

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Giuliani's Senate bid felled by
pornographication of politics

— PAGES 12, 14

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Lebanese celebrate Israeli troop withdrawal from south

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Israel's more than two-decade-long occupation of territory in southern Lebanon collapsed as thousands of jubilant villagers accompanied by Hezbollah fighters marched into the area to reclaim their homes and land they were forced to flee.

"The nightmare is over," stated Abdul Latif Ghaith, 60, a local resident. "Good riddance."

Initially, imperialist-led United Nations forces in the area tried to block the convoy of cars and marchers from entering the so-

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NY forum discusses Puerto Rico struggle

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK—"Vieques is our land. It doesn't belong to the U.S. Navy. It belongs to Puerto Rico," stated Rafael Cancel Miranda, a former political prisoner and longtime leader of movement for the independence of Puerto Rico. The audience at a meeting at Hunter College here responded with an enthusiastic round of applause.

Some 125 people attended this event May 20 to discuss the political contributions of Pedro Albizu Campos—historic leader of the modern Puerto Rican independence movement—in the context of today's fight to get the U.S. Navy out of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques and other aspects of the struggle against U.S. colonial rule.

Entitled "Albizu Lives in the Puerto Rican Resistance," it was part of a "Puerto Rican Resistance Weekend" that included a picket for Vieques at the federal building the day before and a "Freedom Mass for Puerto Rican Political Prisoners" held at Resurrection Church in the Bronx the following day.

The meeting was organized to build the "Albizu Vive" contingent in the June 11 Puerto Rican Day Parade here, dedicated this year to the struggle of the people of Vieques and to Albizu Campos.

One of the featured speakers was Pedro Aponte, co-author with human rights fighter Ruth Reynolds of *I Accuse*, a book that documents the case that U.S. authorities subjected Albizu Campos to radiation as part of their unsuccessful effort to break him in prison in the 1950s and '60s.

Aponte spoke about the importance of the dual theme of the upcoming Puerto Rican Day event. Albizu "was always against the militarization of Vieques" by Washington, Aponte stated. "Albizu and Vieques were held captive by the U.S. government and denied their freedom. And both were exposed to radiation" by the same repressive state force.

Albizu "resorted to any means available to struggle for Puerto Rican independence."

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New Mexico miners strike P&M Coal

Unionists on Navajo Nation fight for health, pensions, pay

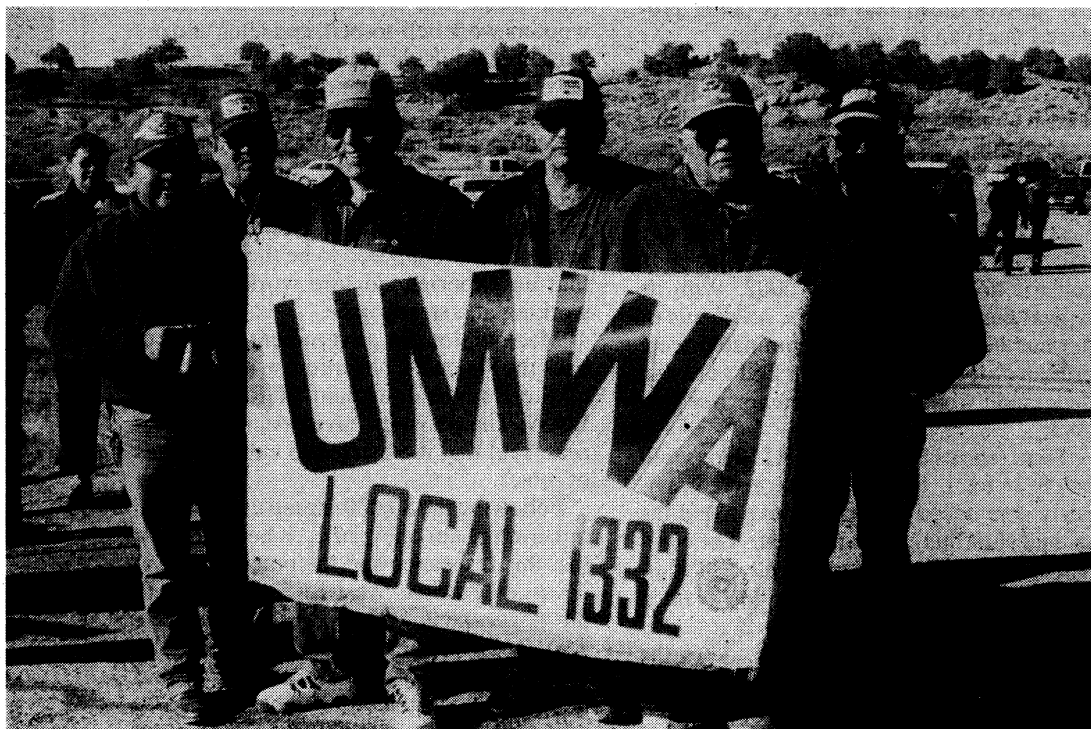
BY JAN MILLER

GALLUP, New Mexico—The mine workers strike against the Pittsburg and Midway Coal Co. (P&M) here is solid. On the picket lines, the experience of many union members in previous strikes and struggles with the coal bosses is evident.

The struck McKinley mine is on the Navajo reservation, and more than 90 percent of the mine workers are Navajo. P&M owns mines in Alabama, New Mexico, Wyoming, and Texas. The union contract at the company's Kemmerer mine in Wyoming is set to expire May 26.

Mine workers here organized a rally of 100 strikers and family members to "greet" company officials of the Pittsburg and Midway Coal Co. meeting at the McKinley mine. Pickets assembled at 6:00 a.m., chanting, "No contract, no work" as the caravan of company officials un-

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Militant/Carole Lesnick

Striking miners oppose company scheme to replace health coverage with \$100 monthly payment

Cuban workers discuss economic reforms

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN AND MARY-ALICE WATERS

HAVANA—A lively discussion on wages, working conditions, and enterprise management took place at an assembly of workers at the Asticar shipyard in the port on the east side of this city. Asticar repairs oil tankers, as well as refrigeration, cement, and roll-on/roll-off cargo ships. In addition to working on Cuban vessels, the yard repairs ships from other countries, including Japan, Russia, China, Germany, and from

elsewhere in the Caribbean.

The 65 workers at the assembly, held February 17, were representatives elected on a ratio of about 1:10 by co-workers in their respective work areas. Prior discussion had been held in individual workshops at the yard, in work teams known as brigades, and on each shift. Members of the Communist Party and Union of Young Communists (UJC) had also held meetings prior to the assembly.

There are 127 CP and 18 UJC members

at the plant, whose current workforce is some 625.

With ups and downs, "efficiency assemblies" like this one have been a regular feature in Cuban factories for many years. Generally they are held each quarter. Meetings

SPECIAL FEATURE

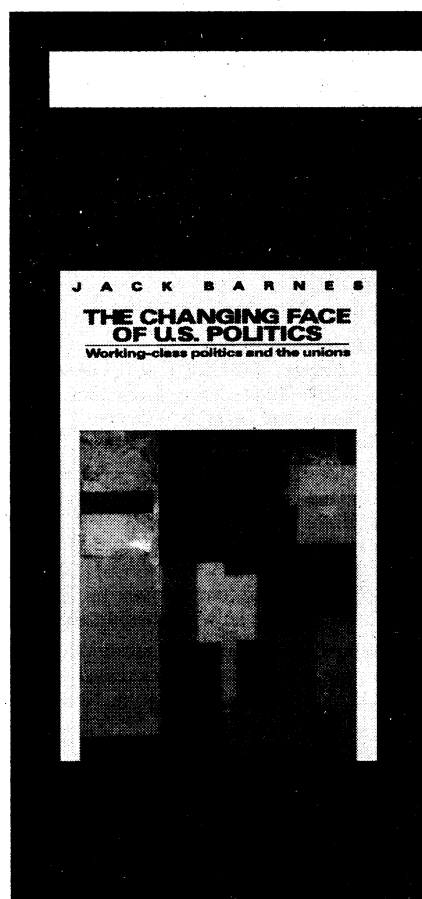
FROM PATHFINDER Changing Face of U.S. Politics

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Jack Barnes

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with similar-sounding names are sometimes organized in companies in capitalist countries to press workers to intensify their labor in order to boost the bottom line of the owners. In Cuba, efficiency assemblies are one of the ways in which workers bring their weight to bear in influencing the economic and industrial policies of what is genuinely their government.

Hated by imperialism, that government of the toilers was the most important instrument conquered following the successful revolutionary war and mass popular insurrection that brought down the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista more than 40 years ago. It has been defended by Cuban working people ever since in face of Washington's unrelenting determination to overthrow it in order to crush them.

Organization of management

At the efficiency assembly at Asticar, the chief topic of discussion, and controversy, was a proposal for a major change in the organization of management of the enterprise. The proposal was presented by the plant director, Jorge Muñoz, on behalf of the plant management and the leaders at the yard of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC) and of the Communist

Continued on Page 8

Sales to miners set pace in final push to win readers — page 5

Ford announces big job cuts in Britain

BY CAROLINE BELLAMY

LONDON—Auto workers across Europe are being hit by plant closings and concession demands in the midst of a crisis of capitalist overproduction of cars on the continent. In Britain plant closings and threats of mass redundancies (layoffs) have a wide impact.

