Even as the Bush administration projects its military might in the Middle East and sends troops back to the Philippines, it has had to pull its Navy out of a small island in Puerto Rico. After more than six decades of living under U.S. Navy bombardments, strafing and many other military exercises in their territory—and suffering the abuse of soldiers who ventured into the civilian part of the island—the people of the island of Vieques finally celebrated the end of this violence on May 1. Thousands joined in the celebration, traveling from the rest of Puerto Rico and parts of the United States. At midnight, the deadline set for the Navy to leave the Camp Garcia base, hundreds of activists began a massive entrance onto the firing range. They smashed the fence with sledgehammers, wire cutters and whatever they could use to break down the barrier that for years had kept the islanders from stepping onto their own land. Soon the rage felt against the U.S. military was manifested in action. So many years of contempt, so many deaths by cancer widely believed to be the product of military toxins, the terrible devastation of their economy, unemployment, separation of families by forced emigration, lack of health care services. In sum—the island's lack of development, held hostage to the Pentagon, exploded in a people's catharsis. Structures were hammered down. So were military vehicles. Minutes later, those vehicles were set afire with chants of "Free Vieques—the Navy is gone, at last." The first round of this David and Goliath struggle of tiny Vieques against the U.S. war machine had finally ended and the people had won—a victory cherished not only by Viequenses but by the world as well at this dangerous time when U.S. imperialism is spreading its fury all over the planet.
Deepening emergency crisis for Black children

The Birmingham statistics are just the tip of the iceberg. Black children are not the only children languishing in “extreme poverty”—meaning below half the poverty line. According to a recent report by the Children’s Defense Fund, 12 million children living in “extreme poverty” is hugely disproportionate. In fact, more than 8 percent of Black children lived in poverty in 2001—double the percentage for all other nationalities, according to the study.

To characterize the gross Bush administration’s attitude toward the poor race relations is too much too soon. Bush’s attitude is both racist and hostile. He now wants to eliminate any federal spending for Head Start, a pre-kindergarten program for poor children. At the same time he is pushing for gigantic tax cuts to benefit the rich.

Black children are not the only children languishing in extreme poverty. The study revealed there were over 700,000 Black children living in extreme poverty, an increase of 13 percent from 2000. There was also a 2 percent increase in very poor white children, who now number 2 million. It is no wonder with deteriorating social status of poor children, especially those of color, the United States has the highest infant mortality rate and largest infant population that depends on government subsidized hospital care. Despite all the racial repression they faced—police beatings, dogs and fire hoses—the heroic mass resistance of the Black children of Birmingham who helped overturn Jim Crow laws showed how real change can be brought about.

The time is more ripe to organize nationwide protests in Washington, D.C., to demand money for human needs, not war abroad. And once again, poor working-class youths must lead the way.

More Black children mired in extreme poverty

By Monica Moorhead

In a “60 Days to 2004” program in Wisconsin, 50,000 workers joined students to call on state politicians to support a moratorium on school segregation. The program was launched in Madison and the Milwaukee area in December, and has spread to Milwaukee County, West Allis, Kenosha and Waukesha, Wisconsin. At the beginning of March, the program was expanded to Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, Waukesha, Delafield, Whitewater, Racine and Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Schoolchildren being arrested in Birmingham in 1963 for protesting racial segregation, Jim Crow segregation laws have been overturned, but Black poverty hasn’t.

‘The story of deepening poverty is central to the story of Black children in poverty in the wake of the 1996 welfare law: without it, the story is incomplete,’ the report stresses. ‘That is because more than eight in 10 Black children on AFDC were already poor in 1995, the year before the law was signed. Therefore, any deterioration in the economic circumstances of most Black children on welfare can only be measured by looking at the deepening or lessening of the severity of poverty for these already-poor children—not by changes in official poverty rates.’

This is the highest level since these annual data were first collected in 1979. It marks an increase of 50 percent from the number in 1999, based on the 2000 Census Bureau figures.

The fact that American children compose about 13 percent of the U.S. population highlights that 1 million Black children in extreme poverty is hugely disproportionate. In fact, more than 8 percent of Black children lived in poverty in 1991—double the percentage for all other nationalities, according to the study.

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New evidence: Cops concocted Mumia ‘confession’

By Betsey Pietry
Philadelphia

The last remaining pillar of the prosecution’s case used to convict Mumia Abu-Jamal in 1982 has been knocked down.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, an African American activist and award-winning journalist, was convicted of the 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. Police claimed that Abu-Jamal confessed after the incident while he was hospitalized for gunshot wounds. Mumia Abu-Jamal has always maintained his innocence.

Now, new evidence reveals that cops concocted the confession.

Attorneys for Abu-Jamal have filed a declaration in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third District. In the declaration, Kenneth Pate, Durham, a security guard, was on duty at Jefferson Hospital on Dec. 9, 1981, when Abu-Jamal and Faulkner were brought in to the emergency room with gunshot wounds.

According to Pate, the police appealed to Durham to “stick with them” because as a security guard he was part of the “brotherhood” of law enforcement officers.

Abu-Jamal’s jury was never allowed to hear testimony from the police officer responsible for guarding him at the hospital; the police officer had filed a written report that Abu-Jamal made no statements.

So why is Mumia Abu-Jamal—viewed by millions around the world as a U.S.-held political prisoner—still being on Pennsylvania’s death row?

Free Mumia!
It would be difficult for any jury today to possibly convict Abu-Jamal after hearing all the evidence that has come to light since his 1982 trial.

Abu-Jamal’s attorneys have taped sworn testimony from a man named Arnold Beverly who passed a lie-detector test while confessing that he killed Faulkner. Beverly says he shot Faulkner in a “mob hit” ordered by some police and organized crime because Faulkner was an obstacle to the payoffs that corrupt racketeers were running in center city Philadelphia in the 1980s.

Physical evidence, witness testimony and a polygraph examination back up Beverly’s confession. Yet the courts have not even allowed Beverly to come in for a routine deposition.

Witness statements by Yvette Williams and private investigator Mike Newman prove that the prosecution’s “eyewitnesses”—Cynthia White and cab driver Robert Chobert—did not even see the shooting and lied on the witness stand.

Philadelphia Common Pleas Judge Sabo’s neutrality was challenged by Terri Maurer-Carter, who was working as a court stenographer in 1982 when she heard Sabo make the statement, “Yeah, and I’m going to help them fry the n—-r”—referring to Mumia Abu-Jamal’s case.

Yet Abu-Jamal remains in prison.

The Fraternal Order of Police, district attorneys, judges, Pennsylvania governors and even the media remain hellbent on silencing the death-row prisoner known as the Voice of the Voiceless, keeping him imprisoned and even attempting to reinstate his death-penalty conviction.

