

Military Resistance 811



**Landstuhl:
[The Real News Gets Buried At
The Bottom Of The Story]
“On A Medical Rating Scale, The
Number Of Patients Above A Level
Considered Extremely Critical Has
Increased 190% In The Last Two
Months, He Said”**

August 30, 2010 By Tony Perry, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts from a long long story that tosses off the real news as an afterthought. T]

Reporting from Landstuhl, Germany — Before Marine Cpl. Corey Griggs went on his last patrol in Afghanistan's restive Helmand province, he had a premonition of sorts.

"I was joking with my buddies that it was going to be a bad night," said Griggs, 23, of Portland, Ore.

He was right.

As darkness settled on a recent Saturday over the desert village of Sangin, someone threw a bomb over a mud wall at Griggs and his squad. The blast shattered his right forearm and embedded jagged shrapnel in his left.

After emergency surgery at a military outpost, Griggs, who is also being monitored for possible brain injuries, was placed aboard a specially outfitted cargo plane airlifting him to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center next to the U.S. air base at Ramstein, Germany.

Since 2004, nearly 13,000 U.S. service personnel wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq have been evacuated to Landstuhl, the largest American-run medical facility outside the U.S.

Some of the wounded are patched up and sent back to frontline duty. Many others are taken to the U.S. for advanced treatment at military hospitals in Washington, D.C.; Bethesda, Md.; San Antonio; or San Diego.

As the U.S. troop buildup in Afghanistan continues, Landstuhl is experiencing an increase in wounded patients to levels unseen since the 2004 battles in the Iraqi city of Fallouja.

The complexity and severity of wounds are also increasing, said Army Col. John M. Cho, a chest surgeon who is the hospital's commander.

On a medical rating scale, the number of patients above a level considered extremely critical has increased 190% in the last two months, he said.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Resistance Action

Aug 29 (Reuters) & Aug 31 (Reuters) & Sept 1 (Reuters)

ABU GHRAIB - Insurgents opened fire at a checkpoint manned by Iraqi army and police, killing one soldier and wounding one policeman, in Abu Ghraib on the western outskirts of Baghdad, police said.

MOSUL - Insurgents threw three hand grenades and blew up a wooden cart as a police patrol was passing by, wounding one policeman, in central Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

FALLUJA - A roadside bomb wounded three policemen when it went off near their police patrol in the city of Falluja, 50 km (30 miles) west of Baghdad, police said.

A roadside bomb wounded three policemen when it went off near a police patrol in central Falluja, 50 km (30 miles) west of Baghdad, late on Monday, police said.

A sticky bomb attached to the car of an off-duty policeman killed him in Kadhimiya, northwest Baghdad, an Interior Ministry source said.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Five More US Soldiers Killed In Afghanistan: “The Deaths Come A Day After Eight NATO Troops -- Seven Of Them American -- Were Killed”

Aug 31 AFP

Five US soldiers were killed in Afghanistan on Tuesday, NATO announced, as the number of Americans to die in the war in the past four days climbed to 22.

Four soldiers were killed in eastern Afghanistan in a bomb attack, NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said.

The fifth died in an insurgent attack in the south, ISAF said.

The deaths come a day after eight NATO troops -- seven of them American -- were killed in bomb attacks in southern Afghanistan.

Delayed Announcement: U.S. Marine Killed In Helmand Friday;

8.31.10 AP

A U.S. Marine was killed in fighting in Helmand province on Friday. The death was not announced until Monday night.

Estonian Soldier Killed In Helmand By IED

08/31/10 By The Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia — Estonia's Defence Ministry says a soldier has died in southern Afghanistan after insurgents ambushed his unit.

The ministry says that Sgt. Herdis Sikka was killed Monday in an explosion while the unit was on a routine patrol in Helmand province.

The 20-year-old Sikka served as the driver of his unit's armoured personnel carrier.

Officials said Tuesday that no other soldiers were wounded in the attack.

Canadian Soldier Dies In Hospital From Injuries Sustained In Afghanistan

August 30, 2010 CEFCOM NR10.019

OTTAWA— A Canadian soldier, who sustained injuries in Afghanistan, passed away at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany today.

Corporal (Cpl) Brian Pinksen from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Newfoundland Regiment, based in Corner Brook Newfoundland, was serving in Afghanistan with the 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group. Cpl Pinksen sustained his injuries when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated during a routine patrol in the Panjwa'i District, southwest of Kandahar City at approximately 1:40 p.m., Kandahar time on 22 Aug, 2010.

Cpl Pinksen was treated on scene and evacuated by helicopter to the Role 3 Multi-National Medical Facility at Kandahar Airfield then subsequently moved to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Centre in Germany. He arrived in Ramstein, Germany on 25 August and succumbed to his injuries earlier today at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

Now For The Good News

Aug 31 by Lynne O'Donnell, AFP [Excerpts]

KABUL (AFP) – The US commander of the Afghan war acknowledged Tuesday that the Taliban were expanding their footprint across the country even as foreign forces close in on their traditional southern strongholds.

"I don't think anyone disagrees that the footprint of the Taliban has spread," [Petraeus] said, adding the insurgents had "reconnected in various safe havens and sanctuaries outside and inside the country," a reference to Pakistan.

Resistance Action



Insurgents attacked and burned a fuel tanker in Ali Abad district of Kunduz province, north of Kabul, Afghanistan, Sept. 1, 2010. The tanker was part of a military supply convoy. (AP Photo/Fulad Hamdard)

08/31/10 AP & TOLONews & 01 September 2010 TOLONews & AP

In a remote-controlled bomb explosion in Kandahar Wednesday morning, two people, including the province's Hajj and pilgrimage Chief were killed and three others were wounded.

The incident happened at 09:00am on Wednesday near the province's Hajj and Pilgrimage directorate, the Police Chief of Kandahar, Sardar Mohammad Zazai told TOLONews reporter.

