

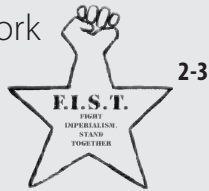
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Another outrage in New Orleans

Stop demolition of public housing

By Monica Moorehead

In what can only be viewed as another racist outrage against Hurricane Katrina survivors—especially those who are still displaced two years after the collapse of the levees—the Bush administration has passed a law calling for the demolition of 5,000 public housing units in New Orleans. They are now scheduled to be demolished on Nov. 19.

Many activists see the destruction of perfectly sound, affordable housing as another indication that the federal government is working hand-in-hand with the big real estate developers and some local and state officials to systematically push out the majority working-class, African-American population—making way for more luxury housing and condominiums for rich, affluent whites.

Along with the real threat of demolition, other developments related to this racist gentrification conspiracy include the privatization of schools, which has led to the massive layoffs of thousands of public school teachers; the lack of health care, especially for the poor; an alarming increase in the homicide rate in the Black community; and more police brutality.

The greatest devastation during Katrina took place in the Lower Ninth Ward, where the majority Black families lost their homes to flooding. To this day these families have been denied insurance coverage and governmental assistance to rebuild.

Progressive forces have called for a national day of protest against this demolition on Nov. 13 in a number of cities, especially where Katrina survivors have relocated. The New Orleans' Public Housing and Right of Return Movement stated in a recent

press release, "We oppose these plans not only because they are a clear violation of Human Rights but also for the corruption involved at every step."

The statement goes on to say: "This corruption includes local officials' ties to the federal government's Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Jimmie Thorns, a businessman and close friend of Judge Ivan LeMelle, the federal judge that approved demolition, recently received a sweetheart \$500,000 appraisal consulting contract from the HUD-controlled local housing authority."

Since Katrina hit, the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) and HUD have only reopened 1,600 public housing units. According to HANO's records, HUD has approved plans to demolish four major housing developments: Lafitte, St. Bernard, B.W. Cooper and CJ Peete. HUD and HANO have leased the soon-to-be-empty lots to private developers for 99 years to build mixed housing, "mixed" meaning luxury and low-income housing together.

The current 4,600-plus public housing units in these four areas alone will be reduced to less than 750 units—an astounding 82 percent decline, according to HUD. The cost of redevelopment is estimated at \$762 million, which does not include any current housing subsidies for low income families. Those subsidies come to about \$1,000 per family per month, or \$100 million so far.

Although the demolition is set for Nov. 19, there is a legal challenge to push this date to Nov. 28 to allow more time for activists from around the country to travel to New Orleans and participate in direct protests against this blatant injustice. □



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

The New York Solidarity Coalition with Katrina & Rita Survivors held an emergency press conference, rally and march Nov. 13 against the planned demolition of thousands of public housing units in New Orleans scheduled for Nov. 19. The New York protest was part of a national call to action against the on-going violation of human rights that Katrina survivors continue to suffer at the hand of the Bush administration. Speaking before the press is Joetta Chestnut, a Katrina survivor who now resides in New York.

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ITHACA, N.Y.

Student mobilization challenges racism

By Sophie Herman
Ithaca, N.Y.

Thanks in large part to a spontaneous Oct. 10 high school student walkout, the Ithaca, N.Y., school board voted unanimously on Oct. 23 to rescind its challenge of the state's human rights law. Students chanted outside the administrative offices at Ithaca High School Oct. 8 to protest the way the Board of Education has dealt with recent racial incidents. Around 50 students attended the protest, which lasted about six hours.

It all started two years ago when an African-American student in Ithaca, the home of Cornell University, suffered racial harassment, threats and physical abuse in her seventh-grade year. For example, one day she was told by white students on her school bus that there was a gun with her name on it; another day a white student held up a sign that said, "KKK I hate n—rs," as she was getting off the bus.

Frustrated with the assistant principal's inaction, the Black student's mother, Amelia Kearney, sent an e-mail to each member of the board of education, but received no reply from any of the board's nine members. She also contacted the local police. The racist harassers were arrested and had a restraining order placed on them. But the school, ignoring the restraining order, placed Kearney's daughter in the same class with one of the harassers the following year.

Finally Kearney approached the state's Division of Human Rights, which determined there was probable cause of racism, and brought suit against the Ithaca City School District on Kearney's behalf.

But in late September, the ICSD obtained a temporary restraining order to halt the legal process, which had been scheduled to begin Oct. 1. The district argued that because of student privacy laws, the Division of Human Rights should not have jurisdiction over public education.

If this challenge had succeeded, public school students across the state of New York—in particular, students of color and LGBT students—would have no recourse to the state Division of Human Rights.

A public outcry ensued. During a lunchtime rally in front of the Board of Education office on Oct. 1, demonstrators stormed the office and staged a spontaneous sit-in, demanding a dialogue with the superintendent, Judith Pastel. She eventually agreed to talk with the demonstrators, on condition that the dialog take place outside.

Building on the momentum, community members and high school students voiced their outrage at a Board of Education meeting on Oct. 9. A motion was then made by the sole African-American member of the board, Seth Peacock, for the district to withdraw its human rights challenge and allow the Kearney hearing to take place. The board voted 5 to 3 to postpone a vote on Peacock's motion, and then attempted to turn to other matters. The crowd objected vociferously, took to the stage and shut down the meeting.

On the morning of Oct. 10, a small group of irate Ithaca High School students refused to attend classes. They staged an impromptu march through the school and the board office next door, swelling their ranks as they protested. The principal, Joe Wilson, promptly locked the demonstrators out of the school building and locked the rest of the students in their classrooms.

Wilson then sent the district's sole African-American administrator, Assistant Superintendent Leslie Myers, to talk to the students. She tried the "divide and conquer" tactic by inviting the students to send a "delegation" to sit down and talk with her, but the students would have none of it. They insisted that if she wanted to dialog, she would have to dialog with all of them.

Myers eventually agreed and the students aired their grievances, citing systemic racism in the Ithaca schools, with the Kearney case being just the tip of the iceberg. They gave numerous examples of white students and Black students receiving different punishments for the same infraction, with a white student often receiving a two-day suspension, or no suspension, and a Black student receiving a two-week, four-week, or even a six-week suspension.

This double standard helps to explain why only half of Ithaca's students of color graduate from high school.

Principal Wilson eventually showed up at the meeting and, under pressure from the students, agreed to hold an open forum where the student body and the community could learn about racism in the ICSD. He promised to hold the forum within seven school days.

Demonstrators returned to class, but made it clear over the next week that they meant to hold Wilson to his promise. They distributed "Seven Countdown to Equity" flyers and wore a designated color each day to represent an aspect of their struggle.

In the ensuing week, Pastel and Wilson tried to use "racial tensions" and "safety concerns" as a smoke-screen to distract the community from student grievances. Wilson did not keep his word about holding an open forum. On the sixth day, Oct. 18, he held two closed meetings, one for downtown students of color and one for rural, white students, and denied entrance to parents and community members.

On the weekend of Oct. 20-21, the district called in the New York State Center for School Safety and the Department of Justice to bolster the local police presence in the high school. District administrators spent the weekend harassing students and parents with phone calls to prevent students from holding another rally.

But the students' voices had been heard loud and clear by the Board of Education. On Oct. 23, before a crowd of 200 people, the board voted unanimously to accept Seth Peacock's motion to rescind the human rights challenge and allow the Kearney case to be heard.

After the revote, according to the Ithaca Journal, "Peacock thanked Lambda Legal, a legal advocacy group that focuses on gay rights, for alerting the board that its challenge would remove the only effective legal protection for LGBT students. 'I want to thank Lambda for their involvement in this case,' Peacock said. 'Their letter, I think, allowed many of us to look at this issue differently.'"

Building on this victory, the movement for equity in Ithaca is continuing to call for the ouster of Pastel and Wilson and an apology from the district to Amelia Kearney and her daughter. Students and parents want to see more ethnic studies courses at the high school—currently there is only one; a clear policy for dealing with racist acts in school and on school buses; and equitable and positive disciplinary methods, as an alternative to the draconian suspensions of students of color. □

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Columbia University

Student hunger strike against racist gentrification, attacks

By Larry Hales

On Nov. 7, five students at Columbia University began a hunger strike to force the hand of school administrators. The students did so in a show of solidarity in the struggle against racism.

The youths wanted to show solidarity to oppressed people in Harlem, who are being forced out of their homes due to gentrification and face a greater assault as Columbia attempts to expand. The expansion will squeeze out 5,000 residents of Harlem, the quintessential historically Black neighborhood in the country.

In addition, the students want a more inclusive curriculum, something that accounts for the histories of people other than those from Europe, and for swifter action to be taken against those responsible for the many racist incidents that have been popping up all over the campus.

The rising racist incidents include a noose hung on the door of a Black professor, a swastika, anti-Arab slurs, and the attacks against Iranian President Ahmadinejad during his visit to the school. Yet the university is slow in response and appears callous.

At a Nov. 10 rally the students revealed their statement "Why We Strike," which partly reads: "We are on hunger strike because we want change and because we believe that change is worth sacrifice. ... There has been tremendous unrest on campus this semester, these past few

years, this past decade. And people here feel psychically hurt by Columbia's indifference to our heartache, to our struggle, to our rumbling need for a better university. With luck, Columbia will see the starvation of our bodies as a bellwether of our growing desperation on this campus. It's a shame that Columbia was not more alarmed when we said our minds, hearts and spirits were starving, too."

The students, some of whom are youths of color, say that they intend to fast as long as it takes and are willing to go beyond "Thanksgiving."

TUCSON, ARIZ.

Migra out of our schools!

By Paul Teitelbaum
Tucson, Ariz.

On Nov. 6, nearly 100 high school students walked out of their classes and marched to the Tucson Police Station to demand that the Tucson Unified School District and the Tucson Police Department stop bringing Border Patrol agents into the schools. The students marched nearly five miles chanting, "Si se puede" and "We are students, not criminals." Many carried signs that read "Migra out of our schools!"

In highlighting gentrification, the youths are putting a spotlight on something that is happening in cities across the country. The expansion of Columbia, an Ivy League university, is a real danger to the shrinking Harlem community—shrinking because the people who created its culture and history are violently being driven out.

The nature of gentrification is to be violent, whether it be through the use of eminent domain, which was expanded for private use, or through other coercive methods. It is to uproot for the purpose of development that will produce greater

profit. Gentrification follows aggressive tactics by the police in oppressed communities, where youths of color are especially targeted.

The hunger strike and rally are bold actions. The students say they draw inspiration from students at Georgetown University, who went on hunger strike in solidarity with low-wage workers on their campus to demand higher wages.

It is clear that their course is one that the movement against racism and war as a whole needs to take—one of sacrifice and solidarity with the oppressed of the world. □

Patrol was called into the school.

The deported family had peacefully resided in Tucson for six years and within a matter of hours were uprooted from their home and jobs and pushed out of the country, forced to leave everything behind.

The protesting students did manage to wring a concession from the school board and police. The Border Patrol will no longer be called into the schools.

These determined youth are showing that they can organize quickly and that fighting back against the racist, anti-immigrant onslaught can yield results. □

Struggle for Black liberation & socialism

By Abayomi Azikiwe, Editor
Pan-African News Wire

This compilation of articles and speeches places the struggle for African reparations within a broad political context that encompasses the overall movements against national oppression, capitalism, imperialism and for socialism.

