

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Fidel Castro's 1961 speech  
on cultural policy of revolution

— International Socialist Review PAGES 5-12

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## Illinois coal miners win support in 3-month strike

BY CAPPY KIDD  
AND BETSEY STONE

CHICAGO — As the strike by 350 miners against the Freeman United Coal Co. in central Illinois approaches its 100th day, the company continues to escalate its attacks on the United Mine Workers.

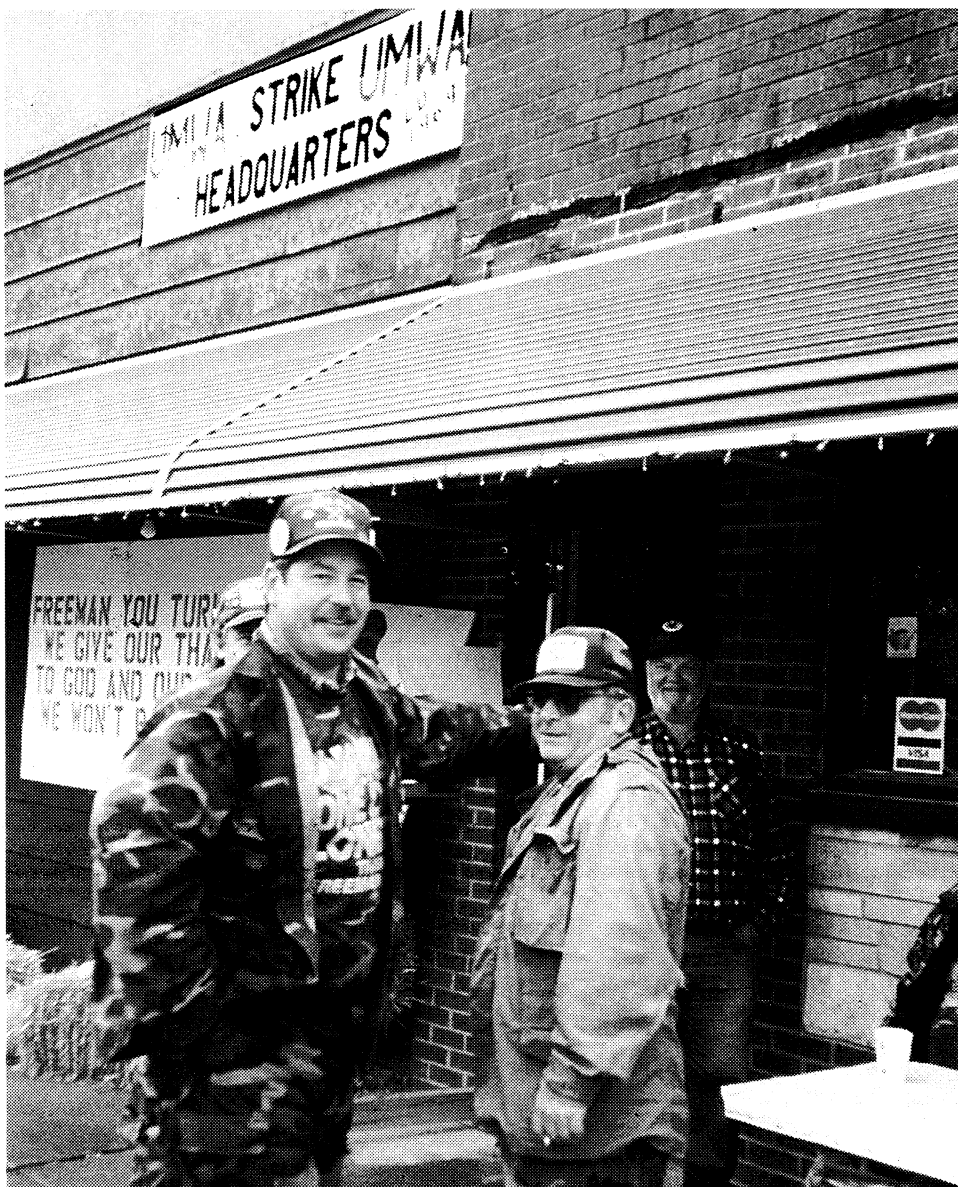
"We believe that the company is training scabs and that the scabs are living on company property," said Arthur Rouse, a striker from Freeman's Crown 2 mine. Rouse was among a group of 45 miners who had traveled from the coal fields to a rally organized by Operation PUSH in Chicago December 5.

Freeman spokesman Steve Cindrich was cited in the December 5 *State Journal Register* from Springfield, Illinois, as saying that "roughly 40 replacement workers began training at the Crown 3 mine in Girard and the Industry mine...." Crown had run an ad for scabs in the *State Journal Register* all week. Additional strikebreakers are still being sought Cindrich said.

In response to the company's latest provocation members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) are strengthening support for the strike. On November 30 and December 1 the three striking locals organized expanded picket lines at the Crown 2 and Crown 3 mines. Three hundred miners, family members and supporters rallied in the Farmersville High School gym December 5. Earlier in the week a 92-car caravan of strikers and their supporters drove through the Farmersville mining area to show their determination to win the strike.

The miners who drove to Chicago were guests at a Founders Day rally honoring Jesse Jackson of Operation PUSH. UMWA president Cecil Roberts was the keynote speaker. Both Roberts and Jackson spoke extensively about the strike against Freeman.

Vowing to make a solidarity visit to the  
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Members of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) on strike at Freeman Coal standing in front of strike headquarters in Farmersville, Illinois, November 30.

## 'Inspectors' step up provocations in Iraq

BY MEGAN ARNEY

Washington is once again stepping up its threats to launch a bombing assault against Iraq. After several dozen "surprise arms inspections" within a 48-hour period, the United Nations "inspectors" were refused access to the headquarters of Iraq's ruling Baath Party December 9. Washington immediately began wailing about Iraqi non-compliance with the UN snoops searching for "weapons of mass destruction."

At about the same time, on December 8, the Clinton administration made an open appeal for support among regimes in Arab countries for its campaign to overthrow the government of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein.

The U.S. government provoked the latest crisis, as it did all previous ones, with its blatant disregard for Iraqi sovereignty. Iraqi radio reported that the UN "inspectors" attempted to enter the party's headquarters "in a provocative manner...without previous announcement."

Oil Minister Amer Mohammed Rashid told a news conference that the inspectors are deliberately seeking a confrontation. He added that Baghdad had agreed February 23 to allow inspections, but the United Nations also agreed "to respect the security, integrity, and legitimate concerns of the Iraqi government," which included prior notice on some sites like the ruling party headquarters. "The practice of the inspectors... have the clear goal of creating crises and problems," stated Iraqi Gen. Hossam

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## Bonapartist figure Hugo Chávez is elected president in Venezuela

BY BRIANTAYLOR

Elections in crisis-racked Venezuela have yielded a Bonapartist figure as president — former military officer Hugo Chávez Frías, who became popular after organizing a failed coup in 1992 against a discredited regime.

The two traditional ruling parties — the Social Christian Party known as COPEI and the social-democratic Democratic Action — made a desperate, last-minute move to ditch their candidates and back Henrique Salas Römer, a single pro-establishment politician. Despite this attempt, Chávez attracted nearly 57 percent of the vote with a campaign that rested on anticorruption rhetoric and promises that, if elected, he would bring stability to the country.

It was the first time in 40 years that a capitalist politician not belonging to Venezuela's dominant ruling-class parties has won an election. Chávez is scheduled to take office February 2.

The global capitalist crisis has wreaked havoc with the Venezuelan economy. Depression conditions have progressively spread and worsened since the end of the oil boom a decade and a half ago. Various

administrations have tried to ram austerity measures down the throats of working people to appease imperialist bondholders. As a result, more than 70 percent of the population lives in poverty in a country that's among the largest oil exporters in the world.

Chávez put anticorruption demagoguery at the center of his campaign, vowing to "fry" the heads of the "political elites" and to bring back ethics and morality. He referred to the anti-Chávez alliance between COPEI and Democratic Action as "a wedding of corrupt politicians." Chávez, who cultivates his image as a "man of the people," is mestizo unlike the main-party politicians who are white and have presided over a population that's nearly 80 percent mestizo, Black, or Indian.

### A political strong-man, the 'sheriff'

Chávez has cultivated a reputation as a political strong-man. Nicknamed "*el Comandante*" (the commander), Venezuela's president-elect often sported the army special forces red beret and military fatigues. He touted his former career as a lieutenant colonel in the military and a leader of a coup against the government in 1992.

He combined this image with nationalist rhetoric, identifying himself with Simón Bolívar, a Venezuelan national hero and a main military commander in the struggle for Latin America's war of independence in the early 19th century.

Chávez's political proposals are vague and chameleonic. He has espoused opposition to "neoliberal economic policies" like selling off Petroleos de Venezuela, the nationalized oil company, and has called for a partial moratorium on payment of foreign debts. He enjoys support from layers of small businessmen and other middle-class elements who hope his nationalist rhetoric will equal trade protections.

Chávez, is "neither for savage capitalism, nor socialism, nor communism," he explained as the election neared, but instead for a so-called kinder gentler capitalism. He supported job creation and more educational programs, while at the same time calling for "rigorous fiscal discipline" and deep spending cuts.

The new president, as is traditionally the case with Bonapartist figures, projects himself as a savior rising above social classes

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## Young Socialists hold third national convention

BY NAOMICRAINE

LOS ANGELES — The third national convention of the Young Socialists and socialist conference held here December 4-6, registered the growing possibility for fighting workers and farmers to forge links with each others' struggles and with the activity of a revolutionary proletarian youth organization.

Eighteen delegates elected by YS chapters, and YS members in cities where no chapter exists yet, had voice and vote in the proceedings of the convention, which is the highest decision-making body of the Young Socialists. Members of the National Committee elected at the previous convention in 1997 participated as fraternal delegates with voice and consultative vote, as did delegates from Young Socialists groups in Canada, France, Iceland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

These delegates discussed and adopted reports on building a proletarian youth organization and on the tasks and perspectives

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# YS convention and socialist conference

Continued from front page

of the Young Socialists. They adopted the "Young Socialists Manifesto" and "Aims of the Young Socialists," published in the Marxist magazine *New International* no. 11, as a guide to the organization, and elected a new National Committee.

Discussion on the main convention reports was open for all YS members and invited youth to observe. The convention reports were open to all participants in a broader socialist conference held in conjunction with the YS convention.

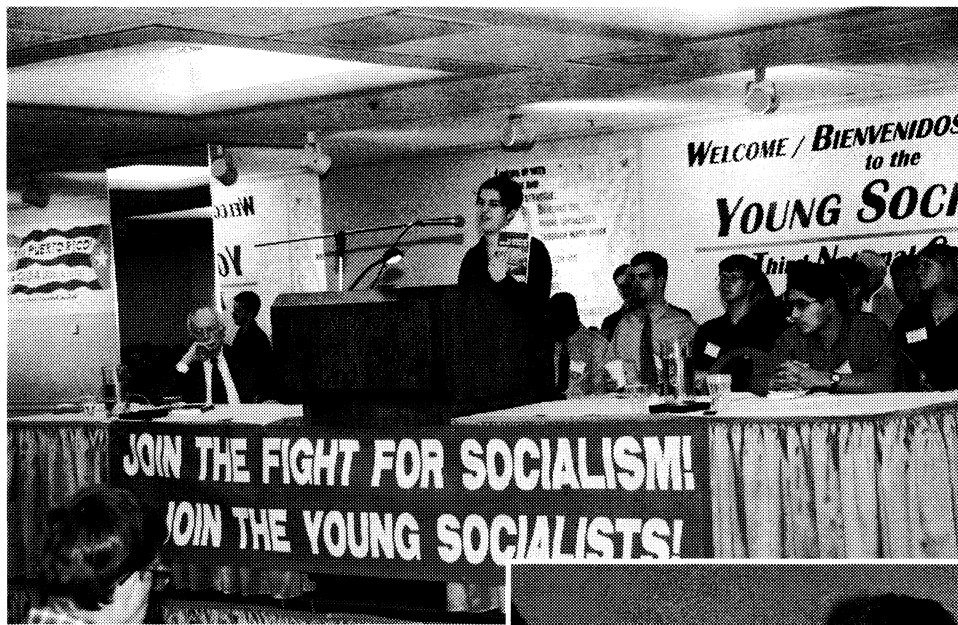
Of the 345 people who attended the conference, 91 were under the age of 27. Many were members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party and sister communist leagues. Other participants included guests involved in labor struggles, the fight by Black farmers for their land and against government discrimination, and the Irish freedom struggle.

Mary-Alice Waters, editor of the Marxist magazine *New International*, gave the first major conference presentation, titled, "Cuba as part of the world: Confronting global capitalism's assault on the toilers and winning a new generation to communism." Waters, who recently returned from a *Militant* reporting trip to Cuba, conveyed greetings to the Young Socialists convention from the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution and from combatants who fought with Che Guevara in Bolivia.

Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes spoke on "Bonapartism and polarization: contradictions and instability of the leftward shift in bourgeois politics." His talk took up the question, "What do the voters for AMFA and Jesse Ventura have in common," and the underestimated social weight of Young Socialists activism.

Six members of the Young Socialists led a panel discussion about their experiences and activities, titled, "Bringing alive *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*," referring to the book by Jack Barnes, published by Pathfinder.

A broad range of classes helped round out the discussion at the conference. These included, "The response of merchant seamen to the expansion of U.S. imperialism during and after World War II"; "New rise in the fight for Chicano liberation"; "Teamster Rebellion: the fight for a class-struggle left wing"; "The fight for Black freedom: from '40 acres and a mule' to the fight for a workers and farmers government"; "150 years of the Communist Manifesto: its relevance for today's struggles"; "The Russian revolution: how the Bolsheviks led workers and peasants to power"; "Dynamics of the Cuban revolution: Key turning points"; "The origins of U.S. imperialism: from the defeat of Radical Reconstruction to the Spanish-American War"; "U.S. imperialism lost the cold war: Imperialism's march toward fascism and war; encirclement of the Russian workers state, from Eastern Europe to the Silk Road"; "Why the Canadian ruling class fears Quebec independence"; and "The origin of women's oppression and the fight for socialism."



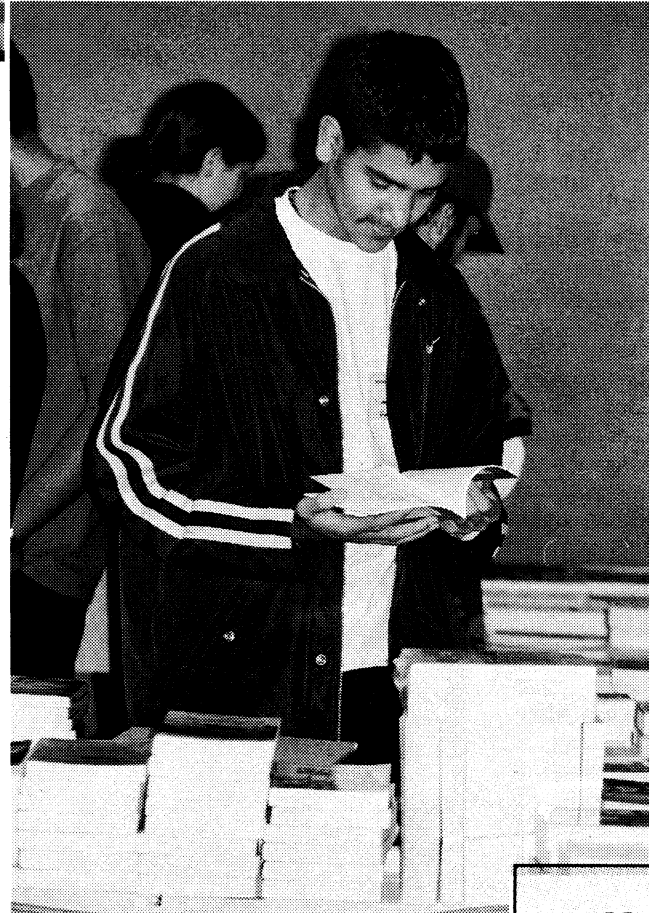
Militant photos, top: Dave Wulp, right: Megan Arney

Above, YS leader Samantha Kern points to *New International* no. 11, which features "U.S. Imperialism has Lost the Cold War" and the "Young Socialists Manifesto," as essential reading. On stage are members of newly elected Young Socialists National Committee and SWP Trade Union Committee. Many conference participants stocked up on books (right), especially copies of *New International*.

One set of classes were presentations by fighters involved in labor and farm battles today. Dean Cook, a locked-out member of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) Local 4-227, spoke on "Three years of struggle to defend the union at Crown Central Petroleum in Pasadena, Texas: Lockout of 252 members of the OCAW; frame-up charges of sabotage; racism and sexism at Crown refinery." Gary Grant and Eddie Slaughter, the president and vice president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association, spoke on, "Black farmers fight for survival." David Yard, a striking member of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1969, gave a class on "Challenges facing striking coal miners in central Illinois: UMWA stands up to FBI and Freeman United Coal." Displays from all three fights, with photos, T-shirts, and information, were a center for informal discussion during breaks.

