

Call for world anti-war day

‘Troops out of Iraq now—with no conditions’

BULLETIN--Some 35 U.S. soldiers were reported wounded on Jan. 7 when mortar rounds made a direct hit on a U.S. military camp west of Baghdad. The attack came just hours after a U.S. tank destroyed a home in Fallujah, killing a couple and leaving their five children orphans.

By John Catalinotto

The ANSWER anti-war coalition, which called and organized many of the largest anti-war actions in 2002 and 2003, joined Arab and Muslim groups in the United States on Jan. 2 to announce plans for demonstrations on March 20, 2004, the first anniversary of the start of Washington’s second war against Iraq.

The groups’ statement emphasized the main demand of these protests: “End the Occupation—Bring the Troops Home NOW!” and said protests are already planned in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and other U.S. cities.

On Nov. 16, the European Social Forum had already endorsed March 20 as an international day of action. Marches and rallies have been called in many European cities, and the World Social Forum meeting in Mumbai, India, Jan. 16-21 will discuss expanding the action worldwide.

Signers of the Jan. 2 statement include the Arab Muslim American Federation, the Free Palestine Alliance, the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation and the Muslim Student Association. The call was joined by Al-Awda—the Palestine Right to Return Coaliton—the National Lawyers

Guild, and 500 other organizations and individuals in the first four days after it was published.

Explaining the nature of the protest, the statement raised and explained the following points:

“We will demonstrate on March 20 to support the right of the Iraqi people to self-determination without condition. ...

“We will also demonstrate on March 20 in solidarity with the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, including the right to return to their homes and land.”

Brian Becker, a spokesperson for ANSWER, told Workers World that “The issue of a political program for March 20, as expressed in the statement, is of paramount importance. It is essential to demand that the U.S. troops leave immediately with no conditions and to support the right of the Iraqi and Palestinian people to resist as they embrace the fundamental right to self-determination. This would include opposing any internationalization of the occupation through the United Nations or any other bodies.”

Becker noted that the “anti-war movement is at a crossroads. There is a growing hostility and disgust for the Bush admini-

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IMF BLOCKBUSTER

BULLETIN: As we go to press, a report by the International Monetary Fund says that U.S. deficits are threatening the world economy. This highly unusual step by an institution controlled by Wall Street banks is sure to have broad repercussions. For an analysis and background on the potential for catastrophe in the current capitalist boom,

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Community responds to death of child

Demands Baltimore restrict utility shutoffs

By Sharon Black
Baltimore

On New Year’s Eve, 11-year-old Davon Dortch died in a house fire in East Baltimore caused by burning candles. His family’s electricity had been shut off. Davon’s 7-year-old brother was listed in critical condition at Johns Hopkins Children’s Hospital, suffering from extensive burns.

Teddy bears, balloons and other mementos mark the site of Davon’s death, placed there by loving neighbors and family. Behind this makeshift memorial are the burned-out remains of a small row house.

Community activists who visited the area found themselves filled with anger and tears. Renee Washington, an organizer with the All Peoples Congress, exclaimed, “I cannot imagine the sadness and hurt that the mother of these two children is feeling.

“How can a greedy and callous billion-dollar company like Baltimore Gas and Electric be allowed to put profits before the safety of the people?” she asked. “How long will it be before the mayor and city government take action to protect our children, the elderly and the poor?”

Washington and other community activists are planning a rush-hour protest on Jan. 12 at City Hall to demand that Baltimore Mayor Martin O’Malley use his powers under the City Charter to declare a halt to all shutoffs of gas and electricity during the winter and other periods of extreme weather.

Washington asserted that this

APC organizers
Steven Ceci, Reynold
DeFreitas and Renee
Washington at
makeshift memorial
for 11-year-old
Davon Dortch.

WW PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

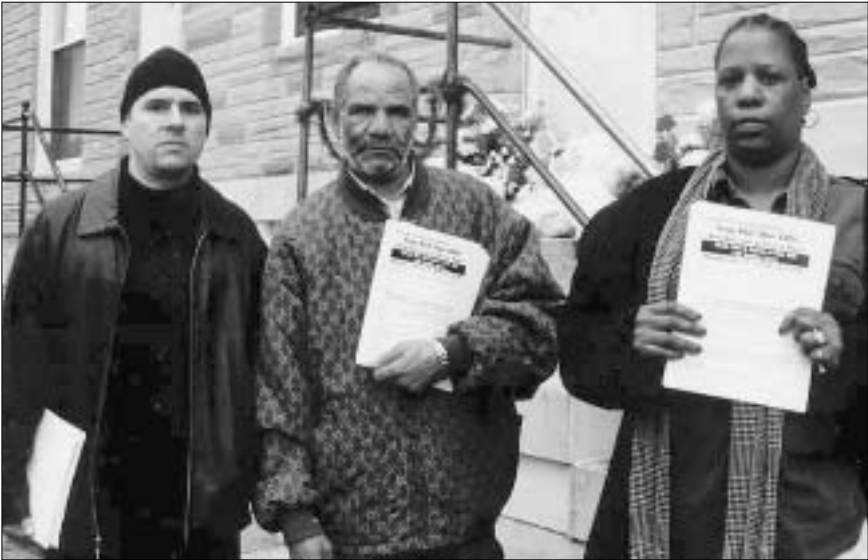
was not just an individual tragedy for poor and working families faced with crisis, but also an issue of safety for everyone.

“Baltimore is a city of row houses and apartments,” she said. “Not only did 11-year-old Davon die tragically and needlessly, but that entire block of Luzerne Avenue was threatened with the possibility of fire.”

The APC is calling for a “City Commission to Review and Stop Utility Shutoffs” to hold hearings, formulate and regulate a system of appeals for shutoffs, launch a special investigation and advocate for rolling back rates to protect workers and poor people in Baltimore.

Steven Ceci, a local organizer with the Service Employees International Union, explained: “The city has designated commissions for all sorts of purposes. It is time to set up a commission to address the crisis of utility shutoffs and the high cost of gas and electricity that is threatening the wellbeing of all workers.”

He added: “This is an issue for the unions. Our members are not only fighting to demand union rights but also for housing, healthcare and the basic right to heat and light. We will be mobilizing on Jan. 12 to build a campaign to stop utility shutoffs in Baltimore.” □



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WW CALENDAR

BUFFALO, N.Y.

Sat., Jan. 17

The Coalition Against Police Abuse plans a noon march from NFTA Station at Main & Utica to MLK Park regardless of weather. Speak-out at 3 p.m. in commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday. For info (716) 479-3799 or www.CoalitionAgainstPoliceAbuse.com

LOS ANGELES

Every Friday

Workers World Party weekly meetings at 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 7. At 422 S. Western. Phone (213) 500-0529 for info.

NEW YORK

Thu., Jan. 15

Rally to bring the troops home now and protest Bush’s convention set for next summer. Sponsoring: ANSWER, 1199 Bread and Roses Cultural Project, House of the Lord Church, Harlem Tenants Council, and others. 4:30-7 p.m. At Madison Square Garden, 32nd & 7th Ave. For info (212) 633-6646, 316-2240, 603-1192 or (718) 596-1991.

Every Friday

Workers World Party weekly meeting. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) 55 W. 17th St., 5th fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

SAN FRANCISCO

Sat., Jan. 10

Int’l Action Center Forum: Resistance to Imperialism in Latin America. 3 p.m. Refreshments, childcare. Donation. At S.F. Women’s Bldg, 3453 18th St, between Valencia & Guerero. For info (415) 821-6545.

Mon., Jan. 19

Join an ANSWER anti-war contingent in the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom March. Gather 10:30 at 4th and Townsend at the San Francisco CalTrans Station. For info (415) 821-6545 or answer@actionsf.org.

Every Sunday

Workers World Party weekly meetings. These educational meetings cover current events as well as struggles of peoples from all over the world. 5 p.m. At 2489 Mission St, room 28. For info (415) 826-4828.

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Another boom, as in boom and bust?

Wall Street cheers, but workers don't

By Milt Neidenberg

A cheer is rising from Wall Street leaders: "We're back on track."

The rapid rate of economic expansion in 2003 furthered the goal of U.S. global hegemony. Manufacturing hit a 20-year high in December, triggered mainly by a falling dollar that gave a major boost to U.S. exports.

The Institute of Supply Management (ISM), which indexes data from purchasing executives of over 400 industrial companies, reported a jump in the purchasing index to 66.2 in December from 62.8 in November. A reading of over 50 "shows signs of expansion and December was the sixth straight month of growth. It was also the highest monthly level since 1983." (BBC News World Edition, Jan. 2)

The ISM, which polled 17 of 20 industries in manufacturing, says a jump in new orders reflected the same optimism. All the major stock market indexes—including the Dow Jones, Standard & Poor's 500, and NASDAQ—have been on a high this past month. Last year was the first to end on a positive note in the last four.

No cheers from workers

Rising corporate profits and the expansion of productivity at an unprecedented and inhuman rate produced this exultant mood. The intensification of exploitation has led to massive layoffs and cuts in wages and benefits. Slashes in labor costs without an organized fightback from the labor movement helped create the euphoria. The wealthiest one-percenters grabbed all the spoils. What else is new?

For Marxists, nothing. Frederick Engels summed up the capitalist cycles of boom and bust over a century ago in his book "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific." He described the boom side of the capitalist cycle, which comes after a period of protracted capitalist economic stagnation: "Little by little the pace quickens. It becomes a trot. The industrial trot breaks into a canter, the canter in turn grows into the headlong gallop of a perfect steeplechase of industry, commercial credit, and speculation which finally, after a break-neck leap, ends where it began—in the ditch of a crisis." Speculation—where have we heard that before?

Then comes the bust side, when the crisis occurs. "Commerce is at a standstill, the markets are glutted, products accumulate, as multitudinous as they are unsalable, hard cash disappears, credit vanishes, factories are closed, the mass of workers are in want of the means of subsistence—because they have produced too much of the means of subsistence."

"Productive forces and products are wasted and destroyed wholesale," says Engels. "[M]achinery becomes the most powerful weapon in the war of capital against the working class." And he concludes "that the instruments of labor, (owned privately) constantly tear the means of subsistence out of the hands of the laborer; that the very product of the worker is turned into an instrument for his subjugation."

In early 2000, the stock market crashed. Markets became glutted as overproduction led to over 9 million officially unemployed, with many millions more not counted. Household incomes dropped precipitously as more workers, particularly among the skilled and higher paid, were driven into lower-paying jobs. Factories closed and many companies raced abroad to exploit cheaper labor and

raw materials. Poverty became intense among people of color and spread among white workers too.

