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LOS CINCO CUBANOS
LA CRISIS ALIMENTARIA 12

Massive revolt over U.S. trade pact

Strikes, protests besiege South Korean regime

By Sara Flounders

South Korea has been seeing nightly mass demonstrations for over a month, a candlelight march of 1 million people on June 10 and a strike wave of key industrial unions. All are connected to a trade agreement between Washington and the current government of President Lee Myung-bak that would allow U.S. beef into the country.

This huge movement is the biggest challenge to date to U.S.-imposed trade agreements around the world. The escalating mass actions deserve to be watched closely and supported fully.

So far no government in Washington's orbit has been able to resist the trade conditions imposed on them by the combined pressure of U.S. corporations, government negotiators, and the military reinforced by international banking institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organization.

In many countries of the developing world U.S.-imposed trade agreements have undermined and all but destroyed local-

ly grown food production. They have driven tens of millions of small farmers off the land and created famines in the midst of surplus. They have also spread genetically modified, uninspected and tainted food into global food distribution networks.

The huge demonstrations and strikes in South Korea show that such agreements, imposed through complicit governments, can be challenged by a mass grassroots movement.

March of a million

Over 1 million people in the capital, Seoul, flooded the streets in candle-lit demonstrations on June 10. It was the largest demonstration in South Korea's history. Eighty other cities also held protests that day—the anniversary of the 1987 June Popular Resistance movement that had overturned the U.S.-backed military dictatorship in South Korea.

A coalition of 1,500 civic, union and student groups known as the People's Council for Countermeasures Against Mad Cow

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South Koreans protesting U.S. beef imports try to march to president's house.

Midwest floods & crumbling levees

Why capitalism can't deal with global warming

By LeiLani Dowell

A series of flooding, storms and tornadoes throughout the Midwest has once again called attention to the crumbling nature of U.S. public infrastructure and the increasing crisis of global warming.

At least 15 deaths in the Midwest and elsewhere have been attributed to the recent weather that has hit the region. People have been displaced from their homes in the thousands in Indiana and the tens of thousands in Iowa. Power outages have occurred in Michigan, Ohio and Iowa, while in some areas, people have been required to limit their water usage to drinking only.

Reminiscent of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, levees broke throughout the region. Two levees broke on

June 14 near Keithsburg, Ill., near the Mississippi River, and emergency workers and residents have been fervently trying to reinforce nearly 30 levees along that river before they too break. Another levee broke along the Iowa River, flooding the community of Oakville, Iowa. And in Wisconsin, an embankment along a human-made lake broke, washing out a highway and five homes.

A levee in Des Moines, Iowa, burst on June 14, flooding part of the city's northeast side. According to Des Moines Public Works Director Bill Stowe, the city had been seeking federal approval to reconstruct that levee, which was built in the 1950s. (Washington Post online, June 14)

The American Society of Civil Engineers, in its 2005

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Vietnamese triumph after 35-year liberation

By Andy Stapp

We reprint this article from *Workers World* of May 2, 1975, as part of our archival series.

After 35 years of war, victory came to the heroic Vietnamese people on April 30 at 9:30 a.m. when the stillborn U.S. puppet government of Duong Van Minh unconditionally surrendered to the People's Liberation Armed Forces.

As thousands of soldiers in the fascist army threw away their weapons, hoping to fade into the civilian population, armed units of the Provisional Revolutionary Government entered the state radio station and broadcast the news that they had hoisted their red, blue and gold flag over the Presidential Palace.

'Cheers, smiles, and handshakes'

Early reports of the liberation of Saigon—now renamed Ho Chi Minh City—are incomplete but the New York Daily News (April 30) reported that "laughing, cheering Communist troops riding tanks into the city shouted, 'Hello, comrades' to bystanders and newsmen." The New York Post added, "People strolled the streets, greeting the arriving communist soldiers with cheers, smiles, and handshakes. Vietcong flags appeared on many buildings. A jeepload of Vietcong drove up and down the Rue Catinat, the city's main street, waving as they sat with their rifles pointed in the air. Other Vietcong soldiers walked along the street, shaking hands with the people."

The collapse of the puppet regime came only two hours after the last U.S. Marines escaped from the roof of the fortress-like American Embassy aboard a Ch-46 helicopter while embittered puppet soldiers fired at them from the street below. Peter Arnett of the Associated Press wrote that as the final squad of Marines abandoned the embassy, "they threw tear gas grenades into the elevator shaft" to keep their erstwhile "allies" at a safe distance.

In fact, most of the violence on the final day of the war took place in clashes between U.S. Marines and the hapless puppet troops enraged at their master's pell mell flight. The New York Times dispatch covering this frantic evacuation stampede stated that when the first busload of Americans arrived at TanSonNhut air base, "Vietnamese guards fired at it." The English news agency Reuters cabled this story: "United States Navy fighter planes went into action over South Vietnam when two boats carrying the American consul general from the delta city of Can Tho reported that two helicopters with South Vietnamese markings were firing at his party. Later, the consul general was said to be stranded somewhere in the South China Sea."

Suitcase stuffed with gold

Several thousand high-ranking Vietnamese quislings did manage to make their escape in the final hours, in many cases bringing their loot with them. The New York Daily News correspondent observed that "One three-star general carried a suitcase loaded with gold." Four U.S. Marines were killed in the retreat.

The Vietnamese have been fighting for their independence from imperialism ever since the French capitalists conquered Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in 1887, but the liberation struggle did not take a great leap forward until Ho Chi Minh founded the Indochinese Communist Party

in 1930. After the Japanese takeover of Vietnam in 1940, Ho Chi Minh led the guerrilla war against the occupiers. When the French colonialists returned in 1945, he carried on the fight against them also.

The first U.S. military "advisers" were sent to Vietnam by President Harry S. Truman in March 1950. By the time of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May of 1954, the U.S. was paying 78 percent of the cost of the fighting to the Paris government.

After the French withdrawal, Eisenhower rigged up the Diem regime in Saigon. Diem refused to hold elections to reunify the nation, which had been divided into North and South, because he knew Ho Chi Minh would easily win. Instead he instituted a Nazi-like persecution of Communists and all others who opposed his dictatorial rule.

From guerrilla war ...

In 1960 the people of South Vietnam rose up against Diem and began to wage a guerrilla war under the leadership of the National Liberation Front (called the Viet Cong by the capitalist media). In 1963 Diem was assassinated and the next year Lyndon Johnson fabricated the Gulf of Tonkin hoax to justify U.S. intervention, which began in earnest in the spring of 1965.

By 1968 the Pentagon had over half a million men in Vietnam, but after the U.S. defeat during the year's Tet Offensive, the troops began to be withdrawn. After a number of further setbacks for the U.S. militarists and their Saigon puppets—the Laos debacle in 1971 and the huge loss of B-52s over Hanoi in the Christmas bombing of 1972—Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon were forced to sign the Paris ceasefire on Jan. 23, 1973.

By this time, U.S. public opinion had swung heavily against more war. But because General Thieu, like Diem before him, continued to be nothing but a U.S. puppet and refused to hold elections (which were called for in the Paris accords), the fighting continued in South Vietnam.

... to final victory

On March 18 of this year, the liberation army drove the fascist forces from the Central Highland city of Ban Me Thuot. By March 20 the freedom fighters had captured three provinces and a week later entered Hue. On March 29 Danang was liberated. The people's army continued to advance, freeing the cities of Nha Trang, Tuy Hoa, Xuan Loc, Bien Hoa and finally Saigon itself.

The war has accelerated the decline of U.S. capitalism. When Johnson sent the first two battalions of U.S. Marines to Vietnam 10 years ago, the yearly inflation rate in America was only 1.7 percent. This year it topped 12 percent, even while millions were suffering mass unemployment. The New York Daily News (April 30) concedes that "The ultimate tax dollar cost of the war, including payments to veterans and their descendants, interest on the war-related debt and the like, could take the final cost to \$1 trillion."

This does not count the human cost: 55,000 GIs killed and 6,000,000 Indochinese dead and wounded.

Now that the war is over and the Vietnamese have finally won an unconditional victory, the U.S. government and media are calling it a "great tragedy." But the tragedy is past. April 30, 1975, will live in history as a glorious achievement of the masses and the beginning of the socialist reconstruction of South Vietnam. □



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Youth of color energize Boston Pride

By Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston

Lesbian, gay, bi and trans youth of color and their allies were in major motion during Pride Weekend in Boston, organizing and taking part in events and demonstrations across the city on June 13-15.

From Back Bay and downtown Boston to Dorchester, youth from Boston GLASS, an LGBT drop-in center, as well as the Boston Youth Organizing Project and Fight Imperialism—Stand Together (FIST) played a major role in asserting their power to lead.

During the LGBT Pride March, youth organizers of color rode past thousands of spectators on the Stonewall Warriors Float. It was covered with posters reminding the crowds of the cases of the Jersey 4 and Sean Bell—youth of color who have faced repression and death at the hands of the state.

Stonewall Warriors and Boston GLASS youth led the cheering crowds in chants of “Gay, straight, Black, white! All unite to fight the right!” and “Trans youth under



Youth at HIV awareness meeting in Dorchester.

WW PHOTO: GERRY SCOPPETTUOLO

attack! What do we do? Act up, fight back!”

Their stirring passions and the crowd’s enthusiastic response were in marked contrast to the dreary parade of corporate-sponsored bank floats, utility company trucks with ill-fitting rainbow banners, and hack politicians who exploit the revolutionary character of gay pride more and more every year. A bright spot was the dozens of UAW and UNITE/HERE members who marched together just ahead of the Stonewall Warriors float, supported by members of the Boston School Bus Drivers’ Union, USWA Local 8751.

This new Boston-based organizing force of nearly two dozen youth, mostly

of color, had for weeks also been organizing a desperately needed HIV Health Fair held June 16 at the Epiphany School in Dorchester, Mass., in coordination with Dorchester’s Healing Our Land, Inc., led by minister Franklin Hobbs. For weeks they met constantly, setting up the New Era coalition to mobilize a fightback movement to stop the spread of HIV in communities of color in Boston.

The state’s AIDS bureau has been unable to devise effective policies to diminish the ever-rising HIV rates in the Black community, so these youth and Healing Our Land have taken matters into their own hands. They passed out thousands of flyers, made countless phone calls, and on

Pride day spread the message over the Stonewall Warriors’ sound truck microphones: “Get tested! Know your status! Stop HIV!”

As a result, more than 150 people came out to the Health Fair in Dorchester for the workshops, food, inspirational speakers and free HIV testing. Rap artist Natural Bliss performed and urged people to remember the case of Sean Bell, shot dead by New York police two years ago. Fifteen HIV tests were administered.

Geo Yovannys, a Boston GLASS organizer, explained to Workers World the importance of this event: “It’s not right that the government is hiding the real numbers of the people who are infected. We need more youth like us to do this work. All schools should have this movement in their schools and have HIV testing available there. The little ads that are out there are not enough to get people tested.”

Keeping up the beat, New Era youth organizers will next be helping Healing Our Land organize a July 19 HIV awareness march in Dorchester. For more information, contact the Rev. Franklin Hobbs, healoland@yahoo.com. □

Pseudo-science still tries to ‘cure’ LGBT people

By Tyneisha Bowens

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) is the official handbook of U.S. mental health workers. Created by and a registered trademark of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the DSM categorizes mental health conditions and the criteria for diagnosing them.

First published in 1952, the DSM has played a role in creating classifications of mental health “illnesses” and “disorders” that have stigmatized the poor, women, people of color and LGBT people.

For example, until 1973 the DSM categorized homosexuality as a mental disorder and recommended it be “treated” aggressively. These “treatment methods” for homosexuality included surgeries such as clitoridectomies, lobotomies and castration; hormone treatment; and shock treatment, both electric and pharmacological. Only through a protracted struggle by the LGBT movement was the “disorder” removed from the manual.

To this day, LGBT communities and especially trans peoples and LGBT youth are forced to undergo extensive physical and psychological abuse in the guise of treatment to “cure” their sexual and gender identities. Many times it is their sexuality or gender identity that is the basis for being institutionalized in a mental health facility.

