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Anti-war movement demands end to occupation

Iraqi resistance controls key cities

Neither Bush nor Kerry plans to bring troops home

By Leslie Feinberg

Sept. 7—George W. Bush says it's still the "right war for America." Presidential contender John Kerry says he'd "try" to bring the troops home four years into his first term, just in time for second-term election promises to begin.

But the people of Iraq and increasing numbers of people across the United States demand that Washington end the brutal occupation for empire by pulling its troops back—now.

And all the high-tech Pentagon weaponry abroad, police-state-style show of force domestically, high-fallutin spin by presidential hopefuls, and pro-war coverage in the monopoly media are proving incapable of suppressing that demand.

As hundreds of thousands massed and marched and skirmished with police in Manhattan during the Republican National Convention to confront the incumbent administration for its support of the war, Iraqi resistance surged in the face of overwhelming firepower.

Fighting in Iraq continues to rage. Occupation troops have taken their worst hits in five months.

Battling in Baghdad

Insurgents battled U.S. troops in Sadr City on Sept. 6 and 7 after what a spokesperson for Moqtada al-Sadr said were Pentagon incursions into the Baghdad neighborhood and

Youth views on Republican Convention protests

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attempts to arrest followers of the anti-occupation cleric. (Associated Press, Sept. 7)

The impoverished neighborhood, home to some 2 million Iraqis, has been a stronghold of anti-occupation insurgency backed by powerful popular support.

U.S. tanks, armored personnel carriers and Bradley fighting vehicles rolled in, firing into the densely crowded neighborhood. Warplanes screamed overhead. Columns of black smoke billowed from residential areas. A senior Health Ministry official said that an estimated 35 Iraqis were killed and 203 wounded.

While Pentagon spokespeople said a "multinational force" carried out the siege, AP reported, "U.S. forces appeared to be carrying out most if not all of the fighting."

But groups of Iraqi youths with rocket-propelled grenades fought back, and militia fighters dug up the asphalt to bury explo-

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Group from U.S. visits Haiti Political prisoners tell of mistreatment

By LeiLani Dowell

On Sept. 3-6, twelve people from both coasts of the United States who oppose the current U.S. occupation of Haiti traveled to that Caribbean country to participate in a fact-finding delegation.

They met with internal exiles—people forced from their homes to different parts of the country in fear of their lives—as well as union leaders, women's groups and about 35 political prisoners.

Among these prisoners were Annette "So Anne" August, famous Haitian singer and political activist; Prime Minister Yvon Neptune; and Minister of the Interior Jocelerme Prevert. All were imprisoned for refusing to be pushed into exile outside Haiti.

The delegation included former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark and 11 others from the United States from the International Action Center, the New England Committee for Human Rights in Haiti and the Haiti Support Network.

Since the coup d'etat and kidnapping of democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide by U.S. forces last Feb. 29, the situation for many inside Haiti has dramatically worsened. Supporters of Aristide's Lavalas Party are routinely targeted, as are people living in neighborhoods known to be strongholds of Lavalas support.

People reported being rounded up and thrown into jail without charges or hearings, their families forced into exile. Rape has substantially increased, with women unable to seek support for fear of further threats on their lives. Whole towns have been exiled.

So Anne detailed the conditions around her arrest. Around midnight on May 10, U.S. Marines arrived at her house and killed her two dogs. They then handcuffed So Anne and her six children, aged 5 to 12, putting bags over their heads and leaving them on for two hours until



WW PHOTO

they all arrived at the medical school the troops had taken over as headquarters.

The delegation also met with leaders of the Confederation of Haitian Workers, who expressed support for the Oct. 17 Million Worker March in the United States.

LeiLani Dowell, who was on the Haiti delegation, is a Workers World Party member and Peace & Freedom Party candidate for the Eighth Congressional District, San Francisco.

Delegation from U.S. outside prison in Port-au-Prince.

Iraqi resistance controls key cities

Continued from page 1

sives. Pentagon brass reported their forces came under mortar, grenade and bomb attacks.

Six U.S. soldiers were killed in and around Baghdad in the fighting. Two of those were killed and 16 wounded after missiles exploded on their base to the north of Baghdad. A high-ranking U.S. official said the losses might be even higher. (ArabicNews.com, Sept. 7)

Fighting flares in Falluja

Pentagon forces also bombarded Falluja from the air and the ground on Sept. 7. Pentagon warplanes rained air strikes that reportedly set whole neighborhoods ablaze. Tanks shelled residential areas. Military helicopters and drones circled above. (SABCnews.com, Sept. 7)

But the imperialist onslaught has met stiff resistance. Fighters marched and danced in the streets of Falluja on Sept. 6 with parts of one of the drones they said they had shot down.

And the same day, seven Marines and three Iraqi puppet troops were killed in an insurgent ambush in Saqlawiya, a city of 300,000 on the northern outskirts of Falluja. Rage against the occupation has roiled in Saqlawiya since Sept. 1, when U.S. air strikes on the city killed 20 Iraqis, including three children.

In April, at least 700 Iraqis, mostly women and children, were reported killed and 1,500 others injured during a three-week Pentagon blitzkrieg on Falluja. But Marine commanders were compelled to pull out their forces after sustained and ferocious defense of the city by the resistance killed 135 U.S. troops.

Since then, Falluja—35 miles west of Baghdad—has been in the hands of the popular resistance. And so have the nearby cities of Samarra and Ramadi.

At least 16 Iraqis were killed and 60 injured in the northern town of Tal Afar, close to Mosul, after U.S. troops opened up another offensive there. Fire from resistance fighters forced one of the attack helicopters to make an emergency landing.

With little fanfare, the U.S. command has ordered the arrests of some 500 Iraqis in Latifiya, 40 miles south of Baghdad. The brass ordered Iraqi security officers to storm al-Jazeera's Baghdad offices, sealing the newsroom with red wax, to indefinitely shut down anti-occupation reporting. And the Pentagon directed Iraqi puppet forces in an attempt to take over al-Sadr's offices in Najaf.

Abduljabbar Al-Kubaysi, president of the Iraqi Patriotic Alliance (IPA) and renowned exponent of the popular resistance, was arrested on Sept. 3 in a quarter of Baghdad controlled by guerrilla forces. The house he stayed in was surrounded and stormed by U.S. occupation forces employing helicopters, tanks and up to 100 heavily armed soldiers. An international campaign to free Al-Kubaysi has begun. (Anti-Imperialist Camp)

Death toll mounts

A total of 14 U.S. troops were killed within a 36-hour period on Sept. 6 and 7, bringing Pentagon casualties—including three contractors—to more than 1,000. More than three dozen of the U.S. troops killed were immigrants, at least 10 of whom died waiting to get green cards. (CNN.com, Sept. 7)

Pentagon spokespersons announced late Sept. 7 that the number of wounded had reached 7,000. They offered no official figures for the number of Iraqis killed by occupation troops—estimated by independent sources at between 11,000 and 20,000.

When the GI casualty roster hit 1,000, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld attempted to do damage control in his first news conference at the Pentagon since mid-July. He claimed the U.S. was “winning” and once again vaguely linked the former Saddam Hussein government with “terrorism.”

In fact, whether the Bush administration plans were well laid or not, they have gone astray.

Things aren't going so well for the empire.

Top Pentagon and Bush administration officials conceded publicly on Sept. 7 that the popular resistance controls key parts of the country, including Ramadi, Fallujah, Baquba, Samarra and Sadr City.

In northern Iraq Sept. 6, a gas line that piped to a major electrical plant near Kirkuk was set on fire. And anti-occupation forces reignited an inferno in a key oil pipeline to Turkey, shutting down exports from the northern oil fields around Kirkuk. Insurgents continue to demonstrate the vulnerability of the oil and gas channels that imperialist oil cartels are using to steal the world's second-greatest petroleum reserves.

The U.S. media machinery ballyhooed the “capture” of Izzat Ibrahim al-Dour—a top-ranking official in the Hussein government. But medical tests proved the Iraqis had the wrong man in custody.

The phony June “handover of power” to a puppet regime has not quelled Iraqi resistance. The figurehead of the titular “government” is Iyad Allawi, one of the U.S. and British intelligence agencies' most trusted spies while Saddam Hussein was president. (Columbia Daily Tribune, Sept. 7)

Nor has the fig leaf of “sovereignty” created even a semblance of an Iraqi state and governmental apparatus.

On Sept. 7 an explosion ripped through the convoy of Washington's handpicked “governor” of Baghdad. Ali al-Haidri—traveling through the capital in his BMW—escaped unharmed.

The same day the son of the governor of Niniveh, a northern Iraqi province, was assassinated in Mosul. The “provincial government” building in central Mosul, headquarters to area collaborators with the imperialist occupation, had been devastated by a mortar attack on Sept. 1. And the previous Niniveh governor was assassinated in July.

Sen. John Kerry is making an election-year bid to convince U.S. finance capitalists that he could carry out the theft of Iraqi resources more smoothly by building a broader international coalition that could commit large numbers of troops to take a share of the casualties.

But neither Germany nor France has committed troops. The hand of Japanese imperialism has been stayed in large part by widespread domestic opposition to sending more troops.

Who will commit troops and contractors? With more than 100 hostages in Iraqi custody, many countries have pulled out their contractors and some troops.

Ukrainian officials announced on Sept. 7 that they would also cut their 1,600-member contingent by 200 soldiers.

Only Georgia has vowed to double its military deployment—of 157 soldiers. The country's “armed forces” are armed, uniformed, equipped, fed and transported by the Pentagon.

However even doubling 157 troops is still short of the 550 troops that Tblisi—eager to join NATO—promised four months ago. □

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NEW YORK

Fri., Sept. 10

Workers World Party meeting. Fred Goldstein will be speaking on the significance of the huge protests that defied Bush and Bloomberg's war on New York. The program will also include important updates on:
 * Sept. 18 WWP Election Campaign Rally at PS 41 in NYC, which is a major kick-off event for the national campaign tour.
 *October 17 Million Worker March in Washington 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30.) At 55

W. 17 St., 5th fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

Sat., Sept. 18

Rally for socialist candidates John Parker, Teresa Gutierrez and Leilani Dowell. 2 p.m. At P.S. 41, 116 W. 11 St., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

Nov. 13-14

Workers World Party National Conference. Details to come. For info (212) 627-2994.

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Bush, Greenspan threaten Social Security

By Milt Neidenberg

Amid cheers of “four more years,” confetti and balloons saturating the ballroom, President George W. Bush fired a preemptive strike on Social Security at the Republican National Convention Sept. 2.

He repeated his call to privatize a section of the system which could empty the Social Security Trust Fund of \$2 trillion over 10 years. Currently the Fund provides about \$492 billion to 47 million retirees each year.

Bush opened his attack on Social Security in a cloak of lies and deception. To a crowd of adoring delegates, he said: “We will always keep the promise of Social Security for our older workers ... in all these proposals, we seek to provide ... more freedom and more control over your own lives.”

According to former U.S. Rep. Barbara Kennelly, president of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, “The president is trying to hide the fact that in the ‘ownership society,’ what individuals really own is the risk. No guarantees, no security, no protection.”

It is an insidious plan. More than 150 million wage earners currently pay into the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA), a tax of 6.2 percent of their wages to assure a modest nest egg in retirement years. The workers have viewed this as an insurance policy, a contract with the government, no different from a defined benefit pension or a 401(k) pension plan, though the courts have ruled that it is a social program handed down by the government.

The Social Security Trust Fund has been ripped off as the budget deficit grows at an alarming rate. Over the years, trillions of dollars have been replaced by IOUs. These paper coupons are worthless to the 77 million baby boomers, born after World War II, who will soon reach retirement age.

Most recently, the borrowing grew astronomically to pay for the endless wars of imperialist aggression, tax cuts for the wealthiest sector of capitalist society, plus huge amounts to pay the banks for debt service.

