

# THE MILITANT

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Expansion of Panama Canal  
reflects rising trade rivalries  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE VOL. 78/NO. 32 SEPTEMBER 15, 2014

## Workers in struggle join Labor Day actions

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Trade unionists who circulate the *Militant* joined fellow workers taking part in Labor Day weekend rallies, marches and other events. Contingents at these actions this year reflected an uptick in resistance to bosses' attacks and some new efforts to organize unions.

From Chicago, Alyson Kennedy, a production worker at Electromotive  
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### Special fall book offers for 'Militant' readers

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**See ads on page 3**

## Kurds repel Islamic State, advance fight for homeland

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Kurdish combatants, who've been leading the battle against the Islamic State in Iraq, continue to deal blows to the reactionary group as they fight alongside an unlikely assemblage of forces and simultaneously advance their fight for a homeland. Meanwhile, ruling-class support for stepped-up U.S. military intervention is growing.

A more than two-month siege by Islamic State forces of the town of Amirli, about 100 miles from Baghdad, was beaten back Aug. 31 with a combined assault led by Kurdish Peshmerga forces that included Iranian-backed Shiite militias, Iraqi army troops and U.S. airstrikes. Some 17,000 mostly Shiite Turkmen were holed up in the town.

Kurdish forces also advanced into Diyala province, retaking three villages from Islamic State forces in the Jalawla area Aug. 25, blocking a strategic path towards Baghdad, reported the Lebanon *Daily Star*.

In an Aug. 26 statement, Defense Secretary Charles Hagel said that seven countries had pledged weapons and  
**Continued on page 2**

## Moscow sends troops to back Ukraine separatists

Protests in Ukraine, Russia condemn move



Gregory Zhygalov

People of Mariupol, Ukraine, form human shield around city Aug. 30. Working people built trenches and other fortifications as Russian troops seized nearby border town of Novoazovsk.

BY JOHN STUDER

Moscow has deployed more than 1,000 troops, with tanks, armored carriers, anti-aircraft equipment and other armaments, to aid pro-Russian government separatist forces in the two eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The government of Russian President Vladimir Putin faces internal opposition among working people and a substantial section of the country's capitalist ruling class.

The imperialist governments of America and Europe have threatened to inflict further financial sanctions on Russia, but have ruled out

direct military intervention for now. "Ukraine is not a member of NATO," U.S. President Barack Obama said Aug. 28. "We don't have those treaty obligations with Ukraine."

"There have been 3,000 to 4,000 [Russian troops] in our ranks," Alexander Zakharchenko, the newly installed "prime minister" of the separatists' so-called Donetsk People's Republic, said in an interview on Russian state television Aug. 28.

Russian trucks transporting troops and weaponry have been hauling away industrial machinery looted from Ukrainian factories in areas un-

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## March in Staten Island protests cops' killings of Garner, Brown



Militant/Brian Williams

Thousands take part Aug. 23 in Staten Island march to protest brutality and killings by police.

BY MAGGIE TROWE

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — Thousands took to the streets here Aug. 23 to demand prosecution of police officer Daniel Pantaleo for killing Eric Garner by chokehold and to protest the recent gunning down of Michael Brown by officer Darren Wilson in

Ferguson, Missouri. It was the largest demonstration yet against the July 17 killing of Garner, with prominent trade union participation.

Marchers chanted, "Hands up, don't shoot," the chant of the Ferguson protesters, and "I can't breathe!"

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## Tel Aviv, Hamas sign cease-fire, war takes big toll on Palestinians

BY SETH GALINSKY

Tel Aviv and Hamas agreed to an open-ended cease-fire Aug. 26, ending for now the third Gaza war since 2008. The terms essentially maintain the same Israeli restrictions on trade and travel for Gazans that existed before the conflict.

The Israeli army struck Gaza more than 5,200 times, killing more than 2,100 people and wounding 11,000. More than 17,000 homes were destroyed and 38,000 damaged, leaving 120,000 Palestinians homeless. According to the U.N., nearly 70 percent of Gazans killed were civilians. Tel Aviv puts the figure at a little more than half. Some 126 factories in Gaza were ruined, and hundreds damaged, along with many greenhouses, live-stock pens and orchards.

"All the land installations for fishermen have been destroyed, including storage facilities and thousands of nets," Zakaria Baker, head of the committee for fishermen of the Gaza Union of Agricultural Work Committees, told the *Militant* by phone from Gaza Sept. 2. "The Israelis also killed four

fishermen and sank nine boats."

"Since 2006 they've imposed an economic embargo," he said. "One day they let us fish three miles out, other days up to six. They keep changing the rules."

After Israeli forces killed three top Hamas commanders in airstrikes Aug. 21, Hamas publicly executed 18 Palestinians who had been detained some time before the most recent con-

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# Kurds repel Islamic State

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ammunition to Kurdish fighters — Albania, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, France, Italy and Britain. German government officials announced Aug. 31 plans to provide the Peshmerga with thousands of machine guns and hand grenades, as well as hundreds of anti-tank missiles. The White House has “decided to take an international coalition approach,” reports The Hill website, hoping to bolster Iraq’s Shiite-dominated central government in Baghdad and mitigate the Kurds’ growing strength.

While Washington bombs Islamic State targets, Shiite militias aligned with Tehran are fighting them on the ground. While they have common immediate goals in Iraq, government officials insist they’re not working together. “We are working with the Iraqi government and with the Kurdish Peshmerga in Iraq. That’s it,” an unnamed administration spokesperson told the *New York Times*.

Since Aug. 8 the Pentagon has conducted more than 120 airstrikes against Islamic State forces, most near the autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq.

The U.S. government is considering whether to deploy additional special forces to identify Islamic State targets and call in airstrikes. At least 40 such special operations “advisers” are currently operating out of the Kurdish city of Erbil, according to the London *Guardian*. Also under discussion is obtaining congressional authorization for unlimited use of force against Islamic State forces in both Iraq and Syria, an unnamed administration official told the *Washington Post*.

Defeating the Islamic State “will have to be addressed on both sides of what is essentially at this point a nonexistent [Syria-Iraq] border,” said Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at an Aug. 21 news conference.

According to a recent Pew Research Center poll, the proportion of people in the U.S. who think the government is doing too little in “helping solve world problems” increased from 17 percent in November 2013 to 31 percent today. The shift in public opinion reflects rising ruling class opposition to the White House’s reluctance to undertake greater intervention against Islamic State forces. Obama has been sharply criticized by a range of politicians and big-business media for telling an Aug. 28 press conference, “We don’t have a strategy yet.”

The Islamic State has grown rapidly, attracting recruits from all over the world with its quick victories. Estimates vary that it has from 10,000 to as many as 17,000 fighters, including thousands of Iraqi Sunnis, some former members of Sadaam Hussein’s Baathist Party, driven by resentment over sectarian rule by the Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad.

At the same time, the Islamic State has stretched far. And its brutal, archaic brand of sharia law — with public beheadings, amputations and lashings — can garner fear, but not a solid base of support among the population.

As the states of Iraq and Syria — cobbled together by imperialist victors of World War I — disintegrate, an increasing number of U.S. ruling-

## Unions join DC protest against deportations



Militant/Glova Scott

WASHINGTON — More than 1,000 people marched here Aug. 28 from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency headquarters to the White House to protest deportations and government anti-immigrant policies. A range of organizations took part, from immigrant rights group Casa de Maryland, to the National Organization for Women, Sisters of Mercy and several unions, including the United Food and Commercial Workers, Laborers and Communications Workers of America.

