

DELAWARE COUNTY PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE



P.O. Box 309 ~ Swarthmore, PA 19081 ~ phone & fax: 610-543-8427

Fall 2005

War of the World-views

by Brad Bradlee

In Venezuela, President Hugo Chavez is the legitimate Big Dawg. A series of electoral victories gave him bragging rights on a mandate, and the August 7 off-year election continued his streak. The pro-Chavez coalition won 80 percent of the contested city and district council seats.

Chavez is popular, with a 70-plus percent approval rating that tends to break along class lines. His emphasis on education, housing, and health care explains a lot of his support. He resists imposed free-market “solutions” and wags his finger defiantly at the U.S. president and secretary of defense, whom he mocks as “Mr. Danger” and “Mr. War.” This also plays well with Chavez’s large base but makes for a great deal of trouble with Washington.

The U.S. welcomed the 2002 coup and supported the business strike of 2003. It funds the Venezuelan opposition. It labels Chavez “a negative force in the region” while trying to isolate Venezuela at every turn. The U.S. leaves no possible point of conflict unexploited, and so it wasn’t a surprise that when Venezuela announced its new media venture, Telesur, sparks began to fly.

Ways of Seeing

Telesur, launched in July, is a continent-wide television channel that broadcasts news, films, documentaries, and music by Latin American and Caribbean producers. Venezuela has con-

tributed \$10 million and several installations to the project and holds 51 percent of the shares. Argentina holds a 20 percent interest, Cuba, 19 percent and Uruguay, 10 percent. Officials say their goal is to show Latin America through Latin American eyes. Telesur’s director explained at opening ceremonies:

“We are convinced that there is no way to change reality unless we first see it as it is. ... [Uruguayan writer] Eduardo Galeano says that for 513 years we have been trained

to see ourselves with other eyes, with the eyes of foreigners. Today we begin to see ourselves with our own eyes.”

And what is the “reality”? Telesur makes its point of view clear:

“Nowadays the mediatic dictatorship is trying to supplant the military dictatorship. Big economic powers are using the media and are saying who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist. ... We have begun to dismantle the mediatic Latin American *latifundio*, in which

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To cheers and applause, Pledge members staged their traditional march in the Swarthmore July 4th parade. Pictured following the march are (L-R) Judy Goodrobb, Paula Bronstein, Bob Small, Lawren Bale, Ron Coburn, and Brad Bradlee. Will and Becky Scull (not pictured) provided support.

WORLD-VIEWS

we find ourselves, towards the democratization of the television spectrum.”

The debut broadcast promised a concert by pop music acts from Mexico, Miami, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela. But before this line-up could shake the hemispheric status quo, the U.S. House took defensive action. With a proposal by Rep. Connie Mack (R-FL), the House moved “to initiate radio and television broadcasts that will provide a consistently accurate, objective, and comprehensive source of news to Venezuela.” The initiative still must pass the Senate.

Shedding light on the protagonist/antagonist question, Mack explained, “In Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela there is no free press—just state controlled anti-American propaganda. . . . There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of dissent, and no freedom to stand in opposition to the Chavez regime.” U.S. government sponsored broadcasts would counteract Telesur, which is “patterned after Al-Jazeera to spread . . . anti-freedom rhetoric.”

The fact is, all Venezuelan cable and satellite carriers feature the Voice of America TV channel. Fox News and CNN are on cable and satellite, too. The main private TV stations broadcast the conservative Miami program of Andres Oppenheimer. Arguably, all Venezuela’s private broadcasters display an anti-Chavez bent. Indeed, if the Venezuelan people are informationally malnourished, Telesur could provide a more varied diet.

Of course, when Washington calls for freedom and democracy in other lands we know it’s time to prick up our ears. Venezuela, with its populist economic and foreign policies, poses, for elite interests, the “threat of a good example.” A notable threat, when we consider the potential its oil wealth provides. No wonder it’s labeled “authoritarian” and “a negative force in the region” by American officials.