There have been four major revisions of the DSM, with DSM-IV published in 1994. The next revisions are scheduled for May of 2012, with an early draft of DSM-V due for comment in 2009.

In May 2008 the APA named Kenneth Zucker as the committee chair of the so-called “Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders” section of the upcoming edition. Zucker’s research and treatment work at Toronto’s Clarke Institute—currently the Centre for Addiction and Recovery—has been labeled as part of the “ex-gay” movement and seen by multiple “ex-gay” groups as working to “cure” homosexuality.

However, Zucker’s appointment has outraged not only the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities but also progressive mental health workers across the U.S.

Leading the charge against Zucker’s appointment, and particularly his research on a so-called “treatment” of so-called gender identity disorder (GID), are trans and gender non-conforming organizations and activists. GID and gender dysphoria are so-called diagnoses by the medical and mental health establishments to account for the existence of trans and gender nonconforming peoples in society. Zucker claims, for example, that in order to “treat” GID, young boys should be forbidden to play with dolls.

Although the creation of the GID diagnosis was meant to further mentally pathologize trans people, its current inclusion in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual has led to an important debate within the trans communities. Using the diagnosis to their advantage, trans activists fought and won to have Medicaid pay for hormone therapy and other health care needs.

Transgender lesbian activist and author Leslie Feinberg explains: “From the standpoint of gender variant individuals, the diagnosis of DSM has been used as a weapon to enforce gender conformity. But for some transsexual men and women, particularly the poorest, the diagnosis can mean access to physical transition. It is the right of the transsexual communities, particularly nationally oppressed communities, the poor and the uninsured and

underinsured, to decide when and how to replace the DSM diagnosis.”

Science, specifically the fields of psychology and medicine, can be abused to establish hierarchies and thereby systems and institutions of oppression. Heterosexuality as a sexual identity, as well as manifestations of conforming to assigned gender norms, have never been scrutinized and classified as mental illnesses. The institutional inequality is evident. The abusive past and present “scientific” view and “treatment” of homosexuality and gender variance are a part of something unrelated to psychological health.

The use of “science” to prove one race, sex, gender, sexual identity or class inferior to another dates back to the initial need for validation of the oppressive and exploitative systems stemming from private property. These systems of hierarchy and biased classifications and experiments have historically been used to prove the political, mental and physical inferiority of women, LGBT folks, people of color and working class people—through the criminalization of poverty and alternate economic survival tactics. It should be noted that these hierarchies have been established through the exclusion of LGBT folks, women, people of color and the working masses in the processes of defining normality and variance.

Haitians protest at U.N.

Some 35 members of Fanmi Lavalas (New York) demonstrated in front of the United Nations for five hours June 13 to protest the U.N.’s brutal occupation of Haiti since that country was invaded by U.S., Canadian and French forces in 2004. That’s when U.S. Special Forces kidnapped popular Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and exiled him to Africa.

Many speakers pointed out that the Haitian community has been demonstrating in front of the U.N. for 17 years, since the first U.S.-sponsored coup against Aristide. They also made it clear that they want Aristide to be able to safely return to Haiti.



—Report and photo by G. Dunkel

The validity of the LGBT community’s response is further understood when one looks at the trend to use oppressive pseudoscientific arguments, even when they have been disproven, to repress the working class and the oppressed during times of political unrest. These arguments include the “abnormality” of homosexuality and gender variance.

It is evident in this time of economic crisis and seemingly endless advances of U.S. imperialism that the ruling class is correct to see this as a period of potential, and some may argue current, political unrest. □

FIST discusses the state



Fight Imperialism—Stand Together (FIST) is holding discussion groups every Thursday evening in New York. The subject on June 13 was “The Origin and Role of the State.” It was first established that the state means the whole repressive apparatus of the government—the prisons, police and military. Politicians come and go, even governments come and go, but the state remains essentially the same as an apparatus for one class to repress another.

Articles on ICE raids and police brutality were read, along with selections from “Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State” by Frederick Engels and “State and Revolution” by V.I. Lenin.

Some questions raised and addressed during the discussion were: How does class division become a hindrance to production? Why is universal suffrage merely a gauge of the maturity of the working class? What is to replace the smashed state machine? How does one explain what the state is and why it exists in simple terms? What is the difference between an imperialist capitalist state and an underdeveloped capitalist state? Is the media part of the state? What is the difference between a capitalist state and a workers’ state?

For information on the classes, call 212-627-2994.

—Larry Hales

Supreme Court ruling on Guantánamo: What does it mean?

By Greg Butterfield

Activists and legal organizations that defend civil rights celebrated a victory June 12. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the habeas rights of the remaining 270 detainees at the U.S. military base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

In *Boumediene v. Bush*, a case brought by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and co-counsel, the court ruled 5-4 that the prisoners have the right to appear in a U.S. civilian court and challenge their detention.

The court majority rejected the government's argument that the U.S. Constitution doesn't apply at Guantánamo because it is not on U.S. territory. They noted that the U.S. "exercises exclusive jurisdiction and control over Guantánamo, with no other country's law applying." Guantánamo is, of course, Cuban territory illegally occupied by the Pentagon.

The ruling also confirms the Marxist view that even a reactionary court can be forced to make a positive ruling through mass pressure—in this case, because the heroic liberation struggle of the Iraqi people, international disgust with Bush's brutality, and the spiraling economic crisis at home have put U.S. imperialism on the defensive.

The men held at Guantánamo, whom the Bush administration terms "enemy combatants," were swept up by U.S. military forces in Afghanistan and other countries in the early days of the so-called war on terror. Some have been held for over six years in deplorable conditions. All have been subject to horrendously racist treatment. Many have been tortured.

Most were never charged with any crime. In fact, they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, spoke the "wrong" language,

had the "wrong" beliefs and the "wrong" appearance or skin-tone in the eyes of the U.S. military.

Others, who may have been active combatants fighting the unlawful U.S. invasion of Afghanistan or interventions into other Middle Eastern, South Asian or African countries, have not been accorded their rights under international law as prisoners of war.

"Today, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the part of the Military Commissions Act that attempted to block the federal courts from hearing the claims of our clients was unconstitutional," states a legal analysis released by CCR. Founded by radical attorneys in 1966 to defend the Civil Rights movement, CCR began the legal battle on behalf of the Guantánamo detainees in early 2002. Today the organization coordinates a team of more than 500 pro bono attorneys who represent the detainees.

President George W. Bush, in Rome when the ruling came down, said, "We'll abide by the court's decision." Nevertheless, he threatened that "new legislation may now be needed to keep the American people

safe." (Associated Press, June 12)

This was the tactic pursued by Bush and Congress after two earlier Supreme Court decisions challenged the detentions in 2004 and 2006. Combatant Status Review Tribunals (CSRTS) and the Military Commissions Act have prevented the detainees from having their day in court.

Gitmo = torture

During the drawn-out battle, Guantánamo has become synonymous with torture and abuse. A Red Cross report leaked to the New York Times in 2004 described "humiliating acts, solitary confinement, temperature extremes, use of forced positions."

Explaining the torture inflicted on CCR client Mohammad al-Qahtani, attorney Gita Gutierrez reported he endured "48 days of severe sleep deprivation and 20-hour interrogations, forced nudity, sexual humiliation, religious humiliation, physical force, prolonged stress positions and prolonged sensory over-stimulation,



and threats with military dogs."

H. Candace Gorman, a Chicago attorney, described the treatment of her client, Abdul

Hamid Al-Ghizzawi: "His American jailers spared Al-Ghizzawi the very worst of the worst in the long list of torture techniques now in use. He was not murdered or waterboarded. He did not have a razor blade taken to his penis, nor was he hung from the ceiling by his arms. ...

"In American custody, Al-Ghizzawi was 'only' beaten with chains; bound to chairs in excruciating positions for endless hours; threatened with death and with rape; stripped and subjected to body-cavity searches by nonmedical personnel while men—and women—laughed and took pictures.

"Among many other brutalities and indignities, Al-Ghizzawi was also posed naked with other prisoners; terrorized with dogs; forced to kneel on stones in the searing heat; left to stand or crouch for extended periods; deprived of sleep;

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After court ruling

New plans made to free Cuban Five

By Alex Majumder
New York

Hard on the heels of an adverse decision by the 11th Circuit Court in the case of the Cuban Five, solidarity activists came together here on June 14 to find ways to redouble their efforts to free the five men held in prisons across the U.S.

The tri-state working conference on the Cuban Five had been called by a number of organizations before the court decision came down. The Five are political prisoners approaching the 10th anniversary of their incarceration for their efforts to end U.S.-based terrorism directed at their Cuban homeland. The conference drew over 100 participants, mostly from the region, but also from places as far away as Florida, Texas, California and Quebec.

New York media activists Sally O'Brien and Jennifer Wager showed an excerpt from their upcoming documentary, "Against Silence in Our Own Voices: Families of the Five Speak Out." The wives and a mother of the five discuss living without the five men and being repeatedly denied visitation rights—a violation of U.S. laws and international norms of prisoners' rights. The film highlighted the need to step up the visa campaign to demand the U.S. allow them their visitation rights.

Rodrigo Malmierca, Cuban ambassador to the U.N., welcomed the participants and discussed the decades-long history of terrorism by right-wing Cuban-exile groups. With the funding and approval of various U.S. agencies, it has been aimed at Cuba's socialist infrastructure and economy and has taken more than 3,400 Cuban lives.

It was this history, and a rise in terrorist attacks in the 1990s, that prompted Cuba to send the five men to monitor the right-wing exiles.

Cuba had presented the material evidence gathered by the five to the FBI and demanded that appropriate action be taken. Instead, the FBI studied the evidence to determine who collected it. Using this information, on Sept. 12, 1998, they arrested the five—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González. The conferees discussed ways of broadening knowledge about the Five in the progressive movement.

Attorney Leonard Weinglass from the legal team gave a summary of a June 4 ruling by a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court that upheld guilty verdicts

obtained after a trial in Miami marked by massive anti-Cuba propaganda. Although a setback, Weinglass said the 99-page ruling, which includes a 16-page dissenting opinion, did provide opportunities for continued legal appeals at the Circuit Court level and, if necessary, to the Supreme Court. For example, while the convictions were upheld, three of the five men will be resentenced, which means their sentences could be reduced.

Gloria La Riva of the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five highlighted the history of campaigns by the movement to raise public consciousness about the five Cuban heroes and to contrast it to the U.S.'s hypocritical handling of the known terrorist Luis Posada Carriles. Posada, a long-time CIA operative living freely in Miami, is wanted in Venezuela for the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed 73 people.

Charged with the responsibility of raising public awareness about the Cuban Five and exposing the U.S. government's hypocrisy in this case, the conference spent the rest of the day in workshops, brainstorming ideas and making concrete proposals for the summer. These activities will lead up to a Sept. 13 national demonstration that will launch a month of activities for the Cuban Five.

The workshops discussed outreach to youth and students, forums on campuses and outreach to labor activists, communities of faith, the legal profession, academic conferences, and conducting visibility campaigns at LGBT Pride Month events and Caribbean Day parades. There were also proposals to organize cultural activists to produce a song and a mural about the Five, and outreach to local elected officials.

The conference exceeded the organizers' expectations. The goal is that the packed auditorium will translate to a more active campaign during this critical stage. As the legal defense teams press ahead with their challenges to the court rulings, activists will put pressure on the streets through these varied educational campaigns. □

Habeas corpus and death row

By Stephen Millies

According to the Innocence Project, 218 prisoners have been freed because of DNA testing. Sixteen of them were awaiting execution.

The Death Penalty Information Center has counted 129 death row prisoners who were found innocent since 1973. With over two million people in jail and five million on parole, this is still a tiny percentage of those unlawfully convicted.

Despite this heartbreaking record of frame-ups, Congress in 1995 sped up the trip to the electric chair or lethal injection by passing the "Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act" (AEDPA).

This vicious law has severely limited the right of death row prisoners to file habeas corpus appeals. Among those whose appeals have been cut is the eloquent political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

One of the senators sponsoring this act was the notorious segregationist Strom Thurmond. As a circuit judge, Thurmond sentenced 17-year-old Black sharecropper Samuel Osborne to die for defending himself against his white landlord.

As South Carolina governor, Thurmond executed 21 people in the state's electric chair. Everyone burned to death was African-American.

