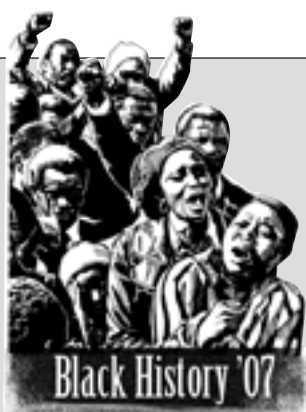


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Using more lies

Bush steps up threats on Iran

Anti-war protest set for Washington March 17

By LeiLani Dowell

Using a barrage of unconfirmed, anonymous "evidence," Washington has attempted to ratchet up public opinion against the government of Iran, in an announcement ominously reminiscent of the lead-up to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

President Bush claimed that the announcement was not meant to signal a war threat upon Iran. However, given the escalation of the administration's hostility towards the country—including the imposition of sanctions, the positioning of aircraft carriers off the coast of Iran in a possible attempt to provoke an altercation, and the current claim of Iranian weapons in Iraq—an aggressive move by Washington can't be ruled out.

It is necessary for the anti-war, anti-imperialist movement to take the threat of a U.S. war against Iran extremely seriously, and to make the demand to Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House for "no new wars!"

New propaganda campaign

At a Feb. 10 press briefing in the Green Zone in Baghdad, even

the officials who presented the evidence—a senior defense official, a defense analyst and an explosives expert—refused to identify themselves publicly, as they displayed what they said were munitions and weapons fragments of the deadliest weapons in Iraq.

They claimed that the "highest levels" of the Iranian government has been supplying these weapons—known as Explosively Formed Penetrators—to resistance forces in Iraq, and that these weapons had been responsible for 170 of the more than 3,000 U.S. casualties there.

Media representatives were not allowed to record, photograph or videotape any part of the briefing. (Washington Post, Feb. 12) Instead, photos of the munitions were made available to the press. The Los Angeles Times reports, "The officials said each piece of the displayed hardware could be traced to Iran, though to the untrained eye there were no obvious Iranian markings other than that on the dynamite. Some of the munitions bore Western lettering." (Feb. 12)

No explanation was given as to what made these weapons distinctly

Continued on page 10

EDITORIAL

House 'debates' Iraq war funds

What is behind the conflict in Congress over the Iraq war and what can the anti-war movement do to intervene? Now in the House, where the "debate" will take up three full days and evenings of arguments, there will follow a vote Feb. 16 on a short non-binding resolution stating that the House opposes Bush's escalation or "surge." Nearly all Democrats and about 20 Republicans are expected to pass the resolution.

Non-binding means that the Democrats, who introduced it, are avoiding the one thing that Congress has the Constitutional power to do: cut funding. They can cut funding for the escalation. They can cut all funding for the war.

Still, with sound bites played on the evening news and the whole thing on CSPAN, the House "debate" has drawn the attention of millions. Those many workers, poor and oppressed people who have relatives dying or being maimed in Iraq are passionately involved. So are the hundreds of millions of working people who see their social benefits disappear as trillions in government funds disappear into the Iraqi quagmire.

Let's take a cold, hard look at the "debate."

Continued on page 10



Campaign begun to free Efred Paredes

Elena Herrada, director of Centro Obrero in Detroit and a lifelong progressive labor and community activist, has initiated a campaign to collect 1,000 petition signatures demanding a new trial or pardon/commutation for Efred Paredes. The deadline for the signature campaign is March 15, the 18th anniversary of Paredes' arrest.

Herrada wrote in a letter supporting Paredes: "He was sentenced to three life terms at age 15. He was incarcerated as a child and is now 33 years old."

Paredes was a Latino honor student in Benton Harbor, Mich., when he was convicted in 1989 for a murder and armed robbery he did not commit—crimes to which others pled guilty. The case against Efred was entirely circumstantial. There was no physical evidence linking him to the crimes, no eyewitnesses, and Efred was home with his parents and two brothers when the crimes occurred.

Children of any age may be tried as adults in Michigan. Not surprisingly in a racist prison-industrial system, most children tried as adults in this state are African Americans.

A 2004 report by the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan documented 307 youth serving life sentences; 221 are youth of color and 211 of those are African Americans.

Background on the case is available at www.4Efred.com. The petition can be downloaded or signed online at: <http://www.petitionspot.com/petitions/4Efred>. Return paper petitions to Elena Herrada c/o Centro Obrero, 4300 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210

—Cheryl LaBash



Elena Herrada and Efred Paredes in Jackson Prison.



WW PHOTO

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Workers World
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 New York, N.Y. 10011
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 Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
 Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie Feinberg, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
 West Coast Editor: John Parker
 Contributing Editors: Greg Butterfield, G. Dunkel, Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Hales, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Cheryl LaBash, Milt Neidenberg, Bryan G. Pfeifer, Minnie Bruce Pratt
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National Office
 55 W. 17 St.,
 New York, NY 10011
 (212) 627-2994;
 Fax (212) 675-7869
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
 P.O. Box 424,
 Atlanta, GA 30301
 (404) 627-0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
 426 E. 31 St.,
 Baltimore, MD 21218
 (410) 235-7040
baltimore@workers.org

Boston
 284 Armory St.,
 Boston, MA 02130
 (617) 983-3835
 Fax (617) 983-3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
 367 Delaware Ave.,
 Buffalo, NY 14202
 (716) 566-1115
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
 27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
 Chicago, IL 60606
 (773) 381-5839
 Fax (773) 761-9330
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
 P.O. Box 5963
 Cleveland, OH 44101
 phone (216) 531-4004
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
 5920 Second Ave.,
 Detroit, MI 48202
 (313) 831-0750
detroit@workers.org

Houston
 P.O. Box 130322,
 Houston, TX 77219
 (713) 861-5965
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
 5274 West Pico Blvd.,
 Suite 203
 Los Angeles, CA 90019
 (323) 936-1416
la@workers.org

Philadelphia
 P.O. Box 9202,
 Philadelphia, PA 19139
 (610) 453-0490
phila@workers.org

Richmond, Va.
 P.O. Box 14602,
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richmond@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
 (585) 436-6458
rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
 3930 Oregon St.,
 Suite 230
 San Diego, CA 92104
 (619) 692-4496

San Francisco
 2940 16th St., #207
 San Francisco, CA 94103
 (415) 561-9752
sf@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
 P.O. Box 57300,
 Washington, DC 20037,
dc@workers.org

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Anti-war protesters demand gov call economic emergency

By Kris Hamel
Lansing, Mich.

The Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI) brought its fight-back against war and economic devastation to the steps of the State Capitol on Feb. 6. Inside, Gov. Jennifer Granholm—newly reelected to a second and final four-year term—was preparing to give her annual State of the State speech.

Outside, in brutally cold weather, 20 activists from Detroit and Lansing delivered their own message to the governor. They demanded she utilize her executive authority to declare a state of economic emergency, and to institute an immediate moratorium on plant closings, layoffs, foreclosures, evictions, school closings and utility shut-offs.

Michigan leads the U.S. in foreclosures, mass layoffs, plant closings and high unemployment, as well as child poverty and infant mortality.

Activists handed out copies of a letter addressed to the governor which laid out

the legal and practical basis for the governor to take such emergency action.

MECAWI organizer Jerry Goldberg told Workers World: “It wouldn’t cost a cent and is a real solution. The auto industry and its workforce have been systematically dismembered and the economic basis of Michigan will never be the same. The governor must use her authority under the law to take emergency measures to relieve the suffering affecting so many working and poor people here.”

Granholm presented the proposed state budget on Feb. 8. It includes more tax breaks for big business and a regressive 2 percent sales tax on services such as haircuts, lawn work, attorney services, movies, music concerts and sporting events.

Granholm recently limited welfare benefits from the federally mandated five-year maximum to four years.

The Detroit News reported on Feb. 12 that a record 1.19 million Michigan residents, or one out of every nine people in the state, now receives food stamps or other nutrition assistance. The Food Bank Council of Michigan reports that

more than one million Michiganders received free food from religious or charitable groups last year. Only California, Texas, New York, Illinois and Florida have more people receiving food stamps than Michigan.

Meanwhile, the proposed budget that President George W. Bush has Congress considering spells more disaster for Michigan. Under the federal budget, Michigan will be one of four states to get cuts in Medicaid funding: \$173 million less than anticipated—a 3 percent cut. Home heating aid will be cut by 25 percent, community block grants by 28 percent and social service grants by 29 percent.

More than \$9.5 billion for the U.S. war and occupation of Iraq has been taken out of the pockets of Michiganders. More than two-thirds of the federal taxes paid by people in Michigan go to the Pentagon and to pay interest to the banks on the federal debt.



WW
PHOTO:
KRIS HAMEL

In Lansing, Mich., Feb. 6 confronting the governor.

The growing economic disaster in the state and the insatiable needs of the military-industrial complex are leading inexorably to a crisis which only the masses of poor and working people can solve.

In Michigan, the demands put forth by MECAWI for a moratorium on plant closings, layoffs, foreclosures, evictions, school closings and utility shut-offs—coupled with a call to end the Iraq war and recover the money stolen from the state by the Pentagon to be used instead for the needs of the people—will take on even more significance as the crisis deepens. □

WALKOUT HITS N.C. HATE CRIME

Palestinian students fight back

By Dante Strobino
Raleigh FIST

On Jan. 20, 15 members of the Guilford College football team in Greensboro, N.C., used their fists, feet and brass knuckles to attack three Palestinian students while yelling anti-Arab epithets. Only three of the white students involved, Michael Bates, Michael Robert Six and Christopher Barnette, were arrested on the spot for assault and ethnic intimidation. Guilford College is refusing to classify the attack as a “hate crime,” severely decreasing the severity of the charges.

The college released a statement saying that it would refrain from taking action against the accused students until they had been prosecuted in the local courts. Three more football players were later charged. Witnesses claim that the racists involved in the attack yelled “terrorists” after the violent onslaught began, thus signifying that the attack was not motivated by hatred based on race, nationality or ethnic origin, which it clearly was.

This attack cannot be understood outside the context of U.S. imperialism,

which is a global war to eliminate all unity amongst working people and extract the highest profits from their labor and land via these divisions. U.S. imperialist attacks on Iraq, Somalia, Colombia and the ongoing land theft and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people are only a few symptoms of global capitalism that also has effects within the borders of the United States. Under the “war on terrorism,” the ruling class has created a white-supremacist culture here and across the world that violently attacks and oppresses Arabs and people of color. This anti-Arab and white-supremacist furor continues to deepen as the contradictions of U.S. imperialism deepen.

Recalling the incident, a Palestinian student at N.C. State University told YES! Weekly that as he was trying to pull the assailants off his two Guilford student friends, “That’s when they put me on the dirt and beat my a—. All this was accompanied by ‘sand n—s,’ ‘f—ing Palestinians,’ ‘terrorists.’ I would like to say seven to eight people were attacking me.” (Jan. 22)

Less than a week after the attack, more than 300 students walked out of class at

Guilford College carrying scarecrows, placards and banners condemning the hate crime and offering solidarity to the attacked Palestinian students.