The liberal establishment claims that Social Security could be solvent if Bush

would pare back around 50 percent of his tax relief for the wealthy that he wants to make permanent, making his privatization plan unnecessary.

Over the years, without consulting workers, many amendments to the law have been passed, whether under Republican or Democratic administrations. It was the Clinton administration that created a commission that came up with the recommendation to privatize Social Security through personal accounts to be set up for young workers just entering the program, similar to what Bush is now proposing.

There were divisions in the inner circle of the Bush administration over whether to touch this hot potato. Those who supported the idea of private Social Security accounts, like Karl Rove, Bush’s top hatchet man, and Treasury Secretary John Snow, thought this would sit well with the future retirees.

Others like Chairperson of the Council of Economic Affairs Greg Mankiw and top economic advisor Stephen Friedman saw it as the “third rail of politics,” a shock move that could even lose Bush the election, except for the fact that John Kerry, his Democratic opponent, has been mum on this crisis.

Federal Reserve Board (FRB) Chairperson Alan Greenspan, who claims to stand above the mundane politics of the two capitalist parties, has all along supported downsizing Social Security benefits.

Growing old a danger under capitalism?

At a two-day symposium held at the end of August, central bankers, Wall Street academics and scholars gathered in Jackson Hole, Wyo., for a conference organized by the FRB of Kansas. The theme of the annual conference was demographics and government retirement benefits. The discussion centered on how to zap an aging population that is becoming a burden to capitalist society—a sure sign of a decadent system.

Against a background of snow-tipped mountains, shiny lakes, and plush hotels, FRB Chairperson Alan Greenspan set the tone. He described the economic implica-

tions of the aging of the population and predicted that it will significantly affect the fiscal situation. He warned that the U.S. may have already promised retirees more Social Security and Medicare benefits than it can deliver and urged policy makers to “recalibrate” benefits without raising taxes.

“If we delay, the adjustments could be abrupt and painful,” he said. (Wall Street Journal, Aug. 30)

Greenspan talked about the “elderly dependency ratio,” the ratio of older workers to younger, and the fact that except for a short period following the Second World War, “it has been rising in the industrialized world.” He said that the ratio is worse for Europe and Japan.

The FRB chairperson reminded the elite audience that the U.S. population older than 65 will climb from 12 percent to 20 percent by 2035. He warned political leaders that they cannot count on continued rapid rises in productivity and faster economic growth to solve the problems of soaring retirement and health-care costs.

His speech was calculated to pressure young and old to accept Social Security concessions or face the possibility of never getting benefits. The truth is, many may never see a Social Security check, but for different reasons.

According to the Sept. 5 New York Times, inhuman stress on the job and the fear of being fired raises the question of whether these wage earners will live long enough to collect. “American workers are stressed out and in an unforgiving economy, they are becoming more so every day.”

Greenspan used his dominant position as the manipulator of monetary policy (interest rates) to cover up his attack on workers and oppressed communities. This is nothing new for Greenspan. In the early 1980s, he wielded the hatchet when President Ronald Reagan appointed him to chair a Social Security Commission. His recommendations led to an increase in the retirement age to as much as 67 for those who entered the workforce after 1960 to get their entire benefit.

Greenspan presented the idea to tax Social Security benefits, which Reagan

and Congress readily seized. Once again, the sly old conspirator was plotting strategy to satisfy his ruling class masters.

Social Security won in struggle

The Social Security Act of 1935 was to be a first step to guarantee an income for seniors, the disabled and the families of those whose loved ones died prematurely. Social Security and Medicare were meant to provide a precious network of concessions won by the courage and sacrifice of the laboring masses that took over the factories and the streets during the 1930s depression.

It was meant to be a beginning. Social Security was considered one leg in a three-legged stool. The other two necessary for a secure retirement were personal savings and pensions.

But private sector pension plans are vanishing. Corporate America, Wall Street financiers, and a government that represents their class interests are savaging savings. Now Medicare premiums are due to rise to a record 17 percent in the coming year.

As the economy continues to shrink, the war at home intensifies. Decent jobs are hard to find, and the endless wars abroad in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere have diverted hundreds of billions of dollars from the needs of the people. The relentless attack against the workers and oppressed communities is tearing apart all the hopes of security in the golden years.

Only bold measures, independent and class-wide, can stop this hemorrhaging. Labor’s forebears paved the way. Social Security is a contract, an insurance policy, not a handout from the government. It must not be reduced or denied.

Those benefits must be protected and advanced to guarantee a retirement that is secure, 100-percent solvent and under the control of trustees elected by beneficiaries.

There are more than 150 million wage earners in the Social Security program. Young and old, multinational, women and immigrants, they have produced the wealth of this capitalist economy through their labor power. They constitute a powerful force when united in a righteous cause. □

International visitors inspire WWP forum

By John Catalinotto
New York

The Aug. 27 Workers World Party forum in New York was special, even for a meeting that has gotten a reputation for lively discussion and which recently featured speakers from the Venezuelan Mission to the United Nations, U.S. activists returning from Colombia, and organizers of important protest activities in the U.S. This evening’s forum had four international guests, in New York for the Iraq War Crimes Tribunal and other activities of the Week of Resistance against the Republican National Convention.

Any one of the four could have been featured for a forum or more. Since they were only in New York for this one Friday-night event, the meeting was extended to take advantage of their pres-

ence. It was well worth it.

Manik Mukherjee of Kolkata, a leader of the All-India Anti-Imperialist Forum and the Socialist Unity Center of India, outlined the role of the various left parties in that nation of over 1 billion people. He also repeated and motivated his proposal of the night before at the tribunal that worldwide anti-imperialist actions be coordinated more closely, and offered his organization’s cooperation.

Joachim Guilliard of Heidelberg, Germany, has been a leader of the anti-sanctions movement in that country. Guilliard explained the contradictory role of the German and “old European” ruling class in its relation to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. They may be pleased that the occupation is not a smashing success, he said, but they are more afraid that a complete victory for the Iraqis could hurt all the

Manik Mukherjee

WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

imperialist powers, including themselves.

Javier Barandiaran of San Sebastian in the Basque Country had witnessed U.S. war crimes in Baghdad during the March/April 2003 “Shock and Awe” bombings. He spoke, however, of the struggle of the Basque people for self-determination from the Spanish state.

The final speaker was French-Iraqi filmmaker Hana Al-Bayati, who has recently completed a documentary film about Iraq’s political movements. She was able to share her insights into the various currents of the Iraqi resistance and inspire the audience with enthusiasm for the



overall struggle of the Iraqi people to drive out the occupation.

The speakers, in turn, while unsurprised to find that not all people here were clones of George W. Bush, were pleased to experience some days of close contact with the U.S. anti-war movement and to meet active working-class and anti-imperialist organizers in “the belly of the beast.” □

By Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Venezuela after the referendum

The voting is over in Venezuela, and the U.S.-supported right wing lost—badly.

Over 60 percent of Venezuelans voted to keep President Hugo Chavez in power, despite the opposition of the wealthiest segments of Venezuelan society.

Venezuelan society is one of extreme contrasts of rich and poor. Sixty-seven percent of Venezuelans live in poverty; 35 percent live in extreme poverty.

The opportunity to Chavez came from those like owners and managers of Coca-Cola, where workers were intimidated and fired for voting against an earlier recall. The main economic supporter of the anti-Chavez movement came from—guess where?—the man who owns Venezuela's subsidiary of Coca-Cola, billionaire Gustavos Cisneros. He also owns the nation's largest TV network, which has been on an anti-Chavez campaign for years.

Chavez has enemies among the wealthy because he has supported using Venezuela's vast oil wealth to try and rectify the nation's staggering social problems. Some three quarters of Venezuelans are unemployed, or work on the margins in the informal economy.

Among the very wealthy, it's believed the resources of the nation should be privatized, and sent along the usual routes—north. They are not social resources, but private ones, to be owned, and sold. They deeply oppose Chavez's plan to share the wealth.

What Chavez is trying to do is deepen a kind of social revolution among the poor, using the name and nationalist spirit of the greatest Venezuelan of them all—Simon Bolivar—to rally and mobilize Venezuelans for Bolivarianismo, a strong support of the nation against the imperialists to the north.

That's why he is being demonized in the western and corporate media. Prepare for more of it—soon; for while the voting may be over, the battle to exploit Venezuela's natural resources ain't.

An early American revolutionary, Tom Paine, wrote in his 1791 classic, "Rights of Man," about the kinds of guys who stir up conflicts in nations for their own ends. Two hundred years later, he seemed to be talking about Americans when he wrote:

"That there are men in all countries who get their living by war, and by keeping up the quarrels of Nations, is as shocking as it is true; but when those who are concerned in the government of a country, make it their study to sow discord, and cultivate prejudices between Nations, it becomes the more unpardonable." [p. 6]

When Paine scribbled these words, he was probably criticizing his birthplace, England. He was always critical of what he saw as imperial arrogance, and England's attempts to stir up enmity between America and France.

What would this radical writer and anti-imperialist think of the American empire, with its armies in over 120 countries?

What would Paine think of the nefarious Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), whose main job is to "sow discord" among nations?

What would this American revolutionary think of the Rebirth of Rome on the Potomac?

What would he think about an America that tried, unsuccessfully, to spark a coup in Venezuela several years ago, because oil companies and money-men didn't want that country to spend its national wealth on the nation's poor?

Would he find in Senor Presidente Chavez and his struggle to empower the poor an enemy, or an ally?

The U.S. has consistently treated its neighbors in South and Central America like something on the bottom of one's shoe—as something repellent. It has treated them as Rome treated Carthage, or Greece, or Britain.

This is not an America that Paine would recognize, or support.

In fact, if he were alive, he'd still be a revolutionary, but he'd be determined to oppose this new Empire, the Empire of Wealth and Greed — the Empire of Capital.

Sources: Alvaro Michaels, "Chavez calls for struggle against imperialism," *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* newspaper. (August/ September '04), 10.; Tom Paine, "Rights of Man" (Mineola, NY: Dover Publ., 1999).



ON THE PICKETLINE

BY SUE DAVIS

\$1.9 million settlement to immigrant janitors

Global Building Services in Newhall, Calif., has to pay 775 immigrant janitors who cleaned Target stores in Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico and Texas \$1.9 million in compensation for unpaid overtime. The workers were often forced to work seven days a week.

The Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund, which monitors working conditions for janitors to stop such abuses, blew the whistle on Global. It observed that janitors were being paid a flat rate in cash without workers compensation or Social Security taxes. A number of the late-night cleaners were only 15 or 16 years old, a violation of child labor laws.

Felipe Aguilar told the Aug. 26 New York Times that he had worked in five Target stores in Southern California about 80 hours a week (from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. daily). He was paid \$525 to \$625 every 15 days. That is less than \$4 an hour, well below the poverty-level federal minimum wage of \$5.15.

"We felt bad about the pay," his wife, Claudia Aguilar, who also worked at Target, told the Times. "Sometimes we felt rage, but we were scared to complain because we needed the jobs."

Immigrant rights is one of the demands of the Million Worker March to be held on Oct. 17 in Washington, D.C. This case shows why all workers need to fight to end such blatant discrimination.

Many N.Y. teachers to work without contracts

Forty-two of New York state's 700 school districts are stalled in union contract talks as of Sept. 3. That's up from 31 last year.

One sticky point is whether starting teacher salaries should be raised above that of veteran teachers. School districts claim higher starting salaries are needed to attract qualified teachers. Unions in many districts agreed, on one condition: that the percentage of raises be matched for veteran teachers.

The New York State United Teachers union reported that 371 locals would begin the school year without contracts. Some 203 represent teachers, 168 represent bus drivers, custodians and other workers. Last year there were 266 unsettled contracts, making this year the second worst since 1992.

