

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
The FARC and the debate
over revolutionary strategy
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 33 AUGUST 25, 2008

Socialist Workers win ballot spot in six states, four to go

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

BATON ROUGE, Louisiana, August 12—The Socialist Workers Party became the first to place its presidential ticket on the November 4 ballot in Louisiana yesterday. The party is running Róger Calero for president and Alyson Kennedy for vice president.

The socialists are now certified for the ballot in Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, New Jersey, Louisiana, and Washington state. Completion of efforts to get on the ballot in Florida, New York, Minnesota, and Vermont are under way.

Kennedy filed here along with Eloise Williams and Mike Howells, from New Orleans, two of the party's nine electors.

Following the filing, campaign supporters joined Kennedy, Williams, and Howells for a press conference on the capitol steps.

The Baton Rouge daily the *Advocate* covered the news conference. "Kennedy, a former coal miner, said the other candidates say they understand the hardships caused by rising gas and food prices," the paper reported. It quoted Kennedy saying, "They

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Louisiana Director of Elections Nancy Underwood (right) congratulates SWP electors Eloise Williams and Mike Howells with SWP vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy (center).

Militant/Jacquie Henderson

U.S. gov't presses for accord with Iraq on troop presence

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—The U.S. government is pressing to reach an accord with its client regime in Baghdad on a so-called Status of Forces Agreement. Such a pact will provide the legal rationalization Washington is seeking to continue the deployment of U.S. troops and other imperialist forces in the country.

The current UN mandate for the more-than-half-decade-long military operation expires in December.

Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations, Hamid Bayati, said an agreement on U.S. military presence was close and that the government planned to submit it to parliament after the summer break.

Under the proposed agreement U.S. troops would hand over parts of the Green Zone—where the U.S. embassy and Iraqi government offices are located—to the Iraqis by the end of 2008. U.S. troops would be off city streets by the middle of next year, and largely withdrawn by 2010. The remaining "support personnel" would stay for about three more years. The

proposal includes a clause allowing for the schedule to be changed, if both sides agree.

One Iraqi official said getting the Bush administration to agree to a timetable was a "key achievement," making it possible that the agreement would be passed by the Iraqi parliament.

A major sticking point in the negotiations is the insistence by the U.S. government that its troops have immunity from prosecution under Iraqi law. The Iraqi side has said it is willing to grant immunity for actions committed on U.S. bases and in combat operations—but not a blanket exemption from Iraqi law, according to press reports.

In a related development, Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr announced August 8 that most of his Mahdi Army will be disarmed. The militia was routed by the Iraqi army in successive battles to oust them from Basra in March and from their stronghold in Sadr City in May.

Mudhafar al-Moussawi, a Shiite

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Moscow invades Georgia to reassert domination

Claims defense of Ossetian, Abkhaz rights



Reuters

Russian troops roll through Alagir, North Ossetia, on their way to South Ossetia August 10.

BY SAM MANUEL
 AND SETH GALINSKY

WASHINGTON, August 14—Soon after signing a cease-fire agreement August 12, Russian troops moved deeper into Georgia, effectively dividing it in half. At one point they were just 30 miles from the capital, Tbilisi.

"One can forget about any talk

about Georgia's territorial integrity," Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov told reporters August 14.

Moscow is using its invasion of Georgia, a nation historically oppressed by Russia, to reassert its dominance in the region. It cynically claimed its military action was in response to Georgian "genocide"

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Pennsylvania janitors rally against immigration raid



Militant/John Staggs

Lucía Varrías, arrested in July 31 immigration raid at ABM Industries, speaks at August 7 rally in Norristown Pennsylvania.

BY JANET POST

NORRISTOWN, Pennsylvania—The union representing cleaning workers here organized a rally and a press conference to protest a July 31 immigration raid. In what the union denounced as "an ambush," bosses helped cops arrest 42 janitors, most of whom belong to Local 32BJ of the Service Employees International Union.

The union said that ABM Indus-

tries, which employed the workers, instructed them to attend a mandatory training meeting on July 31. There, the company said, they would receive their paychecks, including overtime pay for the training. If workers did not attend the meeting they could lose their jobs, ABM warned.

But as the meeting began, the bosses walked out and in came some 15 armed agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). They locked all the doors and arrested 42 workers. Twenty remain in custody and 22 with children or medical con-

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Guantánamo prisoner gets five-month sentence but no guarantee of release

BY BEN JOYCE

A military tribunal held at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, convicted Salim Ahmed Hamdan August 7 of giving “material support for terrorism.” He was acquitted of “conspiracy” charges.

Hamdan was a driver for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan. He was sentenced to five and a half years, which includes the five years and one month time served, leaving five months left in his sentence.

Department of Defense prosecutors had asked the court for a sentence of 30 years or more based on conspiracy charges they had filed originally. Although Hamdan’s sentence is set to expire in January, U.S. officials will have the option to continue to hold him as an “enemy combatant” for as long as they see fit. Hamdan was declared an “unlawful enemy combatant” by a military judge in December 2007.

“That’s always been on our minds in terms of a scenario we could face,” said Pentagon spokesperson Bryan Whitman. “He will serve his time for the conviction and then he will still be an enemy combatant, and as an enemy combatant the process for potential transfer or release will apply.”

The trial was conducted under the Military Commissions Act of 2006. The judge and jury were military personnel appointed by the Pentagon. Hearsay as well as statements obtained through beatings, threats,

and some forms of torture were all permissible forms of evidence for the prosecution.

Pentagon officials pointed to the short sentence Hamdan received as evidence of the objectivity of the court. Air Force Col. Morris Davis, the former chief prosecutor for the Guantánamo trials, said, “there is a perception that trying people in front of the military was going to be a rubber-stamp process.” He pointed to the Hamdan trial as proof otherwise.

Similarly, Republican presidential contender John McCain said, “The fact that the jury did not find Hamdan guilty of all of the charges brought against him demonstrates that the jury weighed the evidence carefully.”

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama criticized the Pentagon for not having convicted Hamdan sooner. “That the Hamdan trial—the first military commission trial with a guilty verdict since 9/11—took several years of legal challenges to secure a conviction for material support for terrorism underscores the dangerous flaws in the legal framework,” said Obama.

Socialist presidential candidate Róger Calero called for shutting down the prison camp at Guantánamo and releasing all those incarcerated there. He demanded an immediate end to all attacks on workers rights, from the use of secret evidence, to conspiracy charges, to arbitrary “enemy combatant” status.

Hotel workers continue strikes in Canada



Militant/Toni Gorton

Hundreds of hotel workers and their supporters organized by UNITE HERE Local 75 marched through downtown Toronto July 31 from Nathan Philips Square to the Fairmont Royal York Hotel. There they rallied to press their contract demands.

