



IRAQ

Colonial rule of 'law'
and resistance 10-11

LESBIAN, GAY, BI, TRANS

PRIDE 2003

Remember
Barry Winchell 3

Fire station closings spark

COMMUNITY TAKEOVERS

5

ORGANIC FOOD

& the class struggle 4

DOLLARS & BOMBS

Weapons of
mass destruction 8

U.S. MENACES IRAN

Recycling pretexts for war

EDITORIAL 10

Responding to Europe-wide cuts

French workers lead fight to defend pensions

By G. Dunkel

Hundreds of thousands of workers marched through the streets of Paris May 25 to denounce the French government's scheme to "reform" pension rights and take away other hard-won benefits. The plan would force government employees—about 25 percent of all French workers—to work 2-1/2 years more before they get a full pension.

The protest march from the Place de la Nation was so huge that it was split into three sections. The last demonstrators did not arrive at the final destination, the Place d'Italie in the southern part of the city, until 10 p.m.

Unions that organized the march estimated that 600,000 to 1 million workers turned out, the ranks swelled by many teachers and students. The government is also trying to restructure the education system. In France the national government organizes education.

Tens of thousands of workers marched in other big French cities: Marseille, Avignon, Toulon, Toulouse, Nice and Bordeaux.

On May 13, 2 million workers had rocked France with a strike that drew its strength mainly from the public sector unions, but with significant contingents from large private companies like Danone, Renault, Thales, Air France, Alstom and Bouygues. They also held demonstrations in 115 French cities, some larger than those held in the same cities in 1995 and even in the political tumult of 1968.

Workers flex their muscle

The government party, the Alliance for a Parliamentary Majority (UMP), held a pro-reform rally in Paris on May 25. It drew 1,000 people, according to police.

Given the relative size of the two rallies, French political analysts doubt that Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin will call a referendum on the retirement question any time soon. Many workers in France believe that rather than risk a referendum, Raffarin plans to hang tough and ram his reforms through parliament, where the UMP holds a commanding majority.

Raffarin has managed to get two major union confederations, including the Democratic Confederation of French Workers (CFDT), to agree to the changes in the retirement plan. The CFDT, however, faces a major revolt of its local affiliates—which endorsed, sponsored and participated in the May 25 march.

In France, workers in the same jobs may choose which union they will join. Thus different unions with different leaderships may represent parts of the same work force. A walkout of the entire work force of an enterprise requires an agreement among all the unions.

If French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Raffarin are seeking a confrontation with the French union movement, they might just get it.

Bernard Thibault, head of the General Confederation of Workers (CGT), asked, "Is our rejection of this plan clear enough?" With 700,000 members, the CGT is a major force, especially among transportation workers.

Marc Blondel, head of the Workers Force (FO) union confederation, has hinted that a general strike might force the government to back down. He avoids using the words themselves, telling reporters he is for "the amplification of the movement, its generalization and coordination, for as long as it takes to move the government."

Jean Collon, a schoolteacher from Parthenay, a town 250

Continued on page 8

■ **NYPD RACIST TERROR** Claims new victim

■ **ALBERTA SPRUILL** Harlem mourns union worker

■ **MUMIA ABU-JAMAL** Recalls Nina Simone

■ **'NO RECOLONIZATION OF AFRICA'**

CENTERFOLD



WW PHOTO: PAT CHIN

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This week ...



★ National

- Lesbian, gay, bi, trans GIs—up against the brass 3
- Workers fight to organize Whole Foods 4
- NYC communities take over fire houses 5
- LA poor hit with "austerity" travel tax 5
- Harlem mourns Alberta Spruill 6
- Mumia on Nina Simone 6
- NY cop guns down unarmed African immigrant 7
- Brooklyn celebrates African Liberation Day 7
- Falling bombs and falling dollars 8
- The modern keepers of the vault 9

★ International

- French workers protest pension 'reforms' 1
- Iraqis ambush U.S. occupation force 10
- U.S. wins resolution to enslave Iraq 11

★ Editorials

- Recycling pretexts for war 10
- Guantanamo 10

★ Noticias En Español

- Policías falsificaron la 'confesión' de Mumia 12
- Contando los civiles muertos y heridos 12

WW CALENDAR

<p>BALTIMORE</p> <p>Mon., June 2 Workers World Party meeting. Hear Deirdre Griswold, editor of Workers World newspaper, on the history of the Party, its origins and program. 7 p.m. At the All Peoples Congress Hall, 426 E. 31st St.</p> <p>LOS ANGELES</p> <p>Sun., June 15 Special Red & Lavendar Forum. Hear Leslie Feinberg, author "Stone Butch Blues" and "Transgender Warriors," on LGBT Liberation and the Struggle Against Racism, Oppression and War. Host: Stuart Timmons, author "Trouble with Harry Hay" and executive director the ONE Institute and Archives. At ONE Institute and Archives, 909 W. Adams Blvd. For info (213) 487-2368 or (213) 741-0094</p> <p>NEW YORK</p> <p>Every Friday Workers World Party weekly meetings at 7 p.m. Phone (212)</p>	<p>627-2994 for topics and location.</p> <p>SAN FRANCISCO</p> <p>Sat., June 14 Prospects for LGBT liberation through reform and revolution. Featuring Leslie Feinberg. Sponsored by Workers World Party. Donation \$5-\$10. At Women's Bldg., 3543 18th St. For info (415) 821-6545.</p> <p>Sun., June 21 Cuba: the next target in Bush's endless war? Featuring Andres Gomez of the Antonio Maceo Brigade and editor Areito Magazine Digital, and Gloria La Riva of the Nat'l Comm. to Free the Five. At Horace Mann Middle School, 3351 23rd St. For info (415) 821-6545.</p> <p>Every Sunday Workers World Party weekly meetings. These educational meetings cover current events as well as struggles of peoples from all over the world. 5 p.m. At 2489 Mission St, room 28. For info (415) 826-4828.</p>
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Workers World

55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: (212) 627-2994 • Fax: (212) 675-7869
E-mail: editor@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org
Vol. 45, No. 22 • June 5, 2003
Closing date: May 28, 2003

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Workers World-WW (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 55 W. 17 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Phone: (212) 627-2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$25; foreign and institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

Selected articles are available via e-mail subscription. Send an e-mail message to wwnews-on@wwpublish.com.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World-WW, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

Why general finally met with grieving parents

Lesbian, gay, bi & trans GIs – up against the brass

By Leslie Feinberg

Maj. Gen. Robert T. Clark finally deigned to meet with the parents of Pfc. Barry L. Winchell on May 13—four years after their son was beaten to death on July 5, 1999, at Fort Campbell, Ky., while Clark was commander of the base.

Winchell had suffered six months of harassment after he began dating a trans woman, Calpernia Adams. After months of national outrage over his brutal slaying, a military court convicted and sentenced Pvt. Calvin Glover of clubbing Winchell to death with a baseball bat. Glover received a life sentence. Pvt. Justin Fisher, who reportedly cheered Glover on, was sentenced to 12-and-a-half years for lying to investigators.

“In the wake of Winchell’s murder,” charged Servicemembers Legal Defense Network Director C. Dixon Osburn, “Gen. Clark demonstrated the poorest leadership, issued no statements against harassment, refusing to speak with or meet the parents of Pfc. Winchell or to reassure base soldiers that harassment would not be tolerated.” SLDN assists lesbians and gays in the military.

Reporting on their May 13 meeting, Winchell’s parents Wally and Patricia Kutteles said Clark proffered no apologies.

So why meet with the couple who charge him with allowing a “tyrannical, homophobic atmosphere” at Fort Campbell? Protest about the murder has persisted, and it is hampering Clark’s military career.

Last fall, President George W. Bush nominated Clark for promotion to the Army’s second-highest rank of lieutenant general—a third shiny star for his epaulet. Clearly the bludgeoning death of the young soldier hadn’t tarnished Clark’s brass in the eyes of the commander in chief.

At that time, the Senate Armed Forces Committee refused to allow Patricia Kutteles to testify against Clark. Facing angry protests by trans, lesbian, gay, bisexual and women’s rights organizations, the Democrat-controlled committee voted to hold a closed-door confirmation hearing. But the noisy controversy hindered the general’s promotion; another star wasn’t on the horizon at that time for Clark.

In March, Bush renominated Clark. More protest forced Sen. John Warner, who heads the Armed Services Committee, to table consideration of the promotion in mid-May. News reports speculated that pressure for an open hearing may have led the committee to backpedal.

As his third star was fading for the second time, Clark met with the Kutteles.

“This meeting was clearly more important to Maj. Gen. Clark than to us,” Patricia Kutteles observed. She said that Clark acknowledged that he knew the meeting was necessary for his confirmation. “He felt that his third star resided on

that meeting.”

Steven Ralls, SLDN communications director, emphasized that the Kutteles have won a considerable victory whether or not Clark is eventually boosted up another rung on the Pentagon ladder.

“This nomination should have been a rubber-stamped approval but it was not. Gen. Clark was nominated eight months ago when he should have been confirmed. But this case is a blot on his record and is stalling that process.”

Clark holds the smoking gun

Clark’s crime is not merely benign neglect.

The Kutteles have stressed that while Clark was commanding general at the base he failed to limit anti-gay harassment or to instruct soldiers about the Pentagon’s policies. And, the parents charge, Clark instigated an illegal investigation into Winchell’s sexuality while ignoring threats to the 21-year-old soldier’s safety. (Washington Blade, May 16)

Clark did most of the talking in the two-hour May 13 meeting. Yet he never once said he was sorry for the human toll of the terror or his handling of the aftermath, according to an SLDN report.

In an interview with SLDN, Wally Kutteles said that even the way their son’s belongings were sent home showed disrespect. “The box that was sent looked like it was trash. They didn’t send any dress uniforms, only fatigues—one boot. Everything was just thrown together. The inside of the box looked like someone emptied their trash.”

Wally Kutteles said he asked Clark, “Why wouldn’t you want to meet us as a sign of courtesy?” The general didn’t answer, he recalls.

Kutteles persisted: “Why did you wait four years to meet with us?” The Kutteles recall the general retorted, “Well, you could’ve called me.”

It’s not just the Kutteles who have been unable to reach Clark or other brass. Calpernia Addams says neither “Gen. Clark nor anyone from the military has ever acknowledged me in any way.”

Addams concluded, “These failures [at Fort Campbell] allowed the murder of Barry Winchell to take place.”

Calpernia Addams was onstage at the premiere of “Soldier’s Girl”—based on the lives of Winchell and Addams—at this year’s Sundance Film Festival. The Advocate magazine reported that the film “played out to its inexorable ending as a sold-out crowd gasped with fear, sympathy, revulsion, anger. When the lights came up the audience jumped to its feet, clapping until hands were sore and arms were tired. Winchell’s parents were in the audience.”

Showtime Network will premiere “Soldier’s Girl” on May 31 at 9 p.m. EST.

The Kutteles have been supportive of Addams. Winchell’s father recalls the first time he and his wife saw Addams perform

at Nashville Pride in June 2000. “Oh man, was she beautiful. And what a dancer. She put on an excellent show.”