Exploitation grows more intense

Due to the quantum leap in the scientific-technological revolution, the intensification of exploitation has caused the mass displacement of millions of workers on a global scale—just as Engels described.

But the ruling class is saying it wasn't so bad. Here is how Alan Greenspan, chairperson of the Federal Reserve Board, viewed this same period. At the annual conference of the American Economic Association (AEA), before a broad array of prestigious capitalist economists, he downplayed the damage. "Despite the stock market plunge, terrorist attacks, corporate scandals, and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we experienced an exceptionally mild recession, even milder than that of a decade earlier." (New York Times, Jan. 3)

What an apologist for the Bush administration, which has taken the capitalist economy to the brink of disaster!

The National Clock records the public debt. It now hovers around \$7 trillion, or \$7,000,000,000,000. Current budget deficits will add a trillion more, and that's not counting the hidden costs of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Then there's the \$500-billion annual deficit in this country's global trade.

Borrowing abroad to cover these costs could bring down the house of cards, according to Robert Rubin, former Treasury secretary in the Clinton administration and a powerhouse on Wall Street as a partner in Goldman Sachs. At the same AEA conference, Rubin presented a paper on the consequences of fiscal and financial disarray that could lead to a crisis in confidence and the "potential for catastrophe." (Liberal columnist Paul Krugman in the New York Times, Jan. 6)

In fact, this is the age of boom and bust cycles. Capitalist instability and crisis is on the agenda. In a Wall Street Journal article on Jan. 5 headed "Crash, Bang, Wallop," Edmund S. Phelps, a professor of political economy and director of the Center on Capitalism and Society at Columbia University, draws parallels between the 1930s and today. "The late 1990s boom, the slide into slump and recent rebound has a striking similarity to the boom of the roaring 1920s, the deep decline in the early 1930s and initial rebound ... each boom was caused by the advent of a new general-purpose technology."

Left out of Phelps's comprehensive and statistical analysis of the 1930s is the tremendous upsurge of the workers that challenged the property rights of capital, followed by the U.S. entry into World War II, which put an end to the heroic sit-down strikes that had begun in the 1930s.

One swallow not a summer

This boom cycle may be short lived. The working class can't buy back what they produce. In an AP article entitled "Job Market Diminishes Consumer Confidence," Lisa Singhania on Dec. 30 reminded bullish Wall Street optimists that consumer confidence slipped in December. Consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of the economy. A survey of 5,000 households indicated that consumers are still worried about jobs. Just to keep pace with the continuing layoffs, job creation must reach a level of 150,000 to 200,000 new jobs a month. At best, unemployment has slowed, but new jobs

only increased by 55,000 per month in this so-called boom period.

In addition, the Conference Board, a Wall Street think tank, said sales of previously owned homes declined by 4.6 percent in November. Singhania noted that both reports are closely watched, since housing and consumer spending have been the main props holding up the economy since the end of the recession in November 2001.

The Wall Street Journal of Jan. 6 reported that the vacancy rate in the apartment market across the U.S. at the end of 2003 was the highest in 15 years. Meanwhile, homeless families crowd into shelters because they are unable to pay the exorbitant rents demanded by landlords.

Short-lived window of opportunity for labor

Will the labor movement intervene in this period of rising corporate profits and manufacturing and industrial expansion? Will they struggle to get a measure of economic and social justice?

The AFL-CIO must seize this moment and take the offensive. It is not that the labor movement lacks resources.

"The unions of the United States have huge resources: 15 million members, billions of dollars in dues, and hundreds of billions in pension capital." ("Three Steps to Reorganizing and Rebuilding the Labor Movement," Stephen Lerner, Service Employees International Union

Director of Building Services)

It is the lack of will or unity of purpose among AFL-CIO leaders. They are in disarray as they argue over which Democratic presidential candidates to support financially and work for, diverting the workers from the real struggle.

Meanwhile, the strike/lockout of 70,000 United Food and Commercial Workers has entered its third month. It is a watershed struggle over healthcare that affects every union member. How many of the 15 million AFL-CIO members are involved in it and how much resources of the 66 amalgamated international unions have been mobilized?

Not enough, or these arrogant supermarket bosses would be at the bargaining table.

The time is now to take this strike/lockout to a higher level of militant struggle. A victory for the 70,000 heroic food workers will be a victory for all labor.

The multinational labor movement has not reached its potential to resist the voracious appetite of Wall Street for global conquest. To take the road of independent classwide struggle at home, labor will need the participation of the anti-war movement and other supporters. Such solidarity is based on a conjunction of class interests. Compelling the U.S. government to end the Iraqi occupation and forego further imperialist wars goes together with resisting the war against the workers and oppressed at home. □

RALLY



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Behind mad cow stands a madder system

By Heather Cottin

The recent scare over a sick Holstein cow in Washington state that was slaughtered and shipped to eight states and the U.S. island colony of Guam reveals more than the threat of an outbreak of mad cow disease. Consumers have learned something in the past few weeks about how meat gets processed in the United States, and they are appalled.

The media have focused on the gruesome possibility that mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), which in humans manifests as Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), has infected the nation's meat supply. However, the meat industry has been trumpeting the lie that everything is just fine, and that this incident is nothing like the mad cow epidemic that shook England and all of Europe in 1996.

British cattle had been given feed containing animals' nervous system tissue that carried BSE. The revelations that people were dying from eating infected beef shut down the British meat industry. Twelve million cows had to be slaughtered.

But the truth about the U.S. meat supply is more complex and horrifying. This is not about one sick cow. It is a story about diseased animals and endangered workers, of big business profiteering and government indifference, and of media complicity.

The type of feed that produces BSE was outlawed in the U.S. in 1997. (Washington Post, Feb. 9, 2001) However, the nation's



Consumers have learned how meat gets processed, and they are appalled.

beef supply comes from two sources: beef cattle that are raised for their meat only, and dairy cows that can no longer produce milk. Whether dairy cows or steers, USDA inspections of meat processing plants in 2002 found that, due to current killing and mechanical meat extraction practices, a full 35 percent of beef is contaminated with nervous system tissue. The tissue spills onto the meat from the bone marrow of the animals as they are sliced up in

the abattoirs. (organicconsumers.org)

The United States has no laws against what are known in the trade as "downers," animals that cannot stand but are slaughtered for their meat anyway. These cows may be ill, but the drive for profits is so intense that they are literally dragged into the slaughterhouses, where they are processed for meat.

The Europeans and the Japanese test 100 percent of their beef for BSE. Last year, while the European Union tested 10 million cattle for BSE, the U.S. tested only 20,526 cows out of 35 million slaughtered.

Dr. Ron DeHaven, chief veterinarian with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, belittled Japan's concern for the welfare of its consumers, saying, "Japan tests too much." (New York Times, Dec. 26, 2003)

Feeding cows hormones and brains

Wall Street and Washington have always placed profits before people.

The whole idea of feeding cows animal products stems from industry efforts to maximize food production at any cost. The new feeds developed by the major fodder industries, notably Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland, produce bigger and meatier cattle.

The same profit drive behind increased meat production has spurred new ways to boost milk production. The two are fatally connected not only to the danger of mad cow disease but to the growth of cancer in the United States.

Monsanto manufactures recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH), which has increased the amount of milk U.S. cows produce. Monsanto manipulated U.S. farmers to accept rBGH and makes a yearly profit of \$500 million from its sale.

Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone is supercharged with high levels of a natural growth factor called IGF-1. Excess levels of IGF-1 have been incriminated as major causes of breast, colon and prostate cancers. ["Got (Genetically Engineered) Milk?," an e-book by Samuel S. Epstein, M.D.]

Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone weakens dairy cows; animals receiving the hormone need to be fed higher concentrations of protein. The additional protein ostensibly strengthens the cow, enabling her to stand the weight of udders filled with 20 percent more milk. The protein-enriched feed these cows received until 1997 included ground-up brains and mar-

row, and that may still happen in some cases.

The beasts are held in conditions that could turn the most avowed carnivore into a vegetarian. They have to stand for their whole milking lives on concrete floors in barns. They give milk for five or six years and then are sent to the abattoirs for slaughter.

These abattoirs are factories from hell. Meatpacking is one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States, with an injury rate about three times higher than any other industry. One quarter of the workers, who face constant speedup, are injured on the job, some fatally. Slaughterhouse workers are mauled, sliced and even decapitated by the knives and machines the industry relies upon.

These workers, many of whom are immigrants without healthcare, face excruciating back and hand injuries and carpal tunnel syndrome from wielding the knives upon which their jobs depend. They work in a sea of blood and guts, in chilling temperatures, but are afraid to lose the jobs that support their families in Mexico or Central America.

Big firms break unions

The meatpacking industry is now dominated by big firms like ConAgra, IBP and Excel. While meatpacking once had strong unions and paid above-average wages, it is now largely non-union and pays among the lowest industrial wages.

Diseases lurk in every corner of the factory. E-coli, salmonella, yersinia and listeria—pathogens found in the intestinal tracts of animals—are present in most abattoirs. Workers are exposed to them on a regular basis. According to a trade journal, 50 percent of slaughterhouses studied had one or more of these contaminants on the killing floors. (Meat & Poultry, May 1999)

Huge agribusiness firms have captured the agricultural regulatory agencies and set an agenda in Washington that has led to little or no inspection of the meat or enforcement of worker safety regulations.

For example, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman says the nation's meat supply is safe. Veneman served on the board of a food industry trade group funded by Archer Daniels Midland and Cargill, both major suppliers of feed to the livestock industry.

Veneman's chief of staff, Dale Moore, was a lobbyist for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. Elizabeth Johnson, another lobbyist for the cattle corporations, is now a senior advisor on nutrition in George W. Bush's Agriculture Department. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's PR point person on mad cow disease, Alisa Harrison, was director of public relations for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. (Eric Schlosser, "Fast Food Nation")

After Upton Sinclair in 1906 wrote "The Jungle," the muckraking book about the U.S. meat industry, popular anger forced the government to change food safety laws. They didn't last.

The unholy alliance between both Republican and Democratic administrations and the chemical, feed and meat corporations has taken conditions for workers in the meatpacking industry and for consumers in this country back to where they were a century ago.

It was the rise of the labor movement that changed things back then. It can happen again if the low-paid immigrant workers get the support they need from the unions, consumer and environmental groups, and all progressives. □



PHOTO: UFCW

Borders strikers win tentative agreement

By Sue Davis

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 876, which represents the workers at the flagship Borders Bookstore in Ann Arbor, Mich., announced it had reached a tentative agreement on Dec. 30. That ends a nearly two-month strike and national boycott that followed months of contract negotiations. No details about the agreement were announced. (Detroit Free Press, Jan. 1)

"We have made more gains in actual negotiations with Borders in the last week than we achieved in the last year of futile meetings," wrote an unidentified worker on the web log at www.borders-union.com. "They have made many concessions that over excruciatingly long meetings they would not make in the past. This contract is not Nirvana, but

it's a good start."