In Montreal, workers organized by the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) in 15 hotels walked off the job and set up picket lines August 8. Later in the day, some 700 workers marched to the Hyatt Regency Hotel where workers have been on strike since July 19.

Louise, a banquet worker at the Hotel Gouverneurs Place Dupuis, said the workers are in “good shape” for this fight, since “the CSN is currently negotiating contracts for more than 5,000 workers at 41 hotels in Quebec.”

The CSN is fighting for three-year contracts that would reduce the number of rooms chambermaids have to clean and raise wages by 3 percent each year.

—BEVERLY BERNARDO

Communications workers at Qwest vote to authorize strike

BY BEN JOYCE

Communications workers at Qwest Communications International, a large U.S. phone company, voted August 10 to authorize a strike if union and company negotiators do not reach a contract agreement.

Strike authorization won 93 percent from members who voted, according to the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the largest union at Qwest. The contract, which is set to expire on August 17, affects about 20,000 workers in 13 states. Health care, retirement benefits, and wages are at issue.

Qwest is providing telecommunications at the Democratic and Republican national conventions coming up over the next few weeks.

Meanwhile, negotiators for Verizon, CWA, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers agreed August 10 on a three-year contract, which now goes to the union

members for ratification.

The tentative contract provides wage increases of about 10.9 percent over the three-year period. The agreement provides union recognition to 600 Verizon workers previously in the company’s business unit and makes many temporary workers permanent employees. Verizon also agreed to increase future pension payouts. Union officials expect membership to increase by 2,500 under the new agreement.

The union took blows on health-care benefits, on the other hand. Co-payments for medical treatment will go up. New hires will no longer be eligible for full payment of health insurance premiums after they retire, but instead will be limited to a fixed monetary amount of coverage based on the number of years a worker is with the company. Verizon officials say they expect to achieve significant savings from this “breakthrough.”

THE MILITANT

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U.S. troops in Mosul, Iraq, July 2006.

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Tensions remain high after Bolivia recall vote

BY SETH GALINSKY

Bolivian president Evo Morales won nearly 61 percent of the vote in a contentious recall referendum August 10. Four governors who are harsh opponents of Morales in the wealthy lowlands in eastern Bolivia also won by large margins.

Morales had ordered the vote in an attempt to undermine his opponents, who have blocked land reform, opposed nationalization of natural resources, and stalled proposals for a new constitution. Podemos, the main opposition group, also backed the recall, hoping they could deal blows to the central government. Two opposition governors lost the vote, as did one pro-Morales governor.

As candidate of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), Morales took office in December 2005 when he won 53.7 percent of the vote. Formerly a leader of Bolivian peasants, he is the first indigenous president in the history of Bolivia.

At least 55 percent of Bolivians are Quechua or Aymara and 30 percent are of mixed ancestry, known as mestizo.

Morales's 2005 election came at a time of widespread mobilizations by peasants and workers resisting the plunder of the country's resources by imperialist corporations and local capitalists and landlords.

Even though Bolivia has the second-largest gas reserves in South America, as of 2006 more than 75 percent of Bolivians lacked running water and only 15 percent had electricity.

Revenues to the national government boomed after Morales nationalized natural gas fields, renegotiated contracts, and took measures for energy revenues to go directly to the federal, not provincial, governments. Bolivia now keeps 85 percent of the profits. Combined with rising prices, exports have nearly doubled since 2005 to \$4.7 billion last year.

Since his election, the Morales government has expanded cash payments to more than 2 million children and the elderly. Investment in roads and other public works has jumped from \$629 million in 2005 to \$1.1 billion in 2007.

"Other presidents put money in their pockets and gave none of it to us," Isabel Quispe told the *Washington Post* the day of the vote to explain her support for Morales.

Wealthy landlords infuriated

While some land has been distributed to landless peasants, Morales has vowed not to expropriate private property, with the exception of fallow land in the east. But even these

limited measures have infuriated wealthy landowners who have so far successfully slowed or blocked land distribution.

When the deputy land minister visited a 37,000-acre cattle ranch in Caraparicito in February, amid claims of forced servitude of Guaraní Indians who work there, the rancher who owns the hacienda shot out the minister's tires.

In December 2007 four eastern provinces—Beni, Pando, Santa Cruz, and Tarija, where most of the country's natural gas is produced and the largest farms are based—approved symbolic autonomy statutes.

Leaders of the proimperialist Podemos charge that the Morales government is unfairly favoring the indigenous majority of the highlands against the more heavily white eastern provinces and is "an absolute satellite" of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez. Venezuela has provided millions of dollars in assistance to Bolivia.

The conflict heated up in the days before the recall vote. When Morales flew to the opposition-run city of Santa Cruz August 6, rightists surrounded the football stadium where he was to speak and blocked roads. The event at the stadium was cancelled.

The president then flew to Trinidad where about 100 opposition youth on motorcycles circled the airport to disrupt his arrival. Morales' plane did not land in Trinidad, but returned to La Paz. Instead, two of his ministers addressed a rally in Trinidad of thousands of peasants and other working people.

Prior to the vote, Percy Fernández, the opposition mayor of Santa Cruz, openly called for the military to overthrow the "useless government."

Offers olive branch

After the initial results of the referendum, both sides claimed victory. Morales addressed several thousand cheering supporters from the balcony of the presidential palace in La Paz. Many in the crowd chanted "firm hand," urging Morales to get tough with the opposition.

While he promised that his government would "continue to advance in recovering natural resources and state enterprises and in consolidating nationalizations," he also held out an olive branch to the opposition.

Morales called for the unity of Bolivians, which he said could be achieved by combining a new "constitution with the autonomy statutes" approved in the four eastern provinces.

La Razón, a La Paz-based daily, lauded the "careful and cautious" speech by Morales and the moderate, conciliatory tone of the opposition "with the exception of Governor Rubén Costas." The Santa Cruz governor called the outcome "a defeat for centralism" and said his province would create its own police force and tax department.

Agreement with striking workers

Leading up to the recall vote, Morales also moved to reach agreement



Striking tin miners at August 5 march in La Paz, Bolivia. Miners, teachers, and health-care workers in the country are demanding higher pensions and a lower retirement age.

with striking miners, teachers, and health workers organized by the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB). The union is demanding bigger pensions and a lowering of the retirement age to 55. Two strikers were killed August 5 when police cleared a road occupied by unionists from Huanuni, the largest tin mine in the

country.

The day before the recall a tentative agreement between the government and the COB was announced. The accord calls for approving a new pension law within 45 days, an investigation into the deaths of the two miners, and compensation for their families.

