

ANTI-WAR ALERT

Don't wait for the next Pentagon excuse for a new war of aggression. All out for an emergency anti-war conference June 1 in New York City!

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WAR PROFITS

Live from death row, Mumia Abu-Jamal writes about wars for wealth.

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CALIFORNIA SCHEMIN'

New revelations confirm worst suspicions: There's more stink to unearth in the Enron scandal. And the worst part is, it's business as usual.

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MIDDLE EAST PRESSURE COOKER

Israel's ruling Likud party just voted to deny Palestinians any right to a nation. What did the media here say about it? Damn little. Meanwhile, over 100,000 Israelis demonstrated against the occupation, likening the government's policies to apartheid South Africa.

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U.S. 'HUMAN RIGHTS'?

Death penalty under fire

Bold Texas actions hit death row

By Gloria Rubac Houston



Napoleon Beasley faces May 28 execution.

As the pace of executions speeds up in Texas and conditions on death row deteriorate daily, activists on both sides of the walls are increasing their fight back.

In May, men on death row initiated a voluntary lay-in. This means they will not go to recreation, to shower, or to the commissary except for stamps and hygiene products. And they will not speak to guards except to give their prison number during counts.

They are refusing to participate in normal prison life. An innocent youth activist on Pod D, Nanon Williams, initiated this.

There are reports that others prisoners are organizing different actions. The 450 men on Texas death row are on the move.

Held in six-by-10-foot cells behind steel doors and going to their one hour of recreation alone, communication is difficult. Yet struggle and actions are taking place and a proactive spirit is building.

Every Saturday in May lines of angry people, ranging in age from pre-teen to senior citizens, are holding signs and chanting into bullhorns up and down Farm-to-Market Highway 350 in Livingston, Texas, to demand the cruel, inhumane treatment stop.

"Guard brutality, gassings with pepper spray, a starvation diet, lack of medical care, tampering with mail

STRUGGLE AGAINST RACIST REPRESSION

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including legal mail from attorneys and courts, and the sensory deprivation and isolation are issues we are raising. Also, there is no work program, no educational program, no religious services, no television or newspapers. All this compounds the isolation that is pushing prisoners to the brink of insanity," explained abolition movement activist Njeri Shakur.

The protests are a continuation of the actions initiated by the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement that took place every Wednesday in March. A death row

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Protest at the Polunsky (formerly Terrell) death row unit in Texas. The woman in the wheelchair is Mary Curtis, mother of death row activist/prisoner Paul Colella. WW PHOTO

Mobilize to stop the next attack

All out for June 1 anti-war conference

By Sarah Sloan

The writer is an organizer of the June 1 Emergency National Anti-War Conference called by the ANSWER—Act Now to Stop War & End Racism—coalition.

She is the national youth and student coordinator for the International Action Center, one of 11 national organizations that make up the ANSWER steering committee.

The ANSWER steering committee also includes Bayan International-USA, Free Palestine Alliance-USA, IFCO/Pastors for Peace, Kensington Welfare Rights Union, Korea Truth Commission, Mexico Solidarity Network, Middle East Children's Alliance, Muslim Student Association (U.S./Canada), Nicaragua Network, and Partnership for Civil Justice-LDEF.

On June 1, there will be an emergency national anti-war conference in New York City that will include organizers and activists from all regions of the United States. The conference will include exciting and educational discussions on many issues, and will map out anti-war strategies and projects for the months ahead.

Why do we call it an emergency conference?

Because the people of this country, through their action, can stop a massive new air and ground war being planned against the suffering people of Iraq.

Because we must act to oppose the Bush administration's support for Ariel Sharon's butchery against the Palestinian people.

Thousands of U.S. troops are now in the Philippines. And Bush is readying a larger intervention in Colombia. The people of the world are looking to us to see if we will extend a hand of solidarity and fight against a war policy that is wrongly being carried out in our name.

Details of the conference

The conference will take place on June 1 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Fashion Institute of Technology, West 27th Street and Eighth Avenue in Manhattan. The schedule is as follows:

8:30 am Registration begins (\$10 donation requested)

9:00 am-10:30 am Opening presentations

10:45 am-12:30 pm Workshops/discussion groups

12:30 pm-1:30 pm Lunch

1:45 pm-3:00 pm Palestine: The Fight for Freedom (panel discussion)

3:15 pm-4:45 pm Action proposals and organizing skills workshops

5:00 pm-7:00 pm Closing session

Workshop discussions are set to include:

- **From Palestine to Iraq** Understanding U.S. strategy in the Middle East
- **Racial and political profiling** What you need to know about John Ashcroft's new "anti-terrorism" laws
- **Latin America and the struggle vs. capitalist globalization:** Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Venezuela
- **Labor and the war at home and abroad**
- **Invisible workers = superprofits** The role of immigrant labor
- **Bush's war drive in Asia** U.S. troops from the Philippines to Korea

A volunteer committee in New York City is organizing housing. If your group needs housing information, please email housing@internationalanswer.org.

How you can get involved

The June 1 conference is an entirely volunteer effort. There are many ways you can get involved to help insure that this conference is a huge success.

1) Attend volunteer organizer meetings: These meetings are a great way to become involved. They include discussions and reports on current events around the world, and strategizing for upcoming activities including the June 1 conference. Check out the ANSWER web page:

(www.internationalANSWER.org) to find out about meetings in New York, Boston, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and other cities.

2) Help get the word out to others by distributing fliers and putting up posters: Getting the word out is a grassroots effort. Thousands of beautiful two-color brochures have been printed and are being distributed around the country. Downloadable versions of this brochure (both two-color and black and white) are available on the ANSWER web page. Contact the office closest to you to pick up fliers or have them shipped to you.

3) Get on the bus to New York City: Buses, vans and car caravans are being organized from around the country to attend the conference. Contact the organizers in your area to find out about travel to the conference—or if there's no one in your area, think about becoming an organizer. See the ANSWER web site for a list of contacts, or email ANSWER@afgj.org to get more information about becoming an organizer in your area.

For more information about the June 1 conference, email ANSWER@afgj.org or call: New York (212) 633-6646, Washington (202) 332-5757, Chicago (773) 583-7728, Los Angeles (213) 487-2368, San Francisco (415) 821-6545.



April 20, Washington, D.C.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

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WW CALENDAR

NEW YORK

Fri., May 17

Israel's defeat in Lebanon. Hear Joyce Chediak on the 2nd anniversary of the victory of Lebanese resistance to Israeli occupation. 7 p.m. At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

Sat., June 1

National Anti-War Conference. Join hundreds of anti-war activists and organizers from around the country. Panels & workshops. Special panel: Palestine, the fight for freedom. 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. At FIT, 27th

Street and Eighth Avenue, Manhattan. For info (212) 633-6646. www.international-ANSWER.org or e-mail answer@internationalanswer.org.

SAN FRANCISCO

Sun., May 19

May Day in Cuba. Hear Gloria La Riva, who spoke at the May Day celebration in Havana, report on the event and show video footage. Workers World meeting. 5 p.m. At 2489 Mission St., Room 28. For info (415) 826-4828.

Workers World

55 West 17 Street
 New York, N.Y. 10011
 Phone: (212) 627-2994 • Fax: (212) 675-7869
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National Office
 55 W. 17 St.,
 New York, N.Y. 10011
 (212) 627-2994;
 Fax (212) 675-7869
wwp@workers.org

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
 P.O. Box 5963
 Cleveland, OH 44101
 phone (216) 531-4004
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.
 3930 Oregon St., Suite 230
 San Diego, Calif. 92104
 (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

Los Angeles meeting:

Why gov't hides truth about Israel, Palestine

By Adrian Garcia
Los Angeles

What would happen if U.S. workers knew that the government squanders \$400,000 in tax money every hour to support an apartheid state perpetrating a genocidal military campaign against oppressed people?

It would be safe to assume that the masses would rise up with indignation and demand an immediate cessation of such funding. This begs the question: Why isn't the U.S. public aware of such vital information?

At a May 11 public meeting in Los Angeles, International Action Center West Coast Regional Coordinator Richard Becker explained why the people are kept in the dark about U.S. support for Israel—and the implications for Palestinians and working people throughout the world.

Becker spoke to an audience of about 100 people about the Palestinian people's unceasing struggle and the growing menace the Bush administration's war drive poses for everyone.

Becker examined the Bush administration's current war policy. He informed the crowd that President Bush's branding of Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an "axis of evil" has encountered opposition.

During Bush's last visit to South Korea, Becker said, the U.S. president was greeted by huge crowds protesting Washington's hypocritical condemnation of other countries. The Korean people have not forgotten the 4 million casualties caused by the U.S.-led incursion into their country 50 years ago, Becker explained.

In Korea, Bush visited a museum in the demilitarized zone between north and south, which ironically "is one of the most militarized zones in the world,"

said Becker. The museum was set up to commemorate a battle between North Korean and South Korean troops. When he learned that two U.S. soldiers died in the battle, Bush was stricken with emotion and commented, "No wonder I think they [North Koreans] are evil."

According to Becker, Bush's ridiculous statement was not simply another "Bush-

ism," but a lucid illustration of the methodology the Bush administration is using to pursue its war aims. "Establish policy first and seek justification later" is Bush's modus operandi.

Despite growing opposition to Bush's foreign policy, the government seeks to expand its war aims against other countries. In early May U.S. Undersecretary

of State John Bolton accused Cuba of developing biological weapons—an accusation Cuba vehemently denies and is prepared to contest. Bolton's accusation places Cuba on a list of six "rogue states" the Bush administration calls a threat to U.S. security. The other five countries are Libya, Syria, Iran, Iraq and North Korea.

Becker compared the U.S. military budget with those of the six countries. The House of Representatives recently approved an increase of \$48 billion for the Pentagon, he said. This increase alone is "four times the military spending of those six countries combined," said Becker.

U.S. funding of Israel is not a gesture of kindness toward Jewish people, Becker explained, but a policy based on big-business interests. The U.S. rulers "don't give money away, they invest it" to protect U.S. oil profits in the region.

Unfortunately, this investment contributes to the brutal oppression of the Palestinian people. In an effort to protect its investment, the U.S. capitalist elite promotes a shameless campaign of misinformation and lies.

Becker ended his speech by beating the drum of resistance. "The fact that the April 20 rallies in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco were the biggest protests in support of the Palestinian cause in the history of the U.S. provides hope and gives us the impetus to continue struggling, like our Palestinian brothers and sisters, until justice is achieved," he concluded.

