

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Radical reorganization, cutbacks
in Cuba's sugar industry

—PAGE 6

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VOL. 68/NO. 5 FEBRUARY 9, 2004

Colorado miners' locals mobilize for Utah strikers

Labor solidarity event boosts union-organizing struggle

BY FRANCISCO PICADO

CRAIG, Colorado—Coal miners on strike at the Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah, were the guests of honor at a January 24 labor solidarity rally and fundraiser here attended by 175 people. The meeting was organized by the Craig Committee to Support the Co-Op Miners, which includes members of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1984 at the Deserado mine in Rangely, and of the Brotherhood of Operating Engineers Local 9 at the Trapper mine here, miners from the Twenty Mile mine near Steamboat Springs, and others from this area. UMWA Local 1984 and St. Michael's Catholic Church co-sponsored the event, which was held at the church.

"In the name of my co-workers who stayed behind in Utah, we want to thank you for the support we see here," said Gonzalo Salazar, a Co-Op striker who addressed the rally.

The meeting was stamped by the strong participation of UMWA miners from Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt counties. Representatives of UMWA locals in Rangely, Hayden, and Craig spoke at the rally. Altogether, miners from three UMWA locals, a fourth mine organized by the Brotherhood of Operating Engineers, and a fifth not yet unionized took part. (See map on page 11.) Those present raised more



Militant/José Aravena
William Kleckler, president of United Mine Workers of America Local 1385 at Seneca mine in Colorado, speaks at January 24 labor solidarity rally for Co-Op miners in Craig, Colorado. On the right are translator Cecelia Lee and rally chairperson Isidro Quezada from the Brotherhood of Operating Engineers Local 9 at nearby Trapper mine.

than \$2,000 for the Co-Op miners.

"I bring greetings to this meeting in the name of International Board Council member Mike Dalpiaz, District President Fred Lupo, and District Treasurer Floyd Gutierrez," said Fran Lux, president of retirees Local 1799 of the UMWA at the Empire Mine,

which is currently closed. "We all have to hang together—this is a tough battle. But if we watch each other's backs, we will get through this."

"We are behind you 100 percent," said William Kleckler, president of UMWA Local 1385.
Continued on Page 11

In State of Union speech Bush trumpets 'war on terrorism'

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—In his January 20 State of the Union address—choreographed, as is the custom, whether Democrat or Republican in the White House, in this once-a-year televised extravaganza of bipartisan jingoism—U.S. president George Bush reiterated the central place in U.S. foreign policy of the conquest and occupation of Iraq. Bush repeated the brutal message of "you're next" that's become a hallmark of Washington's "war on terrorism." He also insisted that the U.S. rulers will not ask for a "permission slip" from rival imperialist powers, or the United Nations for that matter, to do what's necessary to defend their interests around the world, seeking alliances instead with those willing to go along with Uncle Sam.

"As we gather tonight, hundreds of thousands of American servicemen and women are deployed across the world in the war on terror," Bush said. "It is tempting to believe

Continued on Page 4

Canadian cops use 'terror' case to seize notes of reporter

BY ROBERT SIMMS

TORONTO—Ten Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers raided the home of Juliet O'Neill, a reporter for the *Ottawa Citizen*, at 8 a.m. January 21. They seized her notes because, they said, of an article she wrote on the case of Maher Arar, a Syrian-born Canadian citizen the RCMP has falsely accused of ties to "terrorist" groups. "It was a five-hour invasion of my privacy," said O'Neill. "They took my address books, contact books, Rolodex." The police carried out a similar raid at O'Neill's office at the *Citizen*.

The police agents carried out the raids on the grounds that they were looking for the source of a leak of RCMP classified information in the case of Arar. U.S. authorities had arrested Arar at John F. Kennedy Airport
Continued on Page 3

Bedford-Stuyvesant residents protest killing of Black youth by New York City police

BY SALM KOLIS AND DON MACKLE

BROOKLYN, New York—"They're killing us like dogs out here, pure dogs!" Phyllis Clayburne told the 1010 WINS AM radio station. "It's not right and it needs to stop!" Clayburne is the mother of Timothy Stansbury Jr., a 19-year-old African American who was fatally shot in the early morning hours of Saturday, January 24, in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn by New York Police Department (NYPD)

Protest Police Killing of Timothy Stansbury Jr.

Sat. Jan. 31, 10 a.m. Brooklyn, NY
Meet at: 385 Lexington Ave. (near Marcy)

officer Richard Neri.

Dozens of neighborhood residents and others held a protest that day at the 79th Precinct police station nearby, demanding the cop who pulled the trigger be brought to justice. "This could have been any of us," said Michael Ledbetter, one of the demonstrators. "Everybody should come out for this." During the march he bought a megaphone and walked around the neighborhood chanting, "911—call for murder," referring to the police emergency number. Ledbetter said he did this because he wanted everyone to know that "this is about racial profiling. We don't want Timothy's death to be in vain. Something has got to change."

City officials took immediate steps to try to head off an explosion in the community. Mayor Michael Bloomberg and others from
Continued on Page 10

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Also Inside:

- Thousands protest ban by Chirac on Muslim headscarves at school 2
- U.S. rallies mark 31 years of *Roe v. Wade* court ruling that decriminalized abortion 3
- Conference opposing imperialist trade treaties opens in Havana 3
- Income gap grows once again between U.S. workers, wealthy 4
- Genocide against Native Americans: materialism vs. moralizing 10

Thousands protest ban by Chirac on Muslim headscarves

BY YONATAN MOSQUERA AND SHEILA HUGHES

LONDON—Around 400 people took part in a lively picket outside the French embassy in London Saturday, January 17. In Edinburgh, 100 people protested outside the French consulate. The actions were called by the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and the Muslim Women Society, as part of an international day of protests in France, Canada, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and the United States against the French government's ban on the wearing of headscarves (hijab) in state schools.

Up to 5,000 protesters, mainly Muslim women in scarves, rallied in Paris that day. French president Jacques Chirac had announced the ban in December.

Participants in the youthful London rally traveled from as far as Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester, and West Wales. They chanted, "Stop this racist law, before they make some more," and "What do we want? Women's rights/human rights." *Militant* reporters talked to immigrants from Malaysia, Sudan, Iraq, Nigeria, Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Morocco, and the Indian subcontinent at the rally.

A MAB statement said, "There can be no doubt that such laws represent a gross breach of human rights and a contravention of the notions of secularism which uphold personal freedoms and liberties, including the right to religious expression and worship."

"We fear that the British government could follow suit," said Soha El-Samman from London. Seven German states backed legislation barring the hijab during a recent meeting of 16 regional ministers in Darmstadt.

In the days leading up to the protests MAB representative Ihtisham Hibatullah told *Islam on Line* that thousands would join the actions. "The French government must realize that it has made a huge mistake," he said, "by forbidding Muslim students and employees from wearing as they wish and as their religion stipulates."

Nabil Al-Ebadi, a student from London,

told *Militant* reporters that the ban was a "violation of human rights and a repression of our religious beliefs, which might spread."

"They are trying to make Muslims look like terrorists," said Abbas Zayni. His brother, Yusif, added, "Wearing the hijab is a question of choice."

"They try to give reasons for their wars," said 17-year-old Munir Eljaouhari. "When they go to war again they justify it by using 'terrorism' as an excuse. They just want money. The British did this in Iraq, Iran, Congo and Zimbabwe, and the rest of Africa. They want to separate people by pushing Muslims into their own group who don't have a say in anything."

While the majority at the MAB-organized protest identified themselves as Muslim, they appealed for support from a broader range of groups. Speakers at the demonstration included individuals from Jewish, Catholic, Sikh, and other religious



Jean-Pierre Muller/AFP/Getty Images

Some 10,000 marched in Paris January 17 to protest anti-Muslim law prohibiting students from wearing headscarves in schools.

groups, as well as trade unions and anti-racist organizations.

A separate demonstration through London of about 2,000 people was organized by Hizb ut-Tahrir, which describes itself

as a "global Islamic political party." The group marched under banners with reactionary slogans such as "Challenge secularism," "Secularism has failed the world," and "The hijab is freedom for women."

New Jersey day laborers demand right to work

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

FREEHOLD, New Jersey—"We are not going to renounce our rights to live and work in this town," said Alejandro Abarco January 19, speaking to 130 people who had gathered to protest the borough council's shutdown of a local "muster zone" for day laborers like himself.

For nearly four years, workers like Abarco, most of whom are immigrants from Mexico, assembled there each morning to hire out their labor to construction contractors. The council's ruling declaring the zone off-limits came into effect January 1. Since then workers have used a hall in the nearby Second Baptist Church, opened up as a three-month stopgap by Rev. Andre McGuire.

"Today we [day laborers] are honoring the memory and example of Martin Luther King," said Abarco, reading from a statement by the Workers Committee for Progress and Social Benefits, which called the

action. The statement demanded the repeal of the council order, along with "an immediate end to the harassment and intimidation of our community and our work center."

After hearing speeches at Freehold's municipal building, participants marched to the Monmouth County Hall of Records a few blocks away. Undeterred by low temperatures and the light snow that fell throughout the two-hour action, they punctuated the speeches with frequent applause and chants.

Supporters of the day laborers' fight came from New Jersey and New York. Banners and placards identified participants from Monmouth County Residents for Immigrant Rights, International Action Center, Socialist Workers Party, and Wind of the Spirit, a group active around immigration issues.

A day laborer from Union City, New Jersey, delivered a message of solidarity from Ecuadorian workers there. Erick Carrito of the National Day Laborers Association, Carol Gay of the New Jersey Industrial Union Council, and Rita Dentino of the Monmouth County Residents for Immigrant Rights were among the other speakers.

The borough council approved the closure of the muster zone at its December 1 meeting, brushing aside the protests of 300 day laborers and supporters there.

The muster zone, the council said in a flier, "may not be used for day labor pick-up and discharge.... Any person trespassing on this property will be arrested and can be punished by up to 30 days in jail and a fine up to \$500."

Opponents of the zone seek to duck charges of discrimination by professing a concern for "quality of life" in Freehold.

According to the October *Tri-Town*

News, the council hired more cops mid-2003 to deal with "complaints" from overcrowding to hornblowing. The courts levied almost \$128,000 in fines between June and October, Mayor Michael Wilson reported.

After the protest wrapped up, day laborers and protest organizers invited participants to warm up back at the hall that serves as the temporary muster zone.

Juan Miguel Lopes Rojo, 27, who came to Freehold from Sinaloa, Mexico, described the daily wait for employment. We do "all types of work," he said. Contractors come from as far away as New York City to offer jobs lasting from one day to several weeks.

The cold weather means fewer jobs, said Alejandro Abarco—although things have begun to pick up. "The next step is promotion of the center" among construction contractors, he said.

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Washington presses its offensive in Iraq

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Concentrating much of their military activity in and around Baghdad, U.S. forces occupying Iraq are pushing ahead with their Iron Hammer offensive launched last November. At the same time, U.S. officials are pressing Iraqi parties and politicians to reach agreement on establishing government structures that can give the appearance of national sovereignty.

"The coalition remains offensively oriented to kill or capture anti-coalition elements, terrorists, and conspirators against the Iraqi people, and to establish a safe and secure environment," said U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmit, the deputy director of operations of the occupying armies, at a January 22 press briefing in Baghdad.

The same day, Army Maj. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the commander of the 4th Infantry Division, told reporters that more Iraqis had come forward with information following the December 14 capture of the deposed Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. This, he said, allowed his troops to "conduct numerous precise raids to kill or capture financiers, [bomb]-makers, and mid-level leaders of the former regime."

Odierno claimed that under this kind of pressure, Hussein's followers have become "a fractured, sporadic threat with the leadership destabilized, finances interdicted, and no hope of the Baathists' return to power."

Over the previous week, said Kimmit, there had been "an average of 18 daily engagements against coalition military forces, just over two attacks daily against Iraqi security forces, and just over one attack daily against Iraqi civilians."

The death toll among U.S. forces has continued to grow at an average rate of a bit more than one a day. By January 23 it stood at 362 since the invasion was declared over, and 500 since the start of the war in March.

In addition, 50-plus troops from the United Kingdom have been killed, along with 19 from Italy and one each from Denmark, Spain, Ukraine, and Poland—each of which has been named by Washington as a member of its "coalition of the willing." According to GlobalSecurity.org, which pulls together different media and research services, Washington has 131,000 troops in Iraq, alongside 24,000 from allied armed forces.

U.S. generals Kimmit and Odierno said that the opposition military forces have increasingly aimed their fire at Iraqi police and civilians who collaborate with occupying troops. On January 22 a bomb killed two men when it exploded in the offices of the Iraqi Communist Party (CP) in Baghdad. The CP has a representative on the U.S.-run

Iraqi Governing Council. Its cadres danced in the streets of Baghdad on hearing news of Hussein's capture by imperialist troops.

CP representatives participated in the Baathist government in the early 1970s, giving political backing to its actions—including its murderous assault on the Kurdish people in the north—until the party itself became the target of repression.

Reporting the bombing attack, the Associated Press described the party as "the most organized political group in the country," with "small offices nationwide. The party operated underground under Saddam Hussein's regime, and openly in the northern Kurdish areas that were outside government control."

