

ALL OUT FOR APRIL 20!

Do you have your bus ticket yet for Washington, D.C., or San Francisco? This day of coordinated protests against Bush and Company's war and racism is building momentum around the world. **6**

'STOP THE RACIST ROUNDUPS!'

From Chicago to Brooklyn, supporters of Arabs and Muslims secretly swept up in mass raids loudly denounce these racist detentions. **5**

'SUBMIT OR STARVE'

That was Bush's message to Latin America on his three-nation tour. But demonstrators delivered an angry answer. And when Fidel Castro was asked to leave a conference in Mexico before the U.S. emperor arrived, it ignited a firestorm of protest. **8-9**

A SEA OF RED FLAGS

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As economic chaos deepens

Mass protests shake Argentina

By Bill Hackwell and Alicia Jrapko
Buenos Aires, Argentina

The ongoing political struggle in Argentina continues to escalate with mass protests in Cordoba, Mendoza, Buenos Aires and other cities. This wave of protests came on the 26th anniversary of the military coup that had resulted in the disappearance of 30,000 people and ushered in an escalation of imperialist penetration into the country.

In Cordoba, the second-largest city in Argentina, 20,000 people gathered on March 22 in the busy intersection of Avenida Colon and General Paz and marched to the Government House. The march was called by HIJOS and by Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. These organizations are made up of the children and grandmothers of the disappeared.

A significant number of trade unions brought out large contingents of their ranks. They included Light and Power (Luz y Fuerza), United Union of Municipal Employees, Union of Graphic Workers, Provincial Union of Sanitary Workers, the Confederation of Argentinean Workers and others.

The struggle against privatization has energized the union movement in an attempt to preserve their jobs. Transnational corporations own almost all basic industries in Argentina. Foreign corporations own even the highways. Road tolls are a most outrageous act of everyday robbery.

High school and university students and grassroots organizations from the popular assemblies also participated in the demonstrations. Popular assemblies are new neighborhood political organizations that surfaced

during December 2000 and are independent of the government.

Also present were left political parties, including the United Left, Free Homeland, Workers' Party, Party of Liberation and others.

As the march passed the most hated bank in Argentina—the Bank of Boston—a group of young protesters broke windows, spray painted the walls, disabled an ATM machine and set fire to the front lawn of the bank.

Protesters fill streets of Buenos Aires

The largest protest took place in Buenos Aires. Some 250,000 people filled the Avenida de Mayo from the Congress to the Plaza de Mayo across the street from the Casa Rosada—the presidential palace.

In addition to recalling the reactionary coup 26 years ago and the demand for justice for the disappeared, the demonstration was also a struggle against the current Duhalde government, seen by most as a servant of imperialism.

Feeder marches came down side streets with large contingents representing most districts of Buenos Aires. Significant was the presence of many from the Movement of Unemployed Workers (MTD). Members of this group, commonly referred to as piqueteros, have conducted nationwide blockades of highways, sit-downs in work places that are about to be closed, and spontaneous unannounced protests against transnational targets.

What also made this mass march different from previous protests was the participation of established

Continued on page 8



Mothers of Plaza de Mayo take part in mass march of 250,000 people in Buenos Aires, Argentina, protesting economic crisis. The mothers have demonstrated at the plaza for their disappeared sons and daughters every week for the past 25 years.

WW PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

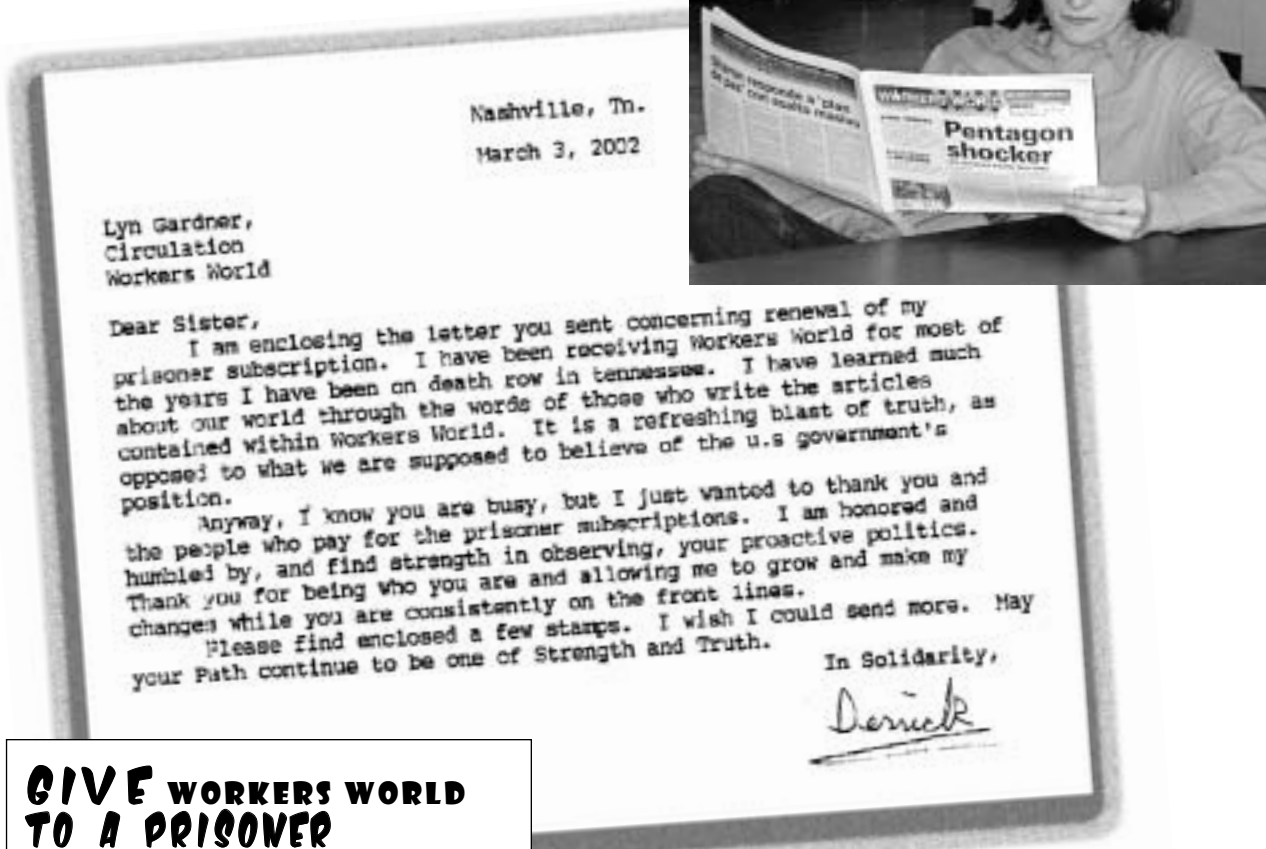
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National Office
55 W. 17 St.,
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Atlanta P.O. Box 424,
Atlanta, Ga. 30301
(404) 235-5704
Baltimore 426 E. 31 St.,
Baltimore, Md. 21218
(410) 235-7040

Boston 31 Germania St.,
Boston, Mass. 02130
(Enter at 284 Amory St.)
(617) 983-3835;
Fax (617) 983-3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
P.O. Box 1204
Buffalo NY 14213
(716) 857-2112
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago P.O. Box 06178,
Wacker Drive Station,
Chicago, Ill. 60606
(773) 381-5839;
Fax (773) 761-9330;
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
3030 Euclid Ave.,
LL1, Cleveland, Ohio
44115 phone/
fax (216) 426-0851
cleveland@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.,
Detroit, Mich. 48202
(313) 831-0750;
detroit@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 130322,
Houston, Texas
77219 (713) 861-5965
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
422 S. Western Ave.,
Room 114,
Los Angeles, Calif. 90020
(213) 487-2368
fax (213) 387-9355
la@workers.org

Milwaukee
P.O. Box 12839,
Milwaukee, Wis. 53212
milw@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 9202,
Philadelphia, Pa. 19139
(610) 352-3625;
phila@workers.org

Richmond, Va.
P.O. Box 14602,
Richmond, Va. 23221
richmond@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
2117 Buffalo Rd., PMB.
303, Rochester, N.Y. 14624
(716) 436-6458;
rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
3659 India St., #102,
San Diego, Calif. 92103
(619) 692-4496

San Francisco
2489 Mission St.
Rm. 28,
San Francisco,
Calif. 94110
(415) 826-4828;
fax (415) 821-5782;
sf@workers.org

Seattle
1218 E. Cherry #201,
Seattle, Wash. 98122
(206) 325-0085

State College, Pa.
100 Grandview Rd.,
State College,
Pa. 16801
(814) 237-8695;
jxb58@psu.edu

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300,
Washington, DC 20037,
(202) 347-9300
dc@workers.org

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WW CALENDAR

BALTIMORE

Thu., April 4

Commemorate the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Join with the Baltimore chapter of the National Action Network and the All-Peoples Congress to demand no war or racism. 6 p.m. At the War Memorial, Gay & Fayette Sts. Reception following the rally at the APC Hall, 426 E. 31st St.

Sundays

Classes on imperialism sponsored by Baltimore Workers World Party. 7 p.m. At 426 E. 31st St. For info (410) 467-6132.

NEW YORK

Fri., April 12

Fundraiser for the medical care needs of the survivors of hunger strikes in Turkey. Sponsored by the U.S.

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Two Black actors make Oscar history

By Monica Moorehead

"This moment is so much bigger than me. This moment is for Dorothy Dandridge, Lena Horne, Diahann Carroll," said Halle Berry at the 74th annual Academy Awards ceremony on March 24. Berry had just made Academy Award history by being the first African American ever to win the Oscar for Best Leading Actress.

Prior to Berry, only two Black women—Hattie McDaniel and Whoopi Goldberg—had received Oscars, and then in the Best Supporting Actress category.

After receiving a standing ovation, Berry said about her win, "It's for the women who stand beside me: Jada Pinkett, Angela Bassett, Viveca Fox. It's for every nameless, faceless woman of color that now has a chance because this door has been opened." Berry also thanked Black director Spike Lee for casting her in her first breakthrough role in "Jungle Fever" in 1990.

Dandridge, Horne and Carroll waged heroic battles against racist, stereotypical movie roles for Black women from the 1940s through the 1970s. The late Dorothy Dandridge was the first Black woman to be Oscar-nominated for Best Lead Actress back in 1954; Carroll was nominated in the same category in 1974. Pinkett, Bassett and Fox are all current African American actors.

In another historic moment this year, Denzel Washington became the second Black male actor to ever win a Best Leading Actor Oscar. The first was Sidney

Poitier, who won in 1964. Washington, who won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor in 1990, joins a handful of multiple Academy Award winners.

Poitier won an honorary Oscar this year for lifetime achievement. A stunning, moving film tribute to Poitier by other Black actors was shown before Washington helped to present Poitier the award. The tribute was by an African American woman director, Kasi Lemmons, whose film *Eve's Bayou* was overlooked by the Academy several years ago.

If winning an Oscar were consistently and objectively based on giving a memorable, great performance, Denzel Washington should have received the award for his 1992 portrayal of Malcolm X or even his 1999 portrayal of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter. Instead, Washington won for his role as a stereotypical, Black corrupt cop in "Training Day." In reality, Washington may have received this best actor Oscar as long-overdue recognition of his brilliant, overall body of film work, rather than this one performance.

