

THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 68/NO. 10 MARCH 15, 2004

Utah coal strikers strengthen picket line

BY ANNE CARROLL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—New sturdy picket signs reading “Co-Op Miners—On Strike” in English and Spanish now dot the area around the trailer from where coal miners, who walked out five months ago from C.W. Mining’s Bear Canyon mine, organize picketing. The more visible picket has begun to pay off, miners say. One morning in the last week of February four strikers turned away a pickup truck that was coming up the mine road. The vehicle came to a dead halt when the driver and the passenger of

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Greenspan calls for cuts in Social Security

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Testing the waters for a new round of government assaults on the social wage of working people, Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan told a Congressional committee February 25 that cuts must be made in Social Security benefits. Greenspan argued that the 77 million “baby boomers” who in the next few years will start becoming eligible for Social Security and Medicare will “bankrupt” the programs.

Greenspan’s remarks are part of the ongoing campaign by Democratic and Republican politicians to “reform” Social Security, that is, to further undermine its

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California grocery workers end strike, bosses gain concessions

BY BETSEY STONE

LOS ANGELES—After nearly five months on strike and 16 days of negotiations, some 60,000 grocery workers throughout Southern California are returning to their jobs after voting to ratify the latest contract offer by the grocery bosses. The strike began October 11 after 97 percent of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 770 members rejected the grocery bosses’ concession demands.

The supermarket bosses won the bulk of what they wanted in the new three-year deal.

The contract contains a steep two-tier wage and benefit setup—a major goal of the grocery chains from the beginning—that weakens the union by creating two classes of workers. New hires will earn significantly lower wages—from \$1.12 to \$2.80 less an hour—and, under this contract, they will not reach the wage levels of current workers. For the newly

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Pro-imperialist forces set back in Venezuela

Elections board turns down recall referendum petition; Washington intensifies offensive to topple Chávez gov’t

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS AND OLIVIA NELSON

The drive by weighty sectors of Venezuela’s capitalist class, with Washington’s full backing, to topple the government of President Hugo Chávez was pushed back March 2. The country’s National Electoral Council (CNE) announced that day that it had disqualified or set aside for further verification nearly half of the 3.4 million signatures the pro-imperialist opposition had submitted in December demanding a referendum to recall the president. That brought the total valid signatures to well below the 2.4 million required to trigger such a vote.

The U.S. government sided with the Coordinadora Democrática opposition coalition in charging that the election board’s ruling was undemocratic. “We are increasingly concerned about the situation in Venezuela,” White House spokesman Scott McClellan said March 2. “The United States continues to urge the Venezuelan National Electoral Council to finish its work in a timely and fully transparent manner. This is about allowing the people’s voice to be heard through the democratic process.” He added that “the focus should remain on the efforts by the Venezuelan people to exercise their constitutional and democratic rights [in] a transparent and internationally monitored presidential recall referendum.”

Representatives of the U.S.-based Carter

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Reuters/Jorge Silva

Hundreds of thousands rally in Caracas February 29 to oppose U.S.-backed attempts to topple Chávez government. “Venezuela is sovereign,” says banner. Inset: pro-Chávez demonstrators in Caracas celebrate March 2 ruling by elections council.

Armed rightist forces take over Haiti as U.S., French, Canadian troops deployed

BY ERIC SIMPSON AND SETH GALINSKY

MIAMI—U.S. Marines, along with French and Canadian troops, entered Haiti to “restore order” immediately after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide resigned and left the country February 29 at the demand of and under increasing pressure from Washington and Paris.

Armed rightist forces in revolt against the government rapidly swept into the capital city of Port-au-Prince, seizing the

national police headquarters and other key positions. One rebel leader, Guy Philippe, has declared himself head of Haiti’s military and police, and his forces rampaged through the former army headquarters while U.S. Marines looked on.

Aristide, whose exit was organized by the U.S. State Department, was flown to the Central African Republic. He is reportedly seeking asylum in South Africa.

The rightist groups, led mostly by former army officers, had launched a revolt

against the government in early February. They took advantage of Aristide’s diminishing popularity in face of the economic crisis and his reliance on Washington to try to protect his regime.

U.S. officials said they would support Haiti’s Supreme Court chief, Boniface Alexandre, sworn in as president soon after Aristide’s departure. According to the Haitian constitution, Alexandre is supposed to remain in office until elections in 2005.

The advance contingents of foreign troops will be reinforced by an imperialist “peacekeeping” force to be deployed in

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AP/Ricardo Mazalan

Man with baby passes by bank set on fire February 29 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s capital, after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide resigned and was flown into exile.

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California protest condemns killer cops

BY NAOMI CRAINE

DOWNEY, California—"No justice, no peace! No murdering police!" chanted about 80 people as they marched to the police station in this Los Angeles-area town February 15. The protest took place on the second anniversary of the killing of Gonzalo Martínez by Downey police officers. The 26-year-old, whose family is from Argentina, was shot 34 times with an automatic rifle when he got out of his car with his hands up, following a brief police chase.

"I would like to see those cops be fired and put in jail," Norma Martínez, Gonzalo's mother, said at the rally outside the police station. The district attorney has refused to file charges against Brian Baker and William Kutz, the cops who killed Martínez. An appeals court judge recently asked that the cops be given immunity, which would bar the family from suing the police.

"How can they justify immunity?" demanded Norma Martínez. "It's only a gang—the police, the DA, and the rest." She noted that although there are two videotapes of the cops killing her son, the police are allowing people to view only one of them.

The Martínez family has refused to give up their fight, organizing several protests over the last two years to demand justice in the killing of their son. They have also made the case known in Argentina, where it has received significant television coverage. The family has reached out to other victims of police brutality, some of whom took part in the February 15 protest.

Javier Quezada, Sr., told protesters how the Pasadena, California, police gunned down his son, Javier Quezada, Jr., in a hospital parking lot Jan. 23, 2003. The 22-year-old was suffering from depression and his parents had taken him to the hospital. "He was not violent, he needed help," Quezada said. Instead, a cop arrived. "He first shot my son four times. [Quezada] ran to get away and fell, and the cop shot him lying on the ground." The youth tried to stand, fell to his knees, and was shot again in the face, just a few feet from where his parents stood.

Quezada brought posters that he had

drawn depicting these events, which had been used at a protest outside the Pasadena police station a few weeks earlier, on the anniversary of his son's death. As in the Martínez case, the district attorney refused to prosecute the cops. The police "kill people like they kill animals, and that isn't right," Quezada said. "I've worked here 30 years, pay taxes, and look what we're getting."

Idalia Campos came to the rally with a poster demanding justice for her son, José Juan Campos. He has been in prison for five years, since he was 23, serving a 50-year sentence on frame-up charges of murder. Campos turned down a plea-bargain offer, insisting he was innocent, "but the detective lined up a bunch of witnesses" for the trial, his mother said.

Sylvia Ramirez, a 21-year-old student at Cerritos College, was one of many neighbors of the Martínez family who joined the march. Her brother was a friend of Gonzalo Martínez. Since his death, she



February 15 march in Downey, California, protests cop killing of Gonzalo Martínez. Norma and Norberto Martínez, his parents, second and third from right, with banner.

said, "I've tried to come to the protests and invite other people to come."

Other participants in the march and rally included members of the Brown Berets,

Socialist Workers Party, students active in the October 22 Coalition, and the Aztec Dancers, who led the march with dancing and chants.

West coast grocery workers return to work

Continued from page

hired workers, payments for health benefits will be introduced. Although some union officials spoke out against the two-tier arrangement, it was never featured as an issue in the same way as the fight to defend health-care benefits.

With the high turnover in the grocery industry, "the two-tiered system could save the supermarkets tens of millions of dollars over the three-year life of the contract," according to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

There are no wage increases in the contract. Grocery workers will receive a ratification bonus of 15 to 30 cents an hour for time worked in the past year. This will not amount to much, as some 75 percent of the grocery workers are part-time.

The union accepted concessions on health-care coverage. It will take longer for new hires to qualify for benefits and they will pay a portion of their health-care premiums. Current workers will not pay premiums for the first two years of the contract. In the

third year, however, coverage will be capped at \$4.60 an hour, which could mean workers would pay as much as \$60 a month toward family health insurance.

The chains also won concessions on pension benefits, which will be cut for both new hires and current employees.

As workers went to vote, UFCW International president Doug Dority said the pact crowned "one of most successful strikes in history." According to a March 1 Reuters dispatch, a union spokeswoman said the contract was approved by an 86 percent margin.

Most workers voted for the contract but did so with little enthusiasm. Some thought they had given up too many concessions. "Basically, for all those months that we were there on strike, we should've gotten a better deal," said Armando Montes, who was voting in Hollywood, California. Others were tired of being on strike. "I got to eat, man," said Oscar Karillo, a worker from Pavillions, which is owned by Safeway. "I have a wife and two kids. Whatever it is I'm going to take it."

Despite the deep concessions, Mickey Kasparian, president of Local 135 in San Diego, told the *Tribune-Union* he was "ecstatic with everything we did with pension and welfare." He said "the current members were our soldiers. We were going to protect our soldiers."

A statement from the grocery bosses said the contract "squarely addresses the challenging health-care costs and competitive issues we face" and

that they were "very pleased to have reached this agreement and at the prospect of seeing our employees return to work."

A two-tier system that creates a new class of workers with lower pay and benefits went against the grain for quite a few workers. Some said that the two-tier setup was not consistent with what they had asked of shoppers—not to cross the picket line because they had been fighting for all workers, not just themselves. "It is not right for some workers not to have the same wages and medical coverage as others," said Antonio Moreno, a Vons worker from San Pedro.

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UN 'inspections' aid U.S. in squeezing Iran

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. government has seized upon allegations of weapons violations by United Nations inspectors in Iran to keep tightening its squeeze on Tehran. A February 19 BBC report said that inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have found components of an advanced uranium-enrichment centrifuge at an Iranian air force base that had not previously been reported to the UN agency. IAEA officials have declined to comment on the report, according to the BBC. Centrifuges are used to enrich uranium that can then be used as fuel in nuclear reactors or for nuclear weapons.

In a February 20 speech at Princeton University, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell said, referring to so-called weapons of mass destruction, that "Iran is slowly—still too slowly—coming forward with answers needed by the IAEA and the rest of the international community to make sure that they are not violating their obligations." He called on Tehran to "pledge and end—not just a suspension—all of its WMD programs."

That same day a *Washington Post* editorial, titled "Iran's 'Serious Failures,'" called upon the Bush administration to be "more insistent" with Washington's European allies on pushing them to join in clamping down on Tehran, so that there would be no watering down of the message sent to would-be nuclear powers by the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq and the subsequent capitulation of Libya.

"Beware Iran's Atomic Ayatollahs," was the headline of an editorial in the *New York Daily News* the following day. "Iran must get no more wiggle room," it said. "And the United Nations must gear itself to cracking down with economic sanctions and every other means possible to ensure that Iran does not get close to developing a weapon of mass destruction. Because there are exactly two words for a nuclear-capable Iran: imminent threat."

Last October, under intense pressure from Paris, Berlin, London, and Moscow, the Iranian government announced it would agree to demands of the IAEA to allow surprise inspections of its nuclear facilities. As a gesture of good faith Iran also said it would voluntarily halt enrichment of uranium. In pressuring Tehran to agree to the unannounced inspections, European Union governments—particularly Paris and Berlin, which had differed with Washington on the assault on Iraq—hoped to keep the U.S. rulers at bay.

In mid-November the IAEA released a report stating that Iran had manufactured small amounts of enriched uranium and plutonium as part of a nuclear program that Tehran operated secretly over 18 years. Tension between Washington and its European rivals flared up at the November 20 meeting of the IAEA board over the language of a resolution condemning Tehran for its nuclear program. Washington failed in its attempt to get a resolution that would declare Tehran in "non-compliance" with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). That would have also allowed Washington to refer the matter to the UN Security Council, which could impose a range of economic and other sanctions against Iran.

The current allegations against Tehran are based on drawings of a P-2 gas centrifuge that were among documents given to UN

weapons inspectors by Iranian authorities. It is a more advanced model than Iran had acknowledged possession of, said the BBC report. *USA Today* reported that Iranian officials also admitted to having the centrifuge and having tested it. Iranian foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi told the British news agency that Iran had only been studying the design of a P-2 centrifuge and that the IAEA had been informed about the research.

The IAEA board is scheduled to meet March 8–11 to review current findings by weapons inspectors in Iran and Libya. According to the BBC report, the White House has so far said it will give Iran time to fully disclose its nuclear activities before deciding whether to refer the issue to the UN Security Council.

Imperialist 'experts' in Libya

Preliminary investigations by weapons "inspectors" indicate that the drawings of the P-2 centrifuge match those in Libya that were allegedly supplied by the founder of Pakistan's nuclear program, Abdul Qadeer Khan. On December 19 the Libyan government announced it would dismantle its nuclear and chemical weapons programs and allow UN inspectors to verify compliance. With this move, Tripoli effectively surrendered a good part of its sovereignty—the decision came after Washington and London had made it clear that the Libyan regime would face a similar fate to that of former Iraqi leader Saddam

Hussein unless it bowed to U.S. dictates on "weapons of mass destruction."

