Iowa unionists back locked-out workers

BY DAVID ROSENFELD
KEOKUK, Iowa—After almost three months on the picket line, locked-out grain millers at Roquette America continue to win support.

On December 10, four members of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 310 in Davenport, Iowa, made the three-hour trip to Keokuk to deliver a $1,300 donation. Union volunteers had collected the money at the gate of the Bridgestone-Firestone tire factory during shift changes.

After George Cox, vice president of Local 310, presented the check to Steve Underwood, president of Local 48G of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union, they joined the picket line outside Roquette’s main gate. Three of the steelworkers, like many others at the tire plant who made contributions, had gone through a long and bitter lock-out Roquette’s main gate. Three of the steelworkers, like many others at the tire plant who made contributions, had gone through a long and bitter lock-out.

In November the Federal Reserve began creating $75 billion a month out of thin air through its second “quantitative easing” program, a government bond-buying scheme that provides financial institutions with cash and raises the U.S. government’s budget deficit. Dubbed QE2, the Fed plans to carry this through June of next year.

After the Fed had lowered short-term interest rates to near zero in its initial efforts to stimulate growth, it enacted its first round of quantitative easing in early 2009, effectively print-

Ceremony in Pretoria, South Africa, December 12, day before opening of World Festival of Youth and Students there, celebrates role of Cuban internationalist fighters in helping defeat South African apartheid regime’s invasions of Angola in 1970s and ’80s.

BY PAUL PEDERSON
PRETORIA, South Africa—At a joyous and militant ceremony here, hundreds of young Cubans paid tribute to Cuban internationalist fighters who lost their lives fighting, jointly with Angolans and Namibians, against the South African apartheid regime’s invasions of Angola beginning in 1975.

The Pretoria event took place December 12 in Freedom Park, whose patron-in-chief is Nelson Mandela. A wall in the park lists the names of some 75,000 people who lost their lives in the struggle for freedom in southern Africa, from precolonial struggles until today. In 2006, the names of more than 2,000 Cubans

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BLACK FARMERS WIN PAYMENTS, KEEP FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION

BY SUSAN LAMONT
WASHINGTON—On December 8 President Barack Obama signed a measure to provide additional funding in the settlement of a long-standing discrimination lawsuit brought by Black farmers against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The law provides $1.15 billion for Black farmers. It also includes $3.4 billion for Native Americans who sued the federal government in 1996 for swindling them out of revenues earned from tribal lands.

Additional funding for the Black

Continued on page 9

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Chicago SWP candidate: ‘We need a labor party’ 3
Bangladesh: Thousands strike for higher wages 4
People of southern Sudan to vote on independence 6
California prisoners fight dehumanizing conditions

BY BETSEY STONE
One prisoner dies unnecessarily about every eight days in California jails due to medical care being denied, delayed, or insufficient. The suicide rate averages one a week. And the prisons are so overcrowded that inmates are stacked in triple-bunk beds in gymnasiums, classrooms, day rooms, and even hallways.

Testimony before the U.S. Supreme Court on December 7 in the case of Schwarzenegger v. Plata put the spotlight on these and other inhuman aspects of the California state prison system.

The case that is now before the Supreme Court began as two class-action suits brought by prisoners seeking to end long-standing medical abuses. The first, filed in 1990, charged that prisoners with acute mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, were not receiving basic care. A second, filed in 2001, argued that health care in the California prisons is so bad that it constitutes “cruel and unusual punishment,” prohibited by the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution.

In 2009, the decision of a three-judge panel in California put major blame for the continuing abysmal level of medical care on the state. The suicide execution of a state-designed to house 80,000 prisoners now contains twice that many. The judges mandated that the prison population be reduced through the release of roughly 44,000 prisoners over the next two years.

That decision has been appealed to the Supreme Court by the state of California on the basis that it would not interfere with how prisons are administered and that releasing 44,000 prisoners threatens public security. Lawyers for 18 other states, including Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, have joined in support of the appeal.

Medical procedures done in prisoner’s cells, without access to basic requirements of sanitation—like clean water or gloves—was an example of the type of abuse prisoners at San Quentin have faced, according to Christine Thomas, a paralegal with the American Civil Liberties Union.

Thomas told the Militant that the closing of facilities for the mentally ill in earlier decades has added to the numbers in prison who need psychiatric care. “Prisons are the place where many of those who are mentally ill are taken,” she said.