— GLOVA SCOTT

class spokespeople have been calling for a strategy that recognizes and responds to the changing reality.

“We are long past the point of debating ‘one Iraq’ versus ‘three Iraqs,’” wrote John Bolton, Washington’s ambassador to the United Nations under President George W. Bush, in the

Aug. 25 *National Review*, “because fierce animosities have already split Iraq de facto into Kurdistan and the predominantly Arab remainder. The only outstanding issue is whether the Arab lands will themselves break into two, one largely Sunni, the other largely Shiite.”



Reuters/Youssef Boudial

Kurdish Peshmerga forces celebrate as they take control of town of Sulaiman Pek, near Amirli, northwest of Tikrit city, Sept. 1, driving out reactionary Islamic State forces.

## THE MILITANT

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National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa  
South African Metalworkers march July 1 during strike by 220,000 union members.

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# Labor Day reflects struggles

**Continued from front page**  
Diesel, and Serhii Tereshchenko, a Ukrainian-born college student who worked last summer as a furniture mover, joined several dozen other workers and union members protesting outside the Walmart on the South Side of the city.

“We are here today to represent Walmart workers across this nation who are fighting for higher wages and better conditions,” Charmaine Givens-Thomas, who works in the electrical department at Walmart, told the crowd. “We are standing up to this retailer and we are not backing down.”

“I am here to fight for a living wage,” Linda Haluska, who works at a nearby Walmart, told Kennedy. “I have to work two jobs, at Walmart and as a substitute teacher, just to make enough to support my family.”

Clay Dennison, who works at a wire plant near Seattle, met berry pickers, members of Familias Unidas por la Justicia labor union, at the Labor Day picnic

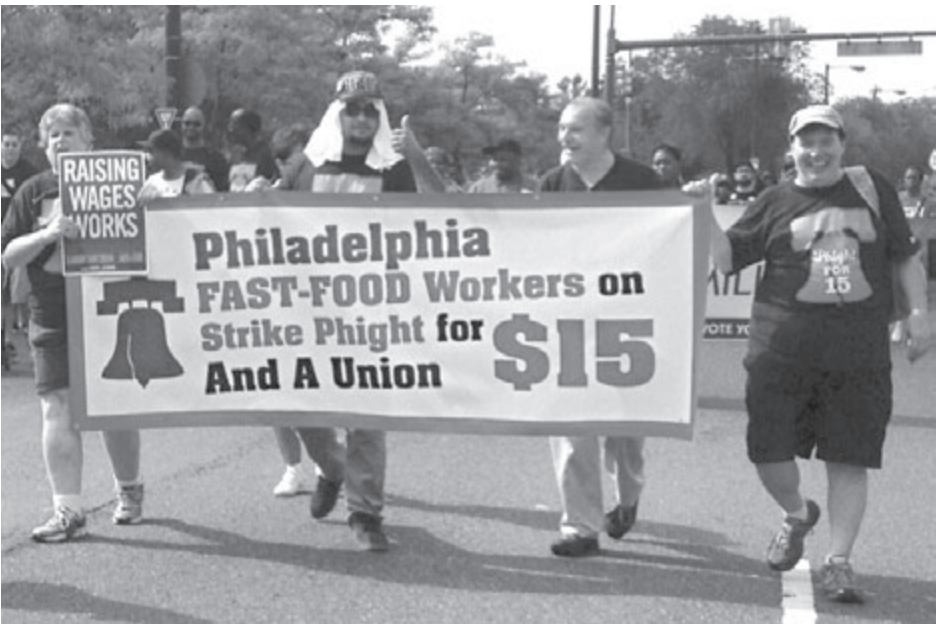
in Seattle. The union has been fighting for better wages and working conditions for more than a year against Sakuma Brothers Farms in Mt. Vernon, Washington. Dennison worked with union members on an article for the *Militant* on their fight.

“We are fighting for farmworkers rights,” Ramón Torres, president of the union, told those at the picnic. “The company is carrying out reprisals against union supporters. To all the unions who have supported us, thank you.” He told several workers that the *Militant* has told the truth about the farmworkers’ struggle.

At Labor Day actions, trade unionists who look to the *Militant* for a fighting perspective and international coverage of workers’ resistance and other political developments found many opportunities to get to know other workers and their struggles. Because of the interest they found in the socialist paper, registered in dozens of new subscribers, the *Militant* has decided to count all sub-

scriptions sold over the Labor Day weekend toward the seven-week fall circulation campaign that runs through Oct. 28.

George Chalmers, a worker at the Hyundai Rotem railroad car plant in South Philadelphia and member of Transport Workers Union Local 234, helped shop steward Eddie Bengochea talk up the Labor Day march on the job. Sev-



Militant/Janet Post

**Fast-food workers’ contingent marches in Philadelphia Labor Day parade. “I’m going to do whatever it takes to get \$15 and a union,” said Shymara Jones, who works at McDonald’s.**

eral co-workers joined them in the local’s contingent. Their union is currently in contract negotiations with the company. The local also represents bus drivers for Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority who have been working without a contract since March 14.

Chalmers spoke with McDonald’s workers, activists in the Philadelphia Fast Food Forward Organizing Committee who were staffing a table at the end of the march to build support for a strike, rally and speakout Sept. 4.

Shymara Jones, a McDonald’s worker, told Chalmers her hourly wage of \$7.75 “is not enough for me and my 7-year-old son. I work two jobs and still can’t provide for my family. So I say enough is enough and I’m going to do whatever it takes to get \$15 an hour and a union.”

In Los Angeles Phil Presser took part in the Labor Day parade, rally and picnic in Wilmington, California, a town that is home to many port workers. He

met up with a worker he knows in the port truckers’ struggle, and a worker active in the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

Hugo Menendez, a port truck driver, attended to build support for the truckers’ fight for a union and to be recognized as hourly wage workers instead of so-called independent contractors responsible for their own expenses and risks. “We are not going to stop fighting until we have a labor contract,” he said.

Also attending the rally were car washers organizing with the United Steelworkers union. Juliette Ovalle, lead organizer of the car washers campaign, told the rally, “Last year we had three contracts. This year we have 28. There are now 200 union car washers in the L.A. area.”

*Militant* readers in cities across the United States and in other countries are discussing quotas for the fall campaign. Articles each week will give readers a picture of the skirmishes workers are involved in and why they find the *Militant* useful.

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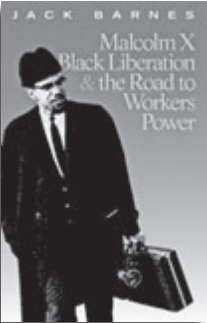
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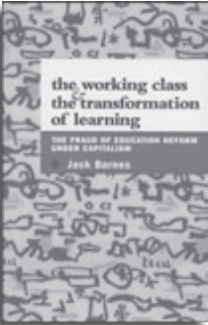
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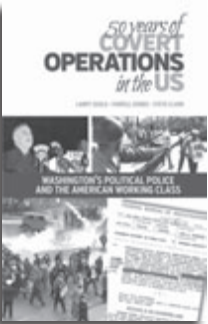
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# Miami event: ‘Five represent dignity of the Cuban people’

BY NAOMI CRAINE

MIAMI — Antonio Guerrero’s prison paintings were shown at an event here Aug. 9 supporting freedom for the Cuban Five, who were framed up and imprisoned by the U.S. government. (See “Who Are the Cuban Five?” on this page.)

