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Farm workers to R.J. Reynolds: ¡Sí, se puede!

By Ben Carroll
Winston-Salem, N.C.

A powerful demonstration of more than 300 farm workers, labor unionists and community supporters here on Oct. 28 opened up a new struggle against R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. The Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) led the demonstration, which marked the beginning of a campaign to demand that the tobacco company meet with the union to address the oppressive and deadly conditions facing farm workers in the fields of North Carolina.

The streets of Winston-Salem were filled with red and black FLOC flags as marchers wove through downtown and past a number of buildings owned by Reynolds, chanting "¡Sí se puede!" and "¡El pueblo, unido, jamás serán vencido!" ("Yes we can!" and "The people united will never be defeated!") In front of the company's headquarters, marchers placed flowers on a makeshift coffin to memorialize workers who have lost their lives or become sick harvesting tobacco destined for Reynolds, the second-largest tobacco company in the U.S.

Many were on hand to demonstrate solidarity with the farm workers and FLOC in their fight for dignity and respect. A large

representation came from unions along the East Coast, including the Teamsters, Letter Carriers, Seafarers, Mine Workers, Steel Workers, Auto Workers, Machinists, Postal Workers and AFSCME, among others. Various religious groups, such as the National Council of Churches, were also present to lend support to the workers and show solidarity, along with a number of community organizations including Student Action with Farmworkers, Students for a Democratic Society and Fight Imperialism-Stand Together (FIST).

The opening of the campaign came as CEO Susan Ivey of Reynolds American, the parent company of R.J. Reynolds, refused to meet with FLOC over the oppressive conditions on the tobacco farms that supply the company. A FLOC statement outlines what these workers must face: "In the past two years, six field workers have died in North Carolina tobacco fields, most of them due to heat stroke. In addition, most of these farm workers suffer slave-like hardships, including racism, long hours of stoop labor in the fields, harassment in their work, abject poverty, staggering debt, exposure to lethal nicotine and pesticides, poor health, miserable housing in labor camps, and denial of basic labor and human rights protections."

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Farm workers with FLOC march in Winston-Salem, N.C.

WW PHOTO: PETER GILBERT

PAKISTAN

Martial law provokes popular resistance

By Deirdre Griswold

The hated military leader of Pakistan, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, tried to bolster his faltering dictatorship by declaring martial law on Nov. 3. He suspended the constitution and ousted the head of the Supreme Court.

But Musharraf's attack has boomeranged. Instead of being intimidated, the popular movement that has been growing over the last year has gone into the streets and is urging opposition politicians to fight back.

Musharraf has antagonized the Pakistani people in many ways. The military coup that first brought him to power in 1999 also enormously enriched the high-ranking brass, while leaving most of the people in this nuclear-armed nation having to endure continued poverty and underdevelopment.

The ruling military caste are beholden to the support of U.S. imperialism, which since 9/11 has poured, at last count, at least

\$9.6 billion in aid to Pakistan, most of it to build up the army. (AP, Nov. 7)

The aid came with a price. Musharraf had to join Washington's "war on terror" and allow Pakistani territory to become a battleground in the U.S. war against Islamic fundamentalism—which is an adjunct to the war of U.S. capital to control the oil-rich Middle East and Iran.

So in July Musharraf, at the urging of the U.S. ambassador, sent troops and tanks to destroy the Lal Masjid mosque in central Islamabad—an act that led to scores of deaths of students and teachers in the mosque's madrassa, or Islamic school, and antagonized a great part of the Pakistani population, both religious and secular.

That was followed last month by an offensive in the north-west territories bordering Afghanistan, where both U.S. and Pakistani armed forces rained down bombs and shells on what

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'The Shock Doctrine'—pros & cons

This week ...



By Stephen Millies

Dr. Ewen Cameron tortured people with shock treatments in CIA-funded experiments. The economist Milton Friedman urged CIA-installed dictator Augusto Pinochet to take a "shock approach" against Chile's working class.

Naomi Klein ties these two aspects of capitalist globalization together in her new book, "The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism."

She shows how "shock and awe" campaigns launched against oppressed people don't just consist of cruise missiles. The cutbacks and privatizations imposed on poor countries by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank amount to economic war.



The CIA's MKUltra program spent \$25 million at 44 universities and 12 hospitals to develop torture techniques. Dr. Cameron used LSD and other drugs to destroy the memory of his victims at McGill University's Allan Memorial Institute in Montreal.

Cameron became president of the World Psychiatric Association. The Western capitalist media didn't expose his background; they were too busy attacking psychiatrists in the Soviet Union for allegedly abusing patients.

As a result of MKUltra the CIA published a 128-page secret manual called "Kubark Counterintelligence Interrogation." These methods are used today at U.S. prisons in Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo.

During the 1950s and 1960s the Ford Foundation brought hundreds of students from Latin America and Asia to study economics at the University of Chicago. Milton Friedman, Ronald Reagan's favorite economist, was their star professor.

Klein describes how these "Chicago Boys" went back to their countries where they pushed for eliminating all social programs and letting U.S. corporations exploit workers.

Their first big chance was in Indonesia where a million communists and progressives were slaughtered following a military coup in 1965. Friedman's disciples became economic advisors to the dictator, General Suharto.

More people died in the CIA-backed coup in Chile on Sept. 11, 1973, than at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001. Pinochet's fascist reign of terror allowed the "Chicago Boys" to wipe out every gain of the working class, including social security. Bush's scheme to privatize Social Security in the United States is based on it.

Naomi Klein shows how this "shock therapy" became the model for the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to use in 50 other countries.

A false analogy

The first eight chapters of "The Shock Doctrine" are moving and full of interesting details. But Naomi Klein is wrong when she puts an equal sign between Pinochet's fascist regime and the People's Republic of China.

While gladdened by the tremendous economic gains of China, communists around the globe are worried by the country's virtual integration into the world capitalist market and the growing class contradictions there.

Where previously there was virtually no unemployment, China now has the world's largest reserve army of labor. Private capitalists exploit millions of workers. The People's Communes are a distant memory.

Millions of Chinese communists are concerned as well about these backward steps and are struggling to revive the revolution. And while there are now millionaires in China, there are also hundreds of millions of wage workers. Chinese trade unionists are organizing Wal-Mart workers, something U.S. unions haven't been able to do.

Home to one out of five human beings, China deserves a careful investigation, particularly when it is the Pentagon's ultimate target.

Klein instead dwells on the 1989 events in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, which she equates with the torture and killing of thousands of leftists in the football stadium of Santiago, Chile. There's no comparison.

The leaders of the Tiananmen protests, and other elements in Chinese society, openly

wanted a coup against the Communist Party. They weren't satisfied with the market reforms of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping—they wanted a full-blown capitalist counter-revolution instead. That's why they used U.S. imperialism's Statue of Liberty as their symbol. That's why they welcomed Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev—who not long after allowed the disintegration of the USSR to begin. Some of the participants at Tiananmen had previously attacked college students from Africa.

What capitalist government would tolerate the occupation of its capital's central square for weeks by opponents?

The People's Liberation Army was forced to take action when its soldiers—young recruits from the countryside—were attacked by counter-revolutionaries and burned alive in their buses. Despite the inflated claims of the capitalist media, casualties in the battle that followed were in the hundreds, not the thousands, and were about the same on both sides.

"The Shock Doctrine" correctly points out how President Boris Yeltsin's 1993 bombing of Russia's parliament opened the way for the "Chicago Boys" to stage a fire sale of the country's assets. But at the time, Workers World was one of the few voices to oppose the capitalist counter-revolution, and was called "Stalinist" for doing so.

Klein describes the painful compromises that the African National Congress was forced to make to get rid of the apartheid system. But using statistics she falsely implies that Black people in South Africa are no better off now than under racist rule.

The general strikes called by South Africa's unions are never mentioned in this book. The assassination of Chris Hani is cited but he's not identified as the Communist Party's general secretary. Yet Joe Slovo, legendary leader of the SACP, is blamed for white racists being allowed to keep their pensions.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has called for a "21st-century socialism." Naomi Klein offers no such vision in "The Shock Doctrine."

She called herself a "democratic socialist" in a recent interview in the British "Socialist Review." But she also said, "I'm a believer in mixed economies."

Although Naomi Klein is a Canadian, she endorsed John Kerry for president in 2004. This is no road forward for the movement.

Here's hoping that Naomi Klein will write her next book about the U.S. prison-industrial complex, including the frame-ups of Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier. □

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 E-mail: editor@workers.org
 Web: www.workers.org
 Vol. 49, No. 45 • Nov. 15, 2007
 Closing date: Nov. 7, 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. Subscription information is at www.workers.org/email.php.

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.

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FIST invites youth to WWP conference

By Larry Hales
New York

The youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism-Stand Together) calls for all youth interested in building a better world and for socialism to attend the Workers World Party National Conference on Fighting Racism and War for a Socialist Future in New York on the weekend of Nov. 16-18.

The events will start on Friday afternoon with an outdoor FIST presentation on "Che's Living Legacy of Internationalism: A Guide for the Anti-War Movement," at Washington Square Park from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The WWP Conference begins the next morning at 9 a.m. and goes to 7 p.m., then reconvenes on Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Youth face an uncertain world in which socialism and a planned economy are increasingly necessary to bring about social justice, and that need will only grow. But history has shown that workers, in order to overthrow the dictatorship of capital, need a struggle organization, led by the most oppressed, that can wade through the deceptions and confusion propagated by the rulers in capitalist society.

Scientific socialism was first formulated by Karl Marx, who began his study of capital by explaining the commodity, the "cell" of the capitalist mode of production. A

commodity is a thing extracted, picked or manufactured by human labor not just to be used but to be sold at a profit, and thus commodity production leads inevitably to all the horrors of capitalism. The idea of a vanguard party to combat capitalism and fight for socialism was espoused by the leader of the first workers' revolution, Vladimir Lenin.

Imperialist war, be it against Iraq, Vietnam or anywhere else, happens because of the anarchic nature of capitalism, which produces and produces and goes through periods of boom or bust, but constantly needs markets, cheaper labor and/or cheaper access to resources.

Already, there has been a wave of de-industrialization in the United States that has crippled inner city areas, from upstate New York to the Midwest to Los Angeles, in favor of more exploitable labor abroad. This is connected to the capitalist mode of production, because as workers here fought over years for a better standard of living, the capitalists sought out cheaper labor elsewhere.

This irreconcilable relationship, where the laborers strive for comfortable lives but need to sell their labor power to the bosses, who pay them far less than the value of what they produce, is at the heart of capitalist crisis and the drive for war.

So, as the capitalists think globally, so



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

FIST organizer Larry Hales, left, at New York's City College, discussing support for Katrina survivors with Easter Wood, managing editor of the CCNY undergraduate weekly.



must workers, and see their struggle as an international one. Workers World Party is an organization built in the Leninist model, dedicated to being on the ground wherever workers are, to fight racism and the rulers, to be in solidarity with the world struggle for freedom from exploi-

tation and war and to overthrow the capitalist system.

