From Buffalo to Uvalde: Racism, violence come from the top

By John Parker

From Buffalo, New York, to Uvalde, Texas, it all comes from the top.

It comes from the top and trickles down to us in bullets and death. That’s the reality in a capitalist country that glorifies murder by drone of people we’ve never heard of, diminishing life into a decision of U.S. corporate interests.

War is a game that all of the Democrats and Republicans are playing – all who voted for more high-tech weapons of death sent to Ukraine, where many will land in the hands of those whose ideology promotes killing in the name of white supremacy.

And the games continue in Somalia, where more African lives will be sacrificed to the weapons carried by U.S. troops being sent there now – more racism at work and, as U.N. research shows, more extremists created, a byproduct of Pentagon terrorism.

The almost $100 billion sent to Ukraine since 2021 was a record year for deadly police shootings. According to an in-depth article by Die Zeit in Germany, neo-Nazi and white supremacist international networks are growing and becoming more dangerous, and Ukraine has become their center. Their Black Sun symbol was not only on the white supremacist shooter in Buffalo, but can be seen tattooed on cops here as well.

2021 was a record year for deadly police shootings since the Washington Post started keeping track in 2015. The disproportionate number of Black and Brown victims tells another story of white supremacy spread through state bodies of repression.

Those fall victim to an impressionable age to an ideology that makes them feel powerful and provides an outlet to blame others for the problems of capitalist alienation and economic despair are watching and listening. And some will act.

As tragic as those actions are, the racist institutions of the capitalist state will use them to continue their proliferation of violence and white supremacy.

Why are there no common-sense safety mechanisms in place that would make it harder to acquire assault weapons without some type of background check, evaluation, etc.? Because it gets in the way of profits and support from certain right-wing and racist forces. And it’s the ruling class that supplies the racist police forces nationally with the most dangerous assault weapons. Police and military weapons often find their way into the hands of white supremacists.

The indoctrination of youth into hate, violence and white supremacy is not an accident. It is a consequence of putting profits over society’s responsibility to protect our youth from fascist propaganda that should not be allowed to build and recruit amongst those whom society has failed. There needs to be a financial and structural commitment to fighting racism, white supremacy and structural commitment to fighting racism, white supremacy.

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One million people killed by capitalism

By Stephen Millies

One million people in the United States have died of COVID-19. Coronavirus was written on their death certificates as the cause.

But they were really killed by poverty, racism and capitalism.

Even compared to other capitalist countries, the U.S. has a much higher death rate from COVID-19. If the United States had the same number of COVID fatalities per thousand people as Australia does, 900,000 people would still be alive.

At the beginning of the pandemic, reactionaries scorned at the coronavirus. The late, unlamented, bigoted windbag Rush Limbaugh told his 12 million radio listeners on Feb. 24, 2020, that the coronavirus was just the common cold.

The Wall Street Journal devoted an entire page of its March 25, 2020, issue to pour scorn on the risks. "Is COVID-19 as Deadly as They Say?" was the page’s lead headline.

Two years later, over 840,000 people in the U.S. were counted as having gotten the disease. The real number is much higher because of a lack of initial testing and unreported figures from home testing.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, half the U.S. population became infected with COVID-19. That includes 75 percent of children and adolescents.

Viruses don’t discriminate, but capitalism does. In zip code 11369 — the East Elmhurst neighborhood of Queens, New York, where Malcolm X lived with his family — one out of every 117 people died of COVID-19. That’s a rate almost three times the U.S. average.

In the Navajo Nation, 1,771 people died of Dikos Ntsaaigii — COVID-19. Latinx people are 18% of the U.S. population while having 24% of the COVID cases.

Essential workers were deliberately put in harm’s way. Nurses and other workers at Manhattan’s Mount Sinai Hospital had to wear Hefty garbage bags as their personal protective equipment.

Over 150 transit workers in New York City died of the virus. Metropolitan Transit Authority chief safety officer Pat Warren initially forbade workers from wearing masks.

In the first 11 months of the pandemic, over 59,000 employees at the four biggest meatpacking companies became infected. At least 265 workers died in the industry.

Most of these workers were Latinx, Black and/or immigrants. John Tyson and other dead animal capitalists got Trump to sign an executive order that drove workers back to the unsafe plants.

Demanding Chinese people die

Another big killer during the pandemic is high rents. Behind the shamrock is the bank or insurance company owning the cockroach capitalist’s mortgage.

Overcrowded housing makes social distancing impossible. Many are forced to double up in homes with their sister’s or brother’s family.

The Economist claimed in an April 16 editorial that “the zero-COVID policy has become a dead end from which the Communist Party has no quick exit.” To this mouthpiece of the Anglo-American financial aristocracy, profits are always more precious than life, especially the lives of poor people.

Socialist China, with over four times the population of the United States, has suffered 14,583 deaths from COVID-19. This figure includes the capitalist special administrative region of Hong Kong, which had 9,366 deaths.

Hong Kong laggard behind the rest of China in taking necessary safety measures against COVID. Now it’s catching up.

Yet Hong Kong’s death rate from the coronavirus is about a quarter of New York City’s rate. Not only is the Big Apple the capital of capitalism. It’s also a center of the $4 trillion U.S. medical-industrial complex.

Eight medical schools are located in New York City, along with Rockefeller University, a leading research institution. That didn’t help people in East Elmhurst too much.

In the first year of the pandemic, more than 5,600 health-care workers died of COVID in the United States. Despite these workers’ valiant efforts, the capitalist medical system is unable to combat pandemics.

Socialist Cuba has the highest number of doctors per population in the world. But it doesn’t have a single health insurance company.

We need what Cuba has: free, quality health care for all.

Students march on Capitol in defense of reproductive rights

Denver, Colo.

By Kevin Niemann

Hundreds of Denver-area middle and high school students took to the streets on May 13 to resist the ongoing warfare against a woman’s right to choose and reproductive rights generally.

"Hey ho! Hey ho! These sexist laws have got to go!" and "My body! My choice!" chants rang through the air as Denver youth and their parents marched on the Colorado State Capitol as part of a larger national student walkout in defense of reproductive rights and women’s liberation. A recently-leaked draft opinion outlines plans for the Supreme Court to strike down the historic ruling regarding the right to an abortion.

"We Care” memorial wall pays tribute to those who died of COVID-19 in New York nursing homes.

After the declining number of deaths in the last few months, there’s been a new push to downplay wearing masks. Schools and colleges were reopened without adequate protection.

Then came the highly contagious BA.2 Omicron subvariant. U.S. COVID cases soared to 171,000 on May 18. That same day socialist Cuba, despite a cruel U.S. economic blockade, had 64 cases.

Also on May 18, the White House held its first pandemic briefing in six weeks.

One million COVID deaths in the U.S. means 300 people died in an average small town with a population of 10,000. Despite that miserable record, the capitalist media are attacking the People’s Republic of China for doing too much to combat the coronavirus.

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From Buffalo to Uvalde

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white supremacy and the glorification of state-sponsored violence, including the numerous recruiting ads for the military. A federal requirement to teach history that includes the contributions of African and other non-European peoples is also a necessary step.

The resources and funding now going to imperialist war should instead be used for teachers, social workers and healthcare providers to be uncensored in their most vital work — protecting our youth from those who would destroy their lives and end their potential to become loving, productive human beings.

