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Immigrants stay in the streets

Call May 1 boycott to demand legalization

By John Catalinotto
New York

Many tens of thousands of people marched across the Brooklyn Bridge into downtown Manhattan on April 1 to demand respect and legalization for 11 million undocumented immigrant workers. The more than 2-mile march route was jammed for over three hours.

This New York action against HR 4437 was the latest in a massive wave of protests that has swept the United States from San Diego to Boston since the anti-immigrant bill passed the House of Representatives on Dec. 16.

Another major national protest is set for April 10.

Anyone standing on the railing of the Brooklyn Bridge pedestrian walk would have seen people from all of South and Central America and the Caribbean, mostly young working people with their families, demanding (1) no to HR 4437, also known as the Sensenbrenner-King bill, (2) legal status for undocumented workers, and (3) dignity for the millions of people without papers who work, pay taxes and obey the law.

Groups carried the banners of Mexico—there were many of these—and the Caribbean but also of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and nearly all the countries of South America, including Chile, Colombia and Uruguay. Showers were predicted, but they held off until the afternoon, and from the bridge in the sultry sunlight everyone could see clearly the bridges and skyscrapers of downtown Manhattan. Many people also held U.S. flags. Farther south in the bay the Statue of Liberty was visible in all its irony.

Along with the overwhelming number of people whose origins were south of the Rio Grande were smaller contingents of immi-

grants from China, Korea and Ireland. When these groups joined the militant chants, they also shouted in Spanish. A delegation from Workers World Party joined the march under the banner, in English and Spanish, "There are no borders in the workers' struggle," which drew cheers as it was unfolded.

Many chanted slogans came from earlier struggles. "Yes, we can," from the farm workers' struggles in California was the favorite, along with "The people united will never be defeated." Some others were "Bush, listen, the people are in the struggle" and "People who keep silent will never be heard." A defiant chant was "We're here, we're not going; if they throw us out, we'll come back."

MORE ON IMMIGRANT STRUGGLE Centerfold

- Cesar Chavez legacy
- Farmworkers march in Chicago
- Black-Latin@ unity in N.C.

Even motorists stalled in traffic on the bridge honked their horns in support. Many Black motorists—both Caribbean-born and African Americans—raised clenched fists or gave vee signs.

HR 4437, introduced by Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.), is the most racist, reactionary and xenophobic of 11 bills currently proposed in Congress, none of which satisfies the demands of the immigrant workers. HR 4437 would make any relative, employer, coworker, clergy, lawyer or friend of an undocumented immigrant into an "alien smuggler" and a criminal. HR 4437 was the threat that awoke the explosive reaction of the immigrant workers.

Workers World correspondent Berta Joubert-Ceci told a public forum March 31 that these bills represent a struggle between

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April 1 march for immigrant rights in New York City.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

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Duke rape case exposes system's contradictions

By Yolanda Carrington
Raleigh, N.C.

Since last week, one of the most elite universities in the United States has been under national scrutiny for its grossly incompetent handling of a sexual assault investigation involving one of its top-ranked athletic teams. The firestorm that this case unleashed has galvanized residents in the working-class city of Durham and the entire Triangle, N.C., community. For many people in this region, the incident and its aftermath stand as a hard reminder that systemic oppression remains alive and well in the 21st-century U.S. South.



Demonstrators at Duke University protest rape.

University officials had been aware of the allegations of rape and assault against members of the school's top-ranked lacrosse team since March 14, but for nearly two weeks, no one from either athletics or administration made any public response about the incident. Duke lacrosse head coach Mike Pressler remained in denial right up until a scheduled March 25 match against Georgetown, not even bothering to address the allegations when pressed by a reporter from WRAL-5 TV on March 24. As the scandal began making national headlines, Duke President Richard Brodhead and athletics director Joseph Alleva finally decided to hold a press conference on March 28.

For four days before March 25, local media reported that a woman working as an exotic dancer had accused three players from Duke University's lacrosse team of beating, raping, robbing, and nearly strangling her at a team party on March 13. At this point, the media reported that all 47 of the team's members refused to talk to police, and that 46 of the players submitted DNA samples at the request of the Durham County district attorney (the lone African-American member of the team was excluded from testing because the victim said all her assailants were white).

But several key aspects of the attack were conveniently omitted in the early reports, the most critical being the race and class background of the victim and her attackers. This initial obfuscation would later elicit strong anger from the community.

At press time, no one has been formally charged in this case.

On March 13, two African-American women were hired to perform as exotic dancers for a team party at the home of the team's three captains. The single-story house, at 610 North Buchanan Blvd., is located in Durham's historic Trinity Park neighborhood near Duke's East Campus. This home was one of 14 houses recently purchased by the university in response to repeated nuisance complaints from homeowners in the neighborhood, who were fed up with constant all-night partying, public inebriation, and disruptive behavior on the part of obnoxious Duke students. The university had plans to sell the homes after their current leases expired.

The women arrived at the home under the impression that they would be performing for a bachelor party of five men, but when they arrived, they encountered a drunken lacrosse team party with over 40 men present, apparently all members of the team. According to later police reports, the women were immediately subjected to racist and misogynistic slurs upon entering the house.

As the victim herself—a mother of two and a full-time student at historically Black North Carolina Central University—told Raleigh's News and Observer, the

women became so terrified by this verbal abuse that they decided to leave. A next-door neighbor told the paper that he personally witnessed white men verbally abusing the women with racist slurs as they tried to leave. As they were approaching their car, one of the men from the house came over to them and apologized for the racist abuse. He pleaded with the women to come back inside and perform at the party, and the accuser returned to the house. Once she was inside, she was allegedly pulled into a bathroom by three men, where they subjected her to a brutally violent rape and beating. The victim says she was vaginally, anally, and orally penetrated, punched, kicked, and nearly strangled by the three men for about 30 minutes. After she was able to escape from the house, she and the other woman drove to a local supermarket, where a security guard called Durham police around 1:30 a.m. on March 14.

When the violently racist nature of the attack was finally revealed to the public on March 24, community outrage was swift and immediate. Durham residents quickly set up listservs and message boards in order to coordinate community response and planning. On March 25, a silent demonstration was held in front of the lacrosse field to protest Duke's match against Georgetown, holding signs bearing strong messages such as "Don't be a Fan of Rapists." As it turned out, Duke forfeited the Georgetown match at the last minute, in anticipation of mounting public anger. Later that night, community members held a candlelight vigil in front of the house at 610 North Buchanan to express support for the victim. The very next morning, activists from across the Triangle gathered in front of the house and staged a "Cacerolazo" wake-up call—a traditional form of protest used by women in Latin America to publicly shame rapists and batterers. The participants banged on pots and pans while powerfully chanting calls for justice and solidarity.

This case has also shone a national spotlight on long-simmering resentments between majority-white Duke and the ethnically diverse working-class city in which the elite school resides. As the New York Times reported on March 31, Duke received a fifth-worst ranking out of 361 colleges in the latest Princeton Review survey of so-called "town-gown" relations—the interaction between a major academic institution and its surrounding community. In the same survey, Duke was also ranked sixth in having little or no interaction between students of different social classes and ethnic groups. Indeed, many African-American students at Duke say that racist treatment from white classmates is fairly common on campus. As graduate student Danielle Terrazas Williams told the Independent Weekly: "This is not a different experience

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Sat., April 15
'Finding Each Other on the Road to Freedom.' Minnie Bruce Pratt on Walking to New Orleans and reading from her book, Walking Back Up Depot Street. 4 p.m. At 5274 W Pico Blvd #203, L.A. For info (323) 936-7266.

Sat., April 22

Stop War on Iran Before it Starts: Hear Ardesheer Ommani, just returned from Iran, and Sara Flounders, initiator of the Stop War on Iran Campaign. 4 p.m. At 5274 W Pico Blvd #203, L.A. For info (323) 936-7266.

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BALTIMORE

Community marches on CEO's mansion to stop rate hike

By Sharon Black

Community and union activists marched March 22 to the opulent home of Constellation Energy CEO, Mayo Shattuck III, to stop an enormous electric rate hike. By July 2006, rates are slated to increase by 72 percent after caps are lifted, following a deregulation plan passed by the state legislators in 1999. Electric costs are estimated to increase on average \$743 yearly per household.

This increase has touched off a statewide crisis for workers and debates among state legislators over a pending \$11.4 billion merger between Constellation Energy and

March 22
protest against
72% energy
rate hikes.

the FPL Group of Florida. Shattuck himself will reap \$40 million from the merger.

Renee Washington of All Peoples Congress, an organizer of the protest, stated, "This increase is a disaster. We are not only calling for no rate hike; we are demanding that the people



take over BGE. Gas and electric should be for the people, not for profit."

Protesters were met by police in squad cars, on foot and in a motorcycle caravan. Police blocked off the street where Shattuck lives and forced cars to detour. The group nevertheless persisted and marched around the police to Shattuck's fancy home.

Groups participating included the All Peoples Congress, AFSCME Council 67, ACORN, and the Green Party. A planning meeting to launch a statewide coalition is scheduled for April 5 at the downtown library, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, visit www.iacenter.org/folder01/baltimore.htm or e-mail apcbaltimore@pipeline.com. □

Longshore unionist explains how

Dubai backlash bites Bush

This article was contributed to WW by Clarence Thomas, former secretary-treasurer of ILWU Local 10 and national co-chair of the Million Worker March Movement.

The company Dubai Ports World (DP World) of the United Arab Emirates announced on March 8 that it would back out of any management role in U.S. maritime ports.

For nearly a month its plans to purchase Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Co. (P&O) of Britain for \$6.8 billion, which had been approved by the Bush administration, had ignited a firestorm of controversy among Republicans and Democrats that spilled over to the general public.

The collapse of the DP World deal had everything to do with the politics of fear and racism, targeting in particular people of the Middle East. This is the outcome of racially profiling Arabs as potential terrorists—a mantra of the Bush administration since 9/11. Both political parties have bought into this policy.

Security experts have generally agreed that the DP World deal presented no threat. DP World would not actually run or manage the ports in the U.S. That is the function of the port authorities, the municipal counties, or the state-controlled concerns that own and operate most U.S. ports. Companies like P&O just lease cargo terminals from these entities, similar to a landlord-tenant arrangement.

Chickens come home to roost

There is clearly a certain irony that the Bush government, its politics of endless war against "terrorism" having created fear of Arabs, would find itself the victim of its own politics.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; domestic spying on Americans; arrests of so-called enemy combatants without due process; criminal background checks and I.D. cards for workers, and the undermining of civil rights and civil liberties with the invocation of the Patriotic Act—all this has created an atmosphere of anti-immigrant hysteria around security and fighting terrorism.

Since 9/11, a xenophobic frenzy has spread throughout the country regarding people of Arab descent. This has been the root cause of the DP World deal unraveling. Bush's chickens have come home to roost.

There's an old expression on the docks:

"watch the game." It means longshore workers should work safely, look out for the people working around them and observe the operation of the job. The waterfront is a dangerous work environment.

That same logic may be applied to paying attention to the real issues involving the Dubai deal.

The containerization of the shipping business has increased profit margins considerably. U.S. companies are no longer in the top ranks of global terminal operators, which are now permanently based in Asia and the Middle East. They now manage 80 percent of port terminals in the U.S.

While ports are publicly controlled, their operation is in private hands. Terminal operators manage where and when a ship will berth, the use of gantry cranes, relations with longshore workers, which trucks or rail cars will move cargo for distribution to consumers.