They met again at Sundance. Wally Kutteles recalled, “I’ll never forget it, but in the auditorium she leaned over and said to me that she was nervous and hoped that we weren’t mad at her because of who she was.”

The Kutteles explain that they understand that the relationship was not a gay one, but that they are not anti-gay, either.

Patricia Kutteles, a registered nurse, said her son would have known that he could come out to her and find acceptance. “He knew, by the work I did, how I felt about gay kids.”

Her husband added, “My wife and I are not anti-anything.”

Not an aberration

The brutal bigotry that fueled the fatal bashing of Winchell is not an aberration in the U.S. military.

In the months after the horrible slaying, SLDN reported scores of calls from gay GIs at Fort Campbell who feared for their own lives. More than 200 soldiers were discharged from the base over the rest of that year—many voluntarily because they were terrified. (Gay & Lesbian Times, Oct. 17, 2002)

Investigations turned up a pattern of anti-gay harassment, including graffiti, verbal and physical abuse at the base.

Along with letting an anti-gay climate flourish, SLDN charged in a letter to the Armed Services Committee in early January, under Clark’s command soldiers and their families received inadequate health care and the brass condoned widespread underage drinking of alcohol in the barracks. (New York Blade, May 16, 2003)

Gay bashing is an intrinsic component of Pentagon culture, as is racism and sexism.

President Bill Clinton had to surrender to the admirals and generals after he had made ending the ban on gays in the military a campaign promise in his 1992 election race.

Clinton backed down and proposed a “compromise”—don’t ask, don’t tell. That emboldened the brass and resulted in stepped-up witch hunts against lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans GIs. Both houses of Congress at that time were controlled by Democrats.

When the dogs of war unleash military aggression, discharges of LGBT soldiers often all but stop, “only to pick up again as soon as the fighting is over,” SLDN reports. “During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, discharges of gay military members were put on hold, only to be started again when the fighting was over.”

Lesbians are much more likely to be expelled than gay male soldiers.

While reports of harassment declined in fiscal 2002, the conscious incitement of bigotry makes life for gay and lesbian GIs a living hell.

One soldier, Spc Brad Powell, related to SLDN that where he was stationed a non-commissioned officer instructed his unit during hand grenade exercises to visualize “blowing up a gay bar.”

Powell added that he heard NCOs tell soldiers, “The only way to decrease our nuclear arsenal is to put all f-gs on an island and nuke it,” and, “The only thing a good f-g needs is a good f-g bashing.”

GIs remain fearful and closeted. “The goodbyes to loved ones sent overseas to fight and die are not the hardest part,” says Brian, whose last name is withheld for security reasons. “It’s the hellos. The first time you see your partner in five or six months, it’s very emotional. And you have to shake hands.” (Los Angeles Times, April 17)

It’s important to protest that the country’s largest employer wages war on its own rank-and-file employees. But take a look at the “job.” It requires being a foot soldier for an army of conquest.

The Pentagon, Washington and big capital had no problem with sending lesbian and gay, bisexual and trans people to kill or be killed in a murderous siege against the Iraqi people. Money that should be spent on social services, health care, funding for AIDS treatment, research and education, are squandered on the war and the colonial occupation in its aftermath.

The chauvinism, jingoism and Rambo mentality that the right wing is trying to foment intensify racism, the oppression of women and trans people, and lesbians, gays and bisexuals.

Every attempt is made to break down solidarity and sow division. That’s the basis of the racist profiling that is being used to justify the mass round-ups of Muslim, Arab and South Asian people.

The Pentagon portrays its racist war to recolonize Iraq as the humanitarian act of a “liberation army.”

But the brass hats would like people in this country to forget the thousands and thousands of Iraqis who are dead or wounded as a result of this colonial conquest.

This June, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans activists are organizing contingents in major Pride marches across the country to say: “No pride in war! No pride in occupation.”

They will march in solidarity with the people of the world who are resisting the Pentagon—as the left-wing of the LGBT movement has since the Vietnam War.

As all the lives lost to Pentagon genocide are recalled and honored, remember Barry Winchell. □

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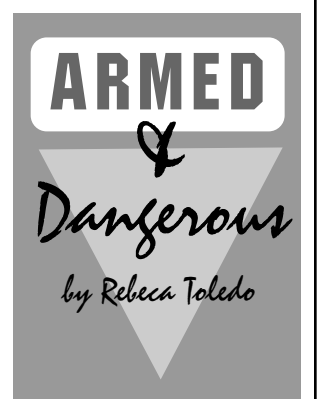
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End of an illusion?

Workers fight to organize Whole Foods

By Deirdre Griswold

The Whole Foods Market is not a mom-and-pop establishment. Its web site explains that it is “the world’s largest retailer of natural and organic foods, with 143 stores in North America.”

Since it started in 1980 with one small store in Austin, Texas, the company has grown into a retailing giant with assets of over \$1 billion—\$97 million of that in cash, according to a May 7 company news release. Its stock trades on the Nasdaq exchange.

Customers are attracted by its wide array of fresh fruits and vegetables, organic meats and poultry, and environment-friendly products. The company views itself as fulfilling a mission of “helping to transform the diet of America, helping people live longer, healthier, more pleasurable lives while responding positively to the challenge of environmental sustainability.”

But who keep the shelves stocked with fresh produce? Who ring up and bag the groceries? Who move crates of food and sundries in and out of the stores? Who mop the floors and clean out the meat counters?

Workers. And many of them have made it clear that they need a union.

The company wants them to pay more for health benefits. Wages are not pegged to seniority but to subjective evaluations made by management. A new hire can earn more than a veteran worker.

Struggling to get a union

So in July 2002 the employees at the Madison, Wis., store voted in a union—the United Food and Commercial Workers. They are still waiting for contract negotiations, however, which the company has been stalling—apparently in an effort to force a new election after a year has elapsed.

More recently, store workers in Falls Church, Va., have signed union cards, but the National Labor Relations Board halted an election scheduled for this April after the union charged that Whole Foods had packed the store with workers from other locations to influence the vote. Unions around the country have added Whole Foods to their boycott lists.

The CEO and chair of Whole Foods, John Mackey, thinks his “team members”—he doesn’t call them workers or even employees—reacted out of “fear” instead of “love” when they voted in a union in Madison. This is what he said about the pro-union vote: “We all make many mistakes in life. It is all part of our growth process because that is how we learn, that is how we grow. When confronted by great stress in life, we have but only 2 choices: 1. Contract into fear. 2. Expand into love.”

The union members might respond, “Why don’t you show some love for us and loosen your grip on some of that \$97 million in cash the company is hoarding?”

But that would be an exercise in futility.

Mackey says: ‘The union is like having herpes’

Mackey has been open about his anti-union stand for years. “Here’s the way I like to think of it. The union is like having herpes. It doesn’t kill you, but it’s unpleasant and inconvenient and it stops a lot of

people from becoming your lover,” he said when workers in Austin first raised the idea of a union. (Business and Society Review, June 22, 1992)

In November 1991, In These Times ran an article about Whole Foods by James Raskin. “Whole Foods keeps up leafy green appearances but makes no apologies for its single-minded devotion to profit and its fierce determination to keep its wages low, its venture-capitalist investors hidden and its workforce young, powerless, and union-free,” he wrote. He described the corporation as “pro-New Age in rhetoric, anti-New Deal in practice.”

The United Farm Workers say that Whole Foods refused to give them any support when they campaigned to get a five-cents-a-pint increase for strawberry pickers. Of the \$2.50 or so that customers paid for a pint of strawberries, only 10 cents went to the pickers.

In New York City, where a new Whole Foods store has been doing a booming business in Chelsea, leaflets given out by UFCW informational pickets explain that the company is one of the few chain stores in the city to run a non-union shop.

Many of the people who shop at Whole Foods probably think they are doing some good for the world while they cater to their picky palate. At least, that’s what the company wants them to believe.

Which raises an interesting question. Can the world be made a better place by buying and/or investing in companies that claim to have a social mission?

Business is business

The struggle at Whole Foods should remind everyone that there are two basic classes in society: the workers and the capitalists. Those who stand in between these two classes hope to be able to soften the conflict between them. They hope that capitalism can be modified to improve its record of brutal disregard of the workers and of trampling over everything in its addiction to profits.

Eating fresh, chemical-free foods may be good for the consumer who can afford them, but this doesn’t necessarily translate into better conditions for the farm workers or the grocery workers. That’s because business is business, and any entrepreneur who wants to expand—and they all do, because if they don’t, someone else will take their market—needs to attract capital. That means paying out generous dividends and/or interest on loans. And where does this money come from? It comes directly out of the labor performed by the company’s workers.

At the most basic level, it is human labor that creates all value—meaning value that commands a price. There is of course a different kind of value in a beautiful sunset or a breath of fresh air. But unless labor is applied to them—like building a device that compresses air for industrial use, for example—these things are free. When you buy something, you’re paying for the labor



Workers spoof the Whole Foods logo.

that went into it in all its various stages of manufacture.

Capitalism has a very destructive contradiction built right into it. Workers have to compete to sell their labor power for wages. Bosses buy their time at the going rate for that kind of labor. But what determines how much the bosses will pay? Not the value of what the workers produce. A farm worker may get paid only 10 cents for something that sells for \$2.50 or \$3.00. The minimum wage is determined by how little the bosses can pay and still be assured that the workers they need don’t just die of starvation and disease or go elsewhere. The one thing that pulls wages up above subsistence is the organized resistance of the workers themselves.

Hospital workers in this country, especially those without technical skills, used to be paid the barest minimum. In 1961, a janitor at Beth-El Hospital in Brooklyn took home \$36 for a 50-hour week. Now most of them get a union wage. It took years of struggle, strikes, picket lines and sit-ins to accomplish this.

It wasn’t just a coincidence that Local 1199, the union that organized hospital workers, used tactics borrowed from the civil rights movement. U.S. bosses have long promoted racism to keep workers in the U.S. divided and their organizations weakened. The super-exploitation of people of color drags down the entire class while the bosses laugh all the way to the bank.

Farm workers, many of whom are undocumented immigrants and most of whom are people of color, are still struggling to bring their wages above subsistence level. The U.S. government’s reactionary immigration laws make it very difficult for them to organize.

Doing what capitalists do

Whole Foods is doing what all capitalist companies do—it is trying to pay the lowest wages possible in order to produce profits for its investors and keep its prices low enough to attract more business. This is not unusual. It is how capitalism—green, blue or purple—works.

Maybe Mackey began his career as an organic food merchant with great social ideals. Maybe he didn’t, and his little

speeches are just self-serving rhetoric. In the long run, it doesn’t make much difference. If you’re in business, you play by the rules of capitalism or you go under—particularly in times like now, when merchants are finding it harder and harder to sell their products.

When slavery was the prevailing mode of production in the South of this country, there were “good” slave masters and “bad” slave masters. Certainly, some were more brutal than others. But as Frederick Douglass and all the Abolitionists pointed out, it didn’t matter much. Slavery was a cruel and brutal institution. If a “good” slave master didn’t get every ounce of work out of their human property, then eventually they’d fall behind and have to sell their slaves to someone who would. Slavery had to be abolished.