Shiite protests demand elections

As U.S. forces prepare for a massive troop rotation into Iraq over the coming months, Washington's blueprint for assembling a more representative Iraqi face on its occupation has come under attack. The plan, which was drawn up in November of last year, calls for Iraqi leaders to hold caucuses in 18 provinces to select a legislature. That body would in turn select a provisional government.

Well over 100,000 people mobilized January 19 in Shiite communities in Baghdad and to the south to reject this schema and demand direct nationwide elections.

Marchers carried portraits of Shiite cleric Ali Sistani, who opposes the U.S. plan. Other leaders of the Shiite community, which comprises 60 percent of Iraq's population of 25 million, have also called for a referendum on the presence of the occupying troops.

U.S. officials have insisted that only indirect elections can be prepared at this time, while saying that the plan can be

Pro-choice rallies mark Roe v. Wade anniversary



Militant/Glova Scott

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Defenders of women's right to choose abortion rally January 22 in the U.S. capital. About 150 people, mostly young women, joined the candlelight vigil to mark the 31st anniversary of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision that decriminalized abortion. They chanted, "For 30 years it's been this way, *Roe v. Wade* is here to stay," drowning out chants of anti-abortion protesters. Similar rallies were organized in Cleveland, San Francisco, and other U.S. cities. Thousands of opponents of women's right to choose had gathered earlier in Washington to call for reversing this historic gain for working people. U.S. president George Bush described the anti-abortion crusade as a "noble cause."

—JANICE LYNN

modified. U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld told reporters January 22, "The United States has always been for direct elections. The only question was when and how fast." U.S. officials had met with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, Rumsfeld said, adding that "my hope is that he will be sending an assessment team down to meet with the Governing Council sometime later this month or next month to

talk about that."

As Annan put together his delegation, Ali Sistani called a halt to the Shiite demonstrations, saying that his supporters should wait out the UN officials' verdict. The spokesman for another Muslim cleric, Muhammad Said al-Hakim, said, "Who will supply legitimacy to the new government? I think you will agree with me when I say the UN or the rule of the UN."

Canadian cops seize reporter's notes

Continued from front page

in New York City in September 2002 as a suspected "terrorist," jailed him, and deported him to Syria a month later. There he underwent weeks of torture. Arar returned to Canada in October last year after Syrian authorities released him.

In the wake of Arar's release, press attention focused on the complicity of Canadian police agencies in the decision of U.S. authorities to arrest Arar and deport him to Syria, where he faced torture, instead of sending him to Canada. After his return to Canada last fall, Arar called for a public inquiry into the role of Canadian authorities in his deportation, and to clear his name.

O'Neill could be charged under the Security of Information Act, rushed through parliament in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in the United States. If convicted, she could be sentenced to up to 14 years in jail.

The particular section of the act used to justify the raid, making it illegal to receive information known or believed to be an "official secret," has been in the Official Secrets Act for decades. Police have been emboldened to make use of this provision by the new political context of the U.S.-led "war on terrorism" that Ottawa increasingly supports.

"It is a black, black day for freedom in this country," said Scott Anderson, editor-in-chief of the *Ottawa Citizen*. "The Canadian government has a lot to answer for, and it's using intimidation to prevent the search for the truth."

The Canadian Association of Journalists stated, "The Security of Information Act and its broad prohibitions against possession of sensitive government materials threatens journalists' right and duty to thoroughly and truthfully investigate stories related to national security."

"Protection of sources is the cornerstone of press freedom," said Robert Minard, secretary-general of Reporters Without Borders.

In fact, the information leaked to O'Neill was designed to polish up the image of the political police. The story she published claimed that Arar had come into the RCMP's sights while they investigated an alleged al Qaeda logistical support group based in Ottawa. One of the leaked documents referred to in the story describes "minute details" of Arar's alleged terrorist training at a camp in Afghanistan, supposedly revealed to Syrian intelligence agents during the first few weeks of his detention in Syria.

After his release last fall, Arar said that he was beaten and tortured with electric cables for weeks. "Under torture I told them what they wanted to hear," he said. Arar insists that he has never been in Afghanistan or had any involvement with a terrorist organization.

"The leaks have had a devastating ef-

fect on me and my family," said Arar. He also opposed the raid on O'Neill's home and office, saying, "My wife and I don't believe it's the right way to go and attack journalists. I think the RCMP has to look for answers within their organization."

The police raid on the *Citizen* reporter's home came one day before lawyers with the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights, acting on Arar's behalf, launched a lawsuit against U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft, Secretary of Homeland Security Thomas Ridge, and other top U.S. officials under the Torture Victims Protection Act. Arar is banned from the United States.

Arar and his lawyers argued that U.S. authorities sent him to Syria intentionally to get information extracted by torture.

No amount of damages is specified in the suit. Lawyers said a declaration of Arar's innocence was more important than the amount of compensation.

The CBS TV News program *60 Minutes II* quoted unnamed U.S. government officials who said that Canadian intelligence officers knew in advance that the U.S. authorities were going to deport Arar to Syria and "signed off on the decision."

Imad Moustafa, the chargé d'affaires at the Syrian embassy in Washington, told the November 6 *Washington Post* that Syria had agreed to imprison Arar as a goodwill gesture to Washington.

The release was a "political decision" made in Damascus, Moustafa said, according to the *Post*. "We believe there is no case against him."

The previous day the *Post* reported that U.S. officials said "the Arar case fits the profile of a covert CIA 'extraordinary rendition'—the practice of turning over low-level, suspected terrorists to foreign intelligence services, some of which are known to torture prisoners.

"In the early 1990s," continued the article, "renditions were exclusively law enforcement operations in which suspects were...brought to the United States for trial or questioning. But CIA teams, working with foreign intelligence services, now capture suspected terrorists in one country and render them to another, often after U.S., interrogators have tried to gain information from them."

Conference opposing imperialist trade treaties opens in Havana

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL AND RÓGER CALERO

HAVANA—The Third Hemispheric Meeting opposing the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) opened here January 26, drawing more than 1,000 people from across the continent. The focus of the conference is opposition to the FTAA, an imperialist trade pact that Washington is working to impose on the semicolonial countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen domination by U.S. finance capital.

In the keynote opening presentation, Osvaldo Martínez, head of Cuba's Center for Research on the World Economy, pointed to recent examples of resistance by the governments of Brazil, Argentina, and Venezuela—expressed sharply at the mid-January regional summit in Monterrey, Mexico—to efforts by the U.S. rulers to beat down trade and investment restrictions throughout the Americas while maintaining its own trade barriers, including subsidies for U.S. farm products. These measures have strengthened Washington's competitive edge over rivals in the European Union, while undercutting the ability of Latin American and Caribbean nations to export their products to the U.S. market.

Martínez also condemned Washington's stepped-up offensive against Cuba. "They accuse us of collaborating [with the Venezuelan government] to destabilize democratic governments," he said. "We are honored by those lies. Those lies show that they are terrified by the Cuban Revolution, by the example of a people who for 45 years have resisted everything" in the four-decade-long war that the U.S. government has waged against Cuba, "and who have shown that a lot can be accomplished with few resources."

Among the other featured speakers the first day was João Pedro Stédile, a leader of the Movement of Rural Landless Workers (MST) of Brazil, who called for defending Cuba and Venezuela in face of this U.S. offensive and proposed continent-wide protest actions against the FTAA. Other speakers from the United States, Venezuela, and Brazil, took up different aspects of the trade pact.

Delegates have come from a range of social protest organizations, political groups, unions, and peasant organizations from countries throughout the continent. Among the largest delegations are those from the United States, Mexico, and Canada, followed by Brazil and Venezuela.

State of the Union

Continued from front page

the danger is behind us," he continued, noting that it has been 28 months since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Bush called such hope "false," stating, "We can go forward with confidence and resolve, or we can turn back to the dangerous illusion that terrorists are not plotting and outlaw regimes are no threat to us."

Contrasting his administration's course with that of his predecessor, William Clinton, Bush said, "After the World Trade Center was first attacked in 1993, some of the guilty were indicted and tried and convicted, and sent to prison. But the matter was not settled. The terrorists were still training and plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. The terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States, and war is what they got."

Bush also answered liberal criticism that the Iraq war should not have been launched without the involvement of the United Nations. In the Democratic Party rebuttal that followed Bush's speech, for example, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said Bush "has pursued a go-it-alone foreign policy."

Bush read off a list of 17 of the more than 30 governments that are part of his "coalition of the willing," having sent troops to join the Anglo-American occupation. "From the beginning, America has sought international support," he said. With plenty of arrogance, he added: "There is a difference, however, between leading a coalition of many nations and submitting to the objections of a few. America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country."

Bush also received enthusiastic applause as he reviewed the Pentagon's accomplishments in Iraq and Afghanistan. "Thousands of very skilled and determined military personnel are on the manhunt," he said, referring to Afghanistan. "The once all-powerful ruler of Iraq was found in a hole, and now sits in a prison cell," he said to a standing ovation, referring to Saddam Hussein.

Bush holds up Libya as example

Bush pointed to the decision of the Libyan government last month to disclose and dismantle all of its chemical and nuclear weapons programs and facilities, effectively surrendering a good part of its sovereignty. Tripoli also accepted the imposition of a UN-sponsored inspections regime that will have the authority to snoop into any part of the country without prior notice.

"For diplomacy to be effective, words must be credible, and no one can now doubt the word of America," Bush gloated.

"America is committed to keeping the world's most dangerous weapons out of the hands of the most dangerous regimes," Bush said. Under extreme pressure from Washington's imperialist rivals in Berlin and Paris, primarily, and from Moscow, the Iranian government agreed to allow inspections of its nuclear facilities by the UN atomic agency without prior notifica-

tion. Tehran took that step in exchange for a promise by those countries that they would oppose Washington's effort to declare Iran in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was one of Washington's stated goals. Washington has sought the aid of Beijing along with Tokyo and Seoul to force north Korea to dismantle its nuclear power facilities and weapons programs.

The president invoked once again "democracy" and "freedom" to rationalize his administration's imperial course, pointing to the new constitution in Afghanistan "guaranteeing free elections and full participation by women."

The war party across Congress

The Democratic rebuttal, following Bush's speech, offered ample proof of the bipartisan character of the war party in the United States. Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Thomas Daschle both expressed broad agreement with the "war on terrorism" as a justification for stepped up military intervention by U.S. imperialism around the world.

"Democrats have an unwavering commitment to ensure that America's armed forces remain the best-trained, best-led, best-equipped force for peace the world has ever known," said Pelosi.

"Let there be no doubt—the state of our union is strong—stronger than the terrorists who seek to harm us," added Daschle.

One of the Democrats' main criticisms of the Bush administration was that it has neglected "homeland security," leaving the domestic front more vulnerable to "terrorists."

Bush called on Congress to renew the USA Patriot Act. Adopted in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001, the act allows the police to sneak into someone's apartment or office and search the premises without telling the owner—a violation of the Fourth Amendment guarantee against arbitrary search and seizure; to have expanded authority to wiretap phones, personal e-mail, and the Internet, supervised by special courts granting secret authorization; and to use "roving wiretaps" to monitor any phone used by an individual instead of requiring separate authorizations for each phone. Rules barring use of evidence obtained from illegal phone taps do not apply to wrongfully obtained e-mail "evidence." The measure drops a prohibition on domestic CIA spying and allows prosecutions based on evidence obtained overseas by means that would be illegal under the Constitution.

Income gap grows again between U.S. workers, wealthy

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Recent figures released by the U.S. Department of Labor show the income gap is widening between the wealthiest 10 percent in the country and the 10 percent at the bottom of the wage scale.

The data shows that the income of workers with the lowest wages fell by 3 percent last year. According to the labor department,



U.S. troops in southern Afghanistan search through debris left by a U.S. bombing raid on the weekend of January 17–18, in which 11 people were killed. Congress gave Bush enthusiastic applause as he rationalized Washington's imperial conquests.

Opposition to the act has deepened among working people as thousands of mostly immigrant workers from the Middle East have been arrested and held in prison for two years now, some without charges. It has been used against political activists like Farouk Abdel-Muhti and Sami al-Arian.

When Bush noted that some provisions of the act are set to expire next year many Democrats in the chamber applauded. The "key provisions" to which Bush referred are a tiny part of the 1,016 clauses of the law, mainly the section on phone tapping.

The candidates for the Democratic Party presidential nomination all stressed the state of the economy, rising unemployment, and health-care costs—issues on which they believe they can win their party nomination and the election this fall.

Bipartisan assault on working people

Bush also defended his administration's pragmatic social and economic policies at home, aimed at strengthening the ability of the employers to intensify labor production and discipline—which built on similar measures passed under Clinton. These policies include a series of tax measures that mostly benefit the wealthy. Bush called on Congress to make the tax cuts permanent.

He gave a pitch for his administration's proposed immigration bill, which would create a category of "temporary workers" with work permits for a few years who are dependent on an employer to keep their legal status and subject to deportation once their

visas expire. Above all, the measure would give federal authorities a list of immigrant workers they could keep track of, making it easier to deport them in case of an economic depression.

Bush revived features of the rulers' attack on Social Security aimed at taking steps towards "privatizing" it, including a proposal to push workers to gamble with social security payments in the stock market. He commended both parties for passage of White House legislation to "reform" Medicare that, under the guise of providing a drug benefit payment to seniors, shifts more of the cost of medical care onto the backs of working people.

