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Faced with more givebacks

Chrysler workers are in a fighting mood

By Martha Grevatt

While the vote is still too close to call, for the first time in 25 years thousands of Chrysler workers are rejecting a concessionary contract negotiated between management and the United Auto Workers. This development marks a shift in class consciousness and opens up new possibilities for class struggle in the plants.

Chrysler workers showed their fighting spirit Oct. 10, when Chrysler workers across the country walked off their jobs en masse at 11 a.m. Yet by evening, in what was the shortest strike in the history of the UAW, the picket signs came down. The lead story on the nightly news was the tentative agreement between the UAW and Chrysler LLC. This agreement, like the one ratified that same night by General Motors workers, promised job security.

While the workers were putting out the fires that warmed them on the picket lines, their bosses were drawing their swords.

Not wasting any time, and perhaps emboldened by the news that GM workers had ratified an agreement where they made concessions, Chrysler announced Oct. 10 that it would cut 3,500 salaried workers' jobs, almost double the 2,000 cuts announced last February. These cuts affect clerical and engineering workers as well as lower management.

Next the automaker—now a part of the Wall Street private equity firm Cerberus—said it was reducing projected vehicle production by at least 80,000 units. If these brazen, arrogant acts against a union that had just called off a strike weren't enough, Chrysler Co-Vice President Jim Press—lured from Toyota for a secret but no doubt huge amount of money—stated his intentions to drop, ahead of schedule, at least five current vehicles from production.

The final nail in the coffin of Chrysler's and UAW President Ron Gettelfinger's phony promises came with the specific details

of the proposed four-year contract. They revealed unanticipated plant closings in Michigan and possibly St. Louis. For the majority of plants and parts warehouses, there are no plans for future work beyond the current models being produced.

In this respect the agreement falls short even of the one GM workers ratified. The GM contract contained major loopholes but showed tentative work schedules extending past 2011.

When former owner DaimlerChrysler held a news conference last February to hail its misnamed "Recovery and Transformation Plan," the workers called it "the St. Valentine's Day Massacre." Now they're looking at a new round of horrors, just in time for Halloween.

The assurances of Cerberus CEO Steven Schwartzman last May—that if his firm bought Chrysler there would be no additional job cuts beyond the 13,000 announced by Daimler—proved hollow.

If Cerberus management thought that they could execute a new round of slash and burn without opposition, they miscalculated. While some locals haven't voted on the contract as of this writing, so far the contract has met widespread opposition. Out of 26 locals reporting, nine representing 16,703 workers have rejected it, some by huge margins. The 17 locals that have approved the contract represent about 11,307 or more workers.

The no vote at Chrysler had the added stimulus that the chair of the national negotiating committee and president of the Sterling Heights assembly plant local, Bill Parker, issued a well-publicized memo outlining the reasons workers should shoot down the contract.

'The enemy of solidarity'

The continued outflow of jobs isn't the only thing the contract has going against it. Many workers are horrified that their union

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THROUGHOUT EUROPE Workers demand higher wages, job security



200,000 workers march in Lisbon Oct. 18 to demand job security, no more cutbacks. See page 7.

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WWP Conference Nov. 17-18

A unique gathering with a special purpose

By Greg Butterfield

On Nov. 17 and 18, Workers World Party will hold its national conference in New York City. Entitled "Fighting Racism and War—For a Socialist Future," this will be a special gathering of activists from diverse backgrounds and communities, ferocious youth fresh to the struggle alongside committed veterans of many movements.

It will be held in the school auditorium at 127 E. 22 Street in Manhattan. Registration begins at 9 a.m. on Nov. 17 and the first panel will kick off at 10 a.m. On-site childcare is available.

Every day, activists, students and community organizers hold important meetings, demonstrations and other events that unite people in struggle against injustice.

The year 2007 has already seen some extraordinary gatherings. Take the first U.S. Social Forum, held in Atlanta from June 27 to July 1. This truly historic event brought together 10,000 anti-racists, hurricane survivors, farmworkers and domestic workers, prisoners' families, environmentalists, lesbian/gay/bi/trans activists, and fighters for women's rights in the Deep South.

This was an opportunity for people from many different communities and political viewpoints to meet, establish contacts that never before existed, and look for points of unity in the common struggle.

Another example was the recent anti-war Encampment in Washington, D.C., from Sept. 22 to 28, culminating in a militant youth-led march Sept. 29 that blocked the streets of the U.S. capital. Organized by the anti-imperialist Troops Out Now Coalition, the Encampment attracted a more focused alliance of anti-war fighters united around demands to end the war at home and abroad, immediately and with no further excuses by Democratic and Republican politicians. Those who attended agreed on the need to move "from protest to resistance."

Forum on reparations in Detroit

Monica Moorehead, managing editor of Workers World newspaper, spoke Oct. 20 in Detroit on "Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle." After the meeting Moorehead, who is a central organizer of the WW Party Nov. 17-18 national conference, signed copies of the beautiful illustrated anthology by the same name, which she had edited.

Her presentation explained the integral links between the wars abroad and the war at home, something that is not well understood by the traditional anti-war movement because racism and the national question keep the working class divided.

Moorehead's talk was illustrated by a riveting video prepared for the Common Ground Collective in New Orleans' Algiers community. The unity between Black and white volunteers working together to provide for the people as Hurricane Rita bore down is contrasted with racist violence perpetrated on Black men and gentrification. A short video tour of the lower Ninth Ward showed the current devastation and the remembrance of a survivor who lost his small child, mother and other family members in the catastrophe.

—Report and photo by Cheryl LaBash



Monica Moorehead

It included supporters of national liberation movements in Palestine, Latin America, Iraq and the Philippines, opponents of a new war against Iran, and veterans of the Black liberation movement. Anarchists, socialists, communists and other militants united for common action in the streets.

And the year's not over yet.

What makes the WWP conference Nov. 17-18 unique? It will bring together activists interested in fighting on the basis of the revolutionary theory and practice of Marxism.

What unites those coming to New York isn't only opposing the ills of capitalism—but also struggling for a socialist world based on the interests of working class and oppressed peoples, a world where the goods and services produced by common labor are equitably shared for the wellbeing of all, and where the needs of people and the planet come first.

This will be an opportunity for members, supporters, and allies who share a revolutionary vision and program of action—and those who are interested in learning more about it—to discuss a perspective for fightback in the coming year.

And what an important time for such a gathering to take place! Already some in the anti-war and other progressive movements are being sucked into the losing game of investing their hopes, efforts and money in the 2008 presidential elections and "lesser evil" politics. What is the most effective way for revolutionaries to counter this powerful dampener of struggle?

The grassroots upsurge by Black people and their allies to free the Jena 6 in rural Louisiana took the whole capitalist establishment off guard. But the criminalization of youths in Jena and throughout the U.S. continues to grow. So does the disenfranchisement of the survivors displaced by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Was the march in Jena just a fluke, or is this the beginning of a new and vibrant anti-racist struggle?

Immigrants are under fierce attack, with vicious raids on undocumented workers happening daily. Immigrants are among the most vital and vibrant sectors of the working class, as the mass outpourings of May Day 2006 showed the world so vividly. How can revolutionaries step up support for and solidarity with them, as well as with lesbian/gay/bi/trans people, women, political prisoners, and all those who are under fierce attack from the profit system?

Where is the anti-war movement going? Can it become more united, more militant, and more inclusive of the millions who oppose the deadly occupation of Iraq? And what about Iran? What are the prospects for a new imperialist adventure against that country? What can be done to fight the demonization of the Iranian government and arm the progressive movement with arguments to counter it?

These are just a few of the crucial issues that will be discussed at the WWP conference, which will include panel discussions, workshops, music and cultural performances, and other resources for revolutionary activists.

For more information, or to pre-register, visit www.workersworld.net or call (212) 627-2994. Email your questions to conference2007@workers.org. Members of the Facebook social networking site can learn more and join in discussion at www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=20419221992.

All who want to unite and fight the system are welcome.

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If you would like to know more about WWP, or to join us in these struggles, contact the branch nearest you.

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Class, race and the California wildfires

By Teresa Gutierrez

On the East Coast, an unprecedented warm October reminds us all about the crisis in climate change. It is fall, but the trees are still green, flowers are still blooming, birds still sing and, troublingly, there is no need for a jacket.

But on the West Coast, the burning fires of Southern California are a stark and painful reminder that the times they are a-changing—and not for the good.

As of this writing, almost half a million people have had to flee their homes in Southern California as a result of wildfires that started Oct. 21. An estimated 700 houses and businesses as well as 260,000 acres have been destroyed.

One person has been reported dead and more than 20 people have been injured.

The fire is being called one of the worst in California's history, a "perfect storm," prompting both Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and President George Bush to declare the area a national emergency. Schwarzenegger is deploying National Guard soldiers to help support the 6,000 firefighters who are fighting the flames.

Within two days, there were at least 14 separate fires raging throughout Southern California, covering a region from north of Los Angeles to south of the Mexican border.

More than 316 fire engines, 19 air tankers, 15 bulldozers and eight helicopters are being used to fight the infernos. Help is being requested from Northern California, Arizona and Nevada.

The Associated Press reports that the fires are so extensive that several of them could be seen from space. Due to strong winds, which are erratic and unpredictable, there is no telling where other fires will move or start up.

It remains to be seen if the fires will rival the record wildfires of 2003 that killed 22 people, destroyed more than 3,300 structures and caused more than \$2 billion in damages.

What really caused the fire?

One of the firefighters on the site stated that "strong winds, totally dry" led to perfect storm conditions.

But Mike Davis, an academic who writes prolifically about California, takes another view. His writings have been labeled as fringe leftist ranting by the right wing. However, his book, "Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster," was on the Los Angeles Times bestseller list for weeks. His views about the fires of Southern California should be noted.

Are the fires burning in Southern California, and the destruction they bring, inevitable? Or are they avoidable?

Davis documents that fires in the Southern California region of Malibu are part and parcel of California history. Spanish conquistadors could see vast blazes along the coast when they arrived.

Back then, due to a healthy respect for the earth by Indigenous people, the Native Chumash and Tongva peoples annually burned brush in that area. These fires, it turns out, were ultimately beneficial in recycling nutrients in the earth and ensuring seed germination.

