

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

No solution for Palestine in imperialist framework  
—PAGE 8

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 73/NO. 3 JANUARY 26, 2009

## California protests win arrest of killer cop

BY JOEL BRITTON

OAKLAND, California, January 14—Faced with mounting protests against police brutality, the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) cop who killed Oscar Grant New Year's Day was finally arrested January 13. Alameda County district attorney Tom Orloff announced that Johannes Mehserle has been charged with murder.

At a news conference January 14 Orloff said, "Murder charges were filed because at this point what I feel the evidence indicates is an unlawful killing done by an intentional act. . . . When you have a homicide that's intentional and there's no mitigation it's more or less presumed to be a second-degree murder."

Mehserle was arrested on a fugitive warrant in Nevada, where he had fled. He was returned to California January 14.

Grant, a 22-year-old apprentice butcher from Hayward, was returning home with friends on a BART train after celebrating the New Year in San Francisco. The shooting of Grant, an

Continued on page 2

## Washington to expand antiballistic missile fleet

BY DOUG NELSON

The U.S. military is expanding its antiballistic missile weapons system with the upgrading of three additional Aegis warships in the Atlantic Ocean. The ABM system is designed to restore Washington's ability to use its massive nuclear arsenal unchecked.

The warships, two cruisers and one destroyer, will be equipped with the SM-3 missile system designed to intercept and destroy ballistic missiles, according to *Defense News*. Last February, the U.S. military shot down a satellite traveling 17,000 miles per hour at an altitude of more than 130 miles. The successful SM-3 intercept registered Washington's progress in ABM system development.

The three additions will bring the number of Aegis warships in the U.S. antiballistic missile weapons system to 21. This will increase the number of Aegis warships outfitted with the technology in the Atlantic from two to five. The other 16 vessels are assigned to the Pacific Fleet.

Washington's deployment of most of its missile-targeting fleet in the Pacific

Continued on page 2

## End Israeli assault on Gaza Strip now!

Oppose Washington's support to Israel



Reuters

Israeli combat troops march toward northern Gaza Strip January 12. The Israeli offensive there has left more than 1,000 dead and thousands more wounded.

BY SETH GALINSKY

January 14—The Israeli Defense Forces are continuing their land, sea, and air assault on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Backed by reservists and tanks, Israeli ground troops have pushed into neighborhoods on the edge of Gaza City, some of the most densely populated in the world.

Israeli troops have virtually sealed off the strip of some 1.5 million people, closing all crossings. The area is bordered by Israel on the north and east and Egypt on the south.

As of January 14 more than 1,000 Gaza residents, including 300 children, have been killed and nearly

5,000 wounded. Another 90,000 have been forced from their homes by the fighting, reported the BBC.

"Israel is not going to show restraint anymore," asserted Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni in an interview appearing in the January 19 *Newsweek*.

The Egyptian government is attempting to broker a cease-fire. According to the January 14 *Jerusalem Post*, Hamas negotiators in Cairo had agreed to an Egyptian proposal "in principle," which would include halting rockets attacks on Israel. Amos Gilad, head of the Israeli Defense Ministry's diplomatic bureau is scheduled to

Continued on page 3

## Socialist mayoral candidate in New York protests Israeli war

BY WILLIE COTTON

NEW YORK—Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City mayor, has joined in demonstrations here and in Washington, D.C., to protest the Israeli government's military assault in the Gaza Strip.

"While Mayor Michael Bloomberg recently visited Israel on a 'solidarity'

visit, the Socialist Workers campaign has been marching in the streets of New York and Washington, D.C., in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and against Israeli aggression," Fein said speaking at a January 11 rally in Times Square. Some 5,000 braved the cold to march and rally against the Israeli aggression in Gaza.

"Not a nickel, not a dime, no more money for Israel's crimes!" was one of the many chants protesters enthusiastically yelled as they marched from 42nd Street and Times Square past the New York Times Building to the CNN building on 58th Street. Many chants were in Arabic as well. A large number of demonstrators were Muslim, including many youth in high school and college, who were organized by their mosques to participate in the action. Many were Arab or Arab-American.

"My campaign calls for the withdrawal of Israel's troops from Gaza," Fein said speaking into a bullhorn during an impromptu street meet-

Continued on page 10



Militant/Nancy Boyasko

Dan Fein, Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of New York, addresses January 11 demonstration there.

## Celebrations held in Cuba on 50 years of socialist revolution

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL AND JONATHAN SILBERMAN

HAVANA, January 8—Local residents lined the streets to salute a procession that traveled through Havana today in a reenactment of the Freedom Caravan, the Rebel Army columns led by Fidel Castro that victoriously entered Cuba's capital on this date 50 years ago.

The caravan culminated a week of political, educational, and cultural activities throughout the island celebrating the 50th anniversary of the victory of the Cuban Revolution, which opened the road to the first socialist revolution in the Americas. Since then, revolutionary Cuba has set an example of what workers and farmers can accomplish when they take state power out of the hands of the capitalist class and wield it in the interests of the vast majority.

In the early hours of Jan. 1, 1959, U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista fled Cuba in wake of decisive

Rebel Army victories, including the taking of Santa Clara, the third-largest city. In the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba, the dictatorship's army garrison surrendered to the Rebel Army forces commanded by Fidel Castro, who called for a revolutionary general strike to prevent the consolidation of

Continued on page 9

### Also Inside:

Washington protesters: End assault on Gaza!	3
Mexico drug wars: U.S. gov't plans border 'surge'	4
Moscow squeezes Ukraine in gas price clash	5
Malcolm X in Spanish to be published in Cuba	9



# Protests win arrest of cop

**Continued from front page**  
African American, by Mehserle, who is white, was captured on cell-phone videos by other passengers who were on the train stopped at the Fruitvale Station in Oakland. The videos were posted on the Internet and broadcast on TV news, fueling the anger felt by working people and many youth, especially in Black communities in the Bay Area.

A \$25 million claim has been filed on behalf of Grant’s mother, Wanda Johnson, and Sophia Mesa, his companion and mother of his four-year-old daughter, reported the *Oakland Tribune*. According to the report, the claim notes that Grant “was unarmed and offered no physical resistance to BART police officers.” The cops had removed Grant, several friends, and others from the train, supposedly to break up a fight.

The claim states that when Grant stepped off the train, “an unnamed Latino officer” threw him against a wall and kned him in the face. Grant

dropped to his knees and put his hands up “in an effort to demonstrate that he was submitting to the Latino officer’s thuggish display of authority.”

The claim reports that Grant “made a valiant effort to de-escalate the situation by appealing to the officer’s sense of humanity by telling the officer that he had a 4-year-old daughter” and asked not to be Tasered.

Grant was forced to the ground, face down. “Without so much as flinching,” the claim continues, “Officer Mehserle stood over Mr. Grant and mercilessly fired his weapon, mortally wounding Mr. Grant with a single gunshot . . . to the back.”

Nearly 1,000 people attended the funeral for Grant in Hayward on January 7 and hundreds rallied that afternoon at the Fruitvale Station to demand “Justice for Oscar Grant.” The Coalition Against Police Executions (CAPE) called the protest and demanded that “BART call for the criminal prosecution of ALL officers responsible for the death” of Grant.

Following the CAPE rally, self-styled anarchists and other middle-class radicals of various stripes led some of the protesters into nearby streets and lit fires in garbage dumpsters, broke windows at some 300 shops and stores, and set some cars on fire. More than 100 arrests were made by Oakland police, who used tear gas on protesters.

The following morning an overflow crowd of some 200 packed the BART board of directors meeting. Speaker after speaker blasted the board for not responding appropriately to what many called the murder of Grant by Mehserle. The cop resigned from the BART force January 7, after avoiding being interviewed for an entire week.



Militant/Eric Simpson  
High school students rally January 7 at transit station in Oakland, California, demanding justice for Oscar Grant, 22-year-old Black man killed by cop on New Year’s Day.



Militant/Eric Simpson  
OAKLAND, California—Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers Party candidate for city treasurer in San Francisco, speaks to a reporter at January 11 meeting in Oakland of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) commissioners. Speaking at the hearing Sánchez called for the arrest and prosecution of the BART cop who killed Oscar Grant, along with the others who have assisted in the cover-up. “I am a worker, a butcher like my brother Oscar Grant,” Sánchez said. “Workers who are Black, immigrants, and also workers who are white are brutalized by the police every day.” He called for militant, disciplined, and peaceful protests by workers and youth to bring the killer cops to justice.  
—ERIC SIMPSON

## U.S. antiballistic missile fleet

**Continued from front page**  
was aimed most publicly at North Korea and its expanding ballistic missile and nuclear capabilities. But the Pacific system also targets China, which not only possesses nuclear ICBMs capable of reaching the United States, but is also working on ballistic missiles designed to take out warships.

