

THE MILITANT

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Haitian, Dominican floods: social, not 'natural,' disaster Imperialist domination is cause of deadly toll

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The capitalist catastrophe facing working people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic has deepened with the devastating consequences of floods and mudslides in the rural border region of the two nations. At least 2,000 people are reported dead and thousands have been left homeless, with entire villages washed away.

The toll has been magnified by the lack of adequate housing, medical care, roads, transportation, communications, and other basic infrastructure. These conditions are the result of exploitation by the domestic capitalist ruling families and plunder by the imperialist powers—above all Washington, Ottawa, and Paris—of the wealth that workers and peasants produce.

One of the horrible consequences of the imperialist domination of the two countries—especially Haiti—is the deforestation of the border region that made the toll from the floods so devastating. Haiti is the most deforested country of the Americas. Only 1 percent

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Reuters/Timothy Edwards (top)
Daniel Morel (right)

Area near Haitian village of Mapou in border region of Haiti and Dominican Republic, submerged in water, top, has few trees. Right, a farmer sits on porch of his mud-filled house in Leogane, Haiti, May 27 after severe floods hit area. At least 2,000 people have died, about 1,600 of them in Haiti.



As numbers of women in prisons explode, abuse of female prisoners widespread in U.S.

BY RÓGER CALERO

NEWARK, New Jersey—Recent press interviews with female inmates and other reports about the U.S. prison system have focused attention on the systematic abuse faced by hundreds of thousands of women, overwhelmingly from the working class, behind bars across the United States. The revelations come to light as the numbers of women in U.S. prisons have skyrocket-

ed in the last quarter century, jumping by nearly 600 percent between 1977 and 2001—a rate double that for male prisoners, according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics.

In May, the daily *Star-Ledger*, published in Newark, New Jersey, ran a series of articles based on interviews with female prisoners in New Jersey. The inmates described as every day occurrences in state

prisons “unnecessary and degrading strip searches; verbal abuse; sexual innuendoes; late-night cell visits [by the guards]; trysts in a bathroom or a storage shed; threats when it was over.”

One of the women interviewed, Chelsea Ward, 35, told the *Star-Ledger* that her story began not in prison, but in the prisoner holding cell next to a judge’s chambers at the Essex County courthouse. That’s where police officer George Bradley told her that he would get drug charges against her dismissed if she had sex with him, Ward said.

Ward then described acts of sexual coercion and other abuses by the prison guards at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility in New Jersey, where she served time for a drug-related crime. In 2000 Ward and seven other inmates filed a lawsuit against Edna Mahan, New Jersey’s only women’s

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U.S. occupying forces make gains in assault on Najaf, other Iraqi cities

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—In a deal reached May 27, Muqtada al-Sadr agreed to pull combatants from his Mahdi Army militia off the streets of the southern Iraqi cities of Najaf and Kufa. In return, U.S.-led occupation forces agreed to suspend operations there. As we go to press, however, clashes continue in these cities between al-Sadr’s forces and U.S. troops, with Washington on the initiative as its troops push deeper into the heart of these cities and provoke firefights.

For the past seven weeks U.S. military forces have waged an assault against al-Sadr’s militia and have made gains in their offensive. The progress of the occupiers is reflected not only on the military field but in isolating al-Sadr politically and creating an atmosphere in which other Shiite leaders are publicly distancing themselves from his group and are more openly call-

ing for “dealing with his intransigence.” Al-Sadr has refused to recognize the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council and his forces have carried out attacks on

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Kerry pushes federal police spying under banner of ‘homeland security’

BY PAUL PEDERSON

In a May 27 speech in Seattle, Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry pressed the point that, if elected, his administration would outdo the Bush White House in strengthening the powers of the federal secret police and other spy agencies at home and abroad, while driving ahead with Washington’s imperialist offensive under the banner of the “war on terrorism.”

The current administration has “made

America less safe than we should be in a dangerous world,” Kerry said. “We have endured in these last few years under this administration too many intelligence failures.”

“This is my message to the terrorists,” Kerry said. “As commander in chief, I will bring the full force of our nation’s power to bear on finding and crushing your network. We’ll use every resource of our power to

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UMWA strike in Utah wins support from PACE union

BY ANNE CARROLL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—Region 11 of the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy workers union (PACE) held a council meeting May 20 in Portland, Oregon. The 180 union representatives present from the western states of Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming, heard a report from Kyle Wulle on the Co-Op miners’ strike.

Wulle, a member of PACE Local 8-931 in Salt Lake City, Utah, has been an active supporter of the striking miners since the beginning of the walkout last September, helping to raise funds and organizing solidarity activities along with other unionists in Salt Lake.

“I presented a resolution at the Region 11 council meeting to support morally and financially the Co-Op miners on strike in Utah until the end,” said Wulle. “The resolution passed unanimously.”

“Whereas, the coal miners employed by the Kingston-owned Co-Op mine are on strike for union recognition, economic justice, safe working conditions and basic human dignity,” the resolution stated, “and whereas, this strike has lasted going on nine

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Saudi Arabia raid provides opening for U.S. imperialism

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

The May 29–30 raid on a compound housing oil company employees in al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia, by forces opposed to the Saudi monarchy, is sparking criticism of the royal government and speculation by the big-business media and politicians in the United States about its vulnerability to further “terrorist” attacks. The events provide a new opening for Washington to work with the most pro-American elements of the monarchy toward boosting the U.S. military presence in the country and ensuring the long-term domination of Saudi oil by U.S. finance capital.

The siege and battle, which pitted four hostage-takers against numerous Saudi police and commandos, occurred one year after Washington announced the withdrawal of all but 400 of its 5,000 troops from the country. Saudi Arabia, which sits atop one-quarter of the globe’s known oil deposits and is the biggest exporter of oil in the

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Australian military abused prisoners in E. Timor, Solomons

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY—In the midst of worldwide outrage over systematic abuse of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. and British occupation forces in Iraq, the Australian imperialist rulers and their military command are trying to stifle publicity about their own ill treatment of prisoners.

Torture and possible murders of captives under “interrogation” by Australian forces in East Timor in 1999 are among the most serious charges to be detailed in the media recently. Abuse of prisoners by Australian cops in the Solomon Islands has also come to light.

Beginning in September 1999, the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) spearheaded an imperialist intervention into East Timor, which was backed by Washington and endorsed by the United Nations. Since July 2003, Australian and New Zealand military and police have formed the core of a regional intervention in the Solomon Islands in the Pacific.

In November of last year, *Dateline*, a Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) TV current affairs program, aired interviews with three Timorese men—Caetano da Silva, Johnny Rohiede, and Jao Ximenes—about their interrogations. They were arrested in 1999 on suspicion of belonging to a pro-Indonesian “militia.” Each described being beaten, terrorized, and tortured by Australian troops.

“It was inhumane,” Rohiede said. “We were told to lie down on human feces. They hit us. They say Westerners are never cruel. But they abused us, hit us, mistreated us.”

Ximenes showed *Dateline* reporters a toe he said had been “crushed under the heel of an Australian soldier” during interrogation.

Kept in a back room of the football stadium in Dili, East Timor’s capital, they said they were “badly stung” by wasps. Their Australian captors forcibly held their heads down a toilet bowl. Their faces were “covered with shit.” Punched and kicked for hours, they were told they would be killed

if they didn’t talk.

All three said that another man, Yani Ndun, a native of West Timor, was tortured at the same time. Nobody has seen him since then.

The *Dateline* revelations were the first publicity of some of the abuses allegedly being investigated by ADF internal inquiries. The ADF has not denied the SBS story but simply insisted that the prisoners were held “in accordance with the Geneva Conventions.”

The army initially claimed to have no record of detaining Ndun. However, the day of the second *Dateline* program, an army press conference announced Ndun had been released Sept. 26, 2003. Yet his family and friends have found no trace of him.

Military inquiry dismisses all charges

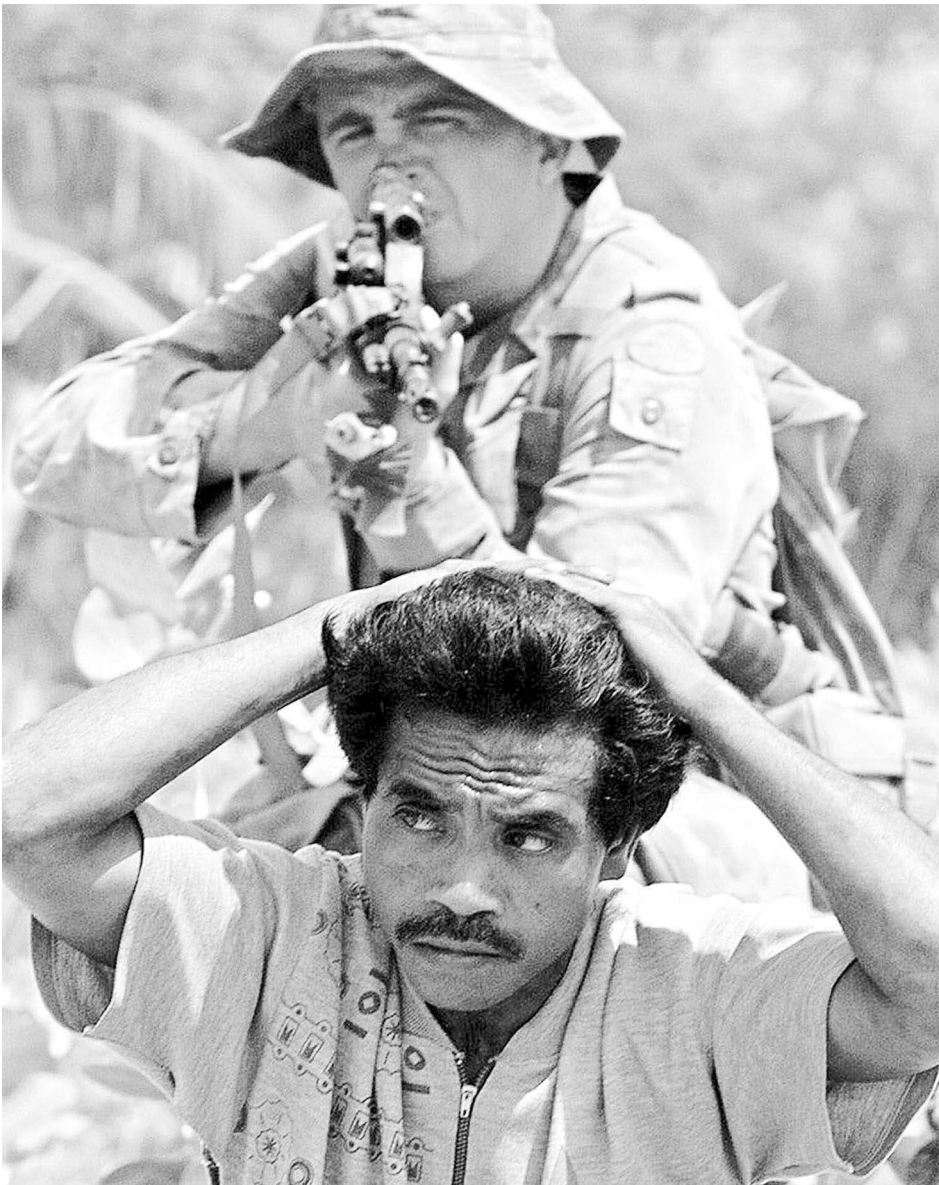
On May 5, another *Dateline* program noted that in the intervening six months, “not a single witness [in East Timor] has been approached” despite relevant names and places being provided to the army.

At an Australian army interrogation center set up at a Dili heliport in October 1999, other captives were reportedly deprived of food, sleep, and hygienic facilities. Another case involved an “unnecessary amputation.”

The two-year secretive military inquiry was set to investigate 19 such unspecified allegations of serious misconduct by members of the Special Air Service and an intelligence unit during the East Timor deployment in 1999. In April 2003, military investigators dismissed all torture and murder charges as “unsubstantiated.”

Australian, British, and New Zealand soldiers in East Timor initially reported the abuses. Only one charge, against an SAS officer over the “kicking of a body,” went to trial. It was dropped when witnesses in the New Zealand army refused to appear. The ADF claimed allegations against the same soldier of “unlawful killing” of a detainee were “unsubstantiated.”

Lt. Gen. Peter Leahy, chief of the



Reuters/Maya Vidon

Australian soldier fighting under United Nations banner holds Timorese man at gunpoint Sept. 21, 1999, during East Timor intervention. Former prisoners of war accused Australian troops of abuse and humiliation in East Timor and the Solomons.

Australian army, defended some actions as measures in a “robust situation,” not “a four-star resort,” and denied other allegations. Tacitly admitting heat from the exposures, however, Leahy said there is a need to overhaul some “operational procedures.”

For a quarter-century since 1975, the Australian and U.S. governments aided and abetted the Indonesian generals brutal military occupation of the country to quash the independence movement.

On Aug. 30, 1999, despite continued repression, hundreds of thousands of East Timorese voted for independence from Indonesia in a UN-sponsored referendum. The Indonesian army and cops retaliated, using their surrogate militia to kill 1,500 East Timorese and lay waste to the country.

Australian and U.S. government mouthpieces deflected blame from the Indonesian generals with the line that the militia were “rogue elements.” Then these imperialist powers pressured Jakarta to withdraw. Trumpeting the bloodshed as a pretext, the Australian government led the military intervention.

Abuse of prisoners in the Solomons

In July 2003, the governments of Australia and New Zealand led a force of troops, cops, and civilian officials,

with the cover of participation of some Pacific Island forces, to intervene in the Solomon Islands. On the pretext of countering “worsening lawlessness and ethnic violence,” the imperialist intervention was unleashed to strengthen neo-colonial control of policing and finances of the island country.

