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Why every worker should demand U.S. out of the Middle East

Stop Big Oil's wars in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon

By Sharon Black

Workers in this country cannot afford to remain neutral on the question of the U.S.-Israeli war against Lebanon and Palestine because too much is at stake. The dangerous widening of the war in the Middle East not only threatens the safety of the people of that entire region but it impacts workers right here in the U.S.

Death and destruction widen

At present, according to very conservative estimates, 384 people have been killed in Lebanon by the Israeli offensive. The vast majority are civilians. Some 750,000 people are now displaced, trying to escape from the bombed-out cities and towns. It is as though every person in a city the size of Baltimore or Detroit instantly became homeless.

Hospitals are overflowing with the injured while hospital workers labor all day and night to save lives, fearful they too will be attacked. Health workers report treating children with horrible burns from phosphorus weapons—which are banned by international law. The U.S. used phosphorus bombs in Vietnam.

Ambulance worker Kassem Shalan exclaimed to an Associated Press reporter, "One of the rockets hit right in the middle of the big red cross that was painted on the top of the ambulance. This is a clear violation of humanitarian and international law." He provided a home video of this incident to news media.

Cars and trucks leaving areas after Israel told the people to evacuate have themselves been blown up by the attacking planes.

In Beirut itself, there is a stark contrast between the areas that the Israeli air force has bombed and the areas that remain tranquil. In the southern suburbs populated by workers and the poor, Israeli bombers have reduced whole neighborhoods of large apartment buildings to rubble. But restaurants and business areas nearby that cater to the well-off have been left unscathed.

Israeli terror made in U.S.

Even some of the news media are now admitting that Israel's brutal war on Lebanon is seen all over the world as having been

planned and executed in open collaboration with the U.S. government. This means the Bush administration is behind the launching of yet another criminal war. And again, the excuse given—the capture of just two Israeli soldiers—is nothing but a smokescreen for a long-planned offensive.

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The real reason is the same as for the war in Iraq—to try to extend the control of Big Oil over the entire Middle East by beating down any people who defend their national sovereignty.

Every bomb that lands on the home of a Lebanese or Palestinian family has been manufactured and made in the U.S. Israel is a client state and cannot act on its own. It is an outpost for U.S. imperialist domination.

Who profits and who dies

Even as this government provides Israel with millions of dollars worth of costly weapons to attack the people of Lebanon—including cluster bombs that target civilians—tens of thousands of people here in the United States haven't recovered from the effects of Katrina and even earlier hurricanes.

Each bomb dropped on Lebanon also explodes in poor and oppressed communities here. The money spent to kill and maim could provide health care for all. It could rebuild cities and infrastructure, like the levees in New Orleans, rather than foster a deadly and purposeful policy of racism and neglect that still has not been addressed.

The same military-industrial-banking-oil complex that profits from and wages war is also responsible for falling wages and a heavier tax burden on working people.

High gas and oil prices have emptied workers' pockets, prov-

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Make the Weekend of August 5th National Days of Actions to Say

NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE:

U.S. OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Support the Palestinian & Lebanese Peoples' Right to Resist

End the Occupation of Iraq, Palestine, & Lebanon

Support the Palestinian People's Right to Return

U.S./Israeli Troops Out Now

No More Fighting & Dying for Oil Profits

STOP U.S. Aid to Israel

Volunteer, pick up leaflets at the International Action Center
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Hezbollah banner says, "U.S.A. head of the terrorists"



Over the weekend of Sat., **AUGUST 5TH**, the International Action Center is proposing that activists across the country organize demonstrations, teach-ins & other events with the theme: **NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE, U.S. Out of the Middle East.** Please endorse the weekend of actions, plan a local action and list it

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This week ...

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Politics behind the Bush veto

By Gene Clancy

President George W. Bush has sent a message to millions of sick, injured and disabled people: He is willing to trade their hopes for a scientific cure in order to advance the narrow religious interests of part of his reactionary political base.

On July 19 Bush used his first veto in five and a half years to crush a bill that would have allowed federal spending on embryonic stem cell research. The bill had been passed by a large majority of both houses of Congress.

Of course, he did it in the name of being "pro-life."

According to a recent poll, 58 percent of the public favors embryonic stem cell research, while only 30 percent opposes it. (ABC Beliefnet poll) Celebrities, including Michael J. Fox and the late Christopher Reeve, have heightened public focus on the issue.

Even conservatives like former first lady Nancy Reagan, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn), a Harvard-trained surgeon, and Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) supported the bill. "It blows me away," said Rep. Christopher Shays, a Connecticut Republican. "What a horrible circumstance: The president is going to make his first veto something that will stand in the path of scientific progress."

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

Research on stem cells, especially those from early embryos, is especially promising because they offer a way to turn back the biological clock. Current drugs can do no more than slow the progress of degenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. Stem cells, however, may one day replace cells and rebuild tissues, perhaps even organs, helping to restore patients to the way they were before they became ill.

European researchers for the first time have now identified muscle stem cells, suggesting a treatment for muscular dystrophy, according to a recent report published in the journal Nature. Among other tissues that could be repaired are those of the central nervous system and spinal cord, offering hope to millions who suffer from brain and spinal cord injuries and diseases.

Stem cell treatments already exist for stroke and scientists are looking for cures for diabetes and heart disease.

In 2001, Bush killed most research on embryonic stem cells by limiting federal funding for the research to 15 lines that had already been developed from frozen embryos left over from in vitro fertilization attempts. He explicitly disallowed the use of any additional embryos, even though they are slated to be destroyed anyway.

The bill that he vetoed didn't even challenge this. It differed from Bush's policy only in that it would allow additional frozen embryos to be used from the same stock of in vitro leftovers.

Politics vs. profits

Republican leaders moved quickly to minimize whatever political damage they thought might emerge from the president's veto. Within 24 hours they had passed two symbolic bills that Bush could sign, and the Republican-dominated House of Representatives quickly voted on, and defeated, an override of the veto so as to "move beyond the issue as quickly as possible."

However, the question remains: Why are some of the most reactionary sections of the ruling class divided on this?

Many pundits attribute Bush's veto to his low standing

in the polls and his fear of losing his only remaining base of support—the religious right. "There could be a silver lining for Republicans," says Nedra Pickler of the Associated Press. "The president's opposition to embryonic stem cell research is a popular move among his most conservative supporters—the same bloc that has been angry over Bush's immigration policies."

Richard A. Viguerie, a conservative direct-mail fundraiser, said Bush is in "serious trouble" with his base.

"If he were not to veto this legislation, you could see the administration come unraveled very quickly," Viguerie said. "It would really wreak havoc with his ability to govern with the conservative base there."

The hope among Republican strategists is that the stem cell veto will reinvigorate conservatives to get to the polls in the midterm, when turnout is traditionally lower.

However, there is another side to the debate, at least as far as the big business advocates in the House and Senate—which is practically all of them—are concerned. And that is the literally billions of dollars that could potentially flow out of stem cell research.

"With strict limits on federal funding, scientists must rely largely on private money. But venture capitalists have largely stayed away from stem cell companies because most are still in early stages. VCs [venture capitalists] enter after the research is completed," says Robert Bellas Jr., a general partner at Morgenthaler Ventures. (Red Herring, June 20, 2005)

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

Frist, who tried to push the vetoed bill in the Senate, represents this wing of the medical business establishment.

Frist entered the Senate already a millionaire, thanks to his father and brother. They founded what has become HCA, Inc., the largest hospital chain in the U.S., with over 200 hospitals and revenues of \$21.8 billion in 2003. His family is currently leading a consortium of private investors who are trying to carry out the largest leveraged buyout in history.

Over the years, HCA derived about one third of its revenue from the federal government's Medicaid and Medicare programs.

In addition to owning the largest number of hospitals, HCA has another dubious distinction: The company had to pay the government \$631 million in penalties for defrauding Medicare, Medicaid and TRICARE, the military's health care program, of more money than any other health care provider in the U.S. (Donald L. Bartlett and James B. Steele, "Critical Condition: How Health Care in America Became Big Business and Bad Medicine")

Frist and his allies would like to cash in on the new research, but they were stymied by the president's political difficulties, caused in large part by the administration's bloody adventures in Iraq and elsewhere—which both Democrats and Republicans in Congress supported.

So progressive and working people not only have to resist the religious bigots who seek to hold back scientific progress and the politicians who use them as shock troops. The other challenge is to see that the fruits of science are not appropriated for the benefit of a few profiteers, and insure that the promise of stem cell research can truly benefit humanity. □

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With recession fears rising

Labor must prepare for class battles

By Milt Neidenberg

U.S. monopoly capitalism is sinking into a quagmire. An economic slowdown is being aggravated by inflation and stagflation, described by some Wall Street pundits as stagflation. The crisis is compounded by sinkholes faced by U.S. imperialism in Iraq, Afghanistan and now the U.S./Israeli war in Lebanon.

In a recent survey, Federal Reserve Board economist Jonathan Wright explained that inflation is already surging and stagflation risks are mounting, presenting a serious problem for the U.S. Wright blames the growing crisis on rising interest rates, higher oil prices, a housing slump, higher core inflation—which doesn't count soaring energy and food prices—and a consumer downturn.

Alarmed by the lack of savings among workers who are beset by falling wages and benefits, and also by rising government debt and debt service, Wright included geopolitical factors that add to the crisis—Washington's tensions with North Korea and Iran, the struggle in Palestine, and the U.S./Israeli Lebanon war. He calculated that the odds of a recession in the next year are now at 36 percent, up from 14 percent six months ago. Other economists put the risk as high as 50 percent. (Wall Street Journal, July 25)

Wall Street's mood is turning to pessimism. Uncertainty and volatility are reflected in the stock, commodity and currency markets, the heartbeat of finance capital.

A July 21 New York Times article headlined, "As Oil Rises Will Economy Finally Fail?" expressed this pessimism. The article was concerned not only about oil prices but that housing is "sinking." It says new home starts are down 45 percent this year, according to the National Association of Home Builders, and are at their "lowest level since 1991."

The downturn in housing along with higher interest rates has cut into the ability of consumers/owners to use their homes as a source of cash. Many can no longer buy furnishings and other products that have been the biggest generator of jobs and income for a wide range of work-

ers in other industries, such as the construction trades and the service-oriented centers in finance and retail.

Fueling the stagnation of the economy is the slowdown in auto. The Big Three—General Motors, Ford and Daimler Chrysler—are ruthlessly restructuring: trimming payrolls, laying off thousands of workers and closing down or selling off plants. The auto industry has "multiplier effects," meaning a downturn in auto ripples to a host of supplier industries like steel, glass, plastics and rubber. Delphi, the largest auto supplier in the country, is in bankruptcy.

An article headlined "Workers on the Slag Heap of History" describes the devastation enveloping U.S. cities and towns. "The gates of many towns welcome visitors with abandoned factories. And the communities these factories flank tell you more about what is really destroying America than any Wall Street analyst or Washington policy wonk ever could." (Philadelphia Daily News, March 24)

Even last December, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were "7.4 million unemployed people seeking work ... not to mention the roughly 10 million others who say they would look for work if they thought that their hunt would be successful." (New York Times, Feb. 12) For African American and Latin@ workers, the unemployment rate is at least double that of white workers.

The overall monthly jobs available fall far short of the number of workers entering the job market. Some 340,000 new workers a week are filing unemployment claims.

Recently, Federal Reserve chairperson Ben S. Bernanke addressed both House and Senate committees. In a most cynical expression of contempt for the workers and the oppressed nationalities, he stated that a slowing economy might enable inflation to cool without more tightening of interest rates. That day the stock market jumped over 200 points.

Bernanke's remarks encouraging an economic slowdown to solve the inflation crisis were interpreted by Wall Street as meaning the Federal Reserve Board will not raise interest rates when it meets on

Aug. 8. The board's policies represent the banks and other organs of high finance. Bernanke formerly headed the global investment and banking firm of Goldman Sachs.

A slowing economy will only further intensify the exploitation of the multinational workers.

Some economists disagree with the idea that a slowing economy will curb inflation. A Wall Street Journal July 19 article headlined "Bernanke Sees Inflation Pressures Declining as Growth Moderates" wrote: "The combination of higher inflation and slowing growth led some economists to invoke the stagflation of the 1970s," though not as severe.

