

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

U.S. occupation troops crack down along Kosova border

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Garment workers strike plants in Los Angeles area

UNITE members win solidarity for their fight nationwide

BY FRANCISCO CIPRIANO  
AND WENDY LYONS

VERNON, California—Some 450 workers are on strike against Hollander Home Fashions at two plants here, just outside of Los Angeles. Organized by the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), the workers produce curtains, bedspreads, and other home textiles.

About 150 workers set up a picket line in front of the Seville Ave. entrance before dawn March 9. Pickets proudly told *Militant* reporters that the strike was supported by every worker in both plants.

"There is no pension plan, and the way Social Security is under attack, this is an important issue," noted UNITE Western Joint Board manager Cristina Vásquez.

A worker with 12 years' service, who asked that her name not be used for fear of company reprisal, said, "We want a 401 (k) plan and they don't want to give it to us. This is the most important issue in the strike."

Alberto Pantoja, a machine operator in the plant for 27 years who is making \$8.30 an hour, said some workers there "have about 15 years to retire and will have nothing to live on. Current wages aren't enough to save for retirement, especially with recent cuts."

In the last two months some workers at Hollander Home Fashions received a 50 percent pay cut and a doubling of their workload. Wages were cut, Pantoja said, through the use of a new machine that the



UNITE strikers picket Hollander Home Fashions March 9 in Vernon, California.

Militant/Al Duncan

company says "should be a one-man job. The old system was a two-man job which does not change with the new machine. The only change is that now one person does the work of two."

Marta Bonilla, who has worked at Hol-

lander Home Fashion for five years and makes \$6.75 an hour, said, "If we're one minute late, they take it out of our pay."

María Solorio, with four years' seniority, remarked, "The company will pay you

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## NY event marks April 1961 Cuban victory

BY MAGGIE TROWE

NEW YORK—Some 270 people gathered here March 11 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of U.S. imperialism's first military defeat in the Americas: the victory of the Cuban people in crushing a U.S.-backed counterrevolutionary invasion at the Bay of Pigs—an event identified in Cuba as Playa Girón—and defending their socialist revolution.

It also marked the 40th anniversary of the successful mass campaign to wipe out illiteracy in Cuba, which made 1961 the Year of Education in that Caribbean nation.

The meeting celebrated the publication of Pathfinder's newest book, *Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs: Washington's first military defeat in the Americas*. The English edition arrived at the event hot off the presses, and the Spanish edition was printed a few days later. Participants bought up 105 copies of the new title, and some picked up boxes of books to take back to sell in their respective cities.

The meeting served as a springboard to launch an international campaign to sell this book, along with two other new Pathfinder titles—*Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*, and *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia*.

The meeting was hosted by the New York and New Jersey branches of the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialists. People attending the meeting came from throughout the metropolitan area and from numerous cities as far

away as Houston, Chicago, and Miami, as well as from Canada. The themes of the afternoon's event were highlighted in a series of photo displays in the meeting hall. They featured striking photos showing how

Cuban working people mobilized to defeat the U.S.-organized invasion, and simultaneous protests in U.S. cities organized by the Fair Play for Cuba Committee against

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### 40th Anniversary Celebration

- The victory of the Cuban people at Bay of Pigs
- Cuba's successful campaign to wipe out illiteracy

Join us in launching the campaign to read, use, and sell *Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs: Washington's First Military Defeat in the Americas; Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces; and Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia*

The program will feature:

**MARY-ALICE WATERS**, Pathfinder president, editor of *Making History* and *Fertile Ground*, coeditor of *Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs*

**JACK BARNES**, author of foreword to *Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs*, Socialist Workers Party national secretary

**JACK WILLEY**, organizer of New York City Socialist Workers Party

The event coincides with a March 17–18 meeting of the Young Socialists National Leadership Council, and the opening of the new headquarters of the SWP branch in Seattle.

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## Thousands in Mexico greet Indian rights convoy

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Leading a caravan of vans, trucks, and buses in what organizers called a March for Dignity, two dozen leaders of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) carried out a two-week trek from the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico to the country's capital, Mexico City.

The welcome they received along the way registered the widespread identification of working people throughout Mexico with the heightened struggles by Mexico's indigenous peoples, captured by the sharp conflict in Chiapas between the government and ruling propertied families, on one hand, and Indians—mostly peasants and farm workers—fighting for equal rights, land, jobs, and decent living conditions. The response of the new president of Mexico, Vicente Fox, to this outpouring of support was cautiously conciliatory, while some in the ruling class reacted with virulent statements against the EZLN.

The March for Dignity, which began with a February 25 send-off rally of 10,000 in the town of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, drew turnouts of 10,000 to 15,000 in cities and towns all along the way. It culminated with a March 11 rally of 100,000 in Mexico City.

"The popular reaction has exceeded all expectations, as schools shut down to allow pupils to wave at the convoy," the *Finan-*

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## Bush bars strike at Northwest Airlines

BY ELLEN BERMAN

DETROIT—Workers at Northwest Airlines set up protest picket lines in a number of cities around the country March 12 to oppose the decision by U.S. president George Bush to stop them from striking the carrier for an additional 60 days. Bush vowed he would also intervene to try to prevent workers at other airlines from going on strike this year.

"President Bush, read my lips, no more PEB," chanted 80 airline workers at a picket line outside the White House organized by the Airline Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA), which represents 10,000 mechanics, cleaners, and other workers at Northwest Airlines (NWA). The PEB is the Presidential Emergency Board set up to review the labor dispute and make recommendations to each side. If either party rejects the proposals the union can strike, the company can lock out the workers, or Congress can impose a settlement.

Union members at Northwest, who have been working under an expired contract for more than four years, voted by a 96 percent margin to start job actions against the airline March 12, but Bush stepped in three days beforehand.

One mechanic on a picket line of 50 out-

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Truth revealed on 1921 racist mob attack in Tulsa — page 7

# Washington escalates 'banana war' with its rivals in Europe

BY HILDA CUZCO

U.S. trade representative Robert Zoellick escalated the banana war March 7, stating Washington is ready to implement trade sanctions against a range of products if the European Union pushes ahead with its plans concerning imports of the fruit to Europe.

Zoellick, who made the threats on the eve of a visit to the United States by European Union (EU) trade commissioner Pascal Lamy, said adoption of the banana import rules would give him "no recourse other than to start to use the carousel provisions," whereby Washington would impose punitive duties on \$308 million worth of imports, targeting one product, then another.

Since the EU adopted new import rules on bananas in 1993, the U.S. corporation Chiquita Brands International has lost market share on the continent to its rivals, one factor driving it close to bankruptcy. Chiquita has filed suit against the European Commission, demanding payments of \$519 million for losses it says it suffered as a result of the changes. The company won several rulings from the World Trade Organization, which called the restrictions illegal, and said the EU's new rules, known as "first-come, first-serve," would only make the problem worse.

The trade measures adopted by the European imperialist powers in 1993 to protect their investments in former colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean ensure a steady export market for the countries and give them a competitive edge over their U.S. rivals.

Three leading U.S. enterprises, Chiquita, Dole, and Del Monte, have long dominated the banana industry in Central America, Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Chiquita—formerly the United Fruit Co.—saw its best profits in the European markets during the 1980s and early 1990s, where regulations made it possible for the company to sell bananas at twice the price as in the United States.

In response to the changes in 1993, Del Monte and Dole bought up fruit and flower companies based in Europe and countries

benefiting from the new rules, such as Jamaica, Cameroon, and the Ivory Coast. This allowed them to gain market share in Europe against Chiquita, which still sells more bananas in Europe than any other company.

As the competitive struggle has sharpened, Chiquita has sought to cut costs, including by driving down what it pays to suppliers and workers. For example, Chiquita recently reduced the price it pays to Atlantic Banana Cooperative in Panama, one of its suppliers, by 8 percent, from \$3.11 to \$2.86 for a 42 pound box. "We can survive at that level but we cannot prosper," Atlantic's president, Bolivar Aguirre, told the *Financial Times*.

Dole, on the other hand, has shifted where it gets bananas from Costa Rica and Panama to Ecuador, where wages are \$2 a day and unions are more scarce. The company reports the move has allowed it to cut its cost of production in half.

Armuelles Fruit Company, Chiquita's



Ship owned by Chiquita Brands International docks at port. U.S. company has lost market share in Europe to its imperialist rivals, bringing it to the edge of bankruptcy.

subsidiary in Panama, said that in order to stay competitive with bananas produced in Ecuador it has to lower the price per box from \$5.20 to \$5.

The company employs 7,000 people in Puerto Armuelles and "suffered a damaging strike in 1998 from which it has yet to recover," the *Financial Times* reported. The paper complained that "productivity and

worker morale has slumped and more than 25 percent of the fruit is damaged during harvest and packing." The Chiquita subsidiary shut down part of its operations already and threatened to lay off 500 more workers.

The European Union announced March 9 it will delay implementation of the banana import regulations in order to discuss the issue with Washington.

## Benefit cuts in Louisiana leave workers exposed

BY MAGGIE TROWE

In the wake of drastic cuts in the safety net that unemployment and welfare benefits once provided, the slowdown in the economy is proving disastrous for working people in Louisiana.

New Orleans, a city of nearly half a million people, had the largest increase in unemployment of 337 metropolitan areas in 2000, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Joblessness rose from 3.4 percent the previous year to 4.7 percent. In addition, the number of people on welfare in the city is increasing after four years of decline. Statewide, January 2001 unemployment was 6.7 percent, up from 5.3 percent in December 2000.

Louisiana is among the states that has set more severe limits on welfare benefit eligibility than those required under the overhaul of the federal welfare system carried

out in 1996. In that year, acting on his 1992 campaign pledge to "end welfare as we know it," President William Clinton signed the bipartisan Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. The law eliminated the federally guaranteed Aid to Families with Dependent Children and cut off food stamps and Medicaid to many working people. In addition, the law set a five-year lifetime limit on welfare benefits. Louisiana law only allows people to receive benefits for two years in a five-year period.

The federal-state unemployment benefit program provides for some jobless workers to collect a weekly check, usually ranging between 10 percent and 25 percent of their previous weekly earnings. But as a result of restrictive rules on qualifying and aggressive employer challenges to applications, only 38 percent of those who lose their jobs become eligible for this program, down from 50 percent in the 1950s.

A January report from the General Accounting Office of the U.S. Congress stated that in the event of an economic downturn, "many low-wage workers may find that, unlike higher-wage workers, they will be unable to qualify for unemployment benefits."

In Louisiana, eligibility is tied to previous earnings. An applicant must have worked at least six months in a 12-month period, but their earnings of the past three to six months are not factored in. So a worker who got a job six months ago and lost it recently would probably be ineligible.

In addition, a worker must have earned at least \$1,200 to qualify for the minimum benefit of \$10 a week for 26 weeks. To continue receiving the benefits, workers must

prove that they are looking for work, and in most cases they must be willing to work full-time, even if their previous job was part-time, making it difficult or impossible for some women with children to qualify. So a Louisiana woman with young children who received welfare benefits for more than two of the past five years and cannot obtain or afford child care to allow her to work full-time, is not eligible for any benefits.

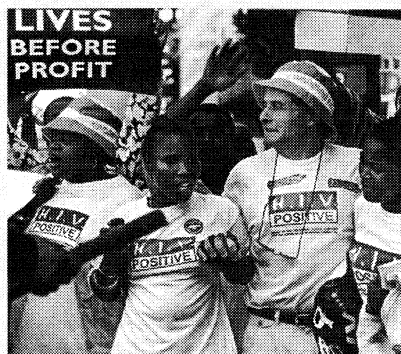
One reason that fewer than 25 percent of unemployed workers in Louisiana receive unemployment benefits is because employers—in order to avoid the higher tax they must pay if they have a history of many layoffs—frequently challenge workers' claims. Denise Butler, for example, a 39-year old worker who has three children, told a *New York Times* reporter she was fired from her \$5.30 an hour supermarket cashier job because her employer said she was insubordinate. She denies her ex-boss's allegation, but it prevents her from becoming eligible for benefits. Louisiana employers challenge one-quarter of benefit applications, substantially more than the national average of 1 in 10.

The negative impact of the dismantling of the social wage falls hardest on Blacks and women in Louisiana as elsewhere. New Orleans has the highest proportion of Black residents, 34.8 percent, of any major metropolitan area in the United States. And Blacks make up 32 percent of Louisiana's 4.4 million residents. Census reports show that nationwide in 1998 the median income for Black men was \$19,321, compared to \$26,492 for all men. The median income for Black women was \$13,137 and for all women \$14,430.

## THE MILITANT

### Profits vs. human needs in AIDS crisis

The protests in South Africa demanding affordable medicine for people with AIDS place a spotlight on the pharmaceutical giants, whose concern is only high profit margins. The 'Militant' explains how these companies fight against affordable prices for AIDS drugs while millions die each year.



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# U.S. forces move against Albanian rebels

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

On March 8 U.S. forces led NATO troops into the border region of Kosova and Macedonia in pursuit of Albanian guerrillas. This was the most aggressive action to date by the imperialist occupation force against the armed groups operating on Kosova's south and southeast borders.

Several days later NATO officials announced a one-week cease-fire in the region, and gave the go-ahead for the Yugoslav army to operate within a narrow piece of a buffer zone that the occupation powers had previously declared off-limits to Belgrade's forces.

The developments spotlighted Washington's efforts to maintain its dominance in the region by getting the new Belgrade regime to police the border region and clamp down on Albanian insurgents, while continuing to foster conflicts between Serbs and Albanians.

NATO's "KFOR" forces moved into Kosova in June 1999 after an 11-week bombing campaign by the U.S. air force, with backup from other NATO powers. While Washington and London claimed to be targeting the Serb armed forces operating inside Serbia and Kosova, Yugoslavia's industrial and transport infrastructure suffered heavy damage, along with working-class neighborhoods.

The occupying forces number more than 42,000 soldiers in Kosova, with another 7,500 backup troops in Albania and Macedonia.

Some 20,000 additional imperialist troops are stationed in Bosnia, down from the 32,000 soldiers placed there after a U.S.-imposed settlement in 1995.

When the imperialist troops moved in, they posed as liberators of the Kosova Albanians against the Yugoslav army, which had carried out atrocities and mass deportations as part of the efforts by the Serb chauvinist regime of Slobodan Milosevic to suppress the Albanian struggle against discrimination and for national self-determination.

The recent clashes occurred in the U.S.-commanded southeast zone of Kosova. Other regions remain under the control of the governments of France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. The U.S.-controlled areas in dispute include the Kosova-Macedonian border and the Presevo Valley, which forms part of a "Ground Safety Zone" established by KFOR, which surrounds Kosova and goes three miles deep into Serbia.

Unlike Kosova, Macedonia is a formally independent country, having seceded from the Yugoslav federation in 1991. Its population is about 2 million. Kosova remains officially part of Yugoslavia, along with Serbia and Montenegro. The population of the three regions is around 1.6 million, 10 million, and 700,000 respectively.

## U.S. forces move into action

With its March 8 operation, NATO acted to help the Macedonian regime suppress the incipient ethnic Albanian insurgency. NATO forces, consisting of a majority of U.S. troops and commanded by U.S. officers, moved into action in the border region of Kosova and Macedonia after rebel forces appeared in the village of Tanusevci. NATO troops reportedly injured several rebels in a gun battle near the town of Mijak. Coordinating their efforts with the Macedonian army, U.S. troops moved from village to village in the name of "eliminating safe havens."

Several days later, NATO representatives concluded an agreement with the Yugoslav regime to allow its troops to patrol a 9.6-square mile section of Serbia that lies between Kosova and Macedonia.

The commander of the KFOR forces, Lt. Gen. Carlo Cavigliosi, said NATO had imposed "military and ethical limits" on the Serbian forces, stipulating that "they do not occupy houses, do not enter villages, do not receive backing from armored cars or use rocket launchers and antitank weapons." The troops are also barred from using helicopters or planting mines.

"On the other hand," said Cavigliosi, "we have allowed them to use mortars, and they will also be allowed to intervene, in coordination with our command, with artillery from behind their lines."

NATO secretary general Lord Robertson said this was "the first step in a phased and conditioned reduction" of the Ground Safety Zone. The step "could pave the way for Serbia to retake control of the entire buffer



U.S. troops and helicopters of 82nd Airborne Division near Kosova-Macedonia border

zone, including the Presevo valley," wrote the *Financial Times*, citing an unnamed NATO diplomat.

Representatives of some of the Albanian rebel forces agreed to a one-week cease-fire, but insisted they could not guarantee the safety of the Yugoslav army forces. "My commanders and I cannot accept responsibility for spontaneous actions of local Albanian elements in Sector C of the Ground Safety Zone," said Shefket Musliu, one rebel commander who signed the document.

"KFOR is abandoning the border and is inviting our army into the crossfire," stated the recently elected Yugoslav president, Vojislav Kostunica. "The army will of course do this," he continued, "but it now undoubtedly has to make up for the mistakes of others."

## Presevo Valley agreement

An agreement has also been drawn up for the Presevo Valley area a little further north, another focal point of rebel activity. Around

60 members of the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medveda and Bujanovac have been imprisoned at U.S. Camp Bondsteel, the largest U.S. military facility in Yugoslavia.

Under the Presevo Valley deal the insurgent forces are to remain in control of nearly 60 miles of the border. One clause calls for the withdrawal of heavy weaponry from a point near Bujanovac, just outside the buffer zone. At that and other points in the area, Serbian police and guerrillas are positioned only about 100 yards apart.

The agreements represent one more step by the U.S. rulers to gain the collaboration of Belgrade in the area, without relaxing their military and political domination. For its part Belgrade has agreed to U.S. demands to voice support for "democratic reforms" and greater Albanian participation in local government.

The actions of Washington and other NATO forces underscore the fact that their intervention in the Balkans has nothing to do with protecting the Albanian population,

much less supporting their aspirations for improved conditions and national self-determination.

Albanians are the majority in Kosova, about one-third of the population in Macedonia, and a substantial majority in some of the border regions with Serbia. Kosova has historically been the most underdeveloped area in Yugoslavia. The Milosevic regime, ousted by a general strike and popular revolt in October, had brutally enforced the second-class status of the Albanian population.