Now the U.S. military is moving to build up its ABM on the other side of the world. “I believe near term that we need an additional four to six Atlantic Fleet ships,” Rear Adm. Alan Hicks, the director of the Aegis antiballistic weapons program, told reporters in August.

The expansion of the system’s capability in the Atlantic is aimed at countering “Iran’s potential to strike targets in Europe,” according to *Defense News*. But the buildup of the antimissile fleet in the Atlantic also boosts Washington’s capacity to counter Moscow’s nuclear arsenal. Russia is the only country other than China that has nuclear ICBMs capable of reaching the United States.

Washington has also been setting up

ABM radar in the Czech Republic and interceptor missile batteries in Poland—a move that Moscow opposes and is seeking to counter or reverse.

Aegis vessels, produced by Lockheed Martin, incorporate sophisticated radar and computer systems into the U.S. Ticonderoga cruisers and Arleigh Burke destroyers, as well as a few other non-U.S. warships. The United States had 74 Aegis-equipped warships as of May 2007, with plans for 22 more. Eighteen of these are currently equipped with ABM technology. Small Aegis fleets totaling little more than a dozen are owned by Japan, Spain, Norway, Australia, and South Korea.

The U.S. military is also upgrading its ABM Aegis system to allow the warships to intercept missiles as they are heading back towards earth. Currently they are designed to hit ballistic missiles in the upper layer of the earth’s atmosphere as they are in ascent. All 18 currently ABM-outfitted Aegis warships are to be updated with the new technology by June.

## THE MILITANT

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Some 300 people marched in Brooklyn, New York, December 14 to protest thug killing of Ecuadoran immigrant.

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CLIP AND MAIL TO THE MILITANT,  
306 W. 37TH ST., 10TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10018.

## The Militant

Vol. 73/No. 3

Closing news date: January 14, 2009

Editor: Sam Manuel

Managing Editor: Martín Koppel

Business Manager: Angel Lariscy

Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Ved Dookhun, Seth Galinsky, Cindy Jaquith, Ben Joyce, Doug Nelson, Ben O’Shaughnessy

Published weekly except for one week in January and one week in July.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018. Telephone: (212) 244-4899

Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: For one year send \$35 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: For one year send \$85, drawn on a U.S. bank, to above

address.

Africa, Asia, and the Middle East: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

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United Kingdom: Send £25 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London, First Floor, 120 Bethnal Green (Entrance in Brick Lane), London, E2 6DG, England.

Republic of Ireland and Continental Europe: Send £50 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London at above address.

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# Washington protesters: End assault on Gaza!

BY SETH DELLINGER

WASHINGTON, January 10—Demanding “Let Gaza Live,” some 12,000 people joined a spirited march here today to protest the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip that began December 27. The U.S. government, which gives billions each year in financial and military aid to Israel, has supported the attack.

Busloads and cars full of protesters came from the Midwest and East Coast, including New York, New Jersey, Georgia, Illinois, Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Virginia to show their outrage.

While dozens of buses organized by Muslim mosques brought many Palestinian Americans, the crowd included students from universities and high schools across the Northeast, many at their first protest. The demonstration was sponsored by the Muslim American Society, ANSWER Coalition, Free Palestine Alliance, Code Pink, National Council of Arab Americans, and dozens of other organizations.

The demonstration started out with a rally at Lafayette Park across from the White House. After the speakers, demonstrators marched through Washington stopping at the offices of Lockheed Martin and the Caterpillar corporation, both of which sell equipment to the Israeli military, and at the *Washington Post*. The newspaper, which demonstrators accused of pro-Israeli bias, ignored the protest in its Sunday edition.

College student Melanie Alexea, 19, from Long Island, said, “I felt that I had to come protest. What Israel is doing in Gaza is one of the greatest injustices in the world today.”

“I am Jewish and I want Israel to stop massacring the people of Gaza in Judaism’s name,” said Frans Koster, 23, who also came to the demonstration from New York.

Shaikha Thabet came on one of three buses organized by a mosque in Flint, Michigan. Thabet, who is originally from Yemen but has lived in the United States for 25 years, came with

her husband and three children. “It’s my first time,” she said. “My children convinced me to come. I support the Palestinians because innocent people are being killed every day.”

At least half a dozen buses filled with demonstrators made the overnight trip from Chicago. “The siege of the Palestinian people must stop,” said Najeh Cheriqui, a student at the University of Chicago who was born in Tunisia and has lived in the United States since 2001. She was one of 50 members of the Alliance of Muslims for Palestine (AMP) who came on the Chicago buses. Cheriqui’s father grew up in a refugee camp in Tunisia after being orphaned in 1948 when Israeli troops drove hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes.

“What’s next—nuclear war?” another AMP member, Nazia Rafat, a bank worker originally from India, asked. “It’s so unfair. It’s precision-guided missiles vs. homemade rockets. What the Israelis are doing is the same thing that was done to the American Indians.”

“There is a difference between the Israeli leaders and the Jewish people,” said Fouad Ven, 32, a bus driver



Demonstrators march through downtown Washington, D.C., January 10 to demand an end to Israel’s assault on Gaza. Some 12,000 people turned out to the protest.

in Virginia who is originally from Morocco. “Just like the Arab leaders don’t represent the Arab people.”

There were a wide variety of views expressed on what solution is possible. Some demonstrators told *Militant* reporters that they were for an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. Others are for an Islamic Palestine, reflecting the views of Hamas.

“Israel says it is attacking Gaza because of the Hamas rockets,” said Sam Amer, 54. “But it has nothing to

do with that. I think the only practical solution is for one state for two people instead of a Jewish state. Palestine can’t be partitioned. As long as there are two states groups like Hamas will say they want it all and Israel will keep attacking.”

Cynthia McKinney, the 2008 Green Party presidential candidate, gave the keynote address at the rally. She said that the “dead babies, decapitated bodies” and the other “carnage that

**Continued on page 4**

## Oppose Washington’s support to Israel

**Continued from front page**

travel to Cairo January 15 to review the cease-fire proposal and present Tel Aviv’s conditions.

Washington and Tel Aviv insist on an “international” force at the Egypt-Gaza border to block arms shipments through tunnels.

The London-based Arabic daily *Al Hayat* reported January 13 that Hamas is willing to accept Turkish forces in the town of Rafah along the Egyptian-Gaza border crossing as part of a cease-fire agreement.

After occupying Gaza for 38 years, Israel pulled out its troops and settlements in September 2005. Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) won a majority in the elections to the Palestinian parliament in Gaza in 2006.

Washington has given full support to the assault on Gaza. “There will not be a sustainable cease-fire if they continue firing rockets. I happen to believe the choice is Hamas’s to make,” said U.S. president George Bush January 12.

According to the *Jerusalem Post*, the Israeli Defense Forces are carving out a “security zone” along Gaza’s border, which it plans to occupy even after the war ends, regardless of the negotiations.

**Working-class targeted**

Just a week into the assault, which began December 27, Israeli forces had bombed more than 1,000 sites, including mosques, universities, dairy factories, news media offices, homes, and many government buildings. However, few sites in the affluent Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City have been hit, according to *Haaretz*. Instead, the Israeli Defense Forces have focused on the city’s more working-class eastern side.

Attacks on civilians and restrictions on aid are so blatant that the International Red Cross, which rarely makes public criticisms, charged that

“the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded.” The statement was issued after it took four days for the Red Cross to get Israeli permission to travel to a bombed-out residence where several small children were found next to their parent’s corpses.

The Israeli assault came on top of an 18-month economic blockade of Gaza, which has increased dependence on UN handouts and caused severe shortages of electricity, water, food, and medicine.

**Gazans help each other out**

Gaza residents are seeking ways to help each other out in the midst of the assault. In the Shati refugee camp, baker Zuhair Abu al-Arraj opened his house to neighbors looking for a place to cook. Arraj did not have electricity, but he did have a clay oven which he powered with cardboard and paper.

“Give me more, give me more,” he said sticking his hands out to two women with baskets of dough, ac-

cording to a report in the *Washington Post*. He baked 400 loaves by midafternoon that day.

From the point of view of the Israeli government, Operation Cast Lead has so far been a success. The Israeli Defense Forces say they have seriously damaged Hamas’s infrastructure and inflicted hundreds of casualties. Rocket attacks by Hamas have declined from 70 a day before the assault to about 20 now.

**Tel Aviv controls on media**

Tel Aviv also has worked to control media coverage of the assault. Israeli soldiers in Gaza had to turn in their cell phones. Foreign reporters have not been allowed into Gaza since the assault began.