Health workers strike over health benefits

It's a sure sign that something's rotten with capitalism—not to mention ironic—when health-care providers have to strike to defend their health-care benefits. But that's exactly what hundreds of nurses, therapists, medical assistants and social workers did when Seattle's Group Health Cooperative, a managed care organization, tried to make them start paying premiums, deductibles and co-insurance. The Service Employees members staged a five-day strike from Aug. 24 to 28 in protest.

Quebecor World workers organizing

U.S.-based workers at Quebecor World, the second largest commercial printer in the world, are fighting to be represented by the Graphic Communications International Union. Their struggle is supported by fellow workers in 15 other countries. Quebecor World employs 39,000 workers in 160 plants.

The workers need a union for many reasons, but a big one is to protect their health and safety. Workers report hazardous conditions that lead to amputations, chemical poisoning, ergonomic problems and injuries from falls and fires. Over the past five years OSHA has cited Quebecor for more violations than all of its major competitors combined.

Another issue is sexist and racist discrimination. At the Olive Branch, Miss., facility, 74 percent of the 280 non-management production workers are African American. Only 14 percent of the plant's managers are Black. Women make up 41 percent of the plant's workforce but only 9 percent of its production supervisors.

Even though Quebecor grossed \$6.3 billion in sales in

2002, the mega-corporation announced in 2004 that it was doubling health insurance costs for U.S. workers and was no longer contributing to 401(k) retirement accounts.

Quebecor has fought the workers' right to organize by a vicious campaign of threats, harassment and intimidation. Several regions of the National Labor Relations Board have recently found merit in 22 charges that Quebecor workers were unlawfully fired, disciplined and threatened for union organizing.

The right to organize is a human right, but the corporate elite refuses to honor that because union contracts usually put a dent in bloated profit margins. That's another reason why working people need to demand our rights at the Million Worker March on Oct. 17.

For more information about the Quebecor struggle, visit www.justice@quebecor.org.

RAND, Boeing violate workers' rights

Though the RAND Corp. has been commissioned by the Department of Labor to study such topics as health benefits, pensions and sex discrimination, the think tank is facing its own sex discrimination case. A group of women on its research staff recently filed such a suit, even though RAND agreed in 1998 to clean up its affirmative action plan. In 2001 the company paid almost \$200,000 to comply with regulations governing health and pension benefits.

RAND is not the only company that persistently violates workers' rights while continuing to feed off the government's gravy train. Boeing, one of the largest Pentagon contractors, was investigated by the Labor Department in 1998 to see if it was meeting its affirmative action obligations. It wasn't.

The case was first settled in 1999 when Boeing offered \$4.5 million in back and future pay adjustments to women and people of color. But when Boeing refused to turn over documents showing it had been aware of pay disparities between men and women since at least 1994, it was slapped with a class-action lawsuit, which was finally settled this July. Boeing agreed to pay as many as 29,000 current and former workers up to \$72.5 million.

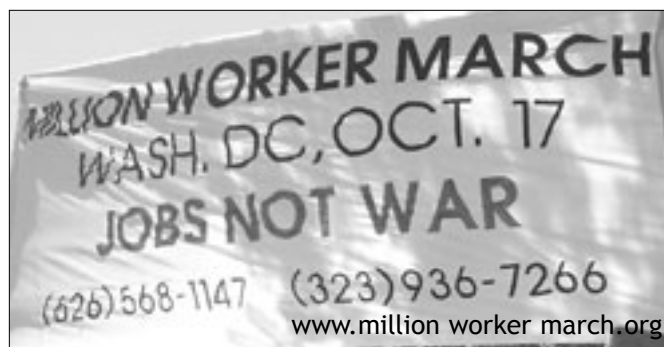
Karen Donovan, writing about this flagrant double standard in the Sept. 5 New York Times, noted, "The ultimate punishment, debarment from working for federal agencies, has never been invoked against a major contractor." A DOL spokesperson told Donovan, "If someone gets a speeding ticket, it doesn't mean that they can't ever drive again."

But violating workers' rights is hardly the same as a speeding ticket. Robbing someone of their livelihood is a serious crime. To expose the many crimes of Corporate America—and government complicity during both Republican and Democratic administrations—it's important for everyone who values economic and social justice to be at the Million Worker March on Oct. 17.

Paterson, N.J., Labor Day

On Sept. 5, spectators all along the route of the Labor Day March broke out into cheers when a contingent carrying signs reading, "Bring the Troops Home," came into view. Casa Freehold, Monmouth County Residents for Immigrants' Rights and the Central New Jersey Coalition for Peace & Justice also all wore signs promoting the Million Worker March. The parade wound through multi-racial working-class neighborhoods and joined in chants in English and Spanish of: "Raise the wages, lower the rents, end the war!" and "Youth need jobs and schools, not jails and war!" The parade and watchers all got flyers for the MWM. "What a great idea," one worker remarked and many of the marchers said they are coming to Washington, D.C.

— Gavrielle Gemma



'Solidarity' and 'Fight Back' on Labor Day

By Sako Sefiani
Los Angeles

On Sept. 6, Southern California labor unions gathered in Wilmington, Calif., a working class suburb of Los Angeles, to celebrate Labor Day. After the permitted march, local union leaders and organizers spoke at a rally in Banning Park.

The event was one of several in Los Angeles sponsored by some of the most active union locals in Southern California, including the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Teamsters, UNITE HERE hotel and restaurant workers union, and United Teachers Los Angeles, among others.

The Million Worker March-Los Angeles organizing committee was also a visible participant, telling workers about the historic protest scheduled for Oct. 17 in Washington, D.C.

Seventy years ago, longshore workers celebrated Labor Day with a decisive victory in the San Francisco General Strike—part of a coast-wide strike in which seven workers were killed and hundreds injured in clashes with police, scabs and the National Guard. Ultimately, these actions brought maritime workers union recognition, hiring halls and dignity on the job.

Now, once again, labor feels squeezed and pressured to give up gains won through long, hard battles. Health care and retirement are under attack; education is deteriorating due to lack of funds; unemployment is rife; wages are stagnating in the face of huge profits made by transnational corporations; and an absurd amount of money is spent on the military for wars of profit and empire building.

'We must all unite'

Labor is beginning to respond.

Although many in organized labor place the blame on the Republicans and hope for changes under a John Kerry presidency, more and more workers are coming to the realization that neither big capitalist party speaks for them.

They are awakening to the need to speak for themselves by organizing, holding marches and rallies, and carrying out civil disobedience, as UNITE HERE members did in August.

On July 8, the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union, with 260,000 members, and the Union of Needle-trades, Industrial and Textile Employees, representing 180,000 workers, merged to create UNITE HERE. The union is currently battling hotel bosses over contract terms. Workers seek a two-year contract to coincide with the expiration date of hotel contracts in several other major cities to give the union more clout.

Donald Wilson of UNITE HERE Local 11 is a chef at the prestigious Century Plaza Hotel. Wilson told the crowd on Labor Day: "We must all unite, whether you're a teacher, or machinist or a cook."

Wilson told Workers World of the "great solidarity" his union was getting from other unions.

When asked how he sees this year's Labor Day in comparison with past ones, Andy Grigg of UTLA said: "Workers are more active now. They're fighting back."

Meanwhile, the fight to keep benefits and improve wages is being linked with two other battles: the struggle of immigrant workers for basic rights and the anti-war struggle.

Many members of UNITE HERE and other unions are immigrants, people of color and/or women. When the Communications Workers union held its convention in Southern California at the



WWPHOTO: SAKO SEFIANI

Teachers march in Los Angeles area Labor Day Sept. 5

end of August, it passed a resolution condemning the war on Iraq.

The convergence of these struggles—for wages and benefits, for immigrant rights, and to stop the war—is best exemplified by the Million Worker March, initiated by ILWU Local 10 in San Francisco. This local was home to Harry Bridges, who led the fight against maritime corporations and founded the union 70 years ago.

Universal health care, a national living wage, guaranteed pensions, cancellation of all corporate "free trade" agreements, repeal of Taft-Hartley and all anti-labor legislation, restoring decaying and abandoned schools, affordable housing, repeal

of the Patriot Act, slashing the military budget, amnesty for all undocumented workers: these are but some of the MWM demands.

A few years ago, it would have been almost unthinkable that unions would endorse an independent march for such progressive demands. Today, more and more unions are endorsing, the latest being the 330,000-strong Postal Workers union.

UNITE HERE may just be on to something when it says: "Together we'll be better able to organize at a scale that hasn't been seen since the 1930s and better able to raise standards in our industries." □

LEONARD PELTIER:

Still fighting for justice

By Minnie Bruce Pratt



Free
Leonard
Peltier

A worldwide movement exists to try to reverse what Peltier's supporters see as a frame-up.

In the suit filed in Washington, D.C., Peltier asserts that U.S. Department of Justice officials knowingly violated the Sentencing Reform Act (SRA) of 1984 to illegally extend inmate prison terms. Congress passed the SRA to address the inconsistent sentences given by judges to different individuals convicted of the same crimes, as well as inconsistent or arbitrary parole decisions.

The suit charges that the U.S. government has refused to enforce part of the SRA that ordered the then-existing Parole Commission to issue parole dates to "old system" prisoners held prior to a date specified in the SRA.

If the SRA had been enforced properly, Peltier argues, he would have been released over 12 years ago. His suit charges the U.S. Parole Commission and individuals serving on it during the past two decades, including Attorney General John Ashcroft and former Attorneys General Edwin Meese, Richard Thornburgh, William Barr and Janet Reno.

Peltier is serving consecutive life sentences.

Yorie Von Kahl, a farmer and tax protestor serving life for the alleged killing of two U.S. Marshals in 1983, joins him in the suit. After trial, undisputed evidence of government misconduct was uncovered in both of these controversial cases.

In August, the California Peace & Freedom Party nominated Peltier as its presidential candidate, preferring him to third-party candidate Ralph Nader.

To support Leonard Peltier, contact: Leonard Peltier Defense Committee

PO Box 583, Lawrence, KS 66044-0583; e-mail info@leonardpeltier.org; or visit www.leonardpeltier.org. □

The Caribbean rocks Brooklyn



WWPHOTO: PAT CHIN

Peoples of the Caribbean, in a gathering of as many as 2 million, celebrated their unity and pride on Sept. 6 with a massive festive parade along Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway, ending at the Grand Army Plaza. The celebration is also a powerful expression of African pride and reflected the Indigenous cultures of the region. Along with Caribbean nations, African Americans participated, some wearing the red, black and green of the Black liberation movement, along with people from Brazil, Panama and Venezuela.

Alongside pride went working-class organizing. There was a strong labor contingent with a presence of Service Employees Local 32BJ, Carpenters and many others. Organizers of the Million Worker March, set for Oct. 17 in Washington, D.C., reached out at the parade. Transport Workers Union Local 100 had a huge booth to promote the MWM. The area was visibly pasted up with stickers that will end up being seen by tens of thousands of English, French, Spanish and Dutch-speaking Caribbean people and others.

—Story and photo by Pat Chin

Flags of Caribbean fly in Brooklyn.

International solidarity with Iraq War Crimes Tribunal

As the International Action Center was holding a session of the Iraq War Crimes Tribunal in New York on Aug. 26, the West Bengal State Committee of the All India Anti-Imperialist Forum held a march in solidarity from Subodh Mullick Square to end in a rally held in front of the American Center, Kolkata. Effigies of Bush and Blair were set on fire at the rally.

On Sept. 1, in incessant rains, a massive anti-imperialist march organized by 17 left parties took place in the same city demanding an end to U.S. war threats and the occupation of Iraq.

At the same time as the tribunal hearing, the Japan-based Anti-War Joint Action Committees, which had sent a solidarity message to the New York tribunal, were demonstrating with others in Okinawa against U.S. bases on that island.