This is the first contract for the 60 workers, who have been represented by UFCW since December 2002. A vote to ratify the agreement will be held shortly.

"We are all so very pleased with the outcome of this struggle," said Victoria Collins, secretary-treasurer of UFCW Local 876. "The spirit, dedication and courage of these Borders strikers was very admirable. This effort, which took the extraordinary efforts of its workers, and the supporters from all corners of the state made this possible."

Workers in the Minneapolis store, who were not on strike, are still negotiating with Borders over a union contract. UFCW Local 876 represents more than 23,000 workers in supermarkets, meat packing plants and healthcare units nationwide. □

Readers of almanacs, unite!

Repression only leads to more resistance

By Deirdre Griswold

The “terrorism threat level” set by the Department of Homeland Security had been cranked up to an Orange Alert. Thousands of police ringed New York’s midtown area, searching everyone who came in. Black Hawk helicopters, the same kind used to launch attacks on Somalia and Iraq, hovered overhead while military jets flew over the city. Police snipers were positioned on roofs.

Despite these unprecedented police and military measures, however, upwards of a million people reportedly celebrated the arrival of the new year in Times Square. A similar situation was reported in Las Vegas and other cities where large gatherings had been planned.

There is no doubt that this costly beefing up of the state’s repressive apparatus, which has soared in the last two years, has a dual purpose. There is the stated one, of protecting the population against “terrorism.” And there is the unstated one, the one dear to the hearts of right-wingers and corporate elites, of creating a climate of intimidation and conformity during a volatile period when the possibility is never far away of an economic and financial catastrophe that could radicalize a large section of the population.

But if the population is intimidated, ready to roll over and play dead, it’s not showing it.

Since 9/11, the largest anti-war gatherings since the 1970s have occurred, and groups like the ANSWER Coalition have broadened the struggle to denounce imperialist aggression everywhere, from Palestine to the Philippines to Korea.

Immigrant workers have arisen as a new force in and outside the labor movement. They are leading organizing drives, strikes and struggles against the low wages that impoverish a growing layer of the working class. Their potency can be seen in President George W. Bush’s sudden discovery that he has a program to “legalize” immigrant workers.

Seniors are mobilizing against rent increases, utility shutoffs, and the raiding of Social Security and Medicare.

Rancor against their role as an occupation force is growing among the troops, and more young people

Orange Alerts, Black Hawks in Times Square, FBI warnings about almanac readers—what’s the unstated purpose of all this beefing up of repression? And can it really turn back the growing popular movement for social change?



Repression of the anti-war and civil rights movements in the 1960s (above) could not turn them back.

are looking for ways to get out of going to Iraq.

While more money is being taken from social services and spent on policing the population, the struggle against police brutality, especially in the oppressed Black and Latino/a communities, continues to boil. Because of this struggle, the NYPD has been ordered to pay \$3 million to the parents of Amadou Diallo to compensate for the wrongful killing of this immigrant African worker.

“No justice, no peace!,” the familiar slogan of the struggle against police murders, is true on both a national and global scale. Heightened repression can never bring about real stability and security, as every military or fascist dictatorship has found out sooner or later. And in the meantime, the ruling class that is so afraid of yielding to any social change that might undermine its profits is winding up shooting itself in the foot.

Reaping the whirlwind

U.S. imperialism’s repeated outrages against the oppressed nations of the earth have so antagonized broad layers of the world’s population that the rulers of this country are now paranoid about security, fearing a “terrorist” around every corner. So they have urged their politicians to take such extreme measures that the airlines are now

in a panic as flights are canceled and bookings fall, their potential passengers just too weary with all the delays and indignities of airport security lines.

Some of the most ingenious jokes going around the Internet these days have to do with the paranoia of the government and the right wing. When the FBI sent out a memo instructing its

agents to look for people with almanacs because they might be terrorists—almanacs list the tallest buildings, the longest bridges, etc.—the response was uproarious. Nor have almanac sales dropped off.

Bush now has his advance people set up “designated free-speech zones” when he puts in a public appearance anywhere. People with pro-Bush signs are allowed up front where the cameras are. Opponents are sent to the “free-speech zones,” which can be blocks away. Some who refuse have been arrested. (San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 4)

The U.S. capitalist government, which for so long has presented itself to the world as the bringer of democracy and human rights, must now account for its brutal behavior abroad and its increasingly heavy-handed style at home. How can its patrons, the billionaire class, admit that the enormous problems wracking the world are the creation of their very own irrational and uncontrollable profit system?

But, in a world with just one “superpower,” there’s no one else to blame. “Terrorists with almanacs” just don’t fill the bill. □

Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row:

‘Ill’-ections to come



The brand “America” is like the Clorox corporation: it sells both toxic bleach (Clorox) and salad dressing (Hidden Valley Ranch). If the salad dressing came with the Clorox label, we wouldn’t buy it. If “America” came with images of poverty and of military domination, it would fail as fantasy.

— Vijay Prashad, “Keeping Up With the Dow Joneses” (South End Press, 2003, pp. xiii-xiv.)

It is difficult to hear major presidential candidates—for either major political party—get up and talk about their program without stifling a chuckle.

Almost all of them are corporate henchmen who have gotten their political positions by serving the whims of the corporate elites. What is perhaps most amusing is to see these guys (most are guys) dress down, with workshirts, their collars unbuttoned, their sleeves rolled up, to affect an illusion that they are just average working stiff, instead of the wealthy corporate shills that they have spent their lifetimes being.

It is a telling reflection of the political need to perform this schlocky kind of theatre, in order for them to begin to be heard by average, everyday folks among the American citizenry. Most can’t point to any real legislative, gubernatorial or mayoral achievement of any real note that helped out the working people. Indeed, many have been part of the generations-long war on the poor, sparked by Reagan and continued under Clinton, to “discipline” the poor and make them amenable to corporate rule over the marketplace.

The corporate media doesn’t help matters when it blares about the falling unemployment figures, or the rising Dow Jones average, when neither indicator really reflects much to average working folks. The unemployment rates are notoriously unreliable, for they never reflect those millions who have simply given up looking for work, those who are on disability, or those many in prison. As for the Dow, international studies scholar Vijay Prashad reports:

“While almost half of U.S. households own some stocks (whether through a retirement plan or otherwise), for 60 percent of households, their stocks amounted to only \$4,000. The top one percent, those people who are given ‘free money,’ hold almost half of all stocks (47.7 percent), while the bottom 80 percent hold a miniscule 4 percent of all stock holdings.” (“Keeping Up With the Dow Joneses: Debt, Prison, Workfare,” South End Press)

When’s the last time you heard a political candidate talk about those on the bottom of the nation’s political economy? Those millions who are out of luck, out of work, on the bottom? If you listen to most pols, they’ll wax eloquent about the great American “middle class,” as if there are not millions of folks who are below that great middle. Millions of folks work every day, but can’t seem to get a grip on the means to really make a decent wage. For the politicians who yearn to run the government, these people are invisible. They don’t exist. They are forgotten.

If they’re invisible before the election, what do you think they’ll do afterwards?

And now, the financial media broadcasts about the “jobless recovery.” For too many men and women in America, the answer is not simply jobs. Jobs without a living, growing wage, are just daily drudgery and toil.

The millions of manufacturing jobs that have been lost in the last few years are gone forever, and in its place is a slew of service jobs, which don’t begin to pay the rates of those that are gone.

Five years ago, corporations sent terror through their workforces by threatening to move to Mexico. With the beginning of Mexican trade unionism edging their way into the dreadful maquiladoras, businesses now threaten to cross the seas to China, where labor is even cheaper! We are witnessing the dark face of globalism, the “structural adjustment” of Reagan, and the “new economy” of Clinton.

The solution ain’t voting for some loser to betray you after election day; it’s to organize, to rebuild unions, and make them truly international entities, to protect the interests of labor—globally! □



Bulgarians, Israelis

More soldiers refuse to be colonial occupiers

By John Catalinotto

As 2004 began, two separate incidents showed there is growing resistance from rank-and-file soldiers who are ordered to enforce oppressive occupations.

In Bulgaria, some 30 soldiers have refused to go to Iraq to serve as a repressive occupation force there. In Israel, a court on Jan. 4 sentenced five Israeli “refuseniks” to one year in prison. The judges explained these harsh sentences as a way of teaching a lesson to others.

Five hundred Bulgarian troops are now serving under Polish command around Karbala, an Iraqi city about 70 miles southwest of Baghdad. Car-bomb attacks in Karbala on Dec. 27 killed 19 people. Five of them were Bulgarian soldiers; another 26 Bulgarians were wounded, six seriously.

This sudden crisis forced Bulgarian Defense Minister Nikolai Svinarov and Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg to quickly return home from foreign trips. On Dec. 29, the government held a national day of mourning for the soldiers and conducted burials in their home towns.

Both the Polish and the Bulgarian governments are openly pro-NATO and pro-U.S. regimes. Bulgaria’s president and prime minister have vowed to keep the troops in Iraq. But, according to the BBC on Dec. 29, “other commentators have sounded a more critical note. One paper noted in a headline that Bulgarian soldiers are risking their lives in Iraq to earn \$60 a day.”

By Jan. 2, the Bulgarian army chief of staff had to announce that over two dozen of the 500 troops scheduled to replace the current contingent in Iraq had refused to go. “Between 25 and 30 soldiers have declined duty, probably as a result of pressure from their families,” Gen. Nikola Kolev told the media.

For decades, when Bulgaria was part of the Warsaw Pact, along with other East European countries and the USSR, Bulgarian troops were never sent outside Europe. Their duty was to defend the socialist camp. Now, with the return of capitalism, their role has become cannon fodder for U.S. imperialism. It must be an unpleasant pill for the Bulgarian population to swallow.

General Kolev said that these troops who un-volunteered would have to pay the cost of their training and medical examinations, but mentioned no further punishment. Resistance inside the Bulgarian military is still at an early stage, but it clearly has much popular support.

Harsh sentence for Israeli draft resisters

In Israel, military resisters have begun to have a big impact on the national consciousness. The right-wing Israeli government has countered with harsh punishment. On Jan. 4, the five Israeli soldiers known as refuseniks, all under the age of 20, were each sentenced to one year in jail for refusing to join the “Israeli Defense Forces.”

The five conscripts had signed a statement while still in high school declaring



they would not serve in the IDF “as long as it acts as an army of occupation.”