It is therefore natural that this region burns. What is unnatural and avoidable is building in areas that should not be built in. But the rich have to have their ocean views, don't they?

What is unnatural is the drier climate, possibly resulting in more wildfires, as a result of capitalist polluters who have ruined the environment. And what is unnatural are the racist and class divisions

that result in the allotting of resources when disaster strikes.

Malibu, Westlake & New Orleans: lesson in racism & class oppression

Davis compares the wealthy and star-studded neighborhood of Malibu with that of Westlake, an area in Los Angeles where many immigrants and Latin@s live.

It is commonly known that August through October is California's wildfire season. It is then, Davis writes, "when Westlake and Malibu suffer a common lot: catastrophic fire."

But there the similarity stops.

Westlake, it turns out, has the "highest urban fire incidence in the nation: one of its two fire stations was inundated by an incredible 20,000 emergency calls in 1993," Davis notes. Many of the sites of these fires are in tenements and apartment hotels.

Malibu is the "wildfire capital" possibly for the world, Davis contends. A large fire in the area occurs every two and half years.

"The two species of conflagration (between Malibu and Westlake) are inverse images of each other. Defended in 1993 by the largest army of firefighters in



(U.S.) history, wealthy Malibu homeowners benefited as well from an extraordinary range of insurance, land use and disaster relief subsidies. Yet as most experts will readily concede, periodic firestorms of this magnitude are inevitable as long as residential development is tolerated in the fire ecology of the Santa Monicas."

A film executive protected his home against the current blaze with his own private firefighting team that has been on his payroll.

In Westlake, on the other hand, most of the "119 fatalities from tenement fires in the Westlake and Downtown areas might have been prevented had slumlords been

held to even minimal standards of building safety."

The differences between the growing rich and the poor, between the working class and the bourgeoisie are becoming more evident everyday.

This obscene difference in class society will result in tumultuous struggles. The victims of Katrina and Rita will unite with the immigrants of Westlake and all decent minded people will rise up to reclaim justice. What will burn to a crisp then is not Southern California but capitalism.

"Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster" is available at www.Leftbooks.com

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Economic crisis intensifies, spreads globally

By Milt Neidenberg

A full-blown economic crisis is plaguing Wall Street, still the financial center of the world. A symptom of it could be seen on Oct. 19, when the Dow Jones Industrial Average price of stocks plunged an alarming 366 points. That day was also the 30th anniversary of the 1987 stock market crash.

Not every stock market plunge results in a capitalist economic crisis but the recent volatility with unpredictable ups and downs, panic and confusion has compounded the fears of a growing number of Wall Street prime players that a recession is on the horizon.

The stock market is a representation of the conditions of capitalist production—a barometer of economic trends and development—and generalizes the state of the capitalist economy.

How many of the investors are small and how great are their losses in paper wealth remains to be seen, but it will be in the billions of dollars. The subprime mortgage crisis and the decline in the housing market have led to the worst credit crunch in years, infecting the entire financial services industry with debt and non-performing loans.

The health of U.S. transnational banks, the heartbeat of monopoly capitalism and an integral sector of the stock market, is a significant influence on the fortunes of investors who trade billions of shares daily. Recently, Citicorp, Bank of America and Wachovia reported billions in losses. They have been forced to write down the value of non-performing loans they held that were invested in subprime mortgage instruments and in the broader housing market. They have joined forces with

JPMorgan Chase in an attempt to mitigate the financial crisis, demanding that the Federal Reserve Board bail them out.

Fed Chairperson Ben Bernanke, whose public role is to protect the monetary integrity of the entire capitalist system, caved in to these demands. The Fed flooded hundreds of billions of dollars into the system, providing liquidity to the giant banking institutions to alleviate their credit crunch crisis. It also lowered its prime interest rate from 5.25 to 4.75 percent, making it easier for the banks to borrow from the government to pay down huge debts. However, a reduction of such magnitude can have other consequences, too.

The bailout only momentarily calmed the market. The slide and volatility then intensified and the dollar devaluated further. Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch, Bear Stearns and numerous other institutions that have invested in the real estate debacle continue to report losses. Pension funds, mutual funds, credit unions, insurance companies, mortgage institutions, hedge funds—all an integral part of the stock market—are also trapped in the quicksand of risk and speculation.

Crisis becomes global

The industrial sector has now caught the financial virus, which has spread abroad. On the day the DJIA plunged 366 points, the stock market reflected negative reports from three major global industrial empires—signs that the financial crisis was impacting on the broader economy.

Earnings reports from Caterpillar, Honeywell International and 3M, all elite Dow Jones industrials, failed to meet expectations.

Caterpillar is a global industrial power with 44 percent of its sales overseas. Operating in 200 countries or more, its global investments are almost three times that of its U.S. investments.

Likewise, there are more Honeywell plants in operation abroad than in the U.S., providing technology, manufacturing and aerospace services in 95 countries.

Even though Caterpillar posted a 21 percent gain in quarterly profits, its stock went down 5.3 percent because of a lower profit forecast for the year. Net income at Honeywell climbed 14 percent, but the stock still fell nearly 4 percent. Shares of 3M plunged 8.6 percent on lowered revenue expectations; the company said it would be forced to cut prices. (New York Times, Oct. 20)

These three global corporate giants lowered their yearly earnings expectations even though they all had posted previous quarterly profits. The stock market reflects a deep concern that a downward trend in the strategic industrial sector will pull down the entire capitalist economy.

Against this backdrop of trouble, representatives of the G-7 countries—the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan—met in Washington on Oct. 20-21. G-7 finance ministers and central bankers were looking to the United States to calm the volatile markets. Funds and banks around the world have been hit hard as a result of bond purchases and risk-backed bad loans, often bundled into financial instruments called collateralized debt obligations. Recently, the European Central Bank warned that the global credit squeeze could jeopardize the Eurozone—13 countries that have adopted the euro as their currency—as well as world economic prospects.

The G-7 conclave came at a time when oil was hovering around \$90 a barrel, gold reached a record high of \$760 an ounce, and the dollar hit record lows against the euro. The euro has risen in value to \$1.43, making U.S. goods and services more attractive to 320 million West Europeans.

Tensions are rising between the U.S. and its European capitalist allies. In response to the devaluated dollar, the European Central Bank, as well as Japan and China, have begun dumping U.S. Treasury bonds, heightening fears of a fresh slide in the dollar and a spike in interest rates on U.S. bonds as the Treasury tries to attract investors. This will further weaken the dollar and stimulate inflation.

In the U.S., a slowing economy coupled with inflation will hit the workers and the oppressed hard, washing out their living standards. Those who have jobs will suffer a decline in the value of their labor power, which reflects wages and benefits expressed in devaluating dollars. Burdened by the rising costs of food, energy, shelter and health care, they will drown in credit card debt, foreclosures and unemployment.

Worker-consumers make up 70 percent of the GDP. They are already in the grip of recession.

Add the Iraq and Afghanistan quagmire, the threat that the Pentagon will attack Iran and Bush's threat that this can become a third world war and it is clear that the capitalist system has become more crisis prone. No matter the dimensions of the crisis, it will intensify the struggle of the working class and oppressed at home while changing the character of the international situation. □

Faced with givebacks, Chrysler workers are in a fighting mood

Continued from page 1

would negotiate a two-tier wage scale. They can't support language that has new hires in "non-core" jobs hiring in at \$10 less an hour than current workers doing the same work. Nor can Chrysler rank-and-file workers back the decision to end traditional defined pensions for all future workers. If this dangerous trend towards market-dependent 401ks engulfs the UAW, no worker's pension is safe.

The definition of "non-core" defies logic. Every alleged "non-core" worker is as essential to the auto industry as the "traditional" worker. All of the UAW jobs at 19 parts distribution centers are now called "non-core." Chrysler Transport drivers are all non-core. Fork lift drivers who move parts around parts and assembly plants or load them into rail cars are non-core. Some plants are completely non-core, including a new axle plant in Marysville, Mich. How can an axle on a car not be a core component?

The Marysville plant replaces Detroit Axle, slated for closure. Despite intense lobbying from UAW Vice President General Holyfield, who once worked in Detroit Axel, the local there rejected the contract.

During an informational meeting in Twinsburg, Ohio, a worker remarked that "There was such tremendous solidarity on the picket lines. Two-tier is the enemy of solidarity." Her remarks were well-received by the stamping plant local that



Outside the Chrysler Warren Stamping Plant in Warren, Mich., Oct. 10.

was among the first to vote no.

VEBA Las Vegas?

The third feature that turned so many against the contract was the creation of a union-administered Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association to fund retiree health care. The VEBA, which the rank-and-file autoworker group Soldiers of Solidarity renamed Vandalize Employee Benefits Again, lifts \$19 billion of debt off Chrysler's shoulders for a one-time cost of

\$10 billion.

Gettelfinger, with his entourage of Wall Street wizards, has insisted the fund will be solvent for 80 years and that benefits would be protected even if Chrysler went bankrupt.

Past experience demonstrates that such fantastic claims are unfounded. The VEBA negotiated at Caterpillar by the UAW, for example, is now broke. An article in the Warren, Ohio, Tribune-Chronicle sheds new light on the dangers of VEBA.

"Earl Thomas, 82, the chairman of the VEBA trustee committee formed out of Copperweld Steel Co.'s first bankruptcy, expects its 12-year-old program to last only a few more years, not the projected 30 years, before the well runs dry," the article explains.

"The trustees say the program's problem stems from being shortchanged in its funding by the defunct CSC Ltd., which emerged in 1995 from Copperweld's bankruptcy, unexpected costs from CSC's bankruptcy and health care costs that rose faster than the inflation rate."

Surely another Chrysler bankruptcy could take the VEBA down with it. Workers are rightfully leery. The other outrage is that workers are expected to pay for this VEBA—which is saving the company billions of dollars—by giving up cost of living allowance raises and letting Chrysler deduct their savings when calculating workers' profit-sharing bonuses.

Regardless of how the ratification vote finally goes, it is clear that there will be no business as usual for the UAW rank and file. The business unionism of Gettelfinger and company cannot continue. The heavy vote against the contract is just the first but necessary step in a new direction. A regroupment is inevitable, and a turn towards class struggle is coming.

Martha Grevatt has worked the Chrysler Twinsburg stamping plant for 20 years.