The truth is inflation can't be controlled by the manipulations of the Federal Reserve Board. The skyrocketing cost of oil is not the cause of inflation, though Wall Street would like the public to believe it is, in order to blame the oil-producing countries.

Inflation is a product of monopoly capitalism. The growing mega-mergers of giant corporations lead to the rigging of prices of goods and services to maximize profits.

Military domination of economy

Military expenditures, which have reached gargantuan dimensions in the last decades, are another cause of inflation. The military does not buy in the open market with competitive bidding. Prices are continually rigged upward as the capitalist government caters to corporations like Halliburton, Lockheed Martin, Bechtel and Boeing. Military spending is all-consuming and permeates and disrupts all levels of civilian production.

Dollars are now floating all over Asia, primarily China and Japan, and Europe. But they're really IOUs. U.S. debt is bankrolling the humongous growth in the military, further heightening inflation and accelerating the tendency toward capitalist stagnation.

The military-industrial empire is fed by huge government appropriations for "defense." A Wall Street Journal article on March 10 reflected on the financial appetite this generates. This year's defense

budget includes "\$560 billion [plus] Mr. Bush's latest emergency war-spending request for \$67.6 billion ... up nearly 70 percent from \$334.8 billion for defense when he took office."

"Last month he requested \$513 billion for 2007—a sum that will need many more requests for emergency war spending in the coming fiscal year."

According to the article, "The administration [keeps] separate books for the regular defense budget and for war expenditures, which increasingly include new planes and helicopters to replace ones lost in the Mideast."

Class struggle, not conciliation

As new conditions of capitalist production bring on economic downturn and plant shutdowns become widespread, it is incumbent upon trade union leaders to plan a broad-based strategy that can change the relationship of class forces to one more favorable for the workers.

The current labor bureaucracy has failed to do this. Bureaucratic tensions, organized from the top down, have split the labor movement into two federations: the AFL-CIO and Change to Win. Yet they have no differences when it comes to wasting millions of dollars and other resources mustering the rank and file to lobby for the Democratic Party.

However, rank and file opposition to these priorities is developing within many local unions. Workers are demanding that the unions focus on building roots in the communities, establishing ties with the disenfranchised, the poor and unemployed. A splendid example would be to rally around the immigrant workers and the Katrina survivors who are fighting racism and government criminal negligence.

Every economic struggle is a political struggle, and the relationship of class forces can be changed. It will come from below as all history of class struggle has confirmed. The multinational U.S. working class must forge broad-based unity and prepare to build a classwide independent movement to turn back the relentless assault and seize the high ground. □

ACTIVISTS LAUNCH

Summer of Organizing & Struggle

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

A contingent from the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee (BRPHRDC) hit the streets for a mass leaflet distribution July 22. Traveling through mostly working class communities of color, organizers were busy informing people about the committee's Summer of Organizing and Struggle campaign against poverty, racism, sexism and war.

This campaign, being taken to the neighborhoods of Boston, is making the connection "between the local violence in the community and the U.S. war drive and economic crisis on the poor, working class and oppressed peoples, especially Black and Latin@ in Boston and the nation," according to the campaign call.

The action focused on mobilizing for a July 30 citywide activists' summit and an Aug. 29 rally in Roxbury, Mass., on the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina as well as the date Emmett Till was murdered in 1955.

A main focus of the rally will be demanding justice and reparations for those displaced by Katrina/Rita as a result of the criminal and racist neglect of the U.S. government. Other demands include "Money for people's needs, not war," "Stop the attacks on the LGBT community," "Full rights for the immigrant communities," "Stop Homeland Security attacks," "Money for levees—Not racist border walls," and "End colonial occupations."

A multinational delegation of the BRPHRDC youth committee named "Rosa 7053" led the outreach contingent, distributing hundreds of bilingual leaflets and speaking to the people in English, Creole and Spanish from a mobile sound truck. The committee's name refers to the booking number that Birmingham police gave Rosa Parks in 1955.

Eric Jones, a Rosa 7053 member, implored those along the route to join the people's struggle. "Come organize with us. Come support us," declared Jones from the microphone on the truck.

The route taken included community centers, shopping plazas and districts, and Bromley Heath, a public housing development well known for rampant police racial profiling and brutality. Many along the city streets and front porches raised their thumbs or fists and nodded their heads or honked horns in solidarity with the contingent.

Rico Holley summed up the organizers' message.

"I'm totally against the Bush agenda—against war, occupation and racism—whether in Boston, Iraq, Lebanon or Palestine. I'm for affordable housing for all, education and other people's needs. These are all basic rights, not privileges," said Holley, a member of the Boston International Action Center, who lives in Martha's Vineyard and works as a painter there.

Oppression breeds resistance

Lorena Escoto, Rosa 7053 member and participant in the July 22 outreach contingent, said her personal experiences of

racism and sexism, witnessing wholesale police brutality in her community and military recruiting in schools and many other forms of oppression, brought her to join BRPHRDC. These experiences led her to conclude, "It's time to take action."

Escoto participated in building Dec. 1 and March 18 BRPHRDC rallies and marches by distributing leaflets, making home visits and helping on speakers' committees, amid other tasks.

According to Noelia Cabrera, Escoto's activism inspired her to take action as well. The two Dominican friends are participating in major outreach for July 30 and Aug. 29.

Like Escoto, Cabrera joined Rosa 7053 to fight the oppression in her community. "We don't want to just talk the talk. We want to walk the walk," said Cabrera.

Cabrera and Escoto said upcoming plans for Rosa 7053 include building awareness through school and community outreach, meetings, workshops, as well as

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First outage, then outrage in Queens

By Mary Owen & LeiLani Dowell
New York

Large sections of the Astoria, Sunnyside, Woodside and Long Island City communities in the Queens borough of New York City have had low or no power since July 17. During a week of both stifling heat and torrential rains, some 100,000 people were affected. Like the response in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, people were left to fend for themselves for several days.

Queens is a predominantly working class area with a large immigrant population. Many believe that it was initially ignored because of its demographics and class background—unlike the immediate response to ritzy Manhattan areas when there is an outage.

It took four days before officials would even recognize this major outage in Queens. Residents angrily and repeatedly called the media and government offices to demand they pay attention.

Local elected officials finally called a news conference, backing residents' demand that New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg come to the area. On July 20, billionaire Bloomberg deigned to respond, likening his presence there to a "photo op." (New York Sun, July 21) Later that same day he conceded to public outrage and held a hastily organized news conference in Astoria.

The city's electric company, Con Edison, had attempted to minimize the scope of the crisis by announcing that 2,500 customers were affected—a number it based only on the number of complaint calls received. Later it upped that number to



Utility workers laying new cable on Steinway Street, a normally crowded shopping hub in Astoria.

WW PHOTO: MARY OWENS

from many other cities in the eastern U.S. They have been working 12-hour-plus shifts, eating and sleeping in their trucks and then going back underground to work in dangerous conditions. Workers World spoke to many, and they all expressed sympathy for the community. Some blamed Con Edison for the outage, saying it should never have happened.

One worker remembered a similar outage that affected some 70,000 people in the largely Dominican community of Washington Heights, in upper Manhattan. He said Con Edison knew the electrical feed was bad and didn't act on it. An investigation by the Public Service Commission found that "managers had been told to reduce the operation and maintenance budget in each of the four years leading up to the [outage]." (ABC7 News)

Community supports itself

Forced to survive a crisis without government assistance, people in apartment buildings organized themselves to support each other, checking each apartment to assess needs and conditions.

Residents also organized to fight back. On July 22, affected community, labor,

peace and immigrant rights activists held an emergency meeting, launching a campaign called Power for the People.

Their demands include: compensation for losses, expenses and lost wages over and above the paltry \$350 being offered to individuals by Con Edison; free power for the length of time the outage lasts, and no charge for low power; a people's fact-finding investigation into the outage, its causes, impact on the communities and plans to prevent future outages; a first alert as soon as power problems occur; and a community review board of Con Edison's emergency response.

The group has started a community petition drive. For more information, visit powerforthepeople.info or e-mail powerforthepeople2006@yahoo.com. To volunteer help with petitioning, call 718-512-5442.

Other major cities are having similar problems. In Cave Creek, Ariz., water service was disrupted for 2,300 people during a July 21 outage because the water company did not have a backup generator. A power failure in St. Louis on July 19 affected more than half a million households and businesses, resulting in the evacuation of many from their homes.

These outages raise the issue of how social needs are handled under capitalism—where services like health care and power are considered a commodity and not a necessity and a right. What many in Queens have learned is that nothing would have happened if the people didn't speak out—and that their ongoing demands for justice will be won in the same fashion.

Mary Owen is a resident of Sunnyside, Queens. This article was co-written because the outage left her without access to a working computer.

First New Orleans, now Harlem?

Developers threaten historic Black community

By Tony Murphy
Harlem, N.Y.

Last year the crisis brought on by Hurricane Katrina exposed the shocking level of New Orleans' racism and poverty, two forces that trapped people there as much as water. Driving these forces—and preventing people from returning to their homes—was gentrification, the desire of landlords and real estate players to push poor people out of their homes and get richer from the property.

While Katrina exposed and accelerated the process for New Orleans, the scourge of gentrification is demolishing communities in every city—some with all the power of a Level 5 hurricane.

Hurricane Katrina was mentioned frequently by the speakers at a recent anti-gentrification protest and tenants' speak-out in Harlem. The action, organized by the Harlem Tenants Council, was part of the group's dynamic, people-based campaign of demonstrations, town-hall meetings, teach-ins and community speakouts designed to stop evictions and landlord harassment in this historic neighborhood. The campaign is calling for either a moratorium on evictions or a rent strike.

The July 19 action took place in a unique spot: outside ex-president Bill Clinton's Harlem office, located on 125th Street, the commercial heart of Harlem. Clinton's 2001 arrival in Harlem was greeted with much fanfare in the media. However, his pro-corporate policies as president—the elimination of federal public assistance, for instance—have made many of the community's residents poorer.



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Nellie Bailey speaks for Harlem Tenants Council.

Every pedestrian who passed by the protest was handed a leaflet with the title "President Clinton Can Easily Afford Harlem—How About You?" The text under that title said, "Illegal evictions, landlord harassment and soaring rents are driving African Americans out of the historic Black community of Harlem. While our first 'Black President' Bill Clinton can rent with relative ease in Harlem, so many poor and working families are barely able to make ends meet."

The initial crowd was about 60 people. When the action ended three hours later, it had grown to over 100. Hooked by the leaflet, many passersby stayed to hear tenants' testimonies and Harlem Tenants

Council leader Nellie Bailey, who educated the crowd about the New York struggle against gentrification.

Bailey talked about the area's increased real estate speculation; the corporatization of Harlem's local economy; Columbia University expansion; the glut of luxury housing; inflated rents; illegal evictions; shrinking housing subsidies; and public policies tilted overwhelmingly in favor of landlords and developers.

"The established media has largely ignored the displacement and soaring evictions occurring throughout Harlem," Bailey said. In fact, much of the media has sought to portray the gentrification in Harlem as a good thing.

A June 2005 article on The Real Deal, a website for real estate brokers and players, shows what's been happening there. Reporting on the opening of a high-end health food store, the article stated, "The new retail isn't just confined to food stores—residential real estate offices are also moving in."

The article continued, "By summer, Warburg, Corcoran and Douglas Elliman will all have Frederick Douglass Boulevard offices within a three-block stretch. Warburg opened a 2,500-square-foot office in October on Frederick Douglass and 120th Street. Corcoran is renovating a 1,900-square-foot storefront across the street and plans to open June 1. Douglas Elliman plans to open its 1,300-square-foot office at 117th Street ... by July 1. The three offices have desks for between 15 to 20 agents."

Elliman's director of sales, Gary Cannata, who will manage the Harlem office, said, "We've looked at the corridor and the new rentals and condominiums there and we thought having a position in that lower part of Harlem was a smart move."

Obviously these offices are not there to help current residents stay in Harlem.