The judges wrote in their ruling that the sentence was to serve as a warning to others. Col. Avi Levi, speaking for a three-judge panel, said: “From analyzing the testimonies of the accused we have come to the conclusion that their acts are mainly motivated by the wish to extend opposition against government policy in the Territories and draw a stream of others to follow in their footsteps, either by refusing to enlist or refusing to serve in the territories.”

He justified repressing their speech, saying that when the “offense [is] committed for the specific purpose of drawing the general public into mass law-breaking, when there is a concrete reason to worry about a large number of people, and in that way causing incalculable damage to the army and the state, it is undoubtedly justifiable to mete out a more severe punishment, in order to let the masses at whom the accused directed their call see and understand that the price of refusal is a severe and painful punishment.”

The five young men said the sentence would not stop the refusenik movement. They objected to getting long prison terms for matters of conscience when Israeli troops who commit war crimes hardly get a slap on the wrist.

Experienced and even special troops are also resisting being used to punish civilian protests. In December, 13 reservists from the Sayeret Matkal unit made their statement in a letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon:

“We say to you today, we will no longer give our hands to the oppressive reign in the territories and the denial of human rights to millions of Palestinians and we will no longer serve as a defensive shield for the settlement enterprise.”

Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak once commanded this unit. Just as with the refusal of certain Israeli pilots to refuse duties enforcing the occupation, this refusal by elite troops puts the entire role of the IDF in question.

Recent polls have shown that about 25 percent of the Israeli population now opposes the forceful occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This change of attitude is due primarily to the continued Intifada, or uprising, of the Palestinian people, who have risked all to regain their national rights despite ferocious repression from the Israeli regime. □

World Anti-war Day March 20

Coalition in U.S. calls anti-occupation action

Continued from page 1

stration’s domestic and foreign policy, and understandably so, but there is a tendency that seeks to direct the movement’s energy to supporting Howard Dean or some other Democratic Party candidate in the upcoming national elections.

“While Bush’s policies are criminal, it would be an error for the progressive anti-war movement to become a tail to the Democratic Party, which shares Bush’s imperialist objectives regarding the occupation of Iraq, Palestine and everywhere else. The ANSWER statement makes it clear that its goal is to make the international March 20 action one of solidarity with all those who resist U.S. hegemony, domination and invasion,” Becker concluded.

The statement addresses domestic issues, too. “We will demonstrate on March 20 to overturn the ‘USA Patriot’ Act, and to end the repression directed at Arab American, South Asian, Muslim and immigrant communities. We will defend the right to free speech and oppose Bush’s and Ashcroft’s war on the Bill of Rights. ...

“We will demonstrate on March 20 to call for money for jobs, housing, health care and education, not for war and occupation. ...

“We will demonstrate on March 20 to demand an end to the Bush administration’s ‘Endless War’ plans for global dom-

ination. We stand for an end to U.S. intervention, occupation and threats against Korea, Colombia, Afghanistan, Cuba, Iran, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Syria, the Philippines, Haiti and everywhere.”

While the statement obviously opposes the Bush administration, it notes that the Democratic Party “agrees with Bush about maintaining U.S. troops in Iraq and supports continued aid to Israel as it wages war against the Palestinian people.”

The National Council of Arab Americans (NCAA), an all-inclusive pan-Arab Ameri-

can national council that was founded on Nov. 29, 2003, in Washington, D.C., also issued a statement on Dec. 24 calling for the March 20 demonstrations.

In New York City, the plan is to assemble at 12 noon at Times Square and march to the United Nations. Call (212) 633-6646 for details about upcoming citywide planning meetings and for more information. New York ANSWER is also participating on Jan. 15 with community and Black civil rights groups in a demonstration at Madison Square Garden protesting

the holding of the Republican National Convention in the city next summer.

In San Francisco, demonstrators will gather at 11 a.m. at Dolores Park (18th and Dolores streets) with a march to the Civic Center. Call (415) 821-6545 for more information.

In Los Angeles, the demonstration will assemble at 12 noon at Hollywood and Vine. Call (213) 487-2368 for more information.

Additional information can be found at internationalanswer.org. □



Metal of Dishonor: Depleted Uranium

How the Pentagon Radiates Soldiers & Civilians with DU Weapons

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A gateway to the riches of Central Asia

AFGHANISTAN: Behind the façade of 'democracy'

By Leslie Feinberg

An inordinate amount of imperialist media attention on Afghanistan has focused on the wording of a new constitution approved by the *loya jirga*, or grand assembly. Like a huckster at a carnival shell game, the more the big-money media can get the crowd to concentrate on the shells, the less likely they are to realize the entire game is rigged.

President George W. Bush, who in this election year no longer talks about the “endless” character of his war for empire in Central Asia and the Middle East, hailed the signing of the new constitution on Jan. 4 as the dawn of democracy in Afghanistan.

Is this genuine self-rule? Is the newly named Islamic Republic of Afghanistan newly independent?

Some 11,700 U.S. troops occupy Afghanistan. The country’s government, army, police and judiciary were crushed or dismantled during the Goliath versus David war against one of the poorest countries on the planet.

After tight political control of the process, the new constitution upholds the presidential system that Washington pushed for, defeating the demand for a parliamentary system. Elections for president—a formality in order to give Hamid Karzai, who was appointed by the U.S., the mantle of being elected—are slated to take place in six months.

Washington and its would-be allies are eager to slip a glove of “sovereignty” over the iron fist of military occupation in Afghanistan. Forces hostile to U.S. control now dominate much of the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan. Interior Minister Ahmed Jalali officially concedes that the Taliban—the religious group that the Pentagon invasion ousted—controls at least 12 districts.

Donald Rumsfeld visited Kabul in early December to shore up the shaky Karzai. The U.S. defense secretary also reportedly met in Mazar-I Sharif with two Afghan generals, Abdul Rashid Dostum and Mohammad Atta, who come from the Uzbek and Tajik peoples in the north, the area most improved by Soviet development aid before the war.

As a show of strength during Rumsfeld’s visit, the Pentagon launched “Operation Avalanche.” However, a few hours after he left Kabul on Dec. 5, resistance forces fired a rocket at the heavily-guarded U.S. Embassy in the capital.

During the three weeks in which delegates to the *loya jirga* fought verbal battles over the wording of the constitution inside a huge white tent in Kabul, the U.S. had to militarily protect them. Warnings not to collaborate with the occupation kept some delegates away.

Washington’s handpicked titular leader, Karzai, is virtually a prisoner in the capital, under the night-and-day protection of U.S. corporate mercenary bodyguards. In order to congratulate delegates at the grand assembly meeting, Karzai had to be flown there by helicopter, even though it was only a mile away from his office. It was too dangerous for him to drive through the streets of Kabul.

Major decisions of the council were reportedly really made by Zalmay Khalilzad, the Afghan-born U.S. ambassador to Kabul. (Muslimmedia.com)

Dragged back a century

As the ink dried on the newly signed constitution, Karzai announced, “It’s the first time in the history of Afghanistan that we take a step for the real power of the people.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. It was his patron, the U.S. government, that drowned the only truly progressive government in Afghan history in blood when it funded and organized a vicious war against it. In 1978, a progressive revolution in the impoverished, semi-feudal country had tried to carry out a social transformation in the direction of socialism. The new government instituted land reform and women’s rights, built schools for girls and boys, and set up literacy programs. It printed textbooks in many languages, and sought to unite Dari, Pashtu, Uzbek, Turkic, Baluchi and other nationalities in Afghanistan.

Had there been no outside intervention, the defeated feudalists would have been relegated to the dustbin of history. But in the Cold War era of imperialism, U.S. monopoly capitalism was hell-bent on destroying this revolution on the Soviet Union’s borders.

Beginning early in 1979, the CIA began covertly financing and arming landlord mercenary bands, according to admissions by National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and former CIA director Robert M. Gates. After the Afghan government appealed to the Soviet Union for troops in December, Washington began admitting it was funding an armed opposition, but claimed it did so to help Afghanistan fight a “Soviet invasion.”

During the 1980s, the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and other reactionary forces received some of the \$8 billion Washington shelled out on this dirty war. The revolutionary government was defeated in 1992. After four years of factional fighting among rival fundamentalist forces, the Taliban came to power in 1996. They expected continued aid from the U.S., but the Soviet Union had been overthrown by then and Washington wasn’t that interested in Afghanistan any more.

By Sept. 11, 2001, it was the Taliban who were on the Pentagon’s hit list.

Michael Meacher, a senior Labor Party member of Parliament who had been a member of British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s cabinet, wrote in a Sept. 6, 2003, article in the Guardian of London: “Until July 2001 the U.S. government saw the Taliban regime as a source of stability in Central Asia that would enable the construction of hydrocarbon pipelines from the oil and gas fields in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, through Afghanistan and Pakistan, to the Indian Ocean. But confronted with the Taliban’s refusal to accept U.S. conditions, the U.S. representatives told them ‘either you accept our offer of a carpet of gold, or we bury you under a carpet of bombs.’”

Today most of the schools and apartment complexes built during the revolutionary period with help from the Soviet Union lie in ruins. Bombing raids continue to turn the rural countryside into a virtual moonscape. Hunger, disease and poverty are rampant. And no matter how the new constitution is worded for Western consumption, it’s not going to change the reality for the Afghan popula-



tion, national minorities or women. The most reactionary and repressive forces in the country—the feudal landlords and their militias—have been elevated by imperialist intervention and more than a quarter century of war.

Poppy cultivation, which helped bankroll the counter-revolutionary war, is burgeoning again. Armed rivalries between regional factions and nationalities are becoming increasingly explosive.

The country is run by a U.S. ambassador, Khalilzad, who was a liaison between the U.S. energy company Unocal and the Taliban government and had worked under National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice when she served as a director of Chevron oil.

And the current U.S.-appointed “president,” Karzai, worked with the CIA to overthrow the Afghan revolution. He, too, became a consultant for Unocal, which planned to build a multi-billion-dollar, 1,000-mile natural gas pipeline across Afghanistan from Turkmenistan to Pakistan.

Now, however, more than two years after the Sept. 11 attacks provided Washington with an excuse to unleash its devastating aerial bombardment of Afghanistan, it’s proving difficult for Pentagon Special Forces to protect a road from Kabul to Kandahar, much less a pipeline traversing the country.

Afghanistan was seen as the shortest route from the oil and gas fields of Central Asia to the sea, with the most favorable terrain. But monopoly capital, inexorably compelled to create profits, never puts all its eggs in one basket.

