

STEEL TARIFFS

Who is Bush protecting? Not steel workers at LTV, who are still losing their jobs and pensions. Brutal competition will only intensify among the giant steel producers as they fight for hegemony over markets and profits. The union needs a new strategy in an era of capitalist overproduction.

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RUSH TO JUDGMENT IN ATLANTA

Al-Amin has been found guilty, but many still believe the prosecution did not prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt.

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WOMEN'S DAY

The demand all over the world was: 'Stop the war on women! And stop the U.S. war!'

6

MEXICO CONFERENCE

The U.S. has tried to criminalize Colombia's revolutionary movement. But a prestigious meeting in Mexico City gave a resounding 'NO!' to Washington's 'Plan Colombia.'

9

TERRORISTS? NOT WHEN THEY'RE 'OURS'

They tried to assassinate Fidel Castro. They shot down a Cuban airliner, killing 73 people. But now Washington is trying to get them released, while at the same time twisting arms to condemn Cuba for 'human rights' violations.

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Pentagon shocker

U.S. threatens nuclear first strike

By Fred Goldstein

The Bush administration has dramatically escalated its campaign of global intimidation by going public with portions of the Pentagon's latest classified plans for the use of nuclear weapons and its targeting of China, Russia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya with these weapons.

By clearly throwing out the policy of using nuclear weapons for deterrence in favor of using them as part of the regular arsenal of warfare, the Bush administration and the Pentagon have openly demonstrated to the world that military madness and the quest for imperialist world domination are inseparable.

Bush has thrown down the challenge to the anti-war movement and the working class and oppressed of the whole world to escalate the struggle against Washington's war plans. The Pentagon has expanded its definition of the so-called "war against terrorism" and enumerated a long series of instances in which it would carry out a nuclear attack, including "in the event of surprising military developments." This is a policy carte blanche that can cover just about any situation in any country that the Pentagon cares to designate.

The planning revealed by the Nuclear Policy Review (NPR) document "reverses an almost two-decade-long trend of relegating nuclear weapons to the category of weapons of last resort," wrote William Arkin in the Los Angeles Times of March 10. Arkin, a senior fellow at Johns Hopkins and an adjunct professor at the U.S. Air Force School of Advanced Airpower Studies, wrote that the NPR "offers a chilling glimpse into the world of nuclear-war

planners: With a Strangelovian genius, they cover every conceivable circumstance in which the president might wish to use nuclear weapons—planning in great detail."

USSR's existence deterred nuclear threats

In the new policy guidelines, the Pentagon is dealing with the fact that the nuclear arsenal it built up during the struggle to destroy the Soviet Union and socialism left it with a devastating military technology that it could not use for ordinary warfare. Furthermore, the very existence of the Soviet Union was a deterrent to Washington threatening smaller, oppressed countries with nuclear weapons. The NPR seeks to remedy this situation.

In the NPR, "Defense Department strategists," continued Arkin, "promote tactical and so-called 'adaptive' nuclear capabilities to deal with contingencies where large nuclear arsenals are not demanded. They seek a host of new weapons and support systems, including conventional weapons and cyber warfare capabilities integrated with nuclear warfare."

The review calls for incorporation of "nuclear capability" into many of the conventional systems now under development. For example, an extended-range conventional cruise missile in the works for the U.S. Air Force "would have to be modified to carry nuclear warheads if necessary." The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter should be modified to carry nuclear weapons. Starting in April, research is to begin on fitting an existing nuclear warhead into a new, 5,000-pound earth-penetrating bomb.

The NPR completely abandons the pretext of the so-

Continued on page 8

ISRAEL MASSACRES PALESTINIANS



Israeli soldiers arrest Mahmoud Saleh in Jerusalem March 10.



Soldier handcuffs and forces Saleh down.



Soldier fires in air to scare off people watching in horror.



Special unit officers strip Saleh.



Three soldiers fired, blowing Saleh's brains out.

Talking peace, Israel has launched its biggest operation yet, using U.S.-supplied weapons. Left, photo sequence shows execution of a Palestinian in front of horrified residents of East Jerusalem. Below, U.S. student protest simulates an Israeli checkpoint.

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WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Congress pulls a fast one

Boosts profits but not jobs

By Heather Cottin

In a cynical move that used unemployed workers as hostages, Congress passed an "economic stimulus" package that rewards the ruling class with nearly \$100 billion in tax breaks. The House voted 417-3, the Senate 85-9, to give the corporations a three-year ride on the gravy train. Only after they secured this deal to enrich their wealthy supporters did the members of both parties reluctantly approve a miserly 13-week extension on unemployment benefits.

President George W. Bush quickly signed the bill into law on March 9.

Unemployment stands at nearly eight million. Many workers' benefits were about to expire. The major unions had been calling for at least a 26-week extension, but the bill offered only half that. In past recessions, extensions of 26 and even more weeks of unemployment benefits have been almost routine.

Under the terms of the bill, employers can also reduce contributions to pension funds for their employees. Congress and the Bush administration have tried four times to deliver special tax breaks to the rich. This time the deal was: no tax breaks, no unemployment benefits. Democrats and Republicans hurried the bill through both houses, providing seven times more money for the rich than for the poor.

In the last 20 years, the rich have grown even richer through the intercession of the government, which has become more openly a tool of the capitalist class. Deregulation and tax breaks coupled with aggressive business practices have busted unions, moved businesses out of the country, lowered wages and erased benefits.

A New York Times analysis of a U.S. Census Bureau survey in August 2001 showed that the economic situation for most people was worse at the end of the 1990s than at the beginning of the decade. One percent of the U.S. population, the ruling class, owned 40 percent of the national wealth.

The new tax law is designed to further enrich this class.

Lots for a few, little for the many

While the news headlines focused on the extension of unemployment insurance, the actual cost of helping the workers was a paltry \$14 billion. Not much was said about the fact that Congress, by a huge vote, rejected provisions in the bill that would have extended health benefits to unemployed workers.

Nor did the corporate press criticize other provisions of the bill, which is systematically designed to fleece the public while it benefits the corporations.

Tech firms, which have spent about \$6 million buying friends on Capitol Hill since 2000, lobbied to enable corporations to deduct the cost of depreciation on their machines. This clause will cost the treasury \$35.3 billion—which is sure to eventually come out of workers' wages and benefits, since it is human labor that creates all wealth. (http://www.washtech.com/news/regulation/15569-1.html).

According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the bill will worsen conditions in most states, which are already facing state budget shortfalls of up to \$50 billion in 2002.

The "stimulus" package will deepen the economic crises in individual states by producing an additional shortfall of \$14.1 billion. The CBPP

lists some of the victims of this congressional grand larceny:

"Cuts in Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) ... would affect thousands of low-income children and elderly and disabled people ... New Mexico may eliminate its SCHIP program for children entirely. Tennessee has proposed cutting Medicaid eligibility for 180,000 low-income people.

"Some states, such as Florida and Oregon, are likely to cut coverage for the 'medically needy,' a group of low-income people who incur catastrophic health care expenses. Some other states will no longer cover disabled workers returning to work and low-income women with breast and cervical cancer. In addition, a number of states, including Indiana, Maine and New Jersey, are suspending measures to reach more of the uninsured."

Other provisions of the bill give five years of tax breaks to multinational corporations engaged in banking, finance and insurance activities overseas. (http://www.cbpp.org/) Businesses benefiting from the stimulus package include Citigroup Inc., McDonald's and the Intel Corporation. (Bloomberg News, March 11)

Federal Reserve Bank chair Alan Greenspan has proclaimed that the recession is over—but unemployment could still rise to 6 percent. If he is right, what is needed is more help for the unemployed, not the big corporations that are poised to increase their profits. Congress quickly passed this bill to deliver billions of dollars to the corporations and the wealthy.

As long as they can, the bosses will use the government to legitimize their robbery of the working class. When workers organize to challenge these crooks, this will all change.



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WW CALENDAR

CHICAGO

Fri., March 15
Free the 5 U.S.-held Cuban political prisoners. Hear Gloria La Riva, Nat'l Comm. to Free the U.S.-Held Political Prisoners, and Florentino Batista, Cuban Interests Section, and others. 7 p.m. At DePaul Student Union, 2250 Sheffield at Belden. For info Chicago IAC (773) 878-0166.

DETROIT

Sun., March 17
Free the Cuban Five meeting. Hear Gloria La Riva and Florentino Batista, Cuban Interests Section. At Swords into Plowshares Gallery, 23-33 E. Adams at Woodward. For info Justice for Cuba Coalition (313) 561-8330.

LOS ANGELES

Sat., March 16
Hear about the current struggle of the Filipino people against the introduction of U.S. troops and Special

Forces into the Philippines under the guise of "fighting terrorism." Featured guest: Joe Navidad, Nat'l Coordinator BAYAN Int'l USA and national steering committee member of Int'l ANSWER. 7 p.m. At 422 S. Western Ave., Room 114. For info (213) 487-2368.

SAN FRANCISCO

Sat., April 20
Protest the REAL Axis of Evil: War, Racism, Poverty. 11 a.m. gather Dolores Park. Noon march. 1 p.m. rally Civic Center. For info (415) 821-6545 or www.InternationalANSWER.org.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Sat., April 20
March on Washington Against War & Racism. For info (212) 633-6646 or www.InternationalANSWER.org.

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Guess who Bush is protecting?

Slaps tariffs on steel imports

By Milt Neidenberg

The ailing steel industry, inundated with 31 bankruptcies in recent years, received a shot in the arm from President George W. Bush on March 5. He issued sweeping tariffs and quotas to protect steel bosses from their global competitors. Owners of integrated steel plants that convert iron ore into finished steel are the beneficiaries of a protectionist policy that has far-reaching economic and political consequences.

It is too early to determine the extent of the protectionist fallout. But it is clear that although the names of the “good old boy” Morgan-Rockefeller steel network of a century ago may have changed, its conservative, rightwing corporate mentality is still alive.

Bush imposed a stiff three-year, 30-percent tariff on the main products of integrated steel plants. Other products, such as stainless steel, face tariffs of 8 percent to 15 percent. The immediate result is a dramatic increase in the price of steel.

Catering to this sector, President Bush has provoked a trade war with the same capitalist allies he has been courting for his expanding war against Afghanistan and other regions. The European Union and its steel monopolies are furious.

