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## Reality show in the Green Zone

# Bush can't hide debacle in Iraq

By Deirdre Griswold

Once again, the White House, with the help of the powerful U.S. mass media, has created a "reality" television show designed to turn the reality in Iraq upside down. According to the show's script, the war is going so well, and "democracy" is now so firmly implanted in Iraq, that the U.S. occupiers are going to turn over authority to an Iraqi government chosen in free and fair elections, etc.

There was George W. Bush, sitting side by side with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on June 13 in the middle of Baghdad's somewhat secure Green Zone, telling him that Washington was now ready to put the fate of Iraq "in your hands." Later, the outwardly upbeat commander-in-chief was shown praising and god-blessing a roomful of U.S. troops who cheered the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

The official line—dutifully elaborated by all the networks and front-page news editors—was that Bush's trip to Baghdad was a

clever coup, since the story had been put out earlier that he was at Camp David in the Maryland mountains with his top policy makers for a teleconferenced meeting with the new Iraqi cabinet in Baghdad. Photos to prove it had been distributed to the media. They showed Bush and his colleagues around a large table, ready to start the dialog in cyberspace.

Instead, just in time to dominate the day's airwaves, he turned up in Iraq, where none of the Iraqis knew he was coming until five minutes before his arrival, not even the new prime minister.

As with the emperor's new clothes, it doesn't take much smarts to see through all this. If some portion of the U.S. population believes the line, enough to give Bush an uptick in his dismal poll numbers, it is only because questioning by the media wasn't allowed on prime time but was reserved for the talking heads.

The fact is that Bush's visit completely negated the claim that Iraq has any kind of sovereign government. Obviously, the U.S. completely controls Iraq's airspace, Baghdad's Green Zone, the

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## Katrina evacuees tell Bush, FEMA 'NO HOUSING, NO PEACE!'



Delegations of Katrina evacuees and their supporters came to Washington, D.C., on June 13 from as far away as Houston, Atlanta, New Orleans and Greensboro, N.C., to protest the recent announcement by the Federal Emergency Management Administration. FEMA had said that housing subsidies for tens of thousands of people who lost their homes would be cut off. Under the Stafford Act, FEMA is obligated to provide 18 months of housing subsidies for those impacted by natural disasters. The one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina is Aug. 29. The evacuees organized a picket line in front of FEMA

headquarters. This was followed by a news conference held inside FEMA. FEMA did not send any of its representatives to the media conference to hear the grievances of the evacuees. Malcolm Suber, a resident of New Orleans and a leader of the People's Hurricane Relief Fund, also addressed a special session on the public housing crisis held at the offices of the U.S. House of Representatives. He spoke about how FEMA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have failed the Hurricane Katrina evacuees.

—Story & photo by Monica Moorehead

# Sir! No Sir!— break the chains

By John Catalinotto



Jane Fonda's FTA tour, 1970.

From the first moments of "Sir! No Sir!" the film grabbed me and hurled me back to the sights, sounds and political taste of 1968: to the struggle to stop the war against Vietnam, to the struggle to stop the war against Black America and to the hundreds of thousands of U.S. youths who, while wearing a uniform of one of the armed forces, fought to end that war, fought racism and tried to upend the U.S. war machine.

If you lived through that period, see the film to remind yourself what it was like. If you didn't, see it for a glimpse of what was possible, and imagine what can be possible.

Producer and director Dave Zeiger's portrayal of the events he chose to show was accurate, though one's heart beat faster seeing five years condensed into 90 minutes. Moving back and forth between more recent interviews and archival footage, he lets GIs and dissident officers and Jane Fonda tell their stories.

Some of the best archival footage is from the FTA—not Fun, Travel and Adventure but F—k The Army—tour that Fonda, Fred Gardner and Donald Sutherland did in 1970 as an anti-war version of Bob Hope's USO tour. Fonda had to perform off base, but still played before tens of thousands of GIs in Japan and Okinawa.

Zeiger was himself part of what was known as the "coffee-house movement." These were anti-war activists, youths for the most part, who set up "coffee houses" in towns near the large military bases where tens of thousands of GIs were being trained. Zeiger was at the coffee house in Killeen, Texas, near Fort Hood, called The Oleo Strut—named after a helicopter part.

I don't remember ever meeting Zeiger, but we experienced many of the same events, at a different angle. I was a civilian organizer from 1967 to 1971 with the American Servicemen's Union (ASU) and circulation manager for The Bond, the ASU's monthly newspaper—which reached tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of GIs. In August 1968, and again in October of that year, I was in Killeen and at Fort Hood with other ASU members to help with the legal and political defense of the Black soldiers known as the Fort Hood 43.

## A broad span of resistance

"Sir! No Sir!" manages to cover a broad span of military resistance. It shows the moral repugnance to an unjust war felt by officers like Capt. Howard Levy, who refused to train Special Forces to cure skin ailments—a talent they used to try to win the confidence of villagers in order to better murder the political leaders of the Vietnamese liberation movement.

It also shows how some Black soldiers, fed up with racism, identified more with the Vietnamese than with their white officers, and how all were affected by the revolutionary upsurge in the Black communities in 1968.

After Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in April of that year, there were rebellions in 100 U.S. cities, some of which were repressed through the intervention of the U.S. Army. So should it be any surprise that 50 to 100 Black GIs at Fort Hood, all having recently returned from a tour in Vietnam, balked at being sent to Chicago for the Democratic National Convention?

Zeiger examines "fragging"—the action by rank-and-file GIs of killing particularly vicious, racist and bloodthirsty officers and sergeants with fragmentation grenades. It happened a lot during the Vietnam War. The film focuses on the case of Billy Dean Smith, a Black activist GI who was obviously framed on a fragging charge because he was politically outspoken. He finally won the court-martial, but

only after spending a long time locked up.

A number of movie reviewers in the corporate press attacked Zeiger because, to them, the film seemed sympathetic to the fragging. "Is he for violence?" one asked, apparently forgetting that those who "frag" are soldiers and marines who are trained and ordered to kill Vietnamese people who did them no harm. These troops have simply awakened and pointed their weapons at those who order them to kill.

Even more reviews chided Zeiger for "not presenting the other side." We hope as many people watch "Sir! No Sir!" as watched the one-sided, racist "Rambo" fantasy or distortions of history like "Forrest Gump."

The voices you hear first and most often in "Sir! No Sir!"—at least those giving the most complex explanations for their resistance—are from dissident officers like Levy and Lt. Susan Schnall, Special Forces Master Sergeant Donald Duncan and a group of Air Force codebreakers. Their explanations about why they were ready to face punishment are honest, centering on their moral revulsion to the war, in stark contrast to the hypocrisy of the Johnson and Nixon administrations and the Pentagon brass.

The movie represents best that part of the 1960s movement that was not oriented toward the working class and the class struggle, but that had a revolutionary spirit, a growing solidarity with the Black liberation struggle and with the Vietnamese and a disdain for authority.

## The army in class society

There was, however, another dimension to the GI movement. The military is an instrument of rule by the capitalist class over the working class. The military's own structure also reflects, in a more rigid way than in civilian life, the class differences and class privileges in society.

Instead of the civilian worker, supervisor and boss, in the army there are enlisted people, officers and generals. Rules that forbid fraternizing and make obedience to orders a prime virtue help exacerbate these differences.

Breaking this rigid system, breaking the chain of command in any way, has revolutionary potential.

There's no doubt that the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people to liberate their country was a driving force of the resistance of enlisted people

inside the U.S. military, and that the Black liberation struggle had an additional impact. But in addition, the GIs who joined the ASU also hated being forced to salute their officers and call them "sir"; they hated the orders and those who handed them out; they hated the privilege of rank and wanted to elect their own struggle leaders.

This class attitude came through in "Sir! No Sir!" in the scenes with the Black enlisted men. Also in one of the interviews with a white GI in Vietnam about fragging, the interviewer asks him about attitudes toward the officers and sergeants. "Well," the GI answers, "you know we call them 'pigs.' That's our name for them."

If you go to the site [www.sirnosir.com](http://www.sirnosir.com) you'll find a schedule of where the film is showing, and lots of GI movement history—including many references to ASU organizers Pvt. Andy Stapp, Pvt. Terry Klug, Pvt. Tom Tuck and others who made it clear during the organizing from 1967 to 1974 that the battle of GIs against the Pentagon is a class struggle. They too were willing to risk punishment, but their goal was to organize enough of their class brothers and sisters to win that struggle.

Today, let's make sure that "Sir! No Sir!" gets to this generation's enlisted people in Iraq.

Email: [jcat@workers.org](mailto:jcat@workers.org)



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#### Sat., June 24

Workers World Forum. "The 1916 Irish Rebellion, James Connolly and the 1981 Hunger Strikers." In honor of the 90th anniversary of the Irish Rebellion/Easter Rising led by James Connolly and the 25th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strike, this forum will address the Irish and other national liberation movements in the last century of world struggles for socialism. 1-4 p.m. Free and open to the public. At 284 Amory St. (The Brewery), Jamaica Plain, MA (Stonybrook, Orange line T stop).

### LOS ANGELES

#### Fri., June 23

The U.S. Role in Darfur, Sudan. Featuring: Isma'il Kamal, co-founder Sudanese-American Society and Larry Holmes, secretary member, Workers World Party. 7:30 p.m. At 5274 W Pico Blvd #203 (between Fairfax & LaBrea). For info phone 323-936-7266.

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# Jefferson refuses to step down

## *Says it would be discriminatory*

By Fred Goldstein

On May 20 the FBI carried out the first-ever raid on the office of a U.S. member of Congress, the office of Rep. William Jefferson (D-LA). The FBI leaked word of the raid on the office of the eight-term congressman, the first Black representative elected to the House from Louisiana since the era of Black Reconstruction after the Civil War. The highly-publicized and unprecedented police-state measure was carried out in connection with a bribery sting operation in which the FBI alleges that Jefferson took funds to promote the interests of a small Kentucky technology firm seeking business in Nigeria and Ghana.

Shortly after the raid, Nancy Pelosi, (D-Calif.), House minority leader, asked Jefferson to step down from his position as a senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Pelosi did this despite opposition by the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) to this

racist move, which is a violation of precedent. Jefferson refused to step down, declaring his innocence, and basing his refusal on the fact that no charges have been brought against him and that his removal would violate Party rules and precedent.