About 100 people came over the course of the evening to view the collection of 15 watercolors titled “I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived,” hosted by Haitian group Veye Yo at its center in the Little Haiti neighborhood. The collection and accompanying descriptions convey the experience of Guerrero and his four comrades during their first months in U.S. prisons.

Tony Jeanthenor welcomed everyone present on behalf of Veye Yo. Speakers included Elena Freyre, president of the Foundation for Normalization of US-Cuba Relations; Max Lesnik, a leader of Alianza Martiana; Tom Baumann of the Socialist Workers Party; and Carol Meyer, a maintenance worker who read a poem by Guerrero titled “From the Hole.”

Richard Klugh, an attorney in Miami who is part of the defense team for the Cuban Five, joined the meeting by phone. “The work that Antonio has done that is displayed tonight is truly a reflection of his humanness and what he actually experienced,” Klugh told the gathering. “The difficulties we have had in presenting the case of the Five to the American people can only be combated by the type of event taking place tonight.”

“We pay tribute to these Five who represent the dignity of the Cuban people,” said Lesnik. “Enjoy the art — these paintings and these five men represent the heart of the Cuban Revolution.”

“When you look at these paintings and their descriptions, you see the creativity and the humor with which the Five resisted their incarceration,” said Baumann. “This strikes a chord with millions of working people here

in the U.S. who’ve had their own experiences with capitalist ‘justice.’”

The event had previously been scheduled to take place at the nearby Sweat Records, but store owners decided not to hold it there in face of threats from opponents of the Cuban revolution that were picked up by the press.

At least one participant, Michael Carracedo, a young worker and Miami Dade College student, came to the event after hearing it promoted on the online radio show “La Tarde Se Mueve,” hosted by Edmundo García.

A handful of rightists protested the event outside. Police moved them to the opposite side of the street. Over the course of the evening more than a dozen people from the neighborhood stopped by to view the exhibit after noticing the commotion.

Shena Othello, a young woman from nearby who didn’t know about



Carlos Rafael Diéguez

Participants at Aug. 9 meeting hosted at Haitian group Veye Yo center in Miami view prison paintings “I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived” by Antonio Guerrero, one of Cuban Five.

the case of the Cuban Five, came in with a friend who bought a copy of *The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, and Why They Should Be Free* to learn more.

“I came here first because I like art, and second to say that the right to freedom of expression that’s in

the U.S. Constitution should be respected,” Nicolas Marte, a limo driver originally from the Dominican Republic, told the *Militant*. He said that in viewing the paintings he was struck by “the peace and serenity of spirit, even as they express the harsh reality and suffering in prison.”

## Capitalism fuels spread of deadly Ebola in Africa

BY SETH GALINSKY

As of Aug. 22 more than 2,600 people have been infected and 1,427 have died in West Africa in the largest outbreak of Ebola virus since its appearance in 1976.

Ebola is a threat almost exclusively in sub-Saharan Africa, where economic and social conditions for the vast majority, many of whom live on less than \$1 a day, pave the way for recurring outbreaks and their spread. Because Ebola epidemics don’t pose a direct threat outside Africa and don’t provide opportunity for profit, the development of medical treatment and a vaccine has stalled for lack of funds.

The center of the epidemic is rural Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, among the poorest nations worldwide. It is spreading to densely populated major cities, where the vast majority lack access to modern sanitation or health care.

An outbreak in Nigeria, one of the most industrialized countries in Africa, has been contained. Nigerian Minister

of Health Onyebuchi Chukwu told the Nigerian *Times* Aug. 26 that seven of the 13 people infected have recovered and were discharged, five died, and only one person is still hospitalized.

Ebola is transmitted through direct contact with body fluids such as blood, vomit or feces. In the absence of an effective vaccine, the only treatment is to keep victims hydrated, stabilize their blood pressure and treat infections until the body’s immune system kicks in.

This simple treatment is out of the reach of many of those infected. Sierra Leone has only two doctors per 100,000 people; in Guinea and Liberia it’s just one doctor per 100,000 or less. Medical personnel lack enough masks, goggles, boots, gloves and waterproof aprons, or even running water so they can wash their hands. More than 240 health care workers have been infected and half of them have died.

In the midst of the crisis, the U.S. government’s Peace Corps evacuated all

340 of its personnel in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, including all health education workers. “We do not have anyone involved in Ebola efforts,” Peace Corp public affairs specialist Erin Durney told the *Militant* Aug. 27.

Government officials in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia cordoned off and quarantined a 4,200 square mile area where the three countries meet, the heart of the epidemic.

On Aug. 19 the Liberian government imposed a 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew in the West Point neighborhood of Monrovia, the capital city. It put up barbed wire barricades around the area, preventing people from entering or leaving. West Point has open sewers and little indoor plumbing or running water.

Hundreds were beaten back by police and soldiers Aug. 20 as they tried to break through the barricades.

“You fight Ebola with arms?” shouted David Anan, one of the protesters, according to the *New York Times*.

### 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, on the pretext that he bore responsibility for the Cuban government’s 1996 shootdown of two Brothers to the Rescue planes 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 and Fernando González on Feb. 28 this year.

## New volunteer joins ‘Militant’ staff

BY JOHN STUDER

With this issue, Maggie Trowe, 66, has joined the volunteer *Militant* staff. Trowe became politically active in high school in Oakland, California, where she joined the fight to desegregate public schools.

She joined the Young Socialist Alliance in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1974 and the Socialist Workers Party a year later in Seattle.

Trowe has helped defend unions, organize solidarity and get the *Militant* around in garment and meatpacking plants in Des Moines, Iowa; Austin, Minnesota; New York; Boston; and Miami, as well as in Montreal, Canada. In 1999 she joined coworkers in leading a fight against deportations in Marshalltown, Iowa.

Trowe ran as a SWP candidate for a range of offices, including U.S. vice president in 2000.

Fluent in Spanish and French, she has participated in a number of international *Militant* reporting trips to Venezuela and Cuba.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### CALIFORNIA

#### San Francisco

**Why Working People Should Defend Ukrainian Sovereignty.** Speaker: Carole Lesnick. Fri., Sept. 12, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-1235.

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Auckland

**Election Campaign Marked by Political Scandals, Social Crisis.** Speaker: Mike Tucker, Communist League. Fri., Sept. 12, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5 waged, \$2 unwaged. 188a Onehunga Mall. Tel.: (09) 636-3231.

## ON THE PICKET LINE

### Berry pickers in Washington seek union recognition, contract

BURLINGTON, Wash. — Berry pickers in Washington's Skagit Valley have entered the second year of their fight to win union recognition and a contract with improved conditions. They formed their union — Familias Unidas por la Justicia — last year, in the course of strikes at Sakuma Brothers Farms Inc.

Some 150 farmworkers walked off the job and protested Aug. 11 at Sakuma's offices in Bow against the firing of co-worker Cornelio Ramirez, one of 11 members of the union's negotiations committee. He had received warnings for "talking back," recording a conversation with bosses and picking too slow.

At a meeting with the company, "I said we need more money for what we do," Ramirez told the *Militant*. "I spoke up for all of us and for that I was fired. Since then I've tried to get a job at another farm. But the foreman showed me a list of members of Familias Unidas that had my name on it and would not hire me."

While Ramirez and four other workers were in the office demanding reinstatement and the removal of warnings on other workers, farm bosses tried to park a line of tractors between the farmworkers' picket line and Ramon Torres, president of the union, who is not allowed on company property. Picket Carmen Ventura Juarez led others in blocking the tractors and preventing the pickets from getting boxed in.