## Protest in Skopje

Albanians in neighboring Macedonia have also been rebelling against discrimination and oppressive conditions. They face an unemployment rate of more than 60 percent, compared with the national average of about half that.

Some 10,000 Albanians demonstrated March 13 in Skopje, Macedonia's capital. The action was led by Arben Xhaferi, leader of the Democratic Party for Albanians, part of the coalition government headed by President Boris Trajkovski. Xhaferi made a point of condemning the insurgents' actions, while declaring afterward in a news conference that Albanians want "representation in government bodies proportional to their population, and their language to be designated an official language in the country," the *New York Times* reported.

Leaders of the armed Albanian groups in both Macedonia and the Presevo Valley, who reportedly number between 800 and several thousand fighters, appeal to this widespread desire for national rights. "We are waging war for the liberation of the Albanian population in Macedonia. We are not trying to change frontiers," said Commander Mjekrra of the National Liberation Army on March 13.

One "Western diplomat" interviewed by the *New York Times* made clear the position of the imperialist powers occupying Kosova. "The West has never made it clear enough to the Albanians that we are not there to ensure Albanian independence and promote Albanian interests, but we're there to promote our interests, which are a stable Balkans," he said.

# Bush bars strike at Northwest Airlines

Continued from front page

side Detroit's Metro airport stressed the importance of all unions coming together to support the mechanics and cleaners in AMFA. Another worker agreed. "It's eventually going to happen to every union member," she said. "In April I'll have been a cleaner at Northwest for 24 years, and I never thought it would come to this. We are just trying to get decent wages and working conditions to be able to feed our families. He [Bush] knows his family's going to eat!"

"I haven't had a raise since '94," Rich Hutton, a United Airlines mechanic, told the *Detroit Free Press* at the protest in front of the White House. "Congress votes themselves cost-of-living pay raises every year. Why can't we have the same?"

"People in labor should be able to go on strike," mechanic Tom Helisek told the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*. "Before, we were just fighting the company. Now I guess we're fighting the government."

Bush told a crowd in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, that he had intervened because "it is important for our economy, but more important, it's important for the hardworking people of America to make sure air service is not disrupted." Noting that several other negotiations involving national carriers face deadlines within the next few weeks, the president stated, "I intend to take the necessary steps to prevent airline strikes from happening this year."

Workers and pilots at American, Comair, Delta, and United are all at various stages of negotiations. Some 14,000 mechanics at United Airlines, organized by the International Association of Machinists, have been without a contract since July. Flight attendants at American Airlines voted nearly unanimously to give their union strike authorization after two years of contract talks. Pilots at Delta have been in contract negotiations since September 1999, and the contract covering 31,000 members of the Transport Workers Union at American Airlines expired March 1.

Harry Shaw, a member of AMFA Local 38 in Memphis, Tennessee, told the *New York Times*, "He did it way too early. It destroyed the collective bargaining process." AMFA officials opposed Bush's move on similar grounds.

## Railway Labor Act

Labor negotiations at airlines and railroads are governed by the antiunion Railway Labor Act. The law serves to string out negotiations to the benefit of the companies, tie the unions up in red tape, and put the weight of the federal government behind rules that tell the unions they cannot strike without permission from the National Mediation Board (NMB). Even after a NMB mediator declares an impasse and releases the unions from contract talks, the unions are not allowed to strike for 30 days.

Former chairman of the NMB Joshua Javits pointed to the effect the law has on unions in an interview with the *New York Times*. "In the rail industry," he said, "where you have the expectation of an emergency board, you have less success in reaching

collective bargaining agreements. That history would suggest that emergency boards hurt successful collective bargaining."

AMFA officials point out that they were in negotiations with the company when President Bush made his announcement. After Bush intervened, AMFA officials announced they were at an impasse and listed 20 objections they had to a last-minute offer by Northwest. Three of the main sticking points are the company's back pay offer, which does not compensate workers for the four and a half years they have gone without a new contract; demands by Northwest for a four-year contract when the union wants three; and the lack of a payoff for unused sick time upon retirement.

Northwest negotiators told the *Times*, "We're confident that the PEB recommendation will be fair and just, and Northwest will accept the PEB's final recommendation."

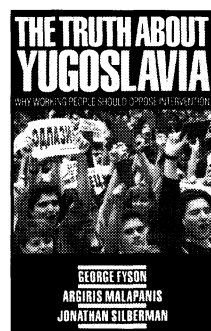
Ellen Berman is a member of United Auto Workers Local 157. Stu Singer from Washington contributed to this article.

## The Truth about Yugoslavia

George Fyson, Argiris Malapanis, and Jonathan Silberman Examine the roots of the carnage in Yugoslavia, where Washington and its imperialist rivals in Europe are intervening militarily with occupation troops, with the ultimate aim of reimposing capitalist relations. \$9.95

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# Bush administration plans more military assaults against Iraq

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Officials in the Bush administration and other Republican Party politicians have begun laying out the framework for stepping up Washington's aggression against Iraq. This includes expanding the pretexts for military attacks by U.S. warplanes and installing armed "opposition groups" inside Iraqi territory that would be backed by U.S. military might. The new "rules of engagement" would allow air strikes against alleged weapons production facilities and troop movements.

Speaking before the House International Relations Committee March 7, Secretary of State Colin Powell outlined an "emerging policy" to authorize air strikes against targets in Iraq that Washington deems are a violation of United Nations resolutions established after the 1990-91 Gulf War. In the past, White House officials claimed U.S. military forces were acting in "self-defense" as their reason for launching bombing assaults.

"If and when we find facilities or other activities going on in Iraq that we believe are inconsistent with our [UN] obligations, we reserve the right to take military action against such facilities and will do so," Powell said. In February, U.S. warplanes dropped 28 antipersonnel cluster bombs, guided missiles, and laser-guided bombs on Iraqi radar installations near Baghdad. Washington said its aim was to "degrade" Iraq's radar system, which had been modernized enough to start targeting U.S. and British warplanes patrolling "no-fly zones" imposed after the Gulf War.

At the Senate hearing Powell outlined "three baskets" of Washington's policy on Iraq: the U.S.-led sanctions, enforcing the "no-fly zones," and building support for so-called opposition groups. In exchange for an agreement on more effective sanctions, the U.S. government said it would consider revising the list of products the United Nations restricts or prohibits for sale to Iraq. Some 1,600 contracts worth an estimated \$3 billion are currently being held up because of objections by Washington.

The secretary of state said recent moves by the U.S. government on sanctions did not reflect an easing of the embargo against Iraq. Instead, he explained, "We are trying to fix a collapsing situation with respect to the sanctions." He asserted the Bush administration aimed to "revive international support" for the sanctions, and defuse growing criticism that they are punishing Iraqi civil-

ians, the *Washington Post* reported March 8.

Several administration officials downplayed the sanctions, stating the embargo was the first part of an "evolving policy" toward ousting the Iraqi government. "Sanctions aren't a policy," declared U.S. deputy defense secretary Paul Wolfowitz at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee. "They're at best, a part of a policy."

Two years ago Wolfowitz, now-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld; Richard Armitage, the nominee for deputy secretary of state; and John Bolton, nominee for under secretary of state, signed a public letter urging the Clinton administration to adopt a "more muscular Iraq policy." The letter asserted that "the only acceptable strategy" for Washington would be one geared at overthrowing the Iraqi government.

Richard Perle, who was a foreign policy adviser for the election campaign of George Bush, appeared before a subcommittee panel of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in late February urging support to the Iraqi National Congress. He called for transporting figures connected with the bogus group into the "no-fly zones" of Iraqi territory. Then if Baghdad organized a "military response" in defense of its sovereignty, Washington would have its "assets in the air to protect" the imperialist-created grouping.

Sen. Samuel Brownback said the Bush administration should provide more money for arms and training to the group. "There is only one answer to solving this problem, and the answer is Saddam Hussein and get-



Thousands of women protest in Baghdad February 18 against U.S. bombing of Iraq two days earlier. Washington is preparing to step up aggression against Iraqi people.

ting him out of power," he stated.

Powell had announced to the House International Relations Committee that he had approved the release of more U.S. funds to the grouping. His statements coincided with stepped-up propaganda in the bourgeois media about kickbacks demanded by Iraqi government officials who are allegedly cheating on the "oil for food" program imposed on Baghdad four years ago by Washington and other imperialist powers. "Iraq Is Running Payoff Racket, U.N. Aides Say; Kickbacks Are Cited in 'Oil for Food' Plan," read a headline in the March 7 *New York Times*.

Washington's ongoing efforts to strangle the Iraqi people through sanctions has sharpened frictions among its imperialist rivals, in particular Paris, which hopes to rake in handsome profits from any oil deals, construction contracts, and other trade with

Baghdad. According to a March 9 report from Radio France Internationale, "The two countries openly clashed at yesterday's meeting of the UN Security Council." The report cited Washington's blocking of vaccines for measles, tetanus, and tuberculosis for children, "putting the lives of 4.7 million Iraqi children under the age of five at risk."

French foreign minister Hubert Védrine said Paris would not budge on its demand to end the sanctions against Iraq, which he described as "more and more cruel and less and less effective," the *Financial Times* reported March 2.

Meanwhile, the Russian-Belarusian oil company Slavneft signed an agreement with the Iraqi oil ministry March 6 to develop the Subba oil deposit in Iraq. Oil experts estimate that there are more than 105 million tons of oil reserves in the Subba deposit.

## New Jersey farmer fights to keep land

BY MARK BARTON

PISCATAWAY, New Jersey—"In 1952 there were 30 farms in this township. We're down to the last two or three and they want to steal one of them—our family's farm. But our farm is not for sale."

So explains Larry Halper, a 43-year-old farmer who, together with his wife Clara and their four children, is fighting to stop developers from seizing their farm. To add insult to injury, the land grab is being carried out under the guise of "environmentalism" and preserving "open space."

Halper and his family have been fighting to explain the facts of the case through protests at township council meetings, by tapping and televising these meetings on cable

TV, and through a recent door-to-door petition drive that netted the support of more than 3,000 neighbors and other residents of the town.

The 75-acre farm, which has been in the family for 80 years and four generations, was originally a chicken farm, then a dairy farm, and is today the site of a nursery operation, bridle paths, and a pumpkin crop. To make ends meet, Halper, like many other farmers, has taken on a second job delivering milk and eggs produced elsewhere.

"We had to shut down our own dairy operation in 1987 because milk prices were so low we couldn't make a go of it," he told the *Militant* during a recent visit. "But we've always had horses and grain and veggies."

To real estate developers, the Halper's farm is nothing more than the last—hence extraordinarily valuable—piece of vacant land in this bustling suburb 25 miles southwest of Newark.

The farm is hemmed in on all sides by major thoroughfares, a Wal-Mart and other shopping malls, and housing developments. Fifteen years ago Halper says he was offered, and turned down, \$22 million for the land.

Unable to force the Halper family to sell, the developers and their local political representatives—sometimes, Halper has found, the same person wears both hats—have taken legal action to have the land "condemned" so it can be taken over, allegedly to be preserved as "open space."

"As if our farm wasn't already an open space!" says Clara Halper. "And who knows better than a farmer how to preserve the land?"

In addition to the Halper farm, three other farms are being targeted in a similar fashion by officials in Bridgewater, North Brunswick, and the Warren Township Council.

Superior Court Judge Robert Longhi issued the original condemnation order against the Halpers in June 2000. In August he rejected the family's appeal for a reconsideration of his decision and denied their request that he throw out the case. The next step will be for the court to name commissioners to condemn the farm, which the Halpers plan to appeal as well.

Under the "open spaces" legislation, land taken at one price for supposed environmental purposes can later be reclassified or "exchanged" at the stroke of a pen and resold for many times the original amount for development.

Halper pointed to 12 cases in which this has already occurred in Piscataway. Responding to questions in August 2000 about seven cases in which "open space" land had either been sold or designated for development, former Piscataway mayor Helen Merolla acknowledged that it had happened, blaming an "oversight."

"They have offered me \$4.3 million for the farm, but I don't want to sell," says Larry Halper. "I offered the city the right of 'first refusal' in case we ever did want to sell. But my family and I want to stay here and my son, who is now 11, may want to continue the farm. I don't want to cut that off."

## Farmer speaks in Houston on Cuban Revolution

BY STEVE WARSHALL

HOUSTON—"This was one of the greatest educational experiences of our lives," said Karl Butts about a visit to Cuba last year by six farmers from the United States. The socialist system in Cuba means people "think and react differently than we are trained to do here, living in our cash nexus," he said. "They are not isolated and atomized with no one to fall back on like we are."

In Cuba they are developing truly social beings with a strong sense of solidarity."

Butts, a farmer from Florida, spoke to a group of 23 people at the University of Houston, part of a four-day visit to the area to discuss the farm crisis and the Cuban revolution. He was interviewed on a popular local radio program and by the Texas A&M University Agnet news service in College Station, which makes its programming available to affiliates across the state. Butts was also the featured speaker at a Militant Labor Forum, and spoke with workers outside of a meatpacking plant at shift change.

The farmers were hosted in Cuba by the National Association of Small Farmers. They were able to attend the organization's convention, visit Cuban farms, see for themselves the conditions on the land, and talk to them about the revolution and the problems faced by working farmers in the United States.

"Cuba is an example of what happens when the people take control of their society," he said at the university meeting. "There, the wealth that is created by labor is used for the benefit of all, not just that of a few billionaires." By making a revolution and carrying out a thorough-going agrarian reform, peasants won title to their land, he said. This cannot be taken away from them "because the Cuban Revolution ended the system of rents and mortgages that exploits

people around the world."

A student asked Butts how agriculture differed in the United States and Cuba. Pointing to a slide of a research center in Cuba, the Florida farmer said that farmers in the United States are pressed by capitalist market forces to use chemical-intensive methods, often regardless of safety, environmental, or long-term land-use considerations.

In Cuba, he said, "they take time and look at all chemicals, using good science to carefully measure their effects. This has enabled Cuban farmers to cut their use of chemical inputs over the years and rely on biological and other controls developed by scientists who work together with the farmers."

Butts describing how farmers are gouged through interest payments by the banks and high prices from the monopoly oil companies and chemical manufacturers. "The seed merchants, implement makers and dealers, and insurance companies then take their cut," he said. "And after all this, the farmer is then faced with the uncertainties of the market. If all the farmers have really productive years, we all go broke at harvest time."

A rancher from central Texas agreed with Butts and explained that he had "sold some calves recently and got only \$1.08 per pound. Compare that to the \$5.00 per pound for a T-bone steak in the supermarket. That price has nothing to do with the price farmers get for their efforts."

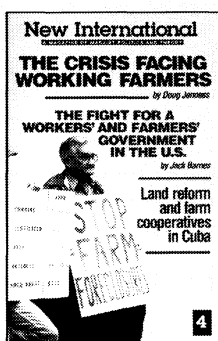
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# Wyoming miners: 'Glad to see that paper!'

BY BERNIE SENTER

KEMMERER, Wyoming—"Oh, I see that paper in the mine every week. Glad to see you here," was what one person told us as we sold the *Militant* at the entrance to the Pittsburgh & Midway (P&M) coal mine here in southwestern Wyoming. "I saw that paper in Price, Utah," said another as he purchased one. All told, 25 people bought the *Militant* from our sales team during the morning shift change March 14. Many remembered the paper and its coverage of their strike last year. One miner who is a subscriber to the paper said he brings it into work for others to read.

A miner explained that they only got a \$1.80 increase in wages over the six years of their new contract. "But the important thing is we beat back the 12-hour days" that the bosses demanded, the miner emphasized. Workers going to a nearby coke plant and power plant also stopped to buy the paper.

One miner said she saw the *Militant* at a "lady miners conference several years ago." Another miner stopped and handed us a bunch of money to get a copy. "Hey, that's a \$20 bill here," we reminded her. "That's OK," she said and sped off into the mine.

This warm response to the socialist newsweekly was won as a result of the consistent and factual coverage the *Militant* gave to the P&M strike. The local president of the United Mine Workers of America stopped to greet the team selling the paper and thanked us for showing up.

The week-long sales team to the region sold a total of 64 papers at five coal mines in Colorado and Wyoming. The team went to both union and nonunion mines, met with miners at their homes, visited a local bookstore to place Pathfinder books, and set up a literature table at a community college.

"One of the things we've done differently this time around is sell the paper at both the morning and afternoon shift changes at most of the mines," team member Tony Lane explained. "We had people stopping a second time to discuss some of the articles they read. Other people who didn't have money when



Militant/Susan LaMont

**Participants in March 4 commemorative action cross Edmund Pettis bridge in Selma, Alabama, where cops brutally assaulted civil rights activists in 1965 march. Some \$150 worth of Pathfinder literature and 25 *Militants* were sold at the recent event.**

they saw us the first time, purchased a paper when they came back."

"This also helped the team get a better feel for what's taking place in the mine," said Lane, "because we were able to talk to more miners about what they are facing."

## Sales team visits rail yard and soda ash mine in Wyoming

BY MARION RUSSELL

GREEN RIVER, Wyoming—We traveled from Grand Junction, Colorado, two weeks ago to sell the *Militant* to crews of workers at the big Union Pacific railway yard in this southwestern Wyoming city. We also wanted to learn what they thought of the strike by

members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE) on January 26. The workers were just coming in from Rawlins, Wyoming, and Salt Lake City, Utah. Two engineers, two car men, and a conductor bought copies of the *Militant*.

"They reneged on their agreement on personal leave days," said one engineer of the company as he bought a copy of the paper. "The only trouble is, all of our strikes are four hours long!" He was referring to the quick intervention by a federal judge who issued a restraining order on more than 8,000 engineers who stopped rail traffic on the largest freight railroad in the United States.

In Rawlins, BLE Local 142 chairman Dan Schumacher told us, "Everywhere we had terminals we set up pickets. No one crossed

our lines. We won in court, and now another contract is in the making."