E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.org

Labor conference tackles war & racism

By Joan Marquardt and John Parker
San Francisco

More than 100 local, national and international union workers, community and anti-war activists and progressive political organizations met on Oct. 20 in San Francisco at the "Labor Conference to Stop the War" at the ILWU Local 10 union hall.

The conference initiators stated: "San Francisco ILWU Longshore Local 10 and Ship Clerks' Local 34, carrying on the militant tradition of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, have organized solidarity actions in defense of workers' struggles and against oppression. It is our intent that this conference will spark workers to take the anti-war struggle beyond street protests to industrial actions, including strikes."

They went on to say: "The bold actions at the start of the Iraq war by railroad workers in Scotland, Italy and Japan were important steps, but they lacked leadership and coordination with other transport unions. Australian longshoremen and French dockers before them helped bring an end to the Vietnam War by organizing. These exemplary actions have shown all workers the way forward to stop the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Speakers included representatives from the largely African-American-led ILWU Local 10, including Clarence Thomas; Tim Paulson, San Francisco Labor Council; Betty Olson-Jones and Bob Mandel, Oakland Education Association; and Cindy Sheehan, Gold Star Families and mother of a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq.

International speakers included Takumi Shimizu, Doro-Chiba Rail Union (Japan); Bob Crow, Rail, Maritime & Transport Union (Britain); and Jeremy Corbyn, Labor Party Member of Parliament (Britain). These speakers, and many others, all spoke against the current U.S.-led war and for labor solidarity in the task of ending the war.

To better understand and strategize how to end the war, several well-planned and attended workshops took place. They included "Class Struggle & the War," "The Middle East, the War for Oil & Empire," "Soldiers & Vets Against the War" and

"War & the Destruction of Civil Liberties."

The "Racism, Class & the War at Home" workshop was led by a diverse panel including Clarence Thomas, who chaired the panel; C.C. Campbell-Rock, a Hurricane Katrina survivor and now an activist around the rebuilding of New Orleans; Cristina Gutierrez, Barrio Unido and an immigrant rights activist; Gerald Sanders, Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal; John Parker, Troops Out Now Coalition and March 25th Coalition for Immigrant Rights; Jason Ruffin, one of two African-American members of ILWU Local 10 who were assaulted and arrested in the Aug. 23 "increased homeland security" racial profiling incident on the docks in Sacramento by both private security guards and police; and a taped message

from Mumia Abu-Jamal expressing solidarity with these two ILWU members.

Campbell-Rock pointed out the need to fund the rebuilding of New Orleans instead of funding the war. Cristina Gutierrez expressed the solidarity of the Latin@ communities with the African-American communities. She pointed out the special oppression of African-Americans, whose ancestors were slaves.

Sanders noted the shameful history of early U.S. labor organizations that excluded African-American workers and the progressive struggle that finally opened unions to all workers.

Parker spoke about the great strengthening potential for the anti-war movement once it unites with the struggles of the most oppressed, especially immigrant and African-American workers in this

country, and thereby builds its working class character. Parker spoke of how the weeklong anti-war encampments in both Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., and the Sept. 29 marches were a step in that direction.

Ruffin explained his anger at being beaten and arrested, saying he "wasn't raised to take a thing like that lying down," and he plans to raise his children to fight back too.

During the ending plenary, retired ILWU Local 10 member Leo Robinson recounted the success of the longshore workers refusing to handle South African cargo during the years of racist apartheid. Also, an enthusiastic discussion took place on a draft resolution based on the collective experiences and ideas from the conference participants. □

'Link the war at home with the war abroad'

Clarence Thomas, a former ILWU Local 10 official, Central Labor Council of Alameda County member and initiator of the Million Worker March Movement, gave closing remarks during the morning plenary on Oct. 20 at the "Labor Conference to Stop the War" in San Francisco. Below are edited remarks by Thomas who spoke on the need to build unity and to challenge all that is holding the working class back by fighting divisions created by racism.

In 1934 longshore workers went against the shock troops of capitalism, the ship owners, and maintained they would defend socialism because workers wanted to have the right to a union hall like you're sitting in today. I want to talk a little about a very important question that has not been discussed yet—the question of racism and white supremacy in America. Racism is in the DNA of so-called democracy in this country. Anytime this country wages war on people of color in Iraq and Afghanistan and other places it's deep in the subconscious and creates chauvinism that allows for apartheid justice and that's

why we have the Jena 6 ...

We must understand that one of the major reasons we cannot end this war in Iraq is because we have to begin to link up the issue of racism in this country. White workers cannot believe they are part of another working class simply because of white-skin privilege, brothers and sisters. And that's why our Harry Bridges stood out from every other labor leader in this country around the question of race because he understood that discrimination is a tool of the bosses.

We need to take action at the point of production and we have to link the war at home with the war abroad. They go together. Oppression of people of color is directly related to imperialism. What more do we need to see than what we witnessed in New Orleans. ... In order to move forward we must make those links and go back to our respective organizations and must take action at the point of produc-



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

Clarence Thomas celebrates Rosa Parks day.

tion to call the attention of the Democrats and Republicans, the Bush administration and the multinational corporations that we in the working class aren't going to take it. ...

Remember the lessons of the civil rights movement that taught us that the right to vote wasn't won by voting but by organizing in our own name and that's exactly what the working class must do today to end this war. ...The bottom line is that we must make a date to shut this country down. □

Why Iraqis fight to free their country

Meeting Resistance, a film by Steve Connors and Sally Bingham, opening at selected theaters in the U.S. on Oct. 20. In Arabic with English subtitles. See www.meetingresistance.com.

By John Catalinotto

For the last four and a half years, the most powerful military in the world has been stalemated in Iraq. Somehow, without a base or funding in another country, without jungles or mountain ranges to hide in, a home-grown resistance has brought the Pentagon to its knees. How could this happen?

See "Meeting Resistance" and you'll know how to answer that question.

Steve Connors and Sally Bingham started work on their film in August of 2003, just as the Iraqi resistance was beginning to pick up steam and be recognized in U.S. government and media reports.

Their technique, and the strength of the film, was to let the Iraqis taking part in the resistance tell the story. Naturally any



WWW.MEETINGRESISTANCE.COM

directors will choose material and present it in a way they consider most effective. But in this film you are hardly aware of their presence.

The nine Iraqis and one youthful Syrian volunteer fighter who tell their stories over a period of 10 months are uninterrupted by the filmmakers. They represent different sectors of Iraqi society—teachers, soldiers, religious people, homemakers. One dynamic force unites them: the desire to drive out the U.S. occupiers.

Some were staunch opponents of Saddam Hussein, but even those who hated him hated even more seeing the foreign occupier vilify the former Iraqi

leader. Their feelings of Iraqi nationalism—the nationalism of a country now oppressed by the U.S. occupiers—and of being Muslim motivated their struggle. Not all were religious when their resistance work started, but it was obvious that Islam provided an ideology that not only approved resistance but made it a condition of a righteous life.

One woman, the wife of a soldier, tells of the combination of fear and pride she feels as she delivers messages and weapons to the resistance fighters.

No known resistance member is shown clearly enough to be identified. The filmmakers also avoided covering battles as

such, avoiding anything that would compromise their basic role, to let the Iraqis tell their stories. All the fighters are very human and very determined.

If this film is not distributed widely in commercial theaters, the anti-war



movement here in the U.S. should make sure it is seen. Anti-war activists should see it to move their struggle up another level. Soldiers and National Guard members who are questioning the war should see exactly what they will be up against; many would undoubtedly decide that if they were Iraqi, they too would join the resistance.

Only those whose thinking is distorted by the arrogance of U.S. imperialist ideology could come away from "Meeting Resistance" and think that Washington can impose its will on the Iraqi people. □

S-CHIP denied, struggle continues for health care

By LeiLani Dowell

Some 400 people marched through the streets of New York on Oct. 17 to demand “Health care for all!” Participants included many youths, health care workers and advocates. Sharon Black, an organizer with the Troops Out Now Coalition who attended the march, reports, “The demo was great; but the trip back and forth with our signs [reading ‘Healthcare, not warfare’] was just as good; on the subways and street we were greeted with a lot of ‘yes.’”

Just days later, the House of Representatives failed to override President Bush’s veto of a bill to provide health insurance coverage for 10 million children in the United States. The bill would have provided \$35 billion to expand the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP).

The program provides health care for children whose families have incomes that are too high to be covered by Medicaid, but not high enough to afford private health insurance.

The House Democrats are now saying that they will reintroduce the bill with minor changes. Nancy Pelosi says the goal of health care for 10 million children is “not negotiable.” Yet it has become clear to many that, as with the issue of stopping war funding, the Democrats do not have the political will to push this through.

Bush and the Republicans claimed their disapproval was based on three factors: that people who could afford health



Protest marches from NYC’s Bryant Park to Hillary Clinton’s office.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

insurance would, instead of paying for it, rely on the government program; that the program could be used by undocumented immigrants; and that an increase in funding for the program would be a step in the direction of “socialized medicine.”

However, the Bush administration, famous for its tax cuts benefiting the rich, has never had a problem giving a handout to those that need it the least. The assumption that people “cheat” the government by not paying for health care when they can afford it is inherently anti-worker,

and ignores the massive outcry throughout the country from the millions in the U.S. who currently don’t have insurance, and the many who are dying because of that lack.

Falling in line with the anti-immigrant rhetoric surrounding the presidential candidacies; Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton announced Oct. 18 that her proposed “universal” health care plan would not cover undocumented immigrants. (Associated Press, Oct. 19)

Meanwhile, socialized medicine—that is, medicine that is adequate, free and available for everyone—is completely within economic range in the world’s richest country, were it not for the allocation

of funds for imperialist plunder. A flyer for an Oct. 27 anti-war march, organized by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice, points out: “The war in Iraq has already cost Michigan taxpayers over \$12 billion and will cost another \$4 billion next year alone. The \$12 billion could be used instead to ... pay the health care costs of 7,181,636 children for one year.”

At the time of this writing, the National Priorities Project reports that the money that has already been spent on the occupation of Iraq could have insured 276,962,389 children for one year. (costofwar.com)

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Students demand jobs & education



The protest demands were jobs for all young people; quality education must be a constitutional right; power for young people in our schools; and to Governor O’Malley: pay the 800 million dollars owed to Baltimore schools.

