

# THE MILITANT

**SPECIAL FEATURE INSIDE**

**Crisis, boom, and revolution**

by Jack Barnes, V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky

—PAGES 6–8

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## Columbus, Georgia: 8,000 march against police brutality, racism

Protesters demand justice for Kenneth Walker, killed by cops in 2003

BY BILL ARTH

COLUMBUS, Georgia—More than 8,000 people marched January 15 from the Civic Center here to the Columbus Government Center to demand justice for Kenneth Walker and to protest cop brutality and anti-Black discrimination.

Walker, a 39-year-old African American, was killed Dec. 10, 2003, by two bullets to the head fired by Muscogee County deputy sheriff David Glisson. Walker was a passenger in a vehicle stopped by Glisson and other deputy sheriffs from the local police Special Response Team. The cops claimed they were looking for drug dealers who they suspected would be armed. But the police officers did not find any incriminating evidence against the four men nor did they provide any plausible explanation as to how Walker was shot dead. Muscogee County Sheriff Ralph Johnson called the shooting a “tragedy.”

Glisson was subsequently fired from the police department. On November 23, however, a grand jury decided not to indict him after deliberating for about 40 minutes.

Attorneys for Walker’s family filed a civil lawsuit the week prior to the march here, seeking \$100 million in damages from the city of Columbus, Glisson, and Johnson, the country sheriff.

Warren Beulah, Daryl Ransom, and Anthony Smith—the other men in the vehicle where Walker was killed—also filed a civil suit in U.S. District Court January 10 charging that their constitutional rights were violated and seeking damages of \$3.5 million.



Thousands demonstrated in Columbus, Georgia, January 15—on anniversary of Martin Luther King’s birthday—to demand justice for man killed by cops in December 2003 and to condemn anti-Black discrimination.

The men were stopped as they drove down Interstate 185 on that fatal night a little more than a year ago. The three survivors told the press later that the police ordered them to get out of the vehicle with their hands in the air and get on the ground as officers advanced, guns drawn. In the ensuing moments, Walker was shot twice

in the head. Beulah, Ransom, and Smith were then handcuffed and searched. The police found no weapons or drugs in their possession or in the car. The men were taken to the sheriff’s department where they were held in separate cells and questioned by deputies. No charges were ever

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## Utah miners describe how they were fired for union fight

BY GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL

PRICE, Utah—Coal miners in Utah who have fought a relentless battle for safe working conditions, livable wages, and respect and dignity on the job for 16 months at the Co-Op mine near here are pressing for resolution of several issues pending with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Despite delays on the part of the NLRB, Co-Op miners say they remain confident their efforts to be represented by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) will prevail. Miners say they have been encouraged in recent weeks by an outpouring of letters to the NLRB urging the board to rule in favor of the workers’ demands and other messages of solidarity and financial donations from the labor movement in the West and beyond.

The miners’ demands include that they be reinstated to their jobs and that the national labor board stick with an earlier ruling that votes by relatives of the mine owners not be counted in the union representation election. On December 9, a week before the union election at the Co-Op mine, the company, which is owned by

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## Washington weighs cuts in U.S. military programs

Debate shows factionalism among U.S. rulers

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of Defense is seeking to cut several weapons programs, particularly in the Air Force and Navy, which do not fit what the Pentagon describes as the “transformation” of the U.S. military. According to a December 6 report in the *Defense News*, top commanders of the Air Force and Navy have balked at proposals to cut back on purchases and modernization of warplanes and ships in order to qualitatively expand the Army’s resources—most importantly Special Forces.

The debate on possible cuts in the U.S. military budget highlights a growing factionalism among the U.S. rulers as well as the increasing politicization of the officer corps.

Last November the defense department convened an advisory commission to help improve the military’s “transformation.”

This is a strategic reorganization of the U.S. armed forces, prompted by the rulers’ conclusions that their military was not up to snuff to defend Washington’s imperialist interests worldwide more than a decade after the end of the Cold War.

U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld has been at the center of leading these changes in the U.S. military, which relied primarily on heavy armored divisions, bombers and long-range land and sea-based missile systems aimed at the former Soviet Union. In testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee last September, Rumsfeld said, “We have entered an era where enemies are

in small cells scattered across the globe. Yet America’s forces continue to be arranged especially to fight large armies, navies, and air forces, and in support of an approach—static deterrence—that does not apply to enemies who have no territories to defend and no treaties to honor.” He added, “We are still situated in a large part as if little has changed for the last 50 years—as if, for example, Germany is still bracing for a Soviet tank invasion across the northern plain.”

The reorganization underway includes closing bases and cutting troop levels in western Europe and moving units toward the east. It also includes upgrading the role of the Special Forces, relying more on modern weapons technology and infiltration of enemy forces, combining commands of various branches of the military, outsourcing jobs like running prisons and hospitals to nonmilitary entities in order to upgrade the army’s “warrior ethos,” and organizing military units into smaller and more agile brigades that can be deployed within days anywhere in the world.

The 19-member Transformation Advisory Group includes retired military officers, executives of arms industries and private “intelligence” firms, Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton, and Newton Gingrich, former Republican Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Cuts in warplanes

The Pentagon plans to cut purchases in half for a new warplane, the F/A-22 Raptor

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## Thousands in Russia protest cuts in social wage

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Thousands of retirees and others protested in cities across Russia for more than a week in mid-January against government “reforms” that substitute miserly cash payments for a series of essential social entitlements. Demonstrators have blocked highways and demanded that the Kremlin “bring back everything” taken from them “and go.”

“Pensioners in several cities, angry at having to pay for public transport when the changes were introduced, fought with bus conductors and hijacked buses,” reported the Reuters news agency. “Many elderly people have to work to supplement their meager pensions and rely heavily on public transport to get to their jobs.”

President Vladimir Putin has stood by the measures to “monetize” social benefits, which took effect January 1. Faced with ongoing demonstrations, however, he has blamed other government officials for the consequences. “The motives for the decisions taken by the State Duma and the government are understandable. The question is how they are carried out in practice,” he said on national television January 17. “The government and regions have not completely carried out their task that we spoke of, which was to not make the situation of those who depend on state assistance any worse.” Putin also announced a hike in the monthly pension allotment as a means of

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## U.S. troops in Iraq unleash raids in Mosul

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. military carried out a series of rapid raids against forces loyal to the former Baathist party regime of Saddam Hussein and their allies in Mosul January 16, according to the Associated Press. Mosul, with a large Sunni population, is Iraq’s third-largest city and is located in one of four provinces the U.S. military says are likely to be “unsafe” for the U.S.-orchestrated elections for a national assembly scheduled for January 30.

More than 8,000 U.S. and Iraqi troops will be in Mosul prior to the vote, reported Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Meanwhile, about 650 British troops have arrived in Basra in southern Iraq to aid U.S. occupation forces and the Iraqi interim government of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi leading up to the elections, according to the January 17 British daily *Telegraph*. With this deployment, London’s forces in Iraq exceed 9,000 troops.

At about the same time, on January 14, Baathist forces assassinated a key aid to Iraq’s leading Shiite cleric, Ali al-Sistani, as part of an ongoing campaign to derail

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# Montreal poultry workers strike for livable workweek

BY SYLVIE CHARBIN

MONTREAL—The 90 members of the Union of Volailles Marvid Workers, affiliated to the National Confederation of Trade Unions (CSN), have just entered their fifth month on strike. The employer, Volailles Marvid, is the largest certified kosher poultry abattoir in Quebec. “We’re fighting for a guaranteed minimum 30-hour workweek, because 15 to 20 hours isn’t enough,” said Luc Dufour, 38, who has worked at the company for eight months. “We’re not asking for much.”

In February 2003, after the company started a second production line, workers saw their former 39-hour workweek cut in half or less. Their weekly take-home pay fell to between CAN \$150 and \$200 (CAN \$1 = U.S. \$0.82). Strikers told the *Militant* that since February 2002 the bosses have selectively used temp agency workers for tasks normally done by union members, often bringing them in while union members are told to stay home because there’s no work.

Despite often freezing temperatures, both the company owners and the city of Montreal has denied the union permission to set up a picket trailer. The city has also denied workers permission to set up a wood-burning barrel to warm their hands. So when temperatures plunge well below zero the union has been making sure that no-one pickets for more than 15 minutes at a time and that a few cars, engines running, are at their disposal to warm up.

“Our numbers on the picket line have dropped off because of the cold,” said Carlo Désir, the union president. “But others have decided not to look for other jobs in order to support the strike. We all agree that we won’t go back with our heads down and that we have to wage this battle to the end.”

On November 30, the striking workers voted 96 percent against the first company offer since their contract expired in December 2003. The contract contained no guaranteed hours, and made no mention of wages, vacations, pensions, or paid leaves for illness or other reasons, with the exception of legal holidays.

The union has had to confront a number of challenges since the strike began September 13. At the beginning of November, striking workers were handed an

injunction that limited pickets to 18 at a time and forced strikers to move the line to the other side of the street. Two weeks later, however, workers were able to get the injunction modified to allow them to resume picketing on the sidewalk in front of the plant.

The union has been able to push the bosses back on some other points. On October 30, the union filed a complaint before the Quebec Labor Relations Board (CRT), charging the company with using some 40 replacement workers to maintain production, in violation of the Quebec Labor Code, which bans the use of salaried workers, other than supervisory personnel, to replace striking or lock-out workers.

The union won a partial victory November 2, when the CRT ruled that relatives of supervisory personnel, as well as rabbis who were paid to insure that chickens are slaughtered according to strict Jewish ritual before the strike began, could not work during the strike. The CRT also ruled, however, that persons who voluntarily offer their services to Volailles Marvid out of religious conviction could legally work during the strike. The company has continued to use this loophole in the Labor Code to its advantage. But it was caught violating the ruling December 29 when a CRT board member, through the vigilance of the union, witnessed three of the rabbis named in the ruling entering the plant.

Désir estimates that the abattoir is presently running at about 25 percent of capacity. An article published in the November 11 internet edition of *The Canadian Jew-*



Militant

**Poultry workers on strike against Volailles Marvid in Montreal for a 30-hour minimum workweek return to picket line January 12, after a union meeting.**

*ish News* said, “In a rare move... the city’s main kosher certification body.... the Vaad Ha’ir, began to allow suppliers from outside Montreal—most prominently from the U.S.-based Empire Kosher Poultry—to bring kosher chickens into the city to cope with the shortage,” which was caused by the strike.

In another CRT ruling handed down November 23, the company was ordered to reinstate Arnold Fertil, a worker who was fired for union activities August 11, a month before the strike. Léo Ouellette, the CSN counsellor assigned to the strike, told the *Militant* that the company has recently appealed this ruling.

Glorieuse Dorvil, who has worked at Marvid for 26 years, told this reporter that on December 28 strikers received their weekly \$200 strike pay, plus a Christmas bonus of \$150, drawn from the some \$9,000 contributed so far by other CSN-affiliated unions.

On that snowy day, a group of strikers, in high spirits, returned to the picket line and began to dance and sing to a rhythmic popular carnival tune in Haiti called “Don’t give us that.” The strikers, 80 percent of whom are Haitian, have adapted the lyrics of this song to include the main demands of the strike.

At one point, one of the bosses came out of the plant, walked toward them, stared at the workers contemptuously for several minutes while leaning on a shovel, then shook his head in disbelief and slowly turned back toward the plant.

“Since the November 30 vote,” said Dorvil, “we’ve heard nothing from the company, but what’s encouraging is that the solidarity among us is strong and our morale remains high.”

*Aimée Kendergian, a meat packer in Montreal, contributed to this article.*

## Success! SWP supporters contribute \$316,000 to party in 2004

BY PAT O'REILLY

SEATTLE—“We’ve achieved a great success: \$316,642.50 donated by party supporters and contributors to the Socialist Workers Party national office in 2004! We surpassed our national goal of \$315,000. Congratulations on a job done well, in full, and on time!”

That’s how a January 12 newsletter by the SWP supporters’ financial steering committee addressed to the party’s monthly contributors begins. The committee is based in Seattle and is made up of Scott Breen, Sara

Gates, and Pat O’Reilly.

SWP supporters adopted this goal in July 2003, after exceeding the \$300,000 they had set to raise for the period from August 2002 to July 2003.

In cities across the United States, SWP supporters collect regular monthly pledges, record them in an electronic database, and mail them to Seattle. Here, the financial steering committee verifies the checks received, prepares and makes the deposits, and sends the funds to the SWP national office in monthly installments. The committee also sends out a monthly newsletter to supporters reporting on the status of the campaign.

“Our labors resulted in the steady, consistent, dependable collection and transfer of an average of \$26,551 monthly to the SWP National Office—just as we promised,” the latest newsletter states. “Out of the 12 months of 2004, we met our \$26,250 monthly goal eight times. In the course of this national campaign, there were 92 contributor pledge raises totaling \$1,502, and 42 new contributors joined us, adding \$1,365. These successfully offset pledge drops and people who stopped regular monthly contributions. Several areas established financial committees to help organize the reach out and collection work of supporters’ groups, bolstering our fund-raising efforts. All of these were necessary to win this victory.”

The last two weeks of the effort the steering committee sent a daily e-mail to local financial directors and committees. The e-mail included a daily running total of funds posted to the database, checks received in Seattle, and checks still outstanding. Many local supporters’ groups went the extra mile to collect pledges at the last minute and send them special delivery overnight mail to compensate for the holiday delays. This final push helped assure that the total donations went over the top. But the achievement was mainly due to being on course all year long.

“The successful campaign to raise \$315,000 in 2004 organized by Socialist Workers Party supporters is a big victory and a big boost to building the communist movement,” said SWP leader Dave Prince in a note to the steering committee. “We salute your effort. The party budgeted in the income every month and contributors made sure their generous pledges arrived each month as promised—an essential part of enabling the SWP to respond in a timely way to political developments as they have unfolded over the last year. Based on the results we can look forward with confidence to budgeting these contributions for our work in 2005.”