Some of the workers we spoke with pointed to a successful action last year when members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMW) walked off the job in February in solidarity with their fellow workers in Laramie, Wyoming. Union Pacific (UP) planned to close a plant it owns that fabricates panels used in train derailments, lay off more than 30 employees, and buy the panels from outside contractors. All other unions honored their picket line and let the trains stack up along the track. The strikers were ordered back to work when Union Pacific filed an injunction, but the court also ordered UP not to lay off any of the workers or use any panels other than those manufactured by BMW employees. According to Schumacher, the plant in Laramie is still working today.

## Retired miners protest insurance hikes

Two weeks before our trip to the rail yard in Green River we visited the giant FMC trona (soda ash) mine there, where some 800 workers are employed. The mine produces soda ash for numerous industrial uses. We sold 10 copies of the *Militant* to miners there.

"Hey, where were you Monday? The retirees struck us!" stated one person in the first car that stopped. The miners explained how retirees (both salaried and hourly) put up a picket line in front of the plant on Monday, February 5. They were protesting hikes in the insurance premiums they must pay to remain in the company's health plan. Some premiums were raised 100 percent, leaving retirees paying more than \$700 for insurance each month. Before the day shift buses reached the plant, company representatives promised a meeting to address the higher premiums and other concerns.

One miner who stopped said, "We've wildcatted them twice. This is how corporations act. Give me one of those subscription blanks."

## Good sales of socialist literature at Alabama civil rights event

BY ARDY BLANDFORD

SELMA, Alabama—Socialist workers from Birmingham participated in the March 2-4 activities here that commemorated the 36th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery voting rights march of 1965. An estimated 2,000 people participated in the event, which included a march of 500. We set up a literature table for two days and sold nine copies of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning*.

Many women who came by the table were attracted to the pamphlet *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* by Thomas Sankara, a leader of the Burkina Faso revolution in the 1980s. Four people bought copies of the pamphlet. We could have sold more if we had them.

In all, we sold about \$150 worth of Pathfinder literature, including *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia*, *Capitalism's World Disorder* in French, two *Militant* subscriptions, one subscription to *Perspectiva Mundial*, and 25 copies of the *Militant*.

# Garment workers strike California plant

Continued from front page

25 cents more an hour to work in the feather department [stuffing pillows] but it's not worth eating dust for that amount. There is no proper ventilation and they don't give us masks."

At 7:05 that morning, a man and a woman arrived to attempt to go into the plant to work. The woman, sent by a temporary agency, didn't know there was a strike, and the pickets dissuaded her from walking through the line.

The man managed to break the picket line held by female workers, by shoving and punching the pickets, hitting Maria Solorio in the left eye with his fist. He was aided by an office employee who pulled him in through the front door.

Solorio, who was later treated by paramedics on-site for her swollen eye, subsequently said of the incident, "It did scare me to tell the truth, but not enough to stop me from coming back to this picket line every day."

The angry pickets began complaining that police should be protecting them instead of

harassing them. "Whose side are they on?" yelled some pickets.

After this incident 20 to 25 new workers, accompanied by a representative of the temporary agency, were sent to break the strike. While some pickets argued with the agency representative, others explained their cause to the new workers. After listening to the unionists, these workers agreed not to break the picket line and left the representative with the pickets.

Throughout the day several drivers scheduled to make deliveries at that location, including a UPS driver, refused to cross the picket line.

At the Boyle Street entrance to the plant, similar events took place. Some pickets stopped a J.C. Penney delivery truck at the gate. The police arrived to quell the disturbance, explained union representative Antonio Orea, "but we held strong, even when they threatened us with arrests."

At the same time, other pickets stopped a pickup truck with 10 workers sent by the Labor Ready temp agency a block and a half from the plant. After the pickets stated their

cause, the 10 explained that they didn't know about the strike and then left.

In addition, "the garbage man refused to cross," said Orea while addressing workers at the Boyle Street site. "Instead, he put on a UNITE T-shirt and encouraged us to stand strong." The strikers cheered.

Hollander Home Fashions has plants in Texas, Illinois, Georgia, and Pennsylvania, as well as in Canada. Union officials report that workers in those plants have carried out solidarity actions with the workers in Vernon, ranging from demonstrations, to petitions, to lunchtime meetings.

On March 12, several workers from Los Angeles and other cities attended a solidarity action organized by workers at the Hollander plant in Tignall, Georgia.

*Francisco Cipriano is a meat packer in Los Angeles. Wendy Lyons, a garment worker, is the Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of Los Angeles.*

## Workers in Georgia honor picket line set up by strikers from California

BY DEAN HAZLEWOOD

TIGNALL, Georgia—Operations were shut down at the Hollander Home Fashions pillow factory here March 12 when workers refused to cross a picket line set up by three strikers from the Vernon, California, plants. Most of the workers at the plant, who number more than 80, joined the pickets and milled around at the gates in high spirits despite the driving rain. Like the California strikers, the workers at this plant are organized by the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE).

The workers here have no pension plan but intend to fight for one when their contract expires in March 2002. Many of them saw this as round one in that fight.

About half a dozen second-shift workers initially crossed the line but soon came back

out and went home, much to the delight of the unionists at the gates.

A bonfire and several awnings were set up on a supporter's lawn opposite the plant, and food was available. Many copies of a letter sent out to the picket line by the company, advising workers to return to work immediately, ended up as fuel for the fire.

The next day the picket was even larger, and included at least a couple of workers who had crossed the line the previous day. It also included a few workers from other factories organized by UNITE.

The increasingly frustrated bosses announced that if workers did not return by March 14 they would lose their jobs. They also threatened to bus in replacement workers.

As we go to press, the pickets remain.

## Pathfinder launches \$80,000 fund drive

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Supporters of Pathfinder books launched an \$80,000 fund drive at the March 11 celebration in New York of the 40th anniversary of the Cuban people's revolutionary victory at the Bay of Pigs and successful literacy campaign. It was a solid start to the campaign, with participants in the event contributing more than \$2,700 and making pledges totaling about \$23,600.

Martin Koppel, editor of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, explained at the meeting that the fund will help make it possible to continue producing new Pathfinder titles and keep in print the entire arsenal of revolutionary books and pamphlets. These include titles like the three newest ones—*Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs*, *Making History*, and *Fertile Ground*, which socialist workers and Young Socialists have embarked on a

campaign to sell widely—and others such as the recently published pamphlet *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning*, which has come out in English, Spanish, and French and will also be published in Swedish and Icelandic.

"All these books are not only produced but are financed exclusively through the contributions of working people and others who support Pathfinder," Koppel stressed.

The campaign will go through late May. Supporters will be organizing public fund-raising meetings in the coming weeks.

To help with the fund campaign, contact your nearest Pathfinder bookstore (listed on page 12). To make a contribution, checks and money orders should be made payable to Pathfinder, and sent to: Pathfinder, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.

## Through revolution, Cuban women's role has changed

The following is an excerpt from the introduction to *Women and the Cuban Revolution*, edited by Elizabeth Stone. Copyright © 1981 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. The subheading is by the *Militant*.

BY ELIZABETH STONE

The women who joined the struggle against the dictator Batista in the 1950s had already begun to show the way. They played an important role in that fight. Women organized demonstrations and worked in the underground, collecting supplies for the guerrillas, selling bonds to raise money, creating hospitals, sewing uniforms, and hiding revolutionaries in their houses. They

served as messengers and spies. There are many stories about the role women played in transporting weapons under their skirts through the streets of Santiago and the other centers of revolutionary activity.

Some women became guerrilla fighters. Individual women fought on different guerrilla fronts and there was also a group of women combatants called the Mariana Grajales Platoon, named after the Black woman active in Cuba's first war of independence. This legendary unit grew to the size of a company during the final stages of the revolutionary war and was maintained afterwards.

The women who joined the struggle to overthrow Batista not only had to have the

courage to face the repression and torture of Batista's police, but they also had to buck the prevailing prejudice against women's involvement in politics. Describing the tremendous pressure put on women by their families and others not to participate, Haydée Santamaría, one of the leaders and heroes of the revolution, commented, "My own mother was the kind of woman who thought that men were the only ones who had the right to make revolutions."

Women had to counter the prejudices of their own comrades-in-arms as well. A speech by Fidel Castro, given in Granma Province on January 20, 1981, described the opposition among the male guerrilla fighters to women having a combat role:

"I remember that when I organized the Mariana Grajales Platoon—in fact, I took part in the combat training of those comrades—some of the rebel fighters were furious, because they didn't like the idea of a platoon made up of women. We had some spare M-1s, and the M-1 was considered a good light weapon and, therefore, we thought it would be the right one for the women. Some of our fighters wanted to know why they had Springfield while the women were going to get M-1s. On more than one occasion I got so annoyed that I would answer, 'Because they are better fighters than you are.' And the truth is that they showed it...."

One of the first activities to draw in large numbers of women was the creation of the militia. As the revolution deepened with the carrying out of the land reform and the nationalization of large imperialist holdings, the U.S. government and counterrevolutionaries within Cuba began to organize armed opposition. Bombings, sabotage of factories, and the burning of sugarcane fields went hand-in-hand with the threat of military attack from the United States. To help counter this a popular militia was organized in the workplaces and schools, and women who worked or who were students joined it.

There was a big hue and cry from counterrevolutionary elements about women's incorporation into the militia. They questioned the "morals" of women who dressed like men, wore pants, and carried guns. When the militia women went out to drill, they were sometimes greeted with rocks. There were also many supporters of the revolution who questioned whether women belonged in the militia. But every able-bodied person was needed to defend the country, and eventually most revolutionaries were won over.

The intensification of the counterrevolutionary attacks led in September 1960 to the formation of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs). Even larger numbers of women joined the CDRs, which were organized on a block-by-block basis. They guarded public buildings, watched for suspicious activities in the neighborhoods, and carried out other important tasks of the revolution.

On August 23, 1960, another big step was taken with the formation of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC). The FMC immediately began to organize masses of women, house by house, in the cities and the countryside, helping to build the militias and the CDRs, organizing the drive against illiteracy, setting up schools for peasant women, and establishing a network of childcare centers....

### Impact of literacy campaign

In 1961, the campaign to wipe out illiteracy was organized. It was a gigantic effort. A hundred thousand youth between the ages of ten and eighteen left their schools and went into the countryside as literacy *brigadistas* to teach people how to read and write. Over half of these *brigadistas* were girls and young women.

Fifty-five percent of those who learned to read and write were women. This was accomplished despite considerable resistance to including women in the campaign....

For the young women and girls who went out to teach, the experience was a wrenching break from the past. Until then, some of them had not even been allowed out of the house alone. Now they were traveling to the most remote parts of the countryside and mountains, where they shared the life of poverty of the peasants, not only teaching but also working with them in the fields....

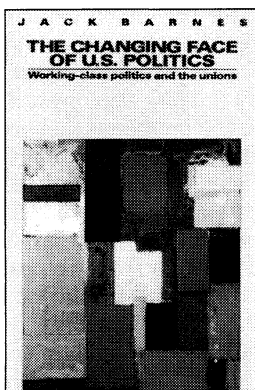
Years later, one former literacy teacher expressed it this way: "The literacy drive was the first time in my life, and I believe the first time in our history as well, that women were given an equal role with men in bringing about a monumental change."

Along with the literacy drive came other bold educational efforts. A school was set up in Havana for 20,000 maids. As their employers left for the United States, these former maids were trained as child-care workers, bank workers, and taxi and bus drivers.

Special schools were set up for former prostitutes too, where they could live, receive an education, and learn skills which would prepare them to be integrated into the labor force.

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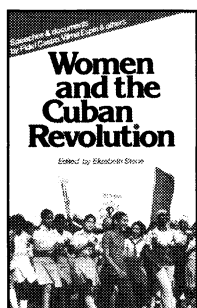
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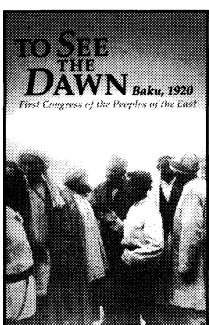


#### Woman's Evolution

*From Matriarchal Clan to Patriarchal Family*

EVELYN REED

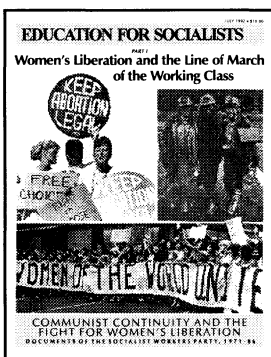
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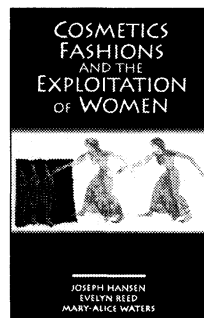
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# Report reveals facts on 1921 racist riot against Blacks in Oklahoma

BY RÓGER CALERO

A commission charged with compiling for the first time an official government record of the 1921 riot in Tulsa, Oklahoma, released its findings February 28. The May 31–June 1, 1921, rampage through Tulsa's Black community by a racist mob was one of the worst such riots in U.S. history. Through the determination of the survivors of the assault and the refusal by the Black community to let the events be swept under the rug forever, the Oklahoma state legislature in 1997 set up the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission to unearth the facts of the infamous days.

The commission's report explains that over the course of 16 hours a mob of up to 2,000 killed between 100 and 300 people; demolished the entire 35-square block Greenwood District; torched 1,200 homes, the Dunbar Elementary School, and six churches; destroyed two Black community newspapers, the *Tulsa Star* and *Oklahoma Sun*, along with offices of more than a dozen dentists, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals; and left 10,000 people homeless. No one has ever been arrested, charged, or prosecuted for any crimes perpetrated against the Black community on those two days.

It took the commission four years to complete its mission. The work by volunteers and others included digging through newspaper files, government and National Guard records, and historical archives; interviewing survivors; gathering photographs and secondhand accounts; and using sophisticated equipment to help reveal the location of unmarked burial sites of riot victims.

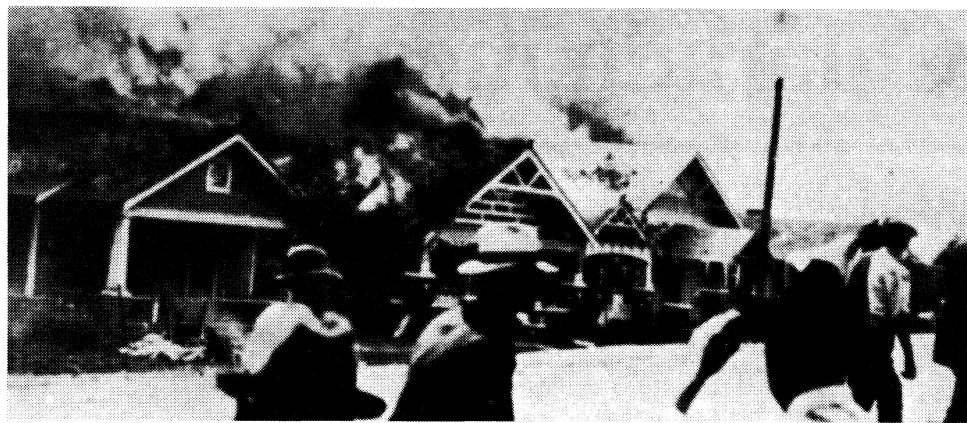
of the U.S. government, and descendants of runaway slaves who had fled to what was then the Indian Territories before and during the Civil War.

The majority of the city's 10,000 Blacks lived in the Greenwood district near downtown Tulsa. Kept out of the oil industry and from most of the manufacturing jobs by the employers, Black workers labored under harsh conditions as janitors, ditchdiggers, porters, day laborers, maids, and domestic servants. A small layer of Black businessmen and entrepreneurs grew up and fostered a prosperous commercial district that became known as the "Negro Wall Street." The community featured an active cultural, political, and social life, including a library, two newspapers, two large theaters, and a number of business associations, fraternal orders, and women's clubs.

But legal discrimination and violence against Blacks was as integral to Oklahoma as it was elsewhere in the country. Racist laws were being passed by both the state and federal government during those years. In 1911 Oklahoma adopted a number of segregation laws, ranging from barring African Americans from voting to mandating segregated phone booths, becoming the first state to do so.

## History of lynchings

Over this same period the practice of lynching criminals became more directed against Blacks. In 1911, all but one of the state's lynching victims were African Americans, and over the next decade 23 Black Oklahomans—including two women—



**In two days, a mob of up to 2,000 racists in Tulsa, Oklahoma, killed between 100 and 300 people; demolished an entire 35-block Black neighborhood; torched 1,200 homes, a school, and six churches; and left 10,000 people homeless. No one has ever been arrested, charged, or prosecuted for the crimes against the Black community.**

white press and praised by it afterwards, members of this outfit tarred and feathered more than a dozen local members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and forced them out of town at gunpoint.

## Armed Blacks try to stop mob

Events in Tulsa were precipitated with the arrest of Dick Rowland, a young Black worker, who was falsely accused of assaulting a 17-year-old white woman. Incited by inflammatory stories in the newspapers about the incident, a white mob began to gather outside of the Tulsa County Courthouse where Rowland was being detained.

Having every belief that Rowland would be lynched, 25 armed African American war veterans "decided to cast their lot not only with an endangered fellow member of the race, but also, literally, upon the side of justice," and offered their services to the authorities to defend the courthouse, the commission reports.

The appearance of the armed men had an electrifying effect on the white mob, estimated to be more than 1,000 strong. The authorities refused their offer but a second group of 75 Blacks returned to make another offer to defend the city building. By that time the crowd had grown to nearly 2,000 people. It was then, the report describes, that a shot went off after a white man tried to take away a gun from one of the Blacks as they were leaving the courthouse.

Almost immediately the white mob and possibly some law enforcement officers opened fire on the African American men who fired back in self-defense. They began a retreat, fighting their way back to the Greenwood district.

What followed was a pogrom that took place with the complicity of the city authorities and National Guard. In 16 hours of terror, the white mob shot, looted, and torched Black homes and businesses, forcing thousands to flee for refuge into the countryside. Reports by survivors of the attack that they were bombed from the air by Sinclair Oil Company planes are probably accurate, according to the commission.

Many who joined the assault were among the 500 white men deputized and armed after the shooting broke out at the courthouse, including the would-be lynchers who had gathered there that night.