Capitalism is a system based upon wage slavery. The shrinking class of owners of the economy exerts control over the vast majority by determining whether they work or not. What once was the natural occupation of all—working for one’s livelihood—is now a “privilege” granted by the bosses who monopolize land, industry, transportation, communications, finance, even culture and science. Workers have been alienated from the means of production.

For a long time, however, U.S. capitalism gave the appearance of lessening the class contradictions. Everyone was going to become middle class.

U.S. capitalism expanded at a tremendous pace after World War II, when its rivals were in ashes. After the scare that the corporate rulers got from the great labor struggles of the 1930s, the rise of a bloc of socialist countries, and the profound national liberation movements in the Third World, they were ready to make concessions to the workers here—especially if they wanted them to fight for corporate interests in places like Vietnam. The capitalist government intervened, too, with anti-poverty programs aimed at keeping the peace at home in order to better fight the wars abroad.

But now it’s a whole new ballgame. The class struggle is deepening once again. Capitalist competition is growing on a world scale. Any corporation that can do so is scouring the globe for cheaper labor and raw materials. Instead of creating a big new middle class, the system is widening the chasm between rich and poor like never before.

All the utopian or New Age or whatever schemes for a kinder, gentler market-based system are losing their allure. Workers and oppressed peoples have to organize and fight, not just for better wages and benefits, but for the end of wage slavery.

That’s what a movement for socialism is all about—the right of the working class to take over and run what they have created with their sweat and blood. Want fresh, healthy food for everyone? And a good life for the workers who pick, transport and market it? Fight for socialism. □



PHOTO: THE MADISON INSURGENT

Picket line in Madison, Wis.

NEW YORK

Attempts to axe firehouses ignite community takeovers

By Leslie Feinberg
New York

Attempts by billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg to axe city firehouses, mostly in working class and oppressed neighborhoods, have sparked angry protests. Community members—young and old, Black, Latino and white—have taken over firehouses. Some have chained themselves to the engines.

Bloomberg began the controversial budget-cutting measure on May 25, despite months of demonstrations, rallies and demands to City Hall, Albany and Washington. Four were ordered fully shut that day in Brooklyn, one in Harlem and one in Queens. Others are being partially closed.

But community activists, young and old, together with firefighters, turned up the heat in this struggle.

Dozens of chanting demonstrators blockaded the entrance to the Engine 36 fire station on E. 125th St.

At the same time, in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, neighbors locked arms to form a human chain across the sidewalk in front of Engine 204 at 9 a.m.—the time set by the city to shut down the station. A group of about a dozen protesters surprised police by rushing inside, struggled with fire marshals for control of the door. They locked themselves inside and held the premises for three hours. Hundreds of supporters outside cheered the actions of these 12 demonstrators as police dragged them out in handcuffs.

One of those arrested was Steve Buscemi, who was a firefighter for four years before becoming an actor. He ridiculed claims by city officials that the closings would only add about an extra minute in emergency response time. “If your house was on fire, would you wait one minute to call the Fire Department?” he asked.

Firefighters agree that closing these facilities would cost lives. (Daily News, May 26)



Activists also occupied a fire house the same day in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, where, according to the May 26 Daily News, “a jostling crowd used wooden doors and slabs to keep open the doors of Engine 212.”

A total of 20 were arrested at the two Brooklyn takeovers. They were reportedly charged with criminal trespass and disorderly conduct.

Fire marshals have been stationed inside the closed building since then to impede another community occupation.

‘It’s a fight for our lives’

The city had tried to shut down Engine 212 in the 1970s during the last mass closings of firehouses. At that time, too, city officials tried to shift the burden of the fiscal crisis through budget cuts, including mass closings of firehouses.

But when word spread that Engine 212 was being closed, within hours some

300 angry residents massed in front of the station to bar the city from removing the fire truck. That night some of the protesters packed their suitcases and moved inside the two-story firehouse, refusing to leave until the city promised to keep it open. The occupation continued for almost a year and a half, until the city finally relented.

Engine 212 was dubbed the People’s Firehouse.

Now, residents vow to renew their fight to keep the station open. They’ve erected a 12-by-12-foot tent outside Engine 212. Members and supporters of the People’s Firehouse camped out in the rain, keeping shifts going around the clock.

“There are no ifs, buts or don’ts,” stressed Alma Savoia, a 51-year-old teacher, to the agreement of four of her neighbors alongside her. “We just have to keep it going rain or shine.”

Brooklyn protesters say closing station near radioactive waste facility could spell disaster.

If officials try to drive the fire truck out of Engine 212, vowed Paul Veneski, the group will “wake up the whole neighborhood” and block it from being moved. “We’re going to be here,” he said. “We’ll even block the [nearby] Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and the Williamsburg Bridge if we have to.”

Veneski’s father Adam was founder of the People’s Firehouse. Three generations of the Adam Veneski family took part in this current struggle to keep the station open.

They also promised to dog the mayor until he re-opens the firehouse. “This is going to be a nightmare for him,”

promised Diane Jackanin.

They made good on that promise on May 27 when neighborhood residents converged on the steps of City Hall wearing paper costumes that looked like nuclear protective gear. They pressed the point that closing their fire station, which is located near a radioactive waste storage facility, was short-sighted.

The protesters said that if a fire ignited at Radiac Corp., which stores low-level nuclear waste from hospitals and research facilities, it would create an environmental disaster. “The city says it will take only a minute longer for other fire companies to respond but that extra minute could be enough time for a catastrophe,” said Jennifer Hilton. (New York Newsday, May 27)

People’s Firehouse Director Daniel Rivera summed up the urgency of the overall struggle: “It’s a fight for our lives.” □

Money for war, prisons and the rich, but

LA poor hit with ‘austerity’ travel tax

By John Beacham
Los Angeles

Washington spent billions of dollars to destroy the infrastructure of Iraq, impoverishing the Iraqi people so that mega-corporations could rebuild the country. Now Capitol Hill is giving this country’s rich an enormous tax cut.

Meanwhile, here in Los Angeles, what do poor workers and their children get? An increase in their public transportation costs.

On May 22, the Los Angeles City Council passed an “austere 2004 budget” for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. It raises the monthly rail and bus pass fee by \$10 a month—from \$42 to \$52.

At the council’s decision, the meeting erupted. Angry community members, along with representatives from the Bus Riders Union and the Korean Immigrant

Workers Advocate, forced the council members to retreat to their chambers.

During that retreat, the spirited Angelenos took over the microphone and denounced the rate hike as an undue burden on the city’s working poor.

The day-to-day lives of the poor in Los Angeles are grim, and getting worse. The monthly fee increase is a tax on the poor that the roughly 250,000 workers who rely on public transportation should not have to pay.

In Los Angeles County, 18 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. And 14 percent of families in the county get by on less than \$15,000 a year.

The proportions are much, much higher in poorer neighborhoods where official unemployment runs as high as 15 percent.

In Los Angeles, 23 percent of immigrant workers live below the poverty line. Now, in 2004, a family of four is going to

have to pony up an extra \$2,480—roughly \$500 dollars more than in 2003—just to get around the city.

The MTA will make an estimated \$15 million in 2004 from the rate hike.

This comes in a city in which the hospital system is a cruel parody of a health-care system for poor workers. Eighteen hospitals are on the chopping block.

The public education system is woefully underfunded. Tens of thousands of teachers are threatened with layoff.

In the wealthiest country in the history of the world, the state of California cannot find the money to fund the most desperately needed social services for the most endangered of its population.

The working poor need better jobs, free health care, and free education—not a rise in transportation costs.

So many who cannot afford the fare hike must travel on mass transportation. Thirty-one percent of those living below

the poverty line in Los Angeles do not have access to a car.

Yet miraculously, the state of California has found the money in its 2004 budget to build more prisons and give raises to prison guards.

In Los Angeles alone, 3 million people over 16 are outside the labor force. Many are in jail, are racking up enormous college debt, or have simply been left out in the cold by the capitalist system.

There are an estimated 230,000 homeless people in Los Angeles.

When an estimated 350,000 people who are officially unemployed in Los Angeles are added to these shocking numbers, it provides a clear picture of just how cynical the capitalist system is: Billions of dollars spent on a war for empire. Tax cuts for the rich. More money for prisons. Less money for health care, education and jobs. And an increase in the cost of living for the working poor. □

Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row**To be young,
gifted and ...
Simone!**

"...Our sweetest songs are those
that tell of saddest thought."

—Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822),
'To a Skylark'

When the historical record of the 20th century is finally written, a special chapter will have to be penned about the remarkable and talented singer who was called Nina Simone (1933-2003).



In any true history, words, no matter how skillfully crafted or masterfully molded, will fail to capture the brilliance of the woman. Some recording must be appended, so that the student will be blessed to hear her thrilling contralto, dark, full, rich as earth in the promise of spring.

Also required will be a collection of her lyrics, so that no one may miss the words that she dared set to music and bring to life, with a fury, a passion, and sheer artistic courage that continue to dazzle years, decades even, after their creation.

She was an Artist (with a capital "A") in every sense of the word, but she was far more than that term now suggests. She was proud, imperial, majestic and deliciously arrogant as, say, the late jazz great Miles Davis was in his prime.

The writer remembers her appearing in the late 1970s, in an outdoor, mid-day concert at the Bell Tower at Temple University. She looked out at the crowd with nervous irritation, not fear driven by the uncertainty of her performance, but a barely suppressed anger that there were only hundreds of people gathered to hear her, not thousands.

She sang songs with bite, and grit, and pride and longing ... and rage. Deep down, boneset rage at how cheaply life was lived for Africans in America. Her "Mississippi Goddam" was an anthem that stirred, not merely the Civil Rights Movement, but also the Black Liberation Movement: "You don't have to live next to me, just give me my equality!" she demanded. Her songs could also be tender, loving odes to the multi-flavored beauty and spirits of Black women, as in her signature "Four Women," which spoke of the various moods and hues of her sisters.

Decades before Erykah Badu would wear the head wrap Simone did so, and walked as regally as the Nubian princess that she became.

Although she was born in the Jim Crow South, the apartheid way of quiet acceptance was never hers, and she spoke out boldly, in her art, and in her interviews, against the injustices suffered by her people.

When the Nixon era began, she bid her homeland adieu, and like a generation of other brilliant Black Americans (like the writer Richard Wright) who could not abide the nastiness, meanness, and racial indignities of the time, she migrated to live with dignity in France.

Some reviewers have pronounced her career essentially over when she left the U.S. during the 1970s, never to rise again.

But great artists, like great music, have a habit of resurrection.

In the early 1990s, an American film emerged that was a borrowing from the French. Bridget Fonda portrayed an alienated, drug-addicted youngster who got caught up in a failed drugstore robbery-turned-killing. She was spirited into a shadowy spy agency where she worked for the government. The character, when she was alone, invariably played Nina Simone records in the background to reflect her moodiness. The film was titled "Point of No Return" (a U.S. remake of "La Femme Nikita"). A generation of young filmgoers was thus exposed to the wonder and power of Simone's magnificent instrument.

