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GIs want to come home and Iraqis want them out

Crisis deepens for Bush and Pentagon brass

By Fred Goldstein

President George W. Bush and his entourage are touring Africa as part of Washington's plans to expand its military, economic and political domination on the continent. Washington has threatened Iran, Syria and North Korea. It has dispatched troops to the Philippines and Colombia, and is trying to push the Palestinians into abandoning their struggle for national survival.

All of this is in accord with their ambitions of exercising total world domination.

But the momentum of the whole imperial enterprise is being significantly weakened, if not undermined, by the deepening crisis in Iraq.

The growing Iraqi resistance to the U.S. military and the declining morale of U.S. troops is haunting the Pentagon. It should be a signal to the anti-war movement to intensify its efforts to stop the occupation and bring the troops home.

Bush: 'Bring 'em on'

Bush declared the war over on May 1 during a triumphal photo op when he landed on a U.S. aircraft carrier. That scene is no longer being replayed. The Pentagon's latest count of U.S. sol-

diers killed in combat since then is up to 30. More are said to have died in accidents. The number of wounded is in the neighborhood of 200.

On July 2, Bush's public response to this growing crisis and intensifying conflict was to taunt the resistance and say "Bring 'em on." This was safely said from the campaign trail in the U.S., where he was busy circulating among his millionaire and billionaire cronies, building up his financial war chest for re-election.

This belligerent, thuggish taunt was repeated by Gen. Tommy Franks during his retirement ceremony. But while it may have sounded good among the fraternity of ultra-militarists, elitist pilots, Special Operations mercenaries and assorted right-wingers to whom Bush was appealing, the phrase undoubtedly had a different ring to U.S. soldiers on the ground and their families back home, not to speak of the resistance fighters in Iraq.

No sooner did Bush get the words out of his mouth than U.S. forces in Iraq suffered their heaviest attacks since May 1. These were underplayed in the media. But the Washington Post of July 5 reported an attack in Balad, a small farming town about 50 miles north of Baghdad. Balad was the scene of massive U.S.

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It was a holiday and it was steaming hot—in the way Philadelphia gets in July. But 5,000 people put aside thoughts of cool comfort on July 4 and marched through the downtown streets demanding the U.S. get out of Iraq and let the troops come home.

And, in this city that feels like a plantation, they raised yet again the cry of justice for native son Mumia Abu-Jamal, whose powerful and passionate voice of outrage the police want to hush forever. On death row for 20 years despite abundant evidence of his innocence, Abu-Jamal is paying for the crime of exposing racism and police brutality in the "City of Brotherly Love."

At rallies before and after the march,

which wound through the historic district where the Declaration of Independence was drafted, speakers tied the monstrous crimes of U.S. imperialism abroad to its festering sores at home—symptoms of a rotting capitalist system that can produce in abundance but turns wealth into poverty while spreading war and violence.

Unity in action had been achieved among various currents in the progressive movement. The event was sponsored by Philadelphia ANSWER, Philadelphia Regional Anti-War Network, Minority Experience Network, Avenging the Ancestors Coalition, Unite for Peace and International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

—Story & photos by Deirdre Griswold



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Tour honors slaves of George Washington

'Trail of Blood & Tears'

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Two prominent buildings now stand as opposing pillars of Independence Park in Philadelphia's historic district.

At one end, at 6th and Arch streets, is the newly opened National Constitution Center, built by a construction firm that excluded Black workers. The target of a national protest on July 4, it houses a museum dedicated to the history of the U.S. Constitution. This document, when penned in 1787, protected only the rights of white male property owners.

At the park's southern end sits Independence Hall, constructed by the labor of enslaved Africans. They were counted as only three-fifths of a "free inhabitant" by the Constitution's authors, who also allowed the importation of slaves to continue until 1808 and let the national government collect a tax on imported slaves. The first U.S. census in 1790 reported 757,000 African Americans—about 694,000 of them enslaved—out of a total population of nearly 4 million.

Trail of blood and tears: a day of remembrance

The park service offers tours around Independence Park. Guides offer a wealth of information designed to glorify the men who declared independence from British colonialism, as well as Philadelphia's role as the country's first capital, where the Constitution was written and where the first U.S. president, George Washington, resided.

The location of the president's house—or the Philadelphia White House, as it was sometimes called—became a subject of controversy in 2002 when the public learned that Washington had unlawfully housed eight or more enslaved Africans on the property. This came out in connection with construction of the Liberty Bell Center and the National Constitution Center.

The holding of slaves on a permanent basis was illegal in Pennsylvania, even at that time. To get around this, Washington would periodically return the eight enslaved men and women to his plantation in Virginia so they could not be considered "permanent inhabitants."

Attempts to bury this history along with the artifacts uncovered during these construction projects have resulted in numerous protests by the African American community here. Last year the Avenging the Ancestors Coalition—ATAC—organized hundreds of protesters to demand that Independence National Historical Park totally fund a commemorative project honoring the eight enslaved Africans and all Africans who contributed mightily to building the United States.

Hundreds came out again on July 3 of this year to continue this struggle for reparations. They were seeking both input for such a project from the African American community and a portion of the \$19-million annual budget for the maintenance of the \$137-million National Constitution Center.

On July 2, Generations Unlimited, an African American community organization, had led a walking tour dedicated to the memory of those enslaved ancestors, under the banner, "No more lies." Over 400 people participated in this tour—a memorable and moving experience rich in history that is seldom, if ever, presented in U.S. schools.



WW PHOTO: BERTA JOUBERT-CECI

Independence Hall was built with slave labor. African Americans are demanding reparations.

ience rich in history that is seldom, if ever, presented in U.S. schools.

The Trail of Blood and Tears Tour began at 2 Front St., site of the London Coffeehouse, built in 1702. Prospective buyers used to come there to examine and purchase enslaved Africans who had recently arrived on slave ships docked at a wharf on the Delaware River. One such ship, the Mytrilla, owned by a consortium of slave-trading merchants, carried the Liberty Bell to America. Ironically, the bell would later become the symbol of the anti-slavery abolitionist movement.

The tour continued past the site of the first White House, between 6th and 7th on Walnut and Locust streets. One of the five city squares designed by William Penn, it was originally called the Southeast Square, but later named Washington Square to honor the first president. Tradition holds that African Americans called it "Congo Square," as enslaved Africans were brought to this square once a month before they were sold to buyers from Philadelphia and elsewhere.

The Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1787 by Rev. Richard Allen on the oldest parcel of land continuously owned by African Americans in the U.S., was another stop on the tour. The site was a focal point for the struggle for freedom among African Americans. A few blocks away, the tour ended at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, where an unmarked grave contains the remains of "Black Sam"—Samuel Fraunces, a freeman and soldier in the Revolutionary War, steward of Washington's house, and founder of famous taverns in both Philadelphia and New York, who died in 1795.

