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After worldwide pressure Cuban 5 win a new trial

Appeals court vacates convictions, citing bias in Miami

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

On Aug. 9, in a historic victory for revolutionary Cuba, a three-judge panel from the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta declared the Draconian sentences imposed on the Cuban Five to be null and void.

The Cuban Five are political prisoners in the United States: Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino and René González. The appeals court ordered new trials for all five.

Their defense lawyers indicated they would immediately seek release on bail for the Five.

In 2001, the men were convicted of conspiracy to commit espionage and murder in a politically motivated prosecution that targeted the Five for monitoring far-right terrorist groups in Miami. These groups, such as Alpha 66, have an extensive and public record of violence against socialist Cuba, including a 1976 Cubana Airline that killed 73 people.

The Five's sentences ranged from 15 years to life. They have now been in jail for seven years.

At a news conference after the decision was announced, defense lawyers Leonard Weinglass and Phil Horowitz called the legal victory "historic" and a "landmark case." They said it establishes a precedent on what is required for a fair trial in the United States.

The judges' unanimous ruling was based on one aspect of the Five's appeal: the fact that a fair trial for them had been impossible because the venue—the trial's location in Miami—was saturated with prejudice against revolutionary Cuba. The original judge in the case denied the defense request for a change in venue five times.

The appeals court cited over 100 incidents of bias during the trial. These included statements and actions hostile to Cuba by jurors, members of the community, the media and prosecuting attorneys. The judges mentioned the case of Elián González as an example of the local community's anti-Cuba bias, and acknowledged the massive documentation of prejudice supplied by the Five's defense team.

Most significantly, the court mentioned the terrorist actions of right-wing paramilitary anti-Cuba groups in southern Florida

as a factor in shaping a dramatically unfair venue for the trial of the Five.

Teresa Gutierrez, a leader with the National Committee to Free the Five, said: "The decision confirms what supporters of the Five have been saying all along, that their prosecution was biased, unfair and politically motivated. This is a wonderful victory for the Five and for the people of Cuba. We won't rest until they get home."

Gutierrez added that the court's ruling reflects worldwide outrage at the U.S. government, which has seized and imprisoned thousands of people nationally and internationally with its "anti-terrorist" campaign launched in an "endless war" strategy of imperial expansion.

The United States has held many people secretly, refusing to release their names and locations. Locked up with no access to lawyers or families, many are brutally tortured, as in the prisons of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled May 27 that the imprisonment of the Cuban Five violated international law.

The panel held that "the trial did not take place in the climate of objectivity and impartiality which is required in order to conclude [there was] observance of the standards of a fair trial." (Associated Press)

Now, two months later, a U.S. Court has conceded this point—but only because of years of concerted struggle by the Cuban people and their allies all over the world.

The next step, according to Gloria La Riva of the Free the Five Committee, is for supporters to work to unite the Five with their families.

La Riva also announced that the struggle against U.S.-financed terror attacks on Cuba will continue with an Aug. 29 protest in El Paso, Texas, on the opening day of Luis Posada Carriles' extradition hearing.

Sentenced to prison in Venezuela for his role in the Cubana Airline bombing, Posada Carriles escaped with CIA assistance and entered the United States with impunity. President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela is seeking Posada Carriles' return to that country to stand trial for terrorism. □



PHOTO: GLORIA TATUM

Thousands march to defend right to vote

By Jimmy Raynor
Atlanta

Fifteen thousand people marched in Atlanta on Aug. 6, the 40th anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Act. One of the fruits of the Civil Rights Movement, the bill abolished many Jim Crow laws barring African Americans, particularly in the South, from the right to vote. The march, organized primarily by the Rainbow/Push Coalition, was part of a national campaign to renew portions of the act due to expire without congressional action, such as access to bilingual election materials. People from Mississippi to Michigan attended the protest, reflecting widespread concern about continuing disenfranchisement of Black, Latino and Native voters. A participating contingent of anti-war activists who also leafleted the demonstration was well received by other marchers. □

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This week ...

1952 court victory against anti-gay charges

By Leslie Feinberg

The decision by Dale Jennings, a Mattachine founder, to fight catch-all "lewd-vagrancy" charges, stemming from an attempt by police to sexually entrap him, was not the first time a gay man in the U.S. had pleaded not guilty.

But the way Mattachine organizers fought the charges was a landmark. They took the struggle public, issuing leaflets explaining, "The issue is civil rights."

The leaflet argued that when the police are allowed to use extortion, intimidation, shakedowns for money, entrapment, search and seizure without warrant, and imprisonment without charge against people based on their sexuality, then these terror techniques can be wielded against others, as well.

The moment subcategories of the overall population are denied rights, the rights of all are threatened.

The committee invited the public to the courtroom and sent out a lengthy press release. Harry Hay noted that not one media representative showed up. ("Gay American History")

'One true pervert in the courtroom'

The trial began on June 23, 1952. Jennings described what happened in an article he wrote later in "One" magazine.

Arab-American attorney George Shibley opened up with a bodacious courtroom argument. "The attorney, engaged by the Mattachine Foundation," Jennings explained, "made a brilliant opening statement to the jury in which he pointed out that homosexuality and lasciviousness are not identical after stating that his client was admittedly homosexual, that no fine line separates the variations of sexual inclinations and the only true pervert in the courtroom was the arresting officer."

Under questioning from Shibley, Jennings explained that he was indeed a homosexual, but that he was not guilty of the charges against him.

This political defense was a bombshell approach. Rather than just deny the police account of the attempted entrapment, this Mattachine leader was affirming his sexuality—a sexuality that was illegal in every state.

Jennings later explained, "Even if I had done all the things which the prosecution claimed... I would have been guilty of no unusual act, only an illegal one in this society."

At the trial's close, Shibley delivered what Hay called "a military exposition of what it is like to be a homosexual in today's sociopolitical climate." ("Making Trouble")

The jurors deliberated for close to 40 hours. One lone juror said he would vote for a guilty verdict until hell froze over. But the 11 other jurors held out for acquittal. The jury was deadlocked.

The judge called for a retrial, but within a few days the district attorney's office dropped the charges.

'Victory!'

Mattachine sent word about the win against the state to the media. "We informed every paper in Southern California, every journal, radio and television station, on every hearing date and on the date of the judge's decision not to renew—to no avail.

"This was a deliberate conspiracy of silence," Hay concluded.

So Mattachine activists took the news to the streets the same way they had built this case—with widely distributed leaflets hailing the decision in a one-word headline: "Victory!"

The July 1952 leaflet read in part: "You didn't see it in the papers, but it... did happen in L.A." For the "first time in California history an admitted homosexual was freed on a vag-lewd charge." This win was "the result of organized work" and contributions of funds, work and time by "people who believe in justice for... the homosexual."

Mattachine member Jim Kepner said he'd heard of other cases that were reportedly won around the same time. But Dale Jennings' defense against the criminal charge, and the committee that took his case public, fought and won the case on a political basis.

In his ground-breaking book "Gay American History" (1976), Jonathan Katz provides further elaboration by Dale Jennings about the struggle that rose up to support him.

"Actually I have had very little to do with this victory," Jennings wrote. "Yes, I gave my name and publicly declared myself to be a homosexual, but the moment I was arrested my name was no longer 'good' and this incident will stand on record for all to see for the rest of my life. In a situation where to be accused is to be guilty, a person's good name is worthless and meaningless.

"Further, without the interest of the Citizens' Committee to Outlaw Entrapment and their support which gathered funds from all over the country, I would have been forced to resort to the mild enthusiasm of the Public Defender. Chances are I'd have been found guilty and now be either still gathering funds to pay the fine or writing this in jail.

"Yet I am not abjectly grateful."

Jennings explained that he understood that the hundreds of people "who helped me push this case to a successful conclusion" were not doing so out of personal support for him. They were being "intelligently practical and helping establish a precedent that will perhaps help themselves if the time comes."

In this sense, the bond of solidarity is not mere blanket "generosity," Jennings noted. "It is unification for self-protection."

He concluded, "Were all homosexuals and bisexuals to unite militantly, unjust laws and corruption would crumble in short order... Were heterosexuals to realize that these violations of our rights threaten them equally, a vast reform might even come within our lifetime.

"This is no more a dream than trying to win a case after admitting homosexuality."

Sources for this article: "Gay American History," "The Trouble with Harry Hay" and "Making Trouble." Next: Victory launches Mattachine like a rocket.



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Sat., Aug. 20
Street meeting/rally. "Shut the War Down!" 2 p.m. at CNN, 6430 Sunset Blvd. (at Caluenga). Sponsored by International Action Center-LA (323) 936-7266.

NEW YORK

Fri., Aug. 12
Workers World Party Meeting: Teresa Gutierrez on Cuban Five winning new trial and Sara Flounders on imperialist plans and people's resistance in Iraq and Palestine. 7 pm. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

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Mother of GI killed in Iraq confronts Bush

By Dustin Langley

President George W. Bush thought he could escape the rapidly deteriorating situation in Iraq by hiding out on his 1,600-acre Crawford, Texas, ranch for a five-week vacation. But the horrors of the war have followed him to his vacation hide-away.

Cindy Sheehan—whose 24-year old son, Spc. Casey Sheehan of Vacaville, Calif., was killed in Baghdad's Sadr City on April 4, 2004—is determined to confront Bush.

On Aug. 6, Sheehan rode to Crawford on a bus organized by Veterans for Peace and Iraq Veterans Against the War. Once they reached Crawford, she began walking toward the ranch. She was accompanied by veterans, local activists, Gold Star mothers and others who had driven in from across the country.

Eventually, they were stopped by local police and the Secret Service. As of Aug. 9, the protesters are camped out by the road leading to the ranch. Activists from all over Texas and the United States have joined the crowd at what they call Camp Casey, named after Sheehan's son, to demand an answer from Bush.

One active-duty soldier from Ft. Hood stopped by on Aug. 7 to express his support for Sheehan and her efforts. Gold Star Mothers for Peace announced that families from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Arkansas and other states whose loved ones have died as a result of the war were planning to join Sheehan in Crawford.

Peace organizers with Arlington West are planning to join them and erect their display of crosses, one for each U.S. soldier killed in Iraq.

Dennis Kyne, a 15-year veteran of the U.S. Army who was a medic during the first Gulf War, joined the Aug. 6 protest. He said: "Why won't the president—the Commander-in-Chief—meet with the mother of a fallen soldier? What is it that he is afraid of?"

In a move to silence Sheehan, the Secret Service informed her on Aug. 8 that she had until Aug. 11 to leave or she would be arrested as a "threat to national security." Sheehan has said she intends to stay, even if that means getting arrested.

Bush's inhumanity exposed

Sheehan has met with Bush once before, shortly after her son's death, when

Cindy Sheehan argues with sheriff on outskirts of Bush's ranch Aug. 6.



she was invited to a brief visit at the White House in June 2004. She says that Bush behaved as if he were at a party, walking into the room asking in a loud, bluff voice, "Who we'll honorin' today?"

She recalled: "His mouth kept moving but there was nothing in his eyes or anything else about him that showed me he really cared or had any real compassion at all. This is a human being totally disconnected from humanity and reality. His eyes were empty, hollow shells."