A 10-page report by imperialist "experts" now in Libya describes Tripoli as providing "active cooperation and openness." The report being prepared for the IAEA board meeting states that Libya produced only a small amount of plutonium and that its nuclear program was at best in "disarray." In one instance the report states that some 20 centrifuges that had been pre-assembled were suddenly disassembled and placed into storage by the Libyan government for "security reasons." This was done while a shipment of thousands of parts was en route to Tripoli.

Much in this report is based on the testimony to Malaysian police of Buhary Syed Abu Tahir. Bush has called Tahir the "chief financial officer and money launderer" of a "nuclear network." According to the *Post*, Tahir has described in detail how designs, parts, and uranium fuel that could be used in production of nuclear weapons were sold and transported involving businesses and individuals in Pakistan, Britain, Spain, Germany, Turkey, and Italy. Tahir has not been arrested or charged, and according to the *Post* report he has also told police that on instructions from Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan he arranged to ship equipment used to enrich uranium to Iran and Libya.

Washington has also singled out the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

(DPRK), along with Iran, in its push to prevent these states from developing nuclear weapons. The last week of February, a U.S. delegation took part in talks in Beijing along with government representatives from the DPRK, south Korea, Japan, Russia, and China at six-party talks on the so-called nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula.

Talks between DPRK and U.S. negotiators, hosted by Beijing, broke down at the end of April 2003 when U.S. officials accused Pyongyang of having admitted to possession of nuclear weapons and threatened to test and export them. North Korean officials also reportedly told the U.S. delegation that they had reprocessed enough spent nuclear fuel rods to be used in the production of nuclear weapons.

Pyongyang has offered to freeze its nuclear activities in exchange for economic aid, lifting of U.S. economic sanctions, and removal of the DPRK from Washington's list of countries that sponsor "terrorism." The Bush administration is demanding that Pyongyang begin dismantling—not just freezing—its nuclear program before making any concessions. Washington also accuses Pyongyang of operating a uranium-enrichment program, and that it begin discussions on them.

Pyongyang has denied statements attributed to Pakistani nuclear scientist Qadeer Khan that he sold nuclear secrets to north Korea, calling them a "whopping lie."

In face of broad protests, Israeli court orders halt to construction of section of 'security wall'

BY PAUL PEDERSON

Thousands of Palestinians have braved tear gas attacks by the Israeli armed forces to join demonstrations against Tel Aviv's construction of a massive wall around and into the occupied West Bank. The rallies have coincided with a hearing of the World Court in The Hague, the Netherlands, on a Palestinian case that seeks to win a ruling against the barrier.

Responding to the protests, the Israeli Supreme Court February 29 ordered a one-week halt to construction of the wall in an area where it would envelop eight villages. It would lock 30,000 Palestinians into their villages, and they would lose thousands of acres of land.

A Supreme Court hearing the following week is expected to make a final ruling on this section of the wall. Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz complained that "there are many areas where we are not doing the work owing to statutory legal problems."

On February 23 protests erupted at Deir Ghsun, Bethlehem, and Qalqilya, where a crowd of 5,000 rallied at the structure that encircles the city and cuts off many residents from their farm and water supply. In Abu Dis, Palestinian Authority prime minister Ahmed Qurei told protesters, "We say to the judges in The Hague: Listen to what the Palestinian people have to say. They won't compromise on their rights."

Hundreds of Palestinians and supporters gathered the same day in The Hague, chanting, "The wall must fall," and "No justice, no peace." Supporters of the Israeli state staged a counter-rally.

Palestinian Authority (PA) representatives at the court are calling for the barrier to be dismantled or shifted to follow the Green Line—Israel's boundary with the West Bank before Tel Aviv seized it in 1967. Among the governments that have sent representatives to testify in support of the Palestinian case are those of Jordan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Cuba. According to a February 23 Reuters report, the PA "expressed disappointment that most of the Arab League member states did not submit briefs to the court on its behalf."

As of the end of February, the Israeli government is a quarter of the way through the construction of the 400-mile wall, which will redraw the map of the West Bank—a 2,270-mile territory that is home to nearly 2 million Palestinians—and extend Israel's claims to Palestinian land.

Since the 1993 Oslo Accords, portions of the West Bank have been ceded to the PA, which was established under the same agreement. In the decade since, settlement activity and Israeli military infrastructure in

the nominally PA-run territory have expanded.

When complete, the "security fence," as the Israeli government has dubbed it, will be more than four times longer and in parts much higher than the Berlin Wall. John Dugard, special reporter of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in the Occupied Territory, noted last summer that in places the fortified rampart is 26 feet high. Mostly, he said, "it takes the form of a barrier 60 to 100 meters wide, which includes buffer zones, trenches and barbed wire, trace paths to register footprints, an electric fence with sensors, a two-lane patrol road and guard towers at regular intervals."

At the heart of the project is a substantial Israeli land-grab. Tel Aviv aims to block the possible formation of a viable Palestinian state. The barrier's route will cut off 15 percent of the West Bank, effectively extending Israel's border throughout those areas. In those same areas live 80 percent of all Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories, who are spearheaded by rightist opponents of Palestinian self-rule who have acted as a vanguard of Israel's expansion into the West Bank.

Already some 11,400 Palestinians who fall on the "Israel" side of the wall have been entirely separated from PA schools, health care, and other services. They will also have to apply for permits to continue to live in their homes.

The wall is reinforcing the deep blow to West Bank economic life already dealt by years of Israeli incursions and siege. The first stage of work in constructing the wall is being done in the Jenin, Tulkarm, and Qalqilya districts—three of the richest agricultural areas on the West Bank.

These moves are exacerbating an already deep economic crisis in the occupied territories. Palestinian unemployment is close to 40 percent, and a decline in resources has resulted in a deterioration in health care and a growth in malnutrition among children.

Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon has rejected negotiations with PA leaders, calling it "a government of murder and lies."



Reuters/Nir Elias

Aerial photo of part of 400-mile-long wall being built by Tel Aviv as "security barrier." Israeli authorities began tearing down one section in face of protests by Palestinians on the eve of World Court hearings challenging its legality.

He told the *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper, "It will be impossible to reach any agreement with this government."

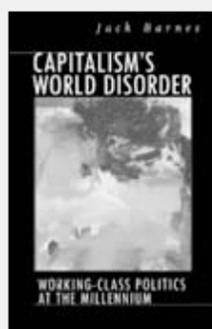
In a December 18 speech to the Herzliyya Institute of Policy and Strategy, Sharon said that Israeli planners would draw fortified "security lines" conforming to the wall to isolate Palestinians in the West Bank—a policy that he called "disengagement."

While claiming the scheme is temporary, Sharon said in the same breath that Tel Aviv would "strengthen its control in those parts of Eretz Yisrael that will constitute an inseparable part of the State of Israel under any future arrangement."

Meanwhile, Israeli troops raided three banks in the West Bank city of Ramallah February 26 and seized over \$8 million from 400 institutional, charity, and individual accounts.

Amin Haddad, the head of the Palestinian Monetary Authority, said the raids were an "unjustified ungrounded daylight theft at gunpoint by the Israeli army from two Jordanian banks operating in Palestine, as well as the Arab Bank and the Cairo-Amman bank." Among the accounts pillaged were the Islamic University in Gaza and the Zakat Committees, which oversee small donations to the poor required of every Muslim.

Capitalism's World Disorder Working-Class Politics at the Millennium



by Jack Barnes

(also available in French and Spanish)

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Greenspan calls for cuts in Social Security..

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character as an entitlement that working people expect to receive as a right for all. The first major assault on the Social Security system was the dismantling of welfare by the Clinton administration in 1996.

Since then, politicians from both big-business parties have sought to gain acceptance for further attacks. Their main argument is that soon there will not be enough money to pay Social Security to all retirees, implying that younger workers will bear an undue burden caused by older generations. They insist that working people should be concerned about the federal government's budget deficit and sacrifice in order to reduce it.

Feigning concern for workers whose benefits he proposes be slashed, Greenspan urged Congress to act rapidly to give future retirees "enough advanced warning to plan their finances accordingly," the *Washington Post* reported February 26.

Seeking to downplay the impact that cuts would have, the big-business daily reported U.S. government estimates that about 20 percent of the elderly rely on Social Security for their entire retirement income. Many working people seek additional sources of income, however, because they have a hard time living on meager Social Security benefits, particularly with skyrocketing medical bills.

The U.S. government's central banker said he was worried about the impact of the costs of Social Security on the long-term government budget deficit, which would "slow the growth of living standards." This year's budget deficit is projected to reach \$521 billion and the long-term deficit, according to a January 5 report by the liberal Brookings Institute, is expected to reach as high as \$5 trillion over the next decade.

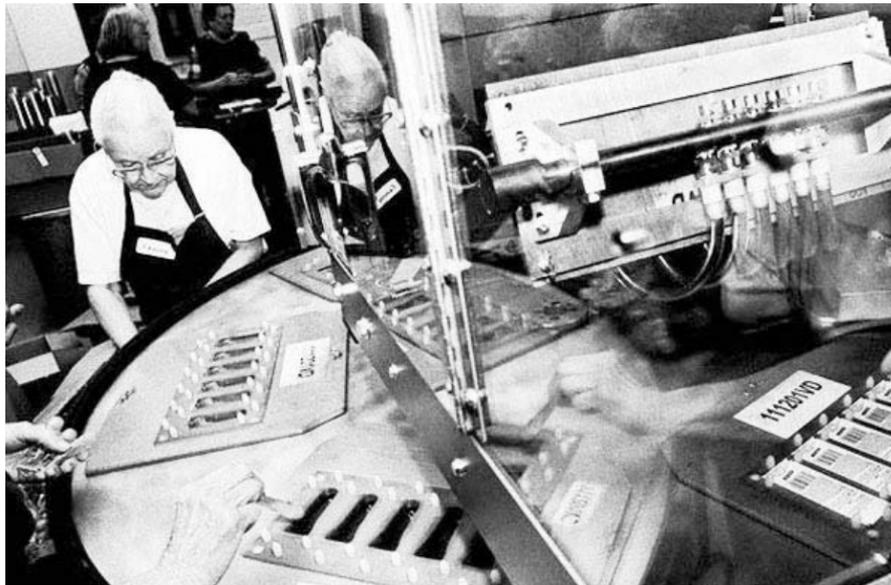
To reduce the risk of a sharp reaction from working people, Greenspan and President George Bush have said they oppose any cuts for those currently receiving benefits. Instead, Greenspan proposed that Congress consider reductions for future retirees, a higher eligibility age for Social Security and Medicare, and tying cost-of-living increases in the program to a measure of inflation other than the consumer price index. The latter measure was floated by a Congressional committee under President William Clinton but received little support within ruling-class circles at that time.

Commenting on the budget committee hearing, Bush told the *Post* he had not read Greenspan's remarks but took the occasion to reiterate his proposed solution for Social Security: to create "personal savings accounts" for younger workers—a scheme to push workers to gamble with their social security benefits, whether on the stock market or elsewhere.

Democrats have also insisted on the urgency of Social Security "reform" and reducing the federal budget deficit. Democratic presidential candidates, however, have been carefully vague about their proposals. Instead, they have attacked Bush "for worsening the deficit and endangering Social Security," the *Washington Post* reported.

During the discussion following Greenspan's testimony not one member of the committee, Democrat or Republican, said that cutting Social Security was not an option to be considered. The differences centered on how much and how fast.

Greenspan chaired a commission on Social Security under President Ronald Reagan but that administration, which like previous ones operated on the basis



Ruth Connie Bowen, 71, operates packaging machine at Bonnie Bell Cosmetic factory in Washington, D.C., on line set up for older workers. Claiming that growing numbers of elderly are "bankrupting" Social Security, Federal Reserve chief suggested raising retirement age. Already many "retired" people are forced to work to make ends meet.

of deficit spending, decided that attempts to "reform" social security at that time would have run the risk of unleashing a social explosion. Greenspan has continued to serve as central banker under subsequent Democratic and Republican administrations.

The current round of assaults on Social Security has its roots in the Clinton administration. In August 1996 Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which abolished Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), or welfare, the main federally funded cash relief program. AFDC was part of the Social Security Act of 1935, which also encompasses Social Security, Supplemental Security Insurance, and unemployment insurance.

In 1997 a panel appointed by Health and

Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala to study ways to cut Social Security issued a report that proposed some measures similar to those advocated by the Bush administration, including investing in the stock market. Sensing the powder keg involved in going after an entitlement that so many view as their basic right, the Clinton administration was cautious in backing the panel's recommendations.

Greenspan's February 25 remarks to the House Budget Committee came within months of bipartisan legislation passed by Congress and signed by Bush that shifts much of the costs of Medicare onto the backs of working people.

The new law requires Medicare to compete with private health insurance companies, gives billions in subsidies and

tax breaks to those companies, and includes incentives for recipients to join private health-care plans. It also introduces for the first time a "means test" for eligibility, and increases the amount Medicare recipients pay in deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses.

In 1934 three major strikes—in Toledo, Minneapolis, and San Francisco—and numerous smaller ones set the stage for workers to force concessions from the bosses and their political servants in Washington. These working-class struggles transformed the labor movement, opening the process that forged the industrial unions that formed the backbone of the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

Under the pressure of the strikes and mobilizations of the unemployed, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act in August 1935, in an attempt to placate the growing social movement.