These operations could be publicly managed. By having the control in private hands, large conglomerates have exercised leverage, forcing public ports to make huge concessions and subsidies.

U.S. companies jump ship

With the loud outcry around the issue of who should run the seaports, many here are unaware that U.S.-based corporations have jumped ship when it comes to investing in the stevedoring business.

Stevedoring Services of America (SSA), a family-owned company in Seattle, is the largest terminal operator in the United States and one of the employers of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) members. During contract negotiations in 2002 between the ILWU members and Pacific Maritime Association, SSA attempted to weaken the union by not bargaining in good faith. It is well known that SSA has a history of outsourcing longshore jobs under the aegis of technology. SSA has been a major force behind developing a large transshipment port in Panama.

There's a close connection between U.S. rulers and DP World. U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow was the chair of CSX rail firm, which sold its own international port operations to DP World for \$1.5 billion in 2004. He left DP World in 2004 to join the Bush administration.

In 2002, CSX was purchased by the Carlyle Group, of which George Bush Sr.

was a principal owner. Carlyle bought it for \$300 million and sold it to DP World for \$650 million two years later.

The chief operating officer at DP World is Edward H. Bilkey. Other U.S. citizens in DP World's leadership include David Sanborn, President George W. Bush's nominee to run the Transportation Department's Maritime Administration.

CNN's Lou Dobbs reported on Feb. 22 that "President Bush's family and members of the Bush administration have longstanding business connections with the United Arab Emirates," adding that the UAE was a major investor in the Carlyle Group and that "the president's brother, Neil Bush, had reportedly received funding for his educational software company from the UAE investors."

DP World's decision to unload its U.S. operations has increased speculation over which U.S.-based corporation will eventually operate the marine terminals.

One possible buyer of the contract is rumored to be the Carlyle Group.

Working people can have a clear understanding of this incestuous relationship among the corporate players by simply following the money. It always

leads to the powerful and the privileged.

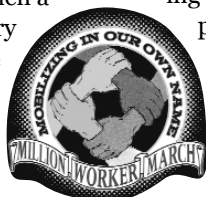
Democrats exploit anti-immigrant fever

The demand of Sen. Hillary Clinton and other Democrats to require U.S. citizenship of those working at the ports fuels the anti-immigrant fever. This kind of legislative measure opportunistically feeds on xenophobia and racism. African Americans and other people of color are well acquainted with racism in all its forms. It is as American as apple pie.

At no time was Bush concerned about the Dubai deal. This was all about business as usual. Family business at that!

The Dubai deal has put the spotlight on privatization in a big way. There is no question that the ports should be controlled by the people in the communities where they are located. There should be greater representation of port worker unions and the community on the Port Commissions to oversee their operations. There should also be greater accountability to the communities they serve.

The resources from the ports should be used to address the issues of the communities, such as employment, housing, education and the environment. □



Hurricane survivors fight back

On the 38th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination, survivors of the Katrina and Rita hurricanes went to Queens County Housing Court, above, on April 4 to fight the Radisson hotel chain's plans to evict them.

None of these survivors wants to live forever in a hotel. But they also don't want to be thrown into the street.

At a news conference held outside the courthouse, Rev. James Pullings pointed out that Radisson collected \$2 million from these hurricane survivors. Yolanda Turner told how she suffered a heart attack in the hotel after management refused to listen to her pleas for a clean, accessible room. Legal Aid Society attorney Ashwani

Prabhakar called the hotel chain "base and vulgar in its greed." As for Radisson's paymaster FEMA, "They just want us to disappear," said Bilal, poet and survivor.

Because they fought back, survivors were able to stave off eviction for 45 more days. Survivors who are able to get other housing and leave earlier can get up to \$2,500 from the hotel.

Among the activists and organizations who came out were Rev. Hudson, Brenda Stokely, Attorney Joan Gibbs, Ron Daniels, the New York Solidarity Coalition with Katrina/Rita Survivors, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, and the International Action Center.

—Story and photo by Stephen Millies

Transit workers strike

By Larry Hales
Denver

Over 1,700 bus drivers, light rail operators and mechanics, a substantial number of them Black and Latin@, have gone on strike in Denver. The strike vote on April 2 was 55 to 45 percent after RTD—the Regional Transportation District—offered a contract with a raise of a paltry 2 percent after three years. The health insurance premium they are made to pay would not have changed—they now pay \$190 per month for a single person. And there was a mandate clause continuing on in the new contract.

RTD is considered one of the best mass transit systems in the country and it is the workers that have made that possible. “If they are number one, we made them that way,” said Patricia Stephens, an employee for eight years. But executives at RTD decided that it is more important to give themselves a 47 percent wage increase, while the rank and file have been under a three-year wage freeze. At least one of the raises amounts to more than \$50,000.

These are highly skilled workers. The bus drivers have to attend an eight-week intensive training course to earn a license to drive the buses, and have to log hundreds of hours of driving before carrying passengers. All together, the bus drivers are required to go through a 12-week course before driving a regular route.

The conditions for the workers have gotten even worse over the years, especially for the drivers. According to a union official at Amalgamated Transit Union, the number of bus drivers has decreased from over 1,000 to 800 in 10 years. The bus drivers operate under dangerous conditions.

The bus drivers talk of having to drive for 90 consecutive days without a day off, and some have had to take their sick days just to rest. They must keep on time, no matter the road conditions, have to make transfers to get riders to their destinations, and when they do take a sick day they are written up for being late. They are wor-



Denver transit workers on the picketline.

ried about fatigue and their riders' safety.

It is clear that RTD is not worried about safety, or the ability of their workers to survive, as the cost of living climbs steadily but wages remain stagnant.

RTD claims that it operates in a deficit, and this is the reason that it decided to increase fares from \$1.25 to \$1.50, a steep increase for many of the workers that use the mass transit. However, the deficit that applies to RTD can be traced to the amount of money being drawn for imperialist war, as nearly 80 percent of the transit system is subsidized. The money being spent for war and raises for the bosses could go to provide for a cheap means of transit for the masses.

One worker on the picket line stated that RTD is looking to privatize. Forty-five percent of RTD work has been contracted out to private companies, hence the reason that RTD is playing a harder line than might be expected, and why they even refused arbitration.

The workers at RTD need support, as RTD is not willing to budge and is seeking to force the workers into a poor contract. Officials all the way up to Governor Bill Owens are denigrating the RTD workers. Governor Owens said, “To do it on a Sunday night before Monday, to do it on

opening day, to do it with five hours of notice, I think the union—at least the 55 percent that voted last night to strike—showed whose side they are on. They certainly aren't thinking of the public; they're only thinking of themselves.” This kind of talk isn't fooling anyone, however, as many riders expressed solidarity with the striking workers. One rider said, “I think the company is unfair to the workers. They are greedy.”

RTD certainly cared nothing when it raised the fares 25 cents and it cared nothing about forcing the drivers to work long shifts, almost 12 hours a day in split shifts, with four hours in between two four-hour shifts. RTD cared nothing about forcing workers to work 90 days straight, to the point of fatigue.

The workers care about safety. They are holding the line and showing a resolve greater than that of the bosses, and see the aim of bosses all over the country to drive down wages. They are fighting for all workers.

Though the union wanted to accept the bogus contract and had not prepared for a strike, the rank and file has decided that they will fight for better wages and dignity. Lasonya Jenkins, a six-year employee, summed their fight up: “We bend over backwards. We do a great job. We want respect.” □

Duke rape case exposes system's contradictions

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for us here at Duke University. We go to class with racist classmates, we go to gym with people who are racists. That's not special for us.”

Unfortunately, both the media and Duke's administration are desperately trying to obscure the blatant racism and misogyny of this case. Many media outlets make a point of referring to the victim as a “stripper” or “exotic dancer,” while framing the allegations of racist verbal abuse as mere race “issues” or “tensions.” Many outlets dare ask if this case has anything to do with race at all, as if sexual violence can ever be separated from systemic oppression. At the March 28 press conference, athletic director Alleva

stated publicly that during his entire 26 years in Duke athletics, he has seen “no racial problems” with the lacrosse team or in the entire sports program. It is unclear if Alleva consulted athletes of color before making this statement.

At N.C. Central University this week, public events have been scheduled to show support for the

victim in the case. These include speak-outs and a candlelight vigil in front of the campus Student Union on April 3. As junior Maya Jackson told Black College Wire, “We as a university do not accept this. This is an issue that affects all of us.”

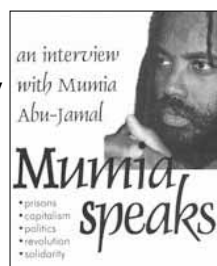
The writer is with FIST—Fight Imperialism—Stand Together—youth group. □

MUMIA SPEAKS

An interview with Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Columns by the Black journalist on prisons, capitalism, politics, revolution and solidarity. Additional essays on the prison-industrial complex by Monica Moorehead, Larry Holmes & Teresa Gutierrez.

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ON THE PICKETLINE

By Sue Davis

Teachers 'sick' of pay cuts

DETROIT — About 1,725 teachers and 345 long-term substitutes in the Detroit public school system called in sick on March 22, leading to the cancellation of classes for about 38,000 students at 54 schools. That represents more than a quarter of the system's teaching staff.

The teachers were protesting the fact that they had received the first of five reduced paychecks on March 21, while principals are getting raises ranging from 4.7 to 10.6 percent.

The reduced paychecks were part of the settlement reached August 2005 to avert a strike. The school district had demanded an 11 percent pay cut. Instead, the teachers agreed to a one-year contract that would “loan” the district five days' pay, to be paid back in 2007, and freeze five sick days. Only recently did the teachers learn of the raises for principals. The school system will save \$15 million—\$3 million for each of the five days.

President of the Detroit Federation of Teachers Janna Garrison defended the sick-out. “You do not ask someone to take a cut and give others a raise,” she told the Detroit Free Press. (March 23)

The teachers have not received a cost-of-living increase in more than three years. Their contract expires June 30, and negotiations started in March.

Student sit-in aids workers' strike

MIAMI — On March 28 students from STAND (Students Toward A New Democracy) at the University of Miami in Florida camped out for 13 hours in the administration office. They demanded that the University of Miami allow 900 service workers, who have been striking since March 1, to be represented by Local 11 of SEIU. There was also civil disobedience by clergy, workers and community supporters outside the building.

The students' solidarity was decisive. The next day University of Miami President Donna Shalala, who before the strike denied any responsibility for the service workers employed through Unico Service Co., finally demanded all parties come to the negotiating table by March 31.

Although the janitors, housekeepers, food servers and gardeners—predominantly immigrants from the Caribbean and South America—won wage hikes and health benefits in mid-March, they continued the strike to protest Unico's labor law violations.

Delta Comair flight attendants vote to strike

Ninety-three percent of Delta Comair flight attendants voted on March 24 to authorize a strike. Delta, which filed for bankruptcy on Sept. 14, is demanding nearly 30 percent pay cuts, amounting to nearly \$11,000 annually. That would be catastrophic for the workers who currently average \$28,000.

But that's not all. The cuts come on top of huge increases in health care costs that Comair implemented last year in violation of the flight attendants' contract.

The workers asked members of Delta's Sky Miles frequent flyer club to sign petitions protesting the draconian pay cuts on April 3-5 at airports in Cincinnati, New York and Orlando. To sign the petition, go to www.teamsterstakeaction.org/campaign/delta/.