Those interested in becoming regular contributors to the SWP can contact party supporters in their area (see directory on page 8).

## THE MILITANT

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# Debate on U.S. military

Continued from front page

fighter jet, according to *Defense News*. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John Jumper, the news service said, argued with Pentagon budget cutters that the Raptor is the top transformation priority of the Air Force. The Raptor is supposedly superior to the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter—more lethal, and more capable of sustaining high speeds for longer periods. Air Force generals claim the new plane is vital to maintaining U.S. global air superiority.

According to *Defense News*, senior officials in Rumsfeld's office, among them Undersecretary for Intelligence Stephen Cambone, have been arguing that too much money is being spent on conventional weapons and not enough on what is needed to fight "unconventional adversaries." They say air superiority is an area in which the Pentagon enjoys "excessive overmatch." For this reason, while Jumper champions development of a multi-mission electronic aircraft to replace the AWAC and JSTARS spy planes, Cambone favors using satellites or unmanned aircraft for future spy missions, said the *Defense News*.

Private companies affected by the proposed cuts have also shown concern and have expressed hopes that the arms programs will go ahead as planned. Dennis Boxx, a spokesman for Lockheed Corporation, for example, said the company had not been informed of any changes in orders for the F/A-22. "If in fact these cuts do occur, they would not take place for several years," Boxx said. "That would allow the aircraft time to prove its value and convince the Pentagon to restore its numbers."

## Fewest ships since 1916

The Pentagon also plans to mothball the aircraft carrier USS *Kennedy* and reduce the number of carriers in the Navy's fleet, from the current 12 to possibly as few as nine. Other new shipbuilding programs for a destroyer, an amphibious assault ship, and a nuclear carrier would be delayed.

When deployed, each carrier is the centerpiece of a battle group. In addition to the carrier's compliment of 70-80 warplanes, the group usually includes guided-missile cruisers, destroyers, frigates, submarines, and a supply ship.

Washington's naval superiority is in no danger either, just like its edge in the skies, the top leadership of the Department of Defense argues. Only eight other countries have aircraft carriers. Of those, only two

have more than one carrier—Russia with four, and the United Kingdom with three. France, India, Spain, Brazil, Italy, and Thailand have one aircraft carrier each, according to *World Navies Today*.

The U.S. Navy is also cutting the number of sailors in uniform by 52,000. Its 289 ships is the lowest number since 1916, according to *Defense News*.

The Air Force and Navy are taking deeper cuts as more resources are being redirected to the Army and Marines, which have borne the brunt of the \$4.9-billion-a-month occupation of Iraq.

## 'Trigger pullers'

The January issue of *Armed Forces Journal* noted that during last year's election campaign both President Bush and his main opponent, Senator John Kerry, said they would substantially increase Special Operations Forces. At the same time, the Pentagon publication said, interviews with officers recently retired from the Special Operations Command cautioned against a rapid increase in the numbers of these troops.

"There is no fear within the halls of the Pentagon," the magazine said, "that the special operations mission will deteriorate as it did in the late 1970s when the Carter administration began viewing this mission as expendable.... The attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and the ensuing war on terrorism made sure of that."

But the "jarring" reality, the military magazine continued, is that only about a quarter of the 48,000 special operations personnel are "trigger pullers"—soldiers who have received intense training in the ways of combat. "We need highly trained people actually performing the missions," an unidentified "expert" is quoted in the article as saying. Another retired special operations officer, quoted anonymously, said, "To put this bluntly, you cannot train trigger pullers overnight." Training for the Army Special Forces, Navy SEALs, and Air Force Special Tactics Teams require at least two years, he said.

Another factor intensifying the debate over increasing special forces troops is the relatively high numbers of the elite-trained soldiers who are leaving the force at the end of their tours of duty to take high-paying jobs with private "security" firms that operate in so-called trouble spots. Their skills are needed in numerous other "terrorist-plagued" countries, the magazine said, including Morocco, Algeria, the



U.S. Navy/Dominick Haen

**Aircraft carrier USS *Kennedy* is guided by tugs into Mayport, Florida, naval station in 2002. Carrier is slated to be scrapped as part of the military's "transformation."**

Philippines, and Indonesia—and perhaps Iran and Syria.

The emphasis on the use of the Special Forces is also expected to sharpen turf wars between combat commands, especially the Air Force and Navy, *Armed Forces Journal* reported. It noted that for the first time the Special Forces are expected to be the lead command in many future operations, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan. Traditionally, the magazine reported, the Special Forces served a supporting role.

## Changes sought in 'homeland security'

The transformation of the U.S. military is also propelling proposals for changes in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Edward Rowny wrote in the December 20 *Wall Street Journal* that the makeover of the U.S. armed forces contains insight for changes that are quickly needed in the DHS. Rowny is a career Army officer who has been associated with the defense department since its founding in 1947.

His column highlighted two changes in the Department of Defense that were "tested in the first and perfected in the second Gulf War." The first was to establish a joint structure in which commanders reported directly to the secretary of defense. The second was to establish that no officer would be promoted to general or flag rank without first serving in a joint organization.

The DHS faces a more daunting task, noted Rowny. Instead of melding five uniformed services, it must mold 22 widely disparate agencies of 180,000 people. "Delay

only nourishes entrenched bureaucracies and fuels turf battles," Rowny counseled.

The general also urged improving the exchange and coordination of intelligence within the DHS—an objective at the heart of many recent congressional hearings. Just as the defense department has begun to take on domestic responsibilities with the establishment of the Northern Command, the DHS must follow suit and begin to look outward, Rowny wrote.

In December, the White House and Pentagon won a key fight on another front that serves the military's transformation effort. The Bush administration beat back an attempt to dilute the defense department's control over spying operations and confer it to a new national intelligence director, wrote Seymour Hersh in the January 24 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine. The legislation on reorganizing Washington's spying operations was based largely on the recommendations of 9/11 Commission hearings last year, in which liberal politicians argued that "intelligence failures" prevented the Bush administration from stopping the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

The description by Hersh, a liberal reporter, is another indication of the increasing factionalism within the ruling class.

"The White House solidified its control over intelligence last month, when it forced last-minute changes in the intelligence-reform bill," Hersh reported. "A reform bill passed in the Senate by a vote of 96-2. Before the House voted, however, Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld balked. The White House publicly supported the legislation, but House Speaker Dennis Hastert refused to bring a House version of the bill to the floor for a vote—ostensibly in defiance of the President, though it was widely understood in Congress that Hastert had been delegated to stall the bill. After intense White House and Pentagon lobbying, the legislation was rewritten. The bill that Congress approved sharply reduced the new director's power, in the name of permitting the Secretary of Defense to maintain his 'statutory responsibilities.'"

The Pentagon currently controls roughly 80 percent of the \$40 billion budget for U.S. government spying operations. Hersh quoted a former senior CIA officer's assessment that "the Pentagon is a five-hundred pound gorilla and the CIA director is a chimpanzee."

# Volunteers build new London Pathfinder Books

BY PAUL DAVIES

LONDON—Work is moving ahead to complete the construction of the new Pathfinder Books in London's Brick Lane, at a pace to meet the scheduled February 1 opening.

The new premises will be used as a center to distribute revolutionary literature in the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. For the last 30 years this work was done out of Pathfinder Books at 47 The Cut. Last year alone, more than £39,000 worth of books were sold from the London outlet.

The new premises will also house the Militant Labour Forum hall and the London branch and national office of the Communist League in the United Kingdom.

A full-time construction team of volunteers is working to meet the targeted opening date. In addition to London, volunteers hail from Manchester and Edinburgh in the United Kingdom, as well as Norway, Sweden, and the United States.

Overlooking the bustling Brick Lane street market, the new political center will be a place where workers and young people attracted to the struggles of the working class can get hold of Marxist literature, have political discussions, and learn about activity they can get involved in. "This is the type of area where we can get a good response to working-class politics," said James Haywood, a member of the Young Socialists at a sixth form college in Surrey, who has worked on the crew on weekends. "This work has given me a better idea about how the communist movement is organized internationally," he said, "and helped me learn some new skills."

"Today we have installed the first six bays of bookshelves, got the main lighting up, and are close to completing the plumbing in



Militant/Jim Spaul

**Volunteers put up walls of new Pathfinder Books in London's East End, January 11.**

the bathroom," said Tony Hunt, organizer of the steering committee for the construction work on January 16. "The next big step will be to start work on the kitchen. Utilizing volunteers who understand the political character of the center that we are building is decisive to completing the work. We're learning all the time how to do the work in a more disciplined and efficient way."

Marge Towers, an unemployed garment worker from Boston, Massachusetts, has been working on frames for the interior windows. She said good lighting is needed for well-presented book displays that will attract those visiting the new center.

Elton Grey, a Socialist Workers Party supporter from Los Angeles, California, has been helping to lead the plumbing work. "It's great to make a contribution to the work of the movement internationally and to be able to pass on some of the skills I've learned that are necessary to completing these projects,"

he told the *Militant*. Another supporter of the communist movement, Greg McCartan, who helps distribute revolutionary books to shops and libraries in Norway, added, "Living in Scandinavia it's important to contribute to constructing the place from where Pathfinder books and the *Militant* will be distributed across Europe. It's also an opportunity to talk politics with those involved in the communist movement in different countries."

The project is being funded from beginning to end through a £5,000 (U.S. \$9,650) fund appeal. Collecting the pledges already made and winning new contributions is necessary to complete the work on schedule. Checks can be made payable to CL London and sent by January 31 to Pathfinder Books, 47 The Cut, London, SE1 8LF, UK.

A meeting to celebrate the opening of the new premises will be held on Saturday, January 29 at 7 p.m. at 120 Bethnal Green Rd., London.

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# 'Bandit' coal mines crop up in Vietnam

BY DOUG NELSON

Illegal mines in Vietnam, operating without licenses or basic safety standards or equipment, increasingly dominate the coal mining industry in that country's northeast province of Hai Duong, according to two Vietnamese news sources. The two are the Vietnam News Service, the official state news agency, and *Vietnam Investment Review*, a newspaper for foreign investors set up by the Vietnamese Ministry of Planning and Investment.

According to reports by these news agencies, deaths in these mines are so common that an unwritten law is in place by which families of miners who died from accidents on the job are regularly paid 20-30 million Vietnamese dong (\$1,260-\$1,890) to prevent them from reporting deaths or suing mine operators.

The state-owned coal company, which took over mining in the area in the early 1960s, closed operations in 1992 because coal in Hai Duong is of low quality and costly to extract. Unregulated and private mines have sprung up in its place.

Miners say that the illegal mine shafts are relatively small, about 4 feet wide and 60-230 feet deep. Workers are reportedly lifted in and out of these mines by rope.

Small farmers in the area are drawn to work in these mines because they offer a higher income than they can get from farming.

"Every day we get 20,000 dong [\$1.26] and a free lunch if we can get 100kg [220 lb] of coal," one miner said, according to an article in the March 22 issue of *Vietnam Investment Review*. At that mine, workers reportedly breathe air that is hand-pumped

through cloth tubes from above ground into the mineshaft. The article described another more modern mine run by a family in their backyard that has an electric pump and plastic tubes. There each member of the Son family reportedly earns about VND 50,000 (\$3.15) a day.

Authorities at the Chi Linh district have reportedly asked the police and military to take stricter action against the illegal mines, with limited success. The Vietnam News Service (VNS) said December 21 the Hai Duong police seized 20 boats loading coal from these mines during a recent one-month crackdown ordered by the Chi Linh District's Party Committee. The article also pointed out that while police have recently stepped up inspections at ports and loading areas, illegal mining is still on the rise. The small-scale industry appears to be generally tolerated by officials and police, and mine operators and others profit from government loopholes.

Relaxing control of state industry has accelerated, along with foreign investment, since the government launched the "Doi Moi" economic reforms in 1986, moving from a strictly centralized, planned economy with nationalized industry to incorporating private ownership and capitalist market mechanisms. With "assistance" from the Australian government and the World Bank, the first auction of a state enterprise took place in February 2003. The privately-owned Viet Tin Construction Joint Stock and Trading Company bought the Hai Phong Agricultural Mechanical Engineering Company at that auction for \$300,000.

The March 22 issue of *Vietnam Invest-*



Getty Images/Andy Rain

**Miners—mostly women—gather coal August 2000 at Mo Coc Sau, an open pit mine near Cam Pah, Vietnam. The demand for coal has spurred the opening of unregulated coal mines in the country's Hai Duong province, near Cam Pah.**

*ment Review* described how the "bandit coal," as it is called, became semi-legitimized last year. It said that in December 2003 the Hai Duong police announced a coal bandit amnesty of sorts. Under it, illegal mine operators were given 20 days to sell 40,000 tons of stored coal to local authorities before being shut down. A local packing company, Hoang Le, was officially allowed to buy the coal.

Hoang Le managers, however, sold the company's financial invoices for VND 30,000 (\$1.89) each on the black market allowing trucks to transport coal through checkpoints to any customer. What's more, the coal sold for VND 120,000-150,000 per ton, while the set price on the invoices was only VND 70,000, relieving the buyer from paying about half the tax required by the state. Hoang Le continued issuing

the invoices after the 20-day amnesty, resulting in a number of new illegal mines opening to meet the increased demand. After raking in VND 2 billion (\$126,000) in illegal profits in two months, police said Hoang Le would be replaced as the official buyer.

Residents and brick kiln operators from neighboring provinces, among others, feed the high demand for black market coal in the area. By the end of last year, 70 illegal mines employing 350 people were in operation in the Van Duc and An Lac communes in Hai Duong province, said the *Vietnam Investment Review*.

The Vietnam News Service said local authorities estimate as much as 150,000 tons of coal have been produced from illegal mines in Hai Duong. Although significant, this still represents a small percentage of total national coal production.