A couple of years ago a circuit court judge, Joseph Kaplan, ordered that Baltimore’s public schools were owed more than 800 million dollars because

the state had not lived up to its obligation in funding Baltimore city schools.

Dwayne Jackson, a high school student from Connections Academy, told this reporter the reason why he was protesting: “I am here because I am angry over the fact that the government has billions of dollars for wars such as Iraq but doesn’t have money for our schools. Sometimes we don’t even have toilet paper in our bathrooms.”

Karen Jones, a parent, commended the students for their activism and believes there is a new generation of young people ready to organize for a better world.

The organizers of the protest promised to be back and keep marching and protesting until their demands are met by the mayor, school board and governor.

—Report and photos by Steven Ceci

On Oct. 16 more than 300 students, parents and supporters marched and protested for better schools and against the lack of jobs for young people in Baltimore. The march, organized by the Baltimore Algebra Project, started at City Hall and then snaked through downtown Baltimore.

The BAP is a student group that helps tutor other fellow students in the city. The last couple of years the group has evolved to not only tutor fellow students but to take an active role in advocating and fighting for better schools and opportunities for young people.

The march was very militant and spirited. Students chanted: “No Education! No Life! Whose streets? Our Streets! We deserve a fair fight! Education is our right.”

Cleveland march against police brutality

More than 100 angry, impassioned people marched along Cleveland’s Luke Easter Park and rallied in the parking lot of the Cleveland Police 4th District building against police brutality on Oct. 22.

While family members told of the killings of their loved ones, they turned and looked right up at the very police, watching from the rooftop balcony, who represent the source of their losses.

One speaker was the grandmother of Brandon McCloud, who at 15 was shot multiple times in his bedroom closet in her house. Other family members spoke of Jena 6-type scenarios of long prison sentences for young men of color innocent

of any wrongdoing.

Others had died in police custody in that very building. At the end of the rally, the crowd marched into the police lobby, first silently, then singing, chanting, and praying. Everyone there vowed to build a movement for justice.

—Report and photos by Sharon Danann



Europe's workers fight neo-liberal attack

1 million-plus take to streets

By G. Dunkel and John Catalinotto

Unions in Portugal, France, Germany and Italy held uncoordinated strikes and mass demonstrations from Oct. 18 to 20. All were aimed at countering a relentless attack from the imperialist ruling class that has cut wages and benefits and eliminated job security for tens of millions of workers.

Where mass workers' parties played a strong role organizing the struggle, as the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) did in Portugal, the goal of the protest remained clear and the mobilization on the highest level. Even in countries where the leadership was lacking, the mass rallies, marches and strikes, all defending workers' rights, showed a mass combative spirit among the workers.

The protests coincided with a summit meeting of the European Union in Lisbon where heads of government of 26 countries signed a new treaty. This treaty replaces the constitution that had already been rejected by referenda in France and the Netherlands in 2005. Such a treaty would impose common institutions on the member states that would rapidly erode social and economic gains workers had made since 1945 regarding wages, benefits and job security. It would also demand greater militarization of all EU members.

When the European Central Bank puts limits on any member country's deficit spending, this exerts pressure to cut government spending for pensions, health care, wages and spending on education.

West European workers at present have more guarantees than U.S. workers, not to mention workers in Eastern Europe and in Asia who are now part of the globalized economy. For example, 85 percent of French workers have a legally enforceable right to their job compared to only about 15 percent in the United States.

In Portugal and Italy the governments are led by nominally "left" forces and in France and Germany by center-right parties. Both groupings are imposing anti-worker policies, that is, neo-liberal policies that allow government intervention only on behalf of the capitalist monopolies.

PORTUGAL: Largest protest in more than 20 years

Led by the major labor confederation, the CGTP-IN, more than 200,000 workers came to Lisbon on Oct. 18 to hold what union leaders called the "country's biggest demonstration in 20 years." The local target was the nominally "Socialist" Prime Minister Jose Socrates, whom the PCP describes as leading a sharper and more widespread attack on workers and democratic rights than any government since the fascist Salazar regime was overthrown in 1974.

A major target of the protest is so-called flexicurity. The bosses present flexicurity as a tradeoff with workers providing more flexible work hours in return for unemployment insurance. In practice, just as in the recent deals with GM and Chrysler, it provides more leeway for management to arrange work hours and dismiss workers.

"Flexicurity is, above all, for this government, a slogan to impose liberalization and a lack of job protection for many years," Jose Carvalho da Silva of the CGTP union said in a speech at the rally.

The Portuguese workers have maintained a high level of class consciousness and combativity even in the period since the overthrow of the USSR. The PCP, a mass workers' party, which still has a proclaimed goal of a socialist society, is play-



200,000 workers march in Lisbon.

PHOTO: AVANTE

ing a key role in the struggle to defend workers' rights.

More clearly than in the other countries, the workers in Portugal have expressed that their enemy is the bourgeois regime, even if it is administered by a "Socialist" premier, and the imperialist European ruling class along with that in the United States. Their allies are the other European unions and the struggles in the oppressed countries against U.S.-led wars.

FRANCE: Rail workers shut down traffic

Some 754 of the normal 800 long-distance trains never moved in France on Oct. 18, nor did nine out of 10 trains on the Paris Metro. Suburban and regional

trains in the Paris area were severely limited, with four out of five shut down by government accounts.

Twenty-nine French cities, in addition to Paris, lost public transportation, with Marseilles, France's second largest city, nearly completely shut down. Besides workers in transportation, some teachers, school aids and workers in electricity generation and gas distribution—generally public employees—also struck.

Some 300,000 people marched to support the rail workers' pension rights, including 50,000 in Marseilles and 25,000 in Paris. They carried signs and banners reading, "Together we can win," "Solidarity" and "Struggle to win." Young workers told the French newspaper Le

Monde, "We are fighting for our elders' rights in order to defend our future."

French workers had told rightist President Nicolas Sarkozy that if the government tried to take away the right of railroad workers with outside jobs to retire with a full pension at age 50, they would react. "He's a thief robbing me," one worker told the media. "My pension will go from 65 percent of my final wages to 46 percent."

The strike continued through Oct. 21, especially on the suburban trains and the Paris Metro or subway. The French government is proclaiming that it will negotiate with the unions, but won't back down on removing the pension language that lets some workers retire at 50, which Sarkozy claims costs the government 1.6 billion euros.

The October issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique* points out that Sarkozy has given the wealthy elite of France tax breaks worth 13 billion euros a year and wants to increase them to 15 billion euros.

GERMANY: Train conductors disrupt work day

German train conductors also went out on a one-day strike Oct. 18 for the third time in two weeks. About half the local and regional trains in Germany didn't run. A court order prohibits strikes on long-distance trains.

In Eastern Germany, 80 percent of the trains stopped, more than in heavily populated and industrialized western areas. Traffic jams clogged most German cities, slowing the economy, as Germany has the highest percentage of train users in the world.

The conductors are asking for recognition of their union and a 30-percent wage hike, since their wages are far below comparable workers elsewhere in Europe. Since Deutsche Bahn, the public company that owns the railroads, does not want to recognize the union and is only offering 10 percent, these one-day strikes will likely continue. Günther Kinscher, one of the union leaders, told German television, "Our membership is asking us to authorize an unlimited strike."

ITALY: 800,000 workers demand job security

As in Portugal, the major issue in Italy is job security. Now young workers—some

Continued on page 11

Marchers demand 'Tear down the wall!'

A march of about 60 people made its way through downtown Nogales, Ariz., to the U.S.-Mexican border on Oct. 20. The marchers demanded an end to the construction of the border wall, as well as the demilitarization of the U.S.-Mexico border and the removal of the National Guard and racist "Minute Klan" from the border towns.

Shoppers and motorists in this Latin@ city stopped to show their support and many joined the march as it passed through the port of entry into Mexico, where the marchers converged with demonstrators in Mexico to hold a rally at the border wall.

Speakers denounced the brutal U.S. immigration policies and the ICE raids that terrorize communities. The indigenous dance group Danza Mexica Cuauhtemoc performed for the crowd and also said that the "immigration problem" started in 1492 with Christopher Columbus. Another speaker said what



an insult it is that Latin@s are asked for their papers. "The color of my skin is my papers. I am indigenous. You have stolen my land. I do not need papers."

A ceremony was held in which the names of the 237 bodies recovered from the Arizona desert in the year ending Sept. 30 were read. After each name the crowd shouted "Presente!" and at the end of the reading 237 crosses, each bearing a victim's name, were attached to the border

wall. For each body that is recovered, an estimated five to 10 others are not.

This demonstration was one of many opposing the border wall happening in various border cities during the month of October. For more information on the immigrant rights struggle in Tucson and on the Arizona border, see www.derechoshumanosaz.net and may1st.iactucson.org.

—Report and photo by Paul Teitelbaum

Toronto meeting

Set to 'break the silence' on Cuban 5

By Cheryl LaBash

"Breaking the Silence: A solidarity conference for the Cuban Five" will take place on Nov. 9 and 10 in Toronto. Jointly organized by the Canadian Network on Cuba, La table de concertation de solidarité Québec-Cuba and the National Network on Cuba (U.S.), this event could not be held within U.S. borders. The brutal 47-year blockade of the island neighbor south of Florida restricts Cuban representatives from entering the U.S.

The Cuban Five—Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, René González, Gerardo Hernández, and Fernando González—are heroic men falsely imprisoned in the U.S. since Sept. 12, 1998. For peacefully monitoring the actions of paramilitaries who prepare terrorist attacks on Cuba from Florida, these men were branded in the media as spies, tried in Miami in what Federal appellate court judges called "a perfect storm of prejudice," and sentenced to a total of four life terms and 75 years in prison.

Since 1959 more than 3,200 Cubans have been killed as a result of terrorist attacks organized from Miami, including the very first midair bombing of a passenger plane, Cubana 455, as it took off from

Barbados on Oct. 6, 1976. Seventy-three passengers and crew were killed, but the planner, an ex-CIA operative, Luis Posada Carriles, walks free in Miami today. Venezuela's request to extradite Posada to stand trial for actions in Venezuela leading to the Cubana bombing has been ignored by the U.S. State Dept.