The political editing of the book was done by Monica Moorehead, managing editor of Workers World newspaper based in New York City. In the obviously careful selection of these essays and speeches it becomes quite clear that the demand for reparations for African peoples will only be won along with the simultaneous victories against the ever increasing super-exploitation of labor and the attempt by U.S. imperialism to secure its position of global dominance through militarism and the further suppression of working people within its own borders.

The introductory section of this book entitled "Black liberation & the working-class struggle," begins with an essay by Larry Holmes where he reviews the role of the international socialist movement in advancing the struggle for national liberation among the oppressed and colonial peoples.

Holmes states that: "After much debate, the movement under Lenin's leadership concluded that bourgeois elements in the national liberation movement were a problem, and wherever possible we should wage a class struggle against them within the national liberation movement. But that should not for one second limit us from unconditionally supporting the national liberation movements to free the colonies."

Continuing to emphasize this point, Holmes declares: "Not only should we support the liberation movements, but if we want to prevail, if we want to influence oppressed people, we have to become the champions of the liberation of oppressed people, in deed as well as word."

This book examines the multi-faceted character of the struggle by African peoples inside the United States as well as on the continent. The articles seek to extend the demand for reparations beyond the period of chattel slavery in the U.S., the Caribbean and Latin America in order to point to the continued oppression and exploitation of African peoples during the periods of Reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation, the race terrorism of the early twentieth century during the era of widespread lynchings and infamous massacres in Tulsa, Okla., in 1921.

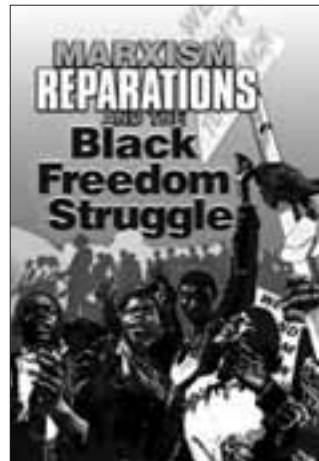
As it relates to the African continent, the contributors point to the continued exploitation of labor and resources. Moorehead writes in the chapter entitled "Africa, A Battleground Against Colonialism and for Sovereignty," that the struggle against the international debt crisis and its impact on the continent was part and parcel of the Black demand for reparations.

Moorehead points out that "The fact that Africa is both the richest continent in terms of resources and the poorest in terms of underdevelopment did not come about over a span of years or decades but centuries. Three of the G-8 members—Germany, France and England—expanded their capitalist economies with the African

book review

Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle

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slave trade beginning in the middle of the 16th century. The United States became involved in the slave trade a century later. An estimated 40 million African people were stolen from their homeland during slavery."

The editor continues by stating: "Europe became the main colonizer of the entire African continent. The result was millions more lives lost and resources and land plundered from the late 19th century until African struggles brought about nominal independence in the 1960s and 1970s."

Bringing the struggle up to its present period, Moorehead says: "Today the greatest part of Africa is a neocolony under the control of imperialist banks through the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Since the post-colonial period, whole African economies have been caught in a vicious cycle of bank loans and structural agreements that have plunged them into a spiraling debt they can never pay off in several lifetimes."

This book defends the government of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, which engaged in a revolutionary land redis-

tribution program that brought about vicious attacks from the former colonial power in Britain as well as the U.S. Moorehead exposes the political contradictions within American foreign policy toward this southern African nation that won its national independence through an armed struggle that gained international support.

Moorehead says in relationship to the present situation in Zimbabwe that "U.S. imperialism is hypocritical when it denounces 'repressive measures' taken by the Mugabe government. Look at the repression we face right here if we organize anti-war or anti-police brutality demonstrations. When aren't there thousands of NYPD cops in full riot gear trying to intimidate and even arrest us when we exercise our right to freedom of assembly and free speech? Look at how revolutionaries like Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier are locked away because they dared to speak out against this terrible, racist, oppressive system."

Consequently, any effort aimed at repairing or re-correcting the historic oppression and exploitation of African peoples will be met with maximum resistance from the ruling class in the U.S. and throughout the various imperialist circles internationally. Therefore, a struggle must and will be waged to overturn the dominance of world capitalism over the oppressed peoples of the globe.

This book makes a significant contribution to the literature on the international character of the Black liberation movements worldwide and the need to link the war to end national oppression and neocolonialism with the global class struggle for socialism. □

Broadway stagehands say 'no!' to job and wage cuts

By Brenda Ryan
New York

On a chilly Sunday afternoon Nov. 11, dozens of theater stagehands marched in a series of picket lines on Broadway. Carrying placards and handing out leaflets, they let people know why they had gone on strike the day before: theater owners and producers are demanding a 38 percent cut in their jobs and wages.

The stagehands, members of Local One of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, have refused these terms. They have been in negotiations with the League of American Theatres and Producers since their contract expired in July. In October the 3,000-member union unanimously voted to allow the union to call a strike and on Nov. 10 they did so. The strike, the first in the union's 121-year history, shut down 31 of Broadway's 39 theatres.

Picketing under marquees for "Avenue Q," "Chorus Line," Phantom of the Opera, "Les Miserables" and other shows, the stagehands were upbeat. A taxicab driver honked and waved a thumbs-up in support. Members of other unions, including the Actors' Equity Union and the musicians' union Local 802, were on the line offering their support.

Outside the Schubert Theatre where "Monty Python's Spamalot" had been performing, two musicians from the musical stood in solidarity with the stagehands, playing tunes on their trumpet and trom-

bone. They told Workers World that the stagehand workers are fighting the same battle Broadway musicians waged in 2003, when they went on strike against job cuts.

"The theater owners and producers are using the same strong-arm tactics," said one of the musicians, who preferred to remain anonymous.

Four years ago, theater producers sought to eliminate orchestra jobs, accusing musicians of "featherbedding"—requiring theaters to hire a specific number of people for a show. The musicians did not fare well in that battle. One of the "Spamalot" musicians said theater producers cut about 25 percent of musician jobs, so orchestras now play with 15 members instead of the previous 20 to 23. He noted that saxophone players are now also playing English horn and oboe to make up for the orchestra not having full sections of brass and woodwinds.

The League of American Theaters and Producers are leveling the same bogus claims against the stagehands, saying union rules force them to pay for an unnecessary number of stagehands.

"We think it is fair to be able to hire the workers we need and to pay them for the work they do," Charlotte St. Martin, the executive director of the League, said in a statement posted on the League's website. "We think it is not fair to have to hire workers we don't need and pay them for doing nothing. No industry can continue to tolerate such featherbedding. Certainly not ours, where four out of five produc-

tions are failures."

Despite the failed shows, theater producers are making huge profits. Projection, Lights and Staging News (PLSN) noted in an Oct. 8 article that Broadway shows had a record-breaking season in 2006-2007, with grosses of \$939 million. By comparison, during the 2005-2006 season 19 of 39 shows opened and closed without recouping investments, for an aggregate loss of \$96 million.

Theater producers want workers to pay for their losses. PLSN reported that a primary issue is the number of stagehands employed during the load-in, the time when a production is moving into a theatre. Producers set the number of stagehands they use, but they don't want to pay them all every day.

"They want us to come in and instead of working a full day they want to pay us for two hours," said Local One spokesperson Bruce Cohen in a phone interview. "They'd like to pay less for stagehand labor, and we'd like a raise." The producers "have never done anything this destructive in the past," he said.

The stagehands are not fighting alone. The Actors' Equity Association 1913 joined



Stagehands picket.

them on the picket lines, handing out a leaflet addressed to audience members. "In a highly technical and dangerous work environment, stagehands make it safe for us to work," the leaflet states. "Their craft and expertise may not be apparent from the audience, but it is absolutely integral to the running of the show."

The first show to shut down as a result of the strike was "Dr.

Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas." The star of the show, Patrick Page, stood outside the theater the first day of the strike signing autographs. He voiced support for the stagehands in an interview with Playbill, a trade publication. "These guys are the backbone of Broadway," he told Playbill.com. "I've worked with some of these guys on four or five Broadway shows and they are amazing craftsmen and workers."

Mayor Michael Bloomberg offered to mediate discussions between the League and union, as he did during the Broadway musicians strike. But the union, perhaps wary of getting a similarly bad deal, turned

Continued on page 5

As UAW negotiations wrap up

Layoffs loom despite major givebacks

By Martha Grevatt

Last month, General Motors and Chrysler UAW members ratified four-year contracts with the biggest and smallest of the Big Three auto companies. Now 54,000 Ford workers are voting on a similar deal.

The official spin from Ford and the UAW leadership is that the contract protects jobs, with only 10 plant closings instead of the 16 Ford had announced earlier this year. The tradeoff? As with GM and Chrysler, Ford can start new hires at roughly half the pay of current production workers.

However, while GM and Chrysler are limited to paying the lower rate to workers in certain "non-core" classifications, Ford has no such restrictions. And Ford got an even bigger break than the other two companies in what it will contribute to the Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association fund for retiree health care, putting the Ford retirees' benefits in even greater danger.

With vote tallies in from a majority of Ford's plants, ratification appears likely, but support is not unanimous. "I'm voting no. I just don't believe in the two-tier wage. That's selling out of union principles," insisted Junior Chrislip, a worker in Dearborn, Mich. "The job guarantees? Ask the Chrysler and GM workers what they think of job guarantees in their contract. At least in my work area, a lot of people are talking about voting no."

At the Cleveland casting plant, scheduled to close in 2010, and two adjacent engine plants, an ad hoc Committee To

Preserve Our Contracts called on workers to "Vote no on this pension-wage rip-off."

The term "rip-off" is no exaggeration. According to GM's own figures, and assuming a similar pattern at Ford and Chrysler, the three companies will see their labor costs cut in half by 2011. Claiming that wage and benefits cost them \$75 an hour, the automakers stand to pocket \$37 per hour of labor as a result of these concessionary contracts.

With 172,000 UAW members currently employed at the Big Three, this constitutes a \$6.5 million dollar per hour rip-off of workers' labor.

Yet gratitude, clearly, is not in these thieves' vocabulary. At all three companies the bosses are already displaying contempt for any contractual understanding about jobs there may have been. The workers are still voting and already Ford CEO Alan Mulally, after announcing that the misnamed "Way Forward" target of 44,000 job cuts had been met, said, "We will continue to reduce our employment consistent with our restructuring to operate at the lower demand over the next few years." (Detroit Free Press, Nov. 9)

Mass layoffs at GM and Chrysler began just days after the contracts were ratified—in plants that were supposedly "saved" from being shuttered by a moratorium on plant closings. Whole shifts are being shut down at six Chrysler plants in Michigan, Ohio and Illinois. In Marion, Ill., a GM plant with 1,300 workers now could lose 830 jobs.

Already GM has backed off from a commitment to make current temporary employees permanent. By the end

of January 500 temp workers in Lansing, Michigan will be laid off indefinitely, along with 510 "traditional" workers. The UAW leadership has given GM the OK.

All of these cost-cutting measures are driven by capital's insatiable drive for profit. Detroit's automakers are willingly ceding domestic market share to their overseas competitors. Meanwhile they are expanding their global reach into the lucrative Asian market, where Ford and GM are breaking sales record on their rivals' home turf.

However, to realize the full profit potential of this growing economy they need to export not only products, but whole factories with the most advanced, most exploitive technology. Hence while the axe was falling in Michigan, GM announced it was building a plant in India.