Building workers nix pay freeze

NYC — On March 22, workers at 3,500 apartment buildings in New York City rejected the owners' demand for a one-year pay freeze and payment of 15 percent of their health care premiums. The 28,000 doormen, janitors and other service workers represented by SEIU Local 32 BJ have threatened to strike on April 21.

Mich. to increase minimum wage

MICHIGAN — Pushed by a grassroots petition drive, the Michigan legislature voted to raise the state's minimum wage to \$6.95 an hour in October, \$7.15 in July 2006 and \$7.40 in July 2008. It has joined 17 states and the District of Columbia in setting minimum wages higher than the federal minimum of \$5.15.

At least \$8.88 an hour is needed to keep up with inflation, reported a Feb. 23 AFL-CIO press release. For example, one person working full-time for \$5.15 a year makes \$10,712. That's \$5,378 below the poverty line of \$16,090 for a family of three. Two minimum-wage workers would have to work 132 hours a week, or 3.3 full-time minimum wage jobs, just to make ends meet.

But that's only part of the story. Here's the criminal part. While the federal hourly minimum has been stuck at \$5.15 for the past nine years, Congress members voted themselves eight pay hikes—or \$31,600—during the same period. They make on average \$162,000 a year. That sort of obscene disparity should be outlawed. □

Delta pilots pull 'practice' strike

By David Dixon

A contingent of 275 Delta Air Line pilots marched through the country's busiest airport, in Atlanta, on March 30. The angry pilots have been picketing airports around the U.S. with good reason. Delta bosses are trying to get an arbitration panel to void the pilots' contract so they can rip off \$325 million in pay and benefits from the workers.

The union has agreed to take \$140 million in annual pay cuts in addition to

the \$1 billion they took in 2004, but that's not enough for the profit-driven vultures at Delta. The pilots say they will strike if their contract is broken, which Delta claims will put it out of business. "You can consider today's actions an exercise and you can stand by for the real thing," said Lee Moak, the pilot union's executive committee chairman, as he led the march, according to AP.

Delta pilots are voting on a strike authorization and the results will be announced after polling is completed

on April 4. There are plans by the union to picket airports serving Atlanta, Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, New York and Los Angeles this week (washingtonpost.com).

Delta is trying to use the arbitration panel and bankruptcy court against the workers. The solution for Delta pilots and other workers would be to force the bankruptcy court to place the airline in the control of the workers, whose labor created the company and should be the rightful creditors. □

The battle over the Taylor Law

By a NYSUT member
New York

The Taylor Law in New York State prohibits public employee unions from conducting strikes, or even job actions like "work to rule." Violation of the law leads to fines, sanctions against the union and even jail for union leaders. But there is no pressure on employers to bargain fairly with employees. As a consequence, tens of thousands of public employees in New York State are working under expired contracts.

One of the most powerful unions in New York City, Transport Workers Local 100, which represents the bus and subway workers, defied the Taylor Law and went on strike against the Metropolitan Transportation Agency for three days in December because its contract had expired and the union has a policy of "no contract, no work." The strike had a huge impact on the city, in which a majority of people use public transportation.

After the agency's new contract offer was rejected by just seven votes out of more than 22,000 cast, the MTA took all its offers off the table, refused to bargain and demanded the Public Employees Relation Board appoint a panel to impose a contract on TWU 100. The union is facing a \$3 million fine and loss of dues check-off, which could bankrupt it.

In the field of education, 46 locals in New York State United Teachers, out of 740 districts covered by NYSUT, entered the fall semester of 2005 with a

contract that had expired over two years earlier.

The Professional Staff Congress, a member of NYSUT that represents 20,000 faculty, adjuncts and professional staff at the City University of New York, had its contract with CUNY expire over three years ago. A wall in NYSUT headquarters gives the names of 84 local leaders imprisoned for striking in violation of the Taylor Law.

The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, representing 6,500 administrators and principals, just declared a deadlock. Its contract expired June 30, 2002. The Firefighters union in New York City got a contract this past fall after 51 months of negotiating, stretching back to three months before 9/11.

A debate is going on in the state labor movement on how to deal with the Taylor Law. Any serious leader realizes that to change it will require a joint effort of all the workers in New York City, both private and public. Some union leaders want to combine direct action with political lobbying to get the state to amend the law; others would rely on lobbying.

This debate surfaced at a City Council hearing on March 30. The Council has no oversight or influence on the Taylor Law but allowed union leaders to bring it up in a hearing on the transit strike.

Randi Weingarten, president of the United Federation of Teachers, which represents 80,000 teachers in New York City, said that the Taylor Law allows senior city officials and negotia-

tors to simply stay away from the bargaining table without any consequence. Of course, they can be sued, found guilty of failing to bargain in good faith and then reprimanded and told to mend their ways. But no fines or other penalties are imposed, other than a public scolding.

"The city's ability to stall without repercussions means unions have virtually no leverage," she said. And when disputes are ultimately resolved through the Taylor Law's arbitration procedures, the state arbitrators have "ruled that the pattern must prevail" and workers must accept the terms set by another union.

The UFT has laid out an ambitious program around the Taylor Law, with amending it a number-one priority. But just imploring the State Legislature is not going to satisfy teachers who are working more hours, often in chaotic situations, for a slight increase in pay. And it is not likely to result in significant changes to the law.

The city administration told the City Council hearing, "It is the administration's position that the Taylor Law has been effective over the years in helping to foster harmonious labor relations. The administration would oppose any legislation that attempts to diminish or dilute the positive effects that this law has had."

What lies behind this debate among labor leaders is the rising anger among rank-and-file workers who see their living standards and jobs eroded by this pattern of stonewall bargaining. □

No concessions!

Delphi workers picket CEO Miller

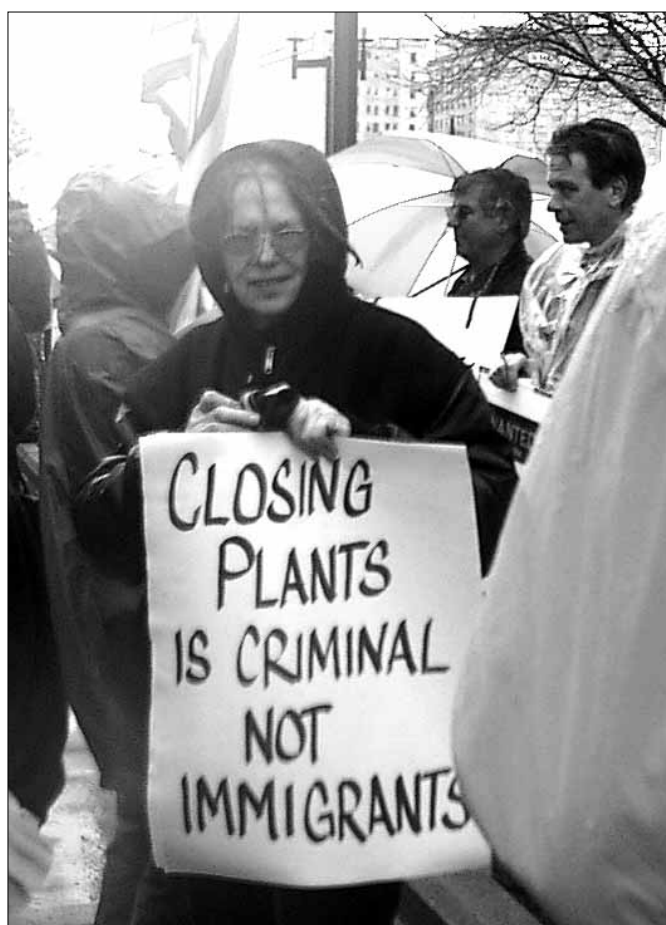
Delphi workers and their supporters picketed the Detroit Economic Club on April 3 as CEO "Steve" Miller was giving a major address. Delphi makes auto parts for General Motors. Three days earlier Miller had filed petitions with federal bankruptcy court judge Robert Drain to invalidate Delphi's union contracts after the unions refused to accept Delphi's latest "offer": to give workers a one-time check for \$50,000 in exchange for an almost 40 percent pay cut and the destruction of their pension plans.

The picket line was called by the rank-and-file group Soldiers of Solidarity and raised the slogans "Expose corporate fraud" and "No concessions."

Meanwhile, about 45 hourly workers at Delphi's Flint East operations who had been laid off on Friday, April 30, and told not to report to work on Monday "showed up anyway in defiance and refused to leave," according to the Detroit Free Press. Claudia Perkins, a Delphi worker with 30 years' seniority who organized the protest, said her coworkers were unfairly laid off because they had earned secured employment status under the union contract.

The workers won after some negotiating and were reinstated with back pay for missed days of work.

—Martha Grevatt



WWPHOTO: DAVE SOLE

By Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Ongoing war against workers: The TWU strike

From a March 1 commentary.

It only lasted for three days, but it lasted long enough to betray the scuffles and scars of war.

It was a spark for the eternal war between labor and capital. It was a war between those who work and those who hire.

When the New York Transport Workers Union (TWU) went out on strike [in December 2005—WW], their action sent shock waves across the country and rattled the rulers. Immediately, like a slave-driver who claims he was "betrayed" by "his people," New York's mega-billionaire mayor, Michael Bloomberg, unleashed an ugly verbal missile at those who demanded a fair contract under which to work.

In the minds and mouths of the Bloombergs, TWU strikers were: "Thugs!"

The corporate press joined the slander, with one well-known fishwrapper blaring, with a banner headline, "JAIL 'EM!"

Them's fightin' words. And they reflect, with a richness and clarity rarely revealed, the true nature of this war: a class war.

Local 100 of the TWU is a predominantly Black, Latin@ and immigrant union, and the ugly war of words, spun by the masters of the nation's media machines, were as raw as they were racist.

When an unruly mob of cops converged on City Hall to lambaste the city's first Black mayor (David Dinkins) as a "washroom attendant," and sprinkled other racist references to local Black leaders, one needed to search far and wide to find references to the behavior of the cops as "thuggish."

The city and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) used the Taylor Law, which disallows such strikes, to demand that local courts return crippling fines against any striker.

But some leader TWU members pointed to the history of the early civil rights movement, specifically the experience of the late Rosa Parks, who broke unjust laws to spark a mass movement.

Can the Taylor Law be just, when it leaves workers at the mercy of management, when it forces them to accept substandard contracts, when it requires ruinous givebacks?

While the corporate press channeled the negativity of their bosses, strikers reported that average, working-class and poor folks supported their efforts, for many understood that this was a stand to strengthen workers generally, and beat back the hands of greed that have been choking unions all across the country.

As for the Taylor Law, why would anyone even try to pass such a law, which clearly disadvantages labor? The very fact of its existence proves the political betrayal by politicians who supported, lobbied and voted for it.

The Taylor Law is a weapon of the rulers, and a whipping for the workers. It strips them of their only real instrument of social power—the ability to refuse their labor. Since when is that a crime?

Well, to the rich, it is! Karl Marx said that the law "is but the will of one class made into a law for all."

It is a machine, just like it made segregation legal, and criminalized Black freedom and dignity. The same law demanded that Blacks take the back of the bus. That same law outlaws the right of those who labor to withhold their labor, to better their condition, and those who follow them.

Such a law must itself be outlawed! But it won't be, if the people rely on the politicians to do so.

That law can be unmade only by the concerted actions of the people, by workers' power, supported by others, in every area of work and life.

Even though a recent contract was approved by the TWU leadership, the proposed pact was reportedly rejected by a majority of union members.