Although much hard work has been done inside the U.S. over the past nine years by the National Committee to Free the Five and many others, the Cuban Five are still better known around the rest of the world than they are here. They are loved and supported throughout Cuba, where the entire population has resolved not to rest until "the Five" are returned home.

At the upcoming Toronto conference, Cuban Five family members, activists and prominent figures in the struggle for constitutional and human rights will present their experiences and ideas including discussion of outreach steps and coordination between Quebec, Canada and the U.S., and linking the movement to other movements to further "break the silence." Attorneys who are fighting on the appeals in federal court and others will update the legal situation. Notables like author Alice Walker, former U.S. attorney general

and international human rights attorney, Ramsey Clark, professor and author Isaac Saney, representatives from Cuba and more will participate.

The prosecution and continued imprisonment of the Cuban Five is part of the war by U.S. imperialism to deny the Cuban people their right to choose their own path. The terror bombing of Cuban tourist hotels and civilian aircraft, chemical and biological warfare, the economic blockade, the travel ban to prevent U.S. citizens from seeing the reality of socialism in Cuba, the theft of well-known Cuban brand names for rum, cigars and coffee, the extraterritorial sanctions to prevent businesses from other countries from exchange with Cuba are all intended to impose starvation and hardship on Cuba from the outside to try to weaken the deep support for the socialist revolutionary process.

In Cuba's report to the United Nations General Assembly in July 2007, Cuba points out this starvation policy was directly proposed in a 1960 State Dept. discussion memo declassified in 1991. For fifteen years the U.N. General Assembly has voted nearly unanimously to end the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

The observations by the Cuban Five

enabled Cuba to block attacks before lives were lost. Such losses would create concerns for safety among potential tourists and reduce hard-currency income from tourism needed to buy essentials on the foreign market.

But the continued imprisonment of the Cuban Five, who peacefully prevented terror attacks, is daily evidence that the much touted "war on terror" emanating from Washington is self-serving and false. It's an excuse to pursue economic and military domination of the world, to destroy Iraq, invade Afghanistan, install military bases in Africa and curtail civil liberties in the U.S.

The conference in Toronto will equip and organize an expanded effort to free these five brothers. On Friday, Nov. 9, registration begins at 10 a.m. All events, including a press conference, plenary session and public meeting will be held at the Toronto City Hall on Nathan Phillips Square, 100 Queen St. W. (at Bay). On Nov. 10 all events will be at the Steelworkers' Hall, 25 Cecil St. The three sponsoring organizations will hold separate meetings on Nov. 11, when the National Network on Cuba (U.S.) will hold elections for three co-chairs. □

Serpa conference:

Imperialist decay demands revolutionary response

By John Catalinotto
Serpa, Portugal

Some 36 Marxist activists, writers and thinkers from 15 countries gathered Oct. 5, 6 and 7 in the town of Serpa in the Alentejo region of Portugal to contribute to a special kind of conference. They dedicated their contributions to examining the challenges facing the working-class movement in the post-Soviet period, as the world system of capitalism and imperialism experiences a deep, broad and perhaps terminal crisis.

The team that maintains the Portuguese-language website odiario.info organized the conference with the help of the municipality of Serpa and the magazine *Vertice*.

Unlike some gatherings of academic Marxists—even those few who apply Marx's teachings instead of the many who try to revise his most important work—this one was made up mostly of political activists, some of them leaders of communist parties. They supported the struggle of the oppressed nations against imperialism; most looked to the working class as the revolutionary subject of history and to the Russian revolutionary leader Lenin for an approach toward organizing a struggle for state power.

The Alentejo was a center of anti-fascist struggle during the decades before Portugal's 1974 revolution. In 1962 hundreds of thousands of agricultural workers challenged the fascist Salazar regime with strikes for the eight-hour day. Though the region's economy has completely changed in mere decades, the traditions of class struggle and anti-imperialist struggle remain and this region is still a stronghold of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP).

Many of the hundreds of people attending the sessions of the conference were from the Alentejo or had done some of their political work there. It seemed like everyone over 50 years of age had either



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO
Reinaldo Carcanholo (Brazil), Remy Herrera (France) and Leila Ghanem (Lebanon) at Serpa, Portugal conference.

worked clandestinely, been in the fascist prisons, broken out of them, or all three. Such an audience encouraged rigor and discipline on the part of the speakers.

What is to be done?

The conference's title was "Civilization or Barbarism." Many of the speakers—some of whom were economists—dissected the serious crises faced by the capitalist world economy and their impact on the working class. Others attacked U.S. imperialism's aggressive wars and the European ruling classes that joined these adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan, or who supported the Israeli regime in Palestine.

The conference's guiding theme, however, was how to promote a socialist revolution to overcome the misery heaped on the mass of humanity by a globalized imperialist system in crisis. A concurrent theme was how also to overcome the setback to socialist ideology that followed the material loss to the world workers' movement of the Soviet Union and the East European socialist countries of 1989-1991.

Speakers came from India, Egypt and Lebanon. Most came from Portugal itself, from France and the other Latin-language countries in Europe and from across Latin America, including Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil, and one from the United States. The Latin American speakers reflected both the opportunities arising from the election of progressive leaders—especially in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador—and also the challenges faced by the revolutionary movements in those countries.

Marcos Domich, international secretary of the Communist Party of Bolivia, warned of the threat of counter-revolution in his country: "The ruling classes and the owners of property never abandon their power and privileges without putting up a battle."

Isabel Monal, editor of the Cuban journal "Marx Ahora" (Marx Now), underlined the vital importance of the emergence of Indigenous leadership of many of the struggles in Latin America, pointing to Evo Morales in Bolivia.

Cuba had a special place in the hearts and minds of the participants, as was

shown in the conference's closing statement: "Demand an end to the blockade imposed on Cuba by the USA and salute the Cuban people for their example of heroic and victorious resistance to imperialism."

Lebanese environmental editor Leila Ghanem discussed the role of the Islam-based movements Hezbollah and Hamas in combating imperialism and Zionism in Lebanon and Palestine. This explanation was needed to promote solidarity for these struggles among progressive movements in Europe and North America.

Angeles Maestro from Spain exposed the horror imperialist globalization inflicts on countries like Nigeria, forcing a migration that is as deadly as the "middle passage" of the slave trade. One of every three immigrants drowns on the perilous trip to an uncertain future in Europe.

Other speakers exposed the threat to the workers in the imperialist centers. These workers now face a relentless attack on their wages, benefits and way of life. Social democratic parties, which at one time promoted benefits, are now imposing these pro-capitalist neo-liberal policies.

The Portuguese communist journalist Miguel Urbano Rodrigues, a key organizer of the conference, ended his contribution with the following call to struggle: "To pass therefore from the defensive to the offensive is a requirement of our time, imposed upon the forces and parties for which the alternative to [imperialist] barbarism is socialism."

Workers World managing editor John Catalinotto presented a paper entitled "Imperialist Globalization Creates Its Own Gravediggers" and spoke on the class struggle within the U.S. at a satellite meeting in nearby Beja, Portugal, and at a meeting in Madrid, Spain. See odiario.info for the conference statement and for the contributions in the original language and in Portuguese. Email: jcat@workers.org

MYANMAR

Washington's geopolitics and the Straits of Malacca

By Sara Flounders

Attempting to understand George W. Bush's concern for the people of Myanmar means looking beyond his statements at the U.N. General Assembly that "Americans are outraged by the situation in Burma" and that attempting to impose a new round of economic sanctions is because he "only desires peaceful change in Burma."

How is it possible for the Bush administration to be on the same side as a popular or progressive struggle, while threatening the planet with World War III and conducting a criminal war of occupation that has cost more than a million Iraqi lives?

What has received little attention in the U.S. corporate media is Myanmar's geopolitical position and its rich resources. A U.S. base in Myanmar is considered vital for control of the most strategically important sea lanes in the Pacific.

Remember that the U.S. government actively supports, arms and defends dictatorships like those in nearby Thailand and Pakistan. U.S. imperialism's record overthrowing popular and democratic governments in Iran, Congo, Chile, Guyana and many other countries shows that Washington has never promoted democratic change except as a cover for direct intervention.

Straits of Malacca—chokepoint of Asia

Eighty percent of the oil shipped to China's booming economy passes through the Straits of Malacca, the shortest sea route for oil coming from West Africa and the Persian Gulf to the South China Seas. The oil is also essential for economies and industries of Japan, Malaysia, South Korea and the other East Asian countries.

The southern tip of Myanmar is strategically situated on the western entrance to the Straits of Malacca. This funnel shaped waterway, which narrows to 1.5 miles between Indonesia and Malaysia, links the Indian and Pacific Ocean. More than half of the oil tankers in the world ply this route.

According to F. William Engdahl, author of "A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order" and the Web site www.engdahl.oilgeopolitics.net, more than 12 million barrels in oil

supertankers pass through this narrow passage daily.

Engdahl explains that the Pentagon has been trying to militarize this region since Sept. 11, 2001. The Pentagon claims this is essential for defense against terrorist attacks and pirates. It would also give the Pentagon unilateral control of the main route for China's energy supply.

In November 2003, Xinhua News Agency quoted President Hu Jintao warning that China needed to develop a strategy because some big countries were attempting "to control the transportation channel at Malacca."

The Wall Street Journal of Oct. 7, 2005, explained China's growing apprehension. "The U.S. is the only power with sufficient naval forces to enforce a blockade of the 900-kilometer waterway that borders Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia."

According to Energy Bulletin, Oct. 3, the Chinese government is so concerned about China's vulnerability to U.S. control or blockade of the straits that it is now building a strategic China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline 2,300 kilometers (1,460 miles) across Myanmar, from Myanmar's deep water port at Sittwe in the Bay of Bengal to Kunming in China's Yunnan Province, where an oil refinery will be built. This would allow China to bypass the Malacca Straits entirely.

It is noteworthy that the sanctions against Myanmar that the U.S. tried to push through the U.N. Security Council would block "new" construction of a transit pipeline. The vast Chevron and Total S.A. oil corporation's investments, however, would be free of all U.N. and EU sanctions or restrictions because their agreements with Myanmar are "grandfathered" in.