Ford is has just opened a manufacturing center in China and is building a plant in Thailand, primarily to reach car buyers in Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

"Ford's strategy appears to be to save money by radically slashing operations in North America while making money by expanding in the growth markets in Asia and elsewhere outside the United States," reported the International Herald Tribune. "Ford's operations outside the United States give the company a lifeline of liquidity, including \$551 million of pre-tax profit in South America in 2006, \$469 million in Europe and \$168 million through its association with Mazda." (Oct. 9)

Desperate not to be left behind, Chrysler has adopted the slogan "go global" as part of its so-called "Recovery and

Transformation Plan"—the slashing of one in three workers' jobs in North America.

For the labor movement, there is a real danger of drawing national chauvinistic and protectionist conclusions from these developments that divert the struggle away from the companies. On the other hand, the globalizing of exploitation creates the potential for a worldwide, class-wide movement against both the sharpened exploitation in the imperialist countries and the super-exploitation of the most oppressed. Armed with this cross-country solidarity, workers will make it harder for bosses anywhere to beat them down.

A Job is a Right!

The corporate agenda is already provoking class conflict at the plant level, where local contract issues remain unresolved. This week UAW Local 1005 at GM's Parma, Ohio, stamping plant, announced the possibility of a strike over job consolidations. "We don't want to go on strike, but there are issues at the local level," President Tito Boneta stated. (Cleveland Plain Dealer, Nov. 12)

Regardless of contract language, workers have every right to resist any threat to take away their livelihoods, which are their legal and human rights. These jobs are the property of the workers and the communities whose economies depend on them. As workers, these jobs should be there for future generations—with union wages and pension protections.

The worldwide class struggle must be resuscitated around the slogan "a job is a right"—and the sooner the better. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

Nurses strike in W.Va., Ky.

More than 630 nurses at Appalachian Regional Hospitals in West Virginia and Kentucky have been on strike for nearly a month. Their pay was cut 10 percent in December 2005. Although an arbitrator found in favor of the nurses, ARH, which purchased the nine hospitals from the United Mine Workers in the 1970s, refuses to honor the ruling and appealed the case to federal court.

The Kentucky Nurses Association, which represents the nurses, called the strike to protest ARH's unfair treatment of nurses and for allowing unsafe staffing for patients. To sign a petition demanding that ARH negotiate with the nurses, go to the Jobs with Justice Web site: www.jwj.org.

Possible Amtrak strike

Amtrak workers in eight unions may strike as early as Dec. 1 after more than half of their 15,000 members rejected mediation and entered a 30-day cooling-off period on Nov. 1. The issues include health insurance costs, work rules and back pay dating to 2000 when the last contract was approved.

Smithfield stops negotiating, sues union

On Oct. 15, Smithfield management thumbed its nose at the Food and Commercial Workers union by calling an end to negotiations. The UFCW has been struggling for more than a decade to represent the 5,500 workers at Smithfield's Tar Heel, N.C., plant, the largest pork processing facility in the world.

Two days later, Smithfield pulled another punch and sued the union under the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, which was originally passed to stop organized crime syndicates. The suit alleges that UFCW's efforts to organize public support for the Tar Heel workers constitute attempted extortion.

As a union statement notes: "Clearly, the lawsuit is meant to be a distraction from the ongoing health and safety issues at the plant, and the latest roadblock to finding a long-term solution for workers who have been struggling for years to bring union representation into the plant. The UFCW intends to vigorously fight these baseless allegations." (Oct. 22) For more about this struggle, go to www.smithfieldjustice.org.

Cintas workers protest death on the job

More than 50 people did not let torrential rain stop them from picketing Cintas' annual shareholder meeting in Cincinnati on Nov. 6 to protest and mourn the death of fellow worker Eleazar Torres Gomez—who was killed on the job in Oklahoma after being dragged into an industrial dryer. (Unite Here, Nov. 7)

Workers and community allies demanded that the uniform company address the lethal hazards that led to Torres Gomez's death. The same dangers have been found at plants in California, New York, Ohio and Washington. Eleuteria Mazon, who works in Cintas' Schaumburg, Ill., laundry, said, "We can see a continued lack of safety measures because the company only cares about production—not about the conditions that we work under."

March on Burger King!

In 2005 the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, representing tomato pickers in Florida, won a precedent-setting agreement with Taco Bell. In May of this year McDonald's agreed to the same terms, which boost the workers' pay and help improve their working conditions.

As of Nov. 30, CIW is marching on Burger King with help from leaders of both the AFL-CIO and Change to Win. For more about CIW's Campaign for Fair Food, go to the CIW Web site: www.ciw-online.org. □

The credit crunch: Cyclical downturn or more severe?

By Jaimeson Champion

The global capitalist economy is showing ever greater signs of instability. A question on the minds of many members of the multinational working class here in the U.S. and around the world is just how severe a capitalist crisis is coming.

Are the workers facing a cyclical boom-bust process of the type that has happened numerous times over the course of the development of capitalism? Or is this the prelude to a crisis that is much more severe? Is the current volatility on Wall Street heading toward a 1987-type market crash, or is it the opening stage of a crisis on a much larger scale?

Cyclical crises in capitalist economies

The boom-and-bust cycle is inherent to the capitalist mode of production. Under capitalism, periods of rapid expansion in production are followed by sharp slowdowns and recession. This cyclical process results from regular crises of overproduction.

As Karl Marx wrote in "Theories of Surplus Value," "Overproduction is specifically conditioned by the general law of the production of capital: to produce to the limit set by the productive forces, that is to say, to exploit the maximum amount of labor with the given amount of capital, without any consideration for the actual limits of the market or the needs backed by the ability to pay."

Overproduction leads to glutted markets. Glutted markets lead to falling profits for the capitalists. This causes the bosses to intensify their drive to slash wages and cut jobs, exacerbating the pain and suffering of the working class during recessionary periods.

In the U.S. today, signs of a cyclical downturn resulting from a crisis of overproduction are readily apparent. From 2000 to 2006 the housing sector was the primary engine for economic expansion in the U.S. The housing bubble of those years was characterized by an unprecedented spike in new home construction.

The rapid expansion in the production of homes brought a profit boom for the capitalist class. Home construction is a multiplier industry, so the bubble meant increased commodity sales in numerous other industries. This increase in commodity sales applied to everything from kitchen appliances and television sets to pickup trucks and building supplies

Stagehands say no to job cuts

Continued from page 4

the mayor down. In the meantime, the strike shows how valuable the stagehands are to the economy. The League said the strike would cost the city \$17 million a day.

New York City, which receives millions in tax revenue based on the Broadway-related tourist trade, lost \$7 million a day during the musicians' four-day strike in 2003.

The stagehands' strike is the second

Overproduction in housing



used by construction workers.

The drive to increase production and profits irrespective of the limits of the market, or of the workers' ability to pay for the goods they produce, was exemplified by the proliferation of infamous sub-prime mortgages during the recent housing bubble. These predatory loans proved unaffordable for millions of working-class families across the country. Delinquencies and defaults on mortgages in the U.S. have now hit record highs.

The housing market is glutted with millions of unsold homes as tidal waves of foreclosures have swept over entire working-class communities. Jobs are being cut and wages slashed with greater intensity in industries ranging from auto production to retail sales.

Is this crisis more severe?

Historically, the capitalist ruling class has dealt with crises of overproduction by increasing the money supply in concerted efforts to increase liquidity—easy access to credit—in the economy and increase aggregate consumer purchasing power. Responses to recent capitalist crises like those of 1987 and 1997 highlight this strategy. Both crises were met with the slashing of interest rates by the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks, flooding the global economy with liquidity and eventually stabilizing the markets.

It is not surprising that the capitalist ruling class has sought to do the same thing in recent months, ever since the stock markets began gyrating wildly. What makes this situation seemingly more severe is how remarkably little effect the massive liquidity infusions

to roil the entertainment industry. The Writers Guild of America went on strike against the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers Nov. 5, fighting for a slice of the profits studios make from digital media.

The message of both battles is the same: movie, television and theater producers have to share their profits with the workers who allow the shows to go on. □

have had in terms of stabilizing the markets.

For months, central bankers and finance ministers in the U.S. and countries across the globe have been scrambling to inject billions upon billions of dollars worth of liquidity into the markets. The Federal Reserve in the U.S. has cut interest rates multiple times.

Thus far, every attempt to stem the growing crisis has seemingly failed. The major stock indexes have not recovered, foreclosures and bankruptcies continue unabated, the dollar continues to fall to new lows, and the price of oil continues to climb to record highs.

The current developing economic crisis appears to contain within it deep contradictions that yield to no easy solution from the capitalist class or its state. What does that mean for the future?

It is important to remember the words of Russian revolutionary V.I. Lenin in a speech to the Second Congress of the Communist International in July 1920. Lenin reminded comrades that no capitalist crisis would ever prove "terminal" without the work of committed revolutionaries dedicated to organizing and mobilizing the working class.

In his speech, Lenin said, "Comrades, we have now come to the question of the revolutionary crisis as the basis of our revolutionary action. On the one hand, bourgeois economists depict this crisis simply as 'unrest,' to use the elegant expression of the British. On the other hand, revolutionaries sometimes try to prove that the crisis is absolutely insoluble. This is a mistake. ... Practice alone can serve as real 'proof' in this and similar questions. All over the world, the bourgeois system is experiencing a tremendous revolutionary crisis. The revolutionary parties must now prove in practice that they have sufficient understanding and organization, contact with the exploited masses, and determination and skill to utilize this crisis for a successful, a victorious, revolution."

Lenin's words are as applicable today, as revolutionaries prepare ideologically for future upheavals, as they were when he delivered them. □

Anti-war movement faces repression but continues to go strong

By Caleb T. Maupin

All throughout the United States, the anti-war movement has been stepping up its activities against the bloody occupation of Iraq. In many places, those resisting have faced repression at the hand of the state and other authorities, but this has not silenced them. They continue to resist with heroism and militancy.

Anti-war voices at Veterans Day parades

On Nov. 10, members of the groups Iraq Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out, and Veterans for Peace were excluded from the Veterans Day Parade in Long Beach, Calif. The reason given by the Parade Committee, according to the Long Beach Press Telegram, was that the IVAW, MFSO and VFP had a "political agenda." (Nov. 9)

This despite the fact that the marches are in themselves highly political, tending to glorify U.S. wars and present them as heroic.

After much outcry, the Iraq Veterans Against War contingent was allowed to stand, wearing their T-shirts, in a designated area along the parade route.

In Atlanta, anti-war veterans as well as veterans in the lesbian, gay, bi and trans community were initially excluded from a parade in that area, then told that anti-war messages and "public displays of affection" would be prohibited. (Atlanta Progressive News, Nov. 10)

Expulsion threatened after high school protest

At Morton West High School in Berwyn, Ill., a group of about 60 students began a protest in the school cafeteria on Nov. 1. When the school administration responded with threats of discipline, half of the students left. The remaining 30, according to the Chicago Tribune (Nov. 9), were told they could avoid being expelled if they

moved to a new location. They agreed.

When they arrived at this new location, they were barricaded in with cafeteria tables and surrounded with caution tape. The police who normally patrol the halls of the school were on the scene. All these efforts were made by the administration in an attempt to keep more students from joining the protest.

School officials have threatened a number of the students who protested with expulsion, citing "gross disobedience and mob activity" as the reason.

The punishment given to the students for their dissent was not handed out equally. Students with high grade point averages were given much lighter discipline than others, and not threatened with expulsion. Students who play varsity ath-

letics were also shown favoritism.

At a school board meeting packed with community members and parents, people demanded that the students be allowed to return to school. "These kids should receive extra credit for speaking up, not expulsion," Cesar Ruvalcaba, a disabled veteran, told the board. Many parents spoke in their children's defense, saying they were proud that their children acted in opposition to the current state of affairs.