Join us at our conference. The alternative for youth—that doesn't include war, racism and the destruction of our planet—is socialism, and for that you need a vanguard revolutionary party. □

Discovering Lenin in the 21st century

By Greg Butterfield

We've all seen—or been—people walking down the sidewalk, entering a class or marching in the streets wearing Che Guevara T-shirts. But Lenin?

Yes, V.I. Lenin—the leading figure of the 1917 Russian Revolution and foremost strategist of the modern communist movement—is showing up in interesting places these days: T-shirts, tattoos, Facebook and other social networking sites, and more.

Not surprisingly, you will be able to hear about Lenin's contributions at the Nov. 17-18 Workers World Party Conference in New York City, where revolutionary Marxist activists from around the U.S. will gather to scrutinize the state of the class struggle and plan new actions and strategies for the year ahead.

But what about this: A book of essays recently published by Duke University Press entitled, "Lenin Reloaded: Toward a Politics of Truth." This 340-page volume is part of a series assembled by Slovenian cultural critic Slavoj Žižek and written entirely by academics. Some reaffirm key Leninist concepts and some attempt to overwrite them, but the most remarkable thing is that such a book was published at all.

It wouldn't have been published eight years ago, at the time of the Battle of Seattle, one of the first manifestations of what came to be known as the anti-globalization movement. At that time, in the wake of the USSR's destruction, most academics and cultural commentators, no matter how "left" they claimed to be, wanted nothing to do with Lenin. Neither did the majority of those who identified with the anti-globalization struggle—even though their critique of the system had many similarities to Lenin's Marxist analysis of imperialism.

But times—and the struggle—have changed. The perspectives of the anti-war movement, movements based in oppressed communities, immigrant workers and especially the youth movement are rapidly evolving under the hammer blows of increased state repression and economic decline. Pro-socialist upsurges in Venezuela and other Latin American countries as well as Nepal, along with revolutionary Cuba's steadfastness, also play an important part.

The demand of oppressed nations for self-determination refuses to be ignored. Whether it is the struggle of the six Black students imprisoned in Jena, the jailed lesbians of color from Newark, or the armed resistance in Iraq, this is the cut-

ting-edge issue in the movement. And it was Lenin who asserted that the working class could only emancipate society by making a principled alliance of solidarity with oppressed nations fighting for liberation from colonialism and imperialism.

Since the Battle of Seattle, a whole new generation of activists has emerged, forged in the shadow of post-9/11 repression, the war in Iraq, and the war at home against immigrants, hurricane survivors and youth.

Many are from working-class backgrounds, are oriented toward organizing workers and their communities, are immigrants, lesbian/gay/bi/trans or women. And many have found, or are learning, that Marxism and Leninism—and the 90-years-young Russian Revolution—provide invaluable tools and perspective for waging the struggle to end capitalist exploitation forever.

Some of these young people have united in formations like FIST—Fight Imperialism-Stand Together. FIST will be holding a national gathering in conjunction with the WWP conference, including a Youth Forum on "The Legacy of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara" in New York's Washington Square Park on Friday, Nov. 16, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, visit FIST on the web at <http://fistyouth.wordpress.com>.

The WWP conference, "Fighting Racism and War—For a Socialist Future," will be held in the school auditorium at 127 E. 22nd Street in Manhattan. Registration begins at 9 a.m. on Nov. 17 and the first panel will kick off at 10 a.m. On-site childcare is available. Registration and conference discussion documents are available online at www.workersworld.net. For more information, e-mail conference2007@workers.org or call 212-627-2994. □

Farm workers: ¡Sí, se puede!

Continued from page 1

CEO Ivey claims that because the farms that supply the tobacco and employ these workers are not owned directly by R.J. Reynolds, the company can do nothing to improve their conditions. But FLOC argues that this system of layers of subcontractors is designed for exactly this purpose—to defer responsibility. Because of the control R.J. Reynolds has over this procurement system, as well as its excessive wealth, it has the power to change the conditions faced by workers in the field. However, it chooses to ignore the suffering of workers in exchange for profit.

In this case, Big Tobacco faces big opposition from a broad range of progressive forces. In a statement read at the demonstration, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney committed the support of the national union federation to the struggle being waged by FLOC. "We will stand with you, organize with you, and struggle with you

until justice is won in the fields. ... Together, we will win."

National Council of Churches President Rev. Michael Livingston echoed this sentiment. "We all deserve the right to work with dignity and the right to organize. ... When Susan Ivey will not meet with you, she turns her back on all of us."

R.J. Reynolds is a giant, even among Big Tobacco, manufacturing one of every three cigarettes and controlling six of the top 10 brands in the U.S. It will undoubtedly be a long and hard fight. But the fighting spirit and solidarity exhibited by farm workers, FLOC, other unionists and community supporters in this opening of the campaign demonstrates the willingness of a broad range of forces to commit to victory and win dignity and respect in the fields for North Carolina's farm workers.

The writer is an organizer with the youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism-Stand Together).

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Four days after contract ratification

Chrysler axes one third of jobs

By Martha Grevatt

Rarely do predators address their prey as “colleagues.”

Yet “Dear Colleagues” is how Chrysler CEO Bob Nardelli opened a Nov. 1 letter to employees. Nardelli was hired by Cerberus, the aptly named Wall Street private equity firm that took over the auto company this summer. Cerberus was a three-headed dog in Greek mythology that guarded the entrance to the underworld.

Nardelli’s letter outlined plans to eliminate one in every three Chrysler jobs in the U.S. and Canada.

The latest round of cuts was announced just four days after Chrysler workers, represented by the UAW, ratified a four-year contract. The package of givebacks had passed by at most a few thousand votes. That it passed at all was due to promises of job security. Now workers, not swayed by the phony niceties, believe they were lied to by the company and by their union leaders.

Whole shifts are being cut out at six plants in Michigan, Ohio and Illinois. The 12,000 jobs now set to be eliminated are on top of 13,000 announced last February in what the company, with its typical callous disregard for human consequences, called the Recovery and Transformation Plan. Those 13,000 were on top of 5,000

skilled trades jobs negotiated away in the 2003 contract, which in turn were on top of 26,000 jobs that Chrysler cut world-wide in 2001.

This shock comes after the majority of the workers reluctantly agreed to major concessions to help the new owners “be competitive.” New hires will start at \$14 an hour and will not get health insurance or a traditional pension when—and if—they can afford to retire. At \$14 an hour, 40 hours per week, with no layoffs during the year, these union workers would earn only one and one-half times the official federal poverty wage for a family of four. That wage, which is half the current pay of a UAW production worker at Ford, Chrysler and General Motors, is more than three dollars less than the average hourly wage nationwide.

Obviously, enough is never enough for this breed of predators. Days before the cuts were announced, Nardelli remarked that the auto industry “has an insatiable appetite for cash.”

Declining sales are what the Chrysler bosses are using to justify these catastrophic cuts, but the math doesn’t compute. October sales are down 9 percent compared to October 2006. Sales for the year are down only 4 percent.

Nardelli’s own argument for the cuts cites a projected industry-wide drop in

annual sales from 17.2 million vehicles last February to as low as 15.5 million by the end of this year. Yet that’s 10 percent or less—not 33 percent.

In fact, this criminal act, this tearing away of some 25,000 workers from the few good-paying union jobs left, has nothing to do with temporary market fluctuations. As the Nov. 2 Detroit News commented, “The new, privately held Chrysler LLC will be a smaller, leaner and more selective automaker than the expansion-driven division it was under the German management of DaimlerChrysler AG.”

One could argue that such a drastic restructuring violates even the weak language of the just-passed contract. While it unfortunately permits “volume-related” and other specified layoffs, nowhere does the agreement allow for the permanent shrinking of the workforce as part of a “lean” corporate strategy.

Years ago, the United Auto Workers union would have been in the forefront of the fight to save these precious jobs. UAW President Ron Gettelfinger should be screaming bloody murder over this horrible deception and the scale of the cuts. In fact, the UAW leaders must have known in advance what was coming down. At meetings in Belvidere, Ill., where the last plant was voting on the contract, a union representative let the cat out of the bag by

admitting that the third shift there would be eliminated.

The UAW had no immediate response to this latest outrage. It was only days later that Gettelfinger remarked he didn’t know that Chrysler would do what they did. Clearly, the fight won’t come from the top.

A new strategy must arise from below to put an end to such shameless collusion between labor and capital. The new fight-back program must revive an old concept, popular during the time of the great sit-down strikes of 1936-37: that a job is a worker’s property right. Workers could advance the legal arguments expressed then by the UAW’s lead attorney, Maurice Sugar:

“Let us see if there is not a logical basis for the claim which the worker makes that he has a right in his job. We start by asserting that every worker has the right to live in decency and as a free man. Since the worker has the right to live in decency and as a free man and since his livelihood and his freedom actually depend upon his having a job, it follows that he has a right to a job.”

Such simple truths can form the basis of a militant campaign to defend workers’ jobs against those who promise economic security even as they conspire to destroy it. □

Transit workers struggle to restore dues check-off

By Mike Gimbel
New York

On Dec. 1, at 12 noon, Transit Workers Union Local 100 will hold a “Save Our Union” mass membership meeting at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in this city for all members in good standing.

The TWU, which represents subway and bus workers in New York, has been the target of a concerted government attack since it went on strike for three days in December 2005, defying the state’s anti-labor Taylor Law. In retaliation, then-State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer went into Brooklyn Supreme Court to try to force the union to end the strike. Judge Theodore Jones fined the union \$2.5 million, jailed TWU 100 President Roger Toussaint, suspended dues checkoff for the union, and fined every union member five days’ pay.

This Oct. 4, TWU Local 100 filed papers in Brooklyn Supreme Court seeking restoration of dues checkoff. Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the Metropolitan Transit Authority, at the behest of Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, representing Spitzer who is now governor of the state,

immediately responded with motions opposing the union’s filing.

The MTA proposed a “conditional” restoration of the union’s right to collect dues via checkoff, which could be revoked the instant the union threatened a strike. The MTA wants to use the dues—the lifeblood of the union—as a hammer against it in upcoming negotiations over the current contract, which ends in December 2008.

On Nov. 1 Mayor Bloomberg went one step further and had the New York City Law Department file papers with the Brooklyn Supreme Court opposing any restoration of dues checkoff, be it “full” or “conditional,” without an explicit promise never to strike against any government.

This is why TWU Local 100 has instituted a “Save Our Union” campaign. Some 23,642 members—76 percent of TWU membership—have voluntarily paid their dues. But collecting dues “by hand” forces the administration of the union to use much of its people power to chase after each member for the money, reducing the union’s ability to fight management. In addition, the failure to collect from the 24 percent who don’t voluntarily pay their

dues forces the union to lay off staff needed to defend the membership.