Where are the Simones of this generation? They are there ... in the shadows, perhaps; but they are there.

They are perhaps afraid of giving as much as their recently departed ancestor. For even they know that she sacrificed a good deal to sing the songs that moved her great heart. Such a prospect is no doubt scary.

Yet, one wonders, who among the madding throng will be remembered, not to mention revered, 30 years from now? How much of what is produced now furrows its way into the heart, or rings the deep bell of recognition in the soul? Who will sing of the wonder, the terror, the beauty, and the madness of Black life in this new century? □

Harlem mourns Alberta Spruill**Community outraged by
police killing of union worker**

By Stephen Millies
Harlem, N.Y.

"Why did they have to kill her?" That's the question people in Harlem are asking about the death of Alberta Spruill. The 57-year-old African American died of heart failure on May 16—after police raided her apartment and set off a concussion grenade.

Spruill was looking forward to retirement after spending 29 years working for New York City. A member of AFSCME Local 1547, she was known for handing out bags of candy to neighborhood children.

None of this meant anything to the half-dozen Emergency Services Unit cops who broke down her door without warning shortly after dawn. A judge had issued them a "no-knock" warrant on the word of an alleged informant.

According to Newsday columnist Leonard Levitt, it's customary for cops in these raids to throw residents to the ground, handcuff them and point guns at their head. That's enough stress to kill anyone, especially someone with a history of heart trouble like Spruill.

It was ESU cop Stephen Sullivan who fired his shotgun twice at Eleanor Bumpurs on Oct. 29, 1984, killing her. The elderly woman's "crime" was owing the New York City Housing Authority \$417.10 in back rent.

**Crocodile tears from
billionaire mayor**

Three thousand people came to Alberta Spruill's May 24 funeral at her church, Convent Avenue Baptist. Presidential candidate the Rev. Al Sharpton gave a eulogy.

Also making an appearance was the 63rd wealthiest person on earth, according to Forbes magazine, and 29th richest in the United States: New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly tagged along.

The only reason these two showed up was their fear that Harlem might explode.

The man from City Hall told the mourners, "We all failed humanity." Humanity has nothing to do with it. It's the police protecting billionaires who bankroll these bloody crimes.

Naming the M1 bus line after Alberta Spruill, as Bloomberg suggested, is not enough. Bloomberg's



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

3,000 people came to the funeral for Alberta Spruill, left.



\$4.8 billion would be enough to give \$16,000 to each of Harlem's 300,000 inhabitants.

Marching through Harlem

On May 25, the day after the funeral, 200 people gathered behind Spruill's apartment house to protest her death. Sara Bailey, president of the tenants' association at 310 West 143rd Street, welcomed people to where Alberta Spruill lived.

It was a community rally, with a cook-out following a march. Nellie Bailey, leader of the Harlem Tenants Council, chaired the event.

People spoke about losing loved ones to police violence.

Juanita Young told the crowd how cops killed her son Malcolm Ferguson on March 1, 2000. Police had shot Amadou Diallo 41 times in the same Bronx neighborhood the year before.

Ferguson had protested the acquittal of the cops who shot Diallo.

A family friend of Georgy Louigene talked of how the 23-year old Haitian was gunned down in Brooklyn on Jan. 16, 2002. Cops claim that he was "acting irrational."

Actually, Louigene had asked residents to call police to "rescue" him after he was beaten. He got killed instead.

Viola Plummer and Omawale Clay spoke on behalf of the Dec. 12th Movement. Plummer, who was National Chairperson of the Millions for Reparations rally in Washington,

fired up the crowd.

Police didn't dare interfere when people took to the streets, not the sidewalks. They went down Malcolm X Boulevard and passed the Schomburg Library, the world's largest collection of Black history. Just as the U.S. military brass conspired to loot Iraq's museums and libraries, New York City officials plotted to destroy the Schomburg in the mid-1970s.

The closing rally was held in front of the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building located at 125th Street—the most famous in Black America.

Forty years before, on the same corner Malcolm X spoke to crowds. Across the intersection stood the Hotel Theresa, where Malcolm X first met Fidel Castro in 1960.

At this historic site Brenda Stokely—like Alberta Spruill a member of AFSCME—spoke. We have to do more than march, said Stokely, president of AFSCME District Council 1707. Daniel Vila told of plans to hold a community congress against police brutality in the summer.

"While grenades are thrown in occupied Baghdad by the U.S. military, grenades are thrown in occupied Harlem and other communities of color by cops," Johnnie Stevens of the People's Video Network told Workers World. "Mobilizing within the belly of the beast to stop the war against Black America is also the greatest solidarity we can give our sisters and brothers in Iraq." □

Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle

◆ Racism, national oppression & the right to self-determination *Larry Holmes*

◆ Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery *Sam Marcy*

◆ Reparations & Black Liberation *Monica Moorehead*

◆ Harriet Tubman: woman warrior *Mumia Abu-Jamal (Guest Commentary)*

◆ Black labor & the fight for reparations *Bill Cecil*

◆ Alabama's Black Belt: Legacy of slavery, sharecropping and segregation *By Consuela Lee (Guest commentary)*

◆ Black farmers demand justice *Monica Moorehead*

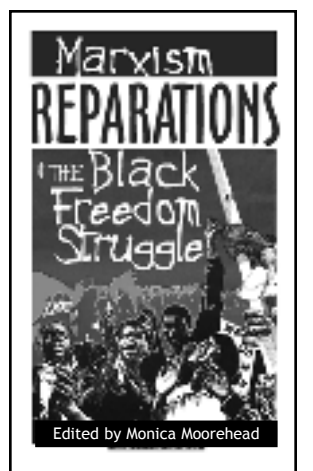
◆ Greetings from Mumia Abu-Jamal to the 3rd UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia & Related Intolerance

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◆ The driving force behind the land seizures *Monica Moorehead*



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NYPD terror continues

Cop guns down unarmed African immigrant

By Monica Moorehead
New York

Ousmane Zongo, a 35-year-old West African from Burkina Faso, was gunned down by Police Officer Bryan Conroy at the Chelsea Mini-Storage warehouse located in Manhattan near the Hudson River on May 22. Zongo, a repairer of damaged African artifacts, was shot four times. Conroy was dressed in plainclothes when he killed Zongo.

The Chelsea Mini-Storage warehouse has become an important site for exhibiting African arts and crafts. It has also become a make-shift mosque for African traders who follow the teachings of the Koran.

New York Police Department officials say Zongo was shot during a police raid on the warehouse. Cops were supposedly out to bust what they claim was a counterfeit compact-disk operation.

Zongo, they admit, was unarmed, had no police record and had nothing to do with any illegal activity of any kind. (New York Times, May 26) Conroy alleges that Zongo tried to grab his gun. (Daily News, May 27)

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said, "Keep in mind, this is a situation where apparently there were no witnesses, so it will take a while to get the facts out."

But the Rev. Al Sharpton announced at a May 26 news conference that he was

in touch with a worker who witnessed the fatal shooting. Sharpton is leader of the National Action Network, which was in the forefront of the protests against the Amadou Diallo shooting.

Michael Hardy, Sharpton's attorney, said the witness is a West African man who was working nearby. "It would be fair to say that he was present during the period of the encounter," Hardy explained. "They were in close proximity during the initial time."

"We are convinced that what he has to say would be significant," Sharpton told reporters. Sharpton added that several people have contacted him about the shooting. All are reluctant to speak to prosecutors, he said.

Sharpton concluded that he has "serious questions about how four bullets could have been a reaction to an alleged lunging." He also questioned the objectivity of the Manhattan district attorney's office. He pointed out that the district attorney's office having helped police obtain a search warrant for the raid creates a possible conflict of interest in the shooting inquiry.

Let the NYPD police itself?

Gov. George Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg tried to deflect outrage, saying that the investigation should be left in the hands of the NYPD and a grand jury.

On May 16, less than a week before the

NYPD shot Zongo, Alberta Spruill—a 57-year-old African American city worker—suffered a fatal heart attack when New York police staged a stun-grenade terror raid on her Harlem apartment. Many Harlem residents and other progressive activists are holding protests calling for an independent investigation.

The shooting of Zongo also recalls painful memories of the Feb. 4, 1999, police killing of 26-year-old Amadou Diallo, also an African immigrant. Four white plainclothes cops shot Diallo 41 times as he stood in the vestibule of his apartment in the Bronx. Like Zongo, Diallo was unarmed when he was brutally cut down. The killing of Diallo sent shock waves throughout the country and the world, and set off a tidal wave of anti-police-brutality protests throughout New York City. All four police officers were later exonerated.

When asked about the Spruill and Zongo killings, Bloomberg said: "I don't think there's any evidence that there's a trend in police misconduct. There were a couple of incidents that should have never have happened—at least are still under investigation—but it would appear that something was done wrong."

This is the same billionaire mayor who is currently carrying out devastating layoffs and budget cuts—including shutting down firehouses in oppressed and working-class neighborhoods. And this is the



Ousmane Zongo

same NYPD that's working hand in hand with the mayor to arrest residents who are carrying out civil disobedience to stop the firehouse closings in an attempt to save firefighter jobs as well as save their own dwellings and lives.

The mayor and his police force are setting the stage for mass protests against the layoffs and budget cuts, and for the fight against ongoing police brutality. These movements would gain great power by merging their struggles to make clear that the police do not exist under capitalist society to "protect and serve" the people. Instead they protect and serve the private property interests of the corporate and banking elite. □

Brooklyn celebrates African Liberation Day

'No re-colonization of Africa! Hands off Zimbabwe!'

By Pat Chin
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Cries of "No re-colonization of Africa! Hands off Zimbabwe!" rang out in the streets here May 24 in celebration of African Liberation Day.

The activity, which started with a long march from Bedford-Stuyvesant to the sound of drums, was a loud and spirited protest against U.S. and British imperialist designs to re-colonize Africa as it has done with the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and now Iraq.

The marchers, who carried banners and the red, green and black flag of the Black liberation movement, were warmly and enthusiastically received in each community they traversed.

Demonstrators called for a fight against Washington's and London's attempt to oust the government of President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Mugabe was one of the leaders of the liberation movements in Zimbabwe that drove the British colonizers from power in the 1970s. Much of the most fertile land remained owned by the white racist colonial settler class and the Black majority remains mired in poverty.

Britain has reneged on a promise to compensate white farmers for lands the farmers stole in the first place. But when the Mugabe administration, decades later, finally seized these lands for Black farmers, an imperialist campaign to demonize and destabilize Mugabe's gov-

ernment was unleashed by the United States and Britain.

The ALD activity, which included a delegation from the group Labor Against the War, was organized by the African Liberation Day Coalition 2003. Endorsers include the December 12th Movement, the All-African People's Revolutionary Party, Pan African Liberation Movement, Haiti Support Network, Black Vets for Social Justice, Bedford-Stuyvesant Coalition for Peace, African Poetry Theatre, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Friends of Zimbabwe, National Conference of Black Lawyers, New York ANSWER, Harlem Anti-War Coalition, Korea Truth Commission, Workers World Party and others.