The school board postponed its decision about the expulsions, drawing massive booing from people at the meeting, who wanted to see the students back in school and free of punishment for their protest activities as soon as possible.

A petition in defense of the students can be found at petitiononline.com.

School of the Americas

Many members of the anti-war movement plan to participate in the annual protest against the School of the Americas Nov. 16-18. The SOA is the training site for repression in South America, including counter-revolutionary rape, slaughter and torture.

Organizers are expecting a crowd much larger than the 20,000 who came last year to the protest in Fort Benning, Ga., where the school is located. Folk singer Pete Seeger will perform.

Youths, students, veterans, workers and oppressed people continue to take militant actions against war. Combined with the heroic Iraqi resistance, actions like these will help end the bloody repression of the Iraqi people. □

Call at NYC forum: Unite prisoners' struggles



WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD

Standing: Teresa Gutierrez, Kate G of Leonard Peltier Support Group, Bill Bachman of NY Free Mumia Coalition, Lynne Stewart, Julie Fry. Seated: Charlotte Kates, Heidi Boghosian.

By Greg Butterfield
New York

On Nov. 6, the International Action Center and New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five hosted a public forum entitled "Free All Political Prisoners, from Occupied Palestine to the U.S." The event brought together a diverse audience of advocates for political prisoners held within and outside U.S. borders.

Julie Fry of the IAC and FIST (Fight Imperialism-Stand Together) set the tone in her opening remarks: "Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, the Puerto Rican political prisoners and prisoners of war: these are just some of more well-known freedom fighters held in U.S. prisons.

"But increasingly, the U.S. is also taking international political prisoners. We only need to look at the illegally occupied Guantanamo base in Cuba, where Washington has held and tortured hundreds of people swept up in its so-called 'war on terror.'

"We believe it is crucial to build understanding and active support among all of us who work on political prisoner issues and international solidarity. By working together, we can break down isolation and strengthen all of the struggles."

Heidi Boghosian, executive director of the National Lawyers Guild, talked about her organization's work on behalf of the Cuban Five—Cuban citizens arrested almost a decade ago after infiltrating U.S.-backed right-wing terror groups in Miami. Today the five are held in federal prisons while known anti-Cuba terrorists like Luis Posada Carriles walk free.

"We've called upon the United Nations Committee on Torture to take measures to stop Washington's human rights abus-

es against the Five," said Boghosian. She urged the movement to "keep the pressure on" as the Five prepare for an appeal decision from a three-judge panel.

Teresa Gutierrez, a founder of the New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five, also noted gains in the Cuban Five case, thanks in part to the fact that they have all stayed strong behind prison walls.

Speaking of the Bush administration's new spate of anti-Cuba measures, Gutierrez said: "The Revolution is strong. But it's a constant struggle to maintain that, and the U.S. is working hard to undermine the spirit of the Cuban people. This is one struggle where Cuba definitely requires our help."

Surprise guest Lynne Stewart, a longtime radical attorney, electrified the audience. She urged the crowd not to forget prisoners like Mutulu Shakur and Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin (H. Rap Brown), who were recently moved into isolation at the Florence, Col., Supermax prison because of their skills at organizing their fellow prisoners.

Stewart was prosecuted by the Bush administration for allegedly "supporting terrorism" in the course of representing a client. Washington hoped to use her treatment as a warning to other progressive attorneys after 9/11. Stewart beat back the most serious charges but still faces 28 months jail time. She is out on bail pending an appeal.

Charlotte Kates, organizer for New Jersey Solidarity-Activists for the Liberation of Palestine and Al-Awda New York, reported on a recent delegation to occupied Palestine focused on the plight of 11,000 women, men and children, including Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Secretary Ahmad Sa'adat, held as political prisoners by the Israeli apartheid regime.

"Since 1967, one quarter of the population of the West Bank and Gaza has spent time in Israeli jails," Kates explained, comparing the "criminalization of Palestinian life" to the mass incarceration of Black youth in the U.S.

"Our tax money pays for every bullet, every checkpoint, every prison used against the Palestinian people," Kates pointed out, "just as it pays for the imprisonment of Mumia and Leonard."

The audience also heard updates from the New York Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition, the New York Leonard Peltier Support Group and Friends of Daniel McGowan. □

Demonstrators confront war machine

By Jim McMahan
Olympia, Wash.

A group named the Port Militarization Resistance has put up a week of resistance here against Iraq war military shipments at the downtown port. Protesters have blocked Stryker combat vehicles, slowed them, demonstrated, kept up 24-hour vigilance, held many meetings and withstood police brutality and at least 15 arrests.

In 2006, Olympia activists fought against the shipment of military equipment for the third Stryker Brigade to Iraq. They took 37 arrests then and at least slowed the shipment.

Now that the Stryker Brigade is returning to Iraq, the confrontation resumes. A statement from the Port Militarization Resistance read, "We oppose Olympia's complicity in a war whose disastrous effects have been felt worldwide and we actively resist the use of Olympia's port to further that war."

Demonstrations began on Nov. 5 when the ship returned from Iraq. The ship carried more than 100 Stryker vehicles to be repaired and refitted, plus other military cargo. On Nov. 7, demonstrators blocked the road in front of the port.

Cops pushed, beat and pepper-sprayed people to get the vehicles through.

Protestors reported overwhelmingly positive gestures from troops, such as "thumbs up," as they drove by in Strykers.

An encampment was set up on Nov. 8 after 200 resisters showed up at the port. The next day, a line of activists stopped a convoy and the trucks were forced to back up. The whole operation was stopped for 18 hours; the cops went home.

On Nov 10, two semi trailers left the port but ran into a line of demonstrators downtown, where three were arrested. Just before the freeway, another line of protestors was shot at by the cops with pepper balls; but the line wouldn't move. They had locked their arms together with PVC pipe. It took the cops an hour to remove them.

Demonstrations at the port continue. The port resistance movement in Olympia is part of a wider port resistance movement in Washington State over the last 18 months. There have been demonstrations, usually with dozens of arrests, at Tacoma, Indian Island Naval Weapons Depot and Grays Harbor.

As of this writing, most of the vehicles have gone through the Olympia port. The third Stryker Brigade came back to Fort Lewis with 48 fewer troops, soldiers who died in the Iraq war for the aims of Big Oil. □

Protests continue despite martial law

Crisis grows in Pakistan

By Deirdre Griswold

The political crisis in Pakistan shows no signs of abating. Gen. Pervez Musharraf continues to arrest a broad spectrum of opposition leaders, who join the thousands already jailed for daring to demonstrate their defiance of his martial law.

Around the world, Pakistanis and others are taking to the streets to protest both the Musharraf dictatorship and the support he gets from Washington and London.

The Bush administration is playing a dual and deceptive game. At the same time that it continues its military aid to the Musharraf regime, it is talking about the need for democracy and has tried to broker a deal between Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto, a former prime minister ousted for corruption. Clearly, it was hoping that the inclusion of Bhutto in the

government would paste a democratic fig leaf on the general's military regime and pacify the growing mass opposition.

Bhutto, who was given immunity from corruption charges by Musharraf on her return to Pakistan, nevertheless has been held under a mild form of house arrest by the regime. But even if a deal were to take place—now unlikely, since Bhutto has changed her rhetoric and is calling for Musharraf to go—it is unlikely to satisfy the Pakistani masses, who keep growing bolder in demanding a total end to military rule.

As of Nov. 14, the constitution is still suspended under Musharraf's state of emergency. There is no freedom of speech or of the press. Only government-generated news is allowed on television. Demonstrations are illegal. All the top justices have been dismissed and thousands

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WW PHOTOS: LAL ROOHIK

Dr. Muhammad Shafique, President, Pakistan-USA Freedom Forum, and Workers World editor Deirdre Griswold, spoke on the crisis in Pakistan in New York on Nov. 10. The meeting was chaired by Larry Hales, a leader of FIST, left. To hear a podcast of the meeting go to www.workers.org.

Columbia president caught in lie

When the president of Iran went to Columbia University this September for a scheduled speech, he was insulted and castigated by the school's president. It was different when Pakistani dictator Pervez Musharraf visited Columbia in 2005, writes a student in the school's Spectator newspaper on Nov. 9:

"Even University President Lee Bollinger, who apparently prides himself on his tough-talking, no-nonsense treatment of visiting 'dictators,' was found wanting when

Musharraf came to Columbia in September 2005. 'President Musharraf is a leader of global importance, and his contribution to Pakistan's economic turnaround and the international fight against terror remain remarkable. It is rare that we have a leader of his stature at campus,' Bollinger opined. Musharraf's democratic credentials are far inferior to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's, but Bollinger and the U.S. government he worships have never given much play to the ideal of consistency." □

CALL OFF Bush's phony Annapolis 'peace conference'

A Call for Anti-War Actions

For Justice & Peace, U.S. Out of the Middle East

Across the Country—

PROTEST ON NOV. 27

END THE WAR NOW

- Get out of Iraq and Afghanistan NOW
- Stop preparations for war under the guise of "peace," from Iran to Syria, Palestine and Lebanon
- Free Palestine – Support the Right to Return and self-determination
- End the embargo of Gaza
- Occupation is a crime, from Iraq to Palestine

Initiated by Troops Out Now Coalition; Endorsers List (in formation): Arab American Union Members Council; American Iranian Friendship Committee; Ahmad Kawash, Palestine American Congress, Executive Board, Boston; Al-Awda, The Palestine Right To Return Coalition (Omaha, Nebraska); Abayomi Azikiwe, Editor of Pan-African News Wire; Artists and Activists United for Peace; All Peoples Congress; Asia-Pacific Action; Bishop Filipe C. Teixeira, OFSJC, Northeast Diocese of St. Francis of Assisi, CCA; Bernadette Ellorin - BAYAN USA*; Brenda Stokely - NYC Labor Against the War*; Campaign for Healthcare Not Warfare; Chuck Turner - Boston City Councilor; F.I.S.T.-Fight Imperialism Stand Together; Harlem Tenants Council; International Action Center; Elena Everett, GPAX*, North Carolina Green Party*; Jersey City Peace Movement; Haiti Support Network; Lenora Foerstel, Women for Mutual Security; Lynne Stewart; Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Oakland Chapter; Millions for Mumia; New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five; Pakistan-USA Freedom Forum; Peoples Video Network; Queers for Peace & Justice; Stop War On Iran Campaign; Womens' Fightback Network * For identification only

We call on the anti-war movement to organize and join in demonstrations across the U.S. on November 27, during President George W. Bush's phony "peace meeting" at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., or whenever this meeting is held. (In New York City, rally at Times Square at 5 p.m. List of actions in formation.)

It is a monumental insult to the people of the Middle East and all justice-minded people that war criminal Bush would dare to convene a "peace meeting" while Washington continues to bring occupation, genocide and devastation to Iraq and Afghanistan, destabilization to Palestine and Lebanon, and constant threats to Iran and Syria in its quest for oil and colonial empire. This phony meeting should be called off. The fraud is so transparent that Bush's plan for a grand "Middle East peace conference" has shrunk to a one day meeting.

As an anti-war movement, we must ask ourselves: Can we allow the war criminals, who time after time have callously ignored the anti-war majority in this country and globally, to get away with this outrageous farce?

Some may be confused about the purpose of the Annapolis meeting, so let's speak plain truth: It isn't really about peace and justice for the Palestinian people—it's about deception, occupation and war. It's about isolating popular forces and countries that reject U.S. rule, while attempting to normalize relations between Saudi Arabia and other Arab governments with Israel as Tel Aviv continues its all-out assault on the Palestinian people. And it's about preparing for a new war.