The Australian government provided millions of dollars to build a high-security section at Rove prison in the capital of Honiara. Abusive treatment there against prisoners held under Australian Federal Police orders has recently come to light.

At least nine prisoners have been kept in lengthy solitary confinement with as little as half an hour out in late afternoon sunlight.

Moses Su’u said he was kept for the first two days sleeping on a bare concrete bunk wearing only underpants. “What they did to me was inhuman,” Su’u said. “They would not even give me my trousers.”

Another man says he was held in solitary confinement for months, with only rice and tinned fish with no fresh fruit or vegetables for food. “They only let me out for one hour to walk in the corridor and have a shower,” he said.

Lawyers for some of the prisoners have pointed out that these are especially harsh conditions for people with a culture based on outdoor life.

THE MILITANT

A capitalist, not a ‘natural,’ disaster

The ‘Militant’ explains why the thousands of working people who died in floods in the Dominican Republic and Haiti as well as in last summer’s heat wave in France are victims not of ‘natural,’ but social disasters, caused by capitalism and, in the case of Hispaniola, by imperialist plunder. Don’t miss a single issue!



Searching for loved ones in Dominican Republic, May 26, after floods swept away whole towns.

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U.S.-led forces make gains in Iraq offensive

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occupation troops.

The U.S.-led forces provoked al-Sadr and his supporters into armed revolt two months ago by ordering the closure of their newspaper, arresting some of the group's leaders, and killing demonstrators demanding the release of those arrested.

U.S. military officials have said their goal is to capture al-Sadr and put him on trial on charges of killing a rival Shiite cleric who returned to Iraq with the aid of U.S. forces following Saddam Hussein's overthrow.

The latest agreement, the *Washington Post* reported, was brokered by Shiite political leaders, including Mowaffak Rubaie, the national security advisor of the Iraqi Governing Council.

Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, spokesman for the occupation forces, compared the arrangement to one reached earlier in the city of Fallujah, west of Baghdad, where U.S. forces attacked insurgents in the largely Sunni Muslim city, which for years was a base of support for the Hussein regime.

Rubaie said al-Sadr handed him a letter in which he agreed to end "armed demonstrations and the occupation of government buildings, offices and institutions." Nonresident members of the Mahdi Army would be withdrawn and the U.S.-trained Iraqi police would be allowed to provide "security and order." The letter said it was al-Sadr's understanding that as part of the arrangement Washington would be required to hold "broad talks with representatives of the Shiite establishment on the future" of the Mahdi Army and the charges against him.

Daniel Senor, a spokesman for the occupation forces, said U.S. troops would be repositioned in their bases outside Najaf and Kufa "as soon as the Iraqi security forces have assumed responsibility for public security and reestablished law and order." But he added that Washington had not altered its position that the Mahdi Army must be dissolved and al-Sadr brought to trial.

Washington seeks UN cover

Meanwhile, Washington, backed by London, has submitted a resolution seeking approval by the United Nations Security Council for an "interim" government in Iraq deemed "sovereign" by the imperialist occupation forces. That U.S.-backed regime is supposed to be in place by June 30.

This is one of the steps Washington is taking to maintain a stable protectorate in Baghdad that is obedient to U.S. imperialist interests and through which it can tighten its grip on the Middle East vis-à-vis its rivals in Paris and Berlin.

French president Jacques Chirac declared that the proposed UN resolution needs "serious improvement" and should guarantee the Iraqi interim government "full sovereignty," Al-Jazeera reported May 28. Chirac said the interim government must have sovereignty in all fields and have control over oil and gas resources. Washington has barred companies from countries whose governments opposed Washington's course in Iraq from access to contracts for rebuilding Iraq, including the oil and gas industry. The French and German rulers are above all concerned with their own "sovereignty" over investments and trade in Iraq.

Similarly, German chancellor Gerhard Schröder insisted that the interim government in Iraq "must be able to make decisions over security issues."

The proposed resolution would give UN recognition to the U.S.-backed interim government in Iraq. The imperialist occupation of Iraq would continue but through a UN-sanctioned "multinational force." In a May 24 speech at the War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Bush said 138,000 U.S. troops would remain in Iraq after June 30 and more would be sent if needed to ensure control.

According to media summaries of the UN resolution, the U.S.-dominated international military force would have "authority to take all necessary measures" against those opposing the imperialist-backed interim government. The "new" occupation force would remain in Iraq for at least one year, after which it might be subject to review, but there is no deadline for its departure.

The resolution would further expand the number of occupying forces in Iraq by establishing a "special force" to "protect UN personnel."

Regarding the UN's role in Iraq, British ambassador Emyr Jones Parry told the BBC the resolution projected the UN having a

"leading role—circumstances permitting, of course, on the ground."

British prime minister Anthony Blair argued that turning over "operational authority" for security of Iraq is "essential" to convincing Iraqis that military actions by the occupation forces are in their interests, the *Post* reported. Without that, Blair said, opposition forces could still present themselves as fighting against an occupying power. Blair added that military operations like those conducted by U.S. troops in Fallujah would be done with the consent of the interim government. "That's what the transfer of sovereignty means," he said.

After speaking with Chirac by phone, Bush played down Washington's differences with Paris and Berlin. He told reporters, "What President Chirac and others have said is they want to make sure that the transfer of sovereignty to the interim government is a real transfer. And that's what we want."

In his May 24 speech Bush made it clear U.S. troops would remain under U.S. command.

U.S.-backed interim government

On May 28 the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council selected one of its members, Iyad Allawi, to be prime minister for the interim government, reported Al-Jazeera. Hussain Sharistani, who had been favored for the position by UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, withdrew his name from consideration after meeting stiff opposition from members of the Iraqi Governing Council. Bush and the U.S. consul in Iraq, L. Paul Bremer, both congratulated Allawi.

Allawi is a wealthy businessman and former member of the Baath party, which ruled Iraq for decades under the Saddam Hussein regime. Allawi ran afoul of Hussein and went into to exile in the early 1970s. In 1991 he formed the Iraqi National Accord with CIA backing. Since returning to Iraq,

Number of women prisoners skyrockets

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prison. The most common incidents of violence and mistreatment of female inmates by prison guards include rape, sexual extortion, groping during body searches, male guards watching women undressing or in the shower or the toilet, and guards taking nude pictures of inmates. In order to intimidate women from reporting this abuse, guards threaten prisoners with the loss of rights to their children and visitation; issue "tickets" for alleged infractions that lengthen prisoners' sentences, and place women who speak out in solitary confinement.

The rise in the number of reported abuse cases coincides with an explosion in the number of women in U.S. prisons. The female population in prison grew by 592 percent between 1977 and 2001, double the rate for men. There are now about 150,000 women in state and federal prisons in the United States.

Rising unemployment, the closing of psychiatric hospitals, and the "ending of welfare as we know it" by the William Clinton administration in the 1990s, and other cuts in social programs, combined with record numbers of arrests, mandatory minimum sentencing, and other "tough on crime" laws, have all contributed to this unprecedented boom in the incarceration of working-class women.

In 1973 the New York State legislature enacted the Rockefeller Drug Laws, which require prison terms of no less than 15 years to anyone convicted of selling two ounces, or in possession of four ounces, of a narcotic. At that time, there were 400 women in New York prisons. This number grew to more than 3,100 by January 2002, according to a 2002 report by the New York-based Women in Prison Project.

Women of oppressed nationalities, who comprise 60 percent of women in U.S. prisons, have born the brunt of these policies. Forty-six percent of the female population in prisons nationwide is Black.

According to the Women in Prison Project, in 2002 an estimated 1,040,000 women were caught in the web of the U.S. justice system—either in jail or on parole or probation.

Among them, 40 percent held no job prior to incarceration. Of those who had jobs, two-thirds reported never receiving

Allawi has fostered ties with high-ranking military officers from the old Iraqi army under Hussein.

On June 1, the Iraqi Governing Council dissolved itself, turning over its functions to an "interim government," most of the members of which were the choices of the U.S.-run Governing Council. Ghazi Yawar was appointed to the ceremonial office of president of Iraq. A 45-year-old engineer with a master's degree from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., Yawar is a Sunni Muslim who lived in exile under the Hussein regime.

Allawi, a Shiite, is the prime minister—the main post of the "interim" regime. One of the two vice-presidents is Ibrahim Jaafari from the Shiite Dawa Islamic Party. The second vice-president, Rowsch Shaways, and the deputy prime minister for national security, Barham Saleh, are from the two main Kurdish parties in northern Iraq.

Abu Ghraib prison

In another step by the U.S. government to clean up its image following revelations of abuse and torture of Iraqis at the Abu Ghraib prison, the new head of the prison, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, said the U.S. military plans to vacate Abu Ghraib by August, handing it over to Iraqi security forces, the *Washington Post* reported May 26.

Miller was previously in charge of the notorious prison camp in Guantánamo, Cuba, where the U.S. government holds hundreds of prisoners dubbed "enemy combatants," who have been held without charges and denied the right to an attorney or a trial in which to defend themselves.

At the same time, Miller made it clear that Washington will maintain a large prison facility in Iraq after June 30.

Seven members of the U.S. Army's 372nd Military Police Company have been charged with abusing Iraqis at Abu Ghraib. The first to be court-martialed, U.S. Army

specialist Jeremy Sivits, was sentenced to one year in prison May 19 for his role in the abuse and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners. The one-year sentence was the maximum that could be imposed under a special deal in which Sivits agreed to testify against six other soldiers to be court-martialed.

Miller was brought to Abu Ghraib to replace Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, who has been suspended indefinitely pending the results of a Pentagon investigation into her responsibility for the abuses that took place at the prison. In addition, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the top commander of U.S. troops in Iraq, is being recalled from his post this summer. Sanchez has been tarnished by accusations that he had knowledge of the brutalization of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and that he was present during some of the notorious "interrogations."

According to transcripts of an army investigation into the abuse at Abu Ghraib, the top U.S. intelligence officer at the prison has said in sworn testimony that last summer Miller, then commander of the U.S. prison camp in Guantánamo, visited Iraq to give advice on how to extract information from prisoners, encouraging the use of guard dogs to frighten and intimidate prisoners.

The intelligence officer, Col. Thomas Pappas, told army investigator Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba that Miller said dogs had been used at Guantánamo in "setting the atmosphere" to get information from prisoners. He said Miller indicated that use of the dogs "with or without muzzle" was "okay" during interrogations.

Pappas told Taguba he had been frustrated with a rule that had required that dogs be muzzled. "It's not very intimidating if they are muzzled," he said.

Pappas also testified, according to press reports, that the use of dogs, shackling prisoners, making detainees strip naked, and similar measures used in the prison were often approved by Sanchez.



Reuters

A sheriff's deputy guards women prisoners on a chain gang near downtown Phoenix, Sept. 19, 2003. Chain gangs for male prisoners began a year earlier in Arizona.

more than \$6.50 an hour.

The bipartisan assault on social programs over the last two decades, which includes the closing of many psychiatric hospitals, has turned prisons into the largest mental institutions in the country. Nearly one-third of women in prison across the country are diagnosed as mentally ill. Human Rights Watch reported that mental illness among inmates is three times higher than for the population as a whole.

The overcrowding of prisons and lack of medical staff often result in long delays in obtaining medical attention. An increasing number of prisons have also turned over medical services to private contractors. Others have begun charging inmates for medical attention supposedly to deter prisoners from seeking medical attention for minor matters or for avoiding work.

According to the National Institute of Corrections, in 1994 only half of the state prison systems surveyed offered services such as mammograms and Pap smears for women. Where such services are offered, female inmates often face long waits to

obtain care. Shackling of all prisoners, including pregnant women, is government policy in federal prisons and the U.S. Marshall Service, and exists in almost all state prisons, according to Amnesty International. "Shackling during labor may cause complications during delivery such as hemorrhage or decreased fetal heart rate," says a recent report by the group. "If a caesarian section is needed, a delay of even five minutes may result in permanent brain damage to the baby."

Inmates who give birth while in prison are sometimes allowed to keep their infants at a nursery cellblock for a year or two. While these have existed in prisons before, in the past five years an increasing number of states have built prison nurseries. This is the case in Nebraska, Illinois, Ohio, New York, California, Washington, and Massachusetts. The costs of the nurseries are "recouped" because the infants do not become "wards of the state," the *Star-Ledger* reports. In one of these programs in California, children may stay with their imprisoned mothers until they reach six years of age.

PACE backs miners

Continued from front page

months; And, whereas the issues involved in this strike go to the heart of the reason for the existence of the U.S. labor movement; Then be it resolved that PACE Region 11 go on record in support of this strike.... Be it further resolved, that PACE Region 11 encourage its affiliate unions and their members to support this strike both financially and materially.”

“We passed the hat and collected over \$850 in cash for the miners,” Wulle said. “Many delegates told me that when they go back to their locals they plan to get more support for the Co-Op miners.”

Since the beginning of the strike, the Co-Op miners have received financial support from unions and other organizations from around the world. These funds have enabled the strikers to receive weekly strike payments of \$100. Co-Op strikers said that the \$850 donation from PACE, combined with \$1,700 they had received a little earlier from the National Union of Mineworkers in Britain, meant the miners received a \$200 strike pay the last week of May.

The 75 coal miners were fired to the person from their jobs Sept. 22, 2003, by CW Mining, Inc., also known as the Co-Op mine. It is an underground mine owned by the Kingstons, a wealthy family that owns businesses in six western states.

The miners were fired for union activity. They had been talking to the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) about how to get a union organized at the mine. Strikers say that they were getting paid between \$5.25 and \$7.00 an hour, compared to average wages of about \$15 an hour at underground mines. The workers, who are in their majority of Mexican descent, had no health insurance or pension.