President Bill Clinton signed the AEDPA on April 24, 1996, while Mumia Abu-Jamal was spending his 42nd birth-

day on Pennsylvania's death row.

The U.S. Constitution specifically forbids Congress from suspending the right of habeas corpus. But these rights never applied to those held in slavery.

Slave masters and wealthy merchants wrote the Constitution. They also suspended habeas corpus in cases of invasion or insurrection. Besides being worried about slave revolts, they were concerned about the rebellion of poor farmers led by Daniel Shays in Massachusetts.

The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld the AEDPA. Not a single judge dissented.

Yet five justices on this court have upheld the right to habeas corpus for inmates at the Guantánamo concentration camp. That's because of the uprisings in the Middle East and Latin America.

Troy Anthony Davis is one of those unlawfully convicted and faces execution in Georgia. No physical evidence linked Davis to the killing of Savannah police officer Mark Allen MacPhail. Seven of the nine main witnesses who testified against Davis have recanted.

The AEDPA has prevented Davis from bringing up evidence that could prove his innocence in appeals.

His life is in danger. On March 17 the Georgia Supreme Court denied Davis his appeal. Go to troyanthonydavis.org to see how you can help save the life of this innocent man. □

Michigan moratorium coalition calls for march on Lansing

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

The UAW Local 7 hall, across the street from a Chrysler assembly plant, was the place to organize and speak out here June 14 for a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions in Michigan. An organizing session, town hall meeting and free legal clinic anchored the day's activities.

First, at a statewide organizing meeting, the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions voted unanimously for a mass action Sept. 17 in Lansing, Mich. It will focus on demanding the Michigan Legislature pass a bill for a two-year moratorium introduced recently by state Sen. Hansen Clarke of Detroit.

SB 1306 would allow a homeowner facing foreclosure to go to court for an automatic stay that would delay a sheriff's sale for two years or extend the repayment redemption period from six months to two years. The court would set a reasonable repayment plan based in part on the borrower's income and ability to pay. The law would be in effect for three years; anyone in foreclosure during that period could utilize the moratorium.

SB 1306 was modeled on a five-year moratorium law in effect in Michigan during the Great Depression. Over half the states had moratoriums in place at that time.

Representatives of organizations throughout metro Detroit and beyond strategized on building public support for the moratorium and the Sept. 17 march on Lansing. Coalition members and supporters plan to mobilize statewide by fanning out to county fairs, festivals and other summer events.

They will be leafleting, speaking and doing media work to build the Lansing action and put the heat on politicians to support the moratorium. Organizers

reiterated that only by building a strong grassroots movement will enough pressure be generated to force the state Legislature to act on behalf of the people.

Many tactics were discussed, including demonstrations outside bankers' homes and targeting the law firm of Trott & Trott, whose lawyers represent the mortgage companies and banks throwing people out of their homes.

The moratorium coalition office at Central United Methodist Church in downtown Detroit has been buzzing with activity. People stop by to get leaflets and information, then spread the word in their communities and organizations such as unions, churches and student groups. Coalition members leafleted the crowds at Barack Obama rallies in Detroit and Flint.

After the organizing meeting, 150 people attended a town hall speak-out organized by the Coalition and hosted by Sen. Clarke. Testimony from victims of foreclosures and evictions showed the crisis situation caused by the foreclosure epidemic.

Coalition leader Abayomi Azikiwe of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice set the tone by explaining why SB 1306 is so sorely needed and how a mass march on Lansing when the state Legislature reconvenes is the next step in this crucial struggle. Legislative aide Bruce Sullivan Feaster chaired the open-mike meeting.

Sen. Clarke, sponsor of SB 1306, told the crowd: "I'm here today to listen to you. Foreclosures don't just evict people from their homes—they hurt everyone in Michigan. As our property values go down, people owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth. I again declare today that we are in a state of emergency here in Michigan."

Next came the people's testimony. One



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Speak-out heard many tragic stories of foreclosures and evictions.

after another, those victimized by predatory lending and in various stages of foreclosure stepped up to tell their horror stories.

Yvette Charles of Southfield owned her home for 30 years on a veteran's loan and is now in foreclosure. "We're made to feel shame and pain, that somehow we caused this, when it's not true," she stated. "Trott & Trott made illegal maneuvers and worked with the VA to steal my home at a sheriff's sale."

Sandra Hines of Detroit told how, just before Christmas last year, "I was evicted from my home of 38 years. I was also evicted from my community and disconnected from my history."

Wayne County Commissioner Phil Cavanagh told the audience that he fully supports the moratorium. He said one out of five mortgages in the county is delinquent or in foreclosure.

Kendra Washington told how she moved into an abandoned home, spent her money to fix it up utilizing a nuisance abatement program, and then HUD forced her to leave.

State Rep. Bettie Cook Scott spoke out for the moratorium and for a bill she introduced that would stop late water and utility bills from being tacked onto property taxes—a practice that has increased the rate of tax foreclosures.

Jean Irwin, who went bankrupt after a bout with cancer and being unable to find steady work, used her tax refund to stop foreclosure on her home after being laid off last August. She said she's in an uphill

battle against homelessness.

Richard Clay, vice president of Concerned Black Men, said that while it was "too late" for him, SB 1306 is important to help "the dozens of people I know in foreclosure now."

Carol Summers has one month left before her home is gone. "Countrywide told me my payments were too low and that I don't make enough money. They said I should cut my monthly grocery bill down from \$100 to \$50."

Larry Thomas testified that "Communities are being destroyed, families ripped apart." He said that two years after being in bankruptcy, he was finally able to afford a house, but, "Now I'm two months away from losing my home."

Kimberly Canty, who has been unable to find a job for five years despite holding an MBA degree, said, "I owe \$10,000 and now my water bill has been added to my taxes. I will be homeless by the end of the year."

"This is a social crisis that requires a broad political response," stated a Coalition organizer. "Only a mass outpouring of the people will force the Legislature to act and pass the moratorium now!"

A free legal clinic held during the town meeting assisted dozens of people facing foreclosure and predatory lending situations. Paralegal Shelia Tyson did intake as attorneys from Michigan Legal Services; Legal Aid and Defender Office; Neighborhood Legal Services; Vanessa G. Fluker, Esq., PLLC; Jerome D. Goldberg, PLLC; and housing counselors assisted people with their many questions and problems.

Much-needed donations can be sent to the Moratorium NOW! Coalition at 23 E. Adams, 4th Floor, Detroit, MI 48226. Phone 313-319-0870 or e-mail moratorium at moratorium-mi.org to get involved. Visit the Coalition's Web site for PDF leaflets, videos and other resources at moratorium-mi.org.

Bryan G. Pfeifer contributed to this article.

S.F. forum weighs May Day, Obama



Monica Moorehead, managing editor of Workers World newspaper, and Clarence Thomas, International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 executive board member in San Francisco and national co-chair of the Million Worker March, both spoke at a Workers World Party meeting June 14, held at the Women's Building in San Francisco. Thomas spoke on the significance of the West Coast Longshore Workers' Shutdown Against the War this past May Day and his union's militant history of shutting down the docks against all forms of injustice.

Moorehead spoke on why all currents within the progressive movement should

be prepared to defend Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama and his spouse, Michelle Obama, against vile, racist attacks which also target the Black community. She also explained why neither Obama's platform nor that of Republican presidential nominee John McCain will solve the economic crisis of foreclosures, health care, rising food and gas prices at home or the war abroad.

Following the meeting, copies of "Marxism, Reparations, and the Black Freedom Struggle" were sold and then the books were signed by Thomas and Moorehead, who were contributors to it.

—Report & photo by Tova Fry

Labor Council calls for moratorium

On June 9, the San Francisco Labor Council passed a resolution "For a Moratorium on Foreclosures, Utility Shutoffs, Evictions & Public Housing Demolitions."

The resolution declares that although "housing is a human right," homelessness is increasing, public housing units are being demolished and "millions may lose their homes to foreclosure and eviction—all at a time when workers need the jobs at prevailing wages that building adequate housing for the people would provide."

The resolution targets "the predatory practices of banks and mortgage companies" as well as "a big increase in the number of evictions of renters from their homes and apartments, and utility shutoffs facing those unable to pay their gas and electric bills."

It recalls that "during the Great Depression of the 1930s, 25 states adopted a moratorium (freeze) on foreclosures, and such moratoriums were upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court," and adds that "Governors, State Legislatures, the President and Congress, as well as the Department of Housing & Urban

Development, have the statutory authority to declare a moratorium on home foreclosures and evictions during a time of either natural or economic emergency disaster."

Noting that "Michigan State Senator Hansen Clarke has introduced a bill calling for a 2-year moratorium on foreclosures, in a state that is suffering the worst housing crisis since the 1930s," and that "4,500 units of habitable or easily renovated public housing are being demolished or threatened with demolition in New Orleans," the Labor Council calls on "the President and elected representatives to implement a moratorium (freeze) on home foreclosures, utility shut-offs and evictions" and also "a moratorium on public housing demolitions."

The San Francisco Labor Council resolves to "work together with housing advocates and the trade union movement in a joint effort to bring about these reforms, and to establish the principle and practice that housing is a right for every man, woman and child living in the United States." □

Health care in crisis, part 1:

Which way forward?

By David Hoskins

A little over one year ago 12-year-old Deamonte Driver died in Maryland after infection from an abscessed tooth spread to his brain. His mother, Alyce Driver, had spent a considerable amount of time prior to his death trying to find dental care for her children. Although Alyce was a working mother, none of her jobs in a bakery, construction or home health care provided the insurance she needed to care for her children.

Deamonte died after weeks of emergency hospitalization failed to save his young life.

Unfortunately, his death is not an isolated tragedy. It is endemic to a system that consistently prioritizes profits before people and allows pharmaceutical companies and big insurers to dictate the terms of the health care debate.

Nearly 50 million people living in the U.S. lack basic health insurance. Another 25 million are underinsured and find themselves woefully unprepared when a medical crisis hits.

The Commonwealth Fund—a private foundation specializing in health policy research—recently commissioned a survey that found many families delayed visiting the doctor, skipped tests and failed to fill prescriptions as a result of inadequate insurance and skyrocketing medical costs.

Almost half of those surveyed took out mortgages or loans or used credit-card debt to pay their medical bills. They are the lucky ones. The unlucky ones, like

Deamonte Driver, die far too young from preventable ailments that cause needless pain and suffering.

For decades a lack of insurance has been associated with the working poor and nationally oppressed. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one in five Blacks and one out of every three Latin@s lack health insurance. The same survey found that one in 10 whites were uninsured.

If national oppression is a fair indicator of who lacks health care coverage, class is the other factor. Statistics from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services show that 25 percent of the uninsured live below the poverty line and a full 72 percent make less than \$27,930 per individual or \$56,550 for a family of four.

But as the health care crisis balloons, higher-income workers are increasingly at risk of losing adequate insurance. The underinsurance rate of families earning over \$40,000 a year tripled from 2003 to 2007.

The uninsured and underinsured are tasked with facing incredible financial hardship at the same time that they confront life-changing illnesses. A 2005 article for Health Affairs journal titled “Illness and Injury as Contributors to Bankruptcy” chronicled the devastating effect health care debt can have on working households.

According to the article, half of all bankruptcies are caused by medical bills and three-fourths of those bankrupted had health insurance at the time they got sick or were injured. The number of families

filing for medical bankruptcies went up by 2,300 percent between 2001 and 2005.

Families cited the high cost of medical bills, prescription drug costs and lost income due to illness as the primary reasons for their financial hardship. The study found that even middle-income households with insurance are susceptible to financial catastrophe when sick. One in five households filing for medical-related bankruptcy went without food at some point in the two years leading up to bankruptcy. Thirty percent had their water or electricity shut off and close to half lost their phone service.

Blaming the victim: right-wing myths and the health care crisis

Right-wing academics and politicians have long sought to blame the health care crisis on someone or something other than the for-profit system and the drug companies and HMOs that make billions off of it. As part of their blame-the-victim scheme, they have repeatedly attempted to scapegoat two groups: immigrants, particularly the undocumented, and the uninsured who seek emergency treatment.

