

## 220,000 Metalworkers strike in South Africa

Launch fight on heels of platinum miners’ victory



Reuters/Rogan Ward  
Members of National Union of Metalworkers protest in Durban, South Africa, July 1 at start of strike for wage raise, end to temporary jobs filled by “labor brokers,” and other demands.

BY SETH GALINSKY

More than 220,000 members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa walked off the job across the country July 1, inspired by the successful five-month strike by platinum miners that ended a week earlier.

The Metalworkers kicked off their fight with marches in Cape Town, George, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Kwazulu-Natal, East London and Johannesburg. The heart of the strikes

are in factories that make parts for mines, automobiles and telecommunications equipment.

General Motors shut down its Port Elizabeth factory July 3 due to a shortage of auto parts. BMW has also cut down its production.

Strikers are demanding a 12 percent wage increase. Bosses are offering 10 percent for the lowest-paid workers and between 7 and 8 percent for the rest. The central issue is the union’s

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## Hamas provocations, big Israeli assault follow lynchings of Jewish, Arab youth

BY SETH GALINSKY

The Israeli government launched an air and sea attack on Gaza July 7 in retaliation for the firing of scores of missiles by Hamas and other Islamist groups into Israel from the Hamas-ruled territory. The offensive comes on the heels of the lynching of three Jewish teenagers in the West Bank and the retaliatory lynching of a Palestinian youth in Jerusalem.

By July 9, Israeli forces had attacked more than 450 sites, including dozens of houses, vehicles carrying Hamas leaders, and suspected launch pads and weapons caches. Public health officials in Gaza said the same day that 35 people had been killed so far and at least 300

wounded, including women and children. The operation destroyed more targets in its first 36 hours than during a similar weeklong offensive in 2012, a senior Israeli military official told the *Jerusalem Post*.

Hamas began firing the missiles — many of them successfully intercepted by Israeli rockets — after hundreds of alleged Hamas members were arrested by Israeli police in the West Bank following the June 12 kidnapping of the three Jewish youth — Eyal Yifrach, 19, Gilad Shaar, 16, and Naftali Fraenkel, 16. Their bodies were found June 30. Israeli authorities charge they were killed

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### ‘Militant’ wins another round against prison censorship

The *Militant* received notice July 7 that officials at the U.S. Federal Penitentiary in Florence, Colorado, have reversed their decision to censor an issue of the paper and informed David Goldstein, the *Militant’s* attorney, that it can be sent to subscribers there. “USP Florence has reconsidered the prior rejection of ‘The Militant,’ Vol. 77, No. 47,” John Oliver, warden of the high-security prison, wrote June 25. “The publisher may resend.” Next week’s issue will report in further detail.

— JOHN STUDER

## Separatists lose support and ground in east Ukraine

BY JOHN STUDER

As infighting and desertions spread among armed separatist groups in eastern Ukraine, government troops have been retaking cities, including Kramatorsk, Druzhkivka, Artemivsk and Slovyansk — the headquarters of the separatists’ so-called Donetsk People’s Republic.

On July 2, supporters of Ukrainian sovereignty demonstrated in the southeastern city of Mariupol, where workers drove out separatists in May and again in June.

Anti-Ukraine forces are increasingly unpopular and losing their base of support in the east. Noting that “cases of kidnappings, thefts and armed attacks” targeting working people and industry have grown, Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine chair Mikhailo Volynets called June 21 for workers to undertake “the creation of a labor guard, whose militants could protect not only their enterpris-

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## ‘Only Cuba acted with such human solidarity’

BY JOHN STUDER

KIEV, Ukraine — “Cuba played a really big role in helping those stricken by the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl, especially for such a small country,” said Liliya Piltyay, who helped organize to get children and others in need of medical attention to the island

### UKRAINIANS TELL ‘MILITANT’ ABOUT CUBA’S MEDICAL AID TO VICTIMS OF CHERNOBYL

where they could receive top-quality treatment free of charge. As part of a special medical program, Cuba to date has treated more than 25,000 victims of the nuclear meltdown in Chernobyl, Ukraine, from Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

“This is the first time we have met with a delegation from the United States interested in what we did,” she told *Militant* correspondents with the

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## Farmers, miners in western Turkey discuss challenges facing rural toilers



Militant/Frank Forrestal  
Farmers in Kinik, western Turkey, July 1. Many coal miners also farm land in area around Soma, Turkey, where profit drive of bosses and government killed more than 300 workers in May.

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

SOMA, Turkey — Along the road between this town of 76,000 and the village of Kinik, 13 miles to the southwest, lies an arid but fertile landscape with field after field of olive trees, tobacco and other crops worked mostly by women farmworkers.

Some distance off the main road stands the Eynez mine, where more than 300 coal miners were killed May 13 in an underground fire that touched off protests against boss and government disregard for workers’ safety in pursuit of profit.

Many miners in this region of western

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# UN committee backs freedom for Puerto Rico, Oscar López

BY MICHAEL BAUMANN

UNITED NATIONS — Independence for Puerto Rico and freedom for Oscar López, a political prisoner serving a 70-year sentence in the United States on frame-up charges of “seditious conspiracy,” were the main themes at the June 23 hearings here on Puerto Rico at the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization.

Supporters of the fight to free López held an all-day picket outside. The day before, several hundred marched in San Juan, Puerto Rico’s capital, demanding independence and López’s freedom.

The hearings take place as the economic squeeze on working people in the U.S. colony grips tighter. On June 25, thousands of electrical workers, water workers and other public employees marched on the Department of Labor in San Juan to protest a new “fiscal emergency law” that aims to gut union contracts and slash wages and benefits. With these measures, the colonial government seeks to assure holders of Puerto Rican bonds, overwhelmingly big capitalists in the U.S., that they will be paid in full and on time.

The decolonization committee heard testimony by 47 speakers from Puerto Rico and the U.S., where today more than half of Puerto Ricans live.

For the 32nd year in a row it approved a resolution demanding U.S. recognition of Puerto Rico’s right to self-determination and independence. The resolution, introduced by Cuban Ambassador Rodolfo Reyes, also called for the release of López, who has been imprisoned for 33 years for his

pro-independence actions.

Puerto Rico has been a U.S. colony since 1898, when the island was invaded by U.S. troops in the war over Spain’s colonial possessions, which also included Cuba, the Philippines and Guam.

Almost every speaker condemned the degrading effects of colonial rule. A few petitioners, while critical of the conditions imposed on the island, advocated making it the 51st U.S. state or maintaining its “commonwealth” status — reflecting the competing positions of Puerto Rico’s two leading capitalist parties, the New Progressive Party and the Popular Democratic Party.

The majority of speakers supported independence.

“Our country was robbed from us, first by Spain, then by the United States. We were passed from hand to hand,” stated José Nieves, a carpenter’s helper from San Juan representing the League for Our Taíno Land. “They didn’t consult us. We weren’t recognized as the owners of our country.” He added that for more than a century “Puerto Ricans have always fought for our freedom and we have resisted imperialism.”

Most speakers called for the release of Oscar López. Ana López of the New York Coordinator to Free Oscar López Rivera read a statement he had prepared for the hearings.

Others calling for his release included Ana Irma Rivera of the Lawyers Guild of Puerto Rico, Wilma Reverón of the Hostos National Independence Movement, Eduardo Villanueva of the Puerto Rico Human Rights Commit-



Right, Militant/Michael Baumann

tee, Juan Dalmau of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, Ben Ramos of the ProLibertad Freedom Campaign, and the National Lawyers Guild’s Jan Suler, who is López’s attorney.