While TV news reports around the world show scenes from Gaza hospitals that include critically wounded children, in Israel similar images from Gaza are scarce while news on Israelis injured or killed is covered around the clock.

“We don’t pretend to show the whole

**Continued on page 9**

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### IOWA

#### Des Moines

**Abortion: A Woman’s Right to Choose—Mark the 36th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade.** Fri., Jan. 23. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 3707 Douglas Ave. Tel.: (515) 255-1707.

### NEW JERSEY

#### Newark

**Celebrate the Release of Moisés Mory ... The Fight against Deportation Continues.** Speakers: Moisés Mory, others. Sun., Jan. 18. Program, 4 p.m.; dinner afterwards.

**The Capitalist Crisis and the Fight for Jobs.** Speaker: Angela Lariscy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of New Jersey. Fri., Jan. 23, 8 p.m. Both events at 168 Bloomfield Ave., 2nd floor. Tel.: (973) 481-0077.

### PENNSYLVANIA

#### Philadelphia

**Defending Women’s Rights: The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.** Speaker: Janet Post, Socialist Workers Party 2009 candidate for Philadelphia city controller. Fri., Jan. 23, 7:30 p.m. 188 W. Wyoming Ave., Tel.: (215) 455-2682.

### On the Jewish Question

by Leon Trotsky

“In the epoch of its rise, capitalism took the Jewish people out of the ghetto and utilized them for its commercial expansion. Today decaying capitalist society is striving to squeeze the Jewish people from all its pores. . . . Never was it so clear as it is today that the salvation of the Jewish people is bound up inseparably with the overthrow of the capitalist system.”

LEON TROTSKY, 1940 —\$20



### Israel and the Arab Revolution:

Fundamental Principles of Revolutionary Marxism

by Gus Horowitz

The fight for a democratic, secular Palestine and its place in advancing the struggle of workers and peasants against imperialist oppression and capitalist exploitation throughout the Middle East and the entire world. Socialist Workers Party resolutions and reports from 1971–72. —\$10

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# Mexico drug wars: U.S. gov't plans border 'surge'

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The U.S. government has devised contingency plans for military intervention at the Mexican border in response to the intensifying deadly violence, and kidnappings organized by capitalists involved in Mexico's drug trade. The plans have been in effect for several months, Jason Ciliberti, a spokesperson for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, told the *El Paso Times*.

In a January 7 telephone interview Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff told the *New York Times*, "We completed a contingency plan for border violence, so if we did get a significant spillover, we have a surge—if I may use that word—capability to bring in not only our own assets but even to work with the Defense Department."

According to the *Times*, unnamed officials of the Homeland Security Department said that "the plan called for aircraft, armored vehicles, and special teams to converge on border trouble spots, with the size of the force depending on the scale of the problem." U.S. military forces would be called into action if Border Patrol cops and local and state police are unable to handle the operation. Chertoff said he told Arizona governor Janet Napolitano that "helping Mexico get control of its borders and its organized crime problems" is at the very top of the list of "national security" concerns. Napolitano is nominated by President-elect Barack Obama to be the next homeland security secretary,

Over the past few years warfare in Mexico between capitalist-run drug cartels and government troops has undermined the functioning of the government and torn apart the country's social fabric. Mexico has the second-largest population and economy in Latin America. Several major cartels have been battling for control of the \$40 billion annual drug trade, which represents almost 20 percent of all exports to the United States.

Drug-related killings have grown

from 1,500 in 2005 to 2,700 in 2007 to more than 5,300 in 2008.

Drug capitalists have used their influence to put government officials—from local cops to high-ranking state and federal officials—on their payrolls. Over the past year the cartels killed 500 cops. In some towns, Mexican authorities have had to arrest the chief of police and the entire police force on corruption charges, reported the big-business U.S. intelligence agency Stratfor.

The Mexican government has mobilized some 45,000 federal cops and army troops to fight the drug lords in 17 Mexican states. This includes some 16,000 troops along the northern border, which for the most part have been ineffective. These troops, writes Stratfor, "face a similar situation that U.S. Marines confronted in Iraq's Anbar province, where a frustrating game of 'whack a mole' became the prevailing coalition tactic. Even with U.S. cooperation, there are simply too few Mexican troops along the U.S.-Mexico border to comprehensively combat cartel activities inside Mexico."

In March 2007 President George Bush pledged \$1.4 billion in military aid to the Mexican government for anti-drug-trafficking operations. This includes equipment like scanners, helicopters, surveil-



Immigration and Customs Enforcement

June 9, 2008, Houston news conference of officials from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Mexican government announcing joint "Border Enforcement Security Task Force Conference." Washington is using drug wars in Mexico as pretext for stepped-up military activity along Mexican border.

lance aircraft, drug detection dogs, and police training. Congress allocated \$465 million of these funds last June. This month the U.S. government released another \$99 million, with about \$900 million more to be given to the Mexican government over the next two years.

In his interview with the *Times*, Chertoff said that bolstering the size of the Border Patrol cops and building a fence

along nearly 700 miles of the Mexican border plays a dual role—reducing immigration of undocumented workers and for use against Mexico's drug violence.

The federal border police is now more than 18,000—double the number of less than a decade ago. Fencing is up on 580 miles of Mexico's 1,920-mile border with the United States.

## Washington protest condemns Israeli assault

Continued from page 3

is Gaza" is "neatly censored" from view in the U.S. media, while in other countries TV viewers "are witnesses to 15 days of war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide."

The crowd cheered when she mentioned the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Venezuela by President Hugo Chávez. McKinney condemned President-elect Barak Obama for being as "quiet as a lamb" on the Israeli assault after "roar[ing] onto the scene like a lion." But McKinney also injected anti-Semitism into the program when she claimed that Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid was "cowering before the Israeli lobby."

Ralph Nader, who ran for U.S. president in 2008 as a "anticorporate" procapitalist alternative to the Democrats and Republicans, was another featured speaker. Like McKinney and other speakers, he condemned nonbinding resolutions backing Israel passed in the Senate and House of Representatives on January 8 and 9 respectively. The House resolution offers "unwavering commitment" to Israel and recognizes "its right to act in self-defense to protect its citizens" against a "terrorist" group. "There is more dissent in the [Israeli] Knesset than in the puppet show called the U.S. Congress," Nader said.

Other speakers included Mahdi Bray, executive director of the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation, Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and Mounzer Sleiman, vice chairman of the National Council of Arab Americans. Student leaders from the Muslim American Foundation called on college students around the country to join a national

fast on January 15 to raise aid money to send to Gaza.

Marwa Abed, 19, a member of the Muslim Students Association at DePaul University, told the *Militant* that

activists on her campus are planning to set up informational tables and organize sit-in demonstrations to raise awareness about the situation in the Gaza Strip.

## Sri Lankan military presses offensive against Tamil rebels

BY ALASDAIR MACDONALD

SYDNEY, Australia—Sri Lankan government troops captured a strategic point known as Elephant Pass on Sri Lanka's northern coast from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) January 9, according to press reports. Situated on the A9 highway, which links the Jaffna peninsula with the rest of the country, it had been under Tamil control since 2000. A week earlier government forces took Kilinochchi, capital of the northern area previously controlled by the LTTE.

The Tamil Tigers are an armed opposition group that has been fighting for an independent state for the Tamil minority in the South Asian country since 1983. More than 70,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

The latest offensive by government troops comes after a year of renewed fighting since the breakdown of a 2002 cease-fire agreement. The Sri Lankan government has received the backing of the governments of both India and Pakistan, which includes providing military supplies and the training of military officers.

Sri Lanka, located just off India's southern coast, was dominated by Portuguese, then Dutch, and finally British colonialism from the 1500s to its independence in 1948. The British colonialists, using divide and rule tactics, imported many Tamils from southern India to work on the large

tea and rubber plantations in slave-like conditions, while at the same time recruiting some of them into the colonial administration.

The government today is dominated by the Sinhalese, who make up 74 percent of the population. Tamils make up 18 percent of Sri Lanka's 21 million people. They have faced institutionalized oppression for more than four decades, including denial of language rights and discrimination in housing and education.

According to Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara, a Sri Lankan military spokesman, the LTTE had begun withdrawing its forces to the last major town under its control, Mullaittivu. He warned of retaliation, citing the detonation of a roadside bomb in the eastern city of Trincomalee, which killed three air force soldiers and four civilians.