Right-wing scapegoating spearheaded hateful legislation such as California’s Proposition 181, which sought to bar undocumented workers from receiving non-emergency health services. Disinformation regarding the impact of immigration was also responsible for a clause in the 1996 welfare reform law that barred all immigrants who entered the U.S. after 1996 from receiving Medicaid

for five years after entry.

The American Journal of Public Health examined the claim that immigrants disproportionately drive up health care costs. According to the 2005 study, approximately one-third of immigrants are uninsured. The study also found that despite the level of uninsured, immigrants are likely to pay \$80,000 more per capita in taxes over their lifetime than they will receive in government services.

This coupled with the fact that U.S.-born individuals account for over 92 percent of private and government insurance expenditures demonstrates that immigration is in no way responsible for the current health care crisis.

Research on the cost of emergency room visits similarly disproves the notion that the problem with the U.S. health care system is the uninsured. Emergency department use accounts for a small portion of medical expenditures, while cost shifting from the uninsured emergency patient to the insured is miniscule. The American Journal of Public Health published another study in 1996 that found free care for the uninsured emergency patient totaled just 2 percent of total emergency department costs.

Despite the right wing’s attempt to demonize undocumented workers and blame the uninsured for the high cost of health care, the research demonstrates that this crisis is rooted in the capitalist for-profit health care system.

Next: Democrats’ quick fix is no solution for workers.

Mental health workers fight for safe, effective treatment

By Dante Strobino
Raleigh, N.C.

Second of two articles.

Workers at the Dorothea Dix mental health hospital in Raleigh, N.C., have staged weekly rallies involving more than 150 workers to prevent the closing of their hospital. On June 6, more than 25 workers attempted to barge into Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Dempsey Benton’s office to demand a one-year moratorium on closing the hospital.

A recent stage of a 2001 DHHS reform plan was to close Dix and John Umstead Hospital, two of the state’s four psychiatric hospitals, and merge them into one Central Regional Hospital. However, the number of patient beds in the new hospital is much fewer than those served by the two hospitals combined, and already-low staffing ratios are to be significantly cut.

Workers at Dix are being asked to drive an additional 40 miles to and from work each day, during a time of exorbitant gas prices. The DHHS administration is trying to rush to close down Dix and move those patients and workers to the new hospital, despite huge safety design flaws, unwritten policies, inadequate training and orientation, and hidden and incomplete major reports from assigned legislative and DHHS committees.

The workers have been able to turn around unfavorable press coverage and a public perception that the workers were the cause of the crisis. Due to the workers’ organizing efforts and public pressure, Secretary Benton announced that there would be an initial six-week delay on the closing of Dix hospital.

Privatization and capitalism

Many countries and states have privatized what were previously public services. Often this results in grave social consequences, as is now being displayed in North Carolina.

Many of the privatized mental health providers do not provide quality care for patients. In North Carolina and other states, psychosocial treatment under privatized care commonly consists of a trip to a grocery store or movie theater with the patient, accompanied by workers who are paid low wages and have not been properly trained in mental health. There is rarely the proper intensive, around-the-clock care that is needed and is provided in the public psychiatric hospitals and developmental disability centers.

“This job is important and the need is growing,” stated UE Local 150 member Raymond Howard, youth program assistant I at the Caswell Developmental Center in Kinston, N.C. “Mental health is an issue in the U.S. and we don’t need them cutting funds. We need them to add funds. We need to have proper staffing levels.”

With an economy now superdependent on credit, privatization of social services is a way for private capital to get a guaranteed profit on their investment. Banks have turned to investment in education, health, transportation, waste management, prisons and mental health. Corporations receive governmental subsidies to ensure that they receive profit on services that the government should be providing to the people.

The privatization of social services also

serves as a union-busting tactic, as union contracts are voided with the turnover to a private company. Lower wages for the workers always follow.

When the North Carolina mental health system was partially privatized in 2001, many workers were laid off. Public beds were supposed to be absorbed by private “community services” which did not exist in many areas. Many patients, including some of the neediest, were dropped from programs.

Instead of community clinics, the place to go in an emergency became the regular hospital emergency room or emergency ward, at inflated costs and poorer services, as practitioners were not familiar with the patients.

Meanwhile, the privatized local mental health offices often ration care. For example, a doctor may recommend six therapy sessions for a patient, but the local office may approve three. Some corruption and abuse of public contracts has also been reported.

Massive discharges of patients have increased the homeless and prison population. There are now more than 4,000 people with mental illnesses in North Carolina prisons, where they are not being treated. The state Department of Correction said in August that over the past five years, there has been “a steady increase” in the number of inmates with severe and persistent mental disorders. North Carolina has opened 13 new prisons since 1997 and all of them are now full. A new 1,500-bed prison is scheduled to open in September.

Only through the class struggle will this crisis be resolved. Public workers in North

Carolina, through the efforts of UE 150, have been struggling for years to establish the right to collectively bargain with their bosses. They believe that if they had this right, most of this crisis could have been avoided.

A document circulated by UE 150 reads, “Through this struggle, the workers must be brought into the wider struggle for health care, including the demand for a Single Payer system, and in defense of social programs that benefit the working poor. Being part of this larger struggle will expose them to other militant and politically active workers, who bring a level of trade union and worker consciousness not readily seen in North Carolina or the South.

“Our members and other workers at these institutions want their voices to be heard on the issues and want to build power to change and improve their working conditions and their image as mental health workers. Many have been reluctant to speak out, not knowing if it would represent a violation of patient rights or insensitivity about people with mental illnesses. Thus the need for an organized fightback that makes the issues of worker rights an essential component of patient care.

“Working class unity and consciousness must be built through organization and struggle. It must be a struggle that engages the rank-and-file in actions that enable their collective voices to be heard on the issues impacting them, so that they are not dismissed in any proposed plans to address the problems related to patient care. This will help workers to gain a sense of their own collective power and recognition of the importance of having a fighting union” □

Katrina scandal

FEMA diverts \$85M meant for survivors

By Heather Cottin

Joetta Rogers, chairperson of the Northeast Katrina Survivors, hasn't had a new pair of shoes since Hurricane Katrina destroyed her home in Mobile, Ala., in 2005.

But thousands of brand-new shoes sat for two years at a warehouse in Fort Worth, Texas. There were new dishes, brooms, coffee makers, pots and pans, towels, blankets, buckets, cleansers, mops and brooms, tents, lanterns and camp stoves, clothing, cleaning supplies, bedding, plates and utensils—all earmarked for Katrina survivors. Instead, the Federal Emergency Management Agency gave away \$85 million worth of desperately needed supplies—121 truckloads. (CNN, June 11)

Who got them?

First FEMA gave them to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the U.S. Postal Service and the Border Patrol. It then extended the giveaway to the National Guard, U.S. Marshals Service, the Air Force and Navy, and the departments of Agriculture, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security.

James McIntyre, FEMA's acting press secretary, said the supplies were "in excess to FEMA's needs."

These items also were offered to 16 states—except for Louisiana, where the majority of people displaced by the disaster live. John Medica, director of the Louisiana Federal Property Assistance Agency in Baton Rouge, said he was "unaware that Katrina victims still had a need for the household supplies." He declared the supplies "federal surplus" and gave them away.

"These are exactly the items that we are desperately seeking donations of right now: basic kitchen and household supplies," said Martha Kegel, executive director of Unity of Greater New Orleans, a nonprofit agency that helps find homes for those still displaced by the storm.

"Kegel said FEMA was told in regular meetings that Unity was desperate for household supplies and that the group has been forced to beg for donations. But she said FEMA never told Unity and other community groups that it had tens of millions of dollars worth of brand-new items meant for storm victims." (CNN)



Ivey Parker on the left.

Ivey Parker, co-chair of the Northeast Survivors Assembly, goes back and forth from New York to New Orleans, where her family still lives. "It hurts your heart to see how ordinary people are trying to survive with nothing, no household goods, no assistance. The government did not get it right," she said in a New York meeting of survivors and supporters on June 14.

"Homeland Security forced tens of thousands of Hurricane Katrina survivors into a diaspora all over the U.S. and will not tell us where they are, and FEMA and Red Cross robbed millions from us," said Rogers.

"This was a conspiracy," said Hilda White, who at 88 is the oldest survivor living in New York. "The government has cruelly manipulated us. It is like slavery, forced separation of families."

"This is war," added Rogers, "and the National Survivors Assembly will be meeting in Houston in October to demand an end to this injustice. The government is not there for the people, so we have to unify for this struggle."

As the floodwaters recede in Iowa, the lessons of government indifference echo. Most of the victims there may not be Black and poor, but "people who turn to FEMA for help are going to find out that they are ineligible for grants and that FEMA will direct them to the Small Business Administration [for] low-interest loans"—at a profit. (Des Moines Register, June 16)

Rogers said, "The federal government fails the people in every way. Those folks in Iowa are facing big trouble." □



Holmes to speak in Detroit

Hear Larry Holmes, a national leader of Workers World Party, give a Marxist political analysis of the Barack Obama campaign, racism and the capitalist economic crisis on Friday, June 27, at 7:00 p.m., 5920 Second Ave., north of Wayne State University at Antoinette.

Dinner will be served for a donation of \$5 or \$1 for the unemployed, students, seniors, or those on fixed income. No one will be turned away.

Holmes is a long-time activist and leader in the people's struggles. He is a leading member of WWP's National Committee and a national organizer of the Troops Out Now Coalition. He was WWP's candidate for president in the 1984 and 1988 national elections. For more information contact Workers World Party, 313-680-5508. □

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row:

Is Obama's victory ours?

With the attainment of the required delegates to claim the Democratic Party's nomination for U.S. president, Sen. Barack H. Obama (D-IL) has written a new page in American history.

For by so doing he succeeds where Channing Phillips, Shirley Chisholm, Jesse Jackson, Sr., and Al Sharpton could not—by gaining the necessary delegates to demand nomination.

Of course, there have been numerous Black candidates for president, but these have been third party efforts designed more to raise issues, to organize or protest than to actually win elections. Some of the best known have been Eldridge Cleaver (former Black Panther Minister of Information), Dick Gregory, Dr. Lenora Fulani, and the former congresswoman, Cynthia McKinney.

But this is a different kettle of fish, for Obama's candidacy is the closest to make it to the winner's circle.

What also distinguishes Obama from his predecessors is he doesn't come from civil rights, Black liberation, socialist or anti-war movements. (He often remarks at speeches, "I'm not against all wars, I'm just against dumb wars.")

Indeed, although his detractors may try to paint him as a leftist liberal, this is hardly true. On issues both foreign and domestic he would've been more at home in the Republican Party of his senatorial forebear, Edward Brooke of Massachusetts. For though he is Black by dint of his African father, he has studiously avoided Black political groups in his long, harrowing climb to the rim of the White House.

He has studiously avoided the very real and long-standing grievances of Black America. In fact, he tried to run a "post-racial" campaign until Sen. Hillary R. Clinton (D-NY) and her rambunctious husband, former Pres. Bill, brought race front and center during the Super Tuesday February primaries, by trying to pigeonhole him as "the Black candidate."

This primary wounded Obama, and as he won in the delegate count, he also lost a number of primary states, such as Ohio and Pennsylvania, which are necessary for a win in November.

Politics is the art of making people believe that they are in power when, in fact, they have none.

It is a measure of how dire is the hour that they've passed the keys to the kingdom to a Black man.

As in many American cities, Black mayors were let in when the treasuries were almost barren, and tax bases were almost at rock-bottom.

With the nation's manufacturing base also a thing of history, amidst the socioeconomic wreckage of globalization, with foreign affairs in shambles, the rulers reach for a pretty, brown face to front for the Empire.

"Real change that you could believe in" would be an end to Empire, and an end to wars for corporate greed, not just a change of the shade of the political managers.

That change, I'm afraid, is still to come. □



FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

Midwest floods, crumbling infrastructure & global warming

Continued from page 1

Report Card for America's Infrastructure, gave the U.S. an overall failing grade of D, with grades of D+ or less in the categories of aviation, dams, drinking water, energy, hazardous waste, navigable waterways, roads, schools, transit and wastewater. Their Web site, updated for 2008, states, "Establishing a long-term development and maintenance plan must become a national priority." (www.asce.org)

Happening during an overall economic crisis, the poor will be bearing the brunt of this disaster—not only in the Midwest, but everywhere. The price of corn, a staple food, jumped to a record \$7 a bushel after the floods destroyed crops in the Midwest.

