

# W50 years WORKERS WORLD

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## As layoffs soar

# Fed gives banks \$200 billion

By Gary Wilson

Just days after the worst jobs report in almost two decades, a giant financial boost was provided by the capitalist government—not to the laid-off workers, but to the biggest banks.

The news on March 11 that the Federal Reserve Bank had made the unprecedented decision to practically give away \$200 billion in loans to the biggest banks in the world at first stunned Wall Street. The Dow Jones average of industrial stocks

stopped falling, then started falling again. But by the end of the day, it had risen 400 points over the previous day's close.

Wall Street cheered. The giant giveaway goes into the pockets not of those most needy but of the rich banks and finance capitalists.

The Federal Reserve Bank is turning over U.S. Treasury funds in exchange for failing subprime housing loans. The deal relieves the lenders—mostly banks—of the immediate crisis of the bankrupt loans, but it does nothing to protect the homeowners from foreclosure or eviction. And eventually the working class, as taxpayers, foots the bill for all this.

While the Constitution says that only Congress can tax and spend, where were the howls of protest over this unauthorized giveaway of tax monies?

Of course, last December when Congress was voting on measures to "alleviate" the economic crisis, including a small "tax rebate," the provision that would have extended unemployment benefits and food stamps was cut out, while the provision of emergency funds to the big mortgage companies was expanded.

The March 11 Wall Street Journal noted that "The Fed's effort won't eliminate the root cause of the economy's problems." That's right. It just fattens the pocketbooks of the bankers and financiers.

While the stock market ended the day with its biggest rise in a couple of years, it did not even roll back the 500-point drop of the previous three days. And it is still down about 2,000 points from its October 2007 high.

### 63,000 jobs lost in February

The sharp drop in jobs last month—63,000 were lost—was the steepest one—

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Community, labor unite

WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH  
American Axle strikers with MECAWI solidarity team, including WW reporter Bryan Pfeifer (kneeling).

# Support strikers at American Axle

By Bryan G. Pfeifer  
Detroit

As of March 11, the workers at American Axle have been on strike for three weeks.

Here in "Motor City," UAW Local 235 and Local 262 are holding strong at nine plant gates around the clock. The workers are in a determined, fighting mood and are drawing the line against the company's intentions to cut half their pay, replace their pensions with a 401-k, increase healthcare benefit costs, and demand other outrageous concessions.

About 3,600 workers at five American Axle plants in Michigan and New York went on strike Feb. 26 over these issues after the UAW filed an unfair labor practice over the company's refusal to open its books for bargaining purposes. American Axle is a parts maker spun off by General Motors in 1994.

Workers at the five plants are governed by a master agreement. After not talking

for the first nine days of the strike, the UAW International and American Axle sat down at noon on March 6 and have been at the table since with no word on bargaining information from either side.

Because of parts shortages triggered by the strike, General Motors admits to shutting or partly shutting almost 30 of its plants with more than 37,000 workers in the United States and Canada. About 80 percent of American Axle's products are sold to GM. GM said that as of March 10, 22 of its plants, including facilities in Michigan, Missouri, Wisconsin, Ohio, New York and Indiana, had shut down or shifted to shortened work hours. The company has stopped or slowed work at another eight assembly plants that build its Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra pickup trucks as well as sport utility vehicles like the Hummer H2.

Although American Axle made \$37 million in profits last year on sales of \$3.2

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## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY ROCKS, IN U.S. & ABROAD

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## Women's Day march targets

# Texas prison for immigrants

By Gloria Rubac  
Taylor, Texas

Activists from several Texas cities, joined by reporters and local residents, gathered here March 8 to march against the incarceration of immigrant families in the T. Don Hutto immigration detention prison. The occasion was International Women's Day.

The prison, run by Corrections Corp. of America (CCA), the country's largest for-profit jailer, is 30 miles north of the Texas capital. It imprisons families and children under harsh conditions that have caused protests to get it shut down.

Adrienne Evans with the Free the Children Coalition in Terlingua, Texas, had called for people "to join together and make a stand against this injustice inflicted on women and children by our government. What better way to spend International Women's Day?"

Women, children and their male allies held a peace walk through downtown Taylor and then rallied across from the detention center until sunset. They ended with a candlelight vigil and a prayer ceremony.

The Department of Homeland Security opened the 510-bed facility in May 2006 as the first detention center for families. Hutto holds men, women, some of whom are pregnant, children and infants while their applications for political asylum are being considered. None is charged with a criminal offense, yet they are all held in a former prison under prison-like conditions.

Most of the detainees are from Central and South America. There are also Africans, Asians, Europeans and families from the Middle East.

At a congressional hearing two days before International Women's Day, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff had defended the administration's treatment of immigrants during workplace raids and at detention facilities. He faced tough questioning by U.S. Reps. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-Texas) and Linda Sanchez (D-Calif.) about the treatment of children at immigrant facilities in Hutto and a smaller family facility in Berks County, Pa.

On Feb. 9, community activists in Houston had heard a moving personal account of life at Hutto by a woman who survived it. Denia and her children, who came from Honduras, spent months at Hutto and are still dealing with the traumatizing incarceration. Speaking through a translator, she and her mother, María, shared how the children still have nightmares about the prison.

Denia said that her main source of stress while at Hutto was that she and her children were constantly hungry. They didn't get proper nutrition, even though Denia was pregnant at the time. She received no prenatal care and worried that her unborn child was ill. María had heard about a woman having a miscarriage due to lack of health care, so she visited often and left enough money for Denia to buy food and phone cards. But Denia received only one bag of chips and one phone card.

Denia's children were not allowed to have toys in their cell. They received only one hour of schooling a day and the rest of the time had to sit quietly. There was never normal playtime for the children.

The meeting was co-hosted by Multicultural Education through Counseling and the Arts (MECA) and Grassroots Leadership. A film, "Hutto: America's Family Prison," was screened about the ongoing campaign to shut down the facility.



Former detainee Denia says her children still have nightmares about Hutto.

WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Denia's experiences are typical of abuses other detainees suffered in Hutto. Fortunately, the protests over conditions at Hutto attracted many in the immigrant rights movement in Austin, Texas, including attorneys and law students. The ACLU won a lawsuit against Chertoff last August.

Immigration lawyer Frances Valdez said the settlement resulted in dramatic improvements at the facility. Pregnant women detained at Hutto are now receiving prenatal care and better food. Children are allowed more time outside and families can wear normal clothes instead of prison uniforms which everyone, including infants, was forced to wear. Though the lawyers had hoped to shut down the facility completely, Valdez said the settlement to improve the situation was as far as they could legally take the case.

Valdez stressed the need for continued activism. "I really think the best way to change it is your political activism. With enough political pressure, you can shut it down."

During the March 4 primaries in Texas, dozens of Democratic Party precinct caucuses in five counties passed resolutions to shut down Hutto. These resolutions will proceed to senatorial district conventions on March 29 and then to the state convention on June 5.

The detention of immigrants is the fastest-growing form of incarceration in this country. It has become a profitable business since 9/11. At the end of 2006 there were 14,000 people locked up for violating immigration law. This was up by 79 percent from 2005, the year that Chertoff announced the U.S. would no longer allow undocumented immigrants to remain free in the country while awaiting a court appearance.

While private prisons began in earnest in the 1980s, by 2000 they weren't faring well as escapes, prisoner rebellions and mismanagement sent their stock values plummeting. But after 9/11, when the government began detaining more immigrants, they made their prison beds available and business was again profitable.

In 2005, the year CCA was awarded the contract for Hutto, the company paid close to \$3.4 million to five different lobbying firms. CCA now charges the federal government \$34 million a year to run the Hutto facility.

Williamson County, where Hutto is located, is the intermediary in the agreement between the federal government and CCA. The county receives a dollar a day for

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## Southern workers exercise solidarity

# Charleston 5 support fired UAW strikers

By Dante Strobino  
Cleveland, N.C.

A March 4 community event here for the Freightliner 5—members of United Auto Workers Local 3520 who were fired after leading a strike—highlighted support the five are getting from other militant unionists in the South.

After the workers refused to accept the company's concessionary contract and initiated a strike on April 3, 2007, Freightliner bosses fired five members of Local 3520's bargaining committee—Robert Whiteside, Allen Bradley, Franklin Torrence, Glenna Swinford and David Crisco—along with six other workers.

The contract had 22 articles with no tentative agreement and 86 unsettled sub-issues relating to health and safety. Among the concessions was a two-tier wage structure, which pays newer workers far less than their seniors.

The other six got their jobs back after signing "model employee" agreements; one was subsequently terminated.

Kenneth Riley, a dockworker and president of International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422, gave encouragement to the 50-plus Freightliner workers at the meeting. Local 1422 is home of the Charleston 5—workers who were put under house arrest in 2000 for leading a picket in Charleston, S.C.

### Community support for labor

At the meeting, many spoke about organizing in the South and the need for community-labor support groups. In 2007, North Carolina and South Carolina ranked 50th and 48th, respectively, in union density in the U.S.

Riley spoke about the Charleston 5's successful campaign after they faced conspiracy charges for leading a picket line at which more than 600 cops attacked 150 workers. Without being convicted of any crime, the Charleston 5 were then put under house arrest for almost two years.

"It was not until we got the community involved that things changed," Riley said.

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each detainee at Hutto, which can add up to as much as \$180,000 per year.

One of the founders of CCA was Terrell Don Hutto, once the director of the Arkansas state prison system. He became the defendant in *Hutto v. Finney*, a famous case that went before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1978 and was one of the first successful lawsuits by prisoners against a prison system. The court ruled that Arkansas prisons, where inmates were held in solitary confinement for indefinite periods of time, used cruel and unusual punishment.

The land on which Hutto was built was originally cooperatively owned by Mexican workers. Since they had been denied a place in town to park their trucks during cotton season, the workers pooled their wages to purchase the land. It later became a place to congregate and have fiestas and eventually became known as Hidalgo Park.

During the 1980s the workers were unable to pay the property taxes, so they donated the land to the Catholic parish church with the understanding it would be parish property. However, the church later sold the land. Ironically, the CCA prison now sits on land once owned by immigrants. □



Ken Riley, President of ILA Local 1422, gives encouragement at Freightliner 5 meeting.

WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

They rallied churches, community groups and students. The case became an international campaign where trade unionists threatened to go on strike if the five were convicted. In the end, they were freed and given a fine of \$100 each.

Local 1422 is "one of the largest and most powerful union locals in the state with the nation's lowest rate of unionization," stated Riley. "State troopers attacked the longshore workers only

days after an historic march on Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, at which 47,000 people demanded that the Confederate battle flag be taken down from the South Carolina State Capitol.

"Local 1422 is a largely African-American local, a very important segment of the Charleston community. It is significant that we are under attack because we are living proof that unionization is the best anti-poverty program ever created."

## As layoffs soar

# Fed gives \$200 billion to banks

*Continued from page 1*

month decline in more than five years. Unemployment is now at a level last seen in 1990.

Not included in that 63,000 figure are the 450,000 people the U.S. Labor Department says have left the labor force in February—that is, have given up looking for work. If they had been included, the jobless rate would be 5.1 percent instead of 4.8 percent.

But it doesn't bottom out there. Also left out are the millions in jail or prison as well as the working class youth who are in the military forces because they couldn't find better jobs. None of these are counted, though they are clearly jobless.

Rebecca Blank of the Economic Policy Institute told Congress's Joint Economic Committee on March 7 that the current unemployment rate among young men is significantly higher than the official figures show.