Bailey said that in 2005 there were 17,413 residential eviction proceedings in Central Harlem and Washington Heights, and as of March 2006, a total of 21,991 eviction warrants had been issued in Manhattan Housing Court. "Harlem is a hotbed for real estate development and speculation," said Bailey. "Without a doubt there is ample evidence that long-time Harlem residents are being pushed out and there is no relief in sight unless tenants take to the streets." □

Private prisons profit from immigrant bashing

By Heather Cottin

They're salivating on Wall Street. Putting immigrants behind bars is the latest growth industry.

Stockbrokers are urging their clients to "buy corrections stock." (New York Times, July 19) For fat cats in the prison-industrial complex, anti-immigrant laws already on the books and future repressive anti-immigrant legislation promise a gold rush for profits.

The government is using the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) to justify the capture and imprisonment of tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants.

This isn't new; it's just become big business.

In the mid-1990s the El Paso Border Patrol, then headed by Silvestre Reyes, initiated "Operation Blockade," which captured immigrants after they crossed into the U.S. This spurred on the militarization of the southwestern border. (Texas Observer, May 15). Reyes is currently a U.S. Congressperson from Texas.

Immigration reform laws passed in 1996 by Congress and signed by President Bill Clinton allowed the detention and deportation of any non-citizen convicted of such crimes as drunk driving, hot-check writing and shoplifting.

Now immigration agents catch an esti-

mated 1 million "illegal" entrants per year, and the big prison-industrial moguls are vying for contracts to build more detention centers in cities and counties. Nationwide, immigration has recently surpassed drugs as the number one federally prosecuted "crime."

Profiting from racism

MSN Money's Michael Brush, in a glowing analysis of prison industry stocks, wrote in 2005 that "private prison companies look like solid investments for the next several years" because legislation "makes it likely that more illegal immigrants will be caught." (MSN Money, Jan. 5, 2005)

The stock of Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) has increased 27 percent since February, and the company has now been awarded a contract to run a detention facility in Taylor, Texas, where whole families, including children, will be incarcerated.

The Geo Group—which operates prisons in the U.S., Australia, South Africa and Britain—has increased its stock earnings by 68 percent in the same period.

Detention centers, according to Wall Street analysts, produce profit margins of more than 20 percent every year. (New York Times, July 18) KBR, a subsidiary of Dick Cheney's Halliburton Co. and the firm that built the cages in Guantánamo, Cuba, won a contract in January to build new "temporary" facilities for immigrants in Laredo, Texas. The Department of Homeland Security wanted the facilities in case of an "emergency influx of immigrants." Texas accounts for 80 percent of all incarcerated undocumented immigrants.

The government agency hunting down immigrants is now called Immigration and Customs Enforcement—ICE. The budget for border enforcement has increased from \$1.2 billion in 1995 to \$4.7 billion in 2006. And most of that money is now going to the prison-industrial complex.

In October the so-called "catch-and-release" policy, in which undocumented

immigrants are released on their own recognizance, will end. Immigrants will be incarcerated and have no rights under law. They will be deported after detention.

Whether or not Congress passes repressive anti-immigrant legislation, such as HR4437 (the Sensenbrenner bill) or S2611 (the Hegel-Martinez bill), conditions for immigrants will worsen. And while they suffer, profits will soar.

Although the Pew Hispanic Center reports that the number of unauthorized immigrants has declined by 50,000 a year since the late 1990s, the number of incarcerated detainees has more than tripled in the past 12 years. Meanwhile, hiring by the Border Patrol has increased by 200 percent and hiring by the U.S. Marshals Service has jumped 2,100 percent.

Racism lurks deep within the Border Patrol and the Marshals Service in the Southwest and recruits are encouraged to perform their jobs with xenophobic zeal.

Under the new "Secure Border Initiative," imprisoned undocumented people have limited access to lawyers, phones, translators and timely medical care. (Associated Press, Feb. 2)

Capitalists super-exploit immigrants by paying them sub-minimum wages and denying them benefits that were won long ago by the workers' movement. They can only get away with it by dividing immigrants from the rest of the working class—which is the intent of these repressive laws.

Now they've found another way to profit from the suffering of the undocumented: the "cash cow" of privatized jails and prisons, where corporations get rich off tax dollars spent by the federal, state, county and municipal governments.

The great demonstrations this spring showed there's a strong and united immigrant rights movement. When the rest of the progressive movement joins it in solidarity against the repressive laws that are putting workers by the tens of thousands behind bars, this grim situation can be turned around. □



WW PHOTO: LUCHITA RODRIGUEZ

Houston activists outside jail where death row activist and poet Howard Guidry awaits a new trial.

After beating of prisoner

Protest at jail gets support from public

By Liz Lyon
Houston

As two members of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement and the Howard Guidry Justice Committee walked toward the Harris County Jail here on July 21, four white mounted police were waiting for them. The lead cop asked, smiling, "Y'all here to protest? What are you protesting?"

"Police brutality," the pair responded, and walked on. As they and others began their protest, they were confronted by the Houston Police Red Squad, the Canine Unit and many squad cars as well as the cops on horses.

The two groups already mentioned, plus the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and the Harris County Green Party, were at the jail to protest the brutal treatment of Howard Guidry who, supporters say, had been beaten on July 17 by police assigned to take him to a court hearing.

Guidry's supporters stood on the corner of San Jacinto and Baker streets for almost two hours in solidarity with the men and women, and in some cases their loved ones, who are brutalized by the prison system.

Many passersby stopped to ask for more information about Guidry and talked about their own loved ones' experiences with the racist, inhumane Harris County jail system. Some thanked the protesters for coming out and making their unspoken complaints heard.

The whole time the protest was taking place, cars passing by honked loud and long in response to a sign saying "Honk to stop jail brutality." Even people who got off the bus to go visit at the jail would say, "Honk! Honk!" as they walked by.

Njeri Shakur led the crowd in chanting, "Five white cops/one Black man/equals zero justice" and "They give us no jus-

tice/We give them no peace" during pauses in her speech. She spoke of the similarities between today's prisons and the racist plantations started during slavery.

"We are not isolated," she said, "and Howard Guidry is certainly not the only poor, Black man being abused and disrespected behind these very walls. All of us whose loved ones are being treated like animals in these jails and prisons must come together and put our voices together. Alone, we are victims. Together, we are an unstoppable force.

"Nothing but the organized anger of the people will ever stop these injustices. They give us no justice, we give them no peace!"

One woman paused on the way to visit her husband, then asked for the bullhorn. She spoke of the brutal treatment her husband had received at the hands of the Harris County police, adding, "The cops were all white. My husband is Black." She then walked across the street to wait on line for almost an hour with hundreds of others, mothers and sisters and babies and brothers, all waiting for a 15-minute visit through reinforced glass with their loved ones.

Gloria Rubac of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement asked the crowd, "Would Ken Lay go to court barefoot, without his glasses, after being sat on by a SWAT team?" She denounced the prison system that brutalizes Black, Latin@ and white working class brothers and sisters who can't afford the same kind of justice that Ken Lay and Jeff Skilling, two Enron executives who stole millions, can pay for.

In English and Spanish, Rubac called for an end to police brutality and demanded that criminals who hide behind badges be put where they belong—behind bars.

See www.geocities.com/howardguidryjusticecomm for more information. □

Activists support Black radical for Congress

The International Action Center hosted a "Charles Barron for Congress" rally and fundraiser at its new office in Manhattan July 25. Barron, an African-American, is a New York City Council member from Brooklyn who is radical and outspoken on many domestic and international issues. He is seeking election on Sept. 12 in order to represent the 10th Congressional district.

Barron has a powerful mass base among Black voters in Brooklyn. One hope of his campaign is to reach out to broader sectors of the population for funding as well as political and organizational support. The IAC established "antiwar4Barron" to build anti-racist solidarity with the former Black Panther.

Larry Holmes, an IAC co-director, introduced Barron and told the audience, "Barron is a movement candidate. His views are global. He is not just against the war in Iraq but he is against all wars. Barron has no problem standing with the Palestinian people or supporting the Cuban revolution or Venezuela's right to control its oil. With the antiwar4Barron component, we have the rare opportunity to help put one of our own in Congress."

Barron announced that he plans to host Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez at City



Larry Holmes left, presents Charles Barron.

Hall in September during the opening of the UN General Assembly. He stated that "electoral politics are important because of what the people can extract from it," like having a say in how the \$58 billion city budget is spent. He went on to talk about his campaign program, which includes: "Bring the troops home now; Free Palestine; the people of New Orleans have the right to return, self-determination and the right to vote; free all political prisoners; reparations now and an end to police brutality." He received a standing ovation when he ended his talk with these words: "America needs a revolution." Go to www.barronforcongress.com for more information.

—Story and photo by Monica Moorehead

LEBANON

Resistance bares limits of U.S.-Israeli

By Sara Flounders

Reports on July 22 that the Pentagon is rushing the delivery of precision-guided bombs to Israel for use in its criminal offensive in Lebanon confirm the real relationship in this U.S./Israeli war. The utter dependency of the Zionist state on the military equipment, massive funding, political and diplomatic support of the United States has never been clearer.

But news of the shipment also exposes the limits of U.S. and Israeli power.

With these same weapons, U.S. troops have been unable to prevail in Iraq. How can the Israeli war criminals, even with an endless supply of U.S. high-tech weapons, expect to prevail in Lebanon?

Israel is headed into the same quagmire. Like the U.S. in Iraq, Israel is quickly finding that it faces a highly motivated, ever more organized people's resistance in Lebanon.

U.S.-supplied bunker busters, cluster bombs, white phosphorus, napalm and depleted uranium weapons are wreaking enormous damage on the whole country and causing horrendous suffering for hundreds of thousands of defenseless civilians. Helicopter gunships, jet aircraft and missiles that come from the Pentagon have destroyed seaports, airports, roads, convoys of refugees and essential civilian infrastructure.

However, U.S. and Israeli forces are used to making all-out war against defenseless civilian populations. They are shocked that Hezbollah has been able to secure or build large quantities of land mines and anti-tank missiles, anti-aircraft guns, rocket-launching facilities and night-vision equipment. They didn't know until they opened this brutal offensive that the resistance forces had developed innovative technology, including aerial drones and submarines.

Numerous news articles are describing how both the U.S. and the Israelis underestimated the weapons and the level of organization of Hezbollah, which has deep-fortified bunkers, networks of tunnels and well-trained fighters able to handle sophisticated technology. Its fighters even managed to destroy an Israeli warship and several tanks and helicopters, and send missiles into Haifa and other cities deep inside Israel.

The corporate media are full of speculation, threats and charges about where Hezbollah obtained its weapons. They barely mention who has supplied Israel with generations of weapons, tanks, helicopters, jet planes, ships and missiles. The most extreme sources are charging that Iran may have contributed \$100 million to Hezbollah, and are treating it as a crime. But even if it is true, it bears no comparison to the \$288 million a week in aid that the U.S. supplied Israel in fiscal 2003, for a total of \$15 billion in aid that year. Similar levels have occurred every year for more than 50 years. (Jewish Voice for Peace)

The Zionist command didn't anticipate the sophistication. It's not that they don't have sufficient spy satellites, eavesdropping and reconnaissance equipment, and bought agents. It's once again the arrogance of colonial occupiers.

The end of gunboat diplomacy

The biggest surprise was the ability of Hezbollah to hit the INS Hanit, an Israeli Navy missile ship, which was firing at Lebanese targets from off the coast.

The Hanit was built by Northrop Grumman in Pascagoula, Miss., and was considered to be Israel's most advanced

The new buzzword in military-speak for the unexpected ability of resistance organizations to challenge an overwhelming military advantage is 'asymmetric advantage.'

surface ship. The corporate media, while full of endless speculation on who supplied the Hezbollah missile, never raised the issue of who supplied the Israeli ship, at a cost of \$260 million.

Yet it matters little whether Hezbollah used a modified Silkworm missile obtained eight to 10 years ago from China via Iran, or an Iranian C-802 rocket transported via Syria, or an explosives-packed aerial drone such as they have used before. Israel, the Pentagon and all the Western powers got the message—they are no longer invincible.