At Odds on Oil?

This summer Venezuela’s state-owned oil company released a study



claiming that the country’s oil reserves are the largest in the world. Venezuela’s reserves had been accepted as the fifth largest; this new calculation puts them ahead of Saudi Arabia.

(The extra oil is 238 billion barrels of “extra-heavy crude.” New production techniques make this supply more efficient to use, and so it now commands a better price. Venezuela includes the extra-heavy oil with its 78 billion barrels in conventional reserves, giving them their first place ranking.)

However it’s measured, they’ve got an awful lot of oil in Venezuela. It’s a resource that brings leverage: oil sales have helped Chavez finance social programs he promises will make the country more independent of U.S. influence. And oil agreements with Argentina, Brazil, and Caribbean nations strengthen Venezuela’s regional position. Accords with China are in the works.

The U.S. itself relies heavily on Venezuelan crude, its fourth largest source behind Canada, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia. Venezuela could find other buyers, disrupting supplies and driving up U.S. fuel prices. But this would be a political tactic with an economic cost. Over 60 percent of Venezuelan oil is sold to the U.S.; replacing this market would mean higher shipping and infrastructure costs. (Refineries geared to process the heavy crude are located in the U.S.) So both nations have solid financial incentives for maintaining their arrangement, and Chavez has said

as much. Still, the conflict between oil-rich developing countries and nations with high demand is sharpening, and Chavez will press any advantage.

Standing Fast

As Venezuela pursues an economic nationalism out-of-line with Washington’s wishes, it runs a risky course. The U.S. has shown an enthusiastic hostility towards the Chavez administration, and U.S. officials continue to label the president a menace. The relationship is strained, but strained may be the best we can hope for.

“We are constantly going to be in his cross hairs,” a senior U.S. official said, in customary victim mode. “It’s not a question that we will have a negative relationship (with Chavez).”

Or things could get worse. Chavez speaks often of North American invasion plans and assassination plots. In July his government claimed it had evidence of an invasion blueprint. “Operation Balboa” would allegedly provoke instability within Venezuela, then send in U.S. troops to restore order.

Yet Venezuela continues to stand its ground. It offers a condition popular with its citizens, but so far dismissed by Washington. A Foreign Ministry official explained, “The only country Venezuela has bad relations with is the United States; with all other countries we have good or very good relations. But with just one word, the U.S. could resolve all of the problems. That word is ‘respect.’”

Mercosur: Trade—Free of the U.S.

by Paula Bronstein

Do trade agreements exist in the “Americas” without U.S. sponsorship? What comes after CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement)? Is FTAA (Free Trade Agreement of the Americas) to follow? That is what the U.S. government would like to see. However, the FTAA would be ineffective without the participation of the Mercosur countries. Mercosur, also known as “Common Market of the South,” has become a symbol of the resilience and struggle of the global South against the exploitive and undemocratic nature of the current economic order.

Mercosur is comprised of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay as full members, and Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela, Peru, and Ecuador as associate members. Mexico has observer status. Mercosur is the third largest trading block in the world, after NAFTA (U.S., Canada, and Mexico) and the European Union. Furthermore it has the largest reserve of natural resources in the world, and its energy resources, chiefly oil and hydroelectric, are among the most important in the world. Led by Brazil, Mercosur provides strong criticism of the neo-liberal model of economic growth as embodied in IMF/World Bank structural adjustment and bailout loan conditions. It has also criticized the undemocratic nature of the international financial institutions.

