

Round one goes to the people

U.S. Navy pulls out of Vieques

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Even as the Bush administration projects its military might in the Middle East and sends troops back to the Philippines, it has had to pull its Navy out of a small island in Puerto Rico.

After more than six decades of living under U.S. Navy bombardments, strafing and many other military exercises in their territory—and suffering the abuse of soldiers who ventured into the civilian part of the island—the people of the island of Vieques finally celebrated the end of this violence on May 1. Thousands joined in the celebration, traveling from the rest of Puerto Rico and parts of the United States.

At midnight, the deadline set for the Navy to leave the Camp García base, hundreds of activists began a massive entrance onto the firing range. They smashed the fence with sledgehammers, wire cutters and whatever they could use to break down the barrier that for years had kept the islanders from stepping onto their own land.

Soon the rage felt against the U.S. military was manifested in action. So many years of contempt, so many deaths by cancer widely believed to be the product of military toxins, the terrible devastation of their economy, unemployment, separation of families by forced emigration, lack of health care services. In sum—the island’s lack of development, held hostage to the Pentagon, exploded in a people’s catharsis.

Structures were hammered down. So were military vehicles. Minutes later, those vehicles were set afire with chants of “Free Vieques—the Navy is gone, at last.”

The first round of this David and Goliath struggle of tiny Vieques against the U.S. war machine had finally ended and the people had won—a victory cherished not only by Viequenses but by the world as well at this dangerous time when U.S. imperialism is spreading its fury all over the planet.

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For also at this time, as the international mobilizations against the war have demonstrated, the people are taking their rightful place in history. As the people in all of Latin America are saying, “The sword of Bolívar is running throughout the continent.”

It is interesting to note that the only place in the Puerto Rican islands visited by Simón Bolívar, the great 19th-century Venezuelan leader of anti-colonial struggles, was Vieques, where his statue presides over the main plaza. Here, too, his sword has extended.

Next, decontamination, devolution and development

But the struggle has not ended. The Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, the main organization fighting for the ousting of the military, demands what it calls the four Ds: demilitarization, decontamination, devolution of the land and development.

Of these, only demilitarization has been accomplished.

The continued colonial domination of Puerto Rico by the United States makes the transfer of the land to the people an insult. Two-thirds of the territory had been occupied by the Navy—the western part for weapons storage, and the eastern for military maneuvers and a bombing range.

The people’s forceful, committed struggle to liberate their land forced the U.S. to close its base in the western part in April 2001 and transfer most of that land to the municipality of Vieques.

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40 years after Birmingham protests

More Black children mired in extreme poverty

By Monica Moorehead

Who could forget the horrific images of white firefighters aiming their water hoses at African American youths who were trying to protect themselves from the torturous blasts of water? Or racist police, at the behest of the notorious public safety commissioner "Bull" Connor, urging their vicious dogs to tear at the flesh of these youths?

It was a scene that would forever change the political landscape of the civil-rights movement.

The place was Birmingham, Ala., once considered the most segregated city in the United States. The year was 1963. On May 3, thousands of African American students, from elementary to high school age, walked out of their classes all over the city to protest racist Jim Crow laws.

Much of the organizing for these demonstrations came out of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Just four months later this same church would be the scene of a terrible bombing by the KKK, resulting in the murders of four Black girls.

Child activists, supported by their parents, were arrested in massive numbers for organizing marches and civil disobedience. As their bodies filled the jails, they kept their spirits high by singing civil-rights songs.

This year, on May 3-4, more than 2,000 participants in those protests, now in their 50s and 60s, came together with former civil-rights leaders in the city once referred to as Bombingham to commemorate these significant protests that are credited for helping to force the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The progressive gains coming out of the civil-rights movement helped win political and economic concessions for a significant sector of Black people battling conditions of semi-slavery.

Forty years later, have fundamental conditions gotten better or worse for Black people—especially the young?

The 2000 Census Bureau statistics for Birmingham show that there has been a severe decline in living standards.

Black people compose more than 73 percent of the general population in the steel capital of the South. The per-capita income is about \$16,000.

Close to 25 percent of the population and 21 percent of families live below the official poverty line.

Of those living in poverty, more than 35 percent are under the age of 18.

Deepening emergency crisis for Black children

The Birmingham statistics are just the tip of the iceberg. On April 30, the Children's Defense Fund released very alarming figures.

They indicate that in 2001, almost 1 million Black children were living in "extreme poverty"—meaning below half the poverty line.

Extreme poverty refers to after-tax income, including the value of food stamps, subsidized lunches and housing benefits. Half the poverty line in 2001 was \$7,064 annually for a family of three.

The most devastating federal policy affecting the rise of extreme poverty was and continues to be the 1996 "Welfare Reform" Act, which eliminated federal funding for Aid to Families with Dependent Children. AFDC once



Schoolchildren being arrested in Birmingham in 1963 for protesting racist segregation. Jim Crow segregation laws have been overturned, but Black poverty hasn't.

guaranteed Medicaid health benefits for poor children. All this occurred under Democratic President Bill Clinton.

"The story of deepening poverty is central to the story of Black children in poverty in the wake of the 1996 welfare law: without it, the story is incomplete," the report stresses. "That is because more than eight in 10 Black children on AFDC were already poor in 1995, the year before the law was signed. Therefore, any deterioration in the economic circumstances of most Black children on welfare can only be measured by looking at the deepening or lessening of the severity of poverty for these already-poor children—not by changes in official poverty rates."

This is the highest level since these annual data were first collected in 1979. It marks an increase of 50 percent from the number in 1999, based on the 2000 Census Bureau figures.

The fact that African Americans compose about 13 percent of the U.S. population highlights that 1 million Black children in extreme poverty is hugely disproportionate. In fact, more than 8 percent of Black children lived in poverty in 2001—double the percentage for all other nationalities, according to the study.

To characterize the current Bush administration's attitude toward the poor as callous is much too generous. Bush's attitude is both racist and hostile.

He now wants to eliminate any federal spending for Head Start, a pre-kindergarten program for poor children. At the same time he is pushing for gigantic tax cuts to benefit the rich.

Black children are not the only children languishing in extreme poverty. In 2001, there were over 700,000 Latino children living in extreme poverty, an increase of 13 percent from 2000. There was also a 2 percent increase in very poor white children, who now number 2 million.

It is no wonder that with the deteriorating social status of poor children, especially those of color, the United States has the highest infant mortality rate and largest prison population of any industrialized country.

Despite all the racist repression they faced—police beatings, dogs and fire hoses—the heroic mass resistance of the Black children of Birmingham who helped overturn Jim Crow laws showed how real change can be brought about.

The time is more than ripe to organize nationwide protests in Washington, D.C., to demand money for human needs, not war abroad. And once again poor and working-class youths must lead the way. □

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New evidence:

Cops concocted Mumia 'confession'

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

The last remaining pillar of the prosecution's case used to convict Mumia Abu-Jamal in 1982 has been knocked down.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, an African American activist and award-winning journalist, was convicted of the 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. Police claimed that Abu-Jamal confessed after the incident while he was hospitalized for gunshot wounds. Mumia Abu-Jamal has always maintained his innocence.

Now, new evidence reveals that cops concocted the "confession."

Attorneys for Abu-Jamal have filed a declaration in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third District. In the declaration, Kenneth Pate swears that his half-sister Priscilla Durham, during a telephone conversation with Pate in 1983 or 1984, admitted that she had not heard a "confession" by Abu-Jamal.

Durham, a security guard, was on duty at Jefferson Hospital on Dec. 9, 1981, when Abu-Jamal and Faulkner were brought in to the emergency room with gunshot wounds.

According to Pate, Durham told him that the only statement Abu-Jamal made at the hospital was, "Get

off me, get off me—they're killing me," when police interfered with his medical treatment.

This directly contradicts Durham's testimony at Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial that she heard him yell out, while surrounded by police, "I shot the motherf---er and I hope he dies."

According to Pate, the police appealed to Durham to "stick with them" because as a security guard she was part of the "brotherhood" of law enforcement officers.

Abu-Jamal's jury was never allowed to hear testimony from the police officer responsible for guarding him at the hospital; the police officer had filed a written report that Abu-Jamal had made no statements.

So why is Mumia Abu-Jamal viewed by millions around the world as a U.S.-held political prisoner—still sitting on Pennsylvania's death row?

Free Mumia!

It would be difficult for any jury today to possibly convict Abu-Jamal after hearing all the evidence that has come to light since his 1982 trial.

Abu-Jamal's attorneys have taped sworn testimony from a man named Arnold Beverly who passed a lie detector test while confessing that he killed Faulkner.

Beverly says he shot Faulkner in a "mob hit" ordered by some police and organized crime because

Faulkner was an obstacle to the payoffs racket that corrupt police were running in center city Philadelphia in the 1980s.

Physical evidence, witness testimony and a polygraph examination back up Beverly's confession. Yet the courts have not even allowed Beverly to come in for a routine deposition.

Witness statements by Yvette Williams and private investigator Mike Newman prove that the prosecution's "eyewitnesses"—Cynthia White and cab driver Robert Chobert—did not even see the shooting and lied on the witness stand.

Philadelphia Common Pleas Judge Sabo's neutrality was challenged by Terri Maurer-Carter, who was working as a court stenographer in 1982 when she heard Sabo make the statement, "Yeah, and I'm going to help them fry the n---r"—referring to Mumia Abu-Jamal's case.

Yet Abu-Jamal remains in prison. The Fraternal Order of Police, district attorney, judges, Pennsylvania governors and even the media remain hellbent on silencing the death-row prisoner known as the Voice of the Voiceless, keeping him imprisoned and even attempting to reinstate his death-penalty conviction.

As more truth comes to light, it is clear that it will take a militant grassroots struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. □

By Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row:

The great dissenters



"I have been accused of obstructing the war.

I admit it. Gentlemen, I abhor war. I would oppose war if I stood alone. ... I have sympathy with the suffering, struggling people everywhere. It does not make any difference under which flag they were born, or where they live..."

—Eugene Victor Debs, Socialist, to the jury at his espionage trial in 1918

The name Eugene Debs may not ring bells today, but in the first quarter of the 20th century his trial rocked the nation. An ardent Socialist, Debs made plain his opposition to World War I, and more importantly, his opposition to the class character of the war; that it was a war waged by working people for the wealthy. A powerful and stirring orator, Debs drew waves of applause from those who came to hear him. He also spoke plainly about war and the wagers of war:

"They tell us that we live in a great free republic; that our institutions are democratic; that we are a free and self-governing people. That is too much, even for a joke. ... Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder... And that is war in a nutshell. The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles." (Howard Zinn, "A People's History of the United States," p. 358)

Debs, charged with violating the Espionage Act, was convicted of obstructing the draft for giving this speech, and a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court would affirm his conviction a year later. The imprisoned labor leader, convicted of exercising his alleged First Amendment rights of speaking out against an unpopular war, would go on to write his stirring "Walls and Bars: Prisons and Prison Life in the 'Land of the Free'" (1927).