She remembers that Bush called her "Ma" or "Mom" throughout the whole meeting, never got around to learning her name and didn't know the name of her son. "He wouldn't look at the pictures of Casey. He didn't even know Casey's name. Every time we tried to talk about Casey and how much we missed him, he would change the subject."

Shortly after this meeting, she co-founded Gold Star Mothers for Peace, and began speaking out against the war. She says she has found from her travels that "people are fed up with this war and want to do something to stop it."

In June, Cindy Sheehan testified at a hearing in Washington, D.C., about the Downing Street memos. These are the recently leaked British intelligence documents that exposed the fact that Bush intended to invade Iraq almost from the beginning of his first term, and that "intelligence and facts were being fixed around

the policy" of invasion.

Busloads and carloads of activists are currently heading toward Crawford to support Sheehan. Organizers are asking individuals to call or email the White House (comments@whitehouse.gov or 202-456-1111) and demand that Bush meet with Sheehan. They are also asking activists in the region to come to Crawford to stand in solidarity. Daily updates are available at www.meetwithcindy.org.

Sheehan commented: "And the other thing I want him to tell me is: 'Just what was the noble cause Casey died for? Was it freedom and democracy? Bullshit! He died for oil. He died to make your friends richer. He died to expand American imperialism in the Middle East. We're not freer here, thanks to your Patriot Act. Iraq is not free. You get America out of Iraq and Israel out of Palestine and you'll stop the terrorism!'"

"There, I used the 'I' word—imperialism," Sheehan said. "And now I'm going to use another 'I' word - impeachment - because we cannot have these people pardoned. They need to be tried on war crimes and go to jail." (Counterpunch)

Polls show that most people want the troops home now. It is up to activists everywhere to make sure this sentiment is reflected en masse on Sept. 24 at the anti-war protest in Washington, D.C.

The DVD "Arlington West" is available at Leftbooks.com. □

GI deaths raise anti-war sentiment

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

The Cleveland metropolitan area remains in shock after 20 Ohio Marines, 14 from this area, recently died in Iraq. Public outpourings of grief have taken a variety of forms, from anonymous flowers to Sunday sermons. Funerals and memorials have brought out tens of thousands who never knew the men who died.

Public anger about the Marines' deaths, however, is by and large not directed at the Iraqi people. Rather, it's aimed at President George W. Bush.

Local TV news polls show 68 percent opposed to Bush's handling of the Iraq war.

The father of Augie Schroder, one of the Marines killed, openly blasted the Bush administration and the Democrats who voted for the war. Schroder's mother said, "I didn't raise my son to be cannon fodder."

U.S. Rep. Stephanie Tubbs-Jones has called for an end to the war.

It was against this backdrop that 80 youths and their supporters engaged in a counter-recruiting action Aug. 6 outside a military recruiting station. Many had



WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT
Aug. 6 counter-recruitment protestor.

joined the demonstration after getting a leaflet at their high school. Others joined in off the street.

Honks of support were non-stop, not only from motorists but from bus drivers and truck drivers on the job. The recruiting office was open—but no one signed up during the protest.

The demonstration was organized by Stop Recruitment in Cleveland, a project of the Northeast Ohio Antiwar Coalition.

LOS ANGELES Activists 'greet' Rumsfeld with protest



WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

On Aug. 4, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel about 60 protesters "greeted" Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld who was attending a conference there. The war criminal Rumsfeld was forced to use another entrance but couldn't avoid the loud chants of 'Rumsfeld, Rumsfeld You Can't Hide - We Charge You With Genocide' bouncing off the exclusive hotel walls. Participating organizations included International Action Center, ANSWER, Codepink and Neighbors for Peace and Justice.

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No justice for Alabama's HIV+ prisoners

By Judy Greenspan
San Francisco

An investigation of the treatment of male prisoners with HIV/AIDS in Alabama's Limestone Prison, reported in the Aug. 1 New York Times, has again shone a spotlight on the criminally negligent care received by prisoners with serious and life-threatening diseases in this country's prisons. Alabama, one of the states that led the country in Jim Crow racist segregation laws, continues these practices today in its prisons.

When the early cases of HIV/AIDS were discovered in U.S. prisons in the mid-1980s, the first response was to isolate and segregate those prisoners. Prisoners were forced to live apart from the rest of the prison population. They were denied programs, jobs and education opportunities inside the prison.

That segregation also amounted to gross medical neglect and serious human-rights abuses. Segregating prisoners did not mean that they received stellar care. In fact, just the opposite. Prisoners became victims of beatings and psychological violence by guards and an AIDS-phobic prison system.

Segregating prisoners with HIV/AIDS help to criminalize, stigmatize and demonize prisoners living with the disease. It did little or nothing to provide proper care for prisoners with serious illnesses.

Since those early days of the epidemic, the Federal Bureau of Prisons and most state prison systems have housed prisoners with HIV/AIDS in the general prison population.

Alabama is the only prison system in the country that maintains a draconian system of segregation of prisoners with HIV/

AIDS. Limestone Prison, near Huntsville, has created a prison within a prison in which to isolate and maintain complete control over its 230 known HIV+positive prisoners.

This "control" has caused the unnecessary deaths of countless prisoners.

Doctor resigns in protest

In 2004, as the result of the settlement of a class-action lawsuit brought by 240 HIV+ prisoners, Prison Health Services, a private company responsible for Alabama's prison health care, hired Dr. Valda Chijide. An infectious disease specialist, Dr. Chijide thought she was being hired as the doctor for prisoners with HIV/AIDS.

She soon found out that she was supposed to singlehandedly provide care for all 1,800 prisoners at Limestone prison.

Dr. Chijide, who had never worked in a prison before, didn't know about the court settlement and the history of poor care when she took the job with Prison Health Services. She was immediately outraged by the abysmal living conditions and negligent health care in the HIV unit.

She found the housing unit to be "rid-dled with rats, where broken windows had been replaced with plastic sheeting that was falling apart." Her medical orders were ignored or frequently countermanded by improperly trained medical staff.

She could not even find soap in the infirmary where the sickest prisoners were kept. She had to walk to another building so that she could wash her hands between visits.

Dr. Chijide resigned after holding her position for three months. Before resigning, she wrote a 10-page critique of the criminal care at Limestone, which she shared with Dr. Joe Bick, the court moni-

tor. She complained bitterly about the way that Prison Health Services ran medical care in that state.

"If you bring up a problem that they won't want to hear about, they will attack you," Dr. Chijide stated. "I felt better resigning than staying on and bending my principles to their principles."

Profit-hungry prison corporations

If the number of lawsuits filed against Prison Health Services is any indication, the private company has no principles. Prison Health Services, one of the several profit-hungry companies to appear on the prison-health-care horizon, has faced more than 1,000 lawsuits for its delivery of poor medical and psychiatric care in this country's jails and prisons.

Yet this is the company that was chosen after the 2004 class-action settlement to clean up the crisis in medical care for prisoners with HIV/AIDS in Alabama. Despite the recent national media exposure and almost daily attention to the many abuses suffered by prisoners under the company's care, Prison Health Services continues as the contract provider of prisoner care in Alabama.

The firm is even bidding to take over care in the San Francisco jails.

Medical care at the state's women's prison—Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women, in Wetumpka, Ala.—is no better. That prison, which is also under contract with Prison Health Services, has been the target of several class-action lawsuits brought by women prisoners for better care.

This past year, as part of an ongoing lawsuit, the Southern Center for Human Rights, an Atlanta-based legal- and human-rights office, investigated the deaths of three women prisoners in two

months at Tutwiler.

One woman who died had been placed in lock-up shortly after receiving a mastectomy. According to Vanessa Filley, an investigator with SCHR, the woman was sitting in prison on a parole violation and just deteriorating. The prison did nothing to provide any care that would have saved her life.

The Southern Center for Human Rights has represented prisoners all over the South in class-action lawsuits for justice, dignity and decent medical care.

Prison is big business, as the proliferation of 32 prisons in the state of California clearly attests. International watchdog agencies like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty Now have released extensive exposés of torture and neglect in this country's prisons and detention centers.

Most prisoner-advocacy organizations and health-care-rights groups have loudly opposed both private prisons and the privatization of health care.

Alabama's criminally negligent system is only one example of the human-rights abuses faced by prisoners in this country. It is the profit system that drives not only the war machine but the prison-industrial complex that creates these concentration camps for the poor.

Greenspan worked as a paralegal for the ACLU National Prison Project. She interviewed Tutwiler and Limestone prisoners living with HIV/AIDS during the late 1980s when the first lawsuit against the segregation and neglect of HIV+ prisoners was filed. Greenspan is currently the co-coordinator of the HIV/Hepatitis C Committee of California Prison Focus.

Immigrant community exposes media racism

By Cheryl LaBash
Dearborn, Mich.

The largest, most diverse protest to date said "No!" to anti-immigrant racism outside the office of the Dearborn Press and Guide newspaper Aug. 4.

From young school children to elderly U.S. citizens born in Mexico who had suffered from forced deportations during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, the Latin@ community was there. They were joined by Arab, African-American, Asian and white residents.

The struggle began when a racist cartoon attacking Mexican immigrants was published in the Press and Guide on June 19. The insult was then compounded when newspaper representatives walked out of meetings with the community.

On July 28 another racist editorial cartoon was published by another local newspaper, The Oakland Press, slandering the Islamic religion.

Although purporting to be community-based news media, both newspapers are owned by the Journal Register Company. JRC stock is traded on Wall Street. It owns newspapers throughout the northeastern U.S.

Even though the editors published a small apology and pledged not to use that cartoonist again, the demonstrations just won't go away.

What is the community demanding?



Respect and discussion about ways these "community" papers can really represent the diverse residents and undo the damage done by the racist images.

In a July 26 letter to Jim Williams, president and publisher of the Heritage Papers group of the JRC, the community demanded "a feature story on the contributions of immigrants in the United States; a series of articles highlighting the experiences of immigrants to this area, with emphasis on life since the Patriot Act,

9/11 and the role of the press in creating public opinion; cartoons by Latino and Arab artists depicting ourselves, rather than others, who ridicule us and diminish our humanity; coverage of the harsh conditions immigrants are living under in particular industries, such as agriculture and landscaping; or bring interns from the community to work at the paper and be consultants to the paper regarding life in our community."

The letter was reportedly signed by



WW PHOTOS: CHERYL LABASH
August 4 protest outside the Dearborn Press and Guide

more than 30 African-American, Latino, Arab-American, Jewish and Muslim groups from across metro Detroit.

As part of the continuing struggle, the community is asking advertisers to withdraw ads until progress is made with Heritage Newspapers. However, the JRC papers cover many other areas where there are immigrant workers. According to journalregister.com, the "Journal Register Company owns 27 daily newspapers. ... The Company's operations are strategically clustered in seven geographic areas: Greater Philadelphia, Michigan, Connecticut, Greater Cleveland, Central New England, and the Capital-Saratoga and Mid-Hudson regions of New York." □

Profits over ideology

Why Frist has embraced stem cell research

By Gene Clancy

On July 29, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist formally announced from the floor of the Senate that he was breaking with President George W. Bush on the subject of stem cell research. He followed up with a highly publicized phone call to the White House to tell the president in person that he was reversing a position he had previously supported. President Bush is reported to have told Frist to "follow his conscience."