She defied Henry Kissinger

Nguyen Thi Binh, vice president of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, met with a group of U.S. activists in New York on May 9. Many remembered her as the incomparable Madame Binh who had headed the delegation of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam at the Paris peace talks in the 1970s. She had faced down former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who threatened the Vietnamese with nuclear bombs several times during the negotiations. Her skill and grace under pressure gave inspiration to women everywhere to take their place in the leadership of progressive causes.

Madame Binh thanked the movement here for its work to stop the war. She also explained that Vietnam today, although reunited and at peace, continues to suffer serious health problems from the heavy use



Nguyen Thi Binh

WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

of toxic chemicals—like Agent Orange—that the U.S. dropped all over the countryside. Its economy is still one of the poorest in Asia, and has never received the reparations promised for the terrible damage done by the U.S. war.

New Yorkers demand 'FREE PALESTINE'

Every Saturday for months Al-Awda, the Palestine Right of Return Coalition, has been holding an afternoon picket line at Union Square in New York City. Some Saturdays, the picket line has drawn hundreds of people and marched around the Square, a traditional site for protests in New York.

There is chanting, leafleting, sometimes a short march and much discussion with passers-by—some hostile, some merely curious and some willing to listen. Organizers describe this weekly demonstration as a chance to capture the current mood in New York and a regular spot for information about Palestine, the struggle against Zionism and the U.S. intervention in the Middle East.

—Photo and story by G. Dunkel



CHICAGO

Another protest dogs Bush's heels

By Beth Semmer
Chicago

It seems like everywhere President George W. Bush goes these days he is greeted by protesters. May 13 in Chicago was no exception.

In the middle of the work day, while Bush was speaking to a group of Republican business executives inside the posh Sheraton Hotel, more than 300 came out to confront Bush on the U.S. government's policies—everything from the environment, U.S. aid to Israel, the proposed invasion of Iraq and the racist death penalty to the attacks on civil liberties and intervention in Colombia and the Philippines.

The Chicago Coalition Against War and Racism called the demonstration. More than 40 other organizations endorsed. These included many Palestinian groups, a big contingent from DePaul Students Against the War, and Latino groups representing struggles from Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua—and an especially loud, militant Puerto Rican group demanding an end to the bombing in Vieques.

Loud chants of "Free Palestine," "Free Rabih Haddad" and "Free Mumia" filled the air.



Challenge to Genocide: LET IRAQ LIVE

Read the truth about on the devastating effect of U.S.-led economic sanctions on Iraq since the Gulf War. It features "Fire and Ice," a chapter by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark. Since this book was published other delegations have gone to Iraq to challenge the sanctions.

It was truly empowering to challenge this most senseless and monstrously evil U.S. policy, writes the sanction challenger Rev. Lucius Walker. "I saw genocide in the mutilated bodies and anguished faces of the Iraqi babies, who were at the threshold of death because of U.S. sanctions."

International Action Center \$12.95

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Medicine costs hit new heights

Bosses try to make retirees pay for drug benefits

By John Catalinotto

Drug monopolies stand on one side, raising the cost of medicines each year by almost 20 percent. On the other side are other big manufacturers and banks, angry about making big payments for prescription drugs for their retired workers.

Who's suffering when these two giants fight? The retired workers.

The big companies are dumping the rapidly growing costs of medications in these former employees' laps.

The question is whether the workers will be able to wage a successful campaign against both their own former bosses and the drug makers to assure affordable health care.

There is little doubt that the pharmaceuticals are the leaders in price-gouging and profit-making. Costs of prescription drugs leaped from \$102.7 billion in 1998 to \$154.5 billion in 2001.

To bring about this 50-percent jump in the total annual cost of prescription drugs in the United States the pharmaceutical companies have:

- (1) increased the price of individual drugs
- (2) encouraged the use of costlier drugs
- (3) encouraged an increase in prescriptions.

For companies that had promised their retirees extensive health insurance plans, the soaring drug costs have created an unexpected expense. The cost increase's initial impact was to decrease these companies' profits as it increased the profits of the pharmaceuticals.

The first thing the bosses try to do when they fight each other is to make the workers pay. Companies, from Morgan Guaranty Trust Co. to the Ford Motor Co., have been trying to dump the costs on their retirees by demanding

bigger co-payments, raising deductibles and limiting the coverage that had been promised. (New York Times, May 10)

Non-union retirees have been hit with the first cuts, because they are not covered by contracts. Ford executives recently told 50,000 non-union retirees that they must pay premiums of \$5 to \$150 per month for health insurance or choose a plan with a high deductible.

How the pill pushers do it

Apologists for the drug monopolies claim high drug prices encourage and fund research and improve the available medicines. A closer look shows that there is a big gap between the strategy to maximize drug profits and providing the best medicines to the public.

The monopolies give priority to profits.

When pharmaceuticals succeed in getting a patent on a new drug they are able to charge monopoly prices as long as the patent lasts. Often the cost of manufacturing these pharmaceuticals is much smaller than the drug's unit price.

This was obvious in the case of drugs for treating AIDS-related illnesses. Other companies could provide these drugs for 70 percent less than patent holders Merck and Co., Bristol-Meyers Squibb, Glaxo-Wellcome and others charged, and still make profits.

When a drug monopoly patents a new drug with a potentially large market, it pursues an aggressive strategy—not to maximize health, but to maximize its profits. The key to this strategy is to sell as much of the drug as possible during the period the patent is in effect at the highest monopoly prices.

This strategy includes using a big sales force to push doctors and other health-care providers to write prescriptions for the drug. The companies grease

the way with free samples and gifts.

They also fund research groups at university hospitals. And since the advertising laws were loosened in 1997, they can also run heavy promotional campaigns, especially television commercials directed at the consuming public.

Perhaps the clearest example of drug-company abuse can be found with the allergy drug Claritin. Even studies run by Claritin's maker, Schering-Plough, showed that at most only 50 percent of the people who used it got allergy or cold relief. The ads, of course, don't highlight this fact.

Schering-Plough spent over \$100 million a year to push Claritin on the public in direct advertising. It also spent millions to encourage doctors to prescribe Claritin.

In the past two years, with the patent due to run out, the company raised prices on Claritin eight times.

It's the same story with other drugs. In 2000, Merck spent more money to directly advertise the arthritis drug Vioxx—\$161 million—than Coca Cola did to sell its soft drinks. Pfizer spent \$90 million on its anti-impotence drug Viagra.

Indeed, eight of nine major pharmaceuticals in a Families USA consumer health study spent more than twice as much in 2000 on marketing, advertising and administration than they did on research and development.

So much for the argument that the high prices are needed to fund research. This advertising does nothing to advance health care. It does, however, increase the price of the drugs.

Canada has laws that limit the price of drugs. As a result, medicines are often sold there much cheaper than the same ones in the United States.

What is the cure for the corporate dominated health care crisis?

In a border state like Maine, patients too poor to afford prescription drugs at U.S. prices are organizing buying trips to Canada. According to a report in the May 11 New York Times, one such run recently saved 25 people a total of \$18,000.

But it's no long-term solution to the crisis, even for retirees who live near the Canadian border.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, militant mass AIDS marches and in-your-face direct actions by activists demonstrated that a struggle against capitalist barriers to health care can win concessions. And it raised consciousness regarding the drug companies' greed.

But the sky-high prices of necessary medications for retirees is just the tip of the iceberg of an even bigger health-care crisis in the United States. Health care as a whole is becoming a luxury that fewer and fewer working and poor people can afford.

If all those affected by this crisis coalesced in struggle—retirees, the millions without health insurance, people with AIDS, oppressed communities and others, together with health care workers and their unions—a powerful battle could be joined that could transform the delivery of life-and-death care in this country.

Detroit workers fight budget cuts

Special to Workers World Detroit

Five hundred angry Detroit city workers marched in front of City Hall May 9 to protest Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's proposed 2002-2003 budget. The \$3.7 billion budget is based on a two-year wage freeze for all city employees.

After an hour-long picket, workers packed a special evening public hearing of the City Council. For three hours worker after worker rose to speak out against the pay freeze.

Many complained of already being underpaid. Some make only \$7 or \$8 per hour.

While the mayor wants to freeze wages, every worker in the room faces a big hike in medical insurance co-pays, scheduled to take effect July 1.

Union officials, joined by rank-and-file workers, exposed the city's failure to fill positions, which causes a backlog of work

for those on the job. While equipment is old and worn out, workers reported that their supervisors are all driving brand-new vehicles provided by the city along with free gasoline and service.

Privatization was also a big issue. One welder told how he could do a job that would cost the city no more than \$800, yet a private contractor was doing it for \$3,500. Angry workers gave other examples of wasteful or unnecessary private contracts.

Members of the union representing city accountants and appraisers presented a detailed analysis of the budget, handing council members spreadsheets showing where money could be saved.

Auto Workers Local 2334 President David Sole, representing workers at the Detroit water and health departments, went beyond just looking at waste and corruption in city management. He asked why the mayor hadn't joined 30 busloads of Detroit demonstrators in



ACT-UP contingent supports health care rights for people with AIDS in Washington D.C.

Washington, D.C., on April 20 to protest the Bush administration's massive military spending—money that is being drained from the cities.

"The U.S. government gives Israel \$15 million a day to shoot down Palestinian women and children," Sole testified. "If we could stop that money for just six days, it

could be used to wipe out the reported Detroit budget deficit of \$90 million. Why wasn't the mayor with us?"

The hearing also drew a vocal group fighting to keep the Belle Isle Children's Zoo open. The mayor shut the zoo in another attempt to balance his budget at the expense of Detroit's people.

California schemin'

Enron scandal still deepening

By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

Recently released memos reveal that bosses at Enron Energy Services carried out elaborate schemes that bilked California consumers of at least \$30 billion.

It occurred during months when California and several neighboring states were suffering the devastating effects of an acute energy crisis.

When the dust from this scandal finally settles, what many already suspected will be confirmed: The crisis did not stem from a shortage of energy supply or a lack of capacity to transmit sufficient power. Instead it was manufactured by thieving energy billionaires.

How many other energy trading companies and power producers employed similar tactics is not yet known. But it's already clear that this is a capitalist swindle of historic magnitude.

Other energy firms that dominate California's market—like Mirant, Dynergy, Calpine, and Williams—are falling all over themselves to proclaim innocence. But Enron attorney Robert Bennett asserts that the shorthand names used to describe the schemes were known throughout the industry, implying that others took part.