They now export more than 6 million tons of finished steel products to the U.S. The projected trade barriers could cost the integrated steel corporations more than \$2 billion annually. Steel monopolies like Thyssen/Krupp of Germany, the Anglo-Dutch Corus Group, South Korea’s Pohang Iron & Steel, and others took heavy hits in the stock market.

Japan, South Korea, Russia, Brazil and others seriously affected are angry. They are assessing retaliatory options. Even British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Bush’s willing junior partner in the war drive, characterized the move as “unacceptable and wrong.”

A key question therefore is: Will the U.S. war allies, particularly the European Union, raise tensions by applying sanctions—such as closing off tax benefits

given to U.S. companies or retaliating against U.S. products? The 15-nation union has already announced it will file a two-part complaint with the World Trade Organization.

Competition will intensify

Capitalist overproduction has created a glut in the global market. Brutal competition will intensify among the giant steel producers as they fight for hegemony of markets and profits. Even U.S. non-union mini-steel mills, like Nucor, that compete with the integrated steel plants have joined the fray. They can enjoy the protection of high tariffs and cheaper labor costs, while not being responsible for worker pensions and health costs that are a burden to Big Steel.

To add to this crisis, the tariffs raised tensions between the integrated steel plants and domestic users who fabricate the steel for consumption. The costs of the latter will rise dramatically as tariffs kick in. These steel users may move their operations abroad to avoid the increases, eliminating many thousands of jobs, or pass their costs in price increases on to workers and consumers—or both.

They constitute a broad array of powerful forces that include the Big Three auto giants, their suppliers, construction companies, and manufacturers of a multitude of consumer products and household necessities, like refrigerators and stoves.

Even steel-producing countries like Brazil that are now shut out of the U.S. market have threatened to retaliate. This has special significance in regard to the Free Trade Area of the Americas, where the U.S. wants to increasingly squeeze Latin America and the Caribbean in its economic clutches. Bush’s imperialist “free trade” policies may have hit a bump in the road.

So what was in it for the Bush administration that Bush would weigh in on the side of the protectionist wing of his base? Is his popularity finally waning as the World Trade Center disaster recedes? Is he worried about domestic support for his

decision to widen the war? Is he concerned about the November 2002 mid-term elections and therefore wooing the steelworkers’ union, the USWA, which supported him unconditionally in the tariff campaign?

The union joined the campaign of Bush and the steel tycoons to raise protectionist tariffs. The USWA mobilized thousands of its members, held marches and rallies, lobbied politicians and communities, all in the hope that Bush and the steel bosses would support its effort to save jobs and finance the benefits currently in danger.

However, Bush has rejected any bailout for retirees who gave a lifetime of sweat and blood toiling in the smokestack industries. Now the steelworkers will be hung out to dry by a Congress—Democrats and Republicans—who will put the retirees’ issue on a back burner. The Democratic Party joined the protectionist chorus.

The AFL-CIO leadership is facing a critical moment. The expanding war, military budget and “anti-terrorist” campaign are eating up wealth and resources desperately needed by steelworkers and labor in general. And the recession has continued to take its toll on the masses of working people.

Millions are unemployed, particularly in the industrial sector. Millions more are without decent health care. Hunger and homelessness are rising.

It’s time for the AFL-CIO to review the full significance of the Bush administration’s protectionist tariff hike. The steel industry is in deep crisis. Only a few will survive.

The day after the higher tariffs were imposed, National Steel—the fifth-largest steel corporation, Japanese-owned but located in Indiana—declared bankruptcy. This threatens the jobs of 7,500 steelworkers. Bethlehem Steel, the second-largest steel corporation, is now in bankruptcy. LTV, a Midwest giant, has been sold off to a corporate speculator.

Other bargain hunters will exploit the workforce mercilessly or sell off the physical assets of the plants. The greedy steel

Bush's imperialist 'free trade' policies have hit a bump in the road. He has provoked a trade war with the same capitalist allies he has been courting for his expanding war.

barons driven by the profit motive are bloodsuckers on a potentially healthy industry capable of producing more than 100 million tons of steel annually.

A spark of struggle could turn it around

Steel workers and their allies need a plan to revive the industry—a strategy to take over their plants. USWA President Leo Gerard wouldn’t initiate it, but union leaders would have to support it.

The rank and file have made the maximum sacrifices to keep the plants running. So much of their labor is invested in the plants that they have the right to legally declare that they are the principal creditors, particularly in the bankrupt plants. They have the skills and the know-how to make the plants run.

Occupying the plants could save their jobs, their pensions and health benefits.

There is a desperate need for steel products, particularly in war-torn, impoverished countries, as well as here in this country. The potential for international solidarity will rise as steelworkers abroad face a similar crisis from exploiting steel magnates.

A spark of struggle, such as taking over a steel plant, even one in bankruptcy or on “hot idle”—a closed plant with its furnaces still lit—would be timely and could energize this development.

Laid-off and dying

Steel workers need a new strategy

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

Every day, in addition to formal obituaries, the Cleveland daily newspaper lists everyone who recently died. A few words identify the deceased, perhaps as a member of a church or a worker at a certain company.

This year has seen a marked increase in deaths of workers or retirees from LTV Steel.

Because of bankruptcy proceedings, on Feb. 28 LTV retirees lost their health insurance. Laid-off workers lost supplementary unemployment benefits and health insurance. Salaried employees were left out in the cold completely, without a penny in the severance pay promised them.

However, the bankruptcy court approved millions of dollars in “retention bonuses” to the top executives who shut the mills down. The workers’ families drew little comfort from the announcement, also made Feb. 28, that a buyer had been found for the mills, which were idled last year.

Officials of the Steelworkers union are pleased that the new owners, the New York investment firm of W. L. Ross, will reopen the mills and recognize the union. It is surely good news that steel making will continue in Cleveland.

However, the new bosses will not be bound by the previous contract, and will surely demand even more concessions on top of those the union has already made to LTV. Even more significant, they will recall at most 3,000 of the 7,500 workers who lost their jobs. Whether these recalls will respect seniority rights remains to be seen.

The Steelworkers leadership focused on sweetening the pie for a potential buyer by dropping a successor clause that would have required the new owners to recognize the union and abide by the existing contract. The union leaders credit their threat to strike with pushing LTV to extend benefits to laid-off workers and retirees.

Ironically, it is the non-represented salaried workers who have organized to de-

mand a better deal. These former salespeople, supervisors and others who were not unionized have held rallies and filed a lawsuit against the company, stating that they should be considered a secured creditor in the bankruptcy proceedings.

In fact, the union, whose members are owed billions in pension funds, should have been recognized all along as the largest creditor, bigger than all the vendors and bankers to whom LTV was indebted. Instead, the union leaders negotiated as subordinates to these corporate creditors.

If the salaried workers can demand recognition as creditors, why not the union and the workers it represents? As creditors, and thus de facto owners prior to the sale, they could demand all the proceeds of the sale go to rehiring the workers and restoring health benefits to retirees.

The steelworkers recently mobilized large numbers of members and supporters to go to demonstrate in Washington, D.C. Huge ads in the local papers appealed to area workers to help “save

our steel.” President George W. Bush then agreed to impose large tariffs on some imported steel.

While the steel companies and unions alike welcomed this step, it will not solve the worldwide crisis of capitalist overproduction in steel and manufacturing. Setting off an international trade war does not create jobs. In fact, steel buyers are using the higher price of steel as an excuse to lay off workers in their industries.

The other key demand of the Washington demonstration was that the federal government use the funds from increased tariffs to restore and secure benefits for retired steelworkers. This demand was denied.

With over 30 U.S. steel companies now in bankruptcy, the Steelworkers union has a crisis far bigger than LTV. It is not too late to mount a militant strategy to control the future of these mills and the tens of thousands of jobs they represent. Failure to do so will only lead to more layoffs, more loss of benefits, and far too many early deaths of stress-filled workers.

20,000 rally to save Children's Hospital

Enron-type greed bled it dry

By Bev Hiestand, R.N.
Chief Steward, CWA 1168
Buffalo, N.Y.

“Save our Children’s Hospital” was the rallying call of more than 20,000 supporters who filled downtown Niagara Square here on March 2. They protested the plan of Kaleida Health to close the existing children’s facility in Buffalo.

The hospital, founded 110 years ago, is today ranked one of the 20 best children’s hospitals in the country. It is the major provider of pediatric care in the western New York area.

At the rally, parents, healthcare union workers, doctors, local sports celebrities and politicians gave testimony. Many wept as they shared stories about how their son’s or daughter’s life was saved by staff at the hospital.

And many here are dubbing the corporate owners of Children’s Hospital—Kaleida Health—the “Enron” of western New York.

Children’s merged into the Kaleida Health system, along with four other major hospitals, in 1998. Kaleida became the biggest health-care conglomerate in New York State outside of New York City. The result was an immediate downsizing in available beds and workforce size.

Healthcare for profit rather than for human needs is now the norm in this country. Kaleida is a “non-profit” corporation. But that is a misnomer. The term “non-profit” is a legal technicality that means they can’t sell stocks on the market or diversify into other industries.

But make no mistake about it: Kaleida bosses make profits off workers’ labor. And they are bleeding profits from the facilities they gobbled up, like Children’s.

One year after the merger, Kaleida proposed building a new pediatric hospital near Buffalo General Hospital. The move

was supposed to cut costs by sharing services. Opposition surfaced almost immediately; physicians were concerned that the special environment and needs of children would be compromised.

Last December Kaleida management announced they could not afford such a move and Children’s would remain where it was.

In early February, news leaked that the Hunter group—a national hospital consulting firm hired by Kaleida—recommended closing Children’s and consolidating pediatric services into one of the adult-care hospitals.

Later, reports emerged that the Hunter group concluded that surgery on adults is more profitable than surgery on children, so cutting pediatric services would be a good way to cut Kaleida’s deficit.

Dr. Steven Lana, a Buffalo pediatrician and president of the medical staff at Children’s, told the press that closing the pediatric facility is “about solving Kaleida Health’s financial crises at the expense of Children’s Hospital and the community.” (Buffalo News, Feb. 1)

Time for community, unions to examine books!

Since the merger, Kaleida has operated with massive losses on its books. This year the corporation states it will lose as much as \$60 million.