These front-line workers want to put an end to givebacks, and compromises, and labor bowing to capital, and their puppet politicians.

Labor wishes to fight for their class, and for their many and varied communities, who are supported by their efforts.

To make a change, labor must fight for it!

Go to prisonradio.org to hear Mumia's audio commentaries.



Youth honor legacy of Cesar Chavez

By Ruth Vela

Cesar Chavez and his contributions to the workers' struggle were remembered and honored throughout California on the weekend of April 1. This year marked the thirteenth year since his death, yet even today his name is synonymous with the plight of farm workers.

Now, more than ever, the lessons of Chavez's life illustrate the need to continue the struggle. Today immigrants have increasingly come under attack both by racist vigilantes and the government.

In San Diego, the annual parade honoring the labor leader had a different feel from those in years past. As is the custom with parades in San Diego, leading the march was a contingent of police officers, but this year youth responded by chanting "La placa la migra la misma porqueria!" meaning "the police and the border patrol are the same dirty pigs." Organizer Enrique De La Cruz of the California Coalition Against Poverty (CCAP) spoke to onlookers and parade-goers, explaining that the chant was in response to police violence experienced by local youth, who walked out of school last week in response to racist, anti-immigrant legislation. Members of CCAP, FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together—and other local groups took the opportunity to join the parade. Upon arriving at the rally point the groups took turns speaking, so as to disrupt the politicians on the stage and instead bring messages of truth to the people of the community.

In downtown Los Angeles about 1,000 students, the United Farm Workers, teachers and progressive organizations such as the South Central Farmers marched from historic Olvera Street to City Hall to honor Chavez and continue the sentiment of the pro-immigrant march held the previous week in Los Angeles. The International Action Center marched alongside the South Central Farmers, who were also highlighting their struggle against the city of Los Angeles's



SAN DIEGO

WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU

attempt at evicting them from their 14-acre community farm.

In Costa Mesa in Orange County, where there is a first-in-the-nation plan to use local police to enforce federal immigration law, about 1,500 to 2,000 residents, students, union members and progressive organizations marched to protest that plan and honor Chavez.

Cesar Chavez and The United Farm Workers made tremendous gains for workers, and today the struggle for wages and dignity continues. But as Chavez himself said, "We shall strike. We shall organize boycotts. We shall demonstrate and have political campaigns. We shall pursue the revolution we have proposed. We are sons and daughters of the farm workers' revolution, a revolution of the poor seeking bread and justice."

Cesar Chavez present!

John Parker contributed to this report.



LOS ANGELES

WW PHOTO: JOHN PARKER

April 1 marches continue Chavez's legacy.

CHICAGO

Rally & march for farmworkers



PHOTO: CIW-ONLINE.ORG

The Coalition Of Immokalee Workers staged a five-mile march and rally in Chicago on April 1 to protest food chain McDonald's exploitation of farmworkers. The coalition's website states, "As the march made its way through Chicago and the crowd grew, the march itself became the message—a diverse group of people, from farmworkers to everyday consumers, brought together by a common vision of economic justice, a call for fair wages and human rights, finally, for workers whose exploitation has gone unquestioned for far too long while corporations throughout the food industry have profited from their labor."

—David Dixon

Immigration march

Continued from page 1

"the right and the ultra-right" and all of them increase police measures to stop immigrants from entering the United States. Even the least reactionary ones, like the McCain-Kennedy bill, set up a "guest worker" program, which means they allow some to become temporary residents with no civil rights except to work at unpleasant jobs at low wages without being jailed or deported.

Joubert-Ceci said that while programs like NAFTA sought to globalize imperialist control of the economies in Latin America, "the struggle of immigrants here is globalizing the reaction of the Latin American people to these neoliberal programs and bringing the struggle home."

The latest polls have shown that recent immigrants who have legal papers are overwhelmingly sympathetic with the undocumented workers, and that even in the general population at least half are sympathetic.

Immigrant groups and their supporters have called for other major activities. The next are expected to culminate on April 10 in a National Day of Action, a coordinated series of regional demonstrations scheduled for New York, Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles and other cities, organized by labor, immigration, civil rights, religious and political groups.

At the same time, immigrant rights groups have begun to organize a national boycott and strike for May Day, May 1, to illustrate the historic positive impact of immigrant labor on the national economy.



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

New York, April 1.

The March 25th Coalition against HR4437, which organized the huge rally in Los Angeles, is calling for a Great American Boycott of no work, no school, no sales and no buying on May 1 to demand amnesty and full rights for all workers. The web site www.nohr4437.org has more information and a place to endorse.

In New York City the Troops Out Now Coalition is working with immigrant and other groups to organize a rally and march from Union Square on May Day in support of the national boycott. Its web site, www.troopsoutnow.org, will have updates on this developing action. □

Black/Latin@ unity stressed at labor banquet

By Monica Moorehead
Raleigh, N.C.

Black Workers for Justice held its 23rd annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Support for Labor Banquet April 1 in Raleigh, N.C. BWFJ was also commemorating its 25 years of community, workplace and anti-imperialist organizing. The major theme of the banquet was "No to war, repression, racism... yes to peace, justice, reparations, human and workers rights."

BWFJ has a tradition of holding its banquet on the first Saturday in April to honor the memory of Dr. King, who was assassinated on April 4, 1968. King was not only a champion of civil rights but was an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam war and a proponent for workers' rights. He was killed in Memphis, Tenn. while supporting striking sanitation workers, mainly Black men, who were struggling for a living wage, better working conditions and dignity.

A majority of the 300 or more people who attended the banquet were labor, community and political organizers, mainly from the South but from other regions of the country as well. BWFJ has a close working relationship with UE Locals 150 and 160 that are carrying out organizing drives to sign up hundreds of thousands of public-sector workers into unions throughout North Carolina, a "right to work" state. North Carolina ranks 50th as the state with the lowest number of unionized workers.

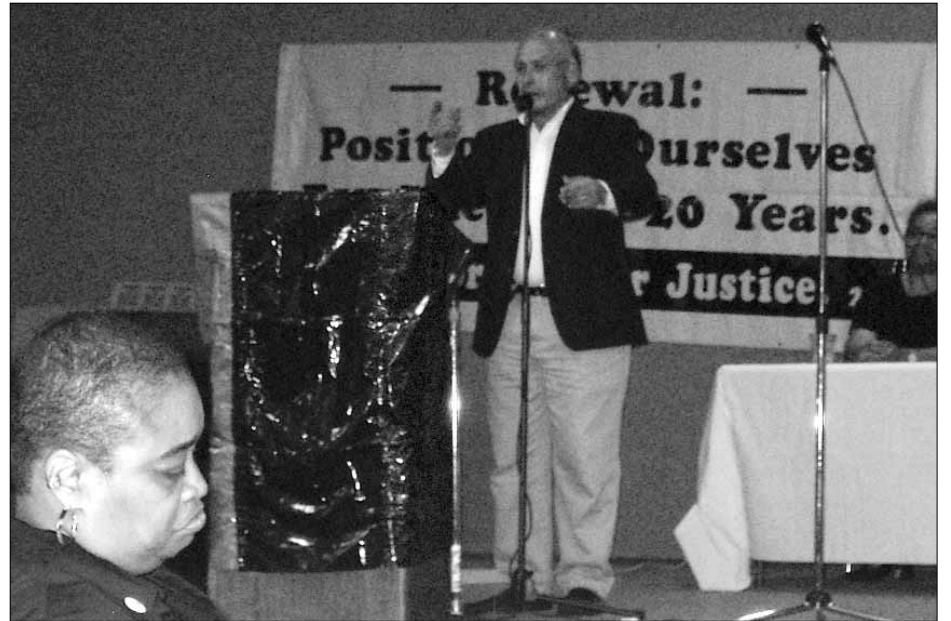
BWFJ's National vice-chair, Angaza Sababa Laughinghouse, stated in his welcoming remarks that the organization's goal has been to build class-wide unity especially among African American, Latin@, Indigenous, women and white workers. The banquet was emceed by Nathannette Mayo.

BWFJ has had a close working relationship with the Farm Labor Organizing Committee that represents the interests of 8,000 migrant workers in North Carolina, who won their first union contract last year. The national president of FLOC, Baldemar Velasquez, traveled from Toledo, Ohio, to Raleigh to thank BWFJ for all the years of solidarity work.

Ashaki Binta, BWFJ's Director of Organization, introduced Rueben Solis from the San Antonio, Texas-based Southwest Workers Union. He remarked on the historical links between racist repression at home with war abroad and U.S. capitalist expansion.

Saladin Muhammad, National Chair of BWFJ, introduced the banquet's keynote speaker, Malcolm Suber, a leader of the People's Hurricane Relief Fund based in New Orleans. Suber, a Hurricane Katrina survivor, publicly recognized several other survivors in the audience.

Suber spoke about how the local ruling class has taken full advantage of the Katrina tragedy to carry out union-busting tactics in New Orleans in order to gen-



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Baldemar Velasquez, Farm Labor Organizing Committee president, speaks at April 1 banquet. Sitting left is BWFJ leader Ashaki Binta.

trify the city. These tactics have led to the decertification of the teachers union and the transformation of public schools into charter schools. The union at Charity Hospital has also been decertified.

The upcoming April 22 mayoral election in New Orleans are threatening to disenfranchise tens of thousands of African-American voters who are still dispersed throughout the country because little to nothing has been done to rebuild the poorest sections of New Orleans.

Suber described how white contractors bring Latin@ workers to New Orleans to do the most dangerous clean-up work,

especially getting rid of toxic waste without any kind of protection. After the work is completed, instead of these undocumented workers getting paid a decent wage, the contractors often turn them into the Immigration Naturalization Service for deportation.

Suber stated, "If the levees had been repaired before the storm, we would not have to pay billions of dollars to rebuild... We have to take on the monster of the world that is drowning people here and around the world.... We have to join the struggle of immigrants with the struggle of Gulf Coast survivors." □

DETROIT

City Council joins Michigan campaign to 'Free the Cuban Five!'

By Cheryl LaBash

In a unanimous and historic vote on March 29, the Detroit City Council called "for Freedom for Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González—the Cuban Five." The resolution was submitted as part of a statewide push to pierce the curtain of silence that has clung stubbornly to this case since the "Five" were arrested in 1998. The Michigan Campaign to Free the Cuban Five project of the Justice for Cuba Coalition organized a public meeting featuring noted attorney Leonard Weinglass and Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, a fundraiser netting at least \$1,000 for the Freedom Fund and statewide showings of the joint Cuban/Irish video production "Mission Against Terror."

A cover letter from retired Judge Claudia Morcom submitted the resolution and displayed the wide support the Five are receiving in this area, from City Council representatives and the ACLU to Michigan Welfare Rights and anti-war organizations. Morcom herself, a veteran civil and political rights advocate, traveled to Atlanta to witness oral arguments on February 14 and presented the violations of the rights of the Cuban Five to the United Nations on March 13.

Not only did the City Council call for freeing the Five, the resolution also demanded "an end to the blockade of Cuba" as well as "restoring the right of U.S. citizens to freely travel and exchange with the people of Cuba." Several cases are pending against Michigan residents for travel to Cuba including two health care workers from Port Huron and the U.S./Cuba Labor

Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, Religious Director, Chautauqua Institution, and Leonard Weinglass.



Exchange, that has been threatened with a \$27,000 pre-penalty notice.

Extradite Posada Carriles!