The *Financial Times* of London reported May 13 that Ford cut output or closed plants in Portugal and Poland. More than 2,000 workers in both Genk in Belgium and Cologne in Germany have already been affected by the changes. Vehicle assembly is to be ended at a plant in Belarus.

"In the first quarter of this year, Ford's North American operations earned a record \$1.7 billion while its European sibling lost \$19 million in a market plagued by overcapacity," the *Times* reported. By "overcapacity" bosses mean that more is being produced than can be sold profitably.

BMW recently unloaded its Rover car division, after losing nearly \$3 billion. Threats by BMW bosses to close its plants in England were met by a massive demonstration last month by auto workers.

Workers at Ford's Dagenham plants in East London were informed the company will cease vehicle assembly and major body construction there in early 2002. With its typical contempt for workers, no details of the number of jobs to be eliminated were provided, forcing workers to find out what they could from the TV, radio, or newspapers.

Press reports indicate that 3,250 jobs will be cut in total, 1,350 of which were previously announced through a move to cut the second shift this coming August. The company says that it expects to create 500 additional jobs by expanding the engine plant at Dagenham.

To head off resistance from workers, the company is encouraging workers to leave "voluntarily" with the inducement of "enhanced" redundancy packages. These would pay workers between £20,000 and £35,000, depending on age and years of service (£1=US\$1.49). Workers over 50 can take early retirement with pension in addition to this. The bosses said that workers between the ages of 45 and 49 will be able to apply for deferred early retirement, with a severance

payment upon leaving and starting their pensions at 50.

These payments are relatively large here. For example, a worker with 15 years service at a Courtaulds textile mill in Derbyshire, which is closing down, said he would be getting a redundancy payment of £4,000. A worker from Eures, the company which runs the catering at Dagenham, is losing his job. "I'm only going to get £1,000 for five years," he said. "Make sure you put that in your paper."

Ford is using its moves to implement speedup, a lengthening of the working day, and a pay cut for those remaining after August 2000. These workers will see a drop of more than 15 percent in their wages as shift premiums and allowances disappear with the move to a single shift.

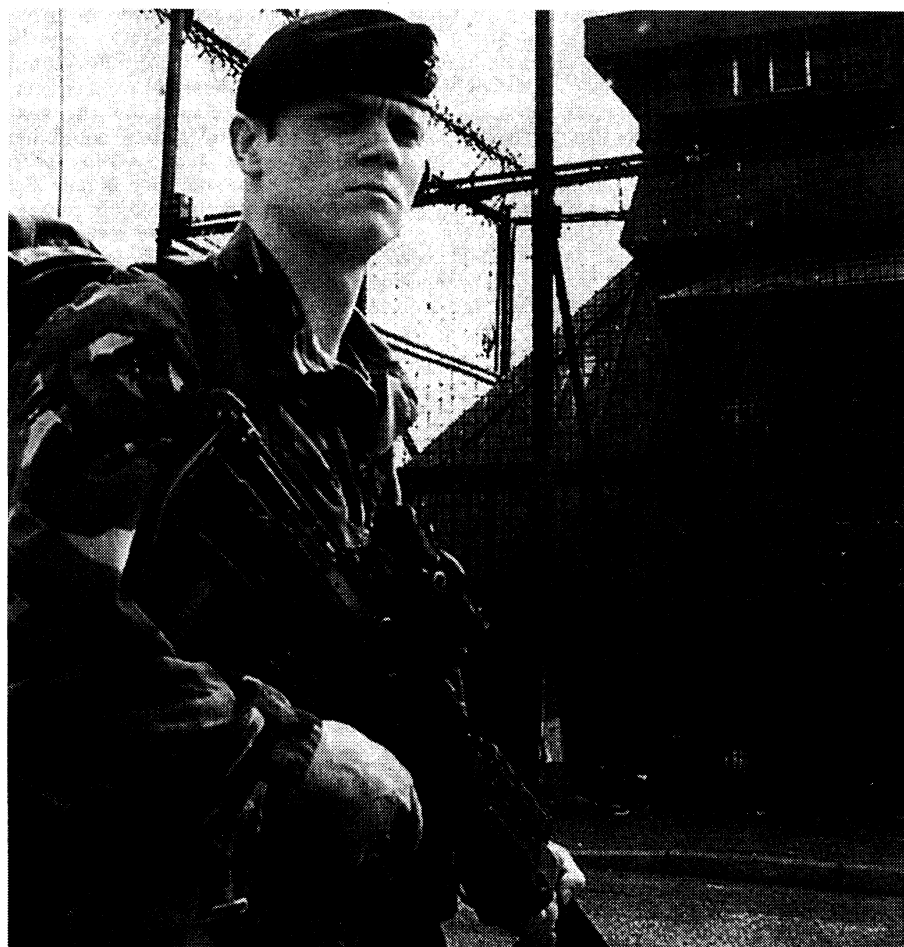
As part of the implementation of a 37.5-hour week, the company has demanded workers work bell-to-bell, and fetch and put back tools outside paid hours. Tea breaks have been shortened and lunch breaks are to be reduced to 30 minutes. A proposal by the company to allow jobs to be loaded to 103 percent was rejected, but workers expect the company to load most jobs to 100 percent after the summer shutdown. A 100 percent job is supposed to be the maximum that an experienced line worker can do working at a steady pace.

Meanwhile, the government moved to back the Phoenix Consortium in its purchase of the Longbridge plant of Rover from BMW. The previous buyer, Alchemy Partners, said that it expected to cut thousands of jobs.

Following the 80,000-strong union march in Birmingham on April 1, it became clear that this resistance and the potential social devastation in the West Midlands had put the government under considerable pressure. BMW sold Longbridge for £10 to the new bosses at Phoenix. The new owners said they will cut less than 1,000 jobs of the 9,500 jobs at the plant, but have not yet announced further cutbacks and concessions at the financially troubled car company. BMW sold Rover's profitable RUV line to Ford.

Caroline Bellamy is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union at Ford Dagenham.

UK army base in N. Ireland to close



A British soldier patrols Crossmaglen army base. The Royal Ulster Constabulary announced in mid-May that this "observation post," in South Armagh, Northern Ireland, is to be dismantled. Local residents are known for their opposition to British rule and division of Ireland. The base has been a key staging point for British military forces in the occupied Six Counties of Ireland. The move follows the Irish Republican Army's decision to allow partial inspection of its arms caches, which has put pressure on both the British government and the pro-British Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) to restart the self-government council in the north. Urging the UUP to rejoin the government, Sinn Féin chief negotiator Martin McGuinness said the "IRA initiative did in fact create a golden opportunity to break the impasse and this indeed could be the last opportunity to move forward."

Israeli troops leave Lebanon

Continued from front page

called Israeli security zone. But, as the *Washington Post* reported, "the Lebanese, too numerous to control, either drove or walked around them."

The 2,600-member South Lebanon Army (SLA), which the Israeli government created and armed, rapidly disintegrated as its militia members retreated, surrendered, deserted, or tried to flee to asylum in Israel, abandoning their ammunition and artillery as they left. The Israeli air force fired on the crowds in a futile effort to halt their advance, and attempted to destroy artillery pieces left behind by fleeing SLA members. Lebanese fighters celebrated their victory by riding abandoned Israeli tanks through village after village that had previously been under tight Israeli military control.

Israel's prime minister Ehud Barak had earlier announced plans to withdraw Israeli forces from southern Lebanon by July 7. But these recent developments forced them to get out six weeks ahead of schedule.

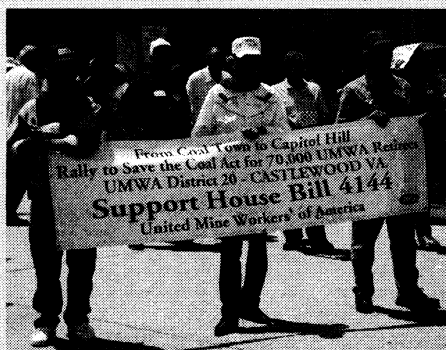
Meanwhile, the U.S. government has requested more UN troops be sent into the 11-mile deep zone inside Lebanon from which Israeli forces withdrew. UN secretary general Kofi Annan asked the Security Council to bolster the 4,500-member UN force currently in South Lebanon with 3,400 additional soldiers. But under pressure from Paris and other governments with troops already there, UN officials said they will take a wait-and-see approach to the situation.

Bemoaning this recent turn of events, an editorial in the May 24 *Wall Street Journal* said, "Critics of Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon have long compared that policy to America's ill-fated involvement in Vietnam. The comparison is especially apt now that Israel's withdrawal has turned into a rout." The editors called this "the greatest military humiliation in the country's history," which occurs as protests by Palestinians against Israeli occupation of the West Bank are once again on the rise.

THE MILITANT

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Workers speak out after cops kill Maori youth in New Zealand

BY FELICITY COGGAN

WAITARA, New Zealand—The police slaying of 23-year-old Maori student Steven Wallace on April 30 in the Taranaki town of Waitara has provoked a major political discussion in this country on the role of the cops.

Maori and other working people in Waitara and elsewhere have stepped forward to explain the increased harassment they face at the hands of the cops, including the increasingly routine use by police of firearms.

As politicians, news editors, and other ruling-class voices have moved to shore up the cops, divisions among them—sometimes sharp—over how to proceed have come to the surface. Meanwhile, voices on the right have sought to rally support for the cops and whip up a racist response to Maori protests at the shooting.

The polarized discussion has also spotlighted the situation facing working people who are Maori in many rural communities today, under the impact of the capitalist economic crisis. Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, are an oppressed nationality. They make up around 15 percent of the population, and are overwhelmingly working class and the most rural sector of society.