At this moment, Palestinians in Gaza are being deprived of food, fuel, medicines and other basic necessities by an economic embargo imposed by Israel and backed by the U.S. Meanwhile, more Israeli settlements, roads, walls and checkpoints are being set up in the West Bank each day.

Beyond pretending to be a "peace broker," Bush hopes that the Annapolis meeting will:

- Divide and weaken the just struggle of the Palestinian people;
- Prop up the unstable Israeli occupation regime;
- Legitimize and strengthen the illegal occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, and U.S. plans for colonization of the whole Middle East;
- Help prepare for aggression and war against Iran.

Representatives of the Israeli apartheid regime will be in Annapolis, along with some Palestinian and other Arab forces that are under severe pressure from Washington or are willingly in its orbit. Those who refuse to tow the line have not been invited or chosen to boycott the meeting.

We must not be silent when the war criminals in the White House and Pentagon talk peace while waging war and planning new wars. This is the time for anti-war forces to take a strong stand!

'Big lie' and breakup of Yugoslavia

By Leslie Feinberg

The Pentagon is not a vehicle to liberate women or same-sex love, and it is certainly not a rape-crisis intervention force. But these truths get blurred when there is a war in progress.

When U.S. imperialism is gearing up for war, ad agency spin doctors are put on the payroll to sell the aggression as defensive or humanitarian.

U.S. and German imperialists used a public relations psychological operation to cover up their violent covert and overt war to destabilize and dismantle the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia from 1990 to 2000. That media agitation, broadcast by the imperialist monopoly news industry, helped to isolate the peoples of Yugoslavia from the world solidarity they deserved.

After finally undermining and breaking up the Soviet Union, U.S. imperialism no longer needed to tolerate non-aligned Yugoslavia.

Some of the countries of Eastern Europe had already acceded to all the privatization and austerity measures drawn up by imperialist bankers. The Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia was the last of the Eastern European workers' states trying to hold on to what was left of its planned, socialized framework of production and its collective ownership.

In a Jan. 2, 1996, New York Times opinion piece headlined "The Third American Empire," Jacob Heilbrunn and Michael Lind, two editors of the right-leaning magazine *The New Republic* that supported the Clinton administration's war on Yugoslavia, wrote: "Now, in the years after the cold war, the United States is again establishing suzerainty over the empire of a former foe. The disintegration of the Soviet Union has prompted the United States to expand its zone of military hegemony into Eastern Europe (through NATO) and into formerly neutral Yugoslavia. And—most of all—the end of the cold war has permitted America to deepen its involvement in the Middle East."

Heilbrunn and Lind argued that Bosnia should become the western border of a



Pat Chin, an opponent of the U.S. bombing of Yugoslavia, traveled to Yugoslavia to express her solidarity. Here she speaks at an anti-war rally in Union Square, New York.

new U.S. imperialist empire in the Middle East "encompassing the regions once ruled by the Ottoman Turks." That's a swath of territory from Iraq to the Balkans—a geo-strategic area that Britain, Germany and France ruled over before World War I, the first world conflagration caused by inter-imperialist rivalry over economic "spheres of interest."

It would take a "Big Lie" propaganda campaign to cover up this imperialist dismemberment of the multinational Yugoslavia federation.

Using charge of 'mass rape' to sell the war

The imperialist pro-war campaign—covert and overt—was based on two charges, repeated often and loudly: "systematic mass rape" and "ethnic cleansing."

The very suggestion that U.S. imperialism and its military are a rape-rescue team, and that they bring equality and peace between nationalities, should give immediate pause.

Rape has been a constant feature of class-divided societies—a weapon of mass terror and reinforcement of patriarchal ownership and control. Rape, the violence and the threat, has enforced enslavement, racist domination, oppression of women and punishment for those who bridge or blur the partitioning of the sexes.

U.S. finance capital is bloody with the

"ethnic cleansing" that facilitated stealing the labor and land of African and Native peoples. "Defense of white Southern womanhood" was the white-supremacist ideological cover for mass lynching of Black men. At the same time, the white slaveocracy and those in its hire were carrying out mass rape of African peoples.

The U.S. military—from its early Cavalry to today's high-tech Pentagon—has brought rape, prostitution and sexual enslavement in the wake of its invasions and the establishment of its bases, from the Philippines to South Korea.

Women GIs are survivors of mass rape in the Pentagon's own ranks.

The U.S. and German ruling classes, their politicians, and their embedded media and public relations demonstrate cruel and callous contempt for the lives of all women—particularly Muslim women—and for all rape survivors, when they use the charge of "systematic mass rape" as a pretext for imperialist aggression.

Mass rape is a serious charge that warrants meticulous and thoughtful attention.

Between the fall of 1992 and spring of 1993, imperialist corporate news sources carried coordinated reports that an estimated 20,000 to 100,000 Muslim women had been systematically raped by the Bosnian Serb Army.

The public accusation came first from Haris Silajdzic, then foreign minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, who stated that 30,000 women and girls had been raped.

A cover story in *Ms.* magazine charged that Bosnian Serb forces were raping women in order to make pornographic films. No films were ever discovered. And even the findings of Helsinki Watch and Human Rights Watch—which are often in accord with U.S. imperialist interests—did not support those charges.

The Warburton Report in January 1993, authorized by the European Community, got big headlines when it released its estimate that 20,000 Muslim women had been raped. But Simone Veil—a former French minister and president of the European Parliament—got virtually no air time as a dissenting member of the Warburton report group. Veil disclosed

that the estimate was based on interviews with only four individuals. The New York Times admitted on Oct. 19, 1993, that the Croatian Ministry of Health in Zagreb was the source for the Warburton Report figures.

Newsweek reported in its Jan. 4, 1993, issue that up to 50,000 Bosnian Muslim women had been raped. This estimate, according to Tom Post, a contributor to the article, was based on interviews with 28 individuals.

French television reporter Jerome Bony summed up his pursuit of the charge of mass rape: "When I was 50 kilometers from Tuxla, I was told: 'Go to the Tuxla high school grounds. There are 4,000 raped women.' At 20 kilometers this figure dropped to 400. At 10 kilometers only 40 were left. Once at the site, I found only four women willing to testify."

The point of these facts is not to diminish the impact of rape on a single life. Rather, the pattern in these facts demonstrates how cynically, callously and contemptuously the real "butchers of Belgrade"—in Washington and in Bonn—can create rumors of tens of thousands of rapes in order to re-shackle the peoples of the former Yugoslav federation to exploitation and steal the rich natural resources and industries that were once the collective property of all.

Nadja Tesich—Serb writer, filmmaker and professor of film—went back to Yugoslavia when the civil war started in 1991. In response to misreporting by corporate news accounts, Tesich wrote that she contacted PBS, *Nightline*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Vanity Fair*, the *Times* magazine section, women's magazines, *Mother Jones*, *Harper's*, the *New Yorker* and other media. She concluded: "They wanted to hear about rapes. (Got any rape stories, we want to hear about rapes.) But the moment I mentioned Serb women raped, they were not interested."

Next: U.S.-led NATO occupation brought mass rape in its wake.

E-mail: lfeinberg@workers.org.

For more information read "NATO in the Balkans" (International Action Center, New York: 1998). Available at Leftbooks.com

Capitalism brought misery, not freedom

Mass protests shake former Soviet republic

By Heather Cottin

In Georgia, a former republic of the Soviet Union, President Mikheil Saakashvili sent riot police to shut down the main television stations in the capital city of Tbilisi on Nov. 7. On the following day, he imposed a state of emergency.

This came after days of protests against the regime. Tens of thousands gathered throughout the capital to protest the abysmal social and economic conditions that are destroying their country. Acting as a dictator, Saakashvili issued an emergency decree abolishing all civil liberties. His ruling restricted dissemination of information, demonstrations and strikes.

With clubs, water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas, riot police bloodied and jailed hundreds for violating the emergency decree. "These people are fascists," one protester said. (*London Times*, Nov. 7)

However, the Bush administration considers Georgia a great democracy. When Saakashvili clamped down there, Washington merely raised its eyebrows. Saakashvili assured his friends that the

restrictions would last only a fortnight, but then changed his mind and decided to extend the repression as long as "the Georgian government deemed it necessary." Saakashvili blamed the protests on Russians, extending the emergency decree indefinitely.

Georgia is Washington's closest ally in the Caucasus, a mountainous region south of Russia that has enormous economic resources. Four years ago, the United States helped create what was called the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia. Intelligence assets, including the National Endowment for Democracy, funded a takeover of the nation that mirrored the pro-U.S., pro-NATO governments these same forces had helped establish in Yugoslavia in 2002 and the Ukraine in 2003. When Saakashvili took power, his great revolutionary act was to enable the complete privatization of the Georgian economy and bring it more rapidly into the U.S. and Western sphere.

Georgia's geographical situation made it a perfect conduit for the pipelines that Western corporations require to transport

the oil and natural gas of the Caspian basin through Georgia to Western Europe.

British Petroleum, Chevron and Atlantic Richfield are developing oil fields near Baku in the Caspian Sea. They helped build the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline from the Caspian through Georgia to Turkey. It has been moving thousands of gallons of oil per day since it opened in 2006. The World Bank helped build an oil terminus on the Black Sea in Georgia. The Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline is under construction, at the cost of the beautiful environment and national parks near the Black Sea, which have been ruined.

Since the end of the Soviet Republic of Georgia, conditions for ordinary people have deteriorated. In the last decade, over one-fifth of the 4 million Georgians have emigrated, mostly to Russia, and are sending home remittances to poor relatives remaining in their homeland. Even the CIA World Factbook says that 54 percent of the people lived below the poverty line in 2001. Life expectancy has fallen precipitously, partly because health care has been privatized. (Mzia Shelia, Tbilisi

State University)

Georgia's industrial output has significantly declined. In 2001, 48 percent of the GDP came from industrial production; today it is only 12 percent. Unemployment immobilizes 50 percent to 65 percent of the able-bodied population. The authorities have dismissed masses of employees in the system of education, closing free schools and kindergartens and firing more than 800 Tbilisi University professors and lecturers. (Aleksander B. Krylov, Strategic Culture Foundation, Nov. 11)

George W. Bush calls Georgia a democracy, but its parliament rubber stamps whatever Saakashvili proposes, while the courts act to quash opposition and dissidents.

When socialism was abolished in Georgia, factories that had formerly employed hundreds of thousands were closed. What the "rose revolutionaries" called "liberal reforms" boiled down to predictable sell-offs of state property. Some became millionaires and corruption and graft flourished while the social and

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Luis Miranda, ¡presente!

By Teresa Gutierrez

The Cuba solidarity movement in the United States, as well as the Cuban people, has lost a wonderful beloved friend and leader.

On Nov. 13, Cuban revolutionary Luis Miranda, who lived in New York, died after a long illness at the age of 78.

Luis, affectionately called Miranda by many of his friends and comrades, was the President of Casa de las Americas, a cultural and political center in New York City dedicated to Cuban and Latin American art and politics since 1987.

Some of his friends and allies said online upon news of his death: "Always a fighter in the struggle for sovereignty of his beloved Cuba, Luis was steadfast in his support for the Cuban Revolution. He was a comrade and friend to many and will be greatly missed."

Since 1959, Luis Miranda has been a loyal supporter of the Cuban revolution. In fact, Miranda wanted to return to Cuba after the triumph of the Revolution. He stayed in the U.S. as an assignment, to play a role in defending the Revolution. When rich, privileged Cubans, most of them white, fled the revolution in loyalty to the capitalist system, the role of revolutionary Cubans in the U.S. became pivotal.