The timing of the missile during a meeting of the G-8 powers could not have sent a clearer message. Any power considering an attack on Iran could do the calculation. The U.S. aircraft carriers, battleships, the hundreds of oil tankers in the narrow Persian Gulf—all are now vulnerable.

The days when the U.S., British or French navy could sail into the harbor and blast at the shoreline until their demands were met had been challenged.

Asymmetric warfare

U.S. power and equipment are far greater than any developing country or resistance movement. But today, because of global advances in simple technology that can no longer be kept in a locked box, plus the availability of the Internet and instant communication, imperialism's total control is slipping.

U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan have met the same rude surprises. A simple cell phone or doorbell can set off a roadside bomb and destroy an expensive tank.

The new buzzword in military-speak for the unexpected ability of resistance organizations to challenge an overwhelming military advantage is "asymmetric advantage" or "asymmetric warfare." This means that even though the Pentagon has formidable military capabilities and is adept at doing horrendous damage, it is not winning.

This has changed the rules of politics in the Middle East. Wherever oppressed people are able to organize themselves, they are able to fight back.

Despite overwhelming military superiority, Israel was forced to withdraw from Lebanon in June 2000 and from Gaza in August 2005 because of the enormous skill of guerrilla forces.

Gaza and Qassam rockets

In the early days of the Palestinian uprising that began in September 2000—called the second Intifada—Israeli patrols could still confidently drive around the West Bank and Gaza in jeeps and light armored personnel carriers. They destroyed at will small Palestinian Authority police stations and social service centers. They fired on youths armed only with stones and homemade gas bombs in bottles. But these young fighters expressed the will of the whole population to resist.

Now Hamas, Islamic Jihad and popu-

lar committees are producing increasingly sophisticated small weapons. Even their hand grenades are designed at standards as advanced as U.S.-produced grenades. All these secret, locally made products are stamped, "Made in Gaza by al-Qassam."

Locally made anti-tank missiles and mines have broken the ability of Israeli tanks to roll unimpeded into the streets of Gaza, crushing all in their path. In past decades this was such regular Israeli policy that the wide swaths of destruction in Gaza City and other Palestinian cities were called Sharon's Boulevards after the Israeli general who became prime minister, Ariel Sharon. Now in Gaza hundreds of missiles, with simple guidance systems known as al-Qassam I and II, are fired regularly across the border. There is growing skill and accuracy in the manufacture of these small rockets.

The same youths who used to throw stones at Israeli tanks today are also far more organized. They have education and basic technology skills, along with enormous determination and anger.

Hezbollah was born under occupation

Hezbollah (or the Party of God) emerged after 1982 as a guerrilla resistance army with Islamic leadership, fighting against the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Originally it appealed primarily to disenfranchised Shiite youth in Lebanon—the most oppressed group. In a war-torn and divided country where corruption was rampant, Hezbollah broadened its support and gained wide political legitimacy for its determined resistance and its well-organized, non-corrupt social services. It helped rebuild the crumbled infrastructure of roads, electricity and potable water.

All of this earned Hezbollah the hatred of the old corrupt ruling families in Lebanon and of U.S. corporate interests, which are tied to the old ruling class. Hezbollah was added to the U.S. State Department's list of international terrorist groups in October 1997.

This hardly hurt Hezbollah's popular image. Now Hezbollah holds 12 parliamentary seats. Its civilian branch runs schools, orphanages, hospitals and a television station. And its relentless guerrilla attacks on the Israeli army of occupation, combined with growing anti-war sentiment within Israel, forced a military retreat from Lebanon in June 2000.

In the six years since the Israeli withdrawal, Hezbollah has used its time well to prepare for the next Israeli offensive. It built deep underground bunkers, networks of tunnels and a series of camouflaged defense positions. In the hilly terrain Hezbollah built shelters for weapons and ammunition, food supplies and medical stations. Anti-tank mines and missiles line the border region to block Israeli tanks from rolling in, as they have in the past. Each Israeli thrust across the border in the past two weeks, even after heavy bombardment, has resulted in Hezbollah ambushes from behind Israeli lines.

Lebanon's infrastructure has been so destroyed by the latest Israeli onslaught that Hezbollah's highly effective social service network of schools, hospitals and clinics is bound to expand and take on added significance.

Hezbollah General Secretary Hasan Nasrallah warned the Israeli people on July 14: "Those times when Israel used to get away with whatever destruction, killing children and freedom of movement on Arab lands, have come to an end. I

promise you those times have passed; therefore you must bear the responsibility for what your government has done and has undertaken."

Militarism and the Israeli lobby

U.S. backing and support for Israel is often blamed on the strength and influence of the Israeli lobby, including the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington, D.C. But the Israeli lobby is effective not because of its great connections and resources, but because they serve U.S. corporate interests in the entire region.

The largest and most profitable corporations in the U.S. today, which hold decisive political power in the imperialist state, are the oil corporations and the military contractors. They have a huge financial stake in controlling the resources of the Middle East and in the policy of endless war and instability. The Israeli Army plays a pivotal role in U.S. corporate control of the region.

Northrop Grumman spends seven times and Lockheed Martin four times as much as AIPAC on lobbying. General Electric, Raytheon, Boeing and other military contractors also outspend AIPAC. Their corporate profits are bound up in the more than \$2 billion in weapons given to Israel every year.

These corporations are as enthusiastic about rushing the latest satellite- and laser-guided bunker buster bombs to Israel, to be used aboard U.S.-supplied F-15 aircraft to blast Lebanon, as they are about supplying the U.S. military occupation of Iraq.

Policy of civil war

The ruthless Israeli bombardment and attacks on Lebanon and the bombing of Gaza are based on the desperation of the Israeli military command. They failed in their political plan to reignite a civil war in either place. Instead they have succeeded in uniting the entire population against them.

The Western coalition that U.S. imperialism had so carefully arrayed against Iran at the G-8 meeting and in the UN is now divided.

Since the democratic election of Hamas in January 2006, both Israel and the U.S. have used the most extreme measures of sanctions, starvation and threats, trying to push the Palestinian Authority and Hamas into armed conflict. The Bush administration cut off all aid and credits. Israel withheld tax revenue and cut off the pay of social service workers, teachers and police. They strangled the export of agricultural produce and closed border crossings for Palestinian workers, all in an effort to inflame a struggle over scarce resources.

They demanded that the moderate president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, break with the democratically elected Hamas leadership. Israel staged targeted assassinations, random bombings and round-ups. But the policy failed to decisively divide the Palestinian groups.

When Palestinian resistance units managed to dig tunnels, kidnap an Israeli soldier, and destroy an Israeli tank to bargain for the almost 10,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails, Israel used this as an excuse to bomb Gaza.

In Lebanon the hopes of both the U.S. and Israel were pinned on the Cedar Revolution. In the spring of 2005 demonstrations broke out, mainly in Beirut, demanding the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and blaming Syria

eli power

Attacks on Palestine, Lebanon lead to worldwide protests

for the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on Feb. 14 of that year.

The Lebanese government was disbanded and a government much friendlier to U.S. corporate interests was established. Syrian troops were withdrawn. But the hope that this would destabilize Syria and force the disarming of Hezbollah forces did not succeed.

For Israel to now go back into Lebanon is like the U.S. trying to go back into Vietnam. They already know it won't work, but are driven to try to accomplish by military measures what political pressure has failed to accomplish.

New occupation proposals

While continuing to give the Israeli forces time and additional weapons to blast Lebanon, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has begun a slow trip through the region trying to broker a deal favorable to U.S. and Israeli interests. U.S. "peace" proposals are to disarm the patriotic resistance forces and occupy Lebanon with foreign troops, including the possibility of a NATO, UN or other multinational occupation force to protect Israel's northern border. Israel would of course be rearmed and resupplied.

Any political solution that does not have the full agreement and participation of the Lebanese people, including the Hezbollah resistance, would be in danger of repeating 1983 in Beirut.

In that year U.S. President Ronald Reagan sent an international occupation force to assist the Israeli forces and allow them to pull back. On Oct. 23, 1983, a truck bomb at the new U.S. base in Beirut airport killed 241 U.S. Marines and 54 French soldiers. U.S. and other international troops were pulled out.

Israel is a state built on stolen land. The occupied Palestinian population has never stopped resisting. Each U.S.-equipped Israeli offensive since the creation of the state of Israel 58 years ago has caused enormous human suffering, as well as deepened the rage and determination of the attacked and displaced people. Although totally disarmed, isolated and surrounded, the Palestinians have organized themselves again and again to resist, even under the most onerous conditions.

The Lebanese resistance has grown in a similar way.

For both peoples the resistance has taken many political forms, but each time it resurges with more militancy, determination and skill. □

By Larry Hales

July 25—As the racist Zionist regime, with the total backing of the Bush administration, continues its aerial bombardments of Lebanon, the world clamor to end Israel's occupation of Palestine and its attacks on Lebanon grows by the day. Coordinated worldwide actions have been called for Aug. 5 and there will be a protest in Washington, D.C., on Aug. 12, but already there have been massive demonstrations.

Inside Israel itself, 2,500 people marched from Tel Aviv's Rabin Square to a rally at the Cinemateque Plaza on July 22. The rally was jointly conceived and attended by Palestinians and Israelis. It had an anti-Washington tone, with slogans condemning both George W. Bush and the prime minister and defense minister of the Zionist regime in Israel. There were also calls for Israeli soldiers to refuse to fight.

Students protested in Haifa as well. They numbered 50 and held signs that read, "Unconditional ceasefire now" and "Get out of Lebanon."

On July 21, thousands of protesters fought police in Cairo and shouted slogans denouncing the collusion of Arab governments with Israel and demanding they not recognize it as a legitimate state.

In Amman, Jordan, 2,000 rallied in support of Palestinians and Lebanon. There were protests in Syria as well as in Iraq. The protests in Iraq condemned the U.S., Israel and Arab governments that give in to their pressure, and were held in the Sadr City section of Baghdad.

Over 100,000 people turned out in the small country of Yemen on July 20 for a demonstration in solidarity with Lebanon and the Palestinian people. (AFX news, Cairo, July 22)



Asia and Europe

In Kolkata, India, the West Bengal Committee of the All India Anti-Imperialist Forum staged a protest on July 24. According to the AIAIF, speakers "pointed out how the belligerent Israeli rulers, in pursuance of their expansionist, aggressive policies against the Arab countries, more so Palestine, have unleashed an all-out offensive on innocent people, damaging the very economic infrastructure of the country of Lebanon and Palestine, violating all norms of national sovereignty and civility. They also highlighted the heinous role of the U.S. imperialist rulers."

Demonstrations were held throughout Europe as well as Asia. Tens of thousands rallied and marched in cities in Britain, including 20,000 in London. The demonstrations were called by Stop the War Coalition, the Muslim Association of Britain, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Lebanese organizations.

Some 10,000 marched in Berlin, and from Madrid and Barcelona to Paris and Moscow, in Turkey and in other nations, thousands of people came together in solidarity with Palestine and Lebanon.

Many protests in North America

In North America, the largest demonstration was held on July 18 in Dearborn, Mich., home to a large Middle Eastern and Muslim community. Some 10,000 people

called for the attacks to cease, calling the onslaught terror.

Some 1,500 rallied in front of the Israeli Mission to the United Nations in New York on July 18. The protesters chanted "Free, free Palestine" and "Free, free Lebanon." Many from the Middle Eastern and Muslim communities attended the demonstration.

Some 500 demonstrators protested on July 21 at a Boston rally, and hundreds more the next day in Chicago. On July 24 a protest was held in Springfield, Mass., outside the Federal Building. The Springfield demonstration was co-sponsored by the Western Massachusetts International Action Center and the International Socialist Organization.

In Buffalo, N.Y., two emergency demonstrations on July 22 and 25 drew both anti-war activists and people of Arab and Muslim descent. Banners and signs made clear that the U.S. government essentially funds the Israeli war for the same reason that U.S. soldiers are sent to die in Iraq: oil and domination of the Middle East.

On the West Coast, 700 rallied in San Francisco on July 13, where four days later Jewish peace groups staged a rally in front of the Israeli Consulate. Some 18 of the protesters were arrested during a civil disobedience action, got citations and were released.

Continued on page 9

San Diego, right.

WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

Chicago Below.

WW PHOTO: LOU PAULSEN



Summer of Organizing

Continued from page 3
movie and music nights.

Andrew King, a student at Philadelphia's Temple University who is in Boston for the summer break, said when asked why he joined Rosa 7053 and was participating in the July 22 day of outreach: "To stand for justice and equality and rally against the criminal actions of our racist government and to talk to the people. We must mobilize from the bottom up."

To the street!

As the sound truck wound its way back to the Boston IAC office, a downpour couldn't dampen the activists' spirits. Hoisting umbrellas to shield themselves from the worst of the rain, they persevered, talking to the people and chanting the demands of the July 30 and Aug. 29 actions.

Organizers discussed plans for similar street outreach actions to take place every Saturday throughout the summer and increasing as Aug. 29 nears.

General meetings for the BRPHRDC are held every Wednesday at 6 p.m. at the Cultural Café, 76 Atherton St. in Jamaica Plain, Mass. For more information call 617-524-3507, email rosaparksday@brphrd.com, or visit www.brphrd.com or www.iacboston.org.

U.S. out of the Middle East

Stop Big Oil's wars in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon

Continued from page 1

ing that the Middle East war is not about cheap oil but is about the oil companies making profits and controlling the flow of this commodity.

Racism, lies and war

Racism is a tool of divide and conquer—whether it is aimed at scapegoating immigrant workers, criminalizing the survivors of Katrina, or demonizing Arab and Muslim people to convince workers at home to support the war.

One of the bigger lies is that the war in the Middle East is about religion rather than economic and military interests. Lebanon itself is a country made up of a

diverse variety of religions, who have coexisted for millenia.

Every worker who understands anything about justice has to know that when Bush insults whole nations and sends missiles, bombs and troops in our name to bludgeon them into submission, he creates division, hatred and anger among the peoples around the world. This is a prescription for more 9/11 disasters.

The only answer is for the U.S. military to get out and allow the people of the Middle East to control their own resources, choose their own leaders and determine their own destiny.

It is not enough for poor and working people here to fight for pensions, health

care and a higher minimum wage. Militarism will continue to eat away at workers' standard of living through inflation as long as these wars go on.

The answer is to fight to stop the war and get the U.S. military and corporate interests out of the Middle East for good. It's in all workers' interests to do everything possible to reject racism and imperialist domination.

Sharon Black is a long-time community activist and trade unionist. A former UFCW shop steward in Baltimore, Md., she represented food processing workers. A founding member of the All Peoples Congress, she has fought against utility rate hikes and police brutality.

Struggle over Middle East reaches into world LGBT movements

By Leslie Feinberg

Imagine a group of individuals standing on the deck of an imperialist gunboat, under the shadow of cannons aimed and readied to fire at a country—formerly or currently colonized. The group is shouting at the targeted government, “We demand your surrender too, but for progressive reasons!”

That’s the position of those based in the imperialist U.S., Britain and France who are directing their political fire against the popularly elected Palestinian and Iranian leaderships, based on what they say are violations of gay rights in those countries.

Their political campaign has ratcheted up. July 19 events in some two dozen cities worldwide called for regime change in Iran. And the annual “World Pride” march—incongruously themed “Love without Borders”—was scheduled to take place in occupied Jerusalem on Aug. 10, making Israel appear to be a bastion of liberty in the Middle East.

But Israel—the apartheid, theocratic imperialist power threatening the entire Middle East—was blasting the population and infrastructure of Gaza and pounding Lebanon with U.S.-supplied bunker buster bombs, while the U.S. Navy Central Command was positioning its war armada off Lebanon’s shores.

On July 21, the Israeli government canceled the pride march. The stated reason was that the widening war was drawing troops and police who would be needed to guard the march. The unstated reason is that the Israeli coalition government needs to cement unity with its own theocratic base. The Israeli ruling coalition faced a motion of non-confidence from two religious parties within its government on July 10 that demanded the cancellation of the march in Jerusalem.

Taking aim at Palestine

The July 19 events were taking aim at Iran—drawing handfuls of individuals in some cities, scores in others—at the same time that the Palestinian and Lebanese people were at ground zero of the bombs and bullets. This widening Israeli assault in the region—a proxy war waged in the economic, strategic and military interests of U.S. finance capital—is also aimed at Iran, as well as Syria.

The call for anti-Iran events on July 19 was issued by OutRage!, a British gay human rights group, and the Paris-based International Day Against Homophobia.

On the day of the July 19 anti-Iran events, Peter Tatchell, an OutRage! leader, issued a political statement from London in which he argued against the progressive movement boycotting “WorldPride” in Jerusalem, which had not yet been canceled.

Tatchell claimed that opposition to the Jerusalem march was coming from groups based in Western countries—a criticism more accurately leveled at his July 19 anti-Iran organizing.

As the Israelis laid siege to Gaza, Tatchell said his organization would actually prefer that the march be scheduled in Palestinian Ramallah rather than Jerusalem. But he added that news coverage of the Jerusalem “World Pride” event would

“give comfort and hope to isolated, downcast queers throughout the Arab world.”

He concluded, “Imagine the hope and confidence such news will give to isolated, vulnerable LGBT people across the Middle East,” and that the event “might help trigger the creation of LGBT movements in repressive, homophobic Middle Eastern states, including Palestine.”

Voices from within Palestine and Lebanon sent a very different message.

Voices from Palestine

There already is a lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersexual (LGBTQI) organization in historic Palestine. It is called “Aswat”—which translates from Arabic to English as “Voices.” Aswat works with LGBTQI groups and individuals in the Middle East.

Aswat raised its voices early on regarding the Jerusalem march.

In the English portion of its web site, Aswat states clearly that as Palestinian LGBTQI’s living directly under military occupation, and as part of a national minority in Israel, “[W]e are opposing this attempt to hold the international pride parade in Israel, particularly in Jerusalem, the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As the pride parade will be at a time for the gay and lesbian community to celebrate, Palestinians in Eastern occupied Jerusalem will continue to suffer under intensified checkpoints, increasing racism, house demolishing, confiscating IDs and expanding of Israeli settlements.

“Therefore, ASWAT—a Palestinian gay women group—decided not to take part in the World Pride 2006.”

A promotional DVD for the Jerusalem events had promised “great parties” and stressed that “out” gay and lesbian soldiers can fight in the Israeli Army. The propaganda DVD denounced the Palestinian Authority for its alleged treatment of its same-sex-loving population and claimed that the Palestinian resistance—the Intifada—made it harder for lesbian and gay Palestinians to “escape” to Israel. (The Coalition to Boycott World Pride)

Aswat emphasized that these are soldiers in an occupying, oppressive army. “This is an insult to our struggle for freedom and tolerance. In Israel, violence and hatred are articulated through homophobia and xenophobia, and this very same violence is evident in racism, occupation and war crimes.”

In a recent interview, Aswat co-founder and group coordinator Rauda Morcos explained, “We are focusing on our work within the Palestinian community. We believe we need to have our allies within the community before having them around the world. This is very important because without the support of our community, we cannot exist. The other thing we are focusing on is deliberating the change that is happening within the Palestinian community without comparing that to what is happening in the world. Each community has its own ways, its own scale, its own time, and our time has started, and we’re happy with that.”

When asked how Palestinians viewed her as an “out” lesbian, Morcos concluded, “I think Aswat’s existence proves there are

seeds of change. I think we are on the agenda—of the Palestinian social agenda. I think we’re there, and I think it’s very important that the change has to happen. I think it wouldn’t happen without Aswat, and it wouldn’t happen without the support within the community and without having supportive media in our community.” (gay.com)

Lebanese support for Palestine

The group Helem (translated into English as “dreams”) describes itself in the English-language portion of its Arabic website as a non-profit organization in Lebanon, working on various human rights issues, including LGBTIQ equality.

As part of its emergency action under Israeli bombardment, the website explains that the Helem center is helping to provide shelter, food and other supplies to the refugees who have poured in from the southern suburbs of Beirut and the south of Lebanon. (helem.net)

The organization states, “Helem supports the global movement to boycott Jerusalem World Pride 2006 as part of the international boycott of, and divestment from Israel. Helem strongly condemns holding World Pride in a city beleaguered by violence and conflict, and where the words ‘Love without Borders’ belie a reality of separation, ubiquitous borders, destruction of homes and livelihoods, land theft, gross human rights violations and the apartheid policies of Israel.”

Helem concluded that, “the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders should not be placed in competition with the long struggle of the Palestinian people, including Palestinian LGBT people, for self-determination, for the right to return to their homes, and the struggle against apartheid and the occupation of their lands.”

Progressive opposition to the week of “World Pride” events in Jerusalem had been building around the world. The march—expected to draw tens of thousands—would have violated the widening call to boycott Israel, infused the settler state’s tourism economy with cash, and politically promoted the Israel settler state as a “democracy” in the Middle East.

Faisal Alam, a gay Muslim of Pakistani descent who co-founded Al-Fatiha—an international gay Muslim organization—wrote that the Israeli occupation of Palestinians is so brutal that, “With this in mind, I cannot support an event that will seemingly ignore the suffering of Palestinians—both queer and straight—in the Occupied Territories, the West Bank and Gaza.” (southernvoice.com)

The Coalition to Boycott World Pride, which described itself as “individuals and groups working for the liberation of all oppressed peoples,” stressed that “LGBT, intersex and other queer-identified people, should not be placed in competition with the long struggle of the Palestinian people, including Palestinian LGBTIQ people, for self-determination, for the right to return to their homes, and the struggle against apartheid and the occupation of their lands. We urge all people who seek peace and justice to support the travel boycott of World Pride Jerusalem as part of the boycott of Israeli goods, and the call to divest from Israel.”

Turn the political guns around!

This political struggle regarding Iran and Palestine takes place within the context of a burgeoning battle between imperialism and the countries of the Middle

East that are resisting its demands to surrender their sovereignty and right to self-determination.

Those who argue that Islam is the problem and that pressure from the imperialist democracies—who have historically arrayed their forces under the banner of Christianity—is the solution are lining up with the oppressor in this war, not the oppressed.

It was colonialism and later imperialism that imposed anti-“sodomy” laws—a term that comes from the Bible, not the Quran—from Africa to the Middle East, from Asia to the Americas, in its effort to restructure social relations in these countries to its economic interests.

The French Mandate imposed anti-sodomy laws in Lebanon; the British Mandate made it law in Palestine.

Imperialism is not going to bring democracy as a form of state rule to the Middle East or Central Asia or any other part of the world it seeks to dominate economically.

In the imperialist centers, democracy is a form of class rule by the capitalists over the vast laboring class. But even in a democracy, state repression—particularly against nationally oppressed peoples within the imperialist citadels—is cruel. And challenge to capitalist rule can shift the form of state quickly to a more iron-fisted rule, as the rise of fascism in Germany, Italy and Spain demonstrated.

Imperialist super-exploitation around the world requires a much more brutal form of state dictatorship than democracy. The Iranian people remember. They lived under a fascist “regime change” by the U.S. and Britain that installed a king—the Shah—on the peacock throne.

Imperialism is not looking to bring “progress” to the oppressed. Washington cheered the restoration of semi-feudal social relations in Afghanistan after drowning in blood a democratic revolution there that had been supported by the Soviet Union. And the CIA has brought medieval torture techniques, employing anti-gay and anti-trans humiliation and violence, to its makeshift prisons in Afghanistan and Iraq.

For decades, U.S. imperialism has waged a war to annihilate the left-wing leaders of resistance movements in the Middle East and Central Asia, creating a void that the Islamic forces are filling today.

So now, imperialism—which had relied on some of these same forces to crush communist resistance in the region—has turned to Islam bashing as its justification for economic and military warfare against any government and people who resist its rule, from Afghanistan to Iraq, Iran to Palestine.

Like the German Homosexual Emancipation movement, which was derailed when it supported its own ruling class on the eve of World War I, any progressive movement that does not fight its own imperialist bosses and oppose a war for an empire built on super-profits surrenders its independence and kneels before its own oppressor class.

The gay liberation struggles in the U.S. during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s gained power from organizing against the Korean and Vietnam wars.