In the days following the shooting, Prime Minister Helen Clark, expressing "concern" about the "bad relations between Maori and police in Taranaki," dispatched Race Relations Conciliator Rajen Prasad to Waitara to come up with a "plan of action." An urgent report was demanded from the Ministry of Maori Development.

At meetings held with Prasad working people publicly spoke out against racist treatment by the police. Forty women attended one such special meeting held at their request, where they explained the treatment they and their families had received from the police. One described the conditions in which Maori live as a "collusion of evils," pointing also to the institutionalized racism practiced by other government agencies. When asked by Prasad why they had not told anybody about these events, they explained "because the people we're supposed to tell are the people doing these things to us."

The Ministry of Maori Development report gave some examples of what people had been raising, such as police subjecting a young Maori woman driver to a strip search and internal investigation after she questioned a breath testing procedure.

Tom Hunt, a member of the local Te Atiawa tribe, told the *Militant* in an interview of another case when a Maori youth, remanded on bail after pleading not guilty to several trumped-up charges, was placed under curfew by the police. For six months the cops came, at times every night, to his house and banged on doors and windows until the occupants confirmed he was at home. To escape this harassment he finally pleaded guilty.

Institutional racism 'on endemic scale'

Hunt explained that such incidents were part of a broader problem. "From one end of Taranaki to another—and I don't think for a moment that it's any different anywhere else in this country—Maori report mistreatment of their people at the hands of the police. They get similar treatment at the hands of people in other agencies," he said. Hunt gave the example of how, in the early 1990s, the local high school was investigated by the Human Rights Commission for human rights abuses, with racism rife in the school.

The news media has made much of the police's identification of the cop who shot Wallace as "part Maori" to deflect charges of racism in the police force. Hunt explained, "You need to know what racism is. Racism is not just name-calling or referring to the color of your skin. There is a common thread where institutions on an endemic scale mistreat Maori." The cop who shot Wallace "was a police officer first, whatever else he was. He was a small piece of a huge machine that historically has been

used to enforce the racist policies of the system and government."

The discussion around the shooting has also highlighted the growing loss of confidence in the Police Complaints Authority as a recourse to appeal against cop actions. The Authority currently investigating the shooting had its credibility further dented May 8 when a High Court judge awarded political activist David Small compensation for an illegal police search of his home in 1996. The investigation by the Police Complaints Authority at the time had concluded that there was no misconduct by the police.

Prime Minister Helen Clark has now turned to blaming differences within the Te Atiawa tribe over settlement of land claims as the cause of social problems in the area. The \$NZ34 million offered by the government to the tribe for the settlement could be used for development in the area, Clark said. "The conflict delays a lot of things that could be happening. Our focus has to be to start to mend that conflict." (\$NZ1.00=US 46 cents).

Who should fund social needs

But such compensation for past losses should not be used to fund social needs that working people have won the right to expect from the government today, Hunt said. And he pointed to the glaring inadequacy of the offer, even to cover recovery of the language. He quoted comments made at a meeting about the claim by a young Maori woman, who studies Maori language at the local polytechnic institute. Her course fees are \$3,000 per year. "They stole our language from us and kept it away from us for 100 years. Now if we want it we have to buy it back from the government," she said.

Hunt took *Militant* reporters on a tour of the Waitara area to explain the history of the British colonists' attempts to seize the land in the 19th century in face of fierce Maori resistance. Virtually all of Taranaki—1,244,930 acres—was finally confiscated by the colonial government. The area on which Waitara township now stands was part of the first area seized in 1860. Hunt explained that three judgments since then have ruled the Waitara land should be returned, but this has not occurred.

'Independent' Livingstone elected London mayor

BY PETE CLIFFORD

LONDON—Ken Livingstone, a longtime Labour Member of Parliament, overwhelmingly won the elections for mayor of London.

Livingstone ran as an independent, charging British Prime Minister and Labour Party leader Anthony Blair with rigging the party's selection process to ensure Frank Dobson was the official Labour candidate. Livingstone garnered 39 percent of "first preference" votes and his total reached 58 percent after the "second preference" votes were tallied. Blair's nominee came in third with 13.1 percent of the first preference vote, behind the 27 percent cast for the Conservative Party candidate Steven Norris.

After the results were announced, the *London Times* ran a front page headline titled, "Ken's wake-up call to Blair." This was typical of the response in the big-business media to Livingstone's victory.

Livingstone immediately challenged the Labour government on its plans to partially privatize the London Underground tube (subway) system and called for government intervention to avert massive redundancies (layoffs), after Ford announced it would scale back, then close its Dagenham car production plant here.

One of the new mayor's first appointments was Lee Jasper, leader of the National Assembly against Racism, to be responsible for race relations and liaison with the police. Livingstone, who was expelled from the Labour Party when he decided to run as an independent after Blair's undemocratic maneuver, reiterated his continued backing for Labour, and called for his own reinstatement.

Much of the commentary in the media

Philadelphia protesters denounce cop terror, 'summary punishment'



Militant/John Studer

May 13 protest in Philadelphia called by Mothers Organized Against Police Terror. Families of a number of people on the receiving end of cop brutality joined the action. Erin Forbes was one victim of police violence, shot at around 5:00 a.m. on his way home from work on January 10. Forbes's parents have filed a lawsuit charging that he was the victim of "summary punishment."

The protest occurred on the 15th anniversary of the police bombing of the headquarters of the MOVE organization in Philadelphia. Eleven people lost their lives and 60 houses were destroyed in the ensuing blaze. Protesters also demanded the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal, framed up and convicted of killing a Philadelphia police officer in 1982. Abu-Jamal remains on death row.

The land claimed by Taranaki tribes, and the adjacent continental shelf, is now the site of oil and gas exploitation and a billion dollar petrochemical industry. But the government is trying to exclude oil and gas resources from claims.

Maori are now also pursuing claims for a section of the radio spectrum used for mobile phone communications, which the government plans to sell. In the wake of the controversy over the shooting, the government decided to make available a greater share of the spectrum to Maori at a five percent discount to "close the gaps" between Maori and whites. The National Party opposition cried "discrimination," saying that Maori would next be claiming a share of "crown minerals, starlight and moonlight."

Class attitude to working people of color

Their leader, former prime minister Jennifer Shipley, revealed her real class attitude to working people of color when she accused the government the next day of inconsistency in its "closing the gaps" policy, which the government presents as one that

will deal with high crime statistics. Seizing this reactionary framework, Shipley asked, "Where's the 5 percent discount for Pacific Islands people if they are actually causing trouble as well? They climb in the windows of other New Zealanders at night. It's not only Maori."

Throughout the discussion around Steven Wallace's shooting, many commentators have said that "tensions" between Maori and the police are a result of the fact that "Maori commit criminal offenses way out of proportion to their numbers," as an editorial in the May 9 *Christchurch Press* claimed.

Tom Hunt said in reply: "They say it is a reality that Maori offend more. It is a reality, but who is the biggest threat in New Zealand? Is it our children committing petty crimes out of frustration and anger from despair at having nothing?" He pointed to a far greater thievery—the dispossession of Maori from their land, upheld by successive governments for more than 150 years.

Felicity Coggan is a member of the National Distribution Union.

seats, mainly at the expense of Labour. During the campaign, Conservative Party leader William Hague focused on demands for more stringent government action against people seeking asylum in Britain and advocated various "anticrime" measures.

In the London elections, the fascist British National Party polled 3 percent of the vote. Combined with the rightist UK Independence Party and Christian Peoples Alliance, rightist forces increased their vote total to 8 percent. The Green Party won 3 seats with 11 percent of the vote, an increase over past elections.

Pete Clifford is a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Workers in China demand unpaid wages

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Some 5,000 retired and laid-off workers clashed with police in northeast China May 15 during a protest over nonpayment of pensions and wages.

Workers from the Liaoyang Ferroalloy Factory in Liaoning province, began a sit-in that day that continued into the night. Some of these workers had not been paid their wages for up to 20 months.

Around 1:00 a.m., 900 cops tried to break up the sit-in, beating about 50 of the protesters and detaining three retirees who had helped organize the action.

Later that morning, about 2,000 workers angered by the police action surrounded the city government offices, demanding the release of the three organizers as well as their back pay. They were blocked by a cordon

of 1,000 cops.

The workers carried signs saying, "Being owed wages is not a crime," and "Release the workers' representatives." After the deputy mayor promised that current and past wages, pensions, and living stipends for laid-off workers would be paid soon, the protesters went home.

The state-owned metals factory, which has been in operation for more than 40 years, is responsible for about 8,000 workers, including 1,300 retirees, and 1,000 who have been laid off.

Last February in the town of Yangjiazhangzi, also in Liaoning province, some 20,000 miners and their families organized demonstrations and battled the cops over three days in protest over mine closures and minimal severance pay.

YS West Coast meet launches week of political activity

BY LOUIS TURNER

SAN FRANCISCO—The Young Socialists in the West Coast region got a jumpstart on the YS summer perspectives of participating in politics, studying the works of revolutionary leaders, actively building solidarity for working-class fights throughout the country, and campaigning for socialist candidates for the 2000 local and national elections.

A West Coast regional meeting and educational weekend May 13-14 in San Francisco kicked off a week of events that helped to advance the work of building a strong internationalist proletarian youth organization.