The memos detail strategies with catchy names like Fat Boy, Death Star, Get Shorty and Ricochet. Fat Boy was the name for buying in energy-strapped California—where price caps prevented the selling price from going above \$250 per megawatt—and then reselling in neighboring states for as much as \$1,200 per megawatt.

One of the memos recording a discussion about the legal risks concludes that it's safe: "This strategy appears not to present any problems, other than a public-relations risk from the fact that such exports may have contributed to California's declaration of a Stage 2 emergency yesterday."

Death Star was how traders labeled the practice of scheduling power transmission that didn't really exist. The purpose was to create fake congestion in some areas of California's power grid. Then they scheduled power transmission in the opposite direction.

As a result they were paid a premium for relieving congestion by Cal-ISO, the independent agency that operates the grid.

According to a memo dated Dec. 6, "No energy, however, is actually put onto the grid in either direction."

Similarly, "Ricochet" meant creating fake congestion as a justification for buying more expensive power out of state, then reselling it in California above the price cap of \$250 per megawatt.

During times of high congestion, Cal-ISO would also pay a premium to traders who reduced their load. So another tactic was to simply overstate the amount of power scheduled and collect payment for a reduction that never really occurred.

The agency had no way of detecting how much power was really scheduled to begin with. For "reducing congestion," Cal-ISO paid the traders \$750 per megawatt.

Too big to sweep under the rug

The Enron bosses are infamous for hiding mountains of debt through financial interplay among all the firm's divisions and offshore companies. Thus they kept the companies' share prices artificially high to continue accumulating capital.

When their pyramid scheme collapsed in 2001, it caused the biggest bankruptcy in history.

Just before Enron stock plummeted on the market, the bosses dumped their shares to avoid losses. At the same time, Chief Executive Officer Kenneth Lay, a close friend of President George W. Bush and a big contributor to his campaign, lied in a videotaped message to Enron employees about the company's health.

The company savings plan mandated that em-

ployees buy Enron shares. Thousands of Enron workers lost their life savings while the executives held onto their fortunes.

Under the pressure of ongoing investigations into the Enron debt-hiding scam, lawyers for the post-bankruptcy Enron bosses came forward with the memos. But even some Wall Street insiders are warning against limiting scrutiny to corruption at Enron or even just to energy trading corporations.

In a May 10 opinion piece in the New York Times, Paul Krugman wrote that "federal officials, from George W. Bush on down, offered California nothing but sermons on the virtues of the free market. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which is supposed to police these things, found no evidence of foul play. Essentially, FERC asked energy companies whether they were manipulating the market. 'Who, us?' they replied—and that was that."

Krugman added: "The bigger story involves market manipulation by a number of producers. ... if no smoking-gun memos have yet come to light, what do you expect? The Enron story shows just how easy it is for companies to cover their tracks, especially when the regulators are in their corner. If Enron hadn't lost its clout by going bankrupt, you can be sure that we would never have heard about Fat Boy and Death Star."

In 1996 California's energy system was the first to be deregulated. Until that time the investor-owned utilities—Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison and San Diego Electric—controlled both production and supply.

Under deregulation, they shed their generating and transmission facilities to make way for giant energy traders who buy energy in a huge open auction market from giant private power producers.

The Bush administration has been a champion of deregulation. The White House even opposed the price cap applied during the worst days of the crisis.

A number of politicians wasted no time in calling for a Justice Department investigation into the market manipulation. Sen. Tom Daschle is even calling for jail sentences. Because of the myriad connections between the Bush administration and Enron, and because of their advocacy of unbridled capitalism, this is a prime opportunity for Democrat demagogues to shellac the Republicans.

So what's holding them back from nailing Bush and Cheney for the Enron scandal?

On the one hand, the government is the steering committee for the entire capitalist class. It is supposed to be responsible for reining in excesses by individual banking and corporate empires. Enron didn't just bilk customers, its workers and shareholders. A lot of capitalists lost money in the Enron mess and they're hopping mad about it.

On the other hand, this scandal comes at a time when the Bush administration is popular with the ruling class because of its massive military expansion and aggressive global policies. As a result, the Enron mess hasn't stuck to the Bush administration—not yet.

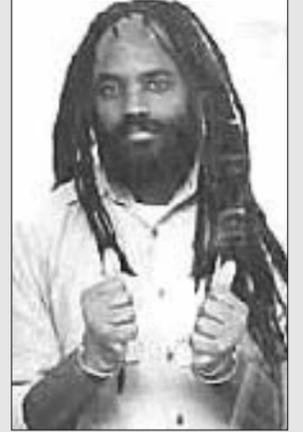
But some of the demagoguery from politicians emanates from their fear that the Enron debacle could provoke a very formidable reaction from the working class. And on that count, they have every reason to be afraid.

As the legions of those struggling against capitalist globalization and this endless imperialist war increase and find common cause with each other, more and more people in this country will see that the same U.S. banks and corporations that are bleeding the workers and poor around the world for mega-profits are also gouging the workers and poor from California to Connecticut. And it won't take a capitalist politician to make that connection.

Mumia writes from death row

Who profits from big business wars?

By Mumia Abu-Jamal



Few things stir the national imagination as the trappings and glitter of war.

This is true of virtually every nation, but this is especially so when it comes to those people who delight in calling themselves "Americans." While the term would seem to apply to those who dwell on the two vast continental regions of North and Latin America, the name sticks like flypaper to those who live in the 50 states called the United States, and excludes either the Pacific people to the north (the Canadians), or the multicultural peoples of the south (the Mexicans).

Americans, for the most part, simply thrill at the prospect of war. Or so it seems.

When is the last time that a politician has called for a mass mobilization of national will, without invoking the language, or the metaphor, of war?

When the late Lyndon B. Johnson wanted to stimulate national will to eradicate the conditions of the poor, he called for a War on Poverty.

When Richard M. Nixon wanted to galvanize right-leaning constituencies against the radicals, the anti-war activists, the revolutionaries, and the teeming masses in the nation's ghettos, he called for a War on Crime.

When Ronald W. Reagan wanted to tap into the deep puritan instincts of so-called middle America, he sounded a similar theme when he launched the War on Drugs (remember Nancy's plaintive "Just Say No"?).

While these old wars seem rather silly to us now, in the opening years of a new century, the energies unleashed by Americans, especially those of the middle classes, was really remarkable, and impacted the lives, fortunes, and destinies of millions of people, both here and around the world.

Millions of people are in America's vast carceral islands of despair, or their lives have irreparably been impacted by their contact with such networks. There are millions of victims of these quasi-wars.

By the same token, however, there have been millions of people who have benefited from these internal wars, as the security and repressive industries have employed hundreds of thousands of young males, and, to a lesser extent, females, and by extension, supported households.

What was true for internal wars is also true for external wars.

If the former CIA station chief John Stockwell is correct, over 6,000,000 men and women and children perished as a direct result of U.S./C.I.A. actions and activities, in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the second half of the 20th century. ("The Praetorian Guard: The U.S. Role in the New World Order," Boston: South End Press, 1991, p. 81) However, he notes that if activist/scholar Noam Chomsky's analysis is used, that figure rises closer to 7 million people!

Wars work wonders for the economy, for every bomb that explodes must be replaced!

But, in another, more sinister sense, war is big business, not simply in the replacement of munitions, nor their manufacture. War is business in the sense of, Who really benefits from war?

Many years ago, a military man who led the Marines into battle all around the globe made a rather startling announcement of the purposes of his military action. It is interesting for the lack of the usual rhetoric about "to protect our democracy" or "to keep America free" or some such blather.

Major-General Smedley D. Butler wrote:

"I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism ... I helped make Mexico ... safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank Boys to collect things in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street." (ca. 1935, quoted in Dave Dellinger's Preface to Eugene V. Debs' "Walls & Bars: Prisons & Prison Life" in "The Land of the Free," Chicago: C.H. Kerr Publ., 2000)

If you replace 1914 Mexico with 2002 Iraq or 1990 Kuwait, it would make America's current overseas ventures clearer than ever.

Wars are waged today for the same reason that most of them were waged yesterday: to protect the wealthy elite, and to make them richer.

Democracy? Nope. For why is there less of that here every time a war is fought?

To make the world safe? (Honestly — do you feel any safer today than you did before 9/11/01?)

We are looking at war—endless war—for the same reasons as Maj. Gen. Butler strapped on a Colt .45—"... for Big Business."



Anniversary of cop bombing of MOVE

The struggle continues

Seventeen years ago, on May 13, 1985, the Philadelphia Police Department carried out a vicious act of terrorism against the Black community. Cops aided by U.S. military advisors staged an early-morning attack on the MOVE Organization house on Osage Avenue. The capitalist establishment had long targeted MOVE supporters for their radical views including their advocacy of the right to armed self-defense.

Over 10,000 rounds of ammunition were fired at the house. Then a helicopter dropped a bomb on the roof.

Eleven people, including five children, died inside.

This powerful bomb ignited, spread like wildfire and eventually caused 60 homes in the African American neighborhood to burn to the ground.

Ramona Africa, the sole adult survivor in the MOVE house, was charged with assault, conspiracy and riot, and sent to prison. Since her release she has toured the world speaking on behalf of death-row journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal and the MOVE 9 political prisoners, who were unjustly sentenced to life in prison.

In 2000, on the bombing's 15th anniversary, MOVE's newspaper First Day wrote: "John Africa's MOVE Organization has not backed off this rotten corrupt system one bit. We are stronger, more committed than ever, both in prison and out."

This year supporters protested in Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square to remember the victims of the "Mother's Day Massacre."

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and the MOVE 9!

—Greg Butterfield



Texas death row struggle

Actions hit slavery-like conditions

Continued from page 1

mother in a wheelchair joins activists and other families. There's a Houston Catholic priest with his lay youth volunteers, prisoners' pen pals from as far as Chicago and even Europe, a law student from New York University, a retired member of the longshore union, students from Texas A & M University, a merchant marine, a lawyer who represents Texas prisoners, mothers, fathers, wives and children of those on death row, and activists from around the state.

When the weekly protests began in March, the prison cops told demonstrators that they couldn't stand on the sides of the highway and police would be called unless they moved. No one moved.

The cops came. The sheriffs came. Prison security from Austin and San Antonio came. Not a single protester was intimidated into leaving.

Visiting families stop to take fliers along the highway. Neighbors stop and say they didn't know of the brutal conditions. A man living across the highway who raises goats allows demonstrators to park and protest on his property and comes out to visit every week.

Each week the protesters walk from the prison entrance about a quarter mile down to the highway and rally across from Warden Zeller's house.