Pelosi then called a meeting of the Democratic Party leadership steering committee, which voted against Jefferson and moved to refer the matter to the rank-and-file House membership of the party. Mel Watt, CBC member (D-NC) moved to have the vote postponed for five days and read a CBC statement denouncing the decision.

The CBC declared that Jefferson was entitled to "a presumption of innocence" and opposed measures "to force Rep. Jefferson to resign from Congress or to remove him involuntarily from his position on the Ways and Means Committee in the absence of precedents that have been historically applied..." (AP, June 9).

Rep. Mel Watt (D-NC), a CBC member, added that if action is taken only against someone who "is a Black member of Congress, then our community will legitimately ask, 'What in the world are you doing?'"

Pelosi said that she wanted Jefferson removed in order to "uphold the highest ethical standards." Corruption thrives everywhere in the capitalist establishment, from the White House on down. Yet instead of standing up to the racist singling out of a prominent African American legislator from New Orleans, Pelosi immediately jumped on the FBI/Republican bandwagon in order to save the Democratic Party strategy of "running against corruption" in 2006.

Meanwhile, Rep. Allan Mullohan (D-

VA), was not asked by Pelosi or the Democratic Party leadership to step down from his position on the powerful House Committee, despite the fact that he is under suspicion for funneling millions of dollars through the appropriation process to foundations that he established and to non-profits run by his cousin (Washington Times, June 1).

There have been no FBI raids on Mullohan's office. Pelosi asked him to resign from the Ethics Committee but not from the Appropriations Committee, which is the committee through which he is accused of enriching himself.

Below is the text of a letter written by William Jefferson to Nancy Pelosi responding to her request for him to resign his committee post.

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Leader Pelosi:

I have received your letter of this date requesting my immediate resignation from the Ways and Means Committee. With respect, I decline to do so.

Through my committee position and since this federal investigation became public, I have secured over \$20 billion in tax credits and federal funds for my district after Hurricane Katrina. I authored the GO ZONE Act, the Katrina Public Finance Act, and the Katrina Tax Relief Act, along with my colleague Jim McCrery, which all resulted in massive tax relief for families, seniors, government agencies and businesses in the hurricane-affected region. All of these matters fall within the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee.

Additionally, my committee covers trade, which is important to the Port of New Orleans. My work on the committee has been important to our port's recovery after the storm.

None of the matters reported to be under scrutiny involve issues under jurisdiction of the Ways and Means committee. Therefore, such a request would be even more perplexing and unreasonable. If I agreed, it would unfairly punish the people of the 2nd district and I will not stand for that.

Further, such a request would be discriminatory, in as much as no other Member currently under federal investigation has been asked to step down from a substantive, legislative committee assignment. It would also be unprecedented, in as much as I have served with Members who have been indicted, tried and won their cases, and who were never asked to step aside from their committee assignments during those processes.

Therefore, I will not give up a committee assignment that is so vital to New Orleans at this crucial time for any uncertain political strategy.

Sincerely,  
William J. Jefferson  
Member of Congress

## NYC gov't tries to divert trans march

Following are excerpts from an action alert by TransJustice, organizers of the Trans Day of Action. For more information, email [info4tdoa@alp.org](mailto:info4tdoa@alp.org).

The New York City Police Department and the City of New York are attempting to deny TransJustice's applications to march and rally on 8th Avenue. During a June 6 meeting, NYPD Assistant Chief Bruce Smolka made an anti-LGBT remark, telling TransJustice members "to go back to the Village" and that a rally at 42nd Street and 8th Avenue would not be allowed.

TransJustice called the rally to address the growing violence and murders of trans people. The rally will also commemorate sixth anniversary of [the murder of] Amanda Milan, a 25 year-old African-American transgender woman, who was brutally murdered on June 20, 2000.

Historically, 8th Avenue has been regarded as the place that several LGBT and HIV organizations, as well as LGBT nightclubs, have called home. TransJustice selected this route to call attention to [the] innumerable members of our communities that work, reside, play, and access support-

ive services, right in the heart of Midtown.

On June 23, trans and gender non-conforming people of color and their allies will rally and march against police brutality, to oppose the racist and xenophobic immigration policies of the Bush administration, to show our outrage at the lack of access to living-wage employment, adequate affordable housing, quality education, basic healthcare for our communities, and to demand an end to the devastating impacts of U.S. imperialism being waged against people at home and abroad.

TransJustice sees this attempt to deny the march route and permits as part of the ongoing plan of the Bloomberg administration to repress the progressive political movements of NYC. Now more than ever, TransJustice calls on all social justice activists from communities of color, lesbian, gay, bi, two-spirit and trans movements, immigrant-rights organizations, youth and student groups, trade unions and workers organizations, religious communities and HIV/AIDS and social service agencies to endorse, build contingents and to help fight for the right to march on 8th Avenue on June 23. □

## Harlem tenants:

### 'Hell no, we won't go!'



Tenants, mostly from the Harlem and upper Manhattan area, marched 1,000-strong on June 10 to demand affordable housing and a stop to the encroachment of Harlem housing by Columbia University. The university has been taking over buildings using the legal tool of eminent domain, which allows the acquisition of private property for public use.

People of all ages, from seniors to babies in carriages, took part in the march called by the Harlem Tenants Council, other advocacy groups and elected officials. The two-mile march started at Marcus Garvey Park.

Some marchers used the anti-war, anti-draft chant, "Hell no, we won't go," as their statement of refusal to leave the Harlem community. They carried placards with slogans in English and Spanish, which were printed by the hospital workers' union 1199-SEIU. They also chanted, "Stop the war on the poor."

—Workers World New York bureau



WW PHOTOS: ANNE PRUDEN

## On eve of UAW Convention

# Delphi offers buyouts, hopes to derail resistance

By Martha Grevatt

If you and your best buddy are both flat broke, pooling your resources won't make the two of you rich. Zero plus zero equals zero. The equation changes, however, when it involves two supposedly broke giant corporations: General Motors and Delphi.

Earlier this year General Motors, citing major losses, demanded and won concessions from the United Auto Workers — contractual raises were canceled and retirees' health benefits were cut. As a thank-you present the company announced plans to cut 35,000 jobs. Yet the same executives who were so desperate to cut costs suddenly found billions of dollars to entice thousands of workers — with bribes

running from \$35,000 to \$140,000 — to quit or retire.

Now GM has come to the aid of its former parts division Delphi, which has been in Chapter 11 bankruptcy since last October. Some 20,000 Delphi workers facing job cuts will be offered the same "Special Attrition Program" packages as GM workers.

Gregg Shotwell, an organizer of the rank-and-file group Soldiers of Solidarity, points out that "the SAP is not a comprehensive collective-bargaining solution. The SAP is not a union solution; it's the bosses' solution. The SAP helps GM-Delphi accomplish the downsizing, outsourcing, and downward spiral commonly known as whipsawing with a minimum of resistance. The SAP decimates solidarity,

isolates the embattled, and mitigates expense to the companies."

The UAW leadership is backing the deal, but Delphi has not backed off its aggressive stance towards the UAW. Delphi is not withdrawing its petition asking the bankruptcy judge to throw out the union contracts altogether. Delphi has fired union leaders and rank-and-file members of UAW Local 696 in Dayton, Ohio.

### Workers willing to fight

If GM/Delphi has billions to coax workers to give up their jobs without a fight, they must be lying when they claim they can't afford to pay union wages and benefits. The workers know this. Last month, UAW members voted overwhelmingly to strike if Delphi voided their contracts—96

percent were in favor with some locals voting almost unanimously to walk out. Months earlier, members of the International Union of Electrical Workers/Communication Workers of America voted similarly. Since last year, workers have been engaged in work-to-rule slowdowns under the leadership of Soldiers of Solidarity.

How to take the fight to the next level? This should be foremost on the agenda of the UAW Constitutional Convention taking place this week. Nothing is more critical for the future of the union than mobilizing its hundreds of thousands of members in a life- and- death fight for jobs, the union wage scale, health benefits and pensions, not to mention getting the fired Dayton workers reinstated. □

## Trial starts for Somerville 5

Supporters held a picket line and news conference on June 7 at the start of the trial for Isiah Anderson and Calvin Belfon, two of the defendants known as the Somerville 5, to demand that all charges be dropped immediately.

African-American Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner's statement to the news conference read, "Justice demands that all charges against the Somerville 5 be dropped immediately. None of the youths should ever have been indicted, and the fact that it has gone as far as a trial is an outrage and a travesty of justice.

"Police brutality and racial profiling in the Boston area and around the country is at epidemic proportions. The Somerville 5, Black youth, were victims of racial profiling and police brutality and gang profiling when they went to Medford, Mass., to attend a carnival on April 20, 2005. They were beaten, maced and called racist names by 10 white police officers.

"These young men were good students and accomplished athletes at Somerville High School with no prior records, but were suspended from school by officials who found them 'guilty until proven innocent.' Cases like the Somerville 5 show the



lengths that police and DAs will go to criminalize youth of color and feed them into the prison system."

The jury trial is expected to continue through June 14. Supporters have been attending the trial on a daily basis to demand justice for the Somerville 5.

—Phebe Eckfeldt



WW PHOTOS: LIZ GREEN

## A symbol for youth of color

*The following is excerpted from a talk by Phebe Eckfeldt from the Boston Women's Fightback Network and Committee to Defend the Somerville 5, which she delivered at a May 13-14 conference, "Preparing for the Rebirth of the Global Struggle for Socialism."*

On April 20, 2005, in Medford, Mass., a town near Boston, five Black high school students went to enjoy an evening at a carnival. They report that when they exited a store, they were stopped by police and accused of being in a gang. One cop punched one of the youths twice in the face, forcing him to defend himself. He was then attacked by several cops who clubbed and beat him. His best friend jumped in to save him, and in the end 10 white police officers were beating the teenagers.

The youths were arrested and charged with numerous crimes.

The police, courts, district attorney, local media and education officials all worked together to cover up this police

attack and then frame the young men.

The Committee to Defend the Somerville 5 was initiated by the Women's Fightback Network—made up of family, friends, community leaders and activists. The youths became known as the Somerville 5, after the high school they were attending. They are Calvin Belfon Jr., Cassius Belfon, Earl Guerra, Isiah Anderson and Marquis Anderson.

