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As millions lose homes

Mortgage crisis spreads on Wall St.

Banks bail out hedge funds but foreclose on workers' houses

By Jaimeson Champion

The subprime mortgage crisis, which has already forced a record number of working class families to lose their homes to foreclosure, has metastasized. It has spread into other sectors of the U.S. economy and sent shockwaves down Wall Street. The 21st-century robber barons of finance capital are scrambling to avoid a further meltdown as the predatory loans they underwrote go into default en masse.

Subprime lenders lure people with poor credit into taking out mortgages but then squeeze higher interest out of them and foreclose more often when they can't pay.

The panic over the worsening crisis was on full display in the week culminating on June 22, when Bear Stearns—one of the largest and most influential investment banks on Wall Street—announced it would spend \$3.2 billion of its own money in an effort to rescue one of its hedge funds, the ironically named High Grade Structured Credit Fund, from complete liquidation. The hedge fund was under siege by individual investors who had begun demanding their money back after it posted large losses resulting from the subprime crisis.

The \$3.2 billion bailout proposal capped a frenzied week in which a number of different rescue plans were suggested. The capitalist rulers and their executives debated ways in which to best limit the damage to their holdings.

High Grade Structured Credit Fund is the less leveraged of two Bear Stearns hedge funds which were intricately involved in underwriting the predatory mortgage loans made to working

families. During the housing bubble of 2000-2006, Bear Stearns, in addition to other Wall Street giants like Goldman Sachs and Bank of America, bankrolled the subprime mortgage lenders with hundreds of billions of dollars worth of credit.

The subprime lenders then used this money to ensnare working class families, a disproportionate number of them Black and Latin@, in adjustable rate mortgages that had "exploding" interest rates. These loans would start out at low "teaser" interest rates, some as low as 1 percent and 2 percent for the first few years, but would then reset or explode as interest rates skyrocketed into the double digits.

Subprime mortgage lenders and their investment bank sponsors on Wall Street raked in astronomical profits during the housing bubble. At their peak, subprime mortgages were a \$1.3 trillion industry. But now that the housing bubble has burst, sending the price of homes into a freefall, borrowers who were caught in these predatory loan schemes are defaulting in unexpectedly large numbers.

The Wall Street institutions are now starting to feel acute losses. High Grade Structured Credit Fund had posted losses of nearly 23 percent over the first four months of 2007. Losses at the second Bear Stearns hedge fund, High Grade Structure Credit Enhanced Leverage Fund, are much worse, but so far Bear Stearns has not announced a bailout plan for that fund.

Waves of foreclosures

As is the case with all economic crises under capitalism, the

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Lesbian, gay, bi, trans: Pride & solidarity —Centerfold



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Superdome II

New Orleans death rates jump 47%

By Ellen Catalinotto

New Orleans residents are dying at 47 percent higher than normal rates since Hurricane Katrina.

When the hurricane struck in 2005, racist and incompetent government agencies failed to provide people in the Superdome with water, food or sanitation. According to a report published in June 2007 in the new journal, "Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness," the sequel to the Superdome disaster is an ongoing toll of almost 400 excess deaths a month.

Dr. K.U. Stephens, head of the New Orleans public health department, led the team of experts who produced the study documenting the rise in death rates. The authors cite the collapse of the public health infrastructure as a major cause of this increase.

The report notes that "only 15 of 22 area hospitals have reopened, with less than half the number of pre-storm beds. A significant portion of the population is still living in substandard conditions, contributing to the reported pervasive, unmitigated stress among residents."

New Orleans' public hospital—named Charity—which provided care to many of the poor and uninsured, including the majority of the mentally ill, has been closed. More than 4,000 doctors have left the city. Rates of depression, post traumatic stress disorder and other psychiatric problems have soared.

The lack of medical resources has been made worse by the inability of health officials to accurately track, monitor or report conditions requiring urgent intervention. The report concludes that "a destroyed or poorly recovered public health infrastructure, which normally would be able to identify health problems and protect the health of a population, has in fact contributed to excess mortality."

The study used paid death notices published in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, the major daily newspaper, to obtain numbers of deaths occurring in the greater New Orleans area from January to June 2006. Official death-certificate data is unavailable due to understaffing and other problems in the city's health statistics bureau. A comparison of average monthly mortality rates for 2002 to 2003 showed that the death notices in the Times-Picayune and official Louisiana state data were closely comparable.

An average of 1,317 people died each month during the study period. This compares with 924 before the storm—when the population of New Orleans was much bigger. The number of excess deaths was more than 2,300 in the course of the six-month study period, about twice the number who died during the storm. The mortality rate in the first six months of 2006 was 91 per 100,000 people, up from 62 per 100,000 before Katrina, an increase of 47 percent.

People throughout the world exposed to catastrophic public health



Ellen Catalinotto and Malik Rahim, Common Ground Collective leader, New Orleans, Dec. 2005.

emergencies die from indirect causes for many years afterward. These deaths affect the most vulnerable people in society and are 90 percent preventable, according to the editors of the new public-health journal.

Beyond the report

The report did not address issues of age, race, gender or cause of death. Racism results in wide gaps in health status between whites and African Americans. Studies of health disparities show this in everything from infant mortality to HIV, treatments for heart disease and cancer—even when insurance status is equal. A similar pattern would be expected in the post-Katrina deaths.

Another important health issue following Hurricane Katrina concerns questions about exposure to mold and to toxic substances in the floodwaters. Tracking these outcomes will require long-term follow-up studies.

Deaths among survivors still unable to return to New Orleans were not included in the report. These evacuees face the trauma and stress of having lost their homes, possessions and social networks. Accessing health care in their new locations is just one of the multiple problems and stresses they face. "We can get hung up on the numbers, but the bottom line is that people are dying at a faster rate here post-Katrina,"

says Juliette Saussy, director of New Orleans EMS in a June 21 interview in USA Today. "The lack of primary care, of mental health care and the long waits in emergency rooms all have [worsened] people's normally controllable chronic diseases," she says. "Diabetes, respiratory disease and hypertension all are killers, especially when they're not dealt with."

The writer was a volunteer nurse at the Common Ground Health Clinic in New Orleans in December 2005.



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Police beat, arrest civil rights attorneys

By Larry Hales
Brooklyn, N.Y.

A long-time civil rights and people's attorney, Michael Tarif Warren, and his partner Evelyn Warren, also a lawyer, were beaten and arrested by police on June 21 in Brooklyn, N.Y. The Warrens, who are both Black, were held for several hours at the 77th Precinct before being released.

Their statement to the press on being released later that evening, following a long ordeal and after both having been attacked by a cop, was: "What we experienced tonight happens every day in our communities. What happened to me was the result of doing what is right—speaking out against wrongdoing."

The doing "what is right" was to observe and try to offer assistance to a young Black man who had been chased by cops. After having caught the young man, they began kicking him while he had his hands behind his back and was on the ground.

The following are excerpts from an article entitled "NYPD Brutalize Human Rights Attorney" written by Amadi Ajamu, an organizer with the December 12th Movement:

"Warren, a high profile attorney who has been practicing law for 28 years, said, 'We saw a young kid being chased by a horde of policemen across a McDonald's parking lot. They tackled him and immediately put handcuffs on him. Then Sergeant Talvy, who appeared to be in charge, began kicking him in the head and ribs, and stomping him on the neck.' The other police officers followed suit. 'They literally gave this kid a beating which was unconscionable.'

"Not only as people of conscience and moral decency, but as lawyers, we said this is outrageous.' They arrived and stood 'more than 10 feet away,' he said. Mr. Warren told Sergeant Talvy they were lawyers, and told him to stop and just take the young man to the precinct. In response, he said, 'Talvy shouted, 'I don't give a f**k who you are, get the f**k back in your car!'

"They returned to their car, and Mr. Warren began to write down the license plate numbers of the police vehicles as they watched them put the bleeding young man in a car. 'Then Talvy comes to my car and viciously attacks me, repeatedly punching me through the window. Shouting, 'Get out of the car!' he dragged me out of the car, ripping my shirt and pants. My wife, very upset, asked him, 'Why are you doing this?' He then punched her in the face.'



WW PHOTOS: ARTURO J. PÉREZ SAAD

Michael Tarif Warren (above center), Charles Barron (below, left) and Larry Holmes address crowd outside Brooklyn's 77th Precinct at June 23 protest rally.



Both were arrested and taken to the 77th precinct charged with obstruction, disorderly conduct, and resisting arrest.

"Michael Tarif Warren has handled many police misconduct cases in the black community, including the shocking police murder of graffiti artist Michael Stewart, and Yvonne Smallwood, who was beaten to death by police in the Bronx. He also handled the case exonerating the five young black teenagers falsely convicted of raping the white bank executive 'Central Park Jogger.'"

Arrests outrage community

Perhaps the cops didn't know who they were attacking, maybe they did. It is entirely possible, though, that the cops thought the two were a "regular" Black couple and that, like countless other times that play out in every city around this country, they would simply get away with it.

The community might hear or read of the incident, and then again, they might not. There could be a press conference, a few rallies, outrage, marches calling for justice, but at the end of the day, just as

many times before, the police chief, mayor and the corporate media outlets would speak of the difficulty of police work.

There would be no suspension, no dock in pay, no firings and cops still celebrated as heroes in popular media.

This time, though, the cops picked on two Freedom Fighters, two well-known heroes and supporters of liberation struggles around the world. This time the cops attacked people who not only have the know-how and determination to fight back, but also the popular support that comes with having been in the struggle for years and with being loved for their work, compassion and humble demeanor.

There is no greater evidence of those assets than what happened the night of their detainment.

It undoubtedly goes without utterance or written word that no cop at the 77th Precinct expected that there would be a minor rebellion, albeit a peaceful one. But that is what happened in the late evening of June 21.

As soon as word got out about the Warrens' arrests, the call was sent out by e-mail, WBAI-FM public radio and by phone to gather at the 77th Precinct where

they were being held. In just a couple of hours, the precinct was packed with political and community leaders and activists, including this writer.

Those who immediately came to the precinct were Brooklyn-based city council member Charles Barron; the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement; the December 12th Movement; FIERCE!; CAAAV; WBAI, which broadcast the incident on the airwaves; the Jericho Movement; the Safiya/Nuh Foundation; CEMOTAP, the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition; representatives from the Muslim and Haitian communities; the International Action Center; Workers World Party; and other organizations and concerned individuals.