Familias Unidas has won support from the Puget Sound District Council of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and others unions, attends meetings of the Northwest Washington Central Labor Council and received a resolution of support from the Washington State Labor Council convention.

Farms bosses have also been organizing. In response to the union's call for a boycott of Sakuma berries, members of the Washington Farm Bureau launched the I Love Berries campaign, which has staged anti-union counterprotests. "Until the farmers and the farmworkers come together, we're both losers," Steve Sakuma, one of the owners of Sakuma Brothers, said in July.

Familias Unidas responded with an open letter:

"With all due respect, we the members of Familias Unidas por la Justicia are writing this letter in good faith to ask for a meeting. ... If you really mean

what you have said in public about caring for the farmworkers and our community, together we can end this conflict. We know that the blueberry harvest is here and you need us as much as we need you. ... The only thing we want is to negotiate and assure a better future for our children."

While some workers at Sakuma Farms are afraid to join the union, workers at some other companies have gotten in touch with them, Felimon Pineda, vice president of Familias Unidas, said by phone Aug. 20. "If you want to defend your rights against abuse on the job, this union is for you," he said. "If we win a contract this would be a basis for improving our conditions. We want medical care, vacation, pensions. If we win these things, it would benefit many in Burlington, other parts of Washington and beyond."

More information on Familias Unidas por la Justicia, including how to support the union, can be found at [www.boycottsakumaberries.com](http://www.boycottsakumaberries.com).

— Clay Dennison

### Quebec municipal workers fight attack on pensions

MONTREAL — Tens of thousands of unionized municipal workers here and across Quebec are locked in a battle with the provincial Liberal Party government against legislation to impose new pension terms.

City office workers, road construction crews, garbage collectors, street cleaners, bus drivers and others have been mobilizing under the banner of the Coalition for Free Negotiations to oppose the anti-union maneuver that disregards existing contracts and denies workers the right to negotiate over pension plans, as they have for many years. An organization of more than 50,000 retirees is also represented by the coalition.

Cops, whose pensions will also be affected, have marched in the workers' demonstrations.

On Aug. 20, the day that parliamentary hearings began on the legislation, hundreds of municipal workers protested at provincial government offices here and at the Quebec National Assembly in Quebec City.

"This is not just a fight for us, but for all the retirees," said Gaétan Dudiattel-



Militant/John Steele

Municipal workers in Montreal rally Aug. 20 against Quebec government attack on pensions.

lier, a city bus mechanic.

"We made sacrifices in negotiations to get the pensions we now have," said Marie-Hélène Vermette, an office worker also employed by the city bus company. "Unions need the right to negotiate."

To loud cheers and the blowing of horns, Jean Lapierre, former president of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 301, said, "The Liberal government is severely mistaken if it thinks it can keep stealing from us without a fight."

The government says the law is needed to maintain the viability of 172 pension plans by covering a \$3.9 billion deficit. Workers would pay 50 percent of the contribution costs and 50 percent of deficits accrued before 2014. Automatic cost-of-living pension increases would be cancelled. In addition, a city budget cap on pension costs of 18 percent would be imposed.

For the average Montreal city office worker, the proposed law would mean paying \$1,950 a year more and receiving \$1,880 less.

— John Steele

### Hotel workers in Quebec end strike after 21 months

SAINT-HYACINTHE, Quebec — Some 105 workers at Hotel des Seigneurs voted 90 percent on July 30 to end their 21-month strike, but nonetheless refused to accept the hotel bosses' concession demands.

Hotel des Seigneurs was the largest

hotel in the area when the strike began in 2012, with up to 300 workers employed in convention and banquet facilities.

At that time the Hotel des Seigneurs workers were among 5,500 members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions at 35 hotels across Quebec fighting contract concessions. While many hotel owners settled on terms more favorable to the workers than those the bosses had been pressing, SilverBirch, which owned Hotel des Seigneurs, decided to sell rather than negotiate.

The Bibeau family, who bought the hotel, tore down the kitchen and convention center, eliminating 88 jobs. It plans to contract out the majority of the other positions, maintaining little more than 40 unionized jobs.

Workers debated the issue for four hours before the July 30 vote. After 21 months of walking the picket line and taking part in numerous solidarity actions with other workers, they decided to go in together or not at all.

At a union press conference on Aug. 1, Local President Robin St-Pierre captured the mood of the meeting by repeating a comment made by one of the workers: "We leave with our head high, not on our knees."

"I think that no one wins in this conflict — neither the union nor the boss, and certainly not the town," Brigitte Malenfant, who worked in the banquet area for 28 years, told the *Militant*.

— Annette Kouri

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



September 8, 1989

The facts in the killing of Yusef Hawkins, a 16-year-old Black youth, in the Bensonhurst section of New York City on August 23 are unambiguous.

It was premeditated murder by a lynch mob. The racist motives behind the killing cannot be covered up. Statements made by the up to 30 bigots, before and during the attack on Hawkins and his three companions, show that they were out to grab the first Black or person of color who came through the streets of the white enclave of Bensonhurst.

What must be done is also clear. Only six of the attackers have been arrested and two have been indicted for murder. The full weight of city, state, and federal authorities must immediately come to bear in apprehending every single thug involved and all should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.



September 14, 1964

Malcolm X, the militant black nationalist leader, has publicly declared that he will not vote for either Goldwater or Johnson in the coming presidential election.

"Johnson and Goldwater," Malcolm X writes, "I feel that as far as the American black man is concerned, are both just about the same. It's just a question of Johnson, the fox, or Goldwater, the wolf. 'Conservatism' is only meaning 'Let's keep the niggers in their place,' and 'Liberalism' is meaning 'Let's keep the knee-grows in their place, but tell them we'll treat them a little better. Let's fool them more, with more promises.' Since these are the choices, the black man in America, I think, only needs to pick which one he chooses to be eaten by, because they both will eat him."



September 9, 1939

The entire labor movement of the Twin Cities has rallied to the defense of the 103 WPA [Works Progress Administration] workers who were framed up and indicted for striking against the Roosevelt-Woodrum Starvation Law.

The executive boards of the 125 AFL locals of Minneapolis, with a total membership of more than 60,000, voted unanimously at a special meeting in the Central Labor Union auditorium last Tuesday night to give their complete support to the indicted strikers.

The arrested strikers are organized in the jail. The first thing they did was to elect Max Geldman, leader of Federal Workers Section of General Drivers Local 544, as their Jail Union steward. The encouraging solidarity of the labor movement has kept the morale of the jailed strikers high.

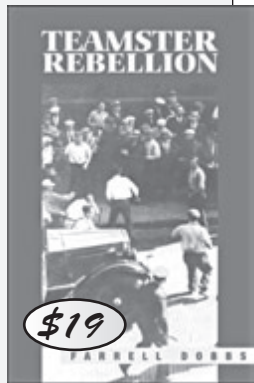
### Teamster Rebellion by Farrell Dobbs

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# ‘Now the world knows about our experiences in Ferguson’

BY JOHN HAWKINS

FERGUSON, Mo. — The outpouring of protests chanting “Hands up! Don’t shoot!” following the Aug. 9 killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson — especially the determination and discipline of the vast majority of working people involved — has won support nationwide and put government officials from Ferguson to Washington, D.C., on the defensive.

“The importance of what is happening here is that now the world knows about our experiences,” Carmelita Williams told the *Militant* Aug. 24 at the memorial erected in the middle of Canfield Drive, a block from West Florissant Avenue where Brown was shot dead.