Students fight back

At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill a new group has formed in reaction to the beating, called SPEAC—Solidarity with Palestine through Education and Action at Carolina. The group includes Muslim students, members of Students for a Democratic Society, members of Raleigh FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together—and others.

At a SPEAC demonstration on Jan. 2, more than 50 students spoke about the hate crimes on campus and the lack of university response. Speakers stressed that the attacks on Muslims are directly related to U.S. imperialism and Israeli state terrorism. The group is circulating a petition that has already gotten hundreds of signatures demanding that Guilford call the attack what it is—a hate crime.

At N.C. State University the Muslim Student Association organized a meeting with campus police, city police and uni-

versity administrators to sequester more information about their rights and protections. More than 75 students attended the session where the cops, through their creepy charisma, attempted to build trust amongst the Muslim students. After participants raised questions about U.S. imperialism and the ongoing rash of police brutality and killings at the hands of cops—including the killing of 18-year-old UNC Wilmington student Peyton Strickland on Dec. 1—there was an overwhelming mood of solidarity amongst the students against the cops. Muslim students inquired about the local cops’ history and asked about the repeated tasing of an Arab student at the University of California, Los Angeles, in November. N.C. State students left with a greater sense of what the cops really stand for and are working to build a support committee to support the N.C. State student involved in the racist beating.

Raleigh FIST and other progressive students continue to build relationships with other community and labor forces in North Carolina to foster a genuine anti-imperialist movement that can stop this violence and oppression at its roots. □

Mistrial in Watada resister court martial

By John Catalinotto

After making its case badly at the Ft. Lewis, Wash., court-martial of war resister Lt. Ehren Watada, the Army prosecution team requested and was granted a mistrial. The unorthodox handing of this case has raised the possibility that the U.S. Army might have to free Watada, who had faced four years in prison.

Watada is the first officer to refuse duty in Iraq. Since his announcement last spring that he would refuse, the lieutenant has been a strong spokesperson for anti-war sentiment. He participated in a conference of anti-war veterans in the summer and made a speech that has been played all over the country at meetings large and small.

Both his parents have been supportive of Watada’s action, and they both have

been speaking around the country on his behalf. For the Jan. 27 protests, his father spoke in Washington to over 100,000 people while his mother spoke on the West Coast.

Hundreds of people, many of them veterans, and including actor Sean Penn and other military war resisters, with a large contingent from Iraq Veterans Against the War, had come to Watada’s court-martial to show their support at the Feb. 5 opening and throughout the trial. The judge made all decisions in the first days of the trial to prevent the lieutenant from bringing up his principled opposition to the Iraq war as part of his defense.

Nevertheless, the prosecution apparently believed they failed to make a strong case against Watada, so lead prosecutor Capt. Scott Van Sweringen asked for the

mistrial. The defense objected, but Lt. Col. Judge John Head granted the prosecution the ability to re-present their case at a different time in the future.

Eric Seitz is Lt. Watada’s civilian lawyer. Seitz said, “The mistrial is very likely to have the consequence of ending this case because a retrial would be a case of double jeopardy based on the military rules for courts martial and applicable case law.” Seitz added that if the Army attempted to try Watada again, he would ask for dismissal of the charges with prejudice so they could not be filed again. “I do not expect a retrial to ever occur,” stated Seitz.

Watada’s military defense lawyer—appointed by the Army—Capt. Mark Kim, said that he agreed with Seitz’s interpretation of military law.

E-mail: jcat@workers.org



Ehren Watada

Unweaving the lies

Why many Cuban gay men & lesbians left after 1959

By Leslie Feinberg

Significant numbers of Cuban homosexual males and females, including many who were transgender, began leaving the island immediately after the July 26 Movement overthrew the hated U.S.-backed Batista regime in 1959. The U.S. big-business media pointed their microphones at counter-revolutionary claims that anti-gay terror drove them to flee.

This reactionary political propaganda was a cover for a dirty war by imperialism to carry out “regime change” in Cuba. It also was aimed at demoralizing the multinational, revolutionary wing of the young gay liberation movement in the U.S.

This political and ideological campaign to paint Cuba as a cruel and oppressive dictatorship was crafted by Cold War capitalists who were themselves carrying out a ruthless domestic war against same-sex love and gender variance.

Before the Cuban Revolution, U.S. finance capital had installed two iron-fisted dictatorships in order to grease the gears of exploitation: Gerardo Machado in the late 1920s and Fulgencio Batista in the 1950s. For a cut of the profits, these brutal regimes served the rule of U.S. sugar, nickel and citrus companies and made it possible for the imperialists to own the banks, telephone and electric systems and big retail stores.

U.S. crime bosses ran the lucrative large-scale sex industry and interconnected casinos and drug distribution. Tens of thousands of Cuban women, men and children of all sexualities served the desires of wealthy and powerful tourists from the U.S. and on the island.

Cold War anti-gay and anti-trans purges and persecution in the U.S. created the demand for an offshore prostitution network in Havana that exploited large numbers of men and boys, the majority of them feminine, for profit.

The revolution that took state power on Jan. 1, 1959, shut down the sex industry and casinos. The workers and peasants of Cuba faced a massive task—restructuring their economy to meet the needs of all, which meant creating jobs, land reform, food, clothing, housing, medical care, basic literacy and higher education.

This work had to be done while imperialism tried to take away every tool through

economic strangulation, military encirclement and siege.

Seeking scientific understanding

Researchers Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich made an important analytical contribution in the mid-1980s to understanding why many Cuban homosexuals left after the revolution—and why many stayed.

The two researchers took a scientific approach, accruing data through historical analysis, survey, field and experiential methods. They interpreted the results “within a theoretical framework drawn from lesbian-feminist and critical gay scholarship and the politico-economic and phenomenological study of Cuban social life.”

Between 1979 and 1984 Arguelles and Rich interviewed Cubans on the island and émigrés in the United States, Spain, Mexico and Puerto Rico. The report on the research, titled “Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Revolution: Notes Toward an Understanding of the Cuban Lesbian and Gay Male Experience,” was first published in the summer of 1984 in “Signs, A Journal of Women in Culture and Society.”

The two researchers said their goals were to reveal the nature and dynamics of the Cuban homosexual experience in order to put the questions of same-sex love in Cuba, migration and resettlement in context.

They also sought to develop greater understanding of same-sex love in what were at that time referred to as Third World countries and communities, and to further develop theory “on the nature of the relationships

between the structures of sexuality and the corresponding structures of socialist organization.”

This is what they found.

Attempt to discredit the revolution

The role of economic incentive and individual ambition—powerful stimulants for all migration from poorer to wealthier countries—was seldom considered when it came to Cuban homosexual émigrés.

Arguelles and Rich wrote, “The more structuralist explanations for international population movements, which stress the role of capital and of capitalist states in organizing migratory flows from less developed to more developed economies, have yet to be invoked in the interpretation of gay migration from Cuba.”

Washington had passed the Immigration and Naturalization Act in 1952, which specifically mandated blocking entry or expelling “sexually deviant” immigrants. But when it came to Cuban homosexuals, Arguelles and Rich noted, “Then, as now, anticommunism won out.”

Wealthy homosexual male Cubans, who before the revolution had spent extensive periods abroad, left the island for good. “Emigration began immediately. The promoters and overlords of the Havana underworld along with large numbers of their displaced workers (many of them homosexuals) headed for Miami. Many lesbians who had liaisons with members of the bourgeoisie followed their male protectorate to Miami, as did gay men who had worked for U.S. firms or had done domestic work for the native bourgeoisie.”

The two researchers point out that Cuban “refugee” testimony became “the main source for evalua-

tion of Cuban gay life, despite knowledge of the pressures on émigrés to testify to political persecution in their country of origin in order to attain the legal and economic advantages of refugee status in their new country.”

These narratives were then amplified as part of an imperialist propaganda campaign calculated to neutralize “badly needed support for the Cuban revolution among its natural allies,” Arguelles and Rich wrote. In addition, the propaganda campaign “legitimated the presence in traditionally liberation circles of some of the more reactionary elements within the Cuban émigré population.”

They added that it obscured changing realities of gay life in Cuba as part of the ongoing revolutionary process, made the historical inheritance of the pre-revolutionary political economy and homophobia seem irrelevant, and helped to disguise the oppression and exploitation of gay and lesbian Cubans living in émigré enclaves.

The campaign also distanced “gay activists in capitalist mainstream culture from minority gays involved in the liberation movements of their respective countries and national communities.”

And lastly, this scapegoating of Cuba “has made the growing number of progressive gay émigrés who criticize but also support the revolution into living contradictions: invisible to gay liberation forces but easy targets for the homophobic anti-Castro army in exile.”

While many left the island, many others stayed.

Arguelles and Rich concluded, “Other homosexuals, especially those from working-class backgrounds or students from petty-bourgeois families, worked to integrate themselves into the revolution.”

They stressed, “For these homosexuals, class and class interests were perceived as more elemental aspects of their identity than homosexual behavior. And the revolution spoke to these interests and this identity.”

There was work for all, free health care, free education, affordable housing and tremendous cultural growth.

Cuban lesbians, some of whom had played an important role in the pre-revolutionary urban struggle, also benefited from the great gains being made by and for women.

Next: Homosexuality, revolution and counter-revolution.

E-mail: lfeinberg@workers.org

lavender
&
red #90



Court bans LGBT benefits in Michigan

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

A three-judge panel of the Michigan Court of Appeals announced Feb. 2 its decision that a state constitutional amendment limiting marriage to one man and one woman bars public employers from providing domestic partnership benefits to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (LGBT) and other unmarried couples.

The ruling overturned an Ingham County judge's ruling in 2005 in a case brought by plaintiffs, including 21 LGBT couples employed by the city of Kalamazoo, public colleges and universities.

The appellate court accepted State Attorney General Mike Cox's argument in extending the same-sex marriage ban—passed by voters in November 2004—to deny unmarried couples the right to medi-

cal and other insurance benefits.

The law's proponents had promised in their 2004 anti-gay campaign literature that such benefits would not be affected by the ban.

In its decision, the Court of Appeals stated: “The marriage amendment's plain language prohibits public employers from recognizing same-sex unions for any purpose. ... The protection of the institution of marriage is a long-standing public policy and tradition in the law of Michigan.”

The decision was a huge blow to the LGBT movement in Michigan and nationally. Seventeen other states face similar legal battles. Michigan is the first state to rule it illegal for public employers to provide benefits to partners of LGBT and unwed persons.

In Alaska—the only other state to rule so far regarding the benefits given to

same-sex partners of public employees—the courts went the other way, ruling it unconstitutional to deny benefits.

Of the 27 states that have passed bans on LGBT marriage, 18 of those states, including Michigan, also have broader prohibitions against recognizing civil unions or same-sex registered partnerships.

Up to 20 public universities, community colleges, school districts and local governments in Michigan offer same-sex benefits to their workers.

