

U.S. gov't claims Tehran is near having nuclear arms

Atomic agency report is latest salvo in U.S. anti-Iran campaign

BY NAOMI CRAINE

A report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) accusing the Iranian government of secretly buying uranium 12 years ago is the latest salvo in the U.S.-led campaign to declare Tehran in violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

"The number of failures by Iran to report facilities and activities in a timely manner, as it is obliged to do, is a matter of concern," said the report. One of its main claims is that Tehran did not make public a purchase of 1.8 tons of uranium from China in 1991. Washington contends that some of this uranium was secretly enriched, although the amount involved would not be enough to produce a single nuclear bomb.

The IAEA report, while not officially released yet, was quoted in major daily papers June 7. It was issued in preparation for the June 16 meeting of the agency's Board of Governors, made up of representatives from 35 countries. If that board finds Iran in violation of the NPT, the issue will automatically be placed on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council, which may consider imposing sanctions.

"The assessment is that they do have a very active program and are likely to have nuclear weapons in a relatively short period of time," said U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld, referring to Iran, during a visit to Germany June 11. He also attacked Tehran for alleged interference with the U.S. occupation of Iraq. "The efforts by Iran to try to make Iraq become a model



Bushire nuclear power plant under construction in southwestern Iran, built with aid from Russia. Washington accuses Tehran of using such facilities for weapons development. Iranian government denies charge, saying plants are needed for energy.

of Iran with a small group of clerics taking over the country and controlling it, we're not going to let happen," he stated.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi responded to the IAEA report by saying that Tehran had not been obligated to publicize its purchase of nuclear fuel. He added that the "IAEA has not been able to raise a single specific issue against Tehran over the past 12 years, and this shows that we have been transparent over these years and have performed our commitments." Tehran has acknowledged

buying nuclear fuel and building facilities to process it, insisting that they are part of its nuclear energy program.

Washington is continuing to press its accusations that Iran is seeking to build nuclear weapons, and "supporting terrorism," with the aim of forcing a "regime change" in the largest country in the Middle East.

This is an escalation of the hostile policy the U.S. rulers have maintained against Iran since 1979, when the workers and farmers there overthrew the brutal U.S.-backed

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Washington to deport 13,000 registered immigrants

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

U.S. government officials have announced their plans to deport more than 13,000 men, mostly Arab and Muslim, who complied with a federal order to submit to "special registration" with immigration authorities earlier this year. These mass deportations represent nearly 16 percent of the 82,000 men 16 years of age or older who registered.

The order, issued last November by Attorney General John Ashcroft, targets men and teenagers over the age of 16 holding temporary U.S. residency from a list of 25 countries in the Middle East and Asia, most of them with large Muslim populations. Those falling under this category were

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Tokyo detains two north Korea cargo ships

BY RÓGER CALERO

Japanese government "safety inspectors" detained two north Korean cargo ships in Japanese ports June 10—a move that Pyongyang denounced as de facto sanctions. This measure is part of a campaign led by Washington to pressure the north Korean government to abandon its nuclear program. It includes economic sanctions and naval interdictions, possibly on the high seas, of north Korean vessels that the imperialist powers claim are suspected of carrying "illegal drugs or weapons." These ship "inspections" were agreed to at the June 1-3 Group of 8 meeting in France on the initiative of the U.S. government.

A day earlier, the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) announced that it is developing nuclear weapons to deter the imperialist campaign of aggression against the country and cut down the size of its army, estimated at 1 million troops.

A June 9 dispatch of the official Korea
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Pro-independence forces condemn colonial status of Puerto Rico at UN



Militant/Michael Italie

Panel of speakers at June 9 event at Hunter College in New York back independence for Puerto Rico. They were among those who testified earlier that day at UN hearings on Puerto Rico. From left, Manuel Rivera, Puerto Ricans United in Action; Ricardo Gabriel, Hostos Puerto Rican Club; Luis Rosa, former Puerto Rican political prisoner; Jorge Farinacci, Socialist Front; Róger Calero; Alice Hernández, Puerto Rican Nationalist Party; and Benjamin Ramos, ProLibertad.

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

UNITED NATIONS—"On May 1 the U.S. Navy was forced to cease its military operations on our island" in Vieques, said Elliot Monteverde-Torres, speaking on behalf of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques at hearings held here June 9 on the colonial status of Puerto Rico. A mass protest movement "paralyzed the war exercises by the most

powerful military force in the history of humanity," he said.

The hearings, held by the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, adopted a resolution that affirmed "the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence." As in the past three years, the resolution, sponsored by the revolutionary government

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Calero kicks off national victory tour

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

NEW YORK—"I've been called many things in my life," Róger Calero told an audience of 250 in New York June 7. "But I've never been called 'nondeportable.' I will wear that as a badge of honor on behalf of all immigrant workers."

On May 22 Immigration Judge William Strasser signed a final order ending the government's moves to deport Calero, associate editor of *Perspectiva Mundial* and staff writer for the *Militant* newspaper. The order reads: "Reason for termination: Respondent is not deportable."

Calero spoke on his success in beating back the efforts of the immigration police to exclude him from the United States, as part of a public meeting here at Hunter College titled "Europe and America: To the Victor Go the Spoils; Appearance and Reality of World Politics."

"I invite you to celebrate with all those across the country that see my victory as one for all workers—a victory for our class," said Calero. "It is in this spirit that

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Italian gov’t takes aim at social wage

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

Flight attendants in Italy joined millions of workers in a number of European countries in labor actions June 3 when they forced the cancellation of 285 flights by Alitalia, the national carrier. Hundreds called off sick in a coordinated protest at company plans to cut the number of attendants assigned to domestic flights from four to three, and to reduce staffing levels on European flights. The next day unions in Italy representing 50,000 health-care workers called a one-day strike over a contract fight.

Strikes in France, Austria, and Germany were also organized June 3. The Austrian strike was reportedly the biggest in the country’s post–World War II history. Workers condemned the government’s plan to cut retirement pensions by 11 percent. The French strikes, too, were organized to protest proposed cuts in pensions.

The Italian government’s attacks on retirement benefits and rights have also roused opposition from the country’s labor movement. Italy’s three major trade union federations have said they will organize a strike on the issue after June 8, when a second and final round of voting in regional and local elections will be completed. “If the government doesn’t address our concerns, we will have to resort to a strike,” said Morena Piccinini, a leader of the General Confederation of Italian Workers (Cgil), the largest federation.

Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi attacked the European actions during the meeting in France of the G-8, which comprises the governments of the seven largest imperialist powers and of the Russian workers state. “Structural reform is necessary where each one must take on his own responsibility for being productive and stay off work for strikes which could affect national economic results,” he said. Imperialist Italy is the fourth largest power in the European Union, behind Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.

The House of Liberties coalition government led by Berlusconi’s Forza Italia (Forward Italy) party is pushing through a series of attacks on pensions designed and initiated by previous governments. They include the promotion of private pension schemes and the use of financial incentives

to push workers to entice them to work past the official retirement age, which stands at 65 for men and 60 for women.

Propaganda around pensions

Arguing in favor of such steps—and frequently calling for stronger measures—capitalist propagandists raise the alarm about the growing proportion of retired people in the population. “The structure of the population in Italy is starting to resemble that of Florida,” Franco Pavoncello, a professor at the John Cabot University in Rome, told the BBC. “You have a lot of very old people. At the same time, the level of fertility is constantly decreasing, so there aren’t enough people who are starting to work who are going to sustain the system.”

At the G-8 meeting, Berlusconi said, “there is a general European problem of aging populations. An older population results in a decrease in consumption.”

In his annual speech on the state of the economy May 31, Bank of Italy governor Antonio Fazio urged Berlusconi to “enact structural reforms—particularly to the overburdened public pensions system—that will cut spending and bolster growth,” reported the *International Herald Tribune*.

Fazio also bemoaned the impact of the fall in the value of the U.S. dollar against the euro, which has made Italian exports more expensive.

The arguments and proposals on cutting pensions have been at the center of cuts by successive governments in the social wage through the 1990s, as the capitalist rulers moved to shift the burden of their growing economic crisis onto the backs of working people. In December 1994 one million people marched in Rome against the increase in the retirement age from 56 for women and 61 for men to its present levels. Those cuts were enforced by a coalition government also headed by Berlusconi, who had been elected in March of that year in his first-ever campaign.

At the time, Stefano Micossi of Confindustria, the Italian industrialists’ association, gloated, “I scarcely believe that this government has dared to do what no one else has dared to do—structural cuts in pensions and health systems.”

Nine years later, Berlusconi faces a new

Austria: workers defend retirement benefits



Workers in Austria struck June 3 to oppose the government’s proposal to cut pensions by 11 percent, shutting down public transport and the postal service in the capital city of Vienna. This was the unions’ third major action in the fight in less than a month. Above and right: workers rally in Vienna during previous demonstrations in May.



stage of the economic crisis. On May 15 his government announced that the economy had shrunk by 0.1 percent in the first three months of the year. The news raised the specter of further layoffs and an upward push on the unemployment rate, which stands officially at 9 percent. In the less industrialized south, the jobless rate reaches 20 percent.

Threats of EU-wide recession

The news from Rome coincided with similar statements from Berlin and Amsterdam. The contraction of the latter two economies has now spanned six months, placing them officially in recession. With the minimal growth rates recorded by France and many other countries in the European Union, the big-business media is now speculating that an EU-wide recession may be underway.

Berlusconi, who is in line to take over the EU presidency in the second half of this year, called on the European Central Bank to lower interest rates. “Europe has to do its part to help the economy,” he said.

Trumpeting his government’s program of tax cuts, Berlusconi said, “Obviously this is not enough. If we don’t want to increase our [budget] deficit, we have to intervene with other measures we are now considering.”

Meanwhile, the automaker Fiat, Italy’s largest industrial company, has called for new investment—or “recapitalization”—and appealed to General Motors bosses to pick up part of the bill. GM, which owns a one-fifth stake in the embattled company, has not responded.

Fiat has reported a succession of annual losses and has laid off 15,000 workers in one Turin plant alone over the past three years. The layoffs prompted protest strikes and demonstrations by workers in Sicily, Milan, and Turin in the closing months of 2002. Capitalist pundits in the United States criticize Rome for its protectionist barriers to foreign investment and ownership of the auto industry. Unlike their competitors in Europe and North America, the Italian capitalists have so far not permitted foreign car-makers to produce vehicles on Italian soil. The country’s auto production fell by almost 10 percent last year.

Deputy prime minister Gianfranco Fini said the government would not join in any

bail-out of Fiat, which is closely identified with the Italian state. “We have replied to Fiat that they should sell the family jewels and make more appealing cars,” he said. “We are for the policy of competition between owners.”

Elections in late May

The developing crisis in Italy and elsewhere in Europe was the backdrop for the May 25–26 regional elections. Up for grabs were the governments of some 500 towns and two regions. In the 12 provinces where voting took place, the coalition led by the Democratic Party of the Left (DPS) won five and Berlusconi’s Forza Italia won four. The DPS, the former Italian Communist Party, has taken part in a number bourgeois coalition governments since World War II.

Several of Forza Italia’s five governmental coalition partners fared worse, however. The Democratic Union of the Center, which is a remnant of the former Christian Democratic Party, lost out in the Rome election to the DPS candidate. So did the rightist National Alliance Party. The leaders of both parties claimed that potential supporters in the city had been frightened off by their association with the Northern League, another coalition partner. Northern League leader Umberto Bossi had attacked Rome for “draining wealth from the northern regions that form his electoral base,” according to the *Financial Times*.

In addition to scapegoating homosexuals, Muslims, and immigrants, the Northern League calls for the separation of the more industrialized northern regions from the agricultural and less developed south—from Sicily through to Naples.

The National Alliance and the Northern League were both partners in Berlusconi’s first government, which held office for three years until it broke apart amidst a corruption scandal centering on Berlusconi and his business concerns.

Like Berlusconi himself, these parties have risen to prominence amid the rubble of the conservative Christian Democratic Party, which dominated a string of coalition governments for almost five decades after World War II. At times the Christian Democrats would cede first place to the

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U.S. gov’t gets its way at Aqaba summit

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

U.S. president George Bush left the Group of 8 conference in Évian-les-Bains, France, early for two summits in Egypt and Jordan to press Arab and Israeli leaders to implement his “road map for peace” in the Middle East. As planned beforehand, Washington got its way at these gatherings.

The June 4–5 meeting in Aqaba, Jordan, was organized at Washington’s initiative. At the meeting, Bush got confirmation of the concessions Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon had promised the previous week to evacuate some Jewish settlements from Palestinian land, and assurances from Palestinian prime minister Mahmoud Abbas that he would put an end to “the militarization of the intifada.”

This summit was organized to announce an agreement on a U.S.-crafted Israeli-Palestinian accord. The so-called road map calls for the formation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip within three years, on condition that the Palestinian Authority crack down on groups called “terrorist” by Washington and choose a leadership acceptable to the White House.

At a June 3 meeting in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, Bush won backing for the plan from Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah of Jordan, King Hamad of Bahrain, and the Palestinian prime minister.

Addressing the issue of Israeli settlements, Sharon promised to “immediately begin to remove unauthorized outposts.” Tel Aviv has established hundreds of Jewish settlements throughout the occupied territories and has moved in more than 200,000 settlers—largely right-wing Zionists. Some 3.5 million Palestinians live in the West Bank and Gaza.