“We’ve maintained our numbers in the face of violations of our rights — that we cannot assemble, that we cannot huddle, that we have to keep walking,” she said.

On Aug. 20 President Barack Obama sent Attorney General Eric Holder to St. Louis to “help determine exactly what happened and to see that justice is done.” His visit came two days after Gov. Jay Nixon deployed the National Guard to Ferguson to protect the police command center there.

The day before two St. Louis police officers emptied their weapons

on 25-year-old African-American Kajieme Powell, a suspected shoplifter who reportedly was brandishing a knife and yelling “shoot me.” They killed him less than four miles from where Brown was shot.

Holder’s visit took place in the midst of proposals from government officials for police reforms in several predominantly African-American working-class St. Louis County suburbs.

“This may have started out with the death of Michael Brown, but it’s about something much larger than that. It’s not only Ferguson or St. Louis County and it’s not Black versus white,” said Christopher Jones, an African-American musician and spokesperson for the Prophecy Gospel Singers, who have visited the memorial daily.

“Every time the cops gun somebody down they use the ‘fear of life’ excuse,” he said. “But what constitutes fear of life is at the officer’s discretion. That’s the problem.”

Nixon said Aug. 21 that the National Guard would begin withdrawing from Ferguson. A day later St. Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar announced the suspension of two cops, who had been assigned to crowd control in Ferguson.

Glendale cop Matthew Pappert was suspended for posting on Facebook that he thought protesters should be “put



Militant/Laura Anderson

March in Ferguson, Missouri, Aug. 23 against killing of Michael Brown by cop Darren Wilson.

down like rabid dogs.” St. Louis County cop Dan Page was suspended for comments made in a two-year-old YouTube video where he said, “I’m into diversity. I kill everybody, I don’t care.”

“Really these cops should be fired. Suspension is not enough. But even that wouldn’t have happened if not for what’s been going on,” Demetrius Luckett, 26, a landscaper and daily participant in the protests, told the *Militant* Aug. 24 outside his parents’ home about three miles from Canfield. Pappert was fired a few days later.

“This was bound to happen here,” Luckett said. “Ten years ago seven of us were at a friend’s house a couple of blocks away and we were making a little noise. The cops rolled up and said somebody had complained. In-

stead of telling us to quiet down, they made us lie face down on the ground. They started choking one of us and released the dogs on us. Then they made us crawl around the yard.”

Michael Brown was laid to rest Aug. 25. His funeral at the Friendly Temple Missionary Baptist Church in St. Louis was attended by close to 6,000 people.

On Aug. 27 Nixon nominated former St. Louis Police Chief Daniel Isom II, who is Black, to become the state’s top law enforcement official in an effort to mollify distrust in the cops and the capitalist “justice” system.

The following day, Ray Albers, a St. Ann police officer who had been serving on the streets of Ferguson, resigned. At an Aug. 19 protest Albers had pointed his rifle at a Ferguson protester during a heated verbal exchange, an episode that was captured on video and widely circulated on social media. St. Ann Police Chief Aaron Jimenez said Albers, a 20-year veteran of the force, quit on the recommendation of the municipality’s Police Board of Commissioners.

“What happened to Mike was wrong,” Devin Stone, a machinist who recently worked in a refinery near Ferguson but is now unemployed, told the *Militant*. “I knew him from the neighborhood. We used to play ball together. People need to say something. We can’t get anything done standing around.”

Laura Anderson and Arlene Rubinstein contributed to this article.

## Tel Aviv, Hamas sign cease-fire agreement

Continued from the front page

flict for allegedly collaborating with Israel.

During the war, Hamas targeted residents of Israel with more than 4,500 rockets and mortars, killing six civilians, including a Bedouin Arab and a Thai migrant farmworker. Sixty-four Israeli soldiers were killed, most in the ground assault on Gaza.

On Aug. 20 Hamas spokesperson Saleh Al-‘Arouri admitted that the group’s armed wing was responsible for the kidnapping of three Jewish teenagers in the West Bank in June, which he called “a heroic operation.”

On July 2, after the dead bodies of the three Jewish youths were discovered, a 16-year-old Palestinian from East Jerusalem was kidnapped and killed in retaliation. Hamas began a stepped-up barrage of rockets that day. Israeli airstrikes started July 7, followed by a ground invasion July 17.

At an Aug. 26 press conference in Gaza City, Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that Hamas has accomplished “what no Arab army has done. ... We have defeated them.”

Five days later, Tel Aviv announced that it was appropriating 1,000 acres of Palestinian land for settlements in the West Bank, near where the three Jewish teens were killed.

The war put a temporary damper on the class struggle inside Israel. Hundreds of Arab citizens of Israel were arrested during protests against the assault on Gaza, although most have been released.

About 70 Orthodox Jewish butchers at the Milouoff chicken slaughterhouse on the outskirts of Accra went

on strike from Aug. 12 to 17, demanding higher wages and union representation. But other labor battles in Israel were put on hold during the fighting, including a campaign for a 30-shekel-an-hour (\$8.68) minimum wage. “Now that the war is over we are talking about how to reinstitute the campaign,” Shay Cohen, organizational secretary for the Koach La Ovdim labor federation, said by phone from Haifa Aug. 29.

Koach La Ovdim has also been organizing construction crane operators, who are fighting against long

shifts and unsafe work conditions. According to Cohen, about two-thirds of the operators are Jews from the former Soviet Union and one-third are Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. The laborers on the ground are mostly immigrants, including from China and Romania, and Palestinians from the West Bank.

“The Palestinians from the West Bank were not allowed into Israel” during the war, Cohen said. “Now it’s getting back to business as usual,” and the union plans to resume its organizing efforts.

## Staten Island march protests cops’ killings

Continued from the front page

In a widely watched cellphone video taken by a bystander, Garner told cops, “I can’t breathe,” 11 times.

“I saw cops surround Eric that night,” Frederick Winship, 59, told the *Militant*. “They knocked him to the ground and chokehelded him. It was totally unwarranted.”

Police accosted Garner for allegedly selling “loosie” cigarettes, employing deadly force after Garner protested: “Every time you see me you want to mess with me. I’m tired of it. It stops today! ... I’m minding my business, please just leave me alone.”

Staten Island District Attorney Daniel Donovan announced Aug. 19 that a grand jury will convene in September to consider criminal charges after the city medical examiner ruled Garner’s death a homicide.

The protest was organized by the National Action Network, the NAACP,

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East and the United Federation of Teachers. Speakers included Rev. Al Sharpton, president of the National Action Network; George Gresham, president of 1199SEIU; and David Paterson, former New York state governor. Eric Garner’s widow, Esaw Garner, and his mother, Gwen Carr, took part in the march and rally. Other speakers at the rally included Kadiatou Diallo, whose unarmed son Amadou was shot 41 times by police in the Bronx in 1999, and Constance Malcolm, the mother of Ramarley Graham, an unarmed 18-year-old shot to death by the police in 2012.

“People should be accountable for what they do,” said George Mizell, 74, a retired union apprenticeship coordinator whose son Irving Mizell died last year in custody of police from the 120th Precinct, the same precinct where Garner was killed.

Ronald Harris, 74, marched carrying

the funeral program for his son Ronald Harris, Jr., who also died in police custody last year at the age of 47 after being picked up on a warrant for having an open beer can. “The cops said he hanged himself with his belt,” Harris said, “but he never wore a belt.”

“The cops are the criminals here,” said Shaki Campbell, 35, a hotel maintenance worker who lives in Staten Island. “If I killed someone, I’d be arrested and on my way to trial. That officer should be in jail facing trial.”