Many speakers addressed the conditions working people face in Puerto Rico. Forty-six percent of the island’s population have incomes below the official poverty level, said María de Lourdes Guzmán of the United Sovereignty Movement of Puerto Rico.

Some 15 percent are officially unemployed and the actual figure is higher, said Sonia Santiago of Mothers Against War, and many young people enlist in the military as the only way to find a job. Those who need treatment find out that Veterans Administration health care on the island is even worse than in the United States. “There’s one hospital for 200,000 veterans,” she said.

Ana Cristina Cabán of the National Union of Students in Puerto Rico pointed out that 30,000 graduates leave each year to look for jobs in the United States.

Evelyn Román of the Puerto Rican Coalition Against the Death Penalty noted that Puerto Rico abolished the death penalty in 1929 and wrote that ban into its 1952 constitution. In an example of the reality of colonial rule, however, U.S. federal courts on the island have heard seven capital cases since the adoption of the 1994 Federal Death Penalty Act. In an expression of

popular sentiment Puerto Rican juries rejected death sentences in each case, Román said.

“Winning the fight for Puerto Rico’s independence is in the interests of the vast majority of people in the United States,” said Martín Koppel, speaking for the Socialist Workers Party, which has championed that struggle since the party’s founding eight decades ago.

“We have common interests and a common enemy — the U.S. government and the propertied ruling class it defends,” he said. As long as U.S. imperialism rules Puerto Rico, “it weakens the ability of workers in the United States to fight for our interests.”

In discussions with fellow workers, we find receptivity to the fight for the release of Oscar López and of the Cuban Five, Koppel said. That’s because “millions have had firsthand experience with the cops, courts, prisons and frame-ups of the U.S. capitalist justice system.”

After the resolution was adopted by the committee, Oscar León, Cuba’s alternate permanent representative to the U.N., outlined the common history of “unbreakable” struggle of Puerto Rico and Cuba for independence and against imperialist rule.

Today, he said, the people of Cuba and Puerto Rico “share heroes — men of the stature of Oscar López Rivera and of the Five Heroes of the Cuban Republic.”



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Reuters/Ako Rasheed  
Members of Kurdish Peshmerga celebrate June 24 after taking control of city of Kirkuk.

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# Inmate in Texas immigration jail fights deportation, wins support

Finds lack of interest among ‘friends of Latinos’ politicians

BY STEVE WARSHALL

CONROE, Texas — Supporters of the rights of inmates at the Joe Corley immigration jail here have been organizing against prison abuse and impending deportations.

On July 1, No Están Solos, an organization that defends detainees at the Corley jail, organized a delegation to the office of State Sen. Sylvia Garcia to appeal for support for David Vásquez, who is facing imminent deportation. The group was formed last March to support inmates at the detention center on a hunger strike, demanding improved conditions, an end to abuse by authorities and a halt to deportations.

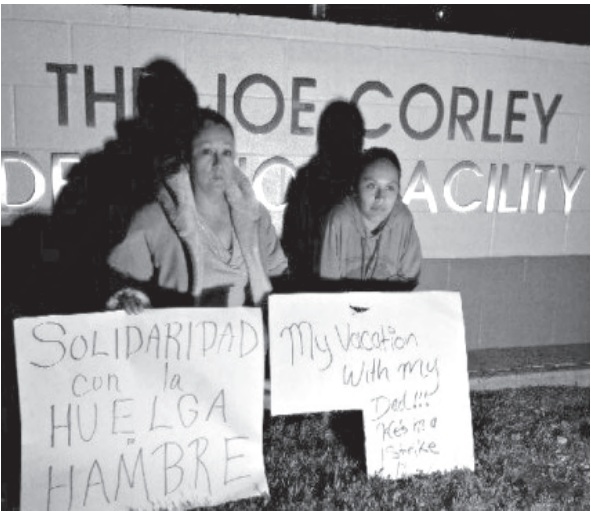
The prison is designed to hold 950

inmates, but currently Immigration and Customs Enforcement says 1,100 are incarcerated there.

“We are coming here because David Vásquez has no more legal steps left that can prevent his deportation back to El Salvador,” Orlando Lara, an organizer for the group, told the *Militant*. “We are demanding that Sen. Garcia help us.” Garcia was the only elected official in the Houston area to vote against imposing ICE’s 287(g) agreement that ties local jails into the federal database to determine if a prisoner is in the United States illegally.

A camera crew from Telemundo was present at Garcia’s office to film what they thought would be a statement from the senator and Adelina Cáceres, wife of David Vásquez. But after 10 minutes security guards came to the office and told everyone to disperse. The delegation then organized a press conference on the building’s steps.

“The Democratic politicians present themselves as ‘friends of the Latinos,’ they say they are for immigration reform,” said Cáceres, “but they don’t lift a finger to stop these abuses.



Inmates at Joe Corley immigration jail in Conroe, Texas, won solidarity during their hunger strike in March.

## ‘Prosecute Miami cop who killed Israel Hernández’



Militant/Naomi Craine

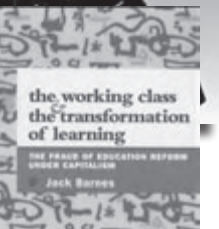
MIAMI BEACH, Fla. — “Slow justice is no justice,” chanted dozens of people who rallied here July 6, demanding action against the police who killed 18-year-old Israel Hernández last year. The young artist was painting graffiti when police chased him and eventually shot him in the chest with a Taser. In March the medical examiner confirmed that the electric shock caused his death, but State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle has thus far not indicted the cops responsible. Offir Hernández, Israel’s sister, (with microphone) announced plans for a larger vigil and rally on Aug. 6, the one-year anniversary of his death. The action will begin at 6 p.m. at the corner of 71st Street and Collins Avenue in Miami Beach.

— NAOMI CRAINE

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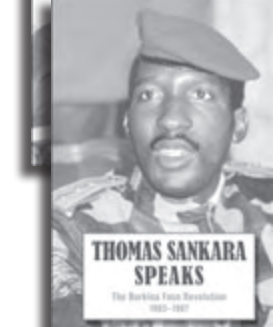
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portation policy of President Obama that is devastating immigrant families across the country.”

Later that day, Garcia’s office issued a one-paragraph statement saying, “It would be improper for me as a state legislator to attempt to influence the judicial process. However, I directed my staff to provide resources to Mrs. Cáceres that could help with the best course of action.”

Facts about the conditions facing jailed immigrant workers are gaining more attention. Thousands of persons “subject to deportation are now confined in private, for-profit prisons under inhuman conditions and shocking abuse,” American Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Terri Burke told a news conference in Houston June 10, reported *Rumbo* newspaper. The Texas ACLU recently completed a four-year study documenting this mistreatment.

“I spoke to prisoners who spent weeks in isolation cells after being sent there upon intake,” said Carl Takei, one of the authors of the report, according to the ACLU website. “Simply arriving at prison was the reason why they were locked in a cell and fed through a slot for 23 hours a day.”

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### CALIFORNIA

**San Francisco**  
No Deportations. Legalize All Immigrants Now. Speaker: Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., July 18, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

### GEORGIA

**Atlanta**  
The Fight for Women’s Emancipation, 1986 to 2014: What’s Changed? Speaker: Lisa Potash, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., July 18, 7:30 p.m. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel.: (678) 528-7828.



# Metalworkers in SAfrica

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demand to end the system of labor brokers and for a one-year contract.