At Aqaba Palestinian prime minister Abbas stated, “Our goal is two states, Israel and Palestine.” He pledged to bring to an end the nearly three-year-old uprising of the Palestinian people. In remarks aimed at Hamas and other Palestinian groups opposed to the latest U.S.-inspired plan, Abbas stated that “our national future is at stake and no one will be allowed to jeopardize it.” During the meeting, Abbas did not refer to key Palestinian demands: the right of the 700,000 Palestinians expelled from their land by the Zionist armies in 1948, and their 4 million descendants, to return to their land in what is today Israel; Jerusalem being the capital of a Palestinian state; and what the borders of a future Palestine will be. His failure to do so drew criticism from many Palestinian forces. On June 6 Hamas withdrew from negotiations with Abbas over a cease-fire.

Two days later Palestinian fighters attacked an Israeli army outpost at the Erez crossing from Gaza into Israel, killing four Israeli soldiers. Leaders of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Al Aksa Martyrs Brigade said they carried out the unusual joint operation to demonstrate their rejection of the Aqaba agreement.

Israeli troops carried out a retaliatory strike next day. They were unsuccessful in their attempt to assassinate a central Hamas leader with a helicopter gunship attack but killed two Palestinians and wounded 20 others. Washington criticized Tel Aviv for the action. At a June 9 press conference, Abbas defended the Aqaba accord and renewed his call for an end to armed Palestinian actions. He stated, however, that his government “was not going to outlaw anyone” or use force against other Palestinian groups.

The Israeli government made initial concessions in the negotiations in order to block with Washington in achieving larger objectives in the region. A major goal shared by the U.S. and Israeli rulers is to deal blows to the Iranian regime, including the destruction of Tehran’s capacity to develop nuclear weapons. As part of this goal they seek to neutralize or qualitatively weaken Hezbollah—a Lebanon-based group made up largely of Shiite Muslims that has taken responsibility for guerrilla attacks against Zionist targets.

Sharon stipulated that any concessions on the part of Tel Aviv are conditioned on the termination of the Palestinian struggle, stating Israel “will continue fighting terrorism until its final defeat.”

In his “road map” Bush calls for the removal of all Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza built in the last two years. Israeli officials have indicated that Tel Aviv plans to take down only about a dozen outposts, consisting largely of “a few mobile homes placed on isolated West Bank hilltops,” the *New York Times* reported June 4. Since the Oslo accord in 1993—the first Israeli-Palestinian political agreement—the population of the settlements has doubled. The largest outposts, like Ariel and Aumim, with some 20,000 settlers, are left untouched by the White House’s current plan.

Tel Aviv tears down empty ‘outposts’

On June 9, Israeli troops tore down a watchtower adjacent to a Jewish settlement in Ofra, West Bank, and two trailers in nearby Neve Erez South. These are among the 14 “unauthorized outposts” Sharon has pledged his army will take down. Settlers have erected these on land that not even Tel Aviv has claimed as Israeli territory. These outposts are largely uninhabited.

“It’s a phony show that has no value,” said Nabil Abu Rudaneh, an aide to Palestinian Authority president Yasir Arafat, referring to these removals. The same day the Israeli army demolished 13 homes of Palestinians in the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanun.

At Sharm El Sheikh Bush stated, “Israel must make sure there’s a continuous territory that the Palestinians can call home.” A day later a White House spokesperson assured that he meant “contiguous.” In this context, stated the *Jordan Times*, contiguous means “a self-contained state, not crisscrossed by roads open only to Israelis or separated by Jewish settlements.” Hoping to reassure the Palestinian people, who have witnessed how accords have been used to continue denying them self-determination, U.S. secretary of

Tokyo announces negative interest rates

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

The Japanese monetary authority has announced it will authorize banks to charge negative interest rates of 3–5 percent below zero. The move was reported in *Shukan Gendai*, a Japanese financial publication, according to a June 9 article by James Sinclair, a stockbroker and precious metals trader in the United States. The article was posted on the website of *Le Metropole Café*, an internet publication aimed at investors and financial analysts.

This is another attempt by Tokyo to channel credit to productive activity and generate growth in the stagnant national economy. Under this approach, the banks would pay borrowers to take loans—a move that would in theory provide an incentive to capitalist corporations and other investors to take out new loans.

Prospective depositors, on the other hand, would have to pay banks to keep their savings—a possible incentive to many to invest their money in productive activity rather than putting it into a savings account.

In the last three decades interest rates charged by the Bank of Japan have plummeted from 6.25 percent in 1970 to just about zero now—the rate officially adopted in March 2001.

A deflationary crisis—characterized above all by a contraction in credit and accompanied by falling prices and a decline in productive activity—has seized Japanese capitalism in a tightening noose over the past decade. It is tied to the state of near-collapse of the country’s major banks, which carry a crippling load of unpayable loans. The four largest banks reported a combined loss of \$25 billion for the year that ended March 31.

Between 1998 and the year 2000, Japan had a net decline in the rate of growth of its gross domestic product. GDP growth hovered between –2.5 percent and zero. During the same period unemployment shot up to levels unprecedented in the last half century. In March joblessness stood at 5.4 percent, according to official figures. It rose even higher among young people—for those between the ages of 15 and 24 it exceeded 13 percent.

On June 10 Tokyo formally approved a

Teachers in Peru strike to demand higher wages, end of state of emergency



Striking public school teachers march June 9 in Lima, Peru, to press their demands for better wages and benefits. The strike and street protests have continued despite a state of emergency the government declared May 27.

state Colin Powell said that the new plan will lead to a Palestinian state that “can’t be chopped up in so many ways in some form of Bantustan”—a reference to the isolated and arid areas of apartheid South Africa to which the disenfranchised African majority was confined.

A June 4 Zionist protest against concessions to the Palestinian people drew tens of thousands to the center of Jerusalem. The huge banner across the stage said, “No to a Palestinian state.” Shaul Goldstein, the deputy head of the Settlers Council, which organized the rally, said, “The land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people and not to anyone else.”

Palestinian prisoners released by Tel Aviv June 3 were met by cheering crowds as they walked free. Some were behind bars for decades, like Ahmed Jubarah, 68, who had been imprisoned for 28 years. The nearly 100 Palestinians released were among the 2,000 Israel has arrested since September

2000, most held without charges. In the last three years nearly 800 Israelis and more than 2,300 Palestinians have been killed.

At Aqaba President Bush repeated his support for a “vibrant Jewish state” and stated Palestinians must abandon “terrorist crimes” in order to receive his support for statehood. He also announced Washington will take a direct hand in enforcing its demands, noting that “my government will provide training and support for a new, restructured Palestinian security service.”

While the current accord was drawn up by the so-called quartet of Washington, the European Union (EU), Moscow, and the United Nations, it was Bush who unveiled the plan on May Day. Washington alone took charge of the Sharm El Sheikh and Aqaba summit proceedings, leaving the rest of the Group of 8 to finish their business in Évian-les-Bains without him. No representatives from any EU governments or Moscow attended the Middle East meetings.

plan to inject more than \$16 billion into the country’s fifth largest bank, the latest in a series of patch-up measures. For its money, Tokyo will gain 70 percent of Resona Holdings, effectively nationalizing it. The bank’s managers have announced that they will cut employees’ pay by 30 percent and close a number of branches.

While Japanese capitalism is in worse shape than its imperialist competitors in Europe, let alone the United States, deflationary pressures are making themselves felt throughout the imperialist world. Attempting to spur increased loans and investment, the U.S. Federal Reserve Board

has slashed interest rates on federal funds to nearly zero, while the European Central Bank cut rates by half a percentage point to 2 percent June 5.

Speaking in early May, U.S. Federal Reserve Board chairman Alan Greenspan drew a distinction between this type of “corrosive deflation,” which he sees as a threat on the horizon of the U.S. economy, and the more usual tendency of prices to fall as a result of rising productivity. “Corrosive deflation,” he said in early May, “feeds on itself, creat[ing] falling asset prices, which in turn brings down levels of economic activity.”

Social wage in Italian rulers’ sights

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Italian Socialist Party. Both these twin parties of capitalist rule were victims of the capitalist crisis that first began to hit in the mid-1970s. The fall of the Christian Democrats was more spectacular, as leaders and prominent associates were toppled in the middle of ongoing bribery scandals.

Seizing this situation in the 1994 campaign, Berlusconi presented himself as an uncorrupted “outsider” in Italian politics who would use executive power to “clean up” Rome. At the time capitalist commentators in the United States drew parallels between Berlusconi and Ross Perot, the businessman and Bonapartist politician who received nearly 20 percent of the vote as a third-party candidate in the 1992 U.S. presidential elections.

Berlusconi came to power as the deepening capitalist crisis started breeding radical attitudes that initially put wind in the sails of the right before it precipitated massive class battles—that is, before a working-class radicalization during which growing numbers of workers become more receptive to class-struggle proposals and communist ideas. Berlusconi tapped into the conviction of millions that the established bourgeois politicians were incapable of addressing the social crisis, unfit to be in office.

In power, Berlusconi has acted as a mainstream capitalist politician. His program has been determined less by the

rhetoric of the rightists on his flanks than by the drive of the Italian rulers to increase their profit rates and cut social programs.

At the same time, Berlusconi’s interventions in the recent election campaigns had a characteristic edge of demagoguery, red-baiting, and self-promotion. Without his role as the country’s savior, he told the *New York Times* on May 9, “there would be no freedom in Italy.”

“If I left political life right now,” he added, “Italy would fall into the hands of Communists.” Berlusconi gives his anti-communism a personal twist, blaming “Communist judges” for corruption investigations into his business affairs. The coalition government lined up with Washington and London in their invasion of Iraq, in defiance of the larger powers of Berlin and Paris, which saw the U.S.-dominated military action as a blow to their own oil contracts and other imperialist designs in the Middle East.

At the June 2–3 G-8 meeting in France Berlusconi announced that Rome would contribute 3,000 troops to the occupying armies.

“We are the third country in the world, after USA and UK” in the deployment of active-duty military forces abroad, he said. According to the Italian government, some 55,000 Italian troops are engaged or on stand-by for such imperialist “peace-keeping” missions in Kosova and elsewhere.

13,000 registered to be deported

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required to register—that is, to be interrogated, photographed, and fingerprinted by the immigration cops—by deadlines set between December 2002 and April of this year.

The “special registration” requirement sparked protests in Los Angeles, New York, and other cities. On December 18 thousands of people rallied in Los Angeles—some of them holding signs that read, “What’s next? Concentration camps?”—to protest the arrest of some 500 Iranian-Americans after they had registered with the immigration cops.

Some of those facing deportation today have been waiting for months or even years for officials to process their applications for residency status. In a catch-22, the immigration police declared they are “illegal immigrants” even though they had green card applications pending.

In the last two years the number of expulsions of Pakistanis, Jordanians, Lebanese, and Moroccans has doubled, and the number of Egyptians deported has tripled.

Washington deported more than 600 Arabs and Muslims in the weeks immediately after Sept. 11, 2001, but the Justice Department stopped giving information on these actions after the number of ar-

rested immigrants reached 1,200. It still refuses to provide complete statistics for that period.

On June 2, the U.S. Justice Department’s inspector general issued a report criticizing the federal government’s treatment of immigrants jailed as part of the “antiterrorism” raids. Focusing on the detention of 762 immigrants held after September 11, the report said those arrested in New York City, many of them born in Pakistan, were subjected to “a pattern of physical and verbal abuse” from guards. More than 80 held in the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn were placed in 23-hour per day “lockdown” in their cells, with their families often told they were not being held in that facility. The cops refused to notify some of the prisoners for more than a month of the charges under which they were being held.

None of the 762 detainees reviewed in the report were charged with “terrorist” offenses; one man was arrested on the basis of a complaint to the police that he had made “anti-American” statements. Most of those arrested were charged, after their arrests, with minor immigration infractions such as an expired visa.

Justice Department spokesperson Barbara Comstock said, “we make no apolo-

Immigration cops convicted in Houston for death of Serafín Olvera



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

Supporters of the campaign to win justice for Serafín Olvera scored a victory with the conviction of three immigration cops June 9 for violation of his civil rights—they had denied him medical care after breaking his neck in a raid at the home of construction workers in Bryan, Texas, in March last year. Olvera died from his injuries almost a year later, and his family launched a public campaign for justice in his case that led to the conviction of the three cops. Above, supporters of the campaign at May 25 immigrant rights march in Houston.

gies” for the government’s detentions and deportations.

The internal report, issued by an internal Justice Department “watchdog,” offers only a glimpse of the brutality meted out to immigrants caught up in the dragnet. The report’s conclusion is that the raids were “abuses” or “errors” that, by “casting the net too wide,”

detracted from a supposedly legitimate campaign against “terrorism.” While the examples cited in the report are described in the past tense, they fail to mention ongoing injustices such as the indefinite detention without charges of Palestinian activist Farouk Abdel-Muhti, who continues to be held in solitary confinement.

Calero kicks off national victory tour

Continued from front page
we are launching a victory tour.”

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had filed a one-sentence motion before Strasser in Newark, New Jersey, on May 1 to “terminate the instant Removal Proceedings predicated on the Notice to Appear dated December 3, 2002, issued in Houston, Texas.” The DHS motion was based on two sections of the government’s immigration regulations: “The notice to appear was improvidently issued,” and “Circumstances of the case have changed after the notice was issued to such an extent that continuation is no longer in the best interest of the government.”

What had changed since the immigration police detained Calero was his successful campaign to win broad support for his fight to stop the government’s efforts to deport him. In this six-month fight Calero won a wide hearing from defenders of freedom of the press, supporters of the rights of immigrants, and others opposed to government attacks on workers’ rights.

Unions—from the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 789 in St. Paul, Minnesota; to District 1199J of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees in Newark; to the National Union of Journalists in Britain—came to his defense, sending letters to demand the charges be dropped, inviting him to speak, and making financial contributions.