Iraq troop withdrawal

Continued from front page

cleric and al-Sadr supporter, said most Mahdi militia members will now focus on doing social, religious, and community work. A small number of the militia will remain armed. Al-Sadr spokesman Sheik Salah al-Obeidi said that group would be "small and limited" and will only be allowed to act under direct orders from al-Sadr. They would also not attack Iraqis.

Al-Sadr fled to Iran just ahead of the Bush administration sending 30,000 extra troops to Iraq last year in what was commonly referred to as "the surge." The Mahdi militia has weakened and divided in the face of the U.S. military escalation. Iraqi government troops took control of Sadr City in May without firing a shot.

Washington considers a law on the provincial elections an important piece of a power-sharing arrangement among competing Shiite and Sunni capitalists in Iraq. President Bush telephoned Iraqi government leaders several times over the first week in August urging them to reach an agreement.

Dispute in Kirkuk

The Iraqi parliament recessed August 6 for its summer break without approving a bill for holding provincial elections this year. Iraqi Kurds are demanding the elections include a vote on whether to incorporate Kirkuk into the Kurdistan autonomous region. The city is the center of Iraq's northern oil fields.

A bloc of Kurdish parties and allies already control the 41-member Kirkuk provincial council. Turkomen and Sunni Arab capitalist forces have sharply opposed the Kurds and want Kirkuk to remain under control of the central government.

Kurdish representatives walked out of the Iraqi parliament in July in protest against a bill establishing an ethnic quota system on the Kirkuk provincial council and reducing the role of Kurdish security forces there. In their absence the parliament approved the bill.

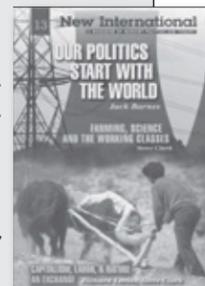
Some 100,000 Kurds demonstrated July 29 in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan's regional capital, to protest the parliament's action. Iraq's president and leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Jalal Talabani, vetoed the measure and sent it back to parliament. A committee will continue negotiations during the summer recess.

Thousands of Kurds were forcibly removed from Kirkuk and the surrounding area in the 1980s by the Saddam Hussein government. Their lands and homes were given to thousands of Sunni Arabs, many of whom were also forced to move to the area, in an "Arabization" program to strengthen the regime's hold over the strategic region.

Our Politics Start With the World in New International no. 13

A magazine of Marxist politics and theory

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What's Behind Russia's War Against Georgia? Speaker: Bernie Senter, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Aug. 22. Dinner: 7 p.m.; program 8 p.m. Donation: \$5 dinner, \$5 program. 6777 NW 7th Ave., Suite 5. Tel: (305) 757-8869.

Calero participates in Chicago ICE protest



Militant/Jorge Lertora

CHICAGO—Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Róger Calero joined a protest August 5 of 35 people outside City Hall here. The picket line was called to protest the cooperation of the Chicago Police Department with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Authorities have been holding 59 people in jail, some for as long as five months, who were originally detained for traffic violations and other misdemeanors and are now under investigation for immigration violations.

—DENNIS RICHTER



Militant/Sarah Katz

Campaign supporter Tom Baumann, left, and SWP presidential candidate Róger Calero, center, turn in nearly 30,000 signatures on petitions for ballot status in New York.

Socialists file for ballot status

Continued from front page

don't suffer the brunt like working class people do."

Kennedy said that her trip to New Orleans made clear the urgency of the SWP's proposal for a massive public works program to put people to work at union-scale wages to build homes, schools, hospitals, and public transportation.

"Mike Howells of New Orleans, one of the party's electors, said he witnessed firsthand the bipartisan failure to address the most rudimentary needs after Hurricane Katrina in 2005," reported the *Advocate*. "Republicans and Democrats only offer problems, not solutions," Howells said. "They all let the people down."

Williams, a civil rights activist and retired health-care worker, said, "Our schools and hospitals are closed. Housing is being demolished, not built. The politicians have done nothing for working people. This is why we are running our own candidates."

Campaign supporter and oil worker Derrick Morrison said the Socialist Workers candidates are the only ones supporting immediate legalization for undocumented immigrant workers and the expansion of unions to protect wages and working conditions.

The *Advocate* article noted that the SWP supports the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all military troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. "We're the only campaign saying that," Kennedy said.

BY ANDREA MORELL

ALBANY, New York, August 13—Socialist Workers candidate for president Róger Calero filed nominating petitions yesterday containing some 30,000 signatures to place his name and that of Alyson Kennedy on the November 4 ballot. The

SWP candidates were the first of the parties required to petition for ballot status to submit their completed petitions.

Today Martín Koppel, SWP candidate for Congress in the 15th District, submitted more than 7,000 signatures to the New York City Board of Elections to obtain a spot on the ballot.

The socialists filed the day after New York governor David Paterson made public a plan to slash the state's budget this year by \$1 billion, with the lion's share of the cuts—more than \$500 million—to come from Medicaid.

Calero said there should be no cuts in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, or workers compensation payments. The federal government should guarantee lifetime medical care and retirement pensions for all.

Our History is still being written

THE STORY OF THREE CHINESE-CUBAN GENERALS IN THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

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SWP presidential campaign tour schedule



Presidential candidate Róger Calero, center facing camera, speaks with participants in May Day rally demanding legalization of immigrants in Los Angeles.



Vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy being interviewed by a Georgia TV station April 1 at a truckers' convoy in Atlanta protesting high fuel costs.

Presidential candidate Róger Calero

August 16 Washington, D.C. Aug. 29–Sept. 2 Los Angeles September 6 Muscoda, WI

August 17 Georgetown, DE September 3–5 Chicago September 7 Milwaukee

Vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy

August 16–19 Miami September 2–5 Philadelphia September 8 Burlington, VT

Aug. 28–Sept. 1 St. Paul, MN September 6–7 Boston

Get the Socialist Workers Campaign on the Ballot!

STATE	STATUS
NEW YORK	PETITIONS FILED
NEW JERSEY	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
WASHINGTON	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
VERMONT	PETITIONING COMPLETED
MINNESOTA	PETITIONING COMPLETED
LOUISIANA	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
FLORIDA	COMING SOON
DELAWARE	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
COLORADO	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
IOWA	✓ ON THE BALLOT!

Wal-Mart signs contract with union in China

BY DOUG NELSON

Some 20 Wal-Mart outlets in China signed collective labor contracts with the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) between mid-July and early August. The world's largest retailer announced it will sign contracts at all its China stores, covering 48,500 workers, by the end of September.

The agreements stipulate that wages must be higher than the local minimum. The first contract, signed on July 14 at Wal-Mart's Shenyang location, set an 8 percent annual wage increase over the next two years. The agreements also cover work hours, paid vacations, overtime pay, and benefits.