The intervention of the National Guard was not only late and militarily inadequate, but, the report explains, targeted the Black community as well. Instead of disarming the racist mob, the Guard unit concentrated its efforts on disarming and arresting nearly all of Greenwood's residents, putting them in holding centers. It was the city's official policy to only release a Black person if a white agreed to take responsibility for the detainee's subsequent behavior.

Blacks organized to defend themselves and their community. John Hope Franklin in the foreword to the book *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* wrote, "Many more whites were killed during the riot than any whites were willing to admit" in the years that followed.

The report contains a chilling list of how "civil officials" deputized and armed those who perpetrated the violence and "failed to take actions to calm or contain the situation." People, "some of them agents of the government, also deliberately burned 1,256 homes, along with virtually every other structure" in the Greenwood district. "No government at any level," the report says, "offered adequate resistance, if any at all," to the assault, and in the end "the restoration of Greenwood after its systematic destruction was left to the victims of that destruction."

Although unable to determine the exact role of the Ku Klux Klan in the assault, "Everyone agrees that within months of the riot Tulsa's Klan chapter had become one of the nation's largest and most powerful, able to dictate its will with the ballot as well as the whip," the commission found. "Everyone agrees that many of the city's most prominent men were klans men in the early 1920s and that some remained klans men throughout the decade."

The *Daily Tribune*, according to the report, played a big role in playing up the charges against Rowland, with a May 31, 1921, headline "Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator." The paper is also said to have run an editorial, "To Lynch Negro Tonight." All copies of the pages with these two articles have been destroyed.

## Kept from history books

For half a century the Tulsa race riot went unacknowledged and almost forgotten in the official history books and newspapers. The report describes how the *Tulsa Tribune's* "Fifteen Years Ago" column ignored the riot and reprinted an article about Tulsa's social life as the most important event that year. Ten years later in the *Tribune's* "Twenty Five Years Ago" feature studiously ignored the riot again.

With the emergence of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and an increased awareness of African American history in the two decades that followed, the Tulsa riot began to get some exposure.

Interest in having the true history of the murderous assault on the Black community come to light was demonstrated by the fact that close to 50 people volunteered to help the commission as unpaid researchers and hundreds called the Tulsa County Historical Society volunteering information.

The 200-page report, which includes a number of pictures, can be found on the web at [www.ok-history.mus.ok.us/trrc.htm](http://www.ok-history.mus.ok.us/trrc.htm).



**Above, Tulsa authorities rounded up Blacks and interned them at Convention Hall. At least one man (foreground) was killed there. Some entrepreneurs sold postcards of the riot and its aftermath. Right, hand-written caption reads "Running the Negro Out of Tulsa, June 1, 1921."**



The commission recommended the state and city pay \$33 million in reparations, a proposal not readily welcomed by Oklahoma governor Frank Keating. Some legislators said they are more attracted to the suggestion of building a memorial site for the victims and providing some economic development funds to the Greenwood district where the rampage took place.

The commission report gives a glimpse of the social dynamics of institutionalized racism that existed in Oklahoma and the rest of the United States in the years leading up to the riot and in its aftermath. The report helps illustrate that the events were not an isolated case, but one example of the brutal methods used by the wealthy rulers against African Americans in the United States.

## Oil boom

Tulsa's population grew from 10,000 in 1910 to 100,000 in 1920 due to the rapid influx of workers seeking jobs in the booming oil industry. The migration of working people included Blacks looking for work and seeking to escape the racism and brutality of the Jim Crow system of segregation in the southern states. Tulsa's Black community also included descendants of African slaves who had accompanied Native American tribes in the Trail of Tears, forced marches out of their lands on orders

were lynched by whites in more than a dozen communities. In 1919 alone, "more than two dozen different race riots broke out in cities and towns across the nation," according to the report, and more than 75 Blacks were lynched by white mobs.

It was common, the report notes, for white politicians and the local media to promote and perpetuate racist attitudes and try to build resentment among whites against Blacks, especially by pointing to the supposed prosperity of the Greenwood district. With a drop in the price of crude oil and subsequent layoffs by the oil barons, the local rulers scagoated the Black community. During this time, the Ku Klux Klan, and other right-wingers were whipping up an anticrime and anticorruption campaign that blamed Blacks for the increase in crime and the inept politicians for not responding to the supposed threat.

Examples of right-wingers taking the law into their own hands as the way of dealing with the ills of society were frequently praised in the local media. The antiworker attacks were not limited to Blacks, even though they were usually the victims.

One example listed is that of the Knights of Liberty, a rightist antilabor organization formed in 1917 after the United States had entered World War I. Encouraged by the

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Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

# Colorado meat packers tell story of their strike

BY ROSE ANA BERBEO

FT. MORGAN, Colorado—After a three-day strike against the Excel beef slaughterhouse here in which the majority of the 1,600 production workers participated, some of the unionists discussed their action and the ongoing struggle to change the intolerable conditions that drove them to strike. Most of the meat packers are originally from Mexico or Central America.

"People are more united and more awake," said Ricardo Rodríguez, a fabrication (cut-floor) worker. "It's not going to be the same as it was before."

The fight against the company was precipitated by a six-year contract proposed by Excel and the union negotiating committee of Teamsters Local 961. The previous contract, a three-year accord covering 1,650 union members at the plant, expired February 25.

Adán Morales, a fabrication worker with nearly seven years in the plant, explained that the contract offer included a wage increase of \$2.00 over six years, a doubling of the yearly family insurance deductible to \$600, no overtime pay for holidays unless 40 hours are worked in the plant, and three weeks of vacation after eight years of service. Workers rejected the proposal in a 917-59 vote on February 25.

"After the vote, everyone was saying 'No work! If we're united, we'll win something,'" Morales said.

"We asked the union president to call the company president to come and negotiate or we'd go on strike," said Enrique Soto, a fabrication worker at the plant since 1992. A hand vote was quickly taken, and the majority decided to carry out a strike, despite opposition voiced by Local 961 president Douglas Whetstine, Soto reported.

Workers said the job action actually started the day before, when second-shift fabrication and kill-floor workers did not report to work on Saturday, February 24. They were angry about the six-year contract offer and sure that the company was not going to pay Saturday overtime, because the bosses had sent workers home earlier in the week after an hours-long blackout. The company had pulled the same trick of not paying Saturday overtime previously, workers reported.

## Workers arrested

After the union meeting where workers decided to strike, sheriff's deputies arrested Morales and Soto at their homes without warrants, holding them overnight until noon



Sean Crosier/Fort Morgan Times

Meat packers picket outside Fort Morgan, Colorado, Excel plant February 26.

the next day, Morales said. He added that Soto was not even read his rights, and neither worker was allowed to make a phone call. According to Morales, Morgan County sheriff Jim Crone told the two that Whetstine had brought charges against them of misdemeanor harassment and incitement to riot.

"They thought they would scare people and they wouldn't strike, but it was the opposite," Soto said. "People were furious, because Adán and I weren't guilty of anything, we were just workers defending our rights."

Added Morales, "They said I was inciting, but I was just a spokesperson, repeating what people were saying."

At 4:00 a.m. the next morning, about 600 workers gathered in the freezing cold in front of the plant entrance, chanting, "Three years only!" and carrying signs in English and Spanish that said, "No more injustice in the plant" and "Out with Abel Carrera and Billy Martinez!"—two hated managers at the plant. Within a half hour, \$2,000 was donated by the strikers to pay bail for Morales and Soto.

Both shifts, totaling more than 1,200 production workers plus maintenance workers, stayed out for two days, with a total of about 400 crossing the line, workers reported. They said the plant was so empty that the bosses went to get their relatives' and friends' cars to make the parking lot look full.

Workers got calls at home from the company telling them they would be fired if they

didn't come to work, and received letters February 27 that threatened to cut off wages and insurance benefits, saying "The current situation is an illegal wildcat strike." The Spanish translation of the letter said the strike was "*una huelga salvaje ilegal*," which literally means an illegal, savage strike.

"We heard through different sources that the company lost \$3 million the first day alone," said Enrique Chávez, a fabrication worker. "We heard the supervisors were going to lose their production bonuses, which go up to \$10,000."

Teamsters Local 961 officials refused to support the strike, with Whetstine telling the *Fort Morgan Times*, "This strike is illegal. It is not endorsed by Local 961 and the workers were told that yesterday."

By Monday afternoon, the company asked workers to negotiate.

On the picket line, workers elected a committee of eight, including Morales and Soto, that represented all departments and both shifts. Pickets drew up a list of 14 demands to present to the company. Among these were a three-year contract with a better raise, no mandatory overtime, basing the line speed on the number of workers on the line on a given day, a guarantee of two shop stewards on the production floor at all times, a maximum family insurance deductible of \$200 a year, and no more abusive behavior toward workers.

When union officials agreed February 27 to include three of the elected representatives on the union negotiating committee to meet with the company, workers decided to go back to work. Morales said Whetstine apologized to him and Soto that night and said he would drop the charges against them.

## Contract approved

In negotiations that included a federal mediator, the company presented as its final offer—a five-year contract that was almost identical to the one workers had rejected February 25, Morales said. The company threatened to close down the plant if the union didn't accept its ultimatum, he added. "They ignored our demands," Morales said.

"The biggest mistake we made was going back to work," Soto remarked. "We trusted them when they said they wanted to negotiate. Why the hell did we go back?"

While the company took no action against workers who had participated in the strike, supervisors throughout the week tried to intimidate workers to vote for the company's new offer, workers reported.

The company plastered posters around the plant with the union local's logo on it saying, "Vote Yes!" and supervisors went around telling workers that if they approved the contract, they would have a 60-cent raise immediately. The vote on the company's latest offer was held March 10. The contract was approved 300-216.

"Everyone at the meeting was saying, 'if the contract doesn't pass, then what?'" Morales reported. "Everyone was saying, 'let's strike,' but the union president said that even if we carried out a legal strike, we couldn't prevent the company from using replacement workers."

"A lot of people got up and said, 'I've been on strike in California, and when the people are united in a legal strike, no one

can cross,'" Morales said. Despite that, a lot of people felt they had no choice, and that's why the contract was approved, he said. "People feel like the contract was imposed on them—no one likes it," Soto said.

Workers noted that the company had canceled the Friday kill-floor shifts before the vote, and the Monday fabrication shifts. Many workers said they thought the company did that so they wouldn't have cows to process in the event that workers decided to strike again.

While no worker had been fired or suspended for participating in the strike, workers were expecting reprisals from the company.

"They took no action because they were waiting for the contract to pass," Soto said. "If they try to fire one of us, we'll all go," he added. "The company learned that before it does us injustice, they'll think twice. The people might get together again."

## Unbearable conditions

Workers described unbearable conditions at the plant, where 2,300 cows a shift are killed and processed. The line speed is one of the main problems, having risen from 250 cows an hour a year ago to 310 an hour. Workers are expected to do the same amount of work whether or not all positions are filled on a particular day.

"They do the same amount of work with three workers as with seven," said Chávez. "If you complain, they say, there's the door."

Workers described company discrimination, with bosses giving U.S.-born whites preferential treatment, although the majority of supervisors are Latino.

Many workers are forced to work injured. If they get put on "light duty", the company "makes life impossible" for them, shorting them on hours and sending them hustling around the plant to do dirty and heavy jobs that they shouldn't be doing, said Orlin Acosta, 24, a fabrication worker for six years. Acosta had three operations on his left wrist after a cow leg fell on it, with the company refusing to send him to a doctor for two weeks. Morales has had two operations on his wrists, and has lost movement in his hands.

Soto, Morales, and others said they had no previous strike or union experience. However, workers at the plant had staged a work stoppage over two days in May 1998 to protest the company's refusal to pay for time lost during an ammonia leak at the plant that hospitalized dozens of workers.

On that occasion, after taking hours to finally evacuate people, the company had kept first-shift workers around for hours while the employers dealt with the ammonia leak, and failed to advise second-shift workers that production was halted. Many workers travel up to an hour from the nearby towns of Greeley and Sterling to come to work.

When second-shift workers received their checks the following week and saw that the company was not paying them for the hours lost, they sat down in the cafeteria and refused to work until they received their pay. After an hour, the company told the workers they were illegally trespassing and called in police, who brought dogs and even pepper-sprayed some workers. Workers occupied the cafeteria until the end of the shift.

The next day, day-shift workers occupied the cafeteria at lunchtime and refused to return to work because the company had not passed out checks on time. The manager told workers they were all fired, and made a show of removing workers' files from the personnel office, but no one budged.

Finally, the company agreed to negotiate with four representatives elected by the workers and ended up paying both shifts the four hours' time lost for the ammonia leak. The company refused to pay the hospital bills of workers who were injured during the leak, however, including a woman who had a miscarriage.

Workers also described an immigration raid two years earlier, where the company inserted notes into about 50 workers' paychecks, asking them to attend a meeting for an unspecified reason.

When the workers were in the room, the door was locked behind them and immigration cops identified themselves, and deported the workers.

Rose Ana Berbeo is a meat packer in St. Paul Minnesota.

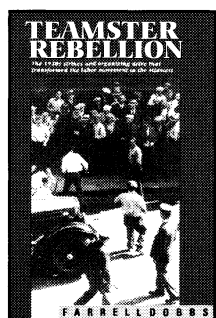
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# NY meeting marks Cuba's April 1961 victory at Bay of Pigs

Continued from front page

Washington's aggression. Also displayed were scenes of volunteers producing books in Pathfinder's printshop and party supporters helping produce reprinted titles; street sales of revolutionary literature; and construction efforts by socialist workers and young socialists in both Brooklyn and Seattle to prepare their new halls based in workers districts.

The first featured speaker at the event was Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder president, editor of *Making History* and *Fertile Ground*, and coeditor of *Playa Girón* together with Steve Clark. She pointed to a revealing story told in one of the many books that have attempted to explain the U.S. defeat in April 1961. In *Reflections of a Cold Warrior: From Yalta to the Bay of Pigs*, Richard Bissell, the CIA's head of covert operations at the time of the invasion, recounts how Secretary of State Dean Rusk asks why a "silver bullet"—an effort to buy off the enemy—wouldn't be more effective than an invasion of Cuba. Bissell explains that, unfortunately for the U.S. government, the silver bullet wouldn't have worked against revolutionary Cuba. U.S. capitalist politicians like Rusk, Waters explained, "couldn't see the men and women of Cuba and what they would prove capable of defending."

## Decade of collaboration by revolutionists

Forty years after Cuba's victory, Waters said, working people worldwide can celebrate the historic weight of that accomplishment. And this meeting, she continued, is also an opportunity both to celebrate the collective effort that many people made to produce the book, and to organize to study, use, and sell the book—at factories and mine

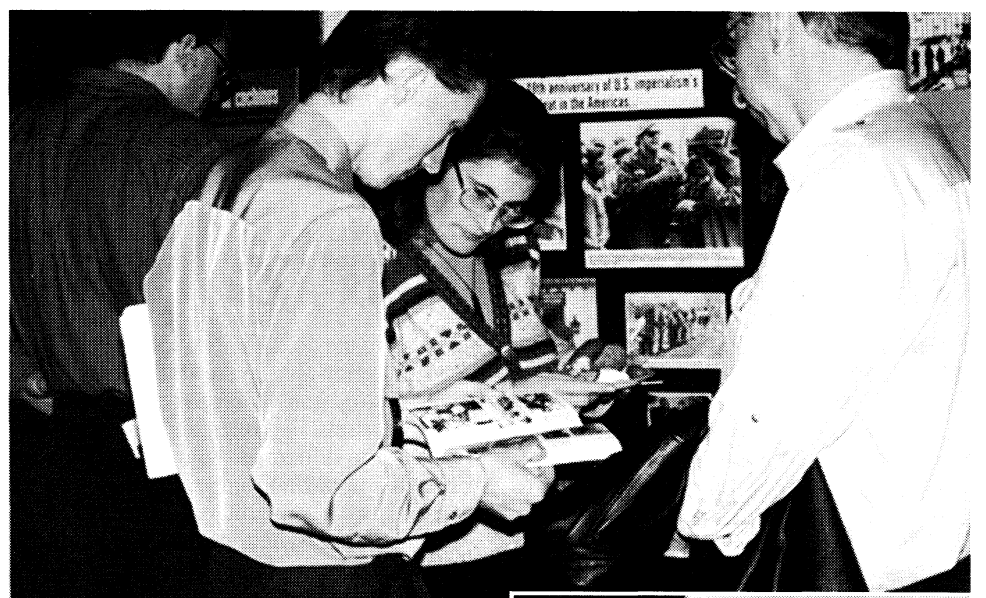
portals, on campuses, and to bookstores where workers and farmers buy books.

*Playa Girón* features the July 1999 testimony of Brig. Gen. José Ramón Fernández before a Havana court detailing the background to the April 1961 victory. Fernández commanded the main column of the Cuban forces that defeated the U.S.-organized invasion. The book also carries excerpts of speeches by Cuban commander-in-chief Fidel Castro before and after the battle.

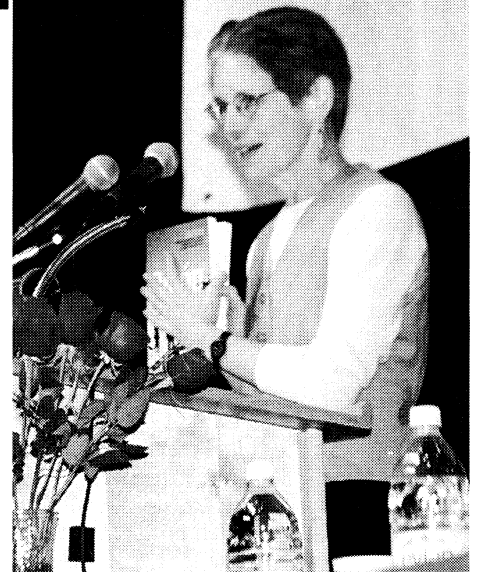
This book, Waters noted, is the cumulative product of collaboration between revolutionaries in the United States and in Cuba over more than a decade in an effort to get out the facts about the Cuban Revolution in Spanish and English, from *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara* to *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* and *Making History*, which consists of interviews with Fernández and three other Cuban generals. This collective work, Waters said, is making speeches and photos available that capture a revolutionary working-class history and continuity that would otherwise be lost forever. The books that have resulted from this work provide essential lessons for the working class in the United States, and are a crucial part of building a communist movement here, as well as internationally.