The most class-conscious workers pushed for a broader political agenda that aimed at providing the widest protections for working people. In 1934 the National Unemployed League drafted a "workers security bill" that called for a 30-hour workweek and a public works program to provide "an up-to-date, fully equipped county hospital in every county; modern libraries and recreational centers in every city and county." It also addressed other social needs, calling for "rural electrification" and that those employed by the "relief" program be paid the standing union wage. The Unemployed League demanded that unemployment and social insurance be "extended to workers and farmers without discrimination because of age, sex, race, or color, religious or political opinion or affiliations—for all time lost."

Provisions of the Social Security Act were expanded in the 1960s, introducing Medicare and Medicaid, as a product of working-class struggle in the form of the advancing civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s.

...warns of 'systemic risk' from mortgage bubble

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Speaking before the Senate Banking Committee February 24, Federal Reserve Board chairman Alan Greenspan warned that the debt-driven growth of two government-sponsored mortgage institutions, the Federal National Mortgage Association and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, could pose a "systemic risk." The two are known as "Fannie Mae" and "Freddie Mac," respectively.

He proposed measures to curb their expansion that would effectively raise mortgage rates for working people seeking to buy homes.

The next day he told the House Budget Committee that he was worried about the impact of the costs of Social Security on the long-term government budget deficit, which he described as a "structural problem." (See article on Social Security.)

Fannie Mae was set up in 1938, ostensibly to provide low-interest home loans. Freddie Mac was established in 1970. Both are what are known as government-sponsored enterprises, or GSEs. They are chartered by Congress but are private companies. Together they buy up and repackage billions of dollars in mortgages from local lenders and resell them on financial securities markets around the world. They have grown to be among the largest financial institutions in the United

States, standing behind more than \$4 trillion in mortgages. That represents more than 75 percent of the single-family mortgages in the United States. Greenspan said that while he didn't see any immediate danger with the companies, "concerns about systemic risk are appropriately focused on large, highly leveraged financial institutions...that play substantial roles in the functioning of financial markets."

Perception of 'full faith and credit'

Greenspan attributed the growth of the companies to the perception by investors around the world "that these securities are backed by the full faith and credit of the United States government" and that in case of a financial crisis Washington would have no choice but to prevent the two companies from defaulting. He added that this perception, also called an implicit subsidy, has been reinforced by the "scale itself" of the company's holdings and the impact a default would have on financial markets.

It was under Greenspan's watch as chairman of the Federal Reserve since 1987 that this massive debt balloon was inflated. Fannie Mae's debt obligations from borrowing rose four-fold over the last decade, reported the February 25 *Wall Street Journal*—from \$201 billion to nearly \$962 billion. And Freddie Mac's shot up 15 times, from \$48 billion to \$745 billion.

Financial departments of large corporations invest in GSEs such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in an effort to protect the money value of their capital from erosion and unanticipated fluctuations. The result is more and more complex forms of paper securities designed to hedge bets, offset currency devaluations, and reap enormous windfall profits at the same time. The growth of their investments has opened the doors to financial speculation on a scale never before possible in history, while creating the potential for shifts that could not only bring down individuals capitalists but trigger a collapse of the entire world banking and monetary system.

Greenspan expressed further concern that, "unlike many well-capitalized" savings and loans and commercial banks, the two companies have chosen not to lessen that risk by holding greater capital reserves

as protection. This practice heightens the degree to which they are leveraged and raises interest rate risk. "Without the expectation of government support in a crisis, such leverage would not be possible without significantly higher cost of debt," Greenspan said.

In his summation Greenspan proposed that Congress establish a regulator over Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and other GSEs with the authority to set levels of capital they must hold, limit their levels of borrowing, and establish a "clear process for placing a GSE in receivership." Greenspan argued that these steps would send a "clear warning" to the companies' debt-holders, according to the *Journal*, that they could take a financial "haircut" in the event one of the companies was declared insolvent.

Senior executives at both companies reacted quickly to Greenspan's remarks. A Fannie Mae official commented that the Federal Reserve Board chairman's testimony "does not appreciate the role of our mortgage portfolio and the impact of his proposal" according to the February 25 *New York Times*.

A Freddie Mac executive told the *Financial Times* that Greenspan's proposal would "raise mortgage costs for US homebuyers."

Shares in both companies dropped following Greenspan's testimony. Shares in Fannie Mae fell \$2.65 to \$76.25 and Freddie Mac slid \$1.81 to \$62.12.

Concern in ruling class circles about both companies has heightened over the past year due to a wide variety of admitted questionable accounting practices. Last November executives at Freddie Mac admitted to overstating the company's earnings by \$5 billion in order to "smooth out" its long-term earnings trend and to allay concerns by investors. And last October Fannie Mae was forced to correct what officials said were \$1 billion in errors in its recent financial results.

In his testimony Greenspan also cited a study done by the Federal Reserve that he said shows that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac actually have a negligible impact on lowering interest rate for home buyers as compared to the hefty dividends reaped by its stock holders.

— MILITANT LABOR FORUMS —

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco

The Crisis in Haiti: What are the Stakes for Working People?, Speaker: Ryan Scott, Young Socialists; Fri., March 12, 7:30 p.m., 3926 Mission St. (between Colgate and St. Mary's), Donation requested. 415-584-2135.

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Build the April 25 March for Women's Lives, Speakers to be announced. Fri., March 12, 6:30 p.m. dinner, 7:30 p.m. program. 306 W. 37th St. 10th Floor (enter at 36th St., use north side elevator), 212-629-6649.

FREE THE CUBAN FIVE!

MARCH 5 NEW YORK

EMERGENCY MEETING

SEIU LOCAL 1199 HALL, 6:30 P.M.

MARTIN LUTHER KING AUDITORIUM,

310 W. 43RD ST. BETWEEN 8TH & 9TH AVE.

Speakers include: Orlando Requeijo Gual, Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations; Michael Steven Smith, National Lawyers Guild; and others.

Utah coal strikers strengthen pickets

Continued from front page

the pick up observed the picket line. They waved to the strikers, turned their truck around, and headed back down the main highway away from the mine.

Then another pickup truck pulled up and stopped. The couple in the truck said they needed to buy some lump coal. They didn't want to cross the picket line, they said, and asked the strikers if they knew of another place where they could buy it. The strikers said they didn't know of one. The couple said they hated to cross the picket line, but that they needed the coal to heat their home and proceeded to cross the line. That day the strikers found another place that sells lump coal, and one striker pointed out that they should make a big sign in fluorescent letters that tells everyone where to go to buy lump coal—including at night.

"Are you a UMWA representative?" asked a coal truck driver February 24, coming out of the Co-Op mine. The driver was leaving with a load of coal and stopped to talk to the miners on picket duty, who have been on strike against the company for five months. "You are hurting this company," said the driver. Many times coal trucks like his are called out to the mine and wait

around for hours, he told the strikers, but there is no coal to haul.

The driver and other coal haulers support the miners' strike and they have also been discussing how to get organized themselves, he said, giving his name and phone number to the strikers to stay in touch.

These incidents have encouraged the strikers to reinforce their picket line, which has been set up since October 11. Miners are maintaining it daily with four six-hour shifts. A mobile trailer donated by a United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) retired miner has helped protect the strikers from the harsh winter. The trailer, equipped with a propane tank and a gas generator that provides heat and lights, is parked at the entrance to the road that leads to the Co-Op mine.

Now that winter is beginning to break, the miners report that they are setting up the picket line outside the trailer during more hours on picket shifts, especially during the 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. shift changes. The Co-Op bosses are running production on two 12-hour shifts.

The miners explain that having a visible picket line at the road will help increase solidarity. Many cars and trucks that pass



Militant/Anne Carroll

Strikers picket Co-Op coal mine February 26. Picket sign at left reads in Spanish, "Co-Op miners on strike with assistance of UMWA," referring to the United Mine Workers of America. Sign at right reads, "We want safety."

the picket line on Highway 31 wave and honk as they drive by. Some drivers stop to talk to the strikers.

The walkout began September 22, when the company fired the workforce of 75 to the person because the workers, overwhelmingly from Mexico, protested unsafe working conditions and demanded the reversal of the suspension of one of the workers and an end to victimization against a number of union supporters on the job. The Co-Op miners have been trying to organize themselves

into the UMWA.

The strike is featured in the January-February 2004 issue of the *United Mine Workers Journal*. "UMWA Supports Co-Op Miners' Strike in Utah" reads the front-page headline below a picture of six miners on the picket line. A four-page article inside titled, "Co-Op Miners' Strike — A Pivotal Battle for Worker's Rights!" describes how the strike began and the solidarity the miners have received.

Growing support from the labor movement across the United States has included solidarity resolutions approved by labor councils in Atlanta, New York, and San Francisco.

The Atlanta Labor Council adopted such a resolution February 11. After outlining the unsafe conditions, low wages, and discrimination by the company against the Co-Op miners, the statement says: "Be it RESOLVED, the Atlanta Labor Council stands firmly with the striking miners in solidarity."

"RESOLVED, that this organization work among its constituency and community allies to mobilize support, both financial and with letters of support,

"Further be RESOLVED, ask our Affiliates and Coalition Partners to write or email Governor Olene Walker [of Utah] to investigate the Kingston's business practices."

The Kingstons are a family of millionaires who own the Co-Op mine and many other businesses stretching across several western states.

Support from the labor movement is also generating backing from religious and other organizations.

On February 26, a delegation of supporters of the Co-Op strike in Salt Lake City, Utah, three Co-Op strikers, and a UMWA representative met with Mark Shurtleff, the attorney general of the state of Utah. The delegation included representatives of the Catholic Diocese, the Utah Federation of Labor, Jobs with Justice, the AFL-CIO, and others. They asked the attorney general to investigate the Co-Op mine.

On March 1, the Co-Op strikers were invited to address members of the Communications Workers of America Local 7704 in Salt Lake City. The next day they spoke before the monthly meeting of the Salt Lake Central Labor Council.

Meeting celebrates Grand Opening of international headquarters in New York

Fund appeal for construction is successful, topping \$231,000

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

NEW YORK—"The construction of the Socialist Workers Party international headquarters was completed on schedule to the day," SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes told some 360 people in attendance at the February 29 Grand Opening here. "This is the most important omen for the discipline and accomplishments of our movement for the future."

The offices are located in the Midtown Manhattan Garment District where members of the New York SWP branch carry out regular political work.

Barnes also announced that the \$225,000 2004 Headquarters Building Appeal had been brought to a successful conclusion, with \$231,652 in hand.

The Grand Opening capped off a Red Weekend of volunteer labor involving more than 100 supporters of the communist movement from around the world in putting the finishing touches on the new Pathfinder Bookstore and Militant Labor Forum hall, newsroom of the socialist periodicals the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, and SWP headquarters.

Barnes served as the chairman of the program, which both celebrated the victory won in the two-month intensive effort to complete the beautiful new offices and bookstore, and featured presentations on central questions facing workers and farmers.

"Starting the construction was hard,"



Mary-Alice Waters speaks at February 29 meeting to celebrate opening of international headquarters in New York. SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes is to her right and Bill Estrada is to her left. Part of audience is shown in insert.

said Chris Hoepfner, who had organized the work of the crew that began January 2, "but completing it was harder." He stressed the importance of the planning—including the budget, floor plan, and schedule—that was critical to effectively organizing the work of the 123 volunteers who joined the crew over the course of the 58-day project. Hoepfner

stated that each aspect of the preparation "was necessary, and each was political."

Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *New International*, a magazine of Marxist politics and theory, spoke for the international team of volunteers—from seven countries—who represented Pathfinder Press at the 13th Havana International Book Fair held February 6-15 in Havana, Cuba.

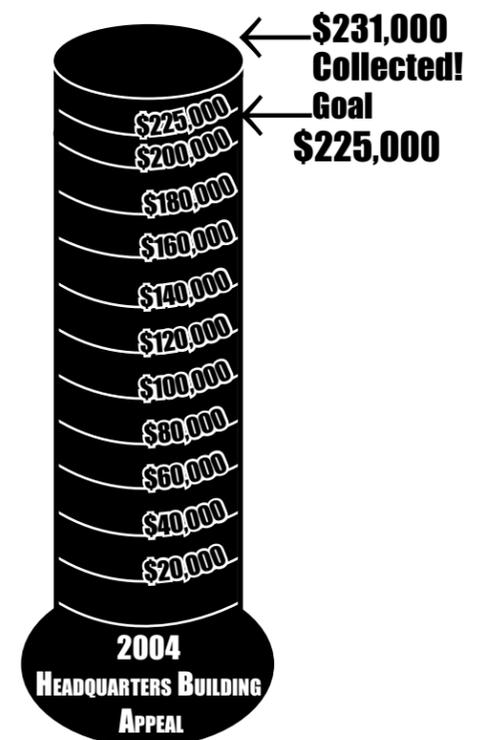
Waters stated that the single most important feature of the work of the team in Havana "was the interest in and response to the successful fight of Róger Calero" against the efforts of the U.S. government to deport him. Calero spoke in Cuba at numerous meetings on what the victory in his antideportation struggle reveals about the class struggle in the United States.