Before his very public break with Bush, Frist had been one of the darlings of the Christian right. He was not just a supporter of the Bush policy on stem cell research. A medical doctor who stridently opposed the right of women to control their own bodies, Frist had thrilled the right when he led the fight to have Congress intervene in the tragic Terri Schiavo case. His name was prominently circulated as a presidential candidate in 2008, and he had openly curried favor with what was perceived to be the reactionary "Republican base" of voters.

Immediately, dozens of right-wing religious leaders and advocacy groups, in blistering language, attacked Frist for abandoning the Bush policy.

Referring to the cells as though they were people, Lanier Swann, government relations director of Concerned Women for America, said, "It certainly gives one pause in trusting his commitment to the sanctity of life."

The Christian Defense Coalition said Frist should not expect its support in the 2008 Republican presidential primaries, while the Catholic bishops of Pennsylvania took the opportunity to issue a pointed reminder that the church views embryonic stem cell research as "morally unacceptable."

Catholic League President William Donohue called Frist "Dr. Duplicity." An editorial in the conservative Weekly Standard magazine said "The incoherence of Frist's position is staggering," while the National Pro-Life Action Center lambasted what it called Frist's "sell-out." (Washington Post, July 30)

But Bill Frist also had his supporters, or, more accurately, Frist is now supporting another whole group who want government funding for embryonic stem cell research. Many, like Frist, have imposing right-wing credentials.

A bill which would fund research using stem cells derived from human embryos has already passed the Republican-dominated House of Representatives. The same bill is expected to pass easily in the Senate, even though Bush has vowed to veto it. And individual states, including California, have pledged to spend millions—even billions—of dollars to conduct stem cell research.

Most of the mainstream media and political pundits have treated the story as a case of morals vs. politics. Some have even defended Frist as someone who made a principled decision to do what he thought was right. Since Frist's departure from Bush's position was only a "minor disagreement," says George Will, a nationally syndicated columnist, why should it be "inexplicable why a physician would be receptive to a potential expansion of medicine's healing arsenal?" (Washington Post, Aug. 4)

As we shall see, something much more powerful than high-minded principle was behind Frist's decision to abandon his erstwhile allies.

Stem cell research promises health ...

It is certainly true that the science of stem cell research offers great promise and hope for medical breakthroughs that could greatly alleviate human suffering.

Research on stem cells, especially those from early embryos, is especially promising because it offers a way to turn back the biological clock.

Current drugs can do no more than slow the progress of degenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. Stem cells may one day replace cells and rebuild tissues, perhaps even organs, helping to restore patients to the way they were before they became ill.

For the first time, European researchers have identified muscle stem cells, suggesting a treatment for muscular dystrophy, according to a recent report in the journal Nature. South Korea's Hwang Woo-suk made headlines in May when he created the world's first embryonic stem cells that genetically match injured or sick patients, a major step toward growing patients' own replacement tissue to treat diseases.

Among the tissues that could be repaired are those of the central nervous system and spinal cord, offering hope to

millions who suffer from brain and spinal cord injuries and diseases.

There are now already stem cell treatments for strokes, and scientists are looking for cures for diabetes and heart disease. In Ecuador, 10 heart-failure patients who received fetal stem cell injections were all showing signs of rapid recovery three months after the treatment, according to surgeons who performed the first-time procedure. (PBS Online News Hour, June 20)

In 2001, Bush killed most research on embryonic stem cells by limiting federal funding for research to 15 lines that had already been developed from frozen embryos left over from *in vitro* fertility attempts. He explicitly disallowed the use of any additional embryos, even ones slated to be destroyed anyway. The new bill that Bill Frist now supports differs from Bush's policy only in that it would allow additional frozen embryos to be used from the same stock of *in vitro* leftovers. U.S. law already strictly prohibits the cloning of any human embryos.

But Frist's break with Bush, small as it might seem, is very important to certain people.

... and immense profits

Red Herring, Inc., is a privately held media company headquartered in Belmont, Calif. According to its website, it exists to provide the corporate world with information about "innovation, technology, financing and entrepreneurial activity." It claims to provide a "deep understanding of venture capital and capital markets." (Red Herring .com)

On July 29, Red Herring reported Frist's decision with the following headline: "Stem cell stocks rise after U.S. Senate majority leader breaks with White House on federal funds for stem cell research." The article went on to detail how Frist's announcement had helped lift the shares of three stem cell-related companies: Geron, Aastrom Biosciences and StemCells. It continued with an analysis of why the stock market responded favorably to the announcement.

"With limits on federal funding, scientists have had to depend largely on private money for research. But venture companies have been wary of funding these firms as many are in early stages. Scientists have worried that the U.S. will lag behind other

nations, where governments are more supportive of the research.

"California voters approved a bond initiative in November 2004 that will provide \$3 billion in taxpayer money for stem cell research. If the U.S. changes its policy and lifts existing barriers on stem cell research, it will have a better shot at being the global leader in the field." (Red Herring.com, July 29)

Why should free market billionaires and stock marketeers care about government-funded research?

"With strict limits on federal funding, scientists must rely largely on private money. But venture capitalists have largely stayed away from stem cell companies because most are still in early stages. 'VCs [venture capitalists] enter after the research is completed,' says Robert Bellas Jr., a general partner at Morgenthaler Ventures." (Red Herring, June 20)

In other words, the biomedical corporations want to profit from stem cell research, but they don't want to risk their own money. They want the government to pay for the research and then turn it over to them so they can patent it and charge sick people enormous sums for the new life-saving technology!

Bill Frist is a staunch advocate of this kind of "free market medicine."

Frist entered the Senate already a millionaire, thanks to his father and brother. They founded what has become HCA Inc., the largest hospital chain in the U.S., with over 200 hospitals and revenues of \$21.8 billion in 2003.

"Over the years, HCA derived about one-third of its revenue from the federal government's Medicaid and Medicare programs. In addition to owning the largest number of hospitals, HCA has another dubious distinction: The company has defrauded Medicare, Medicaid and TRICARE, the military's health care program, of more money than any other health care provider in the U.S." (Donald L. Bartlett and James B. Steele, "Critical Condition: How Health Care in America Became Big Business and Bad Medicine")

Most of the government money for stem cell research will go to large universities and teaching hospitals, often linked to each other. It is a safe bet that the Frist medical empire will profit immensely from this government spending. But there

Continued on page 9

Attack on reproductive rights deepens

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

On Aug. 4, despite opposition from pro-choice demonstrators on the State Capitol steps, New York Gov. George Pataki vetoed legislation that would have made conception-preventing pills available to women without a doctor's prescription. Those rallying to protest Pataki's veto included members of Family Planning Advocates of New York State and Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood.

The so-called "morning-after pill" is actually an emergency contraceptive (EC). It is particularly needed by women whose birth control has failed, and by women who have been raped. The pill prevents fertilization of eggs.

Reproductive-rights advocates in New York speculate that Pataki, who has sup-

ported abortion rights in the past, is swinging to the right as preparation for a presidential bid in 2008.

However, Pataki's veto is part of a continuing national campaign against reproductive rights. The campaign's most visible target has been women's access to an abortion.

Recently a right-wing campaign has focused on denying women's access to birth control by promoting pharmacists' "right" to refuse to fill prescriptions for contraception, including the EC pill.

On July 26, Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney vetoed legislation that would have required hospital emergency rooms to offer the EC pill to rape survivors.

In the U.S. Senate, third-ranking Republican Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania has publicly criticized the landmark

1965 Supreme Court ruling in "Griswold vs. Connecticut." That decision made married couples' access to birth-control methods a legal right.

Until the ruling, purchase of contraceptive aids, even by a married person, was a crime in many states. In 1975 the Supreme Court extended to unmarried women the right to access to birth control.

Santorum emphatically asserted that he does not believe the U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to contraceptive methods under "the right to privacy" argument used in Griswold and subsequent cases.

Giant corporate retailer Wal-Mart has banned the EC pill from its stores across the United States. But women are organizing to protect their right to contraception.

At a demonstration called by the group

"UMass Vox: Voices for Choice" outside a Wal-Mart in Hadley, Mass., UMass Vox President Linda Forman said: "Wal-Mart is one of the biggest chains there is. We have access to CVS and Target [pharmacies], but some women don't. There only is a Wal-Mart in their neighborhood." (Daily Collegian, March 28)

Just as the reactionary forces are trying to defeat reproductive rights on many fronts, the pro-choice movement must defend the broad range of rights for women. These include women's ability to decide when or if they will become pregnant; maternity leave, child care, living wages, and family health insurance for women who do decide to have children; women's right to choose to terminate pregnancies through abortion; and an end to forced sterilization. □

Rank and file unity and the AFL-CIO

By Larry Shoup and Clarence Thomas

The following are excerpts from a Million Worker March Movement statement.

The AFL-CIO has been split almost in two, mainly on the basis of personalities and inter-bureaucratic hair splitting. The differences causing this rupture boil down to two main questions.

First, what share of union resources should go to organizing the unorganized versus what share should go to electoral efforts supporting the Democratic Party? Second, should diverse unions be reorganized and merged by sector in order to achieve enough density and power to stand up to the current anti-worker corporate offensive?

Left unmentioned in the discussion were more central questions of concern to the rank and file and the Million Worker March Movement. These include how to transform and make democratic the existing structure of top-down business unionism; how to end the inequality, injustice and ecocide of racialized capitalism; what to do about the endless sellouts of the union-supported Democratic Party; and how to stop the war crimes, mass murders and tortures of the U.S. empire and its ongoing imperialism.

If a split of the magnitude that has taken place in the AFL-CIO was going to happen, there should have been a great rank-and-file debate on these fundamentals. Instead, the "debate" over the collective future of over 100 million U.S. workers, both organized and unorganized, was con-

finied to a few hundred leaders, with an even smaller group having a decisive role.

The Million Worker March Movement wants an ongoing dialog among the rank and file about the grand issues of our day. ...

Business unionism

The labor movement has lost its ability to confront the employer because of the threat of court intervention through injunctions, striker replacement and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Trade unionism should be a democratic people's movement, not in any way a business run on corporate principles. Yet business unionism is the dominant perspective in the current leadership of the American labor movement, on both sides of the new split. The major premise of business unionism is that the most labor can ever achieve is to be the junior partners of capitalism, which is seen as an eternal system destined to last forever. Respectability is desired, so that a special relationship with the "enlightened" wing of the capitalists can be fostered. ...

We must deeply understand that dominant sectors of corporate capital no longer want to accommodate the trade union movement; on the contrary, they want to destroy us. Supposed union "leaders" who fail to recognize this reality are totally, even criminally, out of touch.

Much of the labor movement still operates on undemocratic, top-down principles, also based on business unionism. Yet

if there is to be a future for the labor movement, an educated, active, informed and empowered rank and file is fundamental, along with a serious vision of working class power.

To achieve this, the working class must speak in its own name, not as a junior partner of our oppressors. We need to advance the civil rights and economic interests of the working class as a whole, not only union members. ...

Racialized capitalism

A globalizing capitalist market system now dominates the earth. Its sole goal is the liberation of capitalist property from all political, economic, social and ecological restraints so it can endlessly accumulate more wealth for those already wealthy. This system can be labeled "hyper-capitalism," a cancer-like system in which privatization and commodification of everything, including even life forms, is accelerating, making every human activity conform to market laws so that capital accumulation can expand further. ...

