

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Rodolfo Saldaña: the making of a revolutionary in Bolivia

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Uranium shells poison Kosova, NATO troops

BY GREG McCARTAN

One of the consequences of the imperialist military intervention in the Balkans is coming to light through revelations about the potentially deadly exposure of soldiers from the occupying powers to depleted uranium shell fragments. The Italian government recently requested that NATO provide information about the use of this ammunition in Kosova and Bosnia. Six of its soldiers who served in the Balkans have died from leukemia. Two Danish soldiers who were part of imperialist military forces in the two republics also have died of the cancer.

A United Nations report released January 5 said that UN teams have investigated 11 sites in Kosova and found eight are "considerably contaminated" with radioactivity. NATO says there are 112 such areas with targets where depleted uranium shells were used. Much of Kosova's water supply could be contaminated, the report warned, and residents have not been told of the danger or of any precautions to take.

"Depleted uranium" is the radioactive isotope 238 produced in the refining of uranium for use in nuclear power plants. Projectiles made of this material can penetrate steel armor better than other ammunition because of its weight and exceptional hardness. They also ignite on impact, releasing toxic and radioactive substances.

Washington used these munitions in its 100-hour ground assault against Iraq in 1991, and this may be responsible for the

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Ruling backs meat packers in union fight at Smithfield

BY LAUREN HART

TAR HEEL, North Carolina—Workers at the giant Smithfield packing plant here scored a victory when a labor judge ruled the company committed "egregious and pervasive" labor law violations during union organizing campaigns in 1994 and 1997, including illegally firing 11 workers. The ruling set aside the results of the latest election, in which 63 percent of workers reportedly voted against the union.

In his December 15 ruling, Judge John West ordered that the 11 union supporters be rehired with back pay. Smithfield says it will appeal the decision to the full National Labor Relations Board and then to the federal courts before reinstating the workers.

The ruling was "a clear victory for the union," Brian Murphy, president of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 204, told the press. "Smithfield management clearly violated the law and the judge saw that. The company's ploy is to take as much time as possible and not do what the judge told them to do."

The judge ruled that a future election be held outside company property, and possibly outside the county, to counter intimidation by the bosses. Several company lawyers and managers had lied under oath dur-

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Cause of energy crisis: monopolies' profit drive

Workers and farmers face soaring prices, layoffs

BY BOB KELLER

SAN FRANCISCO—The growing energy crisis in California has been marked by soaring prices for electricity and natural gas, almost daily power emergencies, several plant shutdowns and layoffs due to the jump in energy rates, the threat of insolvency facing the major utility companies, and repercussions affecting the Northwest and other parts of the country.

On January 5 the California Public Utility Commission (PUC) unanimously approved a 10 percent increase in residential electricity rates for at least the next 90 days, as an "interim" solution to back the state's two biggest privately owned utilities, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) and Southern California Edison.

Wholesale electricity prices in California now average \$330 per megawatt hour—11 times higher than a year ago.

Both utilities have said they are unable to pay power-generating companies for the skyrocketing wholesale prices of electricity without passing on the additional cost to customers. Under the state's utility "deregulation" legislation passed in 1996, electric rates are supposed to be frozen until next year.

PG&E and SoCal Edison say they may

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Worker at Kaiser Aluminum in Mead, Washington, leaves work after being laid off when company decided to close and resell power for a profit.

Nationalize the energy companies!

The labor movement needs to respond to the power shortages, rate hikes, and skyrocketing fuel prices that are creating a disaster for working people by demanding government expropriation of the power and energy companies.

These monopolies control a resource vital to society. But they are in the business of making profits, not of providing energy.

EDITORIAL

Through their drive for ever-higher profits they have created a situation endangering the lives and livelihoods of millions of workers and farmers, as well as small businesspeople.

They must be taken out of private hands, nationalized, and run as public utilities for the benefit of the majority rather than the interests of a handful of super-wealthy capitalists, bankers, and bondholders. Working people, especially on the West Coast, where the crisis is most acute, would respond massively to calls by the labor movement for a campaign of mobilizations calling for the nationalization of this industry.

In addition, immediate relief is needed to ensure that not a single person goes without heat, electricity, or cooking fuel. The crisis has exposed the outrage of the cutbacks by the Clinton administration and the

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Unions in Argentina protest austerity, call March strike — page 2

Unions in Argentina protest austerity, call March strike

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Some 15,000 workers marched December 19 to the government house in Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital. Their protest, called by the main wing of the General Federation of Labor (CGT), was directed at moves by the government of President Fernando de la Rúa to begin to dismantle the social security system.

The demonstration followed a November 23-24 general strike called by the two public wings of the CGT and the Argentine Workers Federation (CTA) to oppose that and other deep-going attacks on the social gains of working people. In addition to union actions, protests by unemployed workers have rocked the country from north to south.

The CGT has called a 36-hour national general strike for March 1-2 to oppose the government's austerity measures, which also include a freeze on federal funding for the impoverished provinces, tax cuts to wealthy businessmen, a raise in the retirement age for women from 60 to 65 years, gutting the union-run health-care system, and an end to industry-wide collective bargaining. The federation is also demanding the government provide unemployment benefits; most jobless workers in Argentina do not receive unemployment insurance.

On December 29 de la Rúa signed decrees, previously approved by Congress, enacting the measures to dismantle the state-run retirement pension system and undermine the health-care system through competition by private companies. These moves are an assault on broad social gains won by working people in this South American nation following World War II.

Workers in Argentina have been handicapped by the union officials' long-standing subordination to the bourgeois Peronist party since it was founded during World War II by bourgeois nationalist figure Juan Perón. De la Rúa's predecessor, Peronist Carlos Menem, presided over the sell-off of most state-owned industries, which resulted in mass layoffs. Since the Menem regime,

the Argentine peso has been officially tied to the U.S. dollar, which has resulted in high prices and the devastation of workers' living standards.

IMF-dictated austerity program

The austerity moves, initiated by the Menem administration and now enacted by de la Rúa, had long been demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other institutions that represent the interests of Washington and the most powerful imperialist investors.

The day before the union action in Buenos Aires, the IMF announced a package of loans and credits to the Argentine government totaling almost \$40 billion—double what had previously been expected. The World Bank, IMF, Spanish government, and a number of private banks inside and outside Argentina have committed funds or lines of credit to the package.

This amounted to the largest such "rescue" effort since the IMF loaned \$41 billion to prop up the Brazilian economy in 1998, a measure undertaken in the wake of the financial and currency crisis that swept Asia and sent shock waves through several of the major Latin American nations.

The loans reflected concern among international capitalist investors that Argentina has been close to defaulting on payments of its foreign debt, which stands at \$123 billion—an amount equal to half the country's gross domestic product. The IMF package will be used to cover interest payments due this year of more than \$14 billion.

Battered by weak economic growth and exports, the Argentine government has borrowed heavily in a struggle to maintain the one-to-one parity of the peso with the U.S. dollar established in 1991. Argentina is now the most indebted country in Latin America.

The country's economy, the third-largest in Latin America after Brazil and Mexico, has declined in relation to its major semicolonial competitors on the continent, shrinking by 3.2 percent in 1999. Growth



Thousands march in Buenos Aires May 31 against government's brutal austerity measures. Protests by unionists and unemployed workers, including two general strikes and many other actions, took place throughout 2000—and show no sign of ebbing.

for last year was virtually zero. A downturn in the U.S. economy could have big repercussions in Argentina as well as throughout the continent.

Despite the sweeping character of the austerity measures, some spokespeople for financial capital have expressed impatience that the assault on working people is not deep enough. Some have argued that the IMF loans "protect" the Argentine government from undertaking the level of cutbacks in social spending deemed necessary by the imperialist powers.

In a December 22 column entitled "Who Will Heal Argentina? Please Don't Answer," the IMF's Mary Anastasia O'Grady, the editor of the Americas column of the *Wall Street Journal*, laid out a harsh prescription for Argentina, which she claimed was marked by "a half-century of socialist redistribution." "Monetary stability," she wrote, "is incompatible with protected markets, inflexible labor laws, high and ubiquitous taxes, broad entitlements, and a generous system of transfers to the provinces."

Claiming that past IMF loans have allowed "more wiggle room to delay reform," O'Grady quoted a local businessman who "says there is only one way out: 'You have to starve the bastards.'"

O'Grady said the government had to take the "political risk" involved in such "economic reform." She was referring to the prospect of growing working-class protests as the de la Rúa government tries to push ahead with the austerity program.

Near-daily protests

Concern about the social volatility in Argentina is evident in the tone of coverage in the big-business media. "Economic problems, including 15 percent unemployment, have brought near-daily protests, including blockades of key highways by jobless workers," the Associated Press reported December 19.

Protests by unemployed workers and social explosions have taken place in provinces throughout Argentina. Many are areas devastated by the mass layoffs that followed the

privatization of the oil and other state-owned industries, as well as economically depressed agricultural regions.

In Neuquén province, for example, unemployed workers blocked highways in late December, demanding government aid to be able to buy food for the Christmas holidays. The police responded with billy clubs and tear gas, arresting 45 adults and 11 children. The local branch of the CTA organized a protest rally December 21 to condemn the repression. In a related protest, workers blocked a bridge connecting the provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro for several days, until the government agreed to pay back wages and reopen a clinic it had closed.

In La Matanza, in Buenos Aires province, more than 1,000 unemployed and retired workers demonstrated December 23 in front of several supermarkets, chanting "Bread and Jobs" and "Food for our tables at Christmas." Despite a heavy cop presence, they eventually forced the owners to donate several thousands of kilos of food. They threatened to hold a similar protest in front of the local Wal-Mart.

La Tablada sentences commuted

In a victory for working people, 11 political prisoners in Buenos Aires, convicted for a 1989 attack on the La Tablada army barracks, won a reduction in their sentences December 29. The prisoners, members of the All for the Fatherland Movement (MTP), had been on a hunger strike for 116 days to demand their freedom. Their sentences were reduced from life to between 20 and 25 years. Those with a 20-year sentence will be eligible to be considered for parole in 2002, said the justice minister in announcing the decision. Until a week earlier, the government had refused all appeals by the prisoners.

Two of the MTP prisoners, however, were excluded from the commutations of sentences. These are Enrique Gorriarán Merlo and Ana María Sívori. Gorriarán was a former leader of the Revolutionary People's Army (ERP), a guerrilla group active in the 1970s and '80s.

THE MILITANT

Nuclear power—a danger to humanity

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Uranium shells harm Kosova, NATO soldiers

Continued from front page

"Gulf War Syndrome" among U.S. soldiers, as well as affecting the health of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. The U.S. Navy has also used these shells in its military training exercises on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, where residents suffer unusually high cancer rates.

In Bosnia, the U.S. military fired 10,000 rounds of depleted uranium shells and later shot 31,000 rounds in Kosova in its war against the people of Yugoslavia. In a newspaper interview, Italian prime minister Giuliano Amato said, "We've always known that depleted uranium was used in Kosova, but not in Bosnia. We've always known that it was a danger only in exceptional circumstances like, for example, picking up a fragment with a hand on which there was an open wound, while in normal circumstances it isn't dangerous at all. But now we are starting to have a justified fear that things aren't that simple."

Both the Portuguese and Belgian governments also report deaths under similar circumstances among soldiers who served in the Balkans.

Families of the six dead soldiers released a document, dated Nov. 22, 1999, that was sent by NATO to Italian commanders of troops involved in the assault and occupation of Kosova as guidelines for dealing with depleted uranium. The families say the soldiers had already spent months in Kosova by that date. The document contains a warning in English that says, "Inhalation of insoluble depleted uranium dust particles has been associated with long-term health effects, including cancers and birth defects."

Use of uranium shells against Iraq

During the assault on Iraq by Washington and its allies, U.S. M1 Abrams tanks and Bradley armored personnel carriers used depleted uranium shells, as did the A-10 Warthog aircraft. U.S. tanks fired at least 14,000 large-caliber rounds and warplanes fired 940,000 small-caliber rounds that proved especially devastating to Iraqi armor. Army combat engineer Dwayne Mowrer was quoted in *The Nation* magazine in 1996 as saying that nearly half the vehicles along the "highway of death" heading toward Basra, Iraq, were hit with the explosive shells. "It leaves a nice round hole, almost like someone had welded it out," he said.

Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

Leon Trotsky

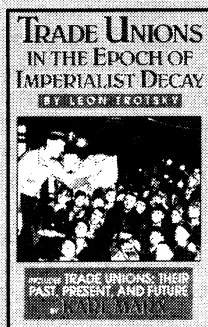
Featuring 'Trade Unions: Their Past, Present, and Future' by Karl Marx

"Apart from their original purposes, the trades unions must now learn to act deliberately as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation.... They must convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions." —Karl Marx, 1866

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From Pathfinder

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Farm in Kosova demolished in May 1999 by U.S.-NATO forces. Soldiers from European countries participating in occupation force have become ill and some have died as a result of contact with depleted uranium shells fired by U.S. military. Contamination of water and land is threat to population of Kosova.

U.S. forces left behind about 300 tons of expended depleted uranium ammunition in Kuwait and Iraq. A 1995 study by the Iraqi government presented to the United Nations

documents a sharp rise in the number of cases of leukemia and other cancers, especially in the Basra region.

The Pentagon, which has played down the

effects of contact with this radioactive material, released a report in December claiming that its latest research "supports previous assessments that depleted uranium is not the cause of the illnesses some Gulf war veterans are experiencing."

Dr. Roger Coghill, a British biologist, noted at a recent conference in London that "one single particle of depleted uranium lodged in a lymph node can devastate the entire immune system."

According to the *New York Times*, "Besides the leukemia deaths and cases being treated" of soldiers who were in Bosnia and Kosova from European countries, "unaccounted numbers of soldiers" have "complained about an array of symptoms, such as chronic fatigue, hair loss, and various types of cancer — complaints similar to gulf war syndrome, registered after the Persian Gulf war in 1991."

Pekka Haavisto, head of the UN team investigating the impact of the ammunition in Kosova, said, "We found some radiation in the middle of villages where children were playing. We were surprised to find this a year and a half later. People had collected ammunition shards as souvenirs and there were cows grazing in contaminated areas, which means the contaminated dust can get into the milk."

He added, "There remains a risk for the local population."

Union militants fired by Quebec truck bosses

BY AL CAPPE

MONTREAL—"I have not been rehired nor have the other truckers fired at Simard Transport. To my knowledge there are a number of others who have not been rehired," stated Éric Huard in a telephone interview January 2. Huard was one of several hundred truckers who staged a militant 28-day strike last October against transport companies at the Port of Montreal.

Uniting independent operators, company employees, and truckers hired by employment agencies, the truckers demanded recognition of their union—the Syndicat National du Transport Routier, an affiliate of the Confederation of National Trade Unions of Québec (CNTU)—and the negotiation of a contract providing some relief from their difficult working conditions and desperate financial situation. Rank-and-file truckers worked for two years to sign up more than 1,000 drivers, resulting in the CNTU applying to the Canadian Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) for recognition at 41 trucking companies.

Faced with stalling by the CIRB and refusal to negotiate by the bosses, the truckers decided to go on strike October 22. About 650 of those who signed up for the union participated in the walkout, which nearly paralyzed the busiest container port in the North Atlantic. A backlog of 15,000 containers piled up in just five days, idling some factories in the area. Containers were stacked five high, well above the safe limit of three.

When the government hit the strikers with an injunction barring effective picketing, they set up a camp across the street from a key entrance to the port and reached out to win solidarity from other CNTU locals. In face of a determined walkout, the Parti Québécois government of Prime Minister Lucien Bouchard introduced strike-breaking legislation that was adopted unanimously by the Quebec National Assembly November 2. The strikers defied the legislation. On November 8, an assembly of 500 truckers voted to continue the strike even as the companies began firing strikers, and bailiffs and cops were delivering hundreds of notices of fines of up to \$1,000.

The federal government in Ottawa also lashed out at the strikers. After years of delays, the CIRB suddenly announced that it had rejected 33 of 41 CNTU accreditation applications.

The big-business media focused on the fact that Teamsters union members who are truckers at the port were crossing the picket lines. The Teamsters are affiliated to the Quebec Federation of Labor (QFL). This

allowed the port to move about 30 percent of normal traffic. Throughout the strike unionists held regular rallies and demonstrations, including one of 250 November 19 that closed the street outside a federal election rally of the Bloc Québécois where Bouchard was scheduled to speak.

However, under the blows from the government and the bosses, the ranks of the strikers began to dwindle. On November 19 an assembly of 250 strikers voted 66 percent to end their strike after the Quebec government agreed to name a special mediator. One of the conditions was that the 180 fired truckers were to be rehired either by their employer or another in the industry. In addition, the trucking bosses had agreed to an increase in what they paid truckers for hauling containers.

A large number of the strikers were rehired. But when the bosses took a hard line against those they saw as union activists, the mediator went along. Truckers like Huard received no severance pay or compensation, were not offered other jobs, and found themselves blacklisted by container transporters. He now works for an employment agency

hiring out drivers to the trucking firms.