The final speaker was Bill Estrada, one of 75 coal miners on strike in a battle for a union at CW Mining, known as Co-Op, in Huntington, Utah. The 10-year veteran of the socialist movement explained the steps the strikers are taking to advance what Barnes earlier described as "the most important strike going on today." In his remarks, Estrada walked through the ongoing discussions among the miners on maintaining and strengthening an effective picket line, winning solidarity from other workers in the region, and the role the other unionists are playing in strengthening the fight. "Every one of us is learning the ABCs of leading a competent strike," Estrada said.



Militant/Elizabeth Olsen

Chris Hoepfner, who led construction crew, points out features of new bookstore as he leads tour of new premises. To the left is the kitchen.



Cuba, 1957: Castro defends revolutionary course, rejects reformist 'Miami pact'

Printed below are excerpts from *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952-58*, by Armando Hart, published by Pathfinder Press in January in both English and Spanish editions. Armando Hart was a central organizer of the urban underground and is one of the historic leaders of the Cuban Revolution.

This account of the struggle to overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship led by the July 26 Movement and the Rebel Army, headed by Fidel Castro, recounts the events from the perspective of revolutionary cadres organizing in the cities.

The *Militant* is publishing a series of excerpts from the book. This week's selection is the "Manifesto to the nation: Response to the Miami Pact," of Dec. 14, 1957. It was drafted by Castro after discussions with Hart and other July 26 Movement leaders in the Rebel Army base in the Sierra Maestra, in Oriente Province.

The document is a repudiation of the Miami Pact, issued by a so-called Cuban Liberation Council in 1957. The council was dominated by bourgeois opponents of Batista living in the United States. Presented as a call for unity among the anti-dictatorship forces, it was drafted without the knowledge or participation of the July 26 Movement in Cuba.

Castro's open letter was broadly circulated within Cuba through clandestine channels. When press censorship was briefly lifted, it was printed in the Feb. 2, 1958, issue of the anti-Batista magazine *Bohemia* in a special run of 500,000. Hart likens its impact to a "depth charge." Citing another revolutionary leader, he notes "the huge national and international impact of the manifesto in reply to the Miami Pact, as well as the favorable response to it by members of the July 26 Movement."

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Naturally enough, any unity agreement will inevitably be welcomed by national and international public opinion....

But what is important for the revolution is not unity in itself, but the principles on which it is based, how it is achieved, and the patriotic intentions motivating it.

Agreeing to a unity whose provisions we have not even discussed; having it signed by persons with no authority to do so; and announcing it publicly without further ado from the comfort of a foreign city, thereby putting the Movement in the situation of facing a public deceived by a fraudulent pact—this is a trick of the lowest sort, which a truly revolutionary organization can have no part in. It is an act of deception to the country and to the world.

Moreover, such a trick is possible only because of the simple fact that the leaders of the other organizations that signed this pact are living in exile, making an imaginary revolution, while the leaders of the July 26 Movement are in Cuba, making a real revolution.

Our letter, however, might not have been necessary, regardless of the very bitter and humiliating procedure attempting to tie the Movement to this pact. Differences over



Rebel Army troops guard captured government soldiers in Fomento, December 1958. In open letter a year earlier, Castro said that the dictatorship's "barbaric reprisals" against unarmed peasants "led the people to a state of absolute rebellion."

form must never overshadow essentials. We might still have accepted it, despite everything, because of how positive unity is, because of the usefulness of some of the ideas raised by the council, and because of the help being offered us, which we genuinely need. The simple fact, however, is that we disagree with a number of its essential points.

No matter how desperate our situation in face of thousands of the dictatorship's troops mobilized to annihilate us, and perhaps with more determination because of it (since nothing is more humiliating than to accept an onerous condition under trying circumstances), we would never accept the sacrifice of certain principles that are fundamental to our conception of the Cuban Revolution.

To omit from the unity document the explicit declaration that we reject every form of foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Cuba is a sign of lukewarm patriotism and of cowardice, which must be condemned in and of itself.

Declaring that we are opposed to intervention is not simply asking that there be no intervention in support of the revolution, which would undercut our sovereignty and undermine a principle that affects all the peoples of the Americas. It also means opposing all intervention on the side of the dictatorship by supplying the planes, bombs, tanks, and modern weapons that maintain it in power. No one knows this better than we do, not to mention the peasants of the Sierra, who have suffered it in their own flesh and blood.

In short, ending such intervention means achieving the overthrow of the dictatorship. Are we such cowards that we won't even demand no intervention on the side of Batista? Are we so insincere that we ask in an underhanded way for someone else to pull our chestnuts out of the fire? Are we so halfhearted that we dare not utter a single word on the issue? How then can we call ourselves revolutionaries and sub-

scribe to a unity document with historical pretensions?

The unity document omits the explicit rejection of any kind of military junta as a provisional government of the republic.

The worst thing that could happen to Cuba at the present time would be the replacement of Batista by a military junta, as this would be accompanied by the deceptive illusion that the nation's problems had been resolved by the dictator's absence....

Experience in Latin America has shown that all military juntas tend toward autocracy. The worst of all evils that has gripped this continent is the implantation of military castes in countries with fewer wars than Switzerland and more generals than Prussia. One of our people's most legitimate aspirations at this crucial hour, when the fate of democracy and the republic will either be saved or ruined for many years to come, is to guard the most precious legacy of our country's liberators: the tradition of civilian rule. This tradition dates back to the emancipation struggle and was broken the day a uniformed junta first took control of the republic—something never attempted by even the most glorious generals of our independence struggle, either in wartime or in peace.

Are we willing to renounce everything we believe in? Are we to omit such an important declaration of principles out of fear of wounding sensibilities? (This is a fear more imagined than real with regard to honest officers who could support us.) Is it so hard to understand that a timely definition of principles might forestall in time the danger of a military junta that would serve no other purpose than perpetuating the civil war?

We do not hesitate to declare that if a military junta replaces Batista, the July 26 Movement will resolutely continue its struggle for liberation. It is preferable to do battle today than to fall into a new and insurmountable abyss tomorrow. Neither military junta nor a puppet government that would be the toy of the military. The slogan should be: "Citizens, govern with decency and honor. Soldiers, go to your barracks." And each and everyone, do your duty!...

If one lacks faith in the people, if one lacks confidence in their great reserves of energy and struggle, then one has no right to interfere with their destiny, distorting and misdirecting it during the most heroic and promising moments of the republic's life. Keep the revolutionary process free of all dirty politicking, all childish ambitions, all lust for personal gain, all attempts to divide up the spoils beforehand. Men are dying in Cuba for something better....

Another point that is equally unacceptable to the July 26 Movement is secret provision number 8, which states: "The revolutionary forces are to be incorporated, with their weapons, into the regular armed bodies of the republic."

In the first place, what is meant by "revolutionary forces"? Are we to grant a badge of membership to every policeman, sailor, soldier, and everyone else who at the final hour comes forward with a weapon in his hand? Are we to give a uniform and invest authority to those who today have weapons kept in hiding, in order to take them out on the day of triumph? To those who are standing aside while a handful of compatriots battle the entire forces of the tyranny? Are we to include, in a revolutionary document, the very seed of gangsterism and anarchy, which not very long ago were the shame of the republic?...

As we see it, there has also been a regrettable underestimation of the military importance of the struggle in Oriente. What is being waged at present in the Sierra Maestra is not guerrilla warfare but a war of columns. Our forces, which are inferior in numbers and weaponry, take maximum advantage of the terrain, always keep a watchful eye on the enemy, and have greater speed of movement. It need hardly be said that the moral factor has been of decisive importance to the struggle. The results have been astounding, and some day these will be known in all their details.

The entire population has risen up. If there were enough weapons, our detachments would not have to guard a single zone. The peasants would not allow a single enemy soldier to pass. The defeats of the dictatorship, which obstinately sends large forces, could be disastrous. Anything I could tell you about the courage of the people here would be too little. The dictatorship takes barbaric reprisals. Its mass murder of peasants compares with the massacres perpetrated by the Nazis in any country of Europe. Each defeat it suffers is paid for by the defenseless population. The communiqués issued by the general staff announcing rebel losses are always preceded by a massacre. This has led the people to a state of absolute rebellion. But what is most painful, what makes one's heart bleed, is to think that no one has sent a single rifle to these people. While peasants here see their homes burned and their families murdered, desperately begging for rifles, there are arms hidden away in Cuba that are not being used, not even to eliminate a single miserable henchman....

There is one thing we can state with certainty: had we seen other Cubans battling for freedom, pursued and facing extermination; had we seen them not surrender or back down day after day, we would not have hesitated one minute to join them and die together, if that were necessary. For we are Cubans, and Cubans do not remain passive even when it is to fight for the freedom of any other country of the Americas. Are there Dominicans gathering on a little island to liberate their nation? For each Dominican, ten Cubans arrive. Are Somoza's henchmen invading Costa Rica? Cubans rush there to fight. How is it now that when our own country is waging the fiercest battle for its freedom, there are Cubans in exile, expelled from their homeland by the tyranny, who refuse assistance to Cubans who fight?

To obtain aid, must we bow to onerous demands? Must we forsake our ideals and turn this war into a new art of killing human beings, into a useless shedding of blood that does not promise the country any benefit from so much sacrifice?...

We are prepared, even if alone, to triumph or die. The struggle will never be as difficult as it was when we were only twelve men; when we did not have a people organized and tempered by war through the Sierra; when we did not have, as today, a powerful and disciplined organization throughout the country; when we did not possess the formidable mass support demonstrated at the time of the death of our unforgettable Frank País.

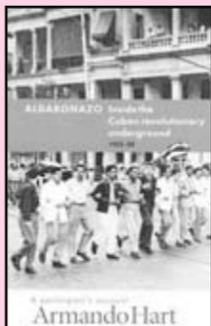
To die with dignity does not require company.

Fidel Castro Ruz
For the National Directorate of
the July 26 Movement,
Sierra Maestra, December 14, 1957.

New from
Pathfinder

Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952-58

by Armando Hart



In this firsthand account by one of the historic leaders of the Cuban Revolution, we meet many of the men and women who in the 1950s led the urban underground in the fight against the brutal U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. Together with their comrades-in-arms of the Rebel Army, they not only brought down the tyranny, their revolutionary actions and example worldwide changed the history of the 20th century—and the century to come. **Now ready for shipment!**

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‘Marianas in Combat’: ‘A book needed by those on front lines’

Pathfinder Press president presents book by Cuban general

The following are remarks by Mary-Alice Waters to participants in a February 19 presentation in East Havana, Cuba, of the book *Marianas in Combat: Teté Puebla and the Mariana Grajales Women's Platoon in Cuba's Revolutionary War, 1956–58*. Waters edited and wrote the introduction to the book, published in both English and Spanish by Pathfinder Press. It contains an interview with Delsa Esther “Teté” Puebla, a brigadier general in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). Puebla was second in command of the Mariana Grajales Women's Platoon, an all-female unit of the Rebel Army in the two-year-long revolutionary war that overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, who fled the country on Jan. 1, 1959. Puebla remains on active duty in the FAR.

The meeting, sponsored by the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution (ACRC), was attended by some 50 people, including members of the association from several municipalities in East Havana as well as nearly a dozen youth from the same neighborhood who are completing their training as revolutionary social workers, one of the recently established programs being led by the Union of Young Communists. Also speaking were Iraidá Aguirrechu, a senior editor at Editora Política, the publishing house of the Cuban Communist Party, and Manuel Pico Pérez, president of the Combatants Association in East Havana. Martín Koppel, editor of *Perspectiva Mundial*, was also asked to join the platform and helped answer questions from the audience during a lively discussion period following the presentations.

The ACRC, which has more than 330,000 members nationally, is made up of combatants spanning several generations, from the revolutionary war to Cuba's missions of internationalist solidarity around the world.

Marianas in Combat was launched a year ago at the February 2003 Havana International Book Fair. Three other presentations of the book were held at that time in Havana, sponsored by the ACRC. Puebla was part of the speakers platform at all four meetings. In September she also took part in a presentation in eastern Cuba in the town of Yara, where Puebla grew up and joined the revolutionary movement as a teenager.

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BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

First, a thank you to all who are here this evening for giving us the honor to share with you the presentation of *Marianas in Combat*. Above all we want to thank compañera Teté Puebla and the compañeros of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR); compañero Juan Almeida, president of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution (ACRC) and the author of the foreword; compañero Harry Villegas (Pombo), executive vice president of the ACRC; and the entire leadership of the Association. Their support and enthusiasm for this book made all our efforts fruitful.

It is also in order here to extend a special thank you to compañera Iraidá [Aguirrechu], without whose editorial capacities and unflagging collaboration, it is safe to say, this book would not have been completed.

I would like to say a few words about why this book is important for us in North America and elsewhere beyond Cuba. And why over the last year it has had such a positive response among revolutionary-minded workers and youth in the United States—most of whom were not yet born when many of you were fighting in the Sierra, in the Escambray, at Playa Girón, or during the October Crisis.

Needed by those on front lines

We are very happy that compañeros in Cuba have responded to *Marianas in Combat* so enthusiastically. I think this is the fifth presentation of the book we have done together with our compañeros of the Combat-

ants Association. Pathfinder, however, did not publish this book in both Spanish and English in order to bring it to Cuba. We published the story of Teté Puebla and the Mariana Grajales Platoon because it is needed by those who find themselves in the front lines of the struggle for national liberation and socialism the world over—including by those of us who live and engage in working-class political activity in the United States.

