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# 'Bring the troops home!'

# Mood grows hostile to Bush's endless war

By John Catalinotto

Another GI was killed in Baghdad on Aug. 26—the 139th since President George W. Bush declared the war over on May 1. As many news reports noted the next morning, this is more than were killed during the U.S. invasion.

The same day Bush promised American Legionnaires in St. Louis "no retreat" from Iraq and an endless war between "civilization and chaos." He claimed to represent civilization.

The next morning two more GIs died while fighting the Iraqi resistance.

Meanwhile, the U.S. people, on a collision course with Bush, were finding ways to express their dissatisfaction with the continuing occupation of Iraq.

A Newsweek poll released Aug. 23 found that about 70 percent of the U.S. population thought the U.S. would be "bogged down" in Iraq for years. More wanted troops out than wanted them kept in. And for the first time, more people wanted Bush replaced in 2004 than wanted him to stay.

Articles in this issue of Workers World show that polls weren't the only area where people showed their opposition to the occupation.

At the commemorative civil rights rally held in Washington on Aug. 23, anti-war statements drew the most enthusiastic applause and cheers.

A packed meeting at a Black church in Brooklyn, N.Y., on Aug. 19 showed strong support for parents of GIs in Iraq who

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wanted their children back with them, and for war resisters.

The same week protesters hit the streets of Chicago and of Richmond, Va., to protest war and occupation; they confronted Attorney General John Ashcroft in Detroit to oppose the "Patriot Act"; and they marched outside Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's home in Taos, N.M, as the unpopular warmaker was meeting with equally unpopular Vice President Dick Cheney.

The media took notice of the new developments. On Aug. 22, Financial Times reporter James Harding used the Chicago demonstration as an example of "a new season of anti-war protest with a fresh message: 'Bring the troops home now!'"

The ANSWER coalition, which led many of last year's antiwar actions, has called for local protests against the occupation of Iraq and Palestine for the Sept. 25-28 period, followed by a national march on Washington on Oct. 25. The major slogan for Washington: "Bring the troops home now!"

# Black church hosts anti-war rally



PHOTO: PAT CHI

Relatives of GIs in Iraq and war resisters join Black political activists, unionists and anti-war forces at House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn, N.Y.

# **Black liberation fighter** Safiya Bukhari, Presente!

In the early hours of Aug. 24, the progressive movement lost an invaluable leader. Safiya Bukhari, known internationally for her tireless work to free political prisoners in the United States, died from complications of prolonged illness. She was 53 years old.

Born in 1950 in Harlem, N.Y., Safiya moved to South Carolina before she was 1. She attributed her love for her people to her upbringing in the Black South.

In 1969, Safiya, a college student, joined the Black Panther Party after witnessing a vicious police beating of a Panther brother in Times Square. She had tried to stop the attack and was ultimately arrested. It was in jail that Safiya decided to leave college and dedicate her life to the struggle against racism.

As a New York City BPP organizer, Safiya became the section leader for 125th to 116th Streets from Seventh Avenue to First Avenue. She taught political education classes, coordinated community breakfast programs and focused on the needs of women in the community.

With CONTELPRO raids and arrest on Black Panthers, Safiya soon joined the Black Liberation Army. To avoid testifying against her comrades, she went underground for over two years. In 1975, Safiya was captured. She spent nine years in prison, with close to a year of that term done in solidarity confinement.

From behind the walls of prison, Safiya founded Mothers Inside Loving Kids, an advocacy rights group for mothers sentenced to long terms to retain custody and visitation of their children. It was also in jail that she begun her regular correspondence with Mumia Abu-Jamal.



After she was released on Aug. 22, 1983, Safiya used her training as a "jailhouse" lawyer to fight for the freedom of her comrades still behind prison walls. She wrote prolifically about individual cases, designed and made political prisoner T-shirts, buttons, bumper stickers and mouse pads, wrote fact sheets on each individual case. For years to come, Safiya provided critical support to her comrades, from driving their family members

for visits to making sure medical needs were met.

In 1992 she co-founded the New York Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition, which she co-chaired until her death. She also served as vice president of the Republic of New Afrika and was a longtime producer at the Pacific station WBAI.

In 1998, Safiya became the co-chair of the Jericho Movement to Free U.S. Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War. She traveled internationally to speak out against the racist U.S. prison industrial complex.

Despite serious health conditions, since 2000 Safiya had been a leading force in organizing continued solidarity for the New York Three, who were framed from killing New York City police in 1975.

Safiya Bukhari, revolutionary, mother, grandmother, singer, writer, comrade, sister and friend: Presente!

-Imani Henry

Some of the information in this report comes from statements from International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and WBAI Producer Sally O'Brien. Also, Henry wrote a series of six articles interviewing Safiya Bukhari published in Workers World the summer of 2002; the first url is www.workers.org/ww/2002/safiya0704.php



# A L E R T on Mumia's health

Supporters of imprisoned Black revolutionary and journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal are very concerned about his health. They report that he is suffering from swollen feet that could be the result of blood clots, a potentially serious condition. He wants to be able to take herbal medicines and be examined by a doctor from outside, since he has no confidence in the prison

Abu-Jamal is still on death row in Pennsylvania after 21 years, even though a judge's ruling struck down his death sentence last year. His eloquent advocacy for the poor and oppressed has made him a target of the repressive state establishment.

The Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal is asking that people not only contact SCI Greene Prison at (724) 852-2902 about Mumia's condition, but also urge elected officials supportive of Mumia to put pressure on the prison and demand that Mumia's minimum requests be met.

These officials are: State Sen. Vincent Hughes at hughes@dem.pasen.gov.

Rep. Harold James at (215) 462-3308 or www.hallwatch.org/profiles/pahouse/hjames/faxban k/writeletter

Congressmember Chaka Fattah. Go to www.house.gov/htbin/wrep\_findrep and type in 4601 Market, Philadelphia, PA 19143-4616 to get to email form.

In a late development, the group on Aug. 26 asks Mumia's supporters to engage in a creative "direct action" and send cloves or whole heads of fresh garlic to Mumia in prison, care of SCI Greene's Superintendent, including a note stating all of the above demands. People can mention that at SCI Graterford, fresh garlic is available to prisoners through commissary.

Please enclose your garlic in a sturdy envelope with a note instructing the Superintendent to provide garlic to Mumia and mail it using the following address:

Mumia Abu-Jamal, c/o Superintendent Folino, SCI Greene, 169 Progress Drive Waynesburg, PA 15370

-Deirdre Griswold

JOIN US. Workers World Party (WWP) fights on all issues that face the working class and oppressed peoples-Black and white, Latino, Asian, Arab and Native peoples, women and men, young and old, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, trans, disabled, working, unemployed and students.

If you would like to know more about WWP, or to join us in these struggles contact the branch nearest you.

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#### LOS ANGELES

Fri., Sept. 5 Forum on the Cuban Five. 6:30 p.m. At CARECEN 2845 W. 7th St. For info (213)

Sun., Sept. 28

No to colonialism in Iraq, Palestine, and everywhere. Gather at noon Hollywood & Vine. March to Hollywood and Highland for 2 p.m. rally.

**Every Friday** 

Workers World Party weekly meetings at 7:30 p.m. (Dinner at 7.) At 422 S. Western. Phone (213) 500-0529 for info.

#### **NEW YORK**

**Every Friday** 

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

#### SAN FRANCISCO

Sun., Sept. 28

No to colonialism in Iraq, Palestine, and everywhere. At Dolores Park at noon, march to Civic Center for 2

**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.

#### SAN DIEGO

Sat., Sept. 27

No to colonialism in Iraq, Palestine, and everywhere. Gather at noon on the University Avenue bridge over I-15 in City Heights. March at 1 p.m.

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# Cleveland's banks, FirstEnergy and the power outage The unholy alliance among banks, utilities and both capitalist parties

By Deirdre Griswold

upgrading the grid.

The vast Aug. 14 power outage that forced over 50 million people in the United States and Canada to turn to 19th-century technology is now believed to have started in Ohio, in the domain of the FirstEnergy Corp.

FirstEnergy didn't cause the rolling blackout that brought down 13 states and the province of Ontario. The power failure spread because the high-voltage transmission lines that now carry electricity hundreds of miles from seller to buyer were not built to handle such a task. And the energy companies—mostly controlled by big banks like Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs and Citigroup—have not wanted to invest in

The Ohio company may not be that much different from all the others. But since the problem seems to have originated in its system, FirstEnergy is getting media attention. And some interesting facts have come out about the company.

FirstEnergy was formed through a merger of utility companies that owned nuclear power plants. These companies, instead of saving consumers money with what they had promised would be an inexhaustible source of cheap energy, had instead incurred huge debt. Operating the nuclear power plants has proven to be enormously expensive.

One of FirstEnergy's facilities is the Davis-Besse nuclear power plant at Port Clinton, Ohio. In March of 2002, workers accidentally found that leaking boric acid had eaten a football-sized hole, six inches deep, in the head of the nuclear reactor. Only a thin stainless steel lining, two-tenths of an inch thick, was containing the nuclear reaction, and it had begun to crack and bulge.

USAF DMSP F-15 Imagery
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"[T]hat's not a lot of wiggle room between containment and Kingdom Come," wrote William M. Adler in the Austin Chronicle.

Davis-Besse is currently shut down. Millions of people live in the reactor's shadow. Their safety and the crucial Great Lakes water supply had been at risk. Even though inspections had earlier found improper maintenance and actual cover-up of the reactor's degradation, federal regulators decided that the company's financial condition necessitated that the reactor continue to operate.

It was a classic case of collusion between the federal government and big business in the interests of profit.

Sam Collins was the management official from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission directly responsible for overseeing the Davis-Besse nuclear power plant while some \$450 million in flaws went undetected. Collins had actually stopped a government-ordered shutdown of Davis-Besse just three-and-a-half months before the hole in the reactor was discovered. Yet this July, Collins was promoted to a higher position in the NRC. (Counterpunch, Aug. 23)

Might all this have something to do with the fact that FirstEnergy donated \$640,000

Parento Albazy Prietin

to George W. Bush's presidential election campaign?

FirstEnergy used to be called the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. It was a high-performing blue chip stock until it invested in nuclear power.

#### Strangled public utility

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In the 1970s, CEI was in an epic struggle to get Cleveland to sell its publicly owned utility, Muny Light. Muny Light provided electricity to about one-third of city residents, at savings of 20 to 30 percent compared to CEI's rates. It also saved the city millions of dollars on street lights and city-owned facilities.