"I don't believe in mediators anymore," said Guy L'Espérance in an interview December 16. L'Espérance is an independent trucker who has worked in the industry for 30 years. Involved in previous organizing attempts, he was one of the rank-and-file organizers of the recent drive. To date, there has been no coordinated public effort by union officials to fight the firings and other reprisals such as fines.

A number of truckers said that they did not expect the scope of the antiunion attack from the bosses and particularly from the government. But they point out that the strike has better prepared them for future struggles and solidified the ranks of the workers.

"I have more respect for the Indian truckers," stated L'Espérance referring to the large number of English-speaking truckers from the Punjab in India who fought alongside French-speaking Québécois like him. "And I think they now have more respect for me."

Al Cappe is a meat packer in Montreal.

Garment and shoe workers in Cambodia protest forced overtime

BY HILDA CUZCO

In the coastal town of Sihanoukville, 115 miles southwest of the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, hundreds of shoe factory workers held a demonstration January 4 to demand an end to mandatory overtime. The workers, employed at New Star Shoes, were joined by opposition politicians at the rally.

Last June, 20,000 garment workers went on strike, the largest in recent years, against low wages and unsafe working conditions. Workers at one garment plant in the Takhmau district north of the capital complained about receiving electric shocks from the sewing machines. The workers stayed out for six days despite the bosses ordering them to keep working and locking the gates to prevent them from leaving the plant. But through their persistence, garment workers in Cambodia's 200 factories scored a victory by forcing the bosses to agree to their demand for an increase of \$5 in the \$40 monthly minimum wage.

About 1,000 garment workers, mainly female, at Flying Dragon (Cambodia) Garment Ltd. rallied December 20 outside the Labor Ministry in Phnom Penh to protest

forced overtime. "The management even locks the doors to force them to work overtime," said Ken Chheng Lang, one of the organizers of the demonstration and vice president of the National Independent Federation Textile Union of Cambodia.

The unionist also said that the bosses have implemented a 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. shift without time off for national holidays. A spokesperson from the factory denied workers are forced to work overtime but threatened to fire those who did not show up for work.

"At least five workers faint every day because of the heat in the factory and hard work," said Hen Rany, a 23-year-old worker at Flying Dragon, which employs more than 2,000 people. They have been demanding to be paid a commission per item of clothing made and that overtime be voluntary.

The garment industry in Cambodia is the country's main source of foreign currency, bringing in more than \$6 million a year from exports to the United States. Many apparel companies have set up shop in recent years in the country, attracted by the low labor costs.

Clinton sets up counterintelligence 'czar'

BY GREG McCARTAN

Moving to expand what is classified as government and corporate "secrets," as well as to broaden spying on working people at home and abroad, the Clinton administration announced January 4 the creation of a National Counterintelligence Executive. The body has "a broad mandate to identify potential security threats and vulnerabili-

ties," according to the *New York Times*. This new setup will include a board made up of officials from the FBI, CIA, Pentagon, Justice Department, and other government agencies, headed by a counterintelligence "czar."

"Counterintelligence the way it has been conceived is a very small part of it. It's a subset," one government official told the

Wall Street Journal. The paper said the "czar's duties will include identifying and protecting critical corporate secrets and private-sector assets."

The new spy agency will take over and widen activities currently assumed by the National Counterintelligence Center, which was created in 1994 during the Clinton administration, ostensibly in response to revelations that CIA officer Aldrich Ames had been spying for the Soviet Union for nine years. The *Journal* reported that the plans for a counterintelligence czar had been under way for two years and that it has strong bipartisan backing.

While official statements, unnamed government sources, and articles in the big-business media suggest that the rationale for the latest move is a threat from abroad, their statements do not distinguish the "foreign" from the "domestic." Instead they focus on "protecting national assets" from "national adversaries" and equate "economic security" with "national security."

Intelligence Authorization Act

One example of what Washington is driving at in the United States can be seen in the passage of the annual Intelligence Authorization Act. The bill was originally vetoed by Clinton in November because it included a provision imposing a three-year prison sentence on any government employee who "knowingly and willfully discloses or attempts to disclose any classified information."

In sending the bill back to Congress, the president said such persons "commit a gross breach of the public trust and may recklessly put our national security at risk." He encouraged legislators to draft a "more narrowly drawn provision," stressing that the measure "lacked the thoroughness this provision warranted." Clinton said that what is in dispute "is not the gravity of the problem, but the best way to respond to it."

Rep. Porter Goss, chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, protested the veto, saying the legislation, "including the offending anti-leak provision, was approved by the Adminis-

tration before final passage." The provision was removed from the legislation and subsequently signed into law by Clinton.

Wen Ho Lee frame-up

The announcement also follows the unraveling of the U.S. government's frame-up of Wen Ho Lee, a scientist at Los Alamos laboratory in New Mexico who was arrested and held in solitary confinement on a range of charges, including stealing U.S. nuclear weapons secrets. He was released after 10 months in jail when the government dropped all of the 59 charges but one, related to downloading national defense information at Los Alamos. The *Times* reported that FBI director Louis Freeh pressed for the counterintelligence reorganization in response to the outcome of Lee's case.

Several months later, in describing the National Counterintelligence Executive, White House spokesperson Jacob Siewert said, "The agencies that are charged with the responsibilities for counterintelligence—primarily the CIA, Department of Defense, and the FBI—can work together in a way that's more coordinated and look at new threats, assess them, and decide how to protect our secrets." The appointment of the spy czar will likely be left to the incoming Bush administration, he said.

News articles and administration officials report the National Counterintelligence Executive will pursue "closer ties between the government and private industry in fighting spies," according to the *Journal*, which added that "with the rise in economic globalization and industrial espionage, government officials now say national security and economic security are indistinguishable."

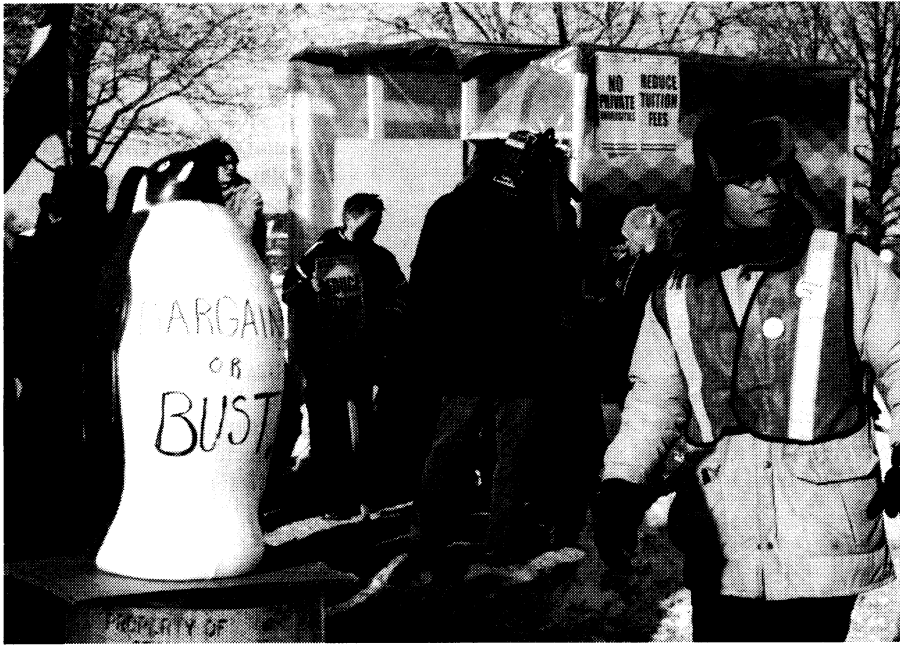
The *New York Times* reported that the "executive's central task will be to try to determine which secrets held by the government or the private sector are so valuable that they need to be protected from the nation's adversaries."

At the White House press briefing, Siewert said, "A threat today can as easily come from a laptop as it could from an old cloak-and-dagger spy, and we need a counterintelligence capability that matches that new globalized reality."

According to various press reports, the mandate of the agency is to identify such "secrets," determine who may be interested in obtaining them, identify whether or not anyone is trying to obtain them, and take necessary steps to "protect" them.

To carry out this open-ended mandate would of necessity require widespread spying, extension of the amount of information deemed "classified"; the growth in the number of workers who must receive government clearances for jobs; more collaboration between the government and corporations in setting up and running spy operations in plants, factories, and offices; and witch-hunts against and victimization of workers employed by the government and industry for "revealing" information deemed "secret."

Teaching assistants' strike shuts down York University in Toronto



Hundreds of striking York University teaching assistants in Toronto joined by other unionists and students organized mass pickets at the entrances to the university January 8, thwarting plans by the administration, backed by the Ontario government, to restart classes. The teaching assistants, on strike since October 26, belong to the Canadian Union of Public Employees. York University, attended by 30,000 undergraduates, has ground to a halt. Both sides have agreed to a 2 percent increase in each year of the contract. But the central issue is the demand by the strikers that their wages be indexed to any future tuition increases. The strikers are demanding grants to teaching assistants equal to any tuition increase. The administration refuses to do this out of fear of setting a precedent for other universities.

Workers at 'Seattle Times' end walkout with seniority intact after approving six-year pact

BY ERNEST MAILHOT

SEATTLE—Striking workers at the *Seattle Times* voted to end their walkout January 8 by a vote of 359 to 116 following federal mediation talks in Washington, D.C. The news, advertising, and circulation department workers are members of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild. Striking members of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) Local 7800 from the composing room voted 45 to 17 to go back to work.

About a week earlier strikers voted down a proposed contract by an 80 percent margin after the company claimed millions in losses during the strike would force them to lay off 10 percent of the workforce. The bosses said they would protect the jobs of workers who crossed the picket line and 68 replacement workers first. Several strikers said their stand on this issue, as shown by their overwhelming vote, was the most important factor in getting the company to drop their demands. In the new contract layoffs will be according to seniority.

The company agreed that 90 percent of new hires will be required to join the union, rather than the 80 percent they demanded, and to pay 75 percent of medical insurance as opposed to 66 percent in the past. The two-tier pay scale for suburban reporters will be phased out as well.

In terms of wages—the main issue that prompted the strike—the deal sticks with the company's original proposal with raises totaling \$3.30 an hour over a six-year contract. The newspaper workers had originally demanded a three-year contract with raises totaling \$3.25 an hour.

Naomi Hoida, a worker in the classified ads department who has been at the paper for 19 years, voted for the latest offer and is leaning towards taking early retirement. Like many strikers she believes the workers deserve a better contract, especially in terms of wages, but felt this was probably the best they could do at this point. She explained: "I feel really good about the strike. We

banded together and helped each other. We made the company a better place for our co-workers. I see it as a question of principle and ethics—not me, me, me, but us, us, us. We fought for what we believed in."

Some felt strongly that the contract should be rejected. Teri McClain, a sales associate at the *Times* for the past year, wore her picket signs to the contract information meeting just before the vote. She inverted the signs and wrote on their blank sides: "My momma didn't raise her children to just settle." and "Why vote yes for nothing?"

Another issue that strikers were concerned about was their ability to support Local 174 of the Teamsters. The 94 union drivers honored the Guild and CWA strike and joined the picket lines every day of the 49-day strike. Teamsters Local 763, which has more members, did not honor the picket line.

Local 174's current contract with the *Times* ends in February and the company is not expected to offer them a decent contract. In the case of a strike by Local 174 the Guild and CWA contracts allow their members to honor the Teamsters picket lines for a period of one year from the ratification date of their just-approved agreements.

Jan Held, who works in the composing room, spoke strongly against the contract and about Local 174. "It's unconscionable," she said. "Local 174 supported us and the right to honor their strike after one year has been given away." Some other strikers explained that they are looking forward to supporting Local 174, if needed in the coming year.

Just prior to voting, striker Teresa Parks told the *Militant*: "I wonder if we could get more if we stay out longer. I'm voting yes [for the contract] but it's not an enthusiastic yes."

The strike, which began November 21, included more than 800 workers in news, publishing, and circulation at the *Times*. About 130 newsroom workers at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* were also on strike and ap-

proved a new contract about a week earlier.

While the companies got some of what they wanted in the new contracts, many unionists at the papers said the bosses now face a different workforce. Flossie Pennington, a sales assistant for five years in display advertising, said she "wouldn't have traded this experience for anything. It's been wonderfully terrible. They now know we have it in us to fight."

Ernest Mailhot is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 81.

Mine fatalities hit 38, rise for third year

BY TONY LANE

PITTSBURGH—The impact of the assault by the bosses on coal miners and their union was once again seen in the year-end statistics on mining fatalities, which rose for the third year in a row. Thirty-eight miners were killed on the job in 2000, with five of these occurring in December. In 1999, 34 miners died in coal mines and the previous year the total was 29.

The largest number of deaths was in Kentucky, with 13. West Virginia had nine deaths and Virginia four, bringing the total in these three Appalachian states to 26 of 38 miners killed. There were also four mine deaths in Utah. Accidents were almost evenly divided between underground and surface mines; there were also a number of deaths at coal preparation plants.

Two of the fatal accidents in which two miners were killed had the potential for greater injuries and fatalities. In a hoisting accident in Kentucky two contractors plunged to their death when a hoist mantrip ran away and safety devices failed to operate. They were the only passengers at the time of the accident.

In a methane explosion on a longwall face at the Willow Creek mine in Utah, eight were also injured in the explosion, two of them

seriously. Willow Creek is a subsidiary of RAG American Coal, one of the world's biggest coal operators. Willow Creek is a gassy mine and was closed for a year after a methane ignition and fire in November 1998.

From the reports presently available from the Mine Safety and Health Administration, at least seven miners working for contractors lost their lives on the job last year. This underscores the increasing use of contractors in the mines by some of the largest coal operators and the more dangerous safety situation miners hired by them often face. Contract miners may receive less safety training and are most often not covered by union contracts.

Over a third of the deaths occurred at mines owned by some of the biggest names in coal. Consol Energy had four deaths at four mines it owns in West Virginia, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Other large operators that had deaths at mines they own or are owned by subsidiaries include A.T. Massey Coal, Arch Coal, Pittston, AEI Resources, and RAG.

A.T. Massey subsidiary Martin County Coal also had a massive spill from their slurry pond, which caused widespread environmental damage to streams, rivers, and water supply in Kentucky and West Virginia.

Worker and peasant protests face police repression in Mexico

BY PEDRO RUBÉN JIMÉNEZ

ROME, Georgia—Indian rights activists in the state of Oaxaca, in southern Mexico, have been subjected to repression by government and paramilitary forces in response to protests for their rights.

The Committee for the Defense of the People's Rights (CODEP) has reported that Félix López, a leader of that organization, died November 23 under suspicious circumstances in an automobile accident. CODEP has condemned his death as a murder. He was the third CODEP leader to be killed—all of them in "auto accidents"—in the midst of repressive campaigns by the government and right-wing paramilitary groups.

CODEP was founded in 1993 to fight against discrimination by landlords and government officials, against exploitation and corruption, and for improved living conditions. It is made up of more than 300 peasant communities, two transportation unions, three taxi associations, and two other trade unions in Oaxaca. CODEP is affiliated to the "Ricardo Flores Magón" Indigenous and People's Council of Oaxaca (CIPO-RFM).

López had a long history of political activity in the state of Oaxaca. He was involved in an action by peasants in May 1985 that took over land from landlord Melchor Alonzo and established a community called Unión Nacional Zafra. In August 1987 he and others took over 50 hectares of land from landlord Ricardo Martel and founded the Campo de Aviación community. In March 1998, he was part of an occupation of 20 hectares of idle land in Huajuapán de León.

Because of López's involvement in takeovers of government offices, public demonstrations, and other legal activities, the previous governor, Eduardo Diodoro Carrasco, and the current one, José Murat Casat, had issued orders of arrest against him.

In September 1997 he was arrested and tortured by the police. He "appeared" 48 hours later in a jail in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca, after a public protest campaign by CODEP. On April 18, 1998, he was one of 130 members of CIPO who were arrested and tortured. After an eight-month defense campaign,

CODEP won his release.

On November 10, López joined a demonstration by taxi drivers in Putla de Guerrero that was attacked by the preventive, municipal, and transit police forces and by paramilitary groups. He was among the demonstrators most seriously injured in the assault. It was 13 days later that he was killed.

Two other CODEP leaders have been killed in alleged auto accidents. Héctor Alvarado Herrera, founder of CODEP, was killed after he left a political meeting in Mexico City on July 5, 1993. Silviano Herrera Ortiz, a teacher, was killed on Dec. 15, 1998, on the Puebla-Oaxaca highway.