Support for their cause has continued to expand in the labor movement across the United States, especially in the West.

On June 9, Co-Op strikers Juan Salazar and Bill Estrada will fly to Seattle, Washington. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) has invited the miners to speak at ILWU meetings in Portland, Oregon, and Seattle. Strikers are expected to address more than half a dozen union locals in the Pacific Northwest.

The speaking tour comes as the striking miners await a decision by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on a representation petition that the UMWA filed

with the board May 18, demanding that a union election take place at the Co-Op mine.

“For years, some of these miners have been forced to pay dues to a company dominated ‘union’ that most of them did not know existed until it surfaced during the current labor dispute,” said Mike Dalpiaz, UMWA International Executive Board member from Price, Utah, in a statement the union released May 19. The miners are taking advantage of a legally required open-window period in the so-called contract the Co-Op miners toiled under, Dalpiaz said, so “a real union can file a representation petition in an attempt to challenge or supplant the one currently recognized by the NLRB.” The company “union” contract expires in August.

For more information on the Co-Op strike, or to make a donation, write to: UMWA District 22, 525 East 100 South, Price, Utah 84501. Earmark checks to the “Co-Op Miners Fund.”

Menswear garment bosses hike workers’ health costs

BY LAURA GARZA

NEW BEDFORD, Massachusetts—A contract between the Clothing Manufacturers Association, representing major manufacturers of men’s suits, and UNITE, the union representing sewing machine operators, pressers, cutters, and other production workers who produce the suits, was ratified in mid-May. The three-year contract covers some 7,000 workers. Under its terms many workers will end up taking a substantial net wage loss because of the increase in health-care costs they will now have to pay.

Workers voted on the contract in plants in a number of U.S. cities. It includes a raise of 25 cents per hour starting in September 2004; a bonus, in lieu of a raise, of \$500 payable in October of 2005; and a raise of 20 cents an hour effective October 2006. Workers who are paid by the piece instead of by the hour are supposed to see an increase in the rates they are paid. Often though, the companies find ways to change the rates, adjusting the way the operation is performed in order to cut the price paid and undercut any increase in the rates.

The health-care provisions, which vary from company to company and are negotiated locally, all share the feature of shifting a greater cost onto the workers. At the Hart



Militant/Guillermo Esquivel

Coal miners on United Mine of Workers of America strike at Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah, in their picket shack May 30 display the \$100 food coupons they received from PACE Local 9-831 in Salt Lake City. From left: Natividad Flores, Humberto Miranda, Juan Salazar, and Apolonio Acosta.

Schaffner Marx (Hartmarx) production plant in Chicago, workers and their families previously have had doctor visits at the union-run clinic available at no cost. Under the new contract, workers will pay \$6 a week for health insurance for individual coverage, \$10 a week for a couple, and \$35 a week for a family.

At the Hugo Boss plant in Cleveland, the terms of the insurance plan require workers to pay out-of-pocket expenses amounting to 20 percent of the costs. Under the new contract, they will also be paying about \$6 a week for an individual and \$20 to \$30 for family coverage.

“I disagree with the changes done to our health insurance,” said José Peña, 34, a sewing machine operator at that plant. “It is too much money. I don’t agree with the contract.”

At the Riverside Manufacturing plant in New Bedford, Massachusetts, workers were paying 25 percent of the cost of health-care insurance, amounting to about \$26 a week to cover a family. Now the company claims that the overall cost of health insurance has risen, and so is demanding that workers pay more for coverage. In all these cases the new deductions will begin in October, when the wage raises will go into effect.

A modest increase in the amount paid for pension benefits was also negotiated. Union representatives in several cities reported that the companies wanted to include a provision for forced overtime in the new contract. Instead, the union pledged it would work with the companies to meet “production needs.”

The press statement released by UNITE quoted the president of the Clothing Manufacturers Association, Homi Patel, who is also the president and CEO of Hartmarx Corporation, saying, “We are very pleased that we have been able to negotiate a reasonable and fair agreement which allows the industry to stay competitive while providing our employees with a good wage and benefit package.”

Most workers voted in favor of the contract with little discussion at the brief meetings that were organized to vote on the proposal. “I voted yes because I felt that the proposed contract is the best we can do right now,” said Richard, a worker at the Hartmarx plant in Chicago who asked that his last name not be used.

The contract was approved at the Hartmarx plant in Chicago by a margin of 3 to 1. Wages at the plant vary widely, with the most skilled workers making in the range of \$12 to \$14 an hour, and many others making \$7 to \$8 an hour.

Laura Garza is a member of UNITE Local 377 in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Lisa Potash, a UNITE member at Hart Schaffner Marx in Chicago, and Carole Lesnick, and Romina Green, UNITE members at Hugo Boss in Cleveland, also contributed to this article.

Communications Workers reach accord with SBC

BY BEN WHITMORE

HOUSTON—Following the conclusion of a four-day strike by 100,000 members of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) against SBC Communications, the union announced May 25 that it had reached a tentative agreement with the company on a new five-year contract. The accord provides workers with “employment security,” access to new high tech jobs, and health insurance with no monthly premiums, according to the union. The company succeeded in imposing higher medical co-payments on union members. Telephone workers at SBC—the second-largest local phone provider in the United States—had walked out in 13 states in their first strike since 1983.

“From what I can see it sounds like it’s a good deal,” commented Eva Marron, a

union shop steward, in a phone interview. “One of the main things we have been concerned about is job security.”

According to a news release issued by the CWA, “The settlement guarantees that there will be no layoffs of employees currently on the payroll for the life of the agreement, and it calls for the rehiring of several hundred workers who had been laid off at SBC Southwest and SBC Midwest.” In addition, the pact reportedly gives union workers access to new jobs being created at SBC in areas such as Voice over Internet Protocol, Wireless Internet, video services, and business data services. The union statement added, “CWA and SBC agreed to work together to bring back tech support jobs from overseas when the current outsourcing agreement with Accenture expires.”

The recent collection includes \$637 from *Militant* supporters in France, who originally took a goal of \$300.

The final total includes two corrections. The amount collected in Canada was \$2,691, not \$3,864 as the final chart printed in the May 31 issue showed. In addition, the chart showed the collection in Cleveland at \$1,005, or 84 percent of the local goal, when in fact supporters there had sent in \$1,205—100 percent—before the deadline. Pittsburgh and Philadelphia supporters also made their goals a little bit after the cut-off date for the chart.

Fund organizers are sending out a thank-you letter to the hundreds of contributors around the world who made the fund drive a double victory with the international circulation drive.

‘Militant’ fund well over the top

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

In the two weeks since the *Militant/Perspectiva Mundial* fund drive ended, contributions have continued to come in, taking the fund well over the original goals. The final total of \$97,568 surpasses the \$94,000 in pledges from supporters in local areas and exceeds by nearly \$12,600 the international goal of \$85,000.

The fund drive enabled the *Militant* to halve the price of introductory subscriptions to \$5—the same as the four-month sub for new readers of *Perspectiva Mundial*.

This helped supporters respond to the growing interest in the socialist publications by doubling the subscription base in a circulation drive that also ran from March 20 to May 17.

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Tufts University symposium discusses ‘Cuban policies, politics since Cold War’

BY TED LEONARD

SOMERVILLE, Massachusetts—“But what happened to us was as if one day the sun didn’t rise at 6:00 a.m., nor at 7:00 a.m., nor at 10:00 a.m., nor at 12 noon, and in the midst of this darkness we have to look for solutions.” That was how Cuban president Fidel Castro in 1993 described the “Special Period,” the political and economic crisis that exploded in Cuba more than a decade ago when the bureaucratic regimes and parties in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe imploded and Cuba, whose main trading partner had been the Soviet Union, lost 85 percent of its foreign trade almost overnight.

Tufts University professor Claudia Kaiser-Lenoir cited Castro’s description in opening a May 4 symposium at Tufts attended by more than 100 students and others. Titled “Cuban Policies and Politics After the Cold War,” the program featured Susan Eckstein, professor of Sociology at Boston University and author of *Back From the Future: Cuba Under Castro*; and Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press and editor or author of more than a dozen titles on the Cuban Revolution, many of them books of speeches, writings, and interviews with its leaders. Eckstein is a past national president of the Latin American Studies Association.

The event, jointly sponsored by the Latin American Studies and the International Relations programs at Tufts, also included an award ceremony for graduating seniors who had completed the Latin American Studies Program, and a buffet dinner for all the participants.

Professor Peter Winn of the Latin American Studies Program welcomed people to the late afternoon symposium, which was open to the public. He introduced Kaiser-Lenoir, who chaired the discussion.

In introducing the speakers Kaiser-Lenoir, who taught a class on the Cuban Revolution during the spring semester and helped organize a parallel Focus on Cuba lecture series on the campus, explained that the program would discuss how Cuba responded to the Special Period.

Speaking first, in a presentation entitled “Dollarization and Discontents,” Eckstein, laid out the view that she developed in *Back From the Future*. In the preface to the second edition published last year she notes, “When I wrote the final words of the first edition in 1994, I thought that Castro’s regime might be relegated to the dustbin of history before the printed version saw the light of day.”

Now, she states, “a new Cuba is in the process of formation.... No one talks any more of Castro’s initial project, to create the utopian egalitarian communist society in which people work for the good of society, not private gain....”

“Tourists, as well as family abroad, have dollarized the domestic economy. Cubans unable to obtain dollars through either source, or through domestic jobs that now offer hard currency supplements, have turned to pilfering, corruption, and black marketeering.... The socialist moral order is in the process of decay.”

Waters on the other hand began her presentation explaining, “Since the early 1990s and the collapse of the bureaucratic regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Cuban Revolution has emerged stronger not weaker.”

Through the challenges they have faced and conquered during that period of time, Waters noted, a decisive component of workers and farmers in Cuba, and broadening layers of young people for whom



Militant/Margaret Trowe
Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, center, and Susan Eckstein, right, speak May 4 at Tufts University. Professor Claudia Kaiser-Lenoir, left, chaired the meeting. Inset, audience.

new alternatives are being created, have developed more confidence, more creativity, and taken more initiative in dealing with the contradictions and problems they confront. They are less isolated from the class struggle throughout the capitalist world, including its political, cultural, and artistic expressions. A new generation of revolutionary leadership is being tested and gaining experience in the process, answering in practice the often asked question, “What will happen after Fidel?”

Eckstein in her presentation detailed how Cuba’s income from tourism and remittances sent by relatives who have emigrated to family members at home has grown dramatically over the last decade, while dollar earnings from exports have declined.

Immediately after the revolution, Cubans emigrated because they were opposed to the revolution, Eckstein noted. “But since the 1990s there is a new type of Cuban emigrating—one who is leaving to help out his family.”

The legalization of dollar holdings, and the opening of “dollar stores” supplying many otherwise unavailable necessities, have produced, according to Eckstein, a “population that is desperate for dollars.” Many people take jobs “so they can steal things and then sell them on the black market,” Eckstein stated.

Explaining the growing inequalities that have developed due to the “dollarization” of the economy, Eckstein argued that “Blacks who were beneficiaries of the early days of the revolution” are now finding that those gains are coming back to haunt them. Few Blacks emigrated and today there is no “overseas network” of Cubans who are Black that can send dollars back to their families, she stated.

Finally, there is a “deschooling of society” in Cuba, Eckstein argued. “People are finding education isn’t necessarily getting them good jobs. Good jobs are no longer defined by prestige, like the professions,” she argued, “but by getting access to dollars. It is really hard to survive in Cuba today,” Eckstein said, “and the more educated you are the greater the contradiction.”

A revolution not a rose garden

“To understand Cuba you have to start with the world,” Waters countered in opening her presentation. “If you just put Cuba under a microscope and look at this little slice or isolate that little fact you will understand nothing. You’ll miss the class political dynamics that explain

Continued on Page 10

Havana responds to new U.S. sanctions; resumes all sales at ‘dollar stores’

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Cuban government has announced new measures to counter the latest sanctions by Washington, publicized May 6, which ratcheted up the U.S. rulers’ economic war against Cuba.

At the third international conference in Havana on “Nation and Emigration” at the end of May, Cuba’s foreign minister Felipe Pérez Roque told the 465 participants, who were overwhelmingly Cuban immigrants living in the United States and other countries, that the Cuban government has eased travel regulations to the island by Cuban immigrants.

The measures include establishing a new office to assist Cubans living abroad wishing to visit the country.

Cuba will also grant university scholarships to children of Cuban émigrés and create summer programs in Spanish language and Cuban culture and history.

The foreign minister noted that the new steps come on top of others taken the last half decade to facilitate family visits. “Those who migrate legally no longer have to wait five years to return to our country on a visit,” Pérez Roque said. He added that those visiting do not have to stay at hotels, as was the case in 1994.

Pérez Roque announced that as of June 1 all Cubans living abroad will no longer need an entry permit to travel to Cuba. This requirement was eliminated in 1994 for those living temporarily abroad.

Sales of all items in “dollar stores” also resumed in Cuba May 24, according to the Cuban daily *Granma* and other news reports. Two weeks earlier the Cuban government had suspended sales of all goods at these stores except food, soap, and other personal hygiene items.

Individuals who work in the tourist industry and other sectors of the Cuban economy where they have access to dollars, or those receiving remittances from relatives abroad, can purchase essential items like soap and cooking oil that are scarce in other outlets.

Havana had temporarily suspended the dollar store sales as one among a series of measures responding to new sanctions by Washington.