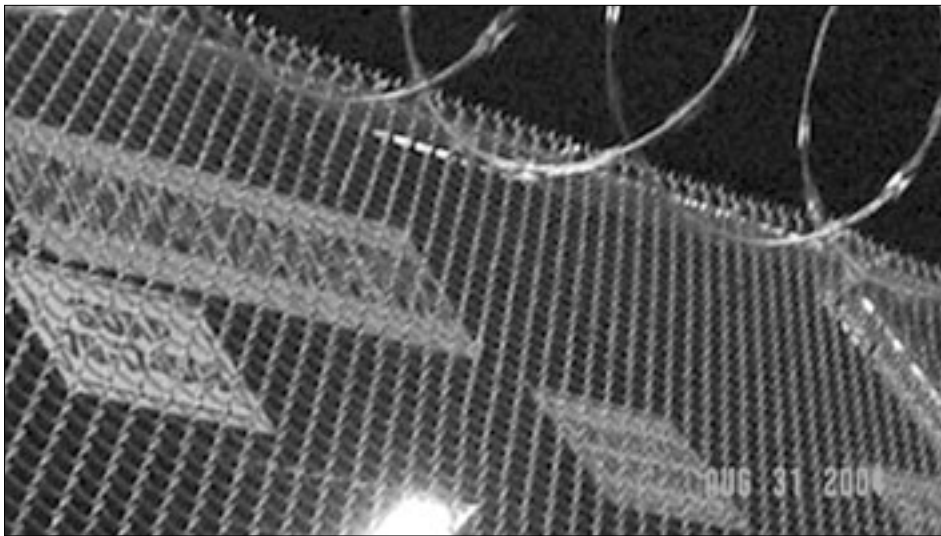


PHOTO: SUCI

Kolkata (Calcutta), India, Aug. 27.

On Aug. 13, a U.S. military helicopter had crashed on the Okinawa International University campus. University buildings and residents' homes were damaged. This dangerous incident sparked a series of protest demonstrations demanding the closure of U.S. bases on Okinawa.

—From AIAIF and AWJAC releases



PHOTOS: INDYMEDIA



Inside the detention pens

A renewed pledge to resist the war drive

By Dustin Langley
New York

On Aug. 31, the New York Police Department arrested more than 1,100 people in mass roundups designed to silence and intimidate the militant protests against the Republican National Convention. I was one of the 1,100 arrested that day.

Police took those arrested to Pier 57 on the Hudson River. Some activists described this holding area as “Guantanamo on the Hudson.” It was made up of detention pens, surrounded by chain link fence and topped with razor wire, with floors covered in soot and motor oil.

Detainees at Pier 57 reported sustaining chemical burns and rashes from the floor of the detention center, which was previously used as a bus depot. Arrestees were also denied medical attention. Some detainees “disappeared” into the system altogether, their families and lawyers finding no trace of them for two days or more.

Despite a court order, the NYPD refused to release many of the prisoners until the end of the convention.

But this attempt to silence dissent had just the opposite effect on many protesters, as I discovered when our group arrived at the pier. We were greeted with loud cheers and applause from our fellow prisoners. Despite the brutal police tactics, we were in high spirits.

At one point during the night, as we were standing in line with our hands cuffed behind us, we started singing “Solidarity Forever.” The buses kept rolling in, filled with protesters. We greeted the new prisoners with applause, and those of us who could raised our fists or flashed peace signs.

When I was first arrested and thrown into the police van, I said to my fellow arrestees: “The people of Najaf are being shot down in the streets for resisting the Empire. We can take a bust in solidarity.” I had been arrested in front of the New York Public Library while taking pictures

of the NYPD beating protesters.

Later in the night, one activist led our pen in a chant that said, “Attention NYPD: Come out with your hands up! The Empire that you are defending is crumbling!” Later, a group of us chanted, “Brick by brick, wall by wall, we’re gonna free Mumia Abu-Jamal!”

At one point we decided to read aloud the “Pledge of Resistance” that Not In Our Name has been promoting since before last year’s attack on Iraq. We took turns reading it.

Detainees were not allowed to contact attorneys, and many were held much longer than the 24 hours allowed by law—some more than 48 hours. When we were transferred to Central Booking at 100 Center St., we were photographed, fingerprinted, and then constantly moved from cell to cell.

We decided to organize a protest inside the jail. We started using the pay phones inside the cells to call Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s office to demand

access to attorneys and immediate release. Another groups of prisoners began a hunger strike to protest the illegal detentions.

Although some of the protestors were released the next day, Sept. 1, approximately 500 were held until late Sept. 2, when the RNC was drawing to a close. This was an illegal attempt by the NYPD to shut down political dissent.

Their attempts to silence us failed. We demonstrated great solidarity and a spirit of resistance inside, and will bring that spirit back to the streets.

Many of the people I was locked up with said that this had just renewed their determination to resist. We will be back on the streets again and again.

On to Washington, D.C., Oct. 17 for the Million Worker March!

Langley is a Navy veteran and an organizer of SNAFU, a support organization for GI resisters, conscientious objectors and those fighting against a new military draft.

‘The whole world is watching’

A youth’s perspective on the RNC protests

By Stephanie Nichols
New York

Young people converged on New York City for the Week of Resistance to the Republican National Convention, bringing with them a wide spectrum of political ideologies. For many it was their first time in the struggle on the streets.

It started slowly at the Books Not Bombs Convergence on Aug. 28. Youths had come to politically shop around as well as to share their ideas. They were coming together with a unifying force to demonstrate during the week ahead.

On Aug. 29 half a million people showed up to protest the occupation of Iraq, the “Bush agenda” and beyond. Youth contingents that marched together demonstrated the most unity of all within the march. A Books Not Bombs contingent, immigrant solidarity and youth of color contingents, the Young Communist League, and the contingent from FIST—Fight Imperialism—Stand Together—were among them.

One group arched across 18th Street to Seventh Avenue chanting, “We’re all in this together,” “Free Palestine” and “Globalize the Intifada.” Those identifying themselves as communists marched alongside avowed anarchists. They marched past Madison Square Garden, site of the convention, with few problems.

Police arrested a few youths at random and charged them with stealing other marchers’ placards.

Monday, Aug. 30, the first day of the convention, started with a youthful bang. A memorable chant from the Still We Rise Coalition’s march that afternoon was, “They say death row, we say hell no!” Large numbers of young people, particularly youths of color, marched to show

their anger at the system and its affects on immigrants and low-income people.

ACT-UP, which held some of the most militant demonstrations during the week, was there, raising awareness about AIDS and the health-care crisis.

Later the mostly youthful March for Our Lives led by the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign attempted to march from the United Nations to

Madison Square Garden without a permit. The Rude Mechanical Orchestra played back-up music during the march, providing songs in several different languages.

Hour by hour the youth were becoming more unified, with more solidarity and class-consciousness. Some were shouting, “1, 2, 3, 4, we declare a class war, 5, 6, 7, 8, organize to smash the state.”

Some pro-John Kerry people made an appearance and got yelled at by marchers.

At apparently random points during the march, the police closed in, assaulted marchers and arrested a few people at a time. Finally, when the marchers reached 28th Street, cops closed in and started to beat up and arrest more marchers.

Half of the march stopped when a crowd of young people huddled around the cops, screaming, “The people united will never be defeated,” “Whose streets? Our streets!” and “No justice, no peace, get those pigs off the street.”

The front of the march continued on while the end was backed up. Cops had managed to set up barricades at 28th Street, where the march split in half. As a result, at 29th Street, the police erected more barricades and trapped people in a cage from 28th to 29th Streets. The rest of the marchers had to flee in either direction. People started shouting, “We are peaceful people, practicing nonviolence.”

That day’s events not only raised class-



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Artists & Activists United for Peace, Harlem, Sept. 2.

Youths defy police repression in battle of NYC

By Julie Fry
New York

Hundreds of thousands of people participated in demonstrations against the Republican National Convention in New York City. While the demonstration on Aug. 29, with over 500,000 people, was by far the largest event of the week, there were dozens of actions throughout the convention that brought out thousands of people as well.

Many of the actions were organized and led by youths, especially the direct street actions. Some of these actions were organized well in advance. Others were spontaneous. But the result was a clear, mass rejection of the repressive and brutal program of the Bush administration. The New York Police Department and the Bush administration met this sentiment with even more brutality and repression during the week.

Instead of resigning themselves to the steel pens and designated protest areas set up by the police to ensure that demonstrators would have no contact with the convention or its delegates, young activists were creative and determined to let the Bush administration know that they were there and ready to fight back.

Starting on Aug. 27, the Friday before the opening of the convention, when thousands of bicyclists clogged the streets of Manhattan for several hours and rode past Madison Square Garden, demonstrators found ways to reach the convention that the cops had tried so hard to keep them away from.

Activists from Fight Imperialism-Stand Together (FIST) participated in many of these actions alongside thousands of other

young militants. They witnessed and experienced the brutal police response.

Over 1,800 people were arrested during the convention. As FIST member Peter Gilbert described it, "Anyone under 30 was targeted by the police. I think the banner we were carrying that said 'Stop the War on Youth From Here to Najaf' was very timely because there was definitely an all-out war on youth in New York last week."

Gilbert reported that, while waiting in line during the week at the courthouse to get information about a friend who had been, he met parents whose 18- and 19-year-old children had been arrested on their way home from work or while out riding bicycles.

Heavy-handed cops

The police responded with heavy repression to even the smallest and most peaceful actions. On Aug. 31, the day on which the greatest number of arrests occurred, FIST members went to the steps of the New York Public Library to assemble with other youths who wanted to march to Madison Square Garden.

Two participants tried to prop up a banner on a statue near the steps as they waited for others to arrive. Cops surrounded and arrested them immediately. Minutes later, dozens of police swarmed the stairs and started making arrests.

SNAFU organizer Dustin Langley was thrown to the ground and handcuffed by



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

New York, Aug. 29.

police after trying to take pictures of another arrest. The SNAFU organization supports GI resisters.

Police then chased those protesters at the library off the steps and down the street. The cops used a mesh net to trap fleeing protesters. Several bystanders were caught in the net and arrested as well.

Later that night FIST members were in Herald Square, where a group of youths of color from the Still We Rise Coalition led a group of protesters for at least an hour. They chanted and booed Republican delegates who passed by their corner. The demonstration was absolutely peaceful and disciplined the entire time—even when a police provocateur was sent into the crowd to try to start a fight.

Still, the police decided to attack the demonstration, sending hundreds of people fleeing for their safety into oncoming traffic. Many caught by the police were beaten and brutalized. Gilbert reported being cornered by the police at one point, and then managing to escape only because the police turned away from him in order to join in beating another activist. Events like this occurred in Union Square and other parts of the city that night.

The brutality did not end with the arrests. Activists were held for two or three days at a time in filthy conditions. New York law requires the police to give arrestees a probable cause hearing within 24 hours of an arrest. A state judge at one point ordered the police to immediately release about 500 people who had been held for days without any hearing.

The NYPD and the city ignored the court's order, even after being held in contempt by the judge. It was clear that the police were trying to keep activists off the streets until after the demonstrations were over.

Repression fuels resistance

This police strategy failed to stop the protests. Imani Henry, a Workers World Party member who participated along with FIST members in the direct actions, said: "When you arrest a thousand people one day, and then the next day thousands more people show up at demonstrations, that shows that the strategy of preemptive detention does not work."

Indeed, despite the attempts by the NYPD to terrorize youths throughout the week, young activists continued to participate in and lead the demonstrations. At the ANSWER protest Sept. 2 until 10 p.m. when Bush began to speak, and even later

when another group marched up to Madison Square Garden from Union Square, young people refused to give in.

Who was the NYPD protecting last week? Certainly not the vast majority of New Yorkers, who stated in poll after poll before the convention that they supported the demonstrators. This support came despite a massive media campaign to demonize demonstrators, especially young activists, before and during the convention.

