

THE MILITANT

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Bolivia: capitalist forces mobilize against gov't measures
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Pakistan: after assassination, capitalist parties call for 'nat'l unity' gov't

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—In the wake of the assassination of former Pakistan prime minister Benazir Bhutto, leaders of her party and other capitalist opposition forces are pressing for quick elections in order to form a “national unity” government.

The Bush administration is using the assassination to push Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf to do more in the “war against terrorism.” His regime has blamed al-Qaeda for the killing. Leaders of the main opposition parties have accused the government of a cover-up, and a possible hand in the killing.

Bhutto, leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), was killed December 27 when assailants attacked her motorcade following a rally in Rawalpindi. Her 19-year-old son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, has been named as her successor and chairman of the PPP. Her husband Asif Ali Zardari is cochairman.

Widespread protests against the assassination that erupted in major cities and in Bhutto's home province of Sindh have largely ended. During the protests hundreds of banks, police stations, rail terminals, and factories were burned. Musharraf

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Socialist Workers Party launches presidential ticket of Calero, Kennedy SWP candidates announced in state and local races

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

NEW YORK—The Socialist Workers Party is launching its 2008 election campaign, and campaign supporters are hitting the streets to win support for the working-class alternative in the November elections.

Róger Calero, 38, is the party's candidate for president of the United States. Alyson Kennedy, 57, is its

Biographies of Calero and Kennedy
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List of SWP candidates
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candidate for vice president. Calero, a writer for the *Militant*, and Kennedy, a garment worker, are joined by more than 30 SWP candidates for local, state, and federal offices in 12 states and the District of Columbia (see biographies of Kennedy and Calero, and initial candidates' list on page 6).

Supporters of the socialist ticket will be campaigning at factory plant gates, joining candidates' debates, participating in labor and other political actions, and raising money from workers. They will also be petitioning to get the SWP candidates on the

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Militant/Paul Pederson

Socialist Workers Party candidates Róger Calero for president and Alyson Kennedy for vice president are presenting a fighting, working-class alternative to the capitalist parties.

Special election campaign forums...

Militant Labor Forums across the United States over the January 4-6 and January 10-12 weekends will discuss the results of the Iowa caucuses, the New Hampshire primaries, and what the Socialist Workers 2008 election campaign stands and fights for. For more information, contact 'Militant' distributors near you, listed on page 8!

New Orleans: workers protest plans to demolish public housing

BY STEVE WARSHELL

HOUSTON—Black and other working-class residents of New Orleans held several protests in December against city plans to demolish public housing. Municipal authorities responded with a police assault on demonstrators. Cops also gave notice

to homeless workers living in a tent city outside City Hall that they had one more week before eviction.

The attacks are the latest examples of the social disaster—caused by capitalist greed and indifference—that has unfolded in the Gulf region for more than two and a half years since Hurricane Katrina.

At the end of November, New Orleans city officials, along with the Housing Authority of New Orleans and the federal Housing and Urban Development agency (HUD), decided to implement their plan to demolish the city's four largest public housing developments, further reducing the housing available to working people. The 4,605 low-income public housing apartments were slated for demolition and were to be replaced by 744 low-income public housing apartments—barely 16 percent of the previous number.

Nearly two-thirds of the city's rental housing stock was

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AP

Homeless workers in New Orleans remove their belongings December 21 after local government gave notice of eviction from tent city they set up in front of City Hall.

Profit drive of U.S. coal bosses killed 32 in 2007

BY CHRIS HOEPPNER

SEATTLE—In mid-December two more workers at coal mines in the United States were killed on the job, raising to 32 the number killed by the coal bosses' deadly profit drive in 2007.

A truck driver was killed December 12 at the Bear Canyon No. 4 mine near Huntington, Utah. The unidentified victim was a driver for Trimac Trucking Co. The Bear Canyon mine is operated by C.W. Mining Co.

The trucker's vehicle had got stuck in the snow. A loader at the mine was preparing to pull it out when the driver was crushed between the loader and the truck, a spokesperson for the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) told the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

Four months earlier, nine people were killed in the disaster at the Crandall Canyon mine, near Huntington.

On December 14, David Neal, 57, of Dixie, West Virginia, died at a Charleston hospital from injuries received in a fall 10 days earlier at

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Canada gov't postpones deportation after protests

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—More than 1,500 people rallied at the Vancouver International Airport December 10, compelling Canadian authorities to postpone their moves to deport Laibar Singh to India. Many of the demonstrators were members of the Punjabi Sikh community in the Vancouver area.

Protest actions to support Singh were held the same day in Toronto

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Protests halt deportation

Continued from front page
and Montreal, reported Harsha Walia from the organization No One Is Illegal, one of the groups that has led the antideportation actions.

Singh entered Canada in 2003 applying for refugee status. In 2005 the Indian-born worker suffered a stroke that left him a paraplegic. Despite his health and pending legal appeals, the Canadian government issued a deportation order against him for July 8, 2007.

Rally organizer Harpreet Singh, who works for Radio India in Vancouver, noted that as a result of community pressure Singh received two stays of deportation. A petition with 40,000 signatures was presented to Canadian parliament in support of his right to remain in Canada.

Organizations that have supported Singh include the Canadian Labour Congress, British Columbia Hospital Employees' Union, BC Coalition of People With Disabilities, and the Association of Chinese Canadians for Equality and Solidarity Society.

On his arrival in Canada, Singh said that he had used false docu-

ments for travel. International and Canadian refugee laws recognize the reality that refugees are often forced to travel with false papers.

"We will continue to organize further activities which will be announced," Walia said. "We encourage people to support this fight by writing to Canadian immigration minister Diane Findlay in Ottawa, calling on the Canadian government to grant Laibar Singh refugee status."

Protesters at the airport surrounded the taxi carrying Singh, chanting slogans demanding that Ottawa let him remain in the country. In face of this outpouring, border police said Singh would be allowed to temporarily stay in Canada.

The action in support of Singh took place two weeks after a demonstration of 1,000 at the Vancouver airport protesting the cop killing of Robert Dziekanski, a Polish immigrant.

Last March defenders of South Asian immigrants held a rally in Surrey, a Vancouver suburb, to protest the unsafe conditions that led



December 10 protest at Vancouver airport prevented the deportation of Laibar Singh

to the deaths of three Punjabi farm workers. A company van carrying 17 women workers to their jobs flipped over on the highway. To jam more

workers into the vehicle, the boss had taken out the regular seats and replaced them with wooden benches without seat belts.

Thirty-two miners killed last year in coal bosses' drive for profit

Continued from front page
the Mammoth 130 mine. The underground operation, located near the community of Mammoth in Kanawha County, is run by a Massey Energy subsidiary.

Neal and another worker were on the surface changing rollers on a suspended, overland conveyor belt. The belt started moving unexpectedly and Neal fell nearly 40 feet to the ground,

a state mine safety official told the media.

Neal was the eighth West Virginia coal miner killed on the job in 2007.

Crandall Canyon mine

In a separate development, a Utah state agency rejected efforts by attorneys for coal boss Robert Murray to block the release of records relating to the August collapse at the Crandall

Canyon mine.

The general manager of the Utah state government's Intermountain Power Agency (IPA), James Hewlett, wrote, "IPA believes that the public's interest in obtaining information about the Crandall Canyon mine outweighs petitioners' interest in protecting information that has little, if any, commercial value given that the Crandall Canyon mine is currently closed."