So where are the profits that Kaleida workers generate?

“Kaleida Brass Raking in Millions Through Salaries, Bonuses, Perks,” read the March 5 Niagara Falls Reporter headline.

The article exposed that while Kaleida was drowning in a sea of red ink and laying off essential caregivers, administrators of this non-profit corporation were living a Kenneth Lay lifestyle.

These top administrators are “raking in six-figure salaries, receiving bonuses and

corporate incentives totaling millions of dollars annually and enjoying lavish expense accounts, corporate credit cards and other perks that would make executives at Enron blush.”

One executive netted a base salary of \$363,380, but was awarded a \$78,076 bonus.

But the corruption is only the tip of the iceberg.

The March 10 Buffalo News reported that Buffalo General and Millard Fillmore hospitals carry mortgages that require \$23 million a year in debt service. Children’s is debt-free. So Kaleida used Children’s as collateral on its state and federal loans.

How can the community Children’s is supposed to serve trust the profit-driven decisions by the board of trustees? How can the workers’ unions, slashed by Kaleida management to turn a bigger buck, trust their bosses’ moves?

The community and the unions have the right to demand: “Open up the books for us to examine. Let us see what decisions were made and why. We should be the final arbiters of moves that will affect the lives of ourselves, our neighbors and our co-workers.”

Turning up the heat

After accepting the Hunter recommendations, the Kaleida Board of Trustees had continued to assure the community there would be no compromise in services at the new site.

But physicians, parents, healthcare workers and members of SEIU Local 1199 Upstate believed otherwise. The union represents more than 1,500 workers at Children’s. Together they formed a coalition called “Women and Children First” to mobilize thousands of western New York supporters. The coalition is reaching out to many of those who have relied on Children’s for care.

Women and Children First called for a

huge March 2 protest rally and pressured local and state legislators to act.

Under the weight of this mobilization, more information leaked out about the Hunter group report.

Kaleida intended to consolidate all inpatient pediatric services into two units at one of its existing adult hospitals. Severe cutbacks in the intensive care areas were recommended.

Pediatric emergency room beds would be cut from 18 to 12. Plans had been underway at Children’s to address overcrowding and increase emergency beds to 30.

It became obvious that Kaleida had not been open about its intent. A Feb. 13 Buffalo News editorial noted that “Kaleida Health officials have asked the public to trust them as they consider the future of one of Buffalo’s most beloved institutions, Children’s Hospital. Yet they undermine the very trust they ask for by refusing to release the report upon which this decision is being based.”

With community pressure mounting, one day before the March 3 rally the Buffalo News dropped a bombshell. It reported that the head of a Kaleida Health advisory panel—which two years ago recommended building a new Children’s Hospital near Buffalo General—later sold Kaleida a piece of property near the proposed site. This led critics to charge the board member with obvious conflict of interest.

On March 5, Kaleida bosses announced they would indefinitely postpone their decision to move Children’s. And, on March 11, they plan to release the full Hunter group report.

However, the mobilization continues. Here in Erie County, one out of every five children lives below the poverty line. If Children’s closes or is severely downsized, there will be no alternatives for essential healthcare.

Bush gang tangled in Enron web

By John Catalinotto

With each week a new entanglement of the Bush administration in the Enron scandal breaks to the surface. If a “war on terror” weren’t already underway, the Bush gang would have to invent one to hide behind.

This scandal should come as no surprise, as both the Bush gang and the Enron executives look upon government as an aid to enriching the already rich private interests owning and controlling the big corporations and banks. They have much in common.

The latest outbreak came regarding Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White, an Enron Corp. executive for 11 years. White, a retired Army general, was paid \$5.5 million a year as vice chair of Enron Energy Services, the company’s retail energy division.

When White first discussed these matters with the U.S. Senate, he agreed to divest himself of all interests in Enron by last Nov. 30. Even that date involved a 90-day extension from his first pledge to divest.

As Army secretary, White pushed hard for privatization of Army installation utilities. Indeed, he sent out a memo last November urging such privatization.

Indeed, White’s feeling on this might appear to stem from deep ideological conviction. This conviction has a material basis.

While White was at Enron, he told the company it could make \$75 billion from Army privatizations.

White apparently broke no laws. Capitalist laws tend to be soft on this type of theft. The administration claims that White removed himself from decisions directly involving Enron, and this was enough to keep all dealings straight and honest.

What weakens this claim is that White, after taking a Cabinet position, held on to \$1 million of Enron stock in a private fund—the WSW Exchange Fund. In addition, White had a small annuity paid by Enron that began in January.

As of March 7, he was unclear if he had divested. Until Feb. 20, he hadn’t even informed the Senate committee that he still held this investment.

White claims his investments “were too complex” to deal with so quickly. He hadn’t mentioned this complexity in his earlier discussions with the Senate.

Bush and Lay go way back

Bush displayed shock and horror that the Enron executives had misled not only their entire workforce but also their investors. But it turns out White was not the only member of the administration who was tight with Enron.

Vice President Dick Cheney, when he wasn’t conspiring to find a way to invade Iraq, was meeting with Enron executives to discuss energy policy. He is trying now to prevent Congress and the public from seeing reports of these discussions.

Bush himself was a good-old buddy with Enron CEO Kenneth Lay, having met him sometime in the 1980s, according to the March 6 Chicago Tribune. Bush developed a closer relationship during his first term as governor of Texas, starting in 1994.

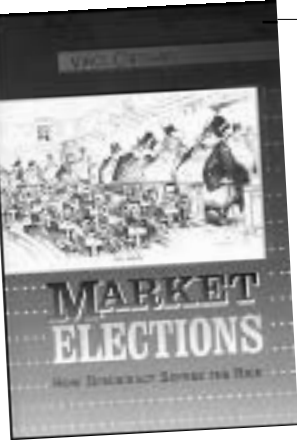
A birthday note from Bush to Lay in 1997 reveals the extent of this familiarity. “Dear Ken,” the letter said, “One of the sad things about old friends is that they seem to be getting older—just like you! 55 years old. Wow. That is really old. ...”

It is easy to speculate that Bush might

really admire someone like Lay, who had grown immensely rich and powerful without contributing anything of value to the rest of humanity. He was cut from the same mold as George W., and made it without the advantage of having a father who was president.

Beyond speculation, however, there were more substantial reasons for the relationship. Bush and Enron had overlapping interests in oil wells. Also, Enron and its employees contributed \$114,500 to the first Bush campaign for governor and \$198,000 to his 1998 campaign. Enron’s PAC and its employees gave \$114,000 to Bush’s presidential campaign.

Even as Bush was lashing out at the Enron executives recently, he must have wanted to say to Lay—“I feel your pain.”



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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Fighting global poverty and war

By Kathy Durkin

Women throughout the world have commemorated International Women's Day since 1910, demonstrating for equal economic, political and social rights, and against oppression, exploitation and war. It's also commemorated by displays of international solidarity with women in struggle.

This year, some protests were directed against the Pentagon war drive and U.S. support for Israel's genocidal assaults against the Palestinians.

On March 8, hundreds of Palestinian women held a sit-down outside United Nations headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, in solidarity with their sisters in the West Bank and Gaza who have been under a 17-month siege by Israel. They called for an end to the genocide of Palestinians. Their sisters in Gaza City rallied for a Palestinian state and for their rights.

Filipino women chanted, "Women unite: U.S. troops out now!" as they rallied near Manila's presidential palace. They militantly protested joint military exercises with U.S. Special Forces in the so-called "war on terrorism." They burned effigies of government officials covered in U.S. flags and chanted anti-government slogans. The women demanded wage increases and housing, and criticized their government for failing to meet their economic needs, which has caused many to turn to prostitution to support their families.

In its official government IWD event, the Afghan government noticeably ignored the destruction and loss of life of thousands of women and children caused by U.S. bombs and troops.



Manila: 'Women unite: U.S. troops out now!'

Although the U.S. government has cried crocodile tears over conditions for Afghan women under the Taliban, the imperialist war has exacerbated homelessness, hunger, dislocation, health problems and harassment—increasingly by U.S. soldiers.

Well-known Afghan actress Zamzana Shakila blames U.S. Special Forces for aggressive behavior towards women who've shed their burkas. She tells U.S. soldiers, "You are worse than the 'terrorists'." You are making life impossible for Afghan women. Cut it out." (NY Times, March 10)

Kuwaiti women demanded their full political rights, which are denied them.

Women worldwide are grappling with capitalist globalization that intensifies exploitation and inequality. It has deepened the feminization of poverty and engendered more anti-woman violence. Most women live in poverty; 70 percent of the world's poor are women; 550 million can't read.

Indigenous women grabbed the micro-

phone to yell, "No to Ralco," at an official IWD event at Chile's presidential palace in Santiago. They disrupted a similar event in Temuco to protest the building of a \$500-million hydroelectric plant by Endesa Chile—owned by Spain's Endesa Corp.—that would destroy the homes of Pehuenches on their traditional land. The United Workers Federation organized an IWD march in Concepcion; it ended with protests against the plant's construction.

Women marched in Guatemala City against poverty, discrimination and abuse, and for indigenous peoples' rights. Argentinean, Salvadoran, and Peruvian women demanded equal pay and an end to hunger and unemployment.

In New Delhi, 7,000 Indian women marched to demand equal pay and political representation and to protest discrimination, harassment, exploitation and anti-woman violence. Thousands more demonstrated in Calcutta, Bombay and Trivandrum.



Beirut: 'Stop the genocide!'