When hundreds of cyclists were rounded up and arrested on Aug. 27 in the East Village, people came out from bars and restaurants in the neighborhood to boo the cops and cheer on the cyclists. During the many marches that took place all over the city during the week, residents leaned out of their windows or stood on their front stoops waving and cheering on the demonstrators.

Several times pedestrians stopped FIST members carrying placards or banners around the city in between demonstrations to wish them luck or tell them to "Give 'em hell."

Despite all the police and corporate media lies about activists' threats against the city, most New Yorkers knew it was the convention and the Bush administration that pose a real threat to their well being. New Yorkers, like people in many other cities, have been deeply affected by job losses and by the loss of billions of dollars for social programs that is now being used in the brutal occupation of Iraq.

That the Bush administration came to New York to exploit the events of 9/11 for its political gain made the presence of the convention all the more insulting to the people of New York.

So why did the police spend tens of millions of dollars on security and arrest hundreds of people last week? To protect the bankers and the bosses whose interests they really serve.

Having hundreds of thousands of people in the streets ready to shut down a convention destroys the illusion perpetuated by both ruling parties that they actually represent the interests of the vast majority of people in this country.

The youths who battled in the streets all week, despite the demonization by the media and despite the brutality of the police, were trying to bring a little bit of truth to the parade of lies and distortions that characterized both the Republican and the Democratic conventions. They should be commended for their boldness and bravery. □



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

New York, Aug. 29.

Continued from facing page

consciousness among the youths who came to protest, but it raised their awareness of the role of the police when they came down on a march against poverty.

Young people organized Tuesday's A31 Day of Non-Violent Direct Action and Civil Disobedience. These youths paid for their consciousness with thousands of unjustifiable arrests. But the arrests failed to stop youths from continuing to protest throughout the week. If anything, it appeared to make young people stronger, more unified and more aware.

On the final day of protests, Sept. 2, a march through Harlem proved to be a truly diverse and politically solid group, made up, again, of mostly youths.

A multinational group called SIANTU,

whose members headed up chants at a demonstration against Coca-Cola the night before, provided chants in several languages, including, "People of color say no to war. We're fired up and can't take it no more," "One, we are the people. Two, a little bit louder. Three, we want housing for the homeless," and "No one is illegal. Open up the borders and shut the RNC."

Youths who came into the streets for the first time learned some great lessons about the nature of the capitalist system—not just the policies of one administration, but the policies put into place by an exploitative system. Youths who had been at demonstrations before learned new lessons on the streets in a week of constant and diverse protest and solidarity.

The writer is an activist and organizer with FIST.

1930s Soviet Union: 'Seismic gender shift'

By Leslie Feinberg

The political backslide that resulted in the re-criminalization of male homosexuality and banning of abortion in the 1930s in the Soviet Union did not take place in an economic, military or social void. The point of examining these conditions is not to "explain them away" but to serve as a tool for today's movement for socialism to strengthen its understanding of revolutionary process.

Women's and same-sex rights had been politically catapulted ahead by the 1917 Russian Revolution. But when the isolated, impoverished and embattled workers' state could not raise the living standards of the population quickly enough to provide economic and social freedom from the old patriarchal, heterosexual nuclear family bequeathed by class society, then both women's rights and same-sex rights suffered setbacks.

The broadest outlines of this economic crisis are apparent in the efforts to liberate Soviet women.

William H. Mandel, in his book "Soviet Women," noted that after the seizure of state power in October 1917, "In a matter of months, the new government legislated more than the upper-class feminists had ever asked for: suffrage of course, divorce and civil marriage laws which made marriage a voluntary alliance, elimination of distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate children, employment rights equal to those of men, equal pay for equal work, universal paid late-pregnancy and early-maternity leave. Overnight, the status of women in Russia became far and away the world's most advanced."

But the revolution had been made in a single city—Petrograd—which at that time was the capital, and then spread to Moscow. The country was left technologically underdeveloped as a result of feudalism and the greed of foreign imperialism. And its working class was tiny.

The cities were isolated and famished. By early 1918, with German troops still occupying much of the grain-producing west, workers in the cities were surviving on starvation rations: nothing but four ounces a day of bread.

A combined force of the imperialists, forces loyal to the ousted Provisional Government and the monarchists tried to launch a counter-revolution.

Trying to roll aside obstacles

Writing in 1971, Soviet scholar Helen Emelianova commented about the early

workers' state, "An acute contradiction had arisen: the participation of female workers in the socialist revolution was considerable, but immediately after the revolution their numbers were extremely few among members of the party, in the soviets, in factory committees, in trade unions." (Quoted in "Soviet Women.")

Mandel stressed, "Peasant women (four fifths of the total female population), housewives (a majority among urban women), and houseworkers (an extremely large group) had hardly been involved at all" in the revolution.

To address the critical need to reach out to masses of women, the Bolsheviks organized the First Russia-Wide Congress of Women Workers and Peasants in November 1918. No men were present at the meetings.

About 300 to 500 women were expected; 1,147 attended.

One delegate described the goal of the congress's work: "to explain their rights to the millions of women in even the most remote corners of the country, and call upon them to take an active part in building a new life."

One of the resolutions of the congress stressed that "housework is a heavy burden on female workers and peasants and ... negating the eight-hour workday for them, interferes with their becoming revolutionaries."

The delegates decided to organize special groups for women. And the communists urged their party to set up a women's department. Although some currents of men in the party reportedly argued that this would "divide the working class" along sex lines, they did not predominate. The Bolshevik Party Women's Department, known as Zhenotdel, was established in 1919, even as civil war ravaged the workers' state.

The following year, in 1920, 60,000 women were elected to organize women. At Lenin's insistence, this work was paid so that they could be full-time organizers. However, even with small stipends, these women could reach only about 2 percent of the female population, mostly urban.

During the 1920s, Zhenotdel worked to liberate women from exhausting individual housework, and led attempts to create socialized childcare, large-scale dining halls and public laundries.

Zhenotdel's rationale was that "socializing this work would bolster the new socialist economy by replacing the inefficiencies of individual women's household labor with economies of scale and would also raise productivity by shifting millions of new workers into Soviet industries," according to historian Thomas T. Shrand, in his essay "Socialism in One Gender."

Women would not only be socially "equal" to men, they would break out of stultifying isolation, become productive members of society in the fullest sense of the word, and thereby contribute their skills and insights to the revolutionary process for social progress.

Dead hand of history, iron fist of imperialism

These Bolsheviks were not utopian socialists, however. "The Zhenotdel approach to liberating women involved integrating them into a super-productive socialist economy that would be created following a global (or at least, continental)

revolution," Shrand notes. "In this scenario, Russia would have access to the rest of Europe's technology and resources, which would allow it to modernize its economy and to invest in the infrastructure of nurseries, daycare centers, and other institutions that would make women's emancipation possible."

The defeat of revolutions in Germany and elsewhere dashed these hopes. The fists of capital were clenched and striking the workers' state externally and internally. The country was surrounded and

invaded by imperialist armies soon after it first liberated territory to begin building socialism.

And as a result, the dead hand of the past weighed heavily on the revolution.

The population was hungry and exhausted by war. The Bolshevik Party had lost many of its most revolutionary elements in the struggle to defend the workers' state. Lenin, the leader of the October 1917 Revolution and architect of the early years of socialist construction, had died in 1924 from complications resulting from an assassination attempt. It took many years before the benefits of a planned economy reached the people.

Between 1924 and 1934, the phenomenon of "postcard" divorces grew. Under the new marriage laws, a spouse could simply inform the authorities that the marriage had dissolved. Mandel wrote that, "if the other party was not physically present, a form postcard would break the news. The major intent of the law was to free millions of women who had been married off against their will under traditional patriarchal procedures. It proved catastrophically counterproductive. Women lost the protection against abandonment with a child or children that they had formerly had." Material need, not love, was still the most important impetus for many marriages.

The technologically underdeveloped workers' state continued to be wracked by internal class warfare. During the New Economic Policy in the early 1920s, when the market in agricultural goods was restored after the war, rich peasants—kulaks—withheld food from the cities in order to drive up prices. This virtual starving of the city workers spurred on the decision by the leadership to collectivize agriculture.

Industrialization and its impact on women

The task was still clear and compelling—the workers' state had to build up industry and hike productivity to meet the needs of its vast population. But a constant state of capitalist siege hampered that urgent objective.

"Rather than retreating from the goal of socialism," Shrand states, "Stalin and his followers decided that the USSR would have to create the economic prerequisites for it in isolation, while surrounded by hostile capitalist powers. From this perspective, the campaign for industrialization and modernization became, among other things, a desperate struggle to arm the Soviet Union for the defense of socialism."

The first five-year plan, ratified by the party in 1928, set a goal of a 250-percent growth in overall industrial development and a 330-percent increase in heavy industry. All industry and services were

nationalized by the workers' state, thousands of new factories and industrial centers were constructed throughout the Soviet Union and productivity was planned by quotas. However, the investment required to build heavy industry created painful shortages in consumer goods and services.

The five-year plan also attempted to rapidly convert small-scale peasant agriculture into large-scale state collective farms. Resistance from the peasantry—particularly the wealthy kulaks—created a disastrous and widespread famine.

The threat facing the workers' state—from within and from without—was enormous.

Shrand offers his insight into the enormous impact that this swift industrialization had on Soviet women. "Between the years of 1929 and 1941, Soviet society experienced what might be described as a gender-quake, a seismic shift in sexual divisions of labor produced by the largest national peacetime expansion of women's employment in world history.

"As a result of this rapid industrialization campaign, over 10 million women began wage-labor in the industrial and service sectors of the Soviet economy," he continued. "The Soviet government actively recruited women for industrial employment, created affirmative action programs to train female technicians and skilled workers, and greatly expanded childcare and cafeteria facilities to free working women from some of their domestic obligations."

Steps forward and backward

The continuing threats from imperialism required a mobilization to defend the Soviet Union, and that demanded development of heavy industry and military growth.

The marshaling of so much investment of the USSR's resources in these branches of manufacturing, Shrand stressed, "came at the expense of the light industries, which not only employed many women, but also produced the consumer goods that might have lightened their domestic labor.

"The new priorities also restricted the construction of cafeterias, laundries, daycare centers, and other institutions necessary for Bolshevik-style women's emancipation."

In 1930 Zhenotdel, weakened since the late 1920s, had been formally abolished.

"The Soviet government actually began developing a Five-Year Plan for Women's Labor, but the effort to mobilize women was not accompanied by a commitment to freeing them from domestic labor," Shrand concluded. "Although social services did expand somewhat during the 1930s, they did so within limits, and only to the extent necessary to recruit a certain number of women workers."

The formal liberation of peasants from serfdom in 1861, the creation of urban industrial centers and the dislocation and carnage of the first imperialist war had shaken the medieval patriarchal family structure. Now this rapid industrialization was also having a profound impact on the sexes.

And it was in this period that official attitudes towards gender expression and same-sex love were also shifting.

Next: Gender, sexuality and national defense: Dual nature of 1930s Soviet state

Lesbian ♦ gay ♦ bi
and trans
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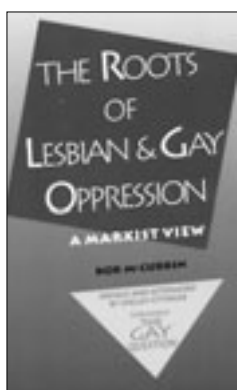
SERIES
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14

The Roots of Lesbian & Gay Oppression: A MARXIST VIEW

By Bob McCubbin

This ground breaking pamphlet was originally published as the Gay Question in 1976, during the first flush of the modern lesbian and gay movement.

Its unparalleled achievement was to offer a historical analysis of when, where, why and how lesbian and gay oppression developed.