Already today there are growing legions of young people who, like the young Teté of this book, are unwilling to accept or to rationalize the brutal realities of the capitalist world in which they live. Among them there is a small but growing vanguard that is beginning to search ever more insistently in the experiences of past revolutionary struggles for the lessons that can help point a way forward, forward to struggle for a socialism they can admire, embrace, and defend.

Most of them, however, still believe that it is possible to tame imperialism, pressure it into adopting a more benign posture. They have not yet concluded from their own painful experiences, aided by a study of history—as many of you began to realize some 50 years ago—that no reform, no lasting concession to the rights and to the living and working conditions of the toilers, can be won other than as a by-product of revolutionary struggle. Imperialism can no more change its character than could the tsarist autocracy of the Russian empire, or the English masters of their North American colonies. Only an uncompromising struggle to destroy the state power of the capitalist rulers and replace it with the power of the workers and farmers, as you did here in Cuba, can open the door to the “other world” that is so often wished for.

It is in *this* world—today—that the concrete example of Teté is so important. Knowledge of her story increases our confidence in our ability to fight and win. Through it we come to recognize that revolutions are not made by gods or devils but are a work of human clay. They are made by ordinary human beings like the men and women we meet in these pages. They are the work of men and women who, as the great American revolutionary leader Malcolm X said, could be awakened to their own worth and dignity. Who could then take the future of humanity in their own hands, accomplishing the impossible because they have not yet “learned” it can't be done. And in doing so they transform themselves while they transform their world.

Young women, especially, respond to the example of the Marianas. They identify with the Teté who emerges from these pages—with her growing audacity and courage in combat, with her competence, firmness, and humanity in the battles of life.

Over the past year, we've had the opportunity to discover how young women everywhere who are fighting for their emancipation, for the right to live and work as equals, appreciate this book. They see themselves in the Marianas who overcame the initial prejudices held even by many of their most revolutionary compañeros. The Marianas proved in combat that the women of the Rebel Army, having already assumed all the other duties of the revolution, were also able to fight arms in hand—not ahead of or behind the men, but side by side with them.

Nothing could better confirm the attractive power of the example of the Marianas than the fact only a few weeks ago this book came off the presses in Iran—edited in Farsi by a publisher who specializes in titles relating to women. A very attractive edition, with photos and all. What an omen!

Advancing rights of women

In learning about the Mariana Grajales platoon, moreover, we come to appreciate even more fully the caliber and class consciousness of the leadership of the Cuban Revolution from its earliest days—the understanding of the place of the fight for women's emancipation in the historic line of march of working people the world over, and above all in the socialist revolution. We can



Militant/Björn Tirsén

Participants at East Havana presentation of *Marianas in Combat* sponsored by Combatants Association (above). Speakers panel (inset, from right): Iraidá Aguirrechu, Mary-Alice Waters, Manuel Pico Pérez, and Martín Koppel.



see how and why that leadership has been able to unify and mobilize the people of Cuba to hold at bay the imperial might of the North American colossus for some 45 years.

In a few short decades, the Cuban Revolution has brought the kind of advances in the economic and social status of women that it took well over a century of struggle to partially achieve in the imperialist world. They remain a distant dream for hundreds of millions of women throughout the rest of the so-called third world. The achievements of the Cuban Revolution stand as a powerful refutation of those who light-mindedly claim that Marxism, communism, has no adequate understanding of the millennia-long oppression of women, nor any place in its practice for eradicating that condition.

U.S. and world politics

To finish I want to return to the beginning.

The importance of this book, for us, lies above all in what is already happening in the United States and—even more so—in what is coming in the class struggle. The driving force behind U.S. foreign policy is neither irrationality nor stupidity. From increasingly aggressive protectionist offensives under the banner of “free trade,” to wars of imperial conquest under the banner of combating terrorism, they are driven by something far more deadly: the insatiable demands of capitalism itself. The economic and social conditions that mark today's international reality bear increasing resemblance to those that gave rise to the Great Depression and struggles of the 1930s, and culminated in the second imperialist slaughter of the 20th century.

We can all see with some clarity what the U.S. rulers are doing in Afghanistan and at their Guantánamo Bay Naval Base, in Iraq and Korea, at their forward bases from Eastern Europe to Central Asia's Silk Road, and with their military buildup in Colombia—on the doorstep of our brothers and sisters in Venezuela, who face Washington's mounting arrogance and threats.

It is harder, however, for those outside the United States to see the concrete consequences of the exact same policies inside the U.S. Yet the brutal offensive of the bosses and their government against the rights, working conditions, and standard of living of working people in the U.S.—even the norm, so valuable to workers, of civil discourse—began long before September 11, long before the election of George W. Bush. It is driven by their increasingly desperate need to boost their rate of profit enough to stabilize the bloated dollar—in the vain hope of holding off the consequences of their monetary overextension, of flooding

the world with a national paper currency to a degree never before seen in history, of the sharpest interimperialist conflicts since the first half of the last century.

Under these conditions, the pressures on the working class and its defensive organizations, the trade unions, the drive to cut costs and intensify the exploitation of labor, are unremitting and accelerating. But all this is precisely what is also generating a new kind of resistance, new attitudes of solidarity, new examples of increasing stature, determination, and mutual respect among the toilers and our allies.

This resistance can be seen not only in the strike by some 70,000 workers at giant supermarket chains in Southern California, but in other sharp struggles. One example is a strike at a union garment shop in Miami where the workforce—largely immigrants from Haiti and many other countries of the Americas, including Cubans who have recently arrived—has been in the streets time and again over the past year and a half. They are refusing to accept conditions such as the bosses' attempt to impose a limit of one glass of water per workday for each employee—in Miami, no less!—in order to reduce labor time “lost” to bathroom breaks.

The most inspiring example is the union-organizing drive now in its fifth month being waged by 75 coal miners in the western state of Utah, almost all of them immigrants from Mexico who are rejecting the extreme dangers of working with defective equipment, in mine shafts with only one exit, flooded with water, for which they were being paid a third to a quarter of what other miners in the region earn.

This is the world in which acts of resistance, courage, and self-affirmation such as those we learn about in the pages of *Marianas in Combat* resound. Where the example of our five Cuban compañeros—who are today carrying out their revolutionary work alongside some two million of their brothers and sisters in the prisons of the United States—speaks to a growing vanguard.

That is why we—in the United States—need this book *in both English and in Spanish*. It is why we are so proud to be presenting *Marianas in Combat* here with you today. And that is why we are so grateful to all of you whose revolutionary deeds wrote in life what this book recounts, and then made it possible many years later for us to capture part of that experience in this book.

Gracias. Adelante. Venceremos.

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From Pathfinder



Marianas in Combat

Teté Puebla and the Mariana Grajales Women's Platoon in Cuba's Revolutionary War, 1956–58

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Marxists and the fight for women's equality

Below is an excerpt from the pamphlet *Feminism and the Marxist Movement* one of Pathfinder's books of the month for March. The pamphlet is based on a speech given at the Socialist Activists and Educational Conference held in Oberlin, Ohio, Aug. 13-20, 1972.

The talk traces communist continuity in the fight for women's emancipation from earliest days of the modern communist movement embodied in the Communist League of Germany led by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, to the Third International led by V.I. Lenin the central leader of the Bolshevik party that led the first successful socialist revolution in Russia in 1917, and through the struggle by revolutionary Marxists to defend that continuity in face of the Stalinist counterrevolution in the



Demonstration of Baku Women's Union, Aug. 22, 1920. On banner at right, Azeri text reads, "Long live the world revolution"; Russian text links "liberation of women" with "liberation of the world's toilers." At left, red flag with Islamic crescent. In center, emblem of Azerbaijan Soviet republic.

vading armies of fourteen countries, trying to hold power despite the devastation of war and civil war, famine and disease, in the most economically backward country of Europe.

From 1917 through 1923, the Bolsheviks and many others saw that the struggle for state power was on the agenda not only in Russia but in Germany and other European countries as well. In this they were not wrong. But no leadership other than the Bolsheviks proved capable of meeting the challenge and grasping the historical opportunity to bring the insurgent working masses to the conquest of power.

As the first revolutionary wave subsided, many in the young international failed to understand the meaning of the new situation, the need to readjust the tactics and strategy of the international to accord with the new objective situation, the need to adopt a united-front strategy toward the Social Democracy and other working-class parties. They didn't understand that repeated denunciations of the betrayals by Social Democracy would not by themselves convince those workers still loyal to the Second International. It was necessary to expose the reformist leaders in action.

Lenin and Trotsky together led the fight in the Third International against the ultraleft tendencies that sprang up. They recognized that ultraleftist errors could be just as disastrous for a revolutionary party

as reformist ones.

It is in this general political context that Lenin's opinions about the proposed work of the International Women's Commission of the Comintern should be seen. Again, this was at a new turning point in the history of the revolutionary Marxist movement. Again, analysis of women's oppression and the struggle against it figured in the divisions. However, unlike some of the earlier debates and differences, this time many of the opponents of revolutionary Marxism were ultraleft, not reformist.

Clara Zetkin's book, *Recollections of Lenin*, contains the fullest presentation of Lenin's views at this stage. Zetkin's account is based on two meetings with Lenin in Moscow in 1920. These were preliminary discussions, part of the process of drafting the resolution on work among women for the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921.

First, Lenin urged that the document should stress "the unbreakable connection between woman's human and social position and the private ownership of the means of production." To change the age-old conditions that subjugate women within the family, communists should seek to link the women's movement with "the proletarian class struggle and the revolution." (Clara Zetkin's book is not available in English. Her report of these interviews with Lenin is included in the pamphlet *Lenin On the Emancipation of Women* [Moscow: Prog-

ress Publishers, 1968].)

Lenin next took up the organizational questions I referred to earlier. "We derive our organizational ideas from our ideological conceptions," he told Zetkin. "We want no separate organizations of communist women! She who is a Communist belongs as a member to the Party, just as he who is a Communist. They have the same rights and duties."

"However," he continued, "we must not shut our eyes to the facts. The Party must have organs—working groups, commissions, committees, sections or whatever else they may be called—with the specific purpose of rousing the broad masses of women..."

Zetkin commented that many party members had been denouncing her for making similar proposals on the basis that such ideas were a return to Social Democratic traditions, and that "since the Communist Parties gave equality to women they should, consequently, carry on work without differentiation among all the working people in general."

"How," Lenin asked Zetkin, "do such guardians of the 'purity of principles' cope with the historical necessities of our revolutionary policy? All their talk collapses in the face of the inexorable necessities."

"Why are there nowhere as many women in the Party as men," he demanded, "not even in Soviet Russia? Why is the number of women in the trade unions so small?" In sharp terms he defended the need to put forward special demands for the benefit of all women, of working women and peasant women, and even women of the propertied classes who also suffer under bourgeois society.

Finally, Lenin was sharply critical of the national sections of the Comintern for not doing as much as they should. "They adopt a passive, wait-and-see attitude when it comes to creating a mass movement of working women under communist leadership." He attributed the weakness of women's work in the International to the persistence of male chauvinist ideas which led to an underestimation of the vital importance of building a mass women's movement. For this reason he thought the resolution for the Third World Congress of the Comintern was especially important. The fact that it was on the agenda would itself give an impetus to the work of the sections.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

decades that followed. It is copyright © 1972 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.



BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

The Third International was built on the shoulders of the victorious Bolshevik revolution. It was founded when a line of blood was being drawn between the new revolutionary international and the old Social Democracy. No quarter was given to those who wavered between the two. It was a life-and-death struggle for the young Soviet Republic, which was fighting the in-

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Over easy—According to the English-language *Saudi* [Arabia] *Gazette*, Sotheby in London will auction nine Faberge Imperial



Harry Ring

Easter Eggs. The *Gazette* provides a fascinating description and history of the famed golden eggs crafted for the Russian imperialist dynasty.

Gazette columnist Susannah Tarbush writes: "The extraordinary

Coronation Egg commissioned by Nicholas II in 1897 is expected to sell for between \$18 million and \$24 million. The egg opens to reveal a velvet-lined compartment containing a replica of a coach in which Alexandra made her grand entry into Moscow."

Wait, there's more—The nine eggs were acquired by Malcolm Forbes, publisher of *Forbes* magazine, which includes in its venerable logo, "Capitalist tool." Meanwhile, the *Saudi Gazette* reports, the Forbes family is now marketing the eggs. One problem was Steve Forbes. He dropped a bundle contending twice for the Republican presidential nomination.

Cops will be cops—In Denver, the American Civil Liberties Union filed its fifth suit against the cops for refusing to disclose complaints filed by victims of abuse. Joining with the ACLU is Terrill Johnson, who is Black. He was "subdued," arrested at gunpoint two years ago.

An airline mechanic, Johnson was followed from the airport to home by a squad car. With reinforcements summoned to Johnson's home, they hurled racist epithets at him and demanded he drop his gun. He had no gun to drop. A year later, authorities dropped the charges against Johnson, asserting some of them were true, others not. They refused to say which was which.

Keep hollering—A few weeks ago, a group of students did a study of the pirate price of college textbooks. The report pointed to a top-dollar book of \$100 plus. The publishing house responded coming books would be turned out in cheaper quality and a 25 percent price discount to dealers.

You can bet on it—"Markets usually gain, no matter who wins"—*USA Today's* headline on elections article.