“If you are working permanently you have benefits, wages, medical aid and all that, but if you are employed by a broker, it’s not the same,” Mphumzi Maqungo, national treasurer of the Metalworkers union, told the *Militant* by phone July 4. “The worker employed by the broker says, ‘We are on the same line, the same shift, the same job, why can’t I have the same benefits?’”

The bosses want a three-year contract. “But food is going up, everything just goes up,” he said. “The strategy for us is we want one collective negotiation for auto, tires, parts.”

The union is also demanding bosses not implement a youth wage subsidy passed by the African National Congress government that gives bosses an incentive to push older workers out and a new lever to sow divisions. The measure “reimburses” companies for part of the wages of first-time workers aged 18-29.

In a July 4 press release, the Steel

and Engineering Industries Federation of Southern Africa, which represents 20 percent of 10,500 companies being struck by more than half of the workers, said there was “no way” industry bosses “would accede to NUMSA’s demand to desist from ever using the services of labour brokers.”

### Miners ‘fight for next generation’

Miners at Anglo American Platinum, Impala and Lonmin, the world’s top three platinum producers, went back to work June 25. The miners, organized by the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union, had been on strike since Jan. 23.

At a mass meeting at the Rustenburg soccer stadium, miners approved a three-year contract that included a 20 percent annual wage increase, amounting to about a 1,000 rand (\$93) monthly raise each year for the lowest-paid workers. The highest paid will get up to an 8 percent increase.

The end of the strike “is not necessarily a time of celebration,” said Lonmin Chief Executive Ben Magara,



Reuters/Siphiwe Sibeko

**Victory by platinum miners in five-month strike paved way for Metalworkers union strike in South Africa. Above, Lonmin miners at mass meeting of AMCU union in Rustenburg May 14.**

flanked by his counterparts at Amplats and Impala at a press conference in Johannesburg. “There are no winners.”

Many miners see it differently. “I don’t care what I’ve lost in unpaid wages, we are doing this for the next generation of mineworkers,” a worker from Impala, who did not want to be identified, told the Johannesburg-based *Fi-*

*nancial Mail*. “Our children must not inherit this situation when their time comes to work in the mines.”

The biggest gain was narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest paid worker, AMCU President Joseph Mathunjwa told the *Militant*. “This gap of inequality is still there, but we were able to crack it.”

“There is still a lot to be done,” Mathunjwa said. “Many mine workers still live in hostels, with eight in a single room. The issue of safety is still a challenge.”

At the end of 2012, 100,000 workers at platinum, gold, chrome and other mines stopped work, demanding a minimum monthly wage of 12,500 rand. The leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers opposed the strike, leading many miners to join AMCU, which is now the main union in the platinum belt.

The NUM and Metalworkers are both affiliated with the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the main union federation in the country, which is allied with the ruling African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. Earlier this year some COSATU officials called for the expulsion of the Metalworkers because the union wouldn’t back the ANC in the May elections.

Bosses are concerned about the precedent set by the platinum miners’ strike victory. A June 25 editorial in *Business Day Live* said the strike settlement “is no more than a reprieve, a breathing space that must be used to restructure the mining industry so as to avoid a repeat performance in three years’ time — or sooner if other sectors are impressed enough with the settlement terms to follow the platinum miners’ lead.”

On July 4, three days after the Metalworkers strike began, some 2,000 members of the National Union of Mineworkers struck Impala’s Marula platinum mine, demanding the same concessions wrested by their fellow platinum miners organized by AMCU.

# Armed separatists losing support in east Ukraine

Continued from front page

es and workplaces, but also their lives and those of their families.”

Alexei, a local driver, told Associated Press by phone that he left his house in Slovyansk July 5 and saw that the armed gunmen had fled. There was some damage to previously occupied buildings, but most of the rest of the city was left untouched.

“Everything is different now. Tonight is the first night with no shelling,” Mikhail Martynenko, 58, a security guard at a market near Slovyansk, told Reuters July 7. “People are in a better mood and there are more people on the streets.”

As separatists vacated Slovyansk, Igor Strelkov, Russian military agent and “commander of the Donetsk People’s Republic,” posted a video online saying his men had “lost the will to fight.”

“They want to live in Russia,” he said. “But when they tried to assert this right, Russia doesn’t want to help.

“I do not claim that Russia does not help,” he quickly added. “But that which we desperately need, does not, at this time, arrive.

“Some believe that I am panicking, that I’m not ok,” he concluded. “Yes, I am not ok.”

Some separatists are regrouping in the city of Donetsk, capital of the eastern Donetsk province, where they still

control government buildings but have otherwise done little to interfere with the day-to-day administration of the city government. Donetsk Mayor Alexander Lukyanchenko has maintained municipal services; city workers just finished installing bike lanes downtown.

But Lukyanchenko estimates that some 100,000 people have fled Donetsk in recent weeks as the city is beset with fighting among competing gangs of armed separatists and their thuggery against the population.

A separatist faction from nearby Horlivka led by Igor Bezler, another Russian intelligence officer who goes by the name “Demon,” was routed by rival separatists after he attempted to seize the Donetsk city police station for himself.

“There is an exchange of fire among the separatists,” Iryna Verigina, from the eastern city of Luhansk, told a Ukrainian television station July 8. “They are shooting at each other.”

“Since hundreds of rebels flooded into the city [Donetsk] at the weekend,” *Reuters* reported July 8, “armed men have been out on the streets, setting up new barricades and checkpoints and stopping pedestrians and motorists.”

### Russia stands back

The capitalist government of Russian President Vladimir Putin has not acknowledged the paramilitaries’ calls

for Russian military intervention. On the Fourth of July Putin sent a message to U.S. President Barack Obama calling for improvement in relations between the two governments.

A state-funded poll released July 7 showed two-thirds of Russians oppose the country sending troops into Ukraine. Most workers are weary of war following decades of Russian military interventions from Afghanistan to Chechnya and Georgia. They face falling wages, 7 percent inflation and seek greater political rights and space to organize. Russian bosses are foremost concerned about maximizing profits and political stability in Russia and the surrounding region.

Moscow also faces growing discontent among workers and farmers in Crimea, annexed and occupied by Russian troops since March. Prices have soared 20 to 50 percent. As Russia cut off trade with Ukraine, store shelves went bare. Tourism, the main industry, plummeted, cutting jobs and pay. Medication prices have soared beyond the reach of working people. Few Russian banks opened up to replace Ukrainian banks closed by the new regime.

Farmers report they expect a good harvest, but everything else — from irrigation to credits to export possibilities — has been disrupted. “On a scale of one to five, we are at negative three,” Sergei Tur, head of the Association of Farmers and Landowners of Crimea told the *New York Times* July 7.

Oppressive measures against the 300,000-strong Crimean Tatar population, who overwhelmingly oppose Russian rule, have grown. On July 7 Moscow banned Refat Chubarov, the leader of the Tatar ruling Mejlis assembly, from entering Crimea for five years. Mustafa Dzhemilev, the long-standing leader of the Tatars and leader of the Mejlis until last year, was slapped with a similar ban in April.

Support for the Crimean occupation among Russian working people is low. The government’s appeal to give up a day’s pay to help fund costs of the annexation got little traction. “In our department, not one of us made the donation,” hospital worker Tatyana told *Reuters* July 6.



Demonstrators backing Ukrainian sovereignty demonstrate in Mariupol, Ukraine, July 2.