These pro-capitalist, pro-U.S. Cubans strongly believed that the Revolution would be short lived and that they would return shortly to Cuba. They believed that the ouster of the cruel ruler Fulgencio Batista, who had ran Cuba for the sake of the U.S., would be the major change in Cuba.

Protests in former Soviet republic

Continued from page 8

economic conditions of the majority of the population declined.

On the day before Saakashvili announced the state of emergency, the Georgian parliament voted to allocate two-thirds of its budget for military spending (Civil Georgia, Nov. 6), something the people could ill afford. Saakashvili's government is a willing market for U.S. weapons manufacturers.

This is why the population is so angry.

Georgia, not yet in NATO, is sending hundreds of soldiers into the NATO armies in Afghanistan and into the Iraq War. In the past 10 years Washington has paid for the training and equipping of Georgian frontier guards and the setting up of "anti-terror" units, some of which have been dispatched to Iraq and Afghanistan. (Krylov)

There is widespread opposition to these wars among Georgians. Georgia once fed, housed, clothed, educated and cared for its citizens. Now homeless children beg in the streets of Tbilisi and thousands of impoverished women are lured into the international sex trade. (BBC News, March 29, 2002)

Saakashvili has stopped all agricultural commerce with Russia, causing farm failures and widespread migration. While Georgia was once called the breadbasket of the Soviet Union, its farmers now suffer the worst poverty in the country.

Now that the Soviet Union is out of the way, U.S. corporations have their sights set on the fabulous natural resources of Eurasia. This does not sit well with Iran, Russia or China. NATO militarism is encircling the region and Washington needs Saakashvili. NATO and the U.S. won't desert him unless they have some other puppet ready to follow their program. □

What they did not know was that not only would Batista be ousted, but wholesale capitalist relations would be ousted from Cuba and a pro-worker society free of imperialist dictation would take hold.

These rich privileged Cubans would become principal pawns for U.S. imperialism. Many of them were trained and financed to carry out the Bay of Pigs attack against Cuba.

For five decades, Miranda, along with many others, filled the gap of Cubans in the U.S. who defended the Revolution. His voice was loud and clear despite great sacrifice, even of his life.

Even before the Revolution triumphed Luis was a supporter of the movement. At Casa de las Americas, Luis organized meetings in New York City for the July 26th Movement.

Sally O'Brien, a well-known WBAI personality who has produced a program on Cuba for years, posted an article about Luis that ran in Granma in 2003. It reads:

"Luis Miranda, Casa president since 1987, has a long history of struggle in the concrete jungle of this noisy city.

"Born in Havana in 1928 and resident in the United States since 1948, Miranda affirms that the Cuban emigrant community, not by chance but with a thorough understanding, has defended the Revolution because it knows the Cuba of yesteryear where hunger, misery and prostitution were rife.

"After the visit by Fidel and Juan Manuel, we began our struggle for the Revolution with the sale of bonds to fund-raise and send money to Cuba," explains Miranda. ...

"After the arrival in the United States of Batista's henchmen and military staff we faced many problems, above all with the counterrevolutionary organizations La Rosa Blanca and Omega 7, the most aggressive.

"Maintaining our position was very difficult because those people had every kind of protection. They destroyed our Casa Cuba at the end of 1959 but, all the same, we celebrated the triumph of the Revolution and always organized events for Jan. 1 and July 26, as well as the victory at the Bay of Pigs and other dates. In 1962, we changed the name to Casa de las Americas but had to leave our place at 93rd St. and Columbus, where we had been for five years. We moved to 17th St.



2003, GRANMA

Luis Miranda sits top right behind Che Guevara in this group photo.



and Broward. We were in that building for a couple of years until the U.S. authorities threw us out for being subversive. We then moved to 18th St and Broward.

"Later we moved to 14th St. and Sixth Avenue where we have been for the last 30 years.

"They have made life very difficult, not just for me but for many other comrades. The 1960s and 1970s were critical ones in terms of those aggressive attitudes. Immigration and the U.S. government caused us a lot of problems because we defended the Revolution."

"He added that during this time, the U.S. authorities and counterrevolutionaries were extremely repressive in New Jersey; they could not accept that a venue in support of Fidel that opened its doors to U.S. and Latin American left-wing groups and societies could exist in New York.

"Many comrades and their relatives were injured or received constant threats and insults by phone.

"Luis Miranda went on to recall that at the end of the 1970s, they marched on the Pentagon in Washington and police on horseback charged them. They damaged his spinal column. They said that the police horses had bolted and came to a halt over the bodies of several protestors.

"Miranda tells of how the Novo brothers and terrorist groups in New Jersey attacked them several times in broad daylight and the sad thing was that the authorities never did anything to try and control them.

"In 1960, an explosive device was planted in the Casa that completely demolished the building. Another exploded in the Casa de las Americas during the 26th of July celebrations in 1978, breaking

windows in the entire block and causing major damage to the building.

"In 1983, a device placed inside the Musical Academy on 14th St. was deactivated. Later came another that could have blown up the entire block. However, just a few hours before, the police caught two terrorists some who confessed to the crime and a further explosion was prevented. ...

"In 1960 when Fidel came to New York, a group attacked us with sticks and chains on 125th St. They struck me in the face and I almost lost an eye. They have attacked us so many times with every possible type of weapon that both my hands are scarred from those encounters.

"In 1978, I was shot in the hip. I was coming out of a meeting in the Casa and someone fired from a nearby building. We couldn't go to the authorities because of all the lengthy explanations this would involve and so the wound became infected.

"In 1982, whilst I was leaving the Cuban diplomatic mission—when it was located on 67th St. and Park Avenue—there was a couple on the street and the woman came running towards me, crying out to me to help her, but then she grabbed my arms. The man then stabbed me with a knife. I managed to ward off the blow but I was still wounded close to my heart. They fled and with a lot of effort, I managed to get myself to the house of a friend of mine, a doctor, who put three internal and three external stitches on the left nipple."

Miranda dedicated his entire life to the Cuban Revolution. He was a brave and loyal fighter. His boisterous laugh and booming voice will sorely be missed at every picket line, every demonstration, every rally for Cuba. Luis Miranda, ¡presente! □

North American activists gather to support the Cuban Five

By Julie Fry
Toronto

On Nov. 9-10, hundreds of North American activists gathered in Toronto for a conference on the case of the Cuban Five. During the two days, Canadian and U.S. activists shared their ideas and experiences in the campaign to free the five Cuban political prisoners being held in the U.S.

One of the common problems cited by the activists in their work was the mainstream media suppression of information about the case. People discussed the work they are doing to break through what they called an information blockade about the Five. The participants, who included people from all over the continent, discussed the rallies, film screenings, public forums,

and media campaigns they are working on to spread information about the case. In Detroit, for example, activists were able to have a city council resolution passed in support of the Five.

Also participating in the conference were several Cuban leaders. Among them was Elizabet Palmeiro, the wife of Ramon Labañino—one of the Five. She read a message of solidarity from Ramon to the conference, and spoke about how difficult it is for many of the family members of the Five to visit them in prison. The U.S. government continues to deny visas to family members of the Five; several of the Five have not seen their loved ones since they were detained in 1998.

Leonard Weinglass, one of the attorneys for the Five, attended the conference

and provided a legal update on the case. He stated that he expects a decision from the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on the most recent appeal sometime after the new year, but he does not know for sure when they will issue a decision.

Conference participants made a proposal for an international day of action in support of the Five, which would take place on the day after the court of appeals issues its decision, whenever that is. The proposal calls for activists all over the world to organize actions in support of the Five on that day, regardless of how the Court of Appeals rules. In addition, the conference participants adopted a resolution affirming their support for the Five and their continued dedication to the struggle for their freedom. □



The fires of capitalism

Critics of socialism often ignore examples like Cuba, which provides adequate housing and free health care to every person living on the island—despite the U.S. blockade that has cost its economy so much.

However, an example of what can happen to the people of a country where socialist planning and institutions have been destroyed by a counter-revolution can be gleaned from a Nov. 7 New York Times article, originally entitled “Deadly fires reveal flaws in Russia’s resurgence,” but later renamed “Deadly fires expose disorder in [Russian President] Putin’s Russia.”

Describing one of many recent tragedies, the article reports: “The fast-moving fire on Oct. 2, and the grotesque panorama of desperation, injury and death that accompanied it, underscored the enduring disorder beneath Russia’s partial revival.”

In that fire, at the private Moscow Institute of Government and Corporate Management, many students and workers jumped out of windows after finding that the doors to the fire exits were locked. Both fire trucks and medical vehicles arrived late. Eleven people have died, while 30 remain hospitalized.

Fires caused the deaths of more than 17,000 people in Russia in 2006. Adjusting for population, that puts its fire death rate at more than 10 times the rates of Western Europe and the United States. This year, the number of dead hover around 40 a day.

Factors cited by the Times in the death toll include “aging electrical and heating systems in public housing and rural homes; dilapidated firefighting equipment; and widespread violations of safety codes. ... Traffic-clogged roads—caused by soaring rates of automobile ownership and uneven urban planning—have slowed fire engine response times.”

Later, the article admits: “Effective fire prevention and firefighting have been problems in Russia since the Soviet Union’s collapse.” That collapse was a boon for would-be capitalists in Russia and for the transnational corporations that quickly moved in to exploit its resources. The number of wealthy has soared. But it was a disaster for the working people, the ones who live in public housing and rural homes.

The example of Russia only highlights the dangers that capitalism—an economic and social system that has profit as its ultimate goal—can bestow on working and oppressed people.

Meanwhile, an economy and social system that is planned with the goal of human well-being in mind—a socialist system—can prevent unnecessary suffering and harm. Cuba proves this every hurricane season, when it manages to evacuate almost everyone to safety while, in neighboring countries, the death toll soars. It’s why so many are looking now to socialism as the solution to capitalist oppression and chaos. □

WWP conference Nov. 17-18

Fighting for worldwide class solidarity

By Greg Butterfield

Under the banner of “Fighting Racism and War—For a Socialist Future,” members, friends and allies of Workers World Party and the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) will gather in New York City for a national conference the weekend of Nov. 16, 17 and 18.

Communist activists and organizers from across the United States and from many communities will discuss, share information, strategize and plan actions for the coming year.

Revolutionary organizations around the globe recognize the significance of a gathering of Marxist fighters in the belly of U.S. imperialism. Messages of solidarity to the WWP conference have been received from the Cuban Communist Party, Dr. Jose Maria Sison of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, the Bolivarian Continental Coordination, Party of Liberation of Argentina, the LAB union of Euskadi in the Basque Country, Socialist Unity Centre of India, Anti-Imperialist Camp, Workers Party of Belgium, the Pole of Communist Resistance in France and more.

The weekend kicks off with a FIST national youth forum on “The Legacy of Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara” in Washington Square Park on Friday, Nov. 16, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. This public space in Greenwich Village has been the site of many radical and labor gatherings since the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire claimed the lives of 146 women workers—many of them immigrants—there in 1911. For more information, visit at fistyouth.wordpress.com.

The WWP conference will be held in the school auditorium at 127 E. 22 Street in Manhattan. Registration begins at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 17. Those who plan to attend are encouraged to pre-register at www.workersworld.net. On-site child care is available.

At the Web site, readers can also find an updated schedule of events and download conference discussion documents, including the first two chapters of a soon-to-be-published book, “Colossus with Feet of Clay: U.S. Imperialism,

Globalization and the Working Class,” by WWP Secretariat member Fred Goldstein.