The West Coast Regional Weekend began with YS members from Los Angeles and Tucson, Arizona, hopping on buses to attend a demonstration in San Francisco on May 13 to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Black journalist who was railroaded to death row in 1982. These buses were organized by various groups involved in the fight to free Abu-Jamal and were a great place for Young Socialists to meet and discuss politics with as many serious youth as possible. YS members also drove to the demonstration from Los Angeles, Santa Cruz, Tucson, and Oakland.

The YS differentiated itself from other youth organizations at this demonstration, bringing a clear perspective on issues ranging from the INS raid in Miami to the eviction of protesters on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques to the history of working

people's struggles around the world. Discussing politics at Pathfinder literature tables was a part of the YS's participation at the demonstration. A large number of youth there asked to keep in contact with the YS.

The Mumia Abu-Jamal demonstration was a great starter for the West Coast Regional weekend. The Saturday demonstration was followed by a Young Socialists fund-raising dinner at the San Francisco Pathfinder Bookstore, a fund-raising book sale and raffle, and a forum on the *Militant* editorial "In defense of the Cuban revolution, in defense of the working class" given by Rashaad Ali, an airline worker and member of the International Association of Machinists. Two youths who participated in the Mumia demonstration came to the forum. The YS raised almost \$370 from the fund-raising events, which goes toward the national fund drive.

On May 14 a West Coast regional Young Socialists meeting was held in San Francisco. Those present discussed two reports, one given by Doug Nelson for the YS National Executive Committee, and one by Louis Turner, West Coast regional YS fund drive director, on the Young Socialists summer perspectives and the West Coast regional fund drive situation, respectively.

The discussion on the summer perspectives centered on the creation of summer school centers—cities where YS members can move to for the summer to build chapters of the YS, collectively study the history



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Young Socialist selling *Militant* to coal miners on strike in New Mexico

of the working-class movement, participate in the class struggle, get jobs in industry, and help petition to get Socialist Workers candidates on the ballot in different states. Many YS members living on the West Coast expressed interest in going to the South for the summer, one area where numerous battles by workers and farmers have been breaking out.

Rounding out the weekend were two classes. One, on "Two conflicting class views," was based on a feature *Militant* article and was given by socialist worker John

Benson. The other, given by Louis Turner on "To be a revolutionary doctor, first you must make a revolution," was based on a speech given by Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara, reprinted in the Pathfinder book *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*.

Tucson regional team

On May 16, a team of Young Socialists went to Tucson, Arizona. They organized campus visits, educational on immigrant rights violations by vigilantes on the U.S.-Mexico border and *Militant* editorials, community *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* sales at a Pathfinder literature table, and *Militant* sales to copper miners. They met and expressed their support to striking miners in the New Mexico region and tomato workers fighting for a union in Willcox, Arizona. YS member April Holland and socialist worker Carole Lesnick, a member of the United Auto Workers, came from Los Angeles to join with Young Socialists in Tucson for the activities.

In Willcox we met with six tomato workers, who invited us over to their home for a discussion on their fight to unionize. They informed us they will be voting in their union election by July 20.

An article published in the January 6 Arizona *Daily Star* focused on the struggle unfolding in Willcox, where more than 250 tomato workers (*tomateros*) are entrenched in a unionization battle. The article emphasized that these workers are at the forefront of 56,000 Arizona agricultural workers in a \$6.3 billion a year industry.

The workers we talked to explained that the stakes in this battle are high for both the workers and the owners. They also said that the workers in Willcox need the support of all workers because the *tomateros'* road for union representation is going to be a long and hard-fought one.

Socialist Workers win support to get on Texas ballot

BY STEVE WARSHALL

AUSTIN, Texas—Supporters of the Socialist Workers campaign here filed petitions May 10 to place the names of two workers running for U.S. Congress, Dean Cook and David Ferguson, on the November general election ballot. More than 900 people signed petitions to place Ferguson on the ballot and more than 800 signed for Cook—well over the legal requirement of 500 signatures.

For several weeks socialist campaigners petitioned in shopping centers, colleges, plant gates and door-to-door in working-class neighborhoods. Ferguson, a sewing

machine operator, is running for a Congressional seat in a district covering most of the central areas of the city. Cook, who has been a leader of the resistance by refinery workers locked out for more than four years by Crown Central Petroleum, has campaigned with supporters in rural and working-class suburban areas of Harris, Fort Bend, and Brazoria counties.

Petitioners won support from many workers and farmers in these areas for putting working-class candidates on the ballot, and generated interest in the ideas presented by the communist workers to oppose all the employers' parties—Democrats, Republicans, Reform—and the dog-eat-dog system of exploitation they uphold.

Socialist candidates Ferguson and Cook are running for positions currently held by liberal Democrat Sheila Jackson Lee and conservative Republican House majority whip Thomas DeLay, respectively.

Campaign supporters had a particular opportunity to learn more about the struggles of working people in rural Fort Bend County when Cook received an invitation to speak at a meeting on April 30 of Chicano and Mexican workers who live in three *colonias* (communities of makeshift dwellings)—Cummings Road, Rio Brazos and Tensley Estates—on the outskirts of Rosenberg, Texas.

The meeting of the Cummings Road Water Supply Corporation, an organization of some 200 community residents who are among the 35 families in the *colonias*, was chaired by Hortensia Hernández, leader of

the five-year-long battle. The workers are fighting to defend themselves from attempts by developers to drive them out of their homes and open the area to highly profitable commercial development. They are now waging a fight for the city government to provide clean water to their homes.

The efforts by community residents to fight for clean water arose as parents were told their children were developing ringworm, lice, elephant skin, and other diseases by bathing with water from contaminated wells in the area.

Hernández introduced the Socialist Workers candidate by noting, "Mr. Cook told me we should have a government of workers and farmers, and I think that's a good idea." At the end of the meeting, half a dozen people signed the petition to put Cook on the ballot. Later, socialist campaigners returned and sold subscriptions to the socialist press to three area residents.

In Houston, socialist workers who petitioned at one shopping center in a largely Spanish-speaking area displayed signs proclaiming: "No to INS Assaults, End the Embargo of Cuba, Defend the Cuban Revolution, U.S. Out of Vieques, Independence for Puerto Rico."

A number of workers voiced interest in these views and campaigners sold several copies of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. Books by Cuban revolutionary leaders such as Ernesto Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces were prominently displayed.



Militant/Lea Sherman

Campaigning at University of Houston to get Socialist Workers candidates on ballot

Socialist Workers 2000 National Campaign \$80,000 Fund

City	Goal	Paid	%
Allentown	1,000	925	93%
Washington	3,800	2,942	77%
Twin Cities	5,000	3,125	63%
Houston	5,000	2,770	55%
Cape Girardeau	565	290	51%
Charlotte*	1,850	935	51%
Des Moines	1,200	593	49%
Philadelphia	3,000	1,450	48%
Seattle	6,000	2,600	43%
Boston	3,750	1,575	42%
St. Louis	1,300	525	40%
Chippewa Falls	500	200	40%
Birmingham	3,500	1,250	36%
Pittsburgh	3,000	1,030	34%
Cleveland	2,250	740	33%
Atlanta	3,100	1,000	32%
Detroit	3,000	950	32%
Chicago	7,000	2,025	29%
Los Angeles	6,000	1,700	28%
San Francisco	7,300	1,925	26%
Brooklyn	2,800	370	13%
Upper Manhattan	2,000	240	12%
N.Y. Garment Dist.	4,000	450	11%
Miami	2,500	125	5%
Newark	4,000	200	5%
Fort Collins	250	0	0%
Fresno	300	0	0%
Other		250	
Total	\$83,965	\$30,185	36%
Goal	\$80,000		

Young Socialists Fund Drive March 15-June 1

City	Goal	Raised	%
Washington	200	130	65%
Miami	400	233	58%
Birmingham	450	225	50%
New York	1,000	358	36%
Detroit	550	189	34%
Seattle	350	120	34%
Chicago	800	205	26%
Newark	700	142	20%
Twin Cities	650	115	18%
Tucson	200	20	10%
Atlanta	300	0	0%
Cleveland	350	0	0%
Fort Collins	75	0	0%
Fresno	200	0	0%
Los Angeles	450	0	0%
Philadelphia	500	0	0%
Santa Cruz	250	0	0%
Valdosta	200	0	0%
San Francisco		20	
Other		100	
Total	\$7,625	\$1,757	23%

Campaigners push to make sub drive

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Partisans of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* are hot on the trail to make the international goals of the subscription campaign. They sold nearly 200 subscriptions to the socialist newsweekly this past week. They are also closing in on the *PM* goal with just 19 subs to go. Several supporters of the subscription drive said last week was the best ever and reported selling out of their bundle.

"Campaigners in cities across the United States are doubling their bundles and making plans to go all out over the Memorial Day weekend," said *Militant* editor Martin Koppel. "We want to press on the campaign we've been carrying out in defense of the working class in Cuba and in the United States and push to get this issue into the hands of workers and farmers."

Koppel said reading and discussing the feature article "Cuban workers discuss reforms in factory management" in this issue would be the best preparation for an energetic political campaign among co-workers, union and farm fighters, and rebel-minded youth. "We should get back to those who bought a copy of the paper during the past weeks to encourage them to get this issue and a subscription. This goes for the *PM* as well. We're getting extra orders for the June issue of *PM* which features the article, 'Two conflicting class views: Did U.S. win the Cold War? Are workers doing okay?'"