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## ON THE PICKET LINE

### Car battery workers' strike in Quebec enters third month

BOUCHERVILLE, Quebec — Spirits were high June 30 as some 20 strikers walked the picket line at Bathium, a subsidiary of the French-Bolloré Group that makes batteries for electric cars. Sixty-one members of Unifor Local 2011 walked off the job April 29 after voting 96 percent to go on strike. They had been working without a contract since Dec. 31, 2012.

Among the workers' demands are higher wages, no hiring by temporary work agencies and an end to a divisive two-tier wage scale. After seven years of service, workers can receive up to \$6 an hour more at the discretion of the bosses.

Workers on the line said the company had denied them access to shop stewards during working hours and refused to pay shift premiums.

Yvon Paquette, Local 2011 recording secretary, told the *Militant* during a June 10 visit to the picket line that Bathium is using supervisors to keep the plant running. The next negotiating session is scheduled for the end of September.

Workers from Uni-select, Pratt and

Whitney and Bombardier have joined the picket line in solidarity.

— *Philippe Tessier*

### Workers strike in Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman

An impressive number of workers in the Arabian Peninsula kingdoms of Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman have been on strike.

In Kuwait a walkout by government workers employed by the Social Security administration is now into its fifth week, the longest strike in Kuwaiti history. Workers walked off the job June 7, after a year of stalling on implementing better pay and benefits that were already agreed to by government officials, according to the *Kuwait Times*.

In comments before parliament July 1, MP Hamdan al-Azmi urged the government to "respond to workers' demands in order to avoid more labor strikes in the public sector," the paper reported.

At the end of June workers protesting the layoff of nearly 800 women who prepare elementary school lunches staged a couple of sit-ins and tried to occupy the office of Kuwaiti Undersecretary for Education Mariam al-Wutaid. The



Women workers on strike against LuLu hypermarket in Oman June 26-28. Some 1,300 workers were involved in the walkout, which won health insurance coverage for all Lulu workers in Oman. Inset, strikers sit by entrance to aisles.



workers are demanding the government find them other jobs in the schools or require they be hired by the companies that won the contracts to prepare school meals for next year.

In the Kingdom of Bahrain, some 2,000 migrant workers, mostly from India and Bangladesh, struck MRS Fashions in Hajiyat June 10-16 over wages, poor working conditions, threatened deportations, and abuse by management. The company manufactures clothing for Macy's, JC Penney, Kohl's, Walmart and other major outlets.

The walkout began after "Indian machine operator Tariq Iqbal was allegedly assaulted by his line manager after trying to resign" because of "unhealthy working conditions," reported the *Gulf Daily News*. "The manager said I cannot go home, tore up my resignation and threw it in my face," he told the paper. Upon hearing that Iqbal had been handed over to the police and faced deportation, workers halted production.

The government then threatened to deport all the Indian and Bangladeshi workers on strike. The workers responded with a list of 12 demands, including a pay raise, better food and medical care.

"This place is like a prison," Pavan Kumar, a worker from India, told *Gulf Daily News*. "Our target is 2,200 gar-

ments to be completed by 60 laborers in one shift. During working hours we need permission even to go to the bathroom or drink water."

The strike ended June 17 after workers accepted pay raises of 10 to 14 percent. Charges were also dropped against 11 workers arrested during the strike.

Meanwhile, the Bahrain Free Labour Union Federation announced plans in mid-June to form a union to represent Bahraini and some 120,000 migrant construction workers.

In the Sultanate of Oman, some 1,300 workers struck LuLu hypermarkets, a giant supermarket and department store chain, June 26-28. The workers presented 16 demands, including a wage raise, cost-of-living allowance and a bonus.

According to a statement from Oman's Ministry of Manpower that was quoted in the June 29 *Times of Oman*, "A solution was reached to provide health insurance coverage to all Omani workers at LuLu, regardless of their service status." Striking workers will be paid for the days they went on strike and will not be penalized. A panel of management and workers was established to discuss wage rates.

Oman legalized labor unions in 2006. Bahrain did so four years earlier.

— *Brian Williams*

## Rural toilers in western Turkey

### Continued from front page

Turkey are also farmers with small plots they either rent or own.

"Me, my wife and our two children are up at 3 a.m. most mornings to work on the tobacco crop. We work 16 hours a day," said Engin Kursuncu, an underground miner at the Imbat mine who lives in a small village near Kinik.

Polat Tetik, another Imbat miner who farms near Kinik, said the tobacco he and other farmers produce goes to U.S.-based Philip Morris, among the biggest cigarette manufacturers in the world. Tetik and Kursuncu are among miners in the area who have been fighting for better working conditions since the mining disaster that claimed the lives of many they knew.

Turkey is the fourth-largest producer of tomatoes and the fifth-largest tobacco-producing country in the world. Tobacco comprises 18 percent of Turkey's total agricultural exports.

The Soma Coal Basin is in the Aegean region, which stretches along the coast of western Turkey and produces more than half the country's tobacco and olives.

Larger plots of land belonging to wealthy farmers are worked by contract day labor, Kursuncu said. Women, sometimes the wives of the unemployed, are hired on a daily basis by middlemen. The workers "are paid 30 lira [\$14] a day," he said. "One kilogram of meat costs 27 lira."

"Nearly everyone in the area owes money to the banks," said Kursuncu. "Most miners have loans to pay hospital bills when the children get sick, to build houses and other things."

Out of his monthly income of 1,500 lira (\$702) "750 lira goes to the bank," Kursuncu said. "I am an experienced miner, but there are many miners who make only 1,200 lira [\$562]," he said.

Many of the roughly 2 million migrant farmworkers throughout Turkey are Kurdish, said Hayri Ates, a leader of the Kurdish Peace and Justice Party (BDP), during an interview at the party's office in Izmir, southwest of here.

"In southeast Turkey there are thou-

sands of seasonal migrant workers who move from farm to farm picking the crops from central Turkey to the Black Sea coast," said Ates. "They live in tents that they take from farm to farm. They are not allowed in the city centers. It is very common to hear of lynchings of Kurds in the Black Sea coast region."

Many get work through so-called "uncles," who act as intermediaries between the workers and growers. There are two types — legal ones registered through the state employment agency and those who operate without a license.

Schooling in Turkey is mandatory through the 12th grade, but children of Kurdish migrant families usually have to leave school to work in the fields after the third or fourth grade. "Kurdish day laborers usually make only 8 to 12 lira for a 13 to 14 hour day," Ates said.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



July 21, 1989

LONDON — Some 600,000 workers in Britain were out on strike during the week that began July 10. This included most dockworkers, who started an indefinite strike on July 10; 75,000 rail workers and 20,000 London Underground subway workers, who together held their fourth in a series of weekly 24-hour actions; and a half million local government employees who struck for two days as part of a three-week series of escalating actions. It was the first national strike in the history of the government workers' union, the National Association of Local Government Officers.

Also on strike are 1,200 steel erectors in London. And construction workers on 30 oil platforms in the North Sea fields have engaged in sit-ins and sporadic strikes over the last six weeks.

The government has set up a special committee chaired by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to counter the spreading strikes.



July 13, 1964

James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, the three young civil-rights workers missing in Mississippi, must now be presumed dead — lynched by police and white supremacists.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, spearhead of the fight for justice there charges that "Mississippi law-enforcement officials and private citizens are engaged in a conspiracy to harass and intimidate local Negroes and civil-rights workers through cross burnings, beatings, shootings and illegal arrests."

