

MUNDO OBRERO

Manos fuera de Cuba y Venezuela 12

Dos helicópteros 12

Bush's immigration plan A lesson in racist demagoguery

By Deirdre Griswold

Demagoguery. It's the stuff politicians are shoveling out when they say what people want to hear, even as they're knifing them in the back.

President George W. Bush's speech on immigration, carried live by the media on May 15, was full of demagoguery.

He said, "The United States is not going

to militarize the southern border." But he laid out a plan to send up to 6,000 National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexican border. One senator, Richard J. Durbin of Illinois, calculated that the plan could result in more than 150,000 Guard members being deployed to the border in the next two years. (New York Times, May 17)

The deployment of National Guard troops is in addition to Bush's plan to

increase the number of Border Patrol agents from 9,000 to 12,000.

With the huge deployment of National Guard troops to Iraq and Afghanistan, most states already lack the person-power to deal with calamities. In February, governors from both the Democratic and Republican parties met in Washington and concluded that "Bush administration

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CONFERENCE ON SOCIALISM

Movement leaders open a dialog

By Monica Moorehead
New York

Whether during periods of political reaction or tumultuous mass upsurges, revolutionary organizers have the duty to step back from their daily tasks in order to take inventory of those social forces in motion at that moment—and those not in motion.

With this orientation in mind, Workers World Party (WWP) sponsored a national conference in New York City on May 13-14 entitled, "Preparing for the Rebirth of the Global Struggle for Socialism." This gathering occurred only weeks after the immigrant rights demonstrations that recently swept the country, prompted by various repressive bills currently being debated in the U.S. Congress that seek to criminalize undocumented workers to one degree or another.

This conference was unique in that it consciously opened up a serious, ongoing dialog between WWP and important leaders and allies representing some of the most significant movements of the day involving oppressed peoples and the working class. These representatives included those involved in the struggles to win full rights for immigrant workers and to win justice for the survivors of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Many of the conference speakers also reinforced the Marxist-Leninist view

that capitalism is a bankrupt system that cannot be reformed and that—despite the collapse of the first attempt at socialism in the Soviet Union—only socialism can begin the process of sweeping away racism, war, poverty and other forms of inequality and oppression. A concurrent theme that generated enthusiasm throughout the conference plenary sessions was the revival of May Day 2006 in the U.S. due mainly to the intervention of the immigrant rights movement.

The opening panel of the first plenary on May 13 was chaired by Dianne Mathiowetz, an International Action Center organizer from Atlanta and a General Motors worker for 30 years. Her remarks included dedicating the conference to WWP members Pat Chin and Johnny Black, who died within the past year.

Prospects for reviving global socialism

Berta Joubert-Ceci, a contributing editor of Workers World newspaper and a WWP leader based in Philadelphia, gave a rousing talk about the rising tide of anti-imperialist sentiment throughout Latin America and parts of the Caribbean. The main sparks for this development have been the Bolivarian revolutionary process in Venezuela led by President Hugo Chávez and the move by Evo Morales, the recently elected first Indigenous president of Bolivia, to nationalize the gas and oil industries of that country.

LeiLani Dowell, a managing editor of Workers World newspaper and a leader of the Fight Imperialism Stand Together (FIST) youth group, spoke on the plight of young people and why they have no future under capitalism here and worldwide.

Fred Goldstein, contributing editor of WW newspaper and a WWP Secretariat member, cited some important points made in his pre-conference document,

"Reviving Marx and Lenin." Goldstein explained how capitalism is the main source of the world's problems.

"The only way to replace a social system of production," he said, "is with another social system of production. The antithesis of capitalism, which is based on private property and production for profit, is the system of socialism, which is based on social ownership by the workers and society as a whole and production for human need."

Larry Holmes, WWP Secretariat member and Troops Out Now Coalition organizer, opened his remarks by reminding everyone of how much the world movement is relying on revolutionaries to help revive the struggle for socialism right here in the belly of the beast, U.S. imperialism.

Holmes lauded Che Guevara as the "most important internationalist of the last half-century," personally trying to instigate the struggle for liberation in Africa, in Vietnam, in Latin America. "He refused to limit his perspective to revolution in one country."

Holmes went on to emphasize how the May Day uprising must spread to other sectors of the working class that were not a part of it, including the Katrina survivors and anti-war activists.

Connecting the struggles

The second panel in the first plenary session focused on "Forging Class Solidarity; Unity with the Oppressed, Overcoming Fragmentation in the Movement." It was chaired by Monica Moorehead, a WW newspaper managing editor and WWP Secretariat member.

Moorehead reminded the audience that May 13 marked the 21st anniversary of the bombing of the MOVE house in Philadelphia by the local and national governments as an act of racist terror.

"I propose that this conference go on record to extend our solidarity to our sis-

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Alejandro Ahumada



Berna Ellorin



Teresa Gutierrez

What happened during Katrina goes deep into the history of oppression suffered by Black workers



Fred Goldstein



LeiLani Dowell



John Parker

Black people in this country share the immigrants' experience of racist targeting



Saladin Muhammad



Brenda Stokely

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This is a special issue dedicated to covering the May 13-14 conference organized by Workers World Party. Most of the articles are excerpts from conference talks by members and guest speakers.

CONFERENCE PHOTOS IN THIS ISSUE BY G. DUNKEL, LIZ GREEN, LAL ROOJK AND GARY WILSON

Bush's immigration plan A lesson in racist demagoguery

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policies were stripping the National Guard of equipment and personnel needed to respond to hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, forest fires and other emergencies." (New York Times, Feb. 27)

Hurricanes and floods. Think Katrina and the unanswered pleas for help by people about to drown. Think grapefruit-sized hail in Tennessee a month ago. Think the recent floods in New England.

All the scientists are warning that, with extreme climate change caused by global warming, this is just the beginning. Yet Bush hasn't jumped in front of the cameras with any plan to deal with this dire emergency. In fact, nothing, absolutely nothing, is being done by the so-called "homeland security" heavies to plan for these disasters, despite the huge budget at their disposal. They're too busy eavesdropping on people's telephone conversations and setting up juicy business contracts for the next level of high-tech surveillance.

Surveillance along the border. Says Bush: "We are launching the most technologically advanced border security initiative in American history. We will construct high-tech fences in urban corridors, and build new patrol roads and barriers in rural areas. We will employ motion sensors, infrared cameras and unmanned aerial vehicles to prevent illegal crossings."

And in people's wallets. Says Bush: "[There] should be a new identification card for every legal foreign worker. This card should use biometric technology, such as digital fingerprints...."

All this will cost billions, which will slip easily into the pockets of the already super-rich. The workers in this country will gain nothing from it. Diverting government money from other, needed social projects will mean new cutbacks in the public sector.

Solidarity is what's needed

Since March, literally millions of immigrants have been marching to demand their right to live and work in this country like anyone else. This movement mushroomed up after the House passed the draconian Sensenbrenner-King bill, which would attach heavy criminal penalties to anyone found without papers and to people who employ or assist them. Bush jumped into the fray when it became clear that this bill was going nowhere.

Undocumented immigrants have had a hard enough time even before this latest assault. With the threat of deportation hanging over them, even if they have lived and worked here for years, they have been forced into

below-minimum wage jobs, often working on a day-to-day basis with no benefits or security of any kind.

Increasingly, the right-wing in this country is discovering that workers are very upset. They are trying to turn that anger against immigrants. In the distorted world of Pat Buchanan, CNN's Lou Dobbs and other demagogues, the problem is not because the big corporations are in a frenzy of layoffs and cutting wages, pensions and health care; it is not because the drive to build a world empire, led by Big Oil, is draining hundreds of billions away from schools, hospitals and all public services.

The lie they push is that it's because "illegal immigrants are taking your jobs and not paying taxes."

Both parts of this statement are totally false and calculated to turn worker against worker. It's the bosses who decide who to hire and who to fire. Capitalist bosses are scouring the globe looking for places where they can pay lower wages. They also encourage immigration when they need labor here—but deliberately deprive immigrants of their rights, to keep them from winning better conditions.

Bush's "guest worker" plan aims to do just that. It would keep employers of immigrants happy and supplied with a low-wage workforce, but send most of the workers home again before they could get the rights of citizens.

That's a prescription for perpetual super-low wages. The only way to overcome it is by building solidarity among all workers, who can then struggle together against those who rob them every payday.

As for taxes, the current law is set up in such a way that two-thirds of those without papers—or 8 million out of the 12 million estimated to be here—have taxes automatically deducted from their paychecks.

This is because the Internal Revenue Service, since 1996, has had a policy of issuing identification numbers to undocumented workers. These immigrants, who can't get most jobs without the numbers, "have Social Security and Medicare taxes automatically withheld from their paychecks. Since undocumented workers have only fake numbers, they'll never be able to collect the benefits these taxes are meant to pay for. Last year, the revenues from these fake numbers—that the Social Security administration stashes in the 'earnings suspense file'—added up to 10 percent of the Social Security surplus. The file is growing, on average, by more than \$50 billion a year." ("Illegal Immigrants are Paying a Lot More Taxes Than You Think," Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service, May 1)

It's the immigrants who are getting ripped off here, by both the employers and the capitalist government, and not the other way around. □

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Larry Holmes

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CONFERENCE ON SOCIALISM

Movement leaders open a dialog

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ters and brothers in MOVE along with International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal. One reason that Mumia Abu-Jamal has spent almost a quarter of a century on death row is because he defended the MOVE family against Philadelphia police brutality. Free Mumia! Free the MOVE 9! Free Leonard Peltier! Free the Cuban 5 and all political prisoners!"

Tony Van Der Meer, professor of Africana Studies at the University of Massachusetts and co-chair of the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee, spoke on what it will take to unite the movements for Black liberation, for the rights of the undocumented and in opposition to wars and interventions, in order to strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle.

He went on to say, "Progressive and revolutionary white workers must challenge their white counterparts to encourage and support Black, Latin@ and all oppressed people of color to struggle among their own groups to develop themselves and their positions on policies that endanger their lives and those of all people."

Larry Hales, a FIST leader and community and anti-war organizer from Denver, spoke on the need to broaden all the struggles of the workers and oppressed peoples from a Marxist perspective.

Hales raised some of the more prevalent issues in Denver, from organizing against a jail for youth to supporting Indigenous rights. "We must reject any attempts to compromise the movement by attempting to make it more vapid," he stated, "or by pandering to sectors of either of the ruling class parties."

Brenda Stokely, a leader of the Million Worker March Movement and New York Solidarity Coalition with Katrina/Rita Survivors, opened her talk by sharing a heart-wrenching story about having to go to court that morning to support a Katrina survivor living in New York who was accused of committing fraud. She connected this story to a general viewpoint of how the movement is ill-equipped to deal with these kinds of injustices.

Stokely then talked about the need for ongoing dialog with activists here and worldwide in order to have a "true honest discussion in dealing with imperialism, the government, racism and sexism."

Saladin Muhammad, chairperson of Black Workers for Justice, a member of Black Workers League and a UE union organizer for Virginia and North Carolina from Raleigh, stated that part of the problem of the revolutionary struggle in this country is the failure to understand the national question and its relationship to the working class in the U.S., and how the ideology of white supremacy has made it difficult for white workers to break with national chauvinism.