Gnawing at reality—Georgia education officials are working to scrap the word "evolution" in science courses for middle and high school classes. Also, they are pushing the "creation" mumbo-jumbo

contention that the earth and all matter on it were created a few thousand years ago.

Hey grandpa—Kathy Cox, Georgia superintendent of schools, told the media that the word "evolution" is a buzzword and causes a lot of negative reaction. She added that folks associate it with "that monkey-to-man sort of thing."

Slam dunk!—Genetics professor Francisco J. Ayala responded: "Creation is not science. So it should not be taught in a science class. We don't teach astrology instead of astronomy, or witchcraft practices instead of medicine."

Printing project volunteers finish four new books

BY JIM ALTENBERG

OAKLAND, California—More than 100 volunteers on the Pathfinder Printing Project have just completed two extraordinary months of hard work, meeting tight deadlines through intensive work to produce four new Pathfinder titles: *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952-58* in English and Spanish; *Rebelión Teamster*, the first-ever Spanish edition of *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs; and *Leur Trotsky et le nôtre*, the new French-language edition of *Their Trotsky and Ours* by Jack Barnes.

Working under the direction of editors Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark, volunteers in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, New Zealand, and Sweden took the elements of each book—text, cover, photo section, index, and more—and put it together in a digital form according to the design and specifications worked out by the editors. Skills honed over several years of similar work made this possible.

A schedule listing the tasks involved in producing the two *Aldabonazo* books and *Rebelión Teamster* was drawn up by Laurel Kelly of the project steering committee. She worked with the editors and the teams responsible for graphics, formatting, proofreading, indexing, and the preparation of Pathfinder ads for the new books teams. She and steering committee member Tom Tomasko reviewed each day's accomplishments, addressed unanticipated difficulties, and made sure that material was sent to the editors on time and that the decks were cleared for the next round of work.

All the strands of the book production process had to come together on schedule to get the books printed and in the hands of Pathfinder's team at the Havana Book Fair in February. *Aldabonazo* was presented at a public launching that closed the book fair.

(See report in March 8 issue.)

"Being spread over two continents was often an asset," reported Martin Hill, of the formatting team who lives in London. Formatters lay out the text, chapter headings, footnotes, index, and other text-based elements of each book. The geographic spread "enabled work to be done and checked within a 24-hour period," he said. "Occasionally the time zones worked against us too!"

Harvey McArthur in Illinois and Markie Wilson in Hawaii passed files back and forth to take advantage of the four-hour time difference between the states.

Bobbi Sack, the organizer of Printing Project volunteers in graphics, which is responsible for photos, maps, and book covers, said that her team worked more like a relay. One volunteer would do a round of work, then another would step in to do the next phase. Given the number and complexity of the graphics for all three books—two photo sections in each book, internal graphics, maps, covers, and title pages—the almost seamless passing of work from one volunteer to the next was impressive.

The editors sent a steady stream of corrections, reported Hill from London, ranging from typos and punctuation errors to details of translation and political expression. "You really see the thought that goes into ensuring these books are accurate, weapons that fighters will be able to rely on," he said. "And that the political message is expressed as precisely and clearly as possible."

Work on these books helped raise the skill level of many volunteers. Mindy Brudno, a coordinator of the proofreaders, wrote from New York that her team consisted of "mostly new members of the project, since most of the veterans have moved on to other teams." While several former team members returned to help out their old team, and others worked for long periods over Thanksgiving,

newer proofreaders took on work they'd not done before. "After being bombarded with different elements of the books as they came our way, new team members are now fairly experienced proofreaders," said Brudno.

The number of volunteers who can now do "pre-flight checks"—the final preparation for printing and archiving of graphics files—went from one to five.

Over a December 6-7 "Red Indexing Weekend," volunteers broke their previous record for the rapid completion of two new book indexes, reported indexing coordinator Sandi Sherman from the Twin Cities. Fifty-four people joined in the work of indexing and checking 44 sections, she explained. A compiler for each book then reviewed the work and made final decisions on any outstanding issues. All indexing deadlines were met. "This effort took a tremendous amount of diligence and discipline to accomplish in such a short period of time," wrote Sherman.

Over the last couple of years, Printing Project volunteers who have worked on indexing have devised a system for rapid and accurate indexing of books in Spanish and French from the English editions. This enabled volunteers to index the Spanish editions of the new books without being

familiar with Spanish.

"The graphics team's work on these new books was more extensive than for any previous new books," noted Bobbi Sack. She reported that "the extensive design and editorial work required for this project pushed the schedule to the limits," even up to the last hours before the final files were sent to the printer. The photo sections, running to 28 pages in *Aldabonazo* and encompassing some 60 photographs in *Rebelión Teamster*, include many that have not been available for public viewing in decades, or ever before in some cases. Members of the graphics team also put together promotional leaflets and posters for bookstores, libraries, and Pathfinder's booth at the Havana event.

The Printing Project volunteers are now turning their attention to preparing new English-language editions of *Teamster Rebellion* and *Teamster Power*, the first two books in Dobbs's four-volume series on the fight to build the Teamsters Union in the 1930s. Many also plan to seize the long-awaited chance to read and discuss the political experiences described in these new books!

Jim Altenberg is a member of the Printing Project steering committee.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



March 16, 1979

CLEVELAND—When working people are swindled into voting to increase their payroll tax by 50 percent and the mayor says it's a victory over the corporations, you know something funny is going on.

That's what happened here in voting February 27. By a margin of more than two-to-one, voters in this working-class city approved a measure to hike the city's payroll tax from 1 percent to 1.5 percent.

This regressive measure will soak Cleveland workers for an extra \$25 million a year. It doesn't take a cent from the profits of banks and industry.

By a slightly smaller margin the voters turned down a proposal to sell a city-owned power system that supplies electricity to 20 percent of Cleveland's residents.

The municipal plant is supposed to hold down the rates of the city's principal supplier of power, Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company. But it doesn't. The rates keep going up and up.

The debate over whether to sell Muny Light was used by Democratic Mayor Dennis Kucinich as a smokescreen to put over the payroll tax hike demanded by the bankers. Kucinich has cultivated the image of being a "people's mayor fighting corporate domination."

Kucinich's pretense of campaigning against the "greedy corporate special interests" enabled the corporations to ram through the tax hike that voters had rejected four times in the past decade.

By focusing public attention on Muny Light, the mayor diverted attention from the basic question in the city "crisis": Why should the workers foot the burden of the alleged city deficit, when it could

easily be paid from the huge profits of the industrialists and financiers?



March 15, 1954

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Wall Street's hatchet-man at the Tenth Inter-American Conference at Caracas, Venezuela, has demanded a signed oath from all Latin American countries to support U.S. intervention against any one of them whose form of government U.S. imperialism does not find satisfactory. Washington's delegation has demanded the enactment of a U.S. resolution which provides a formula for U.S. assault under the guise of taking "necessary measures to protect their political independence against intervention of international communism."

Central to the loyalty oath that Dulles proposed to exact from the countries south of the Rio Grand is the proposition: "That the domination or control of the political institutions of any American state by the international Communist movement, extending to this hemisphere the political system of an extra-continental power would constitute a threat to the sovereignty and political independence of the American states, endangering the peace of America, and would call for appropriate action in accordance with existing treaties."

Thus, any government which refused to knuckle under to Wall Street and lay its country open to unlimited exploitation by U.S. capitalism could be accused of maintaining "the political system of an extra continental power," presumably the Soviet Union, and might be subject to U.S. economic reprisal and military assault.

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Defend Social Security

The recent call by U.S. Federal Reserve chief Alan Greenspan for cuts in Social Security benefits and the favorable response this received in big-business circles is part of preparing the ground for the next stage in the U.S. rulers' assault on social gains that working people consider to be their basic rights.

Social Security, Medicare, unemployment benefits, workers compensation, and other social benefits were won through mass struggles by workers and farmers—first in the labor battles of the 1930s that led to the rise of the industrial union movement, and then the Black rights struggles of the 1950s and '60s. These represent part of the basic living standards of working people—our social wage.

The tiny handful of billionaire families who rule the United States, however, face an increasingly acute crisis. Since the mid-1970s their profit rates have continued to decline. To turn this around they are driven by the inexorable workings of capitalism to wage a double offensive—a military offensive abroad under the banner of the “war on terrorism” and an offensive at home to roll back the social gains of workers and farmers and intensify class exploitation. That means ultimately dismantling the social security system and forcing workers to fend for themselves.

Because Social Security and other gains were won as a by-product of massive struggles, however, the U.S. rulers cannot simply take them away without a fight. The Reagan administration, for example, discussed “reforming” Social Security in the 1980s but decided not to run the risk of unleashing a social explosion. Reagan said that no politician would dare touch Social Security.

The opening wedge came under the Clinton administration, which chose an easier target: Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The Clinton White House callously dismantled what he called “welfare as we know it,” with virtually no opposition—with brutal consequences for millions. It was the first major assault on the Social Security Act.

This attack, however, is not enough to turn around the economic depression the capitalist system worldwide is headed toward. The employer class is increasingly compelled to probe further in its attacks on Social Security and Medicare—which is what Greenspan's statements represent. As part of the propaganda war to gain acceptance for this assault, the big-business media and politicians claim there is a fixed pot of Social Security funds—workers pay into it and then get retirement benefits from it. And now, they claim, the large number of “baby boomers” approaching retirement will soon “bankrupt” the Social Security program; it's their fault. That is a lie—this program is simply part of the overall budget, and it's the federal government that de-

icides priorities. When they cry “budget deficit!” they would never, of course, consider cutting interest payments to the wealthy bondholders.

Greenspan's warnings are part of ruling-class efforts to soften the beaches for a government assault on Social Security. Democratic and Republican politicians alike have floated various proposals to “reform” Social Security—to raise the retirement age, reduce pension benefits, increase employee taxation, and urge workers to set up individual savings accounts. Democratic politicians' election-year denunciations of President George Bush notwithstanding, there is no doubt that if elected the Democrats—like their Republican counterparts—would launch the next assault. Their man, Clinton, has already blazed the trail.

The same week that he called for slashing Social Security, Greenspan warned that the debt-driven expansion over the past decade of two major government-sponsored mortgage institutions, known as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, posed a “systemic risk” to the U.S. economy. Greenspan, of course, is one of the main creators of this debt bubble.

The latest probes against Social Security and the warnings about the mortgage institutions are further signs of where the capitalist economy is inexorably headed—toward a deepening worldwide depression. These economic pressures are sharpening the competition between the U.S. rulers and their imperialist rivals in Europe and Japan for markets and territories, as seen in last year's U.S.-led war on Iraq.

This is not primarily an economic crisis, but the great political and moral crisis of our time.

For the capitalist class, when it passed Social Security legislation in the mid-1930s, it did so as a concession to the rising industrial union movement. The capitalists never expected to have to pay out much on this promise because U.S. life expectancy was lower than the retirement age of 65. But now workers live some 10 years past retirement age. So our lifespan has become a big problem for the rulers. “Why won't you people face this?” the “experts” like Greenspan ask.

For workers, though, Social Security was the beginning of the attempt to moderate the dog-eat-dog competition imposed on the working class under capitalism. Social Security was an initial step by those who produce the wealth toward conquering the social organization of conditions necessary for life, such as education and health care, *for a lifetime*. Workers cannot make themselves think of each other as if they do not exist up to the age of 13 or after the age of 65. They have a different class view, a different moral view of society. Elementary human solidarity is in our interests, not in conflict with them. That's why we should defend Social Security from the impending assault.

Rightist forces take over Haiti

Continued from front page

Haiti under the United Nations banner.

Aristide had called for an “international” police force to intervene to save his regime. But as the rightist forces continued to advance and the Haitian leader acquiesced to demands by Washington and Paris that he “share power,” the very forces he turned to announced that they wanted him to quit.

Speaking the day after his arrival in the Central African Republic, Aristide complained bitterly that he had been overthrown by the U.S. government.

On February 5 right-wing armed groups seized control of Gonaives, the country's fourth-largest city, and soon took control of more and more cities and towns. By the time of Aristide's departure, they had taken over a majority of Haitian territory and were preparing a bloody assault on Port-au-Prince.

The armed rebel front includes former army officers and leaders of death squads in previous military dictatorships. Guy Philippe was assistant police chief in northern Haiti during Aristide's first term. He turned against Aristide and fled the country in 2000 after being charged with plotting a coup against the government.

Another rightist leader, Louis-Jodel Chamblain, headed death squads in the late 1980s and became a leader of the murderous paramilitary group FRAPH (Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti). He was tried and convicted in absentia for the 1993 assassination of Aristide supporter and financier Antoine Izmerly, and for an 1994 attack in Gonaives known as the Raboteau massacre.

In 1986 a popular revolt overthrew the bloody

U.S.-backed dictatorship of Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier. Aristide, who had become popular for speaking out against the Duvalier regime, was elected president in 1990 and enjoyed widespread support among workers and peasants at the time.

In 1991 Aristide was overthrown in a right-wing coup. He appealed to Washington for support and was restored to office on the bayonets of a U.S.-led force in 1994. His first term in office ended in 1996 and he was re-elected in 2000. Washington hoped Aristide, unlike the discredited rightist forces, could stabilize bourgeois rule in Haiti and effectively protect imperialist interests.