Nominated by the Socialist Party to run for president in 1920, Debs received over 1 million votes—while behind bars!

Nor was Debs alone in his opposition to the war, as papers of the time attest. The Minneapolis Journal would blare, "Draft Opposition Fast Spreading in State." Over 300,000 men evaded the draft for the "War to End All War" (as it was called). Working people demonstrated against the war all across the nation, and were attacked by cops and soldiers, under orders of their brass. Tens of thousands of men claimed conscientious objector status. What is clear is that anti-war sentiment didn't just sprout up during the unpopular Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s.

Being anti-war is part of the historical fabric of America.

Although it may surprise us in this age to speak of him thus, Abraham Lincoln was famous before his presidency for his outspoken opposition to the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), when, as a member of Congress, the Illinois delegate challenged President James Polk to specify exactly where American blood was shed "on the American soil"—the pretext for the Mexican War. As a Whig, Lincoln was outspoken on his party's position:

"The declaration that we have always opposed the war is true or false, according as one may understand the term 'oppose the war.' If to say 'the war was unnecessary and unconstitutionally commenced by the President' be opposing the war, then the Whigs have very generally opposed it." (Zinn, p. 151)

Historians who now review the basis for the Mexican-American War generally agree that the White House used a lie to justify it.

We have mentioned the Vietnam War. Who can question the outspoken contributions that the heavyweight boxing champ, Muhammad Ali, or the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made to challenging and ending that fevered carnage in the Far East? Ali's famous phrase, "No Vietnamese ever called me a n---r," shone a garish light on the plight of Blacks in this country, who were asked to defend a "democracy" abroad that was sorely lacking at home.

Dr. King's speeches against the war earned him the enmity of his liberal, fair-weather "friends," and caused the corporate press to attack him relentlessly for treason. Yet who, some 30 years later, can remember the catcalls of his critics, when compared to the excellence and ethics of his dissent against the rampant militarism of the war?

Dr. King's proclamation that America was the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today" is found in the mouths of tens of thousands of anti-war protestors in America who weren't alive when he said it, and is repeated in a hundred different languages around the world to legitimize a global anti-war movement of millions who oppose the American way of war.

To paraphrase the former Rap Brown (now Imam Jamil Al-Amin), "Dissent is as American as cherry pie." □

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Biggest protest in Albany history

50,000 workers demand state restore budget cuts

Fifty thousand teachers and staff rallied in Albany, N.Y., May 3 to demand Gov. George Pataki's budget cuts be restored. The workers came from big cities, like Buffalo and New York, small towns like Riverhead on the eastern tip of Long

Island and Masena on the Quebec border. This was by far the largest rally in the history of Albany. Handmade signs read: "Pataki's budget: nothing more than a class war" and "A second of war costs more than a year of school."

—Photo and story by G. Dunkel

Wall Street bandits get a slap on the wrist

By Heather Cottin

Citibank is the most powerful bank in the world. It has gotten away with money laundering in Mexico in 1999 and was in on the Enron and WorldCom frauds. Now Citigroup, the corporate entity that controls all of Citibank's financial maneuverings, has been caught unloading stocks at inflated prices, manipulating initial public offerings and defrauding investors.

The fine levied against all the banks that took part in this wheeling and dealing was \$1.4 billion. Citi's penalty was \$400 million—equivalent to a week's profits.

On April 29, New York State Attorney General Elliot Spitzer made the announcement that Citigroup and two smaller financial institutions would be fined for open malfeasance of the law. But not a single criminal charge was levied on anyone. The fine was merely a "slap on the wrist," wrote economist Paul Krugman in the New York Times on May 2.

Analysts at Citigroup's Salomon Smith Barney acted as the agents for this fraud. But they were not alone. Merrill Lynch,

Credit Suisse First Boston, J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers, Morgan Stanley, Bear Stearns, UBS AG and US Bancorp use the same methods. Neither Citigroup nor the other firms admitted wrongdoing, and most Citicorp executives were allowed to keep their jobs under the settlement.

For Citigroup it was business as usual. Their M.O. is extortion. Sometimes they do it legally, sometimes not. Citi has cheated the public out of billions of dollars, costing workers their homes, jobs and businesses.

Bank foreclosures have accelerated in the declining economy. Citi is the "repo man" that throws people like Wanda and Tyrell R. into the street. Last summer, Citibank foreclosed on their one-story house in Chicago. Citibank kept their down payment and all the money they had paid toward their mortgage. It then resold the house at a profit.

Citigroup is the largest U.S. bank and financial services company and the premier underwriter of global debt and equity. Wanda and Tyrell's misfortune is not unusual. Foreclosures have reached

levels not seen in 30 years. Citigroup also benefits from the unprecedented growth in credit card debt worldwide. The average in the U.S. is about \$8,000 per family, having tripled in the last 10 years, and that's not including other forms of household debt like home mortgages and car payments.

Citigroup is not merely profiting from consumer debt and mortgaging. Citibank manipulated a compliant Washington to become lord of the mergers and acquisitions business.

Citigroup CEO Sanford Weill led the campaign to gut Depression-era legislation known as the Glass-Steagall Act, which had put a firewall between the banks and the stock market. With the help of telecommunications analyst Jack Grubman—who would become head of Citigroup's brokerage business, Salomon Smith Barney—Citigroup and the banking industry managed to buy enough congressional influence to pass the 1999 Financial Services Modernization Act. Its promoters touted its virtues, claiming it would "give consumers the opportunity to shop for

almost any financial service ... in one place." (Wall Street Journal, Oct. 25, 1999)

That opened the door to the kind of manipulation exposed in the recent settlement. Now Weill is under a court order not to even talk to his company's stock analysts without a lawyer being present and Grubman is barred from the securities business for life.

When workers steal they go to prison. When members of the ruling class steal they get richer, and they have the law on their side.

While the majority of workers own no stocks at all, the super profits Citigroup and the other banking giants make come directly from the labor of workers all over the world. The "Citi never sleeps" as it racks up assets of nearly \$1 trillion. (Newsweek, Aug. 5, 2002)

Meanwhile the punishment of Wall Street pirates is a joke. But Wanda and Tyrell R. and millions of jobless, indebted and homeless workers are not laughing. Neither are the small investors on Wall Street whom the big capitalists took to the cleaners. □

New York civil disobedience

'Operation Homeland Resistance'

Some 80 activists were arrested May 5-6 in civil-disobedience actions in front of the Federal Building in New York City. A following day of actions was also planned as part of a three-day campaign called "Operation Homeland Resistance."

This campaign was organized and led by people of color and immigrant-rights groups. The purpose was to draw attention to "war and occupation abroad" and the continued domestic war against immigrants, people of color and poor people.

Organizers said the actions were to "draw attention to the different ways communities in New York City are under attack through criminalization of local communities of color, increased policing and police violence, massive cuts in basic services, and targeted attacks on immigrant communities."

More than 56 local and national social-

justice organizations endorsed the actions. They include Blacks Against War, Desis Rising Up and Moving, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, New York City AIDS Housing Network, Harlem Anti-War Coalition, CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Audre Lorde Project, Nodutdol—For Korean Community Development, United for Peace and Justice New York and New York ANSWER.

The vast majority of those arrested were women and a large proportion of the activists were from the lesbian, gay, bi and trans movement.

—Imani Henry



PHOTO: OPERATION HOMELAND RESISTANCE

THE ROOTS OF LESBIAN & GAY OPPRESSION A Marxist View

This groundbreaking pamphlet was originally published in 1976. Its unparalleled achievement was to offer a historical analysis of when, where, why and how lesbian and gay oppression developed. List price is \$7.95 but at leftbooks.com it's 15% off, only \$6.99

The vast majority of those arrested in New York civil disobedience were women.

Stop the war—at home and abroad

Longshore workers ratify struggle resolutions

The following resolutions were adopted by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Convention in San Francisco on May 1. The ILWU's militant, progressive history extends back decades, to the 1934 general strike in San Francisco. During the struggle to end apartheid, union members refused to unload cargo from South Africa. They shut down every West Coast port in April 1999 to support death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. And they took part in the historic 1999 Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization. The ILWU opposed U.S. intervention in El Salvador and today is standing up against the U.S. military occupation of Iraq.

Opposition to the U.S. occupation of Iraq

WHEREAS: The ostensible purpose of the U.S. military invasion of Iraq was to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, facilitate "regime change" by ending Saddam Hussein's brutal dictatorship and "liberate" the Iraqi people; and

WHEREAS: The real purpose that war was waged by Bush was for control of Iraq's nationalized oil fields and to impose its influence in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS: To realize those aims the U.S. is occupying Iraq and imposing its own military dictatorship while the Iraqi people have been angrily demonstrating in the streets demanding U.S. military withdrawal; and

WHEREAS: This war cost \$75 billion dollars while the U.S. economy is in shambles, leaving people jobless, homeless, without universal health care, and public school systems in major cities like Oakland bankrupt; and

WHEREAS: Over a billion dollars is being cut from veterans' benefits as many who fought in the 1991 Gulf War are still suffering from debilitating diseases while hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts are being given to U.S. companies closely connected to the Bush administration like Stevedoring Services of America to run the port of Umm Qasr

and the San Francisco-based Bechtel Corporation to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by U.S. bombs in Iraq; and

WHEREAS: The war in Iraq is over and Bush is now making threats in that region against Syria and Iran, not to mention North Korea, China and Cuba;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That we demand that the U.S. military immediately withdraw from Iraq and the Middle East and recognize the right of the Arab peoples to self-determination free of foreign interference.

Submitted by ILWU Local 10

Oppose the U.S war against Iraq

WHEREAS: Working people in the U.S. will pay for the war on Iraq by cuts on health, education, workers' safety and social services; and

WHEREAS: The war in Iraq is being used to escalate attacks on the working class, workers' democratic rights, and our civil liberties, through the use of the Homeland Security Act, Patriot Act, and Port Maritime Security Act; and

WHEREAS: Workers throughout the world, and in every trade union, must stand together to oppose this war; and

WHEREAS: United labor action internationally has the power to stop the war against Iraq; and

WHEREAS: The ILWU had opposed the Vietnam War and the first U.S. invasion against Iraq in 1991;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the International Longshore and Warehouse Union opposes the war against Iraq and stands in defense of labor and people's democratic rights throughout the world.