Also buried in the cemetery are eight Seneca, Mohawk, Iroquois and Delaware chiefs, killed in 1794 when Washington unleashed General Anthony Wayne to wipe out their tribes just a year after signing a peace pact with them.

In 1841, famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass delivered a speech entitled "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?" in which he chastised those glorifying the U.S. holiday: "Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence bequeathed by your fathers is shared by you, not by me ... you may rejoice, I must mourn."

Over 200 years of U.S. history have failed to erase this disparity. □

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WW CALENDAR

NEW YORK

Tue., July 15

IAC forum: Eyewitness Zimbabwe. Guest speaker: NYC Councilperson Charles Barron. Plus video footage from Zimbabwe. 7 p.m. At 39 W. 14th St., Room 206, Manhattan. For info (212) 633-6646 or on the Web at www.iacenter.org.

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Workers World Party weekly meetings at 7 p.m. Phone (212) 627-2994 for topics and location.

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Benton Harbor march to protest arrests

By Jerry Goldberg
Detroit

A demonstration in Benton Harbor, Mich., on Saturday, July 12, will demand amnesty for four men who face criminal charges arising from the Black community's rebellion on June 16-17 after a police chase killed Black motorcyclist Terrance Shurn.

The protest will begin at 11 a.m. with a march from Benton Harbor City Hall along Main Street (I-94 Business West) and across the Benton Harbor/St. Joseph bridge to the Berrien County Courthouse in St. Joseph, for a rally at noon. Co-sponsors of the march and rally are the Southwest Michigan Coalition Against Racism and Police Brutality, the Benton Harbor chapter of the Black Autonomy Network of Community Organizers (BANCO) and the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality. It is endorsed by two dozen social justice organizations and individuals from throughout Michigan, including Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice, President David Sole of UAW Local 2334-SCATA, and the International ANSWER coalition.

William Johnson, 27, of South Haven; Larry Doolittle, 47, of Benton Harbor; and Christopher Burke, 31, of Benton Township have been bound over for trial on charges stemming from the rebellion. The three are charged with rioting and assault with a dangerous weapon for failing to obey police orders to stop their cars. A fourth man—Joseph Dowd, 19, of Baroda—faces a preliminary hearing on

July 8 on charges of assault with a dangerous weapon. He is accused of driving through several police lines.

The rioting charges carry a maximum sentence of 10 years; the vehicular assault charges are four-year felonies.

No charges have been brought against Benton Harbor Township Patrolman Wes Koza or Berrien County Sheriff's Deputy Dan Lundin, who are white. Their high-speed chase led to Shurn's death. Reportedly, 40 eyewitnesses saw Lundin kick Shurn as he lay on the ground and saw Lundin and Koza give each other high-fives when they realized he was dead.

This was the third police killing in three years in this small African American city of 12,000 in southwest Michigan.

Systematic theft of city's resources

Recently, a study of poverty and racism in Berrien County, Michigan, was published by the S.W. Michigan Coalition Against Racism and Police Brutality and Benton Harbor BANCO. It was entitled, "Tale of two cities: Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, Michigan."

It documented how, 37 years ago, the Black community of Benton Harbor rose up in rebellion against racism. After this, the white power structure essentially made a decision to initiate an economic embargo. This town, which had been the most prosperous in Berrien County, was devastated. Whirlpool Corp., the world's largest manufacturer of appliances, which is still headquartered in Benton Harbor and had been the major employer, shut down all its factories in the city. The study

described what happened:

"Thousands of whites left the city, apparently no longer feeling safe and in control of Benton Harbor. This did not happen immediately, but over the years they have managed to bankrupt Benton Harbor and build up the economy of St. Joseph. How did they do this? By seizing control of the county government, then diverting incoming federal and state community and economic developments funds to St. Joseph, [inducing] high levels of unemployment in Benton Harbor. In addition, St. Joseph banks systematically engaged in bank redlining and denial of business credit and loans to Blacks in Benton Harbor, creating a shortage of multiple and single-family dwellings, housing improvements, or creating new buildings.

"Consider that there is only 2 percent unemployment in St. Joseph, while over 50 percent unemployment in Benton Harbor among youth and adults alike, many of whom have not had a job in years. Further, there has been a massive economic decline in basic industry which started in the 1970s, as well as a cutback in economic aid to Benton Harbor, orchestrated by Berrien County officials, which trapped the city in even deeper poverty. It is no exaggeration at all to say that St. Joseph and Berrien County officials stole the available federal and state funding, which impoverished the city of Benton Harbor to the stage where it is the poorest city in Berrien County and in the state of Michigan. They robbed the community of all wealth, the same as if they had used a gun for armed robbery. All of this made St. Joseph the dominant city in Berrien County, and one of the most affluent in that state, while Benton Harbor became a beggar city of thousands of ever

younger Black people. This economic apartheid is a large factor in what led to the revolt of June 17th."

This study pointed out that the Berrien County political and judicial apparatus was also moved to St. Joseph. It continued, "The court system, especially, is an openly white racist system, and it is they who judge over the Black people of Benton Harbor in all criminal offenses. Very few Black people are chosen for jury duty from Benton Harbor, because of widespread racial discrimination in the jury selection process. With the exception of one minor court judge, all the judges, prosecutors and public defenders are white. These are issues which have incited the residents of Benton Harbor for years, and they complain that they have no representatives on the bench, and are fined or sentenced to long years in prison by all-white juries."

The story of Benton Harbor, intensified by the city's small size, typifies the fate of most cities across the Midwest, from Detroit to Baltimore to Cleveland. They have been victimized by corporate deindustrialization, carried out in a systematic, racist fashion to weaken the power of oppressed workers, who had become the militant center of the entire working class struggle in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Today, the U.S. government is spending billions to carry out an illegal occupation of Iraq while funds for human needs are being slashed every day. Millions demonstrated against the war. The time has never been riper to unite this growing movement against war and militarism with the fight of the oppressed at home for social and economic justice. Such a united movement would demand money to rebuild our cities, not for war and occupation. □

Youth open U.S. tour to packed house

Palestinian dance troupe thrills L.A.

By John Beacham
Los Angeles

Performing a politically charged mix of traditional and theatrical dance, the Palestinian Ibdah Dance Troupe is currently touring the U.S. in support of the Ibdah Cultural Center. On July 3, the youthful dancers opened their tour in Los Angeles to a packed house at the La Mirada Theatre. In a huge outpouring of love and respect for the Palestinian struggle, over 1,000 Angelenos came out in support of the dance troupe and cultural center.

The Ibdah Cultural Center is located in the Dheisheh Refugee Camp in the West Bank. Ibdah means "To create something out of nothing." Founded in 1994, the center provides educational and creative activities to refugee children and their families.

Palestinian refugees face a tough existence. Because of the Israeli state's policy of kicking Palestinians off their land, 3.8 million refugees, more than half of them children, live in 59 camps in Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Their conditions are dire, especially in the West Bank, where the poverty rate often exceeds 70 percent.