Reacting to recent court rulings striking down sodomy laws and recognizing civil marriages of gays, Bush said, "If judges insist on forcing their arbitrary will upon the people, then the only alternative left to the people would be the constitutional process"—implying he may back a constitutional amendment preventing marriage by individuals of the same sex that many conservatives and rightists are pushing for. "Congress has already taken a stance on this issue by passing the Defense of Marriage Act, signed in 1996 by President Clinton," Bush said.

Bush also said he would revive efforts to allow religious charities and institutions to receive federal funding. He reported that his office has issued an executive order that would allow religious groups to compete for billions of dollars in grant funding.

Longshore union raises funds for striking California grocery workers

BY JAMES VINCENT

LOS ANGELES—"I'll never cross the picket line," said picket captain Thommy Evans outside the Vons grocery store where he worked until early October, when he and other union members walked out. His resolve was shared by other United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) members on picket duty.

Vons workers across California, along with their fellow unionists at Pavilions stores, stopped work October 11, rejecting the grocery chains' demand for \$1 billion in health-care cuts, a wage freeze, and a two-tier wage structure. The next day Ralphs and Albertsons bosses locked out union members. A total of 70,000 workers are involved in the fight at 850 stores. Picketing has resumed at Ralphs after being suspended by union leaders as a "good faith gesture" at the end of October.

Evans said that strikers now receive weekly strike benefits of \$125—half of what they were getting at the onset of the fight. Most strikers also had their medical

coverage under the contract cut January 1. Picket Francisco Diaz, a Vons worker for 16 years, said that 23 of the 100 workers at the store had returned to work. "We are not happy about the line crossers," he said.

The strikers got a shot in the arm January 20 when the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) pledged to raise \$1 million through a dues increase to go to a health-care fund for the grocery workers. ILWU Local 13 president Joe Donato called on "every union in California and across the country" to help raise funds.

AFL-CIO leaders said in a January press release that the "labor movement will extend nationwide its efforts to hold the line for affordable healthcare in its fight with grocery chains in Southern California." The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, has called a "Day of Solidarity, Massive March and Rally" for January 31.

Meanwhile, the bosses remain intransigent around their demands. At recent talks, they turned down an offer by union negotiators to cut benefits by \$350 million.

the weekly take-home pay for these workers rose a mere \$19 over three years—from \$284 in the final quarter of 2000 to \$303 in the same period last year. That left a net increase of 0.6 percent after inflation is factored in.

The statistics also reveal that the income of the "median full-time worker over 16 years of age" rose 2 percent—a 0.1 percent increase in purchasing power after inflation is factored in.

The top 10 percent, on the other hand, saw a 4.5 percent increase. According to the government agency's figures, the weekly income of these managers, professionals and higher-paid workers rose \$141—from \$1,299 to \$1,440.

The figures would reveal an even greater gap if stock options and other extras received by executives in the top 10 percent were included, noted an article in the *Wall Street Journal* on the government report.

The widening income gap "is the totally predictable result of a relatively strong growth in tandem with relatively high unemployment," Economic Policy Institute economist Jared Bernstein told the *Journal*. Bernstein said that there are far more workers looking for jobs than are available, weakening their ability to bargain for a "larger share of the pie. It's a recipe for higher inequality," he said.

University of Michigan economist Sheldon Danziger said that the new figures most likely show a return to a longer-term trend of growing income inequality after an "interruption in the late 1990s," in the words of the *Journal*.

The government data does not include part-time workers, and those who are self-employed or not in the workforce. The latter category includes those who have retired or

are living on incomes derived from government programs or investments.

Young workers were hit the hardest by the widening income gap. The average paycheck for workers between the ages of 16 and 24 years shrank slightly after inflation. Workers 25 and older netted only a 0.6 annual increase.

The historic inequity between the earnings of women and men is highlighted by the fact that women earned 25 percent less than men on average last year, even though their average paycheck increased by 1.8 percent as compared to 0.3 percent for men.

The labor department report indicated that there was little change in income disparity between white and Black workers. Figures published in the Encarta dictionary show that in 2000, Blacks on average earned 77 percent of the wages of whites in comparable jobs, down from 82 percent in 1975.

A factor in the widening income gap is that the federal minimum wage hasn't been increased for seven years, having been frozen at \$5.15 by successive Democratic and Republican administrations.

The *Journal* also pointed to the continuing decline in unionization. The percentage of workers in the United States who are union members dropped to 12.9 percent from 13.3 percent in 2002. Another labor department study reported that the average weekly paycheck of union members grew by 3 percent last year, compared with 2 percent for nonunion members.

Workers in manufacturing and industrial jobs had the largest drop in union coverage, from 8.6 percent in 2002 to 8.2 percent today. Union membership among workers employed by federal, state, or city governments dropped slightly to 37.2 percent.

Feb. 7 in Utah: day of solidarity with strike

BY ANNE CARROLL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—Miners on strike at CW Mining are inviting everyone who supports their fight for a union to come to Huntington on Saturday, February 7. There will be an expanded picket line at the strikers' picket shack and trailer in front of the mine at noon, to be followed at 3:00 p.m. by a solidarity rally at the Canyon View Junior High School.

Miners report that the action is getting broad support, and promises to be larger than one held December 1. The 200 people at that event included a busload of supporters from Salt Lake City.

Jesús Salazar, a leader of the strike at Co-Op, said that February 7 will "show the company we are not alone. We are making an effort to contact unions and members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) to be here."

He noted that the UMWA district office in Price sent out a letter notifying locals in the West of the action. Just this week, the Co-Op miners contacted members of Local 1332 at the McKinley mine in New Mexico. Miners there, who are predominantly members of the Navajo Nation, said that they have been talking about coming to Utah to visit the picket line and February 7 sounds like a good time to do it.

In Craig, Colorado, UMWA members, coal miners, and other working people are planning a caravan to the action, and will bring food and other donations. Over the January 24–25 weekend some 175 people attended a solidarity meeting and dinner and dance in support of the Co-Op miners. (See article on front page.)

The four Co-Op miners who toured the San Francisco Bay Area in mid-January invited union locals they spoke at to come to Huntington for the strike support action. The January 15 meeting of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 voted to send a representative from the local to speak at the rally and to send the local's drill team.

The strikers said that many others they talked to during the tour wanted to know how to get to Salt Lake and were interested in joining the buses being organized.

Messages of support to the rally can be sent to UMWA District 22, 525 East 100 South, Price, Utah 84501. For more information contact the UMWA District 22 office in Price, Utah, at 435-637-2037. To reserve a seat on the buses coming from Salt Lake, contact Jobs with Justice at 801-606-2074.

Celebrate Black History Month with books from Pathfinder

■ MALCOLM X TALKS TO YOUNG PEOPLE / MALCOLM X HABLA A LA JUVENTUD



By Malcolm X

This expanded edition includes four talks and an interview given to young people in Ghana, the United Kingdom, and the United States in the last months of his life. The collection concludes with two memorial tributes by a young socialist leader to this great revolutionary, whose example and words continue to speak the truth for generation after generation of youth. \$15

■ WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND THE AFRICAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

By Thomas Sankara

"There is no true social revolution without the liberation of women," explains the leader of the 1983–87 revolution in Burkina Faso. Workers and peasants in that West African country established a popular revolutionary government and began to combat the hunger, illiteracy, and economic backwardness imposed by imperialism. Also available in Spanish, French, and Farsi. \$5.00

■ FROM THE ESCAMBRAY TO THE CONGO: IN THE WHIRLWIND OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

By Víctor Dreke

Revolutionary leader Víctor Dreke describes how the Cuban Revolution was able to rapidly "take down the rope" segregating Blacks from whites at town dances, yet how enormous was the battle to transform the social relations underlying all the "ropes" inherited from capitalism and Yankee domination. Dreke recounts the determination, internationalism, and creative joy with which working people have defended their revolutionary course against U.S. imperialism—from Cuba's own Escambray Mountains to the Americas, Africa and beyond. Also available in Spanish. \$17.00

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By Jack Barnes

This is a handbook for young people who, in growing numbers, are repelled by the racism, women's inequality, and other intolerable social relations reproduced every day by the normal operation of capitalism on a world scale. In today's world of deepening capitalist social crisis, struggles against racist discrimination, police brutality, and attacks on hard-won civil and political rights increasingly intertwine with the resistance by workers and farmers to economic devastation and imperialist war. Also available in French and Spanish. \$23.00

Order at www.pathfinderpress.com, or from bookstores, including those listed on page 8.

BENEFIT FOR STRIKING COAL MINERS

Hear Ben Miller talk about his recent trip to the strike in Huntington, Utah.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 7:00 P.M.

UFCW Local 789 Hall

266 Hardman Ave, South St. Paul, MN

Sponsored by: Ben Miller of Lakes and Plains Regional Council of Carpenters, and Bernie Hess of UFCW Local 789 (651) 451-6240

DAY OF SOLIDARITY FOR THE MINERS ON STRIKE AGAINST CO-OP MINE

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7

JOIN THE MINERS' PICKET LINE

12:00 NOON

RALLY 3:00 P.M.

In the Gymnasium of Canyon View Junior High School in Huntington

550 North 400 West (Highway 31)

Sponsored by: Committee in Solidarity with the Co-Op miners and the United Mine Workers of America

For more information call (435)637-3083 Spanish speakers call (435) 687-5645

HQ Building Appeal tops \$185,000, \$60,000 to be collected

BY NORTON SANDLER

MIAMI—From Los Angeles to Chicago to Boston to Miami and Tampa, backers of the \$180,000 January 2004 Headquarters Building Appeal are in the homestretch of raising both pledges and contributions to this unique one-time fund. The appeal is funding the construction of a new Pathfinder Bookstore in the heart of Manhattan's Garment District in premises that will also include the national office of the Socialist Workers Party and the newsroom of the *Militant* and Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*.

Five days before the January 31 target for collecting the pledges, the total amount pledged topped \$185,000, with more than \$125,000 in hand.

A contribution from a dozen industrial workers and others in Sydney, Australia, who pooled their resources to send in \$2,710, boosted the appeal last week. "The progress reports in the *Militant* are exciting. Hope this helps take the fund over the top," Joan Cryder wrote from Sydney.

"We will be getting new pledges and simultaneously picking up checks right until the deadline," said Joel Britton from Los Angeles. Britton is a chairperson for the Headquarters Appeal, along with Martin Koppel, Arrin Hawkins, and Janice Prescott. He urged anyone with an outstanding pledge to send in their check right away.

"When I called one SWP supporter yesterday to set up a time to meet, she told me she had just been reading the *Militant's* coverage of the Headquarters Appeal," said Britton in a January 25 interview from Los Angeles. "She said she enjoyed reading about individuals giving larger sums. 'That's really what I want to do but I can't now,' she said. 'Not until mid-February or so, when I expect to have an increase in my income.' I told her a generous contribution to our movement's spring fund drive would be appreciated at that time, but that we must wrap the appeal up by January 31. She said she will bring a \$150 contribution to the next Militant Labor Forum where we will be celebrating the publication of *Rebelión Teamster* by Farrell Dobbs, and the successful completion of our fund-raising efforts for the new political center in New York City.

"No sooner did I hang up the phone, here comes a call from another supporter who had sent in \$1,000 in December in response to the first article that appeared in the *Militant* on the Headquarters Appeal. 'Our household has another \$1,000 to contribute,' he said, and asked where to send it."

Dave Prince from New York spent the third week of January in Chicago and Boston joining local efforts there to raise funds. Fund chairperson Janice Prescott joined Prince in Boston on the January 24–25 weekend. Like Britton, Prince said he had been struck by the "unsolicited raises in contributions that have been coming in."

Prescott described a meeting with one supporter who had first met the movement during the 1960s and recalled the preparations for moving the headquarters at that time to 873 Broadway in New York City. "George Novack, a longtime SWP leader and author of several Pathfinder books asked the supporter to come look at the new space," Prescott reported. "Then he said 'What do you think you could do to help make it a reality?'"

Prescott stressed the value of individual meetings with supporters. "As crucial to the success of the construction that they are, the value of these meetings is more than just financial contributions," she said. "It also lies in cementing relationships and making sure that those who support the need for this new headquarters are kept in the loop about the opportunities it provides for our movement."

Over the past week, Chicago appeal supporters raised their goal from \$4,000 to \$11,000, said Prince. They have pledges or contributions already in hand from 56 people in the Chicago area and from individuals in St. Louis, Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Muncie, Indiana. The contributions range from \$4 to \$2,000, Prince said.

Appeal co-chair Arrin Hawkins described one of the meetings she and Martin Koppel participated in with a New York SWP supporter. "After some discussion, the individual we met with responded enthusiastically by agreeing to raise her initial pledge, to contact several people in the area she thought would be interested in making a contribution, and offered to cook a dinner for the volunteer

work crew," Hawkins said.

This reporter spent several days in Miami and Tampa working on fundraising, and also spoke at a special Militant Labor Forum in Miami on the appeal January 23. Also speaking was Eric Simpson, one of the designers of the covers and photo displays for Pathfinder's new books *Rebelión Teamster* by Farrell Dobbs and *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952–58* by Armando Hart. Simpson described how these new books would be tools for revolutionists to use in building the communist movement in this country and around the world.