Despite all the pressure put on the TWU Local 100 leadership, the union has not capitulated. It even provided office space to the Taxi Workers Alliance during their recent strike.

All this is happening at the same time that the MTA is considering a transit fare hike that will hurt working people.

Where are the other city unions? Where is the Central Labor Council?

TWU Local 100 is the most powerful union in the city due to its ability to shut down the financial center of the capitalist world. The failure of the other city unions to go out on strike in 2005, or even to threaten a strike in support of the TWU, allowed Spitzer to go to court and demand draconian penalties.

The lack of support from other city unions was the single most important reason why the Brooklyn Supreme Court was able to impose fines, jail Toussaint, suspend the dues check-off and dock the workers five days’ pay. The other city unions failed to show real solidarity and allowed the most strategic and powerful

union in New York to be isolated.

The result is a weakened labor movement in New York City.

The next TWU Local 100 contract negotiations will take place in 2008. Other city unions, such as District Council 37 AFSCME, have already begun negotiations on new contracts with the city.

New York is the financial and banking center of the capitalist system. The current capitalist economic crisis will hit the city workers very hard. Already Mayor Bloomberg has ordered cuts in city agency budgets and a job freeze that will lead to layoffs and cuts in services, which will hit the oppressed communities hardest.

Union solidarity during this crisis would make it possible for the TWU to raise the workers’ basic right to strike if necessary and challenge the punitive measures of the Taylor Law. Will the labor leadership continue to waste millions of dollars on the fraudulent 2008 election campaigns—or will they change their strategy and pin their hopes on the only real solution: mobilizing the union rank and file in a united front of public sector unions and the community? □

Orders job freeze and budget cuts

Billionaire mayor blames workers for deficits

By Brenda Ryan
New York

When the capitalist economy turns downward and the government, run by the rich, seeks to scrounge up more money, where does it turn? To the workers, who are already reeling from layoffs, slashed wages, and the loss of health benefits and pensions.

This time around it’s the city of New York that says it is short of cash. On Oct. 30 Mayor Michael Bloomberg imposed a hiring freeze on all government agencies

as a solution to declining revenues. No discussion, no way for city employees or residents to debate what to do. The mayor did it by decree. He also told city commissioners to find ways to cut spending by 2.5 percent this fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2008, and by 5 percent next year.

What’s the reason for the city’s financial problems? News reports cite the crisis in credit and housing, a lack of large real estate transactions and a decline in Wall Street profits as factors for the city’s declining revenues. But city officials are trying to scapegoat the unions.

The officials recently submitted a revised spending plan to the Financial Control Board, which oversees the city’s finances, stating that labor costs will be responsible for 65 percent of the revenue deficit by 2011, while a decline in tax revenue will be responsible for 34 percent. (New York Times, Nov. 3)

Bloomberg “has agreed to more generous pay raises for union after union, leading to expenses that stand to outpace revenue, especially toward the end of the city’s four-year spending plan,” the article stated.

For the mayor to complain that work-

ers are making too much money is particularly outrageous, given Bloomberg’s status as one of 946 billionaires in this country. This year he moved to No. 25 in Forbes magazine’s list of the 400 richest people in the U.S., with a net worth of \$11.5 billion.

Bonuses to Wall Street executives last year hit a record \$23.9 billion—more than 15 times what the city expects to save over the next two years through the budget cuts. (Bloomberg, Oct. 31) (Yes, THAT Bloomberg. The mayor owns this huge

Continued on page 5

Victory for LA8 as

Gov't 'test case' finally bites the dust

By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

The U.S. government ended its 20-year vendetta against the Los Angeles Eight last week when it agreed that it wouldn't deport the two remaining defendants, Michel Shehadeh and Khader Hamide.

The two Palestinians were arrested in 1987 along with five other Palestinian men and one Kenyan woman. The eight were charged with supporting the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine by distributing its magazine and carrying out fundraising for the Marxist organization, which was at the time the second-largest member group of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

They were held in a maximum-security prison for 23 days. Those who remained in the U.S. have spent their lives since the arrests fighting for the right to live and work.

The McCarthyite-style frame-up finally ended—too flimsy to go farther—when the Board of Immigration Appeals agreed to halt efforts to deport them.

The government's case had weaved its way through laws, courts and charges. At different times the U.S. used the McCarran-Walter Act, the 1990 Immigration Act, the Clinton-era Anti-terrorism Act, the Patriot Act and the Real ID Act. Over two decades, the case went before the U.S. Court of Appeals four times, the Supreme Court once, and the Board of Immigration Appeals multiple times.

Each time the government lost, it tried a new way.



The Los Angeles 8 and supporters in 1987.

PHOTO: WWW.COMMITTEE4JUSTICE.COM

When the McCarran-Walter Act was declared unconstitutional and finally repealed in 1990, the Feds kept the case alive by bringing charges under a newly enacted law that made it illegal to aid organizations deemed "terrorist" by the State Department. Never mind that the arrests had occurred three years before the 1990 Immigration Act was effective, or that the PFLP was not designated a "terrorist" organization by Washington until 1997.

Later, provisions of the Patriot Act were actually written to be effective against the LA8, even though their arrests had occurred years earlier.

National Lawyers Guild attorney Marc

Van Der Hout has been on the team representing the LA8 from the beginning. In an interview on Pacifica's "Democracy Now" program, Van Der Hout suggested that the government's conduct reveals it had picked out a group of people to arrest and pursue their prosecution, but not because of any criminal activity on their part.

He pointed out that during William Webster's 1987 confirmation hearing to become director of the CIA, the former FBI director admitted to a three-year FBI surveillance effort of the Eight that failed to find any illegal activity. Van Der Hout said the FBI then "turned it over to immigration and said, 'Can you figure out some way to deport these people?'"

Interviewed on the same program, Michel Shehadeh explained how the attorneys brought up a probable explanation for the FBI's actions against him and the others while in court:

"[W]e found out that there was a plan that was leaked to the newspapers ... entitled 'Alien Terrorists and Undesirables: A Contingency Plan.' And in the plan there was an outline of a test case, and that test case [was] to establish a legal precedent, so in case of a war, as the plan says, or an incident, then Arab Americans would be rounded up en masse and put in concentration camps, like what happened to the Japanese Americans in 1945 after Pearl Harbor. And this test case would be to establish that legal precedent, so the government will be able to do it. And they said that they learned that from the registrations of Iranians in 1979 during the Iranian Revolution, when they wanted to do a registration of the Iranians, and they couldn't, because they didn't have the law.

"So our attorneys in court were able to prove and establish that the process of this case followed the outline of the test case that was outlined in their plan to the letter. And so, we believe that we were this test case over the years."

The government's failure to deport these activists is a victory for all those who support the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, for all those who support immigrant rights, and for all those who are fighting to defend the right to protest and to extend solidarity with workers around the world. □

WW interviews member of Lucasville 5

Siddique Abdullah Hasan, aka Carlos Sanders, was an imam, or prayer leader, for the Sunni Muslims at the state prison in Lucasville, Ohio, in 1993. During an 11-day siege of a portion of the prison, he was a spokesperson for the Sunni Muslims, helping to negotiate a peaceful end to the rebellion with the prison administration on April 21. Instead of accolades, the state charged him with the killing of a guard. He and four others, known as the Lucasville 5, received capital sentences. Only a few levels of appeal at the federal level are left for Hasan, but a growing movement of supporters is seeking to overturn his conviction entirely.

Martha Grevatt, a member of the Cleveland branch of Workers World Party and the Cleveland Lucasville 5 Defense Committee, sent Hasan interview questions. The first portion of the interview was published on www.workers.org on March 29 of this year. The following excerpts are part 2 of the interview. The final installment of the interview will appear in a future issue.

WW: How did they convict you of capital murder?

Hasan: Seeing there was no physical or scientific evidence linking me to any of the crimes, the state made the scheming decision to demonize me in their diabolical pursuit to use me—their phantom ringleader and master puppeteer—as their scapegoat. Early on in their biased investigation, the state convinced the prison guards that I had ordered the murder of their fellow

officer. As a result, guards immediately started fabricating things they had allegedly seen me doing. Many of their stories conflicted with one another, but it didn't matter because this was their way of seeking revenge for the murder of their co-worker.

Moreover, the state convinced prisoners who had committed murders and other serious crimes that it was me they wanted to "fry" and not them. This gave certain prisoners an outlet to lie on me in order to save their own skin and the proof is in the pudding.

Take, for example, these snitchers said that I was in a meeting where a decision or vote was made to kill a guard, and that I chaired this meeting. The irony of their cock-and-bull story is the state secretly recorded this meeting and I'm not even present in this meeting. Yet the state allowed this perjured testimony to go

uncorrected. As a result of their perjured testimony, two of these murderers have been released from prison and the other two will be released in a couple of years.

Another factor which contributed and sealed my conviction was that the state, during the course of the trial, repeatedly focused on my race, my religion and

my Islamic attire—all to create an atmosphere of Islamophobia. Therefore, it was not a complicated task to secure a conviction in Cincinnati, before a predominantly white and Catholic jury. I do not have to remind you that Cincinnati is notorious for its racism and bigotry,

On April 7, Elaine Brown, former Black Panther Party leader and long-time prisoner advocate spoke in Cleveland at a rally to campaign for the release of the Lucasville 8. From left to right, Betty Springer, Elaine Brown, Saadiqah Hasan, Sharon Danann, Dwight Lamar, Kandy Cannon, Jackie Thomas, Susan Schnur and Martha Grevatt.

PHOTO: ERICKA ABRAM



especially the wholesale incarcerating of young Black men.

WW: Since the bosses typically regard multiracial unity as a threat, was this a factor in the harshness of your sentence?

Hasan: It's really hard to say if the harshness of my sentence(s) were actually motivated by the perceived threat of multiracial unity. However, I can say with certainty that my 14 years of isolation, the harshness of my treatment and denial of my privileges, which are readily afforded to other death row prisoners, are directly related to the awe-inspiring and unprecedented multiracial solidarity displayed during and after the rebellion. The prison authorities are unrelentingly trying to shove a message of deterrence down the throats of other potential activists and revolutionaries under their jurisdiction and control. That message is: Do not try to resist the excessive and oppressive conditions in our system; otherwise, we will be vindictive in punishing you with no end in sight.

WW: How did you happen to be transferred to Ohio State Penitentiary in Youngstown?

Hasan: As soon as it became official that a super-max prison was going to be built in Ohio, Ohio's former director [of the prison system] Reginald Wilkinson unilaterally decided that I would be one of the first prisoners housed at the \$65

million concentration camp. True to his words, I was brought here on May 7, 1998—the fourth day of its opening.

WW: What are the conditions there? What are the grievances and is there a movement for improved conditions?