What is needed is an end to the culture of militarism, war and violence, and the acceptance and encouragement of state-sanctioned killings of Blacks and Brown peoples by the Border Patrol and police. What is needed now is for working people to decide what type of procedures are necessary to keep their children safe, not only from mass shooting incidents but from law enforcement as well. This needs to be done while we build a movement to get at the root cause of this violence.

It’s curious that mass shooters like Dylan Roof in Charleston, South Carolina, and Payton Gendron in Buffalo — both white — were taken into custody alive, but not Salvador Ramos in Uvalde. Whatever the reason, that resonates with history.

It’s also curious that the fascist Alex Jones is allowed to continue to spread racism and anti-trans lies — this time falsely blaming a transgender woman for the shooting in Texas. Jones’ right to “free speech” is vigorously enforced, just as the Azov Regiment’s is on Facebook, while anti-fascist voices are silenced.

But it all comes from and is encouraged from ... the top. And it will only stop when capitalism, the generator of white supremacy and violence, is toppled.

John Parker is the Socialist Unity Party candidate for U.S. Senate in California on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket.
Million Worker March leader talks with Teamsters

Roots of unity in the labor movement

Clarence Thomas — labor organizer, retired California Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10, leader of the Million Worker March Movement and author of the recently released "Mobilizing in Our Own Name: Million Worker March" — spoke at Teamsters Joint Council 16 in Flushing, Queens, on May 14. Follows are excerpts from his presentation.

By Clarence Thomas

Let me first say that I am glad to be here, on this part of a whirlwind book-signing tour. The Teamsters' meeting is special and I'm going to get right into a reasoning of the right of workers to organize.

The Teamsters and Longshore Workers represent two of the strongest industrial unions in the nation, if not the world. We also share a radical rank-and-file militancy at the point of production.

Rise of industrial unionism

In May 1934, longshoremen on the West Coast and longshore workers in the Midwest took part in important struggles in the history of the U.S. labor movement: the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters Strike and the West Coast Maritime Strike led by longshoremen in San Francisco.

Longshore workers associated with the Communist League of America led the Minneapolis Teamsters Strike. The strike paved the way for the organization of rank-and-file unions and drivers and the Teamsters union.

Bloody Friday is the name of the event which occurred in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on July 20, 1934, when police shot at truck drivers who were flying pickets, injuring 67 picketers and killing strikers John Belor and Henry Ness. An investigation determined, "Police took direct aim at the pickets and fired to kill."

When solidarity pickets protested the shooting, the governor declared martial law and deployed 4,000 National Guard. July 30, 1934, when police shot at truck drivers who were flying pickets, injuring 67 picketers and killing strikers John Belor and Henry Ness. An investigation determined, "Police took direct aim at the pickets and fired to kill."

One of the things I want to talk about is International Workers' Day, which is on May 1. I was one of the directors of the Million Worker March Movement pledged to reclaim.

As an African American, I know quite well what the enslavement of African Americans has meant to me, my family and many generations of African Americans who lived on these shores. We have been denied our names, our history, our culture, our traditions and our freedom.

Many people think May Day is a communist holiday. Yes, it is. It is an official holiday in socialist countries.

But something else is true. In the U.S., we don't grow up understanding the importance of labor solidarity, or that whether a person is Black, white, Latino, trans or straight, we are all working people. If you are unemployed, you still are a worker. That's a common bond.

The history of the labor movement is hidden because we didn't learn how we got the eight-hour workday.

In 1866, workers in Chicago who manufactured the McCormick reapers were in the forefront of the struggle for the eight-hour workday. If we think about this, we have to pay attention to when four men were framed up for throwing dynamite at the police department in 1886 and martyred by a kangaroo court. There is a common thread that runs through labor history. That is the role of police, who represent the bosses, the state and the privileged.

We must understand that history — and the role of the police department. Whenever we have a picket line, some of the workers are arrested. At the police come out, they aren't in solidarity with us. They come out on the side of the bosses. That's their job.

There is a reason why the government and big business did not want the working class to celebrate May Day. They gave us Labor Day. That has no connection to our struggle.

The reason why the Teamsters are who they are because of the militant history that we share.

Class interests — theirs and ours

We are working-class people whose interests are separate from those of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Their interests are not the same as ours, and I can prove it.

Most people in this country would like to have national health care. Do we have it? No. Most working people in this country would like to have a living wage. A living wage today would really be calculated somewhere between $25 and $30 an hour. The bosses want to make it appear as if there is something criminal about a worker making six figures, but they are afraid of the likes of Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates. They say the Teamsters and the Longshore

BY CLARENCE THOMAS

Clarence Thomas, third from left, with Teamsters, Nestor Cabassa, Víctor Mojica, Wendy Peralfon, Carlos Blanco, Richard Melinski and Kenneth Melinski in flushing, N.Y.

Left to right, Joe Belmane, Ozzie Lovernere, Clarence Thomas, Chris Silvera, Harry Nichols, Jesus Rivera, Barry Jackson, also pictured at Joint Council 16 hall on May 14.

Clarence Thomas

The bosses want to make it appear as if there is something criminal about a worker making six figures, but they are afraid of the likes of Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates. They say the Teamsters and the Longshore Workers make too much money because they are making the same wages as they pay people in Walmart.

The Democratic and Republican parties are funded in the interests of the rich. If they had their way, there wouldn't be any unions.

We did not get the eight-hour workday until the labor movement fought and the bosses loved us. We got that because people fought and died for that. There's nothing wrong with us standing up for our own class interests.

We don't have a labor party in this country. They have them in other countries. Have you ever thought about why? Because they want us to believe that our interests are synonymous with the Republican and Democratic parties.

Let's look at that. People in other countries don't have to pay for their children to go to college, because they believe that a nation that does not invest in the youth doesn't have a future. A country that really serves everybody would not be one with tremendous examples of income inequality.

Why do we have homelessness and poverty? We must be very clear as working people that we have our own class interest and that is what led to the Million Worker March.

To learn more about the formation of the MWM, read Clarence Thomas' entire presentation online or listen to his speech, go to MillionWorkerMarch.com. More information and updates can be published from his book tour.

From transcription by Gloria Verdieu.

Clarence Thomas on East Coast book tour

‘Mobilizing in Our Own Name: MILLION WORKER MARCH’

By Lallan Schoenstein

This May, Clarence Thomas, a retired member of the International Longshore & Warehouse Union Local 10 in San Francisco, is touring the East Coast to broadcast his book’s claim: "It is the time to advance our demands, and to proclaim a political agenda in our own vital interests."

Thomas talked about the struggle that culminated in the Million Worker March (MWM) at the Lincoln Memorial in October 2004, and about the challenges facing the MWM movement in the years that have followed. All of this is covered in his antholog "Mobilizing in Our Own Name."

Thomas first spoke at the Al-Awda Conference on May 6.

On May 11 he spoke at The People’s Forum, joined by key organizers of the MWM: Brenda Stokely, Larry Holmes, Johnnie Stevens and Sharon Black. Gloria Verdieu, an editor of the book, gave a presentation.

Thomas spoke at the Teamsters Joint Council 16 in Flushing on May 14, invited by Local 808 Principal Officer and MWM organizer Chris Silvora.

His final meeting was May 21, led by Charles Jenkins, vice chair Trans-Port Workers Local 10, presi- dent of NY Chapter Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and MWM organizer.

In between the meetings, Thomas spoke several times on WBAI and on a Zoom call celebrating Malcolm X’s birthday by People’s Organization for Progress in Newark, N.J.