Zeller lives on the vast prison property in a big, well-maintained house. One prisoner wrote Workers World that as he looked out of the three-inch slit of a window toward the warden's house, he wasn't sure what century he was in. He saw Black men in white uniforms washing the warden's cars, mowing his expansive lawn, and working on the roof.

It looked like a plantation scene from the past.

As the microphone is passed around at the protests, everyone tells why they are there. Anger builds. So does the solidarity of families and activists, who pledge they will not stop until the torture and execu-

tions stop.

Texas has already executed 11 men this year. Thirteen more executions are scheduled through August.

As another state, Maryland, announced a moratorium on executions, Texas is going full steam ahead, planning to execute innocent men, men with mental problems, men who didn't have decent attorneys and a man who was a juvenile when arrested.

The juvenile case is that of Napoleon Beasley, who was 17 at the time. He is scheduled to die May 28. In a clemency petition filed May 7th with the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, his lawyers asked for a 120-day reprieve to allow the Supreme Court to rule in this case.

Beasley is mentally disabled. His attorney Walter Long said in the petition that he believes the court soon will bar the execution of mentally disabled defendants and persons who were 17 at the time of their offense because a national consensus has developed against executing those individuals.

Twenty-eight states bar the death penalty for offenders younger than 18. "I predict that, whether or not Texas continues to kill child offenders, the United States Supreme Court will soon put an end to it," Long wrote.

"For his sake, the health of his parents and family, and the well-being of his community, I do not want my client to be the last child offender executed by Texas."

As happened last summer when Beasley had an August execution date, his case is drawing an unusually high level of attention. Pleas for leniency are pouring in from all over the world. Most mention Beasley's age and the fact that international law bars the execution of juvenile offenders.

"The amount of attention he is drawing is above the norm," said Gerald Garrett, who chairs the parole board.

Last August, the board voted 10 to six against recommending clemency for Beasley. Garrett said the board will vote later this month on Beasley's latest petition.

The board has received letters in German, French, Polish and Spanish seeking mercy for Beasley.

To send a letter asking the parole board to grant a stay, write:

Board Of Pardons and Paroles, Gerald Garrett, Chairman, P.O. Box 13401, Austin, Texas 78711-3401; Phone: (512) 463-1679; Fax: (512) 463-8120. Also, please sign a petition for Beasley at: <http://www.PetitionOnline.com/ab17an77>.

New York City

'Drop the Rock!'

By Sara Catalinotto
New York

Upstate New York
protest against
repressive drug laws.



On May 8 at noon, about 200 people rallied in front of Gov. George Pataki's Manhattan office to demand repeal of the Rockefeller drug laws that feed the prison-industrial complex and tear apart families while doing nothing to cure substance abuse or stop drug profiteering. Chanting, "Drop the Rock," demonstrators held placards with pictures and slogans of people now serving long prison sentences for minor drug possession charges.

The state has many ways to prey on people suffering from drug addiction, including entrapment. Even bystanders who are not drug users have been caught in the vicious web of sweeping drug arrests. Mandatory minimum sentences under these laws can mean that first-time offenders could spend decades in jail.

The laws' overall racist character can be seen in the statistics: African American and Latino people make up 94 percent of those jailed under these laws, while the use and sale of drugs is much more evenly distributed among all nationalities.

Some speakers at the rally character-

ized their growing movement as the "civil rights movement of the 21st century."

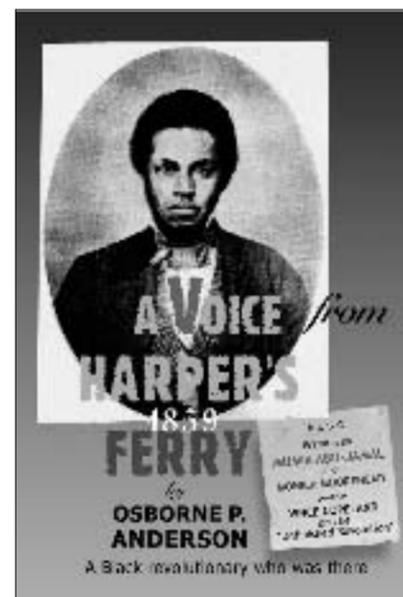
Speakers and delegations represented various churches, community-based substance abuse recovery programs, and organizations for relatives of the incarcerated. The related issue of a lack of alternatives to prison for mothers who are convicted of non-violent crimes was raised by the Mothers in Prison-Children in Crisis National Campaign, whose members played a tape recording of a crying baby to dramatize the suffering of the laws' innocent victims.

Under capitalism it is a crime to be poor, but not a crime to profit off captive labor at prison factories and switchboards. Anyone can show their support for the Drop the Rock campaign by attending the next major New York City event on June 15. This will include a rally outside the Harlem State Office Building at 12 noon and a concert in Marcus Garvey Park.

A VOICE from HARPER'S FERRY 1859

By Osborne P. Anderson, a Black revolutionary who was there. With an essay on 'The Unfinished Revolution' by Vince Copeland & new prefaces by Mumia Abu-Jamal and Monica Moorehead. 128 pp, photographs. WORLD VIEW FORUM, 55 W. 17th St., 5th Fl., N.Y., N.Y. 10011

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The late, but not lamented

Judge Sabo's legacy: racist repression, death row prisoners

By Imani Henry

On May 8, Judge Albert F. Sabo, who helped railroad African American journalist and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal to Pennsylvania's death row, died of heart failure at age 81. Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther framed for the murder of white police officer Daniel Faulkner, has spent the last 20 years in prison for a crime he did not commit.

Sabo, a notoriously racist judge, leaves behind the legacy of having sentenced more people to death row than any other judge in the history of the United States. According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, one in every six people sentenced to die in Pennsylvania was condemned in Sabo's courtroom.

Statistics gathered for 2000 show that 225 prisoners, including 221 men and four women, reside on Pennsylvania's death row, the fourth-largest number of any state in the U.S. Ninety percent of them were unable to afford a private attorney at their original trial. One hundred fifty-five are people of color.

For the anti-death-penalty movement Sabo symbolized the racist character of the U.S. "injustice" system. Sabo's racist record helped expose the terror that the cops, courts and the prison-industrial complex wield against people of color and the poor across the country. His home was the target of anti-death-penalty demonstrations on several occasions.

Sabo's record of racism

Sabo was a card-carrying member of the racist Fraternal Order of Police. He also made securing a death-penalty conviction against Mumia Abu-Jamal his personal vendetta.

During the original sham of a trial in 1982, ballistics evidence proved that the gun used to kill Faulkner shot a different caliber bullet than the gun Abu-Jamal owned. Sabo dismissed this crucial ballistics evidence.

In 1995 and 1996, Sabo was illegally brought out of retirement in order to preside over—and ultimately throw out all the new evidence and testimony presented at—Abu-Jamal's Post Conviction Relief Act Hearing.

In August 2000, when Federal Court Judge William Yohn denied four amicus curiae briefs, the world learned to what lengths Sabo had gone during the 1982 trial to seek the death-penalty conviction against Mumia Abu-Jamal, and how the capitalist court system had given him the green light to do so and get away with it.

A Chicana/Chicano Studies Foundation brief exposed the conspiracy among Abu-Jamal's court-appointed defense attorney Anthony Jackson, Sabo and prosecutor Joseph McGill to convict him. The brief outlined their strategies for getting a conviction that would be protected from appeal; this showed how Abu-Jamal was a victim of the breach of attorney-client confidentiality.

These legal violations, among many others, were all grounds on which the original trial should have been thrown out and Abu-Jamal freed.

And then there is the taped confession of Arnold Beverly, who in 1999 admitted to being hired by the police-run mob to kill Faulkner.

On Aug. 28, 2001, another bombshell was dropped, exposing Sabo's racist venom. An affidavit was submitted to the state appeals court by Terri Maurer-Carter, a court stenographer. She said that in 1982 she overheard Judge Sabo say in reference to Abu-Jamal, "Yeah, and I'm going to help them fry the n---r."

Neither Sabo's racist and devious actions nor any single agent of state-sanctioned terror has stopped the rising momentum of the anti-death penalty movement in the United States. With more and more people questioning the racist, anti-poor death penalty, coupled with international pressure, there have been significant breakthroughs in the struggle to abolish the death penalty within the bourgeois political arena.

Just last month, Ray Krone, originally from Pennsylvania, was exonerated and released from Arizona's death row after DNA tests revealed that he was innocent of a 1991 murder. On May 3, death-row

prisoner Thomas H. Kimbell Jr., who spent four years on Pennsylvania's death row, became the 101st exonerated death-row prisoner in the United States and the fourth person to walk free from Pennsylvania's death row.

According to the anti-death-penalty group Pennsylvania Abolitionists, in the past 26 months eight Pennsylvania municipalities have called on the state government to impose a moratorium on executions.

On May 9, one day after Sabo died, Maryland Gov. Parris Glendening declared a moratorium on all executions in his state pending the release of a study documenting the racist nature of the death penalty. Glendening joins Illinois Gov. George Ryan in instituting a moratorium on executions.

While there are no tears to shed for this racist bigot who rained terror on the oppressed, as one Philadelphia activist put it, "The people have been robbed of our opportunity to put Sabo on trial and bring him to justice."



The last of Hangin' Judge Sabo.

portunity to put Sabo on trial and bring him to justice."

The writer is a co-founder of Rainbow Flags for Mumia.



April 24, 1999: Some 25,000 march in Philadelphia to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.



WW PHOTOS

Death penalty opponents score victory

By Sharon Black
Baltimore

Maryland Gov. Parris Glendening became the second U.S. governor to place a moratorium on the death penalty May 9 when he ordered a halt to the scheduled execution of African American inmate Wesley Eugene Baker. Illinois Gov. George Ryan put a moratorium on executions in that state two years ago.

Glendening cited "reasonable doubts" about the fairness of the death penalty and placed a moratorium on executions until a University of Maryland study is finished.