The Pathfinder book tables were also crowded. Conference participants bought more than \$1,400 worth of books and pamphlets. The Marxist magazine *New International* was the top seller, including nine copies of the new issue no. 11. *The Communist Manifesto*, *Teamster Rebellion*, and books on the Cuban revolution were also popular.

John Fogarty, the Bay Area regional vice president for human rights of the Irish American Unity Conference, read greetings to the YS convention from two of the "H-Block Three," Irish freedom fighters who escaped from Long Kesh prison in Belfast in 1983 and have been fighting extradition from the United States to Northern Ireland



since the early 1990s. Dean Cook, Gary Grant, and David Yard also gave greetings to the gathering.

The final conference session heard reports from Young Socialists leader Samantha Kern and SWP leader Jack Barnes on the accomplishments of the YS convention and preparing the 1999 Socialist Workers Party convention, which will be held in April in San Francisco.

Kern introduced the newly elected Young Socialists National Committee, and announced that for the next period, leading up to the SWP national convention, the YS National Office will move to San Francisco. The new National Committee had just met and elected a National Executive Committee of Kern, Ryan Kelly, and Cecilia Ortega.

Barnes introduced the members of the SWP's Trade Union Committee, who were seated on stage along with the YS National

Committee, as the party leaders who would be responsible for working most closely with the Young Socialists over the next four months. Barnes stressed the party's obligation to organize to read and study this issue of *New International* along with Young Socialists units.

Pointing to the openings that communists and other vanguard workers must respond to today, Barnes cited the article "Ours is the Epoch of World Revolution," published in *New International* no. 11. "The evidence continues to accumulate that the working class in the United States and most other imperialist countries has emerged from the period of political retreat that followed the short, brutal — and demoralizing, because largely uncontested — imperial assault on the people of Iraq in 1990-91," the article

reads. "Signs of renewed defensive action are all around us — more numerous strike actions reflecting the tenacity and resistance of the embattled ranks; a noticeable growth in the confidence and determination of women in industry; the increased weight of Black leadership in labor battles and struggles of working farmers; an upswing in the Puerto Rican independence movement; more actions in defense of immigrants' rights. Such developments prepare the strengthening of working-class leadership in these struggles and increase the potential of the unions 'to act deliberately as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interests of its complete emancipation.'"

Next week's *Militant* will carry further coverage of the gathering.

## Young Socialists National Committee (elected December 6, 1998)

### Regular members

Paul Carter - Atlanta  
Alaric Dirmeyer - San Francisco  
Ryan Kelly - New York  
Samantha Kern - San Francisco  
Cecilia Ortega - San Francisco  
Paul Pederson - Newark  
Elena Tate - Boston  
Heather Wood - Twin Cities  
Maithong Yang - Los Angeles

### Alternate members

1. Jamie Williams - Birmingham  
2. Luis Rivera - Chicago  
3. Roberto Guerrero - Houston

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# Young fighters turn out for YS convention

BY ANA CHÁVEZ  
AND GAETAN WHISTON

LOS ANGELES—Youth interested in the Young Socialists had the opportunity to attend the YS Third National Convention and Socialist Conference here December 4-6. Of the 91 young people who attended, more than 30 were not yet members of the Young Socialists or Socialist Workers Party. Among these were five students from UC Santa Cruz — Mireya Gómez, David Arguello, Luis Gutiérrez, Benjamin D'Harlingue, and Benjamin Frost — who talked to these reporters over dinner. They all remarked on the respect that exists among the different generations in the YS and the Socialist Workers Party. "I was taken back when I saw how close the YS and the SWP work together... something I have never seen in another organization," commented Arguello.

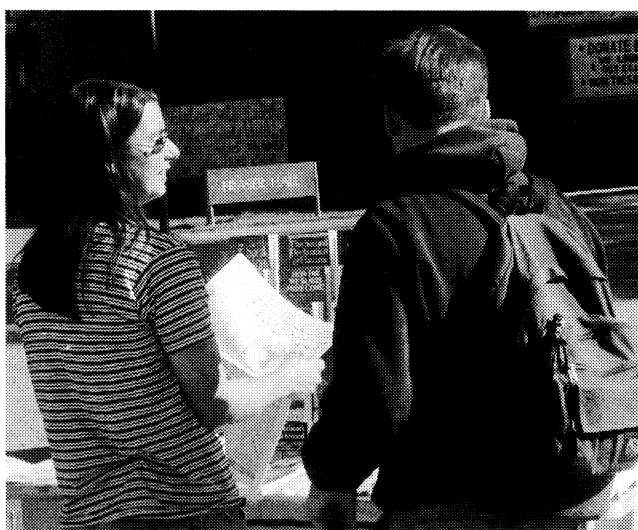
Most of the youth from Santa Cruz have some background in political activism. The political positions that the YS and SWP have taken on and their willingness to answer questions or offer clarification on them attracted them towards the movement. Gómez said that after visiting Cuba last summer with the Venceremos Brigade, the Cuban revolution has been her main interest. Along with the experience came many questions that needed answers. She expressed that the YS Convention created an environment where she "felt comfortable asking questions" about Cuba. This sentiment seemed to be shared by all who were there.

The Santa Cruz students are currently working with UC Students for Affirmative Action to help form a campus-wide coalition to fight for affirmative action. After the convention, participants from Santa Cruz not

in the Young Socialists expressed interest in joining.

Several other convention participants told the *Militant* how they first learned about the Young Socialists. Migdalia Jiménez, an 18-year-old student at De Paul University in Chicago, met the YS at a Pathfinder literature table on campus. "The books were eye-catching, and my friend and I had to stop," she said. Jiménez is involved with the Puerto Rican Student Association and the De Paul Alliance for Latino Empowerment on her campus. "I have been interested in socialism for a long time," she said. "I don't feel like an invitee; inside I feel like a Young Socialist."

Maritza Raos, a 27-year-old secretary in Chicago, is a member of the National Committee to free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners. She came to the convention after meeting the Young Socialists at the Pathfinder Bookstore. Raos took part in a recent protest outside the federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas, where Puerto Rican political prisoner Luis Rosa is jailed. She also went with the Young Socialists to an October 11 rally in Virden, Illinois, to support the Freeman coal miners strike



Militant photos: top left: Jeff Powers; bottom left: Megan Arney

Young Socialists discussed building solidarity with union struggles, joining social protests with others, and using the *Militant* and Pathfinder books. From top left: YS member Autumn Knowlton sells *Militant* in Washington State; strikers walk picket line at Titan Tire in Natchez, Mississippi; participants in YS convention and socialist conference.

Communist Manifesto when he gets back.

Three members of the Young Socialists from England spoke to the *Militant* about their new chapter and the activities they have been involved in. "Leading up to the convention we had been getting to the Jubilee Line pickets" of electricians demanding safer working conditions, said Edward Shine. He described the recent *Militant* sales team he was on to the coal fields of West Yorkshire and Nottingham.

Angela Stewart, also a YS member in England, said the best thing about the convention was meeting other YS members from all over. "The convention made me want to go back and read more," she added.

## Capital Fund for Pathfinder shop gets boost at conference; \$90,000 more is needed by New Year's

BY MAGGIET ROWE

LOS ANGELES — Some \$48,000 was pledged during the December 4-6 Young Socialists convention and socialist conference here for the capital fund to help in the transformation of the production of Pathfinder books and pamphlets.

Altogether, the fund is seeking to raise \$550,000 for Pathfinder's printshop to cover the \$350,000 cost of its newly installed Agfa Galileo computer-to-plate (CTP) system and to pay off \$200,000 still owed on the shop's web and two sheetfed printing presses. By the end of the conference, \$266,000 had been contributed or pledged toward this goal; \$84,000 more is needed by January 1 to complete payments on the Galileo platesetter.

### United Airlines 'blood money'

Pledges totaling \$40,000 came from four socialist workers employed as cleaners, baggage handlers, or mechanics at United Airlines. All four are currently seeking other jobs as part of an effort by cadres of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists to strengthen the political work of the communist movement in eight industrial unions. Each of them has pledged to sell the United stock they acquired while working for the airline and donate the proceeds to the fund.

The appeal for funds was presented to the conference by Dave Prince, a member of the international capital fund committee. Prince explained that United's so-called Employee Stock Ownership Program (ESOP) was initiated in 1994 as part of a takeback contract in which wages were cut 15 percent and the 30-minute paid lunch break was eliminated. Employees were "compensated" with United stock, the value of which is subject to fluctuations in the stock market. "Many workers," Prince said, "view the ESOP as 'blood money' taken from them by the company's assault on their wages and working conditions. So it's satisfying for socialists to put these chunks of capital to good

use for the working-class movement."

Conference and convention participants had time between sessions to look at a display prepared by printshop volunteers showing the new equipment being installed, featuring a countdown thermometer for the capital fund.

The display included the first plates produced on the new equipment; the plates were for the cover of *Panama: the Truth about the U.S. Invasion*, the first Pathfinder title scheduled for production using the new equipment. Press operator David Rosenfeld, who is organizing the installation of the CTP equipment, and other shop volunteers answered questions about the new system from those attending the conference.

The display also described the efforts of the 140 volunteers across North America and around the world who are scanning, proofreading, formatting, and preparing the covers and graphics for reprints of Pathfinder books and pamphlets. The most recent title submitted by the volunteers for production by the Pathfinder printshop is *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions* by Jack Barnes.

### Transformation of printshop

In his presentation to the conference, Prince explained that getting the Galileo platesetter up and running will help drastically cut labor time and the cost of producing Pathfinder books and other printed material used by the communist movement. "Doing this is necessary if we are to maintain the printshop financially," Prince said. "And everything we are discussing at this conference politically tells us it's more important than ever to keep Pathfinder's full list of books by revolutionary leaders in print and available for fighters."

All aspects of the organization of labor in the shop must be transformed in order to increase productivity, Prince said. This includes the expansion of cross-training on

and commemorate the Battle of Virden, where the coal bosses massacred striking miners in 1898.

Brent Sanders, 21, is a laborer from Nashville, Tennessee. He met the Young Socialists at a protest against the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia. The highlight of the convention for him was the panel "Bringing alive the changing face of US politics." The youth and working-class fighters "spoke from the heart. They are at the front lines of the revolution today," he said. Sanders plans to set up classes with the Young Socialists on the

presses and bindery equipment; stepping up production rates and cutting scrap rates and costly remakes of plates; greater attention to quality control; and the growing involvement of the entire shop cadre in commercial sales to help finance the operations of the shop.

Along these lines, Prince announced that the shop would decrease its size by at least two volunteers between now and the opening of the Socialist Workers Party convention in San Francisco at the beginning of April. He presented the names of four volunteers being released in December to go out and take part in the movement's efforts to build the industrial union fractions, and the name of a fifth who will be released early next year. Following the convention, a sixth

volunteer was released to take on responsibilities in San Francisco as a member of the Young Socialists National Executive Committee.

Four volunteers will come in to the shop over the next four weeks to begin training in the shop bindery.

At the final conference session, Prince gave an update reporting the additional pledges raised over the weekend. The capital fund committee is organizing further meetings with potential contributors over the next few weeks to raise the rest of the funds needed by the end of the year.

To find out how you can make a capital contribution, write to the Capital Fund Committee, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

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# Irish leader speaks to 600 in San Francisco

BY JIM ALTENBERG

SAN FRANCISCO — Supporters of the fight for a united Ireland filled the Russian Center here November 14 to hear Gerry Adams, president of the Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein. Adams was in San Francisco as part of a fund-raising tour, which was sponsored by the Washington D.C.-based Friends of Sinn Fein.

Adams began by explaining that he had just come from Mexico City, where he had been part of the unveiling of an exhibition about Bloody Sunday, the 1972 massacre of Irish working people by British troops in Derry, Northern Ireland. The exhibit, called "Hidden Truths," drew a big turnout. Adams said he had always been "intrigued by the Irish in America, which extends south" of the U.S. border. Irish immigrants, he stated, driven from Ireland to the United States during the famine of the 1840s found themselves in the U.S. army at the time of the U.S.-Mexican War. Some quit and joined the Mexican forces, forming the San Patricio Brigade. With Mexico's defeat in the war, 50 Irish were executed by the U.S. army. Thus "it was appropriate," Adams said, "to

launch the exhibit on Bloody Sunday in Mexico City."

The "Good Friday Agreement," between nationalists, London, and Unionists, aimed at settling the conflict in Northern Ireland, "advances the struggle for unity and independence," Adams said. Unionists are those who support continued British rule over the northern six counties of Ireland.

The accord was approved in May 1998 by a large majority of voters in both the Republic of Ireland and in the northern counties. Adams said, however, that the settlement remains on paper only. Unionist parties continue to delay its implementation. There are still political prisoners. The police force is still in the hands of the Unionists. A shadow government, which is to include a cross-border council with the Republic of Ireland, was to have been in place by October 31, but does not yet exist.

"Irish in America," Adams said, "won't stand for reneging on the Good Friday agreement." He urged Irish supporters in the United States to reach out, campaign for the agreement in their trade unions, churches, community organizations, and among poli-



Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams addressed hundreds of people in San Francisco November 14. He called on those present to reach out broadly to find support for the Irish freedom struggle. Above from left, Terry Kirby, Kevin Barry Artt, and Pól Brennan — Irish political prisoners recently released on bail after spending 14 months in U.S. federal prison awaiting extradition to Northern Ireland after escaping from Long Kesh.

ticians. "Why did the British campaign to keep me from getting a visa to go to the U.S.?" Adams asked. "They were afraid of you. You people here have to have some

sense of your own strength. You were able to change U.S. policy." The worst thing that could happen, Adams added, is that supporters in the United States of the fight for Irish freedom think that the struggle ended with the May referendum.

Participants in the meeting celebrated an important victory in the struggle. Irish freedom fighters Terry Kirby, Kevin Barry Artt, and Pól Brennan, known as the H-Block 3, received a standing ovation when they stood on stage in front of the crowd. The three were released on bail October 16 after spending 14 months in federal prison awaiting extradition to Northern Ireland. They were among 38 republican fighters who escaped from the notorious Long Kesh prison near Belfast, Northern Ireland in 1983.

A fourth, Jimmy Smyth, was deported back to Northern Ireland and jailed in 1996. Smyth was recently released from Long Kesh. Joe Doherty, another Irish freedom fighter who waged a long battle against extradition and for staying in New York, was also recently paroled as a direct result of the "Good Friday" accord.

Many at the meeting have been part of a long campaign to win the prisoners' release and stop their deportation.

## Australian gov't reverses visa ban on Adams

BY DOUG COOPER

SYDNEY — On November 27, the Liberal-National coalition government of Prime Minister John Howard reversed its two-year ban on Gerry Adams traveling to Australia. It was a victory both for the right to travel and for people in Australia being able to hear the republican point of view of the centuries-long struggle to free Ireland from British domination.

Adams, president of Sinn Fein, the party leading the struggle to end British rule of the six northeastern counties of Ireland, is a sitting member of the recently established Northern Ireland Assembly as well as an elected, though not sitting, member of the British Parliament. Adams was refused a visa by Canberra in November 1996, a week before he was scheduled to launch the Australian edition of *Before the Dawn*, his autobiography.

But the ban became more and more unsustainable as Sinn Fein's strength has grown, a fact that capitalist governments from London to Washington to Dublin have been forced to reckon with.

Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock had used his discretionary powers under Section 501 of the Migration Act, which allows him to bar people who are not of "good character," to deny Adams a visa, ostensibly because of his criminal record. In fact, Adams's prison record was the product of internment without trial — one of a series of dictatorial measures used to no avail by London to try to crush the Irish nationalist struggle in the early 1970s — a penalty that he shared with thousands of other fighters

at the time.

Ruddock made the backtrack announcement himself, saying that Adams had played a "constructive role" in the peace process.

A protracted legal challenge to the visa ban was launched by Adams in the Federal Court with the help of supporters of Sinn Fein in Australia and well-known Brisbane lawyer Terry Fisher taking the case. Australian Aid for Ireland (AAI), which raises funds for republican prisoners of war and their families, helped coordinate the effort to challenge the ban.

Eugene McCague, a heavy-equipment operator and president of the New South Wales branch of AAI, told *Militant* reporters: "We're delighted with the decision.... They tried to criminalize Sinn Fein and the IRA [Irish Republican Army] but time has proven otherwise. We don't know what will

happen with the peace process ultimately, but they've held their ground and proved worthy of their positions. Already, many working people both Irish and Australian have expressed interest in meeting Gerry when he comes. We're in for a heap of work now!"

In welcoming Canberra's decision, Adams told the Australian Broadcasting Corp., November 27, "Ironically enough, the very reason given for me not being allowed into Australia was the very reason given for [Irish] people being sent to Australia [as convicts] ... that was that we were of bad character. So it's an interesting piece of history that that Catch 22 has turned on its head."

The Sinn Fein leader is likely to visit Australia in 1999, but no plans have been announced.