For over 50 years, the Palestinian people have been struggling against the tanks, assassinations, curfews, massacres, checkpoints, mass arrests and daily economic humiliations of the Israeli occupation.

But the children of the Dheisheh Refugee Camp are not daunted by these grim realities. They have come to the U.S. to make it clear to their audiences that the struggle of the Palestinian people for free-

dom and justice will continue. As a youth leader of the dance troupe—whose name cannot be used for fear of reprisal—said in his introductory remarks before the performance: "We want peace, but there will be no peace without the right of return."

Master of ceremonies Michel Shehadeh, asked to sum up the importance of the July 3rd performance, said, "These children demonstrate the resiliency and steadfastness of the Palestinian people for freedom and their determination to never abandon the right of return to their homeland. No matter how many generations, from generation to generation, they will never forget their being unjustly dispossessed of their land."

The performance included three dance pieces: Al Matakhal (The Political Prisoners), Al Khaima (The Tent), and Al Waseeya (The Will). Al Waseeya is a dance that tells the story of the Palestinian people's heroic struggle against their oppressors—the Ottoman Empire, the British, and now the Israeli state.

The troupe also sang a rousing rendition of "My Homeland," the popular national anthem of Palestine. As the Palestinian flag was brought on stage at the beginning of the song, the audience stood and erupted in applause.

The Middle East Children's Alliance is sponsoring the troupe's tour. The event in Los Angeles was sponsored by the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee Los Angeles/Orange County, and co-sponsored by the Free Palestine Alliance, International ANSWER and many others. □



BALTIMORE BUREAU

From right to left, Tara Cariaso, Renee Washington, Florence X. Gross and Sharon Ceci get ready to pick up boycotting bus riders.

Bus boycott demands lower fare

It was July 1, the day of the Baltimore bus boycott to protest an increase in fares. At 4 a.m., before the sun was up, volunteers with the All Peoples Congress set out to drive along several bus routes, picking up workers along the way. The group pictured here were among those traveling along the No. 8 bus line from Coldspring Avenue and York Road to the No. 64 line to Curtis Bay. Their van and cars stopped to pick up workers going to downtown hospitals and factories along the waterfront.

While Baltimore's Mass Transit Authority would not offer any figures on how many people rode the buses that day, many attending the All Peoples Congress meeting two days later had opinions.

Renee Washington, a state worker, reported that many of her fellow workers said they had boycotted. "The parking lot was crowded this morning because workers were taking their cars in protest and offering others rides to work." Others reported that bus stops and buses looked empty.

Organizers felt their call to action was a huge success. Local television programs carried news of the boycott, including live coverage in the morning. The group also plans to mobilize defense for nine people arrested at a June 27 protest, when police tried to intimidate the crowd for having a bullhorn. One of them, union organizer Jeff Bigelow, is facing a 10-year sentence on assault charges. —Sharon Ceci

Mumia on Iraq:

More than oil

"Concessions obtained by financiers must be safeguarded by ministers of state, even if the sovereignty of unwilling nations be outraged in the process ... the doors of the nations which are closed must be battered down."

—From a lecture at Columbia University by Woodrow Wilson in 1907, quoted in Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States," Harperperennial Library (1995), p. 353

For many Americans, perhaps millions, what lay beneath the alleged threat of Iraq was the tempting possibility of U.S. control of oil. "No blood for oil" became a powerful rallying cry that echoed around the world.

The events following the so-called "liberation" of Iraq have revealed that our perception was too narrow. While oil is indeed precious to the "oil-igarchy" in the White House and the State Department, that does not begin to tell the story.

To paraphrase the legendary "boy general" of the Civil War, the notorious George Armstrong Custer, when he escorted troops and businessmen to the sacred "Paha Sapa" (Black Hills): "Boys, there's gold in them thar hills!"

There's plenty of dough to be made in the dusty ruins of Iraq.

The politically connected Bechtel Corp. was given the go-ahead by the U.S. Agency for International Development to rebuild Iraqi infrastructure. Bechtel will make some \$680 million, at the very least. Vice President Dick Cheney's former company—Kellogg Brown & Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton—has been granted [a contract to repair and operate] the oilfields of Iraq, a project certainly worth billions. The Pentagon gave a contract to the telecommunications giant MCI to construct an Iraqi wireless network. The fee? Around \$45 million.

What we are witnessing in the shattered ruins of Iraq is the spoils of war; spoils that are the seeds of vast wealth. Of course, administration officials are putting quite a different spin on this development. In a speech made several months ago before the conservative American Enterprise Institute, neoconservative thinker Richard Perle observed, "What I think we have won on the battlefield is the right to try to establish consistent policies that are for the benefit of the people of Iraq." He hastened to add, "It's not that we are looking for anything for ourselves ..." The U.S. role was described as a "stewardship" over the conquered territory.

The U.S., of course, doesn't have to "look[...] for anything." It already has what it wants.

It has Iraq.

And despite the recent "warming" at the G-8 Summit in Evian, the U.S. intends to leave France and Germany out in the cold when it comes to the goodies that Iraq offers.

War has once again proven that it is good business—for some. Of course, forgotten in that calculation is the Iraqi people, and the people of the region, who are being forced to quake in fear that they will become the next—or latest—demonstration war that the Empire wages to keep its subject peoples in line. To hundreds of American families, who have lost a loved one in the adventure in Iraq, their hearts must swell with bitterness to know that their familial sacrifice was not for "democracy," nor to "prevent terrorism," but to fill the coffers of the corporations that swelled the satchels of politicians during the late so-called election.

Over a century ago, virtually the entire continent of Africa—with the exception of Ethiopia—was colonized by European nations like England, France, Portugal and Germany. The Europeans tried to justify their colonial acquisitions with claims of bringing "civilization" to the benighted natives. What they brought was massive exploitation, the delusion of white supremacy, and oceans of death and destruction. When Africans fought for their freedom and the colonies were given up, the colonies were left with wrecked economies, very few educated people, and the long legacy of corruption. Many African countries still suffer under the shadow of that unfortunate inheritance.

What we are witnessing in this hour is a new imperialism.

Iraq is reduced to rubble, and American corporations make a mint by rebuilding it. All of this, we are assured, is to benefit "the people of Iraq."

Haven't we heard this tale before? □

Marine resister says:

'People not reenlisting'

By Heather Cottin

He is gay, he is young, and he is fighting the most powerful military institution in the world. Stephen Eagle Funk from Seattle, Wash., is a U.S. Marine Reservist who was on unauthorized leave before he publicly declared himself a conscientious objector in April. Since that time he has spoken out against the military. He is facing a court martial and two years in the brig.

He says that military recruiters manipulated him and thousands of young people like him to join the military. They create ads that make the armed forces look "cool" and "a lot of kids don't realize what's involved."

"The military coerces people into killing," Funk, 20, said in a recent interview with Workers World. Recruiters "get points for recruiting people into the Marines for four to six years, and they don't tell you that you can serve for less time."