In 1976, after CEI got all the major media behind it, the mayor and city council agreed to sell Muny Light, which would give CEI a monopoly on electric power. Dennis Kucinich, the maverick Democrat now running for president on a populist platform, was an elected clerk of the Municipal Court at the time. He campaigned for mayor on the promise he would not sell Muny Light. Kucinich was elected and canceled the sale.

Two years later, according to Kucinich: "The Muny Light issue came to a head on Dec. 15, 1978, when Ohio's largest bank,

utilities and both capitalist parties threatens more dangerous collapses of

the system in the future.

Cleveland Trust, the 33rd largest bank in America at that time, told me that they would not renew the city's credit on \$15 million worth of loans taken out by the previous administration unless I would agree to sell Cleveland's municipally owned utility to CEI. On that day, by that time, the sale of Muny Light was being promoted by both Cleveland newspapers, virtually all of the radio and TV sta-

tions in town, the entire business community, all the banks, both political parties, and several unions, as well as a majority of the Cleveland City Council. All I had to do was to sign my name to legislation and the system would have [been] sold and the city credit 'protected.' The chairman of Cleveland Trust even offered \$50 million of new credit if I would agree to sell Muny Light. ...

"I said no to the sale of Muny Light to CEI. At midnight, Cleveland Trust put the City of Cleveland into default.

"Later, it was revealed that Cleveland Trust and CEI had four interlocking directors. Cleveland Trust was CEI's bank. Together with another bank, Cleveland Trust owned a substantial share of CEI stock and had numerous other mutual interests."

This unholy alliance among the banks, the utilities and both capitalist parties has only grown since then. It could be seen in the Enron scandal that contributed to nearly bankrupting the state of California. And now it is starkly evident in the recent power outage and in the shaky infrastructure that threatens more costly and dangerous collapses of the system in the future.  $\square$ 

## **Bush lied about 9/11 pollutants**

# Millions exposed to lethal plume

By Heather Cottin

The Bush administration instructed the Environmental Protection Agency to lie about air pollution in New York after the World Trade Center burned up in September 2001. The White House coordinated its effort with the National Security Council and the EPA on behalf of the capital of finance capitalism: Wall Street.

According to a report by the EPA's inspector general's office just released—almost two years after the Twin Towers disintegrated into a trillion toxic particles—the White House instructed the EPA to give "misleading information."

The Long Island daily Newsday reported Aug. 23 that "some of the [EPA] press releases were softened before being released to the public, reassuring information was added and cautionary information deleted."

"Softened" is a euphemism. All statements had to be cleared by the National Security Council of the White House.

On Sept. 16, 2001, EPA chief Christine Todd Whitman issued a statement saying it was "safe for New Yorkers to go back to work in New York's Financial District." But it was not safe.

The asbestos level was in some cases 10

times the acceptable levels. As early as January 2002, reports on asbestos indicated that the increased danger in "homes or offices that have not been properly decontaminated could be as high as one additional cancer death for every 10 people exposed." (St. Louis Post Dispatch, Jan. 14, 2002)

A vermiculite mine in Libby, Mont., supplied some of the asbestos used in the World Trade Center. Most of the people in Libby are now dying of asbestos-related diseases. The W.T. Grace Company made its money and then closed down the mine.

Cate Jenkins, an EPA senior chemist who measured the levels of asbestos in Libby, noted the World Trade Center connection in early 2002. She asked, "Why are government agencies just shrugging off the fact that many of the apartments and businesses in lower Manhattan have identical levels of asbestos or higher?"

Les Skramstad, a miner from Libby, also saw what was happening back then. "It's the same damned government babble and indecision that led to half this town being either dead or dying from asbestos. ... Twenty or 30 years from now, when those New Yorkers start falling over dead, some young government bureaucrat will get all choked up apologizing for what

the EPA and others didn't do." (St. Louis Post Dispatch, Jan. 13, 2002)

What the government did do was distort, cajole and cover up.

Lethal levels of lead and asbestos were in the air. Scientists were alarmed at the deadly cocktail of inhalable particles, toxic metals, asbestos and byproducts of burning plastic. Yet the EPA directed businesses to open up, saying, "The general public should be very reassured by initial sampling."

The plume of debris that blew over Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens was called "no significant health hazard," by the EPA. But there was in fact no basis for saying this. The EPA had not tested for very fine particles of substances like asbestos.

In November 2001 Dr. Tom Cahill, professor of applied science and atmospheric sciences at the University of California Davis, suspected the presence of the ultrafine particles, considered to be more dangerous to human health than large particles. (New York Times, Feb. 24, 2002)

But the EPA did what it was told. The government got the financial district up and running again, while the millions who inhaled the air and those with deadly dust in their homes, schools and businesses were kept in the dark.



Undoubtedly, those who worked at Ground Zero and the many members of cleaning crews will be the most affected. These workers often immigrants paid the minimum wage and given little or no safety equipment, cleaned polluted office and residential space after the disaster. Sen. Charles Schumer endorsed the coverup, calling it "understandable. ... If the public loses faith that things are safe when the government says so, we'll have done more damage. ..." For Schumer and for the White House, people's lives are secondary. For them, damage control means saving Wall Street and the liars in Washington.

# A look behind California's recall vote

By Saul Kanowitz San Francisco

An enormous amount of money and media space is being used to cover the Oct. 7 recall vote and the complementary special election for governor of California. The Democratic and the Republican parties are calling on the workers and poor people in California to vote for their party's respective candidates.

Both big-business parties are saying they can solve the problems plaguing the state of California. What course of action best serves the independent interests of the multi-national working class in California?

Historically, the right to recall elected officials is a progressive social development. It removes barriers between the masses of people and the representatives of the government.

Recall can facilitate the will of the majority of society, who are the workers and the poor. During the Paris Commune of 1871—the first attempt to establish a government of the workers—the right of recall was one of the laws the communards enacted.

The current recall campaign and referendum, however, has a completely different character. It began as a right-wing attack on the already bankrupt program of Gov. Gray Davis, who is a political centrist and a Democrat. With heavy funding and hired canvassers, the campaign was able to gather enough signatures to force a recall referendum on Oct. 7.

On that day voters will vote on two points. First, they vote yes or no on the recall of Governor Davis. Then they vote on who should replace Davis as governor. If Davis loses the recall vote, whoever of the many candidates gets the most votes becomes California's next governor.

#### Democratic Party and "lesser evil"

The Democratic Party points to this right-wing offensive in order to put pressure on progressive organizations and the labor movement to provide resources,

first to "get out the no vote on the recall" and then to back the campaign of Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante. Once again they ask the working class and oppressed to choose the lesser of two evils. The message is, "Well, Davis may be a disappointment, but what is coming is even worse."

Organizing for a no vote on the recall gives legitimacy to the Gray Davis administration

But what is Davis's record? During the height of the economic boom, he presided over an energy crisis in which billions were shelled out to the energy companies. This exacerbated the current budget crisis that has led to enormous cuts in social services and increases in fees for services and education that fall most disproportionately on the poor.

In October 2002 Davis vetoed a bill that would have given an estimated 1 million-plus undocumented workers, mostly from Latin America, the right to obtain a driver's license or state ID. By denying these workers the basic right to drive, Davis kept a section of the workers in a desperate and vulnerable position. This in turn drove down the living standards of all working and poor people in the state.

This bill could have served as a modest effort at combating racism and building solidarity between documented and undocumented workers. Now, Davis is having to turn to the Latino community and admit he was wrong to veto the bill. He is now promising to sign it and is asking for their vote.

In several cases involving women who had been victims of domestic violence and had been convicted of killing their abusers, Davis overturned decisions by the state parole board that would have granted them parole.

Under the Davis administration, the prison-industrial complex consumed more of the state budget than the deteriorating educational system. The prison system was the only sector to see an increase in funding for the fiscal year 2003-2004.

Workers, oppressed people and the

middle class in California have all become angry and disillusioned with the Davis administration. Those drawn to work on the recall campaign are mostly disenchanted middle-class and poor whites. The recall forces appealed to them with reactionary and racist demagogy, objectively against their own class interests. But they are not a cohesive right-wing movement that present an immediate threat and must be stopped at all costs, including surrendering independent working-class politics, which is what some are urging.

Instead of spending resources to shore up the capitalist electoral system, the interests of the working class and oppressed people would be better served by calling for a vote of no confidence in both arms of this system, the Democratic and Republican parties.

#### What makes a Terminator 'viable'?

The program of the big-business candidates arbitrarily identified by the capitalist media as "viable" is more of the same, but under the direction of a different face or party. They all call for continued cuts in social services and education, "efficiencies" in government—which is code for attacks on state workers—and tax and fee increases that protect the rich and hurt the

This goes for the three major Republican candidates, State Senator Tom McClintock, former baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth and movie actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, as well as for Bustamante.

Among the 135 candidates left on the ballot as of Aug. 26, some are more progressive. But without an enormous social upheaval, none of the progressive or radical candidates will sit in the governor's chair. The budget crisis will still be placed on the backs of the workers and the poor, as it is now.

During the 2002 gubernatorial campaign, the labor movement gave millions to Davis' election. The governor is reportedly seeking an additional \$10 million

from labor for the recall campaign. But whether Davis remains in office or Bustamante, Schwarzenegger, McClintock, or Ueberroth wins, the workers and oppressed of California will face the same fundamental conditions.

It's not that there are no differences among the major candidates. It's that it would be more effective use of resources to organize independently of them.

#### Is another world possible?

What if that \$10 million went towards organizing a statewide march against the budget cuts? What if the state AFL-CIO provided buses free to all poor and oppressed communities affected by the Republican/ Democratic budget for a mass rally in Sacramento to denounce the big-business legislature?

What if students from around the state, at the University of California and Community College levels, brought their grievances on the 30 percent or more increase in tuition to Sacramento—and refused to leave until the legislature taxed the wealthy to complete the construction of the Merced campus and roll back tuition?

What if the lesbian, gay, bi and trans community got out the rainbow flag and brought demands for statewide domestic partner benefits to Sacramento?

What if the labor and progressive movement issued drivers' licenses or IDs to the million undocumented workers and those workers showed up at Sacramento demanding validation of their IDs?

What if all this happened on the same day and no one refused to leave until all these demands were met?

That would be the beginning of a genuinely progressive recall of the bankrupt capitalist system.