The *Salt Lake Tribune* had requested a copy of the records from IPA. The agency is a co-owner of the Crandall Canyon mine with Andalex Resources, a Murray-owned subsidiary. IPA operates several coal-fired power plants, buying coal from Utah mines and selling the electricity to California and Utah utilities.

The *Tribune* asked for documents relating to safety, engineering, and accidents at the mine. The request included information about "bounces"—incidents in which pressure from above causes coal to explode

from pillars holding up the mine roof. The Crandall Canyon mine lies deep under a mountain.

Murray's lawyers opposed releasing the records arguing that there was no "public interest" in how Crandall Canyon was operated and that the disclosure could harm the company and give competitors an unfair advantage.

"This theory has a fatal flaw," Hewlett wrote. "The Crandall Canyon Mine has no customers and, therefore, no competitors. It is difficult to understand how current or former customers could use any of the disputed information to negotiate a better contract when the mine cannot fulfill any contracts."

Andalex Resources was given 30 days to appeal before any records could be released.

Murray-owned companies have sued to block the release of other documents relating to the Crandall Canyon collapse as well.

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August 2007 'Militant' supplement after cave-in at Crandall Canyon mine.

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Pakistan assassination

Continued from front page

issued orders to security forces that “all measures” should be used to halt the protests.

Bhutto’s death has further complicated efforts by Washington and capitalist forces in Pakistan to cobble together a coalition government that is stable enough to be a more effective ally in the U.S. government’s “global war on terror.”

Bhutto’s PPP is the largest political party in Pakistan. Another bourgeois opposition party, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), is led by Nawaz Sharif, also a former prime minister. Both he and Bhutto come from wealthy ruling class families. Both had been forced out of office on charges of corruption and brokered deals to go into exile. A group call-

ing itself Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) split from Sharif in 2002 and has been the backbone of Musharraf’s political support.

The U.S. government had urged Musharraf to seek a coalition government with Bhutto and others in the capitalist opposition to counter advances by armed groups backed by al-Qaeda on both sides of Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan. Since Bhutto’s death officials at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad have made overtures to Sharif, reported the *New York Times*.

PPP leaders rejected December 30 statements by Pakistani government officials that the elections could be postponed for at least a month. Sharif has also opposed any postpone-

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Reuters

Supporters of Benazir Bhutto protest her assassination in Islamabad, Pakistan, December 29.

Capitalist forces in Bolivia mobilize against gov’t measures

BY RÓGER CALERO

Class polarization in Bolivia is intensifying. Working people are seeking to defend government measures to exert more control over the country’s natural resources and improve living conditions. At the same time capitalists and landlords are organizing to undermine these gains.

Tens of thousands of workers and peasants rallied December 15 in La Paz, Bolivia’s capital, in support of a draft constitution approved by the country’s National Assembly on December 9. On the same day, similar numbers joined opposition-led rallies against the new constitution. The right-wing rallies celebrated the declaration of “autonomy statutes” that would give the country’s four wealthiest provinces—Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni, and Pando—greater powers over tax revenues, oil royalties, and police.

Claiming that they produce Bolivia’s wealth, the capitalists and big landowners complain that the measures adopted by the government of Evo Morales amount to “subsidizing” the country’s poorer regions in the mountains. They also attack provisions in the new consti-

tution that give greater autonomy to indigenous groups, which are the majority in Bolivia. The four opposition-led provinces are more white and mestizo than the rest of the country.

Morales called the moves to set up autonomous regions “illegal” and accused the opposition of seeking to split the nation. Alejandro Almaraz, Vice Minister of Lands, labeled the moves “a landlords’ uprising—backward and conservative—against democracy.”

The opposition has opposed land reform. As of June 2007, some 2.2 million acres of land had been distributed primarily to landless peasant and indigenous families, according to the TeleSur website. The opposition has also demanded a discussion on a government measure that diverts oil royalty

revenues from the provinces to a pension plan for the elderly.

Before the new constitution is enacted the National Assembly will need to approve the entire text of the draft, which will then be placed for a vote in a national referendum.

One article in the draft constitution—limiting the amount of idle land one individual can own—did not win the two-thirds majority required for approval by the National Assembly. That article will be placed for a vote in the referendum, with voters deciding between a limit of 2,000 or 4,000 acres per person.

In late December a string of bombings hit the Bolivian Workers Federation office in La Paz, the homes of several elected officials who support Morales, a residence for Cuban volunteer doctors,

and a house next to the Venezuelan consulate. The opposition has condemned the aid extended to Bolivia by the governments of Venezuela and Cuba.

Attempts by the opposition to disrupt debate in the National Assembly on the draft constitution were met by mobilizations of Morales supporters, including miners who guarded the meeting site.

Morales has called for a “dialogue” with the opposition. He proposed a meeting with opposition governors on January 7. Five of the governors have agreed to attend. Morales has proposed holding a recall referendum for the president’s office and for the nine state governor seats. The proposal is currently being reviewed by the National Assembly, and the referendum could be held as early as April.

New Orleans: protests against gutting of public housing

Continued from front page

destroyed or badly damaged in the 2005 hurricane. In addition to the demolition of public housing, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has now announced that it will be closing its trailer parks in the region, evicting nearly 3,000 families. The federal agency also said it will end financial assistance for nearly 3,700 more families who live in private trailer camps.

These moves led to the December demonstrations against the destruction of housing units. A December 20 protest during a city council meeting was attacked by cops using chemical spray and stun guns. After the police assault, the city council voted unanimously to go ahead with the demolition.

The federal and state housing agencies want to demolish the buildings so wealthy developers can take advantage of tax credits and build new “mixed-income”—less working-class, less Black, and more middle-class—neighborhoods that can generate greater profits for real estate capitalists. Some critics note that at a

time when affordable housing is scarce, the plan will cut back the stock of lower-cost housing and drive many Black and other working people out of the city. They also point out that the buildings are brick structures that would outlast anything HUD builds in their place.

“Some city council members said we were the cause of crime and poverty,” said Sam Jackson, a 28-year resident of B.W. Cooper public housing. “But that’s far from the truth.” Jackson attended the city council hearing and the protests. “All the problems we face from the government’s failure to maintain the buildings are the result of either not enough funds or those funds being stolen,” he said in a phone interview.

On December 21 the city gave notice of plans to remove all remaining people from a tent city of homeless workers on the steps of City Hall.

The city’s homeless population has nearly doubled since Katrina and now stands at 12,000 people, according to the local housing coalition UNITY. The problem is worsened by a post-Katrina reduction in mental health and drug abuse services. In addition, the number of shelter beds in the New Orleans area has sharply dropped. Meanwhile, average rent for a tiny “efficiency” apartment has jumped from \$463 to \$764 a month.

In Houston, the more than 100,000 relocated New Orleans residents also face an acute housing crisis. Most of

the relocated workers were previously kept afloat by federal rental assistance. Now some of these families are losing their benefits and are ending up on the streets. A number are forced to go from one cheap motel to another or to double up in other people’s homes. Those lucky to have transportation are living in their cars.

“We have gone from pillar to post,” Brenda Hickman told the *Houston Chronicle*. “I can’t see myself living on the streets.” Hickman, 59, was disqualified from rental assistance after she broke up with her husband. He had been designated as head of the household and thus sole recipient for FEMA rental assistance.

In the last month, the transfer of the FEMA rental assistance program to HUD has displaced hundreds more. Many Houston landlords who previously accepted FEMA funds are opting out of the HUD program that requires tenants to start contributing to their rent payments March 1.