Jay Kaplan of the Michigan ACLU, which argued the case, said a stay has been requested while the decision is appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court. Michigan's highest court, however, is composed of a right-wing majority of Federalist Society members who have systematically decimated civil law in the state for workers and plaintiffs over the last 20 years.

Lauren Spencer, a bisexual activist and student leader at Michigan State University, told Workers World: “This reactionary decision by the Court of Appeals may be a setback, but the struggle for LGBT rights and equality will continue. At a time when so many of us in Michigan are poor, unemployed and underpaid, we need more benefits, not less. Now is the time to redouble our efforts and step up the struggle.”

Spencer was a 2006 statewide candidate for the MSU Board of Trustees on the Stop the War Slate of the Green Party of Michigan ticket. Her campaign platform called for continued defense of domestic partner benefits for LGBT campus workers, a demand that Spencer's principled position forced the other candidates to uphold during the campaign. □

CUNY students fight to keep Shakur-Morales center

By Brenda Ryan
New York

For about 10 hours a sign honoring Puerto Rican freedom fighter Guillermo Morales and former Black Panther Assata Shakur once again hung over a student center at City College of New York.

City Council member Charles Barron replaced the sign at a Feb. 8 press conference at the Guillermo Morales/Assata Shakur Community and Student Center. In December the university had sent a crew to take the sign down in the middle of the night in reaction to a campaign against the center and the revolutionaries it is named after.

After Barron replaced the sign, university authorities again had it taken away during the night. This time school security guards removed the students in the center first. "Myself and two other students in the building were escorted out just after

11 o'clock," said Lydia Shestopalova, an activist with the center. She saw no other students being escorted from the building. Students are permitted to remain in the building after 11:00 p.m. once they sign in, so the action of the security guards was stunning.

The sign had hung at the center since the group was founded in 1989 during a struggle over budget cuts. Students had taken over administration buildings and school officials gave them the room to end the takeover. The students named the center after Morales and Shakur, former CCNY students. Morales, one of the leaders of the open admissions strike of 1969, helped integrate the school system. The name was fitting as the center is devoted to social justice.

"It was a violation of our rights and our very being to question our right to have the sign up," Shestopalova said.

The attack on the center began after a



Assata Shakur

CUNY student wrote a letter to The Daily News denouncing the center for taking the name of Assata Shakur. The Daily News followed the letter up on Dec. 12 with a front-page headline "Disgrace" and an article calling Assata "a terrorist and cop killer."

Instead of standing up for the students and against the absurd and racist media attacks, the university joined the campaign. Two days after the news article



ran, it took the sign down. The center says Acting Vice President of Student Affairs Ramona Brown threatened to suspend or expel students if they replaced the sign. City Council member Barron did so on their behalf.

The students are now battling the university in court. A federal judge denied their request for a temporary restraining order and has yet to rule on the university's motion to dismiss the students' complaint.

Meanwhile, members of the center are building community support. "The sign represents what the students that founded it were fighting for," Shestopalova said. "Social justice and freedom for all, particularly the most oppressed in the city and the world." □

42 years after assassination

Malcolm X inspires militant struggle against racism

By Monica Moorehead

On Feb. 21, 1965, revolutionary Black nationalist leader Malcolm X was assassinated while making a speech at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, N.Y. He was only 39 years old. To this day, it is still widely believed throughout progressive sectors that the U.S. government was very much behind his death.

Consider the fact that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a repressive arm of the U.S. Justice Department, began keeping a file on Malcolm X—then Malcolm Little—in March 1953, upon his release from prison. It was during his prison term that he became politically radicalized and joined the Nation of Islam, a Black Muslim organization.

The file on Malcolm X, more than 3,600 pages and 19 sections, was part of the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program—COINTELPRO—which targeted political formations and individuals advocating various forms of liberation struggles of

oppressed nationalities.

Malcolm X evolved into one of the most dynamic representatives of the NOI and the Black struggle. He traveled throughout the United States, speaking to predominantly Black audiences and to many white college students about the political and economic oppression of Black people inside the United States and worldwide.

Malcolm used historical facts and disarming political formulations to explain in a popular manner why Black nationalism was a more than justified response to an institutionalized racist ideology, as opposed to being "anti-white"—a distorted view projected by the big-business media.

He popularized the concept of Black people's right to armed self-defense against the state-sponsored racist terror of the police and the U.S. government. This concept helped to give birth to the Black Panther Party in Oakland, Calif.,



in 1966, and to other revolutionary formations like the Young Lords, a Latin@ youth organization.

He along with Martin Luther King spoke about the right of Black people to reparations for the generations of racism and national oppression brought about

by the legacy of slavery. He created the immortal phrase "By any means necessary" in relation to the various tactics Black people should use to win liberation.

In the aftermath of his travels to Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere, Malcolm X was in the process of developing an anti-imperialist perspective when he was tragically struck down.

He had just formed the Organization of African-American Unity as a vehicle for uniting other political currents within the Black liberation movement. He was planning to bring worldwide attention to the plight of African Americans to the United Nations.

Forty-two years after his death, Malcolm X remains a revered figure of defiance against all forms of racist oppression, especially among the youth as well as progressive and oppressed sectors of workers.

Excerpted from a Feb. 26, 2004, article.

Shareef Aleem trial: 'Not guilty'

By Larry Hales
Denver

The jury in the trial of Shareef Aleem came back with a not guilty verdict here on Feb. 5. Shareef Aleem, his family and his supporters packing the courtroom celebrated this verdict from a multinational jury. It was the end of a torturous, two-year battle.

In the first trial in the case against Aleem, he was charged with second-degree aggravated assault, which carries a minimum of four years in prison and a maximum of 12. That trial ended in a hung jury.

But Adams County declared after that trial that the case would be tried again.

The criminal charges stemmed from a University Board of Regents meeting on Feb. 3, 2005. Shareef Aleem stood up in the public meeting regarding the university's attacks on Ward Churchill—which supporters argued were meant to censure the professor.

Aleem declared that the students were

Shareef Aleem, second from right, shown here with family members.

WW PHOTO: LARRY HALES

not being allowed to speak and that they should be allowed to address their support of their professor and their opinions.

Aleem was immediately set upon and what ensued was a cop riot. Aleem was pushed from behind by one and pulled from the front by another.

Adams County asserted that Shareef Aleem's attempts to move away from the cop and remove the cop's hands from his person constituted second-degree aggravated assault.

However, the jury saw it for what it was and after a day-and-a-half of deliberations, came back with a not guilty verdict. □



We Want Freedom

A life in the Black Panther Party

Mumia Abu-Jamal provides a history of the founding of the Philadelphia Black Panther Party in this book. Mumia, known to the world as a wrongly convicted political prisoner held for 25 years in Pennsylvania's death row, is exacting and luminous in his history. Paperback, 320 pages, 2004.

Order on line at

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In Boston, Black history lives

By Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston

"Lift every voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring, ring with the harmony of liberty": The stirring lyrics of the Black national anthem, written by James Weldon Johnson, were sung out with meaning on Feb. 10 at the Cultural Café here. Sixty-five activists—African-American, Native, Cape Verdean, Latin@ and white—came together to honor Bob Traynham at this Black History Month event on his 70th birthday.

Friends came from far and wide to honor Bobby "T"—"Mr. Bobby's"—life. In doing so, they recounted major events in Black history.

Bob Traynham is a leading member of the Boston branch of Workers World Party and a member of WWP's National Committee. A leader in the Boston School Bus Drivers' Union, he and his union, United Steel Workers' Local 8751, have led a community fight against anti-busing racists in Boston for three decades.

An ex-Black Panther, he served as a bodyguard for Dr. Martin Luther King's March against Racism in Boston in the 1960s. In 1988 Traynham ran for U.S. Senate on the WWP ticket against racist Massachusetts Senate President Billy Bulger and garnered over 20 percent of the votes despite personal threats on his life.

Bobby T, along with Mia Campbell from Politic'n with the Sisters and the Women's Fightback Network, co-chaired the WWP forum, entitled "Black History, a Bridge to Today's Struggles, the Fight against Colonial Wars, Racism, and Repression—What It Will Take to Win."



Bobby Traynham, left. Part of the Black history month meeting in Boston, Feb. 10.

Campbell paid tribute to Bobby T by recalling his history in the struggle, beginning with the early years of fighting against the KKK in West Virginia. Traynham spoke on the tremendous contributions made by the Black Panther Party to the struggle for national liberation.

Speaker after speaker addressed similar themes: uniting our struggles against racism and national oppression in this country, the war against Iraq, and the fight against U.S. imperialism—from Tehran to Caracas.

The speakers were themselves living figures of Black history. For example, Dorothea Peacock, a leading member of the WFN, read Rosa Parks' own account



WW PHOTOS: LIZ GREEN

of her arrest in Montgomery in 1955. But then Peacock recounted her own Jim Crow treatment as a young Black woman traveling by interstate bus in 1961.

Uniting struggles at home, abroad

Monica Moorehead, a member of the WWP Secretariat, delivered the main address. She announced the imminent release of the book "Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle."

"The billionaire class that you don't really see," Moorehead emphasized, "uses George Bush to administer its policies. They try to co-opt Black History Month to really control the masses who give rise to someone like Martin Luther King.

"We want to connect all the mass movements here and around the world. Almost 700,000 Iraqis have died since the invasion and the Pentagon is asking for another \$245 billion this week on top of the half a trillion dollars they have already spent.

"Where is this money coming from? From Medicare, Medicaid, public housing and education. For the oppressed in the U.S., the impact is even worse. U.S. foreign policy is an extension of domestic war against us here at home. We see it in the rumored 10,000 layoffs at Chrysler, the slashing of pension funds and healthcare—all to make super profits for the rich."

Moorehead urged all to come out March
Continued on next page

Kenyans honor liberation hero Dedan Kimathi

By Stephen Millies

Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi was executed on Feb. 18, 1957, by the British occupiers of Kenya. Being captured with a loaded revolver was enough to send this freedom fighter to the gallows. Kimathi was hanged because he was a leader of Kenya's Land and Freedom Army, demonized by the media as the "Mau Mau."

According to David Anderson's "Histories of the Hanged," 1,090 Africans were hanged in the 1950s by Britain's colonial regime in Kenya. Just for supplying food to guerilla fighters—labeled "consorting"—the colonialists sent 207 people to their deaths.

In her Pulitzer Prize winning book "Imperial Reckoning," Caroline Elkins estimated that 300,000 Kenyans were thrown into concentration camps.

Elkins and her assistant Ms. Terry Wairimu, a researcher at the Kenyan National Archives, interviewed 300 survivors. They heard how Alsatian dogs mauled women inmates at the Athi River camp and guards clubbed prisoners arriving at the Manyani camp.

Six hundred children were confined in Kamati camp alone. Almost none survived.

"Hard Core Mau Mau" supporters were selected to bury the children. "They would be tied in bundles of six babies," recalled former inmate Helen Macharia.