Submitted by ILWU Local 8

Stop allowing the threat of war to attack our civil liberties and workers' rights at home

WHEREAS: The Bush Administration has carefully crafted a strategy of distracting Americans from its anti-civil liberties, anti-labor and anti-worker agenda at home by an endless war on terrorism; and

WHEREAS: Wars have been waged in

ILWU drill team carrying cargo hooks leads union contingent in Oakland anti-war march.

WW PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

Afghanistan, Iraq, with Syria and Iran possibly being next; and

WHEREAS: The Bush Administration has used the issue of patriotism to silence the dissent of working people who oppose the wars and who speak out against the growing infringement on our civil liberties, civil rights and workers' rights; and

WHEREAS: The anti-labor agenda of the Bush Administration using the cover of the economy and national security intervened into our contract negotiations; and

WHEREAS: Taft-Hartley was invoked against us subsequent to the lock-out by the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) during an impending war against Iraq;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That in the tradition of the ILWU's progressive history, we take an active role in building labor and community coalitions to organize to protect our workers' rights and civil liberties here at home.

Submitted by ILWU Local 10

General strikes and Taft-Hartley

WHEREAS: This Union was born of a general strike; and

WHEREAS: The current national and international political environment restrains the rights of workers to such a degree that they are unable to rise above

the oppression; and

WHEREAS: The achievement of the Longshore hiring hall, the elimination of the shapeup, and the current right for all members to attend every Longshore Local Union General Membership meeting followed the San Francisco general strike of 1934; and

WHEREAS: Since the inception of Taft-Hartley, workers have been unfairly and unjustly fettered in their ability to organize, to strike in sympathy with other workers, to engage in secondary boycotts and pickets and engage in large-scale acts of solidarity;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the ILWU will publicize and champion the goal of regaining the right of workers to engage in a general strike, in plain and proud view of all workers for further consideration; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: That the ILWU will work with other Unions and coalitions towards repealing the Taft-Hartley Act.

Submitted by ILWU Local 5



Bush couldn't duck California protesters

Fresh from his entrance, all costumed as though he was a Navy fighter pilot, onto the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln 100 miles off San Diego, President George W. Bush had to come back to reality May 2 in the economically depressed Silicon Valley. He was greeted by a couple of thousand demonstrators who marched within two blocks of where he was speaking at the military contractor United Defense.

They protested the occupation of Iraq and lack of jobs in this country.

Once the crown jewel of electronic technology, Silicon Valley today has an unemployment rate of 8.4 percent. Santa Clara County alone has lost over 175,000 jobs in the past two years.

Protesters who had gathered at Lafayette Park marched to within two blocks of the Brokaw Road entrance to United Defense despite police on horseback trying to push them onto the sidewalks. Several protesters were knocked

over.

But the demonstrators' strength and determination succeeded in holding the street. Protesters chanted, "War criminal!" as the presidential motorcade entered the plant.

The early morning demonstration had to be organized in only two days because the location of Bush's speech was kept secret in an attempt to diminish the strong Bay Area opposition to his imperial regime.

The protest was organized by the South Bay Mobilization to Stop the War, Global Exchange and the San Francisco chapter of International ANSWER.

Ignoring growing opposition and resistance to occupation by the Iraqi people, Bush proclaimed at United Defense that the war was just about over. United Defense is the military contractor that produces the Bradley fighting vehicle. It also produces the Hercules tank recovery vehicle best known for its role in the



made-for-TV toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein in central Baghdad.

Bush hailed United Defense as a model company in his war economy that is sucking the life out of schools, health and human services.

In reference to the economic depression and unemployment of the region in California, Bush had no answers except to

push his tax plan. This plan is not about job programs or economic stimulus.

Instead, it is a huge handout to the rich. Under the Bush administration's plan, those making a million dollars a year would get a tax cut of about \$100,000. A worker making under \$50,000 would get an average of \$482.

- Story and photo by Bill Hackwell

Cinco de Mayo: still battling empire

By Teresa Gutierrez

At the Cinco de Mayo commemoration in Houston the weekend of May 3-4, members of the group Latinos Por La Paz (Latinos for Peace) planned to participate with an anti-war contingent.

They had a nicely decorated vehicle in the parade. Their members carried placards against the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

The peace organization, however, was forced out of the parade by the League of United Latin American Citizens, the official organizers, who charged that LPLP was conducting a "protest."

LULAC called the police to expel Latinos Por La Paz only 15 minutes after they had begun to march. In those short 15 minutes however, LPLP organizers reported, the crowd clapped, cheered and shouted "viva" at them.

Cristobal Hinojosa, an LPLP organizer, told WW: "What is interesting is that many Mexicano activists have participated in the Cinco de Mayo parades in Houston now for almost 10 years. We have come with many messages: against the death penalty, against other military interventions, in support of the Zapatistas and other issues.

"We have never been treated this way. We have always been allowed to march."

Hinojosa continued: "Cinco de Mayo is very important to Mexicanos because it represents a victory against an invading military force. It symbolizes for many Mexicans, especially out of Mexico, that we do not approve of any

kind of invasion or intervention of one country over another. And the position of the Mexican people on the U.S. invasion of Iraq was a clear rejection of that invasion."

Latinos Por La Paz is demanding a public apology from LULAC. The group is asking supporters to denounce their expulsion and defend freedom of expression.

To support Latinos Por La Paz, call (713)426-4804 or check www.geocities.com/latinosporlapaz.

A rallying cry

Cinco de Mayo commemorations arise from the events of May 5, 1862. It was in the Mexican state of Puebla where the Mexican army heroically defeated a battalion of one of the major colonial armies of the time, the French.

Although Mexico did not win the war, and would end up colonized by the French for a number of years, the Battle at Puebla on May 5 has become a rallying cry against foreign colonial domination as well as for self-determination.

It is outside of Mexico that Cinco de Mayo is mainly celebrated. In fact, it was in the Chicano liberation struggles of the 1960s and 1970s that Cinco de Mayo was revived and commemorated in Mexican communities throughout the southwest and other regions in the United States.

Over the years, however, the political significance of Cinco de Mayo got lost. The commemoration became instead a key market for the beer and cigarette industries.

Said a spokesperson for the Distilled

Spirits Council of the U.S., "We see nothing wrong with adults celebrating Cinco de Mayo with a margarita or other tequila cocktail." (AP, May 3)

Corona, a Mexican beer distributed in the United States, has previously marketed the beer as the "drinko for Cinco."

The Washington Post wrote on May 4: "Many bars in the U.S. are offering 'cinco beers for cinco dollars.' Flower delivery services are offering floral arrangements with a packet of hot sauce. The U.S. avocado industry estimates that 37 million pounds of avocados, much of it mushed into guacamole, will be consumed just on that one day.

"Cinco de Mayo has become a major-league reason to party for anyone who has ever dipped a chip or stuffed a lime wedge down the neck of a beer bottle."

But this year's Cinco de Mayo in this country, as testified to by the Houston event, reflects the worldwide struggle against not only U.S. colonial military aggression—but against the overall encroachment of imperialist culture on the oppressed as well.

In California and Arizona, Latinos have led a small but significant struggle against the corporate co-optation of Chicano culture. Under the slogan "Our culture is not for sale," groups such as Latin@s for Health and Justice are sponsoring alcohol- and tobacco-free events as part of their "Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo" (Fifth of May with Pride) campaign.

In New York City, where the Mexican population has exploded with growth in the last few years, an Indigenous dance

group held a Cinco de Mayo Resistance to the War event in El Barrio.

Latino union activists used the non-political Cinco de Mayo events to reach out to thousands of Mexican workers. Brian Barraza told Workers World: "Unionists and immigrant-rights activists distributed thousands of fliers on the struggle to demand amnesty for immigrants. My union [Food and Commercial Workers] supports amnesty because immigrants need legalization to make it easier to join unions and get a good paying job."

Thousands of fliers were handed out about the national demonstration for amnesty that will take place in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 4.

In 2001, President George W. Bush, it was said, "elevated" Cinco de Mayo by holding the first-ever commemoration at the White House. But it is George Bush, as the principal representative of imperialism, whose actions are laying the basis for a massive and militant worldwide movement against the empire.

Latinos Por La Paz in Houston as well as others are showing that the "party culture of margaritas and chips" is not a true picture of the Mexican culture.

The Mexican culture is centuries old and marked with glorious contributions to civilization. It is a culture rich with struggle and fight back.

With Latinos dying in Iraq in disproportionate numbers to the population, imperialism has laid the basis for profound solidarity with the very people these soldiers have been ordered to kill. □

May Day in L.A.

'Legalize all immigrant workers!'

By John Beacham
Los Angeles

May Day in Los Angeles: More than 4,000 marched on the downtown Federal Building calling for the immediate legalization of all immigrant workers in the United States.

The demonstration, organized by the Multi-ethnic Immigrant Workers Organizing Network, raised its banners against immigrant bashing and the invasion and colonization of Iraq.

In a concrete embodiment of increasing solidarity among peace and social-justice organizations, anti-war forces including the ANSWER coalition of Los Angeles joined with the various immigrant workers' organizations that make up MIWON to bring off this enthusiastic and militant march—in a city that is home to one of the biggest immigrant populations in the United States.

The biggest and strongest sections of the demonstration were made up of immigrant garment workers.

In Los Angeles, garment workers are subjected to illegal working conditions on a massive scale. If they are lucky enough to work in legal garment factories, they work in a local industry in which fully 67 percent of bosses violate state labor laws, according to the Department of Labor. Many other immigrant workers are not this lucky and find themselves working in underground garment factories.

In the United States there are some 22,000 garment factories. In an estimated 75 percent of these factories, bosses violate the labor laws that set the minimum wage and fail to pay overtime to the workers.



Los Angeles, May 1.

In the current climate, immigrant workers live in fear that the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees the newly constituted Bureau of Citizenship and Immigrant Services, will escalate its

demonization of immigrants and continue to pursue policies that increase jailing, deportation and arbitrary revocation of legal status for immigrants.

In a well-received speech in front of

the Federal Building, John Parker of ANSWER demanded the immediate release of all immigrants—workers who help create the wealth of this country—and an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. □

WW PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA

In response to U.S. threats

Millions pledge to defend Cuba's sovereignty

By Gloria La Riva
Havana, Cuba

More than 1 million Cubans gathered in Havana's Revolution Square on May 1 for International Workers' Day and proclaimed this year's theme: "The First for Socialism."

As early as midnight, a proud and militant people left from their residences all over Havana province to assemble in the city. Half of Havana's 2 million were there. Across the country, almost 6 million more marched in all 14 provinces and the Isle of Youth.

As the people entered Revolution Square, small Cuban flags were distributed to all present. This has become a tradition in recent years. A sea of flags rises in the air as people show support for speakers' remarks.