Why are these two wins so historic? Examine the numbers. According to CBS television, only 39 performances by African American actors have been nominated out of 1,369 overall acting nominations since the first Academy Award ceremony in 1929. According to CNN, Black nominations have accounted for just 2.2 percent of the Academy Award nominations; before March 23, only six Black people had won Oscars.



Halle Berry and Denzel Washington

Considering these statistics and the tremendous social impact of movies on U.S. mainstream culture, two African Americans winning the top honors in one ceremony is a big step forward in challenging the racist barriers erected by Hollywood since the 1915 pro-slavery silent movie "The Birth of a Nation."

The actors who select the nominees in all acting categories make up the most progressive current of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Once the nominees are established, however, all branches of the Academy vote for who will actually receive the Oscars. There are thousands of

members of the Academy. It is still dominated by white men who overwhelmingly control the decision-making positions, despite minor inroads by people of color and/or women. These conservative executives have the final say on what pictures get made, the film budgets and even character development.

Whatever motivated official Hollywood to award Berry and Washington these prestigious acting awards, it should be viewed as an extremely late concession. The movie and television industries have been under increasing scrutiny and attack for their lack of decent roles for Black and other actors of color. This political pressure certainly had an important impact on what happened March 24.

At the same time, Hollywood bigwigs made a concession to the Bush administration and the Pentagon by giving Oscars to two pro-war movies, "Black Hawk Down" and "Pearl Harbor," along with showing a film clip of Laura Bush during the ceremony. This is a reminder that the U.S. movie industry plays a leading role in promoting a militaristic, racist, misogynist, anti-gay, chauvinist society.

Halle Berry's remarks let millions of people around the world know that the struggle of actors of color, especially women, to have equal access to significant movie roles is far from over. Berry's and Washington's wins reveal that Hollywood still has a long way to go to right the wrongs of institutionalized racist policies and depictions of people of color.

FLORIDA

Same-sex foster parents fight for their children

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

A struggle against a zealously anti-gay campaign is currently being waged in Florida. Adoption by lesbian and gay people was banned in the state in 1977, the result of a right-wing crusade to "Save Our Children" under the figurehead leadership of reactionary Anita Bryant.

Now several gay male foster parents are challenging the ban. The American Civil Liberties Union has filed a suit on behalf of foster parents Wayne Smith and Dan Skahen. The suit also includes partners Steven Lofton and Roger Croteau, who are raising five children—including three foster children who have never known other parents. Another plaintiff, Doug Houghton, has raised a 10-year-old boy for five years. Last year the court that denied his appeal for adoption admitted that he and the child were as close as biological parent and child. (www.aclu.org/news)

Support for repealing the ban has come from many quarters.

As part of a coordinated effort to overturn the bigoted ban, Emmy-award-winning talk-show host Rosie O'Donnell—also a Florida foster parent—spoke about her sexuality publicly for the first time in a March 14 ABC television "Primetime Thursday" interview with Diane Sawyer. Since the program aired, Florida legislators have received more than 100,000 e-mails asking that the ban be overturned. (www.expressgaynews)

The Child Welfare League of America filed a brief in support of the ACLU lawsuit. The CWLA is an 80-year-old organization serving more than 3 million children and families annually. CWLA support for

gay foster parents follows on the heels of an endorsement of lesbian and gay parenthood by the American Academy of Pediatrics. In the February issue of its journal "Pediatrics," the peer-reviewed, scientific journal stated, "Children who are born to or adopted by one member of a same-sex couple deserve the security of two legally recognized parents."

Nine former members of the Florida House and Senate who helped pass the ban recently issued a statement saying, "We now realize we were wrong. This discriminatory law prevents children from being adopted into loving, supportive homes—and we hope it will be overturned." Signers include the former speaker of the Florida House of Representatives and the former president of the State Senate.

The real danger to foster children: poverty

Movement organizing pushed back the wave of openly right-wing, anti-abortion violence that hit Florida between 1984 and 1994. Now opposition to lesbian and gay parenting in Florida is led by right-wing groups such as the Center for Reclaiming America, an outgrowth of Coral Ridge Ministries.

Coral Ridge Ministries makes no secret of the fact that it is a key backer of Judge Roy Moore, the Alabama Supreme Court chief justice who recently issued a viciously bigoted ruling against a lesbian mother.

CRA initiatives include a campaign to send baby rattles to U.S. senators to get them to confirm anti-abortion nominees to the U.S. Supreme Court. (www.religioustolerance.org)

Last summer more than 3,000 people—

lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, families and friends—marched to protest a series of anti-gay newspaper ads placed by Coral Ridge Ministries and other extremist groups. Gays United to Attack Repression and Discrimination—GUARD—sponsored the "March for Truth."

The march was made up of a coalition of more than 40 South Florida organizations, including the American Federation of Veterans, Black and White Men Together, Congregation Etz Chaim, Dignity, Florida NOW, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, PFLAG, and the Stonewall Library and Archives.

Tony Ramos, president of GUARD, denounced Coral Ridge's newspaper attacks. "Their ads play on people's insecurities about homosexuality for political and monetary gain. They ... foster bigotry and violence against lesbian and gay people." (www.gaytoday.badpuppy.com)

Other Florida organizers are preparing to defend an existing Miami-Dade County ordinance that passed in 1998. It prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. Right-wing elements are attempting to repeal that ordinance. They denounce lesbian, gay, bi and trans people and their supporters as "corrupt enemies of democracy," while cloaking themselves in a "pro-family" mantle. (www.miami.com)

In fact, figures from the 2000 census show that nontraditional households now make up 75 percent of all families in the U.S. (New York Times, March 15) And that means lesbian, gay, bi and trans families, too.

Wayne Smith, a plaintiff in the ACLU suit, told a gathering of supporters at a March 14 forum at the Gay and Lesbian

Community Center of South Florida, "This is not a gay rights case. This is a children's rights case."

His remarks underscore the grave crisis for foster care children in this country. Between 1986 and 1996, the number of children in the overall U.S. foster care system increased 90 percent. At the same time, the number of foster families dropped by 3 percent. (www.join-hands.com/fostercare)

The advocacy group Join Hands-Justice for Children notes that implementation of so-called "welfare reform" coincides with the rise of children in foster care. The charge of neglect is used in over half the cases in which children are removed from their homes. The organization argues that behind this neglect are two key problems—substance abuse and poverty—neither of which is being addressed through state support.

Instead, Aid to Dependent Children is being wiped out through "workfare" programs. Loving parents are less and less able to feed and clothe their children, while foster care children have a clothing allowance and access to Medicaid. (join-hands.com)

The right wing is trying to demonize loving gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgender parents. But the danger to children comes from the brutal effects of poverty and oppression.

Pratt, born in Selma, Ala., wrote her award-winning book of poetry, "Crime Against Nature," after losing custody of her two children because she came out as a lesbian in North Carolina in 1975. The book takes its title from the still-existing state "sodomy" statute criminalizing same-sex love.

'The lesson of sticking together'

Georgia machinists put down tools

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta, Ga.

Members of the International Association of Machinists Local 709—2,700 strong—are walking picket lines 24 hours a day in front of the sprawling Lockheed-Martin plant in Marietta, Ga.

Their strike against the world's largest defense contractor began on March 11, following the membership's overwhelming rejection of the company's revised "last, best and final offer." Two California locals accepted the deal.

The defining issue for the workers is the corporation's refusal to end its policy of outsourcing. The giant firm, virtually synonymous with the military-industrial com-

plex, claims that in order to stay "competitive" in the global economy, it must constantly lower labor costs and use cheaper materials.

This translates into union-busting, unsafe working conditions, and a lower standard of living for Lockheed-Martin workers, and raises issues about the reliability and safety of the planes.

In 1999, a strike was averted at the last minute over the same issue. But IAM members say management undermined the contractual agreement on outsourcing at every turn.

Lockheed workers have filed an unusually high number of grievances over the years, according to a Georgia State University labor expert. A common source of

conflict is the reclassification of a job from an hourly to a salaried position. The other way the company has managed to reduce the union-represented workforce to less than 40 percent of the 7,000 people employed there is to subcontract work to nonunion contractors.

The Marietta facility, located at Dobbins Air Force Base, builds the F-22 Raptor fighter plane and the C-130J Hercules transport. Under the Bush administration's program of "endless war," beefed-up contracts have been awarded to Lockheed-Martin, totaling billions of dollars.

IAM members of Local 709 are on average 53 years old and have 21 years of seniority. Currently they earn about \$23 an hour.

The Lockheed workers, who have not been on strike since 1977, voted down a revised "last" offer that increased their hourly pay by 10 percent over the next three years but retained "flexibility" for management in outsourcing. The rejected contract would have also required that local members not support other union members on strike.

The sentiment of those walking the picket lines is that a pay increase doesn't matter much if the job disappears.

As Jimmie Brooks put it, "My daddy was a Pullman porter in 1946. He taught us about unions and the importance of sticking together. To me that's the right thing to do." Jimmie Brooks is teaching his children the same lesson.

Seattle schools

Bus drivers struggle to keep union jobs

By Jim McMahan
Teamsters Local 763
Seattle

The Seattle School District is trying to cancel its contract with the Laidlaw Co. and kill the jobs of 300 school bus drivers. Experienced Teamster bus drivers at Laidlaw have been transporting children to school for 30 years.

Laidlaw has had a bus contract with the district all this time. But now the district transportation office recommends dumping the Laidlaw drivers and giving the contract to two non-union companies: First Student and Durham.

With only two days' notice that their jobs were on the line, close to 100 drivers packed a school board meeting on March 6. Teamster drivers Robert Alexander and Deloris Capers spoke out strongly against the district's budget-cutting move at the expense of their jobs and their many years of experience.

District transportation executive Steve Neilson recommended dumping Laidlaw

in order to save \$1.5 million, according to his figures. But he completely ignored the experience of the Laidlaw drivers. Seventy have 20 years or more experience, 100 have 10 years or more, and most have five or more.

First Student and Durham would bring in inexperienced, nonunion drivers to transport students to school.

Laidlaw drivers have won union benefits, better wages and job security. They have the experience to transport children safely. They know how to transport and care for disabled students who use wheelchairs, autistic youth and those with behavioral disorders. But thus far, the Seattle School District bid recommendation takes none of this into account.

The Teamsters have recently exposed that Durham has had major problems with safety at its large yard in Hayward, Calif. Some 28 percent of its buses were taken out of service by the California Highway Patrol for mechanical problems.

After finally being able to see the bid proposals of Laidlaw, Durham and First Stu-

dent, the union found out that Durham provides only one mechanic per 42 buses. Laidlaw has to provide one mechanic for every 18 buses.

Thus, it's becoming clear to drivers that the school district wants to end Laidlaw's contract in order to break the union. With no union in Seattle school bus transportation, it would be a race to the bottom in wages and benefits. It would also be open season for harassment and discrimination against workers.

The district's deadline for awarding the transportation contract was March 20. But the Teamster bus drivers organized a march and rally on March 19. They petitioned at the schools and among the parents and in their communities. They went to other unions for support. A large number of letters, phone calls and e-mails were sent to the school board by parents and drivers in support of the jobs of Laidlaw drivers.

On March 19, more than 400 drivers, students, mechanics and supporters from

other unions marched on district headquarters.

Speakers included representatives of Teamsters 763; Steve Williamson, head of the Seattle/King Co. Labor Council; Celso Tolman of the ILWU and Asia Pacific Labor Alliance; and representatives of other unions.