‘Pipelineistan’

More than a century ago, the “Great Game” was a struggle among capitalist powers—particularly the British Empire and Tsarist Russia—to control the hub of the Eurasian landmass and the warm-water ports of the Persian Gulf.

Today, after its defeat of the Soviet Union, U.S. imperialism, with Britain as its junior partner, is leading the struggle to command hegemony over the great wealth and geo-political advantage of Central Asia.

On the shores of the Caspian Sea and under its waters lie the world’s biggest untapped oil and gas reserves, ranging in estimated worth up to \$4 trillion. The only catch is that the region is landlocked. From the capitalist viewpoint, these resources are worthless until they can be transported and sold as commodities.

Under the cover of the “war on terror,” the Pentagon has quietly established military bases in the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The area of this U.S. military boot heel on Central Asia is commonly referred to as “Pipelineistan.” For years, Enron, Unocal, BP Amoco, ExxonMobil, Pennzoil, Atlantic Richfield, Chevron, Texaco and other oil monopolies have been like piranhas in a billion-dollar feeding frenzy to siphon off and sell the rich oil and gas reserves.

ExxonMobil, Chevron and BP have already reportedly invested more than \$30 billion in production facilities in the

region. And construction of a \$3.8-billion pipeline from Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, to the Turkish port of Ceyhan has already begun. It’s dubbed “the new Silk Road.” (Media Monitors Network, Dec. 14, 2003)

U.S. corporations are also embarking on a trans-Balkan pipeline from the Black Sea across Bulgaria to the Adriatic coast.

Through a massive infusion of money and political manipulation, Washington and Wall Street have created client governments in the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Georgia. “Washington has never made any secret of its agenda to wrestle the Caucasus, the Caspian and Central Asia away from Russia,” reminds *asiatimes* online.

These vast and precious reserves of hydrocarbons were once the collective property of the peoples of the Soviet Union. This oil and gas lifeblood fueled its tremendous productive growth.

Since overturning the Soviet Union—the achievement of a momentous revolution of workers and peasants that lasted over 70 years—imperialism has shattered the former socialist camp in Asia and Europe into vassal states, their populations ethnically divided and economically devastated.

But Pax Pentagona can find no stability. Its military machine and dreams of empire are bogged down by indefatigable resistance in Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan, as well as Colombia, the Philippines and elsewhere.

Since the start of this “endless war,” thousands of GIs have returned home injured or in body bags. The Pentagon’s available troop strength is stretched thin and so is the endurance of its foot soldiers, growing increasingly fed up with orders from the brass to be an occupying army for U.S. corporations.

As a major troop replacement looms in the Middle East, eight of the U.S. Army’s 10 divisions will be on the move in the most massive rotation of soldiers since the end of World War II. Roads and highways will be congested with Pentagon convoys, vulnerable to resistance.

It is not a need by the people for more oil or gas that is fueling this war machine, it is the drive of the corporations for super-profits.

Monopoly capital in its highest stage—imperialism—is deepening the exploitation of the world’s workers and oppressed, waging endless war and widening the chasm between wealth and poverty, stealing resources and fouling the planet.

At the same time it has laid the basis for the collective takeover of all that has been built by human labor and makes such a revolutionary struggle inevitable. □

Haiti celebrates 200 years of independence

By G. Dunkel

Tens of thousands of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's supporters came out Jan. 1 in Port-au-Prince to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Haiti's independence.

Given the country's tense political climate—fueled by an opposition that intends to drive Aristide from power through violent street protests like those that have killed 40 and injured hundreds in the last six months—organizers said the turnout was surprising and encouraging.

Twelve international delegations attended the celebration. President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa explained: "We celebrate the Haitian Revolution because it dealt a deadly blow to the slave traders who had scoured the coasts of West and East Africa for slaves and ruined the lives of millions of Africans."

Mbeki also acknowledged the "heroic struggle" still being waged against poverty on both sides of the Atlantic.

Mbeki was scheduled to go to Gonaïves, the city where independence was proclaimed, but his visit was canceled after his helicopter was reportedly fired on.

"Our biggest job is to avoid a coup d'état here," said U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, a member of the Congressional Black Caucus who attended the ceremonies. She criticized the lack of U.S. economic aid to Haiti.

Aristide listed 21 goals he hopes will be accomplished by 2015, from stabilizing

the HIV infection rate to reducing poverty. He pushed for \$21 billion in reparations from France, the former colonial power, and "respect for the Constitution."

U.S. and French media coverage focused on a counter-protest by a motley collection of groups, lumped together in the so-called Democratic Convergence and Group of 184.

Every report noted, however, that the official celebration outdrew the protests.

The convergence, openly funded by the U.S.-based International Republican Institute, calls itself the "democratic" opposition to Aristide but refused to participate in the 2000 elections. They claimed the elections were rigged, but Aristide's supporters say their lack of support would have been exposed if they had run.

The U.S.-backed opposition includes major business associations, landowners, Catholic and Protestant lay groups, some labor unions representing more high-paid workers, university students from conservative disciplines like business administration, ex-military officers and former members of the Macoutes death squad.

Andy Apaid, who coordinates the Group of 184, owns a manufacturing plant and boasts that he pays his workers \$4.50 a day, or two-and-a-half times the legal minimum wage.

Thanks to the legacy of French and U.S. domination, Haiti is by far the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with a life expectancy hovering around 50

years—18 to 20 years lower than its Caribbean neighbors. Unemployment is over 50 percent.

The massive numbers of poor people in Haiti's cities are Aristide's main base of support.

Haiti's struggle against slavery

The first modern war of national liberation was fought in Haiti from 1801 to 1803, against France's genocidal attempt to reimpose slavery in Haiti.

In 1804, Haiti became the second independent state in the Western Hemisphere, after the U.S. It was the first Black state formed by a slave rebellion. It could even be considered as one of the earliest examples of a successful general strike.

The Haitian people and their army, under the leadership of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, crushed the French. Napoleon later called it his greatest defeat.

The success of Haiti's revolution completely flummoxed the 19th-century slave

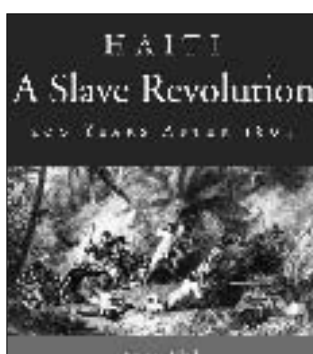
owners and their bourgeois competitors, who relied on wage slavery and were equally racist.

The imperialist powers have spent the last 200 years tearing down Haiti, lying about it and smashing its economy, occupying it militarily and installing pliant regimes—all the while blaming Haitians for the results of this neocolonial campaign.

In 1990, the Haitian people shocked the world bourgeoisie again when they first elected Aristide president. While formally an election, it was really a mass movement of the Haitian people that rolled over the U.S.-approved and -financed candidate, Marc Bazin, a former World Bank official.

Since then, first by a coup and later by economic and political strangulation, both Democratic and Republican administrations in Washington have been trying to rid themselves of Aristide and the movement he crystallized.

So far, they have not succeeded. □



HAITI A SLAVE REVOLUTION

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What can revolutionaries do now?

Be in the struggle and build the party

From a talk given by Richard Becker at the Dec. 6-7 New York conference on reviving the struggle for socialism.

Karl Marx once wrote that people "make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like an Alp [mountain] on the brains of the living. ..."

How do these well-known words, written 150 years ago, relate to the theme of our conference this weekend?

How can the struggle for socialism be revived? That is the question on the minds of revolutionaries all over the world.

How has the worldwide struggle for socialism been revived in the past? We know that it was, as Sam Marcy often pointed out, Lenin who rescued and revived Marxism, and updated it for our era, the era of imperialism. But what made Lenin's invaluable contributions known and popularized around the world was the Russian Revolution of 1917 and after, which in itself was in large part due to the world crisis created by the first imperialist world war.

The Bolsheviks made their own history, but under circumstances transmitted from the past. The upheaval in Russia was largely a spontaneous rebellion against the war and the misery it created. Even as perceptive and insightful a thinker as Lenin was taken by surprise. He had just given a speech to some Swiss youth a month before saying, in effect, "I might not live to see the revolution, but you certainly will."

It took the existence of a highly trained and experienced revolutionary party to transform the revolutionary crisis in Russia into the first successful socialist



Richard Becker

revolution. The victory of the revolution and the creation of the Communist International caused the ideas of revolutionary Marxism and Leninism to spread all over the world.

Communist parties were soon formed. In the advanced industrialized and imperialist countries, the old Socialist parties split into revolutionary communist and reformist socialist wings. In the decade of the 1920s, communist parties arose in the colonized and oppressed countries of Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa.

A great expansion of socialism and the development of the socialist camp came about as a result of the revolutions that grew out of World War II in China, Korea, Vietnam, Yugoslavia and elsewhere in eastern Europe. A new socialist upsurge came about in the 1960s when the Chinese leadership opened up a revolutionary polemic against the reformist Soviet line—the parliamentary road to socialism, etc.—and in response to the Cuban and

Vietnamese revolutions.

In the last century, war and revolution have gone hand-in-hand. War is where imperialism is at one and the same time at its most dangerous and most vulnerable. That fact is one reason that the struggle against imperialist war is such a critical question. Looking back, we can see that the great advances of the socialist perspective have flowed from great revolutions. And it is—unfortunately—true that the revolutionaries do not control the pace of development or the unfolding of revolutionary crises in society. Neither does the ruling class.

What revolutionaries do have some control over is not when a new great revolution will come, but what type of organization will be available when a revolutionary crisis does arise, as it inevitably will. How strong, experienced, widespread, numerous and united will the revolutionary party be? How steered will it be in many and widely varying struggles? How well does its class composition correspond to its ideology? Is it able to renew itself and build for the future by attracting young people—workers and students? How has it measured up to challenges, especially in times of crisis?

To the question, what do revolutionaries do in non-revolutionary times, Lenin's answer was to build the party, build the organization without which the revolution cannot succeed. Build now, because if you wait, it will be too late. "You can't build your ship once you're in the storm," as the saying goes. From Lenin's point of view, the entire reason for the party from the very beginning was preparation for the revolutionary opportunity.

And preparation doesn't mean just reading books and studying, as indispensable as those factors are—and we need more reading and more studying.

It means being involved in the most critical struggles of the day, at the points of greatest conflict between the classes. It means fighting to win the movements that spontaneously respond to crises in capitalist society to a truly progressive and revolutionary outlook.

A little over a year ago, starting in September 2002, was such a development with the seemingly sudden upsurge of mass anti-war activism. On Oct. 26, 2003, some 200,000 people marched in D.C., 100,000 more in San Francisco; on Jan. 18, 500,000 and 200,000, respectively, and similarly on Feb. 15-16.