Funk went through Marine boot camp training. He was an excellent shooter, but he wanted out. The brass gave him the run-around when he tried to apply for conscientious objector status, and he served for six months, facing open hostility for being gay.

Funk realized that the military cultivates anti-gay sentiment, but he also believes that it "perpetuates feelings of hatred against all who are different either culturally, ethnically or otherwise. I think that is the way the military dehumanizes the enemy—whomever that may be—so that its members won't be averse to killing them."

Funk realized that he was against all war during his training, which included having to bayonet human-shaped dummies while shouting, "Kill, kill." He is from a progressive family. His mother is a Filipina and was not happy that he joined the Marines, but told him she would be there when he decided to get out. She supports his decision to apply for C.O. status, even if it means time in jail.

Stephen Funk was an activist before he joined the Marines. He had participated in the anti-globalization protests in 1999 in Seattle. He protested at the Democratic National Convention in 2000 in Los Angeles and was politically active in San Francisco.

Funk was recruited into the Marines during a period when he was depressed



Stephen Funk, in uniform on left, turns himself in at his reserve unit in San Jose, Calif. His mother, Gloria Pacis, is next to him.

and searching for meaning in his life. He told Judi Cheng, a member of the Support Network for an Armed Forces Union (SNAFU), "If I can be recruited, anyone can be recruited." Funk addressed the July 4 protest in Philadelphia against U.S. wars at home and abroad. He told the crowd of 5,000 that he realized the war on Iraq was immoral because of the deception perpetrated by the government. He said, "People in the military are not reenlisting because the conditions in the military are oppressive."

Stephen Funk spoke softly for only a few minutes, but he explained to the demonstrators in Philadelphia that the military lies to recruits. He said that in the Vietnam period, people knew about conscientious objector status, but today, young people are ignorant. "I only knew about it from 'Forrest Gump,'" he told Workers World.

Funk described the training in the military. "You're in suspended thought. You are trained to be subordinate. It is so stressful, people forget how to think." The chaplains lied to him, and told him that his religion condoned killing. They never told him about C.O. status, either.

When he decided to resist, Marine Corps officials were angry but many of his fellow Marines supported him. When he raised the issues of war causing environmental damage and the death of innocent civilians, many Marines agreed with his analysis. "I found people went along with it [the

war] because they felt they had to."

Stephen Funk discovered that the young people in the Marines were poor, and felt they had few opportunities except to join the armed forces. "They are oppressed by the same people who are oppressing people in Iraq. They learn hopelessness. They learn ways to justify killing. They learn to dehumanize themselves and other people, to subordinate their actions and thoughts. The military doesn't want you to have opinions about politics."

"Our economy," said Funk, "is based on our military." He is really eager to get out to the high schools and colleges to do anti-recruitment work. He said, "The U.S. won't spend money on education, on teachers. We base our whole economy on the military. It's part of a plan. But we can't exploit everyone forever."

"I am lucky," he said, "being a minority and gay. I was already anti-military. It's easier for me to resist what I was told to do. I just became stronger."

Dustin Langley, a U.S. Navy veteran and member of International ANSWER's SNAFU group, said, "What impressed me about Stephen was his remarkable courage. He sees that our conscience and concern for all humankind is greater than our obligation to blindly follow orders. Stephen is one of the real heroes of this war."

Langley noted that SNAFU (Join-SNAFU.org) is mounting a campaign to pressure the Marine Corps to drop the court martial charges against Funk. □



Youth get ready for Cuba trip

The WW/PVN Youth Camp's Caribbean dinner fundraiser on June 22 in New York included talks by second- to sixth-graders on Cuba, Cuban-Jamaican solidarity, and plans for a 10-day visit to Havana this July. At left is a photo from last summer's camp. The case of the Cuban Five was presented as well. Hundreds of dollars were raised, but more funds are still needed to help the group travel to Cuba, where they will film and deliver toys to Cuban children. Readers may send checks to Peoples Video Network/Youth at 39 West 14 St. # 206, New York, NY 10011. The group's website is www.wwpvnyouth.homestead.com.

—Sara Catalinotto

PVN PHOTO: JOHNNIE STEVENS

Why Bush wants troops in Liberia

By Monica Moorehead

The Bush administration has sent a military team of 32 Marines and specialists to Liberia to assess whether the U.S. should send more troops to this impoverished West African country. The reason given is that they may be necessary to end the civil war that has plagued this country for more than a decade. The real reason is oil.

President George W. Bush has repeatedly said that he will accept nothing less than the departure of the elected president of Liberia, Charles Taylor.

On July 6 Taylor met with the president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, at the airport outside the Liberian capital of Monrovia, where an agreement was made to provide Taylor temporary asylum in Nigeria if he leaves.

Taylor helped to lead a rebellion against the previous Liberian president, Samuel Doe. The rebellion lasted from the late 1980s until the mid 1990s, even though Doe was assassinated in 1990. Taylor was elected president in 1997 and has faced armed opposition to his presidency since 1999.

The real prospect that U.S. troops will be sent to Liberia comes at a time when Bush is on his first trip to Africa. He plans to visit five countries within five days: Senegal, South Africa, Botswana, Uganda and Nigeria. South Africa and Botswana are among the countries in the world with the highest percentages of people living with the HIV virus and AIDS.

Bush is using the carrot and stick maneuver, offering billions of dollars in aid to pressure each country to open its markets to U.S. imports and its military and police to collaboration with the U.S. in the so-called war against terrorism. Washington heavily subsidizes U.S. agribusinesses. If African countries were to change their agricultural policies and allow in unlimited quantities of cheap U.S. agricultural products, local farmers would be destroyed.

The U.S. military presence in Africa is more ominous than ever. Rapid deployment troops and semi-permanent forces from the Army, Air Force and Marines are now stationed or will be stationed in the Horn of Africa as well as countries in North and West Africa. A command base with 2,000 troops was established in Djibouti in May.

Lisa Hoffman of Scripps Howard News Service wrote on June 13: "Little noticed among the Pentagon's plans to radically reshape the U.S. military presence overseas is the groundbreaking possibility of basing thousands of American troops in or around West Africa.

"Under discussion: everything from positioning a U.S. aircraft carrier battle group off Africa's vast west coast to establishing one or more forward operating bases in Ghana, Senegal, Mali, Equatorial Guinea or the tiny island nation of Sao Tome and Principe.

"The spurs for what may prove an unprecedented U.S. military beachhead in sub-Saharan Africa are the region's instability, potential attractiveness to terrorists and, most pivotal, its rich oil resources, Pentagon officials and Africa experts say.

"As much as 15 percent of America's oil now comes from West Africa—about the amount imported from Saudi Arabia. By next year, the West African portion is expected to jump to 20 percent."

The U.S. seeks to overtake its European imperialist rivals as the dominant power

in areas of Africa where oil is plentiful, like Nigeria.

Nigeria is home to one-fourth of the people living in sub-Saharan Africa. It also has one of the world's largest oil reserves.