Hasan: Conditions here are both oppressive and vindictive. This is especially true when it comes to a small class of prisoners dubbed "long-termers," which I am unduly assigned to this class. Although this group has not been in any trouble and has completed various programs, nothing we do will ever be good enough for the prison officials to reduce our long-term status. Thus, our insufficient privileges and punitive status will forever remain the same. The prison officials have made it perfectly clear that they're following the orders of their superiors at Central Office in Columbus, Ohio.

Our complaints and grievances have internally fallen on deaf ears; therefore, relief will have to emanate from an outside judge. In fact, we are waiting on a judge's ruling now. If a favorable ruling does not come down, then I will personally organize the people and push for massive demonstrations throughout the state of Ohio.

"Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising" is available at leftbooks.com.



Siddique Abdullah Hasan

WEST VIRGINIA



Hundreds protest racist, sexist atrocity

By Dante Strobino

In the biggest expression of anti-racist outrage since the Sept. 20 Jena 6 rally, nearly a thousand people from all over the country gathered in Charleston, W. Va., the state capital, on Nov. 3 to support Megan Williams, a 20-year-old Black woman who survived a vicious, racist gang raping, torture and week-long kidnapping.

The marchers were demanding U.S. Attorney Charles Miller and Logan County Prosecutor Brian Abraham add hate-crime charges to the sexual assault and kidnapping charges against three white men and three white women from the county.

The march was organized by the West Virginia chapter of Black Lawyers for Justice and was endorsed by hundreds of Black organizations from across the country, including the Millions More Movement, National Action Network, The Ordinary People Society (TOPS), Peoples Organization for Progress, New Black Panther Party, Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault, Southern Christian Leadership Council, ex-Congressmember Cynthia McKinney and many others.

In a press release for the event, the organizers were very clear on the connection that this case has with other racist attacks, including rampant police killings and brutality all over the U.S. Besides the Jena 6 case in Louisiana, the press release raised cases involving noose hangings at the University of Maryland, College Park; in Pittsburgh targeting Black workers; in Long Island this past October; and in public schools all over North Carolina.

On Oct. 3 white students at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., reportedly held a Black student hostage for over an hour and repeatedly wrote "KKK" all over his body with markers.

Seen in this national context of racist attacks, the gruesome details of the Williams incident can hardly be imagined outside the legal framework of a "hate crime."

Prosecutors said, "Every time they stabbed her, they called her 'n---r.'" Carmen Williams told the Charleston Gazette regarding her daughter's ordeal,

"She wakes up in the middle of the night screaming, 'Mommy.' What's really, really bad is, we don't know everything they did to her. She is crying all the time."

The suspects took turns beating, stabbing, choking and sexually abusing Williams, while continually threatening her with death, according to criminal complaints.

Many marchers not only made the connection between this case and other racist attacks, they also raised questions about the national scenario of women's oppression. In many rape cases, the survivors are so deeply traumatized that they never report the incident or come forward in public.

Megan Williams, however, even after her lawyers advised her and her family not to attend the march, proudly marched and rallied with her supporters. It was a stunning act of strength.

Given that only 3 percent of West Virginia residents are Black, this militant crowd was a sight for sore eyes. Marchers chanting "Blackpower!" and "Justice now!" proceeded down Kanawha Boulevard on their way to the Capitol building.

One marcher, Cassandra Rice, a student at Fairmont University in West Virginia, told Workers World, "As a white member of the West Virginia population, I had an obligation to be here to speak out against this type of hatred. [We have] to recognize everyday hatred that goes on in West Virginia that manifests in bigger events like what happened to Megan Williams. Everyday name-calling builds up to big events such as this."

More and more movements across the country are springing up to respond to these attacks. The people united will never be defeated!

Strobino is a member of the Raleigh chapter of the youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism-Stand Together). Contact fist@workers.org.



PHOTO: CASSANDRA RICE

Megan Williams, victim of racist torture and abuse, stands strong at rally between Malik Shabazz of Black Lawyers for Justice and her mother, Carmen Williams.

Black Solidarity Day in Harlem

Special to Workers World
Harlem, N.Y.

Several hundred people, the overwhelming majority of them Black, attended a city-wide forum at the Mount Olivet Church in Harlem on Nov. 5, also known as "Black Solidarity Day." The forum was organized by the Brooklyn-based December 12th Movement and was chaired by one of its leaders, Viola Plummer.

"Race Matters" was the main theme of the forum, to put emphasis on the deepening racist and national oppression that Black people are facing in New York and around the country.

Among the speakers was King Downing—a Black lawyer with the New York Chapter of the ACLU—who spoke on the Jena 6, Black youth who have been framed for the "crime" of defending themselves against racism in their Jena, La., high school.

Downing gave an update on the legal status of their cases and ended his remarks with the chant, "Stop the Jena-cide." He encouraged the audience to write to one of the incarcerated youths, Mychal Bell, at Renaissance Home for Youth, P.O. Box

7997, Alexandria, LA 71306. He also asked that funds be sent to the young men's families at Jena 6 Defense Fund, P.O. Box 2498, Jena, LA 71342.

New York City Councilperson Charles Barron spoke on why he is supporting Barack Obama for president—as a revolutionary tactic and also because Obama is Black. Pam Africa from International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal brought greetings from Philadelphia.

Monica Moorehead from the International Action Center spoke on why Katrina survivors deserve reparations, including the right to return. She also spoke on the need to build Black and Brown unity in light of the raids and deportations that undocumented workers, especially Latin@s, are facing.

Radio personality Bob Law spoke on the economic exploitation facing Black people and encouraged Black people not to shop during the holiday season. He also told the crowd to call Congressperson John Conyers' office at 313-961-5670 to ask that the Senate House Judiciary Committee investigate the role of the prosecutor in the Jena 6 case. □

Art exhibit: dream house of a long-term prisoner

By Anne Pruden
New York

What kind of house does a man dream of who has lived in a six-by-nine-foot cell for more than 30 years?

This question is at the heart of "The House That Herman Built," an exhibit now showing at Artists Space, 38 Greene St., third floor, in New York City. The exhibit will end on Dec. 8.

It began as a conversation between Jackie Sumell and political prisoner Herman Wallace. Wallace is one of the Angola 3—three prisoners who were framed up after joining the Black Panther Party while confined at Louisiana State Penitentiary.

The exhibit contains a maquette of the house that Wallace and Sumell designed, as well as a replica of Wallace's cell and timelines and correspondence linking the research on this case to the dialogue and architecture. Also part of the exhibit is a trailer for a film being made about the friendship between Wallace and Sumell and the actual realization of the develop-

ment of "The House That Herman Built."

The voice of Robert "King" Wilkerson, the third prisoner in the trio, who has been released, is heard reading Wallace's letters to Sumell. Wallace has dedicated this exhibit to all political prisoners and the Jena Six, in memory of the Angola Three's staunchest supporter and donor, Dame Anita Roddick, who tragically passed away in October. In September 2006, after a new evidentiary hearing, the court commissioner recommended that Wallace's conviction on charges he had killed a prison guard in 1972 be overturned. After sitting on the recommendation for over a year, the Louisiana Supreme Court has denied it; now the case will be reviewed by the First Circuit Court of Appeals.

The Angola 3 are awaiting a court date for a suit they have initiated, through the American Civil Liberties Union, charging the state with cruel and unusual punishment they suffered while in prison.

For more information, visit www.Angola3.org, www.hermanshouse.org and www.anitaroddick.com. □

Miami police kill unarmed Haitian

By Mike Martinez
Miami

Less than 20 yards from his door, Gracia Beaugris was stopped and then shot to death by Miami Dade County police officer Christopher Villano on Oct. 26.

Beaugris, 19, was coming home from a laundromat with friends when Officer Villano stopped and then frisked them. Beaugris, who had emigrated from Haiti six years earlier, tried to question Villano about being stopped.

At this point, according to the other youth, the officer shouted profanity at Beaugris, who was already spread-eagled against a wall. The cop shoved him and eventually put him in a chokehold. Beaugris was shot in the arm and fell. Then the Miami Dade cop fired two more shots into him while on the ground. One was in the back of the head above the ear;

another entered his shoulder.

Villano's version, reported in the Miami Herald, was that he had believed the victim was going for the officer's gun. Beaugris was unarmed.

"He didn't do anything to get shot down," said one of the teens who was on the scene but asked not to be identified. Beaugris' aunts and father all say that "BG" was a good kid. They say that when he was shot, he was returning from the laundromat after washing his father's work clothes.

Some in the community here are calling it murder. Others are just as disturbed over how the shooting occurred and say it was unjustified. Tensions clearly exist in the community. Local police have harassed young people who created a memorial for the dead teen.

A full investigation into the case has not been completed. □

Venezuelans to vote on People's Power

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Bolivar Avenue in the center of Caracas was once again covered in a sea of red on Nov. 4 as 100,000 Venezuelans demonstrated in support of the Bolivarian Revolution. Red is the color of the revolution and is worn to indicate allegiance to the "proceso." Venezuelans refer to a person's political affiliation as "with or against the process."

That day launched the "Campaign for the Yes," a political campaign to educate and mobilize the people to vote on Dec. 2 for reform of the 1999 Constitution. The choices are "Yes" to approve the reform and "No" to disapprove. This reform is the legal, electoral vehicle to put into practice the changes needed to deepen the revolution and steer it towards a socialist path—the political platform on which Hugo Chávez won his last election by a 61 percent vote.

On Aug. 15 Chávez presented his project for constitutional reform to the National Assembly (NA). It contained 33 changes. On Nov. 2, when the NA submitted its proposal to the National Electoral Council, the number of changes had jumped to 69. This was the result of intense debates within the NA, including proposals submitted to the legislative body from social groups and organizations.

If the reform passes on Dec. 2, Venezuela's Constitution will be the most advanced in Latin America, with the exception of revolutionary Cuba. It will transfer and guarantee power to the people, making participatory democracy a strong vehicle by, among other things, restructuring local government to facilitate the revolutionary organization of various social formations and the government funding of communal projects proposed and directed by the people themselves.

This territorial restructuring, according to the text of the Reform Project, includes the establishment of communes, which "will constitute the basic and indivisible territorial nucleus of the Venezuelan Socialist State where the citizens will have the power to construct their own geography and history."

Banned in U.S.

Workers to meet in Mexico

By Cheryl LaBash

Feeling battered by pay cuts, layoffs, foreclosures, medical, utility and fuel costs? You're not alone. But you have a chance to learn how workers are struggling for a better life right now—and making gains—in other countries.

On Dec. 7, 8 and 9 the fourth Cuba/Venezuela/North America Labor Conference will bring together workers on the front line of social change from Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Haiti, Mexico, Colombia and the United States. Immigrant rights organizers and Katrina survivors are invited.