The people of Kenya considered British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as evil a tyrant as the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. Over a million Kikuyu people were forced into 800 "emergency villages" built with their own slave labor.

Queen Elizabeth II, who was already on the throne during these atrocities, isn't the only war criminal who should be put on



Dedan Kimathi

trial. U.S. "foreign aid" helped pay for the Embaksi Airport, which was constructed with the bare hands of prisoners.

Stealing the land

In 1895, British Queen Victoria declared a "protectorate" over Kenya and Uganda. A few British settlers stole the best land. One named Lord Delamere grabbed 160,000 acres.

Troops wielding machine guns forced Africans into "native reserves" that were modeled on U.S. Indian reservations. As in South Africa under apartheid, Africans were forced to carry a pass, known in Kenya as a "kipande."

"We have stolen his land," declared the British explorer and land-grabber Colonel Grogan. "Now it is time to steal his limbs." The colonial regime enforced compulsory labor from African women and men. Ten

thousand workers, many from India, were killed or maimed building a 582-mile long railroad from Mombasa to Lake Victoria.

"Illiterates with the right attitude to manual labor are preferable to products of the schools" declared a 1949 report written by Anglican Bishop Leonard Beecher. Three high schools at the time annually admitted 100 African students.

The average yearly wage of 385,000 African workers in 1948 was \$73.

Freedom by any means necessary

Jomo Kenyatta became president of the Kenyan African Union in 1947. The same year women in Murang'a revolted against being forced to build terraces that often washed away in the rain.

The East African Trade Union Congress (EATUC) was founded on May Day in 1949. The following May Day it demanded independence and majority rule.

Though Britain had a "Labor Party" government, its colonial regime immediately arrested union leaders. One hundred thousand workers joined a general strike. Nairobi was paralyzed for nine days. Nothing moved on Mombasa's docks for 48 hours.

Only a mobilization of the army and police broke the strike. EATUC President Fred Kubai was jailed for eight months. General Secretary Makhan Singh, whose origins were South Asian, was detained without trial for 11 years.

Their jailing symbolized the unity of Kenyan workers of both African and Asian origin against colonialism.

Kenyan revolutionaries made preparations for armed struggle against the oppressive colonial rule. Kenya's colonial Governor Evelyn Baring responded by declaring a state of emergency on Oct. 20, 1952. The governor's family controlled

Barings Bank, founded in 1762 by the slave trader Francis Baring.

Jomo Kenyatta, Fred Kubai and four other defendants were put on trial for leading the Mau Mau. There was no jury. According to Elkins, the governor guaranteed conviction by arranging a 20,000-pound bribe to the judge.

Baring hoped Kenyatta's frame-up would demoralize Africans. It ignited years of guerrilla warfare instead.

Mau Mau fighters stole weapons and ammunition. Blacksmiths made hundreds of guns.

Britain mobilized 55,000 soldiers and cops to fight the Mau Mau. The Royal Air Force bombed guerrilla strongholds in Aberdares Forest and Kirinyaga.

A posse led by Ian Henderson finally captured Field Marshal Kimathi on Oct. 21, 1956. A notorious torturer of Mau Mau suspects, Henderson's cruelty couldn't stop the revolution. Twenty thousand Mau Mau guerrillas didn't die in vain. Kenya declared its independence on Dec. 12, 1963.

Africa remembers its heroes. Kimathi's execution is commemorated and streets are named in his honor. A statue of Dedan Kimathi was unveiled in Nairobi on Dec. 11, 2006.

In October 2006, Mau Mau veterans filed a suit against the British government for reparations, charging it with systematic torture of Kenyan freedom fighters during the struggle for independence. The fallen and wounded "Mau Mau" are being avenged in Iraq and wherever else people are fighting against imperialist occupation for land and freedom.

Long live the memory of Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi! □

Histories of the Hanged and Imperial Reckoning are available at www.Leftbooks.



Black editor in Detroit on: 'The rise of colonialism in Africa'

From a talk entitled "A review of developments in Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe and the role of the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament/Aspects of the politics of contemporary Africa in the era of continuing imperialism" delivered at a Detroit Workers World public meeting on Feb. 10 by Abayomi Azikiwe, Editor of Pan-African News Wire.

Azikiwe is a co-founder of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI). He can be heard on radio weekly on WDTW, 1310 AM, on Sundays from 10 a.m.-11 a.m. in Detroit. In Toronto, he can be heard on Thursdays on CKLN, 88.1 FM, from 9:30 p.m.-10 p.m. This broadcast can be heard online at www.ckln.fm.

The talk was dedicated to the memory of the late Mama Adelaide Tambo, the African National Congress Women's League leader and widow of the late Oliver R. Tambo, the longtime acting president of the ANC while Nelson Mandela was imprisoned in South Africa. More of Azikiwe's talk will be printed in upcoming WW issues.

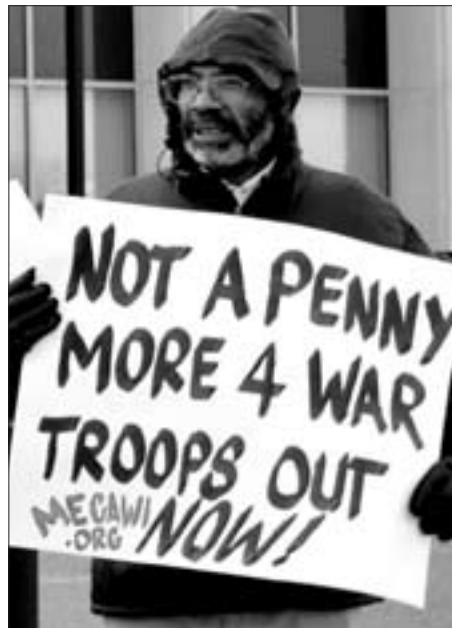
Since the middle of the 15th century the African continent has been pivotal in the rise of western capitalism and imperialism. The nations of Spain and Portugal began to conduct expeditionary operations in West Africa resulting in the beginning of the slave trade.

The trafficking of Africans as slaves resulted in tens of thousands of people being transported to Europe. With the advent of [Christopher] Columbus, who was commissioned by the monarchy in Spain, Europeans began to seek mineral resources and trade routes in the areas that became known as the western hemisphere.

Columbus landed in the Caribbean in 1492, setting off an historical process that would last for over five centuries. The Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean were negatively affected by this process of European exploration in their search for gold and other natural resources.

By the 16th century a genocidal campaign against the Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean was well underway. The Spanish colonialists enslaved the inhabitants of these islands, working many to death while millions would perish from infectious diseases brought from Western Europe. Others, who were not able to escape the slave masters, took their own lives rather than live under such deplorable conditions.

As a result of the deaths of millions of Caribbean Indians, tremendous labor shortages existed in the colonial outposts that spread into the South American and



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Abayomi Azikiwe

North American continents. Consequently, the Spanish and later Portuguese, French, Dutch and English monarchies began to intensify the capture and export of slaves from Africa.

Forts were established on the African coasts to facilitate the growing trade in human beings. Haiti, originally known by the colonialists as Hispaniola, and Brazil in South America, became two of the most prosperous colonial outposts in the hemisphere. Both colonies required the importation of millions of African slaves to work the sugar plantations.

In North America, the Spanish, French and British colonialists competed vigorously for control of the land originally occupied by the Native Americans. From the latter part of the 16th century under Spain through the 17th and 18th centuries under the British and the French, millions of Africans were brought into the continent as slaves while the Native Americans were driven off their land systematically resulting in the worst genocidal onslaught in recorded human history.

It has been well documented that the profits accrued from the Atlantic slave trade spawned the rise of the industrial age in England and North America. This was illustrated clearly in the works of historians such as C.L.R. James (*The Black Jacobins*, 1938), W.E.B. Dubois (*Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, 1935), Eric Williams (*Capitalism and Slavery*, 1944), Anna Julia Haywood Cooper (*Slavery and the French Revolutionist*, 1926), William Alpheus Hunton (*Decision in Africa*, 1957), Kwame Nkrumah (*Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, 1965) and Walter Rodney (*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 1972).

With the rise of industrial production and shipping in England and the United

States, a fierce struggle arose over the future of what form of economic organization would dominate these mercantile and imperialist states.

As a result of this divergence of interests between feudal states that dominated the colonies and the burgeoning industrialists, it became necessary to eliminate chattel slavery as the dominant mode of production in favor of mass production, which required a more free movement of labor.

Consequently, slavery was eliminated in England in 1776 and the trade was outlawed in 1806. In the British colonies it was ostensibly abolished in 1833, leading to a period of apprenticeship. In the United States a bloody civil war was fought from 1861-1865 leading to the abolition of slavery after decades of slave revolts.

At the time of the beginning of the Civil War approximately four million Africans were in bondage in the United States with another 500,000 that were technically free. Some 176,000 Africans fought in the Civil War to end slavery, with 68,000 losing their lives.

However, in other parts of the hemisphere, slavery did not end until years later.

In Cuba, slavery did not end until 1878, some thirteen years after it concluded in the United States. In Brazil, where millions of slaves were taken by the Portuguese, their captivity did not end until 1888-89, after the collapse of the monarchy in this South American nation.

After four centuries of the slave trade in Africa, the stage was set for widespread colonization of the continent. Although the Portuguese had colonies in Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe since the 16th century and the Dutch had settled in South Africa beginning in 1652, large sections of Africa remained outside the complete control of colonization. The slave trade had so weakened African societies that colonialism became inevitable. By the 1870s, the Belgians had moved into Congo in order to secure rubber and other mineral resources. In 1884-85, the Berlin Conference was held in Germany to divide the continent into spheres of economic and political influence.

Colonialism in Africa involved the settlement of more Europeans, who ruled the continent as political outposts of various nation-states. The most successful colonies were operated by Britain, France, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, Spain and Italy. However, World War I resulted in the loss of colonies by Germany, which had controlled Namibia, Tanganyika and Togoland. These outposts were taken over by Britain (Namibia, where the Union of South Africa took control) and France (Togo). □

17 for the March on Washington and to bring their unpaid bills to the demonstration. She called for active organizing for May Day events this year that were called a week before this event by the March 25th Coalition. And she stressed the need to deepen Black-Brown unity in the struggle for immigrant rights.

She concluded, "We want to do everything that we can to make Black and Brown unity a reality, and even beyond that, we need Black, Brown, Native, Asian, Arab and working-class white unity against a common enemy—and that is U.S. capitalism and imperialism."

Mahtowin Munro, co-chair of the United American Indians of New England, recounted the historical example of unity against racism and colonial oppression in the slave revolts in South Carolina: 100 enslaved Africans joined with Native people in a successful revolt against the Spanish masters. She also called for the freedom of all political prisoners, like Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Bishop Filipe Teixeira transfixed the audience in recounting his recent racist encounter at a church in Atlanta: White worshipers questioned him on what he was doing there in the church and called the police to threaten him. Bishop "T", as he is known, is a fierce defender of a large Cape Verdean immigrant community in Brockton, Mass., and could be seen often picketing the recent trials of the Somerville Five, a group of Black high school students who faced racist profiling and were attacked by Medford police in 2005.