The Nigerian people do not control the oil wealth of their country. Big oil conglomerates such as Chevron-Texaco and Shell make tremen-

dous profits exporting millions of barrels of oil from Nigeria to other parts of the world while the Nigerian masses remain extremely poor. The average annual per capita income of Nigeria is only \$290.

The Nigerian Labor Congress just organized a powerful general strike against the skyrocketing price of gasoline, which lasted several days before the government offered a compromise.

U.S. and Liberian relations

Liberia's population is less than 4 million people. According to UNICEF August 2002 statistics, the poverty rate is 85 percent and the extreme poverty rate is 55 percent. Per capita income is less than \$100 per person.

News accounts say a sector of the Liberian masses look to foreign intervention, including U.S. troops, to help bring an end to the bloodshed and bring economic relief to their country. Some of this hope may be rooted in what some perceive as long-time close relations between Liberia and the U.S.

The U.S. history books and the big business press claim that Liberia was founded in 1822 by freed slaves who migrated from the U.S. But that theory is disputed. There is evidence to show that the American Colonization Society, a group of whites including slaveowners, bought land in Liberia in 1817 for next to nothing.

One of the most prominent of these slave owners was Francis Scott Key, credited with writing the words of the Star Spangled Banner, the U.S. national anthem. Another slaveowning member of the ACS was William Thornton, an amateur architect who designed the U.S. Capitol. It was mainly slaves who built that historic building and others in Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia.

Former slaves were encouraged to emigrate to Liberia by the ACS, not to escape the horrors of slavery but to keep them from fighting for the right to jobs, education and political representation that whites on the whole had won. In other words, the ACS, seeing that the days of their slavocracy were numbered, mapped out this strategy in order to undermine the potential that former slaves might win democratic rights, including receiving 40 acres and a mule from the federal government.

In the 1920s the Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. got a 99-year lease for 1 million acres of Liberian land at 6 cents per acre per year. Its Liberian rubber plantation became the company's main source of profit while Liberia sunk deeper into poverty.

Untapped oil reserves in Gulf of Guinea

Bush and the Pentagon claim that the



Members of Association of Nigerian Students protest in Abuja against increase in fuel prices.

focus on oil in the Gulf of Guinea would probably ensure that the United States looks the other way when it comes to human rights, accountability and transparency. In Nigeria, the example of that would be how does the United States respond to campaigns from local communities

for equitable and local management of resources." (NY Times, July 6)

The U.S. government certainly did not offer any support over a year ago for the justifiable takeovers of oil facilities in the Niger Delta organized by defiant Nigerian women, who demanded that the oil conglomerates fund jobs and educational opportunities for their sons. A Nigerian paper, This Day, reported that the U.S. may be deploying troops to the Niger Delta to "protect" oil facilities there.

Bush's quest for endless war cannot be separated from what is going on in Liberia, Nigeria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Bush is accusing Taylor of instigating war crimes in neighboring Sierra Leone, but it is Bush who is the biggest war criminal of all.

Bush envisions himself as a modern-day emperor, similar to the rulers of the vicious Roman empire, and the majority of the world as an appendage of U.S. corporations. □

only motive for sending U.S. troops into Liberia would be to help bring about "stability and democracy" for the war-weary Liberian people. Nothing could be further from the truth. The real truth lies in the U.S. wanting to control the most important world resource—oil.

Liberia could be a jumping-off place for U.S. troops to control the nearby Gulf of Guinea. Vast untapped oil reserves were recently discovered there. Whatever imperialist power controls this strategically oil-rich region will be in the position to dramatically increase its oil markets. For the U.S., this could mean a 25-percent increase in oil imports from Africa.

Nigeria and the former Portuguese colony of Sao Tome and Principe are located on the Gulf of Guinea. So is Ivory Coast, which is in the midst of a civil war instigated by its former French oppressors.

Kayode Fayemi, the leader of the Center for Democracy and Development based in Lagos, Nigeria, stated, "The



WW PHOTO: JOHNNIE STEVENS

Harlem march:

'U.S./British hands off Zimbabwe!'

A group of activists held an emergency demonstration in Harlem on June 28 to demand no U.S. and British intervention in the internal affairs of Zimbabwe, located in the heart of southern Africa. The protest, seen by hundreds of Harlem residents, was organized by the December 12 Movement, a long-time Brooklyn-based organization.

The march began at the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building and ended up in front of the Mount Olive Baptist Church, where New York City Council member Charles Barron,

Omawale Clay from the D12 Movement, and Monica Moorehead from the International Action Center spoke at an impromptu street meeting.

President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair have joined forces to attempt to illegally oust the president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe. Mugabe has been supporting a grassroots campaign to restore arable lands, stolen under colonialism, back to their rightful owners, the Zimbabwean workers and peasants.

—Photo and story by Johnnie Stevens

workers world editorial

Bush's sneak attack

Endless war. That's what the Bush administration has promised. And that is what it's delivering, from Afghanistan to Iraq to the Philippines and Liberia. The military operations of the Pentagon are top news every day.

But there's another war that barely gets any mention, except in the pages of union newspapers or the Black press. It is the domestic war of the Bush administration, the war on the multinational working class.

Unemployment is growing relentlessly — partly pushed by the cutbacks in social services. The economy for everyone but the rich is continuing to decline. Wages are going down. Prices are generally rising, as are many taxes on the working class, especially sales taxes and fares for public transportation. And to top it off, the Bush administration is now attempting to eliminate the right to overtime pay.

Unemployment is the highest it has been since 1994. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 6.4 percent of the work force, or 9.4 million workers, are jobless. But this significantly understates the real level of unemployment, because it leaves out so-called discouraged workers who've given up on finding a job, as well as part-time workers who want and need full-time jobs. The Economic Policy Institute says that the underemployment rate—which includes the officially unemployed as well as part-time workers who want full time work and discouraged workers no longer seeking jobs—is now at 10.3 percent. Again, this is the highest rate since September 1994.

The rate of unemployment among teens can run as high as 50 to 60 percent, especially in oppressed communities.

Perhaps more revealing of just how bad is the economy is the fact that the average number of weeks spent by unemployed workers looking for new

jobs is now at its highest level ever, since the Bureau of Labor Statistics began keeping track in 1967. The average number of weeks of unemployment is now 19.8, matched only once before in August 1983.

The Bush administration's motto appears to be, "Kick 'em while they're down."

They used the world's most highly armed force ever to invade Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries in the world with the most antiquated weapons, crushing the population with overwhelming force and massacring thousands of civilians. They followed that with an invasion of Iraq, a country whose infrastructure was weak from over a decade of sanctions and a previous invasion, and whose military was almost completely disarmed before the invasion began.

And now, for the workers in the United States, the Bush administration is aiming its bombs at rights won through years of union and civil rights battles.

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 established the 40-hour workweek. For most workers, it guarantees the right to overtime pay—"time and a half"—for each hour beyond 40 worked in a week. Currently about 80 percent of the country's 120 million wage and salary workers are entitled to overtime protection under this law.