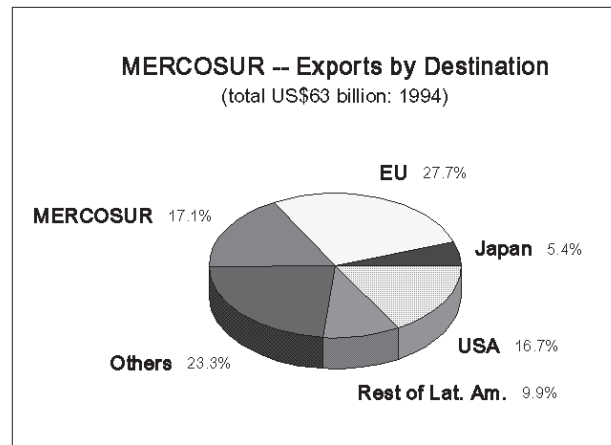
Mercosur was established with the aim of creating a common market, modeled on the EU—a full fledged customs union with a common external tariff; a common series of import tariffs applied to products from outside the region; the free movement of people and capital; and a common trade policy that includes the coordination of macroeconomic policies and harmonization of legislation. Beginning in 1995, Mercosur became a partial customs union, with a common external tariff covering over 85 percent of its trade products. Mercosur is a supranational entity with legal existence under international law, giving

it authority to negotiate agreements with third party countries, groups of countries, and international organizations. This status ensures its position as an important economic actor in the international arena.

After the implementation of Mercosur, trade initially increased fourfold within the member countries. But then the Asian crisis, Brazil’s recession, and Argentina’s financial crash left Mercosur on hold. On the other hand, these events discredited the neo-liberal model of development in the eyes of the people and leaders of Mercosur countries. This resulted in a political shift in the region and the rise to power of left-leaning presidents: Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in Brazil, Nestor Kirchner in Argentina, and Tabarez Vasquez in Uruguay.

In the past two years, Mercosur has experienced a revival. Argentina was able to recover some economic growth; during the same period intra-Mercosur trade grew by almost 25 percent. The image of the bloc has consequently improved, putting it in a stronger political position. In October 2003, presidents Kirchner and Lula jointly outlined their goals and principles for a shared future. They chose to call their statement the “Buenos Aires consensus,” in contrast to the package of neoliberal policies referred to as the “Washington consensus”—the same structural adjustment and bailout conditions that Lula and Kirchner have criticized.

The Buenos Aires consensus criticizes the “unprecedented concentration of wealth” caused by globalization and argues that the consolidation of political democracy and the active participa-



tion of civil society are crucial to development in the region. In the declaration, both countries commit to further growth and development and give absolute priority to education. In addressing Mercosur, the declaration notes that “regional integration constitutes a strategic option,” and gives the countries more clout in multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, WTO, and IMF.

Mercosur has pioneered a new era of South-South cooperation as a means to create alternatives, reduce dependency on former colonial powers, strengthen national economies, and form international strategic alliances that would allow developing countries to negotiate on an equal footing with rich countries. The bloc has been courting diverse trading partners both in the region and globally as a clear strategy to lessen dependency on the U.S. and the EU, which currently account for almost half of the bloc’s exports.

In January 2004, India and Mercosur signed a preferential trade agreement that is expected to increase bilateral trade from \$1.04 billion in 2003 to \$5 billion in 2008. India, Brazil, and South Africa, which have called themselves the G3 as opposed to the rich countries’ G7, wish to strengthen trade cooperation. They aim to create free trade agreements between the five-mem-

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Cinema Resistance Returns

by Bob Small

Pledge Cinema Resistance resumes presentations on Saturday, September 17, 7 pm, at Media-Providence Friends Meeting with a free showing of *Letter to the President* (1952).

Letter to the President was variously titled *My Man and I*, *Shameless*, and *This Night Forever*. The movie looks at immigrants seeking a better life and an inter-cultural love affair, among many other topics. But most importantly, the movie highlights the effectiveness of non-violent resistance. The stars are Ricardo Montalban and Shelly Winters, with strong supporting turns by Wendell Corey and Claire Trevor, among others. The director is William Wellman and the executive producer is Dore Schary.