Muhammad explained that supporting the right to self-determination means supporting movements for the right to self-determination and that it is incorrect to view Black nationalism as a reactionary tendency. He explained that what happened on the Gulf Coast during Katrina goes deep into the history of oppression suffered by Black workers and the U.S. government continues to make its racism clear toward African American workers.

Phebe Eckfeldt, from the Women's Fightback Network and the Committee to Defend the Somerville Five in Boston, described the case of the five Black youth

who were brutalized by police and then arrested on trumped up charges. She generalized this case, referring to the epidemic of racist profiling.

Immigrant rights movement inspires all

The second plenary on May 13 entitled, "The Workers' Struggles Have no Borders," featured two panels. The first, on "The Significance of the Immigrant Rights Movement," was chaired by Teresa Gutierrez, a WWP Secretariat member, co-director of the International Action Center (IAC) and an organizer of the New York Free the Five Committee.

Gutierrez, a Chicana, said, "Last year, the Associated Press published a survey reporting that one Mexican laborer dies every day in this country due to abominable working conditions. They are impaled, drowned or crushed every single day. Remember the case of Amadou Diallo, an African immigrant viciously killed by the NYPD? His only crime was that he was Black."

Carlos Canales, a day laborer organizer at the Workplace Project, the only organization of low-income workers in Hempstead, Long Island, told the audience how he was forced to swim with his daughter on his back to come to the U.S. A Salvadoran, Canales was a member of FAPU, the political arm of the National Resistance, which was one of four organizations that made up the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

Berna Ellorin, a Filipina activist with Bayan USA and Migrante International, spoke on the neocolonial relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines in terms of the immigrant rights movement. An estimated 3,000 Filipin@s are forced to leave their country daily due to austerity measures imposed on the Philippine masses by the IMF and World Bank.

Chris Silvera, chair of the National Teamsters Black Caucus and secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 808, asked why, if capital knows no borders when it comes to exploiting the workers, then why should workers have to respect borders when it comes to finding a job.

Alejandro Murrieta Ahumada, president of the Inland Empire Association of the descendants of Joaquin Murrieta and a member of the March 25 Coalition, himself a migrant from Mexico, spoke on the developing struggle of immigrant workers in Los Angeles from March 25 to May 1 that shut down southern California. He emphasized the need for the movement to reject solutions short of complete rights for migrant workers.

WWP leader John Parker, West Coast



Berta Joubert-Ceci translates for Carlos Canales

coordinator of the IAC and an organizer for the May 1 immigrant rights march in Los Angeles, said, "Black people in this country share the immigrants' experience of racist targeting of people as criminals, denying basic freedoms that most in society enjoy, including the right to be able to live with your family and children."

Sharon Black, a WWP leader in Baltimore and an All-Peoples Congress organizer, spoke on the leadership role of women in the immigrant rights movement. David Hoskins, a FIST leader and WW reporter from Washington, D.C., spoke on the plight of coal miners.

An injury to one is an injury to all

The second panel in the second plenary focused on the "Changing Character and Conditions of the Working Class." Minnie Bruce Pratt, a well-known lesbian author and poet and a contributing editor to WW newspaper, chaired the panel and used her experiences as a participant on a recent march from Mobile, Ala., to New Orleans, organized by Katrina survivors and anti-war veterans and their families, to discuss the changing character of the working class in the U.S. South.

Ruth Vela, a FIST leader and immigrant rights' organizer in San Diego and Tijuana, spoke about what she sees almost every day living on the U.S./Mexican border. "I drive by strawberry fields where people pick the produce by day and sleep in a cave at night."

Steve Gillis, vice-president of Steel Workers Local 8751 in Boston, introduced Frantz Mendes, the newly elected president of the same local. Mendes, who is Haitian, said, "Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers, represents over 800 workers—95 percent from Boston's communities of color. We are Haitian, Cape

Verdean, African American, Asian and white—the majority from Boston's immigrant communities. For nearly 30 years we have built a proud record of struggle for justice." He said his union, led by the rank and file, fights "100 percent for every grievance, every contract" and is united with the "communities in the struggle against poverty, racism and war."

Leslie Feinberg, a Workers World newspaper managing editor, transgender author and lesbian activist, explained why communists must view lesbian, gay, bi and trans oppression as part and parcel of the overall struggle to liberate humanity. According to Feinberg, "Fighting all forms of oppression defends lives. And it also helps build unity in the struggle by revealing to the entire working class the social and economic inequalities that are built into the capitalist system."

Martha Grevatt, UAW member and autoworker and organizer of Pride at Work, AFL-CIO, from Cleveland, spoke on what the Delphi workers' crisis means for all of labor: "The fight is on, and workers aren't waiting for the top union leadership's permission. Since Delphi, the former GM parts division, declared bankruptcy, the rank and file has formed Soldiers of Solidarity, engaging in work-to-rule slowdowns.

"Even from a legal standpoint," she added, "the workers have the right not only to strike but to seize the plants."

Peter Gilbert, Raleigh FIST organizer and former union organizer, spoke on the struggle to organize workers, including immigrant workers, in North Carolina, an anti-union, right-to-work state.

Solidarity with world struggles

The "Fighting Imperialism and Building Revolutionary Internationalism" panel was the third plenary session, held on Saturday evening. Cheryl LaBash, long-time Detroit city worker, organizer for the May 20 Hands off Cuba and Venezuela demonstration and a WW newspaper writer, chaired.

Nellie Bailey, a leader of Harlem Tenants Council and the Troops Out Now Coalition, spoke of the threats to the infrastructure of the cities.

Sara Flounders, WWP Secretariat and co-director of the International Action Center, spoke

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A performance by Urban Essence Dance Performance Collaborative.

Youth of world begin fightback

As imperialism tightens the noose on workers throughout the world, youth are left with few options. According to the United Nations' 2005 World Youth Report, 18 percent of all youth live on less than one dollar a day, and 130 million youth are illiterate. The report says: "Despite the fact that youth are receiving more education, youth unemployment in the world has increased to record levels ... at a total of 88 million. There is increased pressure on young people to compete in a globalizing labor market."

Ten million young people currently live with HIV/AIDS.

Here in the wealthiest and most technologically advanced country in the world, the situation is not much better for youth. A powerfully symbolic example of the neglect that youth face [is] that after Hurricane Katrina struck, about 150 teenagers were left in the Orleans Parish Prison, locked up and alone, without food or water, stranded on the top bunks to get away from the floodwater, for three to five days.

However, this year has seen a momentous upsurge in youth resistance around the globe. Here in the United States, students have walked out of schools again and again, first over the war – and sometimes they stayed, and kicked military recruiters off their campuses – and most recently, and in massive numbers, for immigrant rights.

There has been the rise of the youth movement in France, begun with rebel-



LeiLani Dowell

lions in November against racist, anti-poor police repression and brutality, and continued with the protests against the CPE, a law that would have given employers the right to fire youth under 26 for no reason, without explanation.

I'm excited that the capitalist marketing of Che as an empty icon is backfiring. Even if every young person doesn't know the whole history, they know his image is a symbol for revolution.

—LeiLani Dowell, FIST national coordinator and managing editor of Workers World newspaper

Marxism is dialectical. It looks at the motion of things. It looks beneath the surface of things to find their essence. It is the doctrine of development. The stage for the [May Day] demonstration was set long ago. It was set when the Reagan administration together with the bankers initiated the campaign of neoliberal aggression, and they sent the International Monetary Fund to every capital of every country in the oppressed world.

Trends in imperialism bring struggle home

Now who would have thought six months or a year ago, even if you were in Los Angeles, even if you were in the center of the immigrants' rights movement, that there would have been several million people on the streets across this country, in this reactionary heartland, in the "belly of the beast," in a general political strike, demanding their rights?

This momentous development was touched off by a reactionary attack in the legislature on 12 million people and all their friends, families and supporters. But there is another dimension, for Marxism is dialectical. It looks at the motion of things. It looks beneath the surface of things to find their essence. It is the doctrine of development.

The stage for the demonstration was set long ago. It was set when the Reagan administration together with the bankers initiated the campaign of neoliberal aggression, and they sent the International Monetary Fund to every capital of every country in the oppressed world to tell them that the day of austerity is here, you have to cut all subsidies to the masses, you have to privatize everything and you have to lower your tariffs and let us in to do as we please in your country. That's when it began in Mexico, in Central America, in Africa, in Asia.

And this continued under Clinton with NAFTA, and under Bush with CAFTA. And it created a huge wave of impoverished people who were assaulted by imperialist finance capital and were driven toward the rich capitalist countries in order to find a living for themselves and their families.

This is when the material for this demonstration was created.

U.S. imperialism concentrated the proletariat and sections of the rural population from many regions of the world, especially in Latin America, into the meat-packing industry, the construction industry, the textile industry and the service industries. It concentrated them in the towns and the cities here, the way they are doing around the world now.

This May 1 demonstration was the climax of that process. It's part of a long development that was slow and under the surface and which burst out. Now we need to see if there are other processes, analogous to this, that are going on in the imperialist world that tend in this direction.

This tolerance of immigration by the imperialists fits with their long-term intention to take the U.S. from being a high-wage country—as it was after World War II for a section of the white workers who predominated in the labor movement—to a low-wage country. They are in a capitalist crisis which forces them to sell more and more goods flowing from their vast



Fred Goldstein

means of production to make their profits.

This began in the 1970s and the 1980s, when they took technology to try to dismantle much of the manufacturing industry and weaken and destroy the unions. They have taken this technology and expanded into a vast reserve army of low-paid labor, and have forced the working class in this country into a competition with this vast, global network of labor in low-wage countries.

They want to destroy the social wage the workers are entitled to—whether it be welfare, Medicaid, Medicare or food stamps. This is neoliberalism in the United States. This is what the IMF does in oppressed countries. Only they do not need the IMF here. They are the IMF. They have the capitalist government, the Treasury Department, the Federal Reserve Bank.

Clinton destroyed welfare. Fifty years of social gains were destroyed by Clinton at the behest of the bankers. That's neoliberalism in the United States.

So this is a whole current. And it derives from their insatiable drive for profit and super-profit. But what does it do? It undermines the basis of social stability in this country.

I don't want to dwell on it, but when you consider that they're trying to turn this into a low-wage country and they're trying to conquer the world, and they face an economic crisis, you see there are undercurrents, you see how the trends in imperialism today lead in the direction of social upheaval and rebellion. Where? When? How? We do not have a crystal ball. But what we do see is the laws of capitalism, as understood by Marx, operating in the social and economic sphere, and politically. And they cannot get out of this, the imperialists. They cannot go on the way they are.

—Fred Goldstein, Secretariat, WWP

Unity will be engine for liberation

For most of our experience here in this country, people of African ethnicity born here were denied citizenship rights in the Constitution—from voting, to organizing in unions, to drinking from a damn water fountain, to being allowed to live with your children and loved ones—denied during slavery.

And after the unnatural disaster of Katrina, we are even more familiar with being forced from our homes to cities that appear and feel like foreign lands. Like our immigrant sisters and brothers, the Katrina survivors are victims of U.S. policies that lay bare their cities to natural and unnatural disasters—from hurricanes to real estate and Wall Street thieves acting like the IMF, stealing livelihoods and homes.

But our history also has great examples of solidarity. The annexation of Mexico and the issue of slavery in the United States were intertwined. And it was our Mexican sisters and brothers who provided us African slaves refuge when we escaped south across the border. It was our Mexican sisters and brothers who brought us in like family and refused, even under the threat of U.S. war, to throw us back into that bondage of hell.