## Transit strikers in Ontario ready for long fight

BY ROSEMARY RAY

HAMILTON, Ontario — Bus drivers and maintenance workers who are members of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 107 are going into their seventh week on strike against Hamilton Streetcar Railway (HSR). HSR runs the public bus system in this city of more than 300,000, which is 30 miles west of Toronto.

The ATU members rejected a concessions contract offer from the HSR that included a 20 percent wage cut for new hires, a 1 percent wage increase for each year of a three-

year contract and the refusal of HSR to contribute to the workers' pension fund.

Showing the company that they are ready for a long fight the strikers are busy on the picket line building wooden shacks insulated with plastic sheets. Wooden skids are piled high, ready to burn in the barrels that will be the only source of warmth for the strikers as winter approaches.

This is the fourth strike by Hamilton bus drivers in the last 20 years. Strikers on the picket line explain with pride that they struck to defend their working conditions in 1971, 1982, and 1996.

Tony Iacozza, a bus driver for 20 years, said that even though public transit has come to a standstill in the city that the majority of the public is supporting the union in this fight. "The HSR is waging a propaganda campaign against our strike, trying to turn the public against us. They are putting advertisements in the *Spectator*, Hamilton's daily newspaper, saying we are rejecting their generous contract offer," Iacozza said.

The HSR advertisements are trying to turn public opinion against the strike by saying that meeting the union's demands would mean a tax increase of \$30 per Hamilton household, substantial bus fare increases, and cancellation of later evening and Sunday bus service.

They are particularly trying to scare senior citizens who rely on public transit by saying that the special low-rate yearly bus passes for seniors would go from \$160 to \$360 if the HSR gives in to the union's contract demands.

Iacozza, who is the secretary-treasurer of his local, told *Militant* reporters that the bus drivers have not had a wage increase since 1993. "If you take the 3 percent they are offering over three years now, that equals out to 0.37 percent over eight years, which in no way keeps up with the cost of living over the same period," he said.

Strikers on the picket line were particu-

larly concerned about HSR's demands to pay lower wages to new hires. Not only will it take five years to reach top rate the company reserves the right to not give the increase if they consider there to be a problem with "a new employee's learning curve." Any work performance or disciplinary measures taken against new hires would disqualify them from their wage increase.

In its advertising campaign the HSR is boasting that it has improved transit service in Hamilton at the same time as having \$13 million removed from its operating budget by the provincial government of Ontario.

"This is not true," Iacozza said. "In 1985 the total miles operated by HSR was 9.042 million and by 1996 it went down to 8.095 miles. Not only did they reduce service to the public in the last 5 years, HSR has also raised bus fares by 25 percent."

Pointing to the fact that HSR is no friend of seniors Iacozza added that the seniors' passes jumped from \$90 per year in 1993 to \$165 in 1998.

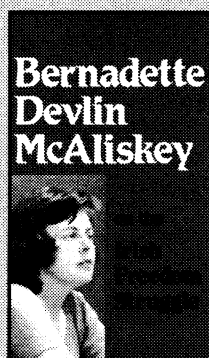
On December 3 the ATU local voted down a second HSR contract offer by nearly 99 percent because it still contained concession demands.

Apart from their determination to fight off the HSR's concession demands the drivers on the picket line explain that driving a city bus is a difficult job citing lack of wash-room facilities while driving their routes, eight-hour shifts without designated breaks and split shifts.

Bus drivers from Toronto, who work for the Toronto Transit Commission and whose own contract expires in March 1999, have come to the picket lines in Hamilton to lend their support. The strikers maintain 24-hour picket lines and are organizing a Christmas pot-luck lunch at the Wentworth Gate on December 23, to which all are welcome.

Rosemary Ray is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 9208.

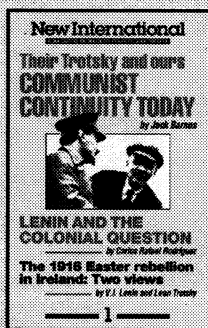
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## 'A true social revolution produces a cultural revolution'

Fidel Castro's 1961 speech on cultural policy of Cuban revolution

We reprint below the text of Fidel Castro's June 30, 1961, speech, known in Cuba as his "Words to the Intellectuals" (see box). The speech will be included in a collection Pathfinder is preparing of Castro's speeches from the first decade of the revolution. The translation is copyright © Pathfinder Press and reprinted by permission. Subheadings and footnotes are by the *Militant*.

### *Compañeros and compañeras:*

Over the course of three sessions various issues related to culture and creative work have been discussed. Many interesting questions have been raised and different points of view expressed. Now it is our turn. I'm not speaking because I'm the best-qualified person to deal with this matter, but rather, since this is a meeting of you and us, because we feel it is necessary to express certain points of view.

We were very interested in these discussions, and I believe we have demonstrated what might be called "great patience." But no heroic effort was actually necessary, because for us it has been an enlightening discussion and, in all sincerity, a pleasant experience. Of course, in this type of discussion we, the members of the government, are not the ones most qualified to express an opinion on questions you specialize in. At least that is true for me.

The fact that we are members of the government and revolutionary leaders does not mean that we are obligated to be experts in everything (although perhaps we are). It is possible that if we took many of the *compañeros* who have spoken here to a meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss the problems we are most familiar with, they would feel the way we do now.

We have been active participants in this revolution, the social and economic revolution taking place in Cuba. At the same time, this social and economic revolution will inevitably produce a cultural revolution in our country.

On our part, we have tried to do something in this field (although perhaps there were more pressing problems to deal with at the beginning of the revolution). If we were to review our efforts with a critical eye, we might say we neglected somewhat discussion of a question as important as this one. That is not to say that we forgot it completely. A discussion like this was already being considered by the government — and perhaps the incident referred to here repeatedly helped speed things up. Months ago we in-



Cuban peasants, headed by Rebel Army commander Camilo Cienfuegos (center), march into Havana July 26, 1959. Two months after sweeping land reform began to be implemented, the revolutionary leadership organized tens of thousands of peasants to come to Havana, many for the first time. In taking power, Cuban working people began to transform society, deepening their culture of national and social liberation.

## Background to debate in Cuba on culture and revolution

BY MIKE TABER

Fidel Castro's June 30, 1961, speech, known in Cuba as his "Words to the Intellectuals," which is reprinted here, is one of the Cuban revolution's main statements of cultural policy. Its guideline for artistic expression — "Within the revolution, everything; against the revolution, nothing" — serves as a summary of the revolution's cultural policy to this day.

Two and a half years earlier, on Jan. 1, 1959, U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista fled Cuba in the wake of victories by the advancing Rebel Army led by Castro and a revolutionary uprising and general strike by Cuban working people led by the July 26 Movement, which sealed the fate of the capitalist regime.

The new revolutionary government began implementing social and economic policies that addressed the needs of Cuba's workers and peasants rather than protecting the financial interests of U.S. imperialism and wealthy Cuban property owners. The most important measure of its first year was an agrarian reform that confiscated the millions of acres owned by U.S. corporations and Cuban landlords, distributing them to hundreds of thousands of small and landless peasants. Other measures included the outlawing of racist discrimination; a housing reform that slashed rents owed to landlords; the reduction of electricity rates; steps to promote equal rights for women; the eradication of gambling, prostitution, and drug networks; and a vast expansion of public education.

Between late 1960 and the end of 1961 the revolutionary government organized a successful campaign to teach one million Cubans to read and write. Central to this effort was the mobilization of 100,000 young people to go to the countryside, where they lived with peasants they were teaching. As a result of this drive, Cuba virtually eliminated illiteracy. This was combined with steps to foster the development of book publishing, film, and artistic creation, expanding access for millions of people in city and countryside.

These and other measures, supported by the overwhelming majority of the Cuban people as well as working people and youth around the world, determined the enmity of Washington, which, to this day, remains committed to the overthrow of the Cuban revolution. As it became clear that the revolution's leaders could not be bought off, the U.S. rulers embarked on an intensifying political, economic, and military drive to destroy the revolution. In response to Washington's moves, in the

summer and fall of 1960, the revolutionary government mobilized working people to defend their interests, nationalizing the properties of U.S.- and Cuban-owned corporations and ending capitalist domination in Cuba.

On April 17, 1961, two months before this speech to Cuba's artists and writers was given, 1,500 Cuban-born mercenaries, organized and financed by Washington, invaded Cuba at the Bay of Pigs on the southern coast. The counterrevolutionaries hoped to establish a beachhead, declare a provisional government, and appeal for direct U.S. intervention. The invaders, however, were defeated within 72 hours by Cuba's militias and its Revolutionary Armed Forces. On April 19 the last mercenaries surrendered at Playa Girón (Girón Beach), which is the name Cubans use to designate the battle.

During the months leading up to this battle, Cuba had been on a war footing as workers and farmers mobilized throughout the country to meet the expected attack. On the eve of the battle, Prime Minister Castro proclaimed the socialist character of the revolution and called working people to arms in its defense.

In this context of deepening class struggle and intensifying military assault by imperialism, the division between supporters and enemies of the revolution among Cuban artists and writers also sharpened. Discussion and disagreements over the revolutionary government's policies on culture and freedom of artistic expression intensified. Two of the controversies that preceded the meeting at which Castro spoke, which are referred to here, concerned the journal *Lunes de Revolución* and the film *PM*.

*Lunes de Revolución* was a weekly literary supplement to the daily newspaper of the July 26 Movement, *Revolución*. Besides its editor, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and *Revolución* editor Carlos Franqui, its leadership included Pablo Armando Fernández, Antón Arrufat, Virgilio Piñera, and Rine Leal. It published articles by a broad range of authors, from Jean-Paul Sartre, Virginia Wolfe, and Pablo Neruda to André Breton, Thomas Jefferson, and Leon Trotsky. Its editorial policy came under attack from various quarters, including political currents such as the Popular Socialist Party and writers who were polemical targets of articles published in the pages of *Lunes*.

*Lunes de Revolución* was closed in November 1961. In subsequent years, members of the journal's leading staff went in opposite political directions. Several left Cuba and became enemies of the revolution, while others remained prominent supporters.

In a retrospective look at *Lunes* published in the May-

June 1993 issue of *La Gaceta de Cuba*, Graziella Pogolotti — currently a member of the national secretariat of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC) — discussed the controversy around it.

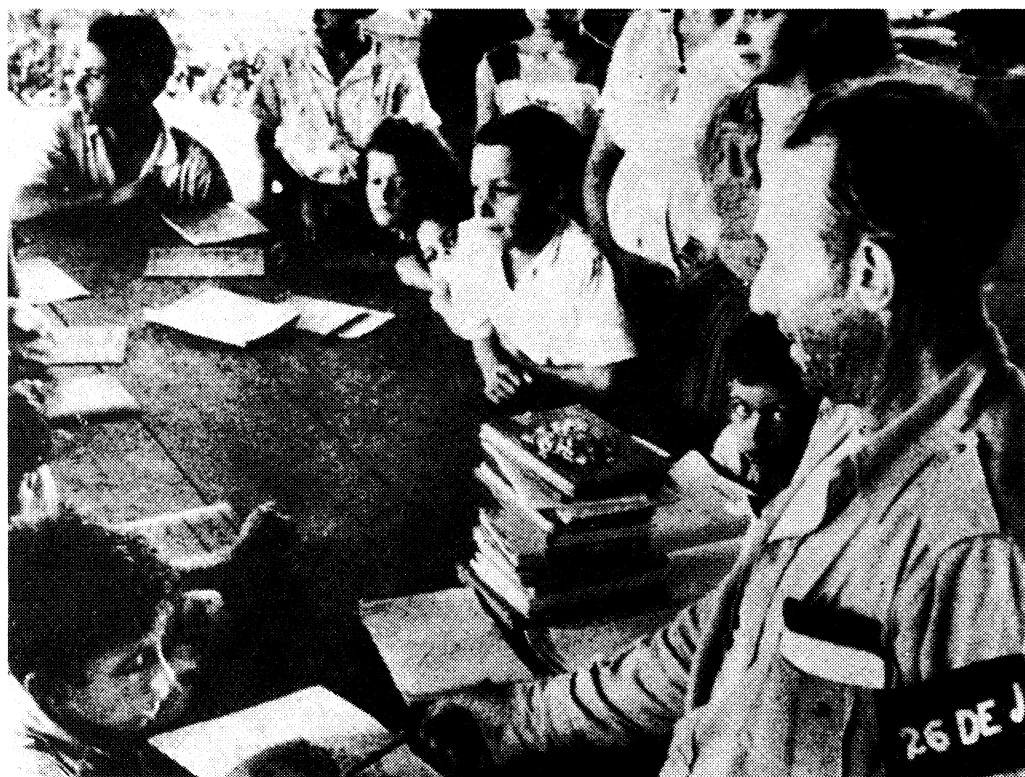
"The closing of *Lunes* came about following the clash that gave rise to the discussion in the National Library and [Castro's] "Words to the Intellectuals," she wrote. "What was raised at that time was that *Lunes* had a kind of monopoly of power. The solution proposed at the time was to multiply it, that is, that *Lunes* not be the only literary and cultural newspaper, but that there be a wide array of publications that would give space for everyone to express themselves. This coincided with the creation of UNEAC, and part of the space that opened up led to the creation of *La Gaceta de Cuba*." Pogolotti noted, however, that "instead of being multiplied, *Lunes* disappeared."

A second controversy at the time surrounded the film *Pasado Meridiano*, or *PM*, produced in 1961 by two Cuban film makers, Orlando Jiménez and Sabá Cabrera. The Commission for the Study and Classification of Films reviewed the film — which painted an impressionistic picture of a Havana afternoon in January 1961 — and decided it should not be shown, categorizing it as "harmful to the interests of the people and their revolution." This decision sparked wide debate among Cuban writers and artists.

The controversy was discussed in an interview with Alfredo Guevara, president of the Cuban Film Institute, published in the July-August 1993 issue of *La Gaceta de Cuba*. In that interview Guevara stated, "It's worth recalling that in those days an armed attack was expected any day, and anti-aircraft guns were being placed everywhere.... If today, under current conditions, I was called on to approve or to prohibit *PM*, I would simply let it be shown."

Debate around these and other questions led the revolution's leaders to call a series of meetings with several hundred leading Cuban artistic and literary figures, at the National Library in Havana, on June 16, 23, and 30, 1961. Among the government leaders attending were Castro, Cuban president Osvaldo Dorticós, Minister of Education Armando Hart, and members of the National Council of Culture. Castro's speech was given at the close of the third and final meeting.

On August 18-22 of that year, the First Congress of Cuban Writers and Artists was held in Havana. Out of that gathering UNEAC was founded.



Ministry of Revolutionary Armed Forces  
From the first days of the revolutionary struggle to overthrow Batista's dictatorship, the Cuban leadership has organized to extend education and broaden culture among workers and farmers. Above, one of more than 400 schools the Rebel Army established in the Sierra Maestra mountains during the 1956-58 revolutionary war.

tended to call a meeting like this one to review and discuss the question of culture. Important events kept taking place one after the other, however, and the latest ones above all prevented it from taking place earlier.<sup>1</sup> However, the revolutionary government has been taking a few measures that express our concern over this question. A few things have been done, and several members of the government have brought the question up more than once. In any case, it can be said that the revolution itself has already brought about changes in the cultural field, and that the artists' conditions of work have changed.

I believe that pessimistic aspects have been overemphasized here somewhat. Concerns have been expressed that go far beyond any real justification for them. The reality of the changes that have occurred in this field and in the actual conditions of artists and writers have been almost ignored in the discussion. It is unquestionable that things are better for Cuban artists and writers than in the past, when their conditions were truly depressing. If the revolution started off by bringing about a profound change of atmosphere and a change in the conditions of work, why should we fear that the revolution that brought us these new working conditions would seek to destroy them? Why should we fear that the revolution would destroy the very conditions it created?

It is true that what we are discussing here is not a simple problem. All of us have the duty to analyze it carefully, you as well as we. It is not a simple problem, since it has arisen many times and has come up in all revolutions. It's

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the U.S.-organized Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961.

a knotty problem, we might say, and it's not easy to untangle. Nor is it one we are going to solve easily.

The various compañeros who have spoken here expressed a great many points of view, and they gave their reasons for them. The first day people were a little timid in broaching the subject. For this reason we had to ask the compañeros to tackle the subject squarely, to have everyone state their concerns openly.

If we are not mistaken, the fundamental question raised here was that of freedom of artistic creation. When writers from abroad have visited our country, political writers above all, these questions have been brought up more than once. It has undoubtedly been a subject of discussion in all

countries where deep-going revolutions like ours have taken place.

By chance, shortly before we returned to this hall, a compañero brought us a pamphlet containing a brief conversation between Sartre and myself on this subject that Lisandro Otero included in the book entitled *Conversations at the Lake (Revolución, Tuesday, March 8, 1960)*.<sup>2</sup>

I was asked a similar question on another occasion by C. Wright Mills, the North American writer.<sup>3</sup>

I must confess that in a certain way these questions caught us a little unprepared. We did not have our Yenan conference<sup>4</sup> with Cuban artists and writers during the revolution. In reality, this is a revolution that arose and came to power in what might be called record time. Unlike other revolutions, it did not have the main problems all resolved.