In Iowa, Gov. Chet Culver has requested federal disaster status for 83 of the 99 counties there, so that the Federal Emergency Management Administration can provide food, water and other resources and individuals can request individual assistance. Whether or not FEMA will neglect the people of these Midwest states—as it did the people of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita—remains to be seen.

Global warming a reality, not a threat

The recent surge in natural disasters such as tornadoes

and other extreme weather events speaks to the fact that global warming is increasing their threat and intensity.

In Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the National Weather Service reported on June 12 that the Cedar River was expected to reach a record crest a staggering 12 feet higher than the previous record, which was set more than 150 years ago in 1851. Jeff Zogg, a hydrologist for the Weather Service in Davenport, Iowa, told the New York Times, "Usually if you break a record, you only do it by an inch or two." (June 13)

At the same time that flooding was occurring in the Midwest, the East Coast was experiencing a rash of heat waves from North Carolina to New Hampshire, with record temperatures in New York. According to the National Weather Service, heat is the primary weather-related killer, accounting for 1,500 deaths in the U.S. annually. (New York Times, June 10)

The World Health Organization made climate change the theme of World Health Day on April 7. A statement by WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan asserts: "Climate change endangers health in fundamental ways. ... The effects of extreme weather events—more storms, floods, droughts and heat waves—will be abrupt and acutely felt. Both trends can affect some of the most fundamental determinants of health: air, water, food,

shelter, and freedom from disease. ... In short, climate change can affect problems that are already huge, largely concentrated in the developing world, and difficult to combat."

The utter lack of planning or accountability for human needs under capitalism has created both an environmental crisis that will lead to even more natural disasters and an infrastructure that is unable to cope with them. The prospects are ominous for people in the U.S. and throughout the world.

However, there is an alternative. The planning and response to natural disasters in some socialist countries show a way forward.

In Cuba—which according to the Global Footprint Network is the only country that has built its infrastructure and raised educational and health levels without adversely impacting the environment—hurricanes are frequent, yet lives are seldom lost. In China, the entire government has responded with urgency and resources for earthquake survivors.

These two examples show just a glimpse of how socialism, based on people's needs and not profit, can better handle the damage to the environment and also turn it around.

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Where do calls to intervene in Somalia come from?

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

There have been new calls for United Nations intervention in the East African country of Somalia. In a statement issued on behalf of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organization, Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki said, "The prevailing security situation in Somalia is worrying and greatly threatens regional peace and stability."

IGAD wants the United Nations to take complete control of the 2,600-member African Union peacekeeping force already operating in Somalia. This call for U.N. intervention was made at an IGAD summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on June 15.

In addition to the existing AU force in Somalia, other nations from the international community would be requested to supply troops and equipment to ostensibly restore order and implement a June 9 peace agreement signed among various political organizations in Somalia.

Somalia has not had an internationally recognized government since 1991, when the Western-backed regime of Mohammed Siad Barre collapsed. A U.S.-led military intervention, under the auspices of the United Nations, occurred between 1992 and 1994. In December 2006, the Bush administration encouraged and backed an Ethiopian invasion and occupation of Somalia that has been met with growing resistance among the population.

The recently signed peace agreement has not won the support of leading resistance movements inside the country. An Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia has agreed to halt attacks within one month on the condition that Ethiopian troops withdraw from Somalia within four months. However, the Al-Shabaab Islamist movement reiterated on June 13 that its fighters would not adhere to the agreement.

The Western-backed government of President Kibaki in neighboring Kenya

has taken the lead in the current thrust for international intervention in Somalia. At the June 15 IGAD conference, Kibaki blasted the member countries of the regional organization, which includes all countries in the area with the exception of Eritrea, for not doing enough to stabilize the situation in Somalia.

President Kibaki condemned the resistance forces in Somalia for embracing violence in order to overthrow the U.S.-imposed Transitional Federal Government and for scaring away the AU peacekeeping mission.

"As a region, we cannot accept those who use violence, pirates and kidnap syndicates to continue killing and kidnapping people. ... In particular, it is critical that the United Nations Security Council urgently consider transforming the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) into a United Nations Peacekeeping Mission," Kibaki continued.

Kibaki also stated that he "appreciated the pledges made by African countries to deploy troops to AMISOM, and in light of the prevailing security challenges in Somalia, I am urging Benin, Ghana and Nigeria to deploy their troops without further delay."

Fighting rages in Mogadishu and other areas

Despite claims by the Western media that the recently signed peace agreement on June 9 will improve the security situation in Somalia, fighting has escalated in the capital of Mogadishu and in other areas of this nation located in the Horn of Africa. According to reports published by Shabelle.net on June 15, armed Islamic Court combatants launched mortar attacks against Ethiopian troops at the Heila Barise military camp, resulting in an hour-long battle.

"They are fighting with rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns," said resident Hassan Nor, who was afraid to leave his home because of gunfire in the area. "There is now intense fighting going

on around Heila Barise in north Mogadishu."

According to Shabelle.net, "It was not immediately clear if there were any casualties in the earlier mortar strikes on the Ethiopian troop's army base, where more than a dozen explosions could be heard."

The resistance fighters have vowed to attack any foreign troops and the interim government, since their forces were routed by the Ethiopian military in an invasion coordinated by the United States and Britain in December 2006. Since then, U.S. forces have carried out several aerial bombardments of Somali territory under the guise of attacking al-Qaeda bases.

Meanwhile, in the central part of the country at Beledweyne, Ethiopian troops have withdrawn their forces from the area after repeated attacks by the guerrilla forces opposed to the occupation. Residents told Shabelle.net that the Ethiopian soldiers had been driven out of the area. The occupation forces used civilian vehicles to avoid detection as they retreated.

In Kismayu, located 328 miles (528 km) southwest of the capital, Mogadishu, attacks were carried out June 14 against a military base in the area. One soldier was reported killed before the armed combatants escaped the vicinity surrounding the camp.

French firm Secopex signs deal to patrol coast

A French military services firm, Secopex, has signed a contract with the U.S.-backed Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to purportedly boost security off the country's coast. This is being done to control reported acts of piracy taking place in the region.

A statement issued by Pierre Marziali, CEO of the private security company, stated that the deal would "strengthen maritime business" off the coast of Somalia.

This deal has been estimated to be worth anywhere between 50 million to



U.S. troops on 'search and seizure' mission in downtown Mogadishu, 1993.

100 million euros annually and is slated to be in effect for the next three years. The contract comes just two months after the seizure of a French luxury yacht by Somalis. During the ordeal, which resulted in a weeklong standoff, all 30 crewmembers were released without injury. Nonetheless, French Special Forces operating in the area attacked the Somalis, arresting six.

Marziali told the French Press Agency (AFP): "Our core business is primarily in the U.S. We will set up a unified coast guard, creating a comprehensive coast guard information system" as well as forming a special security detail to protect the U.S.-backed TFG president of Somalia, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed.

"These measures mean we can offer a concrete response to any armed attack," Marziali said. "The economic facet of this contract is also important for Somalia, victim not just of pirates but also the victim of huge pillaging of its natural fish stocks off its coastline."

Secopex claims that it is capable of mobilizing as many as 2,000 armed security personnel in 40 categories of specialization including skilled trades, divers, translators, pilots and nurses.

The firm was founded in 2003 and supplies private security forces and bodyguards, as well as security consulting and auditing. The division located in Carcassonne in southern France specializes in private military services to various countries.

Continued on page 9

Imperialist rivalry spurs conflict in W. Africa

By **G. Dunkel**

A rebellion broke out in February 2007 in both Mali and Niger. French interests support the rebellion and the U.S. government supports the governments in place.

With French and U.S. interests maneuvering to gain control of the significant resources these desperately poor countries have, it is much more likely that the imperialists' favorite tactic of "divide to rule" leads to armed violence as a method to resolve the legitimate interests of different groups in the population involved.

Niger and Mali are two of the poorest countries in the world. Niger ranks 174th out of 177 countries in the U.N.'s human development index, while Mali ranks 173rd. This index, which combines a number of factors, such as literacy rate, life expectancy, infant mortality, caloric intake and so on, is often used to compare living standards.

U.S. steps up intervention

Niger and Mali, along with Senegal, Mauritania, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo were all part of France's West African colonial empire, and became formally independent in the 1970s. French imperialism still maintains

a solid neocolonial hold on them, with a few exceptions like Guinea, but France's role is now being rivaled by U.S. imperialism with its new AFRICOM command.

Since 1997, the Pentagon has openly run a series of extensive and major military exercises every two years, called Operation Flintlock, with armies from West Africa in northern Mali. Mali, Niger and Senegal, along with Nigeria, have usually participated. (Le Monde Diplomatique, July 2004)

In September of 2007, according to Agence France Presse, a U.S. Air Force plane delivering supplies to a Malian army unit operating near Tinzaouatène in northern Mali came under fire. It was able to complete its mission and return to base.

Mali is so poor that a June 5 UNICEF report claimed that 300,000 children there suffer from malnutrition. In Niger, the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization reported in 2005 that 3.5 million people out of 12 million were suffering from malnutrition after years of drought and a severe plague of locusts. Overall conditions in Niger have not improved much, but emergency food aid did relieve the threat of widespread famine.

Niger had a minor economic boom in

the 1970s because it contains a majority of the world's reserves of uranium, and nuclear power was taking off. In the 1980s and 1990s, when countries developed techniques of using fissionable material from decommissioned bombs, and nuclear power was not under active development, Niger's income from uranium mining fell drastically.

Energy crisis drives conflict

But as the energy crisis heated up and, according to the World Nuclear Association, countries like Russia, India, Japan and China announced intentions to build 93 nuclear reactors in addition to the 34 currently under construction, the price of uranium soared.

Niger opened up vast areas of the northern regions of the country for new mines. There appear to be major deposits of uranium in Mali near some of the deposits in Niger, but they are not yet in production.

Niger also opened up some mining concessions to Chinese companies and encouraged them to prospect for oil, which they appear to have found in significant quantities.

These concessions given to the mining companies meant that many of the 300,000 people living in northern

Niger—primarily but not exclusively from the Tuareg ethnic group—are being forced out of their homes. They are nomadic herders in a region that lies deep in the Sahara desert. While they grow some food on scattered oases, they get most of their income from selling salt, plus skins and meat from their flocks.

The people in northern Niger had been promised a significant share in the wealth this new burst of economic activity in their homeland was bringing, but it appears not much of the income generated was disbursed, at least not in the north.

The exact role the French-based energy companies played in the outbreak of the rebellion, which quickly spread to the people in a similar situation in northern Mali, isn't clear. They did have a significant role in sustaining it. The motive of these companies is clear—they wanted to force Niger to dump their Chinese competitors.

One of the Niger army officers who went over to the rebels got 85,000 euros to provide security for Cogema, the French energy giant. (Le Monde Diplomatique, June 2008) Col. Gilles de Namur, head of security for Cogema, and Dominique Pin, the local president of the group, were expelled from Niger in June and July 2007 for the support they gave to the rebellion. □

What's at stake for imperialism in Somalia?

The way in which the nation of Somalia is portrayed in the Western media makes it appear that the country is a humanitarian disaster in desperate need of U.S. or U.N. intervention. Yet the current crisis in security, food deficits and internal displacement largely results from the U.S.-backed and coordinated invasion and occupation that utilized the government of Ethiopia.

According to reports issued by various relief organizations operating in Somalia, the humanitarian situation has become the worst crisis on the African continent since the events of December 2006. Although the Union of Islamic Courts and other organizations have repeatedly stated that they are not affiliated with al-Qaeda, the U.S. continues to utilize these false claims to justify their ongoing involvement in the region.

The nation of Somalia is strategically located near the Indian Ocean, where the transport of minerals and oil makes it valuable to the multinational corporations that dominate the commerce of the region. In addition, Somalia itself contains a number of important minerals and other resources that Western interests seek to control.