"Kandahar city has become an open place for thieves and insurgents. The government is failing and putting their failure on the shoulders of the Taliban," taxi driver Niyamat Agha said.

Insurgents killed three and wounded 12 more employees of the Afghan Supreme Court travelling on a mini bus in Kabul, Aug. 31. The employees were wounded with small-arms fire and were taken to the Kabul Emergency Hospital for treatment.

Assailants on two motorcycles halted the bus Tuesday morning in the Musayi district, an area where insurgents are active, court spokesman Abdul Malik Kamawi said. One militant then boarded the bus and opened fire with an automatic weapon, killing two people, Kamawi said. A third died later in a hospital.

"All the wounded are in critical condition and one of them who was badly hurt, has already died," said a doctor in Avicenna hospital.

"I went to almost every hospital and none of them could provide blood," said a relative of the victims. The incident took place as the governor of Kabul had voiced concern on a security shortcoming in Mosahee district.

In Zabul province bordering Kandahar, insurgents on Monday night ambushed a convoy carrying supplies, killing two private security guards and wounding five others, provincial government spokesman Mohammad Jan Rasoolyar said.

GUESS WHO'S WORRIED GUESS WHO ISN'T ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers with the 2-502 Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, take cover behind a low mud wall in Zhari district, Kandahar province, southern Afghanistan, Aug. 25, 2010. Zhari holds many well-armed insurgents who blend in with a support network providing them with explosives and safe havens. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

Insurgent Mortar Attack Kills Foreign Occupation Soldiers At Presidential Palace

Aug. 30 (Bloomberg) & GAROWE ONLINE & IRIN & Aug 31, 2010 GAROWE ONLINE

At least four Ugandan peacekeepers [translation: U.S. government-sponsored occupation troops] were killed on Monday when insurgents fired mortars at the presidential palace.

"A mortar hit part of the palace which is used by our troops as base, killing four Ugandan soldiers and injuring eight others," said AMISOM spokesman, Maj. Barigye Bahoku.

It is not clear if any Somali government official were hurt by the mortar.

In recent months, Mogadishu has been a battleground for troops loyal to the government of the western-backed President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, and armed opposition groups, chief among them Al-Shabab.

Most of southern and central Somalia has already been seized by the rebels.

President Sharif's administration controls only a small bit of the capital, Mogadishu, while Al-Shabaab controls most regions in southern Somalia and most of the traditional capital, Mogadishu.

Meanwhile, Hizbul Islam Leader, Sheik Hassan Dahir Aweys accused the statement of the Somali president calling for more support from international community in its fight against the insurgent group. "We are saying to AMIOSM to leave Somalia: before they did not meet problems from the Somali people. The Somali people do not like you so we are saying to you go away," said Hassan Dahir Aweys.

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

MILITARY NEWS

THE UXO COLLECTIVE & IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR PRESENT

THE SHOW



FREE CONCERT

**ANTI-FLAG
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TIM BARRY

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HIGH RISK

SUPPORT GI RESISTANCE!
THE WARS END ON
SEPTEMBER 10TH
11 AM, FREEDOM PLAZA, DC

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Afghanistan, Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 888.711.2550

**THIS IS HOW OBAMA BRINGS THE TROOPS
HOME:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE**



The coffin containing the remains of Navy Seaman William F. Ortega at Arlington National Cemetery July 9, 2010. Ortega, 23, of Miami, died June 18 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, of wounds sustained from an improvised explosive device blast. Ortega was assigned as a hospital corpsman to Third Battalion, First Marine Regiment, First Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

**Hope for change doesn't cut it when you're still losing buddies.
-- J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War**

Ohio Senate Candidate Campaigns For Immediate Withdrawal Of All U.S. Troops From Iraq And Afghanistan: “Leaving 50,000 Troops In Iraq Is A Continuing Occupation, Not Withdrawal”



Dan La Botz

August 25, 2010 Dan La Botz, Interviewed By Shaun Harkin, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Ohio has a socialist candidate for the U.S. Senate this November. Dan La Botz, the veteran socialist activist and author, is running as the Socialist Party candidate because of the urgency of putting forward a political alternative in the midst of the Great Recession and the continued corporate domination of U.S. politics.

Dan is a co-founder of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) and member of the socialist group Solidarity, and he has written extensively on workers' rights in the U.S. and Mexico.

Why are you running and what impact do you think you can have?

THE UNITED States is at a critical moment in its history, faced with three crises which threaten the wellbeing of our people.

First, we have an economic crisis which has become the first Great Depression of the 21st century, and the government is failing to act to provide jobs.

Second, we face an environmental catastrophe of enormous proportions--global warming or climate change--and the government is moving too slowly and ineffectively to address this problem.

Third, the United States finds itself involved in illegal, immoral and unwinnable wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and refuses to withdraw all troops and end the wars. Leaving 50,000 troops in Iraq is a continuing occupation, not withdrawal.

The Republicans and Democrats don't have the ideas or the will to address these issues. We need new political ideas and a new political movement which will take action to address these problems. I see my campaign as contributing to building that political alternative.

My campaign provides a vehicle for putting before the American people an alternative vision of a just society, a democratic socialist vision. As a candidate for office, I am every day speaking before the public, distributing literature, being interviewed by the media and in other ways putting a socialist analysis of our current situation and a socialist proposal for a solution to our problems before the people of Ohio and the country.

Through this campaign, I am meeting and bringing together in cities throughout Ohio activists from various movements and organizations who want to work together to build the social movements, and talk to people about why democratic socialism represents a way out of the current situation. I'm delighted that my campaign can be a vehicle for groups such as the Socialist Party, Solidarity, the Ohio Labor Party, the International Socialist Organization, members of the Democratic Socialists of America, and others from many movements to unite in the fight against the corporate domination of our society and against the capitalist system.

I'm running to win--to be the first socialist senator from Ohio. But as I see it, whatever the outcome of the election, the socialist movement will win.