Workers World Party does not call for a no or a yes vote on recall. At the same time, it endorses the gubernatorial candidacy of C.T. Weber of the Peace and Freedom Party, which has popularized an antiracist and anti-war program in the state since the Vietnam War.  $\square$ 

### TULIA, TEXAS

# 35 Black frame-up victims pardoned

By Richard Wales

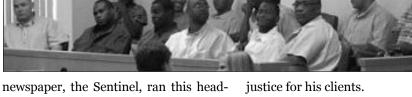
In late August, Texas Gov. Rick Perry was forced to reverse a racist atrocity when he pardoned the 35 Black people from Tulia who were still in jail or facing charges. Perry said that he was influenced by questions about the testimony of undercover agent Tom Coleman. But he was also feeling the heat of a media, legal and popular campaign to free these victims.

Some 46 people, 39 of them Black, were originally arrested in a 1999 drug "sting" operation in Tulia. Some 38 Black defendants were convicted on trumpedup drug charges on the strength of Coleman's words.

The FBI recovered no cash, drugs or weapons when its agents searched the homes. Of the other three convicted, one is on deferred probation and two others were ineligible for pardons because of other convictions.

This case is a story to be added to a long list that reveals the racist nature of the criminal justice system and the ingrained racism in U.S. society.

A week after the arrests, Tulia's local



newspaper, the Sentinel, ran this headline: "Tulia's Streets Cleared of Garbage," referring to the Black people who had been framed and arrested.

Now the entire public is aware that Tom Coleman is a racist liar the local police were using as an informant. But Coleman couldn't do it singlehandedly. District attorneys had to present these cases before judges and juries.

After the first few tried were sentenced to from 12 to 99 years in prison, some defendants pleaded guilty to avoid such long terms. They still received sentences of up to eight years.

The 35 are now pardoned, but not just from the governor's good will. Credit instead Jeff Blackburn, an Amarillo, Texas, lawyer working with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Blackburn has spent thousands of hours and thousands of dollars of his own money in seeking

Credit the Pacifica radio network that has spent many hours publicizing the atrocities over its listener-sponsored radio stations. Credit the series by Black commentary writer Bob Herbert that ran over the better part of a year in the New York Times.

This story has crept into the consciousness of increasing numbers of people over the last two to three years, bringing pressure on officials like Gov. Perry. It should never have taken this long to correct what one racist cop did—a cop who had been fired from a previous law enforcement position for misconduct involving theft and abuse.

That 10 percent of the Black population of any town could be prosecuted, let alone found guilty, is a racist atrocity.

After Perry issued the pardons, defense attorneys filed a federal civil-rights law-

Tulia defendants: first row from left Calvin Kent Klein, James Barrow, Benny Robinson, Freddie Brookins Jr., Timothy Towery and Willie Hall. In back from left are Kizzie White, Christopher Jackson, Jason Williams, Dennis Allen (hand to chin), Kareem White (obscured), Daniel Olivarez and Joe Moore.

suit in Amarillo's federal district court. It names more than 40 defendants, including the drug task force that supervised the sting and every county belonging to the task force.

Blackburn, one of the lawyers who filed the suit, said he is seeking compensation and justice for violation of the constitutional rights of his clients, Tonya White and Zury Bossett.

"This lawsuit is going to get done what it needs to get done," Blackburn said. "In terms of bringing true accountability, the real wrongdoers in this case have got to pay for what they did. They've got to pay in a large enough amount that they won't do it again."

And there are many people who believe that if there were real justice in Texas, many of these police officials would face criminal charges for depriving people of their freedom.  $\Box$ 

### 9/11 repression spurs immigrant fightback

Mass protest set for Oct. 4 in Queens, N.Y.

By Teresa Gutierrez Queens, N.Y.

One of the first U.S. soldiers to die in the invasion of Iraq was an immigrant from Guatemala, Marine Lance Cpl. Jose Antonio Gutierrez.

To die in an imperialist war for oil and colonial domination is a tragedy for any worker. When one reviews the horrible conditions for immigrants in the United States today, Gutierrez's death becomes even more tragic.

Immigrants in the United States, especially those who come from oppressed countries, face extreme exploitation reinforced by deplorable work conditions, racial profiling, inhumane prison detention with no legal representation, racist attacks, and even out-and-out slavery.

The capitalist economic system in its bloodthirsty drive for greater and greater profits super-exploits the labor of these immigrants. And the capitalist government has been historically complicit with this situation, carrying out policies that facilitate the bosses' exploitation.

But a new situation exists in the United States today.

A growing movement among the immigrant population—both documented and undocumented—indicates that they are playing an ever greater role in the progressive and working-class movements.

Much as during the early part of the last century when Jewish, Italian and Irish immigrants carried out militant struggles against the bosses, the situation today illustrates the longstanding adage: Repression breeds resistance.

### Immigrants and so-called war on terrorism

On April 20, 2002, the biggest demonstration in solidarity with Palestine ever held in the United States took place in Washington, D.C., organized by the antiwar coalition ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism).

One of the most exciting scenes at this important anti-war demonstration was the sea of faces of activists not traditionally seen at U.S. anti-war rallies.

The vast majority of participants at the march were immigrants and children of immigrants from countries throughout the Middle East and South and Central Asia. They came from Latin America and Africa as well.

Despite—or perhaps because of—President George W. Bush's so-called war on terrorism, immigrants and their children came to say no to war in Iraq and to show solidarity with Palestine.

The U.S. government, in launching its "war on terrorism," had expected to drive Arabs and others from the Middle East into the shadows of this society. But the opposite occurred.

Immediately after Bush's wave of repression was unleashed, immigrants began to defend themselves from the onslaught. Their allies, too, organized in their defense.

Longstanding organizations as well as new formations rose up to protest the wave of racial profiling sweeping the country

On June 26, the Migration Policy Institute, a mainstream and pro-government Washington think tank, issued a report saying that more than 1,200 people had been detained in the year after Sept.

11. The government has refused to say exactly how many or who they are, according to the institute.

Nearly 77,000 non-citizen men from Arab and Muslim countries were questioned, photographed and finger-printed. About 13,000 are in deportation proceedings. Progressive organizations believe the numbers could be much higher.

Immigrants from other countries were also targeted. Workers of color at airports throughout the country were held and scrutinized. Many workers report being fired from airport jobs just because they were born in Latin America.

# Portland Bolse, ID Minneapolis Flushing Mexitors Park San Lake Chy, UT Omaha, NB Chicago Gupens, New York PNew York Remo, NV Sap Francisco Denver, CD Des Moines, Id Kansas City: K8/MO. Las Vegas Wichita, KS St. Leads, MO Enulaville, KY Park Enulaville, KY Park Enulaville, KY Park Fayetteville, NC Park Fayetteville, NC Fayettevi

Map routes show some cities scheduled to participate in the immigration march. See www.immmigratworkersfreedomride.com

#### Super-exploitation: Nothing new in the U.S.

The so-called war on terrorism has particularly targeted immigrants from the Middle East and South and Central Asia. But it was calculated to have a chilling effect on all immigrants.

The Bush administration and the bosses expected immigrants to cower in fear as a result and perhaps stay quietly in the underground economy. But that did not happen.

Instead, immigrants are organizing in increased numbers.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2000 that the number of immigrant workers in the United States had jumped to 15.7 million, up 17 percent from three years earlier. The BLS estimated that nearly 5 million of these workers were undocumented.

The report stated that immigrants now represent 12 percent of the workers in the United States. This has a profound effect on the work force and the economy.

Many immigrants who come to this country have a unique perspective on the class struggle. They come from countries devastated by hundreds of years of imperialist domination. Most are forced to migrate to the United States because their home countries can no longer provide a living.

So when the jobs they get are the worst jobs, it is easy to understand why immigrants fight against these horrific conditions. These jobs range from supermarket delivery that pays an illegally low \$3 an hour, to gardening or becoming nannies, housekeepers or manicurists.

According to Immigration News Briefs of September 2000: "There is a horrific wave of violations of the nation's labor laws. Unscrupulous employers have

refused to provide workers' compensation or pay minimum wage or time-and-a-half overtime to immigrants required to work 70 to 80 hours a week.

"Some female immigrants have complained that their bosses sexually harass them, and they fear that if they complain, their bosses will report them to the INS.

"One immigrant, Silverio Otero, a grocery store worker on New York's Lower East Side, complained that for a long time he was paid \$240 a week even though the store owner required him to work 72 hours a week. That came to \$3.33 an hour."

This was three years ago, when the economy was still booming. If anything, conditions are likely to be worse now.

A woman from Cameroon was actually enslaved by a Silver Spring, Md., couple who forced her to work for three years without pay as a housekeeper and babysitter. (Washington Post, March 28, 2002)

Given these awful working conditions, it is even more shocking that immigrants risk losing their lives just to come and work here.

A Washington Post editorial of Aug. 16 headlined "Death in the Desert" predicted that the death toll among immigrants trying to cross the border from Mexico into the United States will break all records this year.

Five more migrants had been found that weekend alone.

The record deaths are partly due to an unusually fierce heat wave and "partly to increased patrols along other parts of the border," according to the Tucson Citizen.

And the danger is not just in the crossing. Not only has the government carried out a racist witch hunt against some immigrants and people of color, but the anti-immigrant climate has spurred on many a racist attack.

Throughout the United States, immigrants of all nationalities are beaten, spit on and chased down by racist thugs. The home of a Latino family in Farmingdale, N.Y., was recently burned down.

#### Out of the shadows and into the streets

The wave of racial profiling, the intensity of the exploitation and the brutality of the anti-immigrant hysteria fostered by various legal and extralegal institutions in this country give immigrants and their children no choice but to organize in self-defense.

On Oct. 4, a national event for immigrant rights will occur in Flushing, Queens, in New York. Caravans of labor activists, students and immigrants from every corner of the United States will converge there.

This event could have historical significance. It is being spurred on not only by immigrant organizations of many nationalities but by the labor movement. Called the Freedom Summer Ride, it is taking on the character of a major civil-rights movement, like that of the 1960s.

The fact that it is in Queens, a borough of New York City where every continent on the earth is represented, could indicate that the immigration movement is maturing. It has the potential of being not just a movement where Latinos or Pakistanis or Haitians work on their own, but where they and all other immigrants come together in one mighty voice, with one mighty fist, to say, "Enough is enough."