Based on the story *Letter to the President* by John Fante, this is an off-beat film with just a little bit of noir. Ricard Montalban is a migrant farm worker, unjustly imprisoned. He is in love with the world-weary Shelly Win-

ters. At one point, Shelly says, “America the beautiful? You must show it to me; I’ve never been there.”

This film has special relevance at a time when some U.S. border states are claiming a crisis due to illegal immigration, vigilante “minuteman” are organizing to repel the invaders, and immigrants are dying while crossing borders.

There will be a short introduction and a discussion afterwards. Refreshments will be served and donations will be collected.

The Pledge Cinema Resistanceurs are Brad Bradlee, Bob Small, and Will Scull, and we can always use more help. Scheduled dates for future film presentations are October 15, November 26, and December 10, and we will be announcing the rest of our features at a later date.

For further information, call 610-543-8427.

MERCOSUR

ber Southern African Customs Union (SACU), Mercosur, and India.

In addition, the rise of China as a leading world consumer is already beginning to displace the influence the U.S. has traditionally had in the region. In 2003, China became the world’s second largest consumer of oil, after the U.S., and invested almost \$19 billion in Latin America. This presence is welcomed by countries like Argentina, Brazil, and oil-rich Venezuela, all of which wish to see the end of U.S. domination in South America.

Europe has sought affiliation with Mercosur since its inception in 1991 through associate status or other agreements. Although there has been “partnering” at numerous levels, agreement has not been reached, partly due to EU farm subsidies. In January 2005 the Mercosur-EU Business Forum concluded, “The negotiations for the creation of the largest free trade area in the world, covering almost 700 million people, should be re-launched ... The conclusion of the EU-Mercosur Association agreement would establish the

first ever region-to-region free trade area.” In July 2005, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, commissioner for external relations and European neighborhood policy stated, “Our goal is to reach an ambitious, balanced, and comprehensive agreement between the EU and Mercosur to enable both regions to respond more effectively to the challenges of globalization.” Clearly, Europe is competing with the U.S. for trade benefits with Latin America. Mercosur is proving that Latin Americans have alternatives to the trade model peddled by the U.S.

The latest meeting of Mercosur was held in Paraguay, June 2005. The meeting approved an accord on defending human rights and launched a \$100 million regional cooperation fund to help fight poverty in the smallest Mercosur countries, Paraguay and Uruguay. Mercosur also approved the launching of a natural gas ring project that would link gas fields in Peru to Chile and would be connected to existing pipelines that supply gas to Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay to ease gas shortages. Leaders also discussed the possibility of a Mercosur parliament and the seats rep-

resenting each country. A deadline has been set for 2006 to create such a parliament. Meanwhile, Brazilian president Lula encouraged Mercosur nations to extend trade agreements with Canada, Egypt, and Morocco, as well as hasten an accord with the EU. Also, President Vazquez of Uruguay began his six-month term on the rotating presidency of Mercosur.

In what direction does the U.S. want Latin America to go? In what direction does Latin America want to go? Mercosur is a global South initiative that will aid the people of Latin America in their quest for self-determination. Unfortunately news reports on Mercosur and other South successes are very hard to find in the U.S. However, this news is a sign of progress and a reason to hope for the Latin American movement in all “the Americas.”

Sources:

1. 50 Years Is Enough, vol. 8 no.2, Apr. 2005.
2. World Press.Org. www.worldpress.org/americas/2104.cfm.
3. “External Relations,” europa.int/comm/external_relations/2005sp05_460.
4. “External Relations,” europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mercosur/intro/ip05_1111222.