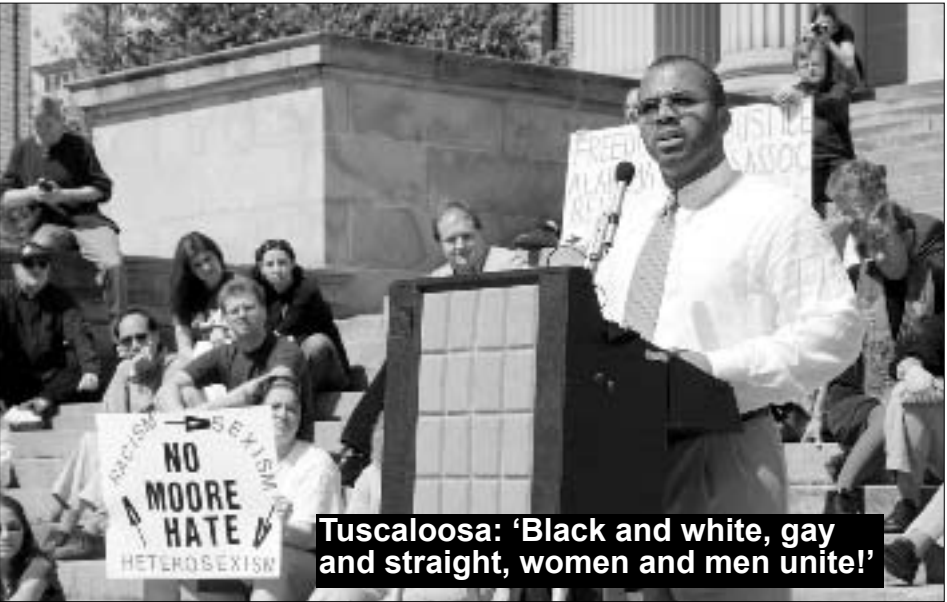
Women and men by the thousands marched in 10 major cities of Bangladesh to protest rising violence against women.

At its IWD commemoration, the African National Congress Women's League dedicated the month of March to "Women's Rights, a Pillar for Human Rights," and reviewed gains made for South African women, including pro-choice legislation.

Russian women, who've been hard hit along with those in Eastern Europe since the re-introduction of capitalism, began a petition campaign to demand equal pay. They receive on average 30-percent lower salaries than men.

IWD protests and celebrations were also held in Colombia, Uganda, the Congo, Pakistan, Indonesia, Spain, France and elsewhere.

Imperialist militarism and globalization will not be met unchallenged by the women of the world who will resist, organize and fight back in the spirit of International Women's Day.



Tuscaloosa: 'Black and white, gay and straight, women and men unite!'



New York: 'No sweatshops, no war!'

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

IWD in the U.S.

Focus is on war and war on women

Los Angeles

Ana Duarte explained IWD started with the militant struggle of women textile workers in the U.S. against sweatshop exploitation. Jennifer Kang gave a vivid description of the historic Bread and Roses strike in Lawrence, Mass., in 1912. Kang explained how solidarity among the very oppressed workers, mostly women and immigrants, was crucial to their victory over the textile mill bosses.

Cheri Chapman recited Sojourner Truth's "And Ain't I a Woman" speech and closed with a quote by Frederick Douglass. Maggie Vascassenno moti-

vated the call for April 20 national marches against war, racism and poverty.

Cleveland

An ad hoc committee of activists protested Bush and the generals' attempts to use women's issues to justify their imperialist war against Afghanistan. They held a "solidarity line" with women around the world, picketing and chanting "No rape, no war." Later, activists held an Art Speak Out with poetry, music, visual art and statements condemning war, racism, homophobia and women's oppression.

Riverside, Calif.

Students, primarily women of color, protested against war and racism at the University of California at Riverside. Lesbian speakers from Queer Alliance, Women of UC Riverside and students from International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism), denounced racism, homophobia, sexism and attacks on Muslim people in the wake of Sept. 11. UCR Students signed a non-compliance petition, demanding that the administration not turn students' private information over to the FBI and Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Milwaukee

"We believe the enemy of all oppressed and exploited people is capitalism," said Dr. Doreatha Mbalia of the Pan African Revolutionary Socialist Party at a March 9 IWD forum sponsored by A Job is a Right Campaign and held at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society museum. Topics included "the war on terrorism," police brutality and W-2, so-called welfare reform.

Latasha Thurman chaired. Speakers included Janice Thurman of AJRC, whose son was killed by an off-duty Milwaukee police officer.

Continued on page 8

As Israel talks peace

Troops massacre Palestinians

By Richard Becker

No sooner had the Bush administration announced plans to send its diplomat, Gen. Anthony Zinni, back to the Middle East to reopen negotiations than the Israeli army launched its biggest offensive in two decades. Not since the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 had Israel deployed such massive force. In addition to 20,000 troops, U.S.-supplied F-16 fighter bombers, "Apache" helicopters and hundreds of tanks attacked Palestinian refugee camps, cities and towns all over the West Bank.

Since the beginning of March at least 163 Palestinians have been killed and more than 1,000 seriously wounded. Thousands more have been rounded up in mass sweeps. Fifty-eight Israelis have been killed in the same period in Palestinian counter-attacks.

On March 7, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced that Zinni was returning to the Middle East. On March 8, Israel invaded refugee camps all over the West Bank and Gaza.

The attack was from air, ground and sea, indiscriminately hitting houses and civilians. By the day's end 50 Palestinians were killed, the largest one-day toll since the Intifada, or uprising, began more than 17 months ago.

Residents of the camps resisted with great courage, but had no weaponry to match the high-tech, U.S.-equipped Israeli army.

On March 9, as the Israeli offensive continued, a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up in Jerusalem, killing 13 people and wounding more than 80. The same day, two Palestinian guerrillas opened fire in Netanya. Three people were killed and more than 25 wounded.

By March 12, the Israeli army had occupied many cities and camps, including Ramallah. Just a few miles north of Jerusalem, Ramallah is a city of 200,000 and the base of the Palestinian Authority (PA). More than 150 Israeli tanks and other armored vehicles moved into Ramallah, firing in all directions.

Israeli army forces on March 13 were reported to be ransacking Ramallah and its twin city, Al-Bireh, along with the nearby Ama'ari and Qaddura refugee camps. Israeli tanks were firing on a local hospital and preventing ambulances from bringing Palestinian wounded for treatment.

Among the many dead was the Italian freelance news photographer Raffaele Ciriello. According to colleagues with him at the time, Ciriello was hit by six bullets fired without warning from an Israeli tank machinegun. According to Palestinian sources, Ciriello and a wounded French journalist were photographing the Israeli army attack on the hospital.

Israeli tanks had opened fire the day before on the hotel from which 20 international journalists were covering the occupation of Ramallah.

In a new tactic, the Israeli army began mass roundups of Palestinian men in

the camps and cities they occupied. Refugee camps, because they are bastions of the Palestinian resistance, have been particularly targeted for attacks and roundups.

In the occupied camps, all males between the ages of 15 and 45 were ordered to surrender to the army. The troops then went house-to-house, breaking down doors looking for men who hadn't come forward.

In the Tulkarem camp in the West Bank, those arrested had numbers written in ink on their foreheads and arms. PA leader Yasser Arafat called the army's treatment of the detainees a form of "new Nazi racism."

In all, several thousand men were detained. In the Deheishe camp outside Bethlehem, renowned for its history of struggle, more than 600 men were arrested and marched to a quarry two miles away. Blindfolded and bound, they were lined up while awaiting interrogation to determine whether or not they were suspected fighters. If the men didn't move fast enough, Israeli soldiers would hit them in the head with their guns.

University of Michigan

'Mock checkpoint'

By Jane Cutter
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Facing bitterly cold wind and snow, more than 50 supporters of Palestinian liberation protested creatively outside a pro-Zionist conference at the University of Michigan on March 10. Protesters organized a "mock military checkpoint" which depicted the reality of life for many Palestinians as they attempt to go to work, school, places of worship and the hospital.

The conference, "Israel Under the Lens: An Academic Conference," was in no way a genuine scholarly conference. Sponsored largely by an assortment of Zionist organizations, it featured the "Caravan for Democracy"—a campaign to bring pro-Israel speakers to campuses to attempt to rebut the growing movement for Palestine.

A free CD from the Caravan for Democracy, distributed to conference participants, proclaimed "Israel and America: Sharing hopes. Sharing values." The CD is intended to be a source of information to "respond effectively to the anti-U.S. and anti-Israel chorus on campus." Speakers at the conference included the notoriously right-wing academic Ray Tantor—who has promulgated the "Rogue States" theory about such nations as Cuba, North Korea, Libya and Iraq—as well as Relik Shafir, an Israeli general.

Starting at 9:30 am, protesters organized by Students Allied for Freedom and Equality and the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee at U of M set up a "check-point," identified with a banner, outside the conference. Some protesters portrayed Israeli Defense Force soldiers, wielding cardboard machine guns. Others depicted ordinary Palestinians trying to cross the checkpoint, including injured people trying to go to a hospital and a woman in labor. A cardboard ambulance, complete with flashing red light, and a

After interrogation, those suspected of being fighters were taken away to army camps or prisons—where they are assured of facing weeks of torture. All Palestinian political prisoners are subjected to what the Israelis call "pressure" during interrogation.

At a minimum, this "pressure" includes beatings, having a vomit- and urine-soaked burlap bag tied over the head while strapped in very awkward and painful positions on a tiny chair for days at a time, and long periods of sleep deprivation.

Palestinian detainees, who have not been convicted—or often even charged—are routinely tortured by a government that boasts of being "the only democracy in the Middle East." The U.S. corporate media just as routinely parrots this lie.

Sharon's two-part strategy

The response of the Sharon government to the latest U.S. "peace initiative" is in keeping with a long-standing pattern. Every time such an initiative has gained momentum in recent months, the Israeli military or intelligence services have im-

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WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Students acted out horrors of life in occupied territories.

stretcher carrying an injured "child" added to the vivid images.

A narrator set the stage for various skits as the Palestinians approached the checkpoint and tried to get through, only to be denied entry by the mock soldiers. All the scenarios depicted by the street theatre protest had their basis in actual incidents at checkpoints.

The creativity and fortitude of the young, mostly Arab and Muslim, protesters seemed to mirror the courage and spirit of those resisting the U.S.-backed Israeli repression on the front lines in Palestine. Protesters held the line in the cold and wind for two hours, then regrouped at 4:30 p.m. when the conference keynote speaker was scheduled to appear.

Earlier in the week, more than 100 campus activists had marched in solidarity with the Palestinian people in record-breaking cold weather.

Pentagon shocker

U.S. threatens nuclear first strike

Continued from page 1

called “war against terrorism” in using nuclear weapons. It cites examples of situations when it would use them: if the DPRK invaded South Korea; if Iraq attacked Israel; if the People’s Republic of China was at war with Taiwan.