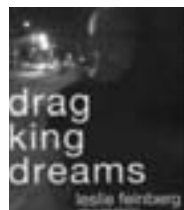
It is too late to expose the pretexts and “justifications” for imperialist war after the fact. The movement for sexual, gender and sex liberation needs to turn its political guns around now on the real enemy of the world’s people—imperialism! □

Email: lfeinberg@workers.org

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From Communists, anti-imperialists

Solidarity with Lebanese and Palestinian people

By John Catalinotto

The criminal Israeli invasion of Gaza and Lebanon has awakened protest all over the globe. Along with demonstrations and meetings have come statements from communist parties and anti-imperialist and working-class organizations expressing solidarity with the Palestinian and Lebanese people and their organizations.

The excerpts here give an idea of the range of condemnation of Israel and support for the Palestinian and Lebanese people and their resistance movements, as well as analysis of the crisis provoked by the U.S.-Israeli onslaught upon the peoples of the oil-rich regions of western Asia known as the Middle East.

All described the capture of Israeli soldiers as a "pretext" for the invasion and not its cause.

The political bureau of the Communist Party of Lebanon, which participates in the national resistance movement whose strongest military element is the Hezbollah fighters, issued a statement on July 17. Here are some excerpts:

"This aggression is a part of the Zionist-American plan for the region and is furthermore an act of aggression undertaken with international permission and cover, in particular that of the United States of America, which is using the Security Council and the United Nations as tools with which to exert pressure and control. The aggression also bases itself on compliance and collusion by official Arab regimes and takes advantage of the current atmosphere of political division inside Lebanon.

"Despite the steadfastness [of the resistance] there is an international effort involving the United Nations, Europe, and

France under U.S. pressure aimed at securing political benefits from the aggression, such as the implementation of UN Resolution 1559, by holding negotiations and bringing in Israeli and international stipulations under the cover of the continued military operations.

"In the event that this effort fails—and we believe that it will fail because of the high ceiling of conditions set by the Americans and Israelis, in particular their requirement that Hezbollah must be broken up and its role completely ended ... we believe that the military operation will be relatively prolonged and could spread outside Lebanon's borders . . .

"[T]he fundamental task is to confront the aggression with a comprehensive, cohesive patriotic stance, a stance that reinforces national unity."

Asian parties

The Communist Party of the Philippines, currently waging a mass and a military struggle against the pro-U.S. Macapagal-Arroyo regime in Manila, said on July 20:

"Israel's all-out bombing aims to force Lebanon to its knees and compel it to suppress Hezbollah—a patriotic armed politico-religious group that fought the 1978-2000 Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon and supports the Palestinian people's struggle for self-determination.

"In bombarding Lebanon, Israel also aims to threaten and provoke Syria and Iran who are among the supporters of the Hezbollah movement. U.S. and Israeli authorities have accused Syria and Iran of supplying arms to Hezbollah and hinted that some of the rocket attacks in northern Israel were launched by these countries. The objective is to lay out the justification

for a possible invasion of Syria and Iran in the same way the U.S. carried out its all-out invasion and occupation of Iraq."

Manik Mukherjee of the All-India Anti-imperialist Front (AIAIF) wrote: "The AIAIF unequivocally denounces this act of the U.S. imperialists and their cohorts, as well as the Israeli Zionists, which smacks of machination for escalating aggression over the people of the entire Middle East, in the face of ignominious defeat the U.S. imperialism is experiencing on the soil of Iraq."

Latin America and Europe

The Communist Party of Brazil called for "the Brazilian peoples and the active progressive forces in our country to mobilize in solidarity towards the Arab countries being attacked."

The Portuguese Communist Party in a July 13 statement said: "Israel feels encouraged to continue and intensify, under the usual excuse, its terrorist policy with the aim of annihilating the Palestinian cause, annexing territories, imposing its hegemony in the region, in alliance with imperialism.

"The silence and the complicity of the European Union (EU) and of the United Nations regarding these crimes, that nothing can justify, is unacceptable and constitutes a true insult to human dignity."

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE), which later announced plans to send a high-level delegation including its secretary general, Aleka Papariga, to Lebanon to show solidarity, wrote on July 14:

"It became evident that U.S. and EU are taking full advantage of the aggressive stand of the Israeli government, targeting people and countries of the Middle East who resist or are not fully in line with their dangerous projects.

"The Communist Party of Greece appeals to the Greek people to use any opportunity to express its rejection of the positions of the Greek government and

PASOK [the ruling party—JC] and to vehemently condemn the new attacks of the Israeli army this time against Lebanon."

Most of these and other communist parties' solidarity statements can be found in full at solidnet.org.

Other organizations

Workers' organizations also took strong positions on the new war crisis. Gulzar Ahmed Chaudhary, general secretary of the All Pakistan Trade Union Federation, wrote:

"Now we workers and people have more responsibility to continue our collective resistance and agitation for stopping fascist forces from creating further Afghanistan and Iraq and killing millions of millions innocent people. Palestinian and Lebanese people have right to defend themselves. They have a right to fight for their land and freedom."

The Anti-Imperialist Camp in a July 24 statement also raised the possibility that while U.S.-Israeli aggression was inflicting punishment on the Lebanese, it could also blow up in the aggressors' faces:

"Lebanon is democratic because its people could liberate itself from Zionist occupation and imperialist predominance thanks to the popular resistance embodied and led by Hezbollah.

"The fresh Zionist aggression against Lebanon must be understood as an element of the U.S.'s Greater Middle East project. Its essence is to subdue the region—whether 'rogue states,' popular movements or military resistance groups—by brute military force. ...

"We already can see in Iraq and Afghanistan that the U.S. first of all lacks the political hegemony to create functioning puppet states according to their model of 'exporting democracy.' The more armed aggressions they start the more popular resistance they evoke." (www.antiimperialista.org) □

Attacks on Palestine, Lebanon lead to protests

Continued from page 7

On very short notice, 300 came out July 20 for a protest called by the San Diego Peace & Justice Coalition, with a large contingent from the Middle Eastern and Muslim communities.

Hundreds of protesters confronted a pro-Israeli rally in Los Angeles on July 23. The Muslim Students Association, Women in Black, and the International Action Center joined with many students and youth to protest the Israeli fundraiser. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger were featured speakers at the Zionist rally.

Protests were called for many cities in Canada as well—Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton—and were held throughout the weekend.

In Palestine and Lebanon, Hamas and Hezbollah have resisted valiantly, with Hezbollah challenging the Israeli claim to have gained a foothold in south Lebanon. No matter the destruction that has been rained down by high-tech Israeli hardware, which has led to hundreds of civilian casualties, when it comes to putting soldiers on the ground, the settler government has been thoroughly embarrassed by



WWW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITTE

Buffalo protest.

the fighting capabilities of Hezbollah.

Nick Camerota of the Western Massachusetts International Action Center summed up what the movement in the U.S. should be doing: "We are asking people to take a firm stand on the side of those struggling against imperialism and racism. The U.S. anti-war movement mustn't confuse or conflate the oppressed with their oppressors. Today we seek to demonstrate that those suffering in Lebanon, Palestine and throughout the Middle East are not forgotten or friendless, and that we and others in this country emphatically support their right to self-determination."

For the anti-war movement and all those who demand real peace in the United States, there can be no other stance. □

Israeli soldier refuses duty in Lebanon war

By John Catalinotto

Refusal by members of an oppressor army to fight against an oppressed people usually begins only after the oppressed have shown they are courageous and competent fighters. Hezbollah's resistance to Israel's attacks has already borne fruit.

On July 19, the first Israeli to refuse that country's criminal invasion of Lebanon went public. Staff Sgt. Itzik Shabbat refused his emergency order to report for reserve duty in the occupied territories. The reserve troops are aimed at replacing combat troops in the standing army for duty in southern Lebanon, where the Israeli Defense Forces have met stronger than expected resistance from Hezbollah and other defenders of Lebanese territory.

All Israeli Jews, women and men, are subject to military conscription. Men are also required to spend one month a year in the reserves until they are 50 years old.

Shabbat, who is a television producer in his civilian life in the Israeli settler state, said in a statement to the newspaper Haaretz, referring to Hezbollah's rockets: "I know people will attack me and ask how

could I not take part in this war when Qassams are falling on my hometown and Katyushas on the towns in the north. In my opinion, only this type of opposition that I've chosen will put an end to the madness that is going on now and will shatter the false feeling that the entire home front supports this unnecessary war that is based on deceptive considerations."

He added: "Someone has to be the first to break the silence and it will be me. It is a shame that my order was signed by another Sderot resident, Defense Minister Amir Peretz." Shabbat, who is also a resident of Sderot, told Haaretz he has already informed his commander and other officers in the unit of his intentions and is prepared to face the consequences.

Shabbat has a prior history of refusing to serve in the occupied territories. He was imprisoned 28 days for this. He was also one of those who signed a petition put out by the refusal movement, Courage to Refuse. Haaretz reported that his decision not to report at the present time is "not connected with the need to relieve a unit in the territories but rather with his opposition to the war in Lebanon." □



Rice's diplomatic disaster

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has taken on an impossible task in her trip to Beirut, Ramallah, Tel Aviv and Rome: to put together through diplomacy a formula for a long-lasting domination of Lebanon. The problem is, the formula was based on Israel having crushed Hezbollah.

Her dilemma is that—despite the deep suffering the U.S.-Israeli terrorist offensive has imposed on the Lebanese population—this offensive has been unable to defeat or even seriously wound the Lebanese national liberation movement.

Imperialist diplomacy, like imperialist war, has as its objective the subjugation of colonies and the subordination of its rivals. Diplomacy includes additional layers of lies. But it is possible to see beyond these lies to examine Rice's trip and piece together the facts behind it.

A look at the last few weeks of U.S. diplomacy indicates the following:

The U.S. and Israel together planned a broad offensive against Hamas and Hezbollah long in advance—shown by the 100-percent pro-active diplomatic backing of Bush for the Israeli offensive and the immediate and unconditional U.S. support with words and vetoes in the Security Council.

U.S. client states that usually have to sound hostile to Israel in public—the regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan, for example—were lined up beforehand against Hezbollah. At first, they did not even demand a cease-fire.

The U.S.'s NATO allies, who often keep a public distance from Washington even though they support the U.S. and Israel against the liberation movements, put up no serious opposition to the Israeli attack at first, nor did they criticize it, instead calling it an attack on "terrorism."

Everyone was lined up for a rapid Israeli victory in Lebanon.

But the victory hasn't happened, so Rice's trip had to change. Washington and Tel Aviv were forced to improvise diplomatic initiatives as a substitute for military success.

Originally, Rice's trip was supposed to include visits to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia; Amman, Jordan; and Cairo, Egypt. These were canceled. The regimes there, which originally believed they could get away without an outcry against the Israeli invasion, are now embarrassed to be seen in the same photo as the U.S. representative. Saudi Arabia is now demanding a cease-fire.

It may already be too late for these imperialist clients to avoid being completely discredited by what the mass of their countries' people rightly see as a

betrayal of the struggle for Arab liberation from imperialism and Zionism. The disgrace of these client regimes is another setback for imperialism.

Even Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora, put in office with heavy U.S. support, and whom Rice might have expected would welcome a defeat for Hezbollah, said that Lebanon had more to fear from the Israelis than from Hezbollah.

In Rome, the U.S. turned to NATO to make up the occupation force on the Lebanese border. The NATO countries support this, but only in theory. In fact, France says the NATO troops must be under United Nations control. Germany says there must already be a cease-fire in place. Britain is already stretched thin in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Reports from Rome late on July 26 said most countries objected to the U.S. refusal to demand an immediate cease-fire, which allows Israel more time for air and ground attacks on Hezbollah. Despite Rice's isolation on the question, however, the group reached agreement on an apparently meaningless resolution for a UN force that no one expects could really enforce a truce.

To the White House, the U.S.-Israeli plan for rapid conquest must have looked good when viewed on the computers of the Pentagon's War Room or presented in the essays and lectures of U.S. neo-cons and Israeli hawks. It was "shock and awe" all over again. Like the expectations for a rapid and trouble-free occupation of Iraq, however, these plans underestimated the role of the masses and repeated the imperialists' inherent racist contempt for oppressed peoples.