Adm. Muller on surrounding China

On Oct. 18, the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Mullen, described the Pentagon's plans to look beyond their deteriorating position in Iraq and Afghanistan to "refocus the military's attention beyond the current wars to prepare for other challenges, especially along the Pacific rim and in Africa."

Mullen, speaking at a news conference with Defense Secretary Robert Gates at

the Pentagon, also described the need to be prepared for high-intensity wars against "larger adversaries." Mullen said, "I recognize that the military budget is higher now than it has ever been" but "I would see that in the future as an absolute floor."

The Pentagon's new strategy of "forward positioning" calls for establishing sites where U.S. forces can store equipment and from which they can come and go as needed.

Fearful of their own angry populations and the anti-U.S. climate, all the countries of the region initially denied the Pentagon basing rights.

Hiding behind 'humanitarian relief'

The U.S. Pacific Fleet moved back into South Asia by providing emergency relief during the Dec. 26, 2004 tsunami near Indonesia.

Using the cover of tsunami relief, the U.S. Navy also moved back into the giant U-Tapao base on the Gulf of Siam in Thailand. This had been a major front-line U.S. base during the Vietnam War, from which the Pentagon launched 80 percent of its air strikes against North Vietnam.

After the tsunami emergency passed, the elected government in Thailand wanted the U.S. Navy to leave. A U.S.-supported military coup in September 2006 overthrew the elected government, abolished the parliament, revoked the constitution and established a military dictatorship. This was considered a major setback for democracy in the region.

Unlike the response of the corporate media to the current military crackdown and censorship in Myanmar, there was barely a mention of the coup or the total news shutdown in Thailand. Armed soldiers stood guard in TV newsrooms, and more than 400 community radio stations in the north and northeast of Thailand were closed. The dictatorship even blocked BBC, CNN and other Western news broadcasts.

There were no complaints from the Bush administration then and no calls for international sanctions. The U.S. State Department merely expressed the hope that elections would again be organized in the near future.



One of the dictatorship's first acts was to allow the U.S. Navy use of the U-Tapao Base.

At the same time, the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group NINE (CSG-9) moved into Banda Aceh, Indonesia's Sultan Iskandar Muda Air Force Base at the entrance of the Straits of Malacca, across from Myanmar. Navy ships arrived to provide tsunami relief. The U.S. military said that they were unable to predict when they will be able to withdraw their "resources" from the region.

The U.S. Navy Seventh Fleet's USS Gary made the first U.S. visit to impoverished and underdeveloped Cambodia in more than 30 years, landing at the Ream Naval Base near Sihanoukville. The U.S. Navy is expanding the base so Ream can receive more warships and navy personnel. A U.S. intelligence base is being built on the Cambodian island of Koh Tang in the Gulf of Thailand.

Although the military dictatorship in Myanmar has complied with many imperialist demands for greater access to its once nationalized resources, it is an unstable repressive regime that understands that there is a 150-year history of opposition to colonialism, and especially to British imperialism, among Myanmar's population. Fearful for its own survival, the regime has been unwilling to grant U.S. military bases. This has frustrated the Pentagon's plans for the region.

Even though Chevron and French oil corporation Total S.A. have reaped enormous profits from the Yadana gas concessions in Myanmar, they are interested in helping to overturn the regime if they could secure even greater access and more lucrative terms.

Next: The people of Myanmar and the history of the popular struggle.

Iraqi resistance sends message to U.S. GIs

Abu Muhammed, who signed the message below, is a spokesperson for both the post-invasion Ba'ath Party in Iraq and for one of the coalitions that make up the Iraqi resistance, and whose formation was announced Oct. 2. Workers World published an interview in English with Abu Muhammed in our Oct. 25 issue; it appears in Spanish in this issue. There are other coalitions in the Iraqi resistance that also group thousands of resistance fighters. This new message recognizes the growing dissent among U.S. troops regarding the occupation. WW has learned of a similar message disseminated by the organization known as the 1920 Brigades, which is in a different coalition.

To all U.S. Army officers and service women and men in Iraq:

You must be aware now that all that your president and his aides told you before pushing you into the Iraqi inferno proved untrue.

Iraq had no links whatsoever to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and terrorists.

Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq had not harmed U.S. citizens and interests.

When you came as invaders, the Iraqi population did not receive you with flowers and candy but with bullets and bombs. Your fight in Iraq has not been an easy and short one but a lingering bloody and costly nightmare. Many of your mates were sent back to their loved ones in coffins or in wheelchairs or with psychological illnesses and disturbances.

Now what are you fighting for?

Why are you making these sacrifices and facing all these hardships?

To keep Bush, Cheney, Rice and the war party in office?

To help big U.S.-based companies such as Halliburton (headed previously by your Vice President Richard Cheney) make billions of dollars in profits?

To keep fighting until you will be thrown out of Iraq in a humiliating defeat?

We, Iraqi mujahideen (freedom fighters), have no quarrel with Americans. We have no hatred against Americans. But we will keep fighting you, as invaders and occupiers of our land, until we crush your army and the mercenaries. We will soon force a repeat of the humiliating U.S. Saigon Embassy desperate escape scene. This is why we ask you:

End your participation in this shameful

lost war.

Put down your gun and leave.

Do not shoot at Iraqi freedom fighters or Iraqi population.

Speak up against this shameful bloody war.

Reject orders of your criminal commanders to kill Iraqis.

Run away for your life.

We, Iraqi mujahideen will soon close in on your unit. There is no way out for you but surrender to us.

We promise to save your life and help you go home to your loved ones.

Abu Muhammed
Political representative of the
Ba'ath Party and the Iraqi National,
Pan-Arab and Islamic Front
Baghdad, Iraq
October 2007

Jurors see through 'war on terror'

Corporate news outlets, from the New York Times to the Associated Press, are calling the U.S. government's failure on Oct. 22 to win a conviction in the trial against the Holy Land Foundation one in a series of "missteps" and "setbacks" in terrorism convictions.

The Foundation, described by the Times as "once the nation's largest Islamic charity," was charged with giving money to Hamas—the democratically elected representative of the Palestinian people that was labeled a "terrorist" organization by the United States. The jury trial, held in Dallas, ended in one mistrial and several acquittals.

What is most likely becoming clear to the juries who rule on these cases is that they are nothing but cooked-up government persecution and an attempt to whip up anti-Arab sentiment in order to justify the supposed "war on terror," which is really a colonial war and occupation against the people of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Some of the cases being brought up to justify this war, including the Holy Land case, involve evidence that is decades old—begging the question of why the case is being tried now, if not for political reasons. Andrew C. McCarthy, who led the 1995 prosecution against Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman—defended by attorney Lynne Stewart—told the Times, "There are some of these cases that we did not push ... because we were in a different mindset before 9/11."

One of the jurors in the Holy Land trial, William Neal, described some of the courtroom profiling. He said prosecutors

"danced around the wire transfers by showing us videos of little kids in bomb belts and people singing about Hamas, things that didn't directly relate to the case." (New York Times, Oct. 24)

Meanwhile, the U.S. government is still attempting to punish former college professor Sami Al-Arian after his well-publicized acquittal in eight of the charges against him for financially supporting the liberation movement in Palestine—another "supporting terrorism" case. Al-Arian pled guilty on one of the lesser charges to avoid a retrial and has been serving a 57-month prison sentence.

Despite all the government persecution, Al-Arian continued to stand to his principles. When a prosecutor called him to testify in a grand jury investigation going after Islamic charities, Al-Arian refused. He is now being held in contempt of court; on Oct. 17 a judge again refused to lift the contempt citation. He could remain imprisoned until next spring.

The Times reported that some scholars and former prosecutors cite a "lack of selectivity and judgment" in the bringing of these cases. If a real people's court were to be held, only one organization would be brought to trial, along with its accomplices.

Let that case go to trial, and it wouldn't take long to convict the biggest terrorist in the world—the tiny group at the top of the U.S. government. Its accomplices—from known terrorists Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch to the very heads of state sitting in the White House—would be locked up and the key thrown away. □

NATO

Making enemies 'out of area'

By Heather Cottin

Built up as an anti-Soviet military pact, the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance had no defined purpose after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. But under Washington's guidance, NATO has now expanded to be a worldwide NATO, tool of imperialist conquest "out of area." The first step was to use NATO in Yugoslavia starting in 1992.

Yugoslavia was the last remaining socialist country in Eastern Europe, rich in resources and with a skilled, trained working class. The U.S. and the European imperialist countries began a campaign of demonization and destabilization of the Yugoslav state, replete with false charges of genocide and mass rape, that lasted for a decade.

On March 24, 1999, with U.S. President Bill Clinton leading the way, NATO opened a brutal 78-day campaign of "humanitarian bombing" of Yugoslavia. The physical destruction of what was left of a united Yugoslavia was followed by a U.S.-NATO destabilization program that used George Soros' "Open Society" as well as the National Endowment for Democracy, the CIA and other government assets.

The campaign ended with a coup that toppled the government of Slobodan Milosevic in September 2000 and ended with the sovereign nation of Yugoslavia broken into pieces. NATO kidnapped, incarcerated and tried Milosevic on phony war-crimes charges. As he was successfully finishing his defense against these charges, Milosevic finally died under suspicious circumstances in a prison near The Hague once used by Nazi occupiers of the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, U.S., German and other imperialist firms privatized and grabbed up the most profitable parts of the Serbian economy.

Then NATO went to work with a vengeance on Eastern Europe and the former USSR. As one British foreign policymaker said, Yugoslavia was "the foot in the door." (Sean Gervasi, "Why is NATO in Yugoslavia," *NATO in the Balkans*, IAC). NATO expanded its influence into Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia, all formerly part of the socialist camp. And last March the U.S. Senate approved NATO membership for Georgia and the Ukraine, even if NATO itself has not.

The Western NATO countries under U.S. leadership have expanded NATO to put the resources and people of all of the new countries of the former USSR, Eastern Europe and Asia within their reach.

Most European and Canadian workers are wary of NATO's military expansionism and people in Canada and Quebec will be demonstrating Oct. 27 against the Canadian military adventure in Afghanistan. They are not happy to supply their youths as cannon fodder, nor to pay for this militarism. In the U.S. the anti-war forces are more concerned with direct U.S. intervention—in places like Iraq and Afghanistan—than with NATO expansion as such.