From Pathfinder

The History of the Russian Revolution

By Leon Trotsky

The social, economic, and political dynamics of the first socialist revolution as explained by one of the principal leaders of this victorious struggle that changed the course of history in the twentieth century. Unabridged edition. Published in the original Russian. Also available in English. Unabridged edition, 3 vols. \$195.00

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

Militant/PM Subscription Drive in the Unions

	Militant		PM		NI	
U.S.	Goal/Sold	%	Goal/Sold	%	Goal/Sold	%
IAM	45 36	80%	10 8	80%	20 8	40%
USWA	40 28	70%	3 2	67%	16 3	19%
UTU	32 19	59%	3 4	75%	10 4	40%
UAW	17 7	41%	3 1	33%	9 5	56%
UFCW	35 13	37%	20 12	60%	15 6	40%
UNITE	35 10	29%	25 16	64%	16 2	13%
Total	204 113	55%	64 43	67%	86 28	32%
Australia						
MUA	3 2	67%			1	100%
TCFUA	2	0%			1	100%
Total	5 2	40%			2	100%
UK						
TGWU	10 4	40%			3 2	67%
RMT	7 1	14%	2	100%	5	100%
AEEU	8	0%				
Total	17 5	29%			8	100%
Canada						
UFCW	3 1	33%	1 1	100%	4 1	25%
UNITE	4	0%	2 1	50%	2	100%
Total	7 1	14%	3 2	67%	6 1	25%

IAM—International Association of Machinists; MUA—Maritime Union of Australia; RMT—National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers; TCFUA—Textile, Clothing, and Footwear Union of Australia; TGWU—Transport and General Workers Union; UAW—United Auto Workers; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UNITE—Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees; USWA—United Steelworkers of America; UTU—United Transportation Union

As we enter the last days of the drive, supporters of the campaign are urged to send their latest sales results to the *Militant* by e-mail or fax by 5:00 p.m., Saturday, May 27. The results will be posted on the *Militant*'s web site that evening. All subscriptions received in the *Militant* business office by noon on Wednesday, May 31 will be counted in the drive and printed in the scoreboard the next day.

Participants in the subscription effort across the country report how the recent actions by miners, including the May 17 rally in Washington, D.C., and the strike in New Mexico, provided a big impulse to the campaign. The *Militant* was well received by striking miners at the Pittsburgh & Midway mine in Tse Bonito, New Mexico, and by miners at the Peabody Western Kayenta mine in Kayenta, Arizona.

Many workers at the two mines were interested in the *Militant*'s coverage of the rally by mine workers, retired coal miners, and their supporters demanding the government continue to fund health care for retired miners and their dependents. During visits to the picket lines, coal portals, and mining communities a sales team in the region sold 70 copies of the paper and 10 subscriptions.

Candace Wagner from Pennsylvania wrote, "Through the subscription campaign so far, we've made progress in meeting young people and other workers in northeastern Pennsylvania who were excited to meet socialists. Many of them followed the news about the U.S. government's attack on Cuban sovereignty in the Elián González case, the commando-style raid in Miami, and the removal of demonstrators from the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico. The articles in the *Militant* clarifying the interests of working people on these questions were welcomed."

"Last Sunday we held a discussion at a local cafe in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, on these articles. A student at Kings College who met a sales team at an apartment complex and another young woman who has been active in social protests participated. On the final weekend of the drive we plan to get back to Tamaqua, Pennsylvania, where we successfully turned back a legal challenge to our right to sell the paper door-to-door. Tamaqua is a town in the center of the coal mining region here."

BY MARY ANN SCHMIDT

MIAMI—We experienced our best week so far selling subscriptions, with better sales on the job and opportunities to participate in a variety of political events. We acted on the political conclusions presented in the *Militant* on major shifts in politics in southern Florida and sent a team to Hialeah. We went to the working-class community there for the first time in more than a year, selling seven *Perspectiva Mundial* supplements and two May issues of the *PM*, the majority to Cubans. Quite a range of opinions on the Elián González case and the commando-style INS assault were expressed.

Some of those who bought the *PM* not only opposed the INS raid for the right reasons—as a dangerous precedent for more violations of democratic rights—but also supported Elián being repatriated to Cuba. A minority of the papers we sold were to workers from Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere in Latin America. The striking thing was that we didn't meet even a hint of hostility, including from right-wingers who laughed when we said we were selling a socialist newspaper published in the interests of working people.

One Cuban woman with rightist views about Cuba who said, "You can sell this paper here, but in Cuba there is no such freedom," bought a *PM* supplement after a discussion about attacks on democratic rights in the United States. Another Cuban, a former Eastern Airlines worker, expressed the view that "Cubans in Miami" have finally been initiated into the reality of what all workers face when it comes to the cops and the INS. He bought a *PM* and a supplement.

We plan to continue doing regular door-



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Selling *Militant* and *PM* to working people on streets of upper Manhattan

to-door sales and other political work there. It's a pleasure!

Altogether we sold 11 *Militant* subscriptions, 2 *PM* subs, 5 copies of *New Internationalist*, and 44 copies of the paper in the city and the region last week. We sold one subscription at a Haitian immigrants rights march and one at a vigil against police brutality commemorating the 20-year anniversary of the killing of Arthur McDuffy. He was killed by the cops, which sparked a rebellion in Overtown.

One team went to West Palm Beach, selling three subscriptions to Haitians at a Haitian flag day event and three more going door-to-door in Miami. Another team went to Orlando and sold one *Militant* subscrip-

tion and one to *PM* in a mainly Puerto Rican neighborhood.

We also made some breakthroughs in our political work on the job, selling subscriptions to both the *Militant* and *PM* at an aerospace plant, a *PM* subscription to a union member at CSX railroad, and one copy of *Nueva Internacional* no. 3 to a worker at a garment shop.

We decided to double our initial order of the next issue. We have also completely sold out of *Militant* no. 18, featuring the article "INS assault in Miami: a blow to the working class" and would like to order 15 copies of that issue. We would also like to order another 20 *PM* supplements as well.

Where we stand at end of week 8

	Mil	PM	NI
Week 8			

Militant/PM Subscription Drive March 25–May 28

	Militant			PM		NI	
Country	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold	Goal	Sold
Sweden	12	12	100%	4	3	6	7
Australia	12	12	100%	1		5	2
New Zealand							
Christchurch	12	10	83%	1		3	1
Auckland	20	16	80%	1	1	3	4
N.Z. total	32	26	81%	2	1	6	5
France	4	3	75%	4		20	15
United States							
Allentown	15	22	147%	2	1	5	
Cleveland*	35	39	111%	8	6	5	5
Newark	65	64	98%	25	25	25	14
Atlanta*	34	33	97%	10	9	12	8
Los Angeles*	60	58	97%	40	36	30	25
Washington*	37	35	95%	10	8	15	9
Des Moines	30	28	93%	15	12	10	7
Miami	40	37	93%	15	12	20	16
Birmingham	45	40	89%	5	3	15	8
St. Louis	15	13	87%	5	4	10	8
San Francisco	50	42	84%	20	9	25	7
Seattle	40	33	83%	12	9	12	2
Charlotte	10	8	80%	3	1	5	2
Pittsburgh	25	20	80%	2	2	8	
Chicago*	44	35	80%	16	13	17	16
Philadelphia	35	27	77%	10	10	15	11
Twin Cities	35	27	77%	8	5	10	4
Chippewa Falls*	25	19	76%	18	13	10	7
Cape Girardeau	12	9	75%	4	1	4	
Boston	35	26	74%	10	11	15	6
Houston	35	21	60%	15	14	12	7
Tucson	5	3	60%	2		2	2
Fort Collins	12	7	58%	1	1	4	1
Fresno	12	6	50%	8	8	6	3
Detroit	45	22	49%	8	2	15	
N.Y. Garment Dist	60	26	43%	20	16	20	10
Upper Manhattan	55	21	38%	20	17	20	10
Brooklyn	55	16	29%	10	5	25	4
Other		1					
U.S. total	966	738	76%	322	253	372	192
Canada							
Toronto	25	16	64%	6	5	20	16
Vancouver	25	10	40%	5	2	12	11
Montreal	16	2	13%	6	1	15	7
Canada total	66	28	42%	17	8	47	34
Iceland	5	2	40%	1		5	2
United Kingdom							
London	40	15	38%	8	15	20	6
Manchester	24	3	13%	2	1	12	1
UK total	64	18	28%	10	16	32	7
Int'l totals	1161	839	76%	361	281	493	264
Goal/Should be	1100	979	89%	300	267	450	400
*raised goal							

Senate debate on Kosova reflects divisions

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

On May 18 the U.S. Senate narrowly defeated a measure that would have cut off funds for Washington's continuing military intervention in Kosova by July 1. Washington has spent an estimated \$20 billion in what is an open-ended military intervention in Kosova and Bosnia. U.S. forces in Kosova stand at 6,000 troops.

Meanwhile, in the face of a police crackdown and attempts to gag the media, working people, students, and opposition parties continue to mount protests against the Serbian regime of Slobodan Milosevic.

"The intent of the amendment is to restore congressional oversight over the Kosovo mission," said Sen. Robert Byrd, a Democrat from West Virginia, in the Senate debate. Byrd said the Clinton administration did not like the proposal because it wants "a free hand to participate in military adventurism whenever and wherever they please. They don't want to hear a peep out of Congress."

Senate majority leader Trent Lott voiced a common theme in the debate, saying the government has "no long-term plan for Kosovo. We don't know how long we're going or how much it's going to cost. Commitments are not being fulfilled by the Europeans, and that's unacceptable."