AFSC Hosts Iraqi Intellectuals

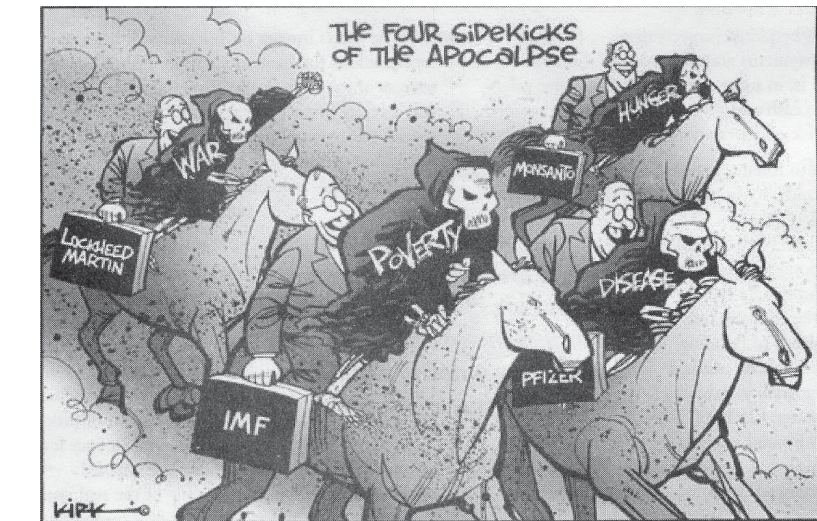
by Bob Neveln

During July, the American Friends Service Committee brought two Iraqi intellectuals to the U.S. for a speaking tour. As Peter Lems, AFSC Iraq education coordinator, said, "Discussions of Iraq need to include the voices of Iraqis." Indeed we often forget all about this important point.

On July 6, Professor Naba Saleem Hamid of the University of Baghdad spoke at Friends Center in Philadelphia. She spoke of the deplorable conditions which have existed since the U.S. invasion; things are so bad that she said many Iraqis would even welcome the return of Saddam as a way out of the existing situation. She also spoke of her efforts to organize a support organization for women, especially women university students now in Iraq. She was also asked specifically if she favored immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces. In her answer, she referred to the opening of the borders by the U.S., the resultant entry by suicide bombers from all over the region, and compared Iraq to a body without an immune system. She said that Iraq currently needs U.S. forces to remain.

On July 27, Bishop Yousif Thomas Mirkis, a Roman Catholic theologian from Babil College in Baghdad, also spoke at Friends Center. He spoke somewhat abstractly about the attitudes needed for peace, but when a questioner tried to pin him down about whether U.S. troops should be withdrawn immediately, he refused to support this position. Both Bishop Mirkis and Professor Hamid called for a Marshall Plan for Iraq. They called for the U.S. to restore electrical power to Iraq, to replenish the hospitals now depleted of necessary medical supplies, to restore adequate water, sewers, and gasoline.

Clearly this is the U.S.'s responsibility as an occupying power, especially



given the fact that the loss of the necessities for the infrastructure was a direct result of the invasion. And whether

the U.S. military stays or leaves Iraq, this responsibility will remain.

CAFTA Squeaks through by Two Votes

by Marge Van Cleef

On July 27, in a midnight Congressional vote, CAFTA was approved by a 2-vote margin. It was brought about by massive arm-twisting, alleged bribes, presidential lobbying, and at least two runaway representatives who hid during the vote. This vote on CAFTA was a historic moment when it became clearer than ever that CAFTA's proponents have lost in the court of public opinion and that the consensus on free market fundamentalism is irrevocably broken. They won only on a procedural measure and dirty tricks.

Please take one more action. Call your Pennsylvania congressional representatives who voted against CAFTA. Tell them we appreciate their willingness to stand their ground against an avalanche of administration pressure and corporate promises. Similarly, make sure that those who voted for CAFTA also hear from you. They might lose their jobs because of CAFTA.

Every Pennsylvania Democrat voted against CAFTA. First term legis-

lator Rep. Allyson Schwartz, in particular, despite months on the list of top administration targets, deserves special appreciation. On the other side of the aisle, every single Pennsylvania Republican voted against the interests of their districts and environmental laws. The majority of them attempted to hide their betrayal behind the thin smokescreen provided by a weak China Trade Enforcement Bill advanced by Rep. Phil English (R-Erie). Obviously, partisan politics won out nationwide, above the fundamental interests of working people both in the U.S. and in the Central American countries who have little or nothing to gain from this trade agreement.