The government-affiliated ACFTU launched a high-profile campaign two years ago to unionize Wal-Mart stores across China, as part of its stepped-up efforts to organize large foreign-owned companies. The first location in Quanzhou was unionized in July 2006.

The Wal-Mart contracts come seven months after China's new Labor Contract Law went into effect. The law, passed amid rising labor unrest and after two years of debate, mandates collective bargaining with the union federation. The law also places restrictions on companies' ability to hire workers through third-party labor agencies and fire them without compensation.

The introduction of the new law at the start of the year gave some impetus to action by the labor federation. In Shenzhen, for example, arbitrated labor disputes quadrupled in January.

"The Labour Contract Law presented ACFTU with a big opportunity," Han Dongfang, direc-

tor of the Hong Kong-based *China Labour Bulletin*, told the *Financial Times*. The union federation risked irrelevance, according to Han, because it was neither able to control the growing unrest among workers or appear to do its job representing their interests.

In China unions independent of ACFTU remain illegal and workers don't have the right to strike. Han was exiled in 1989 for leading attempts to form an independent union. "Bargaining doesn't make sense without the right to strike," he said. "The movement needs to push the legal system to develop."

A labor shortage in China's main manufacturing areas provides an upward pressure on wages and improved working conditions, Stephen Frost, executive director of Hong Kong Consulting Firm CSR Asia, told *Business Week* in July. A number of businesses are having trouble hiring and keeping workers. In the highly industrial Pearl River delta, for example, turnover rates in some plants are as high as 200 percent, he said.

Wal-Mart has locations in 15 countries, and is unionized in Brazil, China, Mexico, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The company has so far successfully thwarted efforts at unionization in the United States.



Wal-Mart workers in China vote Aug. 17, 2006, for union at outlet in Wuhan. Twenty outlets have signed contracts so far.



Militant/John Staggs

Three workers arrested July 31 during an immigration raid at ABM Industries display their tracking bracelets at an August 7 protest in Norristown, Pennsylvania. From left to right: Jazmín Zavala, Margarita Trinidad, and Lucía Varrias.

Janitors protest ICE raid

Continued from front page

ditions were released pending a court hearing. They cannot work and are forced to wear 24-hour electronic tracking devices on their ankles. All the workers are charged with violating immigration law.

"It is totally unfair that we were misled this way," said Lucía Varrias, one of the workers arrested. She spoke here at an August 7 rally protesting the raid. Close to 200 people attended the rally, called by Local 32BJ.

Jazmín Zavala told the *Militant* that when she walks down the street wearing the ankle bracelet tracking device "people look at me and think I'm some sort of criminal."

Margarita Trinidad, another worker with the tracking device, said that she can't "work, travel, or pay the rent."

ICE agents allowed U.S.-born

workers present during the raid to leave, Local 32BJ shop steward Rob Houston told the rally. He heard ICE agents say the native-born workers were "not it."

"I guess if you have an Hispanic name, you are not a human being but an 'it,'" Houston said.

He reported that the company brought in nonunion workers to work alongside Local 32BJ members two weeks before the raid. Those workers remain on the job.

A meeting and press conference in Spanish was organized here August 5 by Local 32BJ. Fifty workers, mostly Mexican, attended, including seven wearing *braceletas*.

Marta Gómez and Alejandro Sánchez, two garment workers from Norristown, organized a dozen co-workers to attend the press conference in solidarity.

For further reading

New International no. 12



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IN THIS ISSUE:

Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun
by Jack Barnes

Their Transformation and Ours
SWP Draft Resolution

—\$16

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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



August 26, 1983

MORENCI, Az., August 17—Here in this small mining town a big battle is under way between the Phelps Dodge Corp. and striking copper workers.

Phelps Dodge, one of the nation's biggest copper producers, is out to bust the copper workers' union. From the day the strike began, July 1, the company has used every means at its disposal to break it.

Phelps Dodge has tried to work the mine with a relative handful of scabs and has openly appealed to hire more. The company got court injunctions limiting the number of strikers picketing any gate to five.

As we go to press, Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt has activated seven units of the Arizona National Guard. Several hundred guardsmen and 400 state troopers equipped with armored personnel carriers, four Huey helicopters, automatic weapons and hundreds of tear gas canisters, are on hand within miles of Morenci.



August 18, 1958

AUG. 12—President Eisenhower, once more, has used his high office to pressure American workers to forego wage increases. The President warned labor that the American consumer "is going to rebel in a big way, and there will be real trouble" if labor is not "very, very careful about this whole problem of pushing wages each year above those rates that imply or show the increases in productivity."

Eisenhower hit at the working class as a major factor in the inflation the same day that the U.S. government broke two old records in inflationary spending. The House of Representatives voted to raise the national debt ceiling to its highest point in peacetime history, to \$288 billion. This sum is second only to the high of World War II. And a House-Senate conference committee voted the biggest peacetime war budget in history.

To blame labor for inflation is monstrous in view of these government moves.



August 26, 1933

In the dark hours of August 13, Sheriff Shamblyn and some deputies decided that for "safety's sake" they were going to transport the three young Negroes, Dan Pippen, A.T. Harden and Elmore Clark, charged with a typically southern felony—murder of a white woman—from Tuscaloosa to the larger city of Birmingham, Alabama.

They had not gone far when a mob waylaid the car, and ordered the sheriff to hand over the Negroes to them. The sheriff did exactly as ordered. He did not lift his little finger in protest—not to mention his gun. Dan Pippen, 18, and A.T. Harden, 16, were slain outright. Elmore Clark, 28, played dead and after the lynch mob left crawled to the house of a Negro family.

A committee has been formed to demand from Roosevelt immediate action in Tuscaloosa and to force the arrest of Judge Henry B. Foster and Sheriff R. L. Shamblyn in connection with the murder of the two young Negroes.

Colombia's FARC and the debate over revolutionary strategy

BY VED DOOKHUN

Two articles by Cuban leader Fidel Castro criticizing the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have provoked a wide-ranging debate. One of the sharpest polemics against the Cuban leader has come from radical U.S. academic James Petras in a piece titled "Fidel Castro and the FARC: Eight Mistaken Theses of Fidel Castro."

Following the Colombian government's successful operation July 2 to free 15 hostages held for years by the FARC, Castro wrote, "We are watching with concern how the imperialists try to capitalize on what happened in Colombia in order to cover up and justify their heinous crimes."

Washington and the Colombian government use accusations of "human rights abuses" and "drug trafficking" by the guerrillas as the pretext for a massive military buildup in that Latin American country, aimed not only against the Colombian workers and peasants but at toilers throughout the region.