The event could also become, implicitly or explicitly, a major demonstration against the colonial occupation of Iraq.

Oct. 4 in Queens: Will it be the day when all can see that "there are no borders in the workers' struggle"?  $\square$ 

# Detroit marchers protest Ashcroft

By Workers World Detroit bureau

Attorney General John Ashcroft continued his national tour to defend the Patriot Act in Detroit, when he addressed over 100 local police officials at Cobo Conference Center downtown on Aug. 21.

Outside of the center, over 60 people chanted slogans denouncing the Patriot Act that was passed in the immediate aftermath of the attacks on the World

Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 11, 2001.

The Act has been used to justify the indefinite detention of hundreds of immigrants from predominantly Muslim nations. Many of these immigrants have been subjected to forced registration by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

At the demonstration outside, members of the Michigan Emergency Committee

Against War and Injustice, the Blue Triangle Network, International ANSWER, the Detroit Area Peace and Justice Network and other organizations, held signs calling for the impeachment of Bush, the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq, and demanding an end to the harassment and deportation of Muslim, Arab and South Asian immigrants by the United States government.

### Brooklyn action jumpstarts Oct. 25 march

# Black community rallies to 'bring troops home'

By G. Dunkel Brooklyn, N.Y.

A strong and informative rally filled the House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn Aug. 19. The gathering kicked off the New York City campaign to mobilize for the Oct. 25 march on Washington to end the occupation of Iraq and bring the troops

With anger and humor, speakers showed their concern for both the U.S. troops who are dying daily and the greatly suffering Iraqi people who are dying in greater numbers.

Two speakers have children among the U.S. troops in Iraq. One's son is a war

The enthusiastic, majority Black audience filled the sanctuary and most of the balcony on this workday midsummer night. The crowd greeted Cynthia McKinney, the former member of Congress from Georgia, with a standing ovation and fists in the air.

As they left, many people took extra leaflets about a Sept. 28 march to support the Palestinian struggle as well as those for Oct. 25. Many were community or union organizers.

"This war was unnecessary, unjust, it was about oil and hegemony," said the Rev. Herbert Daughtry in welcoming the rally to his church. "It was about oil, you know it and the American people know it. It was naked imperialism."

Daughtry, who is 73 years old, has been a national leader of the Black United Front and has a 45-year-long history of involvement in major national and citywide progressive struggles.

ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) leader Larry Holmes



Above, from left, Larry Holmes, Cynthia McKinney, Rev. Herbert Daughtry and NYC Councilperson Charles Barron. Below, from left: Daughtry, Gloria Jackson, Moonanum James, Gloria Pacis—mother of Marine resister Stephen Funk—and Dustin Langley.

thanked Daughtry for risking having an anti-war rally in his church. Referring to the power outage that struck the Northeast Aug. 14, he said: "It probably only took 15 minutes or so for the people here to start thinking about Baghdad, Basra, Iraq, their lack of food, medicine, and power.

"There's power outages over there because of the war and the bombing. Over here there was a power outage because no one could figure out how to make a profit from fixing their hokey grid. Those in power failed, their system failed because they couldn't figure out how to make a profit."

Holmes had some fun with terminology. "A blackout," he said, "is when Black people go on strike. A power outage is when all of us go on strike. And that's peo-

"A power surge is when we go out into the street and stop a war or some other injustice. We need to get the people in power out of it."

Holmes called for people to go to Washington on Oct. 25 and to organize others to go. He pointed out that there are new forces entering the struggleresisters in the military and the families of soldiers. They will lead the Washington

Holmes ended his talk with: "Stop all the dying, stop all the colonizing, stop all the occupying. We must make this occupation fail. Iraqi people know what they have to do. We have to do our part.

"If this occupation fails, it will be much more difficult for Bush and company to occupy North Korea, Iran, Cuba, Libya, Zimbabwe, anywhere they're scheming to control."

#### Family members speak out

Gloria Jackson, a childcare worker in Local 205, AFSCME District Council 1707, whose 29-year-old daughter is in Iraq, had this message: "I want my daughter home. I don't see why she can't come home. She was scheduled for Sept. 4 but they said they couldn't replace her."

Jackson said, "I need you to help me fight for her and for all of them and bring them all home."

Moonanum James is co-chair of United American Indians of New England and a Vietnam-era veteran. His son is a reservist now stationed in Iraq. James said, "I honor my son by standing here and talking about this struggle. Native Americans have been on the receiving end of 500 vears of a relentless campaign of war and terror. Isn't it open racism behind this drive to see our Arab sisters and brothers as somehow less than human?"

James called for unity with the Palestinians struggling for their land, and for solidarity with Leonard Peltier, Mumia Abu Jamal and all other political prison-

Ron Kuby, a lawyer who has handled the cases of many military resisters, said, "Now that the war is not going so well, when troops say 'get us the hell out of here,' the military's response is to say 'if you speak out, you will be court mar-

McKinney, who was singled out by the Bush administration for defeat when she opposed the pro-war campaign just after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, said, "In the most passionate spirit of patriotism, we say bring the troops home now."

McKinney gave shocking details about

#### RICHMOND, VA.

By Susanne Kelly Richmond, Va.

Chanting, "From Iraq to Palestine, occupation is a crime," several hundred people held a militant rally and march against the U.S. imperialist war on Iraq in Richmond, Va., on Aug. 24

The demonstration was called by the Coalition Against the Occupation, which consisted of Richmond ANSWER-Act Now To Stop War and End Racism, Food Not Bombs and others.

Marchers demanded an end to the U.S.

Richmond, Va., marchers open anti-war offensive.

WW PHOTO: SUSANNE KELLY

occupation of Iraq and to U.S. funding of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. They also took note of the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington and expressed solidarity with those marching the day before to



commemorate that event.

Ana Edwards of the Defenders of Freedom, Justice and Equality said: "There is a connection between the closing of a community pool and the billions spent on the war. There is a connection between the overcrowded conditions at the Richmond city jail and the money spent by the U.S. on arms of destruction."

Dr. Ali Abed, who had just returned from Palestine, said, "Our problem is not with Jews, but we are against

racism, and racism is the core and essence of Zionism."

Selim Khalfani, executive director of the Virginia Conference of the NAACP, said: "We're not here today to be nostalgic. The same issues of jobs, freedom and justice are as relevant today as they were in 1963."

After the rally, protesters marched through the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University and heard other speakers. Organizers announced plans for the Oct. 25 national march in Washington against the occupation of Iraq.  $\square$ 





how the Pentagon disregards soldiers' reasonable health concerns by ordering them to take anthrax and smallpox vaccines that it knows are dangerous. DynaCorp, a firm with close political ties to the administration, produces the vaccines. But the Pentagon can't find enough money to guarantee enough water to soldiers serving in one of the hottest countries in the world.

She asked, "If the government could spend \$40 million to impeach Bill Clinton for having sex, if they denied me re-election for asking questions about 9/11, if they try to recall Gray Davis for a bad economy, doesn't a conspiracy to use false grounds for going to war, looting the treasury, mishandling 9/11 provide grounds for the impeachment of George Bush?"

#### **Union supporters**

Brenda Stokely is president of AFSCME District Council 1707, which represents home-health-care and childcare workers in New York City. She said: "It's always very important when we come together like this. It's always very important when we go out in public and march. It's always very important when we rally. But what's equally important is what we do on a daily basis to bring this leadership down to its knees and out into the streets because this ain't about reform."

She went on: "This country can't recover based on the foundation it was built on. It was built on kidnapping and robbing people from another land, stealing the land from the people who were already here when that idiot who thought he was in India landed here. ... People who run the IMF, the World Bank are the ones we must get rid of to get rid of imperialism."

This aroused a cheer from Gloria Jackson, who is also a member of Stokely's union, and who let everyone sitting near her know, "She's my president!"

New York City Councilmember and former Black Panther Charles Barron recalled his youthful appreciation of Ho Chi Minh, Kim Il Sung, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Kwami Nkumrah, Julius Neyrere and Amilcar Cobral. He said, "What's happening in Iraq is not about Saddam, it's about people who have had enough occupation."

Barron plans to run for mayor of New York in 2005 as a representative of the Black community and of other people of color. He said, "The bottom line is that America needs a revolution—radical, root change."

Mara Verheyden-Hilliard of the Partnership for Civil Justice in Washington, D.C., and an ANSWER steering committee member, pointed out: "Bush's preventive war is not just against Iraq, but it's also against human rights, against workers in the United States and elsewhere in the world. It is also against Social Security, education and health care."

She said the people gathered together can "force this war to come to an end."

# DC rights march reflects anti-war mood

By Pam Parker Washington, D.C.

The Aug. 23 march on Washington that marked the 40th anniversary of the giant 1963 Civil Rights March led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was noted for its strong anti-war mood. Thousands of people from across the country streamed onto the grounds of the Lincoln Memorial to commemorate the historic march, which featured Dr. King's famous "I Have A Dream" speech.

The night before this year's march, Yolanda King hosted a "spit in" geared toward younger activists. Many people took the stage for five minutes each to "spit" poetry against war, about growing up poor and oppressed, about police brutality and other injustices to illustrate that the "dream" has not been realized by most working people in this country.

Teach-ins about civil rights and peace and justice issues gathered audiences in huge tents on the Washington Mall.

Throughout the weekend the speakers who received the loudest ovations were those who demanded an end to the occupation of Iraq.

Among the speakers were three presidential candidates—the Rev. Al Sharpton, Carol Mosely Braun and Howard Dean;

historic civil-rights leaders such as James Forman, Coretta Scott King and Jesse Jackson; representatives of the civilrights/peace-and-justice movement like NOW Executive Director Kim Gandy, National Lesbian and Gay Task Force Executive Director Matt Foreman, Damu Smith of Black Voices for Peace, Leslie Cagan of United for Peace and Justice, James Zogby of the Arab American Institute, Raul Yzaguirre of La Raza, and Mahdi Bray of the Muslim American Association, who invited everyone to come back for the Oct. 25 march against the U.S. occupation of Iraq. National youth and student leaders and church representatives also spoke.

1,000 in Chicago blast occupation

By Beth Semmer Chicago

More than a 1,000 people attended a protest Aug. 23 organized by the Chicago Coalition Against War & Racism (CCAWR). Over 60 organizations endorsed the protest, called just three weeks ago.