This modern capitalist system was born together with racism and slavery. White workers' class consciousness was deformed at the same moment the Black worker was enslaved and the Asian, Native or Latin American worker bonded in a second-class status through debt peonage. The American labor movement has been crippled by the resulting racism and white supremacy, which divides workers by creating solidarity on the basis of whiteness,

thereby preventing authentic class solidarity and class consciousness.

Capitalism, which is a dictatorship of the rich, can only be transformed through an end to white supremacy and class-conscious rank and file unity born on the basis of class solidarity for all working people and serious anti-racist theory (education) and practice (an injury to one is an injury to all). Racist oppression inside and outside the workplace must be confronted and a power base built through assistance to oppressed communities to advance a working class agenda.

The Million Worker March Movement believes that the priorities of capitalism are deformed and can never be reformed. Workplace massacres are taking place in today's labor market, with Black labor taking the brunt of the cuts. The current reality for Black workers and other workers of color as well as for many women workers means that representatives of our own choosing [must] be heard at every level and venue of power, built into the structure of the larger labor and social movements. Social justice unionism must ally and collaborate with community organizations fighting the oppression inherent in American racial capitalism, becoming an organic part of a community-based fight-back. We have to speak to and fight for working class control of economic development, including control of investment and community development.

The Democratic Party

The Democratic Party is a sellout party increasingly influenced by corporate donations and lobbyists; is adrift with no



UFCW leaves AFL-CIO



What about the workers?

By Sharon Black

On July 29, United Food and Commercial Workers Union President Joe Hansen announced the UFCW's decision to disaffiliate from the AFL-CIO. It was a move that came as no surprise to many who have followed the labor movement and the debate between Service Employees President Andrew Stern and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

The question is whether this benefits the 1.4 million members of the UFCW, who have for the most part not been a part of this process. Or does it make the workers more vulnerable?

Does the UFCW need the help of the entire union movement, undivided and unfractured, to galvanize the kind of power needed to organize the million-plus low-paid workers at Wal-Mart? How can the members of the UFCW—mostly service workers, many lower-paid women, Black, Latin@ and immigrant workers—defend themselves and reverse the relentless attacks that have lowered wages and battered the right to health care and pensions?

What do the 70,000 Southern California grocery workers who spent close to five months in 2003-2004 on strike and locked out to defend health benefits think about this move? What were the real les-

sons of that strike for the labor movement?

Health care and the war

One of the primary issues in the California grocery strike was health care. The billion-dollar grocery industry wanted to force draconian cuts in workers' health-care plans. Wal-Mart, the low-wage, no-benefit prototype of capitalist organization in the era of high technology, was touted as the reason for cutting benefits and introducing a two-tier wage system.

Health care is important not only to those workers who have a union but to all workers. Over 43 million workers are estimated to be uninsured. Labor cannot fight this battle effectively on a one-by-one basis, contract to contract. It cannot even be effectively fought on an industry-wide basis.

Even with the tremendous courage that workers have shown and the self-sacrifice of many union organizers, the battle is much too costly and sometimes unachievable at a time when workers are on the defensive. What is needed is the massive mobilization of all the workers, at the work place and in the community, to take this demand to the very doorstep of the White House.

And health care cannot be won without challenging endless war. Close to \$186 billion is currently being spent on the Iraq war. (costofwar.com) Not only are the

sons and daughters of workers here, and countless thousands of Iraqi people, paying the ultimate cost in this war, but it is also money stolen from workers' pockets.

Fight racism; support immigrant and community rights

Labor must fight racism and strengthen its relationship to community struggles, whether they be against police brutality or for immigrant rights. This was the strength of last October's Million Worker March, which was led by Black workers. It is the first step to building the kind of solidarity needed to organize multi-billion-dollar giants like Wal-Mart, where community support is key.

Neither the Democratic nor Republican Party, which both serve the interests of the corporations and the banks, is the solution for labor. This was clearly illustrated during the Kerry presidential campaign. Even though he was neither pro-

More than 70,000 UFCW grocery workers struck the supermarket giants Safeway, Albertson's and the Kroger-owned Ralph's stores in 2003. The chains locked out their workers. For four months UFCW workers cried out for the support from the entire labor movement.

WWW PHOTOS: SHARON BLACK AND JULIA LA RIVA

worker nor against the war, unions on both sides of the debate in the AFL-CIO split, shamefully poured millions of dollars into his campaign.

What is needed in this period of capitalist development, marked by increasing recklessness and greed, is to build a new movement that will take on the demands of the workers in their own name and fight against racism. It must make this struggle political and on a class-wide basis. This is the recipe for success—not division and split.

The writer is a labor activist who served as an elected shop steward in UFCW for 26 years. She worked as a packer in a food-processing plant for 15 years and successfully fought to retain health-care benefits for workers. Black helped to mobilize Maryland and D.C. workers for the Million Worker March.

CIO split

clear ideology or mobilizing approach to politics; and represents a weak, "Republican-lite" approach. Largely taken over by the pro-corporate Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), the Democrats are an organizational ally, a junior partner and frequent supporter of important aspects of the current corporate capitalist offensive against the working class. ...

The overall function of the politically bankrupt Democratic Party is to try to co-opt and control any people's movement which arises on the left and channel it into dead ends controlled by the corporate power structure. For all these reasons the Million Worker March Movement believes that workers must break with this sellout party and form an independent political party by and for the U.S. working class. This new party must be based on a spirit of service and sacrifice for all the people, not greed and selfishness for a few. In short, we must craft another way of doing politics, one which will be based more on the direct action of the movement than involvement in the electoral corruption of the current system.

A history of support for U.S. imperialism

AFL-CIO foreign operations, often in cooperation with the CIA and other branches of the U.S. government, have helped overthrow democratically elected governments in Guatemala (1954), Brazil (1964), Chile (1973) and Venezuela (2002). They subverted and helped repress progressive movements in Guyana (1964), Dominican Republic (1965), El Salvador (1980s), Nicaragua (1980s) and South Africa (prior to 1986). The AFL-CIO has refused to "clear the air" with an open discussion and honest accounting of their support for the imperialism and empire of the reactionary corporate bosses, support which has led to the murder of hundreds of thousands of progressive people and the repression of even more.

As U.S. imperialism has become more aggressive under both Clinton and the current Bush regime, there has been a continuation of what can only be called "labor imperialism" during the tenure of John Sweeney. This "labor imperialism" has helped the U.S. government try to overthrow the popularly elected government of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. ...

The labor movement of the 1930s, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the anti-war movement of the 1960s and 1970s were all mass movements, and we need a rebirth of all of these in a grand coalition to fight for the just, equal and peaceful society we all want. The supreme task of labor is to challenge corporate America head on as part of a new civil rights movement for all workers.

This can only be done with an anti-racist and anti-sexist, class-conscious, mass democratic movement. Unionism must be linked to social transformation, not just collective bargaining. ...

The Million Worker March (MWM) ... put forward a workers' agenda with a list of demands which includes: universal health care, a national living wage, protection and enhancement of social security immune to privatization, guaranteed pensions for all working people; an end to the war and occupation in Iraq; and an aggressive enforcement of all civil rights against all racist and discriminatory acts, including those based upon gender and sexual orientation, in the workplace and in our communities. ...

Shoup is a member of UAW Local 1981 and the MWMM. Clarence Thomas is co-chair of the MWMM and on the ILWU Local 10 Executive Board.

Bankruptcies fuel airline crisis

Labor needs industry-wide fightback

By Milt Neidenberg

The airline industry is heading for a crash landing.

United Airlines, second biggest carrier in the country, has postponed exiting from bankruptcy. UAL has been operating under Chapter 11 for nearly three years.

Delta Air Lines is about to declare bankruptcy. Northwest Airlines is threatening bankruptcy to avoid a strike.

Continental Airlines, which had earlier gone in and out of bankruptcy, is on the verge of another. US Airways had been in bankruptcy and would not have survived if the government hadn't approved its merger with America West.

What is feeding this crisis? A market overloaded with too many commercial planes and too few passengers; imperialist wars going badly in Iraq and Afghanistan, driving oil over \$60 a barrel; and a debt-ridden, declining empire.

Wall Street/corporate strategy is to dump these vast problems onto the entire organized-labor movement. The airline unions and their hundreds of thousands of members are in management's cross hairs.

With the combined support of the government, the courts and Congress, financial strategists have encouraged the industry to become leaner and meaner. In an intensely competitive industry, cheap non-union carriers like Southwest and Jet Blue are the shining examples.

UAL is the pace setter for this transition. It has already implemented a strategy that scrapped collective-bargaining agreements and imploded wages and benefits, including health care, pensions and working conditions.

Since December 2002, UAL has been in a Chapter 11 bankruptcy, enjoying the fruits of eliminating more than \$3.4 billion in union wages and benefits. Management has been able to increase workloads and manipulate schedules to intensify productivity and speedups. The corporation has also ripped off billions of dollars more from the funded pensions of the four UAL unions.

An Aug. 3 New York Times editorial described the UAL pension default: "From 1999 through 2003 ... a huge gap opened between the value of the pension assets and the amount owed to present and future retirees from a surplus of about \$2 billion to a deficit of \$7 billion."

Since 2003 the gap has widened to \$13 billion. UAL has now dumped \$10.2 billion of its under-funded pensions onto the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, a government-insured pension agency. This dumping is a violation of the 1974 Employment Retirement Income Security

Act—ERISA—which created the PBGC.

The law states, "The pension insurance program is there to protect workers benefits ... it shouldn't be used as a piggy bank to help companies restructure."

UAL's violation should be a major concern for the entire labor movement because 44 million workers are covered by pensions similar to UAL's. The Bush administration's Labor Department has refused to honor a written request from one of UAL's unions for an audit to open the books.

The PBGC has picked up the tab for 3,200 failed pension plans since 1974. It is now \$63 billion in the hole.

The PBGC made a deal with UAL to mitigate the airline's pension liability. The PBGC will now be the trustee for the four under-funded UAL pensions, and will be given a seat on the corporation's creditors committee.

This arrangement is a dangerous development—and it is illegal for the PBGC, a government agency, to get so deeply involved in a bankruptcy proceeding.

Under the protection of U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Eugene Wedoff, J. P. Morgan Chase, Citigroup, CIT, General Electric Capital, and Deutsche Bank AG are ripping off UAL assets. These banks loaned UAL billions of dollars to run the airline during bankruptcy. They are being rewarded with exorbitant interest rates and a guarantee that their loans are secured.

There are also more than 30 money managers, pension consultants and other greedy parasites who charged \$125 million in commissions, fees and services while chewing up the \$13 billion pension fund.

If UAL goes belly-up, the PBGC couldn't underwrite the pension liability. The taxpayers and workers would be liable as the payers of last resort.

It would be a rerun of the debacle in 1989. Out of the eight biggest airlines that went bankrupt then, only two carriers emerged intact: Continental Airlines in 1993, and America West the following year. UAL could go the way of other bankrupt carriers: Eastern, Pan Am and Braniff.

UAL has delayed exiting from bankruptcy once again. The company "remains in the red and still has tasks—working out new financial terms for about 130 jetliners it leases from investors; finalizing terms of a planned \$2.5 billion debt based exit-financing package; and determining whether it would need to augment that funding with a ... minority private equity investment." (Wall Street Journal, Aug. 3)

UAL is still in desperate need of financing for its debt. Seeking a private equity corporation for further funding translates into hedge-fund speculators getting their claws into a sinking UAL.