The Somerville 5 case has become a symbol in Boston of the determination of young people of color to stand up and fight back against the rampant police brutality not only in our city but across the country.

Racial profiling is a weapon used by the capitalist class to divide us—white from Black, worker from worker, poor from poor—so that we are unable to come together and fight for what we need, like jobs, housing, schools and health care. It is used to scapegoat people of color, especially youth of color, for all the evils and ills of society.

Racial profiling equates Black people with crime. Fake cop shows and fabricated crime statistics bolster this thinking and it

seeps into the minds of our class and becomes a real threat to our movement. It divides us. We must fight against this. We must build unity among our class. Racism hurts all poor and working people.

Racial profiling serves to criminalize youth of color. The district attorneys and the courts are right there to feed the youth into the ever-expanding, profit-making prison system where they work as virtual slaves. Police brutality is at epidemic proportions. Their job is to control, intimidate and repress the poor so that we don't unite against all the injustices of capitalism.

It is imperative that white people in the progressive movement address the issue of racism. They need to show solidarity with youth of color in their battle against police repression. They need to broaden their demands—not just anti-war, but anti-racist also. There are wars going on abroad but there is a war going on right here at home, against the communities of color.

Our party strives to build class unity. It is the only way we will win. □



WW PHOTO: LAL ROOJK

Phebe Eckfeldt

## Protests bring home lesson of Haditha

# Lt. Watada refuses orders to Iraq

By John Catalinotto

"My Lai, Vietnam, 1968. Haditha, Iraq, 2005. Rumsfeld, Cheney and Bush hate it when anyone mentions these two events—these two war crimes—in the same breath."

So starts the June 7 statement the Troops Out Now Coalition sent out with an appeal to active-duty troops to refuse to fight in Iraq, and to U.S. youths to refuse to enlist in the military. The statement, issued June 7, continues: "What is the lesson of My Lai and of Haditha? It's that when an occupation army is ordered to suppress a resistance movement (in Iraq this is called the 'insurgency') that has popular support, then it commits war crimes. ...

"The only choice is to refuse to take part

in these military operations in Iraq. And it is up to the anti-war movement to give every support possible to those who refuse."

The anti-war movement will have an opportunity to give that support to 1st Lt. Ehren Watada. Lt. Watada's supporters held coordinated news conferences on June 7 in Tacoma, Wash., and Honolulu, Hawaii. When he was restricted from taking part in the noon Tacoma news conference, a video statement was shown instead. Later that night, Watada did meet in person with journalists in Tacoma, near Fort Lewis.

Watada told the world that he would refuse to serve in Iraq because his participation "would make me a party to war crimes." He also criticized the "wholesale

slaughter and mistreatment of the Iraqi people."

Watada, who is of Hawaiian descent, is with the Third (Stryker) Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, which is scheduled for its second deployment to Iraq. He tried to resign his commission, but in May the Army rejected his attempt.

The anti-war movement in Washington state is supporting Watada's decision, according to a June 8 report in the Seattle Times.

Meanwhile, in New York on June 9, activists from TONC and other organizations demonstrated outside the military recruiting center on Chambers Street, near the Borough of Manhattan Community College and Stuyvesant High School. The

slogans on their signs, like "Haditha = My Lai," were aimed at advising young people not to join the Pentagon's war drive.

Demonstrators found a favorable response from passersby, including youths from the nearby schools. This showed that the day's news—that U.S. bombs had killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi—had not wiped away the truth about Haditha and other U.S. massacres.

After the Manhattan protest ended, one subway worker was so inspired to see the anti-war placards that he waved three of the protesters through the "special" entry door.

"It's about time that Iraq war ended," he said.

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## June 16

# N. America rallies to condemn Israeli massacres

Following are excerpts from a statement being circulated on the Al-Awda-News listserve.

Friday, June 16—  
Emergency National Action—  
Protest Israeli Massacres Of Palestinians  
5 p.m. at Union Square Park South  
[New York]

Rally in anger, in memory, in support of the Palestinian struggle to survive...

Friends and supporters of Justice in Palestine: Join Chicago, New York, Toronto, Montreal, San Francisco, Boston, and dozens of other cities in North America calling for a Day of Action in solidarity with the people of Palestine in their struggle against the Genocidal Apartheid Israeli State.

On June 13, Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) committed a new extra-judicial execution in Gaza City, killing 11 Palestinians, including 9 civilian bystanders. The number of extra-judicial executions committed by IOF in the past four days has mounted to six, which have killed 18 Palestinians and wounded at least 40 others. These attacks [are] an implementation of decisions taken by Israeli Defense Minister Amir Peretz to escalate extra-judicial executions against Palestinian militants to stop launching locally made rockets at Israeli towns. Peretz has been also considering intensifying military operations in the Gaza Strip, whose victims are often unarmed civilians.

According to investigations conducted

by PCHR [Palestinian Center for Human Rights], on June 13 an IOF aircraft launched one missile at a civilian vehicle traveling in al-Tuffah neighborhood in the northeast of Gaza City. Two members of the al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Jihad, were in the car. The missile hit the car, killing the two: Hammouda al-Wadiya; and Shawqi al-Saiqali. Palestinian civilians in the area gathered around the car and two paramedics from the nearby hospital came to provide medical aid.

Immediately, IOF aircrafts launched another missile at the car, killing nine civilians, including a man, his two children and the two paramedics. At least 30 other civilians, including a number of children, were wounded, 12 of them serious[ly].

On June 9, at least seven Palestinian civilians were killed when Israel Navy gunboats firing artillery shells hit a beach in the northern Gaza Strip. Some 40 others were wounded. Among the dead were three children.

As the European and U.S. governments demand the freezing of humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine, Israel has continued its military attacks, arresting hundreds more civilians, destroying countless homes and property, expanding its illegal settlements and its Apartheid Wall, and imposing more than 500 checkpoints and roadblocks, seriously restricting freedom of movement and suffocating the economic and social life of the Palestinian people.

In the past week, Israeli forces have launched missile air strikes against "targets" in densely populated civilian areas of the occupied Palestinian territories, directly intended to kill Palestinian civilians, a policy that has continued unabated even though the democratically elected Hamas-led Palestinian government, and the vast majority of resistance organizations, have complied with a self-imposed unilateral truce against

the Israelis for over a year.

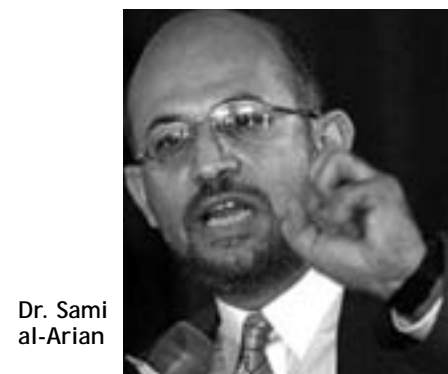
Israel's army also continues to restrict the movement of ambulances, and has even fired upon ambulances during the recent period, including shooting at one, which was carrying a woman in labor, on May 27, destroying the vehicle's engine, and delaying the woman's arrival at the hospital.

End the siege on Palestine now! End Israeli occupation now! □

## Gov't moves al-Arian to Atlanta

The Tampa Bay Coalition for Justice and Peace reports that Dr. Sami al-Arian, political prisoner of the U.S. government's phony "war on terror," has been moved from a correctional facility in Tallahassee, Fla., to a penitentiary in Atlanta, receiving no food or water during the 15-hour process. Now in Atlanta, Al-Arian is being held in solitary confinement and 23-hours-a-day lockdown. The move makes it harder for his family in Florida to visit him; in addition, he has been denied visitation rights for 30 days.

Although the U.S. government led a public campaign to condemn Al-Arian as the "North American leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad," he was acquitted of eight charges, with the jury deadlocked over the remaining nine. Facing



Dr. Sami al-Arian

deportation, he accepted a plea bargain for an immigration fraud charge in order to be with his family. But the judge reneged on the bargain, forcing him to remain in prison until his deportation.

Letters of support to Dr. Al-Arian can be sent to: Dr. Sami Al-Arian (#40939-018), USP Atlanta, USP Penitentiary, P.O. BOX 150160, Atlanta, GA 30315.

—LeiLani Dowell

# Stonewall Rebellion: Crowd rage ignites

By Leslie Feinberg

Acts of resistance, some of them virtually simultaneous, presaged rebellion as prisoners were being loaded into the police wagon and precinct cars outside the Stonewall bar the night of June 28, 1969. Many of the following precious first-hand accounts by Stonewall combatants are compiled in books about the rebellion by David Carter and Martin Duberman.

A number of accounts of the confrontation between cops and the crowd outside the Stonewall bar mark the prolonged struggle between police and a cross-dressed butch lesbian as a qualitative turning point. According to Village Voice journalist Howard Smith, "It was at that moment that the scene became explosive."

Smith wrote that the crowd roared: "Police brutality! Pigs!"

Gino, a Puerto Rican construction worker, joining in the shouts of "Let her go! Leave her alone!" reportedly dislodged a loose cobblestone and heaved it across Christopher Street. Eyewitness Steve Yates remembered, "It landed on the trunk of a police car with a terrible screech, 'scaring the shit' out of a policeman who was standing next to the car."

According to Stonewall employee Harry Beard, one or more people in the crowd were able to slash all four tires on the police cruiser with the butch lesbian prisoner inside.

Raymond "Ray" Castro, a Puerto Rican baker, recalled how he fought his own arrest. "At that point I started pushing back and wound up with two plainclothes police pushing me. The next thing I know, there's two plainclothes cops and two uniformed police in the melee. I was knocked to the ground by one of their billy clubs, [which,] put between my legs, tripped me. At that point the handcuffs got put on me, and they had a [police] wagon right in front of the entrance to the Stonewall. When I got shoved up to the door of the [police] wagon, I had two policemen on each side of me. I didn't quite go willingly into the [police] wagon. I didn't want to be arrested. Even though I was handcuffed, I jumped up and [put] one foot on the right side of the door and one foot on the left of the door. I sprung up like a jumping jack and pushed backwards, knocking the police down to the ground, almost against the wall of the Stonewall. Well, they finally dragged me into the [police] wagon."