Today, socialism is being misconstrued and misrepresented in the media in bizarre ways.

This campaign provides an opportunity to explain that socialism means the working class majority would control the government, collectively own the major industries and firms, and produce not for profit but for human need.

The campaign is way to link together people in Ohio who have considered themselves socialists, but had no organizational way to connect and act together. I believe the campaign can become an expression of existing social movements--labor, immigrant

rights, LFBTQ, environmental and others. My campaign has and will continue to speak out in solidarity with those in struggle, and work to inspire others to fight for economic and social justice and for political power.

IN A recent CNN poll, 47 percent of people said the economy is the most important issue facing the country. How are working Ohioans coping with the recession? What do you think of President Obama's response to the economic meltdown?

THE OBAMA administration and the Democratic Congress acted with amazing speed, mobilizing vast economic resources to save the banks, to save the auto companies and to save insurance companies.

They saved the banks--but not homeowners. Saved the auto companies--but not auto jobs, wages and benefits. Saved the insurance companies--but didn't provide health insurance for all and haven't kept down insurance costs.

Above all, they haven't provided jobs.

The overriding concern of the American people today is with finding or keeping a full-time job. We have an official unemployment rate of 9.5 percent, while in reality the figure is more like 17 percent (including discouraged workers and the underemployed), and in African American and Latino communities, the figure is 25 percent. For youth, it's 50 percent.

Republican and Democratic candidate both talk mostly about tax cuts for small business as a way to create jobs, a not-very-useful approach during a typical recession, and useless in the face of the potential economic catastrophe we face.

ONE OF the reasons you gave for running for U.S. Senate was that this would you to take up U.S. foreign policy.

PEOPLE VOTED for Barack Obama in large measure because they wanted to bring an end to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But under Obama, the wars have only expanded while continuing to drag on, ruining the lives of both the soldiers who fight them and the countries that suffer them.

At the moment, there are roughly 95,000 troops in Afghanistan and 90,000 in Iraq. Obama plans to leave an occupying force of 50,000 in Iraq indefinitely, while continuing to increase the forces in Afghanistan. The drone bombing of Pakistan continues, frequently taking the lives of civilians.

This is completely unacceptable. U.S. soldiers have had 500,000 casualties, suicides in the military are rising, and returning soldiers often return unable to participate in civilian life. What a tragedy. What a waste.

American corporations dominate U.S. government policies, whether we're talking about domestic, environmental or foreign policy.

Capitalism has from the beginning been as much about piracy and war as it has been about markets and trade.

The U.S.'s self-proclaimed role as world policeman, with its world command structure, derives from the corporate drive for dominance in the world economy.

The U.S. has between 700 and 1,000 bases in nations around the world which work to prevent rival states, nationalist movements, or social rebellion from disturbing the long term interests of the corporations. The U.S. will spend 4.7 percent of our GDP, or \$1 trillion on military spending this year, representing 19 percent of the total budget, and 28 percent of tax revenues.

We've got to stop this.

We must withdraw all troops from Iraq and Afghanistan at once.

Stop the bombing of Pakistan.

As a senator, I would vote against any military budget while foreign wars and occupations continue.

We must withdraw all U.S. troops from the Middle East, for those occupations only breed anti-Americanism and terrorism. We should be using that military budget to create jobs at home, and for health care and education.

CINCINNATI, WHERE you live, has a large immigrant population that includes 60,000 Latinos and more than 20,000 people from sub-Saharan Africa. But inspired by Arizona's SB 1070, right-wing politicians have introduced a slew of anti-immigrant measures into the Ohio legislature--SB 35, SB 150 and SB 238.

THE REPUBLICAN Party and the Tea Party, joined by the Blue Dog Democrats, have been fomenting an anti-immigrant movement. The results have been Arizona's SB 1070 and a spate of copycat laws across the country. In Ohio, legislators have introduced bills SB 35 and SB 150, which would allow local law enforcement to assist ICE in immigration enforcement and deportation, and SB 238, which would require injured workers to prove that they had immigration documents before they could collect workers' compensation.

Clearly, these laws threaten both immigrants' and other Americans' civil rights and their rights as workers, and they must be opposed.

They will lead to even more racial profiling, more arbitrary detentions and more exploitation of workers on the job.

The Obama administration's increased level of deportations will hit an estimated 400,000 this year--10 to 25 percent above the average annual level of the Bush administration. At the same time, Obama has increased the military presence at the border. These measures suggest that immigration reform will be based on repression of immigrants.

I support calls for immigration reform, but feel that the dominant coalition, Reform Immigration for America (RIFA), makes too many concessions to right-wing politicians and to the corporations.

The "comprehensive immigration reform package" that RIFA supports--which exists in various forms and remains in process--to its credit proposes the regularization of those immigrants and their families who are living and working in the United States today, though it accepts the notion that those immigrants should pay various penalties. But it accepts measures that would lead to more walls, police and soldiers on the border; create a guest workers program; and continue to deny undocumented workers jobs. The bill, if it proceeds, will only get worse as it moves through Congress.

My position is that all immigrants and their families now living and working in the United States should be regularized at once. We should also make the citizenship process easier and more rapid so that immigrants can gain full political, civil and labor rights more quickly.

Guest worker programs will inevitably lead to second-class status and should not be accepted by the labor and immigrant movements. Instead, the United States should increase the number of visas offered to immigrants from something like 70,000 to the more realistic 500,000, which reflects the typical participation level of immigrants in the U.S. economy. All immigrants should be eligible at once for all services available to other Americans, since immigrants pay employment, property, sales and other taxes which support those services.

In the bigger picture and longer term, we have to fight to change the corporate-driven U.S. foreign policy--trade agreements, diplomacy, military interventions--which have helped to ruin many economies around the world, forcing people to migrate.

We need to build socialist movements that can take political power in many countries so that we can more fairly distribute the world's resources.