So far, 48 landlords representing 68 properties have dropped out of the HUD program, Spurgeon Robinson, director of Harris County’s Disaster Housing Assistance Program, told the press. Hundreds of working-class families with no money must now come up with security deposits to move once again.

Farhad Karim in New Orleans contributed to this article.

CALENDAR

Celebrate the political life of Robert Simms, a communist militant for 38 years

Robert Simms, an internationalist cadre and leader of the Communist League in Canada, died in Toronto December 3. He was 61. Join us in celebrating his life and political contributions to building the communist movement in Canada and internationally, to which Simms dedicated close to four decades.

Speakers: Jack Barnes, national secretary, Socialist Workers Party; Ben Joyce, Young Socialists National Steering Committee; Steve Penner, International Print Project volunteer; Michel Prairie, organizer, Communist League executive committee. John Steele, director of Pathfinder Books in Canada, and Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *New Internationalist*, will chair the event,

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China: consequences of Stalinist 'Cultural Revolution'

BY CINDY JAQUITH

(Third in a series)

With the victory of China's socialist revolution in 1949, workers and peasants there removed from power the capitalists and landlords who blocked their progress toward a society free of class exploitation and oppression. The door was now open to begin modernizing agriculture, developing industry, overcoming the legacy of social backwardness, and extending China's support to the worldwide struggle for socialism.

From the start, Washington and other imperialist powers imposed tremendous political, economic, and military pressures on the young workers state. The U.S. government refused to recognize the government, led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Instead, it insisted that the capitalist regime that Chiang Kai-shek had set up on the Chinese island of Taiwan was the legitimate representative of the Chinese people.

Washington cut off trade with China. U.S. troops in south Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, plus the U.S. Seventh Fleet patrolling off China's shores, kept the revolution encircled.

In spite of this, major social changes took place rapidly in the new China. Hundreds of millions of peasants won ownership of the land they worked and an end to debt slavery. The production of electrical power increased by 400 percent, coal by 300 percent, textiles by more than 100 percent, and steel by more than 1,100 percent within the first decade of the revolution.

Working people also advanced culturally. The number of children attending elementary school nearly tripled from 22 percent in 1950 to 60 percent in 1958. Women by the millions began entering social and political life. Curable diseases such as polio, tuberculosis, diphtheria, and tetanus were virtually wiped out. The accomplishments were dramatically superior to those of neighboring India, which won independence from Britain in 1947 but, unlike China, remained under capitalist rule and imperialist domination.

The previous article (see December 24 issue) explained how the Stalinist leadership of the CCP under Mao Zedong tried to restrain the mobilizations of workers and peasants and hold off a socialist revolution, until mounting imperialist threats led it to change course. Once in power, the Communist Party continued to give priority to the interests of a privileged middle-class layer, not the working class and peasantry. It feared the initiatives of the masses and sought to regiment them, putting a lid on political discussion of how to move forward.

From the mid-1920s, the CCP had followed the line of the Communist International dominated by Joseph Stalin, adopting its zigzags between ultraleft adventurism and right-wing opportunism, depending on the prerogatives of the bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union. Now in power itself, the CCP approached political questions from the narrow nationalist interests of the bureaucratic caste it was consolidating in China. That meant putting the brakes on the workers and peasants who strove to place their stamp on the unfolding revolution.

In the countryside, peasants sought to consolidate and extend the gains of the revolution through the formation of small-scale cooperatives, whereby several families shared tools, animals, and labor to increase production and living standards. This initiative was endorsed by the government in 1951.

But in 1955 Mao launched an adventurous course of administratively trying to speed up the pace of development without the mobilization or leadership of the rural and urban masses. The peasant-led cooperatives were replaced by bureaucratically imposed "higher-stage" cooperatives in which party and government officials, not those working the land, became the administrators. Some peasants resisted the change, including by slaughtering their livestock.

In 1958 the CCP declared the "Great Leap Forward," a campaign to supposedly turn China rapidly into an industrial giant under the slogan "Catch up with England in 15 years." A sizable segment of the rural population was organized into industrial production and construction. "People's communes" were decreed. Each such unit grouped together 5,000 peasant families who were to give up their private homes and plots of land to live communally and work under near military conditions. This policy followed the course of forced collectivization of land that the Stalin regime had brutally imposed on peasants in the Soviet Union.

Families were pressed to set up primitive steel-making furnaces in their backyards and to collect scrap metal, including personal belongings, to melt down. A productivity push also took place in the factories, with callous disregard for workers' health and safety.

The Great Leap Forward was a disaster. Food grain production dropped from about 200 million to 150 million metric tons from 1958 to 1960. Famine began to spread, claiming an estimated one million lives. In industry, the frantic drive for production led to a sharp decline in the quality of goods produced. The backyard steel furnaces made little usable steel but wasted enormous amounts of labor. By 1959 the Mao regime was forced to back away from that policy and the "people's communes."

Defeat in Indonesia

Not long afterward, the Stalinist misleadership in China was responsible for a devastating defeat for the working class, this time in Indonesia. As in many semicolonial countries, the Indonesian toilers identified with the Chinese revolution and looked to its leadership.

The Chinese CP advised the Indonesian Communist Party to bloc with the "progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie represented by President Sukarno. From the narrow nationalist—as opposed to internationalist—perspective of the CCP, it was preferable to maintain good relations with Sukarno, who had diplomatic relations and carried out trade with China, than to lead Indonesian working people to organize for socialist revolution.

Politically demobilized, workers were unprepared in 1965 when General Suharto led a coup that, with



Beijing, 1967: people branded as "counterrevolutionaries" are publicly degraded, paraded through streets wearing dunce caps with their names, during Mao's "Cultural Revolution."

little resistance, crushed the workers movement and massacred hundreds of thousands of members and supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party, the third-largest CP in the world. It was the biggest defeat for the international working class since the victory of fascism in Germany in the 1930s.

'Cultural Revolution,' Red Guards

Shortly after the disaster in Indonesia, the Mao leadership launched what it called the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" in China. It had nothing to do with advancing the proletariat, culture, or revolution. Its goal was to purge Mao's opponents from party and government positions of power and to consolidate his faction in control.

Millions of teenage youth were mobilized across the country into contingents of the "Red Guards" to root out those branded as "capitalist roaders" and "bourgeois" elements. The targets were Mao's political rivals, but a wide range of cultural figures and intellectuals were the initial victims. Instead of an open debate on questions that sorely needed discussion—from the Indonesia debacle, to how to advance the Chinese economy, to the lack of workers' democracy—Mao's opponents were simply accused of being counterrevolutionaries seeking to restore capitalism.

What followed was a giant assault on progress and culture. Following the bureaucrats' dictates, the Red Guards arbitrarily went after anything they deemed might deviate from "Mao Zedong Thought": Greek and Roman

statues, plays by Shakespeare, anyone wearing jewelry or sporting a "bourgeois" haircut. Many schools were closed for several years. The number of periodicals in the country dropped 1,300 to about 50. Most books became unobtainable. The exception was the writings of Mao—books of catechisms whose possession proved one's loyalty to the CP chairman, the very opposite of scientific socialism.

Thousands were killed in sharp clashes between rival factions. Many party and government office holders were removed and imprisoned, or publicly humiliated and brutalized.

In 1969, once Mao felt his faction was securely in control of the party, army, and government, he unceremoniously dumped the Red Guards, many of whom were shipped off to the countryside for a lifetime of forced "reeducation."