There was barely room to move and still more people waited in the stairwell and outside in the rain. When one cop asked if the people could make room, someone in the crowd retorted, "As soon as you let Michael and Evelyn go, we'll give you all the room you want."

Because of the mass of people, there was nothing the cops could do, not even when the cop who attacked Michael Tarif and Evelyn Warren was pointed out, and not

Continued on page 9

As state piles on new charges

Popular Black official remains in jail

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Milwaukee

On June 22 District Attorney John T. Chisholm unveiled more state charges against Black City Alderman Michael McGee Jr., who has been locked up in the Milwaukee County jail since May 28 on various charges.

McGee has been charged in state court with seven felony counts and five misdemeanors related to elections, bribery, conspiracy and contempt. He has also been indicted in federal court on charges that allege he pressured businesses in his district for money to get licenses okayed through the City Council. McGee is facing at least 30 years on all counts if convicted.

The jailed Black alderman is due back in court July 13. On June 22 his bail on

the state charges was reduced to \$50,000 from \$100,000, but authorities would not immediately release him because of pending federal charges. U.S. Attorney Steven M. Biskupic said the U.S. Marshals Service placed a hold on McGee that would turn him over to federal custody if he were to be released on bail in relation to the state charges. McGee would then be taken into federal court for his first appearance there, which could include a separate bail amount being set.

This situation amounts to an extraordinary full-court press by state and federal agencies in collusion with the corporate media against an elected official from the African-American community. Yet despite this attempt to demonize and silence McGee through incarceration and other means, numerous supporters are standing behind him.

On June 22, as the handcuffed alderman entered the courtroom, over 50 supporters, many wearing "Free Ald. McGee 4 Me" tee shirts, stood in salute with their fists raised.

On June 8 the Milwaukee NAACP had held a press conference with the goal of "seeking justice for Alderman Michael McGee Jr." Jerry Hamilton, president of the local branch, said the bail in McGee's case was unjust, as in recent years almost all other elected officials in Milwaukee and Wisconsin who were charged and indicted were released on their own recognizance or a small signature bond. Hamilton said the bail of \$250,000 set when McGee was first arrested exceeded the total of all the bails of the other recently indicted politicians. McGee is the only one not to be released on his own recognizance or a signature bond.

Since McGee's arrest, a wide range of supporters in the Black community has supported him by demonstrating at his court appearances, getting messages of support aired on local Black radio and other avenues. In contrast to the rabidly racist coverage in the predominantly white media, Black media outlets have covered extensively the support for McGee and the implications of his case for all poor and working people in Milwaukee and beyond.

Many in the Black community see the targeting of McGee as payback for his steadfast support of economic and social justice for poor and working people, particularly in regard to Black youth and fighting police brutality.

McGee supporters are now discussing various defense activities and will be packing the court again on July 13. □

Used up and thrown away

1.8 million veterans get no health care

By Caleb T. Maupin

Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish-born revolutionary and courageous opponent of imperialist war, wrote of soldiers returning to Germany after World War I that they had “sacrificed the most blood and goods” but that they “return to need and misery, while billions has been heaped in the hands of a few.”

She would say the same thing today about U.S. soldiers.

The young men and women who, often out of basic economic need, sign up for the military are betrayed. Recruiters patrol the poor and oppressed neighborhoods bearing promises of veterans' benefits. Capitalist politicians brag about how much they “support the troops.”

But regardless of their rhetoric, regard-

less of recruiters' empty promises, there are currently in the U.S. 1.8 million veterans who have no health insurance or any access to medical care, according to the Washington Post of June 21.

It seems that, even if young people donate their bodies to the rulers of this country, they still can't get what is guaranteed to everyone in socialist countries and even in some capitalist ones: healthcare provided to the people free of charge.

It was already a scandal that 45 million people in the U.S. are without any health coverage. Now, at this time when every big shot professes to love the troops who are fighting the rich man's war, it is doubly scandalous that even veterans can't get health services.

The Post article added: “The ranks of uninsured veterans have increased by

290,000 since 2000, said Stephanie J. Woolhandler, the Harvard Medical School professor who presented her findings yesterday before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. About 12.7 percent of non-elderly veterans—or one in eight—lacked health coverage in 2004, the most recent year for which figures are available, she said, up from 9.9 percent in 2000.”

Some of these veterans are eligible for Veterans Administration care, but there are no VA hospitals or facilities near them. The government has closed many down recently—just as veterans with multiple problems have been returning home.

Another recent study, conducted by Dr. Drew A. Helmer for the Baylor College of Medicine, discovered that, in a group of 56 veterans returned from Iraq and Afghanistan, the average was four physical health

concerns for each one, and that 55 percent also had mental health issues. The study was published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

Perhaps this callous disregard for veterans should not be surprising. Under capitalism, workers are laid off when their work is no longer profitable; public housing is reduced as homelessness rises; cuts are made to food stamp services; schools are crumbling and classrooms are packed even as the incomes of the super-rich soar into the stratosphere.

In a system based on profit, when people are no longer useful tools for those who crowd the halls of power, they will be cast aside as useless, no matter how many promises must be broken. The only recourse for veterans is to organize and use their skills to fight back. □

Birds are disappearing

Another warning to fix human society

By Kris Hamel

Avian enthusiasts, environmentalists and nature lovers everywhere read with a heavy heart the reports of the National Audubon Society study on Common Birds in Decline released on June 14. The study showed dramatic declines in populations of 20 common bird species in the U.S.

The Audubon Society summed up the 40-year study: “Since 1967 the average population of the common birds in steepest decline has fallen by 68 percent; some individual species nose-dived as much as 80 percent. All 20 birds on the national Common Birds in Decline list lost at least half their populations in just four decades.”

Among the nationally diminishing species are the whippoorwill, down 57 percent; four types of sparrows, including lark and field sparrows, which declined an average



Bobwhite, field sparrow, eastern meadowlark and, below, an evening grosbeak.

of 64 percent; the eastern meadowlark, down by 72 percent; evening grosbeaks, reduced 78 percent; and the biggest loser of all, the northern bobwhite, down 82 percent. The northern bobwhite's population, now just 5.5 million birds, was 31 million only four decades ago.

Individual states have seen dramatic declines in other bird species. California, for instance, has documented declines of 75 percent to 96 percent for several species, including the northern pintail, horned lark and loggerhead shrike.

The Audubon Society avows: “Birds are important indicators of the overall health of our environment. Like the proverbial canaries in the coal mine, they send an urgent warning about threats to our water, air, natural resources, climate and more.”

The Audubon study was based on over 40 years of data collected by the organization's annual winter bird counts and

summer censuses conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey. Thousands of volunteers over many decades meticulously collected data. The Audubon bird counts have taken place for more than 100 years, and the USGS census began in 1967.

The devastating decline in bird populations is blamed on several factors, including loss of grassland and shrub habitat from “suburban sprawl” and other development; the expansion of corporate agriculture, including the drive to produce more ethanol, a corn-based fuel alternative; and effects of global warming.

In the dominant capitalist system, production and development of every kind is motivated by the drive for ever-increasing profits, the so-called “bottom line.” Every year, each privately owned company has to try to show an increase in its profits, no matter what the cost to the environment, human beings or any living species. Even

the potential destruction of life on earth is no barrier to the capitalists' plans to expand in order to raise their profits.

This class of super-rich individuals is what stands between the great mass of humanity and true social progress.

Only socialism, a social and economic system based not on profit but on planning to meet people's needs, can truly protect birds and all the myriad forms of life on earth. It takes social ownership of production to plan and implement a sustainable economy, to work out how people can live comfortably but efficiently, how they can travel from place to place without polluting the environment, how life in general can be reorganized so the long-term needs of the people are met, with every precaution taken to safeguard the natural environment and diverse ecological systems and species.

Hamel is a member of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Detroit Audubon Society.



Mortgage crisis spreads to Wall Street

Continued from page 1

working class has borne the brunt of the fallout from the subprime mortgage crisis. Entire communities have been uprooted as foreclosures force families from homes in which they had invested their entire life savings. “For Sale” signs have become ubiquitous, dotting the front yards of homes in working class neighborhoods across the country, as banks try to unload the foreclosed properties in an already glutted market.

The Center for Responsible Lending projects that an additional 20 percent of the some \$265 billion worth of outstanding subprime mortgages around the country will enter into foreclosure over the coming months. Each new foreclo-

sure further depresses the value of other homes in that neighborhood, creating a downward spiral.

Working class communities in states like Michigan, California, Colorado, Ohio, Arizona and New York have been particularly hard hit. In many areas in the Midwest, the wave of foreclosures coupled with large-scale layoffs in heavy industries has turned once vibrant communities into ghost towns.

While the surging wave of foreclosures appears to be an almost unstoppable force, it is important to highlight the many ways in which working families and other community groups are organizing to help stem the tide.

Activists in and around Cleveland, an

area that has been absolutely devastated by the subprime mortgage crisis, have begun an innovative campaign to force the remaining subprime lending institutions out of the area. Under the direction of the East Side Organizing Project, activists have been placing thousands of toy sharks on the front lawns of the homes of subprime lending executives to convey the message that the lenders are loan sharks who are preying on the community.

Economic stagnation

The subprime crisis has led to a marked stagnation in the U.S. economy. New home construction had been a primary engine of economic growth in the U.S. since the late 1990s. Following the dot-com bust of

2000, Wall Street began intentionally funneling billions of dollars worth of investment capital into the housing market in an attempt to boost the U.S. economy.

During the housing bubble of 2000-2006, which was marked by historic levels of new home construction, the capitalists' plan seemed to be working. The housing bubble had meant an increased demand for labor in numerous industries related to home construction. Carpenters, masons, electricians, plumbers—all saw demand for their skills increase. While the rest of the U.S. economic landscape consisted primarily of low-paying service industry jobs, the housing trades gave some workers a more financially rewarding option.

Continued on the next page



Ashley Turner, shown here, and Ben Browning U-locked themselves to the gates of the detention center in solidarity with immigrants.