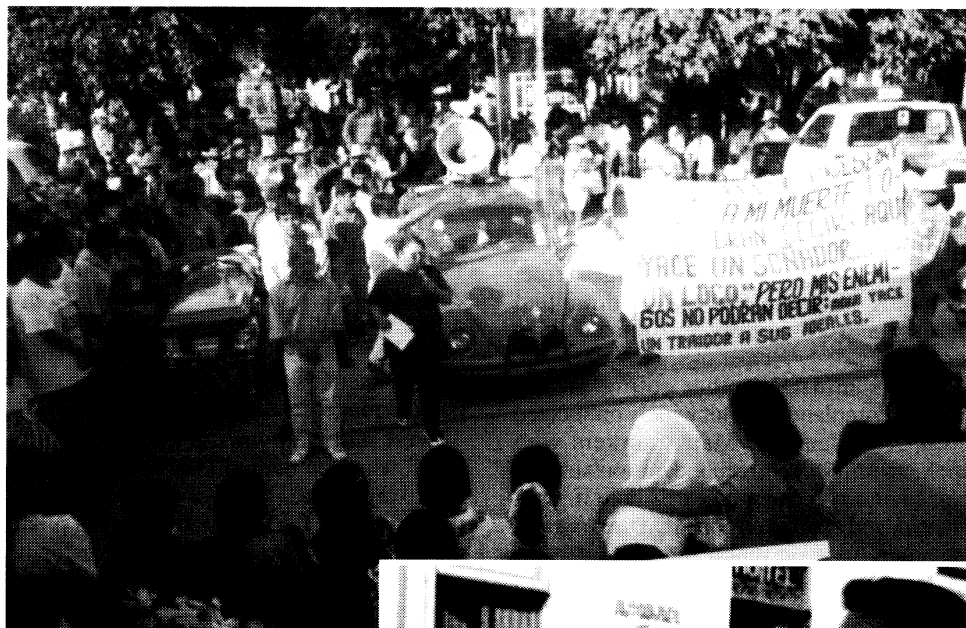
Struggles by taxi drivers

The death of López takes place in the midst of struggles by taxi drivers fighting for their livelihoods and other social struggles by indigenous communities in Oaxaca. Some of these struggles are reported in the first two issues of the newsletter *Nuestra Palabra* (Our Word), a new publication produced by CODEP.

The drivers of taxis and other commercial vehicles have been organizing to defend their rights. Drivers work under miserable conditions, with no paid vacations, social security, or other benefits. While independent unions are harassed, government transportation officials give preferential treatment to gangster-run drivers' unions that demand between 15,000 and 30,000 pesos just to join, and then the government requires between 100,000 and 300,000 pesos for taxi permits, depending on locations and services provided.

The state transportation secretary, Aurora López Acevedo, and local officials in Oaxaca have been relying on rightist gunmen to issue death threats against taxi drivers organized in the Independent Drivers Union (UTI). Gunmen hired by local bosses of the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI), the former ruling party of Mexico, have threatened a leader of the drivers, Gregorio Serrano.

In Putla de Guerrero, López Acevedo and



Militant
Above, November 26 mobilization in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, for funeral of Félix López. The Committee for the Defense of the People's Rights, of which he was a leader, says his death was a result of government repression. Right, police forces at November 18 protest of taxi drivers and other working people in Oaxaca.



PRI bosses Noé Castro and Ramón Arellano have backed armed groups of thugs that have threatened drivers at taxi stations organized by CODEP. For years, taxi drivers in Putla have been fighting for official permits authorizing them to work. On November 10, the drivers at three taxi stations—the Ñuu-Kaa, April 10, and Héctor Alvarado Herrera stands—won the issuance of permits from the transportation authorities.

That same day, however, transportation secretary López Acevedo ordered the arrest of drivers working with the very permits her office had issued. The drivers organized a peaceful protest at city hall to protest the arrests. They were assaulted by paramilitary groups disguised as taxi drivers at PRI-backed taxi stations. Several protesters were injured by the thugs.

Government officials have also tried to disrupt other political actions, including a series of public forums on the fight for Indian rights sponsored by CIPO. Following the November 10 thug attack, taxi drivers affiliated to CIPO called on local residents

and Indian organizations to attend a public forum the next day.

A statewide protest demonstration was called for November 18 by taxi drivers and others in the city of Oaxaca, the state capital. The day before, demonstrators departed from their respective towns, forming a car caravan to the city of Oaxaca.

In the town of Pinotepa Nacional, a group of 500 demonstrators from several towns who had gathered to travel to Oaxaca was blocked by paramilitary groups and the preventive police, who were deployed by the state governor and Acevedo López. Armed with clubs and guns, they threatened to beat up and kill the demonstrators including women, children, and old people.

CODEP and CIPO have called for the removal of López Acevedo and is holding the government responsible for any attack on the drivers and their unions.

Pedro Rubén Jiménez is a member of CODEP's Organization and Mobilization Committee.

Peasants who opposed ecological destruction framed up in Guerrero

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

The newsletter *Nuestra Palabra* (Our Word), published by the Committee for the Defense of the People's Rights (CODEP), reports in issue no. 2, dated November 2000, that two members of a peasant organization in the state of Guerrero, in southern Mexico, remain imprisoned, falsely accused of being drug traffickers, "armed ecologists," and members of the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), a guerrilla group.

The two, Rodolfo Montiel Flores and Teodoro Cabrera García, are members of the Organization of Ecological Peasants of Sierra de Petatlán and Coyuca de Catalán. They have been jailed since May 2, 1999.

In the eyes of the authorities, the real crime of these two farmers is their involvement in the fight to prevent the destruction of forests in the region. This struggle is opposed by big economic interests such as the U.S. lumber company Boise Cascade and local authorities, who called in the army under the pretext that there were armed groups in the area.

Between 1992 and 2000, some 86,000 hectares of forests have been destroyed by illegal logging, which accelerated after 1995 with the arrival of Boise Cascade, also known as Grand Forest Products. Eventually, a broad campaign organized by the Organization of Ecological Peasants succeeded in forcing the company to leave. Illegal logging in the area has continued, however.

Nuestra Palabra has called for supporters of democratic rights to demand that the president of Mexico, newly elected Vicente Fox, order the release of Montiel Flores and Cabrera García.

Meeting in Los Angeles will honor life of Judy White

BY NAN BAILEY

LOS ANGELES—The Los Angeles branch of the Socialist Workers Party is hosting a meeting on January 21 to celebrate the life and contributions to the communist movement of Judy White, who died here January 2. Speakers will include party leaders Mary-Alice Waters and Norton Sandler.

White, a longtime member and supporter of the Socialist Workers Party, was part of a generation of young people won to the communist movement under the impact of the Cuban revolution and the civil rights movement. After visiting Cuba in 1960, White became convinced of the need for a socialist revolution to transform society and the possibility of doing so in the United States. She joined the Young Socialist Alliance in 1961 and the Socialist Workers Party in 1963.

As the U.S. government escalated its war against the people of Vietnam, White helped to found the Greater Boston Coordinating Committee during the first International Days of Protest in October 1965. In 1966, at the age of 28, she was the Socialist Workers candidate for governor of New York. In response to the firebombing of the party's campaign headquarters in the state, White said, "If the right-wing terrorists think they can intimidate us by such tactics, they are mistaken. We will continue our opposition to American intervention in Vietnam."

Following the elections and a week of large mobilizations against the war in 1967, New York governor Nelson Rockefeller signed a law described by the *New York Times* as the "anti-Judy White bill." The law barred "ineligible" people from being nominated for public office or appearing on the ballot. Backers of the law claimed that since White was not yet the age required in New York to serve as governor, her campaign had led the 12,000 people who voted for her to "waste" their votes.

An article reporting on this in the May



Militant/Arthur Hughes

Judy White joined the Young Socialist Alliance in 1961 and the Socialist Workers Party two years later.

15, 1967, *Militant* explained, "The real intent of the law is plain: it is to throw another roadblock in the path of minority political parties. The SWP is especially singled out for its uncompromising fight against the war in Vietnam, which its candidates have carried to the people of this state."

White was a staff writer for the socialist weekly *Intercontinental Press* and helped found the Spanish-language magazine *Perspectiva Mundial*, which began as a special section of *Intercontinental Press*. Fluent in Spanish, she became an outstanding translator and taught Spanish at the party's leadership school. White was active in the U.S. Committee for Justice to Latin American Political Prisoners (USLA). During the Nicaraguan revolution she served on the Managua, Nicaragua, bureau of the *Militant* and *PM*. She helped build several branches of the Socialist Workers Party and joined in the party's work in the industrial unions.

Messages to the meeting can be sent to the Los Angeles Socialist Workers Party at 2546 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90006; faxed to 213-380-1268; or e-mailed to 74642.326@compuserve.com.

CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF JUDY WHITE

40-year builder of the communist movement

Featured speakers:

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NORTON SANDLER, SWP National Committee
Representative of the Young Socialists,
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Sunday, January 21
Los Angeles

1:30 p.m. Reception
2:30 p.m. Program

Location:

National Association of Letters Carriers Local 24
774 Valencia St. (between 7th and 8th Streets)

For more information:
Call 213-380-9460

Meat packers win round at Smithfield

Continued from front Page

ing hearings in the case, the judge wrote, including one who may have committed perjury and knowingly introduced false statements.

West's mid-December ruling on the union's complaint was not widely publicized until early January. Many workers who spoke to *Militant* correspondents outside the plant January 5 had not heard about it. Others had, and expressed hope that there would be a new vote on union recognition. "We need to vote in the union this time," said one Black worker. That workers are mistreated by Smithfield is nothing new, he added, "It's been like that all along."

Smithfield is one of the biggest players in an industry that has become increasingly concentrated. According to statistics on the UFCW website, Smithfield Foods kills some 20 percent of hogs produced in the United States, and controls the production of an even larger percentage. The company boasts that its Tar Heel plant, which employs 5,000 people, is the world's largest pork slaughterhouse. Smithfield had sales of \$5.2 billion last year and record profits. In the second quarter alone its profits soared 600 percent over the previous year.

According to the UFCW, the injury rate at the Tar Heel plant is among the highest nationwide, and annual turnover at the plant is 100 percent. A Smithfield spokesman cited the high turnover to argue that the dismissal of 11 union activists was no big deal. "The union is protesting the discharge of 11 people out of 16,000 from 1993 through 1997, the majority of whom quit or were terminated" for their attendance, he said.

That's not how most workers view it, though, and management is determined to try to make the firings stick. One worker coming out of the plant said her supervisor told her the 11 fired workers would never work there again—the company would always be looking over their shoulders.

West's ruling, which is more than 400 pages long, documents not only firings but also how other workers were threatened and interrogated by Smithfield management for supporting the union. It supports the union's charge that one worker was assaulted in response to his pro-union activities.

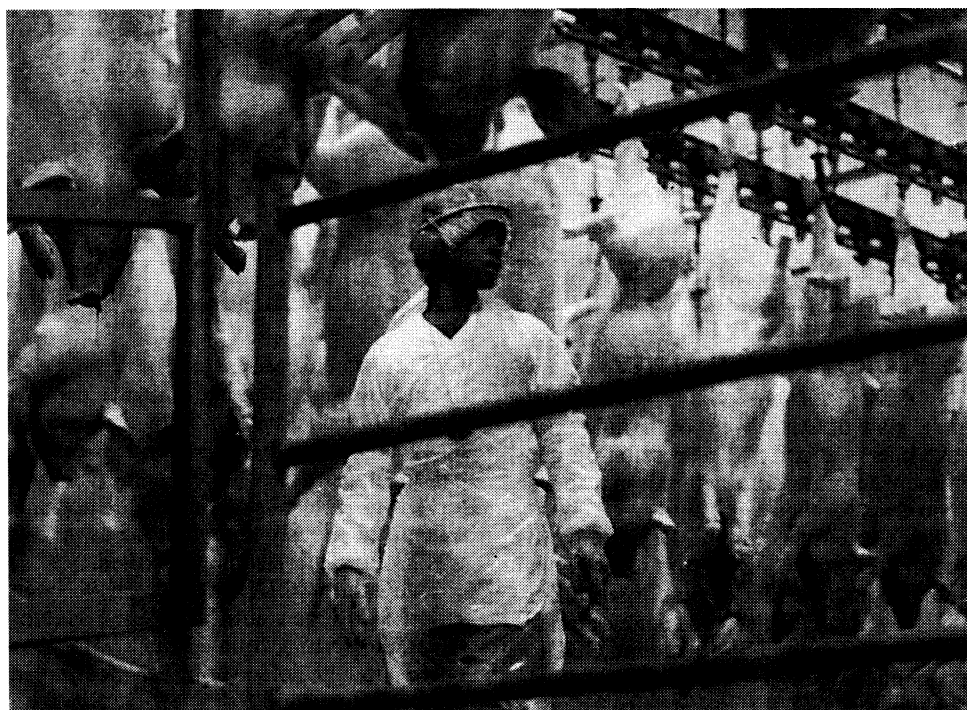
And it concludes that the plant's general manager, Jere Null, was responsible for the presence of county sheriff's deputies in the

plant parking lot on the day of the August 1997 vote on union recognition. That day cops dressed in battle gear lined the long driveway leading to the plant. As workers passed by, they saw the head of the Bladen County sheriff's department talking to company management.

West said Null was "not a credible witness" when he denied knowledge that the cops were there. "Null wanted to make a point that the Tar Heel plant was his plant, the union was going to pay a price for its attempt to organize the employees who worked there, and employees who supported the union would have an old-fashioned example of what can occur when they try to bring in a union," the judge wrote.

The ruling also states that the company tried to scare Latino workers into voting against the UFCW by saying the union would report them to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Roughly half of the workforce at the Tar Heel plant are immigrants from Latin America, and the big majority of other workers are Black.

One Latino worker coming off day shift told this reporter he hopes there will be another vote. After working at the plant five years he no longer believes the company.



Worker on the line at Smithfield's giant hog slaughterhouse in Tar Heel, North Carolina. National Labor Relations Board judge ruled in favor of the union's claims that the company violated workers rights in 1997 representation election.

"They talk sweet before the union vote and offer us a raise," he said, "but the way they're running the line and treating people things can't get worse." He said he and other workers he knows are ready to vote for the union this time.

Meanwhile, a civil rights lawsuit filed by the UFCW against Smithfield and the

Bladen County Sheriff's Department in August 2000 is pending in a U.S. district court. The suit says the company intimidated workers, pitted Black and Latino workers against each other, and used sheriff's deputies as a private security force to beat and arrest organizers on false charges during the 1997 vote.

Companies in Washington State profit from rate increases and plant closings

BY CECELIA MORIARITY

SEATTLE—Working people throughout the Northwest are now facing sudden and high energy "surcharges" from utility companies due to soaring wholesale energy prices.

Several companies in the region that use large amounts of energy in manufacturing have shut down production, laying off thousands of workers, either because they cannot afford skyrocketing electricity rates or because they can make windfall profits reselling the electricity they purchased at much lower prices than the current rates.

Tacoma Power in Tacoma, Washington, was granted a 43 percent rate increase by the city council December 20—half the rate increase the power company was request-

ing. Power that sold for \$30 a megawatt-hour last spring has spiked as high as \$3,000 a megawatt-hour.

City officials have suggested they may authorize even higher rates after February. Already retired workers on fixed incomes and many working-class families are being severely affected. They are being forced to reduce thermostat settings and worrying about how they can afford the new rate increase, torn between paying for food, medicine, and rent. An administrator for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program in Tacoma reported that many retired people have expressed fear of having their utilities cut off.

Georgia-Pacific announced December 6 it was shutting its paper plant in Bellingham, Washington, putting about 800 workers out of a job. Georgia-Pacific's general plant manager said energy price increases—from \$1.2 million a month to \$4 million a month—were the reason for the shutdown.

Kaiser Aluminum Corp. shut down its Mead, Washington, smelter December 10, just two months after workers had returned from a two-year lockout battle with the employer. "Kaiser Aluminum has already netted \$100 million in windfall profits from the resale of a few months of BPA

[Bonneville Power Administration] power and stands to realize \$300 million more at current electrical rates in the next nine months," said David Foster, director of District 11 of the United Steelworkers of America.

"Right now, the economics are such that you can make much more money selling power than you can producing aluminum," declared Kaiser Aluminum spokesperson Susan Ashe.

Some 400 workers will be idled for at least 10 months at Kaiser's Mead smelter in Spokane, Washington—the fourth of 10 smelters in the Northwest to close due to high power costs. Kaiser Aluminum has said it will pay laid-off workers 70 percent of their wages and full medical benefits while they are out of work, but is not contractually bound to do so, said the union.

Behind the skyrocketing energy prices in the Northwest is the decision by federal energy officials in mid-December to order energy suppliers in the Northwest to send emergency electricity to California (see article on page 7).

Cecelia Moriarity is a meat packer and a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

Walkout by UFCW at Box USA in Pennsylvania nears one month



EIGHTY FOUR, Pennsylvania—Fifty-three workers at Box USA, members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 23, took to the picket lines December 11, after rejecting the proposed contract by a vote of 46 to 7. They are currently picketing around the clock to protest forced overtime, an inadequate pension, and the replacing of the union's health plan with a company plan. The workers also rejected the 3 percent pay raise the company offered, pointing out that workers at a nearby factory are making the same product and earning \$1.50 more per hour. Passing motorists show their support by honking and waving, and fellow union members donated gift certificates for purchases at the local grocery store where they work.