In the aftermath of the Iraq war, and faced with increasing threats by the U.S., the Cuban people show a deep awareness of the need to mobilize in their defense.

That's why the mass rally was not just a day to honor workers and their accomplishments. Along with beautiful cultural performances, the speakers denounced U.S. imperialism's designs on the world, and pledged that Cuba is not alone.

Pedro Ross, general secretary of the 3-million-strong Cuban Workers Federation (CTC), opened the rally. He mentioned the actions taken by Cuba to defeat counter-revolutionary forces directed by the U.S., as well as to stop U.S.-backed hijackings.

"I want to put a vote to you. Are you in agreement with the measures that the government adopted to defend the integrity and sovereignty of the nation, and those that may be necessary to defend the lives of citizens and of socialism? Raise your flags if you agree."

The giant gathering turned red, white and blue with the paper Cuban flags as the people proclaimed a resounding yes.

U.S. incites counter-revolutionaries

At the same time that the U.S. was preparing its attack on Iraq, James Cason, the top U.S. diplomat in Havana, was inciting counter-revolutionary activity inside Cuba, personally handing out materials and money to nurture an opposition. The U.S. government was also encouraging hijackings by refusing to return to Cuba the criminals and property they had stolen. This crisis came to a head just as the bombs started falling on Baghdad.

In this dangerous situation, Cuba arrested and tried 75 people on charges of collaborating with U.S. officials against the revolution. Then three boat hijackers who had endangered the lives of many passengers were tried and executed in April.

This led some governments and prominent individuals to attack Cuba, but in recent weeks they have been answered by statements coming from many parts of the world.

Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano, U.S. professor Noam Chomsky and Portuguese writer José Saramago were among those who immediately signed on to a particularly scurrilous statement circulated by the U.S. Campaign for Peace and Democracy.

This was answered by a declaration

from well-known Cuban artists and writers, called a "Message from Havana for Friends Who are Far Away." It urged those who had signed the anti-Cuba statements to understand Cuba's embattled situation and reconsider their position.

The sponsoring Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC) made a distinction between those who they consider to be friends of Cuba, like Galeano and Chomsky, from those who have long been hostile to the Cuban Revolution, like right-winger Mario Vargas Llosa. So far, this declaration has been signed by 13,352 Cuban artists, including Silvio Rodríguez, Amaury Pérez, Omara Portuondo, Pablo Milanés, Miguel Barnet and others.

At the May Day rally, speakers stressed the urgency of solidarity with Cuba, among them Rev. Lucius Walker of Pastors for Peace and German writer Heinz Dieterich Stefan.

Well-known Mexican sociologist Pablo González Casanova, who has circulated a declaration in Latin America called "To the Conscience of the World," available at www.granma.cubaweb.cu, said, "Many statements on the Cuban situation, although done in good faith, can seem supportive and yet still magnify issues that the U.S. seeks to justify an invasion of Cuba.

"That truth obligates all the peoples of the world—including the people of the United States, whose role in the survival of humanity is and will be very important—to think in concrete terms, how we can detain the cowardly offensive against Cuba, which is an offensive against humanity."

Galeano and Chomsky also signed González's defense of Cuba. Several U.S. figures joined in, including Danny Glover, Harry Belafonte and Ramsey Clark.

Miguel Barnet, noted Cuban author and UNEAC vice-president, said, "Humanity is experiencing moments of crisis and extreme danger for the survival of the planet. ... Our obligation, as intellectuals and artists, is to avoid all possible risks for our country. We need to be conscious that our main priority is to defend our homeland.

"It is a matter now of closing ranks against the dark forces of fascism that destroy human beings, that oppress and alienate them.

"The world will not permit our people to be massacred, or Havana to go up in flames some day like Baghdad, or our heritage to be ransacked, our educational, cultural and scientific works leveled That is why to slander Cuba today, to turn one's back, is an act of injustice and irresponsible."

Claudia Cambia, Argentinian organizer for the Cuban Five political prisoners in the U.S., condemned the imperialist media's mercenary role.

"The media campaign launched against Cuba in these last weeks is indignant, dirty, disgusting

"Why don't they inform the public about the terrible violation of human rights that the five Cuban heroes are constantly subjected to in U.S. prisons? Why don't they write about the solitary confinement, the isolation. ... Why not?"

"It's simply because one doesn't talk about the untouchable empire. They can imprison innocent people and torture them, they can massacre peoples, invade

Havana, May 1.

PHOTO:
GRANMA DAILY NEWSPAPER



nations, carry out terrorist acts, they can have weapons of mass destruction with the certainty that they will not be condemned in the media, nor the United Nations or Organization of American States.

"But be careful, because we the people did condemn them when we came out throughout the world to repudiate the genocide and double standard of the U.S. government. And it will be the people who will put a brake on the empire and their emperor...."

'Never has the world witnessed such an unequal fight'

As Cuban President Fidel Castro walked from the assembled crowd to the podium below a contemplative statue of José Martí, the crowd erupted into cheers and chants for the Cuban leader. His talk began with a vow that Cuba would never bow to the demands from 90 miles to the north.

"Our heroic people have struggled for 44 years from this small Caribbean island just a few miles away from the most formidable imperial power ever known by humankind. In so doing, they have written an unprecedented chapter in history. Never has the world witnessed such an unequal fight.

"Some may have believed that the rise of the empire to the status of sole superpower, with a military and technological might that has no counterweight anywhere in the world, would frighten or dishearten the Cuban people

"On a day like today, this glorious International Workers' Day, which commemorates the death of the five martyrs of Chicago, I declare, on behalf of the 1 million Cubans gathered here, that we will face up to any threats, we will not yield to any pressures, and that we are prepared to defend our homeland and our revolution with ideas and with weapons to our last drop of blood."

President Castro reviewed the feats of the revolution and its people, beginning with the 1959 overthrow of the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, with its 80,000 soldiers and police. He spoke of the literacy campaign, the 72-hour defeat of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, and the Cuban people's bravery during the precipitous 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

He talked of the impressive educational levels Cuba has achieved. "It has the highest school retention rate—over 99 percent

between kindergarten and ninth grade—of all the nations in the hemisphere. Its elementary school students rank first worldwide in the knowledge of their mother language and mathematics."

Saying, "In no other people has the spirit of international solidarity become so deeply rooted," President Castro gave a sweeping overview of Cuba's internationalist missions in support of liberation struggles from Algeria, Republic of Congo, Guinea and Angola to Vietnam and Grenada.

Lastly, he warned that if the U.S. were to attack Cuba, "The aggressors would not merely be facing an army, but rather thousands of armies that would constantly reproduce themselves and make the enemy pay such a high cost in casualties that it would far exceed the cost in lives of its sons and daughters that the American people would be willing to pay for the adventures and ideas of President Bush. Today, he enjoys majority support, but it is dropping, and tomorrow it could be reduced to zero.

"The American people, the millions of highly cultivated individuals who reason and think ... will show that you cannot fool all of the people, and perhaps not even part of the people, all of the time. One day they will put a straitjacket on those who need it before they manage to annihilate life on the planet. ...

"We do not want the blood of Cubans and Americans to be shed in a war. We do not want countless numbers of lives of people who could be friends to be lost in an armed conflict. But never has a people had such sacred things to defend, or such profound convictions to fight for, to such a degree that they would rather be obliterated from the face of the Earth than abandon the noble and generous work for which so many generations of Cubans have paid the high cost of the lives of many of their finest sons and daughters.

"We are sustained by the deepest conviction that ideas are worth more than weapons, no matter how sophisticated and powerful those weapons may be.

"Let us say like Che Guevara when he bid us farewell:

"Hasta la Victoria Siempre!" □

U.S. empire menaces Asia

By Greg Butterfield

President George W. Bush's May 1 speech aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln declaring U.S. victory in Iraq was more than just an arrogant proclamation of colonialism to people in the Middle East. It also signaled new dangers and challenges for independent governments and people's movements further east, in Asia and the Pacific.

Increasingly, the White House and Pentagon warlords are pushing, prodding and projecting their military prowess throughout the region, especially in Korea and the Philippines.

This was the subject of a very different speech given at a mass demonstration in Pyongyang, North Korea, celebrating the May Day workers' holiday. Ryom Sun Gil, leader of the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea, urged workers there to "form regiments and divisions so that they may be fully ready to defend the country from the enemy's invasion." (Korean Central News Agency, May 2)

Seeing how Iraq's people are now subject to brutal colonial occupation, people in North Korea and throughout Asia are standing up against the proliferation of U.S. bases, Pentagon intervention in sovereign countries' affairs and outright threats of war.

Socialist North Korea, in particular, has been the target of increased U.S. belligerence since the Pyongyang government announced plans to reactivate its nuclear program and use any means at its disposal to defend the country from a U.S. invasion or attack.

The White House and corporate media are working hard to portray this small country of 25 million people as a global threat because it dares to say it will defend its sovereignty and independence. Bush even included North Korea, along with Iran and Iraq, in the so-called axis of evil.

But for 50 years North Korea has been trying to get Republican and Democratic presidents to sign a formal peace treaty ending the state of war between the two countries. Every president—from Eisenhower to Bush II—has refused.

Both the Clinton and Bush administrations egregiously violated a 1994 agreement to build light-water nuclear reactors and provide heating fuel in exchange for Pyongyang ending its independent nuclear project. Yet Bush has the gall to accuse North Korea of breaking the agreement.

On April 30, the North Korean government said it would view any U.S. moves to impose United Nations sanctions over the resumption of its nuclear

program as a "green light for war."

The May 2 Arab Times reported, "Pyongyang regularly reports the number of U.S. spy flights it says were carried out in the previous month, but Thursday's tally on the official KCNA news agency was particularly detailed and came at a time of heightened tension with the United States. KCNA quoted an unidentified military source as saying various types of U.S. reconnaissance aircraft had flown at least 220 missions to spy on military targets, coastlines and front line positions along the Demilitarized Zone border with the south."

The U.S. has 37,000 troops across the border in South Korea. An additional 42,000 U.S. troops are stationed in nearby Japan.

In 1992, when the senior George Bush was president, the Pentagon admitted to having 2,400 nukes in the south aimed at North Korea and People's China. Bush claimed these were withdrawn, but there was no independent verification. Many South Korean and U.S. anti-war activists believe the nukes are still there.

Spread of bases in Asia

Progressive and anti-war forces in Asia joined the people of Vieques, Puerto Rico, in celebrating their righteous eviction of the U.S. Navy from the small island. For more than five decades, Pentagon war games rained toxic poison, environmental devastation, injury and death on the people of Vieques.