As more truth comes to light, it is clear that it will take a militant grass-roots struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The great dissenters
“I have been accused of obstetric timing. I admit it. Gentlemen, I abhor war. I would oppose war if I stood alone. ... I have sympathy with the suffering, struggling people everywhere. It does not make any difference which flag they were born, or where they live.”
—Eugene Victor Debs, Socialist, to the jury at his espionage trial in 1918

The name Eugene Debs may not ring bells today, but in the first quarter of the 20th century his trial rocked the nation. An ardent Socialist, Debs made plain his opposition to World War I, and more importantly, his opposition to the class character of the war as a war waged by working people for the wealthy. A powerful and stirring orator, Debs drew waves of applause from those who came to hear him. He also spoke plainly about war and the wargers of war:

“They tell us that they live in a free republic; that our institutions are democratic; that we are a free and self-governing people. That is too much, even for a joke. ... Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder and that is war in a nutshell. The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles.” (Howard Zinn, A People’s History of the United States, “The Espionage Act,” p. 358)

Debs, charged with violating the Espionage Act, was convicted of obstructing the draft for giving this speech, and imprisoned for 10 years. His appeal was affirmed by the Supreme Court a year later. The imprisoned labor leader, convicted of exercising his First Amendment rights, spoke out again on the danger of this conviction a year later. This time the Department of Justice released Debs from prison on his own recognizance.

We have mentioned the Vietnam War. Who can question the outspoken contributions that the heavyweight boxing champ, Muhammad Ali, or the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made to the challenge and ending that so many people have always opposed— refused to run for president in 1960, Debs received over 1 million votes—while behind bars?

Was Debs alone in his opposition to the war, as papers of the time attest. The Minneapolis Journal would blare, “Draft Opposition Fast Spreading in State.” Over 50,000 men evaded the draft for the “War to End All War” (as it was called). Working people demonstrated against the war all across the nation, and were attacked and beaten by the troops and soldiers of the imperialist power. They were constantly hassled by cops and soldiers, under orders of their brass. Tens of thousands of men claimed conscientious objector status. What is clear is that anti-war sentiment didn’t just sprout up during the unpopular Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s.

Being anti-war is part of the historical fabric of America.

Although it may surprise us in this age to speak of him thus, Abraham Lincoln was famous before his presidency as an outspoken opponent to the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), when, as a member of Congress, the Illinois delegate challenged President Polk to specify exactly where in American soil the “war” was being fought. This was the “war” over who owned the Mexican- American soil—the pretext for the Mexican-American War. As a Whig, Lincoln was outspoken on his party’s position:

“The declaration says clearly that the United States have always opposed the war. In 1861, all of the Whigs opposed the war, and the Whigs have very generally opposed the war.” (Zinn, p. 151)

Historians who now review the basis for the Mexican-American War generally agree that the White House used a lie to justify it.

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was and organized crime because Faulkner was an obstacle to the payoffs that corrupt racketeers were running in center city Philadelphia in the 1980s.

The strategy of empire: From invasions to elections

Korea to Afghanistan and the Caspian Sea

Who profits from war?
Driving forces behind U.S. foreign policy—
Organizing among doctors and nurses
Defending workers’ and union rights
Attacks on women’s rights
War and intervention in Asia: From the Philippines to
 Attacks on civil liberties and immigrant rights
Introduction to core concepts: What do we mean by
PARTICIPATE IN WORKSHOPS ON:

Against war, colonial occupation & imperialism

Join anti-war organizers and activists from around the country for:
strategy • analysis • evaluation and assessment • plenaries and workshops
Opens Saturday, May 17 at 10:30 am Be there for a multi-media presentation on imperialism’s strategy in the Middle East and South/Central Asia, an assessment of the rise of a global movement and more. Join in discussion on an Action Plan for the coming period.
Wall Street bandits get a slap on the wrist

By Heather Cottin

Citibank is the most powerful bank in the world. It has gotten away with money laundering in Mexico in 1999 and was in on the Enron and WorldCom frauds. Now Citigroup, the corporate entity that controls all of Citibank’s financial maneuverings, has been caught unloading stocks at inflated prices, manipulating initial public offerings and defrauding investors.

The fine levied against all the banks that took part in this wheeling and dealing was $1.4 billion. Citi’s penalty was $400 million equivalent to a week’s profits. The other firms admitted wrongdoing, and most Citigroup executives were allowed to keep their jobs under the settlement.

Analysts at Citigroup’s Salomon Smith Barney act as the agents for this fraud. They were not alone. Merrill Lynch, Barney acted as the agents for this fraud.

Wall street pirates is a joke. But Wanda and Tyrell R. and millions of jobless, indebted consumers the opportunity to shop for almost any financial service ... in one place.” (Wall Street Journal, Oct. 25, 1999)

(Newsweek, Aug. 5, 2002)

Citigroup is the largest U.S. bank and has gotten away with manipulating initial public offerings and defrauding investors. Not a single criminal charge was levied on anyone. The fine was merely a “slap on the wrist,” wrote economist Paul Krugman in 2002, “not a single criminal charge was levied on anyone. The fine was merely a “slap on the wrist.”

This groundbreaking pamphlet was originally published in 1976. Its unparalleled achievement was to offer a historical analysis of when, where, why and how lesbian and gay oppression developed.

New York civil disobedience ‘Operation Homeland Resistance’

Some 80 activists were arrested May 5-6 in civil-disobedience actions in front of the Federal Building in New York City. A following day of actions was also planned as part of a three-day campaign called “Operation Homeland Resistance.”

This campaign was organized and led by people of color and immigrant-rights groups. The purpose was to draw attention to “war and occupation abroad” and the continued domestic war against immigrants, people of color and poor people.

Organizers said the actions were to “draw attention to the different ways communities in New York City are under attack through criminalization of local communities of color, increased policing and police violence, massive cuts in basic services, and targeted attacks on immi-grant communities.”

More than 56 local and national social-justice organizations endorsed the actions. They include Backs Against War, Desis Rising Up and Moving, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, New York City AIDS Housing Network, Harlem Anti-War Coalition, CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Audre Lorde Project, Nodutch—for Korean Community Development, United for Peace and Justice New York and New York ANSWER.

The vast majority of those arrested were women and a large proportion of the activists were from the lesbian, gay, bi and trans movement.

---Imani Henry

50,000 workers demand state restore budget cuts

Fifty thousand teachers and staff rallied in Albany, N.Y., May 3 to demand Gov. George Pataki’s budget cuts be restored. The workers came from big cities, like Buffalo and New York, small towns like Riverhead on the eastern tip of Long Island and Masena on the Quebec border. This was by far the largest rally in the history of Albany. Handmade signs read: “Pataki’s budget: nothing more than a class war” and “A second of war costs more than a year of school.”

---Photo and story by G. Dunkel
Bush couldn’t duck California protesters

Fresh from his encounter, all costumed as though he was a Navy fighter pilot, onto the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln 100 miles off San Diego, President George W. Bush had to come back to reality May 2 in the economically depressed San Francisco Bay Area.