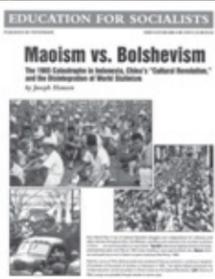
While this destructive factional warfare raged in China, the workers and peasants of nearby Vietnam were battling half a million U.S. troops. Precious little political or material aid was extended to the Vietnam liberation fighters by either Moscow or Beijing. Both Stalinist regimes rejected the pressing need for a united front against the imperialist war, based on the narrow interests of their respective bureaucratic castes.

Mao died in 1976. In the subsequent power grab by competing bureaucrats, his faction was ousted. But the new leaders of China were cut from the same cloth as the old. The next article will take up the developments that ensued.

For Further Reading

Maoism vs. Bolshevism: The 1965 Catastrophe in Indonesia, China's "Cultural Revolution," and the Disintegration of World Stalinism

By Joseph Hansen

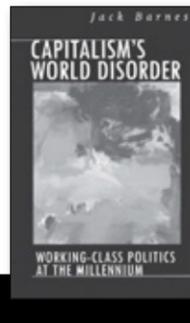


Following the Chinese revolution of 1949, many workers and youth in Asia and elsewhere—inspired by that historic blow to imperialism—were politically misled by the Mao Zedong leadership. These articles, reports, and resolutions explain the communist alternative to Mao's Stalinist course, which in 1965 paved the way for a bloody CIA-backed coup in Indonesia. —\$10

Capitalism's World Disorder

By Jack Barnes

"[T]he Stalinist regime headed by Mao Zedong made it impossible for the Chinese toilers to become as powerful a force as they could have been to advance the struggle for national liberation and socialism in Asia and throughout the world," Barnes writes. "To the degree the Maoist regime did influence fighters, it turned them away from proletarian internationalism toward petty-bourgeois nationalism." —\$24



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ON THE PICKET LINE

N.Y. grocery workers lose union vote amid 'migra' threats

NEW YORK—Workers at FreshDirect, an online grocery delivery company, lost a union election December 22–23. In the weeks leading up to the vote, at least 100 workers quit or were suspended after management told them they had to come up with proper work authorization papers because Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was going to inspect company records.

The election ballot contained choices of Teamsters Local 805, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 348, or “no union.” The company claims that 80 percent of those voting chose “no union.” Some 900 workers at the FreshDirect warehouse were eligible to vote. Five hundred truck drivers at the company voted in 2006 to join UFCW Local 348.

Sandy Pope, president of Local 348, told the press that company lawyers might have invited ICE officials to scrutinize workers in order to weaken the union drive. ICE spokesperson Kelly

Nantel said, “I would categorically deny that that’s the case.” Jim Moore, a FreshDirect spokesman, said the company was just complying with ICE regulations.

Workers rallied outside the warehouse September 28 to protest the firings of two prounion workers, Loreto Gómez and Lonnie Powell. Earlier that month, the company had handed out a flyer warning: “Be smart: Don’t sign a union authorization card.”

—Dan Fein

New Zealand store workers protest 0% wage offer

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Members of the National Distribution Union (NDU) at Bunnings hardware stores around the country have been protesting the company’s offer for no wage increase.

In Auckland, 30 workers and supporters picketed the Botany Downs store for two hours December 15. Holding up placards to passing motorists, they contrasted the bosses’ miserly wage proposal to the NZ\$6 million paid to



Workers at FreshDirect rally outside warehouse in Long Island the day before the union vote

the CEO of Bunnings’ parent company, Wesfarmers—a 61 percent increase from last year.

The company’s only offer, reported union delegate Graham Chicken, was to raise the starting rate from NZ\$11.25

[\$8.60] to NZ\$12.00 [\$9.20] in April when that becomes the legal minimum wage. The union announced that further industrial action was planned for the start of the new year.

—Ruth Gray

Auto workers union in Canada ratifies no-strike deal

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—Delegates to the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) National Council meeting, held here December 7–9, overwhelmingly voted to endorse the union’s no-strike agreement with Magna International, the largest auto parts manufacturer in Canada. About 25 of the more than 800 delegates opposed the controversial deal, the CAW reported.

The “Framework of Fairness” agreement gives the company’s approval for the CAW to unionize Magna’s 18,000 workers, while establishing a union contract that bars Magna workers who join the CAW from striking and that imposes binding arbitration on unsettled union contracts. It substitutes traditional union stewards, elected by workers on the shop floor, with “employee advocates” selected by Magna and the top CAW leadership to work through joint union-management “fairness committees” in each plant.

The CAW-Magna deal, which became public last October, has generated widespread controversy in the labor movement. Less than two weeks before the CAW council meeting, delegates to the biennial convention of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), which the CAW left several years ago, unanimously voted to condemn the deal to “send a clear message to all employers that labour will not give up the right strike or the right to democratic representation in our unions and our workplaces.”

CAW Local 112 at Bombardier Aircraft has been one of the few locals to oppose the deal. “Without the leverage the right to strike provides, what other tools do workers have to back up their demands at the bargaining table to improve wages and working conditions?” asked Local 112 unionists in a leaflet distributed to the National Council delegates. “The right to strike is central to the collective bargaining process and must never be given up,” the leaflet said.

“CAW members at Magna should have the same rights as other CAW members,” said CAW Local 222 president Chris Buckley in opposition to the deal. “Has the CAW given up on

defending our current members for a sweet-heart Magna deal?” He warned, “Other employers are going to want the same thing.” Local 222 represents workers at the giant General Motors plant in Oshawa.

The majority of council delegates and CAW officials who spoke in the day-long debate defended the deal, calling it “innovative,” a “foot in the door strategy,” and a step forward not only for the CAW but the for labor movement as a whole.

“At a tough time for auto assembly, auto parts, and manufacturing workers in Canada, this decision creates a new window of opportunity for workers to be able to join our union,” CAW president Basil “Buzz” Hargrove told the delegates. Hargrove, echoed by other CAW officials, argued that since a 30-year effort to organize Magna had failed—only 1,000 workers, in four of more than 45 plants, are CAW members—this was

the only way to get the union in, and that “high union density” in the auto sector “is critical to the future bargaining success of all workers.”

Responding to criticism from the OFL and other unions, Hargrove pointed out that many other unions had signed agreements at one time or another conceding the right to strike and accepting voluntary arbitration. “The danger to the labor movement does not come from this agreement,” Hargrove said. “The threat comes from the Delphi Disease,” referring to the contracts recently approved by the memberships of the United Auto Workers with GM, Ford, and Chrysler in the United States. The contracts make steep union concessions, including a two-tier wage system for new hires.

Hargrove also noted that at recent conventions of other provincial labor federations across the country, no criti-

cism of the CAW-Magna deal was heard. “The OFL is not attacking us because of the Magna deal,” he said. “It’s about the NDP [New Democratic Party], that’s the real difference.”

The NDP is a social democratic party linked to the unions and supported by the OFL. In the last federal and Ontario provincial elections, the CAW promoted “strategic voting” against the Conservative Party by urging workers to vote for many Liberal Party candidates. The OFL and most of its affiliates maintained their decades-long policy of backing the NDP.

In November more than 250 workers at Windsor Modules, a division of Magna, voted to join the CAW under the terms of the Framework of Fairness agreement. “I’m looking forward to our future in the CAW,” Moe Soydanbay, the “employee advocate” at Windsor Modules, said to loud applause.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 21, 1983

DENVER—Five hundred people were attacked by police, sheriff’s deputies, and a volunteer posse at a farm protest at the Baca County Courthouse in Springfield, Colorado, January 4.