PHOTOS: HOUSTON INDYMEDIA

Protest briefly shuts ICE jail

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Just after dawn on June 4, two young Houston activists shut down the Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center in Houston for three hours. They chained and locked themselves to the only two gates that allow vehicles into and out of the jail.

Ashley Turner and Ben Browning used bike locks and chains to attach themselves to the automatic rolling gates in front of the jail, which holds 950 people. Not only could the shift not change, but none of the vans bringing in people rounded up in early morning raids could enter either.

A phalanx of Houston cops joined the ICE cops and finally told the two activists they had five minutes to get off the property. One of the dozens of people joining in the protest and supporting the civil disobedience told the cops they had five minutes to release all the people in the detention center. The standoff began.

It took three fire trucks and dozens of police and firefighters over two hours to figure out how to get the bike locks off. Turner and Browning were led to the cop cars as their supporters cheered. They were bonded out and now face a misdemeanor charge of trespassing and a felony charge of possession of a criminal instrument.

A newly formed group, Houston Sin Fronteras, which Turner and Browning are working with, has called for another demonstration in front of the ICE Detention Center on the Fourth of July at 8 a.m. to show solidarity with all those incarcerated while U.S. authori-

ties profess to celebrate freedom and independence.

A statement released by participants after the arrests linked this action to others happening around the world during the G8 summit:

"This week the leaders of the richest and most powerful eight countries in the world are meeting in Germany for the Group of 8 (G8) conference. During the G8 gathering these leaders will continue to strategize and promote the economic and political policy of neoliberal 'globalization.' These eight nations, which compose 65 percent of the global economy, have pushed for an economic system

which impacts the whole world, making the rich richer, and impoverishing millions.

"Today, June 4th, the Dissent! Network in Europe has called for a Global Day of Action for freedom of movement and equal rights for all!

"We here in Houston, Texas, USA, have heard this call to action and share the same concerns as our brothers and sisters in Europe and all over the world who are taking action today in solidarity with migrants and refugees of the global economy."

For updates, see www.houston.indymedia.org. □

LETTERS

Police killing of Aaron Steele

This email is to comment on the article written by Martha Grevatt about the numerous killings that were done by the Cleveland police in the beginning of this month [WW, "Cops kill three people in 3 days," May 25].

Aaron Steele was a friend of mine and he is truly missed and to have the media and the Cleveland Police Department paint someone who was as gentle as a teddy bear as a hardened criminal thug type haunts me every day that I have to face without him. I am just thankful that someone has the sense and the heart to state what they believe is true and what they believe is not.

The one thing that hurts us all that know him is that the Aaron we know and love would not have pointed a gun at the police but out of all the witnesses that saw the shooting no one went on record to say that he did point a gun. The coro-

ner ruled his death a homicide so I hope some kind of justice comes out of this.

—Charmagne Jordan
Cleveland

More on Barry Bonds

I liked the Mike Gimbel response to the Barry Bonds situation in your earlier issue [WW, Letters, May 31]. This past weekend the San Francisco Giants were here in Boston to play the Red Sox. Of course Barry Bonds was heavily jeered and booed by the local crowd (so-called Red Sox Nation).

Babe Ruth (famed ex-Red Soxer) was hardly a "choir boy" based on his notorious off-the-field behavior as noted by Gimbel. But the point that impressed me the most is that of Barry Bonds' allegedly "bad attitude"—or that he is an "uppity negro." The hypocrisy around the legal and illegal drug use in this country is another story.

As a man of color (Asian-American) I am well aware of the label of having a "bad attitude" in the world of race and race consciousness (this was reinforced by my experience as a Marine in Vietnam)—in this case then "good" means "go along to get along"—maintaining a servile, correct attitude in the face of authority.

Interestingly enough, recently a black MLB player (whose name and team escapes me at this moment)—stated that a lot of MLB players are black, but they have Spanish surnames—consequently these "temp/guest" workers are more easy to "handle" by the league bosses than say native-born African-American players.

I believe it was Malcolm X that said: "The Negro (black man) who is not angry should go see a psychiatrist."

Thank you.

—Henry
Boston

Mortgage

Continued from page 4

But the subprime meltdown has led to a near moratorium on new home construction, which in turn has meant more layoffs and a further reduction in wages for workers in the construction industries. Hundreds of thousands of workers have been laid off or have had their work hours and wages reduced in the wake of the subprime crisis. Workers in large conglomerates like Home Depot and Lowe's have also become victims of subprime-induced layoffs as those stores trim their workforce in response to lower demand for construction products.

U.S. gross domestic product growth has slowed to a crawl. The latest figures show that the U.S. economy grew by a measly 0.6 percent over the first quarter of 2007. Wages continue to lag behind inflation even though aggregated measures of productivity and corporate profits continue to rise. Workers across the country are struggling to cope with food and gas prices that keep going up.

While it remains to be seen just how deep into the heart of the U.S. capitalist economy the subprime crisis will strike, it has already laid bare some critical chinks in the armor of the empire. While it is by no means certain that the subprime crisis will push the economy into a recession, it appears more likely with each new record high in foreclosure rates.

A full-blown economic recession, coupled with rising food and gas prices, an imperial army bogged down in the sands of Iraq, and an angry working class at home: it's a scenario for a surge of orga-

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Marchers demand 'Trans justice, now!'

By Leslie Feinberg
New York

Close to 1,000 people marched in the third annual Trans Day of Action for Social and Economic Justice here on June 22. The event was organized by TransJustice of the Audre Lorde Project, an organizing center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, transgender, and

gender non-conforming people of color.

Elizabeth Marie Rivera, organizing coordinator of TransJustice, told Workers World that a wide variety of organizations and individuals endorsed the march, many of whom have not participated in the last two actions.

Marchers demanded accountability from city agencies for homeless trans youths and adults. The protest also,

Rivera said, "brought visibility to ongoing issues that continue to impact on the lives of trans and gender nonconforming people.

"We need to be able to continue to create a movement for voices to be heard," she continued, "to bring visibility to our community and the discrimination that we face on a daily basis, to let people know we're here, we're human

and we won't allow our community to be silenced."

Rivera said "there was new energy this year, the leadership is very strong this year, and a lot of people are looking to see what's going to come out of TransJustice in the upcoming year."

Elizabeth Marie Rivera concluded, "My goal next year is 2,000!" □

New York Pride

WWP: 'Free all political prisoners'

Workers World Party took part in the LGBT Pride March in New York City, as it has for more than a quarter of a century. The contingent was multi-national, immigrant and U.S.-born, and included party members of all sexualities and genders and sexes.

This year, the WWP contingent pressed the demand for freedom for the Jersey 4. An all-white jury recently convicted the four African American lesbians—Venice Brown (19), Terrain Dandridge (20), Patreese Johnson (20) and Renata Hill (24)—who had defended themselves against an anti-lesbian attack. The four received sentences ranging from three-and-a-half to 11 years.

Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five—five political prisoners held behind bars in the U.S. for trying to stop CIA-backed anti-communist terror attacks on their island—also marched with the Workers World contingent. □



WWW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL



Look who's talking

Giuliani says Cuba mistreats gays

The following is from a talk by Bob McCubbin at a June 23 Los Angeles film showing of "Butterflies on the Scaffold," a powerful documentary about transgender experience in Cuba. The event was a fund-raiser for an upcoming trip to Cuba led by the militant youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

On June 22 the New York Times online edition carried a blog article reporting on presidential aspirant Rudolph Giuliani's latest anti-Cuba rant, where he gushed eloquently on how terribly Cuban gays are treated. Not to let current billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg off the hook, but former New York City Mayor Giuliani left no pro-gay legacy for that city. Like the rest of the U.S., the streets of New York City were, under Giuliani's rule, and continue to be under the rule of Bloomberg extremely hazardous for lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) people.

Such dangerous homophobic and gender-phobic conditions exist nowhere in the island nation of Cuba.

If Giuliani had any real concern about the bigotry against LGBT people that remains so prevalent in the U.S., instead of attacking Cuba he could have called for support for the Jersey 4.

Quoting from an article by trans activist Imani Henry in the current issue of Workers World: "On June 14, four African-American women ... received sentences ranging from three-and-a-half to 11 years in prison. None of them had previous criminal records. Two of them are parents of small children. Their crime? Defending themselves from a physical attack by a man who held them down and choked them, ripped hair from their scalps, spat on them, and threatened to sexually assault them—all because they are lesbians."

[Y]ou can find out more about the continuing struggle to free the jailed lesbian

sisters at www.fierceny.org.

Someone might want to alert Mr. Giuliani: The attack against these sisters occurred in New York City's Greenwich Village.

[T]o cite an important example of real solidarity with the struggle against lesbian bashing and with Cuba, the New York City LGBT youth group called FIERCE!, which is in the forefront of organizing support for the four jailed New Jersey lesbians, is also a proud signer of the Rainbow Solidarity call demanding justice for the Cuban Five.

The Rainbow Solidarity with the Cuban Five call has, since its issuing, received the endorsement of over 1,000 individuals, organizations and unions in 40 countries, as well as every state in the continental U.S. The statement has been translated from English into 12 other languages with six more translations on the way, including a streaming video in American Sign Language.

S.F. Pride huge, as usual

Thousands of trans people, their families and supporters from around the Bay Area marched and rallied on June 22 in the Mission and Castro neighborhoods here. The next night, the annual "Dyke Rally & March" took place in the same area.

On June 24, the 37th annual Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Trans (LGBT) Pride Parade in downtown San Francisco attracted

hundreds of thousands of visitors and participants from all over the world. It's hard to get a "crowd count" of such a huge event, but it took hours for the seemingly endless stream of beautiful contingents to complete the parade route and pack the Civic Center Plaza in front of City Hall. This event is one of the largest LGBT Pride marches in the world.

—Joan Marquardt

Everyone—lesbian, gay, bisexual, straight and trans—should sign on to this statement of support.

A high point for the Rainbow Solidarity campaign for the Cuban Five was the June 2 meeting at the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Community Center in New York City. At that meeting, a representative of the Cuban government welcomed the support of the LGBT movement.

Sisters and brothers, there's another grouping within U.S. society whose contributions to social enrichment and political progress remain to be welcomed: the contributions of immigrant workers. These workers deserve no less than full equality with full political rights. But they need solidarity from the rest of us in this difficult struggle.