BP Amoco exposed on West Coast oil and gas price-rigging scheme

BY BERNIE SENTER

SAN FRANCISCO—The current manipulation of energy supplies by the power monopolies in order to jack up the price paid by working people is a page out of an old book (see article on page 7).

BP Amoco, it turns out, did the same in the late 1990s in order to boost the price of gas and oil on the West Coast. A 1995 e-mail correspondence by two BP managers, Robert Aicher and Linda Adamany, discussed "shorting the West Coast market" to achieve "West Coast price uplift scenarios," according to federal court records and other documents obtained by the daily *Oregonian*.

Instead of exporting Alaskan crude oil to refineries in the United States, BP Amoco sold it for less on Asian markets. The BP managers discussed the benefits of sending oil to Asia at a lower "netback"—the sales price minus transportation costs—than it could get for the same crude on the West Coast.

"Even if FE [Far East] netback is slightly below WC [West Coast] netback, we may choose to export some to FE in order to 'leverage up' our WC ANS [Alaska North Slope] prices," Aicher wrote. Adamany

termed the strategy "a no-brainer."

"When they say 'leverage up,' what does that mean?" asked economist Preston McAfee, who was hired by the Federal Trade Commission to analyze the proposed merger of BP and Atlantic Richfield. "It means, 'We're going to jack up the West Coast price by taking some of our production and selling it at a lower price elsewhere.'"

McAfee revealed that BP Amoco also used a computer model called "the optimizer" to manipulate West Coast prices. The computer determined the "trigger points" at which refiners would switch to other sources of crude oil.

"BP has successfully used the optimizer to set noncompetitive, discriminatory prices in the market place for many years," McAfee wrote. He noted in his report there was "overwhelming evidence" that the company manipulated West Coast oil prices.

Oil companies, in turn, have blamed the Northwest's higher prices on production cutbacks by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, refinery fires, taxes, and pipeline disruptions.

Energy giants' profit drive hits working people

Continued from front page

face bankruptcy, a prospect that worries banks that have lent money to the utilities, the power-generating companies, and other businesses that would be affected. The two utilities have a combined debt of about \$11 billion, accrued from this past summer's spike in the cost of electricity generation.

Standard and Poor's recently downgraded the corporate bonds of both PG&E and Edison to one step above junk status, and the companies' stocks have plummeted to new lows.

In his annual speech to the state legislature January 8, Gov. Gray Davis called for the creation of a public agency to build power plants and raised the possibility of the state government taking over the plants of wholesalers in order to control prices.

Throughout the United States, working people are facing a colder than usual winter and record-high energy bills. A year ago the nationwide average price of a gallon of heating oil was \$1.12. By the end of December 2000 it was \$1.56. The price of natural gas, which was \$2 per 1,000 cubic feet a year ago, has now mushroomed to between \$9 and \$20. The federal Department of Energy is forecasting even higher prices as the winter wears on.

In California, with the newly approved increases, the average household utility bills will reportedly be about \$60 a month. But some working people already pay \$100, \$150, or even more.

Government programs underfunded

A survey of the 62,000 households in Iowa receiving government energy assistance showed that 20 percent of recipients are postponing medical care to pay their utility bills, and another 12 percent are cutting back on food. Nearly 2,000 say they are forced to shut off their hot water to save money.

Meanwhile, federal government programs to aid families who can't afford to pay high energy bills are not being funded. President William Clinton recently bragged about his release of \$155 million in emergency funds to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, but the program's

budget is still half a billion dollars less than it was 14 years ago. Only an estimated 15 to 20 percent of the 27 million eligible households will receive any assistance from this program.

State programs are also underfunded. For example, Community Enhancement Services, which aids low-income households in the Los Angeles area with high heating bills, only helps about 4,500 households—out of 20,000 applications this winter.

Those who cannot afford to pay the exploding increase in energy rates are told not to expect aid from the government but to depend on charity. PG&E is encouraging its customers to contribute to a charity called REACH, a one-time assistance program run by the Salvation Army. Last year PG&E customers donated \$2 million to this program; PG&E's matching contribution was just \$1.25 million.

The energy crisis has been at the center of public debate here over the past month. Many working people have expressed skepticism and hatred toward the energy trusts and their ruthless drive for profits. Benito Marquez, a construction worker in Hayward, told this reporter, "I hate working Saturdays, but I need the money for when PG&E's ransom note comes in January."

"I don't believe their story they're losing money," Cassandra Mason of Huntington Beach told a *Los Angeles Times* reporter. "They're just looking for a way to raise rates. I think we already pay too much." Mason, a housewife whose monthly power bill is \$100, "places the blame for the crisis squarely at the feet of Southern California Edison and other utilities," the paper reported.

In the northern California city of Anderson, south of Redding, 200 angry people crowded a town hall meeting on the energy crisis sponsored by a state assemblyman who organized a panel of politicians and "consultants" to address the audience. "They're gouging us!" one man said of the utilities, prompting cheers. "They're pulling the wool over our eyes," said Sonja Perez as she left the meeting. "There's not one person on the panel that represents the rate-

payer or the consumer."

The first sign of the crisis came last June in San Diego, the first region where the cap on electricity rates was lifted. Energy bills ballooned, by 300 per cent in some cases.

But the roots of this turmoil go back several years. Energy deregulation was instituted in this state in April 1998. The deregulation law eliminated utility price controls that had been in place since 1912. It also made customers pay off the bad debts of PG&E, Edison, and San Diego Gas & Electric—around \$17 billion.

In return, customers were offered an immediate rate reduction of 10 percent, a cap on electricity rates until early 2002 (natural gas rates are not regulated), and the promise of competition by utility companies and lower energy rates.

Monopoly control of energy

What actually occurred was quite different. First, virtually no competition has emerged among or against the state's biggest utilities. Secondly, the rate cap, which kept customer costs at 1995 levels for six years, actually meant bigger profits for PG&E because of a decline in the price of natural gas at that time. The Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights has estimated that since 1998 "PG&E alone has raked in \$8.3 billion—far more than it has paid recently in higher energy prices."

The periodic "shortages" of energy have been the result of decisions made by the giant energy trusts, which monopolize the mining, drilling, processing, generating, and distributing of fossil fuels around the world. The oil monopolies have the ability to restrict supplies and hoard inventory in order to raise prices.

As the demand for natural gas increased in the fall of 2000, the prices were jacked up. According to *Financial Times Energy*, a trade publication, the price of one British Thermal Unit (BTU) of natural gas in California in December 1999 was \$2.30. By early December 2000, it had soared to \$53 per BTU; in recent weeks it has hovered between \$15 and \$20. A BTU is the amount of gas required to raise the temperature of one pound of water by one degree.

Since gas is used to power the generators producing electricity, the cost of electricity, which stood at 3 cents per kilowatt-hour in early 2000, rose to 18 cents last August, and is more than 25 cents today.

Additionally, several power plants in the state have been kept off-line for maintenance. As the daily demand for electricity rises in the late afternoon when people return home from work, additional reserves of power suddenly become available—at a higher cost.

State officials say they believe the power companies are "gaming the market"—deliberately holding back electricity until prices surge. But, unless collusion between power generators can be proved, this practice is completely legal.

Despite growing demand, the energy companies have refused to invest in new refineries, power plants, or pipelines over the past decade. Rather than expand productive capacity and hire more workers—and seeking to avoid spending money on environmental regulations—the energy industry has downsized to maximize their short-term profits. No new power plants have been built in California in 10 years, and the state doesn't have enough pipelines large enough to pump in natural gas from other states.

In a January 3 *New York Times* opinion piece titled "The New Reality is Old Economy Shortages," columnist Paul Krugman wrote, "California's power crisis is first and foremost a crisis of underinvestment—a booming state economy undone because nobody built the power plants and gas pipelines it needed. And at least part of the reason for that underinvestment was the excessive enthusiasm of the financial markets for all things tech." Krugman concludes his piece by saying, "You don't have to be a raving populist...or a conspiracy theorist to wonder whether there are some perverse incentives when an industry dominated by a few large players finds it hugely profitable not to invest."

Power alerts, threat of rolling blackouts

Throughout December, state officials declared almost daily power emergencies, including its first-ever "Stage 3 alert," when power reserves dropped to almost nothing. PG&E and Edison threatened to carry out rolling blackouts in the state if their demand for a 30 percent rate hike went unmet. On December 20, state officials invoked an emergency federal order requiring out-of-state power producers to sell surplus electricity to California.

In December the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) rejected the idea of putting a cap on what power generators could charge utilities for electricity, asserting its confidence in the electricity market's ability to "self-correct" any imbalances.

At the end of last month, Southern California Edison, backed by the California governor, filed a lawsuit demanding that federal authorities act to prevent the skyrocketing wholesale electricity rates from pushing the utilities into bankruptcy. FERC chairman James Hoecker said that if PG&E and Edison adopted more cost-cutting measures, his agency might consider providing some relief.

The impact of this crisis on working people is more than sky-high energy bills. The owners of building materials, steel, aluminum, paper, and textile plants as well as dairies and other businesses that rely on natural gas to fire boilers, furnaces, dryers, and kilns have shut down and laid off workers to avoid paying higher energy bills.

L.A. Dye and Print Works in Los Angeles closed one of its dye houses and laid off 40 workers; the jobs of the other 660 workers are also in jeopardy. Shasta Paper Company in Redding, California, the last full-operation paper mill, laid off all but 16 of 460 workers on December 1.

The scattered plant shutdowns are taking place not only in California but in Northwestern states (see article on page 6 on Washington State).

Dairies in California are expecting to add 15 cents a gallon for milk next month to offset heating costs. The Western Growers Association, a group of 3,500 farmers in California and Arizona, are cutting back planting broccoli, lettuce, and strawberries.

While capitalist farmers will pass on the costs to consumers, small farmers will be devastated by the huge increase in their en-

Continued on Page 14

Nuclear plant in NY threatens environment

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

After a more than 10-month shutdown, Con Edison once again attempted to restart the Indian Point 2 nuclear power plant, located 35 miles north of Manhattan, in Buchanan, New York. However, just hours after the plant went back in service radioactive coolant began leaking from a pipe in the system that draws Hudson River water and converts it into steam.

Con Edison insisted the leakage was a necessary part of restarting the plant, claiming "at no time" was there a threat to "the health of the public or our workers." They insisted that full power was expected to be produced by the plant within a week.

Meanwhile, Westchester County executive Andrew Spano and Senator Charles Schumer spoke out against the utility's moves to restart this plant right now. They called for a "pause" to allow an inspection by an independent panel of "industry experts and local officials," according to the *New York Times*.

Last February 15, in what the *Times* described as "the worst accident in the plant's 26-year history," a steam generator tube that had been corroding from the inside burst open. Superheated radioactive water leaked inside the plant and some radioactive steam also escaped into the atmosphere.

A report issued last August by a Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) inspection team "preliminarily concluded" that Con Edison failed to "adequately account for conditions which adversely affected the detectability of, and created increased susceptibility to steam generator tube flaws." The inspectors said, that "these failures resulted in tubes with flaws being left in service following the 1997 inspection, until one of these tubes failed in February."

The Indian Point 2 nuclear plant purchased replacements for its four steam generators in the 1980s, but decided it was too expensive to install them anytime soon. Instead they planned for the work to be done in 2002 or 2004, reported NRC spokesperson Neil Sheehan.



Union-backed demonstration in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1981 after Three Mile Island nuclear plant disaster. Actions helped expose dangers of nuclear power.

"Rather than embarking on what would have been a multimillion-dollar replacement project, Con Ed chose a novel method to extend the aging generators' years," stated an article in the *Daily News* last February. "The technique, which involved lowering water temperature and pressure to preserve the equipment, was unique to Indian Point," the paper quotes Con Ed vice president Steve Quinn as saying at the time.

According to a November 20 NRC news release, the commission staff cited Consolidated Edison for violating NRC's requirements for steam generator tube inspections at the Indian Point 2 plant. "The NRC has determined that the conditions associated with the violation were of high safety significance," stated the release.

Nonetheless, the NRC gave the go ahead

for once again restarting this aging plant over the December 30-31 weekend.

In November during the shutdown Con Edison announced a deal to sell the two Indian Point nuclear power plants for \$602 million to a private company—Entergy Nuclear of Jackson, Mississippi. The *Times* reported December 30, "A condition of the sale is that the plant must be operating fully." Also included in the deal is Indian Point 1, which has been mothballed since the early 1970s.

Meanwhile, the New York State legislature in August passed a law ordering Con Edison to refund \$100 million in higher charges that consumers paid the utility for replacement power after the no. 2 plant was shut down. This law was overturned in federal court in October, and the state is now appealing this ruling.

Rodolfo Saldaña: the making of a re

In new Pathfinder book 'Fertile Ground,' he describes political activity as tin

Reprinted below are excerpts from *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia—A Firsthand Account* by Rodolfo Saldaña. The new Pathfinder book consists of an interview with Saldaña conducted in Havana in April 1997 by Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *New Internationalist* and president of Pathfinder, and Pathfinder editor Michael Taber.

Rodolfo Saldaña joined with Ernesto Che Guevara, one of the central leaders of the Cuban revolution, in the 1966-67 revolutionary front that Guevara led in Bolivia. Che was captured and assassinated by U.S.-trained Bolivian army forces in October 1967.

In last week's issue, the *Militant* reprinted the introduction to the book by Waters along with excerpts from the book. In those excerpts, Saldaña described the 1952 popular upsurge through which working people won the nationalization of the largest mines, the initiation of land reform, and elimination of the literacy requirement that had disenfranchised the indigenous majority; the class struggle in the early and mid-1960s that created "fertile ground" for revolutionary struggle; and the response by miners, students, and others in Bolivia to the guerrilla led by Guevara.

Fertile Ground is scheduled to be released in February simultaneously with a Spanish-language edition by the Cuban publishing house Editora Política. The two editions will be launched together at a special event during the Havana International Book Fair, to be held February 2-10.

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Question: Tell us something about your personal history. How did you become involved in political activity?

Saldaña: Well, my first political struggles began when I entered high school. I was always on the side of the revolutionary forces.

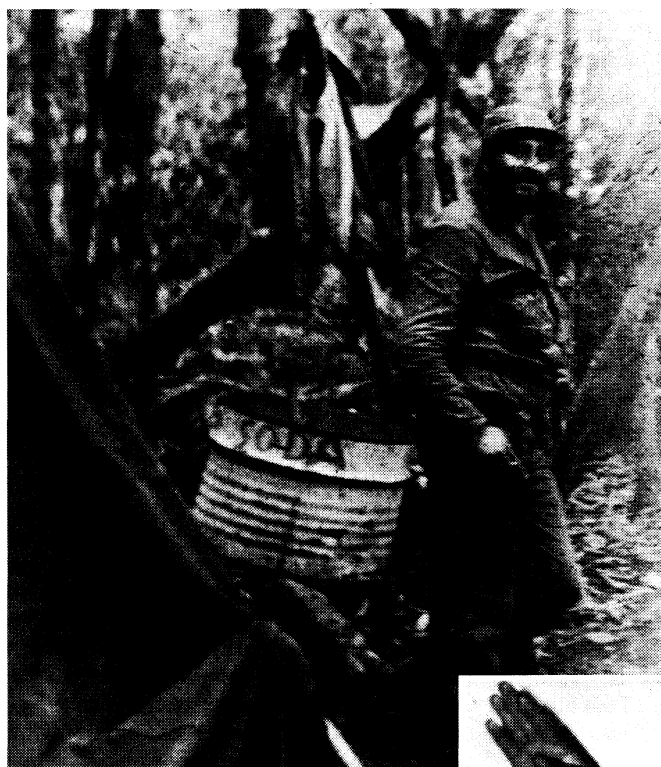
Question: What year was this?

Saldaña: In 1947 I began high school in the city of Sucre. In 1946 there was a popular insurrection against the government of Villarroel. Villarroel was hanged from a lamppost in La Paz, together with one of his followers.¹

Question: What was the nature of his regime?

Saldaña: Villarroel was a military man. His government was considered connected to Argentina, sympathetic to Germany in the Second World War. He was also accused

¹Bolivia's president during the latter part of World War II, Gualberto Villarroel was hanged by a crowd in front of the presidential palace in La Paz on July 21, 1946.



Above, courtesy Gladys Brizuela
Above, Rodolfo Saldaña undergoing military training in Cuba, April 1969, in preparation for relaunching the revolutionary guerrilla struggle after the end of 1966-67 campaign led by Che Guevara. Right, Saldaña boarding plane following his release from prison in Bolivia, July 22, 1970.

of being tied to Getulio Vargas in Brazil.² His government tried to take advantage of the imperialist conflict in the international arena. So there was some connection to the Brazilian government in the era of the Second World War, some connection to Germany. At the same time, there was, to a certain degree, an easing of U.S. pressure, to try to keep the country on its side.

This was the period of the antifascist popular fronts, and the strongest party with popular support was the PIR. I was not a member of the PIR, but I was in street demonstrations, and I used to be there throwing stones.