The world--its land and seas, its resources and its wonders--is the common inheritance of humanity, and we must all live in it together. So these measures which I propose should be understood as steps to a world of open borders, a world without borders--sin fronteras, as the movement has said.

I am inspired by the young immigrants fighting for immigration reform and for the DREAM Act--while at the same time recognizing that the DREAM Act's military provisions represent a problem. Most inspiring to me have been the young immigrants who--taking a page from the LGBTQ movement--have "come out" as undocumented and risked their freedom to stand up for reform now. I hope I can take just a little of their inspiring energy and idealism into my campaign as I talk about the need for immigration reform.

WHAT OTHER issues are you aiming to raise in the campaign?

CLEARLY, WE have to continue to fight for full equality for gays and lesbians in our society. The LGBTQ movement has provided an inspiring example of an active social movement, often fighting around the issue of gay and lesbian marriage rights. Gays and lesbians have also fought for the right to serve in the military without the discriminatory "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

I support those movements, but we must also continue to fight for equality at every level of our society, from the school and workplace to the broader community. The Equality at

Work movement represents an inspiring real and ongoing challenge to homophobic attitudes and practices in our everyday life.

On the question of the environment, we face a looming catastrophe through climate change or global warming, call it what you will. We are witnessing profound changes in our weather patterns that will affect agriculture and threaten to inundate low-lying nations and coastlines.

More immediately, the BP oil spill revealed the degree to which the U.S. government has been corrupted by oil money and regulation has been a joke. The greater oil spill is the oil money flowing into the Congress, which determines our national social, environmental and foreign policy.

We have to continue to strengthen the environmental movement and to give it a more independent and militant character aimed at dramatic reductions in carbon fuels--and over time, the replacement of coal and oil with environmentally sustainable energy sources.

HOW DO you hope to get your message out? Will they let you in the debates?

TODAY, MOST of the big debates are controlled by the news media--CNN, FOX, etc.--and by the Republican and Democratic Parties. So it will be a real struggle to get into the big debates, and we are looking at both legal and political strategies to do so.

Meanwhile, I have been surprised and happy to find that the idea of the town-hall meeting still exists in small cities and towns, often organized by the local Chamber of Commerce or some local civic association. Some local media also hold "Meet the Press" events, in which I will be able to participate, and some professional organizations hold meetings for candidates.

For example, an educators' organization (not either of the major teachers unions) has invited me and other candidates of the "minor parties" (the official term in Ohio) to speak to a gathering of a couple hundred of their members. Interestingly, some of the local patriot and Tea Party groups invited speakers from all points of view to speak to their meetings, and not to be heckled either.

As an official candidate, newspapers from around the state invite me to provide my views for publication in print or online. We are also leafleting at local fairs and parades around the state, as well as putting out my positions online at DanLaBotz.com, and on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. News coverage has been most important: newspaper articles in papers throughout the state, a 12-minute interview on a local news show and several radio interviews.

THE RIGHT wing labels Barack Obama a socialist, but few socialists would agree with this characterization. Socialism suffers from long-standing misconceptions. How have people responded to your campaign, and how would you describe the socialism you believe in?

I HAVE been pleased to find that many young people have self-identified as socialist--whatever that means to them--without ever having been part of a socialist organization

or read a socialist publication. My impression from some conversations is that they think of socialism as representing a more just society.

Many people in Ohio who reject the Republican and Democratic Parties and have come to think of themselves as Libertarians do so as much from a somewhat conservative outlook as because they believe that libertarianism means freedom. They have never had much of an encounter with socialism, and I have not found them to be hostile, so much as curious.

Most hostile to my campaign are the Democratic Party loyalists who argue--mistakenly, I think--that Ralph Nader brought us Bush, and so they say that I will help elect Portman. Some Democrats, however, will tell me, "Well, I don't know if I'll vote for you, but I'm glad that you're raising these ideas."

With all the confusion about socialism created by the Tea Party and right-wing media attacks on Obama as a socialist, I find that this is a good opportunity to talk about what socialism means. In doing so, I find it important to differentiate democratic socialism from Stalinism, or bureaucratic Communism with a capital C.

Many liberal Americans have a favorable attitude toward European social democracy, since especially in its Scandinavian version, it seems (or once seemed) to provide such important social programs as universal health care, free education from kindergarten to college, low-cost housing and good public transportation. So that can provide a kind of bridge to talking about democratic socialism, though I have to point out that today's social democrats often administer capitalism like neoliberal conservatives, rather than working to do away with capitalism and its attendant problems.

Arguing against illusions in the Democrats or in the notion that electing socialists will bring about change, I talk about the importance of building the powerful social movements which will be absolutely necessary to force change from the corporations and the government--movements that will need to find political expression in a working-class political party.

I don't see the Socialist Party, Greens, Labor Party or other left-of-center third parties as representing the core of such a party, but rather as making small but significant contributions to such a process. Workers will have to go into motion on a big scale before such a working-class party will become a reality.

YOU'VE BEEN an activist for a long-time in many different social struggles. What's the relationship between your election campaign and activism?

ACTIVISM IN progressive social movements--labor, LGBTQ, environmental, immigration--builds the power of political opposition to the corporations and the government. But unless there exists an alternative political party, that activism will always be harvested on Election Day by the Democrats.

The Democratic Party not only harvests from the movements, it also plucks off the leaders well. And if it incorporates the movements, it inevitably smothers them.

If, in the end, activism is to be meaningful, then we have a responsibility to provide a place for activists to go on Election Day--a place to stand up and be counted against the

corporations, against the Republican and Democratic Parties, and the government's policies.