Now the Department of Labor is proposing to change the law in a way that could make more than 8 million more workers ineligible for overtime pay. It's only because of the sharp eye of some unions that this move was even revealed; the government was trying to make the change on the sly. Sort of like slipping a bomb in the back door when no one is looking.

This is class war. And there is only one way to fight this war. It takes mobilization, organization and resistance. □

Troops want to come home, not be colonial cops

Continued from page 1

sweeps in Operation Desert Scorpion recently.

"The mortar attack, which occurred late Thursday and wounded at least 17 members of the Army's 3rd Corps Support Command at a sprawling military base near the town, resulted in more injuries than any other single incident since President Bush declared major combat over on May 1."

The subsequent ambush of a military patrol on a highway south of Balad, continued the Post, "sparked one of the most intense clashes in the past two months, with soldiers killing 11 Iraqis during three separate firefights that spanned eight hours, military officials said."

A U.S. military official said about 50 people were involved in the attack. "This is unusual and concerning," the official told the Post. "A group of 50 suggests a degree of organization we haven't seen before."

The attack on Camp Anaconda near Balad used mortars, which take training and skill in ballistics and can be fired from up to four miles away. During the week there was a mortar attack on the International Airport near Baghdad, where the top U.S. military commander works, and on the field headquarters of the Army's 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Ramadi, which was hit three nights in a row, according to the Post.

Heavier attacks than during war

New York Times chief military correspondent Michael Gordon journeyed to the headquarters of Theater Support Command for logistics at Arifjan, Kuwait, to meet with officials there. "We are having heavier attacks now than we did during the war," Maj. Gen. David E. Kratzer told Gordon, who reported in the Times of July 4. "It is an unusual day when we don't have at least one attack someplace on the supply route." The area just south of Baghdad has been dubbed "RPG Alley" by the soldiers. RPGs are rocket-propelled grenades. The high command is worried that the resistance fighters are improving their skills.

Similar reports come from the 1st Armored Division, which arrived in Baghdad in early May. One field artillery unit was attacked seven times while patrolling a two-square-mile area, according to the Washington Post of July 8: "The incidents included mortar fire from a nearby neighborhood, a drive-by shooting, a rocket-propelled grenade launched from a bus stop and hand grenades tossed at soldiers' Humvees as they drove through a congested market."

"We're hit more now that the war is pretty much over," Spec. Justin Keeney, 22, of Oregon City, who drives a heavy equipment truck from Baghdad to the northwest, told the Post. "When we haul tanks or artillery, they don't mess with us."

If we have engineering equipment, we get lit up. It's almost guaranteed."

'They're getting tired of us'

"Such urban combat," continued the Post, "not only poses an immediate threat to soldiers' lives, it has the potential to stir resentment toward occupation forces at a time when the U.S. government is attempting to focus attention on its efforts to rebuild Iraq."

The Post reporter talked to Spec. James McNeely, 48, a member of the D.C. National Guard's 547th Transportation Company. "They're getting tired of us," he said. "Wouldn't you be mad if they invaded your country?"

As the occupation drags on and U.S. soldiers are confronted with having to carry out the colonial role of occupation police, their morale is dropping.

"Most soldiers would empty their bank accounts just for a plane ticket home," said one recent letter to Congress written by an Army soldier now based in Iraq. The soldier requested anonymity. (Christian Science Monitor, July 7)

"Make no mistake, the level of morale for most soldiers I've seen has hit rock bottom," said another soldier, an officer from the Army's 3rd Infantry Division.

This morale is being worn down by long and frequent deployments amid an openly hostile population, whose resistance is drastically underreported. A Washington Post reporter watched as the lead Humvee in a caravan had its front lifted off the ground by a mine on the side of a bridge. The vehicle was damaged, but because no one was killed or seriously wounded, this incident was not reported by the military. But such incidents are everyday occurrences. "It's becoming routine," a military official told the Post.

When the reporter went over to interview some of the many Iraqis on the banks of the Tigris by the bridge, no one saw who planted the mine. "And even if they did, several said, they would not identify the person to U.S. forces."

"This kind of attack is good for the Iraqi people," said Kudier Abbas, 39, a food vendor. "The Americans have been here for four months. What have they done for us?" He pulled out some candy and asked, "They think this will make us happy?"

This growing tide of reported and unreported attacks on the soldiers is downplayed by the high command. But it cannot be downplayed to the families of the soldiers who get letters and first-hand reports.

Anger, disillusionment mounting

At Fort Hood, Tex., Fort Stewart, Ga., and base towns throughout the U.S., tension and anxiety are rising rapidly among military families, who had thought that when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld promised a short, clean, surgical war that would "liberate, not occupy,"



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As 200th anniversary nears

Haiti needs reparations, not sanctions

By Pat Chin

The Republic of Haiti will mark the 200th anniversary of its independence on Jan. 1, 2004. Preparations for celebrating the bicentennial are being made against the backdrop of a deepening economic crisis in that oppressed country, exacerbated by economic sanctions.

"For over two years," reported the May 23 Inter Press Service, "the United States, the European Union, and multilateral lenders have been holding up some \$500 million in aid and loans because they say Aristide's government and Lavalas Family party have failed to reach a compromise with opposition parties, which boycotted the 2000 Presidential race after protesting allegedly fraudulent parliamentary contests in 2000."

The Washington-backed "Democratic Convergence" is made up of 15 tiny bourgeois opposition parties, ranging from hard-core Duvalierists to Social Democrats, with no real support in the popular masses. The group is similar to the imperialist-backed "Democratic Coordination" in Venezuela that has unsuccessfully tried to oust progressive Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. The Convergence has reportedly received some \$120 million from the U.S.-based right-wing National Endowment for Democracy.

In response to the imperialist maneuver to force a "regime change" by tightening the economic squeeze, Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide has called on

France—the original colonial power—to make restitution for an indemnity Haiti was forced to pay after militarily defeating the French, forcing slavery's end and declaring independence.

The French government in 1825 had demanded 90 million gold francs to "compensate" white planters for property loss due to the revolutionary war. It was decades later that Haitian independence was recognized and crippling sanctions lifted. The Aristide administration calculates the sum owed Haiti by France, including interest, to be well over \$21 billion.

The indemnity insured that Haiti would remain in debt to French financiers for most of the 1800s.

Reparations for hundreds of years of forced labor are also being demanded. This call is supported by African-American organizations that have launched a movement for reparations in the U.S.

Aristide first sounded the call on April 7 at a massive gathering in front of the National Palace marking the 200th anniversary of the death, in a French prison, of revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture. Almost two months later, at a June 3 press conference during the G-8 summit of capitalist vultures in Evian, France, French Foreign Ministry spokesperson François Rivasseau arrogantly rejected the demand. The summit was protested by thousands of anti-war and anti-globalization demonstrators. Rivasseau cited loans made to the Haitian government, while blaming alleged cor-

ruption and mismanagement by the Aristide administration for Haiti's economic problems.