Due to pressures from rising oil prices on the world market and the unceasing economic war against the Cuban Revolution by the U.S. rulers, the Cuban government expects rising costs of imported goods sold at dollar stores and other economic problems. As part of withstanding these pressures, Havana announced it would take such long-term measures as increasing use of draft animals and lowering the use of petroleum derivatives in agriculture; raising nickel and cobalt production, metals Cuba exports for hard currency; and intensifying search for oil and gas deposits in and around the Caribbean island in areas with signs of good exploration prospects.

According to *Granma*, the Cuban government used the suspension of sales to organize restocking of products, most of the prices of which rose. Prices on food and personal hygiene items, clothing, children’s shoes, baby supplies and school backpacks reportedly went up by 10 percent. Increases in the prices of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, and gasoline ranged from 15 percent to 25 percent, according to the *International Herald Tribune*.

U.S. president George Bush announced the new sanctions against Cuba at a May 6 press conference at the White House. Among them are new limits on travel to Cuba by Cuban-Americans and on the number of family members on the island remittances can be sent to. Anyone in Cuba who is a member of the Communist Party is now prohibited from receiving such remittances.

Trips to the island by Cuban-Americans to visit family members are now limited to once every three years as opposed to once a year as it has been up till now. In addition, Cuban-Americans will now be required to apply for permission for each trip where previously they were allowed to travel under a general license that covered visits to family members. They would also

not be eligible to apply for a such a license until three years after their last visit. This applies retroactively. Anyone who visited Cuba last year, for example, will not be eligible to visit again until 2006. Anyone who visited two years ago, has to wait another year now before applying for a new permit. And any Cuban who immigrates to the United States would not be eligible to apply for a license to visit the island until three years after they left Cuba.

While visiting family members, Cuban-Americans previously were allowed to spend up to \$164 per day on expenses. That is now reduced to \$50 per day. The State Department report justifies the cut by saying that “travelers will stay with family.” This measure is also aimed at the Cuban hotel and tourist industry.

The restrictions on remittances to relatives in Cuba continue to be limited to \$1,200 per year but can only be sent to “immediate family members”—eliminating cousins, aunts, and uncles. The new regulations authorize U.S. cop agencies to set up “sting” operations to entrap “mule” networks and others who carry money to Cuba illegally and assist in any way in unauthorized remittances.

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by Armando Hart

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‘Pin hopes on workers and peasants in fight for national independence, land’

Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky’s 1939 open letter to workers of India

The following are major excerpts from “An Open Letter to the Workers of India” by Leon Trotsky. They are taken from *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, published by Pathfinder Press. The letter first appeared in the September 1939 issue of the *New Internationalist* magazine and was written in July of that year, on the eve of World War II. In it, Trotsky explains that a proletarian party is needed in India to lead the working class and its allies on the land to stand at the head of the revolutionary movement for independence from British colonial rule. Under the leadership of such a party, he explains, the movement of the majority—initially directed towards national independence—could then be turned against capitalism and imperialism.

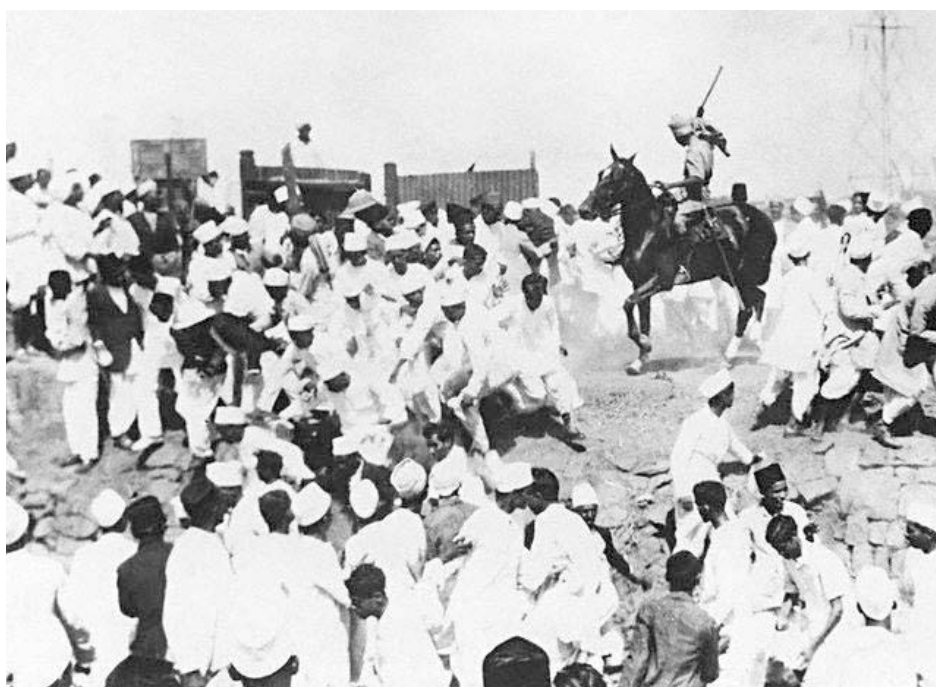
The first national uprising against India’s foreign oppressors was the 1857–58 Sepoy rebellion, a century after India’s subjugation by the British colonialists. The revolt laid bare the depth of mass discontent and unrest against British rule, even though its leadership was dominated by feudal landlords and princes.

The sepoys were Indian troops employed by the British East India Company. The revolt was sparked by the introduction by British forces of the Enfield rifle. To load the new gun, the sepoys had to bite off the ends of cartridges lubricated with a mixture of lard from pigs and cows. The soldiers, both Muslims and Hindus, took this as an insult to their religious and cultural practices, which forbid oral contact with such types of meat. As the revolt spread, the British army unleashed savage repression against the mutineers. Captured rebels were tied to the mouths of cannons and blown to pieces.

After crushing the uprising, the British government incorporated the native princes into the colonial regime, ushering in the period known as the Raj.

The national movement developed on a mass scale again in the years following World War I. A strike wave across India in 1919–20 was followed a decade later by a general strike in Bombay in opposition to antilabor legislation and the arrest of peasant leaders. The resistance was driven by increasing levels of exploitation and misery faced by working people of town and country. Life expectancy among Indians, for example, declined from 31 years in 1881 to 23 in the late 1930s. Life expectancy in Britain at the time was 55. Writing in the late 19th century, communist leader Karl Marx estimated that London’s total annual profits and taxes from the Raj equaled the income of 60 million Indian workers.

The leading party in the independence movement was the Indian National Congress. While the party included peasants—the great majority of the population—and workers in its membership, it was dominated by the rising capitalist class. Among its most prominent leaders were Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who became India’s first prime minister in 1947 and served in that post until 1964. Gandhi and Nehru sought to reach independence through com-



Mounted police attack 1930 pro-independence demonstration in Bombay organized by Indian National Congress. Forced to concede independence in 1947, London gained Congress leaders’ agreement to carve off Pakistan from the new nation.

promise with the British colonialists and to that end put brakes on the mass movement of peasants, workers, and others fighting for national liberation.

The Congress Socialist Party, referred to by Trotsky at the end of his letter, grew out of a left wing in the Congress Party that attracted revolutionary-minded workers and currents in the labor movement, including the Stalinist Communist Party.

Faced with the growing support for national independence during World War II, the weakened British rulers chose to concede independence. At the same time, London gained the Congress leaders’ agreement to carve off part of the massive new country as “independent” Pakistan. Ruled almost entirely since then by military regimes, Pakistan functioned as a spear point against the potential for a revolution in India and to maintain imperialist domination of the second most populous country in the world.

Leon Trotsky was part of the central leadership of the Bolshevik Party that led the October 1917 Russian Revolution, and of the Communist International (Comintern) in its early years. Following the death in 1924 of V.I. Lenin—the central leader of the Bolsheviks—Trotsky led the international fight against the Stalinist degeneration of the Russian Revolution in order to continue Lenin’s political course and the program for world revolution developed by the Comintern under Lenin’s guidance. The letter below—dated July 25, 1939, and written while Trotsky was in exile in Coyoacan, Mexico—is copyright © 1969 and 1973 by Pathfinder Press and is reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.



BY LEON TROTSKY

Titanic and terrible events are approaching with implacable force. Mankind lives in expectation of war which will, of course, also draw into its maelstrom the colonial countries and which is of vital significance for their destiny. Agents of the British government depict the matter as though the war will be waged for principles of “democracy” which must be saved from fascism. All classes and peoples must rally around the “peaceful” “democratic” governments so as to repel the

fascist aggressors. Then “democracy” will be saved and peace stabilized forever. This gospel rests on a deliberate lie. If the British government were really concerned with the flowering of democracy then a very simple opportunity to demonstrate this exists: let the government give complete freedom to India. The right of national independence is one of the elementary democratic rights. But actually, the London government is ready to hand over all the democracies in the world in return for one-tenth of its colonies.

If the Indian people do not wish to remain as slaves for all eternity, then they must expose and reject those false preachers who assert that the sole enemy of the people is fascism. Hitler and Mussolini are, beyond doubt, the bitterest enemies of the toilers and oppressed. They are gory executioners, deserving of the greatest hatred from the toilers and oppressed of the world. But they are, before everything, the enemies of the German and Italian peoples on whose backs they sit. The oppressed classes and peoples... must always seek out their main enemy at home, cast in the role of their own immediate oppressors and exploiters. In India that enemy above all is the British bourgeoisie. The overthrow of British imperialism would deliver a terrible blow at all the oppressors, including the fascist dictators. In the long run the imperialists are distinguished from one another in form—not in essence. German imperialism, deprived of colonies, puts on the fearful mask of fascism with its saber-teeth protruding. British imperialism, gorged, because it possesses immense colonies, hides its saber-teeth behind a mask of democracy. But this democracy exists only for the metropolitan center, for the 45,000,000 souls—or more correctly, for the ruling bourgeoisie—in the metropolitan center. India is deprived not only of democracy but of the most elementary right of national independence. Imperialist democracy is thus the democracy of slave owners fed by the life blood of the colonies. But India seeks her own democracy, and not to serve as fertilizer for the slave owners.

Those who desire to end fascism, reaction and all forms of oppression must overthrow imperialism. There is no other road. This task cannot, however, be accomplished by peaceful methods, by negotiations and pledges. Never before in history have slave owners voluntarily freed their slaves. Only a bold, resolute struggle of the Indian people for their economic and national emancipation can free India.

Indian bourgeoisie can’t lead revolution

The Indian bourgeoisie is incapable of leading a revolutionary struggle. They are closely bound up with and dependent upon British capitalism. They tremble for their own property. They stand in fear of the masses. They seek compromises with Brit-

ish imperialism no matter what the price and lull the Indian masses with hopes of reforms from above. The leader and prophet of this bourgeoisie is Gandhi. A fake leader and a false prophet! Gandhi and his compeers have developed a theory that India’s position will constantly improve, that her liberties will continually be enlarged and that India will gradually become a Dominion on the road of peaceful reforms. Later on, perhaps even achieve full independence. This entire perspective is false to the core. The imperialist classes were able to make concessions to colonial peoples as well as to their own workers, only so long as capitalism marched uphill, so long as the exploiters could firmly bank on the further growth of profits. Nowadays there cannot even be talk of this. World imperialism is in decline. The condition of all imperialist nations daily becomes more difficult while the contradictions between them become more and more aggravated. Monstrous armaments devour an ever greater share of national incomes. The imperialists can no longer make serious concessions either to their own toiling masses or to the colonies. On the contrary, they are compelled to resort to an ever more bestial exploitation. It is precisely in this that capitalism’s death agony is expressed. To retain their colonies, markets and concessions, from Germany, Italy and Japan, the London government stands ready to mow down millions of people. Is it possible, without losing one’s senses, to pin any hopes that this greedy and savage financial oligarchy will voluntarily free India?

True enough, a government of the so-called Labor Party may replace the Tory government. But this will alter nothing. The Labor Party—as witness its entire past and present program—is in no way distinguished from the Tories on the colonial question. The Labor Party in reality expresses not the interests of the working class, but only the interests of the British labor bureaucracy and labor aristocracy. It is to this stratum that the bourgeoisie can toss juicy morsels, due to the fact that they themselves ruthlessly exploit the colonies, above all India.... All these gentlemen... are ready at any moment to brand the revolutionary movement of the Indian people as “betrayal,” as aid to Hitler and Mussolini and to resort to military measures for its suppression.

In no way superior is the policy of the present day Communist International. To be sure, 20 years ago the Third, or Communist, International was founded as a genuine revolutionary organization. One of its most important tasks was the liberation of the colonial peoples. Only recollections today remain of this program, however. The leaders of the Communist International have long since become the mere tools of the Moscow bureaucracy which has stifled the Soviet working masses and which has become transformed into a new aristocracy. In the ranks of the Communist Parties of various countries—including India—there are no doubt many honest workers, students, etc.: but they do not fix the politics of the Comintern. The deciding word belongs to the Kremlin which is guided not by the interests of the oppressed, but by those of the U.S.S.R.’s new aristocracy.

Stalin and his clique, for the sake of an alliance with the imperialist governments, have completely renounced the revolutionary program for the emancipation of the colonies. This was openly avowed at the last Congress of Stalin’s party in Moscow in March of the current year by Manuilski, one of the leaders of the Comintern, who declared: “The Communists advance to the forefront the struggle for the realization of the right of self-determination of nationalities enslaved by *fascist* governments. They demand free self-determination for Austria...the Sudeten regions...Korea, Formosa, Abyssinia...”