Those who voted against CAFTA: Rep. Robert Brady, (202) 225-4731; Rep. Chaka Fattah, (202) 225-4001; Rep. Paul Kanjorski, (202) 225-6511; Rep. John Murtha, (202) 225-2065; Rep. Allyson Schwartz, (202) 225-6111; Rep. Mike Doyle, (202) 225-2135; Rep. Tim Holden, (202) 225-5546;

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Address correction requested

Community Calendar

Sept. 11— Potluck Supper*/Program, “Clinging to the Promise of Peace,” Special 9-11 peace memorial & anti-war vigil commemorating the 4th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks. Brandywine Peace Community’s Monthly Potluck Supper*/Program, , 4:30 pm, University Lutheran Church, 3637 Chestnut St., Phila., Pa. (*bring main dish, salad, or dessert to share).

Sept. 24-26—End the War on Iraq Anti-War Mobilization, Wash., D.C. Saturday, 9/24—March on Washington to End the War. Sunday, 9/25 & Monday, 9/26—Anti-war fair, interfaith service, grassroots and nonviolence training, lobby Congress and nonviolent civil resistance at the White House. For info, www.unitedforpeace.org. The Brandywine Peace Community, as part of its three-decade old efforts of peace-making and nonviolent resistance to war, is organizing a Phila. Area Affinity Action group to participate in the Sept. 26 action in which people will circle the White House and face arrest for non-violent civil resistance to Bush’s war. Call or e-mail the Brandywine Peace Community to get more information and details on the Sept. 26 Nonviolent Re-

sistance at the White House and to find out how to become part of the 9-26 Philadelphia-Area Action Affinity Group.

For more information: Brandywine Peace Community P.O. Box 81, Swarthmore, Pa. 19081. 610-544-1818. brandywine@junoc.com. www.brandywinepeace.com.

CAFTA

Those who voted for CAFTA: Rep. Phil English, (202) 225-5406; Rep. Melissa Hart, (202) 225-2565; Rep. John Peterson, (202) 225-5121; Rep. Jim Gerlach, (202) 225-4315; Rep. Curt Weldon, (202) 225-2011; Rep. Mike Fitzpatrick, (202) 225-4276; Rep. Bill Shuster, (202) 225-2431; Rep. Don Sherwood, (202) 225-3731; Rep. Charles Dent, (202) 225-6411; Rep. Joe Pitts, (202) 225-2411; Rep. Tim Murphy, (202) 225-2301; Rep. Todd Platts, (202) 225-5836.

For more information and to help inform your letters to the editor, go to www.citizen.org/trade and review *The Washington Post* article about the vote at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/27/>.

Crisis in Haiti

Take Back Democracy in Haiti. Defend Human Rights

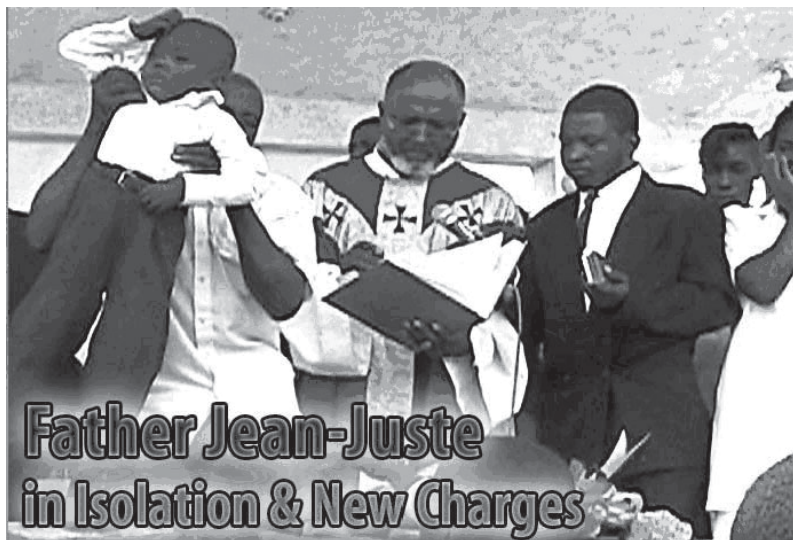
Sept. 10, 2005

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

(bring brown bag lunch)

Friends Meeting House
4th & Arch Sts.