“Mental illness has been criminalized.” Medical and psychological illnesses have also been made worse by conditions faced by the growing numbers of prisoners in Security Housing Units (SHUs) in California. Prisoners labeled as dangerous by their jailers, including those targeted because they have resisted injustices and brutal prison conditions, are placed in the SHUs, where they are isolated in individual cells, unable to communicate, eat, or exercise with others. The 750 percent increase in the prison population in California since the mid-1970s is attributed in part to “get tough on crime” legislation, including mandating sentencing imprisonment for even minor parole violations.

In 1994, the “three strikes law” passed.

Inmates at California Institution for Men in Chico face overcrowded conditions

As the prison population has grown, budgets for prison educational programs have been slashed. Up to 900 instructors in English, math, vocational, and other classes were laid off as a result of this year’s $250 million cuts.

In addition, Prison Focus, a newsletter filled with letters from prisoners, describes cutbacks across the board, including daily shower denied, visits reduced, and exercise time limited to once a week.

Court lets stand.govt plan to assassinate U.S. citizen

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

A federal judge recently ruled that the courts have no business interfering with a White House decision to target a U.S. citizen for assassination.

The decision comes in the case of Muslim cleric Amwar al-Awlaki, 39, a U.S. citizen born in New Mexico, who is believed to be living in Yemen. The U.S. Treasury Department declared he is a “specially designated global terrorist,” and government officials have placed him on the CIA and Joint Special Operations Command “kill lists.”

Washington claims al-Awlaki is affiliated to al-Qaeda and corresponded with Mg. Nidal Malik Hassan, the U.S. Army psychiatrist charged with killing 13 people in Fort Hood, Texas, in 2009.

In August the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Center for Constitutional Rights filed a lawsuit by Naseer al-Awlaki demanding a halt to government actions to kill his son. President Barack Obama, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, and CIA Director Leon Panetta were the defendants.

U.S. District Judge Robert Bates on December 7 threw the case out, saying the plaintiff had no standing to file such a suit. Targeted assassinations are political and military questions that the executive branch decides, the judge said. “There are circumstances in which the Executive’s unilateral decision to kill a U.S. citizen overseas is ‘judicially unreviewable,’” he wrote.

The court’s ruling gives the government authority “to carry out the targeted killing of any American, anywhere, whom the president deems to be a threat to the nation,” stated ACLU attorney Jameel Jaffer.

In this case the Obama administration invoked the “State-secrets privilege,” where the executive branch refuses to reveal information on “national security” grounds.

Washington has a long record of ordering assassinations of its adversaries around the world. In the 1960s, top government officials approved numerous covert plans to kill Cuban president Fidel Castro. During the Vietnam War the CIA’s Operation Phoenix was exposed for assassinating thousands who opposed the U.S.-backed puppet regime in South Vietnam, including mayors, teachers, and doctors. Recently, stepped-up drone attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan have killed Talibans and other opposition figures.

In the case of al-Awlaki the government is openly declaring its intention to kill someone, in this instance a U.S. citizen.
Thousands in London protest tuition raises

BY BETSY FARLEY

CHICAGO—“I will use my campaign to organize solidarity with workers in struggle throughout the state and region, across the country, and around the world—from the locked-out grain millers in Keokuk, Iowa, to the locked-out nuclear workers in Metropolis, Illinois, to workers resisting austerity measures in Ireland, Greece, and France,” said John Hawkins, a long-time unionist and fighter for Black rights, in announcing his campaign as Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor here.

Hawkins will be an official write-in candidate. Discriminatory election laws make it difficult for working-class candidates to be on the ballot.

Twenty candidates have filed petitions for ballot status in the February 22 election, since Richard M. Daley announced he would not seek a seventh term as mayor. The Daley family has run Chicago politics for the capitalist rulers for all but 12 of the past 56 years.

Among the capitalist politicians in the race are Rahm Emanuel, former White House Chief of Staff; Carolyn Moseley Braun, former U.S. senator from Illinois; and U.S. Rep. Daniel Davis. At least a dozen candidates have had their ballot status challenged over validity of signatures, residency, and other issues.

“Working people throughout Chicago are confronting a severe crisis. Like workers around the country and around the world, we are living through the deepest and longest economic depression since the 1930s. And there is no end in sight,” said Hawkins.