Question: The PIR was the ...?

Saldaña: Partido de la Izquierda Revolucionaria [Party of the Revolutionary Left], which later gave rise to the Communist Party. Many people who were in the PIR left to form the Communist Party.³

By 1952 the MNR [Revolutionary Nationalist Movement] had become the standard-bearer of the nationalization of the

²Getulio Vargas held power in Brazil from 1937 to 1945.

mines, of the agrarian reform, which had been the slogans of the PIR. The MNR came to power in 1952.

In 1950 the Communist Party was formed primarily by young people who had been members of the PIR. At that time I was living in La Paz. I participated in some actions, strikes that ended in confrontations, in massacres. That was when I began my political life, in the CP. This was in 1950. I was practically a founding member.

Becoming a miner

A student leader in the early 1950s, Saldaña was



sent to Chile to attend a conference of the World Federation of Democratic Youth. Before returning he traveled to Brazil and Moscow. In the mid-1950s, as a leader of university students, he was active in fighting the efforts by the MNR government to take over the universities and abolish their autonomy.



Then I became a member of the Communist Party's organization commission, and in that commission we began to consider what to do, how to organize the party. We decided that the most important thing was to organize the party among the proletariat. But we had to consider what sectors of the proletariat were the most important, and where in the countryside we should devote special attention.

That was how we decided we had to begin in the mines. We identified the most important mines in the country at the time: Siglo XX, which had around 6,000 workers, the largest mine on the continent at that time; Potosí; and Pulacayo.

At first we did what had always been done. A leader would travel, meet with some people who belonged to the party or wanted to belong to the party, a cell would be formed, the comrade who had attended the first meeting would leave, and then nothing would happen after that. And once again we would have the same situation.

So three comrades went to these three mines to stay there about a month, find the people, meet with them, and organize the party.

But we reached the conclusion this wasn't enough. We would go, assuming we could hit all three, hold four meetings with people we had met with many times, explain the situation, and then once again the thing would evaporate. The only way to guarantee that the party would be organized for real was for us, the three of us, to enter the mines. That was how I became a miner

³There was no Communist Party in Bolivia prior to World War II. In the 1930s, supporters of the Communist International functioned in the union movement and were part of the Frente de Izquierda (Bolivian Left Front), which in 1940 joined in forming the PIR. In 1952, following the revolution in Bolivia that same year, the PIR formally dissolved.

at Siglo XX.

We also determined that we had to go inside the mines themselves, not remain outside of it in other sections, but to go into the very center of the mine. And so I became a miner.

The section I entered, which was made up of young men, was the specimen section. These are miners who go around in groups taking samples from the unmined locations and take them to the laboratory to determine what quantity of mineral there is. This was a mobile group. One day they would work here, the next day there, and the following day somewhere else. It was an ideal situation to make contact with a lot of people.

At first the specimen section had around 200 workers. Eventually the majority of the miners there became members of the party; they formed their cell and held meetings. That was where we recruited Rosendo García Maisman.

So now the party existed.

Then we pointed out that the party had to expand within the mine, and we said that people should transfer to different sections of the mine. But people did not want to move. In order to have the others do so, I had to set the example, and I went to the most difficult section, Block Caving.

There the amount of space was very small, and there was a lot of dust. A lot of dynamite was used, there were many explosions. In short, the work was very tough, very difficult. There are people who get silicosis after three months. Their lungs are destroyed. That's where I went.

García Maisman went to one section. And the same with other comrades, who transferred to different sections. Then the party encompassed much more. It wasn't just the specimen section, but we had party groups in other sections.

Question: What years did you work there?

Saldaña: From 1955 until 1958.

As one might expect, I left Block Caving in very bad health. At the end of 1958 I returned to La Paz. At that time I was a member of the Central Committee.

Support to Peru, Argentina

In the early 1960s Saldaña participated in support work for guerrilla fronts trying to establish themselves in Argentina and Peru.

In late 1963 a guerrilla front was opened in Argentina, under the leadership of Jorge Ricardo Masetti, who worked under Che's direction. Masetti was an Argentine journalist who had traveled to the Sierra Maestra in Cuba in 1958, and became a supporter of the Cuban revolution. After its victory, he moved to Cuba, where he helped found the news agency Prensa Latina. Logistical support to the guerrillas in Argentina was organized from Bolivia, with the participation of Bolivian CP members. Also involved in the support work was Abelardo Colomé Ibarra (Furry), today a corps general of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and Cuba's minister of the interior. The Argentine guerrillas were routed by the military in early 1964. Masetti and most of his comrades were killed.

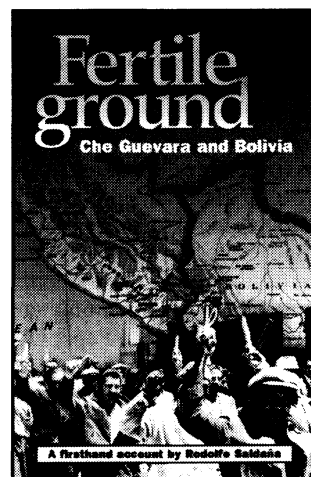
Saldaña spoke about his experience.



After my return from the Siglo XX mine, I had an auto repair shop, doing car repairs, paint jobs, sheet metal work, and so on. I had the shop until the military actions began at Nancahuazú. Of course during this period there were times I abandoned the shop. During that time I was giving support to developments in the south.

Question: When you say the "south"...?
Saldaña: I'm referring to Argentina. Masetti.

Question: What about Peru? Were you



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Fertile Ground

CHE GUEVARA AND BOLIVIA

A firsthand account by Rodolfo Saldaña

Rodolfo Saldaña was one of the Bolivians who joined ranks in 1966-67 with Ernesto Che Guevara to forge a revolutionary movement of workers, peasants, and young people to overturn the military dictatorship in Bolivia and open the road to socialist revolution in South America. Here, Saldaña talks about the unresolved battles of the tin miners, peasants, and indigenous peoples of his country that created "fertile ground" for Guevara's revolutionary course and mark out the future of Bolivia and the Americas.

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volutionary

niner, communist in Bolivia

also involved in supporting the guerrillas there?

Saldaña: There too.

Question: Were you involved in supporting the movement of Puerto Maldonado in Peru?

Saldaña: Yes. All their equipment passed through my hands. I amassed and stored it, preparing it for shipment. My tasks were run out of my repair shop, above all for the business of the south. Many things were needed, and I helped resolve the problem of packing the material for shipment. We would utilize false bottoms; for example, we would take a barrel of oil, remove the lid and fill it with items on the bottom, and cover it up again, soldering it over and putting oil on top. When the items reached their destination, they were opened up with a chisel and everything was taken out....

Bolivia through 1971

In the four years after Che and his comrades fell in battle, Bolivia was rocked by momentous class battles. Dictator René Barrientos was killed in a helicopter crash in April 1969. His successor, Luis Adolfo Siles Salinas, was overthrown in a coup by Alfredo Ovando, the army chief of staff, in September. Under pressure from intensifying popular struggles, Ovando's regime adopted measures opposed by the bourgeois and military forces most closely allied with U.S. interests. These forces organized a coup to oust Ovando in October 1970. Bolivian workers took to the streets and defeated the coup attempt. Juan José Torres, another officer, assumed power. A second attempted right-wing coup in January 1971 was also defeated through the mobilization of the toilers. Riding the wave of these mass mobilizations, Bolivian working people formed a Popular Assembly, an incipient workers parliament, in February. Following months of wavering and indecision by workers leaders, military forces led by Hugo Bánzer overthrew the Torres government in August 1971 and unleashed a wave of murderous repression.



Saldaña: After Barrientos died, there was a very short transitional period where Siles

Salinas was president—previously he had been the vice president, and then there was the government headed by Ovando.

The Ovando government nationalized Gulf Oil, which not long before had begun operations in Bolivia.⁴ A whole series of U.S. imperialism's organs, like the Peace Corps, were thrown out of the country. Some of the CIA's operations were



dismantled, like its phone-tapping center in La Paz. The U.S. military mission, which had its base in the area and was known as "little Guantánamo,"⁵ was shut down in this period.

My view at the time was that the measures being adopted by the Ovando government did not have the unanimous support of the state apparatus, including the armed forces. While some elements were pushing to take another road, the apparatus of Barrientos was still intact. I predicted that the government's days were numbered. In addition, there was the weight of the United States rulers, who were decisive in Bolivia's situation; they could not be in agreement with Ovando's course.

So first they kicked some of the ministers out, and after that the government of Ovando went. Later, Juan José Torres came to power. Torres had been removed from command of the army. He was appointed president amidst a great popular upsurge, supported by a large majority of workers and peasants and others, plus a sector of the military. And he remained in power for one year, until the coup d'état in 1971, when Bánzer assumed power.

Looking at the governments of Ovando and of Torres shows us to what extent the guerrilla effort had an impact on the class struggle in the entire country, including affecting the armed forces itself....

The struggle continues

Saldaña was arrested in 1970, following the end of the revolutionary campaign originated by Guevara. After his release later that year, he went to Cuba, where he stayed for 12 years, working in a factory, studying sociology and working for Radio Havana, Cuba, making broadcasts in Quechua to Bolivia. In 1983 he returned to Bolivia, where he taught the history of political thought at the university.



Then came the political changes in the world, with the collapse of the socialist camp, the threats against Cuba, and the Iraq war, above all. When the Iraq campaign



Above, tin miners (carrying sticks of dynamite) march in Oruro, Bolivia, Oct. 28, 1964, in support of student demonstration. Saldaña worked in Siglo XX mine from 1955 to 1958 to join in struggles of miners and win them to revolutionary course. Left, marchers in 1997 May Day demonstration in Havana, Cuba, carrying portraits of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Cuban combatants who served with Che Guevara in guerrilla force in Bolivia. 1997 was 30th anniversary of death in combat of Che and his comrades.

ended they said, "Now all we need is Cuba." Remember? We thought an attack against Cuba was imminent.

So in 1990 I decided to return and occupy my modest position, in the trench of defending socialism, of defending Cuba. I am here in my small trench, at a radio station where I have a regular program, and at InterPress Service, a third-world news agency.

But the attack on Cuba has not taken place, and I don't think it will. None of the enemy's predictions with respect to Cuba have been fulfilled. They have set various timetables. First it was a matter of months before Cuba fell, then within a year. Now more than ever, Cuba is rebuilding its economy. It has contacts, relations with many countries. In the United States itself there is interest in negotiating, in investing in Cuba, but the Helms-Burton Law and all the other anti-Cuban, antihuman measures do not permit it. Nevertheless Cuba moves forward, and the struggle continues.

Contribute to Books for Cuba Fund

In preparation for the Havana International Book Fair, which will be held February 2-10, the *Militant* has launched an appeal for contributions to the Books for Cuba Fund.

Since the third such fair in 1986, Pathfinder supporters have had a booth displaying books and pamphlets at the biannual event, which in 2001 is becoming yearly. During the fairs, requests for Pathfinder titles have been made by students, workers, soldiers, librarians, teachers, and others. In response to the political interest in these titles, donations of books have been made to libraries and other cultural institutions in Cuba.

To make these and other book donations possible, the *Militant* for a number of years has organized a Books for Cuba Fund, to which working people in the United States and elsewhere have contributed thousands of dollars.

To help prepare for book donations during the 2001 Havana book fair, you can contribute to this international effort. Checks or money orders earmarked "Books for Cuba Fund" can be sent to the *Militant* at 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.

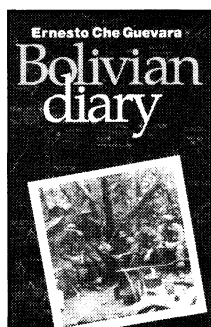
⁴Under the Barrientos regime, Gulf Oil's share of Bolivia's oil production rose from 3 percent in 1964 to 82 percent in 1967.

⁵The U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay in southeastern Cuba has been occupied against the wishes of the Cuban people since the beginning of the twentieth century.

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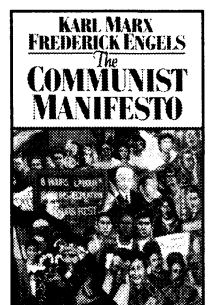
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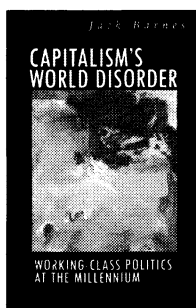
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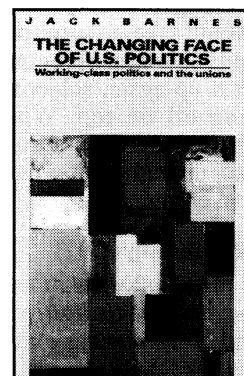
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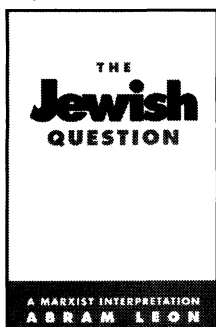
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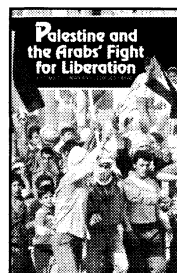
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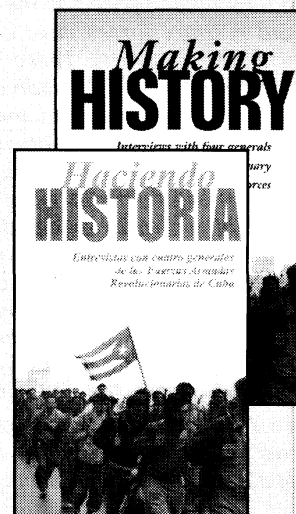
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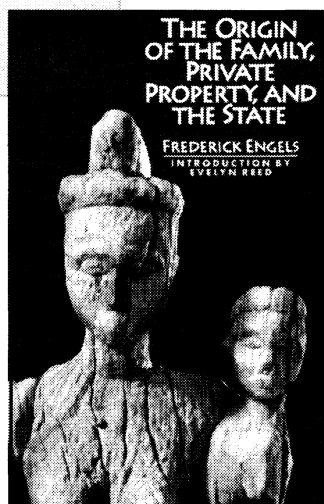
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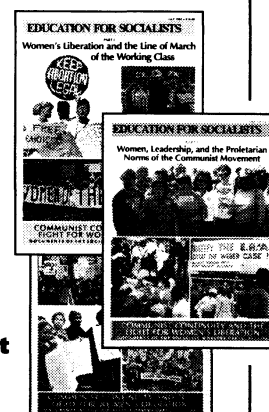
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Why capitalism can't solve 'Jewish question'

Reprinted below are excerpts from *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* by Abram Leon. They are taken from chapter seven of the book, titled, "The decay of capitalism and the tragedy of the Jews in the twentieth century." The book is now being reprinted through the work of volunteers in the Pathfinder Reprint Project.

Leon was born in Poland in 1918. He became a leader of the communist movement in Belgium and wrote this book while active in the underground factory committees organizing resistance to the Nazi occupation during World War II. He finished it only a short time before he was captured by the Gestapo in 1944 and deported to Auschwitz, where he was executed in the gas chambers.

Footnotes are in the original; subheadings are by the *Militant*. Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY ABRAM LEON

The primary merit of the capitalist regime lay in its tremendous expansion of the productive forces, its creation of a world economy, its permitting an unprecedented development of technology and science. As against the stagnation of the feudal world, capitalism presented an unparalleled dynamism. Hundreds of millions of people, immobilized up to then in a routinized, horizonless existence, suddenly found themselves drawn into the current of a feverish and intensive life.

The Jews lived within the pores of feudal society. When the feudal structure started to crumble, it began expelling elements which were, at one and the same time, foreign to it and indispensable to it. Even before the peasant had left the village for the industrial center, the Jew had abandoned the small medieval town in order to emigrate to the great cities of the world. The destruction of the secular function of Judaism within feudal society is accompanied by its passive penetration into capitalist society.

But if capitalism has given humanity certain tremendous conquests, only its disappearance can allow humanity to enjoy them. Only socialism will be able to lift humanity to the level of the material bases of civilization. But capitalism survives and all the enormous acquisitions turn more and more against the most elementary interests of humanity.

The progress of technology and science has become the progress of the science of death and its technology. The development of the means of production is nothing but

the growth of the means of destruction. The world, become too small for the productive apparatus built up by capitalism, is constricted even further by the desperate efforts of each imperialism to extend its sphere of influence. While unbridled export constitutes an inseparable phenomenon of the capitalist mode of production, decaying capitalism tries to get along without it, that is to say, it adds to its disorders the disorder of its own suppression.

Powerful barriers impede the free circulation of merchandise and men. Insurmountable obstacles arise before the masses deprived of work and bread following the breakdown of the traditional feudal world. The decay of capitalism has not only accelerated the decomposition of feudal society but has multiplied a hundred-fold the sufferings which resulted from it. The bearers of civilization, in a blind alley, bar the road to those who wish to become civilized. Unable to attain civilization, the latter are still less able to remain in the stage of barbarism. To the peoples whose traditional bases of existence it has destroyed, capitalism bars the road of the future after having closed the road of the past.