One of the revolution's characteristics has therefore been the need to confront many problems under the pres-

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, a writer and philosopher, was an active opponent of French imperialist wars in Algeria and Vietnam. Lisandro Otero is a prominent Cuban writer.

<sup>3</sup> C. Wright Mills was a prominent U.S. sociologist. In 1960 he wrote a widely read defense of the Cuban revolution entitled *Listen, Yankee*.

<sup>4</sup> In the early 1940s, the Chinese Communist Party had its base in Yenan province in northwest China. In May 1942, Mao Tse-tung gave a series of talks there on art and literature presenting the Chinese Communist Party's views on these subjects. These talks, which outlined policies very different from those adopted by the Cuban revolution, came to be known as the Yenan Forum.

sure of time. And we are just like the revolution, that is, we have improvised quite a bit. This revolution has had neither the period of preparation that other revolutions have had, nor have the leaders of this revolution had the intellectual maturity that the leaders of other revolutions have had. I believe that we have contributed to current developments in our country as much as was in our power. I believe that with everyone's efforts we are carrying out a true revolution, and that this revolution is developing and seems destined to become one of the important events of the century.

Despite this fact, however, we who have had an important part in these events do not consider ourselves revolutionary theoreticians or revolutionary intellectuals. If men are judged by their deeds, perhaps we would have the right to consider the revolution itself to be our merit. Yet we do not think so, and I believe that we should all adopt a similar attitude, regardless of the work we might have done. Whatever merits our work may appear to have, we should begin by placing ourselves in the honest position of not presuming that we know more than others, that we know all there is to know, that our points of view are infallible, and that everyone who does not think exactly as we do is mistaken. In other words, we should place ourselves in an honest position, not of false modesty, but with a genuine evaluation of what we know. If we place ourselves in that position, I believe it will be easier to advance with confidence. If we all adopt that attitude, you as well as we, subjective attitudes will disappear, and that certain element of subjectivity in analyzing problems will disappear too. What do we know, in fact? We are all learning. In reality we all have much to learn, so we have not come here to teach; we have also come to learn.

There have been certain fears floating about, and some compañeros have expressed them.

Listening to them, we thought at times that we were dreaming. We had the impression that our feet were not firmly planted on the ground. Because if we have any fears or concerns today, they are connected with the revolution itself. The great concern of all of us should be the revolution. Or do we believe that the revolution has already won all its battles? Do we believe that the revolution is not in danger? What should be the first concern of every citizen today? Should it be concern that the revolution is going to commit excesses, that the revolution is going to stifle art, that the revolution is going to stifle the creative genius of our citizens — or should it be the revolution itself? Should it be the dangers, real or imaginary, that might threaten the creative spirit, or should it be the dangers that might threaten the revolution?

It is not a question of our invoking this danger as a simple point of argument. We are saying that the concern of the country's citizens and of all revolutionary writers and artists — or of all writers and artists who understand the revolution and find it just — should be: What dangers threaten the revolution and what can we do to help the revolution? We believe that the revolution still has many battles to fight, and we believe that our first thought and first concern should be: What can we do to assure the victory of the revolution? That comes first. The first thing is the revolution itself, and then, afterward, we can concern ourselves with other questions. This does not mean that other questions should not concern us, but that the fundamental concern in our mind — as it is with me — has to be the revolution.

The question that has been under discussion here and that we are going to tackle is the question of the freedom of writers and artists to express themselves.

The fear on people's minds here is that the revolution might choke this freedom, that the revolution might stifle the creative spirit of writers and artists.

Freedom of form has been spoken of here. Everyone agrees that freedom of form must be respected. I believe there is no doubt on this point.

The question becomes more delicate, and we get to the real heart of the discussion, when dealing with freedom of content. This is a much more delicate matter, as it is open to the most diverse interpretations. The most controversial aspect of this question is: should we or should we not have absolute freedom of content in artistic expression? It seems to us that some compañeros defend the affirmative. Perhaps it's because they fear that the question will be decided by prohibitions, regulations, limitations, rules, and authorities.

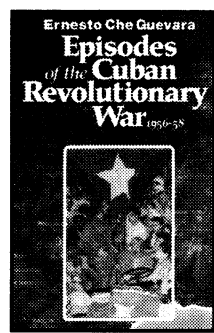
Permit me to tell you in the first place that the revolution defends freedom. The revolution has brought the country a very high degree of freedom. By its very nature the revolution cannot be an enemy of freedom. If some are worried that the revolution might stifle their creativity, that worry is unnecessary, there is no grounds for it whatsoever.

What can be the grounds for such a worry? Only those who are not sure of their revolutionary convictions can be truly worried about such a problem. The person who lacks confidence in his own art, who lacks confidence in his ability to create, can be worried about this matter. One should ask whether a true revolutionary, whether an artist or intellectual who feels the revolution and is sure that he is capable of serving the revolution, could worry about this problem, that is, whether truly revolutionary writers and artists could hold any doubts. My opinion is no, that the only ones who hold doubts are writers and artists who, without being counterrevolutionaries, are not revolutionaries either. [Applause]

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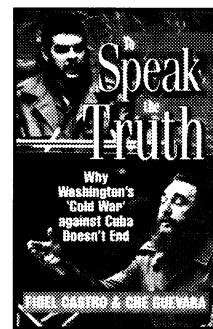
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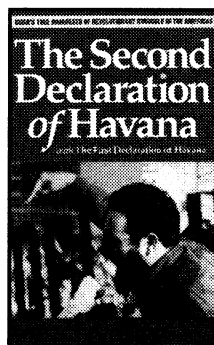


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It's correct for a writer or artist who does not feel himself to be a true revolutionary to pose this question. An honest writer or artist, who is capable of grasping the revolution's purpose and sense of justice without being part of it, should face this question.

Because a revolutionary puts one thing above all other questions; a revolutionary puts one thing above even his own creativity: he puts the revolution above everything else. And the most revolutionary artist is the one who is ready to sacrifice even his own artistic calling for the revolution. [Applause]

No one has ever assumed that every man, every writer, or every artist has to be a revolutionary, just as no one could ever assume that every man or every revolutionary has to be an artist; nor that every honest man, just because he is honest, has to be a revolutionary. Being a revolutionary is also having a certain attitude toward life. Being a revolutionary is also having a certain attitude toward existing reality. There are men who resign themselves and adapt themselves to this reality, and there are men who cannot resign themselves or adapt themselves to that reality but try to change it; that's why they are revolutionaries.

But there can be men who adapt themselves to reality and are honest men; it's just that their spirit is not a revolutionary spirit; it's just that their attitude toward reality is not a revolutionary attitude. Of course there can be artists, and good artists, who do not have a revolutionary attitude toward life, and it is precisely that group of artists and intellectuals for whom the revolution constitutes something unforeseen, something that could even deeply affect their state of mind. It is precisely that group of artists and intellectuals for whom the revolution constitutes a problem.

For a mercenary artist or intellectual, for a dishonest artist or intellectual, this would never be a problem. He knows what he has to do, he knows what is in his interest, he knows where he is going.

The real problem exists for the artist or intellectual who does not have a revolutionary attitude toward life but is an honest person. Obviously a person who has such an attitude toward life, whether or not he is a revolutionary, whether or not he is an artist, has his own goals and objectives, and we should all ask ourselves about those goals and objectives.

## **"There are persons who adapt to reality. And there are those who cannot resign themselves to reality but try to change it. That's why they are revolutionaries."**

For the revolutionary, those goals and objectives are directed toward changing reality; those goals and objectives are directed toward the redemption of man. It is man himself, one's fellow man, the redemption of one's fellow man that constitutes the revolutionary's objective. If we revolutionaries are asked what matters most to us, we will say: the people, and we will always say the people. The people in their true sense, that is, the majority of the people who have had to live under exploitation and under the cruelest neglect. Our fundamental concern will always be the great majority of the people, that is, the oppressed and exploited classes. The vantage point through which we view everything is this: whatever is good for them will be good for us; whatever is noble, useful, and beautiful for them, will be noble, useful, and beautiful for us. If one does not think in that manner, if one does not think of the people and for the people, that is, if one does not think and act for the great exploited masses of the people, for the great masses we seek to redeem, then one simply does not have a revolutionary attitude.

It is from this standpoint that we analyze what is good, what is useful, and what is beautiful in every action.

We understand that it must be a tragedy when someone understands this and nevertheless has to confess that he is incapable of fighting for it.

We are, or believe ourselves to be, revolutionaries. Whoever is more an artist than a revolutionary cannot think exactly the same as we do. We suffer no inner conflict, because we fight for the people and we know that we

can achieve the objectives of our struggle. The principal goal is the people. We have to think about the people before we think about ourselves, and that is the only attitude that can be defined as a truly revolutionary one. And it is for those who cannot or do not have such an attitude, but who are honest people, that this problem exists. And just as the revolution constitutes a problem for them, they constitute a problem the revolution should be concerned about.

The case was well made here that there are many writers and artists who are not revolutionaries, but are nevertheless honest writers and artists. It was stated that they wanted to help the revolution, and that the revolution is interested in their help; that they wanted to work for the revolution and that for its part the revolution was interested in them contributing their knowledge and efforts on its behalf.

It is easier to appreciate this when specific cases are analyzed; and among those specific cases are many that are not easy to analyze. A Catholic writer spoke here. He raised the problems that concerned him and he spoke with



Above: Bohemia; right: Ministry of Revolutionary Armed Forces struggle and military assault by Washington. Above, August 1960 rally in Havana to support nationalization of imperialist-owned properties in Cuba. Chemical workers union banner, top, says, "Fidel, our homeland will become a grave before it returns to foreign hands." Sign below it quotes Nicaraguan anti-imperialist leader Augusto César Sandino: "A people's sovereignty is not debated. It is defended arms in hand." Right, Cuban combatants in battlefield during April 1961 U.S.-organized mercenary invasion at Bay of Pigs, which they routed in 72 hours.



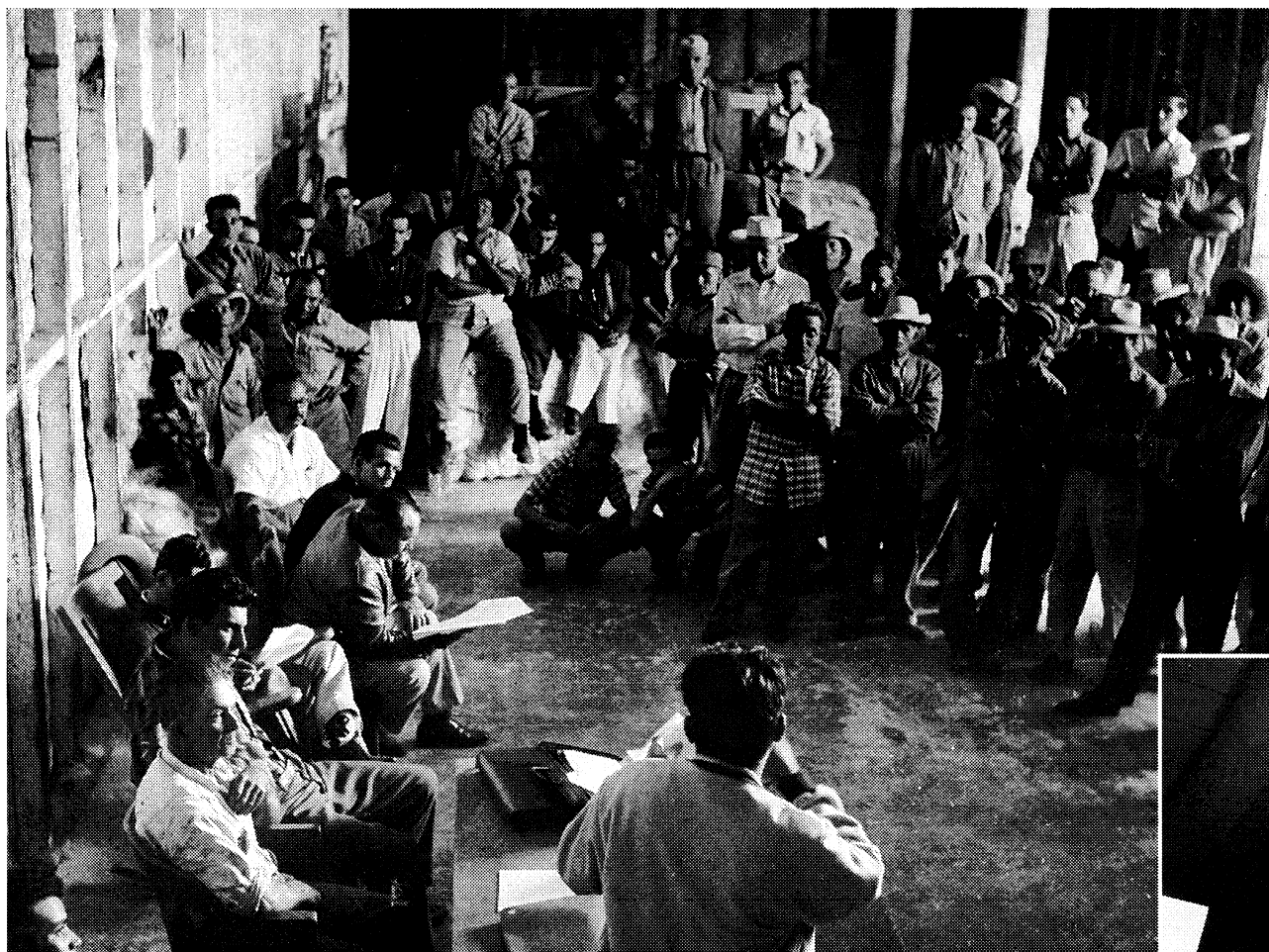
this part of the population, to this section of the intellectuals and writers. The revolution has to understand this reality and should therefore act in such a manner that this whole sector of artists and intellectuals who are not genuine revolutionaries can find within the revolution a field in which they can work and create. Even though they are not revolutionary writers and artists, they should have the opportunity and freedom to express their creative spirit within the revolution.

This means: within the revolution, everything; against the revolution, nothing. Against the revolution, nothing, because the revolution also has its rights, and the first right of the revolution is the right to exist, and no one shall oppose the right of the revolution to exist. Inasmuch as the revolution embodies the interests of the people, inasmuch as the revolution signifies the interests of the whole nation, no one can justly claim a right to oppose it.

I believe that this is quite clear. What are the rights of writers and artists, revolutionary or nonrevolutionary? Within the revolution, everything; against the revolution, there are no rights. [Applause]

This is not some special law or guideline for artists and writers. It is a general principle for all citizens. It is a fundamental principle of the revolution. The counterrevolutionaries, that is, the enemies of the revolution, have no rights against the revolution, because the revolution has one right: the right to exist, the right to develop, and the right to be victorious. And who could cast doubt on that right, the right of a people who have said, "*Patria o muerte!*" [Homeland or death], that is, revolution or death.

The existence of the revolution or nothing. This is a revolution that has said, "*Venceremos!*" [We will win], that is, it has very seriously stated its intention. And as much as one may respect the personal reasons of an en-



Photos: National Institute of Agrarian Reform

The revolutionary leadership sought to "extend culture into the countryside, to the state farms and cooperatives, by training music, dance, and drama instructors," said Fidel Castro in 1961 speech. Above, peasants meet to establish cooperative farm, Cárdenas, Cuba, early 1960s. May 1959 agrarian reform law encouraged creation of cooperatives on land being distributed to peasants. Right, Fidel Castro turns over land title to farmer, early 1960s.

enemy of the revolution, the rights and the good of a revolution must be respected more. This is even more true inasmuch as a revolution is a historic process, inasmuch as a revolution is not and cannot be the product of a whim, of the will of a single individual. A revolution can only be the product of the needs and the will of a people. And in face of the rights of an entire people, the rights of the enemies of the people do not count.

We were speaking of extreme cases only in order to express our ideas more clearly. I have already said that among those extreme cases there is a great variety of attitudes and there is also a great variety of concerns. To hold a particular concern does not necessarily signify that one is not a revolutionary. We have tried to define basic attitudes.

The revolution cannot seek to stifle art or culture since one of the goals and one of the fundamental aims of the revolution is to develop art and culture, precisely so that art and culture truly become the patrimony of the people. And just as we want a better life for the people in the material sense, so too do we want a better life for the people in a spiritual and cultural sense. Just as the revolution is concerned with the development of the conditions and means that will permit the people to satisfy all their material needs, so too do we want to develop the conditions that will permit the people to satisfy all their cultural needs.

Do our people have a low cultural level? Do a high

percentage of the people not know how to read and write? A high percentage of the people have also known hunger, or at least live or used to live under very difficult conditions, under conditions of extreme poverty. A section of the population lacks a great many of the material goods they need, and we are trying to bring about conditions that will permit all these material goods to reach the people.