Much as we might want to, we can't attribute the vast increase in the size of the protests to our exemplary visibility work. No, something else was going on. It was a spontaneous response to the Bush administration's war program.

What the ANSWER Coalition, in which WWP works along with many other organizations, did was to fight to win the movement to an anti-imperialist perspective, to a perspective of unconditional support for the right of self-determination for the Iraqi, Palestinian, Iranian and other oppressed peoples of the Middle East, and irreconcilable opposition to the imperialist ruling class of the U.S. ANSWER did this while at the same time pursuing a United Front tactic for the mass protests with the more moderate and conciliationist forces in the anti-war movement, something which the base of the anti-war movement very much desired.

The ANSWER Coalition was firm in its principles and at the same time flexible in tactics. Everyone involved in this process has learned a great deal, and the anti-imperialist core of the anti-war movement has been very significantly expanded, and ANSWER's standing in the world movement is very strong. □

Rejecting Bush 'humanitarian' ploy, Iran says: No photo-ops please, just lift sanctions

By Mazda Majidi

A UN report released on Jan. 5 estimates the death toll from the earthquake that struck the Iranian city of Bam at 30,000 to 32,000.

Reuters reported that “about 90 percent of the mostly mud-brick buildings in the ancient Silk Road city collapsed” when the quake hit on Dec. 26. However, not just the older mud structures but even modern buildings collapsed in the quake, prompting Iranian authorities to announce that they had “uncovered violations of building regulations ... and that those responsible would be prosecuted.”

In a capitalist system, houses are often built by developers whose sole purpose is to maximize their profits. In the poverty-stricken Third World, the people who scramble to make ends meet have no choice but to settle for substandard housing just to have a roof over their heads.

Despite living in an era of virtually unlimited productive capacity, resulting in periodic crises of overproduction in the world capitalist system, the majority of the human population is deprived of its most basic needs, including affordable and safe shelter. It is not because of a shortage of raw materials or skilled labor; rather, it is a shortage of “demand” in the capitalist

market. People living in mud houses have a need for safe, higher-quality housing, but that does not constitute a “market demand,” since they lack buying power.

The plight of the victims prompted support from people around the world. At least 24 teams of aid workers were sent to Iran and more than 30 countries contributed to the aid effort, according to the Associated Press.

This included eight paneloads of aid from the United States, as well as some 80 relief and medical experts, as Washington “eased” sanctions on Iran. Aware of its immense unpopularity in the Middle East, the Bush administration is using the Bam tragedy as a public relations opportunity.

The U.S. government proposed sending Sen. Elizabeth Dole, former president of the Red Cross, to Iran on a “humanitarian mission.” She was to be accompanied by unspecified members of the Bush administration and possibly even someone from the Bush family, in what certainly would have been a photo-op for the administration.

It is unclear what exact humanitarian function Dole would have been able to perform. Iranian authorities, however, politely declined to permit Dole’s trip, stating that the “time is not right.”

Some U.S. officials have denied any

political significance in these developments. “We’re talking about two different issues,” State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli told reporters. “One is the humanitarian mission and one is better relations with Iran. The two aren’t linked.”

On the other hand, Secretary of State Collin Powell commented that “there are things happening, and therefore we should keep open the possibility of dialogue at an appropriate point in the future,” signaling that the U.S. might intend to use the situation as an opportunity to open negotiations. If this is the case, it would mark a change, if only temporary, from the stated U.S. position of pursuing a “regime change.” That became a serious threat when President Bush included Iran in his “axis of evil” speech two years ago.

Iran’s response to U.S. maneuver

There is no doubt that Washington would like nothing more than to install a puppet government in Tehran. But the failure of the Iraq colonization project may, for the time being, have soured Washington’s appetite for further occupations.

On the other hand, this may simply have been a maneuver to put the Iranian government in a no-win situation. Had it refused to accept the U.S. aid, given the

enormity of the catastrophe, Tehran’s refusal would have come across as insensitive to the needs of the earthquake victims. By accepting the U.S. aid as it did, the Islamic Republic regime became an unwitting participant in Bush’s humanitarian propaganda.

The ulterior motives behind the U.S. aid and the proposed Dole trip have prompted officials in Tehran to take conflicting positions. Some are proposing a positive response to the good gesture by extending a fig leaf to the U.S. But President Mohammad Khatami, while thanking the U.S., said that “humanitarian issues should not be intertwined with deep and chronic political problems.”

Other comments have been more direct, referring to the oppressive nature of the history of U.S. policy toward Iran, such as the 1953 CIA-engineered coup that removed the democratically elected prime minister, Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh, from power and installed Shah Reza Pahlevi as a U.S. puppet.

Referring to assets the U.S. government froze after the 1979 revolution that overthrew the Shah’s regime, a state radio commentary said: “Instead of sending meager aid to help quake victims, Washington should unfreeze billions of

Continued on page 10

USSR’s impact on national liberation

From a talk by Pat Chin to the Dec. 6-7 New York conference on reviving the struggle for socialism.

When the Soviet Union was born in 1917, most of the world was colonized by the U.S., the British, French, Dutch, Belgians, Spanish, etc. But the existence of a huge socialist state changed the world relationship of forces. This happened in large part because the Bolshevik revolution, as the social and economic rival to Western imperialism, provided the space in which countries were able to win independence.

At the Baku Congress of 1918, organized by leaders of the Russian Revolution, Lenin renounced all imperialist treaties and called for the liberation of the world’s colonies.

The Bolsheviks uncompromisingly supported the right of all nations to independence, even though they weren’t able to give material aid until much later. The political line regarding the right to self-determination taken by the Soviet government and the Communist International had a tremendous impact on oppressed countries.

The people in Iraq rose up against the British after that. There were anti-colonial uprisings all over the world, including in Korea in 1919. These struggles were all inspired by the fact that there was now a state that was a deterrent to imperialism and colonialism.

Soviets, or workers’ councils, were formed in Cuba in that period and communist parties arose in all the oppressed countries—in South Africa, India, French-occupied Indochina, Dutch-ruled Indonesia, Sudan, Iraq, Vietnam and elsewhere. At the first congress of the Communist International, the slogan “Workers and oppressed peoples of the

world unite” was adopted.

After World War II the Soviet Union became much stronger and was able to give more aid to the revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia and Korea. The country’s emergence as a military power prevented the U.S. and the other imperialists from dominating the world. The fear of communism was, in fact, behind some de-colonization moves that were allowed. The imperialists felt pressured to pull out of Africa because of the anti-colonial struggles, for example, but would cunningly try to replace open colonialism with neo-colonialism.

When the first post-colonial regimes started to emerge in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, the Soviet Union gave tremendous military and material support to even bourgeois regimes like Nasser’s Egypt, and to Ghana, where Nkrumah became a communist but the Ghanaian state didn’t.

This allowed these countries to carry out somewhat independent developmental policies that wouldn’t have been possible with the world capitalist market. This was true of socialist countries like North Korea, North Vietnam and Cuba in the 1960s, but also of bourgeois democratic regimes like Egypt and India, Ghana and the Congo, all of which had won formal independence from colonialism. For the first time they could trade on more equal terms due to the socialist nature of the Soviet economy and not be subjected to the boom-and-bust cycle of the capitalist system.

Imperialism and monopoly capitalism holds back even capitalist development in the oppressed countries, but the existence of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China provided more space for these countries to develop.

The Soviet Union, for example, built the first steel plant in India, which became the



Pat Chin

property of the Indian government. A strong capitalist class even developed there based on India’s relationship with the USSR. They didn’t have to bow down to the International Monetary Fund.

The Soviet Union also provided military aid. When Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt in 1956, they assisted Egypt. They even sent troops to Iraq to defend the Kassem revolution after the U.S. threatened a counter-revolutionary invasion. Lybia, Iraq, Syria and Ghana also got tremendous military assistance. Cuba was able to survive because of the military and economic relationship with the USSR. Soviet military aid had the greatest impact in relationship to the national liberation struggles in Cuba, Vietnam, Korea, Angola and Namibia.

Some people have criticized the Soviet Union for supporting capitalist governments in oppressed countries rather than working with the revolutionary forces. But

the most important point is they weren’t operating on an imperialist basis. The Soviet Union and the socialist camp had no interest in holding back development in any part of the world. It was in their interest to encourage the growth of the productive forces everywhere. The U.S., British and French capitalists didn’t want this because they don’t want competitors.

Patrice Lumumba of the Congo was murdered because the U.S. claimed he was trying to work with the Soviet Union. Lumumba had basically asked for economic assistance from that country. In 1962 the Patrice Lumumba University was founded in Moscow for students from so-called Third World countries. Free education in engineering, agriculture and other disciplines, over the course of Soviet history, had been provided for millions of students.

It wasn’t just altruism on the part of the Soviet leadership because, even in the later period, development of the productive forces around the world was in their material interest.

When the Soviet Union collapsed it had a devastating economic impact on the countries that had once received its aid and assistance.

For Cuba it meant a special period of austerity. Vietnam was forced to let in Western capital. For India it meant opening up to harsh dictates from the IMF and World Trade Organization—privatizing state-owned industries, layoffs, cuts in social benefits, lowering of protective tariffs, and so on. In Central America the armed liberation movement was forced to compromise.

Some 90 countries have been forced to accept structural adjustment programs in the last 10 years by the forces of capitalist globalization. As a result there’s been a huge surge in poverty, especially in Africa, South and Southeast Asia. □



Kissinger and Bremer

L. PAUL BREMER III, who was appointed by President Bush last summer to be in charge of “rebuilding” Iraq as a “democratic” country, was probably unknown to most people here and in Iraq before taking on that job. But he has a history, and it’s not one referred to that often in the media.

Bremer is considered an expert on crisis management. Meaning that he has had access to all kinds of classified information about areas where the U.S. has been engaged in more or less secret battles. He came to this through his long association with organizations tied in to the most influential fortune in the history of U.S. capitalism: the Rockefeller empire.

Of course, the Rockefeller fortune was built on oil—the Standard Oil Company, in fact, which over more than a century has metamorphosed into scores of other companies and banks connected to energy and finance. The Rockefellers built two of the most important organizations for grooming political leaders and working out the niceties of imperialist foreign policy: the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission.

Almost every single secretary of state for 100 years has had some connection to the Rockefellers, ever since their oil empire began to reach into Venezuela, Indonesia and the Middle East.

Bremer is a product of the Council on Foreign Relations. He also has been a trusted executive—a managing director from 1989 to 2000—of Kissinger Associates, headed by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, another Rockefeller protege.