We remember that solidarity and will respond in kind, be it legal or illegal.

Divide and conquer has been practiced and refined since the ruling class first stole this land; and when poor whites and Native people and African slaves were collaborating to fight their rich oppressors, the rulers developed methods to keep us all from uniting.

And more and more of our South Asian, Asian, Native and Arab sisters and broth-



John Parker

ers are joining and coming into the leadership of this struggle, providing more basis for unity amongst our working class.

Like the civil-rights movement lifted all working-class struggles for justice, this unity will become a major engine for the movement against war, poverty and racism and the liberation of our entire working class.

All we have to do is unite. The chains may have been physical for African slaves, yet economic for our immigrant sisters and brothers, but the chains still make us bleed. And we have nothing to lose but them, and a world to gain. All workers and oppressed people of the world unite.

—John Parker, West Coast Coordinator, International Action Center; May 1, Los Angeles organizer

Immigrants revive the class struggle

Immigrants and their supporters have revived the class struggle in the U.S.! They have reminded the powers that be that the irreconcilable struggle between the ruling class and the working class is far from dead.

This struggle may at times be dormant or hidden, but as long as there are bosses and workers, as long as there are exploiters and exploited, the class struggle will not end.

Workers World Party could ask for no greater development, short of the revolution. Because history shows that an upsurge of oppressed people can impact every other struggle.

Even if this was not their aim, immigrant workers revived in the U.S. a historical date that the ruling class fears very much: May Day, a day for workers that is a clarion call for struggle.

Our party—like many other immigrant activists and others—knew that this day would come, that it was inevitable.

Why? Just listen to the horrors of migrants—the accounts of those who travel here in perilous seas from other parts of the world. Remember the plight of those who have died from the heat of deserts ablaze or in the backs of stifling sealed truck beds.

Learn about the countless, faceless, nameless migrants from not only throughout Mexico and Central America but indeed from throughout the world, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa. Many have died without anyone knowing who they are.

Many families will spend the rest of their lives never really knowing the fate of their loved ones. They may have died at sea or on the border or maybe in some agricultural field somewhere in the U.S.

And there is a whole generation of children whose mothers were torn by indecision—should they stay so their child at least has a mother by their side, but watch them go to bed hungry every night, or should they go to the other side of the border?

Many are ultimately forced to abandon their children. This decision has left a tear in their children's heart that will never be healed.

The culprit of those children's pain must be put squarely on the shoulders of imperialism.

And for immigrants who make it into the U.S.?

Last year, the Associated Press reported that one Mexican laborer dies every day in this country due to abominable working conditions.

They are treated to racist attacks. Day laborers are vilified and demonized. Remember Amadou Diallo, an African immigrant viciously killed by the New York Police Department.

So is it any wonder that millions risked jobs and deportation to take to the streets? Is it any wonder that millions defiantly declared: "aqui estamos y no nos vamos"—here we are and we are not leaving.

No racist minutemen, no act of Congress, no menacing boss could keep them home.

The oppression is exactly why we knew this day would come. The decades of capitalist exploitation would become a specter that would haunt the bosses. That day has come.

We must do everything to show our unconditional support of the immigrant rights struggle. It is they who must lead.

The struggle for immigrant rights was integral to the Chicano liberation struggle from which I come. But it was the Communist Manifesto that gave me the tools to understand that the oppression of Chicanos was part of the oppression of all



Teresa Gutierrez

There is a whole generation of children whose mothers were torn by indecision—should they stay so their child has a mother by their side, but go to bed hungry every night, or should they go to the other side of the border?

workers. And it was Lenin who explained that even within class oppression there was the special oppression of certain people, a particular oppression that required the most utmost thought in order to build solidarity.

Lenin's view on national oppression could not be more timely as Latin@s take center stage in this period.

—Teresa Gutierrez,
Secretariat, WWP

Defeat the guest-worker program

This is the 130th [anniversary] of Haymarket, which was mostly immigrant workers. The labor movement and immigrant rights movement have always been one, in which the boss seeks to create divisions to weaken that movement. So I don't really believe that we created something new on May 1; I think we struck a chord that made people get up and risk everything to be on the front line of change.

I believe that labor needs to make some of the same demands that capital has made. Capital has said that it wants to tear down borders and have unfettered freedom to surge the globe looking for profit. If that is true, why can't labor have the same unfettered right in looking for work?

What we have to do here is to build and make this movement significant, so we have got to tie in mainstream labor, and we have to make sure the mainstream labor movement has a focus that is purely in the interest of workers from a global perspective.

So where is the labor movement in this struggle? What is the demand of labor and is it different from the Democratic Party, and does the Democratic Party have a demand that's even worth listening to? The Democratic Party is a failure, certainly for working people. I suspect that if you are on the upper side of a quarter million dollars

Immigrants need full civil rights

My involvement with those who later formed the core of the March 25 Coalition started last summer. We organized along the California-Mexico border against the armed vigilante group called the Minute Men, who set up ambushes to murder migrants as they crossed over the border. Our task was to organize border communities against them, march large opposition groups into their camps, and search out their ambush sights armed only with cameras, spotlights and outrage.

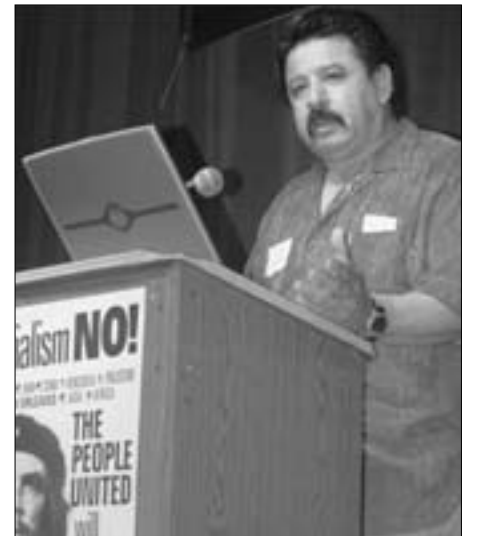
This outrage was shared by the Latino community and reached its boiling point when the House of Representatives approved HR 4437 in December 2005. We knew then that it was time to start organizing for mass mobilizations.

In early March, Chicago gave a great impetus to the immigrant rights movement. The historic mobilization of 600,000 showed tremendous courage and set an example for the rest of the country by fearlessly marching while many risked deportation.

Then on March 25, the immigrant community clearly demonstrated that it had taken history into its own hands, showing a complete immunity to fear and the paralysis that accompanies it. Over a million and a half marched that day demanding an end to the draconian Sensenbrenner bill and insisting on complete amnesty for all undocumented immigrants.

This great success was quickly surpassed in numbers and impact by the Gran Paro Americano of May 1, the "Great American Boycott," a day without an immigrant, called for and organized by the March 25 Coalition with the support and assistance of many organizations throughout the country.

Nearly 2 million missed work or school to participate on May 1 in downtown Los Angeles. Over a million more participated in marches or stayed home in the surrounding areas of Southern California, in spite of the opposition of Mayor Antonio



Alejandro Murrieta Ahumada

Villaraigosa, the cardinal of the Catholic Diocese, many unions and NGOs, which called for people to go to work and school.

The great task before us now is to once again change the debate and keep out compromise legislation that provides for guest worker programs and militarization of the borders. We must not support or give quarter to any organizations, politicians, unions, or individuals that support the compromise legislation.

This is a worldwide movement that has not only begun to write its own history, but has the power to write the next chapter as well. It must include:

- Full amnesty for all undocumented workers and their families;
- Full labor and civil rights for all workers;
- No further militarization that contributes to lives being lost in the border regions;
- Reunification of families;
- Full prosecution and imprisonment of fascist domestic terrorists who are promoting genocide against immigrant brothers and sisters.

—Alejandro Murrieta Ahumada,
Inland Empire Association of the descendants of Joaquin Murrieta

Labor needs to make some of the same demands that capital has made. Capital has said that it wants to tear down borders and have unfettered freedom to surge the globe looking for profit. If that is true, why can't labor have the same unfettered right in looking for work?



Chris Silvera

a year, then the Democratic Party is as favorable to you as the Republican Party.

I can't tell you what the significance of the immigrant rights movement is, but what I can tell you is that we have positioned ourselves to become a very important part of this resolution. But Congress is running with a group of people who you didn't see in the march. Most are on the payroll, and those people are going to be the ones to say yes to guest worker programs.

In enslavement time you had slaves and indentured servants. The indentured servant is the original guest worker, and their situation was so bad that at many times, they banded with enslaved people to seek freedom. So the guest worker is an absolute no-starter in trying to resolve this

issue. It's got to be defeated up front.

If the unions properly got on board with this solution, I believe we'd have three, four million members quick. We have an opportunity that we have not had since 1886.

The eight-hour day didn't just come in one day because of Haymarket. Haymarket was one day in years of building what were known as "Eight-Hour Leagues." So we are gonna have to continue to fight. We have to build a series of actions that are coordinated and effective, because we have proven we have the numbers and the power.

—Chris Silvera, secretary-treasurer,
Teamsters Local 808; chair,
Teamsters National Black Caucus

The struggle to rebuild the Gulf Coast should be viewed as an unfinished stage of a revolutionary process that began with the first Reconstruction after the Civil War.

Importance of Katrina struggle

In his document, "Build a Black-Brown Alliance for Justice and Human Rights," Saladin Muhammad writes: "Hurricane Katrina was a 21st-century snapshot of the genocidal direction of the U.S. government. It exposed the reality of conditions faced by working-class African Americans and people of color under U.S.-style democracy. There has yet to be a massive upsurge that expresses the deep outrage of the African American masses against the U.S. government for this crime against humanity."

If the greedy capitalist developers and the corrupt politicians are able to get away with premeditated mass murder, if they are able to carry out a racist gentrification of New Orleans without defiant resistance from a mass movement, then this would prove to be a historical blow to the African American struggle for the right to self-determination in the South with huge ramifications in this country and internationally.

The struggle to rebuild the Gulf Coast should be viewed as an unfinished stage of a revolutionary process that began with the first Reconstruction after the Civil War. That first stage was drowned in a bloody betrayal with a full-blown counter-revolution when the federal government abandoned the newly-freed Black people, fighting for full democratic rights, leaving them defenseless and powerless when it came to KKK terror and semi-slavery conditions in the South. Black people became isolated after slavery just as they were isolated during Katrina. So what we are seeing today are Katrina survivors who have had their right to self-determination once again trampled upon by this racist government.

Even the right to vote, supposedly a basic guarantee under a capitalist democracy, is being taken away from the Black population in New Orleans, a city that used to be at least 70 percent Black. When the municipal elections took place in New Orleans last month, a reported 31 percent of the Black registered voters took part in the elections, which resulted in a run-off election a week from today. This percentage is down from 45 percent of Black voters who participated in the 2002 elections, according to the Associated Press. There were no polling places set up for dispersed Orleansians in Houston, Atlanta and other cities with large numbers of Katrina survivors.

The bigger question is what kind of real commitment will the rest of the movement make in order to elevate the struggle of the Katrina survivors in a meaningful way. This is tantamount to elevating the struggle against racism and national oppression and will help forge class unity with all workers, including white workers.

Why isn't the anti-war movement finding a way to support Katrina survivors with all of its resources? Where is the trade union movement and others to show the broad solidarity this super-exploited, super-oppressed sector of our class needs?