George W. Bush had no answers except to restrains the rights of workers to such a degree that they are unable to rise above the oppression; and

WHEREAS: The achievement of the Longshore hiring hall, the elimination of the shapers and the current right for all members to attend every Local Union General Membership meeting followed the San Francisco general strike of 1934; and

WHEREAS: Since the inception of Tarr-Hartley, workers have been unfairly and unjustly fettered in their ability to organize, to strike in sympathy with other workers, to engage in secondary boycotts and pickets and engage in large-scale acts of solidarity; THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the ILWU will publicize and champion the goal of regaining the right for workers to engage in a general strike, in plain and proud view of all workers for further consideration; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: That the ILWU will work with other Unions and coalitions towards repealing the Tarr-Hartley Act.

Submitted by ILWU Local 5

Stop the war—at home and abroad

Longshore workers ratify struggle resolutions

The following resolutions were adopted by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Convention in San Francisco on May 1. The ILWU’s militant, progressive history extends back decades, to the 1934 general strike in San Francisco. During the struggle to end apartheid, union members refused to unload cargo from South Africa. They shut down every West Coast port in April 1990 to support death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. And they took part in the historic 1999 Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization. The ILWU opposed U.S. intervention in El Salvador and today is standing up against the U.S. military occupation of Iraq.

Opposition to the U.S. occupation of Iraq

WHEREAS: The ostensible purpose of the U.S. military invasion of Iraq was to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, facilitate “regime change” by ending Saddam Hussein’s brutal dictatorship and liberate the Iraqi people; and

WHEREAS: The real purpose that war was waged by Bush was for control of Iraq’s nationalized oil fields and to impose its influence in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS: To realize those aims the U.S. is occupying Iraq and imposing its own military dictatorship while the Iraqi people have been angrily demonstrating in the streets demanding U.S. military withdrawal; and

WHEREAS: This war cost $75 billion dollars while the U.S. economy is in shambles, leaving people jobless, homeless, without universal health care, and public school systems in major cities like Oakland bankrupt; and

WHEREAS: Over a billion dollars is being cut from veterans’ benefits as many who fought in the 1991 Gulf War were being cut from veterans’ benefits as those making a million dollars a year

WHEREAS: Wars have been waged in Afghanistan, Iraq, with Syria and Iran possibly being next; and

WHEREAS: The anti-war agenda of the Bush Administration using the cover of the “war on terrorism” has carefully crafted a strategy of dis- tion and unemployment of the region in the wake of the Iraq war, and the San Francisco-based Bechtel Corporation to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by U.S. bombs in Iraq; and

WHEREAS: The war in Iraq is over and Bush is now making threats in that region against Syria and Iran, not to mention North Korea, China and Cuba.

WHEREAS: The ILWU supported U.S. intervention in South Africa.

WHEREAS: Wars have been waged in the Arab peoples to self-determination; and

WHEREAS: Since the inception of Tarr-Hartley, workers have been unfairly and unjustly fettered in their ability to organize, to strike in sympathy with other workers, to engage in secondary boycotts and pickets and engage in large-scale acts of solidarity; THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the ILWU will publicize and champion the goal of regaining the right for workers to engage in a general strike, in plain and proud view of all workers for further consideration; and

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Submitted by ILWU Local 5
Cinco de Mayo: still battling empire

By Teresa Gutierrez

At the Cinco de Mayo commemoration in Houston the weekend of May 3-4, members of the group Latinos Por La Paza (Latinos for Peace) planned to participate with an anti-war contingent. They had a nicely decorated vehicle in the parade. Their members carried placards against the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

The peace organization, however, was forced out of the parade by the League of United Latin American Citizens, the official organizers, who charged that LPLP was conducting a “protest.”

LULAC called the police to expel Latinos Por La Paza only 15 minutes after they had begun to march. In those short 15 minutes however, LPLP organizers reported, the crowd clapped, cheered and shouted “viva” at them.

Cristobal Hinojosa, an LPLP organizer, told WW: “What is interesting is that many Mexican activists have participated in the Cinco de Mayo parades in Houston now for almost 10 years. We have come with many messages: against the death penalty, against other military interventions, in support of the Zapastistas and other issues.

“We have never been treated this way. We have always been allowed to march.” Hinojosa continued: “Cinco de Mayo is very important to Mexicanos because it represents a victory against an invading foreign force. It is outside of Mexico that Cinco de Mayo is mainly celebrated. In fact, it was in the Chieano liberation struggles of the 1960s and 1970s that Cinco de Mayo was revived and commemorated in Mexican communities throughout the southwest and other regions in the United States.

Over the years, however, the political significance of Cinco de Mayo got lost. The commemoration became instead a key market for the beer and cigarette industries. Said a spokesperson for the Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S., “We see nothing wrong with adults celebrating Cinco de Mayo with a margarita or other tequila cocktail.” (AP, May 3)

Corona, a Mexican beer distributed in the United States, has previously marketed the beer as the “drinko for Cinco.” The Washington Post wrote on May 4: “Many bars in the U.S. are offering ‘cincos’ beers for cinco dollars.” Flower delivery services are offering floral arrangements with a packet of hot sauce. The U.S. avocado industry estimates that 37 million pounds of avocados, much of it mashed into guacamole, will be consumed just on that one day.

“Cinco de Mayo has become a major league reason to party for anyone who has ever dipped a chip or stuffed a lime wedge down the neck of a beer bottle.”

But this year’s Cinco de Mayo in this country, as testified to by the Houston event, reflects the worldwide struggle against not only U.S. colonial military aggression—but against the overall encroachment of imperialist culture on our civilization. It is a culture rich with struggles and fight back.

Latinos Por La Paz in Houston as well as others are showing that the “party culture of margaritas and chips” is not a true picture of the Mexican culture.

The Mexican culture is centuries old and marked with glorious contributions to civilization. It is a culture rich with struggles and fight back.

With Latinos dying in Iraq in disproportionate numbers to the population, imperialism has laid the basis for profound solidarity with the very people these soldiers have been ordered to kill.

May Day in L.A.

‘Legalize all immigrant workers!’

By John Beacham

Los Angeles

May Day in Los Angeles: More than 4,000 marched on the downtown Federal Building calling for the immediate legalization of all immigrant workers in the United States.

The demonstration, organized by the Multi-ethnic Immigrant Workers Organizing Network, raised its banners against immigrant bashing and the invasion and colonization of Mexico.

In a concrete embodiment of increasing solidarity among peace and social-justice organizations, anti-war forces including the ANSWER coalition of Los Angeles joined with the various immigrant workers’ organizations that make up MIWON to bring off this enthusiastic and militant march—in a city that is home to one of the biggest immigrant populations in the United States.

The biggest and strongest sections of the demonstration were made up of immigrant garment workers.

In Los Angeles, garment workers are subjected to illegal working conditions on a massive scale. If they are lucky enough to work in legal garment factories, they work in a local industry in which fully 69 percent of the industry is organized and fight back against the Department of Labor. Many other immigrant workers are not this lucky and find themselves working in underground garment factories.

In the United States there are some 22,000 garment factories. In an estimated 75 percent of these factories, bosses violate the labor laws that set the minimum wage and fail to pay overtime to the workers.

Los Angeles, May 1.