Associated Press also reported that the editor of the *Sunday Leader*, Lasantha Wickramatunga, a critic of the Sinhalese-dominated government, was killed in Colombo by unidentified gunmen on motorcycles January 8. This came just two days after more than a dozen men armed with assault rifles and grenades attacked the studios of the country's largest private broadcaster, MTV. The station had been accused by the state-run media of not being "patriotic" enough in reporting military successes against the Tamil Tigers.

### For further reading

#### New International Issue no. 12

"Among the central aims of the transformation of the U.S. military is the creation—under the banner of antiterrorism measures—of the command structures and operation capabilities needed to respond to the resistance the capitalists know will inevitably deepen inside the United States as the consequences of their economic course bear down on workers, farmers, and other working people."

—From *Socialist Workers Party resolution 'Their Transformation and Ours' in this issue*

\$16

#### The Changing Face of U.S. Politics

Working-class Politics and the Unions  
by Jack Barnes

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## ON THE PICKET LINE

### **Longshore union opposes attempt to breach contract**

OAKLAND, California—Some 200 members of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 and their supporters blocked the unloading of *Zhen Hua*, a cargo ship docked at Pier 7 at the Port of Oakland December 26. The ship was carrying tons of steel for rebuilding of the Bay Bridge.

The California Department of Transportation, the governmental agency overseeing rebuilding of the bridge, along with the project's contractor—a joint venture between American Bridge and the Fluor Co.—leased Pier 7 designating it a construction site for the bridge project, and not subject to the jurisdiction of Local 10.

The contractor then hired two other unions, the Ironworkers and Operating Engineers, to work at the site and unload ships.

Negotiations, which involved a federal mediator, lasted several days. An agreement was reached on December 30. Longshore workers will untie and release the ship from the pier, then ironworkers and operating engineers will unload it near the bridge project site in the bay.

Trent Willis, a representative of Lo-

cal 10, told the San Francisco *Chronicle* that this deal made sense and would not hurt the other unions.

Frank Gaskin, the business agent for Local 10, called the agreement “a happy medium.” Still at least 10 more ships full of steel for the bridge are expected this year and negotiations of who will unload them will continue.

—Lea Sherman

### **Thai auto parts workers win higher bonus pay**

More than 1,000 workers at Thailand's auto parts maker Yarnapund won higher bonus pay in December. Workers went on strike blocking roads to the plant December 13. The strike was settled after the company promised to pay a bonus of two months' salary and not to punish workers involved in the labor action, reported *The Nation*.

The company initially offered to pay a bonus of one-and-a-half months' salary, but the strikers insisted on at least three months.

“My wife just lost her job and we have two children to support. I've had to borrow money from loan sharks. I need the bonus to repay them,” a 41-year-old worker said. After working for the company for two decades, his monthly salary is Bt9,900 (\$283).



Militant/Eric Simpson

Pickets from longshore workers union at Port of Oakland, California, December 28.

The workers fell short of winning their demands for a pay raise, the removal of three company executives, the establishment of a labor union, and permanent employee status for all workers with more than one year of service.

—Sam Manuel

### **Truck drivers in India go on nationwide strike**

Prices of fruits and vegetables have started to rise in some Indian cities as a nationwide strike by truck drivers began January 5, reported the BBC.

Truck drivers say they have been hit hard by high fuel prices and the economic slowdown. “We are on an indefinite strike until our demands are met,” Charan Singh Lohara, president of the All India Motor Transport Congress, said. The president and the secretary of the union have been arrested.

“The government is giving concessions and bailout packages to so many industries. Why not us when we are struggling to repay loans with high fuel prices, high prices of tires, and numerous taxes?” said Lohara.

Truck drivers are also seeking an exemption from road tolls. Most freight in India goes by road.

Some 6 million truckers remained off India's roads, according to the BBC. The government threatened to revoke the truckers' licenses after talks with them broke down.

—Sam Manuel

## Moscow squeezes Ukraine in gas price clash

BY DOUG NELSON

January 13—Exports of natural gas from Russia to Ukraine and through Ukraine to much of Europe remain suspended, as a dispute between the two governments over gas prices, transit fees, and related issues remain unresolved. Agreements between the two governments had been reached several times the last week only to fall apart.

This is the third time Moscow has reduced gas shipments to Ukraine since the 2005 election of President Viktor Yushchenko, who has established closer ties with the U.S. government and pressed for Ukraine's entry into the European Union and NATO.

Russian state monopoly Gazprom cut off gas to Ukraine January 1, demanding higher gas prices, while continuing to pump gas through the Ukrainian pipeline to other European customers. Ukraine receives about 70 percent of its gas from Russia.

Last year the Ukrainian government was charged about \$180 per 1,000 cubic meters. Gazprom turned off the pumps after Kiev refused the company's demand for a 40 percent price hike to \$250.

As a former Soviet republic, that was lower than the market price of \$450 that other European customers pay. Following the shutoff, Moscow revised the price it charges Ukraine to \$450 for the first quarter.

The Ukrainian government, meanwhile is demanding that Gazprom pay higher transit fees.

On January 7 Gazprom cut off all gas to the Ukrainian pipeline system, through which 80 percent of Russian gas is supplied to about 20 countries in Europe. Roughly one-quarter of gas used in Europe comes from Russia.

Moscow says it ceased all Ukrainian shipments because Kiev was siphoning off gas bound for other countries, a charge the Ukrainian government denies.

In January 2006 Kiev siphoned off

gas in its pipelines after Moscow cut off its supply for a couple days in demand for higher prices. Last March, Gazprom reduced shipments to Ukraine by about half in a dispute over Kiev's debt, Bloomberg news service reported.

Gazprom said it would resume gas shipments through Ukraine only after Kiev signs an agreement to allow inspectors from Russia and several European countries to monitor the gas flow. The Ukrainian government signed the agreement January 13.

But no gas flowed. Both governments blame the other for creating technical problems that prevent restart of the gas flow across the country to the Romanian

border. Moscow has also accused Washington of influencing the Ukrainian government to impede the restoration of the gas supply.

The hardest hit by the shutdown include Bulgaria, Slovakia, Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Macedonia, according to Marketwatch.com. Others include Hungary, Greece, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, Romania, Croatia, Germany, Italy, and France.

In the dead of winter, gas heat prices have skyrocketed throughout Europe and many countries are restricting its use. The hardest hit face power outages,

Continued on page 7

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 27, 1984

A strike against layoffs at the huge Talbot automobile factory in Poissy could have repercussions throughout French industry. The plant, which has more than 16,000 workers, is owned by Peugeot, France's largest automaker and its largest privately-owned company.

On December 7, workers at Poissy went on strike, protesting an agreement between Peugeot and the French government that allows the company to lay off 1,905 workers at the facility. Peugeot had originally requested permission to eliminate 2,900 jobs at Poissy.

The struggle at Talbot is being closely watched throughout French industry because plans have already been announced to lay off 100,000 workers in the auto, steel, shipbuilding, and coal sectors in the near future. If the Talbot workers can force the company and government to back down on the plan to eliminate 1,905 jobs at Poissy, that victory would encourage similar resistance in other industries.



January 26, 1959

Editors, congressmen and ministers are deploring the execution of Batista's strong-arm men.

We agree that each of these murderers, whose tortured victims are now being dug up by the hundreds from makeshift graves, should receive a fair trial.

But we think that the Castro government asked a reasonable question in response to the outcries.

Why were the editors, congressmen and ministers silent in the terrible years when Batista's men clubbed and gunned some 20,000 Cuban citizens?

We should like to ask a still more pertinent question of these same suddenly converted spokesmen for fairness, for the protection of the innocent and for due legal process in Cuba.

What are they doing about the atrocities committed in the U.S.A. against the Negro people?



January 27, 1934

The biggest industry in New York, the mammoth hotel and restaurant industry dominated by the biggest banks has flung a challenge to the workers in the industry, and their challenge has been met—the workers have moved for a general strike!

The bosses have spoken in an ambiguous manner for a few months, temporizing for time. Now they are ready, and there is nothing ambiguous about their actions. They struck at the workers in the key hotel of the industry in the heart of the city—the Waldorf Astoria.

With the exception of a handful, the entire kitchen and dining room staff of some 600 workers responded to this challenge by declaring an immediate stoppage. The waiters went into the kitchens, the cooks put out the lights on the stoves. And at 7 p.m. at the height of the dinner hour, “the guests” sat at their tables while the orchestra played to stimulate their appetites.