Most important in this statistically poorest major city in the United States, "the City of Detroit calls on the U.S. government to extradite Luis Posada Carriles to the sovereign country of Venezuela without further delay so he may stand trial for the 1976 bombing of Cubana airlines resulting in the deaths of 73 people."

The phony U.S. "war on terror" wrings national resources out of local and state budgets to shower destruction on Iraq, but terrorists plotting in Miami are handled with kid gloves.

These anti-Cuba terrorists themselves are enmeshed with U.S. government covert aggression throughout Latin America, Central America and the Caribbean. The CIA trained Luis Posada Carriles, who is presently detained in El Paso, Texas by U.S. immigration authorities. Bolivarian Venezuela is demanding his extradition because the 1976 Cubana airline bombing over Barbados was planned in Venezuela.

His partner Orlando Bosch, one of the leading terrorists in the Western Hemisphere, was also involved in the bombing of the airline. The first President

Bush granted Bosch resident status despite a Justice Department report recommending denial. "Bosch lives a normal life and is often granted a place of honor at presidential speeches," Weinglass said, and "the lawyer who introduced Bosch to Jeb Bush is named Batista, the son of the former dictator, who is now on the Florida Supreme Court."

The 'Brothers to the Rescue' aircraft that was used to overfly Cuba was formerly flown by the CIA-backed Contras, who waged an illegal war under the direction of and funded by the United States against Nicaragua during the 1980s. The Miami terrorists have been involved in countless covert actions, from the Iran-Contra deals with Oliver North in the 1980s to Nixon's Watergate burglars in the 1990s.

Cuban Five legal victory invigorates struggle

In August 2005 a unanimous decision of a three-judge panel from the 11th Circuit Court overturned the convictions of the Cuban Five. The 93-page decision concluded that a fair trial was impossible in Miami. Nonetheless, the U.S. attorney general decided to prolong the unjust imprisonment of the Five heroes by asking an en banc review by the entire 11th Circuit



WW PHOTOS: DAVID SOLE

Judge Claudia Morcom and representative of Canadian Cuba Friendship.

Court. A reinvigorated international campaign to free the Cuban Five is underway to counteract the stalling and build support leading to a new trial or their release.

The Detroit public meeting held at Wayne State University Law School Partrich Auditorium included a special presentation by Ignacio Meneses, co-chair of the National Network on Cuba, recognizing retired Council President Maryann Mahaffey for her steadfast support and assistance in solidarity with Cuba, and a message from the Cuban interests section that also recognized her.

Weinglass and Campbell's spellbinding presentations revealed in detail nearly half a century of aggression and intrigue that is being brought to public view through the struggle to free these five courageous men.

Although the case of the Cuban Five involves civil liberty and human rights issues, it also goes to the heart of the historical aims of U.S. imperialism in the Americas. This imperialist domination through neoliberal policies, kidnappings and coups is being rolled back throughout Latin America and bitterly fought in Haiti. A demonstration called for May 20 to demand "Hands off Cuba and Venezuela!" is being built hand in hand with Free the Cuban Five efforts. □

AFRICA

Threat of U.S./NATO military intervention grows

By Greg Butterfield

The United States and the former colonial powers of Europe, under the auspices of NATO and the European Union, are taking new steps to deepen their direct military intervention in Africa.

On March 29, President George W. Bush publicly called for NATO military intervention in Sudan. As justification, he repeated charges of government-sponsored genocide in the Darfur region, without mentioning the long-time interests of the U.S. in the country's vast oil wealth, or the U.S. sponsorship of separatist forces.

Bush has bipartisan support for his latest military threats against Sudan. In the U.S. Senate, Democrat Joseph Biden and Republican Sam Brownback are sponsoring a resolution calling for NATO troops to be sent in and for the enforcement of a no-flight zone over Darfur.

President Omar al-Bashir, head of the national unity government created after the end of Sudan's 50-year north/south civil war in 2004, warned March 20 that the U.S. "risked another Iraq" if non-African troops were sent into his country.

"We have witnessed what happened in Iraq and Afghanistan and learned lessons that shouldn't be repeated on the African continent," said Bashir. (Reuters, March 20)

Currently 7,000 African Union peacekeepers are stationed in Darfur, along with 13,000 UN humanitarian aid workers. Washington and London have been pressuring the AU to make way for United Nations troops. Bush says he wants NATO forces to add muscle to a UN presence.

U.S.-authored resolutions being pushed through the UN Security Council are laying the groundwork for invasion—just as they did in Iraq.

In the meantime, the U.S. is providing logistical support to Rwandan army "peacekeepers" in Darfur. The Rwandan army has been implicated in genocide during its U.S.-instigated invasion of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Tens of thousands of protestors made their opposition to U.S., NATO and UN troops clear on March 8, when they ral-

lied in Khartoum, the capital city, chanting, "Down, down U.S.A." and "UN peacekeepers, bring your coffins."

NATO war games

More than 7,000 troops from the new NATO Response Force (NRF) are scheduled to carry out military exercises in the mountainous archipelago of Cape Verde, off Africa's northwest coast, from June 1 to July 12. It's the first time NATO has held war games in Africa, and the first time such maneuvers have taken place at such a distance from Europe or North America.

"NATO to stage African show of force" was the blunt headline of a March 27 French News Agency report on the war games.

Countries of the nearby southern Sahara region were racked by famine last year after a locust plague destroyed crops in late 2004. The United States stood aside while children died of hunger. But these exercises, insisted on by Washington, have a budget of "tens of million of euros" according to AFP's anonymous military source.

Not coincidentally, Mauritania, one of Cape Verde's closest neighbors on Africa's western coast and home of a major oil discovery, was the site of a popular uprising that ousted a pro-U.S. regime last year. In fact, the U.S. had initially proposed conducting the war games in the Mauritanian desert.

U.S. Gen. James L. Jones, NATO's operational commander, complained March 31 that other NATO member countries were not providing promised military personnel and materials for the Cape Verde maneuvers or the NRF, which is supposed to be fully operational by October 2006. Jones said there were shortfalls of 25 to 35 percent on troops and material for the coming year.

NATO leaders agreed to create the "rapid response force" at a summit in Prague in November 2002—before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and subsequent rise of an intransigent Iraqi resistance.

Washington has groomed the NRF as another means of rapidly deploying troops to "trouble spots" far outside the original boundaries of the anti-Soviet North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The European capitalist powers may be dragging their heels when it comes to U.S.-dominated NATO. But that doesn't mean these former colonial overlords want to be left out of the new "scramble for Africa."

The European Union is planning to send 1,500 troops, under German command, to Central Africa this summer, allegedly to protect national elections scheduled for mid-June in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It will be just the second foreign deployment of German-commanded forces since World War II. The first was in 1999, during the U.S.-led war against Yugoslavia.

U.S. plan: re-colonization

Why are U.S. imperialism and its European allies/rivals pushing for more direct military control in Africa now? What does it mean for the long-struggling people of that continent, and for the anti-war and progressive movements in this country?

The plan to recolonize African countries liberated in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and to more openly dominate neocolonies, has been taking shape since the early 1990s, with the Clinton administration's invasion of Somalia.

Then Workers World wrote: "The U.S. occupation of Somalia under the auspices of the United Nations is in many ways an experiment to test a new method for the recolonization and domination of other African countries, prized by the United States either for their strategic location or their fabulous natural resources and raw materials.

"Washington feels free to pursue an aggressive policy toward these countries now that the Soviet Union has collapsed. The mere existence of the Soviet camp served African countries as a diplomatic, economic, and military counter-weight to the designs of the U.S. and the capitalist powers in Europe. ...

"The official U.S. line is that these countries must be targeted for armed, outside (that is, U.S. and European) intervention because civil wars or potential civil wars have made these countries 'ungovernable.'

"That, of course, is a resort to the racist, colonial position that Africa is 'not ready for independence.' This line also conve-

niently obscures the fact that the CIA has a hand in fomenting many of the same 'civil wars.'" (WW, June 24, 1993)

Clinton's Somalian adventure ended in disaster. The U.S. forces' brutally racist behavior united the population in a people's war that drove out the invaders and their superior Black Hawk-type technology—just as Bush's invasion of Iraq has provoked a determined people's resistance in that country.

Nevertheless, the U.S. ruling class is still determined to seize Africa's resources outright, and has steadily increased the pressure on debt-ridden and war-torn countries to open their markets to U.S. corporations and their lands to U.S. military bases.

Sudan has been a particular target since it opposed the first Gulf War in 1991. In August 1998, then-President Clinton bombed Sudan's main pharmaceutical plant, using fabricated evidence of chemical weapons manufacturing. Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark led a fact-finding delegation that reported first-hand evidence exposing this U.S. terrorism.

Since 1999, Sudan has become a major oil exporter. Its main customer is the People's Republic of China.

With Big Oil's dreams of unfettered domination of Iraq going up in smoke, U.S. imperialism is lashing out—and driven to desperate acts, it is targeting oil producing countries that refuse to bow to its control, like Iran, Venezuela and Sudan.

The Bush cabal may feel that Sudan is an easy target. It is a poor country, decimated by decades of civil war and divisions rooted in its colonial history under Britain. Sudan's government has been extensively demonized in the media, and the country's problems are not well understood or appreciated by the progressive movement in the U.S. and Europe.

Progressive and revolutionary forces in the West must be on alert and ready to act in solidarity against U.S./NATO intervention in Sudan, Congo, Zimbabwe, and anywhere else on the continent. The heroic African people, who have shouldered so much of the burden of struggle against imperialism and HIV/AIDS, deserve nothing less. □

'De-privatize the subject of immigration.'

The following letter was submitted to Workers World by Gerardo Cajamarca Alarcón, a Colombian human rights advocate and member of the Coca-Cola workers' union, SINALTRAINAL. Cajamarca is in exile in the United States because of death threats he received from paramilitaries.

De-privatize the subject of immigration. This is an urgent necessity for progress.

I believe that the subject of immigration has many approaches. During almost 700 days living in the United States, I have had the opportunity to participate in activities with several organizations.

Each organization and individual works hard for immigrants in the broad context of human rights, everyone in their own way, with their particular vision and values, with their political and economic resources, but all in general have the desire to do the right thing.

But I have always found the best and greatest learning experience could be

found in the streets, on the bus, in the clinic, in the park, speaking with people. Surely people know much more than we believe they do.

People know what is just and unjust because every one has experienced or suffered it; they know why they come here, they have suffered from poverty or war, or both, and they are here to transform this terrible reality in their own way and according to their possibilities.

We work hard. We study hard. Some of us think of returning to live in our homeland, particularly those of us who are here against our will. But those who make the decision to become nationals or to permanently reside in this country have the right to make it without discrimination or racism. This is, in the end, a country of immigrants.

Reality and what to do

Steven Camarota, author of a recent study, affirms that immigration to the

United States reached a record level between March of 2000 and March of 2005, with 7.9 million new immigrants, including documented and undocumented—the highest number reached in a five-year period in the history of this country. More than half of those—3.7 million—who arrived after 2000 are without papers, the Center for Immigration Studies report says, using data provided by the United States census. By March 2005, some 35.2 million documented and undocumented immigrants were living in the United States—a record level.

The measures to stop immigration are ridiculous; fences as high and expensive as they are useless, since people will continue to build tunnels or devise other means of arriving at their destiny.

But while we are here there are many issues to resolve.

The first is to accept reality: We are here, more will arrive by thousands and

we will remain here until we reach our objectives. So it is necessary to set up rules for coexistence; this means justice, that we be treated with dignity as human beings. This implies a program of basic issues: work in worthy conditions, a job with just wages and without discrimination; good health services, education and social security at all levels and in equal conditions.