On Aug. 26, the bankruptcy court will

hold hearings on the UAL request for a postponement of its reorganization proposals that would open up the door for private speculators. At the same time, Northwest mechanics, represented by an independent union, are threatening to strike.

Shut 'em down!

A fight-back summit should be convened to send all airline workers and their unions into the streets—an industry-wide strike. The appeal should be to shut down the industry unless the corporations cease and desist from destroying an industry built with the sweat and sacrifices of millions of airline workers and retirees.

Organizing such an effort is a tall order. But it is survival time.

The government, Wall Street and "corporate America," including the airlines, are united—hell-bent on dumping their problems on the union rank and file. The events in the airline industry mirror the history of the steel industry. Millions of steel workers lost their jobs, pensions and health care with no fight from the AFL-CIO.

The issue of organizing on an industry-wide basis was a factor in the recent split in the AFL-CIO. The Change to Win coalition has a plan to bring together unions connected by industry, referred to as the "density factor." At its recent convention, the AFL-CIO approved a plan to create an Industrial Coordinating Committee for the same purpose. Both camps represent workers in the airline industry—Teamsters in Change to Win; Communications Workers in the AFL-CIO.

The Association of Flight Attendants has merged with the Communications Workers, waging a struggle against UAL that the union calls CHAOS (Create Havoc Around Our System). Here is a golden opportunity for the rival camps to emulate CHAOS and test their industry-wide proposals in struggle.

In a recent statement examining the AFL-CIO split, the Million Worker March Movement raised a critical question: "Should diverse unions be reorganized and merged by sector in order to achieve enough density and power to stand up to the current anti-worker corporate offensive? ... These include how to transform and make democratic the existing structure of top-down business unionism; how to end the inequality, injustice and genocide of a racialized capitalism." In these words lie a perspective to unite a multinational labor movement made up of diverse nationalities—class-wide and independent—facing a common capitalist enemy.

History will judge the AFL-CIO and Change to Win on the basis of what they do, not on what they say. □

Labor activists appear on 'Like It Is'



Brenda Stokely, a national leader of the Million Worker March Movement, and Jim Houghton, a long-time activist with the community group Harlem Fightback, were featured guests on Aug. 7 on "Like It Is," a popular, mainly African-American-oriented New York TV program. Host Gil Noble discussed with Stokely and Houghton the current crisis facing the U.S. labor movement and the impact on workers—both organized and unorganized—of the prison-industrial complex, the poverty draft, racism, sexism, and the Iraq war.

—Monica Moorehead



WW PHOTOS: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

As children starve in the Sahel

Pentagon spends \$500M on troops in Africa

By Deirdre Griswold

The BBC has been showing heart-breaking images of wraith-like, starving children in Niger, one of several countries in the African region known as the Sahel where large numbers of people are in grave danger because a plague of locusts destroyed their crops last November.

Hardly any food aid has arrived in these countries, even though donors in the rich imperialist countries have had nine months to respond to UN appeals.

One BBC report said that if food aid had been sent earlier to Niger, it would have taken only one dollar per child to avert famine. The cost now could be 80 times that, assuming the food aid comes through at all. No explanation is being given as to why organizations that every year collect hundreds of millions of dollars, supposedly to provide relief in exactly these kinds of situations, have done virtually nothing.

It is widely recognized that global warming—which comes from the burning of fossil fuels in the developed imperialist countries—has contributed to the desertification of the Sahel and the resulting suffering of millions of people.

Also not being mentioned in connection with this widespread hunger and suffering are the hundreds of millions of dollars now being quietly spent by the U.S. government on military operations in resource-rich Africa—giving the “war on terror” as the excuse.

Hunger, oil and U.S. troops

The hunger belt south of the Sahara also includes Mali, Chad and Mauritania, where a popular and bloodless military coup just ousted the pro-U.S. government of Ould Taya. Taya was overthrown while out of the country, attending the funeral of Saudi Arabia's King Fahd. Large deposits of oil were recently discovered in Mauritania, which expects to begin pumping next year. The deposed government had been the first in Muslim Africa to recognize Israel—at Washington's prodding.

According to the Aug. 9 Christian Science Monitor, “Washington had enlisted Mr. Taya as a key partner in its Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), a five-year, \$500 million program that kicked off in June across nine West and North African countries (Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria, Morocco, and Tunisia). American units have already begun training 3,000 troops from Mauritania and other Saharan armies to improve border security in a region considered to be a potential hotbed for terrorist activity.”

\$500 million for “counter-terrorism,” but not one penny for starving children!

Last September, two months before locusts blanketed the area, U.S. Marines were in Chad training troops there, under the command of Maj. Paul Baker. “We're looking at Africa as a place of growth for the Marine Corps and the Department of

Defense,” says Major Baker, standing in his command post under a giant shade tree. There's growing evidence of terrorist activities on the continent. And there's a need to protect Africa's rapidly expanding oil industry. So the U.S. military is paying attention.” (Christian Science Monitor, Sept. 17, 2004)

The Pentagon is also getting involved in the Darfur region of western Sudan. According to a news release from the U.S. European Command, U.S.-contracted planes on Aug. 7 moved 49 Rwandan civilian police officers from Kigali to Darfur. This operation began on July 14 with the deployment of 150 U.S. Air Force personnel “to provide logistical and airlift support of Rwandan forces as part of the African Union's expanded mission in Sudan, or AMIS II. The AU plans to increase its presence in the region to more than 7,700 personnel by September.

“As part of a larger NATO effort, the U.S. is airlifting three battalions of Rwandan troops to Darfur by mid September. Movement of the first battalion's 680 troops and 14,500 pounds of cargo began July 17 and was completed July 27 by U.S. Air Force C-17 and C-130 aircraft. The C-130s also returned 190 previously deployed Rwandan troops from El Fashir back to Kigali. ...

“Two additional Rwandan battalions, of approximately 540 soldiers each, are being flown via U.S. contracted commercial airlift. ...

“President Bush on July 15 authorized

an additional \$6 million in emergency spending for the Defense Department to support the transportation of African Union forces to Darfur to help improve security and enable humanitarian assistance to relieve suffering to those displaced by conflict in the region.”

The Rwandan military, which has a close relation to the Pentagon, invaded eastern Congo—an area of vast mineral wealth—and played a key role in the war there that cost over 3 million lives. And now the Pentagon is moving Rwandan troops to Darfur for “humanitarian” reasons?

Darfur in western Sudan is another area in Africa where oil was recently discovered. Sudan also has oilfields in the south, which it has been developing with China's help. This has made the country a prime target of U.S. and British intrigue. These imperialist governments helped instigate the fighting in Darfur and are now using it as an excuse for military intervention, pushing the African Union to authorize their role.

The imperialist politicians do the bidding of the huge corporations and banks that have sucked Africa dry. They know no shame. Their rhetoric about “debt relief” and “humanitarian assistance” are just a cover for the continued plunder of Africa's riches, especially its oil and other mineral wealth.

Is it any wonder that the level of resistance—called “terrorism” by the imperialists—is rising in Africa, too? □

Behind the continuing crisis in Sudan

Sudan, by area, is Africa's largest country. This Jan. 9, the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, headed by John Garang, signed a peace agreement that ended two decades of warfare between north and south in which 1.5 million people are estimated to have died.

The pact gave the southern region autonomy during an interim six-year period to be followed by a national referendum; agreed to split oil revenues 50-50 between north and south; and established a new government of national unity in which Garang would become first vice president of Sudan. The agreement brought rejoicing throughout the country.

However, on July 30, just three weeks after he took office, Garang was killed in a helicopter crash in southern Sudan while returning from a meeting with the president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni. The helicopter belonged to Museveni.

Garang's death reopened the struggle, even though the Sudanese government immediately announced that his deputy would take over as vice president. Bloody fighting erupted in Khartoum between police and partisans of Garang.

What are the issues behind this struggle, and what role have the Western imperialist powers, some of them former colonizers of the area, played in it?

*In August of 2004, as another crisis was developing in Darfur, a vast region in the west of Sudan, the Belgian newspaper *Solidaire* interviewed Mohammed Hassan, a former diplomat in Sudan's neighbor, Ethiopia, about the situation in Sudan and talk in the West about the need to intervene there for “humanitarian” reasons. What follows are excerpts from that interview a year ago.*



PHOTO: PTB.BE

Mohammed Hassan

In August 1998, the U.S. organized a war of aggression against Congo, Sudan's neighbor. They encouraged Rwanda to invade Congo and provided it with weapons and military advisers. For the U.S., war was the only way to keep Congo in check. This war has made already 3.5 million direct and indirect civilian casualties. And now these very people who instigated the war in Congo are showing concern for the humanitarian situation in Sudan? Now they are incensed about the 10,000 deaths this conflict [in Darfur] has caused?

U.S. imperialism has never had any humanitarian concern and has never been disturbed by ethnic cleansing. The U.S. is taking advantage of the dramatic situation in the western province of Darfur for its own economic and political interest.

Sudan started to export oil in 1999. Last year, revenues from export amounted to \$1.2 billion and in 2005 this will rise to an

estimated \$2 billion. The most important destination of this oil is China. That is the real reason for the U.S. concern.

Britain conquered Sudan at the end of the 19th century and added it to Egypt. From the very start of the colonization, they made Sudan into a laboratory for their tactics of “divide and rule.” The people have been saturated with racist propaganda. All colonizers did that. Look at Rwanda and Burundi, where Belgium was responsible for the rivalry between Hutus and Tutsis which has led to several instances of genocide.

In Sudan, the British established an administration on the basis of racism and ethnicism. According to these ideas, the northern, brown, Arab Sudanese were superior to the black population in the south because they were believed to be more similar to the European “race.”

[The British] institutionalized these racist ideas: the north of Sudan was separated administratively from the south—a form of apartheid, in fact. The north was governed from Cairo in Egypt while the south's administration was based in Nairobi, Kenya. The British established a system of “closed districts,” which means it was all but impossible to travel from north to south. The age-old trade relations between the north and the south were cut, destroying the traditional relations between north and south.

In the north, the British allowed Islam and the Arabic language, while they were forbidden in the south.

In the north, a centralized administration was established with the help of young Sudanese graduates from Egyptian universities. In the south, the British governors ruled indiscriminately. Just like in Belgian Congo, the south's education was left to Christian missionaries who held the population mentally captive in the Middle Ages.

On Jan. 1, 1956, the British chose to separate Sudan from Egypt and reunite it again into one state. That was met with resistance from the small elite in the south, as they were afraid to lose all power to the north.

At that time, the north was veering toward the anti-colonial policy of Nasser in Egypt. Great Britain therefore supported the southern elite to rise up against the north. Before the independence, civil war erupted between north and south.

The country has been ravaged by civil war ever since, except for a short interruption between 1972 and 1983. In 1983 the division gained the upper hand again and war resumed. In April of this year, there was a new peace agreement.