And what about India, Indo-China, Algeria and other colonies of England and France? The Comintern representative answers this question as follows, “The

Continued on next page

From Pathfinder

Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939–40

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India: behind electoral upset by Congress Party

BY VED DOOKHUN
AND MICHAEL ITALIE

In an electoral upset, the Congress Party of India swept the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from office May 13, capturing 149 seats to become the largest party in parliament. Together with its coalition partners, including the two Communist Parties, the new government will hold a slim majority of the 539 seats in parliament, compared to 135 won by the BJP.

The defeat of the BJP-led government, which had held office in New Delhi since 1998, came as a surprise to all Indian political parties as well as capitalist politicians and pundits abroad. The government had called early elections in anticipation of winning the vote on the crest of the decade-old “software-led economic boom.”

The electoral results underscored the contrast between the “India Shining” promised by the BJP in its campaign, and the social catastrophe facing the majority of India’s 1.05 billion people.

While the Congress Party won the largest number of seats in the national vote, the Congress-led government in the southern state of Karnataka was defeated by the BJP in assembly elections. Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka, is a center of the boom in the software industry.

In another southern state, Kerala, Communist Party of India (Marxist) candidates took the seats held by most Congress Party members of parliament.



AFP/Getty Images/Sebastian D’Souza

Shantytowns surround newly built high-rise apartments in Bombay. India’s “technology boom” has benefited only a tiny fraction of the population.

Days after the vote, Congress Party leader Sonia Gandhi, who led the demagogic party campaign appealing to the hundreds of millions of workers and farmers who

have gained nothing from the “software-led boom,” withdrew her name from consideration for the position of prime minister. The stock market in India had plummeted on the news that Gandhi would become premier.

Instead, Congress picked Manmohan Singh. The first Sikh to become India’s prime minister, Singh had served as finance minister in the early 1990s, leading government attacks on social programs and the privatization offensive that opened up India to further penetration and exploitation by foreign finance capital. Immediately after he was picked, Wall Street and financiers around the world breathed a sigh of relief and the Bombay stock exchange rebounded.

Social catastrophe for toilers

The economic and social devastation facing the toilers in India is the result of decades of colonial and imperialist exploitation. Through the debt bondage imposed by Washington, London, and other imperialist powers much of the wealth created by the workers and farmers of India has been siphoned into the coffers of imperialist banks and other financial institutions.

Today 60 percent of India’s population lives in rural areas in some 650,000 villages. Only 10 percent of the villages are connected to a road, reports the *Financial Times*, and fewer than half have clean water and electricity. Facing serious drought conditions and the price squeeze of the capitalist market that favors the wealthy, many farmers cannot afford to buy seed. The average life expectancy is 63—compared to 77 in the United States—and 40 percent of the population is illiterate.

The official unemployment rate of 8 percent grossly understates the reality of the vast poverty for India’s working people in city and country. While as many as 1 million positions have been created in the last decade for software engineers, customer service agents, and claims processors, this has only a limited impact on a workforce of more than 400 million. When the state-owned railways recently announced openings for 20,000 *khalasis*—the lowest category of laborer—more than 5.5 million workers put in applications in the hope of finding steady work.

The BJP, a right-wing Hindu nationalist party, led a coalition government for the last six years. It appealed to the insecurities and prejudices of the middle class. The party’s recent campaign pointed in a more “centrist” direction—focusing on “development and moderation,” a shift from its agenda of Hindu nationalism. But the BJP is responsible for a political campaign that led to the destruction of a 16th century mosque in Ayodhya by a mob in 1992. More than 3,000 were killed in the anti-Muslim riots that followed. As prime minister, BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee had called for constructing a Hindu temple on the site where the Muslim mosque was leveled. In 2002, in the BJP-ruled state of Gujarat, some 2,000 Muslims were slaughtered in response to the killing of 58 Hindu train passengers by a mob alleged to be Muslims.

Its campaign slogan of India Shining targeted the growing middle class and

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Trotsky’s open letter to workers of India

Continued from previous page

Communists demand of the imperialist governments of the so-called bourgeois democratic states the immediate *[sic]* drastic *[!]* improvement in the living standards of the toiling masses in the colonies and the granting of broad democratic rights and liberties to the colonies.” (*Pravda*, issue No. 70, March 12, 1939.) In other words, as regards the colonies of England and France the Comintern has completely gone over to Gandhi’s position and the position of the conciliationist colonial bourgeoisie in general. The Comintern has completely renounced revolutionary struggle for India’s independence. It “demands” (on its hands and knees) the “granting” of “democratic liberties” to India by British imperialism. The words “immediate drastic improvement in the living standards of the toiling masses in the colonies,” have an especially false and cynical ring. Modern capitalism—declining, gangrenous, disintegrating—is more and more compelled to worsen the position of workers in the metropolitan center itself. How then can it improve the position of the toilers in the colonies from whom it is compelled to squeeze out all the juices of life so as to maintain its own state of equilibrium? The improvement of the conditions of the toiling masses in the colonies is possible only on the road to the complete overthrow of imperialism.

But the Communist International has traveled even further on this road of betrayal. Communists, according to Manu-ilski, “subordinate the realization of this right of secession . . . in the interests of defeating fascism.” In other words, in the event of war between England and France over colonies, the Indian people must support their present slave owners, the British imperialists. That is to say, must shed their blood not for their own emancipation, but for the preservation of the rule of “the City” over India. And these cheaply-to-be-bought scoundrels dare to quote Marx and Lenin! As a matter of fact, their teacher and leader is none other than Stalin, the head of a new bureaucratic aristocracy, the butcher of the Bolshevik Party, the strangler of workers and peasants.

The mockery of the ‘Popular Front’

The Stalinists cover up their policy of servitude to British, French and U.S.A. imperialism with the formula of “People’s Front.” What a mockery of the people! “People’s Front” is only a new name for that old policy, the gist of which lies in class collaboration, in a coalition between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In every such coalition, the leadership invariably turns out to be in the hands of the right-wing, that is, in the hands of the propertied class.

The Indian bourgeoisie, as has already been stated, wants a peaceful horse trade and not a struggle. Coalition with the bourgeoisie leads to the proletariat’s abnegating the revolutionary struggle against imperialism.

The policy of coalition implies marking time on one spot, temporizing, cherishing false hopes, engaging in hollow maneuvers and intrigues. As a result of this policy disillusionment inevitably sets in among the working masses, while the peasants turn their backs on the proletariat, and fall into apathy.... The same danger also menaces the Indian revolution where the Stalinists, under the guise of “People’s Front”, are putting across a policy of subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. This signifies, in action, a rejection of the revolutionary agrarian program, a rejection of arming the workers, a rejection of the struggle for power, a rejection of revolution.

In the event that the Indian bourgeoisie finds itself compelled to take even the tiniest step on the road of struggle against the arbitrary rule of Great Britain, the proletariat will naturally support such a step. But they will support it with their own methods: mass meetings, bold slogans, strikes, demonstrations and more decisive combat actions, depending on the relationship of forces and the circumstances. Precisely to do this must the proletariat have its hands free. Complete independence from the bourgeoisie is indispensable to the proletariat, above all in order to exert influence on the peasantry, the predominant mass of India’s population. Only the proletariat is capable of advancing a bold, revolutionary agrarian program, of rousing and rallying tens of millions of peasants and leading them in struggle against the native oppressors and British imperialism. The alliance of workers and poor peasants is the only honest, reliable alliance that can assure the final victory of the Indian revolution.

Opposite trenches

All peacetime questions will preserve their full force in time of war, except that they will be invested with a far sharper expression. First of all, exploitation of the colonies will become greatly intensified. The metropolitan centers will not only pump from the colonies foodstuffs and raw materials, but they will also mobilize vast numbers of colonial slaves who are to die on the battlefields for their masters. Meanwhile, the colonial bourgeoisie will have its snout deep in the trough of war orders and will naturally renounce opposition in the name of patriotism and profits.

Gandhi is already preparing the ground for such a policy. These gentlemen will keep drumming: “We must wait patiently till the war ends—and then London will reward us for the assistance we have given.” As a matter of fact, the imperialists will redouble and treble their exploitation of the toilers both at home and especially in the colonies so as to rehabilitate the country after the havoc and devastation of the war. In these circumstances there cannot even be talk of new social reforms in the metropolitan centers or of grants of liberties to the colonies. Double chains of slavery—that will be the inevitable consequence of the war if the

masses of India follow the politics of Gandhi, the Stalinists and their friends.

The war, however, may bring to India as well as to the other colonies not a redoubled slavery but, on the contrary, complete liberty: the proviso for this is a correct revolutionary policy. The Indian people must divorce their fate from the very outset from that of British imperialism. The oppressors and the oppressed stand on opposite sides of the trenches. No aid whatsoever to the slave-owners! On the contrary, those immense difficulties which the war will bring in its wake must be utilized so as to deal a mortal blow to all the ruling classes. That is how the oppressed classes and peoples in all countries should act, irrespective of whether Messrs. Imperialists don democratic or fascist masks.

To realize such a policy a *revolutionary party*, basing itself on the vanguard of the proletariat, is necessary. Such a party does not yet exist in India.... The basic conditions for this party are: complete independence from imperialist democracy, complete independence from the Second and Third Internationals and complete independence from the national Indian bourgeoisie....

The very same policy ought to be pursued by the advanced workers of British India. We must cast away false hopes and repel false friends. We must pin hope only upon ourselves, our own revolutionary forces. The struggle for national independence, for an independent Indian republic is indissolubly linked up with the agrarian revolution, with the nationalization of banks and trusts, with a number of other economic measures aiming to raise the living standard of the country and to make the toiling masses the masters of their own destiny. Only the proletariat in an alliance with the peasantry is capable of executing these tasks.

In its initial stage the revolutionary party will no doubt comprise a tiny minority. In contrast to other parties, however, it will render a clear accounting of the situation and fearlessly march towards its great goal. It is indispensable in all the industrial centers and cities to establish workers groups, standing under the banner of the Fourth International. Only those intellectuals who have completely come over to the side of the proletariat must be allowed into these groups.

Alien to sectarian self-immersion, the revolutionary worker-Marxists must actively participate in the work of the trade unions, educational societies, the Congress Socialist Party and, in general, all mass organizations. Everywhere they remain as the extreme left-wing, everywhere they set the example of courage in action, everywhere, in a patient and comradely manner, they explain their program to the workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals. Impending events will come to the aid of the Indian Bolshevik-Leninists, revealing to the masses the correctness of their path. The party will grow swiftly and become tempered in the fire.

Women and the African freedom struggle

Below are excerpts from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for June. On Aug. 4, 1983, a popular uprising in the West African country of Upper Volta—one of the world's poorest and a former French colony—ushered in one of the deepest revolutions in African history. Its central leader was Thomas Sankara, 33, who became president of the new government—the National Council of the Revolution. The country was renamed Burkina Faso.

While Sankara was murdered in an Oct. 15, 1987, counterrevolutionary coup that toppled the revolutionary government, his legacy remains alive today.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

The excerpt below is from a speech titled, "The Revolution Cannot Triumph without the Emancipation of Women." It was given to a rally of several thousand women held in Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou, March 8, 1987, commemorating International Women's Day. From his experience as a revolutionary fighter, convinced of the need for a Marxist understanding of human society, Sankara explains here the origin of women's oppression and the importance of the struggle to eradicate it. He pays special attention to the challenges facing women in Africa.

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Militant/Pat Hunt

Members of the Women's Union of Burkina march on the second anniversary of the Burkina Faso revolution, Aug. 4, 1985.

BY THOMAS SANKARA

There can be no clearer way to conceptualize and explain the question of women and the liberation struggle ahead of us. "The genuine emancipation of women is that which entrusts responsibilities to them and involves them in productive activity and in the different struggles the people face. Women's genuine emancipation is one that exacts men's respect and consideration."

What is clearly indicated here, sister comrades, is that the struggle to liberate women is above all your struggle to deepen our democratic and popular revolution, a revolution that grants you from this moment on the right to speak and act in building a new society of justice and equality, in which men and women have the same rights and responsibilities.

The democratic and popular revolution has created the conditions for such a liberating struggle. It now falls to you to act with the greatest sense of responsibility in breaking through all the shackles and obstacles that enslave women in backward societies like ours and to assume your share of the responsibilities in the political fight to build a new society at the service of Africa and all humanity.

In the very first hours of the democratic and popular revolution we said that "emancipation, like freedom, is not granted but conquered. It is for women themselves to put forward their demands and mobilize to win them."

The revolution has not only laid out the objectives of the struggle for women's liberation but has also indicated the road to be followed and the methods to be used, as well as the main actors in this battle. We have now been working together, men and women, for four years in order to achieve success and come closer to our final goal. We should note the battles waged and the victories won, as well as setbacks suffered and the difficulties encountered. This will aid us in preparing and leading future struggles.

So what tasks does our democratic and popular revolution have in respect to women's emancipation? What acquisitions do we have and what obstacles still remain? One of the main acquisitions of the revolution with regard to women's emancipation was, without any doubt, the establishment of the Women's Union of Burkina (UFB). This is a major acquisition because it has provided the women of our country with a framework and a solid mechanism with

which to wage a successful fight. Establishing the UFB represents a big victory in that it allows for the mobilization of all politically active women around well-defined and just objectives, under the leadership of the National Council of the Revolution.

The UFB is an organization of militant and serious women who are determined to change things, to fight until they win, to fall and fall again, but to get back on their feet and go forward without retreating. This is the new consciousness that has taken root among the women of Burkina, and we should all be proud of it. Comrades, the Women's Union of Burkina is your combat weapon. It belongs to you. Sharpen it again and again so that its blade will cut more deeply, bringing you ever-greater victories....

Step by step, the women of Burkina have gained a foothold everywhere, asserting themselves and demolishing all the male chauvinist, backward conceptions of men. And this process will go on until women are present in Burkina's entire social and professional fabric. For three and a half years our revolution has worked to systematically eliminate all practices that demean women, such as prostitution and related activity, like vagrancy and female juvenile delinquency, forced marriages, female circumcision, and their particularly difficult living conditions.