Laidlaw bus drivers turned out en masse, and six big school buses were parked in front of the district headquarters. Other unions well represented at the support demonstration were the school teachers of the Seattle Education Association, newly organized teaching assistants at the University of Washington-UAW, Machinists Local 289 and District Local 751.

The next day, the school board was forced to extend the deadline for the contract bid until its next meeting on April 3. This allows time for the union to organize and reach out to students, teachers, parents, unions and communities in the fight for the drivers' jobs.

The labor movement will work hard to organize a large rally at the school board meeting in a desperate attempt to save the jobs of those who have worked hard much of their lives for the children.

The Seattle School District is not broke; it has the money to start building a new \$40-million headquarters.

This all fits in with President George Bush's double-barreled attack on workers at home and abroad, which is bringing mass unemployment, cutbacks in education, union busting, racist repression and war. The federal government has decentralized and handed off the dirty work of cutbacks to the local governments.

30 years in solitary

Angola prisoner faces new repression

By Leslie George
Angola 3 Committee

Herman Wallace of the Angola 3 has been sentenced to Camp J., the Louisiana State Penitentiary's solidarity confinement/punishment camp, following a disciplinary hearing on March 13.

The Angola 3 are Wallace, Albert Woodfox and Robert King Wilkerson. The three fought for prison reform in the early 1970s. As a result, prison officials framed them for crimes they did not commit. Wilkerson was released on Feb. 8, 2001.

Wallace and Woodfox, who created a chapter of the Black Panther Party behind bars in the early 1970s, remain locked down 23 hours a day. On April 18, 2002, they will have been in solitary for 30 years.

Now prison officials claim they found a small piece of metal in Wallace's cell during a shakedown on March 11—the third

Angola 3 committee with Herman Wallace, seated left, and Albert Woodfox, seated right.

shakedown of Wallace's cell that week. Officials allege they found a contraband after searching his cell while he was out in a "yard" for exercise. They claim the piece of metal, which Wallace adamantly denies having, could be used to open handcuffs.

Wallace believes he was set up in part because of a pending American Civil Liberties Union suit against state officials for his long-term solitary confinement.

At a disciplinary hearing, Wallace challenged the authorities to give him and the officer who searched his cell a lie detector test, but his request was denied and he was found guilty.



At Camp J., Wallace will lose even the few privileges he is afforded in his current solitary confinement status. He has already been stripped of all his property except for writing materials, a dictionary and his copy of "Lockdown America" by Christian Parenti. He will be forced to wear leg irons during his three hours per week of solitary exercise in a fenced-in cage. Phone calls are limited to one per month.

For more information, visit www.Angola3.org.

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Anthrax-laced letters

Does FBI know who did it?

By Greg Butterfield

The latest attempt to link last year's anthrax scare to the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon collapsed almost before it began.

A sensational New York Times headline March 23 claimed, "Report linking anthrax and hijackers is investigated." The story originated with Christos Tsonas, a Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., doctor who treated Ahmed Alhaznawi, one of the men U.S. officials say carried out the Sept. 11 attacks.

Last June Tsonas treated Alhaznawi for an infected lesion on his leg. Tsonas now says he believes the lesion was caused by anthrax exposure and that Alhaznawi must have been producing weapons-grade anthrax.

The FBI would have no reason to deny the story if it had any credibility. In fact,

the government has worked for months—unsuccessfully—to link the anthrax letters to the 9/11 attack, Iraq or any Middle Eastern source.

Instead the FBI immediately refuted Tsonas's story. In a Reuters dispatch issued the same day, an FBI spokesperson said Tsonas's claims were investigated last fall, and no evidence was found to support his story.

In fact, six months after the anthrax-laced letters began to appear in newsrooms and politicians' offices, the FBI says it still has no solid suspects. Five people died and 13 were made very sick from the anthrax letters.

Building pretext for war

The same day that it touted a supposed link between 9/11 and anthrax, the Times also carried a front-page story about the

discovery of an alleged "Al Qaeda bio-terrorism laboratory" under construction near Khandahar, Afghanistan.

The article, based on a "confidential assessment" from the U.S. Central Command, said no biological agents were found at the site. But it claimed that anthrax production was its purpose and a "foreign power" was probably involved.

As soon as the anthrax letters appeared, U.S. officials tried to link them to Saddam Hussein's government or Iraqi-born scientists living in the United States. They failed to find any proof, or even to construct a convincing story.

Most of the world concluded by last November that the anthrax came from someone with ties to the U.S. military-industrial establishment. The Ames strain of anthrax, which was used in the letters, can be found in fewer than 20 laboratories, all

but three in the United States. The others are in Canada, Britain and France.

When it comes to anthrax, the Bush administration is walking a narrow tightrope.

The government wants to remind people of the anthrax scare, and channel their fear into a war fever aimed at Iraq and other countries on the Pentagon's hit list.

At the same time, the Bush administration doesn't want anyone looking too closely at the FBI's seemingly stalled investigation—much less at Washington's own biological weapons program.

Expert says FBI knows

Dr. Barbara Hatch Rosenberg thinks she knows why.

Rosenberg, a noted molecular biologist, leading expert on biological weapons and professor at the State University of New

Continued on page 6



Brooklyn, March 23.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

New York unionists say

'End racist roundups'

By G. Dunkel
Brooklyn, N.Y.

More than 500 people, most of them union members, marched through the streets of Park Slope, Brooklyn, on March 23 to protest the government's indefinite detention of immigrants.

The protest wound up at the federal detention center in Sunset Park, where some family members of detainees and union leaders spoke at a rally.

Somewhere between 300 and 1,500 people are being held in detention centers around the country. No one knows the real figure, since the government is not releasing their names or the charges against them, if any. From reports filtering out, the detainees do not know why they are being held, have no contact with lawyers, and little or no contact with family or friends. They are mainly South Asian and Arab.

They have been disappeared.

Marchers chanted, "INS, FBI, no more kidnapping, no more lies," "Stop the racist detentions—set them free," "Bush, do not expand this war," and "No justice, no peace!"

An impressive number of unions had contingents: Local 23-25 of UNITE, representing garment workers in Chinatown; UFCW Local 1500; DC 1707 and Locals 2627 and 1930 from AFSCME; the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), which represents faculty and professional staff at City University of New York; and Local 300 of the National Postal Workers.

Representatives of Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), a group from the South Asian community, said at the rally that they don't just want the names of the detainees

and the charges they face, they want justice.

Larry Adams, president of Postal Workers Local 300, pointed out that "The foundation of the union movement is the principle 'an injury to one is an injury to all.' All the immigrants in this country are workers, whether or not they are union members. We need to protect them and their rights to protect ourselves and our own."

He declared, "These racist detentions flow from imperialist war."

Barbara Bowen, president of the PSC, spoke about her union's struggle against the City University administration's attempt to double the tuition it charges immigrants. She said that demonstrations—big and strong—could end these racist detentions.

Hank Sambach, representing the Public Library Guild, AFSCME 1930, said, "Bush can dig up \$5.2 billion for homeland security, but has to cut daycare, senior care, schools and libraries because he doesn't have enough money. The union movement must oppose his endless war." He called for a strong union presence in the April 20 anti-war march in Washington.

Brenda Stokely, president of AFSCME DC 1707, said, "We cannot tolerate racism in silence. We cannot support the bombing of innocent children, innocent women, and innocent men—we cannot support the terrorism of our country in Afghanistan, or anywhere else."

Anne Pruden, a hospital worker and militant from SEIU 1199 who has been going to these weekly marches since they started two months ago, said they have grown considerably—from 50 to 500.

"We need them to keep on growing," she concluded.

All out for April 20

Rallies defend Arab, Muslim detainees

By Beth Semmer
Chicago

Hundreds rallied in the Chicago area on March 22 and 23 to demand the federal government free Rabih Haddad, one of the country's most prominent Arab and Muslim "detainees." Haddad has been imprisoned since Dec. 14 without any charges or evidence brought against him. He has been denied bail and his court hearings have been closed to the public, including his family.

Haddad's case has become a lightning rod for protests by civil rights advocates, led by the Chicago Coalition Against War & Racism, the Ann Arbor Ad Hoc Committee for Peace and the Committee to Free Rabih Haddad.

Thanks to these protests, Haddad has recently been released from solitary confinement and his visitation rights have improved considerably.

The March 22 rally took place at the Al-Aqsa school in Bridgeview, Ill. Racists attacked the mosque there shortly after Sept. 11. Popular African American radio show host Cliff Kelley, who chaired the rally, reminded those gathered that the "patriotic" attackers had carried Confederate flags.

The mainly Arab and Muslim audience gave a spirited welcome to other featured speakers, including Rabih Haddad's brother, Mazen Haddad, and Dr. Sami al-Arian, a University of South Florida tenured professor who was fired for speaking out for Palestinian rights.

Dr. al-Arian also raised the case of his brother-in-law, Mazen Al-Najjar—a Palestinian who was arrested in 1997. He was held for three years by the Clinton administration Justice Department based on alleged "secret evidence." Al-Najjar was finally freed in 2000 after months of pressure by his lawyers finally resulted in a hearing convened by Judge R. Kevin McHugh—the same immigration judge who had ordered his detention.

The government's lead witness, an immigration agent, admitted there was no evidence of Al-Najjar contributing to a "terrorist" organization or advocating "terrorism." So Judge McHugh was forced to rule that there were no "bona fide reasons" to

conclude that Al-Najjar was a "threat to national security"

Yet Al-Najjar was picked up again in November 2001 on the same nonexistent "secret evidence" and is today still in solitary confinement.

Dr. al-Arian concluded that the government's strategy towards the hundreds, if not thousands, of immigrants "detained" since 9/11 is to imprison them based on "secret evidence" and "secret witnesses"—which the accused and their lawyers have no right to know or question, yet are required to defend against.

Dr. Jose Lopez of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, who has a long history of working to free Puerto Rican Nationalist political prisoners, stressed at the rally the importance of overcoming fear and intimidation to vanquish the government's war-mongering and witch-hunts.

Christine Geovanis of CCAWR, Chicago Indymedia and Chicago Women in Black chaired the March 23 meeting at the United Church of Roger's Park in Chicago.

Geovanis, Mahmud Ahmad of the Committee for a Democratic Palestine and the Chicago Coalition Against War & Racism strongly encouraged everyone to "get on the bus" for the Washington anti-war protests on April 20-22.

The rally was endorsed by more than 40 organizations that also contributed to CCAWR's scholarship fund to send activists to Washington to demand no more war; U.S. out of Colombia; free Palestine; defend civil liberties and stop racist attacks.

CCAWR is organizing two bus trips for Chicago activists. Bus tickets are available for \$65 to attend the April 20 protest, and \$85 for the whole weekend of protests. The longer stay includes the April 22 mass demonstration called by Palestinian organizations and their supporters against the visit of Israeli leader Ariel Sharon.

Tickets can be purchased by sending checks or money orders payable to 8th Day Center for Justice. Write "DC bus" in the memo section. Mail to: CCAWR, c/o 8th Day Center for Justice, 205 W Monroe, Chicago, Ill. 60606-5013.

For more information, call Dorothy or Kathleen at 8th Day Center for Justice, (312) 641-5151.

APRIL 20

World protests to hit war & racism

On March 4 and 5, activists from the U.S. took International ANSWER's call for an April 20 International Day of Protest Against War & Racism to the Second International Encounter in Solidarity and for Peace in Colombia and Latin America in Mexico City.