Castro minced no words about the hostage-taking tactic. "The civilians should never have been kidnapped, nor should the soldiers have been kept as prisoners in jungle conditions," he wrote. "These were objectively cruel actions. No revolutionary aim could justify them." He urged the FARC to release its remaining hostages through the Red Cross.

Colombian Communist Party

Castro also disagreed with the FARC's approach of prolonged guerrilla warfare in the countryside. He linked this to FARC leader Manuel Marulanda's support for the Colombian Communist Party, which like every other Communist Party in Latin America "was under the influence of the Communist Party of the USSR, not Cuba's," Castro said. "The

Communist Party of Colombia never intended to conquer power through the armed struggle. The guerrilla was a resistance front and not the fundamental instrument for conquering revolutionary power, as had been the case in Cuba."

Although the FARC attracted many adherents, political conditions in Colombia deteriorated. "The Colombian territory had become the largest source of cocaine production in the world," Castro said. "Then, extreme violence, kidnappings, and taxes and demands on drug producers became widespread.

"The paramilitary forces, armed by the oligarchy, were fed by the great abundance of men serving in the country's armed forces who were discharged from duty every year without any guarantee of a job. This created in Colombia such a complex situation that there was only one way out: real peace." For the last 30 years, Castro said, the Cuban leadership has favored an end to the armed conflict in Colombia.

'Ammunition' for imperialists?

Petras charges that "the effect of Castro's anti-FARC articles has been to provide ammunition for the imperial mass media to discredit the FARC." He attempts to answer the Cuban leader by presenting a glorified picture of the guerrilla group.

"Marulanda's prolonged guerrilla war strategy relied on mass grassroots organizing based on close peasant ties with guerrillas, based on community, family and class solidarity, building slowly and methodically a national political-military people's army," Petras writes, whereas "Castro's guerrillas were recruited from the mass of urban mass organizations, methodically organized prior to and during the formation of the guerrilla foco in 1956-1958."

"Marulanda built, over a period of 40 years, a bigger guerrilla army with a wider mass base than any Castro-inspired guerrilla force from the 1960s to 2000," he says.

For a revolutionary, the test is not



Workers and peasants greet Fidel Castro and other Rebel Army leaders as they enter Havana Jan. 8, 1959, following the collapse of the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. In a recent interview Castro explains the role of the guerrilla army in the Cuban Revolution: "[F]or us guerrilla warfare was the detonator of another process whose objective was the revolutionary takeover of power. And with a culminating point: a revolutionary general strike and a general uprising of the populace."

the size of the armed force that is built, but the capacity to lead a revolutionary overthrow of the class in power. The Cuban revolutionaries' goal was never to build a permanent guerrilla army—it was to lead the workers and peasants to seize political power as quickly as possible and with the fewest losses. Castro and the team of leaders around him were well aware that long-term guerrilla movements, isolated from the working class, can degenerate into banditry.

The Rebel Army forged in the course of the struggle in Cuba developed a cadre that was tested in battle and that became more homogenous, politically educated, and disciplined as the struggle advanced. It took only two years from the very first battle with the army of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista until the revolution triumphed in 1959.

Moreover, this could only be done by recruiting urban workers to the Rebel Army. The Cuban revolutionaries never envisioned a successful struggle for power waged by the peasantry alone, separate from the working class. In a recent series of interviews titled *My Life* Fidel Castro explains, "For us guerrilla warfare was the detonator of another process whose objective was the revolutionary takeover of power. And with a culminating point: a revolutionary gen-

eral strike and a general uprising of the populace."

Petras argues that the FARC's tactics with prisoners are justified because what the Colombian regime does is worse. "Revolutions are cruel," he says, "but Fidel forgets that counter-revolutions are even crueler."

Proletarian morality

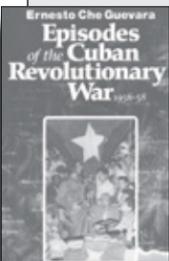
The July 26 Movement's approach to prisoners—treating them with respect and releasing them as quickly as possible, taking the moral high ground—was decisive to the Cuban Revolution's victory. "No soldier will ever lay down his arms if he thinks he will be killed or subjected to cruel treatment," Castro wrote.

In his polemic against Castro, Petras never presents a strategy for how working people can successfully wrest political and economic power out of the hands of the capitalist class in Colombia or anywhere else. Instead, he implies that guerrilla war, not just "prolonged" but forever, is the only logical road.

Castro explains that working people need not accept that dead end. Instead, the lessons of the victorious Cuban revolution point the way forward for fighters not only in Colombia but around the world.

Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War 1956-58

By Ernesto Che Guevara



A firsthand account of the military campaigns and political events that culminated in the January 1959 popular insurrection that overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship in Cuba. Guevara describes the political and moral high ground the revolutionaries took and how the struggle transformed the men and women of the Rebel Army and July 26 Movement.

—\$30

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Right to privacy suit wins in United Kingdom

BY PAUL DAVIES

LONDON—In a victory for the right to privacy, Max Mosley, president of the International Automobile Federation, won a High Court case against a newspaper here for violating his privacy. *News of the World* had published material including video footage obtained secretly showing Mosley in a sexual encounter with five women.

Mosley was awarded £60,000 in damages, a record for a privacy case (1£=US\$1.90).

News of the World sought to justify its actions by alleging that Mosley had participated in a "Nazi-style orgy" and that publication of the material was "justified by the public interest in exposing Mosley's serious impropriety." Mosley denied the encounter with the women had a Nazi theme.

His father, Oswald Mosley, was the

leader of British fascists in the 1930s and a Nazi sympathizer.

The judge, Justice Eady, said in his ruling, "The modern approach to personal privacy . . . is very different from that of past generations . . . there is greater willingness to respect an individual's right to conduct his or her personal life without state interference or condemnation."

The judgment in Mosley's case was met with opposition from many commentators in the big-business press, some church leaders and politicians.

The Sun described the judgment as a "dark day for British freedom" and said the law "provides a cloak of secrecy behind which privileged and powerful people will be able to hide their criminal or immoral activities."

An editorial in *The Times* claimed the judgment "has imposed new boundaries between individual privacy and

freedom of expression" that is not "good for the press, Parliament or, ultimately, the public."

George Carey, former archbishop of Canterbury, said the ruling was "devoid of the basic, decent moral standards that form the very fabric of our society."

Using arguments that bolster "family values," he asked, "If a politician, a judge, a bishop or any public figure cannot keep their promises to a wife, husband, etc, how can they be trusted to honour pledges to their constituencies and people they serve?"

In a case in Scotland, still ongoing, the former leader of the Scottish Socialist Party, Tommy Sheridan, was also targeted by the *News of the World* over sex and drugs allegations. Sheridan denied the allegations and won a libel case in court, winning £200,000 in damages. He is now facing a new criminal trial over police charges of perjury.