Coal production in Vietnam, primarily anthracite, has risen dramatically in recent years to meet the growing demand in both foreign and domestic markets. Vietnam has become the third-largest producer of anthracite in the world, going from 9.6 million tons in 1999 to nearly 19 million tons in 2003. Exports—primarily to China, Japan, Hungary, Thailand and the Philippines—also doubled in that period, rising to 7 million tons annually.

Hanoi plans to greatly increase use of thermoelectric power as part of shifting away from dependence on electricity from hydroelectric sources, whose output fluctuates with natural phenomena. The government plans to invest \$1 billion in the construction of seven new coal-fired power plants with the goal of increasing the portion of coal-generated power to 25 percent of total electricity production by 2010. Toward this end, the Vietnam Coal Corp. (Vinacoal) is seeking \$750 million in foreign investment.

## Thousands in Russia protest cuts in social wage

Continued from front page

staving off more protests.

Moscow is taking aim at a range of gains the toiling majority won after taking power in the 1917 Russian Revolution, abolishing capitalism, and establishing a workers state. Even though a parasitic layer whose foremost representative became Joseph Stalin betrayed the revolution in the 1920s, following the death of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, many of the social gains workers and farmers made lasted for decades. The Putin government is one of successive pro-capitalist administrations, which, since the shattering of the Stalinist apparatus in 1989-91, have met with resistance when they've pushed too far in their efforts to restore capitalist social relations.

The new measure, which was approved after heated debate in the parliament, or Duma, abolishes a number of benefits and will immediately effect one-quarter of Russia's population of 144 million. Retirees, veterans, and the disabled will be denied access to free public transportation, and subsidies for housing, prescriptions, telephones, heating, electricity, water, and other services.

Rather than guarantee these services free of charge or provide them at substan-

tial discounts because they are workers' basic rights, Moscow promised instead to provide a monthly stipend that's the equivalent of as little as \$7. The government's goal is to establish the bourgeois norm that housing, electricity, and the like are commodities available only to those who can afford to pay for them. The protesting retirees say the \$7 stipend they will receive falls far short of covering these expenses, and will force them to have to choose between food, heat, and other necessities. Even the \$7 has not reached all those to whom it was promised, according to media reports.

The focus of the protests so far has been around buses and trams, because the termination of free access to public transportation for some 35 million people is having the most immediate effect.

"Demonstrations by elderly pensioners that began in Moscow earlier this month continued in large cities and spread to Russia's Far East and extreme north," *Moscow News* reported January 18. An estimated 10,000 people took to the streets in St. Petersburg three days earlier. The same weekend 1,500 retirees blocked Nevsky Prospekt and Sadovaya Street, the city's two main thoroughfares.

Local authorities were the first to grant

concessions to the protesters. Officials in the Moscow region promised retirees they would restore their right to travel freely, and in St. Petersburg they announced subsidized travel passes would be provided, according to the Associated Press.

Seeking to take an edge off the demonstrations, Putin said in a January 18 speech that there would be a doubling of an already planned increase in pensions—about \$8 per month—and that it would take effect March 1 instead of April 1.

Although the protests so far have targeted the Kremlin's ending of free public travel for the elderly, disabled, and veterans, this is expected to change in the weeks ahead. That's when working people will get hit with their first non-subsidized bills for water, heat, and electricity under the new legislation.

## 8,000 march in Columbus, Georgia

Continued from front page

filed against them. The march and rally, on the anniversary of the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., were called by a coalition of civil rights and religious organizations. These include the NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Concerned Black Clergy, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, the National Action Network, Rainbow Coalition/PUSH, and the Nation of Islam.

Speakers included Democratic Party politician Jesse Jackson, Joseph Lowery of the SCLC, and others representing the sponsoring organizations.

Days before the march, one of its organizers, Rev. Wayne Baker of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, had predicted that "several hundred" would attend. Instead, thousands turned out, including protesters from Albany, Atlanta, and other cities in Georgia. The big majority of the predominantly Black marchers, however, came from the Columbus area and the towns in Alabama just across the river.

This is significant, since Columbus is a relatively small city of about 185,000 people.

In his speech to the rally, Baker demanded a new grand jury be convened in the case.

"Last week statements were made that only a couple of people in Columbus, Georgia, were making a lot of noise about nothing," said Cheryl Walker, the widow of Kenneth Walker, addressing the crowd. "By your presence here today, we have proved them wrong."

On January 11, an all-white demonstration of 150 people in support of Glisson had been held at the same location.

Germeka Harvey, 25, told the *Militant* she came with a friend and their kids "to see that justice be served, because it wasn't served."

"I came for Kenny Walker," said Joshua Maddox, 13. "It's important to be here." He said there was a big discussion about the case among students and teachers at his school.

"I came because I want this killing to stop, to support a brother and his family," said Dr. Andoh, 62, a biologist in Albany, Georgia, who is originally from Ghana. "I know he was killed because of profiling. The Black man in America is like a dog."

"People need to know that prejudice is alive and well," said Josie Duffy, 17. "We have a long way to go."

Renee Benson, 25, added: "I'm here to find out how I can solve the problem of the unjust system."

## Pro-choice rally set for San Francisco

BY LAURA ANDERSON

SAN FRANCISCO—Supporters of women's right to choose are building the January 22 Defend Women's Health and Rights march here sponsored by the San Francisco Area Pro-Choice Coalition. On the same day, anti-choice forces plan to march in San Francisco against abortion rights, calling their action the Walk for Life West Coast.

January 22 marks the 32nd anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that decriminalized abortion.

Nicole Yelich, 24, of the Pro-Choice Coalition told the *Militant*, "We found out about the 'right to life' march in late November. On short notice we started emailing everyone we knew, and I got 250 responses right away from people throughout the state who were interested in having a pro-choice march."

Endorsers of the march include the American Civil Liberties Union Northern California, A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition, Gabriela Network, NARAL Pro-Choice California, Planned Parenthood Golden Gate, San Francisco NOW, Socialist Workers Party, and YWCA- San Francisco.

On January 15 volunteers built the pro-choice action throughout the city with bilingual flyers in Spanish and English. This reporter was assigned to a working-class area in the Mission district. We handed out and posted flyers in the area and got into discussions on why the action is an important part of fighting for women's equality.

"The new people with the energy and the seasoned folks have made a good combination," Yelich said of the Monday night coalition meetings. Leading up to the pro-choice action there will be clinic escort training, sign making, and more flyering activities.

# Utah miners' struggle

Continued from front page

the Kingston family, fired most of the foreign-born workers on the pretext that they lacked proper work documents. The miners counter that they had the same documents when they started their employment years ago. Some have given testimony to the labor board showing that the company fired the workers to retaliate for their efforts to win UMW representation.

"I told the NLRB agent who interviewed me that a boss had pointed out to me who he was going to fire before the union election because they were union 'troublemakers,'" said Co-Op miner Pedro Santos. "I endured several years of harassment myself from this boss. I can't believe they fired all of us after we worked so hard for them for years."

Santos said he did not take part in the 10-month strike that started in September 2003. For this reason, he said, some bosses thought they could openly speak to him about what they were going to do, even though the bosses were already planning to fire him as well.

"I also testified to the NLRB agent," said Santos, "that another boss told me they were going to pile up 'occurrences' on some miners until they accumulate enough to fire workers they wanted to get rid of." Santos had worked at the mine for nine years.

Under a "contract" between the International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU), which miners say is a company-run outfit, and C.W. Mining, which operates the mine, bosses can arbitrarily give miners "occurrences" for accidents, damaged equipment, missing days, or safety violations. If a miner accumulates eight occurrences, workers say, he or she can be terminated.

## Transcripts of affidavits to NLRB

Santos and several other miners said they have recently received transcripts of testimony they gave to the NLRB. These affidavits tell the story of how the Co-Op bosses used discriminatory firings, and other forms of harassment and intimidation, to scuttle the workers' efforts to win UMW representation.

Two NLRB agents traveled to Huntington, Utah, where the Co-Op mine is located, December 16-17, in conjunction with the December 17 vote on whether workers will be represented by the UMW, the IAUWU, or no union. The labor board representatives interviewed five miners about their firings and took statements from them about company harassment on the job resulting from pro-UMW activities, workers said. These affidavits are to be used by the NLRB in ruling on the unfair labor practice charges against C.W. Mining. The UMW filed

these charges on behalf of the Co-Op miners in December, demanding that all of the fired workers be reinstated.

Three of the five miners interviewed by the NLRB—Celso Panduro, Ricardo Chávez, and Alyson Kennedy—said they had been selectively terminated prior to the December 9 mass firings.

Santos himself was fired December 9 along with 35 others for supposedly not having proper documentation to work in the United States. Miners say that most of those fired by the company were not intimidated; they took part in the union representation election to back the UMW. The two NLRB agents who took affidavits from the miners conducted the union election at the mine's bathhouse.

## Union representation election

More than 100 other individuals, relatives of the Kingston family, also cast ballots in the election. These votes were sealed because Region 27 of the national labor board had ruled November 18 that none of these individuals were eligible to vote. C.W. Mining subsequently appealed this ruling to the national NLRB. Until a ruling is handed down on this question, these ballots won't be counted.

The company also challenged most of the votes cast by some 40 miners, the large majority of whom had just been dismissed by the bosses.

The decision about which votes will be counted is now in the hands of the NLRB in Washington, D.C. The results of the union election won't be announced until such a ruling is made.

The fight at the Co-Op mine was triggered in September 2003 when bosses at the mine fired 75 mostly Mexican-born workers after they protested the termination of one of their co-workers and harassment of other union backers. It had been the third attempt by the Co-Op bosses over two weeks to fire miners whom the bosses considered supporters of the UMW. The workers turned the lockout into a strike that lasted nearly 10 months. During that time, the Co-Op miners' received widespread support for their struggle in the United States and from other countries.

In July, the NLRB ruled the miners had been fired illegally and demanded the strikers be offered their jobs back. After an unconditional offer to return by the company, strikers were back on the job July 12. The NLRB also awarded the miners back pay and mandated a union representation election. Miners report that several issues from the first NLRB ruling are still pending. The miners say, for example, that they have not received yet any of the back pay

before the union representation election took place there December 17. The Co-Op owners dropped a number of original defendants, in an effort to split those supporting the miners. Those no longer cited include all entities related to the Catholic Church, the local newspapers in Utah's Carbon and Emery counties, and a number of individuals who have backed the miners' fight to win UMW representation over the last 16 months.

The UMW, the 17 Co-Op miners, a number of labor organizations, the *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret Morning News*—Utah's two main dailies, and the *Militant* remain defendants.

The new complaint is a sharper attack against the UMW and others who have backed the fight. The amended Kingston legal brief now claims that the UMW, through one of its "agents," misrepresented the actions of the Co-Op bosses when they fired miner Bill Estrada on Sept. 22, 2003. The complaint claims that after his firing Estrada "falsely told the waiting workers they had also been fired," thereby causing the walkout.

As miners have told the *Militant*, through these false claims the Co-Op owners are attempting to rewrite history and obscure what the miners have been fighting for.

C.W. Mining lawyers also state their intention in the lawsuit to prove allegations of defamation against the UMW and the *Militant* through "discovery." No



Militant/Katherine Bennett

**Annie Fivecoat and her husband Bob, a UMW retiree, handwrite thank-you notes to contributors to the Co-Op Miners' Fund January 13 at their home in East Carbon, Utah. The two longtime supporters of the miners' struggle help organize the fund.**

ordered by the labor board. Between July and December, the workers faced incessant harassment and intimidation by the bosses on the job.

## Harassment by bosses on the job

"I presented the NLRB with written statements about how the bosses targeted me by putting me on a graveyard crew of mostly Kingston relatives," said miner Alyson Kennedy. "They had me build stoppings [block walls to control ventilation in the mine] by myself. They usually have two people or more do this job. It was all a set up to claim I wasn't working fast enough," she continued.

"Two of my co-workers were also witnesses to a shoving incident by a boss against me at the mine, I told the NLRB. I provided the government agent with copies of the charges filed with the local county sheriff for this assault."

Another miner, Celso Panduro, described his case to a Spanish-speaking NLRB agent. "I explained to him they fired me because I support the UMW," Panduro said. "When they fired me they claimed I refused orders from my boss, but I didn't. I had been working sick and the boss wanted me to bolt a rooftop that would get me wet and sicker." The "roof" is the ceiling of the underground mine. Roof bolting is a job involving securing the rock in the ceiling by inserting metal bolts. Roof bolters work in conditions where water is leaking down on them.

Ricardo Chávez said he testified that he was fired for not wearing a safety harness

when working on a belt above ground. Chávez pointed out that the lead person of his crew, Chelsea Peterson, had not locked out the belt, which is a blatant safety violation. "This is discrimination against me because she committed a serious safety violation and continues to work at the mine, but I was fired for not following a safety procedure often ignored by the bosses." Chávez said Peterson is the daughter of his boss.

Miner Bill Estrada also provided an affidavit to the NLRB about the harassment he faced on the job. He said he was also put on a crew with mostly Kingston relatives as an equipment washer underground. "The boss met with me twice about new job checklists and work performance, before meeting with anyone else on my crew," said Estrada. "He told me I'd have two weeks to improve or he would terminate me."

Estrada said he was fired December 28 by his boss after the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) cited the company with 10 safety violations that day. Estrada was given two "occurrences" by the Co-Op bosses for allegedly being at fault for one of the violations.

## Solidarity forthcoming

Since the firings last month, the miners report financial donations from many backers of their union-organizing struggle in the labor movement and others have eased the economic strains on them and their families. The cost of utility bills, rent, food, and other necessities continue to mount up while about 20 Co-Op miners remain without work. Miners report that the local state-run job service officers are making a point of checking Social Security numbers of Latino workers coming in to apply for jobs. Anglo workers are not asked for Social Security numbers when dropping off a resume.

Workers said the Co-Op Miners' Fund got a big boost in mid January. A check for \$7,338 arrived from the AFL-CIO Voices@Work program. A letter accompanying the contribution said, "Many of these donations come in the form of \$10 or \$20 contributions from union activists, workers and allies all over the United States who are inspired by these courageous miners. The money came from a Voice@Work Network email sent to more than 26,000 online members detailing the struggles of the miners and appealing for a donation to help them."