In the same way we should bring about the necessary conditions so that all these works of culture reach the people. This does not mean that the artist has to sacrifice the artistic worth of his creations and that he has to sacrifice quality. It means that we have to struggle in all ways so that the artist creates for the people and so that the



We are not enemies of freedom. No one here is an enemy of freedom. Whom do we fear? What authority do we fear will stifle our creativity? Do we fear our compañeros in the National Council of Culture?<sup>5</sup> In talks we have held with members of the National Council of Culture we have observed feelings and viewpoints that are far removed from the concerns expressed here about limitations, straitjackets, and so on, imposed on creativity.

Our conclusion is that the compañeros of the National

## "The revolution must try to win over the majority of the people to its ideas. It should turn its back only on those who are incorrigible counterrevolutionaries."

people in turn raise their cultural level and draw nearer to the artist. We cannot set up a general rule. All artistic expressions are not of exactly the same nature, and at times

we have spoken here as if that were the case. There are expressions of the creative spirit that by their very nature are much more accessible to the people than other manifestations of the creative spirit. Therefore it is not possible to set up a general rule. For if so, what type of expression should the artist follow in his effort to reach the people, and in what ways will the people draw nearer to the artist? Can we make a general statement about this? No, it would be an oversimplification. It is necessary to strive to reach the people with all creative expressions, but at the same time it is necessary to do all we can to enable the people to understand more and to understand better. I believe that this principle does not contradict the aspirations of any artist — and much less so if it is kept in mind that men should create for their contemporaries.

Don't say that there are artists who create only for posterity, because without considering our judgment infallible, I believe that whoever proceeds on this assumption is deluding

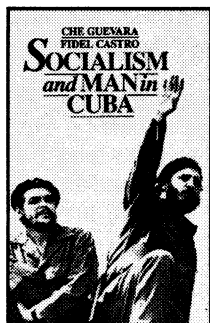
Council of Culture are as concerned as all of you are about achieving the best conditions for the development of creative work by artists and intellectuals. It is the duty of the revolution and the revolutionary government to see that there is a highly qualified agency that can be relied upon to stimulate, encourage, develop, and guide — yes, guide — that creative spirit; we consider it a duty. Does this perhaps constitute an infringement on the rights of writers and artists? Does this constitute a threat to the rights of writers and artists, implying that there will be arbitrary measures or an excess of authority? It would be the same as being afraid that the police will attack us when we pass a traffic light. It would be the same as being afraid that a judge will condemn or sentence us. The same as being afraid that the forces of the revolutionary power will commit an act of violence against us.

In other words, we would then have to worry about all these things. And yet our citizen does not believe that the militiaman is going to fire at him, that the judge is going to punish him, that the state power is going to use violence against his person.

The existence of an authority in the cultural field does not mean that there is any reason to worry about that authority being abused. Does anyone think that such a cultural authority should not exist? By the same token, one could think that the militia should not exist, that the police should not exist, that the state power should not exist, and even that the state should not exist. And if anyone is so anxious for the disappearance of the slightest traces of state authority, then let him stop worrying, be patient, for the day will come when the state will not exist

<sup>5</sup> The National Council of Culture was a Cuban government agency in charge of overseeing the improvement of working conditions for writers and artists. In 1976 it was replaced by the Ministry of Culture, which also incorporated other cultural institutions and agencies.

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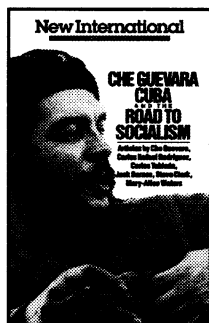
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either. [Applause]

There has to be a council that guides, that stimulates, that develops, that works to create the best conditions for the work of the artists and intellectuals. What organization is the best defender of the interests of the artists and intellectuals if not this very council? What organization has proposed laws and suggested various measures to improve those conditions, if not the National Council of Culture? What organization proposed a law to create the National Printing House to remedy the defects that have been pointed out here? What organization proposed the creation of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore, if not the National Council? What organization has advocated the allocation of the funds and the foreign currency necessary for importing books that had not entered the country in many months; for buying material so that painters and plastic artists can work? What organization has concerned itself with the economic problems, that is, with the material conditions of the artists? What organization has concerned itself with a whole series of current needs of writers and artists? What organization has defended within the government the budgets, the buildings, and the projects directed at improving your working conditions? That organization is none other than the National Council of Culture.

Why should anyone view that council with suspicion? Why should anyone fear that it will use its authority to do exactly the opposite: limit our conditions, stifle our creativity?

It is conceivable that some people who have had no problems at all are concerned about that authority. But those who appreciate the necessity of all the steps the council has had to take, and all the work it has to do, can never look at it with suspicion, because the council also has an obligation to the people and it has an obligation to the revolution and to the revolutionary government. And that obligation is to fulfill the objectives for which it was created, and it has as much interest in the success of its work as each artist has in the success of his own.

I don't know if I've failed to touch upon some of the fundamental questions that were raised here. There was much discussion on the question of the film.<sup>6</sup> I have not seen the film, although I want to see it, I am curious to see it. Was the film dealt with unfairly? As a matter of fact, I believe that no film has received so many honors nor has any film been discussed so much.

Although I have not seen that movie, I have heard the opinion of compañeros who have seen it, including the president and different members of the National Council of Culture. At the very least, their opinion, their judgment, merits respect from us all. But there is one thing I believe cannot be disputed, and that is the right established by law to exercise the function that was exercised in this case by the Film Institute or the Review Board. Perhaps that right of the government is being disputed? Does the government have the right to exercise that function or not? For us, what is fundamental in this case is, above all, to determine if the government did or did not have that right. The question of procedure could be discussed, as it was, to determine if it was fair or not, if another, more amicable procedure would have been better, if the decision was just or not. But there is one thing I believe no one can dispute, and that is the government's right to exercise that function. For if we challenge that right, then it would mean that the government does not have the right to review the films that are going to be shown to the people.

I believe this is a right that cannot be disputed. There is, in addition, something that we all understand perfectly, and it is that some intellectual or artistic creations are more important than others as far as the education or the ideological development of the people is concerned. I do not believe that anyone can disagree that one of these fundamental and highly important media is the cinema, as well as television. Now, in the midst of the revolution, can anyone challenge, the government's right to regulate, review, and supervise the films that are shown to the people? Is this perhaps what is being disputed?

Can the revolutionary government's right to supervise the mass media that influence the people so much, be considered a limitation or a prohibition?

If we were to challenge that right of the revolutionary government, we would be faced with a problem of principles, because to deny that right to the revolutionary government would be to deny the government its function and responsibility — above all in the midst of a revo-



Above: National Institute of Agrarian Reform; left: Granma. The revolution "has already begun teaching all the people to read and write," Castro said, and its goal is "the creation of schools everywhere in Cuba." Former Batista dictatorship's army garrisons were converted into schools. Above, Moncada garrison in Santiago de Cuba is turned into July 26 School at ceremony on Jan. 28, 1960. At center is Revolutionary Armed Forces minister Raúl Castro; Education Minister Armando Hart is on right. Left, volunteer literacy teacher with combatant at camp of Revolutionary National Militias, 1961.

lutionary struggle — in leading the people and leading the revolution. At times it has seemed that this right of the government

was being challenged, and in response we state our opinion that the government has such a right. And if it has that right, it can make use of that right. It can make mistakes; we are not pretending that the government is infallible. The government, acting in exercise of a right or function that belongs to it, is not required to be infallible. But can anyone be so doubting, so suspicious, and so distrustful toward the revolutionary government that when he believes one of its decisions is wrong, he is terror-stricken that the government might always be wrong?

I am not stating or implying that the government was mistaken in that decision. What I am saying is that the government acted in exercise of a right. I am trying to put myself in the place of those who worked on that film. I am trying to put myself in their state of mind, and I am even trying to understand their sorrow, unhappiness, and pain when the film was not shown. That is perfectly understandable. But one must understand that the government acted within its rights. This judgment had the support of competent and responsible members of the government, and there is no reason for distrusting the spirit of justice and fairness of the members of the revolutionary government, because the revolutionary government has given no cause for anyone to doubt its spirit of justice and fairness.

We should not think that we are perfect, we should not even think that we are free of subjectivity. Some people could point out that certain compañeros in the government are subjective, or not free of subjectivity. Can those who believe this assure us that they are free from subjectivity either?

Can they accuse some compañeros of holding subjective views without accepting the fact that their own opinions might also be influenced by subjective views? Let us state here that whoever feels himself perfect or free from subjectivity should throw the first stone.

I believe that there has been a personal and emotional element in the discussion. Has there not been a personal and emotional element in the discussion? Did absolutely everyone come here free of emotionalism and subjectivity? Did absolutely everyone come here free of any group spirit? Are there no currents and tendencies within this discussion? There undoubtedly are. If a six-year-old child had been seated here, he too would have noticed the different currents and viewpoints, the different emotions that were confronting one another.

People here have said many things. They have said interesting things. Some have said brilliant things. Everyone has been very "erudite." But above all there has been a reality, the reality of the discussion itself and the freedom with which everyone has been able to express themselves and defend their points of view. The freedom with which everyone has been able to speak and explain their views in the midst of a large meeting, which has grown larger by the day, a meeting that we consider positive, where we were able to dispel a whole series of doubts and worries. Have there been quarrels? Undoubtedly. Have there been wars and skirmishes here among the writers and artists? Undoubtedly. Has there been criticism, and supercriticism? Undoubtedly. Have some compañeros tried

out their weapons at the expense of other compañeros? Undoubtedly.

The wounded have spoken here, expressing their complaints at what they consider unjust attacks. Fortunately, we've had no dead, only wounded, including compañeros who are still convalescing from their wounds. And some of them presented as a clear case of injustice the fact that they had been attacked with high-caliber artillery without even having the power to return fire. Have harsh criticisms been made? Undoubtedly!

In a certain sense a problem has been raised here that we are not going to pretend to be able to elucidate in a couple of words. But I believe that of the things said here, one of the most correct is that the spirit of criticism should be constructive; it should be positive and not destructive. That's what we believe. But in general, that is not kept in mind. For some the word *criticism* has come to be a synonym for *attack*, when it really means nothing of the sort. When they tell someone, "So-and-so criticized you," the person gets angry before even asking what was really said about him. That is, he thinks he was torn apart.

ing what was really said about him. That is, he thinks he was torn apart.

If those of us who have been a bit removed from these problems or struggles — these skirmishes and weapons tests — were told about the case of certain compañeros who have almost been at the verge of deep depression because of devastating criticism leveled against them, it is really possible that we would sympathize with the victims, because we have a tendency to sympathize with victims. We who sincerely want only to contribute to an understanding and unity among all, have tried to avoid words that could wound or discourage anyone.

One thing is unquestionable, however: there may have been struggles or controversies in which conditions have not been equal for everyone. From the point of view of the revolution, that cannot be fair. The revolution should not give weapons to some to be used against others. We believe that writers and artists should have every opportunity to express themselves. We believe that writers and artists, through their association, should have a broad cultural magazine open to all. Doesn't it seem to you this would be a fair solution? But the revolution cannot put those resources in the hands of one group. The revolution can and should marshal those resources in such a manner that they can be widely utilized by all writers and artists.

Soon you are going to constitute an association of writers and artists, you are going to attend a congress.<sup>7</sup> That congress should be held in a truly constructive spirit, and we are confident that you are capable of holding it in that

<sup>7</sup> The First Congress of Cuban Writers and Artists was held in Havana August 18–22, 1961. It established the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC).



Militant/Harry Ring. Students at Cubanacán art school, Havana, 1968. The Cuban revolution began to create opportunities for "thousands of creative talents that had been lost in our countryside and cities due to lack of conditions and opportunity to develop."

<sup>6</sup> A reference to the controversy over the film *PM*.



Above: Prensa Latina; right: J.J. Vidal Hernández

"We should bring about the necessary conditions so that all these works of culture reach the people." Above, young Cuban painters, early 1960s. Right, Cuban Film Institute poster in 1969 for "mobile film," referring to campaign that began in 1961 to take films around the island, especially to more isolated areas, by truck, motorboat, mule, and other means. Millions of Cubans have seen films through this effort.

spirit. From it will arise a strong association of writers and artists where everyone who has a truly constructive spirit can take part. If anyone thinks we wish to eliminate him, if anyone thinks we want to stifle him, we can give assurances that he is absolutely mistaken.

Now is the time for you to contribute in an organized way and with all your enthusiasm to the tasks corresponding to you in the revolution, and to constitute a broad organization of all writers and artists. I do not know if the questions that have been raised here will be discussed at the congress, but we know that the congress is going to meet, and that its work — as well as the work to be done by the association of writers and artists — will be good topics for discussion at our next meeting. We believe that we should meet again; at least, we don't want to deprive ourselves of the pleasure and usefulness of these meetings, which have served to focus our attention on all these questions. We have to meet again. What does that mean? That we have to continue discussing these questions. In other words, everyone can rest assured that the government is greatly interested in these questions, and that the future will hold ample opportunity for discussing all these questions at large meetings. It seems to us that this should be a source of satisfaction for the writers and artists, and we too look forward to acquiring more information and knowledge.

The National Council of Culture should also have an information agency. I think that this is putting things in their proper place. It cannot be called cultural imposition or a stifling of artistic creativity. What true artist with all his senses could think that this constitutes a stifling of creativity? The revolution wants artists to put forth their maximum effort on behalf of the people. It wants them to put the maximum interest and effort into revolutionary work. We believe this is a just aspiration of the revolution.

Does this mean that we are going to tell the people here what they have to write? No. Everybody should write what they want, and if what they write is no good, that's their problem. If what they paint is no good, that's their problem. We do not prohibit anyone from writing on the topic he prefers. On the contrary, each person should express himself in the form he considers best, and he should express freely the idea he wants to express. We will always evaluate his creation from the revolutionary point of view. That too is a right of the revolutionary government, which should be respected in the same way as the right of each person to express what he wants to express should be respected.

A series of measures are being taken, some of which we have mentioned. We wish to inform those who were concerned with the question of the National Printing House that a law is under consideration to regulate its functioning, create different editorial divisions in line with different publishing needs, and overcome the deficiencies existing at present. The National Printing House is a recently created organization that made its appearance under difficult conditions.<sup>8</sup> It had to begin working in the offices of a newspaper that was closed suddenly (we were present

<sup>8</sup> The National Printing House (Imprenta Nacional de Cuba) was created March 31, 1959, as part of the Ministry of Education. Following the nationalization of newspapers opposed to the revolution in early 1960, one of these paper's printing plants was given to the National Printing House. In 1963 it was succeeded by the National Publishing House of Cuba (Editorial Nacional de Cuba), which in 1967 became the Cuban Book Institute (Instituto Cubano del Libro).

the day that newspaper plant became the largest printshop in the country, with all its workers and editors), and it had to attend to the publication of urgently needed works, including many of a military nature. The National Printing House does have deficiencies, but these will be remedied. There will be no grounds for complaints such as the ones expressed here, in this meeting, about the National Printing House. Measures are also being taken to acquire books, to acquire work materials, that is, to resolve all the problems that have concerned writers and artists and which the National Council of Culture has repeatedly pointed to. For as you know, the state has different departments and different institutions and, within the state, each body seeks to have the resources necessary for doing its job well. We want to point to some areas where we have already advanced, areas that should be sources of encouragement for all of us.

One example is the success attained by the Symphony Orchestra, which has been completely reorganized. Not only has it reached a high level in the artistic sense, but

### "Within the revolution, everything; against the revolution, nothing."

also in the revolutionary sense, for there are now fifty members of the Symphony Orchestra who belong to the militia.

The Cuban Ballet has also been rebuilt and has just made a tour abroad, where it won admiration and recognition in all the countries it visited.

The Modern Dance Group has also been quite successful, and has been highly praised in Europe.

The National Library, for its part, is working hard on behalf of culture. It is engaged in awakening the interest of the people in music and painting. It has set up an art department with the objective of making fine paintings known to the people. It has a music department, a young people's department, and a children's section.

Shortly before coming to this hall, we were visiting the Children's Department of the National Library. We saw the number of children who were there, the work that is being done there. The progress made by the National Library is a motivation for the government to provide it the means needed for continuing this work.

The National Publishing House is now a reality, and with the new forms of organization it is being given, it is also a victory for the revolution that will contribute mightily to the education of the people.

The Film Institute is also a reality.<sup>9</sup> The first stage has consisted chiefly in supplying it with needed equipment

<sup>9</sup> The Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC), more commonly known as the Cuban Film Institute, was founded March 24, 1959.

and material. The revolution has established at least the foundation of a film industry. This has been done at the cost of great effort, if it is kept in mind that ours is not an industrialized country and that the acquisition of all this equipment has meant sacrifices. Any lack of facilities as regards the cinema is due not to a restrictive government policy, but simply to the scarcity of economic resources at present for creating a movement of film enthusiasts that would permit the development of all cinematic talent when the resources are available. For its part the Film Institute's policy will be the object of discussion, and of emulation among the different work teams. It is not yet possible to assess the work of ICAIC itself. The Film Institute has not yet had time to do enough work to be judged, but it has been working hard, and we know that a number of its documentaries have contributed greatly to making the revolution known abroad. But what we should emphasize is that the foundation for the film industry has already been laid.