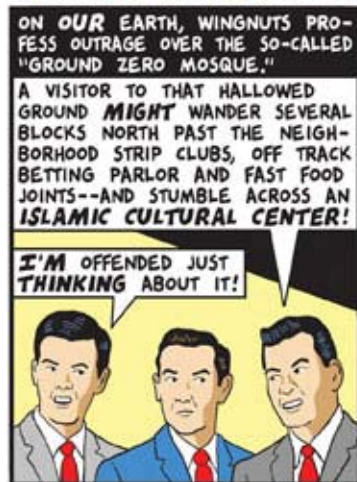
At the same time, no candidate and no election will end the corporate control of the U.S. government or succeed in making that government represent working people.

We need a new government of working people and a new democratic socialist economy and society, and we will only get there through activism of tremendous scale and scope.

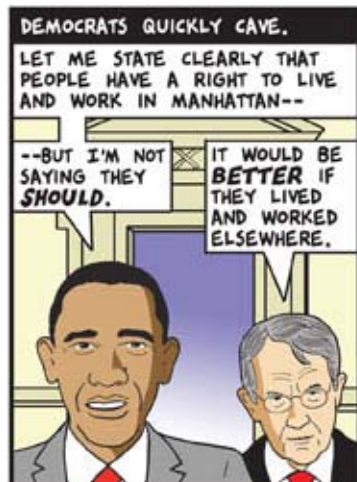
So I believe my campaign must be all about the political alternative and all about promoting greater activism.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

THIS MODERN WORLD



by TOM TOMORROW



CLASS WAR REPORTS



**Open Class War In Bolivia:
“The Dynamite Of Miners Is Set Off
From Time To Time To Remind
People That This Is A City In
Revolt”**

**Workers And Peasants Organize
Revolutionary Uprising Against
President Evo Morales’ Rotten
“Andean-Amazonian Capitalism” And
Take Power In The City Of Potosi:**

“The Bulk Of The Wealth Generated By Mineral Exploitation Continues To Be Repatriated To Imperial Countries Outside Of Bolivia”

While ostensibly led by the Civic Committee of Potosí, in which the cooperative miners play a partially determining role, the sectors in revolt also include communities of indigenous peasants, various unions of the formal working class, the informal urban poor, organized sex workers, university students and professors, artists and intellectuals, and even the city’s soccer team.

Unfortunately, with the continuity of neoliberal mining policy under the government of Evo Morales, the bulk of the wealth generated by mineral exploitation continues to be repatriated to imperial countries outside of Bolivia, leaving only poverty, unemployment, regional underdevelopment, and environmental contamination in its wake.

16 August 2010 Written by Jeffery R. Webber, Upside Down World

Beginning in September, 2010, Jeffery R. Webber will be a Lecturer in the School of Politics and International Relations at Queen Mary University of London. He is the author of *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggles in Modern Bolivia* (2010), and *From Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia: Class Struggle, Indigenous Liberation and the Politics of Evo Morales* (2011). He is currently in La Paz, Bolivia.

The streets of the city of Potosí, 600 kilometres southeast of the capital of La Paz, are desolate, distended with the uncollected garbage of 18 days of a general strike and popular revolt against poverty.

Over 700 vehicles are trapped in road blockades at Villa del Carmen, Betanzos, Chaqui, Dan Diego and elsewhere, separating Bolivia’s poorest department (state) from its neighbouring territories, as well as from Argentina and Chile.

Stores are closed, and public and private institutions boarded up, along with schools, markets, and banks. Cash machines are out of money, food and fuel supplies are low, and inflation is lifting the prices of remaining basic commodities into the clouds.

Only vehicles authorized by Potosí’s Civic Committee – the umbrella organization through which the protests have been organized – are permitted to navigate the streets, although some Potosinos, as residents of this city of 160,000 are known, make their way on bikes and motorcycles through the few internal streets that remain passable.

The dynamite of miners is set off from time to time to remind people that this is a city in revolt, even if negotiations with the government – after six aborted efforts – have finally begun in the neutral city of Sucre.

The Poor Shut Things Down

The avenues and alley ways of Potosí are adorned with red and white – the colours of the department – and roughly 500 blue tent stations are scattered in different locales, providing shelter for possibly 1,000 people on hunger strike, including the governor, who is a member of the ruling party but has temporarily broken ranks under grassroots pressure.¹

Two MAS congress persons also joined the hunger strike initially, but were then successfully pressured into abandoning that route by higher-ups in the party.

In recent days, over 100,000 people have taken to the streets in marches.

Peasants from nearby Jatun Ayllu Yura (independent indigenous community) physically occupied the hydro-electrical station that supplies power to the biggest mine in the department, San Cristóbal, run by a Japanese multinational, and the site of major worker and peasant disputes earlier this year.²

San Cristóbal is losing \$US 2 million per day in exports. \$US 500 thousand is lost daily from the cooperative mining sector. Tourism is dead in Potosí, at the peak of its season (unless we count the few beleaguered backpackers still stuck in the area).

“This is going to affect the entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP),” said Minister of Economy and Finance, Luis Arce, a prestigious expert in the inane and obvious.

“We hope that the conflict will be resolved so that it will not have major economic impacts on the country.”³

The protests began on July 30 with a 48 hour general strike to drive home popular disaffection with the government’s failure to respond to a series of electoral commitments made to the destitute department.

These agreements had first been outlined in a petition delivered by the Civic Committee to Morales back in 2009. The 48 hour strike was extended to an ongoing action with indefinite end when the government’s response was silence.⁴

The favoured government tactic has been to exhaust the strike through inattention, but this has seemed only to radicalize and broaden the base of support for Potosí’s militancy around six principal, immediate demands: (1) resolution of department borders between Potosí and Oruro, particularly around the mountain of Taha, rich in the rock base used for cement production; (2) the immediate installation of a promised cement factory in the community of Coroma, to create jobs; (3) the reopening of a metal processing plant in Karachipampa; (4) the structural preservation of the over-mined Cerro Rico (the massive, historically and symbolically crucial mountain that towers over the city of

Potosí); (5) the construction of an international airport in the department to attract tourism; and (6) the completion of promised highways.⁵

So we're dealing with the poorest department in the country (where life expectancy is dramatically below the national average), which gave roughly 80% support to the MAS in the last elections, rising up in a protest against neoliberal continuity and the failure of basic responses to endemic poverty.