The first session of the conference begins at 10 a.m. “Needed: Worldwide Class Solidarity to Build the Struggle for Socialist Future” introduces the overarching theme of the weekend’s discussion.

Following this panel, the conference will break for lunch at 11:30 a.m. People’s Video Network will offer showings of progressive films during the break.

At 1:30 p.m., discussion groups will be held. They include: “The Nature of the Capitalist Economic Crisis”; “Racism, National Oppression and the Class Struggle”; “State of the Working Class, including the Unorganized”; “Understanding Women’s and Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Trans Oppression”; and “Geopolitical Strategy of Imperialism and the Right to National Liberation.”

At 3:45 p.m., these discussion groups will repeat so attendees can participate in another topic.

At 6 p.m., the full conference will reconvene for a panel led by FIST members on “The Legacy of Che Guevara.”

A 7 p.m. dinner break will feature a special discussion about joining Workers World Party, followed by a social event in the evening.

On Sunday, Nov. 18, doors will open at 11:30 a.m.

Starting at noon, FIST will lead a panel discussion marking the 90th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution and its lessons for today’s struggle.

At 1:30 pm, the conference will wrap up with a session on “Preparing for the Struggles Ahead,” followed by the singing of the “The Internationale,” the communist anthem, at 3 p.m.

In the coming weeks, Workers World will publish excerpts from conference presentations. Key talks will be available for download on the web at www.workersworld.net.

For more information, email conference 2007@workers.org or call 212-627-2994. □

FRENCH PRESIDENT SARKOZY:

Ovations in the U.S. Congress, strikes at home

By G. Dunkel

“Freedom fries” forgotten, the combined House and Senate gave Nicolas Sarkozy a number of standing ovations during his speech to them, delivered in French Nov. 7.

Freedom fries was the name the Congressional cafeteria gave to french fries after France refused to back the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

It wasn’t just his praise of Elvis Presley, U.S. culture of the 1950s and the supposed U.S. virtues of merit pay, hard work and equal opportunity for the children of immigrants like himself (his father came to France from Hungary) that drew the ovations.

Sarkozy vowed to back the U.S. stand on Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. He won’t move French troops from Kabul to the eastern and southern parts of that country, where the fighting is heavier and the risks of French casualties are consequently greater.

But he got one of his 12 standing ovations when he said: “As for me, failure [in Afghanistan] is not an option. Terrorism will not win because democracies are not weak, because we are not afraid of this barbarism. America can count on France.”

On Iran’s nuclear program, he told the Congress, to rousing applause, that “the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable to France.”

He feels that “the major danger in Pakistan is nuclear weapons falling into the hands of extremists one day.”

Sarkozy has even publicly admitted that France is contemplating returning to NATO’s military command structure, which it left in 1966 under Charles de Gaulle.

While Sarkozy certainly feels that it is in France’s long-term interests to mend its relations with the U.S., he avoided even mentioning the word “Iraq” in his speech. At a later press conference, he said France wanted only to see “a united Iraq. It is in no one’s interest to see Iraq dismantled. We want a democratic Iraq.”

Bush didn’t push him on the issue, since international allies of significant heft have been scarce to find after Tony Blair departed from power in Britain five months ago. He went so far as to put on a skit during the state dinner in which an actor playing the Marquis de Lafayette addressed another actor playing George Washington, in French. It was Bush’s lame attempt at showing the long history of French-U.S. relations.

Sarkozy tried very hard to not get too

close to Bush, who remains deeply unpopular in France and indeed throughout Europe. In his speech, he made it clear he was addressing the people of the U.S., “the people of the greatest nation of the world.” He also made a 15-minute telephone call to Hillary Clinton, covering all his bases.

Politically, he kept some distance by criticizing the U.S. for its “weak currency” and for its “lack of leadership” on the issue of climate control. The weak dollar makes it harder for France’s exports in particular and Europe’s in general, and adds an aura of uncertainty to the world’s economy.

While Sarkozy wanted to strengthen the diplomatic ties between his country and the U.S., he was obviously hoping that a successful visit would strengthen his domestic position and polish his image.

Strikes to rock France

Sarkozy was elected on a platform of “reforming France,” removing the gains that French workers have won with decades of struggle and replacing them with working conditions common in the U.S. French workers have a constitutional right to strike and to take four weeks vacation. A majority have a legally enforceable right to their job. Eighty-five percent of French workers are retired with a full pen-

sion by 55 and some workers, like train crews and crews on fishing trawlers, have the right to retire with a full pension at age 50. College education is essentially free, except for some fees. Low-cost health care is the norm.

His trip didn’t move the unions away from their plans to strike in opposition to his pension reform. They know what U.S.-style pensions and working conditions are like. Almost all the railroad unions and the subway unions in Paris have announced they will strike Nov. 14, and they intend to stay out for a while. Many civil service workers and teachers will also walk.

The national student union met Nov. 11 and formulated a plan to blockade all college campuses and railroad stations. A series of mass meetings have been set for Nov. 12 at which students will vote on whether or not to strike. Right-wing groups are mobilizing, but so is the left, and the outcome is uncertain.

Whatever the students do, the workers are going to put all the pressure they can on Sarkozy’s government. After the success of their strike in mid-October, both sides are going to be looking at the turnout for this one. The week after his “successes” in the U.S. promises to be a week of heightened class struggle in France. □

LOS ANGELES

Fast to free Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine

Danny Glover headlined the launching of a 24-hour fast every Tuesday, initiated by Global Women's Strike in Los Angeles, to protest the kidnapping in Haiti of Haitian human rights activist Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine. The action was organized by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Haiti consisting of Global Women's Strike, the International Action Center, Pan African Activist Coalition, ANSWER, CISPES/LA and the Coalition in Solidarity with Haiti. Signs read "Return Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, End Occupation." Glover stated that since Haiti is "under the radar" in terms of corporate media coverage, actions like these are important.

Another Hollywood star came upon the demonstration and decided to join the one-day fast. Jimmy Jean-Louis plays "the Haitian" on the TV series "Heroes" and is in fact Haitian. He said he saw the demonstration while driving by and decided to stop and show support.

—John Parker

Margaret Prescod, Global Women's Strike; Danny Glover; John Parker, IAC; Hank Jones, one of the San Francisco 8.



WW PHOTO: MAGGIE VASCASSENNO

Protests continue despite martial law

Crisis grows in Pakistan

Continued from page 7

of lawyers and some judges, who have been protesting the general's assaults on the judiciary for months, are in jail.

One current and two former presidents of the Supreme Court Bar Association, as well as a former vice chair of the Pakistan Bar Council, have been arrested and interrogated by military intelligence. No one is allowed to see them and there are allegations they have been tortured.

Precipitating Musharraf's state of emergency and crackdown on the judiciary, the Supreme Court had refused to certify an election in October that the dictator claimed gave him the right to continue in the presidency. Under Pakistan's constitution, the head of the army cannot simultaneously be president of the country.

Prominent figures arrested

When Imran Khan, a legendary Pakistani cricket player turned politician, emerged from hiding to address students at a university in Lahore, a city southeast of the capital, he was first greeted by supporters but was then seized by Islamic students, who accused him of being pro-U.S. and pro-British. They released Khan, who left in a van but was then arrested by police. Khan was charged under Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Act, which includes penalties that can carry the death sentence or life imprisonment.

Akhtar Hussain, general secretary of the National Workers Party of Pakistan, also a deputy secretary of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and former president of the Sindh High Court Bar Association, was arrested in the wee hours of the morning on Nov. 13.

The day before, Hussain had presided over a large meeting of lawyers in Karachi that passed a resolution calling for the launching of a nationwide people's movement to end martial law and pressure Musharraf to step down, paving the way for "real democracy and an independent judiciary."

When, on Nov. 12, a group of students in the capital, Islamabad, held a silent protest against martial law and the gag order, carrying signs and wearing tape across their mouths as they walked outside a public park, they were suddenly surrounded by 500 police and commandos from the regime's Anti-Terrorist Force.

According to a posting on the web site of the Communist Workers and Peasants Party of Pakistan, "Forty-eight boys were physically assaulted and detained,

amongst them a 12-year-old boy. Even after they had turned themselves in with docility, many of them were beaten with sticks and severely bruised. They were detained in the Margalla Police Station for hours, and were prevented from meeting visitors or making calls. They were eventually released after they had signed written assurances not to attend protests in the future."

Bush sends Negroponte

The Bush administration is sending John Negroponte, now number two person in the State Department, back to Pakistan for talks with Musharraf that supposedly will tell him to end martial law and restore the constitution. But what the government of U.S. imperialist big business really wants is a Pakistan—with or without Musharraf—stable enough so the Pentagon can continue to pursue its plans for the area. These include widening the war in Afghanistan and putting even more pressure on Iran—both countries that border on Pakistan.

According to Musharraf himself in his memoirs, the U.S. threatened Pakistan after 9/11 that it could be "bombed back into the Stone Age" if it didn't join the U.S. "war on terror." But U.S. wars and occupations in the region have since alienated the whole Muslim world, and Musharraf has been walking a tightrope in his own country between the secular opposition calling for democracy and Islamic forces that don't want Pakistan dragged into more wars against neighboring forces in conflict with Washington's drive to recolonize the area.

While the present crisis in Pakistan appears to encompass elements of all social classes in opposition to Musharraf, the underlying social conditions are felt most keenly by the workers and peasants.

Underlying social crisis

Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world, with 165 million people. Until 1947, it was part of India and



New York protest against martial law in Pakistan Nov. 8. Demonstrators chanted, "Go, Musharraf go!" and "End martial law!"

WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD

Protest in Pakistan, November 14.

spent almost a century under British colonial rule. For most of the 60 years since independence, it has been under the thumb of U.S.-supported military dictators.

In this period, feudo-bourgeois elements like Bhutto, who comes from a wealthy land-owning family, as well as the military caste that has controlled the government under Musharraf and earlier dictators, have become extremely rich—even billionaires. But for the Pakistani people, this period has been one of great misery.

According to United Nations figures, one third of the people live below the official poverty line. But 65 million—almost 40 percent—live on less than \$1 a day, showing how inadequate the poverty figures are. Infant mortality is 73 per 1,000 live births.

By contrast, in neighboring Iran, infant mortality has gone down to 28.6 since its revolution in 1979 swept away the hated Shah Reza Pahlevi, a U.S. puppet whose brutal rule had given a free rein to U.S. and British oil companies.

Washington cannot but be deeply worried that mass upheavals in Pakistan, if they bring down Musharraf, may not be satisfied with another regime that carries out U.S. dictates, even if it comes wearing civilian clothes.

As the Cuban newspaper Granma explained on Nov. 12, the U.S. has had a dual relationship with Musharraf, "whom they call a close ally in the 'war on terrorism' while on the other hand they say 'he isn't doing enough.' One of the problems facing the strategists at the White House

is the absence of a strong substitute for Musharraf, who is keenly aware of the structural weakness of the corrupt and divided opposition. ...

"At least on three occasions the U.S. government threatened to invade Pakistani territory and went so far as to threaten to 'send it back to the Stone Age' under the pretext that border zones were being used as Al Qaeda and Taliban sanctuaries. That statement received a rebuff from Musharraf.

"It should be noted that shortly before her return to Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto said she favored a U.S. military presence in the region and the turning over of the leader of the Pakistani nuclear program to the U.S. for trial."

Meanwhile, even as maneuvering continues on the top, demonstrations are continuing in the streets of Pakistan's major cities, despite martial law.

And around the world, Pakistani expatriates are being joined by progressives and anti-imperialists in protests demanding "Go, Musharraf go!" and "End martial law!"