Farmers had come from at least seven states to protest the court-ordered auction of a 320-acre wheat and milo farm near Campo. The owner, Jerry Wright, had missed two annual payments on a \$85,000 loan from the Federal Land Bank and a \$125,000 loan from the Farm Home Administration.

Wright had earlier made payments totaling \$50,000 on the \$85,000 loan. But due to a gigantic jump in interest rates, he now owes \$86,000 even though he repaid more than half his original loan.

Wright told a rally outside the courthouse that the recession and federal government policies including the embargo on the sale of American grain to the Soviet Union has made it “totally impossible to pay my operating costs and make my land payments too.”



January 6, 1958

DETROIT—The most immediate and urgent single problem facing the United Auto Workers’ Special Convention this month is the beginning of mass unemployment in the automobile industry.

In Detroit last week, Chrysler workers were talking about a corporation statement that everything was “normal.” How “normal” may be judged from the fact that for the past month and a half, Dodge workers here have been on a three to three-and-a-half day week. From Dec. 20 to Jan. 7 the plant will be completely shut down. Ordinarily the winter months are times of peak production in auto. In most years, relatively full employment provides Detroit workers with their Christmas cheer. This year Santa is bringing lay off slips, instead.

At the local DeSoto plant the workforce has been cut by 20% affecting workers with as much as seven years of seniority in some cases. A total of 60,000 workers in the Detroit area alone are “furloughed” for two weeks.



January 7, 1933

The military clique in control of the political fortunes of Japan has embarked upon the second phase of its military adventure of conquest in Northern China. Under some flimsy pretext the Japanese army, navy, marines, and air force has laid waste to the city of Shanhaikwan. After a ferocious assault the Japanese forces with the use of armored cars, bombs thrown from airplanes, cannonades, and all together paraphernalia that goes with a bombardment, the Japanese succeeded in repeating their raid on Shanghai a year ago. The whole Chinese garrison of 500 soldiers and about as many civilians, men, women and children were annihilated, and the city reduced to smoldering ruins by these terrific assaults.

The Japanese invasion will not stop with the capture of this northern city. It is but another step in the campaign of Japanese imperialists to carve a colonial empire out of Northern China.

Róger Calero, SWP candidate for president

Róger Calero, 38, is a writer for the socialist newsweekly the *Militant* and an editor of its Spanish-language section, *El Militante*.

Calero has been active for years in the fight for the legalization of undocumented immigrants. Mobilizing along with hundreds of thousands of fellow workers on May Day in 2006 and 2007, Calero marched to demand immediate, unconditional permanent residency for all immigrants. He has taken part in many actions against police raids and deportations by immigration cops.

He has supported strikes and organizing battles in factories and workplaces by workers resisting the increasingly harsh conditions of life and labor being imposed by the bosses and their government. As a result, Calero has become known to workers on the front lines of struggle in many areas, from meat packers across the Midwest to day laborers in New York, cab drivers in Florida, and coal miners in Utah.

He was the Socialist Workers Party candidate for president in 2004. Two years later he led the SWP ticket in New York state, running for U.S. Senate. A member of the Socialist Workers Party's National Committee, he lives in the Bronx, New York.

In 2000, working as a meat packer in Iowa and then Minnesota, Calero was part of a groundbreaking union-organizing drive at Dakota Premium Foods in South St. Paul, Minnesota. Through a two-year battle that began with a sit-down strike and won broad solidarity in the labor movement and local community, workers there won recognition of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789 as their union.

In recent months Calero has extended support to the trade unionists at Dakota Premium in their fight against a company campaign to decertify the union.

Born in Nicaragua, Calero has lived in the United States since 1985, when his family moved to Los Angeles. He joined the socialist movement there in 1993.

In December 2002 Calero was arrested by federal immigration cops on his return from a *Militant* reporting trip to Cuba and Mexico. He had attended a conference in Havana opposing the Free Trade Area of the Americas—a pact aimed at extending U.S. imperialist domination—and a congress in Guadalajara of the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service jailed Calero in Houston for 10 days and began deportation proceedings against him.

Calero and his supporters fought back. They won broad support from defenders of immigrant and workers rights, and with the backing of the Socialist Workers Party, prevented his deportation, successfully defending his right to live and work in the United States. That victory set an example of how working people can fight to win, inspiring others to resist and beat back government attempts to deport them.

A supporter of the Cuban Revolution, Calero attended an international conference in Havana in April 2007 in solidarity with the Cuban Five—revolutionaries jailed in U.S. prisons on frame-up charges since 1998. The five were working to protect fellow Cubans from right-wing groups that have launched violent attacks against Cuba with Washington's complicity.

Over the past year in New York, he has helped build demonstrations for the freedom of the Five, against the police killing of Sean Bell, and for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Calero has recently reported for the *Militant* from Venezuela about struggles by workers and farmers for land, jobs, and improved living conditions.



Militant/Arrin Hawkins

Róger Calero campaigns as candidate for U.S. Senate in New York in the summer of 2006.

In November 2007 he participated in the third Venezuela International Book Fair and the second Cultural Festival in Solidarity with the People of Africa, held in Caracas. There he

joined discussions and helped to get revolutionary literature into the hands of working people fighting against the devastating consequences of capitalism and its economic crisis.

Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. vice president

Alyson Kennedy, 57, is a garment worker. A socialist and trade union fighter for more than three decades, she is a member of the Socialist Workers Party's National Committee.

Kennedy has worked in coal mines in Alabama, Colorado, Utah, and West Virginia. She first joined the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in 1981.

From 2003 to 2006 Kennedy was a leading militant in a union organizing battle at the Co-Op coal mine outside Huntington, Utah. The miners there, in their majority immigrants from Mexico, fought for UMWA representation to win safer working conditions, an end to abuse by the bosses, and improved wages, which were \$5-\$7 an hour at the time.

In winning support for the struggle and explaining its accomplishments, Kennedy and other Co-Op miners spoke before unions and other organizations in Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, California, Washington, and elsewhere across the United States, as well as in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. The battle won widespread solidarity. While the miners did not win a union

local, their struggle became a powerful example for working people of how to fight, at a time when the coal bosses' profit drive has put miners in unsafe—and too often, fatal—working situations.

Kennedy helped build support for the Militant Fighting Fund, a labor defense effort that defeated a harassment lawsuit filed by Co-Op's owners against several of the miners, the UMWA, the *Militant* newspaper, and scores of supporters of the unionization drive.

Originally from Indianapolis, Kennedy joined the socialist movement in 1973 in Louisville, Kentucky. In addition to the UMWA, Kennedy has been a member of the garment workers' union UNITE, United Steelworkers, and other trade unions. In St. Louis, she was the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in 2000. She now lives in Newark, New Jersey.

Kennedy has been active in the fight against imperialist war, beginning with the movement against the U.S. war in Vietnam. More recently she has joined demonstrations demanding an end to the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A long-time fighter against racism and discrimination, she was part of the fight to desegregate public schools that erupted in Louisville, Kentucky, in the mid-1970s. Throughout the 1980s she promoted solidarity with the battle in South Africa to get rid of the racist apartheid system.

As a union miner, Kennedy was actively involved in the Coal Employment Project, an organization founded in 1977 that championed women's fight to get hired in the coal mines and opposed harassment on the job. She is active in the fight to defend a woman's right to choose abortion, and has helped defend clinics from rightist attempts to shut them down.



Militant/Tamar Rosenfeld

Alyson Kennedy, left, speaks with fellow participant in April 2006 "Changing Woman" conference in Farmington, New Mexico, an event that drew dozens of women miners.