Calero will begin his victory tour in Houston, where he was originally detained in December of last year by immigration

agents, now organized under the Department of Homeland Security, said John Studer, coordinator of the Róger Calero Defense Committee, at the June 7 meeting.

From Houston, Calero will tour cities in the Midwest, where he won broad backing from meat packers and other trade unionists. Before joining the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* staff, Calero worked as a packing-house worker in both Iowa and Minnesota. He was part of a groundbreaking union organizing drive that won the union at Dakota Premium, a packinghouse where he worked in South St. Paul, Minnesota.

UFCW Local 789, which now represents workers at Dakota Premium, took up the fight from the beginning. Local president Bill Pearson signed on as one of the national co-chairs of the defense committee and the local organized a fund-raiser at the union hall that brought in over \$2,000. Since then, many more checks from other union members have been sent to the defense committee through the ongoing work of UFCW Local 789 in support of the defense campaign, Studer said.

Calero said that his tour will offer a political example of how to organize an effective fight at a time when “Attorney General John Ashcroft is justifying the conduct and methods used in the arrest and deportation of thousands of immigrants, which are strengthened by the Supreme Court decision to continue allowing secret deportation hearings, and while the U.S. government is preparing to execute prisoners held without charges at the U.S. prison camp at Guantánamo—on territory Washington occupies against the will of the Cuban people. But they can’t hide the outrage provoked by the death of dozens of immigrant workers at the U.S.-Mexico border as they attempt to cross it into this country.”

Calero was seized, upon returning from a reporting trip to Latin America, at Houston Intercontinental Airport in December 2002 by immigration agents. Like thousands of others, he was thrown into detention and told he was to be “excluded” from the United States. The government based this decision on a 1988 conviction Calero had on his record for selling an ounce of marijuana to an undercover cop while he was in high school. The Immigration Service was fully informed of this conviction when he applied to be a permanent resident in 1989. They waived the record of this petty offense and granted him a green card in 1990, and renewed his permanent residency status 10 years later.

At the June 7 program here Calero said his tour will “seal the victory” achieved in his case by helping to make his successful

campaign the property of others in struggle. He pointed in particular to the ongoing fights against the immigration police by Farouk Abdel-Muhti, Sami Al-Arian, and Omar Jamal, and expressed support for five Cuban revolutionaries framed up and imprisoned in U.S. jails.

Following the Midwest tour stops, Calero will head to several West Coast cities. Then, in early July, Calero will return to the East Coast for engagements in New York and Newark, New Jersey, before attending the Socialist Workers Party’s July 10–12 Active Workers Conference in Oberlin, Ohio. Following that conference, Calero will take his tour to the NAACP Convention in Miami, Florida.

In a June 5 letter to supporters of the Róger Calero Defense Committee, John Studer wrote, “for the rest of July and August, Calero will complete his tour around the country. Calero will finish his victory tour by traveling to speak before supporters in Europe. Successfully reentering the country will complete Calero’s tour and consolidate his victory.”

GE workers protest layoffs, cuts

BY ELLEN BRICKLEY

LYNN, Massachusetts—Hundreds of workers rallied in front of the General Electric Riverworks aircraft engine plant in this Boston-area town on June 7, two days after national contract negotiations got under way in New York City. Organized by Local 201 of the International Union of Electronic Workers-Communication Workers of America (IUE-CWA), the rally protested GE’s threatened layoffs and proposed cuts to health care for retired and active workers, along with other attacks.

The unionists are among the 25,000 workers across the country—members of 13 unions—whose contract with GE expires at midnight, June 15. A nationwide strike has been scheduled against the giant company for June 26 if agreement is not reached on a new contract.

The Lynn rally took place in the course of a 24-hour plant-wide strike over the bosses’ farming out of work from Building 64 of the company complex. Job security is a key issue for the 2,500 workers in the local.

Busloads of GE workers, retirees, and supporters came to the rally from a number of far-flung areas, including Louisville, Kentucky; Erie, Pennsylvania; Cleveland, Ohio; Schenectady, New York; and Jonesboro, Arkansas. Community groups such as the Lynn Senior Action Committee also participated.

Róger Calero Victory Tour

Below is the schedule for the first leg of the tour. Requests for additional tour dates can be made to the committee.

Houston June 18–19
Twin Cities June 20–21
Jefferson, WI June 22
Chicago June 23–24
Des Moines June 25
Omaha June 26
Los Angeles June 27–28
San Francisco June 29–30
Seattle July 1–2
New York July 4–5
Newark July 6–7

For more information, materials, or to send a contribution, contact the Róger Calero Defense Committee, c/o PRDF, Box 761, Church St. Station, New York, NY 10007; phone/fax (212) 563-0585, or visit its website at www.calerodefense.org

—CALENDAR—

**SOLIDARITY SUNDAY
JUNE 22**

**JOIN TYSON STRIKERS IN
JEFFERSON, WISCONSIN
Rally at Tyson Foods Plant Gate
1:30 - 2:30p.m.**

**Followed by Free Music
in Rotary Waterfront Park**

470 United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union Local 538 members are nearing the end of their fourth month on strike against Tyson Foods. Please join them on Solidarity Sunday, 45 minutes from Madison. For more information: tel: 608-244-5653, www.tysonfamiliesstandup.org

How Saudi, U.S. rulers came into conflict

This is the second of two articles. The first, “Saudi Arabia: fruit of imperialist carve-up of region,” was published in last week’s issue, no. 20, dated June 16, 2003.

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The history of modern Saudi Arabia is the history of imperialist oil interests in the country. The first Saudi king had not yet gained control of the western part of the country when he granted the first oil concession to a British investment group in 1923.

As early as 1912, four groups were competing for oil rights in Mesopotamia, now Iraq. They were: the German Deutsche Bank, the British D’Arcy, the Dutch-Anglo-Saxon Oil Company, and a U.S. group. With the discovery of suspected large oil reserves in the region, competition sharpened between the imperialist powers that defeated the German-Ottoman alliance in the Middle East following World War I.

Iraq, believed at the time to have the largest oil reserves, became a British protectorate. Capitalists from the United Kingdom established their dominance of oil in Iran through the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. At the end of the war, executives of Socony (now Mobil) reported bitterly to the U.S. State Department that the British commander of Baghdad prohibited their scouts from travelling to the oil-rich cities of Mosul and Kirkirk. Their teams in Palestine and Turkey, they reported, were being stalled while those of the Royal Dutch and Anglo-Persian oil companies were given free access to explore in the desert. This relationship of forces prompted Standard Oil’s New Jersey president to comment, “British domination would be a greater menace to New Jersey business than a German victory would have been.”

In 1928 nine companies signed an agreement that aimed to prevent any single company from obtaining oil rights in the region. The “Red Line” agreement, as it came to be known, got its name from a red-pencil circle someone among the nine drew around the countries of the old Ottoman Empire. Within this boundary the oil giants agreed that exploration and development rights would be granted only in combination—not to a single company alone.

The Standard Oil Company of California, which had not been a signatory to the agreement, obtained oil rights in Bahrain in 1932 and in Saudi Arabia the following year. By 1946 Standard had brought on Texaco, Standard Oil of New Jersey (later renamed Exxon), and Socony.

Fall of London, rise of Washington

The establishment by these companies of the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco), a U.S.-owned oil consortium, was the first step by Washington toward wresting dominance of Middle East oil reserves from British imperialism. In 1951 British



oil barons were dealt another blow with the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry under the pressure of tens of thousands of oil workers. The 1954 CIA-organized overthrow of the government of Mohammad Massadeh in Tehran placed the Shah back on the throne and replaced London with Washington as the main imperialist power in the country.

In 1940 British companies controlled an estimated 72 percent of oil reserves in the region as compared to 9.5 percent for U.S. companies. But Washington emerged as the number one imperialist power after World War II, displacing London. By 1967 reserves controlled by British companies had fallen to 29.3 percent while those under U.S. control had risen to 58.6 percent.

Aramco also qualitatively reinforced the position of what would become one of Washington’s key allies in the region—the Saudi royal family. The original contract with Aramco called for the payment of an annual rental fee of 5,000 British pounds in gold or its equivalent; a royalty payment of four shillings gold per net ton of crude production after the discovery of oil; and the free supply to the Saudi government of specific quantities of products from Aramco’s refineries.

In exchange Aramco received exclusive rights to explore for, produce and export

oil, free of all Saudi taxes and duties, from most of the eastern part of Saudi Arabia for sixty years.

Production costs for Aramco were minimal and the oil wells were very productive compared to those in the United States. In 1971 oil wells in the Middle East produced an average of 4,500 barrels per day as compared to 15 barrels per day in the United States. The costs of production in the Middle East averaged 20 cents per barrel as compared to \$1.75 in the United States.

The decisive factor in the cost differential was the low wages paid to oil workers. In 1950 the wage for oil workers in the Middle East averaged \$2.13 a day. In Saudi Arabia it was \$1.30 daily.

With access to a number of Gulf coast ports, Saudi Arabian oil could also be transported cheaply. The infrastructure of Saudi Arabia was developed along lines that primarily fit the needs of Aramco. The company built a modern port at Ad Dammam and a railroad linking it to Riyadh paid for by the Saudi government. The company built pipelines, storage tanks, gas-oil separation plants, and loading terminals throughout the country. In the 1970s Aramco managed the electric power company that supplied electricity to the eastern provinces.

While Aramco trained Saudis to perform a wide range of tasks in the oil industry,

Saudi Arabian personnel were denied access to top management positions. The Saudi government first proposed obtaining a part in Aramco’s ownership in 1968. After long negotiations, the Saudi regime bought a 25 percent stake in 1973. In 1988 the Saudi government obtained an agreement to fully purchase Aramco, which was renamed the Saudi Arabian Oil Company.

Saudi royal family and OPEC

The Saudi royal family also began playing a more central role in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), formed by governments in semicolonial countries after victories in anti-colonial struggles following World War II to counter domination of world oil markets and prices by imperialist powers and their companies. OPEC was founded in Baghdad in September 1960 in response to a unilateral decision by oil companies to reduce prices of oil they paid to exporters. The founding members—Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela—stated a number of objectives for the organization, including that OPEC member countries achieve a fair rate of return for their oil exports. In total, the countries belonging to OPEC comprise more than 77 percent of the world’s oil reserves and more than half of world petroleum exports.

Saudi Arabia has the world’s largest proven oil reserves at just over 260 billion barrels. Oil not only lubricates but also drives the world capitalist economy. In 2000 oil accounted for 42.7 percent of world energy production as compared to 15.8 percent through hydroelectric plants. Energy produced from coal stood at 7.9 percent, a drop from 13.8 percent in 1973. In 1999 oil was used to produce 52 percent of the energy used in Japan—a country with virtually no oil reserves of its own. Half of that figure is used to drive Japan’s industries.

The military forces of Washington and other imperialist powers in Europe and the Far East depend on fuel supplies from the Middle East and North Africa. As early as 1914, Winston Churchill, then head of the British Admiralty, argued that the British Navy must purchase the Anglo-Persian Oil Company of Iran and that “we must become the owners, or at any rate the controllers of the source, of at least a proportion of the supply of natural oil which we require.”

The looming signs of political challenges faced by the Saudi rulers are a growing concern to Washington for the stability of its access to oil in the region.

Through the occupation of Iraq, Washington hopes not only to find a more suitable location for its armed forces, but also sees the chance to end Saudi dominance of oil in the region and undermine OPEC. Ultimately, however, this can’t be done without direct U.S. control of Saudi oil.

Gary Vogler a former executive with Exxon now heads the Iraqi oil ministry. In true imperial style his first order was that “all employees of the ministry were prohibited from independently making any operational or staffing decisions until further notice.”

Iraq has the second largest known oil reserves, at 115 billion barrels. With the end of the war it is now under U.S. control. Thamir Ghadhbani, Chief of Planning at the Oil Ministry for many years believes that by the end of the year Iraq’s oil production can be gotten back up to the pre-war level of 2.5 million barrels a day. In four to five years daily production could exceed 6 million barrels.

This is the number needed to qualitatively weaken the Saudi capacity to influence world prices through OPEC’s control of production levels, according to oil experts. Fadhl Chalabi, an Iraqi exile and Director of the London Centre for Global Energy Studies, estimates that it would cost \$6 billion to get Iraqi oil productions levels up to 3.5 million barrels per day by 2005.

To meet these costs of restoring Iraqi production levels Chalabi, who is also currently a consultant to the U.S. State Department, proposes “generous privatization” of the Iraqi oil industry.

But denationalization of Iraq’s oil industry is potentially explosive. The June 1, 1972, nationalization of oil production in the country, as in many countries in the Middle East, is considered a symbol of liberation from colonial rule and has been celebrated as a national holiday until last year.

Nursery workers in Scotland strike over pay

BY HARRY LAWS

EDINBURGH, Scotland—“The Government keeps banging on about education, education, education. It’s time we were valued too,” said Margaret Wilkins, a nurse and shop steward at a nursery here, as she led a picket outside council offices in Bathgate, West Lothian, May 28. These nurses provide child care in nursery schools for children between the ages of three and five.

The ten picketing union members got a good response to their sign reading “toot for support,” as many drivers sounded their horns. Earlier, 120 had marched through the town.

Some 4,500 members of the Unison public sector union are holding a series of rolling strikes over six weeks covering different parts of Scotland. Strikes have so far taken place May 20–22, May 28–29, and June 3–4. The nurses are also refusing all

additional duties and overtime as they fight for a raise of around £4,000 per year, a 35-hour workweek, and a pay review.

The unionists explained that there has been no such review for 15 years, despite considerable added duties and responsibilities. “We’re expected to do the same as teachers, but they receive twice our pay,” said Elspeth Hill, a nurse at a rally outside Edinburgh City Chambers May 29. Hill was on her fourth strike day.