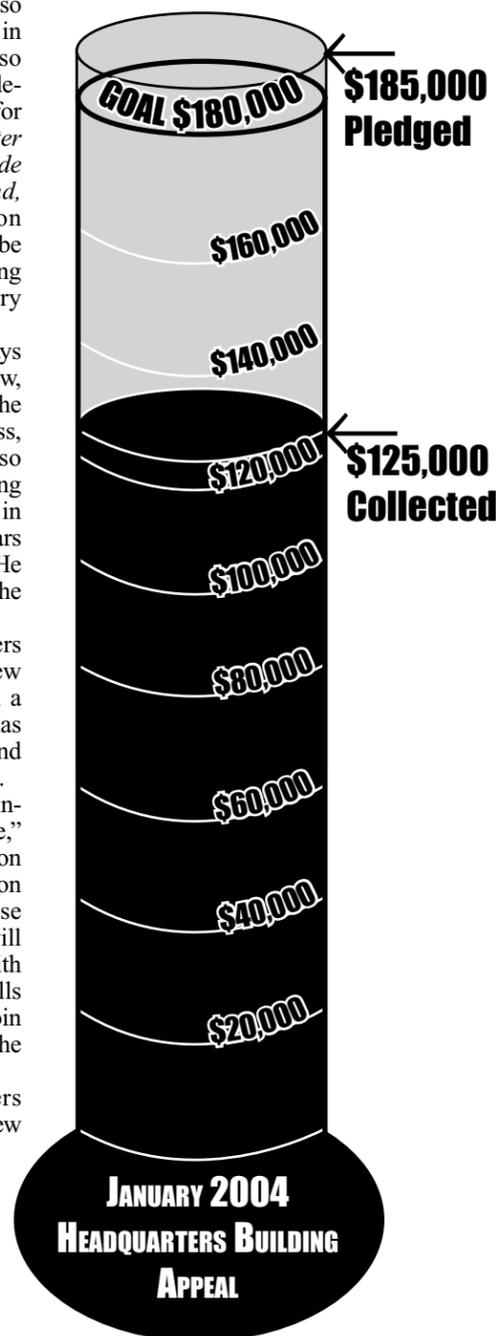
Pete Seiders, who had spent several days working on the volunteer construction crew, also spoke at the meeting. Seiders said he was impressed by the crew's seriousness, competence, and organization. He also described his first impressions of coming into the headquarters at 873 Broadway in New York in 1965, when he was 19 years old, and the lasting impression this made. He appealed to others in the audience to join the work crew in the coming days.

Chris Hoepfner, one of the organizers of the volunteer work crew at the new headquarters in New York, reported in a telephone interview that the plumbing has been installed in the new kitchen there and that it has been successfully water tested.

"The crew is organized so a pace is maintained that ensures we stay on schedule," Hoepfner said. "But this does depend on volunteers with all levels of construction skills joining the effort, including those completely new to this kind of work. It will be especially important for volunteers with electrical, painting, and other similar skills to arrange their schedules to be able to join the crew for a week or two in February," he emphasized.

Hoepfner said many crew members participate in classes organized by the New York Headquarters branch and that supporters in the area are preparing meals for the crew several times a week.

Contributions should be written to the 2004 Headquarters Building Appeal and sent c/o SWP National Office, 306 W. 37th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.



Radical reorganization and cutback of Cuba

Restructuring of island's largest agro-industry lays basis for di

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN,
MARTÍN KOPPEL,
AND MARY-ALICE WATERS

(First of two articles)

HAVANA—A December 24 report to Cuba's National Assembly by Economy and Planning Minister José Luis Rodríguez confirmed that the country's 2002–03 sugarcane harvest resulted in the “less than satisfactory” production of 2.2 million tons of raw sugar.

While the Cuban government had expected production to be less than the 3.6 million tons of raw sugar produced in 2001–02, the decline was substantially greater than anticipated. Similarly low production levels have not been seen since the early 1930s, at the depth of the Great Depression, when output dropped just below 2 million tons. In order to fully meet long-term contracts to supply sugar to other countries, Cuba will have to buy sugar on the world spot market.

The 2002–03 harvest is the first since Cuba began a radical reorganization and cutback of its sugar industry in April 2002. The shortfall registers the scope of the challenges in sugar production still confronting Cuban workers and farmers and their government.

New government measures

Numerous measures have been taken by the Cuban government over the last year and a half to reshape what has been at the center of Cuban agriculture and industry for more than 150 years:

- 70 of the island's 155 sugar mills have been closed (50 had already been idled prior to the April 2002 decision);
- 3.4 million acres of land (1.38 million hectares) have been taken out of sugarcane—some 62 percent of the total land area previously devoted to the crop—and allotted to other agricultural uses;
- the number of workers employed in sugar production has been reduced by one-quarter—from some 420,000 to 300,000; and
- 100,000 former sugar workers have been guaranteed their former wage rate as they take the opportunity to enroll in further education and job retraining, and make the transition to new occupations—where they will continue to receive no less than the wage they were earning as sugar workers for the rest of their lives.

The goal of this transformation is to concentrate resources on the most efficient mills and on the best land for the cultivation of sugarcane in order to cut the cost of producing a pound of sugar to below the long-term average price the crop brings on the world market. The annual production target is to average some 4 million tons to meet domestic consumption and international contracts.

This transformation of the sugar industry would further advance what has been a goal of the Cuban Revolution from its outset: breaking the stranglehold of Cuba's economic dependence on sugar and further diversifying both agriculture and industry. The timing of the decision to introduce these



Workers dismantle sugar mill at Camilo Cienfuegos complex in Santa Cruz del Norte, Cuba, February 2003. Seventy of Cuba's 155 mills are being closed, and 3.4 million acres of land taken out of sugarcane production in restructuring of sugar industry.

changes now, however, was not dictated by that goal. Nor was it determined by the long-term decline of raw sugar prices on the world market (which have fallen at an average annual rate of some 1.5 percent, adjusted for inflation, over the second half of the 20th century).

The timing of these moves is the product of Cuba's increased vulnerability over the last decade to the pressures exerted through the world market and Washington's economic warfare, as well as the need to reverse the growing obsolescence of Cuba's sugar industry. The inefficient production methods, machinery, and exceptionally high cost structure of Cuba's sugar agro-industry are a legacy of three decades of production geared to demand and trade agreements with the countries that were then part of the Soviet-dominated Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation (Comecon).

Opposite of capitalist 'downsizing'

Workers in any capitalist country know that when their bosses start making proposals to “restructure” production and increase efficiency, the last thing they have in mind is the well-being of the producers. Words like “downsizing,” “rationalization,” “productivity,” “competitiveness,” and “modernization” have become synonyms for brutal speedup, layoffs, wage cuts, longer workdays, union busting, and social devastation.

The leadership in Cuba has set out to demonstrate that none of this will be the case in the cutback of the sugar industry, a restructuring within which workers and their organizations are helping shape each decision and supervising the implementation of each step.

To find out more about this process, a team of *Militant* reporters spent several days last year with leaders of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC) and National Union of Sugar Workers (SNTA), as well as Sugar Ministry economists and

technicians, and visited one of the closed sugar mills in Havana province, the Camilo Cienfuegos complex in Santa Cruz del Norte. The large mill had previously employed more than 1,700 workers. There we met and talked with scores of them about the changes (see article in next week's issue).

“In carrying out this reorganization, which involves substantial cutbacks in the number of workers employed in sugar production, we proceeded from two principles,” Pedro Ross told the *Militant*. Ross is the national union federation's general secretary and a member of the Council of State.

“First, that no worker would be abandoned, left to fend for themselves.

“And second, that the workers and communities affected by the reorganization would come out of the process better off, discovering they had benefited from it.”

One fact explains the difference between what happens to workers in Cuba and workers in capitalist countries such as the United States and United Kingdom in face of such changes. That fact is the socialist revolution initiated by Cuba's workers and farmers more than 40 years ago.

Roots of Cuba's monoculture

The roots of Cuba's dependence on sugar for export earnings are found in the legacy of four centuries of Spanish colonial domination followed by more than half a century of U.S. imperialist exploitation.

Following the successful slave revolt and victory of the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804, Cuba, under the boot of imperial Spain, was transformed into the world's largest sugar producer, using slave labor on an increasingly massive scale.

As Cuban President Fidel Castro explained in an Oct. 21, 2002, speech to 10,000 sugar workers and their families in the town of Artemisa in Havana province, the entrenchment of a sugar mono-culture accelerated even more rapidly in the second half of the 19th Century following the devastation of Cuba's coffee-growing plantations by two powerful hurricanes in 1844 and 1845.

The historical “accidents” that led to the dominance of sugar production also prolonged the life of slavery on the island. Almost 600,000 slaves were brought into Cuba between 1816 and 1867, more than were brought to the United States over the entire period of the slave trade. In Cuba, more than half the slaves labored—and died—on the sugar plantations. Only in 1886 did the Spanish colonial government in Cuba outlaw the use of slave labor. Cuba and Brazil were the last two countries in the Americas to do so.

With the defeat of Spanish colonial rule in 1898, Cuba immediately fell under Washington's military occupation and was subjected to U.S. imperialist domination. Vast new sugar plantations and steam-powered mills were established under the ownership of wealthy U.S. families. Corporations such as United Fruit supplied North American markets for 60 years. Cuba became the top sugar-export-

ing country in the world—as the U.S. rulers prospered off soaring demand created by two world wars, while millions of Cuban workers and farmers lived in desperate poverty.

1959 revolutionary triumph

All that came to an end in 1959. Cuban workers and farmers, led by the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army under the command of Fidel Castro, overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and opened the road to a deep-going social revolution.

As the victorious rebels had promised, the new revolutionary government implemented the most far-reaching land reform the Americas had ever seen. Millions of acres of land owned by U.S. families and their corporations were expropriated and turned over to the rural toilers who had long worked them. The land was nationalized, so peasants would no longer face debt slavery and foreclosures and would be guaranteed permanent stewardship of the soil they tilled. The former owners were compensated with long-term bonds funded by future earnings from the sugar quota, the annual sales they had previously been guaranteed by the U.S. government.

Washington retaliated by drastically cutting the sugar quota, and soon by barring all Cuban trade with the United States. It set about organizing to overthrow the revolutionary government. As the struggle deepened, Cuban working people expropriated the remaining U.S.-owned corporations, overturning capitalist rule and breaking free from imperialist domination. “*Sin cuota, pero sin bota*” (without the quota, but without the boot), a slogan that appeared on walls and placards across the island, captured the revolutionary spirit.

Washington has not forgiven the Cuban people for their audacity and dangerous example. And never will.

Comprising the largest single component of the working class in Cuba, sugar workers had long been in the vanguard of revolutionary struggles. Following the 1959 victory, organized and led by their revolutionary government, they proceeded to transform the sugar industry as well. Profits wrung from the labor of peasants and farm workers no longer poured into the coffers of U.S. and Cuban exploiters. Privately owned plantations were expropriated and replaced by cooperatives and state-owned farms. Revenue from sugar production was turned toward national economic development aimed at increasing labor productivity and improving the living standards of working people.

The conditions of sugar workers themselves were radically transformed. The infamous *tiempo muerto*—the nine-month “dead period” between harvests, during which most sugar workers were jobless and their families went hungry—disappeared. There was a shortage of labor everywhere, as workers and other volunteers built housing, schools, and clinics and attended to other social needs.

In a few short years, as the harvest and other backbreaking agricultural jobs were mechanized, workers increased their productivity on the farms, and hundreds of thousands of toilers were released to take on other work. Schools, clinics, and hospitals were established, free for everyone. An internationalist-minded revolutionary armed forces was constructed. Farmers and workers in the countryside and cities exerted growing weight in policy decisions related to development of industry and defense of Cuba's socialist course.

Goal was to diversify

At the session of the National Assembly a little over 12 months ago in December 2002, Sugar Minister Ulises Rosales del Toro reminded delegates that during the opening years of the revolution, Cuba's oft-reiterated goal was diversification of agriculture and the reduction of Cuba's dependence on sugar. He quoted an August 1960 speech by then-prime minister Fidel Castro outlining this goal to 600 sugarcane cooperative coordinators some 10 days after the nationalization of U.S. sugar interests. Despite early efforts in that direction, how-



Machine operator at Héctor Rodríguez sugar mill near Santa Clara, Cuba, February 2002. More than 90 percent of Cuba's mills were built before 1925.

Cuba's sugar industry Diversification of food production

ever, this course of action was diverted.

"Only because of the emergence of a market with fair and stable prices with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries did we postpone that strategy," noted Rosales del Toro.

"Over the course of more than three decades, the revolution built up the sugar agro-industry until it reached a productive capacity of some 10 million tons of raw sugar" in order to fulfill trade agreements with the Soviet Union and other Comecon countries. Rosales del Toro reminded delegates of Castro's remark that "if it had been possible to grow cane in flower pots, the wealth that meant for Cuba would have fully justified it."

Between 1959 and the opening of the 1990s, Cuban workers produced an average of 6.4 millions tons of sugar a year, surpassing 8 million a half dozen times.

"When the Soviet Union and socialist camp disintegrated, however, the base of support sustaining this fabulous market collapsed," Rosales del Toro explained. "Our ability to cover the costs of production fell drastically, as we again had to sell on the world market."