Support Socialist Workers Party candidates across the U.S.

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| CALIFORNIA | John Hawkin |
| Lea Sherman, U.S. Congress, 8th C.D. | gress, 1st C.D. |
| Gerardo Sánchez, U.S. Congress, 12th C.D. | Laura Anders |
| Michael Ortega, U.S. Congress, 34th C.D. | gress, 4th C.D. |
| James Harris, U.S. Congress, 35th C.D. | Dennis Richt |
| Arlene Rubinstein, U.S. Congress, 37th C.D. | gress, 7th C.D. |
| FLORIDA | IOWA |
| Omari Musa, Mayor of Miami-Dade County | Diana Newbe |
| Margaret Trowe, U.S. Congress, 17th C.D. | ate |
| GEORGIA | Frank Forrest |
| Eleanor García, U.S. Senate | gress, 3rd C.D. |
| Loretta Van Pelt, U.S. Congress, 3rd C.D. | MASSACHUSETTS |
| Jeanne FitzMaurice, U.S. Congress, 6th C.D. | William Estr |
| Jacob Perasso, U.S. Congress, 7th C.D. | ate |
| ILLINOIS | William Leona |
| Betsy Farley, U.S. Senate | ate, 2nd Suffo |
| | MINNESOTA |
| | Ernest Mailho |
| | Carlos Sama |
| | Congress, 4th |
| | Rebecca Wil |
| | Congress, 5th |
| | Rollande Gira |
| | representative, D |
| | NEW JERSEY |
| | Sara Lobman, |

Socialists launch campaign

Continued from front page

ballot in as many states as possible. Truthfully explaining the unfolding capitalist economic crisis and its consequences for the lives, job safety, and social conditions of working people is at the heart of the socialist campaign. The SWP campaign puts forward demands to defend workers and farmers from the attempts by the bosses and their government to shift the burden of their decaying system onto the backs of working people.

“Whether it’s Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Rudolph Giuliani, Mitt Romney, or any other Democrat or Republican, no capitalist candidate offers solutions for working people,” said Kennedy in an interview. “They are just looking out for the interests of the rich. Working people need to organize to defend our own interests.”

She said working people need their own political party—“a labor party based on a fighting trade union movement, to effectively fight for our interests in the political arena.”

The Socialist Workers campaign “advances a course that will unify the working class in order to fight effectively and win,” Calero said.

He noted that rising prices and unemployment “are among the most ruinous problems facing working people when capitalism has a financial crisis like the one developing today. We call for a sliding scale of wages and hours, so that when prices go up, wages go up to match. When unemployment spreads, hours should be reduced with no cut in pay to spread the available work around.”

The socialist candidates for federal, state, and local offices are also raising demands that aim to unify working people worldwide. These demands point to the need to organize a movement of millions that can

take political power out of the hands of the ruling capitalists and establish a workers and farmers government.

Campaign in Northern California

“The Socialist Workers campaign demands the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops from the multiple theaters of Washington’s ‘global war on terror,’ from Iraq and Afghanistan to the Philippines and Somalia,” said Lea Sherman, a meatpacking worker in Fremont, California, who is the SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in California’s 8th Congressional District.

“None of the other candidates provide a perspective in the interests of working people, who today are being battered by the spreading world capitalist financial crisis,” she added.

Sherman’s opponents are Democrat Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; Republican Dana Walsh; and Cindy Sheehan, a well-known opponent of the Iraq war who is running as an independent.

Sam Manuel is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for City Council At-Large in Washington, D.C. A veteran militant in the labor and Black rights movements, Manuel, 58, has helped organize activities in defense of the Cuban Revolution. He has reported for the *Militant* from New Orleans, getting out the truth about the social disaster that has unfolded there in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

The SWP is running Rebecca Williamson, 26, for U.S. Congress in Minnesota’s 5th Congressional District. A member of the Young Socialists, Williamson is a meat packer at Dakota Premium Foods in South St. Paul, Minnesota, and is active in United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789. She has helped build actions against Washington’s wars abroad, and has been involved in fights to defend women’s rights.

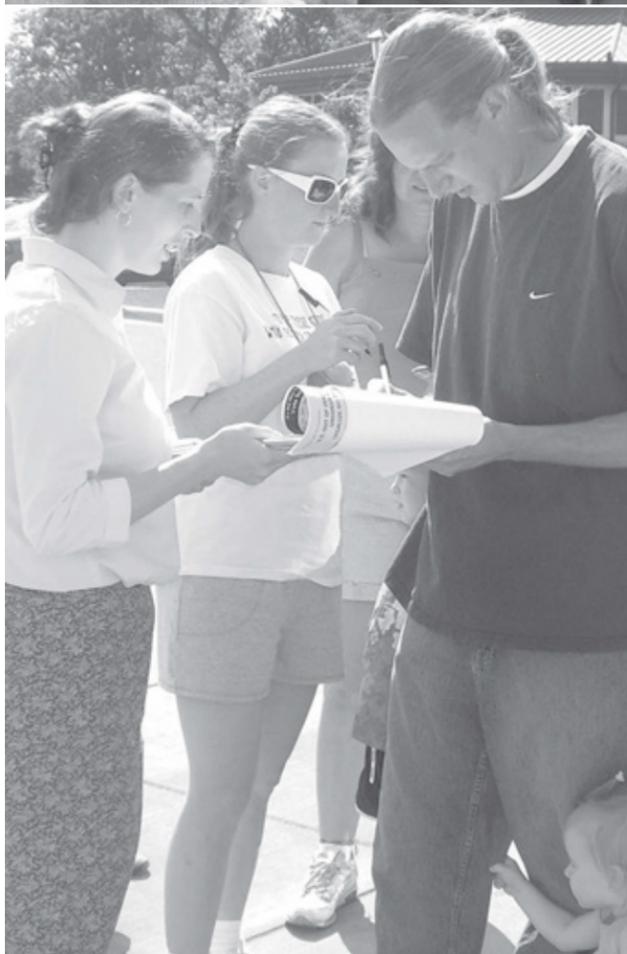
Eleanor García, 55, is running for U.S. Senate from Georgia. García is a sewing machine operator in Bowdon, Georgia. She has marched alongside fellow workers in street protests to demand the legalization of all immigrants.

Socialist Workers ticket in Florida

“Our campaign is part of the fight for legalization of immigrants—Latino, Haitian, and Asian,” said Margaret Trowe, 59, the SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in Florida’s District 17, who is a sewing machine operator.

The Socialist Workers campaign in Florida is also running garment spreader Omari Musa, 63, for mayor of Miami-Dade County. Musa, a founding member of the National Black Independent Political Party in the 1980s, has joined protests in Miami’s African American and Haitian communities demanding that cops who have killed young Blacks in recent months be prosecuted and jailed.

To get involved with the socialist campaign, contact *Militant* distributors listed on page 8, or: Socialist Workers National Campaign, P.O. Box 31322, San Francisco, CA 94131, or socworknatlcamp@sbcglobal.net.



Militant photos by (clockwise from top) Angel Lariscy, Eric Simpson, Eric Simpson, Ilona Gersh, and Tom Baumann
2008 Socialist Workers Party candidates, clockwise from top: New Jersey ticket of Michael Taber, Sara Lobman, and Dean Debrosse, running for U.S. Congress 13th C.D., U.S. Senate, and U.S. Congress 10th C.D., respectively; Lea Sherman for U.S. Congress in California’s 8th C.D.; Gerardo Sánchez for U.S. Congress in California’s 12th C.D.; Betsy Farley for U.S. Senate in Illinois; and Rebecca Williamson, left, for U.S. Congress in Minnesota’s 5th C.D.