In working together with Cuban revolutionaries on photos, manuscripts, and maps, Waters said, "we were educating each other in the best sense of the word," listening, learning, and testing each other by working through challenges together over time.

Waters described the February 2-10 International Havana Book Fair, which attracted tens of thousands of Cubans hungry for books and ideas. Pathfinder had a booth at the fair. Waters introduced several people



Militant: above, Ruth Nebbia, right, Hilda Cuzco  
Above, participants in March 11 meeting browse *Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs* and study photo displays. Right, Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder president, coeditor of new book.



present on the platform, in addition to herself, who had been part of an international team staffing the Pathfinder booth or reporting on the fair for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*: Young Socialist Natalie Tremblay of Montreal; Olympia Newton, member of the Young Socialists National Leadership Council, who opened the March 11 meeting; Cindy Jaquith, a garment worker from Miami; and Martin Koppel, editor of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* and chairperson of the meeting that afternoon.

The Pathfinder exhibit at the nine-day Havana book fair drew thousands of visitors. One typical example was a group of Haitian youth studying in Cuba, who bought up every Pathfinder book in French. One of the students insisted, "We have to have these books—we need a Marxist perspective." Other workers, professors, and students visiting the booth had a similar thirst for books giving a class explanation of world politics.

## Strengthening of revolution in Cuba

Waters recounted a high point of the book fair, on the opening day. A mounting crowd of eager and persistent parents and children, when told the event would open a couple of hours later, would not take no for an answer—they had to go in and buy books. The police were finally persuaded to step aside and let the crowd pour in.

Among the wide array of literature, one of the largest and most attractive sections of the Havana book fair was the Children's Pavilion. The resources devoted to this center of children's books—which featured mime shows and music as well as a selection of international children's literature written by authors including Mark Twain and Jules Verne—were an illustration of how the Cuban Revolution has fostered a culture of reading, beginning at an early age.

The breadth of literature and ideas represented at this literary festival, and the response to it by thousands of Cubans, is one sign of the strength of the Cuban Revolution, Waters noted.

Another initiative to broaden culture among working people in Cuba today, she added, is the University for All, a popular series of nationally televised classes that make the study of English and Spanish literature, art and music appreciation, and other subjects available to the entire population, young and old.

Waters pointed to a parallel development—a new campaign led by the Federation of University Students and the Union of Young Communists (UJC) to mobilize youth to visit the poorest working-class neighborhoods and make door-to-door visits to learn about some of the most pressing problems the residents face. The youth then report to the government what they have learned, and make proposals that sometimes include immediate material assistance with such items as mattresses or toys where they are lacking.

In his presentation, Jack Willey, organizer of the New York City Socialist Workers Party, said:

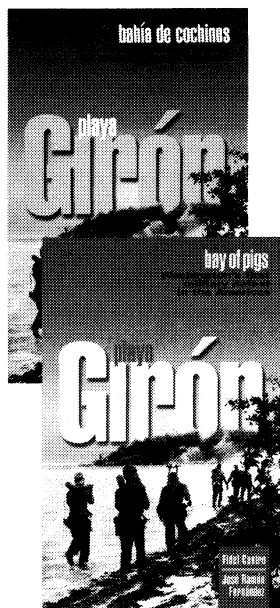
Continued on Page 12

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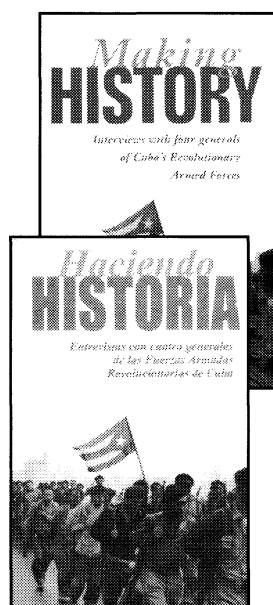
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# Brooklyn SWP inaugurates hall

BY ANGEL LARISCY

BROOKLYN, New York—Close to 80 people attended a standing-room-only Militant Labor Forum March 10 celebrating the opening of the new headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party branch in the Sunset Park area of Brooklyn.

The forum on "The Crisis Facing Farmers Today," given by Maggie Trowe, was followed by a lively discussion. It was a part of a weekend of activities that featured a meeting the following day to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Cuba's victory over the U.S.-organized invasion at the Bay of Pigs.

The opening of the hall comes after months of political activity by socialist workers and Young Socialists, who have been selling books and pamphlets in Sunset Park to garment, packinghouse, and other workers there, and have found a thirst for revolutionary literature and interest in the communist movement.

The top sellers have been titles on the Cuban Revolution, which many workers have expressed surprise and pleasure to find in the United States.

The large majority of workers who live and work in the area are originally from Puerto Rico, Mexico, and other parts of Latin America.

In one week, with help from volunteers

around the New York area, local supporters of Pathfinder carried out a construction project to tear down a wall and build bookshelves, a counter, and a sign in time for the opening.

Attending the event were guests from other cities in town for the weekend events as well as workers from nearby shops in the Bush Terminal garment complex.

The hall will serve as a center of working-class politics. It will be the site of regular Friday night Militant Labor Forums, as well as a Pathfinder bookstore and a place to participate in classes and discussions on political questions of interest to working people.

Volunteers organize teams out of the bookstore during the week to set up literature tables on the streets in shopping areas and at the large garment complexes and factories in this workers district.

Plans are now being mapped out to participate in the international campaign to sell subscriptions to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, as well as to increase the sales of Pathfinder titles, including the campaign to sell three new books—*Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs*, *Making History*, and *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia*.

For more information on forums, classes, and the bookstore's hours, call (718) 567-8014.

# From El Salvador to Ecuador, toilers resist effects of 'dollarization'

BY RÓGER CALERO  
AND MAURICE WILLIAMS

In face of the instability and financial crisis faced by semicolonial countries, a number of capitalist governments in Latin America and the Caribbean are moving to adopt the dollar as their national currency. This is being promoted from Washington to Buenos Aires as a way to curb inflation, attract foreign investment, and curtail devastating currency fluctuations.

The range of measures being adopted undercut national sovereignty and limit the ability of each country to defend itself against sudden shifts and downturns in the world capitalist economy.

Capitalist investors, government officials from several countries in Latin America, representatives from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other bourgeois figures have held numerous forums and debates on this policy, often called "dollarization."

"The biggest reason a country might want to dollarize is that its central bank has performed poorly, and under the circumstances dollarization is the most effective way of achieving a sound currency," answered Kurt Schuler, senior economist at the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress.

Over the past year, the governments in Ecuador and El Salvador have adopted the U.S. dollar as their official currency. The regime in Guatemala plans to replace its currency with the dollar on May 1, and the Dominican Republic as well as some of the English-speaking Caribbean governments are giving strong consideration to this shift.

For the past decade, the government in Argentina has pegged the value of its peso at one-to-one with the U.S. currency, and prominent capitalist politicians there have advocated adopting the dollar outright. The dollar has officially circulated in Panama since 1904.

In each case adopting the dollar has gone hand-in-hand with a government's drive to deepen its austerity program, accelerate the sell-off of state-owned industries, and open the country's natural resources more to imperialist exploitation. Working people are told these measures are the only alternative to hyperinflation, which can rapidly wipe out savings and lower the buying power of already meager wages.

Through a national currency a government is able to use monetary policy to respond to a variety of economic developments. These include setting interest rates, steps to increase or tighten the money supply, measures to raise or lower the value of the currency, and control individuals' ability to take money out of the country by purchasing of foreign currency. Measures such as these can curb currency speculation and affect the price of imports and exports, thus helping to boost economic activity or protect domestic markets, for example.

Governments in countries that completely

convert to the dollar and no longer print their own currency give up the ability to use monetary policy and other levers to their benefit. All assets, liabilities, and prices are converted into dollars at the current exchange rate. If the old currency is still in use, reserves, payable in gold, precious metals, or U.S. dollars are held against the country's monetary base. Argentina, for example, holds \$15 billion in U.S. Treasury bills to back the peso.

## Washington looks out for its interests

Washington has made it clear it will not adjust its policies to suit the needs of countries that adopt the dollar. "It hardly needs emphasizing that the [U.S. Federal Reserve Board] will choose monetary policies based on U.S. conditions, not on the conditions of the dollarizing country," remarked Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Center for International Development at Harvard University.

Many in the imperialist ruling class in the United States and other capitalists favor countries adopting the dollar as official currency because it eliminates a range of inconveniences and problems stemming from having to deal with what can be unpredictable exchange rates or measures that inhibit maximum ease of imperialist banks, investing firms, or other corporations moving capital in and out of the country.

The government in El Salvador christened the dollar as an official currency this past New Year's Day. Even though the colon will be maintained as legal tender at a fixed exchange rate of 8.75 colones to the dollar, government officials say their goal is to replace it entirely. Carmén de Alemán, vice president of the Central Reserve Bank of El Salvador, said that the country only needed \$450 million out of its \$2 billion reserves to match the colones in circulation.

"The colones will be retired out of circulation to the extent that Salvadorans demand dollars, at the end they will be the ones that will decide what currency they will use to make their transactions," said Alemán. As part of its "Monetary Integration Law," El Salvador has arranged with the IMF to have access to \$35 million "just in case it is needed," asserted Rafael Barraza, president of the Central Reserve Bank. The law bars the country's central bank from issuing more colones.

In El Salvador last month, the supreme court heard arguments from the Foundation for Studies for the Application of Law concerning the constitutionality of the monetary legislation. They have been joined by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). The FMLN's deputies to the national assembly had tried to get the law overturned last January.

The opposition's main claim was that the law was unconstitutional and that the government should have consulted other political parties. They called for a plebiscite on replacing the colon with the U.S. dollar as



More than 2,000 rally in Quito, Ecuador, January 21 to mark anniversary of ouster of President Jamil Muhaud, forced out by huge actions against austerity policies. Foreign investors demand moves to ensure economic stability, at expense of working people.

the country's official currency.

In Argentina, the government adopted a Convertibility Law in 1991, which established a currency board system setting the peso at a one-to-one ratio with the dollar. The law places sharp limits on the printing of money by the country's central bank in order to keep government-run banks from going bankrupt. Under Argentina's currency board, dollars are legal tender along with pesos, and the amount of pesos in circulation has to be equal to the country's reserves in dollars.

Despite these moves, Argentina sank into a deep, 18-month recession in 1995 following the devaluation of the Mexican peso. There was a run on Argentine banks as the propertied classes sought to turn in their pesos for U.S. dollars. The wealthy did not want to be caught with their holdings devalued in a depreciated currency. Argentine banks lost some 20 percent of their deposits and capital flight amounted to some \$8 billion.

Four years later, the regime of President Carlos Menem called for abolishing the peso and replacing it with the U.S. dollar in response to a currency devaluation in Brazil, Argentina's largest trading partner. A layer of the ruling class in the country sees this as a way to reduce and eventually eliminate frequent speculation about devaluation of the peso.

## Stability for profitable investments

Ruling-class figures in the United States are debating whether Argentina's currency board and the dollarization of other Latin American countries is the "best approach" to ensure stability for profitable investments. "Sticking to the currency board may condemn Argentina to a perpetual cycle of boom and bust as its economy is alternately stimulated and shocked by measures aimed at a different market," said the editors of the *Washington Post*.

Over the past year especially, Argentine exports have been hit hard because of the strength of the U.S. dollar on world markets. This helped lead to another financial crisis late last year. As Argentina teetered on the brink of defaulting on payments toward its \$123 billion debt owed to U.S. banks and other financial institutions, the IMF granted a \$40 billion "bailout" loan and demanded the regime impose austerity measures as conditions for the deal.

The reshuffling of the entire cabinet by President Fernando de la Rúa in early March, after 32 months of official recession, is the latest sign of political and economic turmoil in the country. One out of every four residents of the capital is living below the official poverty line and about 35,000 small industrial or agricultural companies have closed over the past decade. Argentina's official unemployment rate hit 15.4 percent in December.

Ruling-class layers in both the United States and Argentina worry about whether the regime is strong enough to push through cutbacks in the face of continued protests by workers and farmers. These included a 36-hour general strike last November where millions of workers walked out of factories, airports, railroads, buses, banks, schools,

and government offices, shutting down the country.

"Fixed foreign exchange rates have a way of blowing up when the going gets tough," warned a December 7 *New York Times* article on Argentina. "The fixed rate is supposed to discipline governments, which learn they cannot simply print money to get around problems and therefore must make the tough decisions needed for economic stability."

## Resistance to austerity in Ecuador

Resistance to these "tough decisions" and the capitalist rulers' attempts to impose "strict fiscal discipline" are what has been at the center of mobilizations by workers and peasants in Ecuador as well, where mass actions in February forced the government of Gustavo Noboa to retreat from a steep increase in the cost of gasoline, cooking gas, and public transportation. The protests included farmers blocking roads and thousands of indigenous people marching in the capital, Quito.

"Noboa, Ecuador's sixth president in five years, has been weakened by this battle," noted the *Economist*. The two previous Ecuadorian presidents were forced to resign when they tried to impose similar measures.

Last year the regime in Ecuador approved legislation replacing the country's national currency, the sucre, with the dollar at an exchange rate of 25,000 sucres to the dollar. The government plans to withdraw the last sucre bills from circulation in March. Along with this move, the government has pressed austerity policies against workers and peasants to make the country attractive to foreign investors.

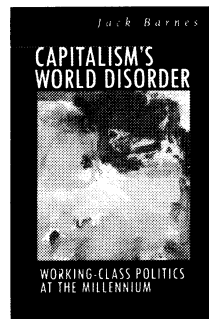
In Ecuador, the price of the basic food basket went up from \$253 in the month of December to around \$270 in January, at the same time that the monthly minimum income went down. In March last year the average monthly household income was \$52 compared to \$193 dollars in 1997.

The transition to the U.S. currency has also brought some other complications. One concern of U.S. and local government agencies is the amount of counterfeit currency circulating in Latin America right now. News reports indicate many small vendors complain they have been victims of counterfeit schemes since they are not familiar enough with the new currency to detect fakes.

Other problems that have a more direct impact on working people are linked to social ills such as high levels of poverty and illiteracy that exist in these countries. In Ecuador, for example, before the dollar was adopted, the sucre was printed on different colors of paper according to the denomination. To introduce the dollar the government printed an instruction book to explain the value of the various denominations, but many cannot read the book. U.S. coins only have their value written in English.

Even some capitalist politicians in Latin America have noted that dollarization infringes on a country's sovereignty. They point to the fact that in the late 1980s, for example, the U.S. government cut off the supply of dollars to Panama in its effort to overthrow then President Manuel Noriega.

## FROM PATHFINDER



### Capitalism's World Disorder

WORKING-CLASS POLITICS AT THE MILLENNIUM

Jack Barnes

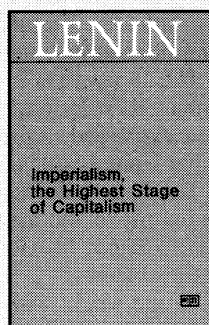
The social devastation, financial panics, political turmoil, police brutality, and military assaults accelerating all around us are the inevitable forces unleashed by capitalism. But the future capitalism has in store for us can be changed by the timely solidarity, courageous action, and united struggle of workers and farmers conscious of their power to transform the world. Also available in French and Spanish. \$23.95

### Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism

V.I. Lenin

"I trust that this pamphlet will help the reader to understand the fundamental economic question, that of the economic essence of imperialism," Lenin wrote in 1917. "For unless this is studied, it will be impossible to understand and appraise modern war and modern politics." \$3.95

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# Caravan from Chiapas shows backing by Mexico's working people for Indian rights

Continued from front page

*cial Times* of London reported in its March 8 issue, noting that the public rallies along the way drew "thousands of youth."

The 12-state tour, covering more than 2,000 miles through southern Mexico, was aimed at demonstrating popular support for a bill on Indian rights and autonomy, also known as the San Andrés Accords, that has been stalled in Congress for the past five years.

At the March 11 rally in the nation's capital, EZLN leaders said they would stay in the city until this measure was passed. The following day they addressed a congressionally appointed "peace commission."

"Mexico, we do not come to tell you what to do," stated Subcommander Marcos, the central EZLN leader, to the Mexico City rally. We do not come to guide you in any direction. We only come to ask respectfully that you help us, that you do not allow that there be another dawn for this [Mexican] flag without us." He added, "We do not aspire to hold power."

The indigenous struggle in southern Mexico drew national and world attention on New Year's Day 1994 when some 2,000 combatants of a newly announced organization, the EZLN, carried out armed occupations of several towns in Chiapas for a few days, including San Cristóbal de Las Casas, a city of 85,000. The federal government responded with repression, sending 12,000 troops to Chiapas—one-fifth of its army—along with some tanks, helicopter gunships, and warplanes. Close to 150 people were killed in 12 days of fighting.

Over the course of the following year the government, led by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), sent 50,000 troops to Chiapas, where they have acted like an occupation army, besieging Indian communities that back the EZLN. Although a ceasefire has been in place for most of the conflict, hundreds of people have been killed in the repression.

Peace talks between the government and the EZLN have made little progress since 1996 when the Zapatistas accused the government of renegeing on preliminary accords setting forth indigenous rights. The bill now in the Senate would enact the San Andrés Accords into law and provide constitutional

rights for Indian communities to conduct their affairs—including administering justice, choosing leaders, and owning land—according to tradition and custom.

Fox and his top officials have expressed confidence that such an accord will be reached rapidly—and their hope that the indigenous rights fight will be over after that. "I am very confident that this will work out well," declared Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda. "Marcos is going to get his law and that will be the end of it."