What about "Rainbow Solidarity with Undocumented Workers"? Could this become more than just another interesting idea? □

Biggest Pride on planet

BRAZIL

At least 3 million people crowded into the streets of São Paulo for the biggest Pride march on the planet June 10. The turnout was estimated at half a million more than last year. The march condemned anti-gay bigotry, racism and sexism. (AP, June 10)

Before the march, the Communist Party of Brazil issued a support statement that read: "The Communist Party of Brazil greets the participants of the Gay Pride March in São Paulo and supports the fight against racism, male chauvinism and homophobia present in our society. The March is a great moment of struggle and raising of consciousness, with the joy and irreverence characteristic of our people."

"The freedom of sexual choice and for individual rights is part of the option for democracy and the transformation to a more just society."

"We are part of the Brazilians, men and women, who fight for social inclusion, for a guarantee of rights and equality between people. We defend the banners raised for the right to civil union for people of the same sex, the fight against discrimination and for the affirmative actions of public institutions and society to guarantee full conditions for human development."

"To build a just Brazil it is necessary to fight all forms of discrimination and to promote broad social inclusion. Our determination is to defend a sovereign country, with equality, democracy and free of prejudice."

—Leslie Feinberg



Atlanta Pride draws regional crowds

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

Hundreds of thousands of gay men, lesbians, bi and trans people and their family, friends and supporters crowded the sidewalks and streets of Atlanta for the 37th annual Gay Pride parade on Sunday, June 24.

The Pride events draw people from cities and towns across Georgia and the South, excited to experience the power,

diversity and beauty of their lives.

Among the many contingents and floats representing community organizations, religious, social and youth groups, businesses, AIDS activists and more, Queer Progressive Agenda organized a contingent promoting the U.S. Social Forum which is about to begin here in Atlanta.

Banners and signs in the contingent reflected political issues such as ending war and occupation, human rights for all and calling for freedom for the Cuban Five. □

'Strawberry and Chocolate'

The sweet taste of change in Cuba

By Leslie Feinberg

In 1993, the Cuban state sponsored a ground-breaking movie, "Strawberry and Chocolate" ("Fresa y Chocolate").

The movie tells the story of two young Cuban men—a heterosexual communist and a homosexual. In his 1995 Cineaste article, Dennis West described the movie about two young men getting to know each other in Havana in 1979. David is the young communist. Diego, the homosexual, West writes, "leaves in spite of his pro-Revolution sympathies and his friend's claim that there is a place for gays in the Cuban Revolution." (vol. 21, no. 1-2, Winter-Spring 1995)

The release of "Strawberry and Chocolate" in Cuba broke national box office records and opened up an island-wide discussion about same-sex love and prejudice.

The movie's script is an adaptation by author Senel Paz of his own very popular short story, "The Wolf, the Woods and the New Man."

Dennis West interviewed acclaimed Cuban director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea—affectionately known to friends as "Titón" but also referred to as Alea—in August 1994. Gutiérrez died, at age 68, in April 1996. West conducted the interview in Juárez, Mexico, during the Second Festival of Latinamerican Cinema Paso del Norte; Dennis West and Joan M. West translated the interview into English, edited it and published it in the Winter-Spring 1995 edition of Cineaste.

The movie, which played simultaneously at 10 to 12 Havana theaters, drew lines of Cubans that stretched for blocks. (Larry R. Oberg, "The Status of Gays in Cuba: Myth and Reality")

When West asked Gutiérrez why he thought his movie "Strawberry and Chocolate" so resonated in Cuba, the

filmmaker answered that as soon as the movie opened after the annual film festival, "There were very long lines to see it, and it ran for something like three months in Havana. I think it had that response because it was a well-told story with a theme that many people wanted to discuss in public. A theme that up until this time had remained rather marginalized. I'm not referring just to the theme of homosexuality, but rather to the theme of intolerance in general. I think that people really felt a great need to reflect on this, and to reflect on it openly. For these reasons, the film became a sociological phenomenon."

When asked about the number of Cuban viewers who attended screenings, Gutiérrez said, "'Strawberry and Chocolate' may hold the record for the greatest number of Cuban viewers. I don't know. But at any rate, it is the film which has attracted the greatest number of viewers in the shortest period of time."

Gutiérrez contrasted 1979, the year in which "Strawberry and Chocolate" is set, with life on the island in 1995: "Now there is greater flexibility in job opportunities for homosexuals. In the case of representing Cuba abroad, for example, the appointment of representatives used to be handled with kid gloves when homosexuals were involved. Many people were against appointing them because they were considered more vulnerable to scandal and blackmail—and that's true, we've seen it in countries such as England and the United States—but things are very different nowadays for homosexuals."

Gutiérrez summed up, "Many Cuban homosexuals are now open about their sexual orientation. Others are not open about it—just like anywhere else—but there is a new level of awareness concerning homosexuality."

Gutiérrez recalled the experience of his friend Aramis, who told him in Havana in

1994 about an argument with his father. Aramis said when he returned home for a visit with shoulder-length hair, his father used an anti-gay slur and ordered his son to get a haircut or leave.

Gutiérrez said Aramis argued with his father, saying, "You're supposed to be a communist, for freedom, for human beings. I'm your son, you should love me, whether or not I'm a homosexual. What kind of communist are you?"

Gutiérrez said by the time Aramis had stormed to the door, his father stopped him with these words: "Wait. You're right. You

can stay. You don't have to cut your hair. I've got to think about these things." Aramis added, "So we hugged, and I stayed."

'The trajectory of Cuban cinema'

Julia Levin, a Latvian freelance film critic who lives in the U.S., described Gutiérrez Alea as the most famous director in Cuba. She noted that the filmmaker was born to a bourgeois family in 1928. After getting a law degree from the University of Havana, he studied film at "the Centro

Continued on page 10

Rainbow Solidarity In Defense of CUBA

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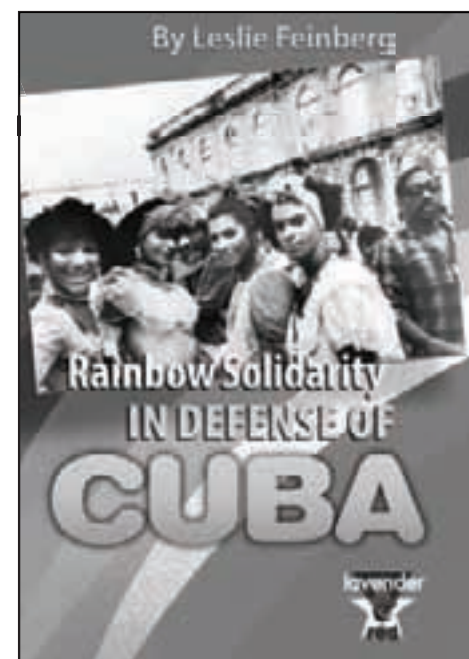
This soon-to-be published work, a compilation of 25 articles from the Lavender & Red series in Workers World newspaper, shows how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love inherited from the colonial and imperial eras.

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Fidel Castro Ruz:

'They will never have Cuba'

June 17—I hope that no one says that I am gratuitously attacking Bush. Surely they will understand my reasons for strongly criticizing his policies.

Robert Woodward is an American journalist and writer who became famous for the series of articles published by the Washington Post, written by him and Carl Bernstein, and which eventually led to the investigation and resignation of Nixon.

He is author and co-author of 10 best-sellers. With his fearsome style he manages to wrench confessions from his interviewees. In his book "State of Denial," he says that on June 18, 2003, three months after the Iraq war had begun, as he was on the way out of his White House office following an important meeting, Bush slapped [Lt. Gen.] Jay Garner on the back and said to him:

"Hey, Jay, you want to do Iran?"

"Sir, the boys and I talked about that and we want to hold out for Cuba. We think the rum and the cigars are a little better. ... The women are prettier."

"Bush laughed, 'You got it. You got Cuba.'"

Bush was betrayed by his subconscious. It was in his mind when he declared what scores of dark corners should be expecting to happen and Cuba occupies a special place among those dark corners.

Garner, a recently retired three-star general who had been appointed Head of the Post-War Planning Office for Iraq, created by secret National Security Presidential Directive, was considered by Bush an exceptional man to carry out his war strategy.

Appointed for the post on Jan. 20, 2003, he was replaced on May 11 of that same year at the urging of Rumsfeld. He didn't have the nerve to explain to Bush his strong disagreements on the matter of the strategy to be pursued in Iraq. He was thinking of another one with identical purpose.

In the past few weeks, thousands of marines and a number of U.S. aircraft carriers, with their naval supporting forces,

have been maneuvering in the Persian Gulf, a few miles off the Iranian territory.

It will very soon be 50 years since our people started suffering a cruel blockade; thousands of our sons and daughters have died or have been mutilated as a result of the dirty war against Cuba, the only country in the world to which an Adjustment Act has been applied inciting illegal emigration, yet another cause of death for Cuban citizens, including women and children; more than 15 years ago Cuba lost her principal markets and sources of supply for foods, energy, machinery, raw materials and long-term low-interest financing.

First the socialist bloc collapsed followed almost immediately by the USSR, dismantled piece by piece. The empire tightened and internationalized the blockade; the proteins and calories which were quite well distributed despite our deficiencies were reduced approximately by 40 percent; diseases such as optical neuritis and others appeared; the shortage of medicines, also a result of the blockade, became an everyday reality. Medicines were allowed to enter only as a charitable act, to demoralize us; these, in their turn, became a source of illegal business and black-market dealings.

Inevitably, the "special period" struck. This was the sum total of all the consequences of the aggression and it forced us to take desperate measures whose harmful effects were bolstered by the colossal media machine of the empire. Everyone was awaiting, some with sadness and others with oligarchic glee, the crumbling of the Cuban Revolution.

The access to convertible currency greatly harmed our social consciousness, to a greater or a lesser degree, due to the inequalities and ideological weaknesses it created.

Throughout its lifetime, the Revolution has taught the people, training hundreds of thousands of teachers, doctors, scientists, intellectuals, artists, computer engineers and other professionals with university and post-graduate degrees in dozens of professions.

This storehouse of wealth has allowed us to reduce infant mortality to low levels, unthinkable in any Third World country, and to raise life expectancy as well as the average educational level of the population up to the ninth grade.