The U.S. rulers, however, never fully trusted his government's ability to do so, especially in face of heightened expectations by working people in Haiti that their lives would improve under his administration.

As Haiti's economy continued to deteriorate and the government carried out most of the economic austerity measures demanded by the imperialist powers, however, popular support for the government shrank. The government further alienated the population by resorting to tuggish methods of rule against its opponents. In the final days of his regime, for example, Aristide supporters attacked the Capane Vert hospital, the only such facility still operating in the capital. They said they were looking for opposition forces who had been wounded in recent days.

As a result of the rapidly increasing political isolation of the Aristide regime and its reliance on imperialism, relatively small groups of rightist rebels were able to take control virtually without a fight.

Class war in Venezuela

Continued from front page

Center and the Organization of American States, which have had “experts” in the country to monitor the recall campaign, said they saw no evidence of fraud in the CNE's decision. In the same breath, however, they asked electoral authorities to disregard petition irregularities and respect “the apparent will of the voters,” according to the *Washington Post*.

Addressing hundreds of thousands who rallied in Caracas February 29 to oppose the U.S.-orchestrated campaign to topple the Venezuelan government, Chávez said the White House was responsible for destabilizing the country. He threatened to cut off oil shipments to the United States if Washington took further steps to intervene. Venezuela, the world's fifth-largest oil producer, is among the top four suppliers of oil to the United States.

Venezuelan vice president José Vicente Rangel said the actions by Washington and its local backers amounted to a “third coup” against the government.

The escalating showdown between large sections of the working class and peasantry and some middle-class layers, on one hand, and the majority of the capitalist class, on the other, is the third major class confrontation in the country in the last two years. Two previous efforts to topple Chávez—a short-lived military coup in April 2002 and a bosses' “strike” a year ago—were defeated as millions of working people mobilized in the streets, dividing the military.

After these two setbacks, the pro-imperialist opposition launched a petition drive demanding a referendum to recall the president, submitting 3.4 million signatures December 19.

The Chávez government charged that the signature gathering involved major fraud. Evidence presented by Caracas included testimony by workers who said their employers coerced them into signing the opposition petitions under the threat of losing their jobs; forged signatures of people who have died; and Venezuelans not listed on voter rolls crossing into the country from Colombia to back the anti-Chávez ballot drive.

As the February 29 deadline for a decision by the National Electoral Council neared, it became clear that the board would not grant the Coordinadora Democrática demand for a referendum.

Frustrated opposition resorts to violence

Frustrated that their plans to overthrow the bourgeois nationalist government would be thwarted once again, Fedecámaras, Venezuela's main business association, and other groups in the opposition coalition organized daily antigovernment protests during the week leading up to the CNE announcement. Demonstrations ranged from tens of thousands to dozens of people. They became more and more concentrated in eastern Caracas, in the city's wealthiest neighborhoods. Many of the protests included burning tires, blocking roads, and throwing tear gas at National Guard troops or pro-Chávez demonstrators.

The rightist protests intensified February 27 with a march in Venezuela's capital during the two-day summit of governments of semicolonial nations known as the Group of 15. The U.S. big-business press reported that 30,000 took to the streets in the February 27 antigovernment protest. When demonstrators tried to advance to the summit venue, National Guard troops turned them back with tear gas. A firefight broke out, resulting in two people killed and 21 injured. Caracas fire chief Rodolfo Briceno said it was not clear who had used firearms.

A government statement blamed Bandera Roja (Red Flag), a Maoist group that has joined the pro-imperialist opposition coalition, and the social democratic Democratic Action party, which dominated the government for decades prior to Chávez's election, for the violent confrontation. Chávez also accused the Caracas metropolitan police, which is under the control of the city's mayor, opposition figure Alfredo Peña, with aiding the outbreak of violence. He also threatened to use tanks, if needed, to bring the police under government control.

During this period, Chávez repeated statements that Washington was intervening openly to back the recall referendum drive and preparing to expand its offensive with possible open military intervention. He blasted the White House for attempting to tie his government to “terrorism,” through allegations of support for guerrilla groups in neighboring Colombia.

Washington denied that it was funding anti-Chávez groups. The government, however, presented unambiguous evidence that Sumate, a group that helped plan the recall drive, received \$53,000 from the U.S. government through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which has funneled hundreds of thousands of dollars to groups trying to oust Chávez, according to the *Washington Post*.

“It was quite legitimate for them to receive funds from the NED, which gives money to hundreds of civil organizations around the world in order to promote democracy,” said Juan Fernández, a Coordinadora Democrática leader.

On March 2, CNE president Francisco Carrasquero announced that only 1.83 million signatures submitted by the opposition in December were valid. The elections board invalidated more than 600,000 signatures. It also ruled that another 870,000 could not be verified, calling on those who may have signed them to show up at designated polling stations between March 18 and March 22 to verify personally their signatures.

Officials of the pro-imperialist opposition said this would be a monumental task that could indefinitely postpone the referendum or derail it entirely. They were backed by officials of the OAS and the Carter Center.

In a sign of the growing tensions between the government and imperialist “experts” in the country, Carrasquero held a press conference March 1 stating that the Carter Center was leaving the country. Jennifer McCoy, the center's president, replied, however, that her group had no plans to leave. “I want to make it clear that the Carter Center mission remains in Venezuela,” she told reporters.

Behind the intensifying class war

Elected in 1998, the Chávez government has won widespread popular support among workers, peasants, fishermen, and other exploited producers, as well as layers of small businessmen, for adopting measures that if implemented would be in the interests of working people. These include an agrarian reform law that grants the right to titles and credits to peasants who have taken over land on estates of big landowners and are tilling it; a bill that substantially expands the rights of small fishermen to the detriment of capitalist fishing firms; and legislation that strengthens control of oil and natural resources that are part of the country's national patrimony.

Determined struggles by working people to implement such measures—including pitched battles between peasants and private armies of capitalist landowners—have been at the heart of why most in the capitalist class, with Washington's backing, have not let up in their drive to topple the government.

Chávez has also drawn the ire of U.S. imperialism and its supporters in Venezuela for developing normal diplomatic and trade ties with revolutionary Cuba. These have included oil exports to Cuba on terms similar to those Caracas has extended to semicolonial countries in the region, cooperation in Venezuela's nationwide literacy campaign launched in June 2003, and a program that has brought to Venezuela thousands of Cuban doctors operating free neighborhood clinics in areas where working people have had little or no access to health care. Some 15,000 Cuban volunteers now serve in Venezuela. These include doctors, literacy teachers, sports trainers, agricultural specialists, and others.

Bush grandstands for constitutional change on marriage that has little chance of success

BY MARK GILSDORF

SAN FRANCISCO—On February 24 U.S. President George Bush declared his support for a Congressional amendment that would define marriage as “a union of a man and woman as husband and wife” and thereby bar marriage between same-sex couples.

Bush’s statement was crafted to consolidate support among the conservative-minded voters who constitute an important part of the electoral base of the Republican Party. At the same time, the president put forward no timetable and proposed no campaign to speed the progress of the amendment, which at best faces years of debate and many obstacles.

Any such amendment, Bush said, should leave state legislatures “free to make their own choices in defining legal arrangements other than marriage”—a reference to civil unions. Under legislation passed in Vermont, the first state government to recognize civil unions, same-sex couples are entitled to the benefits associated with legal marriage.

Speaking for five minutes and allowing no

questions, Bush argued on the precedent set by his Democratic Party predecessor. “Eight years ago,” he said, “Congress passed and President Bill Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage for purposes of federal law as the legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.”

Bush did not state his support for any specific amendment. Of the several proposals circulating in Congress, reported the February 25 *New York Times*, “White House officials said Mr. Bush liked the language in the only amendment introduced so far, by Representative Marilyn Musgrave, Republican of Colorado.”

Agape Press, which bills itself as the Christian News Service, reported January 21 that Musgrave’s Federal Marriage Amendment “currently has 108 bipartisan co-sponsors”—a long way short of a majority of the 535 representatives in Congress.

A Constitutional amendment would require a two-thirds majority in the House and Senate. If it achieved that, it would go to the state level, where it would require the approval of three-quarters of state legislatures

to be written into the Constitution. Such a process would take years.

Bush’s announcement gained the immediate approval of Senate representatives from his party who have supported the amendment. However, House majority leader Thomas Delay, a Republican from Texas, refused to commit to pushing the amendment through before the November presidential election. “We are going to look at our options and be deliberate about what solutions we may suggest,” he said. According to the *Times*, Delay said, “it would be ‘very difficult’ to get such a measure through Congress and that some Republicans were strongly resistant to changing the Constitution.”

While it initially received little support in Congress when she first introduced it in May 2003, Musgrave’s amendment quickly became part of a broader debate.

In mid-June the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Texas anti-sodomy law on the grounds that it violated privacy rights—a registration of the widespread rejection of state intrusion into private matters, and opposition to discrimination against gays.

The two front-runners in the primary race to decide the Democratic Party presidential candidate said they would vote against the amendment. Massachusetts senator John Kerry, the odds-on favorite to win the nomination, said February 24, “While I believe marriage is between a man and a woman, for 200 years this has been a state issue. I oppose this election-year effort to amend the Constitution in an area that each state can adequately address.”

Second-placed John Edwards said that he also opposed same-sex marriage. However, he said, “we have had our Constitution for more than 200 years.... We should not amend it over politics.”

Stance on affirmative action

This is not the first time that the Bush administration has rhetorically supported a conservative political cause, while refusing to attach its banner to the right-wing social crusade known as the cultural war.

Last year the White House filed a brief backing a legal challenge to a University of Michigan admissions policy that takes nationality into account. The Supreme Court rejected the challenge and upheld the affirmative action policy.

While the administration had asked the court to invalidate the programs, it angered right-wing groups by accepting the consideration of race as a factor.

The administration’s pragmatic stance on immigration has further angered right-wing commentators who call for a clampdown on the influx of working people over the border. Howls of conservative outrage greeted Bush’s January proposal to create a new work visa that would give employed undocumented workers temporary legal status, regularizing the low-wage exploitation of millions of immigrants.

Gay marriages in San Francisco

In his February 24 remarks, Bush criticized the action two weeks earlier of San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom, who had “issued thousands of marriage licenses to people of the same gender, contrary to the California Family Code.” He noted that the Defense of Marriage Act had also been defied in Massachusetts, where the highest state court has instructed the government to issue licenses for same-sex couples starting in May.

When the San Francisco marriage licenses became available February 12, hundreds of couples lined the blocks around City Hall to apply. The February 23 *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that “after more than a week of block-long lines, the city is now issuing the licenses by appointment only.” By February 24, more than 3,000 couples in San Francisco had taken advantage of the opening. The licenses may not be recognized in other states.

Mayor Newsom said his action complies with the state constitution’s guarantee of equal protection under the law. His decision was “about human beings,” he said February 22. “It’s about dignity. It’s about advancing and affirming marriage in a unique bond and relationship.”

The newspapers reported similar comments from other opponents of discrimination against gays. “We have the deeply moving images of thousands of couples lining up overnight, some in the rain... because of their deep hunger to marry,” said Evan Wolfson, director of Freedom to Marry. “There’s no question it’s touching a chord.”

Among the opponents of the marriage license extension were 25 people who briefly blocked the door of the count clerk’s office. Right-wing columnists across the country expressed outrage.

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger instructed State Attorney General William Lockyer to file suit to block the issuing of any more licenses.

Two opposition groups have taken legal action with the same purpose. Terence Thompson of the Alliance Defense Fund, one of the groups, said: “This is a simple issue of legal anarchy. The mayor can’t decide what is constitutional or what is unconstitutional.” Mathew Stover of the Campaign for California Families said the group was seeking an injunction to block further marriages.

Murder trial used to smear Peltier fight

BY TED LEONARD

BOSTON—“All we ask for is justice. Leonard was fighting for the truth, for what is right,” said Timothy Swallow at a February 6 public meeting called to build support for the campaign to free Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM). Peltier has spent almost three decades in prison on frame-up charges of killing two FBI agents in 1975. The agents died in a shoot-out at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

Swallow, who is Teton Lakota, band of Crazy Horse, was one of a panel of speakers to address the meeting, which drew 40 people to the Zumix arts and cultural center in East Boston. The event occurred the same day as the conviction in South Dakota of Arlo Looking Cloud for the 1976 murder of fellow AIM member Anna Mae Pictou Aquash. AIM spokesman Vernon Bellecourt told the *New York Times* that the way the prosecution conducted its case against Looking Cloud, “you would think the American Indian Movement was on trial.”

Speaking at the Boston meeting, Peltier’s attorney Barry Bachrach observed that Looking Cloud’s trial “isn’t about who murdered Anna, it is about smearing Leonard Peltier and other AIM leaders.”

Andrea Hornbein, a coordinator of the Boston Area Leonard Peltier Support Group, which sponsored the meeting along with the Militant Labor Forum, said that the event was part of an international day of solidarity with Peltier’s fight for freedom. Last year, she said, the defense committee forced the FBI to release additional pages of formerly secret files on its investigation of the Pine Ridge killings. Some 100,000 pages remain under FBI lock and key, she added.

In the course of Peltier’s attempts to gain justice, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals concluded that his trial and previous appeals had been riddled with FBI misconduct and judicial impropriety. It cited coercion of witnesses, perjury, and fabrication and suppression of evidence. Nevertheless, the court confirmed Peltier’s conviction and double life sentence.