Some of the urgent issues addressed in these forums have been organizing drives at Amazon, Starbucks and the labor fight against white super- piracy in Buffalo, NY.
Beyond abortion, a struggle to win our future

By Cheryl LaDash
Havana, Cuba

May 14 — When you have touched a woman who has struck a rock, says a South African proverb. It continues, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed. The U.S. Supreme Court justices who penned the recently leaked draft majority opinion abolishing voluntary legal pregnancy termination should take heed. Although the current debate centers on the issue of the women’s right to make decisions over their own bodies, in fact much is at the root. Today’s political flashpoint holds within it the urgent need to overturn patriarchal gender norms, class oppression and the capitalist economic system that perpetuates them. The fight is really about life for the majority, not just for the few. This is not political jazz. The combat between the past and the future can be seen in real time when Cuba’s proposed Families Code and 2022 National Program for the Advancement of Women is compared with the hateful onslaught faced by women in the United States, where the Equal Rights Amendment is still blocked.

In the United States, rights that were thought to have been won, at least in part, are now being slashed, eroded or reversed like the right to legal, safe abortion or like universal voting rights. It must be understood that the U.S. is still the only industrialized country without a national health care system that provides for real procedures even where legal may not be covered by private insurance and require out of pocket payment. A poll published by CNBC.com reported that “66% of Americans fear they won’t be able to afford health care” in 2021.

All Cubans can afford health care

On the other hand, no Cuban need fear they won’t be able to afford health care in any year. Despite the undeniable fact that the U.S. economy, financial and media war against revolutionary socialist Cuba hurts every aspect of daily Cuban life, all health care from organ transplants to abortion is the right of every Cuban who needs it. Not Obama Care, not Medicare for All — free, universal, community-based preventive health care.

Revolutionary Cuba leaves no stone unturned to provide these rights, even expanded by sex-focused, intensified U.S. blockade. Somehow, through working together with solidarity, they do it: Within hours after opening its doors for vaccine development, now expanding to protect the six-month to two-year age group.

The right to health care and debate about abortion will set Cuba long before the recent green bandana advances in Argentina, Colombia and Chile. Nonetheless, the Cuban people, too, are in the midst of debating rights — but not the rights for capitalists and landlords to exploit and steal or Big Pharma extortion for medicines. The groundbreaking 1975 Family Code that codified gender equality in the home and in society was strengthened, modernized, and strengthened with more equality and inclusion, more protection, not less. Significantly, even the title has been changed from Family Code to Families Code.

As presented by Teresa Ama- rellle Boué, Secretary General of the Federation of Cuban Women, at the March 2022 U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference in New York City, the proposed revisions include the rights of children and seniors, as well as expanding benefits important to and sought by women workers such as in-workplace child care. Even with resources severely stunted by the U.S. economic warfare, the code proposes to boost income 50% for working women with three or more children under 18. Six thousand one hundred and eleven of these women who are unable to have children already received a new home free of charge, fully resuming their housing needs. Even more could be done without the U.S. blockade, she said. Community laundries are a new win-win proposal that provides new jobs while alleviating some household labor.

Child poverty across the U.S.

Contrast abolition with set U.S. where a “right to life” banner is cynically used to restrict women’s reproductive autonomy. In the U.S., right to life is purported to begin at conception, but stops before birth, sending Black maternity and infant death rates to scandalous heights in the richest county on the globe. In 2020, 16% of children under 18 years of age lived in poverty. Students graduate from university with unpayable student loans. Tickets to concerts and sporting events are out of reach for most. The right to health care, education, housing, sports and culture and a dignified life with the possibility of developing each human’s potential are all constitutionally guaranteed in Cuba. Gender reassignment has notably been free in Cuba as part of medical care. Now free fertility assistance including surrogacy under certain conditions is included in the proposed Families Code, something unhinkably unaffordable to many in the U.S. who are unable to have children.

The Families Code provides legal rights for the various family formations that actually exist in Cuba today — officially married, or committed relationships with formal or informal, same-sex relationships, grandparents or other close relatives raising children and more. Rights are expanded, not restricted, so each family choice and need is respected. Amarelle explained the improvements this way:

“This is a code of opportunities and alternatives, of adding and multiplying, that recognizes and guarantees rights for those who didn’t have them. In no way does it affect or limit the rights already recognized for others.

“It does not establish molds nor does it require anyone to choose a family model that is not the one desired by each family.

“It is a broad and comprehensive code, revolutionary and modern.”


Cuba expands rights of children

The rights of children are expanded.

The term “patricia potestas” or parental authority was replaced with parental responsibility, meaning physically and psychologically capable to guarantee and protect the rights, well-being and the happiness of the children and sons, provide participation, to listen to them, pro- tect them, bring them love, foster their growth and independence in an atmosphere of affection.

The discussions are not pro-forma to check off some government requirement, but take into consideration the comments, additions, suggestions and proposals gathered through multiple opportunities in 78,000 assemblies. As of the March conference, the version under discussion is the 24th draft. After appreciating the National Assembly the final product of the consultations will then be voted on by the people in a national referendum. The consultation processes, voters actually understand what they are voting on.

The secret weapon of socialist Cuba

Equality and development of the potential of each human being is the secret weapon of socialist Cuba. The current U.S. efforts to push women back in time, and past family forms, conflicts with development of technology and our globalized world.

This equality was fundamental in the revolutionary process itself, recognized and promoted by the historic leader of the 1959 Cuban Revo- lution, Fidel. It helped to transform clandestine leaders like Celia San- chez, Heidi Santamaria, Melba Hern- andez and Vilma Espín also joined Fidel in the 26 Movement in the Sierra Maestra. Fidel also supported the formation of a battalion of women combatants, the Marianas, named after Marian Grajales, mother of five sons including Antonio Maceo who fought and died for an end to slavery and Cuban independence from Spain. Weapons were scarce, but Fidel prioritized arming the Marianas, who were re- garded as the best fighters. After the victory over the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship Fidel and Vilma Espín founded the Federation of Cuban Women: “We considered the domination through education and job opportunities. Tradition’s chains were broken. Upon their borders young women joined Cuba’s historic Literacy Campaign, teaching the country to read and write in a year. The success of this process is evident today where women scientists and technicians are integral leaders in the development and production of Cuba’s five COVID-19 vaccines.

The following statistics were presented by the FMC delegation to the Conference on the Status of Women (CSW66): Women: 67.4% of workers in education, more than 70% of judges and lawyers and 62.4% of doctors and nurses. Women represent 47.5% of professional engineers and 53.22% of parliamen- tary representatives. 54.35% of the Municipal Assembly presidents and vice-presidents.

So what are we fighting for? The Supreme Court has forced the ques- tion. Let’s answer it. Cuba represents our future.
‘U.S.-NATO proxy war in Ukraine is extension of the war against’


By Gloria Verdeu

Since the last international seminar in 2019, Cuba has achieved much — the implementation of a vaccination program that benefited not only the Cuban population, but those most in need in vaccines and health care around the world, by sending doctors and medicine abroad.

In spite of a coup supported by the U.S. in 2009, and the subsequent support of dictators loyal to the U.S. government, the Cubans have been able to overcome the violence and terrorism and courageously build a movement capable of electing a socialist and anti-imperialist woman, Xiomara Castro. After becoming president, Castro immediately revoked the racist law that discriminated against half a million people suffering from poverty created by the corruption of the former president.

