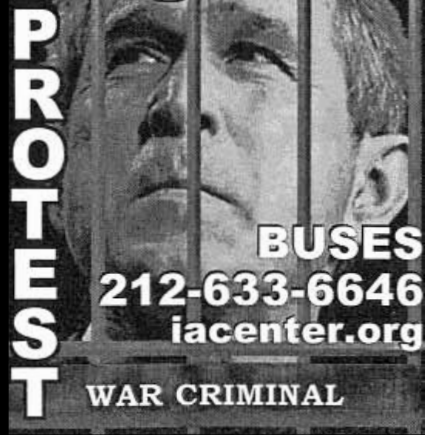


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## Imperialism deepens tsunami toll

# Deaths not just act of nature

## Socialist organization & planning can save lives

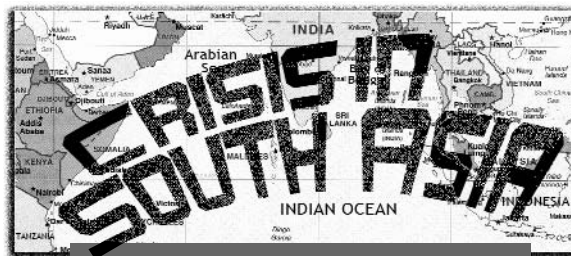
By Fred Goldstein

The enormity of the disaster that has befallen the peoples of the Indian Ocean region can only be comprehended in terms of the fundamental contradiction of the modern age: the antagonism between the enormous productive forces unleashed by stunning scientific-technological advances and the outmoded social system of capitalist exploitation. This technology, which holds the capability of alleviating and eliminating the age-old burdens afflicting humanity, is owned by a capitalist class that utilizes it to pursue profits, and the result is an increase in human misery.

No amount of technology, of course, could have prevented the powerful undersea earthquake or the resulting mega-tsunami that struck 27 countries. But humanity has progressed to the point where a combination of technology and social organization is capable of vastly mitigating such a disaster. Through education, training and preparation, early warning, rapid mass mobilization for evacuation and full-scale social coordination to deal with the aftermath, tens of thousands of lives, at the least, could have been saved.

Only governments with the interests and welfare of the masses as their primary concern could have made the preparations and taken the actions to do what was necessary. Cuba is such a country. It is poor, and its situation has been made far more difficult by the U.S. blockade and the collapse of the USSR and other socialist trading partners. Nevertheless, it is the internationally acknowledged leader in dealing with natural disasters, including devastating hurricanes.

In September 2004, Cuba endured Ivan, the fifth-largest hurricane ever to hit the Caribbean, with sustained winds of 124 miles per hour. Cuba evacuated almost 2 million people—more than 15 percent of the total population. One hundred thousand people were evacuated within the first three hours. An incredible 78 percent of those evacuated were wel-



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comed into other people's homes. Children at boarding schools were moved. Animals and birds were moved. No one was killed.

The International Federation of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent Society, the United Nations, Oxfam and other institutions in capitalist society that concern themselves with minimizing the effects of natural disasters have been compelled to study and praise the Cuban government. But none dare say that it is because Cuba is socialist.

The journal Public Administration and Development (Vol. 22, Issue 5) in December 2002 published a highly laudatory paper by Holly Sims and Kevin Vogelmann entitled "Popular Mobilization and Disaster Management in Cuba." (interscience.wiley.com)

Oxfam, which is decidedly pro-capitalist, issued a 68-page report in 2002 entitled, "Weathering the Storm: Lessons in Risk Reduction from Cuba." It cited

Cuba's Civil Defense force, early warning system, well-equipped rescue teams, emergency stockpiles and other resources.

But the report went on to make the most telling point. "Such tangible assets are impressive, but if they were the only determining factor, then

other wealthier countries such as the United States would have lower disaster death tolls. (The U.S. spent \$13 billion for the Florida hurricane and had higher casualties than Cuba.) Thus, it is equally important to consider the role played by other 'intangible' qualities in making the Cuban system work so well. These include community mobilization, solidarity, clear political commitment to safeguard human life and a population that is 'disaster-aware' and educated in the necessary actions to be taken in the event of a disaster. Together, these tangible and intangible elements create a seamless effort that incorporates disaster preparation, response and recovery."

Cuba's achievements flow from the fact that its socialist government is fused with and has the confidence of the workers and peasants. The fate of the masses in the Indian Ocean region, by contrast, was in the hands of the imperialists as well as their own capitalist governments. This is what magnified the loss of human life to untold and unnecessary numbers.

### Is Pentagon humanitarian? Ask Iraqis!

It is important to view this disaster within the framework of contemporary class relations. The predominant aspect of the crisis is that it occurred in the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal—a region of a billion and a half oppressed people living in countries that are under the domination of imperialism. There are no imperialist countries bordering the Indian Ocean except the minor sub-imperialist Australia, whose sparsely populated west coast can be exposed to Indian Ocean tsunamis.

The fact that the Bush administration made a great media event out of raising its

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# 'The first edit meeting after the Revolution'

From a talk given by Leslie Feinberg at the National Fightback Conference in New York City on Nov. 13-14, 2004.

This is how I imagine the first editorial meeting of Workers World newspaper after we all seize state power. It begins with cheering.

"How many cities have been liberated by the people's militias?" the managing editor asks. "We need a round-up of what battles are still taking place."

"Well, we've got our headline," one editor says. "One word, big and bold: LIBERATION!"

"Hmm, I don't know," another cautions. "It's not over. We need to make clear that a revolution isn't a single act, it's a process. We've seized state power but that doesn't create socialism; we've just liberated the ground to build it. Now the real work begins. Reorganizing the economy on a planned basis. There're a lot of needs out there to be met. And we need to explain that socialism is the first stage where we try to make distribution more fair, more equal."

"Yes," someone agrees, "let's write about how communism is a higher stage of economic development than socialism. Very soon we'll be able to create such abundance that people can contribute what they can to society, and get back what they need and want."

An editor raises his hand: "Let's make clear that right now we need neighborhood militias as self-defense against the forces of these old diehard capitalists and their hangers-on trying to regain power. But once we've pushed them back and get to the point where everybody can have what they need, we won't need militias or jails. We'll just need accounting workers to tally how much is being produced and distributed."

Whoever is chairing this meeting will focus the discussion: "Let's talk about what articles we need in this issue. And let's keep it short because some of us want to go to the big victory rally at the old Stock Exchange tonight."

Excitedly, someone interjects, "Yeah, there's gonna be great performances at the rally—rap and reggae, mariachi and cumbia!"

An editor says, ironically, "We finally don't need an article explaining that capitalism had a fatal contradiction that made the struggle for socialism inevitable."

Another shakes her head. "I think we still do need to re-raise that contradiction. One huge class was doing the work of the world. Another tiny class claimed to own all the profits from that labor, and laid claim to the deed for all the giant tools that generations of our class built collectively."

Someone leans forward to stress: "But we're already

tearing up that deed now. With the workers and oppressed around the world we're liberating the productive apparatus."

Another says, "Yes, but this article shows why the class that did the work on that worldwide productive apparatus together is the only force that can carry out this revolutionary restructuring of economic and social life."

Other editors nod. One adds, "Now, for the first time in human history we can ultimately fulfill every want on earth."

"And every desire," another smiles. "No more dreams deferred. Now we can provide real reparations, for everything that U.S. finance capital stole from peoples around the world. And revolutionary affirmative action to redress the crimes of slavery and super-exploitation."

An editor raises her hand. "You know what I think we need to deal with now: building widespread confidence that we can achieve the revolutionary goals."

"Yeah," someone recalls. "Not long before the insurrection some hard-working activists worried whether the workers would ever rise up."

"Right!" another agrees. "We need to show why that qualitative leap forward is revolution. That a revolution is the catching up of mass consciousness to new relationships in the objective conditions. Let's quote Lenin: Sometimes decades go by and nothing seems to happen, and then weeks go by and decades happen."

"But there are workers and oppressed peoples out there who are wondering, 'Is this transformation really possible?' They may be wondering how we're going to wipe out bigotry and selfishness. We were all taught that people are hardwired to be cut-throat."

A West Coast editor being teleconferenced announces: "New laws were issued this morning against racism and anti-gay and anti-trans bashing! Let's show how this old way of thinking was a form of shackles. We could run a photo of Bob Marley, with the line from 'Redemption Song': 'Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery; none but ourselves can free our mind.'"

A male editor says, "We need to focus on what it will take to relieve women from 'second shift' work at home, too, and get men to stand up against sexism."

"Let's use 'fight,'" someone else amends, "not 'stand up.' There're a lot of men rolling out there in wheelchairs who are militant fighters against sexism. We can point out, too, that our class has a revolutionary party to help raise consciousness. We've all liberated the giant tools of mass education: schools, news media, movies, television."

"And problems that seemed impossible to solve under

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*This week ...*

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## WW CALENDAR

### BALTIMORE

#### Mon., Jan. 10

The Sun., Jan. 9, Workers World Party meeting and class is rescheduled for Mon. This will be the first of a video series featuring Larry Holmes on the "National Question." 7 p.m. At 426 E. 31st St. For info (410) 235-7040.

### LOS ANGELES

#### Fri., Jan. 14

Tsunami, U.S. guilty of criminal neglect? Also update on U.S. war/occupation of Iraq. Sponsored by IAC. 7:30 p.m. At 5274 W. Pico Blvd. #203.

#### Sat., Jan. 22

Workers World meeting: John Parker on developing perspectives for the struggle for socialism. 4 p.m. At 5274 W. Pico Blvd., #203. For info (323) 936-1416.

#### Fri., Jan. 28

Screening of "Chavez, Venezuela and the New Latin America," a new film by Aleida Guevara. Sponsored by International Action Center 7:30 p.m. At 5274 W. Pico Blvd., #203. For info 323-936-7266

### NEW YORK

#### Fri., Jan. 7

Workers World Party meeting:

LeiLani Dowell, F.I.S.T. youth organizer, on the Tsunami tragedy: why capitalism cannot respond to natural disasters; Remy Herrera, an economist at the University of Paris, on the Cuba-Venezuela economic accord, and Dave Sole, president of UAW Local 2334 in Detroit, on the crisis in the cities and the war. 7 pm. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

### SAN DIEGO

#### Fri., Jan. 14

IAC activist Carl Muhammad will speak on the contributions of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the struggles against militarism and racism. At 3930 Oregon Street #230.

#### Sat., Jan. 15

Martin Luther King, Jr., march with the IAC contingent. 10 a.m. at the County Administration Bldg on Harbor Drive.

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

#### Thu., Jan. 20

Protest at Bush inauguration. For more information, including buses, contact the International Action Center at (212) 633-6646 or www.iacenter.org.

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To our readers:  
 There was no  
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 one-week break.



## Fannie Mae secret stock sale

# Wall Street feeds off a crisis

By Milt Neidenberg

Fannie Mae, the largest non-bank mortgage lender in the world and a favorite of the New York Stock Exchange, has just successfully received a massive transfusion. Not blood. Money.

After an unusual secretive offer to a select group of big-time investors, preferred stocks valued at \$5 billion were grabbed up in one day. Holders of preferred stock are first in line in any financial crisis. Those who quickly snatched up the stock were nameless and described only as "qualified institutional buyers."

The Wall Street Journal headline on Dec. 31 read, "Fannie Puts a Treat in Stocking with a New Issue." The article enthusiastically describes how "by one analyst's reckoning ... Fannie left about \$450 million on the table for investors by offering such generous terms." This didn't include the hefty fees that go to Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc., the only Wall Street behemoth retained to secretly and speedily accomplish the sale.

The one-day wheeling and dealing sent Fannie Mae's shares up by 12 percent. It was a splendid example of the self-bestowed generosity of Wall Street at a time when poverty, hunger and death in the world were being exacerbated by the cataclysm in South Asia.