Join AFSC Peace Building Unit Latin American/Caribbean Program, Delco Pledge of Resistance, House of Grace Catholic Worker, Phila. Yearly Meeting Peace and Concerns Standing Committee, and Witness for Peace-Mid-Atlantic for a day long forum on recent events in Haiti. Haiti is in crisis and the Haitian people need our help and support.



Thank you to everybody across the world for all your support. I am in prison again. Please keep pushing for democracy and human rights in Haiti—they are feeling it. Please remember all the people in prison. There are so many young people here who have never seen a judge. Please keep up the pressure. Democracy will return to Haiti.

Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste,
August 3, 2005
Haitian National Penitentiary

Haiti Forum Keynote Speaker Imprisoned

By Ronald F. Coburn

The forum *Crisis in Haiti: Take Back Democracy in Haiti: Defend Human Rights*¹ which will occur Sept. 10 at the 4th and Arch Meeting House has Fr Jean-Juste listed as one of four keynote speakers. (See www.DelcoPledge.org for the complete program of this forum.) Fr. Jean-Juste is now in prison accused by the United States-supported Haitian government of the murder of journalist Jacque Roche. He was forcibly dragged from a Catholic church and accused of this crime, even though he was in the United States at the time of the murder. I think Fr. Jean-Juste represents hope for the future of Haiti, a strong voice for the people; he refused and refuses to be silenced. I include a statement about the background of recent horrible events occurring in Haiti, and also reprint an interview of Johanna Berrigan conducted by Amy Goodman on Democracy Now.

The forum was organized by the *House of Grace Catholic Worker, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Peace and Concerns Standing Committee and the Haiti Working Group, Delaware County Pledge of Resistance, AFSC Latin American/Caribbean Programs, Witness for Peace Mid-Atlantic and was co-sponsored by Catholic Coalition for Peace and Justice; Catholic Peace Fellowship; Commission for Justice -Sisters of St. Joseph; Committee for the Return of Democracy in Haiti; Morley, Surin & Griffin, P.C.; Peace Center of Delaware County; Radio Haiti; St. Malachy's Church; SOAWNE; WILPF/DC; WILPF/US Section/Haiti Issues Committee; WILPF/Philadelphia.*

Background

by Johanna Berrigan, House of Grace, Catholic Worker

On February 29, 2004 President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forcibly removed by the United States and replaced by a United States-backed, unelected, interim government. The regime change ended over nine years of continuous democracy, the longest such interlude in Haiti's history. Today the security situation for many Haitians is dire and continues to deteriorate. Many people have been arrested and over 700 people have been detained arbitrarily and remain in detention without formal charges. Government literacy, nutrition, and education programs have been dismantled. Violence, including rapes, killings, robberies, and abuses of human rights and the rule of law, occurs daily. Thousands of Haitians are internally displaced. Pro-democracy activists are under attack. Haiti is in a political, economic, and human rights crisis of immense proportions.

Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste, Pastor of St. Claire's Parish, an outspoken activist advocating on behalf of the defenseless poor, human rights, democracy and the return of President Aristide, has been harassed, arrested, and wrongly imprisoned twice. In the fall of 2004 he spent seven weeks in prison. All charges against him were dismissed. His lawyers credit his release to the pressure placed on the Haitian Government by international peace and human rights groups. Sadly, at this writing, Fr. Jean-Juste is once again in prison. He is being held in solitary confinement at the Haitian National Penitentiary on charges of "public de-

nunciation” and “inciting to violence”. Falsified charges followed by arrests and lengthy imprisonment are often used to silence those who speak out against human rights violations. Many human rights observers have been to Haiti and have witnessed first hand the extreme poverty, violence, and have spoken with those harassed and wrongly imprisoned. The people of Haiti need our help. The human right violations in Haiti need immediate attention. We Americans must act and insist that our policies help protect human rights, the constitution of Haiti and the poor.