Where was the support from the anti-war movement for the immigrant rights struggle? If the leaders of these movements don't support the rights of the Katrina evacuees and for immigrant workers, then how can we expect large numbers of their followers to come out?

No class realizes the potential of a united working class more than the capitalists. Their repressive state apparatus rules over all society with divide-and-con-



Monica Moorehead

quer tactics, as we witness today how the ruling class is trying to pit the interests of the oppressed nationalities against each other where African Americans and immigrants are concerned.

Real class unity is more than words. It's about deeds, including building consciousness and making sacrifices. As Karl Marx and Frederick Engels stated in the "Communist Manifesto," the capitalists will create their own grave diggers. What happened on May Day 2006 is a just glimpse of great struggles to come.

—Monica Moorehead, Secretariat, WWP

Sam Marcy on The party & the national question

[The imperialist war drive] comes from the inner workings of capitalism itself, its need to expand or die. But the United States evolved into a particularly aggressive and brutal imperialist power around the world because of its history right here: its suppression of Native peoples to occupy their land, its super-exploitation of African peoples dragged here in chains, its oppression of Chicano/Mexicano people in territory it seized from Mexico.

The profits from the oppression and super-exploitation of its internal colonies helped the U.S. capitalist class rapidly develop into a world power. But the struggle of the oppressed nations at home for their liberation can also be the Achilles heel of imperialism. It can be a decisive factor in the worldwide struggle against imperialism—as it was during the Vietnam War—and also in the class struggle of all workers to end capitalist wage slavery and build socialism.

I say it can be because much depends on how the workers who are part of the oppressing nation understand their interests and responsibilities in relation to the struggle of the nationally oppressed. Will they be passive? Will they lack direction and be used against the oppressed peoples? Or will they understand that their own class interests, their success in fighting the exploiters, in resisting being cannon fodder for their endless wars, lie in supporting the right of self-determination here at home too?

When we talk about building a revolutionary party in this country, the question

No future without struggle for socialism

We have to be clear about what is historically necessary and how our role will be decisive, because while our comrades are fighting imperialism around the world, they are waiting for us to kick the shit out of imperialism here.

If we all do our job, we'll look back on these opening years of the 21st century as the rebirth of the world struggle for socialism, the second phase. The first phase was interrupted by reaction, by counterrevolution.

We must convince this generation of revolutionaries, potential revolutionaries and all those who once were dedicated to the good fight for a new world, that there is no future without the struggle for socialism. We have to have this vision, and we cannot put it off.

In Hugo Chavez's speech to the World Social Forum late last year, he urged that Earth is in danger. If we don't get to socialism soon we may lose the planet.

We don't have our head in the clouds. We are in the day-to-day struggle. We are for every gain the workers can win—the right to a coffee break, a union, a street lamp. These things are important. But we never forget the vision—to take back the world from the imperialists.

We didn't decide to put Che Guevara on the conference banner just to be in vogue. He is the most important internationalist of the last half-century. He was so obsessed with the necessity of world revolution that he literally tried to go around and instigate it, in Africa, in Vietnam, in Latin America.



Larry Holmes

Our sisters and brothers in the Middle East are kicking some butt, from Palestine to Baghdad and Tehran. We don't judge the masses [there]. There's a great history and tradition of revolutionary working class parties and national liberation movements. And if their influence is not what it was, it's because agents and cronies of U.S. imperialism have smashed those organizations. But they will build themselves up.

The best thing for us to be obsessed and concerned with is the development of the working class in our country. That's what the people of the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Africa are waiting for.

May Day was welcome, good news to them. I submit that May Day 2006 in this country was a huge defeat for U.S. imperialism. For decades U.S. imperialism has done everything possible to smash May Day, international workers day, in the country of its origin. Uh oh, it's back. There haven't been so many people in Union Square since they protested the execution of the Rosenbergs in 1953.

And not only did we have May Day, we had the closest thing that the working class of this country has ever had to a general strike. Millions of workers. Every industry affected. A political strike against the government.

And they tried to stop this May Day too. The bourgeoisie spread rumors of repression, mostly false.

Even some labor leaders went against it, and they should be ashamed. Hopefully, they'll think and say, "This helps workers, doesn't hurt them. What am I thinking?"

It's important to point out that while the struggle against racist legislation was the impetus behind this, this was not just the undocumented working class. This was their families who are workers, predominantly Latin@ but also Asian and African, this was a reflection of what the working class looks like.

Imperialist globalization has brought workers together. It has brought May Day back to the U.S. It has brought back class consciousness and militant traditions. And we better consider it and explain it as a wake-up call. If you have doubted that there could be any qualitative political change, look at May Day.

It just goes to show that you don't have to depend on the bourgeois parties. Imagine if we had a general strike over what they're trying to do to Delphi workers, or around national health insurance, or to stop the war. All of those things, all of a sudden are less nutty, because look what the immigrants did.

Can the May Day uprising spread to those sectors of the working class that were not a part of it? Yes, it will. But the struggle of the undocumented for their rights has to be unconditionally sup-



Deirdre Griswold

immediately comes up: Where does such a party stand in relation to the liberation organizations of the oppressed that already exist or may arise in the future? This question has been raised many times before by our party leaders, especially by Sam Marcy, our founder and ideological leader, who died in 1998. He wrote and spoke on literally hundreds of occasions on this very subject, because he considered it key to the building of a revolutionary Marxist and Leninist party in this country.

I'd like to read to you a few paragraphs from just one of the many documents he wrote on the national question. This was written in September 1971, when the government was doing everything it could to break up the Black Panther Party and

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Strategic role of Black labor

The system of national oppression is anchored by African-American national oppression; not because it was the first experience of national oppression in what became the United States—we know that the Native peoples were the first. It is because of the role that Black labor has played in the historical development of U.S. capitalism, as the economic base for the institutionalized racist political superstructure, and for the consolidation of white supremacy as an expression of white national social consciousness.

There can be no real revolutionary working class unity without a consistent struggle against African American national oppression. However, the African American liberation movement must have an internationalist character, so that it helps the African American masses to see immigrant workers as their allies in a struggle against the same system of national oppression.

White workers whose political consciousness is also shaped by bourgeois democracy and white supremacy, which is further encouraged by the trade unions, see these voting blocks of oppressed nationalities as a threat to white skin privilege, and associate its diminishing character with the increased immigration of Latinos and the social programs won by the African American struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, which racists claim is the reason for the U.S. government debt crisis.

The Latino communities' call and massive mobilization for a general strike and boycott on May Day was very significant. It made the issue of mobilizing working class power a central component of the Latino struggle against national oppression. This can help set the tone for other struggles against national oppression and hopefully the trade union movement—which has become weakened by its failure to exercise power as a working class, as was shown during the PATCO strike in 1981 and more recently in the New York transit-workers strike.

How to unite the masses into a revolutionary anti-imperialist movement is a continuing question facing the revolutionary struggle in this country. Should it take the form of a multi-national struggle of workers and oppressed nations against U.S. imperialism, or as a multi-racial working class struggle? The failure to support the right of self-determination of oppressed nationalities has been a major impediment to building revolutionary

Continued from page 6

ported. We must fight the racism, the fear, the chauvinism.

There's talk of a million immigrant march in September, and if they can get together with the Black movement and combine justice for Katrina, whoa. This struggle can't reach its maximum potential without the decisive participation of workers of all nationalities, and trade unionists.

Black and brown unity is decisive. We know that because the bourgeois mouthpieces are trying to create tension between Latin@ and African American workers.

We live in the prison house of nations. This is the center of oppression, racism, sexism, homophobia, of every kind of ugly division that imperialism spawns. We would be naïve to think that it doesn't have its impact in the movement.

We have to fight it everyday.

—Larry Holmes, Secretariat, WWP; Troops Out Now Coalition leader



Saladin Muhammad

working class unity.

This raises the question about the role of conscious political forces—revolutionaries—in the spontaneous national movements. Too often, there has been a practice of mainly trying to recruit from the spontaneous movements into the revolutionary organizations, with little or no effort to help organize the working class leadership and organizing capacity of the national movements.

The working class of the oppressed nationalities must be organized to popularize the slogan of self-determination within the national movements.

The strategic alliance between African American and Latino national movements must be concrete and built around real struggles that are able to help both communities and the broad movements for social justice see the strategic importance. That is why it's so important to focus this alliance today around the struggle for Reconstruction in the Gulf Coast and the struggle for immigrant rights.

—Saladin Muhammad, chair, Black Workers for Justice; Black Workers League, Raleigh

Building revolutionary consciousness

How do we build mass revolutionary consciousness among oppressed nationalities and working people in this nation? How do we get working people to become conscious of themselves as an exploited and oppressed class while also taking into consideration the deeper divisions that are centered on race and gender?

If white workers can't see how institutional racism and cultural imperialism has created internalized white supremacy on their part, how can they see how racism—be it personal, systemic, covert or overt—not only dehumanizes non-whites, but divides the very class of people whose lives are smothered by the political, cultural and economic elite of this nation?

While there are many different movements, the Black liberation movement, the undocumented worker movement and the antiwar movement are three that have greater potential for building the class solidarity critical in forging an anti-imperialist movement.

Hurricane Katrina has resurfaced the central issue of self determination and reparations for African Americans in perhaps the sharpest ways.

Katrina is not an isolated political act, it is an extreme example of a form of gentrification that is happening to African Americans and other oppressed national-

A space for frank discussion

I was with one of the [Katrina] survivors here in New York City in court when she was rearrested because of [alleged] fraud, because they claim she's "stealing" money from taxpayers. And by the same token, the Halliburtons and other contractors who have gotten billions of dollars have not been arrested and would not be arrested.

I'm raising this is because I think that you should be applauded for having this discussion, because we don't have the discussions about the beast that we're dealing with, or how we're not organized well enough to deal with it, and what the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie really means. Because it was so frustrating and apparent that the court system, as we know, and the injustice system, as we know, are ill equipped to free our people, and that we are ill equipped to do it ourselves. We were in a system and a building that was built by working people [but used by the ruling class] to screw us and keep us divided.

We have to find a serious space to have a true, honest discussion on all the details involved in dealing with this bastard imperialism, in dealing with all of its leaders, in dealing with the government, in dealing with all of the traitors that are in the movement pretending to be about freeing people, in dealing with the racism and sexism that keeps us divided.

How do we identify the revolutionary leaders of the immigrant rights movement, of the oppressed nations here in this country? How do we deal with the international struggle? Why are we compartmentalizing all the different struggles when, as a working person, I don't have the luxury to do that? I have to be on the forefront of the anti-war movement, because it's my nephews, and when my granddaughter gets older and the shit ain't resolved, it will be her, sent to die over in another country



Brenda Stokely

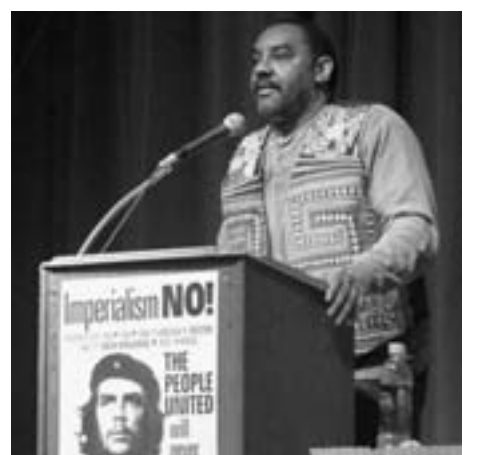
defending an imperialist beast.