“The only party offering a program to defend working people and a perspective for fighting to end the dog-eat-dog capitalist system in favor of a socialist world is the Socialist Workers Party,” he said.

“We tell the truth, that working people must organize a mass revolutionary movement to take political power and replace the rule of the capitalist class with working-class rule.

“Working people must stop relying on the twin capitalist parties—Democrats and Republicans alike. These parties always put the interests of the bankers, landlords, and industrialists first. We need a labor party, based on unions and the ranks and leadership of the mass movement. . . .”

Quebec students rally against fee increases

Quebec City—Some 3,000 students from across Quebec rallied December 6 outside a government-organized conference by the Quebec Liberal Party here on education. It was attended by government, student, union, and boss representatives. The gathering was billed as a discussion on how to improve financing of higher education, but was in fact organized around a government proposal to significantly increase university tuition over the next few years.

Student and trade union representatives opposed to the fee hikes walked out in the middle of the conference, protesting its fake character. As Banner above reads, “We too, our decision is to say no to tuition fees.”

John Hawkins, right, SWP candidate for mayor of Chicago, participates in December 3 picket by United Steelworkers members locked out by Honeywell in Metropolis, Illinois.

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

by Jack Barnes

“This is a book about the dictatorship of capital and the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat. A book about the last century and a half of class struggle in the United States—from the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction to today—and the unimpeachable evidence it offers that workers who are Black will comprise a disproportionately weighty part of the ranks and leadership of the mass social movement that will make a proletarian revolution . . . .”

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Michel Prairie

—MICHEL PRAIRIE
New York City

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Casa de las Americas and the July 26th Coalition invite you to a New Year’s Eve celebration Friday, Dec. 31, 8 p.m.–2 a.m.

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MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

ILLINOIS

Chicago December 27, 2010

By Angel Lariscy

Thousands of garment workers from some of the 4,500 apparel factories in Bangladesh participated in protests beginning December 10 against companies’ refusal to pay the new government minimum wage. Some 20,000 workers employed by manufacturers near Dhaka in central Bangladesh blocked the main roads into the Suhi Industrial Park, in effect shutting down production. On December 12 four workers there were killed and more than 100 injured in clashes with police, who fired tear gas and rubber bullets at protesters. The workers decrying the cuts and demonstrations that rocked Bangladeshi in August, as garment workers

demanded an increase in the minimum wage, one of the lowest in the world. Out of those actions the government agreed to raise the minimum wage to the equivalent of $470 a month—a 72 percent increase that had been no increase since 2006. The new amount, however, remains far below the country’s extremely low poverty line.

The new minimum wage promised by the government was supposed to go into effect in November. Workers who are demonstrators say many bosses have still not implemented the change.

Shinkdar Moshubuddin Ahmed, a director of the Youngone garment company, complained to the press that the workers “became unruly and didn’t wait for our decision” to raise wages.

Apparel manufacturers who have made fortunes off the labor of workers in Bangladesh—who toil 10 hours a day, six days a week—say the increase is “too heavy” and that they are being “crushed by global turmoil” in the industry.

Garment production accounts for about 80 percent of Bangladesh’s exports. More than 540,000 artisans, 85 percent of them women, produce clothing for stores such as Wal-Mart, H&M, Gap, JCPenny, Tommy Hilfiger, and Levi Strauss and Company.

The government and garment manufacturers have a history of targeting labor leaders and cracking down on strikes and protests. The country’s home minister, Sahara Kabiboon, told Al Jazeera that the recent demonstrations were part of a conspiracy to destabilize Bangladesh’s export sector. “We will find out the conspirators and give them exemplary punishment,” she said.

An example of the disastrous conditions faced by garment workers in Bangladesh is the fire in a garment factory just north of Dhaka on December 14 that killed at least 25 people and injured more than 100.

The 10-story building employs 5,000 workers who make pants for export to the United States and Europe. The workers could have been higher except most workers at the time were outside for lunch.

While the cause of the blaze is unknown, stacks of garments in factories can easily catch fire. In addition, some factory owners have been known to lock exit doors to prevent workers from leaving their machines.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Two workers at an agricultural implements plant in Des Moines, Iowa, sent in a total of $1,106 in bonuses they recently received to the Capital Fund, which helps to finance long-term projects of the communist movement.

“This comes from one of the company’s insurance programs,” wrote Helen Meyers, who contributed her bonus, as did Becca Williamson. “The company pays production bonuses so there is always pressure to work faster and reduce the workforce. One supervisor said the more you cut, the more dollars in your pocket.”