That is the history of the conflict. Those who are responsible for ethnicism, the colonizers, would now like to intervene to save the country from ethnicism. Isn't it ironic? Africa belongs to the Africans. The 1972 and 2004 peace agreements were the work of the Sudanese themselves. Intervention by the U.S. and Great Britain would mean greater dependence and a new form of colonialism that would worsen the people's sufferings. It would never be able to liberate itself from social and economic poverty because it will lose control of its natural resources. □

U.S. losing political battle for Iraq, too

By John Catalinotto

In the wake of a multiple land-mine strike that killed 14 Marines from an Ohio-based reserve unit outside Haditha, Iraq, in early August, President George W. Bush and his top officials tried to divert attention to the occupation's political aspects. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice claimed on Time magazine's web site that she believes the Iraqi "insurgency" — that's the word U.S. officials use for the heroic resistance fighters — is "losing steam" politically.

In the early stages of the war and occupation, Washington was only too happy to concentrate on the Pentagon's military prowess. Now that the U.S. population is watching the casualty figures closely, "political progress" is supposed to take center stage. An evaluation of political developments on both sides of Iraq's war for liberation is in order.

For a start, consider the nature of the battle the Marines were engaged in. Its name was "Operation New Market." It was aimed at clearing resistance fighters from the region in Anbar Province, northwest of Baghdad, where the liberation struggle is strongest.

"New Market" is meant to recall a Civil War battle in which cadets from Virginia Military Institute performed bravely — on the side of the Confederacy, a government of slave owners. Thus the name fit the politics of reaction: The U.S. Marines are attempting to put Iraqis in colonial slavery.

Then there is the confusion of messages from U.S. strategists. Some Republican leaders and some top generals are emphasizing the possibility that U.S. troop levels will be reduced in 2006. This depends, they say, on their ability to train Iraqi troops to take their place.

Decrease or increase U.S. troops?

Gen. John Abizaid, U.S. commander in the Middle East, has a plan to remove up to 30,000 U.S. troops by next spring. Of course, conditions will have to allow it. Abizaid plans to increase U.S. troop levels from 138,000 to 160,000 for the December elections.

Lawrence Di Rita, spokesperson for Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, told reporters Aug. 8 that it is likely troop levels will be raised for the December election just as they were in January. The Pentagon may have to extend Iraq tours beyond 12 months or send over additional units based in the United States to achieve this increase.

Still, Abizaid's mentioning the possibility of troop removal has given the Republicans an opportunity to claim that this

ever more unpopular war is winding down. This is another Big Lie, to add to the multiple Big Lies the Bush gang told to justify U.S. aggression in the first place. This lie is aimed at preventing a disaster for the Republicans in the 2006 midterm elections, and at softening the growing anti-war mood in the United States.

The Democratic Party leadership, instead of appealing for a rapid end to the war, has been providing an alternative strategy aimed at crushing the Iraqis. Sen. Joseph Biden, pointing to the lack of trained Iraqi troops in the U.S.-backed regime's army, has called for sending even more U.S. soldiers and marines to Iraq.

Biden told Fox News Aug. 7 that the United States should announce that it wants no permanent bases in Iraq and "won't deal in" Iraqi oil. His problem is that U.S. imperialism has coveted both the bases and the oil—and everyone in Iraq knows it.

Neither the Republicans' lies nor Biden's idea will prevent a defeat for U.S. imperialism in Iraq. Neither has a strategy to recruit new youths to the U.S. armed forces. What Biden's comments do show, however, is that the Democratic Party leadership gives priority to rescuing U.S. imperialism over serving the needs of the people to quickly end the war.

'Poison DUst' shown in New York



WW PHOTO: JOHN RAMIREZ

Two screenings of "Poison DUst," a full-length video-documentary with a new look at U.S. radioactive weapons, served as a successful fundraiser for New York community radio station WBAI on Aug. 7. The event held at Riverside Church also featured a discussion panel with videomaker Sue Harris of People's Video Network; Juan Gonzales, co-host of Democracy Now and Daily News journal-

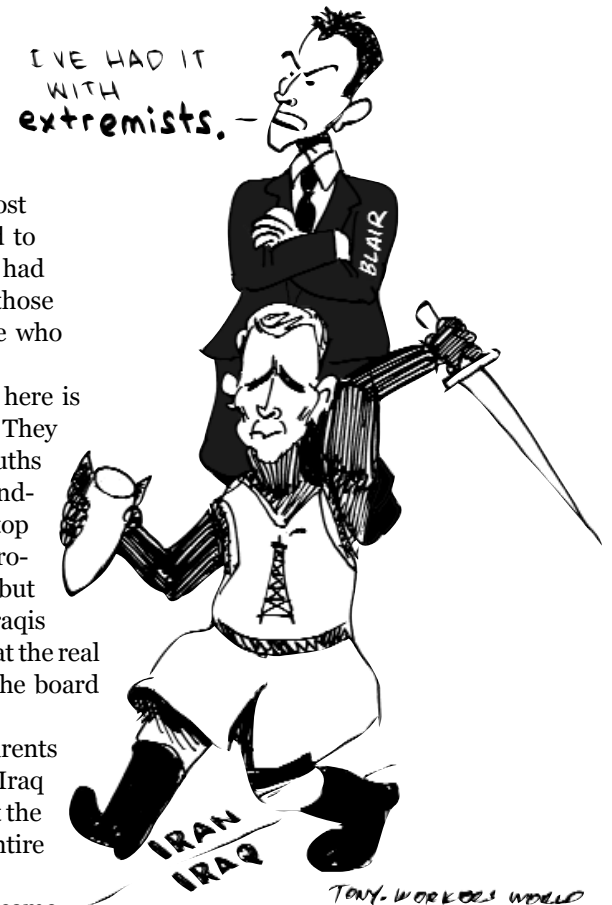
Bush's nightmare

Newspaper and television interviews of parents and other relatives of the Marines killed in "Operation New Market" focused on those who were most patriotic and those who wanted to believe their children or siblings had not died in vain. But even those reports referred to other people who held "a different opinion."

It seems that the population here is about to make a breakthrough. They may begin to realize that their youths are dying in the interest of a handful of oil billionaires, bankers, top politicians and generals. An appropriate reaction is not just sorrow but anger—and anger not at the Iraqis fighting for their homeland, but at the real enemy, in the war rooms and the board rooms here.

Bush's nightmare was that parents of soldiers and marines killed in Iraq would speak out publicly against the war and get the attention of the entire United States.

On Aug. 7 Bush's nightmare came true. Cindy Sheehan, whose son, GI Casey Sheehan, was killed in Iraq in 2004, had been speaking out against the war for a



year. This time, she did it accompanied by 50 other people in Crawford, Texas, on her way to demand a meeting with Bush at his vacation ranch.

Reporters were all over the place with not much else to report. And it was only days after the heavy casualties of the Ohio marines.

Sheehan vows to stay there until Bush meets with her and explains why her son died. Rice and Rumsfeld are scheduled to visit Bush in Texas on Aug. 11. Perhaps they will have more to say on the primacy of the political battle for Iraq.

Iraqi liberation front?

There is an important and legitimate point that Rice made with her comment. In most historical experience it has been almost impossible for a resistance battle to go on indefinitely if those fighting are unable to unite behind a political program. In Vietnam, in Algeria, in earlier days in Iraq, in the Portuguese colonies in Africa, for example, there were always liberation fronts and in most cases with a united leadership.

Thus it was an optimistic sign for the Iraqi liberation struggle that the "Beirut Symposium" held its second gathering in Beirut, Lebanon, July 25-28. According to a report from its organizers, "108 Iraqi patriots (with about 40 Ph.D. holders, and about half of the attendees came directly

Continued on page 11

Why Frist has embraced stem cell research

Continued from page 5

is a problem.

Dr. Xiangzhong Yang, director of the Center for Regenerative Biology at the University of Connecticut, had this to say last June: "Scientifically, the U.S. remains the strongest in the world. But we can't touch nuclear transfer in human cells, and because of this, our overall scientific teams are now way behind other countries." (Red Herring, June 20)

Frist and a section of the U.S. ruling class worry they can be left behind on an international scale. Dozens of countries are already ahead of the U.S. in stem cell research. These include South Korea, China and most of the European countries. Many have more liberal policies about cloning and research and provide

significant government funding. South Korea has even established an embryonic stem cell bank.

U.S. capitalists know that if these researchers make crucial discoveries before they do, their capitalists will be the first to profit from them.

These countries cannot compete with the cash-rich U.S. biomedical giants and venture capitalists who have billions of dollars to invest. But at present, U.S. law forbids embryonic stem cell research and even bars purchasing and importing the technology from abroad. (Red Herring.com)

The U.S. capitalist class has done very well under Bush, who drastically cut their taxes and launched an anti-worker offensive. They know he gets needed foot soldiers at election time from the Christian

right wing. But a significant section of them—especially those with connections to the biomedical industry—won't let this stymie what they see as an unprecedented golden opportunity.

It is difficult to overstate the pure greed and rapaciousness of capitalists when they see a chance to make a profit. A British geneticist made the following remarks in 2001 shortly after attending a conference about the human genome project, which had just mapped the entire DNA of the human species:

"I sat aghast in the audience as patent lawyers and biotechnicians debated the pros and cons of patenting genes. ... At one point an enthusiastic manager from a large pharmaceutical company stood up to address the audience.

"He ... illustrated his point with a pie

chart showing the division of ownership of the human genome, the sum total of all human genes, among major corporations. The pie was sliced up and the portions assigned. ... Patents are being filed every day claiming ownership and a commercial monopoly on our genes. As I sat there, I had the overwhelming feeling and very disturbing sensation that parts of me and my past were being bought and sold." (Bryan Sykes, "The Seven Daughters of Eve," p. 296)

Progressive and working people from all nations must not only resist the feudal religious and semi-fascist bigots who seek to hold back scientific progress. We must also make sure that the benefits of science are not appropriated for the benefit of a few profiteers, and insure that the promise of stem cell research can truly benefit humanity. □

Who's behind the far right

Nothing is more dangerous for the working class of the United States than the rise of neo-fascist and KKK-type groupings.

The armed vigilantes aiming their racist terror at immigrants on the Mexican border; the Klan cross burners in an area of suburban Detroit; and now a racist gang in Brooklyn, N.Y., that jumped out of a van, beat and might have killed a young Black man except for the courageous intervention of a Black couple driving by.

These racist, neo-fascist attacks cannot be dismissed as isolated events carried out by a few miscreants. The paramilitary Minutemen are openly encouraged by the Bush administration's Department of Homeland Security, which even offered to give them legal status. Attacking immigrants is cheered nightly by Lou Dobbs on CNN. Anti-Arab and anti-Muslim hate is now spread all too frequently, from judges' seats to political cartoons in local newspapers to Hollywood blockbuster movies.

The politicians decry "intolerance," but the fact is that behind the emergence of these racist, neo-fascist groupings and attackers are the very forces that are behind the war on Iraq. These are also the very forces that put Bush into the White House.

Big Oil and the military-industrial complex create the climate of fear and hatred as they pursue open wars on Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine and clandestine wars on Venezuela, Iran and North Korea, as well as the occupation of Haiti. With every one of these interventions, the message is that people of color are expendable if they stand in the way of U.S. global ambitions.