"By expanding the prison population, we have removed more and more young men from our labor market count," she testified. Blank said that the adjusted figures show that the jobless level now is almost the same as during the major recession of 1990, when it was officially 5.5 percent. That recession brought down the first George Bush presidency. It was the stupid economy.

The second George Bush said on March 8 in response to the Labor Department's jobless report the day before, "Losing a job is painful." He appeared to be thinking mainly of himself.

The tabloid newspapers and the television newscasts, from CNN to Fox, didn't shout RECESSION. But the staid voice of the corporate executives, the New York

Times, reported that Wall Street economists all now agree that the country is in a recession.

"Unemployment typically starts to rise only after a recession has started," the March 8 Times reported.

### Falling rate of profit

Job cuts are the capitalist response to a falling rate of profit. The failure to make a profit is the crisis.

In any capitalist crisis, the bosses always blame the workers. Sometimes they say the problem is that the workers aren't buying enough, not borrowing enough or not charging enough on their credit cards. Other times, it's that workers' wages and benefits are too high.

None of this is the reason for the crisis, but that doesn't stop the bosses from blaming the workers. It is the falling rate of profit that has put the capitalist economy into a crisis.

When the profit rate falls, the bosses become ruthless. In an attempt to increase the rate of profit, jobs are cut, wages and benefits are decreased. The rate of exploitation of the workers is increased.

Profits are the driving force of capitalism. The profits come from the labor of the workers. Profits are the unpaid wages.

Capitalists are always competing with each other for profits. Part of that competition is the introduction of new technology that increases the rate of exploitation of the workers.

In "Capital," Karl Marx showed that capitalists introduce new technology not to reduce costs, though that can happen. They do it in order to raise the rate of profit.

The first capitalist to introduce a new

Workers at Freightliner are finding ways to build a similar campaign. The Freightliner 5 recently returned from a tour of the Midwest and West Coast to gain support for their efforts.

Many Freightliner workers also participated with 7,000 others in the "Historic Thousands on Jones Street" (HKonJ) march in Raleigh, N.C. on Feb. 11, which marched on the North Carolina Legislature for the second year in a row. The HKonJ People's Assembly has a progressive 14-point platform that includes livable wages, collective bargaining for public workers, ending the Iraq war, civil rights enforcement, better education and addressing chapters of racist history in North Carolina. Local People's Assemblies are being organized throughout the year across the state.

### Solidarity is key

"In a 'right-to-work' state, with only 3 percent of employees unionized, it is extremely important for the community to rally behind the workers to improve their lot in life. ... When these workers are able to attain these goals, this betters the community as a whole," said Glenna Swinford, one of the Freightliner 5.

"Solidarity is more than just a word, it is actions. Solidarity is when people come together with one common goal, to undo the wrongs and build a movement for justice for all."

To learn more about how to support the Freightliner 5, visit [justice4five.com](http://justice4five.com).

technology raises the productivity of labor. The commodities made using the new technology cost less to produce per unit. So the capitalist increases his own profit by either selling the cheaper commodities at the old price or selling them at a lower price while increasing market share.

But once the competing capitalists also start using the new technology or introduce newer, even more productive technology, then the higher rate of profit disappears. And, since by this time the capitalists in general are spending much more on technology and less on workers, the rate of profit actually falls—because profits come from the exploitation of human labor.

When the rate of profit falls, the capitalists start cutting wages and benefits and eliminate jobs. Unemployment rises. Capitalists also respond to the falling profits by increasing prices, which creates inflation.

For the bosses, laying off workers is a way to try to increase the rate of profit. Right now there are absolutely no restrictions on job cuts and layoffs. Bosses can give any reason or no reason. It doesn't matter how many years a worker has been on the job or the amount of profits he or she made for the boss during that time.

Clearly, this is not justice. Even in an economic crisis, workers should have a say in any decision regarding their own jobs. Workers have a right to protect the investment of their labor in the company.

Every company is built on the labor of the workers. That makes the workers the primary investors in the company.

As the recession deepens, it becomes ever more important that workers fight for and win this essential right to protect their jobs. □

# Canadian TRW strike wins better pay, benefits

By Martha Grevatt

After six days on the picket line, 175 members of Local 444, Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), ended their strike against auto-parts maker TRW on March 4. Their plant in Windsor, Ontario, makes suspension frames for the Chrysler mini-van, also built in Windsor.

That they could shut down a Chrysler assembly plant in a matter of hours gave them tremendous leverage.

At issue had been TRW's refusal to increase workers' pay above the \$11.25 (Canadian) an hour wage in effect before the shop was unionized. Now the workers will get \$15 an hour, which will rise to \$17 an hour by 2011. Their pay raise is retroactive back to Sept. 30, 2007.

Health care and insurance benefits

have also been improved.

The \$15 an hour is still well below what CAW members make at Ford, General Motors and Chrysler. Workers were justifiably outraged that TRW, a huge multinational corporation with extensive contracts with automobile and aerospace firms, would insist on keeping wages so low. Some workers said that, before the strike, they had to get help from food banks.

A number of Canadian parts plants—including all those of Magna International, a major Chrysler supplier that at one time considered buying the automaker—recently came under the umbrella of the CAW. The arrangement was complex and controversial, involving not only the parts companies but the Big Three automakers, and led some CAW militants to charge CAW President Buzz Hargrove with set-

ting up sweetheart agreements.

Nevertheless, Hargrove reportedly leaned heavily on Chrysler to force TRW to give in to the workers' demands. An upbeat Local 444 news release announced that the local would now focus on getting better pay and benefits at other workplaces that supply the Chrysler Windsor Assembly Plant. HBPO, Dakkota and Oakley were mentioned.

In a speech, Local 444 President Ken Lewenza added: "We don't want another work stoppage. But we're not going to accept less [at other supplier plants]. Hopefully, the struggle of the last four or five days will help us get through any future struggles."

Lewenza also warned employers not to bring in scabs, which TRW was rumored to be planning to do, and urged the govern-

ment to pass anti-scab legislation. "This could have been another crisis in the community," he said. "This could have been another dangerous situation. ... I say to the Liberal government: Wake up, man."

Lewenza further charged Chrysler management with trying to create division between Chrysler and TRW members of Local 444 by denying contractual unemployment pay to Chrysler workers displaced by the TRW strike. In fact, many Chrysler workers walked the picket line in solidarity.

Speaking for themselves, union members are jubilant over having won so much in their first union contract. "I stayed strong. I told everyone to stay strong no matter what," said 19-year-old Brian Dufour. "It's exactly what we need."

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## Community support

# Support strikers at American Axle

Continued from page 1

billion, it still wants to squeeze more out of the workers who built the company into what it is. American Axle President Richard Dauch, a former chair of the National Association of Manufacturers, and other company executives are making millions off the backs of the workers.

Wall Street analysts speculate that the company will be able to force significant concessions out of the UAW, similar to the two-tier and buyout concessionary contracts that suppliers Delphi and Dana Corp. and then the Big Three automakers got in the fall of 2007. But this battle is far from over, as the UAW rank and file and their labor and community allies are showing on the picket lines and beyond.

All know that the outcome of the American Axle strike will have profound effects on the working class in the U.S. and beyond, particularly for people of color, immigrants and women workers.

Black, Arab, Latin@, poor white and women workers make up the majority of the work force at Local 235 in Hamtramck, a separate working-class city within the boundaries of Detroit. It is the largest local on strike, with over 1,900 members.

### Broadening base of labor/ community support

A broadening base of labor and community supporters is building solidarity for the striking workers. Every day UAW members, including retirees not from American Axle, and other union members from throughout the state and beyond, visit the union hall and picket lines, often bringing provisions such as hot beverages, bottled water and firewood,

which are then distributed by the union's Community Support committees.

Members of the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, including its president, Saundra Williams, as well as activists from the Michigan AFL-CIO and Change to Win stop by the picket lines regularly.

Locals 235 and 262 have received support resolutions from UAW Local 2334, from the Union of Part-Time Faculty—AFT at Wayne State University, from the Graduate Employees Union at Michigan State University, and from the National Association of Letter Carriers, Local 214.

A rank-and-file committee of American Axle workers is distributing a newsletter, "Shifting Gears," on the picket lines and at the union halls. The rank-and-file organizations Future of the Union and Soldiers of Solidarity update their Web sites often to keep UAW members and others informed of the strike and support actions.

Community organizations are also engaged in support work. Two of these, the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization and the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI), have designated days where their members join in picket line support. The MECAWI Solidarity Team will be on the picket lines Sunday afternoons for as long as the strike lasts. Welfare Rights is on for Tuesday afternoons. And Green Party members are joining the strike support actions.

At all hours of the day local businesses are donating meals and provisions for the strikers at all five plants.

### 'Support the American Axle workers!'

Workers World was at the Local 235 union hall and on the picket line in

Hamtramck on March 9 to talk to and support the strikers.

Sue Davis from UAW Local 1981, National Writers Union, came to Detroit from New York to be the keynote speaker for an International Women's Day forum sponsored by Workers World Party on March 8. She stopped by the UAW Local 235 picket line in Hamtramck with a member of the Detroit Action Network for Reproductive Rights.

"I wanted to show solidarity with the strike because I think it's really important that UAW members are fighting back against horrendous contract terms. American Axle is trying to steal from the workers here in order to enrich the bosses' profits. This is injustice and it has to be fought. I'm here to show solidarity with the fightback," said Davis as she walked the picket line.

Abayomi Azikiwe of MECAWI, also at the picket line, said, "I'm here to express my unconditional solidarity with UAW Local 235 and the other locals striking at American Axle. I think it's a very important action, an industrial action. It's going to determine whether or not the people in this country will have a living wage or whether they're going to be forced down into abject poverty. Of course this strike is not set up to benefit just the local members. If there's victory here, it's going to represent a major victory for working people throughout the United States."

Azikiwe added that MECAWI is engaging in strike support because there's no division between the anti-war movement and labor—organized or unorganized. "It's a clear connection. Just this last year \$700 billion was spent on the military budget in the U.S. At the same time working people are being forced out of their homes. They're being forced to take drastic cuts in wages and benefits. So, yes, there's a definite connection between the economic downturn and the ongoing war in Iraq, in Afghanistan and of course the overall military budget in this country."

Dean Farm, a District Committee representative from Local 699, Region 1B, drove down from Saginaw to join the picket line. Farm is a second generation UAW member who works at parts supplier Delphi.

"Unions are the only way we're going to have some sort of parity in wages throughout the country. If we didn't have organized labor, we would probably be into 1950 wages and it'd be a wider disparity between the haves and the have-nots than we already have in the country. Corporate executives and those who have are trying

to widen that gap even wider than what it is," said Farm.

Gabriel Alaciz is one of 12 human relations commissioners for the city of Hamtramck and president of the Eight Mile Wyoming Citizens District Council in Detroit. Alaciz is a lifelong resident of Metro Detroit and has worked on the assembly line at Ford in Dearborn. Said Alaciz, "All my life I've been in support of workers. Workers in this country have had to organize and support each other in order to safeguard their families and the workplace.

He sees the company's intransigence as "a threat to the working man and woman here in Hamtramck and in particular around the state of Michigan. With inflation at the rate that it is and workers being deprived of benefits and decent, fair working salaries, it quite realistically boils down to a threat against the overall community. I'd like the public to come out and support the American Axle workers in their strike."