Class-conscious workers refer to these types of bonuses as blood money—bribes by the bosses to buy workers’ silence over speedup, low pay, long hours, and unsafe conditions.

From Chicago, Laura Anderson sent in $25 she received from the company as a Thanksgiving holiday bonus. “Coworkers weren’t particularly thankful,” wrote Anderson, “faced with a 150-day probation, short workweeks, and no time and-a-half for working on the holiday.”

Other workers in New York have sent in the “turkey bonuses” they received. “Enclosed is my check for $68.30,” wrote Sarah Katz. “All employees, including temps, were given a bonus for all our hard work.” Dan Fein, a pharmaceutical worker, contributed a $15 turkey coupon along with a $77 bonus check.

After receiving a $25 Christmas bonus and a $15 “birthday gift” from bosses at a meat processing plant in the Atlanta area, John Benson sent it to the Capital Fund. “These are part of the constant little bribes the company hands out to try to convince workers that our wages are a gift from them,” he wrote.

From Seattle, Dean Peoples donated $1,500. “It comes from an annual contractual lump sum payment—like a ‘signing bonus’ between the company and the union to dampen the fight for a better contract and get acceptance of the company proposal,” he wrote. “Let it be used to advance the interests of the working class.”

—BRIAN WILLIAMS

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Workers donate bosses’ bribes to help build the communist movement
Iowa unionists back locked-out workers

SYDNEY, Australia—Some 595 workers were arrested in Melbourne December 13 for attempting to block truck access to a strikebreakers plant of Visy, a large cardboard recycler and manufacturer.

Almost 400 workers, most of them members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, began an indefinite strike at three Visy facilities December 3. The picketers are fighting to defend union rights as they seek parity pay increases with workers at newer company plants without union agreements.

The strike is also against the reduction of casual (temporary) workers’ pay to the minimum rate and the halving of severance payments. The union is demanding a “heat policy” with better protection during very hot conditions.

Unionists at Visy sites in Dandenong, Melbourne, and at Warwick Farm and Smithfield in Sydney set up continuous pickets to discourage truck drivers and strikebreakers from entering the plant. Many drivers, members of the Transport Workers Union, have refused to cross. Several workers at Warwick Farm told the Militant that some hiker gang members had been used to “ride shotgun” on strikebreaking trucks to try to intimidate union members.

The indefinite strike was preceded by a 24-hour work stoppage November 29 that included more than 100 other workers at Visy plants in Western Australia and Queensland. Unionists there are supporting the strike action with overtime bars.

—Ron Poulsen

Philadelphia: Sky Chef workers rally for new contract

Dozens of LSG Sky Chef workers, represented by UNITE HERE, rallied in Philadelphia December 6 to demand a new contract. The previous one expired more than a year ago.

The union represents some 7,900 Sky Chefs workers at the United States and Canada. The company supplies catering and inflight products to more than 300 airlines around the world. In 2005 Sky Chefs cut wages and benefits by 30 percent. In January health care costs will rise to over $50 per month for family plans. Average wages are $10 per hour.

The union says Sky Chef workers will be holding informational rallies around the United States.

—Angel Lurisay

Minnesota: Grocery workers fight for contract

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Some 125 grocery workers, organized by United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1189, and supporters rallied here December 2 as they prepare for contract negotiations set to begin in January. After the protest they picketed on a nearby busy street corner. The union contract covers more than 4,500 workers at stores in the east Twin Cities metro area. “They talk about doing more with less,” said union steward Alex Kuran. “Everybody is burnt out. Part-timers are on 10 hours less a week.”

—TONY LANE

The Militant December 27, 2010
Women in Wau, southern Sudan, wait at school to register to vote November 22. Referendum of southern Sudanese January 9 will decide whether to declare independence from rest of Sudan.

New York, SPLM leader Salva Kiir called upon imperialist governments and banks for help. “We need support . . . especially from the United States of America and other multinational institutions, such as the World Bank, IMF, and all other institutions,” Kiir said.

“This day leading up to the referendum, the Obama administration offered to take Khartoum off the “terrorist” list and reduce sanctions if Bashir allows the voting to proceed unhindered. . . . On December 7 officials of the SPLM charged that the Sudanese army had attempted to braid southern a referendum in order to sabotage the referendum. Khartoum denied the charge but said it will continue to pursue rebels from Darfur, in western Sudan. In the past Bashir has accused the SPLM of offering refuge to Darfur insurgents, who are waging a separate struggle against discrimination by Bashir’s government.