Under the hammer of rotting capitalism

It is with these general phenomena that the Jewish tragedy of the twentieth century is tied up. The highly tragic situation of Judaism in our epoch is explained by the extreme precariousness of its social and economic position. The first to be eliminated by decaying feudalism, the Jews were also the first to be rejected by the convulsions of dying capitalism. The Jewish masses find themselves wedged between the anvil of decaying feudalism and the hammer of rotting capitalism....

It is the unbridled development of the productive forces colliding against the narrow limits of consumption which constitute the true motive force of imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism. But it is the "race" which seems to be its most characteristic apparent force. Racism is therefore in the first place the ideological disguise of modern imperialism. The "race struggling for its living space" is nothing but the reflection of the permanent necessity for expansion which characterizes finance or monopoly capitalism.

While the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, the contradiction between production and consumption, involves for the big bourgeoisie the necessity to struggle for the conquest of foreign markets, it compels the petty bourgeoisie to struggle for the expansion of the domestic market. The lack



Militant/Lauren Hart

Demonstration of 4,000 people in Washington in September supporting Palestinians' right to return to their homeland. In *On The Jewish Question* Leon writes, "The conditions of the decline of capitalism which have posed so sharply the Jewish question make its solution equally impossible along the Zionist road.... Zionism wishes to resolve the Jewish question without destroying capitalism, which is the principal source of the suffering of the Jews." The interests of Jewish workers in Israel lies in fighting alongside Palestinians for a democratic, secular Palestine and against capitalist rule.

of foreign markets for the big capitalists proceeds hand in hand with the lack of domestic markets for the small capitalists. Whereas the big bourgeoisie struggles furiously against its competitors on the foreign market, the petty bourgeoisie combats its competitors on the domestic market not a whit less fiercely. "Racism" abroad is consequently accompanied by "racism" at home. The unprecedented aggravation of capitalist contradictions in the twentieth century brings with it a growing exacerbation of "racism" abroad as well as "racism" at home.

The primarily commercial and artisan character of Judaism, heritage of a long historical past, makes it Enemy Number One of the petty bourgeoisie on the domestic market. It is therefore the petty-bourgeois character of Judaism which makes it so odious to the petty bourgeoisie. But while the historical past of Judaism exercises a determining influence on its present social composition, it has effects no less important on the representation of the Jews in the consciousness of the popular masses. For the latter, the Jew remains the traditional representative of the "money power."

This fact is of great importance because the petty bourgeoisie is not only a "capitalist" class, that is to say, a repository "in miniature" of all capitalist tendencies; it is also "anticapitalist." It has a strong, though vague, consciousness of being ruined and despoiled by big business. But its hybrid character, its interclass position, does not permit it to understand the true structure of society nor the real character of big business. It is incapable of understanding the true tendencies of social evolution, for it has a presentiment that this evolution cannot help but be fatal for it. It wants to be anti-capitalist without ceasing to be capitalist. It wants to destroy the "bad" character of capitalism, that is to say, the tendencies which are ruining it, while preserving the "good" character of capitalism which permits it to live and get rich. But since there does not exist a capitalism which has the "good" tendencies without also possessing the "bad," the petty bourgeoisie is forced to dream it up. It is no accident that the petty bourgeoisie has invented "supercapitalism," the "bad" deviation of capitalism, its evil spirit. It is no accident that its theoreticians have struggled mightily for over a century (Proudhon) against "bad speculative capitalism" and defended "useful productive capitalism." The attempt of Nazi theoreticians to distinguish between "national productive capital" and "Jewish parasitic capital" is probably the last attempt of this kind. "Jewish capitalism" can best represent the myth of "bad capitalism." The concept of "Jewish wealth" is in truth solidly en-

trenched in the consciousness of the popular masses. It is only a question of reawakening and giving "presence," by means of a well-orchestrated propaganda, to the image of the "usurious" Jew, against whom peasant, petty bourgeois, and lord had struggled over a long period. The petty bourgeoisie and a layer of workers remaining under its sway are easily influenced by such propaganda and fall into this trap of "Jewish capitalism."

Historically, the success of racism means that capitalism has managed to channel the anticapitalist consciousness of the masses into a form that antedates capitalism and which no longer exists except in a vestigial state; this vestige is nevertheless still sufficiently great to give a certain appearance of reality to the myth....

Zionism: pro-imperialist nationalism

Zionist ideology, like all ideologies, is only the distorted reflection of the interests of a class. It is the ideology of the Jewish petty bourgeoisie, suffocating between feudalism in ruins and capitalism in decay. The refutation of the ideological fantasies of Zionism does not naturally refute the real needs which brought them into being. It is modern anti-Semitism, and not mythical "eternal" anti-Semitism, which is the best agitator in favor of Zionism. Similarly, the basic question to determine is: To what extent is Zionism capable of resolving not the "eternal" Jewish problem but the Jewish question in the period of capitalist decay?

Zionist theoreticians like to compare Zionism with all other national movements. But in reality, the foundations of the national movements and that of Zionism are altogether different. The national movement of the European bourgeoisie is the consequence of capitalist development; it reflects the will of the bourgeoisie to create the national bases for production, to abolish feudal remnants. The national movement of the European bourgeoisie is closely linked with the ascending phase of capitalism. But in the nineteenth century, in the period of the flowering of nationalisms, far from being "Zionist," the Jewish bourgeoisie was profoundly assimilationist. The economic process from which the modern nations issued laid the foundations for integration of the Jewish bourgeoisie into the bourgeois nation.

It is only when the process of the formation of nations approaches its end, when the productive forces have for a long time found themselves constricted within national boundaries, that the process of expulsion of Jews from capitalist society begins to manifest itself, that modern anti-Semitism begins to develop. The elimination of Judaism accompanies the decline of capitalism. Far from being a product of the development of

Continued on Page 12

FURTHER READINGS ON THIS TOPIC (SEE ALSO AD ON PAGE 10)

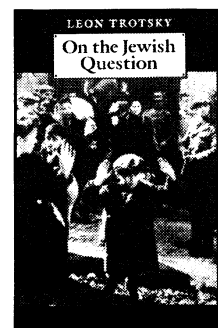
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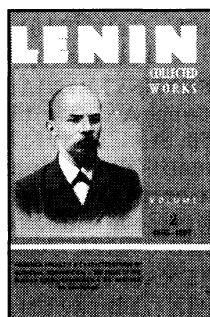
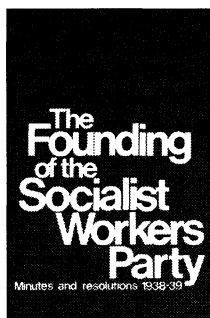
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LEON TROTSKY

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See section titled 'Blacks and Jews' (pp. 81-83)

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¹ See the Proudhon utopia of free credit.

Meat packers win cleanup pay from Swift

BY KAREN RAY

WORTHINGTON, Minnesota—An out-of-court pay settlement has been reached between the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) and meatpacking giant Swift and Co. over unpaid time workers spend to clean up their safety equipment used to perform their jobs. Some 2,300 union members received back pay through the \$3 million settlement at the kill and cut operations in the company's plants in Marshalltown, Iowa, and Worthington, Minnesota.

Raymundo Diaz, a worker at the Worthington plant and member of UFCW Local 1162, said the company is "now paying workers \$4.46 per week for PPE [personal protective equipment], which comes to only a few minutes per day—not the real time you spend washing up the equipment—but it is something."

Lisa Mejia, one of the plaintiffs named in the suit, reported that the weekly compensation is paid only to those who work with knives and comes to six minutes' worth a day. "Six minutes would have been a lot more fair if everyone got that."

It is a common practice by the packing bosses not to give workers paid time during their shift to sanitize their safety equipment, change their clothes, or change out their knives. Workers are forced to come in early, use their breaks, and stay late in order to do this. It is important that equipment be sanitized since it is used in food production.

Diaz explained that the real time it takes is more like 10 or 15 minutes a day to perform this work.

The contract between the UFCW and the Swift plant in Worthington expires in June 2001. Diaz hopes "that we can get 10 minutes of paid cleanup time for everyone in the next contract." The current settlement only affects workers who use knives as part

of their job.

The lawsuit was filed on May 24, 1999, and covered the period from June 1996 to May 1999. Diaz explained that the settlement payment was received by all those who signed onto the suit regardless of whether they used knives.

According to the union complaint, Swift violated the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, the Minnesota Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Iowa Wage Payment Collection Law.

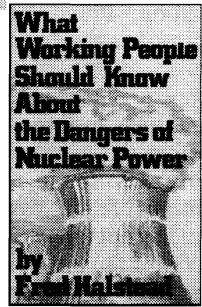
Last July workers at Quality Pork Processors in Austin, Minnesota, filed a suit against the company for the same practice of not paying for cleanup time. Some 700 workers have signed onto the suit and union attorneys sent notices to another 2,600 current and former employees asking them to join the action.

Over the last couple of months, company

and union representatives along with their attorneys have been filming workers cleaning up and exchanging equipment. In early January the company began instituting the practice of bringing a cart around to the line with knives to exchange as opposed to mak-

ing workers stand in line during breaks to get equipment.

Karen Ray is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 9 and works at Quality Pork Processors.



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Fred Halstead

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Capitalism and 'The Jewish Question'

Continued from Page 11

the productive forces, Zionism is precisely the consequence of the complete halt of this development, the result of the petrification of capitalism. Whereas the national movement is the product of the ascending period of capitalism, Zionism is the product of the imperialist era. The Jewish tragedy of the twentieth century is a direct consequence of the decline of capitalism.

Therein lies the principal obstacle to the realization of Zionism. *Capitalist decay—basis for the growth of Zionism—is also the cause of the impossibility of its realization.* The Jewish bourgeoisie is compelled to create a national state, to assure itself of the objective framework for the development of its productive forces, precisely in the period when the conditions for such a development have long since disappeared. The conditions of the decline of capitalism which have posed so sharply the Jewish question make its solution equally impossible along the Zionist road. And there is nothing astonishing in that. An evil cannot be suppressed without destroying its causes. But Zionism wishes to resolve the Jewish question without destroying capitalism, which is the principal source of the suffering of the Jews....

The dead-end of a Jewish state

A relative success for Zionism, along the lines of creating a Jewish majority in Palestine and even of the formation of a "Jewish state," that is to say, a state placed under the

complete domination of English or American imperialism, cannot, naturally, be excluded. This would in some ways be a return to the state of things which existed in Palestine before the destruction of Jerusalem and, from this point of view, there will be "reparation of a two-thousand-year-old injustice." But this tiny "independent" Jewish state in the midst of a worldwide Diaspora will be only an apparent return to the state of things before the year 70. It will not even be the beginning of the solution of the Jewish question. The Jewish Diaspora of the Roman era was in effect based on solid economic ground; the Jews played an important economic role in the world. The existence or absence of a Palestinian mother country had for the Jews of this period only a secondary importance. Today it is not a question of giving the Jews a political or spiritual center (as Achaad Haam would have it). It is a question of saving Judaism from the annihilation which threatens it in the Diaspora. But in what way will the existence of a small Jewish state in Palestine change anything in the situation of the Polish or German Jews? Admitting even that all the Jews in the world were today Palestinian citizens, would the policy of Hitler have been any different?...

The imperialist war and the triumph of Hitlerism in Europe are an unprecedented disaster for Judaism. Judaism is confronted with the threat of total extinction. What can Zionism do to counteract such a disaster? Is

it not obvious that the Jewish question is very little dependent upon the future destiny of Tel Aviv but very greatly upon the regime which will be set up tomorrow in Europe and in the world? The Zionists have a great deal of faith in a victory of Anglo-American imperialism. But is there a single reason for believing that the attitude of the Anglo-American imperialists will differ after their eventual victory from their prewar attitude? It is obvious that there is none. Even admitting that Anglo-American imperialism will create some kind of abortive Jewish state, we have seen that the situation of world Judaism will hardly be affected. A great Jewish immigration into Palestine after this war will confront the same difficulties as previously. Under conditions of capitalist decay, it is impossible to transplant millions of Jews. Only a worldwide socialist planned economy would be capable of such a miracle. Naturally this presupposes the proletarian revolution.

But Zionism wishes precisely to resolve the Jewish question independently of the world revolution. By misconstruing the real sources of the Jewish question in our period, by lulling itself with puerile dreams and silly hopes, Zionism proves that it is an ideological excrescence and not a scientific doctrine.²

² In this chapter, Zionism has been treated only insofar as it is linked with the Jewish question. The role of Zionism in Palestine naturally constitutes another problem.

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'Making History': The Place of the Cuban Revolution in the World Today. Speaker: Luis Madrid, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan. 19, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6:30 p.m. *1068 Fulton St., 3rd floor.* Donation: \$4. Tel: (718) 398-7850.

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The Truth About the So-Called Cuban Missile Crisis. Speaker: Jeff Rogers. Fri., Jan. 26, 7:30 p.m. *465 Boulevard, Suite 214.* Donation: \$4. Tel: (404) 622-8917.

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Why the Right to Choose Abortion. Speaker: Eva Braiman, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan. 19, 7:30 p.m. *7535 Broadway, one block south of Fleet.* Donation: \$4. Tel: (216) 641-9405.

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How clever—"School of the Americas," in Fort Benning, Georgia, was slated to shut down at year's end. Branded by legions of



Harry Ring

protesters as "School of the Assassins," the Army used it to train killers to stamp out rebellions in Latin America by any means, including torture and murder. The school will

reopen this month in the same facilities and with the same curriculum and trainers. However, it will be redubbed, Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

Not bloodthirsty?—In South Central Los Angeles, a mainly Latino and Black community, a reported 150 high schoolers marched on the district school board last month. There they demanded an end to the scarcity of college preparatory classes in their schools. An apparently relieved *Los Angeles Times* reported that the protesters were "loud but peaceful."

Wrong diagnosis—Frederick Moore spent four days in a Mary-

land hospital after sheriff's deputies used clubs and a police dog to "subdue" him at a traffic stop. Moore is suing. The cops say they mistook diabetic shock for "drunken belligerence."

Read it and rebel—"DNA Clears Florida Man Who Died of Cancer on Death Row."—News headline.

See how nice they can be?—In the Syracuse, New York, area *la migra* asserted that before Thanksgiving it had proof that 16 Mexican workers at a turkey processing plant were undocumented and would be scooped up for deportation. The company asked them to

wait until after the holiday rush. Agreeably, *la migra* waited. Explained the top cop: "We're not insensitive. We don't want to ruin their business."

Sure, administrators don't sweep and mop—"Iowa's three public universities and two specialty schools are hiring more minorities, but most of the gains are among janitors rather than administrators."—News item

Welcome—The menu at Poncho's Cantina, in Auburn, Maine, included items like enchiladas and burritos. It sounded inviting to three Mexican immigrant workers. But chatting at the bar in

their native Spanish, they were sharply rebuked by the owner, Patricia Varium. Victor Estrada told a reporter, "She slapped the bar with her hand and said, 'If you're going to be here you have to speak English because this is my place!'" A civil rights suit is being weighed.

Sheer coincidence—In Delaware, the Artesian Water Co. shut down four wells supplying some 5,000 customers because of "low but rising" contamination by the chemical, ether. Officials said the solvent may be leaking from a closed toxic dump nearby. The chemical is deemed a "possible" carcinogen.

Sankara on the class roots of women's oppression

Printed below are excerpts from a speech by Thomas Sankara, the central leader of the 1983-87 revolution in the West African country of Burkina Faso. The speech, titled "The revolution cannot triumph without the emancipation of women," was given on March 8, 1987, International Women's Day, at a rally of several thousand women in Ouagadougou, the country's capital. Following a popular uprising on Aug. 4, 1983, the democratic revolution in Burkina carried out an ambitious program that included land reform, reforestation to halt the creeping desert and avert famine, and priority to education and health care. To carry out these measures, the revolutionary government encouraged the organization and mobilization of peasants, workers, and youth, including women. On Oct. 15, 1987, Sankara was assassinated during a counterrevolutionary coup that destroyed the revolutionary government.

The entire text of the speech is available in the Pathfinder pamphlet *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*, by Thomas Sankara. Copyright ©1990 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the Militant.

BY THOMAS SANKARA

We undoubtedly owe it to dialectical materialism for having shed the greatest light on the problem of the conditions women face, allowing us to understand the exploitation of women as part of a general system of exploitation.

Book of the Week

Dialectical materialism defines human society not as a natural, unchangeable fact, but as something working on nature. Humankind does not submit passively to the power of nature. It takes control over this power. This process is not an internal or subjective one. It takes place objectively in practice, once women cease to be viewed as mere sexual beings and we look beyond their biological functions and become conscious of their weight as an active social force.

What is more, woman's consciousness of herself is not only a product of her sexuality. It reflects her position as determined by the economic structure of society, which in turn expresses the level reached by humankind in technological development and relations between classes. The importance of dialectical materialism lies in having gone beyond essential biological limits and simplistic theories about our being slaves to nature and having laid out the facts in their social and economic context.