A special evening of solidarity with the Cuban Five on Friday, Dec. 7, begins the conference. The Cuban Five have begun their tenth year of unjust imprisonment in the U.S. Irma Sehwerert will represent the families of the Cuban Five. Her son, René González, is serving a 15-year sentence in the federal prison in Marianna, Fla., where he is denied visits from his spouse, Olga Salanueva. The International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five is collaborating on this event.

Saturday topics will include U.S./Cuba relations and ALBA, the alternative to



Among other changes: the government will have a larger role in the Central Bank; diversity will be recognized, including rights for gays and people with disabilities, and discrimination will be prohibited; the president will serve a term of seven years instead of the present six and can be re-elected as many times as the people want; the work day will be reduced from eight to six hours and the voting age will be lowered to 16.

The development of a socialist structure in all institutions and the recognition of Poder Popular (People's Power) in all areas of the government apparatus exist throughout the Reform Project.

There is a special section on international relations. A paragraph in Article 152 states, "The exterior policy of the Republic should orient itself in an active way towards the configuration of a pluripolar world, free from the hegemony of any center of imperialist, colonialist or neocolonialist power."

Article 302 addresses the rich resources of the country: "For reasons of sovereignty, national development and interests, the state earmarks for itself the activities of exploration and exploitation of liquid, solid or gaseous hydrocarbons ... especially those in the Orinoco strip."

In general, these reforms increase the potential for autonomy and sovereignty of the nation—key goals of the Bolivarian Revolution, in order to further develop-

ment on behalf of the masses and attain social justice.

NAFTA and other "free trade" agreements. U.S./Latin America immigration issues will be discussed on Sunday. The conference will be held in Tijuana, Mexico, just across the border from San Diego, Calif., because the U.S. State Department refuses to approve visas for representatives from the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC).

The U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange initiated the conference. It is supported by Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME); World Organization for the Right of the People to Healthcare, SEIU 1199 NY; National Network on Cuba (NNOC); Venezuela Solidarity Network (VSN); International Action Center (IAC); Cuba Solidarity New York (CSNY); Southwest Workers Union, San Antonio, Texas; Convergencia de los Movimientos de los Pueblos de las Américas (COMPA); Peace and Freedom Party; Movimiento Latino USA; Cuba-U.S. Sustainability Project; March 25 Coalition; and the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five.

Registration and hotel information can be found at laborexchange.blogspot.com; or send e-mail to laborexchange@aol.com. □

ment on behalf of the masses and attain social justice.

It is not surprising, then, that Washington, the Venezuelan pro-imperialist oligarchy and their stooges would be especially infuriated with these proposals. The opposition both inside and outside Venezuela has used the media to air charges of a "constitutional coup," "the loss of freedom and civil rights," and that President Chávez will be "dictator for life."

They are particularly angered by the proposed changes in the presidential elections, as if Chávez is the only president in the world to propose this. A good response was given by Giusto Catania, vice president of the Commission for Freedom of the European Parliament. He said, "This constitutional reform absolutely responds to European standards. In almost every

Same storm, different social systems

By Caleb Maupin

Heart-breaking stories are coming out of the Dominican Republic and Haiti about people washed away in floods caused by Hurricane Noel.

More than 100 people are estimated to have died in the Dominican Republic. A man in Piedra Blanca saw his 70-year-old mother swept away in a rush of water. Another man tried to get away from his car when it stalled but was swallowed by the flood.

The Associated Press described how the civil defense force of the Dominican Republic, combined with countless volunteers, tried to evacuate people from the path of the deadly hurricane but did not have enough boats. Civilians desperately volunteered their boats to the heroic effort to save people from the natural disaster.

The estimated deaths are even higher for Haiti: 140. People were simply not evacuated in time and were consumed by floods and mudslides.

In Cuba, however, the story was different. Although the island was struck harshly, not a single Cuban lost their life to the hurricane.

ABC News described how the Revolutionary Armed Forces went door to door, to every home in the path of the hurricane, and evacuated those within. All were accounted for.

Some 30,000 people were evacuated with speed and efficiency.

What makes Cuba different? Its socialist government, which has been able to allocate resources and carry out a plan to protect the people in the event of a natural disaster.

In the Dominican Republic, however, attempts at social change were squashed.

European country exists the possibility that a president of a republic, elected by the people, or a prime minister, can repeat his mandate indefinitely. It happens in Spain, France, Great Britain and Italy." (www.guengl.org)

On Nov. 1, a group of opposition students went to the NA demanding the reform be delayed. After deputies in the NA cordially received their written demands, the students left in anger and chained themselves to the NA's gate as part of an opposition demonstration. Rocks, bottles and other objects were thrown at the police and attempts were made to set ablaze police cars. When it was over, seven plastic bottles filled with gasoline were found on the street. The right-wing media gave the protest extensive coverage.

On Oct. 29, Carolus Wimmer, a member of the Latin-American Parliament and of the Venezuelan Communist Party, had denounced U.S. plans to stop Venezuela's constitutional reform. He stated that "senior United States officials met with Venezuelan opposition groups in Prague between Oct. 7 and 9 to demand that the Venezuelan opposition ask the Supreme Court to consider the proposed reforms as a 'constitutional coup' and that they should call for social upheaval, organize acts of economic sabotage against infrastructure, destroy the food transport and delivery chain ... and organize a military coup with all means possible, including bloodshed by means of Colombian paramilitaries infiltrated in Venezuela." (*Venezuelanalysis*, *Diario VEA*, *Tribuna Popular*) □

When the people in 1962 elected a popular reformer named Juan Bosch, he was overthrown in a bloody U.S.-backed coup. In 1965, when the coup regime appeared in danger of being toppled, the U.S. sent 42,000 Marines to occupy the country. The forces of U.S. capitalism have kept their grip on the Dominican Republic ever since.

In Haiti, it has been similar. The U.S. has backed dictators there to keep the rule of Wall Street in effect. Francois Duvalier, and later his son Jean-Claude Duvalier, ruled by terror, suppressing all who challenged capitalism and injustice. In 2004, the popularly elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was physically kidnapped by U.S. personnel and sent into exile. (See www.workers.org.)

But in Cuba a revolution against the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista succeeded in 1959. Now the factories, farms and banks are publicly owned, rather than in the hands of foreign corporations and their henchmen. This enables the government to prioritize people, not profits.

In Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez is attempting to build a socialist economy. He has already volunteered to assist the people of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. According to *El Universal*, a Latin American news agency, Simon Bolivar Taskforces are already being sent to the Dominican Republic from Venezuela to help rebuild.

Chavez has said his goal is a society "based in solidarity, fraternity, love, justice, liberty and equality." As the people rebuild after the hurricane in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, the system of socialism has proven it can save lives in a crisis. □

U.S. 'peace' conference to prepare for new war

By Sara Flounders

The actions of the U.S. and Israeli governments speak much clearer than their words. They announced a possible "peace conference" on Palestine, originally slated for Nov. 26 in Annapolis, Md., but as of Nov. 7 it is still up in the air.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has been traveling the Middle East promising that the meeting will arrive at a "process" for an eventual solution of a Palestinian state. In the past months Rice has made eight trips to the region for a continuing round of meetings with Israel and some pliant Arab political leaders, trying to jump-start this international meeting.

Indicating the difficulties facing such a gathering, the Annapolis meeting is still without an official confirmed date, participants or agenda. Faced with a disastrous war in Iraq, a protracted resistance in Afghanistan, an explosive upheaval in Pakistan and only a year left of Bush's presidency, no government seems to want to accept the invitation.

Israeli media reports make it clear that the Bush administration will not press for a defining declaration or timetables. There are no concrete plans to take up decisive issues such as the return of refugees and final status of Jerusalem. The democratically elected Palestinian government, led by Hamas, will be totally excluded.

So what is the purpose of this grand Middle East peace gathering in Annapolis?

One answer comes from Saudi Arabia, an absolute monarchy with no rights for anyone but the multi-billionaire ruling family, which is totally dependent on U.S. military equipment and political backing.

The Saudi media is tightly controlled. So it was important when Arab News, the leading government-controlled Saudi newspaper, admitted on Nov. 1: "The real motive behind the decision to convene the conference and the hectic activities now going on have been explained as an attempt to guarantee total Arab support for the U.S. stand over Iran's nuclear ambitions...."

"It is apparent that President Bush wants to make the occasion a grand spec-

tacle attended by world leaders representing the G-8 countries, the U.N., the Middle East Quartet and the Arab states though it will only sign an empty agreement."

A similar observation came from the Palestinian resistance excluded from the meeting. The leader of Hamas, Khaled Mashaal, told a press conference in Damascus, "There are preparations for an aggression against Iran that could include other parties—Syria, Lebanon and Hezbollah. Therefore, America is distracting us with a false game and is preparing itself for the real one."

Senior Hamas leader Muhammad Nazall in another interview said: "The conference's purpose is not Palestine, but to gain support for a strike on Iran. The U.S. administration needs to prove it is making efforts to solve the Palestinian issue, while all the while beating the drums of war against Iran."

The Guardian of London on Nov. 4 explained it in essentially the same way. Bush needs to "be seen to be doing something about the Israel-Palestine conflict at a time when it needs to corral its Arab allies for the coming confrontation with Iran."

At a Nov. 3 meeting of the Egyptian Council on Foreign Affairs, a body of former Egyptian diplomats, Secretary General Osama al-Razali Harb told the briefing, "There is a great deal of suspicion across the political spectrum in Egypt that the United States had called the summit to prepare the ground in the Middle East for a confrontation with Iran."

David Brooks in a New York Times Op Ed on Nov. 6 explained approvingly: "It's not really about Israel and Palestine; it's about Iran.... It is slightly unfortunate that the peace process itself is hollow. It's like having a wedding without a couple because you want to get the guests together for some other purpose. But that void can be filled in later. The main point is to organize the anti-Iranians around some vehicle and then reshape the strategic correlation of forces in the region."

A headline in the Oct. 24 Guardian summarized the opinion expressed in almost every capital and among politicians of every political leaning regarding the out-

come of the proposed meeting. It read: "At last, consensus in the Middle East: all agree these talks are bound to fail."

While pressure from the U.S. and Israel has succeeded in breaking the Abbas forces away from Hamas and creating a major split in the Palestinian leadership, Israel has offered virtually nothing to Abbas in return. The Israeli and U.S. tactic is to have talks to make it seem like something is going on when Israel has no plans to offer anything. It wants to split and then destroy the Palestinian movement.

Collective punishment of Gaza

In all these discussions there is no mention and no coverage of the continuing strangulation of the population in Gaza. Despite its official withdrawal two years ago, Israel continues to control all access to the Gaza Strip and remains the occupying power, both legally and practically.

Palestinians last year overwhelmingly elected a government with a majority from Hamas, a Muslim force seen as more intransigent toward Israeli occupation.