Cubans who fought in Angola set example

Cubans who fought in Angola set example

Continued from front page

who fell in the Angola war were add-
ed to the wall.

The Cubans present for the ceremony are in Angola today in honor of the 17th World Festival of Youth and Students taking place December 13–21.

The Cuban combat mission in Angola involved some 375,000 volunteers and a period of 16 years. It culminated in the victorious 1988 battle at Cuito Cuanavale, described by Nelson Mandela as a “milestone in the history of struggle for southern African liberation.”

Present for the ceremony were a number of prominent participants in the Angola campaign and other Cuban internationalist missions in Africa. They included Jorge Risquet, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, who went to Congo-Brazzaville in 1965 to assist the liberation forces there. Risquet was head of Cuba’s civilian mission in Angola from 1975–80.

In his remarks at the Wall of Names event, Risquet listed the countries in which combatants from Cuba have fought, including Algeria, Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Namibia, as well as Angola. “We salute the lives of all those who fought,” Risquet said, giving special mention to Raúl Diaz Angúelles, first head of Cuba’s military mission to Angola. Diaz Angúelles was killed by a land mine on Dec. 11, 1975, just one month after going to Angola, almost 35 years ago to the day of the Pretoria ceremony, at which his daughter Natasha was present.

“The herosim of those who fought continues in the lives of the Cuban Five, three of whom fought in Angola,” Risquet continued, referring to the Cuban revolutionaries who have been locked up in U.S. jails for more than 12 years. “We demand their immediate release.” Among the Cuban delegation and present for the event were Irma González, Antonio Guerrero, Jr., and Aliu Labuño, children of three of the five.

Others in the Cuban delegation who fought in Angola are Brig. Gen. Amelés Escalante, Chief of the General Staff of the Cuban Military Mission in Angola from 1982-83; Commander René Hernandez Gattorno who, with Diaz Angúelles, was one of the first to arrive in 1975; and Col. Fidencio González, hero of the Republic of Cuba and head of Cuban troops in the victorious battle at Cangaamba, Angola.

The delegation includes former combatants in other African nations: Commanding Victor Dereke was second-in-command to Che Guevara in the 1965 Cuban internationalist mission in the Congo and leader of Cuba’s military mission to Guinea-Bissau 1966–68; Rodolfo Paute Ferro led the medical section in the Congo-Brazzaville mission and was a former Cuban ambassador to Angola; Col. Orlando Cardozo, Hero of the Republic of Cuba, who spent nearly 11 years as a prisoner in Somalia as a result of Cuba’s international solidarity with Ethiopia.

In his speech, Serote said that “we pay tribute to those Cuban names on the wall!” Senato asked. “The answer is that those names stand for combat readiness, freedom, and peace around the world,” describing the internationalist solidarity of the Cuban people and their government.

In her remarks, Laulimth Alarmo Duach, first secretary of the Union of Young Communists of Cuba, said that coming to the aid of Angola and other African countries was how the Cuban revolution pays its debt to humanity, fighting against lies and hate, for sov-

P e o p l e o f s o u t h e r n S u d a n to v o t e on i n d e p e n d e n c e

BY CINDY JACQUIT

In Sudan a referendum on independence for the south is scheduled in less than a month. The roots of the conflicts in Sudan go back to colonial times—Arab and non-Arab—past and the current race for oil profits between U.S., European, and Chinese energy companies, as well as capitalists invested in African economies.

The people of southern Sudan are voting January 9 on whether to maintain their autonomous status or establish their own independent state. A large vote for independence is expected. The National Congress Party of Sudanese president Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir, based in the north, says it is working “toward unity.”

Since World War II, the South Sudanese people have lived in oil in sub-Saharan Africa. Some 80 percent of the oil fields are located in southern Sudan, but the processing facilities are in the north.

Until 1956 Sudan was a colony of Britain. London ruled by pitting the many different ethnic groups and tribes against each other. The British and Southern Sudanese, the majority of whom speak Arabic and practice Islam, over southern Sudanese, the majority of whom are black, English, and consider themselves Christian or animist.