This call was met with an overwhelmingly positive response. As a result, demonstrations for April 20 are now planned in Tabasco, Oaxaca and Mexico City, Mexico; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; San Salvador, El Salvador; Santiago, Chile; Managua, Nicaragua; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Basque Country and Madrid, Spain; and Montréal, Canada.

Demonstrations are being discussed in other cities in Latin America.

Anti-war activists in Japan are building an April 20 protest at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. Last November, these activists pledged to respond to all International ANSWER calls to action.

In the United States, organizing centers in close to 100 cities are mobilizing to bring people to the march at the White House in Washington, D.C., and to a West Coast march in San Francisco.

ANSWER's call for April 20 protests around the world reads, "The need for international solidarity against the extremely menacing and expanding U.S. war drive has never been greater. ... We stand at a critical moment.

"U.S. and British military forces are continuing the war in Afghanistan—a war that is far from over. In recent weeks the U.S.

has dispatched troops to the Philippines, Yemen and the Republic of Georgia, and announced plans to step up military intervention in Colombia and Peru.

"The U.S./Israeli war continues against the Palestinian people, who are courageously and determinedly resisting overwhelming force.

"A new U.S. assault on Iraq—a country devastated by more than 11 years of bombing and blockade—is no longer a matter of if, but when, according to the Bush administration war planners.

"New plans for nuclear war against seven countries, five of them non-nuclear powers, have been sent to Congress by the Pentagon. These plans defy international law, international treaties and the most elemental of human rights.

"To fund their maniacal military plans, the Bush administration is calling for the Pentagon budget to be increased to a half-trillion—\$500,000,000,000—by 2007, more than the combined military spending of all other countries on the planet.

"The Bush program threatens all of humanity. It must be stopped, and the only force that can change this dangerous course is the global people's movement.

"The International ANSWER coalition urges all anti-war, labor, women, student and other progressive organizations to hold anti-war and anti-racism protests on April 20."

For more information, send e-mail to ANSWER@afgi.org or visit the website at <http://www.internationalanswer.org>.

Radio debate over the next war

Dr. Strangelove

By John Catalinotto

Anyone who tuned in to the middle of the debate on Pacifica radio's Democracy Now! show on March 20 might have thought that Dr. Strangelove had jumped off the movie screen and into the radio studio.

They should have been relieved that host Amy Goodman had also invited Ramsey Clark of the International Action Center to be there to counter every dangerous, destructive scheme Strangelove promoted.

It wasn't Strangelove himself on the air, of course, but the nearest thing. Former CIA Director James Woolsey was promoting a plan to overthrow the Iraqi government. It involved Kurdish forces in northern Iraq, Shiites in the south, the Iraqi National Congress in the center, and some assistance from the Turkish army.

The Pentagon, of course, was the key element. It would be there to back the whole thing up with bombing and perhaps with troops. The goal, said Woolsey, would be to install a "democratic regime."

Clark leapt back at him. "When Washington overthrew Mossadegh in Iran, it put in the shah. When Allende was overthrown by the Chilean armed forces, the Pinochet dictatorship began. When Lumumba was murdered, the Congolese were left with the 35-year reign of Mobutu. No U.S. intervention has ever installed a democratic regime."

Clark also pointed out that Woolsey's law firm receives millions in payments from the Iraqi National Congress, a U.S.-created opposition group.

Woolsey's presence was no accident. He is a key spokesperson for a new right-wing propaganda offensive aimed at all sectors

Does FBI know?

Continued from page 5

York at Purchase, has been trying to expose what she believes is a cover-up in the making.

The FBI knows who sent the anthrax, she says, but is stalling because of what the man knows about U.S. biological weapons research and production.

The U.S. signed the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and promised not to develop biological weapons. But Washington's continued refusal to have its facilities independently monitored has led many scientists and activists to believe it is violating the convention.

Rosenberg published her information on the American Society of Scientists web site. She's also spoken at Princeton University and granted several interviews.

The New Yorker magazine of March 18 reported: "She is persuasive in arguing that sending the anthrax letters required not just access to the 'Ames strain' of anthrax, but also knowledge of the weaponization technique developed by Bill Patrick." Patrick is head of biological weapons research at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Ft. Detrick, Md.

Exposing the relationship between the letters, the Patrick method and the Ames strain is important. It puts the lie to most of the FBI's public "hot list" of suspects—like a Somali student at an unnamed Midwestern university. The student's plight was mentioned in the Feb. 26 New York Times.

The FBI targeted the student because he was Somali and Muslim and because the school's lab had Ames anthrax. But the student could not have known the U.S. military's Patrick method.

Rosenberg says the real anthrax culprit worked at the Army facility at Ft. Detrick, where he learned Patrick's method of creating weapons-grade anthrax. After a falling out with his bosses, he left the facility and is now employed by a Washington-area military contractor.

Taking advantage of the anti-Arab/Muslim racist profiling after 9/11, he included crude pseudo-Islamic slogans in some letters, and planted "clues" to direct suspicion at a former colleague from Ft. Detrick: Egyptian-born scientist Ayaad Assad.

Rosenberg believes the man was trying to prove his worth to the military higher-ups.

The FBI and the White House deny that they have a prime suspect. But according to the Feb. 26 Washington Post, the FBI has indeed concentrated its investigation on the Ft. Detrick facility.

Rosenberg said a law-enforcement agent confirmed off the record that the man is the FBI's principal suspect.

"We know that the FBI is looking at this person and it's likely that he participated in the past in secret activities that the government would not like to see disclosed," said Rosenberg. "And this raises the question of whether the FBI may be dragging its feet somewhat and may not be so anxious to bring to public light the person who did this.

"I know that there are insiders, working for the government, who know this person and who are worried that it could happen that some kind of quiet deal is made and he just disappears from view."

Postal workers especially will be outraged if they find out that the government has made a deal to cover up the murder of their colleagues.

International ANSWER coalition: Mass 'unity rally' plans

International ANSWER reported on March 25 that the principal anti-war coalitions planning demonstrations and rallies on April 20 in Washington, D.C., have agreed to a concluding unity rally that will be organized and co-chaired by those coalitions. Marches organized by the different coalitions will converge on Pennsylvania Avenue east of the White House and move together to the unity rally site. The coalitions are forming a joint committee to organize and plan the unity rally.

The ANSWER coalition says it "considers this united front effort to be an essential component of building a movement that can stop George Bush's 'declaration of war' that is targeting the people of Iraq, Colombia, Palestine, Vieques, the Philippines, Yemen, Somalia, Korea, Iran and elsewhere." The domestic component of this war drive, says ANSWER, is "an attack on civil rights and civil liberties at home."

Further details of the marches and unity rally will be announced later.

Organizing Centers:
National Office
 212-633-6646
April 20 HQ
 Washington DC
 202-543-2777
Baltimore
 410-235-7040
Boston
 617-522-6626
New York City
 212-633-6646
Philadelphia
 215-724-1618
Atlanta
 770-989-2536
Chicago
 773-583-7728
Detroit
 313-831-0750
Bus InfoCall:
 1-212-633-6646
Online Ticket Sales:
www.internationalanswer.org

www.internationalanswer.org
international A.N.S.W.E.R. coalition

vs. Ramsey Clark

of U.S. society, even the progressive Pacifica listeners. Of course, he probably didn't anticipate having to go head-to-head with an opponent as capable and well informed as Clark. The war hawks are accustomed to a virtual monopoly of the media.

War propaganda machine

If war is too serious to be left to the military, as World War I French Premier George Clemenceau reportedly said, then the Bush administration obviously thinks war propaganda is too serious to be left to even the most compliant moneyed media. It has turned to William Bennett, former education secretary and right-wing ideologue. Bennett co-chairs the Empower America think tank, which promotes privatization, the end of affirmative action and other reactionary schemes.

Bennett has gotten together with Woolsey, former Reagan Pentagon official Frank Gaffney and other right-wing hacks euphemistically known as "neo-conservatives" to start a new Empower-backed pro-war pressure group called Americans for Victory Over Terrorism.

AVOT's first big move was a full-page ad in the March 10 New York Times. The group's goal is to maintain the post-Sept. 11 backing for Bush's endless crusade against oppressed peoples around the world, currently disguised as a "war on terror."

They know that real support for a war is a lot thinner than it appears and might not survive heavy U.S. troop casualties or great

sacrifices at home. So their goal is to repress, squelch and censor any opposition before it can gain momentum, while in general promoting the war.

To that end they have targeted even the mildest sort of opposition to Bush's policies. For example, among their targets is former President Jimmy Carter, who criticized Bush for using the phrase "axis of evil," arguing that it was "overly simplistic and counter-productive."

They also named Congressperson Maxine Walters, who said, "Some of us, maybe foolishly, gave this president the authority to go after terrorists. We didn't know that he, too, was going to go crazy with it."

Bennett, Woolsey and some of the others in AVOT are known for pushing hardest for a war of aggression against Iraq. Since 1991 they have been frustrated that the Pentagon wasn't occupying that country, which would let U.S. big business control its vast oil reserves.

Unable to convincingly blame Iraq for the Sept. 11 attacks or the anthrax letters, Woolsey and Company are now chiming in with Bush's allegations that Iraq possesses "weapons of mass destruction" as a reason to attack that country.

They never mention that U.S. sanctions have killed over 1.5 million Iraqis and are still killing thousands of children each month. And heaven forbid that anyone use the term "weapons of mass destruction" to describe the Armageddon-level arsenal the Pentagon employs.

Ad demands end to sanctions

While AVOT speaks in the interests of the oil billionaires, a popular organization countering these war schemes also recently placed an ad, this one in the March 20 International Herald Tribune. It called for an end to the sanctions that for more than 11 years have been murdering the Iraqi people.

Three former senior United Nations officials who resigned to protest the continued sanctions—Denis J. Halliday, Hans von Sponeck and Jutta Burghardt—together with the Bridge to Baghdad group in Italy organized hundreds of prominent individuals and organizations to support this demand for unconditional lifting of the sanctions.

The statement calls the sanctions "not simply a crime against the children of Iraq and millions of Iraqi families. It is a violation of internationally recognized human rights and humanitarian standards."

Among the signers are Arundhati Roy, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Ramsey Clark and Sara Flounders of the International Action Center, Noam Chomsky and Edward Said. For the statement and a full list of signers, see <http://www.notinour-names.org/iht/statement.html>.

To hear a broadcast of the radio debate, go to <http://www.webactive.com/webactive/pacifica/demnow/dn20020320.html>.

Human Rights Watch

Providing Bush with ammo for attack on Iraq

By Heather Cottin

The failure of Vice President Dick Cheney's trip to the Middle East to round up support for a war on Iraq means the Bush administration must find some new way to rev up enthusiasm for the next phase of its plan to secure world domination—euphemistically called the "war on terror."

Now Human Rights Watch, an organization funded by a billionaire anti-communist with close ties to Washington, George Soros, has developed a new approach to stimulate antagonism to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

In an opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal on March 22, HRW director Ken Roth came up with a new suggestion: "Indict Saddam Hussein."

Roth proposes an international tribunal dominated by the countries that attacked Iraq in the Gulf War—similar to the tribunal in The Hague now sitting in judgment over the former leader of Yugoslavia, another target of a devastating, high-tech war by the U.S. and NATO.

Roth writes, "As deposed Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic discovered, indictment for grave abuses can de-legitimize a dictator and undermine his grasp on power." He suggests that indictment by such a tribunal would "weaken Saddam's support" internationally and "encourage Iraqi officials to overthrow him."