Mike Montijo, 42, a union electrician, described a run-in with New York police six months ago, when the cops accused him of robbing a store. “It was mistaken identity,” he said. Cops broke his arm. “This demonstration opens up people’s eyes. It’s not just Black and white, it’s blue — they’re the biggest gang in New York. Everyone is supposed to be equal, but we’re getting judged, juried, and convicted on street corners.”

# Panama Canal expansion underscores trade rivalry

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL  
AND MARY-ALICE WATERS

PANAMA CITY — The Panama Canal, one of the most impressive feats in history of human labor and a triumph of engineering, began operation 100 years ago. A yearlong program of activities here marking the centennial of this strategic international waterway has been more than a commemoration of the accomplishment of the canal's place in Panama's history. It has reflected the deep pride among the Panamanian people in their century-plus struggle to get the U.S. imperialist boot off their neck.

At the same time, an expansion of the canal currently nearing completion provides a window into intensifying rivalries among capitalist powers worldwide today — and the class struggles their competition is already generating.

Among the centennial events was the commemoration of a related anniversary: 160 years since the arrival in Panama of the first shipload of Chinese indentured workers. Laboring under conditions of virtual slavery in the mid-1850s, these bonded workers helped build a predecessor to the canal, the Panama Railroad, connecting the Atlantic and Pacific coasts nearly 15 years before the opening of the U.S. Transcontinental Railroad.

An Aug. 6-9 regional conference of the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas, which focused on Chinese in the history of the Americas, was one of the activities timed to coincide with the anniversary. The gathering was organized to help participants learn about the history of this strategically located country.

Washington controlled the canal and the 10-mile-wide Canal Zone that divides the country in half from 1903 until the end of 1999, when these were turned over to Panamanian jurisdiction under the 1977 treaties signed by Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos and U.S. President James Carter.

Today the 48-mile waterway remains a major trade link, providing passage for up to 14,000 ships a year — about 5 per-

cent of international shipping.

The anniversary celebrations come at a time when a massive project is underway to expand the Panama Canal's capacity in order to accommodate a new generation of giant container ships. Completion of a new set of locks, scheduled for the end of 2015, will change international trade and shipping patterns. The scramble among capitalist rivals for who will win and lose in the sharpening competition has already begun.

From the visitors observation center at the Gatún Locks, on the Caribbean side of the canal, *Militant* reporters witnessed the huge scope of the expansion project, initial work on which had begun in the early years of World War II. When completed, it will double the tonnage that can be shipped through the seaway.

## Centennial highlights canal's place in rise of imperialism, struggle against US domination

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL  
AND MARY-ALICE WATERS

PANAMA CITY — The construction of the Panama Canal revolutionized world trade and accelerated the rise of the United States as a Pacific power and bastion of imperialism.

As the Panama Railroad was being built in the wake of the 1848 California gold rush, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, founders of the modern communist workers movement, wrote about Panama's place in the expansion of capitalism worldwide.

"It is a mere 18 months since the Californian gold mines were discovered, and the Yankees have already started work on a railway, a large highway and a canal from the Gulf of Mexico, steamships are already making regular trips from New York to Chagres [on Panama's Caribbean coast], and from Panama to San Francisco," they noted in a February 1850 article.

"The main trade route to the Pacific Ocean, which has only now really been opened up and which is becoming the



Gates arrive in Panama for new, larger canal locks. Expansion to accommodate today's mega-freighters puts spotlight on international competition among capitalist powers.

Many of today's freighters — as well as battleships and aircraft carriers — are too large to go through the canal's two sets of locks, so they must take alternate, more costly routes. Chinese super-freighters, for example, currently dock at U.S. and Canadian ports on the West

Coast and the cargo is shipped cross-country by rail or truck.

The third set of locks, now under construction alongside the existing ones, will provide a wider and deeper lane for larger military vessels, cruise liners

Continued on page 9

most important ocean in the world, will henceforth cross the Isthmus of Panama," they wrote in a subsequent article. "The growing traffic between Asia, Australia and America is demanding new, large-scale steamship services from Panama and San Francisco to Canton, Singapore, Sydney, New Zealand and the most important port-of-call in the Pacific Ocean, the Sandwich Islands [Hawaii]."

In a presentation at the recent conference here of the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas (see accompanying article), Panamanian historian Berta Alicia Chen noted that in the early 1850s, as many as 1,500 Chinese indentured workers were brought to Panama as part of what was known as the coolie trade. They toiled alongside workers from Jamaica, Ireland, India and other countries in building the Panama Railroad. Thousands of these workers — estimates range from 6,000 to 12,000 — died from deadly job conditions, yellow fever, malaria and other diseases. Hundreds of Chinese committed suicide rather than remain subjected to bonded labor.

The Panama Railway, completed in 1855, accelerated the building of a canal across Panama. In the 1880s the first attempt, undertaken by French capitalists, ended in bankruptcy and with the death of some 22,000 workers from disease and job injuries.

As Washington consolidated its reach as an imperialist power with colonies and markets in both oceans, the Panama Canal project became vital to the interests of the U.S. ruling families. In 1903 U.S. Marines were sent to the isthmus to "support" Panamanians fighting for independence from Colombia. The U.S. government imposed a treaty on the newly established country, giving Washington rights to build and operate a canal "in perpetuity" — including the five-mile swath of land on either side — and to use U.S. troops anywhere in Panama to maintain "order."

Cutting through jungle and rock, some 56,000 workers — nearly half of them Barbadians and other West Indians — were involved in the herculean

feat, which took a toll of another 5,600 lives before the canal's completion in 1914.

The U.S. imperial masters imposed Jim Crow-style segregation in their colonial enclave. While U.S.-born Caucasian workers were hired on the "Gold Roll," Black workers were put on the "Silver Roll," which meant lower wages and segregated housing, schools and other facilities. Under the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Chinese immigrants were barred from the Canal Zone, and the Panamanian government followed Washington's discriminatory anti-Chinese policies.

### Struggle for national sovereignty

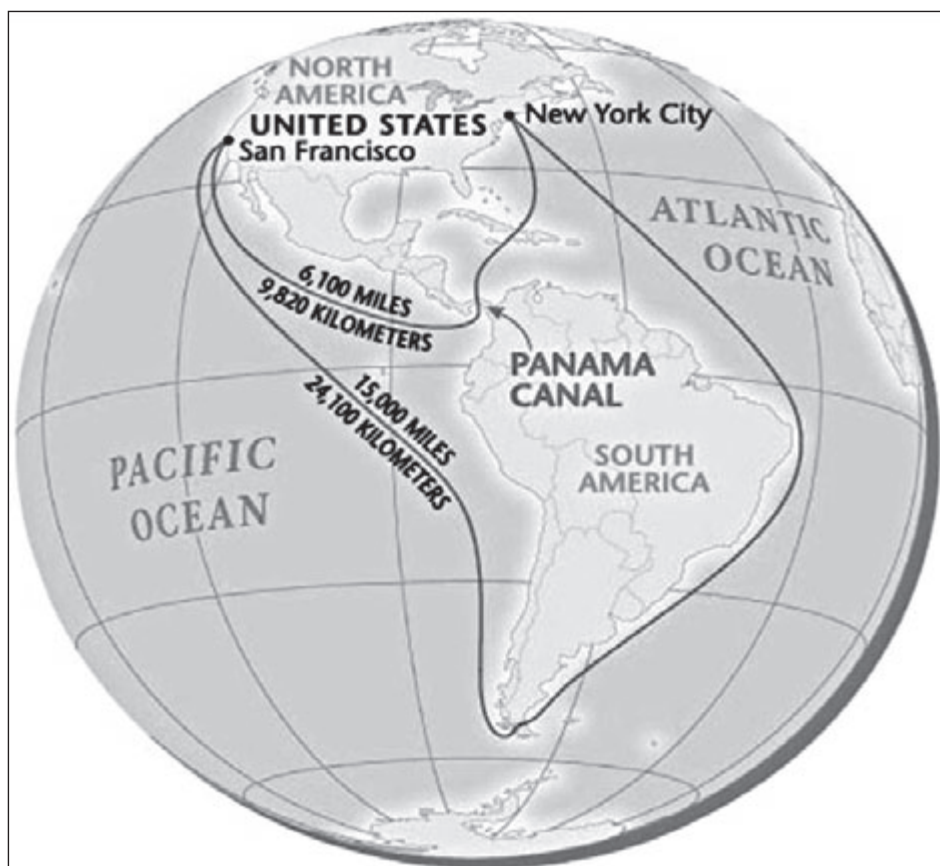
U.S. military forces repeatedly intervened in Panama over the decades. The struggle for Panama's national sovereignty intensified in the wake of the 1959 victory of the Cuban Revolution and the rising wave of anti-imperialist struggles throughout Latin America.