Cuba's sugar production had become dependent on extensive cultivation of land ill-suited to sugarcane, requiring large quantities of fertilizers, pesticides, and fuel obtained through barter arrangements on favorable terms with the oil-rich Soviet Union. The highly mechanized process relied heavily on gas-guzzling Soviet-produced tractors, as well. In the early years of the revolution, when relative sugar and oil prices were such that one ton of sugar could buy 8 tons of oil—as opposed to today's ratio of 2 tons of sugar to buy one ton of

fell precipitously from a high of 8 million tons in 1989–90 to roughly 4 million tons in 1992–93. It has remained at that level or less ever since.

Even so, Rosales del Toro explained in his 2002 National Assembly report, "during the first seven years of the Special Period, the Sugar Ministry tried to restore production of cane and sugar, and did not dismantle the industrial capacity to do so." Such a course had remained possible during those years, he explained, when world sugar prices were fluctuating between 18 cents and 12 cents a pound and oil was running closer to \$15 a barrel than the current \$30.

By 1998 Cuba had fought its way through the worst years of the Special Period—its very survival had been at stake! With some hard-won breathing space, the leadership began to implement a course toward decreasing the size and weight of the sugar sector and accelerating the diversification of agriculture.

April 2002 turning point

In early 2002, as Fidel Castro told the sugar workers in Artemisa, sugar prices on the world market had plunged to less than 6 cents a pound. "In April it became crucial to make an immediate decision," he said. To proceed with the planting of 270,000 hectares "would have been disastrous." Reorganization was imperative. Simply put, Castro said, the government decided "to select the best sugar mills, with the best lands, the ones with which we were producing sugar, or we could produce it, at a cost of even less than four cents" a pound.

The April 2002 decision was influenced by additional factors, Castro told the workers in Artemisa. Not only had the price of oil risen to \$27 a barrel, but with the approach of a U.S.-led imperialist war against Iraq, the Cuban government had no alternative but to draw up contingency plans anticipating an even greater spike in fuel costs. That same month, he noted, there was also a "coup attempt in Venezuela, which interrupted our supplies for several months.... We had to spend even more money to obtain oil." Venezuela supplies one-third of Cuba's oil. "This

is when the decision was made to restructure the sugar industry," he said.

Crisis for sugar-producing nations

The crisis in the sugar industry is not unique to Cuba. Many semicolonial sugar-producing nations face similar challenges: increased use of sugar substitutes and other sweeteners in the industrially developed countries, obsolete technology, the imbalances and shocks reinforced by the lack of diversification of agriculture and industry, and aggressive protectionism by the U.S. and European Union governments in relation to their own cane and beet sugar growers. These factors and others have led to a tendency toward overproduction on the world market.

Many countries in the semicolonial world have been forced to scale back sugar production as well. In these capitalist countries, unlike in Cuba, however, the consequences for workers and farmers have been devastating.

A May 2002 report by Cuba's Sugar Ministry cites the example of a sister Caribbean country, the Dominican Republic. Despite having a preferential quota with the United States, the report says, sugar production in the Dominican Republic has been reduced by one-third since 1960, and over the last



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Workers take part in class at school within the Camilo Cienfuegos sugar production complex in Santa Cruz del Norte, Havana province. They worked there until the mill closed as part of reorganization of Cuba's sugar industry. They are among 100,000 former sugar workers who are paid wages at the previous level, as they study and receive job training.

decade almost half its mills have been closed. The impact on sugar workers has been catastrophic. Working conditions of Dominican cane cutters, in particular those of superexploited "guest workers" from Haiti along the border between the two countries, are notoriously brutal.

Sugar production by countries in the Caribbean has fallen by more than 50 percent over the past 18 years, declining precipitously from 11 percent of world output in 1985 to 3 percent last year. In the Philippines, once an important sugar-producing country, tens of thousands of former sugar workers are now jobless or permanently underemployed. On the island of Negros, the country's main sugar-producing region, the decline in output has drastically increased poverty and malnutrition. Since 1980 sugar production has also fallen sharply in Indonesia and in Malaysia.

In addition, imperialist governments use numerous protectionist measures against Third World imports, including subsidizing the production of sugar in their own countries, dumping surpluses on the world market, and imposing tariffs on imports. In the United States the domestic price of sugar, about 21 cents a pound—more than three times the world market price—is supported by protectionist tariffs as well as quotas that limit imports from countries in the Caribbean and elsewhere. The European Union countries subsidize their domestic beet sugar industries to the tune of \$1.5 billion a year. The surplus dumped on the world market contributes substantially to the depression of world sugar prices.

U.S. economic war

On top of these challenges common to all sugar-producing countries in the semicolonial world, however, Cuba continues to face Washington's more than four-decade-long economic war against the revolution. One

of the early acts of that war was the decision by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to slash Cuba's sugar quota by 95 percent in July 1960. The administration of President John F. Kennedy subsequently barred not only all remaining imports of Cuban sugar but imposed a complete embargo on trade with Cuba. Among many other consequences, the embargo cut off access to spare parts for machinery used in sugar production, much of which was U.S.-made.

With the Torricelli law adopted in 1992 during the administration of George Bush Sr., and the Helms-Burton law signed into law by President William Clinton in 1996, Washington has further tightened its embargo. The 1992 law bars trade with Cuba by U.S. subsidiaries abroad, and penalizes ships that dock in Cuba by prohibiting their entry to U.S. ports for 180 days. The 1996 law allows U.S. businessmen to sue non-U.S. companies investing in property that was expropriated by Cuban workers; this has led to a number of foreign companies stiffening terms, canceling investments, and even ending trade with Cuba.

The impact of these two U.S. measures on Cuba's sugar agro-industry is estimated by the Cuban government to be \$70 million a year.

Inefficiency of Cuba's sugar industry

Three decades ago, at the beginning of the 1970s, Cuba was the world's leading sugar exporter. By 2001 its exports were less than those of Brazil, Australia, and Thailand, among others.

The cost of production of Cuban sugar—estimated to be 20 cents per pound at the end of the 1990s—is more than twice that of Brazil and 20 percent higher than the global average.

Cuba's sugar milling complex is ancient. Upwards of 90 percent of the factories here

Continued on page 9



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

Member of sugarcane cooperative in Cienfuegos province cutting cane, April 1997. In late 1993, the large state farms were reorganized into smaller cooperatives known as Basic Units of Cooperative Production, or UBPCs. The aim was to give workers more say in operations, increase efficiency, and reduce large numbers of workers assigned to administrative tasks.

oil—there was little economic incentive for Cuba to develop more efficient machinery, Cuban president Fidel Castro explained to the sugar workers in Artemisa.

The biggest problem was the one that Castro explained so clearly almost a decade earlier to a November 1993 congress of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC). The Cuban leadership acted on the assumption that the Soviet and Eastern European regimes would last forever, he noted, and so would the aid. When the collapse of these regimes began, it was "as if they said one day that the sun wouldn't rise," Castro told the UNEAC delegates. "Everyone expects the sun to rise every day in the same way that everybody, revolutionary or not, expected that the socialist camp would continue to exist and that the USSR would continue to exist. But what happened to us was as if one day the sun didn't rise at 6:00 a.m., nor at 7:00 a.m., nor at 10:00 a.m., nor at 12 noon, and in the midst of this darkness we have to look for solutions."

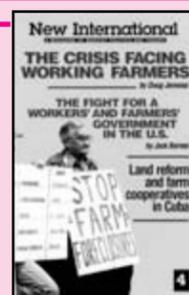
The long-term Comecon trade agreements had accounted for 85 percent of the island's imports and the majority of its export contracts for sugar. With the abrupt cancellation of these trade pacts, sugar output was devastated in Cuba. Production

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Minneapolis Teamsters prepare 1934 strike

Printed below are excerpts from *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January. The book is the firsthand story of the 1934 Teamsters organizing drive in Minneapolis. Through hard-fought strikes, rank-and-file workers defeated the trucking bosses and the strikebreaking efforts of the big-business "Citizens Alliance" and the federal, city, and state governments—including Floyd Olson, the Farmer-Labor Party governor of Minnesota. The selection printed here is from the chapter, "Organizing the Strike." It describes how the leadership of Teamsters Local 574 prepared for the first strike in May 1934.

Farrell Dobbs, who emerged from the ranks as part of the union's class-struggle leadership, wrote four books on the Midwest Teamsters organizing drive in the 1930s, all published by Pathfinder. *Teamster Rebellion* is the first in the series; the others



Minnesota State Historical Society

Members of the women's auxiliary serving food to striking Teamsters. "Over 100 volunteers served 4,000 to 5,000 people daily," writes Dobbs.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

are *Teamster Power*, *Teamster Politics*, and *Teamster Bureaucracy*. Copyright ©1972 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY FARRELL DOBBS

Local 574's combat leaders, acting through the organizing committee, had no illusions about the gravity of the impending conflict. They were fully aware that the bosses would try to smash the strike. If the union was to win, a tremendous battle would be necessary. Under the pressures of such a fierce struggle, maneuvers detrimental to

the union could be expected from the Labor Board and from Governor Olson. We could also anticipate weakness on the part of the city's AFL officialdom, which was bound to be squeamish about physical combat and prone to urge the workers to rely completely on Olson. In the last analysis the outcome of the strike would hinge on the fighting capacity of the union ranks.

Seeking to impart this understanding to the membership, the combat leaders prepared to teach the workers the ins and outs of fighting for their rights. This circumstance made the strike quite exceptional. Fighting spirit in the ranks was usually restrained and dampened by the AFL officials, while in this case a militant struggle was being organized by what had become the key section of the top union leadership.

Seldom anywhere, in fact, had there been such a well-prepared strike. When the sun rose on May 16, 1934, the headquarters at 1900 Chicago Avenue was a beehive of activity. Union carpenters and plumbers were installing gas stoves, sinks, and serving counters in the commissary. The Cooks and Waiters Union sent experts on mass cooking and serving to help organize things and train the volunteer help. Working in two twelve-hour shifts, over 100 volunteers served 4,000 to 5,000 people daily....

Committees were set up to promote mate-

rial aid. They solicited friendly grocers for staples to be used in the commissary and to help out the needy families of strikers. Similar donations were also received from sympathetic farmers. The committees fought city hall to get public relief for union members and the facts of life were explained to landlords who pressed the workers for rent payments. Money donations from other unions helped to stock the commissary, as well as to buy gasoline for the cruising picket squads and medical supplies for the union's emergency hospital. Even Governor Olson contributed \$500 to Local 574.

The union's medical staff included Dr. McCrimmon and two interns from the University of Minnesota hospital who volunteered their services during their off hours. Three trained nurses headed up a larger volunteer staff that provided such efficient care that, despite the many open wounds treated, not one bad infection developed. The hospital was supervised by Mrs. Vera McCormack, a skilled technician whom everyone fondly called "Mac"....

Special attention was given to keeping the workers informed about the strike's progress and helping them to answer lies peddled by the bosses. Each evening a general assembly was held at the headquarters for this purpose. Reports were made by the strike leaders, guest speakers were invited

from other unions to help morale through expressions of solidarity, and some form of entertainment usually followed. A loud-speaker system was installed so that packed meetings could hear what was said, as could the overflow crowds outside, which often numbered two to three thousand.

There were also regular meetings of the strike committee of seventy-five, which had been elected by the union membership. This body, which made the general decisions about strike policy, had in turn designated a small subcommittee to handle complaints. Most of the complaints had to do with requests from cockroach bosses who asked for special permission to operate their trucks. Usually the requests were unjustified and were automatically turned down, but having a special committee to handle these matters saved unnecessary wear and tear on the picket commanders....

Picket dispatching was assigned to Ray Dunne and me. This was Ray's first official function in Local 574, although he had headed the Communist League fraction in the union from the start of the organizing drive in coal. Previously he had been handicapped by loss of his coal job, which stripped him of a formal basis for union membership. Now, however, he was able to step forward as a volunteer supporter of the strike, along with hundreds of other individual workers. Many in the strike committee were aware of his impressive trade-union credentials, and he was given an important assignment accordingly.

Working beside Ray, as had been the case earlier with Carl Skoglund, impressed upon me the experience and education one gains through membership in a revolutionary socialist party. He knew a lot about conducting a strike, and like Carl, he taught me a lot about the team concept in leadership. Ray was a superb combat leader with a clear sense of purpose, backed up by strong willpower and the ability to keep a cool head in critical situations. He not only taught by the example he set, never shirking either hazardous or minor tasks; he also gave others leeway for initiative, seeking only to safeguard against serious blunders. His criticisms were presented constructively with the aim of helping others to learn. Never a dabbler at anything he did, Ray tried to find some role for everyone who wanted to help. "Don't write people off lightly," he often said. "It's not the mark of an organizer."

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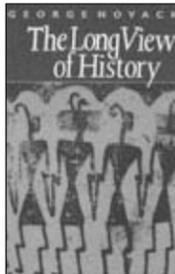
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Reorganization of Cuba's sugar industry

Continued from Page 7

were built before 1925. The grinding capacity of the majority of mills is small, and many have antiquated boiler houses badly in need of rebuilding.