Tom, a participant, remembered Ray battling against arrest. "A couple more were thrown into the van. We joined in with some who wanted to storm the van, free those inside, then turn over the van. But nobody was yet prepared for that kind of action. Then a scuffle at the door. One guy refused to be put into the van. Five or six cops guarding the van tried to subdue him with little success. Several guys tried to help free him. Unguarded, three or four of those in the van appeared then quickly



Boston LGBT pride march, 2005.

disappeared into the crowd. This was all anyone needed."

As police hurriedly tried to load other prisoners into the police wagon, one 18-year-old participant saw "a leg in nylons and sporting a high heel shoot out of the back of the [police] wagon into the chest of a cop, throwing him backward. Another queen then opened the door on the side of the wagon and jumped out. The cops chased and caught her, but Blond Frankie [who worked the door at the Stonewall] quickly managed to engineer another escape from the car; several queens successfully made their way out with him and were swallowed up in the crowd." ("Stonewall," Duberman)

Michael Fader reported seeing the cops "leave the van unattended—the doors were open, so they left. That raised the emotional level, the excitement of them getting away."

The multinational crowd of hundreds massed around the police was made up of those brave enough and angry enough at oppression to be drawn to a confrontation with the police. Stonewall combatant Sylvia Rivera stressed a very important point about the rebellion that ensued. Rivera was a Venezuelan and Puerto Rican transgender youth who had lived homeless on the streets of Manhattan since she was 10 years old. Before her death, she stressed the role in the rebellion of the homeless gay/trans street youth—Black, Latin@ and white, and gender-defiant—who could not afford the Stonewall door admission charge or the overpriced, watered down drinks. The vest-pocket park across the street from the bar was their home. (Personal interview, 1997)

Rivera emphasized that at the moment of ignition of the rebellion, "It was street gay people from the Village out front—homeless people who lived in the park in Sheridan Square outside the bar—and then drag queens behind them and everybody behind us." ("Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue," Feinberg)

Danny Garvin described how police tried to push back those gathered around them. This allowed the crowd to make an important discovery: a big stack of new bricks at a Seventh Avenue South construction site. Garvin explained, "They would come at us with nightsticks, and we would have to disperse onto Seventh Avenue, where the people were able to see the bricks."

Deputy Inspector Seymour Pine, who

led the raid, ordered police to drive off quickly with prisoners in the police wagon and three cop cruisers and "just drop them off at the Sixth Precinct and hurry back."

People in the crowd around the police wagon began beating on its sides, demanding to know the names of those imprisoned inside. According to Voice reporter Lucian Truscott, "A cry went up to push the [police] wagon over, but it drove away before anything could happen."

The slashed tires of one or more of the vehicles slowed down the police exit. According to accounts compiled by David Carter: "The crowd, however, was beyond being intimidated by mere sirens and the caravan had to push slowly through the furious protesters, who, enraged, pounded on the police vehicles. Danny Garvin recalls the noise as 'people would run over, grab the [police] wagon, and start shaking—ba-boom! ba-boom!!'"



PART 66

Lavender & Red focuses on the relationship over more than a century between the liberation of oppressed sexualities, genders and sexes, and the communist movement. You can read the entire, ongoing Workers World newspaper series by Leslie Feinberg online at [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org). Stop and get a subscription while you're there!

Martin Duberman reported, "One queen mashed an officer with her heel, knocked him down, grabbed his handcuff keys, freed herself, and passed the keys to another queen behind her."

Inspector Pine was left with eight plain-clothed detectives and one uniformed cop, all surrounded by an enraged crowd. Those among the hundreds who surrounded police threw their precious pocket change in a hard hail, shouting, "Dirty copper!" and "Here's your payoff!"

They hurled bottles, cans, bricks, a damaged fire hydrant, and dog excrement at police. A youth named Timmy reportedly heaved a wire-mesh garbage can, which shattered the Stonewall's plate-glass window, which was reinforced with plywood.

Cries of "Gay power!" and "Let's get 'em" articulated the detonation of mass rage.

There was nowhere for the police to retreat except back into the Stonewall—the very bar they had raided.

*Next: Police barricade themselves inside Stonewall bar; crowd lays siege.*

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Los Angeles pride march.

WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU

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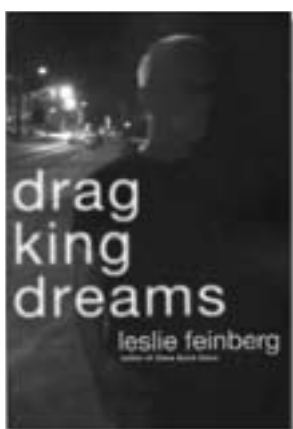
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## 2006 BOSTON PRIDE

# Spirit of Stonewall revived

By Gerry Scoppettuolo  
Boston

In the midst of a cold driving rain, Stonewall Warriors/International Action Center organized the single biggest contingent at this year's Boston Pride march on June 10. The "Unifying Our Struggles" float provided joyous music, multinational marchers and placards with slogans that truly reflected the struggles facing LGBT communities in Boston and elsewhere.

Marchers from community organizations revived the true spirit of Stonewall, demanding an end to institutionalized transphobia, funds for LGBT youth organizations, money for AIDS and not for war, and an end to racial profiling and the anti-immigrant policies of Bush, the racist Minutemen, and their corporate sponsors.

The Stonewall Warriors/International Action Center initiated the contingent, with the solid organizing of QueerToday.com, the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee, United Steelworkers of America Local 8751 (the Boston school bus drivers' union), the Women's Fightback Network and Workers World Party. Endorsements and support also came from New England



Boston, June 10.

Black Gay Pride and the Somos Latin@s LGBT Coalition.

Pride in Boston came just as the huge Macy's Department Store chain yielded to the demands of the homophobic Article 8 Coalition and pulled a gay male mannequin display from its downtown store, along with a sign from the AIDS Action

Committee, New England's oldest and largest AIDS service organization. Queer Today.com quickly organized a protest the next day, June 11, at Macy's downtown store.

Massachusetts has the only legal civil marriage rights in the United States and local LGBT groups have therefore drawn

constant attacks from right-wing organizations like Fred Phelps' group, also Focus on the Family and the Article 8 Coalition. The largely radical queer youth in the "Unifying Our Struggles" contingent and their alliance partners at Boston 2006 Pride showed that a new phase of struggle and fightback is alive—and growing. □

WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

## Los Angeles pride: message of unity

By Ruth Vela  
Los Angeles

Thousands of people lined the streets of Los Angeles on June 11, celebrating another extremely successful Lesbian, Gay, Bi, and Trans Pride March. The International Action Center contingent, from both the San Diego and Los Angeles branches, carried an assortment of placards showing support for many different causes—from saving the South Central Farm, to bringing the troops home now and stopping the illegal war in Iraq, to defending women's reproductive rights. Other placards read "LGBT equality now!" and "Marriage rights for all."

Chants included: "Gay, straight, Black, Brown, and white, all unite to fight the right!" and "When trans people are under attack, what do we do? Act up! Fight back!" Many on the sidelines joined the chanting and were noticeably pumped up by it.

Justino Jimenez of San Diego FIST—Fight Imperialism Stand Together—and the IAC kept the crowd moving by dropping knowledge in the form of hip hop. He shared rhymes on many current issues while John Parker beat boxed.

Jimenez said: "The thing I will remember the most about today is seeing the gay community representing hip hop. It was amazing that LGBT hip hop heads got to come out representing the culture and got to see an emcee rock the mic to show support for their struggle. Today was a big step in the direction of unity."

Unity was the main message of the day, combining all these struggles into the working-class struggle against imperialism. This was reflected by the lead banner carried proudly by the contingent, which read: "Come out against racism and war—United we fight for full rights for LGBT and immigrant communities." □



WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU

IAC contingent, Los Angeles, June 11.

### THE DIRT SHE ATE Selected & New Poems by Minnie Bruce Pratt

Vivid, lush, and intensely honest, these poems capture the rough edges of the world and force us to pay attention. Pratt is the author of four previous books of poetry, including *Crime Against Nature*, chosen as the Lamont Poetry Selection by the Academy of American Poets and a New York Times Notable Book of the Year, and *Walking Back Up Depot Street*, Foreword Magazine's Gay/Lesbian Book of the Year.

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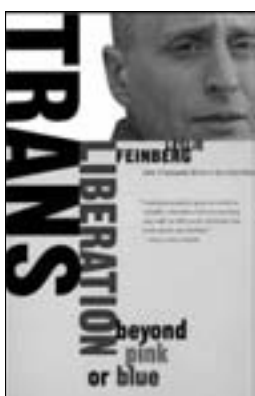


### TRANS LIBERATION beyond pink or blue

More exists among human beings than can be answered by the simplistic question I'm hit with every day of my life: "Are you a man or a woman?"

Trans Liberation is the phrase that has come to refer to all those who blur or bridge the boundary of the sex or gender expression they were assigned at birth. In this inspiring collection of speeches and new writing, Leslie Feinberg argues passionately for the acceptance of all trans peoples—and for the absolute necessity of building coalitions between all progressive political groups.

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## PUERTO RICO PRIDE DAY

THOUSANDS OF GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES DEMONSTRATED AT THE BEACH-RESORT COMMUNITY OF BOQUERÓN, PUERTO RICO, ON JUNE 11, TO DEMAND AN END TO DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL IDENTITY AND FOR EQUAL RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO MARRY.

—TOM SOTO



## Legacy of counter-revolution

# State sharpens anti-gay attacks in Poland

By Leslie Feinberg

Estimates of the size of the June 10 "Equality Parade" in Warsaw, Poland, range as high as 10,000, making it the largest gay rights demonstration in that country's history. Those who came out braved threats and an attack by Polish neo-fascists, reportedly members of the All-Poland Youth organization, who hurled rocks, bottles and eggs.

The Equality Foundation said only city officials could have known the time and route of their demonstration, which had not been made public but was included in their application for a permit.

Warsaw city officials scheduled an ultra-rightist League of Polish Families parade at the same time and along the same route.

The June 10 attack and others on recent gay rights marches in various Polish cities are being generated—and actually organized—as part of a sustained political and ideological campaign against homosexuality by the Polish coalition government, the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy with which it is closely allied, and some of the national media. This classical scapegoating is a blatant attempt to deflect mass anger at the economic dislocation brought to Poland in the last decade and a half of capitalist restoration.

Gay rights groups in Poland report an escalation of anti-gay political attacks after the center-right Law and Justice Party (PiS) in September won a national election marked by low voter turnout. Anti-gay rhetoric is a centerpiece of the party's program.