Peltier had gone to Pine Ridge after becoming active in the fight for American Indian rights in the early 1970s. There he worked to assist local people under attack by goons organized by the Pine Ridge Tribal Council headed by Dick Wilson, who enjoyed covert FBI backing. During this time the reservation had a higher ratio of FBI agents to citizens than any other area in the country. Despite this, not one of the murders or beatings carried out in the course of Wilson’s campaign of violence was ever investigated.

On June 26, 1975, shooting broke out between two FBI agents in unmarked cars and local residents, some of them AIM members. The two agents and one Native man were killed. Leonard Peltier was one of three people put on trial in the deaths of the



Leonard Peltier is deported from Canada to United States in December 1976 to face frame-up trial in deaths of two FBI agents at Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

agents. No investigation of the Native man’s death took place. Two of those who went to trial were found not guilty on grounds of self-defense.

Fearing that he had no possibility of a fair trial, Peltier fled to Canada, from where he was later extradited in response to FBI affidavits that the government now concedes were fabricated. Tried in a different district from the first trial, and by a judge hand-picked by the FBI, he was found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to two consecutive life terms.

Swallow, who grew up at Pine Ridge and was nine years old at the time of the frame-up, described conditions today on the reservation. “There is a massive health problem—black mold is in the houses—our babies die before they are one year old, our old people are dying. There is no other housing available and the Bureau of Indian Affairs tells us we have to pay the rent.” Cutbacks in government programs for the reservations squeeze their residents even tighter, he said.

The other panelists were Danielle Shenandoah Patterson, Oneida of the Six Nation Iroquois Confederacy and representative to the United Nations Indigenous Forum, and Margaret Trowe of the Socialist Workers Party.

Murder trial of AIM member

The prosecution had opened its case against Arlo Looking Cloud three days earlier, charging that he had carried out the killing on Peltier’s orders. They leveled the same charge at John Graham, who is fighting extradition from Canada.

Prosecutors claimed that AIM leaders targeted Aquash, a veteran of the 1973 occupation at Wounded Knee and other protests, because they feared she was a

government spy. Ka-Mook Nichols, who had been a friend of Aquash and a member of AIM, testified along these lines.

“The prosecutors have accomplished what they wanted. They’re trying to smear Leonard, and they’re trying to smear AIM. They’re trying to change history,” said Bachrach in response to Looking Cloud’s conviction, according to the *New York Times*. The report in the big-business paper itself indicated that AIM was at the center of the proceedings. The trial, it said, “offered a glimpse inside the politics and distrust within the militant Indian civil rights group at the height of its clashes with federal authorities in the 1970s.”

In a February 8 press release, Bachrach observed that “the majority of the testimony presented had nothing whatsoever to do with Arlo Looking Cloud, but prominent members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and my client, Leonard Peltier, in particular.”

Bachrach noted that in spite of this, the AIM leaders have not been charged “simply because there is no evidence against them.... And for every witness presented, there are any number of other individuals who could be called to appear and who would tell very different stories—that Annie Mae wasn’t afraid of AIM, but the Federal Bureau of Investigation; she had stated this to various individuals on numerous occasions; and she had actually put such fears in writing.”

To obtain information on Peltier’s case and upcoming activities related to his fight for freedom, contact the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee at Box 583, Lawrence, KS 66044, call (785) 842-5774, or visit www.freepeltier.org.

Joe Swanson in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this article.

Australia cops kill Aboriginal youth Police brutality, racist conduct spark rebellion in Sydney

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia—About 500 Aboriginal people and other supporters of Black rights marched in Redfern, Sydney, February 24 in dignified silence demanding “Justice for T.J.” Thomas Hickey, or TJ as his friends knew him, was a Black youth killed by police the week before. The procession coincided with the funeral of the 17-year-old in Walgett, an outback New South Wales town, in which 300 people took part.

TJ was killed February 14 as he was chased on his bicycle by a police car. This sparked a nine-hour street battle next day between a large cop force and residents of a working-class area of Aboriginal housing in Redfern known as “the Block.” The confrontation received national and international media coverage.

A silent vigil was held at the spot where the teenager was impaled on a fence, now a memorial site initiated by Black youth in the area. It is decorated in black, red, and yellow—the Aboriginal flag colors—and covered with hand-written messages and flowers. The demonstrators proceeded to the Redfern police station where they presented a list of 17 demands to secure evidence for the government inquiries.

Police claim they “had nothing to do with” the death of TJ, stating their cars were “blocks away” looking for a different man over a local assault and bag snatching when TJ had his “accident.” The cops’ version of events has been highly publicized by the media.

Virginia Hickey, TJ’s aunt, said in a February 24 interview with the *Militant*, however, that her nephew had been targeted by the police and recently beaten up by five cops, and became “terrified” of them.

Militant reporters talked to several eyewitnesses February 18. Two boys, who asked that their names not be used for fear of police reprisals, said they saw TJ riding his bike at full speed trying to elude a “screeching” cop car with lights and siren on. The 17-year-old was thrown from his bike and impaled on an iron fence after a cop “bull wagon” rammed his rear wheel, the boys said. The cops then called for “back-up,” not an ambulance. When more police arrived, they pulled him from the fence, held him down roughly, and “searched his pockets,” despite his screams.

“There were too many coppers there for them not to be chasing him,” said another witness, Glen McArthur, a 40-year-old laborer. “They took the bike away but now they’re telling the family they don’t know where it is.”

“He was bleeding to death,” said Lisa McArthur, Glen’s wife. “A little girl had to call the ambulance.”

TJ died in the hospital hours later from neck, chest, and internal injuries. As news of TJ’s killing by the police spread the next day, a flyer was handed out with a picture of three police officers. “Wanted: child murderers,” it said. “There is a gang of child killers operating in the Redfern area. They can be easily identified as they all dress the same.”

A cop riot

Residents say that after TJ’s killing cops stepped up their presence in the neighborhood in cars and on foot, taunting the Black teenagers. TJ’s mother, Gail Hickey, said her son’s friends became “wild” and began throwing things at the police in retaliation. As cops gathered in force, sealing off the area and shutting down the local railway station, the battle began.

Up to 250 cops with riot gear and 15 police vehicles were locked in a running fight into the night with about 100 mainly youthful Aboriginal protesters, according to press reports. Seven fire engines and two ambulances were behind the police lines.

Residents used burning car barricades and projectiles to keep the amassed police out of the Block during the running



Protesters use fireworks to keep riot cops out of Sydney, Australia, neighborhood February 16 during protests that followed police killing of 17-year-old Aboriginal youth.

battle. Lines of police cars were attacked with bricks and paving stones, bottles, firecrackers, and some Molotov cocktails. More than 50 police were reported injured, one knocked unconscious. The front of the local railway station, which cops often use to watch the Block, was set on fire.

Cops used high-pressure water hoses to force back the youthful crowd. Riot police then forced their way into the Block, marching down the road in close formation, and lining the footpaths for hours, “like storm troopers,” according to one resident.

New South Wales (NSW) Labour premier Robert Carr blamed the outcome on “heat and alcohol...and orchestration by elements who’ve chosen to urge a major incident.” Parroting “what the police on the ground reported to us,” Carr said “the criminals” who instigated the fighting would be arrested.

Claiming to use video footage identification, the cops planned a sweep of arrests through the neighborhood. TJ’s girlfriend, for example, was arrested as she verbally

expressed her frustration and anger at the police over her friend’s murder.

A February 16 Block community meeting of 300 people heard speakers calling for justice over TJ’s death. Several hundred attended a February 18 concert of Aboriginal bands and singers. Three days later, more than 200 silently joined a memorial service for him. Aden Ridgeway, a Democratic senator and the only Aboriginal in federal parliament, pointed to “the alienation of Aboriginal kids” and spoke against the arrest of Black protesters.

Pat Dodson, a nationally known Aboriginal leader, said that there were 20 or 30 Redferns in Australia waiting to explode. Recently, Aborigines in the Northern Territory town of Katherine also protested the police killing of a Black man there. Cops in a patrol car ran over and killed him as he was sleeping in a driveway, then claimed it was an “accident.”

In a crude appeal to anti-Aboriginal racism, NSW Liberal Party opposition leader

John Brogden called for the Block to be “bulldozed.” His remarks expressed the interests of profit-hungry real estate sharks who have long eyed the area for “development” of high-priced apartments.

Specter of ‘stolen generations’

Brogden denounced what he called the “softly-softly” handling of the situation by the police. The conservative leader called for removing Aboriginal children from families with problems of alcohol, violence, or drugs. This brought back to today’s reality the specter of the “stolen generations”—the kidnapping by state authorities of “half-caste” Aboriginal children from their mothers, which went on for decades.

Redfern has been an area of relatively inexpensive housing for over a century. Indigenous people, dispossessed of their lands by British colonization, have gravitated here since the Depression of the 1930s. This trend accelerated in the 1950s and ‘60s as agricultural mechanization did away with many low-paid rural jobs previously held by Aboriginal people.

Government purchase in the 1970s of housing in the Block—passed on to the new Black-run housing service—alleviated some Aboriginal homelessness and related social problems. The project has since been starved of funds.

As a result of chronic discrimination, living standards and conditions for Aborigines are far below those of most other residents of Australia. Their average life span today is 20 years less than for nonindigenous people. Black infant mortality is three times that of other babies. Aborigines make up 2.4 per cent of Australia’s population of 20 million, yet they comprise 19 percent of adults in jail and 41 percent of juvenile prisoners.

Lyall Munro, a longtime fighter for Black rights, said in a radio interview that most Aboriginal kids, “have been bashed by police” and that “harassment and intimidation is an everyday occurrence.” TJ’s death, he continued, “was a preventable death, like most of the deaths of young Aboriginal people today. As far as we’re concerned, it’s an Aboriginal death in custody.”

Protesters condemn UK aid to Ireland death squads

BY JULIE CRAWFORD AND ANTONIS PARTASIS.

LONDON—Holding photos of their murdered loved ones, relatives of the victims of rightist death squads in Northern Ireland led a protest here February 4 to expose and condemn collusion in the killings by the British government. Representing 100 families of victims of the rightists, they demanded that London tell the truth about the involvement of successive governments in the murders. The killings were part of a 30-year campaign of terror by state forces and Unionists—named after their support for union with the British Crown—against those who oppose British rule and support reunification with the Republic of Ireland.

The protest followed by a couple of days the annual Bloody Sunday parade in Derry, Northern Ireland, marking the anniversary of the 1972 massacre of 14 civil rights marchers by British paratroopers.

Most of the families at the London protest live in Belfast, although participants pointed out that the death squads have been active across Ireland, including in the republic. One banner read, “Who sanctioned Britain’s death squads? Time for the truth.”

The crowd, which numbered more than 80 people, picketed outside the headquarters of MI5, London’s equivalent of the CIA. “We are here because this is where decisions got made for generations of murders,” Paul Crawford told the *Militant*. His father had been brutally murdered by the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in the nationalist area of Milltown, West Belfast, in 1974.

Four people were involved, including one former British soldier, said Crawford, but only one person was sentenced.

“After the murder our house was raided every week for a whole year,” Crawford said. “My brothers and I were arrested frequently. I was hospitalized at one stage through one of these arrests. I want to tell the British government I’m here, I am not going anywhere, I hold them responsible, and I want answers.”

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams was the featured speaker. He condemned British officials’ refusal to investigate incidents of state and state-sponsored violence, and their continuing cover-up of their responsibility for the Bloody Sunday massacre—including in the current Saville Inquiry.

“The murder of citizens through collusion with Unionist death squads has been and remains a British state policy in Ireland,” Adams said. “Collusion—the control, resourcing and direction of loyalist death squads by British state agencies—was sanctioned at the highest level of the British government. It resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Republicans, nationalists and Catholics.”

Adams emphasized that “the British apparatus, which operates the policy of collusion, continues in existence.... There must be a full disclosure of the truth about Britain’s war in Ireland.”

Others talked of their direct experience of the death squads’ activities. Mark Sykes said that 12 years earlier he had been shot four times by loyalist gunmen in an attack on

the Ormeau Road in South Belfast. Among the five killed was his 18-year-old brother-in-law, Peter Magee. The gunmen’s weapons had been in the hands of the security forces in Northern Ireland just weeks earlier.

Laura Hamill described the murder of her husband Patrick, carried out in front of his family by the Ulster Defense Association using intelligence supplied by the British army’s covert Force Research Unit.

Carol Kane explained, “My father Edward Kane was murdered in North Belfast in an explosion that killed 15 other people in 1971. [The British government] tried to say it was someone in the bar. It only came to light over the last few years that there was collusion” between British officials and the UVF, which carried out the murder.

Carol Kane’s brother Billy was murdered in the family home 17 years later at the age of 19. She said that he had been searched by British troops in the adjacent street half an hour before the killing. Soldiers were billeted above the apartment, from where they “would have seen everything,” she said.

A week earlier Sinn Fein leader Martin McGuinness told a Belfast press conference, “British intelligence recruited and placed large numbers of agents within Unionist paramilitaries.... In December 1987, over 300 weapons were brought into the north of Ireland, with the full participation and knowledge of British intelligence and distributed among the Unionist death squads. The British state created an efficient sectarian murder machine and set it loose on the northern nationalist community.”