At the same rally Barbara Foubister, chair of the Edinburgh City Unison branch (local), said, “We want to hold on to full-time status as well as get regrading.” Nursery workers are afraid they will be forced into part-time status so bosses can avoid paying them during holidays. They would lose full-time holiday and pension entitlement if that happened.

Caroline Milne, also from Edinburgh said, “I’ve been a nursery nurse for 15 years now and in that time the role has changed dramatically, but the pay is just the same.”

These nurses are currently paid £10,000 per year as new hires. That rises to £13,800 after eight years or more. Some 50 percent of them work up to 10 hours of unpaid overtime per week, while half are on temporary

or fixed-term contracts.

The nurses made their initial claim 18 months ago to the employers, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA).

The bosses had offered a job evaluation process, said Foubister, but “they have asked the unions to put back the start date till 2004. It is simply another attempt to fob off low-paid nursery nurses who have already been waiting nearly 15 years. Well, we can’t wait any longer.”

Talks aimed at solving the dispute held on June 3 ended in stalemate as the bosses put forward substantially the same offer that was rejected in April by the nurses. COSLA officials have played on the inconvenience caused to parents by the strikes. “They hold a gun to our heads,” a nurse in North Lanarkshire with 11 years experience told *Militant* reporters, but “most of the parents support us.”

Of the 64 percent of union members who voted, nine out of ten were in favor of striking. At Bathgate and Edinburgh, nurses were adamant they wanted a result. Hill said, “This is the biggest strike we’ve ever had. We’ve had enough, we’ll fight till this is sorted out.”

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What did the G-8 summit reveal?

BY PATRICK O'NEIL
AND SAM MANUEL

The domination of the recent Group of 8 summit in Évian-les-Bains, France, by U.S. president George Bush revealed once again that there is no rising imperialist power capable of competing with, much less replacing, Washington. Neither can the euro—the currency of 12 countries in the European Union with various levels of development and military strength, and with conflicting economic interests—replace the dollar as the currency of international trade and investment.

The June 1-3 meeting involved the major imperialist powers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, along with the government of Russia. They unanimously adopted a U.S.-sponsored resolution condemning Iran and north Korea for allegedly developing nuclear weapons. Bush also built support for a range of aggressive measures against the two countries, including the right to seize alleged nuclear and military material on the high seas or in the air exported by these governments. Behind Bush's "command performance"—in the words of *Business Week* columnist John Rossant—was the military and economic superiority of Washington over its imperialist rivals, demonstrated anew in the Anglo-American invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Rossant's column appeared in the June 16 issue of the U.S. weekly magazine. He noted that the French left-liberal daily *Libération* had written before the event that this was "the summit where French President Jacques Chirac expected to be crowned 'king of the non-George Bush world.'" In an unprecedented maneuver, designed to present the French government as a friend to the countries brutally exploited by the imperialist powers, Chirac invited a number of observers from semi-colonial governments. "This would be a chance to show that France and Europe really did care about poverty, disease, and inequality in the world," wrote Rossant.

"Guess what?" he continued. "George Bush stole the show." The U.S. president also stole Chirac's disguise as an ally of the Third World. He had used a prior visit to Poland as a platform to trumpet Washington's \$15 billion AIDS fund that the White House is using as a carrot to coax semicolonial regimes to ally with Uncle

Sam. This amount dwarfed "the French government's own \$57 million outlay last year on AIDS projects," wrote Rossant.

Bush followed this up in Évian by telling the other heads of government, "U.S. contributions to the U.N.'s Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria are now seven times the size of pledges from the next-largest donor, Germany," said Rossant. Bush also announced that the Millennium Challenge Account, the White House's "poverty-fighting initiative aimed at Africa, would reach \$5 billion annually by 2006.

"There was more to come," wrote Rossant. "Bush got fellow G-8 leaders to sign on to new initiatives fighting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, even getting them to single out North Korea and Iran."

Taking the most optimistic projections of U.S. economists, Bush also "reported that U.S. growth was set to clock in at close to 3 percent in this year's second half—vs. barely 1 percent in recessionary Europe."

With an air of contempt for his imperialist allies, Bush left the summit a day early. From France, U.S. government officials flew to Egypt and Jordan to get backing for the administration's push to conclude a Mideast settlement that can bring the



U.S. president George Bush and French president Jacques Chirac at G-8 summit

Palestinian resistance to an end. While Rossant advised "the Europeans to do a sight better if they want to set up a convincing counterbalance to the U.S.," he also stated, "When you think about it, any gestures Chirac made at the G-8 were bound to be hollow. Continental economies are performing too poorly to give him much clout in setting world policy. The French and Germans cannot afford a decent army, let alone a global AIDS initiative. The U.S. can afford both. Easily."

His analysis was largely correct.

"Two months after the fall of Baghdad," observed the columnist, "Bush still

occupies center stage." Having expressed opposition to Washington and London's invasion of Iraq—an assault that was the inevitable outcome of more than a decade of sanctions and "inspections" that they co-sponsored—Berlin and Paris have voted for the occupation.

The *Business Week* columnist exhorted Bush and his rivals to "remember the advantages of the old alliance." Rossant's own description of the summit, however, confirmed that competition and conflicts between these imperialist powers will continue to sharpen, not abate—the G-8 unanimous agreements notwithstanding.

N. Korea says it's building nuclear weapons

Continued from front page

Central News Agency (KCNA) stated, "The DPRK's intention to build a nuclear deterrent force is not aimed at threatening and blackmailing others but at reducing conventional weapons under a long-term plan and channeling human resources and funds into economic construction and the improvement of peoples' lives.

"The DPRK will build a powerful physical deterrent force capable of neutralizing any sophisticated and nuclear weapons with less spending unless the U.S. gives up its hostile policy towards the DPRK." Washington's response to Pyongyang's announcement was cautious. "This does not mean we are going to war," said U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell while in Santiago, Chile, at a meeting of the Organization of American States. "We are not." Referring to U.S. president George Bush, Powell stated,

"The president continues to believe that there is an opportunity for a diplomatic solution, a political solution, but it's a solution that must come from a multilateral forum." The Bush administration has held the stance that any negotiated solution to the conflict with north Korea must include Beijing, Seoul, and Tokyo—an effort to involve these governments in putting pressure on north Korea to abandon efforts to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. Washington, for example, has been pushing China to seal off its border or cut off shipments to north Korea, unsuccessfully so far. Pyongyang, on the other hand, has been insisting on bilateral talks between the U.S. and north Korean governments.

U.S. government officials said Washington will not announce new measures against Pyongyang, in order to avoid an overt confrontation at the moment. The

U.S. government, however, has already taken steps to prepare for military strikes on north Korea down the road if the current campaign of economic and political pressure doesn't work.

At the G-8 summit in Évian-les-Bains, France, Washington won the agreement of the other six major imperialist powers represented there to begin interdictions and inspections of north Korean ships. Washington accuses Pyongyang of having shipped missiles to the Middle East, including Iran and Pakistan.

The Japanese government was the first to begin tightening the naval noose around north Korea. It deployed 1,900 "safety inspectors" to Japanese ports. These inspectors are to be used to search north Korean cargo ships, and a passenger ferry they accuse of smuggling electronics, computer parts, and other software Pyongyang needs for its missile program. The inspections are also aimed at blocking the transfer of money sent by north Koreans living in Japan to relatives back home. Tokyo has also demanded that privately owned banks suspend the sending of remittances to north Korea.

On June 10, these inspectors boarded two north Korean vessels in Maizuru—a western Japan port that last year received one quarter of the 1,344 port calls by 147 north Korean ships to Japan—and detained the Namsan 3 freighter saying the ship cannot leave until its crew fixes three alleged safety violations. A dispatch by the KCNA called the inspections "another sinister political attempt to lay siege to the DPRK."

Meanwhile, as part of Washington's military threats against the north Korean people, the Pentagon announced that it will begin withdrawing some 18,000 U.S. troops from the border with north Korea at the so-called demilitarized zone and from a military base occupied by U.S. forces in downtown Seoul. The troops will be stationed at least 75 miles south of the DMZ, out of the reach of north Korean artillery in case of a military conflagration.

Washington currently has 37,000 troops in south Korea, part of a U.S. military presence maintained on the peninsula since the stalemate at the end of the Korean war—the first major military setback for U.S. imperialism. It also maintains another 48,000 troops in Japan, as well as the nuclear-armed U.S. Seventh Fleet patrolling the region.

In May, U.S. Congress, with overwhelming bipartisan support, gave a green light to the Pentagon to begin testing "low-yield" nuclear weapons. Many politicians justified the decision as specifically designed to develop weapons that can destroy Pyongyang's deep underground bunkers.

Atomic agency: Iran got nuclear fuel secretly

Continued from front page

monarchy of the shah, which had been a bastion of imperialist domination in the region. The government that replaced the shah is a capitalist regime, wrapped in clerical forms that are increasingly out of step with the views and sentiments of many working people. Nevertheless, Tehran has remained at odds with U.S. imperialism and has not been able to roll back all of the political and social gains won by the toilers through their struggles, nor has it crushed their aspirations and anti-imperialist sentiments.

Iranian security forces arrested more than 80 people in Tehran during overnight clashes with the police June 10, according to Agence France Presse. The police broke up demonstrations that began with some 500 students at Tehran University protesting government attempts to privatize some campuses. The students were joined by others shouting slogans such as "the clerical regime is nearing an end," swelling the crowd to more than 1,000. It was the first such protest in at least six months. "These people, incited by extremists outside the country, were shouting illegal slogans," said Iran's intelligence minister Ali Yunesi, according to the student news agency ISNA. He stated that Tehran "will use force to prevent all illegal actions."

The IAEA report follows a June 2 declaration by the "Group of 8" (G-8)—made up of seven major imperialist states plus Russia—that singled out the governments of Iran and north Korea for allegedly seeking to develop nuclear arms. Nuclear proliferation

is "the pre-eminent threat to international security," said the statement, signed by U.S. president George Bush and his counterparts in Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, and Russia. It called for stepped-up, intrusive inspections at nuclear plants and related facilities; export controls directed against Tehran and Pyongyang; and, "if necessary, other means in accordance with international law"—a threat of possible military action if all other measures fail.

A day later, French president Jacques Chirac and Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi told reporters that this statement did not imply a threat of force. These imperialist powers agree with the U.S. rulers' goal of preventing Iran and north Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons, but at the same time have competing interests with Washington.

The G-8 declaration was reminiscent of the various United Nations resolutions against Iraq leading up to the U.S. invasion of that country earlier this year. Paris, for instance, joined in the unanimous UN Security Council vote on November 8, 2002, dictating the ultimatums that Washington used a few months later as justification for the invasion. At the same time, the French rulers—who stood to lose out on their lucrative trade with Baghdad—presented themselves as the peace party compared to Uncle Sam. Today, once again, Washington's imperialist rivals are voting for the resolutions that will be used down the road as the pretext for U.S. military action and domination of these countries.

Liberal critics of the Bush administra-

tion in the United States have also gone out of their way to praise the course of the White House vis-à-vis Iran and north Korea. "It is easy to see why world leaders at the recent Group of 8 summit meeting in France declared the spread of such unconventional weapons to be, along with international terrorism, 'the preeminent threat to international security,'" said an editorial in the June 7 *New York Times*, titled "New tools for arms control."

"It is encouraging to see that the Bush administration is now proposing some intriguing new ideas for reinforced international cooperation in this area," the editorial continued. "No country has yet been able to develop unconventional weapons without some degree of outside help. If such aid can be thwarted, either at the source, by stronger export controls, or in transit, by naval or air interception of contraband cargoes, proliferation can be much more effectively contained."

Meanwhile Moscow, which has a valuable contract to complete the construction of a nuclear power reactor in the Iranian city of Bushire, is coming under greater pressure from Washington and London to back out of the deal. British prime minister Anthony Blair told his parliament June 4 that the Russian government had pledged to suspend shipment of nuclear fuel to Iran unless Tehran agreed to accept much more intrusive "inspections" of its nuclear facilities. Russian atomic energy minister Aleksandr Rumyantsev denied this, although Moscow has said Tehran should agree to the inspections.

SWP: ‘Puerto Rico independence is in the interests of vast majority in the U.S.’

The statement below was presented June 9 by Martín Koppel, a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States, to the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization. Koppel was among two dozen individuals and representatives of organizations who testified at the committee’s annual hearings on the colonial status of Puerto Rico. Subheadings have been added by the *Militant*.

Distinguished Chairman and honored committee members:

I join with others here in celebrating the victory won with the withdrawal of the U.S. Navy from Vieques last month. This is a victory in the fight against U.S. colonial rule over Puerto Rico. It strengthens the hand of working people and the oppressed around the world fighting against exploitation and imperialist domination.

The success of this struggle is testimony to the tenacity and resistance of the Puerto Rican fishermen, workers, students, and others who for more than six decades have fought to get the U.S. military out of their land in Vieques. It demonstrates that it’s possible to stand up to the power of U.S. imperialism and win. And it shows that imperialism today is weaker than ever, not stronger.

The battle over Vieques highlights one fact above all: that Puerto Rico remains a U.S. colony.

We face a common enemy

Workers and farmers in the United States have absolutely no stake in Washington’s colonial domination of Puerto Rico. It is only the tiny handful of billionaire ruling families in this country who benefit from the exploitation of Puerto Rico’s labor, land, and natural resources. The people of Puerto Rico and working people in the United States face a common enemy: those wealthy families and their representatives in Washington, regardless of who may be in the White House.

A successful struggle for independence is in the interests, not only of the people of Puerto Rico, but of the great majority of people in the United States. As long as the Puerto Rican people have the U.S. boot on their necks, labor in this country will not be able to throw the source of exploitation off our backs either.