We've seen that Big Oil and the military will use any means—legal or illegal,

paramilitary, torture, whatever—to obtain their goals. But this does not stop at the U.S. borders. These same means—illegal, paramilitary, racist torture, whatever—can be resorted to by Big Oil and the military-industrial complex domestically to keep their domination at home. The prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo has its parallels in the racist treatment of working class prisoners in the U.S. In fact, some of those guards got their training in the prison-industrial complex here.

And while Bush professes to be spreading democracy around the world, thousands just demonstrated in Atlanta on the anniversary of the Voting Rights Act to protest the racist exclusion of Black people in the elections here.

Sheer might is never enough for domination, as imperialists have to be taught over and over. People will resist occupation and oppression, as Iraq has shown.

Here at home, the only way to stop the threat is to act now, not to wait. Neo-fascist groupings and racist terror are not stopped by ignoring them and hoping they will go away. What has stopped them every time was a mobilization of the working class and the oppressed into mass action.

As leaders of the Million Worker March Movement point out, the labor movement here has been greatly weakened for decades because of the leaders' tolerance of racism and imperialist aggression. Any rebuilding of the labor movement has to put these issues at the top of its agenda.

But most workers aren't even in unions. What's required is the broadest possible alliance of all progressive forces for a united struggle that can really put a halt to war, racism, anti-immigrant terror and neo-fascist threats. □

Kamehameha unity rally in Hawai'i



Aug. 6 protest in Honolulu.

Over 20,000 Native Hawaiians (Kanaka Maoli) and their supporters rallied Aug. 6 in support of the Kamehameha school, which was established by the sovereign Hawaiian government to educate Native Hawaiian children.

The sovereign Hawaiian government was overthrown by white settlers, resulting in the annexation of Hawai'i by the United States in 1898.

Right-wing groups have challenged the Kamehameha school's mission of educating Native Hawaiian children, claiming it favors Native Hawaiians. A mainland U.S. court decision backing the right-wing groups' challenge to the school has united the Native Hawaiian (Kanaka Maoli) community and their supporters in protest.

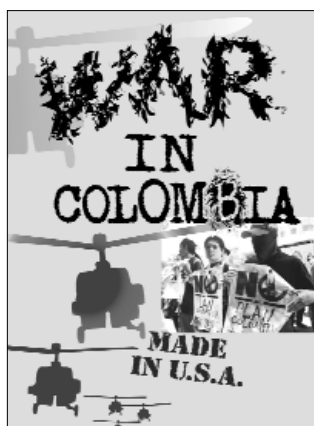
—Jesse Lokahi Heiwa

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From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death-row

The neo-liberal war against the Filipino people!



There is a war going on in the Philippines. It's not the so-called "War on Terrorism." It's not the usual regional wars that have been waged in developing countries.

It's a war waged against the Filipino people by the neoliberal government of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

What is happening in the Philippines is happening all around the world.

Countries are using the mask of the "war on terror" to destabilize, attack and destroy dissident groups; or any groups that oppose the State.

In the Philippines, the government is responding to the criticism and dissent by trying to intimidate and liquidate its opponents.

In March alone, the beleaguered Arroyo government has unleashed a wave of repression against its opponents. For example:

March 1: Four members of GABRIELA, a national alliance of women's organizations, were unlawfully arrested and detained in Quezon province.

March 3: Abelardo Ladera, a city councilor and a provincial coordinator of the Bayan Muna Partylist, was shot dead....

March 9: Romeo Sanchez, Bayan Muna Partylist Regional Coordinator and former Bayan Regional Secretary General and radio broadcaster in the Ilocos region, was shot dead in Baguio City, Northern Luzon.

March 10: Ernesto Bang, provincial information officer of the AnakPawis Partylist of workers, peasants and urban poor, was killed in front of his residence in Camarines Sur, Bikol.

March 13: Fr. William Tadena, Philippine Independent Church priest, was shot dead on his way home from officiating a mass....

[Excerpts from Fact Sheet of the Int'l Solidarity Mission: In Defense of A People Fighting Repression, p. 2]

The most recent stage of the Filipino human-rights crisis was sparked by the Nov. 16, 2004, massacre of seven striking workers of Hacienda Luisita (HLI) in Tarlac, Central Luzon, when Philippine government soldiers opened fire on their picket line. Many of the people slain, arrested, or "disappeared" in the following March were people publicly supporting the HLI strikers. Many of them became victims of a vicious military that reminds one of the U.S.-supported military juntas and death squads of Latin America during the 1970s, 1980s, and beyond.

Indeed, many Philippine military officers are armed and trained by the Americans.

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime has been implicated in an election scandal that suggests it bought its way into power. The

Bayan-USA (the overseas chapter of the Philippines-based opposition alliance) has dubbed "Glorigate" the tapes indicating the president engaged in electoral fraud.

At a recent protest in Los Angeles against the Macapagal-Arroyo regime, Bev Tang, an organizer of the Filipino youth activist group Anakbayan, talked about the state terrorism that the U.S. funds by supporting the regime: "They cut funding for social services here in America so that they can fund the Philippine military and police who torture and kill journalists, priests, human rights advocates. ..." Bev Tang added, "They cut the budget on education here in the U.S., so that they can give more money to repressive states such as the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo regime under the auspices of the War on Terror." [Fr. Angel Buensuceso, "Filipinos in LA Rally for GMA's Ouster," "Bulatlat" (Philippine alternative weekly news-magazine), July 3-9, 2005.]

In August an International Solidarity Mission will visit the Philippines, in five teams, in five different areas of the country, to gain firsthand knowledge of the nation's human-rights crisis. Afterwards, a Peoples' Tribunal is planned, where ISM observers will present their findings.

This international fact-finding mission is designed to be a popular tool to expose and mitigate the horrific human-rights crisis gripping the Philippines today.

What the Filipino people are really fighting is the neo-liberalism that has placed a series of post-Marcos regimes in place, in the service of the United States/International Monetary Fund powers, and against the democratic rights of the Filipino people. Various Filipino puppets to the U.S./IMF will have been waging a real war against the people, to please their foreign masters.

That war seems only to be getting hotter! □



PHOTO: AIAIF

India commemorates Hiroshima Day

Hiroshima Day was observed by the West Bengal Unit of the All India Anti-Imperialist Forum, Aug. 6, 2005 in Kolkata, India, in remembrance of the first atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan by the Pentagon.

Report from World Youth and Students Festival

Venezuela hosts 20,000 'for peace and solidarity'

By LeiLani Dowell
Caracas, Venezuela

Aug. 9—This city is covered with signs and placards welcoming the delegates to the 16th World Youth and Students Festival, now being held in Venezuela's capital. The theme for the next week is "For peace and solidarity, we struggle against war and imperialism!"

Over 20,000 delegates from more than 100 countries are attending. The level of work and organization that has been put into hosting us all is very impressive and courageous, given the imperialist pressure that Venezuela is under as it continues to

build its Bolivarian Revolution.

Members of the U.S. youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism Stand Together), one part of the U.S. delegation, are being housed in a military barracks in Los Teques, in the mountains near Caracas. The staff at the barracks are Venezuelan youth, and several have gone out of their way to thank us for attending and expressing solidarity with their country.

The festival's opening on Aug. 8 was an amazing celebration of culture and political struggle.

The largest delegations are the Colombians (about 4,000), the Cubans (about 1,500) and the Brazilians. The U.S. dele-

gation is the fifth largest, at around 700. There is a very large Angolan delegation. When they passed by the Cubans, both groups chanted to each other, "Cuba and Angola! Angola and Cuba!"

The delegation from Palestine has a huge Palestinian flag. During the opening ceremonies, the FIST delegation went over to them and chanted "Long live Palestine!" and "Viva Viva Palestina!"

For the first time at a World Youth Festival, the very front of the U.S. delegation was occupied by Indigenous peoples with their own banner.

The Venezuelan delegation featured a contingent of several hundred Indigenous



people who marched together in a procession, as well as a very dynamic and militant organization called Rumbo al Socialismo (Course to Socialism).

At the opening ceremony, Ruth Vela of San Diego FIST initiated a chant: "Que viva Chávez, que viva Venezuela." That became, at least for our section of the U.S. delegation, the chant of the night. Folks on the sidelines went crazy over it, chanting along with us and waving Venezuelan flags. At one point, two Venezuelan men came down to the bottom of the bleachers, pointed at us and yelled: "We love you! we love you!" over and over, and we, of course, chanted the same back to them.

President Hugo Chávez formally welcomed the delegates to the festival. One of the banners hanging overhead carried his words, which we translate here: "It is necessary to cast away the fear of the sword and to fight with ideas and conscience in hand, if we really want to save humanity. Only the young people have the purity to make the revolution of the 21st century." □

U.S. threatens, but Venezuela doesn't flinch

By John Catalinotto

Every step the Bolivarian government in Venezuela takes to assert its sovereignty is met with frantic charges from right-wing U.S. officials. As of Aug. 8, Washington has provided no evidence to back up any of its wild charges against the government of President Hugo Chávez.

In a July 27 letter to anti-Cuban U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros Lehtinen of Florida, Matthew Reynolds, the State Department's leading congressional affairs official, claimed to have found "mounting evidence" that Venezuela was using oil money to fund "anti-democratic groups" in Bolivia, Ecuador and elsewhere in order to destabilize the region.

The Venezuelans quickly denied the charges. Venezuelan Ambassador Álvarez said: "There is no evidence whatsoever. We have good relations with all the countries of the region."

He mentioned Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, and the Caribbean. "We are using energy as a way of promoting real integration of the continent," he said.

The Chávez government has used increased revenues from high oil prices to fund social services at home. It has also offered oil at good rates to promote trade among the Latin American countries and

in the Caribbean.

Many suspect that Chávez' program, which helps Latin America be more independent from U.S. and other imperialist control, is what really irks Washington.

The State Department cited no evidence for its charges.

Chávez also angered the U.S. government recently by purchasing 100,000 AK-47 rifles from Russia for Venezuela's army. This upsets Washington in two ways. First, it means Venezuela is no longer dependent on U.S.-built weapons systems. Second, these are weapons for a people's army that can become a guerrilla resistance in case there is an invasion by an army with superior arms and technology. This is what the Pentagon, to its dismay, found out in Iraq.

Through Plan Colombia, Washington has turned the pro-fascist government of President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia into one of its biggest recipients of arms, including helicopters and jet fighters. There are rumors that Washington is looking to the Colombian army as a possible force to enter Venezuela and overthrow the Chávez government.

So it is a normal use of the Big Lie for Washington to charge that Chávez bought the 100,000 rifles to help arm the FARC guerrillas in neighboring Colombia.

Chávez denied the U.S. charges emphatically on Aug. 4. "They accuse us of buying arms to give them to the guerrillas—no, they're for our troops," Chávez said. "They are a terrorist state, but they accuse us of being terrorists."

An Aug. 7 report in Ireland Online said that Venezuela's defense minister has signed a deal to buy Chinese radar systems for use with Venezuela's air force. On Aug. 8, Chávez accused agents of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency of spying on his country, and broke all relations with the DEA. He said the DEA was using its cover as drug-trafficking investigators to "carry out intelligence" on the president and Venezuelan government.

Along with buying arms for Venezuela's military, the Chávez government is also shoring up popular support worldwide for the government there. On Aug. 8, the World Youth Festival opened in Caracas, Venezuela, with 15,000 to 20,000 young people from over 140 countries getting an opportunity to experience a part of Venezuela's revolution. And recently TeleSur, an alternate news source to the imperialist-dominated media, opened up for

Latin America with Venezuelan support.