This well-funded group that arrogantly proposes the overthrow of the Iraqi government presents itself as an unbiased organization concerned only with violations

of human rights. It is not concerned with the division of the world into oppressor and oppressed, haves and have-nots. It supposedly judges all by the same yardstick. Such a position in itself is as unfair as saying that a law that punishes a millionaire and a beggar equally for stealing a loaf of bread is a just law.

But HRW does not live up to even this bourgeois concept of justice. It has not criticized the continued U.S. bombing or the sanctions that have killed more than 1.5 million Iraqis since 1991. The U.S. campaign to break down Iraq and return it to a neocolonial status by depriving its people of food, medicine and clean water apparently doesn't merit HRW's scrutiny.

Is it just coincidence that this well-endowed organization looks for human rights violations especially in those countries that resist efforts to subordinate their economies to Western corporations?

HRW gives the plight of the Kurds as one reason for indicting the Iraqi leader. The Kurds are a people with a distinct language and culture who live in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Washington has tried to manipulate their struggle for self-determination, using it when and where it is convenient to U.S. geo-strategic interests.

At the time of the Gulf War, the CIA worked with some Kurdish groups against the Iraqi government, only to abandon them when that proved unproductive.

The Kurds "were badly let down during the failed rebellion of 1991 when U.S. promises of support failed to materialize," reported the BBC on March 5. The Kurds

have not joined Washington today in pressing for a U.S. war against Iraq.

One big reason for Washington's ditching of allies it had cultivated among the Kurds is its relationship with Turkey, a member of NATO and a very important U.S. military outpost.

The greatest repression of Kurds has been in Turkey, which has conducted an unrelenting war that has killed over 37,000 Kurds since 1984. The last time HRW condemned Turkey's war against the Kurds was in 1995. It only occasionally mentions the Turkish government's treatment of Kurdish hunger strikers, many of whom have died, and the atrocious conditions in Turkish jails.

The BBC on March 4 interviewed Leith Kubba, an Iraqi analyst at Washington's National Endowment for Democracy, who pointed out that the Bush administration is distancing itself from "the Kurds and the Shia Muslims."

Turkey is completely opposed to giving the Kurds in northern Iraq any role at all in a war against Saddam Hussein. Says the BBC, "Ankara would oppose a role for the Kurds for fear that they would seize the opportunity to establish an independent Kurdish state—setting a precedent for Turkey's estimated 12 million Kurds."

But HRW is silent about that. It certainly would never suggest an international tribunal to indict and try the right-wing Turkish government for its brutal war against the Kurds. The Pentagon would never allow it.

Mumia Abu-Jamal:

STOP WAR AT ITS SOURCE

Mumia Abu-Jamal wrote the following article for *Workers World newspaper* from death row.

When U.S. President George W. Bush spoke about an "endless war," some took it as mere political speech, or rhetoric designed to gain the top spot on the evening network news.

I did not. "W" is an agent of his class, the wealthy oil merchants of the land, and his intentions are to press for an ever-wider war in all corners of the earth, to make the world safe for capital exploitation and unbridled commerce.

This will eventually become a war that reaches into a slew of countries in the Middle East, on behalf of the rich and powerful elites who rule. Make no mistake: this is a war that has nothing to do with democracy.

The U.S. enters the region, armed to the gills, not to defend democracies, but to defend theocracies; to defend kings, princes and sultanates; to defend U.S. access to vast oil resources in the region.

And how can the U.S. credibly claim to be leading a war against terrorism, when the world's largest training academy for terrorists is the School of the Americas, in Georgia, where some of the most brutal military dictators in the world are alumni? The U.S. may have since renamed the school, but it has the same essential mission—to create foreign military leaders who are the enemies of democratic and popular movements, and who are beholden to their imperial masters in Washington.

The graduates of the SOA have proven relentless fighters, to be sure, who are masters of the dark arts of torture, cruel interrogations, rape and mass murder; and who do they fight but their own people?

To millions of people in Latin America, the school is known by the popular name, "la escuela de golpes"—the school of coups! There is scarcely an infamous massacre that cannot be traced to its graduates: the Vraba massacre in Colombia, the El Mozote massacre, the rape and murders of four U.S. churchwomen and the Jesuit massacres in El Salvador; the La Cantuta massacre in Peru—and hundreds more.

When the U.S. brays about a war on terrorism, there are millions in America to the South who snort in derision, for they know another America, which breeds state terrorism!

The people who brought you 9/11 were brought to you by the CIA—for they were all graduates of a CIA school of terrorism designed to wreak havoc upon the soldiers of the former Soviet Union. They were jihadis recruited, paid, indoctrinated and armed by U.S., Pakistani, Saudi and related intelligence to wage a holy war against the former communist government in Afghanistan. And like the proverbial dogs of war, they turned on those who fed and trained them, to remind them of what they've unleashed.

And now, with little thought to its true beginnings, the nation is, once again, embroiled in war. A war that was born not in Kabul, nor in tropical Asia. This war began in cool office buildings in Washington, where men of wealth and power drew up plans to draw the former Soviets into a neighboring territory, into what they called "the Afghan trap."

And now, as Malcolm X once said, "The chickens have come home to roost."

You wanna stop war?

Then stop them where they are born—in Washington.

Fidel Castro asked to leave conference

Furor in Mexico as government bows to Bush

By Gloria La Riva
Havana

George W. Bush's attendance at the UN Summit on Finance and Development in Monterrey, Mexico, was accompanied by a threat: Cuban President Fidel Castro must not be allowed to participate.

In an unprecedented move, the Mexican government of Vicente Fox capitulated to U.S. pressure and asked President Castro to leave after the first day's luncheon on March 21. Bush was due to arrive in Mexico the next day, in the midst of a Latin American tour meant to tighten U.S. hegemony over the region.



Brazil double cross

Police arrest landless leaders

In a government double cross, police on March 24 arrested 16 leaders of the Landless Workers Movement (MST) after agreeing to negotiate the end of a land takeover near the town of Buritis. The town is about 120 miles from the capital, Brasilia.

Early on March 23, some 450 movement members had boldly seized the land belonging to the family of Brazilian President Fernando Cardoso. They pressed their demands for more land and agricultural credits.

The regime surrounded the farm with 200 army troops and federal police and falsely promised that no one would be detained if the MST left the property peacefully. Throughout this country of 170 million people, a few rich people own huge swaths of the most arable land.

As economic chaos deepens

Mass protests shake Argentina

Continued from page 1

national capitalist parties, including the Radical Party, the Intransigent Party and even large elements of Duhalde's own Peronist Party.

The pots and pans that were common in previous protests have now been replaced by large sections of drummers that accompany each contingent. High-powered firecrackers also punctuated the deafening sound along this major street where the political power of Argentina resides.

The main organizers of this event were the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. Hebe Bonafini, their president, gave a revolutionary speech before the march began in front of the presidential palace. She called for prosecution of the corrupt politicians who have robbed this country and have allowed the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to plunder Argentina. She said, "It is a bigger crime to open a bank than to rob one." Bonafini began and ended her speech by singing the revolutionary anthem, the "International."

After President Castro's forced departure, which Cuba publicly revealed to the world, a storm of protest broke out across the Mexican political spectrum. The Fox government's disinvitation has been roundly condemned by many in Mexico as a historic surrender of the country's once fiercely independent stance on foreign policy.

The incident is a serious rupture in friendly relations that have existed for decades between Cuba and Mexico. Mexico was the only Latin American country that refused to break relations with Cuba in 1962 after the U.S. forced the Organization of American States to expel the socialist island. Mexico's courageous position in keeping ties with Cuba was always deeply appreciated by the Cuban government and people.

In many other examples, Mexico has historically refused to bow to U.S. coercion on foreign matters. However, in recent years Mexico's economic independence has eroded. Recent administrations have also been more submissive to political pressure from the U.S.

Mexican press condemns surrender to Bush

Headlines in virtually every Mexican newspaper have condemned the surrender to the Bush administration and the insulting conduct toward Cuba. Members of the Mexican congress are demanding an accounting from Fox and Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda, who was denounced by Cuba as being responsible for its leader's departure.

Castañeda, once a progressive Mexican activist, moved to the right a number of years ago. As foreign minister he has made very hostile remarks against Cuba. However, the U.S. government is pulling his strings.

It is clear why Bush wouldn't want Castro to attend. The Cuban president has stood out among government leaders in the world for his forceful denunciation of capitalism's creation of rampant poverty alongside obscene wealth.

In international forums like the UN Conference Against Racism in South Africa, Castro has inspired oppressed peoples with his demand for real social and economic justice. Cuba's example in the midst of raging Latin American crises is a threat to U.S. hegemonic plans.

The day he left, President Castro made a seven-minute speech to Summit attendees. (See accompanying article.) At the end, he made a surprising announcement. "I ask 20 seconds to make a clarification." Pulling a paper out of his pocket, he said, "Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I ask you to excuse me for not being able to continue accompanying you, due to a special situation created by my participation in this summit.

"I am obliged to leave immediately to my country. Heading the Cuban delegation is Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, president of the National Assembly. I hope

that he is not prohibited from participating in any official activity that he has the right to do as head of the Cuban delegation, and as president of the supreme organ of the state power in Cuba." But Alarcón was barred as well.

After President Castro left Mexico, Castañeda denied Mexico's role in his departure. But Alarcón held a press conference on March 22 to explain that "very highly placed Mexican authorities" were pressured by Washington.

This incident is just the latest in a series of attempts by the U.S., through other parties, to isolate Cuba politically. Even though political and diplomatic maneuvers against Cuba are nothing new, U.S. imperialism has lately engaged in more concerted attacks.

The Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva is also the scene of dirty maneuvers by the U.S. to try to force a vote against Cuba, falsely charging it with human rights violations. Even though the U.S. had been voted off the commission for 2002, Italy and Spain shamelessly bowed to Washington's coercion by vacating their seats so that the U.S. could sit in judgment of Cuba this year.

On March 26, an important statement in Cuba's national newspaper, Granma, detailed Castañeda's anti-Cuba role. It quotes him as saying in early February that "Mexico's relations with the Cuban Revolution have ceased to exist. From now on our relations will be with the Republic of Cuba."

Incident at Mexican Embassy

On Feb. 26, while in Miami to inaugurate the Mexican Cultural Institute, and with several anti-Cuba terrorists present, Castañeda had made an open invitation to counter-revolutionary elements to carry out disruptive actions in Cuba. He said, "The doors of the Mexican Embassy in Havana are open to all Cuban citizens, as they also are in Mexico."

The next day the CIA-sponsored radio station in Miami, Radio Martí, broadcast Castañeda's call. That night 21 people in Havana—more than half with criminal records—hijacked a bus and broke through Mexican Embassy gates. After a two-day standoff, Cuba's police entered unarmed and without force removed the people who had invaded the embassy. Cuba had peacefully defused this potentially dangerous situation.

It remains to be seen what Fox will do in the future with respect to Cuba-Mexico relations. During the Monterrey summit he met several times with Bush and made no critique of the disrespectful treatment towards Cuba.

Of the Monterrey scandal, the Granma statement concluded, "By whatever means, for Mexico's honor, the offenses and aggressions on the Cuban people must stop."

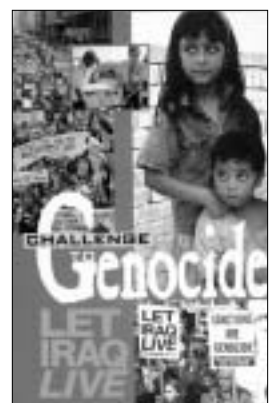
provinces can pay government workers.