Lech Kaczynski, now Poland's president, had banned pride marches in Warsaw when he was mayor in 2003 and 2004. Several thousand gays, lesbians and their supporters defied the mayor and took to the streets, despite organized neo-fascist attacks. The president's identical twin brother, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who now rules parliament, had earlier called for a ban on gay men teaching in schools.

Shortly after being appointed as prime minister last September, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz—a senior politician in the ruling PiS—publicly characterized homosexuality as unnatural, likening it to a spreading disease that must be stopped. One of his first acts was to dismantle the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Equality of Men and Women, which was established to stop discrimination based on sexual orientation.

In May, PiS formed a coalition with two parties even farther to the right in an attempt to secure a parliamentary majority. This brought the League of Polish Families (LPF), closely allied with the Catholic hierarchy, and the peasant-based Self-Defense Party into the government. Both parties are ultra-nationalist, anti-gay and espouse feudal anti-Jewish propaganda.

As a reward for bringing the LPF into the coalition government, Roman Giertych has been appointed education minister and deputy prime minister. Giertych founded the All-Poland Youth organization in 1989. This youth wing of the LPF is a magnet for skinheads, neo-Nazis and other fascist elements. Its violently anti-gay members were reportedly the core of ultra-rightists who threw stones and eggs at participants in a March for Tolerance in Krakow in April.

One of Giertych's early acts after being appointed education minister was to demand a list of all schools that had been visited by gay rights groups.

Giertych's closest aide—LPF director and former leader of the All-Poland Youth, Wojciech Wierzejski—reportedly told the Warsaw-based daily newspaper *Zycie Warszawy* that if demonstrators marched on June 10, they should be bashed with clubs. He later denied saying it. However, Wierzejski wrote a formal letter on May 12 to the justice and interior ministers demanding a criminal investigation into funding sources of Polish gay rights organizations. Wierzejski has tried to link gay rights with child sexual abuse and claims that organized crime and drug traffickers are financing gay organizations.

The Polish state prosecutor then announced on May 30 the launching of a widespread investigation into alleged criminal connections and financing of gay rights groups. He used the specter of child molestation to justify state scrutiny of the relation of gay rights organizations to the Polish educational system.

The deputy minister of education, also a leading member of the LPF, charged on May 19 that the Polish organization Campaign Against Homophobia—which had organized several gay rights marches—was "depraving young people." He vowed to sever all funding to this group and others like it.

### Struggle wins some support

Polish gay rights organizers have found some support, mostly from intelligentsia, artists and Social Democrats within Poland, and from Social Democratic lesbian and gay politicians and organizations in Western Europe.

Famous Polish singer Michal Wisniewski announced that he and his band, *Ich Troje*, supported the Warsaw march organizers. The band held a concert in Berlin on May 7 to raise money for the march.

Chartered buses brought hundreds of Germans of all sexualities to the Warsaw march. Politicians from Germany, France, the Netherlands and Sweden traveled to Poland to take part.

Individual Poles were also drawn to show their solidarity. Law student Katarzyna Maszkowska said, "I came here to support the idea of freedom. I see no point in discriminating against people because of their sexuality. I want to live in a country which respects human rights."

Polish Radio quoted one man who marched: "I'm hetero myself, but I quite simply support these people, because they have the right to express themselves as they want."

### This support for gay rights predates the Warsaw march

The government investigation of gay rights organizations, and attempts to equate them with child molestation and infiltration of the school system, come on the heels of successful national protests against Giertych's appointment as minister of education. Gay groups, joined by students and left-wingers, held a demonstration in Warsaw on May 9 estimated by organizers as 8,000 strong.

Within days after a petition against Giertych's appointment was posted online, some 60,000 people had signed it,

Hundreds made their way past police barricades to occupy Le Madame, a Warsaw gay club, in March.

PHOTO: BENT.COM



including academics, artists, prominent film directors and Mark Edelman, the last living leader of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

In March, when Polish police on the orders of the Warsaw City Council raided and tried to shut down a gay bar, Le Madame, heterosexuals joined a sit-in with gays and lesbians to occupy the club. As word of the resistance traveled, left-wing activists, artists, students and other intellectuals—including those from out of town—made their way past police barricades to reinforce the occupation. A group of militants from the left-wing political party *Nowa Lewa* (New Left), with its chairperson Piotr Ikonowicz in the lead, "eventually broke through the police barricades while lobbing a few beer bottles at blockading forces." (*Gay City News*, Doug Ireland)

The club, owned by Polish-born Black gay activist Krystian Legierski, was home to many political currents, including gay rights activists, anti-globalization activists, pacifists, anarchists and left-wing opposition parties.

Also, thousands of demonstrators marched in Warsaw, Gdansk, Elblag, Rzeszow, Lodz, Torun, Wroclaw and Poznan last November, after police and right-wingers attacked a March for Equality and Tolerance in Poznan. The marches, called by the Campaign Against Homophobia, were co-sponsored by some branches of the Polish Social Democratic Party, the Green Party, the Democratic Party, the Young Socialists and feminist and human rights groups.

### Struggle within state

There are indications that the Polish capitalist class is not united behind the ultra-nationalist outlook of this far-right government. A struggle has opened within the state over repression aimed at the gay rights movement.

After police arrested scores of gay rights demonstrators in Poznan in a march declared illegal by local authorities, courts later ruled the ban was unconstitutional and all charges were dropped.

Similarly, a ban on a gay rights march in Warsaw decreed by then-mayor Kaczynski was overturned.

This year, Warsaw municipal authorities—known to be controlled by conservative forces—were forced to formally allow the June 10 march after a ruling by the Supreme Administrative Court that gays and lesbians, and other groups, have the right to rally and march. The crowd reportedly cheered on June 10 when several police joined in the march.

After the May 30 announcement by the Polish state prosecutor ordering an investigation of gay rights individuals and organizations, a Polish daily newspaper quoted this response from an anonymous police official from the state prosecutor's office: "This is absurd. We are not here to check the sexual orientation of adult people."

These point to tactical differences in the Polish ruling class over how to relate to the European Union. The Polish elite hoped that the restoration of full-blown capital-

ism would result in their enrichment on a par with the Western European ruling classes. Poland and seven other former socialist-bloc countries joined the European Union in 2004. However, the dismantling of the remnants of planned economies has left Poland and other Eastern European countries economically ravaged by imperialist finance capital.

One wing of the Polish ruling class is obviously concerned that state attacks on gay rights will result in the loss of European Union voting rights. On the other hand, pressure from EU politicians on the Polish government to protect gay rights is grist for the ultra-nationalist mill. German intervention is particularly resented by Poles, based on Germany's history of fascist military occupation of Poland and mass extermination camps.

The movement in Poland can't count on segments of the capitalist class there or in the EU or U.S. to turn the political situation around. It was their conspiracy with the Catholic Church hierarchy to bring down the weak Polish workers' state and sever it from the socialist bloc that opened the door to the right-wing nationalist forces in the first place.

### This is what 'democracy' looks like

Some are comparing the police attacks on gay demonstrations to attempts by the former Polish government to repress the Solidarity movement, and blaming "communism" for it.

It's a false analogy.

Poland never had a strong socialist state, even though it was part of the Soviet bloc. It was the Red Army after World War II, not a workers' revolution, that removed the capitalists from power, many of whom had collaborated with Nazi Germany's military occupation of Poland. However, the new Polish regime, while anti-fascist, was a political amalgam that made many compromises with the former propertied classes and with Western imperialism.

More than 87 percent of agricultural production remained in private hands and had to be subsidized. Eventually, the capitalist banks got into Poland, convincing the political leaders to take out loans. Finally, Poland owed \$20 billion to 14 imperialist banks that then demanded the right to oversee and control the "planned economy." It was the workers who paid for all this with low wages and hard working conditions, making it easier for reactionaries to gain their confidence.

The leaders of Solidarity were Western-oriented intellectuals who used the workers' grievances as a tool for counter-revolution. Most of the plants and shipyards where Solidarity demonstrated are now either closed or have been bought by Western imperialist companies that have "stream-lined" them by cutting the workforce.

Today, the last thing those struggling against capitalist reaction in Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe need is anti-

*Continued on page 9*



## COLOMBIA

# Coal workers' strike faces death squads

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

When workers strike in Colombia, the world's most dangerous country for union leaders, they do so at great risk to their lives. Defiant unions, particularly those that represent the workers toiling in transnational corporations, are the target of the right-wing paramilitary death squads—gangsters more often than not directly hired by the companies as a weapon against labor challenges.

More frequently, paramilitaries have been reported to have ties with the Colombian government and its army. This makes the murder of unionists a national and even international affair. Ties among the U.S. government, the Colombian government, U.S. corporations and paramilitaries are clearly exposed.

U.S. President George W. Bush invited Colombian President Alvaro Uribe Velez to visit Washington on June 14 to discuss what a June 7 White House news release called "a range of issues including their shared commitment to advancing opportunity, security, and respect for human rights in Colombia; the importance of free trade to sustained economic growth; and continuing cooperation in areas of mutual interest."

Meanwhile, an intense labor and

human-rights issue has been developing in Colombia. Some 3,500 workers represented by the union SINTRAMIENERGETICA walked out their jobs after the U.S. Drummond Coal Co. refused to negotiate the union's demands in good faith.

The most crucial union demands related to labor rights, work place safety and investment in the social network of the community. This last includes improvements in health education, housing and other basic needs for the workers and their families.

The union also asks for a pension and compensation increase for the hard work that lasts an average of 12-to-18 hours daily. Raul Sosa and Estivenson Avila, the workers' spokespersons, said: "We do not ask for outrageous salaries. What we want is labor stability in the company. We do not want millions; we want thorough solutions." (in the website [drummond-watch.org](http://drummond-watch.org), May 19)

A major economic demand is to change the date of the yearly wage increase. The workers want the company to shift the date the increase starts from April to January so that families can better deal with general cost of living increases that start in January. Showing Drummond's intransigence on even such minor points, according to the same article, "The company has reiterated its total discord and has only communicated to the workers' negotiators that this point is not going to be negotiated now nor in 20 years."

What is Drummond Coal Co.?