At the march, and at the rally at the House of the Lord church, activists also called for reparations for the trans-Atlantic slave trade; to deepen the ties of communication among Africans worldwide; to continue the struggle against the occupation of Iraq; and for solidarity with Cuba, Venezuela, Haiti and North Korea. The Palestinian people's liberation struggle was also hailed.

Participants pledged to revitalize the long tradition of annually celebrating African Liberation Day. ALD initially took place as "African Freedom Day" at the first organized conference on African independence held in Ghana at a 1958 conference of Pan-African leaders working for the unification of Africa under socialism. □



WW PHOTO: PAT CHIN

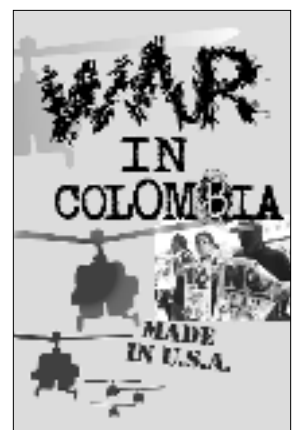
African Liberation Day.

WAR IN COLOMBIA MADE IN U.S.A.

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Two weapons of mass destruction:

Falling bombs & falling dollars

By Bill Cecil

The Bush regime's panzers roared into Iraq on March 19. Two months and thousands of civilian deaths later, the other shoe dropped. On May 19 U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow signaled that the U.S. would not act to stop the dollar's slide against the euro.

U.S. currency has dropped 26 percent against the euro since Bush's "axis of evil" speech in January 2002. The invasion of Iraq and the new dollar policy are directly related. The first made the second possible.

Both were driven by capitalist economic crisis. Both were acts of war.

Snow made his remarks in Deauville, France, where he had just attended a summit of the Group of 8—Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the U.S. Some thought the U.S. would use the meeting to mend relations damaged by the Iraq War.

Instead Snow declared economic war—a giant wrecking operation on the European Union, Japanese and Canadian economies. It was a move as perilous as any military adventure.

European stock prices plummeted after Snow's remarks. By the end of the week Berlin, Moscow and Paris blinked. They voted in the United Nations to recognize the U.S. "right" to occupy Iraq and sell its oil.

That capitulation won't satisfy Washington, however. Any more than Iraq could when it agreed to allow UN weapons inspections.

It won't change the economic factors

driving the Bush agenda.

What Snow actually said was that the strength of the dollar depended on "investor confidence," not its rate of exchange. He implied that the U.S. would no longer buy dollars to keep the currency strong. It was a major shift. When Snow was nominated for the Treasury post in January, he said he wanted a strong dollar.

What changed in four months' time? It's simple. U.S. troops grabbed the world's second-largest oil reserves.

A cheaper dollar is in effect a wage cut for U.S. workers. It makes U.S. goods cheaper on the world market and imported items like autos more expensive here. It gives U.S. companies a bigger return on their overseas investments.

Even before Snow's press conference Business Week called the falling dollar "good news for much of Corporate America, especially multinational companies. ... The biggest reason for the immediate profit gains many are starting to see isn't rising exports or better protection from cheap imports but simply from translating earnings from more valuable currencies into dollars."

About 26 percent of U.S. corporate profits come from overseas operations. That figure is expected to rise.

But a cheaper dollar is fraught with risks for the U.S. ruling class. Soldiers can be ordered to advance, halt or retreat. Capital, on the other hand, has a life of its own. The fall of the dollar could change from an organized retreat into a rout. Why should people buy stocks and assets valued in dollars when the dollar

is losing value?

"When you're the world's banker, you really need to maintain the world's confidence in you and your currency," Northern Trust senior economist Paul Kasriel told CNNMoney. "If you start telling creditors you're going to pay them back in currency that doesn't buy as much, they won't want to bank with you any more."

The U.S. has a \$10 trillion economy—the largest in the world. It also has the largest trade deficit the world has ever seen. Last year the U.S. imported \$435 billion worth of goods more than it sold overseas. This March alone the figure was \$44 billion.

How has the economy been able to weather such a huge trade deficit without collapsing? In the 1980s and 1990s international investors poured money into U.S. assets. From 1995 to 2000 the U.S. took in about \$500 billion a year in direct capital investment. That doesn't count trillions in stocks, bonds, treasury notes, real estate, hedge funds and bank accounts.

"Foreign investors now have claims on the United States amounting to about \$8 trillion of its financial assets," the April 20 New York Times reported. They also "hold about two-fifths of the federal debt in private hands." To finance its deficit, the U.S. needs \$1.5 billion in new outside investment every day. Talk about foreign aid!

A lot of that money comes from oil-producing countries in the Middle East and elsewhere. Their economies are bound to Wall Street because oil is traded in dollars.

Saudi Arabia alone is estimated to have nearly \$1 trillion invested in the U.S. That was last year. It's probably worth a lot less now. The fall in the dollar is, among other things, a giant rip-off of these international investors.

So why don't the Saudis and others take their money out? Why don't they sell oil for euros instead of dollars? Iraq got UN permission to do that in 2000. Iran, Libya and Venezuela have said they might do the same.

Iraq won't be selling oil for euros anytime soon. It's under U.S. occupation. Iran has moved up on the Bush regime's hit list. And should Saudi Arabia start pulling funds out of the U.S., it won't take long for Donald Rumsfeld to "discover" an "al-Qaeda" cell in the royal palace in Riyadh. The U.S. occupation of Iraq is a gun to its head. It not only puts a massive U.S. military force next door. It gives Corporate America power over the price of oil. That's a gun to the head of the world.

Many people, even in the anti-war movement, were baffled by the Bush regime's desperation to attack Iraq. They didn't believe the lies about al-Qaeda connections and weapons of mass destruction. But even greed for oil didn't seem to justify the risks involved.

The desperation of U.S. imperialism came from the falling rate of corporate profits. The conquest of Iraq, the threats against Iran and North Korea, the economic war against Europe all have one purpose: To destroy any avenues of economic life on this planet that don't lead to Wall Street. □

French workers lead fight to defend

Continued from page 1

miles from Paris, explained the current labor struggle to the Irish Times on May 25. "Unfortunately," he said, "in France, it's always a power struggle. We won't accept that one class—big business—seizes all the wealth of the country. The next few weeks will be hard. Chirac is going to have an unpleasant Bastille Day; he'll have to give in."

Fighting for decent education

May 26 was the eighth day this year that the educational system in France saw a national mobilization: Teachers and staff from day care centers to universities walked out and shut their institutions down. A new national poll shows that most of the population supports the teachers' demands and their tactics in defending their union rights, their retirement and the educational system.

The unions representing workers in the national railroads, along with the unions representing workers in the Paris Metro and regional rail lines, filed notice that they will strike June 2 and stay out until their demands are met. While the government is not currently threatening their retirement plan that lets operational workers retire at age 50 with 20 years' service, these workers are walking out in solidarity with the teachers.

In Perpignan, a city in southwestern France near the Spanish border, the university is scheduled to be closed. Students locked the gates and the doors even though final exams were scheduled. One

professor showed up and said, "You can't keep a professor from his job." A student answered, "We certainly can!" And they turned him, and the provost, away.

Air France and the air traffic controllers have scheduled a renewable strike for May 27. The post office, unemployment insurance, and sanitation workers have scheduled renewable walkouts for the week starting May 26. A renewable strike means the workers can hold a one-day strike, go back to work, and then strike again later.

Raffarin is betting that he can win a confrontation with the workers. In 1995 the government lost a similar bet.

Fightback underway across Western Europe

The struggle of workers to maintain benefits won decades ago is not restricted to France.

All the members of the European Union are currently trying to apply the decisions of the 2002 Barcelona summit. That summit resulted in guidelines that include raising the average retirement age by five years by the year 2010.

In Germany, some 90,000 unionists demonstrated throughout the country on May 24 against Agenda 2010. Their pensions are scheduled to decrease from 70 percent of salaries to 64 percent by 2010. Unlike France, in which the government is center-right, a Social Democratic-Green Party coalition is directing the attack against the German working class.

Historically, the German union leadership is closely tied to the Social Democrats. Now some of the unionists are accusing



Teachers join mass one-day protest in Paris on May 13.

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of betraying his election promises. The unionists say that these government attacks along with cuts in social benefits will destroy more jobs.

In Austria, a governing coalition of the right wing and the extreme right is trying to increase retirement age from 60 to 65 while cutting benefits by 13 percent. A strike wave rose in protest on May 6 and 200,000 workers demonstrated in Vienna on May 13. More protests are expected if the government continues to push through this program.

For three days, beginning June 1, heads of state of the seven major imperialist countries and Russia—the G-8—will meet in Evian, France, near the city of Geneva, Switzerland. The G-8 meeting is expected to be the site of anti-globalization and anti-war demonstrations. It will also

attract many European workers fighting to maintain their social benefits.

Many of the benefits won by Europe's workers came into effect in the years following World War II. There were strong communist and socialist movements in many countries of western Europe, where they had led the resistance to Nazi occupation. The West European ruling classes were in direct competition with the regimes that had taken over and expropriated private industry and banks in Eastern Europe after the Soviet Red Army defeated Hitler. Although these East European countries were poor, social benefits for the workers were strong.

As part of the worldwide struggle against socialism that came to be known as the Cold War, the West European capitalists felt constrained to make social concessions to the workers at home. Now,

The modern keepers of the vault

By Sam Marcy (Oct. 8, 1992)

This article was written shortly after the previous Gulf War and before the 1992 election, when a contraction of the capitalist economy led to the defeat of George Bush.

Once upon a time there was a young prince who was deeply concerned that his father, the king, was in failing health and was rapidly deteriorating. Worried about the heavy burden that would fall upon him, he soon became obsessed with the magnitude of his tasks.

Not much later the king passed away and the young prince was proclaimed king. Preparations began for the coronation, which, the new king decided, should be of such splendor and magnificence as to reach the outermost parts of the world. He would invite all the foreign princes and make the coronation the most luxurious and elegant they had ever seen. All who came would learn to respect and honor his kingdom.

Soon enough all the royal advisers were upon him, but his eye and mind were fixed on the keeper of the royal vault. "May I have a word with you?" he signalled to the royal keeper of the vault and thereafter the two disappeared into the basement.

"Tell me," said the prince to the royal keeper, "how much do we have in the royal vault?"

"I cannot tell you exactly at the moment, but I can show you something of interest in planning the coronation. This small vault," he pointed to one, "was full when your father ascended to the throne. Now it is empty. With your divine wisdom and youthful mind you will, I'm sure, succeed in refilling it."

Astonished, the prince became pensive. Then suddenly the prince picked up a coin from the stack of gold coins and asked, "How much gold is in this coin?"

Again the royal keeper of the vault said, "I do not know. My eyesight is not what it used to be and my hands are no longer as sensitive, either. But I will call in the royal goldsmith who has travelled far and wide throughout the world and understands the mysteries and magical qualities of this precious metal."

When the goldsmith came in, the prince asked him, holding up the coin: "How do you assess it?"