Other targets of U.S. imperialism like Bolivia and Venezuela have successfully maintained their sovereignty in spite of the illegal and devastating sanctions by the U.S. and its complicit imperialist allies in Europe, Canada, Australia and Israel. Nonetheless, how could they have done in that time? Well, they continue to flourish in their attempts at containing the coronavirus due to their dependence on the market, rather than a more democratic and centralized approach in line with the international community. They contributed too little too late in providing the unequal access to vaccines suffered by developing countries, especially on the continent of Africa.

The government is now aggravating the crisis by taking vital resources needed to combat a further threat: the expected increase in the price of oil. The worst is that the U.S. expects to send $33 billion more to Ukraine that report those types of stories have been closed down.

In Kiev, arrests began even earlier. On Feb. 27, brothers Mikhail Kononovich and Aleksandr Kononovich, leaders of the Ukrainian Communist Youth, members of the World Federation of Democratic Youth and ethnic Belarusians, were seized and imprisoned along with members of other organizations.

As I speak, one of our Socialist Unity Party members is traveling in Kiev and Donetsk, gathering more information on the real situation.

NATO expansion, NATO wars

Since 1990, when the Soviet Union unilaterally disbanded the Warsaw Pact military alliance, NATO has expanded from 17 to 30 member states. In 1999, U.S.-led NATO began raining bombs on the people of Yugoslavia, bombing 10,000 homes and killing thousands of people, including three journalists at the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade.

Because of the end of the alleged threat from the Warsaw Pact, the belligerence continued with the unprovoked killing of thousands of children in Iraq by the U.S. But this is just the tip of the iceberg of victims of U.S. and NATO wars, including the more than 100,000 killings in Syria, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Yemen. Now slavery exists in the U.S., because the war waged by the Obama administration and NATO — a reality that undoubtedly is destroying the lives of children.

In Yemen, U.S. assistance to the war led by Saudi Arabia is causing the starvation of millions of children, according to United Nations estimates. In Afghanistan, the Biden administration continues the endless wars abroad and the racist wars by police and ICT against people in the U.S., including immigrants, already victimized by U.S. economic wars against their countries, targeted by drones and Border Patrol on the U.S. borders.

The latest U.S.-NATO proxy war, with the corporate media acting as its propaganda arm, carries the danger of igniting World War III, and will do nothing but exacerbate the already desperate conditions in the economies of global countries, critical lack of health care, food insecurity and starvation – crises most affecting children.

Capitalism an open wound

Capitalism in the U.S. is exposed like an open wound. Its proclivity towards war is unacceptable, and today we face an unprecedented challenge to stop a possible world war.

We understand that the crisis of capitalism forces imperialist countries to desperately further siphon their resources to divide the people and either steal or destroy the productive capacity of lesser capitalist states like South Korea. The U.S. economy is smaller than that of South Korea, with an almost neocolonial economy dependent on the exchange of raw materials — not the export of capital — to survive.

That is an important distinction. It explains why Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, Syria, Zimbabwe and other targets of U.S. imperialism would suffer most if the U.S.-led forces are not successful in this war — not to mention the threat of another NATO member state on the border of Russia, this time potentially with nuclear weapons controlled by a Nazi-led military.

Our historic mission right now is to expose how the destabilization of its proxy war in Ukraine exacerbates the crisis of workers and oppressed communities at home and worldwide.

We must highlight the fact that the U.S.-NATO proxy war in Ukraine is an extension of the war against us, such as solidarity workers who understand the source and solution to their problem, and begin dismantling the system that has led us to humanity today — U.S. imperialism.

Watch tinyurl.com/3yr9wqxm

Fernando Gonzalez Llort, one of the Cuban 5 heroes, pictured with May Day Brigadista Gloria Verdeu. Gonzalez is president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP).
Fact-finding trip to Donbass: A front-line

By John Parker

I had just left the Lugansk People’s Republic, making my way to an interview in Moscow, when I saw a May 11 CNN story claiming Russia had targeted civilians in the Ukrainian city of Odessa. This was after the bombing of a hotel and shopping center there. When such structures are bombed, one assumes that they were filled with civilians.

Odessa was also the location of a massacre that took place after the 2014 coup, funded for years prior by the United States. The fascist element that was part of that coup burned the Odessa House of Trade Unions on May 2, 2014, killing progressives, socialists, trade unionists and anti-fascists.

My friend and guide during the Lugansk portion of my trip was Alexey Albu, who was inside that burning building and one of the few who survived. At the time, Alexey was an elected member of the Odessa Regional Council. He was a former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and at that time the local coordinator of Union Borotba (Struggle). He and others were working on solving the contradictions created in society by the coup in a peaceful way through the still-existing legislative process.

However, by May 2, time had run out. The fascists who praised Nazi collaborators and pushed ultra-nationalism against the Russian population turned even more violent against any opposition. Political repression and jailings were on the rise by the coup government, and six days after the massacre, Alexey found out he was to be arrested. He and his family then fled to Crimea where they felt safe. He later went to Lugansk to continue his political work, but had to separate from his family for four years to do so.

As he is from Odessa and still has many connections there, I wanted to ask Alexey about the bombing on May 11. Alexey responded: “Yes, Russia attacked the luxury hotel Grand Pettine, because there were foreign mercenaries operating there. And the big shopping and entertainment center Riviera was attacked because the place was a complex with a school and a beautiful playground. But now it looked like the backdrop to a ‘Walking Dead’ episode.”

But perhaps that’s just a quirky Ukrainian sense of humor.

**Challenging U.S. narrative**


The authors, many of whom were military officers, had to remain anonymous in order to be as truthful as possible, since they were still working as advisers. The article challenged the official narrative that Russian President Putin was targeting civilians.

Regarding a similar earlier accusation by the corporate media about a Russian bombing, said to have targeted “peacekeeping facilities” (as if there really were such facilities), the analysts responded: “And the so-called peacekeeper training ground (in Yavoriv) was hit because it was the place where the ‘international legion’ (Ukrainian military unit, training international mercenaries) was to have trained.”

This quote from one of the advisers sums up their motivation for becoming whistleblowers: “I’m frustrated by the current narrative — that Russia is intentionally targeting civilians, that it is demolishing cities, and that Putin doesn’t care. Such a distorted view stands in the way of finding an end before true disaster hits or the war spreads to the rest of Europe,” said this Pentagon adviser and U.S. Air Force officer.

It’s interesting that CNN reported that only one person died and five were hospitalized in the May 11 bombing. In a shopping center and hotel filled with people, as they implied, many more likely would have died.

One of the ways to determine whether someone is telling the truth when you have no access to events far away, under media blackout and the jailing of journalists, is to either catch the liar at other lies to bring their credibility into question, or find a way to get access to the location of the events.

We did both.

**Fact-finding mission**

On April 27, I began a trip to the LPR in the Donbass region as part of a fact-finding mission organized by Struggle-La Lucha newspaper in the U.S. to gather eyewitness observations and testimony of Lugansk residents, some of whom I found were living in shelters near the front lines of the war. The loud blasts are a constant reminder for them of their infamy of being Ukrainian mili-

tary, targeting apartment buildings nearby and hopefully continuing to mutual destruction.

This trip would not have been possible if not for our friends from Borotba, who we’ve been collaborating with for several years. Borotba was founded in 2011 and in the process of becoming a political party, but the Maidan coup interrupted that process.