The class character of the protest is complex. Some of the leadership is clearly composed of cooperative miners. The richer layer of the cooperative miners is basically constituted by reactionary petty capitalists working together with transnationals in Potosí against the rights of state-employed miners.⁶

Also in the leadership are other sectors that might accept merely a clientelistic buy-out by the MAS to “solve” the situation.

But the rebellion has matured into something much, much larger.

Eighteen days of general strike (total lockdown of the city) and a thoroughly impenetrable regime of coordinated road blocks are not easily carried out absent mass popular support.

While ostensibly led by the Civic Committee of Potosí, in which the cooperative miners play a partially determining role, the sectors in revolt also include communities of indigenous peasants, various unions of the formal working class, the informal urban poor, organized sex workers, university students and professors, artists and intellectuals, and even the city's soccer team.⁷

“The historical necessity of the region, to which no government has ever attended,” sociologist José Mirtenbaum suggests in a recent op-ed, “produces these types of just and legitimate demands, which speak to all citizens. The qualitative magnitude of the historical causes are too enormous to measure. It's absolutely legitimate that a population takes to the streets to reclaim their natural resources and for other demands that have much to do with their symbols,” as a people.⁸

Neoliberal Mining and Uneven Capitalist Development

“In search of profit and driven to compete,” Marxist geographer Neil Smith reminds us, “capital concentrates and centralises not just in the pockets of some over the pockets of others but in the places of some over the places of others.”⁹

With the crash of tin prices in 1985 and the onset of 15 years of brutal neoliberal restructuring in Bolivia, capital increasingly vacated the impoverished department of Potosí – once the silver capital and slave graveyard of the Spanish Empire – and entered the new dynamic centre of Bolivian accumulation – the agro-industrial, hydrocarbon-rich, and narco-fuelled right-wing heartland of Santa Cruz.

However, with the onset of the commodities boom in 2002, and still today, even in the midst of the ever-mutating global crisis, transnational capital has found its way back to mineral-rich Potosí.

Unfortunately, with the continuity of neoliberal mining policy under the government of Evo Morales, the bulk of the wealth generated by mineral exploitation continues to be repatriated to imperial countries outside of Bolivia, leaving only poverty, unemployment, regional underdevelopment, and environmental contamination in its wake.

This is the backdrop to the extraordinary and ongoing popular revolt against poverty we've witnessed in Potosí since it first broke out, 18 days ago, on July 30, 2010.

Again, the crux of the situation is that the mining regime that prevails in Potosí, as elsewhere in the country, is fundamentally neoliberal, and that this is a MAS strategy, not a deviation from their plan, or a distortion by disgruntled state bureaucrats, leftover from old regimes.¹⁰

For example, a recent study of a Canadian subsidiary, Pan American Silver, operating in the department through a shared-risk contract with the state company COMIBOL (COMIBOL effectively controls about 30% of the project), shows that the company will pay merely 17% taxes and royalties on projected gross sales value over the next 30 years.

The taxes going to the municipality where the company is located, one of the poorest in the country, are just over 0.5%.

This is straightforward looting.

By comparison, in various shared risk contracts in Chile (hardly a socialist haven) taxes and royalties going to all levels of the state amount to up to 51%, whereas, in Peru, it's on the order of 26%.¹¹

The hegemony exercised by transnational capital in the mining sector in Bolivia calls into question the viability of the Morales government's commitment to "harmony" and "equity" between different forms of property (state, private, communitarian, and cooperative), or what it terms a "plural economy."

Vice-President Álvaro García Linera has theorized the independent development paths of different forms of property under the rubric of "Andean-Amazonian Capitalism," but his theory resolutely fails to account for the overwhelming dominance and power of private property – under the control of transnational capital – in the underdeveloped capitalist socio-economy of Bolivia.

In mining, the role of COMIBOL has been entirely marginalized and the power of transnational mining capital to loot continues unabated.¹²

“No Change In Poverty Rates Under Morales”

Neoliberal continuities in Bolivia's political economy under Morales are not restricted to mining, and this is increasingly evident to perceptive thinkers from across the political spectrum.

"What has changed in these last few years," asks Roberto Laserna, one of Bolivia's most renowned neoliberal intellectuals. "A lot, if one observes the process in terms of its discourse and symbols and maintains a short-term perspective. But very little if one is attentive to structural conditions and observes the economic and social tendencies with a longer-term view."¹³ I rarely agree with Laserna, but on this point he is precisely on target.

Most of Morales' first four years can be described, from an economic perspective, as high growth and low spending. Prior to the fallout of the worldwide economic crisis, which really started to impact the Bolivian economy in late-2008 and early-2009, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) had grown at an average of 4.8 percent under Morales.

It peaked at 6.1 percent in 2008, and dropped to an estimated 3.5 percent in 2009, which was still the highest projected growth rate in the region. This growth was based principally on high international prices in hydrocarbons (especially natural gas) and various mining minerals common in Bolivia.

Government revenue increased dramatically because of changes to the hydrocarbons tax regime in 2006. But fiscal policy remained austere until the global crisis struck. Morales ran budget surpluses, tightly reigned in inflation, and accumulated massive international reserves by Bolivian standards. Public investment in infrastructure, particularly road building, increased significantly, but social spending rose only modestly in absolute terms, and actually declined as a percentage of GDP under Morales.

Fiscal policy changed in 2008 and 2009, as a consequence of a sharp stimulus package designed to prevent recession in the face of the global crisis. The social consequences of reconstituted neoliberalism — whatever the rhetoric of sympathisers on the international left—have been almost no change in poverty rates under Morales, and deep continuities in social inequality.