For example, exploration for titanium and uranium has taken place in the country since the 1970s. Oil exploration concessions have also been held by various multinational firms including the British Burma Oil Company, Elf-Somalie, the former Federal Germany and Gulf Oil going back to the 1970s.

The country's mineral resources also include atomic minerals with deposits at Alio Ghelle and in the Bur region, with possible reserves of 250,000 metric tons containing 8,050 tons of thorium, 290 tons of uranium oxide, and 205 tons of yttrium. The total reserve could well exceed 1 million metric tons with additional deposits in the Ludugu area.

Bauxite deposits have also been discovered in Mana Daimir. Other mineral deposits include marble located north of Bur Acaba; sepiolite at El Bur in exploitable quantities; sulfur at Berber; and titanium in the Giubi River with reserves estimated at 10 million metric tons. There are also uranium deposits in the Wabo region.

Most importantly during this period, however, is the question of oil in the ongoing conflict in Somalia. An article published by the Canadian-based Center for Research on Globalization in 2001 stated: "According to documents obtained by The Times, nearly two-thirds of Somalia was allocated to the American oil giants Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips in the final years before Somalia's pro-U.S. President Mohamed Siad Barre was overthrown and the nation plunged into chaos in January 1991. Industry sources said the companies holding the rights to the most promising concessions are hoping that the Bush administration's decision to send U.S. troops to safeguard aid shipments to Somalia will also help protect their multi-million-dollar investments there."

Consequently, the principal motivation of U.S. imperialism and its allies is to secure the oil and other strategic mineral resources and waterways, in order to utilize the national wealth of Somalia to enrich the multinational corporations and their surrogates. By creating a humanitarian disaster, the U.S. administration can utilize this crisis to justify Western intervention.

Anti-war and anti-imperialist movements must focus on the necessity of the Somali people to determine their own future. The lessons of U.S. and U.N. intervention during the 1990s clearly indicate that such interference cannot benefit the Somali masses.

Abayomi Azikiwe is the editor of the Pan-African News Wire. PANW articles have appeared in publications and Web sites throughout the world.

Koreans honor Kim Jong Il

By Deirdre Griswold

The memory of the people in the Democratic People's Republic Korea is long. They remember how their country was devastated by invading U.S. planes and troops in the 1950-53 war. They remember how the leader of their anti-colonial struggle, the legendary Kim Il Sung, refused to surrender to either the Japanese or the U.S. overlords and built a resistance army, a party and finally a revolutionary, sovereign government based on the popular masses.

Now, all over the DPRK, they are

remembering and discussing the significance of the time 44 years ago when Kim Jong Il, the successor to Kim Il Sung, first started work at the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, the leading political body in the country.

Because the U.S. occupation of South Korea with tens of thousands of troops has persisted since World War II, defense of the north against another attack is uppermost on everyone's mind. Kim Jong Il is being lauded today for guiding the country through another extremely difficult period—the perilous time after the collapse of the USSR when Washington thought

it could take over the whole world—and achieving success in building up North Korea's defenses. The DPRK now has enough nuclear weapons to deter a U.S. attack—a great scientific-technological achievement for any developing country surrounded by nuclear-armed U.S. ships, planes and bases.

There has been much bluster from the Pentagon and the State Department, but these days U.S. imperialism has so many problems with the wars it has already started that it would be foolhardy to the point of insanity for them to start another one in Korea. □

Massive revolt over U.S. trade pact

Strikes, protests besiege South Korean regime

Continued from page 1

Disease had begun nightly vigils on April 27 that drew many thousands.

In face of the rising mass anger, President Lee offered to have his entire cabinet resign. With his popularity ratings sinking below 17 percent, Lee has repudiated many of his own right-wing market plans and has promised concessions, loans and subsidies. But the demonstrations have emboldened the opposition. Now the calls "Out with President Lee" are everywhere.

Lee has been in office just over three months. His Grand National Party is associated with the years of military dictatorship. He came into the presidency promising rapid growth, sweeping market reforms, privatization of nationally owned firms and banks, painful revisions in pensions and social programs, and tax cuts for the rich along with greater openness to foreign investments and friendlier relations with the U.S. A new hostility in relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north reflects Lee's whole orientation and U.S. pressure.

But Lee's business-friendly policies ran into globally rising food and fuel prices and an economic downturn with rising unemployment.

The beef with 'free trade'

The immediate focus of mass anger in South Korea is a trade concession allowing U.S. beef imports. President Lee was required to lift a ban on U.S. beef that had been in place in order to secure the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement. This was seen as an attack on the sovereignty of South Korea.

Before 2003 the country was the third-largest importer of U.S. beef. Then the discovery of an imported cow infected with mad cow disease led to the ban.

South Korea is hardly alone in banning U.S. beef. Sixty-five countries, including every one in the European Union, ban U.S. beef.

According to Christian Ahn, "USDA tests only one out of 1,000 cows.... Japan surveys every cow, Europe one in four, and Canada one out of 250." (Foreign Policy in Focus, June 13) The U.S. Congress has not even passed a ban on eating "downed animals"—animals too sick or injured to walk that are dragged to the slaughterhouse.

"Last year, some 200 million pounds of beef were recalled from the U.S. food

supply," says Dr. Michael Gregor of the Humane Society of the U.S. "This is a staggering amount."

U.S. capitalist economists see the tens of thousands of demonstrators in South Korea as a sign that "After six decades of ever-expanding international commerce, the high tide of free trade is ebbing." (Bloomberg News, June 13)

Festival of resistance

The nights of demonstrations have especially aroused the creative energy of the youth, who use their skills to create their own media and to organize spontaneous actions and confrontations. Laser projectors write slogans in the night sky, there are impromptu concerts, and encampments, with tents and gear spread out, block traffic at major intersections.

Some 37,000 riot police have been mobilized, 20,000 of them in Seoul against the demonstrations. The government has ordered huge metal shipping containers to be stacked in solid walls of barricades to prevent demonstrators from reaching the presidential "Blue House" or other government ministries.

Thousands of police have arrested, beaten and used high-pressure water hoses on the demonstrators. Youth with video cameras have recorded the attacks and posted them nightly on youtube and other sites.

Workers' movement comes forward

With hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets night after night and the government clearly on the defensive, the political climate has been transformed. The workers' movement has come forward with its own demands.

Faced with rising fuel prices, 13,000 truck drivers were the first to go on a three-day strike demanding a fuel subsidy and a guaranteed minimum wage. Only a fraction of South Korea's truck drivers are unionized. They were joined by thousands of non-union contract truckers facing even more difficult conditions. Their actions impacted immediately on production at big electronics factories, auto and steel works.

South Korea has an export-driven economy. The vast commercial port of Busan ground almost to a halt. At the port of Incheon only 157 drivers are unionized, but 2,000 non-union drivers also refused to deliver cargo.

The Federation of Peasants Associations

has raised its own demands, along with the Teachers union, the Federation of Government Employees, and the Court Employees union. The Korean Federation of Public Services is planning future walkouts.

Businesses owners fear the worst. "Rising calls for a general strike were significantly strengthened on Monday as thousands of building sites across South Korea were silenced by striking cement mixer drivers." (Asia Business, June 16)

Workers in Seoul are pushing for mass walkouts across the economy. Asia Business quoted Korean Confederation of Trade Unions President Lee Seok-haeng explaining the union strategy: "We will walk out like the baseball batting order goes; the first batter is the Korea Cargo Transport Workers' Union, the second batter is the construction and machinery workers, followed by the metal workers and the railway workers."

Then on June 17 the KCTU announced that a majority of its members had voted for a nationwide general strike on July 2 to demand that the government cancel its plans to privatize public corporations and renegotiate the beef import deal with the U.S.

The Labor Ministry called the strike voted on by the 630,000-member confederation an "illegal and political strike." South Korea "Justice" Minister Kim Kyung-han said the strikes by truckers and the union federation were illegal and vowed to crack down on them.

The KCTU rejected the warning, saying the government had no legal basis to brand the strike illegal and its threat would only deepen South Korean President Lee's political isolation.

The government attempted to clamp down on all coverage of the demonstrations and the growing strike wave. The Federation of Press Trade Unions responded by issuing a call for the resignation of both Lee's cabinet and the chair of the Broadcasting Organization.

The issue of U.S. beef imports has the potential to merge with a whole series of other deeply felt grievances, including the ever-present resentment over more than 50 years of U.S. occupation and the stationing of approximately 40,000 U.S. troops in South Korea.

Clearly a new stage of the struggle in South Korea is opening up. It will be rich in experience for Korean youth and in lessons for a global movement confronting U.S. trade demands. □

Not even Maliki

President George W. Bush's farewell European tour was marked by his seemingly inane insistence that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was both righteous and successful. Once again, the facts on the ground in Iraq were colliding with Bush's words as he spoke them.

Think back to Bush's original promises as the administration launched this illegal war of aggression. A majority of Iraqis, he said, would greet the U.S. with open arms for liberating them from Saddam Hussein and a new democratic, sovereign Iraq, having become a friend to Washington, would use its oil wealth for the benefit of its people—after paying off Washington's expenses for the war, of course. The mass media duly echoed this line and Congress approved the funds.

Now, more than five years later, a million Iraqis are dead, millions more have been turned into refugees, the nation itself is torn asunder, thousands of GIs have died and tens of thousands are badly wounded, and Bush is trying to impose a long-term "agreement" on the allegedly sovereign government of Iraq.

The military agreement Bush proposes involves the permanent placement of 58 U.S. military bases in Iraq, including five that a Boston Globe editorial described as "mega-bases that replicate the amenities of an American town," each housing 10,000 to 20,000 troops. The Pentagon would control Iraqi airspace below 29,000 feet. U.S. troops and private mercenaries, now called "contractors," would be immune from legal prosecution in Iraq, no matter how many Iraqi civilians they slaughtered or Iraqi prisoners they tortured.

The economic agreement involves—you guessed it—Iraqi oil. Except it would no longer really be Iraqi. Almost all the oil would go to Western, mostly U.S., companies. The Iraq National Oil Co. would hold only 17 of Iraq's 80 existing oilfields. Foreign corporations would control the rest, including all yet-to-be-discovered oil, for 30 years.

If anyone could have missed the point of the U.S. invasion over the last five years, the U.S. proposals spell it out: Washington and Wall Street want an abject colony in Iraq, to rob Iraq's oil wealth and use its soil as a military launching pad for the next war.

Now consider that the Iraqi regime consists of politicians who owe their office to the U.S. invasion. They are secure only within the Green Zone of Baghdad, surrounded by a wall and U.S. troops. They are beholden to Washington.

Yet even they could not go along with these arrogant U.S. demands! Nuri al-Maliki, the premier, said the talks were "at an impasse." Other members of the Iraqi Parliament had stronger criticism, even after the U.S. discussed some concessions. One Kurdish member said: "We will not sign."

If the politicians most dependent on the U.S. are shouting out their anger against the pact, imagine how the other Iraqis feel. From resistance fighter to schoolchild, no Iraqi in 2008 can accept living as a colonial subject of U.S. imperialism. They ended colonial slavery in 1958, kicking out the British overlords.

Bush's aggression was and is criminal. The Iraqi people won't accept it, but, without a militant, organized opposition in the U.S., the military machine grinds on. □

After daring Afghan prison break

U.S. threatens to spread war to Pakistan

By John Catalinotto

A spectacular prison break in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on June 13 freed 1,200 people, including hundreds of resistance fighters. It exposed the weaknesses of the U.S.-led NATO occupiers and their puppet regime in this impoverished country. The prison break and an impending battle in the region around Kandahar coincide with dangerous U.S. moves to extend the Afghan war into Pakistan.

Following this dramatic challenge to his regime, Afghan Premier Ahmad Karzai threatened to invade Pakistan, saying that militants come from Pakistan "to kill Afghan and kill coalition troops," and that "gives us the right to do the same."

Karzai was installed by the occupying imperialists and wields power only in part of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital. President George W. Bush backed up Karzai's threat, showing where this threat to expand the war to Pakistan really comes from.