### Secrecy, panic and haste

Is Fannie Mae enmeshed in an Enron-like coverup? That debacle involved cooking the books and resulted in wiping out millions of investors and thousands of jobs. Fannie Mae faces similar charges by the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight (OFHEO), a government agency. It also found that the giant mortgage holder was "significantly under-capitalized." The newly hired auditors found a shortfall of \$9 billion.

The Securities and Exchange Commission, protector of Wall Street's banks and financial institutions, agreed with

OFHEO. This led to the resignation of the head of Fannie Mae's board of directors and chief executive officer, as well as the chief financial officer. These two bailed out, their golden parachutes floating above them. Fannie Mae will soon need another \$4-billion transfusion to shore up its money reserves in the wake of the shortfall and the accounting scandal.

Since 1968 when Fannie Mae was privatized, it has provided \$6.3 trillion in mortgages for 63 million families.

### Child of the Depression

In 1938, long before Fannie Mae became the darling of Wall Street, Congress had established the Federal National Mortgage Association, nicknamed Fannie Mae.

The Great Depression had collapsed the national housing market along with banking capital. Fannie Mae became the principal and largest source of financing for home mortgages. Its mandate was to expand home ownership for millions of first-time home buyers as well as to develop rental housing projects and provide financing where it was needed most at reasonable rates.

It remains to be seen how the current crisis will affect the millions of first-time home buyers and those who seek affordable rental housing.

Fannie Mae operated under federal charter for 30 years. But in 1968 President Lyndon Johnson signed legislation amending the charter so it could be a private, shareholder-owned company—a sweetener for Wall Street. This made it easier for Fannie Mae to change its practices to please shareholders first, although, as always, the workers and the oppressed desperately needed decent housing. The amendment also made it possible for Johnson to reduce the budget deficit and to finance the Vietnam War. President George W. Bush has similar plans for Social Security.

By 1972, Fannie Mae had established itself as the only national secondary mar-

ket for conventional mortgages. Refinancing them has become a billion-dollar industry. This set up a tight relationship between Wall Street banks and financial institutions investing in Fannie Mae.

Fannie Mae borrows at low interest rates and profits from the spread it charges first-time homeowners. Fannie Mae packages mortgages bought from financial institutions and sells many of them in the open market to the highest bidders. The banks profit from unloading these mortgages as their lending capacity rises, particularly when interest rates are climbing. Because Congress has defined Fannie Mae as a Government Sponsored Enterprise, it is exempt from federal, state and local taxes. Big-time investors are persuaded by the Bush administration that the taxpayers will pick up the tab if Fannie Mae goes down. It's a sweetheart deal for all.

### What went wrong?

Due to the generous conditions, Fannie Mae has experienced a period of unprecedented growth over the last few decades. So why did it have to cook the books to cover up its losses? Is it because the housing market is overloaded with debt and a downturn is in the making?

To compound its problems, Fannie Mae has entered the world of derivatives and hedge funds. This is Wall Street's favorite game. It's casino capitalism—betting on the roll of the dice. Since there is no government regulation of these forms of speculation, nor is transparency required, there is no way of knowing how deeply Fannie Mae is involved.

In 1984, Fannie Mae for the first time sold its debt in the European market. It is this cumulative debt that has shaken up the foreign markets. In July 2003, Asian central banks heavily sold off their holdings in Fannie Mae debt. Asian investors had held over \$13.6 trillion of Fannie Mae debt! The selloff was the result of rumors that the European Central Bank, which held \$10.6 trillion, was dumping its

Fannie Mae holdings.

Multiple factors are now plaguing Fannie Mae. The mortgage industry and the capital markets it serves have entered a period of uncertainty and debt. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the twin mortgage lender which has also been under investigation, have a combined debt equal to 48 percent of the current national debt. The U.S. government spent \$600 billion more last year than it raised in revenues. This debt was financed primarily by borrowing from foreign central banks, mainly in Japan and China. The accumulated debt to foreign investors has now increased to \$3.3 trillion, which comes to 28 percent of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product—the value of all goods and services produced over a year.

Fannie Mae is trapped in a maelstrom of debt and speculation. As the Federal Reserve Board continues to raise interest rates, inflation will affect millions of homeowners and others financed by Fannie Mae. They will be forced to pay more in interest rates and other fees. While wages and other benefits are being slashed and the dollar is declining, foreclosures and evictions will become more threatening. Meanwhile, there is a desperate need for low-cost mortgages and funding for new housing.

Fannie Mae will cut back on its investments in the housing industry, emulating the Bush doctrine of cutting social services to pay for endless imperialist wars. The housing industry has been a main prop to the overall capitalist economy, generating demand for building supplies, furniture, improvements and so on.

The progressive legislation that created Fannie Mae followed years of strikes and struggles. During the Depression years, the labor movement was on the move. Foreclosures and evictions were fought successfully by mass resistance. Home ownership and decent housing became a rallying cry.

The crisis unfolding in Fannie Mae should be a wake-up call. □

## The first edit meeting

Continued from page 2

capitalism, that sowed divisions between people, can be solved in a planned economy. The roller-coaster ride of economic crises? That's endemic to a profit-driven system of production, not planned production. High-tech productivity leading to more competition for jobs? Under socialism, science and technology lighten the load for all. Unemployment? Everyone who wants to work has a job in a socialist economy. And everyone has free health care and education, and affordable rent under socialism. That will all go a long way to relieve social antagonisms."

Another editor suggests: "Let's do a feature to show that as the organization of society changed throughout history, human nature has changed, too. All our early ancestors worked together for survival for millions of years. That produced a different way of thinking. If those societies had pitted people against each other based on difference they couldn't have survived. Scarcity was the glue that held those groups together, and it created appreciation of the contributions each individual made.

"But when cooperative labor got so efficient that it produced more than what was needed right away, it created a group that wanted to own the extra.

"It's only been such a short time by com-

parison—10,000 years—that humans have been divided into haves and have-nots under slavery and feudalism and capitalism. These economic systems accelerated the productivity of labor, but at a terrible, terrible human cost."

Another editor raises: "But people heard so many attacks on the early workers' states, they might say: 'Wait a minute. You say that people shared in pre-class societies. But when there were revolutions, didn't some take more than their share?'"

"Ah, that's important! When nobody had anything in ancient societies—that produced sharing. Everyone ate or everyone starved. But the first revolutions were in some of the poorest countries, where scarcity was relative. There wasn't enough to meet everyone's needs and so some took a little more.

"But let's remind everyone that those early workers' states, even with little technology, did what the richest capitalist countries couldn't do—they fed and clothed and housed people and provided free health care and education."

"Yeah," someone in the meeting laughs gently. "Now that's our job. But with high-tech production, we can produce more than enough."

As the meeting draws to an end, one editor says to another: "How are we going to get all this into 12 pages?" □

## Lynne Stewart trial

By LeiLani Dowell  
New York

The trial of progressive lawyer Lynne Stewart has concluded. It is currently in the summations and charge phase. Summations began on Jan. 4.

Stewart, Arabic translator Mohamed Yousry and U.S. postal worker Ahmed Abdel

Sattar are accused of providing "material support to terrorists." Stewart is also charged with violating a gag order imposed by the U.S. Bureau of Prisons on her client, Sheik Abdel Rahman.

Stewart's case would not have been possible without the passage of the U.S. Patriot Act. The law allows broad and intrusive government surveillance powers, supposedly to counter "terrorism." These powers include the right to monitor communication between federal detainees and their attorneys, in complete disregard of attorney-client privilege.

A statement issued by the Lynne Stewart Defense Committee says: "This thwarts the ability of criminal defendants to receive the effective assistance of counsel to which they are entitled under the Sixth Amendment. Under these same interim rules and directives there are new



Lynne Stewart

WWW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

guidelines for domestic intelligence gathering that repeal the hard-fought-for reforms of the Church Committee's 1976 findings [regarding Cointelpro]."

As a result, the case against Stewart has revolved around secret FBI audio and video recordings of telephone calls and meetings of Stewart and the two co-defendants.

Many believe that the attack on Lynne Stewart—an attorney for 37 years who has vocally defended many well-known political defendants—is an attempt by the U.S. Justice Department to deter ardent representation of detainees being criminalized by the government, by sending a signal to lawyers about the potential of attacks on them.

Supporters in New York are encouraged to attend the last days of the proceedings. Court is in session in Manhattan, Monday through Thursday, from 9 a.m. until 12:45 p.m., then from 2 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. For more information, please visit [www.lynnestewart.org](http://www.lynnestewart.org). □

## Hotel workers rally in D.C.

Local 25 hotel workers in Washington, D.C., marked their third month on strike Dec. 15 by marching to the Capital Hilton, Jefferson and Renaissance Mayflower hotels. At each hotel they rallied and chanted to demand justice, respect and a decent contract.

"If we don't get the economic justice we deserve, there will be no peace on Jan. 20," said UNITE HERE Local 25 Executive Secretary-Treasurer John Boardman, referring to the upcoming presidential inauguration. Hotel workers in Los Angeles and San Francisco resumed negotiations the week of Dec. 13.

## Los Angeles laundry workers sign contract

Twenty laundry workers who had been locked out for three months from the Wilshire Grand Hotel in Los Angeles signed a contract on Dec. 17 with wage, job security, health care and pension improvements.

"After almost three months, laundry workers won every issue, including job security and a better health coverage," said Cristina Vazquez, local general manager, UNITE HERE Local 52. The National Labor Relations Board is investigating allegations that the hotel illegally locked out the workers.

## Wal-Mart appeals women's class-action suit

Last June a federal court in San Francisco ruled that 1.6 million women workers could join a sex discrimination lawsuit against Wal-Mart. Then Wal-Mart filed an appeal to overturn that ruling. If Wal-Mart is successful, each woman will have to file a separate complaint. The workers' lawyer filed papers on Dec. 29 contesting the appeal. The struggle continues.

## Iron Workers win watershed victory

Workers at water treatment plants, sports stadiums, performing arts centers and parking lots in Arizona set a precedent when they signed a union contract with J.D. Steel last September. The Iron Workers contract is unusual because it creates a multistate local covering 600 workers in 21 states. That gives the union the flexibility and mobility to reach out to more workers. As the January 2005 AFL-CIO's magazine *America@Work* noted, this agreement "has the potential to reinforce the workplace rights of as many as 10,000 construction workers nationwide."

## Temp workers lose bargaining rights won in 2000

Temporary workers will no longer be able to bargain for job benefits alongside permanent employees, the National Labor Relations Board ruled on Nov. 26. The board thus reversed one of its rare pro-worker rulings from 2000. In a three-to-two vote, the board ruled that there is a difference between temporary and permanent workers. "Thus, the entity that the two groups of employees look to as their employer is not the same." (Washington Post, Nov. 30)

This decision overturned the earlier M.B. Sturgis ruling, which permitted bargaining units with both temporary and permanent employees. In a dissent, two board members cited the rising number of temporary workers and noted that having to get the consent of both their temporary agency and the company where they work in order to unionize would impose a hardship on temp workers.

There are about 2.5 million temporary workers, most of them women, in the work force today. They generally don't get health or other employment benefits. One of the biggest sources of job gains is temporary jobs, which grew by 33,000 in September and 48,000 jobs in October, according to the Labor Department. Temps account for nearly half of the private jobs created since 2002.

This is the latest of three major decisions overturned in 2004 by the NLRB, now ruled by aggressively anti-labor Bush appointees. These decisions reflect the Bush administration's agenda that seeks to rob workers of their rights. In June, the board ruled that employees in nonunion companies are no longer entitled to have a co-worker present when they are interviewed as part of a disciplinary investigation. In July, it ruled that graduate teaching assistants at private universities are not employees and therefore cannot organize.

These decisions are graphic examples of the efforts by a Bush-dominated NLRB to tear up the original National Labor Relations Act of 1935. That legislation was won by militant strikes and the courageous acts of unorganized industrial workers who were treated then as temp workers and unorganized women are treated today.