Miners are also urging their supporters to keep sending letters to the NLRB, pointing out that a long delay in reinstating them to their jobs and ruling on the union representation election works to the advantage of the company.

Miners ask that letters demanding their reinstatement and upholding the exclusion of the Kingston votes from the union election be sent to: National NLRB, Robert J. Battista, Chairman, 1099 14th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20570-0001; and NLRB Region 27, Director, B. Allan Benson, 600 17th St., 7th floor—North Tower, Denver, CO 80202-5433; Tel: (303) 844-3551; Fax: (303) 844-6249.

Correspondence to the NLRB, along with other messages of solidarity and financial contributions, should also be sent to: UMW District 22, 525 East 100 South, Price, UT 84501. Checks should be made out to "Co-Op Miners Fund." For more information call: (435) 637-2037.

## 'Thank you for success of Militant Fighting Fund' \$50,000 raised helps fight harassment lawsuit by Co-Op mine owners

The following is a letter the *Militant* sent Jan. 14, 2005, to thank contributors to the Militant Fighting Fund.

Dear Contributor,

Thank you for your contribution to the Militant Fighting Fund. Hundreds of people around the world have so far donated nearly \$50,000. That far exceeds our goal of \$30,000 to cover *initial* legal fees and costs for organizing a public defense campaign against a harassment lawsuit that the owners of the Co-Op coal mine in Utah have filed against the *Militant*.

The Kingston-owned company, C.W. Mining, and the International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU), which Co-Op miners have described as a company union, filed this civil lawsuit in September in a federal court in Utah. Defendants include the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), 17 Co-Op miners, a number of trade unions and other organizations that have backed the union-organizing struggle, as well as newspapers that have reported on the fight. The dozens of defendants were cited with "unfair labor practices" and "defamation" against C.W. Mining and the IAUWU.

As you may have already read in the *Militant*, the plaintiffs subsequently amended their legal complaint. News about this broke out around the time the company fired en masse most of the foreign-born miners at Co-Op—a week

mention of using discovery is made in relation to the *Salt Lake Tribune* or *Deseret Morning News*, the other two newspapers still named in the suit. This process, which can be used if the court does not dismiss the case in its early stages, opens up defendants to massive legal expenses as company lawyers conduct a fishing expedition by demanding correspondence, records, and deposition from defendants. This process is often used not primarily to back up allegations but to tie up opponents in court and bleed them dry financially.

The UMW has stated that its attorneys will represent the Co-Op miners and will try to get the case dismissed. The *Militant* has hired its own legal counsel and intends to do the same. At the same time, it's prudent to be prepared for a protracted legal battle.

The *Militant* has a proud record of covering this struggle since it started in September 2003. It has never made any apologies for reporting accurately on the wages and working conditions facing workers at that mine, their efforts to reach out for solidarity, and how this battle fits into the broader struggle for unionization of the coalfields in the western United States. With your support the *Militant* will continue to do so.

Fraternally,

Sam Manuel, Fund Director  
Argiris Malapanis, Editor

# Crisis, boom, and revolution

1921 reports by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, with preface by Jack Barnes

Below is the prefatory note by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes to reports Bolshevik leaders V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky presented in 1921 to the Third Congress of the Communist International. We publish it along with excerpts from those reports. These materials will appear in issue no. 12 of *New International*, a magazine of Marxist politics and theory. They will be published as an appendix to "Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun," the political report and summary by Barnes adopted by delegates to the July 2002 SWP national convention.

The report by Barnes points to the convergence of Washington's accelerating militarization drive with the economic conflicts among imperialist powers being deepened by the opening stages of a depression. It explains the beginnings of a political transformation of those workers who take the lead to reach for and use union power and join with others to resist as the social consequences of the capitalist crises grow.

New International no. 12 will be published in February together with a companion volume, no. 13. Both will be published at the same time in Spanish as issues 6 and 7 of *Nueva Internacional*.

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## BY JACK BARNES

"Capitalism's long hot winter has begun," the political report and summary adopted by the 2002 Socialist Workers Party convention, refers several times to two reports debated and approved by the Third Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow in 1921: "A Very Unstable Equilibrium: Report on the Tactics of the Russian Communist Party" by V.I. Lenin, and "The World Economic Crisis and the Tasks of Communists" by Leon Trotsky. Because of the light they shed on how to come to grips with central political questions before convention delegates, these two reports sparked considerable interest.

In preparing the SWP convention, the party's National Committee recognized that we were addressing a special challenge: Not only how to orient the party to act in face of the "long, hot winter" world capitalism has now entered, but how to lead it to act confidently and responsibly. When enough indications accumulate that the direction of capitalist development, and thus the class struggle, has shifted, we must act and act now on that knowledge. We do so even when concrete manifestations of the unfolding political logic—accelerating financial and economic crises, increased militarization, spreading wars, and increasing social and economic pressures on a growing majority of the working class—are still visible only in partial and scattered ways.

Once we understand the algebra, we need to act before it's possible to do all the arithmetic. If, before acting, we wait until we can substitute constants for most political variables, it will be too late. In the midst of these changing conditions, we will have squandered opportunities to act as part of a small but recognizable emerging working-class resistance, to join with others in affecting its outcome and politicizing its militants, to learn from the experiences, and to transform the revolutionary workers movement in the process.

## Valuable political tools

In presenting the above perspectives to the 2002 SWP convention, I emphasized that Lenin and Trotsky's 1921 reports are valuable in that they allow worker-bolsheviks today to better understand and use the political tools that enable us to analyze



**Top: Alexandra township in Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002. Many residents lack electricity, running water, and basic sanitation. Bottom, left: U.S. Army Special Forces officer teaches counterinsurgency techniques to Colombian army unit; growing numbers of U.S. troops have been sent to Colombia since 2000. Bottom, right: Some 1,000 coal miners, their families, and supporters join protest organized by United Mine Workers in Lexington, Kentucky, July 20, 2004, demanding Horizon Natural Resources honor union contracts. Two weeks later Horizon eliminated medical coverage for 1,000 miners and 2,300 retirees. "Manifestations of the political logic of capitalist development," says Barnes, include "accelerating economic crises, increased militarization, spreading wars, and social and economic pressures on a growing majority of the working class."**

shifts we are in the midst of in capitalism's long-run trends and their consequences for communist strategy and party building today. The Bolshevik leaders' analysis was developed in the heat of revolutionary activity, applying what they had internalized from studying similar earlier efforts by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the founding leaders of the modern communist movement, to apply the materialist dialectic to turning points in history. Mastering this historical materialist method is necessary if we are to orient ourselves politically to such shifts.

A revolutionary proletarian party not only organizes its own members and supporters to act on the evidence of such changes and their logic; it takes responsibility for encouraging other class-struggle-minded, fighting workers and farmers to do the same. Militants won to this perspective may occasionally overreach what the relationship of class forces allows. Such mistakes will be made. We know that. But we remain convinced by 150 years of revolutionary working-class history that the costs of political indecision and delay are far more dangerous and difficult to correct.

## Two different turning points

Extracting lessons from Lenin and Trotsky's analysis in the reports printed here is made more complex by the fact that the turning point vanguard workers act on today bears little resemblance to the concrete historic period more than eighty years ago during which the Bolsheviks were inspiring, educating, and leading millions in class combat. The Communist International, organized in 1919, was a product of the most exhilarating event of the twentieth century: the victorious conquest of power by the Bolshevik-led workers and peasants of Russia in October 1917, and the extension of this power to large parts of the tsarist empire in Europe and Asia to become the first union of soviet socialist republics.

Working people worldwide were drawn

to the possibility of learning from and emulating a living proletarian revolution and its leadership, which had shown for the first time ever how to organize workers, peasants, soldiers, and sailors to conquer—and defend—workers power.

In March 1918, just four months after the conquest of power, the Bolsheviks adopted the name communist, signaling an unequivocal break with all elements of the world Socialist movement that, with the guns of August, had politically gone over to imperialism, ceasing to subordinate their lives and work to advancing the line of march of the working class toward power, the dictatorship of the proletariat. By proclaiming to the workers of the world that new name as *their* name, the Bolsheviks underscored the fact that the toilers of the expanding union of soviet socialist republics were reknitting the continuity with the revolutionary proletarian world movement that Marx, Engels, and their comrades had begun building in the mid-nineteenth century at the convention that voted to issue the Manifesto of the Communist Party.

Between 1918 and 1920 revolutionary or prerevolutionary situations erupted in Germany, Hungary, and Italy, and mighty battles were fought by workers and farmers in Britain, France, Japan, the United States, and elsewhere. As the Comintern's Third Congress opened in June 1921, workers and peasants in Soviet Russia and worldwide were still celebrating the Red Army's recent crushing of the counterrevolutionary, landlord-capitalist armies that had waged a murderous three-year civil war to turn back the revolution. Invading forces from fourteen countries, including France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other imperialist powers, had also been repelled.

## Postwar depression

In the wake of World War I, capitalism had entered a period "of prolonged and pro-

found depression," Trotsky told the Communist International congress. The roots of that convulsion, he added, could have been seen "as far back as 1913," the eve of the interimperialist slaughter in which 8.5 million soldiers died, another 21.2 million were wounded, and factories, livestock, and railroads across Europe were decimated.

As it turned out, despite ebbs and flows, neither that social and economic crisis, nor the wave of revolutionary opportunities impelled by the Bolshevik victory, were to run their course for another twenty years: a period marked by the triumph of fascism in Italy; the Great Depression of the 1930s; the victory and bloody consolidation of National Socialism in Germany; and, most importantly, renewed if failed opportunities for the socialist revolution—prerevolutionary and revolutionary situations in Europe and Asia—that were exhausted only with the defeat of the Spanish revolution in 1939, making the second imperialist world war then inevitable.

The concrete character of the historic turning point today, analyzed in "Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun," is very different from that of 1921. As is the world relationship of class forces. One difference is the international political standing of communism among workers, farmers, youth, and others. In the years following the October Revolution, the political respect the Bolshevik leadership had earned, and the confidence millions of workers worldwide had in them, became a powerful objective factor in the international class struggle.

Today, more than three-quarters of a century later, broad mass political attraction to communism among militant working people and youth has—for the moment—been exhausted. At best, communism is seen as a perhaps heroic and historically interesting, although bypassed, movement. At times it is put forward by academic "Marxists" in eviscerated form—its revolutionary working-class heart, the inevitable march toward state power, cut out. At worst, it is identified with the Stalinist counterfeit of Marxism and all the counterrevolutionary, political crimes against and betrayals of the working class committed in its name around the world.

## Finest examples

The political course and communist continuity hammered out by the Comintern in Lenin's time, however, are revolutionary and working-class to the core. The reports by Lenin and Trotsky printed here are among the finest examples of the materialist dialectic used as a guide to revolutionary action by working-class leaders. Our job is to learn from and apply Lenin and Trotsky's living, *practical* example of how Marxists approach the interrelationship between deep-going economic and financial trends in international capitalism, shifts in long-term patterns of imperialist politics and the worldwide class struggle, and sea changes in working-class resistance. Our responsibility—and opportunity—is to act accordingly, in response to today's trends, and build revolutionary proletarian parties as part of a world communist movement.

Using these tools enabled us to come to the central political conclusion of "Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun" and its implications for the organization and activity of proletarian revolutionists today:

Like most other workers, communists participating in this convention must get used to the fact that this world—a world almost none of us have yet known in our political lives—is the one we are facing today. And it is the one we will be living and fighting in for some time. We're in the very opening stages of what will be decades of economic, financial, and social convulsions

and class battles.... We must begin acting on this reality today, or we will be politically caught short when wars erupt, deeper social crises explode, pogroms are organized and attempted, and union battles can become matters of life and death. The party that exists tomorrow can only grow out of the party we put together today.

v

The publication in *New International* of this appendix fills out a package of related materials now easily available from Pathfinder Press, especially Trotsky's 1923 letter, "The Curve of Capitalist Development," available in issue 10 of *New International*. In addition, two talks by Trotsky from 1924 and 1926 are published together in the pamphlet *Europe and America: Two Speeches on Imperialism*.

Steve Clark, managing editor of *New International*, took responsibility for excerpting Trotsky's 1921 report, preparing the annotation of both it and the report by Lenin, and supervising the translation checks. The English text of Trotsky's report, translated by John G. Wright and first published at the close of World War II in Pathfinder's *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, has been checked against the original Russian and corrected. The English translation of Lenin's report, available in volume 32 of his *Collected Works*, was also checked against the Russian and corrected.

December 2004

The following are excerpts from the report "A Very Unstable Equilibrium: Report on the Tactics of the Russian Communist Party" that V.I. Lenin presented July 5, 1921, to the Third Congress of the Communist International in Moscow.

BY V.I. LENIN

I think that to make a case for our party's tactics we must first of all examine the international situation. We have already

had a detailed discussion of the economic position of capitalism internationally, and the congress has adopted the corresponding resolutions on this subject. I deal with this subject in my theses very briefly, and only from the political standpoint. I leave aside the economic basis, but I think that in discussing the international position of our republic we must, politically, take into account the fact that a certain equilibrium has now undoubtedly set in between the forces that have been waging an open struggle, arms in hand, against each other for the supremacy of one or another leading class. It is an equilibrium between bourgeois society, the international bourgeoisie as a whole, and Soviet Russia. It is, of course, an equilibrium only in a limited sense. It is only in respect to this military struggle, I say, that a certain equilibrium has been brought about in the international situation.