The 46,000 foreign troops in Kosova today, assembled under the banner of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and led by the imperialist powers of the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Italy, are termed "peacekeepers," but their actions increasingly indicate their real role as an occupying military force. They have been stationed in Kosova since the conclusion of the 78-day air war, carried out a year ago by NATO forces under Washington's command.

That bombing campaign, which destroyed much of the infrastructure in Serbia and Kosova along with housing and public facilities, failed to remove Milosevic from power, a goal desired by the U.S. government. Washington is driven—against the interests of working people in the region—to attempt to reimpose capitalist relations in the territory of the Yugoslav workers state. This longer-term goal involves greater use of military muscle, tied to more and more flexible deadlines.

Albright: U.S. is 'richest nation'

"We are the richest nation on the globe. Now is the time to advance, not retreat," said Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in a unabashedly imperial speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on May 17. In considering the "premature" withdrawal of U.S. forces from Kosova the senators were "playing with fire," she said. "In the Balkans signs of impatience can be misinterpreted as symptoms of weakness. We cannot afford that in a region where weakness attracts cultures."

Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers said the same day that "no threat is more serious than the temptation to turn inwards during good times," referring to the competitive edge—based largely on the intensified exploitation of labor power—that the U.S. capitalists are enjoying over their rivals.

In a letter to the U.S. senators, the secretary general of NATO, Lord Robertson, a former secretary of state for defense in the British Labour Party government, wrote that "the prospect of any NATO ally deciding unilaterally not to take part in a NATO operation causes me deep concern. It risks sending a dangerous signal to the Yugoslav dictator Milosevic that NATO is divided, and that its biggest and most important ally is pulling up stakes."

Claims that the European imperialist powers are failing in their commitments to fund and provide manpower for the Kosova occupation are common among the politicians who voted for the withdrawal, and who promise to keep up their fight against White House policy.

In fact, under the banner of the European Union (EU) the imperialist governments in Europe are playing an active military and diplomatic role in Yugoslavia. NATO secretary general Robertson noted in his letter to the U.S. senators that of the foreign troops in Kosova, 80 percent come from EU countries.

Mass protests against Milosevic regime

The imperialist powers are trying to find points of leverage among the forces that

have headed the mass protests against the Slobodan Milosevic regime in Serbia. In the largest such demonstration in many months, up to 150,000 people gathered in central Belgrade on April 14. Some 16 opposition groups united to call the action. The two most prominent opposition figures, Vuk Draskovic of the Serbian Renewal Movement and Zoran Djindjic of the Democratic Party, appeared on stage together in a short-lived show of unity among the divided opposition groups. The protest organizers called for elections scheduled for later this year to be brought forward, and urged a vote against Milosevic.

In the weeks since, tens of thousands have participated in opposition demonstrations in Belgrade and in other cities. The working people who turn out in spite of the lack of clear leadership or unity among the opposition forces are clearly determined to force open more democratic space, and to find some way to fight against their declining standards of living.

"The electricity bill is half my salary and food takes the other half, and my wife can't find a job and I've got two kids," stated Dragan Vujacic to reporters at the April 14 rally. "I've been working for 25 years, and I have a salary of 100 German marks [US\$55 a month]."

A wave of protests answered the crackdown by the Milosevic government against media outlets for the opposition. On May 17 the government seized Studio B, a television station run by the city government in Belgrade and closely associated with the Serbian Renewal Movement led by Vuk Draskovic. Over that day and the next, dem-

onstrators, numbering some 30,000 in Belgrade, 10,000 in the northern town of Novi Sad, and 4,000 in the central town of Kragujevac, condemned the government seizure of Studio B. Around 10,000 protested in Nis—where on the previous day demonstrators reportedly attacked local legislators of Milosevic's Socialist Party.

The major opposition figures did not appear at these actions until May 19, when Vuk Draskovic urged "peaceful resistance" to 5,000 people participating in a Belgrade rally. More than 150 have been injured by the police in the course of these protests.

Student activists arrested

Milosevic's police also arrested, and then released, some 40 students on the days before the seizure of Studio B. The government claims the student group Otpor, or Resistance, was involved in the May 13 assassination in Novi Sad of Bosko Perošević, a high-ranking official in the ruling Socialist Party.

The Otpor activists call for "free and fair elections in Serbia," a "Free University," and an "independent media," on their web site. Their movement is growing rapidly, students report.

Two days after Milosevic closed Studio B, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, and the organization's external relations commissioner, Christopher Patten, met representatives of the anti-government media in Serbia.

At a joint press briefing with Portuguese foreign minister Jaime Gama, Madeleine Albright stated, "Officials in Serbia face a choice. They can stand for the freedom and

the rights of all Serbs, or they can prolong Milosevic's rule by participating in the oppression."

The support by imperialist spokespeople like Albright for opposition groups—and the policy of the capitalist-minded opposition leaders—gives greater credence to the slanders of the Milosevic government against the protests. Ivan Markovic, a spokesperson for the Yugoslav United Left (JUL), part of Milosevic's ruling coalition, described one anti-government rally as a "gathering of terrorist leaders and their followers" that "call for the destruction of the country and its institutions." Repeating a common slander, he linked the protesters to NATO, whose bombing campaign wreaked such destruction on the country just over one year ago.

The JUL announced that it is drafting a law against "terrorism," based on British law that provides for detention without trial in Northern Ireland.

Moscow also maintains an interest in developments in the unstable region. A United Nations tribunal, created by the imperialist-dominated Security Council, protested the visit to Moscow in early May of the Yugoslav defense minister, Gen. Dragoljub Ojdanic, who has been indicted for "crimes against humanity." Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte asked "why steps were not taken to arrest him."

The new government in Russia has invited prominent anti-Milosevic figures to talks on Moscow on May 29. Opposition leaders say they intend to ask for backing from the Kremlin—which has maintained close ties with the Belgrade regime—in opposing the crackdown.

Forum in New York on Puerto Rico discusses Albizu Campos, Vieques, and independence fight

Continued from front page

Aponte stated, emphasizing that this is an important lesson for the current fight against the U.S. military on the island.

Dedicating the Puerto Rican Day Parade to both Vieques and Albizu Campos has sparked controversy among forces that support the continued colonial status of Puerto Rico. A questioner in the audience pointed out that some have resurrected the slanderous charge that Albizu Campos was a fascist, pointing to the black and white uniforms of the Cadets of the Republic, the youth section of the Nationalist Party. Several of the speakers answered the false accusation.

What riled the U.S. imperialist rulers was the fact that before, during, and after World War II, Albizu maintained his intransigent stand of opposing the conscription of Puerto Ricans in the armed forces of the oppressor power. Dozens of Puerto Rican independence fighters were jailed as Washington prepared to enter the war in the name of "fighting fascism." Those in the working-class and national liberation movements who stood up to "democratic" imperialism were slandered as Nazi sympathizers and persecuted—from Puerto Rican independence fighters to cadres of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States.

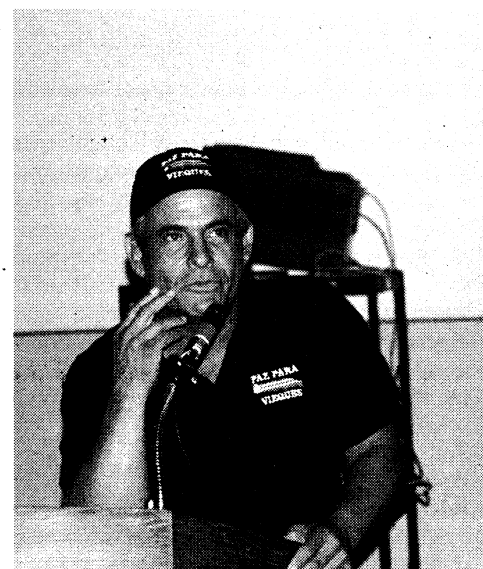
'Oppressor fears belief in yourself'

Rafael Cancel Miranda brought the audience to its feet several times through the course of his speech. "Albizu reminds us of who we are," he stated. "Believe in yourself—that's what he was all about. That's why the colonialists are afraid of Albizu's legacy, of his dignity and lack of fear. We must rely on ourselves and fight them."

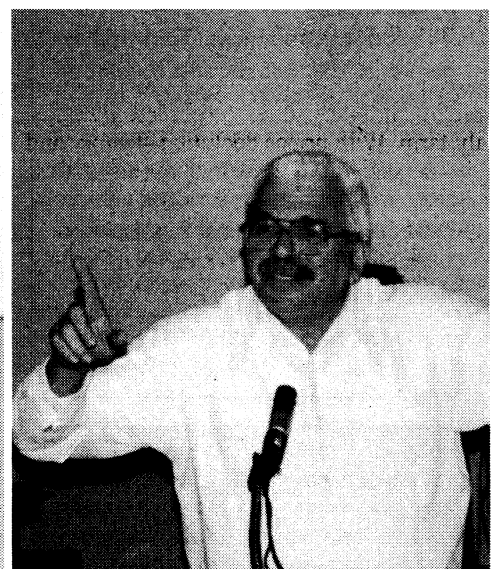
Cancel Miranda, who himself spent nearly three decades in U.S. prisons—first for refusing to fight in the U.S. Army and then for taking the struggle for Puerto Rico's independence to the halls of Congress in a 1954 armed protest—hailed the ongoing battle to get the U.S. military out of Vieques and the rest of Puerto Rico.