Despite these well-known facts, President Johnson refuses to intervene to protect the lives of Negroes and civil-rights workers in Mississippi.

In the face of mounting terror and the federal government's failure to provide minimum protection, Negroes in Mississippi have the right and duty to arm and organize themselves for self-defense.



July 21, 1939

CHICAGO — In the second week of the nationwide W.P.A. [Works Progress Administration] strike a special meeting of the Chicago Building Trades Council unanimously adopted an order for all building trades workers representing 212 locals to cease work on 65 projects.

This official action brought out many additional workers to swell the strikers' ranks in the city to over five thousand. At the same time the Sewer and Tunnel Miners' Union has called out its skilled workers and have thus compelled the closing of this project which employs in the neighborhood of 10,000.

The official strike figures handed out by the administration in the person of Charles E. Miner, State W.P.A. administrator, estimates 12,250 strikers in Illinois, exclusive of Chicago. Yet, in the same breath, Miner announces that 25,000 W.P.A. workers will be severed from their projects unless they report to work at once.



# Cuban aid to Chernobyl kids

Continued from front page

help of translator Oksana Demyanovych.

Present at the meeting along with Piltyay were eight young women who had gone to Cuba for medical treatment and two of their mothers, as well as Tatiana Burka, a woman associated with the program who worked for years as a “liquidator,” helping to evacuate people from the Chernobyl area.

Piltyay was assigned by the Ukraine Komsomol — the Communist Party youth organization — to organize participation in the Cuban program when it began in 1990. Today, Piltyay works in a cardiac program for the Ukraine Ministry of Health.

“When the explosion at Chernobyl took place on April 26, 1986, it was a social tragedy,” she said. “The authorities didn’t tell anyone the extent of what was taking place. To this day, I don’t know why they did not cancel the big May Day demonstrations in Kiev and other cities in zones where radiation was high.”

“Until the early 1990s spreading information about the true extent of the radiation and the number of those affected was prohibited,” Piltyay said. “But some of our young scientists got the facts together and at the end of 1989 this material was published, focusing attention on the extent of the radiation danger to the population.”

Much of this material was published in articles and later a small book by Alla Yaroshinskaya entitled *Chernobyl: The Forbidden Truth*, which exposed the cover-up by Soviet authorities, who even curtailed aid to downplay the disaster.

“As a result the government was forced to extend the official affected area and the number of people eligible for compensation,” Piltyay said. “This was the first time residents of Kiev, the country’s largest city, were included. The government was worried about how much they would have to pay.” Kiev is about 80 miles from Chernobyl.

## Cuba offers free medical care

“We younger leaders of the Communist Party responded by calling for international aid,” she said. “People at the Cuban consulate read some of the material on the true extent of the disaster and heard our call. Sergio López, then Cuban ambassador, came to the young CP members and offered to help. He said Cuba would be pleased to offer free

medical treatment to those in need.”

“Two weeks later, three of Cuba’s foremost doctors came to Ukraine. They visited hospitals and towns, selecting the sickest children to go to Cuba,” she said.

“Once the first group had been selected — 139 children and some of their parents — we asked the Ukrainian government for plane tickets,” Piltyay said. “But they said there was no money in the budget. The medical authorities were critical of us, accusing us of having doubts about the Soviet health system.”

“On March 29, 1990, two Cuban planes took the first group to the island,” said Piltyay, who was on the first plane. “Cuban President Fidel Castro met us when we landed in Havana. He was surprised and shocked by the condition of the children.

“He went into a huddle with other government representatives right there, and by the time the second plane landed three hours later, he announced that Cuba would take 10,000 children from Ukraine, Belorussia and Russia,” Piltyay said.

“I couldn’t believe it,” she said. “I asked the translator whether he had made a mistake. But he hadn’t. And the Cubans did it, and more.”

Castro gave a speech July 1, 1990, at the dedication of the medical program’s facilities at the former center for the Pioneers children’s organization in Tarará, outside Havana. Construction was completed in less than three months by more than 7,000 volunteer workers Castro said, who responded to the challenge with a great “spirit of internationalism.”

The Pioneers’ seaside location was chosen not only because it had medical facilities. “For a child, it is depressing to be imprisoned in a hospital,” Castro said, “We planned recreation and vacation programs, trips to the sea.”

“Because Ukraine officials wouldn’t take any responsibility for transporting the kids to Cuba, from 1991 to 1998 we got together with some of the parents of the children and organized our own fund,” Piltyay said. “I was able to make an appeal on television that got us some publicity and a big response.”

“After that, we raised the money ourselves,” she said. “We got donations here, from Canada where there are a lot of Ukrainians, and elsewhere. It took a huge collective effort, but we were able to organize a charter flight every two months.”



Cuban President Fidel Castro welcomes children from Belorussia who came to Tarará, Cuba, for medical treatment, March 1990. Right, Ukrainian child in physical therapy, 2010. More than 25,000 victims of 1986 nuclear disaster in Chernobyl, Ukraine, have received care in Cuba.



Above, Militant/Yulia Panasiuk

From left, *Militant* reporter John Studer; translator Oksana Demyanovych; former “liquidator” Tatiana Burka; Liliya Piltyay, director of program to send youth to Cuba for treatment; Tatiana Molodchenko and her daughter Inna Molodchenko, who was treated in Cuba. Inset, Yulia Panasiuk, center, who was part of meeting above, at Tarará, with Julio Medina, right, director of the Pediatric Hospital there. Picture is from *Second Homeland*, book in Russian about program.



“The Cubans organized all the housing, medical care and other help,” she said. “Cuba was the only country in the world to organize a program like this. We got some help from other countries, Germany, Israel, France, even the U.S., but Cuba was the only one with a far-reaching, long-term program.”

“And they did this when they confronted serious challenges of their own, what they called the ‘Special Period,’” she said.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Cuba lost 85 percent of its foreign trade, creating an acute economic and social crisis marked by shortages of food and other basic necessities.

“For 24 years, Cuba has provided care for more than 25,000 people, more than 21,000 of them children,” Piltyay said. “Forty percent of them were seriously ill, with thyroid cancers, other cancers or physical defects, including blood and skin diseases.”

“Cuba had such a high level of medical care,” she said. “Ukraine couldn’t match it. And the love the Cuban people gave, the doctors and everyone, was something else again.”

“In 2012, Ukrainian bureaucrats in the health care system convinced then-president Viktor Yanukovych they should take over all treatment of Chernobyl victims, and the government ended relations with the program,” Piltyay said. “We continued to fight, and in 2013 Yanukovych said he would allocate funds in the next budget to send 100 more children.”

Yanukovych was ousted in February at the height of popular anti-government mobilizations. As of now, the future of the program to get Ukrainians to Cuba for treatment is unclear.

“Some people still get care in Cuba, but they have to raise the funds to cover transportation themselves,” she said. “Cuba is willing to continue the program and we hope we can find a way to get the funding.” There are hundreds of young Ukrainians still on the waiting list, she said.

“Cuba says they do what they do for moral and ethical reasons, so they never kept count of what it cost,” Piltyay said. “But we estimate they spent more than \$2 billion. We will never forget what Cuba has done.”

## ‘Second Homeland’

The group gave two gifts to the *Militant*, one a book in Russian entitled *Second Homeland* — which is how all

the young women described Cuba. The book describes the Cuban medical program in Tarará. Piltyay and some of the other women are pictured in the book.

The second was a painting by Inna Molodchenko, a young woman who came to the interview with her mother Tatiana. Molodchenko is the first on the waiting list.