By offering Cuba oil under favorable terms of payment at a time when oil prices were escalating dramatically, the Venezuelan Bolivarian Revolution brought a significant relief and opened up new possibilities, since our country was already beginning to produce her own energy in ever-growing amounts.

Concerned over its interests in that country, the empire had for years been planning to destroy that Revolution, and so it attempted to do it in April 2002, as it will attempt to do again as many times as it can. This is why the Bolivarian revolutionaries are preparing to resist.

Meanwhile, Bush has intensified his plans for an occupation of Cuba, to the point of proclaiming laws and an interventionist government in order to install a direct imperial administration.

Based on the privileges granted to the United States in Bretton Woods [monetary and financial agreements for the post-war period signed by the Allied countries in 1944—WW] and Nixon's swindle when he removed the gold standard, which placed a limit on the issuing of paper money, the empire bought and paid with paper tens of trillions of dollars, more than 12-digit figures.



This is how it preserved an unsustainable economy. A large part of the world currency reserves are in U.S. Treasury bonds and bills. For this reason, many would rather not have a dollar crisis like the one in 1929 that would turn those paper bills into thin air.

Today, the value of one dollar in gold is at least 18 times less than what it was in the Nixon years. The same happens with the value of the reserves in that currency.

Those paper bills have kept their low current value because fabulous amounts of increasingly expensive and modern weapons can be purchased with them; weapons that produce nothing. The United States exports more weapons than anyone else in the world. With those same paper bills, the empire has developed a most sophisticated and deadly system of weapons of mass destruction with which it sustains its world tyranny.

Such power allows it to impose the idea of transforming foods into fuels and to shatter any initiative and commitment to avoid global warming, which is visibly accelerating.

Hunger and thirst, more violent hurricanes and the surge of the sea is what Tyranians and Trojans stand to suffer as a result of imperial policies. It is only through drastic energy savings that humanity will have a respite and hopes of survival for the species; but the consumer societies of the wealthy nations are absolutely heedless of that.

Cuba will continue to develop and improve the combative capacities of her people, including our modest but active and efficient defensive weapons industry, which multiplies our capacity to face the invaders no matter where they may be and the weapons they possess. We shall continue acquiring the necessary materials and the pertinent fire power, even though the notorious Gross Domestic Product as measured by capitalism may not be growing, for their GDP includes such things as the value of privatizations, drugs, sexual services and advertising, while it excludes many others like free educational and health services for all citizens.

From one year to the next the standard of living can be improved by raising knowledge, self-esteem and the dignity of people. It will be enough to reduce waste and the economy will grow. In spite of everything, we will keep on growing as necessary and as possible.

"Freedom costs dearly, and it is necessary to either resign ourselves to live without it or to decide to buy it for its price," said [José] Martí.

"Whoever attempts to conquer Cuba will only gather the dust of her soil soaked in blood, if he does not perish in the fight," exclaimed [Antonio] Maceo.

We are not the first revolutionaries to think that way! And we shall not be the last!

One man may be bought, but never a people.

Fate decreed that I could survive the empire's murderous machine. Shortly, it will be a year since I became ill and, while I hovered between life and death, I stated in the Proclamation of July 31, 2006: "I do not harbor the slightest doubt that our people and our Revolution will fight until the last drop of blood."

Mr. Bush, don't you doubt that either!

I assure you that you will never have Cuba! □



PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO

U.S. groups support Venezuela

Organizations in solidarity with the changes being made in Venezuela held a solidarity picket line in front of the Venezuelan Consulate in New York on June 20.

Their message to the public was that the Venezuelan government's decision to allow the license of RCTV—a right-wing television station that supported the failed 2002 coup against President Hugo Chávez—to expire should not be used as a pretext to attack the revolutionary process there. The closing of the television station has become the focus of a virulent campaign against the Chávez government, whose programs have raised the

social position of the vast majority in the country.

The solidarity picket was called by the Troops Out Now Coalition and supported by Cuba Solidarity-NY, the Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle, the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party and the International Action Center, which all united to support President Chávez and Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution in their efforts to determine their own course of development without U.S. intervention.

Workers at the Consulate came out to thank the people on the line, saying that support in the U.S. was critical.

—Teresa Gutierrez

U.S./NATO bombs slaughter Afghan civilians

By G. Dunkel

Long-range attacks by U.S. and NATO forces, both air strikes and artillery fire, killed more than 100 Afghan civilians—mainly women, children and old men—in a 10-day period in late June.

These deaths have caused such a fury among the Afghan people that Hamid Karzai, the president installed by the U.S. with the blessing of NATO, had to call a press conference on the lawn of the presidential palace to denounce the attacks.

Karzai said, “You don’t fight a terrorist by firing a field gun from 37 kilometers away into a target. That is definitely bound to cause civilian casualties. You don’t hit a few terrorists with field guns.”

Before Karzai was anointed president of Afghanistan, he was a consultant for Unocal, the U.S. oil company that wanted to build a pipeline linking Turkmenistan and Pakistan, which would allow billions of dollars of natural gas from what used to be part of the Soviet Union to be sold on the capitalist world market. Karzai was such a U.S. creation that the bodyguards protecting him until 2005 were U.S. mercenaries, who didn’t leave until they had trained a special group of Afghans to take over.

All throughout his reign in Kabul from 2002 on, Karzai has protested against U.S. and NATO “excesses,” but not to much

avail, since they still continue. Even the Associated Press reported on June 23 that U.S. and NATO forces have killed at least 203 civilians so far this year, while the Afghan resistance has killed 178 civilians.

This report was picked up by over 1,300 newspapers throughout the world. There are now contingents from over 37 countries in Afghanistan, though few of them are soldiers on the ground. The U.S. and other NATO governments are pressuring other imperialist powers and also client states to provide additional troops. The ruling group in Japan, whose constitution prohibits sending its armed forces abroad, has indicated it is willing to change its constitution.

The oil and natural gas resources in Central Asia, including those of the Caspian Sea, are largely unexploited but are believed to be the second largest in the world after the Persian Gulf. The governments participating in the occupation of Afghanistan are looking for a share of those resources.

Canada is one of the largest oil exporters in the world. It has sent significant forces to Afghanistan, which has aroused a significant protest movement within Canada. Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who has allied closely to the U.S., nevertheless had to promise that “this mission will end in February 2009,” while speaking on June 23 at a public ceremony in



NATO attack helicopters in Afghanistan.

Quebec City to send a new Canadian brigade to Afghanistan.

Of course, Harper would like Canada to stay in Afghanistan because he wants a share in what is at stake there. Washington insists that all who want to get a share in imperialist plunder of the region share in the military intervention, from Britain and Spain to Germany and even Poland, all of which have contingents in Afghanistan.

Wall Street’s economic and financial stakes in Afghanistan, namely grabbing the vulture’s share of these reserves, are so high that the Pentagon has maintained a sizable force there—10,000 to 18,000 troops—even though its ground forces are stretched to the maximum with the occupation of Iraq.

The geostrategic position of Afghanistan is also highly significant and this area was an area of imperialist interest and conten-

tion even before oil was involved.

As long ago as the middle of the 19th century, imperial Russia and imperial Britain were competing for control of Central Asia. Frederick Engels, who with Karl Marx founded scientific socialism, wrote an article in 1858 that is still relevant. Describing the British invasion of Afghanistan from its Indian colony, Engels said: “The conquest of Afghanistan seemed accomplished [in 1839] and a considerable portion of the troops was sent back. But the Afghans were no ways content to be ruled by the European infidels, and during the whole of 1840 and 1841, insurrection followed on insurrection in every part of the country.”

The costs of the occupation proved to be so high that the British had to cut back on their payments to the local chiefs, now called warlords.

The very day that W. McNaghten, the executive assistant to the British governor general of India, did this, “the chiefs formed a conspiracy for the extermination of the British, and thus McNaghten himself was the means of bringing about the concentration of those insurrectionary forces, which hitherto had struggled against the invaders singly, and without unity or concert; though it is certain, too, that by this time the hatred of British dominion among the Afghans had reached the highest point.” □

U.S. policies doomed to fail in Latin America

Latin America at the Crossroads—Domination, Crisis, Popular Movements & Political Alternatives, by Roberto Regalado Álvarez, 2007, Ocean Press, 263 pages, available from leftbooks.com.



By John Catalinotto

The Cuban Marxist economist Roberto Regalado, in the preface to the English edition of his book, takes note of the “challenge to write a book that deals with current-day events.” The December 2005 election of Evo Morales as president of Bolivia had forced him to revise the last two chapters before publication.

It is likely Regalado would now like the chance for another revision. Since he wrote those lines the Ecuadorans have elected leftist Rafael Correa president, Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega won the presidential election in Nicaragua and

Hugo Chávez was re-elected by a landslide in revolutionary Venezuela. These new developments, however, only serve to establish Regalado’s main points:

- U.S. imperialism needs to exploit Latin America’s resources and labor even more mercilessly than it did in the period up to the late 1970s. It does this by imposing the policies of “neoliberalism”—essentially, using the state power to aid the banks and transnational corporations to concentrate capital while never using the state to aid poor and oppressed groups or individuals. Washington has tried to do this with minimum intervention, but this has turned out to be impossible; the U.S. is again intervening, subverting and threatening military intervention.
- Washington and the South American oligarchy have allowed the electoral arena to be open to more popular candidates with the plan of gaining a consensus of support for the system. The role of these parties is supposed to be to

alternate with the right wing in administering the same neoliberal program. This has led to victories of left-leaning candidates and parties, which are unable to offer significant concessions to the workers and poor within the confines of the existing system.

- These changes, with a big impulse from the 1991 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, are nourishing a debate in the Latin American left. The potential for a struggle for a socialist alternative is gaining credibility, even if such a struggle is not on the order of the day; Colombia is the only country where an armed struggle is under way. This socialist alternative offers the only solution to the crisis of contemporary capitalism.

Regalado is currently the section chief in the Department of International Relations of the Cuban Communist Party. A former diplomat in the U.S. and Nicaragua, he has researched and written on Latin American politics since the 1970s. He also appears to be well acquainted with U.S. politics and even with developments in the U.S. progressive movement.

The book is effective on a few different levels. It summarizes the recent economic development of the worldwide imperialist system and especially in Latin America. It goes over Latin American history and reviews in detail the change in the type of imperialist domination and exploitation from the earlier part of the 20th century to the period since the mid-1970s.