Independence, general strike

When Sudan won its independence in 1956, that opened the door for Suda-
nese workers and peasants to begin the struggle to overcome economic backwardness and divisions fostered by colo-
lonialism. Led by the railroad union, the labor movement carried out a successful general strike in 1958. Not long after that rebel forces in the south took up arms to combat discrimination against them that was maintained by the new government in Khartoum, in which Arab Sudanese were black, speaking Arabic, and considered themselves Christian or animist.

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leaders of the SPLM were given seats in the central government in Khartoum. Profits from the oil revenues were to be shared. The accord also recog-
nized that a referendum on independence for the south should take place in 2011. Imperialist powers have taken advantage of the conflict to deploy 10,000 UN “peacekeeping” troops in Sudan. Washington has been at odds with Bashir since the 1990s, when he sided with Saddam Hussein in the first U.S.-led war against Iraq.

The William Clinton administration placed Sudan on the “state sponsors of terrorism” list and imposed trade sanc-
ctions. The European Community likewise adopted sanctions. The presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama have continued this policy. Obama has even increased the indictment of Bashir for “war crimes” and has urged his arrest.

The sanctions have meant no U.S. or European oil revenue for Sudan’s vast reserves, a condition they want re-
versed. China has become Sudan’s main trading partner and purchases 60 per-
cent of its exports.

The wars, sanctions, and the failure of any Sudanese government—the central government in the north or the autono-
mous government in the south—to advance the living conditions of the toilers has left Sudan lost one of the poorest coun-
tries in the world, despite its natural re-
sources. Forty percent live beneath the official poverty level. Children attend school for an average of four years.

Islamic militias’ Bashir has gone after his opponents in the name of upholding Islamic law and Arab culture. He organized “Islamic militias” from the International Criminal Court, in which Arab Sudanese were black, speaking Arabic, and considered themselves Christian or animist.

A wide variety of Sudanese leaders are black, speaking Arabic, and consider themselves Christian or animist.

“Africanism” and other Cuban revolutionaries who have been locked up in U.S. jails for more than 12 years. “We demand their immediate release.” Among the Cuban delegation and present for the event were Irma González, Antonio Guerrero, Jr., and Aliu Labuño, children of three of the five.

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Inher remarks, Laulimth Alarmo Duach, first secretary of the Union of Young Communists of Cuba, said that coming to the aid of Angola and other African countries was how the Cuban revolution pays its debt to humanity, fighting against lies and hate, for sovereignty and independence, and for a more just world, something that Cuba will continue to do “wherever we are needed and can do so.” She stressed that the fighters in Angola were “a source of inspiration for future generations.”

By Cindy Jacques

The Militant December 27, 2010

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The Militant December 27, 2010
New book by Fidel Castro on revolutionary victory

Por todos los caminos de la sierra. La victoria estrategica (Through all the paths of the Sierra. The strategic victory) by Fidel Castro. In Spanish, 855 pages (includes more than 200 pages of photos, maps, copies of original documents, and graphics of the weapons used by both sides in the revolutionary war). Offered by Publications of the Council of State, Havana, Cuba.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Today, in the midst of the worst capitalist economic crisis since the 1930s, workers and young people will appreciate the new book La victoria estratégica by Fidel Castro. It gives a vivid picture of how workers and farmers are capable of defeating even the most powerful oppressor with the most modern weapons of destruction at its disposal.

Through La victoria estratégica the reader gains an understanding of the history of the Cuban Revolution. It is an excellent recounting of the military tactics and strategy during key battles that broke the back of the army of one of the most repressive regimes in Latin America at the time. More importantly, through this book you get a sense of the type of organization, leadership, program, cadres, discipline, and selfless functioning that is needed (and possible) for working people to take power out of the hands of the ruling rich.

On Dec. 2, 1956, Fidel Castro and 91 other members of the July 26 Movement, traveling on the yacht Granma, landed in Cuba’s Oriente Province to initiate the guerrilla struggle to overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

Rapidly discovered by Batista’s forces, half were either captured and thrown in prison or assassinated. Over the next several weeks, those fighters who eluded the Batista army made their way to the Sierra Maestra mountains in the southeastern part of the island. Within a little over a year, Castro turned the Rebel Army into a skilled fighting force, recruiting peasants and workers to its ranks, and defeating numerous attempts by Batista to dislodge them.