Minister Franklin Hobbs of the HIV State of Emergency Committee electrified the audience with his condemnation of the racist and capitalist conditions that have spread HIV in the U.S. and abroad.

As the evening drew to a close, the true essence of Black History Month was identified by Tony Van Der Meer, co-chair of the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee. In paying tribute to Bobby Traynham as a proud Black worker, he warned that the importance of Black labor is often lost in Black History Month celebrations. And he stressed that too often the capitalist media will try to put forth their own narrow agenda for Black History Month for their own self-serving reasons.

There was great resolve and commitment in the words, speeches and tributes that poured forth during the meeting—and all the flyers for the March 17 March on Washington left the building with the audience. □

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Victory for women in Portugal abortion vote

By Ellen Catalinotto

Advocates for women and progressives in Portugal greeted the 60-percent majority vote for legalization of abortion there in a Feb. 11 referendum as a victory for the health and dignity of women.

Since 44 percent or fewer than half the 8.7 million voters participated, the results of this referendum are not legally binding. But because of the strong “yes” vote to allow abortion through the tenth week of pregnancy, legislators say they will submit the new law to parliament where a majority from the ruling Socialist Party (SP), the Communist Party (PCP) and others promise to support it. A 1998 referendum on abortion had only 30 percent participation and narrowly defeated legalization.

Spokespeople from the Green Party, the Democratic Women’s Movement (MDM), the Movement for “YES” and the PCP all greeted the result as a victory for women’s health and well-being. Angela Sabino, spokesperson for the MDM in the Evora district, said, “With the referendum result, the MDM has managed to breathe a sigh of relief, because this fundamental right to sexual and reproductive health will stay as a permanent part of the Penal Code.” Evora, long an area of PCP strength, voted 78 percent “yes.”

Portugal’s current law bans all abortions except those performed up to 12 weeks in cases of rape, a malformed fetus or when the woman’s life is in danger. Poland and Ireland are the only other European countries with similar restrictions. An estimated 20,000 illegal abortions are performed annually in Portugal. A high proportion of these result in serious complications, with about 10,000 women a year requiring hospitalization or medical treatment afterwards.

In the U.S. before *Roe v. Wade*, abortion providers faced criminal penalties. In Portugal not only do the providers face prison, but also the women undergoing abortion and anyone who assists them in obtaining the abortion.

Scores of women accused of having illegal abortions and people who helped them have been prosecuted since 2002.



Communist youth mobilize to support legalization of abortion in Portugal.

PHOTO: AVANTE!

Televised trials subject the defendants to public humiliation and they can be imprisoned for up to three years. A midwife convicted of performing abortions was sent to jail for seven years.

Poor women suffer the most under this law. Just across the Spanish border, only a few hours drive from any place in Portugal, women can obtain safe, legal abortions in clinics built just over the border, with Spanish doctors authorizing them for psychological reasons. Thousands of Portuguese women go there every year. But those too poor or without know-how or connections to get to Spain are forced to resort to dangerous clandestine abortions.

PCP supported legal abortions

Women’s groups and progressive organizations campaigned actively for legalization of abortion. The PCP and its allied youth and women’s organizations

mobilized during the months leading up to the referendum, and the PCP’s weekly newspaper, *Avante*, campaigned for legalization in front-page articles before the referendum and called for improved family benefits for mothers, fathers and children, better reproductive health care and sex education. Criminalization never has and never will prevent illegal abortion and the resulting damage to women’s health, pointed out *Avante*.

The PCP also supports legalization of abortion up to the twelfth week of pregnancy, rather than the tenth week.

Workers World spoke to Manuela Vasconcelos, a former trade union leader in the northern city of Porto. “This is an important achievement for women’s rights and democracy in general,” she said. Porto, the country’s second city and a stronghold of the Catholic Church, nevertheless voted for legalization in this referendum, reversing its “no” vote of 1998.

The Catholic Church mobilized for continued criminalization of abortion, urging members to participate in the referendum by voting “no” to legalization and threatening excommunication for those voting “yes.” About 90 percent of Portuguese are at least nominally Catholic.

Much of the corporate media framed the referendum as a struggle between the conservative church hierarchy and modern urban ideas and referred to the outcome as a defeat due to low turnout. Those who mobilized to vote “yes” considered the result an important step forward in the struggle for women’s reproductive rights and a show of solidarity with poor women who are the greatest victims of the current repressive law. They know, however, that further struggle will be needed to assure that clinics and hospitals throughout Portugal make abortions available and accessible to all Portuguese women who need them. □

Bolivia’s social movements make their

By Mark Burton

For the first time in the last 500 years, the election of President Evo Morales has led to Bolivia’s Indigenous majority gaining a significant voice in the running of their country in a process led by social movements. Despite the opposition from the oligarchy and U.S. imperialism, the Bolivian people have made impressive gains in Morales’ first year.

Much of Bolivian society is organized in groups or associations that are generally referred to as social movements. These social movements are based on neighborhoods, regions, Indigenous groups, and industries and have been the motor force behind the recent changes in Bolivia.

The militancy of the social movements—as evidenced by the water war of 2000 where a regional insurrection chased the Bechtel Corp. out of Bolivia, and the gas war of 2003, when a national uprising unseated the former President Sánchez de Lozada—paved the way for the election of President Morales and his party, Movement to Socialism (MAS).

A National Lawyers Guild (NLG) delegation met with President Morales’ legal advisor, Fernando Pissaro, who explained that MAS was not a traditional party but a coalition of social movements whose goal was to move towards socialism. He highlighted the achievements of the Morales government beginning with the re-nationalization of the country’s oil and gas deposits.

Pissaro said that before the re-nationalization, more than 80 percent of the benefits of the nation’s oil and gas went to transnational corporations. Now the Bolivian government receives over 80 percent and has used this increase to fund education, early childhood health care and to make sure that all citizens have proper identification. Previously, a large segment of the Indigenous population had no identification and was thus unable to access many government services.

Pissaro said that the government was next planning nationalizations in the mining sector. In February the government announced the nationalization of the tin processing plant Vinto, a Swiss-owned

plant that a previous government had illegally sold to the private sector. This act may herald the beginning of more nationalizations in the mining sector.

Activists from the social movement that mobilized the workers and peasants of Cochabamba Province against the privatization of their water spoke of the “water war of 2000,” one of the events that sparked the important social changes now occurring in Bolivia. In 2000 the government privatized all of the water in Cochabamba and gave an exclusive contract for water distribution to a subsidiary of the Bechtel Corp.

Winning the ‘water war’

With privatization came a large increase in the price of water. Communally owned wells were ordered metered. Communities had to pay Bechtel for their water. The citizens of Cochabamba rose up and fought the government in the streets, forcing Bechtel to flee the country and the government to reverse the privatization.

Óscar Olivera, one of the leaders of the Water War, told the delegation that one

of that struggle’s great successes was that for the first time city workers and peasants from the country joined together to struggle for the common ownership of water. He described the long history of oppression of the majority Indigenous people of Bolivia and how the idea of the private ownership of water and of land was alien to the Indigenous people of his country.

Olivera believed that the water war began a process that brought the Morales government to power. Olivera’s social movement, however, has decided to stay out of the government. He said his group believes that mass mobilization may still be required as the Morales government, even though it has taken many positive steps, has structural and other impediments that may prevent it from vigorously continuing the process of nationalization.

Student activists of the October Youth Movement gave the delegation a presentation of the struggle for a viable university in the mainly Aymara city of El Alto, their participation in the gas war, and their struggle for a new Bolivia based on social justice.

In 2000, the October Youth Movement

No to bases:

Opposition grows to U.S. militarism

By Sara Flounders

Growing opposition to U.S. militarism is having an impact on the Pentagon's aggressive war plans far beyond Iraq.

An example of the changing mood can be seen in the mass movement opposing proposed new U.S. bases in the Czech Republic and Poland.

In recent polls a clear majority of the population of those countries is opposed to U.S. bases there. By an overwhelming majority, people are demanding the right to decide on this dangerous escalation in a national referendum.

Thousands have signed their names to petitions and participated in rallies and demonstrations demanding "No to the Bases."

The petition in Czech Republic states that the bases "would serve to reawaken the Cold War in Europe and could reignite a new arms race. It is unthinkable that a democratic country should make such a decision of such long-range impact, as the acceptance of foreign military bases on its soil, without an open debate. Neither the government nor the Parliament has the mandate to make such a decision alone."

More than 40 organizations are part of the No to the Bases Campaign formed last July in the Czech Republic.

The approval of the bases seemed a foregone conclusion when the U.S. military started surveying for sites in Poland and Czech Republic four years ago. The missile shield would consist of radar sites and large missile interceptor silos. The radar would have the ability to monitor almost the entire territory of Russia.

Opening a new Cold War

The Pentagon claims that the missile shield is intended as a protection of the U.S. and Europe from missile attacks by what it slanderously calls "rogue states," such as Iran or North Korea. But the project deals with intercontinental ballistic missiles, which neither North Korea nor Iran even possess. The overwhelming consensus is that the bases are an ominous part of the growing ring of U.S. and NATO bases surrounding Russia.

Russia's President Putin at the Munich Conference on Security Policy on Feb. 10



warned of U.S. efforts to open a new Cold War and a new arms race. He denounced the Pentagon's plans to encircle Russia and place missile sites in Central Europe. The 250 participants at the meeting in Germany included more than 30 defense and foreign ministers.

President Putin said, "The process of NATO expansion has nothing to do with modernization of the alliance or with ensuring security in Europe." He also criticized the "almost uncontained, hyper use of force in international relations."

Outside, as many as 6,000 anti-militarist demonstrators protesting NATO expansion surrounded the building where the conference was underway. More than 3,500 police were used to prevent the protesters from exercising their rights.

On Feb. 7, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Peter Pace, speaking to the U.S. House of Representatives, escalated the threats: "I think we need the full range of military capabilities. We need the ability for regular force-on-force conflicts because we don't know what's going to develop in places like Russia and China, in North Korea, in Iran and elsewhere."

Belarus, a country of 10 million people located between Russia and Poland, recently expressed its opposition to the expansion of the U.S. dominated NATO military alliance as a clear violation of the NATO pledge not to expand an inch further east if Soviet troops were withdrawn from the East European countries

that made up the Warsaw Pact. Nikolai Cherginets of the National Assembly of Belarus was speaking about its southern neighbor Ukraine and Georgia's move towards joining NATO.

In violation of NATO's 1990 agreement, NATO has expanded into 10 countries that were formerly part of the Warsaw Pact or into republics that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. The new members of NATO are Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. All of these countries have become military satellites of the U.S. and economically dependent on the imperialist West.

Most of these countries have been forced by their relations with the U.S. military alliance to participate in sending troops to Iraq and/or Afghanistan.