In the current climate, immigrant workers live in fear that the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees the newly constituted Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, will escalate its deportation of immigrants and continue to pursue policies that increase jailhouse and arbitrary recovation of legal status for immigrants.

In a well-received speech in front of the Federal Building, John Parker of ANSWER demanded the immediate release of all immigrants—workers who help create the wealth of this country—and an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

May Day in the 21st Century
More than 1 million Cubans gathered in Havana’s Revolution Square on May 1 for International Workers’ Day and proclaimed this year’s theme: “The First for Socialism.”

By Gloria La Riva
Havana, Cuba

As early as midnight, a proud and militant people left their residences all over the island province to assemble in the city. Half of Havana’s 2 million were there. Across the country, almost 6 million more marched in all 14 provinces and the Isle of Youth.

As the people entered Revolution Square, small Cuban flags were distributed. This movement has become a tradition in recent years. A sea of flags rises in the air as people show support for speakers’ remarks.

In the aftermath of the Iraq war, and faced with increasing threats by the U.S., the Cuban people show a deep awareness of the need to mobilize in their defense.

That is why the mass rally was not just a day to honor workers and their accomplishments. Along with beautiful cultural performances, speakers denounced U.S. imperialism’s designs on the world, and pledged that Cuba is not alone.

Pedro Ross, general secretary of the 3 million-strong Cuban Workers Federation (CTC), opened the rally. He mentioned the actions taken by Cuba to defeat counter-revolutionary forces directed by the U.S., as well as to stop U.S.-backed hijackings.

“I want to put a vote to you. Are you in agreement with the measures that the government adopted to defend the integrity and sovereignty of the nation, and those that may be necessary to defend the revolution and the nation of socialism? Raise your flags if you agree.”

The giant gathering turned red, white and blue with the Cuban flag as the people pronounced their yes.

U.S. incites counter-revolutionaries

At the same time that the U.S. was preparing its attack on Iraq, James Cason, the top U.S. diplomat in Havana, was inciting counter-revolutionary activity inside Cuba, personally handing out materials and money to nurture an opposition. The U.S. government was also encouraging hijackings by refusing to return to Cuba the criminals and property they had stolen. This crisis came to a head just as the bombs fell on Baghdad.

In this dangerous situation, Cuba arrested and tried 75 people on charges of collaborating with U.S. officials against the revolution. Then the U.S. threatened those who had endangered the lives of many passengers were tried and executed in April.

This led some governments and prominent individuals to attack Cuba, but in recent weeks they have been answered by statements coming from many parts of the world.

Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano, U.S. professor Noam Chomsky and Portuguese writer José Saramago were among those who immediately signed on to a particularly scurrilous statement circulated by the U.S. Campaign for Peace and Democracy.

This was answered by a declaration from well-known Cuban artists and writers, called “A Message from Havana for Friends Who are Far Away.” It urged those who had signed the anti-Cuba statements to understand Cuba’s embattled situation and reconsider their position.

The sponsors of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC) made a distinction between those who consider themselves to be friends of Cuba, like Galeano and Chomsky, from those who have been hostile to the Cuban Revolution, like right-winger Mario Vargas Llosa. So far, this declaration has been signed by 13,532 Cuban artists, including Silvio Rodríguez, Amaury Pérez, Omar Portuondo, and Miguel Barnet and others.

At the May Day rally, speakers stressed the urgency of solidarity with Cuba, among them Rev. Lucius Walker of Pastors for Peace and German writer Helmut Dietmar Gross.

Well-known Mexican sociologist Pablo González Casanova, who has circulated a declaration in Latin America called “To the Conscience of the World,” available at www.granma.cubaweb.cu, said, “Many statements on the Cuban situation, although properly grounded in faith, can seem supportive and yet still magnify issues that the U.S. seeks to justify an invasion of Cuba.

That truth obligates all the peoples of the world—including the people of the United States, whose role in the survival of humanity is and will be very important—to think in concrete terms, how we can detain the cowardly offensive against Cuba, which is an offensive against humanity.”

Galeano and Chomsky also signed González’s defense of Cuba. Several U.S. figures joined in, including Danny Glover, Harry Belafonte and Ramón Díaz Clark.

Miguel Barnet, noted Cuban author and UNEAC vice-president, said, “Humanity is experiencing momentous crises and extreme danger for the survival of the planet. ... Our obligation, as intellectuals and artists, is to avoid all possible risks for our country. We need to be conscious that our main priority is to defend our homeland.

“It is a matter now of closing ranks against the dark forces of fascism that destroy human beings, that oppress and alienate them.

“The world will not permit our people to be massacred, or Havana to go up in flames some day like Baghdad, or our heritage to be razed, our educational, cultural, social and political work to be leveled.

“That is why to slander Cuba today, to turn one’s back, is an act of injustice and irresponsible.”

Writing from Argentina, Cambia, Argentinian organizer for the Cuban Five political prisoners in the U.S., condemned the imperialist media’s lies.

“The media campaign launched against Cuba in these last weeks is indignant, dirty, disgusting …”

“You don’t think they inform the public about the terrible violation of human rights that the five Cuban heroes are constantly subjected to in U.S. prisons? Why don’t they write about the suffering, the confinement, the isolation. ... Why not?

“It’s simply because one doesn’t talk about the monstrous empire. Those who can imprison innocent people and torture them, can massacre peoples, invade nations, carry out terrorist acts, they can have weapons of mass destruction with the certainty that they will not be condemned in the media, nor the United Nations or Organization of American States.

“But be careful, because we the people did condemn them when we came out throughout the world to repudiate the genocide and double standard of the U.S. government. And it will be the people who will put a brake on the empire and their emperors…”

‘Never has the world witnessed such an unequal fight’

As Cuban President Fidel Castro walked from the assembled crowd to the podium below a contemplated statue of José Martí, the crowd erupted into cheers and chants for the Cuban leader. His talk began with a vow that Cuba would never yield to the demands from 90 miles to the north.

“Our heroic people have struggled for 44 years from this small Caribbean island just a few miles away from the most formidable imperial power ever known by humankind. In so doing, they have written an unprecedented chapter in history. Never has the world witnessed such an unequal fight.

“Some may have believed that the rise of the empire to the status of sole superpower, with a military and technological might that has no counterpart anywhere in the world, would frighten or dishearten the Cuban people.

“On a day like today, this glorious International Workers’ Day, which commemorates the death of the five martyrs of Chicago, I declare, on behalf of the 1 million Cubans gathered here, that we will face up to any threats, we will not yield to the media and that we are prepared to defend our homeland and our revolution with ideas and with weapons to our last drop of blood.”

President Castro reviewed the feats of the revolution and its people, beginning with the 1959 overthrow of the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, whose 80,000 soldiers and police. He spoke of the literacy campaign, the 72-hour defeat of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, and the Cuban people’s bravery during the precipitous 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

He tallied of the impressive educational levels Cuba has achieved. “It has the highest school retention rate—over 99 percent

between kindergarten and ninth grade—of all the nations in the hemisphere. Its elementary school student ranks first worldwide in the knowledge of their mother language and mathematics.”