Based in Birmingham, Ala., the Drummond Company is owned by Garry Neil Drummond. According to the company website, the "Drummond Co., Inc. is principally engaged in the business of mining, purchasing, processing and selling of coal and coal derivatives. ... Drummond controls reserves totaling over 2 billion tons and shipped over 28 million tons of coal in 2004. ... The international mining operations are located in Colombia, serving customers in both the U.S. and Europe."

Drummond moved to Colombia in 1994, after closing most of its mines in Alabama. There it financed railroads and the necessary infrastructure to funnel the coal out of the Mina Pribbenow open coal pit in La Loma, in the Cesar region in the Northeast, to "Port Drummond" in the northern Caribbean coast. There, it is loaded into gigantic ships, landing as profits in the U.S. pockets of Drummond.

Reuters reported on May 24, the third day of the strike: "The mine, which produced 22 million tons of coal last year, supplies the bulk of Colombia's 55 million ton annual coal production. Coal sales represent the second-largest income from exports for Colombia, at \$2.6 billion in 2005. The state receives revenue from exploration, but not from profits as the mines are owned by foreign operators."

By criminally neglecting the workers' demands, management has kept profits high through the years. Many workers have died. Others have been seriously injured due to faulty equipment and unsafe working conditions.

Workers are required to work in shifts of at least 12 hours for two full weeks alternating day and night shifts. The company increased the Caterpillar front-end loaders from 22 to 32 tons, causing extreme vibration during the machine operation and resulting in severe spinal cord injuries to the workers. Some workers were per-

manently disabled.

Drummond Watch, a website that monitors the company's action, reported, "The Company has fired a number of workers with spinal column injuries, and tries to evade responsibility by claiming that these injuries are not work-related."

In the year 2000, the collapse of an excavation wall buried three workers alive. The workers had warned about an unsafe cut in the wall, but the bosses disregarded their complaint and ordered them to continue working in those unsafe conditions. After the accident, although the company wanted the rest of the workers to continue laboring, workers stopped for the rest of the day in honor of their deceased comrades.

On March 12, 2001, while in negotiations to seek justice for those deaths and to improve safety conditions at the mine, Valmore Lacarno Rodríguez and Víctor Hugo Orcasita Amaya, president and vice-president of the union, were murdered. Fifteen men, some in military uniform, had stopped the company bus in which they and other workers were riding toward Valledupar, where most of the workers and their families live, about 30 miles from the mine. They forcibly removed Lacarno and Orcasita, hitting and shooting Lacarno in the face right in front of his horrified co-workers. Orcasita was forced into the woods where he was later found dead, with his fingernails torn off.

Augusto Jimenez, the president of Drummond LTD in Colombia, had threatened both men earlier, saying, "El pez muere por su propia boca" (The fish dies by opening its mouth).

Though Drummond makes available secure housing and transportation for the U.S. citizens who work for the company, it had refused an urgent request by Lacarno and Orcasita to have permission to stay in the mine after work to safeguard their lives after they'd been threatened by paramilitaries. The two unionists even faxed a request directly to Gary Drummond before they were murdered.

Gustavo Soler, another worker who took on the now dangerous leadership of the union, was also murdered after receiving paramilitary threats. He had also requested sanctuary in the mine after work and once again the company refused.

The Colombian government provides every protection to the company while leaving the workers to fend for themselves against the criminal paramilitaries.

An Oct. 6, 2003, article in the Wall Street Journal reported: "The company, one of the biggest foreign investors in Colombia, has built barracks for the Colombian military at La Loma and near the port. More than 300 Colombian army troops are sta-

tioned at La Loma, where Drummond provides them subsidized food and fuel. The troops protect company facilities and screen employees, Drummond says."

The legal case that the article mentions is a lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama on March 14, 2002, by the International Labor Rights Fund and the United Steel Workers against the Drummond Company on behalf of the relatives of Lacarno, Orcasita and Soler. The lawsuit charges the company with hiring armed paramilitaries to torture, kidnap and murder union leaders.

Dan Kovalik, the lawyer for the union, recently visited Rafael García, the former head of the Administrative Department of Security (DAS), the Colombian intelligence department of President Uribe's administration. García is now in La Picota prison in Bogota, charged with removing the criminal background of drug traffickers from the files of the DAS.

García testified under oath for the lawsuit in Alabama that he was an eyewitness to a meeting where Augusto Jiménez gave money to representatives of the Self Defense Units of Colombia—AUC, the paramilitaries—to assassinate Lacarno and Orcasita. He also stated that he has not testified for the Colombian Justice System since they have refused to guarantee his protection if he does offer testimony. He had accused former DAS Director Jorge Noguera of links with the AUC for the development of some projects, among them "the assassination of labor leaders, a plan to destabilize the Venezuelan government, electoral fraud in favor of President Alvaro Uribe in the 2002 elections." (El Nuevo Herald, June 1)

Now paramilitaries are again threatening the strikers. There is no guarantee that the company or the state will provide the security they need. Uribe's "Democratic Security" has only proved to have been terrorist insecurity for the workers and the progressive movement that oppose his neoliberal politics.

On June 9 Leo W. Gerard, International President of the USW, sent a letter to President Uribe, with copies to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and U.S. Ambassador to Colombia William Wood, expressing concern about Drummond's demand to the Colombian government to "declare the strike of these workers illegal, thereby making it a crime, punishable by imprisonment, for the workers to continue this strike."

Gerard added, "And, we reiterate our call for the Colombian government to take all measures to protect the lives and well-being of these workers as they continue their strike activities." □

## Poland

Continued from page 8

communist leadership.

Pepsi commercials hailing the tearing down of the Berlin wall and other spin doctors of Wall Street all promised that overturning the regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe would mean freedom, democracy and a "peace dividend" for all. Sixteen years later the reality is that these countries are collaborating with the U.S. military in exchange for a few crumbs while their people suffer severe economic and social dislocation.

The neo-fascist movements there, taking a page from the feudal past, are targeting same-sex love and Jews. White supremacy and ultra-nationalist attacks against immigrants of color are on a sharp rise.

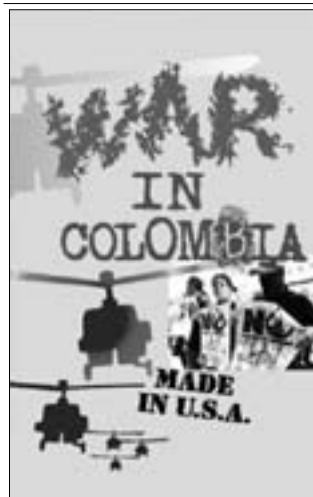
This is what "democracy"—capitalist state rule—looks like.

In Moscow on June 3, fascists, police and the city administration broke up a Pride demonstration. The same day, Romanian police teargassed the Pride demonstration in central Bucharest as nuns and priests joined other right-wingers in throwing bottles and eggs at marchers. The Latvian parliament voted to ban same-sex marriage in December.

Officials in Romania have banned demonstrations protesting same-sex discrimination.

In Hungary, the leader of the Christian Democratic People's party ran on a viciously anti-gay platform in the recent general election.

While progressives worldwide should reach out to the gay movement in Eastern Europe, it should be not with anti-communist rhetoric but with a common program on fighting the forces of reaction, which have so clearly been generated by present-day imperialism. □



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## Death squads in the Philippines

**I**t seems that the Colombian regime of Alvaro Uribe is not the only client of U.S. imperialism that uses paramilitary death squads against popular leaders, trade unionists and people's organizations.

Now the government of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in the Philippines, who in 2002 was the first Asian leader to fully-embrace Bush's so-called War on Terror, has unleashed this scourge on the people of her country, at the same time that she has re-invited U.S. troops onto the islands they were driven from in 1992.

All in all over 680 people's leaders, all active in the movement against intensified U.S. intervention and imperialist domination of the Philippines, have been assassinated under the U.S.-backed Arroyo regime, according to the human rights alliance Karapatan.

Since January over 80 critics of the Arroyo regime have been assassinated by unidentified motorcycle-riding assailants. All victims are members of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), or BAYAN-allied groups. BAYAN has played an integral role in the current people's movement for an Arroyo ouster. This rise in death-squad attacks hits not only activists and party representatives but priests, trade unionists, journalists,

students and youth as well.

Washington has broad experience backing regimes that serve U.S. imperialist interests while using official and unofficial arms of the repressive state against people's organizations and their leaders. Death squads aimed at people's movements supplemented the open warfare in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, as they do in Iraq now. These same tactics were used heavily in Central America in the 1980s.

It is easy to see that Washington and its clients in Manila are forcing the popular movements in the Philippines to take defensive measures to protect their militants and organizers from these government-sanctioned murders, carried out by death squads connected to the army and police.

No popular movement in the world, especially no anti-imperialist movement in the United States, can remain indifferent to death-squad killings of popular leaders. The anti-imperialist movement in the United States has a special responsibility to help expose before the working class and people here the role of the Arroyo government and its U.S. backers in these crimes and to support the right of the popular organizations in the Philippines to defend themselves by whatever means they find necessary. □

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## New developments in immigrant rights struggle

By LeiLani Dowell

Two recent victories in the struggle for immigrant rights show the continued need to step up the struggle. In Colorado, a ballot initiative that would have prohibited undocumented immigrants from receiving "non-emergency services" was rejected by the Colorado Supreme Court on a constitutional technicality.

And in New York, bill A612B, which would allow immigrants access to drivers' licenses regardless of immigration status, passed in the State Assembly transportation committee. The passage of the bill, supported with some reservations by the New York Coalition for Immigrants' Rights to Drivers' Licenses, is the result of a two-year struggle that included rallies in the immigrant communities of Queens long before the movement for immigrant rights hit the spotlight.

With the need for struggle on the streets in mind, activists on the East Coast will be coming together on June 17 for a public meeting to plan the next major immigrant rights protest. The event's press release states: "The Coalition that organized the huge march and rally in New York City for immigrant rights at Union Square on May 1 is sponsoring a meeting of hundreds of immigrant rights activists from around the region.

"On June 17, the May 1 Coalition and others will meet to plan the next big protest. The meeting is open to everyone, especially all of those who have marched and rallied for immigrant rights over the past three months.

"Organizers for this major all-day planning meeting expect organizers from across New York City and State, as well as

New Jersey and Connecticut to participate. The meeting will be conducted in English and Spanish.