By working to solve the water problem; by building windmills in the villages; by assuring the widespread use of the improved stove; by building public nurseries, carrying out daily vaccinations, and encouraging healthy, abundant, and varied eating habits, the revolution has no doubt greatly contributed to improving the quality of women's lives.

Women, for their part, must commit themselves to greater involvement in the fight against imperialism. They should be firm in producing and consuming Burkinabè goods, and, as producers and consumers of locally produced goods, always strive to be a major factor in our economy....

We must collectively remain alert to women's access to productive work. It is this work that emancipates and liberates women by assuring them economic independence and a greater social role, as well as a more complete and accurate understanding of the world.

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OFFER GOOD UNTIL JUNE 30

British Imperialist St.?—In 1984, Bobby Sands won a wide global salute. He had sacrificed his life in a Northern Ireland prison



Harry Ring

hunger strike. He and other inmate comrades were demanding that the British rulers grant them political prisoner status. One response to Sands's unflinching death was in Tehran, capital of Iran.

There, a street adjacent to the British embassy was renamed Bobby Sands Street. From Northern Ireland, the Bobby Sands Trust reports that the United Kingdom government has been demanding that the street name be changed. The earlier name had been Winston Churchill, UK Tory prime minister during World War II.

Plain talk—Fluor, the octopus-like engineering and construction company is not in a hurry. John Hopkins, a top dog, said that despite the turmoil, Fluor wants to continue their myriad projects in Iraq. They already have some 4,000 Iraqis on the payroll being broken in. Hopkins added that

Fluor also wants to deepen its role in Russia, China and Poland.

Adjectives fail us—By near unanimity, the U.S. Senate voted to permit the Internal Revenue Service to outsource delinquent tax collections to private companies. And, neatest of all, the companies would win rewards for catching people cheating on their taxes.

It figures—In Denver, a survey found that in the city's lowest-income neighborhoods, the public libraries, seven of them, were open 30 hours a week, 30 percent less than the rest of the city's library chain.

Loyal servant—"Colorado—Gov. Owens signed a bill barring people from suing over afflictions they blame on fast food. The measure echoes federal legislation. Owens said people have no right to blame corporations for their problems. The measure was one of four signed by the governor to protect businesses.— *USA Today*.

The fight continues—Recently, a federal court in Louisiana upheld a prison in preventing an inmate from having an abortion. Victoria, who learned she was pregnant in prison, was told she would have to hire a lawyer and obtain a court order. A lawyer did take on her

case and she was granted an early release. But too late to obtain an abortion under Louisiana law. She had the baby and placed it with adoptive parents.

The bountiful society—In Wyoming, 40 percent of single mothers live at, or under, the poverty level.

The foul society—Bristol-Meyers Squibb has stopped selling the antidepressant Serzone in the United States. The pill has been linked to numerous kidney injuries, including at least 20 deaths. The company said sales of Serzone have been poor and several suits have been filed against it.

California students protest cuts in education

BY EMILY PAUL

SAN FRANCISCO—About 1,500 San Francisco State University (SFSU) students walked out of class May 12 to protest cuts in education in public schools across California. "We are definitely sending a message today, united from all departments, saying don't cut our programs—any of them!" said walkout leader Cathy Arroyo. The SFSU action followed a similar walkout May 6 by students at Long Beach State University.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's revised state budget projects more than \$1.5 billion in cuts to public education. More than \$1 billion is to be cut from K-12 grade education and \$660 million from California's two public university systems—the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC). The state government promises modest funding increases in 2005. The budget also authorizes a "modest boost" to California's 109 community colleges. These colleges are expected to absorb students unable to enter the two university systems due to freshman and transfer enrollment cuts and financial inability because of tuition increases. The budget estimates this "boost" will cover

the 7,000 additional students redirected to the community colleges from the CSU and UC. Some estimates, however, show that 20,000 eligible students will be turned away from the CSU alone.

At San Francisco State these cuts translate into the elimination of five undergraduate degree programs, five graduate degree programs, and the move of two academic programs to seek self-financing.

As a result, SFSU students will face higher tuition costs and will not be eligible for financial aid.

In addition to the cuts in programs, students are being asked to pay higher tuition fees. Undergraduate fees in the CSU and UC systems will be increased 14 percent for the 2004–2005 school year, followed by an annual 8 percent fee increase the next two years. Graduate fees will rise 20 percent next year and 10 percent annually the following two years.

These hikes come on top of already swollen tuition fees. Over the last two years undergraduate fees have risen 40 percent. Tuition in community colleges has jumped 44 percent during the same period.

The current education cuts are simply

a continuation of the policies carried out by the previous Democratic Party administration of Governor Gray Davis. In March and April of 2003, Davis signed into law bills that amounted to roughly \$2.5 billion in education cuts, promising to restore some funding in the 2003-2004 budget. At the same time, while crying "budget crisis" and cutting money for education and social services, capitalist politicians from both parties continue to pay out billions in high interest bond payments to California's wealthiest families every year directly from the state budget.

The walkout at San Francisco State and Long Beach State are part of mobilizations by students in California since March in response to the cuts in education. In March, 8,000 community college students, teachers, and faculty rallied in Sacramento—the state capital—against the rising tuition fees. High school students in West Contra Costa County, outside San Francisco, walked out in April and are currently conducting a hunger strike and march to Sacramento. These actions supplement the many dem-



San Francisco State University students walk out May 12 to protest cuts in education.

onstrations and rallies that have been taking place on individual campuses within all three public university/community college systems.

After the May 12 walkout at San Francisco State, Industrial Arts major and walkout organizer Yuko Matayoshi reflected, "It was both good and bad; it was successful but we still have work to do. We need to educate ourselves and involve all California students because it's our future."

Students continue to have organizing meetings to plan further actions. On May 26, students at CSU Hayward will have a rally against the cuts. For updates on these actions check www.protestfeehikes.org.

Emily Paul is a student at San Francisco State University and a member of the Young Socialists.

Saudi Arabia raid an opening for Washington

Continued from front page

world, lies on the southern border of Iraq.

In a pointed statement June 1, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell said, "I have confidence in the ability of the Saudi Arabians to continue to provide a secure flow of oil products." He added, "I expect them to use all the resources at their disposal to go after" such opposition forces.

The episode began May 29 when a group of men claiming affiliation to the al-Qaeda network attacked an office building and housing area used by foreign oil companies, taking a number of hostages. Police besieged the attackers for 25 hours before Saudi officers unleashed an airborne commando raid. By the end of the firefight, 22 oil company employees lay dead, 25 were wounded, and three of the four attackers had escaped. Saudi government officials said they had taken the wounded leader of the rebel unit into custody.

Eight of the dead were from India, three each from the Philippines and Saudi Arabia, two from Sri Lanka, and one each from Egypt, Italy, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Some on the scene raised doubts about the ability of the Saudi security forces to deal with such attacks. A Saudi computer technician told the *New York Times*, "We are all really upset about how these people left, how they just ran away from that compound."

The *Wall Street Journal* quoted a U.S. executive in Saudi Arabia, who said that "people have lost their confidence in the Saudis' ability to protect them.... The bad guys seem to be able to attack at will."

This was the 11th case of "violence linked to extremism" in Saudi Arabia since last May, said the Associated Press. Previous incidents have included car bombing attacks on housing compounds for foreign workers and clashes between police and anti-government fighters.

Richard Lugar, the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Commit-

tee, said that the Saudi government "bears part of the blame for the latest terrorist attack in that country," reported the Voice of America radio program. The government funds Islamic schools that teach "dangerous lessons," he said, adding that "out of these schools come young Saudis who join these militant organizations and who have very little regard for the American-Saudi relationship."

According to 2003 figures, 5.5 million technicians and other professionals and workers from abroad live in Saudi Arabia out of a total population of 24 million. Officials of the state oil company, Saudi Aramco, claim that 99 percent of their managers in 2002 were Saudi-born, and that only 6 percent of the company's 54,500-strong workforce were from the United States or western European countries.

While a protracted economic crisis has forced a shift in the Saudi economy to more dependence on native-born labor, imperialist capital and foreign-born employees still play a major part in the economy. Washington and London have dominated Saudi Arabia's oil industry from its inception.

U.S. military strength in the Middle East has been built up over the past 15 years and received a new boost with the invasion of Iraq in 2003. U.S. forces are now in the center of a region that includes Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, along with a number of other major oil exporters. The U.S. government's Energy Information Administration has stated that in 20 years the Arab-Persian Gulf will supply between one-half and two-thirds of oil on the world market.

Speaking in May 2003, U.S. deputy secretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz said that the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime meant that "by complete mutual agreement between the U.S. and the Saudi government we can now remove almost all of our forces from Saudi Arabia. Their presence there over the last 12 years has been a source of enormous difficulty for a friendly govern-

ment. It's been a huge recruiting device for al-Qaeda."

The pressures on the Saudi rulers at the time were reflected in divisions within the Saudi monarchy over whether to explicitly back Washington's military push in the Middle East, or to take their distance from it. Those divisions, and the impact of the recent "terrorist" attacks, provide the U.S. rulers with openings to advance their military and economic presence in the oil-rich region.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



June 15, 1979

The counterrevolutionary alliance forged by the Carter administration against the Indochinese revolution has been forced into the open. The revelations appeared in an interview with Ieng Sary, chief aide to ousted Kampuchean dictator Pol Pot.

Ieng Sary called for a right-wing front and increased U.S. help to defeat the Kampuchean masses. He admitted that the U.S.-dominated military regime in Thailand and the CIA-controlled Khmer Serei guerrillas are helping Pol Pot's rightist terror gangs in the Kampuchean civil war.

Kampuchean-government and Vietnamese troops have won victories over rightist forces in recent weeks. The Carter administration is convinced that if the anti-imperialist fighters are not pushed back, the Kriangsak dictatorship in Thailand is doomed. Carter also knows that the Thai army and the Kampuchean rightists don't have the muscle to impose a proimperialist government in Kampuchea without massive U.S. help.

That's why Carter probes for openings to increase U.S. military intervention in the conflict.



June 14, 1954

It is nearly 11 months since the Korean War ended and the current economic decline began. The second event followed the first as night follows day. Labor organizations estimate today's unemployed at well over 3 million. Millions more have been cut back to part-time.

Capitalism, the private profits system, is again proving its inability, short of war, to provide steady employment for the American working people. Only yesterday we were being treated to grandiose theses about the "permanent revolution" in American capitalism which had abolished forever the "old" type of unstable, "free enterprise."

Now government figures show a rise in manufacturing unemployment for the eleventh straight month. And the worst, admittedly, is yet to come. Immediate measures must be taken to slow up layoffs and keep as many workers as possible on the job. The most effective method of keeping the maximum number of workers employed is through the shorter work week and work day with no reduction in total pay.

An imperialist-caused disaster

Massive, unconditional humanitarian aid to Haiti and the Dominican Republic! Cancel the foreign debt of the two countries immediately! U.S., French, and Canadian troops out of Haiti now! This is what working people should demand as the only steps that can begin to address the devastation from the floods and the long-term social catastrophe facing workers and farmers on the island of Hispaniola.

Mouthpieces for big business have hypocritically lamented what they call a “tragedy” and “natural disaster.” Their cheap words are a cover-up of the real crime and culprits. Why do such devastating floods and mudslides occur periodically in the Haitian-Dominican border region? Why do they happen in other semicolonial countries such as Nicaragua and Indonesia, but not in imperialist countries like the United States or Japan?

These are not natural calamities—they are man-made. That is, they are caused by decades of imperialist plunder.

In Haiti, as in Nicaragua and Indonesia, a major reason for the destructive effect of the flooding is extreme deforestation. Lush woodland once covered 90 percent of the country, but after decades of intensive tree cutting for firewood and charcoal, barely 1 percent of Haiti has tree cover.

The stark contrast between green forests on the Dominican side of the border and bleak deforestation and soil erosion on the Haitian side is unforgettable to anyone who has seen it from an airplane flying over the area. Haiti’s forests have disappeared because, without access to electricity or modern fuels, thousands of workers and farmers depend for heat, light, and cooking on charcoal made from chopping down trees.

Government officials blame working people for cutting trees to deflect attention from the real cause of the crisis: imperialist domination. For the past century, Haiti’s potentially rich economy has been distorted to serve the needs of U.S. billionaire families as well as domestic capitalists, who have filled their coffers while plundering the country’s natural wealth, superexploiting its labor, keeping land in the hands of big landowners, and refusing to provide for basic needs like electrification, housing, roads, schools, and health care.

Washington has enforced these conditions with brute force, sending in the Marines in 1915 and backing bloody dictatorships in the decades that followed. Last February U.S. troops were used to force the elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, into exile and to prop up a regime whose leaders have the blood of working people on their hands. Imperialist troops are there today not to provide aid but to keep Haiti safe for U.S., French, and Canadian capitalists.

Similarly, the Dominican Republic has long been plun-

dered by U.S. and domestic capitalists. A major vehicle for this pillage is the foreign debt, which in the past four years has doubled to \$7.6 billion in a nation of 8.5 million. Instead of being used to provide jobs, land, and other vital needs of the vast majority of Dominicans, millions of dollars are spent every year in interest payments to U.S. and other imperialist bankers. As in other semicolonial nations, this economic subordination is perpetuated by unequal terms of trade between the Dominican Republic and the major industrialized powers, as well as ruinous U.S. trade tariffs on Dominican exports.