NATO's new best friends in Eastern Europe

The Wars against Afghanistan and Iraq are part of NATO strategy. Opposition to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq makes recruitment for soldiers from Western European NATO countries like England and the Netherlands difficult, as well as in Canada.

NATO managers look to the new puppet states in Eastern Europe and the former USSR for support. The governments of Slovakia and Poland have volunteered their children to fight and die for NATO expansionism, and Georgia's lackey-in-waiting have volunteered their youth.

As in the rest of the former socialist republics, unemployment, violent cuts in social services, low wages and an impoverished peasantry make poor Eastern European youth available as can-

non fodder for the deadly Afghan and Iraq wars.

The Associated Press on Oct. 21 reported that former CIA director and current U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates visited Kiev in the Ukraine to attend meetings of the Southeast European Defense Ministers, a 12-nation group created in 1996, at Washington's initiative, to reinforce "security cooperation in the volatile Balkans and to facilitate cooperation with NATO."

In the Czech Republic the majority of the people, also fearful of US/NATO expansion in the region, have opposed the proposed plan to place an advanced radar in their country as part of a proposed "European arm of the U.S. missile defense system that is now based mainly in Alaska and California."

Gates was meeting in Kiev with defense ministers from Croatia, Albania and Macedonia "to discuss progress they have made toward satisfying NATO requirements for earning an invitation to join the alliance." (AP, Oct. 21)

Meanwhile, Polish soldiers are currently stationed in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Kosovo and Bosnia. In Afghanistan the Polish contingent numbers 1,200, and NATO is recruiting Bulgarian warships to patrol the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. (Focus News Agency, Bulgaria, Oct. 19)

NATO powers in Europe and North America met in Norway during the week of Oct. 22 to form a strategic military partnership which would stretch from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. (Focus News, Oct. 22)

And Israel is enthusiastically welcoming NATO inclusion. Since last year, the Israeli government has been in a bilateral cooperation program between Israel and NATO, the first for a country outside of Europe. (Jerusalem Post, Oct. 21)

Resisting NATO expansion

In July, people in and around the Ukrainian Black Sea port of Odessa pitched tents for days, protesting against military NATO war games. (Voice of Russia, July 9).

Massive opposition plagues the NATO stooges in their capitals. Only 16 percent of the Ukrainian population supports NATO membership (Herald Tribune, July 10, 2006) and open resistance to Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's government throughout that country makes these two nations shaky allies for the U.S. and the Western European imperial powers.

Russia has expressly opposed the "financial and political engagement of the U.S. in Georgia and the Ukraine or the planned radar stations in East Europe," according to Professor Alexander Krylov of the University of Bremen. (Islamic Republic News Agency, Oct. 20).

People in the Czech Republic and Poland have demonstrated again and again in opinion polls and protests against their countries' involvement in NATO. A conference on Oct. 20, which included activists from Europe and North America, opposed to the deployment of a U.S. radar station in the Czech Republic. The deputy speaker of the Czech Parliament's lower house, Voitech Filipp, said an overwhelming majority of Czechs opposed the radar station and demanded a national referendum on the issue. (Voice of Russia, Oct. 20)

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has called NATO an "illegitimate alliance. ... We made a deal with the USA—we break off the Warsaw Pact and you dissolve NATO." (Makfax, Macedonia, July 20). The U.S. reneged on the deal. A U.S./NATO demonization campaign has targeted Lukashenko because he has refused to privatize his economy and is still providing jobs and social services in the former USSR republic.

Part II to come: Brzezinski's worst nightmare. Thanks to the work of Rick Rozoff, administrator of the listserv: STOPNATO, for making much of this research available.



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Colombia's workers, peasants need int'l solidarity

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Why should Colombia be high on the list of priorities of progressive movements in the United States?

Colombia is facing the most serious political crisis in its recent history. International solidarity can have an enormous impact in helping the Colombian progressive and social movements advance in their quest for a peaceful and just country. This solidarity will not only benefit Colombia but the whole Latin American region.

It is no accident that Plan Colombia evolved into the "Andean Regional Initiative," a plan by the U.S. government to quash the growing resistance of the Latin American peoples to the neoliberalism that Washington imposes under the cover of "bringing democracy."

What is the nature of Colombia's crisis?

A scandal, known as parapolitics, is being uncovered that is shaking the very foundations of the state. Parapolitics is the murderous and intimate working association between the deadly paramilitaries and government officials, members of Congress, mayors, governors and others from the parties and groups close to Colombian President Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

The paramilitaries themselves claim to be affiliated with 35 percent of the Colombian Congress. The U.S.-backed Colombian police and army, as well as U.S.-owned transnational corporations like Occidental Petroleum, Coca-Cola, Chiquita and Drummond, are also involved with the paramilitaries.

In 2006, compromising information revealing many of these links was found in a computer seized from paramilitary leader Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, alias Jorge 40. As a result, more than a dozen Congress members and other officials from the government are in jail and more than a hundred are being investigated, with the number and accusations growing daily.

Close collaborators of Uribe have been indicted—among them, the brother and father of his young protégé, Foreign Minister Maria Consuelo Araujo. As a result of public outcry, Araujo was forced to resign despite Uribe's refusal to fire her from his administration.

But most damaging of all for Uribe was the arrest of his close ally Jorge Noguera, who had been director of the Department of Administrative Security (DAS) or secret police. Noguera was charged with having given a "hit list" of trade unionists, human



From left, Mundo Obrero editor Berta Joubert-Ceci, Alice Loaiza from the International Peace Observatory and Workers World editor-in-chief Deirdre Griswold explain the current crisis in Colombia at a Workers World forum held at

the Solidarity Center in New York on Oct. 19. Joubert-Ceci and Griswold spoke the following day on the same subject in Boston. Podcasts of the New York meeting can be found at www.workers.org.

—Report and photos by John Catalinotto

rights advocates and other social activists to the paramilitaries. Several people named in the list have been murdered.

The circle is drawing closer and closer to Uribe. Recently the Supreme Court, the judicial entity in charge of the parapolitical case, ordered the investigation of Uribe's cousin, Sen. Mario Uribe. Francisco Santos, Uribe's vice president, is also under suspicion of having been associated with paramilitaries, particularly with Carlos Castaño, founder of the paramilitary group AUC.

Television presenter Virginia Vallejo, mistress of the now-deceased Medellín cartel head Pablo Escobar, said publicly last month that she had met Uribe through Escobar. Vallejo, who has recently published the book "Amando a Pablo, Odiando a Escobar" (Loving Pablo, Hating Escobar), said in an interview with the Spanish newspaper El País that Escobar "adored" Uribe who, as head of Civil Aeronautics in 1980-1982, had "given dozens of licenses for landing runways and hundreds for planes and helicopters which helped build all the infrastructure for the drug traffic."

This crisis has made it impossible for Uribe's backers abroad to pretend ignorance any longer. Even the New York Times, which has reported very little about the horrendous violence against Colombia's workers and campesinos, in an Oct. 8 editorial recommended that the pending Free Trade Agreement with Colombia be delayed because "President Álvaro Uribe and his government have not done enough to bring to justice the paramilitary thugs—and their politi-

cal backers—responsible for widespread human rights violations."

The nature of these relations between the paramilitary institutions and the government is not just an "infiltration" by drug-trafficking paramilitaries into the government. It is the pervasive paramilitarization of the country's institutions.

Paramilitaries are not merely "death squads." They control a significant sector of the Colombian economy. They own health clinics, benefiting from the privatization frenzy pushed by the IMF and World Bank and implemented by Uribe, which has affected the most important basic services for the population. They hold vast territories stolen from small farmers, who had been terrorized into leaving their homes by paramilitary massacres. They control the multi-billion-dollar drug trade. They work together with the transnational corporations to clear land for the benefit of foreign capital.

People's movement

But this paramilitary government is being challenged by the popular movement. A growing social movement representing broad sectors of society—labor, Afro Colombians, Indigenous, peasants, displaced people, women and youth—has been mobilizing to expose and oppose the murderous complicity of government-paramilitary-transnational corporations.

Recently, from Oct. 10-12, the National Agrarian and Popular Mobilization held

actions in different parts of the country. One of the organizers, the Peasant Association of the Valley of the Cimitarra River (ACVC), had been threatened and repressed by the Colombian government even before the mobilization started. Three of ACVC's leaders were detained on Sept. 29 by the DAS and are still in prison.

Nevertheless, the rest of the organization courageously went forward with the action; thousands of peasants demonstrated in different regions, standing up to violent state repression that killed several activists.

International solidarity needed

The role of progressives worldwide has been crucial many times in preventing more murders and saving the lives of social and labor activists in Colombia. These are the class sisters and brothers of working people everywhere. As the labor slogan says, "An injury to one is an injury to all."

Solidarity from individuals and organizations in the United States is very important. Letters of protest to the governments of Colombia and the United States, messages of solidarity to the mass organizations, press releases and delegations to Colombia are among the many ways that needed solidarity can be shown.

For more information, contact Colombia@action-mail.org. □

Europe's workers fight neo-liberal attack

Continued from page 7

4 million or one-sixth of the workforce—have short-term job contracts and thus no secure positions. This was the driving issue for the 800,000 workers, unionists, youths and women who jammed Rome with banners and red flags on Oct. 21, demanding that the "center-left" government of Romano Prodi guarantee better rights for workers.

The demonstrators were ready to struggle. What complicated the protest was that its main organizers, which included the Rifoundation Communist Party and the Party of the Communists, both separate successors to the once-massive Italian Communist Party, are also both supporters of the Prodi government

and hold minister posts in it. Leaders of these parties insisted that the government itself was not a target of the protest. Prodi called on his ministers to stay away from the demonstration, and they did.

The coalition that includes these left parties is not only administering a capitalist state, it is dominated by pro-capitalist politicians and is carrying out an attack on workers' rights and benefits. It is also participating in imperialist interventions in Lebanon and Afghanistan, and has asked for an 11 percent increase in the military budget. The strong Oct. 20 action shows that a large section of the Italian working class refuses to accept this collaboration with the "lesser-evil" Prodi regime. □

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La resistencia iraquí demanda reconocimiento y el retiro de EEUU

John Catalinotto, editor del periódico Workers World/Mundo Obrero, participó en entrevistas en Madrid, España el pasado 10 de octubre con Abu Muhammed, vocero del Partido Socialista Árabe Ba'ath en Irak y del Comando Supremo del Frente de Lucha [Jihad] y Liberación en Irak (FSL siglas en inglés), cuya formación fue anunciada el 2 de octubre. Este frente es una de las principales coaliciones o frentes de organizaciones que participan en la Resistencia Nacional Iraquí (RNI) en contra de la ocupación de los Estados Unidos.