Alan Pollock, a non-union machine operator who formerly worked at a union plant, drove up to the picket line with a truckload of firewood for the strikers. Pollock related how, at his formerly unionized plant beginning five years ago, concessionary contracts containing two-tier wages and provisions broke down solidarity and fractured the workforce.

"There's a war in Iraq and a war in Michigan. I believe the only way to get justice is through a strong force of organized labor with labor working for human needs. I believe the line is drawn in the sand right here, right now. A job is a right and our jobs belong to our communities," said Pollock.

Labor and community support is also solid at the American Axle plants in Three Rivers, Mich., and at two others in the cities of Tonawanda and Cheektowaga near Buffalo, N.Y. Ellie Dorritie of the International Action Center—Buffalo, reports that members of her organization have distributed union support resolutions and a written appeal for strike support to a local peace and justice coalition as well as other progressive organizations.

Send donations/provisions and union/community support resolutions to:

UAW Local 235, 2140 Holbrook Ave., Hamtramck, MI 48212, (313) 871-1190; e-mail: adrianrking@hotmail.com or billalford74@yahoo.com

*The writer's grandfather and great uncle participated as rank-and-file members in the 1954 to 1962 UAW Kohler strike in Kohler, Wis.*

## Solidarity resolution

*Many unions are supporting the American Axle strike. The following resolution was passed by UAW Local 2334 in Detroit on March 4.*

Whereas American Axle Corporation has demanded wage cuts of almost 50 percent from their workers along with huge medical benefit and pension concessions amounting to outright union busting;

And whereas the demands of the company, if successful, will cause harm to the wages earned by all workers;

And whereas the American Axle workers, UAW, have gone on strike to preserve decent wages, benefits and working conditions for themselves and all other workers;

Therefore be it resolved that UAW Local 2334 goes on record in support of the American Axle workers and contributes \$200 to strike support;

And therefore be it resolved that UAW Local 2334 urges all other unions, community and church groups to support the striking American Axle workers in all ways possible. □

# Demand parole board free Move 9

By **Betsey Piette**  
Philadelphia

Unjustly incarcerated for nearly 30 years, the eight remaining MOVE 9 prisoners are eligible for parole this year. In early April seven of them will be interviewed by the Pennsylvania Parole Board. With their hearing just weeks away, MOVE is asking for support. MOVE member Merle Africa died in prison under suspicious circumstances in March 1998. Chuck Africa's hearing is scheduled for October.

The case of the MOVE 9 stems from a confrontation on Aug. 8, 1978, when 600 heavily armed Philadelphia police stormed their house in the Powellton Village section of Philadelphia after a yearlong siege. During the ensuing shootout, Officer James Ramp was shot and died.

The bullet entered his body and traveled downward. The MOVE members were in the basement of their house, attempting to protect the group's children from the police barrage, which included water cannons. In court, they argued that they could not have fired the lethal shot, which witnesses said originated from across the street. Nevertheless, nine men and women were convicted of Ramp's death and given 30-to-100-year prison terms.

In a recent interview with independent journalist Hans Bennett, veteran journalist Linn Washington Jr. of the Philadelphia Tribune cites sources in the police department as telling him that Officer Ramp was actually shot by police gunfire and not by MOVE. ([nyc.indymedia.org](http://nyc.indymedia.org))

Washington says that Ramp was allegedly shot and killed by a bullet from a .223 caliber weapon. Initially police claimed none of the officers present that day carried this kind of weapon. Yet three weeks after the preliminary proceedings, the police department began to admit that some officers there were using Mini-14s that fired .223 rounds.

He also notes that MOVE members were firing from a flooded basement facing up toward police, yet the round that killed Ramp came at a downward trajectory from behind the slain officer. "A .223 bullet is a very small, lightweight bullet that would likely break up if it hit a brick wall, not ricochet back and forth a couple of times," Washington pointed out. "Unless this was a bullet like the one that Arlen Specter, when he worked for the Warren Commission, said killed Kennedy."

Within 24 hours of the shooting, MOVE's house in West Philadelphia was razed to the ground, destroying any evidence that could have been used by the defense. No fingerprints of any MOVE members were found on the weapons Mayor Frank Rizzo displayed at a press conference after the attack. A video showing the police commissioner handling weapons as they were passed through a basement window to other police officers was not allowed as evidence in a pretrial hearing.

Strong media bias against the MOVE 9 made it impossible for them to receive a fair trial and continues to this day. A recent article on

their upcoming hearing repeats without question the prosecution's contention that "There was no doubt the fatal shot came from inside the MOVE house." (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, Feb. 28)

Washington, who covered the hearings, told how presiding Judge Edwin S. Malmed allowed the prosecutor to change the medical examiner's report as he was entering it into evidence. When the prosecutor noticed the report contradicted testimony that the medical examiner had just given, he pulled out a pencil and changed the report right in the courtroom. MOVE defendants, objecting to the judge's obvious bias, were removed from the court and from then on tried in absentia.

MOVE was founded in 1972—the same year that Rizzo became mayor with a promise to "clamp down on rebellious elements in the Black community." Rizzo was already infamous as head of the vicious and racist police department that raided the Black Panther Party headquarters in 1970 and attempted to humiliate the Panthers by lining them up against a wall and photographing them naked.

MOVE, a back-to-nature collective, practiced composting in their yard. A biased media described this waste-recycling practice as "throwing their trash in their yard." MOVE was gaining commu-

nity support for neighborhood marches against police brutality.

Authorities began a campaign to destroy the MOVE organization. Between 1974 and 1976, there were over 400 arrests of MOVE members, as well as multiple brutal attacks on pregnant MOVE women by police. At least two resulted in miscarriages. In March 1976, a 20-day-old child of MOVE member Janine Africa died as a result of one such police attack.

Fearing that police would attack their house and kill those inside in an operation similar to the type of government terrorism used against the Black Panthers, MOVE fortified the house and refused to back down, even after the city shut off water and stopped food deliveries.

The MOVE members had ample reason to adopt self-defense, as witnessed by the murderous police attack on another MOVE house in Philadelphia nearly a decade later, when a police helicopter dropped a bomb on the roof and let the resulting fire burn unchecked, killing 11 men, women and children.

At this urgent time, MOVE is asking for calls of support to 717-787-5699 and signatures on a petition at [www.ipetitions.com/petition/move9parole](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/move9parole). They will be delivered to the Parole Board later this month. □



## Release Rev. Pinkney!

Dorothy Pinkney (left), wife of Rev. Edward Pinkney, points to where her husband is being jailed. Maureen Taylor and Marian Kramer of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization look on during a demonstration on March 7 in St. Joseph, Mich., outside the Berrien County Jail. Rev. Pinkney of BANCO, who has defied developers' plans for a land grab in Benton Harbor, Mich., has been held in the jail since December after he was charged with violation of his probation for quoting biblical scriptures.

—Report and photo by Abayomi Azikiwe, Pan-African News Wire

## Larry Davis assassinated in prison

By **Rosemary Neidenberg**  
New York

"Just ask Larry Davis / how much they took / cops and crooks / but who's the crook?"

—*Jeru the Damaja, a popular New York rapper in the 1990s*

In the yard of the Shawangunk Ulster County, N.Y., prison this Feb. 20, Larry Davis was murdered with a 12-inch metal blade. No authority has explained how a prisoner could conceal a weapon of this size.

The San Francisco Bay View national Black newspaper reported on March 5 that Black Entertainment Television had an upcoming interview with Larry Davis. BET produced the "American Gangster" series, which explored the connections between big-time crime figures, the drug trade and the police.

The BET interview and the murder in the prison yard—coincidence? Not!

Larry Davis had been a street guy and drug dealer in his early teens who later became a popular hero—size extra large—

because he took on drug dealers in his community, both the ones in shiny suits and those in blue uniforms. He began as a runner for the police, a street seller of confiscated drugs. But the devastation brought to his Harlem neighborhood by crack cocaine wrenched his heart and mind.

He quit. In November 1987 when he was only 20, a squad of 27 police and detectives broke into his sister's apartment, where he was staying, under the pretext he was a suspect in the killing of four suspected drug dealers. Six cops were shot and injured in the resulting shootout. Juries later acquitted Davis in both the drug dealer frame-up and in the shooting of the cops, which they ruled was in self-defense.

He made a movie-chase escape from the apartment and was a free fugitive until Dec. 6, 1987.

Larry Davis was finally captured and sentenced to 25 years to life in another case for allegedly firing a shot through the closed door of a drug den, killing a dealer inside.

Sewell Chan wrote that Davis became for some "a symbol of widespread distrust

of the police," but to others he became "something of a folk hero." (*New York Times*, Feb. 21)

Barry Davis spoke about his uncle in an interview with the San Francisco Bay View: "Larry Davis is a person who went to war with the cops. He was a young guy ... took a couple of wrong turns, and tried to come out of it. And that was by defending himself, and he got it done."

Former political prisoner Fred Hampton Jr., son of the martyred Black Panther leader, said: "Larry Davis was a victim who took the position that he was going to be a fighting-back victim. ... He moved in defense of his life ... and he still stands as a symbol of resistance."

Betsey Davis Gimbel, a comrade in Workers World, in her own way and on a smaller stage was also persistent, audacious and fearless. She once let air out of the tires of a police car while anti-Vietnam war protesters were being arrested in Cleveland. She faked her way into a Republican gala and heckled Richard Nixon. After losing a leg because of vascular problems, she became a militant disabled activist.

She is also remembered for being the originator and leading activist in the Larry Davis Defense Committee, publicizing the case from her wheelchair. A small irony: Betsey reported that when Larry Davis arrived to serve the 25-to-life sentence, he was beaten so severely that he, too, had to use a wheelchair.

Betsey and her partner Mike had a collection of reptile pets in their Williamsburg, Brooklyn, loft. For 20 years their snakes, alligators, caimans and iguanas were a magnet for neighborhood children. Local schools sponsored many field trips to their loft.

In what the Gimbels saw as retaliation for Betsey's work in defense of Larry Davis, their loft was raided, dismantled and their pets removed, one dying in the process. It was a small price compared to the 25-years-to-life sentence and execution in the prison yard paid by Larry Davis. But the raid showed the enormity of the hatred the state had for Larry Davis—a man of principle, defiance, courage and resilience. He fought the drug dealers and the cops for his people—and he died for them. □

## International Women's Day in U.S.

# 'We will organize & mobilize!'

By LeiLani Dowell

On March 8—the 100th anniversary of the day militant working women took to the streets of New York City—women throughout the U.S. honored International Women's Day and vowed to continue the struggle for liberation.

### NEW YORK

An initial downpour of rain didn't stop several hundred women and their allies from continuing the legacy of IWD. With militant chants, participants marched to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory memorial, where 146 women workers were killed in a fire on March 25, 1911, after the bosses locked them in. They then continued to the Solidarity Center for an indoor rally and celebration.

Placards featured pictures of women leaders and inspirational words, alongside others demanding women's rights, including reproductive justice and an end to war, racism, LGBT oppression and poverty.

Filipinas for Rights and Empowerment (FiRE) Chair Valerie Francisco stated, "We will organize and mobilize until our demands are met and our collective voices are heard!"

### DETROIT

Workers World Party friends and members gathered in Detroit to celebrate "100 Years of Struggle." Debbie Johnson discussed how conditions that sparked the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire still exist in sweatshops around the world. Sue Paquin gave a presentation on "Feminism and Marxism"—based on the book of that name. Written by WWP founding member Dorothy Ballan, it explains how women's oppression arose with the division of society into oppressor and oppressed classes. Andrea Egypt talked about African-American women who have led the fight for a better life.