Today the administrative decisions by a pro-employer NLRB need to be confronted by a renewal of those kinds of struggles. Temp workers can struggle together with organized workers to resist these decisions. They constitute a natural alliance at the workplace. □

## DENVER

# Racist gentrifiers use drug charge as cover

By Larry Hales  
Denver

"I admit, when I see a group of Black people hanging out on the streets I think they're selling crack or gonna use crack," said one of the founders of the Capitol Heights Neighborhood Coalition, a Denver group formed shortly after the November elections.

The coalition paints itself as a "grassroots organization, making an effort to make necessary changes." Its aim is to "create a committed coalition of residents, business and property owners to revitalize and thus change the current image of the neighborhood bordered by 11th, Colfax, Clarkson and Logan."

Business and property owners called for the Capitol Heights Neighborhood Coalition. The initial meeting attracted nearly 60 people. The next meeting drew even more.

According to the group, the two most noticeable "blights" that plague the Capitol Heights Neighborhood, also known as the Molly Brown Neighborhood, are the open crack dealing and the many homeless people who traverse the streets asking for money.

The danger that is posed by this burgeoning vigilante group is obvious. Drugs are a problem, but the rise in drug use coincides with the downward spiral of the economy.

While people typically think of Denver and the state of Colorado as physically beautiful and with a higher standard of living, Denver actually has a rising homelessness problem. The high cost of living is asphyxiating the poor. The Rocky Mountain News reported in a Dec. 9 article that the number of homeless people in Denver would increase to 11,000 before 2004 was over.

The Capitol Heights Neighborhood Coalition pays no attention to these numbers. It seeks not to truly effect change, but to move the "problem" out of the neighborhood by bullying and spying on people and getting the cops to profile.

Some members of this group even set up a website called [www.crackstreet.com](http://www.crackstreet.com), where they posted pictures of so-called drug offenders. They had to remove the pictures due to community outrage.

To accomplish its goal, the coalition has been trying to incite people who live in this community against the homeless, those who are addicted, and those who because of an addiction or the few opportunities available sell their bodies or drugs.

The coalition is trying to get city officials to agree to open a "cop shop" in a closed 7/11 store that Southland Corp. no longer found profitable.

They also want to have "No Trespass" zones set up so no person can stand in an area too long without being harassed by cops. They want to begin discussing the effectiveness of a city "Drug Court."

Instead of fighting poverty and racism,

they are fighting its victims.

Poverty is being further criminalized. There is no doubt that property and business owners around the country are taking the same steps as this group. The rise of these wanna-be vigilante groups, spurred on by the police and city officials, is part of gentrifying an area.

Inner-city areas are prime for buying and developing, but for the moneyed and propertied people who fled urban areas decades ago. As the poor grow more destitute what are people to do? What are the thousands affected by the computer glitch in the Colorado state welfare system to do without their services?

What are the over 1,000 homeless families in this city to do when jobs are scarce and those available are low-paying? After all, the average two-bedroom apartment in Denver costs \$984 per month but the Samaritan Shelter reports that the people it houses earn on average \$1,193 per month.

In addition, the Capitol Heights Neighborhood Coalition targets people of color because they have been misled to think that people of color make up the majority of drug users and dealers, no doubt from the cops, whose Gang Task Force recently released absurdly bloated figures about Denver's "gang problem".

This Task Force went as far as to release a report stating that there are 25,000 gang members on Denver streets, leading to the rounding up and aggressive profiling of Black and Latino youths. The coalition cited the figures at a meeting.

It is a shame that the "drug problem" is being blamed on the poor and disenfranchised, of any color but especially those from oppressed nationalities, who face higher unemployment, higher rates of being uninsured and higher rates of homelessness.

Activists in the city have started attending meetings and challenging this group. They are building a campaign against this attack on the poor that will invariably feed more youths of color into the growing prison-industrial complex.

Shareef Alim is an activist who has worked on the issue of police brutality and spearheaded Operation Get Tournay (Tournay is the cop who shot and killed Paul Childs, a 15-year-old mentally disabled Black youth). Alim said that "given few possibilities, people get by the best they can".

He further said that "if the group truly wanted to help, then it would be making recommendations to the city and state to provide housing for all, begin to build the hospitals needed, daycares, schools and to staff all those institutions, that nothing short of complete transformation of society can happen before the drug problem can be addressed properly."

To be sure, the only answer to the problems of drug use and dealing, homelessness and prostitution is a revolutionary socialist reorganization of society—to abolish capitalism and to provide for human need. □



# DEBT CRISIS

## *tsunami of a different kind*

By Monica Moorehead

The powerful tsunami created an unprecedented global crisis on Dec. 26 within an estimated seven-hour time frame. This tsunami hit 11 countries off the coast of Asia and Africa. It has so far claimed the lives of at least 150,000 people and displaced millions more. Some of the countries hit hardest by this "natural disaster" include Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Somalia, Malaysia and the Maldives.

But what about the "unnatural" conditions—poverty, underdevelopment and needless suffering—that afflicted these areas way before the events on Dec. 26?

The big-business media have characterized the tsunami's impact on some of the economies as "minor." This means that the tourist and fishing industries that were the most affected by the tsunami accounted for a small fraction of the overall economies. For instance, tourism and fishing make up 6 percent of Sri Lanka's economy. For Thailand, the tourist industry makes up 1.3 percent of its economy.

But when you turn these percentages into the numbers of lives affected, it amounts to millions of human beings. They are the poorest of the poor who have been forced to survive in the remote rural and coastline areas that lack decent roads, indoor plumbing, accessible health care, schools and much more despite the billions of dollars brought in by the tourist industry.

These inhumane conditions are rooted in a tsunami of a different kind, namely the worldwide economic system of imperialism—capitalism on a global scale. And capitalism is governed by extracting profits for a tiny ruling class clique of billionaires and multi-millionaires at the terrible expense of humanity and nature.

Through the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, the imperialists are the overall dictators of whole economies. They impose an unimaginable debt crisis on the developing countries under the guise of structural agreements. Debt pay-

ments tied to these agreements amount to the wholesale looting of resources and the super-exploitation of human labor.

In 2002, Indonesia had a foreign debt of \$131 billion. In 1996, the debt burden for Indonesia amounted to 30 percent of the gross domestic product. After the tsunami, that number has skyrocketed to 128 percent of the GDP.

Much of the agriculture economy in the Aceh region of this country was destroyed by the floods.

Indonesia also has a domestic debt for the first time since the 1970s. Debt repayments, mainly in the form of the cutbacks in goods and services, will exceed 40 percent of government revenues. And these payments will go to just pay the interest, not the principal of the loans.

Sri Lanka had a foreign debt estimated at \$10 billion in 2000. Its fishing industry, geared mainly toward domestic consumption, was all but devastated by the tsunami. Peter Harrold, the World Bank's country director for Sri Lanka, said, "Overnight, a huge capital stock was wiped away." (New York Times, Jan 3)

"Capital stock" is a crude banker's term used for houses, clinics, roads, railways, ports, etc.

In 2001, Thailand's foreign debt was estimated at \$62.5 billion; for Malaysia, it was \$47.5 billion in 2002; Somalia, \$2.6 billion in 2000; and Maldives, \$282 million in 2002. (SBS-World News)

When the people of the world see the devastation and suffering cause by the tsunami, they feel genuine concern and solidarity. But imperialist institutions like the IMF and World Bank mainly look for-

ward to the governments of these countries begging for more loans to rebuild, which will deepen the indebtedness.

The real objectives of the imperialist banks and corporations, just as with the U.S. military, is not to liberate but to occupy and dominate to make the world safe for profiteering. The masses of people impacted by the tsunami don't need

more debt in the form of structural agreements and loans that can never be paid off in several lifetimes.

They need reparations in the form of accessible technology to help build up their infrastructure. The duty of progressives and revolutionaries, especially in the imperialist countries, is to support the demand: "Cancel the debt now." □

## Tourism in South Asia *Who profits, who pays?*

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

The U.S. media admit that Secretary of State Colin Powell's visit to Thailand is designed to prop up the hard-hit tourist industry there. The catastrophic Dec. 26 tsunami hit the beaches of Sri Lanka and Thailand and the islands of the Maldives at the height of tourist season.

While the tourist industry brings a lot of money into these countries, it doesn't enrich the workers and farmers. Instead it aggravates class divisions and makes the capitalists there even more appendages of foreign capital.

In covering the tragedy, U.S. news media highlighted the dramatic stories and deaths of Australian, European, and U.S. tourists in the area. Of the six New York Post photo cover stories on the tragedy, three featured white tourists.

In the days immediately following the tsunami, a top priority of the authorities

was to evacuate the surviving tourists.

The heaviest losses, however, were not in tourist areas but in the coastal villages of Indonesia, which were devastated by the earthquake as well as the tsunami.

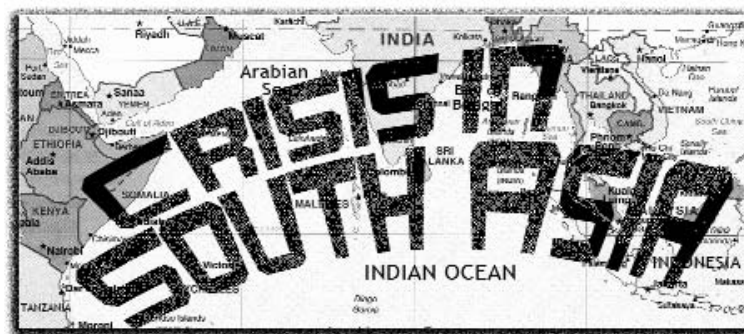
United Nations emergency relief coordinator Jan Egeland asserted, "We will never, ever have the absolute, definite figure because there are many nameless fishermen and villages that have just gone." (The Australian)

Also unnamed in U.S. news reports are the women and men whose labor kept the luxurious beach-side resorts running. At Sofitel Magic Lagoon in Khao Lak, near Phuket, Thailand, one-third of the 320 person staff were still missing a week after the calamity. And an estimated 10,000 people have lost their jobs in the Thai resort industry as a result of the tsunami. (Asian Labour News)

Rooms at the Magic Lagoon cost between \$350 and \$600 a night. An average monthly salary for a Thai hotel worker is about \$130. More than 10 million tourists visit Thailand in a year, 4 million in the Phuket area alone. (beachpatong.com)

The international sex-trade industry preys on impoverished people of the area, mostly women and children. They are marketed to Western tourists, primarily men, as destinations for travel tours. The

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## Tsunami deaths not just act of nature

*Continued from page 1*

promise of aid from \$35 million to \$350 million is pathetic. The same goes for the aid pledged by the European and Japanese imperialists. The entire amount is a few billion dollars.

Compared to the untold wealth that these governments and the ruling classes behind them have taken out of the region during centuries of colonialism and imperialism—super-profits based on cheap labor and stolen resources—the amounts mentioned are less than a bandaid.

Furthermore, it is the enforced underdevelopment and consequent impoverishment of this whole region and the imposition of capitalism that has made the masses so vulnerable to excessive suffering during natural catastrophes. The coastal communities around the Indian Ocean that perennially suffer from earthquakes and typhoons are densely populated and poorly housed.

To make matters worse, Washington and the Pentagon are now using the disaster to strengthen their hand in the region by sending in the military and posing as benefactors. They are dropping aid parcels into Aceh and Sri Lanka in the

name of humanitarianism even as the number of Iraqi civilians they have killed in their efforts at colonial conquest grows to 100,000.

### Was it unexpected?

But the fact that the tsunami in the Indian Ocean caused so much loss of life is of supreme importance. A tsunami warning system has existed for the Pacific since 1965. The U.S. developed a more sophisticated and accurate tsunami early warning system in 1995. It was widely deployed in 2001, but was restricted to the Pacific Ocean, which is dominated by U.S. and Japanese imperialism. With one exception. The U.S. military base on Diego Garcia, smack in the middle of the Indian Ocean, was on the Pacific Ocean alert list.