On Aug. 22, Financial Times reporter James Harding used the Chicago demonstration as an example of "a new season of anti-war protest with a fresh message: "Bring the troops home now!" And indeed many rally speakers, including veterans and parents of U.S. soldiers, urged the crowd at Federal Plaza to get back in the streets to get the U.S. out of Iraq and bring the troops home now.

The rally was co-chaired by Philana Fisher and Andy Thayer, activists with both CCAWR and the Chicago Anti-Bashing Network, a Lesbian/Gay/Bi/Trans organization that defends against attacks on the LGBT community. They told the demonstrators that upcoming actions included a mass rally in Chicago Sept. 26 as part of the Sept. 25-28 International Days of Protest Against War,

Chicago ANSWER's Pearlie Stuckey addresses crowd, which later marches through downtown (below).

WW PHOTOS:



Occupation and Empire and that CCAWR would be organizing buses to go to the Oct. 25 March on Washington.

Pearlie Stuckey of Chicago ANSWER, whose son recently returned from duty in Iraq, told the crowd how last fall she feared the U.S. was determined to go to war with Iraq and her son would be sent. Determined to do something about the impending war Stuckey went to Washington, D.C. for the Oct. 26, 2002, and the Jan. 19 and March 15 ANSWER marches. She was ready to get on the bus

again for the Oct. 25, 2003 march.

Another speaker was Gloria LaRiva of the International Action Center in San Francisco, who was in town for the convention of her union, the Communication Workers of America. Gloria is also a delegate to the San Francisco Labor Council which recently passed a resolution calling for an end to U.S. occupation of Iraq and endorsing the Oct. 25 March on Washington.

Shoppers and tourists lined the march route, with some joining in.  $\Box$ 



### **Belgian doctor's testimony**

# Six weeks in U.S.-ruled Baghdad

Geert Van Moorter, a doctor in the Belgian organization Medicine for the Third World who was in Baghdad during the U.S. bombing in April, returned to Baghdad from the beginning of July to mid-August to find witnesses for war-crimes charges against U.S. Gen. Tommy Franks. He was interviewed in the Belgian weekly newspaper, Solidaire, on Aug. 20.

#### By Pol De Vos

Geert Van Moorter: At first one had the impression that everything is going more or less OK. Life goes on, numerous stores are stocked with goods. Only the U.S. jeeps disturb the peace. But as soon as night falls, all this illusion disappears. Before the war, the city woke up at nightfall. Until 1 or 2 a.m., groups of people would be talking and joking around in the streets

Now, at night, Baghdad is a dead city. Besides, the U.S. command decreed a curfew that begins at 11 p.m., so no one can go out.

I quickly noticed that the population was still suffering terribly from the consequences of the war. The Iraqis can't understand how it could be that four months after the official end of the conflict there are still only a few hours of electricity available each day.

There are still enormous problems with drinking water. The gas supply is still gravely disrupted. Many people told me that after the devastating first Gulf War, in 1991, when most of the country remained in the control of the Iraqi government, all these problems were resolved in less than two months. Now, the entire administrative structure of the country is topsy-turvy.

Most public services and ministries are still closed down. The state enterprises are shut. There are hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who lost their jobs and are more or less running in place. How do they stay alive? I have no idea. They cannot still have savings, after two wars and 12 years of sanctions.

By good luck, the "oil for food" program functions more or less. About 80 percent of the distribution structure put in place by the prior regime seems to still exist. Considering what it is, naturally, it is a pitiful consolation.

**De Vos:** But they have still installed a "provisional government," no? Hasn't that succeeded in resolving the problems?

Van Moorter: Everyone I've spoken to has expressed only contempt for this council of 25 who today claim to lead the country. "In the past we had ONE Saddam, today we have 25," joked someone. "The majority are profiteers who have been abroad for years. They entered Baghdad with the American tanks." It is the U.S. forces who pull the strings. The so-called "ministers" have in reality nothing to say.

**De Vos:** Have the people succeeded in forgetting the war? Can they put aside the anxiety and tension of those days?

Van Moorter: Too many people are still confronted daily with the consequences of the bombings. For example, I was able to see Mohammed Ali Sarhan again. During the war, he had lost both his legs. On April 7, he was accompanying





CREDIT: SOLIDAIRE.

Dr. Geert Van Moorter in Baghdad. At right, he meets with Mohammed Ali Sarhan, who lost his legs when a U.S. tank in April blew apart the ambulance he was riding in, killing his wife and unborn child.

in an ambulance his wife, who was in the final stage of pregnancy, and another woman on the verge of giving birth. Then they became the target of a U.S. tank.

Mohammed was blown out of the ambulance, the two women and the babies about to be born were burned to death. When witnesses at the event wanted to come to Mohammed's aid, they were shot down.

Later, I was able to round up other witnesses, the father and the sister of the other pregnant woman. They were also in the ambulance. The sister is still recovering from her grave burns and has a serious fracture. They confirmed the story: U.S. troops had fired on the ambulance without reason.

**De Vos:** How do the people experience the presence of the U.S. military?

**Van Moorter:** An interpreter told me: "I feel like a foreigner in my own country. Each time that I see the Americans, I'm overcome with anger."

She told me how earlier she had led a varied social life. But today she doesn't go out in the evening. She doesn't even dare travel by auto. The U.S. soldiers are arrogant. Those Iraqis who had a neutral or a somewhat positive attitude toward the U.S. because they got rid of Saddam

Hussein know today that the U.S. Army did not come to help them.

At the international airport in Baghdad, thousands of people are being held. Everyone "suspect" is arrested and often even beaten without explanation. I went to see a young lad—10 years old—who was shot down at a control post. His shoulder was completely smashed up and he will be disabled for life. But this boy has nowhere to go.

The U.S. Military Police, who are assigned to punish crimes committed by the troops, won't raise their little finger to stop these abuses of power and the assaults committed by the U.S. military. When I asked one of them how they would react if they received complaints from the Iraqis, his reaction was: "It's war, man!"

**De Vos:** What do the U.S. soldiers think now about their presence in Iraq?

Van Moorter: A soldier told me that they could not eat any of the local food or drink any local drinks. Only their own rations. It is obviously untenable.

I had one friendly conversation with a soldier in a jeep. He was wearing a heavy helmet and a thick flak jacket. It was more than 104 degrees F. I was there in a T-shirt. I signaled him that I was very hot and asked if he wasn't suffocating under his outfit. His answer: "And it's not only that. I feel like I'm a prisoner. We can't leave our Jeep, we're not safe anywhere."

**De Vos:** What have you noticed of the resistance?

Van Moorter: Naturally, there are many protest actions and demonstrations. Those are organized for many different reasons. The unemployed, the families of people who have been arrested without reason, the inhabitants who demand water and electricity, the soldiers that have not been paid for months.

Then there is the armed resistance. I heard explosions regularly, often during the day. In the beginning of July, I was at the Hotel Palestine when, from the other side of the Tigris, in the presidential neighborhood, a bomb went off. I heard the rumble, saw the clouds of smoke rising

Quite soon, helicopters were coming and going, as well as trucks. I was also able to see a U.S. Army truck burned up. About three hours after the attack, I was there. You have to be fast to see anything, because as quickly as possible the U.S. forces get rid of all traces of the attacks.

It's a secret for no one that the official number of U.S. victims is always understated. In just the first two weeks in Iraq, at the first half of July, I learned from witnesses that 16 U.S. troops had been killed.

**De Vos:** Could one say that the resistance is intensifying?

Van Moorter: I had the impression that it is getting better and better organized. The actions have grown in size, which require more preparation. I was told of military training organized by officers and generals of the former army.

In certain regions, money is openly collected to support the resistance. I have seen many printed fliers opposing the U.S.

occupation. The political opposition grows stronger and demonstrates with sharper demands. At the end of July, the colonial authority closed down three newspapers because they criticized the U.S. forces and because they wrote of the success of the resistance.

**De Vos:** You are one of the initiators of the charges against Gen. [Tommy] Franks. What is your point of view regarding this after your visit to occupied Iraq?

**Van Moorter:** One of the goals of my visit was precisely to collect supple-

mentary information regarding war crimes. I succeeded. In addition, I even gathered another series of new charges and, indeed, all concerning serious war

The case in Belgium against Gen. Franks aims at obtaining an independent investigation of these crimes. But it is exactly at this time that the Belgian government has chosen to eliminate the law of universal competence. That is something that the Iraqis are unable to understand.  $\Box$ 







CREDIT: SOLIDAIRE

### **IRAQ**

# How U.S. policies made the UN a target

By Sara Flounders

Whoever bombed the United Nations headquarters at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad on Aug. 19, killing 23 and injuring over 100, mostly UN personnel, the act has raised questions about the UN's role in Iraq.

The Bush administration has tried to use the bombing to deepen its hold on Iraq. The White House is already working on new UN Security Council resolutions to pressure many countries to commit troops to this criminal occupation.

But the UN bombing also exposed the occupation's weakness. This may undercut U.S. efforts to bribe other governments to send the foot soldiers Washington needs as additional cannon fodder.

Though this may come as a surprise to some, the UN hardly played a humanitarian role in its recent history in Iraq. Its own former officials will testify to how the UN has made itself hated among Iraqis.

#### **UN role in Iraq**

Dennis Halliday, a former assistant secretary general and senior UN official in Iraq, resigned in 1999 rather than administer the UN blockade. He is a predecessor of Sergio Vieira de Mello, the UN special representative killed in the Aug. 19 bombing.

Halliday, who was nominated for the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize, described the UN role in Iraq: "The West sees the UN as a benign organization, but the sad reality in much of the world is that the UN is not seen as benign. The UN Security Council has been taken over and corrupted by the U.S. and U.K., particularly with regard to Iraq, Palestine and Israel.

"In Iraq, the UN imposed sustained sanctions that probably killed up to 1 million people. Children were dying of malnutrition and water-borne diseases. The U.S. and U.K. bombed the infrastructure in 1991, destroying power, water and sewage systems against the Geneva Convention. It was a great crime against Iraq.

"Thirteen years of sanctions made it impossible for Iraq to repair the damage. That is why we have such tremendous resentment and anger against the UN in Iraq. There is a sense that the UN humiliated the Iraqi people and society. I would use the term genocide to define the use of sanctions against Iraq. Several million Iraqis are suffering cancers because of the use of depleted uranium shells. That's an atrocity. Can you imagine the bitterness from all of this?" (Sunday Herald, Aug. 24)

Hans von Sponeck, a former assistant secretary general and the senior UN official in Iraq who replaced Dennis Halliday, also resigned in protest of the UN role in 2000. On Aug. 20 Von Sponeck said on the radio show "Democracy Now" that while the attack on the UN was horrible it could be "expected" because the Iraqis were so provoked by the U.S. occupation.