The soil structure of much of the land on which sugarcane has been planted is low in nutrients needed for high cane yields. In recent years, Cuba has sought to compensate for these obstacles by extending the length of the harvest. Since the yield in sugar production is based not on the amount of cane cut, however, but on the amount of raw sugar extracted per ton of cane, extending the harvest ended up lowering the average yield, since the quality of cane cut either late or early in the growing cycle is inferior. Lengthening the harvest, moreover, worsens mechanical problems because work is done in the rainy season, increasing inefficiency. Most importantly, it has a cumulative negative impact on the following years' crops.

Restructuring unavoidable

The restructuring now under way makes permanent many temporary measures already initiated over the last half decade. Following the decisions of the fifth Cuban Communist Party congress in October 1997, the 1997-98 harvest began with 116 mills in operation. Forty had already been taken out of production as too inefficient and too costly to repair.

In his Oct. 21, 2002, speech to sugar workers in Artemisa, Castro pointed out that over the previous five years the number of idled sugar production complexes had increased to 45, all but two or three of which had effectively shut down. In 2002 the number had risen to 50.

"All these factors made the restructuring of the Cuban sugar industry unavoidable," Miguel Toledo, a member of the national secretariat of the National Union of Sugar Workers (SNTA), told *Militant* reporters in an interview at the union's national offices. He cited "the bad and deteriorating state of repair of the sugar mills, the fact that sugarcane was planted on land of highly differing quality, making yields in some areas of the country very good but in others very low, and the very high production costs" resulting from cultivation methods and the poor condition of the mills.

Steps to restructure industry

In 2001 a Central Government Commission chaired by Carlos Lage, secretary of the Council of Ministers, was established to oversee this reorganization, Toledo explained. The commission includes other ministers as well as the national leaders of the CTC, SNTA, and the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP). A separate Ministry of Agriculture commission was also established, and the two commissions have met weekly ever since. Commissions

were also established in all 13 provinces and in each of the 155 production complexes. Their work led to the decision to set an annual production target of 4 million tons of raw sugar.

"Meeting this goal will supply Cuba's domestic requirements of 700,000 tons annually and provide more than 3 million tons for export to meet our international commitments," Toledo explained. "After the shutdown of 70 production complexes, it will leave 85 running. Of those, 71 will be geared toward sugar and 14 toward the production of enriched syrup for use in animal feeds, alcohol, and medicines for which a significant export market exists, especially in Russia, China, and Japan."

Integral to this plan is the more effective use of the sugar by-product bagasse as an energy source. "The sugar industry used to be a heavy consumer of imported oil," said Tirso Sáenz, president of the National Association of Sugar Technicians, in an interview with the *Militant*. Today, in fact, the sugar industry contributes to meeting Cuba's energy needs.

Overall, the reduction in acreage and mills is designed to release substantial resources for other sectors of agriculture and industry—workers first and foremost, as well as machinery and equipment, fuel, fertilizer, and land.

Workers discuss, back plan

The government's plan was submitted to assemblies of the sugar workers for discussion. Union leaders and sugar workers described to us the five rounds of assemblies in 2002 involving nearly one million workers. Workers discussed everything from the overall plan and needs of the national economy, to the consequences for the living standards, working conditions, and lives of the sugar workers, their families, their communities, and Cubans as a whole.

"The objective is to improve workers' lives alongside the benefits accruing to



Alberto Korda

From the early years of the revolution in the 1960s, Cuba began mechanizing the sugar harvest, the first country in the world to do so. Che Guevara, the revolution's first minister of industry, led the campaign to prove that laborsaving technology could be applied to the cultivation and harvesting of cane. He directed the workers who designed and produced the prototype cane cutter he is testing in the 1963 photo above. With the expanding mechanization of the harvest throughout the 1970s, hundreds of thousands of agricultural laborers were freed up to take on other work.

the country," Toledo said. "All housing and other social services of the local communities near the sugar complexes are being maintained intact and improved. We're working to improve quality of life through additional libraries, theater, and other cultural groups, sporting activities, and museums. Some workers, of course, will decide to move and take jobs elsewhere."

Toledo pointed out that diversification will result in expanded needs for labor in other fields of agriculture and industry. But that transition will not take place overnight. Part of laying the foundation for such a change involves taking advantage of the moment for tens of thousands of workers to have the opportunity to return to school full-time or part-time while continuing to receive an income slightly higher than their previous wages.

Seventy mills began to be decommissioned on Sept. 1, 2002. Five are being only partly dismantled as they are turned into museums, while another five are being mothballed to serve as backups to those remaining in operation. The newer, more efficient, and larger mills, concentrated in the eastern part of the island, comprise the bulk of those that will continue to process sugar.

"We're striving to use the machinery and components of the decommissioned mills as spares for those still running or for other uses," Sáenz said. "For example, the tubing inside the big mill cylinders is proving very useful in new hi-tech greenhouses we're developing. Some components we're selling second-hand to other sugar manufacturers in the Caribbean. So, a bare minimum is being left to be recycled as scrap metal." Paneling, fixtures, and fittings are being sold off to the workers.

"Under the plan, the 1.38 million hectares [3.4 million acres] of land that is being taken out of sugar production is being reclaimed for other uses, principally reforestation, livestock, and milk production, and fruits and vegetables," Sáenz added. Some 700,000 hectares (1.7 million acres) of the most productive land, where the harvest can be completed within 90-100 days, will be kept for sugar production.

Farm cooperatives

"About 97 percent of Cuba's sugar cane comes from the UBPCs," Sáenz noted, referring to the cooperative farms known as Basic Units of Cooperative Production.

The cane-producing UBPCs were established at the end of 1993 by reorganizing the large state farms into smaller cooperatives, whose members own and sell what they produce. That move was designed to give those working the land more say in the operation of the farms, to increase incentives to produce more effectively,

and to drastically cut the large numbers of workers assigned to administrative tasks on state farms—sometimes exceeding 50 percent of the total work force.

"You could say the establishment of the UBPCs was the first stage in the restructuring of the sugar industry," Sáenz said. "Today we're involved in the further effort to put them on an efficient, long-term sustainable footing."

The political leadership challenge in carrying through the massive restructuring of sugar production—of leading the human beings who will make this transformation a reality—is the single biggest task Cuban workers and their government confront in reorganizing agro-industry.

The social and proletarian character of the reorganization of the sugar industry is reflected by the summary presented in the "Programmatic Document" prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2002 for distribution to sugar workers. It served as a basis for discussion in the multiple rounds of workers' assemblies that molded the changes. The document states:

"With regard to the excess personnel resulting from the reduction in size of the work force, there are inviolable principles:

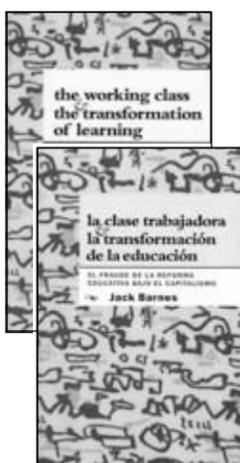
- No one will be left abandoned
- All workers will have wage guarantees
- There will be guarantees of employment or schooling for all sugar workers
- One hundred thousand sugar workers will be able to be incorporated into various advancement courses
- All workers who continue working in the sector will remain members of the sugar workers union
- All farmers will continue belonging to the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP)
- Agricultural workers whose income depends on output will continue receiving their wages on the same basis.

"The number of those taking advantage of the option of requalification and advancement—which will include the university level—is not limited by any quotas. The enormous and noble goal we aspire to is incorporating 100,000 agro-industrial workers into these requalification and advancement programs, and the facilities to accommodate them will not be lacking.

"It is possible to offer this exceptional opportunity today to our agro-industrial workers, and it's already been done with tens of thousands of young people who were neither working nor attending school."

(Next week: Cuba's working people explain the effects on them of the sugar industry's reorganization.)

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Democracy and imperialism

In his State of the Union speech, U.S. president George Bush invoked once again “democracy” and “freedom” to justify Washington’s new imperialist strategy abroad and to chalk off a list of accomplishments. There is a constitution and “democratic elections” coming in Afghanistan, we are told, and women there have more rights. There is similar process in Iraq under way, Bush claims. These arguments need to be answered head on.

Compared to living under the brutal and dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein, it is true that there is more space for working people to defend their interests in Iraq today. Revolutionists need to take full advantage of this opportunity by pressing to use any civic space that exists to work towards building proletarian parties that can eventually lead working people in Iraq and other countries in the Middle East and Central Asia to get rid of the bloody boot of the U.S. occupiers—and the United Nations too. Revolutionists in the United States and other imperialist countries can aid this process by concentrating their fire on the bourgeoisie in the country they live in, demanding the unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. and other occupying forces from that part of the world.

This stance, however, can’t be translated to support for democratic imperialism. Advances in the struggle for women’s liberation are not attributable to the guns and butter of Uncle Sam. The broad worldwide trends

towards secularism, for women’s rights, and against capital punishment and torture are the result of struggles by working people, students, and various middle-class layers in the semicolonial world and beyond. They are by-products of the anticolonial revolutions of the last century, not imperialist benevolence. As long as democratic forms, which include gains conquered through popular struggles, serve to advance imperialist interests, Washington will wield them—but only so far.

In addition, we need to remember that bourgeois democracy in the United States or Afghanistan is nothing but the rule of one class—the relatively few wealthy propertied families that control the means of production and appropriate the wealth produced by working people and nature. Their profit system and its dog-eat-dog reality and morality are maintained to a large degree through bodies of armed men—the cops, army, secret police—used to defend the prerogatives of the wealthy and perpetuate the class exploitation of humanity’s large majority. Only those whose course is based on a revolutionary class-struggle orientation—leading the working class and its allies towards taking power, abolishing capitalism, and joining the worldwide fight for a society based on the needs of the vast majority—won’t end up on the bandwagon of one or another imperialist power that imposes certain bourgeois democratic forms as part of its military offensive and occupation.

Build March for Women’s Lives

We urge our readers to throw themselves energetically into building the April 25 March for Women’s Lives in Washington, D.C. The main point of the action is to defend women’s right to choose abortion. The right of a woman to control her reproductive functions, her own body, is a precondition to equality. It strengthens women’s ability to fully participate as equals on the job and in their unions fighting the bosses’ drive to squeeze more profits from working people through speedup and divide-and-rule discrimination.

Defending this right is a class question and an obligation of all working people.

Since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision decriminalizing abortion, a woman’s right to choose has come under sustained attack by successive Democratic and Republican administrations on the state and federal levels. The recent congressional vote, with strong bipartisan support, to outlaw a specific procedure used in

late-term abortions is part of the 30-year campaign to whittle away at the availability of abortion, particularly for working-class women. Emboldened by its passage, various opponents of abortion rights have announced plans to push for an array of anti-abortion legislation.

Like the defeat of Jim Crow segregation against Blacks—a victory won through a mass movement of working people—the *Roe v. Wade* decision was secured through massive protests of men and women in the streets. And just as the resistance by Blacks beat back night-riding lynch mobs, mobilizations by women and their supporters pushed back the violent campaign by reactionary opponents of abortion rights to shut down abortion clinics—a campaign that included bombings, arson, blockades, and murders of abortion providers.

The time is right for another major mobilization. Get involved in building the April 25 march now! (For more information see www.marchforwomen.org).

NY protest against cop killing

Continued from front page

his administration visited Stansbury’s family that afternoon, passing through a gauntlet of furious residents shouting, “It’s not the first time, Mr. Mayor!” Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said in a press conference that afternoon that the shooting appeared to be unjustified and promised to review how cops patrol housing projects.

A hand-lettered sign was posted on a fence outside the building where the young man was killed, saying, “Innocent Black man killed by racist NYPD.” A memorial with votive candles and bouquets of flowers was in place on the spot Stansbury collapsed Saturday night, and has attracted those outraged by the police killing.

The killing took place atop a row of four-story buildings that share a single roof, part of the Louis Armstrong Houses on Lexington Ave. Stansbury was attending a birthday party for a teenage neighbor Friday night, when he and a friend, Terrence Fisher, also 19, left the party to get more music. They crossed the roof, picked up the CDs and another friend in the building, and again climbed the stairs to the roof to return to the party. At that time, two cops were patrolling the roof in the dark with their guns drawn.

According to press reports, Stansbury was walk-

ing up the stairs ahead of his two friends and one of the officers opened the door, apparently at the same time Stansbury grabbed the door handle. As the door swung open, one of the uniformed cops fired a single shot from his Glock 9-mm semiautomatic handgun, striking Stansbury in the chest. The youth staggered down the steps and collapsed on the ground floor. An ambulance took him to Woodhull Hospital where he was pronounced dead at 2:40 a.m.

“Mommy, I saw them shoot him for no reason,” Terrence Fisher explained to his mother, Jewel Austin. Family members, friends, and neighbors of Stansbury described the shooting as an act of wanton recklessness by officers who had asked no questions, didn’t identify themselves, and fired without warning.

“Why would a trained police officer just shoot a young boy who’s not even armed?” asked Timothy Stansbury Sr., the victim’s father. He spoke to his son’s two companions shortly after the killing and said the officer “didn’t ask no questions, didn’t say freeze, didn’t say hold it, didn’t say stop, and just shot my son, just like that.”

Elizabeth Decambre, who lives on the first floor of the building where Stansbury collapsed, said the two cops stood over the teen while neighbors screamed for them to help. “The kid was lying there looking up at us,” she said. “He was reaching up with one arm.”