"A march for justice in Jackson Heights will follow the meeting. In the morning, workshops will include the status of immigrant legislation in Congress, and coalition building with labor and civil rights movements. In the afternoon [we] will focus on planning actions.

"Teresa Gutierrez, a spokesperson for the May 1 Coalition, said, 'The immigrant bill the U.S. Senate passed recently is unacceptable, just as HR 4437 was unacceptable, because it does not give full legal rights to all undocumented workers. We must continue our struggle for full rights for immigrants, no deportations, and rights for all workers.' Gutierrez added, 'Congress is trying to forget about the millions who marched and boycotted on May 1, so we will be planning dates to go back to the streets to remind them that immigrants will never be invisible again.'"

Organizations participating in the planning meeting include Asociación Tepeyac, Association of Senegalese in America, Latin American Workers Project, Justice 4 Immigrants Filipino Coalition, Freeport Community Worklink Center, Guyanese-American Workers United, Pakistan USA Freedom Forum, Centro Guatemalteco Tecun Uman, Congreso Nacional Dominicano, La Peña del Bronx, LIUNA Local 108, Teamsters Joint Council #16, Casa Freehold, Congreso Nacional Dominicano, Chinese Staff and Workers Association, Anakbayan NY/NJ, Million Worker March, Philippine Forum and Break the Chains Alliance.

For more information, visit [www.may1.info](http://www.may1.info) or call (212) 633-6646. □

## Ukraine protests chase out Marines

By John Catalinotto

President George W. Bush's June 13 visit to Baghdad may have been the top of the news, but his cancelled visit to Kiev, Ukraine, only made the inside pages. The Kiev "postponement," announced June 8, followed the June 7 announcement that Ukraine had canceled U.S.-Ukrainian military exercises in the Black Sea near the Crimean Peninsula.

Anti-NATO activists, mainly from Ukraine, had been demonstrating for over a week starting May 27 to protest the exercises. Some 250 U.S. Marines had landed in the Crimea to make preparations for the exercises, which the Ukrainian parliament had not yet authorized. The exercises, called "Sea Breeze" and "Tight Knot," were scheduled to start in June and continue to August.

The Marines were told they had a quick and simple mission: installing new showers and toilets at a military training facility, then leaving. But they were confronted with hundreds of protesters who set up anti-NATO blockades and shouted, "Occupiers, go home!" The demonstra-

tors stayed for over a week.

Crimea is a mostly ethnic Russian autonomous section of Ukraine. The local parliament was opposed to the military maneuvers, calling them "inexpedient." Since the Ukrainian parliament hadn't authorized the maneuvers either, the only legal basis for the Marines' landing was a go-ahead from Ukrainian President Yushchenko. With legality on their side, the demonstrators confronted the Marines and helped disrupt preparations for the exercise.

Meanwhile, many Russian parliamentarians visited Crimea to show their solidarity with the anti-NATO demonstrations and object to any further expansion of NATO forces to the east.

With no approval from parliament by June 7, Ukrainian Defense Minister Anatoliy Hrytsenko announced at a NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting at defense ministers' level in Brussels, Belgium, on June 8 that "Sea Breeze" and "Tight Knot" would have to be postponed because of the political situations in Kiev and the Crimea.

Subsequently, the Bush administration decided to postpone his trip to Ukraine. □

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# CIA scheme set back in Somalia

By G. Dunkel

The CIA had another setback in Somalia June 6. The coalition of clan leaders, whom Washington and the media generally call "warlords," was driven out of most of Mogadishu, Somalia's capital and principal city. Washington has financed, supplied and politically supported these groups through the CIA. The strongest force in Mogadishu now is the Islamic Courts Union (ICU).

The first U.S. setback in this African nation was in 1993 when two U.S. helicopters hunting down "warlords" were shot down. Armed Somali fighters killed 18 Marines who survived the crashes in the helicopters. As a result of this incident—which was used as the basis of a book and film called "Black Hawk Down"—the Clinton administration hurriedly withdrew the U.S. occupation troops from their incursion in Africa from Somalia.

Washington's justification for its 1992-1993 intervention was that no centralized state had asserted itself in Somalia after the Somali leader Siad Barre had been

driven from power in 1991. The Pentagon's aborted intervention was supposed to be part of a "peacekeeping mission." U.S. meddling in Somalia had begun much earlier, however. It first interfered in Somalia in the late 1970s when Washington urged Barre to invade neighboring Ethiopia, which at that time was then led by a pro-socialist government allied with the Soviet Union.

Beginning in February 2006, the CIA started supplying the clan leaders who were opposing the ICU with \$100,000 to \$150,000 a month, which is a significant amount of money in a country with an unemployment rate too high to measure and no government on the ground able to make the effort to measure it. Political analysts, academics specializing in the Horn of Africa and Somali politicians have all verified the scope of the CIA financing.

With regards to Somalia, the Bush administration is employing its usual excuse to justify intervention into the affairs of poor, underdeveloped countries: alleged concern that the ICU will affiliate with al-Qaeda like Afghanistan did. By

raising the issue of terrorism, Washington has avoided mentioning the strategic importance of Somalia: the Somali port town of Berbera, situated on the Mideast oil route to Europe, hosts a major naval base.

Le Monde's special correspondent in Mogadishu reported that already this month U.S. helicopters have overflown Mogadishu and the U.S. fleet is visible cruising off shore. These pressure tactics, along with the financial backing the U.S. is supplying the "warlords," are backfiring on the U.S. and increasing public support in Somalia for the ICU.

About 350 people in Mogadishu, mainly civilians, died in the fighting between the "warlords" and the ICU and many more were seriously wounded.

While most of the "warlords" abandoned Mogadishu and regrouped in Jawhar, a small city about 60 miles to the north, two groups are trying to hang on to their positions in the capital and have called political rallies of their clan members to bolster their position. The ICU has also called rallies of its supporters.

The ICU has also sent a letter to the Bush administration asking for discussions. Bush's response was to once again terror-bait the ICU. The U.S. is calling an international conference for the week of June 12 to discuss the situation in Somalia.

There are now over 130,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, with more set to deploy there, and about 20,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. There is neither public support nor personnel easily available for a major invasion of land troops in Somalia.

But Washington may keep on financing the "warlords." And the U.S. may also try maneuvering with a group recognized by the United Nations as the Somali government, which, however, controls only Baidoa, a small town 150 miles from Mogadishu.

The political and military situation in Somalia is fluid. But one thing is clear—the Somali people need peace and stability, and want an end to U.S. interference into their internal affairs, so they can address their pressing social and economic problems.

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## Bush can't disguise debacle in Iraq

Continued from page 1

schedules of its "leaders" and whatever security arrangements exist. Otherwise, how could an unexpected guest with the vast entourage U.S. presidents now take for granted sneak into the country without any of its top officials knowing a thing about it?

The whole trip was an embarrassment for the new Iraqi "government." After months of internal struggle, Maliki had finally rammed through his appointments for the key cabinet posts of ministers of security, defense and national security. They presumably have authority over the exercise of state power in Iraq. Except they don't, as Bush's visit showed. The U.S. calls the shots and tells them what to do.

When Bush told Maliki he was putting the future of Iraq "in your hands," he was really telling the Iraqis: "We've destroyed your country and brought it to the verge of civil war. Now you fix it."

Three years after the massive "shock and awe" bombing campaign that pulverized much of Iraq's infrastructure and left its cultural institutions in shambles, the U.S. is walking away from any responsibility to repair the damage. With more than 100,000 Iraqis dead and an untold number wounded, with the population traumatized by daily air strikes and periodic "sweeps" on the ground that leave cities in ruins and undying anger in the hearts of the people, Washington is saying, "This is your problem."

According to news accounts, the Bush administration has a plan by which the proceeds from Iraqi oil production, which remains below pre-war levels, will be used to rebuild the country. U.S. oil service firms will undoubtedly get the lion's share of this.

That's who benefited after Bush appointed L. Paul Bremer III to the title of Director of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq. Bremer awarded only 2 percent of the contracts to Iraqi firms; most went to administration favorites like Halliburton, formerly headed by Bush's right-hand man, Dick Cheney. Meanwhile, life for the Iraqis only got worse.

In January 2005, six months after Bremer left his post, an official report by the U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq



Iraqis chant anti-U.S. slogans during a protest march denouncing the visit of U.S. President George W. Bush in Baghdad, June 14.

Reconstruction Stuart Bowen said that \$9 billion earmarked for the reconstruction of Iraq under Bremer might have disappeared in fraud, corruption and other misbehavior.

### Congress votes 'emergency' funds for Pentagon

On the same day that Bush was grabbing the headlines in Iraq, the House passed an "emergency" funding bill that gives \$65.8 billion more to the Pentagon for the wars/occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is on top of the \$419 billion military budget already appropriated for fiscal 2006.

What about the real emergency in the Gulf area since hurricanes Katrina and Rita?

Just saving New Orleans from future floods caused by storms now on the horizon requires billions in better levee construction. Billions more are needed to rebuild homes and facilities destroyed. Thousands from the Gulf Coast still live in tiny trailers while tens of thousands more dispersed throughout the country, all poor and most Black, are losing their housing subsidies.

Yet Congress approved less than \$20 billion for this massive social emergency at home. And the capitalist news media barely blinked.

While trying to duck responsibility for all the damage they have caused, the U.S. government and military have no plans to get out of Iraq.

They are hunkered down in places like Forward Operating Base Speicher north of Baghdad, headquarters of the 101st Airborne Division, "one of a handful of gigantic bases around Iraq to which American forces are being pulled back....

Speicher has an area of 24 square miles and the appearance of a small, flat, modular Midwestern city; there is a bus system, a cavernous dining hall that serves four flavors of Baskin-Robbins ice cream, a couple of gyms, and several movie theaters. At least 9,000 soldiers live there, and many of them seemed to leave the base rarely or not at all." (New Yorker, April 10)

The reporter "spent two days at Speicher without seeing an Iraqi."

From Speicher, U.S. planes roar off to bomb Iraqi towns and villages suspected of harboring "insurgents." This is part of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's plan to carry out the occupation with fewer troops but more high-tech firepower, thus hopefully averting an anti-war rebellion at home.

It was from bases like Speicher that U.S. planes launched the bombs that the Pentagon says killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian, supposedly an Islamic fundamentalist who organized many of the sectarian attacks on Shiites in Iraq. Zarqawi had been built up by the U.S. occupiers as leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, even though Al Jazeera writes that he was publicly criticized by Osama bin Laden's closest adviser.