Militant/Brian Taylor

Víctor Dreke and Ana Morales, Cuban ambassador and first secretary at the Cuban embassy in Equatorial Guinea, respectively, were honored for their five years of work there by the government of that Central African country at an August 9 ceremony in the capital city of Malabo.

Event on Cuban Revolution held in Equatorial Guinea

The following news release, issued by Cuba's foreign ministry, reports on the July 26 celebration held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The event marked the anniversary of the 1953 assault on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba by a group of Cuban revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro, which launched the revolutionary struggle leading to the overthrow of the Batista dictatorship in 1959, opening the door to the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

The program, which highlighted the campaign to free Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and René González, five Cuban revolutionaries framed by Washington who have now been imprisoned in the United States for 10 years, was hosted by members of the Cuban volunteer medical brigade serving in that Central African country (see related news item in the August 4 *Militant*). The translation is by the *Militant*.



Equatorial Guinea, July 29, 2008—In the modest neighborhood of Nguema, where members of the Cuban medical brigade reside, a moving event was held on the 55th anniversary of July 26, as well as to publicize the struggle to free the Five Compatriots imprisoned in the United States.

Students and professors from the university extension program read biographical sketches on René, Antonio, Fernando, Ramón, and Gerardo. A Cuban volunteer gave details of

their imprisonment, the rigged trial, and the current state of their legal cases. Another compañero gave a PowerPoint presentation, showing the places where they're imprisoned, the conditions of jail life, and the violations of their right to receive visits from family members.

Participating in the activity were Cuban volunteers from all fields, Equatorial Guinean and Ethiopian students who graduated in Cuba, members of friendship associations and of the Cuban community living in the country, the ambassador and other officials of the Cuban embassy, the chargé d'affaires of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and his family, a delegation from the U.S. publisher Pathfinder, and numerous friends of Cuba.

Mary-Alice Waters, the president of Pathfinder, spoke about the Five Heroes and said they were in prison because it was one of the ways the U.S. government was punishing Cubans for not giving in to the empire's pressures.

The second part of the event was devoted to the 55th anniversary of Moncada. A detailed historical account with slides was presented, along with quotes highlighting the ideas of the Commander in Chief in the speech he gave in his defense, "History Will Absolve Me."

Certificates of recognition were awarded to individuals who stood out in carrying out their tasks of cooperation in this country.

Gov't of Equatorial Guinea honors Cuban ambassador

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

MALABO, Equatorial Guinea, August 9—The government of Equatorial Guinea today honored Víctor Dreke and Ana Morales, the Cuban ambassador and first secretary of the Cuban embassy in that country, respectively, on the occasion of the completion of their five-year-long diplomatic mission here.

During the ceremony at which Dreke and Morales were each decorated with the Independence of Equatorial Guinea Order, deputy foreign minister José Esono Micha noted that such distinction is rarely conferred on diplomats of another nation. He highlighted the work of the 230 Cuban volunteers who today are serving in Equatorial Guinea as doctors, nurses, teachers, electrical workers, and technical advisors in other fields. Referring to the discovery and exploitation of large oil reserves off the coast of this Central African nation since the mid-1990s, he noted that Cuba "has

extended and will extend its collaboration before, during, and after the oil, because its collaboration is selfless."

In brief remarks at the ceremony, Dreke said the Cuban Revolution has been marked from the beginning by its support to anti-imperialist struggles in Africa. He cited the role of Cuban volunteer combatants who in 1965 joined national liberation forces battling the proimperialist regime in the Congo. Dreke was second in command of that Cuban column under Ernesto Che Guevara.

Dreke also pointed to the hundreds of thousands of Cuban combatants who helped newly independent Angola defeat several invasions by the South African apartheid regime, starting in 1975 and culminating in a battle at the Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale in 1988. The crushing defeat suffered by the South African forces there led to the independence of Namibia and accelerated the overthrow of the apartheid system.

Police shooting of youth sparks protest in Montreal

BY MICHEL DUGRÉ

MONTREAL—Chanting "Police, assassins" 100 people rallied August 10 to denounce the killing of 18-year-old Fredy Villanueva by the Montreal cops.

The day before, Fredy and his brother Dany were playing dice with friends in a park on the northeast side of Montreal when two cops arrived. A few moments later one cop fired four shots, killing Fredy and injuring Denis Meas and Jeffrey Sagor Metelus.

"The cops came to me and said 'You, come here,'" said Dany Villanueva. "And then a cop took my hand, bent my arm, and threw me on the hood of their car. When I freed myself he took me by the throat and threw me on the ground. The other cop put her knees on my back. My brother came and asked what they were doing." That's when the cop killed his brother.

"I have absolutely no idea why the cops harassed us. They told me nothing," added Villanueva, whose family came from Honduras in 1998. He was detained for few hours after the shooting and released without any charges.

None of the youth were armed. The cops said they felt threatened by 20 people surrounding them, but most witnesses denied these claims.

People in the community gathered the next day, some with hand-made placards, to march against what the cops had done. Many more stood by on the sidewalk supporting them. Patricia Villanueva, Fredy's oldest sister, thanked people who marched. Something must be done, she said, "because what happened to my brother could happen to somebody else."

Long after the march had ended, clashes broke out between the cops and some young people. Several cars were set on fire and three fire trucks

were damaged. The cops say that one police officer was shot in the leg.

Montreal mayor Gérald Tremblay is leading the efforts to defend the cops. "I will not tolerate cops becoming victims of physical attacks," he said.

"What they [the cops] did was criminal," responds Lilian Villanueva, Fredy and Dany's mother. Her daughter Wendy calls for justice. "We know that there is racism," she said. "Today we want justice."

Many in the neighborhood denounce the bullying and racist tactics of the cops. Mirlande Louis, a nurse whose parents came here from Haiti, recounted how seven cop cruisers surrounded her car recently as she was going to work.

"They told me that my car was suspicious because it is the type of car that is often stolen," she said. "While I was dressed as a nurse on my way to work, they said that couldn't be and asked if I am a dancer instead. So you can imagine how they treated these young men playing dice in the park. I would have reacted the way these young men reacted."

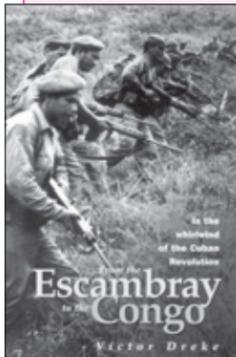
Suzy Fournier and Véronique St. Jacques, who were present at the march, also defended residents of the neighborhood. "We're not a violent community. The cops are those who treated people badly," said Véronique.