Amy Goodman Interviews Johanna Berrigan on August 24, 2005 on DEMOCRACY NOW.

AMY GOODMAN: Meanwhile, Haitian priest Father Gerard Jean-Juste remains in prison and is still suffering from injuries inflicted during his arrest in July. Father Jean-Juste is now considered the prime candidate to run for president on the Lavalas ticket. He told the Associated Press earlier this week that he may run if his candidacy is approved by ousted Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide who was overthrown in what he calls a modern day kidnapping in the service of a coup d’etat backed by the United States. We are talking to Johanna Berrigan, who is a physician assistant. She is with the Philadelphia Catholic Worker, and she and Bishop Gumbleton have been to visit Father Jean-Juste.

JOHANNA BERRIGAN: We had the opportunity to visit him twice this week, once on Tuesday and then again yesterday. He is still very spiritually strong and very committed and determined to continue the struggle for justice and democracy. But he, based on my previous visits with him, is very physically weak and sick. He’s in a lot of pain and clearly fatigued. I noticed a definite change in him since I first met him. Today marks his 36th day in prison as a political prisoner and only yesterday, after tremendous international pressure, did he finally receive a thorough evaluation, a physical exam by a doctor. And that doesn’t mean that he had any tests or that anything has been done for him to date, but he, at least now after pressure, has finally seen a doctor.

AMY GOODMAN: Amnesty International has declared him a “prisoner of conscience”. Just very briefly, though, we have been following the case closely, explain why he is in the National Penitentiary and is he right near the former ousted Prime Minister Yvon Neptune?

JOHANNA BERRIGAN: Up until yesterday in the late afternoon he was in the Haitian National Penitentiary in isolation. He was in the Penitentiary because he attended the funeral of a well-known journalist, Jacques Roche, and at that funeral the crowd began to attack and beat Father Jean-Juste, claiming that he was the person who murdered or responsible for the murder of the journalist. And there was such public clamor that the police claimed they were taking him for his own safety. Actually, when he got into the van with the police they changed these charges and said that he was being held so they could investigate the charges against him. And then finally they have accused him of the murder of the journalist and also that he is a threat to the security of the state and that he gives incendiary sermons. And he himself has stated, and we know this to be true, at the time of the murder he was in Florida. All of these charges are false as a means to just keep him in jail.

AMY GOODMAN: Johanna Berrigan, right now is he able to get medicine in the prison? And this information that we are getting from news reports that he is going to run for President of Haiti, is this true? Is this what he is saying?

JOHANNA BERRIGAN: No. To the first question, my big concern is that the doctor issued a report who saw him yesterday and recommended that, due to his condition, he should be transferred out of the prison, which he was. Yesterday they moved him to an annex of the prison in Pacot, where he is supposedly being held, where Yvon Neptune is. But the doctor, as we know, has not ordered any further evaluation and he has not given any treatment yet. In terms of our conversation with Fr. Jean-Juste regarding that claim of his running for presidency, we spoke with him on two occasions and he basically has said that, no, he is a priest. The only way that he would even consider being a candidate is if the Lavalas party really requested this of him and if he had the backing of President Aristide, and only then he would consider it. He is not yet a candidate. And, interestingly, he heard the news on the radio in the prison that this had come out. That did not originate from him.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, Johanna Berrigan, I want to thank you for being with us, a physician assistant practitioner from the House of Grace Catholic Worker House in Philadelphia, joining us on the line from Port-au-Prince.