The UN exists in a world where the capitalist market ruthlessly decides political and economic relations. It is a body that almost exclusively represents capitalist governments that do not represent the people or their interests. The United States, as the undisputed military and economic super-power, has overwhelming influence.

The UN's humanitarian agencies provide assistance to war refugees, food to

famine victims and medical care to people in impoverished countries. These agencies' thousands of civil servants may be deeply committed to providing emergency relief. But the UN budget for humanitarian assistance is not even a band-aid.

To put it in perspective: Socialist Cuba, a relatively poor country with only 11 million people, provides more free doctors and medical teams to developing countries than the UN World Health Organization.

#### 1991 war and sanctions

One of the greatest crimes against humanity—the 1991 bombing of Iraq and the 13-year starvation sanctions levied against that country—was carried out as a UN-authorized action.

Based on resolutions that the United States pushed through the UN Security Council, the devastating 42-day bombing of Iraq in 1991 took place under the UN flag. The bombs reduced Iraq's earlier accomplishments of free education, free health care, electrification and modern infrastructure to rubble.

Then 13 years of devastating sanctions were implemented through the UN Security Council. The sanctions caused the death of more than 1.5 million Iraqis.

U.S. veto power kept the sanctions ruthlessly in place once the UN Security Council had voted for them. For the people of Iraq there is little perceived difference.

As an international movement arose to demand an end to the sanctions, the United States implemented—again through the Security Council—the Oil for Food Program. This program allowed UN sanctions to continue while allowing Iraq to sell a severely restricted amount of oil. The controls were so onerous that they drove both Halliday and von Sponeck to resign.

The entire sanctions regime was an effort to totally destroy Iraq, based on the now exposed myth that Iraq was hiding weapons of mass destruction.

The UN Security Council, through UNSCOM, carried out more than 9,000 intrusive weapons inspections. Vital Iraqi industries were systematically destroyed because the sanctions program judged countless industrial processes to have a potential dual military-civilian use.

The entire UN inspections program was later exposed as a thinly veiled U.S. spy operation. The UN weapons inspectors were always based at the Canal Hotel.

It was only in March 2003 that the UN Security Council refused to pass a vote authorizing U.S. bombing and invasion of Iraq. Nevertheless, the Bush administration rushed ahead with a war that was unprovoked, criminal and illegal against a sovereign but defenseless country.

A month after the Pentagon blasted its way into Iraq and the sheer brutality of the war had overwhelmed the mass movement, the same UN member states that had refused to authorize the war voted, with the exception of Syria, for a resolution that gave the United States and British military occupation full "authority."

This was the most sweeping authorization for colonial domination in UN history.

After the Baghdad government collapsed there was a growing effort to again make the UN part of the U.S.-British occupation machinery and to line up countries



Washington wants to hog Iraq's wealth for U.S. monopolies, but U.S. troops, shown above, want out.

to send foot soldiers, while keeping total U.S. command and control.

On Aug. 14, the UN Security Council passed a resolution welcoming Washington's handpicked "Iraqi Governing Council." The UN vote established the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq, called UNAMI.

UNAMI sent 300 advisors to Iraq to work on such "humanitarian" missions as training a new Iraqi police force.

In the Aug. 20 British Independent newspaper, reporter and Middle East expert Robert Fisk wrote that the Aug. 19 bombing of the UN building "proves that no foreign organization, no NGO, no humanitarian organization, no investor, no businessmen can expect to be safe under America's occupation."

#### Who are the foreign terrorists?

Virtually all the U.S. and British corporate media claim foreign forces are pouring into Iraq to fight the U.S. occupation. They accuse the Al Qaeda network, the Ansar Al-Islam group, Syrians, Saudis and Iranians of slipping across the border. The Financial Times speculated that 3,000 Saudis volunteers had infiltrated Iraq from the north—although the Saudi border is on Iraq's south.

These unsubstantiated reports are a feeble attempt to downplay the breadth and depth of Iraqi resistance. Iraqis are skilled, highly educated, have military training and are furious over the U.S. occupation. They can organize their own resistance.

A guerrilla struggle has quickly developed using a diverse range of tactics involving ambushes, land mines, trip wires, car bombs, drive-by shootings and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

Today, Iraqis consider the more than 140,000 U.S. troops and 10,000 British troops to be the main foreign terrorists in Iraq.

Meanwhile the Bush administration is in a wild scramble to increase foreign intervention in the service of the U.S. occupation. Through bribery and heavy political arm-twisting

Washington has forced others to pledge support.

Forty-four countries have agreed to send some military forces to operate under the Pentagon's command. Five other countries are discussing the possibility. Although few troops have actually arrived, approximately 22,000 are pledged.

#### UN under U.S. command

Less than 48 hours after the explosion at the UN offices in Baghdad, Secretary of State Colin Powell went to the UN to press for a new resolution that would convince member states such as France, Russia, India, Pakistan and Turkey to provide troops for a proposed multinational force.

Powell made it clear that the United

States is unwilling to give the UN authority in Iraq. The other imperialist powers, which are in competition with U.S. corporate power, seek some "authority"—meaning some say in the multi-billion-dollar reconstruction budget and in contracts for oil exploration, development, pumping, transport and sales.

According to Philip Gordon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, a U.S. think tank, the Bush administration has decided after weeks of internal debate to refuse to transfer any significant authority to the UN, a strategy he considers an error. (Aug. 20 International Herald Tribune)

But the UN bombing undercut U.S. efforts. The most immediate fallout from the attack is the decision by Japan to postpone "until next year" sending 1,000 troops.

Poland immediately scaled back its unpopular decision to send its troops. Polish troops were to be stationed in the central area between the British and U.S. forces.

Ukrainian troops were to operate under Polish command. This would have freed up thousands of U.S. troops. Polish Foreign Minister Cimoszewicz stated that access to Iraqi oilfields "is our ultimate objective."

In a rerun of the old Spanish Empire, Spain's troops were to command troops from El Salvador, Honduras, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. Today these countries are all U.S. neo-colonies. The death of a Spanish civilian at the UN head-quarters has opened a new debate and renewed opposition within Spain.

The decision in The Netherlands to send Dutch troops is already under domestic attack because of the radiation danger due to the U.S. use of depleted-uranium weapons.

Italy's commitment of troops was already unpopular and is expected to meet new resistance.

Adding to the problems, the UN, while declaring that it will remain in Iraq, is cutting its staff more than in half. The International Monetary Fund has withdrawn its staff.

Within the U.S. ruling class there is a growing split over the involvement of the UN. Some in the Bush administration are determined to go it alone. Others are increasingly concerned about the mounting crisis, the vulnerability and isolation of the U.S. position. Clearly the U.S. occupation is in crisis.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, touring Iraq on July 20, made the incredible statement: "I think all foreigners should stop interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq."

Wolfowitz, a key architect of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, should realize that only by bringing the U.S. troops home now could his statement come true. □



# Bill Gates, Blaster, SoBig & other computer worms

In early August, the MS Blaster worm shut down computer systems at Edwards Air Force Base, brought down the Air Canada reservations system, and forced a halt to Amtrak rail service on the East Coast for a few hours. It was one of the most disruptive computer viruses yet.

Then came the SoBig worm, filling the Internet with millions of infected emails almost instantaneously. Many email systems ground to a near halt.

The most disruptive computer viruses have taken advantage of security holes in Microsoft's Windows operating system. Other computer systems like the Macintosh and GNU/Linux are not affected.

The fault lies partly with Microsoft choosing to defy security standards in its default settings for Internet Explorer and Outlook Express in order to gain some market advantage. Partly it's that Microsoft's software gets targeted simply because it's on most computer systems.

At the root of the problem, though, is Microsoft's monopoly control of the Windows operating system and most of the applications that run on it such as Word, Excel and Powerpoint. This is what makes these virus attacks so devastating.

Microsoft's private control of the dominant computer operating system means that everything is hidden in the interests of protecting the coroporation's private profits. On any computer system, users will find vulnerabilities and problems. But it isn't profitable to admit such problems, fix them and

make sure all users have the fixes. Microsoft has made billions of dollars by shipping unfinished and sometimes untested software and never bothering to fix known problems.

Microsoft has made an art of denying responsibility for all problems and vulnerabilities and refusing to fix them. Frequently it will blame rival software companies for Windows' failures. Yet it has been shown time after time that the problems Microsoft has blamed on others are in fact its own problems.

Open software systems can't hide vulnerabilities and problems like that. The software code is open for anyone to see. That's what makes systems like GNU/Linux more secure, because when problems are discovered they can be easily isolated and fixed. There is nothing to hide.

Microsoft is like the computer Hal in the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey." There's something wrong inside, but how can you get in there to fix it?

Open source software isn't consciously socialist, no matter how much Bill Gates preaches against it as a plot to undermine capitalism in his speeches at the Cato Institute. But all of society has become dependent on computers and their operating systems, as well as on the Internet. Private control of these systems restricts their development and interferes with their effective use. It is only natural that the millions who use these systems should resist these restraints.  $\square$ 

# La codicia capitalista cortocircuita la red eléctrica

Continua de pagina 12

capitalismo ha revolucionado los medios de producción durante los últimos 200 años, pero no puede reconciliar los intereses a largo plazo de la Humanidad -conformada mayormente de trabajadores que están ahora conectados por tropecientos hilos en una economía global- con su necesidad de obtener beneficios inmediatos para unos pocos privilegiados.

Irónicamente, su deseo de rentabilidad crece más precisamente cuando el sistema produce bienes baratos en cantidades siempre mayores. La creciente crisis de sobreproducción conduce a los administradores del capital a tomar mayores riesgos y a tomar decisiones que pueden mejorar su verdadera razón de hoy, a la vez que magnifica el potencial de un desastre futuro.

Políticos desde Bush a Bloomberg realizaron un elogio a la población por su calma y conducta ordenada durante el corte. Fue una táctica, por supuesto, para distraer la atención de las causas de los problemas y de su propio papel tanto como pilares del capitalismo estadounidense y moldeadores de la política

Sin embargo lo que la gente trabajadora mostró, es que no necesitan de los Bush ni de los Bloomberg, y ni de los propietarios de las compañías de suministro eléctricos y tampoco de los bancos. Ellos demostraron tener la capacidad y habilidad de realizar el trabajo bien hecho, cualquier trabajo.