There has also been cultural work done in the form of publicity, talks, and so on, sponsored by different agencies. However, it is nothing compared to what can be done and what the revolution aims to do.

There are still a number of questions to resolve that are of interest to writers and artists. There are problems of a material order, that is, of an economic order. Yesterday's conditions do not exist now. Today there is no longer a small privileged class that used to buy the works of artists — although at miserable prices, to be sure, since more than one artist died in poverty and neglect. These problems remain to be confronted and solved, and the revolutionary government should solve them. The National Council of Culture should be concerned with them, too, as well as with the problem of artists who no longer produce and are left completely abandoned. Artists should be guaranteed not only adequate material conditions for the present, but security for the future. In a certain sense, now, with the reorganization of the Institute of Royalty Payments, the living conditions of a great number of authors, who were miserably exploited and whose rights were scoffed at, have improved considerably. Today authors, many of whom used to live in extreme poverty, have incomes that permit them to escape from that situation.

These are steps that the revolution has taken; but they are only preliminary steps. They will be followed by other steps that will create still better conditions.

There is also the idea of organizing some place where artists and writers can rest and work. Once, when we were traveling throughout the whole national territory, the idea occurred to us in a very beautiful place, on the Isle of Pines, to build a community in the middle of a pine forest, where we could send prize-winning writers and artists (at that time we were thinking about establishing some sort of prize for the best progressive writers and artists of the world). That project did not materialize, but it can be revived and a place can be created in some peaceful haven that facilitates rest, that facilitates writing. I believe that it is well worthwhile for artists, and architects as well, to begin thinking of and planning the ideal place of rest for a writer or an artist, and to see if they can agree. The revolutionary government is ready to contribute its share to the budget, now that everything is being planned out.

Will planning be a limitation imposed by us revolutionaries on the creative spirit? Don't forget that we revolutionaries have been improvising a bit, and are now faced with the reality of planning. That presents a problem to us too, because until now we have had a creative spirit toward revolutionary initiatives and revolutionary investments, which now have to be planned out. So don't think we are exempt from the problem, for we could protest it too. In other words, now that we know what is going to be done next year, the following one, and the following one after that, who is going to dispute the fact that economic planning is necessary? But the construction of a place of rest for writers and artists fits in with that planning. Truly, it would be a source of satisfaction for the revolution to accomplish this project.

We have been concerned here with the present situation of writers and artists. We have overlooked future perspectives to some degree. And we, who have no reason to grumble about you, have also spent a moment thinking about the artists and writers of the future. We wondered what it would be like if the members of the government — not us necessarily — and the artists and the writers were to meet again, as they should, in the future, in five or ten years, when culture has acquired the extraordinary development we seek to achieve, when the first fruits of the present educational and training programs begin appearing.

Long before these questions were raised, the revolutionary government was already concerned about the extension of culture to the people. We have always been very optimistic. I believe that it is not possible to be a revolutionary without being an optimist. Because the difficulties that a revolution has to surmount are very serious, and one has to be an optimist. A pessimist could never be a revolutionary.

The revolution has had stages. There was a stage when different agencies took the initiative in the field of culture.



Even INRA [National Institute of Agrarian Reform] was conducting activities of a cultural nature. We even clashed with the National Theater, because certain work was being done there and suddenly we were off doing other work on our own. Now all that is within one organization.

In connection with our plans for the peasants in the cooperatives and state farms, the idea arose of extending culture into the countryside, to the state farms and cooperatives.<sup>10</sup> How? By training music, dance, and drama instructors. Only optimists can take initiatives of that type. So how were we to awaken love for the theater, for example, among the peasants? Where were the instructors? Where would we get instructors to send out to 3,000 state farms and 600 cooperatives, for example? All this presents difficulties, but I am certain that you will all agree that if this is achieved it will be a positive accomplishment. Above all, it will be a start in discovering talents among the people and transforming the people from actors into creators, for ultimately it is the people who are the great creators. We should not forget this, and neither should we forget the thousands and thousands of creative talents lost in our countryside and cities due to lack of conditions and lack of opportunity to develop. Many talents have been lost in our countryside — of that we are sure — unless we presume ourselves to be the most intelligent people ever born in this country, and I want to say that I presume no such thing.

I have often given as an example the fact that of several thousand children in the place where I was born, I was the only one who was able to study at the university — poorly study to be sure. And I had to first attend a number of schools run by priests, etc. etc.<sup>11</sup> I don't want to anathematize anyone, although I do want to say that I have the same right as anyone else here to say what I want, to complain. I have the right to complain. Someone spoke of the fact that he was molded by bourgeois society. I can say that I was molded by something even worse, that I was molded by the worst of reaction, and that a good many years of my life were lost in obscurantism, supersti-



Right: Militant/Joe Hansen  
The example and impact of the Cuban revolution "is now developing beyond the borders of our country, making imperialism on this continent tremble and stagger." Above, peasant unions in Peru demonstrate for land reform in La Convención Valley, early 1960s. Sign reads, "Land or death — we will win." Right, opponents of U.S. attacks on Cuba picket at United Nations in New York, in action sponsored by Fair Play for Cuba Committee, Nov. 26, 1960.

go to the university by a process of social selection, not natural selection. Who knows how many tens of thousands of young people, superior to us all, have been left in ignorance by social selection. That is the truth. And whoever believes himself to be an artist should remember that there are many people, better than he, who were unable to become artists. If we do not admit this, we are avoiding reality. We are privileged, among other things, because our fathers were not wagon drivers. What I have said shows the enormous number of talented minds that have been lost simply through lack of opportunity.

We are going to bring opportunity to all those minds; we are going to create the conditions that permit all talent — artistic, literary, scientific, or otherwise — to develop. Think about the significance of a revolution that permits such a thing. As of right now it has already begun



city, it is somewhat easier in the city. Imagine what that will mean for cultural advancement, because some have spoken here of the need to raise the level of the people. But how? The revolutionary government is concerned about this question, and it is creating conditions so that within a few years the people's level of cultural preparation will have been raised tremendously.

We have selected those three branches, but we can continue selecting other branches and we can continue working to develop all aspects of culture.

The school of art instructors is already functioning, and the compañeros who work there are satisfied with the progress of that group of future instructors. In addition, we have already begun to construct the National Academy of Art, separate from the National Academy of Manual Arts. Cuba is certainly going to have the most beautiful Academy of Art in the world. Why? Because that academy is going to be located in one of the most beautiful residential districts of the world, where the section of the bourgeoisie of Cuba living in the most luxury used to reside, in the best district of that section of the bourgeoisie that was the most ostentatious, the most luxurious, and the most uncultured — let me say this in passing, because none of those houses lacked a bar, but with few exceptions their inhabitants did not concern themselves with cultural questions. They lived in an incredibly luxurious manner, and it is worthwhile to take a trip there to see how these people used to live. But they didn't know that one day an extraordinary Academy of Art would be built there, and this is what will remain of what they built, because the students are going to live in their homes, the homes of millionaires. They will not live sheltered lives, they will

## "One of the fundamental aims of the revolution is to develop art and culture so they truly become the patrimony of the people."

tion, and lies.

That was the time when they did not teach you to think, but forced you to believe. I am of the opinion that when man's ability to think and reason is impaired he is transformed from a human being into a domesticated animal. I am not taking up arms against man's religious beliefs; we respect those beliefs, we respect the right to freedom of belief and religion. But they did not respect my right to this freedom. I had no freedom of belief or religion. On the contrary, they imposed a belief and a religion on me and domesticated me for twelve years.

Naturally I have to speak with a touch of complaint about those years, the years when young people have the greatest amount of interest and curiosity about things, years I could have employed in systematic study that would have enabled me to acquire the culture that the children of Cuba today are going to have every opportunity to acquire.

With all that, only one in a thousand could get a university degree and that person had to pass through that millstone where only by a miracle was his mind not crushed forever. The one person in a thousand had to go through all that.

Why? Because he was the only one of a thousand who could afford to study at a private school. Now, am I to believe that I was the most capable and intelligent of the thousand? I believe that we are a product of selection, but not natural selection so much as social. I was selected to

teaching all the people to read and write, and it will have accomplished this by the next school term. Add to this the creation of schools everywhere in Cuba, educational advancement campaigns, and the training of teachers, and we will be able to discover and bring to light all talent. And this is only the beginning. All the teachers in the country will learn how to recognize which child has special talent, and will recommend which child should be given a scholarship to the National Academy of Art, and at the same time they will awaken artistic taste and love for culture among adults. Some tests that have already been made

<sup>10</sup> The Agrarian Reform Law of May 17, 1959, encouraged the creation of cooperatives on land being distributed to peasants. These cooperatives bought and sold their goods to the government and received credit and machinery from it. State farms were also set up by the agrarian reform on land confiscated from the big latifundia devoted to cattle raising. Subsequently a number of other areas, including the sugarcane cooperatives, were converted into state farms. The second agrarian reform of 1963 gave an additional impetus to the creation of state farms.

<sup>11</sup> Castro describes his primary and secondary school education at various upper-class religious schools in *Fidel and Religion: Conversations with Frei Betto* (Sydney: Pathfinder, 1986). In 1945 he entered the University of Havana.

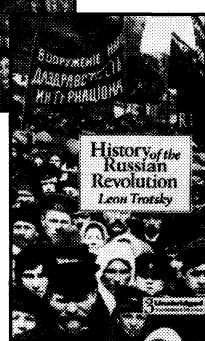
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live in a homelike atmosphere, and they will attend classes in the academy. The academy is going to be located in the middle of the Country Club district, and it will be designed by a group of architects and artists. They have already begun work, and they are committed to finishing by December. We already have 300,000 feet of mahogany. The schools of music, ballet, theater, and plastic arts will be in the middle of a golf course, in a dreamlike setting. This is where the Academy of Art will be located, with sixty houses surrounding it, with a social center at one side, with dining rooms, lounges, swimming pools, and also a building for visitors, where the foreign teachers who are coming to assist us can live. This academy will have a capacity of up to three thousand children, that is, three thousand scholarship students. We expect it to start functioning in the next school year.

The National Academy of Manual Arts will also begin functioning soon. It too has another group of houses for students to live in, another golf course, and a type of construction similar to the others. These academies will be national in character. This does not mean in any way that they are the only schools, but that the young people who show the greatest ability will receive scholarships to go there, costing their families absolutely nothing. These youth and children are going to have ideal conditions for developing their abilities. Anybody would want to be a child now, to enter one of those academies. Isn't that so? We spoke here of painters who used to live on *café con leche* alone. Just imagine how different conditions will be now, and we will see if the ideal conditions for developing the creative spirit are not found. Instruction, housing, food, general education.... There will be children who will begin to study in those schools at the age of eight, and together with artistic training, they will receive a general education. They will be able to fully develop their talents and their personalities.

These are more than ideas or dreams; they are realities of the revolution. The instructors are being trained, the national schools are being prepared, the schools for art appreciation are also being founded. This is what the revolution means. This is why the revolution is important for culture. How could we do this without a revolution? Let's suppose that we are afraid that "our creative spirit is going to wither, crushed by the despotic hands of the Stalinist revolution." [Laughter]

Wouldn't it be better, ladies and gentlemen, to think about the future? Are we going to think about our flowers withering when we are planting flowers all over? When we are forging those creative spirits of the future? Who would not exchange the present, who would not exchange even his own present existence for that future? Who would not exchange what he has now? Who would not sacrifice what he has now for that future?

Doesn't someone with artistic sensibility also possess the spirit of the fighter who dies in battle, knowing that he is dying, that he is ceasing to exist physically, in order to enrich with his blood the triumph of his fellow beings, of his people? Think about the combatant who dies fighting; he sacrifices everything he has: his life, his family, his wife, his children. Why? So that we can do all these things. And what person with human sensibility, artistic sensibility, does not think that to do all that the sacrifice must be worthwhile? But the revolution is not asking sacrifices from those with creative genius; on the contrary, it says: put that creative spirit at the service of the revolution, without fear that your work will be impaired. But if some day you think that your personal work may be impaired, then say: it is well worth it for my work to be impaired if it



Granma/Juvenal Balan  
Cultural policy summarized in Castro's "Words to the Intellectuals" has continued to guide the Cuban revolution to this day. Soon after the meeting where Castro spoke, Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC) was founded. Above, sixth national congress of UNEAC, held in Havana November 5-7, 1998.

contributes to the great work before us. [Applause]

We ask the artist to develop his creative efforts to the fullest. We want to bring about the ideal conditions for artists and intellectuals to create, because if we are creating for the future, how can we not want the best for the artists and intellectuals of today? We are asking for maxi-

the second great historical event that has occurred in the last three centuries in Latin America. And we Cubans are active participants, knowing that the more we work the more the revolution will become an inextinguishable flame, the more it will be called upon to play a transcendent role in history. You writers and artists have had the privilege of

## "Artists should be guaranteed not only adequate material conditions for the present, but security for the future."

mum development on behalf of culture, and, to be very precise, on behalf of the revolution, because the revolution means precisely more culture and more art.

We ask the intellectuals and artists to do their share in the work that, after all, is the work of this generation. The coming generation will be better than ours, but we will be the ones who will have made that better generation possible. We will be the ones to shape that future generation. We, the members of this generation, whether young or old, beardless or bearded, with an abundant head of hair, or no hair, or with white hair. This is the work of us all. We are going to wage a war against ignorance. We are going to wage a great battle against ignorance. We are going to unleash a merciless fight against ignorance, and we are going to test our weapons.

Is there anyone who doesn't want to collaborate? What greater punishment is there than to deprive oneself of the satisfaction that others are getting? We spoke of the fact that we were privileged. We learned to read and write in a primary school, went to secondary school, to a university, to acquire at least the rudiments of education, enough to enable us to do something. And can we not call ourselves privileged to be living in the midst of a revolution? Haven't we read about revolutions with great interest? Who has not avidly read the stories of the French revolution, of the Russian revolution? Who has never dreamed of witnessing those revolutions personally? In my own case, for example, when I read about the Cuban War of Independence, I regretted that I had not been born in that period and that I had not been a fighter for independence and had not lived through that epic time. All of us have read the chronicles of our War of Independence with deep-felt emotion, and we envied the intellectuals and artists and fighters and leaders of that time.

However, we have the privilege of living now and being eyewitnesses to an authentic revolution, to a revolution whose strength is now developing beyond the borders of our country, whose political and moral influence is making imperialism on this continent tremble and stagger. [Applause] The Cuban revolution has become the most important event of this century for Latin America, the most important event since the wars of independence of the nineteenth century. In truth, the redemption of man is something new, for what were those wars of independence but the replacement of colonial domination by the domination of ruling and exploiting classes in all those countries?

It has fallen to us to live during a great historical event. It can be said that this is

being living witnesses to this revolution. And a revolution is such an important event in human history that it is well worth living through if only as a witness.

That too is a privilege. Therefore those who are incapable of understanding these things, those who let themselves be tricked, let themselves be confused, those who let themselves become perplexed by lies, are the ones who renounce the revolution. What can we say of those who have renounced it? How can we think of them but with sorrow? They have abandoned this country, in full revolutionary effervescence, to crawl into the belly of the imperialist monster, where no expression of the spirit can have life. They have abandoned the revolution to go there. They have preferred to be fugitives and deserters from their homeland rather than remain here even if only as spectators.

You have the opportunity to be more than spectators, you can be actors in the revolution, writing about it, expressing yourselves on it. And the generations to come, what will they ask of you? You might produce magnificent artistic works from a technical point of view, but if you were to tell someone from the future generation, a hundred years from now, that a writer, an intellectual, lived in the era of the revolution and did not write on the revolution, and was not a part of the revolution, it would be difficult for a person of the future to understand this. In the years to come there will be so many people who will want to paint about the revolution, to write about the revolution, to express themselves on the revolution, compiling data and information in order to know what it was like, what happened, how we used to live.

I recently had the experience of meeting an old woman, 106 years old, who had just learned to read and write, and I proposed to her that she write a book. She had been a slave, and I wanted to know what the world looked like to her as a slave, what her first impressions were of her life, of her masters, of her fellow slaves.<sup>12</sup> I believe that this old woman can write something more interesting than any of us could about that era. It's possible that in a single year someone can learn to read and write, and then write a book, at 106 years of age. That is what happens in a revolution! Who can write about what a slave endured better than she can?

And who can write about the present better than you? How many people who have not lived through the present will begin to write in the future, at a distance, selecting material from other writings?

On the other hand, let us not hasten to judge our work, since we will have more than enough judges. What we have to fear is not some imaginary authoritarian judge, a cultural hangman. Other judges far more severe are to be feared, the judges of posterity, of the generations to come. When all is said and done, they will be the ones to have the last word! [Ovation]

<sup>12</sup> Slavery in Cuba was abolished throughout the island in 1886.



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**Neat** — British authorities cut off the trial of a judge charged with a £1 million mortgage fraud. A psychiatrist said the judge might commit suicide if the trial continued.