The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty has reported that although 28 percent of Maryland's population is Black, African Americans represent 70 percent of the death row population and 80 percent of murder victims. Yet in cases where prosecutors seek the death penalty, more than 90 percent of the victims have

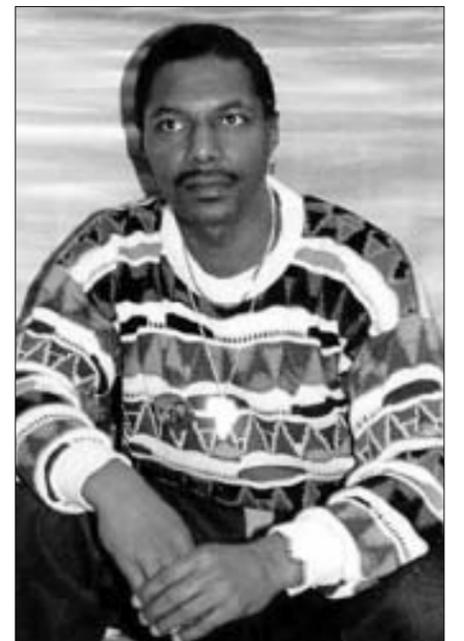
been white.

Making his announcement, Glendening noted that nine of the 13 men on Maryland's death row are Black.

Andre Powell, a spokesperson for the All Peoples Congress, stated: "The governor's decision to enact the moratorium comes as a result of the many protests that were held over the past years demanding an end to the death penalty. This is a partial victory. We need a permanent end to this racist tool of terror."

"The justice system has proven itself anything but fair," Powell charged. "Marshall Eddie Conway, a former member of the Black Panther Party, remains imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. Other innocent men and women remain behind bars for the crime of being too poor to hire adequate defense."

"We salute all those who have held weekly vigils at the prison and who have marched in Annapolis," he concluded.



Maryland's moratorium stopped the execution of Wesley Eugene Baker, pictured above.

Venezuelan minister of education:

'Our strength was the people'

Venezuela's minister of education, Dr. Aristóbulo Istúriz, gave an intimate, eyewitness account of the recent coup attempt in his country to progressive labor unionists in New York on May 10 gathered at the offices of AFSCME District Council 1707. Below is an edited, unofficial transcript of his remarks, which were in Spanish. Bracketed phrases were added by the editor, Deirdre Griswold.

We are faced with external factors in Venezuela. There's always been this debate in the United States over what to do about the situation down there. But we see that we're up against a situation where there's the imposition of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, for example, that is in opposition to the resurgence within Latin America. Also connected with the FTAA we see the imposition of Plan Colombia, which is the military arm of the FTAA.

But what they [in the U.S.] see is a situation where they have a change and transformation in Venezuela, a change and transformation coming in Brazil, with the elections and Lula [Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva, leader of the Workers Party of Brazil]. He's at the head of all the polls right now, and so what is being envisioned is a Latin America with Lula, with Chávez, a Latin America whose political complexion is in the process of changing.

We not only had these external factors that we were confronting and dealing with, but there were all the internal factors going on with the development of the government headed by Hugo Chávez. We had to elaborate and develop a model that was different, we had to transform the state in such a way that it would give a voice to the people themselves.

I myself was vice president of the Constituent Assembly at that time [when it was writing a new constitution] and we were confronted with the task of not just providing a political democracy where people can vote on candidates. What we had to do was establish a social democracy where there can be real participation.

Reform of petroleum, fishing, land

The process of democratization involved different factors to create a state of justice that hadn't existed before. We tried to reform several different aspects. One was the law regulating hydrocarbons, land and fishing rights. It established that the petroleum industry had to stay within the hands of the nation itself, confronting the globalization of the petroleum industry.

In terms of protecting fishing rights, we had to confront these international concerns that are dragging their nets along the coasts of the nations of the world. The third issue was the large estates—the latifundio—to reform and democratize the land so it stays in the hands of those people who are actually working on it.

These factors have come together in an interesting dynamic.

Within Venezuela there is no freedom of expression through the means of communication. There is a monopoly of the means of communication and it is very clearly against the government. They don't give expression to our thoughts and what we believe in.

Chávez was forced to confront the traditional and historical control exercised by Televisa, the company which was supposedly a national company but was always in the hands of the elite in Venezuela and always directly tied in and intimately

linked with the financial sectors. Chávez was very clear. He knew he had to confront this elite and make sure that the industry itself comes within the service of the people. It meant touching a lot of nerves and stepping on big toes.

The 'battalion of generals'

This helped bring about what came to be known as the battalion of generals. They were a battalion of generals, but they didn't have the soldiers beneath them.

These generals were very intent on creating an image, not just nationally but for international consumption, that the coup in process in Venezuela had massive, tremendous popular support. Organizations like Fedecámara, the chamber of commerce, and members of the elite invested tremendous amounts of money to make sure the mobilization projected that image.

There was a demonstration at that time of people who were supposedly defending PDVSA, the Venezuelan state petroleum company. They changed the route and started marching toward Miraflores, the presidential palace. When that happened a call was made to make sure that didn't in fact come about. So the people stood in front of Miraflores to prevent the other demonstration from coming there.

Sharpshooters started firing at the people defending the presidential palace. They killed somebody inside the palace. The National Guard captured three of the sharpshooters [the coup regime later released them].

Nine compañeros had fallen on our demonstration, but the people stayed there. At that time, some of our people went to look for Chávez to find out where he was. Some took up arms against the shooters. The press did not record the actions of the sharpshooters, just the actions of our side. What they projected to the world media was that the Chavistas were opening fire against this other demonstration. But why did they change the route and start moving toward Miraflores? They knew that 100,000 people were already there taking care of the palace.

This was the provocation the generals were asking for. They wanted a death so they could be "provoked" into action. I myself was inside the palace with the president and the cabinet. We left many times to talk to the people.

A portion of the generals betrayed the president. In the afternoon they asked Chávez to resign. But the middle ranks of the armed forces and the troops were with the president.

TV, radio, press in hands of coup

When we tried to go out to talk to the people, they brought down our means of communication. So we were isolated there at Miraflores and were able to talk only to those people in the immediate vicinity. The television channels reported nothing from us, neither did the radio stations.

They gave Chávez a short time to resign. We studied the alternatives. We had three. One was that the president, the cabinet, could go to Maracaibo where there was an old unit of Chávez paratroops. They were very loyal. In the nearby cities were other units loyal to the president.

Another choice was to stay in the palace and resist along with the people outside.

The third alternative was to accept the idea that the president was a prisoner. We told them that we wouldn't give up the president, that we were in accord with the idea of resistance, but we weren't going to be in agreement with the massacre of the

100,000 people who were standing outside. The president asked that we be left alone to figure it out. I was a little concerned because I had a pistol at my side and I remembered [Chilean President Salvador] Allende. We told Chávez, we're not going to leave you.

The president said that if we opted to go to Maracaibo, then in escaping they could capture us; if we went by air, they could shoot us down. We wanted to resist, but within the palace was the whole leadership of the popular movement and we couldn't leave the people without leadership.

We noted that this was a coup of the generals, not of the soldiers at the base.

We had to avoid the spilling of blood at this time. Chávez proposed that we stay there and if they kidnapped him, that would be an example for the world to see, that the ones who are violating the constitution and democracy are precisely them.

Generals threaten to bomb palace

While we were there we received a telephone call from one of the generals that we had 10 minutes left before they would start bombing the presidential palace. That was about 3:30 in the morning. The president said, let's put an end to this, you take me prisoner and explain this before the people and the world.

We accompanied the president to where the generals were and he was taken to Fort Tuna. The ministers were basically told by the generals that you should go home and prepare to surrender tomorrow. The ministers left. I drove around with the labor minister and the ambassador from Cuba trying to get a feel of what the streets of Caracas were like.

Within the city there was this idea circulating around that Chávez had resigned, so at 5:30 in the morning we began calling friendly journalists and met with them. We said we wanted to get out the word and needed help. We said it wasn't true that Chávez had resigned. In fact, it was a coup d'état.

In all the media, they were putting forward that there was no coup d'état, that Chávez had resigned, and they had this document they showed, supposedly his statement that he had resigned. But it didn't have his signature. They also said that he had told his vice president and ministers to get out. All the big newspapers had headlines saying that Chávez had resigned.

We tried to have a press conference. Chavistas were banned by all the TV, radio and newspapers. Police were going to all the ministries and to our houses. They named names on television as if we were all criminals. They held raids on our houses, but we didn't show up. Raids on the houses of ministers were televised, along with certain groups of people going to the houses, spitting and screaming.

They had these images of going into these houses of deputies and governors, physically attacking them. I was at home but they never got to me. They went to my mother's house. One of the reasons they couldn't find me is that I don't live in the sectors where some other folks live. I live in a very popular community. About 300 people congregated on the sidewalk outside my house.

I invited the journalists in. We began to work with the international press, sending out email, faxes, we began communicating with everyone. I made contact with the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights and directly with Mr. [Santiago] Canton by way of our ambassador in Washington, talking for 15 minutes about what

was going on. I spoke directly to Cuba, I spoke to CNN Atlanta because they were carrying nothing about what was actually going on. I directly communicated with TV from Spain, Italy, Germany, many parts of the world, and it was precisely the international press that saved us because on the national level we got absolutely nothing. Part of the raids they were conducting were against the popular, alternative TV and radio stations, they raided them and broke up and destroyed a lot of the apparatus.

This was during the first six hours of the coup. The first six hours of a government that lasted for one day.

Six hours of fascist dictatorship

Six hours of a government that was fascist. Venezuela had never seen such a dictatorship, such a fascist regime. When we compare those six hours with the three years when Chávez was in power, there is absolutely no comparison on the level of human rights between what [coup leader Pedro] Carmona did in that very short period of time and the tremendous advances Chávez made during his period in office.

In that six hours they were killing, they were persecuting, they were attacking the people. In the afternoon Carmona went to Miraflores and he brought together all the oligarchy who were in control of the economy, but, interestingly, he left the mafia leaders who control the unions outside, basically because they looked too much like us.

When they came to Miraflores they brought together the heads of the banks, the heads of the means of communication, to carry out their plan to eliminate the National Assembly, eliminate the Constitution, eliminate the governors, eliminate the mayors. In the presidential palace they took down the picture of Simon Bolivar and threw it into the garbage.

Tide starts to change

Then the tide started to change, because there were other radio transmissions like Fe y Alegría, there were certain reports from Cuba and on CNN, there was also the declaration of the attorney general that this had been an unconstitutional act. So people started in the afternoon to get the idea that something was really wrong, they began to hit the streets, they came out with their pots and their pans in a really massive way.

The people were turning on and off their lights, were blocking the streets, were making their way to the fort where Chávez was being held. Fort Tuna was the nerve center of that sector of the armed forces. The masses of people began to concentrate and demand the liberation of President Chávez. Interestingly at this very time when you had this tremendous concentration of people in front of the fort, on TV they were showing comedies, music, nothing at all about what was going on.