# Lenin's 1920s fight to maintain communist course

Printed below is an excerpt from Lenin's Final Fight. The Spanish edition is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January. The book contains speeches and writings by V.I. Lenin, the central leader of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, from 1922–23. During this time Lenin fought against mounting odds to maintain the communist course with which the Bolshevik Party had led the workers and peasants to power over the landlords and capitalists of the former tsarist empire and defeated the invading armies of 14 nations. The item quoted is from "Better Fewer, but Better," written by Lenin on March 2, 1923. In this article Lenin refers to the Workers and Peasants Inspection, which was a body initiated in 1920 to involve both party and nonparty workers and peasants in greater inspection and control of the state and Communist Party apparatus. Copyright © 1995 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY V.I. LENIN

In the matter of improving our state apparatus, the Workers and Peasants Inspection should not, in my opinion, either strive after quantity or hurry.<sup>1</sup> We



V.I. Lenin addressing Third Congress of Communist International, July 5, 1921.

have so far been able to devote so little thought and attention to the efficiency of our state apparatus that it would now be quite legitimate if we took special care to secure its thorough organization, and concentrated in the Workers and Peasants Inspection a staff of workers really abreast of the times, i.e., not inferior to the best western European standards.

For a socialist republic this condition is, of course, too modest. But our experience of the first five years has fairly crammed our heads with mistrust and skepticism. These qualities assert themselves involuntarily when, for example, we hear people dilating at too great length and too flippantly on "proletarian" culture. For a start, we should be satisfied with real bourgeois culture; for a start, we should be glad to dispense with the cruder types of prebourgeois

culture, i.e., bureaucratic culture or serf culture, etc. In matters of culture, haste and sweeping measures are most harmful. Many of our young writers and Communists should get this well into their heads.

Thus, in the matter of our state apparatus we should now draw the conclusion from our past experience that it would be better to proceed more slowly.

Our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say wretched, that we must first think very carefully how to combat its defects, bearing in mind that these defects are rooted in the past, which, although it has been overthrown, has not yet been overcome, has not yet reached the stage of a culture that has receded into the distant past.

I say culture deliberately, because in these matters we can only regard as achieved what has become part and parcel of our culture, of our social life, our habits. We might say that the good in our social system has not been properly studied, understood, and taken to heart; it has been hastily grasped at; it has not been verified or tested, corroborated by experience, and not made durable, etc. Of course, it could not be otherwise in a revolutionary epoch, when development proceeded at such breakneck speed that in a matter of five years we passed from tsarism to the Soviet system.

It is time we did something about it. We must show sound skepticism for too rapid progress, for boastfulness, etc. We must give thought to testing the steps forward we proclaim every hour, take

every minute and then prove every second that they are flimsy, superficial, and misunderstood. The most harmful thing here would be haste. The most harmful thing would be to rely on the assumption that we know at least something, or that we have any considerable number of elements necessary for the building of a really new state apparatus, one really worthy to be called socialist, Soviet, etc.

No, we are ridiculously deficient of such an apparatus, and even of the elements of it, and we must remember that we should not stint time on building it, and that it will take many, many years.

What elements have we for building this apparatus? Only two. First, the workers who are absorbed in the struggle for socialism. These elements are not sufficiently educated. They would like to build a better apparatus for us, but they do not know how. They cannot build one. They have not yet developed the culture required for this, and it is culture that is required. Nothing will be achieved in this by doing things in a rush, by assault, by vim or vigor, or in general, by any of the best human qualities. Second, we have elements of knowledge, education, and training, but they are ridiculously inadequate compared with all other countries.

Here we must not forget that we are too prone to compensate (or imagine that we can compensate) our lack of knowledge by zeal, haste, etc.

In order to renovate our state apparatus we must at all costs set out, first, to learn, second, to learn, and third, to learn, and then see to it that learning shall not remain a dead letter or a fashionable catchphrase (and we should admit in all frankness that this happens very often with us), that learning shall really become part of our very being, that it shall actually and fully become a constituent element of our social life. In short, we must not make the demands that are made by bourgeois western Europe, but demands that are fit and proper for a country which has set out to develop into a socialist country.

The conclusions to be drawn from the above are the following: we must make the Workers and Peasants Inspection a really exemplary institution, an instrument to improve our state apparatus.

January

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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6

The Militant January 26, 2009



# Guinea coup: mining companies seek accord

BY BEN JOYCE

Imperialist mining companies, already facing depressed markets for minerals and metals, are closely watching the moves of the new government in Guinea following a December 23 coup by junior military officers after the death of U.S.-backed dictator Lasana Conté.

The U.S. government responded to the coup by suspending its aid—a pittance of \$15 million a year.

Conté, a former army colonel, seized power in a coup shortly after the death in 1984 of the country's independence leader and first president, Ahmed Sékou Touré. Backed by Washington, Conté's regime was characterized by blatant corruption and complicity with the imperialist plunder of the country's mineral resources. In January 2007 Guinean unions waged an 18-day general strike demanding a new government. Conté's military killed some 90 people during the work stoppage.

The National Council for Democracy and Development took power within hours of Conté's death, suspending the country's constitution and dissolving the rest of the government. Capt. Moussa Dadis Camara leads the new junta.

A week after the coup, Kabine Komara was named prime minister. He is a former executive at the African Export-Import Bank based in Cairo, Egypt.

Some of the world's largest mining companies have operations in Guinea, including British, Russian, South African, and U.S.-based firms. Mining bosses were given pause in late December when the new government announced it would reevaluate existing contracts. Guinea produces 10 percent of the world's bauxite, a key ingredient in aluminum production, and also has diamonds, gold, and iron ore. Yet it ranks as one of the world's poorest countries.

Several mining companies, anxious to continue exploiting Guinea's vast deposits of minerals, indicated they were ready to give the junta the benefit of the doubt. After the government briefly shut down operations run by English-based Crew Gold Corp., interim chief executive Bill LeClair said, "We understand that this is a difficult time for the government and will continue to support the government in any way we can."

Kevin Lowery, a spokesman from Alcoa, a major aluminum producer, expressed the company's willingness



Photos by Alexandre Foulon

Guinean working people remain among world's poorest, despite country's mineral wealth. Above, mining town of Mambya. Inset: Russian-owned Rusal bauxite mine in Fria, where workers struck in 2008 over poor conditions.

to cooperate with the new government. "We have been operating there for more than 40 years," he said. "This is part of operating in that part of the world. Everything in the country is always fluid."

Announcing Washington's suspension of aid, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said, "We reiterate our call for a return to civilian rule and the holding of free, fair, and trans-

parent elections as soon as possible. We note that at the time of President Conté's death, Guinea was preparing for legislative elections in early 2009."

Paris, on the other hand, responded warmly to the junta's promises that it will restore "constitutional order." During a January 3–4 trip to Guinea, France's secretary for cooperation, Alain Joyandet, while calling for "vigilance," said he felt "great satisfaction" about the junta's commitment to hold elections and its appointment of a civilian as prime minister. Joyandet said that France would have a "greater presence" in Guinea and would make funds available for the elections.

Many Guineans support the new government because of its promises to combat corruption and restore a democratic electoral process. The coup was at first rejected by officials of the ousted regime, but most now support the new government. Since its consolidation of power the government has also won the support of most political parties and trade unions. Elections have been promised within two years.

## Protests around world condemn Israeli war

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Hundreds of thousands marched against the Israeli war on Gaza in cities around the world the weekend of January 9–11. Many protests in the Middle East took aim at the passive response and in the case of the Egyptian government complicity with the Israeli aggression.

In Egypt demonstrations took place after Friday prayers in several cities and towns, with protesters demanding the Egyptian government end its complicity with Tel Aviv's aggression. Police broke up demonstrations in the Sinai Peninsula, El Arish, and Tanta. Fifty thousand marched in Alexandria.

A group of demonstrators briefly blocked a bridge over the Suez Canal. "We are a people's convoy demanding that the Egyptian government open the border" to the Gaza Strip, said 23-year-old Salma Said.

In east Jerusalem and the West Bank several thousand, mostly Palestinians, protested. In Jerusalem's Old City women and children held a demonstration. At the Temple Mount police broke up another protest by women. The Israeli government banned all men under the age of 50 from joining Friday prayers at the site out of fear of large demonstrations. About 1,000 Palestinians marched in Hebron and there were skirmishes with Israeli soldiers at other points in the West Bank.

Some 2,000 people marched in Karachi, Pakistan, and 2,500 in Beirut, Lebanon. In Damascus, Syria, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators chanted, "Down, down with the Arab rulers, the collaborators!" The Damascus action was organized by the Syrian government, which has sought to distance itself from those Arab regimes tacitly approving the Israeli assault on Gaza. A car caravan of 200 vehicles from Turkey drove to the Syrian border to join pro-Palestinian marchers there. Demonstrations took place in Jakarta, Indonesia; Manila,

Philippines; Hong Kong; and Algiers, Algeria, as well.