**Inflammable material**

It must be emphasized, of course, that this is only a relative equilibrium, and a very unstable one. Much inflammable material has accumulated in capitalist countries, as well as in those countries that up to now have been regarded merely as the objects and not as the subjects of history, i.e., the colonies and semicolonies. It is quite possible, therefore, that insurrections, great battles, and revolutions may break out in these countries sooner or later, and quite unexpectedly too. During the past few years we have witnessed the direct struggle waged by the international bourgeoisie against the first proletarian republic. This struggle has been at the center of the world political situation, and it is there that a change has taken place. Inasmuch as the attempt of the international bourgeoisie to strangle our republic has failed, an equilibrium has set in, and a very unstable one it is, of course.

We know perfectly well, of course, that the international bourgeoisie is at present much stronger than our republic, and that it is only the peculiar combination of circumstances that is preventing it from continuing the war against us. For several weeks now,



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

we have witnessed fresh attempts in the Far East to renew the invasion, and there is not the slightest doubt that similar attempts will continue. Our party has no doubts whatever on that score.

The important thing for us is to establish that an unstable equilibrium does exist, and that we must take advantage of this respite, taking into consideration the characteristic features of the present situation, adapting our tactics to specific features of this situation, and never forgetting for a minute that the necessity for armed struggle may arise again quite suddenly.

Our task is still to organize and build up the Red Army. In connection with the question of food supplies, too, we must continue to think first of all of our Red Army. We can adopt no other line in the present international situation, when we must still be prepared for fresh attacks and fresh attempts at invasion on the part of the international bourgeoisie.

In regard to our practical policy, however, the fact that a certain equilibrium has been reached in the international situation has some significance, but only in the sense

that we must admit that, although the revolutionary movement has made progress, the development of the international revolution this year has not proceeded along as straight a line as we had expected.

When we started the international revolution, we did so not because we were convinced that we could foresee its development, but because we were compelled to do so by a number of circumstances. We thought: either the international revolution comes to our assistance, and in that case our victory will be fully assured, or we shall do our modest revolutionary work in the conviction that even in the event of defeat we shall have served the cause of the revolution and that our experience will benefit other revolutions.

It was clear to us that without the support of the world revolution the victory of the proletarian revolution was impossible. Before the revolution, and even after it, we thought: either revolution breaks out in the other countries, in the more developed capitalist countries, immediately, or at least very quickly, or we must perish. In spite of this conviction, we did all we possibly could to preserve the Soviet system under all circumstances, come what may, because we knew that we were not only working for ourselves, but also for the international revolution....

What, in that case, must we do now? We must now thoroughly prepare for revolution and make a deep study of its concrete development in the advanced capitalist countries. This is the first lesson we must draw from the international situation. As for our Russian republic, we must take advantage of this brief respite in order to adapt our tactics to this zigzag line of history....

The following are excerpts from the report "The World Economic Crisis and the Tasks of Communists" presented by Leon Trotsky June 23, 1921, to the Third Congress of the Communist International.

BY LEON TROTSKY

With the imperialist war we entered the epoch of revolution, that is, the epoch when the very mainstays of capitalist equilibrium are shaking and collapsing. Capitalist equilibrium is an extremely complex phenomenon. Capitalism produces this equilibrium, disrupts it, restores it anew in order to disrupt it anew, concurrently extending the limits of its domination. In the economic sphere these constant disruptions and restorations of the equilibrium take the shape of crises and booms. In the sphere of interclass relations the disruption of equilibrium assumes the form of strikes, lockouts, revolutionary struggle. In the sphere of interstate relations the disruption of equilibrium means war or—in a weaker form—tariff war, economic war, or blockade. Capitalism thus possesses a dynamic equilibrium, one that is always in the process of either disruption or restoration. But at the same time this equilibrium has great resilience, the best proof of which is the fact that the capitalist world has not toppled to this day.

**Post-World War I upsurge**

The last imperialist war was an event that we rightfully appraised as a colossal blow, unequaled in history, to the equilibrium of the capitalist world. Out of the war has actually risen the epoch of the greatest mass movements and revolutionary battles. Russia, the weakest link in the capitalist chain,

Continued on Page 8

## Two New Issues

New International no. 12

### CAPITALISM'S LONG HOT WINTER HAS BEGUN

by Jack Barnes

"The underlying contradictions of world capitalism pushing toward depression and war did not begin with 9/11 and its consequences. They were accelerated by those events, but all have their roots in the downward turn in the curve of capitalist development a quarter century ago and then the collapse of the Stalinist apparatuses in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe at the opening of the 1990s."

One of capitalism's infrequent, long winters has begun, Jack Barnes explains. "Now, with the acceleration of imperialism's drive toward war, it's going to be a long, hot winter. More importantly, slowly but surely and explosively, it will breed a scope and depth of resistance not previously seen by revolutionary-minded militants in today's world."

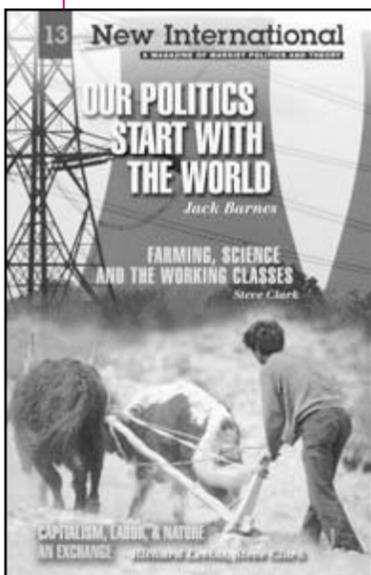
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# Crisis, boom, revolution

Continued from Page 7

was the first to lose its equilibrium and the first to enter the road of revolution....

When in the initial postwar period we observed the unfolding revolutionary movement, it might have seemed to many of us—and with ample historical justification—that this ever-growing and ever-strengthening movement must terminate directly in the conquest of power by the working class. But now almost three years have already elapsed since the war. Throughout the world, with the single exception of Russia, power continues to remain in the hands of the bourgeoisie. In the interim the capitalist world did not, of course, remain standing still. It has been undergoing change. Europe and the entire world have lived through a period of postwar demobilization, an extremely acute and dangerous period for the bourgeoisie—the demobilization of people and the demobilization of things, that is, industry—the period of wild postwar commercial boom followed by a crisis that has yet to end.

And now we are confronted in its full scope by these questions: Does development actually proceed even now in the direction of revolution? Or is it necessary to recognize that capitalism has succeeded in coping with the difficulties arising from the war? And if it has not already restored capitalist equilibrium upon new postwar foundations, is it now either restoring or close to restoring that equilibrium?...

## Boom and crisis

Bourgeois and reformist economists who have an ideological interest in embellishing the plight of capitalism say: in and of itself the current crisis proves nothing whatever; on the contrary, it is a normal phenomenon. Following the war we witnessed an industrial boom, and now—a crisis; it follows that capitalism is alive and thriving.

As a matter of fact, capitalism does live by crises and booms, just as a human being lives by inhaling and exhaling. First there is a boom in industry, then a stoppage, next a crisis, followed by a stoppage in the crisis, then an improvement, another boom, another stoppage, and so on.

Crisis and boom blend with all the transitional phases to constitute a cycle or one of the great circles of industrial development. Each cycle lasts from eight to nine or ten to eleven years. By force of its internal contradictions capitalism thus develops not along a straight line but in a zigzag manner, through ups and downs. This is what provides the ground for the following claim of the apologists of capitalism, namely: since we observe after the war a succession of boom and crisis, it follows that all things are working together for the best in this best of all capitalist worlds.

It is otherwise in reality. The fact that capitalism continues to oscillate cyclically after the war merely signifies that capitalism is not yet dead, that we are not dealing with a corpse. So long as capitalism is not overthrown by the proletarian revolution, it will continue to live in cycles, swinging up and down. Crises and booms were inherent in capitalism at its very birth; they will accompany it to its grave. But to determine capitalism's age and its general condition—to establish whether it is still developing or whether it has matured or whether it is in decline—one must diagnose the character of the cycles....

## Curve of capitalist development

The gist of the matter, comrades, may be depicted as follows: Let us take the development of capitalism—the growth of coal production, textiles, pig iron, steel, foreign trade, etc.—and draw a curve delineating this development. If in the deflections of this curve we have expressed the true course of economic development, we shall find that this curve does not swing upwards in an unbroken arc but in zigzags, looping up and down—up and down in correspondence with the respective booms and crises. Thus the curve of economic development is a composite of two movements: a primary movement that expresses the general upward rise of capitalism, and a secondary movement that consists of the constant periodic oscillations corresponding to the various industrial cycles....

How are the cyclical fluctuations blended with the primary movement of the curve of capitalist development? Very simply. In periods of rapid capitalist development the crises are brief and superficial in character,

while the booms are long-lasting and far-reaching. In periods of capitalist decline, the crises are of a prolonged character while the booms are fleeting, superficial, and speculative. In periods of stagnation the fluctuations occur upon one and the same level....

At the given moment capitalism has entered a period of prolonged and profound depression. Strictly speaking, this epoch should have set in—insofar as one can prophesy about the past—as far back as 1913 when the world market, as a result of twenty years of turbulent development, had already become inadequate for the development of German, English, and North American capitalism. These giants of capitalist development took it fully into account. They said to themselves: in order to avoid this depression, which will linger for many years, we shall create an acute war crisis, destroy our rival, and gain unchallenged domination over the world market that has become too constricted. But the war lasted far too long, provoking not only an acute crisis but a protracted one; it destroyed completely Europe's capitalist economic apparatus, thereby facilitating America's feverish development. But after exhausting Europe, the war led in the long run to a great crisis in America, too....

Cyclical fluctuations will continue to take place but, in general, the curve of capitalist development will slope not upwards but downwards....

## The working class after the war

From the standpoint of the revolution, in general and on the whole, all this creates for the working class a very favorable and at the same time an extremely complex situation. After all, what lies ahead of us is not a chaotic, spontaneous assault, the first stage of which we observed in Europe in 1918–19. It seemed to us...that in the period when the bourgeoisie was disorganized this assault could mount in ever-rising waves, that in this process the consciousness of the leading layers of the working class would become clarified, and that in this way the proletariat would attain state power in the course of one or two years. That was a historical possibility. But it did not materialize.

History has...granted the bourgeoisie a fairly prolonged breathing space.... What has been destroyed, or burned, or ruined, has not come to life again; but the bourgeoisie proved well able to find its bearings in these straitened conditions; it restored its state apparatus and managed to utilize the weakness



Delegates to Third Congress of the Communist International at parade, Moscow, 1921. Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky is at the front, center, in uniform.

of the working class. From the standpoint of revolutionary perspectives, the situation has become more complicated, but still remains favorable. It is perhaps with greater assurance that we can say today that on the whole the situation is fully revolutionary. But the revolution...has its own fluctuations, its own crises, and its own favorable conjunctures.

Immediately after the war, the bourgeoisie was in a state of highest confusion and alarm—the workers, especially those returning from the army, were in a peremptory mood. But the working class as a whole was disoriented... unsure of what and how to demand, dubious of what road to take....

## Bourgeoisie makes its move

The movement, as we saw at the beginning of this report, assumed an extremely stormy character, but the working class lacked a firm leadership. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie was ready to make very great concessions. It kept up the financial and economic war regime (loans, emission of paper currency, grain monopoly, relief for the unemployed working masses, etc.). In other words, the ruling bourgeoisie continued to disorganize the economic foundation and to disrupt more and more the productive and financial equilibrium in order to bolster the equilibrium between the classes during the most critical period....

At the present time the bourgeoisie is proceeding to solve the question of restoring the economic equilibrium. Involved here are not temporary concessions or sops to the working class but measures of a fundamental character. The disorganized productive apparatus must be restored. Currency must be stabilized, since the world market is unthinkable without a universal world equivalent, and, therefore, equally

unthinkable without a universal equivalent is a "balanced" national industry, one tied up with the world market.

## 'Stabilization' and resistance

To restore the productive apparatus is to curtail work on consumer goods and to step up work on the means of production. It is necessary to augment accumulation, that is, to intensify labor and slash wages.

To stabilize the currency it is necessary, apart from refusing to pay intolerable debts, to improve the trade balance, that is, import less and export more. And to this end it is necessary to consume less and produce more, that is, once again slash wages and intensify labor.

Every step toward the restoration of the capitalist economy is bound up with boosting the rate of exploitation and will therefore unfailingly provoke resistance on the part of the working class. In other words, every effort by the bourgeoisie to restore the equilibrium in production or in distribution or in state finances must inescapably disrupt the unstable equilibrium between the classes. Whereas during the two postwar years, the bourgeoisie was guided in its economic policy primarily by the desire to mollify the proletariat, even at the cost of further economic ruination, at the present time, in the epoch of unprecedented crisis, the bourgeoisie has begun mending the economic situation by steadily increasing the pressure on the working class.

England provides us with a most graphic illustration of how this pressure engenders resistance. And the resistance of the working class acts to disrupt economic stability and transform all speeches about the restoration of equilibrium into so many empty sounds....

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**Sound as a dollar**—“Detroit—General Motors, the world’s biggest auto maker plans to trim [like

Linden, New Jersey. Those moves will take about 2000 workers.”—News item



Harry Ring

toenails?]) its U.S. work force.... GM has trimmed the U.S. payroll every year since 2000.... GM said it will close an aging factory in Baltimore and another plant in

**P.O. didn’t mean post office**—US Airways workers staged holiday sick-ins in response to the order of a bankruptcy judge to slash wages 21 percent. But it surely evoked chuckles the day after New Year’s when at least one headline reported: US Airways execs “get hands dirty” wrestling with baggage in Philadelphia.

This came after the weird effort of the airline to get workers to come—without pay!—to the

airport to cope with a repeat of the Xmas flight attendants sick-in. But, the company assured that workers on a regular shift would be paid. Probably their best offer so far.

**Analyzes bank statements**—Dr. Park Dietz, a psychiatrist with decades of victories as a paid witness for prosecutors, finally lost a case. His testimony produced a court of appeals ruling throwing out the conviction of Andrea Yates, the Texas woman who drowned her five children, Dietz had testified she knew right from wrong. He likened what she did to a chapter

in the TV series “Law & Order.” However, a check showed there was no such chapter.