"Your Highness, this is about a troy ounce and should have 480 grains of gold in it," the goldsmith answered.

"Tell me, goldsmith, can you replace a mere 40 or 50 grains of gold from this coin with lead?"

"Oh certainly, your royal Highness," said the goldsmith.

"And can anybody, besides you, tell the difference?"

"I dare say no," said the goldsmith, "not if it is skillfully and correctly done."

"You see this empty vault?" said the prince. "I hope to fill it in the early period of my reign. And I do not wish even so much as to touch the royal vault. But what I want most of all is a splendid coronation for all the world to see. And it shall be an inspiration to all in our realm. How can this be done? We shall purchase all our needs for the coronation with the debased metal and, as you say, no one shall know except the three of us. The secret we shall take to our graves."

Thus the deal was struck and the most elegant and most luxurious of coronations in the ancient world took place.

The prince bought the best and finest of what was available for the coronation and a great time was had by all. None of the merchants from whom so much was bought showed the slightest suspicion that the gold was indeed debased. It was not until months and months later that the keeper of the royal vault called in his royal Highness, the king, and advised him that all the debased coins he had used to pay for purchases had now been returned in the form of taxes.

Appalled, the king exclaimed, "We have thereby gained nothing?"

"No," replied the keeper of the gold, "we have not. We have much to make up for. We cannot raise taxes; our nobles will not stand for it. We cannot squeeze the peasants; they are already burning the estates of the landlords. We are in a time of trouble. And the merchants and traders are becoming more arrogant and rude every day. There is talk in the marketplace that the peasants will soon march on the palace."

Descendants of the vault keeper

It is not quite a century and a half since Karl Marx dealt precisely with the point of this story. He did so in a book called "The Poverty of Philosophy," a celebrated polemic against Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), a French anarchist economist.

Proudhon wrote: "Money is born of sovereign consecration: the sovereigns took possession of gold and silver and affixed their seal to them."

Marx asked in reply: "Was it the sovereign who took possession of gold and silver to make them the universal agents of exchange by affixing his seal to them? Or was it not, rather, these universal agents of exchange [the gold and silver] which took possession of the sovereign and forced him to affix his seal to them and thus give them a political consecration?"

Marx continued: "It has been proved times without number, that if a prince takes into his head to debase the currency, it is he who loses. What he gains once at the first issue he loses every time the falsified coinage returns to him in the form of taxes, etc."

The worldwide financial crisis that has been wracking Europe should have brought this point forward for honest public discussion. Such is not the case. Instead, there was a well-hidden meeting of 172 central bankers and finance ministers in Washington on Sept. 24 [1992]. It would be generous of us to merely describe them as the descendants of the keeper of the vault and the goldsmith. In truth, they are among the most ruthless and predatory exploiters the world has known. There is no crime they will not commit to uphold the social system whose creatures they are.

Apparently the point made by Marx and the experience of the prince had not the slightest effect on them. Yet this is not altogether true.

These bankers and finance ministers included Alan Greenspan, chairperson of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank, and Nicholas Brady, Secretary of the Treasury. Their hurried, nervous meeting, without the fanfare and glare of big-time television, speaks volumes.

After meeting secretly and issuing no report, these keepers of the vault have "gone their 172 separate ways," as a New York Times report on Sept. 25 aptly remarks. There was no meeting of the minds, there was no agreement. Why? Because each is concerned with debasing their coins in their own way, for the salvation of their own ruling class.

The capitalist currency crisis reflects the inability of the central bankers and finance ministers to do more than the ancient keepers of the vault. Today's goldsmiths have the unhappy task of advising them that the clipping of the coins has become a world capitalist scandal.

No longer 'good as gold'

There was a time when anybody who had paper money in some quantity could go to the U.S. Treasury, for instance, and get gold in return, as it said on the paper money. But today all the U.S. paper money, which used to say "Exchangeable for gold," now merely says "In God We Trust."

Governments throughout the capitalist world no longer pay in gold except by specific special agreement. The currencies in the capitalist world today reflect not so much the amount of gold a government has in its treasury as the economic stability of the social system. Of course, it's the Gross National Product that is the main determining factor over a period of time. But that in turn is dependent on the stability of capitalist relations—the stability of the relationship between the exploiter and the exploited.

In times of capitalist overproduction, instability has become so excessive that even artificial stimulants, like military expenditures and imperialist wars, are unable to lift the depressed economy out of its morass.

The keepers of the vault, their goldsmiths and their politicians have proven their utter inability to master the situation. If the current crisis demonstrates anything, it is the correctness of the Marxist analysis of the capitalist mode of production. The bankers and politicians do not manage the economy; the capitalist nature of the economy manages them.

It has been almost a century and a half since Marx explained to leading anarchist

It has been almost a century and a half since Marx explained to leading anarchist economists that it is not the will of the king that determines the value of his coins, but rather it is the coins that determine the will of the king

economists that it is not the will of the king that determines the value of his coins, but rather it is the coins that determine the will of the king.

If one thinks, for instance, that a meeting of the 172 bankers and ministers is perhaps too clumsy and too large to determine such delicate matters as the value of the dollar, the mark or the franc, let us remember that only last week that tiny little club of the seven largest imperialist robbers—the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Canada—also met in private and were unable to accomplish anything. If they did anything at all to dam the flood of economic "bad news," they have kept it secret. Any overt manifestation that the deepening of the financial crisis has been arrested is utterly lacking.

Agreement on the franc

The agreement between Paris and Bonn to prevent a free fall of the franc is actually designed to be a weapon in the psychological war between these two larger imperialist powers and the smaller ones. It is an attempt to club the latter into a European straitjacket where French and German capital will be able to dominate them. The effort to unify capitalist Europe can only create a mechanism for boxing in the capitalist contradictions.

The inevitable inter-imperialist rivalries are due not to some misunderstandings, not to a lack of technical knowledge of market conditions, nor to the productive forces having stopped growing. No, the fundamental obstacle to a coordinated, cooperative union of the European states is the preservation of private property in the means of production.

That means the only solution is socialism. All the maneuvers, all the hurried meetings, all the arming and talk of disarming, cannot obviate the fact that the means of production are owned by ever-growing predatory monopolies. This private ownership stands as the fundamental, insurmountable obstacle to a stable solution of the current crisis.

Apparently standing aloof are the Wall Street bankers and their top politicians. They are engaged, one would say completely consumed, by the presidential elections. It's not because the elections will cause one wing of the capitalist class to be battered or lose its control over the finances of the capitalist state to another capitalist group. The electoral struggle is over which group of politicians should manage the capitalist state on behalf of the whole ruling class. What's involved is the substitution of one managerial group by another, but both serve the common good and welfare of the exploiters and the oppressors.

As far as the masses are concerned, their view must be to look beyond the elections. Once aroused, the invincible might of the working class is the only force capable of dealing with the monstrous growth of poverty, hunger, unemployment and all the other ills of capitalist imperialism. □

pensions

when there is no Soviet Union and no socialist camp to the East, they feel the way is clear to take back those concessions.

The U.S. imperialists are very aware of the current class struggle in Europe. In many ways, it was Ronald Reagan and his ally in Britain, Margaret Thatcher, who initiated the crusade to cut government-funded social programs like health, education and retirement benefits.

The recent anti-French campaign by the big corporate media in the U.S., while it was ostensibly over France's refusal to vote for a UN resolution endorsing the attack on Iraq, had another side to it. After all, France was not alone in its position. All but a handful of countries in the UN agreed. Why single out France?

The official U.S. reaction went far beyond the usual diplomatic signals of displeasure that capitalist governments exchange with each other. It carried over into a demeaning of French culture and French people, trying to instigate jingoism in the population here. Was it a dress rehearsal for the future demonizing of the working class in France—which is very multinational, with millions of militant workers from the Arab world and Africa? As the workers there go on strike by the millions to protect their pensions and social benefits, workers here may be greatly inspired. The boardroom bosses will let the capitalist media know quite clearly that their job is to bash the French.

John Catalinotto contributed to this article. □



Recycling pretexts for war

"It now appears that the so-called 'clear and present danger' of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, or WMD, did not exist and that French and German critics were correctly skeptical of the U.S. argument for the use of force."

—Former senior CIA analyst Melvin A. Goodman,
May 26, Baltimore Sun.

Six weeks of U.S. untrammled search of Iraq have turned up nothing close to WMDs. But this hasn't stopped War Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and others in the Pentagon from rehashing the same lie, this time against Iran, as they discuss the next "regime change."

Perhaps the Bush tax cuts have caused some budgeting problems for the war makers. To cut corners, maybe they decided they could avoid hiring a public relations firm to sell another war. They will buy all the new weapons from their arms-merchant buddies, but they are recycling the old lie used to sell the last war.

What contempt the gang in Washington must have for the population of the United States. They are not even making an effort to find a new ploy to pawn off on the people.

Beyond the shamelessness of the U.S. rulers, there's another important question

here. Iran is a sovereign nation. After seeing what happened to neighboring Iraq, the Iranians might well believe they'd better get their hands on whatever weapons they can if they want to remain a sovereign nation. They have every right to do that.

And they also certainly have the right to develop nuclear power plants to run their industry. So does North Korea. So does any sovereign nation intent on developing its industry. Until the most developed countries invent and perfect efficient alternate energy sources, those trying to advance will have to use what exists.

Yet Washington's current policy is that no nation with any trace of independence has the right to develop nuclear power, let alone seek a way to defend itself against U.S. military threats. If they do, the Bush administration will announce plans to intervene against alleged weapons of mass destruction.

The Pentagon now has 23 million people in Iraq living unhappily under its occupation, and another 23 million in Afghanistan. There are 66 million Iranians, who in 1979 made it clear they wanted no part of the last U.S. client ruler. Can Washington sell a war against them using the same old tired lies? Or will the anti-war movement that arose before the invasion of Iraq spring back even quicker when the empire again shows its fangs? □

U.S. plans death camp

Washington has floated plans to turn the U.S. base at Guantanamo into a death camp, with its own execution chamber. Prisoners there could be tried, convicted and put to death without facing charges or a jury. There would be no right of appeal.

This proposal was disclosed by Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, commander in charge of some 680 prisoners from 43 countries being held at Camp Delta. The prison is part of the Pentagon base that illegally occupies a corner of the island nation of Cuba.

Miller's remarks were quoted in an article in *The Mail of Brisbane*, Australia, on May 25.

The publicity created an embarrassment for the government of Tony Blair. The British ruling class, an older imperial power, has accepted a role as a junior ally to the war drive of the U.S. empire but it has no death penalty. Downing Street's response to the exposure of the death camp plans was terse and avoided condemnation: "The U.S. government is well aware of the British government's position on the death penalty."

U.S. law professor Jonathan Turley, who has led protests against the Pentagon tribunals at Camp Delta, said, "It is not surprising the authorities are building a death row because they have said they plan to try capital cases before these tribunals.

"This camp was created to execute people," he stressed. "The administration has no interest in long-term prison sentences for people it regards as hard-core terrorists."