The U.S. government has used Puerto Rico as a springboard for launching assaults on countries around the world—from its invasion of Grenada in 1983 to the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, to the war of plunder in Iraq this year. And it has used Puerto Rican youth as cannon fodder in all these imperialist wars. The opposition by Puerto Rican youth to the U.S. draft in previous wars and to the use of university campuses by the ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) has set an example for young people in the United States.

Today, as the U.S. rulers seize the spoils of occupation in Iraq at the expense of their imperialist rivals in France and Germany, they have accelerated their campaign for “regime change” in Iran, including aggressive “inspections” of nuclear plants, economic sanctions, and, if these fail, possible military strikes on those facilities. Washington has also stepped up its threats against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea under the banner of nuclear “nonproliferation.”

‘War on terrorism’ is not new policy

This course of aggression is not a new policy, nor did it begin on September 11, 2001. It is the real face of American imperialism—the same imperialism that entered the world stage a century ago by grabbing Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines, and Guam. Today, Washington’s so-called war on terrorism is simply a justification for using military might around the world in an effort to salvage the declining imperialist world order.

This “war on terrorism” is also a cover for the U.S. employers’ assault on workers and farmers at home. Under the banner of “homeland defense”—which began under the Clinton administration with the creation

for the first time of a *domestic* military command—the U.S. rulers are increasingly militarizing the country. They want to get us to accept the regular deployment of heavily armed National Guard troops in the subways; the military and police checkpoints at tunnels and bridges; the interrogations at the airports, including “no-fly” blacklists.

The selective “registration” of immigrants from Middle Eastern and South Asian countries, and the mass deportations that have just been announced—all these are part of the employers’ preparations for cracking down on the broader working-class resistance they know is coming. So is the creation of a U.S. concentration camp in Guantánamo—on land occupied against the will of the Cuban people—where more than 600 men and boys are being jailed indefinitely as “enemy combatants” with no charges and no rights, under subhuman conditions.

In face of the deepening depression in the United States and worldwide, the U.S. employers are driving brutally to speed up production, lay off workers, erode health and safety on the job, drive down wages, and cut social benefits. This has led a growing number of workers and farmers to resist the employer offensive, and to refuse to subordinate their interests to the bosses’ “homeland security” and “national unity” demands. Today, hundreds of meat packers are on strike against Tyson Foods in Wisconsin, fighting attempts to cut their retirement pensions and wages. Some 24,000 General Electric workers across the country have been mobilizing to defend their medical benefits. And in the coalfields, miners have been waging a fight against new government coal dust regulations that will cost the lives of countless miners.

Free Puerto Rican political prisoners

Mr. Chairman,

Some 2.7 million Puerto Ricans are part of the working class in the United States. They face systematic discrimination and second-class status, as do Blacks, Chicanos, and other oppressed nationalities in the country. U.S. colonial rule of Puerto Rico reinforces racist prejudice and every form of reaction in the United States, from attacks on affirmative action, to anti-immigrant terror by *la migra*, to police brutality, like the recent police killings in New York City of Ousmane Zango, an immigrant from Burkina Faso, and of city worker Alberta Spruill—acts that have sparked protests.

The colonial domination of Puerto Rico

Pro-independence forces testify at the UN

Continued from front page

of Cuba, was adopted by consensus.

Many of the two dozen representatives of pro-independence organizations who took part in the hearings spoke about the importance of the hard-fought victory to bring to an end 60 years of bombing exercises and military maneuvers by the U.S. Navy on the Puerto Rican island. At the same time, they said the fight was not over.

The statement from the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, stressed that they were still fighting for the removal of the Navy’s over-the-horizon radar (ROTHR) on the island’s southeast zone. The lands previously used by the Navy have been handed over to the U.S. Department of Interior. The committee, which helped spearhead the movement against the Navy’s presence, demanded the U.S. government clean up the island, contaminated by the Navy’s use of “an enormous quantity of military toxins”; the “devolution of every inch of the territory of Vieques to the people”; and “development projects that principally benefit the people and not the hotel interests, political parties, or other powerful politico-economic forces.”

With the victory in Vieques, one of the

gives Washington a freer hand to attack the rights of working people. Today, five Puerto Rican patriots remain locked up in U.S. prisons because of expressing ideas and carrying out actions in support of Puerto Rico’s independence. They are Oscar López, Juan Segarra Palmer, Haydée Beltrán, Carlos Alberto Torres, and Antonio Camacho Negrón, who was rearrested two months ago. Some of them have been jailed for almost a quarter of a century, making them among the longest-held political prisoners in the world. I join with others here to demand: Release them now!

Likewise, we demand the U.S. government free the five framed-up Cuban revolutionaries who are serving draconian sentences of up to a double life term. Their real “crime” was obtaining information on counterrevolutionary groups that, operating from U.S. territory, have a long record of organizing violent attacks against Cuba, with the full knowledge and complicity of Washington. The FBI’s wiretapping of the phones of these five Cubans and the surreptitious searches of their homes, the denial of their right to a fair trial, the use of “conspiracy” charges—these are the same kind of frame-up methods the U.S. government has used against Puerto Rican independence fighters, and which it is pushing to use increasingly against working people in the United States.

The successful struggle to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques—which will not be over until the U.S. government hands control of those lands to the Puerto Rican people—also puts a spotlight on how, in



Martín Koppel, a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S., testified at UN Puerto Rico hearings.

the name of fighting “drug trafficking” and “terrorism,” Washington has been expanding its construction of semisecret bases and its military intervention throughout Latin America: in Colombia, Ecuador, and the Triple Border area of Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina.

Example of Cuban Revolution

Mr. Chairman,

The people of Puerto Rico and working people in the United States are often told by our common oppressor in Washington that it’s useless to struggle, that independence will only lead to ruin. But the example of revolutionary Cuba proves that to be a lie.

The workers and farmers of Cuba have shown it is possible to fight and win genuine independence from U.S. domination. The socialist road they have freely chosen is the course that has made it possible to achieve sovereignty and dignity.

The U.S. rulers have never forgiven the Cuban people for having the audacity to establish the first free territory of the Americas and to provide an example to working people everywhere. For 44 years they have carried a relentless drive to overthrow the Cuban Revolution—including a mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs, a threatened invasion and nuclear war in 1962, acts of sabotage, assassination attempts against Cuban leaders, and an economic war that continues to this day.

Through their determination, political consciousness, and organization, Cuban working people have defeated all these attacks and have remained fearless. What has kept Washington from launching any subsequent military assault is its knowledge that, unlike its invasion of Iraq, any assault on Cuba would lead to enormous U.S. casualties and a huge political price.

Cuba has consistently championed Puerto Rico’s fight for independence, setting an example of selfless internationalism. Revolutionary Cuba continues to point to the road forward for Puerto Rico as well as for working people in the United States and worldwide.

The condemnation by this committee of Washington’s colonial rule of Puerto Rico will serve the interests of the vast majority of the people of the United States and those fighting throughout the world for national self-determination and for the future of humanity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, for the opportunity to present these views before you today.

ment as ‘domestic terrorists’” under U.S. laws that are part of the “antiterrorist” campaign.

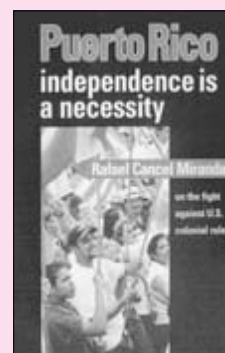
Berthaida Seijo Ortiz of the Puerto Rican Lawyers Guild spoke in opposition to the efforts by U.S. officials to impose the death penalty in Puerto Rico in violation

Continued on Page 10

From Pathfinder

Puerto Rico: Independence is a necessity

In two interviews with Rafael Cancel Miranda—one of five Puerto Rican nationalists imprisoned by Washington for more than 25 years—speaks



out on the brutal reality of U.S. colonial domination, the campaign to free Puerto Rican political prisoners, the example of Cuba’s socialist revolution, and the resurgence of the independence movement. In English and Spanish. **\$3.00**

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Why Bolsheviks suppressed Kronstadt revolt

Printed below are excerpts from the article “Hue and cry over Kronstadt” by Leon Trotsky, a leader of the October 1917 Russian Revolution and head of the Soviet Red Army during the Kronstadt rebellion. The excerpts are from the book *Kronstadt* by Trotsky and V.I. Lenin, the central leader of the Bolsheviks. This is one of Pathfinder’s books of month in June. The uprising took place in March 1921. It consisted of a mutiny by sailors at this garrison near Petrograd, which was suppressed by the Red Army. Copyright © 1979 by the Anchor Foundation, reprinted by permission.

BY LEON TROTSKY

The campaign around Kronstadt is being carried on with undiminished vigor in

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

certain circles. One would think that the Kronstadt revolt occurred not seventeen years ago, but only yesterday....

How can the Kronstadt uprising cause such heartburn to anarchists, Mensheviks, and “liberal” counterrevolutionists, all at the same time? The answer is simple: all these groupings are interested in compromising the only genuinely revolutionary current, which has never repudiated its banner, has not compromised with its enemies, and alone represents the future. It is because of this that among the belated denouncers of my Kronstadt “crime” there are so many former revolutionists or semi-

revolutionists, people who have lost their program and their principles and who find it necessary to divert attention from the degradation of the Second International or the perfidy of the Spanish anarchists. As yet, the Stalinists cannot openly join this campaign around Kronstadt but even they, of course, rub their hands with pleasure; for the blows are directed against “Trotskyism,” against revolutionary Marxism....

Why in particular has this variegated fraternity seized precisely upon Kronstadt? During the years of the revolution we clashed not a few times with the Cossacks, the peasants, even with certain layers of workers (certain groups of workers from the Urals organized a volunteer regiment in the army of Kolchak!). The antagonism between the workers as consumers and the peasants as producers and sellers of bread lay, in the main, at the root of these conflicts. Under the pressure of need and deprivation, the workers themselves were episodically divided into hostile camps, depending upon stronger or weaker ties with the village. The Red Army also found itself under the influence of the countryside. During the years of the civil war it was necessary more than once to disarm discontented regiments. The introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) attenuated the friction but far from eliminated it. On the contrary, it paved the way for the rebirth of kulaks and led, at the beginning of this decade, to the renewal of civil war in the village. The Kronstadt uprising was only an *episode* in the history of the relations between the proletarian city and the petty-bourgeois village. It is possible to understand this episode only in connection with the general course of the development of the class struggle during the revolution....

Among the Kronstadt sailors there were three political layers: the proletarian revolutionists, some with a serious past and training; the intermediate majority, mainly peasant in origin; and finally, the reactionaries, sons of kulaks, shopkeepers, and priests. In tsarist times, order on battleships and in the fortress could be maintained only so long as the officers, acting through the reactionary sections of the petty officers and sailors, subjected the broad intermediate layer to their influence or terror, thus isolating the revolutionists,



U.S. troops train for combat in 1919 on way to northern Russia to fight alongside the counterrevolutionary White Army—part of the efforts by Washington, Tokyo, London, and Paris to crush the Russian Revolution. Kronstadt rebellion took place while Bolsheviks were fending off this imperialist-backed counterrevolution.

mainly the machinists, the gunners, and the electricians, i.e., predominantly the city workers....

The political composition of the Kronstadt Soviet reflected the composition of the garrison and the crews. The leadership of the soviets as early as the summer of 1917 belonged to the Bolshevik Party, which rested on the better sections of the sailors and included in its ranks many revolutionists from the underground movement who had been liberated from the hard-labor prisons. But I seem to recall that even in the days of the October insurrection the Bolsheviks constituted less than one-half of the Kronstadt Soviet. The majority consisted of SRs and anarchists. There were no Mensheviks at all in Kronstadt. The Menshevik Party hated Kronstadt. The official SRs, incidentally, had no better attitude toward it. The Kronstadt SRs quickly went over into opposition to Kerensky and formed one of the shock brigades of the so-called Left SRs. They based themselves on the peasant part of the fleet and of the shore garrison.

As for the anarchists, they were the most motley group. Among them were real revolutionists, like Zhuk and Zhelez-

niakov, but these were the elements most closely linked to the Bolsheviks. Most of the Kronstadt “anarchists” represented the city petty bourgeoisie and stood upon a lower revolutionary level than the SRs. The president of the soviet was a nonparty man, “sympathetic to the anarchists,” and in essence a peaceful petty clerk who had been formerly subservient to the tsarist authorities and was now subservient . . . to the revolution. The complete absence of Mensheviks, the “left” character of the SRs, and the anarchist hue of the petty bourgeois were due to the sharpness of the revolutionary struggle in the fleet and the dominating influence of the proletarian sections of the sailors.

This social and political characterization of Kronstadt, which, if desired, could be substantiated and illustrated by many facts and documents, is already sufficient to illuminate the upheavals which occurred in Kronstadt during the years of the civil war and as a result of which its physiognomy changed beyond recognition. Precisely about this important aspect of the question, the belated accusers say not one word, partly out of ignorance, partly out of malevolence.

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Detroit ‘terror’ convictions: a frame-up

BY ILONA GERSH

DETROIT—On June 3, three of four defendants were found guilty on frame-up conspiracy charges in the first government “terror” trial of individuals arrested following the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Karim Koubriti, Ahmed Hannan, and Abdel-Ilah Elmadoudi, from Morocco; and Farouk Ali-Haimoud, from Algeria, faced charges of conspiracy to provide material support or resources to terrorists, and to engage in fraud and misuse of visas, permits and other documents. In addition, Koubriti, Hannan, and Ali-Haimoud were charged with actual document fraud.