All the social networks on a national level were starting to communicate with one another. In all the cities and towns across the country people started leaving their houses and concentrated in front of the forts where the armed forces were located.

They were demanding that all the military leaders define their positions. In Maracaibo, Valencia, all over they were in front of the barracks. In all these areas the troops themselves would come out and raise the banner of Venezuela in solidarity with the people. The coup already had plans envisioned to swear in the new government and ministers the next day. But



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

Venezuelian Minister of Education, Dr. Aristóbulo Istúriz, speaking in New York.

the people were communicating by way of telephone, cell phone and email, and everyone was out in the streets.

Because the concentration was getting so intense they took Chávez out of Fort Tuna and moved him eventually to an island.

The people took over Channel 8. Community TV stations started trying to get on the air. They directed people to surround Miraflores. I don't know how so many people got there so fast.

Women, youths, old people, unarmed, they all took hold of the fence and demanded Chávez. The soldiers were happy to see the people. An honor guard came out of the palace. A captain told a colonel that if you don't do something for Chávez, we will. The colonel started crying and agreed.

The coup leaders went literally running out of the palace, including Carmona. Around 12:30 p.m. Saturday the ministers returned to Miraflores, saying, "This is our time. If they are going to kill us, it will be with the people." We were cheered by the huge crowd.

We knew the government had left, but we didn't know where the military stood. I went to the door and said let me in. Only ministers can get in, they said, so I went in. Then I went back out to talk to the people by megaphone. When the soldiers saw me, they started shooting up in the air and cheered. The soldiers then carried me on their shoulders to Fort Tuna. We passed some guys under arrest—the coup ministers.

All the barracks started declaring themselves for Chávez. Meanwhile, around 7:00 p.m. the media are still saying that Carmona is the president and everything is normal.

But they still had the real president, and they wanted to take him out of the country. It was a delicate time for the Chavistas. We had to guarantee his safety. We told them, "Don't do anything to the president or else the country will erupt."

'Our strength was the people'

They threatened to exile him, and proposed we accept "Chavismo without Chávez." We said, "We have no power to negotiate. You can only negotiate with Chávez. We demand he be returned to Miraflores right now."

Our strength was the people, but the others were holding Chávez prisoner. Finally the paratroopers had to go in and rescue him, and he was back around 3 a.m.

The coup had lasted 48 hours. We saw the face of fascism for those hours. The people were able to compare Chavism with fascism. In those 48 hours the opportunists were all unmasked. All those who thought of Friday as the end of Chávez forgot there would be a Saturday.

Chávez had been betrayed by some of the generals who we thought were loyal. But seven elections had been held in the three years of Chávez, and that helped to organize the people.

U.S. activist tells Havana rally:

'We must free the five Cuban heroes'

The following is a speech delivered at Havana's May Day rally this year by Gloria La Riva of San Francisco, coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Five Cuban Political Prisoners Held in the United States. The five were given long jail sentences for having monitored the actions of anti-Castro terrorist organizations in Miami. The Free the Five Committee is at 2489 Mission St., No. 24, San Francisco, CA 94110; freethefive@actionsf.org.

As Comandante Fidel Castro and the Cuban people know, it is the struggle that will win the freedom of our five heroes, prisoners in the jails of the empire. That has always been true with the question of political prisoners. It was the struggle of the people of South Africa that destroyed apartheid and liberated Nelson Mandela.

More than once Mumia Abu-Jamal was in danger of execution, but the unceasing struggle of those who support Mumia is what stopped his execution and will win his freedom.

It was the same in the fight for Elián González. Although the government of Washington pretended to ignore the gigantic mobilizations in Cuba, those were decisive.

Something else was gained in the struggle for Elián, a favorable aspect that will help in the battle to free the five compañeros. And it is that the people of the U.S. learned the true nature of the ultra-right in Miami.

In the case of the five heroes, the problem is, there is no knowledge about them in the United States. Once we explain their case, people understand and support them. Imperialism wants to keep their case secret.

They were arrested by the FBI not only to imprison revolutionary Cubans, not only to give the green light to the Miami terrorists, but also to intimidate the Cuban community in Miami, which is more and more opposed to the blockade and challenging the terror of the ultra-right.

In the committees in support of the five, one of our principal tasks is to go to the people and seek their backing through signatures on petitions. The petition is very important because it shows the government that thousands of people support their freedom, and we will be many more. The petitions give us a vehicle to go to the street, to political forums, to protests, and explain their struggle.

And being part of other progressive struggles, uniting the struggle of the five heroes with others, gives us a much broader audience. That synthesis of mutual solidarity gives more strength.

For example, on April 20th in the anti-war coalition ANSWER, we organized the largest demonstrations in the history of the United States in solidarity with the Palestinian people: 100,000 in Washington and 35,000 in San Francisco, and a sea of Palestinian flags.

The unbreakable resistance of the Palestinian people has placed millions of people in the world on their side.

In these protests, the Cuban flag and this banner demanding the freedom of the five compañeros were also present.



WW PHOTO

Gloria La Riva addresses May Day rally in Cuba.

We are producing an educational and inspiring video on the five, because the people of the U.S. are capable of being inspired to support just causes. Together with the admirable work of their attorneys, by a proposal of former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, a friend of Cuba, we will file a "friend of the court" brief, and solicit signatures of attorneys.

Compañeros, from this dear tribunal, full of history and struggle, I make a call to the foreign friends present here, to the friends of Cuba, to form committees of support for the five heroes in your countries. Let us stand side by side with the Cuban people, with the Cuban compañeros. Gerardo, Antonio, Ramón, René and Fernando are men born and

raised in this revolution. The U.S. prisons are truly a nightmare, a great violation of human rights. And yet, from the letters we receive from them, one sees their steadfastness and determination. They will never be defeated!

We are living in truly dangerous times for the world. Bombing after bombing by the imperialists, massacres of Palestinians while Bush declares that Ariel Sharon is a "man of peace."

We see the empire speak openly of assassinating leaders, and expressing their right to use nuclear arms. But we are also living moments of glorious resistance and struggle, in Palestine, in Venezuela, here in Cuba, and within the very United States.

Bush, Clinton, Bush senior, Reagan, Carter, Ford, Nixon, Kennedy, Eisenhower, all have tried to destroy the Cuban Revolution, but they haven't been able, nor will they be able to.

While other leaders try to rescue themselves by embracing Bush, while they betray their people, Cuba and our beloved comandante continue raising the banner of revolution, the banner of the truth of socialism.

Thank you, Fidel, for defending the world of the workers and the oppressed. Thank you, Cuba, for showing that only socialism can create a just society. Thank you, Fernando, René, Ramón, Antonio and Gerardo, for your sacrifice, which you have never renounced. We will never let you down. You will be free and march anew with your beloved people in a May Day like this.

They will return to Cuba! They will return to Cuba! They will return!



WW PHOTO: GLORIA LA RIVA

Over one million Cubans rally for socialism in Havana on May Day. Billboard demands the freedom of the Cuban Five, falsely imprisoned inside the U.S.



Carter and Cuba

President Bush says he intends to deliver a major speech in Miami on May 20 that will announce measures to tighten the blockade against Cuba, putting more restrictions on both trade and travel to that country. The bellicose attitude of this administration towards a country struggling to maintain its splendid socialist achievements in health, medicine, housing and employment for all is a serious threat. Solidarity with Cuba by the progressive movement here is more important than ever.

At the same time Bush was announcing his intentions, Jimmy Carter was in Havana—the first former U.S. president to visit Cuba. He took a different tack, calling for an easing of the sanctions, which of course would be welcomed by the Cuban people.

Carter also used an address broadcast on Cuban television and radio to make a strong appeal to the government to allow opposition political parties. “Cuba has adopted a socialist government where one political party dominates, and people are not permitted to organize any opposition movements,” he said. He backed opposition demands that a referendum be allowed on political rights and on allowing Cubans to own small businesses. He promised that if Cuba changed its political system, “Cubans, not foreigners,” would “decide the future of this country.”

The Cuban Revolution is very deeply rooted among the people and has little to fear from the small dissident movement. Nevertheless, the progressive movement here should not be taken off guard by Carter’s remarks. His implied promise that the United States would respect Cuba’s sovereignty if it changed its political system in the direction of bourgeois democracy flies in the face of reality.

Many examples can be given of U.S. subversion of governments chosen in multi-party elections, especially in Latin America—Guatemala and Chile are only the most dramatic examples. But we don’t even have to go back in history. Just look at what happened in Venezuela last month. It proved that the imperialists are as anti-democratic as ever when the political mobilization of the people is seen as threatening their profit interests.

The government of President Hugo Chavez was overthrown for 48 hours in a coup led by a group of generals and the heads of Fedecamera—the chamber of commerce. Chavez had been elected in a landslide that represented the repudiation of the old political parties by the masses. His government had conducted seven elections in the last three years—not only to fill political posts but also to establish a National Constituent Assembly that rewrote the Constitution, broadening the rights of the masses. Every step taken by the Chavez government had been ratified by the masses through elections.

The right-wing political parties representing the corrupt elite have continued to function. The means of communication—radio, television, newspapers—are totally in the hands of the right. They tried to facilitate the coup by disseminating lies that Chavez had resigned, when in fact he was kidnapped by the generals.

The coup failed because millions of people didn’t believe the big business media. They surrounded the army barracks and the presidential palace and forced the coup leaders to flee.

And what did the great “democratic” government of the United States, that supposedly respects elections, do during this critical period?

The Bush administration publicly congratulated the coup leaders. There is a growing body of evidence to show that privately it helped stage-manage the takeover. Otto Reich, the right-wing Cuban American who is now assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, is acknowledged to have been in phone communication with the leaders the morning of the coup. And the April 16 New York Times carried a virtual admission of the U.S. role. “We were not discouraging people” from making the coup, said “a Defense Department official who is involved in the development of policy toward Venezuela.”

Even after all these years of material difficulties caused by the U.S. blockade, the socialist government in Cuba doesn’t have much to fear from the internal opposition.

But the development of Cuban socialism has been greatly affected by the enormous menace of U.S. imperialism. Invasions, sabotage, bombings of hotels and airplanes, nuclear threats, over 100 attempts to assassinate President Fidel Castro, attacks on Cuba’s right to trade with the world—all this has been part of a reality not mentioned by Jimmy Carter. It says a lot about the opposition that none of this seems to bother them that much; that they gladly accept support from the government responsible for endless attacks on their country.