While much remains to be done—like forcing the Pentagon to clean up its mess and pay reparations to Vieques' people—their victory gives hope to others, like the villagers of Maehyang-ri, South Korea, who also face these bombardments and all the ills that accompany them.

But despite the victory in Vieques, the U.S. is expanding its military operations globally—especially in Asia.

Anger against the U.S. occupation in South Korea has grown so intense that the Pentagon is moving one of its largest bases from the capital city of Seoul to a less populated area. Other bases may be moved as well. (UPI, April 9)

Protests have grown stronger in recent years as U.S.-led massacres from the 1950-1953 Korean War have come to light. The killing of two Korean schoolgirls by recklessly-driving U.S. military personnel has further inflamed anti-Pentagon sentiment.

The Korean people, north and south, want to see their country reunified on the basis of peace and independence, and they see the 37,000 U.S. occupation troops as the main roadblock to that goal.

Much has been said about the Pentagon plan to withdraw from its bases in Saudi Arabia in favor of what are called "temporary" bases in occupied Iraq. But that's just part of the story.

On April 22, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported on a strategy paper making the rounds in Washington. The report "expresses the candidness of key American policy makers to 'eventually seek access to Indian bases and military infrastructure.'" The strategy document was based on the views of 42 individuals, including 23 U.S. military officers, 10 Indian military officers and five senior U.S. officials.

U.S. military bases in India would form a dangerous beachhead for Pentagon aggression, both to the East, against Korea and China, and to the West, against Iran and Pakistan.

In an April 30 Reuters feature entitled, "Saudi Move Part of Broader U.S. Military Realignment," Jack Spencer of the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank with close ties to the Bush regime, said, "The Middle East and Europe are important, but the Pacific is where the future action is going to be. You're not going to see a global base restructuring that diminishes U.S. presence in Asia."

The article added that the Bush administration is maneuvering to recapture its strategic bases in the Philippines, a former U.S. colony where a militant people's movement forced the Pentagon's eviction in 1991.

Christopher Hellman of the Center for Defense Information told Reuters he "expects the United States to secure a basing agreement with the Philippines by the end of the decade."

Real targets in Philippines

The transparent attempt to return U.S. military forces to the Philippines has prompted mass outrage, like a demonstration of 50,000 in Manila on Feb. 28. The Filipino people have vehemently rejected the Pentagon's return and President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's support for the U.S./British war and occupation in Iraq.

Last year, U.S. and Filipino troops engaged in attacks on Muslim villages in the country's southern islands under cover of fighting terrorism, specifically the tiny Abu Sayyef group, which Washington claimed was linked to Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. The aggression sparked protests throughout the Philippines.

At the time, the communist-led New People's Army, which characterizes the Abu Sayyef group as "bandits," said U.S. actions were really aimed against larger

national liberation groups like the NPA and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

On April 25, some 1,200 U.S. troops began new "counter-terrorism" war games with the Filipino armed forces. The exercises had been delayed because of popular opposition.

The war games are being conducted from three points on the northern island of Luzon, including two former U.S. military bases that Washington desperately wants back: Subic Bay and Clark Air Base.

Later this year, U.S. troops are scheduled to again join in "anti-terror" exercises in the southern Sulu islands, although technically U.S. forces are prohibited from engaging in combat by the Philippine Constitution.

The largely Muslim south is home to the 12,000-strong Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a group that has been fighting for independence for 30 years.

The U.S. and Philippine governments are now moving to make the MILF a target of their "anti-terror" campaign. During recent talks between Arroyo's administration and the MILF, the government accused the guerrillas of harboring "al-Qaeda cells" in its ranks. (Gulf News Online, March 27)

The U.S. officially added the MILF and the NPA to its list of "terrorist organizations."

But, as Prof. Jose Maria Sison, founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines, pointed out: "U.S. imperialism is the only force that has used atomic bombs to incinerate entire civilian populations. It has the largest stockpile of nuclear, biological, chemical and missile weapons of mass destruction. And it maliciously boasts of the barbaric doctrine of first use and preemptive strike."

"It has killed millions of people through so many wars of aggression, as in the conquest of the Filipino people [during and after the Spanish-American War], in the Korean War, in the Vietnam War and in the recent wars against Iraq, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. In the underdeveloped countries, it has instigated puppet regimes of open terror, such as those of Chiang, Mobutu, Suharto, Park, Pinochet and Marcos, to repress and massacre millions of people. ...

"Let us expose and oppose the super-terrorism of U.S. imperialism. The Bush administration has used the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks as a pretext for whipping up extremely repressive and bellicose policies for the purpose of aggrandizing the U.S. oil monopolies and the military-industrial complex and preserving a world capitalist system that devours billions of people even in the absence of a shooting war." □

Solidarity with Filipino struggle

By John Catalinotto
Amsterdam, Netherlands

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines celebrated its 30th anniversary in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on April 26 before a packed room of supporters and solidarity visitors from two dozen countries. The day's activities included political analyses and cultural presentations, poetry and song.

The meeting also paid tribute to Eden Marcellana, a human-rights organizer, and Eddie Gumanoy, who organized peasants. These two activists were recently murdered by the Philippine military. The meeting recognized them as martyrs in the struggle for the liberation of the Filipino people.

Professor Jose Maria Sison, the founding chairperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NDFP's chief political consultant, and Luis Jalandoni, chairperson of the Negotiating Panel for the NDFP, presented reports on the current situation in that country.

The NDFP had been negotiating with the government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo over how to end the armed conflict in the Philippines. Now Washington, under cover of the so-called war on terror, has tried to increase its own military intervention.

At the same time the Amsterdam meeting was taking place, the U.S. war machine was moving to get back onto Philippine territory through "anti-terror" war exercises with the Philippine Army. Some

1,200 U.S. troops took part in the war games on the Philippine island of Luzon, at Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base.

Until a mass movement forced the United States out of these bases a decade ago, they were key supports for U.S. imperialist domination of the Pacific and Asia, used heavily in the wars against Vietnam and Korea.

Part of U.S. imperialism's offensive against the Philippine liberation struggle has been to describe the heroic fighters as "terrorists." Washington has branded Sison a terrorist and pressed the European Union to do the same. This has resulted in the Netherlands cutting Sison off from the financial support due to him as an asylum seeker and has placed heavy restrictions



WWW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Luis Jalandoni of the NDFP, Nadine Rosa Rosso of the Workers Party of Belgium, and Jose Maria Sison.

on his right to travel.

The NDFP and its European supporters have opened a case in the European court in Luxembourg to demand that Sison's rights be reinstated.

Those speaking in solidarity with the NDFP included leaders of the New Communist Party of the Netherlands and the Workers Party of Belgium. □

Counter-revolution & resistance in Iraq

By Richard Becker

In April 2003 the U.S. and British rulers finally achieved what they had wanted to do since July 1958: the counter-revolution in Iraq. But erasing 45 years of independence from a people's consciousness is no easy task, and the occupiers face a future of resistance to their imperial rule.

The counter-revolution in Iraq—executed by the vastly superior firepower of the world's lone superpower—is a heavy blow not only to the Iraqi people, but to all those struggling for liberation in the Middle East.

The imperialist takeover of the biggest and most populous Arab state in the Gulf region gravely threatens Syria, Lebanon, Iran and the Palestinian people. It is not a coincidence that the crushing of Iraq was immediately followed by the unveiling of Bush's "road map" for the Palestinians. In the aftermath of the first Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the first President George Bush launched the now-defunct Oslo "peace process."

Last month, on April 9, organized military resistance in Baghdad and most of Iraq suddenly ended. Iraq had by then endured three weeks of air-, ground- and sea-based attacks by "coalition"—U.S. and British—forces.

The circumstances surrounding the collapse of the Iraqi government and state remain unclear, but the relief in the ruling circles of Washington and London was apparent. From the beginning of the war, Washington pursued a strategy of "decapitation"—either killing the Iraqi leadership or fomenting a coup d'état.

The longer the war continued, the greater the possibility of new upheavals in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Islamic world.

Relief was quickly replaced by limitless bourgeois triumphalism—and the announcement that the invaders were now hunting the leaders of the ousted regime, the same way that in earlier manifestations of colonialism the authorities tracked and killed the leaders of defeated slave revolts. The images of Iraqi officials were grotesquely imprinted on decks of playing cards, with Saddam Hussein as the Ace of Spades.

U.S. leaders and their corporate media have relentlessly promoted the idea that their goal of "regime change" simply involved removing the ultra-demonized Hussein and his immediate circle. In reality, Washington's aim was to destroy everything that made Iraq an independent state.

Everything is gone—from the military to the government ministries to the state-run food-distribution and health-care systems.

In the aftermath of the war, Iraq is under a Pentagon military dictatorship. Meetings of U.S.-picked Iraqi "leaders" are now being held to set up a puppet "interim government."

The commander of U.S. ground forces in Iraq, Lt. Gen. David McKiernan, made it clear that these Iraqi leaders are little more than ornamentation. On April 23, McKiernan issued a blunt proclamation stating, "The coalition alone retains absolute authority within Iraq."

U.S. diplomatic and intelligence officials are slated to be the directors of all the new Iraqi ministries set up by the military dictatorship.

Early in the war, U.S. military forces seized the great prize in Iraq, the rich oil fields in the north and south. Iraq holds an estimated 12 percent of the world's proven petroleum reserves, second only to Saudi Arabia.

Iraq before the revolution

U.S. involvement in Iraq began in the 1920s. U.S. corporations were granted 23.75 percent of Iraq's oil as a reward for entering World War I on the side of the victorious British and French empires. Britain, France and the Netherlands received equal shares of Iraq's petroleum resources.

Iraq was then a newly created colony, or "mandate," in the far-flung British Empire. Because of fierce resistance to colonial domination by Arabs and Kurds alike, Britain granted Iraq its nominal independence in 1932. But the country was ruled by a British-installed monarchy, and continued to be occupied by British military bases.

To fortify their domination, the British promoted the development of a class of big landowners in Iraq, who exported grain, dates and other products. The peasants who constituted the majority of the population were treated as serfs, bound to the land and living in utter poverty.

In the 1950s, life expectancy in Iraq was 28-30 years. Infant mortality was estimated at 300-350 per 1,000 live births. By comparison, infant mortality in England at the time was around 25 per 1,000 births.

Illiteracy was more than 80 percent for men and 90 percent for women. Diseases related to malnutrition and unsanitary water were rampant.

A statistical survey at the time showed income of less than 13 Fils—4 cents—per day for individual peasants in Diwaniya, one of the more prosperous agricultural regions.