It reviews the political struggles within the Latin American left—the social movements, social-democratic parties and the broad electoral fronts that have led to the elections of “left” candidates or parties in Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia and Venezuela. The next edition will undoubtedly include Ecuador and Nicaragua.

Regalado also makes a devastating critique of the role of European social democracy and the parties of the Second International, especially those that,

like British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Labour Party, welcomed their new role as administering social cutbacks. In the immediate post-World-War-II period, these parties ran “welfare states” to counter the challenge from the socialist camp, and claimed they would change capitalism. But, Regalado notes:

“It was not social democracy that reformed capitalism, but capitalism that reformed social democracy. This was clear, since by the end of the 1970s, social democracy was participating in dismantling the welfare state and functioning as the spearhead of European imperialism in the South.”

The author discusses the conflicts between socialist Cuba and the U.S., and briefly discusses the Caribbean, but focuses on Latin America. It would be interesting to see what he would write about the U.S. war on Iraq and the impact of the Iraqi resistance on Washington’s ability to intervene in South America, if that were within the scope of the book.

The dilemma the U.S. faces is that the neoliberal scenario continually narrows popular support for the system and its institutions. It wipes out the middle class and impoverishes workers. Thus imperialism is finding it necessary to intervene more directly, as in Haiti and Venezuela, in the Mexican election, etc. While at present the conditions don’t exist for a struggle for socialism, the continued deterioration of living conditions and the threat to humanity from the crisis of capitalism will soon raise this question anew.

“Left political alternatives,” writes Regalado, “will have to include the struggle for revolution.” And “the use of some type of revolutionary violence will be inevitable, because those holding power in the world will cling to it to the very end.”

This conclusion, while not new in classical Marxist literature, bears repetition in this post-Soviet period. To understand how Regalado comes to it, it’s best to read his book. □

WW
Book
Review

Police beat, arrest civil rights attorneys

Continued from page 3

even when shouts of “Michael Warren/Freedom Fighter,” resounded.

Those gathered along with the leadership, from Viola Plummer of the December 12th Movement to Charles Barron, had already decided that the night could not end without the freedom of Michael and Evelyn.

Darkness would have passed into day as nature goes unimpeded, but the masses gathered seemed to have made up their mind.

Eventually, after the summoning of the borough chief and deputy chief, before midnight, Michael and Evelyn walked out of the precinct, surrounded by throngs of supporters who chanted loudly.

Michael Warren’s clothes were torn and both had scrapes and looked tired, but

were surprised and glad to see so many admirers. After giving a statement, they got in their vehicle, flanked by supporters, and drove away. From there the people marched and chanted. The cops looked on, helpless. People from the neighborhood looked out their windows, seeming to revel in the victory, though maybe not even aware of what transpired.

Another anti-police-brutality rally took place at the precinct on June 24.

This battle is not yet over, however. Michael Tarif Warren and Evelyn Warren have a court date on July 25 in Brooklyn to respond to desk appearance tickets. Supporters are asking that the courtroom be packed to show the city that justice is demanded, that the charges be dropped and once again, the cops have to be put on trial for their brutality. □



Oil for profit or for people?

Two U.S. companies, ConocoPhillips and Exxon Mobil, have refused to abide by Venezuela's new laws on ceding ownership of some of their oil holdings. Several other international oil companies have already agreed to the new terms, which require that majority control over investments be handed over to Venezuela's government-owned oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela*.

A report on this development in the June 27 New York Times called Venezuela's most valuable natural resource "some of the most coveted oil reserves in the Western Hemisphere."

What has Venezuela done with its oil since the beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution?

It has pledged to provide oil to Zimbabwe, where U.S. and British neo-colonialists continually push for "regime change" against a president who returned to the indigenous population land stolen by white colonialists. (WW, April 12)

It has an oil deal with impoverished, U.N.-occupied Haiti that saves that country \$150 million a year, and it recently announced a tripartite agreement with Haiti and Cuba—another country facing the guns of imperialism—covering health, energy and oil. (WW, March 29)

It has provided discounted heating oil to people in 11 U.S. states, including more than 220 Native tribes—a program that was created after Venezuela's offer to assist Katrina survivors exposed the need throughout the United States. (WW, Oct. 2, 2006)

And, in Venezuela itself, the resources from the country's oil reserves have allowed a number of social programs to be created and thrive. These programs have combated illiteracy, reduced a staggering amount of poverty, and brought health services to long-neglected communities. The Times article had to acknowledge these programs when it said, "Any increase in oil prices that

does result [from the exit of the U.S. companies] will only help [Venezuelan President Hugo] Chávez finance his broadening government social programs."

The influence of Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution on other countries was not overlooked by the Times. It discussed how the fact that companies from other countries have accepted the new rules in Venezuela "and the potential exit of Conoco and Exxon point to concern that developments in Venezuela may influence negotiations over oil and natural gas projects in other countries, from rising African oil producers like Angola to longtime members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries like Iran."

The "concern" is that these countries will exert their sovereignty to use their own oil to sustain their own people—and perhaps people elsewhere in the world—rather than the pockets of the imperialist corporations.

This development lets the cat out of the bag as to what is really behind the forces that have been trying to make Venezuela's recent closing of the right-wing, imperialist mouthpiece RCTV television station into an issue of "free speech" and "human rights." Notwithstanding the use of the station to openly support the failed overthrow of the Chávez government in 2002—an act that would result in the immediate shutdown of a station in any country—the government's decision not to renew RCTV's contract was yet another blow to those in Venezuelan society who would put corporate profit above people's needs.

The closing of RCTV is really a struggle between imperialism, and all those who have been privileged collaborators with it, and a popularly elected government that is trying to serve the interests of the majority of the Venezuelan people. This current battle over the use of oil clarifies what the struggle with the U.S. and with domestic reaction inside Venezuela is all about. □

ALERT: Time Warner is raising our postage

By Deirdre Griswold

The heavy hand of Time Warner Inc. is reaching into your mailbox and making it more difficult for smaller publications—like Workers World—to mail out their periodicals.

How did they do it? By writing up new regulations for the U.S. Postal Service that will take effect on July 15 and raise the postal rates for smaller publications by up to 30 percent—while the increase for big corporations, like Time Warner, will be kept down to a more comfortable 10 percent.

Originally, the USPS had proposed a plan that would have raised the rates for all types of publications by equal proportions.

But then the Postal Regulatory Commission—whose five commissioners are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate—stepped in and rejected that proposal, adopting a very complicated alternative devised by Time Warner. How's that for hiring the fox to guard the chicken coop?

Everyone knows how postage rates for regular letters keep going up. You probably keep a stash of 2-cent stamps ready to paste next to your old ones. While letters used to be the cheap way

to communicate, it now costs more to send a letter to the opposite coast than most phone plans charge for a 10-minute chat.

Workers World mails out many thousands of copies of our paper every week, some of them free to prisoners. We rely on the support of our readers to make up the deficit. Now that deficit is going to be bigger, thanks to Time Warner.

The whole point of this newspaper is to help organize the fight against the giant monopolies that run the economy in the United States and much of the world. Time Warner is one of the biggest, and the fact that it can dictate policy to the Postal Service just illustrates how these giant firms run the government and determine how decisions are made, no matter which capitalist party is in office.

You need a voice of revolutionary opposition like Workers World, one that gives news of how workers and oppressed people are organizing to fight back against the robber barons. Please check out our appeal for donations on page 5 of this issue and help keep Workers World coming by U.S. mail as well as by e-mail and on the web. □

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'Strawberry and Chocolate'

The sweet taste of change in Cuba

Continued from page 7

Sperimentale della Cinematographia in Rome (which had spawned, amongst others, Michelangelo Antonioni), where he fell in love with cinema and where he directed his first neorealist film, *El Mégano* (1954), with Julio García Espinosa, another filmmaker he met at Centro Sperimentale."

Levin continued, "It has been noted that this film marked the very beginning of the New Latin American Cinema, the 'new wave' in cinema that grew out of the desire by many Latin American filmmakers to unveil the conflicting realities of their own countries and to do this by exploring the political potential of the filmic medium.

"Alea was one of the founders of the Instituto Cubano del Arte y la Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC)," Levin wrote, "which was created in 1959 in order to vigorously produce and promote cinema as the most progressive vehicle for communicating the ideas of the revolutionary through, for the most part, documentaries, although some fiction films were made there as well.

"The ICAIC recognized film as the most powerful and important art form in modern life, a voice of the state, and, unquestionably, the most accessible form of distributing revolutionary ideas to the masses. In its first 24 years, ICAIC produced nearly 900 documentaries and over 112 feature films."

Levin pointed out, "Artistically and intellectually, the trajectory of Cuban cinema—from *cinéma vérité* to experimentalism, and from neorealist drama to social comedy—has paralleled the trajectory of Alea's directorial career. Similarly, Alea's films are a primary source of cultural politics in revolutionary Cuba, a fact that allows one to study his films directly against the political climate in which he lived and worked."

Daniel West added that "Tomás Gutiérrez Alea has been the most prominent of the filmmakers working in Cuba's government-supported film institute. ... Gutiérrez Alea is a committed revolutionary, and his best features explore the social, political and historical dimensions of the revolutionary progress." (www.sensesofcinema.com)

Solidarity served up with a cherry on top

After Cuba lost the socialist solidarity and trade it had had with the Soviet Union, the illegal U.S. blockade tightened its grip on the island's economy.

West pointed out in 1995, "Given the profound economic crisis currently gripping Cuba, it is astonishing that a feature such as 'Strawberry and Chocolate' could be produced. The situation in ICAIC is desperate. Top directors such as Gutiérrez Alea earn the approximate equivalent of \$5.00 per month, and the once relatively well-funded ICAIC filmmakers can now undertake a feature only if co-production money is available. The low-budget 'Strawberry and Chocolate,' for instance, could not have been produced without Mexican and Spanish support."

Gutiérrez Alea, battling cancer, also had to undergo surgery during the production of the film. Juan Carlos Tabío, a collaborator, stepped up to co-direct the film.