Despite the fraud, he pocketed a fee of more than \$50,000. In a previous case he had testified to the sanity of a man with several heads in his refrigerator. In his career since the ’80s, Dietz has never seen a patient.

**Taken for a ride**—On New Year’s Day, the owners of the private transportation system in the United Kingdom declared fare hikes jumping as much as 40 percent. They promised that

the added income would improve the battered system. Typically, the highest rates hit London bus riders the hardest. Subway and bus riders will wait five years for some of the promised improvements.

**‘You scratch my back...’**—“Government scientists [more than 900] have collected millions in royalties for experimental treatments without having to tell patients testing the treatments that the researchers had a financial connection.... Last year, these researchers collected a total of \$8.9 million”—AP

## U.S. Congress debates Central America trade pact

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A sharp debate has taken place in the U.S. Congress and a close vote is expected there on the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The treaty, negotiated by U.S. trade secretary Robert Zoellick with six Central American governments, would open up the economies of those countries to further penetration by U.S. finance capital.

U.S. business groups are pushing members of Congress and the Bush administration for a vote on the treaty in the first half of this year, according to Reuters. Proctor & Gamble and the National Pork Producers Council—a trade group based in Urbandale, Iowa—are among the U.S. corporations lobbying congressmen to pass the treaty.

The accord is a regional version of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), which Washington has been pushing to establish throughout Latin America. It would immediately end duties on up to 80 percent of the \$15 billion in U.S. goods exported to six countries in Central America and the Caribbean, according to the Bloomberg news agency. The affected countries are Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. Caterpillar Inc., based in Peoria, Illinois, is looking forward to using the newly relaxed trade terms to sell more earthmoving equip-

ment in Central America. Proctor & Gamble, which has an administrative office in Costa Rica, expects the treaty to help protect and extend the company’s extensive share of the market in household goods there.

A study by the International Trade Commission estimates that CAFTA would increase U.S. exports to the six affected countries by as much as \$2.7 billion.

The Grocery Manufacturers of America is also eager to expand marketing in the region. The group estimates that when the tariffs set by the participating nations are eliminated, exports to the region of snack foods, candies, soups, and other food items produced in the United States could nearly double from \$359 million to \$662 million.

Top leaders of the AFL-CIO, many Democratic party politicians, and some Republicans from textile and sugar producing regions in the South have said they will oppose the treaty unless the Central American countries are required to adhere to stricter environmental regulations and strengthened labor laws. The Bush administration declined to send the treaty to Congress last year, Bloomberg reported, because it didn’t feel it had the votes to pass it.

“This is going to be an extremely difficult vote with the huge, monstrous trade deficit,” said Congressman Donald Manzullo. In 2004, the value of U.S. imports was \$500.5

billion higher than exports as of October, surpassing the record \$496.5 billion gap in 2003. When the value of imports is higher than exports in a given country, this is referred to as a trade deficit.

Another part of the building spat over trade policy will be a possible congressional vote to extend Bush’s “fast track” trade negotiating authority. It requires Congress to vote on trade agreements within 90 days after the administration has negotiated them without making amendments.

Two recent cases show how “free” the trade outlined in the treaty will be for the Central American nations. Washington is pressuring the Guatemalan government to repeal a regulation approved last month as part of the drive to establish CAFTA. The law allowed low-cost drug producers in that country to quickly produce generic copies of drugs produced by powerful U.S. pharmaceutical giants, instead of waiting five years to get the drug’s test data as had been the case under previous rules.

Richard Mills, a spokesman for the U.S. Trade Representative’s office, said the U.S. government was, “very disappointed” by the Guatemalan government’s action but was confident it would be corrected. Guatemalan president Oscar Berger has promised to review the law when that country’s Congress reconvenes in mid-January, the *Los Angeles Times* reported.

The government of the Dominican Republic acceded to U.S. pressure to repeal a tax on beverages containing imported high-fructose corn syrup December 23. The tax was aimed at protecting the Dominican



AFP/Mayela Lopez

May 31, 2004, protest in San José, Costa Rica, against Central America ‘free trade’ pact.

sugar industry from low-cost imports. The country’s legislative Chamber of Deputies took the action after Washington threatened to remove the Dominican Republic from CAFTA, the *Times* said. “That was really the issue for including the Dominican Republic in CAFTA,” said Leon Corzine, president of the U.S. National Corn Growers Association.

## Colorado’s use of biometrics on driver’s licenses saps right to privacy

BY DANIELLE LONDON

CRAIG, Colorado—Colorado state authorities are stepping up their efforts to incorporate biometrics, (facial recognition technology) into the state’s driver’s licenses. This is another move toward tracking individuals more easily, encroaching on the right to privacy and establishing precedents that could lead to a national ID card.

In 2003, Colorado was one of the first states to adopt the technology, implementing it ahead of many larger states because “its relatively small size made the database more manageable,” the *Denver Post* reported January 2. Biometrics is also being used in three other states and the District of Columbia, according to the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

Police may now ask for a driver’s license photo during an investigation. State officials are considering proposals for authorizing cops to have access to the entire database.

Even before Sept. 11, 2001, Colorado officials had been trying to increase the amount of personal information incorporated into the state’s driver’s license.

State authorities ended the policy of immediate issuance of licenses about a year ago, the *Post* reported. Now applicants receive their license in about week, once a clerk has compared their previous photos, takes a fingerprint, and judges whether the applicant is “legitimate.”

First-time license-seekers in Colorado trigger the computer-operated facial recognition program. Their picture is scanned and compared against the state’s database of 12 million photos. Through this computer program, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) employees scan the faces of about 1,200 to 1,500 applicants a week.

The DMV turns over “suspicious” photos to police agencies. Charges are filed in two to five cases a month, according to state officials. The State Department of Revenue is considering taking similar measures, exchanging photo-matching requests with

neighboring states and allowing cops to have access to the database.

“It’s a national trend in driver’s license operations to make the document more secure,” said Steve Tool, a Division of Motor Vehicles official. “Using biometrics, we do a better job with identification.”

Jack Riley, of Rand Corporation, a right-wing think-tank, predicted that all states will eventually use biometrics in the production of driver’s licenses, using one of a number of technologies: facial recognition, iris scans, fingerprints, or other forms of identification.

Ceding ground to the arguments for such intrusions on the right to privacy, Cathryn Hazouri, executive director of the Colorado chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, said, “That would be terrific if you could rely upon it, but one of the big problems with facial-recognition technology is that there are so many variables, including the quality of the driver’s license and that faces change with age.”

Meanwhile, officials in Washington announced January 3 that they have extended a digital screening system to the 50 busiest U.S. land ports of entry along the Canadian and Mexican borders. This program had been launched a year earlier to help identify visitors to the United States arriving by air or sea.

The program is called US-VISIT, or U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology. Digital scanners examine prints taken from an individual’s two index fingers, and photographs of the person taken with digital cameras. The “identifiers” produced with this equipment can then be matched against several databases, checking people against various federal and state watch lists.

Last year, authorities used this program to deny entry to the United States to 372 people charged with violating immigration law or other federal or state crimes. None were sought for links to “terrorist” activity, according to officials at the Department of Homeland Security.

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



February 1, 1980

Celia Sánchez Manduley, a leader of the Cuban revolution, died January 11 at the age of fifty-two.

The daughter of a doctor from the town of Pilón, in Cuba’s Oriente Province, Sánchez was one of the finest representatives of a generation of revolutionaries who were ready to take any risk and make any sacrifice in the struggle to rid their country of the Batista tyranny and build a decent society in Cuba.

“Founder and leader of the July 26 Movement in the southern region of the old province of Oriente, she distributed History Will Absolve Me [Castro’s 1953 courtroom speech denouncing the Batista regime], and organized and consolidated the Movement in Manzanillo, Sofia, Estrada Palma, Calicito, Campechuela, Ceiba Hueca, San Ramón, Media Luna, Niquero, Pilón, and other places,” said an editorial in the January 12 issue of the Cuban daily *Granma*.

Sánchez worked together with Frank Pais in laying the July 26 Movement’s vital underground network in the cities. This, together with the guerrilla struggle in the mountains and countryside, eventually destroyed the Batista dictatorship.

It was Sánchez who was in charge of the camouflaged trucks that waited for the rebels sailing to Cuba in the boat named *Granma* on November 30, 1956.



January 31, 1955

The fighting power of the German workers was seen once again in the 24-hour protest strike of close to a million industrial Ruhr workers on Jan. 22. Despite government efforts to forestall the strike demonstration, the coal miners and steel workers of the Ruhr kept solid ranks and received pledges of support from the Railroad Workers Union and from hundreds of thousands of workers throughout West Germany.

Officially the strike demonstration was a protest against attempts to deny union representatives voting rights in the co-management holding companies set up in the coal and steel industries after World War II. The unions also protested the arrogant statement of the Ruhr industrialist, Herman Reusch, that the co-management concession won by the workers was obtained by “blackmail” when the government was too weak to resist.

While this protest was the immediate issue, it was generally recognized that the strike was a part of the growing opposition to the Paris agreements for German rearmament that are now before the Bonn government for ratification.

The struggle against the rearmament program has been conducted under the leadership of the Social Democrats, the second largest political party in West Germany.

# No to Central America 'free trade' pact

U.S. Congress is debating the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA)—a regional version of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). This new Yankee "Good Neighbor" policy for the 21st century will open up the countries and peoples of the western hemisphere to even greater penetration and predation by U.S. capital and commodities. Under these accords, terms of trade will become more unequal, not less.

Even before receiving the congressional rubber stamp, Washington has begun using its new trade club in Central America, as an article in this issue points out.

Imperialism warps the economies of the semicolonial world. Oppressed nations in the world capitalist market remain largely restricted to producing and exporting agricultural products and raw materials, as well as in recent decades serving as "export platforms" for light manufactures or other industrial goods often made in imperialist-owned factories. Even with regard to these goods, semicolonial countries get slapped down any time they try to "intrude" on markets sought by the titans of agriculture and industry in North America, Europe, or Japan.

Meanwhile, big business in the United States and other imperialist countries exports heavy industrial goods, technology, machine tools, and agricultural produce—and large amounts of capital as well. Today the capital exported to semicolonial countries in particular takes the form not only of buying up agricultural land, factories, retail and wholesale businesses, insurance companies, banks, and mineral rights. It also takes the form of loans that entangle these countries in a vortex of debt slavery to imperialist banks and governments, often through the intermediary of "international" financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The currencies of a growing number of countries in Latin America have been tied even more directly to the dollar. Both Ecuador and El Salvador have actually adopted

the U.S. dollar as the national currency, joining Panama, which has been shackled to the greenback since the end of World War II. The results of such policies can be seen most graphically in Argentina—imperialism's "free market" show case in the Third World in the 1990s—which suffered a financial collapse in 2001 after years of tying its currency to the dollar.

In Mexico, U.S. finance capital has used the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to pressure the government to open up the banking system to direct imperialist penetration and growing domination. With government barriers to foreign ownership of Mexican banks lifted, nearly 80 percent of commercial bank assets in Mexico are today owned by banks in the United States, western Europe, Canada, or Japan—including all five of the country's largest banks. This is up from 1 percent a decade ago when the "peso crisis" erupted.

Under both the Bush and Clinton administrations, Washington has been pushing the FTAA (NAFTA metastasized) on the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In response, Cuban president Fidel Castro has proposed to working-class parties, popular organizations, and trade unions throughout the region that they demand a nationwide vote in every country of South America, Central America, and the Caribbean on ratification of these imperialist-instigated agreements. Let the people vote on the FTAA (or CAFTA)! We support that demand. We do so, as we simultaneously explain to revolutionists in Cuba and elsewhere in the Americas that in the United States the campaign against the FTAA waged by trade union officials and assorted liberal and radical groupings has a completely different content—a chauvinist, pro-imperialist one—because it is centered on protecting "American jobs" and misleading workers to believe they have common interests with employers "hurt by imports," whether from Central America or China.

# U.S. troops in Iraq unleash raids in Mosul

Continued from front page

the elections. Five days later, five car bombings took place in Baghdad, killing at least a dozen people. Despite such attacks, which have mounted since the beginning of the year, the U.S.-led forces and the Allawi administration insist they are going full steam ahead with the elections and are solidifying support among the country's Shiites, who comprise 60 percent of the population, and Kurds.

Up to 2,000 U.S.-trained Iraqi special forces troops will be in Mosul to provide security for the elections, according to AFP. Another 600 troops from the Iraqi 24th Battalion, also known as the Iraqi Intervention Force, have moved into the city's police academy. The battalion is composed of Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds who fought alongside U.S. Marines in the assault on Fallujah last November.

The U.S. and Iraqi troops in the Mosul area will be headed by the 5,000-strong Stryker Brigade. Such brigades, equipped with the Stryker combat vehicle, are being used effectively in Mosul and are "well-designed for the decentralized war" U.S. forces are fighting in Iraq, said U.S. Brig. Gen. Carter Ham, commander of Task Force Olympia. The Stryker is lighter and faster than the Bradley fighting vehicle and capable of transporting more troops over longer distances, he said. Task Force Olympia is responsible for U.S. forces in northern Iraq.

The Allawi regime recently announced drastic "security" measures for the elections, reported the January 17 *New York Times*. These include a ban on travel between cities and setting up "pedestrian only" areas within blocks of polling stations. One U.S. general said it was "highly likely" that all private vehicle traffic would be banned on election day across the country.

Election officials say no voter registration has taken place in western Anbar province, which includes Fallujah and Ramadi, cities in central Iraq where the Hussein regime had a strong base of support, the BBC reported. U.S. forces

routed Baathists from Fallujah in a week of fighting last November, and have only allowed a few thousand of the city's former 250,000 residents to return. In an effort to increase the number of potential Sunni voters in the four provinces where low turnout is expected—which include the areas around Mosul, Tikrit, and Baghdad, in addition to Anbar province—residents of these areas will be allowed to register on election day.