It's my children, and me, and other workers who have to go to work and not be paid right. It's us that are being told that we cannot organize. So it's a no-brainer to those who truly understand who the enemy is, that we would automatically, without hesitation, be involved in the struggle around Katrina, in the immigrant rights struggle.

It was automatic for the Million Worker March Movement to say hell no, we're not gonna have a separate activity on May 1—we must have an activity that galvanizes all the people who are currently under attack, and combine the struggle.

So when we gave homage to those that were killed crossing the border, we said, don't leave it at that, you must give homage to the brothers and sisters who are dying in Iraq, and you must give homage to the Katrina brothers and sisters who have families who were left with their dead bodies floating in the water. Those people are the same people. And that's how revolutionaries have to think. That's how they have to act, and that's what they have to put into practice.

—Brenda Stokely, Million Worker March Movement



Professor Tony Van Der Meer

ities throughout this country.

At the recent 2005 Millions More March, hundreds of thousands of African Americans participated in another historical gathering. The march raised strongly the quest of justice for Katrina survivors, had a strong anti-war presence and an internationalist perspective with a video broadcast of solidarity from Ricardo Alarcón, president of the Cuban People's National Assembly, and Prime Minister Patterson of Jamaica.

The recent mass demonstrations in support of undocumented immigrant workers are a breath of fresh air. This development was centered more around the historical bases of the Chicano national movement fighting for self determination in the Southwest, which played a major role in this important political upsurge, than getting Democrats to replace Republicans in November.

As a result of the call for a national day of absence on the 50th anniversary of Rosa Parks' arrest, Boston developed the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee. In many ways the committee is an example of "forging class solidarity; unity with the oppressed and overcoming fragmentation in the movement" [the title of the panel]. The BRPHRDC was an alliance of the Black liberation movement, labor

and the anti-war movement connecting Katrina, immigration, violence, workers rights and jobs, healthcare and housing to the billions being spent on the Iraq war.

It is becoming clearer everyday that we need an anti-imperialist movement. However, we must recognize the racial, class, gender, cultural, political and ideological differences in order to build a common ground and develop a program that speaks for the oppressed and by the oppressed. The rank and file of the working class must be challenged and supported in opposing policies that are diametrically opposed to its own interests.

We must go door to door, school to school and shop to shop and develop a genuine relationship and dialog with the youth and working masses, employed and unemployed.

—Professor Tony Van Der Meer, co-chair, Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee

The Americas reject neoliberalism

By the hundreds of thousands, undocumented workers, their families and their allies have courageously filled the streets of dozens of cities, including right here in New York, the center of world finance capital. Their demands might have been different from their comrades' demands south of the border, but their defiance and their challenge, and above all, the origin of their struggles are the same.

And that origin is neoliberalism—that imperialist straitjacket that through the International Monetary Fund and World Bank has choked the possibility of oppressed nations to develop on behalf of their peoples; that imposes fiscal austerity when it comes to provide health, education, affordable housing and social benefits like pensions and child care but on the other hand promotes the so-called free trade agreements that are nothing but a road for the transfer of the national wealth and the natural resources to the coffers of transnational corporations on Wall Street. Trade agreements like NAFTA forced millions of Mexican peasants and workers, who had no other choice but to risk their lives, into crossing the border in order to find jobs in the United States so they could survive and feed their families.

But what the capitalists were not expecting, since they always underestimate the power and the will of the working class, is the enormous wave of resistance to their neocolonial plans throughout



Berta Joubert-Ceci

the whole hemisphere. This is where neoliberalism went on a collision course with the masses.

There is hardly any country south of the Rio Grande that has not rejected this imperialist plan in one way or another. The masses have responded with a sweeping upsurge of opposition, trying to take back their countries away from capitalism. Even the capitalist press worldwide, including in the United States, constantly refers to the "tilt to the left" of Latin America. This is where neoliberalism is collapsing.

—Berta Joubert-Ceci, co-editor,
Workers World Spanish page
(Mundo Obrero)

Cuba's 'battle of ideas'

In what the Cubans call the "battle of ideas," it is clearer for working people that U.S. imperialism can only offer war, destruction and exploitation—from the extermination of Native people to taking 40 percent of Mexico, move the border, then call Mexicans living there suddenly immigrants.

And what was the Iraq War but a destruction of the whole country? For anyone that still has illusions about U.S. imperialism, we see Katrina.

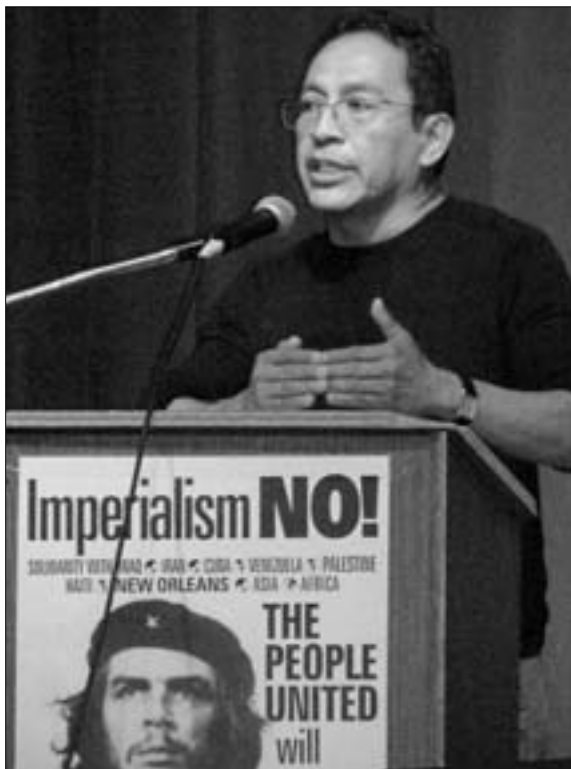
In the richest country of the world, they want to cut the wages of [Delphi] workers from \$27 to \$12.50 per hour. I worked for 28 years on the floor. I am an auto worker. My co-workers don't know if they'll have a pension or health care for them and their families.

Cuba calls the other side "another world is possible." Cuba deepened the roots of the workers' state. In the veins and blood of the revolution are workers. Everything is for the workers. Eighty percent of the population owns their house. There is free health care, free education, sports and culture. There is no malnutrition in Cuba. Cuba has the highest life expectancy in Latin America and the highest literacy rate. In 2000, the U.S. had 270 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants; Cuba had 582.

Another characteristic of Cuba is the international role Cuba plays. In Angola [after helping] defeat the racist South African Army Cuba asked for nothing in return, took not one diamond.

Three Points about Cuba:

- Cuban workers explained the neoliberal



Ignacio Meneses

policy: everything for corporations, for workers nothing.

- After the collapse of the Soviet Union: Cuba kept improving education and health care—in the worst times
- Cuba works with the social movements. The answer to the FTAA is ALBA—the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America, integration of Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia based on solidarity and cooperation for literacy, health care and education.

We have a revolutionary obligation to defend Cuba and Venezuela.

—Ignacio Meneses, National
Network on Cuba; U.S. Cuba
Labor Exchange

Resistance is globalized

Today there are more than 200 million migrant workers globally. And that number is growing by millions every year. The largest number is in the U.S., where there are more than 34 million immigrants with papers and 12 million undocumented.

Every industrialized capitalist country is dependent on super-exploited, low-paid workers with no benefits, no protection, and no rights. This is true not only in the U.S.

Consider the rebellions against racism that swept France this spring. Millions of workers and the children of the second generation from North and West Africa rose in rebellion against the relentless racism of imperialist French society.

Look at the wave of strikes that gripped Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman in the Persian Gulf, where up to 90 percent of the population are immigrant workers living in conditions of modern-day slavery. Last week a strike in Dubai shut down work on what is to be the world's tallest building. In Kuwait Bangladeshi workers stormed their own embassy in protest of unbearable working conditions. In Saudi Arabia, where more than half the population is migrant workers, there is rising instability.

Hundreds of millions of other peasants and small farmers are daily being forced off their lands and into the cities of the developing world. These vast internal migrations are equally disruptive.

There are cartels that deal in human trafficking—a modern-day slave trade. The trade in women for the sex industry is organized on a global basis.

Many developing countries' primary source of revenue is the remittances workers send home to their families.

Imperialist tentacles reach into every village. Capitalist relations uproot centuries-old traditions in the most isolated corners of the globe.

High in the Himalayas a revolutionary movement is sweeping Nepal. A general strike of more than 2-and-a-half million shut down the capital, Kathmandu. A Maoist insurgency has wide support in the countryside. Nepal is one of the poorest and most isolated countries in the world.

Puerto Rico: Let the rich pay!

In 2004, 62 percent of Puerto Ricans lived below the poverty line, of which 66 percent were households headed by women. The price of water and gas doubled and tripled within the last year.

On May Day the Puerto Rican government locked out 100,000 government workers, specifically targeting the Department of Education, whose 46,500 unionized teachers have been under direct attack by the state.

The current bankruptcy of the Puerto Rican government is due to its colonial status. This includes the sell-off of public land to transnational corporations by both ruling parties, the New Progressive Party (PNP) and the Popular Democratic Party (PPD). The granting of tax-free status to U.S.-based transnational corporations for many years has kept the Puerto Rican nation poor and dependent on U.S. government subsidies.

The Puerto Rican government now wants to impose a sales tax on the workers to create revenue. There is already a sales tax added to all products sold in PR. The government plan would amount to a double tax, and that is why the workers are



Sara Flounders

Its main export is labor. Its main income is workers' remittances.

Capitalism has no solutions to the chaos it causes. The giant transnational corporations must maximize profit, not just over the long term, but every minute in order to survive, without regard for human life or the life of the planet itself. This drives them into a frantic race literally around the world to find the lowest possible wage rate. The result is run away shops, outsourcing, free trade zones, and special economic zones with no labor protection.

The pressure to expand and to maximize profit is relentless. Markets are blasted open using full scale military attacks, political coups, and economic sabotage.

Due to the cycle of disruption, U.S. imperialism is increasingly the target of rage on a global scale. Imperialism has internationalized production and is creating at a faster and faster pace millions of new wage slaves—capitalism's grave diggers.

Ruthless globalization has not only vastly expanded the working class. Technology has connected the working class. Communication is instantaneous. The workers are not only more numerous but far more educated and technically skilled. They are increasingly conscious of their own potential.

The U.S. ruling class is determined to

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Arturo J. Pérez Saad

protesting. A common slogan has been: "Not 4, not 5, not 7 percent, let the rich pay for the crisis!"

While the colonial government thought it could railroad workers into deeper poverty, the massive resistance has put them on the defensive. This crisis could be the beginning of the end of the U.S. colonial occupation of Puerto Rico.

—Arturo J. Pérez Saad,
Arab-Puerto Rican organizer

CONFERENCE ON SOCIALISM

Movement leaders open a dialog

Continued from page 3

on the impact of imperialist globalization on worldwide immigration and how it leads to globalizing the resistance to U.S. imperialism, which is already bogged down in military adventures, including in Africa.

Ardeshir Ommani, a founder of the American-Iranian Friendship Committee, spoke on the imperialist threats against the sovereign country of Iran. Joyce Chediak, a Lebanese-American activist and WW newspaper contributor, explained why the Palestinian struggle is central to liberating the entire Middle East from U.S. domination.