Saying, “In no other people has the spirit of international solidarity become so deeply rooted,” President Castro gave a sweeping overview of Cuba’s internationalist missions in support of liberation struggles from Algeria, Republic of Congo, Guinea and Angola to Vietnam and Grenada.

Lastly, he warned that if the U.S. were to attack Cuba, “The aggressors would not merely be facing an army, but rather thousands of armies that would constantly reproduce themselves and make the enemy pay such a high cost in casualties that it would far exceed the cost in lives of its sons and daughters that the American people would be willing to pay for the adventures and ideas of President Bush.

Today, he enjoys majority support, but it is dropping, and tomorrow it could be reduced to zero.

“The American people, the millions of highly cultivated individuals who reason and think … will show that you cannot fool all of the people, and perhaps not even part of the people, all of the time. One day they will put a straitjacket on those who need it before they manage to annihilate life on the planet.

“We do not want the blood of Cubans and Americans to be shed in a war. We do not want countless numbers of lives of people who could be friends to be lost in an armed conflict. But never has a people had such sacred things to defend, or such profound convictions to fight for, to such a degree that they would rather be obliterated from the face of the Earth than abandon the noble and generous work for which so many generations of Cubans have paid the high cost of the lives of many of their finest sons and daughters.

“We are sustained by the deepest conviction that ideas are worth more than weapons, no matter how sophisticated and powerful those weapons may be.

“Let us say like Che Guevara when he bid us farewell: ‘Hasta la Victoria Siempre!’”

In response to U.S. threats

Millions pledge to defend Cuba’s sovereignty
By Greg Butterfield

President George W. Bush's May 1 speech aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln declaring U.S. American victory in Iraq was more than just an arrogant proclamation of the end of the war in the Middle East. It also signaled new dangers and challenges for independent governments and people's movements further east. Increasingly, the White House and Pentagon warheads are pushing, prodding and trying to start their military process throughout the region, especially in Korea and the Philippines.

This was the subject of a very different speech on April 30, delivered in Pyongyang, North Korea, celebrating the May Day workers' holiday, Ryun Sun Gil, leader of the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea, urged workers there to "form regiments and divisions so that they may be fully ready to defend the country from the enemy's invasion." (Korea Central News Agency, May 2)

Seeing how Iraq's people are now subjugated to brutal colonial occupation, people in the region and throughout the Asia-Pacific area are standing up against the proliferation of U.S. bases, Pentagon intervention in sovereign countries' affairs and outright threats to their sovereignty.

Socialist North Korea, in particular, has been the target of increased U.S. belligerence since the Pyongyang government announced plans to renege its nuclear program and use any means at its disposal to defend the country from a U.S. invasion or attack. The White House and corporate media are working hard to portray this small country of 25 million people as a global threat because it dares to say it will defend its sovereignty and independence. Bush even included North Korea, along with Iran and Iraq, in the so-called axis of evil. But for 50 years North Korea has tried to get Republican and Democratic presidents to sign a formal peace treaty ending the war that began with the two countries. Every president—ever since Eisenhower to Bush II—has refused.

But despite the victory in Vieques, the U.S. is expanding its military operations globally—especially in Asia.

Anger against the U.S. occupation in South Korea has grown so intense that the Pentagon is moving one of its largest bases south from the capital city of Seoul to a less populated area. Other bases may be moved as well. (UPI, April 9)

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The U.S. has 37,000 troops across the border in South Korea. An additional 25,000 military troops are stationed in nearby Japan.

In 1992, when the senior George Bush was president, the Pentagon admitted having 2,400 nukes in the south aimed at North Korea and People's China. Bush claimed these were withdrawn, but there was no independent verification. Many South Korean and U.S. anti-war activists believe the nukes are still there.

Spread of bases in Asia

Progressive and anti-war forces in Asia joined the people of Vieques, Puerto Rico, in celebrating their righteous eviction of the U.S. Navy from the small island. For more than five decades, Pentagon war games rained toxic poison, environmental devastation, injury and death on the people of Vieques.

While much remains to be done—like forcing the Pentagon to clean up its mess and pay reparations to Vieques' people—their victory gives hope to others, like the villagers of Maehyang-ri, South Korea, who also face these bombardments and all the ill that accompany them.

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Ira before the revolution

U.S. involvement in Iraq began in the 1920s. U.S. corporations were granted 23 percent of the best oil fields as a reward for entering World War I on the side of the victorious British and French empires. Britain, France and the Netherlands regulated equal shares of Iraq’s petroleum resources.

Iraq was then a newly created, oil-rich Ottoman province of the British Empire. Because of force resistance to colonial domination by Arabs and Kurds alike, Britain granted Iraq its nominal independence in 1932. But the order was reversed by a British-installed monarchy, and continued to be occupied by British military bases.

To fortify their domination, the British promoted the development of a class of big landowners in Iraq, who exported their surplus wheat to West Europe. Farmers who constituted the majority of the population were treated as serfs, bound to the land and living in utter poverty.

In the 1950s, Iraq’s fundamentalist Sayyid was 28-30 years. Infant mortality was estimated at 300-350 per 1,000 live births. By comparison, infant mortality in England at the time was around 25 per 1,000 births.

Illiteracy was more than 80 percent for men and 90 percent for women. Women related to malnutrition and unsanitary water were rampant.

A statistical survey at the time showed income of less than 13 Fils—4 cents—per day for individual peasants in Diyawa, one of the more prosperous agricultural regions.

According to a 1952 World Bank (IBRD) report, the average yearly income for all Iraqis was $82. For peasants it was $21.


The richest of the landlord families was named Chalabi. They owned vast estates in southern Iraq. Today it is Ahmed Chalabi, son of this same family, who is the Pentagon favorite to become the new “leader” of Iraq post-war world to ensure the dominant position of the United States.

Neocolonial and landlord rule was maintained by a ruthless police/ military regime that tortured, murdered and imprisoned countless thousands of Iraqis. Still, the resistance was strong. In the face of it, Iraq was placed under mar- tal law 12 times between 1953 and 1994, for a total of nine years and four months.

Undergoing extreme poverty was this simple fact: Iraq owned none of its oil reserves.

The U.S. and Iraq

In the latter stages of World War II, the Roosevelt and Churchill administrations, dominated by big banking, oil and other corporate interests, were determined to use military force to ensure the dominant position of the United States.

The key elements in their strategy were: 1) U.S. military superiority in nuclear and conventional weaponry; 2) U.S. domina- tion of newly created international insti- tutions like the United Nations, Interna- tional Monetary Fund, and World Bank; and establishment of the dollar as the world currency; 3) control of global resources like oil.

In pursuit of the latter, the United States was intent on taking control of cer- tain strategic assets of the British Empire, including all oil, not just oil from Iraq. Among those assets was Iraq.

A February 1944 exchange between Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill makes clear that the British were well aware of U.S. intentions.