The featured guest speaker, Sue Davis from the New York City WWP branch, examined the Party's historical relation to women's fight for equality and reproductive rights, and showed how revolutionary women influenced those struggles. A lively discussion followed on how socialism will provide true liberation for women.

A delicious meal was prepared by male comrades.

### BOSTON

The Women's Fightback Network—Boston organized a car caravan of women activists and supporters. A sound truck played music while young women leaders led chants and rapped. Passersby gave thumbs up and raised fists.

In driving rain, the caravan passed Boston Police Headquarters, where activists demanded an end to Criminal Offender Record Information laws, and Boston City Hospital, where chants echoed: "Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide."

A Countrywide Financial Co. office, across the street from a homeless shelter, became the target of a militant action when women plastered a banner demanding an end to ALL foreclosures. Countrywide is a major predatory lender.

With music blaring and chants of "Jobs Not Jails," the cavalcade pulled up to the Suffolk County Community Corrections Center—where 150 to 200 women are incarcerated, unfurled banners and formed a picket line. Prisoners put their hands on the windows and pumped their fists.



Alba Moto, May 1 Coalition

### BUFFALO, N.Y.

Code Pink and the International Action Center of Buffalo/Western New York braved the mounds left from a weekend snowstorm to bring an anti-war demonstration commemorating International Women's Day to a busy intersection. The contingent carried empty boots, representing the women soldiers who have died in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and occupations.

The groups are building for a car caravan and rally on March 22 to protest the fifth anniversary of the Iraq War.

### PHILADELPHIA

Many women's and labor groups formed a coalition for a spirited march through downtown on March 8, followed by an afternoon of plenaries, speakouts and cultural performances in the hall of the union UNITE-HERE. They discussed the need for women to unite and struggle for housing, health care, education and an end to the war. Speakers included a survivor of the Katrina disaster in New Orleans and Pam Africa from MOVE.

Kris Hamel from Detroit, Berta Joubert from Philadelphia, the WW Boston Bureau and the WW Buffalo Bureau contributed to this report.

E-mail: ldowell@workers.org



Normahiram Rodriquéz Peréz  
Puerto Rican teacher



Valerie Francisco, FiRE



At an International Women's Day meeting in Detroit Debbie Johnson presented speaker Sue Davis with an award recognizing her dedication to the struggle.



LeiLani Dowell, FIST



Joyce Chediak, Lebanese American activist.



Hasiba Mohammad, Al Awda



Monica Moorehead  
Int'l Action Center

WW PHOTOS: JOHN CATALINOTTO  
Portraits of women at a New York speakout after a rainy IWD march to the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Memorial.

WW PHOTOS: CHERYL LABASH

# Cuban women tell of great gains

By Priscilla Felia  
New York

A program on "Women and the Cuban Revolution Today" took place at John Jay College on March 7 with a large group eager to exchange feminist ideals with Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) representatives Maritzel González, Dora Carcaño and Ana Milagros Martínez, who traveled to the U.S. for the U.N. proceedings for International Women's Day.

When Clara Zetkin of the Socialist International first proposed that March 8 be declared International Women's Day, it was to commemorate a march of thousands of women textile workers that took place in New York on that date exactly 100 years ago.

González commented on the important work of those in the U.S. to help people hear the truth about the Cuban Five and how they were combating terrorism. The Five—imprisoned in U.S. jails for 10 years—have been subjected to cruel punishment. Visas for their relatives to visit have been denied by the U.S. government.

She asked the audience to raise their voices so that Adriana Pérez and Olga Salanueva, the wives of Five members Gerardo Hernández and René González, respectively, can see their husbands.

She went on to say that, "With the February 24 elections to the National



Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) members Maritzel González, Dora Carcaño and Ana Milagros Martínez, March 7, New York City.

PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO

Assembly in Cuba, of the 614 delegates, women represented 43.16 percent of the Assembly. ... This places Cuba third in the world for women who are in parliaments. One can see what our government is doing for women to achieve their full development. A better world is possible where there will be no inequalities."

Carcaño expressed how, "With these Cuban women in the Assembly, we are in solidarity with the women of the world. In the beginning a group of Marxist women celebrated March 8. We were trying to get laws passed demanding democracy. We were struggling for peace, but at that time we did not have consciousness. But then we founded the Federation of Cuban Women and in those early years we could

Assemble in Cuba, of the 614 delegates, women represented 43.16 percent of the Assembly. ... This places Cuba third in the world for women who are in parliaments. One can see what our government is doing for women to achieve their full development. A better world is possible where there will be no inequalities."

speaking about our aspirations. Within the organization we talked about how important we were. Now, Cuban women have embraced this holiday—International Women's Day. "This 43 percent we now have in the Assembly reflects all the work that came before and of the political commitment of the federal government and of the Communist Party, but we didn't have this in the early part of the Revolution. Many people in this room have had an impact on our achievements with their interaction. Fidel has talked about the revolution within the Revolution; that women's participation in the Revolution is like a second revolution. Only 12 percent of women were working when the Revolution tri-

umphed, 49 percent work today. Women make up 67 percent of the technical workforce, and 52 percent of the 40,000 Cuban doctors in the world are women. In the 1960s there were only 3,000 doctors in Cuba, and most left for the U.S. And today 39 percent of government jobs are held by women."

Carcaño said, "But we do have to remember, all these actions we took alongside men. One of the most important roles of women was during the Special Period (1990-1996). Women had to be very creative and learn how to do more with less. During that terrible time children still went to school in their uniforms and stoves in the homes still had to be lit up with difficulty. Because of these things, because women have created a place in the Revolution, we can be very proud this March 8th."

The discussion included questions for the FMC women about Cuba's educational system, rights for homosexuals, maternity leave and much more.

Send postcards or letters to Condoleezza Rice, U.S. Department of State, 2201 C St., Washington, DC 20520, requesting that she immediately grant visiting rights to the two wives whose husbands are part of the Cuban Five.

The writer is with Cuban Solidarity New York (CSNY) and the New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five.



"Musharraf must go, Where are the missing persons?" More than 5,000 attended March 8 rallies in Murdan, Lahore and Karachi, Pakistan.

## IWD around the world

# 'All issues are women's issues'

By Kathy Durkin

Women around the world held actions against imperialist war, occupation, globalization and oppression on the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day (IWD). Marches and rallies were in the militant tradition of this special day—originally founded by European socialist women—despite attempts by the U.S. and other capitalist governments to water down the meaning of IWD.

Here are some of this year's highlights:

The actions started off with a bang on March 4 when Brazilian women protested corporate globalization and environmental theft and destruction, days before the actual holiday. Some 900 women from Via Campesina occupied the 5,200-acre tree farm of Finnish-Swedish paper giant Stora Enso in Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil. They cut down eucalyptus trees and planted native ones.

When a police attack hurt 50 of the women, the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers Movement countered this by blocking eight roads.

Three days later, hundreds of women from Via Campesina protested the Brazilian government's decision to permit Monsanto, the world's largest biotech seed corporation, to sell genetically modified corn in their country. They broke into the company's seed research unit in southeastern Brazil and destroyed a greenhouse and testing field for GM corn.

Protecting reproductive rights, especially abortion, was on the agenda for European women, who also deplored employment inequities and domestic abuse. In Italy women's groups and trade unions marched in many cities for abortion rights endangered by the Vatican and other rightwing forces, which are scheming to overturn the country's 30-year-old legal right to abortion.

And 2,000 Polish women marched in Warsaw demanding restoration of the right to abortion. The previous pro-socialist government had guaranteed all

reproductive rights. It was a victim of U.S. Cold War pressures and was replaced in 1989 by a capitalist government in league with the Catholic Church.

From South Africa to Kenya, women in Africa commemorated IWD with marches, rallies and celebrations.

Asian women's protests raised many issues.

Thousands of Pakistani women, including workers, targeted the U.S.-backed Musharraf regime in Murdan, Lahore and Karachi, decrying political repression and disappearances of family members. The protests were organized by Women Workers Help Line and Labor Education Foundation. They also demanded political, economic and social rights. In Islamabad, signs condemned "foreign intervention."

Philippine women marched to U.S.-backed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Manila palace. Calling for her ouster,



Philippines

they burned an effigy of the president. Protesters also went to the U.S. Embassy to demand that U.S. troops leave their country.

In Seoul, South Korea, women targeted the Japanese Embassy, demanding full compensation and an apology for wide scale sexual slavery by Japan's imperialist army during World War II.

In Jakarta, Indonesian women, carrying tins of milk, demanded that their government lower food prices and solve the problems of hunger, poverty, high oil prices and unemployment.

Factory workers were among women who rallied for their rights in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Signs called for gender equality, equal property rights and resources.

For women living under U.S.-backed occupation, life is very difficult.

Heroic Palestinian women rallied on IWD in Gaza City in the face of a siege by Israeli occupation forces that has worsened their eco-

nomie situation and denied their human rights. A recent invasion and air strikes by Israel killed 126 people, including 27 children and six women in Jabaliya alone.

Their sisters in the West Bank cities of Nablus, Hebron and Ramallah waved Palestinian flags and carried pictures of family members held in Israeli jails. Salwa Abu Khadra, secretary-general of the General Union of Palestinian Women, which led a march through Ramallah City, appealed for international support "to stop this crime wave, which we consider to be against all of humanity, not only against women."

In Afghanistan, the U.S. made a mockery of IWD and the terrible plight of Afghan women by holding a "fashion show" at the U.S. military base in Bagram. But in Kandahar, 1,000 women gathered for IWD and told of their hardships. Afghan women's life expectancy is 44 years, 85 percent are illiterate, and some work 11-hour shifts for \$2 an hour. One million widows are economically desperate; many are forced into prostitution.

On this IWD, women of the world extended their solidarity to their Iraqi sisters, whose conditions of life have deteriorated in all ways under the U.S.-led imperialist war and occupation. □



Philippines



Pakistan



Gaza



Turkey

## As resistance grows in ranks

# U.S. military morale and capacity plummet

By Dee Knight

Long, unjust wars, like the one the U.S. fought in Vietnam and the ones it is fighting now in Iraq and Afghanistan, inflict enormous damage. Not only are the occupied countries affected, however, but also the U.S. soldiers forced to fight against them. Several mutinies have been reported in Iraq, and personal GI testimony suggests there have been many more.

A U.S. Army report released on March 6 said 27.2 percent of noncommissioned officers—the sergeants responsible for leading troops in combat—have mental health problems during their third or fourth tours of duty. A similar percentage of all soldiers on repeat tours of duty show severe anxiety, depression and other mental health problems. The report found a sharp increase in marital problems among GIs, an increased suicide rate and greater depression among soldiers in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has reached epidemic proportions among veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan as well as active duty GIs. But the brass remain coldly indifferent to it. Army Spec. Bryan Currie says commanding officers “disregarded and ridiculed the medical finding” that he is unfit for active duty and that he should receive a medical or honorable discharge. They told him they wanted to send him overseas again, for a second combat tour.

Currie was injured by a roadside bomb during his 2006 deployment to Afghanistan. He spent a month in a hospital recovering from a broken jaw, burns, shrapnel wounds and injuries to his knee and back, but he managed to complete his tour. He was awarded a Purple Heart and Army Commendation Medal of Valor. The 21-year-old was also recently diagnosed with PTSD, but he was rebuffed in his attempts to seek help for his anxiety, depression, nightmares and insomnia.