"Sometimes a young Black man trying to avoid being harassed by the cops asks if he can walk with us because we are white," added Suzy.

For further reading

From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution by Víctor Dreke

In his account of how easy it became after the 1959 victory of the Cuban Revolution to 'take down the rope' that for decades had segregated blacks from whites, yet how enormous was the battle to transform the social relations underlying this and all 'ropes' inherited from colonialism, capitalism, and Yankee domination—Víctor Dreke captures the historical challenge of our epoch. Also available in Spanish. \$17



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The Chicano rights movement: its lessons for today

The rise of the Chicano movement in the 1960s and 1970s dealt a powerful blow to the entrenched oppression of the Chicano people and the divisions within the working class based on language and national origin. Excerpted below is the preface by Olga Rodríguez to the 1995 edition of *The Politics of Chicano Liberation*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for August. Rodríguez is the editor of the book. Copyright © 1977, Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY OLGA RODRÍGUEZ

The Politics of Chicano Liberation, first published nearly twenty years ago, presents a working-class program in the fight for Chicano liberation. The book is based on reports and resolutions that draw on decades of



Militant/Miguel Pendás
Mexican Independence Day parade, Los Angeles, Sept. 15, 1974. The banner "Raza sí migra no!" reflected the growing militancy of a generation of youth drawn into the fight for Chicano rights.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

experience in the fight to defend the rights of immigrant workers, including the concrete experiences of members of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance who participated in the battles for equality and self-determination the Chicano people fought in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The perspectives put

forward were a contribution to discussions among Chicanos on how to confront the new challenges opened by the employers' offensive during the 1974-75 recession.

The lessons of those battles are also valuable today as working people and youth mount resistance to new assaults, such as the spirited and determined marches against the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in California. The struggles covered in this volume that a new generation of fighters will find invaluable include the battles to unionize the mainly Chicano and Mexicano farmworkers from California to Ohio, to defend undocumented immigrant workers from deportation, and to extend civil and trade union rights to this section of the working class in the United States. . . .

The documents in this volume can be of particular value to those who joined protests last year against Proposition 187, a chauvinist measure that would deny undocumented workers and their children access to public education, health care, and other social services. For many among the seventy thousand students, other youth, and workers who took to the streets of Los Angeles in October 1994—and among the tens of thousands of students who walked out of their classes across California a month later—the

actions were their first jolt into politics.

Chicano workers and youth played a leading role in that fight because of the dual character of the oppression Chicanos suffer: discriminated against as a people because of race, culture, and language, and exploited as wage workers, because the Chicano nationality is substantially working-class in its composition. The identity between Chicanos and their Mexican brothers and sisters is deep on both sides of the border. It is this that helps to impel Chicanos into the vanguard of the actions in solidarity with workers who emigrate to the imperialist centers.

The nationalist "America first" campaign has become a central theme of Democratic and Republican party politicians alike. They hope to shift the blame for the deep-going crisis of capitalism away from the wealthy minority and onto the most vulnerable sections of the working class in the United States, including undocumented immigrant workers. For the U.S. labor movement, rejecting this chauvinist, divide-and-conquer approach must become a central issue if it is to take on the ongoing employer assault on the rights, wages, and living standards of working people in the United States. Indeed, the scape-

goating of immigrant workers is a worldwide phenomenon from Bonn to Tokyo, Melbourne to Paris, Ottawa to Athens. This sharply poses the need for independent, working-class solidarity and political action on a world scale—not the narrow nationalist, xenophobic, and chauvinist measures that the politicians of the imperialist ruling classes are pressing.

The growing parasitism and volatility of capitalism in crisis means that the near collapse of the Mexican economy in December 1994 and its devastating impact on working people will be repeated, in varying forms, in country after country dominated by imperialism. And that means that more and more workers and farmers from Latin America, Asia, and Africa will be driven to cross the borders into the imperialist centers in search of jobs and a life for their families.

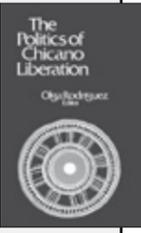
The fighting spirit of the workers and youth who took part in the protests against Proposition 187 helps to break down the borders erected by imperial capitalism that separate us from our class brothers and sisters around the world. Just as the growing numbers of Chicano, Mexicano, and other immigrant workers in the industrial working class and trade unions strengthen the U.S. labor movement, so too, the influx of immigration into the imperialist centers around the world adds to the potential power, unity, and revolutionary capacities of the working class worldwide.

The lessons of the battles fought by the Chicano and Mexicano peoples contained in this book, together with Pathfinder's *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*, can help contribute to a deeper understanding among the generations of working-class fighters coming forward today. They can learn how the oppressed and exploited, rejecting the role of powerless "victim" that capitalism tries to consign them to, can move to center stage to mount a revolutionary struggle in which workers and youth will take their destiny into their own hands.

August BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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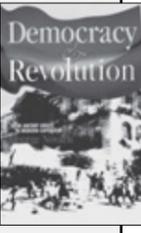
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Nationalize the energy industry

Even with the recent drop in gasoline prices, the cost of filling your tank is still more than a third higher than a year ago. And home heating costs are expected to increase 20 percent this winter.

While working people around the world struggle to make ends meet, Exxon Mobil announced July 31 the biggest quarterly profit of any corporation in U.S. history: \$11.68 billion. Not to mention the company's \$39 billion in cash reserves.

Capitalist politicians like Barack Obama and John McCain argue that gas prices can be brought down by increasing offshore oil drilling, regulating "abuse" by speculators in the oil markets, and ending "our dangerous dependence on foreign oil."

But the high price of energy is caused by the normal workings of capitalism, not by a small group of greedy speculators, foreign owners, or a so-called oil shortage. In fact, according to some reports, capitalist investors have stockpiled via the futures market the equivalent of 1.1 billion barrels of petro-

leum—55 percent more than the entire U.S. strategic reserve.

All of this is why Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, calls for nationalizing the energy industry and placing it under workers' control.

"The owners of the oil and coal monopolies have once again shown they are incompetent to run the industry and provide the most basic needs of the majority of society," Calero says. His campaign calls for taking the energy industry out of private hands and opening the books so we can see where the profits are really going. Along with this, Calero explains, the labor movement needs to fight for cost-of-living increases in wages and benefits to keep up with inflation.

Placing the mines, refineries, and power plants under workers control is also the only way to guarantee safety on the job and halt the poisoning of the air, water and soil.

Moscow invades Georgia

Continued from front page

against the people of South Ossetia, a region the Georgian government considers to be part of its territory.

The Russian government had been preparing its operation for months, as shown by the speed and scope of its rapid advance.