Of Mexico's population of 100 million, at least 10 million belong to indigenous peoples—such as the Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Chol and Tojolabal of Chiapas—who speak 62 different languages. They confront abysmal living conditions, a result both of national oppression within their country and the superexploitation of this semicolonial country by U.S. imperialism. More than 90 percent of Indians in Mexico live in housing with no sewage system, and 60 percent of their houses do not have running water, according to government reports. Close to 45 percent are illiterate. Three-quarters have not completed primary school and many have had no schooling. Seventy percent of Indian children suffer problems related to malnutrition. Infant mortality among the indigenous population is 70 percent higher than the national average.

Mexican president Fox, with his eye toward achieving a measure of social stability and further opening southern Mexico to foreign investment, has called for rapid measures to reach a settlement with the EZLN. Seeking to avoid a public debate



More than 100,000 workers and peasants rallied March 11 in the main square in Mexico City welcoming Zapatista caravan, which had traveled 2,000 miles through 12 states over a two-week period. Reception showed widespread identification of working people with struggles of country's indigenous peoples.

with EZLN leaders, he has called the march from Chiapas a "bridge for peace." Fox assigned a federal escort and police officers to guard the caravan over the course of its trip.

Since taking office December 1—after his conservative National Action Party (PAN) scored an electoral victory over the PRI, which had ruled the country for 71 years—Fox has closed four of the military's seven bases in the Chiapas area and released 50 imprisoned Zapatista supporters, while proclaiming his interest in negotiating a peace agreement and passing a bill on Indian rights.

The EZLN is demanding that the three additional military bases be closed and that all imprisoned Zapatista supporters be released. The governor of Chiapas, Pablo Salazar, announced March 8 that he was immediately freeing the other 19 imprisoned Zapatista sympathizers and dropping arrest warrants that were out for seven others.

Some PAN leaders and other capitalist politicians expressed disagreement with Fox over the EZLN caravan. The governor of Querétaro, Ignacio Loyola, for example, warned Marcos to stay out of that state or face a firing squad. Nonetheless, the March 8 *Financial Times* reported, "the rebel convoy pulled into Querétaro this week, where Marcos addressed a huge rally, called Mr. Loyola an 'imbecile,' then asked permission from the crowd to stay the night. The governor left town for the day."

In Nurio, a Purepecha Indian village in the western state of Michoacán, some of those on the caravan attended a National Indigenous Congress on March 3. The event attracted several thousand Indians and other supporters.

The state of Oaxaca, where the EZLN-led caravan passed through, has the largest indigenous population in the nation, as well as one of the highest levels of poverty. Dozens of people traveled for hours from the town of Santa Cruz Tepenixtlahuaca to join a rally in the city of Oaxaca to demand the government install a water system and build a road to their village.

Chiapas, where the 1994 rebellion by the Zapatistas took place, is Mexico's poorest state, but also one of the richest in natural resources such as oil and lumber.

An article in the *Financial Times* in early March pointed to the Mexican president's interest in expanding imperialist investment in this region. "Fox is aggressively moving forward," the article stated, in "christening Chiapas the 'central axis' in his vision to integrate southern Mexico with the neighboring economies of Central America."

Responding to a recently signed free trade agreement between Mexico and five Central American governments, Fox is seeking to upgrade the region's commerce-related infrastructure. This includes expanding the port capabilities in Puerto Madero, Chiapas, located on the border with Guatemala, as well as setting up an industrial park and a free trade zone for fisheries. "Bringing foreign investors to Chiapas is priority number one," stated Felipe Tomé, an adviser to the Mexican president. Fox also plans to refurbish the railroad connecting central Mexico with Guatemala.

In his third trip to Chiapas in the last three months, Fox insisted, "We are not going to wait for peace to promote development and we are not going to promote development in order to bring peace."

In the name of "development," Fox's plan is to accelerate the sell-off of the country's national patrimony—begun under previous PRI administrations—to investors from imperialist nations. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the Mexican government expects to raise between \$3 billion and \$4 billion from privatization programs this year. State-owned property being placed on the auction block in 2001 will include the country's airlines, AeroMexico and Mexicana de Aviación, as well as an 85 percent stake in two groups of Mexican airports.

## Washington, Seoul differ on stance to north

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

The aggressive stance taken by U.S. president George Bush and his officials toward north Korea has placed the administration at odds with the position the government of President Kim Dae Jung of south Korea has been following. This was registered at talks between the two heads of state in Washington on March 7.

The south Korean president has declared his intention of signing a "peace declaration" with the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the coming months, and is actively pursuing rail and other links across the border of the divided nation.

Bush, on the other hand, has placed negotiations with Pyongyang on hold while a "thorough review" of relations with the DPRK is undertaken. The recent public shift in Washington's policy has alarmed the south Korean government, which is pursuing closer relations with the workers state in the north, and had supported efforts by President William Clinton to pressure Pyongyang into signing a "missile accord."

In broad terms, that accord was designed to outlaw missile exports by Pyongyang, bar the development of missiles with a range of more than 180 miles, and other concessions demanded by Washington. In exchange, the north Korean government had proposed an increase in aid from the U.S. government and assistance in developing satellites. In December, Clinton himself froze efforts to bring the deal home, announcing that his promised trip to Pyongyang was off.

In addition, Bush has put a question mark over Washington's compliance with a 1994 deal with Pyongyang dubbed the Agreed Framework. Under this agreement, involving the governments of the north and the south, as well as Japan and the United States,

Seoul and Washington agreed to construct two light-water nuclear power stations and provide fuel oil and other assistance to north Korea in exchange for concessions on missile development. Implementation of the accord is already well behind schedule.

The White House has stepped up its fear-mongering propaganda offensive against Pyongyang, questioning the government's reliability and criticizing its supposedly unusual secrecy. Bush's officials regularly call north Korea a "rogue nation," an epithet used by the Clinton government as justification for initiating development of a missile shield designed to give Washington a first-strike advantage in any nuclear conflict. Bush has criticized Clinton's missile shield as inadequate, and has announced his intention to proceed with a scaled-up National Missile Defense, continuing to use a possible strike from north Korea as a key pretext.

A regular U.S. theme is that north Korea, in the words of *Wall Street Journal* columnist George Melloan, quoting from a 1998 report by a congressional commission headed by present secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld, is a "major proliferator of missiles of ballistic missile capabilities, selling missiles and support equipment to Iran, Pakistan and others." The same report claimed that "North Korea maintains an active WMD [Weapons of Mass Destruction] program," including nuclear and biological weapons.

U.S. military and "intelligence" officials allege that Pyongyang is reinforcing its defenses along the demilitarized zone, which has divided the north and the south since 1953. According to the *New York Times*, the "North [has] begun laying fiber-optic cables [to] stymie American intelligence gathering and bolster its ability to unleash a devastating conventional attack on Seoul."

One administration official stated bluntly the day before the talks that "the North Korean regime is a problem and [President] Kim Jong Il is a problem."

### Nervous capitalists in the south

Although President Kim Dae Jung maintains a deferential tone when referring to Washington, he has so far continued to defend his "sunshine policy" of closer relations with the north. He speaks for a substantial layer of the ruling class in semicolonial south Korea that fear the war threats that are a logical outcome of Washington's confrontational policy. In spite of their own massive armed forces, and the presence of 37,000 U.S. troops on south Korean soil, they are less than confident of their survival in any conflict.

The government in the south also feels the heat from mass support among Koreans for the reunification of their U.S.-divided nation.

These political differences marked the March 7 meeting and surrounding events. In the week before the summit, the White House sharply criticized a statement that Kim and Russian president Vladimir Putin issued after holding talks in Seoul. The joint statement endorsed the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Moscow has consistently pointed out that Washington's "missile defense" would violate the terms of the 1972 treaty between the two powers.

The south Korean and Russian heads of state described the treaty as a "cornerstone of strategic stability" in their February 27 statement. As Washington pressed Seoul for an explanation, one Bush administration official stated, "We certainly don't consider it the cornerstone."

In what appeared to be a half-hearted re-

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# Meeting marks April 1961 Cuban victory

Continued from Page 9

Party, emphasized the significance of the 15th World Festival of Youth and Students, which will be held in August in Algiers, capital of Algeria. "Thousands of young people from dozens of countries on every continent of the globe will converge on Algiers for an anti-imperialist world youth festival, where they will be part of discussions, debates, and exchanges of ideas on how to advance the struggles of the toilers from Ireland to Ecuador to imperialist centers such as the United States," he said.

Willey had just returned from participating, as part of a Young Socialists delegation, in an international preparatory meeting for the festival, held in Rome in conjunction with a meeting of the General Council of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY). Two other members of the YS delegation were present on the stage, Roberta Black, a meat packer from Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Argiris Malapanis from Miami.

"It's important that the festival will be in Algeria," Willey explained, as the site for an event that can draw youth broadly from around the world. Algeria is a good place to hold it because of the revolutionary legacy still evident in that North African nation, where workers and farmers threw off French colonial rule in the early 1960s and established a workers and farmers government that existed for several years.

Willey noted the efforts by those organizations in WFDY that are seeking to build an inclusive, anti-imperialist festival in Algiers, drawing youth from many regions to learn from each other, and opposing attempts to close it off to differing political currents.

This effort, Willey explained, is part of the long-term work to rebuild a worldwide anti-imperialist youth organization. Participants from the United States can use events like the upcoming U.S. tour of Cuban youth leaders to build a broad delegation to the festival. He reported that several new youth groups were voted in as WFDY affiliates, including the Youth of the Labor Party of St. Lucia, the Youth of the Socialist Party for Power of Turkey, and the Young Socialists of New Zealand.

## Building broad U.S. delegation

"Pathfinder books are one of the greatest tools to facilitate revolutionaries meeting each other," Willey said, describing how a representative to the meeting from the African National Congress Youth League of South Africa picked up 14 Pathfinder books to read and share on his return. This isn't too different, Willey remarked, from his experiences on book tables in the New York City Garment District, where workers originally from West Africa snap up, among other books, collections of speeches of Burkina Faso communist leader Thomas Sankara.

Twenty-three organizations are sending representatives to Algiers for three months leading up to the world youth festival in order to prepare the gathering. Participants in the Rome meeting proposed that representatives from the United States be part of this preparatory work. A March 24 meeting of the U.S. Preparatory Committee will decide who the representatives will be.

## Invaders 'ran out of will to fight'

Jack Barnes, SWP national secretary and author of the foreword to *Playa Girón*, noted that in Cuba, 1961 was the Year of Education. Many people are impressed with the fearlessness of the Cuban toilers in the face of death, he said, but what is different about those who were transforming themselves was their attitude toward life. The conquests

workers and farmers made with the literacy campaign and other steps to broaden culture were at the heart of what the Cuban people defended so fiercely at the Bay of Pigs, Barnes said.

"The word 'education' has a different meaning in Cuba than anywhere else in the world," Barnes said, because of the transformed social relations that are only possible through socialist revolution. The meaning of education in Cuba is captured in the emblem of the UJC, which pictures a rifle, a shovel, and a pencil—the intertwined activities of defense of the revolution, work, and schooling, all of which are part of working people gaining more control over their lives and broadening their horizons.

The new Pathfinder book, Barnes said, helps answer several false contentions about the Bay of Pigs, including the argument by bourgeois critics of John F. Kennedy that the invasion failed because it was ill-planned or bungled by mistakes made by the Kennedy administration.

Fernández explains in his testimony in the new book that "from a strategic and tactical point of view, the enemy's idea was well-conceived.... What they lacked was a just cause to defend." Washington's choice of the Bay of Pigs as the invasion site was sound. The invaders' problem, Barnes said, was that "they ran out of the will to fight before they ran out of bullets."

## A model of mass work

The foreword, Barnes explained, highlights the impact the Cuban Revolution had on the class struggle in the United States. In recounting the work of students and others involved in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and how they responded to decisive events, "the foreword describes a model of

mass work," he said, work that involved collaborating and contending with various political currents in opposition to U.S. policy toward Cuba.

As the U.S.-organized invasion unfolded and was defeated, Barnes explained, "every political current broke open within a matter of hours" on the small Minnesota campus of Carleton College described in the foreword. Patient political work done by supporters of the Cuban Revolution suddenly had an impact on people who had been unconvinced of their arguments before the assault.

A lesson explained in the foreword, Barnes said, especially for the Young Socialists, is that you can prepare and prepare, and not see big results for a period of time, but at turning points such as the Cuban people's lightning victory over the invasion, "when it comes together—the preparation and homogeneity and connection of generations—you can see it pay off."

A whole layer of young people were transformed by the events around the Bay of Pigs and joined the communist movement at that time, and a number of them remain committed to it today, Barnes explained, from leaders of the Socialist Workers Party to party supporters helping produce Pathfinder books—he pointed to several who were present at the meeting itself.

Before and after the program, there was plenty of time for participants to talk, look at the displays, and buy books. Party supporters in New York had prepared an array of hors d'oeuvres and desserts.

Lena Ourique, 25, who recently joined the Young Socialists in Toronto, has been participating in classes organized by the Communist League. She came to the meeting "as part of educating myself about the socialist movement and getting to know

other Young Socialists from Canada and the United States." That morning she had attended a class on *The Second Declaration of Havana*, organized by the Upper Manhattan Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists.

Mindy Brudno, a rail worker and SWP supporter, took time out from setting up food for the reception to talk about the sales work she and other New York supporters have been doing to convince book buyers in bookstores and libraries to order Pathfinder titles. "We've done four visits in the last month," she said, "and we've had nothing but positive results," including a \$200 order from a bookstore in Albany, New York.

Ignacio Ramírez, 38, a construction worker and organizer for Laborers International Union Local 79, came with his son Luis Ramírez, 14. "We're here to learn about the histories of the struggles," Ramírez said, in particular, how in revolutionary Cuba "they took over life in their country." Ramírez said he and a group of Mexican-born co-workers had joined the union "because we were exploited by the companies who paid us \$60 for 14-hour days." He learned about the meeting at a literature table at Union Square in Manhattan.

Shane Robertson, 28, a carpenter from Cleveland, drove with socialists to the meeting. Robertson has been studying Black history with a group of friends. He came to the meeting "to try to absorb more" about Cuba and Marxism. He has recently studied *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination* and the introduction to *Capitalism's World Disorder* by Jack Barnes.

Martin Koppel announced the launching of a \$80,000 spring Pathfinder Fund. A collection brought in \$23,627 in pledges, including \$2,743 in cash.

## MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

### CALIFORNIA

#### San Francisco

**British Troops Out of Ireland! Free All Irish Political Prisoners!** Speaker: Terry Kirby, member of H-Block 3, former political prisoner in Long Kesh. Sat., March 24, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6:30 p.m. 3926 Mission St. Donation: \$5. Dinner: \$5. Tel: (415) 584-2135

### NEW YORK

#### Garment District

**Defend Bilingual Education!** Speaker: Laura Garza, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 16,

7:30 p.m. 545 8th Ave. Tel: (212) 695-7358.

#### Upper Manhattan

**Education is a Right! Defend Bilingual Education, Oppose Privatization of Schools.** Speaker: Olga Rodríguez, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 16, 7:30 p.m. **Why Working People Should Oppose Nuclear Power.** Fri., March 23, 7:30 p.m. Both events at 540 West 165th St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (212) 740-4611.

### TEXAS

#### Houston

**Celebration Defending Cuba's Socialist Revo-**

**lution: 40th Anniversary of U.S. Imperialism's First Military Defeat in the Americas at the Bay of Pigs.** Speakers: Tom Leonard, Jackie Henderson, Herb Van Burgel. Sun., March 25, 3:00 p.m., Reception at 1:30 p.m. 619 W. 8th St. Tel: (713) 869-6550.

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

**Pathfinder Was Born With the October Revolution: Revolutionary Propaganda and the Task of Building a Proletarian Party Today.** Speaker: Sam Manuel, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., March 17, 7:30 p.m. 3541 14th St. NW. Tel: (202) 722-6221.

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## CALENDAR

### NEW YORK

#### Manhattan

**March for the Right of Return of Palestinian Refugees.** Sat., April 7. Noon. Assemble at Israeli Mission, 42nd and 2nd Ave. For more information, contact Palestine Right to Return Coalition, P.O. Box 401, Hummelstown, PA 17036. Fax (717) 832-1123. Email: PRRC@mail.com

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

**March for Women's Lives.** Sun., April 22. Sponsored by the National Organization for Women. For more information, call: (212) 627-9895.



**Defies comment**—For 10 years, a drug has been available to save



Harry Ring

people afflicted by "sleeping sickness," a scourge that kills victims. Currently in Central Africa 300,000 people a year are stricken. Bristol Myers and an international drug

cartel have left the medication on the shelf because Africans can't pay a top price.

But now they've found that the medication also removes women's facial hair—at a juicy price. The drug dealers say they're working out a deal to allocate some for sleeping sickness victims.

**Just doing their job**—In France some 4,000 hemophiliacs were among those given infusions with HIV-tainted blood. French officials had barred blood-screening procedures developed abroad because they were waiting for a test devel-

oped by French capitalists. Families of profits-before-life victims filed charges against the responsible politicians. The politicians walked. One of them, Laurent Fabius, is now minister of finances.

**Brought to you by the makers of napalm**—The feds are working out a deal for the merger of Dow Chemical and Union Carbide. There is no way to estimate the number of people who have died from chemicals and chemical wastes. But we were impressed by the government's assurance that the merger would preserve the integrity

of the industry.

**Probably die soon anyway**—Elderly patients waiting for care in the emergency and accident departments of England's National Health Service lay on gurneys as long as 25 hours. Meanwhile, Labor Party prime minister Anthony Blair said it would be too expensive to follow Scotland's example in providing special care for the elderly.

**Talk about pigs**—Smithfield Foods, the country's biggest hog processor—6 billion pounds a year—is the target of a suit by en-

vironmental groups. They charge Smithfield with deliberately fouling air, earth, and water in defiance of the law. The money saved enhances their ability to clobber small farm competitors. A top dog at Smithfield denied the charge, declaring the company's environmental practices were "state of the art."

**If dead, dial '000'**—With an asserted "enhancement" of other services, New York's Health Insurance Plan (HIP) discontinued its toll-free Nurse Advice Line. "For example," it advises, "in a medical emergency, members should dial 911."