With assistance from attorneys Tod Ensign and Louis Font of Citizen Soldier, Specialist Currie has asked Army Secretary

Pete Geren to convene a court of inquiry—a rarely used administrative fact-finding process—to investigate top generals at Fort Carson, Colo.; Fort Drum, N.Y.; and Fort Hood, Texas. The court should “investigate the extent to which the [generals] have been derelict in failing to provide for the health and welfare of wounded soldiers,” Currie’s request says.

### Generals won’t listen

The willful refusal of the generals to listen is paralleled by a dramatic increase in physical loss of hearing among GIs and veterans. The Associated Press on March 7 reported that new figures from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) show hearing damage is the number one disability from the Iraq war. Ambushes, bombs and firefights all cause violent changes in air pressure that can rupture the eardrum and break bones inside the ear. Some 60 percent of U.S. personnel exposed to blasts suffer from permanent hearing loss and 49 percent also suffer from tinnitus—ringing in the ears—according to military audiology reports.

For former Staff Sgt. Ryan Kelly, 27, of Austin, Texas, the noise of war is still with him more than four years after the simultaneous explosion of three roadside bombs near Baghdad. “It’s funny, you know. When it happened, I didn’t feel my leg gone. What I remember was my ears ringing,” said Kelly, whose leg was blown off below the knee in 2003. Today, his leg has been replaced with a prosthetic. His ears are still ringing.

“It is constantly there,” he said. “It constantly reminds me of getting hit. I don’t want to sit here and think about getting blown up all the time. But that’s what it does.” (AP, March 7)

The suicide rate among returning GIs is high, according to the VA, which also found that more than half of all veterans who committed suicide after returning from the recent wars were members of the Guard or Reserves. That actually



Mosul, Iraq

reflects the proportion of GIs in Iraq and Afghanistan from those reserve units, the VA reports.

### Can’t get recruits

The heavy use of the Guard and Reserve, of “stop loss” extensions of active duty, and of three and four combat tours all underscore the recruitment problem faced by today’s military commanders. As the Army’s official newspaper for the troops put it, “The military is spending a ton of money on recruiting enough troops to maintain the overall force. ... Yet it’s doing so in a field that is increasingly difficult to plow—fewer eligible recruits, fewer parents willing to back a military career and a falling propensity to serve.” (Army Times, March 10)

In other words, with more than two thirds of the population opposing the war, it has become harder and harder to convince troops to fight it or to motivate parents to encourage their children to join the military.

One major difference between the Vietnam era and the present has begun to be a significant factor. Unlike the Vietnam period, the U.S. is currently facing a gigantic economic crisis. Active duty GIs themselves, along with their families and parents, are suffering the ravages of mortgage foreclosures, loss of jobs and increasing worries about the future. These worries, combined with bitter disillusionment about politicians’ invented reasons for the war, have stimulated a new level of opposition within the ranks of the military.

The White House, in the face of the current recruitment problem, along with

extending combat tours and using the Guard and Reserve, has chosen to use mercenaries instead of instituting a draft. They have a very real fear of a mass rebellion of youth across the country, as well as an even more intense rebellion within the ranks of the military. This is part of the legacy of the resistance and rebellion that swept the country and the military during the U.S. war against Vietnam.

### Appeal for Redress

Another legacy of the Vietnam era is the growing resistance among active duty GIs. The Appeal for a Redress of Grievances, initiated a year and a half ago by Navy Communications Spec. Jonathan Hutto and Marine Sgt. Liam Madden, has now been signed by more than 2,100 active duty troops. The long-term goal, says Hutto, is “to build permanence with the formation of an Active Duty Network that can advocate on behalf of active duty members on a range of issues to all levels of government.”

That network is now forming and expanding very fast. The Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) has committed itself to encouraging resistance among active duty GIs. As IVAW has organized chapters at military bases across the country and around the world, it has in turn received strong and active support from Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Veterans For Peace—whose membership of thousands of Vietnam-era veterans has mobilized enthusiastically in support. Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) has also joined in, providing a strong voice from the families of active duty GIs in support of their resistance.

IVAW has been especially notable in the clarity of its goal of organizing active duty GIs to finally put a stop to the illegal U.S. war in Iraq. It has also undertaken a serious drive to educate its current and future members, and to actively train them in the skills necessary to reach out effectively to the GIs. The refusal of U.S. GIs to participate in U.S. imperialist wars is a crucial factor that can make all the difference. □

## WW 1968

# Black GIs stand firm at ‘riot-duty’ refusal trial

*Editor’s note: Workers World is in its 50th year of publication. Throughout the year, we will share with our readers some of the paper’s content over the past half century. Below are excerpts from an article on the trial of the Fort Hood 43 originally published in the issue dated Nov. 10, 1968. The full article can be found online at workers.org.*

### Racist brass nervous, give light sentences; ASU, ECLC cooperate for defense

On Aug. 24, 1968, electrifying news of a demonstration by over 100 black soldiers against possible riot duty in Chicago during the Democratic National Convention came from Fort Hood, Texas. Just after 6 a.m. that morning MPs were ordered to break up the all-night demonstration in the middle of the 40,000-man Army fort. Forty-three black GIs were arrested on the pretext that they were missing reveille formation. Those arrested were later beaten by military police in the post stockade annex.



Vietnam

As soon as this news broke, the American Servicemen’s Union called the Public Information Officer at Fort Hood and demanded to know the names of the men arrested. The PIO refused, but within a few hours the union had obtained the names its own way. The men were contacted and legal defense arranged. When hearings began in September, ASU members went to Fort Hood and were arrested for “vagrancy” by local cops in collusion with the military.

The following account of the trial of six black GIs is written by Ellen Catalinotto,

who went to Fort Hood with representatives of The Bond and the ASU to show support for the men singled out for more serious general courts-martial.

By Ellen Catalinotto

FORT HOOD, Texas, Oct. 25—The court-martial of six black GIs who demonstrated along with 100 others against racism and riot control duty ended here tonight after four days. Two men were acquitted, two got sentences of three months hard labor and the others received bad conduct discharges. The sentences, considerably less than the maximum, were an indication of the Army’s fear that harsher punishment might backfire and lead to open rebellion.

The convictions were the expected outcome of military “justice” so the real climax of the trial came when the convicted men took the stand and put the Army on trial for racism.

The six men on trial today—Pfc. Guy Smith, Sgt. Robert Rucker, Sp/4 Tollie Royal, Pvt. Ernest Frederick, Pfc. Ernest Bess and Sp/4 Albert Henry—were the first of 19 soldiers who face more seri-

ous general courts-martial, which can hand down maximum sentences of five years hard labor and a dishonorable discharge. Twenty-two others were tried by special court-martial, in which six months hard labor and a fine is the maximum penalty. Civilian lawyers for all the men were arranged for by the American Servicemen’s Union so the accused would not have to depend on Army officers to “defend” them, as is customary.

Tension built up outside building 2230—Fort Hood Courtroom—this afternoon as the defendants, civilian supporters from the Committee for GI Rights, The Bond and the Oleo Strut, and GI sympathizers awaited the verdict.

Throughout the four-day proceedings, black and white GIs came to the courtroom to show their solidarity with the men on trial. They were subjected to constant harassment by the unsettled brass for doing so.

A black soldier in civilian dress, who was being separated from the Army and only awaited the final processing of his papers, was arrested for failure to salute during flag-lowering as he stood outside the court building. A white GI who pulled



# Israeli yeshiva cloaked racism in religion

By Joyce Chediak

Suppose a group of KKKers and other white supremacists had their own “church” that was really a center for justifying and organizing murderous attacks on African Americans. Suppose an African-American person, tired of lynchings, tortures, beatings and humiliation of his people, came into this church with guns blazing.

Would there be any doubt that this was a reaction to racism, and not hatred of Christians? Wouldn't it be clear who were the oppressed and who were the oppressors?

Something much like this recently happened in Jerusalem, but the real relationship of forces has been deliberately obscured by the Israeli and U.S. governments and the corporate media.

What happened?

Armed to the teeth with the latest U.S. high-tech weapons, two weeks ago Israel invaded Gaza by land and air killing 126 people, half of them civilians, including 24 children, with 13 of the children toddlers or infants.

Ala Abu Dhaim, a Palestinian worker from the Jebel Mukaber neighborhood of East Jerusalem, “was transfixed by the bloodshed in Gaza,” according to his sister. (Associated Press March 8) On March 6, Abu Dhaim, a driver who sometimes made deliveries to the Mercaz Harav yeshiva in Jerusalem, entered that compound and sprayed the young male students with gunfire, killing eight, and then was killed himself.

While silent at the Palestinian deaths, the U.S. press was aghast at the “sacrilege” of shooting down “innocent religious students.” All sympathy was with the yeshiva student families. The New York Times carried extra photos of the funeral on its website.

Ala Abu Dhaim was labeled an anti-Semitic villain, as were other individuals and any organizations that praised his heroism. The Israeli government used his actions to justify its genocidal assaults on

Palestinians in Gaza, claiming a need to “protect” its people.

But Mercaz Harav was no ordinary yeshiva. Its students' reaction to the attack was to chant, “Death to Arabs!” Rabbi David Shalem, director of the Institute of Talmud Studies at the school, called for the Ehud Olmert government to attack Palestinians “everywhere, in Gaza, and the north and inside.” He issued a thinly veiled call for the extermination of Palestinians by referring to them as present-day Amalekites, who were “indigenous nomads who attacked the Israelites on their flight from Egypt and were annihilated by King David.” (New York Times, March 7)

## Center of settlement movement

This yeshiva is the ideological and organizational center of the white-supremacist Israeli settler movement. Cloaked in religion, these arch-racists oppose any form of Palestinian sovereignty and seek to steal all Palestinian land by driving off or killing its rightful occupants. An unofficial arm of the Israeli government, they expand the settler state's borders in a “creeping annexation”—as even Israeli Gen. Moshe Dayan called it.

It is no coincidence that three days after the attack on Mercaz Harav, Israel announced plans to expand yet another settlement, Givat Ze'ev, five miles from central Jerusalem.

Many Palestinians regard Mercaz Harav as a right-wing paramilitary organization, not a religious one. Thus Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere demonstrated and cheered when they learned that someone breached its security, attacking it in the heart of Jerusalem.

## Flagship for hatred of Arabs

Israelis also know and some oppose Mercaz Harav. Gideon Levy, columnist for Haaretz, the Israeli newspaper of record, wrote on March 10: “From Mercaz Harav emerged the rabbis that led the vilest movement in Zionist history. Most of the delusional right-wing perpetrators and the mongers of hate for Arabs came

from this flagship.”

Mercaz Harav is the base of Gush Emunim, the most aggressive of the settler groups. Levy explains: “Without the Gush Emunim movement, supported by successive Israeli governments, there would be no settlements; and without the Mercaz Harav yeshiva, there would be no Gush Emunim. This institution, then, was the cradle of the settlement enterprise and its driving force. Most of the students killed in the terrorist attack were second-generation settlers.”

While many Jewish religious students seek exemption from military service, Gush Emunim encourages its members to join the army and attack Palestinians. One of its heroes is Baruch Goldstein, who in 1994 burst into Hebron mosque, his machine gun blazing, and killed 30 Palestinians. (Like many of his co-thinkers, Goldstein was from the U.S. and while here was a member of the misnamed “Jewish Defense League,” a racist organization that cut its teeth by physically attacking Black Panthers in Harlem.)