Given the widespread outrage by area residents, city officials acted swiftly to suspend Neri in order to head off the kind of mass protests that have taken place in the past around other incidents of police brutality and racism in recent years, like the shooting of Amadou Diallo, Malcolm Ferguson, and Patrick Dorismond, to name just three.

Those actions involved thousands of opponents of police brutality. Neri’s case is expected to go before a grand jury by the end of January.

The city’s attempts to stop protests of this latest police killing by the police did not dampen the efforts by residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant who organized the protest march from the Armstrong Houses to the 79th Precinct police station. At the same time about 20 people kept vigil outside the apartment building where Stansbury was killed Sunday. The protesters signed homemade signs that were then placed with the candles and flowers at the memorial. Another demonstration has been called for Saturday, January 31 (see details on front page display ad).



Irene Clayburne, grandmother of Timothy Stansbury, Jr., at January 25 protest in Brooklyn to condemn killing by cop of the 19-year-old.

Genocide against the Indians: materialism vs. moralizing

BY SAM MANUEL

In a letter printed on the facing page, Steve Halpern thanks the *Militant* for printing excerpts from the pamphlet *Genocide Against the Indians* by George Novack in the January 12 *Militant*. But Halpern’s letter, taken as a whole, sharply disagrees with Novack’s materialist approach to history and the development of society.

In his April 1970 introduction, Novack points out that his aim is not so much to tell what happened in the conquest of native peoples—many historians have done so—but why. “I have used the Marxist method of historical materialism to answer this key question,” he says. “What was involved was the collision of two disparate levels of historical development, two fundamentally different socioeconomic formations, two irreconcilable modes of life, types of cultures and outlooks upon the world. The defeat of the native tribes was predetermined by the incomparably greater powers of production and destruction, numbers, wealth, and organization, on the side of the classes composing bourgeois civilization.”

REPLY TO A READER

Commenting on Novack’s pamphlet (which is also included as chapter one in *America’s Revolutionary Heritage* by Novack), Halpern writes that “many of its conclusions continue to be true” and that “some things have changed.” But he fails to indicate which conclusions he thinks are no longer true and what has changed.

Halpern hints that these changes may be found in two books he recommends, which supposedly “give a clear documentation” of the genocide against the Native Americans and “expose the foundations of how property was acquired in this country.” Both describe in extensive detail the brutal conquest of the original inhabitants of the Americas. But these authors, like other bourgeois historians, are incapable of giving a scientific, class explanation of those events. Instead, they offer a liberal, idealist view.

For example, *American Holocaust* by David Stannard compares the massacres against Native Americans from the 15th through the 19th centuries with the imperialist government of Germany’s extermination campaign against the Jews under the Nazi regime in the 20th century—two completely different historical periods involving different class forces, causes, and results. Stannard argues that the cause of both phenomena lies in “the core of European thought and culture—Christianity.” This approach is similar to that of anarchist political commentator Noam Chomsky, who in his book *Year 501: The Conquest Continues*, rattles off an undifferentiated litany of horrors perpetrated by the ruling classes from the arrival of European settlers in the 1490s to the U.S.-led imperialist Gulf War in 1990–91, and even compares Christopher Columbus to Adolf Hitler. This is an ahistorical approach, to say the least. It does not even distinguish between the period when capitalism was *revolutionary*, and the epoch of imperialism, beginning in the 1890s, when capitalism reached its current stage—*imperialism*—and became a reactionary brake on progress.

Similarly, Halpern, in trying to highlight the accomplishments of Native Americans, seems to have a hard time explaining them accurately and historically. He marvels at the fact that in North America there were 500 Native American “nations” with “distinct cultures,” and that “much of the food we eat was developed by Native American farming techniques.” Novack lists many of these foods, and their numbers are impressive. But what Novack explains—and is missing in most other accounts—is the historical stages in which these developments took place. The indigenous inhabitants of this continent were in the early phases of developing agriculture, based on collective ownership of the land in a classless, stateless, egalitarian society in which women played the leading role. They produced only for subsistence. That society, representing the stage of primitive communism, collided with the qualitatively more developed productive capacities of capitalism, including farming techniques.

Halpern gets to the heart of his disagreement with Novack when he says that “the overall course of history is progressive” but then adds that “it is difficult to see the gains” for Native Americans. He even lends credence to the idea that “Native Americans might have had better lives before Columbus than they do today.” (Without citing a source, he attributes this view to Fidel Castro to give it authority). This approach substitutes moralizing for a materialist analysis.

The development of capitalist social relations worldwide in the 18th and 19th centuries was historically *progressive*. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels explained this in the *Communist Manifesto*, written in 1847–48. “The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years,” they wrote, “has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature’s forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?” In the United States this led to two deep-going popular revolutions—one gained independence from British colonial rule and the second smashed slavery in the South.

The working class takes no responsibility for the barbaric methods of the capitalist class—including the genocide against the Indians—which working people will sweep away along with the system of capitalist rule itself when they take political power and transform society in the interests of the vast majority. Marx and Engels also explain that what the bourgeoisie “produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers”—the working class. In their fight for self-determination today, Native Americans, along with Blacks and other oppressed nationalities, will stand with workers and farmers in the front ranks of capitalism’s gravediggers.

Colorado solidarity rally

Continued from front page

cal 1385 at the Seneca mine. "I want to call on all folks here to participate in the February 7 meeting in Utah. It will be important if you can make it out there." Kleckler was referring to the solidarity rally that will take place in Huntington, Utah, which the Co-Op miners have been building throughout the West with the union's help. UMWA District 22 has sent a letter to all union locals in the region asking them to send representatives to the Huntington rally.

"I am so glad to see the turnout tonight in support of these brothers," said Carol Miller, a 15-year veteran of UMWA Local 1984 at the Deserado mine. "We may not all speak the same language. But all miners face the same conditions in the mines. The difference is that as UMWA members when we go home at night we know what our wages are going to be next week. We know that if someone in the family gets sick, we will have good health insurance. It is not up to the boss because we are union."

Miller described the efforts of Local 1984 so far in donating \$1,000 in food. She turned over to the chairperson of the rally the latest collection from the last union meeting. In addition, Miller and other miners from the Rangely local loaded the Co-Op miner's van with 200 pounds of fresh meat to take back with them.

"God said that he will help those who help themselves," Miller continued. "Well, these miners have helped themselves by walking the line in defense of their rights and deserve every bit of support we can give them."

In addition to Local 1984, both UMWA locals 1799 and 1385 have sent contributions to the Co-Op miners. Their representatives said these locals will make further donations.

"This company fired us unjustly for carrying out union activity," Salazar explained at the rally. "All of the miners decided to come down from our post to protest the unjust suspension of a coworker who they alleged had not done his work correctly. What is really behind our firings is our protests against the unsafe, the bad working conditions in this mine."

Seventy-five coal miners, almost all of them Mexican, are involved in an unfair labor practice strike against CW Mining company, also known as Co-Op, since September 22. The miners have enlisted the support of the UMWA, which has filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board on the firings and against the company union the bosses have organized in the mine.

"We will not stand any more for the lies and trickery of the so-called union that the bosses have in the mine," Salazar told the crowd in Craig. "That 'union' is composed of bosses and they are all members of the Kingston family. The Co-Op mine is reportedly one of the most profitable business owned by the polygamous Kingston clan in Utah." Several prominent Kingston family members have been convicted of abusing women after charges were brought against them by young female family members, who were forced to marry relatives while teenagers and were beaten and suffered other abuse when they tried to escape.

Father Roger Lascelle, of St. Michael's church, opened the meeting with welcoming remarks. "We have always supported the rights of working people," Lascelle said. "The Mexican community has raised our consciousness on this struggle and it is amazing what is happening here."

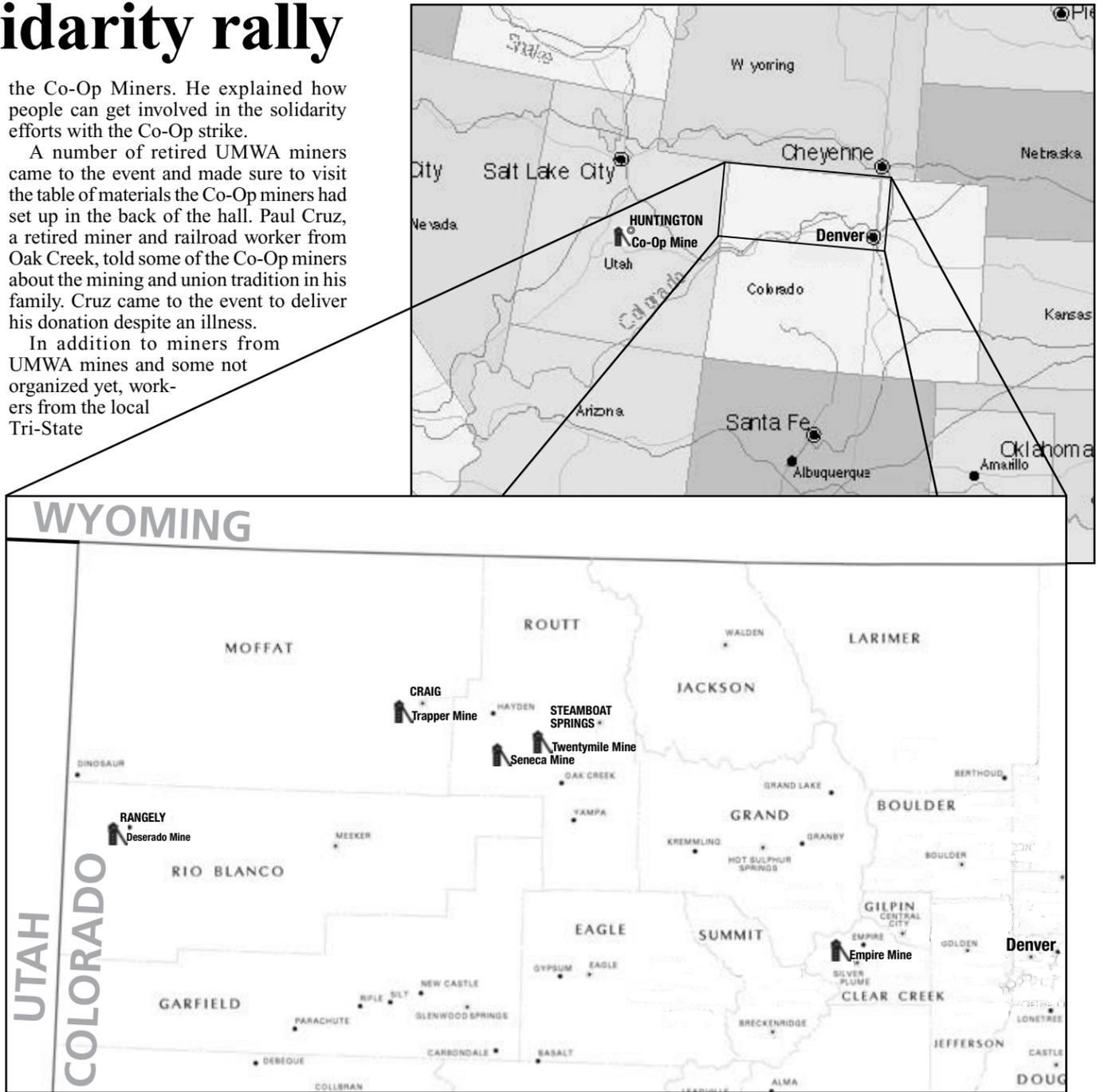
Ed Hinkle, a well-known union veteran in this area who had traveled from Dinosaur, Colorado, to be one of the greeters for the event, asked for a translator when the mike was opened. He is an underground electrician and member of UMWA Local 1984. "The company has told you that you could not stand up for your rights," Hinkle said, addressing his remarks to the half-dozen Co-Op miners who were in the audience. "You said, 'yes we can.' The company tells you that you can't hold out long enough to make a difference. You say, 'yes we can.' Our local has supported you from the beginning and we will be there until the end. We are proud of you."

"This is an ongoing effort and we want people to join us in our continued work to support the miners," said Alvaro Landa, a leader of the Craig Committee to Support

the Co-Op Miners. He explained how people can get involved in the solidarity efforts with the Co-Op strike.

A number of retired UMWA miners came to the event and made sure to visit the table of materials the Co-Op miners had set up in the back of the hall. Paul Cruz, a retired miner and railroad worker from Oak Creek, told some of the Co-Op miners about the mining and union tradition in his family. Cruz came to the event to deliver his donation despite an illness.

In addition to miners from UMWA mines and some not organized yet, workers from the local Tri-State



power plant and members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers took part in the rally.

The event was chaired by Isidro Quezada, a miner at the Trapper mine and a member of the Brotherhood of Operating Engineers Local 9. He called attention to the Craig Committee to Support the Co-Op Miners that organized the dinner and dance and thanked the volunteers who cooked the meal and the five area restaurants and businesses who donated food. The program flyer also thanked the DJ, "Barrio Latino" from Hayden, who donated the music and sound for the event. After the rally, tables were cleared and once the dancing started, the floor remained busy until midnight.

During the early part of the dinner, the support committee had organized interviews with TV Channel 27 and the *Craig Daily Press*. The translation was provided by Cecilia Lee, a 13-year copper miner at Phelps Dodge in Arizona who currently works in a health-care facility in Craig. Under the title of "Laboring for the good of all," an editorial in the *Craig Daily Press* helped build the meeting saying "we are proud of the support local residents

have shown for the Co-Op miners."