The second subject is to put in perspective whether immigration is legal or illegal. I say "to put in perspective" because immigrants will always exist; that has been the history of humanity.

What is irrational is that millions of people must leave their countries of origin, against their will, to arrive someplace where they are persecuted as if they were criminals.

We have the responsibility to confront and resolve the objective causes of the irrational phenomenon of forced immigration. To struggle against war is a fun-

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Youth disrupt ceremony for right-wing Cuban

By Tom Soto
San Juan, Puerto Rico

At times what may seem like an obscure political event can give rise to a course of struggle. This is especially true when there is a deep economic and political crisis brewing, such as the current situation in Puerto Rico.

On March 29, as members of the House of Representatives, which is dominated by the right wing pro-statehood New Progressive Party, attempted to hold a "recognition ceremony" to thank Julio Labatut Escarra—a right-wing Cuban-born businessman—for his "philanthropic contributions in Puerto Rico," a militant demonstration of "independentistas" marched outside the capitol building chanting "Labatut, Labatut, asesino eres tu" (Labatut, Labatut, you are an assassin).

Julio Labatut Escarra has been publicly tied to the right-wing death squads that operated in Puerto Rico in the 1970s and 1980s and implicated in the assassination of Carlos Muñiz Varela in 1979.

Varela, also born in Cuba, was a worker who married and lived in Puerto Rico. In 1979, he was 26 and had two children, Yamaira and Carlos. He operated the Varadero Travel Agency, promoting travel and dialogue with revolutionary Cuba—a policy that the U.S. government opposed.

Varela was also active in the Comité Nacional de la Brigada Antonio Maceo (the National Committee of the Antonio Maceo Brigade), which organized solidarity trips to Cuba.

According to Milagros Rivera of the Cuba Solidarity Committee, "With the view

of ending travel to Cuba, Carlos Muñiz Varela was assassinated by the FBI through its agents in Puerto Rico. Omega 7, a terrorist organization created and funded by the CIA, took responsibility for the assassination."

Labatut is protected by the FBI, which for 26 years has not turned over evidence to the Puerto Rican Department of Justice regarding the murder.

Repression and economic crisis awakens militancy

The attempt to honor Julio Labatut Escarra on the heels of the FBI assassination of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos on Sept. 23 and FBI raids against pro-independence activists in February; in an economic atmosphere where the prices of all commodities and food stuffs have risen dras-

tically in the last year; where a 7 percent sales tax is being considered by the legislature; and in the midst of a fiscal and debt crisis where the Puerto Rican government refuses to negotiate wages with public employees such as the Electrical Industry Workers Union and the Federation of Teachers placed the independence movement in a position to set an example.

The demonstration on Wednesday, which was called on relatively short notice by family members and the Movimiento Independentista Nacional Hostosiano (Hostos National Independence Movement), the Comité de Solidaridad Con Cuba (Cuba Solidarity Committee), the Socialist Front and others grew to almost 1,000 people.

Demonstrators marched up to the



Reporter Humberto Trias thrown to ground by police.

doors of the capitol building chanting: "Assassin, assassin," while police and capitol security outside and inside the building blocked the entrances.

At one point the environmental activist Alberto De Jesús Mercado, popularly known as Tito Kayak, attempted to climb the flagpole in front of the building, which was flying the U.S. flag. When the police rushed off to stop him, the entrance doors to the building were left minimally protected, allowing militant youth to penetrate the sanctity of the colonial legislature.

In the ensuing struggle inside the building, windows were broken, furniture was trashed, paintings were torn off the walls, and the glass encasement holding Puerto Rico's (colonial) constitution was cracked. Reporters like Humberto Trias covering the event were thrown to the ground by the police, and security personnel used fire extinguishers to repel the demonstrators. All this thoroughly disrupted the ceremony honoring the terrorist.

Second disruption is carried out

After riot police were bused in to reinforce the building, representa-



Protesters at capital during ceremony 'honoring' Julio Labatut Escarra.

PHOTOS: ALVIN COUTO

Continued on page 11

Bolivarian revolution advances with seizure of oil fields

By Deirdre Griswold

What happens in a real revolution? Nothing could be simpler: power and property are taken away from the privileged few in order to distribute to the people the wealth the exploiters once hogged.

Venezuela has once again confirmed that it is on the road of revolution. It has moved to gain more control over oil, its most precious resource. It calls its revolution Bolivarian after the Great Liberator, Simón Bolívar, in order to stress that necessary social change requires the liberation of the country and the region from foreign domination.

Near the end of March, the National Assembly passed a law that gives the state oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela or PDVSA, at least a 60 percent stake in projects where foreign oil companies once got the lion's share of the profits. The law applies to 32 oil fields that are pumping about one-fifth of the country's production.

Foreign oil companies will still be making money in Venezuela—just not as much as before.

Sixteen companies, including Royal Dutch Shell, the Spanish-Argentine company Repsol YPF, Brazil's Petrobras and China National Petroleum agreed to the new contracts. Italy's Eni and France's Total, however, refused to go along with the new terms.

For the first time ever, the government then seized their oil fields, putting them

under PDVSA's management.

"These two companies are refusing to abide by our laws," said Energy Minister Rafael Ramírez in a press conference in Caracas on April 3. "They won't accept state control over our resources, and they won't accept the taxes and royalty rates."

The U.S. oil giant ExxonMobil, on the other hand, got around the problem by selling off its stake in the 15,000-barrel-a-day Quiamare-La Ceiba field to a Spanish company rather than resist the new law. One reason it didn't want to jeopardize its relations with the government is that it still holds a 42 percent stake in a much larger heavy-oil project at Cerro Negro, which is not affected by the new law.

These three oil companies are among the six largest in the world.

What does the Venezuelan government of President Hugo Chávez want to do with the money?

It is moving to transform Venezuela by lifting up the poor majority who in the past got virtually nothing from the country's oil riches. The state's enhanced revenue will go to the many social projects it has launched in recent years, with a priority on literacy and general education; medical clinics for the poor, many staffed by Cuban doctors; subsidized food in poor communities; new housing and land reform.

President Chávez recently announced that 150,000 new houses for the poor will be built by the end of the year. The mayor of Greater Caracas, Juan Barreto, has

announced that to alleviate the housing problem and combat high rents, the government expects to expropriate about 400 apartment buildings in the city. To be seized, a building must be at least 10 years old and the owner must have collected at least five times the building's value in rents.

Venezuela has also been helping poor people in other countries who have been hit by the worldwide increase in the price of heating oil. Many cities in the U.S. itself have now signed on to receive Venezuelan oil at a low cost—just at a time when the U.S. government has cut heating subsidies for the poor.

One of Venezuela's major goals is the regional integration of Latin America as a giant economic bloc with its own powerful banks, telecommunications and developed infrastructure. All this has been impossible ever since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 declared all of Latin America to be under the domination of the United States.

Washington's reaction to the ongoing revolution in Venezuela is deepening hostility—which should come as no surprise, considering the terrible war the Bush administration has launched in the Middle East, for no other reason than to control that oil-rich region. Venezuela has what some consider to be the largest recoverable oil reserves in the world.

The Virginian-Pilot, a newspaper from the Hampton Roads area where the U.S. Navy has an enormous base, reported on

March 28 that: "The Navy will send an aircraft carrier strike group, with four ships, a 60-plane air wing and 6,500 sailors, to Caribbean and South American waters for a major training exercise, it was announced Monday.

"Some defense analysts suggested that the unusual two-month-long deployment, set to begin in early April, could be interpreted as a show of force by anti-American governments in Venezuela and Cuba.

"The presence of a U.S. carrier task force in the Caribbean will definitely be interpreted as some sort of signal by the governments of Cuba and Venezuela," said Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute, a pro-defense think-tank in Washington.

"If I was sitting in the Venezuela capital looking at this American task force, the message I would be getting is America still is not so distracted by Iraq that it is unable to enforce its interests in the Caribbean," Thompson said.

The Venezuelan government is taking the threat seriously and has recently purchased military aircraft and small arms from Russia. It has gained enormous prestige in the region through its progressive policies and the masses of people at home are solidly behind the revolution, as shown in every election for the last seven years.

But the leaders, many of whom, like Chávez, come from the military, know that to defend themselves against imperialism the Venezuelan people need more than good will. □

Workers without borders

After more than a week of massive demonstrations across the country for immigrant rights, followed by student walkouts—an estimated 40,000 youth walked out of their schools in Los Angeles alone—you would think there would be even more pressure on the sponsors of the Sensenbrenner-King bill to withdraw this draconian piece of legislation, which criminalizes all undocumented workers and those who aid or employ them.

Its sponsors, however, are hoping for an anti-immigrant backlash and are counting on the decades of poisonous agitation by the capitalist media against “illegal aliens,” enhanced by the economic crunch facing many U.S.-born workers who are losing their jobs and benefits. Day after day, the media claim that the crimes of capitalist bosses against workers are because immigrants are “taking your jobs.”

Meanwhile, a slew of other bills, some supported by Democrats and Republicans, sound less repressive but still make it impossible for most immigrants to ever get permanent residency and would set up “guest worker” programs. They are waiting in the wings in case the Sensenbrenner bill fails in the Senate.

It is important for every worker to know that anything short of full amnesty and full rights for immigrants is a victory for the bosses and a setback for all workers. When workers who dare demand unpaid wages, or organize a union, or complain about long hours and hazardous conditions are threatened with deportation, the working class as a whole is under attack.

This is a global economy, as everyone should realize if they look at where the things they use come from. Especially because of the imperialist-dominated rules of trade and commerce encoded in the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and various “free trade” agreements, capital is free to go where it wants in pursuit of higher profits.

For a very long time, this export of capital from the more industrialized countries has been undermining the economies of other countries all over the world, especially where they had been colonized by force. This imperialist domination of the world began over a century ago. Karl Marx wrote about it in 1848 in the Communist Manifesto, when he said that cheap commodities were the bourgeoisie’s “heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls.” Once the countries were penetrated by foreign capital, however, the commodities didn’t remain so cheap and the people were further impoverished.

What is more recent is the massive movement of labor from the super-exploited areas in search of jobs. Even though in much of the world, especially the wealthy imperialist countries, these workers face anti-immigrant laws, they still will risk everything, including their lives, to slip over the borders because

the economies of their home countries have been decimated. Where there once was a market for home-grown agricultural products, that market has been taken over by the transnational agribusiness companies. So peasants from Mexico, for example, who used to raise a family on a small plot of land, are now working in hotels and restaurants in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York for miserable wages—if they get paid at all.

The capitalist laws that criminalize immigrant workers have one intention: to keep this growing sector of the working class from being able to organize and fight for better wages and conditions. The laws are not to keep them out altogether. Far from it. The bosses need immigrant workers, but they want them here under semi-slave conditions. It’s a huge two-tier strategy to divide the working class.

According to the 2000 census, immigrants made up 12.4 percent of the workforce. But that’s only half the story. In the preceding decade, half the new workers were immigrants. New immigrants accounted for the entire labor growth in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic regions, and 72 percent of the growth in the Pacific region.

Many are paid less than the minimum wage. Twenty percent of all low-wage families are headed by immigrants. And they are often in the most dangerous jobs. By 2002, immigrant workers made up 15 percent of the workforce but accounted for 69 percent of workplace fatalities.