Moshe Levinger, one Mercaz Harav graduate, set up a settlement in the Park Hotel in the heart of the Palestinian city of Hebron, where he once killed a Palestinian shopkeeper. Levinger and his followers continually attack Palestinian men, women and children in Hebron.

Another graduate is Rabbi Dov Lior, who, according to Levy, ruled in 2004 that the Israeli Defense Forces were allowed to kill innocent people.

Knowing full well that this yeshiva used religion to cloak extreme racism, George W. Bush, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and European Union High Representative Javier Solana all condemned the attack and sent condolences to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on the eight students' deaths.

## Israeli deaths mourned, Palestinian deaths ignored

One day before the Mercaz Harav attack, 20-year-old Amira Abu Aser, killed by an Israeli bullet to the head, was buried in Gaza. No international outcry followed, no condolences from world leaders or from Condoleezza Rice, who was then in the Middle East. The New York Times Web site showed no extra photos of her funeral. But the Palestinian people and their supporters won't forget her.

The imperialist powers are neither objective observers nor mediators, but share Israeli goals: to keep the people of the Middle East from reclaiming their land and their oil. To defend these goals, they cloak the real relationship of forces in the Middle East and seek to confuse and disarm those who would support the Palestinians.

Israel remains an oppressor state, an outpost of the Pentagon in the Middle East. The oppressed Palestinian people are still fighting a national liberation struggle for self-determination and sovereignty. And their struggle deserves the support of all. □



WWW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

## Arab youth decry siege of Gaza

Arab youth and students in the United States took their campaign to end Israel's siege of Gaza to the MacNamara Federal Building in downtown Detroit on March 6. Passing buses, delivery trucks and cars honked to show solidarity. The Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI) supported the call from the youth and joined the demonstration.

—Cheryl LaBash

## An ominous resignation

The news that broke on March 11 about the early retirement of Adm. William Fallon means one thing: stay alert for war moves against Iran. The Bush gang pushed Fallon out of his position as top U.S. commander in the Middle East. He has spoken out for negotiating with Tehran rather than bombing Iran first.

Like the other top brass at the Pentagon, Fallon has been a loyal servant of U.S. imperialism. He has never shrunk from using military power when ordered to. But he has crossed those who advocate, as Vice President Dick Cheney reportedly does, that the U.S. should attack Iran while the Bush administration is still in office and before talking to the Iranians. Last fall, in

an interview with al-Jazeera, Fallon said, “This constant drumbeat of conflict [from the Bush administration] ... is not helpful and not useful.”

Defense Secretary Robert Gates says that letting Fallon go does not mean war with Iran is imminent. But the Pentagon is spending billions to keep a huge fleet of U.S. warships, including some heavy-duty aircraft carriers, off the coast of Iran. Not just Bush but all imperialist governments lie while preparing a pretext or provocation for war. The anti-war forces can't allow Washington to launch yet another disaster in order to grab Middle East oil. Stay alert and ready to act.

—WW Editorial Staff

Continued from page 8

his car into the drive outside the building was ticketed for “blocking the roadway” although a jeep had passed him without trouble.

After the verdict was returned, defense attorney Michael Kennedy of the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee called those convicted to the stand to testify on their own behalf.

Sp/4 Tollie Royal was the outstanding soldier of his cycle in basic training and was assigned to the infantry. Royal is married and the father of three young sons.

Royal stood up and said with emotion, “I know I am innocent.... Tell me how you found me guilty.” The court was apparently stunned by this. Their eyes were averted and no one answered.

Sp/4 Albert Henry took the stand next. Henry, 19, was wounded twice in Vietnam, once while pulling a wounded comrade out of fire despite an order to stay behind. He told the court, “This won't stop anything. What is going on at Fort Hood is not right.”

Pvt. Frederick let the court have it. “I'm no angel and don't claim to be one,” he said. (His record, which included such “crimes” as taking an unauthorized Christmas leave, had been read to the court.) He defended the demonstration by black GIs and ended by saying, “I am not guilty.”

Pfc. Guy Smith was the last to speak. He

had spent two months in the stockade in Vietnam for refusing the order of a racist NCO who assigned him to guard duty when Smith was due for R&R after four months in the field. He told the court, “I demonstrated against Army policy here and in Vietnam.... There is racism and prejudice here. General Bowles said he would do something about it, but nothing has been done.... There are clubs in Killeen [the base town] where black GIs can't go.... Your convictions add to the injustice.”

In summing up the testimony for mitigation and extenuation, attorney Kennedy said, “The Army's racist policies are on trial.”

The reply of the prosecutor, Capt. Trammel, was very brief. “This United States Army, this United States,” he said, “cannot survive without law and order.”

Royal was sentenced to three months unconfined hard labor, reduction to lowest rank and fined \$75. Henry got the same sentence but with confinement for three months. Smith and Frederick got bad conduct discharges.

Morale was high as the men left the courtroom, shaking hands and gathering around the jeep that was to take Henry to the stockade. The relatively lenient sentences were a victory—not of justice, but of the strength and determination of the black soldiers not to be used against their brothers. □



# WWP on Iraq Five years of occupation

The U.S. has now occupied Iraq for five years. This has been an unrelenting nightmare for the Iraqi people. It has also been U.S. imperialism's worst military debacle. It has drained the living standards of the working class in the United States. It has made some U.S. corporate owners very rich. It has killed 1 million Iraqis and destroyed the lives of tens of thousands of U.S. youth. It has turned 70 percent of the population against the war and the president. But the anti-war movement has not grown.

Only by holding onto those contradictory ideas at the same time, can we begin to understand what five years of occupation of Iraq has meant. Let's look at them one at a time.

Before 1990 and the U.S.-imposed sanctions, Iraq was relatively affluent. Children didn't go without food or medical care then. Sunnis and Shiites intermarried. But in 2003 the U.S. bombed its way into Iraq, promising a quick victory over Saddam Hussein and "democracy" for Iraq—while U.S. corporations prepared to take over Iraq's oil wealth.

Since then, an estimated 1 million Iraqis have been killed and hundreds of thousands maimed. Nearly 5 million Iraqis are refugees, 2.5 million within Iraq and another 2.2 million in Syria and Jordan. According to U.N. reports, 43 percent of Iraqis live in abject poverty on less than one dollar a day; 60 percent to 70 percent of the workforce is unemployed; 70 percent of the population can't get adequate supplies of drinking water; and 80 percent lack basic sanitation. Cholera epidemics now rage in nine of Iraq's 18 provinces. Child mortality has risen sharply. Sectarian fighting—for which the occupation is responsible—makes daily life hell.

Yet for all the suffering the Pentagon unleashed upon the Iraqi civilians, the U.S. has lost the war. "Shock and awe" made Iraqis suffer but failed to make them submit. Instead, a resistance has endured that can only be described as heroic. This resistance, while not unified, has exposed the weaknesses of the Pentagon. The big one facing recruiters right now is that insufficient numbers of U.S. youth are willing to volunteer as cannon fodder in their war of conquest. U.S. troops are stretched to the breaking point, forced to return for two and three combat tours. The generals wonder when the 158,000 still in Iraq will break.

The latest study shows the war costs \$12 billion each month. The Bush gang had promised in 2003 that the whole

war would cost \$60 billion, and that this would be paid out of Iraqi oil revenues. One economist, adding in the future care of seriously wounded troops, says the war will cost U.S. taxpayers \$3 trillion.

Not everyone has suffered. Dick Cheney's Halliburton, Blackwater and some other companies got rich and are getting still richer. Big Oil makes record profits, playing with the oil shortfalls that have driven petroleum prices to \$100 a barrel. When George W. Bush, speaking recently without a canned speech, dared to claim that the war was good for the economy, he was thinking about his partners in crime who own these industries.

Iraqi death and suffering defies mere words. But to add to the toll, the U.S. stepped up its air strikes sixfold in 2007. It doubled the number of Iraqis held in captivity. Anti-war activists and experts meeting in Berlin March 7-9 concluded that the U.S. occupation has brought "chaos" to Iraq. There is no doubt that in a just world the U.S. corporations behind this war would have to pay immeasurable reparations to the Iraqi people.

U.S. troops were dying somewhat less frequently toward the end of 2007. The generals claimed success for the "surge." But the news on March 10 was that two bombs had killed eight U.S. troops in one day. Besides the 4,000 killed in combat, at least another 30,000 are severely wounded, and tens of thousands more live in psychic pain.

These extreme sacrifices for imperial conquest are limited to a narrow section of the population, those who "volunteer"—usually out of economic necessity. With Iraq now out of the headlines and off the top of television news, the anti-war movement has slowed down. The exception is the movement of Iraq veterans and active duty troops who are exposing this war's crimes at the Winter Soldier hearing in Washington March 13-16. In addition, polls show that 70 percent of the population think the war must end as soon as possible and a majority believe the war has wrecked the economy. They also look to the elections to resolve this horrible situation, which has been a damper on initiative and militancy.

The record is grim after five years. There are no heroes except the Iraqis who keep resisting the occupation. They have humbled the most powerful military in human history. After five years the first step in resolving Iraq's nightmare remains the same: U.S. out of Iraq now! □



Caleb Maupin of FIST at WWP conference.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO



## FIST member defends socialism

By Tyneisha Bowens  
Berea, Ohio

*"I learned about a time in the history of this country when people worked for literally pennies an hour ... worked 12-hour shifts ... and when children worked in factories ... when organizing a union was a crime ... when Black men were being lynched ... the Vietnam War in which 4 million Vietnamese lost their lives ... and while all of this was going on what did they say about the people that were organizing against this? They said what they really want is socialism; they are a bunch of communists. I learned that the first gay rights organization was founded by Harry Hay, a proud member of the Communist Party. And I learned that in women's liberation ... the suffragists contained many socialists and many revolutionaries. And it was learning all of this that made me think maybe these communists and socialists aren't so bad."*

—Caleb Maupin

Students and community members gathered at Baldwin-Wallace College on March 3 to hear two students debate socioeconomic ideology. The event, entitled "Socialism vs. Capitalism," took place in Berea, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland.

On the side of socialism was Caleb Maupin, a member of Fight Imperialism-Stand Together (FIST). Defending capitalism was Timothy Davey, a member of Pi Lambda Phi. Both are students at Baldwin-Wallace College and contributors to the college's newspaper. The debate was initiated through the newspaper, where the two first began to debate their socioeconomic beliefs through articles.

This first student-organized debate in the history of Baldwin-Wallace College began with opening statements by both participants. Maupin explained how his reading of history brought him to socialism (see quote above). To stress the importance of the timing of such a debate, he emphasized the current war and economic crisis, including foreclosures and evictions in which Cleveland is second only to Detroit, the mass layoffs and the statistic that 11.9 percent of the families in the U.S. are food insecure. Maupin ended with the following: "I was taught in school when I was growing up that we have a government of the people, by the people, for the people. But one thing I have come to understand is that in this country we have a government of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. What we advocate as socialists is that the people

should have control of society."

In his introduction Davey stated, "I can't prove to you numbers-wise that capitalism is the best but what I will do is point to the countries that have tried to implement socialism." Davey cited the Soviet Union, which he claimed failed because of the "abysmal living standards placed on the citizens of the country" and that the growth of the USSR economy was "inflated by the fact that they had surrounding countries that they sold their products to that they ultimately controlled."