"Regards" is the operative word here. Not a single person held at Guantanamo since the Afghanistan War has been officially charged with a single crime in the 18 months they have spent caged at Camp Delta, far from their homes. They are, in the lingo of legal limbo, "suspects."

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld dubs them "illegal combatants." That linguistic sidestep allows the U.S. to violate the requirements for humane treatment of prisoners of war specified under the Geneva conventions. Of course, the rights of civilians are also protected by the same Geneva conventions, and the Pentagon brass has crushed their rights, too, in this endless war of terror

cynically camouflaged as a war on terror.

Rumors of torture during interrogations at Camp Delta, another breach of international law, have also leaked out. A front-page article in the Dec. 26, 2002, *Washington Post* called attention to the decades-long policy of the CIA that allows its agents to torture anyone in its custody. The CIA maintains interrogation facilities at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay.

According to the *Post*, detainees "are sometimes kept standing or kneeling for hours, in black hoods or spray-painted goggles... At times they are held in awkward, painful positions and deprived of sleep with a 24-hour bombardment of lights—subject to what are known as 'stress and duress' techniques."

Also, "captives are often 'softened up' by MPs [military police] and U.S. Army Special Forces troops who beat them up and confine them in tiny rooms. The alleged terrorists are commonly blindfolded and thrown into walls, bound in painful positions, subjected to loud noises and deprived of sleep."

Prisoners as young as 13 years old have been taken to Guantanamo. On March 5, Lt. Col. Barbara Burfeind, a Pentagon spokesperson, told the French Press Agency that there had been 20 attempted suicides there so far. There are also reports of several deaths.

Now comes the news that the Pentagon intends to try these prisoners in kangaroo courts and execute those it finds guilty of terrorism—which it defines as nothing more than fighting against the U.S. forces that invaded Afghanistan with fearsome weapons and are still carrying out sporadic bombings and raids on impoverished villages. The generals are relying on the constant racist stereotypes of Middle Eastern people delivered by the media to numb the public's shock over such tyrannical practices.

The imprisonment of more than 2 million people in the United States—disproportionately people of color—and the untrammled, racist use of the death penalty as a weapon of terror have been under attack. This struggle should be expanded to include an end to the illegal detentions on Guantanamo and the dismantling of this death camp. □



U.S. soldier at a checkpoint in Baghdad.

Resistance continues

Iraqis ambush U.S. occupation forces

No blood for oil—bring GIs home now!

By Sara Flounders

Iraqis are resisting colonial occupation in Iraq.

"These have been some of the bloodiest times for U.S. forces in Iraq since the end of the war," ABCNews.com reported May 28, "and there are few signs that the situation is going to get better anytime soon."

In Fallujah, several Iraqis in a pickup truck opened fire at a U.S. military checkpoint on May 27, killing two troops and wounding nine. One witness said the firefight lasted four hours. (AP)

When the gun battle ended, a U.S. helicopter and Bradley fighting vehicle lay in wreckage. One Iraqi man held up a piece of the helicopter to ABCNews. "Let Mr. Bush see this," he said.

The mood in Fallujah, a working-class town on the outskirts of Baghdad of 200,000—many of whom had jobs in government-built factories before the imperialist war destruction—is especially angry. On April 28 and 30, U.S. soldiers fired into protest rallies, killing a reported total of 18 civilians and wounding dozens.

In its coverage of the Fallujah firefight, the May 28 *New York Times* quotes a man it identifies as a brigadier in the disbanded Iraqi Republican Guard: "Mr. Zobai said guerrilla teams had been formed to exact revenge on American forces."

The article also quotes an enraged farmer. "The Americans have really hurt us," he said. "They didn't come here to give us liberty, or free us. They came here to invade us.

"We want to be free. We can govern ourselves. A million Saddam Husseins would be better than having one American soldier in our streets."

Not an isolated incident

Hours after the Fallujah gun battle, two U.S. military police were wounded in a rocket-propelled grenade attack on a Baghdad police station.

On May 25 there were three separate ambushes against U.S. troops in Baghdad—all along the highway between the city center and the airport.

Each attack used a different tactic. A mine was placed on the highway

and detonated as a Humvee with four soldiers drove past. All four were wounded.

Hours later someone dropped a grenade from an overpass.

Later a Humvee with three military police officers hit a trip wire, triggering an explosion. No injuries were reported.

On May 26, one soldier was killed and another wounded when their convoy was ambushed in northern Iraq. In Baghdad, a land mine destroyed a vehicle, killing one soldier and wounding three.

Several other acts of resistance to the occupiers failed.

Some U.S. intelligence sources are brushing off these attacks as a "last gasp" of former Iraqi resistance. But according to ABCNews, "Some commanders say privately they believe the recent attacks are a sign that opposition to American troops is getting more organized." (May 28)

What is clear is that anger at the occupation is deepening, evidenced by the sheer number of demonstrations and protests in recent weeks as tens of thousands of Iraqis have taken to the streets in political protests to demand an end to occupation.

They have also demanded payment of pensions and long overdue paychecks, distribution of food and restoration of electricity.

After the recent announcement by U.S. civil administrator L. Paul Bremer III officially disbanding the national army, Iraqi soldiers reportedly marched on a U.S. command center demanding their back pay. And they reminded the occupiers that all of them still had their weapons at home.

There are already reports that many U.S. soldiers in Iraq are angry at being kept there after having been promised they would be sent home at the end of the war. The Pentagon generals are sacrificing the lives of young women and men in an illegal and brutal occupation that has not an iota of justification. The international movement against the war needs to support this heroic resistance against occupation. The movement in the U.S. has an added motivation for continuing the struggle. It must save the lives of Iraqis and U.S. youth by demanding: "Bring the troops home! U.S. out now!" □

Possession is nine-tenths of the law

U.S. wins resolution to legally enslave Iraq

By Sara Flounders

Possession is nine-tenths of the law. That was confirmed on May 22 when the United Nations Security Council voted to legalize the military occupation of Iraq by the United States and Great Britain.

The Security Council handed over both governmental power and unlimited economic control of Iraq's oil wealth to the U.S. and British occupying forces.

The United States administration managed to secure an overwhelming vote of 14 of the council's 15 members. Only Syria refused to even attend the vote.

This infamous resolution will long be reviled. It establishes a dangerous precedent. And it places every developing nation at far greater risk of predatory imperialist war.

The vote swept away the 65 UN resolutions against Iraq that had imposed 13 years of the cruelest sanctions in history. These sanctions have now been replaced—with a resolution that gives the U.S. and Britain authority far beyond any given to an occupying power in UN history.

There is no time limit for U.S. political rule and economic control over Iraq's resources. The May 23 New York Times bragged that the United States had "gained the authority to do as it sees fit."

The United Nations will be allowed to "check" the resolution after one year. But since the United States and Great Britain have veto power, this is meaningless.

Control of Iraq's vast oil wealth is explicitly granted to the U.S./British Authority. Representatives of the UN, World Bank and International Monetary Fund will be allowed to "participate." So these financial institutions, which are dominated by U.S. capital, can express their opinions.

Before the war began, France, Germany and Russia—all members of the Security Council—had warned that U.S. action would constitute a breach of United Nations resolutions and a violation of international law. Why did they reverse themselves within the space of less than two months?

Why did the United States go back to the UN? Why did Washington need the UN vote?

The U.S. administration threatened that if it didn't succeed in winning this vote, the very future of the UN would be at stake.

The bargaining for votes had nothing to do with assisting the people of Iraq or solving the enormous humanitarian crisis created by the war and the years of sanctions. It was a series of secret agreements on the division of Iraq's past and future wealth.

This UN vote raises important questions that the world movement against the criminal war must deal with.

Law and power

In order to understand the vote's significance and the sweeping mandate over Iraq handed to the U.S. ruling class and its junior partner Britain, it is necessary to examine the importance of law in capitalist society.

In carrying out their war against Iraq, Bush and the Pentagon brass broke their own laws as well as international treaties the United States had helped construct on

the conduct of war, including the Nuremberg and Geneva conventions. They violated the UN Charter and flouted the UN Security Council in initiating the war. They violated the U.S. Constitution and War Powers Act.

Yet law is of enormous importance to the ruling class in the United States, and to all capitalist property relations on a global scale. The giant transnational U.S. corporations want and need undisputed legal authorization in order to sell billions of dollars in Iraqi oil that they now control.

In the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, storage tanks of Iraqi oil are full to the brim. But there are no buyers until it is clear who is legally authorized to sell the oil. Until this issue is resolved, no oil tankers are willing to stop at the Mina al-Bakr terminal, Iraq's sole outlet in the Persian Gulf.

There are billions of dollars in contracts for reconstruction at stake—and billions of dollars in future loans, designed to bleed Iraq into overwhelming debt to pay for this reconstruction.

The enormously profitable business of reconstructing all that U.S. bombs laid waste has major corporations in the United States, and thousands of smaller sub-contractors around the world, anxious to resolve who is authorized to sign contracts.

Banks want to know who has clear title to the billions of dollars that the UN Security Council froze in 1990 at U.S. insistence. These funds, which rightfully belong to Iraq, could be held for years or decades and be a source of endless litigation, if no one has the authority to lay hold of them.

That's why the Bush administration used bribes and threats to secure the vote.

U.S. Ambassador to the UN John Negroponte had presented a first draft of the resolution on May 9. Britain and Spain co-signed. This opened up the negotiations to broker a deal. Secretary of State Colin Powell traveled to Berlin and Moscow to pressure their votes. He conferred via telephone with the heads of government and ministers of other countries.

The debt trap

Many secret financial arrangements on loans and future contracts have been part of this bargaining among thieves.

Washington agreed to 90 changes in the final version of the actual wording of the resolution. But the changes were superficial. They did not alter the resolution's main thrust.

As bribes to gain the votes of France and Russia, the United States used the leverage of the billions of dollars in loans that Iraq owed these countries from before the 1990 war.

These loans will be restructured. Any illusions that the UN would be a vehicle to resist U.S. domination were shattered by these countries' collusion.

The authority to negotiate and structure loans and oil contracts for future development is the most sweeping power. Only the banks will benefit. This was Washington's priority.

The U.S. military didn't fight this war to give the Iraqi people free health care, free education, subsidized housing or food. These are programs Washington wants to destroy. Each Iraqi ministry that orga-

'The basis of law is power.'



nized to provide these basics was looted and destroyed.

To understand what the U.S. corporations and banks have in store for Iraq, look at the situation next door in Saudi Arabia. In order to stay in power, an utterly compliant and corrupt feudal group, the Saud family, has let U.S. and British oil corporations get the lion's share of its oil and gas. This is the country with the largest oil reserves in the world, the most oil pumped and a smaller population than Iraq.

Saudi Arabia, despite its oil wealth, has been bled dry. Billions of dollars have been spent for worthless military equipment that can only be maintained by U.S. technicians. It has become a debtor nation.

Most Saudi women are still illiterate. And except for the modern cities of Riyadh, Mecca and Medina, a large part of the population still lives in mud villages.

Knowing this, can anyone believe that U.S. imperialism plans to spend any significant part of the money it will control from Iraq's oil on human needs? The plans call for the reconstruction of oil fields, pipelines and ports, and little else.