Ansar al-Islam, a Baathist-backed group, took responsibility for the assassination of Mahmoud al-Mandani, a senior aide to Ali al-Sistani, reported the January 15 *International Herald Tribune*. In a sign of the growing isolation of such groups, the Association of Muslim Scholars, a leading Sunni group, condemned the al-Mandani's killing as the work of "criminal agents."

Officials of the interim government recently announced that Saddam Hussein's cousin, Izz al-Din al-Majid, controlled \$7 billion with which he funded groups like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Tawhid and Jihad, which has taken responsibility for many bombings and kidnappings and the beheadings of hostages. The money was reportedly taken from Iraq's treasury just before the U.S. invasion in 2003. Al-Majid was captured in December.

Meanwhile, Kurds who were forcibly displaced from Kirkuk and the surrounding region in the 1980s will be allowed to vote in Kirkuk, said Farid Ayar, an Iraqi election official. This helped cement a tentative agreement, which awaits approval by the Kurdish regional parliament, to drop a threatened boycott of the elections by Kurds in the area. The Hussein regime forced thousands of Kurds out of Kirkuk in the 1980s. Their lands and homes were given to Sunni Arabs, many of whom were also forced to move into the area, in a Baathist "Arabization" program to strengthen the regime's hold over the oil-rich region. U.S. officials estimate that recent Kurdish resettlement efforts have so far forced 100,000 Arabs to leave Kirkuk.

# U.S. soldier convicted for Abu Ghraib torture

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A U.S. military court January 15 sentenced Reserve Army Spc. Charles Graner, Jr., to 10 years in prison for his role in the abuse and torture of Iraqis incarcerated at the U.S.-run Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Graner maintained throughout the court-martial that he acted under pressure from superior officers who ordered interrogators to use abusive methods to coerce information from detainees.

Graner was the first of eight soldiers in a military police unit at Abu Ghraib to face trial. Three others reached plea-bargain agreements for lesser sentences. Staff Sgt. Ivan Frederick received an eight-year sentence, Spc. Jeremy Sivits was sentenced to one year in prison, and Spc. Megan Ambuhl received no prison time, but was demoted in rank. Each of them testified against Graner.

Two other soldiers charged in the case, Sgt. Javal Davis and Spc. Sabrina Harman, are scheduled for court-martial in February. Spc. Lynndie England still awaits a decision on whether she will face trial. England is seen in one photograph dragging a naked Iraqi prisoner by the neck with a leash and in another making a mocking gesture as if shooting the genitals of a naked and hooded inmate.

Photos of U.S. troops abusing Iraqis at Abu Ghraib appeared in the media worldwide last May. As the *Militant* pointed out at the time, such practices are widespread throughout the U.S. prison system as well.

According to the British daily *Guardian*, the Pentagon said at least 20 soldiers, including one officer, will face courts-martial in coming months on charges ranging from abuse to murder of Iraqi prisoners. First Lt. Jack Seville is charged with involuntary manslaughter and aggravated assault because a member of his platoon pushed two Iraqis from a bridge into the Tigris River, one of whom is said to have drowned. Seville's co-accused, Sgt. Tracy Perkins, was convicted of assault, but acquitted of manslaughter charges. Perkins was sentenced to six months in jail and a reduction in rank.

In a separate case, Staff Sgt. Cardenas Alban was sentenced to a year in prison for the "mercy" killing of an Iraqi civilian teenager who had been badly wounded in crossfire in a section of Baghdad between U.S. troops and militias opposing the Iraqi government. A military criminal investigator said Alban and Staff Sgt. Johnny Horne Jr. decided to put the youth "out of his misery" because of the severity of his wounds. Horne was sentenced in December to three years in prison.

# How real wages decline

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

In a letter to the editor in this issue, Robert Dees asks whether there is a contradiction between the statement that "real wages have been on a downward curve for nearly three decades," in the editorial "Defend a woman's right to choose" in the Dec. 28, 2004, *Militant*, and an article in the January 1-7 *Economist* that refers to a 6.4 percent increase in real wages for the lowest-paid workers over the 1979-2000 period.

(The term real wages refers to the actual purchasing power of workers' earnings after inflation is taken into account. For example, workers who receive a 5 percent wage increase in the same year as inflation hits 10 percent, would actually face a 5 percent decline in their real wage.)

What are the facts?

## REPLY TO A READER

While the *Economist* is not referring to the working class as a whole, it's worth noting that a 6.4 percent increase for the lowest-paid 20 percent of the population over a 22-year period is hardly anything to brag about. That comes out on average to less than 0.3 percent per year—in fact, this tiny increase for the worst-off section of the working class fits into the downward curve of real wages in this country since the mid-1970s.

Also the *Economist* deliberately starts in 1979, instead of going back 30 years to the mid-70s, when, prior to the 1974-75 recession, real wages were at a high point. By 1979, a substantial drop in real wages had already taken place due to inflation and other effects of the economic downturn. The chart below shows clearly that, overall, real wages over the past 30 years have declined considerably.

"Real earnings rose sharply for several decades after World War II, but the trend slowed abruptly during the 1970s," says a recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report. In the 30 years following the Second World War, when Washington gained unrivaled dominance over other imperialist powers, the employing class could afford to concede regular wage increases to sections of the working class in exchange for labor peace.

By the early 1970s, however, the postwar boom had ended and the curve of capitalist development dipped downward. At the root of this turn was the decline in the average rate of industrial profits.

The deep recession of 1974-75 brought a sharp increase in unemployment and an intensified employer attack on workers' wages and conditions. Beginning with the take-backs Chrysler imposed on autoworkers in 1979, the bosses rammed through massive cuts that drove down actual take-home pay—before inflation was even taken into account.

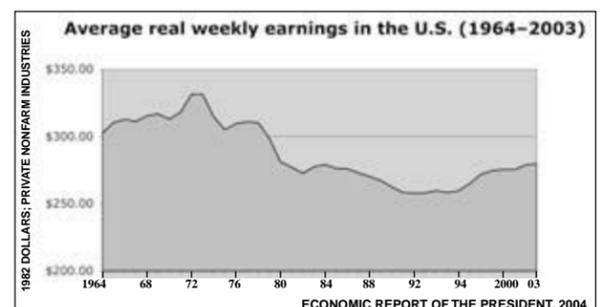
There was a modest upturn in workers' real wages in the late 1990s, the labor bureau report indicates. Although this was true for the working class as a whole, government statistics show that the increase was relatively greatest among those at the bottom of the pay scale. This is explained by an increase in the minimum wage at the same time as a decline in joblessness.

An 8.4 percent increase in the minimum wage in 1997 to \$5.15 per hour—as miserly as that figure is, and which remains the federal minimum wage today, eight years later—meant a short-term hike in real wages. At the same time the unemployment rate in the second half of the 1990s fell to its lowest level in 30 years, remaining below 5 percent from 1997 to 2001. Not since the late 1960s had the unemployment rate held below that figure for five consecutive years. Under such conditions, the labor of the working class is in higher demand, and workers gain greater confidence in their ability to win improvements in wages and benefits from the employers.

The upward turn lasted until the recession of 2001. The pattern of the overall downward curve in real wages resumed as the unemployment rate began to rise, and the \$5.15 minimum wage lost more and more of its purchasing power. Real wages fell in 2004 by 0.6 percent, approaching the level they were at in the depths of the 2001 recession.

The *Economist* uses data in a way that masks the class contradictions that lie behind changes in the real wage. The *Economist* authors compare only the "lowest fifth" in income in the population with the "top fifth"—whose real wages grew by 70 percent in 1979-2000. Thus they promote the liberal myth that those who do not fall into the category they define as "poor" are part of a better-off "middle class." This obscures the grinding conditions that the working-class as a whole faces as the employers' assault on wages and working conditions takes its toll.

"Most Americans believe that their country still does a reasonable job of providing opportunities for everybody, including blacks and women," argues the *Economist*. But nothing good for the working class comes from "opportunities provided" by benevolent employers or social service agencies. It comes from hard-fought struggles.



# N.Y. bus drivers strike for better wages, benefits

BY DAN FEIN  
AND OLGA RODRÍGUEZ

QUEENS, New York—A strike by the union representing 800 current and former bus drivers, cleaners, and mechanics against two bus lines servicing riders in Queens and Brooklyn disrupted daily transportation for more than 70,000 riders in these two boroughs of New York City. The workers walked off the job at midnight on January 10 demanding wage increases and protection of their medical benefits.

The struck companies are Green Bus Lines, which operates out of Jamaica, Queens, and Command Bus, which runs routes in the East New York area of Brooklyn.

City authorities are in the process of buying these two private companies along with five others that the city has subsidized since 1974. City Hall plans to integrate the seven lines into the city's central transportation system—the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

The strikers have been without a contract for two years as the city takeover has dragged on. Green Bus Lines workers belong to the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1179. Command Bus Company workers are members of ATU Local 1181. City subway and bus workers are organized by the Transport Workers Union Local 100.

From day one of the walkout, New York mayor Michael Bloomberg has pressured the workers to return to work. He tried to

undermine the impact of the strike by authorizing commuter vans to pick up passengers along a few of the affected routes.

The unionists pressed for a retroactive pay raise for the two years they have been without a contract. Despite progress on health-care questions, talks broke down January 13 over refusal by the bosses to budge on the retroactive pay demand. The city administration agreed earlier to fund two years of back pay for the private lines that are part of the planned MTA takeover, but has not come through, instead tying payment to the actual takeover. At his January 13 press conference announcing that talks had broken down, Bloomberg said, "It would be paid when this deal closes, because that's when you start getting better service."

*Militant* reporters visited the picket line on the second day of the strike at the Green Bus Lines garage on 147th Avenue here. The nearly 50 picketers were in high spirits. Some were sipping coffee around fires to keep warm. Others were chanting, "What do we want? Contract! When do we want it? Now!"

Stanley Brown, a Green bus driver with five years' seniority, said, "We're all partners out here on the picket line." He added, "Last week my passengers wished me luck with the strike."

Donald Sinkler has put in four years with the Green Line. "Can you imagine having to pay doctor bills for me and my family?" he asked. The union is demanding company contributions into the health care fund, he said, which is running low.

"We also need a merged seniority list



Militant/Dan Fein

**Amalgamated Transportation Union Local 1179 members on picket line in Jamaica, Queens, New York, January 12. The workers are striking Green Bus Lines.**

when we are city bus drivers," Sinkler added. "We can't get into a situation where we are unprotected. One passenger told me before the strike began, 'Do what you have to do to get a contract.'"

The *Daily News*, one of the three main dailies in New York City, ran lead editorials in opposition to the strike in its January 13 and 14 editions. The January 13 editorial, "Put the riders back on the bus," lamented, "The leaders of American [sic] Transit Union Locals 1179 and 1181 have avoided jail only because their striking members work for two privately owned bus lines—Green and Command. Thus, they are beyond the reach of the Taylor Law." The 1967 Taylor Law is a state measure that bans strikes by government workers.

The following day the headline of the editorial was "The guys who stopped the

buses" and had two photographs—union leaders John Longo and Sal Battaglia. The editorial began, "These photographs should be mug shots," and denounced the union leaders for the lack of a contract.

The strikers organized round-the-clock picket lines at the main garages housing the two struck companies. Workers in Jamaica—some with decades on the job—said they were determined to stay out until they get a fair contract. Many people driving by honked in solidarity.

As this issue went to press January 19, the city government announced that a tentative settlement had been reached with the union negotiators. According to the Associated Press, the two-year agreement gives workers a \$1,000 cash payment in the first year and a 3 percent raise in the second year. Union members still have to ratify the contract.

## — MILITANT LABOR FORUMS —

### CALIFORNIA

#### Los Angeles

**Why the Right to Choose Abortion Is Fundamental to Women's Equality** Speaker: Wendy Lyons, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Los Angeles. Fri., Jan. 28. Program: 7:30 p.m. 4229 S. Central Ave. Donation requested. Tel: (323) 233-9372.

#### San Francisco

**The Case of the Legless Veteran & the Fight for Workers Rights Today** See a documentary on this fight, produced and directed by Howard Petrick. Speaker: Laura Anderson. Fri. Jan 28. Program 7:30 p.m. 3926 Mission St. Tel: (415) 584-2135.

### NEW JERSEY

#### Newark

**The Fight to Defend Social Security** Fri., Jan. 28, Program: 8 p.m. 168 Bloomfield Ave., 2nd Fl. Donation: \$5. Tel: (973) 481-0077.

### NEW YORK

#### Manhattan

**The Struggle for Land in Venezuela** Speakers: William Camacarro, Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle; Argiris Malapanis, *Militant* editor. Fri., Jan. 28. Dinner 7 p.m. Program 8 p.m. Donation: \$5 dinner/\$5 program. 307 W. 36th St., 10th Fl. north (near 8th Ave.). Tel: (212) 629-6649.

### PENNSYLVANIA

#### Hazleton

**Unfolding Politics in Venezuela, Peasant Struggles Propel Land Reform** Sat., Jan. 29. Program: 7:30 p.m. 69 N. Wyoming St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (570) 454-8320.

#### Pittsburgh

**The Face of Imperialism: Torture and the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.** Speaker: Cindy Jaquith, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan. 28. Program: 7:30 p.m. 5907 Penn. Ave., Rm. 225. Donation: \$4 dinner/\$5 program. Tel: (412) 365-1090.

### WASHINGTON

#### Seattle

**Workers and Farmers in Mexico Face Attacks by Bosses, Government: Report Back from the Guadalajara Book Fair** Speaker: Betsey Stone, Pathfinder volunteer at Guadalajara Book Fair. Sat., Jan 29. Dinner: 6:30 p.m. Program: 7:30 p.m. 5418 Rainer Ave. S. Tel: (206) 323-1755.