What skills does a person like Bremer need to serve his president well in Iraq? What qualities must he have had to be picked for the job?

Assuming that he learned well from Henry Kissinger, he must be able to speak very convincingly out of both sides of his mouth. Bremer may not have the deep bass voice of a Kissinger, but he has displayed some of the verbal agility needed for the job.

Kissinger was President Nixon’s national security adviser at the time of the right-wing military coup in Chile and became his secretary of state one month later. National security advisers don’t have to say all that much in public, but secretaries of state do.

Secretaries of state are fond of striking a moral pose before the world. Terms like “human rights” and “free world” pepper their speeches. For Kissinger, the architect of “realpolitik,” this took a little getting used to. Once he was secretary of state, he had to make sure that his old buddies from his days as national security adviser still understood him.

Recently, the transcripts of conversations between Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and Kissinger were released

by the National Security Archive, a non-profit group that had obtained them under the Freedom of Information Act. They are being posted this month on the Web site nsarchive.org. Some excerpts appeared in the New York Times of Dec. 28, 2003.

In June 1976, Kissinger met with General Pinochet during a session of the Organization of American States held in Santiago, Chile. Chile was seen around Latin America and the world as a fascist state that had massacred thousands after the coup. The military heads were not only rabidly anti-communist but anti-Semitic as well. At the OAS meeting, Kissinger had to give a speech in which he would criticize countries that had abused human rights—a mild way of referring to the brutal murders that had occurred.

But Kissinger didn’t want Pinochet to think he really meant it. He told the Chilean dictator in their private meeting:

“The speech is not aimed at Chile. I wanted to tell you about this. My evaluation is that you are a victim of all left-wing groups around the world, and that your greatest sin was that you overthrew a government that was going Communist.”

Pinochet complained that he wasn’t getting enough U.S. arms. Kissinger replied:

“I want to see our relations and friendship improve. I encouraged the OAS to have its General Assembly here. I knew it would add to the prestige of Chile. I came for that reason. We have suggestions. We want to help, not undermine you. You did a great service to the West in overthrowing Allende. Otherwise Chile would have followed Cuba.”

At this time, Argentina was also under the rule of an extreme right-wing military dictatorship, which killed and “disappeared” an estimated 30,000 people and also was rotten with anti-Semitism. On Oct. 7, 1976, Kissinger met with Argentine Foreign Minister Adm. Cesar Augusto Guzzetti in New York.

Kissinger: “Look, our basic attitude is that we would like you to succeed. I have an old-fashioned view that friends ought to be supported. What is not understood in the United States is that you have a civil war. We read about civil rights problems, but not the context. The quicker you succeed the better.”

Guzzetti was “euphoric” after the meeting, according to a cable from U.S. Ambassador Robert Hill. The killings and disappearances, of course, continued.

This is the murderous and duplicitous world in which L. Paul Bremer III succeeded in clawing his way to the top. And he is bringing “democracy” to Iraq?

China cancels Africa’s debt

By Leslie Feinberg

China has cancelled the debts owed to it by 31 African countries. The show of solidarity will give African leaders greater leverage to demand that the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the wealthy finance capitalists in the bastions of imperialism do the same.

In his opening address to a two-day China-Africa conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao announced on Dec. 15 that his government has fulfilled, ahead of schedule, its debt exemption commitments and cancelled debts totaling \$1.27 billion.

Wen Jiabao also promised that China would open its markets to exports from the 34 least developed African countries on a preferential, duty-free basis. The current two-way trade volume between China and Africa is \$12 billion annually.

He offered to provide various types of professional training to 10,000 African personnel over the course of the next three years.

Wen Jiabao also said his government will work cooperatively with African countries in the prevention and treatment of AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, in the prevention of natural disasters and in environmental protection. He also proposed a China-Africa Youth Festival and large-scale Africa-themed cultural exchange activities in China next year.

“It is an unshakeable policy of the new Chinese government to strengthen solidarity and cooperation with African countries and other developing nations,” he told those gathered at the Second Ministerial Conference of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum—the first held on the African continent.

The Chinese premier said that his own country’s development problems limited what it could offer, but that China would not impose any political conditions on this assistance.

Twelve African heads of state or government took part in the summit, together with high-level officials from most African states.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi characterized this summit as a landmark in China-Africa relations.

Embattled Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe hailed Beijing’s proposals. To punish Mugabe for standing up to imperialism, the U.S.—and the European Union before it—have levied economic sanctions against Zimbabwe.

Mugabe denounced the “brutal predominance of America, unconditionally supported by Britain, Australia and other nations of Europe recklessly seeking global hegemony under the convenient but false cover of good governance, human rights and democracy.”

He urged African leaders to “turn their backs” on the Western imperial powers and work instead to develop stronger relations with China—a country he said respected African countries.

Former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker has been currently making the rounds internationally to try to cajole the leading wealthy imperialist powers in the elite 19-country Paris Club to back reduction of the debt of another country: Iraq. Its debt accumulated when it refused to bow to Washington.

After more than a decade of U.S.-led sanctions, Iraq’s debt to the Paris Club members—including the U.S., Germany, France, Japan and Russia—is about \$40 billion. Baker is arguing that other countries should write off much of that debt to aid Iraq’s “reconstruction.” They are reluctant because the lion’s share of the contracts to “rebuild” Iraq are going to U.S. firms.

The reality is that it is the U.S., along with Britain and all the former colonial powers, that owes the peoples of the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America centuries of reparations. □

No photo-ops please, just lift sanctions

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dollars of Iranian assets.”

The head of the Council of Guardians, Ayatollah Ahmad Janati, had this message for the American government: “If you had any honor, humanity or mercy, you would do better to have pity on the Iraqi and Palestinian peoples, for whom you have caused an earthquake.”

Disasters such as the Iranian earthquake underscore the need for a worldwide planned economy that rationally allocates resources based on human needs. Not only within national borders but also between nations, capitalism, in its advanced stage of imperialism, inevitably polarizes the world into two camps of haves and have nots. This system requires

that the people in the colonies, semi-colonies and neo-colonies live in poverty in order for their countries to serve as a source of raw materials and cheap labor for the imperialists.

The 30,000 in Bam had to die because they lived in a country that occupies the position of the oppressed in this unjust system. Heavy tolls taken by natural disasters are inevitable only so long as humanity lives under the yoke of capitalism. In a rational system that plans economic and productive activities in accordance to human needs, houses that can withstand natural disasters could be built for all the peoples of the world, minimizing the human cost of earthquakes and other disasters. □

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Fidel on 45th anniversary of Cuban Revolution

'The struggle must grow—there is no option'

Excerpts from a speech by Cuban President Fidel Castro in Havana's Karl Marx theater on Jan. 3.

I must admit that Marx was right when he sketched out the idea that only when a truly rational, just and equitable social regime exists on this earth, will humankind have left prehistory behind.

If the whole development of human society has inevitably been chaotic, disorderly, unpredictable, extremely cruel and unjust, the struggle to create a different and truly rational world, worthy of our species' intelligence is, at this moment in its history, which bears no resemblance to any of humanity's previous stages, something that was not possible or even imaginable in other circumstances: an attempt by human beings to plan their own destiny for the first time.

Dreaming of impossible things is called utopia; struggling for goals that cannot only be reached but which are essential if the species is to survive, is called realism.

It would be wrong to assume that such an aim would be motivated by ideology alone. We are talking about something that goes beyond the noble and completely justifiable wishes for justice, beyond the deep desire that all human beings can live a free and decent life: we are talking about the survival of the species.

The big difference between the age of the Greeks and our age lies not in the intellectual capacity of our species but in the exponential and seemingly infinite development of science and technology that has taken place in the last 150 years, and which completely eclipses the negligible and ridiculous political capacity we have shown for facing up to the risk of perishing as a species, a risk which really is threatening humanity.

Less than 60 years ago, when the first nuclear device equivalent to 20,000 tons of TNT exploded over Hiroshima, it became clear that technology had created a tool which, if developed, could bring about the obliteration of human life on this planet. From that day on, the development of such new weapons and weapons systems, hundreds of times more powerful, varied and accurate has not ceased, not for one day. Today, there are tens of thousands of them. Actually, very few have been destroyed under deceptive and limited covenants.

A small group of countries that have a

monopoly over such weapons have taken upon themselves the exclusive right to produce and improve them. Meanwhile the contradictions and interests of its members change and humanity develops under a web of nuclear weapons that threaten its very existence. Someone could say something similar to what that Persian emperor said as he and his huge army closed in on the 300 Spartans defending the pass at Thermopylae: "Our nuclear weapons shall hide the sunfire."

The lives of the billions of human beings who inhabit this planet depend on what a few think, believe and decide. The worst of it all is that those who wield such great power do not have psychiatrists to look after them. We cannot just accept this. We have the right to denounce it, to exercise pressure and demand changes and an end to such an absurd, unheard of situation, which makes hostages of us all. No one should ever have such powers or else no one on this earth will be able to talk of civilization again.

There is another lethal problem as well: nearly 40 years ago some people began to voice their concerns over what has come to be called the environment, because a barbarous civilization was destroying the natural conditions for life. This extremely sensitive issue was then put on the table for the first time. Quite a few people thought it was just some alarmists exaggerating, a kind of neo-Malthusianism, like in previous centuries.

They were, in fact, well-informed and intelligent people who took to building a public awareness on this issue, at times worried sick that it was too late to take useful measures. Regrettably, those who due to their great political responsibilities should have shown greater concern, showed only ignorance and disregard.

More than 10 years have passed since the UN-convened Rio de Janeiro Summit and despite the usual proliferation of speeches, pledges and promises, very little has been done. Nevertheless, there is a growing awareness of the mortal danger. And the struggle must grow and will grow. There is no option.



Recently, a conference was held in Havana on desertification and climate change, which was also convened by the UN. It was an important effort to inform, raise awareness and call people to join the struggle.

In Rio de Janeiro, I was a witness to the deep concerns and fear of representatives from small islands in the Pacific and from other countries threatened by the risk of being either partially or totally submerged by the seas because of climate change. This is sad. The first to suffer the consequences of environmental damage are the poor. They do not have cars, or air conditioners; it is possible they do not even have furniture, if they have houses, that is. The effects of huge emissions of carbon dioxide causing atmospheric warming and the destructive effect of the ultraviolet rays that pass through the damaged ozone layer filter have a greater impact on them. When they fall ill, it is common knowledge that there are no hospitals, doctors or medicines for them or their relatives.

A third problem: according to the most conservative estimates possible, the world population took no less than 50,000 years to reach one billion. This happened around 1800, just as the 19th century was beginning. It reached 2 billion 130 years later, in 1930. It reached 3 billion in 1960, 30 years later; 4 billion in 1974, 14 years later; 5 billion in 1987, 13 years later; 6 billion in 1999, only 12 years later. Today, it stands at 6.3 billion.