Ukraine's possible admission to NATO would bring Russia's Black Sea naval base and much of the former Soviet armaments industry within arm's reach of the U.S. dominated military alliance and it would expand NATO to Russia's southwestern border. Along with Ukraine and Georgia, Croatia, Albania and Macedonia are on the list of countries waiting to join NATO.

The Pentagon has also moved its largest sea-based missile defense radar in the Pacific from Hawaii to the Aleutian Islands, close to Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula.

In December 2001 Washington unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic

Missile Treaty that it had signed 30 years earlier in order to begin testing a new generation of missiles. These are the weapons that the U.S. wants to put in place in the Czech Republic and Poland.

Now—majority in opposition

U.S. political and economic domination surged forward in Eastern Europe and many of the former Soviet republics after the collapse of the USSR. U.S. and other western-based corporations flooded the region, grabbing and privatizing formerly publicly owned industries and resources. Aggressive U.S. government-funded NGOs set the political and social agenda.

Support for Western capitalist methods is evaporating as millions see the violence and brutality of the U.S. occupation of Iraq and watch with growing apprehension the threats of new and wider wars. The enormous dislocation and insecurity of the capitalist markets has fostered widespread unemployment and low wages while shredding social programs throughout the region.

According to polls in both the Czech Republic and Poland, up to two-thirds of the population oppose the U.S. bases. Both countries, however, are governed by pro-U.S. center-right coalition governments that support the U.S. base proposal.

In the Czech Republic the right wing Civic Democratic Party heads a weak coalition government cobbled together after the country had been without any government for eight months following an election impasse. No political party had sufficient numbers to form a government.

One of the first acts of the new government was to announce that it wants to host the new missile shield system popularly referred to as the "Son of Star Wars." But the new officials lacked the authority to even enforce a ban on a demonstration of 2,000 "No to the Bases" activists who marched through downtown Prague on Jan. 29.

In Poland, Defense Minister Radoslaw Sikorski was forced to resign after saying that Poland would take Russia's concern over the U.S. bases into consideration. Sikorski had also opposed placing at risk the 1,000 Polish troops who will be part of the NATO forces sent to Afghanistan.

Opponents of U.S. bases also criticize the extra-territoriality of the bases, which will become sovereign U.S. territory. Tens of thousands of U.S. forces stationed around the world are not subject to local laws. What actually goes on at a U.S. base, what weapons are stockpiled or are tested, what operations are planned are all secret and not discussed with host countries.

Opposition to U.S. bases has given impetus to a growing political movement that has moved millions of people into militant confrontations with the Pentagon from South Korea and the Philippines to Vieques, Puerto Rico. Even in Italy, on this coming Feb. 17, thousands are expected in a national demonstration to protest the expansion of the U.S. base of Camp Ederle in Vicenza.

The simple democratic demand for a national referendum on the placement of a new generation of weapons and bases in the Czech Republic and Poland is an important struggle against wider U.S. wars and military expansion.

The U.S.-based International Action Center has opened a petition campaign in solidarity with millions of people in the Czech Republic and Poland who are mobilizing to oppose the U.S. bases. A Web site allowing people to sign an on-line petition is under construction at: www.BasesOutNow.org. □

demands

began protesting to demand a viable university for the city of El Alto, near La Paz, the capital. The Bolivian government of that time opposed the students, as it believed that their demands were related to Indigenous rights and were therefore subversive. The students took to the streets and were met with rubber bullets, tear gas and baton charges.

Other social movements, such as the street vendors of El Alto, joined the students, and at the end of their struggle the youth movement has at least been partially successful in making sure that the Public University of El Alto is a viable institution.

The students also described their participation in the Gas War of 2003. Their October Youth Movement took an active part in the defense of El Alto against the army that was sent in by President Sánchez. Though they didn't have conventional weapons, they fought the army with sticks and bricks in the streets of their city. These students were famous for their bravery in defense of their community and were given the nickname, "the Taliban."

Struggling for a more just Bolivia

The students expressed their desire to continue the struggle for a more just Bolivia. They believe that Bolivia should be governed based on Indigenous principles of community. They described a system that is based on social consensus and cohesion, where the wealth of the country is distributed equitably.

Minister of Justice Casimira Rodríguez received the NLG delegation in La Paz. Minister Rodríguez is from a Quechua background and was sold into indentured servitude at 12 years of age. She had become a union leader for domestic workers before Morales appointed her minister.

Rodríguez outlined the challenges that the government faced from the inherited state machinery and the Bolivian right-wing. The minister expressed frustration with the resistance of the judiciary to social change in the country and the difficulties poorer Bolivians have accessing the legal system.

One reform that her ministry was planning that is also a demand of the social movements was to implement Indigenous

courts in Indigenous areas. Such courts are based on ideas of restitution and community consensus, with easy access for all.

It is apparent that the social movements continue to influence the direction of Bolivian society. The government has implemented land reform, nationalizations and other progressive measures these movements demand.

The struggle developing in Bolivia and throughout Latin America will determine if the pace of change demanded by the social movements can be sustained by the Bolivian government in the face of bureaucratic and right-wing resistance, backed by U.S. imperialist intervention.

The writer was part of a National Lawyers Guild delegation in January in Bolivia to study the political, social and legal situation there one year after the election of President Evo Morales Ayma. The trip focused on investigating the status of the process of the extradition of former Bolivian president Sánchez de Lozada, currently exiled in Washington, (See Workers World, Feb. 1) and also met with government officials and leaders of social movements.



The House 'debates' Iraq

Continued from page 1

First, the Bush gang has lost its bet on a quick 2003 victory in Iraq. Instead, the Iraqi resistance, despite the wide difference in armaments and its own difficulties, has stretched the Pentagon's ground troops to the limit for four years. Retired Lt. Gen. William Odom, no dove, recently told the Senate just how badly the U.S. had lost in Iraq.

Because of this defeat, U.S. ruling circles have been searching for a way out of their Iraq crisis different from Bush's way. This gave rise to the Iraq Study Group, which Bush has already managed to ignore. It also gives rise to the Democratic Party playing—in a half-hearted way—the role of war opponent.

Second, U.S. voters, especially from working-class and oppressed communities, voted last Nov. 7 to end the war. They voted mostly for Democratic Party candidates, because these candidates presented themselves as opponents of Bush's Iraq policy. The workers want the war to end, the sooner the better, and the spending on it to stop. Even with the coverage of the premature and diversionary 2008 presidential campaign, it is clear that anti-war rhetoric gets the applause.

Third, there should be no illusion about the Democratic Party leadership. No less than the Republicans, they are loyal defenders of U.S. imperialist interests, that is, the interests of the banks and corporations whose owners rule this country and try to rule the world. Sen. Hillary Clinton makes this Democratic Party position clear every time she defends her early vote for the Iraq war, or refuses to "take off the table" the option of a nuclear strike on Iran. It is clear every time a Democratic representative says the U.S. should withdraw from Iraq so it can better strike at Iran or North Korea.

The result is that a ruling class argument over tactics has opened up in Congress on an issue vital to the working class and oppressed people of this country—along with the rest of the world. The question is how should the anti-war movement intervene in this opening in order to advance the struggle to end the war? For such an intervention to reflect working-class interests it should demand that all war funds be cut and used instead for social benefits. The intervention should not only expose the crimes of Bush and the Republicans but also of the Democrats for going along with the war. Congress should feel the heat of working-class demands at a time when the debate is raging and all eyes are upon them.

Regarding this challenge, we welcome the initiative taken by the Troops Out Now Coalition and others who have called for protests around the country on Feb. 17, calling it "No More \$\$ for War Day." In cities all around the country protests will make this point targeting Congress and demanding "money for jobs at a living wage, housing, health care, education, and rebuilding the Gulf Coast."

In New York, the march will go from Times Square to the offices of Senators Clinton and Charles Schumer, two leading Democrats who try to separate from Bush while not giving one inch on U.S. militarism throughout the world. TONC will carry this position to Washington on and around March 17, when there is an anti-war march on the Pentagon set for the fourth anniversary of the U.S. invasion.

Such an initiative defends the interests of the workers and oppressed peoples, exposes both big capitalist parties and makes more likely an independent working-class struggle to end the war and occupation. □

Scapegoating Iran for Iraq failure

To enter its war against the people of Iraq, Washington manufactured the fiction of Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction." Currently, the U.S. is laboring its mental powers to come up with a similar hoax. Now President George W. Bush, with the generous help of the mainstream media (Fox News, CNN, Wall Street Journal, New York Times and many others), has painted Iran guilty of multiple crimes that have to be confronted for the safety and security of the "international community."

To be true to his character, Bush Jr. had to find a scapegoat for his and the U.S. mighty military's failure to bring the people of Iraq to their knees.

No longer are Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and the U.S.-promoted sectarian conflicts between the Shi'ia and Sunni populations of Iraq, who had coexisted side by side in the same communities for centuries, sufficient and convincing explanations for sacrificing the lives of additional American troops. The U.S. administration now has to deflect from its own failures and put the blame on Iraq's neighboring countries of Iran and Syria.

In the last century, the colonial and neo-colonial powers—France in Algeria, Britain in Iraq, the Dutch in Indonesia and the U.S. in Vietnam—exhibited very similar conduct and arguments, trying to place the blame for their own crimes on third parties.

For the White House and the Pentagon, headed now by a trickster from the CIA, Robert Gates, to receive a green light, or at least no serious opposition to continuing the war in Iraq while taking the U.S. to the brink of war with Iran and utter disaster, they have to scare the American people to death. Now, Iran is the "biggest threat to the United States," in the words of neo-conservative hysteria-maker Michael Ledeen.

The Bush regime, in direct opposition to strong public opinion in the U.S. and internationally, has escalated the tension between the two countries and embarked on a series of provocations, which include:

- The kidnapping and threatening of Iranian diplomats in Iraq and around the world.
- The blacklisting of Sepah, Iran's commercial bank, in the European countries.
- Arbitrarily interpreting the UN sanctions

and, with the assistance of U.S. congressional legislation, imposing embargos on foreign companies in non-nuclear commercial relations with Iran. So far the U.S. has imposed sanctions on several Chinese and Russian companies, in violation of international laws.

- The deployment of Patriot missiles to Israel and the Persian Gulf states with the perceived scenario of shooting down incoming Iranian Shahab-3 missiles, in case Tehran tries to retaliate in response to American-Israeli missile attacks.
 - The deployment of the USS Eisenhower nuclear strike force to the Oman Sea and the vicinity of the Persian Gulf waters.
 - The baseless claim of Washington that Iranian "networks" are operating inside Iraq with the purpose of helping the guerrillas target U.S. troops.
 - The constant violation of Iran's airspace by drones to drop electronic transmission devices and collect intelligence information.
 - The deployment of U.S. special forces to the border regions in Khuzistan province next to Basra in Iraq and in Sistan-Baloochistan province next to Afghanistan and Pakistan to influence ethnic minorities and stir up separatist ideas.
- The same scheme used by the U.S. to exploit social tensions in Iraq, using the sectarian yardstick of Shi'a and Sunni, currently has found a greater application in the entire sub-continent of the Middle East. In this game of occupiers, the kings of Saudi Arabia and Jordan have become two enthusiastic and happy players, expressing dissatisfaction with Iran's growing regional status.