Past crimes and legality

What U.S. imperialism is attempting in Iraq has a long historical precedent. Past capitalists have legalized the most horrendous crimes.

The slave trade in African people was not an illegal act of piracy. It was legal capitalist trade. At one time it was legal in every U.S. state and also under international law.

It was, by every standard, absolutely criminal in human terms. But it was legal because for the early capitalist system it was enormously profitable.

The genocide of Native peoples and the theft of their lands across the United States were carried out through hundreds of treaties. The U.S. government broke those treaties, yet they were important—not to the Native people, who were forced to sign them and who came from societies that could not conceive of owning or selling land. The treaties were essential to the railroad barons, land speculators and bankers in order to have clear title to the stolen land. If the land could not be bought and sold and speculated on, it had no capitalist value.

Colonialism, its wars of conquest, the carving up of India, China, most of Asia, all of Africa and Latin America—all this was codified in international law and the treaties of the day. It was blessed by popes, praised by poets and artists, justified in universities.

This was really pillage and looting of whole parts of the globe. But constructing a legal basis for this piracy was essential for stable capitalist exploitation. All the colonial powers erected a huge edifice of laws to embellish their utterly criminal rule.

Ninety-nine percent of all law under capitalism has to do with property, pos-

session, ownership. Who is entitled to inheritance and profit? The basis of law is power.

Capitalist property is legalized theft

The purpose of law and of the whole state apparatus of cops, courts, prisons and especially the military is to guarantee that the wealth accumulated over generations of legalized theft and the exploitation of millions of workers—in sweatshops, the slave trade, the near-genocide of indigenous nations, and colonial conquest—stays in the hands of a tiny class of globally powerful super-rich capitalists.

Only a tiny fraction of the whole body of law under capitalism deals with issues of human rights. These are the laws and rights that have been won through the massive mobilizations of the oppressed. The guarantees in the Bill of Rights such as the right to free speech and assembly, now under such severe attack, came in response to demands from below.

Laws against slavery, laws prohibiting child labor, laws minimally protecting the rights of workers to organize and form unions, laws against the most blatant forms of bigotry and discrimination—all these came from powerful grassroots movements.

These laws dealing with rights for those without large-scale property are always under attack. The laws dealing with property ownership are endlessly reinforced.

The only times in history when the laws of property have been successfully challenged have been in revolutionary mass upheavals that altered the whole fabric of society.

The Iraqi people have overturned past efforts at colonial domination. The mass demonstration that swept across Baghdad as the UN resolution was being debated was a sign that the people are increasingly aware of what the United States has in store—and that they are determined to resist.

Although UN agencies may be able to distribute some emergency food supplies, the Security Council vote to authorize and legalize colonial subjugation will teach a lesson to the world movement.

It is an infamous decision that sets a far more dangerous precedent. No confidence can be placed in this institution that is incapable of challenging U.S. imperialism. It is made up almost entirely of bourgeois governments that do not represent the people of the world.

The struggle against imperialism and war can only be carried out by an independent movement of the masses of working and oppressed people worldwide. For the first time this movement has had a glimpse of its own potential.

This is the future.

In the difficult period ahead, the power of this movement acting in solidarity with the Iraqi people is the only force capable of challenging U.S. plans of endless war and further conquest. □

NUEVA EVIDENCIA

Policías falsificaron la 'confesión' de Mumia

Por Betsey Piette

El último pilar que la fiscalía tenía para condenar a Mumia Abu-Jamal en 1982 ha sido derrotado.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, un activista afroamericano y reportero ganador de varios galardones periodísticos, fue acusado de haber causado la muerte en 1981 al oficial de la policía de Filadelfia, Daniel Faulkner. La policía afirmó que Abu-Jamal confesó después del incidente mientras se encontraba hospitalizado recuperándose de las heridas de balas sufridas. Mumia Abu-Jamal siempre ha mantenido firmemente su inocencia.

Ahora una nueva evidencia revela que los oficiales de la policía falsificaron la 'confesión'.

Los abogados defendiendo a Abu-Jamal han sometido una declaración en la Corte Suprema de Pensilvania y en la Corte de Apelaciones para el Tercer Distrito. En la declaración, Kenneth Pate jura que su media—hermana Priscilla Durham, durante una conversación telefónica con Pate en 1983 o 1984, admitió que ella no había oído ninguna "confe-

sión" por Abu-Jamal.

Dirham, quien es guardia de seguridad, se encontraba de turno en el Hospital Jefferson el 9 de diciembre de 1981, cuando Abu-Jamal y Faulkner fueron llevados a la sala de emergencia.

Según Pate, Durham le dijo que la única declaración que Abu-Jamal había hecho en el hospital fue, "Déjenme, déjenme—me están matando" cuando la policía interfirió con su tratamiento médico.

Esto contradice directamente el testimonio de Durham durante el juicio en 1982 donde ella dijo que Abu-Jamal gritó mientras se encontraba rodeado por la policía, "Yo maté al hijo de ... y espero que se muera."

Según Pate, la policía le pidió a Durham que "estuviera de su lado" porque como guardia de seguridad ella era parte de la "hermandad" de los oficiales de la ley.

Al jurado de Abu-Jamal nunca le fue permitido escuchar el testimonio del oficial responsable de su vigilancia en el hospital quien había sometido un reporte escrito diciendo que Abu-Jamal no había hecho ninguna declaración.

Entonces, ¿porqué Mumia Abu-

Jamal—visto por millones de personas en todo el mundo como un prisionero político de los Estados Unidos—todavía se encuentra en la celda de los condenados de Pensilvania?

¡Libertad para Mumia!

Sería difícil para cualquier jurado de hoy poder condenar a Abu-Jamal después de escuchar la evidencia que se ha presentado desde el juicio de 1982.

Los abogados de Abu-Jamal tienen la grabación de un testimonio bajo juramento de un hombre llamado Arnold Beverly, quien pasó el examen del detector de mentiras en el cual confesaba que él había matado a Faulkner como parte de un "mandato de la mafia" ordenado por algunos oficiales de la policía y del crimen organizado porque Faulkner era un obstáculo al sistema de pagos para los policías corruptos que operaban en el centro de Filadelfia en la década de los ochenta.

Evidencia física, testimonios de testigos y reexaminación de polígrafo respaldan la confesión de Beverly. Aún así las cortes judiciales ni siquiera han permitido la

entrevista de rutina de Beverly.

Las declaraciones de los testigos Yvette Williams y el investigador privado Mike Newman comprobaron que los "testigos oculares" de la fiscalía—Cynthia White y el chofer de taxi Robert Chobert—ni siquiera vieron los disparos y mintieron en el estrado.

La neutralidad del Juez Sabo fue desafiada por Terri Maurer-Carter, quien cuando trabajaba como estenógrafa de la corte en 1982 escuchó la afirmación de Sabo, diciendo, "Sí, yo les voy a ayudar a freír al N...o"—refiriéndose al caso de Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Aún así Abu-Jamal todavía permanece en prisión.

La Orden Fraternal de la Policía, el fiscal de distrito, los jueces, el gobernador y ex gobernadores de Pensilvania y hasta la prensa se mantienen firme en silenciar al prisionero conocido como la Voz de los sin voz,—de mantenerle en prisión y hasta de reinstaurar su condena de muerte.

Conforme más verdades salen a la luz, es claro que lo que se necesita es una lucha militante y popular para liberar a Mumia Abu-Jamal. □

Solo en Bagdad hay miles de muertos

Contando los civiles muertos y heridos

Por Leslie Feinberg

¿Cuántos iraquíes civiles fueron matados en la guerra? Los medios informativos partidarios del Pentágono en los Estados Unidos generalmente se quedan callados sobre el tema. Pero en Bagdad, volantes con noticias de muertos, impresos a mano en blanco y amarillo y pegados a edificios y árboles, se agitan en el viento.

Una excepción entre los periódicos comerciales en este país fue Los Angeles Times, el cual reportó el 19 de mayo los resultados de una encuesta que hizo en los hospitales. El rotativo descubrió que solo en Bagdad fueron confirmados muertos por los menos 1.700 civiles y más de 8.000 heridos. Además, había por lo menos cientos de civiles muertos sin contar la capital y los alrededores, una cifra que podría subir hasta mil, según reportes de grupos islámicos responsables de las sepulturas que están tratando de buscar a los desaparecidos.

Los altos oficiales militares encargados de la ocupación militar de Irak, no tienen "planes de intentar calcular la cifra de civiles muertos," dijo el artículo.

El vocero del Pentágono Lt. Col. Dave Lapan descartó la idea: "No tenemos ninguna manera para verificar independientemente si los muertos eran o no civiles".

Pero el artículo destacó que "hasta los soldados que se quitaron sus uniformes y descartaron sus armas frecuentemente



¿Liberación u ocupación?

seguían portando alguna forma de identificación".

Y como explica el Doctor Mahmoud Kubisi, "Algunos de ellos nos murmurarían que eran soldados, porque querían que nosotros les ayudáramos a encontrar sus familiares si morían".

El personal clínico iraquí mantuvo detalles meticulosos de los pacientes y sus afiliaciones militares. Incluso luego que las autoridades militares estadounidenses permitieron el pillaje masivo de los hospitales, el personal de los hospitales logró

restaurar mucha de la información basada en anotaciones, constancias de pacientes individuales y de los depósitos de cadáveres.

En el Hospital Monsour, un complejo clínico en el centro de Bagdad conocido como Ciudad Médica, los médicos reportan que tropas del ejército de los EE.UU. confiscaron y sacaron los registros de los que habían muerto.

El registro civil de la ciudad que mantiene la lista de nacimientos y muertes quiere recopilar un cálculo oficial de los

muertos de la guerra, pero esto puede durar meses.

Durante la guerra, los hospitales no pudieron bregar con todos los cadáveres. Muchos fueron sepultados en los terrenos del complejo. Las mezquitas ayudaron con el entierro de cadáveres encontrados en carros y edificios.

Muchos jóvenes, algunos de 15 o 16 años de edad, ayudaron voluntariamente con el entierro de cadáveres en proceso de descomposición, "a pesar del peligro extremo de andar en los primeros días de la presencia americana", notó el artículo.

"Fueron muy valientes", dijo Hashim Oureishi, un ingeniero que organizó un grupo de voluntarios. "Fue un trabajo terrible, espantoso".

Haidar Tari, de la Medialuna Roja Iraquí, el grupo de auxilio responsable de localizar a los desaparecidos estimó que pueden haber ocurrido hasta 3.000 entierros sin documentar, y quizás la tercera parte de estos civiles.

Es posible que se encuentren más cadáveres en las zonas bajo el control militar de los EE.UU. donde los comandantes prohibieron el acceso al grupo de auxilio.

William M. Arkin, miembro del claustro de profesores del Centro de Educación Estratégico de la Escuela de Estudios Internacionales Avanzados de la Universidad Johns Hopkins, dijo que cuando se registre la suma final de las víctimas mortales, la cifra de civiles iraquíes que perecieron en la guerra a lo mejor alcanzará "muchos miles". □