While passing through Russia on the way to Lugansk, I spoke to progressive, socialist and communist organizations at the Moscow May Day celebrations and a commemoration of the Odessa Massacre on May 2.

I also interviewed visiting journalists from Belarus who were covering the May 9 Victory Day parade, commemorating the defeat of Nazi Germany and heroism of the 10-mil-

lion Soviet people who died fighting fascism — a fact which everyone on the far right in Russia ignored. I met with the ‘internation-

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**Rubizhne: Life on the front line**

“Don’t step there!” a soldier from the LPR warned me as my foot was raised to step on the grass, away from the established path of the soldier walking in front of me.

This trek began in the morning, hiking a ride with the Lugansk People’s Militia to an area in the north of Lugansk, close to the front line of war against the Ukrainian military, where the help of Russian soldiers recently liberated a residential area in Rubi-

zhne. This city in Lugansk was pre-

viously occupied by Kiev forces.

Here there was a shelter in an abandoned apartment complex. Unexploded armaments and even mines from the Ukrainian military littered the area, the soldier said.

Of course, I obliged and changed my mind. I also understood why no children were running around the grounds or using the playground. Instead, they mostly seemed to stay in the shelter or sometimes came out to play soccer in a small patch of land directly in front of us — a sheer watchful eye of a young LPR soldier.

At that moment my parental feel-

ings kicked in and I all I wanted to do was walk over to comfort them. But I had to work. I had to do my job.

This was once a lively apartment complex with a beauti-

ful playground. But now it looked like the backdrop to a “Walking Dead” episode.

Borotba’s Alexey Albu accompa-

nied me and provided translation.

The video linked here includes some of these conversations and footage from a portion of the trip: tinyurl.com/zy2v3r8b2.

We spoke with the woman in charge of the shelter, Larisa. She re-

luctantly took the position of care-

taking for the shelter, voted in by the residents who trusted her. It de-

finitely concerned her, because she knew it in the best in the or-

der that can be expected in these times. With all the work and respon-

sibilities, she still manages to share compassion with those in need of comfort — war makes apparent the devils, but also the angels.

Basic foodstuffs and supplies — grains, water, and diapers — were neatly stored away. Getting food is especially a challenge for people who have nowhere else to go. Some resi-

dents who had alternative dwellings and were not disabled in some way, but the area is still not safe for travel. Many stayed to remain under the protection of the soldiers of both the LPR and Russia.

**Russia provides humanitarian aid**

Humanitarian aid arrives frequent-

ly in Rubizhne, delivered by Russian soldiers. (In the short time I was at the border entering Lugansk from Russia, I saw a large truck of Ukrainian rulitarian aid entering the LPR.)

While we were at the shelter, two soldiers brought a van, which we helped bring into the shelter. The box I was carrying almost broke open, with utensils and diapers that would have to be cleaned, or blankets that could be lent to someone in need of diapers, were being placed.

Larisa explained that fuel, which is now hard to come by, had been used as their primary source for electric-

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John Parker in the Lugansk People’s Republic.
SHELTER IN RUBIZHNE

In the LPR, John Parker points to an explosion visible in the distance.

“Thanks for that, President Biden and the people of the United States,” said Larisa to tears. She needed a minute before the area was liberated. “Thanks for the weapons you sent us. We needed them to stay alive.”

I then asked them if they felt safe now. Although they said they felt safer with Biden’s high-tech weaponry sent to Ukraine, they couldn’t say for sure who was shooting at them. Although they said they didn’t have any idea who was attacking, they were sure the Russian soldiers were shooting at them.

The fear, back up to the bone. “We need to stay here in the shelter basement. It happened while we were there! It’s the best and dubious at worst. We need to stay here.”

“Thanks for the weapons you sent us. We needed them to stay alive.”

I also wanted to know how they felt like the Russian soldiers banging on the basement. They all agreed to move it soon, as if she was in a hurry. “We need to stay here in the shelter basement. It happened while we were there! It’s the best and dubious at worst.”

I also wanted to know how they felt about the Russian soldiers banging on the shelter. Both Russian and Lugansk People’s Republic troops are present in this location, with the greatest number being LPR soldiers. I wanted to specifically know how they felt about the Russian troops. So I asked them: “If the Russian soldiers left this shelter, how would that affect you?” The son and grandson answered immediately that they would not feel safe, and the mother nodded agreement.

The last interview we did in that basement was more detailed, regarding the circumstances of a family of four (five if you count the big gray cat held protectively by the teenage daughter).

The grandmother spoke to us about how they came to be there. She said that although this family was Russian, their neighbors were Ukrainian. When the Ukrainian soldiers came to their area, they told those soldiers that they didn’t have to worry because there were no Russian soldiers there. About a half hour later, the Ukrainian tanks came and began shooting into the houses.

“The dogs were very frightened and my neighbor and I building out of burning houses,” said the grandmother. “They were shouting, ‘What are you doing? Why are you shooting at us? We are Ukrainians.’ When they asked that, the soldiers just laughed and turned their faces away from the burning houses.”

She said: “I had to see what exactly was doing this, so I went outside and found some soldiers standing around and asked them, ‘Why are you shooting at my neighbors’ houses?’ No one answered me. But about 20 minutes later, another Ukrainian tank came and shot directly into my house.”

When asked another journalist how she felt about this situation, she said they were children who learned their language in homes that speak Russian. So we continued to teach our children in Russian.

“My granddaughter and great-granddaughter both pleaded with me: ‘Please, I want to change schools because I don’t understand. But we couldn’t do anything about it. And with exact sciences like mathemathics they had bigger difficulties because they couldn’t understand what was written.”

“It shows how the Nazis feel about us and why they killed us and why our home. I didn’t understand what they were doing with this place. I also wanted to know how they felt like the Russian soldiers banging on the shelter. Both Russian and Lugansk People’s Republic troops

I asked them if they felt safe here in the shelter. They all said they did. “We have to stay here because that would they would do without this place.”

I also wanted to know how they felt like the Russian soldiers banging on the shelter. Both Russian and Lugansk People’s Republic troops

...
Ukraine ‘aid’: Congress pays off military-industrial capitalists

By Gary Wilson

Has there ever been a more corrupt Congress? Democrats and Republicans alike.

On May 19, the U.S. Congress approved an additional $40 billion in "aid" to Ukraine, added to the roughly $14 billion of Ukraine war funds approved in March. That's $54 billion total.

President Joe Biden promoted the escalation of military spending, grinning as he stood at the podium, with a banner behind him declaring "Standing With Ukraine."
The Democrats unanimously approved the billions. None suggested that this be used for housing, food, healthcare, transportation, COVID relief or some other failing part of the U.S. economy.

To put some perspective on this, $52 billion is more than Russia's defense budget for the whole year 2021, which was $36 billion.

Officially, the U.S. military budget is $782 billion for 2022. The $54 billion Ukraine “aid” equals 7% of this year’s official military budget.

The New York Times says that it’s more money than the U.S. has given in any kind of aid to any country in the last decade. “It is roughly two times the amount given in 2011 to Afghanistan, the largest U.S. foreign aid recipient until now,” the May 20 Times reported.

The Times adds that it is 1% of this year's projected federal budget. The "Ukraine aid" is more than many of the individual packages in Biden's "Build Back Better" plan that the Democrats couldn’t approve, including Medicare hearing aid benefits, and roughly equal to the "Build Back Better" public housing funds.