The Dominican government uses the army and police to brutalize workers and farmers protesting imperialist-dictated austerity measures and the lack of electrical and other services. In the flood-ravaged areas, many residents are Haitian migrant workers who are terrorized by the Dominican cops in order to maintain them as a cheap source of labor power.

In face of the terrible human toll sparked by the flooding and mudslides, what is Washington’s response? A slap in the face—\$50,000 and two “disaster experts.” The U.S. government doesn’t send volunteer doctors, it sends soldiers—redeploying some of their occupation troops, whose job in Haiti is to keep working people in check.

In contrast, revolutionary Cuba—despite a hostile government now in power in Port-au-Prince—offers invaluable help with no strings attached. For the past five years, more than 500 volunteer doctors, nurses, and technicians have been offering free, quality medical services in remote rural areas of Haiti, where U.S. and Haitian doctors are unwilling to work.

After Hurricane Georges in the Caribbean and Mitch in Central America wreaked havoc in 1998, the Cuban government sent hundreds of medical volunteers to the affected regions. The volunteer contingents then remained on a long-term basis. Cuba also established a Latin American Medical School in Havana that has trained, free of charge, thousands of students from across the Americas, including Haitian youth.

What a contrast between Cuba’s selfless solidarity and the U.S. rulers’ callous concern for their profit system! What an indictment of imperialism!

The Cuban people and their leadership are able to provide such an example—where the mightiest capitalist power in the world will not—because of what a socialist revolution makes possible.

Cuba points the road that workers and farmers will need to take in the United States and in other countries: organizing a movement to wrest power out of the hands of the exploiting classes, establish a government of working people, and join the worldwide fight for a society based on human dignity and cooperation, not the capitalist law of the jungle.

Kerry pushes federal police spying

Continued from front page

destroy you.” But, he added, “I will do what this president has failed to do: reform our intelligence system by making the next director of the CIA a true director of national intelligence with true control over intelligence personnel and budgets across our government.”

The *Wall Street Journal* captured the essence of the message in the headline of a May 28 article on the speech: “Kerry Focuses on Homeland Protection.” Kerry’s speech “sounded in many ways like one from the man he is vying to unseat in November,” the *Journal* said. But Kerry “says he will work harder than Mr. Bush at undercutting terrorists,” the *Journal* says, by “revamping intelligence-gathering and relying more on economic sanctions to block development of nuclear weapons.”

The Kerry campaign has posted on its web site a document called the “Plan to Make America Stronger and Safer.” In it, the Democratic Party campaign outlines the ways in which it plans to beef up the domestic police apparatus and draw other forces into aspects of domestic spying. Among the proposals are:

- “Expanding Americorps to make Homeland Security a core mission.” The government-organized youth program founded by the William Clinton administration would be doubled in size and include “homeland security activities” in its training.
- “Creating a new community defense service.” “Hundreds of thousands of Americans in neighborhoods all over the country” would be enlisted as volunteers in a “21st century neighborhood watch.”
- Boosting the number of cops and their salaries. “We should restore funding to COPS [a federal program] to re-realize its initial mission of 100,000 new police officers.”
- “Cutting down on false identifications.” In this section the Kerry campaign outlines its plan to “modernize” driver’s licenses and state ID cards—part of the rulers efforts to establish a national identification system.
- Using the National Guard more actively for policing inside the borders. “Homeland Security should be a central mission of the National Guard,” the document states.

Kerry returned to this last theme in his May 27 speech, promising “to reform training and update the way we structure our armed forces...with National Guard and

Reserve units retooled to meet the requirements of homeland security which have been neglected by this administration.” This is a continuation of the course first carved out by the Clinton administration and deepened under Bush to strengthen the domestic military command structure. Under Clinton the first military command within the U.S. borders was created in January 2000. It was later formalized under Bush with the establishment of the U.S. Northern Command in October 2002.

In the speech, the Democratic presidential hopeful said he would continue and strengthen the initiatives by the Bush administration to conduct piracy on the high seas in the name of combating “weapons of mass destruction.” As commander-in-chief of the world’s number one nuclear-armed power, Kerry said he would use “changes in international treaties, sharing of intelligence, and setting conditions for economic sanctions and the interdiction of illegal shipments” to ensure that Washington and a small number of other imperialist states remain the only nations with the capacity to use nuclear weapons. The senator from Massachusetts assured his listeners that he would be just as much a war president as his opponent, stating, “Osama bin Laden is still at large because the Bush administration didn’t finish him off at the Battle of Tora Bora [Afghanistan] when they had the chance.” He said that Washington is not dealing strongly enough with “Saudi sponsorship of clerics who promote the ideology of Islamic terror,” saying, “we will not do business as usual with any country that does not demonstrate its full will to partner in this struggle.”

Kerry insisted on a theme pushed by many liberal critics of the Bush administration: Washington is putting its armed forces at unnecessary risk by deploying relatively small numbers in Iraq. “As president, on my first day in office,” Kerry proclaimed, “I will send the message to every man and woman in our armed forces: this commander-in-chief will ensure that you are the best led, best equipped fighting force in the world.... But you will never be sent into harm’s way without enough troops for the task.”

“The idea of America,” waxed the millionaire senator in an interview the next day with the *Washington Post*, “is, I think proudly and chauvinistically, the best idea that we’ve developed in this world.”

Tufts symposium

Continued from Page 5

what is happening in Cuba,” Waters said.

“The Cuban Revolution was the most important historical event in the second half of the 20th century,” she explained. “It brought to power a government that used state power to defend, protect, and advance the interests of a different class—not the capitalist owners of land and industry but the working class, allied with the peasantry.”

Waters quoted Armando Hart, one of the historic leaders of the Cuban Revolution and author of *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground 1952-58* (see ad on page 5), recently published by Pathfinder Press. “Revolutions are not a stroll through beautiful meadows and gardens, where men march without difficulty or anguish. A process of change is filled with both, and multiplies them,” Hart wrote.

Contrary to the picture painted by Eckstein of a society marked by corruption, alienation, and social decay, Waters emphasized the continuity of what is happening in Cuba today and the policies being implemented by the revolutionary government, with the class course that has been followed since the earliest days of the revolution.

Cuban Revolution: course of action to defend toilers

“The Cuban Revolution,” she noted, “is not the product of a preconceived set of ideas, an ideology. It is a course of action to defend the interests of toilers, in Cuba and internationally.” She pointed to the sweeping, nation-wide land reform immediately following the triumph of the revolution in 1959 and the building of hundreds of day care centers during the “Rectification Process” in the late 1980s as two examples.

Taking up Eckstein’s portrayal of an economic and social order dominated by theft and desperation, Waters noted that economic hardships had accentuated the class differentiation in Cuba.

While many of those in administrative and professional positions had indeed become demoralized and felt helpless to affect the outcome, she explained, the vanguard of the workers and peasants reacted differently. Workers in the plants and on the farms rolled up their sleeves and began to produce, defying all the hardships. They organized to deal with problems such as theft, saying “we know who is doing it, how it is being carried out.” They organized factory meetings to discuss it and discipline those responsible, and 24-hour guard duty to stop it. That process, she explained, was part of “the working class gaining confidence, recognizing that what they did would be decisive. And that is why you can say the revolution has been strengthened not weakened.”

Without the progress registered by the Rectification Process, she noted, the outcome of the Special Period would have been very different.

Far from Cuban society becoming “deschooled” and education less important today, Waters insisted, the most significant and most revolutionary initiative that has been taken in recent years is the extensive expansion of the education system under the banner of the “Battle of Ideas,” which she described as “a massive affirmative action program for the working class.”

She pointed to the establishment of university centers in every municipality, the daily television University for All courses, and the special programs to pay high school drop-outs and workers between jobs to study, as evidence of the strengthened working-class course of the revolution today.

Broad range of questions

After both presentations questions were taken from the audience and each speaker had a chance to reply. Questions included were: How has the Cuban education model changed during the Special Period? What about the Special Period and women, and is the women’s movement independent of the government? What about the 75 “independent journalists” and others jailed last March? What do you think about globalization?

In replying to the questions Eckstein pointed out that the organizers of the meeting deserved to be commended “for bringing together the presentation of two very different points of views.”

Agreeing with the student who had asked about the jailing of “dissidents,” Eckstein said she thought there were real problems with freedom of political expression in Cuba. “The hardest thing to justify is the execution of three people for hijacking a ferry to go to the U.S.,” she stated. “The crime did not deserve the punishment.”

Waters took issue with the claim that “the people who were arrested and imprisoned were ‘independent journalists’ expressing ideas in opposition to the course of the revolution.” What was demonstrated in the trials she said was that “those were people on the payroll of the U.S. government.”

And the execution of the three hijackers, she noted, was a deliberately harsh action aimed at halting an accelerating wave of hijackings before many lives were lost in one of the them and the hijackings became a pretext for U.S. government intervention that could lead to a major confrontation with Washington.

Waters ended by reiterating “the historical importance of the Cuban Revolution in the world today and its example, including for those in the United States who are unwilling to accept the brutality of capitalist society.”

After the program almost all the participants stayed for a dinner of traditional Cuban foods, an hour of informal discussion, and music by a student trio playing tango music written by one of the students in the Latin American Studies program.

Floods in Hispaniola

Continued from front page

of its land has tree cover. The reason for the disappearance of the woodland is that electricity and gas or other forms of fuel are not accessible at all in most of the rural areas. As a result, working people are forced to cut wood and use it or sell it for charcoal—the only means of survival available to them.

In response to this calamity, the U.S. government offered the insulting sum of \$50,000 in relief supplies plus two disaster experts. Instead of health-care and relief personnel, it has sent U.S. Marines from the imperialist occupation force to transport the supplies.

In Haiti, virtually the only medical services available to working people in the affected areas are being provided by Cuban volunteer doctors, who have been serving there since 1999.

Deforestation makes floods deadly

Two weeks of heavy rains resulted May 24 in the overflowing of the Sillié River, which crosses the border from Haiti into the province of Jimaní in the Dominican Republic. Haiti has the least economic development of any nation in the Americas. Similar conditions exist in the border region of the Dominican Republic. Per capita income in Haiti is about \$400 per year, and \$2,000 in the Dominican Republic.

The center of the disaster is in towns and villages in the border region—Mapou and Fond Verrettes in Haiti, and Jimaní in the Dominican Republic.

Floodwaters washed through the deforested hills, overflowing previously dry riverbeds. The floods struck before dawn while many people were still asleep. Entire neighborhoods were swept away as people struggled to reach safety on the roofs of their homes or by climbing palm trees.

Mudslides knocked down everything in their path as houses—many built from sticks and sheets of iron—could not withstand the pressure. At the same time, torrential rains, mud, and landslides have made impassable the few roads that could serve as either means of escape for residents or route of entry for emergency relief efforts.

According to media reports, an estimated 1,000 people are dead in the town of Mapou, which remains submerged under 10 feet of water. The single road leading into the town is now cut off by the Peredo River, which before the rains was little more than a creek. Relief workers have had to cancel almost all activity as ground transportation is impossible and only some helicopter flights have made it through the continuing rains. “We know something big is going on. But we can’t get there,” a Red Cross employee told the *Miami Herald*.

In Fond Verrettes—just 40 miles east of Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital—as much as five feet of rain fell in 36 hours, and rushing waters and mudslides destroyed most homes there. Some 160 people reportedly died in the first days of flooding, including 45 children. Another 100 have been found dead in the southern town of Grand Gosier, Haitian government officials said.

For these rural communities, obtaining aid was especially difficult even prior to the recent disaster. The few services the government provides are concentrated in Port-au-Prince. “To get medicines you have to travel one long day to the capital, then spend two days there going around looking for what you need, then one long day to travel back,” Burnet Cherisol, who operates a clinic in Gonaives, in northern Haiti, told Reuters. “As a result the people continue to suffer and needlessly die.”

Cuban doctors’ services vital

Cherisol said that the more than 500 Cuban medical volunteers on the island are vital to health-care services in the countryside. “In many areas the only care available is from the Cuban doctors, even though the current Haitian government doesn’t support them,” she said. “Few Haitian physicians are willing to venture this far, where there’s no electricity, no hotel.”

Haitian prime minister Gérard Latortue was put in power by the U.S. military after a rightist rebellion three months ago spread throughout Haiti. The government of the elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide agreed to allow U.S. and other imperialist troops to land in Haiti supposedly to mediate the conflict. But the U.S. troops quickly shanghaied Aristide, taking him by plane

to Africa. Aristide is currently living in South Africa. Some 3,600 U.S., Canadian, and French troops have been kept in Haiti to “restore order.”

The U.S. government has responded to the disaster by mobilizing U.S. Marines to carry relief supplies.

One of the main reasons for the catastrophic flooding and mudslides was the severe deforestation of the hills and valleys in the border region. Haiti’s forests have disappeared because, without access to electricity or other sources of fuel, thousands of Haitian workers and farmers depend for survival on charcoal made from cutting down trees for heat, light, and cooking fuel.

Latortue announced that to combat the deforestation, his government would create a “forest protection unit” made up of former soldiers from the demobilized Haitian army. Past government-sponsored reforestation campaigns, however, have not been more than token efforts.

The flooding in the Dominican Republic was centered in the border area, one of the country’s poorest regions. In Jimaní, a town of 15,000, about 100 miles west of Santo Domingo, government authorities buried more than 250 bodies immediately, the Associated Press reported May 27. The majority of those living in the town are immigrants from Haiti, trying to make a living as sugar cane cutters or street vendors. As undocumented workers, many are afraid of being deported if they go to authorities for aid. Bodies were found crushed against walls, clinging to tree trunks, and buried in the mud. In most cases the government made no effort to identify those who had died. Many were buried in mass graves, while bulldozers dug holes to bury others where they were found, according to Reuters.