Churchill wrote Roosevelt: “Thank you very much for your assurances about no economic sanctions against Iraq. [Then [ookie smugly] you might remember that we have our interests in the petroleum resources of Western Arabia.” (quoted in Gabriel Kolko, The Politics of War, New York, 1968)

But this note also revealed a key fact that the U.S. leaders were so intent on taking over Iraq and both important neo- colonies of Britain, that it had set off alarm bells in British ruling circles. It is also worth noting that Saddam Hussein was just 7 years old in 1944, when the U.S. leaders fixed their sights on Iraq. Invading Churchill and Roosevelt could not have known the nothing the British could do to restrain ris- ing U.S. power. Within a few years, the British ruling class would adapt to the new reality and accept its new role as Wash- ington’s junior partner.

In 1953, after the CIA coup that put the shah (king) in power in Iran, the U.S. took control of that country. And by the mid-1950s, Iraq was jointly controlled by the United States and Britain.

Washington backed up the Baghdad Pact, which included its client regimes in Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Iraq, along with Britain.

The Baghdad Pact, or CENTO—Central Treaty Organization, had two purposes. First, to oppose the rise of Arab and other liberal movements in the Middle East and south Asia. And second, to be another in a series of military alliances—NATO, SEATO and ANZUS were the others— maintaining the social order of the Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe, North Korea and North Vietnam.

The Iraqi Revolution

But on July 14, 1958, a military rebel- lion led by Brigadier Abdul Karim Kassem and the Free Officers movement turned into a country-wide revolution. The king and his administration were suddenly gone, the recipients of people’s justice.

The 1958 revolution put an end to colonial domination and marked the beginning of Iraq’s real independence. Although the new “revolutionary” government cut down on the size of the Iraqi army, the forces still under President Nasser’s command in Egypt opposed the new regime. The pump was turned off. The anti-colonial nationalist bourgeoisie.

Though not a socialist revolution, the Iraqi revolution created part of the new leadership: Kassem and on Wall Street, President Dwight Eisenhower called it “the gravest crisis since the Korean War.”

The day after the Iraqi Revolution, 20,000 U.S. Marines began landing in Lebanon. The day after that, 6,000 British paratroopers were dropped into Jordan. Washington and London saw the huge Western powers turned into a rapid rebuilding of the Western-dependent regimes in Beirut and Amman.

Massam and Chalabi had even something else in mind as well: invading Iraq, overthrowing the revolution and re-installing a puppet government in Baghdad. The U.S. sent several thousand troops to help engineer a regime or to abandon that plan in 1958: 1) the sweep- ing change of the Iraqi Revolution; 2) the reinforcement of the British and 1) the collapse of the Soviet Union—Syria and Egypt were then one state that bordered Iraq—that its forces would be militarized if they sought to challenge these imperialist forces. This was the revolution from the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union. The USSR begun to mobilize troops in the southern Soviet republics close to Iraq. These forces forced the U.S. leaders to accept the exis- tence of Iraqi Revolution. But Washington never really reconciled itself to this.

Over the next three decades, the United States applied many tactics designed to keep Iraq as an independent country. At various times—for instance after Iraq completed nationalizing the Iraqi Petroleum Corporation in 1972, and after the U.S.-Soviet treaty with the USSR—the United States gave massive military support to Kurdish elements fighting Baghdad and allied Arab regimes.

Washington supported the more right- ist elements within the post-revolution political structure against the communist and left-nationalist forces. For example, the United States backed the overthrow and assassination of President Karim Kassem in 1969 by a right-wing military junta. And Washington applauded the suppression of the left and unions by the Arab Ba’ath Socialist Party governments in Lebanon and Syria.

In the 1980s, the United States encouraged and helped to fund and arm Kurdish leader Abdullah Barzani. In 1984, the Pentagon favorite to become the new “leader” of Iraq was Saddam Hussein, in its war against Iran. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger revealed the real U.S. attitude about the war: “I hope they kill each other.”

Bourgeois governments in both Iran and Iraq pursued the war for expansion- ist aims. The war was a disaster for both Iraq and Iran, militarily and politically, and weakened both countries.

The collapse of the USSR and the Gulf War

Shortly after the Iran-Iraq war ended in 1988, developments in the Soviet Union posed a new and even graver danger. In pursuit of an illusory “permanent detente” with the United States, the Gorbatchev leadership in Moscow was eliminating or shortening the military to secure support for allies in the developing world.

In 1989, Gorbatchev withdrew support for the anti-colonial nationalist bourgeoisie in Europe, most of which then collapsed. This sharp shift in the world relationship of forces, culminating with the collapse of the Soviet Union, opened the door for the U.S. war against Iraq in 1990—and for more than a decade of United States military occupation, killing numbers of people and weakening both countries.

It would have been inconceivable even a few years earlier that Soviet leaders would have stood by while the United States sent more than a half-million troops to attack a nearby country with which the USSR had a mutual defense agreement.

Rather than ushering in a new era of peace, the counter-revolutionary overturn of the government of the USSR and the Soviet Union, and the resulting collapse of the USSR, Washington as the green light for a new wave of wars and interventions from Pakistan to North Korea and North Vietnam.

The counter-revolution in the Soviet Union paved the way for U.S. aggression and counter-revolution in Iraq, the nega- tion of the revolutionary changes of 1958 or the nationalization of the structures that made it an inde- pendent state.

Iraq, its victory, however, the occupiers now confront a people who have a long and proud history of resist- ance. The anti-war movement here and throughout the world must give its unqualifi- ced support to the Iraqi anti-colonial resistance.
This is what democracy looks like

This seemingly contradictory statement is really simple to understand once you look at class differences within U.S. society. For rich people, especially rich white men, there is little government interference with freedom of movement or expression. Even their crimes are rarely punished. That’s bourgeois—capitalist—democracy.

For the poor, on the other hand, there are few means of expression of ideas. For poor people of color, the capitalist state is a club hovering over the head. That’s the worse the United States was a repressive police state directed against the poor, reinforced by 400 years of racism. Banks is a 40-year-old Black man who came within a hair’s breadth of being executed by the state of Texas a few weeks ago. He was reprieved at the last minute when the Supreme Court agreed to hear his case.

As a teenager in 1980 he was charged with murdering a 16-year-old youth he knew. The youth was white. Banks lined up white drug addicts, one of them a paid informer, to testify against Banks. His lawyer barely defended him. The jury, like the prosecution, was all white.

The fact that there was no strong evidence linking Banks to the crime hardly slowed down his prosecution. He was quickly found guilty and sentenced to death. Prosecutors hid their ties to the witnesses, who later recanted their testimony.

While the racist injustice in Banks’ case is egregious, it is not so rare. It is a stark example of class injustice in a land whose ruling class and their paid propagandists proclaim it the epitome of freedom. It is why a majority of the more than 2 million people in jail—an extremely high number overall—are people of color.

This is how capitalist democracy works in the United States. Not badly—if you are rich. Bad for the poor. Horribly for the poor of color.

Laws punish petty theft but reward exploitation. The court system is biased toward those who can pay the most effective lawyers. And the weight of the capitalist state—its police, its courts, its laws—all hang over the working class and poor.