The system, called the Deep-ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunamis (DART), consists of devices that can measure a change of as little as one centimeter in the earth's crust at the bottom of the ocean. They immediately send a signal to a special buoy at the surface that then sends the information to a satellite, which can broadcast the information. This all happens in minutes. This information can

then be used to not only assess the earthquake but, with the aid of surface gauges, to model the tsunami and warn the threatened regions. This system has been deployed on the west coast of the U.S. and near Japan. The monitoring center is in Hawaii.

All the capitalist media have been saying that the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, generated by an earthquake off the coast of Sumatra, was entirely unexpected and that is why there was no warning system. This is completely false.

Scientists at the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S., in charge of dealing with tsunamis, presented a paper in March 2003 entitled "Real-Time Tsunami Reporting from the Deep Ocean." The paper stated that: "National awareness of the tsunami hazard has been heightened by eight tsunamis generated around the Pacific Rim in the last four years." This self-serving formulation is then immediately contradicted by the list. Of the eight tsunamis cited, three were in Indonesia and one, the Java tsunami of June 1994, is described as "a devastating tsunami ... that attacked the south coasts of Java and

Bali islands, killing at least 300 people and destroying hundreds of homes."

In fact, the Java tsunami was generated by an earthquake in the Java Trench just southwest of Indonesia in the Indian Ocean, not the Pacific. Furthermore, it was well known by seismologists that the area where the recent tsunami began was a suspect region. The New York Times blurted out on Dec. 27, the day after the tsunami and before everyone got the line straight: "Seismologists with the United States Geological Survey said the area west of Sumatra and the island chains to its north was a hot zone for earthquakes because of the non-stop collision occurring there between the India plate beneath the Indian Ocean seabed and the Burma plate under the islands and that part of the continent."

Buried in another lengthy account in the Dec. 31 New York Times was a quote from Dr. Kerry Sieh, an earthquake expert at California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. Most of his associates were busy with the Pacific. But Dr. Sieh was "consumed with what he could learn about the dynamics of the earthquake factories

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## IAC to Republicans:

# 'Cancel inaugural bash!'

By G. Dunkel  
New York

The International Action Center has called for a demonstration Jan. 5 at the New York office of the Republican National Committee to demand that the RNC cancel its grossly decadent, \$40-million celebration of Bush's second inauguration and cancel the debts of the 12 countries devastated by the tsunami of Dec. 26.

At a well-attended mobilizing meeting for the demonstration, held Jan. 4 at the IAC office, speakers pointed out that cancellation of the inauguration gala is not unprecedented. Other presidents, like Franklin Delano Roosevelt, have called off these festivities during natural or social disasters.

Alex Majunder, who lived in eastern India, told the meeting that the devastation from the earthquake and tsunami in Southern Asia was so great that "The area

will need hundreds of billions of dollars in aid to reconstruct its infrastructure and economy."

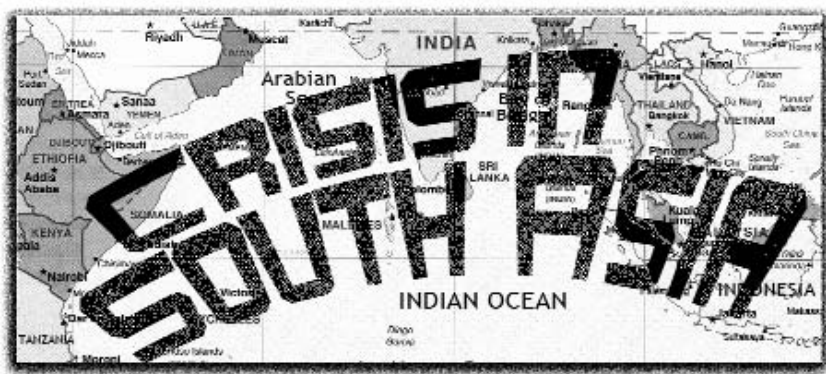
Sara Flounders, a co-director of the IAC, pointed out: "To put the U.S. tsunami aid in perspective, consider that what it has pledged is about what it spends in Iraq in a day."

Dustin Langley charged, "Any warning would have saved thousands of lives. But the priorities of the United States are war, destruction and the search for immense profits."

LeiLani Dowell, who chaired the meeting, urged the importance of building the anti-imperialist struggle by coming out against the RNC on Jan. 5, mobilizing for the counter-inaugural in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 20, and building the anti-war protest in New York's Central Park on March 19.



Left to right: LeiLani Dowell, Alex Majunder.



The day after the tsunami struck, the IAC issued a statement which read in part, "The U.S. and British governments owe billions of dollars in reparations to the countries of this region and to all other formerly colonized countries. The poverty and lack of infrastructure that contribute to and exacerbate the scope of this disaster are the direct result of colonial rule and neocolonial policies.

"Although economic and political policies cannot control the weather, they can determine how a nation is impacted by natural disasters. We must hold the U.S.

government accountable for their role in tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands of deaths. We must demand that it stop spending \$1.5 billion each day for war and occupation and instead provide health care for the victims of this tragedy, build an early warning system, and rebuild the homes and infrastructure destroyed by the tsunami." (iacenter.org)

The statement, available online at [www.iacenter.org](http://www.iacenter.org), was read worldwide, translated into Spanish, Hindi, Bengali, Italian and Russian. It helped formulate a political response to the disaster. □

## Tsunami deaths not just act of nature

Continued from page 5

called subduction zones. But the archives he mined existed only in the coral off Sumatra. 'It's tucked away in a corner of the world that just doesn't have much scientific traffic,' he said." A subduction zone can produce very powerful tsunamis.

The Australian capitalists have begun to develop oil refining on their west coast, so they started worrying about tsunamis in the Indian Ocean. According to The Age newspaper, one of their scientists, Phil Cummins at Geoscience Australia, delivered a paper in October 2003 and again in September 2004 pinpointing the danger right in the region where the recent earthquake occurred. He was only concerned with Australia, however, and his recommendations only included safeguarding the Australian coast. But the danger off Sumatra was widely known.

### The bottom line

The plain truth is that the imperialists were looking after their own interests and could not concern themselves with the fate of South Asian governments or the masses. The DART devices cost \$250,000 a piece, a petty price for a government to pay and, considering the potential for the loss of life, a pittance. That nothing has been done speaks volumes about both the imperialists and the capitalist governments in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and elsewhere throughout the region.

A great deal of recrimination is undoubtedly going on behind the scenes. The failure to have a workable early warning system is a growing scandal. All the regimes in the region and the imperialists themselves are now talking about putting an early warning system in the Indian Ocean—and possibly in the Caribbean. Such a warning system should have been

in place, should immediately be implemented, and the imperialist regimes that have plundered the region should be made to foot the bill.

But while such a system would undoubtedly improve the situation, it will take more than early warnings to save the people from the effects of tsunamis, tropical storms, volcanoes and other natural disasters.

The capitalist scientific establishment has developed ingenious means to detect, assess and warn of earthquakes deep under the ocean. But without pre-planned, highly coordinated, village-based mass mobilization, the effectiveness of early tsunami warnings will be limited at best. In the capitalist countries such duties are mostly left to the police and other repressive state organs.

The fumbling of all the capitalist governments in the region, of all the imperialist-sponsored aid agencies in the face of the disaster, cannot be solved by early warning systems. The problem goes much deeper.

A Thai newspaper has reported that "One of the four officials in charge of monitoring earthquakes confirmed ... that the [Meteorological] department was aware of what had happened minutes after the quake struck at 7:58 a.m. Bangkok time. The official said that they were discussing the likelihood of a tsunami, but did not issue a warning out of concern for tourism and the department's own interests."

The official, who has since come under government investigation for his honesty, told the reporter, "The important factor in making the decision was that it's high [tourist] season and hotel rooms were nearly 100-percent full. If we had issued a warning, which would have led to an evacuation, [and if nothing happened], what

would happen then? Business would be instantaneously affected." (The Nation, Bangkok, Dec. 31)

Compare this to a statement by President Fidel Castro, quoted in the report about Cuba's mass mobilization and disaster management: "We will overcome this problem no matter how big the damage. For us victory means having a minimum loss of life."

The tsunami center scientists in Honolulu did not know who to call in the Indian Ocean governments or have relevant phone numbers, yet the Indian ruling class has nuclear weapons. After the disaster, the governments in New Delhi, Colombo and Bangkok were caught flat footed and the suffering people waited days for assistance. The Indonesian military, with 40,000 troops in Aceh, used the occasion to continue its war against the secessionist movement.

With such regimes, early warning is not enough. Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, carried a comprehensive report on the tsunami. It described how "on the Maikhao beach in Thailand, a 10-year-old British girl, Tilly Smith, recognized the signs when the tide rushed out and boats on the horizon began bobbing violently. She told her mother she had just been studying tsunami in geography at school and that they should leave the beach. Her parents warned others on the beach and so this was one of the few areas where no one was reported killed.

"One of the few populations that evacuated before the tsunami hit was that of the small Indonesian island of Simeulue, very close to the epicenter. Initial reports state the residents were warned by island folklore recounting a devastating earthquake and tsunami in 1907 and fled en masse to inland hills after the initial shak-

ing and before the tsunami struck."

Every single adult and schoolchild in Thailand should have known what the 10-year-old British girl happened to know by pure accident. Every coastal village resident should have known what those Indonesian islanders knew about something that happened a century ago. Indonesian authorities, along with Japanese and U.S. delegations, visited the tsunami sites at Flores Island in 1992, Java in 1994 and Irian Jaya in 1996. Furthermore, Indonesia and Thailand were among the countries that received the early warning. The Indonesian authorities were thoroughly familiar with three recent tsunamis.

Nothing was done about it. The wealth of Indonesia goes to the corrupt military, the local bourgeoisie, the imperialist oil companies, the sweat shops and other exploiters.

A disaster of this magnitude requires the collaborative effort of all the governments of the region. But these are not just governments, not just administrations—they are states, instruments of class oppression. The police, the military, the civil service bureaucracy spend 365 days a year working on behalf of the exploiting classes. They live in a permanent state of antagonism with the masses of people. No natural disaster, or threat of one, will transform them into a humanitarian, cooperative force that puts the lives of workers and peasants at the center of attention.

They are not interested in the Cuban method, which is the marvel of the world. They are incapable of mass preparation and mass mobilization. They lord it over the people on a daily basis. There is hostility and distrust. It is in the interest of the ruling classes that the people remained disunited, scattered, helpless, unin-

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# Alarm grows as U.S. military moves in

By Deirdre Griswold

Alarm is growing in several of the countries hit hard by the tsunami disaster over the sudden appearance of U.S. troops in the role of aid-givers. From Indonesia, where the military has a long and bloody history of suppression, to Sri Lanka, where a civil war has been raging for years, to India, where the government has refused foreign aid as an incursion into its sovereignty, there is deep suspicion about Washington's motives.

Apologists for the U.S. imperial role in the world are trying to put a favorable spin on the deployment of Marines and Special Forces in the area. Derek Mitchell of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank, says, "The United States has this unique capability to move rapidly with its military to take care of humanitarian and other security challenges in Asia."

Rapidly? If anything, the Bush administration has been molasses-slow in its response to this massive catastrophe. Even when thousands were known to have died, the White House took days to even make a statement, and the initial aid pledges were less than pathetic.

But now, it seems, the U.S. government has decided that this is a good opportunity to beat its chest, strengthen its relations with local militaries, and establish its presence in areas that have not been very welcoming to a military stained with the blood of the Iraqi and Afghan people.

"Before the tsunami disaster it would have been unthinkable for a U.S. aircraft carrier to dock in Indonesia's waters, or U.S. Marines to rub shoulders with troops from the world's most populous Muslim nation," wrote the French Press Agency on Jan. 5. Now more than 13,000 U.S. military personnel, backed by warships, planes and helicopters, have been dispatched to the area, making it the largest Pentagon operation in Asia since the Vietnam War. They may stay for six months.