From the first beginnings of human history, man's mastering of nature has never been accomplished with his bare hands alone. The hand with the opposable thumb reaches out for the tool, which increases the hand's power. It was thus not physical attributes alone—musculature or the capacity to give birth, for example—that determined the unequal status of men and women. Nor was it technological progress as such that institutionalized this inequality. In certain cases, in certain parts of the globe, women were able to eliminate the

physical difference that separated them from men.

Women's inequality a product of society

It was rather the transition from one form of society to another that served to institutionalize women's inequality. This inequality was produced by our own minds and intelligence in order to develop a concrete form of domination and exploitation. The social function and role to which women have been relegated ever since is a living reflection of this fact. Today, her childbearing functions and the social obligation to conform to models of elegance determined by men prevent any woman who might want to from developing a so-called male musculature.

For millennia, from the Paleolithic to the Bronze Age, relations between the sexes were, in the opinion of the most skilled paleontologists, positive and complementary in character. So it was for eight millennia! As Frederick Engels explained to us, relations were based on collaboration and interaction, in contrast to the patriarchy, where women's exclusion was a generalized characteristic of the epoch.

Engels not only traced the evolution of technology but also of the historic enslavement of women, which occurred with the appearance of private property, when one mode of production gave way to another, and when one form of social organization replaced another.

With the intensive labor required to clear the forests, cultivate the fields, and put the natural resources to best use, a division of labor developed. Self-interest, laziness, indolence—in short, taking the most for oneself with the least effort—emerged from the depths of the human spirit and become elevated into principles.

The protective tenderness of the woman toward the family and the clan became a trap that delivered her up to domination by the male. Innocence and generosity fell victim to deceit and base motives. Love was made a mockery of and human dignity scorned. All genuine human feelings were transformed into objects of barter. From this moment on, women's hospitality and desire to share were overpowered by cunning and treachery.

Though conscious of this treachery, which imposed on her an unequal share of the burdens, the woman followed the man in order to care for all that she loved. For his part, the man exploited her great self-sacrifice to the hilt. Later, this seed of criminal exploitation was set in terrible social imperatives, going far beyond the conscious concessions made by the woman, historically betrayed.

Historic defeat of female sex

Humankind first knew slavery with the advent of private property. Man, master of his slaves and of the land, became in addition the woman's master. This was the historic defeat of the female sex. It came about with the upheaval in the division of labor and as a result of new modes of production and a revolution in the means of production. In this way, paternal right replaced maternal right. Property was now handed down from father to son, rather than as before from the woman to her clan. The patriarchal family made its appearance, founded on the sole and personal property of the father, who had become head of the family. Within this family the woman was oppressed....



Militant/Pat Hunt

Soldiers in Burkina Faso celebrating second anniversary of 1983 revolution. "There is no true social revolution without the liberation of women," said Thomas Sankara.

Inequality can be done away with only by establishing a new society, where men and women will enjoy equal rights, resulting from an upheaval in the means of production and in all social relations. Thus, the status of women will improve only with the elimination of the system that exploits them. In fact, throughout the ages and wherever the patriarchy has triumphed, there has been a close parallel between class exploitation and women's inferior status. Of course, there were brighter periods where women, priest-

esses or female warriors, broke out of their oppressive chains. But the essential features of her subjugation have survived and been consolidated, both in everyday activity and in intellectual and moral repression....

Comrades, no revolution, beginning with our own, can triumph without first liberating women. Our struggle, our revolution will be incomplete as long as we understand liberation to mean essentially that of men. After the liberation of the proletariat, the liberation of women still remains to be won.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



January 23, 1976

Spain is being rocked by a massive strike wave. Touched off by the year-end expiration of labor contracts, sharply rising prices, and growing demands for democratic rights and amnesty for all political prisoners, it has involved more than 100,000 workers in the Madrid area alone. A Reuters dispatch termed it "the biggest show of labor strength since Franco came to power 36 years ago."

The confrontation between the regime and the labor movement was brought to a head by the strike of 4,000 subway workers that began January 5. Following the example set by Franco during a similar strike five years ago, the government on January 7 ordered troops to run the trains.

The subway workers voted to return to work January 9, but vowed to go out again January 19 unless there was an acceptable response to their demand for a nearly 50 percent wage increase backdated to August.

On January 10 the state-owned subway company offered a \$455 annual pay raise and promised no punitive action against the strikers even though their walkout was illegal under Spanish law.

The subway strike, which caused huge traffic jams in Madrid, successfully challenged the government's wage-control policy. The mood of the Madrid working class was shown by dozens of sympathy rallies and walkouts in banks and the metal and construction industries, in solidarity with the transit workers.



January 22, 1951

The White House and the Pentagon are thinking of a negotiated peace in the Korea war. They have been confronted with three granite facts.

First, the combined strength of the Chinese and Korean revolutions has so far proved superior to the military power of U.S. capitalism. Second, there is a tidal wave of popular resistance all over the world to becoming involved in the Truman-MacArthur intervention in Asia. Third, the American people want the war stopped now.

The failure of American capitalist power to crush the Asian revolution despite superior arms has given new confidence to oppressed peoples everywhere. The decayed system of capitalism in Europe and colonial exploitation in Asia has one main "policeman"—the U.S. ruling class. And that ruling class no longer seems invincible.

As yet U.S. workers have not by and large connected the setback of their own ruling class abroad with their experiences at home. The unexpected failure of American arms in what was considered a minor foray against a weak people on a tiny peninsula has staggered the American public.

It is not news to American workers that the blustering monopolies can be whipped. They whipped them handily in the organizing drive of the late Thirties and early Forties. They again humbled the big corporations in the post-war strikes.

Nationalize the energy companies!

Continued from front page

Republican-controlled Congress in already meager government programs for those needing assistance to pay rising fuel bills.

The unions and farmer organizations can demand that massive government funds and stores of fuel be made available to all those in need. Any worker laid off due to the energy crisis, such as workers at Kaiser Aluminum plants in Washington State today, must receive their full wages as long as they are out of work. Farmers, many of whom are already on the edge of insolvency, must be given assistance to keep dairies, pumps, trucks and tractors, and heating and cooling equipment running.

Taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel—which fall the hardest on working people—should be eliminated to provide immediate relief to independent truckers, farmers, and fishermen. Rate increases should be rolled back now.

The anarchy of capitalism, especially in times of world economic crisis, brings with it the potential for such sudden, devastating—sometimes seemingly inexplicable—outbreaks of shortages, wild price hikes, or sudden collapses of prices or production. The one inexorable result is to make workers and farmers pay for each crisis through rate hikes, currency devaluations, unemployment, or spiraling inflation. The measures advanced by big business and their representatives in the Democratic and Republican parties in response to these crises, such as those proposed by California governor Gray Davis, aim to bail out or otherwise protect the interests of capitalists in industry and banking. Working people need to advance our own interests and mobilize to see that our demands on the government are carried out.

In California, PG&E and Southern California Edison, once seen as stable companies and a place for safe investment by banks and bondholders, are now threatened with bankruptcy. They have been caught in a price squeeze between skyrocketing wholesale prices for natural gas and electricity and what they are able to charge customers under state regulatory measures from which only months ago they were making handsome profits. Giant banks such as J.P. Morgan and Bank of America, with deep lines of credit out to these companies, are suddenly threatened.

The immediate demand of these wealthy businessmen and bankers, carried out by the state government in California, is to push the burden onto working people through rate hikes. But even some capitalist politicians, bankers, and bondholders propose some form of state intervention, recognizing that rapid measures are needed to prevent capitalists in one sector of industry from disrupting the largest state economy in the country. No matter whether there is “regulation” or “deregulation,” however, the end result will be massive profits continuing to flow to these monopolies and the banks that stand behind them.

Nationalization of the energy companies is the opposite of the bailouts of the owners of the corporations

through measures such as state sales of bonds, assumption of debts, or paybacks for “losses” to the consumer. Under a nationalized industry there must be full public knowledge about all aspects of the operation. The energy industry’s books, which today are kept secret, must be opened to public scrutiny. Workers in the energy industry can use their position and knowledge to make sure all the facts are put on the table. Public, elected boards, independent of the government, should run the energy industry, with workers exerting control of job conditions and production.

The scare over energy “shortages” is accompanied by moves to erode environmental regulations, which industry and government spokespeople blame for high energy costs. The Bush administration appointee for the Department of Interior, for example, is pressing for opening up wide swaths of nature preserves in Alaska to oil company exploitation.

Along with this are proposals to bring closed nuclear power plants out of mothballs, such as the powering up of the Indian Point nuclear plant in New York. The ruling rich will seek to justify building new nuclear power facilities, something they have been prevented from doing since the widespread protests in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the exposures of the dangers of these disasters waiting to happen—like the 1979 Three Mile Island catastrophe. All nuclear plants should be shut down now and a massive government cleanup effort launched to deal with the as yet unresolved problem of radioactive waste produced by each facility.

Such a struggle by the labor movement could draw a deep response from coal miners and other working people in mining communities. There is absolutely no need for an energy crisis, among other reasons, because there is plenty of coal that can be burned cleanly and safely to produce electricity. The technology exists and is in use to eliminate harmful emissions at coal-fired plants, but big business resists using it because it cuts into their profits.

Expanding coal production under safe working conditions would employ tens of thousands in mining jobs. With union power in place at every coal mine, coal can be taken out of the ground under safe conditions, turning back the employers’ drive to deal blows to the United Mine Workers by setting aside safety, increasing productivity at workers’ expense, and lengthen the workweek.

The crisis forced on working people by the energy monopolies will be repeated in industry after industry until workers and farmers can mount a revolutionary struggle to replace the capitalist government with one of our own. A workers and farmers government will be a mighty weapon in the struggle to nationalize all the holdings of the capitalists, a step that will finally make it possible to rationally organize production and distribution of the wealth created by working people in a planned way for the benefit of all humanity.

U.S. gov’t and Balkans Syndrome

The growing exposure of cancer deaths among European soldiers deployed in the occupation forces in Kosova and Bosnia has provoked increasing outrage among working people over the massive amounts of depleted uranium shell fragments left behind by the U.S. and other NATO forces after their war against Yugoslavia in 1999.

Even more criminal is the scope of contamination that is endangering the health of the people of Yugoslavia. Radioactive shards of ammunition remain scattered throughout Kosova, contaminating water supplies, pastures and farmland, and towns. This shines a spotlight on the real character of the U.S.-NATO military assault against Yugoslavia.

U.S. government officials have denied that the spent munitions are linked to the illnesses reported by NATO soldiers deployed in the Balkans. But the persistent reports of leukemia and other diseases affecting the soldiers have forced many European capitalist governments to begin to respond.

These actions by the U.S. rulers show their callous disregard for the health and safety of human beings and underscore the fact that, despite their propaganda, the U.S.-led war had nothing to do with protecting the people of

Kosova. Washington’s barbaric bombing campaign, which destroyed factories, bridges, roads, and other vital necessities in the country, was aimed against the workers and farmers of Yugoslavia, whom the U.S. wealthy class ultimately must take on and militarily defeat in order to achieve its goal of reimposing capitalist property relations there and in other workers states. Washington also sought to use its military superiority to assert its political and military dominance in Europe.

The U.S. rulers and their imperialist allies, who are also their rivals, have no concern for the soldiers deployed in the Balkans. The soldiers are mostly workers and farmers in uniform, used as cannon fodder to advance the interests of the billionaire classes of the imperialist countries.

All soldiers potentially affected by the “Balkans Syndrome” should be tested for radiation contamination, with all medical expenses funded by the U.S. and other imperialist governments.

Working people the world over need to demand that all NATO troops get out of the Balkans now. Washington should be held fully responsible for cleaning up the environmental disaster it has caused in Kosova and all of Yugoslavia.

Energy crisis

continued from Page 7

ergy costs.

In the name of “cost-cutting,” PG&E and Edison will reduce or eliminate the annual performance bonuses paid to workers at the utilities—as much as four weeks’ worth of pay. Edison has announced it will eliminate 400 contractor jobs and lay off an additional 1,450 workers.

Meanwhile, the energy corporations have made record profits. Eight companies that sell electricity to California utilities reported third-quarter profit increases from 23 percent to 153 percent. California-based Calpine Corp., a major developer and operator of gas-operated power plants, increased third-quarter revenues 168 percent over the same time period in 1999, and raised profit estimates for the fourth-quarter of 2000 and the year 2001, sending its shares up 8 percent.

Other energy wholesalers that raked in juicy profits include Williams Companies, Dynegy, Southern Co., Duke Energy, and Enron. Duke Energy spokesman Richard Fernandez defended his company’s profits as the result of “basic supply and demand.”

PG&E utility’s parent corporation, PG&E Corp., also posted record profits—\$248 million for the third-quarter, up 26 percent from the previous year. PG&E Corp. has three other operating segments besides the utility. These are power generation facilities; natural gas pipelines, storage facilities, and processing plants; and the purchase and sale of energy commodities.

Governor calls for ‘equality of sacrifice’

In his January 8 address, Governor Davis called the deregulation of California’s power system “a dangerous and colossal failure.” He pledged to set aside \$1 billion in the state budget to stabilize the supply and price of electricity and provide new power generation. Davis proposed the creation of a public agency to build power plants, but offered few details about such a plan. He also raised the prospect of the state government taking over the plants of wholesalers in order to control prices. The governor’s main concern in these proposals is restoring financial solvency to the utilities.

A major theme of Davis and other capitalist politicians is that “consumers” must share responsibility with the energy corporations. “Everyone has to play their part,” Davis said on a PBS Nightly Business Report. Urging equality of sacrifice, he also opined that the utilities “are more victim than culprit in this situation.” The conclusion, reinforced in countless articles in the big-business media, is that working people must “do their part” by cutting back on the use of electricity as well as accept the price hikes.

Davis and California legislators flew to Washington for talks with federal officials January 9. After the meeting they suggested that one move may be an effort to make the power generating and marketing companies give the two major California utilities a short-term break on their debts.

Another proposal, raised by some members of the state Public Utilities Commission and others, is for the state to issue long-term bonds to help bail out the utilities. This would be funded by a surcharge on customers’ bills.

In response to the unfolding energy catastrophe, President-elect George W. Bush said January 9 that his administration will open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil and natural gas drilling, despite opposition by environmentalists.

A number of capitalist politicians and consumer advocates are raising various proposals to protect “rate payers” from energy price “gouging,” that is, making what they term “excessive” profits. Some have called for re-regulating the utilities, that is, returning to a version of the previous setup.

State Treasurer Phil Anglides proposed at a recent news conference creating a state energy authority that could seize existing power plants through eminent domain, supposedly modeling itself after the Tennessee Valley Authority. Such a measure, if adopted, would be designed to socialize the losses of the owners of the utilities, and would leave open the possibility of returning the companies to private hands once they could be made suitably profitable again.

Banks drawn into crisis

The energy crisis is having increasing ramifications, including on a host of U.S. and foreign banks that have extended millions of dollars of credit to the California utilities. The two banks with the biggest “exposure” are reportedly Bank of America Corp. and J.P. Morgan Chase, which have more than \$500 million in outstanding loans to both utilities. The trading stocks of both of these huge banks have also recently dropped because of the energy debacle.

Bourgeois economists have expressed worries about the snowball effect of the situation in California on the faltering U.S. economy and beyond. Morgan Stanley Dean Witter issued a report called, “California Unplugged—A drag on global growth?” In it, Morgan Stanley economist Joseph Quinlan warned, “Negatives tend to snowball, so what is happening in California has the potential to exacerbate the weakness we already are seeing in the U.S. economy.” California has the world’s sixth-largest economy.

Bob Keller works at a meat processing plant in the San Francisco Bay area.

Court charges troopers in turnpike shooting

BY MARK BARTON

NEWARK, New Jersey—In a unanimous 3-0 decision, the New Jersey state appeals court reinstated charges of attempted murder January 5 against two state troopers, John Hogan and James Kenna. In a 1998 shooting on the New Jersey Turnpike, they had fired a hail of bullets into a van carrying Black and Latino students to a basketball camp. The incident received wide publicity, focusing public attention and protests on what has been termed "racial profiling"—the systematic racist harassment of Blacks and Latinos by the police.

Charges against the two cops stemming from this incident had been dismissed several months earlier by a lower court judge, who claimed that under "political pressure" the two had been unfairly turned into "poster boys for racial profiling."

Forces fighting police violence have been encouraged by the ruling. On the other hand, Americop, an ultraright pro-cop outfit headed by a police sergeant in Nutley, a suburb north of Newark, denounced the appeals court ruling as a "travesty." He has called a march in support of Hogan and Kenna in Nutley for January 20.

The ruling came on the heels of a De-

cember 19 decision by a federal jury here finding five Orange, New Jersey, cops guilty of violating the civil rights of Earl Faison, a 27-year-old Black man they beat, robbed, and killed on April 11, 1999. The civil charge carries a maximum 10-year sentence. Although prosecutors failed to bring criminal charges against the cops, the recent verdict is a victory for opponents of police brutality.