All three instances would be examples of nations that have been oppressed by imperialism fighting back against U.S.-backed regimes that had been set up to defeat the national liberation struggle, or the socialist revolution, and protect the interest of the giant U.S. banks and multinational corporations. In other words, if any of the major clients of U.S. imperialism were to be militarily threatened, the Pentagon would use nuclear weapons.

The most immediately ominous aspect of the release of these plans is the timing. The classified information revealed in the documents leaked to the Los Angeles Times of March 10 has been known since Jan. 8, when it was sent to Congress as part of the nuclear policy review. Deputy Secretary of Defense for International Policy J.D. Crouch and other officials testified publicly on the unclassified sections of the document. The Pentagon refused to answer questions about any of the details—until this leak.

Timed for Cheney’s trip

Whereas the Pentagon was tight-lipped in January, the administration is now relishing these revelations. They have been suspiciously timed to coincide with the 11-nation tour Vice President Dick Cheney is making. He is on his way to the Middle East to line up support for a U.S. war against Iraq.

The document emphasizes using nuclear weapons against governments that have “weapons of mass destruction.” The U.S. propaganda campaign aimed at opening up a big war against Iraq is exclusively predicated on the supposed possession by Baghdad of “weapons of mass destruction.” The timing and the terminology are unmistakably aimed at bringing down the regime of Saddam Hussein.

This goal on the part of Washington has nothing to do with eliminating “weapons of mass destruction.” It is the U.S. military that is overloaded with enough means of mass destruction—nuclear, chemical and biological—to destroy the world several times over. U.S. imperialism is the only country that ever used nuclear weapons and has used nuclear extortion as a weapon of its diplomacy for over 55 years.

This campaign has everything to do with intimidating the Iraqi government, trying to engender splits and demoralization as a precursor to invasion. The goal is to establish a U.S. puppet government that would turn over the fabulous wealth represented by the 100 billion barrels of Iraq’s oil reserves to the oil monopolies behind the Bush administration. These threats are also calculated to intimidate the regimes of the Middle East into collaborating in the effort to bring down the Iraqi government in order to avoid a massive war.

To emphasize the U.S. determination to go to war, Cheney has been in London asking for the “possible commitment of 25,000 British troops to topple Saddam Hussein,” according to the Mirror of March 11. The British imperialists are extremely reluctant to be pulled into a U.S. war, but the Blair regime feels duty bound to comply with the demands of its overlord.

Meanwhile, thousands have taken to

the streets against British participation in the war against Iraq and the cabinet may split over it.

Media blitz to intimidate the world

It is most noteworthy that the ruling class here and its media have been relatively passive and silent about this development. This contrasts with 1991 in the period prior to launching the Gulf War against Iraq, when President George Bush Sr. threatened that if Iraq used chemical weapons, the U.S. might retaliate with nuclear weapons. Bush was later forced to write that he did not really intend to carry out the threat.

The mood in the present Bush administration is quite different. Defense Secretary Colin Powell went on CBS’s “Face the Nation” on March 10 and characterized the NPR as “prudent” planning. “We think it is best for any potential adversary out there to have uncertainty in his calculus.”

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said on NBC’s “Meet the Press” that Washington wanted “to send a very strong signal to anyone who might try to use weapons of mass destruction against the United States that they’d be met with a devastating response.”

And Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told CNN’s “Late Edition” on the same day that “this preserves for the president all the options a president would want to have in case this country, its friends and allies were attacked with weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, biological, chemical, or, for that matter, high explosives.”

In other words, far from being defensive about the leak of this classified information, the administration had a coordinated media blitz to arrogantly defend the NPR and to proclaim before the world that any oppressed country targeted by Washington and Wall Street that tries to develop any significant deterrent to aggression by the super-armed superpower risks nuclear destruction.

Whether or not this military madness will lead to a split in the ruling class or not, and thus to a struggle over policy, is a matter of sheer speculation. Indeed, at this point the New York Times finally found its voice, after a period of delay, and wrote an editorial, “America as Nuclear Rogue.”

The Times pointed out that such a policy could force other countries to develop nuclear weapons as a matter of deterrent and “the unrestrained use of nuclear weapons in war could end life as we know it. Nuclear weapons are not just another part of the military arsenal. They are different, and lowering the threshold for their use is reckless folly.”

At present, and for the last several months, the Times seems to be quite lonely in its attempts to restrain the Bush administration and the Pentagon. The Democratic Party establishment has been down on its knees praising Bush in his war drive as he sends troops to the Philippines, Yemen, and the former Soviet republic of Georgia, and brought devastating destruction to the people of Afghanistan. They have uttered only the meekest and most ineffectual protests about this or that detail of the war.

It is important to note that the Times does not really bemoan the suffering of the mass of the people in the colonial world who would be incinerated in a nuclear attack. They bemoan the end of life as we know it, in general. They fear the escalation that would bring down capitalist civ-

ilization along with everything else.

They are quite ready to put up with the horrendous bombs euphemistically called daisy cutters, along with napalm, smart bombs and all the other conventional means of destroying the workers and oppressed in their struggles. They do not want to call back the F-16s or the Apache helicopters that are devastating Palestinian towns and refugee camps. And they are fully prepared to support a full-scale attack on the people of Iraq, just as they have backed the genocidal sanctions.

Madness of finance capital

What the Times does not point out is that the madness lying behind the military minds in the Pentagon think-tanks is the madness of the finance capitalist profiteers and the multinationals that will stop at nothing to plunder and loot the globe for profit. That is where the madness begins and that is what the military was designed to serve in the first place.

The movement must never wait for the moderates in the ruling class to bring the Pentagon to its senses. Reaction and military adventure are an integral part of imperialism in its superpower phase. And

The leak was suspiciously timed to coincide with Cheney’s 11-nation tour to line up support for a war against Iraq.

now that the USSR no longer stands in their way, the military planners feel like the Roman emperors whose legions conquered the world.

But the difference between the Roman emperors and the modern rulers in the U.S. is that this ruling class will have to ultimately face a worldwide working class, including especially the working class right here at home. The workers will inevitably wake up and resist not only the nuclear plans of the Pentagon but the system of exploitation that is its foundation.

Focus is on war and war on women

Continued from page 6

waukee cop, Pamela Fendt of UW-Milwaukee’s Center for Economic Development, and women affected by W-2 and other draconian social policies.

Wisconsin State Sen. Gwendolynne Moore said IWD is “a story of very ordinary women making history.” She called for massive resistance to W-2 as racist and focused on “re-enslaving people” to make profits instead of meeting human needs.

New York City

A Workers World Party IWD forum focused on “Resisting Bush’s war on women.”

Rebecca Toledo called on all to go to Washington on April 20 to demand, “Money for jobs and all human needs, not for war.”

Lana El-Khalil of Al-Awda, and leader of F.I.S.T.—Fight Israeli State Terrorism—described the courageous 17-month struggle by Palestinians against Israel’s U.S.-backed program of genocide.

Vondora Jordan, a founder of Work-fairness, activist, and single mother of three, denounced the new Bush plan that forces impoverished women to marry the man who fathered their children—regardless of rape or battering. She outlined growing difficulties poor families have dealing with city bureaucracies that restrict and cut off benefits.

Nieves Ayers, a community activist and founder of La Peña del Bronx, described the four years she spent in a Chilean military concentration camp after the CIA-backed counter-revolution that overthrew the democratically elected Allende government. Ayers spoke movingly about years of torture that she and other prisoners endured. Struggles by the women in the camp actually won some concessions from the military.

Today, Ayers is struggling to save the

community group La Peña in the Bronx, which has been closed by police.

Minnie Bruce Pratt—anti-racist author and organizer for Rainbow Flags for Mumia—told about a demonstration taking place that evening in Tuscaloosa, Ala., protesting anti-lesbian bigotry. Pratt put the battle within the context of more than a century of resistance to racism and reaction in the Deep South.

Also in NYC

The Global Sweatshop Coalition held its fifth annual International Women’s Day march and rally through the very streets where the first IWD march took place early last century.

Two hundred people marched and rallied through a crowded shopping area. Protesters used puppets, flags, banners and chants to explain how low wages in oppressed countries also keep wages in the United States down and profits up.

Chicago

A multinational IWD demonstration of 300 addressed sweatshops, domestic violence, immigrant rights, civil liberties and cuts in state funding.

Jill Hill from Workers World Party spoke on cuts in human services affecting women and children in Illinois. “The welfare poor have now become the homeless, the imprisoned or the working poor,” she stressed. “This is in contrast to the huge military budget.”

Marchers stopped at the Immigration Office, Old Navy store, the Federal Building and the Federal Prison where Muslim leader Rabih Haddad is being held illegally. A contingent of Women In Black-Chicago marched with a banner protesting the “disappeared” victims of the “USA Patriot Act.”

From reports by Martha Grevatt, Bryan Pfeiffer, Kathy Durkin, G. Dunkel and Workers World bureaus in Los Angeles and Chicago.

Answer to 'Plan Colombia'

Mexico conference demands U.S. out

By Teresa Gutierrez
Mexico City

More than 600 participants representing dozens of countries around the world on March 4 and 5 took part here in the Second International Encounter in Solidarity and for Peace in Colombia and Latin America.

This historic conference reflects the growing worldwide movement against U.S. intervention in Colombia, specifically against the menacing Pentagon “Plan Colombia.” It also reflects the deepening solidarity of the progressive and revolutionary movements in Latin America and the Caribbean that each day is growing stronger and bolder.

The Second Encounter had significant support from a broad and prominent sector of anti-war, peace and progressive elements. Conveners included Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel; Ahmed Ben Bella, former president of Algeria; Archbishop Federico Pagura, president of the World Council of Churches from Argentina; Professor James Petras, U.S.; National Autonomous University of Mexico Professor Heinz Dietrich, Mexico City; former U.S. Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark; Prof. Henry Veltmeyer, St. Mary’s University, Halifax; and, in absentia, U.S. political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Countless organizations, activists and prominent leaders from Latin America and the Caribbean endorsed the Encounter and sent delegations. The FMLN and other mass organizations in El Salvador organized a bus of more than 30 students and other activists to attend the conference. The bus was to arrive on March 3, but was held at the border for hours in what was seen as harassment by the Mexican authorities.

Other delegations came from Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. Representatives also came from Basque Country, Spain, Greece, Canada and Australia.