Both of these axes persist as monumental obstacles standing in the way of social justice in the country.¹⁴

The realities of these dynamics do not escape even some hard-line supporters of the government, such as Ariel Vergara Garnica, Executive Secretary of the Federación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Tarija (Federation of Peasant Workers of Tarija, FSUTCT).

In a recent interview, after praising the government's respect for human dignity, responsible development, and Mother Earth, Vergara Garnica was asked about the economy under Morales: "Bolivia has grown economically at a rate of approximately 4 percent (under Morales); however, in spite of the fact that many say that this growth has brought big economic benefits for Tarija (a hydrocarbons-rich department in the eastern lowlands), these aren't being felt by the people, because they have been concentrated in a few hands, and have never reached the general population."¹⁵

At the same time, this dynamic has been recognized recently by no less an establishment authority than the World Bank Director for the Andean Region, Felipe Jaramillo.

In an exclusive interview with La Paz daily *Página Siete* this week Jaramillo did begin with a call for improvement in the Bolivian investment climate – an aural tick not easily cast aside after years spent as a PhD student in the economics department of Stanford, followed by a stint as Vice-Minister of Finance in Colombia, and then World Bank posts in Asia and Europe.

Grounding himself in the data, however, Jaramillo praised the macroeconomic management of Morales, particularly his government's fiscal and monetary austerity, commitment to extremely low inflation, and unprecedented accumulation (by Bolivian standards) of international reserves.¹⁶

This assessment explains why, earlier in the week, the World Bank agreed to provide Bolivia with \$US 150 million in concessional loans for various projects, loans which are of course subject to a series of neoliberal conditionalities with which the Morales government appears set to comply.

The same is true of a \$US 30 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank agreed to simultaneously.¹⁷

The Rupture In Potosí And The Rising Discontent Of The Popular Classes

Negotiations have now started with the government in Potosí, but it's hard to exaggerate the significance of this break with the MAS, and the ways in which the government's populism will be unable to contain the growing discontent from urban and rural popular classes.

For example, the factory workers of La Paz, who supported the MAS officially in the December 2009 elections, have now distanced themselves from the government.

This was made clear in a series of strike actions in April and May 2010, alongside urban teachers, miners, and health care workers.¹⁸

The political-ideological orientation of the Federation of Factory Workers of Cochabamba, led by former shoe-factory worker Oscar Olivera, reflects an even deeper schism with Morales.

The powerful urban indigenous-proletarian organization, FEJUVE-EI Alto (Federation of Neighborhood Councils of EI Alto), for the first time in four years, has changed course.

Following recent elections, the new leadership has a mandate to follow the latest set of resolutions, drafted at a Congress at which thousands of representatives from the impoverished neighbourhoods of EI Alto had a voice. The new resolutions state explicitly that this government represents neoliberal

continuity;19 three members of the new executive board come from a recently-established revolutionary federation of neighbourhood councils in the city.20

There will be major conflicts, possibly large-scale strikes, over the proposed pension law which is abysmal and which will affect the entire formally-employed working class.

Further demonstrations are also likely to grow around the government's new hard-line approach to cracking down on "contraband." Whereas many on the left would be on board with measures against contraband mafias and narco-trafficking thugs, the reality in Bolivia is that the new measures are going to throw tens of thousands of informal workers out of work with no alternative means of employment.

Other prominent breaches between the government and popular organizations emerged this year.

Particularly salient were those with the lowland indigenous organization, CIDOB, which the government accused of being a puppet of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the coca growing peasants of the Yungas region of the department of La Paz, which split with the government after a dispute between peasants and the Morales administration over development projects in Caranavi.

These fractures between the popular classes and a government that continues to insist it represents them are very distinct phenomena from the rightwing destabilization campaigns in Sucre, Santa Cruz, and Tarija in the last few years, or the related peasant massacre in the community of Porvenir, carried out by functionaries of right-wing governor of the department of Pando on September 11, 2008. The government, in this context, was correct to assume a gladiatorial stance against imperial meddling.

In the latest face-offs with popular groups, the fantasy that the discontent of the exploited and oppressed has simply been artificially engendered by Empire reflects an unsavoury attachment by elements of the Morales administration to the Stalinist witch hunts of the past.

While committed to the defence of the Morales administration against destabilization campaigns from the domestic right and various imperialist forces, these popular currents are also beginning to believe that the break with neoliberalism actually introduced in recent years has been exaggerated by the Morales administration.

Rather than waiting for transformative change to come from on high in the form of state officials aligned with the MAS, the new struggles are reclaiming agency – an agency rooted in the struggles and capacities of the exploited and oppressed themselves, working independently from the MAS.

The ability of Morales to play the distant saviour, to reduce recurrent instability to mere manifestations of internal party problems, "bad-apple" ministers, disloyal bureaucrats, and social movements manipulated by nefarious CIA and NGO agents, is losing plausibility rapidly amongst the population.

As much as he deigns to, Morales cannot stand above the class struggle and inherent contradictions in the capitalist development model to which his government has wedded itself.

At the moment, the Bolivian President is attending the Social Forum in Paraguay as a special guest, while several of his top Ministers are back at home in Sucre attempting to resolve the crisis in Potosí.²¹

It is likely that a short-term agreement will be hashed out and temporary stability restored.

However, unless the Morales government takes the unlikely turn toward abandoning its bourgeois alliances and committing itself to the authentic anti-capitalist and indigenous-liberationist demands of the popular revolts of the 2000-2005 insurrectionary cycle, the Potosí uprising is likely just the beginning of things to come.

Notes:

[1] "La Villa Imperial está unida, movilizada y desabastecida," La Razón, August 12, 2010; "El Gobernador de Potosí está en terapia intensiva," La Razón, August 12, 2010; "Hay ministros que no están con el proceso de cambio," La Razón, August 11, 2010; "Conflicto en Potosí es el más largo desde la caída de Goni," Pagina Siete, August 14, 2010.