While the threats from Washington are apparent and come without justification, Chávez' response shows that he and Bolivarian Venezuela refuse to submit to these threats. □

PUERTO RICO

Teachers fight for schools

As Puerto Rican workers face mounting attacks, Rafael Feliciano Hernández, president of the Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico (FMPR—Federation of Puerto Rican Teachers), spoke July 21 at Hunter College in New York.

In 2004, the FMPR voted overwhelmingly to disaffiliate from the U.S. American Federation of Teachers to achieve self-determination and meet the needs of Puerto Rican teachers, students, and families.

The struggle within the AFT was led by the El Grupo Compromiso, Democracia y Militancia (CODEMI—the Commitment, Democracy and Militancy Group).

Following are excerpts from Hernández' remarks which were translated by Arturo J. Pérez Saad.

Our struggle has been to change the way the union is run and to democratize it. By democratizing I specifically mean to abolish the old representative-democracy model and integrate a participatory-democracy model. We represent a part of the revolt that exists in our schools.

This most radical sector has received the support of the majority including teachers, children and parents. A year before we were elected I had been imprisoned for four months for the act of civil disobedience in Vieques. I am a member of a political socialist organization. The AFT has tried to use my political beliefs against our group CODEMI during past elections, but they lost.

A good indicator of what we are doing is that we first brought a proposal of the collective-bargaining contract to the rank-and-file workers, and it was the first time that this had ever happened, where the issues were first discussed in our schools by the rank and file, then with the bosses.

This process is very complicated and arduous for the 46,000 teachers, in which 96 percent of this collective-bargaining agreement deals with non-economic issues, one of which was that the power of those in charge of the schools be shifted from the director to the teachers, parents and students.

From August 2003 to December 2003, we were able to achieve an increase in maternity leave to 12 months. ... In this period we had over 100 to 200 strikes. Strikes are illegal under the law, but when we closed a school down we view that as a strike. It is important to note that the working conditions are dire in the schools.

The FMPR is an organization which is alive. When we are speaking at the level of 1,568 public schools, it is no longer an organization. It functions like a movement.

First of all, the FMPR is an organization whose base, the strike of the people, is the base of the teachers. We have to recognize that the union was formed in 1966 when the public-sector workers did not have a right to unionize, since it was illegal by law until 1974.

We are a product of those struggles over many years.

The laws established in the U.S. influence us. An example is the "No Child Left Behind Act." It is terrible for you here and for us there, especially the children. We are preparing for a boycott in the works to begin this year.

In this most radical sector we work with whomever, regardless of political orientation. Our point of strength by unity is through the struggle for the betterment of our schools.

For more information on the Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico, go to www.fmprlucha.org.

U.S. losing Iraq

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from Iraq) participated in the second symposium. They represented a wide spectrum of political parties, religious societies and independents. Their common denominator was their complete and unequivocal support for the Iraqi Resistance, the firm rejection of the occupiers' agenda for Iraq and the refusal "to accept the "sham elections" of February 2005, the so-called constitution or the puppet regime.

The Symposium ended with "a call to the Iraqi people and all its patriotic forces for the formation of the Iraqi National Front for Liberation and Democratic reconstruction (INFLD)." It was signed by 50 Iraqis who live both inside and outside the country.

While this is still an early stage in the formation of a national front, the indications are that on both military and political levels, the Iraqi resistance is progressing. Meanwhile political support for the U.S. occupation is collapsing. □

Editorial

El movimiento sindical y la Guerra

La AFL-CIO promulgó una resolución en su convención nacional el 26 de julio que llama por un fin rápido a la guerra de Irak. La resolución, propuesta por el Consejo Ejecutivo General, está siendo calificada por el grupo Sindicalistas en Contra de la Guerra (U.S. Labor Against the War) como un “cambio mayor de política” por la federación laboral.

Y para algunos veteranos de la lucha sindical, esto parece ser un gran cambio. La ausencia de oposición de parte de la AFL-CIO en contra de la Guerra de Vietnam, casi destruyó a la federación y en parte fue la causa de la separación del sindicato de trabajadores de la industria de la manufactura de automóviles, el UAW de la federación en 1968. Fue posible encontrar miembros de sindicatos en todas las protestas contra la Guerra de Vietnam, pero ellos estaban participando sin el apoyo oficial de la federación sindical grande.

Esta vez de hecho es una situación muy distinta. Cuando la convención de la AFL-CIO comenzó en Chicago se encontró inundado con 18 resoluciones en contra de la guerra de parte de federaciones estatales, consejos de trabajo central y sindicatos locales. Esto refleja el cambio profundo de parte de miembros de sindicatos de una oposición pasiva a la guerra a una llamada mucho más activa pidiendo que se saquen las tropas a casa de inmediato. Todo el mundo sabe que una mayoría de la membresía de sindicalistas —realmente de la población entera— está en contra de la guerra contra Irak.

Cuando la AFL-CIO se reunió en Chicago, el Presidente John Sweeney y el Consejo Ejecutivo General echaron una mirada a las resoluciones en contra de la guerra y hesitaron. Algunas de las resoluciones fueron basadas en la declaración excelente apoyada por el Consejo Central de Trabajo de San Francisco, lo cual había apoyado totalmente antes a varias manifestaciones en contra de la guerra. La mayoría fueron similares a la resolución de la AFL-CIO del Estado de Wisconsin, la cual había sido endosada por muchas de las convenciones estatales. Todas estas resoluciones tuvieron el apoyo de grandes cantidades de miembros de los sindicatos.

Pero en vez de esto, el Consejo General Ejecutivo presentó al último momento su propia resolución mucho más débil, que no mencionó el terrible costo humano que la ocupación está cobrando del pueblo iraquí, no habló de los cuartos de tortura en Guantánamo o en Abu Ghraib, y tampoco mencionó el robo de los recursos naturales por los socios corporativos de invasores.

Esta resolución fue maniobrada en la agenda de la convención para reemplazar las 18 otras resoluciones sugeridas por los sindicatos miembros de la confederación. Fue solamente la rápida intervención de Fred Mason, presidente de la AFL-CIO de Maryland/Washington, D.C. y co-organizador de Trabajo Contra la Guerra de los EEUU, que propuso una enmienda a la resolución, que cambió algo de su lenguaje para conformar con el contenido que todas las resoluciones en contra de la guerra enviadas a la convención habían dicho y que esperaban promulgar la mayoría de los miembros de los sindicatos.

Lo que hizo la nueva federación, la Coalición Cambio para Ganar, establecida por los Teamsters (camioneros), el SEIU, (trabajadores de la industria de servicios) y varios otros sindicatos, algunos de ellos que habían desafiado de la AFL-CIO mientras que la convención estuvo en sesión, ellos todavía no han pronunciado ni una sola palabra sobre la guerra.

Lo que puede ser más importante que exactamente cuales palabras fueron en el texto de la resolución, sin embargo, es como la resolución será entendido y visto por los miembros de los sindicatos y sus copartidarios.

Ya queda claro desde los reportes noticieros y en conversaciones con miembros de la AFL-CIO que muchos consideran que esta resolución como una declaración firme de una postura en contra de la guerra.

Todos los miembros de sindicatos debe tomar esta resolución en la mano y usarla para todo que pueden, como un endoso de la clase de acción militante que es realmente necesario para llevar las tropas a casa. Esto incluye participación en los esfuerzos en contra del reclutamiento militar en escuelas locales y llevando miembros de tu sindicato local movilizarse a la manifestación masiva que se va a llevar a cabo en Washington el 24 de septiembre frente a la Casa Blanca.

Esto será consistente con el sentido y el ánimo de la mayoría de las resoluciones en contra de la guerra propuestas en la convención de la AFL-CIO. □

Ilegalidad reinó en juicio a los 5 cubanos antiterroristas en EE UU

Por Javier Rodríguez

La Habana, 10 de agosto, Prensa Latina
www.prensalatina.com

El fallo emitido por la Corte de Apelaciones de Atlanta confirmó hoy, a ese alto nivel judicial estadounidense la ilegalidad y manipulación del juicio que condenó a largas penas de prisión a cinco antiterroristas cubanos.

El ingeniero Antonio Guerrero, los egresados del Instituto de Relaciones Internacionales Fernando González y Gerardo Hernández, el licenciado en Economía Ramón Labañino y el piloto René González, se encuentran presos en diversas cárceles de Estados Unidos.

En la ciudad de Miami, como su aporte a la seguridad del pueblo cubano víctima del terrorismo, los cinco jóvenes buscaban información sobre los planes contra la Isla de las organizaciones criminales allí enclavadas.

Su esfuerzo, según dijeron ellos mismos en respuesta a las acusaciones hechas por el gobierno norteamericano, fue siempre dirigido a salvar vidas obstaculizando acciones que, como otras anteriores, tuvieron como blanco objetivos en Cuba.

Apresados y colocados en un confinamiento considerado por abogados y familiares violatorio de sus más elementales derechos, fueron llevados a juicio en la ciudad de Miami donde la presión de las propias agrupaciones terroristas hizo imposible la imparcialidad.

Las solicitudes de la defensa para trasladar el proceso a otra ciudad se rechazaron por la juez federal de Miami, Joan Leonard quien, el 16 de marzo del 2000, afirmó, sorprendentemente “este proceso será mucho más interesante que cualquier programa de televisión”.

Los abogados denunciaron que sólo se les permitió acceso a algunos materiales del sumario, escogidos previamente por la Fiscalía, mientras a los grupos opositores miamenses le suministraron otros para explotarlos publicitariamente contra los acusados.

La defensa presentó testimonios de oficiales del Comando Sur y del Buró Federal de Investigaciones (FBI) reconociendo que los cubanos nunca afectaron la seguridad norteamericana con sus actividades, pero eso tampoco impidió la condena.

En el ambiente de tensión provocado por el acto terrorista contra las Torres Gemelas de Nueva York se dictó la insólita sentencia.

Gerardo Hernández fue sancionado a dos condenas de cadena perpetua más 15 años de prisión, Ramón Labañino a una sanción perpetua más 18 años, Fernando González a 19 años, René González a 15 años y Antonio Guerrero cadena perpetua más 10 años.

La mediatización de este proceso, la ilegalidad evidente en un juicio parcializado y la



violación del derecho a que los acusados fueran juzgados en una sede lejana a la de una ciudad bajo la influencia de los grupos anticubanos, provocaron el fallo de la Corte de Atlanta.

Previamente, un grupo de trabajo de la Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas también determinó el carácter ilegal del juicio celebrado.

Al determinarse la nulidad del proceso y de las condenas dictadas, la Corte ordenó a la misma juez Leonard iniciar nuevamente el proceso fuera de Miami, lo cual ella debe hacer en un plazo perentorio si la Fiscalía no apela el fallo de Atlanta.

Leonard deberá determinar si, como se supone corresponde legalmente, la anulación de las condenas implica la liberación provisional de los cinco cubanos como señalan expertos y juristas o tendrá que fundamentar su mantenimiento tras las rejas.

De todas formas, se abre una nueva etapa en un proceso que, de acuerdo a la denuncia de La Habana, fue politizado por los grupos anticubanos de Miami y por el propio gobierno de Estados Unidos. □