The recent demonstrations revealed the pent-up anguish of immigrant workers over their situation and their anger over being treated as criminals when all they want is a job. But they also revealed their hope that organization, being able to come out in large numbers for the first time, is the answer.

It’s up to the labor movement and all progressive people to help keep that hope alive. In this time of massive layoffs in the industrial sector, the slashing of wages and the phasing out of union benefits like pensions and health care, the potential of the working class to mount a massive fightback is the only thing that can turn the situation around. This offensive by the bosses is worldwide—as we are seeing in France right now. It doesn’t come from immigration. It comes from the growing competition that always accompanies capitalist overproduction—when the rapid growth of the means of production far outstrips the market for their products, leading eventually to crisis and catastrophe.

It’s time to struggle once again for the truth that an injury to one is an injury to all. The greatest solidarity must be built between U.S.-born workers and immigrants, whether “legal” or undocumented, in order to turn back the assault of the billionaire corporations. That’s only possible if labor comes out unequivocally for amnesty and full immigrant rights. □

FRANCE

Youth, unions continue protests

By LeiLani Dowell

Protests continue in France, led by youth and trade unions, against the First Employment Contract, or CPE, a bill that would make it easier for employers to fire youth under the age of 26 at will. The law was proposed and pushed through the French parliament by Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin with little parliamentary debate and no consultation with youth or trade unions.

Youth and allies see this contract as an attack on labor laws that have protected all workers in France and have been won in hard-fought struggles.

French police say that more than 3,500 people have been arrested since the beginning of the protests on March 7. Union leaders have issued an April 16 deadline for the government to revoke the law.

In a country where youth unemployment is a staggering 23 percent—and 50 percent in the poorer immigrant suburbs—government officials are now scrambling to appease the rage and frustration of the youth, but on government terms. President Jacques Chirac signed CPE into law on April 2 but did not implement it immediately, offering mild amendments such as shortening the two-year contract for youth to one year, and adding language that would require employers to give reason for termination.

The youth are saying they won’t accept any amendments to the law, only its repeal.

Meanwhile, hard-line Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy has been poised to take charge of negotiations over the law, even as he demonizes the protesting youth. Sarkozy reportedly said of the demonstrators on April 4, “It is giving them too much credit to ascribe an ideology to them. These are just hoodlums, who come to break and pillage. I’m not sure there is an ideology behind all this.”

Sarkozy is contending for a presidential nomination from the ruling Union for a Popular Movement party, with Villepin as his main rival.

Workers World spoke to Jean-Claude Keusch, a retired journalist for the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail) union confederation magazine VO (Vie Ouvrière, Worker’s Life), who was at the demonstration in Paris April 4. He said:

“More than 3 million people were in the streets in France on April 4, according to organizers of the anti-CPE demonstrations. A million according to the police.

“Throughout the demonstration shouts calling for a ‘general strike’ could be heard. On the afternoon of April 5, union leaders were scheduled to meet with the government for discussions.

“Whatever the size was, one thing is certain: far from weakening, the anti-CPE movement once again proved its determination. Another certainty: the standing of Prime Minister de Villepin reached its low point. He is now physically exhausted, as he showed yesterday in front of the deputies of Parliament.

“This, following the astonishing, even surrealistic televised announcement made by head of state Jacques Chirac last week [that he would ratify the CPE], when his voice was out of sync with the visual presentation, has widened the gap even more between a broad part of public opinion and the choices carried out by the government.

“France has entered one of its most serious political crises in the history of the Fifth Republic. Even within the majority center-right government, voices are raised that condemn the strategy carried out in Matignon [the prime minister’s residence].

“And more and more Minister of Interior Sarkozy appears to the eyes of the right wing as the man who could get the government out of this quicksand. But it is a good bet that this change in personnel will be only a meager response to the anger of the street. As long as the CPE is not definitively withdrawn, there are few chances that a serious dialogue will begin between the majority of people in France and the current government.” □



New York, March 26.

WW PHOTO

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U.S. occupation responsible for killings, torture in Iraq

By John Catalinotto

In just the first four days of April, 16 U.S. occupation troops in Iraq, mostly Marines and including two helicopter pilots, have been reported dead or missing.

U.S. officials and journalists had noted as March ended that there was an “upside” to the massacre of over 1,000 Iraqi civilians that month following the Feb. 23 bombing of the Golden Dome mosque in Samarra. During March, only 32 U.S. troops died, the lowest monthly body count since early 2004. But the April numbers indicate that the March figures may have been just a blip in a long campaign.

Iraqis, both police and army members but also civilians, are still being killed in firefights, bombings and executions, some of them targeted by U.S. troops. Meanwhile, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw have been pressuring the Iraqi occupation government to get rid of its designated Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jafari, and form a new government.

Under this pressure, the alliance set to govern Iraq, composed of seven parties of which three are the most powerful Shiite-based parties—SCIRI, Dawa and the Mehdi Army—has pulled back in its support for al-Jafari. Four of these parties have said they would no longer back him. Al-Jafari has said he has no plans to withdraw. (Washington Post, April 3)

After Rice and Straw left, Mehdi Army leader Muqtada al-Sadr criticized their “meddling in Iraqi affairs” as undermining Iraqi sovereignty. While some people blame the Mehdi Army for the sectarian killing of Sunni Iraqis, others in the active Iraqi resistance still look to Muqtada’s Mehdi Army as the most likely of the Shiite forces to join the struggle to kick out the U.S. occupation.

Iraqi academics killed

According to a report from Abu Tamam published on Uruknet, on March 30 U.S. occupation soldiers shot and killed a 72-year-old professor, Qais Husameldeen Juma’a, as he left the Agriculture College of the University of Baghdad and passed their check point. The professor had returned from Australia to supervise a few Ph.D. students at the college.

If this news is confirmed, Juma’a would be only the latest of hundreds of Iraqi intellectuals assassinated since the beginning of the U.S.-led occupation. For all

these killings, whether or not the occupying troops pulled the triggers, they have legal responsibility according to international rules of occupation.

To investigate this problem further and to publicize these atrocities, anti-occupation organizations in Spain, Belgium and the United States have organized a seminar for April 22 in Madrid. The meeting is called “A War Launched to Erase both the Culture and Future of the Iraqi People—International Seminar on the Assassination of Iraqi Academics and Health Professionals.”

The Spanish Campaign against the Occupation and for the Sovereignty of Iraq (CEOSI), The BRussells Tribunal and the International Action Center are calling for the international seminar. These groups’ news release states that the following day, April 23, “there will be an international meeting of both European and U.S. organizations with the purpose of encouraging international solidarity with Iraq.”

“Four relevant Iraqi guests—activists, academics and medical doctors—will participate in the public session. They are currently documenting the dirty war in Iraq: Eman A. Khamas, Dr. Ali Abdullah, Dr Sami Wasfi (there was an assassination attempt on his life) and Dr Ghazwan Al-Mukhtar.” Experts and activists from the Spanish state, Belgium and the U.S., among others, will address the seminar.

The Association of Iraqi Academics estimates that more than 180 academics and an additional 311 primary and secondary teachers of both sexes have been killed in Iraq during the last four months alone. Also, workers attached to the National Iraqi Medicare System are being targeted for a mass campaign of extortion, threats and murders, and “Iraqi hospitals and clinics are being attacked and systematically raided by U.S. occupation forces.”

One, two, many proofs of torture

In mid-March the web magazine Salon raised questions as to whether the Iraqi known as Haj Ali was really the man shown in the infamous photograph of a prisoner, wearing a hood, standing on boxes in Abu Ghraib prison with electrodes attached to his limbs. In subsequent newspaper articles Haj Ali said he might not be the one in that particular picture but that he was tortured and photographed like that. Most of these articles gave the false impression that the discrepancy somehow invalidated his story.

To set the record straight, Haj Ali spoke to two reporters in Amman, Jordan on March 21, the article published on the web site of the Anti-Imperialist Camp. Haj Ali told the reporters: “The truth to this is that I was not the only one who was tortured in this barbaric fashion. Almost all prisoners in the part of the prison that I was familiar with were tortured in this way.”

“That doesn’t change the fact that I was one of those who had to stand on that cardboard box, with a black hood placed over my head and electrical wires attached to my hands. As an Iraqi person who has gone through Abu Ghraib, I represent all those tormented people.

“First they denied ever having tortured people in this way. Then they claimed those were just isolated cases. Now they admit that they have tortured many, many people in that way. They do so to discredit us, but on the other hand, it also means that this form of torture was not an isolated case. It has been made public. That is a result of our campaign work.

“Since my release and the founding of our Association of Victims of American Occupation Prisons, we have had 1,300 activities to protest the occupation and especially the private torture companies whose services are employed by the U.S. military. Nobody could imagine that our small association would have been able to do all that, without any official financial assistance. By dogged perseverance, donations and help from friends and some media, we have achieved something, even in the United States. We raised our voices and the Pentagon doesn’t like that.”

Told that the New York Times reports

that the man on the photograph is in fact Abdou Hussain Saad Faleh, Haj Ali said, “I know that man. There are also photos of Said Saleh Shain from Mosul. They gave him the nickname “Joker,” and he was tortured in the same way. There was also someone called Saddam Rawi. They attached the electrical wires to his ears. Still today, he has neurological problems, and he has brought suit at the United Nations.”

Haj Ali described some legal action his group is taking: “The lawsuit we filed is definitely one reason for the current smear campaign. We are an independent NGO. Many have tried to buy us, without success. The suit was brought a year and a half ago in the U.S. Two hundred cases were filed as a class-action lawsuit.

“Now we have brought 50 more former prisoners, among them several women, from Iraq to Jordan. And we have published a comprehensive documentation about the abducted and tortured, the victims of American policies.

“Our campaign is directed especially against Titan Group [Titan Corp., San Diego]. They are a private company conducting interrogations in the prisons. ... We are well aware that the United States is run with the mentality of a corporation. Important motives for the war against Iraq were the interests of those corporations: first of all Halliburton, which is directly owned by Dick Cheney, and all the companies associated with the Bush family.

“The United States cannot accept that their companies are targeted. It is a capitalist regime based on corporate profits, and complete disregard for the needs of human beings.” □

Rightist stopped in Puerto Rico

Continued from page 9

tive Jennifer González of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party, who was chairing the event, attempted to continue with the ceremony, but to the surprise of security officials a loud bang occurred, again interrupting the event.

This time Kayak had been able to crash through a window into the offices of Norma Burgos, the senator for the New Progressive Party. Havoc broke loose in the building as police and security officials, inside and outside, were seen running in all directions searching for the origins of the noise, and later for the intruder. Kayak was arrested.

The action shocked the bourgeois establishment in Puerto Rico.

According to capitol personnel, \$30,000 in damages were sustained. Ricardo Santos, speaking for the Socialist Workers Movement (Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores), referred to the assassination of Muñoz Varela, saying, “What is worth more: \$30,000 in damages, or the life of a person?”

Representative González, the main organizer of the ceremony, later told the press that she had

been asked by Carlos Varela Pérez, son of Carlos Muñoz Varela, not to honor Julio Labatut in light of his suspected role in the murder of his father.

Addressing the rally outside the capitol, Carlos Varela Pérez, now 31, reminded the crowd how in a television interview Labatut was once asked whether he played a role in the murder of Varela. His reply: “I did not have the honor of participating in that killing.”

Jorge Farinacci, spokesperson for the Socialist Front, commented in a written statement, “We repudiate this act of provocation by the legislature, of organizing a ceremony to honor an assassin and terrorist, whose hands are stained with the blood of independentistas and socialists.