Iranian historian Ervand Abrahamian told CNN's Lou Dobbs that if the U.S. administration provoked a war between the U.S. and Iran, it would last 30 to 100 years. The U.S. ruling class may start the war, but the Iranians would finish it.

—Ardeshir Ommani
American-Iranian Friendship Committee
Ardeshiromm@optonline.net

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Using more lies, Bush steps up threats on Iran

Continued from page 1

Iranian. No concrete evidence was given as to the links between the Iranian government and the manufacture or transfer of these weapons to Iraq.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Mohammad Ali Hosseini, made it clear: "Such accusations cannot be relied upon or be presented as evidence. The United States has a long history in fabricating evidence. Such charges are unacceptable." (AP, Feb. 13)

Whether or not the Bush administration has already opted to launch a new war against Iran in the near future, it has decidedly heightened the campaign in favor of one.

Corporate media aids war drive

As usual, the corporate media has supported this campaign, making the newest wave of accusations against Iran front-page, high priority coverage. Despite the fact that the "evidence" presented is dubious at best, they have presented and built up the case in public consciousness.

Yet even the big-business media has

been forced, in a limited way, to acknowledge that this huge propaganda campaign is following the same pattern as the "weapons of mass destruction" ploy in Iraq. Given the fallout around their coverage of the lies that sold the Iraq war, some of these papers attempted to cover themselves by running editorials the next day questioning the lack of concrete evidence, and even the motives of the press conference announcing the news.

The day after the briefing, the top U.S. military officer, Gen. Peter Pace of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, admitted to the Voice of America, "I would not say by what I know that the Iranian government clearly knows or is complicit." (Associated Press, Feb. 13)

Attempting to downplay the criticism that followed Pace's announcement, President George Bush claimed at a Feb. 14 news conference that he was convinced that the Iranian government is supplying weapons to fighters in Iraq. A reporter asked, "What assurances can you give the American people that the intelligence this time will be accurate?"

Bush had a simplistic, elusive response: "We know they're there. We know they're supplied by the Quds Force. We know the Quds Force is a part of the Iranian government. ... My job is to protect our troops." (New York Times, Feb. 14)

Escalation a diversion from Iraq

Last Nov. 7, a majority in the United States voted to protect the troops by sending them home, in what was largely considered an anti-war referendum for a withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. Those same millions are paying close attention to the pending Congressional vote on increased war funding—and despite the voices of the masses at the polls, it appears that Congress is only willing to put forth non-binding resolutions against the continued occupation.

In light of the vote in Congress, the new propaganda campaign against Iran appears as another diversion aimed at dampening the overwhelming anti-war sentiment of working people in the United States. The timing of the release of the "news"—only a month before the fourth

anniversary of the war on March 17, with massive anti-war protests scheduled for that day in Washington and around the country—is not coincidental.

In a Feb. 12 interview on "Good Morning America," Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made this very point: "I think that Americans have made a mistake in Iraq ... and that's why they are trying to point their fingers at other people, and pointing fingers at others will not solve the problem."

Ahmadinejad further pointed out that there is clear, overt evidence that the United States is the main perpetrator of violence in Iraq: "I can give you figures and numbers, which are known: more than 160,000 American troops are in Iraq. What are they doing in Iraq?"

U.S. aggression can't be ruled out

Although the prospect of a new war appears adventurous for the Bush administration, and could possibly lead them deeper into the quagmire than they are today, it doesn't mean the Washington war hawks won't risk a disastrous war in a

U.S. occupation made 3.7 million Iraqis refugees

By David Hoskins

A recent report by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres has identified that two million Iraqi refugees are living in neighboring countries and another 1.7 million people are internally displaced inside Iraq.

This amounts to approximately one out of every seven Iraqis driven from their homes as a result of the U.S.-led occupation. Iraqis are currently displaced by the violence at a rate of 1,300 per day.

Mr. Guterres has pointed out that the number of refugees is “the biggest movement of displaced people in the Middle East since the Palestinian crisis in 1948,” when almost 800,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes following the establishment of the Israeli settler state.

When asked by reporters if Washington has a special responsibility to Iraqis who flee their homes because of the U.S. sponsored violence, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack coyly retorted that, “It’s a shared global responsibility.”

Recent figures indicate that the main governments not fulfilling their share of global responsibility are the same governments that are primarily responsible for the refugees’ predicament—the U.S. and Britain.

Despite the severity of the current crisis only 466 Iraqi refugees have been allowed into the U.S. since the March 2003 inva-



Iraqis are being displaced from their homes at a rate of 1,300 per day as a result of the U.S.-led occupation

sion. The U.K. response has done little more to provide relief to these refugees.

Meanwhile Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran and Turkey have taken in two million refugees between them. Syria alone is struggling to care for up to one million displaced Iraqis. This overload makes it difficult for Syria to continue to accept additional refugees.

Mr. Guterres singled out Syria and Jordan for particular praise saying, “The sacrifices made by these countries are remarkable and the international community needs to assume full responsibility in supporting them”.

Syria’s economy has been severely strained from the influx of refugees and it has joined Jordan and Egypt in reluctantly refusing to admit any more. These countries’ inability to host more refugees further exacerbates the crisis as the number of internally displaced Iraqis is expected to increase by another million before the end of the year.

The onus for providing refuge to these displaced Iraqis lies squarely with the U.S. Were it not for the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq following on the heels of 12 years of brutal sanctions against the Iraqi people, there would be no refugee crisis today.

The Bush administration has given no

indication that it plans to seriously address the needs of refugees. Bush’s proposed 2008 budget calls for just \$35 million—or \$9.45 per currently displaced person—in assistance for Iraq’s refugees.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants had encouraged the Bush administration to seek \$250 million as part of a supplemental war funding request—more than seven times the amount proposed in the 2008 budget.

Bush has made plenty of supplemental requests since the invasion, including \$145 billion in supplemental war funding for the 2008 budget. This money will be used to further escalate the conflict that

has driven so many Iraqis from their homes. The U.S. has not seen fit to use supplemental funding to help these refugees find new homes.

Only a small number of Iraqis have been admitted into the U.S. It appears that until now Washington’s refugee policy toward Iraq made no exceptions, not even for the minority of Iraqis who collaborated with the occupation.

The State Department recently said that it will extend the number of refugees it allows into the U.S. The number will still be small, however, and the Iraqis who officially collaborated with the occupation by working for the U.S. government will be given preference.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced on Feb. 5 the creation of an Iraq Refugee and Internally Displaced Taskforce charged with coordinating displaced assistance and refugee resettlement. Even if this taskforce was meant to provide assistance to all Iraqi refugees, and not just the collaborators, it would be too little and far too late.

The U.S.’s refusal to accept responsibility for the effects of its illegal occupation has shocked many people. Kristele Younes of Refugees International has warned, “We’re not seeing the U.S. do much, frankly,” and if action isn’t taken “in six months, it will be too late.”

Even the Financial Times recently pointed out that “what we should all be scandalized by is how little the two countries most responsible for the Iraq misadventure—the U.S. and the U.K.—are doing to alleviate this crisis.” □



Displaced children. Many have lost their families.

reckless attempt to reverse their defeat.

The Los Angeles Times reports that Israel, the United State’s closest ally in the region, has “begun an unusually open campaign to muster international political and economic pressures against Iran. They warn that time is growing short and hint that they will resort to force if those pressures fail.” (Feb. 7)

In addition, some leading Democrats have fallen in line with the posturing against Iran. In an interview on Democracy Now, New Hampshire Peace Action director Anne Miller described an interaction she had with Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton: “[I] approached the Senator and ... asked her if she really would leave all options on the table [with regards to Iran] and how could she threaten, in effect, other countries’ children with nuclear genocide. She looked me right in the eye, and she said, ‘No options are off the table.’” (Feb. 13)

During the congressional debate over Iraq on Feb. 13, Rep. Anthony Weiner, D-NY, suggested that while Iraq was the wrong target, Iran was the right one: “Our

engagement in Iraq has stretched us thinner and thinner and thinner. ... You know what would send the right message? You take some of those troops out of Baghdad, you put them on the Iranian border.”

While some signals point to the administration’s desire for an air strike against Iran in an attempt to minimize U.S. casualties—and ensure death and destruction for many Iranian people—another alarming sign is Bush’s desire to increase the size of the military by 92,000 troops over the next five years, as expressed in his Jan. 23 State of the Union address.

Retired Army Lt. General William Odom, who oversaw Ronald Reagan’s Star-Wars program, warned, “Fear that Congress will confront [the war in Iraq] helps explain the administration and neocon drumbeat we now hear for expanding the war to Iran. Here we see shades of the Nixon-Kissinger strategy in Vietnam: widen the war into Cambodia and Laos. Only this time, the adverse consequences would be far greater.” (Washington Post, Feb. 11)

E-mail: ldowell@workers.org

Iraqi women to hang for acts of resistance

By LeiLani Dowell

At a time when U.S. occupation troops and puppet Iraqi troops have committed hundreds of thousands of murders of Iraqi civilians, three women are being executed for their alleged role in the armed resistance. The Supreme Iraqi Criminal Court has sentenced the women to death by hanging, with the executions set for March 3 in Baghdad.

According to attorney Walid Hayali of the Iraqi Lawyers Union, 31-year-old Wassan Talib has been charged with the killing of five police officers in an attack on the police; 25-year-old Zainab Fadhil was charged for an attack on a joint patrol of the Iraqi and U.S. armies in Baghdad; and 26-year-old Liqa Muhammad was charged with the killing of an official in the Green Zone in the course of a kidnapping.

The attorney points out that the women were denied legal counsel before and during the trial, and therefore there was no lawyer present to appeal the convictions.

Muhammad is still nursing a child she recently gave birth to in prison. Talib has a 3-year-old daughter with her in the prison.

A fourth woman, Samar Sa’ad Abdullah, has been sentenced to execution for the murder of several family members, which she has denied. (amnesty.org)

Amnesty International notes that the Iraqi interim government reinstated the death penalty in August 2004, and that at least 65 people were executed in 2006 following the ruling. AI states that on Sept. 6 alone, 27 people were reportedly hanged, and 11 more on Sept. 21.

The BRussell’s Tribunal says in a state-

ment, “[This] is a horrible proof that the illegal executions of Saddam Hussein and other Baath leaders were not ‘isolated’ or ‘exceptional’ incidents, but that they laid the groundwork for employment by the Iraqi ruling clique of ‘judicially sanctioned’ executions as a legitimate ‘measure’ against those who oppose their puppet regime and the illegal U.S. occupation.”

E-mail: ldowell@workers.org

MUNDO OBRERO

La juventud paga por la destrucción ambiental del capitalismo

Continúa de página 12

y zonas costeras sostenibles debe estar vinculada con las demandas económicas más amplias de los trabajador@s por viviendas a bajo costo, educación, cuidado de salud, y trabajos bien remunerados.