The floods destroyed all shelters, such as hospitals and churches, and left schools full of water and mud. Several survivors told the media that the government had warned them they were living in a flood-prone area, but were given no alternative. “The government

What’s behind electoral upset in India

Continued from Page 7

placed its hopes on an expanding economy. The ruling party trumpeted the “achievements” of opening India to investments by computer technology-related industries and contracting services to U.S. and other imperialist monopolies such as airlines reservations or accounting. The BJP began moving away from its nationalist stance, talking of Hindu-Muslim unity. Party leaders even donned Muslim headgear.

The election results came as a surprise to those who see the new “white-collar” employees as the motor force of Indian society rather than the hundreds of millions of workers and peasants who along with nature produce all the country’s wealth, and who are subjected in their majority to unlivable wages and conditions.

New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman is among those who writes glowing reports about India’s economy. He was “stunned,” he wrote in a May 20 opinion piece, by the defeat of the BJP government. Friedman wrote that the “broad globalization strategy that India opted for in the early 1990s has succeeded in unlocking

— LETTERS —

Remembering Attica

The rebellion by prisoners at the Attica prison in New York state in 1971 (*Militant* May 31—“What was behind ’71 Attica prison revolt?”) should never be forgotten. I vividly remember those days. The defiant words of those men, facing insurmountable odds, should be a continuing lesson for us all: “We are not beasts, and we do not intend to be beaten or driven as such.... What has happened here is but the sound before the fury of those who are oppressed.”

Floyd Fowler
Hapeville, Georgia

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



AP/Orlando Barrôa

A boy covers his face at the stench from corpses of flood victims in the Dominican town of Jimaní May 26. Hundreds of the town’s residents died in the floods.

came by and said we were in the river’s path, but we didn’t have the money to move or buy any land or build anything, so we stayed,” Fraudi Matos, a washing machine repair worker told the *Miami Herald*.

Dominican president Hipólito Mejía has deployed army troops to take relief supplies to the flood-devastated areas. The main priority of the Mejía government, however, has been to make payments to the imperialist creditors on the Dominican Republic’s foreign debt and to use the army and police against working people protesting the deterioration of their working and living conditions. Since the year 2000 the foreign debt has doubled to more than \$7.6 billion in this country of 8.5 million inhabitants.

A two-day general strike shut down most economic activity in the Dominican Republic on January 28–29. Strikers protested rising unemployment and skyrocketing inflation, and condemned the country’s plunder by international finance capital through debt slavery. Workers demanded action against worsening conditions such as frequent,

hours-long blackouts.

Mejía responded with a display of force, sending thousands of soldiers and police into the streets. Government forces killed at least seven during the 48-hour period, wounded dozens more, and arrested about 500 others.

Imperialist ‘aid’ an insulting pittance

Imperialist governments have offered no more than a trickle of aid for the thousands left homeless, for finding those who are missing, and rebuilding homes and livelihoods. Washington has promised a miserly \$50,000 through its misnamed Agency for International Development. Ottawa has offered \$43,000, Tokyo \$100,000, and European Union governments a combined total of \$2.4 million.

Much of this so-called aid, however, will be used not to improve the country’s infrastructure and the living conditions of working people but to perpetuate the debt bondage of the two countries and fatten the pockets of some local capitalists.

an editorial in the May 22 *Economist*, published in London. “In 1991, when Congress last took office, it was in an almost identical position to the one it finds itself in now: short of a majority, and forced to depend on the support of Communists from outside its coalition. Then, as now, Mr. Singh as the chief reformer.... That government started to privatize, opened India to foreign investment and began to deregulate the country’s appalling infrastructure. Over the past six years, the ruling BJP merely continued Congress’s work, with plenty of backtracking.”

Treachery of Stalinist parties

The Congress Party will preside over a coalition government that needs the backing of the country’s two Communist Parties, which together won more than 60 seats. They will support the Congress-led government in parliament without formally joining it or accepting posts in the cabinet. Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet was also surprised by the workers’ rejection of the ruling coalition. “This scale of anger was not expected by us,” he said. “The question before us now is to bring together all the forces that worked against the BJP.” A statement by the Communist Party of India greeted the Congress Party victory as a strengthening of “the secular-democratic character of the country.”

The “progressive” demagoguery of the Stalinist parties notwithstanding, this is how one of the mouthpieces of British imperialism sees it. “As for the Communists, they should be judged by what they do, not what they say,” commented the May 22 editorial in the *Economist*.

“In West Bengal, where Communists run the state government, 15 state-owned enterprises are being sold off, and IT [Information Technology] companies have been designated as ‘strategic,’ meaning that their workers are banned from striking. Despite dismissing Congress economic policy as no better than the Hindu nationalists of the BJP, the Communists have worked with Congress before, and should have no difficulty doing so again.”

Canadian gov't calls early elections

Blows by U.S. rulers against Canadian imperialism over Iraq war are behind crisis

BY JOE YOUNG
AND SÉBASTIEN DESAUTELS

MONTREAL—On May 23, Canadian prime minister Paul Martin called early federal elections for June 28. Martin was appointed only eight months ago to replace Jean Chrétien in the office of prime minister. But his administration is in deep crisis.

Behind the crisis lie the serious blows Washington has dealt to Ottawa for its refusal to take part in the “coalition of the willing” in the assault on and occupation of Iraq. The Canadian rulers put the Martin government in office in an attempt to reverse or slow down the impact of the punishment they got from their much more powerful imperialist ally to the south. But Martin has done nothing to change the situation. Tariffs and other trade restrictions imposed by Washington, especially over softwood lumber and beef, have cost billions to many Canadian capitalists. As the economic crisis has intensified, the Canadian rulers have pushed harder to cut wages and living standards of working people to shore up their declining profit rates—creating discontent across the board.

The ruling Liberal Party presently holds 168 seats of the 301 in the Canadian parliament. Support for the party, however, has been dropping in bourgeois public opinion. In a May 25–26 national poll, 59 percent of the respondents said a new party should be elected in Ottawa. The Liberals, who have run the federal government for the last 11 years, now face the possibility of being forced to form a minority government.

Martin became the leader of the Liberal Party last fall, replacing Chrétien, who had been prime minister since 1993. This was the result of a faction struggle within the party over how to address the economic problems of the Canadian capitalists as a result of being kicked in the teeth by Washington—Ottawa’s main trading partner and competitor.

Soon after Martin’s arrival, however, what has become known as “the sponsorship scandal” broke out. Liberal Party officials were accused of using money from the “sponsorship fund”—an annual government fund to “promote Canada”—to give away up to \$100 million to their political allies in business in Quebec. Several central Liberal figures were fired from government posts and even arrested and charged with fraud. But the real scandal, as media reports later revealed, is that since 1993 the federal government had spent nearly Can \$725 million (\$1 Can = \$0.73 U.S.) to promote “Canadian unity” through a propaganda campaign aimed against the right of the Quebecois to self-determination. The Quebecois, who comprise 80 percent of the population of Quebec, are a French-speaking oppressed nationality. In a 1995 referendum that was defeated by less than 2 percent, a significant majority of Quebecois voted for Quebec sovereignty.

In addition to the fallout from the sponsorship scandal, support for the Liberals plummeted in Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia—provinces where Liberal governments have carried out massive cuts in social programs. A protracted faction fight within the ruling party continued after Chrétien’s departure, accelerating the weakening of the party.

Blows by Washington

Deteriorating relations with Washington have a lot to do with the looming downfall of the Liberals.

In May 2002, the U.S. Department of Commerce imposed a 29 percent duty on softwood lumber from Canada, charging that the Canadian government was unfairly subsidizing logging operations. In May 2003, Washington and many other governments took advantage of the fact that one Alberta cow tested positive for “mad cow” disease to ban imports of all Canadian beef cattle. The latter step was part of



Reuters/Andy Clark

British Columbia forestry minister Mike De Jong holds up piece of lumber at Aug. 30, 2001, protest outside U.S. Consulate in Vancouver against U.S. tariffs on Canadian lumber.

Washington’s response to Ottawa’s refusal to send troops to Iraq as part of the Anglo-American offensive.

These knockdowns have cost Canadian capitalists billions of dollars. Big business has made sure workers bear the brunt of the crisis. Workers in the wood and meatpacking industries have been hit by tens of thousands of layoffs across the country. Thousands of farmers have also been badly affected.

Many other large corporations are in decline. Air Canada, the dominant airline, is under bankruptcy protection. On May 27, Bombardier, one of the world’s largest monopolies in aircraft and train assembly, announced 500 more layoffs at its plants in Montreal. This comes on top of thousands of previous layoffs.

As Canada’s economy has declined, successive Liberal governments have carried out \$36 billion in cuts to funds allocated to the provinces for health care and other social programs. Since the public health-care system, Medicare, was established in the mid 1960s, the federal government’s share of funding for the program has fallen from 50 percent to 16 percent today.

All the capitalist parties are making demagogic appeals to win votes, trying to tap into working people’s concerns about declining health care and rising medical costs with promises of increased investments or improvements in social services. This has created a momentary shift to the left in bourgeois politics in the framework of the election campaign. On May 9, Martin announced that a Liberal government would inject \$9 billion dollars into health care over the next five years, increasing the federal share of funding to 25 percent.

The New Democratic Party (NDP), a “socialist” imperialist party with ties to the trade unions outside Quebec, is campaigning around five themes: an additional \$29 billion in health-care funding over five years, pension plan protections, eliminating the sales tax on products related to “basic family needs,” and more funding for education and protection of the environment. NDP leader Jack Layton said funding for these programs would come from new taxes and doing away with tax breaks for corporations and high-income families. “Our fiscal projections are reasonable and moderate,” Layton said May 25. “But if the money isn’t there, we will change the time of our propos-

als so that we keep the budgets balanced.”

Since the start of the election campaign, the Liberal Party has been playing the Canadian nationalism card to the hilt. Lashing out at Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper, Martin charged that the Conservatives’ tax cut proposals would lead to slashing social programs and health care and a “U.S.-style society.” At the same time, the Conservatives are accusing the Liberals of conducting a domestic and foreign policy contributing to the bullish stance by Washington against Ottawa.

The Canadian government did not officially support Washington’s war against Iraq, in order preserve its façade as “an international peace-keeping force,” an image it has sought to maintain under cover of the United Nations for almost half a century. At the same

time, Ottawa has maintained hundreds of soldiers and sailors in the Middle East in various support roles for the imperialist aggression, including in Afghanistan. But that’s not good enough for Uncle Sam.

While questions of foreign policy have been all but absent from the election campaign, there are no significant differences between any of the capitalist parties on foreign policy. No party calls for the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan, Bosnia, or Haiti, for example. All support the so-called war on terror and the attacks on civil liberties carried out in its name.

Fragmentation of Canadian politics

The prospect of a minority government—Liberal or Conservative—has become a central question in the present elections. Should this happen, it would mark a deepening of the process of fragmentation of the main capitalist parties and instability of bourgeois politics in Canada, which began a decade ago.

The Liberal Party emerged in the 1993

federal elections as the only capitalist party with support in every part of Canada. In that election, the Progressive Conservative Party (PC), which for more than a century had alternated with the Liberal Party in power, was left with only two seats in parliament compared to 155 in the previous election. This registered the end of this traditional two-party system in Canada, marking the biggest political shake-up in the country since the 1930s Depression.

The 1993 election was also marked by the participation for the first time of the Bloc Québécois (BQ), which runs only in Quebec. It became the official opposition that year with 54 seats. The BQ and the Parti Québécois represent a layer of the ruling class that uses Quebecois nationalism to advance its economic interests.

Recent polls show that the BQ could again win some 54 seats in Quebec, a clear sign of the failure of Ottawa’s propaganda campaign to dampen the national aspirations of most people in Quebec. Quebecois nationalism is quite prominent in the election campaign in this province. The BQ, for example, has adopted the election slogan: *Un parti propre au Québec*, which translates, “For a party that belongs to Quebec.” In French the word *propre* has a double meaning, so the slogan can also be translated, “For a clean party in Quebec.”

The new Conservative Party, a right-wing bourgeois party, is the product of the December 2003 fusion of the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative Party. During the last federal elections in 2000, the Liberal Party took advantage of a divided vote between the PC and the Canadian Alliance to get its candidates elected in several regions, particularly in Ontario. The Conservative Party is calling for cuts in taxes and an end to “wasteful spending.” Its politics are more to the center of the bourgeois spectrum in these elections than those of the Alliance party.

The fortunes of the New Democratic Party also seem to be rising. After a decade of low support in elections, recent polls show the NDP could receive between 15 and 17 percent of the vote, and NDP leaders are raising the prospect of winning enough seats to be in position to join a coalition government with the Liberals if the ruling party doesn’t win a majority of parliamentary seats.

Far from consolidating a strong government, which was the framework of the Canadian ruling class when it pushed Martin to the post of prime minister, all signs indicate that, whatever the final results, the upcoming June elections will open up a period of greater political instability in Canada.

Further Reading From Pathfinder

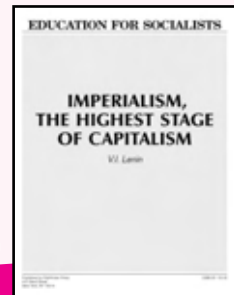
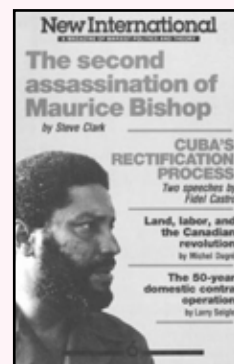
In ‘New International’ no. 6

“Land, Labor, and the Canadian Socialist Revolution”
by Michel Dugré

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