There is dialog and debate in Cuba. Major decisions are discussed in the elected National Assembly—and really important changes are debated in all the mass organizations. Decisions have been made that were later rescinded after much discussion—like the free farmers’ markets of the mid-1980s, which were abandoned after it was shown that millionaires were springing up, not the farmers themselves but the middlemen who brought their produce to market. It was odious to the Cuban people that a market speculator could earn so much more than a worker, even skilled doctors, teachers and administrators.

The progressive movement in this country knows that while people here may be able to vote for different candidates, the results of capitalist elections are always the same: the rich win. It should reject Carter’s preaching to Cuba on democracy, while taking advantage of the attention focused on the blockade to campaign more vigorously than ever against it.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

VENEZUELA

Oil gangsters vs. Chavez

The oil gangsters running the U.S. government wanted Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez out of the way for several reasons, one of which was his defiance of Washington’s attempted isolation of Iraq. After Venezuela rotated on as chair of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, Chavez in August 2000 was the first head of state to visit Iraq since the U.S.-imposed embargo. Now Bush’s team are openly discussing another war against Iraq even more devastating than the one launched by Bush Sr. in 1991. But Chavez has survived a recent U.S.-aided attempt to overthrow him. And the Iraqi government, more than a decade after the war, still stands despite lethal sanctions and frequent U.S.-British overflights and bombing.

NEPAL

U.S. helicopters against land reform

The armored knights protecting feudal aristocrats in Europe had a military edge over the peasants until armies of yeomen started using the crossbow, whose arrows could penetrate chain mail. Today’s aristocrats prefer helicopters to horses as they try to hold onto their crowns and privileges.

The U.S. government, ever the friend of the idle rich at home and abroad, is providing helicopters and other modern military equipment to the kingdom of Nepal, which has been in a civil war involving peasants fighting for land reform led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba met with George W. Bush the second week in May and was promised \$20 million in military aid—which will go straight into the military-industrial complex here.

Nepal, a country of 25 million people high in the Himalaya mountains, has been in political turmoil for years because its archaic social structure—utilized first by British colonialism and now by U.S. imperialism—traps half the population in abject poverty. The average yearly income is only \$220. The previous king, Birendra, and most of his family died in a mysterious shooting spree in June 2001 when, according to palace sources, his son gunned them down before being shot himself.

Nepalese progressives see an outside

hand, however. Birendra was negotiating with the opposition over land reform when he was killed. The present king, Gyanendra, is taking a hard line, which fits right in to Washington’s military expansion in the region.

The workers and peasants of Nepal have no love for capitalism. The Communist Party of Nepal (UML) at one time held 40 percent of the seats in parliament and held political power in 1994-95, but its parliamentary approach did not achieve land reform, leading to the rise of the guerrilla insurgency in the countryside. The government staged an attack on a guerrilla camp to coincide with Deuba’s trip to Washington and claimed to have inflicted many casualties. But official claims of large guerrilla losses were contradicted by military officers.

ZIMBABWE

Land distribution moves ahead

Zimbabwe’s Parliament passed a Land Acquisition and Amendment Bill on May 8 that will accelerate the process of the government taking over white-owned commercial farms and distributing their land to African farmers. Some 6,000 white farmers have controlled half the country’s arable land; 850,000 Black farmers have had to make do with the rest. This situation is the heritage of colonial conquest at the beginning of the 20th century. When decolonization came after a liberation war, Britain agreed to foot the bill for buying out the white settlers, but never lived up to its agreement.

Since President Robert Mugabe and his ZANU party made land reform a central objective, the government has been under tremendous pressure from the U.S. and Britain, which openly spent millions on building up an opposition political party. It was defeated in presidential elections in March, however, when rural people, who make up the vast majority of the population, turned out in record numbers.

Zimbabwe, like other countries in the region, is suffering from a drought and food shortages exacerbated by economic sanctions. Imperialist critics try to blame the food shortages on land reform, arguing that the huge plantations run by the whites are more efficient and modern. They are—but at making profits, not at providing food for the rural poor. Much of what they grow is export-oriented, which brings in hard currency but doesn’t feed hungry people in the countryside.

—Deirdre Griswold

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IN BRIEF

GERMANY

Metal workers strike for 4 percent

In the largest job action since 1995, tens of thousands of German metal workers stopped work for a day at various factories in the southwestern state of Baden-Wurtemberg beginning May 6. On May 13, thousands more stopped work in the eastern states of Berlin and Brandenburg. The workers are among 2.7 million members of the metalworkers' union, IG Metall, who are asking for a 4-percent annual pay increase in their national contract. The union bargains for a national contract with an association of the manufacturers.

German bosses and their paid economists and commentators have opened a broad propaganda campaign against the union. They charge that the increases are not warranted and that they will "stop the recovery" and cost jobs. There are also charges that a strike will lose the upcoming national election for the current Social Democratic chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder.

These analysts omit the fact that from 1993 to 2000 real wages declined 6.5 percent. Meanwhile profits went up 85 percent between 1991 and 2000 and management salaries 90 percent. Unemployment has crept up again to 4 million despite the lack of strikes over the past seven years.

Union strategists have chosen to hold one-day strikes at selected factories, such as the DaimlerChrysler Mercedes and Porsche plants in Stuttgart, hoping to hit the bosses in the pocketbook without giving them the excuse for a general lockout. Management so far has responded by threatening to move more jobs outside of Germany. Observers ask whether it will be necessary to mobilize a full-fledged strike before the bosses will make any concessions.

—John Catalinotto

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.

In the 40+ essays presented here, leading anti-war activists and analysts from many countries—including former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark and former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic—take up The Hague Tribunal, the occupation of Kosovo, media lies, war crimes and the blatant illegality of NATO aggression.

Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark writes on "Blaming the victim."

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Israeli ruling party says no to Palestinian state

By Richard Becker

Imagine the frenzy in the U.S. media if the leading party of the Palestinian Authority voted overwhelmingly to oppose forever the existence of the state of Israel. The howls and gnashing of teeth by U.S. politicians and well-paid pundits would have never ceased.

Yet on May 12, when Israel's ruling Likud party almost unanimously passed a motion against a Palestinian state under any and all conditions, it was reported as just another story in the corporate press.

What the media focused on here, moreover, were the largely fictional differences over the question of Palestinian statehood between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his main rival in the Likud party, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In fact, both Sharon and Netanyahu oppose a Palestinian state, and the vote inside the extreme right-wing Likud was largely a reflection of the struggle between them. When Netanyahu was prime minister from 1996-98, Sharon maneuvered to appear as the more rightist figure.

Nevertheless, the vote had the beneficial effect of clarifying for the whole world the real position of the Israeli government regarding the Palestinians' fundamental right to self-determination.

Mass protest in Tel Aviv against occupation

The vote came one day after more than 100,000 Israelis demonstrated in Tel Aviv on May 11, calling for an end to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. It was the largest such protest since the beginning of the Al Aqsa Intifada [Uprising] more than 19 months ago.

The contradictions being opened up inside Israeli society by the Palestinian struggle were further illustrated by the latest opinion polls. At the same time as support for Sharon's rightist government has risen, the polls also show 63 percent of Israelis in favor of the establishment of a Palestinian state. The continuation of the struggle will likely lead to a sharpening of the differences and conflicts inside Israel.

There should be no doubt, however, that the Sharon government is continuing with its policy of brutal occupation. The unprecedented mass destruction inflicted on Palestinian cities, towns and refugee camps in the March/April offensive has been followed by a program of enforced hardship. Movement of people and goods between Palestinian towns and cities continues to be extremely difficult if not impossible. Thousands of Palestinians remain in detention, subjected to torture and inhuman prison conditions.

Sharon says, mainly for U.S. consumption, that he supports the idea of a Palestinian state. At the same time, Sharon has proclaimed a series of "conditions" that must first be met, including the total "reforming" of the Palestinian Authority and the replacement of Yasser Arafat as its president. Sharon has refused to enter into any negotiations with the Palestinians until there is a period of "complete quiet," i.e., until the Palestinians have surrendered.

An Israeli politician, Haim Ramon, was quoted as saying: "Sharon's conditions for a Palestinian state are so stiff he won't have to implement it, not a chance."

And while Sharon says that he is willing to make "painful concessions for peace," he has for many years stood on a platform of not yielding any land or evacuating even



May 11 anti-war rally in Tel Aviv drew more than 100,000.

the most isolated settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. "Netzarim [a settlement] in Gaza is the same as Tel Aviv," Sharon recently stated in an Israeli TV interview.

On May 14, an Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem, issued a report concluding that the pattern of Israeli settlements in the West Bank was intentionally designed to make the emergence of a Palestinian state impossible.

The report includes maps showing how the settlements and their bypass roads have been used to surround and isolate Palestinian towns, cities and villages. Although the settlers live on 2 percent of the developed areas, they now control 42 percent of the West Bank's land.

Israeli group likens settlement policy to apartheid

The B'Tselem report compared Israel's settlement policy to that of apartheid South Africa. "Israel has created in the occupied territories a regime of separation... basing the rights of individuals on their nationality. This regime is the only one of its kind in the world, and is reminiscent of distasteful ones of the past, such as the apartheid regime in South Africa."

Since Sharon took office last year, at least 34 new settlements have been established in the West Bank. There are now, according to the B'Tselem report, 380,000 Israeli settlers in the area. An estimated 2.1 million Palestinians live in the West Bank.

The settler movement is spearheaded by extreme right-wing and racist elements, many of them recently arrived from the U.S. The settlers' Yesha Council responded to the B'Tselem report by lamenting that "only" 42 percent of the West Bank had been seized by settlers.

"It's regrettable that the settlement movement has not managed to implement the Zionist vision to settle between the sea and the Jordan at a much faster pace," said a Yesha Council statement.

But while the number of Israeli settlers has increased in the West Bank, the population trend in the whole of Palestine is moving in the other direction. In addition to 2.1 million Palestinians living in the West Bank, 1.2 million live in Gaza, and a similar number reside inside the 1948 borders of Israel. There are more than 4 million Palestinians living in exile outside Palestine.

The Israeli population is today approximately 4.8 million. Within a few years, if present trends continue, Palestinians will outnumber Israelis inside historic Palestine for the first time since the mass expulsions of 1948-49 that cleared the way for the establishment of the Israeli state.

Palestinian struggle destabilizing pro-U.S. regimes

The great concern in U.S. ruling circles is about the potentially destabilizing effects

the Palestinian struggle is having on pro-U.S. and puppet regimes throughout the Middle East. That is what explains President Bush's recent expressions of "support" for a Palestinian state.