In both Iraq and Lebanon, instead of a submissive population they have found a boiling cauldron of resistance headed by skilled and determined guerrillas.

This U.S. diplomatic setback does not mean, however, that the suffering of the Lebanese has diminished, nor the dangers of a greater war and increased turmoil have receded. It is more likely that Tel Aviv will expand the invasion in the hope of defeating Hezbollah. It is also perfectly conceivable that the Bush-Cheney White House may look for a way out of their setbacks in Iraq and Lebanon by expanding the war to another arena where the Pentagon can employ its overwhelming and destructive air power, for example to Syria and/or Iran.

These are dangers the anti-war movement must be alert to at present, and are a reason why the ultimate goal of this movement should be to disarm the greatest terrorists: world imperialism with its headquarters in the U.S. □

Between limbo and hell

Former Guantanamo detainee speaks out

By Deirdre Sinnott

Enemy Combatant: My Imprisonment at Guantanamo, Bagram & Kandahar, by Moazzam Begg, New Press, 352 pp., 2006

"Being in solitary confinement for such a long time gave more opportunity than I could have imagined to reflect on my life. ... I knew about death. I was not scared of it, but I was afraid of my judgment in the ultimate court of the Hereafter. So I embarked on a journey that would help secure my fate in the afterlife, by helping the poor and oppressed from amongst the people I related to most: Muslims. That is what I was doing when I traveled around Europe and Asia, learning about a world that had been alien to me. This was part of the reason I was here [in Guantanamo]."

Moazzam Begg was in U.S. custody from January 2002 to January 2005, mostly in solitary confinement in Guantanamo and without legal recourse to challenge his imprisonment.

Begg's harrowing journey is movingly told in this memoir. Born and raised in Britain, Begg has given a voice to the hundreds of men held by the United States and designated as "enemy combatants" in named prisons and unnamed rendition centers scattered around the world.

He was arrested in Pakistan and turned over to the U.S. military soon after the beginning of the war in Afghanistan, October 2001. Never formally charged with any crime, he was accused of having "terrorist sympathies." Begg ran an Islamic bookstore and was under surveillance by the M15 (British Secret Service) since the mid-1990s.

The Bush administration chose Begg and five other men in Guantanamo to face military tribunals. He declined to participate and was told that the tribunal would continue without him. Before the process was finished, and during elections that endangered Tony Blair's position as prime minister, Britain responded to public anti-war pressure and lobbied the U.S. to return some of its citizens held in the notorious prison camp.

When the U.S. finally released Begg to the British in January 2005, he had endured more than 300 interrogations, three long years of incarceration without formal charges, and daily humiliation. The British government questioned him once and released him without pursuing any legal action.

The U.S. Supreme Court recently struck down the tribunal system as a violation of the Geneva Conventions. The Bush administration had maintained that, as "enemy combatants," the men held in Guantanamo had no rights under the Conventions. But the Supreme Court cited Common Article Three, which covers prisoners caught in conflicts that do not involve "High Contracting Parties" (or states).

Because the court also ruled that existing U.S. laws did not apply to pending cases, some members of Congress are beginning the process of drafting a new, more draconian law to replace the "Detainee Treatment Act" of 2005. That act was the basis for the continued detentions.

Whatever law is cobbled together, its goal won't be fair trials for people who have been imprisoned for years without charges or much legal recourse. Begg's experiences

and subsequent book have proven that allowing present and former detainees a voice, in court or in public, will have a devastating effect on U.S. policy. His account reveals the inhumane conditions, torture, deprivation of human rights, and outright murders that have occurred in the brightly lit prisons run by the U.S. And his story is just one of thousands.

Begg brings his experiences to a British and U.S. audience that has seen only glimpses of the routine brutality of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. "Enemy Combatant" opens a small window into several high-security facilities and invites readers to experience life somewhere between limbo and hell.

Begg's book is so dangerous that the New York Times took the unusual step of printing a front-page story challenging the veracity of his statements on June 15, in an article entitled "Jihadist or Victim: Ex-Detainee Makes a Case." Despite media scrutiny, no solid evidence has emerged that shows Begg to be a "sympathizer, a recruiter and a financier" for terrorists, as the Defense Department has described him.

If all memoirs were as closely monitored for factual information, the U.S. publishing industry might collapse.

The strength of Begg's account is his humanity. He details life inside Guantanamo, including the horror of being transported for hours with a bag over his head and entombed in blacked-out goggles. He treats each of his jailers as individuals, some of whom oppose the U.S. war against Afghanistan and Iraq. He mourns the long separation from his family and describes the constant struggle that the imprisoned men endure to keep themselves sane, even though they have little hope of relief from their long detentions.

With fresh headlines of the suicides of three men from Guantanamo, and the dismantling of the so-called "legal basis" for the continuation of the prisons, Begg makes a compelling argument for tearing down the walls. Guantanamo has become synonymous with the Bush administration's disregard for international law. Like the Bastille, the prison stormed by a revolutionary grouping of Parisians on July 14, 1789, its name will live on as a symbol of oppression long after it is dismantled. □

BOOK REVIEW

Cuba caravan

Continued from page 11

and guidelines to prepare us for our eight-day tour of Cuba.

Our ride across the border into Mexico passed without incident. Customs officials made a cursory inspection and we were on our way before noon. At Tampico we offloaded the material aid onto a dock with the volunteer assistance of Mexican dock workers. Two school buses and an ambulance were loaded on steel pallets for shipment. This work went on until 3 a.m., so many of those who flew to Cuba on the morning of July 8 had little or no sleep.

The Cuba caravan works like a guerrilla army in deploying people and vehicles and supplies over great distances. Preparations for the next caravan will begin soon. This enormous volunteer effort will be organized by a soft-spoken English activist named John Waller who works out of the Pastors for Peace office in Harlem. □

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Still trying to overthrow Cuban Revolution

Document details U.S. plans for 'regime change'

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Even as the U.S. government embarks on more aggression in the Middle East, it is wasting no time trying to inflict harm on other nations around the world.

As part of the Bush administration's nightmarish quest for world domination, the State Department issued a report July 5 on the plans of its "Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba." (www.cafc.gov) It is a 93-page blueprint for increased aggression against socialist Cuba, written with total disregard for international law or respect for national sovereignty.

The commission is chaired by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and co-chaired by Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez. The report continues and expands the U.S. administration's hostile campaign towards the Cuban Revolution.

A first report when the commission was unveiled in June 2004 had hundreds of pages describing measures aimed at intensifying the blockade, discouraging tourism and investment in Cuba, restricting monetary flow and the visits of relatives to the island. It even redefined the concept of family. Aunts, uncles and cousins were taken off the list of close relatives who could visit their families in Cuba.

According to its own description, the new document "represents the work of over 100 participants from 17 federal departments and agencies over the course of several months."

Obsessed with Venezuela

It expresses the preoccupation of the Bush administration and its corporate base with the revolutionary developments throughout Latin America. Cuba has always been a beacon for the people's struggles, not only in the region but world-

wide. Recently, it has made great strides in trade and international relations. Its economy is growing, and its relations with Venezuela in particular through the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) have opened new avenues for the island.

On page 24 of the document, U.S. concern over the Cuba-Venezuela relation is exposed: "This axis also undermines our interest in a more democratic [!] Venezuela and undermines democratic governance and institutions elsewhere in the region. Together, these countries are advancing an alternative retrograde and anti-American agenda for the hemisphere's future and they are finding some resonance with populist governments and disenfranchised populations in the region."

The obsession with Venezuela is apparent throughout the document. Right in the opening paragraph it charges that "there are clear signs the regime is using money provided by the Chávez government in Venezuela to reactivate its networks in the hemisphere to subvert democratic governments." In fact, Venezuela is helping Cuba withstand the U.S. blockade and build its economy.

A paragraph in the introduction summarizes the plan: "Recommendations to hasten the end of the Castro dictatorship include: measures to empower the Cuban people to prepare for change by strengthening support to civil society; breaking the regime's information blockade; a diplomatic strategy to undermine the regime's succession strategy by supporting the Cuban people's right to determine their future; and measures to deny revenue to the Castro regime that is used to strengthen its repressive security apparatus and to bolster the regime against pressure for change."

The title of the first chapter also shows

Washington's blatant regime-change goals: "Hastening the end of the Castro dictatorship: transition, not succession."

According to the Cuban Constitution, the vice-president would become president if anything happened to the commander in chief. To prevent what the U.S. sees as the continuation of the revolution, the document openly says it is working to ensure that "the Castro regime's succession strategy does not succeed." It continues, "This is a time for bold, decisive action and clarity of message."

The content of the second chapter is particularly preposterous and insulting. It paints a totally false picture of life in Cuba, which has long been acknowledged by the UN as the most advanced country in Latin America and the Caribbean when it comes to providing quality health care and education free to the people.

Under the title "Helping Cubans respond to critical humanitarian and social needs," the U.S. government, which abandoned thousands of its own poor after Hurricane Katrina, says it wants to help Cuba overcome problems of water and sanitation, health care, nutrition and education. "Conditions will not improve as long as Fidel Castro remains in power," it says.

This extensive document goes into detailed planning for increasing the disinformation beamed at Cuba through Radio and TV Marti, including through third countries. It establishes an \$80 million fund to bolster a political opposition. Interestingly, the opposition has criticized making the funding public, knowing that openly getting money from Washington will not be in its best interest.

Under the subhead "The Rising Cuban Democratic Opposition," the document shows who the U.S. will try to target among

the Cuban people: "At the grassroots level, youth, women and Afro-Cubans are key constituencies for the continued growth of Cuba's civil society movement."

It tightens regulations on any exports to Cuba, specifically mentioning the Cuban Council of Churches, which the U.S. considers a "regime-administered" organization.

Some of the report is simply ludicrous. But three components cause great concern.

One has to do with what is not included. Below the first chapter title, a small paragraph in italics reads: "This is an unclassified report. For reasons of national security and effective implementation, some recommendations are contained in a separate classified annex."

It is already known that U.S. agents over the years have carried out more than 600 assassination attempts against Castro, as well as bombings, killings and a destabilization campaign. What are they not saying? Another assassination attempt? A planned military incursion?

The second is a reference to "critical humanitarian needs and social needs." Anyone who has been in Cuba knows this is ridiculous. The economy is now improving quickly. Does this section refer to devastation the U.S. is planning under the "secret addendum"?

Finally, the U.S. for the first time is trying to extend the blockade of Cuba to other nations through tightening control over nickel imports. Nickel is an important source of revenue for Cuba. This commission proposes the establishment of an "inter-agency Cuban Nickel Targeting Task Force to reinvigorate the existing nickel import certification and control regime."

This latest attack cannot go unanswered. The defense of Cuba should be high on the agenda of all progressive people in the United States. □

Pastors for Peace

Caravan returns after delivering aid to Cuba

By Mike Eilenfeldt

After driving all night on a two-lane road, the 17th Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravan lumbered through the dusty streets of Reynosa, Mexico, at dawn on July 17, then crossed the Rio Grande River into Hidalgo, Texas, at 6:30 a.m.

We were back in the U.S. after completing our mission of circumventing Washington's economic blockade and delivering 60 tons of humanitarian aid to the people of Cuba, after which we shared an inspiring and informative week of solidarity with them.

Each of the caravanistas wore a grey T-shirt bearing the motto of the caravan in yellow: "Cuba is our neighbor. End the blockade now! If there is a law against loving your neighbor, I want to break it."

Caravan leader Rev. Lucius Walker of Salvation Baptist Church in Brooklyn had declared victory at the very outset of the mission, after we were able to recover 45 boxes of computers that had been seized by U.S. Customs agents at the border last summer. They were delivered to the New Orleans Survivors Council.

"This is indeed a people's victory. We refused to buckle under. We refused to just go away," said Walker.

For 10 months, outrage over the com-

puter seizure had led to thousands of phone calls to the Commerce and Treasury departments. Friends of Cuba in Denmark and Sweden sent more computers in solidarity. Support groups maintained weekly vigils in Washington, D.C., and other cities.