Then in April 1958 the July 26 Movement in the cities launched an ill-conceived and ill-prepared general strike that was rapidly defeated by the dictator’s Batista’s soldiers. At the beginning of the regime’s attempt to take the Sierra Maestra, ammunition was so tight among the rebels that Castro ordered careful rationing of bullets. It was not unusual for rebel fighters to go into battle with less than a dozen bullets each.

While the guerrillas were keeping track of almost every bullet used, Batista was bombarding rebel positions from the air, with rockets and napalm. The only defense was to protects themselves in trenches, because all the high ground is ours.”

The book was edited by journalist Ka- tiuska Blanco. She noted that the book was possible because Celia Sánchez, a leader of the July 26 Movement and part of the Rebel Army who died in 1980, called every note written in the Sierra Maestra, and after the triumph of the revolution, organized a team to research the terrain and interview many protagonists of the revolutionary war.

After defeating the Batista offensive and shattering the dictator’s army, the Rebel Army rapidly organized to extend its victory, overthrow the dictatorship, and bring Cuba’s workers and farmers to power, opening the door to the socialist revolution. The story of the final push is told in a second volume, La contraofensiva estratégica. (From the Sierra Maestra to Santiago de Cuba: The Strategic Counteroffensive).

Militant/Maceo Dixon

Staff of Radio Rebelde in Sierra Maestra, 1958, during fight against U.S.-backed dictatorship.

IN REVIEW

World youth festival opens in South Africa

PRETORIA, South Africa—The 17th World Festival of Youth and Students opened here December 13 with thousands of delegates from countries throughout the world gathering for an opening ceremony in the Lucas Moripe Stadium in Tshwane. The theme this year is “Let’s defend peace, solidarity, and social transformations.” This is the first time the festival has been held in sub-Saharan Africa.

The festival is dedicated to Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro. Among those who spoke at the opening was Jacob Zuma, president of South Africa. He said, “We are saying that this country which was isolated for so many decades due to the evils of apartheid has opened its borders to progressive events of this nature.” Julius Malema, head of the African National Congress Youth League, also spoke and a message was read to the delegates from Fidel Castro.

—LAURA GARZA

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Castro’s Strategic Victory, an account of 74 days of battle in 1958, where 300 revolutionary soldiers defeated the Batista’s army, organized to defend itself and protected by workers and farmers all over Cuba, defeated the “final offensive” of 10,000 Batista troops. Available in Spanish, English, and other languages soon. Publisher: Publications Office of the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba $35

Por todos los caminos de la sierra. La victoria estrategica

By Fidel Castro

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Below is an excerpt from "How Can the Jews Survive?" by David Novack, one of Pathfinder Book's Books of the Month for December:

"The coming of capitalism eliminated the necessity and changed the possibilities and prospects for perpetuating Jewry as a people apart, since its special function became the general condition of the social economy. During the 19th century both liberals and Marxists held the view that the Jews would shed their distinctive traits and become identified through gradual absorption into an enlightened bourgeoisie or a future socialist society. Progressive capitalism did institute a certain degree of assimilation in Western Europe and North America, although it failed to complete it. The process of social and cultural homogenization was barely begun in Eastern Europe because of its backwardness. The development of world capitalism in this century upset this perspective. Imperialist, crisis-ridden capitalism swung over to an exacerbated national-chauvinism of the Nazis capped by Hitler's anti-Semitic chauvinism of the Nazis capped by Hitler's extermination of six million Jews. The degeneration of capitalism coupled with the failure of the socialist movement to replace it in time gave the Jewish question an acuteness and urgency unanticipated by the first generation of Marxists. Hitlerism served to fortify the feelings of national solidarity among the Jews which, for different reasons, had been fading in both East and West Europe. The hurried Jews had to defend and define themselves anew in reaction to the menace to their very physical existence. For the sake of self-preservation and national perpetuation, the survivors of East European Jewry who, especially among the workers, had been widely won over to the Marxist ideals of socialism, turned toward Zionism as the last hope of salvation. The project of seeking and securing refuge in a new Jewish state located in Palestine passed the internationalist program and perspective. There were dreadful pitfalls in this forced decision. "The world has thrown the Jew to the mercy of the nation-state in the middle of this century when the nation-state is falling into decay," Deutscher pointed out. The survival of the Jewish race can be removed only by abolishing capitalism, as the East European Jewish workers formerly believed and the non-Jewish Jews in Europe preferred. The Jews have to link themselves with those forces in their own country and on a world scale that are fighting for socialism and striving to build the new society. The solution of the Jewish question is indissolubly bound up with the complete emancipation of all oppressed humanity that can be brought about only along the road of international socialism.