Workers 2008 campaign! Across the United States

- | | |
|--|--|
| Dean Debrosse, U.S. Congress, 10th C.D. | Dean Debrosse, U.S. Congress, 10th C.D. |
| Michael Taber, U.S. Congress, 13th C.D. | Michael Taber, U.S. Congress, 13th C.D. |
| PENNSYLVANIA | |
| Osborne Hart, U.S. Congress, 2nd C.D. | Osborne Hart, U.S. Congress, 2nd C.D. |
| Ryan Scott, U.S. Congress, 14th C.D. | Ryan Scott, U.S. Congress, 14th C.D. |
| TEXAS | |
| Jacquie Henderson, U.S. Senate | Jacquie Henderson, U.S. Senate |
| Amanda Ulman, U.S. Congress, 9th C.D. | Amanda Ulman, U.S. Congress, 9th C.D. |
| Steven Warshell, U.S. Congress, 18th C.D. | Steven Warshell, U.S. Congress, 18th C.D. |
| Anthony Dutrow, State Representative Dist. 138 | Anthony Dutrow, State Representative Dist. 138 |
| WASHINGTON | |
| Chris Hoepfner, Governor | Chris Hoepfner, Governor |
| Mary Martin, U.S. Congress, 7th C.D. | Mary Martin, U.S. Congress, 7th C.D. |
| WASHINGTON, D.C. | |
| Seth Dellinger, Delegate to U.S. Congress | Seth Dellinger, Delegate to U.S. Congress |
| Sam Manuel, City Council At-Large | Sam Manuel, City Council At-Large |

SWP will seek to renew disclosure exemption

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

The Socialist Workers Party campaign, which is now fielding candidates in the 2008 elections, will petition to extend its long-standing exemption from disclosing the names and addresses of campaign contributors. The exemption has been a gain that helps all socialists, independent working-class candidates, unionists, and social protest activists to defend their ability to organize and act without harassment.

Under the 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act, candidates and campaign committees are required to file detailed reports listing the names, addresses, occupations, and financial contributions of those who donate more than \$200 to their campaigns. The reports, which are open to the public, provide a convenient “enemies list” for government agencies, employers, rightist organizations, and other enemies of the workers movement.

The Socialist Workers Party first won a partial exemption from the act in 1979 on the basis of the measure’s threat to First Amendment right to

free association. The Federal Election Commission (FEC) has since extended the exemption several times, at roughly six-year intervals.

Over the years the party has cited police interference with campaign activities, firings of candidates and campaign supporters, break-ins at campaign headquarters, death threats against candidates, and hundreds of other incidents of harassment as among the reasons why an exemption is necessary to safeguard workers’ democratic right to participate in elections.

Since the last extension, granted in April 2003, such harassment has continued. Incidents include the Sept. 11, 2004, firebombing of the SWP’s election campaign offices in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, and the firing of Lisa Potash, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Atlanta City Council president, from her meatpacking job one week before 2006 municipal elections.

The current FEC exemption expires at the end of 2008. The SWP has announced plans to petition in October for an extension.

Marxism is a school of revolutionary strategy

Below is an excerpt from volume 2 of *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for January. This two-volume collection contains speeches and writings by the Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky recording the efforts led by V.I. Lenin and other central leaders of the Bolshevik party to build a world movement of communist parties capable of leading workers and farmers to overthrow capitalist exploitation and colonial oppression. The excerpt below is from a July 1921 speech at a general membership meeting of the Moscow section of the Communist Party. Copyright © Pathfinder Press 1972. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LEON TROTSKY

Comrades, the internal causation and lawfulness of historical development was formulated for the first time by Marxist theory. The theory of Marxism, as Marx himself wrote in the introduction to his work *Critique of Political Economy*, established approximately the following proposition with regard to revolution: No social system departs from the arena until it has developed the productive forces to the maximum de-



Supporters of Bolshevik party on armored car in Moscow's Red Square during armed uprising in November 1917, in which working people in Russia took political power.

gree attainable under the given system; and no new social system appears on the scene unless the economic premises necessary for it have already been prepared by the old social system. This truth, which is basic for revolutionary policy, unquestionably retains all its meaning as a guide for us to this very moment. But more than once has Marxism been understood mechanically, unilaterally and therefore erroneously. Wrong conclusions may likewise be drawn from the foregoing proposition.

Marx says that a social system must leave the scene once the productive forces—technology, man's power over nature—can no longer develop within its framework. From the standpoint of Marxism, historical society, as such, is an organization of collective man—man in the aggregate—for the purpose of increasing man's power over nature. Of course this goal is not posed extrinsically by human beings, but in the course of their development they struggle for it, adapting themselves to the objective conditions of their environment and constantly increasing their power over nature's elemental forces.

The proposition that conditions for a revolution—for a deepgoing social revolution and not simply for superfi-

cial, though sanguinary, political overthrows—conditions for a social revolution which replaces one economic system by another, are created only when the old social order no longer leaves room for the development of productive forces—this proposition does not at all mean that the old social order unfailingly collapses as soon as it becomes reactionary in the economic sense, that is, as soon as it begins to retard the development of the technological power of man. Not at all. For while the productive forces constitute the basic driving force of historical development, the latter nevertheless occurs not separate and apart from human beings, but through them. The productive forces—the means whereby social man dominates nature—take shape, it is true, independently of the will of any single individual and are only slightly dependent upon the common will of human beings alive to-day, because technology represents the accumulated capital inherited by us from the past... But when the productive forces, when technology become too restricted within an old framework, say that of slavery, or feudal or bourgeois society, and when a change of social forms becomes necessary for the further growth of mankind's power, then this is not accomplished au-

tomatically, like the sun rises and sets, but must be accomplished through human beings, through the struggle of human beings welded into classes. To replace a social class, governing an old society that has turned reactionary, must come a new social class which possesses the program for a new social order meeting the needs for the development of productive forces, and which is prepared to realize this program in life. But it by no means always happens when a given social system has outlived itself, i.e., has turned reactionary, that a new class appears, conscious enough, organized enough and powerful enough to cast down life's old masters and pave the way for new social relations. . . . On the contrary, more than once, it has happened in history that an old society exhausted itself, for example, the ancient slave society of Rome—and preceding it there were the ancient Asian civilizations whose foundation of slavery opened up no room for the development of productive forces. But within this outlived society there existed no new class strong enough to overthrow the slaveholders and institute a new, a feudal, system, because the feudal system was, compared to slavery, a step forward.

In its turn, within the feudal system there was not always to be found in the hour of need a new class, the bourgeoisie, to overthrow the feudalists and to open the road for historical development. It has more than once happened in history that a given society, a given nation, or people, or a tribe, or several tribes and nations, living under similar historical conditions, have run up against the impossibility of developing any further on a given economic foundation—slavery or feudalism—but inasmuch as no new class existed among them capable of leading them out to the main highway, they simply fell apart. The given civilization, the given state, the given society disintegrated. Mankind has thus not always moved upwards from below in a steady, rising curve. No, there have been prolonged periods of stagnation and there have been regressions into barbarism.

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Support socialist ticket in '08!

We urge you to support the Socialist Workers Party 2008 election campaign, which has just launched its presidential ticket of Róger Calero and Alyson Kennedy along with candidates for federal, state, and local office around the country. You can get the socialist candidates invited to speak before your union, school, or community group. Join campaigning teams on street corners and in working-class neighborhoods. Make a donation. Order extra copies of the *Militant* to get out the word on the socialist campaign.