## Castro, in 1990 message, explains U.S. aims in Iraq

Printed below is an excerpt from *U.S. Hands Off the Mideast! Cuba Speaks Out at the United Nations*. The piece quoted is from a message sent to Arab heads of state on Aug. 7, 1990, by Cuban president Fidel Castro. At the time, Washington was preparing, under cover of the United Nations, for military action against Iraq. Copyright 1990 © by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the Militant.

### BY FIDEL CASTRO

I am writing to you because I am deeply concerned about the events that are now threatening the Arab world and humanity.

I firmly believe that at this crucial time it is still possible for the leaders of the Arab nation to prevent the conflict that broke out between Iraq and Kuwait from leading to an adverse situation for the independence of many Arab states, to an economic catastrophe, and to a holocaust affecting a large portion of their peoples. Such is the threat, as we see it, caused by the growing and accelerated preparations for a direct military intervention by the United States and its al-

acceptable action in Kuwait is just a pretext for the United States. They are looking for an opening to invoke Article 42 of the UN Charter to legitimize armed intervention in the name of the international community.<sup>1</sup> This is the disaster we now face. And there is no one it can be more offensive to than the leaders of the Arab nation. For it is the same Security Council, acting unanimously with the exception of Yemen and Cuba, that by virtue of the U.S. veto proved incapable of condemning, much less establishing sanctions against, Israel for its forty-year occupation of Palestine and other Arab states. Thanks also to this anachronistic, unfair, and undemocratic veto privilege and its immoral use by the United States, it has not been possible for the Security Council to condemn Israeli genocide against the heroic intifada,<sup>2</sup> or the actions of the Zionist army that have caused the deaths of members of the UN forces themselves in Lebanon.

It would be naive and, above all, extremely dangerous to give even a minimum of credibility to the motivations the United States claims for playing a leading role in the crisis. With its customary experience in manipulating things, the varied and repeated use of pressure, the military capacity for rapid deployment, and its proven vocation for political opportunism, the U.S. mass media, diplomatic corps, and Pentagon have joined with their Western counterparts to take advantage of the just indignation that Iraq's action against Kuwait instilled in the international community. They are questioning, disqualifying, and blocking any alternative for a negotiated political solution that is not subordinated to their geopolitical interests, and are wasting no time in deriving as much advantage as they can from the current situation.

What won't the United States be capable of doing in a vital region such as this one unless they are stopped in time? On other occasions they showed no scruples and slapped the face of the international community by converting a tiny state like Grenada<sup>3</sup> and a country they had already practically occupied like Panama, into a shooting range for their most sophisticated weapons.

How can anyone fail to see the danger of the United States launching an adventure of this nature when it was capable of planning and launching an air raid against the home of the Libyan president after assuming, without its current backing, the role of international executioner?<sup>4</sup> Can any other conclusions be drawn in view of the landing of U.S. marines in Liberia just a few hours ago?...

It is impossible to overlook, Your Excellency, the tragic irony involved if the United States and its allies in this inglorious crusade fulfill their goals—among them the

<sup>1</sup> Article 42 of the UN Charter provides that when other measures prove inadequate, the Security Council may utilize armed force to "maintain or restore international peace and security."

<sup>2</sup> The *intifada* is the uprising sustained since December 1987 by Palestinians and their supporters against Israeli rule of the occupied territories.

<sup>3</sup> In October 1983, the U.S. government invaded and occupied Grenada and set about to forcibly reverse the gains of the country's 1979 revolution. Two weeks before the U.S. attack, the People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada, headed by Maurice Bishop, had been overthrown by a counterrevolutionary coup led by Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard.

<sup>4</sup> On April 14, 1986, U.S. warplanes bombed Libyan population centers, targeting particular the home of Libyan head of state Muammar Qaddafi. One of Qaddafi's children was killed in the raid.



U.S. troops in Saudi desert prepare for 1991 military assault against Iraq. U.S. rulers aimed "to entrench their domination in the region," said Cuban president Fidel Castro.

consolidation of Zionist domination—with a minimum loss of life for the West. Their plans, all worked out and tested over time, call for high-technology warfare, based on the supremacy of their weapons and know-how. The casualties will be mostly sustained by Arab armies and the population involved in the operation....

With all due respect and consideration, I exhort you to act with the speed that the risks

involved demand and within the shortest time possible, overlooking the differences that must now necessarily occupy a second place. I regard this unity of opinion and action as an urgent necessity.

Do not doubt even for a second that in this just and noble endeavor you can count on the support of the overwhelming majority of the international community and, naturally, on the modest cooperation of Cuba.

## BOOK OF THE WEEK

lies. No less alarming is the evidence pointing to steps aimed at the creation, for the same interventionist purpose, of a multinational force whose composition reveals a new relationship of forces on a world scale against the interests of the Arab peoples.

In its current capacity as nonpermanent member of the Security Council, Cuba did not hesitate to cast its vote in favor of Resolution 660, adopted by the Council August 2. Not without pain and bitterness did we take that necessary and just step in line with our principled policy concerning the inadmissibility of resorting to force and military superiority to solve differences among countries, more so when what is involved here is a fratricidal confrontation between Third World peoples. With both Iraq and Kuwait we maintain bonds of respect and friendship, nurtured by the solidarity of Cuba with the Arab nation and the Palestinian people in the face of Israeli aggression and colonial expansion. Additionally, our historical cooperation in several fields with a number of Arab countries is well known.

### 'A pretext for the United States'

These principles, as you no doubt understand, are very dear to Cuba, which is permanently threatened with aggression. At the same time, it is our conviction that if there is one thing we should do now, it is to refrain from adding fuel to the fire of war. And it is this conviction that determined our recent abstention in the case of a new Security Council draft resolution sponsored and zealously promoted by the United States [Resolution 661]. They want to impose, among other measures, a total economic embargo on Iraq—a step that in our opinion lessens the possibility of finding a peaceful solution. The United States and its closest allies are congratulating themselves on this new resolution, which creates ideal conditions for an escalation of the conflict and for the probable use of the most powerful war machinery on the planet. The unmistakable aim is to entrench their domination in the region.

To punish Iraq for its regrettable and un-

## —25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



March 26, 1976

OVEN FORK, Ky.—The greed of the coal profiteers has claimed the lives of twenty-six men from this cluster of small communities in southeastern Kentucky.

On March 9, one day after a federal inspector cited the Scotia Coal Company for three explosion-related safety violations, a blast killed fifteen miners.

Two days later, a team of miners accompanying federal inspectors met a similar fate. Eight miners and three inspectors died in that explosion.

It is the worst mine disaster in the United States since a 1970 explosion killed thirty-eight men in nearby Hyden, Kentucky. In this sparsely populated area, there is hardly a person that the tragedy hasn't touched through the loss of a father, brother, husband, cousin, or friend.

The number of lives lost has focused national attention on the conditions at Scotia. But to the nearly 500 employees of the mine, its dangers were never secret.

With nothing but a company union to speak for them, Scotia miners have long realized that they risk their lives every day they enter the mine. In the past nine years, there have been eight other fatalities at Scotia.

The lowest of three seams of coal in the Scotia mine, where both explosions occurred, is well known as one of the more gassy or "hot" mines in Eastern Kentucky.

Since the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act was passed in 1969, more than 1,000 miners have died in work-related accidents. Of the 185,000 miners in the United States, one is killed on the average every other

working day. It's just not as profitable to run safe mines as unsafe ones.



March 26, 1951

Delegates to the 13th annual CIO United Auto Workers convention which convenes April 1 to 5 in Cleveland meet at a time of political crisis for the American labor movement. They will weigh problems which involve no less than the whole future of the working class.

The major question before the convention is this: how to protect the living standards, working conditions and organizations of labor against the Big Business-dictated policies of the Truman administration.

When the United Labor Policy Committee split with the Wage Stabilization Board, and then with all the war mobilization agencies, the labor leaders took a big step forward. Labor cannot fight against the wage freeze, runaway prices, soak-the-poor taxes, uncontrolled rent increases, threatened conscription of labor, inadequate housing, and government strikebreaking, while the union leaders serve as window dressing for the Truman-Wilson anti-labor program.

At the very time when all of labor's problems lead to Washington, the unions have no independent political voice. That is the end result, today so clearly demonstrated, of the policy of depending upon Democrat and Republican "friends of labor." The burning need is the formation of an independent labor party, which can mobilize the potentially gigantic political strength of the working people.

# Washington hands off Korea

The Bush administration's strident stance toward north Korea is consistent with Washington's decades-long hostility toward the workers state in the north. Former president William Clinton set the tone for the White House's latest actions by calling off his previously announced trip to north Korea during the final days of his administration.

In all its talks and negotiations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Washington is not interested in peace. In the eyes of the U.S. ruling class the government in north Korea will always be a "rogue state" as long as it refuses to bend to its imperial dictates. Bush's arrogant condemnation of the "secrecy" of the government in the north simply means Washington—whose entire foreign policy is based on secrecy and lies—thinks it has the right to stick its snout in that country's affairs.

There are irresolvable class antagonisms between Washington and the workers state in north Korea. The U.S. big-business class will never reconcile itself to the defeat it suffered at the hands of the workers and peasants of Korea, who overturned capitalist property relations there. In response, the U.S. rulers organized a bloody war against the Korean people in 1950-53 that killed more than 3 million Koreans and devastated cities and factories.

The current U.S. conflict of policy with its "ally" in south Korea is a result of Washington's course of aggres-

sion against the north and maintaining its control over the south—including its ever-present threat of using nuclear weapons. The U.S. rulers couldn't care less about their underlings in Seoul who express anxiety over Washington's confrontational stance.

The Bush administration, like the Clinton White House before it, is pressing to develop a "nuclear shield." Its aim is to give the U.S. military a first-strike nuclear capacity that it can wield as a threat against any regime or nation that does not submit to its dominance around the globe. U.S. imperialism is also preparing with cold-blooded awareness for the day when it will resort to military might to try to reestablish capitalism in China, Russia and other countries where workers and peasants have overturned the system of wage slavery.

Washington has been unable to crush the deep aspirations for reunification and sovereignty among the Korean people. Millions are opposed to the 37,000 U.S. troops occupying Korean soil in the southern half of the peninsula—a nuclear-armed military force that targets working people in both north and south.

Working people in this country must oppose the U.S. government's aggressive actions toward north Korea. We should embrace the fight for reunification of that Asian nation and demand that U.S. troops get out of Korea.

# NATO troops out of Yugoslavia

In cracking down on Albanian guerrillas near the border of Macedonia and Kosova, U.S. occupation forces have added proof that they are there not to protect the rights of the Albanian population, but to consolidate Washington's presence in the region, both against the people of Yugoslavia and against Washington's imperialist rivals in Europe.

The U.S. government has found it useful today to advance its aims by drawing the Yugoslav armed forces into the dirty work of policing the border zone from which it had previously excluded Belgrade's forces. From the beginning, the NATO occupation forces have fomented conflicts between Serbs, Albanians, and other national groupings in the Balkans as a divide-and-rule tactic.

From the early 1990s, Washington and other imperialist powers seized on the violence unleashed against working people by warring gangs of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Yugoslav workers state as a pretext to intervene militarily in the Balkans. The brutal U.S.-led bombing campaign in 1999 targeted the industrial working class in Serbia, ravaging basic industries and causing havoc among millions of working people.

The real purpose of the NATO military occupation is to advance toward the long-term goal of reimposing capital-

ism in Yugoslavia. They have learned since the fall of the Stalinist regimes that this goal cannot be achieved short of military confrontations with the workers and farmers of Yugoslavia and throughout the region.

The social gains won by working people there through a powerful socialist revolution in the 1940s—including the nationalized property and other social relations that still predominate, however frayed—can only be reversed by violent means. The decisive battles remain ahead. Today the imperialist governments and their occupation forces are seeking every means possible to try to break the solidarity and fighting capacity of the toilers. Their efforts have so far not met with success.

Washington is threatened by any independent actions of working people to take more control over their lives—from the actions of workers in Serbia to expand their rights following their ousting of the Milosevic regime, to the struggles for self-determination by the Albanian people in Kosova and Macedonia. Those struggles strengthen the working class and deserve the support of working people worldwide. The most important aid we can give is to demand the immediate withdrawal of U.S. and all other occupation troops from Yugoslavia.

# Tulsa racist riot: what it showed

After 80 years, a state government commission in Oklahoma has issued the first official report on the 1921 riot by a racist mob and the government complicity in the assault, which claimed the lives of hundreds of Blacks in Tulsa and destroyed the Greenwood community where they lived.

The lifting of the official silence on the event is a result of the continuing struggle for Black rights and the inability of the wealthy ruling minority to turn back the gains of the mass civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s. Works such as Scott Ellsworth's 1982 book *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, personal memoirs of the assault, and other studies over the years have helped keep the history and the lessons of those days alive.

The facts presented in the commission report and other books show that the 1921 incident was not an aberration but part of the systematic violence, both legal and extralegal, that African Americans have faced in U.S. capitalist society. The racist terror—whether thugs wearing Ku Klux Klan hoods or cops' and sheriffs' badges, or deputized mobs—aimed to keep Blacks as second-class citizens and a cheap source of labor for the employers in the factories and fields.

The employers have also used this oppression against Blacks to keep the entire working class divided and unable to form strong unions or political organizations of its own. This is highlighted by the fact that the International Workers of the World was a target of attack by reactionary thug groups in the area around the same time as the attacks on Blacks in Tulsa.

The Tulsa events and others like them around the country happened at a time when the U.S. billionaire families began to assert their place as the dominant imperialist power in the world, a place gained through wars abroad and exploitation of working people and racist oppression at home.

One aspect of the various reports on the destruction of Tulsa's Black community in 1921 stands out: the confidence and determination of Blacks to prevent the lynching of Dick Rowland and defend their community, and the fact they were not beaten down in the wake of the murderous assault. This resistance was a problem for the U.S. rulers that would only deepen over the next decades.

The giant labor battles in the 1930s that built the industrial unions broke the color bar and organized workers on a scale never before seen in the United States. As Black resistance deepened, the civil rights movement shook the racist foundations of U.S. capitalism, overturned Jim Crow, and gave a mighty impetus to other struggles of the oppressed and exploited. These battles transformed the consciousness of broad layers of the working class, strengthened the labor movement, and undercut the ability of the bosses to use racism to divide workers and break unions. Today, openly racist outfits like the KKK are despised by most working people regardless of the color of their skin.

The racist pogrom in Tulsa is not solely a historical event of the past. It underscores how racist oppression and violence is built into the very foundations of capitalism in the United States. Today, the government, Democrats and Republicans alike, has sharply increased the use of the cops, courts, prisons, and the death penalty against working people—and a particular target remains African Americans.

As the social crisis deepens, the ruling minority will unleash rightist and fascist terror gangs to target militant workers and farmers, including Blacks and Latinos. The potential strengthening of working people over the past decades offers the objective possibility for defeating such assaults and building a massive movement of workers and farmers that eventually can take political power into their own hands. Knowing the truth about the racist riot in Tulsa and its lessons is an essential part of educating ourselves and preparing for the coming battles.

# Washington, Seoul differ on stance to north

Continued from Page 11

traction on March 1, the south Korean foreign ministry denied that any opposition to the proposed missile system had been implied. The ministry said it was "still carefully reviewing its position" on missile defense, and had not "voiced any opposition to it."

In his post-meeting remarks, Bush asserted that "part of the problem in dealing with North Korea is there's not very much transparency. We're not certain as to whether or not they're keeping all terms of...agreements.... We look forward at some point in the future to having a dialogue with the North Koreans, but...any negotiation would require complete verification of the terms of a potential agreement."

Secretary of State Colin Powell also stressed the demand for "verification." He implied that Washington will demand the right to inspect the north Korean nuclear reactors that are being constructed under the 1994 agreement.

Powell said the administration also needed time to "decide whether an agreement should cover other aspects of the north Korean military," according to a Reuters report. "For example," he said, "there's a huge army poised on the demilitarized zone pointing south that's probably as great a threat to South Korea, Seoul, and regional stability as weapons of mass destruction."

## Tactical differences among U.S. rulers

The U.S. secretary of state was speaking in response to criticism of Bush's policy by Democratic Party senators. Tactical differences on this question have crossed party lines. They have also been reflected in the big-business media. "Mr. Bush Picks Up a Stick," read one laudatory editorial in the *Wall Street Journal*. On the other hand, the *New York Times* editors complained that Bush was "losing momentum on Korea."

Kim Dae Jung told a luncheon at the American Enterprise Institute that "without progress between the U.S. and North Korea, advances in South-North Korean relations will be difficult to achieve, and it will be impossible to end the Cold War and establish a system of lasting peace on the Korean peninsula."

"We must not lose this opportunity," he stressed. Bourgeois voices of concern have also been raised in Japan. "It is imperative that Washington and Seoul understand and trust each other when dealing with North Korea," read an editorial in the *Japan Times*. "Treating Pyongyang like an enemy will ensure that it becomes one."

On March 12 Pyongyang called off cabinet-level talks with the south Korean government. "Considering various circumstances, we cannot participate in today's meeting," said DPRK spokesperson Jon Kum Jin. His counterpart from the south, Unification Minister Park Jae-kyu, "expressed strong regret," according to the Associated Press. The wire service reported that Park "urged that the Cabinet-level talks—the fifth round since an inter-Korean summit in June—be held as soon as possible."

## From Pathfinder

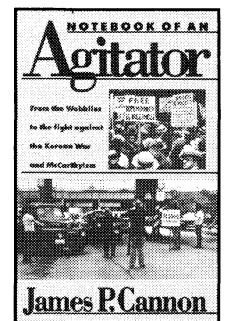
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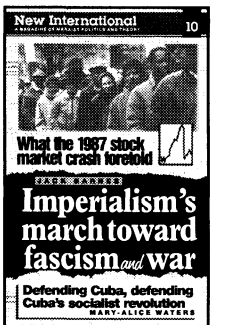
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### Imperialism's March toward Fascism and War

Jack Barnes

"There will be new Hitlers, new Mussolinis. That is inevitable. What is not inevitable is that they will triumph. The working-class vanguard will organize our class to fight back against the devastating toll we are made to pay for the capitalist crisis. The future of humanity will be decided in the contest between these contending class forces." In *New International* no. 10. \$14.00



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# Ontario steelworkers resist concessions

BY JOHN STEELE

WHITBY, Ontario—In face of the solidarity and determination of 460 locked-out steelworkers, Co-Steel LASCO has decided to put on hold its plans to hire replacement workers to run its minimill here. It would have been the first time since 1946 that a steel company in Canada hired scabs, a move "not lost on the entire labor movement in Canada," said union president Denis Kavanagh.