John Choe, a Korea Truth Commission representative, emphasized that from June 4-9, there will be protests in Washington, D.C., to demand U.S. troops out of Korea.

Ignacio Meneses, co-coordinator of the National Network on Cuba, a co-founder of the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange and UAW Local 174 member, spoke on how the Cuban government, led by President Fidel Castro, has deepened its roots among the masses on the island.

Meneses stressed the revolutionary obligation of the U.S. movement to defend Cuba and Venezuela by supporting an upcoming Pastors for Peace caravan of goods to Cuba and the May 20 demonstration in Washington, D.C.

Vannia Lara, a Dominican organizer from New York City who recently visited Venezuela, reminded everyone about the 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic by U.S. Marines. In response to a meeting sponsored by the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States, a people's alternative counter-summit is being organized in the Dominican Republic from June 4-6 by anti-imperialist activists. It will include discussions on the impact of globalization on Latin American and Caribbean economies.

Arturo J. Perez Saad, immigrant rights organizer and IAC activist in New York, spoke on Puerto Rico's rich history in resisting its status as a direct colony of the U.S. and the economic crisis that is galvanizing mass protests throughout the island.

Bryan G. Pfeifer, a contributing editor of WW newspaper from Boston, spoke on the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rebellion of the Irish people against British colonialism led by the Irish



Final session on the need for 'Building a Revolutionary Party.'

revolutionary James Connolly.

The need for a revolutionary party

Rachel Nasca, from the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee, Women's Fightback Network and an AFSCME union member, chaired the fourth and final plenary session on "Building a Revolutionary Party."

Deirdre Griswold, editor of WW newspaper and a WWP Secretariat member, reviewed the Party's long history of support for the self-determination of oppressed nations within the United States, quoting the Party's founder, Sam Marcy, on why this is a necessary condition for uniting the working class in a revolutionary movement capable of defeating imperialism and beginning the transition to socialism.

Richard Kossali, a WWP leader in New York City, spoke on the need for a revolutionary newspaper and why it is important to get that paper into the hands of the workers, the oppressed and progressive movements.

Susan Farquhar, a Detroit Action Network for Reproductive Rights organizer, spoke on why working class and poor women must have a stronger voice in renewing this movement.

Yolanda Carrington, a FIST leader in

Raleigh, remarked, "I am an African American queer woman who is poor. I understand that I'm part of the larger global struggle of oppressed people. I'm proud to be part of the 90 percent struggling against the 1 percent who rule the world. I'm proud to be part of a party that works to get working people to own their creations."

She went on to say, "We need a revolutionary party dedicated to socialism in the triangle area (that includes Raleigh) that talks to homeless, single mothers in the welfare office. We need a movement that can deal and navigate through the bureaucracy of social service agencies. We need a movement that places the oppressed at the head of society and WW works toward that. Class oppression affects my life daily. I have to worry about how to put food on the table for me and my sisters. And, we need to put the struggle against gender oppression at the head."

Carrington announced to the conference that she recently became a candidate to join Workers World Party.

John Catalinotto, WW newspaper managing editor, spoke on efforts to build close ties with international working class formations that are fighting for real social change in their own countries.

Larry Holmes made closing remarks to the conference, followed by the audience

singing the International.

Among the solidarity messages sent to this socialist conference were ones from parties and organizations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Brazil, Netherlands, Senegal, Italy, Puerto Rico, Spain, Portugal, Pakistan, Palestine, Germany, Venezuela, Japan, Denmark, Belgium, France, Britain and elsewhere and from international organizations.

Cultural performances during the conference were provided by MC Aygee Cannibal from San Diego FIST; Pam Parker, an anti-war and union activist from Washington, D.C., and Urban Essence Dance Performance Collaborative from Boston. Casandra Clark Mazariego from Urban Essence and the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee made a special presentation at the conference on the role of culture in promoting social consciousness among youth.

Besides plenary sessions, discussion groups were held on domestic and world issues and struggles, including pre-conference documents written by Larry Holmes and Fred Goldstein. Meetings were held by FIST and lesbian/gay/ bi/trans organizers in-between plenary sessions.

Go to www.workers.org/conf2006/ to hear audio podcasts of the conference plenary talks.

U.S. torture record queried at UN committee

By G. Dunkel

Judging by responses to U.S. testimony at the International Committee Against Torture, Washington is on the defensive. Abu Ghraib and the other hellholes the United States runs in Iraq, Baghram Air force base in Afghanistan, Guantanamo in Cuba, thousands of "renditions" along with CIA operatives grabbing non-U.S. citizens off streets and beaches to be tortured thousands of miles away, the callous disregard toward the people of color who were victims of Hurricane Katrina—all this has exposed to the world U.S. imperialism's cruel, vicious depravity.

With its propaganda machine that uses racism and bigotry dressed up in slick production values, Washington has tried to sell itself as holding the moral high ground. But to the extent anyone ever believed this claim, it was based on deceit.

Now Washington, afraid of losing a sig-

nificant part of its worldwide political influence, is trying to regain this aura. That appears to be the State Department's calculation. On May 5 the State Department sent a large, high-level delegation, headed by legal adviser John B. Bellinger III, to Geneva, Switzerland, for the International Committee Against Torture.

This committee is part of the United Nations. It was set up by the 1987 Convention Against Torture, a treaty that the United States signed. Under this convention, the United States had been expected to report on its detention policies by 1999.

The Geneva meeting was the first time the United States has responded in an international forum to any charges about its "detention policies" since Sept. 11, 2001. The delegation's report stuck to the same tired denials that the U.S. government has systematically mistreated prisoners.

"The timing of our report comes at a difficult time for the United States," said

Bellinger, who is one of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's main advisors. "But we did not shy away from coming."

Even the European members of the commission had trouble swallowing Washington's dissembling responses. Fernando Marino Menendez of Spain, relying on reports from Amnesty International, raised the issue that only 10 U.S. service members or intelligence officers out of 600 accused of the torture or murder of detainees have received prison terms of a year or more.

Andreas Mavrommatis, UN ambassador from Cyprus and chair of the committee, was skeptical about Bellinger's claim that the United States got diplomatic assurances that the suspects it turned over in its renditions would not be tortured. He said, "The very fact that you are asking for diplomatic assurances means you are in doubt."

The European governments are mainly

worried about violations of their sovereignty. Issues like secret CIA overflights, secret CIA prison camps, kidnapping of their citizens, and the need to keep their political distance from the debacle of Iraq appear to drive them. This came out clearly on the second day of questioning over the report. A committee of the European Union's parliament is currently in the United States to investigate these charges.

Guibril Camara, a committee member and jurist from Senegal, challenged the United States directly. He said that the UN and its committee are the responsible bodies that will create the definition of torture. The United States wants to gut the definition by insisting on the phrases "excessive force or violence" and "significant injury or degradation." Camara told the U.S. delegation: "One of the parties is going to have to give way. And I think it's probably going to have to be you." □

The party & the national question

Continued from page 6

other liberation organizations.

Sam wrote: "Is there an inherent contradiction between the right of nations to self-determination and the building of a united working-class Party to attract to itself workers of all nationalities from the oppressing nations as well as from the oppressed nations? The answer is no!

"The need of the workers to organize themselves into a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Party and to unite them in the struggle against capitalism is an indispensable necessity for a victorious proletarian revolution. ...

"[Some] say that each nation within the confines of the U.S. should build their own Party and that since the workers of the oppressing nation and the workers of the oppressed nation have different problems arising from the nature of the oppression, it is impossible, at least for now, to have a single united Party.

"The logical conclusion of this thinking is that the whites should have one organization, Blacks another, Puerto Ricans another, etc. Assume that political evolution in this country favored such a development. The result then would be that we would have several Marxist-Leninist organizations. And if each had a generally Marxist-Leninist program, it would evolve from a loose alliance of these Marxist-Leninist organizations into a federation and finally into a unified multi-national political Party. ...

"When Lenin added to the slogan 'Workers of the world unite' to make it 'Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite,' he summarized the historical needs of the international working class to make the right of oppressed nations to self-determination a basic part of the revolutionary working-class program. The working class cannot emancipate itself without at the same time destroying, root and branch, every form of national oppression.

"Nor can there be any unity between the workers of the oppressed and oppressing nations as long as the workers of the oppressing nation do not recognize and do not advocate the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination. The right of

self-determination can take the form of secession, federation, a variety of forms of amalgamation, or any other form, depending on concrete historical circumstances. ...

"The right to self-determination is a political right which oppressed nations may use in whatever form they may ultimately decide as a nation. We must advocate and support that right. But we do not advocate separation, secession, federation or amalgamation. That is for the oppressed nation to decide. ...

"For a considerable period it appeared that a coalition of liberation organizations which were oriented to Marxism might develop into a federation in which we could participate as a constituent part. But this does not seem a likely variant of development for a considerable period ahead.

"The heavy repression against liberation organizations in this country, splits within the organizations and considerable confusion resulting from all this has made such a desirable prospect more remote. Nevertheless, it remains a hopeful variant of development.

"In the meantime, the task of organizing the workers from both the oppressed and oppressing nations into a revolutionary workers' party remains more urgent than ever."

What Sam Marcy wrote showed us that, even as we do all we can to build up this party as the revolutionary party for socialism, we must be flexible in our outlook and constantly revisit the question of what organizational forms will facilitate the greatest unity of all the workers and oppressed in order to wage a victorious struggle against capitalism.

This conference has been a milestone for us because it represents the development of an honest dialog with serious leaders from organizations of the oppressed, many of them Marxists, on a wide variety of subjects having to do with where the struggle is at today and what needs to be done. They have raised issues and posed questions that will enrich the Party's discussion and political education.

Such a dialog is absolutely necessary if we all are to strengthen ourselves for what I think we agree is going to be a tempestuous period ahead.

This dialog with other leaders and organizations would be impossible without the excellent leadership of the Black and Latin@ comrades in our Party. They have taken the initiative in moving us from the concept of a truly multinational revolutionary party at all levels into an actual work in progress.

—Deirdre Griswold, editor in chief, Workers World, Secretariat, WWP

Resistance is globalized

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use its military and economic power to shape events and dominate the world. U.S. imperialism is determined that no area remain outside its control—regardless of how small, poor or underdeveloped—from Sudan to Nepal, Haiti to Albania.

But with all that power and enormous weaponry, what the bourgeoisie fears most is a powerful mass movement that can overwhelm them and sweep them aside. Their problem is that more and more is happening on a world scale that is outside their control.

Once resistance begins, resistance changes consciousness. It changes the view of what is possible.

The spirit of internationalism and resistance of millions of new workers provides a material basis for the revival of socialism. It will push the whole class struggle forward.

We can feel that spirit of resistance growing and finally it has even taken root here—in the very center of the empire.

—Sara Flounders, Secretariat WWP

NEW YORK Palestinians remember Al-Nakba

Chants of "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" rang through the streets of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, May 14. Hundreds of Palestinian people and their supporters marked the 58th anniversary of Al Nakba—the Catastrophe—the U.S.-backed creation of the racist state of Israel and the expulsion of nearly 1 million Palestinians from their land.

Bay Ridge is home to New York City's biggest Arab community. The march and rally were organized by Al Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition. Signs displayed in Leif Eriksen Park, where the rally began, bore the names of some of the 418 Palestinian Arab villages wiped off the map in 1948.