"Funding total war"

"The sums of money being contemplated in Washington are enormous," Adam Tooze wrote in the Guardian shortly before final approval. "It will mean that we are financing nothing less than a total war." On April 25, at a meeting with more than 40 NATO and non-NATO defense officials in Germany, U.S. Secretary of War Lloyd Austin said in so many words that the NATO military operation is not about “defending Ukraine” but is a proxy war against Russia, with Ukraine as the battlefield.

"A weakened Russia" is the goal, Austin said.

Leon Panetta — White House chief of staff under Bill Clinton, CIA director and secretary of defense under Barack Obama — explained that the conflict in Ukraine is a NATO "proxy war" against Russia. Biden himself declared the goal is regime change in Moscow, saying Putin “cannot remain in power.”

The Ukraine aid package, by the way, should rightfully be called a payoff to the U.S.-military-industry complex. For example, $59 billion of the $40 billion package goes directly to U.S. capitalist corporations that produce weapons, designated as "replenishment of U.S. weapons stock" in the bill.

About $6 billion goes to a Department of Defense slush fund that the Pentagon will decide how to spend. And $4 billion is for Ukraine to spend buying new military equipment from U.S. weapons producers. Another $3.9 billion is for sending an additional 5,500 U.S. troops to Europe. Hard to find anything that’s actual aid to the people in Ukraine.

Written by Lockheed Martin

In fact, the whole Ukraine aid package was written by the U.S. military-industrial complex. Business Insider reported on May 23: "One of the largest defense contractors in the nation donated nearly 150 members of Congress as they debated Ukraine military aid."

On May 1, President Joe Biden went to Lockheed Martin’s Pike County Operations facility in Troy, Alabama, and did a photo op at the Javelin missile production facility.

Military contractors have been the primary beneficiaries of the Ukraine war aid approved by Congress.

Lockheed Martin is the top war (military-industrial) contractor in the U.S., followed by Raytheon, General Dynamics, Boeing and Northrop Grumman.

The top member of Congress in charge of the military budget, Democrat Adam Smith from Washington state, is also the top recipient of money from the weapons makers.

The fact is, any semblance of Congress being representative of people and not money has been mostly abandoned. The Supreme Court’s 2010 Citizens United decision “reversed century-old campaign finance restrictions and enabled corporations and other outside groups to spend unlimited funds on elections,” according to the Brennan Center for Justice.

In the New Yorker, legal analyst Jeffrey Toobin concludes that the Citizens United decision “let rich people buy candidates.”

In 2016, in a case involving the open corruption of former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell, the Supreme Court in a unanimous ruling made it difficult to impossible to prosecute political corruption. Some have characterized it as approving the purchase of sitting politicians.

On May 16 of this year, the Supreme Court removed the only restrictions left on the rich donating to (purchasing) politicians after they had been elected.

The military-industrial complex apparently owns Congress and it is writing the agenda.
Poor People’s Campaign and China’s anti-poverty program

By Sharon Black

On May 12, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Poor People’s Campaign officially began with a Mother’s Day march led by Coretta Scott King and welfare mothers. I was barely 18 years old. Pregnant with my son and filled with the kind of hope that only the young possess — who know little of the hardships ahead — I participated in the Poor People’s Campaign.

My neighbors were from Appalachia; my mother from the coal mining area of eastern Pennsylvania. As much as I was motivated by empathy for the people I loved who were my family and neighbors, it was the civil rights movement that lit a fire inside of me.

So when I saw a flier posted by a group of Vista workers soliciting participants to go with them to the D.C. Poor People’s Campaign, I called immediately.

I lied to my parents and pretended to stay with a friend, then left for Washington with a small group of older, certainly more sophisticated, participants. Most of them were graduates from the University of Delaware.

I was the youngest, the only woman, at the time. I was awkward. I couldn’t accompany them to bars because of my age, had no money and had never been in a restaurant. It wasn’t surprising that my new companions found me a burden and deserted me once we arrived in Washington. I never saw them again until we made the trip back to Wilmington, Delaware.

Instead, it was older Black participants, mostly from the South, who took me under their wing. I was taught how to piece together boards, hammer nails and build Resurrection City.

Much of the mud, rain and even the speeches remain a blur. The only thing that stood out was the kindness and care of those Black residents of Resurrection City who took a rather young white kid under their guidance and shelter.

The aims of the Poor People’s Campaign were never realized. But that is another story.

U.S. poverty today

The United States has the largest economy in the world, yet it is slipping in every index of quality of life. At last count, 37.2 million people were living in poverty, an increase of 3.3 million from 2020.

Poverty in the U.S. has declined for the first time by over two years. The U.S. has slipped from the 43rd place in the world to 64th in life expectancy. Class divisions among race have widened. In essence, “The rich have gotten richer and the poor poorer.”

The Poor People’s Campaign, founded in 1935 through the Social Security Act, which later became Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Continued from page 1

Resist capitalist ‘trans panic’ strategy

Continued on page 12
Shireen Abu Akleh was a truth teller: Palestine will not be silenced

By Stephen Millies

In contrast, the governments of South Africa and Namibia denounced this foul murder. So did the Zimbabwean United Journalists. Africans remember how Israel supported the original apartheid regime in South Africa and even supplied those neo-Nazis with nuclear weapons.

Attacking her funeral

The Zionist state couldn’t even let Palestinians bury Shireen Abu Akleh in peace. The whole world saw on May 13 how Israeli police in riot gear attacked the pallbearers with horses and batons in Al-Quds (Jerusalem), the capital of Palestine. At one point the casket almost dropped to the ground. One of the carriers managed to hold it with one hand while warding off police clubs with the other.

Palestinians belong to different faiths. Shireen Abu Akleh was a Christian.

Some Israeli soldiers asked Palestinians in the funeral procession whether they were Muslim or Christian. If they answered “Muslim” they would be kicked out. Tear gas and stun grenades were used against mourners. Cops beat and kicked the mourners while seizing Palestinian flags.

That’s how every colonial regime acts. In 1964, Law No. 53 was passed in Puerto Rico that made it illegal to display or even own a Puerto Rican flag. “La Ley de la Mordaza” was repealed in 1957.

Israeli police claim Palestinians carrying their own flag is “nationalist incitement.” Real “incitement” is the Israeli Brigadier-General (Reserve) Zvika Fogel justifying these killings by saying “They are armed with cameras, if you’ll permit me to say so.”

The capitalist media covers up these murders. The first headlines about Abu Akleh’s death in The New York Times referred to her as simply being slain, not assassinated.

The actress Susan Sarandon tweeted the truth: “Shireen Abu Akleh was EXECUTED with a shot to the head.” Shireen Abu Akleh held U.S. citizenship. Where was the congressional resolution condemning her assassination after the U.S. has delivered over $540 billion to the Zionist state?

How socialist countries fight disease

By Stephen Millies

Around 75 million people live in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic as compared to 8.8 million people residing in New York City. While 756 people in Laos have died from COVID-19, 40,365 New Yorkers died from it — 53 times as many.

How does Laos do it? More bombs fell on Laos than any other country in history.

Two million tons of cluster bombs were dropped on the Asian country by the United States military from 1964 to 1973. That’s more bombs than were dropped by all sides during World War II.