The January 5 ruling also follows the state government's release in late November of 90,000 pages of police files documenting the long-standing practice of "racial profiling."

Outrage at cop brutality

Underlying these events is the widespread outrage against, and resistance to, cop brutality among working people. The result has been an open debate in ruling circles in New Jersey, conducted in the courts, state legislature, and big-business press, over what levels of po-



Militant/Maurice Williams

Some 300 people rally on April 22, 1999, to protest killing of Earl Faison at the hands of the cops, and other instances of police racism and brutality in New Jersey.

lice violence are deemed necessary and "acceptable" today.

The April 1998 turnpike shooting put a national spotlight on New Jersey cops acting as judge, jury, and executioner. Four

Black and Latino students, headed for a basketball camp in North Carolina, were stopped, allegedly for speeding. Within minutes, troopers Hogan and Kenna had fired into their vehicle at point-blank range, wounding three of the students, two seriously. Denny Reyes, 20, was shot six times; Leroy Grant, 23, four times; Rayhawn Brown, twice. The attack was witnessed by two passing motorists whose testimony challenged the cops' claim of self-defense.

In the case of Earl Faison, the jury heard eyewitness testimony from cops themselves of how the young man was beaten after he was handcuffed, and then pepper-sprayed with a canister held directly against his nose and mouth.

Faison, who suffered from asthma, died within an hour of being taken into custody in April 1999. He was one of several "suspects" rounded up in a brutal police operation carried out by Orange cops following the killing a few days earlier of a fellow cop allegedly investigating a robbery.

Under federal law, jobless workers face eviction from public housing

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

NEWARK, New Jersey—A little-noticed federal law passed in 1998 requires eviction of working people who live in subsidized public housing if they become jobless and don't work for free doing building maintenance or other projects demanded by public housing authorities. If residents don't "volunteer," public housing authorities can refuse to renew their leases.

Workers living in public housing in Camden and Paterson, New Jersey, are among the first to be affected. Public housing officials in Paterson said their plan for implementing the law must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by January 16.

The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act passed by Congress and signed into law by U.S. president William Clinton on Oct. 21, 1998, affects 3,700 public housing authorities in the United States. The law mandates implementation of the community service requirement this fiscal year.

"Every adult resident of public housing will be required to perform eight hours of community service each month, or participate in a self-sufficiency program for at least eight hours each month," the law states. It exempts workers who are employed, elderly and disabled persons, Section 8 recipients, as well as residents exempted from work requirements under state "welfare-to-work" programs.

Some of the work-for-no-pay jobs include

participating in "crime watch" teams, doing building and grounds maintenance, and staffing day-care centers.

The measure has provoked opposition from residents and tenant rights organizations in Camden, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. In New York, one group of people living in public housing said they planned to urge other tenants to boycott volunteer service.

"What will they do, put us in the street?" asked Jessieta White, tenant association president of the Roosevelt Manor housing complex in Camden. She said the housing law was another example of the government pressing down on "the lowest members of the totem pole."

Other provisions in the law include barring applicants for three years from federally assisted housing because of alleged "drug crimes" or "alcohol abuse." Those who are convicted as "sex offenders" are also excluded from public housing assistance.

This assault on subsidized housing is championed by a conservative group called the United Taxpayers of New Jersey. "At the very least [jobless residents] should be able to give something back to that particular community if they are able to work," said Samuel Perelli, chairman of the organization.

The 1998 housing law was among a package of "reforms" placed on the books by the Clinton administration together with the

Republican-controlled Congress that are aimed at gutting the social wage working people won through decades of struggle. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act eliminated Aid to Families with Dependent Children, which was part of the 1935 Social Security Act. Millions more will be dropped from the welfare rolls this year as a result of this "welfare reform" law.

U.S. firms cut jobs, hours

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

U.S. corporations cut nearly 134,000 jobs in December, more than triple the number in November, according to a survey conducted by the outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

The retail sector was especially hard hit, accounting for 30 percent of December's job cuts. This included an announcement January 4 that Sears, Roebuck and Co. will close 89 stores and cut 2,400 people. Montgomery Ward & Co., which employs about 32,000 nationwide, said it is going out of business, closing all 250 of its stores.

While the unemployment rate held steady at 4 percent in December, workers employed in manufacturing jobs faced mounting layoffs. The Labor Department figures report that 62,000 manufacturing jobs were eliminated in December, bringing job losses in

this sector to 180,000 for the year. Since April 1998, some 580,000 manufacturing jobs have been eliminated.

Just in the past few weeks, General Motors, Whirlpool, Union Pacific, Outboard Marine, Gillette, Xerox, Aetna, and Unisys have announced a total of nearly 30,000 job cuts. GM, for example, announced it was idling eight plants and about 21,000 workers in the United States and Canada for a week in an effort to reduce large inventories. Ford Motor Co. and Chrysler have also chopped production this month.

Not only are factories laying off workers, they are also cutting the hours of those still employed. The factory workweek fell by 0.8 hours in December, the biggest drop since January 1996. Overall, the average workweek fell 0.2 hours in December to 34.1 hours.

LETTERS

Crisis of profit rates

The explanation of the causes for overcapacity in an article in the Jan. 8, 2001, *Militant* about General Motors plant closings in the United Kingdom had some problems. The article states that as capitalists strive to increase productivity and win new markets, they end up increasing supply, thus depressing prices and with it their profits.

What is really involved as the capitalists employ "labor-saving" machines and technologies is that the value of the commodities they produce decreases. Each commodity embodies a smaller percentage of living labor, which is where surplus value (profit) comes from.

The first capitalist to invest in such automation can offset this decline in the rate of profit by grabbing more market share and increasing his mass of profit. Until other capitalists follow suit, he will also be able to charge a price higher than the actual value of the commodity and still undersell his competitors.

But as automation is generalized throughout a branch of industry, the price will be dragged downward towards the new (lower) value of the commodity.

The lower rate of profit will also be generalized throughout the branch of industry. The process begins anew.

Unless the market expands fast enough to absorb the expanding capacity to produce, a crisis of overproduction or overcapacity will ensue.

Perhaps the *Militant* could run an article explaining in more than a paragraph or two the causes of these crises.

David Rosenfeld
Chicago, Illinois

Australian government and Jewish refugees in '30s

Thanks for running "U.S. closed doors on Jews during Nazi terror," the excerpt from Peter Seidman's *Socialists and the Fight against Anti-Semitism: An Answer to the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation*

League, in the November 6, 2000, issue.

There are striking parallels to 1930s Australia, when governments, conservative and Labor, refused to open the doors to any meaningful degree to Jewish refugees; and Jewish leaders, both Zionist and non-Zionist, actively blocked efforts to save refugees from fascist repression.

On the other hand, despite some reservations and a decades-long history of support for immigration restrictions to keep Australia "racially homogeneous," significant political backing was won within the labor movement and in other arenas for providing a haven as ordinary people reacted to the news of the fascist terror.

T.W. White, an Australian government minister who attended the July 1938 Evian, France, international conference on refugees, told the meeting, "As we have no real racial problem we are not desirous of importing one by encouraging any scheme of large-scale foreign

migration."

In the wake of the Kristallnacht pogrom in November 1938, the Australian High Commission in London was receiving 600 visa applications a week from refugees, most of them Jewish. But Canberra flatly rejected a call by its high commissioner to London, Stanley Bruce, to double its three-year quota for refugees to 30,000.

Xenophobia and anti-Semitism were promoted by politicians and by sections of the big-business media. For example, the Dec. 30, 1939, issue of the Melbourne mass-circulation newspaper *Truth* condemned "refugees" as a "race that supports no one else but its own with the definite objective of eliminating the Australian shopkeeper."

Many Australian Jewish leaders, both Zionist and non-Zionist, publicly condemned the campaigns for mass immigration. In mid-1939, Isaac Boas, then president of the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board, Sir Isaac Isaacs, the first Australian-born governor-general, and other

Jewish leaders refused to attend a conference urging the government to ease its restrictive refugee policy. Australian Jewish Welfare Society president Sir Samuel Cohen was outspoken in efforts to stop ships laden with refugees leaving Germany for Australia.

The parallels to U.S. history are not accidental. They reconfirm that politics has a class, not a geographic or national, basis. Whenever the "democratic" and "humane" pretensions of Australia's imperialist government and rulers are trumpeted, this history needs to be told.

Doug Cooper

Sydney, Australia

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.

Farmers in France demand payment for herds hit by 'mad cow' disease

BY NAT LONDON

PARIS—Newspaper editorials say it's a type of hysteria. Government officials call it the "beef panic." No matter what the name, a wave of outrage and indignation has swept France, Germany, and a number of other European countries as workers, farmers, and consumers discover that their governments have lied about the safety measures necessary to meet the threat of "mad cow disease." The disease, which destroys the brain, can be transmitted to people and animals that eat infected meat.

A meeting of European agriculture ministers voted to withdraw from the food chain all cows more than 30 months old unless tested for the disease. This will mean the slaughter over a number of years of some 2 million head of cattle. Special incinerators will have to be constructed to dispose of the carcasses.

The next day, 10,000 farmers demonstrated in Clermont-Ferrand in France to demand they be fully compensated for their losses and another 3,000 marched in Nantes. About 200 farmers took their cows to Paris, where they rallied in front of the Ministry of Agriculture. At the same time, the main farmers union, the FNSEA, said that while the measures were a "positive step for the consumer," they offered no guarantees that the farmers would be adequately compensated.

Most cattle raisers in France are small farmers with herds averaging between 50 and 75 heads. While 233,000 farmers raise cattle, most carry out other agricultural activities as well. But even the 30,000 farmers that specialize in cattle raising as their sole activity have an average income of only 130,000 francs a year—about the same as that of a factory worker in a skilled position (1 franc=US 14 cents). The question of adequate indemnities is crucial to these farmers, since if one cow is found to have this disease the entire herd is destroyed.

Under pressure, the European Union has agreed to finance 70 percent of the purchase and cost of destruction of all cows more than 30 months old. The rest of the cost is to be financed by individual member states. However, the farmers unions have not yet reached an agreement with EU officials as to the method of calculating the value of their herds.

For years, the French and German governments have carefully nurtured an atmosphere against imports of beef from Britain, stating it is a source of the mad cow disease, known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). Similar campaigns have been waged against imports of beef treated with growth hormones and genetically modified plants. The latter two are produced in the United States and have been



Cattle farmers protest in Nantes, France, in December. Government inaction led to spread of 'mad cow' disease through meal fed to cows in Europe.

banned by the European Union.

Both the French and German governments claimed to have taken effective measures to control the spread of BSE. But as the disease began showing up on the Continent, arguments once used by French and German capitalists to justify their boycott of "British" beef have now been turned against them.

Dozens of other countries are now using the same reasons to ban imports of beef from France and Germany.

So far, BSE has developed into a full-fledged epidemic only in Britain, where 180,000 cases have been officially diagnosed and 4.5 million head of cattle destroyed. But Portugal has now recorded almost 500 cases of BSE with 170 cases in 1999 alone. Ireland has had more than 500 cases and Switzerland is not far behind.

The governments of Germany and Spain announced their first cases in November. Up to the end of 1999, only 79 cases of BSE had been reported in France. However, the number has almost tripled during the last year. With three new cases a week, claims by the French government to have taken effective measures to stop the spread of the disease have collapsed. Normandy and Brit-

tany have been hit particularly hard.

Beef sales have dropped 50 percent. Schools, such as those in Bordeaux, France, and in Geneva, Switzerland, announced they would no longer serve beef on their menus. Italy, Spain, Austria, and other European Union countries announced boycotts of French beef. Egypt announced a four-week ban on all beef imports from 12 European countries.

Workers and farmers of these countries now face massive destruction of infected herds, higher supermarket prices for meat and dairy products, and the still unknown scope of the problem that has begun to spread to human beings. Tens of thousands of farmers are facing ruin and risk losing their farms as a result.

Capitalist competition

In the 1980s, France was the leading importer of British beef. But France is also the world's second largest agricultural exporter and has been eagerly eyeing the beef market once dominated by its British competitors. The French government helped push through the European Union's embargo of British beef, adopted in March 1996, thus opening up a major new market for French

capitalists.

The U.S. government plays the same game as well. In December 1997, Washington banned imports of beef and mutton from European countries, although the disease existed only in Britain at that time. This cut French capitalists out of the U.S. market.

German agriculture minister Karl-Heinz Funke declared in early November that he was "absolutely convinced" that Germany is immune. People can eat German beef "without fear," he said. Several regions in Germany voted motions asking the German government to block all imports of beef from Britain, Ireland, France, and Switzerland. However, only one week later, Austria, Belgium, and The Netherlands adopted boycotts of German beef when Germany reported its first case of BSE. With almost every member of the European Union banning each others' beef, the principle of "free trade" within the Union was being badly shaken.

Contamination of feed

While the boycott of beef from Britain was strictly enforced in France, other measures were either never adopted or enforced. This was particularly the case concerning the continuing distribution—both legal and illegal—of BSE-infected meat and bone meal. Although the first clinical case of BSE was recognized in Britain in April 1985, it took the British government three years to limit the use of meat and bone meal. Even then, the production of such meal was still allowed for fertilizer and as feed for non-ruminant animals. The poultry industry, for example, still depends on such feed, as do fish farms. British capitalists made a major effort to export the infected meal.

Paris made only symbolic gestures in limiting the use of this, which is much cheaper than any other available source of protein in animal feed. A French government ban on meat and bone meal imports from Britain was followed by a 10-fold increase in imports from Belgium and Ireland. Since neither country is a major producer of the product, it was clear a second-party operation was involved. The French government, however, chose to ignore it.

Such fraud was apparently quite common. European inspectors found that three-quarters of all animal feed tested in Germany—where such feed has theoretically been banned since 1994—showed traces of meat and bone meal. German Farming Federation leader Gerd Sonnleitner pointed the finger at "the lax practices of the EU agriculture authorities [which] are to blame" for the spread of BSE into Germany.

Ten cattle raisers in the Vosges mountains in eastern France, members of the FDSEA farmers union, went to court in 1996 demanding that the government determine the real source of animal feed. They promised to withdraw from the market any cows shown to have been exposed to meat and bone meal. The government has so far refused to supply the court with the necessary documents. In the face of growing farmers protests, the judge has finally ordered the Ministry of Agriculture to pay 1 million francs a day if all documents were not produced within a week.

With protests and economic boycotts spreading, the European agriculture ministers met in emergency session December 4, voting to forbid all meat and bone feed for all animals for a period of six months. It is still permitted, however, to use the meal as fertilizer.

This is a costly measure. The 3 million tons of meal produced each year are worth \$1.3 billion. Destroying the meal will cost an additional \$3.3 billion. The feed would have to be replaced with millions of tons of more expensive soy meal, imported from the United States. This would necessitate lifting the European Union's ban on importing genetically modified organisms and would add billions of dollars more to the overall cost.

Teamsters win new vote at Washington Fruit

BY ERNEST MAILHOT

SEATTLE—In a victory for the Teamsters union and workers at Washington Fruit and Produce in Yakima, Washington, the labor board has overturned the results of a union representation election and ordered a revote.

National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) administrative law judge James Kennedy also ordered the company to reinstate, with full back pay and benefits, Ana Guzman, a worker fired for her union organizing. Another union supporter still at the company, Pamela Smith, will be reinstated to her former job classification. She had been demoted to a lower paying job for supporting the unionizing effort.

The Teamsters filed unfair labor practice charges against the company following a Jan. 8, 1998, election. Results at the time showed fruit packers, sorters, and forklift operators having voted 161 to 121 to reject union representation. In its appeal, the union was able to demonstrate that the company

had used intimidation against the workers, including the firing of Guzman and demotion of Smith prior to the election. The company also broke the law when it refused to give the union a full list of employees and their addresses.

Guzman said in a phone interview that she was happy overall with the judge's decision. However, she said, "Instead of having a revote I would rather we were negotiating for a contract." The union had contended that since the company's many illegal acts had led to the union's election loss the election should be overturned and the Teamsters declared the workers bargaining agent.

"They gave excuses for firing me and putting Pam in a lower position," Guzman said. "I was fired for union organizing. This is justice that the company is obliged to give me back pay and my job. And I'm glad the workers will get another chance to vote for the union."

Kennedy's order also put bosses at Washington Fruit on notice that it must rescind

all written reprimands used to harass workers who supported the union. The company must stop issuing warnings to and threatening workers who talk up the union, the judge said. He ordered the company to post a notice at the workplace that it has been found in violation of the National Labor Relations Act and that the workers have the right to organize and join a union.

The Teamsters had also filed unfair labor practice charges against Stemilt Growers in Wenatchee. After the case against Stemilt was settled last year, the union won a union representation election there by one vote. Both union organizing drives were part of a months-long campaign by the Teamsters to win contracts at these two fruit and produce packers in Washington State. There are approximately 100 packing companies in the state employing about 15,000 workers.

Ernest Mailhot is a meat packer and member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 81.