The march, which went nearly 50 blocks, was led by young people carrying a banner saying "We have the right to return to our homes." The marchers expressed defiance against both the U.S.-financed Israeli occupation of their country and the racist persecution their community has suffered under the Bush regime's "war on terror."



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

One marcher said, "Now I know that if anything happens, my people are with me."

Rama Kased, co-chair of Al Awda-New York, said: "This event reenergized and empowered our community and brought us back onto the streets we have been afraid to march on for far too long. It shows we will never forget and our spirit will not be broken. We will struggle until the Israeli apartheid state goes the way of apartheid in South Africa and our people are free."

—Bill Cecil

Wal-Mart takeover behind attack on Mexican town

By Ruth Vela

Mexican police attacked flower vendors in San Salvador Atenco on May 3 as the vendors tried to sell in their usual area, now a future site of a Wal-Mart.

The government-initiated attack against the group of flower producers and their supporters was actually a result of a rarely seen collaboration among Mexico's three leading political parties—the PRI, the PAN and the PRD—which supported the municipal president of Texcoco in his opinion that the vendors "looked ugly."

The truth, however, is that small-scale vendors were getting in the way of plans for big foreign companies to take over this town as they have so many others in Mexico and around the world.

The flower vendors were occupying the space in the Texcoco market when they were assaulted by police. The next day before dawn the vendors returned with supporters from the town of Atenco to confront the police and reoccupy their space.

The police again responded with violence, this time using batons and tear gas.

Some 3,000 federal police surrounded the town of Atenco. They were later joined by state and local police. The troops pro-

ceeded to launch so much tear gas that the town was engulfed in a cloud. Some protesters were then arrested while others were able to escape and hide.

Police then went from house to house, smashing windows, breaking down doors and arresting more people. During the confrontation, police gunfire killed a 14-year-old boy and left Alexis Benhumea, a 20-year-old economics student at the Autonomous university of Mexico UNAM, in a coma after a teargas canister struck him in the left temple.

Since then, leaders of the People's Front in Defense of the Land, or what is being called the Atenco movement, have been incarcerated along with hundreds of their supporters and are among the most brutally tortured. There are currently more than 200 political prisoners—women, men and children—captive in Atenco. There have been several reports that police have raped women. In addition the town has been invaded and plundered.

In response to the attacks, people throughout Mexico and the United States have held protests. The Chiapas Center for Independent Media released a statement calling for a boycott of Wal-Mart.

The CMI says Wal-Mart "is an unwelcome guest for many Mexican intellectuals, artists, working people and activists. This is not the first time Wal-Mart has encountered problems moving in on new territory. [Atenco] is a reflection of growing outrage about Wal-Mart's unethical business practices, notorious union-busting and general disregard for the people affected by their practices."

The same could be said about all the foreign-owned corporations that move their factories and stores across borders freely, while thousands of people die each year trying to cross those same borders. These people are trying to escape the economic conditions created by imperialism. The people of Atenco are not alone. It is inevitable that workers will continue to rise up and defend themselves. It is their right to do so, by any means necessary, as long as they are confronted with a system where profits come before people. □

MUNDO OBRERO

Las Ocupaciones de Irak, Afganistán peligran

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países en Afganistán, está proyectada para asumir la dirección de las operaciones contra la resistencia en el sur y el este sustituyendo a las tropas estadounidenses antes del fin del año. La FIAS tendrá entonces entre 23.000 y 25.000 tropas en el país.

Naciones como Alemania, cuyo gobierno se negó a participar en la invasión de Irak encabezada por los Estados Unidos, están contribuyendo grandes números de tropas a FIAS en un esfuerzo para remen-

dar sus relaciones con Washington y desempeñar un papel en la alianza Estados Unidos-Europa que está tratando de tomar control de los recursos de petróleo y gas en el Medio Oriente.

Estas operaciones y las bajas que serán inevitablemente su resultado, continuarán disminuyendo el apoyo popular para la intervención. El gobierno de Tony Blair en Bretaña acaba de sufrir pérdidas en las elecciones municipales, con muchos de sus problemas teniendo como base la intervención en Irak. □

Puerto Rico labor fights mass layoffs

120,000 public employees return to work

By Tom Soto
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Some 120,000 public employees returned to their jobs in Puerto Rico May 15 after being laid off for two weeks. On May 13, after experiencing the impact of large and often militant worker protests, and the loss of several hundred million dollars from Puerto Rico's economy, the legislature and Gov. Anibal Acevedo Vilá had come to an agreement on securing a new loan to cover the current budget deficit of \$750 million. Repayment of the loan will come from a consumer sales tax that has not yet been approved.

Earlier, on May 12, tens of thousands of public employees and their supporters marched to the legislature, demanding reinstatement and opposing the unfair imposition of a consumer sales tax. The legislature and the governor consider this tax a "solution" to Puerto Rico's ongoing fiscal and debt crisis. (See related WW article published on May 4.)

Unions at the march included the Puerto Rican Workers Council, the Workers Federation of Puerto Rico AFL-CIO, the Federation of Teachers of Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican Workers Union, the General Workers Union, the Teamsters Union, and dozens of others representing public employees and the labor movement generally.

Starting at 6 a.m. on May 11, contingents of workers wearing union T-shirts and carrying colorful flags and banners took over the "Dos Hermanos" ("Two Brothers") bridge in the Condado area of San Juan, an exclusive hotel-dominated tourist area. At the same time, Teamsters Local 901 and the United Front of Truck Drivers parked their huge transport trucks in the middle of the streets in front of Puerto Rico's Convention Center complex.

The demonstration was impressive. As the front of the march neared the legislature, the end of the march, consisting of the transport trucks, was still leaving the gathering site.

Though the labor movement pulled off this big demonstration, it is divided as to how to confront an impending 7-percent consumer sales tax and the layoffs the government plans when it gets down to "cutting spending."

Some unions, such as the Federation of Teachers of Puerto Rico, the Electrical Industry Workers Union, the Teamsters, the Brotherhood of Exempt and Non-Educational Employees and others, oppose imposing any sales tax on the working class. They have instead advanced the programmatic demand that banks and corporations be taxed.

On the other hand, the Workers Federation of Puerto Rico AFL-CIO, the AFSCME affiliate United Public Servants, the Puerto Rican Workers Council and their allies, who constitute a large block of organized labor, are conciliatory and ready to accept an across-the-board consumer sales tax.

Government ordered layoffs

On May 1 the central government of Puerto Rico laid off 95,000 public employees, partially closing 45 government agencies and shutting down the public school system, which disrupted the education of 560,000 students. Fifteen of Puerto Rico's 78 municipalities also partially shut down, resulting in layoffs for

May 5
Puerto Rico,
Teachers take
over the
steps of the
legislature.

WW PHOTO:
TOM SOTO



25,000 municipal workers.

That's 10 percent of the labor force laid off in one stroke. This is the equivalent of laying off 15 million workers in the United States.

Unprecedented in Puerto Rico's history, the mass layoffs ushered in a sudden economic downturn and uncertainty, as 1.4 million workers and their families pondered what was going on with the economy and what was going to happen next.

The Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce and Exports reported that in the first seven days of the layoffs, consumer retail sales across Puerto Rico were down 24 percent, amounting to a loss of \$120 million as compared to consumer sales last year in the same period. Losses due to lost sales for small merchants were reported as even worse.

Many private businesses began to lay off part-time employees. By the second week of this crisis, losses were projected total-ing close to \$300 million.

Since the crisis exploded on May 1, when Gov. Acevedo Vilá of the Popular Democratic Party invoked the layoffs, workers have protested daily, demanding that the government reinstate the public employees. Union delegations have been constantly lobbying members of the Legislature—which is dominated by the pro-statehood New Progressive Party—to approve legislation authorizing borrowing to cover the current budget deficit and return public employees to their jobs. The current fiscal year ends on June 30.

Unions have set up a 24-hour-a-day encampment before the legislature. Individual unions, student groups, religious orders, women's organizations, anti-poverty groups, associations of the elderly and gay groups have all participated in protests in front of the legislature and in front of the governor's mansion. Some have gone to Puerto Rico's financial district, pointing to the banks and corporations as the real culprits.

External debt & capitalist loans

The current crisis was let out of the bag when Wall Street bond holders—mostly banks, investment houses and money managers—represented by Moody's Investor Services and Standard & Poor's threatened to lower the rating classification of government bonds.

These bond holders demanded that the Puerto Rico government carry out "austerity measures" like cutting spending and securing new revenue sources, thus ensuring interest payments on Puerto Rico's external debt, which is close to \$45 billion.

Puerto Rico has the biggest per capita debt in all of Latin America. Servicing the total government debt currently requires a yearly outlay of \$3 billion and this amount is growing.

Lowering the rating of Puerto Rico's government bonds would decrease their value on the capitalist bond market and increase the interest rates charged for any future loans made by the government through bond offerings.

What this boils down to is that a bigger portion of the value of what workers in Puerto Rico produce will now be extracted from them to pay for the loans made by the bourgeoisie through its political parties. The workers will have to pay a higher interest rate when the capitalist government borrows money. Overall, it is an inflationary measure, a wholesale expropriation of the purchasing power of the masses.

On May 8, in the middle of this crisis, Moody's Investor Services did just that, with Standard & Poor's positioned to do the same in the coming weeks. Moody's announced that due to the "Commonwealth's strained financial condition, and ongoing political conflict and lack of agreement regarding the measures necessary to end the government's multi-year trend of financial deterioration," it was downgrading Puerto Rico's government bonds to one notch above junk-bond status.

The announcement sent shock waves throughout Puerto Rican society, further fueling an already pessimistic atmosphere and deepening the crisis even further.

To satisfy Wall Street's demands, legislators from the two bourgeois parties—the Popular Democratic Party and the pro-statehood New Progressive Party—have been imposing austerity measures. These include cutting public services, forcing the early retirement of public employees, increasing the rates charged for electricity, water, highway tolls, public transportation, increasing tuition at the public universities, etc. But the key issue remains imposing a consumer sales tax that would guarantee debt-service payments.

Teachers and Electrical workers unions: 'Let the rich pay'

The most vocal and consistent opponents of the layoffs and against the consumer sales tax have been the Federation of Teachers of Puerto Rico, the Electrical Industry Workers Union, the Teamsters, the Brotherhood of Exempt and Non-Educational Employees and their allies.

On May 5, which in Puerto Rico was Teachers Day, some 5,000 teachers converged on the steps of the legislature

demanding immediate reinstatement. The teachers proposed a 5-percent tax on the net earnings of corporations making more than \$10 million, and another 4 percent on all corporations' gross income.

Using the pressure of thousands of teachers practically occupying the south side of the legislature, a delegation of six union leaders entered the besieged legislature and actually met with José Aponte, president of the House of Representatives, and made this proposal. Later the teachers and the union leaders marched militantly to Gov. Acevedo Vilá's mansion, sitting down with the governor and making the same proposal.

The fact that these meetings took place at all is remarkable. It shows how nervous the bourgeois politicians are about the labor movement becoming radicalized and militant, given the current crisis.

Workers developing independent voice

Putting forth the important slogan of "let the rich pay" and proposing a specific legislative measure before the politicians, coupled with the mobilization of thousands of workers and the publicity the proposal has received, has begun to give the working class an independent voice in this current phase of the struggle, where the bourgeoisie is seeking to resolve the capitalist monetary crisis on the backs of the working class.