After being without a contract for nearly a year, members of Local 6571 of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) voted December 12-13 to go on strike by January 10, but the company locked them out December 18. One steelworker said a company official called his house and left a message with his 12-year-old daughter, saying his services were no longer needed and his pay and benefits were being cut.

After several days of court hearings on the company's demand for an injunction to limit union pickets at the sprawling plant's two gates, the judge recessed the matter until March 12. In the meantime, the company agreed not to bring in the replacement workers it has been hiring, and the union said it would limit delays to traffic entering and leaving the plant to a maximum of 20 minutes. The company and the union also agreed to meet to see if negotiations were possible.

"If they get an injunction and try to bring in scabs I'll be on the picket line," one worker attending the court hearings said.

Workers at Co-Steel turn scrap metal from the auto industry into structural steel in what the industry calls a minimill. Although the mill here has been organized since it opened in 1964, the company's three plants in the United States are nonunion. Co-Steel officials say concessions are needed from the union in order to remain profitable in face of rising competition and falling prices due to an oversupply of steel on the world market.

Concessions rejected by the workers include the weakening of a no-layoff clause, allowing contracting out of jobs now done by union members, the right to bring in unfinished steel from its nonunion plants in the United States for the rolling mill, and removing job protection for new hires after the proposed five-year pact expires.

"After five years they could shut the melt shop [furnace] down," said 16-year veteran Stephen Richards. "With layoff protection expired nearly 100 people could be out the door." Workers also point out that they are producing as much steel today as when the plant had three times as many workers a number of years ago.

In an attempt to intimidate the workers, Co-Steel sent out a letter February 20 painting a grim picture of the situation in the steel industry due to imports, weak pricing, high energy costs, layoffs in the auto industry, and the possibility of a recession. "Over the past couple of weeks the mill has restarted and during the most recent week we experienced exceptional operating rates," states the letter.

Two days later the company placed ads in local newspapers to hire 200 replacement workers for "this interim period and possibly permanently" at \$17 an hour, \$7 an hour less than current wages. Under the Ontario Conservative government's new antilabor

legislation, replacement workers can become permanent after a six-month lockout or strike.

The company has made its two plant gates more and more resemble military encampments. Early in the lockout Co-Steel hired an antiunion security outfit as part of its preparations to break the union. Uniformed guards videotape the picket lines 24 hours a day under huge floodlights, attempting to provoke incidents that could reinforce the company's case for a court injunction.

**"An injustice to one is injustice to all"**

Local 6571 members have built support for their fight through a number of plant gate rallies and protests in front of the company's offices in Toronto and the Ontario legislature. Auto workers, government workers, teachers, and other unionists have participated in these actions.

"When governments promote scab labor, lower wages, fewer benefits, the loss of hard fought gains are certain to follow," said New Democratic Party leader Howard Hampton at a February 27 rally at the Ontario legislature, attended by two busloads of Local 6571 members and community and church leaders.

A solidarity rally in support of the locked-out workers planned for March 8 here has been on hold by the union pending the outcome of negotiations and the March 12 court hearing.



Militant/Susan Berman

Members of the United Steel Workers of America, locked out by Co-Steel LASCO in Whitby, Ontario, protest February 28 at the provincial legislature.

One sign of the support the steelworkers have received is the full page "Open letter to Concerned Partners in Durham Region's Labor Community" printed in the March 6 edition of the local paper *This Week*. In the letter, Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Local 222 president Mike Shields encouraged auto workers to attend the rally. The local represents workers at the massive General Motors assembly complex situated close to the Co-Steel plant.

"One may ask why the CAW would take such an active role in a labor dispute involving Steelworkers," wrote Shields. "An injustice to one worker is an injustice to all. This time it is Co-Steel LASCO, next week it could be any of our workplaces."

*John Steele is a meat packer and member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 175. John Galo, also a member of UFCW Local 175, contributed to this article.*

## Hog farmers protest USDA tax ruling

BY PETE SEIDMAN

DES MOINES, Iowa—Hog farmers here are protesting a February 28 ruling by the U.S. Department of Agriculture overturning the results of a referendum vote to end the federal government's 14-year mandatory checkoff system, a tax that finances marketing campaigns mostly benefiting capitalist farmers and meatpacking bosses.

"In a blatant disregard for democracy, President Bush's Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, has cut a deal with the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) to continue the mandatory pork checkoff program," a news release from Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement complained the day after the USDA ruling.

Hog farmers voted to end the program 15,951 to 14,396 in a referendum in September. The checkoff, under which farmers are required to pay 45 cents for every \$100 of pork sales, netted some \$54 million last year. But the program has done nothing to improve prices or conditions for smaller producers.

The NPPC, a trade group of "pork producers" run primarily by wealthy hog farmers, receives 91 percent of checkoff funds. The research and marketing campaigns ("Pork, the other white meat") financed with this mandatory tax on all hog farmers mainly benefit these capitalist interests, whose domination of the market has driven many small producers into unfavorable contract arrangements with them, or out of business altogether. Small hog farmers have been

devastated by the drop in market prices below their production costs.

The NPPC and others filed suit January 12 asking a federal district judge in Michigan to block termination of the checkoff, which had been ordered by the USDA the day before in line with the results of the referendum. The lawsuit challenged the authority of the USDA to conduct the referendum and charged that the voting process was filled with irregularities.

On January 20, the court issued a "temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction...enjoining the termination of the pork checkoff program until a full and fair hearing has occurred," according to an NPPC spokesman.

The referendum was organized in response to petitions bearing signatures of more than 19,000 hog farmers calling for a vote—well above the 15 percent of all farmers paying into the fund required for such a vote in the 1985 law that established the checkoff program.

Following a decision by the new Bush administration to review all such regulatory decisions taken by the Clinton administration, the USDA decided to reverse its initial ruling to end the checkoff. In a statement the USDA said the agency could not now consider the referendum "binding" because, it asserted, the vote was "not conducted under the provisions...which require that 15 percent of producers and importers must petition" to request it. Further, the agency argued, the program may in fact be benefit-

ing farmers, despite their vote against it.

The USDA chose to negotiate a settlement in the NPPC's lawsuit rather than defend its original ruling in court. The settlement requires the National Pork Board, which is part of the checkoff program, to sever all its ties with the NPPC, allegedly making the new structure "more responsive to producers' needs."

The USDA says it will carry out a survey no earlier than June 2003 to give hog farmers and importers another opportunity to ask for a referendum. If 15 percent request it, USDA says, it will then conduct a referendum within one year to determine if the program will continue.

Larry Ginter, a Rhodes, Iowa, hog farmer and member of the Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement who has been active in the effort to pass the anti-checkoff referendum, pointed to the common interest of workers and farmers in opposing this combined move of the government and big business.

"The recent announcement to squash the vote to end the mandatory checkoff," he said in an interview, "has the rotten smell of class warfare written all over it. It's the same stench that occurs when the bosses attack workers in a packing plant for uniting to form a union in order to vent their grievances in a unified force."

*Pete Seidman is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1149 in Marshalltown, Iowa.*

## LETTERS

### High school shooting

The news of the shootings at Santana High reached West Hills High approximately 20 minutes after the event. West Hills High School (WHHS) is in Santee, California, a working-class community east of San Diego.

I worked at Santana for 13 years and know many of the teachers and staff there. Many of the students at West Hills High have siblings or friends attending Santana.

The mood was sober at WHHS. Both faculty and students continue to feel empathy for our sister school in Santee. Any real solutions will come from the students, parents, and teachers in the Santee community. It is the working class that is the key to solving the problems of society. There needs to be funda-

mental change of the way society is organized. Barbed wire, bars, and metal detectors are not the answers for the working class. Those measures will only protect the interests of the ruling class.

Young people need the tools to deal with the world around them and the capitalist class is not giving them those tools. To paraphrase from the pages of the *Militant*: Education demands only one thing of students and that is the same as the bosses "obedience." The best education young people can get is in the pages of the *Militant* weekly.

*Gary Willhite  
Santee, California*

### Fight discrimination

The recent U.S. Supreme Court attack on the rights of people with

disabilities is no surprise. Along with legislation against age discrimination, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states that discrimination against people with disabilities is banned unless it costs too much.

There is nothing in the various civil rights laws that says discrimination against African-Americans, Chicanos, and Latinos, and other minorities is illegal unless it costs an employer (or a state for that matter) too much money. But that is exactly what the U.S. Supreme Court says is permissible with regard to age and disability.

The reason for discrimination is to permit capitalist owners of property to pay some workers less than other workers in comparable jobs and to divide us. That is the lawful

operation of capitalism. The only way to end such discrimination is to end capitalism.

There are a number of cases in the pipeline to the Supreme Court that will deal with issues of the cost to states and municipalities of access, such as curb cuts, accessible public transportation, ramps, Braille signs, interpreters for the deaf, etc.

You can be sure that if the Supreme Court finds such elementary access rights to be "too costly" for the states, then surely individual capitalist enterprises could hardly be expected to spend the "scarce resources" of the stockholders for such "frills."

Every worker has a stake in the fight against disability and age discrimination because every worker

is likely to suffer an injury, especially on the job, causing partial or total disability, a slow down with age.

The only way we can win battles against discrimination (whether based on race, gender, age, nationality or disability) is to join together in those struggles, led by the workers, to defend our rights.

*Robin Maisel  
Los Angeles, California*

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

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

## S. Africans demand cheaper AIDS drugs

BY T.J. FIGUEROA

PRETORIA, South Africa—Challenging the primacy of pharmaceutical monopoly profits over the lives of millions of people infected with HIV/AIDS in southern Africa, protesters took to the streets in this capital city, Cape Town, and Durban March 5.

Several thousand demonstrators, including members of the African National Congress, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), church groups, Oxfam, Doctors Without Borders, and AIDS activist organizations, marched to support the South African government on the opening day of a trial in which 39 drug companies have taken the government to court.

At issue is the 1997 Medicines and Related Substances Control Amendment Act. The act, which has not gone into effect pending the outcome of the drug companies' court challenge, would allow Pretoria to produce or import generic versions of drugs at much lower prices than currently charged by the patent holders—the capitalist drug monopolies. It would also establish a pricing committee that would force companies to justify what they charge for medicines.

The Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association of South Africa is the leading complainant in the suit. It represents local companies and subsidiaries of the drug giants, including Boehringer-Ingelheim, GlaxoSmithKline, Merck, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Roche.

More than 25 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are infected with HIV/AIDS. In South Africa alone, about 4 million people, nearly 10 percent of the population, are estimated to have contracted HIV. Drugs that extend the lives of those infected are available, but at a cost that is far out of reach for the vast majority of workers and peasants in Africa.

The pharmaceutical giants have sought, unsuccessfully, to keep the public focus of the case on the legalities of patent law and threats to "intellectual property." The protesters, however, made sure that the judge, and people around the world, understood the fight was about super-profits versus the right to health care. "We thank the efforts of our members, whose voices have ensured that the courts have understood the importance of this matter," said Joyce Pekane, deputy president of COSATU, as the protests got underway.

As the case opened, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), an AIDS activist organization here, applied for "friend of the court" status in support of the government's case. On the second day of the trial, held in the Pretoria High Court, Judge Bernard Ngoepe accepted the TAC's application over the objection of drug company lawyers, who then sought a four-month delay. The judge gave them less than half that time, and the trial will resume April 18.

"Having been accepted as a 'friend of the court,' TAC will give evidence about how brand-name medicines are unaffordable for millions of people living with HIV in South Africa," said Zackie Achmat, chairperson of



Thousands of people protest in Johannesburg, South Africa, in early March to demand cuts in AIDS drug prices. Drugs that extend the lives of those infected are available, but those sold by pharmaceutical monopolies are too expensive for millions of workers and peasants in Africa.

the TAC. "For the first time, the pharmaceutical industry will have to justify to South Africa and to the world why their drug prices are so high and why their patents should be so aggressively protected, when millions of people are dying and cheaper drugs exist."

A joint statement from COSATU and the TAC points out that since 1998, when the companies filed their challenge delaying the act, "more than 400,000 people have died of AIDS-related illness. Most of them could not afford expensive drugs," while "in 2000 alone, drug companies around the world made sales of more than \$315 billion—more than the gross domestic product of all SADC [Southern African Development Community] countries."

*Business Week*, in its online edition of March 7, reported that "70 percent of the world's AIDS population lives in Africa. Yet that continent accounts for less than 2 percent of HIV-drug sales." It continued: "The worst nightmare for the drug companies is that the fight will eventually come back to the U.S.... Eventually, the industry fears that there'll be a push to lower drug prices in the U.S., which still accounts for

the overwhelming majority of the industry's profits. The drugmakers' high profit margins could be placed in jeopardy. Given that drug prices are such a hot-button issue in the U.S., the South African trial suddenly doesn't seem so far away."

In an effort to protect their markets, pharmaceutical monopolies have made a range of highly publicized offers over the past year to sell drugs at discounted—though still exorbitant—prices to African governments. They have also acted to quash offers of lower-priced generics by other manufacturers that would undercut their patents and profits. The South African act would, for example, enable Pretoria to purchase generics from companies in India and Brazil at substantially lower prices.

One such company, Cipla, based in Bombay, has offered HIV/AIDS drugs to African governments at a cost of about \$600 per person per year—40 percent off the lowest price charged by the pharmaceutical monopolies.

On March 7, Cipla applied to the South African government to offer eight generic AIDS drugs that until now have only been

available from the multinational patentholders at high prices. On the same day, U.S.-based Merck said it would cut the sales price of two of its drugs—Crixivan and Stocrin—to \$600 and \$500 respectively per patient per year in South Africa and certain other countries. Both drugs are taken in combination with other drugs as an HIV cocktail. Crixivan retails for more than \$5,000 for an annual treatment in the United States.

Today in South Africa, a combination of drugs to help stem the onset of AIDS in HIV-positive patients costs the equivalent of about \$950 a month. Many higher-paid industrial workers are lucky to take home \$250 a month.

### Pressure from Washington

The U.S. government began putting pressure on Pretoria to withdraw the offending legislation even before it was approved. Former U.S. president William Clinton, on a visit here three years ago, made clear to then-president Nelson Mandela that Washington sharply opposed anything that would impinge on the prerogatives of U.S. pharmaceutical capital. As a result, Pretoria was for a time put on the U.S. trade representative's "watch list" of countries that could face trade sanctions. The European Union also protested against the legislation.

However, Washington found it politically expedient to drop the threat of sanctions, as long as Pretoria was not judged to be violating World Trade Organization agreements on intellectual property. In late February the Bush administration signaled it would stick with this policy.

The March 9 *Mail & Guardian*, published in Johannesburg, reports that the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, which speaks for the drug monopolies, has requested that Pretoria be put back on the watch list for possible sanctions because it stands by provisions of the medicines act. The paper reports that a representative of the association indicated a decision whether to put South Africa on the list would be made by the end of April.

The March 5 demonstration in Pretoria proceeded from the court to the U.S. embassy, where protesters tried to deliver a memorandum. However, U.S. official Robert Godec refused to walk through the crowd to receive it. It had to be delivered to him.

## Aluminum workers in Iceland approve contract

BY SNORRI ARASON

HAFNARFJORDUR, Iceland—Workers at the Ísal aluminum plant here approved a new contract February 27, four weeks after rejecting a company offer that included an individual bonus system and a wage increase they feared would not keep up with inflation. Three-quarters of workers classified as unskilled and two-thirds of the skilled workforce voted for the contract.

At a union meeting officials of the gen-

eral workers union, HLIF, (Shield), said the company had agreed to a number of changes, including getting rid of what workers called the "licking bonus," where the company sought to institute individual bonuses decided by a foreman after interviewing a worker.

Workers also won the company's agreement to set a guaranteed minimum floor for productivity bonuses in addition to the basic wage rate.

In a radio interview at the time of the contract rejection, Gylfi Ingvarsson, head shop steward at Ísal, said he thought one reason workers turned down the proposed pact was they did not trust the company to handle the new bonuses in a fair manner, given its infamous personnel management record.

At a union meeting in the plant February 21 several workers argued against the individual bonuses, pointing to their experience in the fishing industry. The bonuses, they said, are bad for workers' unity and their health.

Other workers expressed concern that the company would use a clause in the contract allowing it to review the bonus every year to effectively eliminate the lower limit, or guaranteed floor for the bonuses. For example, a company goal of calming down a bath of aluminum oxide in four minutes on the average has been reached by workers,

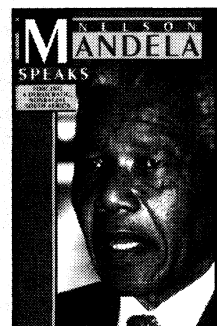
but many worry the company will want to shorten the time even more.

HLIF president Sigurdur Sigurdsson told the newspaper *Morgunblaðið* that the company also said it will give a reason each time it fires or lays off a worker. The country's labor code provides for a worker to defend him- or herself if it can be proved the firing was a result of their political views, including trade union activity. There is, however, no requirement in the law that companies must give a reason for firing an individual worker.

The wage package was improved slightly in the final contract, but many workers point out that given the low wage increases for many years and rising inflation, they are still far behind even in comparison to other sections of the working class. Workers at the plant will get an immediate 20 percent pay raise, partly retroactive to December 1, and around 3 percent increases each of the four years of the contract.

The contract negotiations and the stance of the workers was closely watched by other employers here, as the aluminum industry is the second largest export earner and is one they are expanding given low electricity and labor costs in the country. The Ísal plant, located 10 miles south of the capital, Reykjavik, produces about 168,000 tons of aluminum a year.

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