Ali-Haimoud was acquitted of all charges. Elmadoudi and Koubriti were convicted of terrorist conspiracy, a charge for which they could be sentenced to up to 25 years in prison. Hannan was found guilty of conspiracy to engage in visa and other fraud.

The government indictment said the four had “operated as a covert underground support unit for terrorist attacks within and outside the United States, as well as a ‘sleeper’ operational combat cell.” The unit, it said, was tied to a “loose, transnational network of radical Islamists” that had allegedly launched an “international holy war” in the 1990s.

“Elements of this radical Islamic network established intelligence collection cells in the United States to plan and support future terrorist attacks,” the indictment stated.

The case commenced six days after the September 11 events. Federal agents looking for Nabil Al-Marabh—then number 27 on the FBI terrorist “watch” list—raided a Dearborn house in a working-class neighborhood in the shadow of the giant River Rouge Ford plant. Inside the sparsely furnished apartment they found Ali-Haimoud, Hannan and Koubriti. The three men were taken into custody. Elmadoudi was arrested the following year.

Federal agents assigned to the case traveled to Jordan, Morocco, and Turkey, and from Anaheim, California, to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to New York City. Their 2,000 pages of reports notwithstanding, the government’s case largely rested on the five hours’ testimony of Youssef Hmimssa. In exchange, the government offered Hmimssa 46 months in prison for 10 unrelated felonies he had admitted to committing in three states. Without the agreement, he would have faced sentences of up to 81 years.

Led by Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Convertino, the prosecution also produced a day planner found in the Dearborn apart-

ment. One page contained crude, stick-like sketches of airplanes and runways. The government claimed that the drawings depicted the flight paths into the U.S. air force base in Incirlik, Turkey, so accurately that the base commander had altered routine flight routes as a precaution. The defendants explained that a mentally ill former roommate, who had later committed suicide, had produced the sketches.

Seeking to show evidence of a broader plot, the prosecution said that the defendants kept the answers to the state’s commercial driver’s license test in their apartment, and hinted that such information pointed to “planned terrorism,” according to the *Detroit News*.

A video confiscated in the raid was shown. It included footage of trips to Disneyland, Las Vegas, and New York City. The prosecution claimed that the video was part of casing these sites for attack. The court-appointed language expert testified that the person filming the river in Disneyland uttered the words, “Here is a rising cemetery.” However, a defense witness, Algerian-born Naima Slimani Benkoucha, testified that the cameraman had said less menacingly, “What a lovely view.”

At the time of the indictment’s release in August, Robert Precht, a University of

Michigan law professor who had defended one of the men convicted in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, said that the footage sounded “like tourist videos.”

The inflammatory language of the indictment would prevent the four from getting a fair trial, Precht said. “It’s all part of a pattern of conduct by the Justice Department to attach these very inflammatory labels to people claiming that they are terrorists in an effort to stoke the fires of popular outrage when, in fact, the actual evidence is extremely skimpy,” Precht said. “It makes it almost impossible for a jury to be neutral.”

In preparation for the trial, a pool of 220 jurors had to fill out a questionnaire of 27 pages. Questions included: Have you ever heard the word “jihad”? Do you speak Arabic? Are you a member of the National Rifle Association, a union, a parent-teacher association? What Internet sites do you regularly visit? What were the last three books you read? Have you or any close friend or relative ever been the subject of surveillance by law enforcement officials?

Two days after the convictions U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft proposed that Congress allow him to seek the death penalty or life imprisonment for terrorist acts. He also wants Congress to allow the government to hold alleged terrorists indefinitely without charges.

Elmadoudi, Koubriti, and Hannan have all announced that they plan to appeal their convictions.

L.A. students build Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange

BY DIANA NEWBERRY
AND OLYMPIA NEWTON

LOS ANGELES—“I want to go to Cuba because I’ve heard a lot about Cuba as a socialist country, and I want to see for myself and understand how communism contributes to a better way of life,” said Sol Porras, the president of the MEChA chapter at California State University Northridge. She is helping to organize 18 students from her campus to attend the Third Cuba-US Youth Exchange, which will take place in Cuba, July 24–31. MEChA is the Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan.

More than 75 young people from the Los Angeles area have registered to take part in the Youth Exchange. The group includes students from more than a dozen universities and two high schools.

The trip is an opportunity for young people from across the United States to learn from Cubans themselves about the Cuban Revolution and the impact it has had on the lives of millions of workers and youth. Four of Cuba’s main national youth organizations—the Union of Young Communists, Federation of University Students, the Federation of High School Students, and the Saiz Brothers Cultural Association—are hosting the week-long activities. They will include visits to Cuban historical sights, health-care facilities, and schools.

Participants will also see first-hand the projects that make up the Battle of Ideas. This is a series of more than 100 programs through which Cuban youth organizations aim to win and integrate reinforcements to the active political defense of the revolution. The initiatives include a school for revolutionary social work, popular libraries, and video and computer clubs for workers and



Militant/Eric Simpson

Dozens of youth from around the country, like the ones above at May 23 meeting in Miami, are organizing to take part in Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange in July.

youth who live in the more remote and less developed areas of the country.

Due to the U.S. laws that restrict travel by citizens of the United States to Cuba it is necessary to secure a license from the Treasury department in order to visit the Caribbean nation. Most Youth Exchange participants will be traveling to Cuba under an information-gathering license, specifically related to researching the conditions facing women and youth in Cuba. Several high school students around the country will be traveling under a people-to-people license, a category of legal travel for U.S. citizens to Cuba that allows for educational

trips to the island.

Exchange participants raise funds

The Los Angeles Coalition in Solidarity With Cuba is organizing a series of events to build the trip. They will include house meetings and a public forum at the University of California Los Angeles Labor Center. Among the guest speakers will be Andrés Gómez, co-founder and national coordinator of the Antonio Maceo Brigade, a group of Cuban-Americans who support the revolution. In addition to raising funds toward the travel and other costs, these events will help open a discussion on what is happening in Cuba today, the history of the revolution, and of U.S. hostility toward it. The group is also planning to raise funds through other political programs, parties, garage sales, and car washes.

At the weekly planning meetings in Los Angeles, participants are planning to hold discussions on “The Second Declaration of Havana,” a revolutionary program adopted at a mass gathering in Havana in February 1962, and other historical documents from the Cuban revolution. The discussions will take place at the weekly planning meetings. “There are a lot of misconceptions, rumors, and false information on everything about Cuba,” said Aldo Gonzalez, a design student at California State University Long Beach. “I want to learn more about the history, politics, and other aspects of Cuba.”

“History classes never teach you about the revolution, or if they do, it’s one-sided. I want to see for myself,” Gonzalez added.

To find out more about the Youth Exchange, contact the Los Angeles Youth Exchange, which is serving as a national clearinghouse, at cubasovereignty@aol.com, 1498 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026.

Miami rally: ‘Free Haitians!’

BY ALEX ALVARADO

MIAMI—About 200 people protested across the street from the immigration building here May 31. They were demanding freedom for Haitian refugees who are locked up at the Krome Detention Center, and protesting discrimination by the U.S. government against Haitian refugees.

The Haitian American Grassroots Coalition called the rally. Cosponsors included Fanm Ayisyen Nan Miyami (Haitian Women of Miami), Service Employees International Union Local 1199, American Civil Liberties Union, and the NAACP. The majority were Haitians and many waved Haitian flags.

Protesters held signs saying “Equal Treatment for Haitian Refugees” and “Freedom for Haitian Refugees.” People chanted in English and Creole. One popular chant was “Remember, remember, remember Savannah!” referring to the participation of Haitians in the U.S. revolutionary war against the British, and who died at Savannah, Georgia.

The speakers focused on the situation of the 235 Haitians who arrived on a boat at Biscayne Bay, in Miami last October. They were detained by Miami cops, and then incarcerated at Krome. Marleine Bastien of Fanm Ayisyen denounced the horrible conditions of detention, and the long delays for processing asylum requests by Haitians. Many people held posters protesting the abusive treatment of women and children at the detention center, and the detention of juveniles. Kevin Sharpley, a young man, said he has been attending rallies for Haitian refugees for many years, and called the U.S. government policy towards Haitians “disturbing and unconscionable.”

“More needs to be done to fight the racist and unequal treatment of Haitians,” said Ninon Fortune, another participant at the action. “We must link with the Black American struggle,” she added.

Another focus of the rally was the statement made by U.S. attorney general John Ashcroft April 23 that a mass migration from Haiti, and the release of the boat’s passengers, could pose a “national security” threat. Ashcroft claimed that “Pakistanis, Palestinians, and others, are using Haiti as a staging point for trying to get into the United States.” On April 23 he overruled a decision by an immigration appeals board releasing one of the detainees. Ashcroft’s decision affirmed that Haitians seeking asylum must be held in detention until their claims are processed rather than to be released on bond. Several protesters held signs saying “Haitians are not Terrorists.”

Third Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange Havana, Cuba July 24–July 31

Young people from across the United States will be traveling to Cuba in July to participate in the Third Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange. They will meet with youth in that country, exchange ideas with them, and see firsthand the truth about Cuba’s socialist revolution. They will take part in the 50th anniversary celebration of the assault on Moncada, which launched the revolutionary war that brought down a U.S.-backed dictatorship. The project is hosted by the Union of Young Communists, Federation of University Students, and other youth organizations in Cuba. A national clearinghouse for information on the exchange has been set up in Los Angeles. Contact them at the e-mail address below to find out how you can join—**time is running out for new applicants, so act now!**



**For more information contact:
cubasovereignty@aol.com**

Washington’s anti-Iran course

Having achieved their immediate objectives in Iraq through the invasion and ongoing occupation of that country, the U.S. rulers are now continuing this political course by accelerating their drive against Iran. Through a variety of means, their goal is to bring about the overthrow of the current regime in Tehran and further reinforce U.S. domination of the Mideast, to the detriment of Washington’s imperialist rivals in Europe and Japan.

Pursuing that aim, the U.S. government succeeded in overthrowing the Baathist party regime in Iraq at minimal political cost in the short term. The White House ran right over the objections of liberal Democratic critics who, sharing the same strategic goals, had offered tactical advice on how best to conduct the imperialist drive against Baghdad. Despite the bleatings from liberals about a military “quagmire,” the U.S. armed forces carried out a rapid invasion and takeover of Iraq with few U.S. casualties.

Washington chose a target that was an easy mark. The rotted-out capitalist regime in Baghdad—which relied on creaky Soviet military hardware and bureaucratic military organization, demoralizing the army ranks—simply shattered. These military successes have boosted the morale of the U.S. officer corps, which is no longer marked by the “Vietnam Syndrome.” They proved that U.S. imperialism has been able to improve its armed forces, both increasing the effectiveness of its military technology and relying on the political advantages of a volunteer army.

Today, liberal forces, jockeying to score partisan points against the Bush administration as they step up their campaigning for the 2004 presidential race, offer more dire warnings and hypocritical hand-wringing about the “messiness” of an imperialist military occupation and the fact that no chemical or biological weapons have been found—as though the discovery of such evidence would justify Washington’s war of plunder. But the absence or presence of “weapons of mass destruction” has not and will not hinder the U.S. government, which simply used the argument as only one of its many reasons for the assault. “Regime change,” one of Bush’s top justifications for the takeover of Iraq, was supported by most of the president’s critics.

The U.S.-led drive against Iran is a continuation of the same course, but it is shaping up to take a different path from the assault on Iraq. Since 1979, Washington’s aim has been to seek the overthrow of the Iranian government. That year workers and farmers in Iran carried out a revolution that toppled the U.S.-backed monarchy and changed the relationship of class forces in the Mideast to the disadvantage of imperialism. While the regime in Tehran is capitalist and wrapped in reactionary clerical forms, the political self-confidence and expectations of working people in Iran remain an obstacle to U.S. imperialism.

Today Washington is not preparing an invasion of that country, which would entail a political price it is unwilling to pay at this point. Instead, it is pursuing other means to bring about the ouster of the current regime—which it considers not reliable enough for safeguarding imperialist interests in the region—and replace it with one that will do the job. The U.S. government is pressuring Tehran to extract concessions, and it has been getting results. It is demanding that Iran stop its nuclear program and put Lebanon-based Hezbollah out of commission. Washington is threatening nuclear weapons

“inspections,” economic sanctions, cross-border raids by Mujahedeen combatants based in Iraq, and, if those fail, the possible bombing of Iranian nuclear plants.

Washington registered further progress at the recent G-8 summit. With unanimous agreement these governments—including Paris and Berlin—issued a resolution that condemned Iran and north Korea for trying to develop nuclear weapons and threatened punitive measures against them. If Iran is deemed to be in violation of imperialist-dictated nonproliferation agreements—which allow the major imperialist powers to have nuclear weapons but not most semicolonial countries—then the case will automatically be taken to the UN Security Council, which could consider giving its blessing to further aggressive measures. The U.S. government can be expected to get more such resolutions approved by the UN Security Council and other international bodies that, despite self-serving denials by Paris et al., will be used as political cover to press the imperialist war drive. Because of their weakness relative to Washington, these powers will go along with the U.S.-led drive in order to get their hands on at least some of the spoils.

The invasion and occupation of Iraq is a blow to workers and farmers around the world, one that will not be reversed tomorrow. To chart a clear course in opposition to imperialism and its wars, working people need to understand the underlying causes of the imperialist war drive and longer-term trends in world politics.

The assault on Iraq and the war drive against Iran, north Korea, and other countries are not the result of one American president’s personal intentions or conjunctural factors. The current actions by Washington are part of a bipartisan course that began well before the Bush administration took office. The war and occupation of Iraq were carried out not by a “fascist” administration but by “democratic” imperialism. This imperialist drive toward war is fueled by the economic decline of the capitalist system, which is marked by a 30-year-long drop in average profit rates that cannot be reversed by minor policy changes.