## United, US Air move to gut pension plans

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. agency that insures pension plans has asked a federal bankruptcy court to block a pension plan agreement between United Airlines and the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA). In a separate filing, the airline has asked the court to okay throwing out labor contracts and pension plans with unions it has been unable to reach agreement with. Members of the Association of Flight Attendants overwhelmingly authorized a strike should the court approve the company request.

On December 17 the union representing 14,000 active and retired pilots at United agreed to drop its opposition to the airline's request for bankruptcy court approval for termination of its current pension plan. The pilots also agreed to take a 15 percent pay cut, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. In exchange, United would give pilots \$550 million in stock equity in the company when it emerges from bankruptcy.

The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) has asked the court to immediately block the agreement and make the government agency trustee of the pilots' pension plan. The pilots union called the PBGC court action "vindictive" and said it would "vigorously oppose any effort by the PBGC to take over the plan before May 1," reported the *Financial Times*. ALPA charges that pilots will lose 39 percent of their pension if the PBGC takes over the plan before that date, and would receive a maximum benefit payment of \$44,386 a

year, said the *Chicago Daily Herald*.

A flight attendants union representative said it "would not allow the company to take advantage of the bankruptcy process and strip them of their rights," reported the *Herald*. He said 88 percent of union members had approved strike action. United has asked the flight attendants for \$138 million in concessions in addition to the \$314 million the union gave last year.

A spokeswoman for United said a strike by airline unions is barred by the Railway Labor Act and federal bankruptcy law.

The bosses at United, who have already cut costs by \$2.5 billion annually through an initial round of concessions, had said they need another \$725 million.

In bankruptcy since 2002, United has asked a court to allow the company to tear up pension agreements involving 120,000 retirees and current workers and replace defined benefit retirement plans with 401(k) contribution programs. These are invested

in the stock market and are vulnerable to the fluctuations of market swings. The action by United would dump about \$8.3 billion in pension debt onto the PBGC, which reportedly has a \$23 billion deficit. Since Congress created this agency in 1974, airlines have accounted for 20 percent of benefits claims filed with the agency.

Meanwhile, a judge approved a similar request by US Airways to throw out its contract with the International Association of Machinists (IAM), and tear up its pension plan with the IAM and flight attendants, if the Machinists reject the concessions the airline has demanded. US Airways has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection for the second time in recent years. The wage and benefits cuts it is seeking to impose on the Machinists amount to \$300 million, part of the company's drive to force take backs of about \$1 billion. IAM members are voting this month on the company's concession demands.

## — LETTERS —

### Cuts of social programs

While Michigan's food pantries remain understocked and school-age poverty levels remain high—at more than 220,000—an additional aspect to this reality for hundreds of thousands living in Michigan was the subject of an article in the *Muskegon Chronicle*, titled "Agencies struggle to meet medical needs of the poor."

While those living in poverty with medical needs have risen throughout 2004, a federal funding freeze for those living in extreme poverty went into effect July 1 of last year. At the time of the freeze, state aid was budgeted for 63,000 people. The numbers now exceed 89,000, leaving the state's various charities scrambling to meet the medical needs of the poor. Many, no doubt, are left in crisis situations when considering cancer and AIDS patients.

Diana Stubbs, director of one of Muskegon's aid agencies, said that they remain "in dire need of donations if they are to continue." Diabetes and heart disease, both of which require medication, are common among the poor being helped in Michigan. But the delays in the paperwork that the charities are forced to do under a capitalist health care system can be life threatening. Cheryl Schneider, of Muskegon Care, says, "Many are homeless, living friend to friend. Thirty dollars for a prescription may not seem like much, but when you have no

income it may as well be \$300."

The poorest of the poor, some seriously ill, also often homeless, living through the winter months in Michigan, are in urgent need of a common sense, humane solution to their problems.

Brian McAfee  
*Muskegon Heights, Michigan*

### Real wages

A recent *Militant* editorial (Dec. 28, 2004) stated that "Real wages have been on a downward curve for nearly three decades." I have read something to this effect before in the *Militant* and repeated it often. The Jan. 1–7, 2005, issue of the *Economist*, however, claimed that "between 1979 and 2000 the real income of households in the lowest fifth (the bottom 20 percent of earners) grew by 6.4 percent." I find this hard to believe, but I would appreciate a good article detailing what the development really has been over the last quarter century.

Robert Dees  
*Palo Alto, California*

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

## — CALENDAR —

### CALIFORNIA

#### San Francisco

**Defend Women's Health and Rights: On the 32nd Anniversary of Roe v. Wade** Sat., Jan. 22 Rally 10 a.m. at Powell and Market, March 11 a.m. to the Embarcadero. Sponsored by the San Francisco Area Pro-Choice Coalition. Tel: (415)890-1020 x209.

### NEW JERSEY

#### Newark

**Educational Weekend on 'Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism' by V.I. Lenin** Sponsored by the New Jersey Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists. Three classes on Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 5–6. Location to be announced. For more information call (973) 481-0077.

## Haitian-American to lose U.S. citizenship after drug conviction

BY ERIC SIMPSON

MIAMI—On January 4 the U.S. Court of Appeals in Atlanta upheld a Miami federal court decision to strip Lionel Jean-Baptiste of his citizenship based on its ruling that he lacked “good moral character” when he was applying for U.S. citizenship. He faces deportation to his native country, Haiti. This is the first time that Clinton-era immigration laws, which allow for the deportation of non-citizens convicted of crimes, have been used to revoke the citizenship of a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Jean-Baptiste was charged, tried, and convicted after he had become a U.S. citizen for a crime allegedly committed while his application for citizenship was pending. The Miami court ruled that his conviction reveals that he was not in fact of “good moral character” during the period of time his application was pending, as the law requires. The court ruled “Jean-Baptiste must be denaturalized for illegally procuring his citizenship in the face of commission during the statutory period of acts sufficient to negate and belie a showing of good moral character.”

His attorney, Andre Pierre, argued that the standard of “good moral character” is poorly defined, and that the law does not say that committing a crime prior to naturalization is grounds for revocation of citizenship. The appeals court ruled that immigration regulations give the U.S. At-

torney General discretion to define “good moral character,” and that conviction for a drug-related crime falls within those bounds. Pierre told the press he plans to appeal the case to the Supreme Court.

The case sets a precedent for extending the reach of the 1996 Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which expanded the offenses for which a non-citizen may be deported.

“Well before 9/11, starting back in the 1990s, the government was intensifying its efforts to deport non-U.S. criminal offenders,” Stephen Legomsky, a professor of immigration law at Washington University in St. Louis, said in an interview on the Jean-Baptiste case with Voice of America radio. “After 9/11 that drive picked up.... I have to think that with all their other priorities the government would not have brought this case unless their goal was to test out the strategy for future prosecutions.”

### Police frame-up

Contrary to the Voice of America radio service headline, “Court strips cocaine smuggler of US citizenship,” Jean-Baptiste was not charged with drug smuggling, but with “conspiracy” to possess crack cocaine with intent to distribute.

His conviction was based solely on the uncorroborated testimony of a Miami undercover cop at the trial in 1996. The cop visited Jean-Baptiste’s Royal Carib-

## Toll from Indian Ocean tsunami tops 225,000

BY PAUL PEDERSON

More than three weeks after an earthquake unleashed deadly waves that struck shorelines in the Indonesian island of Sumatra and elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, the World Health Organization reports that the situation in the Aceh province of Indonesia remains “an acute emergency.”

The official death toll there has climbed to 166,000, bringing the total dead in all the countries affected to over 225,000.

Disease remains the main threat to the survivors in the province, which is home to 4.5 million people. Tetanus, a deadly disease that has been all but eradicated through vaccination in much of the world, has hit at least 67 people in Aceh.

“I might have expected to see one case in my entire career,” Charles Chan Johnson, a doctor from Singapore working in the provincial capital Banda Aceh, told the British daily *Telegraph*. “Now I have 20 patients in one ward.” Chan said most had symptoms too advanced to be treatable. “I am afraid nearly all these patients will die,” he said.

Because the tetanus bacteria incubation period can last for weeks, many more survivors may have contracted it. Many residents of the coastal villages that survived the maelstrom found themselves wounded and lying amidst rubble in filthy water. Doctors Without Borders reports that “vaccination coverage in the region is probably very low,” meaning many could be susceptible to the disease.

A potentially more serious threat is posed by the pools of brackish water that have been created deep inland by the tsunami. This has become a breeding ground for a record mosquito crop, which poses the threat of epidemics of malaria and dengue fever.

“Short-term, we’re trying to prevent an epidemic,” Richard Allan told the Associated Press January 15. “And it may already be too late.” Allan is the director of the Mentor Initiative, an in-

ternational anti-malaria group based at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland. Allan warned that tens of thousands could die from such an epidemic, aggravated by the weakened immune systems from injury and trauma and unsanitary conditions.

Washington announced its intention January 15 to withdraw its military forces within two weeks from all tsunami-hit na-

## U.S. infant mortality rate is on the rise

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

The U.S. infant mortality rate rose for the first time in four decades in 2002 to 7 deaths for every 1,000 live births. The United States is ranked 42nd in the world in infant mortality, and has a rate double that of many wealthy imperialist countries such as Japan, Denmark, and Norway, according to the UNICEF 2004 State of the World’s Children report.

Cuba’s infant mortality rate in 2002 was 6.5, and preliminary data from Cuba’s National Statistics Department put the figure at 5.8 for 2004, well below the U.S. national average.

What is behind the relatively high infant mortality in the United States compared to imperialist nations and revolutionary Cuba is the ruling-class offensive over the past decade against the social wage and living and working conditions of working people. Under the two-term Clinton administration from 1992 to 2000, health-care costs continued to increase. The 1996 “welfare reform” bill effectively ended Aid to Families with Dependent Children and imposed a five-year cutoff for those receiving welfare benefits. These cuts fell particularly hard on working women and their children.

More than 45 million Americans had no health-care coverage in 2004, and the cost of medical plans grew by 11.2 percent, five times faster than increases in worker’s wages. A study by the Institute

### Abortion rights vigil marks ‘94 clinic killings



Militant/Sarah Ullman

Twenty-five people took part in December 17 candlelight vigil in Brookline, Massachusetts, to mark 10th anniversary of a 1994 attack on two clinics there that provide abortion. The attack left two receptionists, Lee Ann Nichols and Shannon Lowney, dead, and five others injured. A rightist John Salvi, was convicted for the deadly assault. The vigil, which was organized by the National Organization for Women, was followed by a panel discussion.

bean restaurant in Miami’s Little Haiti in March of 1995—four months after he applied for citizenship—and asked him to sell her drugs. She claims he facilitated her purchase by directing her to a drug dealer across the street. However, the tape recorder she was wearing failed to record Jean-Baptiste, who denies the charges. He was released from prison last year after serving seven years of his eight-year sentence.

Now 57 years old, Jean-Baptiste came to the United States in 1980 and became a

citizen in April of 1996. Six months later he was arrested and tried on the drug charge, and then convicted in January of 1997. The court ruling says the law requires that Jean-Baptiste be stripped of his citizenship and be deported.

Haitians in Miami have suffered systematic abuse at the hands of the immigration authorities. Daniel Joseph, 20, was deported to Haiti last November after spending more than two years at the notorious Krome Detention Center while his asylum request was pending, making him one of the longest-held immigrants there. The same month 81-year-old Joseph Danticat, the uncle of noted author Edwidge Danticat, died at Krome after authorities denied him his medicine, the Associated Press reported. He had been arrested at Miami International Airport upon his arrival from Haiti with a visa and a petition for asylum, and died in custody five days later.

Marleine Bastien, director of Haitian Women of Miami, told the *Militant* that a demonstration for immigrant rights will be held January 28 in front of the immigration police building.

tions except Indonesia. They have been a significant component of the relief effort. U.S. deputy defense secretary Paul Wolfowitz, speaking to reporters that day during a visit to Indonesia, said the U.S. military’s goal in the region was “to put ourselves out of business as quickly as possible” and “hand over responsibility to others, and especially to the Indonesian government.”

of Medicine last year reported, “The lack of health insurance causes roughly 18,000 unnecessary deaths every year,” making it the sixth leading killer in the country. Health-care premiums also increased, taking an increasingly large bite out of workers’ pay checks. The Bush administration’s proposal to put in place individual, tax-free “health savings accounts” to supplement inadequate and costly company-provided benefits packages signaled another step in the offensive by both parties of capitalism against Social Security, Medicare, and other social entitlements.

The national figure for infant mortality does not take into account the disparities based on race and geography. For oppressed nationalities, infant mortality rates are higher than the national average of 7 deaths per 1,000 live births. For Blacks, the infant mortality rate in 2000 was nearly double the national average at 13.6; for Puerto Ricans it reached 7.8, and for Native Americans 8.2. That year the District of Columbia had a rate of infant deaths at 12.0, and Mississippi had the highest rate of any state with 10.7, the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics reports.

The Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control (CDC) blamed these disparities—particularly the high rate of infant mortality among oppressed nationalities—on “behaviors, lifestyles, and conditions that affect birth outcomes, such as smoking,

substance abuse, poor nutrition, lack of prenatal care.” Although government agencies seek to place the burden of the rising infant deaths on the “bad habits” of working people, the real source for the differences in infant mortality rates lies in the decreasing access to adequate medical facilities, the rising cost of medical care, and the government cutbacks in social programs, including those that provide prenatal care to working-class women.

Last year, the state of Colorado cut off Medicaid funding for prenatal care for undocumented workers. State authorities reversed the policy of “presumptive eligibility” for pregnant women who applied for benefits. Applicants for Medicaid-funded prenatal care now must first be ruled eligible before receiving benefits, a process that could delay seeing a physician for weeks. In the name of “balancing the budget,” similar government-funded programs have been placed on the chopping block. In Arizona, a referendum was passed November 2 that cuts off all public services to undocumented workers, and made it a misdemeanor for government employees to fail to report any presumed violation of immigration law by those who apply for services. Although these state governments claim their aim is to limit programs for so-called illegal immigrants, the direct targets are the living conditions and social wage of the working class as a whole.