According to a 1952 World Bank (IBRD) report, the average yearly income for all Iraqis was \$82. For peasants it was \$21. ("Revolution in Iraq," Society of Graduates of American Universities in Iraq, 1959)

The richest of the landlord families was named Chalabi. They owned vast estates in southern Iraq. Today it is Ahmed Chalabi, son of this same family, who is the Pentagon favorite to become the new "leader" of Iraq.

Neocolonial and landlord rule was maintained by a ruthless secret police/military regime that tortured, murdered and imprisoned countless thousands of Iraqis. Still, the resistance was strong. In the face of it, Iraq was placed under martial law 11 times between 1935 and 1954, for a total of nine years and four months.

Underlying Iraq's extreme poverty was this simple fact: Iraq owned none of its vast oil reserves.

The U.S. and Iraq

In the latter stages of World War II, the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, dominated by big banking, oil and other corporate interests, were determined to restructure the post-war world to ensure the dominant position of the United States.

The key elements in their strategy were: 1) U.S. military superiority in nuclear and conventional weaponry; 2) U.S. domination of newly created international institutions like the United Nations, International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and establishment of the dollar as the world currency; 3) control of global resources, particularly oil.

In pursuit of the latter, the United States was intent on taking control of certain strategic assets of the British Empire, war-time alliance notwithstanding. Among those assets was Iraq.

A February 1944 exchange between Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill makes clear that the British were well aware of U.S. intentions.

Churchill wrote Roosevelt: "Thank you very much for your assurances about no sheep's eyes [looking enviously] on our oilfields in Iran and Iraq. Let me reciprocate by giving you the fullest assurance that we have no thought of trying to horn in upon your interests or property in Saudi Arabia." (quoted in Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War*, New York, 1968)

What this note clearly showed was that the U.S. leaders were so intent on taking over Iran and Iraq, both important neocolonies of Britain, that it had set off alarm bells in British ruling circles.

It is also worth noting that Saddam Hussein was just 7 years old in 1944, when the U.S. leaders fixed their sights on Iraq.

Despite Churchill's bluster, there was nothing the British could do to restrain rising U.S. power. Within a few years, the British ruling class would adapt to the new reality and accept its new role as Washington's junior partner.

In 1953, after the CIA coup that put the shah (king) in power in Iran, the U.S. took control of that country. And by the mid-1950s, Iraq was jointly controlled by the United States and Britain.

In 1955 Washington set up the Baghdad Pact, which included its client regimes in Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Iraq, along with Britain.

The Baghdad Pact, or CENTO—Central Treaty Organization, had two purposes. First, to oppose the rise of Arab and other liberation movements in the Middle East and south Asia. And second, to be another in a series of military alliances—NATO, SEATO and ANZUS were the others—encircling the socialist camp of the Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe, North Korea and North Vietnam.

The Iraqi Revolution

But on July 14, 1958, a military rebellion led by Brigadier Abdul Karim Kassem and the Free Officers movement turned into a country-wide revolution. The king and his administration were suddenly gone, the recipients of people's justice.

The 1958 revolution put an end to colonial domination and marked the beginning of Iraq's real independence. Although the Iraqi Communist Party was the biggest organized force among the revolutionary forces, the revolution did not lead to a socialist transformation of the country. The ICP strategy was alliance with the anti-colonial nationalist bourgeoisie.

Though not a socialist revolution, the Iraqi Revolution created panic in Washington and on Wall Street. President Dwight Eisenhower called it "the gravest crisis since the Korean War."

The day after the Iraqi Revolution, 20,000 U.S. Marines began landing in Lebanon. The day after that, 6,600 British paratroopers were dropped into Jordan.

The U.S. and British expeditionary forces went in to save the neo-colonial governments in Lebanon and Jordan. Had they not, the popular impulse from Iraq would have surely brought down the Western-dependent regimes in Beirut and Amman.

But Eisenhower and his generals had something else in mind as well: invading Iraq, overturning the revolution and re-installing a puppet government in Baghdad.

Three factors forced Washington to abandon that plan in 1958: 1) the sweeping character of the Iraqi Revolution; 2) the announcement by the United Arab Republic—Syria and Egypt were then one state that bordered Iraq—that its forces would fight the imperialists if they sought to invade; and, 3) strong support for the revolution from the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union. The USSR

began to mobilize troops in the southern Soviet republics close to Iraq.

The combination of these factors forced the U.S. leaders to accept the existence of Iraqi Revolution. But Washington never really reconciled itself to the loss of Iraq.

Over the next three decades, the United States applied many tactics designed to weaken and undermine Iraq as an independent country. At various times—for instance after Iraq completed nationalizing the Iraqi Petroleum Company in 1972 and signed a defense treaty with the USSR—the United States gave massive military support to Kurdish elements fighting Baghdad and added Iraq to its list of "terrorist states."

Washington supported the more rightist elements within the post-revolution political structure against the communist and left-nationalist forces. For example, the United States backed the overthrow and assassination of President Abdel Karim Kassem in 1963 by a right-wing military grouping. And Washington applauded the suppression of the left and unions by the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party governments in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the 1980s, the United States encouraged and helped to fund and arm Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, in its war against Iran. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger revealed the real U.S. attitude about the war: "I hope they kill each other."

Bourgeois governments in both Iran and Iraq pursued the war for expansionist aims. The war was a disaster for both Iran and Iraq, killing a million people and weakening both countries.

The collapse of the USSR and the Gulf War

Shortly after the Iran-Iraq war ended in 1988, developments in the Soviet Union posed a new and even graver danger. In pursuit of an illusory "permanent détente" with the United States, the Gorbachev leadership in Moscow was eliminating or sharply cutting back its support for allies in the developing world.

In 1989, Gorbachev withdrew support for the socialist governments in Eastern Europe, most of which then collapsed. This sharp shift in the world relationship of forces, culminating with the collapse of the Soviet Union itself two years later, opened the door for the U.S. war against Iraq in 1991—and for more than a decade of sanctions/blockade and bombing that severely weakened Iraq and its people.

It would have been inconceivable even a few years earlier that Soviet leaders would have stood by while the United States sent more than a half-million troops to attack a nearby country with which the USSR had a mutual defense agreement.

Rather than ushering in a new era of peace, the counter-revolutionary overturn of the government of the USSR and throughout the socialist camp was seen in Washington as the green light for a new round of wars and interventions from Panama to Somalia to Yugoslavia.

The counter-revolution in the Soviet Union paved the way for U.S. aggression and counter-revolution in Iraq, the negation of Iraq's sovereignty and the destruction of the structures that made it an independent state.

Having achieved their victory, however, the occupiers now confront a people who have a long and proud history of resistance. The anti-war movement here and around the world must give its unconditional support to the Iraqi anti-colonial resistance. □

This is what democracy looks like

The case of Delma Banks Jr. has made it clear once more that the United States of America is a bourgeois-democratic police state.

This seemingly contradictory statement is really simple to understand once you look at class differences within U.S. society. For rich people, especially rich white men, there is little government interference with freedom of movement or expression. Even their crimes are rarely punished. That's bourgeois—capitalist—democracy.

For the poor, on the other hand, there are few means of expression of ideas. For poor people of color, the capitalist state is a club hovering over the head. That's the police state that has now imprisoned more than 2 million people in this country.

It's true that the Bush administration and the Ashcroft justice department have continually curtailed existing bourgeois rights. But even before this change for the worse the United States was a repressive police state directed against the poor, reinforced by 400 years of racism.

Banks is a 40-year-old Black man who came within a hair's breadth of being executed by the state of Texas a few weeks ago. He was reprieved at the last minute when the Supreme Court agreed to hear his case.

As a teenager in 1980 he was charged with murdering a 16-year-old youth he knew. The youth was white. Banks quickly became a victim of the racist, repressive court system in Texas.

Cops lined up white drug addicts, one of them a paid informer, to testify against Banks. His lawyer barely defended him. The jury, like the prosecution, was all white.

The fact that there was no strong evidence linking Banks to the crime hardly slowed down his prosecution. He was quickly found guilty and sentenced to death. Prosecutors hid their ties to the witnesses, who later recanted their testimony.

While the racist injustice in Banks' case is egregious, it is not so rare. It is a stark example of class injustice in a land whose ruling class and their paid propagandists proclaim it the epitome of freedom. It is why a majority of the more than 2 million people in jail—an extremely high number overall—are people of color.

This is how capitalist democracy works in the United States. Not badly—if you are rich. Bad for the poor. Horribly for the poor of color.

Laws punish petty theft but reward exploitation. The court system is biased toward those who can pay for the most effective lawyers. And the weight of the capitalist state—its police, its courts, its laws—all hangs over the working class and the poor.

This is U.S. capitalist democracy. And that's even before the Bush gang got in.

It is a built-in injustice system that must be uprooted. □



**WALTER
SISULU
presente!**



Legendary South African leader Walter Sisulu passed away on May 5. He would have turned 91 years old in May. Sisulu, a longtime member of the African National Congress and a founder of its Youth League, spent 26 years in prison alongside Nelson Mandela for fighting against the racist apartheid regime. A more in-depth tribute to Sisulu will appear in an upcoming issue of Workers World newspaper.

—Monica Moorehead

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May Day in Belgium

Ben Bella honored at Workers Party fete

By John Catalinotto
Brussels, Belgium

Some 2,500 activists and workers from around Belgium filled a building outside Brussels on May 1 to celebrate the workers' holiday with the Workers Party of Belgium.

The day had two major themes: the struggle to "stop U.S. aggression," with emphasis on the Pentagon's crimes during the invasion and occupation of Iraq; and an effort by the WPB to elect some special activists as representatives to the Belgian Parliament in the May 18 elections.

Keynote speaker for the anti-war theme was the leader of Algeria's liberation struggle from France, former Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella. The 86-year-old Ben Bella described the war on Iraq as "a war decided by the group of oil barons who lead the United States today."

"But it concerns more than Iraq and its oil," he said. "It's also a struggle for the domination of the world. The United States sees Europe as a growing power that it wants to control." But an even greater danger, he said, is the U.S. plan to restrict China's access to energy resources.

Ben Bella also described "people like Rumsfeld, Ashcroft and Cheney" as being "part of a Christian religious current that represents a fundamentalism much more dangerous than that of Bin Laden."

"After his war on Iraq," Ben Bella continued, "Bush plans to hit Syria, Iran, Korea. It's an endless war. This system is no longer tenable. There must be another way. We live in the time of the beginning of the end of the capitalist system. We have to change it."

About Palestine he said: "Sharon is the little cousin of Bush! The United States supports Israel unconditionally because this country plays the role of regional gendarme for the Americans." He added that "the Iraqi people will also



Ben Bella

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

make their Intifada."

Ben Bella also linked the struggle against the war with that against capitalist globalization. He called attention to the large demonstrations in London and other European cities against the war.