Mia Cruz, a feisty teenage revolutionary with the International Action Center and Fight Imperialism Stand Together (FIST), had flown with me from New York City on July 2 to join more than 100 other caravanistas who were converging on McAllen, Texas, in cars, vans and school buses.

They had traveled thousands of miles, starting from places as far apart as Vancouver and New England and driving through 127 cities in all the lower 48 states. They stopped at churches along their 14 routes, where they were joined by hundreds of supporters who contributed humanitarian aid for the children of Cuba. Caravanistas were given food and a place to sleep at night, often on pews in churches.

Many young people of color from New York City rode on a bus that took them through New Orleans en route to the Texas border. Mia Cruz rode back with them on the return trip, arriving in New York on July 23. She said that the New Yorkers stopped again in New Orleans to tell the people about their impressions of Cuba. New Orleans remembers that Cuba

offered 1,600 doctors and medical aid after Katrina.

Before crossing into Mexico, Kalia, a 17-year-old member of Rev. Luis Barrios' church in New York, spoke about New Orleans at a news conference in McAllen on July 3.

"We spent a night in New Orleans. It said a lot about our government. I learned a lot. Basically the poor places of New Orleans with the big African American population looked like the hurricane had just hit. Personal belongings were on what was once their lawns, cars were just rusted and crashed and destroyed. Houses were just completely collapsed.

"And then we went to the rich part of New Orleans and it looked like Katrina never even hit. It was sad. It was beautiful. I saw people mowing their lawns. It was like something you would see in a movie. It was in contrast to all of the poverty and all of the devastation that I saw in a place just five minutes away.

"I think that it's really important that we go to Cuba, because the Cuban government wouldn't have its people die or let them starve or not help them just because of the fact that they don't have economic power. I think that's really important. I mean not everything has to be about money. Not everything has to be status

oriented, though our government tries to make things that way. So I'm just going to experience something new, just to see for myself how a new world or a new coexistence can happen."

Despite U.S. government lies, the Bush administration bluster and the corporate media blackout on Cuba, the Pastors for Peace Caravan has become a dynamic institution led by African American and Puerto Rican pastors who make a reality of their liberation theology in a fierce defense of the Cuban socialist revolution.

Their success is reflected in the character of the caravan. More than half of the 100 or so caravanistas were of African or Caribbean descent, Latin@s or Indigenous people from Mexico. Half were young people and half were making their first Cuba challenge. Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Scotland, England and Mexico were all represented. Three Cuban Americans were reunited with family during our visit.

The caravan took several days to regroup in McAllen. Vehicles needed repairs. The material aid had to be sorted through, labeled and reloaded. This work was carried out under a hot sun in 100-degree heat. The caravanistas needed to be trained for anticipated difficulties at the border. We needed sensitivity training

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MANDO OBRERO

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Crisis pensionaria— otro robo empresarial

Por Milt Neidenberg

Usted va a su banco para sacar dinero. El cajero le dice: “Usted no tiene dinero en su cuenta.” Usted creía que tenía dinero en su cuenta. Pero no es así. El banco tomó tu dinero para invertirlo o para pagar deudas. O simplemente lo querían para ellos. Eso es lo que le está pasando a millones de trabajador@s quienes lograron pensiones algunas veces en las negociaciones de contratos, muchas veces por medio de arduas luchas en las líneas de protestas y en las huelgas.

Gigantescas empresas, como la United Airlines, US Airways, Bethlehem Steel, Northwest, Delta, Delphi, y cientos de otras compañías se han declarado en bancarota y no han pagado las pensiones de jubilación que habían sido logradas bajo contratos legales. Los millonarios que se tornaron en multimillonarios—y que por supuesto gozan de pensiones y seguros de salud además de sus salarios exorbitantes, los bonos y las opciones para comprar acciones—le están robando a l@s trabajador@s.

Un titular en la portada de la revista Time en su edición del 31 de octubre del 2005 leía: “El gran robo de la jubilación”. Los titulares intermedios decían “Millones de americanos que piensan que van a jubilarse con beneficios se llevarán una fea sorpresa. Cómo las corporaciones están robando los bolsillos del pueblo con ayuda del Congreso.”

El artículo del Time fue una importante revelación que relató conmovedores recuentos de trabajador@s y jubilad@s que perdieron sus pensiones. “Desde el año 2001 hasta el 2004,” este dijo que “casi 200 corporaciones pertenecientes a las lista de Fortune 1000 anularon o congelaron los planes de beneficios y desde el 1985 más de 5 millones de trabajador@s ya no tienen cobertura en el sector privado.”

La crisis pensionaria se mostró en un diagrama—“Pensiones en Peligro”—mostrando que desde 1985 la cifra de planes de pensiones patrocinadas por las empresas ha disminuido de 112.200 a 29.700. Desde el 2004 estos planes

empresariales han tenido un déficit de fondos en un total de más de \$450 mil millones de dólares, y esta cantidad sigue subiendo. Cuando se agregan los planes de pensiones de las empresas multi-patronales esta cifra aumenta a más de \$600 mil millones. En el sector público, los fondos de jubilación de est@s trabajador@s en los Estados Unidos están en un déficit de \$7 mil millones.

El gobierno capitalista supuestamente tenía que garantizar estos beneficios, los cuales han sido logrados con el sudor y la sangre de l@s trabajador@s que crearon el valor y las ganancias de las grandes corporaciones. En el 1974, luego de los abusos de las pensiones de l@s trabajador@s por parte de las corporaciones en las décadas de los sesenta y los setenta, el Congreso aprobó el Acta de Seguridad de Ingreso de Jubilación de los Empleados, (ERISA por las siglas en inglés), junto a la formación de la Corporación para la Garantía de los Beneficios de Jubilación (PBGC por sus siglas en inglés).

ERISA, una agencia semi gubernamental y PBGC estaban supuestas a supervisar y asegurarle a l@s trabajador@s que sus pensiones de jubilación estarían seguras.

El Presidente Gerald Ford, quien firmó la legislación en el Día del Trabajo de 1974, prometió que “Esta legislación aliviará los temores y la ansiedad de las personas que están en las líneas de producción o en las minas, o en otras partes, y que ahora saben que sus inversiones en los fondos de pensiones privados estarán mejor protegidas.”

Sin embargo, el Congreso escribió el acta ERISA de forma tan vaga que durante la década de los años ochenta, la alta gerencia pudo meter sus manos en las pensiones y remover fondos que habían sido guardados para la jubilación de l@s trabajador@s. Esto fue una bonanza para los ladrones corporativos, los especuladores y los conglomerados de Wall Street, quienes pudieron robar millones y miles de millones de dólares de los planes de jubilación para comprar las corporaciones que se encontraban en problemas financieros. Aunque el Congreso ha

forzado un impuesto de venta sobre el dinero que ha sido sacado de las pensiones y ha reescrito algunas de las reglas, esto fue solo un castigo leve. El robo todavía continúa.

Después de tres décadas de supervisión bajo ERISA, los planes de jubilación que las empresas están deshaciendo tienen tan poco valor que el estatus financiero de la PBGC, la agencia encargada de salvaguardar las pensiones, se está deteriorando rápidamente. En el año 2000 la agencia estaba operando con un excedente de \$10 mil millones. Para el 2004, éste se convirtió en un déficit de \$23 mil millones. Para finales del año en curso podría llegar a \$30 mil millones.

Según el Director Ejecutivo de la PBGC, Bradley D. Belt, quien recientemente anunció su renuncia, “La agencia tiene activos 350 casos de bancarota.” Belt le dijo al Congreso el cual está debatiendo ERISA que, “37 de estos casos tienen reclamos por fondos escasos en la suma de \$100 millones o más, incluyendo a seis con más de \$500 millones.”

En realidad, los déficits son peores de lo que se está reportando públicamente. La Agencia de Contabilidad Gubernamental (Government Accounting Office, GAO) reportó este año: “El déficit acumulado del PBGC es demasiado grande, y los planes simplemente no tienen dinero suficiente para sostener las promesas a largo plazo que muchos empleadores han hecho a sus trabajadores”.

Un editorial del periódico empresarial Wall Street Journal del 27 de junio titulado “Aterrizaje forzoso de pensiones”, criticó al Congreso, cuyos negociadores de la Cámara de Representantes y del Senado están “ocupados discutiendo otro arreglo legislativo”. Este vocero del capitalismo financiero—que no le tiene ninguna simpatía a la clase obrera—está advirtiendo al gobierno: “Si sigue la tendencia corriente, esto se puede volver en un fiasco al mismo nivel del colapso de los bancos de ahorro y préstamo”.

Ellos se referían al rescate que costó decenas de miles de millones en fondos pagados por l@s trabajador@s y contribuyentes en los años 1980 y 1990 cuando otro asegurador gubernamental, la Corporación Federal Aseguradora de Bancos de Ahorros y Préstamos (FSLIC por las siglas en inglés) se hundió durante una crisis de bienes raíces. Si el gobierno va a pagar la deuda si el PBGC colapsa, aún no se sabe. Sin una lucha amplia, las pensiones pueden desaparecer como el dinosaurio.

Aserrando para destruir la unidad

El foco de una potencial lucha de clases está emergiendo en la industria automotriz.

El 8 de octubre de 1995, Delphi, el fabricante de repuestos para autos más grande de los EEUU, presentó una petición de protección de quiebra con un déficit de \$11 mil millones en sus fondos de pensiones. En 1999, la General Motors se separó de Delphi, su abastecedor prin-

cipal. El déficit en los fondos de pensiones de la GM estimado por la PBGC es de un increíble \$31 mil millones.

La Ford Motor Company tiene un déficit en sus fondos de pensiones de \$12,3 mil millones. La Daimler-Chrysler está creando confrontaciones entre los sindicatos locales que representan a sus trabajador@s para lograr grandes concesiones.

Las Tres Grandes (Ford, GM y Daimler-Chrysler) y Delphi tienen planes para cerrar o vender sus fábricas y reestructurar sus corporaciones, despedir a miles de trabajador@s, reducir los salarios y beneficios, y emplear a trabajador@s temporales. Delphi está demandando un recorte salarial de \$27 a \$12 la hora para l@s trabajador@s sindicalizad@s que aún quedan. Estas corporaciones transnacionales están tratando violentamente de dividir a l@s trabajador@s sindicalizad@s y se están preparando para una confrontación en 2007 cuando expira el contrato con el Sindicato de Trabajadores de la industria Automotriz (UAW), el sindicato principal.

Recientemente la General Motors anunció el resultado de un plan masivo de compra que incluyó a Delphi. De l@s 131.000 trabajador@s de la GM y de Delphi que les fueron ofrecido, aproximadamente 35.000 aceptaron alguna forma de jubilación temprana. De ell@s, alrededor de dos terceras partes eran emplead@s de la GM.

La estrategia corporativa era la de dividir a l@s jubilad@s de l@s trabajador@s activ@s. La compra fue una manera de debilitar la decisión expresada por l@s trabajador@s de Delphi cuando votaron en más de un 95 por ciento autorizando una huelga.

La táctica de dividir para conquistar será enfrentada con resistencia. L@s jubilad@s tienen gran interés en el resultado de las negociaciones contractuales del 2007: hacer cumplir las promesas de jubilación que hizo la GM en la compra. Están preocupad@s y se unirán a l@s trabajador@s de producción para hacer de la crisis de pensiones una lucha generalizada.

Hay grupos de base que están uniéndose para asumir estos desafíos monumentales. Los Soldados de la Solidaridad es uno de los grupos que tiene un record maravilloso en la etapa formativa de esta crisis épica. Su nombre es una expresión elocuente de lo que se necesita: un ejército de trabajador@s listo para combatir en solidaridad con trabajador@s, sindicalizad@s o no, y sus comunidades a través de todo el espectro de la crisis de pensiones, que es en el fondo, una crisis del capitalismo. El imperio del mundo financiero está contando con una guerra sin fin para resolver estos problemas, agravando aún más las muchas crisis aquí.

Fueron los trabajadores de base de la industria automotriz quienes tomaron el imperio de la GM a fines de los años 1930. La UAW fue forjada en las ocupaciones de fábricas en Flint en el estado de Michigan. La resistencia organizada comenzó con unos pocos y creció en un ejército de muchos. ¿Sucederá otra vez? □