The Cuban Women’s Federation from revolutionary Cuba called on the Encounter to dedicate International Women’s Day to the women of Colombia.

The Mexican progressive and revolu-

tionary movements were well represented. Groups in attendance included the Workers Party of Mexico, the Mexican Communists Party, the Popular Socialist Party, and many labor and mass organizations.

Students from throughout the area, including from UNAM—the National Autonomous University of Mexico—gave a revolutionary feel to the event.

These students, along with youth from Colombia, El Salvador and elsewhere, organized the Simon Bolivar Youth Encampment that was located on the UNAM campus. For several nights, students and other youths camped out at the tent city to meet, sing revolutionary songs and work together.

The students passed a resolution calling on the movement to continue education about and organizing against Plan Colombia, support self-determination for all oppressed peoples, press for a negotiated solution to the conflict in Colombia, and participate in the Latin American Seminar for Peace organized by the National Youth Assembly from Colombia on May 2-5 in the capital city of Bogotá.

In addition, the students and others at the conference agreed to organize protests on April 20 throughout Latin America in conjunction with the national march on Washington against Bush’s war and racism. Organizers from various cities agreed to go back to their areas and take up plans for April 20.

Activities are expected to take place in Mexico City, Oaxaca and Tabasco, Mexico; San Salvador, El Salvador; Santiago, Chile; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Guatemala City, Guatemala; and the Basque and Madrid Spain. Organizers from Canada also agreed to hold actions on April 20.

Although the main topic of the Encounter was Plan Colombia, representatives also discussed broader issues, such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the Andean Regional Initiative and Plan Puebla Panama. The conference was in full unity on the need to organize against all forms of U.S. intervention.

Stop Plan Colombia!

A high note of the Encounter came when representatives from the Revolutionary



Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP) and the National Liberation Army (ELN)—the two main rebel groups in Colombia—were able to attend the event. Participants had several opportunities to meet with the representatives of the rebels to find out more about the situation in Colombia.

An ELN statement to the conference read: “Colombia faces a juncture that because of the world situation is the most dangerous in its history. The U.S. government has deepened its intervention, the physical presence of U.S. military officials is a daily reality in many places of our homeland and it is the empire that dictates the principal decisions of the Colombian government. Plan Colombia, a plan against Colombia, and the Andean Regional Initiative is being converted into the launching pad of the geostrategic repositioning of imperialism. The Plan is now being implemented and its principal aim is to finance the war against our people.”

It continues, “The insurgent forces of Colombia in the search for peace with social justice, in the search for a political solution to this historic conflict that bloodies our homeland, will continue with all our

forms of struggle.”

A statement by the FARC-EP to the Encounter, read by Commandant Marco Calarca, stated, “It is an honor for me to present to this International Encounter a warm and Bolivarian greeting from all the men and women guerrillas of the FARC-EP. You know that President Pastrana resolved to end the possibility of finding solutions different from war to the social and armed conflict we face. On the one hand, it did this so that the Colombian people could not have the chance to transform society, but also because this transformation necessarily implies a great deal of resources.

“The government also did this because of international pressure, because since September 11 the Empire is advancing, it is taking advantage of an international conjuncture, and it is acceleratings its geostrategic position in Latin America. Our events are now not just justified, they are necessary.

“At this time, the Colombian people and its organizations, including its People’s Army, say and take note that we are not alone. Thanks to the anger and the courage of the Mexican people and its organizations we can unite hundreds of people here. This demonstrates the rage and courage that tells the Empire, the Colombian ruling class and the ruling classes of the world that there is solidarity with the struggle in Colombia.

“When they say, ‘You are either with us or you are terrorists,’ they erase rights such as that of self-determination of the people and its right to develop freely.

“This is why we raise high the banner of peace and we continue to maintain our positions. But at the same time we demand our legitimate right to defend ourselves. That is why we want to clearly show that it is the government, it is the state, it is the Empire that is responsible for the violence that our people live with, and we cannot allow the media or anyone to hide the real causes of our problems.”

The Third International Encounter in Solidarity and for Peace in Colombia and Latin America will take place in Nicaragua at a date to be determined.

Drops fig leaf of fighting drugs

Bush seeks billions to stop revolution

By Greg Butterfield

Covering itself in the language of the “war on terrorism,” the Bush administration is rapidly laying the groundwork to escalate U.S. military intervention in Colombia’s four-decade-long civil war. Revolutionary forces there are fighting to end U.S. domination and the grinding poverty that engulfs most of Colombia’s 40 million people.

In late February, Colombian President Andres Pastrana had unilaterally ended peace talks with the country’s largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP). With Washington’s blessing, the Colombian Army launched a massive bombing assault on the “demilitarized zone” in central Colombia.

The zone, encompassing an area twice the size of New Jersey, had been the only part of Colombia free of military and death-squad violence during the last three years.

The FARC-EP responded by fighting back. The Marxist rebels have attempted to defend villages and towns in the zone and have struck at death-squad paramilitary units working with the army. They also called on workers and peasants to boycott the March 10 congressional elections.

Under “Plan Colombia,” begun by the Clinton administration, Washington has promised \$1.3 billion in military aid to the Colombian regime. George W. Bush wants the total package raised to \$2 billion, and all restrictions ended on how the aid can be used. Current U.S. law says the military aid is to be used for the “war on drugs.”

It is an open secret that U.S. military aid, including Black Hawk helicopters and at least 100 U.S. “advisors,” are already being deployed against the revolution. But Bush and Pastrana want all restrictions struck down.

The Bush administration is also pushing for an additional \$98 million to protect a pipeline in Colombia owned by U.S. oil

giant Occidental Petroleum. In 2001 Occidental lost an estimated \$75 million in profits because of attacks on the pipeline.

On March 5 the Christian Science Monitor reported that the U.S. money will fund a new Colombian Army brigade set up specifically to protect Occidental’s pipeline. The brigade’s official badge shows a soldier guarding an oil well.

Powell declares ‘shift in policy’

Maj. Gen. Gary Speer, acting commander of the U.S. Southern Command, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee March 5. Speer praised Pastrana for breaking off talks with the FARC-EP and invading the DMZ. He also said, “The Colombian military and the Colombian police lack the resources to fully reestablish a safe and secure environment throughout the countryside.” (Voice of America, March 5)

On March 6, U.S. Secretary of State Colin

Continued on page 10



Colombian government: ‘We won’t accept pressure from anyone.’



U.S. warlords

The same event can have different meanings for different people, for different nations and certainly for different classes.

Consider the memorials held March 11 to mark the six-month anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. For the relatives of the 3,067 people who died in New York, it was another opportunity to express their grief. For millions of New York residents traumatized by this living danger so close to home, it was a reminder of the insecurities of life.

But for the Bush administration, representing the class of billionaire exploiters here, it was—just as Sept. 11 itself—an opportunity to whip up another round of super-patriotism to gain support for the next war maneuvers. Iraq? Somalia? Colombia? Or just the continued slaughter in Afghanistan?

In a similar way the latest events on the battlefield in the mountains of Afghanistan provoke different responses. For the general public here, it is all seen through a heavy screen. The Pentagon simply refuses to have even the most housebroken reporters get their own view of events.

For the U.S. troops, as those returning to base camps from the Shah-i-Kot Valley reported to the Washington Post (March 13), it was a frozen nightmare. Ice. Snow. Bitter cold and withering fire. Air too thin to breathe easily. It was a reality check for any who believed the desire for revenge for Sept. 11 would burn away fear. “There were real bullets, and they were intended to hit you. It was scary at all times,” said one young sergeant.

For the Afghan “warlords” in the battle, it was a reported victory. But Afghan warlords, for all their reputation as fierce fighters, have at least some respect for Afghan lives. So they try to avoid bloody battles if they can. One apparently avoided withering fire

even though it meant exposing some U.S. troops, who then complained bitterly.

They also would rather negotiate an easy victory and let the “enemy” escape than bloody themselves wiping out a bunch of Afghan peasants who had the bad luck to join Taliban militias.

The U.S. warlords, on the other hand, see this mountain fighting as an opportunity to get some combat training for troops they plan to use in future battles around the world. If you read the last chapter of General Wesley Clark’s book, “Modern Warfare,” you see that he is aching to be commanding a war where U.S. forces are ready to make sacrifices and the U.S. population will support these losses.

Top U.S. warlord Donald Rumsfeld feigns concern for the U.S. troops, but he shows no respect at all for human life. This is especially true if the humans happen to be Afghans—or Iraqis, or Somalis. A University of New Hampshire economist estimated 3,742 Afghan civilian deaths as of early December. By now this figure has far overwhelmed the Sept. 11 toll and is still growing.

Rumsfeld dismisses as unimportant the children and other obvious non-combatants killed by one of the 2,500 bombs the Pentagon dropped from planes on the Shah-i-Kot Valley in 11 days. He denies the peasants killed collecting scrap, and diminishes the thousands of Afghan civilian deaths as “collateral damage.” He intends to continue raining terror from the skies on the people of Afghanistan for as long as he believes it is useful.

The growing anti-war movement around the world is concerned about the people of Afghanistan. It also wants to prevent Rumsfeld, Bush and company from turning Afghanistan into a cold and rocky version of Vietnam for the thousands of U.S. troops destined to occupy that land.

Israel massacres Palestinians

Continued from page 7

mediately launched a new provocation, either in the form of assassinations or attacks. When the Palestinians hit back, the U.S. media—which has mysteriously failed to notice this pattern—blames the Palestinian side for “derailing” the peace process.

As he sent his army into the camps, Sharon proclaimed that he welcomed the decision to send Zinni back to the region, and that he was no longer requiring seven days of “complete quiet” before ceasefire negotiations could begin. This was hailed in the U.S. press as a “softening” of Sharon’s position, even as the Palestinian death count soared.

So, too, was Sharon’s announcement that after more than three months of virtual house arrest, PA leader Arafat was no longer confined to the city of Ramallah. However, if Arafat wanted to leave the country, say, to attend an upcoming meeting of the Arab League, he would have to apply for Sharon’s permission.

What could more clearly illustrate the colonial nature of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle? The Palestinian leader must obtain the permission of the Israeli leader to move from one place to another.