Aquellos que claman por una mayor regulación estatal de la industria energética olvidan quienes son los dueños el gobierno. No solo Halliburton o Enron, sino cientos de otras empresas ladronas se han asegurado de colocar a su gente en los asientos del poder político. Cuando los zorros cuidan el gallinero, las gallinas terminan en el

Tanto el capitalismo se vuelva cada vez más disfuncional, se debe encontrar un modo para romper los lazos de la propiedad privada y reunir la riqueza económica y al pueblo. Los Panteras Negras tenían un eslogan que acertaba a sintetizar esta idea: Power to the People (El poder para el Pueblo.)  $\Box$ 



### VENEZUELA

# **Mass outpouring backs Bolivarian revolution**

By Nathalie Alsop

Hundreds of thousands of supporters of Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution gathered in the streets of the capital city, Caracas, on Aug. 23 to celebrate the midpoint of the popular President Hugo Chavez's term. The demonstrators, estimated at 500,000 to a million people, took part in the last of six days of festivities to celebrate Chavez's three years in

The masses of workers and farmers were also in the streets to protest the opposition forces' newest strategy, a referendum seeking the president's recall.

The opposition forces are led by a coalition of business owners, bought-off officials in the old company unions and the corporate news media. They continually try to sabotage the popular government and the economy. They have also made two serious attempts to overthrow Chavez, both with the support of U.S. imperialism.

In April 2002 they arrested Chavez and attempted a coup. That was stopped dead by popular demonstrations and sections of the military. The second attempt was an unsuccessful two-month-long national lock-out-mislabeled "strike"—supported by the U.S. government and corporations like McDonalds, Nestle and Coca Cola. While the lock-out sabotaged the economy for two months, it ultimately collapsed.

These wealthy elements hate Chavez as much as the poor Venezuelans love him. They fear that a continued expansion of democracy will threaten their ability to exploit the Venezuelan workers and peasants, and will eventually lead in a socialist direction.

Their latest attempt is to force a vote

before the end of Chavez' term. They claim to have collected over 2 million signatures authorizing a referendum to recall President Chavez. But Chavez forces have challenged the authenticity of the signatures. The new Venezuelan constitution allows a recall referendum at the midpoint in a president's term.

On Aug. 21 the opposition held a protest to support the referendum that drew "tens of thousands" of people, according to the Washington Post.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell showed Washington's support for the big-business opposition with this Aug. 14 statement: "We are pleased that a mechanism was found where the government, under President Chavez, and the opposition could have this referendum."

Chavez answered that Washigton should not intervene in the internal affairs of Venezuela and that the country is not "a North American colony." (BBC Mundo Aug. 15)

Despite the vicious internal opposition of the rich and their U.S. backers, the Chavez government has succeeded in implementing many reforms that benefit most of Venezuela. It recently initiated a literacy campaign, drawing from the lessons of the campaign the Cuban Revolution undertook in the 1960s.

The new constitution offers indigenous peoples rights they never had before. A bank was set up to specifically grant loans to low-income women. And rural peasants have received land titles.

It is clear the Venezuelan workers and peasants recognize the importance of this process and support it. As Yaritza Alfaro told reporters at the Aug. 23 demonstration: "We are poor and we back the president. We won't permit a referendum." (Associated Press Aug. 23)

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### **PALESTINE**

# Sharon disguises provocation as 'self-defense'

By Richard Becker

Aug. 26—The Black Panther Party used to have an expression about brutal cops who justified their murderous actions by "masquerading as the victim of an unprovoked attack." The same description could be applied to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

A series of unfolding developments over the past two weeks has brought the U.S.-sponsored and misnamed "road map for peace" close to termination. Blame for the collapse, according to U.S. officials and the corporate media, must be assigned exclusively to actions of the Palestinian side, in particular the bombing of an Israeli bus on Aug. 19 in Jerusalem in which 20 people were killed and more than 80 wounded.

Predictably, U.S. officials, from the president on down to the billionaire mayor of New York City, competed in their condemnations of the Palestinians and pledges of devotion to Israel.

And just as predictably, the politicians and pundits alike mysteriously failed to discern the monotonously familiar pattern of Israeli provocations, including the assassinations of prominent Palestinian leaders, that preceded Aug. 19.

For the big business media here, Palestinian casualties—never mind that

they are significantly higher than those among Israelis—are never sufficient to "derail the peace process." According to them, only Israeli blood flowing can cause a "derailment."

Sharon, like his predecessors, thoroughly understands the racist rules of this game. Not only does he have a 50-year career of mass murder of Palestinians—from Qibya to Gaza to Sabra and Shatila—behind him, but Sharon has no compunctions whatsoever about sacrificing his fellow Israelis when he considers it politically expedient.

In the course of the struggle, and particularly over the past decade, the assassination of Palestinian resistance leaders has brought retaliation inside Israeli population centers. When leaders of the Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) or Islamic Jihad organizations have been assassinated, retaliation has been almost guaranteed.

The Israeli Army prefers to carry out "targeted killings"-as its spokespersons like to call assassinations-with U.S.-supplied attack helicopters. Missiles and 1,000-pound bombs are often the weapons of choice, and crowded city streets are frequently the venue for the Israeli hits. As a consequence, civilian casualties are often high. The U.S. media at best treats Palestinian civilian casualties as mildly regrettable "collateral damage."

The Palestinian guerrilla forces fighting against Israeli occupation have no such weapons. They have not received hundreds of billions of dollars worth of high-tech weaponry from Washington or anywhere else. So, Palestinian bombs typically are delivered strapped to the body of a person who invariably dies in the operation.

#### What triggered end of ceasefire

The event that immediately triggered the Aug. 19 Jerusalem bombing was the assassination five days earlier by Israeli troops of the Hebron leader of the Islamic Jihad organization, Mohammed Seder. Hebron is a city of 150,000 Palestinians in the southern West Bank. It has an Israeli settler population of less than 500, who nevertheless control more than 20 percent of the city. The Israeli Army frequently imposes round-the-clock curfews on the Palestinian population of the city.

On Aug. 18, talks between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators broke off over the issue of the withdrawal of the Israeli Army from West Bank cities. The refusal of the Israeli forces to dismantle roadblocks surrounding the cities, which effectively isolate them economically and socially even from surrounding villages, was the culmination of a string of broken Israeli pledges

made under the "road map."

Since the Palestinian resistance organizations began observing a "hudna," or ceasefire, on June 29, the Israeli government has reneged on virtually all conditions of the agreement. After pulling back from parts of Gaza and the city of Bethlehem in June, no further Israeli withdrawals have taken place. Palestinian economic activity remains at an all-time low, while poverty and malnutrition, particularly among children, are at record high levels.

Of the more than 7,000 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons, only 336 have been released, most of them individuals whose terms were nearly over.

Construction of the first phase of a 25-foot "apartheid wall," intended to cut the West Bank in half and annex 58 percent of its territory to Israel, was completed in late July.

And rather than a freeze on settlements, more "outposts"—future settlements—have been established than dismantled. In early August, Sharon's government announced the expansion of a major Gaza settlement. In Gaza, 40 percent of the land is allocated for Israeli settlers, who number fewer than 5,000 people. More than 1.25 million Palestinians live in Gaza's vastly overcrowded refugee camps and

cities.

Moreover, Israeli incursions and attacks inside Palestinian cities and camps escalated in August, resulting in numerous casualties.

Now, the Israeli government has announced that the Haram Al-Sharif, site of the Al-Aksa Mosque, is open for Jewish and Christian "visitors," while it remains restricted for Muslims. It was Sharon's "visit" to Al-Aksa, accompanied by 1,500 riot police, that sparked the beginning of the second Palestinian Uprising (Intifada) on Sept. 28, 2000.

The Sharon government clearly intended that the assassination of Seder in Hebron would end the "road map" process altogether. At the same time, it would be sure to unleash a response, allowing Israel to put the onus for the collapse on the Palestinians.

So, after the Jerusalem bombing did occur, Israel sealed the deal with the assassination-by-missile of one of the top political leaders of Hamas, Ismail Abu-Shanab, and his bodyguards in Gaza on Aug. 21. Tens of thousands of people and representatives of all resistance organizations filled the streets of Gaza City the following day for Abu-Shanab's funeral. Later, Hamas and Islamic Jihad formally announced an end to the ceasefire.

# No to Colonialism in Iraq, Palestine, and everywhere



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The people of Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Philippines and Colombia continue to resist empire and colonial rule.

Bush built his case for war against Iraq on a foundation of lies and racism. Now, Iraqi people and U.S. soldiers are dying daily. While millions are jobless, with education, healthcare, and children in crisis, the Pentagon is spending \$150 million/day on the occupation of Iraq! This year the U.S. plans to send more than \$10 billion to Israel – while an Israeli Apartheid Wall is institutionalizing colonial Bantustans and imprisoning an entire population with our money. The Pentagon is fighting in Afghanistan, the Philippines and Colombia, and threatening new wars against Korea, Syria, and Cuba. "Regime Change" is being proposed for Iran and Zimbabwe.

It seems there is never enough money to meet human needs, but no shortage of funds for war and the propagation of hate. With every military occupation, resistance mounts. As we are pitted against the people of the world, working people in the U.S. end up paying the price with our lives and taxes.

Not everyone is suffering of course: Bechtel, Halliburton, Big Oil and military contractors stand to make billions from colonizing Iraq. How many children of corporate executives or politicians are fighting in Iraq? While pretending to "support the troops," Bush and Congress are slashing veterans' benefits. Secure in the White House, Bush proclaimed "bring 'em on," inviting Iraqi resistance fighters to attack U.S. troops. We say, "Bring the Troops Home Now!"

But Bush and the Pentagon face a rising tide of global opposition to their endless war. Sept. 25-28, people around the world will join in International Days of Protest Against War, Occupation and Empire on the third anniversary of the Palestinian Intifada (uprising). Join us.

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San Francisco Sun. Sept. 28

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### What's behind the 'road map'

The "road map" is a U.S. plan to create what one commentator has called a "Palestinian mini-mini-mini state"-in other words, a bantustan, independent in name but in reality a colony-while putting an end to the Palestinian national liberation struggle. The Palestinian movement is seen in Washington as a major obstacle to U.S. ruling class plans to restructure the Middle East in the aftermath of its seizure of Iraq.