It is a situation where it is impossible to satisfy the banks and the aspirations of the workers. It remains to be seen who will win out, but the mass protests and the impending economic failure may be a harbinger of a possible revolutionary period in Argentina.

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Bush to Latin America: 'Submit or starve'

By Teresa Gutierrez

More than 50 heads of state gathered at the United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development on March 18-22 in Monterrey, Mexico. They met, they said, to discuss the growing gap between rich and poor and how to eradicate poverty.

But the anti-globalization movement has successfully pointed out that no gathering of the rich and powerful will alleviate the dire situation that billions of people face every day. In reality these kinds of meetings—when they are successful—serve only to strengthen the capitalist ruling classes and increase the extreme exploitation of the masses.

The imperialists are rich because they suck the profits like lifeblood from the countries they impoverish. It is a class battle between oppressor and oppressed.

The meeting in Monterrey, Mexico, was no different. It paid lip service to the desperate economic situation of millions of Latinos. It offered band-aid solutions. It set the stage for U.S. imperialism's attempt to further bully Latin America.

And the U.S. managed to drive a wedge between Mexico and Cuba. Cuban President Fidel Castro, a participant at the conference, was reportedly asked by Mexican officials to go home before U.S. President George Bush's scheduled arrival.

Bush used this conference to bring the so-called war on terrorism to the doorstep of many Latin American nations: "You are either with us or you are against us." Unfortunately, many Latin American heads of state were more than willing to comply with imperialism.

Bush's trip was designed to show U.S. imperialism's strong interest in Latin America. Given special attention right now is the Andean region, where Washington has allocated a great deal of resources—not to aid the impoverished masses but to militarize the region.

Washington is hell bent on exterminating the Colombian insurgents who, after 40 years, are continuing to fight capitalist exploitation. Washington is keenly interested in developments in Venezuela, where a progressive administration threatens to serve the people rather than the voracious appetite of the International Monetary Fund.

By its close, the Monterrey conference officially declared that it had "struck a new bargain to fight world poverty." But it offered aid and development to impoverished countries only if they commit to open markets and "good government."

The media reported that aid proposals by the U.S. and Europe fall far short of the \$100 billion a year the UN has said is needed to cut poverty in half by 2015.

And opening markets wide to imperialist exploitation will only intensify the unprecedented economic, social and political crisis facing Latin America.

Mexico is an example of how "open market" policies bring only greater poverty. As a result of NAFTA, a quarter of the corn used in Mexico is now imported from the U.S. This has resulted in an even more desperate situation for thousands of peasants.

The exploiting countries and their financial institutions, such as the IMF, have been forced to take up the issue of poverty by the growing movement of the oppressed. But their "solutions" only make it worse because they take for granted an economic system that lives for profits, not to solve human needs.

George Dubya got a taste of the rising

struggle on his whirlwind tour in Latin America when he visited Monterrey, Mexico; Lima, Peru; and San Salvador, El Salvador.

'Bush: leading terrorist!'

While in Monterrey, Bush announced the further militarization of the Mexican/U.S. border with state-of-the-art equipment deployed along 2,000 miles.

Mexican socialist parties and many mass organizations, in just a few short weeks, brought thousands of activists to protest the UN meeting. Many Mexicans expressed their outrage at the treatment of Fidel Castro, who is beloved throughout Latin America.

Zapatistas, as well as groups fighting privatization, took part in the protests. Many students and youth groups participated.

On March 21, several thousand protesters gathered at police barricades and some burned an effigy of Uncle Sam, a long-time symbol of U.S. imperialism. Others hurled a dead goat over the barricades. Activists said the goat had died from toxic waste from a nearby factory.

Bush then traveled to Peru—the first visit by a sitting U.S. president to that country. It was an indication of the strategic role Peru and its president, Alejandro Toledo, will play in U.S./Latin American relations.

While in Peru, Bush reportedly made it clear that he is in agreement with the unjust incarceration of Lori Berenson, a North American activist who is in a Peruvian jail allegedly for aiding rebels there.

The March 24 Washington Post gave the standard cover story for expanding U.S. armed intervention in the region: "President Bush and President Alejandro Toledo pledged a joint fight against terrorism and drug trafficking in the hemisphere."

In Peru, a car bomb was set off near the U.S. Embassy just days before Dubya's arrival. At another protest, many Peruvians threw stones at the 7,000 police who tear gassed them. Several protesters were arrested.

But they got their message across, waving placards that read "Bush, murderer, out of Peru!" "We don't want to be a North American colony." One painted bed sheet read, "U.S.: leading terrorist of the world."

In El Salvador, tens of thousands marched in the streets of the capital San Salvador to remind Bush of the role the U.S. played in the deaths of thousands of Salvadorans during the 1980s. They carried signs against the Free Trade Area of the Americas, Plan Colombia and the blockade of Cuba.

The protests were spurred on by the fact that Bush set foot in El Salvador on March 24—the anniversary of the day Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated by U.S.-backed death squads in 1980. Only a month before his murder, the archbishop had denounced U.S. military aid to the Salvadoran dictatorship.

The mainstream U.S. press reported that Bush was on more than one occasion challenged by members of the Latin American press. A Mexican reporter boldly asked Bush who was really lying about President Castro leaving Mexico.

During his trip, Bush also met with presidents or leaders from Nicaragua, Honduras, Belize, Ecuador, Bolivia and Colombia. Many of the Latin American leaders reportedly raised the Andean Trade Preferences Act, legislation they hope will alleviate their economic crisis by providing duty-free access to U.S. markets for a range of products from the region.

All these leaders want to avoid an Argentina-type crisis. But while many of them issued welcoming remarks to the Emperor, the masses on the other hand were in the streets, marching and protesting against Bush's visit.

Fidel Castro in Monterrey:

'An unsustainable social order cannot be imposed on world'

This is the official translation of the speech by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, president of the Republic of Cuba, at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, on March 21.

Excellencies:

Not everyone here will share my thoughts. Still, I will respectfully say what I think.

The existing world economic order constitutes a system of plundering and exploitation like no other in history. Thus, the peoples believe less and less in statements and promises.

The prestige of the international financial institutions rates less than zero.

The world economy is today a huge casino. Recent analyses indicate that for every dollar that goes into trade, over one hundred end up in speculative operations completely disconnected from the real economy.

As a result of this economic order, over 75 percent of the world population lives in underdevelopment, and extreme poverty has already reached 1.2 billion people in the Third World. So, far from narrowing, the gap is widening.

The revenue of the richest nations that in 1960 was 37 times larger than that of the poorest is now 74 times larger. The situation has reached such extremes that the assets of the three wealthiest persons in the world amount to the Gross Domestic Product of the 48 poorest countries combined.

The number of people actually starving was 826 million in the year 2001. There are at the moment 854 million illiterate adults while 325 million children do not attend school. There are 2 billion people who have no access to low cost medications and 2.4 billion lack basic sanitation conditions. No less than 11 million children under the age of 5 perish every year from preventable causes while half a million go blind for lack of vitamin A.

The life span of the population in the developed world is 30 years higher than that of people living in Sub-Saharan Africa. A true genocide!

The poor countries should not be blamed for this tragedy. They neither conquered nor plundered entire continents for centuries; they did not establish colonialism, or re-established slavery; and, modern imperialism is not of their making. Actually, they have been its victims. Therefore, the main responsibility for financing their development lies with those states that, for obvious historical reasons, enjoy today the benefits of those atrocities.

The rich world should condone their foreign debt and grant them fresh soft credits to finance their development. The traditional offers of assistance, always scant and often ridiculous, are either inadequate or unfulfilled.

For a true and sustainable economic and social development to take place much more is required than is usually admitted. Measures as those suggested by the late James Tobin to curtail the irrepressible flow of currency speculation—albeit it was not his idea to foster development—would perhaps be the only ones capable of generating enough funds, which, in the hands of the UN agencies and not of awful institutions like the IMF, could supply direct development assistance with a democratic participation of all countries and without the need to sacrifice the independence and sovereignty of the peoples.

The Consensus draft, which the masters of the world are imposing on this conference, intends that we accept humiliating, conditioned and interfering alms.

Everything created since Bretton Woods until today should be reconsidered. A farsighted vision was then missing, thus, the privileges and interests of the most powerful prevailed. In the face of the deep present crisis, a still worse future is offered where the economic, social and ecologic tragedy of an increasingly ungovernable world would never be resolved and where the number of the poor and the starving would grow higher, as if a large part of humanity were doomed.

It is high time for statesmen and politicians to calmly reflect on this. The belief that a social and economic order that has proven to be unsustainable can be forcibly imposed is really senseless.

As I have said before, the ever more sophisticated weapons piling up in the arsenals of the wealthiest and the mightiest can kill the illiterate, the ill, the poor and the hungry but they cannot kill ignorance, illnesses, poverty or hunger.

It should definitely be said: "Farewell to arms."

Something must be done to save humanity. A better world is possible!



Who's for the workers?

In Zimbabwe, what the political opposition had billed as a general strike to protest the re-election of President Robert Mugabe has fizzled. Hardly any workers honored it. This has punctured the opposition's claims to represent the workers and their unions.

In Venezuela, the opposition to President Hugo Chavez—who has been trying to carry out political and economic reforms favoring the poorest people—also presents itself as pro-labor and cites its relation to the leaders of the oil workers' union.

Some might find it odd, then, that imperialist powers like the U.S. and Britain have been cheering on the political opposition in both these countries and trying to put an economic stranglehold on the government leaders. Are the imperialists, the class beholden to big banks and corporations that have carved and re-carved the world markets among themselves, suddenly concerned about the workers in these countries? Haven't they been rolling over workers everywhere else?

In sorting out this problem, it's very helpful to remember that the giant capitalists have a long history of cloaking their predatory maneuvers in populist garb. When Western capital made great inroads into Poland and broke up what was left of its socialist economy, it was in the name of aiding Solidarity, which started as a shipyard workers' union. However, a close relationship had been established between the CIA and Solidarity leader Lech Walesa.

The imperialists expressed so much concern for the shipyard workers in Gdansk, the cradle of Solidarity—until the counter-revolution was over and their crocodile tears weren't needed anymore. Today, after privatization, those shipyards have been closed and the workers tossed out. By the October 2000 Polish elections, Solidarity got only 6 percent of the vote and lost its last seat in Parliament. Poverty in Eastern Europe had soared from a negligible 2 percent in 1988 to 20 percent, according to a September 1990 World Bank report. What had been billed as a workers' movement was in fact captive to a decidedly anti-worker force.

It's a cautionary tale for any workers'

leaders who might be seduced by big promises from the imperialists. No one was more courted than Walesa, and with a huge capitalist-financed publicity machine behind him he actually was elected president of Poland in 1990. Now he—and most importantly, the workers he was supposed to represent—have dropped off the radar screen.

The big issue in Zimbabwe has been the government's promise to confiscate the vast white-owned lands and turn them over to landless Black farmers. This has agitated Britain especially, which used to be the colonial power there when it was Rhodesia. To end the armed liberation struggle, it had long ago promised to facilitate Zimbabwe's transition to majority rule with funds to buy out these commercial farmers, but the money never came through. The people's patience is now exhausted and there have been militant occupations of some farms.