"U.S. Marines arrived in Sri Lanka on Tuesday for a deployment that will even-

While U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell flew over Aceh in a helicopter, the Indonesian military was attacking militants on the ground below.



tually total 1,500 troops—reportedly much to the chagrin of giant neighbor India, suspicious of U.S. military intentions," continued the report. "U.S. forces are also using Thailand's Vietnam war-era air base of Utao as an airlift hub for the humanitarian mission in the region, strengthening potential U.S. military logistical support throughout southeast Asia. ...

"U.S. Rear Admiral Doug Crowder told the Washington Post he expected the joint efforts to improve prospects for resuming full military ties with Indonesia."

Those ties were cut back after massive movements in both Indonesia and East Timor exposed the repressive character of the Indonesian military to a world audience. Back in the 1960s, the Indonesian generals had taken over in a U.S.-backed coup and massacred over 1 million people—primarily leftists and nationalists. Ten years later, again with U.S. covert approval, Indonesian troops invaded East Timor, starting a war that killed one-third of the population there. The military continues to wield enormous political power, and retired army general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is now running the country.

## Fighting continues in Aceh

Most recently, the Indonesian military has been carrying out a bloody suppression of the independence movement in Aceh, the northernmost province of the oil-rich island of Sumatra. This is exactly the area hit hardest by the Dec. 26 tsunami and earthquake, causing the deaths of over 100,000 people there, according to the latest Indonesian estimates.

There are many reports of continuing military operations against the people of Aceh, even since the tsunami disaster. The most recent came in an article in the

Jan. 5 Washington Post focused on U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell's overflight of Aceh in a helicopter.

Amid praise for Powell it briefly mentions that on Jan. 3, trucks taking aid to Aceh "had to halt for eight hours because they encountered a firefight between government troops and rebels."

A separate article in the same newspaper and datelined Jakarta reports that "Indonesian separatist rebels charged Tuesday that the military had launched at least three attacks on them since the Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunami, and that at least two rebels had been killed as they attempted to assist people affected by the calamity.

"A spokesman for the Free Aceh Movement said the military has continued its attacks on his organization, also known by its Indonesian-language initials, GAM, despite the rebels' unilateral declaration of a cease-fire while aid workers help tsunami survivors.

"The military last week killed the two unarmed rebels as they tried to assist relatives, said Tengku Jamaica, a rebel spokesman speaking by cell phone from Aceh province, the scene of the most extensive damage."

Many Indonesian officials in Aceh were among those killed in the quake and floods following the tsunami. Undoubtedly, the generals in Jakarta hope that Powell's visit and the influx of U.S. troops will help stabilize their rule over Aceh at a critical moment.

The November 2004 bulletin of Tapol, an organization that for many years has brought information about the plight of Indonesian political prisoners to the world, contained an article entitled "Horrendous abuses persist in Aceh" that sum-

marized the situation there as follows:

"The Acehnese still suffer widespread abuses at the hands of Indonesian troops. Although martial law was downgraded to a civil emergency in May 2004, abuses have continued unabated."

The article pointed out that the area was officially closed to outsiders—a condition that has persisted since the tsunami disaster. It cites reports of torture and rigged trials issued by several international human rights groups.

An advance contingent of 42 U.S. Marines has arrived in Sri Lanka in preparation for the arrival of 1,500 more. A British military vessel is also off Colombo. This has drawn a sharp rebuke from the New Left Front there.

A statement signed by the group's leader, Dr. Vickramabahu Karunaratne, and issued in Colombo on Jan. 3 condemned the influx of foreign troops into Sri Lanka under the guise of helping the tsunami victims. The New Left Front said "it is totally unnecessary to commit troops" for relief work, and accused the U.S. of having its own agenda of "gaining a foothold with designs to suppress the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and control the Tamil liberation struggle on behalf of local capitalist rulers."

The statement added that the deployment provides an opening for the U.S. not only to arm-twist Sri Lanka to "go along with global capitalism, but also to use Sri Lanka's strategic location to consolidate its neocolonial agenda all the more blatantly." Karunaratne called upon all "oppressed people and the left and democratic forces to protest strongly against the induction of foreign troops to Sri Lanka under cover of relief and rescue operations." □

# How to help grassroots relief efforts

By Deirdre Griswold

Most of the media coverage about relief efforts for survivors of the South Asian tsunami catastrophe centers on international aid organizations, the majority headquartered in the rich imperialist countries. They certainly have the most money and resources at their disposal.

However, they work under contracts with the governments of the affected countries, and that can subject their efforts to the political agendas of the ruling capitalist classes.

In several countries, independent efforts are being made by grassroots organizations to reach the people with food, water, clothing and information to help them over this critical time. This is most urgent in the Aceh area of northern Sumatra, where the destruction is the worst. Much of the low-lying area virtually collapsed after the earthquake and is now under water. And this area has also been brutally repressed by the Indonesian military for decades and was off-limits to any outsiders.

A number of civil groups came together quickly after the disaster and formed the

Indonesian Civil Society Coalition for the Victims of Earthquake and Tsunami. It has opened a crisis center in Medan, North Sumatra, and another in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia.

It is supported by Tapol, an organization dedicated to letting the world know about the terrible repression that has been going on in Indonesia since the 1960s and to gaining justice for the many political prisoners there.

The Civil Society Coalition also includes Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI) and Friends of the Earth Indonesia, which are connected to environmental groups in other countries. These two groups had been focusing on the wholesale destruction of the Indonesian rain forests by unregulated cutting down of the majestic hardwoods there and on deadly pollution by transnational companies like Newmont Mining.

WALHI reports that "Approximately 200 volunteers in Banda Aceh (including ours) have gotten more organized and divided themselves into medical, emergency kitchen, sanitation and general affairs teams. The medical teams are divided into an on-center team and a

mobile team that go around to provide assistance in other refugee spots and centers. Latest information confirmed that they have reached 26 refugee spots in Banda Aceh and surrounding areas, some of them including those which have not received any aid."

The coalition asks people in the United States to donate to Greengrants Fund, which will send the tax-deductible contributions directly to Indonesia and has made matching funds available. Donations can be made over the internet at [www.greengrants.org](http://www.greengrants.org).

Another organization providing relief is the People's Crisis Center (PCC) of Aceh, which has been working for years with people in refugee camps displaced by the war there, according to U.S. journalist Allan Nairn. The East Timor Action Network (ETAN) of the United States is channeling aid to the PCC and similar on-the-ground Acehnese groups. It can be reached at [www.etan.org](http://www.etan.org).

In Sri Lanka, the Health Sector Trade Unions Alliance has set up nine health camps in Hambantota, Matara, Galle, Ampara and Trincomalee and deployed over 100 health workers, including nurses

and doctors. It is giving health advice and distributed 100,000 leaflets among the people in the refugee camps.

Sri Lankans abroad are beginning to organize solidarity fundraising events to send money back home. On Jan. 15, a benefit for progressive Sri Lankan relief efforts will take place at 8 p.m. at 900 Fulton St. in Brooklyn, N.Y. Contact [marian@mangotribe.com](mailto:marian@mangotribe.com) or [Varuni@world.oberlin.edu](mailto:Varuni@world.oberlin.edu) for more details or to contribute to the efforts.

Workers World hopes to have details on progressive relief work in India and other areas in future issues. □

## INDONESIA 1965

*The second greatest crime of the century*

By Deirdre Griswold

This book tells of the massacres following the October 1, 1965, military takeover that decimated the Indonesian left. It focuses on the role of Washington in providing essential clandestine support for the right-wing generals in that bloodbath.

[www.workers.org/indonesia](http://www.workers.org/indonesia)

# Colombian rebel leader extradited to U.S.

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

In an act of compliance with the will of its U.S. masters, on Dec. 31 the Colombian government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez handed over guerrilla member Ricardo Palmera to the FBI for extradition to the United States.

This unprecedented act marks the first time that a leading member of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces-Peoples' Army (FARC-EP) has been extradited to the United States for prosecution.

Palmera—better known by his Simón Bolívar-inspired pseudonym “Simón Trinidad”—had been detained, or, better said, kidnapped in Quito, Ecuador, on Jan. 2, 2004.

He had been there to accomplish a clandestine mission requested by the FARC: to find a suitable place for a meeting with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and other international personalities to work out a solution for the return of the FARC's prisoners of war through a humanitarian prisoner exchange.

Trinidad's capture was carried out through a joint action of the Interpol, CIA and the Colombian and Ecuadorian armed forces. It was reminiscent of the murderous anti-communist Operation Condor of the 1970s.

Trinidad was then extradited to Colombia. He remained in maximum security prison there until Dec. 31. He faced 100 legal charges of terrorism, kidnapping, drug trafficking and rebellion that guaranteed 81 months in prison, according to his lawyer in Colombia, Oscar Silva.

Trinidad's transfer from the Boyacá jail to Bogotá was a three-hour, extremely well-armed action dubbed “Operation Freedom.” The Colombian army surrounded the prison while four military Black Hawk helicopters—the one assigned to carry him named “Batman”—waited for

the trip to the capital's El Dorado International Airport. There, all flights had been canceled in preparation for the operation. On the runway, a U.S. government Gulf Stream-5 airplane was ready to take him to Washington, D.C., in the company of the FBI.

As he entered the plane, Trinidad shouted in Spanish: “Long live Bolívar, Bolívar lives! Long live the FARC, the people's army!”

In Washington that afternoon he was taken to federal court before Judge John Facciola. Trinidad will face charges of kidnapping, terrorism and drug trafficking on Jan. 5.

The kidnapping charges stem from the February 2003 incident when the FARC shot at a small plane flown by U.S. contractors/agents over territory controlled by the insurgents in Caquetá, in the south of the country. These contractors are just some of the many U.S. military or military-associated personnel sent by the United States to Colombia to fight against the insurgency under Plan Colombia. The agents, Thomas Howes, Keith Stansell and Marc Gonsalves have since been kept captive by the FARC.

Trinidad's extradition to the United States took place after President Uribe issued an ultimatum to the FARC. With no possibility of negotiation, he unilaterally demanded that the insurgents release all captives by Dec. 30, as the only condition for annulment of the extradition order.

## ‘I am on the side of progressives!’

Who is Trinidad? His story is noteworthy, for it illustrates the reasons why so many young people join the insurgency. While his background differs from that of the overwhelming majority of the FARC members, his reasons for joining the armed movement reflect the hopes of so many in Colombia.

A native of Valledupar, in the northeast

of Colombia, bordering Venezuela, Trinidad belonged to a wealthy and influential family. He studied at Harvard University. He worked as a banker and teacher, cooperating particularly with the peasant progressive movement that was very strong in the area.

In moving testimony by Imelda Daza Cotes, a friend and political associate of Trinidad, written in Colombian anthropologist Yezid Campos' recent book “Memoria de los Silenciados, El Baile Rojo” (Memory of the Silenced, the Red Dance), she vividly recounts the dangerous atmosphere in Valledupar during the mid-1980s, the time of the formation of the Patriotic Union.

The Patriotic Union (UP) was an effort by the FARC and the Colombian Communist Party to form a broad alternative party that would include all sectors that had suffered under the dictatorship of Liberals and Conservatives and achieve peace and social justice. The UP's main vehicle would be unarmed and peaceful, through the electoral arena. It was launched on May 28, 1985, as a result of the peace accords between the FARC and Colombian President Belisario Betancourt. The government committed to respect and guarantee the security of the members, among many other written promises.

In 1986, the first elections in which the UP members participated, they had a historic success: five senators, nine representatives to the House, 14 state deputies, 351 councilpeople and 23 mayors were elected. However, as this victory took place, so did a state campaign of terrorism and annihilation against the UP that still goes on.

More than 3,500 members and sympathizers were killed, many disappeared and many were forced into exile.

Daza Cotes narrates the multiple stories of increasing threats and assassinations by

the Colombian army, the disappearances and the forced exiles—but also the people's fierce resolve to continue struggling for justice and true democracy in Colombia. And she writes about the choices they were forced to make.