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Behind the disaster in southern Russia

By Deirdre Griswold

When President Boris Yeltsin dissolved the Soviet Union in 1991, it was to the cheers of the entire Western capitalist political establishment and media. Their universal prognosis was that the introduction of a capitalist market and private ownership of the means of production in the territories of the former USSR would vastly benefit all the peoples. The release of individual initiative combined with Western democratic forms of rule would bring prosperity and freedom to those “behind the Iron Curtain.”

The well-being of the people—that was supposed to have been the main U.S. aim in the incredibly costly 45-year “Cold War” against the Soviet Union.

Those rosy predictions have all turned to ashes. From time to time over the past decade, subdued news reports have appeared in the West with alarming statistics showing that in the vast area of the former Soviet Union, where a planned economy had once provided jobs, free health care and education for nearly 300 million people, life expectancy was dropping and the population declining. This reflected the fact that infant mortality, curable diseases, unemployment, prostitution, drug abuse, organized crime, ethnic antagonisms and civil wars had all surged upward.

But these statistics were mere abstractions and caused little comment. The human suffering they represented was certainly not brought to the attention of the workers in the major imperialist countries by any of the capitalist media.

Now come the horrendous events in Breslan, North Ossetia—a small region in southern Russia near Chechnya—where on Sept. 3 more than 350 people were killed, including many children, as Russian forces stormed a school in which over 1,000 students, parents and teachers had been taken hostage by an armed group. Suddenly the media are swarming all over the area, sending back heart-breaking reports on the dead and wounded children and their grieving families.

But of course they are saying nothing about the role that capitalist counter-revolution has played in these events.

This terrible tragedy followed the downing of two passenger planes, apparently by suicide bombers, and an attempt to bomb a Moscow subway. The combined death toll of all these recent attacks was over 500. The Russian government says they are the work of Chechen separatists, but the Russian news agency Novosti reports the hostage-takers at the school also included Dagestanis, Tatars, Kazakhs and even Koreans. About half a million Koreans live in this area, having immigrated in the last century.

A decade of war in Chechnya

Since 1994, Russia has been conducting a devastating war against Chechnya, whose oil and strategic location for a pipeline from the energy-rich Caspian Sea have drawn the attention of the imperialists. The Russian government’s aim is to keep Chechnya from seceding, which it fears could set off other secessionist movements in the area.

The estimates of how many people have died in this war vary widely, but run as high as 38,000 combatants and 200,000 civilians. (Time, Nov. 11, 2002) The groups trying to secede appear to have an

unlimited supply of volunteers ready to die for their cause. A number of the suicide bombers have been women. The Russian media has dubbed them “Black Widows” because they became fighters after their husbands died in the war.

Russian President Vladimir Putin does not say anything linking this terrible situation to the emergence of capitalism. He is angry, however, at the U.S. and Britain for raising criticisms of how the Russian assault on the school was conducted—it appears to have triggered the main explosion that killed so many people.

Western imperialist governments are careful to express sympathy for Russia over the recent bloody incidents, but the U.S. State Department has also called on Putin to negotiate, and this view has been repeated in editorials by leading U.S. newspapers like the Los Angeles Times. Putin refuses to do so, claiming the Chechens are linked to Muslim fundamentalists like al Qaeda.

The Associated Press reported on Sept. 7 that a State Department comment “also left open the possibility of U.S. meetings with Chechens who are not linked to terrorists.”

That Washington would take advantage of Russia’s struggle with Chechnya to intervene there has infuriated Putin. Comparing his situation to that of the U.S. after 9/11, he reportedly told a British newspaper in a tone of bitter sarcasm, “Why don’t you meet Osama bin Laden, invite him to Brussels or to the White House and engage in talks, ask him what he wants and give it to him so he leaves you in peace? Why don’t you do that?” (The Guardian, Sept. 7)

“There are Muslims along the Volga, in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan,” he continued. “Chechnya isn’t Iraq. It’s not far away. It’s a vital part of our territory. This is all about Russia’s territorial integrity.”

In these chauvinist remarks, Putin widened his attack to include other peoples, besides Chechens, in southern Russia who are Muslims. While that might earn him praise from George W. Bush and Tony Blair, it is bound to further inflame what is already a disastrous situation.

How did the animosity between the Chechens and Russia become so venomous that they would feel justified in resorting to tactics like taking over a school and risking the lives of hundreds of children?

Most bourgeois commentators describe it as a resurfacing of nationalist passions from the past. But why they resurfaced is never addressed.

Workers’ and peasants’ revolution offered self-determination

Chechnya is a predominantly Muslim area that was taken over by the czarist

Russian Empire in 1859 after 29 years of resistance. When the workers and peasants of Russia took power in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, they dissolved the empire and declared that all nations oppressed by the Great Russians had the right to self-determination, including secession if they so desired. At the same time, the Bolsheviks promoted class solidarity and unity of all the oppressed.

It was on this basis that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was founded in 1922. Hundreds of nationalities and ethnic groups, including the Chechens, joined the socialist federation, many with local autonomy. It had a very unique bicameral legislative structure. In addition to the Soviet of the Union, with deputies based on proportional representation, the state contained a Soviet of Nationalities. All nations, no matter how small, were guaranteed representation there.

The first years of the socialist revolution were extraordinarily difficult. It took a decade before it recovered sufficiently from the devastating impact of World War I, civil war and a counter-revolutionary invasion by 14 imperialist countries to be able to start transforming the economy. Finally, in 1929, the first Five-Year Plan was launched. By the mid-1930s, while capitalist economies around the world were imploding in the Great Depression, Soviet industrial output was soaring. For the smaller nationalities, especially in the less developed regions, there was great hope that they would prosper as members of this large socialist union while maintaining their distinct cultures, languages and political structures.

But the invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany in 1941, while it evoked enormous heroism by Soviet workers and peasants of all nationalities in defense of their gains, also sowed the seeds of later discord.

According to the NationMaster online encyclopedia, “The Chechnya-Ingushetia region received status of an autonomous republic within the Soviet Union in 1936. During World War II, the Soviet government accused the Chechens of cooperating with the Nazi invaders, which had controlled the western parts of Chechnya-Ingushetia for several months in 1942-1943 winter. On orders from Stalin, the entire population of the republic was exiled to Kazakhstan. Over a quarter died. The Chechens were allowed to return only in 1957, four years after Stalin’s death in 1953.”

This was just one example of many grievous violations of Leninist doctrine on the national question that Stalin carried out under the pressure of the war.

The Soviet Union encompassed hundreds of nationalities and ethnic groups. In its 70-odd years of economic develop-

ment, many people moved from ethnically homogeneous rural areas into the rapidly growing cities. Russians were also encouraged to settle in areas of the south and west, leading to a mix of many different nationalities. The goal was to even out the different stages of development across this vast country by committing resources to the poorer areas.

But the leadership in Moscow, worn down by unrelenting imperialist pressure and even threats of nuclear war, increasingly accommodated to bourgeois demands and favored the more privileged social groups and geographical areas. President Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-1980s began decentralizing the economy in a series of reforms called “perestroika.”

This immediately began to unravel the framework for development of the less prosperous areas of the USSR. The Gorbachev period saw rebellions in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, brought on when the Kremlin replaced Indigenous officials with ethnic Russians in key posts. It was an ominous foretaste of what could be expected if the Soviet government continued to violate Leninist principles on the national question.

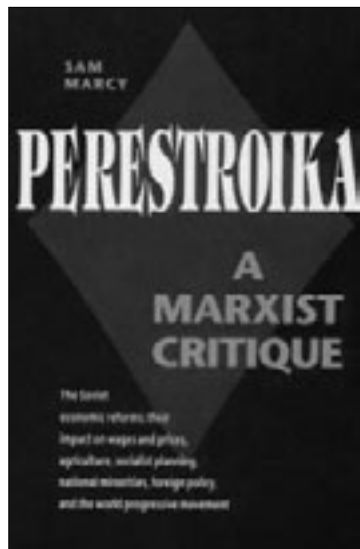
In 1991, President Boris Yeltsin dissolved the USSR and turned the country over to the pro-capitalists, completing the counter-revolution that his predecessor had begun.

With the dismantling of the state-owned economy and the Soviet state itself, a mad scramble began among would-be entrepreneurs to grab control of everything that had been publicly owned. The winners were mostly those who had worked their way up the bureaucratic ladder; the losers were the workers and farmers.

In the chaos that followed, Chechnya and Ingushetia split apart. Ingushetia became part of the now-separate republic of Georgia while, in Chechnya, a grouping took over that soon declared its independence from Russia. The Russian government refused to recognize any separate government, and in 1994, under Yeltsin, invaded with 30,000 troops.

Two periods of brutal war followed. Today the capital, Grozny, is a completely bombed-out city. In the spring of 2003, the Danish Refugee Council began a survey of the internally displaced persons who had returned to Chechnya after fleeing the war. It found that, using the officially established subsistence level of \$70.80 a month income per family, “well over 99 percent of Chechnya’s population lives below the poverty line.” It also found that “the high levels of physical destruction of the industrial, agricultural, financial, commercial and public infrastructure make prospects for a sustained economic recovery in the foreseeable future unlikely. Inside Chechnya, it is estimated that up to 60 percent of the working age population is unemployed and the same proportion of the population reports being regularly unable to meet regular household expenses.”

These abysmal conditions are not unique to Chechnya. Neighboring Ingushetia has the same problems. And throughout the Muslim areas in the south, especially, the counter-revolution turned back the clock of economic development. Increasingly, these peoples have had to turn to imperialist corporations and financiers, selling off their natural resources to survive.



PERESTROIKA: Marxist Critique

by Sam Marcy

Gorbachev said he would improve Soviet socialism. Instead, his reforms fatally weakened it. Under perestroika, hunger, unemployment, national oppression and sexism made a big comeback and the Soviet Union was finally dissolved. This book, written as the events unfolded, helps progressives understand the issues and the forces that undermined the first workers’ state. And why Margaret Thatcher said: “I like him.”

List price is \$12.95
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1990, 409 p.p., index.

Continued on page 10



Nothing happened?

The sigh of relief was almost audible in the background when the New York Times wrote their verdict on the Republican National Convention protests—entitled “The Police and the Protests.” The Sept. 4 editorial by the preeminent organ of the ruling class in New York City began: “The best news is that nothing happened.”

They concluded their editorial with similar expressions of relief and satisfaction, declaring that: “The Republicans put on their show in peace, and hundreds of thousands of protesters had their say without incident.” They ended with praise for the “members of the police force [who] helped make all this possible.”

While the Times’ editors do not always speak for the entire ruling class, in this instance they were expressing the unanimous sentiment of the capitalist establishment. What they feared from the moment the Republicans Party announced its plans to hold its convention in New York City—a stronghold of progressive, radical and revolutionary currents—was a militant, Seattle-type response to the invasion of the reactionary army of millionaires and billionaires, war makers and exploiters.

But a lot more than “nothing” happened on the streets of New York City—despite months of threats from Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the cops, made with the complete collaboration of the embedded capitalist media. What happened was a demonstration of classic capitalist democracy: the democratic rights of the people ended where the vital interests of the capitalist ruling class began.

The Times noted the “record deployment of more than 10,000 police officers” backed up by the entire force of 37,000. From the point of view of the ruling class “nothing happened” because the cops did not have to resort to tear gas and rubber bullets. But from the point of view of the right to demonstrate, plenty happened—namely a record deployment of cops by the capitalist state against the population that is sick of war, racism and political repression, the plundering of the people, the despoiling of the environment and the

world.

And there was another record set besides the deployment of cops—a record number of people arrested in New York City in the post-World War II era.

About 2,000 were arrested in one of the most supposedly liberal cities in the country. The arrests were topped off by a flagrant violation of city statutes requiring the release within 24 hours of persons arrested if they have not been charged. The construction of pens and the holding of people for over 48 hours was clearly a dry-run exercise in preventive detention.