It is equally important to understand, however, that long-term trends in the world class struggle work in favor of working people. The world’s toilers are in a historically stronger position than ever before—through the growth and concentration of the working class as the population keeps shifting from the countryside to the urban centers, the continuing integration of women into the labor force, the internationalization of our class, and the growing weight of oppressed nationalities in working-class leadership. These developments are leading to deep-going trends such as the secularization of society and its positive consequences for the fight for women’s liberation and the possibilities for forging proletarian leadership.

In face of the unfolding world developments, liberal and radical forces have turned with greater zeal toward “lesser evilism”: electing Democrats in 2004 to “defeat Bush.” What working-class fighters need today is to be part of building a communist workers party that joins in the ongoing struggles of working people, systematically explains these facts, and charts a political course independent of the bosses’ parties, the Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. A course toward forging a revolutionary movement capable of leading workers and farmers to take political power away from the war-making class and into their own hands.

Canada ‘mad cow’ crisis: man-made

The *Militant* is providing editorial space this week for excerpts from a statement issued June 7 by Patricia O’Beirne, Communist League candidate for mayor of Toronto in the November 10 municipal elections there.

The outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Toronto and the discovery of “Mad Cow Disease” (BSE) in a slaughtered cow in Alberta have created crises that point to the threat to food and health systems caused by capitalism’s growing world disorder.

While natural organisms are involved, these crises are not natural disasters. They are social crises that reflect the inevitable priorities and policies of the capitalist governments that defend the class interests of the billionaire families that own the mines, mills, land, factories, and banks at the heights of the Canadian economy. The crisis is also heightened by Washington’s trade offensive against its competitors to the north on the justification of the BSE outbreak.

The billionaire owners of industry demand their governments cut public spending and safeguard their profits and profit rates as the capitalist system worldwide sinks deeper into depression. The capitalists use the reality of the intensifying competition produced by this crisis to justify cutting social programs and throwing workers into the pit of long-term unemployment. For them, the health, safety, and jobs of workers and farmers are not a priority, whether in imperialist countries like Canada, workers states like China, or semicolonial countries.

It is certainly not a day too soon to blame the Klein government in Alberta. Before it was tested, the head of the cow with BSE sat in a private lab four months after the animal was slaughtered. The testing backlog in Alberta was due to the decision of the provincial government to close three of the four animal pathology—testing labs as part of its cutbacks program.

Working people cannot rely on the employing class or their governments to protect our health. Nor can we accept the view that workers, farmers, and other exploited producers—who, along with nature, create all wealth—should not expect safe food, water, and clean air, and good health care as a right.

In that context we should especially reject the anti-working-class chauvinist rants by some right-wing columnists that working people here should be grateful that we don’t live in Africa and other countries oppressed by imperialism, where

millions die of diseases like malaria, AIDS, and infant diarrhea every year. These unnecessary deaths also reflect the brutality of the international capitalist system in its death agony.

Throughout the SARS and Mad Cow crises, capitalist governments in Alberta, Ontario, and elsewhere in this country have focused their energies on getting tourists back to Toronto and convincing Washington and other governments to lift the ban on beef produced in Canada.

These efforts contrast unfavorably with the over 40-year-long record of the workers’ and farmers’ government in revolutionary Cuba, which has organized and mobilized the population to build and maintain a health system organized around the needs of the overwhelming majority of the population—not profits—and which is completely free of charge to the Cuban people. At the same time, the Cuban government has organized internationalist aid, including through doctors and other medical personnel, in Africa, Latin America and around the world, despite an unrelenting economic war by Washington, Ottawa, and other imperialist governments.

The unfolding capitalist depression will produce more and more social disasters for working people in Canada and around the world—whether it is more wars of conquest like the invasion and occupation of Iraq, or more frequent breakdowns in the systems that provide us with the necessities of life.

Trade unions, the basic defensive organizations of the working class, have the potential to play a key role in organizing and uniting working people against the effects of these crises by advancing demands on the government such as the following to deal with the current SARS/BSE crises.

- End the reliance on casual jobs for nurses. Hire thousands of full-time nurses now.
- Jobs for all! For a sliding scale of wages and hours!
- Immediate Employment Insurance at union rates and maintenance of all benefits for entire period of joblessness for those who can’t work because of quarantines or who are laid off because of the BSE crisis.
- Full funding of government-operated animal pathology labs with no cost to farmers and of local public health units charged with tracking and developing programs to contain communicable diseases.
- Massive aid to underdeveloped countries struck by SARS. Cancel their foreign debt!

UN hearings

Continued from Page 7

of Puerto Rico’s colonial constitution. Héctor Acosta Martínez and Joel Rivera Alejandro, for example, have been charged with breaking federal laws while on Puerto Rican territory and face the death penalty. “The death penalty was abolished in Puerto Rico in 1929 and expressly prohibited since 1952 by our Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico,” she said.

Opposition to U.S. colonial rule

Almost every speaker condemned U.S. colonial rule and spoke for independence. Many voiced opposition to the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, and pointed out the continued U.S. colonial rule of their homeland is part of the expansionist drive by U.S. imperialism.

Alice Hernández, a leader of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party in New York, said, “Puerto Rico is the oldest colony in this hemisphere. The United States refuses, against our right to self-determination and independence, to take steps towards a genuine process of decolonization.

“All of us have been witnesses to the invasion of a sovereign nation justified with lies,” Hernández said, referring to the U.S. assault on Iraq. “But this was nothing but a redivision of the world among the great powers. While they expressed some differences at first, they have now fully reestablished their alliance under U.S. domination.”

Martin Koppel of the Socialist Workers Party said, “a successful struggle for independence is in the interests not only of the people of Puerto Rico. As long as the Puerto Rican people have the U.S. boot on their necks, labor in this country will not be able to throw the source of exploitation off our backs either” (see “Puerto Rico independence is in the interests of vast majority in the U.S.” on page 7).

“The condition of Puerto Ricans in the United States, especially in the cities, is closely connected to the colonial relationship,” said Ricardo Gabriel, president of the Hostos Puerto Rican Club at Hunter College in New York City. With the public university system in New York under attack, “the forthcoming tuition increases and budget cuts will force thousands of Puerto Ricans and other people of color out of school, thereby denying us our right to an education.” At the same time, he noted, the number of people locked up in U.S. prisons, a disproportionate number of whom are Puerto Rican, is now 2 million.

Róger Calero, who recently defeated U.S. government attempts to deport him from the United States, told the hearing, “Washington’s colonial rule over Puerto Rico reinforces the racist discrimination promoted by employers and the government” (see article on the anti-deportation fight on page 1). Calero, an editor of *Perspectiva Mundial* and staff writer for the *Militant*, offered his victory as a “weapon that can be used by others fighting to defend their rights” both in the United States and beyond. “The frame-up methods used by the FBI against Puerto Rican unionists and independence fighters are the same ones the U.S. government uses against working-class militants in this country,” he said.

Other speakers included representatives of the Puerto Rican Independence Party and the Hostos National Congress, two of the main pro-independence groups on the island.

The pro-independence delegation put its stamp on the deliberations. A lone speaker testified for a group that defends the current “commonwealth” setup. Two individuals argued for making Puerto Rico the 51st U.S. state. No leaders were present, however, from the main colonial parties on the island, the pro-commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PPD) and the pro-statehood New Progressive Party.

That evening, more than 50 people attended a reception and forum at Hunter College, sponsored by ProLibertad, featuring a panel that included many of those who had testified at the United Nations as part of the pro-independence delegation. Among the speakers were Frank Velgara of the Vieques Support Campaign, Jorge Farinacci, Luis Rosa, Ricardo Gabriel, Alice Hernández, Benjamin Ramos, Róger Calero, Wilma Reverón, and Vanessa Ramos of the Association of American Jurists. The presentations and discussion period were an exchange of views on the current state of the Puerto Rican fight for sovereignty and independence.

Rosa stressed the importance of placing the fight for Puerto Rican independence and freedom for political prisoners within the context of the international struggle against U.S. aggression. “We can’t take on the biggest imperialist power in the world, if we don’t fight its attacks on other countries,” he said.

Profit drive fuels Canada ‘mad cow’ crisis

Washington uses outbreak to deal trade blows to its Canadian competitors

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—At the end of May, government officials and health administrators were faced with a resurgence of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in hospitals here after they had declared the deadly virus vanquished. At about the same time, the U.S. and many other governments issued orders banning the importation of beef produced in Canada after an Alberta cow tested positive for “Mad Cow Disease,” or Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). Washington and other imperialist powers took advantage of the outbreak to deal trade blows to their competitors in Canada. In both crises, capitalist Canadian politicians have downplayed the health risks in an effort to minimize the impact on big business.

BSE, which is fatal for cattle, causes the variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) in humans. This illness, which is fatal in humans and has about a 12-year incubation period before symptoms appear (in cows it is eight years), is believed to be caused by prions, a maverick protein that literally chews holes in the brain. BSE does the same thing to cattle. Little is known about the disease and there is no cure at the moment. Live cattle cannot be tested for BSE.

Between 1986 and 2002, some 181,000 cases of BSE were documented in cattle in the United Kingdom. In the same period 129 people died from the human strain of the disease, which has continued to cause deaths in the UK. The British government ordered about 3.7 million cows slaughtered to contain the outbreak. In 1995, London banned the practice of using ground up cattle in cow feed to maximize growth. The spread of the disease among cattle flowed from this profitable practice by the barons of the meat industry. Since that time, cases of BSE have been reported in 17 countries.

In Canada no complete records are kept on individual cows, unlike the current practice in Europe with cow “passports,” so the origins of the one animal diagnosed with BSE so far are not known.

The cow was slaughtered January 31. A veterinarian declared it unfit for human consumption, because it was underweight and was a “downer,” that is, it could not walk. It was suspected of having pneumonia. Then its head was kept in one of two animal pathology labs in Alberta for four months before being tested for BSE. The provincial government of Premier Ralph Klein had previously closed three of the four government testing facilities in the province as part of budget cuts, resulting in a huge backup for testing. Farmers can go to two private labs at their own expense.

Seventeen farms with 1,900 head of cattle were quarantined in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. By June 3, some 1,100 cattle had been slaughtered. Tests on another 800 animals are finished and came back negative. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has been unable, using DNA tests, to pinpoint the birthplace of the infected cow. As a result, another 650 cows from five farms are being rounded up and slaughtered for tests since there is a possibility the diseased cow spent some time



Worker inspects slabs of beef at meat packing plant in Toronto at the end of May (top). Auctions of cattle at the stockyards in Strathmore, Canada, (right) were nearly shut down after the U.S. ban on Canadian beef.

at those farms.

The May 22 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, whose editors speak for a broad layer of Canada’s capitalist rulers, said in an editorial on the BSE crisis: “It is too early to blame Premier Ralph Klein’s government. But the specter of government cuts may cast a heavy cloud over this crisis, as was with the tainted water tragedy in Walkerton and the recent SARS outbreak in Toronto.”

In May 2000 seven people died and hundreds got seriously ill in Walkerton, Ontario—some with permanent damage—from drinking water that contained a deadly form of the bacteria E.Coli. Public outrage forced an inquiry that revealed that the Ontario government’s decision to close public health labs and loosen regulatory control over municipal water systems was at the root of the crisis.

Profits before health

In both the Mad Cow Disease and SARS crises, provincial governments and capitalist politicians have focused on its “economic ramifications” on the profits reaped by their class, rather than the health needs of the majority of the population or its impact on the livelihoods of workers and farmers.

Beef production and related industries is big business in Canada. The beef industry is worth \$7.5 billion a year and involves 14,000 workers. Pet food production stands at \$1 billion a year. Some 70 percent of beef produced in Canada is exported to the United States.

At this point thousands of workers in the beef industry have been laid off, feed lots have been shut down, and farmers whose herds have been quarantined and slaughtered

are facing a bleak future.

From the beginning of the outbreak, capitalist politicians have been campaigning around the theme that the meat is safe and the bans on beef produced in Canada should be lifted.

“I want to stress from the beginning that this is one cow,” said federal agricultural minister Lyle Vanclicf.

“This is a problem with one herd and one cow,” echoed Prime Minister Jean Chrétien as he tucked into an Alberta steak for the cameras in an Ottawa restaurant.

The Alberta government hired a PR agency to prove that Alberta beef is safe.



“That’s ludicrous,” said David Westaway, a molecular biologist at the University of Toronto. “It doesn’t matter what a PR agency does but the scientific facts.” Westaway charged that the same pattern of evasion of the health issue has emerged in Canada as in the original outbreak in the UK.

A soon-to-be-released study funded by the European Commission, the executive body of the 15-member European Union, argues that the British government placed the interests of the meat industry ahead of public safety. The study, according to the *Toronto Star*, reports that protecting the market for British beef was the first priority until a full decade after BSE was identified.

Officials of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), which represents many of the thousands of meat-packing workers who have been laid off at plants like the Tyson-owned Lakeside Packers in Brooks, Alberta, and Better Beef in Guelph, Ontario, have called on the federal government to waive the two-week waiting period for unemployment benefits as they have done for workers in Ontario who have been out of work due to the impact of SARS. The government has rejected this demand.

At the same time, the UFCW officials echoed the government’s stance by issuing a statement titled “Food workers union urges restraint in response to case of mad cow disease.” It pays lip service to the health question and centers on maintaining the market for beef produced by UFCW members.

“UFCW Canada is aware and disappointed to hear about the important bans on Canadian beef, by the United States, Australia and Japan,” says the release. It goes on to call for the lifting of the U.S. ban.

On May 30, Shiv Chopra, a Health Canada scientist, was suspended for two weeks and fined three months pay three days after he cosigned a letter with four other scientists asking Ottawa to ban animal feed suspected of causing Mad Cow Disease.