One of the stories is about Ricardo Palmera. She says of him, “I do not think there was a man in Valledupar as honest and honorable as Ricardo Palmera Pineda.” Daza Cotes did not share the idea of armed struggle, but she points out that while she and her comrades, including Palmera, wanted to peacefully solve the problems of poverty and social inequities that gave rise to the guerrilla, “the response from the establishment and the ruling class was violence. Their decision was to assassinate us and silence us with the help of weapons.”

She concludes that “many people decided to join the insurgency because they did not find how to work politically in a peaceful and legal way.” She later told a friend: “Definitely, there is no alternative. The truth is that the only way you can struggle in this country is through the armed struggle. There are no other possibilities.”

One of those who decided to join the insurgency was Simón Trinidad. In 2002, during the time of the negotiations between the FARC and President Pastrana, he said: “I chose this new life with the guerrilla because I am on the side of progressive people who fight against the 10 percent of landowners who control 90 percent of the arable land in Colombia. For them, I turned into their enemy.”

Many in Colombia, including relatives of FARC captives, view the extradition of Trinidad to the United States negatively. They are afraid that Uribe, as he has done in the past, will try a military, violent solution to the hostage situation in which the hostages could be hurt, instead of a negotiated solution. □

# Tsunami deaths not just act of nature

Continued from page 6

formed, isolated and alienated.

The only forms of mass organization that the bourgeoisie is interested in are the organization of the masses into the military to fight for capitalist interests and the regimenting of workers in the factories, mines, fields and offices for exploitation. This is inherent in the capitalist system, both in the imperialist countries and in the oppressed, underdeveloped countries ruled by capitalism.

The vast storehouses of wealth, the social surplus, is desperately needed in times of such great crisis. But it exists as capital, as private property by and large, as a means of making a profit. Attempts to mobilize this surplus for the population are hampered at every turn by capitalist property relations.

In Cuba, the social surplus is owned by society and distributed by the socialist regime in accordance with the interests of the people, whatever they may be at the present moment. This surplus is available in a crisis as social property.

## Capitalism is outmoded

Science and technology under imperialism are at the service of the Pentagon, the military-industrial complex, the FBI, the CIA, the drug companies, and all manner of corporate exploiters who use it for profit and oppression. Science and technology



are primarily used to make people work for less money, at more onerous tasks, longer and faster to intensify exploitation. Space-age technology is being used in the U.S. to push the working class back into the 19th century. All attempts to use science for the benefit of the people run against the capitalist stream.

Socially conscious scientists the world over concern themselves with how to use their science and technology to improve the lot of humanity, be it in environmental, medical, disaster mitigation or other progressive endeavors. But in imperialist and capitalist society, under the state of the bourgeoisie, these scientists' political, social and economic influence is miniscule. They beg for funds. They implore the capitalist politicians and bureaucrats to have their proposals read. It is only when one of the proposals happens to coincide with the interests of big business, or when there is a huge struggle, that it gets a hearing.

Cuba has a socialist regime. Its leaders are totally immersed in the struggle to

protect the population against natural disasters. In Cuba the scientific community is melded with the government and the people and operates solely on behalf of bettering the life of the Cuban people and people all over the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa. Scientific knowledge, the collective product of all humanity, is put at the service of progress.

The revolution abolished capitalism, expelled U.S. imperialism, set up a workers' state and thus cleared the way for true social, cultural and all-around human development of the people. It has insured a basic livelihood for all, including free education, healthcare and a quality of life that is socially superior to anything under the cutthroat system of capitalism. This produces a relationship of mutual confidence between the leadership and the people and class solidarity among the people themselves. No government can fully combat natural disasters without eradicating capitalist relations.

Natural catastrophes that occur at important moments in history can have an influence in pushing things backward or forward, depending upon the circumstances. In 1755 a giant earthquake devastated Lisbon, Portugal, the fourth-largest city in Europe at the time and the seat of a vast empire—and also a bastion of the Inquisition and religious conser-

vatism associated with feudalism.

The destruction was so massive, with 80,000 killed, that it became a pivotal event in the struggle for enlightenment. It was grist for the mill in the debate over whether people must suffer their fate under god, and therefore pay allegiance to the feudal-minded church authorities who were the ideological prop of the landlords and the monarchy, or should free themselves from slavish passivity. The revolutionary interpretation of the event helped to undermine feudal ideology.

The event fed the debates of the times just as feudalism was becoming rotten ripe for overthrow in Europe. It was only a generation later that the French Revolution took place.

Imperialism and capitalism are presently rotten ripe. They bring only increased suffering, poverty and exploitation. Since the collapse of the USSR, the question of overthrowing capitalism and establishing a socialist society has receded from the agenda of the world movement.

This catastrophe and the role of capitalism in multiplying needless deaths in the tens of thousands requires the revival of the profound truth of Marxism—that capitalism is outmoded and an obstruction to the forward progress of humanity. It must be destroyed and replaced by socialism. □



# Cuba & Venezuela: Dawn of new cooperation

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

While Wall Street and the Pentagon try to advance their campaign of capitalist exploitation and endless war, bringing death and devastation worldwide, Cuba and Venezuela have given a lesson of civilization, dignity and hope by signing an agreement and a joint declaration to implement the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas (ALBA). The signing took place mid-December in La Havana, where Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez was paying an official two-day visit.

ALBA, which in Spanish means dawn, is Chavez' proposal to confront U.S. imperialism's neoliberal process, which has brought extensive misery in the region and has as its main objective the annexation of Central and South America and the Caribbean through programs of "free trade" agreements like the Free Trade Area of the Americas—the FTAA, or ALCA in Spanish.

ALBA is not just a trade agreement. It is an alternative to the FTAA. ALBA's agenda is integration and cooperation based on respectful accords and national sovereignty for Latin America and the Caribbean, as was envisioned by Venezuelan Simón Bolívar and Cuban José Martí.

This partnership initiates in a concrete way the program Chavez has raised on many occasions, particularly during Latin American presidential summits and economic conferences. In this manner, Cuba and Venezuela will lead the way toward the unification process of the region.

Less significant but still important developments in the region's efforts toward integration preceded the Cuba-Venezuelan pact. In early December in Perú, 12 Latin American countries signed

the Cuzco Declaration for the formation of the South American Community of Nations—a community of 360 million people. And they immediately announced initiation of 31 projects for the development of infrastructure.

Also, before the Peru meeting, the Mercosur countries—Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay—had signed a trade agreement with the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) formed by Colombia, Perú, Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela, with Chile as an associate member.

Both Cuba and Venezuela bring different assets to the equation. And both countries, knowing full well the aggressive character of their northern neighbor, are also preparing militarily.

Cuba brings the maturity, expertise and political strength of a revolution that has developed tremendously for 46 years in the face of the most criminal blockade by the United States. And to defend itself, in December Cuba launched Bastión 2004—a thorough exercise of defense readiness that involved not only the Revolutionary Armed Forces, but each and every sector of Cuban society.

Venezuela brings a youthful revolutionary process, strengthened by the August referendum and the triumph of the pro-revolutionary candidates in the overwhelming majority of the country's municipalities in the October local elections. These successes have fueled a dynamic foreign policy. In an attempt to establish new economic relationships away from the parasitic relations imposed by the United States, Chavez has already developed important economic agreements especially in the field of oil and gas exploration and production with many other countries, particularly China,



Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro signing partnership agreement.

Russia, Iran, Libya and the European Union.

The agreements with China extend from technical and economic trade to the development of the Andean country's infrastructure, including complex networks of oil pipelines and highways.

To bolster its defense equipment and move from dependency on U.S. military hardware, Venezuela has bought 40 combat helicopters and 100,000 assault rifles from Russia. It is also looking at the possibility of buying 50 MIG-29 fighter planes outfitted with the most sophisticated state-of-the-art technology.

Closer to home, Venezuela has significantly increased trade with other Latin American and Caribbean countries, developing preferential trade agreements with countries without gas or oil. Chávez has also proposed creating giant joint oil companies—for example Petrocaribe with Trinidad and Tobago, Petrobras with Brazil, and Petrosur with the Mercosur

countries.

The new year has started with improved Venezuelan economic indexes. Unemployment and inflation have decreased. Oil revenues have increased. This is the background that Venezuela brings to the 13-article ALBA accord.

The commercial, financial, educational and technological agreements will be based, as the

second article of the accord reads, "in the principles of solidarity but also to the highest possible degree, on the exchange of goods and services which best correspond to the social and economic necessities of both countries."

Article five states: "Both parties will work together and in coordination with other Latin American countries to eradicate illiteracy in third countries using methods that can be applied on a large scale, are proven to be effective, to give swift results and have been successfully applied in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. They will likewise cooperate on healthcare programs for third countries."

This document, an example of human compassion and cooperation between nations, devoid of the avaricious economic jargon of capitalist accords, signals that a new dawn, precisely at the very beginning of a year, is possible not only for Latin America and the Caribbean, but for the rest of the world as well. □

## EL SALVADOR

# Trade agreement faces battle

By LeiLani Dowell

On Dec. 17, El Salvador became the first country to ratify the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement—known as DR-CAFTA. This is a trade agreement currently being negotiated by the governments of the Central American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, along with the Dominican Republic and the United States.

DR-CAFTA mirrors the North American Free Trade Agreement in its requirements that public services be opened to privatization, that measures to protect domestic products be eliminated and that transnational corporations be allowed to sue whole countries in private courts.

Many studies have shown that NAFTA's effects on Mexican workers have been devastating: no enforcement of labor, environmental or other rights, exploitation wages well below the poverty level, and complete destruction of industries.

Since the January 2003 start of negotiations on DR-CAFTA, a militant resistance movement has fought against its passage throughout Central America and in the United States. Workers, students, activists and others have staged protests, sit-ins, hunger strikes, legal battles and more to stop its passage.

According to the Committee in

Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, "A poll released on Dec. 14 by the Jesuit University UCA shows that more than 60 percent of Salvadorans predict no improvement in the situation of poverty in the country as a result of CAFTA."

Yet in a typical tactic of the right-wing ARENA, El Salvador's governing party, DR-CAFTA was unexpectedly presented to the legislative plenary at 3:20 a.m. on Dec. 17, and passed.

Mere minutes after DR-CAFTA was passed, members of the Popular Social Bloc marched on the main road in front of the Legislative Assembly, shutting down traffic. Then, on Dec. 22, thousands of Salvadorans took to the streets to protest DR-CAFTA's ratification. They blocked main highways throughout the country.

The Bush administration has been intent on passage of DR-CAFTA. This is not only so that corporations can reap enormous profits off the backs of Central American and Dominican workers, but also as a stepping-stone to the passage of the Free Trade Area of the Americas. The FTAA would extend the same kind of "free trade" zone from Alaska to Chile.

Passage of the FTAA will be impossible without the complicity of the Central American governments involved in DR-CAFTA. In the United States, no date has been set for presenting DR-CAFTA to Congress. □

## Tourism in South Asia

Continued from page 5

profits made from this human suffering are as yet incalculable. (Julia Davidson, "Sex Tourists in Thailand," wri-irg.org)

### Tidal wave of super-exploitation

Transnational travel industry giants like Le Meridien, Holiday Inn and Accor make extravagant profits through the super-exploitation of workers in these resorts.

Le Meridien, created by Air France in 1972, subsequently merged with corporations from England and Japan. It now has major financing from U.S.-based Lehman Brothers. Giant Accor, which runs the Magic Lagoon, has hotels in 140 countries, including Motel 6 and Red Roof Inns in the United States.

Joining these worldwide corporations in the rush to wring profit from Asian workers is the World Bank, through its affiliate, the International Finance Corp. The IFC, which finances private corporations expanding into the developing world, has specifically targeted tourism as an area for exploitation.