What did Laotians do to the U.S. to deserve such terror? At least 50,000 people died from the bombing. Another 20,000 have died or been injured from the initially exploded munitions in the 69 years since the war.

The not-so-secret weapon that Laos uses against disease is socialism. Encouraging people to organize themselves is a requirement to build a socialist society.

Unions, women’s associations and youth groups work with the communist party to carry out COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.

Over 1,100 years ago the Iranian scientist Abu Ali Sina or Avicenna — also known as ‘Ibn Sina’ — advocated isolating sick people to stop the spread of disease. Although this was centuries before the invention of microscopes, the Muslim scholar thought that small organisms were responsible for infections.

In the socialist People’s Republic of China, entire cities with populations of millions were shut down to stop COVID. But nobody starved. Unarmed police in Wuhan delivered meals to residents.

Socialist Cuba developed five different vaccines against the corona-
Oil barons, Pentagon knowingly wreck the planet

By Scott Scheffer

The U.S. government and all the corporations that profit from fossil fuels are cherry picking the actions that they are taking in response to the global climate emergency. Everything that they are pursuing is potentially profitable, and they are paying little attention to reforestation, wind power, solar power or other alternative energy sources. As they have done and are continuing to do during the COVID pandemic, they treat the climate crisis as if the United States is the only country enduring the consequences.

The whole scenario raises the question of how, in spite of divergent interests among the rich and powerful, they could have reached this consensus of inaction and callous disregard. The world is on fire and they aren't even looking for a fire extinguisher.

The poorest populations are suffering the worst disasters when extreme weather created by CO2, methane and other pollutants hit their homes.

In 1984, Congress demanded the presence of 13 oil company presidents to answer for the lies they had been telling for decades about the harm of tobacco use. The hearings were a big deal in the national media before and after, and tobacco CEOs’ lies to Congress made headlines and were talked about for years.

Not that it did that much good, but contrast that to what was supposed to be a similar hearing – this time with top energy company executives – to answer for misinformation about climate change that they’ve been funding through phony think tanks. The October 2021 hearing was held electronically because of the pandemic. The CEOs didn’t even bother to join it. They had lower-level flunkies answer questions, and the news media barely covered the events.

The way that they brushed off Congress and the SEC’s second execution was a clear demonstration of the hierarchy. Capitalist government works for corporations – not the other way around. Any events that hint at another relationship in which giant corporations have to answer to the government are theater.

Oil companies expanding

A May 11, 2022, article in Guardian revealed something that even further exacerbates their power. It turns out that despite claims by the major oil companies that they are going green, they are in fact expanding as never before. The article revealed:

“The fossil fuel industry’s short-term expansion plans involve the start of oil and gas projects that will produce greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to a decade of CO2 emissions from China...

“These plans include 195 carbon bombs, gigantic oil and gas projects that would each result in at least a billion tons of CO2 emissions over their lifetimes, in total equivalent to about 18 years of current global CO2 emissions. About 60% of these have already started pumping.

“The dozen biggest oil companies are on track to spend $313bn a day for the rest of this decade erecting new fields of oil and gas that cannot be burned if global heating is to be limited to well under 2 degrees Celsius.

“Here are some of the events happening now that are caused by energy corporation criminals:

- The Colorado River is in an unprecedented crisis. Warming and drying weather for decades has led to a drought that has broken records that go back 1,200 years. Temperature levels at Lake Mead, Lake Oroville, Lake Powell and dozens of other lakes are all at the lowest point ever recorded. The river and tributaries carry water to more than 20 million people and 3 million acres of crops. Drought-fed power generators drain much of the water, and western states are selling water to the fastest growing states and are closer to their breaking point than ever before.

- In northwestern India and in Pakistan a heatwave hit in the latter part of April and beginning of May. It is projected to return at the end of May. The heat was so bad that schools closed, crops were damaged, and there were power outages. A deadly cholera outbreak has infected thousands and killed people because of lack of access to clean drinking water.

On May 15, the temperature in the city of Jacobabad in Pakistan’s Sindh province was 124 degrees Fahrenheit. On May 17, the temperature in the city of Vientiane, Laos, was 121 degrees Fahrenheit on the same day. A study by the British national meteorological office concluded that without the impact of climate change, a heatwave such as this might occur once every 312 years. But the frequency is now likely to be every 3.1 years – roughly 100 times more frequent. By the end of the century their frequency will be about once per year.

This is similar to what has been forecast recently for Baghdad, Iraq.

- KwaZulu-Natal slammed again

After torrential rains destroyed hundreds of homes and killed 235 people in the impoverished KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa last month, flooding is happening again. Hundreds had to flee their dwellings in late March. KwaZulu-Natal Premier Sihle Zikalala told Al Jazeera reporters, “Some areas are inaccessible and have become islands at this stage.” In Bangladesh and parts of northeastern India, flooding in hundreds of villages has stranded 2 million people, including many children.

Global Climate Strike in Nairobi, Kenya, on Sept. 20, 2019.

The region is impoverished and because of lack of mobility, starvation is actually a concern.

The biggest obstacle to curtailing rising atmospheric temperatures is capitalism. But it isn’t just the rise of industrial capitalism that Biden & Co. can blame on the system’s earlier phases. The hyper-militarism of the U.S. imperialist era has exacerbated the global crisis.

That isn’t only because of the emissions spewed during the manufacture of the machinery of war – although the Pentagon itself emits more than the economies of 46 entire countries. But the plunder of the global south made possible by murderous warfare has left much of the world more vulnerable to extreme weather.

No one is safe from hurricanes, floods, rising sea levels or extreme heat. But when poverty is added to the equation, climate change is much more deadly for the world’s poorest populations.

Congressional hearings are nothing more than an attempt to rescue the reputation of the Biden administration that has come nowhere near being the champion of saving the planet that it promised during the 2020 election campaign and the early months of the administration.

The transition to a non-fossil-fuel world is too late for the people.

The oil barons that are knowingly destroying our planet belong in jail for the rest of their lives.

Before their 1949 socialist reformation, Chinese people lived to be on average just 36 years old. By 2022, life expectancy had more than doubled to reach 77.3 years.

China, now an economic power by virtue of being the leader in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, has been doing its utmost to save 2.5 percent of the population and the elderly, he tweeted: “The wealth and powerful thought it was awful to shut down parts of the capitalist economy to stop the spread of COVID-19. To them profits are much more precious than life.

Typical of their class was California lawyer Scott McMillan. Referring to the elderly, he tweeted: “The fundamental problem is whether we are going to tank the entire economy to save 2.5 percent of the population which is (1) generally expensive to maintain, and (2) not productive.”

Seniors and disabled people are considered roadkill by banksters and billionaires. The rich don’t care that one out of 35 people aged 85 years or older in the United States has died of COVID-19.

In socialist countries both older folk and youth are treasured. Cuba is proud that more than 2,000 of its people are over 100 years old.

Remarkable success in combatting COVID-19 was also carried out by people’s governments of Nicaragua, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. This is despite these countries suffering from vicious economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. and European Union. Wall Street continues to economically blockade Cuba and People’s Korea.

Capitalism is unwilling and unable to fight pandemics. We need socialism to do that. Always remember what Laos was able to accomplish despite the mass murder conducted by the U.S.
Por Rosa Miriam Elizalde

Primero, la explosión. El edificio, de seis pisos, vibró, se saltaron unos cables después, con la fuerza de un latigazo. Acto seguido, se desplomó más de la mitad de la fachada sin dar tiempo, sin darse cuenta, cada pedazo de piso trágandose al arriba, aplastados techo contra piso y piso contra techo, en medio de un estrépito y una nube de polvo que ocultaba todo, menos los gritos desesperados. Parecía como si acabara de abrirse y cerrarse en un abrir y cerrar de ojos, cuando otros dos edificios se vinieron abajo.