Since this democratic election, Israel, in an effort to break the Palestinians' will to resist, has confiscated hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes from Palestinians that it is obliged to pass on, as per previous agreements. Both the U.S. and the European Union have imposed their own sanctions and withdrawn aid. Commerce is shut down. Palestinian workers cannot travel to find work. Farm produce and even essential medicines, electronic parts, repairs for sanitation and sewage are all blockaded. The result is huge increases in unemployment, poverty and malnutrition.

Now collective punishment of the people of Gaza has reached a new level. Israel is choking off essential fuel supplies to its 1.5 million people. This shuts off not only transportation but also electricity and pumping of water for drinking and sanitation.

Gaza continues to resist as a blockaded, surrounded ghetto. Overhead Israeli rockets strike apartment houses and vehicles at will. Israel always claims that its attacks are in response to Palestinian rocket attacks, but the ratio of Palestinian

to Israeli deaths is more than 30 to one.

With the official border crossing at Rafah closed, Israeli forces claimed on Nov. 1 to have uncovered and destroyed seven more tunnels used by Palestinian militants to smuggle in essential supplies, arms and people. The tunnels can vary in length from 100 yards to half a mile. Hundreds of tunnels have been destroyed. But immediately work begins on others.

West Bank cantons

Despite many Israeli promises to release the more than 12,000 Palestinian political detainees, a publicized release for the holy month of Ramadan totaled 90 prisoners. This was quickly reversed by the arrest of an additional 78 Palestinian civilians, including six children and two women. Detainees in the Negev Desert detention center confirmed that three new sections have been added to the camp.

In the beginning of November, as representatives of Abbas's emergency government met with Israeli politicians on a "declaration of principles" to unveil at the Annapolis meeting, the Israeli army announced the expropriation of another 300 acres of Palestinian land near occupied East Jerusalem.

The land seizure was to build a bypass road that would effectively cut the West Bank in two and render a contiguous Palestinian state impossible. It will further secure the already massive Jewish-only settlements that bisect the West Bank. The road will open that area for an additional 3,500 housing units and dozens of businesses that have yet to be started.

There are now 563 checkpoints in the West Bank, further dividing the land into apartheid-style cantons. Free movement and all normal economic activity are impossible.

Israeli demolitions, land seizures, settlement expansion, assassinations, armed incursions and continued construction of the separation wall are all continuing.

None of these issues will be resolved or even addressed in a U.S.-sponsored meeting. The only possibility for real peace in the Middle East is for the U.S. to get out. □

Pakistan Martial law provokes popular resistance

Continued from page 1

they suspected were the headquarters of local leaders sympathetic to the Taliban in Afghanistan. Many civilians were killed, but the army suffered significant losses, too.

While all this was happening, the democratic opposition to Musharraf was growing. When he tried in March to dismiss the head of Pakistan's Supreme Court, Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, the justice decided to go by car to the capital for a meeting with Musharraf. The result was hundreds of miles of popular demonstrations as the masses turned out along his route to cheer the judge.

Today, lawyers who oppose Musharraf's effort to muzzle the judiciary are being arrested by the hundreds as they demonstrate against the general's declaration of a state of emergency. At issue is the Supreme Court's refusal to validate the phony "re-election" of Musharraf, who ran virtually unopposed in October when the opposition parties decided to boycott the election. The Pakistan Constitution says that the head of state cannot also be head of the military.

In all of this, Washington is frantically

trying to come up with a winning horse to ride.

For years, the U.S. government has depended on Musharraf and earlier Pakistani dictators to keep the country in its orbit and hostile to national liberation movements in the region.

But today, the resistance in Iraq and the refusal of Iran to knuckle under to U.S. threats are shaking the confidence of regimes that once saw no option but to bow down to imperialist pressure, especially from the U.S. and Britain. Musharraf is himself at risk of being overthrown by elements within the military, and has narrowly escaped assassination several times.

After repeatedly trying to frame the issue as one of "freedom" and "democracy" versus authoritarianism, Washington is hard-pressed to find any justification for its support of Musharraf, especially as the mass movement against him goes into the streets.

The latest ploy of the Bush gang, before Musharraf declared a state of emergency, was to try to force the general to accept a power-sharing deal with Benazir Bhutto, a former prime minister of Pakistan who

was ousted for corruption but whose party, the Pakistani Peoples Party, still remains popular—largely because its founder, Bhutto's father, was hung by an earlier U.S.-backed military dictator, Gen. Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq.

The return of Bhutto, a billionaire, to Pakistan from exile was engineered by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, National Intelligence Director John Negroponte and U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Zalmay Khalilzad. It was thought that having her in the government would pacify the popular opposition while ensuring U.S. interests.

But when Bhutto returned to Pakistan, having been given a guarantee by Musharraf that the corruption charges would be dropped, she was nearly assassinated in massive explosions that killed more than 150 of her supporters. She and her supporters pointed to elements in the government as responsible, while the Western media tried to blame it on Al Qaeda.

Bhutto, pressed by her supporters, has now called for protests against martial law and a 150-mile march to Islamabad. Meanwhile, other opponents of Musharraf who have been in Pakistan all along, and

whose credentials as democratic opponents are not compromised, are throwing themselves into the struggle against the dictatorship.

Washington is desperately trying to figure out how to shore up Musharraf while giving the image of supporting democracy. It's not easy. Intelligence director Negroponte, who has been leaning on the general for almost a year to be more aggressive against the Islamic movement, told the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Nov. 7 that Musharraf was an "indispensable" ally in the U.S. "war on terror."

But the politicians weren't convinced. "We have the worst of all possible worlds," admitted Rep. Gary Ackerman, D-N.Y., who chairs the panel's subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia. "Our ally is an isolated and deeply resented leader who is less popular with his own people than Osama bin Laden." (AP, Nov. 7)

The more the Pakistani masses intervene and assert themselves, the more the myths created by both Musharraf and his U.S. backers to justify their repressive rule will be demolished. □



Long live the Bolshevik Revolution!

In honor of the 90th anniversary of the great socialist revolution in Russia on Nov. 7, we offer a short excerpt from a document by Workers World Secretariat member Fred Goldstein, submitted in preparation for Workers World Party's Nov. 17-18 conference. The entire document can be viewed at workersworld.net.

"Prior to [the fall of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], world imperialism's political control over the geography and economic spheres of exploitation in the world had been contracting for 74 years, since the Russian Revolution of 1917.

"With the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, one sixth of the globe had been lost to capitalism. In the period after World War II, socialism spread to Korea and Eastern Europe. One fourth of the human race was added with the Chinese Revolution in 1949, followed by Vietnam, Cuba, Cambodia, Laos, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Ethiopia, and Yemen. Imperialism was being challenged from Nicaragua to El Salvador to Palestine. The revolutions in Iraq and later Iran freed those countries from the grip of the oil companies.

"In addition to the expansion of socialism as well as the national liberation struggles, the various bourgeois nationalist regimes seeking to sustain political independence and to reduce their

vulnerability to economic penetration by transnational corporations and banks were able to lean on the socialist camp for support to counteract the overbearing influence of the imperialist camp.

"The world became divided into two class camps: the socialist camp allied with the formerly colonial countries versus the imperialist camp and its puppets, clients and agents around the world. However, with the collapse of the USSR imperialism reversed the historic trend of its contraction and began a rapid expansion not seen since the 'scramble for Africa' at the end of the 19th century. ... The removal of the economic and political force of the socialist camp as one able to retard the advance of the corporate ruling class into the so-called Third World paved the way for an escalation of the neo-liberalist offensive."

This offensive is being felt by workers everywhere, including in the United States. But many throughout the world are fighting back, building alliances and struggling towards a worldwide socialist future. In this current period of political and economic crises for imperialism, the lessons of the Russian Revolution hold as true as ever.

Let's follow the Bolshevik strategy of international solidarity, of using the current crises to speed an end to the capitalist system of oppression and exploitation! □

Torture— a U.S. standard

Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee were joined by Democrats Charles E. Schumer and Dianne Feinstein on Nov. 6 in approving President Bush's nomination of Michael Mukasey to be the new attorney general. It is expected that Mukasey's confirmation is now assured when the vote moves to the full Senate.

Mukasey had refused to say in the hearings whether waterboarding is torture and illegal. According to the Washington Post: "Waterboarding generally involves strapping a prisoner to a board, covering his face or mouth with a cloth, and pouring water over [the prisoner's] face to create the sensation of drowning. ... The practice dates at least to the Spanish Inquisition and has been prosecuted as torture in U.S. military courts since the Spanish-American war. The State Department has condemned its use in other countries." (Oct. 31)

Now liberals have joined conservatives in implying that torture is OK if it's being used by the United States—which it is, according to many published accounts.

The New York Times says that "other Democrats portrayed their opposition as a defining moment for Congress in standing up to the Bush administration in upholding basic human rights and constitutional values in battling terrorism." (Nov. 7) How convenient during an election season, when they have yet to take a real stand against the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. The real "defining moment," however, came with the votes of Schumer and Feinstein, which represent a further capitulation by leading

Democrats on an issue that is clear to the world—that despite all its "human rights" rhetoric, the U.S. government uses torture against Third World people.

In a statement, Democratic Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, the Judiciary panel's chair, remarked that waterboarding is "below the standards and values of the United States." That avoids being truthful about the history of this imperialist country. Torture has long been a practice here, especially against oppressed people.

Let's not forget Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant who was tortured and raped by officers of the New York Police Department.

When the Abu Ghraib torture was exposed, political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal—locked up on death row at the SCI-Greene "correctional facility"—wrote, "I [wasn't] even remotely surprised when a former guard from SCI-Greene just happened to be at the forefront of the vile and violent assaults at Abu Ghraib. He just took what he learned here, over there." (Workers World, Sept. 23, 2004) □

Black freedom, Cuba and common ground

On Oct. 21, Leslie Feinberg, a managing editor of Workers World newspaper, was keynote speaker at the Annual Convocation of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco, where she was given the Howard Thurman Award "for her activism and advocacy in defense of oppressed nationalities, women, disabled, the working class movement and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community." Proclamations congratulating Feinberg were issued by the California State Legislature and the City and County of San Francisco. The mayor's office named Oct. 21 "Leslie Feinberg Day." Her talk, on finding common ground where communists and religious activists can be in solidarity in the struggle for social transformation and liberation, can be found in full at www.workers.org. Below is the second of a two-part abridged version.

The great Abolitionist Frederick Douglass expressed with succinct power: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters."

Struggles for justice are a collective act of self-defense.

The Emancipation Proclamation, signed on Jan. 1, 1863, formally ended slavery in this country. The proclamation also specifically spelled out the right of African Americans to self-defense against violence. But the 1877 Compromise left the largely unarmed former slaves defenseless.

The Northern industrialists betrayed the revolutionary potential of Black Reconstruction that followed the Civil War. The U.S. government capitulated to the Southern planters and ex-slaveowners by withdrawing its federal troops.