"I was a free man in prison," he pointedly stated. "If you have to go through life bowing your head to somebody, you are more in prison than the 28 years that I was in jail." He insisted, "If all of us aren't free, then nobody is free."

Pointing to the FBI agents, U.S. marshals, and U.S. marines who evicted civil disobedience protesters from Vieques, Cancel Miranda said, "They are the criminals. I



Ismael Guadalupe (left), leader of fight to get U.S. Navy out of Vieques, and pro-independence leader Rafael Cancel Miranda address May 20 event at Hunter College.



Militant/Bill Estrada

would like to have an army to fight them and kick them out of our country."

Ismael Guadalupe, a leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, which has led the struggle there against the U.S. military, pointed to the high stakes involved in this fight. "What's happening in Vieques is an attempt to destroy the Puerto Rico nation," he said.

'The issue is Puerto Rico's sovereignty'

The struggle in Vieques is the defense of Puerto Rico's natural resources, its land, the health of its citizens, and their right to be free from the bombing practice. But above all else, "this issue is about the fight for our national sovereignty. All those who are for the independence of Puerto Rico must be in the front lines of the fight for Vieques."

Guadalupe said that there was no bombing for the 380 days during which protesters set up their camps on the U.S. Navy firing range. They also succeeded in turning back several U.S. warships. "In those 380 days, the U.S. government spent millions to track where the protesters were located." Despite the arrests there are still people constantly entering the restricted zone and making it more difficult for the Navy to drop its bombs, he said.

"The U.S. government practically imposed a state of siege in Vieques" after its May 4 raid, "including road blockades, checking people on the streets, restricting

Puerto Rican fishermen in Puerto Rican waters. On May 13, despite all this, 54 protesters went back into Navy-occupied territory, and we will continue to do so," Guadalupe declared.

Luis Sosa from the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico reviewed the fight led by the Nationalist Party for independence under the leadership of Albizu Campos from the 1930s to the '50s, and the lengths to which the U.S. government went to harass and victimize supporters of independence.

The recently released FBI files on tens of thousands of independence activists and other Puerto Ricans—which has received wide publicity in the Spanish-language media here—detail the scope of this repression.

"The struggle doesn't end here," stated Sosa. "As Don Pedro [Albizu Campos] said, 'Before they can take away our homeland, first they will have to take away our lives.'"

At the Federal Building picket line the previous day, some 60 people demanded the U.S. Navy get out of Vieques. The "Freedom Mass for the Puerto Rican Political Prisoners" at a church in the Bronx on Sunday attracted 100 activists.

Coming out of these events, pro-independence activists are now busy preparing for the next big action—to make the "Albizu Vive" contingent in New York's Puerto Rican Day Parade a success. Some 2 million people are expected to attend the parade.

Atlanta Teamsters hold rally to back Overnite strikers

BY DON PANE

ATLANTA—Teamster members and their supporters rallied outside the Overnite Transportation Co. here May 17, one of the largest local mobilizations since the early weeks of the strike. The workers walked out nearly seven months ago in a fight to win union recognition and a contract at the trucking company.

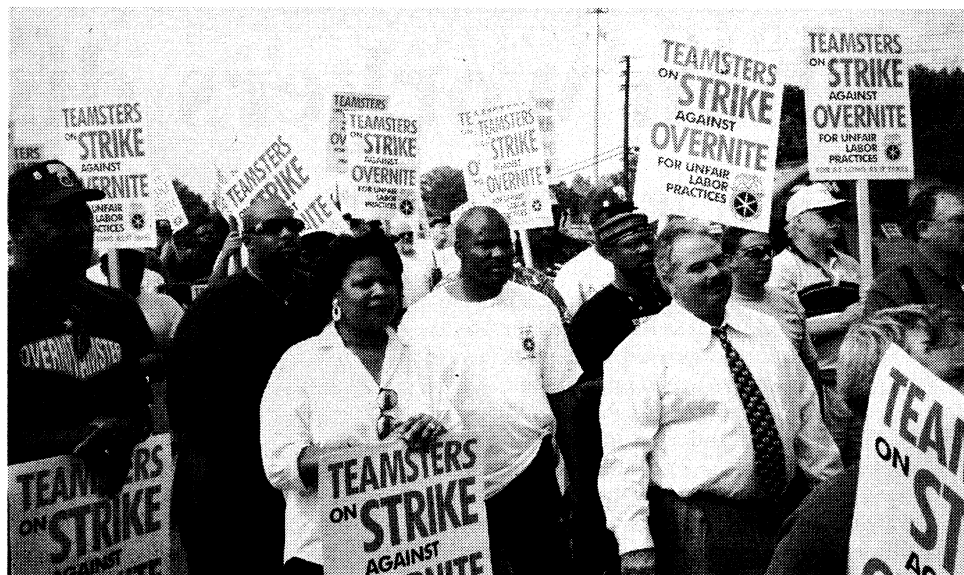
Truck drivers and dockworkers in Atlanta voted in their majority for the Teamsters more than five years ago in an effort to improve working conditions, pensions, and benefits.

The May 17 rally attracted 250 people, including rank-and-file Teamsters members from other nearby trucking companies. Unionists from UPS showed up in their

brown work uniforms. Members of the Bakery, Confectionery, and Tobacco Workers union (BC&T), who work at Nabisco, brought some snacks to donate to the strikers. The rally was held in the late afternoon to coincide with the time a number of scab-driven trucks return to the terminal. Cops were present to make sure the scabs had no problems crossing the picket line, but the unionists had no problem making their presence known.

Union officials reported there were no new developments with the strike or negotiations with the company, urging strikers to continue "one day longer" to win a contract.

Some unionists attracted to the strike see the need for wider solidarity because the



Militant/Don Pane

May 17 rally in Atlanta to support Overnite strikers, who walked out nearly seven months ago to win a new contract and recognition of Teamsters union.

outcome of the struggle between the Teamsters and Overnite will affect broader numbers of workers. Isaac Gober, a member of BC&T, said in an interview that he joined the rally "to support myself and other bak-

ery union members. Support for this strike is needed outside the Teamsters."

John Culberson, a striker with 16 years at Overnite, commented, "This was an uplifting rally seeing our brothers and sisters with a common goal, which is a decent contract. Corporate greed and the elite powers still undermine the American worker and fail to bargain in good faith." Striker Reggie White said winning the strike is "a slow process."

Teamster Denny Strider, who was a member of the United Steelworkers of America at Atlanta Steel for 29 years until it closed a few years ago, said, "I'm here for organized labor. Why work for nothing in a nonunion shop?" Strider now works at Roadway Express.

"I'm here to support the Overnite strike and the Teamsters Union," stated Oliver Neloms, a Teamster who drives for Consolidated Freightways, "Either there is a contract here or we shut them down."

Don Pane is a textile worker.

'This farm is on strike for better prices'

BY BILL ARTH

LIVINGSTON, Illinois—Robert and Norman Engelke, who have farmed 140 acres near this town since 1972, decided to strike this year for prices that will allow them to make a living. They have erected two big signs near the road next to their land that declare, "This farm is on strike for better prices!" Near one of the signs they have parked all their farm equipment. The Engelkes are not going to plant or harvest any crops this year.

The brothers are both factory workers. Robert works at Granite City Steel, and Norman at the Olin ammunition plant. Their grandfather bought the land they farm more than 100 years ago, and they took over the farm from their parents in 1972. In a press release to explain their strike, they state, "Both brothers have another source of employment, but wanted to preserve the family farm. With prices declining steadily and cost of production escalating steadily, it may become a costly hobby, instead of a second income."

They invited *Militant* reporters to their farm. Robert pulled out a 1946 paper he had found in the farmhouse and quoted the prices listed: Wheat at \$1.71 a bushel, corn at \$1.37 a bushel. He then quoted current prices: wheat at \$1.99 a bushel, corn at \$1.62 a bushel. Over the same period, the costs of production have increased tremendously. Norman commented, "You need at least 300 acres and a job on the side to make a living, to help support the farm."

Referring to government farm assistance programs, the Engelkes state in their press release, "Yes, the government offers CRP, LDP, and oil seed payment programs as a tax-subsidized option to farmers to help make the difference. But even with this assistance, the small farmer cannot even break even!"

Robert explained what they hope to accomplish. "We're hoping maybe people next year might think about it and say, 'Maybe we might let some ground lay.' There are people out there like us who can afford to do it, have a job and some land, but aren't making any money. A lot of people are farming 400, 500, or 600 acres trying to survive. They can't afford to leave any lay. Maybe some of the bigger farmers will let 25 acres lay."

The Engelke brothers are looking for a way to get prices for farm commodities up to a level that will allow family farmers to earn a living. They plan to write letters to state and federal officials asking them to do something. To publicize their strike, they organized a press conference that drew a local newspaper and a TV station.

Several nearby farmers stopped to express their support for the Engelkes' action. Alan Libbra, a neighbor who farms 2,000 acres, said, "The value in this is to call attention to the problem. People in the agricultural community clearly understand the problem, but I don't know how well the general public does. Keeping people conscious is the value, but this is not on large enough a scale to

have an impact on the market."

Libbra, who was active in the farm protest movement in the 1980s, added, "There's going to be a lot of social upheaval around this over time. Little towns are just blown away, becoming retirement villages. The explosion in the acreage size on grain farms in the last few years boggles the mind. One of my neighbors farms 4,000 acres, another 5,000, and there are a couple to the north who farm 3,000 to 5,000. Anybody farming less than that has got an off-farm job. It takes a lot of units to spread the cost across a \$200,000 combine. In the central part of the state, there are several operations of between 8,000 and 40,000 acres. This has happened just in the last eight to 10 years."