La única manera en que l@s trabajador@s pueden lograr asegurarse estas demandas es organizar un movimiento político para tomar el poder, lo cual se les ha negado bajo la plutocracia que los capitalistas llaman democracia.

L@s trabajador@s jóvenes y l@s estudiantes deben tratar de colocarse en la vanguardia de este movimiento revolucionario de la clase trabajadora para lograr la justicia social y ambiental.

El escritor es un organizador de FIST - Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (Luchemos Contra el Imperialismo y Unámonos - grupo de jóvenes.

Comuníquese con a fist@workers.org

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

La juventud paga por la destrucción ambiental del capitalismo

Por David Hoskins

El presupuesto presentado por la administración del Presidente Bush para el año 2008 pide una cifra extraordinaria de \$2.900 mil millones de dólares.

Algún/a observador/a razonable podría esperar que un presupuesto tan grande pudiera proveer suficientes recursos económicos para financiar los tipos de programas que podrían beneficiar a jóvenes trabajador@s y estudiantes: una educación superior universal y la cancelación de las deudas de préstamos estudiantiles, el entrenamiento para empleos y programas para puestos públicos que empleen a jóvenes en la construcción de tránsito de masa y viviendas a bajos precios.

En su vez, el presupuesto de Bush está diseñado para financiar el aumento del conflicto en el Medio Oriente. Tal presupuesto provee al Pentágono de \$100 mil millones de dólares para las guerras en Irak y en Afganistán este año, además de los \$70 mil millones ya aceptados por el Congreso, más \$141,7 mil millones para estas guerras el próximo año—todo para pagar por la muerte y la destrucción para destruir la oposición a la súper explotación del área por las grandes compañías petroleras estadounidenses y británicas.

El presupuesto total del Pentágono para el año 2008, que también incluye gastos para sistemas de armas extremadamente caras y el despliegue de soldados alrededor del mundo, llegaría a \$624,6 mil millones de dólares.

Matando a la gente tanto rápida como lentamente

El impacto humano inmediato de la guerra en Irak es obvio. Más 3.100 soldados estadounidenses han muerto hasta ahora en Irak. Las cifras de civiles iraquíes víctimas de la violencia han sido reportadas en un exceso de 60.000 personas. El promedio de la edad de los soldados estadounidenses muertos en Irak es de menos de 27 años.

La guerra en Irak no solo afecta a l@s jóvenes, absorbiendo recursos y enviándoles a morir. También tiene graves consecuencias ambientales para las personas que tendrán más tiempo para vivir en este planeta.

El uso del Uranio Reducido, del fósforo blanco, del MK77 Mod 5 NAPALM y otras armas ilegales usadas en Irak, tienen un efecto inmediato devastador sobre la salud de soldados y civiles. El Club Sierra de Canadá advirtió en el año 1999 que “las consecuencias ambientales resultantes de los residuos dejados por las armas derivadas del Uranio Reducido se dejará sentir por miles de años ya que los productos de este al disolverse, se transforman continuamente en substancias peligrosas radioactivas en la cadena de disolución del uranio.”

La economía de los Estados Unidos desde hace mucho tiempo fue estructurada deliberadamente para depender del petróleo por medio de un acuerdo entre las compañías de caucho, petróleo y las automovilísticas para sofocar la calidad del tránsito de masa. (El libro “Fast Food Nation” de Eric Schlosser da los detalles).

Según la Asociación para la Información sobre la Energía, el consumo de petróleo por los Estados Unidos sobrepasa los 20,8 millones de barriles al día. Este es un ejemplo perfecto de cómo, bajo el capitalismo, el crecimiento económico a corto plazo predomina sobre el desarrollo sustentable a largo plazo debido a la búsqueda de ganancias.

La mayoría de l@s trabajador@s en los Estados Unidos no tiene acceso a una transportación segura pública y se ven obligad@s a comprar automóviles para llegar a sus trabajos, para comprar, para tener una vida social. Esto tiene consecuencias en los bolsillos de l@s jóvenes trabajador@s al mantenerse los precios de la gasolina sobre los \$2 dólares por galón. El medioambiente también sufre ya que el incremento en los viajes se traga casi 9,2 millones de barriles de petróleo al día.

El Panel Intergubernamental sobre el Cambio Climático se reunió en París a comienzos de febrero y pronunció un muy esperado reporte que finalmente confirmó, con muchos datos científicos, que la actividad humana es el factor principal tras el calentamiento global ambiental. El Panel predijo que las temperaturas continuarán ascendiendo tanto como 7,2 grados Fahrenheit para finales del siglo.

El calentamiento global está causado cuando la concentración de gases de efecto invernadero como por ejemplo el bióxido de carbono (CO₂), sube y comienza a formar una cobija retenedora del calor alrededor del planeta. Más de la mitad del CO₂ en la atmósfera proviene de la quema de combustibles fósiles - petróleo, carbón y gas natural. La deforestación es otro factor contribuyente al aumento de CO₂ porque los árboles lo absorben y producen oxígeno.

Degradación ambiental y ganancias

La historia del capitalismo está llena de ejemplos de la indiferencia por el medioambiente natural y las vidas de l@s trabajador@s jóvenes. La revolución industrial vio la creación de tecnologías maravillosas y estableció la base material para la ascendencia del capitalismo alrededor del mundo. Dado que los capitalistas utilizaron esas tecnologías para maximizar sus ganancias, el resultado fue una contaminación extensa.

Manchester en Inglaterra durante el siglo XIX fue un ejemplo de cómo la implementación de la tecnología por parte del capitalismo causó la ruina desde el principio. No había lugar en ese pueblo industrial para jardines o espacios verdes. El aire se llenó de un humo espeso que contaminó los pulmones, la ropa y las casas de l@s trabajador@s forzados a vivir en la ciudad.

Un 57 por ciento de l@s niñ@s murió antes de llegar a los cinco años. La expectativa de vida para l@s pobres era apenas de 17 años. Un reporte gubernamental publicado en el 1842 no dejó duda alguna que

muchas de las muertes resultaron como consecuencia de una degradación ambiental severa. El cofundador del socialismo científico, Federico Engels, escribió sobre este asalto contra l@s trabajador@s y el medioambiente en su libro del 1845 “La Condición de la Clase Trabajadora en Inglaterra”.

Mientras el capitalismo avanzó hasta llegar a la etapa del imperialismo moderno, con sus divisiones territoriales del mundo entre los poderes capitalistas, ocurrieron también frecuentes guerras.

La Primera y la Segunda Guerra Mundial resultaron en el rediseño de los mapas de África, Medio Oriente y Asia por los poderes coloniales/imperialistas. Después, EEUU libró guerras despiadadas contra los movimientos de liberación nacional liderados por comunistas en Vietnam y Corea. Y la primera Guerra

del Golfo se volvió en precursor de la actual ocupación de Irak.

El Pentágono dice que 617.000 soldados de los EEUU murieron en combate durante el siglo XX. La mayoría eran jóvenes y reclutados de la clase trabajadora; muchos también eran oprimidos por razón de su nacionalidad.

Una de las más grandes amenazas al medioambiente surgió de la Segunda Guerra Mundial por el desarrollo y uso de armas nucleares por parte del gobierno de los EEUU. El bombardeo de Hiroshima y Nagasaki provocó la muerte de cerca de 215.000 civiles japoneses. Una lluvia negra cayó en algunas áreas después de la explosión, trayendo materiales radioactivos y creando una fuente secundaria de veneno radioactivo. Cánceres y leucemias resultaron como producto de la radiación al igual que deformidades al momento del nacimiento además de partos de mortinatos.

El histórico uso de armas nucleares por parte de los EEUU y las amenazas recientes de guerra permanente bajo la doctrina de Bush ha hecho necesario que países como la República Democrática Popular de Corea desarrollen tecnología nuclear para su propia defensa.

La negativa por parte del imperialismo estadounidense de confrontar las causas básicas del calentamiento global es el ejemplo más reciente del mal empleo de la tecnología moderna por parte de la clase dominante.

El manejo irresponsable del ambiente enfatiza la urgencia de que l@s trabajador@s y el pueblo oprimido controlen los medios productivos para que se pueda cambiar la dirección de la tecnología hacia la cobertura de las necesidades humanas.

El socialismo: un modelo sostenible

No hay nada inherentemente malo para el medioambiente sobre los avances científicos y tecnológicos ocurridos desde la revolución industrial. De hecho, Cuba socialista señala brillantemente cómo el

control de l@s trabajador@s puede resultar en una implementación más sostenible de las invenciones modernas.

Cuba ha señalado el paso a la vanguardia de la conservación y del desarrollo sostenible a pesar del brutal bloqueo estadounidense de su país. La nación isleña ha hecho increíbles avances en técnicas agrícolas, construcción de viviendas y conservación de energía.

Uno de los logros más impresionantes de Cuba es el desarrollo de la agricultura orgánica, a partir de comienzos de los años 90. Combina exitosamente fertilizantes producidos orgánicamente y técnicas de rotación de cultivos con bio-pesticidas modernos que usan formulaciones microbianas no-tóxicas para controlar las plagas y aumentar la nutrición de la tierra.

Los jardines dedicados a los vegetales en los vecindarios de las ciudades han reducido la transportación que se necesita para llevar alimentos a las zonas urbanas. En La Habana, por ejemplo, se han desarrollado 50.000 jardines comunitarios para proveer comida a la población de la ciudad.

Cuba redujo su dependencia del petróleo usado en el transporte al equipar los autobuses públicos con percheros para bicicletas y distribuir más de un millón de bicicletas hechas en China al pueblo cubano. La experimentación con materiales de construcción más naturales como el bambú para la construcción de casas de estilo moderno, fue desarrollada como respuesta a la preocupación sobre la cantidad de emisiones de efecto invernadero que resultaba de los métodos tradicionales de construcción.

Cuba ha integrado también la educación sobre el medioambiente en su currículo nacional mientras implementa programas especiales de conservación para las zonas montañosas del país.

El camino hacia adelante

L@s jóvenes y estudiantes de los Estados Unidos han estado en la vanguardia de la conservación del medioambiente. No es insólito que trabajador@s jóvenes que tienen toda su vida por delante, much@s de los cuales enfrentan la cuestión de empezar una familia, mirarían los futuros peligros planteados por la contaminación con un sentido de indignación moral.

L@s estudiantes desempeñaron un rol clave en el establecimiento del primer Día de la Tierra en 1970 y hoy en día l@s jóvenes están involucrad@s en una variedad de cuestiones ambientales. Pero hace falta un ingrediente clave. Ese ingrediente es la conciencia de clase.

La degradación ambiental ocurre porque el control sobre la tecnología la tienen los capitalistas. Por ello no es sorprendente que la clase trabajadora multinacional sea la que sufre el peor daño ambiental resultado de ese control.

Es importante que la acción ambiental militante no esté separada del movimiento revolucionario amplio para el poder de la clase trabajadora. La campaña para necesidades como el aire puro, agua potable

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