Protests were also held across Europe, the United States, New Zealand, and Canada. Several hundred thousand marched in Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Norway, Greece, Austria, and the United Kingdom.

Nuzhat Sarfraz, who came with her family to the London demonstration of more than 20,000, said, "For me this is a secular issue. Muslims, Arabs, and Jews have lived together." Bhagwant Singh, originally from the Punjab, marched

with a trade union banner in the Indian Workers Association contingent. "We are here to show solidarity with the people," he said. More than 4,000 marched in Edinburgh.

In the United States, several thousand marched in San Francisco and hundreds in Atlanta; Seattle; Portland, Oregon; Orlando, Florida; and other cities.

*Celia Pugh, Pete Clifford, Christine Beresford, Terry Coggan, Michel Prairie, Lisa Potash, Eric Simpson, and Edwin Fruit contributed to this article.*

## Moscow squeezes Ukraine in gas price clash

Continued from page 5

factory shutdowns, and school closings.

Bulgaria has no other source of natural gas and has discussed restarting a nuclear plant that it shut down as a condition for its recent entry into the European Union. The Slovakian government has said it may also restart an old nuclear reactor it agreed to shut down for its EU status. Hungary ceased emergency gas shipments to Serbia and began using other fuels, resulting in Budapest's first smog alert.

Ukraine, which is heavily dependent on natural gas from Russia, is experiencing an acute economic crisis. Its currency lost 80 percent of its value to the dollar in the last three months and many industries recently closed, with production down nearly 30 percent in November.

In addition to pressing for a higher price from Ukraine, there are other goals Moscow's cutoff may further. The move has increased pressure on the unstable Ukrainian government, which the Russian rulers would benefit from bringing back under Moscow's control. The 2005 election of President Yushchenko—the culmination of what was called the "Orange Revolution"—signaled Kiev's move away from the influence of Moscow

toward alliance with Western Europe and the United States.

Amid the current crisis, the pro-Moscow Regions party has been calling for Yushchenko's resignation. According to a poll by the National Academy of Sciences, the current president would only receive 3 percent of the vote if elections were held today. The Regions leader, Viktor Yanukovich, would receive 30 percent. Yulia Timoshenko, the current prime minister who is gripped in a factional battle with Yushchenko, would get 17 percent.

The Ukraine remains closely tied in with Russia's economic infrastructure. Besides being vital to Russia's gas exports, it is important to its power grid and road and rail transport system. Situated

on Russia's western border, Ukraine has the largest Russian population outside the Russian Federation and is the main base for Russia's Black Sea Fleet.

Moscow has a record of withholding energy resources to press its political agenda. Gazprom temporarily reduced gas supplies to the Czech Republic following Prague's signing of an agreement last year to establish antiballistic missile batteries there.

Gas prices are expected to drop sharply over the next six months, as has already happened to oil. The Russian economy is heavily dependent on revenue from oil and gas exports. Gazprom lost some \$800 million as of January 11 due to the shutdown, according to government officials.

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# No solution for Palestine in imperialist framework

Below is an excerpt from “Opening Guns of World War III: Washington’s Assault on Iraq,” an article that appears in issue number 7 of *New International*, a magazine of Marxist politics and theory. The article is based on a talk presented by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, to a meeting in Cleveland in March 1991. Washington had launched a six-week bombardment of Iraq earlier that year and a 100-hour invasion of the country on February 24. The talk explains that the Palestinian struggle for self-determination remains at the root of the crisis in the Mideast confronting U.S. imperialism, the major capitalist regimes in the region whose population is predominantly Arab, and the Israeli rulers. Copyright © 1991 by *New International*. Reprinted by permission.



BY JACK BARNES

A collateral objective of the war drive was putting Washington in a stronger position to force a “solution” to the Palestinian national question. For the U.S. rulers, the realization of this goal—somehow eliminating the roots of the *intifada*,<sup>1</sup> without igniting a broader revolutionary upheaval—is intertwined with progress toward their longstanding aim of establishing stable, profitable relations with the major capitalist regimes in the region, whose populations are predominantly Arab. These regimes, which stretch from the Atlantic coast of northern Africa to the Arab-Persian Gulf, rule over populations many, many times the size of Israel’s and over lands that contain strategic supplies of oil and other major sources of natural wealth. Washington aims to assert more strongly than ever its position as the predominant imperialist power in its relations with these regimes.

From the early 1960s, the U.S. government increasingly supplied Israel with modern military equipment and had to rely on it as a bastion to defend imperialist interests in the Middle East. During the mid- to late 1950s, an upswing in worker and peasant struggles for national sovereignty and land throughout the region gave rise to bourgeois regimes in a number of countries that, from the standpoint



Militant/Paul Boutelle

“Within an imperialist framework, there is no solution to the Palestinian question,” writes Barnes. “The fight for the national rights of the Palestinian people is the axis of the class struggle in Israel and throughout those areas that historically constituted Palestine.”

of imperialism, were too weak and unreliable to play this role. With the consolidation over the past quarter century of larger and stronger capitalist classes, and a growing middle class, however, Washington grabbed the chance to use these bourgeois governments more effectively to promote its own interests. The military defeats dealt to these regimes by Israel in wars in 1967 and 1973 induced sections of their ruling classes to turn more sharply toward imperialism. The Egyptian rulers have led the way in this regard, recognizing the State of Israel following the 1978 Camp David Accords engineered during the James Carter administration.<sup>2</sup>

The U.S.-organized war in the Gulf widened the divergence between the foreign policy interests of the U.S. and Israeli ruling classes. The Israeli rulers come out losers from U.S. imperialism’s strengthened alignment with the Egyptian, Saudi, and Syrian regimes, which joined in the military alliance against Baghdad. This weakens Israel’s influence with Washington, its special place in the world imperialist system, and thus its leverage in wresting ever-increasing U.S. economic and military assistance and attempting to block such U.S. aid to regimes in the Arab countries.

This divergence between Washington and Tel Aviv is contrary to what most of the major media portrayed during the war as a new high point of cooperation. This is supposedly exemplified by the Israeli government’s “agreement” not to send its warplanes against targets in Iraq in response to Baghdad’s Scud missile attacks and Washington’s subsequent dispatch of Patriot antimissile missile batteries to Israel. The truth, however, is that

Tel Aviv never had any choice in the matter. The U.S. military command simply refused to give the Israeli air force the “friend or foe” codes that would have allowed Tel Aviv’s bombers and fighter jets to enter Iraqi airspace without being shot down by—or shooting down—the U.S. aircraft that controlled those skies.

In fact, Washington humbled Tel Aviv during the Gulf war in order to block it from disrupting the U.S. rulers’ foreign policy and military goals. Israel relies on its proven record as a garrison state: that it will respond militarily to any perceived threat, and respond tenfold to any attack on its territory. The Israeli regime, though, was forced by the U.S. government to take the hits from Baghdad’s Scud missiles without responding. Although the Scuds are militarily insignificant, the inability to retaliate was another political humiliation for Tel Aviv. The bitterness and frustration in Israeli ruling circles grew even more as it later became clear that Washington’s much-touted Patriot missiles are a failure. They didn’t destroy most warheads or prevent the Scuds from doing damage. The Patriots did nothing more than blow apart the highly inaccurate Scuds, scattering the warheads and other debris at random. Scud warheads came down and exploded on Israeli territory regardless, and parts of both the Scuds and Patriots did damage as well. (In fact, Israeli military evaluations insist that each Scud missile launched by Baghdad after the deployment of the Patriots did more damage than those beforehand.)

While Washington’s interests have diverged further from Tel Aviv’s, however, this has not brought the U.S. rulers any closer to a “solution” to the Palestinian question, without which their efforts to establish stable relations with bourgeois regimes in the Middle East are continually disrupted. Washington’s biggest political obstacle in this regard is the irrepressible fight by the Palestinians for their national self-determination—above all the struggles of the Palestinians living inside the post-1967 borders of “Greater Israel.” This remains an enormous problem for imperialism, no matter how much cooperation the U.S. government gets from Moscow, and no matter how many trips Secretary of State James Baker makes to

the region, shuttling between Tel Aviv and the capital cities of Washington’s allied regimes in various Arab countries.

Tel Aviv seized on Washington’s war drive as cover to extend its garrison-state brutality against the Palestinian population in the West Bank, Gaza, southern Lebanon, and inside Israel itself. It imposed a round-the-clock curfew—virtual house arrest—on the Palestinian population, depriving hundreds of thousands of families of their livelihoods. Thousands of Palestinians were rounded up, beaten, and jailed. Israeli cops, troops, and rightist vigilantes murdered Palestinian fighters with greater impunity. Tel Aviv stepped up air raids on Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Despite earlier pledges to Washington, the Israeli regime openly organized immigrants from the Soviet Union and other Jewish settlers to expand land takeovers in the West Bank and Gaza. If the Israelis can’t fly the skies against the U.S. Air Force, they can still build settlements on stolen Arab land—for a while.