“For the first eight years of her life Inna couldn’t chew,” Tatiana Molodchenko said. “She had the benefit of six surgeries in Cuba over a number of visits, which make it possible for her to swallow. She also had skin disease and difficulty moving her hands.”

“I first went to Cuba in 2008 and just came back from spending a month there in January 2014,” said Tatiana Bernadskaya. “It really did feel like a second homeland. The doctors were special, and the Cuban people are special people. They helped us as if we were their own kids.”

“My grandfather was an engineer in Chernobyl,” Yulia Palamarchuk said. “I didn’t have any confidence in myself when I went to Cuba. The Cuban people helped me with love and understanding, helped me learn to love myself.”

“The whole program — educational programs, concerts, dancing, cultural exchanges, a library with books in Russian, teachers from Ukraine to help us, all paid for by the Cubans — the whole environment was great,” she said.

“My head was injured at school and when they sent me to the doctor, he said I had brain cancer,” said Yulia Panasiuk. “They performed surgery on me in Kiev, but when I woke up they told me there was nothing they could do and I had six months to live. My family found out about the Cuban program by chance.”

The other young women have similar stories. Because the Ukrainian government took no organized responsibility for the program, it was not widely publicized.

“I saw the Cuban doctors and they moved fast, in three days I was on my way to Tarará,” Panasiuk said. “I thought I would be there for 45 days, but ended up staying for treatment for five years with my mom.”

“When I got back to Ukraine, my health deteriorated again,” she said. “I came back to Cuba for more surgery. You can still see I have some paralysis on my left side. They gave me physical therapy to rebuild my mobility.

“The Cuban doctors were fighting to

Continued on page 9



# ‘Story of the five Cubans arrested in Clinton times’

## Iran Book News Agency reviews ‘The Cuban Five’

Below is a review by the Iran Book News Agency of *The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free*. The book was published in Iran by Talaye Porsoo, which translated the Pathfinder Press book of the same title into Farsi from the original English. The semiofficial news agency published the review June 19 under the headline “The Story of the Five Cubans Arrested in Clinton Times.” Translation of the review is by the Militant.

*The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free* is the title of a book whose content has been gathered from the pages of the *Militant* newspaper, a socialist weekly in the United States.

The *Militant* proudly declares on its masthead to be “a socialist newsweekly published in the interests of working people.” The newspaper, published in New York in both English and Spanish, is distributed and read in the United States, Canada, Britain, New Zealand, Australia and other parts of the world.

The selection is from among nearly 200 news reports and feature articles about the Cuban Five published in the paper over a span of 15 years.

Mary-Alice Waters and Martín Kop-

pel, editors of the book, write in the introduction that the Cuban Five are “five Cubans who were living and working in southern Florida in 1998 when each of them was arrested in coordinated pre-dawn raids by the U.S. government. At that time William Clinton was president.

“They were framed up on charges that included conspiracy to commit espionage. ... More than two years later, the Five — who proudly acknowledged they were working for the Cuban government — were brought to trial and convicted in federal court in Miami on all counts. The judge imposed maximum sentences. ...

“What were the alleged criminal activities of the Five?

“They organized to infiltrate paramilitary and other counterrevolutionary Cuban American groups that have a 50-year record of planning and carrying out bombings, assassinations, and other assaults on Cubans as well as other supporters of the Cuban Revolution — on the island, in the United States (yes, inside the U.S.), in Puerto Rico and elsewhere. Their assignment was to keep the Cuban government informed of those deadly operations in order to prevent as many as possible from coming to fruition.”

The book recounts the story of the Cuban Five in some detail and includes dozens of photos and illustrations. It consists of an introduction and four sections: “Why and How Washington Framed the Cuban Five,” “We Will Continue Until Victory,” “Angola: Fighting for Africa’s Freedom and Our Own” and “Who Are the Cuban Five?”

In a preface written by Talaye Porsoo we read, “It can be said



Review of *The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free* on Iran Book News Agency’s website.

### Who are the Cuban Five?



Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González are Cuban revolutionaries who during the 1990s accepted assignments from the Cuban government to gather information on the operations and plans of Cuban-American paramilitary groups based in southern Florida. These rightist outfits, organizing on U.S. soil with virtual impunity, have a long record of carrying out bombings, assassinations and other attacks, both against targets in Cuba and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in the United States, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

On Sept. 12, 1998, the Five were arrested by the FBI. They were framed up and convicted on a variety of charges, which included acting as unregistered agents of the Cuban government and possession of false identity documents. Without a shred of evidence, three were charged with “conspiracy to gather and transmit national defense information.”

Hernández was also convicted of conspiracy to commit murder, based on the pretext that he bore responsibility for the Cuban government’s 1996 shoot-down of two Brothers to the Rescue aircraft that had invaded Cuban airspace in disregard of Havana’s repeated warnings. He is serving two life terms plus 15 years. His wife Adriana Pérez is barred from entering the United States.

René González returned to Cuba in May 2013. Fernando González returned Feb. 28.

### Greece: Hundreds learn about Cuban 5 at Anti-Racist Festival



Militant photos by Georges Mehrabian

ATHENS, Greece — The fourth leg of the Greek tour of prison paintings by Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five, took place at the July 4-6 Anti-Racist Festival

here. Some 300 people stopped to view the exhibit and read descriptions of each painting and other material on the fight to free the Cuban Five. The José Martí Cultural Association and Hasta La Victoria Siempre hosted the exhibit.

The Anti-Racist Festival is an annual event put together by the Coordinating Committee of Immigrant and Anti-Racist Organizations. About 20,000 people, mainly youth, attended this year’s festival.

Diethnes Vima, a publisher of Greek-language books on socialism, had a table near the exhibit and sold 23 books on the Cuban Five, the Cuban Revolution and other issues of interest to workers and youth looking to confront the capitalist assault on living standards, rights and dignity.

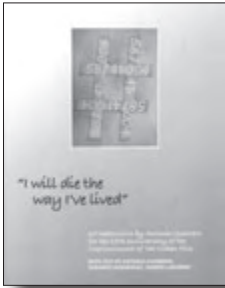
— GEORGES MEHRABIAN

that this book shows the opposing social relations of two countries, Cuba and the United States, through the case of the five Cubans imprisoned in the U.S. Reading this book we learn about the Cuban Revolution and about the Cuban Five, who are the fruit of that social revolution. On the other hand we read the record of the U.S. government’s hostility toward Cuba.”

Another part of the publisher’s preface states, “As we read the book we learn about the U.S. government’s harsh treatment of the Five in prison and how this reflects the U.S. government’s hatred of the Cuban Revolution. ... In addition, the book’s descriptions of developments in relation to working people in the United States show that what the government has imposed on the Cuban Revolution and the Cuban Five is not an exception, but rather the extension of the government’s domestic policy beyond its borders.”

The book is published by Talaye Porsoo in 125 pages with a run of 1,000, and sells for 12,000 tomans (\$3.75).

### ‘I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived’



Fifteen watercolors by Antonio Guerrero for the 15th anniversary of the imprisonment of the Cuban Five. With text by Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino. Also in Spanish.

\$7. Special publication offer \$5

**pathfinderpress.com**

## Exhibits of paintings by Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five

# I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived



### London

**June 15-July 13**

Exhibit hours: Mon.-Fri. 9AM-6PM. Sun. 10AM-4PM. Sat. (call to check). Public meeting, Sat., July 12, 3PM with representative from Cuban Embassy; Rupert Sylvester, whose son died 1999 in Tottenham police custody; Gloria Morrison, campaigner against Joint Enterprise laws; and Andy de la Tour, actor. Bernie Grant Arts Centre, Town Hall Approach Road, Tottenham, N15 4RX. Tel.: (020) 8365-5450.