**Harry Ring**

He's been drawing full salary since he left the bench three years ago and will now begin pocketing a juicy pension.

**Art of positive thought** — L.A. Times columnist Tom Plate deplores

the pessimistic views of the Asian economic crisis voiced by Clinton's lieutenants. He did find one with a positive outlook — Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers who wittily observes, "There's not just more tunnel at the end of the tunnel."

**P.S.** — In Indonesia, "the number of people living below the poverty line has swollen from 27 million to as many as 100 million. Four and a half million children have dropped out of school, hundreds of thousands of workers have lost their jobs in factories around the country, and the economic crisis shows few signs of ending" — Jim De Harpporte, Southeast Asia director

for Catholic Relief Services.

**Catch of the Day** — The Oklahoma environment board advised residents of Jackson County not to eat catfish from Bitter Creek more than twice a month. Pregnant women and children under six, they said, should not eat he pesticide-infested fish at all.

**Looked like a poor neighborhood?** — In Orange County, California, construction was halted on 14 coastal homes that were to sell for up to \$1 million each.

The problem? Underground seepage of decomposed trash in a nearby landfill created a dangerous level of methane gas.

**A proud country** — "Phoenix, Arizona — John R. David Elementary School has failed another health inspection, officials aid. The problem involves rodents and cockroaches. The first health inspection was completed when a student complained to parents about rats in classrooms." — News item.

**Seemed like a safe bet** — In England Police Superintendent Ray Mallon was cleared of charges of padding his expense sheet, interfering with the inquiry, and leaking details to the media.

Mallon, a key creator of zero-tolerance policing, declared: "I knew all along that I would be exonerated."

**Smaller light bulbs?** — Livent, a theater outfit, said it will fire about 470 employees — 40 percent of its staff — as "part" of a plan to cut expenses by 42 percent.

**Ignore them, they're paranoid** — Concerned with public ire and the possibility of state regulation, California HMOs proposed an "independent" appeals panel of doctors whose second opinions would be binding.

A news report said "companies hope to alleviate consumer concerns that money, rather than medical necessities, might govern decisions made by a doctor in a managed-care plan."

# Washington escalates threats against Iraq again

Continued from front page  
Amin.

With imperial arrogance, Richard Butler, chief of the UN operation in Iraq, retorted that Baghdad's request of prior notice and a list of items to be searched was "completely illegitimate, absolutely wrong, and of course we did not do it."

Today, about 200 UN inspectors are probing many sites supposedly on the lookout for "weapons of mass destruction." On December 8 alone, the U.S.-led snoops conducted 32 similar "searches." These provocative raids were imposed on the Iraqi people since the end of the U.S.-led slaughter in Iraq in 1991. A draconian economic embargo, also imposed on Iraq since 1990, has resulted in the deaths of more than a million people.

Baghdad's latest refusal to allow an intrusive search is the first since Washington came within hours of launching a massive bombing assault against Iraq November 14. Baghdad then agreed to allow United Nations snoops access to its territory. But the White House has repeatedly stated it remained ready to strike if the inspectors were refused any and all access to Iraqi territory.

"If Iraq does not live up to its obligations...we have the forces in the re-

gion to respond," said White House spokesman David Leavy December 9. Washington's armada includes: 23,000 U.S. soldiers, nearly 200 aircraft, and 23 Navy ships already in the Arab-Persian Gulf. A second aircraft carrier reportedly arrived in the region at the end of November.

In addition, U.S. national security advisor Sandy Berger reiterated December 8 Washington's willingness to use "effective force, if necessary" to remove Iraqi president Saddam Hussein. Berger said in a speech at Stanford University that the use of sanctions to squeeze the Iraqi regime into submission is not sustainable in the long-term. "The longer this standoff continues," he stated, "the harder it will be to maintain the international support we have built for our policy. Even the toughest of all sanctions regimes in history becomes harder to sustain over time."

Berger's speech followed one by U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright at Emory University. She said U.S. government policy of "containment" of Iraq has changed to one of "containment plus regime change."

## Illinois miners

Continued from front page

the strike, Jackson announced that the Rainbow PUSH organization had collected 200 bags of groceries for the miners' food pantry. Jackson said that the movements of John L. Lewis and Martin Luther King Jr. should come together. "It's not about Black or white, it's about wrong or right," he said.

Standing beside one of the trucks loaded with the groceries donated by Operation PUSH, Arthur Rouse told the *Militant*, "I worked there 22 years, never had one missed day. To this company dedication means nothing. A couple of years ago through LNPCR, a labor-management thing, we practically tripled production, and this is the payback."

As a result of a coal mining injury that destroyed his spleen, Rouse has developed hairy-cell leukemia. He explained that Freeman had cut off his medical disability benefits when the miners voted to go on strike. Defending medical benefits and seniority are two of the key issues of this strike.

For information about the strike, to request a speaker from the striking miners, or to offer solidarity, contact the UMW Strike Headquarters, P.O. Box 107, Farmersville, Illinois, 62533, or call (217) 227-3233.

Cappy Kidd is a member of the United Auto Workers. Betsey Stone is a member of the International Association of Machinists.

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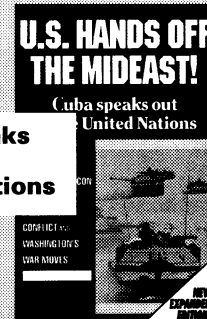
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# U.S. hands off Iraq!

The United Nations snoopers in Iraq have had an initial success in carrying out their mission: provoking a new confrontation with Baghdad that has already been used by Washington to issue new threats of a military assault on the Iraqi people and justify the Clinton administration's imperial calls for overthrowing the Iraqi regime.

As the *Militant* has repeatedly explained, the "aggressive inspections" have nothing to do with searching for chemical and biological weapons. This is blatant hypocrisy coming from Washington — the only power in the world to ever have used nuclear weapons and the one that holds, and has used, weapons of mass destruction around the world.

The U.S. government is trying to use this kind of propaganda to justify its attempts for asserting Washington's hegemony not only in the Middle East but in other parts of the world. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright used this line in arguing the White House case for expanding NATO's mandate to intervene beyond the borders of its member states at the December 8 NATO foreign ministers meeting in Brussels. NATO must be able to prevent "a ballistic missile attack using a weapon of mass destruction from a rogue state," Albright exclaimed.

The U.S. government is seeking to maintain its hegemony as the number one military and economic power in Europe, for which the use of the U.S.-run NATO is a cornerstone. This superiority is now threatened by a British-French government deal to give military powers to the European Union and by intensified inter-imperialist competition over trade and markets. It appears that U.S. economic superiority in Europe has probably peaked.

This competition with its imperialist allies is also a driving force for the U.S. rulers' policy on Iraq. Since the 1990-91 U.S.-led war against the Iraqi people, the U.S. capitalist class has made no progress toward its goal of establishing a protectorate in Iraq. The U.S. rulers aim to use their military might to secure greater control over oil reserves in the region and deal economic blows to their rivals — especially the propertied classes in Europe and Japan. The buildup in the Arab-Persian Gulf is also part of tightening Washington's military ring on the southern flank of the Russian workers state, in preparation for attempting to reestablish the dominance of capitalism in the former Soviet Union. Washington's actions, cooked up by provocations of its UN snoopers, are a sign of weakness, not strength.

As the lead article in *New Internationalist* no. 7 explains, the Gulf War "sounded the opening guns of sharpening conflicts and class battles that will decide whether the horrors of World War III are inflicted on humanity... or a road is opened by working people to a socialist future of international human solidarity."

Class-conscious workers should take the opportunity to take political weapons such as these to fighting workers, farmers, and young people who are drawing their own conclusions about the dead-end that capitalism offers humanity today.

Many of these fighters can also be convinced to join actions demanding: 'Inspectors' out of Iraq now! Imperialist troops out of the Middle East! U.S. hands off Iraq!

# No to FBI in unions

Working people should condemn the government probes into the affairs of District Council 37, which has nothing to do with "rooting out corruption" among the union officialdom. These moves are aimed at stifling trade union democracy as well as weakening resistance by working people to the bosses' belt-tightening demands and solidarity of the labor movement.

The government intervention on behalf of the employers is bound to intensify as capitalist decay gets worse. The wealthy rulers aim to intimidate rank-and-file fighters who would dare to stand up for better wages, benefits, and working conditions. One example of this is the Freeman coal bosses, who have escalated their attacks in Illinois by calling on FBI agents in their siege against striking miners.

This provocative interference into the affairs of the union deepens the employing class's prerogative to poke into the business of any union and to decide who its leaders should be. Last year a "federal election monitor" overturned the election of former Teamsters president Ronald Carey, just days after the union's strike victory against UPS. And four months ago a court-appointed review board expelled Carey from the union, supposedly for his failure to stop campaign fraud in the Teamsters.

The employers and the big-business media are pushing a major propaganda campaign to portray themselves as opponents of corruption in the union movement. Working people should reject this facade and demand an immediate halt to the government investigation of District Council 37 and an end to all government intrusion in union affairs. The internal affairs of a union belong to its members alone.

It is a deadly trap for trade union activists to have FBI or other government officials intervening in the union. Labor history is replete with government frame-ups of union fighters. For several years after World War I, the FBI served as a political police force, carrying out the arrest or deportation of some 3,000 unionists in the infamous Palmer Raids in 1920. Working-class fighters can find the lessons of this history in Pathfinder books and pamphlets like *Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay* by Leon Trotsky and Karl Marx, and *New Internationalist* no. 6, which features the article "Washington's Fifty-Year Domestic Contra Operation," by Larry Seigle.

In his four-volume series on the rise of the Teamsters as a fighting union in the 1930s, Farrell Dobbs explains how communists and other union militants defended their democratic rights. In *Teamster Bureaucracy* Dobbs tells the story of how "the unions were gradually brought under the domination of an officialdom ready to act in 'partnership' with the employing class," which assured the labor skates huge salaries, expense accounts, and other perks.

Learning these lessons are key to recognizing that corruption in the unions will only be ended through the course of broader labor struggles and an accompanying rise in class consciousness. A growing layer of working people will understand and act on the truth that the unions must be transformed into instruments of struggle and turned away from reliance on "friends" among the capitalist politicians.

# Gov't probes N.Y. union

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

The FBI is probing into the affairs of District Council 37, the largest labor organization in New York City, on allegations of voting fraud, embezzlement, and racketeering. The council, which is an umbrella of 56 locals of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) organizing 120,000 municipal workers, is also being investigated by the Manhattan District Attorney on charges of union officials embezzling funds, taking kickbacks, and falsifying records. More than a third of the council's 24 board members are under investigation by the attorney general.

The government moves come after a union panel ruled in June that the president of one AFSCME local, Charles Hughes, embezzled more than 1.7 million. Hughes was then expelled. Several months later AFSCME president Gerald McEntee announced November 28 he was placing the council in trusteeship and forced the executive director of the council, Stanley Hill

to take an unpaid leave of absence.

Hill was ousted after he acknowledged November 23 there was vote fraud in the 1996 ratification of the union contract, which imposed a two-year pay freeze on city workers. Two days earlier, Hill had demanded the resignation of two of his top aides who allegedly helped stuff the ballot boxes to win the contract vote. New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani used that contract to pressure other city workers, including firefighters and sanitation workers, to accept similar two-year wage freezes.

Meanwhile, officials of the motor vehicle operators local and the librarians' local of AFSCME filed a federal lawsuit November 30 charging the district council with running a criminal enterprise. The locals are also suing the city of New York, asserting that city officials knew or should have known about the vote fraud. The lawsuit will be heard in federal court under the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act.

# Bonapartist wins Venezuela vote

Continued from front page

and traditional institutions. "Venezuela's new sheriff" was the headline of a December 8 article in London's *Financial Times*. "He's kind of like the sheriff who comes into the town that has been run by the brothel keeper and money changer. He is going to come in and clean up this town," the article said.

Chávez has called for a referendum to dissolve Congress, one of the institutions blamed by many Venezuelans for the proliferation of widespread corruption and the impoverishment of toilers there. Congress would supposedly be replaced by a constituent assembly with broad powers. "When people want a radical change, the constitution cannot be a strait-jacket," said Jorge Giordani, the architect of the referendum.

**Chávez rises out of capitalist crisis**

Venezuela, which has the largest oil reserves in the world outside the Arab-Persian Gulf, experienced an economic boom in the 1970s that lasted through the early 1980s. During that period toilers wrested a number of social benefits from the ruling class. These programs were largely paid for out of the revenues from the oil industry, nationalized by the social democratic administration of Carlos Andrés Pérez during his 1974-79 presidential term. Some 80 percent of the South American country's budget was based on oil exports.

Washington and other imperialist powers touted Venezuela as a model for capitalist development in the Third World. This all came to an end in the late 1980s as oil prices crashed and a worldwide economic depression set in.

When Pérez was elected a second time in 1988, the social democratic president adopted a "free-market" austerity plan to satisfy imperialist bondholders who wanted payment on Venezuela's then-\$34 billion foreign debt.

The central government in Caracas, the country's capital, slashed social services and dropped subsidies for food, electricity, water, and public transportation. Gasoline prices skyrocketed 80 percent and utilities like water steadily deteriorated. The regime sold off state-owned factories, eliminating tens of thousands of jobs. Official unemployment shot up to 30 percent.

Pérez's 1989 austerity plan ignited a tinderbox. In February of that year Caracas and eight other cities exploded in spontaneous protests. Tens of thousands of people took to the streets, sacked supermarkets, and denounced the government. The regime responded with one of the bloodiest massacres in the country's history. Army and police forces killed anywhere from 400 to several thousand people. Protests ensued over the next few years. In roughly the first half of 1992, there were reportedly 1,400 antigovernment demonstrations.

It was in this context of social devastation that Hugo Chávez, along with other lower echelon army officers, launched a coup against the Pérez government in February 1992. The military action, which had sympathy but no participation from layers of working people, was put down by forces loyal to Pérez. Chávez and other military officers were imprisoned.

Both Democratic Action and COPEI were completely discredited after those events, while Chávez was elevated to hero status. For weeks after the coup, slum residents rallied in support of the arrested officers. Chávez attempted a second coup from prison in November 1992, which the government suppressed at the cost of 230 lives. After crushing the revolt, Pérez suspended basic civil liberties — from freedom of speech to the right to peaceful assembly — and established a 6:00 p.m. curfew.

In a 1993 poll of voters' preference among all the main political parties, "none of the above" stood as top choice with 34 percent. Another poll during that period indicated that Alberto Fujimori, now president of Peru, was the most popular politician in Venezuela.

Fujimori, a Bonapartist figure himself, ran on a similar anticorruption, "put faith in me" type campaign. As president, he dissolved Peru's congress and courts and clamped down on democratic rights with popular support, in the name of fighting inflation and "terrorism."

In early 1993, Pérez was indicted and suspended from office on corruption charges. He was impeached by the Venezuelan Senate in May of that year.

Conservative Rafael Caldera replaced him. Caldera had served a presidential term earlier, but was repackaged by the ruling class as an "independent" and "clean" candidate. Four months after coming into office to "save" the economy, Caldera declared an economic emergency and suspended the constitution, including the right not to be arrested without a warrant and the right to freedom of movement of people and goods.

The deflationary crisis has been deepening since then. Oil is sold for less than \$10 a barrel today — a quarter-century low for Venezuela. Real incomes have fallen by nearly two-thirds in the last 15 years and 70 percent of Venezuela's 21 million people live in poverty. Venezuela has one of the largest gaps in distribution of wealth, with nearly half the country's income going to 20 percent of the population.

Strikes, protests, and marches by many sectors of the working class — from oil workers to teachers — have been ongoing for wage and pension increases. One of the highest turnouts for May Day, the international worker's holiday, was in Venezuela, where tens of thousands filled the streets.

Under these conditions, Chávez, who claims to champion the rights of the downtrodden, drew 700,000 people to his closing campaign rally December 2, as the two main parties in power for the last four decades collapsed in public opinion.

**Shedding radical image**

Chávez has already begun to shed many of the leftist elements of his radical rhetoric. He has called on banks and private investors to bring capital back into the country, which businessmen whisked abroad upon news of his possible victory. He has opened his arms to dealings with the U.S. government that labeled him a terrorist after his coup attempts and has denied him a visa to enter the United States. An article in the Spanish-language big-business newspaper *El País* quoted Chávez in a meeting that included former U.S. president James Carter. "There are no hard feelings with the United States," he said.

Many working people have high expectations that the Chávez administration will deliver jobs and increase the social wage. During his campaign, Chávez promised 30,000 bolivars (\$53) to every unemployed Venezuelan, minimum wage hikes, job security, and retirement guarantees.

But everything indicates Chávez will be a loyal defender of capitalism. In fact, some bourgeois commentators point out that given how discredited the whole gamut of "mainstream" politicians are, Chávez may be the only one who can get away with driving through sharp attacks on working people. That, at least, is what capitalist politicians and pundits are banking on.



# Truckers convoy to protest contract in New Zealand

This column is devoted to reporting the resistance by working people to the employers' assault on their living standards, working conditions, and unions.