So another thing that “happened” was that, under the cover of the near panic generated by the so-called war on terrorism, the Bloomberg and Bush administrations united to create a new climate of fear and opposition to mass protests. They attempted to establish a new right-wing benchmark for police action against demonstrations.

This advance of the police-state tactics must be fought. It was directed against the anti-RNC demonstrators in the first instance. But the \$100 million spent on new police methods, tactical training, crowd control equipment and the stretching of capitalist legality against protests is a threat to all the workers and oppressed people in New York City and around the country.

With the occupation in Iraq growing into a full scale Vietnam-style counter insurgency combined with the growing hardships of the people at home—the increase in poverty, the loss of health care, the threats to Social Security and pensions, continuing layoffs—the strengthening of the police and the capitalist state must be answered by renewed, united mass mobilization. The workers and the oppressed must reclaim their rights in the streets.

Important legal efforts are underway to challenge the police-state tactics in the courts. But a coming together of the movement in united mass action must bolster these efforts. The rights to the streets must be won in the streets. This is in the vital interests of all the workers and oppressed in the struggles that are sure to come. □

Behind the disaster in southern Russia

Continued from page 9

Bourgeoisie turns to ‘god and country’

Even before the USSR was dismantled, its leaders had tried to placate the capitalist world. Under Soviet rule, the Russian Orthodox Church had lost its privileged position as the state religion of the czars. The communist stand had been to promote science and atheism instead of superstition among the people, while not allowing the state to interfere with their freedom of worship. The Western media applauded when President Gorbachev in 1988 abandoned this position and attended the celebration of 1,000 years of the Russian Orthodox Church, thereby giving his support not only to religion but to Christianity—in a country where other religions also had deep roots among the various peoples.

All these developments have created implacable hatred among many of the non-Russians for the rule of Moscow. Like those who now sit in the Kremlin, the current leaders of the various nationalities are not communists and do not put forward any program for unity or cooperation of the workers and peasants of the region on a class basis. However, at a time when the U.S. and Britain, especially, have embarked on an anti-Muslim campaign under the guise of a “war on terror,” which is really a war for oil, it is important that the progressive and anti-war movements reject any facile stereotyping or attributing everything to a few plotters.

It is time to be objective about the tortured history of the USSR, to admit its great achievements as well as its weaknesses, in order to understand why its dismantling has led to such disaster. □



Antonio Guerrero



Fernando González

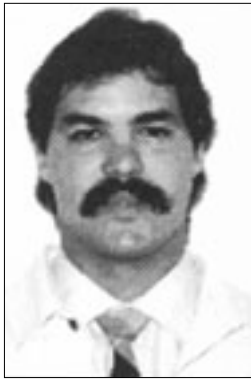


Gerardo Hernández



René González

Free the Cuban 5



Ramón Labañino

Ramon Labañino

A visit to one of Cuban Five

By Teresa Gutierrez
Beaumont, Texas

On Aug. 28 and 29, Teresa Gutierrez and Gloria Rubac visited Ramón Labañino, one of the Cuban Five political prisoners, at the Maximum Security Federal Prison in Beaumont, Texas. Gutierrez is the New York Coordinator of the Committee to Free the Cuban Five. Rubac is a leader of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement and works with the Cuban Five Committee in Houston.

He misses breakfast almost every day so he can stay up late to listen to Cuba on the radio. He is intense and warm and friendly. A very intelligent man, Ramon Labañino says the only regret he has is that he sits in jail and therefore cannot do more for Cuba.

We are amazed by that comment. How much more can one sacrifice than being unjustly incarcerated in a Texas prison?

But it is that kind of devotion and dedication to the Cuban Revolution that has led Ramón Labañino and the other representatives of the Cuban Five to become its heroes.

Ramón shyly says he has never met Fidel Castro. When we tell him that when he is freed, surely Fidel will take him to dinner, Ramón says that he would rather that Fidel take him to the mountains to teach him about revolution.

He is adamant—that is for sure—about the need for profound and fundamental social change. And Ramón is especially adamant about the need for profound change in the United States.

We asked Ramón what he would like us to tell supporters of the Cuban Five about our visit. His main messages over and over concern his gratitude for the work that supporters do on their behalf.

Ramón states that he knows life in the U.S. is hard and that being an activist on any cause takes sacrifice. He is so appreciative of everything we do, even if it is just a little here or there, because he recognizes that people must work hard to pay the rent and buy food and clothes and go to the doctor.

So for him, anyone that devotes any time left after surviving in this country to activism is wonderful.

Ramón said that the main issue for him right now is to “get Bush out.” Like most Cubans, he is very worried about the Bush connection to right-wing Cuban-Americans from Florida. He points out how many reactionary Cuban Americans are in the Bush administration from the transportation department to the State Department.

He recognizes that John Kerry is not that much better but feels that with Kerry in office there would be “a stalemate” on U.S./Cuba relations, which might buy Cuba some time.

In fact, John Kerry issued his “Statement of Principles on U.S. Cuba Policy” on June 5. In it Kerry stated, “I am committed to seeing the end to the Castro regime, which I have long condemned for its flagrant human rights abuse and political oppression.” Kerry also spoke for lifting the travel ban but by encouraging “principled travel.”

In response to Bush’s recent slanders on Cuba, Ramón was just livid. He was furious that Bush accused Cuba of sex trafficking with children, calling it an enormous lie.

This showed three things, Ramón pointed out: 1) that Bush really hates Cuba; 2) that he knows nothing about Cuba or its people; and 3) he repeats the lies of the right-wing Cuban Americans in Miami.

He was so insulted because the number one cause of the revolution is children. “We love our children,” he said. They are “the heart and soul of our country.”

Ramón was so excited when he talked about Venezuela and the recent victory of President Hugo Chávez in the August referendum. “Chávez is the hope, the future of Latin America,” Ramon said over and over in many ways. His eyes shone as he said what is happening in Venezuela is so important for Cuba.

Life remains hard in Texas prisons. There are gangs, drugs and violence. It was so inspiring to us when he said that most of the prisoners support and respect President Fidel Castro. Ramón gets a lot of respect in prison just for being a Cuban who defends the revolution.

When the Cuban baseball team defeated the U.S. team in the recent Olympics, Ramón said all the prisoners shouted with glee along with him.

Ramón says the reason he stays up so late and misses breakfast the next morning is because “I have to hear Cuba, my people” every night. He has to hear how Cuba is doing in the Olympics. The opportunity to listen to Cuban radio broadcasts is more than enough reason to miss breakfast.

Cuba is so vital to him—it is clearly his lifeline. It is so clear how much he loves his partner Elizabeth Labañino and his daughters. He is so proud of them and speaks of them with such love and devotion, your heart almost breaks.

It is a reminder of the importance of the campaign to obtain visas so that the families can visit the Five.

Through phone conversations with Elizabeth in Cuba, Ramón is playing chess with Cuban students. He tells her his chess move and she tells the players in Cuba. He is playing with students from ISLA—the Latin America Superior Institute of Chess.

Ramón says that chess is very important to Cubans and is becoming more of a priority. “Fidel says it is a good life skill,” Ramón says.

He has an intensive correspondence going with a supporter in Indiana who is a priest. Ramón says he hopes he does not offend the supporter when he tells him how decisive radical change is for society, especially in the U.S.

The exchange is but one more example of how, even from within the confines of U.S. prisons, Ramón and the Cuban Five inspire so many of us. Like other political prisoners, these comrades continue to defend their principles despite the harshest sentences ever for such a case.

The Cuban Five are an illustrious and shining example of how the Cuban Revolution remains a beacon for all of us who are active in the movement for socialism. □

Milosevic denied universal right of self-defense

U.S.-created court gags Yugoslav president

By Sara Flounders

In the most drastic maneuver yet to silence the truth of the U.S./NATO war on Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on Sept. 2 denied former President Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia the internationally recognized right to defend himself in court. This comes after the prosecution took two years presenting its side of the case. The ruling came on the very day Milosevic was finally to begin calling witnesses in his own defense.

President Milosevic vigorously presented his opening statement of his own defense in person for two days on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1, immediately before the Trial Chamber decided he "is not fit enough to represent himself." He was apparently "fit enough" to perform that task.

The former president's introductory remarks set the tone for a strong indictment of the U.S., Germany and other NATO powers for their 10-year war of aggression against Yugoslavia. His defense case was expected to continue in the same manner, exposing the crimes of the imperialist powers in the Balkans.

Ramsey Clark, former U.S. attorney general and co-chair of the International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milosevic (ICDSM), stated in a letter to the court: "Under International Law, every person accused of a crime has the right to represent himself in person in the court."

"The appearance of President Milosevic representing himself alone during the prosecution case for over two years, nearly 300 trial days, cross examining nearly 300 prosecution witnesses, coping with 500,000 documents, and 30,000 pages of trial transcript, then at the very beginning of his presentation of his own defense being silenced and lawyers he rejects placed in charge of his destiny, speaks of injustice."

Canadian attorney and international law expert Tiphaine Dickson, who is assisting Milosevic's supporters, said: "The prosecutor is attempting, yet again, to force President Milosevic to accept legal counsel to represent him, using his poor health as an excuse. President Milosevic has insisted that he represent himself from the onset. Within the U.S., the Supreme Court has recognized this as a right under the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution. To refuse to allow him this right would turn the already illegal ICTY hearings into a star-chamber proceeding."

Historically, even in past stage-managed trials where the prosecution held total control and a guilty verdict was assured beforehand, many defendants have had the right to represent them-

selves. Nelson Mandela facing a racist apartheid court in South Africa, Fidel Castro brought before the court of the Bastita dictatorship, or Georgi Dimirov before the Nazi court in the 1930s could speak in their defense.

Over 100 legal experts, lawyers and jurists from 17 countries signed a letter entitled, "Imposition of Counsel on Slobodan Milosevic Threatens the Future of International Law and the Life of the Defendant." This letter urges the United Nations to allow Milosevic to continue defending himself against war crimes charges.

The internationally circulated letter warns that imposing a defense lawyer against Milosevic's wishes would violate international law. It is illegal even under the statute of the Yugoslav tribunal and also under the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights.

Imposing court-appointed lawyers

Tiphaine Dickson, who drafted the petition, said the UN tribunal prosecuting Milosevic is trying to impose a defense counsel to strip him of a defense "that may be embarrassing" to the court.

Ramsey Clark's letter also points out that "The very lawyers appointed by the Trial Chamber have a direct conflict of interest. They have served by appointment of the court as 'friends of the Court.' You cannot serve two masters. Having served as friend of the Court, that same counsel selected by the Court to represent President Milosevic cannot ethically serve as his counsel."

The two lawyers who have been appointed as defense council against Milosevic's express wishes are Stephen Kay and his daughter Gilian Kay Higgins. The two were appointed Amicus Curiae (friends of the court) against Milosevic's wishes in the prosecution part of the trial. In that appointed position, Stephen Kay was made very much aware of Milosevic's insistence on his legal right to conduct his own defense.

Stephan Kay has long played a highly dubious role as appointed council in earlier trials of both the Yugoslav and the Rwanda Tribunals. Where he was appointed there were convictions in the trials. His appointment also allowed the courts to establish dangerous legal precedents for other trials.

Many outrageous judicial abuses have been legitimized by the ICTY over the past 10 years. The court accepts the use of hearsay evidence, offers reduced sentences in exchange for testimony, and allows the use of anonymous witnesses and closed sessions.

ICTY transcripts show pages and pages blanked out because sensitive issues have been discussed in court. "Sensitive" issues means those relating to the U.S. role.

In December 2003, when the former supreme commander of NATO, Wesley Clark, testified in the Milosevic trial, the court agreed to let the Pentagon censor its proceedings. The transcripts were not released until Washington had given its approval.