Capitilists rules scapegoat Jews for economic crises

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Govt ‘stimulus’ is for the wealthy

There is no doubt capitalists are concerned about the state of the economy. Their worries, however, have nothing to do with the high levels of unemployment affect working people, with how workers are increasingly being forced to labor under deteriorating conditions on the job, or with how the rising costs of food and fuel are lowering the standard of living of working-class families. All of their solutions exacerbate our problems.

The government has been moving from one “stimulus” scheme to the next trying to shore up the capitalists’ declining profit system. The latest tax-cut package includes an extension of unemployment benefits for some workers who have been without a job between 26 and 99 weeks, in the midst of a bill to raise the debt ceiling for the wealthiest corporations and individuals.

Democrats and Republicans are concerned about the U.S. budget deficit, which is growing in part due to these “stimulus” measures. The capitalists depend on their government to keep the system functioning. But with their profit margins under pressure, they don’t want more of the surplus value they extract from working people going to finance the state than the rulers consider necessary. Whether through taxes or otherwise.

What concerns working people is not their deficit per se, but how the high levels of unemployment affect their livelihood. These include working for lower wages, cutting social programs, and putting more workers out on the streets. At the same time the bosses and their government clamp down on workers, they urge us to get deeper into debt—spend and borrow—to prop up what is increasingly a teetering house of cards.

Economic devastation and wars are what working people can look forward to under capitalism in the coming decades. The unprecedented possibilities of working people taking power to end these horrors will be discussed at an upcoming public meeting in New York in January 15 on “What Kind of Socialism for the 21st Century?” The Long, Hard Battles Ahead.” (See announcement on front page.)

Measures have little impact on crisis

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The Fed responded in December 2007 to the impending financial crisis with a $10 billion loan to the European Central Bank. With trillions of billions into European banks, most went to U.S. institutions. But the crisis of confidence in the U.S. dollar and palpable collateral. It also illustrates the paramount role of U.S. capitalism as well as the deep interconnections between the financial systems of Europe and America that had developed along the way.

In the latest effort to stimulate the economy, the McCain-Palin administration put together a bipartisan $900 billion tax cut and spending bill, which is expected to pass Congress. It maintains and adds to tax cuts and business incentives enacted under the previous George W. Bush administration.

About 5 percent of the bill will be used to extend unemployment benefits for the millions of jobless who are between 26 and 99 weeks without work. There will be nothing, as unemployment continues to hover at 10 percent, for the tens of thousands even longer-term jobless who are being cut off monthly.

Concerned about the impact of all these stimulus measures on the state deficit, capitalist politicians are united in their determination to make working people bear the maximum cost.

A two-year pay freeze for employees of the federal government proposed by President Obama is one example. The Militant has noted that this is an outright raid on the U.S. Treasury that needs to be investigated. No doubt there are valid minority claims for discrimination, but when there are more claimants than farmers, we smell a scan,” the editors wrote.

The measure finally passed when funds were made available from a “surplus” in nutrition programs for women and children known as WIC, a Department of Treasury program to recover “overpayments” of unemployment benefits, and other sources. Gary Grant, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said, “How in the world, we wonder, can WIC have a nearly $570 million surplus in these times? If folks who need food assistance have been bemoaning the music from the rolls to create a surplus, we are outraged.”

The Black farmers’ class-action lawsuit, known as Pigford v. Glickman, was filed in 1997. Farmers, mainly in the South, sued the USDA for discrimination in loans, disaster relief, and other farm programs.

The article “Crisis strains ‘unity’ of capitalist Europe” in the December 20 issue should have said the Spanish government decided to raise 780 million euros (about US$1 billion), not 780 billion euros.

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farmers’ case was promised by the Obama admin- istration in February 2010, although 99 percent by farmers. After passing the House of Representatives, the money was stalled in the U.S. Senate until Novem- ber 19. While many senators claimed to support the settlement, others held up approval for months, stating that they couldn’t vote for any mea- sure that would increase the federal deficit.

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Correction

The article “Crisis strains ‘unity’ of capitalist Eu- rope” in the December 20 issue should have said the Spanish government decided to raise 780 million euros (about US$1 billion), not 780 billion euros.