A turning point occurred Jan. 9, 1964 — commemorated today as Martyr's Day — when Panamanian students entered the Canal Zone, tried to raise the Panamanian flag, and were attacked, triggering two days of mass protests. Zone police and U.S. soldiers fired on demonstrators, killing 21.

In the aftermath of the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, and with revolutionary struggles intensifying in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America and the Caribbean, Washington decided the political cost of maintaining the Canal Zone as a U.S. territory was too great. In 1977, the U.S. and Panamanian governments signed treaties relinquishing control of the canal and Canal Zone to Panama by 2000.

In 1989, when U.S. forces invaded Panama and seized then head of state Gen. Manuel Noriega in order to impose a more subservient government, they used the U.S. military bases still located in the Canal Zone.

With the final reversion of that territory to Panama a decade later, the 14 U.S. bases were closed and the U.S. Southern Command was relocated to Florida.



Panama Canal cut trade route between coasts, accelerating rise of U.S. as a Pacific power.

# Russian Revolution showed toilers can take political power

*Below is an excerpt from Revolutionary Continuity: Birth of the Communist Movement, 1918-1922 by Farrell Dobbs. Dobbs was a principal leader of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes and subsequent over-the-road union organizing campaign, as well as a central leader of the Socialist Workers Party, serving as the party's national secretary from 1953 to 1972. The book is the second volume in a two-part series by Dobbs on the history of the development of Marxist leadership in the U.S. Copyright © 1983 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FARRELL DOBBS

When the United States government entered the First World War in April 1917 it took coercive measures to enforce compliance by the population with its imperialist course. Compulsory military service was imposed. The passage of the Espionage Act amended federal sedition laws to severely restrict civil liberties. This act served as the main legal justification for government attacks on antiwar militants.

Political cops raided the headquarters of trade unions and workers' political organizations. Homes of workers were invaded as well. Their families were harassed. Records and



Russian Revolution offered "concrete demonstration that the working class could put an end to imperialist wars of conquest." Above, demonstration in Petrograd, May 1, 1917.

literature were seized. Arrests, often followed by imprisonment, were made on frame-up charges of obstructing the military draft. The foreign born became a special target, as deportations were used more and more as a weapon of intimidation. Anti-German chauvinism was fostered on a mass scale.

An even more brutal crackdown, including the imposition of martial law, became the order of the day in Washington's colonial possessions such as Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

Press censorship was instituted, and authorities banned from the mails numerous issues of radical publications. At the same time the government encouraged extralegal suppression of the workers' movement as part of a general antiradical crusade.

Mobs terrorized opponents of the war — socialists, pacifists, syndicalists, and rebel farmers alike. Businessmen were praised for arming themselves. Racist assaults and lynchings increased. Vigilante gangs ransacked trade union centers, broke strikes in the name of "patriotism," and in Butte, Montana, lynched a union organizer, Frank Little. Attacks were carried out against agrarian radicals, especially supporters of the Non-Partisan League.

Under such reactionary pressures class-collaborationist currents within

the labor movement capitulated, one after another, to the imperialist government. The once-massive peace movement was reduced to a scattering of individuals who maintained a stand as conscientious objectors to military service.

Despite such defections, however, many of the nation's toilers remained opposed to the war. A competently led organized labor movement could have forged an alliance of the working class and working farmers that would have launched a strong antiwar campaign as part of its class-struggle course. But the workers were handicapped by a general leadership default. They had no independent means of politically asserting themselves in an organized manner. Right-wing and centrist leaders in the labor movement were betraying them, and none of the left-wing tendencies had a program that pointed the way toward an effective defense of the toilers' interests. ...

Then, like a brilliant sunrise, inspiring political light came from the East. On October 25 (November 7), 1917, the Bolshevik revolution triumphed in Russia, offering living proof that, under the leadership of a revolutionary combat party, a workers' vanguard could lead the exploited toilers to take political power. Once in power, moreover, the Soviet regime's first proclamation stated that the newly created workers'

and peasants' republic was removing itself from the international conflict, thus providing a concrete demonstration that the working class could put an end to imperialist wars of conquest. The Russian example gave fresh impetus to struggles against the capitalists, landlords, and imperialist oppressors throughout the world.

In the United States all wings of the radical movement were inspired by the proletarian victory in Russia. The definitive overthrow of tsarism in war-ravaged Russia and the victory of the antiwar workers, peasants, soldiers, and sailors were popular well beyond the ranks of proletarian revolutionists. Support for the new Soviet government was expressed by individuals adhering to widely divergent political tendencies, ranging from reformists in the SP [Socialist Party] to the anarcho-syndicalists in the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World]. Pro-Soviet sentiments were also manifested among militants in the AFL. Their immediate sense of class kinship with their Russian brothers and sisters was articulated by Eugene V. Debs, the foremost socialist agitator of the time, who proclaimed himself a Bolshevik. ...

In August 1918 Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin addressed a letter to American workers appealing for their support in opposing the imperialist intervention. "At the present time the American revolutionary workers have to play an exceptionally important role as uncompromising enemies of American imperialism," he wrote.

Lenin defended the Russian Soviet republic against bourgeois propaganda that was trying to turn workers against the revolution by pointing to the stern defense measures, including executions and abridgement of democratic rights, forced upon the Bolsheviks in order to defeat the counterrevolution in the civil war. Recalling the example of the American War of Independence from British monarchical rule and the U.S. Civil War to abolish slavery and defeat the slave-owning landlord class in the South, Lenin frankly explained to U.S. workers that the basic "truth is that no revolution can be successful unless *the resistance of the exploiters is crushed.*"

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# Panama Canal expansion

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and super-size cargo ships bearing up to 12,800 containers each.

## Altered world shipping patterns

The canal expansion is fueling fierce competition among capitalist shipping companies and owners of port facilities around the world. The United States and China are the two principal users of the Panama Canal, based on tonnage and point of origin.

Many U.S. harbors, from the West Coast to New Jersey, Miami and New Orleans, are being deepened and their port infrastructure upgraded in the high-stakes drive to accommodate the mega-freighters. Owners of U.S. West Coast port facilities have stepped up their drive against the wages and conditions of longshore workers, truckers and other port personnel in an effort to be more competitive.