“For more than three decades, the history of Julio Labatut is full of conspiracies to murder and to destroy the independence and socialist movement, and everything that appears to be like revolutionary Cuba.” □

Immigration letter

Continued from page 8

damental task for such a goal.

This task is not as complicated as it is claimed. One simply must learn to solve conflicts without arrogance, respecting the right and the dignity of others without any type of imposition.

It is essential to resolve the terrible inequalities between the haves and have-nots; whether this is among individuals, social classes or countries.

While hunger, war and lack of opportunities exist in our countries of origin, emigration will be a constant; the only variable will be the exact number of those who decide to leave their country to look for new opportunities.

The accumulation of wealth in a few hands is a crime. It is antisocial behavior.

This is the approach we must take if we want to seriously and responsibly consider the subject of immigration: poverty and

wealth, war, unjust commerce and free trade agreements, self-determination of the peoples and peaceful coexistence. But all these issues must be in the public domain. It is necessary to share them, discuss them in the schools, in the churches, in the unions and among all. Find the path, the proposal and make it a reality with those who govern—a practical and real exercise in democracy.

“De-privatize the subject of immigration” means not only taking the issue away from the offices of the corporations that profit from fear, but also from government offices or those who believe the community is something to plunder to satisfy their interests or egos, and bring it to the people as a whole for debate and action.

Gerardo Cajamarca Alarcón
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Protesters push into the capitol building.

PHOTO: ALVIN COUTO



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EDITORIAL

¿Renacimiento de la historia?

Durante el año pasado los gobiernos capitalistas que forman la Unión Europea han abierto un ataque reaccionario contra los derechos de organizaciones comunistas. Esto sorprende, dado que hace 15 años los filósofos más altamente pagados y estimados de los capitalistas declararon que la historia había terminado y que el reino eterno del mercado libre había comenzado. Los comunistas que quedaban se suponían que iban a ser ridiculizados, no reprimidos.

Pero en el 2005 el Consejo Europeo decidió distorsionar esta historia —la que había “terminado”— declarando que el Ejército Rojo de la Unión Soviética, que había detenido al imperialismo alemán a costa de un sacrificio enorme, era igualmente culpable junto a los líderes Nazis que iniciaron la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Esto haría ilegal el mostrar las banderas del comunismo, al igual que la odiada svástica.

Además, el gobierno de la República Checa, ahora un mini estado bajo el control del imperialismo alemán y estadounidense, vieron con urgencia el prohibir la Unión de Juventudes Comunistas, (KSM), porque se había atrevido a proclamar la existencia de la lucha de clases.

Y entonces el estado danés lanzó un ataque contra las organizaciones comunistas danesas precisamente en el momento en que estos grupos estaban exponiendo el papel reaccionario de las caricaturas anti-musulmanas y estaban intentando movilizar solidaridad con l@s inmigrantes oprimid@s musulmanes. El pretexto del gobierno: que l@s comunistas daneses —de varios partidos— apoyaron un llamado en el portal “Rebellion” cuya meta era la de desafiar la legislación anti-terrorista nacional, equivalente danesa de la Ley Patriótica (Patriot Act). Este llamado incluyó un pedido a que se hicieran donativos al ejército de liberación de Colombia, las FARC-EP, y al movimiento para la liberación de Palestina, el Frente Popular por la Liberación Palestina FPLP.

Todo el pueblo progresista en los Estados Unidos debe defender los derechos de los comunistas europeos para organizar y luchar por sus ideas. Organizaciones comunistas en Europa han montado una campaña para proteger los derechos del KSM. (<http://4ksm.kke.gr>)

Cualquiera que escuche esto posiblemente se preguntaría, “¿Por qué los capitalistas europeos, y especialmente sus partidos derechistas y neoliberales, creen que ahora tienen que utilizar métodos policíacos para prevenir que los comunistas se organicen? ¿Qué es lo que temen?”

En 2005 tuvieron éxitos electorales el Partido Comunista de la República Checa y el Partido Comunista de Portugal, un partido que abiertamente declara su programa socialista y que mejoró su posición igualmente en elecciones locales y nacionales por primera vez en décadas. Pero estos fueron sólo pequeños indicios de un cambio. ¿Es que los partidos capitalistas anticipan una resistencia de la clase trabajadora a su ataque despiadado?

Las señales están creciendo con fuerza. La rebelión entre la juventud en los suburbios oprimidos de Francia fue el primer indicio de una lucha verdadera.

Luego, comenzando en marzo, cientos de miles de trabajadores alemanes recurrieron al arma de la huelga. Han salido esporádicamente, intentando defender los avances económicos que hicieron después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, los que han estado bajo un ataque constante.

En Bretaña el 28 de marzo, una huelga de 1,5 millones de trabajador@s rechazó un plan del gobierno de reducir los beneficios de jubilación.

La huelga británica pasó casi desapercibida por los medios de comunicación mundiales porque, en la Francia cercana, algunos 3 millones de estudiantes y trabajador@s cerraron casi la mitad del país y marcharon en cada ciudad importante para defender el derecho a un empleo para l@s trabajador@s jóvenes.

Y ahora, al otro lado del Atlántico, en los Estados Unidos, el centro del imperialismo mundial, donde la historia no solamente supuestamente ha terminado y ha sido sepultada, millones de trabajador@s inmigrantes están levantándose e inundando las calles.

Esos que se jactaron de haber sepultado el comunismo realmente creyeron que era el fin de la lucha obrera. En ambas cosas se han equivocado. □

Carta de un inmigrante

Desprivatizar el tema de la inmigración

“Si la luna suave se desliza por cualquier cornisa sin permiso alguno, por qué el mojado precisa demostrar con visas que no es de Neptuno...”

— Ricardo Arjona

Desprivatizar el tema de la inmigración. Una necesidad urgente para avanzar.

Creo que el tema de inmigración tiene muchos enfoques, a casi 700 días de estar en Estados Unidos he tenido la oportunidad de participar en varias actividades junto a varias organizaciones.

Cada una de las organizaciones y distintas personas trabajan duro por los inmigrantes en el amplio contexto de los Derechos Humanos, cada cual a su manera, con su particular visión y valores, con su presupuesto político y económico pero todos en común tienen el deseo de acertar.

Pero la mejor y más grande experiencia y aprendizaje siempre la he encontrado en la calle, en el bus, en la clínica, en el parque, hablando con la gente. Es seguro que la gente sabe mucho más de lo que a veces creemos.

La gente sabe de lo justo y de lo injusto porque cada quien lo ha vivido o sufrido; sabe por qué viene aquí, ha padecido la pobreza o la guerra, o ambas, y están aquí para transformar esta terrible realidad a su manera y desde sus posibilidades.

Trabajamos o estudiamos duro. Algunos pensamos en regresar a vivir

en nuestra tierra, sobre todo quienes estamos aquí contra nuestra propia voluntad. Pero quienes toman la decisión de nacionalizarse o hacer su residencia permanente en este país tienen derecho a realizarlo sin ningún tipo de discriminación o racismo, al fin este es un país de inmigrantes.

Las realidades y el qué hacer:

Steven Camarota, autor de una reciente investigación afirma que “La inmigración a Estados Unidos alcanzó un nivel récord entre marzo de 2000 y marzo de 2005 llegando a 7,9 millones de nuevos inmigrantes —entre documentados e indocumentados— la cifra más alta alcanzada en un periodo de cinco años en la historia de esta nación.

Más de la mitad—3,7 millones— de los llegados después de 2000 son inmigrantes sin papeles, subraya el estudio realizado por el Centro de Estudios de Inmigración, con base en datos suministrados por el censo de Estados Unidos. A marzo de 2005 vivían en Estados Unidos 35,2 millones de inmigrantes—documentados e indocumentados—es decir un nivel récord.”

Resultan ridículas las medidas para parar la inmigración; muros tan altos y costosos como inservibles mientras que de cualquier manera la gente seguirá construyendo túneles o ideando otras formas para llegar a su destino.

Pero mientras estemos aquí hay muchos temas por resolver.

El primero es asumir la realidad: Aquí estamos, llegaremos más y por

miles y aquí nos quedaremos hasta alcanzar nuestros objetivos de tal manera que es necesario construir reglas de convivencia lo cual quiere decir Justicia, ser tratados con dignidad como seres humanos. Esto implica un plan en asuntos elementales: trabajo en condiciones dignas, un empleo con salarios justos y sin discriminación; buenos servicios de salud, educación y seguridad social en todos los niveles y en igualdad de condiciones.

El segundo tema es racionalizar la inmigración legal o ilegal. Digo racionalizarla por que el inmigrante siempre existirá, es así la historia de la humanidad.

Lo irracional es el hecho de que millones de personas tengan que salir de sus países de origen contra su voluntad para llegar a otro sitio y ser perseguidos como criminales.

Tenemos la responsabilidad de afrontar y resolver las causas objetivas del fenómeno irracional de la inmigración forzada. Luchar contra la guerra es tarea fundamental para tal propósito y esto no es un asunto tan complicado como se dice, se trata sencillamente de aprender a resolver conflictos sin arrogancia respetando el derecho y la dignidad del otro sin ningún tipo de imposición.

Resolver las terribles desigualdades entre los que tienen y los que no tienen es imprescindible; esto es entre individuos, entre clases sociales y entre países.

Mientras exista hambre, guerra y falta de oportunidades en nuestros países de origen, la emigración será una constante, la variable estará en el número ascendente de quienes deciden abandonar su país y buscar nuevas oportunidades.

La acumulación de riquezas en pocas manos es un crimen y un comportamiento antisocial.

Este es un enfoque que debemos trabajar si queremos tratar con seriedad y responsabilidad el asunto de la inmigración: pobreza y riqueza, guerra, comercio injusto y tratados de libre comercio, autodeterminación de los pueblos y convivencia pacífica. Pero todos estos temas deben ser de dominio popular, es necesario compartirlos, discutirlos en las escuelas, en las iglesias, en los sindicatos y entre todos construir el camino, la propuesta y hacerla realidad con los que gobiernan lo cual será un ejercicio práctico y real de democracia.

Desprivatizar el tema de la inmigración no solamente de los despachos de las corporaciones que se lucran con el miedo, desprivatizarlo también de los despachos gubernamentales o de quienes creen a la comunidad un botín para satisfacer sus intereses o sus egos.

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Anote la fecha:
13 & 14 de mayo

Hacia el renacer de la lucha global por el socialismo

13 & 14 de mayo
Ciudad de Nueva York

Tod@s están invitad@s a participar de una evaluación crítica de la situación mundial enfocándose en las lecciones más importantes que se pueden aprender y en las principales cuestiones que se necesitan tratar en la lucha mundial por el socialismo—pasado, presente y futuro.

Invitamos su participación en esta discusión.

Anote las fechas de la conferencia en su calendario.

Se están preparando materiales y documentos previos a la conferencia

¿Es la dirección política e ideológica del movimiento de masas un factor decisivo para derrotar el afán de guerra imperialista?

¿Son el internacionalismo, la solidaridad y la perspectiva revolucionaria más vitales hoy que nunca?

¿Todavía son válidas y esenciales las doctrinas centrales del Marxismo para la emancipación de tod@s l@s trabajador@s, para las luchas contra la guerra y la reacción, y contra toda forma de explotación y opresión?

¿Cuál es el papel de l@s revolucionari@s, sus organizaciones y la clase obrera multinacional en los EEUU en promover la próxima fase de la lucha global por el socialismo?

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