### Manchester, England

**June 25-July 19**

Exhibit hours: Mon.-Thurs. 9AM-8PM. Fri.-Sat. 9AM-5PM. Manchester Central Library, St. Peters Square, City Centre, M2 5PD.

### Liverpool, England

**August 2**

Exhibit hours: 11AM-2PM. Public meeting 12PM. The Casa Bar and Venue, 29 Hope St., L1 9BQ. Tel.: (0151) 709-2148.



# ‘I would rather be free soul in jail than sycophant in the streets’

Below is an excerpt from Eugene V. Debs Speaks, one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for July. Debs (1855-1926) was a pioneer socialist agitator and labor leader. The piece is from his speech in opposition to World War I, given to a crowd of 1,200 at the state convention of the Socialist Party, held in Canton, Ohio, June 16, 1918. Debs points to the example of the 1917 Russian Revolution, which under the leadership of V.I. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party brought workers and farmers to power. For giving this speech, Debs was charged with violating the Espionage Act and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He spent two years and eight months behind bars. In 1920 he ran for president of the United States while in prison, winning nearly 1 million votes. Copyright ©1970 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY EUGENE V. DEBS

I have just returned from a visit over yonder [pointing to the workhouse] [laughter], where three of our most loyal comrades [applause] are paying the penalty for their devotion to the cause of the working class. [Applause.] They have come to realize, as many of us have, that it is extremely dangerous to exercise the constitutional right of free speech in a country fighting to make democracy safe in the world. [Applause.]

I realize that, in speaking to you this



“Our hearts are with the Bolsheviks of Russia who have laid the foundation of the first real democracy that ever drew the breath of life in this world,” said Eugene Debs in 1918 speech for which he was sent to prison. Debs condemned capitalist governments on both sides in World War I, the purpose of which, he said, was “conquest and spoilage of weaker nations.”

afternoon, there are certain limitations placed upon the right of free speech. I must be exceedingly careful, prudent, as to what I say, and even more careful and prudent as to how I say it. [Laughter.] I may not be able to say all I think [Laughter and applause]; but I am not going to say anything that I do not think. [Applause.] I would rather a thousand times be a free soul in jail than to be a sycophant and coward in the streets. [Applause and shouts.] They may put those boys in jail — and some of the rest of us in jail — but they can not put the Socialist movement in jail. [Applause and shouts.] ...

Socialism is a growing idea; an expanding philosophy. It is spreading over the entire face of the earth: It is as vain to resist it as it would be to arrest the sunrise on the morrow. It is coming, coming, coming all along the line. Can you not see it? If not, I advise you to consult an oculist. There is certainly something the matter with your vision. It is the mightiest movement in the history of mankind. What a privilege to serve it! I have regretted a thousand times that I can do so little for the movement that has done so much for me. [Applause.] The little that I am, the little that I am hop-

ing to be, I owe to the Socialist movement. [Applause.] It has given me my ideas and ideals; my principles and convictions, and I would not exchange one of them for all of Rockefeller’s blood-stained dollars. [Cheers.] ...

Here, in this alert and inspiring assemblage [applause] our hearts are with the Bolsheviks of Russia. [Deafening and prolonged applause.] Those heroic men and women, those unconquerable comrades have by their incomparable valor and sacrifice added fresh luster to the fame of the international movement. Those Russian comrades of ours have made greater sacrifices, have suffered more, and have shed more heroic blood than any like number of men and women anywhere on earth; they have laid the foundation of the first real democracy that ever drew the breath of life in this world. [Applause.] And the very first act of the triumphant Russian revolution was to proclaim a state of peace with all mankind, coupled with a fervent moral appeal, not to kings, not to emperors, rulers or diplomats but to *the people* of all nations. [Applause.] Here we have the very breath of democracy, the quintessence of the dawning freedom. The Russian revolution proclaimed its glori-

ous triumph in its ringing and inspiring appeal to *the peoples* of all the earth. In a humane and fraternal spirit new Russia, emancipated at last from the curse of the centuries, called upon all nations engaged in the frightful war, the Central Powers as well as the Allies, to send representatives to a conference to lay down terms of peace that should be just and lasting. Here was the supreme opportunity to strike the blow to make the world safe for democracy. [Applause.] Was there any response to that noble appeal that in some day to come will be written in letters of gold in the history of the world? [Applause.] Was there any response whatever to that appeal for universal peace? [From the crowd, “No!”] No, not the slightest attention was paid to it by the Christian nations engaged in the terrible slaughter.

It has been charged that Lenin and Trotsky and the leaders of the revolution were treacherous, that they made a traitorous peace with Germany. Let us consider that proposition briefly. At the time of the revolution Russia had been three years in the war. Under the Czar she had lost more than four million of her ill-clad, poorly-equipped, half-starved soldiers, slain outright or disabled on the field of battle. She was absolutely bankrupt. Her soldiers were mainly without arms. This was what was bequeathed to the revolution by the Czar and his regime; and for this condition Lenin and Trotsky were not responsible, nor the Bolsheviks. For this appalling state of affairs the Czar and his rotten bureaucracy were solely responsible. When the Bolsheviks came into power and went through the archives they found and exposed the secret treaties — the treaties that were made between the Czar and the French government, the British government and the Italian government, proposing, after the victory was achieved, to dismember the German Empire and destroy the Central Powers. These treaties have never been denied nor repudiated. Very little has been said about them in the American press. I have a copy of these treaties, showing that the purpose of the Allies is exactly the purpose of the Central Powers, and that is the conquest and spoliation of the weaker nations that has always been the purpose of war.

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# Cuban aid to Chernobyl victims

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help me. I am really glad destiny gave me the chance to go to Cuba,” she said. “The experience taught us a different attitude toward people.”

Many of the young women said that while they were in Cuba they learned about the fight to free the Cuban Five and they have helped to get out information about it in Ukraine.

### Solidarity with Cuba important

“I worked as a liquidator, one of those who helped to evacuate people,” Burka told us. Hundreds of thousands served as liquidators. Some were volunteers; others were conscripted for military duty.

“The area I was assigned to was supposedly empty, already evacuated, with very high levels of radioactivity,” said Burka. But people continued to

live in the village as late as May 17, more than three weeks after the meltdown, she said. “At first they only evacuated people who were vomiting.”

“In 1989 the contamination zone was extended, which prompted the evacuation of 50,000 more people,” she said. “It was after this that the Cuban program began. We were very grateful to the Cuban people, they were the only country to show this kind of human solidarity, all at their own expense.

“The Cuban program didn’t get enough publicity,” she added. “Many people didn’t know about it, this was the only limit on those who could take advantage of it. We need to get that information out now and get the program strong again. We will never forget the Cuban people.”

“This was an irreplaceable program,” Piltyay said. “It showed that the Cuban Revolution is alive and that solidarity with Cuba is very important.”

# Supreme Court attacks workers’ rights, champions ‘exercise of religion’ of bosses

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Among the seven Supreme Court rulings made at the end of June, some deal with the interconnected questions of women’s rights and workers’ rights, and pose questions on how to effectively defend them against government assault. One of these decisions, Sylvia Burwell, Secretary of Health and Human Services v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc., represents the rulers’ latest salvo under the false banner of “religious freedom.” On June 30, the Supreme Court said business owners could ignore generally applicable laws based on their religious convictions.