The government of Egypt recently announced an \$8.4 billion project to expand the rival Suez Canal. The Nicaraguan government has endorsed a plan by a Chinese company to build a waterway across its territory. And Panamanian authorities are studying a proposal by another Chinese company to dig a fourth set of locks along the existing canal route capable of handling even larger freighters.

The canal expansion has also spurred a wave of construction in Panama in the past half-decade, fueled by hopes of turning Panama into a new center of capitalist finance and trade. In the capital city, office towers, tourist hotels, and high-rise condominiums have been going up, a new subway system opened its first line this year, and a beltway has been built along the shoreline to ease traffic congestion. The resulting demand for labor is attracting workers from across the region and as far away as Spain.

As a result of these economic and social changes, the working class in Panama is growing. Expectations of better living standards are rising.

In April 70,000 striking construction workers, organized by the SUNTRACS union, shut down the canal expansion and other building projects in Panama for two weeks. Workers on canal construction and other big projects won an 11 percent raise and further increases over the next three years. Until then, many skilled workers on the canal project earned \$3.99 an hour.

The commemorations of the Panama Canal centennial have offered a remind-

er of the pivotal role of the waterway's construction in the consolidation of finance capital and the rise of the U.S. as an imperialist power. Participants in the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas conference got a better grasp of that history — including the place within it of Chinese workers — through several conference panel discussions as well as visits to the canal.

## Conference on Chinese in Americas

Titled “From the South of China to the South of America,” the conference brought together about 100 people, mostly academic researchers studying international Chinese migration over the last two centuries. A majority were from North America and several Latin American and Caribbean countries, with others coming from Asia and Europe.

Panelists covered a range of topics, from “Canadian Immigration Policies and Chinese Students’ Migration Intentions” to “Chinese-Mexican Resistance During the 1930s Anti-Chinese Campaign in Tampico” and “The Struggle Against Anti-Chinese Racism in Cuba and the United States, 1865 to Today.”

About a dozen presentations discussed the history of the Chinese in Panama. Several Panamanian panelists highlighted the fact that at least 5 percent of this nation's population is of Chinese descent — one of the highest in Latin America.

Hosted by Chinese-Panamanian associations, conference participants were taken to several sites around Panama City and at the canal. A high point was an Aug. 8 trip to the Miraflores Locks on the Pacific side of the Panama Canal, where the observation deck affords a view of the huge freighters navigating through the channel's gates. At the visitors center, a four-story museum documents the history of the canal.

A special ceremony that evening inaugurated an exhibit on “The Chinese Presence in Panama” that will become a permanent addition to the museum. In attendance were leaders of the local Chinese community and top government officials, including Panama's President Juan Carlos Varela. One of the speakers at the event, Mario Him, a leader of the Association of Chinese-Panamanian Professionals, noted with pride that the new display was the fruit of an eight-year campaign by Panamanians of Chinese descent to gain official recognition of the place of the Chinese in the historic undertaking to build an interoceanic route.



Inauguration of “Chinese Presence in Panama” exhibit at historical museum at Miraflores Locks, Panama Canal, Aug. 8. At podium is historian Berta Alicia Chen. Speakers included Panama's President Juan Carlos Varela, far left, and Chinese-Panamanian community leaders.

A centerpiece of this display is a replica of the *Sea Witch*, the U.S. clipper ship that 160 years ago — on March 30, 1854 — brought 705 indentured workers from the Chinese port of Swatow (today Shantou) to labor under brutal conditions on the construction of the trans-Panama railroad, which was completed

in 1855.

The museum illustrates how the effort to build a short route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific, spurred initially by the 1848 discovery of gold in California, culminated with the opening of the U.S.-run Panama Canal nearly 70 years later.

# Moscow sends troops to Ukraine

Continued from front page

der separatists' control.

Equipment to make early warning radar equipment was removed from the Donetsk Topaz plant, high-precision equipment was taken from the Tochmash military-industrial complex in Makeyevka and entire production lines were removed from the Luhansk Cartridge plant.

In a threat to the southern border city of Mariupol, Russian troops crossed the border and seized the town of Novoazovsk on the Azov Sea. The occupying troops distributed written instructions to residents, *Ukrayinska Pravda* reported, ordering them not to “obstruct the free movement of Russian troops,” and to communicate only in Russian so the “peacekeepers would not misunderstand your intentions.” They also instructed residents to turn in names of those who were “participants of Maidan, activists of civil rights groups and leaders of ethnic minority groups,” and to “show [the Russian troops] how happy you are to see them.” The Maidan refers to the mass mobilizations centered in Kiev's Maidan Square that overthrew pro-Moscow President Viktor Yanukovich in February.

Thousands in Mariupol have protested Moscow's incursion, including by forming a human shield around the city. Workers have volunteered to help build trenches and other fortifications. Steelworkers from the Metinvest plant in Mariupol, which employs 27,000 workers, have been welding anti-tank barriers and preparing for combat.

“This is our gem,” Ilya, a Metinvest worker, told Reuters, referring to the plant. “The Russians would like to either seize it or render it unusable, so we will prevent them.”

## Protests spread in Russia

While the Kremlin denies direct Russian intervention in Ukraine, overwhelming evidence points to the contrary. Ella Polyakova, leader of the Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg, told the Russian press Aug. 26 her group had compiled a list of more than 100 soldiers killed in Ukraine and hundreds more injured. The group, which dates back to Moscow's war in Afghanistan, has strong moral appeal. Two days later the Russian Ministry of Justice placed the

group on its “foreign agent” registry.

“The ruling regime in Russia has dragged the country into a fratricidal war,” the new Organizing Committee of the Russian Anti-War Movement said in a statement in Moscow Aug. 28. The group called on mothers to “demand the return of your children to Russia if you find out that your son has been sent by the command to fight in Ukraine.”

Because one-person pickets don't require government permits, a number of protest actions have been carried out by individuals, including a number of prominent artists, writers and others. “War against Ukraine is a disgrace and a crime,” said the poster held by writer and journalist Viktor Shenderovych as he picketed in Moscow.

Nadia Tolokonnikova, one of the members of Pussy Riot who had been imprisoned for protests against Putin, posted a picture of a small stuffed bear on Red Square holding a Ukrainian flag, next to a set of tires like those erected on Maidan months earlier, with the caption, “Glory to the heroes, silently someone answered.”

## Miners defend Ukraine, jobs

Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, the Ukrainian government has begun to impose a series of sharp cuts in government expenses, targeting jobs, wages and social benefits. Some 38 state-owned mines are up for closure or sale.

“While separatists in the Donbass are destroying businesses and people, the Ministry of Energy and the Coal Industry of Ukraine are destroying the industry and economy of the state,” Mykhail Volynets, chair of the National Union of Independent Coal Miners of Ukraine, told a Kiev Round Table meeting Aug. 22.

Volynets had just returned from a tour of eastern mines, many of which have been closed by separatists.

“Miners have risked their lives to keep production going,” he said. “The miners at the Fashchevskaya mine kept working while the separatists controlled the area. Three weeks ago they were driven out. The miners saved the mine, pumping out water that threatened it.

“But they hadn't been paid since June,” he said. “Are the bosses trying to force them out on strike?”



Barbadian and other West Indian laborers work on construction of Panama Canal, completed in 1914. West Indians made up nearly half of workforce of 56,000. One out of 10 workers was killed on U.S.-run canal project due to disease and brutal job conditions.