What will the world population be in the year 2050?

The lowest estimates say it will be 7.4 billion; the highest say 10.6 billion. According to many experts, there will be around 9 billion inhabitants. The enormous alarm generated by this colossal demographic explosion, plus the accelerated degradation of the natural conditions needed for our species' survival have caused people to react with true

dismay in many countries, since almost 100 percent of the growth I mentioned will take place in Third World countries.

Aware of the growing deterioration and reduction of land and water resources, of the famines in many countries, of the indifference and wastage in consumer societies and the educational and health problems facing the world population, one could imagine that if all of these problems are not solved our human society might become one where its members devour each other.

It would be a good idea to ask the Olympic champions of human rights in the West if they have ever used a single minute to reflect on these realities, which to a very large degree are the result of the current economic and social system. It would be worth asking them how they feel about a system that, instead of educating the masses as a fundamental element for making progress in the search for urgently needed, viable solutions, with the support of science, technology and culture, spends \$1 trillion every year on alienating consumerist advertising.

With the money spent in just one of those years to spread this peculiar poison, all the illiterate and semi-illiterate people in the world could be taught to read and write and even reach ninth grade in less than 10 years and no poor child would have to go without schooling. Without education and other social services, crime and drug abuse can never be reduced or eradicated. This we proclaim from Cuba, a country blockaded for 45 years, accused and condemned more than a few times in Geneva by the United States and their closest allies but which is about to provide health, education and cultural development services the like of which the developed and rich West has never even dreamed of and, what is more, these are absolutely free for all citizens, with no exceptions whatsoever. □





El capitalismo no es la solución; es el problema—la barbarie de los EE.UU.

Extractos del discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz en el 45 aniversario del triunfo de la Revolución Cubana el 3 de enero del 2004.

Debo darle razón a Marx cuando esbozó la idea de que cuando existiera sobre la Tierra un régimen social verdaderamente racional, justo y equitativo, el ser humano habría salido de la prehistoria.

Si todo el desenvolvimiento de la sociedad humana ha sido inevitablemente caótico, desordenado, imprevisible y sumamente cruel e injusto, la lucha por crear otro mundo diferente, verdaderamente racional, digno de la inteligencia de nuestra especie, constituye en este momento de su historia, que en nada se parece a cualquier otra etapa previa de la humanidad, algo que no era posible y ni siquiera imaginable en otras circunstancias: un intento de que los seres humanos por primera vez programen su propio destino.

Soñar con cosas imposibles se llama utopía; luchar por objetivos no solo alcanzables, sino imprescindibles para la supervivencia de la especie, se llama realismo.

Sería erróneo suponer que tal objetivo obedecería simplemente a una motivación ideológica. Se trata de algo que va más allá de nobles y muy justificables sentimientos de justicia y profundos deseos de que todos los seres humanos puedan alcanzar una vida digna y libre; se trata de la supervivencia de la especie.

La gran diferencia entre la época de Grecia y la actual no está en la capacidad intelectual de nuestra especie; está en el avance exponencial y aparentemente infinito del desarrollo de la ciencia y la tecnología que ha tenido lugar en los últimos 150 años, que supera por completo la exigua y ridícula capacidad política demostrada para enfrentar los riesgos de perecer como especie que realmente la amenazan.

Hace menos de 60 años se hizo evidente, al estallar sobre Hiroshima el primer artefacto nuclear equivalente a 20 mil toneladas de TNT, que la tecnología había creado un instrumento cuyo desarrollo podría poner fin a la existencia de la vida humana sobre el planeta. Desde entonces no ha parado un solo día el desarrollo de nuevas y hasta cientos de veces más poderosas, variadas y certeras armas y sistemas de este carácter. Hoy existen decenas de miles de ellas, solo muy pocas han sido eliminadas en virtud de engañosos y limitados acuerdos

Un reducido grupo de países de los que monopo-

lizan tales armas se arrogan el derecho exclusivo de producirlas y mejorarlas. Las contradicciones e intereses de sus miembros sufren cambios, y la humanidad se desenvuelve bajo un tinglado de armas nucleares que amenaza su existencia. Alguien podría afirmar algo parecido a lo que aquel emperador persa exclamó al aproximarse con un enorme ejército a los 300 espartanos que defendían el paso de las Termópilas: “Nuestros misiles nucleares oscurecerán el Sol.”

Las vidas de miles de millones de seres humanos que habitan el planeta dependen de lo que piensen, crean y decidan unas pocas personas. Lo más grave es que los que poseen tan fabuloso poder no cuentan con psiquiatras. No podemos resignarnos. Tenemos derecho a denunciar, presionar y exigir cambios y el cese de tan insólita y absurda situación, que nos convierte a todos en rehenes. Nadie debe poseer jamás semejantes facultades, o nadie en el mundo podrá volver a hablar de civilización.

A este se suma otro letal problema: hace apenas 40 años algunos comenzaron a expresar preocupaciones sobre lo que se ha dado en llamar el medio ambiente, a partir de una civilización bárbara que estaba destruyendo las condiciones naturales de vida. Por primera vez se pone sobre el tapete ese delicadísimo tema. No pocos pensaron que se trataba de personas alarmistas y exageradas, un neomaltusianismo al estilo de pasados siglos. Eran en realidad personas bien informadas e inteligentes que iniciaban la tarea de concientizar a la opinión pública sobre el tema, con la

angustia a veces de que fuera demasiado tarde para adoptar las medidas pertinentes. Quienes por sus altas responsabilidades políticas debían mostrar las mayores inquietudes, no mostraban más que ignorancia y desprecio.

Han pasado ya más de diez años desde la Cumbre de Río de Janeiro convocada por Naciones Unidas, y pese a la habitual proliferación de discursos, compromisos y promesas, muy poco se ha hecho. Sin embargo, la conciencia del mortal peligro crece. Debe crecer y crecerá la lucha. No hay alternativa.

Hace muy poco se produjo en La Habana un encuentro sobre desertificación y cambio de clima convocado igualmente por Naciones Unidas, un importante esfuerzo de información, concientización y llamado a la lucha.

Fui testigo en Río de Janeiro de la inquietud y el temor de los que representaban a las pequeñas islas del Pacífico y a otros países amenazados por el riesgo de quedar sepultados por las aguas de forma parcial o total debido al cambio de clima. Es triste. Los primeros en sufrir las consecuencias de la afectación del medio ambiente son los pobres. No poseen automóviles, ni aires acondicionados, posiblemente ni siquiera muebles, si es que disponen de vivienda. Sobre ellos caen más directamente los efectos de las grandes emanaciones de dióxido de carbono causantes del calentamiento de la atmósfera y el efecto pernicioso de los rayos ultravioletas que atraviesan el deteriorado filtro de la capa de ozono. Cuando se enferman, bien se sabe que no existen para ellos y sus familiares hospitales, médicos ni medicamento alguno.

Un tercer problema: en el más conservador de los cálculos posibles, la población mundial tardó no menos de 50 mil años en alcanzar la cifra de mil millones de habitantes. Esto ocurrió aproximadamente en el año 1800, cuando se iniciaba el siglo XIX. Llegó a dos mil millones 130 años después, en 1930, siglo XX. Alcanzó tres mil millones en 1960, treinta años después; cuatro mil millones en 1974, catorce años después; cinco mil millones en 1987, trece años después; seis mil millones en 1999, solo doce años después. Cuenta hoy con 6 374 millones.

Es verdaderamente asombroso que en solo 204 años la población mundial se multiplicara 6,4 veces desde la cifra de mil millones alcanzada en 1800, después de no menos de 50 mil años, calculados de forma relativamente arbitraria y conservadora para disponer de un punto de arranque que deberá ser considerado ulteriormente. Pueden ser muchos más años, limitándonos solo al

tiempo en que alcanzó su capacidad actual.

¿A qué ritmo crece en este momento?

Año 1999: población, 6 002 millones de habitantes; crecimiento, 77 millones.

Año 2000: población, 6 079 millones; crecimiento, 75 millones.

Año 2001: población, 6 154 millones; crecimiento, 74 millones.

Año 2002: población, 6 228 millones; crecimiento, 72 millones.

Año 2003: población, 6 300 millones; crecimiento, 74 millones.

Año 2004: población calculada, 6 374 millones; crecimiento, 74 millones.

¿A cuánto ascenderá la población mundial en el año 2050?

Los cálculos más reducidos afirman que a 7 409 millones; los cálculos más elevados aseguran que a 10 633 millones. Según el criterio de muchos expertos, la cifra será alrededor de 9 mil millones de habitantes. La gran alarma provocada por esta colosal explosión demográfica, unida a la acelerada degradación de las condiciones naturales elementales para la supervivencia de la especie, ha causado verdadera consternación en muchos países, ya que casi el ciento por ciento de los crecimientos mencionados tendrán lugar en los países del Tercer Mundo.

Conociendo el creciente deterioro y reducción de los recursos de tierra y agua, las hambrunas que tienen lugar en muchos países, la indiferencia y el despilfarro de las sociedades de consumo, así como los problemas educacionales y sanitarios de la población mundial, si no se resuelven, es como para imaginarse una especie humana en la que sus miembros se estarían devorando entre sí.

Sería bueno preguntarles a los campeones olímpicos de los derechos humanos en el mundo occidental si alguna vez han dedicado un solo minuto a pensar en estas realidades, que en altísimo grado son consecuencia del sistema económico y social; qué piensan de un sistema que, en vez de educar a las masas como cuestión fundamental para avanzar con el apoyo precisamente de la ciencia, la técnica y la cultura en la búsqueda de soluciones viables y apremiantes, gasta un millón de millones de dólares cada año en propaganda enajenante y consumista. Con lo que se gasta en uno solo de esos años para sembrar ese singular veneno, se podría alfabetizar y elevar hasta el nivel de noveno grado a todos los analfabetos y semianalfabetos del mundo en menos de diez años, y ningún niño pobre carecería de enseñanza. Sin educación y otros servicios sociales, el delito y el consumo de drogas jamás podrán reducirse y hasta casi eliminarse. Lo afirmamos desde Cuba, el país bloqueado durante 45 años, acusado y condenado no pocas veces en Ginebra por Estados Unidos y sus socios más incondicionales, que está a punto de alcanzar servicios de salud, educación y formación cultural con niveles de calidad que jamás el Occidente desarrollado y rico ha soñado siquiera, y además absolutamente gratuitos para todos los ciudadanos sin excepción alguna. □