"I am very pleased with the response and the numbers we got," Isidro Quezada said in an interview. "The combination of people who came together, both native-born and immigrant, the different nationalities, labor and religious leaders, and folks without much means who normally don't come out to events similar to this one who came out to support these miners and met each other too. With monies still coming in, we raised over \$2,000."

All participants in the event signed a three-foot by five-foot banner that read: "Craig, Colorado, supports the Co-Op miners" both in English and Spanish for the miners to take back to their picket line.

But not everyone supported the effort. This reporter was shown a flyer from the white supremacist "National Alliance," which was placed on the lawns of some residents, including a longtime resident of Craig of Mexican descent, on the day of the well-publicized event for the Co-Op miners. The flyer called on "white people" to fight back from becoming a minority and it blamed immigrants for many of society's ills. The event took

place without any incidents nor harassment of any sort.

UMWA Local 1799 invited the miners to attend their meeting in Craig the following day. "We had a good discussion with the retired Empire miners at their local union meeting," said Gonzalo Salazar. "This is not a local with lots of resources and they decided to give us \$500 on top of the contributions they have made before. We had a discussion about our upcoming rally in Huntington on February 7 after they read a letter from District 22 that called for every union local to have members present. A number of miners said they would go," Salazar reported.

"This was a good trip," he added. "We met people and local presidents from the UMWA, miners from Twenty-Mile mine who were at the event along with miners from Trapper, Seneca, and Deserado. There is obvious support for our fight here."

The Co-Op miners had a meeting with the local solidarity committee before they left. They discussed plans for a local car caravan to the February 7 solidarity rally in Huntington and enlisted volunteers to help with that event.

LETTERS

Native Americans

Thank you for printing the article by George Novack on Native Americans [January 12 issue]. Although this article was written some time ago, many of its conclusions continue to be true. Students are not informed that European powers and the United States government initiated a series of wars to steal the land of Native Americans.

While many of Novack's conclusions continue to be true, some things have changed. I know of two books that give a clear documentation of the genocide that was carried out against Native Americans by the U.S. government. They are: Ward Churchill's *A Little Matter of Genocide*, and David E. Stannard's *American Holocaust*. The facts presented in these books expose the foundations of how property was acquired in this country.

While Native Americans experienced genocide, we can also say that they made

many contributions which we take for granted today.... Some of these contributions include the fact that much of the food we eat was developed by Native American farming techniques.... Even Karl Marx commented that the origins of the capitalist system began with the mining of gold and silver in Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia by Native Americans working under abysmally difficult conditions.

There is one question concerning this history that I have found difficult to answer. George Novack argued that history follows an uneven and combined development. This means that while the overall course of history is progressive there are numerous setbacks that pull humanity back in a negative direction. When it comes to Native Americans it is difficult to see the gains that have been made as a result of the heroic struggles they have waged throughout the Western Hemisphere. Even Fidel Castro has argued that Native Americans might

have had better lives before Columbus than they do today.

However, there is one clear aspect to this history that is progressive. In the past there was never a real opportunity for Native Americans to unite in struggle with workers and farmers. Today this opportunity exists as it never had in the past. As the working class deepens its resistance to the capitalist offensive we're experiencing today, we will find no better ally than Native Americans, who have been defending their rights for over five hundred years.

Steve Halpern
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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.

Washington, New Delhi strengthen ties

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

The strengthening military cooperation of New Delhi with Washington's "war on terrorism" was the focus of talks between the two governments in January. They plan to further expand their military ties, which already involve joint exercises and substantial purchases of U.S. arms by the Indian armed forces. Indian scientists are now also slated to collaborate on development of the Pentagon's "missile defense system."

A January 20 White House meeting between U.S. president George Bush and Indian foreign minister Yashwant Sinha helped put the official seal of approval on these ties. U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell reported after further talks the same day that Washington and New Delhi "will be moving in an aggressive way and promptly" to implement a pact signed the previous week by Bush and India's prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. "There is no area of dialogue that we are not pursuing, and pursuing in a very profitable way," Powell said.

The pact laid out increased cooperation on nuclear and space projects. Washington also pledged in the document to gradually open up exports of advanced technologies that have been kept on its "banned" list since 1998, when the Indian and Pakistani governments each tested several nuclear devices.

Reporting that scientists from the two countries would collaborate on developing a missile shield, the London-based *Financial Times* noted that "India was one of the first countries to welcome the Bush administration's missile defense plans in 2001—in marked contrast with China."

Such a shield would include satellite-based surveillance to provide early warning of a nuclear attack, and missiles to shoot down incoming warheads. If it were put in place, the shield would allow the Pentagon to fire from its own massive nuclear arsenal without fear of full-scale retaliation. It would effectively restore first-strike nuclear capacity to Washington—something it has not had since the Soviet Union developed defensive nuclear weapons in the 1940s.

Placing missile shield stations in India and Japan, whose government is also collaborating in the program, would minimize the effectiveness of China's nuclear defenses.

Vajpayee said the pact showed that "the vision of the India-U.S. strategic partnership that President Bush and I share is now becoming a reality."

According to the *Financial Times*, Bush said that the Indian government was "an important partner in the war on terrorism and in controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

Bush described the "expanded cooperation" as "an important milestone in transforming the relationship between the United States and India." Raja Mohan, described by the *Financial Times* reporter as an "Indian security analyst," said that "in agreeing to enhanced technology cooperation, President Bush is giving de facto recognition of India's nuclear status."

Joint military exercises

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, "joint naval and air force exercises are becoming regular practice." In the past two years, the big-business daily reported, the two armed forces have together conducted naval patrols in the Indian Ocean, and their special forces have trained together in the Indian-administered area of Kashmir. Joint fighter-plane maneuvers are planned for February.

Over the same period, New Delhi purchased around \$200 million worth of U.S.-manufactured arms. It is now putting together a \$1 billion order of P3 Orion maritime patrol and surveillance aircraft.

At the same time, New Delhi is not part of the U.S.-made "coalition of the willing" because it did not contribute forces to the occupation of Iraq. Along with companies from Germany and France, Indian contrac-



U.S. and Indian special forces troops conduct joint maneuvers September 12 in mountainous Ladak region in northeastern Kashmir, along frontier between Indian- and Pakistani-held territory and China to the north.

STP/Getty Images/AFP

tors are barred from bidding for major construction contracts in Iraq.

Washington began stepping up its efforts to expand economic and military ties with India in the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. For much of the preceding decades, Moscow had maintained a substantial arms trade and close relations with New Delhi. The Indian government used those ties to gain some freedom of movement against Washington. At the same time, the government of India—the world's second most populous country, and the most powerful semicolonial country in South Asia—served as a bulwark for imperialist interests against China.

U.S. president William Clinton visited India in March 2000. Eighteen months later, the Bush administration announced that it would lift most of the economic and military sanctions imposed on India after the 1998 nuclear tests.

In the same period, Washington stepped up pressure on the military regime of Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan to clamp down on the Taliban, al Qaeda, and similar forces that have used Pakistani territory as a base of operations. In January, the U.S. news media published "revelations" about alleged trade in missile and nuclear technology by previous governments in Islamabad with north Korea, Iran, and

other customers. The January 4 *New York Times* claimed that accumulated information shows that Pakistan "has emerged as the intellectual and trading hub of a loose network of hidden nuclear proliferators."

U.S. government officials have said that the Musharraf regime continues to be an ally in their "war on terror." Bush said January 1 that Musharraf has "been a stand-up guy when it comes to dealing with the terrorists. We are making progress against al Qaeda because of his cooperation."

The capitalist rulers of Pakistan and India have been bitter rivals since the two countries were carved out of British colonial India in 1947—an effective divide-and-rule ploy against the independence movement by the departing imperialists. Their conflict over Kashmir, which lies on their northern border, has sparked two of their three wars and numerous clashes. The two nuclear-armed powers have been carrying out talks this year on the Kashmir issue.

While Washington continues to cultivate ties with the governments of both Pakistan and India, it is leaning more and more towards New Delhi. Spurred by moves to remove restrictions to foreign investment and other "reforms" that are hitting working people the hardest, India is undergoing some economic growth and industrialization, attracting increasing, although still modest, foreign investment. At the same time, India remains a largely rural country, with great disparities between city and countryside, as well as between regions, and a great degree of underdevelopment. It is home to more than a billion people—second only to China—214 million of whom face "chronic hunger," according to the United Nations. Per capita income averages less than 2 percent that of the United States.

Freed political prisoner welcomed in Puerto Rico

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The fight to win freedom for all Puerto Rican political prisoners took another step forward January 24 as Juan Segarra Palmer was welcomed home to his native land at the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Segarra had been imprisoned since 1985 for his activities in support of the struggle for independence for Puerto Rico from U.S. colonial rule.

"Between 1,500 and 2,000 people came out to welcome Segarra," said Luis Rosa, himself a former prisoner for his pro-independence activity, who was released in 1999 after 19 years in U.S. jails. The crowd chanted, "Segarra, defiant" and "Long years in prison don't change your consciousness." In a telephone interview on his way back from the airport rally, Rosa said that a broad range of opponents of Puerto Rico's colonial status turned out to greet Segarra.

Among those joining the celebration were Lolita Lebrón, who spent a quarter-century in U.S. jails for her uncompromising fight for Puerto Rican independence, and leaders of the successful fight to demand the U.S. Navy withdraw from Vieques, an island off the mainland used for decades for U.S. military maneuvers and target practice. Young people, university students in particular, made up a large section of those who joined the enthusiastic homecoming, said Rosa, as well as veterans of the struggle against U.S. domination of Puerto Rico.

Segarra's supporters had to wait more than an hour to see him after his plane touched down because of the crush of dozens of media people seeking to interview the released prisoner. Rosa said a brief rally featuring Segarra was chaired by Rosa Meneses, granddaughter of Pedro Albizu Campos, the historic leader of the Puerto Rican independence movement. The welcoming committee included the Federation of Pro-Independence University Students (FUPI), Socialist Front, Committee for Human Rights of Puerto Rico, National Hostosiano Congress, and the Puerto Rican

Independence Party.

"Help bring home all of the political prisoners," Segarra told the rally. Like the others who have been released before him, Segarra stressed the importance of leaving no comrade behind bars without a fight.

Other Puerto Rican political prisoners held by Washington today are Haydée Beltrán, Carlos Alberto Torres, Oscar López Rivera, and Antonio Camacho Negrón. Six other fighters against U.S. colonial domination—José Pérez González, José Vélez Acosta, Josté Montañez Sanes, Jorge Cruz Hernández, Néstor de Jesús Guishard, and Heriberto Hernández—face prison terms ranging from four months, in the case of Heriberto Hernández, to five years, in the case of José Pérez González, as a result of May 1 actions in Vieques to celebrate the U.S. government's decision to withdraw the Navy from that island.

Segarra stated that with his release he intends to learn more about the state of the Puerto Rican independence movement today in order to see how best he can participate from outside prison walls. He also said that he wants to meet those who have been campaigning for his and the other political prisoners' freedom.

Frame-up on 'seditious conspiracy'

Segarra had been convicted of seditious conspiracy charges in a case that began on Aug. 30, 1985, when 200 FBI agents invaded the homes of independence fighters in Puerto Rico—highlighting its status as a colony of Washington. The agents arrested 15 individuals—who became known as the Hartford 15—on charges of conspiracy to commit a 1983 robbery of a Wells Fargo depot in Hartford, Connecticut.

In order to make its frame-up stick against the independence fighters, the FBI conducted an electronic surveillance operation that produced 1,500 hours of taped conversations, flouting the Puerto Rican constitution, which prohibits the use of wiretapping. Fifty hours of these tapes were thrown out

as evidence because of demonstrated FBI tampering. In further disregard for Puerto Rican sovereignty, Washington then flew the 15 defendants from Puerto Rico to Hartford and forced them to stand trial before an English-speaking jury, even though most of the "evidence" was in Spanish.

Segarra was sentenced four years after his arrest. Convicted of conspiracy to plan and carry out the 1983 robbery, he received a 65-year prison term.

The fight for freedom for the Hartford 15 and the other Puerto Rican political prisoners gained strength in the last half-decade with an upturn in working-class and pro-independence struggles on the island. In September 1999, 11 prisoners won their freedom after accepting an offer of parole from President William Clinton a month earlier, which included conditions stating they were prohibited from associating with each other. Segarra signed a separate agreement that made him eligible for release five years later.

Segarra's victory follows the successful campaign to win medical treatment for another member of the Hartford 15, Oscar López Rivera, late last year. For more than eight months prison authorities ignored doctors' recommendations that López receive an operation for bilateral hernias. Supporters continue to follow his case to ensure that a second prescribed hernia operation is performed on the 60-year-old independence fighter, who has served more than 22 years of a 70-year sentence.

"The next activity in the fight for Puerto Rican independence will take place February 29 in Mayaguez to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the action at the U.S. Congress," Luis Rosa said. On March 1, 1954, four *independentistas* carried out an armed demonstration in the U.S. House of Representatives to draw attention to Puerto Rico's colonial status. Rosa said the event will be attended by Lolita Lebrón and Rafael Cancel Miranda, two of those who carried out the action 50 years ago.