"Strawberry and Chocolate" was the first Cuban movie to be nominated for an Oscar in the Best Foreign Film category. (Levin) Daniel West concluded in early 1995:

"The commercial release of 'Strawberry and Chocolate' in the U.S. is a welcome event because U.S. authorities have at times hounded Gutiérrez Alea—by, for example, denying his visa requests or blocking exhibitions of his works. This interviewer's videotape copy of [Gutiérrez's 1968 film] 'Memories of Underdevelopment' was confiscated by U.S. Customs in Los Angeles when he entered the country on Dec. 11, 1993, after having legally attended the annual International Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana." By the closing ceremony of that festival in Havana on Dec. 10, 1993, "Strawberry and Chocolate" had won most of the top awards.

"Afterwards"—West, who was a guest, described—"in the Palace of the Revolution, Fidel Castro held a reception for festival guests featuring strawberry and chocolate ice cream served together for dessert."

Next: "Gay Cuba"

To find out more about Cuba, read parts 86-102 of *Lavender & Red* at workers.org.

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In oil-rich Sudan

U.S. intervention is the worst option

By John Parker

In spite of the current and historic role that imperialist forces have played in Sudan, the U.S. and European media almost exclusively blame the violence in the region on the government in Khartoum. This ignores the most important fact in its history: it was colonialism and imperialism that created the root cause of the economic crisis facing Sudan today.

The struggle in Sudan is, in fact, a struggle for basic necessities. They have been denied not by the Sudanese people, but by years of competing British, French and U.S. efforts to increase their exploitation of the region.

Instead of trying to solve this crisis, in 1998 President Bill Clinton sent 19 cruise missiles slamming into Sudan, one of the poorest countries in the world, and destroyed its sole pharmaceutical plant—that provided over 50 percent of the medicine there.

Ever since Sudan opposed the first U.S.-led war against Iraq in 1991, U.S. policy—from both Democratic and Republican presidents—has been aimed at destabilizing the Sudanese government. In fact, Washington helped finance a secessionist civil war against the Khartoum government and imposed economic sanctions on the country.

The missile attack came soon after Sudan took steps to access a 300-million-barrel reservoir of crude oil in the country's South. There is a clear relationship between U.S. oil policy and U.S. government hostility toward Sudan. Likewise, there is clear evidence of indirect U.S. arming and funding of the rebel forces in Darfur that initiated the violence back in 2003.

Darfur is known to have major yet untapped oil reserves, representing a vast amount of potential wealth. It is believed to have oil reserves rivaling those of Saudi Arabia. It has large deposits of natural gas. In addition, it has one of the three largest deposits of high-purity uranium in the world, along with the fourth-largest deposits of copper. Unlike Saudi Arabia, however, the Sudanese government has retained its independence of Washington.

Unable to control Sudan's oil policy, the U.S. imperialist government has made every effort to stop its development of this valuable resource. However, China has helped Sudan, in spite of U.S. efforts, by providing the technology for exploration, drilling, pumping and the building of a pipeline. China buys about two-thirds of Sudan's oil.

So, as it did in in Somalia, Afghanistan, Haiti, Iraq and in the former Yugoslavia, Washington used its dominance over the United Nations to help justify the forced entry of troops across Sudan's borders,

with the false promise of bringing stability and ending bloodshed.

This is what is behind the U.S. calls a month ago for sanctions against Sudan, just four days after the government of Sudan agreed on May 25 to a joint African Union and United Nations (AU/UN) "hybrid peacekeeping force" assigned to Darfur to quell the violence in that region.

In an interview with Gulf News, Sudanese Foreign Minister Dr. Lam Akol Ajawin said: "The message we took from this act by the U.S. is that no matter how much the Sudanese government cooperates, the U.S. is going to go ahead with its plans. The sanctions were strange but it did not surprise us in Khartoum."

This is not the first time that Sudan's willingness to negotiate in order to calm U.S. aggression failed.

In July of 2004 the Sudanese government accommodated the U.S. by allowing small teams of U.S. soldiers to pass into the country as part of official visits and even allowed U.S. Special Forces to do weeklong patrols in its Kurush Mountains to look for alleged al Qaeda activity.

During this period Sudan was holding intense negotiations with warring parties in the Darfur region. In spite of these attempts at cooperation and moves towards negotiating a peace, the U.S. rushed through a resolution, adopted on July 30, 2004, imposing a timetable for sanctions-like measures against Sudan. Its U.N. ambassador, Elfatih Erwa, and its ambassador to the African Union, Osman al-Said, separately said Khartoum would comply. "We are not happy with the resolution, but we are going to implement it—we have no other option," said al-Said.

The situation in Sudan is desperate. The U.N. estimates that 200,000 Sudanese have died from either drought or war-related causes. That war was started in 2003 by the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) over what they considered unjust resource distribution to a region where people depending on the land face scarcity of water, arable land and food.

This problem exists all over the south Sahara region, but it could be fixed through irrigation and the development of Sudan's rich resources—a task easily achievable with just a portion of the resources squandered in Iraq by the U.S.

How U.S. undercut negotiations

Instead of the U.S. assisting in this way, however, it has been creating obstacles every time the Sudanese government makes efforts to negotiate with the various factions of the rebel forces who attacked them.

This is made clear in an eyewitness account of one of these negotiations by



John Parker on a fact-finding trip to Sudan with Ramsey Clark after the U.S. bombed the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant in 1998.

Alex de Waal, who was an adviser to the Organization of African Unity and participated in talks between rebel forces, the U.S. and the Sudanese government. He was quoted in AfricaFocus online (www.africafocus.org) on April 30. Although de Waal is not partisan toward the Sudanese government, his account exposes the U.S. role. He explains:

"Long neglected conflicts first exploded in February 2003, when the newly formed Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) launched guerrilla raids on government garrisons, and the government responded with its well-tested counter-insurgency tool of unleashing militia—in this case the Janjawid. ... It was three years before a workable peace agreement was tabled. And it very nearly succeeded. Everything hinged on a few weeks this May [2006], when the Darfur Peace Agreement was finalized and signed by the Sudan government and one of the rebel factions. Had the leader of the main part of the Sudan Liberation Movement also signed, the current crisis would not have happened."

In the late afternoon of May 5, 2006, after a final 20-hour negotiating session, the Sudanese government and the SLM faction led by Minni Arkoy Minawi signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA).

However, de Waal explains that not all of the SLM representatives signed. The founder of the SLM, Abdel Wahid, refused. After a British official worked into the night on the text to meet the objections of Wahid, he still did not sign and instead asked for more concessions.

De Waal asks: "Would those concessions have been enough? It's not clear. In the early hours of 5 May Abdel Wahid told [U.S. deputy secretary of state] Zoellick and [Nigerian President] Obasanjo: 'I need a guarantee for implementation like in Bosnia.' The personal letter he had just received from President Bush wasn't enough: what he wanted was international military intervention to deliver Darfur from the Khartoum government. ..."

It seems that Wahid had gotten a certain impression from the U.S. government, including President Bush, that he was entitled to much more.

Because Wahid did not sign, other SLM commanders also refused and instead

gathered in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, to form the National Redemption Front (NRF) and continue the war with the Sudanese army.

De Waal continues: "As the Abuja negotiations drew to a close, the Congress Party [Sudan President Omar al Bashir's political party—J.P.] launched an internal discussion on Sudanese-U.S. relations. The central question they asked was: 'Given that we have made peace with the South and given them everything they asked for; given that we are co-operating in the war on terror; why are the Americans still determined to punish us?' ..."

"The worst fears of Khartoum's conspiracy theorists had seemed to be justified when Zoellick arrived in Abuja and revised the security arrangements agenda of the DPA text, increasing the number of rebel combatants to be integrated into the army and security forces to 8,000 (80 percent of these positions, he indicated, would go to Minawi's men [of the SLM]). As Zoellick argued and arm-twisted late into the night on 2 May, agitated Sudanese generals paced up and down in the hotel car park, calling their superiors in Khartoum on satellite phones. They buttonholed mediation team members—by now excluded from the action—to ask: 'What is America's real agenda?'"

U.S. intervention has been bloody and brutal

The history of U.S. involvement in Africa is one of brutal terror and colonial and neo-colonial plunder, using the most sophisticated weapons of mass destruction against the poorest of countries—like the bombings of Somalia, Tanzania and Sudan. It includes the murders and assassinations of anti-imperialist independence leaders who, given the chance, could have helped solve the problems Africa faces today.

U.S. involvement in Africa should concern itself solely with the implementation of reparations to that continent. Any other form of involvement, particularly military intervention in any form, always means escalating death and chaos through their "humanitarian" claws. Yes, even more than would have died if not for its interventions.

Maximizing profits is expensive in terms of lives. In Iraq 1.5 million, close to half of them children, have died because of U.S. sanctions and military intervention—so far.

Shame on those who, to this day, still don't understand this reality and are facilitating a new and real genocide against the people of Africa. It will echo the cries of torture and heartache heard today by the current victims of U.S. imperialism in Iraq, Haiti, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yugoslavia, Congo, Palestine, Lebanon and so many other countries. □

Nigerian unions beat back gov't attack

By G. Dunkel

This spring the Nigerian government announced it would double the value added tax (VAT), a disguised form of sales tax, and sharply increase the prices of kerosene and diesel. Nigeria's workers responded with a four-day general strike that grew stronger and stronger until the government finally backed down on June 24. The VAT will stay at its current level and the price hike for fuel will be cut in half.

The Nigerian federal government also gave its employees a 15-percent pay raise, retroactive to Jan. 1.

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) had jointly called the action.

Two days into the strike, one of the oil workers' unions, PENGASAN, called its workers off their jobs at the oil-export terminal. A strike there would have greatly cut the main source of government revenue. Workers at the Kainji and Shiroro dams decided to join the strike, which meant that Nigeria would have quickly lost most of its hydroelectric power. Also, picket lines kept fuel from reaching diesel generators.

The NLC and TUC apologized to those

who may have suffered "momentary loss of income," but added, "We must remain strengthened in our conviction that we need this kind of collective action and solidarity to end bad governance."

According to the daily newspaper, This Day, the unions noted that good governance cannot evolve if the citizens do not impose control over leaders through strikes and protests.

The union coalitions also hailed Nigerians from all backgrounds for their support and participation and the sacrifice and understanding they showed over the four days of the strike.

The unions involved called the agreement with the government a victory for the workers they represent.