Banco Popular, the largest bank in Puerto Rico, has been put on the defensive. During every workers' protest in the financial district, large numbers of Puerto Rico's riot police have surrounded the bank's offices. On May 7 Banco Popular took out a full-page ad in Puerto Rico's largest newspaper that read in part, "We don't understand why we are being singled out as being responsible for the crisis."

The economic and political crisis has put all the contending class forces of Puerto Rican society into motion, each one advocating in its own interests.

In light of the tumultuous events of the last two weeks, it is no wonder that when the Federation of Teachers and their supporters launched a campaign to "Stop the Profits of the Big Corporations and Banks," picketing the Pan American pier and delaying the departure of a luxury cruise ship for five hours, the capitalist establishment began to worry.

What had been projected by the bourgeois politicians and media as a narrow fiscal crisis based on a budget deficit has been exposed as full crisis of capitalism. □

Ejercicios de guerra de los EEUU amenazan al Caribe

Protestas del 20 de Mayo demandan: 'EEUU no intervengan en Cuba y Venezuela'

Por Cheryl LaBash

Aún cuando una flota de guerra de los Estados Unidos con 6.500 marinos está conduciendo maniobras en el Caribe que amenazan a Cuba, Venezuela y a otros países antiimperialistas en todas las Américas, otro tipo de movilización se está levantando por el mundo.

El 20 de mayo, manifestaciones desde Austria a Australia, desde Brasil a Canadá, coincidirán con una marcha en Washington, D.C. para demandar "No intervención de los EEUU en Cuba y Venezuela"

La situación es urgente. Según el periódico cubano, Granma, la extensión de las maniobras militares de los Estados Unidos es mucho mayor que las maniobras que el Pentágono llevó a cabo en octubre del año 1962 durante la crisis de los misiles. Maniobras similares en el pasado fueron usadas para obtener la información que se necesitaba para agredir, como los "ejercicios" que precedieron a la invasión de Granada en 1983.

Estas también se pueden usar para enviar un mensaje directo de amenaza, como el periódico Virginian-Pilot, aseveró en un artículo el 28 de marzo:

"Algunos analistas de la defensa sugieren que el inusitado despliegue por dos meses programado para comenzar a principios de abril, podría ser interpretado como una muestra de poderío por los gobiernos antiamericanos en Venezuela y Cuba. La presencia de un carguero estadounidense en el Caribe será definitivamente

interpretado como un tipo de señal por los gobiernos de Cuba y Venezuela," dijo Loren Thompson del Instituto Lexington, un comité de expertos en Washington.

Radio Habana dice que esta ominosa muestra de poderío será seguida por otra maniobra en el Caribe involucrando a 4.000 tropas de la OTAN con duración desde el 23 de mayo hasta el 15 de junio.

Organizaciones estudiantiles, latinas y laborales se movilizan

¿Quién está respondiendo al llamado para el 20 de mayo?

Estudiantes de la escuela superior de Nueva York ya han llenado dos autobuses y van por un tercero. La local sindical 1199 de la SEIU junto con el sindicato de la salud y hospitales de Nueva York han producido volantes que fueron distribuidos durante el boicot del 1 de mayo que exigía el derecho total para l@s inmigrantes, y en la marcha del 29 de abril que exigía el retiro de las tropas fuera de Irak.

Activistas cubano-americanos y de los Círculos Bolivarianos viajarán desde Miami hasta Washington, D.C.. Otr@s marchistas se unirán en la capital desde Detroit y Atlanta, Boston y Filadelfia, Nueva York y Virginia y otras áreas del país y del mismo Washington, D. C. Sus intenciones son las de decir no a las nuevas medidas políticas contra Cuba y Venezuela planeadas por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos.

El 20 de mayo es también el Día de la Liberación Africana. Particularmente

debemos hacer saber la colaboración de l@s organizador@s del Día de la Liberación Africana quienes compartirán la plataforma y el sonido en el sitio de reunión en el parque Malcolm X Park con esta movilización. También habrá la participación de organizadores y líderes africano-americanos, incluyendo People's Hurricane Relief, All-African Peoples Revolutionary Party y People of African Descent in Solidarity con Venezuela.

El actor de cine Danny Glover, la activista contra la guerra, Cindy Sheehan y el autor Noam Chomsky son los más recientes partidarios que dan su apoyo y han sido invitad@s a participar.

La marcha va a empezar con un saludo a los oficiales de la Sección de Intereses Cubanos y procederá entonces hacia la Fundación Nacional por la Democracia (National Endowment for Democracy, NED por las siglas en inglés), que ha otorgado mucho apoyo financiero a la oposición venezolana. La marcha luego se dirigirá rumbo al Parque Lafayette frente a la Casa Blanca.

En la Costa Oeste, una marcha en Los Ángeles se va a concentrar al mediodía del 20 de mayo en el Edificio Federal en la parte céntrica de la ciudad.

Intervenciones grabadas de los líderes nacionales de Venezuela bolivariana y Cuba serán emitidos en Washington, D.C. y en Los Ángeles. Otros oradores invitados son los abogados Leonard Weinglass y José Pertierra, los reverendos Lucius Walker y Luis Barrios, el sindicalista colombiano

Gerardo Cajamarca, y Elma Beatriz Rosado, viuda del asesinado luchador por la libertad puertorriqueño, Filiberto Ojeda Ríos.

Weinglass representa a Antonio Guerrero, uno de los cinco antiterroristas cubanos encarcelado injustamente en los EEUU. José Pertierra representa al gobierno de Venezuela en el proceso de extradición en contra de Luis Posada Carriles, terrorista que escapó de la justicia en Venezuela y es perseguido por haber estallado en 1976 un avión cubano que mató a 73 personas, incluyendo a jóvenes de un equipo de esgrima.

La lucha para liberar a los Cinco Cubanos y extraditar a Posada Carriles serán los temas principales. Otros temas incluyen demandar un alto a la intervención estadounidense en Venezuela junto a las campañas hostiles contra ese país, un fin a la guerra económica y política contra Cuba, permitiendo a ciudadanos de los EEUU y residentes legales viajar libremente a Cuba, normalización de relaciones entre Cuba y los EEUU, el cierre del campo de tortura en Guantánamo y la devolución de ese territorio a Cuba, y un alto a toda intervención militar de los EEUU en Latinoamérica y el Caribe.

Se pueden hacer donativos electrónicamente en www.may20coalition.org, donde también hay más información. Para informes de la Costa Oeste, llame al (213) 383-9283 o (323) 936-7266. Hay volantes que se pueden bajar del lugar del Internet para la actividad en Los Ángeles en www.iacenter.org. □

Una historia de dos helicópteros

Las ocupaciones de Irak, Afganistán peligran

Por John Catalinotto

Las ocupaciones de Irak y Afganistán encabezadas por los EEUU siguieron deteriorándose cuando guerrilleros derribaron un helicóptero británico de ataque sobre Basra, matando a cinco soldados, y cuando otro helicóptero de transporte militar de los EEUU cayó en el este de Afganistán, matando a 10 soldados del Fuerte Drum del estado de Nueva York.

Complicando los problemas británicos, cientos de residentes de Basra vitoreaban al concentrarse alrededor del helicóptero caído, lanzando piedras contra los soldados de la Fuerza de Reacción Rápida del Ejército Británico cuando llegaron a la escena. Algunos residentes de Basra gritaban apoyando al ejército Mahdí de Moqtada al-Sadr. Entonces los soldados británicos abrieron fuego contra los iraquíes, matando a cuatro o cinco, incluso a un niño, según la policía iraquí.

Fue típico de la fuerza de ocupación que sus voceros primero intentaran culpar al ejército Mahdí por los muertos civiles, aunque después confesaron que fueron las tropas británicas las culpables.

El derribo de helicópteros de ataque representa un problema táctico para los británicos. Comprueba que sus helicópteros son vulnerables al fuego desde tierra.

La fuerza de ocupación ha estado usando helicópteros con más frecuencia, igual que los usan los EEUU en el norte desde que comenzó a perder más camiones y soldados por las bombas en las orillas de las carreteras. Los británicos actualmente están revisando el uso de sus helicópteros, según el periódico Guardian del 8 de mayo.

Pero el problema político es aún más grave. Durante los primeros años de la ocupación, la parte sur de Irak había sido generalmente más cooperadora con la ocupación que la parte central del país. En el 2004, el ejército Mahdí encabezó una sublevación en Najaf y en otras ciudades pero luego se unió a la coalición de partidos políticos chiíta para formar el gobierno títere de Irak. Aparentemente esta relación está cambiando.

Según el periódico británico The Guardian, el comandante del Ejército Mahdí, Jassan Khalaf, fue reportado ayer [7 de mayo] diciendo que sus tropas habían derrumbado el helicóptero y amenazaban con más ataques.

Periodistas en riesgo en Irak

El Tribunal de Bruselas, que participó recientemente en un coloquio en Madrid exponiendo la culpabilidad de los EEUU por las muertes de académicos y científicos iraquíes, publicó un informe de la

Unión de Periodistas Iraquíes (UPI) el 8 de mayo que documenta que 109 periodistas fueron matados en los últimos tres años en Irak.

El informe que nombra a cada uno de los periodistas, tomó cinco meses de trabajo en el campo, documentando cuándo, dónde, cómo y por quién cada periodista fue asesinado.

Según la UPI, 69 periodistas fueron asesinados por milicias o individuos armados desconocidos, 21 murieron en explosiones o en combate, 17 fueron matados a balazos por tropas estadounidenses, y dos fueron matados a balazos por tropas iraquíes.

El grupo belga contra la ocupación señala que además de los 19 periodistas matados directamente por tropas estadounidenses o por tropas títeres, las autoridades de ocupación son responsables indirectamente por los otros asesinatos porque deben proveer un ambiente seguro en el que los periodistas puedan trabajar.

Afganistán

En Afganistán, un corresponsal de Al Jazeera reportó que Muhamad Hanif, un portavoz del Talibán, dijo que su movimiento había derribado el helicóptero estadounidense en la provincia Kunar cerca de la frontera con Pakistán. Hanif dijo que el Talibán ha conseguido armas

avanzadas con capacidad de destruir helicópteros estadounidenses.

Si el Talibán derribó el helicóptero, no fue la primera vez. El junio pasado, en la misma provincia, el Pentágono concedió que el Talibán había derribado otro helicóptero militar estadounidense con una granada impulsada por un cohete, matando a 16 tropas de las Fuerzas Especiales que estaban a bordo.

El Pentágono sostuvo que no hubo fuego hostil esta vez, implicando que las malas condiciones del tiempo fueron la causa del choque. La ofensiva estadounidense en la provincia de Kunar depende de helicópteros armados.

La OTAN y otros aliados de los Estados Unidos, muchos de los cuáles se han negado a operar en Irak o se han salido de Irak, han empezado a reemplazar a las fuerzas del Pentágono en el oeste y en el norte de Afganistán, incluyendo la capital, Kabul. Están organizados bajo el mando de la Fuerza Internacional de Asesores de Seguridad (FIAS). Si los líderes políticos que toman estas decisiones están pensando que no habrá ninguna repercusión política en este país porque hay poca posibilidad de bajas, quizás queden infelizmente sorprendidos.

La FIAS, que tenía 10.000 tropas de 30

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