The circumstances of Zarqawi's death are murky. There is evidence that his elimination had been planned for some time in order to give Bush a political boost. The U.S. had put a \$25 million bounty on his head. But even Bush acknowledges that the "insurgency" will continue—though the media gave him extraordinary coverage, Zarqawi was a relatively small player in the overall resistance to the occupation, which comes overwhelmingly from Iraqis enraged by what the U.S. has done to their country.

Bush's in-and-out visit to Baghdad can't hide the fact that the U.S. has lost the war to control Iraq. The atrocities committed by Marines in Haditha last Nov. 19, where whole families were gunned down in their homes, reflects the desperation of an army that knows it is hated by the Iraqi people, not just by Zarqawi and other "foreign fighters," as the foreigners from Washington like to call them.

Those Marines were on their third tour of duty in Iraq and a year earlier had engaged in house-to-house fighting in Falluja. Under this kind of pressure, some troops become ruthless killing machines capable of any atrocity. But others can break out of the chain of command and refuse to fight. Bush hopes that the hyped "success" of killing Zarqawi will gain him time as military discipline further unravels under the hammer blows of the resistance.

British troops in Iraq face the same conditions. "In the south of Iraq, in the Basra region, the British who occupy that sector have all but given up aggressive patrol. They are holed up in their encampments on the defensive. Some reports have it that it is now too dangerous for them to fly helicopters by day." (The Guardian, June 13)

The ruling class that spans the U.S. and Britain, the world's leading oil imperialists, has not yet acknowledged what much of the world now senses: that the days when gunboat diplomacy could quickly quell resistance and firm up puppet regimes are over. The brutal effort to return Iraq to a colonial status has instead generated profound anti-imperialist sentiments in the Arab and Muslim world that have affected the oppressed and the enlightened everywhere. Bush's latest propaganda stunt can't turn that around. □

## El alto precio de la gasolina llega a África Occidental

Por G. Dunkel

África Occidental se descarriló cuando los precios de la gasolina subieron repentinamente hace unos meses. Esta parte del mundo contiene algunos de los países más pobres, como Mali, Nigeria y Mauritania, donde el producto nacional bruto (PNB) por persona por año es mucho menos de \$900. Aún en Senegal, que está un poco mejor, la cifra apenas llega a \$1.800.

Comparando, el PNB de los Estados Unidos está sobre los \$36.000. ("Enciclopedia de las Naciones", compiladas por la ONU)

Solo uno de cada tres african@s tiene acceso a la electricidad. Un 40 por ciento de la energía necesaria para el continente es suplida por la madera y otros productos naturales. Sin embargo, la gasolina y el diesel son los productos que guían su economía. Cuando el costo de la gasolina sube, los agricultores no pueden costear el transporte de sus productos a los mercados, l@s trabajador@s no pueden llegar a sus trabajos, y las compañías están forzadas a cerrar porque el precio de la electricidad sigue al precio de la gasolina y del petróleo.

En Burkina Faso, donde el PNB por persona es de \$1.178, el movimiento sindical convocó a una huelga de dos días el 23 de mayo para protestar contra el alza de la gasolina. Laurent Ouédraogo, presidentes de la Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores de Burkina, explicó que "nuestra demanda principal es el respeto a los trabajadores y a sus organizaciones sindicales". Los sindicatos negociaban por un incremento del 25 por ciento en sus pensiones y salarios y la reducción del impuesto de 42 por ciento que Burkina Faso impone a la gasolina. Pero a comienzos de mayo el gobierno los sorprendió con un incremento en los precios de la gasolina.

Según el diario Sidaway de Burkina Faso, los sindicatos se reunieron el 23 de mayo frente al Centro Sindical en Ougadougou y marcharon hasta el edificio de las Naciones Unidas. Las consignas de la marcha fueron, "No al incremento al precio de la gasolina", "No al alto costo de vida", y "Aumento salarial".

Copias de los discursos fueron entregadas al gobierno de Blaise Compaoré, para que éste se diera cuenta de las preocupaciones de l@s trabajador@s.

Las mujeres y los chóferes de taxis también apoyaron la protesta. Los sindicatos anunciaron que protestas similares se llevaron a cabo en las principales ciudades del país.

Níger, que la Organización de las Naciones Unidas considera ser el país más pobre del mundo, está localizado entre dos grandes países productores de petróleo, Nigeria y Argelia. La mayoría de la gasolina que se encuentra en Níger es transportada ilegalmente desde Nigeria en

botellas de licor, un proceso bastante peligroso. Pero en las calles los vendedores clandestinos venden la gasolina a \$0,68 el litro en contraste al precio oficial de \$1,24.

Cuando la policía de Birmin-Konni en la frontera entre esos dos países del África Occidental intentó poner un alto al comercio, los manifestantes erigieron barricadas de llantas al fuego, y combatieron con la policía, que al final utilizó gases lacrimógenos. La policía arrestó a 20 personas y confiscó cantidades de gasolina en unos almacenes, la cual ellos aseguraron que había sido importada ilegalmente.

La manera de tratar con la gasolina en el Oeste de África es ciertamente peligrosa pero es difícil sobrevivir sin ella. Más de 50 personas murieron y más de una docena quedaron quemadas severamente en Porga, Benin, el 26 de mayo después de haber intentado sacar gasolina con un sifón de un camión tanque que había caído en un barranco. Benin ha reportado alrededor de 700 incendios que involucran gasolina durante los últimos tres años.

Aproximadamente 200 personas murieron quemadas en Nigeria, el mayor productor de petróleo en África, el 12 de mayo cuando un oleoducto estalló en las afueras de Lagos mientras la gente intentaba sacar combustible.

### L@s emigrantes lo arriesgan todo

Hombres jóvenes y algunas mujeres solían caminar desde todo el Oeste de África pasando por el desierto de Sahara para llegar a dos enclaves españoles en la costa de Marruecos, Ceuta y Melilla, escalando cercas para dirigirse a Europa. Los viajes pueden tomar un par de años caminando a pie por algunos de los terrenos más desolados y peligrosos del mundo, arriesgándolo todo por la oportunidad de encontrar un trabajo decente y una vida mejor.

Pero España y Marruecos cerraron esta ruta; entonces la gente comenzó a cruzar por el mar hacia las Islas Canarias, una región autónoma de España en el Océano Atlántico al oeste de la costa de Marruecos. Se puede llegar a las Islas Canarias en barcos abiertos desde Senegal y Mauritania si hace buen tiempo.

Cientos de personas están llegando a diario a Tenerife, la isla principal, llenando los centros de recepción. Es un viaje peligroso desde Senegal y Mauritania, sin embargo miles llegan exitosamente. No se sabe cuántos no llegan. Prensa Asociada publicó una historia desde la lejana isla de Barbados en el Mar Caribeño el 1ro de junio describiendo cómo un barco arrastrado por la corriente llevaba los cadáveres de 11 personas que habían salido de Senegal el día de Navidad en 2005 y que fue encontrado por pescadores. Barbados estuvo haciendo un esfuerzo para conocer

la identidad de los muertos.

Mientras que las Islas Canarias anotaron la llegada de 4.750 inmigrantes en todo el 2005, en este año hasta la fecha han contado 6.000 inmigrantes del sub Sahara africano. Las autoridades locales se han quejado de que España tiene más interés en defender sus intereses de petróleo en Bolivia que en ayudar a una región pequeña, aislada y autónoma a bregar con la imprevista inmigración de gente desesperadamente pobre

Después de que esta queja fue publicada, el gobierno de España anunció que barcos y aviones de Austria, Finlandia, Portugal, Francia, Italia, Britania, Alemania, Grecia y los Países Bajos patrullarían las costas de Mauritania, Senegal y Cabo Verde para forzar el regreso de barcos abiertos yendo hacia las Islas Canarias.

Las autoridades europeas han estado tratando de culpar a los contrabandistas codiciosos por esta enorme migración desde África. Pero el Presidente Compaoré de Burkina Faso le dijo a la agencia de prensa francesa AFP el 30 de mayo que "Francia no puede parar a l@s african@s de venir a su tierra si África se mantiene tan pobre. Solo el desarrollo de África podría disuadir a la gente del Sur, de irse al Norte".

Las autoridades españolas tienen cientos de senegaleses que quisieran repatriar, pero l@s primer@s que regresaron fueron tratad@s tan mal, según Senegal, que están negándose a aceptar más.

Senegal ha quedado especialmente perjudicada por la subida reciente de los precios del petróleo. Según su ministro de minería y energía, el 60 por ciento de su presupuesto está dedicado a pagar por las importaciones del petróleo, consumiendo un 40 por ciento de las ganancias de las

exportaciones. SAR, la compañía nacional de petróleo, se niega a abastecer a SENELEC, la compañía de electricidad con suficiente energía para que funcionen sus plantas generadoras, porque SENELEC no ha pagado sus cuentas.

Un grupo izquierdista en Senegal, la Unión de Trabajador@s African@s, publicó en marzo una declaración que explica la situación que existe no solo en Senegal, sino en casi todo el África Occidental.

"SAR es nacional solo en nombre; la mayoría de su capital (91,4 por ciento) es propiedad de corporaciones multinacionales extranjeras: Total [francés] (54,6 por ciento), Shell [británico-holandés] (25 por ciento), Mobil [Estados Unidos] (11,8 por ciento). El otro 8,6 por ciento pertenece a la compañía nacional, Compañía Senegalesa de Petróleo. Esta ha sido la realidad desde 1963. SAR mantiene control de los productos estratégicos de energía y tiene a Senegal cogido por la garganta. Las corporaciones multinacionales que componen SAR están sistemáticamente saqueando al pueblo senegalés y destruyendo sus esfuerzos económicos, mientras que repatrian la mayoría de las ganancias que derivan de esta explotación.

"Pero SAR no se detiene aquí. Los acuerdos con Senegal proveen que en el evento de alguna pérdida resultante de sus operaciones comerciales de importación y refinación de productos del petróleo y de importación de gas butano, Senegal pagaría por esas pérdidas".

Aunque los países más pobres son los primeros que sufren, las compañías grandes de petróleo también quieren aprovecharse de l@s trabajador@s del mundo desarrollado, donde las ganancias serían aún más grandes.

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