Zimbabwe's problem is complex. The white farmers have the capital and the commercial contacts to carry out large-scale agriculture and sell their products on the world market. This brings in much-needed foreign exchange. City dwellers, more than rural workers, rely on imported items for many of their needs and worry about an embargo and isolation from the Commonwealth, which Britain forced on Zimbabwe right after the election. The opposition, which is against Mugabe's land redistribution while supporting the imperialists' "free market" strategies, has played on these worries. It won support in the cities, but Mugabe won overwhelmingly in the countryside, where most Zimbabweans live.

If the large farms are simply broken up into small family units, this will undoubtedly diminish their productivity. The best way to help the rural people and the overall Zimbabwe economy is to reorganize the land into African-owned cooperatives and collectives that can produce on a larger scale while giving work and homes to the landless. Land redistribution is long in coming and urgently needed, especially now that large sections of Zimbabwe are suffering from drought. There is no way it can be painless. But it is certainly in the interests of both rural farmers and city workers that it succeed.

Hot off the Internet

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By Gary Wilson

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BELGRADE

March denounces U.S./NATO aggression

By John Catalinotto

Tens of thousands marched through Belgrade March 24 to commemorate the third anniversary of the 1999 U.S./NATO attack on Yugoslavia and the heroic resistance of its people against great odds.

The demonstration was the largest of actions that took place around the world, including events in Vienna and New York. The protests paid respect to the 3,000 Yugoslav victims of the 78-day aggression that targeted the civilian infrastructure.

Three years after the war began, Yugoslavia's population is 50-percent unemployed, its best industries sold to investors in Western Europe and the U.S., its government overthrown by a foreign-financed election and coup, and its former president held in a NATO jail in The Hague.

Despite these difficulties, the Belgrade demonstration—and speakers at the rally that followed—showed that the spirit of resistance continues.

Their demands included that the Yugoslav government intervene to secure former President Slobodan Milosevic's provisional freedom while he conducts his defense, and creation of a state documentation center to help the defense of Milosevic and other Yugoslav citizens unjustly accused by the tribunal. They also insisted that the government stop delivering Yugoslav citizens to that imperialist court.

In addition, they demanded the right of Serbs and other non-Albanians expelled from Kosovo to return, and an end to the firing of workers and selling of the factories. They also called for the resignation of the pro-Western governments in Serbia and Yugoslavia as well as early elections.

Speakers at the rally included officials of Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia; Gennadi Churkin, of the Russian State Duma; Nico Varkevisser of Global Reflection in the Netherlands; a spokesperson for the International Committee for the Defense of Slobodan Milosevic; Dr. Dimitris Caltsonis, vice-chair of the Greek Association for Democratic Rights and Freedoms; and a representative of the Communist Party of Greece.

Vladimir Krsljanin, international secretary of the SPS, told Workers World he estimated between 30,000 and 50,000 people took part in the march and rally.

Earlier in March, Krsljanin observed, "The continuing aggression against Yugoslavia is failing. Slobodan Milosevic's spirit and the freedom of the Yugoslav people cannot be defeated. Neither bombs nor money from secret services can conquer us."

Krsljanin said that Milosevic's defense efforts in The Hague trial "had an



WW PHOTO: KAIPKIRE

Ramsey Clark

enormous impact on the people in Yugoslavia. According to our latest polls, 77 percent of the people support him and the puppet government here is in panic. According to some estimates, about one million heard at least part of Milosevic's speech."

Milosevic's defense has been so effective that the Western media has stopped broadcasting the trial.

Vienna, New York, The Hague

In Vienna, hundreds attended a March 24 meeting called by the Yugoslav-Austrian Solidarity League. Representatives of Vienna's Yugoslav community and communist and other left groups spoke at the rally.

One of the speakers was Kurt Koepruner, author of "Travels in the Land of War: Experiences of a Foreigner in Yugoslavia." He said, "What happened three years ago in Yugoslavia is continuing today in Afghanistan. And the next targets have already been designated."

In New York, the date was commemorated at a book signing at former U.S. Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark's office for the International Action Center's new publication, "Hidden Agenda: U.S./NATO Takeover of Yugoslavia."

Clark emphasized the importance of the IAC publication in spreading the truth about the war to combat the lies of the military victors.

The meeting opened a campaign to get thousands of copies of this book—as well as the English translation of Michel Collon's "Liar's Poker: the Great Powers, Yugoslavia and the Coming Wars"—into libraries, bookstores and universities across the United States.

In The Hague, Wil van der Klift of the New Communist Party of the Netherlands tried to deliver a copy of "Hidden Agenda" to President Milosevic in prison on March 22. The guards insisted he hand over the book to them. It is not known if the publication, which contains two chapters by the Yugoslav leader, reached Milosevic.

HIDDEN AGENDA

U.S./NATO takeover of Yugoslavia

This book presents evidence gathered by dozens of nongovernmental hearings in 1999 and 2000 that the NATO countries engaged in a decade-long conspiracy to foment war in Yugoslavia in order to split it up. Now NATO has military bases all over the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. They are the Roman legions for Western transnational corporations and Big Oil.

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Red is back in fashion

Millions march in Rome for workers' rights

By John Catalinotto

Red is back in fashion in Italy. Even the conservative press had to admit it after 2 million to 3 million unionists, youth, anti-globalist forces, the gay movement and activists of all progressive tendencies joined in a demonstration in Rome on March 23 to defend workers' rights against the right-wing regime's latest attack.

This action gives tremendous impulse to a general strike planned for April 16.

The vast sea of demonstrators waved red flags—historically the emblem of the working-class movement. Despite the modest demands and the peaceful mood of the protesters, this demonstration—the largest workers' protest in Italy's history—reverses the mood of retreat within the working class.

The right-wing regime, despite its bitter hostility to working Italy, is in disarray. Those members of the government coalition concerned about losing all working-class support are pulling back. Meanwhile, the moderate left can no longer expect that workers will accept a rotten compromise.

The demonstration was a defensive action called by the historically leftwing union confederation CGIL. It demanded the government of right-wing media mogul Premier Silvio Berlusconi halt his plans to dismantle Article 18, a section of the law that defends workers' rights to a job. The law was won in mass workers' struggles between 1968 and 1970.

In effect, Berlusconi is trying to do in Italy what Reagan did in the U.S. and Thatcher did in Britain in the 1980s. Attack unions. Create differences between older and younger workers. Remove legal restrictions to firings and work conditions and create an open road for the grossest capitalist exploitation.

In the weeks before the demonstration, it appeared that the conflict would end in some compromise between the regime and the three union confederations: the CGIL and the even less resolute CISL and UIL. Now, following bitter terrorist-baiting attacks on the unions, all union leaders have agreed to refuse to talk and—for now, at least—to instead prepare for a general strike.

Assassination fails to stop mass action

A few days before the protest, a government technician drafting the new labor law, Marco Biagi, was assassinated in Bologna. According to the investigating police, the murder was the act of a little-known group of "Red Brigades," who allegedly took credit for the killing.

The manifesto issued by this alleged left group was so filled with contradictions and faulty logic, however, that the killing looked to most people on the left like a government provocation. It is now common knowledge that in Italy in the 1970s, right-wing CIA-affiliated groups committed this type of "terrorist" provocation to try to keep the Italian Communist Party from entering the government.

The Berlusconi regime tried to use the assassination to attack the union movement, blaming it for contributing to a climate that encourages terror. The resulting mass demonstration shows that this provocation failed completely, and that the workers were not stopped by such menacing maneuvers.

Florence union leader John Gilbert told Workers World, "It was probably the biggest demonstration most of us will ever participate in. The more loud-mouthed and stupid representatives of the government attacked the demonstration as 'anti-democratic.' They tried to link the union attacks on the government with the terrorist assassination of Biagi, but it all backfired on them so far."

The talks are now stopped. "Things are hot and the tension is high," Gilbert said. "On March 26 the CGIL, CISL and UIL should set a new date for the national, united general strike."

A veteran of the 1968 struggles, Fausto Schiavetto of Soccorso Popolare, wrote the following of the demonstration:

"Impressive. It was an enormous wave of the color red. It is a major political passage, that follows Genoa 2001 where already there had been 300,000 people protesting against imperialist globalization.

"The heart of the working class, Italian workers, the Italian people have demonstrated against neoliberalism and against its policies. An enormous mass is in place and ready for a general strike, for a difficult struggle to begin to reverse the neoliberal policies.

"Many of the slogans were also against Bush's infinite war and the big capitalists. When the government accused the older workers of narrow goals hostile to the youths, the workers answered by carrying banners announcing themselves as father and son." There



was even one group of grandmothers, mothers and daughters that united many generations.

"It was a major demonstration that opened a new chapter in the struggle between capital and labor in Italy and in Europe. The working class has begun to be fed up with retreating and has come out in the street announcing it is ready for struggle," wrote Schiavetto.

All voices in the anti-imperialist left agree that the moderate leaderships of the major union confederations, including the CGIL, are a brake on the development of this vast movement. Then there are the larger center-left parties, which led Italy for

five years and waged the criminal war against Yugoslavia in full collaboration with NATO and the Pentagon. They now back Bush's "war on terror."

Also, it should be kept in mind that the workers were demanding only that their rights, already won, be preserved. There were no clear demands for a change in government, let alone a change in the social system.

But there is no doubt that after years of retreat and passivity, the Italian working class is back on center stage. Berlusconi, for all his swaggering and all his backing from the imperialist world system, is in trouble.

Australians hit gov't racism aimed at refugees

By Malcolm Cummins
Sydney, Australia

Opposition is mounting in Australia to the imprisonment of refugees. Successive Australian governments have had a policy of mandatory detention for any refugee who arrives in that country seeking political asylum. The current administration of Prime Minister John Howard won re-election last November by whipping up a racist campaign against refugees. Prior to the racist frenzy, Howard had been expected to lose.

Howard claimed that a group of Iraqi refugees had thrown their children into the ocean from a boat stopped by an Australian warship. The claim was later revealed to be false, but the government used the incident to demonize all refugees seeking entry to Australia. Ironically, that same warship is now enforcing U.S. sanctions against Iraq in the Persian Gulf.

Refugees who arrive in Australia are imprisoned for long periods in detention centers, where conditions are often brutal. Many Iraqi and Afghan refugees have been sent to Woomera, a camp in the desert of central Australia where temperatures can reach 120 degrees. Under these desperate conditions, some have tried to commit suicide by throwing themselves onto razor-wire fences.

Security at the Woomera camp is provided by an Australian subsidiary of

Wackenhut. Wackenhut runs private prisons in the U.S. and has been accused by the Justice Department of violating U.S. inmates' rights "by habitually using excessive force and allowing brutal fights over such basic items as food, clothing and shoes," according to the Associated Press.

Husain, an Iraqi refugee who spent seven months and 12 days at Woomera, described conditions there as being "very terrible." He said the guards had a "bad mentality. They insult us and swear at us." The Howard government is hoping that by treating refugees in the most barbaric manner possible, it will deter others who might be thinking about trying to make it to Australia.

It is a continuation of a racist immigration policy practiced by both major capitalist parties since World War II—called the "white Australia policy"—that sought to keep people of color from immigrating.

The refugees, unions and progressive movement are fighting back. Support groups are springing up all over the country, even in rural areas. Many groups are planning to go to Woomera for a "Protest and Festival of Freedom" from March 28 to April 1.

One of the organizers, Damien Lawson of "No One is Illegal," called for dismantling the camps entirely. Lawson told Workers World, "The people aren't illegal; the camps are." He added that protesters at Woomera would engage in peaceful civil

disobedience to "use their bodies to enforce international law."