The Southern landowners armed the Klan as a weapon of terror and murder to block redistribution of the land to those who had tilled it for centuries.

Ida B. Wells, a courageous anti-lynch crusader, formed armed neighborhood patrols.

Overall, however, the Klan got away with murder—until 1957. That year, freedom fighter Rob Williams organized the first African American armed defense squads in Monroe, N.C. They protected the home of a Black doctor, then head of the NAACP, against racists who tried to bomb it.

Deacons for Defense and Justice formed around 1964 in Jonesboro, La. The armed Black self-defense squads organized after cordons of cops escorted a Klan march through an African-American neighborhood.

When the Black community forged armed self-defense squads, the racist reign of terror abated. By 1965, there were 62 chapters of Deacons for Defense spread throughout the South and a chapter coalesced in Chicago.

Once the defense guards disbanded, Klan terror revived.

Five heroic Cuban men are in U.S. jails today as political prisoners serving long sentences because they infiltrated CIA-commando contra armies operating on U.S. soil that are plotting and carrying out right-wing terrorist attacks against Cuba.

These political prisoners—the Cuban Five—deserve our support.

The Cuban Revolution could not have withstood U.S. attack without organizing and arming the population for collective defense of the island nation.

As a result of defending this liberated turf, this common ground, the Cuban Revolution has been able to accomplish what the richest capitalist countries in the world will not do and cannot do:

The revolution guarantees free health care for all, free education for all, jobs for all and affordable housing.

PART 2

Let us raise our voices as one to demand an end to the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

Brazilian liberation theologian Frei Betto interviewed Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro at length about Marxism and liberation theology.

Fidel, who was raised Catholic, said about references to Jesus of Nazareth multiplying the fish and loaves to feed the people:

"That is precisely what we want to do with the revolution and socialism: multiply the fish and the loaves to feed the people; multiply the schools, teachers, hospitals and doctors; multiply the factories, the fields under cultivation and the jobs; multiply industrial and agricultural productivity; and multiply the research centers and the number of scientific research projects for the same purpose."

Frei Betto asked the Cuban leader about two concepts that he said cause some Christians difficulty: the concept of class hatred and the concept of class struggle.

Fidel answered, "Marxism-Leninism doesn't cause or preach class hatred; it simply says that classes and class struggle exist and that struggles give rise to hatred. It isn't a call to hatred; rather, it is an explanation of the hatred that exists when people become aware that they are being exploited. ... What really causes hatred," he said, is "human exploitation, oppression, marginalization and social injustice."

This is the ground on which solidarity can be built. True solidarity has always been based not on demanding that you support my struggle, but my willingness to defend yours.

Today, we are being asked to line up behind Halliburton and Big Oil, Wall Street and its banks, to go kill or be killed in a war for empire in the Middle East. This so-called "war on terror" carries the banner of Christian fundamentalism in a war against Muslims who are resisting enslavement, who are defending their land, their labor, their lives.

As a Jewish revolutionary, I say here that I am shoulder-to-shoulder with Muslims who are fighting for their sovereignty and self-determination all over the world.

And our undocumented immigrant sisters and brothers are being rounded up in Gestapo-like raids, families torn asunder, forced deportations.

Surely we can raise our voices as one to say, as we said in the 1960s: "There are no borders in the workers' struggle."

Surely we can unite against racism and

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sexism, against homophobia and transphobia, for jobs, education, health care and housing.

As communists, we will be side by side with you in struggles for justice—from Bayview Hunters Point to freedom for the SF 8, from Katrina to Jena.

We will not render unto Caesar what has never been his—

Either the right to enforce a realm of wage slavery by brutal rule, or the right to claim ownership of the wealth and apparatus of production that have been built through the millennia by the muscle and sweat and blood of the laboring classes.

Today the material conditions, knowledge and techniques are all ripe enough to produce an abundance of food for everyone on the planet.

Why so much hunger? Because we have not yet collectively torn up the deed that says the land and everything produced on it is privately owned and can only be distributed for lucrative profit.

We are the class that can liberate the apparatus of production and multiply the loaves and fishes until there is no hunger. Until the last shall be first.

Until those who have been naught shall be all.

There is a great centeredness and joy and freedom to be found in doing what is historically necessary, in taking up the tasks that history hands us.

Our role in the liberation struggle develops our consciousness, our conviction and integrity, and the new world itself creates a new human being, a new human nature.

We as communists love life—our own, our loved ones and our class.

We would prefer that such a world could be won through moral suasion.

But history proves this is a dangerous illusion to embrace.

Let us continue to find our common ground on the road we pave to liberation.

□

French group tries to kidnap 100 children

By G. Dunkel

A wave of anger has spread through Chad and all of Africa since a group called Zoe's Ark, operating under the false name of "Children's Rescue," attempted to take 103 African children to France from Abeche, a small city in eastern Chad near its border with the Sudanese province of Darfur.

It appears likely from hints in the French press that the French military, which has several bases in Chad, was aware of what Zoe's Ark was planning. Given that the current French government wants to demand DNA verification before it gives out visas for family unifications, it is likely that Zoe's Ark had been given assurances on some level that it could get a large group of African children into France without visas, passports or even birth certificates.

The Chadian police arrested six staff members of Zoe's Ark, three French journalists and seven members of the airplane crew on the tarmac Oct. 25 and charged them with attempted kidnapping and conspiracy.

They and the Belgian pilot, who had flown a light plane from village to village picking up the children, were taken to the jail in Abeche, where they were all put in the only holding cell there.

What tipped the police off was that the children, who were presented at the airport by the group with bloody bandages and a few intravenous lines, didn't look otherwise sick or injured.

Footage shot by one of the journalists just before the children were taken to the airport was shown on French television Nov. 4. In it, staff members can be seen

putting bandages on healthy kids, pouring blood on the bandages and being told by their Chadian staff that there would be "big problems if they were discovered." They are also seen phoning a French family, who had paid them a big fee, to advise them that the children were coming.

The staff of Zoe's Ark discussed how to present these children as orphans from Darfur. UNICEF, however, has determined that 91 of these children had at least one parent alive and in Chad.

Hundreds of women demonstrated in Abeche Oct. 30 accusing France, the former colonial power, of a role in the attempted kidnapping. One woman told French television, which covered the march, "No to the slave trade! No trafficking in children!" She added, "We want those responsible to be tried in Abeche."

Chad's president, Idriss Deby, visited Abeche on the day of the demonstration and told French television that he suspected the children were being taken to be turned over to a "pedophile ring" or be "used for body parts."

Speaking to This Day, an online Sudanese journal, the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Child Affairs, Dr. Saeed A. Saeed, said that Zoe's Ark is not new in this business.

Saeed said the Sudanese government believes the organization may be into child trafficking, either to trade the children into slavery, abuse them sexually for commercial purposes, trade their body organs for medical experiment, or for some other commercial reasons.

According to him, investigations have revealed that the organization had already successfully carried out four similar

operations.

Congo, which like Chad is among the five poorest countries in the world, has also suspended cooperation with all foreign groups taking children out of the country.

The French staff of Zoe's Ark, the journalists and the Spanish airline crew were taken to N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, on Nov. 2 and an investigating judge opened his inquiry. Two days later French President Nicolas Sarkozy flew to N'Djamena, talked with President Deby and openly pushed for moving the trial of the Zoe's Ark staff to France. Sarkozy secured the release of the three French journalists and four of the Spanish aircrew. His plane took off two hours after he landed.

Before it became exposed, this whole operation by Zoe's Ark was meant to whip up humanitarian feelings in France to justify its military intervention in Darfur. France is scheduled in the next few months to lead the joint U.N./African Union "peacekeeping" force that will give European imperialism troops on the ground in the Sudan.

But the French troops and the African police they will direct need bases in eastern Chad, and having French "humanitarians" on trial for kidnapping would create major problems for France and other imperialist powers, such as the U.S. and Britain.

Since Deby's main political support comes from eastern Chad, his home region, he can't be seen as giving in to the French, even though they supply his government with essential military and economic aid. □

NATO expansion and Brzezinski's nightmare

By Heather Cottin

Once the USSR was gone and the Warsaw Pact had been dissolved, the ruling classes of the NATO countries, as well as in Japan, started taking steps to re-establish colonial domination over the peoples and resources of the world.

But obstacles arose. The Iraqi and Afghan peoples' resistance exposed the weaknesses of the Pentagon. In addition, some of the more powerful of the nonimperialist states have taken joint diplomatic steps to counter the NATO offensive.

Talk of NATO expansion into Africa and Pentagon plans to set up an African command—dubbed AFRICOM—to coordinate its military maneuvers in the area began to arouse opposition. Even Morocco, a U.S. client state, joined Algeria and Libya in saying that AFRICOM was set up "only to secure a constant flow of oil to the United States."

On July 27, Radio Free Europe, a U.S. propaganda agency set up during the Cold War, said what Washington is thinking: "The Arctic and Antarctica are the last vast untapped reservoirs of mineral resources on the planet. Underneath the Arctic Ocean, there are gigantic reserves of tin, manganese, nickel, gold, platinum and diamonds. But the Arctic's most lucrative treasure is the enormous deposits of oil and gas, which could amount to 25 percent of the world's resources."

Norway, Denmark (through its colony Greenland), Canada and the U.S. are NATO members with coastlines on the Arctic Ocean. However, the longest part of the Arctic coast belongs to Russia. Moscow estimates that the region con-

tains at least 10 billion tons of oil and natural gas reserves.

When NATO threatened to claim the Arctic as its new region of control, the Russian government sent submarines in an unprecedented 13,800-foot dive beneath the North Pole. During the dive, NATO spy planes buzzed the Russian icebreaker *Rosita*. (Voice of Russia, July 27) The expedition planted the Russian flag on the ocean floor.

The imperialist powers are in a frenzy to control the resources of the world, and have fashioned the new NATO to do this. Only 95,000 troops are left in the European Command (EUCOM) to do the "primary job to ensure European stability," meaning maintaining rightist and pro-capitalist governments in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. According to U.S. Vice Adm. Richard Gallagher, EUCOM's new deputy commander and former head of its operations, "stability" in Eastern Europe "is what's good for us, good for business, good for the United States' central interests." (Stars and Stripes, Oct. 16)

NATO's strategic role

The imperialist powers are using NATO in an attempt to fulfill the strategic imperialist designs that former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski—described in his book "The Grand Chessboard" in 1997: "For America after the Cold War, the chief prize is Eurasia." Brzezinski feared an alliance between China, Russia and Iran, and warned that the U.S. had only 20 years to complete the conquest of the region.