[2] Juan Carlos Véliz, "El diálogo naufraga y Potosí radicaliza sus movilizaciones," Página Siete, August 11, 2010; "Minera San Cristóbal para labores con pérdidas día de \$US 2 millones," La Razón, August 12, 2010.

[3] "El conflicto afectará el crecimiento económico," La Razón, August 14, 2010.

[4] Eugenio Paz, "Demandas históricas irresueltas," Página Siete, August 14, 2010.

[5] Editorial, "Potosí sin salida," Pulso, August 15, 2010.

[6] This layer, for example, often no longer engages in direct mining activities, but rather hires poor "cooperative" miners at super-exploitative wages. The rich layer of cooperative miners has even become known as the "nueva rosca," or the new mining political-economic elite of the region. See Jaime Chumacero, "Potosí entre la eterna frustración y su incierta combatividad," Pulso, August 15, 2010.

[7] "Conflicto en Potosí es el más largo desde la caída de Goni," Página Siete, August 14, 2010; "El Origen del conflicto fue la caliza," Página Siete, August 14, 2010.

[8] Jose Mirtenbaum, "No se puede medir la magnitud," Página Siete, August 14, 2010.

[9] Neil Smith, "The Geography of Uneven Development," in Bill Dunn and Hugo Radice, eds., 100 Years of Permanent Revolution: Results and Prospects, London: Pluto, 2006, p. 189.

[10] For an alternative view, see Frederico Fuentes, "Bolivia: Social Tensions Erupt," Green Left Weekly, August 15, 2010, available online at: <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/45140>.

[11] Juan Collque and Pablo Poveda, "Hegemonía transnacional en la minería boliviana," Le Monde Diplomatique, edición boliviana, agosto de 2010.

[12] Juan Collque and Pablo Poveda, "Hegemonía transnacional en la minería boliviana."

[13] Roberto Laserna, "El cambio que no cambia," Pulso, August 8, 2010.

[14] Drawing on data from Bolivia's National Institute of Statistics, the best study thus far charts poverty and extreme poverty trends up to 2007, which are the latest available figures. The study notes that since 2005 there has been only marginal change in the poverty rate, and that this change has been slightly upward, from 59.9 percent of the population in 2005 to 60.1 percent in 2007.

Levels of extreme poverty increase from 36.7 to 37.7 percent over the same two year period. At the same time, other categories relevant to living standards highlighted, such as household density, and access to electricity, running water, and sewage systems, all show modest improvements between 2005 and 2007. It is possible that poverty levels have improved since 2007, and it should also be noted that these figures do not take into account improvements in the social wage of workers and peasants – i.e. any improvements in social services for the poor. Again, however, social spending has actually declined as a percentage of GDP under Morales, even as it increased in real, inflation-adjusted terms.

The record on poverty shows that there is little to celebrate. The key data here is derived from Mark Weisbrot, Rebecca Ray, and Jake Johnston, *Bolivia: The Economy During the Morales Administration*, Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, December 2009, p. 16. It ought to be noted the poverty figures from ECLAC do not correspond with the figures discussed here. The latest ECLAC publications provide national figures for 1999 and 2007, and claim that there has been a downward shift in Bolivian poverty from 60.6 percent poverty to 54 percent poverty between these years. See ECLAC, *Anuario Estadístico de América Latina y el Caribe*, 2009, Santiago: ECLAC, 2009, p. 65.

Inequality, likewise, remains a huge barrier to achieving social justice in the Bolivian context. Between 2005 and 2007 income inequality, as measured by the Gini Coefficient, declined from 60.2 to 56.3. Figures for the distribution of Bolivian national income show that the poorest 10 percent of the Bolivian population received 0.3 percent of national income in 1999, and still received only 0.4 percent by 2007, the last available figure. Meanwhile, the richest 10 percent of the population took home 43.9 percent of national income in 1999 and precisely the same percentage in 2007. If we broaden our perspective, to compare the bottom and top fifths of the social pyramid, we reach similar conclusions.

The poorest 20 percent of society took in a mere 1.3 percent of national income in 1999 and, in 2007, a still-paltry 2 percent. The richest 20 percent of the population pocketed 61.2 percent of national income in 1999 and 60.9 in 2007. In other words, there has been almost no change on either end of the scale in terms of the redistribution of income, never mind the redistribution of assets. See, Mark Weisbrot, Rebecca Ray, and Jake Johnston, *Bolivia: The Economy*, p. 18 for inequality figures employed here.

[15] Quoted in Danitza Pamela Montaña T., "La economía, el reto para consolidar el nuevo Estado," Pulso, August 8, 2010.

[16] " 'Hay que mejorar el clima de inversión': El máximo del Banco Mundial en la región mira a Bolivia," Página Siete, August 15, 2010.

[17] Demmis Valenzuela, "BM asegura recursos para tres proyectos: Con un aporte de \$US 140 millones," Página Siete, August 11, 2010; "BID entrega \$US 30 millones para apoyar la gestión pública," Página Siete, August 11, 2010.

[18] Personal interview with Wilson Mamani, Executive Secretary of the Federation of Factory Workers of La Paz, August 11, 2010. Also see, Jeffery R. Webber, "Evo Morales and Bolivia's

Reconstituted Neoliberalism," International Socialist Review, forthcoming (September-October, 2010).

[19] Raúl Zibechi, "Movimientos-Estados-movimientos," La Joranda, July 16, 2010.

[20] Personal interview with Carlos Rojas, ex-leader of FEJUVE-EI Alto, August 10, 2010.

[21] "El diálogo avanza pero Potosí mantiene el paro y el bloqueo," Pagina Siete, August 15, 2010; "IV Foro Social: Presidente Morales viaja a Paraguay," Página Siete, August 15, 2010; "El diálogo se abre en Sucre, pero sigue el paro y bloqueo," La Razón, August 14, 2010.

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