In the United States, protests have been reported in New York, Washington, Boston and Austin, Tex. The Pakistan-USA Freedom Forum organized a demonstration at the United Nations. Progressive U.S. lawyers and civil libertarians rallied in a number of cities on Nov. 13 against the brutal treatment of attorneys and judges in Pakistan. Students walked out of several universities in New York to protest Musharraf's declaration of martial law.

In Canada, at least two protests were held in Toronto.

In Europe, major demonstrations were held in London, near the prime minister's residence, and in Manchester, as well as in Berlin. □

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Conferencia de 'paz' en EEUU para preparación de una nueva guerra

Por Sara Flounders

Las acciones de los gobiernos de Estados Unidos e Israel dicen mucho más que sus propias palabras. Estos anunciaron una posible "conferencia de paz" sobre Palestina, originalmente programada para el 26 de noviembre en Anápolis, Maryland, pero para el 7 de noviembre aún no se sabía cuándo sería.

La Secretaria de Estado Condoleezza Rice ha estado viajando por el Medio Oriente prometiendo que la reunión alcanzará un "proceso" para una eventual solución de un estado Palestino. En los últimos meses Rice ha viajado ocho veces a la región como preparativo para esta conferencia internacional, reuniéndose con Israel y algunos líderes políticos árabes que pueden someterse a los deseos estadounidenses.

Indicando las dificultades que enfrenta tal encuentro, la reunión en Anápolis aún no tiene una fecha oficial confirmada, ni participantes, ni agenda. Enfrentados a una desastrosa guerra en Irak, una resistencia continuada en Afganistán, un levantamiento explosivo en Pakistán y a sólo un año de terminar la presidencia de Bush, ningún gobierno parece querer aceptar la invitación.

Los reportes israelitas dejan ver claro que la administración de Bush no pondrá presión para que se defina una declaración o una fecha. No hay planes concretos para discutir asuntos decisivos como son el regreso de refugiados o el estatus final de Jerusalén. El democráticamente elegido gobierno palestino, liderado por Hamas, será totalmente excluido.

Entonces, ¿Cuál es el propósito de este gran encuentro del Medio Oriente en Anápolis?

Una respuesta viene de Arabia Saudita, una monarquía absoluta sin derechos para nadie que no sea la multimillonaria familia gobernante que depende totalmente del equipo militar y del apoyo político estadounidense.

La prensa saudita está estrictamente controlada. Por eso fue importante cuan-

do el noticiero Arab News, el periódico principal bajo el control del gobierno, admitió el primero de noviembre que: "El motivo real detrás de la decisión de organizar una conferencia y las actividades que se están dando ahora, han sido explicadas como un intento por garantizar el apoyo árabe total a la posición de Estados Unidos sobre las ambiciones nucleares de Irán...."

"Es aparente que el Presidente Bush quiere hacer de la ocasión un gran espectáculo con la participación de líderes mundiales representando a los G-8, la ONU, el Cuarteto del Medio Oriente y los estados árabes, aunque sólo se firmaría un acuerdo vacío."

Una observación similar llegó de la resistencia palestina la cual fue excluida de la reunión. El líder de Hamas, Khaled Mashaal, dijo en una rueda de prensa en Damasco, "Hay preparaciones para una agresión en contra de Irán que podría incluir a otros participantes—Siria, el Líbano y Hizbolá. Por lo tanto, América nos está distraiendo con un juego falso y se está preparando para uno real."

El líder de alto rango de Hamas Muhammad Nazall dijo en otra entrevista: "La razón detrás de la conferencia no es Palestina, sino para ganar apoyo para un golpe contra Irán. La administración estadounidense tiene que demostrar que está haciendo esfuerzos para resolver la cuestión palestina, a la vez que toca los tambores de guerra contra Irán".

El periódico londinense The Guardian el 4 de noviembre dio una explicación casi igual. Bush tiene que "verse haciendo algo relacionado con el conflicto entre Israel y Palestina en un momento en que tiene que acorralar a sus aliados árabes para la confrontación que viene con Irán".

En una reunión el 3 de noviembre con el Consejo Egipcio sobre Asuntos Extranjeros, una organización de ex diplomáticos egipcios, el secretario general del grupo, Osama al-Razali Harb dijo a la prensa, "Hay mucha sospecha en todo el espectro político en Egipto que los EEUU había convocado la cumbre para

preparar el terreno en el Medio Oriente para una confrontación con Irán".

En un editorial en el New York Times del 6 de noviembre, David Brooks explicó con aprobación: "Realmente no tiene que ver con Israel y Palestina; es sobre Irán. ... Es un poco lamentable que el proceso de paz en sí sea hueco. Es como celebrar una boda sin una pareja porque se quiere reunir a los invitados para otro propósito. Pero ese hueco puede llenarse después. Lo más importante es organizar a los que se oponen a Irán con algún pretexto y entonces transformar la correlación estratégica de fuerzas en la región".

Un titular en el periódico The Guardian del 24 de octubre resumió la opinión expresada en todas las capitales y por los políticos de todas las inclinaciones políticas sobre el resultado de la propuesta reunión. Decía: "Por fin, consenso en el Medio Oriente: todos están de acuerdo en que esas conversaciones están destinadas a fracasar".

Mientras que la presión de los EEUU e Israel ha sido exitosa en dividir a las fuerzas de Abbas y Hamas creando así una gran división en el liderazgo palestino, Israel no ha ofrecido virtualmente nada a Abbas en recompensa. La táctica israelita y estadounidense es la de llevar a cabo negociaciones para dar la impresión que algo está pasando mientras que Israel no tiene planes de ofrecer nada. Quiere dividir y luego destruir al movimiento palestino.

Castigo colectivo para Gaza

En todas estas discusiones no hay mención alguna y no hay cobertura noticiera de la continua estrangulación de la población en Gaza. A pesar de su retirada oficial hace dos años, Israel sigue controlando todo acceso a la Franja de Gaza y permanece como poder ocupador, tanto en lo legal como en lo práctico.

El año pasado los palestinos eligieron por mayoría abrumadora a Hamas, una fuerza musulmana vista como más intransigente hacia la ocupación israelí.

Desde esta elección democrática, Israel, en un esfuerzo para doblegar la voluntad de los palestinos a resistir, ha confiscado cientos de millones de dólares en impuestos palestinos que están en la obligación de pagar a Palestina según acuerdos previos. Tanto Estados Unidos como la Unión Europea han impuesto sus propias sanciones sobre Palestina y han retirado sus ayudas. El comercio está cerrado. Los trabajadores palestinos no pueden viajar en busca de trabajo. Los productos agrícolas y hasta las medicinas esenciales, las partes electrónicas, la reparación de los servicios de saneamiento y alcantarillado están bloqueados. El resultado es un enorme aumento en el desempleo, la pobreza y la malnutrición.

Ahora el castigo colectivo del pueblo de Gaza ha alcanzado un nuevo nivel. Israel no está permitiendo que entren en Gaza provisiones de petróleo para las 1.5 millones de personas que habitan la Franja. Esto no sólo afecta la transportación, sino

que tampoco funciona la electricidad ni la extracción de agua para beber y para el saneamiento.

Gaza sigue resistiendo en su condición como gueto bloqueado y rodeado. Cohetes israelíes golpean edificios de apartamentos y vehículos a cualquier hora. Israel siempre dice que sus ataques son una respuesta a los ataques de cohetes palestinos, pero la proporción de muertes palestinas a muertes israelíes es de más de 30 a una.

Cuando cerraron Rafah, la frontera oficial para cruzar, las fuerzas israelitas dijeron el 1 de noviembre que descubrieron y destruyeron siete túneles más utilizados por militantes palestinos para pasar provisiones esenciales, armas y personas. Los túneles pueden variar de extensión desde 100 yardas a media milla. Cientos de túneles han sido destruidos, pero inmediatamente el trabajo comienza para construir otros.

Los cantones de Cisjordania

A pesar de las muchas promesas israelíes de liberar a los más de 12,000 detenidos políticos palestinos, una liberación publicada para el mes sagrado de Ramadán, liberó solamente a 90 prisioneros. Este acto fue rápidamente revocado por la detención de 78 palestinos más, incluyendo a seis niños y dos mujeres. Los detenidos en el centro de detención del Desierto Negev confirmaron que tres secciones nuevas han sido añadidas al campamento.

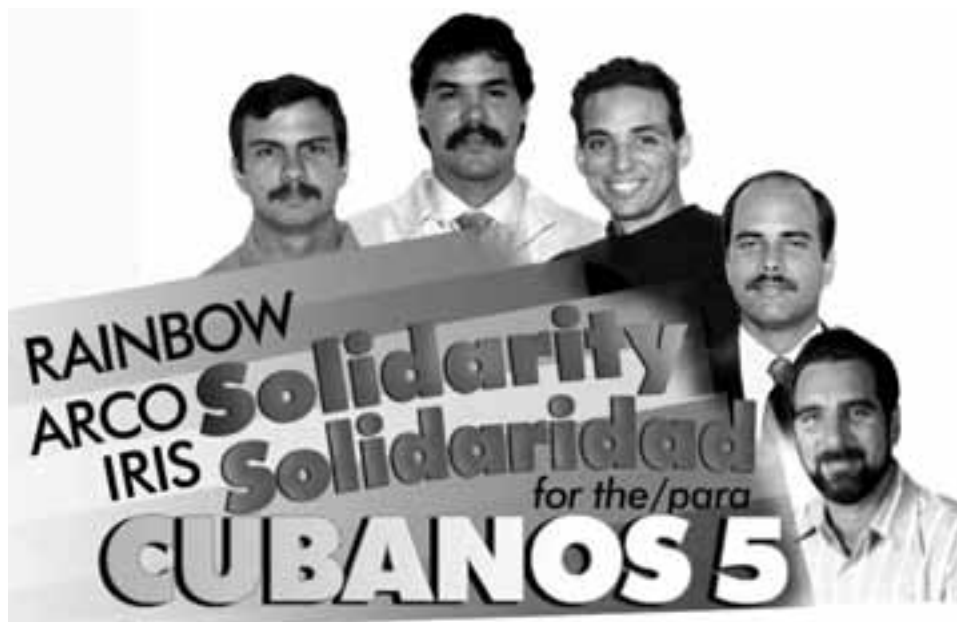
A principios de noviembre, mientras representantes del gobierno de emergencia de Abbas se reunían con políticos israelitas sobre una "declaración de principios" que se revelaría en la reunión de Anápolis, el ejército israelí anunció la expropiación de otros 300 acres de tierra palestina cerca del Jerusalén ocupado del Este.

La confiscación de la tierra era para construir un desvío que efectivamente cortaría en dos a Cisjordania y hacer así imposible un estado palestino contiguo. Esto asegurará aún más la colonización de las masivas comunidades judías que dividen a Cisjordania. El camino abrirá esta zona para 3,500 viviendas más y docenas de negocios que se abrirían.

Hay ahora 563 puntos de inspección de vehículos en Cisjordania, dividiendo aún más la tierra en cantones al estilo del apartheid. El movimiento libre y toda actividad económica normal se hacen imposibles.

Las demoliciones, las confiscaciones de tierra, la expansión de las colonias, los asesinatos, las incursiones armadas y la construcción del muro de separación; todo esto continúa.

Ninguna de estas cuestiones será resuelta ni siquiera mencionada en la reunión auspiciada por los Estados Unidos. La única posibilidad para una paz verdadera en el Medio Oriente es que Estados Unidos se retire de la región. □



Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández and René González.