At a May 23 "Flag Day" celebration attended by thousands of students and other supporters, Aristide also condemned global poverty and the Third World debt. "Two hundred years after the victorious revolution," he said, "the bull that turns the mill doesn't get to drink the sugar syrup. We refuse to be slaves to sub-human misery." (Inter Press Service, May 23).

Why is Haiti so poor?

The main political point made by the bourgeois "National Convergence"—like that of the racist white colonizers and imperialists—is that Haiti is wrenchingly poor because the slaves killed all their white masters to gain independence and liberty. Haiti has consequently remained poor and dependent and in need of U.S. resources and technology. Government corruption is also a fundamental part of the problem, they say.

But this grossly distorts reality. Haiti's poverty lies mainly in the centuries-long crime of slavery, which produced enormous wealth for France, followed by 200 years of economic, political and military aggression waged by the European and U.S. bourgeoisies against the first free Black republic. The only country in the world where slaves had liberated themselves by overthrowing their masters, Haiti was a powerful symbol of resistance and had to be punished.

The country's liberation was a beacon of hope for an end to slavery everywhere. It sent shock waves through the Americas and European capitals growing fabulously

rich from the brutal trade in human Black cargo. Fearing the implications for their own slave-based economies, France joined forces with the U.S. and other European powers.

In fact, after the first rebellion in Haiti, U.S. President George Washington—a slave owner himself—directed his secretary of state, Thomas Jefferson—another slave owner—to give the white planters in Haiti \$400,000 for arms and food to resist the uprising. The U.S. did not recognize Haitian independence until after its own Civil War ended slavery some 60 years later.

On Jan. 1, 1804, Haitian revolutionary hero Gen. Jean-Jacques Dessalines had declared the country's independence. His proclamation was the culmination of years of a national liberation struggle enacted by African slaves, who had freed themselves in a revolutionary upsurge that started at a Voodoo ceremony in 1791. Voodoo, as a result, has been turned into a pejorative term.

The twisted, sadistic form of colonial logic—where the white oppressors get compensated for their loss of the ability to cruelly exploit, while the Black victims are condemned to punishing poverty—was also applied in Jamaica under the British colonialists, and in the U.S. after slavery ended.

The foreign imperialists and their collaborators among Haiti's bourgeoisie have a daunting task ahead. It is one that will surely fail as the people—supported by a solidarity movement abroad—continue to draw on their long history of struggle and resistance against racist demonization, neo-liberal capitalist exploitation and imperialist plunder. □

Troops want to come home

he knew what he was talking about.

"I want my husband home," Luisa Leija, a mother of three children at Fort Hood, told the New York Times, as reported in the July 4 edition. "I am so on edge. When they first left, I thought yeah, this will be a bad war, but war is what they trained for. But they are not fighting a war. ... They have become police in a place they're not welcome."

"Frustrations became so bad recently at Fort Stewart," continued the Times, "that a colonel, meeting with 800 seething spouses, most of them wives, had to be escorted from the session. 'They were crying, cussing, yelling and screaming for their men to come back,' said Lucia Braxton, director of community services at Fort Stewart.

"The soldiers were supposed to be welcomed by waving crowds. Where did all those people go?" asked Kim Franklin, whose husband is part of an artillery unit.

"In the postwar and pre-peace phase," wrote the Times, "it is not Green Berets or top-gun fighter pilots who are being killed. The casualties have been mostly low-ranking ground troops who are performing mundane activities, like buying a video, going out on patrol or guarding a trash pit."

Fear of how the brutality of the war will transform their husbands and break up families is common. "That's my biggest fear," said Valerie Decal, the wife of an artillery sergeant, said. "That my husband will come back different. Even if you're G.I. Joe, if you have to kill someone, that's

not something you just forget about."

The realities of imperialist war and colonial occupation have brought untold suffering to the Iraqi people. Their entire infrastructure and state system has been destroyed. Thousands of civilians have been killed and wounded. Thousands have been arrested and detained by a foreign, oppressive occupying force that has barged into their country and tried to take control. Midnight raids have resulted in handcuffing, blindfolding, destruction and stealing of personal property. Brutalizing interrogations, killing of innocent civilians, widespread attempts to disarm a population under occupation and attack—all this has stoked the resistance.

All these acts of terror are carried out under the orders of the Pentagon and L. Paul Bremer III, the U.S. overlord of Iraq. And it is the soldiers, the working class in uniform, who have to carry out these criminal orders. The Pentagon has pushed the GIs into the line of fire of the resistance because Bush, Rumsfeld, Cheney, Wolfowitz and the entire ruling class, led by the big oil companies, are determined to subdue Iraq and establish their empire in the Middle East.

The task of fighting to get the troops home and allowing the Iraqi people to determine their own destiny is urgent. It is in the interest of not only the Iraqi people and the U.S. soldiers, but of the Palestinians, Iranians, Syrians, the people of Africa, Korea and all the rest of the globe who are on the hit-list of the Pentagon. □

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Police attack workers at 'donkey march'

By Andy McInerney

Police in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, wounded five workers and arrested at least 40 others on July 1 as hundreds of people gathered to protest price hikes and a new agreement with the International Monetary Fund.

The Coordinating Committee of Community, Labor and Transport Organizations, which called the demonstration, planned on marching to the National Palace with 100 donkeys. Ramon Pérez Figueroa, leader of the National Federation of Transport Organizations, told the daily El Nacional, "We want to show that these donkeys and bicycles will be the transportation of the future."

In the days prior to the march, the government had raised the prices of gas, electricity and bread. Inflation is running at rates from 25 to 75 percent. On top of these measures, the government of President Hipólito Mejía is preparing to sign a pact with the IMF that will guarantee more austerity and cutbacks. Mejía also offered to send 300 Dominican troops to aid the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

As participants in the "donkey march" prepared to march from their starting point, police blocked their path. When the demonstrators insisted on marching, police fired into the crowd.

A priest who was one of the organizers, Rogelio Cruz, accused the government of dictatorship. He warned that if peaceful protests were not allowed, a "social explosion" was on the horizon.

There are signs that his warning may be more than hyperbole. On June 23, battles broke out between anti-IMF protestors and police in Barahona, about 120 miles west of Santo Domingo. According to El Nacional, demonstrators blocked roads with barricades of burning tires. When police tried to break up the protests with tear gas and gunshots, the crowds responded by pelting the cops with bottles and stones.

The battles continued throughout the day, culminating in several gun battles between police and Barahona residents.

On July 5, the Force of the Revolution, one of the main leftist parties in the Caribbean nation, issued a statement calling for nationwide protests against the economic crisis and the IMF accord. □

Unión Europea cede ante lucha contra Cuba de Washington

Por Gloria La Riva

Más de un millón de personas marcharon hasta las embajadas de España e Italia en la Habana el 12 de junio, protestando la imposición de sanciones contra la isla por medio de la Unión Europea.