A court to justify occupation

U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright was behind this court's creation in 1993. Since then, it has been financed and organized by funds from the U.S. and Britain. Its 1,300 personnel are also overwhelmingly from Britain and the U.S.

From the very beginning the court has functioned to justify the U.S., British and NATO role in the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation.

The decision to charge President Milosevic with war crimes was made toward the end of the 78-day U.S./NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. By charging the elected Yugoslav president, the U.S./NATO forces placed increased pressure on him to capitulate rather than participate in the cease-fire negotiations or oppose the long-term U.S./NATO occupation of Kosovo.

The entire 1999 U.S. war against defenseless Yugoslavia, the bombing of every major city, the destruction of 480 schools and 33 hospitals, along with bridges, roads and the entire industrial infrastructure, was all presented by the imperialist propaganda machine as necessary to stop an alleged genocide in the Serbian province of Kosovo.

NATO officials constantly referred to "mountains of corpses" and "killing fields." In April 1999, the U.S. State Department claimed that 500,000 Kosovo Albanians had been rounded up and killed by Serbs. Other reports used the number of 100,000 feared dead.

No mass graves

Just as the weapons of mass destruction have never been found in Iraq, the charge of massacres, mass graves, ethnic cleansing and genocide proved to be an utter fabrication in Kosovo.

Immediately after the war, 20 forensic teams were sent to Kosovo by the International Criminal Court at The Hague from 15 NATO countries, including the U.S.. They dug all summer of 1999 at the

very sites where supposed witnesses had reported mass graves.

By October 1999 they reported back to Chief Prosecutor for the Tribunal Carla Del Ponte that they had been unable to find any mass graves in Kosovo at all. They had found a total of 2,108 corpses in individual graves. How many of that number may have been killed by the NATO bombing they did not speculate.

All of this material, including the reports of NATO destruction of Yugoslav cities and the Tribunal's own forensic teams' inability to find mass graves, was to be part of Milosevic's rebuttal. The attempt to remove Milosevic as his own attorney is an admission that President Milosevic is not guilty of the war-crimes charges. It adds to the U.S. and NATO guilt in planning, executing and carrying out a 10-year war that broke up a strong and successful Yugoslav Federation into a half-dozen weak colonies and neo-colonies subservient to U.S. and Western European imperialism.

The breakup of the Yugoslav Federation meant that the many industries of Yugoslavia, including steel, auto, pharmaceuticals, chemical plants, railroads, mines, refining and processing, that had previously been owned by the whole population or by the workers in those plants have been forcibly privatized. U.S., British and German corporations now own them. Social programs, pension funds, free education and free health care have been decimated. It is this history of the crime of occupation that NATO's court is trying to silence by depriving Yugoslav President Milosevic of his right to present his own defense.

Flounders is co-director of the International Action Center. She was scheduled to testify in the opening phase of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's defense at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia at The Hague, Netherlands.

Flounders had met with President Milosevic in Scheveningen Prison at The Hague for six hours on June 28 to help prepare testimony for the defense. Milosevic has been held for three years at the prison. Material from a book published by the International Action Center in 2002, "Hidden Agenda: U.S./NATO Takeover of Yugoslavia," edited by Flounders and John Catalinotto, was to be the basis of her testimony at the trial.



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Detrás de la fachada democrática

El papel del racismo en las elecciones de los Estados Unidos

Este artículo está basado en una charla pronunciada por Dianne Mathiowetz el 13 de agosto durante una reunión del Partido Mundo Obrero en la ciudad de Nueva York.

Las ondas radiales y los periódicos están llenos de conversaciones sobre las próximas elecciones. El votar en estas elecciones se presenta como la forma más alta de la democracia.

No importa cuán corrupto y no representativo sea el proceso de selección de los candidatos y las elecciones, el resultado será presentado como la voluntad del pueblo, la única avenida legítima y efectiva para la participación popular.

Al analizar el papel de las elecciones bajo el capitalismo y plantear una estrategia para terminar el dominio de los ricos, el entender la lucha contra el racismo y la supremacía blanca es clave para forjar la unidad requerida para la victoria.

Los revolucionarios en los Estados Unidos, el epicentro del racismo e imperialismo, tienen que estar siempre conscientes de la historia.

Cuando este país fue fundado sobre las bases y principios de la democracia burguesa, el voto era el derecho exclusivo de los hombres blancos con propiedad. Ni siquiera se consideraba que las mujeres ni l@s esclav@s tuvieran voz política.

A pesar de la decimoquinta enmienda a la constitución, la cual extendió el sufragio a l@s ex esclav@s después de la Guerra Civil, y la decimonovena enmienda que dio a las mujeres el derecho a votar en 1920, los hombres y mujeres africano-americanos enfrentaron obstáculos abrumadores al tratar de ejercer sus derechos, especialmente en el sur del país.

Además de los impuestos de votación, exámenes de alfabetización y otras medidas burocráticas diseñadas para prevenir que l@s african@-american@s dieran su voto, también habían amenazas reales de violencia física y represalias económicas por parte de la estructura racista y su escuadrón, el Ku Klux Klan. L@s african@-american@s literalmente arriesgaron sus vidas para poder registrarse para votar.

La realidad de Jim Crow

La realidad de la segregación “Jim Crow”, con sus fuentes de agua, baños, vagones, hoteles y escuelas separadas ocurrió hace menos de 40 años.

Hace sólo pocas décadas era práctica rutinaria el forzar a l@s african@-american@s a sentarse en la parte de atrás de los autobuses; hacerse a un lado para que una persona blanca pasara en la acera, con los ojos mirando al suelo; trabajar duro por largas horas para recibir salarios de miseria; y recibir golpizas, linchamiento y violaciones sexuales que ni se reportaban ni castigaban.

La realidad política, social y económica de millones de africano-americanos y otras gentes de color se mantuvo separada y lejos de los principios burgueses de “todos los hombres son creados igual” y

“libertad y justicia para todos.”

Durante la década de los cincuenta y sesenta, un poderoso movimiento de derechos civiles nacido de la experiencia compartida de todo tipo de indignidades y opresión racial, se extendió por las ciudades y pueblos pequeños del sur. Decenas de miles de mujeres, hombres y jóvenes desafiaron cañones de agua y perros de la policía, bombas y balas para forzar algunas concesiones del gobierno.

Este movimiento creó un clima social diferente nacionalmente. Una serie de leyes fueron aprobadas, incluyendo el Acta del Derecho al Voto de 1965, la cual dio a l@s african@-american@s y a otr@s, la posibilidad de participar en las elecciones.

En todo el sur y en el país entero, existen hoy alcaldes y jueces de raza negra, diputados, sheriffs y miembros de la Cámara de Representantes. Actualmente, el Senado y la presidencia permanecen como un club exclusivo para millonarios blancos.

Aún así, informa el recién publicado reporte “The Long Shadow of Jim Crow: Voter Intimidation and Suppression in America”, (La gran sombra de Jim Crow: Intimidación y supresión de los votantes en América), por People for the American Way y el NAACP, que el derecho democrático burgués de votar tiene todavía que ganarse para la gente de color y l@s oprimid@s en este país.

Florida: Una lucha que continúa

Muchos ya saben que en las elecciones del 2000 en la Florida, a miles y miles de personas, en su mayoría africana-americanas, haitianas o de habla hispana, les fue negado su derecho a votar porque sus nombres fueron borrados de los registros erróneamente. La elección de George W. Bush fue posible sólo por este fraude masivo.

Pero los medios corporativos de comunicación han prestado muy poca atención a la lucha que se ha estado llevando a cabo para prevenir que un fraude similar ocurra de nuevo.

La administración del gobernador de la Florida, Jeb Bush, ha postergado la implementación de muchos cambios en los procedimientos de la votación que fueron ordenados como resultado de las investigaciones de las elecciones del año 2000.

Así que cientos de observadores de elecciones están siendo reclutados a través del país para prevenir que pierdan el derecho a votar ancian@s, deshabilitad@s, gente de color y votantes que no hablan inglés.

Según el reporte, recientemente en el área de Orlando, oficiales armados del departamento estatal policial vestidos de civiles fueron a interrogar a votantes negr@s ancian@s a sus casas. Supuestamente era parte de una investigación de las irregularidades en una elección para alcalde, pero quedó bien clara que la intención era la de intimidar.

En el 2000, la policía erigió barricadas y establecieron retenes para identificar la gente alrededor de la zona donde las urnas de votación estaban ubicadas en la comunidad negra de Miami y en otras ciudades de la Florida.

Muchos otros ejemplos citados en el reporte son la presencia obvia e intrusa rodeando lugares de votación en las comunidades africana-americanas y de inmigrantes en los estados desde Carolina del Sur, hasta Pennsylvania y California.

Otra técnica común ha sido el envío masivo por correo a comunidades de gente de color dando información falsa sobre las fechas de las elecciones, los requisitos y los lugares para votar.

El caso de Cynthia McKinney

La derrota electoral en las elecciones del 2002 de la representante congresional Cynthia McKinney del estado de Georgia es otro ejemplo de los intentos persistentes de contener la participación electoral de la comunidad negra.

McKinney representó a su electorado, mayormente negro, enfocando cuestiones del racismo e indemnizaciones por los daños ocasionados por la esclavitud y las políticas discriminatorias; los derechos de la mujer y derechos laborales por cinco

períodos electorales desde 1993 hasta el 2003.

Ella se ganó la aversión implacable de los derechistas por apoyar la lucha por justicia para los palestinos y desafiar a la administración de Bush después del 11 de septiembre de 2001 durante sus preparaciones para la guerra contra Irak.

Fue derrotada en su intento de ganar su reelección hace dos años cuando grupos como el Comité de Acción Política Americana-Israelí contribuyeron millones de dólares para sus oponentes políticos – y algunos 40.000 votantes republicanos cruzaron la línea partidaria para participar en las primarias del Partido Demócrata.

Sin embargo, en un revés sensacional el pasado julio, McKinney ganó la primaria Demócrata. Ahora está prácticamente garantizada volver a ganar su puesto en la Casa de Representantes en noviembre.

La campaña en las primarias de McKinney inspiró a cientos de voluntarios que visitaron casa por casa para motivar a la gente a votar.

La negación del derecho a votar es una de las muchas formas de desigualdades que tienen su origen en este sistema racista. La desigualdad por razón de raza en el desempleo, salarios, población de prisioneros, penas de muerte, mortalidad infantil, incidencia de enfermedades, expectativa de vida y educación – revela la discriminación abierta que prevalece en esta “democracia”.

La elección de cualquier político capitalista no va a resolver estas profundas contradicciones. Sin embargo, no cabe duda que todos l@s trabajador@s deben defender contra los ataques racistas, el derecho a votar y tener puestos representativos en el gobierno, como también el derecho a tener un trabajo y una vivienda, servicios de salud y educación.

A través de sus 45 años de existencia, el Partido Mundo Obrero (Workers World Party) ha expresado, en palabra y acción, su apoyo sólido a las luchas de los pueblos oprimidos en contra del racismo y la discriminación. Cada truco inventado por la clase dominante para dividir y confundir a l@s trabajadores tiene que ser desenmascarado y combatido. Y esto significa defender al derecho a votar y ser elegido del pueblo oprimido sin tener que enfrentar reacciones racistas.

La campaña electoral del Partido Mundo Obrero es otra manera de dar una voz independiente a las necesidades y aspiraciones de la gente trabajadora y oprimida. El capitalismo ha fracasado cumplir con sus propias definiciones de igualdad. Al presentar el socialismo como una alternativa necesaria y viable, los candidatos del PMO/WWP desenmascaran la farsa de la politiquera burguesa.

Las millones de personas privadas de su derecho a votar, marginadas y alienadas por este sistema político—prisioner@s, l@s sin techo, inmigrantes, la juventud – tod@s son incluid@s en la lucha por un futuro socialista como socios decisivos en el movimiento de la clase trabajadora. □

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