This is U.S. capitalist democracy. And that’s even before the Bush gang got in.

U.S. Navy pulls out of Vieques

Continued from page 2

However, 100 acres were kept by the Pentagon for a radar facility that targets Colombia and neighboring countries. The eastern part, where Camp Garcia is located and most of the demonstrations were held, will not revert to the people of Vieques, nor even to the Puerto Rican government. With their usual imperialist arrogance, Washington and the Pentagon have simply decided to transfer it to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Department of the Navy will pay for decontamination of these areas—but so far only allocated $2.3 million—a ridiculously small amount for the contamination it has left behind.

Consider that napalm, depleted uranium and countless other heavy, toxic metals have been contaminating not only the soil but the underground water supply and the surrounding ocean for decades. Decontamination is a life-and-death demand for the people.

The intense contamination of the air, land and water has caused serious health problems in Vieques, where the cancer rate is 26 percent higher than in the rest of Puerto Rico and more likely to be fatal. The people hold the demand for decontamination as a very high priority, since their lives depend on it.

For years, while they organized actions to oust the military, they also carefully planned for their future. They learned the lesson of Culebra, a smaller sister island also used by the U.S. Navy where a struggle for clean land to its rightful owners, the people of Vieques, was won.

The people’s militancy won, but they made no plans for the disposition of the land. Today, regrettably, Culebra is still very poor, still contaminated and its land in the hands of speculators.

The Viequeans are making sure not to follow that path. They have assembled panels of experts in every field to make sure that they are part of the decision-making process that ultimately will revert clean land to its rightful owners, the people of Vieques.

The U.S. government, of course, does not want them to have any role in deciding their own future, and has included the Puerto Rican government in the process merely as a diplomatic gesture, without yielding any decision-making power to it.

The courageous people of Vieques have put up a relentless struggle against the imperialist giant, showing once more the power of the people united. In this new phase and challenge, it is crucial that the progressive movement in the U.S. continue to support their struggle for self-determination and independence.

Ben Bella

Ben Bella honored at Workers Party fete

By John Catalinotto

Brussels, Belgium

Some 2,500 activists and workers from around Belgium filled a building outside Brussels on May 1 to celebrate the workers’ holiday with the Workers Party of Belgium.

The day had two major themes: the struggle to “stop U.S. aggression,” with emphasis on the Pentagon’s crimes during the invasion and occupation of Iraq; and an effort by the WPB to elect some special representatives to the Belgian Parliament in the May 18 elections.

Keynote speaker for the anti-war theme was the leader of Algeria’s liberal struggle from France, former Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella. The 86-year-old Ben Bella described the war on Iraq as “a war decided by a bunch of oil barons who lead the United States today.

“It but concerns more than Iraq and its oil,” he said. “It’s also a struggle against the domination of the world. The United States sees Europe as a growing power that it wants to control. But an even greater danger, he said, is the U.S. plan to restrict China’s access to energy resources.

Ben Bella also described “people like Rumsfeld, Ashcroft and Cheney” as being “predatory Christians” whose current current represents a fundamentalism much more dangerous than that of Bin Laden.

“After this war on Iraq,” Ben Bella continued, “Bush plans to kill Syria, Iran, Korea. It’s an endless war. This system is no longer tenable. There must be another way. We live in the time of the beginning of the end of the capitalist system. We have to change it.”

About Palestine he said: “Sharon is the little cousin of Bush!” The United States supports Israel unconditionally because this country plays the role of regional gendarme for the Americans.” He added that “the Iraqi people will also make their Intifada.”

Ben Bella also linked the struggle against the war with that against capitalist globalization. He called attention to the large demonstrations in London and other European cities against the war.

Regarding the Belgian parliamentary elections, WPB General Nadine Rosa Roso focused on three leading candidates who represent different sections of the Belgian working class.

One is Dyab Abou Jahjah, a dynamic young man of North African origin who has been a leader of the anti-racist struggle and for immigrants.

Another is Maria Vindevoghel, who has been a leader of the struggle of the workers at Sabena Airlines, laid off when the state-owned company declared bankruptcy, to fight to regain their jobs and rights.

Vindevoghel wrote a book about the Sabena workers called “I Accuse.” The third was Dr. Colette Monlaert, who had just returned from Iraq. There she, along with three other doctors from the Belgian progressive movement, had both cared for the injured and wounded in Iraqi hospitals and confronted U.S. tanks in the streets of Baghdad. [1]
Neocons, empire building and democracy

By Deirdre Griswold

It seems, according to recent newspaper accounts, that the Renaissance Neocons (New Empire Builders), "New York Times Week in Review, May 4), that the more ideological and political wing of the neoconservative movement has developed a new, more aggressive role for U.S. imperialism, who today wield the upper hand in Washington, like the harken back to ancient Athens for their political inspiration. The truth is, the Wolfowitz, Richard Perle and George W. Bush himself often present their mission as one of restoring "Western values" to a recalcitrant world, and cite Athenian democracy as the model civilization.

Of course, one could say that all this is merely ideological window dressing for policies that are so clearly dictated by the profit greed of the huge oil companies, banks and military corporations which call the shots in Washington, despite all the hype about representative democracy.

But what was Athenian democracy? Can the neocons—"the neoconservative movement," who today take the place of the old right--lay claim to it? And where should the workers and oppressed of today be looking for democratic forms to serve their interests, as opposed to the interests of the war profiteers and modern-day slave drivers?

Peasant uprisings & the 'Tyrants'

Athenian democracy evolved over a relatively short period of time in the sixth century B.C.E. Repeated peasant uprisings had been challenging the plutocracy, the rule by a class of wealthy landowners. At the same time, new men of wealth were emerging as Athens became a center of trade, commerce and the manufacture of many commodities by skilled artisans and farmers.

The use of the word "men" here is very deliberate, because, whether it was a monarchy or a democracy, women were excluded from political life and, with a few exceptions, from ownership property.

The word "tyrant," which today has such a brutal connotation, comes from this period. The Tyrants were military figures, usually swept into power by peasant and working-class revolts. They enriched Athens in many ways.

No rights for slaves, women and foreign-born

Slaves and the foreign-born in general were never granted the rights of citizens. The word "citizen" meant that three of every four free citizens. Most laborers in the homes and workshops of their masters. There were no large agricultural estates based on slave labor, unlike later in the Western Hemisphere when slaves captured from Africa were intensively cultivated. Europeans, produce sugar and cotton for an inner capitalistic market. The plantation and slavery were the work of three for every two free citizens.

Many lived in "free unions" not previously recognized by the law, the right to vote to all male citizens and established a new governing council of 400 people. He was the first ruler to codify a body of laws. But he refused to change the land reform.

Pisistratus, who became Tyrant of Athens 34 years later, in 560 B.C.E. redistributed the land and abolished landlord ownership as a requirement of citizenship.