We invite you to contribute short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers

unsafe vehicles on the roads."

The drivers estimate that under the new contracts their incomes will fall between 30 and 40 percent. Some face bigger cuts. "I could lose 80 percent," John Anderson said. He explained he used to drive for wages, but that two and a half years

## ON THE PICKET LINE

around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — "Defeat is not an option" was the message broadcast from loudspeakers on top of the lead vehicle in a 40-strong line of trucks that left the TranzLink owner-drivers' Auckland picket line for a convoy through the city December 5. Through pickets and other actions, owner-drivers are protesting the terms of new contracts the company is trying to impose on them.

TranzLink is the road haulage subsidiary of TranzRail, the formerly state-owned rail network that was sold to private investors in 1993. It contracts 322 drivers nationally. The drivers own their vehicles, and have to meet the costs of financing and maintaining them from the payments they receive from the company. Since December 1, drivers in Auckland, Hamilton, and Christchurch have setup 24-hour picket lines outside TranzLink depots.

"Under these new contracts, 99 percent of us will go broke," Patrick Neeley, a spokesperson for the drivers, told the *Militant* at the Auckland picket line. A leaflet handed out by the drivers explains that the company wants to reduce their income "to a subsistence wage level but with all the administration burdens and business risks of a conventional contractor."

"The contract has a 'life' of only 30 days, after which time the owner-driver, who may be financially committed to a vehicle costing up to \$350,000, can be subjected to a cut in rates or be terminated," the leaflet continues. "[C]ontractors will be forced to reduce expenditure on such items as tyres, brakes, and general repair and maintenance resulting in an ever-increasing number of

ago he and his wife Joanne both became owner-drivers. They are paying off two vehicles, a container-carrying rig and a truck and trailer unit. More than twelve-hour working days are commonplace for drivers. "We're here before five in the morning, and never finish before five in the evening," Anderson said.

Trade unionists have shown solidarity with the picketing drivers. In Christchurch members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union who load and unload the trucks refused to cross the picket line for the first six days of the action. In Auckland members and officials of the Northern Distribution Union, which organizes wage workers in the transport industry, have visited the picket line. "We welcome their support," Neeley said.

Many TranzLink drivers are members of the Combined Owner-Drivers Association. The association in Christchurch is conducting negotiations with the company on behalf of the drivers nationwide. The company complained to the November 23 *Christchurch Press* the association was "trying to act like a union."

### British Columbia nurses strike for 1,400 new jobs

VANCOUVER, Canada — Members of the British Columbia Nurses Union (BCNU) set up picket lines for three days at five British Columbia hospitals November 27. The action was followed by strikes at five hospitals beginning November 30, including Vancouver General, the largest in the province. Nurses at Nanaimo Regional Hospital, however, refused to take down their picket lines. The collective agreement between the hospital bosses and the BCNU, which represents 25,000 nurses, expired March 31. The union had planned to call out nurses at 35 additional hospitals November 30, but pulled back in what they described as a "sign of good faith" in response to the government appointment of a

## Steelworkers march for jobs in UK



Militant/ Tim Rigby  
Members of the Iron & Steel Trades Confederation marched December 5 against the closing down of a rolling mill in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, England. The demonstration included workers from nearby mills who face job losses of 400 with the closing of the Sheffield Plate Mill.

mediator to negotiations.

According to Maureen Corness and Elly Brouwer, two nurses walking the picket line at St. Paul's Hospital on the first day of the strike, "the main issues are workload and the lack of nurses. There is no incentive to go into nursing. Young people don't want to go into it because of the workload. And they aren't hiring into empty positions."

The BCNU stated that British Columbia has lost 1,600 nursing positions since 1993. And today out of 26,000 nurses, only 400 are under the age of 25.

In mid-November, the government offered CAN\$45 million that would result in the hiring of 600 more nurses. In return, the hospitals demanded that the nurses give up all of their other demands.

The union is demanding that 1,400 more nurses be hired throughout the province. This would help reduce the great amount of overtime that nurses are being asked to work. In northern BC some hospital nurses have worked 24 hours straight. In some long-term care facilities, night-duty nurses can be responsible for as many as 236 patients.

Carrying signs in support of the nurses at St. Paul's were a large number of hospital workers from the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) and the Health Sciences Association who are refusing to cross the picket line. Carmen, an HEU member at St. Paul's, said "I support the nurses because they support health care." Asked about the

government's position that there is no more money, she replied, "they can find money to send people to war so they can find money for health care."

### Skycheffs strikers win more support in Britain

LONDON, England — At a meeting held December 4, union representatives across Heathrow airport pledged their support for more than 200 workers sacked two weeks ago by airline catering company LSG Skycheffs for taking part in a one-day strike. "If Skycheffs get away with this, the same thing will happen across the airport," said Garth King, Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) convenor at the factory. "We have total support, which will include money from branches and from collections," he added. There are some 30,000 TGWU members at Heathrow.

Avtar Moom, a young woman striker said, "We're getting so much support on the picket line. We have a strike fund and the Martindale temple in Hounslow is bringing us food." Others reported visits from Abela Gate and Gate Gourmet workers, two other catering companies at the airport. "British Airways cabin crews have also been down and gave us their support and money," said King.

The sacked workers have set up 24-hour pickets on a rotating system. Directly outside the factory they have organized tent shelters,

braziers against the cold, a toilet, and a port-a-cabin to serve as an organizing center.

The International Transport Federation (ITF) estimates that LSG Skycheff is the biggest airline catering company in the world, with about a third of the world market. The one-day strike, one of four projected, was called after the company imposed new working practices on all workers. Driving and loading teams were cut to one person from the two or more used before, and work in the kitchens and wash-up was speeded up and made harder.

Strikers report that Skycheff has lost two airline contracts, and Air France and Iberia are "back-catering" or loading planes with food for both the outward and return flight at the start of the journey.

"It's disgusting how they treat us," said Ajit Virdee, a young woman striker. "They want to employ people here who have zips on their mouths, which they can open and close when it suits them."

*Terry Coggan, a member of the Engineers Union in Auckland, New Zealand, and Annalucia Vermunt, a member of the Service and Food Workers Union in Christchurch; Mike Barker, a member of the Hospital Employees' Union at Vancouver General Hospital; and Caroline Bellamy, TGWU member at Ford, Dagenham, Celia Pugh, and James Neil in Britain contributed to this column.*

## LETTERS

### Antiracist victory

I, along with 150 people, attended the CAAR [Community Action Against Racism] victory celebration here on November 21 commemorating KQRS radio's defeat. [The station was forced to apologize for racist comments by "shock jock" Tom Bernard against the Hmong.] Not only was there a vast representation of the ages in the Hmong community but there were also many other guests from different ethnicities present.

Regardless of an individual's background, everyone felt the victory in their own hearts and saw the pride and hope in each other's eyes and felt the strength in each other's handshake. This victory celebration, however, by no means marks the end of our struggle. Other battles with human ignorance and injustice will be fought. As heard from the cries of the protesters, "We have lived through so much. We will live

through this too."

Through CAAR's efforts, the pride and sense of justice in the Hmong community has been rightfully maintained and revitalized. There has been so much recent trauma and heartbreak throughout the community that the ignorant insults from KQRS further perpetuated the depression and sense of loss in dignity.

Originally many elders of the community had been against the Hmong's involvement in the protest. There seemed to be a sense of hopelessness among the parents and elders that accepted the insults as parts of American society that cannot be altered. Perhaps it is a lifetime of loss through war and American indignation of the Hmong's presence in the United States that has worn down the elders' fighting spirit for justice. But the youth in the community were inflamed with anger at the public

broadcast and humiliation of the Hmong culture and community.

Despite the lack of solidarity in support within the community, the quiet skepticism of the media and society and the arrogant ways in which KQRS avoided the demands of CAAR and the community, the human spirit, strength and pride of the Hmong was preserved. Despite the odds created by society, CAAR prevailed.

The revelations of young impassioned Hmong leaders making a difference and overcoming the insensitive injustice of an American corporate conglomerate sent strong waves of repercussions throughout the community. Hope and a fierce sense of pride for the Hmong youth was reinforced while the thoughtful and silent approvals from the elders brought the community back together again.

*Pajnhag Vang Nengchu  
St. Paul, Minnesota*

### U.S. torture chambers

There are over 3,500 prisoners in U.S. torture chambers called death row. They are caged like animals until death agents are ready to execute them. This Nazi-style barbarism should end. A prisoner wrote me a letter describing how a police officer broke his arm while punching him. The U.S. government is guilty of serious human rights violations. Over 70 prisoners who were on death row have been freed when the courts found that they were innocent of crimes they had never committed.

Torture chambers are a means the U.S. government uses to eliminate the Black population. The government of the United States lynches its people legally, but at one time the people of the South did the lynching themselves. The Black population of the U.S. are victims of Caucasian supremacy and racism, which is bred of ignorance.

U.S. well-to-do individuals don't get put to death execution-style; only indigent persons without competent legal representation get lynched.

U.S. slave masters were rapists, murderers, thieves, exploiters, yet they didn't get punished for their crimes. U.S. continuous legacy of atrocities against Africans who were brought here in chains, packed like sardines in ships, should be brought to the attention of the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

*Ernst Ford  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

**The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.**

## Farmers march in Toronto to protest disastrous prices and demand relief

BY ROBERT SIMMS

TORONTO — Farmers, most of whom raise hogs, protested in front of the Ontario legislature December 1 to demand immediate income assistance from the Ontario and federal governments. Newspapers reported up to 1,000 farmers participated in the demonstration. There are 6,000 hog farmers in Ontario. They carried signs like: "Hog farmers going bankrupt," and "1972 prices, 1998 bills," "Cost 70 cents/lb., get 30 cents/lb.," and "No farms, no food, no future."

In Canada, hog farmers across the country and grain farmers concentrated in the prairie provinces have been especially hard hit by a worldwide collapse in farm prices this year.

In the Canadian market, it costs about Can\$100-\$110 (Can\$1 = US\$0.65) per hog to raise it to market size. Last year, hogs were selling at above average prices of \$160 per animal. Since mid-1998, prices have collapsed to \$60 and less.

Bert Beyens, who has been farming for 33 years, keeps about 1,000 hogs on his farm in Parkhill, Ontario. He told the *Militant*, "I'm losing \$3,000 per week. We can't survive at these prices. We have to do something. I hope the government listens." Another farmer from Wingham, Doug Garniss, who raises hogs, beef, and cash crops, said, "We've never seen prices fall so hard and so fast, ever. It's a disaster."

Hog production has expanded rapidly in Canada from 16 million shipped in 1993 to 19 million in 1997. Formerly concentrated in Ontario and Quebec, many farmers in the prairies have expanded into raising hogs, often encouraged by government officials and bankers. Speakers at the Toronto rally emphasized that 40 percent of hog production is exported.

The expansion was based on rapid growth in demand from markets in Asia and Russia. The economic collapse in these countries has slashed demand. Capitalist politicians in Canada also blame what they call unfair subsidies to farm production from governments in Europe and the United States spurring overproduction; and as part of their intensifying trade competition with their rivals they also urge farmers to put the blame there.

Leaders of provincial farm organizations and the Liberal, Conservative, and New



Hundreds of hog farmers demonstrate at Queens Park in Toronto, Ontario, December 1 to demand government relief as hog prices drop dramatically.

Democratic political parties addressed the Toronto rally. Conservative provincial Minister of Agriculture Noble Villeneuve promised aid coupled with federal government relief, but no amounts or timetables were mentioned.

There have been reports of some farmers shooting their pigs because they can't afford to feed them. Some Ontario farmers have donated pigs to local food banks. One speaker at the rally said 400 hogs have been promised to the Daily Bread Food Bank. Sue Cox, executive director of that organization, said a couple of meat processors have agreed

to process them for free.

In September, Quebec hog farmers closed a major highway for several days demanding immediate provincial government aid.

In Saskatchewan, some 700 grain farmers in a convoy of 225 trucks converged on North Battleford in November to demand assistance. Farm income in that province in 1997 was \$680 million. The federal government estimates farm income in Saskatchewan in 1998 will be \$189 million, and negative \$169 million in 1999.

"We're just sort of on the edge of a black hole. A lot of farmers are just plain saying

they won't be around," said Stewart Wells, a farmer near Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and a representative of the National Farmers Union.

Federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vancilief has proposed to the federal cabinet a package of \$400 million in aid to farmers this year and additional funds for next year, to be augmented by provincial government programs. Ottawa, however, has made no announcement or promise yet, and Vancilief admitted that no funds would be available until after farmers file tax returns in the spring. The program, directed mainly at hog and grain producers, would only kick in after farmers' incomes fall below 70 percent of their historical average.

Many farmers and farm representatives who spoke at the rally stressed the fact that they need immediate assistance. They have been losing thousands of dollars per week and need money before the end of the year. Vancilief asserted that a firm government announcement of forthcoming aid would enable farmers to approach bankers and suppliers to get loans for the period.

Many farmers also pointed out that although prices for the hogs they ship have collapsed in recent months, prices at the supermarkets for pork have not budged, with hog processors and grocery chains fattening their profit margins.

At the Toronto rally, several farmers indicated to the *Militant* they had heard of the strike vote by a large majority of workers at Quality Meats, a Toronto pork processor. The company is demanding massive wage cuts and other givebacks similar to the contract Maple Leaf Meats wrested from its workers, members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), after a three-month strike last March. Workers at Quality Meats are members of the UFCW.

## Maritime workers strike in Marseille

BY MARK KINZEL

MARSEILLE, France — Maritime workers at the Société de Navigation Corse-Méditerranée (SNCM) waged a six-day strike here December 1-7, demanding the construction of new ships to replace aging vessels. The walkout by 2,500 sailors, main-

tenance personnel, office workers, and ships' officers represented by the French Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT), the General Labor Confederation (CGT), and the Workers Force (FO) union federations shut down the state-owned company's passenger and freight services.

The SNCM's operations account for 20 percent of the activity in the Port of Marseille. Strikers blockaded major sections of the port December 2. Gates leading into the facilities were sealed off by pickets who welded the locks shut, then placed cargo containers, fork lifts, and burning tires in the roadway. These barricades were staffed 24 hours a day and remained in place until the morning of December 7.

Workers took over the company headquarters and welded the doors shut, forcing management to "go underground and find refuge in an undisclosed location for fear of a new invasion," according to *La Provence*, Marseille's main big-business daily.

The strikers' actions affected other workers on the waterfront. A group of about 200 strikers entered the port's ship repair facilities December 3 and boarded the *Napoleon Bonaparte*, the SNCM's flagship. The strikers asked all the workers — including this reporter — to leave the vessel immediately and no further repairs were performed during the strike.

On the picket lines a striking member of the CGT union federation with 25 years at the company, who asked to remain anonymous, explained the issues in the strike. "We'll lose 500 jobs if our demands aren't met," he said. "Three ships are being decommissioned because of their age, and the government has refused to allocate funds for new construction. This is our 10th strike in four years over these issues, but this one is definitely the most serious."

A younger worker on the line agreed, say-

ing, "When I saw the big turnouts on the picket lines and the occupations, I felt very confident. Plus, look what's going on with the rail workers on strike. Hey, even the unemployed are going out on strike!" he added, referring to the ongoing rail strikes and demonstrations and occupations of government offices by jobless workers that were going on in Marseille parallel to the maritime strike.

Similar to last year at this time, when unemployed workers held protests in Marseille and cities throughout France demanding an increase in benefits, the jobless have taken to the streets. On December 3 some 15,000 people marched to the seat of the regional government at the call of the CGT Unemployment Committee, demanding a 3,000 FF (\$525) year-end bonus on their unemployment benefits.

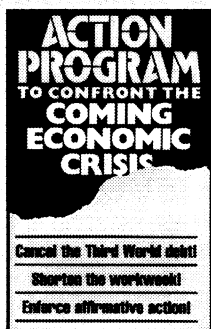
There was a heavy turnout from Marseille's immigrant community, and there were prominent signs reading "Legal Status for Undocumented Workers," "French/Immigrant Solidarity," and "North/South Equality."

The national CGT Unemployment Committee called on the jobless and their supporters December 7 to begin occupying unemployment offices the next day demanding "a 3,000 FF Christmas bonus and jobs for all." The statement also called for protests in front of corporate headquarters and federal government buildings. A national demonstration has been called for December 10 in Paris.

The maritime workers voted the night of December 6 to go back to work, after government officials agreed for the first time to hold negotiations over their demands.

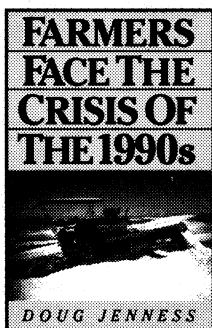
As repair work resumed on the *Napoleon Bonaparte*, one striker commented, "This is not over ... but after this week, we're in a stronger position to fight for jobs."

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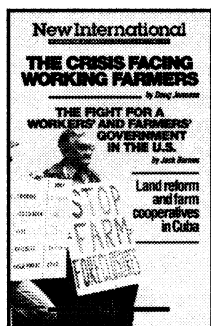
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