Ten have passed and the U.S. and NATO are bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan. Recently the Russian and Chinese militaries participated in joint military exercises, conducting maneuvers in the Ural Mountains. An Iranian newspaper observed, "At the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit both countries warned the U.S. to stay away from the energy-rich and strategic region of Central Asia." (Tehran Times, Oct. 21)

The two governments have expanded "all spheres of the Russian-Chinese relations: summit and high-ranking contacts, trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation, and inter-regional contacts," said Konstantin Vnukov, director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's First Asian Department, and Russia has "forged alliances with China, Iran, Syria, and other neighboring states." (Xinhua News Agency, Oct. 20)

When Russia and China, as well as Serbia and South Africa, together opposed the U.S./NATO plot to make Serbia's Kosovo province an independent country in July, the U.N. Security Council had to drop the resolution. (Itar-Tass, July 20)

Short of allies, short of troops

With populations rising in opposition to NATO expansion, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the threat of war on Iran, the U.S. has few allies. Nevertheless, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates visited Afghanistan in July and said the U.S. will "fight somewhere in the world for at least 20 to 30 more years." Besides the major campaigns the U.S. is waging in Afghanistan and Iraq, the military is

"very much involved" in some 20 other countries. "There's a lot going on right now that's not visible," Marine Gen. Peter Pace said. (AP, July 18)

What is visible has been nothing but murder and mayhem in Afghanistan and Iraq. These wars and NATO expansion have cost the countries connected to NATO hundreds of billions of dollars, the stripping of their social programs and thousands of young lives.

The volunteer militaries in the NATO countries are having an ever more difficult time attracting recruits when soldiers are being blown up in Iraq and Afghanistan. Popular opposition to the NATO intervention in Afghanistan is growing in Canada and the European countries, too.

"[S]hort of the troops needed for victory," wrote the International Herald Tribune on Oct. 21, "NATO again is pleading with member states to step up their commitments. ... Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, secretary general of NATO, urged the alliance's members to stay the course [in] Afghanistan. ... [D]efense ministers are being asked to send troops to Kosovo, Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Lebanon and Chad."

The governments of Britain, Canada and the Netherlands are urging those in France and Germany to take part in the fighting in the southern part of Afghanistan, but these NATO governments are reluctant, reflecting mass opposition and their own pessimism. Paddy Ashdown, the former U.N. high representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, told the British Telegraph on Oct. 25 that in Afghanistan, "We have lost, I think, and success is now unlikely." □

PART 2

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

MYANMAR:

La geopolítica de Washington y el Estrecho de Malaca

Por Sara Flounders

Para intentar entender la preocupación de George W. Bush por el pueblo de Myanmar se necesita mirar más allá de sus declaraciones ante la Asamblea Nacional de la ONU, en la que dice entre otras cosas, que “los americanos están indignados por la situación en Birmania,” y que el intento de imponer nuevas sanciones económicas es solo porque él “desea un cambio pacífico en Birmania.”

¿Cómo es posible para la administración de Bush estar del mismo lado que la lucha popular o progresista, y a la vez amenazar al planeta con una Tercera Guerra Mundial y conducir guerras criminales de ocupación que han costado más de un millón de vidas iraquíes y afganas?

Lo que apenas ha recibido atención en la prensa capitalista de los Estados Unidos es la posición geopolítica de Myanmar y sus ricos recursos. Una base estadounidense en Myanmar se considerada vital para el control de las vías marítimas estratégicamente importantes en el Pacífico.

Debemos recordar que el gobierno de los Estados Unidos activamente apoya, arma y defiende a las dictaduras de países cercanos como Tailandia y Pakistán. El récord del imperialismo estadounidense de derrocar gobiernos populares y democráticos en Irán, el Congo, Chile, Guyana y muchos otros muestran que Washington nunca ha promovido un cambio democrático excepto cuando es una cubierta para una intervención directa.

Estrecho de Malaca—punto de estrangulamiento de Asia

El ochenta por ciento del petróleo enviado a la economía creciente de China pasa por el Estrecho de Malaca, la ruta marítima más corta para el comercio de petróleo que viaja desde África Occidental y el Golfo Pérsico hacia los océanos al sur de China. El petróleo es también esencial para las economías e industrias del Japón, Malasia, Corea del Sur y otros países orientales.

La punta más al sur de Myanmar está estratégicamente situada en la entrada occidental del Estrecho de Malaca. Esta vía marítima en forma de embudo, la cual se reduce a 1,5 millas de ancho entre Indonesia y Malasia, une a los océanos Índico y Pacífico. Más de la mitad de los tanques petroleros en el mundo toman esa ruta.

Según F. William Engdahl, autor del libro “Un siglo de guerra: Las políticas Petroleras Anglo-americanas y el Nuevo Orden Mundial” y la página electrónica www.engdahl.oilgeopolitics.net, más de 12 millones de barriles de petróleo pasan por esta estrecha vía diariamente en súper tanques petroleros.

Engdahl explica que el Pentágono ha estado tratando de militarizar esta región desde el 11 de septiembre del 2001. El Pentágono afirma que esta movida es esencial para la defensa contra ataques terroristas y piratas. Esto también daría al Pentágono un control unilateral de la principal ruta de suministro de energía para China.

En noviembre del 2003, la Agencia de Noticias de Xinhua, citó al Presidente Hu Jintao advirtiendo que China necesita desarrollar una estrategia porque algunos países grandes están intentando “tomar el control del canal de transportación de Malaca.”

El periódico Wall Street Journal del 7 de octubre de 2005, explicó el creciente temor de China. “Estados Unidos es la única potencia con suficiente fuerza naval para imponer un bloqueo de la vía de 900 kilómetros que limita con Malasia, Singapur e Indonesia.”

Según el diario Enegy Bulletin del 3 de octubre, el gobierno chino está tan preocupado sobre la vulnerabilidad de China si Estados Unidos toma el control o bloquea el estrecho, que ahora está construyendo un oleoducto estratégico de China-Myanmar de gas natural y petróleo de 2,300 kilómetros, que cruza Myanmar desde la profundidad de las aguas de Myanmar en el puerto de Sittwe

en la Bahía de Bengala hasta Kunming en la provincia china de Yunnan, donde se construirá una refinería de petróleo. Esto permitirá a China evitar completamente el Estrecho de Malaca.

Es importante notar que las sanciones contra Myanmar que Estados Unidos está tratando de imponer por medio del Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU, bloquearían una “nueva” construcción de un oleoducto. Sin embargo, las grandes inversiones de las corporaciones petroleras Chevron y Total S. A. estarían libres de todas las sanciones o restricciones de la ONU y la Unión Europea porque sus contratos con Myanmar se consideran tratos “antiguos”.

El almirante Muller habla sobre cercar a China

El 18 de octubre, el nuevo presidente de la Junta de Jefes de Estado Mayor (Joint Chiefs of Staff), el Almirante Michael Mullen, describió los planes del Pentágono de mirar más allá de la deteriorante posición de las fuerzas militares estadounidenses en Irak y Afganistán para “reenfocar la atención del ejército más allá de las guerras actuales y prepararse para otros desafíos, especialmente a lo largo del borde del Pacífico y en África.”

Mullen, hablando durante una conferencia de prensa con el Secretario de Defensa Robert Gates en el Pentágono, describió también la necesidad de estar preparado para una guerra de alta intensidad contra “adversarios más grandes.” Mullen dijo, “yo reconozco que el presupuesto militar es ahora más alto que nunca” pero “yo lo vería en el futuro como uno básico.”

La nueva estrategia del Pentágono de “posicionamiento adelantado” demanda el establecimiento de puestos donde las fuerzas estadounidenses puedan guardar sus equipos y desde los cuales puedan entrar y salir a su voluntad. Por temor a la ira de sus propias poblaciones y del clima anti-estadounidense, todos los países de la región inicialmente le negaron al Pentágono el derecho de sentar bases.

Escondiéndose detrás de ‘la ayuda humanitaria’

La flota del Pacífico de los Estados Unidos regresó al sur de Asia al proveer ayuda de emergencia durante los acontecimientos producidos por el tsunami en diciembre del 2004 en Indonesia.

Usando como cobertura la ayuda, la marina estadounidense también regresó a la gigantesca base de U-Tapao en el Golfo de Siam en Tailandia. Esta había sido una de las importantes bases de Estados Unidos durante la Guerra de Vietnam, desde la cual el Pentágono lanzó el 80 por ciento de sus ataques aéreos en contra de Vietnam del Norte.

Después que la emergencia del tsunami pasó, el gobierno electo en Tailandia quiso que la marina de Estados Unidos se reti-

rara. En septiembre del 2006, un golpe militar, apoyado por Estados Unidos, derrocó al gobierno, abolió el parlamento, revocó la constitución y estableció una dictadura militar. Esto se consideró un retroceso gigantesco para la democracia en la región.

A diferencia de la respuesta de la prensa capitalista a las actuales medidas militares y censura en Myanmar, apenas hubo entonces mención sobre el golpe militar o la suspensión total de noticias en Tailandia. Soldados armados rodeaban las salas de redacción en las estaciones de televisión y más de 400 estaciones de radio en el norte y noreste de Tailandia fueron cerradas. La dictadura incluso obstruyó la difusión de la BBC, la CNN y otras cadenas noticieras del occidente.

En aquel entonces no hubo queja alguna de parte de la administración de Bush ni llamados para sanciones internacionales. El Departamento de Estado de EEUU simplemente expresó la esperanza de que se organizaran elecciones de nuevo en un futuro cercano.

Uno de los primeros actos de la dictadura fue permitir a la marina de Estados Unidos el uso de la base U-Tapao.

Al mismo tiempo, el grupo del portaaviones Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group NINE (CSG-9) se instaló en Banda Aceh, la Base Aérea Sultan Iskandar Muda de Indonesia a la entrada del Estrecho de Malaca, frente a Myanmar. Los barcos de la marina llegaron para proveer ayuda por el tsunami. El ejército de los Estados Unidos dijo que no podía predecir cuando podrían sacar a sus “recursos” de la región.

La flota U.S. Navy Fleet USS Gary hizo la primera visita estadounidense al empobrecido y subdesarrollado país de Camboya en más de 30 años, llegando a la Base Naal Ream ceca de Sihanoukville. La marina EEUU está expandiendo la base para que Ream pueda recibir más barcos de guerra y más personal de la marina. Se está construyendo en la isla camboyana de Koh Tang en el Golfo de Tailandia una base para la inteligencia estadounidense.

Aunque la dictadura militar en Myanmar ha cumplido con muchas demandas de los imperialistas para obtener más acceso a sus recursos naturales anteriormente nacionalizados, es un régimen represivo e inestable que entiende que hay una historia de 150 años de oposición al colonialismo y especialmente al imperialismo británico. Temiendo por su propia supervivencia, el régimen no ha querido permitir la bases estadounidenses. Esto ha frustrado los planes del Pentágono para la región.

Aunque las corporaciones Chevron, y la francesa Total S.A. han sacado enormes ganancias de las concesiones de gas en Yadana en Myanmar, están interesadas en derrocar al régimen si así pudiesen asegurar un acceso todavía más amplio y en términos más lucrativos. □