Earlier Pentagon actions underlined Bush's threats. Just days before Karzai's outburst, U.S. planes had unleashed a bombing attack in the border area inside Pakistan that killed 13 Pakistani soldiers. Pakistani protests led to a U.S. State Department apology, but the Defense Department rebuked the apology and insisted that the U.S. planes were acting "in self-defense." Informed sources told Workers World that Pakistanis believe the U.S. purposely bombed the troops to pressure the new government there, which is trying not to be used as a U.S. pawn in the war against Afghanistan.

Jailbreak heartens resistance

The Afghan Ministry of Justice administers Kandahar's Sarposa prison, along with police officers from the Ministry of Interior, but Canadian forces trained the prison guards. Like all prisons in occupied Afghanistan, Sarposa has a reputation for torture and brutal treatment. Some 3,000 Canadian troops are in Afghanistan, of whom 85 have died. A poll taken before the prison break showed only 17 percent of Canadians support their troops' combat role there. (Time, April 17)

In May about 50 prisoners went on hunger strike at Sarposa and, in their desperation, even sewed their mouths shut in protest. They finally ended their action after promises from a parliamentary delegation to review the prisoners' cases. Many of the prisoners are simply people who get rounded up in the frequent sweeps by occupation or Afghan puppet forces.

According to media accounts allegedly from sources inside the Taliban—which is the main but not the only resistance force—the assault on the dungeon followed two months of preparation. A truck filled with dynamite blew up the front gate to the prison, while another hit a mud wall in the back. Then 30 fighters on motorbikes assaulted the prison, killing some of the guards and breaking open the cells.

Afghan officials told the media that the roughly 1,200 prisoners who escaped included 400 resistance fighters. Many were ushered into waiting cars and vans that their liberators had commandeered.

Not only was this military assault audacious and sophisticated, it indicated that many inside the puppet Afghan state are either corrupt or loyal to the resistance. The prison break will win the resistance even more popular support.

As of June 17, resistance forces, including some of the escaped prisoners, were reportedly deploying in villages around Kandahar for a possible attack on that city, a former Taliban stronghold.

"The people are with us. They want us here," Taliban spokesman Qari Mohammad Yousif Ahmadi told CNN by phone. "Now the Afghan



After attack on NATO convoy in Kandahar, April 2007.

and NATO forces are trying to defend Kandahar city. We have control of the whole district."

Turmoil in Pakistan

U.S. threats against Pakistan come as the new government there shows itself to be weakened and unstable. Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who had lined up Pakistan behind Bush's "war on terror," is trying to hold onto the presidency through a U.S.-brokered deal with the newly elected parliament. Ever stronger popular forces are challenging this arrangement.

A recent march of thousands of lawyers and jurists to Islamabad demanded reinstatement of Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, whom Musharraf had deposed in 2007 to prevent him from declaring the general's reelection illegal. His reinstatement could in effect end Musharraf's rule. Popular forces, the parliament and the general are all at odds, and this conflict extends within the armed forces.

U.S. imperialism is again taking dangerous risks in Central Asia by threatening to extend the war to Pakistan when Washington's position in Afghanistan itself is weak, even though it has gotten NATO troops to do most of the fighting. Nevertheless, overriding popular opposition, both the Republican and Democratic parties in Congress support the occupation of Afghanistan and the alleged "war on terror" in that region. It is really a war of terror for the same type of colonial domination that Britain tried to impose in the 19th century.

The U.S. general formerly in command of NATO forces, Dan McNeill, said in an interview last December that he would need 400,000 soldiers to end the resistance in Afghanistan. Though NATO countries have pledged to continue aiding the occupation, they are all reluctant to add to the current total of 60,000 troops. As Bush visited London on June 15, thousands demonstrated against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Eric Margolis wrote June 15 in the Toronto Sun:

"The U.S. is emulating Britain's colonial divide and rule tactics by offering up to \$500,000 to local Pashtun tribal leaders [in Pakistan—WW] to get them to fight pro-Taliban elements, causing more chaos in the already turbulent region, and stoking tribal rivalries. The U.S. is using this same tactic in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"This week's deadly U.S. attacks again illustrate the fact that the 60,000 U.S. and NATO ground troops in Afghanistan are incapable of holding off the Taliban and its allies, even though the Afghan resistance has nothing but small arms to battle the West's hi-tech arsenal. U.S. air power is almost always called in when there are clashes. ...

"They kill more civilians than Taliban fighters. Mighty U.S. B-1 bombers are not going to win the hearts and minds of Afghans. Each bombed village and massacred caravan wins new recruits to the Taliban and its allies."

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WWW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Unionists support Palestinians

While a celebration of the 60th anniversary of Israel was being held inside, union members and other activists participated June 5 in an emergency picket line outside the offices of AFSCME District Council 37. DC 37 is the largest city workers' union in New York and has members of all nationalities. The protest, organized by New York City Labor Against the War, hit the U.S.-funded Zionist settler state's oppression of the Palestinian people. □

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Fighting to save their jobs

Angry Canadian workers lay siege to GM

By Martha Grevatt

For 12 days, members of the Canadian Auto Workers union blockaded the corporate offices of General Motors in Oshawa, Ontario, protesting GM's plans to close a truck plant there. Finally, on the morning of June 16, CAW members complied with a judge's order to end their blockade, but they continued the fight with a vehicle parade, circling the plant GM intends to close next year.

On June 3, GM had announced the planned closing of four truck and sport utility vehicle plants. Besides Oshawa, the plants are in Moraine, Ohio; Janesville, Wis.; and Toluca, Mexico. None of these closings had been agreed to in contracts signed last fall with the United Auto Workers in the U.S. and just last month with the Canadian Auto Workers.

"We just ratified a new three-year collective agreement on May 16. They committed to products in this plant ... and as of today they've pulled that product out from underneath us. It's nothing short of betrayal," charged CAW Local 222 President Chris Buckley, who represents the workers at the Oshawa plant.

By morning the next day, hundreds of CAW members had formed a blockade of the corporate offices. In the following days thousands of workers joined Local 222 in

protesting GM's suddenly announced plans to terminate their 2,600 jobs. No one went in and out of the 900-worker office complex with the lone exception of payroll employees—the workers had to be paid.

"This decision is unfair, it's unjust, it's unwarranted, it's illegal, it violates our collective agreement," CAW President Buzz Hargrove told the news media, "and we're going to do everything in our power—and we have power. We are not going to allow this to happen."

On June 8 the protest was visited by Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labor Congress, who pledged the support of the CLC's 3.2 million members. Solidarity also came from International Metalworkers Federation General Secretary Marcello Malentacchi, on behalf of 120 million metalworkers worldwide.

At a rally later that day, Buckley of Local 222 defiantly proclaimed, "I can guarantee, and I said this to General Motors about an hour ago on the highway, they want their building back and they're not getting their building back."

Paul Moist, national president of the 570,000-member Canadian Union of Public Employees, speaking at the CAW's Collective Bargaining and Political Action Convention in Toronto June 10, promised to stand behind the CAW. The convention heard speaker after speaker vow to back

the struggle at GM, knowing that their jobs too were in jeopardy.

Workers on the blockade, in turn, carried signs that read: "You're next." As one protester told a television reporter, "The CEO of Ford (was) calling our leader here, Buzz Hargrove, saying, 'If you're going to let GM breach their contract, we're going to do the same thing.'"

On one day of the 12-day siege, hundreds of workers also circled the entire GM complex, blocking delivery of parts for several hours.

Thousands turned out for a march in Oshawa June 12. Meanwhile, GM and the CAW lawyers were battling in court over GM's demand for an injunction ending the blockade. GM also sought \$1.5 million in damages from the CAW.

On June 13 Ontario Superior Court Judge David Salmers ordered the union to end its siege of GM's offices by June 16 at 7 a.m.

"As of 7 a.m. Monday morning, General Motors can have their building back, and not until," Buckley stated.

The judge did not award GM one penny in damages. "Considering all of the evidence, including but not restricted to the deceit-like behavior that induced CAW concessions and the almost immediate breach, without apology, of a newly signed agreement," the judge stated, "I find with-

out hesitation that GM Canada does not come to court with clean hands."

To accuse GM bosses of having unclean hands is an understatement. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been cut by the Big Three, going back to the huge wave of plant closings and layoffs by GM in 1987. Some 150,000 livelihoods have been wiped out since the 2005 Delphi bankruptcy.

The dramatic action on the part of CAW members began not long after a 13-week UAW strike at American Axle Motors—once part of GM—forced 30 GM plants to close. Both the strike and the blockade suggest a resurgence of militancy on the part of autoworkers.

The fight may spread. In Moraine the union has also stated its intent to fight the closing. There could also be resistance in Mexico, where, according to union leader Edgar Arroyo, "The news hit us like a bucket of cold water. It's going to affect us all." Some 4,500 people work at the factory in Toluca, an industrial hub west of Mexico City.

The struggle is long overdue. Labor-management cooperation, a fraudulent formulation from the start, is finished. The bosses are out for blood and the only option is to fight back.

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Irish voters reject European treaty

By John Catalinotto

Irish voters struck a blow for workers throughout the 27-country European Union (EU) when they rejected the "Treaty of Lisbon," which would further militarize Europe while increasing big capital's domination. The results of the referendum, announced on June 13, showed a decisive "no" vote—54 percent opposed. It was a victory for working people worldwide, including those in the United States.

While the Irish vote is a serious legal obstacle to big capital's complete domination of the EU, the governments have already set a June 19-20 Brussels meeting to seek to reverse its impact.

When French and Dutch voters rejected the European Constitution in 2005, the EU governments decided to meet in Lisbon in 2007 to reverse this popular decision. The result was the Treaty of Lisbon, a refurbished European Constitution. To be

adopted, the "Treaty" had only to be accepted by the national parliaments—except in Ireland, where a referendum was required. Parliaments in 18 countries had already capitulated to the demands of big capital, and no rejections were expected elsewhere, so only the Irish vote stood in the way.

What is there about "the Treaty of Lisbon" that harms workers all over?

First, the treaty demands that each of the countries increase its military expenditures. This also would mean greater participation in imperialist military adventures like the ongoing occupation of Afghanistan, the "peace-keeping" force in Lebanon and the occupation of Kosovo in Serbia.

This increased EU military force may operate separately from the Pentagon. Or it may—as it does now—follow U.S. leadership within NATO. In either case it is a weapon aimed at Russia and the former colonial world, a financial burden on the European working class, and a threat to

the lives and health of youth of Europe.

Pre-election polls in the Irish Times showed that a large portion of Irish who planned to vote against the treaty were doing so because they opposed European militarization.

Second, the treaty pressures each country to reduce expenditures on social services and to weaken or eliminate laws protecting the rights of workers to match the far lower levels in the U.S. The goal of the European imperialist bosses is to eliminate many of the concessions the governments had made to European workers' struggles in the period between 1945 and the end of the Soviet Union in 1991.

This is what the European and Latin American left call "neoliberal" policies, that is, policies that never regulate economic life in favor of the workers, but only on behalf of the biggest bosses.

If European workers lose the benefits they have won over decades of organized

struggle, it would only increase the pressure on workers in the rest of the world, from India to Brazil to the U.S., to make more concessions to their own big capitalists in the name of "competition."

It should be no surprise that while the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), with almost 250,000 members in Ireland, decided not to endorse the treaty, all the organizations of big capital and its media campaigned for a "yes" vote. So did all the parties in the parliament except the Sinn Fein, which holds four of the 166 seats. And the representatives of European capital—Britain, France and Germany are the biggest powers—all warned against a "no" vote.

Those parties with a more militant and pro-worker program in Europe are already greeting the Irish vote as a victory for all workers and preparing for the next stage of the struggle.

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Supreme Court on Guantánamo

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subjected to extreme cold without clothes or covering; denied medical attention; and kept in isolation for years." (In These Times, May 27)

Five men are known to have committed suicide so far. Many other attempts have been reported to visiting attorneys. The Pentagon calls this "asymmetrical warfare."

What the ruling does—and doesn't do

The revolutionary, national liberation and working-class movements in the U.S. and worldwide should not overrate the importance of this ruling. It is a significant, but limited, legal victory.

The court's Boumediene ruling reaffirms habeas corpus—the right of incarcerated people to stand before a judge and confront the charges presented against them. Habeas was inscribed in the Magna

Carta of 1215, and is considered a foundation stone of bourgeois law.