Esta fue la primera de las entrevistas a un representante oficial de una coalición importante de la resistencia iraquí fuera del Medio Oriente. Él llegó a España como invitado del grupo CEOSI (Campaña Estatal contra la Ocupación y por la Soberanía de Irak, iraksolidaridad.org) y sostuvo reuniones con medios de comunicación, políticos e instituciones.

Existen otras coaliciones que también agrupan a miles de iraquíes en la resistencia. Aunque éstas comparten muchas de las mismas metas del Frente de Lucha y Liberación, en especial la de sacar a los Estados Unidos, estos otros frentes pueden tener un análisis diferente de su fuerza, del papel exacto de Irán, del papel exacto del Partido Ba'ath, etc. Existe la posibilidad de una continua y creciente cooperación entre estos frentes.

Estos frentes sin embargo, no consideran al Ejército de Muqtada al-Sadr Mahdi como parte de la resistencia, aunque Estados Unidos trata a este ejército de 100.000 soldados como una fuerza hostil.

Abu Muhammed quien se graduó de doctor en medicina en los Estados Unidos, fue profesor universitario en Bagdad durante el gobierno de Saddam Hussein. Ya que sus observaciones han sido traducidas dos veces del árabe al español y del español al inglés, es mejor parafrasearlas para la información de los lectores en vez de tratarlas como citas exactas. [Nota del Editorial: Este artículo fue escrito en inglés originalmente]

Declaraciones de Abu Muhammed
Nosotros en el Comando Supremo del Jihad y Libertad en Irak somos luchadores de la resistencia en contra de la ocupación por los Estados Unidos. Nosotros queremos poner en claro que no había terroristas en Irak antes de la ocupación. No había al-Qaeda en Irak antes de la ocupación por los Estados Unidos. Condenamos los ataques de al-Qaeda en contra de los civiles.

Izat Ibrahim al-Duri quien fuera general en el ejército iraquí y vicepresidente

en el último gobierno iraquí antes de la invasión, y quien es secretario general del Partido Socialista Ba'ath en Irak, es jefe del Comando Supremo de los 22 grupos y partidos nacionalistas e islámicos que se han unido en un solo frente.

Refiriéndose al Partido Socialista Árabe Ba'ath en Irak, dijo que ni era ni es un partido dictatorial. Creemos en el nacionalismo. La situación que existía en Irak en las últimas décadas, los desafíos que el partido enfrentaba, conllevaron a la formación de un partido centralizado bajo Saddam Hussein. Desde la ocupación, el partido ha evolucionado de ser un partido en el poder a ser un partido en la resistencia. Creemos en el pluralismo y en una nueva visión democrática.

Nuestro partido cometió errores en el pasado. Bajo el régimen de Saddam Hussein se hicieron cosas buenas y malas. El partido no está encerrado en los viejos modos. Ya no somos un partido centralizado ni una dictadura. Después de la liberación continuaremos siendo pluralistas. Participaremos con otros partidos en las elecciones.

Sobre el intento de dividir a Irak, la verdad es que Irak está actualmente viviendo bajo una ocupación militar y bajo aquellos que apoyan la ocupación. La ocupación y sus defensores son partidos políticos que tienen milicias compuestas de sunitas, chiítas, y curdos. Estos partidos tienen escuadrones de muerte. Algunos cooperan con Irán. Nosotros en la resistencia representamos más de un 80 por ciento de los iraquíes de todas partes de Irak. En una encuesta reciente del periódico USA Today, la mayoría de los iraquíes apoya la resistencia y está en contra de la ocupación y favorece a un Irak democrático y pluralista. El sistema del régimen de un solo partido pertenece al pasado.

Nosotros en la resistencia armada y no armada somos la única vía hacia la independencia y la estabilidad de Irak. Seguiremos resistiendo hasta la derrota de los EEUU o hasta que los EEUU acepte una retirada. Solo aceptaremos la negociación si EEUU reconoce los derechos de los iraquíes. De lo contrario, seguiremos con la resistencia.

Hubo más de millón y medio de iraquíes muertos durante el período de las sanciones [1990 hasta 2003] y adicionalmente, más de un millón de iraquíes han sido matados desde la invasión. En el lado de los EEUU, los 3700 muertos reportados son nada más que los miembros de la Marina. No incluye a los mercenarios, y hay tantos mercenarios en Irak como tropas estadounidenses. Los mercenarios están combatiendo más que las tropas regulares en Faluya, Samara, y en otras ciudades.

El Pentágono ha estimado que ha habido un total de 54.000 acciones en contra de las tropas de los EEUU por parte de la

resistencia. Si calculamos por lo menos un muerto por cada dos de estas acciones, significarían 27.000 muertos. Esta cifra incluye a tropas regulares estadounidenses y mercenarios. Actualmente la resistencia está lanzando 177 operaciones cada día.

La mayoría de los iraquíes en el país está luchando o apoyando a quienes están luchando. No hay montañas ni bosques en Irak, y no recibimos ayuda de países vecinos. Los iraquíes han sorprendido al mundo con su compromiso de seguir luchando a pesar de todas las dificultades y destrucción.

Mensaje de la resistencia Iraquí a la población de los EEUU

Quisiera enviar un mensaje de la resistencia al pueblo de los Estados Unidos.

Bush ha humillado al pueblo de los EEUU con su invasión y ocupación de Irak. Él ha humillado también a las Fuerzas Armadas de los EEUU. Es una mancha vergonzosa en la historia de los EEUU el ocupar un país que vivía en paz y era estable y que era un país en vías de desarrollo.

Bush y su administración mintieron al pueblo de los EEUU, diciendo mentira tras mentira sobre las causas de la ocupación de Irak y lo que acontecía dentro de Irak. También miente acerca de la cantidad de muertos entre las tropas de los EEUU.

Sobre las supuestas causas para la guerra, primero EEUU dijo que Saddam Hussein tenía una dictadura y que poseía armas nucleares y químicas, las llamadas armas de destrucción masiva, y que además Saddam Hussein tenía relaciones con al-Qaeda. Ahora los líderes de los EEUU han abandonado este alegato. Han reconocido que estas razones eran falsas y que nadie puede demostrar que existía una relación entre al-Qaeda y Saddam Hussein. Nadie encontró armas de destrucción masiva en Irak.

De hecho, si la administración de Bush realmente hubiese creído que Irak tenía armas de destrucción masiva, no hubiera invadido a Irak.

Puesto que la invasión estuvo basada en estas mentiras y los líderes estadounidenses sabían que mentaban, ello significa que el gobierno de los EEUU es responsable de todas las consecuencias de la invasión y ocupación de Irak. Esto incluye la existencia de al-Qaeda en Irak, puesto que no había tal organización en Irak antes de la invasión y nadie en Irak había oído hablar de al-Qaeda.

Hay muchos resultados negativos de la invasión estadounidense: la interferencia de Irán en Irak; la lucha sectaria en conformidad con la agenda política; las milicias y los escuadrones de muerte que pertenecen a los partidos que cooperan con la ocupación o que pertenecen al gobierno. Todos estos resultados conducen a una condición extremadamente mala en Irak, al igual que a la carencia de servicios como son los servicios sociales, la salud y el agua. La matanza en masa del pueblo y su encarcelamiento sin causa, los robos de las riquezas de Irak, todo esto fue

causado por la ocupación de Irak, y EEUU es el responsable.

La resistencia comenzó su desarrollo en los primeros días de la ocupación, creciendo al principio gradualmente día a día hasta que aumentó cuantitativa y cualitativamente, y ahora son todos los iraquíes de todos los diversos grupos nacionales, religiosos, de las sectas, curdos y árabes, sunitas y chiítas, cristianos, turcomanos, etc.; todos iraquíes. Según USA Today y CNN, el 80 por ciento de todos los iraquíes apoya la resistencia.

La resistencia está luchando contra el ejército de EEUU y matando a los soldados estadounidenses en Irak, no porque son gente de los EEUU, sino porque están ocupando a Irak.

Programa de la resistencia

La política de la resistencia es liberar a Irak. Luego formarán un consejo temporero compuesto por los diversos grupos y partidos políticos que han rechazado la ocupación. Esto incluye a todos los que se han salido del proceso político organizado por la ocupación y ahora están resistiendo. Este consejo temporero seleccionará un gobierno transitorio que gobernará por dos años. También establecerá una constitución nacional. En ese momento iniciará una ley para que los partidos presenten sus candidatos. Ésta es una nueva visión del Partido Socialista Árabe Ba'ath y de la resistencia.

El proyecto y la estrategia de la resistencia es que EEUU y sus aliados deben reconocer los derechos de Irak y del pueblo iraquí. Éstos incluyen:

- Reconocimiento de la resistencia nacional de Irak como el representante militar y político del pueblo iraquí.
- Retirada total e incondicional de Irak.
- Cancelación de todas las leyes y estructuras que fueron pasadas bajo la ocupación.
- Liberación de todos los prisioneros de los EEUU y del gobierno.
- Compensación al estado y al pueblo de Irak.
- Cese de las invasiones de hogares y el acoso al pueblo.

Si los derechos de los iraquíes son reconocidos y EEUU está listo a implementarlos, representantes de la resistencia nacional iraquí estarán listos a sentarse con los EEUU directamente para poner las pautas en lugar para la retirada del ejército estadounidense y llevar a cabo una discusión sobre la colocación de bases en las fronteras con Irán para prevenir una invasión, y para lograr un acuerdo de tener buenas relaciones con todos los países ya sean vecinos o estén dispersos alrededor del mundo.

De lo contrario, la resistencia continuará por generaciones, a pesar de las pérdidas. No habrá estabilidad en Irak hasta que haya una derrota grande del ejército de los EEUU. La administración estadounidense sabe muy bien lo que significaría tal derrota, y cuáles serían los graves resultados. □

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