Regarding the Belgian parliamentary elections, WPB Secretary General Nadine Rosa Rosso focused on three leading candidates who represent different sectors of the Belgian working class.

One is Dyab About Jahjah, a dynamic young man of North African origin who has been a leader of the anti-racist struggle and for immigrant rights.

Another is Maria Vindevoghel, who has been a leader of the struggle of the workers at Sabena Airlines, laid off when the state-owned company declared bankruptcy, to fight to regain their jobs and rights. Vindevoghel wrote a book about the Sabena workers called "I Accuse."

The third was Dr. Colette Moulaert, who had just returned from Iraq. There she, along with three other doctors from the Belgian progressive movement, had both cared for the injured and wounded in Iraqi hospitals and confronted U.S. tanks in the streets of Baghdad. □

U.S. Navy pulls out of Vieques

Continued from page 1

However, 100 acres were kept by the Pentagon for a radar facility that targets Colombia and neighboring countries.

The eastern part, where Camp García is located and most of the demonstrations were held, will not revert to the people of Vieques, nor even to the Puerto Rican government. With their usual imperialist arrogance, Washington and the Pentagon have simply decided to transfer it to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Department of the Navy will pay for decontamination of these areas—but there are already signs that this will also be a most difficult struggle. The Navy has so far only allocated \$2.3 million—a ridiculously small amount for the contamination it has left behind.

Consider that napalm, depleted uranium and countless other heavy, toxic metals have been contaminating not only the soil but the underground water supply and the surrounding ocean for decades. Decontamination is a life-and-death demand for the people.

The intense contamination of the air, land and water has caused serious health problems in Vieques, where the cancer rate is 26 percent higher than in the rest of Puerto Rico and more likely to be fatal. The people hold the demand for decontamination as a very high priority, since

their lives depend on it.

For years, while they organized actions to oust the military, they also carefully planned for their future. They learned the lesson of Culebra, a smaller sister island also used by the U.S. Navy where a struggle in the 1970s kicked out the Pentagon. The people's militancy won, but they made no plans for the disposition of the land. Today, regrettably, Culebra is still very poor, still contaminated and its land in the hands of speculators.

The Viequenses are making sure not to follow that path. They have assembled panels of experts in every field to make sure that they are part of the decision-making process that ultimately will revert clean land to its rightful owners, the people of Vieques.

The U.S. government, of course, does not want them to have any role in deciding their own future, and has included the Puerto Rican government in the process merely as a diplomatic gesture, without yielding any decision-making power to it.

The courageous people of Vieques have put up a relentless struggle against the imperialist giant, showing once more the power of the people united. In this new phase and challenge, it is crucial that the progressive movement in the U.S. continue to support their struggle for self-determination and independence. □

From Athens to the Paris Commune

Neocons, empire building and democracy

By Deirdre Griswold

It seems, according to recent newspaper accounts (e.g., “A Classicist’s Legacy: New Empire Builders,” *New York Times Week in Review*, May 4), that the more ideological among those defining a newly aggressive role for U.S. imperialism, who today wield the upper hand in Washington, like to harken back to ancient Athens for their political inspiration. People like Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle and George W. Bush himself often present their mission as one of imposing “Western values” on a recalcitrant world, and cite Athenian democracy as the model civilization.

Of course, one could say that all this is merely ideological window dressing for policies that are so clearly dictated by the profit greed of the huge oil companies, banks and military corporations which call the shots in Washington, despite all the hype about representative democracy.

But what was Athenian democracy? Can the “neocons”—the neoconservatives who are but a makeover of the old right wing—lay claim to it? And where should the workers and oppressed of today be looking for democratic forms to serve their interests, as opposed to the interests of the war profiteers and modern-day slave drivers?

Peasant uprisings & the ‘Tyrants’

Athenian democracy evolved over a period of about 150 years, beginning in the sixth century B.C.E. Repeated peasant uprisings had been challenging the plutocracy, the rule by a class of wealthy land owners. At the same time, new men of wealth were emerging as Athens became a center of trade, commerce and the manufacture of many commodities by skilled artisans and slaves.

The use of the word “men” here is very deliberate, because, whether it was a monarchy or a democracy, women were excluded from political life and, with a few exceptions, from owning property.

The word “tyrant,” which today has such a brutal connotation, comes from this period. The Tyrants were military figures, usually swept into power by peasant rebellions against the monarchs and land-owning nobles whose wealth came from serfdom. The Tyrant Solon seized power in Athens in 594 B.C.E. He cancelled the debts of the poor, gave the right to vote to all male citizens and established a new governing council of 400 people. He was the first ruler to codify a body of laws. But he refused to carry out land reform.

Pisistratus, who became Tyrant of Athens 34 years later, in 560 B.C.E., redistributed the land and abolished land ownership as a requirement of citizenship.

Even having land, however, the peasants were not truly free. The productivity of their land was declining even as wheat and other foods began to be imported from more fertile areas around the Mediterranean, and they soon fell into debt slavery. The class antagonisms had not been eradicated by the reforms of the Tyrants.

The first democratic assembly, where representatives of all 10 “tribes” of Athens voted directly on major issues, was formed in 508 B.C.E. when Cleisthenes took power and extended the reforms, cutting down further the power of the nobility. This assembly of 500—50 from each tribe—met 40 times a year and also

selected a smaller body that met almost every day. Members of this standing committee could be recalled at any time if they didn’t carry out the wishes of the assembly.

The century that followed was considered the Golden Age of Greek democracy and produced many accomplishments in science and culture. It was also an age of military conquest and the taking of conquered peoples as slaves. Many of these people came with highly developed skills from other centers of civilization around the Mediterranean and northern Africa that had also amassed impressive scientific, technological and cultural knowledge. (See, for example, the book “The Ancient Engineers” by Lyon Sprague de Camp.) They enriched Athens in many ways.

No rights for slaves, women and foreign-born

Slaves and the foreign-born in general were never granted the rights of citizens. By the fourth century B.C.E., Athens had three slaves for every two free citizens. Most labored in the homes and workshops of their masters. There were no large agricultural estates based on slave labor, unlike later in the Western Hemisphere when slaves captured from Africa were intensely exploited by European settlers to produce sugar and cotton for an international capitalist market. The hardest and most dangerous work done by slaves in ancient Greece was in mines and on sailing vessels.

Ancient Athens at its height was a city-state of about 140,000 people, of whom some 40,000—free men—had the right to vote. However, only those citizens who owned property could run for office.

What is it about this particular center of ancient society that so enthralls the neo-conservatives? Undoubtedly, it is the high development of the art of politics—that is, the art whereby a minority, propertied class succeeds in ruling over a propertyless majority while engaging in the political process a broader section of society than just themselves. In this, today’s liberals are just as enthusiastic as the right-wingers.

Socrates, Plato and the state

Many thinkers in the period of Athenian democracy, like Socrates and Plato, bent their minds around the problem of how to strengthen the state, which seems to stand above society but in fact serves the interests of the dominant class. Students today read Plato’s “Republic” and other such political works but are seldom told that in the course of social evolution the state is a fairly recent development. For tens of thousands of years, people lived in communal societies where there was no division into opposing classes and no state—that is, no special, organized body of repression. The state arose with the overthrow of communal societies and the emergence of a class that claimed for itself the ownership of land and even of other human beings.

In a society like that of Athens, where slaves outnumbered free citizens and where the peasants were in a constant struggle with the nobility over the land, the question of the state became preeminent.

The obsession of Athenian intellectuals with politics stands in stark contrast to other areas of the ancient world, where wealthy people who had leisure time in

which to think and experiment were much more interested in solving the problems of mechanics, astronomy and navigation, metallurgy and other scientific challenges posed by the expansion of trade.

Science & materialist philosophy

In Miletus, a city in Asia Minor (today Turkey) not dependent on slavery but on wage labor for its extensive role in commerce, remarkable progress was made not only in these sciences but in developing a comprehensive view of the universe. This enthusiasm for understanding the material world, rather than for ruling over people, fostered the early development of materialist philosophy.

The view that everything in the universe was made up of tiny particles called “atoms”—which was advanced 2,300 years before the tools existed to prove or disprove this theory—originated with Leucippus of Miletus. His greatest disciple was Democritus of Adbera in Thrace, who traveled to Persia, Egypt and Babylon (today’s Iraq) in search of knowledge, and may also have been to Ethiopia and India. (The book “Greek Science” by the British Marxist scholar Benjamin Farrington skillfully explains the social conditions that led to the development of opposing philosophies—materialism vs. idealism—at the same time in different parts of the ancient world.)

It is a twist of historical fate that today’s neocons hold up Plato and Aristotle as their great inspirers. They would be more honest to honor Leucippus and Democritus, for it was the awesome detonation of two atomic bombs over Japan in 1945 that encouraged the intellectual servants of the U.S. capitalist class to entertain the idea that it was their manifest destiny to rule over the entire world and turn the 20th into the “American” century.

Capitalism has revolutionized the means of production by incorporating the intellectual achievements of all previous societies whenever they could be useful in turning a profit. In this respect, it cares not at all whether the ideas came from Greece or Mesopotamia or China.

But when it comes to political ideas, the present-day rulers are very choosy. Their eyes mist over and their hearts beat faster when they encounter a political philosophy that glosses over terrible social inequities as long as the form of class rule is democratic.

Slaves and women shut out

The United States political system owes a great deal to Athenian democracy. This, too, is a country where slavery was considered normal for hundreds of years, and slaves had no political rights, even though their masters were able to claim added seats in the House of Representatives by counting each slave as two-thirds of a person.

A bitter Civil War ended in the abolition of slavery, but the Northern capitalists soon betrayed their promises of Reconstruction and the descendants of slaves were effectively disenfranchised until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And even in 2000, George W. Bush became president only after the systematic exclusion of Black voters allowed him to claim victory in the key state of Florida.

Athenian women never got the right to vote. It took nearly a century and a half for women here to win suffrage.

And even after these victories for the right to vote, the elections in the U.S. still result in the domination of the billionaire ruling class over the political process. That is why, when the people registered their opposition to attacking Iraq in the clearest way, demonstrating again and again in numbers not seen since the Vietnam War, the Congress completely ignored the will of the people. Without even a mock debate, it allowed the executive branch to proceed with its criminal war of aggression.

The word democracy supposedly means rule by the people. In a modern capitalist society, the majority of the people are wage earners and their families—not the owners and CEOs of Halliburton and ExxonMobil and Fox News, all of whom are so cosy with the Athenian democracy-loving Bush administration.

The democracy of the Paris Commune

Can the majority really rule, and not just be used to rubber stamp the agenda of the moneyed class?