However, Boumediene does not guarantee the release of anyone held at Guantánamo.

It does not challenge the Bush assertion of "enemy combatants" who are neither civilians nor prisoners of war. It simply states that the government must provide some evidence to justify the detentions.

By ruling that habeas applies to detainees held outside U.S. territory, it opens the door to similar cases to demand those rights for "enemy combatants" held by U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, it does nothing to expose or prevent the continued existence of CIA "black sites," "ghost detention" and "extraordinary rendition" in third countries.

In an upcoming report, CCR's British counterpart, Reprieve, documents the ongoing use of 17 U.S. warships as floating prisons for "war on terror" detainees—

including some recently "disappeared" from the Horn of Africa. The British Guardian newspaper broke the news in early June. CCR attorney Shayana Kadidal labeled these "ghost ships."

It does not resolve the dilemma of many detainees who were already cleared for release by the Pentagon, but are unable to return to their home countries for fear of torture.

It does not put a stop to the Military Commissions established in 2006, which have been roundly condemned as coercive and rigged by legal experts and even by U.S. military defense attorneys.

It does not quash the Military Commission trial already underway against alleged 9/11 conspirators, nor does it prevent other detainees from being charged in the future.

The new repressive powers put into common practice by the Bush regime are still in force—openly or covertly—even as new U.S. terror campaigns are contemplated in Iran, Colombia, Sudan and

Venezuela and while the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq—where there are an estimated 27,000 prisoners in U.S. custody—continue unabated.

Already, the brain trusts of capitalism are spinning plans to curb the most obvious excesses of Bush, Cheney & Co. while retaining the reactionary essence of their policies. These efforts will continue throughout the remainder of Bush's term and likely into the next, no matter who wins the presidency in November.

For example, a June 13 Washington Post op-ed by Benjamin Wittes of the Brookings Institute urged Congress to enact a more precise system of detention "open enough to the public to know how scary some detainees really are" while giving a more credible gloss to the war on terror.

An important front in this struggle will be challenging Washington's use of "terrorist" designations to outlaw and demonize those movements opposed to U.S. aggression worldwide and those who support them here at home. □

Tres sentencias han sido revocadas

Condenas de los 5 Cubanos han sido sostenidas por la Corte de Apelaciones

Por Julie Fry

Un panel de tres jueces de la Corte de Apelaciones de 11º Circuito sostuvo el 4 de junio los veredictos de culpabilidad en contra de cada uno de los Cinco Héroes Cubanos. Esta era la segunda ronda de apelaciones para los Cinco, quienes han estado en prisión por casi una década por tratar de prevenir que las organizaciones terroristas en Miami, respaldadas por Estados Unidos, continúen los ataques violentos contra Cuba.

En un documento de opinión de 99 páginas escrito por el Juez William Pryor, la Corte sostuvo por mayoría, que el juicio de 1998 contra los Cinco en Miami fue legal y justo, a pesar de la falta de evidencias de la fiscalía, las numerosas faltas en las decisiones del juez sobre procesos y evidencias, y los chocantes ejemplos de faltas graves del fiscal a las cuales se refiere en la decisión del panel. Una jueza, Phyllis Kravitch, sometió una declaración donde discrepaba en la cual dijo encontrar que la condena de Gerardo Hernández por conspiración para cometer asesinato debería ser revocada porque la evidencia del fiscal era insuficiente para comprobar el cargo. Pero el tercer juez, Stanley Birch, a pesar de referirse a esta decisión como “un caso bien cerrado,” votó con el juez Pryor sosteniendo las condenas.

El juez Pryor—quien fue nombrado por la administración actual de Bush y quien al principio no ganara la confirmación del Senado por su reputación de fanático derechista con poco respeto a la Constitución—fue el único juez del grupo que no oyó la apelación original. En su opinión judicial, Pryor exhibió varios ejemplos de serias faltas por parte de la fiscalía en la presencia del jurado durante el juicio original. Por ejemplo, Pryor admitió que el fiscal declaró en su argumento de cierre que los Cinco estaban “decididos a destruir a los EEUU” y que estaban intentando ejecutar lo que el fiscal denominó “la solución final” en contra de las fuerzas anticubanas en Miami. Pryor decidió que estas y otras declaraciones pudieron haber tenido solo un efecto “menor” en el jurado y que no había ninguna causa para tener un juicio nuevo.

A pesar de que las condenas fueron sostenidas, las sentencias de Ramón Labañino, Fernando González y Antonio Guerrero fueron revocadas. Los tres ahora enfrentan una vista para una nueva sentencia en Miami ante el juez del juicio original en el caso, la jueza Joan Lenard. En 1998, Lenard condenó a cada uno de los cinco con sentencias extremadamente largas, incluso con condenas perpetuas para tres de ellos.

La decisión es un revés para los Cinco

y sus partidarios en Cuba, los EEUU y alrededor del mundo. Después de ser enjuiciado en Miami bajo una catarata de hostilidad anticubana por los medios de comunicación y organizaciones derechistas locales, muchas organizaciones internacionales y de los EEUU han observado que el juicio fue sumamente injusto. La directora ejecutiva del gremio de abogados National Lawyers Guild, Heidi Boghosian, dijo en una declaración, “El sentimiento anticubano ha envenenado toda posibilidad de un juicio justo para los Cinco desde su detención original y encarcelamiento, lo cual el Rapporteur de la ONU describió como una violación de la Convención contra la Tortura y los Castigos Crueles, Infrahumanos o Tratamientos Degradantes”, Boghosian comentó: “Durante el juicio original, la administración de Bush le pagó a periodistas para que escriban artículos desfavorables sobre Cuba. Extremistas anticubanos intentaron intimidar a los miembros del jurado, y hasta miembros potenciales del jurado admitieron que tendrían miedo de pronunciar veredictos de no culpable en contra de los Cinco”.

Los partidarios de los Cinco por todo el mundo reaccionaron rápidamente a las noticias de la decisión. Se hicieron manifestaciones en Nueva York, Miami, Filadelfia, Washington, D.C., San

Francisco, Detroit, Los Ángeles y muchas otras ciudades de los Estados Unidos días después de la decisión. Otras manifestaciones también han tenido lugar en muchos países de Europa y América Latina.

Según Leonard Weinglass, uno de los abogados de los Cinco, el próximo paso legal es presentar una petición para reargumentar la apelación delante del mismo panel de tres jueces. Esa petición será presentada este mes. Después de eso, los abogados tendrán todavía la opción de pedir que el caso sea escuchado por todos los jueces de la Corte de Apelaciones del 11º Circuito, o apelar directamente a la Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos. La audiencia para re sentenciar a Labañino, González y Guerrero debe ser fijada dentro de los próximos meses.

Mientras, el movimiento de apoyo a los Cinco está creciendo dentro y fuera de los Estados Unidos. Organizaciones de solidaridad en Nueva York celebraron una conferencia en apoyo de los Cinco en el Colegio Hostos del Bronx el 14 de junio, y muchas actividades están siendo planeadas en varias partes del país para septiembre y octubre para reconocer el 10º aniversario de la detención de los Cinco. Los millones de partidarios de los Cinco permanecen decididos a ganar su libertad. □

Un líder cubano dice:

La crisis alimentaria es sistémica y estructural

Intervención de José Ramón Machado Ventura, vice-presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros, a la Conferencia de alto nivel sobre la Seguridad Alimentaria Mundial: los Desafíos del Cambio Climático y la Bioenergía.

Sr. Presidente:

En esta misma sede, hace doce años, la comunidad internacional acordó erradicar el hambre en el mundo. Se estableció entonces el objetivo de reducir el número de personas desnutridas a la mitad para el año 2015. Aquella meta, tímida e insuficiente, parecería hoy una quimera.

La crisis alimentaria mundial no es un fenómeno circunstancial. La gravedad de sus recientes manifestaciones, en un mundo que produce suficientes alimentos para todos, es un claro reflejo de su naturaleza sistémica y estructural.

El hambre y la desnutrición son consecuencias de un orden económico internacional que sostiene y profundiza la pobreza, la desigualdad y la injusticia.

Los países del Norte tienen una indiscutible responsabilidad en el hambre y la desnutrición de 854 millones de personas. Ellos impusieron la liberalización comercial entre actores claramente desiguales y las recetas financieras de ajuste estructural. Provocaron la ruina de muchos pequeños productores en el Sur y convirtieron en importadores netos de alimentos a países que antes se autoabastecían e,

incluso, exportaban.

Los gobiernos de los países desarrollados se niegan a eliminar los escandalosos subsidios agrícolas, mientras imponen sus reglas al comercio internacional. Sus voraces transnacionales establecen precios, monopolizan tecnologías, imponen injustas certificaciones y manipulan los canales de distribución, las fuentes de financiamiento, el comercio y los insumos para la producción mundial de alimentos. Controlan, además, el transporte, la investigación científica, los fondos genéticos y la producción de fertilizantes y plaguicidas.

Lo peor es que si todo sigue como hasta hoy, la situación se hará aún más grave. Los patrones de producción y consumo de los países desarrollados aceleran el cambio climático, que amenaza la existencia misma de la humanidad. Es preciso sustituirlos. La pretensión irracional de perpetuar ese funesto consumismo, empujó la siniestra estrategia de convertir granos y cereales en combustibles.

Los Países No Alineados llamamos en la Cumbre de La Habana a establecer un mundo pacífico y próspero y un orden mundial justo y equitativo. Este es el único camino para alcanzar una solución verdadera a la crisis alimentaria.

La alimentación es un derecho humano inalienable. Por iniciativa de Cuba, así quedó confirmado desde 1997 por sucesivas resoluciones adoptadas en la antigua Comisión de Derechos Humanos y después en el Consejo, y por la Asamblea

General de Naciones Unidas. Nuestro país, en representación de los Países No Alineados, y con el copatrocinio de más de dos tercios de los miembros de Naciones Unidas, promovió también la convocatoria de la séptima sesión extraordinaria del Consejo de Derechos Humanos, que acaba de instar a la adopción de medidas concretas para la solución de la crisis alimentaria global.

El hambre y la desnutrición no pueden ser erradicadas con la adopción de medidas paliativas. Tampoco con donativos simbólicos que, seamos honestos, no cubrirán las necesidades ni serán sostenibles.

Se requiere al menos reconstruir y desarrollar la producción agrícola de los países del Sur. Los países desarrollados cuentan sobradamente con los recursos para ello. Lo que se necesita es la voluntad política de sus gobiernos.

Si los gastos militares de la OTAN en un año, fueran reducidos en solo un 10%, se liberarían casi 100 mil millones de dólares.

Si se condonara la deuda externa de los países en desarrollo, que ya hemos pagado más de una vez, los países del Sur tendrían de 345 mil millones de dólares anuales que hoy dedican a su servicio.

Si los países desarrollados cumplieran su compromiso de destinar el 0.7 % de su Producto Interno Bruto a la Asistencia Oficial al Desarrollo, los países del Sur tendríamos de al menos 130 mil millones de dólares adicionales cada año.

Si se destinara a la producción de alimentos, solo una cuarta parte del dinero que cada año se derrocha en publicidad comercial, casi 250 mil millones de dólares podrían dedicarse a combatir el hambre y la desnutrición.

Si se destinara al desarrollo agropecuario en el Sur, el dinero que se utiliza para subsidios agrícolas en el Norte, nuestros países dispondrían de alrededor de mil millones de dólares diarios para invertir en la producción de alimentos.

Señor Presidente:

Este es el mensaje de Cuba, ferozmente bloqueada pero erguida en sus principios y en la unidad de su pueblo: sí se puede enfrentar con éxito esta crisis alimentaria, pero hay que ir a la raíz del problema, abordar sus causas profundas y rechazar la demagogia, la hipocresía y las falsas promesas.

Concluyo recordando las palabras de Fidel Castro ante la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas, en Nueva York, en octubre de 1979:

«El ruido de las armas, del lenguaje amenazante, de la prepotencia en la escena internacional debe cesar. Basta ya de la ilusión de que los problemas del mundo se pueden resolver con armas nucleares. Las bombas podrán matar a los hambrientos, a los enfermos, a los ignorantes, pero no pueden matar el hambre, las enfermedades, la ignorancia».

Muchas gracias. □