Britain is Nigeria's former colonial ruler and still has major economic stakes in the country, raking off a goodly part of its oil revenue. British imperialism played a major role in creating the economic and political structures of Nigeria, which still operate to London's benefit and the benefit of other imperialists who control parts of Nigeria's economy.

Conducting a successful, widespread general strike is a major step forward for the Nigerian working class. □

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Resistencia nacional se enfrenta al imperialismo en Gaza

Por Joyce Chediak

Junio 20—Los recientes eventos en Gaza no han sido “una lucha por el poder entre dos facciones rivales,” o “una guerra civil de cinco días.” Estas descripciones que da la prensa capitalista son intentos de esconder la verdad de los eventos.

La lucha en Gaza era una lucha entre dos fuerzas irreconciliables de clase. Por un lado estaban las fuerzas de la resistencia nacional representadas por Hamas. Por el otro lado estaban las fuerzas del imperialismo esclavista representadas por una pequeña facción de Fatah bajo el presidente palestino Mahmoud Abbas y Mohammad Dahlan, su consejero de seguridad. Este grupo concientemente se prestó a los planes de Washington y Tel Aviv de expulsar a Hamas del poder y revocar los resultados de las elecciones del 2006 que dieron a Hamas una mayoría en el Parlamento Palestino.

“Nuestra lucha no es contra Fatah, que tiene una larga historia de lucha, sino en contra de este grupo de agentes de Fatah que sigue la agenda de los Sionistas,” explicó Abu Obviada, vocero de las Brigadas Qassam de Hamas. Hamas reconoce la presidencia de Mahmoud Abbas y le ha pedido que se les una en un nuevo gobierno de unidad.

Hamas se vio forzado a defenderse destruyendo las fuerzas armadas de las garras del imperialismo antes de que estas garras destruyeran a Hamas. Es por eso que Hamas dio el primer paso en contra de las fuerzas de seguridad de Fatah, especialmente contra las fuerzas de la Seguridad Preventiva y la Guardia Presidencial, las cuales obedecen a Mohammad Dahlan. En la furia del com-

bate, puede que militantes genuinamente antiimperialista, y anti Israel en el lado de Fatah fueran absorbidos erróneamente en la lucha. Sin embargo esto no cambia el carácter clasista de la lucha.

Hamas y Gaza necesitan del apoyo mundial

Estados Unidos, Israel, la Liga Árabe y la Unión Europea se han puesto en contra de Hamas rápidamente, lanzando amenazas adicionales a ese grupo y a los 1,4 millones de personas que viven en Gaza. Hamas y la lucha palestina necesitan el apoyo de progresistas en el mundo entero en este momento tan crucial.

L@s palestín@s, quienes necesitan desesperadamente un movimiento fuerte y unido, han reaccionado a los eventos en Gaza y la consecuente división con mucho dolor. Por los constantes ataques de Israel, la situación en los territorios ocupados es desesperada. Pero sería peor si Hamas hubiera sido derrotado en Gaza por el grupo Fatah. Este grupo se opuso a todos los intentos de Hamas de lograr la unidad en contra de los israelitas y no hizo nada cuando Israel arrestó a 40 legisladores de Hamas. El grupo insistió en la provocación hasta el punto de tratar de asesinar al primer ministro de Hamas, Ismael Haniyeh

Unas citas de las calles de Gaza revelan lo que esta cooperación Abbas-Dalanh con los Estados Unidos y la desestabilización israelita trajo al pueblo. Harem Shurrab de 22 años de edad, trabajador en Gaza, dijo en una entrevista por el noticiero aljazeera.net el 15 de junio que “Yo me sentí muy triste por lo que pasó...[pero] algo bueno es que Hamas apuntó en con-

tra de muchos colaboradores que trabajaron para Israel y cometieron muchos crímenes—como asesinatos contra palestinos sólo porque tenían barbas, además bombardeaban supermercados y casas que eran de Fatah.”

Continuando con su intervención descarada, “Estados Unidos había discretamente alentado al Sr. Abbas para que disolviera el gobierno palestino y destituyera al Primer Ministro Ismael Haniya”, (New York Times, del 15 de junio) Esto es precisamente lo que hizo Abbas, ignorando las ofertas de Hamas para restablecer el gobierno de unidad.

En violación a la Constitución palestina, y con regocijo de Washington, él ha despedido a Hamas y a todo el gobierno electo y ha nombrado un gobierno de emergencia y un primer ministro ex oficial del Banco Mundial que es el escogido de los imperialistas occidentales. Este nuevo gobierno, en el cual fue elegido sólo Abbas, aduce que representa la población de la Franja Occidental, y en verdad rige bajo el puño de hierro de la ocupación israelí, donde todas las fuerzas de lucha tienen que mantenerse en la clandestinidad.

Ahora Bush se refiere a Abbas como “presidente de todos los palestinos”, y el primer ministro de Israel, Ehud Olmert, está llamando a Abbas un “amigo”. Sin embargo, ni Washington ni Tel Aviv tienen la intención de otorgar la verdadera soberanía al pueblo palestino, por el temor de su potencial revolucionario.

‘No lucharán por una agenda estadounidense’

EEUU e Israel fueron cogidos desprevenidos, y les fue entregada una derrota contundente con el colapso de las fuerzas de seguridad de Fatah. Hasta el New York Times, en un editorial del 15 de junio, describe lo ocurrido en Gaza como “una derrota para Israel y la política americana”. EEUU, que considera a las personas como una mercancía que se compra y se vende, quedó verdaderamente asustado con la rapidez con que colapsaron las fuerzas mejor armadas y más numerosas de Fatah ante el asalto de Hamas.

Pero el pueblo tiene corazón y mente. Aunque la pobreza pudo haberles forzado a inscribirse en las fuerzas de seguridad, muchos soldados de Fatah no tuvieron el alma para hacer cumplir una agenda pro sionista y pro imperialista contra su propio pueblo.

El Observer del 17 de junio reporta que

miembros dentro de Fatah apoyan las acciones de Hamas. El ex miembro de alto rango de Fatah, Khaled Abu Helah dijo por la estación de televisión de Hamas que el “acogió positivamente la limpieza por parte de Hamas de los traidores y colaboradores en Fatah”. Además, “algunos oficiales en la guardia presidencial habían enviado sus tropas a casa cuando comenzó el combate”.

Un residente de Gaza agregó, “Los combatientes de Hamas no recibían salarios. Ellos creían en lo que estaban haciendo. Algunos combatieron por cuatro días sin ir a sus casas.

“Las fuerzas de seguridad de Fatah pelearon por sus mil siclos o por un paquete de cigarrillos. Dahlan había usado la pobreza para reclutar. La mayoría ni siquiera se presentó para defender sus estaciones. Muchos se quedaron en casa. La mayoría no se puso los uniformes. Decenas llamaron al Qassam y dijeron, ‘Queremos irnos, dénos seguridad y pasaje seguro’. La mayoría de la gente decente de la seguridad no quiere luchar para Dahlan, o Israel o América. No se sienten que deben morir por la agenda americana [EEUU] o israelí”.

En el pasado hubo un tiempo cuando las fuerzas de Fatah sentían que tenían algo por qué luchar. Uno de sus momentos más excelentes ocurrió durante el asedio estadounidense-israelí de Beirut en 1982. Por siete semanas Israel atacó Beirut por tierra, mar y aire, cortando los suministros de alimento y agua y desconectando la electricidad durante una intensa ola de calor. Pero el pueblo armado y los guerreros heroicos, quienes mayormente se identificaban con Fatah, se mantuvieron fuertes bajo condiciones insoportables, defendiendo el campo y los suburbios y rehusaron rendirse. Su persistencia forzó un trato negociado e inspiró a l@s trabajador@s y a los pueblos oprimidos alrededor del mundo.

Estos luchadores de Fatah mostraron al mundo que sólo la lucha gana concesiones, especialmente en una lucha de liberación nacional tan acosada como la lucha Palestina. Hoy es Hamas la que está atacada por emprender esta lucha. Esa organización, y tod@s l@s que luchan por Palestina, necesitan urgentemente del apoyo activo de tod@s quienes valoren la justicia y la libertad. □

Hamas: ‘Nos forzaron a hacerlo’

El establecimiento imperialista mundial y su prensa le echan la culpa a Hamas por dar un golpe contra el gobierno palestino de unidad, un gobierno disuelto y remplazado por Fatah. Para dar a nuest@s lector@s una visión más precisa, publicamos la siguiente declaración de Hamas, obtenida del www.Manartv.com.lb (16 de junio).

“Hamas no desea tomar el poder,” dijo el jefe del politburó del grupo, Khaled Mershaal. “Somos fieles al pueblo palestino.”

Mershaal añadió: “Lo que ha pasado en Gaza es una medida de emergencia para tratar con un estado que quería imponerse sobre todos ... estuvimos forzados a tomar esta medida de emergencia. No queríamos hacerlo pero estuvimos forzados a tomarla... Queremos fraternidad con los hijos del movimiento de Fatah. Éste no fue un enfrentamiento con Fatah. Nuestra crisis no es con Fatah.

“El pueblo [de Gaza] estaba sufriendo por el caos y la falta de seguridad y este tratamiento era necesario,” continuó Mershaal. “La falta de seguridad condujo

la crisis hacia la explosión.”

“Abbas tiene la legitimidad,” dijo Mershaal. “No hay nadie que cuestionara o dudara que él es un presidente electo, y vamos a cooperar con él en beneficio del interés nacional.” Mershaal pidió que los ministros del extranjero de la Liga Árabe reuniéndose en Cairo ayuden a mediar negociaciones entre Hamas y Abbas, para actuar “como un paraguas para establecer el diálogo nacional palestino para lograr un acuerdo palestino.”

Mershaal dijo que un gobierno de unidad nacional es la única solución, y que la disolución por Abbas del gobierno de unidad “no va a remediar la situación ... y no va a resolver el problema. No habrá dos gobiernos y no habrá división de la patria.”

Mientras tanto, un oficial de Hamas, Sami Abu Zuhri, dijo, “El nombramiento de Salam Fayyad como líder del gobierno de emergencia es un golpe contra la legitimidad [de Hamas]... Pedimos al Presidente Abbas que retracte la decisión para así preservar la integridad de nuestro pueblo.” □