In 2002 the IFC loaned \$17 million to private companies in the Maldives to build resort areas. Before the tsunami, tourism generated 33 percent of the Maldives' GDP, and its typically low-paying service work made up 30 percent of local employment. (ifc.org)

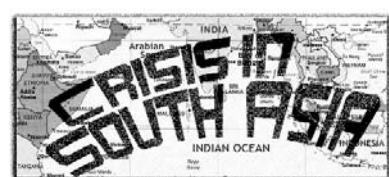
In its own words, "The IFC finances private sector investments in the developing world, mobilizes capital in the interna-

tional financial markets, helps clients improve social and environmental sustainability, and provides technical assistance and advice to governments and businesses."

The mission statement further elaborates: "We are committed to working on the frontiers of private investment, helping bring commercial disciplines and entrepreneurial dynamism to new areas of the economy."

In plain words, the IFC, the World Bank and the transnational corporations that are their partners are dedicated to finding any way possible to make money off the working and oppressed people of the world, including the people who once lived in the countryside, villages and towns now devastated by the tsunami.

In August 2003, management at the Diamond Cliff Resort and Spa in Phuket blasted workers with mass layoffs for attempting to unionize, and kept them from getting jobs at other resorts. The workers, without income and homeless, refused to settle with the company, and demanded their jobs and reinstatement with fair wages. This is the spirit of the workers hit so hard by the tsunami of the ocean, the spirit of their fight against the tidal wave of capitalism. □





## Defend Social Security!

**B**ush and his cronies on Wall Street are opening up a frontal attack on Social Security, using a sophisticated campaign of lies, exaggerations and half-truths aimed at minimizing opposition and pushing through their program to privatize this basic human right. Their goal is to get vast amounts of Social Security funding in the hands of investment bankers and eat up a percentage of those funds in commissions for the financial industry.

But Social Security enjoys broad support. Bush's threat can still be turned back. It has already aroused organized labor and organizations of retired people to mobilize to defend these benefits. This struggle has the potential of mobilizing the working class in the broadest definition of that term—including unemployed and retired workers and their families—to stop Bush. More than that, it can go on to win new benefits.

The first step is to see that this struggle is winnable. The next is to understand how the Bush administration is lying—ignoring facts and science. It even ignores the findings of established scientists—some of whom are among the firmest supporters of their capitalist system—when these conclusions come between them and the loot.

The big lie in this campaign is that the funding for Social Security benefits is in a desperate crisis, based upon the aging of the population. Yes, people are living longer. But they're also producing much, much more than their parents and grandparents. Longer years in retirement can be more than paid for by the enormous rise in workers' productivity. But only if that extra wealth can be wrested away from the class of super-rich who have appropriated it and made themselves into mega-billionaires.

Even though the Bush administration paints a rosy picture for the capitalist economy as a whole—a highly unlikely scenario considering the huge debt hanging over everything and the growing parasitic role of the military—Bush also claims that Social Security has a \$10-trillion shortfall somewhere in its future and that this requires immediate action: privatization. The assumptions used to dredge up this vast number—close to what the entire country produces in a year—were so extreme that they aroused strong criticism from the American Academy of Actuaries.

These actuaries are the mathematicians of the insurance industry and of population science, or demographics. They tend to be conservative. Nevertheless, they pointed out that Bush's "experts" made the least favorable assumptions for economic growth and calculated the total shortfall based on current funding and benefits going on forever. A more reasonable set of assumptions—one that still assumes stability, of course—shows that Social Security is well funded at least to 2042 on its current basis. No emergency action is needed.

Exposing the big lie, however, is just the beginning. The American Association of Retired People (AARP) is lobbying elected officials. The AFL-CIO has already opened a campaign to defend Social Security.

But just as Social Security was first won in the 1930s, so now this struggle will have to move to the streets and the factories and the offices where people work.

It must be joined with the struggle against the war in Iraq and other wars of aggression planned by Washington. Democrats and Republicans alike have always found ample funds when they wanted to pay for military expansion.

Any changes made to pay for Social Security should come from the Pentagon and from the rich—currently enjoying their massive tax cuts—and not from the working people who are already taxed heavily to fund these benefits. □

## Big Oil's comeuppance

# What Yukos case shows about 'rule of law'

By Deirdre Griswold

A strange legal battle in Houston over control of a significant portion of Russia's oil wealth has exploded several myths used to justify capitalist counter-revolution in the former Soviet Union.

The case involves Yuganskneftegas—the main asset of the privately owned Yukos oil company. It was auctioned off by the Russian government and is now in the process of being nationalized. Yukos had been in danger of falling completely under the control of the U.S. oil oligarchy.

After the breakup of the USSR, foreign capitalists moved quickly to grab control of what had been state property at fire-sale prices. But in most cases, this foreign imperialist ownership was concealed through various legal and illegal mechanisms.

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who would become the CEO of Yukos, emerged almost overnight as a billionaire because of his connections to foreign money. After Khodorkovsky was jailed in late 2003 by the Russian government for fraud and evading \$27.5 billion in taxes, two U.S. citizens—Steven M. Theede and Bruce K. Misamore—took over as chief executive officer and chief financial officer, respectively, of Yukos.

It was a breathtakingly confrontational move by the U.S. petro-oligarchy—which, as is well known, has enormous clout in the Bush administration. Putting two guys from the U.S. in charge of Yukos' day-to-day operations was like the wolves marking their territory. And who were these wolves? While Khodorkovsky was still in charge, ExxonMobil had been preparing to sink \$20 billion into Yukos, and ChevronTexaco had also showed interest in getting a piece of the action.

So the Russian government decided to auction off the lion's share of Yukos in such a way that the state could take back control over this vital part of the economy. On Dec. 19, a previously unknown company called Baikal Finance Group bid \$9.4 billion to take over Yuganskneftegas with the promise of meeting its tax obligations.

It was a big surprise to the U.S. oil oligarchs. Through Bruce Misamore of Yukos, they had gone to court in Texas the day before to block the auction by filing for bankruptcy protection. Incredibly, U.S. Judge Letitia Clark ruled that her court had jurisdiction in the case. But that ploy didn't stop the auction.

U.S. journalists scrambled to find out who was behind Baikal. All they found was an obscure office in a small town north of Moscow. Baikal has since been taken over by the state-owned company, Rosneft.

The U.S. had expected that Gazprom, the largest oil company in Russia, would place the winning bid. It had already been in discussions with Deutsche Bank to get financing for the move. The court case in Houston was meant to block the sale by preventing the German bank from underwrit-

ing Gazprom.

But what gave a Houston bankruptcy court jurisdiction over a Russian oil company?

The excuse was laughable. Misamore, who had left Moscow just two weeks earlier, said he had moved his personal office to Houston—and that gave the U.S. court jurisdiction. Of Yukos' thousands of employees, he was the only one in the United States. The company had no assets or business here. But no matter. The bankruptcy judge in the oil state of Texas ruled for Misamore.

Deutsche Bank is appealing the ruling. "Yukos essentially is seeking to have this court intervene in a tax dispute between a Russian company, Yukos and the Russian Federation with regard to its exercise of its sovereign powers," Deutsche argued.

### Rewriting bankruptcy law

The rush by Big Oil to block the sale of Yukos was so clumsy and hasty that it has created a big legal tangle. The Financial Times of London wrote on Dec. 30 that the Houston court's ruling "has prompted widespread surprise from legal experts who said it could lead to a flow of applications from foreign companies for bankruptcy protection."

Those from the imperialist U.S. who pushed capitalism down the throats of the workers in the former socialist countries did so in the name of "the rule of law" and building an "open society." They argued that state ownership promotes lawlessness and cronyism, but capitalist competition would revive the economy by rewarding honesty, openness and entrepreneurial creativity.

However, the only laws they respect are the ones the imperialists write themselves. Even under capitalist law, Russia has every legal right to take over a company that rips off the country's assets and doesn't even pay taxes. But that's not good enough for the imperialist wolves. They say U.S. law should take precedence over Russian sovereignty. And if they have to reinterpret U.S. bankruptcy law in order to hamstring both their German imperialist rivals and the Russian government, they'll do that too—as the Houston case has shown.

They also wax indignant at Russia for having created a corporate front—Baikal Finance—in order to get around the threatened U.S. sanctions on Gazprom. But what is Yukos? A corporate front created by the imperialists for the purpose of grabbing Russia's oil. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

This takeover of Yukos by the Russian state does not mean a return to socialism. That will take a great class struggle by the workers against the new capitalist owners. But it shows there is a growing anger in Russia against the aggressive moves of predatory imperialism, especially the U.S. A sign carried in a recent large and youthful demonstration at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow read: "Russian oil not for you, Bush!" (mosnews.com) □

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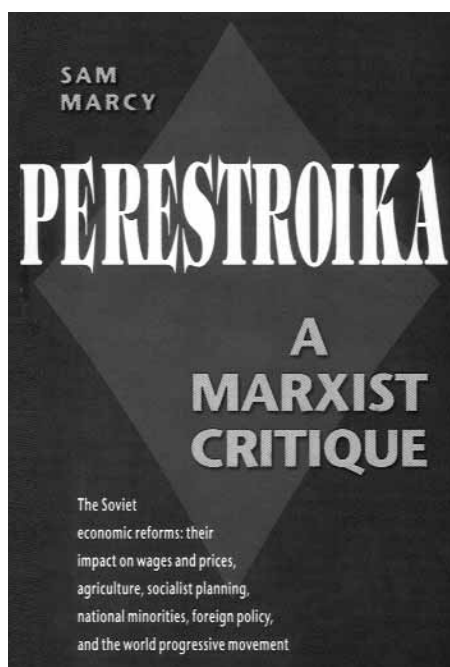
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# Sham Iraq 'elections' in deep trouble

By John Catalinotto

Former CIA "asset" and current Iraqi "Premier" Iyad Allawi telephoned President George W. Bush Jan. 3 to discuss problems about holding the Jan. 30 national elections in Iraq. The big question was whether the upsurge in both armed and popular resistance would force them to postpone the elections.

The official answer was still "no," but it was obvious the elections were headed for at least as big a disaster as the U.S. occupation in general. "Allawi's cabinet is already showing signs of weakening on the question of holding elections in Iraq this month," according to the Jan. 4 New York Times.

Suicide bombers were striking once and sometimes twice a day. Anyone in or around the new Iraqi National Guard and local police were regular targets of bombings and gunfights. Twenty were killed on Jan. 3 alone. The next day, the governor of Baghdad province and six bodyguards were killed.

After the suicide bombing that struck a U.S. military base in Mosul in December, killing 22, the daily killings of one or two GIs by roadside bombs take their toll. Twice as many U.S. troops died in Iraq in 2004 as in 2003.

Over 100 parties or groups are on the ballot. A coalition of 25 groups whose core is composed of eight Shiite parties from southern Iraq is expected to win should the election go forward.

On the other hand, throughout all of central Iraq, including Baghdad, there is strong opposition to the occupation and the elections. As of early December, 70 groups had announced they would boycott.

There may be some people in the United States who think holding these elections in Iraq is a step forward for democracy. That's as far from the truth as the lie that Bush launched the war not for Iraq's oil but to stop weapons of mass destruction.

## Elections under occupation

These are elections held under a foreign occupation. The occupation forces, basically the U.S. military and civilian authorities, decide how and when they are held.

When the idea of elections was first floated a year ago, some of the parties rooted in Iraq greeted it with enthusiasm. Demonstrations in the South of Iraq—the mostly Shiite areas—demanded immediate elections.

But the United States insisted on keeping the "Coalition Authority" led by J. Paul Bremer in place. The corporations first wanted laws in place allowing U.S.-based corporations to own

and exploit 100 percent of major Iraqi enterprises, including the country's oil.

No patriotic Iraqi recognizes these laws or any election carried out under them. "We all believe the Bremer laws have no legal basis, neither here nor anywhere else," said Dr. Abdul Kareem Hani, who was Iraq's minister of social affairs before the U.S. invasion. "According to the Geneva Conventions and The Hague, the occupying force has no authority to change the laws of the occupied country." (The New Standard, Nov. 22)

The Bush administration's policy from the beginning has been to take all of Iraq's resources, sharing them neither with rival imperialist powers nor with any sector of Iraqi society. This policy has helped accelerate the growth of the resistance.