De inmediato se conocieron las causas del siniestro del seis de mayo en el Hotel Saratoga, La Habana Vieja, aunque está abierta la investigación: fue un escape de gas, mientras un camión cisterna habilitaba al edificio que se preparaba para reabrir esta semana. Sin huéspedes, las habitaciones permanecen cerradas. En el cemento, cabe que un simple círculo del interruptor de la luz fuera suficiente para que la masa de gas acumulado provocara la onda explosiva, y así, con actividad bélica, la marquería y la fachada ligera con adornos de estuco verde y blanco, original del siglo XIX.

No es la primera vez que Cuba se enluta. Podría parecer hasta menor un accidente como este en un país que ha padecido en medio siglo más de treinta huracanes de gran magnitud, decenas de muertos durante el sabotaje de la CIA al vapor La Granada en 1960, la voladura de un avión civil con 73 pasajeros en 1976, una cadena de bombas en hoteles y restaurantes en la década de los 90, el bloqueo semiperno del Gobierno de Estados Unidos – “acción canalla”, lo llaman el Presidente Andrés Manuel López Obrador – que ha naturalizado la escasez de casi todo y que hizo más desesperante la pandemia, por citar algunos ejemplos dramáticos.

Pero no. La explosión en el Hotel Saratoga, con casi un centenar de lesionados – de ellos 43 muertos hasta el 11 de mayo –, es otra cosa. Lo que hizo de esta historia en particular la Gran Historia no fue la explosión que se sintió en La Habana, ni el humo denso que se podía ver desde las zonas altas, ni la sensación de vulnerabilidad que nos dejó a todos, sino la solidaridad de la ciudadanía que se apilaba en los alrededores exigiendo un lugar para rescatar a las víctimas de los escombros, donar su sangre para los heridos o aliviar la angustia de los damnificados. Dos horas después del accidente, la fila de voluntarios y voluntarias frente a los bancos de sangre, los policínicos y los hospitales superaban los miles, y la mayoría eran jóvenes, esos mismos que la propaganda de Miami dice que se están yendo en masa de Cuba.

Mientras el Gobierno actúa y la prensa pública da lecciones de inmediatez y sensibilidad, personas de la calle, con todo tipo de profesiones, siguen ayudando a sus compatriotas. No sabemos los nombres de todos los rescatistas – muchos de ellos bomberos voluntarios –, de los maestros de la escuela “Concepción Arenal” que colinda con el hotel y protegieron a sus alumnos, de los niños que salvaron a otros niños, de los transeúntes que socorrieron a los trabajadores del Saratoga y a las familias de los dos edificios que implosionaron en la vecindad, ni de los perros rastreadores que todavía reanudan el trabajo de sus compañeros desaparecidos entre los escombros.

Los héroes del Saratoga

En Los soldados de Salamina, el novelista español Javier Cercas nos recuerda que “en el comportamiento de un héroe hay casi siempre algo ciego, irracional, instintivo que está en su naturaleza y a lo que no puede escapar”. Es decir, mirar de frente el absurdo y la crueldad de la vida para hacernos más humanos, es el precio que debemos pagar de la desesperación nace la lucha.

La muerte no prevalece. Una vez que se cierne un ser, se va.

Este artículo fue producido para Globetrotter y publicado primero en La Jornada. Rosa Miriam Elizalde es una periodista cubana y fundadora de Cubadebate. Es vicepresidenta de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba (UPEC) y de la Federación Latinoamericana de Periodistas (FELAP). Es autora y coautora de varios libros, incluyendo Jinetes en La Habana y Chávez Nuestro. Por su amplio labor, ha sido merecedora de varias ocasiones del Premio Nacional de Periodismo Juan Guallardo Gómez. Es columnista semanal de La Jornada, México.

Poor People's Campaign and China's anti-poverty program

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eriment spending on social programs, eliminating price controls, deregulating and privatizing services in favor of “free market” capitalism.

The nonprofit sector has grown ever larger, but it has served more to enrich its executive directors and top leaders than to serve the poor. It has attracted young workers who are looking for what the consider “meaningful work,” only to encounter poor compensation, resistance to union drives and high burnout rates. This trend toward private charities and nonprofits was meant to replace the government’s responsibility to serve people. The vast amount of wealth produced in this country continued to shift to the war machine, the forces of repression and to fill the pockets of bankers and billionaires.

A parallel movement, the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government, which marks poverty one of its major goals.

China’s anti-poverty program

In 1949, the newly-formed People’s Republic of China was faced with momentous tasks. The majority of the population were desperately poor peasants plagued with famine and death. There was almost no industrialization or education.

Edgar Snow documents many of these incredible obstacles that faced the CPC in his book, “Red Star Over China.” He gives a firsthand account, and puts human faces to the staggering statistics and suffering of both people and places.

The commitment to wiping out poverty has its roots in the early period of the People’s Republic of China and remains important.

Decades later, in 2012, China’s President Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, vowed to eradicate the vestiges of extreme poverty by 2020.

Despite the incredible challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese government proudly proclaimed the achievement of this herculean effort on November 23, 2020.

The World Bank stated that China has lifted over 850 million people out of poverty. “With this, China has contributed close to three-quarters of the global reduction in the number of people living in extreme poverty.”

When humanity looks back, this will be one of the biggest stories of this century.

How did China do it?

It would take a much longer article to explain in full. Of course, one factor is China’s economic growth. But that’s just a part of the equation. Without a conscious effort by the Chinese government, economic growth in of itself would not have solved the problem.

This government effort was remarkably systematic from top to bottom, from the central government to rural villages to individual families. Every poverty family was tracked and assessed individually. Villagers voted to determine who among them should be declared in poverty and when poverty was alleviated.

There were five components: industry, relocation, ecological compensation, education and social security. Social security includes both medical care and social insurance. Massive apartment buildings were constructed to relocate people in villages where soil erosion or other conditions made it impossible to sustain a higher standard of life. Contrast this with the continual destruction of public housing and Section 8 programs in the U.S. In addition to deep housing subsidies, China’s poor families are guaranteed furniture and televisions.

Emphasis is put on providing stipends and funds for education. Young urban students and workers, many of them professionals, moved from their relatively comfortable lives to rural villages to participate in this campaign. It reminded me of Cuba’s literacy campaign that uplifted young women teachers and tasked them with going into the countryside and teaching children to read and write, making Cuba one of the first Caribbean nations to eradicate illiteracy.

Going in opposite directions

The capitalist West, particularly the U.S., remains cynical and dismisses all that China has accomplished. The media distorts and quibbles about statistics. But this is only possible if you have never experienced extreme poverty and poverty crushes human potential.

What cannot be argued is that socialist China is going in the opposite direction of the West.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the government is taking on the responsibility of uplifting the population.

In contrast, the U.S. government has shed itself of responsibility for the depressions of the depression era, and its only duty is to the imperialist banks and billionaires and increasing the repressive apparatus from police to prisons.

Our challenge is to learn from what China has done.

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Vol. 5, Num. 11 30 de mayo de 2012