“We consider that the primary cause for the transmission and spread of this disease, animal feeds containing rendered materials of other animals, has been allowed to prevail for much too long and is continuing,” the letter said. “We urge that to contain the disease a complete and immediate ban must be placed on the use of all such materials in any kind of food and other products for both people and animals.” In 1997 Ottawa banned the use of rendered cattle in cow feed, but the ban was only partial. Rendered cow material is still used in chicken and hog feed, pet food, and other products.

Warnings on SARS ignored

Meanwhile, following a new outbreak of SARS in Toronto hospitals at the end of May, Dr. Richard Shabas, former chief medical officer of health for Ontario, charged that hospitals let down their guard under political pressure. On April 23, the World Health Organization advised people to postpone all but essential visits to Toronto. This set off a storm of protests from politicians worried about the impact on tourism and the hotel and convention industry. The travel warning was lifted a week later.

“We let our guard down too soon,” said Shabas, now chief of staff at York Central Hospital. “I think it is because we felt political pressure.”

The SARS crisis began in March. As of June 3, the number of deaths stood at 32, with 60 active probable cases, 6,800 people in quarantine, and another 5,200 health-care workers in “working quarantine.”

On June 3, Ontario premier Ernest Eves rejected a demand by nurses in the province calling for a public inquiry on the handling of the SARS crisis by the government. The nurses said that health and other government officials ignored their warnings of the possibility of a new outbreak.

The next day, nurses from the Ontario Nurses Association, demonstrated at the offices of provincial health minister Tony Clement, demanding increased pay for all nurses, full-time jobs, and better protective gear for those working in hospitals.

John Steele is a meat packer and a UFCW member.

LETTERS

Strengthened by immigration

The *Militant* has made the point about how the working class, in many imperialist countries like Canada and the United States, has been strengthened by the irreversible immigration of working people from countries oppressed by the imperialist system, who bring their experiences about the imperialist system to workers born and raised here.

This was brought home to me recently when a co-worker at the slaughter house where I work who is from Myanmar (formerly Burma) asked me to go to a demonstration at city hall after work to protest the May 30 repression by the military junta against the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi. In 1990, the NLD, the bourgeois political opposition to the junta, won an election by a landslide but

was barred from taking power, and the country has been under “transitional” military rule ever since.

The present junta came to power after crushing an uprising on Aug. 8, 1988. Thousands of students, who led the movement for democracy, were murdered by the army. At least four of my coworkers participated in the demonstration. All of them were active in the uprising as students and later participated in the armed resistance before leaving the country as refugees. Many of the students who arrived in Canada took jobs in meat packing and auto parts factories.

The action at city hall, which took place on June 3, was called by the Burmese Students’ Democratic Organization (Canada) as part of a series of demonstrations around the world. I was told by my coworkers that government thugs had ambushed Suu Kyi

and several hundred supporters. The army arrived and began shooting, killing up to 70. There are reports that Suu Kyi received a head and shoulder wound. She was arrested by the military and her whereabouts are unknown as well as those of many of the oppositionists who were with her at the time. The military has postponed the opening of the universities for a new session.

The Toronto action was called from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. with many members of the Myanmar community coming and going during that time. Many brought their children. Signs said: “Burma is not a killing field”; “Free Suu Kyi and all political prisoners”; “Canadian government hypocrisy”; and “Start national reconciliation talks,” (between the NLD and the junta).

Yesterday my co-worker told

me the United Nations has sent an envoy to find out what happened to Suu Kyi. He was not sure about the UN getting involved. “Where the UN goes, the Americans come after,” he said.

*John Steele
Toronto, Ontario*

Donation to prisoners’ fund

I found your publication of letters from the five Cuban revolutionaries in U.S. prisons to be very positive! I enclose a donation to the *Militant* Prisoners Fund. I for one am paying very close attention to these five as a bellwether in international politics. That may seem odd, but there it is!

*Michael S.
Denver, Colorado*

The *Militant* receives many requests from readers behind

bars. The Prisoners Fund makes it possible to send them reduced rate subscriptions. A prisoner can buy a six-month subscription for \$6 and a one-year subscription for \$12.

The Spanish-language monthly magazine *Perspectiva Mundial* offers a six-month subscription for \$3 and a one-year subscription for \$6. Please send a check or money order, earmarked “Prisoners Fund,” to the Militant, 152 W. 36th St., #401, New York, NY 10018.

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Sahrawi leader tours New Zealand

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—"We are clear—we want Western Sahara as an independent state," said Fatima Mahfoud, a representative of the national liberation struggle of the people of Western Sahara, to a May 22 meeting at Auckland University during a speaking tour of New Zealand in late May.

Mahfoud is a leader of Polisario, which heads the Western Sahara independence struggle, and of the Sahrawi National Women's Union. This was the first-ever visit by a representative of Polisario to New Zealand. More than 340 people heard her speak at public meetings and on university campuses in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin.

Mahfoud's tour of New Zealand was followed by a series of similar meetings in Australia. The New Zealand leg of the tour was organized by a number of groups including Students for Justice in Palestine, the aid agency CORSO, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Communist League, students' associations, and the Young Socialists, along with university professors and members of African and Muslim communities. The initial invitation for Mahfoud's visit was extended by the Australian Western Sahara Association.

The tour came out of political collaboration between Polisario supporters and delegates from the South Pacific region at the International Festival of Youth and Students, held in Algiers, Algeria, in August 2001.

Mahfoud's itinerary included meetings with aid agencies and the foreign affairs spokesman for the Green Party. Mahfoud also requested that the New Zealand government lend its support to her people's struggle for independence.

Mahfoud used the tour to build solidarity with this fight for national independence—a struggle, she noted, that faces powerful enemies. Behind the Moroccan monarchy, which occupies Western Saharan land, stand the imperialist governments of France and the United States.

The independence leader was welcomed at the public meeting in Auckland with a formal greeting in Maori. She began her presentation with a 23-minute video that provided background on the history of the Sahrawi independence struggle, and her people's ongoing resistance.

A nation of 300,000 people in northwest Africa, Western Sahara was from 1884 to 1975 a colony of Spain. In the face of a growing movement for independence led by Polisario, Madrid withdrew, giving the green light to the governments of Morocco and Mauritania to divide and occupy the embattled nation.

The video showed how the majority of the people of Western Sahara were forced to abandon their homes and flee into the desert in neighboring Algeria at this time.

Four more years of struggle ensued, at the end of which Polisario fighters drove out the Mauritanian forces—only to see the Moroccan regime extend its occupation across the whole country.

The Sahrawi people have never relinquished their fight, however, and today Polisario retains control over around a third of Western Sahara. In 1989 the Moroccan government agreed to a "settlement plan," which suspended the war. The plan included a cease-fire and preparations for a United Nations-organized referendum on independence.

UN referendum never held

Scheduled for 1991, this referendum has never been held. Instead, explained Mahfoud, the Moroccan regime has built a 1,500-mile wall across the length of Western Sahara between the occupied and liberated areas. Some 200,000 Moroccan soldiers are deployed along its length, she said.

The occupied zone, which runs to the coast with its abundant fishing grounds, is fertile and more developed, she said, Sahrawi people living there "can't criticize the monarchy or openly support independence.



Militant/Jacob Perasso (above), Malcolm McAllister **Fatima Mahfoud (right), representative of Polisario, speaks on Sahrawi independence struggle at Auckland University, in Auckland, New Zealand, May 22. International youth delegation visited military museum in Sahrawi refugee camps in southern Algeria, August 2001, after international youth festival in Algiers (above).**

Many have been 'disappeared'." While the total Sahrawi population of the zone is unknown, UN officials have registered 48,000 people as eligible to vote in the referendum.

The arid desert areas of the liberated zone are home to several nomadic peoples, who risk death and injury from the millions of land mines that have been laid by the Moroccan armed forces. "Many have been killed," said Mahfoud.

"The wall affects the lives of so many nations," she said. "The desert was a living zone and is no more." Western Sahara was previously a link to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, she explained. Now travelers and traders have to follow more circuitous routes through Senegal or Algeria.

Refugee camps

For "almost 30 years we have been living in camps in the desert," said Mahfoud. Today most of the Sahrawi population lives in these camps in western Algeria.

Each of the four camp settlements is divided into quarters of around 7,000 people each—an arrangement that helps guard against the spread of epidemic diseases that could break out. Each has its own school, medical centre and Red Cross post. Committees in each camp are responsible for health, education, justice, work with the Red Cross, and making handicrafts for use in daily life.

"Everyday life in the camps is hard, and every simple task is complex," Mahfoud said. Gardens provide only small quantities of food so people are dependent on aid, sent primarily through the World Food Program. Contributions are also sent from friendship organizations, mainly based in Europe. Only two of the settlements have drinkable underground water, while the other two require water to be brought in by truck.

"At the start we had nothing in the camps. We had to organize schools, water, supplies, everything," Mahfoud explained. One early task was to teach people, many of whom had previously led nomadic lives, how to cook and use the canned and prepared foods donated by the aid agencies.

Only a few jobs are available in the medical centers, schools and gardens, said Mahfoud. Under Spanish colonial rule the Sahrawi people were left without an education system. A literacy campaign was organized, and today 90 percent of the camp population can read and write, she reported.

"Preparing the struggle means preparing the people," Mahfoud emphasized. "We now have primary and secondary education in the camps. For further education, students have to go to other countries. There



are currently 2,000 students in Libya, 3,000 in Algeria, and 1,400 in Cuba."

Mahfoud is among those who have studied in Cuba. "Cuba is helping a lot of third world countries," she explained. "The revolutionary government has opened up the Isle of Youth, and each country has its own school on the island. I feel very strongly about this. It is unfair that in Western countries you never see any newspaper speak about this."

Describing the impact the independence struggle has had on the condition of women, Mahfoud explained that "women's lives in the camps are the hardest, because they are responsible for the everyday organization of life. In the past, women were meant only to do some things. Now they realize they can be doctors and teachers."

During the war, when men were at the frontline, "women had to build everything—schools, hospitals, all institutions. Now most councils in the camps are composed of women," she explained. The desert camps include a women's school, where women receive training in nursing, teaching, and computing. The Algerian government has supplied the school with electricity.

Mahfoud also described how the Sahrawi National Women's Union is organizing to supply all the camps with solar panels, so people can run a television or radio and keep in touch with the outside world.

With the refusal of the Moroccan regime

and its imperialist sponsors to organize a referendum, "The Sahrawi people are pushing our leadership to be more aggressive—they are asking to relaunch the war, for a solution," Mahfoud told participants at the Auckland meeting.

"The referendum was not Polisario's idea but the United Nations'," she said. "We accepted and put down our weapons, and now have waited 10 years because we want to get independence peacefully. But we won't give up our right to self-determination."

Mahfoud rejected a proposal made by UN special envoy to Western Sahara James Baker for "autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. It is the same as integration," she said.

"If they think Morocco will be more stable if Western Sahara becomes part of it—that's just crazy," she continued. "Morocco cannot control the people of Western Sahara. We're not used to having a king, to having politicians who like to be on top of us. You have younger people like me who have studied in Cuba, Algeria. There will be rebellions everywhere and they will spread into Morocco. It will be the same as Palestine."

In the discussion period, Mahfoud pointed to the historical ambitions of the royal family of Morocco to rule a larger empire in North Africa. In the 1970s, they launched the "60-day war" against Algeria, and it was only 10 years ago that they recognized Mauritania as an independent country, she said. In Morocco, the maps of the region do not even show a line between Morocco and Western Sahara.

Much more powerful exploiters are also intervening throughout the African continent. Today there is a "war between the United States and France regarding colonies. They are dividing the geography of Africa."

Oil is one of the riches these imperialist powers have in their sights. Both the French company TotalFinaElf and U.S. company Kerr McGee have been granted permission by the Moroccan government to explore the substantial oil deposits off the Western Saharan coast. In addition, the Spanish oil company Repsol is prospecting next to them in the territorial waters of the Spanish-controlled Canary Islands—only half an hour by boat from the Western Saharan coast.

When she spoke at Canterbury University in Christchurch, Mahfoud also observed that more Moroccan youth are opposed to the monarchy. On her visit to New Zealand, she said, she had met some Moroccan immigrants who had told her, "don't give up, please keep fighting."

The Christchurch daily, the *Press*, published an interview and photo of the independence leader May 28, and featured the article on its website that day.

At Waikato University in Hamilton, Mahfoud said, "We are the last colony in Africa—we have never had a decolonization process."

Municipal workers in Sweden win contract after five weeks of strikes

BY CATHARINA TIRSÉN

GOTHENBURG, Sweden—After five weeks of rolling strikes across Sweden, negotiators for the Municipal Workers Union signed a two-year national contract on May 28.

The agreement will cover more than 400,000 workers who are employed in a wide range of occupations by regional and municipal governments. They include nurses at hospitals and day-care centers; cleaners, cooks, and janitors at day-care centers, hospitals, schools, and public recreational facilities; fire fighters; and other public workers.

Under the agreement, nurses employed at hospitals or providing home care to the elderly will receive a 5 percent wage raise in the first year, while other union members

will get 2.6 percent or more. The union had demanded a 5.5 percent raise across the board.

Many details of the agreement will be determined in local negotiations, which always take place under a no-strike pledge.

Some 113,000 workers had taken part in one- or two-week long stoppages in the month following April 23. Union leaders report that these actions were the biggest in the union's history. The fight to increase their low wages had been at the center of the workers' demands.

The contract was signed less than a week before announced solidarity strikes by bus drivers, tram drivers and local trains drivers would have expanded the strike, shutting down public transportation in many cities across Sweden.