The court ruled 5-4 that Hobby Lobby, a chain of arts-and-crafts stores, with 13,000 workers, and Conestoga Wood Specialties, a 950-employee cabinet manufacturer, are exempt from providing employee health coverage for contraceptives as required by the Affordable Care Act, because company bosses say contraception runs counter to their Christian principles.

The court ruling, delivered by Justice Samuel Alito, claims the “contraceptive mandate substantially burdens the exercise of religion.” The decision states that it only applies to the contraceptive requirement of the Affordable Care Act and cannot be extended to deny vaccination or blood transfusions, avoid taxes or justify discrimination. The ruling did not attempt, however, to explain what it is specifically about contraception that should allow bosses to avoid paying for a legally required employee health benefit.

But many of the same justices happen to have a record of opposition to women’s rights. Justice Alito, for example, made his opposition to women’s right to abortion known in a 1985 memo: “We should make clear that we disagree with Roe v. Wade [the 1973 decision decriminalizing abortion] and would welcome the opportunity to brief the issue of whether, and if so to what extent, that decision should be overruled.”

Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor, Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan opposed the decision.

Ginsburg wrote a sharp dissent, calling the majority ruling a “decision of startling breadth,” chal-

lenging equal protection under the law guaranteed by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights’ separation of state and church.

At the age of 81, Ginsburg appears determined to resist all pressure for her to retire, determined to remain as the one consistent defender of the most important constitutional protections on the bench. In this case she was fully joined by Sotomayor, who often flips between upholding or disregarding the Bill of Rights and other protections against government intrusion in order to best accomplish her meritocratic intentions to get things done that are “good” for people, whether they know it or not.

“Accommodations to religious beliefs or observances, the court has clarified, must not significantly impinge on the interest of third parties,” Ginsburg wrote. The exemption “would override significant interests of the corporations’ employees and covered dependents” and “deny legions of women who do not hold their employers’ beliefs access to contraceptive coverage that the ACA would otherwise secure.”

Religious organizations exist to serve a community of believers, but companies existing to make profits do not fit that bill, Ginsburg said. “Workers who sustain the operations of those corporations commonly are not drawn from one religious community,” she wrote. “Indeed, by law, no religion-based criterion can restrict the work force of for-profit organizations.”

“The Court, I fear, has ventured into a minefield,” she concluded, saying the logic of the ruling extends to corporations of any size, public or private. “Would the exemption of the court ... extend to employers with religious grounded objections to blood transfusions (Jehovah’s Witnesses); antidepressants (Scientologists); medications derived from pigs, including anesthesia, intravenous fluids, and pills coated with gelatin (certain Muslims, Jews, and Hindus); and vaccinations (Christian Scientists, among others)?”

What some bosses have been demanding — and the Supreme Court just granted — has nothing to do with the right to worship free of government interference protected under the U.S. Constitution.

Freedom of worship was won as a result of revolutionary struggles against feudal absolutism. Its bedrock was and remains the separation of religious institutions from the government. It strengthens the ability of workers to speak freely, organize and forge unity across religious lines. But the Hobby Lobby decision turns “freedom of religion” into “freedom” for bosses to impose their beliefs on those whose labor power they purchase.

A coming *Militant* issue will take up another recent Supreme Court decision curtailing “buffer zones” inside which opponents of women’s rights cannot protest outside abortion clinics. It will discuss how supporters of women’s rights can chart a fighting course to defend the gains won in Roe v. Wade and how it fits into beating back the anti-working-class, anti-women offensive by the capitalist rulers today.

# Tel Aviv assaults Gaza

Continued from front page

by members of Hamas.

Some ultrarightists demonstrated in Jerusalem during the July 1 funerals for the three chanting, “Death to the Arabs” and “No Arabs, no terror attacks.”

The next day Mohammed Abu Khdeir, a 16-year-old Palestinian, was kidnapped near his home in the Shuafat neighborhood of East Jerusalem and reportedly burned alive.

After his son’s death, Mohammed’s father Hussein Abu Khdeir appealed for “both sides to stop the bloodshed.”

Hundreds of Palestinians protesting the murder clashed with Israeli police July 3. During the protest Mohammed’s cousin Tariq Abu Khdeir, 15, a high school sophomore visiting from Tampa, Florida, was beaten unconscious by Israeli border police and arrested. The beating was caught on an amateur video.

On July 6, police arrested six Israeli Jews who they said killed Mohammed in revenge.

Rachel Fraenkel, the mother of Naftali, issued a statement July 7. “Even in the abyss of mourning for Gilad, Eyal and Naftali, it is difficult for me to describe how distressed we are by the outrage committed in Jerusalem,” she said, “the shedding of innocent blood in defiance of all morality, of the Torah, of the foundation of the lives of our boys and of all of us in the country.”

The day before two Palestinians from the Hebron area visited the Fraenkel’s residence in Nof Ayalon to offer their condolences.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the killing of Abu Khdeir and called the family to offer condolences. “I would like to express my outrage and that of the citizens of Israel over the reprehensible murder of your son,” Netanyahu told the teen’s father July 7. “We acted immediately to apprehend the murderers. We will bring them to trial and they will be dealt with to the fullest extent of the law.”

The family rejected Netanyahu’s condolences. “We refuse to accept the condolences of someone who agrees on the murder of our people in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza,” an unnamed family member told the Palestinian news agency Ma’an.

The killing was widely condemned in Israel. “It gives legitimacy to our enemies to do what they want to us,” retired factory worker Shaul Marziano, 64, told the *New York Times*. Mohammed’s killers “should be treated just like Arab terrorists.”

After the kidnapping of Yifrach, Shaar and Fraenkel, Hamas head Khaled Mashaal told al-Jazeera TV that he did not know anything about their abduction. But if it turns out they were captured by Palestinians, he said, it would be “a logical and natural reaction to the violations of occupation forces.”

“We support every resistance attack against the Israeli occupation, which has to pay for its tyranny,” he said.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas condemned the kidnappings and killings.

On July 8, Hassan Abu Khdeir, a spokesperson for Mohammed’s family, welcomed hundreds of Jewish Israelis, organized by Tag Meir, the Interreligious Coordinating Council, at the mourning tent in Shuafat July 8.

“I congratulate them,” Muhammad Al-Julani, a Palestinian gas station attendant standing outside the tent, told the *Times of Israel*. “I appreciate their good will and support for peace. They oppose settlement activity and what’s happening now across the West Bank.”

But the family refused a visit by Israeli President Shimon Peres. “Whoever visits us must enter with dignity,” Sheikh Mahmoud Abu Khdeir told *Haaretz*. “And now it is not possible to come with dignity.”



Inside mourning tent July 8 for Mohammed Abu Khdeir, 16-year-old Palestinian killed by rightists a week earlier.

Corrections

The article “N.Y. Puerto Rican Day Wins Support to Free Oscar López” in the June 23 issue referred to the Nationalist Party of New York. It should have said the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, New York chapter. The article “Imperialist Order in Iraq Unravels, Kurds Advance Fight for Homeland,” in the July 14 issue has a couple sentences missing. The paragraph should read: “It feels both too late and too early to stop the disintegration,” *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman wrote June 17, reflecting a bleak and inaccurate perspective common in the U.S. ruling class. “Pluralism came to Europe only after many centuries of one side or another in religious wars thinking it could have it all, and after much ethnic cleansing created more homogeneous nations.” ...