Under the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, Australia is obliged to provide sanctuary. At least 120 refugees are on a hunger strike at Woomera. Some have sewn their lips together in protest at being held incommunicado, while others have dug symbolic graves for themselves in the sand and are sleeping in them.

The teachers' federation in the state of New South Wales has called for the children in detention centers to be allowed to attend public schools. The federation condemns the denial of education for refugee children as "a violation of Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child."

Australia is also being condemned internationally. So seriously does Amnesty International take the situation that the current president, Irene Khan, felt compelled to investigate personally. It's the first time an Amnesty president has come to Australia. Khan's accusation that the Howard government is trying "to create a climate of suspicion, mistrust, xenophobia and racism" was quoted by the British Broadcasting Company.

The Howard government, however, feels emboldened by the Bush administration's racist and xenophobic campaign that is providing a cover for U.S. aggression in Asia and the Arab world.

Intifada descarrila la gira de Cheney

Por Richard Becker

El viaje por el medio oriente del vicepresidente Richard Cheney que ha recibido mucha publicidad no salió exactamente como fue planeado. Fue descarrilado por la lucha palestina.

La intención fue de hacer un viaje glorioso con momentos destacados de líderes árabes abrazando, o por lo menos conformarse con, los planes de la administración de Bush de lanzar una guerra total contra Irak.

En vez de eso, Cheney fue confrontado en cada escala en el mundo árabe, Egipto, Jordania, y los estados ricos en petróleo del Golfo, con oposición a tal guerra nueva, por lo menos por el momento, y demandan a Washington a que haga algo sobre la lucha ascendiente entre Israel y el pueblo palestino.

El presidente de Egipto, Hosni Mubarak, el Rey Abdullah de Jordania, y los jefes reales de Kuwait, Arabia Saudita y los Emiratos Árabes Unidos no estaban haciendo sus demandas a Cheney basado en su compasión verdadera por el pueblo palestino y su causa justa. No, algo distinto motivó a sus protestas al vicepresidente: el miedo. Miedo de los habitantes de sus propios países.

Por casi 18 meses, la Intifada palestina, o sublevación, ha combatido la ocupación israelí. A pesar de los pocos chances de ganar militarmente, los palestinos han intensificado la lucha.

Los palestinos han sufrido una proporción abrumadora de bajas, al contrario de la impresión creada por los medios de comunicación corporativos acá, que se enfoca en las bajas israelíes.

Por lo menos 1083 palestinos han sido resultado muertos, a comparación de 353 israelíes. Decenas de miles de palestinos han sido heridos, más de 2.500 de ellos ahora padecen de impedimentos severos permanentes. Miles más han sido detenidos y torturados sistemáticamente, mientras que un sinnúmero de casas palestinas han sido destruidas por el ejército israelí.

El ejército israelí ha utilizado con más y más frecuencia los aviones bombarderos F-16 y helicópteros capaces de lanzar cohetes y tanques contra centros de población palestinos.

A fines de febrero, en respuesta a la "nueva iniciativa por la paz" inspirado por los Estados Unidos y sugerido en su lugar por el Príncipe Abdalah de Arabia Saudita, Israel lanzó su ofensiva militar más grande desde la guerra contra Líbano de 1982.

Israel: ocupador colonial

Tanques de combate israelíes y tropas de infantería, apoyado por aviones F-16 y helicópteros de asalto Apache invadieron a campos densamente poblados de refugiados palestinos en Cisjordania y Gaza. Los campos empobrecidos sufrieron bajas pesadas y destrucción. En los ataques contra los campos Balata y Jenin, por lo menos 30 palestinos resultaron muertos con 200

más heridos. Cientos de casas fueron destruidas.

En el ataque contra el campo de Jabaliya en Gaza, el campo con la población más grande y entre los más pobres, 19 murieron en un solo día, con veintenas más heridas.

Mientras que el ataque israelí creció a incluir hasta 20.000 tropas de infantería y cientos de tanques, todas las ciudades mayores y pueblos de Cisjordania y Gaza fueron invadidos.

La política israelí de hacer blanco de las ambulancias y hospitales demuestra la brutalidad extrema del ataque. Varios trabajadores de la salud fueron dados por muertos cuando una ambulancia claramente marcada fue destruida por el disparo de un tanque israelí mientras que intentaban llevar a los heridos a un hospital.

Dentro de las ciudades y campos, las tropas israelíes se han comportado a la moda típica de ocupadores coloniales. Fueron numerosos reportes, incluso en el periódico israelí Ha'aretz de soldados israelíes participando en vandalismo, destrucción y robo de propiedad personal palestina.

Además, el ejército de ocupación hizo daños deliberados y extensivos a la infraestructura palestina, incluso conductos de agua principales, al sistema principal de suministro de energía eléctrica, y carreteras.

Miles de hombres y niños palestinos entre 13 y 55 años de edad fueron detenidos y llevados atados y con los ojos vendados. Muchos fueron golpeados y algunos fueron ejecutados en el lugar. Los detenidos fueron mantenidos cautivos por muchas horas sin comida ni agua antes de ser detenidos oficialmente o puestos en libertad. Aquellos arrestados fueron sujetos a interrogación extensiva acompañado por la tortura rutinaria a las cuales son sujetos los detenidos palestinos políticos.

La ofensiva masiva israelí en Cisjordania y Gaza volvió en la noticia principal alrededor del mundo. Alrededor del medio oriente, redes de televisión transmitido por satélite reportó extensivamente sobre los ocurridos, inspirando una furia ardiente hacia Israel y su auspiciador principal, los Estados Unidos, junto a un sentido de solidaridad intensiva con los palestinos.

Imágenes del ejército de ocupación racista brutalizando a la población palestina civil, imágenes dados con poca frecuencia en los EE.UU., son vistas siempre en los países árabes.

Palestinos tienen menos armas pero no menos valentía

Otros imágenes, igualmente importantes, se pudieron ver también: los de combatientes palestinos con armas relativamente débiles pero con mucha devoción a la causa siguiendo su resistencia, de niños tirando piedras contra tanques israelíes ronroneando por las calles palestinas. Hasta cuando fueron retrocediendo, los guerrilleros palestinos débilmente armados siguieron abaleando a los tanques.

Combinadas, estas imágenes pueden

crear una mezcla peligrosa de sentimientos populares desde el punto de vista de las élites dominantes: ultraje a los ocupadores y sus colaboradores, y a la vez, admiración orgullosa de los combatientes de resistencia.

La opinión pública enardecida contra los Estados Unidos e Israel es vista por los regímenes pro Estados Unidos en el mundo árabe, como algo amenazante para sus propios intereses. La intranquilidad de la monarquía jordana, la cual ha estado bajo la bota de los Estados Unidos por muchas décadas, ha sido visible en la represión de mano dura del régimen contra cualquier señal de protesta popular. Los palestinos abarcan por lo menos el 60% de la población jordana.

A comienzos de marzo, las fuerzas de seguridad jordana reprimieron brutalmente a una marcha espontánea que montaron unos estudiantes de la escuela media en Amman, la capital del país. Los estudiantes dejaron sus escuelas e intentaron marchar hasta la Embajada de Estados Unidos en solidaridad con la lucha palestina. La policía de seguridad golpeó severamente a los estudiantes, rompiéndoles huesos e infligiendo otras heridas serias. Un cierto número de activistas muy bien conocidos también han sido arrestado y encarcelados.

Pero el régimen está profundamente preocupado que solo la represión no será suficiente si la lucha dentro de Palestina continúa intensificándose. El Rey Abdulla y sus ministros temen a una explosión social.

Esta es una razón por la cual un gobierno subordinado, con gran dependencia de Washington por ayuda y apoyo, podría hablar directa y abiertamente cuando un oficial estadounidense de alto rango los visita.

"Este no es el momento para discutir una nueva guerra contra Irak," dijo el rey al vice presidente, en pocas palabras, "ahora es el momento de apagar el ardiente fuego vecino antes de que nos consuma a todos también."

Cheney escucho variaciones del mismo tema en cada una de las capitales árabes que visitó. Como lo señaló la prensa capitalista, el foco de la gira de Cheney tuvo que moverse de Irak a Palestina.

Calmar el conflicto entre Israel y Palestina fue la nueva prioridad. Volver a comenzar las negociaciones entre Israel y la Autoridad Palestina, bajo condiciones de los Estados Unidos, fue el objetivo inmediato.

Washington cambia estrategia

La Administración de Bush, la cual ha apoyado totalmente todas las medidas tomadas por el Primer Ministro de Israel, Ariel Sharon, tuvo que cambiar de estrategia. El 12 de marzo, en una movida sorpresiva durante la sesión del Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU, los Estados Unidos presentaron y forzaron una resolución en la que se pedía "un estado palestino y un estado israelita viviendo juntos. La sesión de media noche solo duró 18 minutos.

Los Estados Unidos criticaron la ocupación de las ciudades palestinas por Israel y sus campos y a su momento indicado, el Secretario General de la ONU, Kofi Annan también reprochó fuertemente al mismo.

Mientras que los Estados Unidos empujaron para que Israel retire sus tropas y blindajes a la afueras de las ciudades palestinas, pero también continuó sus ataques contra el líder de la Autoridad Palestina, Yasir Arafat, demandando un fin a toda la "violencia". En el diccionario de Washington, "violencia" quiere decir resistencia palestina, y no la represión israelita.

Lo que los líderes estadounidenses quieren no es cualquier clase de paz justa, sino la pacificación, un cese de la lucha, para que ellos así puedan entrar con su agenda mas extensa.

Una vez en Israel, Cheney repetida y arrogantemente demandó que los palestinos asediados "paren la violencia." Cheney sostuvo tres reuniones públicas con Sharon en un lapso de 18 horas, pero rehusó reunirse con el Presidente Arafat antes de partir hacia Kuwait.

Al cierre de su conferencia de prensa, Cheney y Sharon presentaron un frente unido culpando a Arafat y a los Palestinos por la "violencia".

Sharon subrayó el carácter colonial de la relación israelita-palestina cuando afirmó que él podría "permitir" la asistencia de Arafat a la reunión cumbre de la Liga Árabe en el Líbano el 22 de marzo, pero no dejaría que el líder de la Autoridad Palestina regrese si Sharon juzga que en el discurso Arafat incluye "provocación" o si hubiera "violencia" mientras Arafat esté fuera del país.

Lo que descarriló la gira de Cheney fue el factor que los gobernantes casi siempre no cuenta en sus cálculos: la intervención del pueblo—en este caso el pueblo palestino—en el proceso histórico. Pero por su lucha heroica, los palestinos no solo están avanzando en su propia causa, sino que también la causa de liberación en todo el Medio Oriente y el mundo.

El fallo de la misión de Cheney no quiere decir, por supuesto, que la administración de Bush ha abandonado su determinación de lanzar otra guerra contra el pueblo iraquí. La junta militarista y racista que ha tomado las riendas del gobierno están decididos a llevar a cabo una nueva guerra contra Irak. La conquista de Irak y afianzar la hegemonía de los Estados Unidos en la región petrolera del Golfo está en la misma cima de su agenda.

Lo que se necesita para detener una nueva guerra contra Irak, para así ganar la libertad para los palestinos y echar hacia tras la campaña guerrillera de los Estados Unidos, es una intervención mas amplia por el pueblo, especialmente dentro de los Estados Unidos. Las marchas nacionales en Washington D.C. y San Francisco el 20 de abril pueden ser un paso importante en el forjamiento de un nuevo movimiento para detener la agresión de los Estados Unidos en todo el mundo.