Why has Sharon repeatedly launched provocations to derail any negotiations? Because Sharon’s objective, and that of the Israeli ruling class grouping that he represents, is to prevent any agreement that would mean handing over territory to the Palestinians.

At the same time, Sharon needs to place the responsibility for the failure of the negotiations on the Palestinians. The aim here is not to fool the whole world, which for the most part recognizes Sharon’s game, but instead to placate U.S. public opinion.

Israel is heavily dependent on U.S. political support and military and economic aid. This year it will receive \$3 billion in official U.S. aid, and several billions more in non-governmental assistance. Without the weaponry and money it gets from the U.S., Israel would not be the military power that it is today, nor would it be able to carry

out its brutal occupation.

U.S. wants pacification, not peace

The U.S. government wants an agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians—an agreement that would end the Palestinian struggle and pacify the area. The U.S. wants to give the Palestinians a weak, demilitarized and dominated entity, which would be subject to U.S. and Israeli domination. That’s what various U.S. governments have sought since the negotiations began a decade ago.

Right now, Vice President Dick Cheney, a leading war strategist and representative of big oil interests, is touring the Middle East, trying to line up support for a new U.S. war against Iraq. But the ongoing conflict in Palestine is a big obstacle to garnering that support.

The mass anger over Israel’s brutal repression and occupation is at a very high level. Only the repression of the reactionary Arab regimes is keeping it from boiling over. Last week, the U.S. client regime in Jordan unleashed a vicious police assault on junior high school students marching in support of the Palestinians. Unless there is some agreement, the pro-U.S. governments in Egypt, Jordan and elsewhere are worried that they will not be able to contain popular discontent indefinitely.

While preventing any territorial concessions to the Palestinians is one objective of Sharon’s new offensive, there is another, more critical, goal as well: smashing the bases of the Palestinian Revolution.

This is far from the first time that Sharon has sent tanks into refugee camps. After the 1967 war, Sharon was military commander in Gaza, where he used the most brutal measures to crush the Palestinian resistance. A decade later, in 1982, the tanks were once again in Palestinian camps, this time in west Beirut, Lebanon. The culmination of that invasion was the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila camps, which took the lives of thousands of Palestinian refugees.

The aim of the Lebanon invasion was to destroy the Palestine Liberation Organization and subjugate Lebanon as an Israeli puppet state. Sharon and his cronies succeeded in inflicting great suffering on the Palestinians and the Lebanese. But they did not succeed in their objective.

In 2000, the last Israeli troops were forced out of Lebanon by the popular resistance movement led by the Hezbollah guerrillas.

A few months later, the new Intifada began in the West Bank and Gaza, and it is continuing and intensifying today. So, too, must support for the Palestinians’ heroic struggle, especially here in the heartland of their oppression.



THE BOLSHIEVIKS AND WAR
Lessons for today's anti-war movement
BY SAM MARCY

In responding to World War I, what distinguished the Bolsheviks from the other parties in the Socialist International? Written in 1985, this book remains an important examination of how the Bolsheviks led the anti-war struggle in light of the Pentagon’s buildup for nuclear war.

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Washington's strategy to undermine Cuba

Protect terrorists, preach human rights

By Gloria La Riva

While the Bush administration is attempting to obtain the release of four anti-Cuba terrorists from a Panamanian jail, it is at the same time trying to force through a resolution against Cuba in the upcoming UN Human Rights Commission.

Since the 1959 revolution, over 3,400 Cubans have been killed by U.S.-supported terrorism, by invasion, blockade, bombings and assassination. Cuba is the victim of human rights violations, not the perpetrator. It is the U.S. government that belongs in the dock for its countless anti-human crimes around the world.

But shame never stopped Washington from hypocritically accusing its victims of its own genocidal crimes.

With intense threats and bribes to Latin American and other countries in recent days, the Bush administration is once again trying to bully the world to falsely accuse Cuba of human rights violations.

On March 18, the annual meeting of the Human Rights Commission begins in Geneva, Switzerland. It will take up a number of resolutions. But as with many U.S.-controlled international forums, the human rights commission is largely a political weapon in the hands of U.S. imperialism and its allies.

This is especially true since the collapse of the socialist camp in Europe and the replacement of many socialist governments with regimes subservient to U.S. policy.

Perpetrator accuses victim

Last year, after open pressure on many delegations in the human rights commission, the United States forced a narrow 22-20 vote against Cuba. With the balloting of the member states in the open, many were strong-armed to come out against Cuba or face retaliation.

Weeks after that sordid anti-Cuba vote, however, in a secret ballot of the same commission, the U.S. government was kicked off the 2002 commission.

What clearly angered some countries is that the U.S. is the creator and backer of regimes that violate human rights all over the world. Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador and Chile, all with genocidal histories against their own people, had chimed in with the U.S. anti-Cuba resolutions in 2000 and 2001.

The U.S. was shocked at being ejected. In typical sour-grapes fashion, Bush said being on the commission wasn’t important.

Yet this year, behind the scenes, the U.S. government is working overtime to line up votes against Cuba, turning the economic screws on Latin America.

Taking advantage of the deep economic crisis gripping the continent, the U.S. is sending envoys with a clear message: help us gang up on Cuba and political or economic favors may be forthcoming. George W. Bush himself is traveling to Mexico in mid-March, then El Salvador and Peru on March 23-24.

According to a statement by the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a message was secretly distributed in early March by the U.S. government to Latin American governments urging them to sponsor an anti-Cuba resolution at the next HRC meeting.

The only country to sponsor the anti-Cuba resolution three years in a row is the Czech Republic. Formed after the breakup of socialist Czechoslovakia, this country has been an unabashed stooge of the U.S. against Cuba, sending agents into the island at various times to deliver money and support to tiny counter-revolutionary organizations. The U.S. desperately wants to keep up its credibility.

The Cuban Foreign Affairs statement said in part, “There are new maneuvers underway against Cuba within the Human Rights Commission that will begin its sessions next March 18.

“On this occasion, the enormous exhaustion and international discredit that the Czech government has gone through, as designated author of the resolution against Cuba over the last three years, has led the

United States to try and find new “sponsors” for its anti-Cuban plan, focusing its pressures this time on several Latin American governments.”

Interestingly, several Czech government officials are currently visiting Mexico, Peru and Chile for the U.S. So far, however, governments like Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador and Chile are refusing to go along.

Maneuvers to free terrorists

In the meantime, the U.S. government is carrying out dirty maneuvers inside Panama to orchestrate the release of four avowed terrorists who plotted to assassinate Cuban President Fidel Castro in November 2000 as he and a Cuban delegation were set to attend the Ibero-American Summit on Children.

Luis Posada Carriles, Guillermo Novo Sampoli, Pedro Crispin Remón, and Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo were arrested in Panama City on Nov. 18, 2000—the day of Castro’s arrival in Panama—with several boxes of C-4 explosives and other weapons. Their presence and plot were uncovered by Cuba’s intelligence service, which has been a bulwark in defense of the revolution over the last 40 years.

Despite being caught with weapons, the four terrorists, all trained and financed by the CIA for years, may be released by Panama for “lack of sufficient evidence.”

Posada Carriles is one of two terrorists responsible for murdering 73 Cubans, Guyanese and North Korean civilians in the bombing of a Cubana airplane in October 1976. He broke out of jail in Venezuela for that crime by giving a \$26,000 bribe to the guards. The funds had been brought to Venezuela by Gaspar Jiménez, who is now in jail with Posada for trying to assassinate President Castro.

After 15 months of investigation of this latest crime, it seems that Panamanian prosecutor Dimas Guevara doesn’t think several boxes of the powerful C-4 explosive are enough to warrant murderous intent. According to Granma International news-

Cuba is the victim of human rights violations, not the perpetrator. The U.S. government belongs in the dock for its countless anti-human crimes around the world.

paper, Guevara concluded, “Among the charges established was the possession of a dangerous high explosive that would be used for a specific purpose, but the detonating fuse wasn’t found. That’s why we couldn’t charge them with attempted homicide.”

Imagine the uproar in the media if people the U.S. has branded terrorists were to be let go on such a flimsy excuse.

Despite Cuba’s and Venezuela’s requests for extradition of the four to face charges in those countries, Panama has refused. Now, the Salvadoran government, acting on behalf of the U.S., has requested extradition of the four to El Salvador. There they would only face “document falsification” charges and conceivably be freed for “time served.”

Part of the U.S.’s greatest hypocrisy is that five Cubans who sacrificed their well-being to protect their people by monitoring terrorists inside the U.S. now find themselves with long-term prison sentences in U.S. dungeons.

Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, and René González, five Cubans who are heroes in their country, were all cruelly separated from each other this month upon their transfer to permanent prisons across the U.S. Yet avowed mass killers like Posada Carriles could go free once more with the help of the Bush administration.

In the midst of the brutal Afghanistan bombing and the widening imperialist war, it is clear that Cuba is not free from U.S. assault or harassment, either. Cuba’s struggle for justice is one more reason to march on April 20, along with all the just causes for liberation.



WW PHOTO: LIZA GREEN

Boston group pledges aid to political prisoners in Turkey and U.S. Since October 85 hunger strikers in Turkey have died.

Bush seeks to stop revolution

Continued from page 9

Powell “suggested the Bush administration was preparing to shift its policy on Colombia by giving more help to the government in its confrontation with Marxist guerrillas.” (Financial Times, March 7)

In lockstep, the same day the U.S. House of Representatives approved by voice vote a resolution “inviting” the Bush administration to seek legislation ending the current restrictions on U.S. military aid to Colombia. The resolution also expressed support for the Pastrana regime’s aggression.

The resolution received bipartisan support. Influential Vermont Democrat Patrick Leahy was reported to be a major backer of the proposed policy shift.

Surprisingly, Rep. Ron Paul of Texas, a Republican member of the House International Relations Committee and its subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, was one of the few to oppose the resolution.

A statement issued by Paul condemned the suddenness of the resolution, which he said was sprung on the Congress with little notice.

“The legislation represents a very serious and significant shift in United States foreign policy toward Colombia,” Paul said. “It sets us on a slippery slope toward unwise military intervention in a foreign civil war that has nothing to do with the United States.”

Paul said “commercial interests [are] driving U.S. foreign policy” under high-sounding calls to “protect democracy” and “stop drug trafficking.”