The Socialist Workers candidates are explaining the working-class alternative to the Democrats and Republicans, the twin capitalist parties of exploitation, racism, and war. Millions today sense the growing impact of capitalism's world financial crisis on working people: from sharply rising fuel and food prices, to bosses telling us we must "choose" between jobs or safety, wages or health care, pension cutbacks or two-tier pay scales for new hires. From the decline or outright denial of medical care, to banks foreclosing on more and more workers' homes. From deadly police assaults in Black, Latino, and other working-class communities, to immigration raids and deportations.

The socialist campaign is the only one that addresses working people with a truthful explanation of this crisis and how it is caused by the normal operations of an economic and social system—capitalism—that is based on an irreconcilable conflict between labor and capital. The socialists offer a program to unify the working class and combat the efforts by the employer class to make us bear the brunt of the unfolding capitalist economic crisis. It is a strategy through which workers and farmers can take on the ruling bil-

lionaires and win.

The Socialist Workers candidates explain that not only do workers need unions on the job to mobilize against the onslaught of the boss class and its government. In the political arena we need a labor party, based on a fighting union movement, to defend the interests of working people here and internationally.

Calero and Kennedy have both been involved in political struggles that demonstrate the capacity of working people to fight and win. In 2002 Róger Calero and his party defeated the U.S. government's attempts to deport him. That victory serves as an example in the battle for the legalization of all undocumented immigrants—a life-and-death question for the labor movement. Alyson Kennedy was among the leaders of a union-organizing struggle at the Co-Op coal mine in Utah, in which miners won broad labor solidarity in their effort to win safer job conditions, an end to company abuse, and improved wages. The dozens of deaths of U.S. miners in the last two years underscore the centrality of what that fight was about: to be safe, be union.

Working people need not choose between the least of all evils. Why support a candidate you don't agree with? Whichever candidates end up winning the Democratic and Republican nominations, and whether one or the other takes the White House in November, there is no question they will continue to act in the bosses' interests. Instead, join a campaign with candidates that you support, whose program is in your class interests!

Get involved in the Socialist Workers Party campaign! Contact the *Militant* distributor nearest you, listed on page 8, or the national campaign at socworknatlcamp@sbcglobal.net.

Pakistan: parties call for 'unity' gov't

Continued from page 3

ment, but one of his spokesmen said that a short postponement "would be acceptable." Sharif had called for a boycott of the elections but switched after a meeting at the Bhutto family estate.

Sharif and the Bhuttos calculate that a vote held sooner after Benazir Bhutto's death will result in a larger vote for the opposition. Musharraf undoubtedly fears the same.

In condemning the killing of Bhutto, U.S. ambassador to the UN Zalmay Khalizad stressed the importance Washington placed on piecing together a coalition government in Pakistan. Khalizad called on "moderates" to "come together to present a united front against extremism and terror."

Democratic and Republican candidates have also used the assassination to emphasize their qualifications to conduct the war on terror. Senator John McCain defended Musharraf as having "done a pretty good job" as an ally in fighting terrorism. Senator Barack Obama

said U.S. military aid to Pakistan should be cut unless Musharraf gets "serious" about fighting al-Qaeda.

NATO officials have urged Musharraf to continue military cooperation against armed Islamist groups along the border with Afghanistan. Since October the Pakistani military has been conducting a major military operation against Islamists in the Swat region, using artillery and aerial bombardment along with thousands of troops.

Meanwhile thousands of Pakistanis have fled the Swat region as the military has continued operations against Islamist groups, which have responded with sporadic suicide car bombings against Pakistani troops.



LETTERS

Housing crisis

I'm disappointed that the *Militant* hasn't put forward any specific proposals to protect working people from the housing crisis.

An editorial on the housing crisis in the September 17 *Militant* concluded, "The key to defending ourselves as a class . . . begins with the fight to organize and use union power. . . . Strengthening the fighting capacity and self-confidence of the working class is key to forging a movement capable of leading workers and farmers to take political power."

It seems to me these points would have been more persua-

sive if they were accompanied by specific demands. What exactly would a transformed labor movement fight for? What would a workers and farmers government do?

The following possibilities occur to me:

- A moratorium on home foreclosures for working people.
- The government should offer low-interest fixed-rate home loans for working people.
- Open the books of the housing and home loan industry.
- Nationalize the housing industry, under control of either (a) a class-struggle labor movement or (b) a workers and farmers government.

- As part of a nationalized housing industry, limit rent and mortgage payments by working people to 10 percent of income (like in Cuba).
- As part of a massive public works program, build more affordable housing for working people.

Dave Morrow
Oakland, California

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

How to confront housing crisis facing workers

BY PAUL PEDERSON
AND CINDY JAQUITH

In a letter printed below, reader Dave Morrow asks why the *Militant* hasn't "put forward any specific proposals to protect working people from the housing crisis." He suggests several demands aimed at the landlords, banks, and housing-related industries. The letter provides a useful opportunity to review the place of the housing question and how Marxists ap-

REPLY TO A READER

proach it.

The primary form of exploitation that workers face is on the job—the appropriation by the capitalists of the surplus value we produce. As wages are reduced, rents, debts, and other secondary forms of exploitation cut more harshly. But the battle with the boss over wages, working conditions, and social benefits remains the central arena of the class struggle.

The collapse of the giant bubble of debt speculation causing millions to face foreclosure on their homes is the latest product of a deepening crisis of the entire capitalist system. For three decades workers have borne the brunt of an offensive by the bosses. The unions keep weakening. Employers have slashed wages, pension and health benefits, and increased speedup. Inflation is taking a further bite out of wages.

To fight this socialists support struggles to organize unions and to use union power. We champion the demand for a sliding scale of wages to combat inflation and a sliding scale of hours to confront unemployment. We call for a massive public works program to put millions to work at union scale building schools, housing, and hospitals. We point to the need for the unions to break with the capitalist parties and forge a labor party. We explain that capitalist rule must be replaced with a workers and farmers government.

From this starting point, socialists join in struggles against all the horrors and abuses of the capitalist system. We extend labor solidarity to rent strikes, battles against evictions, and other struggles that break out on housing. But we don't appeal to workers as "homeowners." Rather, we explain their exploitation as *workers* and the centrality of their battle against the employer class.

Attempting to come up with a list of immediate demands around the housing crisis today takes us away from this objective, tending to elevate this question above the capitalist system that is responsible for it.

Middle-class reformers have historically taken a different approach to the housing question, seeking a way to solve it under capitalism. Frederick Engels took up their arguments in his pamphlet *The Housing Question*, where he demonstrated that reformers' "solutions"—usually proposing a way every worker can have his or her own house— invariably led to bolstering the very profit system that caused the housing crisis. Home ownership, Engels explained, is one of the main ways the employers tie workers to the capitalist system, entangling them in debt that conservatizes them and making them less mobile, less able to combat the bosses.

Answering critics who demanded he offer "practical" solutions on housing, Engels replied, "[I]t never entered my head to try to settle the so-called housing question any more than to occupy myself with the details of the still more important *food question*. I am satisfied if I can prove that the production of our modern society is sufficient to provide all its members with enough to eat, and that there are houses enough in existence to provide the working masses for the time being with roomy and healthy living accommodation. To speculate on how a future society might organize distribution of food and dwellings leads directly to utopia."

That is why the Socialist Workers Party candidates are inviting their supporters to campaign along the course presented in the coverage in this week's *Militant*.