Only after it appointed a purchased puppet like Allawi to run the interim Iraqi "regime" last June did Washington set up a timetable for elections.

## Pyrrhic victory in Falluja

In the meantime, the resistance movement in Iraq had been growing continuously. It established a relatively safe base in Falluja. Washington's Pentagon strategists targeted that city in November, expecting a quick and thorough military victory. This was supposed to be followed by political advances and a more secure election.

Instead, the Pentagon destroyed Falluja, killing thousands of civilians and far fewer resistance fighters. The resistance spread to far larger Mosul and a dozen other cities.

And in Falluja the resistance continued into 2005, driving U.S. forces out of parts of the city.

Politically, it was even a greater setback for the occupation. On Jan. 1, thousands of Fallujans demonstrated in front of the main entrance to the city. They demanded that U.S. military forces leave and that basic services be restored. (Al-Sharq-al-Awsat, Jan. 2)

On Nov. 9, just after the U.S. assault on Falluja began, the Iraqi Islamic Party pulled out of the Iraqi interim government. The next day, another influential organization, the Association of Muslim Scholars, called on the population to abstain from voting and defended Iraqis' choice to resist the occupation. Also on that day, the Islamic Party of Iraq announced it had withdrawn completely from the interim government. (The New Standard, Nov. 22)

On Nov. 13, the spokesperson for Moqtada al-Sadr, Ali Smasm, announced that their group would boycott the voting. This is significant in a different way, as Al-Sadr was a leader of an uprising in the South of Iraq and is a Shiite religious figure. It showed that even among the Shiite groups, many of which are partic-

ipating in the election, there are differences.

By the end of October the Iraqi National Foundation Congress, which some people describe as a broad-based civilian political group in sympathy with the armed resistance, had already called for a boycott of the elections.

INFC spokesperson Dr. Wamidh Omar Nadhmi described the demands his group made for these elections: "An international committee of oversight; an immediate cease fire because we cannot have elections under bombardment and rockets; withdrawal of American troops from the major cities one month before the election."

He added, "We even gave this international committee the right to delete any name from the list of people running for office if they didn't like it." Of the "interim government," he said, "their declaration of martial law is a declaration of political bankruptcy." (The New Standard, Nov. 22)

## Not just the elections

The U.S. corporate news media still spread the administration's false claims of success in Iraq. But to anyone who went through the Vietnam era, it's beginning to sound like the generals' claims then that they could "see the light at the end of the tunnel."

Independent reporters and analysts who have spent time in Iraq outside the control of the Pentagon have a completely different view of the events there.

Robert Fisk wrote this in his Dec. 28 article in The Independent: "Over the past year, there has been evidence enough that our whole project in Iraq is hopelessly flawed, that our Western armies—when they are not torturing prisoners, killing innocents and destroying one of the largest cities in Iraq—are being vanquished by a ferocious guerrilla army, the like of which we have not seen before in the Middle East."

Dahr Jamail, who wrote the New Standard article, writes: "Iraqis tend to favor free elections without American influence and setting a timetable for military withdrawal as part of the solution to the bloody quagmire their country has become under foreign control."

It's not just independent journalists writing this. The head of the Iraqi intelligence service, Gen. Muhammad Abd Allah Shahwani, told journalists Jan. 3: "I think the resistance is bigger than the U.S. military in Iraq. I think the resistance is more than 200,000 people."

"People are fed up after two years without improvement. People are fed up with no security, no electricity, people feel they have to do something," he said. Asked if the resistance was winning, he concluded, "They aren't losing." (Jan. 3, AFP) □

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CORRECTION: Due to an editing error in the article "Baseball owners scapegoat players on steroid issue," (Dec. 23, 2004) the full name of BALCO should have been Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative, not Bharat Aluminum.

## Para sorpresa de Washington y Wall Street

# Rusia libera a compañía petrolera de las garras de EEUU

Por Deirdre Griswold

El sueño de los súper millonarios petroleros estadounidenses de tomar el control de la mayor parte de la producción petrolera y de gasolina rusa se desvaneció el 19 de diciembre. A pesar de los desesperados intentos de una corte federal en Houston por evitarlo, el gobierno de Rusia vendió una gran parte de Petróleos Yukos, la segunda compañía petrolera más grande del país.

El ganador de la obligada subasta fue una compañía rusa poco conocida, el Grupo Financiero Baikal. Las fuentes de información sobre negocios del Oeste y de Moscú dicen que este es solo un frente para Gazprom, la compañía más grande de energía de Rusia, la cual es en parte propiedad del gobierno. Baikal acordó pagar \$9.3 mil millones por Yuganskneftegaz, la unidad central de producción de Yukos.

Desde el punto de vista de Wall Street, esto es un gran desafío a lo que ellos piensan que ganaron por la Guerra Fría: el control total de las grandes riquezas de la antigua Unión Soviética. Durante la contrarrevolución llevada a cabo por su títere, Boris Yeltsin, la estructura de la economía socialista heredada de la URSS fue desarticulada. El aparato productivo y los recursos naturales que habían pertenecido al pueblo soviético, se comenzaron a vender a comerciantes individuales. En los próximos años, conforme el capitalismo se aferraba y la pobreza crecía para l@s obrer@s, unos cuantos de la élite se convirtieron en ricos propietarios de estos recursos, ya sea por medio de robo y corrupción o por haberse convertido en conductos para el capital extranjero.

Una de estas personas fue Mikhail Khodorkovsky, quien se convirtió en el hombre más rico de Rusia luego de fundar el banco Menatep y tomar el puesto de presidente ejecutivo de Petróleos Yukos en 1996.

### Robándole a Rusia junto al imperialismo

El nombre de Khodorkovsky salió al aire en 1999 en los Estados Unidos durante una investigación federal de lavado de dinero por el Banco de Nueva York y los oficiales de Menatep. (Ver "Escándalo de Banco de Nueva York es solo la punta del témpano: Robos a Rusia genera un despunte en Wall Street" por Fred Goldstein, Mundo Obrero, septiembre 23, 1999.) La cantidad bajo investigación era de \$10 mil millones de dólares, pero esta era sólo la punta del témpano en cuanto al robo capitalista de Rusia se refiere. El Ministerio del Interior ruso estimó en esos días que "entre \$50 a \$250 mil millones fueron transferidos fuera del país ilegalmente entre los años de 1994 y 1998" (New York Times, Sept. 5, 1999).

Hace poco más de un año, Khodorkovsky fue aprehendido por el gobierno ruso de Vladimir Putin, con cargos de fraude y la evasión de \$20 mil millones de dólares en impuestos. A las gigantescas compañías de energía en los Estados

Unidos como la Carlyle Group les cundió el pánico porque, Khodorkovsky, al no estar contento con solo convertirse en multimillonario de la noche a la mañana, estaba preparándose para venderle a la ExxonMobil una parte de \$20 mil millones de dólares de Yukos.

La administración de Bush, incluyendo a oficiales del Consejo de Seguridad Nacional y la embajada estadounidense en Moscú, presionaron fuertemente a Moscú para que liberaran a Khodorkovsky. (Wall Street Journal, Oct. 31 2003)

Pero el jefe de Yukos permaneció en prisión, haciendo de Rusia el único país en el mundo que tiene al más rico de sus ciudadanos tras las rejas. Mientras algunos en el occidente tratan de presentar a Khodorkovsky como un mártir, su encarcelamiento es extremadamente popular entre las masas de obreros rusos.

El gobierno de Rusia congeló los bienes de la compañía y continuó con sus planes de subastar la mayor parte de Yukos, aparentemente para poder recaudar los impuestos debidos.

Lo que pasó después dejó muy claro ante el mundo la naturaleza de esta lucha. Los puestos administrativos más altos de Yukos fueron tomados por dos ejecutivos estadounidenses, Steven M. Theede y Bruce K. Misamore.

### Corte en Houston intenta prevenir subasta

El día antes de la subasta, un juez federal en Houston mantuvo una medida

cautelada pedida por Misamore con la intención de detener la subasta en Moscú. Fue el colmo de la arrogancia imperialista, pero no funcionó. La subasta ocurrió al día siguiente. Pero la amenaza de sanciones económicas por los EEUU contra cualquiera que comprara le empresa fue lo suficiente para que Deutsche Bank y otros tres bancos europeos congelaran entre \$10.000 y 13.000 millones –dinero que habían comprometido prestar a Gazprom para que hiciera su oferta.

Un reporte de Prensa Asociada del 19 de diciembre reveló que, "teniendo una presencia considerable en los Estados Unidos, los bancos potencialmente podrían enfrentar procesos legales si violan el dictamen de la corte".

Gazprom había retenido un abogado de los EEUU, Michael Goldberg, para el proceso en Houston. Goldberg dijo a la prensa que Gazprom no iba a contestar el fallo legal porque "no hay jurisdicción en este caso, y esto no es la clase de casos que una corte de Tejas deba decidir sobre activos rusos".

Entonces, al día siguiente no fue Gazprom quien hizo la oferta ganadora para controlar a Yukos, sino una compañía poco conocida –el Grupo Financiero Baikal. Los rusos habían derrotado a los tiburones EEUU en su propio juego.

¿Cuántos multimillonarios de los EEUU no han fundado corporaciones falsas en el extranjero para ocultar sus ganancias? ¿Cuántos propietarios no han creado agencias administrativas dentro

de otras agencias administrativas para que los inquilinos no sepan adónde dirigir sus quejas? ¿Cuántas empresas no se han declarado en quiebra para reorganizarse con otro nombre y así romper los contratos colectivos que firmaron con los sindicatos y evitar el pago de pensiones y seguros de salud?

Crear empresas falsas es una vieja trampa que corporaciones estadounidenses conocen demasiado bien. Sin embargo, están mostrando indignación porque Rusia hace lo mismo.

El reporte de Prensa Asociada planteó un miedo aún más profundo en el corazón de Wall Street: "La gerencia de Yukos y comentaristas fuera de la empresa dicen que los impuestos adeudados y la detención del ex ejecutivo, Mijael Khodorkovsky, acusado de evasión de impuestos y fraude, tienen la meta de neutralizar las actividades políticas de Khodorkovsky y de reafirmar el control estatal sobre la económicamente crucial industria petrolera".

### Contrarrevolución ocasionó implosión en la economía

La restauración del capitalismo en la ex Unión Soviética ocasionó una implosión en la producción. El analista Sam Marcy del Partido Mundo Obrero (Workers World Party) comparó en aquel entonces lo que había pasado en la URSS, con la división de un barco gigante transoceánico en pequeños botes de remos. Lo que había sido una economía altamente integrada dirigida por un plan nacional fue rápidamente rota en partes pequeñas que competían una con otra por ganancias y mercados. Muchas fábricas y lugares de producción cerraron permanentemente.

El efecto en l@s trabajador@s fue catastrófico. La sola supervivencia de Rusia incluso como país capitalista estuvo en duda cuando el capital extranjero invadió para apoderarse de los escombros.

El gobierno capitalista de Putin puede haber decidido que no tenía más remedio que el ejercer más control estatal sobre los recursos naturales de Rusia. Sin embargo, de ninguna manera la nacionalización por parte de un gobierno burgués constituye socialismo. No obstante, se puede esperar que sea dura la reacción de Wall Street y la administración de Bush.

El día después de la subasta, Putin viajó al viejo rival del capital estadounidense, Alemania, donde celebró una rueda de prensa defendiendo la venta de Yukos por parte de su gobierno como legal y constitucional. También indicó que Rusia y China estarán cooperando en la construcción de un oleoducto. Esto no es nada nuevo; incluso bajo Khodorkovsky, Yukos estuvo en discusiones con la Corporación Nacional Petrolera de China sobre un oleoducto importante desde Siberia del Este hasta China.

En aquel momento a lo mejor los gobiernos de Rusia y China estaban preocupados de otorgar un proyecto tan estratégico a una empresa tan obviamente bajo la dominación de los EEUU. Pero ahora, las ansiedades se originan en Washington. □