The Sharon government, highly conscious of Israel's dependence on U.S. military, economic and diplomatic support, went along with the "road map" for the time being.

Both the U.S. and Israeli governments had demanded that the Palestinians create a new government, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, as a precondition for starting negotiations.

And both demanded that Abbas "dismantle" the resistance organizations, all of which are deeply rooted in the population.

That would have required a civil war among the Palestinians, something that both Washington and Tel Aviv have been most desirous of for the past decade. But the Palestinian forces, despite different perspectives ranging from Islamic to nationalist to Marxist, have skillfully avoided such a ruinous conflict. □

# La codicia capitalista cortocircuita la red eléctrica

Por Deirdre Griswold New York

Fluye instantáneamente de ciudad a ciudad, de estado a estado, de región a región, incluso a través de las fronteras nacionales. Donde hay demanda, penetra inmediatamente. Donde no puede aprovechar un beneficio, mengua. En ocasiones el fluido se interrumpe en un momento crítico, y surge una crisis.

La compleja red a través de la cual viaja enriquece a muchas empresas, pero tan sólo algunas pocas y gigantes corporaciones dominan por completo el proceso.

No, no estamos hablando de electricidad. Hablamos del capital.

Para comprender por qué el 14 de agosto la red eléctrica falló una vez más en gran parte de los Estados Unidos, es necesario saber qué es lo que le sucede a la amplísima riqueza social creada por el trabajo colectivo de millones de trabajadores en el país más rico del mundo. Esta enorme riqueza ha sido empleada para generar una máquina militar más moderna y poderosa que en cualquier otro bloque de naciones del planeta. Y ha producido una clase de magnates con activo mayor que muchos países enteros.

¿Es debido a eso que, en pleno siglo XXI, la distribución de electricidad en los EE.UU. haya sufrido un colapso monumental?

Tal y como el escándalo Enron y la debacle energético de California demostraron, capitalistas han amasado fortunas inmensas, legal e ilegalmente, mediante la venta de electricidad como mercancía. Entre los años 1999 y el 2000, los ingresos totales por servicios de este tipo aumentaron un 32 por ciento y las ganancias por valores subieron hasta el 11 por ciento. A pesar del estancamiento del resto de la economía, el promedio de recuperación de las inversiones en servicios energéticos es ahora la más grande que se conoce en los últimos diez años. Los dividendos por servicios de este tipo son tres veces mayor que el promedio de los 500 de Standard & Poor.

Al mismo tiempo, estas empresas, no han encontrado interesante invertir en la actualización y mejora de la red —la enorme y compleja línea que transmite electrones desde los generadores hasta los consumidores.

La inversión en transmisión eléctrica es ahora la mitad que la de hace 10 años.

Por eso incluso aunque exista exceso de capacidad en el área de generación eléctrica —suficiente para satisfacer los picos de demanda— los cuellos de botella afloran en el área de transmisión. Los ordenadores que dirigen la electricidad a través de las líneas desde los vendedores a los compradores están programados para producir abultados beneficios—frecuentemente a costa de la eficiencia y la conservación de la energía. La electricidad se envía a cada vez mayores distancias, si bien perdiendo potencia en el camino.

#### La regulación comenzó en la década de los 30

Durante más de un siglo, la disponibilidad fiable de fuerza eléctrica ha sido total-

mente indispensable para el crecimiento del capitalismo estadounidense. Esto fue dolorosamente claro para las clases dominantes durante la Gran Depresión, cuando el hundimiento de los negocios de muchas empresas energéticas contribuyó a la implosión de la economía.

Tal y como muchos de los capitalistas hacen, entonces y ahora, encantados de atacar al gran Estado, los astutos representantes políticos de los grandes negocios en la Administración Roosevelt intentaron rescatar del caos a su propia clase decretando un paquete de medidas que aseguraría el acceso a la energía eléctrica a través de los EEUU a unos precios relativamente bajos garantizando a las empresas privadas de la energía un beneficio. Muchas de estas empresas pertenecieron a dueños locales.

Sin embargo, el tremendo crecimiento en la demanda eléctrica de las décadas recientes ha estimulado el apetito del gran capital y aquella regulación les resulta ahora insatisfactoria. Sus grupos de presión han empujado para que se produzcan desregulaciones parciales de algunas áreas

Enver Masud, que dirigió el Estudio de la Red de Energía Nacional en EEUU en 1980, y el Estudio de Fiabilidad Eléctrica Nacional en 1981 para el Departamento de Energía estadounidense, escribió el 18 de Agosto en el periódico Christian Science Monitor: "En cambio, la desregulación estaba mal denominada. Lo que realmente sucedió fue que las nuevas leyes y regulaciones estaban puestas en su sitio, y un sistema bien comprobado que favorecía la minimización de costos se reemplazó por un sistema sin examinar que fomentaba la maximización de beneficios. También fracturó la responsabilidad de garantizar una fiabilidad completa del sistema".

El cambio de las normas hizo más fácil cerrar las plantas eléctricas menos rentables, la separación de la propiedad de las plantas de aquellos de las líneas de transmisión, y despedir en todo este recorrido a muchos trabajadores. El control de la industria pasó de compañías energéticas menores a las corporaciones de mayor capacidad –y ahora a manos de los bancos y firmas financieras que andan detrás de ellas.

#### ¿Quién es dueña de la industria? La gran banca

"La mayor fuerza de la industria energética hoy día no son las grandes compañía de gas natural o de energía eléctrica, sino los grandes bancos como Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley y Citigroup," tal y como afirma el New York Times del 19 de Agosto. Estas compañías de Wall Street se han movido "agresivamente" dentro del mercado de energía, y han comprado plantas de energía, señaló el Times, porque "las ganancias que se ofrecen son atractivas y la capacidad infrautilizada... puede ser comercializada en mercados abiertos rentablemente".

Si tuvieses una radio que funcione a pilas en Nueva York durante el apagón, podrías escuchar la Radio Bloomberg, la cual se llama a sí misma "la única Estación de Radio Global del Mundo". Sí, el alcalde, Michael Bloomberg, el también millonario propietario del imperio de la comunicación y las noticias financieras. Mientras millones de personas se armaban de paciencia, narraba sobre lo bien que enfrentaba la ciudad el hecho —una referencia al alcalde y otros funcionarios, por supuesto.

Claro, Wall Street estaba en una de las zonas en que la energía se restauró primero. Las luces de neón iluminaban en el Times Square, también, doce horas antes que millones de residentes pudiesen utilizar sus refrigeradores, ascensores o ventiladores.

Aún no se encendían los semáforos en muchas zonas. Los trenes subterráneos estaban inmóviles. Las temperaturas aumentaban en los grandes cañones de concreto y los rascacielos.

En Detroit y Cleveland, millones de personas se enfrentaban ante un problema peligroso, añadido al resto de problemas, dado que el corte del suministro dejaba inutilizables las bombas de agua.

Pero en Wall Street, "los precios de la energía en el Noreste hirvieron el viernes, el día siguiente al apagón, llegando a más de \$1.000 un megavatio por hora desde un precio promedio más cerca a los \$100" (New York Times, 19 de agosto.)

Los bancos y financieras de Wall Street que recientemente habían adquirido el negocio de la energía hacían su agosto.

¿Emplearán este dinero para reconstruir la red de energía? Incluso aunque hayan saltado muchas alarmas que un desastre se podría dar, no han hecho nada todavía. Estos ingresos se están repartiendo realmente entre propietarios y accionistas.

La careta y la interpretación que los medios de comunicación le han puesto a lo que se ha nombrado el Gran Apagón del 2003 es que el apagón se produjo por la falla de la maquinaria capitalista de introducir en el proceso de mejora de la red de

transmisión eléctrica una herramienta para sacarle ventaja—lucro. Ese es el 'mantra' del capitalismo: si no es rentable, no lo hagas. Seguramente, a consecuencia de esto, los políticos y los medios de comunicación demandarán mayores tasas de interes y rescates económicos gubernamentales para costear las nuevas y mejores líneas eléctricas. El Secretario de Energía Spencer Abraham ya ha aparecido en televisión para anunciar que los consumidores parece que tendrán que pagar hasta \$50 billones de dólares en cobros por el uso de electricidad.

De cualquier modo, la carga de cualquier nueva construcción, recaerá con todo su peso sobre la clase trabajadora, especialmente sobre las comunidades de color, tanto consumidores como contribuyentes sin caros abogados que les puedan encontrar los huecos de la ley. Además, la industria criticará más fuerte las leyes de naturaleza medioambiental culpándolas de limitar la producción, incluso cuando ese no sea el problema.

#### Los desastres son cada vez más grandes

Este corte es aún peor que los masivos fallos energéticos que pararon el Noreste el 9 de Noviembre de 1965, que paralizaron la ciudad de Nueva York el 13 de Julio de 1997, y en el muy caluroso verano de 1996, que causaron apagones en 11 estados del Oeste, Alberta y la Columbia Británica en Canadá, y la Baja California en México. Después de aquellos desastres, se produjeron exámenes de cómo funcionó la red eléctrica. Se formaron nuevas organizaciones –El Consejo de Fiabilidad Eléctrica de Norte América fue la respuesta de la industria después de 1965– y se dispusieron mecanismos para aislar el problema ante cortes eventuales. De manera que no se esperaba que nuevos apagones volvieran a producirse.

Pero sucedieron, y el día que las temperaturas alcanzaban los 90 grados Fahrenheit—un calor no usual para esta época del año. Y esta vez afectó un total de 50 millones de personas de EEUU y

Es posible que los capitalistas individuales no son muy inteligentes, pero tienen mucha gente inteligente trabajando para ellos. Su clase ha sido advertida una y otra vez de que el sistema de transmisión energética es anticuado e inadecuado. Ahora ha sido otro colapso el que le ha costado a sus negocios billones de dólares—sin mencionar el desorden, los inconvenientes y el peligro que ocasiona a decenas de millones de hogares.

Para la clase dominante incluso todavía, al igual que el anticuado sistema de control de tráfico aéreo —que se colapsó en el área de Nueva York sólo unos días después del apagón, por razones no relacionadas—los costos reales del desastre parecen más aceptables que la necesaria revisión de la infraestructura.

Todo esto parece irracional, pero no debemos fijarnos en la irracionalidad de los individuos sino en la de un sistema económico que se atrinchera cuando el mundo ha cambiado sustancialmente. El

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