That question was answered, if only for a short time, by the workers of Paris in 1871. While the central government was preoccupied by a war with Germany, they took over and set up the Paris Commune. Some of the measures they instituted, like the right of the people to recall their elected representatives at any time, echoed steps first taken in Athens. But the Commune’s democracy went much further.

The Commune dissolved the standing army and police and replaced them with a people’s militia. It reduced the salaries of public officials to what an ordinary worker earned. It opened up all schools and universities to the people, free of charge.

It ended the state’s support of and use of the church by disestablishing all religion. Priests who had been paid by the state would have to depend on their parishioners for support.

The Commune conferred full political rights on those from other countries who sided with the revolution. At a time of war between France and Germany, it elected a German-born worker as Minister of Labor.

The Commune was not advanced enough to offer full equality to women, even though women had started the uprising. But by establishing a pension for all widows and children of “citizens killed defending the rights of the people,” it struck a blow for women’s emancipation, recognizing the rights of children born “out of wedlock.” Many Parisian workers lived in “free unions” not previously recognized by either church or state.

The Commune was crushed by the combined weight of French and German armies before it had a chance to go further. Karl Marx analyzed its strengths and weaknesses in “The Civil War in France.” It was not a blueprint for today. It had no political party or other experienced leadership at its helm, and that left the field free for adventurers and opportunists of all kinds. But it showed emphatically that the working class could become an independent force in history and could create new political forms to strike directly at the entrenched privileges of the old rulers.

For these reasons, and because it promoted the international solidarity of the workers and opposed national chauvinism, the democracy of the Commune is despised by today’s empire-building neo-conservatives in Washington. □

IPROLETARIOS Y OPRIMIDOS DE TODOS LOS PAÍSES, UNÍOS!

MUNDO OBRERO

ARGENTINA

Trabajadores toman control de 150 fábricas

Por Alicia Jrapko

Con el 57% de la población Argentina viviendo en condiciones de pobreza y con una tasa oficial de desempleo del 30%, un hecho sin precedente está tomando lugar en este país Sudamericano. Algunos trabajadores han tomado control de fábricas abandonadas por sus dueños debido a bancarota, "falta de ganancias" o inestabilidad.

Desde 1998, trabajadores en Argentina han tomado más de 150 fábricas—incluyendo plantas de la industria de la comida, metalúrgica, partes de autos, imprentas, cerámicas y textiles.

Cincuenta años atrás, Argentina era considerada una de las economías más desarrolladas e industrializadas del tercer mundo. Cerca del 50% de su producto nacional bruto provenía de las industrias.

Sin embargo, las políticas neoliberales dictadas por Washington, e implementadas, casi por tres décadas por el Fondo Monetario Internacional y otras instituciones financieras, no han traído otra cosa que miseria al pueblo Argentino.

Las circunstancias que rodean la toma de fábricas, varían entre ellas. En algunos casos, los trabajadores consiguieron permiso de los antiguos dueños para administrar la fábrica, pagando una renta y además comprando los medios de producción.

En otros casos, los trabajadores formaron cooperativas y establecieron un sistema igualitario de pago, con una estructura de poder democrática de voto directo en asambleas donde se discuten los problemas y se encuentran soluciones.

Entre las fábricas tomadas por los trabajadores, dos de ellas, se transformaron en símbolos de este nuevo movimiento: la fábrica de cerámica Zanón en Neuquén y la fábrica de textiles Brukman en Buenos Aires, donde la mayoría de los trabajadores son mujeres.

Brukman: 'La fábrica bajo control de los trabajadores'

Cuando los trabajadores tomaron control de Brukman, ellos quisieron negociar con los dueños, pero no recibieron respuesta. Como un testimonio de este nuevo fenómeno, un gran cartel a la entrada de la fábrica Zanón dice "Esta Fábrica Produce Bajo Control de los Trabajadores"

En marzo, la policía trató de ganar control de Zanón, pero se tuvo que retirar debido a la resistencia de los trabajadores y la enorme solidaridad de miembros de la comunidad. Los trabajadores de esta planta han lanzado una campaña para juntar 50.000 firmas en una petición y pedirle al estado la expropiación de la fábrica para que sea administrada por los trabajadores.

Desde que los trabajadores comen-

zaron a administrar la compañía, ellos han creado 40 nuevas fuentes de trabajo para desempleados. Han comprado materias primas y han pagado impuestos de agua, electricidad, y gas.

Mientras que se acercan las elecciones presidenciales, dos jueces que eran activos durante la dictadura militar de 1976 ordenaron a los militares que ocuparan la fábrica Brukman. El 18 de abril, bajo amenazas de desalojo, cinco trabajadores se preparaban a pasar la noche en la fábrica.

Policías fuertemente armadas irrumpieron en la fábrica atacando y desalojando a los trabajadores.

Miles de trabajadores desempleados (piqueteros) y miembros de asambleas barriales se congregaron afuera de la fábrica, pero también fueron reprimidos por la policía federal.

Pablo Kilberg, un activista con la Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, la organización formada por valientes madres quienes por décadas han estado marchando cada jueves, desde que sus hijos "desaparecieron" durante la dictadura militar de 1976, dijo que la policía no tuvo compasión con esas mujeres, ahora en sus 80 y 90 años. Kilberg agregó que las madres fueron rodeadas por nubes de gases lacrimógenos y tuvieron que ser rescatados por vehículos de la prensa.

Kilberg dijo además que la policía usó balas y balas de goma y que fue un mila-

gro que no haya habido ningún muerto. A veinte cuerdas de la fábrica, la policía andaba en una cacería humana. Como resultado, 120 personas fueron arrestadas y muchas de ellas resultaron heridas.

La solidaridad demostrada por otros sectores de la población fue inmensa. Unos días más tarde, en una manifestación en contra de la brutalidad policial y la represión, más de 30.000 personas acompañaron a los trabajadores de Brukman. Entre ellos, estuvieron presentes parlamentarios, partidos políticos, la Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, Madres de Plaza de Mayo Línea Fundadora, Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, organizaciones de derechos humanos, más de 25 asambleas barriales, estudiantes y varias organizaciones de piqueteros.

Los trabajadores de Brukman están comprometidos a continuar la lucha hasta ganar control de la fábrica y han prometido pelear hasta el final.

Los trabajadores Argentinos que han tomado control de sus lugares de trabajo han demostrado que son capaces de administrar las fábricas, comprar materias primas, fabricar productos, pagar salarios dignos, y crear fuentes de trabajo. La mayor preocupación de los capitalistas es que más temprano que tarde la clase trabajadora va a tomar el poder político para controlar su destino. □

PRIMERA PARTE:

Detrás de las exigencias de Washington de levantar las sanciones contra Irak

Por Sara Flounders

El gobierno de los Estados Unidos ha exigido el levante inmediato y completo de las sanciones contra Irak al Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU.

Por 13 años, un movimiento contra las sanciones ha encontrado una resistencia total por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, tanto bajo las administraciones Demócratas como Republicanas. ¿Por qué Washington ha cambiado su posición sobre este asunto? ¿Y cómo debe responder el movimiento mundial a la nueva estrategia de Washington?

Primero, es importante entender los motivos de la administración Bush. El Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU ahora tiene el control sobre por los menos \$30 mil millones de dólares que se encuentran en las cuentas bancarias colectados para la campaña de Petróleo por Alimento producidos por la venta de petróleo iraquí durante las sanciones contra el régimen de Saddam Hussein.

Ya que ha destruido militarmente al gobierno, los Estados Unidos se ha auto proclamado el observador de Irak y la fuerza que escogería al nuevo gobierno. Pero las sanciones no dejan que el dinero

entre a Irak. Por eso los Estados Unidos quieren dar fin a las sanciones para que estos miles de millones de dólares sean entregados al nuevo gobierno de Irak administrado por los Estados Unidos.

Además miles de millones de dólares de Irak han estado congelados desde agosto de 1990 en cuentas bancarias alrededor del mundo. El fin de las sanciones podría ser el primer paso en hacer disponible este dinero al "gobierno iraquí" bajo el control de los Estados Unidos, el cual a su vez sería puesto al alcance de las avaras corporaciones estadounidenses que han recibido grandes contratos para la "reconstrucción" de Irak.

Las sanciones causaron la muerte de más de un millón y medio de Iraquíes, según los cálculos de la ONU. ¿Podemos confiar en el gobierno que causó estas muertes y destruyó las ciudades iraquíes en una brutal guerra de conquista para que administre los fondos que por tanto tiempo ha prohibido al pueblo iraquí?

Es esencial el reconocer que ni los Estados Unidos ni Bretaña tienen derecho alguno a los recursos en Irak. No hay justificación alguna para que decenas de miles de tropas imperialistas ocupen a un país. Es criminal, una agresión sin ley.

Ahora la campaña de los Estados Unidos para dar fin a las sanciones y entregar los miles de millones de dólares prohibidos a los iraquíes a sí mismos, los ocupantes. Esto es una piratería en su forma más cruda.

Miles de millones en juego

La cuestión de levantar las sanciones contra Irak está tomando la forma de una gran confrontación en el Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU.

Francia, Rusia y China tienen el poder del veto para poner fin a las sanciones. Una cantidad de países en el Consejo de Seguridad han hecho recordar al Washington que las sanciones no pueden ser anuladas hasta que los inspectores de armas de la ONU hayan confirmado que Irak no tiene armas de destrucción masiva. Este recordatorio tira a la cara de Washington la misma excusa fraudulenta que el gobierno de los Estados Unidos usó por 13 años para continuar las sanciones.

Francia ha provocado la rabia de la administración de Bush aún más con la sugerencia de que las sanciones civiles puedan ser "suspendidas" por razones humanitarias. Declarando que no fue a favor de "rescindir" las sanciones, fue una

forma de recordarle a Washington que la telaraña de sanciones que los EE.UU. habían tejido le da al Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU el control sobre el futuro de la totalidad de los ingresos petroleros de Irak. Esto también es la posición de Rusia.

El vocero de la Casa Blanca, Ari Fleischer rechazó estas perspectivas declarando categóricamente que, "Las sanciones deben ser rescindidas, no meramente suspendidas. ... Con la desaparición del régimen, la posición de los EE.UU. es que las sanciones económicas ya no son necesarias".

Siempre que las sanciones se quedan funcionando oficialmente, los ingresos de todas las ventas de petróleo iraquí continuarán estar depositados en cuentas controladas por la ONU. Billones de dólares de contratos futuros están en juego. Los países en el Consejo de Seguridad que habían participado con los EE.UU. en imponer las sanciones no tienen mucho interés en entregar estos fondos acumulados, las pujas por los contratos de reconstrucción, y los ingresos petroleros futuros a los conquistadores.

Continúa la próxima semana