Even having land, however, the peasants were not truly free. The productivity of their land was declining even as wheat and other foods began to be imported from more fertile areas around the Mediterranean and, as a result, the people's food supply was threatened. This, then, had not been eradicated by the reforms of the Tyrants.

The deliberative assembly, where representatives of all 10 "tribes" of Athens met 40 times a year and also selected a smaller body that met almost every day. Members of this standing committee could be recalled at any time if they didn't carry out the wishes of the assembly.

The century that followed was considered the Golden Age of Greece and Athens and produced many accomplishments in science and culture. It was also an age of military conquest and the taking of conquered peoples. In war, people came with highly developed skills from other centers of civilization around the Mediterranean and Africa that had also amassed impressive scientific, technological and cultural knowledge. (See, for example, the book "The Ancient Engineers" by Lyon Sprague de Camp.) They enriched Athens in many ways.

Socrates, Plato and the state

Many thinkers in the period of Athenian democracy, like Socrates and Plato, bent their minds around the problem of how to strengthen the state, which seems to stand above society but in fact serves the interests of the dominant class. Students today read Plato's "Republic," but few realize that such political works but are seldom told that in studying the political process a broader section of the people, but just themselves. In this, today's liberals are just as enthusiastic as the right-wingers.

Slaves and women shut out

The United States political system owes a great deal to Athenian democracy. This, too, is a country where slavery was considered normal for hundreds of years, and slaves had no political rights, even though their masters were able to claim added seats in the House of Representatives by counting each slave as two-thirds of a person.

A bitter Civil War ended in the abolition of slavery, but the Northern capitalists employed their military and industrial capacity to reconstruction and the descendants of slaves were effectively disenfranchised until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And even in 2000, when Bush lost in a costly struggle and the elections were not truly free. It struck a blow for women's emancipation, recognizing the rights of children born "out of wedlock." Many Patriotic women lived in "free unions" not previously recognized by either church or state.

The Commune dissolved the standing army and police and replaced them with a people's militia. It reduced the salaries of public officials to what an ordinary worker earned. It opened up all schools and universities to the people, free of charge.

The Commune convened full political rights on those from other countries who sided with the revolution. At a time when war is so often embraced, the Commune recognized the rights of children born "out of wedlock." Many Patriotic women lived in "free unions" not previously recognized by either church or state.

The Commune was crushed by the combined weight of French and German armies before it had a chance to go further. Karl Marx analyzed its strengths and weaknesses in "The Civil War in France." It was a failure, but it left a blueprint for today. It had the potential to transform our world into something better, to make us more aware of the struggle for peace, liberty, and justice. The Commune was not advanced as an idea, it was an actual thing.

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Detrás de las exigencias de Washington de levantar las sanciones contra Irak

Por Sara Flounders

El gobierno de los Estados Unidos ha exigido el levantamiento inmediato y completo de las sanciones contra Irak al Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU. El 13 de años, un movimiento contra las sanciones ha encontrado una resistencia total por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, tanto bajo las administraciones Demócratas como Republicanas. ¿Por qué Washington ha cambiado su posición sobre este asunto? A quién y cómo se debe responsabilizar por el movimiento mundial a la nueva estrategia de Washington?

Primero, es importante entender los motivos de la administración Bush. El Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU ahora tiene el control sobre los menos $30 mil millones de dólares que se encuentran en las cuentas bancarias colectadas por la campaña de Petróleo por Alimento. Se han demostrado que son capaces de administrar las fábricas, comprar materias primas, fabricar productos, pagar salarios dignos, y crear fuentes de trabajo. La mayor preocupación de los capitalistas es que más temprano que tarde el clase trabajadora va a tomar el poder político para controlar su destino.

PRIMERA PARTE:

Argentina

Trabajadores toman control de 150 fábricas

Por Alicia Jrapko

Con el 73% de la población Argentina viviendo en condiciones de pobreza y con una tasa oficial de desempleo del 30%, un hecho sin precedente está tomando lugar en este país Sudamericano. Algunos trabajadores han tomado control de fábricas abandonadas por sus dueños debido a bancarrota, "falta de ganancias" o inestabilidad.

Desde 1988, trabajadores en Argentina han tomado más de 150 fábricas—incluyendo plantas de la industria de la comida, metalurgia, partes de autos, empresa cerámicas, textiles. Cincuenta años atrás, Argentina era considerada una de las economías más desarrolladas e industrializadas del tercer mundo. Cerca del 50% de su producto nacional bruto provenía de las industrias. Sin embargo, las políticas neoliberales dictadas por Washington, fueron radicales y a veces por tres décadas por el Fondo Monetario Internacional y otras instituciones financieras, no han traído otra cosa que miseria al pueblo Argentino.

Las circunstancias que rodean la toma de fábricas, varían entre ellas. En algunos casos, los trabajadores consiguieron permiso de los antiguos dueños para administrar la fábrica, pagando una renta y además comprando los medios de producción.

En otros casos, los trabajadores fueron cooperativistas y establecieron un sistema igualitario de pago, con una estructura de poder democrática de voto directo en asambleas donde se discuten los problemas y se encuentran soluciones.

Entre las fábricas tomadas por los trabajadores, dos de ellas, se transformaron en símbolos de este nuevo movimiento: la fábrica de cerámica Zanón en Neuquén y la fábrica de textiles Brukman en Buenos Aires, donde la mayoría de las trabajadores son mujeres.

Brukman: "La fábrica bajo control de los trabajadores"

Cuando los trabajadores tomaron control de Brukman, ellos quisieron negociar con los dueños, pero no recibieron respuesta. Como un testimonio de este nuevo fenómeno, un gran cartel a la derecha de la entrada de la fábrica Zanón dice: ]Está Fábrica Producir Bajo Control de los Trabajadores.

En marzo, la policía trato de ganar control de Zanón, pero se tuvo que retirar debido a la resistencia de los trabajadores y la enorme solidaridad de miembros de la comunidad. Los trabajadores de esta planta han lanzado una campaña para juntar 30.000 firmas en una petición y pedirle al estado la expropiación de la fábrica para que sea administrada por los trabajadores.

Desde que los trabajadores comenzaron a administrar la compañía, ellos han creado 40 nuevas fuentes de trabajo para desempleados. Han comprado materias primas y han pagado impuestos de agua, electricidad, y gas.

Mientras que se acercan las elecciones presidenciales, dos jueces que eran activos de la administración Bush aún más con la respuesta. Como un testimonio de este nuevo fenómeno, un gran cartel a la derecha de la entrada de la fábrica Zanón dice: ]Está Fábrica Producir Bajo Control de los Trabajadores.

Ahora la campaña de los Estados Unidos para dar fin a las sanciones y entregar los miles de millones de dólares prohibidos a los iraquíes a sí mismos, los ocupantes. Esto es una piratería en su forma más cruda.

Miles de millones en juego

La cuestión de levantar las sanciones contra Irak está tomando la forma de una gran confrontación en el Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU. Francia, Rusia y China tienen el poder de tejer otro vasel de los antiguos dueños para administrar la fábrica, pagando una renta y además comprando los medios de producción.

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