La masiva manifestación se dividió en dos columnas que culminaron frente a las embajadas siendo dirigidas por el Presidente Fidel Castro y el Vicepresidente Raúl Castro.

Solo días antes del 5 de junio, la Unión Europea compuesta de 15 miembros había adoptado nuevas medidas económicas y políticas contra Cuba. La movida de la Unión es supuestamente contra la acusación de los 75 cubanos a comienzos de abril como agentes extranjeros de los Estados Unidos que laboran para destabilizar al país socialista.

Muchos observadores ven la movida de la Unión Europea como una rendición a la dominación estadounidense en otra esfera geopolítica más: primero Irak, ahora Cuba. La declaración de la Unión Europea del 5 de junio es la continuación de una campaña creciente contra Cuba comenzada a mediados de la década de los noventa en la Europa imperialista.

¿Y qué pasa con Guantánamo?

Cuba denunció la hipocresía de la Unión Europea al no decir ni una palabra contra la detención brutal de Musulmanes, Árabes y Afganistanos por Washington en la base naval de Guantánamo, la cual los Estados Unidos ocupa a pesar de las objeciones de Cuba. Los más de 600 prisioneros en Guantánamo están detenidos sin cargos algunos y están privados de todos sus derechos.

A pesar de las manifestaciones masivas por los pueblos de Europa y del mundo entero, la Unión Europea no dijo ni una sola palabra condenando el bombardeo contra Irak por los Estados Unidos o la actual ocupación del país y la explotación de sus riquezas.

Con la aceptación de la ley Helms-Burton en marzo de 1996, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos trató de expandir su bloqueo de 44 años exigiendo que otros países rompan sus conexiones económicas con Cuba o sino serían penalizados.

Los Estados Unidos a aplicado intensas presiones sobre los países europeos y latinoamericanos que comercian con Cuba. Dos gobiernos en particular—España e Italia—han sido serviles al imperialismo estadounidense en años recientes, no solo contra Cuba sino contra Yugoslavia e Irak. Sin embargo, grandes secciones de la opinión pública tanto española como italiana han dado a conocer sus objeciones. Las manifestaciones más grandes contra la guerra de Irak se dieron en esos dos países. El 15 de febrero, más de 4 millones de personas se lanzaron a las calles en España—el 10% de la población entera.

Aunque España es uno de los países de más comercio con Cuba, su Primer Ministro José María Aznar ha encabezado una fuerte campaña de sanciones contra Cuba dentro de la Unión Europea. El Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba ha vuelto a publicar un artículo del 1996 que habla sobre el significado de ese cambio: “Mañana en Bruselas”, escribió el periódico El País, “el gobierno español les propondrá a sus socios comerciantes de la Unión Europea que implementen una estrategia de hostigamiento económico contra el régimen de Fidel Castro.”

El periódico decía que las medidas planificadas por Aznar, “veían un rompimiento completo de las relaciones entre España y Cuba.” Aznar, un conservador, llegó a ser primer ministro en marzo de ese año.

El gobierno de Italia, encabezado por la administración escandalosa del Primer Ministro Silvio Berlusconi, ha tomado pasos unilaterales para detener totalmente la equivalencia en euros de \$46 millones seleccionados para el comercio económico y el desarrollo. Estos incluyen la eliminación de \$20 millones para mejorar el riego en las provincias

de Granma y la Habana. Cuba ha padecido una severa sequía por varios años que según los meteorólogos no muestra señal alguna de terminar. Millones más hubieran ido para gastos de apoyo a centros para ancianos.

Otra amenaza contra Cuba de la Unión Europea es su promesa—realizada en la declaración del 5 de junio—de invitar contrarrevolucionarios cubanos a sus embajadas en la Habana, apoyando así la intención de derrocar al gobierno bajo el disfraz de “promover la democracia en Cuba”.

Oficiales diplomáticos en el Centro Cultural Español, la “Casa España” en la Habana Vieja, ya están haciendo esto. Cuba alberga un programa de cooperación cultural con ciertos países, que permite a los países invitados hacer exposiciones y así compartir su cultura nacional. Pero España ha desobedecido la propuesta de este intercambio cultural y ha utilizado frecuentemente el Centro para invitar a derechistas cubanos a sus reuniones para organizar en contra del gobierno socialista.

El 14 de junio, el Ministerio cubano de Relaciones Exteriores anunció que la Casa de España iba a volver bajo la

supervisión cubana: “se convertirá en el Centro Cultural ‘Federico García Lorca’, en justo homenaje a uno de los más grandes poetas y dramaturgos españoles, brutalmente fusilado por el fascismo en 1936. A partir de ahora, bajo administración cubana, el Centro sí se dedicará por completo a difundir en nuestro país, los mejores valores de la cultura española”.

Un tablón publicitario gigante del famoso mural antifascista “Guernica” de Pablo Picasso, pintado en memoria de las víctimas del fascismo en la Guerra Civil de España, fue erigido recientemente frente a la Embajada Española desafiando así la alianza de Aznar con Bush.

Mientras tanto, el 20 de mayo, EE.UU. incrementó la interferencia televisiva y radial contra las transmisiones cubanas. También permitió a José Basulto, el notorio terrorista anti cubano basado en Miami a conducir una avioneta con equipo rudimentario a un lugar donde pudo interferir con las transmisiones cubanas.

El 12 de junio, el secretario de estado de los Estados Unidos, Colin Powell hizo una declaración sumamente ultrajante y sin ninguna evidencia: Que Cuba ha promovido activamente el tráfico de niños para la explotación sexual de turistas. Esta aseveración fue calculada para provocar la atención de los medios masivos de comunicación, igual que hizo con las gráficas falsas alegando la posesión iraquí de armas de destrucción masiva que presentó a la ONU para justificar la guerra y la invasión de Irak.

En este reporte anual del Departamento de Estado sobre el tráfico de seres humanos, Powell colocó a Cuba en el “Nivel 3”, el nivel más grave. El reporte de tráfico de seres humanos es simplemente otra arma política en contra de países independientes y soberanos que la clase dominante de los EE.UU. considera una amenaza a sus planes de dominación.

Si Washington realmente se preocupara sobre el tráfico de seres humanos, aboliera la Ley de Ajuste Cubano de 1966, que es la incitación mayor del contrabando de personas desde Cuba a los Estados Unidos.

Esta reportera ha visitado Cuba muchas veces. Cualquier visitante puede notar que los niños son considerados el tesoro principal de la revolución. No hace falta que los niños limpien botas, laven cristales de autos en las calles o pidan limosnas en las calles, ellos tienen un futuro asegurado por los avances socialistas de la sociedad cubana.

El aluvión de mentiras y acusaciones contra Cuba tiene la intención de confundir y desorientar a los pueblos del mundo, especialmente en los EE.UU. Más que nunca se precisa un análisis claro y del punto de vista de la clase trabajadora, para reforzar los movimientos populares en defensa de Cuba. □