Davey did not acknowledge, however, the strong attacks that socialist countries, including the USSR, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Cuba, have had to face from imperialist forces such as the U.S. He also failed to acknowledge the situations where the USSR traded with developing countries in order to help them boost their economies with little or no benefit to the USSR. Davey cited other negative occurrences in socialist countries in his defense of capitalism.

In rebuttal, Maupin pointed out that the economic, health and cultural levels of the people in the former Soviet Union dropped enormously after capitalism was restored in 1991. He emphasized how socialist countries, particularly Cuba, have dealt with and rid themselves of the products of capitalism—including racism, sexism, homophobia, unemployment, and lack of healthcare, education, housing and social programs.

When asked about the current wage cuts, layoffs, evictions, foreclosures and lack of education and healthcare in the U.S., Davey admitted to the downfalls of capitalism but insisted, though without any current references, that an altered form of capitalism could remedy these problems.

Some questions included in the debate had been previously agreed on; others were submitted by the audience. These involved the history of former and current socialist countries, the growing divide between the rich and the poor in capitalist countries, the relation of socialism to democracy, and the material nature of both capitalism and socialism.

Each party was given 10 minutes for closing remarks. Caleb Maupin gave a call to action on the part of the people for a socialist revolution. Timothy Davey continued his stance that capitalism is the best socioeconomic system despite its obvious contradictions.

To hear the debate in its entirety, visit [fistyouth.wordpress.com](http://fistyouth.wordpress.com). □

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# Colombia's murder of FARC negotiator creates crisis in region

By Berta Joubert

Now, more than ever, the effort to achieve a humanitarian exchange of prisoners of war held by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) for its guerrilla members held in jails by the Colombian and U.S. governments is the main road to peace with justice in that country.

A month ago it seemed possible. Now the Colombian military has bombed Ecuador and massacred a group of FARC members, including the group's main peace negotiator, Raúl Reyes.

One thing is certain: the struggle of the Colombian people goes on, as was demonstrated by mobilizations on March 6 against the crimes of the Colombian state and for the victims of paramilitarism.

The Colombian group MOVICE—Movement of Victims of State Crime—called the demonstrations. President Alvaro Uribe had falsely accused the organizers of being guerrillas, which is like putting them on the paramilitaries' hit list. Over the past year, scandal has followed scandal showing the ties between the Uribe government and these unofficial death squads.

The call was responded to internationally. Demonstrations were held in Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, Brussels, Britain, Spain, France, Switzerland, Australia, Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Canada and the United States. In many countries there were protests in several cities. In the U.S., New York, Washington, Miami and Chicago had simultaneous actions.

In Colombia itself, the largest was in Bogotá and filled the Plaza Simón Bolívar. Others took place in Cartagena, Bucaramanga, Pereira, Manizales and Medellín.

These demonstrations came on the heel of a brutal incursion of the Colombian military into Ecuador to massacre FARC

guerrillas responsible for international negotiations.

## Colombia massacre in Ecuador

The Colombian Army and police crossed the border into Ecuador on March 1 to bomb a FARC encampment. It was a deliberate action coordinated with Washington to destroy any prospect of peace through the process of the humanitarian exchange.

The main target was Raúl Reyes, the second in command of the FARC after Manuel Marulanda. This was not accidental, since he was in charge of negotiations for the exchange. Reyes was the contact person for talks about peace negotiations with several governments—among them France, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Argentina—and with social and political figures inside Colombia.

In fact, Reyes was working with the Ecuadoran government for the release of 12 people retained by the FARC. Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa corroborated this: "I am sorry to communicate that the conversations were going forward for the release in Ecuador of 12 hostages, among them Ingrid Betancourt. Everything was frustrated by the warmer and authoritarian hands; we cannot discard that this was one of the motivations for the incursion and attacks on the part of the enemies of peace."

Ingrid Betancourt is a former presidential candidate in Colombia. Many sources in Colombia say Uribe does not want to see her freed because she might compete with him in the 2010 presidential elections.

Since Betancourt holds both Colombian and French citizenship, French President Nicolas Sarkozy has been very involved in the negotiations for her release. Precisely on the day that Reyes was killed, three envoys from the French government were in Ecuador. They were getting ready to meet with him when they received a call

from Luis Carlos Restrepo, the "peace commissioner" appointed by Uribe, warning them not to go to the meeting with Reyes because they could "be in danger."

## New information—facts & fiction

Uribe lied blatantly to Correa and the world when his government announced that the Colombian army fired at the FARC members only after the guerrillas shot at them. Colombia had crossed the Ecuadoran border, bombed the camp and then sent troops by land to "finish" the job.

When Ecuadoran soldiers went to investigate the site, they found a horrific massacre: mutilated bodies were piled up and some scattered around. Except for the three guerrillas guarding the camp, all were in sleeping garb and many had bullet wounds in the back, showing they were killed in their sleep.

This illegal invasion of Ecuadoran territory has been condemned by most Latin American countries.

Sofar 25 bodies have been found. In addition, the Colombian Army took away the bodies of Raúl Reyes and Julián Conrado so the FARC could not bury its comrades. Several bodies are still in an Ecuadoran morgue, unidentified. Three injured women were left behind and subsequently taken to a hospital by the Ecuadoran Army, among them a Mexican student who was conducting research about the insurgent group. Several Mexicans who were not guerrillas were also killed.

The Colombian government, loyal to the instructions of its U.S. boss, is acting not only against the insurgency but also against the Bolivarian countries that oppose U.S. hegemony. It claims its army found three computers used by Reyes in perfect condition (after a bombing!) and that information in them compromises Ecuador and Venezuela as financial supporters of the FARC.

## Brief period of heightened tension

Ecuador, Venezuela and later Nicaragua broke diplomatic relations with Colombia because of this aggression. Ecuador and Venezuela sent troops to their respective borders with Colombia. Tension in the whole region increased and it was feared that a regionalization of the Colombian conflict could explode, engulfing several countries.

It is important to note that Colombia is the most militarized country in the region. It gets advisers and technologically sophisticated war materiel from the United States. It is not accidental that many in the region call Colombia the Israel of Latin America; this recent action is reminiscent of Israel's attacks in Palestine and Lebanon.

On March 7, during the Rio Summit held in the Dominican Republic, Dominican President Leonel Fernández pleaded with Uribe, Correa, Hugo Chávez from Venezuela and Daniel Ortega from Nicaragua to discuss the issue and try to diminish the tension, requesting that they "shake hands and embrace." Correa, in a very serious and dignified speech, then spelled out all the infringements by Uribe's administration upon Ecuador and said, "We cannot talk with a president and a government who has no credibility or sense of decency."

After a clearly hypocritical speech from Uribe regretting the actions, tension in the region was diminished. Both Venezuela and Nicaragua reestablished diplomatic ties with Colombia. Correa said, "I am happy that this has been solved, but what is the basic problem? ... [I]t is the Colombian conflicts that are affecting neighboring countries. Ecuador is a victim of this conflict."

Handshakes or embraces do not solve the Colombian conflict; only the people mobilized in struggle can do it. □

# U.S./NATO occupation intensifies Afghans' misery

By G. Dunkel

Opposition to the U.S.-installed "government" in Afghanistan is so strong that U.S. Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell recently testified at a Senate hearing that it controls only 30 percent of the country. Some correspondents in Afghanistan call President Hamid Karzai the "mayor of Kabul."

One justification the U.S. frequently uses for its occupation of Afghanistan is the claim that the condition of women has improved since the Taliban were driven out of office.

Malalai Joya, an Afghan woman who was suspended from her seat in parliament, recently visited Canada to talk about the conditions women face in her country. Canada has a significant force of soldiers there.

In an interview with rabble.ca, a progressive Internet news site, Joya said, "After six years in control, this government has proved itself to be as bad as the Taliban—in fact, it is little more than a photocopy of the Taliban. The situation in Afghanistan is getting progressively worse—and not just for women, but for all Afghans."

Figures from the UN Population Fund (UNPFA) make the extent of women's misery clear. Some 1,600 to 1,900 of every 100,000 women die in childbirth. Only Sierra Leone has a worse record. While

25 percent of boys go to secondary school, according to UNICEF, only 5 percent of girls do. Life expectancy for both women and men is currently about 47 years, again among the lowest in the world.

Another justification the U.S. has used is its fraudulent "war on drugs." Last year, however, according to UNICEF figures, 93 percent of the opium produced in the world came from Afghanistan and it appears more poppies will be planted during the current season. During the last year before the U.S. invasion, when the Taliban ran Afghanistan, no opium was produced.

## Bush leans on NATO countries

The United States has 28,000 troops in Afghanistan, most serving 15-month tours. President George W. Bush has announced he is sending two additional Marine brigades this spring, about 3,200 to 4,000 troops. Along with troops from Canada, Great Britain, Australia, the Netherlands and Denmark, they do most of the heavy fighting in eastern and southern Afghanistan.

At a press conference in Crawford, Texas, March 2, Bush said, "We expect people to carry a heavy burden if they are going to be in Afghanistan." He is going to a NATO meeting in Bucharest early in April to twist arms, or as Bush puts it, to "encourage people to contribute more."

A few days later, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner hinted that French

troops would reinforce Canadians fighting in southern Afghanistan.

"A strategy is necessary," Kouchner said, to obtain "a common determination of the allies to stay engaged in Afghanistan for the long-term." French President Nicolas Sarkozy will announce details of the French plan at the Bucharest meeting.

Even though the U.S. and NATO have complete control of the air, modern telecommunications, transportation and heavy weapons, they have not been able to knock the Taliban out, even after six years of fighting. The Taliban, with rifles and walkie-talkies, dressed in ordinary clothes instead of body armor, are able to ambush U.S. patrols and fight to retain control of small cities and towns they have occupied.

On Jan. 15 they mounted a strong attack on Kabul's newest and most luxurious hotel, the Serena. Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere managed to escape to the basement along with most of his staff, but two journalists and five security guards were killed and a number of other guards and guests injured.

Military analysts are predicting a heavy Taliban offensive later this spring, when the snows are gone.

There is not much difference between the Democratic and Republican candidates for president on the question of the war in Afghanistan. Republican Sen. John McCain says, "The next president must encourage the greater participation and co-operation

of our allies in the fight against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan."

Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, the Democratic candidates, both criticize Bush on Iraq by saying the real "war against terror" should be fought in Afghanistan.

None of the candidates talk about how this invasion of a poor country followed by a high-tech war of jet planes against villagers is a brutal violation of sovereignty, human rights and international law.

While almost all the political arguments are couched in terms of Afghanistan's strategic importance, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) did an assessment of its mineral wealth between 2005 and 2007. It has copper, iron, nickel, gold, lead and other valuable targets like sulfur, talc, marble and rubies. The USGS estimates it has nearly 60 million tons of copper and 2.2 billion tons of iron ore. Since the days of British colonialism, the corporations and banks have been eyeing this region.

Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries in the world, has seen decades of fighting that have left it much poorer. The United States and its allies have spent billions on warfare there, almost none of which went to improving the lives of the people. However, in spite of their poverty and in the face of vast military power mobilized to impose occupation upon them, the Afghan people have maintained an effective and strenuous resistance. □

## Raúl Reyes, el héroe asesinado por el fascismo colombiano

Por Miguel Urbano Rodrigues

*El gobierno de Álvaro Uribe asesinó en la madrugada del sábado, en territorio ecuatoriano, al comandante Raúl Reyes de las FARC-EP, en una operación concebida y ejecutada con apoyo de los EE.UU. La noticia fue inicialmente divulgada por el ministro de la Defensa de Álvaro Uribe en un comunicado triunfalista que deforma groseramente los acontecimientos, ocultando la naturaleza criminal de la acción terrorista.*

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Según Juan Manuel Santos, Raúl Reyes habría sido abatido en un campamento situado en Ecuador a 1.800 metros de la frontera, durante un bombardeo realizado por la Fuerza Aérea de su país a partir de territorio colombiano, para «no violar la soberanía» del país vecino. Pero aclaró luego que posteriormente tropas del ejército colombiano transpusieron la frontera y recogieron el cuerpo de Reyes y lo llevaron a Bogotá para evitar que las FARC lo sepultasen.

La nota del ministro presenta, por absurda, un toque surrealista. Es inimaginable, por incompatible con la ley de la gravedad, que un avión pueda arrojar bombas sobre un campamento encontrándose a casi dos kilómetros de distancia. Y sencillamente grotesco que esa mentira sea seguida de la confesión de que fuerzas del ejército colombiano acabaron por atravesar la frontera, violando la soberanía de Ecuador. Las cosas pasaron de otra manera.

A través de satélites estadounidenses, Uribe tuvo conocimiento de la presencia de un destacamento de guerrilleros de las FARC en Ecuador frente al Departamento colombiano amazónico del Putumayo.

Bogotá supo, por delación, que Raúl Reyes se encontraba allí. El dirigente revolucionario –segundo en la jerarquía de las FARC – tenía la cabeza a premio, vivo o muerto, por 2,7 millones de dólares. La denuncia fue pagada y aviones de la Fuerza Aérea-la más poderosa y bien equipada de América Latina- descargaron una lluvia de bombas sobre el campamento. Después llegaron fuerzas terrestres helitransportadas y la policía colombiana para rematar los heridos.

En el ataque de piratería aérea murieron, además de Reyes, el cantautor revolucionario Julian Conrado (el gran artista de la radio clandestina La Voz de la Resistencia ) y 16 guerrilleros. Fueron masacrados mientras dormían. Al llegar, los ecuatorianos solamente encontraron ocultas en la floresta tres guerrilleras heridas.

Reyes y otros compañeros tenían balas en la espalda y en la cara.

Uribe, al recibir la noticia, felicitó a la Fuerza Aérea, y el cuerpo de Reyes destrozado por la metralla fue llevado para Bogotá. Luego fotos del cadáver del héroe aparecieron en televisiones y periódicos de decenas de países. Casi el mismo ritual macabro que envolvió el asesinato del Che, en 1967.

### Los bastidores del crimen

El atentado terrorista ocurrió en un momento en que la campaña para la liberación de la franco-colombiana Ingrid Betancourt asume un estilo histérico e inspira titulares de la llamada gran prensa

internacional. Nunca se mintió tanto sobre la realidad colombiana como en estos días en que, a pretexto del sufrimiento de la ex-candidata a la Presidencia, las FARC son blanco de una montaña de calumnias.

Un día quedará evidente que en el debate sobre el intercambio humanitario las FARC actuaron permanentemente con transparencia y autenticidad revolucionaria, y Uribe con hipocresía y objetivos inconcesables.

Correspondiendo a repetidos llamamientos de Hugo Chávez y de la senadora Piedad Córdoba, las FARC han decidido, en una primera fase, liberar unilateralmente a Clara Rojas y a la ex-diputada Consuelo Perdomo. La operación fue sin embargo retardada por algunos días porque Uribe intensificó la concentración de tropas en el área donde ambas deberían ser entregadas a la Cruz Roja Internacional antes de viajar para Caracas en helicópteros venezolanos.

Las FARC eran conscientes de los enormes riesgos que la operación creaba. Solamente quienes conocen la geografía de Colombia –un país con 1.140.000 kilómetros cuadrados y 45 millones de habitantes, surcado por tres cordilleras, ríos gigantes, y en gran parte cubierto por la densa floresta amazónica- puede valorar lo que significó conducir las dos mujeres desde el desconocido campamento en que se encontraban hasta el Departamento del Guaviare, cerca de la frontera de Venezuela. Es útil desde luego recordar que el ejército colombiano violó el compromiso del cese del fuego y empezó a bombardear el lugar una hora después de la salida de los helicópteros.

Washington ha transmitido obviamente a Bogotá minuciosas informaciones recogidas por sus satélites sobre el recorrido del comando guerrillero encargado de entregar a Clara y Consuelo a la Cruz Roja.

Insistieron posteriormente las FARC en la desmilitarización de los municipios de Pradera y Florida como condición indispensable al intercambio humanitario exigido por el pueblo colombiano, operación que preveía el cambio de 40 rehenes en poder de las FARC –entre los cuales Ingrid Betancourt- por 500 guerrilleros encarcelados en presidios estatales. Uribe se negó a atender todas las propuestas internacionales recibidas, que tenían el objetivo de un futuro acuerdo para el cambio de prisioneros.

No obstante esa actitud intransigente del presidente neofascista de Colombia, las FARC, en respuesta a un nuevo pedido de Hugo Chávez decidieron liberar, también en gesto unilateral, a cuatro diputados en su poder.

Una vez más, la operación fue aplazada porque el ejército, en vísperas de la fecha establecida, desplazó poderosas fuerzas, concentrándolas en los Departamentos del Caquetá, del Meta y del Guaviare donde las FARC está bien implantadas entre los pobladores y por los cuales los parlamentarios podrían pasar.

Era doble el objetivo de esa iniciativa militar. Si se producía un choque directo, Uribe responsabilizaría a las FARC por la muerte eventual de los diputados. Simultáneamente, los aviones espías, equipados con una tecnología de punta que Washington sólo proporciona a Israel, estuvieron activísimos. Los satélites norteamericanos transmitieron otra vez

informaciones importantes al Pentágono que las comunicó a Uribe.

Pero las FARC cumplieron, lo que no impidió una intensificación de la campaña pro-liberación inmediata e incondicional de Ingrid Betancourt. Hasta el Papa participó. Esa exigencia era, en las condiciones existentes, de imposible aceptación. Una mujer frágil, enferma, no podía en ninguna hipótesis caminar durante días a través de regiones selváticas, donde además las tropas colombianas podrían interceptar al comando encargado de la misión.

Las FARC repitieron por lo tanto su propuesta de desmilitarización de los municipios de Pradera y Florida, sin la cual el intercambio humanitario es inviable.

### El héroe

El comandante Raúl Reyes era después de Manuel Marulanda, el miembro más destacado del secretariado y del Estado Mayor Central de las FARC.

Revolucionario desde la juventud - tenía actualmente 60 años- se estrenó como sindicalista en las luchas contra los gobiernos oligárquicos de su país. Ellas fueron una iniciación para otras batallas políticas y militares. Hace más de 30 años, Luis Edgar Devia adhirió a las FARC y se transformó en Raúl Reyes, un comandante guerrillero que rápidamente alcanzó renombre internacional.

Lo conocí en mayo del 2001. Recibí una invitación para visitar su campamento, próximo a San Vicente del Caguán, capital de la entonces zona desmilitarizada. Acepté y me quede tres semanas.

Raúl Reyes no impresionaba por la apariencia física. Bajo, cañoso, tenía un timbre de voz suave. Hablaba pausadamente. Pero luego en la primera noche, después de la comida, cuando conversamos en su puesto de comando –una modesta oficina instalada bajo una tienda oculta por los altos árboles de la floresta - me he dado cuenta de que aquel guerrillero frágil era una personalidad excepcional. Nunca lo he visto sin su uniforme y solamente retiraba el fusil del hombro en los momentos de descanso.

En ese primer encuentro hablamos de la crisis mundial, antes de que me ofreciera libros y documentos como prólogo indispensable al diálogo sobre la lucha de las FARC. El era el responsable por las conversaciones en busca de la Paz que transcurrían en esas semanas cerca del caserío de Los Pozos con los representantes del gobierno del presidente Pastrana.

Corrían los tiempos en que Pastrana saludaba respetuosamente a Marulanda con abrazos de Judas, días en que he visto embajadores de países de la Unión Europea disputando las palabras y una sonrisa de Marulanda, el legendario Tirofijo, comandante en jefe de las FARC.

Viajé con Reyes para la Macarena, en junio. Allí las FARC entregaron a la Cruz Roja, en gesto unilateral, 304 militares, prisioneros de guerra.

No olvidó el privilegio de mantener con Raúl Reyes, en madrugadas intrépidas, bajo las estrellas, con el campamento en silencio, largas conversaciones sobre su organización revolucionaria, América Latina y la estrategia del imperialismo estadounidense, el gran enemigo de la humanidad. Y también sobre la vida.

Escribí en ese campamento artículos para



Raúl Reyes

“Avante!” sobre los combatientes de las FARC, y una entrevista también publicada por el órgano del PCP. La atmósfera tenía algo de irreal, porque los textos eran transmitidos por la secretaria de Raúl para un destinatario que los encaminaba después para el periódico. Internet, curiosamente, funcionaba como instrumento utilizado por una guerrilla marxista-leninista.

Para honor y provecho mío, Raúl Reyes mantuvo el contacto conmigo cuando regresé a La Habana, en donde yo residía. Con frecuencia recibía mensajes suyos –a través de comandantes amigos- con informaciones importantes y agradeciendo artículos que publicara sobre la lucha de las FARC.

Recuerdo que poco antes del secuestro en Ecuador del comandante Simón Trinidad – después extraditado para los EEUU – Reyes había sugerido que volviera a la selva colombiana. El proyecto fue entonces cancelado porque la frontera ecuatoriana se había hecho muy insegura.

Hasta su último día, Raúl Reyes fue la voz de las FARC en su diálogo con el mundo. Mas el comandante guerrillero, incumbido de una montaña de tareas, aun conseguía encontrar tiempo para escribir artículos, algunos sobre temas ideológicos, para la revista Resistencia, órgano internacional de las FARC, y para dar entrevistas a periodistas de Europa, América Latina y Estados Unidos. En esos trabajos, el saber, la experiencia y la firmeza del comunista tenían como complemento armonioso la cultura del intelectual humanista.

Uribe brinda ahora por la muerte del combatiente que, en las palabras de Jaime Caicedo, secretario general del Partido Comunista Colombiano, fue un revolucionario ejemplar « que entregó la vida por la causa en que creía».

El triunfalismo del presidente neofascista de Colombia – que financió el paramilitarismo cuando era gobernador de Antioquia y cuyo nombre figura en la lista de narcotraficantes elaborada por la Drug Enforcement Agency de los EEUU, pero es hoy el mejor aliado de Bush en el Continente- no tiene el poder de hacer historia.

El paso por la presidencia de sus países de aventureros reaccionarios como Uribe y Bush dejará solamente memoria de actos sombríos y crímenes contra la humanidad. Raúl Reyes entra, al desaparecer asesinado, en el panteón de los héroes de América Latina. Como Sucre, Bolívar, Artigas, el Che. Raúl Reyes transpone la frontera de la única eternidad posible, la de los hombres y mujeres que han vivido para servir a la Humanidad y contribuir para que ella prosiga caminando.

La marcha contra el Paramilitarismo y por la Paz, del día 6 de Marzo, en Colombia y en diferentes capitales de Europa y América asume ahora también el significado de homenaje póstumo a Raúl Reyes. La solidaridad con los que luchan y mueren por una Colombia democrática y progresista es más que nunca necesaria.

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