Within an imperialist framework, there is no solution to the Palestinian question. The fight for the national rights of the Palestinian people is the axis of the class struggle in Israel and throughout those areas that historically constituted Palestine. The Palestinian people continue to press forward the fight against their dispossession and earn solidarity from Arab peoples and conscious fighters among the oppressed and exploited around the world. The Palestinians have not been so dispersed geographically as to lose their national identity and cohesion.

Above all, so long as the Palestinians are not expelled en masse from Israel and the occupied territories, every step forward in their struggle for national liberation is at the same time an *internal* social and political crisis for Tel Aviv. Moreover, every move by Tel Aviv to incorporate the occupied territories into a permanent “Greater Israel” guarantees intensified resistance, including among the Palestinians inside Israel itself, thereby deepening its internal crisis. In addition to some 3.5 million Jews, 2.5 million Palestinians are currently living under Israeli rule: 800,000 inside the pre-1967 borders, and 1.7 million on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian national self-determination is irreconcilable with the class interests of the Israeli ruling class. The bourgeois regimes in the surrounding Arab countries, while claiming to speak on behalf of their “brothers” the Palestinians, have repeatedly shed Palestinian blood to preserve their own class power and state privileges. Washington is pressuring more of these governments to follow in the footsteps of Cairo by establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, and some may do so. Nonetheless, these capitalist regimes must take into account the potentially destabilizing political consequences at home among the Arab and other oppressed peoples—who strongly identify with the Palestinian struggle and who, along with working people the world over, are the only reliable ally of the Palestinians.

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# Cuba: 50th anniversary

## Continued from front page

a military junta named by Batista. Working people responded with a mass uprising, as rebel forces led by Camilo Cienfuegos and Ernesto Che Guevara occupied the principal army garrisons in Havana.

Over the following week, the main Rebel Army columns marched westward across the island, greeted by a huge outpouring of workers and peasants along the way. On January 8 they entered Havana, where Castro spoke to the population from the former dictatorship's army base in Camp Columbia.

On January 1 of this year, President Raúl Castro, commander of one of the main Rebel Army columns during the revolutionary war and second to Fidel in the chain of command of the revolutionary leadership over the past five decades, addressed a rally of 3,000 in Santiago marking the victory. Over the last week, a caravan made up of veteran revolutionary combatants, youth leaders, and others crisscrossed the island, leading actions in cities and towns along the route of the original Freedom Caravan.

In Havana, the procession ended

at the former Camp Columbia, now called Ciudad Libertad (Liberty City), the campus of the Enrique José Varona teacher-training institute. The rally of 2,000, attended by Raúl Castro and other government leaders, was addressed by several speakers, including Pedro Sáez, first secretary of the Cuban Communist Party in Havana; Brig. Gen. Delia Esther "Teté" Puebla; and President Rafael Correa of Ecuador. Puebla, who during the revolutionary war against the Batista regime was second in command of an all-woman platoon of the Rebel Army, spoke about her participation in the Freedom Caravan. Correa, the keynote speaker, expressed his solidarity with Cuba in face of Washington's decades-long economic war.

This year's celebrations were organized on a modest scale to take into account the urgent priority being given to rebuild housing and other infrastructure since three successive hurricanes devastated Cuba in August, September, and November.

In his January 1 speech in Santiago,



Militant/Jonathan Silberman (above), Martín Koppel (left) Cuban students cheer January 8 as "Freedom Caravan" reenacts 1959 entry into Havana by Rebel Army columns led by Fidel Castro.

Raúl Castro described the proletarian character of Cuba's socialist revolution. "This demands, first and foremost, that tomorrow's leaders never forget that this is a revolution of the humble, by

the humble, and for the humble," he emphasized. They must "never be softened up by the enemy's siren songs, and must be conscious that, given its very essence, the enemy will never cease to be aggressive, dominating, and treacherous" toward the revolution. Above all, Cuba's leadership "must never distance themselves from our workers, peasants, and the rest of the people" in confronting the challenges ahead.

"It befits the historical leadership of the revolution to prepare the new generations to take up the enormous responsibility of continuing to carry forward the revolutionary process," Castro said.

## Malcolm X in Spanish to be published in Cuba

BY SAM MANUEL

A Cuban edition of *Habla Malcolm X* (Malcolm X speaks), will be released at the Havana International Book Fair, which takes place February 12–22. The book has been published by Ciencias Sociales, one of that country's largest publishing houses, in a run of nearly 5,000 copies.

At the book fair *Habla Malcolm X* will be presented jointly with "Revolution, Internationalism, and Socialism: The Last Year of Malcolm X" by Jack Barnes. The latter is the lead article in issue number 8 of *Nueva Internacional*, a magazine of Marxist politics and theory. Barnes is the national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States.

*Habla Malcolm X* was originally published by New York-based Pathfinder Press in 1993.

The panel making the presentation will include Esteban Morales, director emeritus of the University of Havana's Center for the Study of the United States, who wrote the preface to the Cuban edition of *Habla Malcolm X*. Also speaking will be Fernando Martínez Heredia,

recipient of the 2006 national prize for social sciences. Martínez is also president of the Communist Party of Cuba's commission to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Independent Party of Color (see Dec. 29, 2008, *Militant*).

In addition, the panel will include a leader of the Federation of University Students and representatives of both Ciencias Sociales and Pathfinder.

In 1974 Ciencias Sociales published

a Spanish translation of Malcolm X's autobiography, which also included excerpts of several speeches, statements, and interviews by Malcolm originally published by Pathfinder.

The only other speeches by Malcolm that have been published in Cuba since the mid-1970s are those in *Malcolm X habla a la juventud* (Malcolm X talks to young people), issued in 2002 by Editora Abril, publishing house of the Union of Young Communists.

## Israel's assault on Gaza Strip

### Continued from page 3

picture, as though we are covering a war in Tanzania. It's our war," said Reudor Benziman, chief executive of Channel 10 News, one of two major private stations in Israel.

But there are some voices opposing the war in the Israeli press. Gordon Levy, a columnist for *Haaretz*, protested what he called the "Israeli stations' blackout of the fighting."

He wrote that anyone who "recoils from our heroic tales, bias, white-washed words, Rorschach images of bombing, IDF spokesman-distributed photographs, propagandists' excuses, self-satisfied generals and half-truths" should instead tune in to the English broadcasts of Al Jazeera, an Arab-language news service that has six reporters in Gaza.

### Elections in Israel during war

Elections to the Knesset, Israel's parliament, are scheduled to take place February 10. This occurs amid tactical differences among the Israeli rulers on how far to go in Gaza, or whether enough has been achieved already. Military officials told the press that they have a contingency plan—the full reoccupation of Gaza and the toppling of Hamas—if Tel Aviv does not achieve all its goals in the negotiations. But few among Israeli rulers

believe that a long-term occupation of Gaza is possible.

Until the attack on Gaza, right-wing Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, was ahead in the race to become the new prime minister. But recent polls show growing support for Defense Minister Ehud Barak, head of the Labor Party. A bloc led by Foreign Minister Livni's Kadima party has pulled even with Netanyahu.

Livni is a one-time spy for Mossad, Israel's intelligence service. She and Barak are considered part of the Israeli "left." With hundreds dead in Gaza, even *Newsweek* noted, "There's something vaguely Orwellian about referring to Barak and Livni as 'doves.'"

On January 12, Israel's Central Elections Committee disqualified from the elections two Arab-Israeli parties—Balad, which currently has three members in the Knesset, and the United Arab List with four. *Haaretz* said Balad and UAL were accused of "supporting terrorist groups and refusing to recognize Israel's right to exist."

Nearly 20 percent of Israel's 7 million citizens are Arabs. But, *Haaretz* notes, Israeli Arabs "have suffered from discrimination and poverty for decades."

One of the largest protests by Israeli-Arabs in years took place in Sakhnin January 3 with 10,000 demonstrating against the assault on Gaza.