Of course the "state" that Bush has in mind for the Palestinians is in reality a very weak and non-independent entity, that would be completely under the thumb of the U.S. and Israel.

But the fact that he's talking about Palestinian statehood at all when no other U.S. president ever formally endorsed such a state is a reflection of the fear in Washington over the deepening anger toward the U.S. in the region.

At the top of the U.S. international agenda is a new war of re-conquest against Iraq, which includes lining up at least superficial support in the Arab world.

Washington's problem was highlighted by Jordanian King Abdullah's visit to the U.S. this week. Abdullah is one of the most dependent and compliant of Middle East rulers. Jordan, which borders both Palestine and Iraq, is more than 60 percent Palestinian in population, and his repressive regime maintains itself only with strong backing from the U.S.

Appearing on the NBC show "Meet the Press," on May 12, Abdullah expressed the fears of pro-U.S. governments throughout the region: "People are angry; the rage is on."

The king said he wanted to inform U.S. officials that "although there seems to be a relative calm now, that is only temporary." This was a reference to the demonstrations that swept the Middle East last month, the largest mass protests in the region in two decades.

"If we don't articulate a vision in the next couple of weeks," Abdullah warned, "that rage is going to come back, and it's going to be twice as strong."

The next day, speaking at the Brookings Institution—a Washington think tank—Abdullah said: "If anybody has any sensitivity to what's going on between the Israelis and Palestinians and how it's affecting the Arab street, to add Iraq onto the menu now, I think, would be devastating. ... With the Israeli-Palestinian crisis going on, with the anger and frustration throughout the Middle East really at levels that people can't take anymore, another armed conflict in the region will be too much for people to bear."

The wide coverage given to the Jordanian king's remarks indicates that his comments reflect the views of influential forces here as well.

For the anti-war and progressive movements here and around the world, the fears in Washington, Amman and other capitals should be a source of hope and inspiration.

The one factor that can unravel the war plans of the ruling class is the intervention of the people on a mass scale. In the past six weeks, millions of people have taken to the streets, moved to action by the heroic example of the struggling Palestinian people.

From Bahrain to Washington, from Amman to Rome, from Cairo to San Francisco, and in many other cities, mass, militant protests in solidarity with Palestine have begun to change the political climate.

What is needed now is to expand and deepen this new movement.

¡PROLETARIOS Y OPRIMIDOS DE TODOS LOS PAÍSES, UNÍOS!
MUNDO OBRERO

Trabajadores por el socialismo

Millones marchan 1ro de mayo en Cuba

Por Gloria La Riva
La Habana

Más de siete millones de la población cubana de 11 millones de personas se unieron en celebraciones gigantescas el Primero de Mayo, la movilización más grande en la historia de la isla. Solamente en la Habana, 1,2 millones participaron. Las manifestaciones cubanas del Primero de Mayo fueron las más grandes del mundo honrando a los trabajadores.

El tema de este año, "Primero por la Patria", enfatizó la importancia de la lucha para liberar a los cinco presos políticos cubanos encarcelados en los Estados Unidos.

También destacado en esta concentración histórica fue una condenación contundente de los líderes latinoamericanos que auspiciaron una resolución en contra de Cuba redactada por los Estados Unidos en la Comisión de Derechos Humanos en Ginebra el 18 de abril.

La guerra contra de los Estados Unidos e Israel contra Palestina fue denunciada por los cubanos y los oradores invitados internacionales.

En un discurso que duró 48 minutos, el presidente cubano Fidel Castro criticó severamente a los líderes de Uruguay, Argentina, México, El Salvador, y otros países latinoamericanos como cobardes y serviles por haber cumplido los mandos de los EE.UU. en Ginebra.

Él dijo, "Fuimos condenados en Ginebra por quienes consideran que ese mar de pueblo aquí reunido, cuya imagen puede observarse desde cualquier rincón del mundo, ha sido privado de sus derechos humanos. Con toda seguridad que ninguno de los que en América Latina promovieron, coauspicaron o apoyaron ese proyecto, podría reunir en la capital de sus respectivos países el 5 por ciento de los ciudadanos aquí reunidos.

"¿Acaso se trata de fanáticos, personas ignorantes e incultas, carentes de conocimientos históricos y políticos?"

Cubanos tienen garantías económicas

El líder cubano habló orgullosamente de los derechos humanos verdaderos que son una realidad por todos los cubanos - cuidado de salud y educación gratis, cultura y democracia por el pueblo - e hizo contraste entre esos y las estadísticas escandalosas de la pobreza, la muerte, y miseria incontroladas y muy extendidas en América Latina.

Dijo: "A los hermanos de América Latina les han hecho un gran cuento de las mil y una noches, en el cual cada día que pasa creen cada vez menos. Llevan medio siglo tratando de hacerles creer que los cientos de miles de niños que mueren cada año por desatención y hambre, los millones que no van a la escuela y trabajan por míseros salarios, limpian parabrisas y zapatos, o son objeto de comercio y explotación sexual, es democracia y respeto

a los derechos humanos. ...

"No les pasa por la mente que el sistema económico, político y social que defienden es la negación total de toda posibilidad de igualdad, libertad, democracia, dignidad humana y justicia.

"¿Cuál democracia y cuáles derechos humanos pueden existir en esas condiciones? Sería como cultivar flores en pleno desierto del Sahara." Presentaciones culturales como bailes, canciones, poesía y discursos fueron dedicados a los cinco "Héroes de la República, Prisioneros del Imperio", incrementaron el espíritu de solidaridad. Participantes agitaban banderas cubanas en el aire para puntuar a los comentarios de los oradores.

Es difícil por un trabajador que vive en el mundo capitalista imaginar tal apoyo revolucionario, unido y poderoso en pro del socialismo y a favor de los trabajadores, pero si existe y prospera en Cuba. Desgraciadamente, en los Estados Unidos, donde nació el Primero de Mayo como el día del trabajo en medio de una lucha en los fines de la década de los años 1880, es nada más una nota a pié de página casi olvidada por la mayoría de la gente.

La juventud de Cuba, desde los Pioneros de las escuelas primarias hasta los miembros de la Unión de Comunistas Jóvenes, no solamente organizaron y encabezaron a la celebración sino dieron charlas dinámicas.

Lazarito Castro, de 10 años de edad, verdaderamente sobrecogió a la multitud mientras que hablara. No tuvo notas o una charla preparada en forma escrita. Como él mismo dijo, el estuvo "hablando desde el corazón". Dijo, "Cuando en muchos lugares del mundo los trabajadores se reúnen y organizan manifestaciones y marchas por el más elemental derecho del hombre al trabajo, en nuestro país lo que hacemos es festejar, pues estos derechos están conquistados, se hacen cumplir y tienen garantía de futuro.

"Se lo dice en esta tribuna internacional un pionero cubano, que como cientos de miles de pioneros a lo largo y ancho de todo



FOTO:
GLORIA
LARIVA

el país, agradece a los obreros su categórico esfuerzo para que los niños tengamos más aulas, más laboratorios de computación, más televisores y videos."

Énfasis sobre liberación de presos cubanos en E.U.

Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labanino y René González son los cinco cubanos, cuyas imágenes se ven por todos lados en la isla. Han sido encarcelados injustamente desde el 12 de septiembre de 1998 en los EE.UU. como resultado de una campaña despiadada de parte del gobierno de los EE.UU. de atormentarlos con acusaciones falsas relacionadas con espionaje. Fueron sentenciados el diciembre pasado a entre 15 años hasta dos condenas de por vida.

Hoy en el corazón de la Plaza de la Revolución, más que un millón de personas que se reunieron allí podían ver a una valla publicitaria enorme con las imágenes de los cinco héroes.

Mientras que el Día Internacional del Trabajador honra al trabajo y alcances de todos los trabajadores, los tres celebraciones últimas también han enfocadas en las movilizaciones al nivel nacional para denunciar la hostilidad de los EE.UU. contra Cuba que está incrementando.

Es por esta razón que cuatro delegados extranjeros fueron invitados a compartir el plataforma con los anfitriones cubanos. Pablo Micheli, secretario general de la Confederación de los Trabajadores de Argentina, habló sobre el nivel de hambre crítico en Argentina "inventado" por el Fondo Monetario Internacional en ese país rico con productos agrícolas.

Ramón Pacheco Llanes, líder del Sindicato Independiente de Electricistas de México, denunció la traición de la política históricamente independiente de México por el Presidente Vicente Fox y el canciller mexicano, Jorge Castañeda.

El líder sindical uruguayo Jorge Castro de parte de los miles reuniéndose el Primero de Mayo en su país que habían

enviado peticiones con 7.500 firmas protestando el patrocinio de Uruguay de la resolución anti cubano de la ONU en Ginebra.

Gloria La Riva, coordinadora en los EE.UU. del Comité Nacional para Liberar a los Cinco, dijo a la multitud que la lucha en los EE.UU. será crítica para poder lograr apoyo efectivo y al fin, su liberación. Ella concluyó: "Gracias Fidel, por defender al mundo de los trabajadores, de los oprimidos. Gracias Cuba, por enseñar que solo el socialismo puede crear una sociedad justa. Gracias, Fernando, René, Ramón, Antonio y Gerardo, por su sacrificio del que nunca se han arrepentido. No les defraudaremos jamás."

Fue el 1ro de Mayo de 2000, que extranjeros fueron invitados por primera vez hablar desde el plataforma cubano en el Día del Trabajo Internacional. En ese entonces Elián González todavía no había suelto para volver a su casa, y los EE.UU. había recientemente presionado a una escasa mayoría votar en contra de Cuba en la Comisión de los Derechos Humanos de la ONU. Los numerosas marchas de más de un millón de personas desde los principios de 2000 hasta el retorno de Elián en junio de 2000 fueron comprobados decisivos para la libertad del niño de seis años de edad.

Movilizaciones populares también serán críticas en presionar a los EE.UU. a soltar a los cinco presos cubanos. Estos héroes verdaderamente están en las mazmorras del imperialismo estadounidense, separados uno del otro en una forma cruel por las autoridades federales, que han transferidos a ellos a cárceles de seguridad máxima dispersadas a lo largo de los Estados Unidos.

El pueblo cubano, que se ha armado de valor durante décadas de lucha, saben cuán difícil esta lucha será. Sin embargo, su espíritu incansable de lucha resonó por las calles rodeando la Plaza, dándole señal a Washington que Cuba nunca va a darse por vencido en esta batalla.