“Like Afghanistan, Kosovo, Iraq and elsewhere, that commercial interest appears to be related to oil.”

Pastrana said he was pleased by the congressional vote. He appealed to Bush and Congress to repeal all restrictions on U.S. military aid, labeling the revolutionary movement as “terrorist.”

Pastrana also said that peace talks could resume. But his sincerity was called into



Sharon responde a ‘plan de paz’ con asalto masivo

Por Richard Becker

A la media noche del 27 de febrero, el Primer Ministro de Israel Ariel Sharon dio su respuesta al “plan de paz” ampliamente promovido y sugerido por el Príncipe Abdula de Arabia Saudita. En ese momento, tanquetas israelitas, helicópteros de ataque, y efectivos de infantería lanzaron un asalto masivo en el campamento de refugiados palestino Balata fuera de Nablus en Cisjordania.

Simultáneamente, el ejército israelí lanzó un ataque similar contra otro campamento de refugiados de Cisjordania fuera de la ciudad de Jenin. La resistencia fue feroz en los dos campamentos, a pesar del hecho de que los defensores palestinos estaban débilmente armados en comparación con los asaltantes. Los defensores no tenían armas para defenderse contra tanques o aviones.

Durante los siguientes dos días por lo menos 30 palestinos perdieron la vida y más de 200 resultaron heridos; cientos de familias perdieron sus casas. La mayoría de los muertos y heridos fueron niños y no combatientes. Empobrecidos y densamente poblado, Balata es un pedacito de tierra donde viven más de 20.000 personas.

La magnitud de los ataques en los campamentos de Balata y Jenin fue sin precedente durante los 17 meses desde que comenzara la sublevación, “intifada”. Balata había sido bombardeada todas las noches por dos semanas antes de la invasión del 27 de febrero.

El uso de carros blindados y aviones de guerra y las cifras pesadas de bajas infligidas causó al gobierno de los Estados Unidos a que publicara una declaración blanda de “preocupación”. Voceros de la administración de Bush urgieron a los israelíes a demostrar “moderación”. Primera vez que Washington expresara cautela a Tel Aviv en varios meses.

Dos días después del ataque israelí, el 2 de marzo, un palestino de 18 años de edad hizo estallar una bomba en una calle llena de gente en Jerusalén. Diez personas murieron, incluso el joven palestino, y veintenas fueron heridas.

El suicida, Mohammed Daraghma, miembro de la Brigada de Mártires Al-Aqsa apareció en un vídeo grabado poco antes de su muerte: “Déjame decir al perro Sharon que voy a atacar y vengar mis familias en el campamento de refugiados Balata y el campamento de refu-

giados Jenin de parte de todos los mártires de Palestina”.

Los EE.UU. respondió calificando esto como un acto de “ultraje terrorista” enfatizando de nuevo el doble estándar de Washington en relación a vidas palestinas e israelíes.

El día siguiente, un solo luchador palestino baleó mortalmente a siete soldados israelíes y tres colonos israelíes armados en un retén cerca de Ramalah. Cinco más fueron heridos. El palestino se escapó.

El 4 de marzo, helicópteros israelíes y tanques lanzaron cohetes y proyectiles a ciudades y pueblos palestinos a través de Cisjordania y Gaza. Un misil mató a dos mujeres y tres niños viajando en un carro cerca de Ramalah.

Un proyectil de un tanque dirigido a una ambulancia bien marcado mató el jefe de Servicios de Urgencia de Jenin, Dr. Khalil Suleiman, y hirió a dos otros adentro. En todo, 14 palestinos murieron a manos israelíes el 4 de marzo.

No hubo ningún comentario de Washington sobre un “ultraje terrorista” en relación a estos muertos. No es de sorprenderse que fueron los EE.UU. quienes proveyeron las armas.

Ahogando al ‘plan de paz’ en sangre

Hay que preguntarse: ¿Porqué deben los líderes israelíes escoger este momento, cuando una nueva iniciativa estaba acumulando momento, para lanzar un ataque de brutalidad sin precedente contra la población palestina civil?

La respuesta no es un misterio, pero parece, a los medios de comunicación corporativos: La meta de Sharon es claramente de ahogar la iniciativa en un río de sangre palestina e israelita.

No es nada nuevo que Sharon no le importa la muerte de palestinos. La carrera entera de Sharon ha sido construida sobre proveer la muerte y la destrucción al pueblo árabe, desde los masacres de Qibya de 1953, hasta la guerra de 1967, y el infame baño de sangre en los campos de refugiados Sabra y Shatila de 1982. Y esto es solo para nombrar los incidentes mejores conocidos.

Pero es solamente cuando los israelíes resultan muertos que los medios de comunicación de los EE.UU. e Israel comienzan a hablar del proceso de paz haberse “descarrilado”.

La invasión de Sharon fue un intento de matar a dos pájaros con una sola piedra. Los campos de refugiados son bien cono-

cidos, como dijo un vocero palestino, los “baluartes” de la lucha palestina. Destrozando a las organizaciones de resistencia desde adentro de los campamentos sería un alcance mayor de Israel. Sin embargo, esto no es probable, sin arrasarlos por completo, un acto que tendría un costo muy alto políticamente.

El liderazgo Israelí supo sin duda alguna que la invasión de Balata y Jenin provocaría una respuesta palestina fuerte. Uno de los caídos durante el asalto contra Balata fue un líder militar del grupo Hamas-Movimiento de Resistencia Islámica. El fue otro de los más de 100 líderes palestinos asesinados conscientemente y deliberadamente durante los últimos 17 meses.

Sharon y los otros líderes israelitas saben por su larga experiencia que ellos no pueden lanzar un asalto masivo contra los centros civiles o llevar a cabo asesinatos de líderes palestinos y activistas, sin esperar una respuestas. Los asesinatos de líderes del Hamas han siempre sido contestados con bombardeos en ciudades israelitas.

En 1996, el servicio secreto israelita asesinó al líder militar de la organización Hamas, Yehya Ayash. Hamas respondió detonando cuatro bombas, las cuales mataron a 80 ciudadanos israelitas. La repercusiones del asesinato de Ayash fue un factor muy importante en la elección de Benjamin Netanyahu como primer ministro de Israel en mayo de 1996.

En noviembre del año 2001, el Secretario del Estado estadounidense, Colin Powel dio un discurso muy importante en el cual pedía el regreso a las negociaciones entre la Autoridad Palestina, Israel y los Estados Unidos, y anunció que él estaba enviando al General Anthony Zinni a la región. Poco antes de la llegada de Zinni la inteligencia israelita asesinó al sucesor de Ayash, Mahmoud Abu Hanoud y también detonó una bomba que mató a cinco jóvenes que jugaban en las calles de Gaza.

Justo después de la llegada de Zinni, hubieron detonaciones en Haifa y Jerusalén, por la organización Hamas que reclamaron las vidas de 25 israelitas. La misión de Zinni de hecho estaba muerta antes de su llegada.

La iniciativa Powell-Abdullah

La “nueva” iniciativa de paz del Príncipe de la Corona Abdula ha sido muy celebrada en la prensa mundial en las últimas tres semanas. Pero en realidad, no es nada nuevo o exclusivamente—o siquiera principalmente—un hecho de Abdula.

El plan de Abdullah básicamente plantea el retiro de Israel de la Banca Occidental, Gaza y el área ocupada de Siria, Golan Heights, a cambio del reconocimiento por los países árabes de Israel como país y la normalización de las relaciones. Varios partidos y gobierno han tomado el plan, sus partes esenciales, por las últimas tres décadas.

Es en realidad más un marco de trabajo que un “plan”, con todos los detalles importantes a ser determinados. Muchos palestinos rechazan esto porque entre otros

defectos, esto no menciona el derecho de regreso de los 4 o 5 millones de palestinos que han sido expulsados entre 1948 y 1967 y sus descendientes.

La manera en la que la iniciativa de Abdulla surgió explica el porqué ha llamado mucho la atención ahora. El periódico The New York Times publicó una entrevista con el príncipe de la corona el 16 de febrero. La entrevista en Riayad, Arabia Saudita, fue hecha por el reportero y columnista Thomas Friedman, quien se le conoce internacionalmente como un aceptor de ideas para el Secretario de Estado, Powell.

Hace un año, Friedman viajó a los Emiratos Arabes Unidos para poner a la vista el plan de Powell para la implementación de las tales “sanciones inteligentes” contra Irak.

La atención internacional y el apoyo a esta nueva pero muy vieja idea hizo claro que la iniciativa tuvo mucho apoyo excediendo las recibidas por el plan de la familia Saudita. La semana pasada, el Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas, Kofi Annan y el líder de la Unión Europea, Javier Solana, expresaron su apoyo.

Tan inadecuada como la iniciativa saudita, desde la perspectiva de muchos palestinos, es percibido como algo muy peligroso por el liderazgo de Sharon.

Desde los comienzos de la década de los años cincuenta cuando Sharon fue el hombre de confianza del principal Jefe del Ejército Israelita, Moshe Dayan, Sharon se ha dedicado a la anexión de toda la histórica Palestina y más para crear un estado israelita mucho más grande, un “Gran Israel”, como se le era llamado en tiempos anteriores.

Desde aquellos días del estado Israelita, cuando los días de David Ben-Gurion, Dayan y Shimon Peres planearon una nueva guerra contra Egipto, la formula ha cambiado un poco: La actuación de manera extremadamente agresiva y expansionista, pero el intento de poner toda la responsabilidad de las guerras sobre los árabes. Las batallas de relaciones públicas sobre la opinión pública—y especialmente los Estados Unidos—fue considerada algo vital, especialmente para un estado que era dependiente de gigantescas cantidades de asistencia internacional para sobrevivir.

El método de práctica del Sharon de bregar con las recientes iniciativas de negociaciones es para llevar a cabo las provocaciones contra los palestinos. Estas provocaciones en si causan muy poco furor en Washington. Pero sin embargo cuando los palestinos responden, el grito es ensordecedor en Washington contra los palestinos y las negociaciones cesan.

Sharon y su gobierno—de quien muchos esperan que el resultado de la actual lucha será una nueva expulsión o “transferencia” de millones de palestinos—quiere derrotar cualquier todas las iniciativas que resultarían en la entrega de algunos territorios a los palestinos.

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