### For further reading

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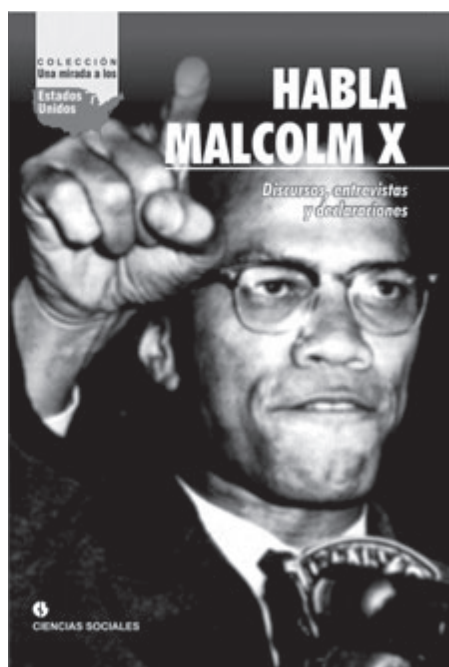
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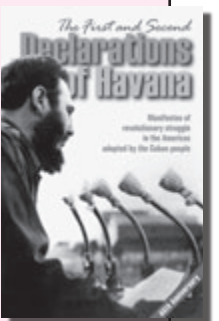
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Cuban edition of *Habla Malcolm X*





# Keep up fight to convict killer cop!

Ongoing protests in Oakland, California, and the surrounding area have won an important victory for working people in the fight against police killings and brutality. On January 13 they forced authorities to arrest the Bay Area Rapid Transit cop who shot Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old African American. The fight remains to keep the pressure on for a full prosecution of all the cops involved in the fatal shooting.

The killing of Grant, a butcher, demonstrates once again that the cops feel free to act as judge, jury, and executioner of working people. Grant was shot in the back in cold blood in front of other passengers on New Year's Day while he was forced to lie face down at an Oakland transit station. In this case the cops' actions were captured by other passengers on cell-phone cameras and the videos sent out to the media. The truth about what happened immediately became known, blocking any quick attempt by the cops to cover up and recast their story. With his guilt widely known, the cop, Johannes Mehserle, quit the police force and fled to Nevada.

Hundreds of working people took to the streets to demand justice, calling for prosecuting and

jailing all the cops involved in this heinous crime. These actions together with the nationwide publicity this case has received has had an immediate impact.

The killing of Grant and of growing numbers of other working people and youth gunned down by cops in cities and towns around the country are examples of the real role played by police in capitalist society. Their purpose—together with the courts and the entire “justice” system—is to serve and protect the tiny ruling class of billionaire families. The role of all cops, whether of the transit, city, state, or federal variety, is to intimidate working people, to keep us from standing up and organizing actions in defense of our rights and living standards in response to the deepest economic crisis since the 1930s.

The cops under capitalism cannot be reformed. The killings they carry out are not the result of “mistakes” or “bad training,” but simply what they do.

To win justice for Oscar Grant, we must keep up the fight. The protests so far have had an important impact. Ongoing actions can continue to play an essential role in winning this fight.

## Socialist candidate protests Israeli assault

Continued from front page

ing at the end of the march. “Stop the bombing! End the blockade! Open the borders! End the billions of dollars of aid the United States sends Israel every year, which helps them carry out these attacks in Gaza!” the socialist candidate said to cheers and applause. Dozens of his campaign supporters sold the *Militant* and passed out copies of a campaign statement calling for an end to the aggression and for a democratic, secular Palestine.

Ten people were arrested as a pro-Israel provocateur started a fight at the end of the rally.

The International Action Center, Al-Awda coalition, and others organized the protest. This is the second weekend in a row that thousands have

marched in the city in support of the Palestinians' struggle against Israeli occupation. Other smaller meetings and protests have been taking place here since the assault began.

Gov. David Paterson and Sen. Charles Schumer, both Democrats, were featured speakers at a pro-Israel rally that drew thousands a few blocks away from Times Square that day. Schumer and Paterson attempted to present Israel as the victim. “What country would be asked not to defend itself?” Schumer asked. “Would any country that had rockets launched at it day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year be told, ‘Let the rockets continue. Just sit down and talk?’”

## LETTERS

### ‘Cuba: An African Odyssey’

I was glad to see the article by Betsey Stone in the December 22 *Militant* on the documentary *Cuba: An African Odyssey*. I agree, the film is a useful introduction to some of the most important national liberation struggles in Africa between 1960 and the final defeat of the apartheid regime in South Africa in the early 1990s, and Cuba's historic role in them.

The documentary contains some very educational interviews with individuals who were on the front lines of these battles in the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, and Angola, including diplomats and intelligence personnel of the governments involved. The degree of U.S. government support for the South African-backed UNITA forces in Angola comes through clearly, as does U.S. involvement in plans to assassinate Congolese anti-imperialist leader Patrice Lumumba. The interviews with the Soviet military advisors and intelligence people—and their expressions of alarm and hatred for the proletarian internationalist course of the Cuban government—are especially striking. We rarely hear them expressing their views so unguardedly.

The article would have been more useful, however, had it also

brought out the political biases of the producers—pointing to what's there and not there. The *Militant* review doesn't mention that the documentary was funded by the French Foreign Ministry. Given that pedigree, it is hardly surprising that one might come away from the film with the impression that history is made by diplomats. This is especially true of the second part of the documentary on Angola.

Nor is there any hint in *this* African odyssey of the first internationalist mission of the Cuban Revolution in Africa, when the Cuban people in 1963 wholeheartedly threw themselves into support for Algeria's national liberation struggle against French imperialism. Hardly a surprise!

The socialist *revolution* in Cuba—which transformed millions of men and women as they transformed the world—is largely

#### ‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

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absent, except through the excellent interviews with a few of the frontline combatants like Che Guevara's comrades-in-arms Victor Dreke and Harry Villegas (Pombo). You see the kind of human beings they are.

The real proletarian roots of Cuba's internationalism and its indispensable role in the survival of the Cuban Revolution don't come through at all—as they do in the video *Cuba and Angola: Response to the South African Escalation* that Pathfinder Press has distributed for years, despite its problems of audio and video quality and its length.

Such limits notwithstanding, *Cuba: An African Odyssey* contains a wealth of information that is presented in a very accessible form, with real quality film work. I'm sure *Militant* readers will get a lot out of it and enjoy lively discussions of its content.

Mary-Alice Waters  
New York, New York

**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.**

# Obama poses cuts in Medicare, Social Security

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Cuts in Social Security and Medicare will be a “central part” of his administration's effort at eliminating waste in government, President-elect Barack Obama threatened at a January 7 news conference. His comments came a couple weeks before he takes the oath of office January 20.

Obama announced the creation of a White House position to “scour this budget, line by line, eliminating what we don't need, or what doesn't work.” He appointed Nancy Killefer as “chief performance officer” to oversee this.

In an interview January 11 on ABC's “This Week,” Obama singled out the program Medicare Advantage as one he would eliminate. Medicare Advantage is an alternative Medicare plan in which the government subsidizes private insurers. Copayments tend to be lower and patients can get more benefits than under the regular Medicare plan.

Obama argued that Medicare Advantage costs the government more than regular Medicare and “doesn't necessarily make people on Medicare healthier.” He claimed that the savings from cutting Medicare Advantage could be used to provide more funding for health care.

“We are going to have to make some tough choices under my watch,” the president-elect said.

Interviewer George Stephanopoulos asked him, “[A]re you really talking about over the course of your presidency some kind of a grand bargain? That you have tax reform, health care reform, entitlement reform, including Social Security and Medicare where everybody in the country is going to have to sacrifice something, accept change for the greater good?”

“Yes,” Obama replied. “Everybody is going to have to give. Everybody is going to have to have some skin in the game.” Obama's nominee for Council of Economic Advisers, Christina Romer, released a report January 9 on the economic stimulus plan the new administration is proposing.

The report projects giving “business investment incentives” to increase production and thus encourage employers to hire more workers. Some 90 percent of the estimated 3.7 million jobs created will be in private business. Thirty percent of these will be in construction and manufacturing and a sizable proportion in retail trade and leisure and hospitality, two other sectors where unemployment has soared.

“Not all of the increased output reflects increased employment,” the report says. “[S]ome comes from increases in hours of work among employed workers and some comes from higher productivity.” Millions will be left jobless by the program, which envisions reducing unemployment by a mere 1.8 percent by the end of 2010, when the unemployment rate is projected to be 5 percent.

The report says, “The recovery plan is likely to create jobs paying a range of wages.” There is no proposal to enforce union-scale wages.

The package includes a temporary increase in food stamps and a temporary expansion of unemployment insurance, funds for state governments to prevent certain health and education cuts, and a one-time tax cut of \$500 for individuals and \$1,000 for couples.

#### Correction

The editorial in the January 19 issue said that in 2005 Israel withdrew its troops and settlers from Gaza and the West Bank. Israel that year did remove all its troops and settlers from Gaza, but it only withdrew several hundred settlers and soldiers from four small locations on the West Bank. Settlement blocs encompassing some 225,000 people remained on the West Bank.