Russian troops occupied Gori, Georgia, putting Moscow in control of the main east-west road through the country, isolating Tbilisi. The Russian military sabotaged airfields, naval facilities, and radar installations, systematically degrading Georgia's military capabilities.

A Russian tank commander in Gori bragged to the *New York Times* that Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili "doesn't seem to understand that the Russian army is much stronger than the Georgian army. His tanks remain in their places. His air force is dead. His navy is also. His army is demoralized."

A six-point cease-fire accord between Moscow and Tbilisi was brokered August 12 by French president Nicolas Sarkozy. It called for Russian troops to withdraw to where they had been stationed before the conflict broke out, but also, at Moscow's insistence, included a clause allowing Russian "peacekeeping" forces to "implement additional security measures."

The fighting began August 8 when Georgian troops moved to occupy South Ossetia after skirmishes between Georgian troops and Ossetian military forces. Some press reports say that hundreds were killed by the Georgian offensive into South Ossetia. The Russian government charged that 2,000 civilians were killed and accused Saakashvili of genocide.

Anna Neistat, a member of Human Rights Watch who visited the main hospital in Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital, told the *London Times* that the number of deaths the Russian government says were caused by the Georgian shelling was exaggerated. She said the hospital reported that 44 people, mainly civilians, were killed.

Moscow poses as defender

Posing as a defender of the rights of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another region Georgia claims is part of its territory, the Russian government has backed supporters of independence in both areas. Moscow also issued Russian passports and gave citizenship to thousands of Abkhaz and Ossetians. Russian president Dmitry Medvedev argued that the invasion of Georgia was necessary because "our citizens" had come under attack.

Tensions in both regions sharpened with the election in Georgia of Saakashvili in 2004. He campaigned on the promise to "reintegrate" South Ossetia and Abkhazia into Georgia.

The Georgian president also established warm relations with Washington. Since 1997 Washing-

ton has given his government \$277 million in military aid. In return, Saakashvili sent 2,000 troops to fight under U.S. command in Iraq.

On August 13, the day after the cease-fire was signed, U.S. president George Bush announced he was sending "humanitarian aid" to Georgia.

"We will see U.S. military ships entering ports despite Russians blocking," claimed Saakashvili. "These will be serious military ships."

But the Pentagon said that it is only sending cargo planes with tents, sleeping bags, and medical supplies, no military ships. "I don't see any prospect for the use of military force by the United States in this situation," U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates said at a Pentagon briefing. "Clear enough?"

History of Russian domination

Russian governments have a long history of dominating not only Georgia but other oppressed nations in the former Tsarist empire. The exception was during the Bolshevik government under Vladimir Lenin that came to power after the Russian Revolution of October 1917.

Under the tsar, nations oppressed by the Russian empire such as Georgia were denied their own language and culture. Russian capitalists exploited their natural resources.

That changed when the Bolshevik-led workers and farmers government took power. The revolutionary leadership forged a voluntary federation of nations, which included Georgia, based on the power of the soviets (councils) of workers and farmers in those countries: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The new federation demonstrably applied affirmative action to develop the economies and cultures of the poorer nations in order to close the gap between them and Russia (see article on Lenin's policy on this page).

Under the Bolsheviks South Ossetia was an autonomous region. Ethnic Ossetians speak their own language. Abkhazia was also granted autonomy under the Bolsheviks, but Joseph Stalin later reversed this and incorporated the province into Georgia.

The Bolshevik internationalist policy of a voluntary federation of Soviet republics began to be replaced with the old Russian chauvinism in the mid-1920s by an emerging privileged, bureaucratic caste headed by Stalin. When the USSR collapsed in the early 1990s, the other Soviet republics declared independence, including Georgia.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, officials in South Ossetia and Abkhazia pressed for independence and association with Russia. Sporadic battles with Georgian forces occurred in both regions. Abkhazia declared independence from Georgia in 1999.

Bolshevik policy on rights of oppressed nations

The excerpt printed below is from the resolution "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War," which was adopted by the Socialist Workers Party at its 35th national convention in 1990. The resolution appears in *New International* no. 11.

(1) The socialist revolution sounds the bell of "nation time" for oppressed nations and nationalities.

(2) This course was advanced by the Bolshevik leadership under Lenin's guidance following the October 1917 revolution.

(a) As the October victory in Russia gave an impulse to revolutionary uprisings elsewhere throughout the old tsarist empire, the communist leadership began to forge a voluntary federation of the various republics organized on the basis of soviet power—both where the dictatorship of the proletariat had been established (as in Russia and the Ukraine), as well as where it could not yet be established but revolutionary workers and peasants governments had come to power (as in most of the Central Asian and Transcaucasian republics).

(b) Lenin insisted on a *Union* of Soviet Socialist Republics, not a new "Soviet" nationality with patriotism used as cover for maintenance and expansion of Great Russian chauvinism and bourgeois nationalism; not a new "socialist nation-state" suppressing minority nationalities. . . .

(c) National self-determination, like other democratic rights, is subordinate to defense of the workers state in face of counterrevolutionary assault and imperialist aggression. The denial of national rights, however, weakens rather than strengthens the defense of a workers state. . . .

2. The Bolsheviks' policy on national self-determination and voluntary federation began to be reversed in the early 1920s by the political course of the emerging bureaucratic caste, led by Stalin. In 1922 Lenin opened a political battle against this counterrevolution, but Stalin's reactionary policies prevailed following Lenin's death.

(a) Stalin's course was intensified and institutionalized with the consolidation of the caste's counterrevolution in the early 1930s. The "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" reemerged in fact as a prison house of nations inherited from tsarism and imperialism.

(1) The USSR was no longer a voluntary federation, but a "Soviet" super-state.

(2) The resurgence and domination of Great Russian nationalism within this "Soviet" state obliterated proletarian internationalism. . . .

(e) Once Stalinism had transformed the Soviet Union into the opposite of a voluntary federation of workers and peasants republics, its break-up, its disintegration from within, was inevitable. This became a precondition to a new advance of the worldwide struggle for national liberation and socialism. . . .

3. Communists and other revolutionists unconditionally support the right to national self-determination.

(a) Mass struggles for national rights in the oppressed republics of the USSR, regardless of their initial leadership, reflect not imperialist-inspired counterrevolution, but the aspirations and interests of workers and farmers.

(b) Given the break in communist continuity in the Soviet Union and European workers states, national struggles there will not begin with revolutionary proletarian leadership; they are today taking place under petty-bourgeois leadership.

(c) Only through the fight for and conquest of the right to national self-determination can space open to develop communist leadership of the toilers in the oppressed nations; to open the road once again toward a voluntary union of soviet republics; and to forge links with anti-imperialist and anticapitalist struggles worldwide.

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