Libbra concluded, "The only thing that can ever reverse this is a reversal in government policy, and that can only happen if people see how it affects them."

Bill Arth is a member of the United Auto Workers. Kitty Loepker, a member of the United Steelworkers of America who works at Granite City Steel; and Ellie Garcia, a garment worker, contributed to this article.

Revere copper workers fight concessions

BY MARTIN BOYERS

NEW BEDFORD, Massachusetts—A rally of 200 here May 4 backed the 82 workers who went on strike three days earlier against Revere Copper and Brass, Inc.

"The solidarity has been great so far. We have to remain strong," said striker Tito Morales on the picket line. The workers are members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 168.

UAW members from other plants, Steel-

workers, and members of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees joined the action. Speaking at the rally, Local 168 president Robert Cunha said, "We're here and we'll be here as long as we have to." Don Boehner, representing a UAW local at a nearby plant, also spoke. "Business is making more profits and we're seeing less and less of it." He stated, "We're going to fight together and we're going to win." Several members of New Bedford's

City Council were also present.

The contract proposed by the company would freeze wages for the first two years of a three-year contract, with the issue to be reopened in the final year.

The guaranteed pension, which only senior workers receive, would be frozen at the current level, with no increase for additional years of employment. Workers hired in the last few years receive no guaranteed pension, only a 401(k) investment fund with both worker and company contributions.

For the first time, workers would pay \$10-\$25 a week for medical insurance, and would be responsible for one third of any future increases in insurance costs. The company says this would save \$500,000 per year.

Tonnage and vacation bonuses would be ended. The company also demanded a workweek of four 10-hour days, with provisions of adding weekend shifts of three 12-hour days. This would enable the bosses to run the plant seven days per week without paying weekend premium rates.

As a sweetener designed to get newer workers to approve the contract, Revere offered to increase entry level wages to \$10 an hour. The two-tier wage scale previously in effect started new hires at \$7.26 an hour, with a 19-month climb to full scale, which for most jobs is in the \$11-12 range.

The divide-and rule ruse did not work. The UAW members rejected the proposed contract by a 56-18 vote and set up picket lines a few hours later. No further negotiations have been scheduled. Although management personnel are trying to run production machinery, pickets report not one worker has crossed the line.

Martin Boyers is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees and recently a member of UAW Local 168 at Revere Copper.

Striking union actors stand up to ad giants

BY NICK CASTLE AND MARK FRIEDMAN

LOS ANGELES—A spirited picket line of 250 striking actors was held here May 12 against ad giant TBWA/Chiat/Day. The agency's clients include Apple, Nissan, Kinko's, and Taco Bell.

The action is one of the ongoing daily protests members of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) have mounted since a May 1 national strike was called against members of the Association of National Advertisers and the American Association of Advertising Agencies. The association represents more than 3,000 of the major ad companies in the country.

Picket captain Racheal Seymore said in an interview that a key demand is "pay-per-play." Management intends to roll back this important victory for actors, which pays them each time a commercial is shown, and institutes a one-time fee for unlimited use in a commercial cycle. One reason this "pay-per-play" formula is important to union members is that actors are denied employment from other agencies when they are

seen as representing a certain product. They are no longer a "fresh face." With the companies' buyout demand, the union estimates an actor would average only \$11 per day over the normal 13-week commercial cycle.

The last strike by SAG was in 1988 for about three weeks. Seymore and union activist Spider Madison also pointed out that the companies want to roll back the whole wage system. The rate that actors have made for prime-time commercials has dropped dramatically from about \$30,000 per commercial to \$5,000 over the past few years.

Winning new support

Strikers in Los Angeles have begun to win support, including from members of the Teamsters union who work at UPS and Teamsters-organized sanitation truck drivers, who refused to cross the picket lines. Union members from the Writers Guild, Musicians union, and Steelworkers locked out by Kaiser Aluminum in Spokane, Washington, have joined the pickets.

Seymore added, "Without support like that, the strike would be so much harder to win." The strikers have been invited by of-

ficials from the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union to address a rally they are having May 22 around a contract battle with Ogden food services.

While the Canadian Union for Actors ACTRA, was forced to accept a contract similar to what is being opposed by SAG, they have told their members not to take jobs at struck agencies, nor to cross the picket lines. Increasingly, production of commercials and movies has been outsourced to Canada to avoid paying higher union wages in the United States. AFTRA and SAG in Los Angeles organized protests against this last month.

Prominent individuals like professional golfer Tiger Woods and All-Star baseball player Nomar Garciaparra have shown their strike solidarity by refusing to do commercials that involve production by one of the struck companies.

Nick Castle is a member of the Directors Guild of America. Mark Friedman is a member of the International Association of Machinists.

Cuban workers discuss reforms in facto

Political leadership is decisive as working class tackles economic ch

Continued from front page

Party. Muñoz proposed that Asticar adopt a set of reforms known as Perfeccionamiento Empresarial, or "improved management," as provided for by the National Assembly's decree-law 187 adopted in August 1998.

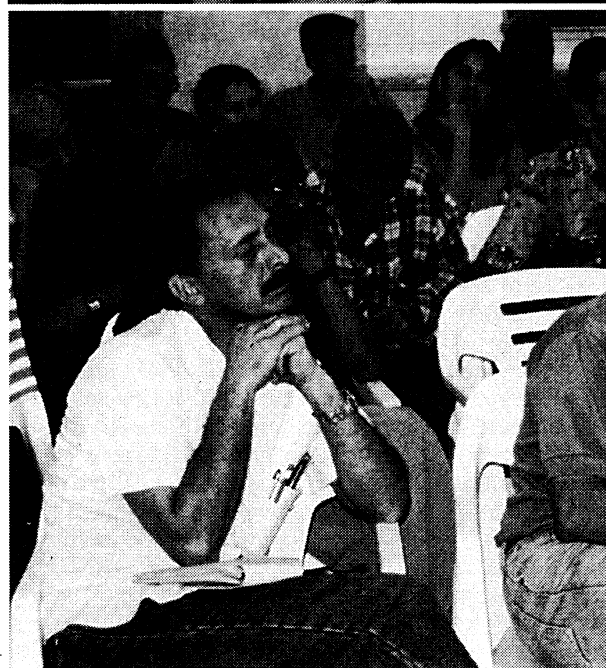
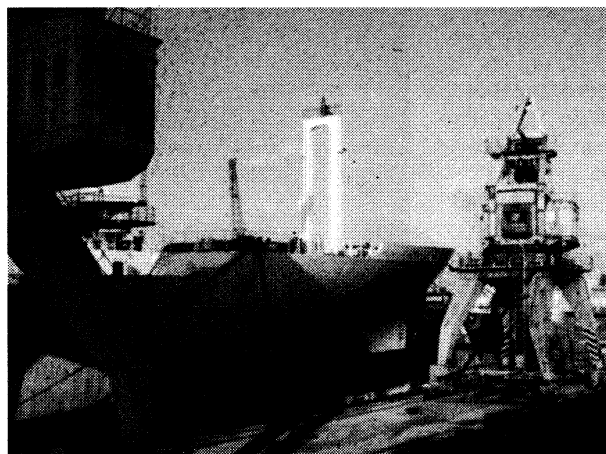
That new law followed the adoption in October 1997 of an Economic Resolution by the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party, which emphasized boosting labor efficiency in order to reduce state subsidies to enterprises and produce more of the essential goods needed by the Cuban people.

Under the decree-law, a number of important management policies that up till now have been determined by national legislation, or are subject to strict regulation by the responsible government ministry—such as wage scales, the number of workers employed, the hours worked, and enterprise responsibility for training—will be determined to a greater degree enterprise by enterprise. These policies will be subject to discussion and agreement between management and the union at the workplace. Noel Carrillo of the CTC's international relations department told the *Militant*. Eliminating government subsidies to inefficient enterprises—what the legislation refers to as "self-financing"—will have great weight in determining production and trading decisions.

According to a March 1999 CTC document "Improved Management and the Trade Union Movement," the reforms build on the revolution's long-standing "premise that state enterprises constitute the fundamental links in the economy; what is posed is strengthening the level of efficiency, authority, and the way they run." The union leadership will strive to become "a driving force within enterprise management," the document says, converting itself into "a factor of economic efficiency."

As the CTC organizes preparations for its national congress in 2001, Carrillo said, the initial experience of enterprises that have adopted the reforms will be a prominent issue under review.

According to the CTC, six enterprises had begun to function under the new guidelines by mid-February and an additional 895 were at some stage of preparing to do so. Before the changes can be implemented, we were told, they must be agreed to by both the enterprise management and the workers. Discussions are organized in union meetings at the brigade, workshop, and plant level, as well as at meetings of the CP and UJC in the workplace. A vote must then be taken following discussion at an enterprise



Workers' representatives at Asticar shipyard in Havana participate in "efficiency assembly." Chief topic of discussion, and controversy, was proposed change in organization of management of the enterprise. Reforms affect matters vital to workers across Cuba, such as wages, hours, and social security. Inset: the repair dock of the shipyard.

Militant/Ron Poulsen

assembly.

"Following these discussions, a report is drawn up for submission to the relevant ministry," said Carrillo. The enterprise, he said, must demonstrate that there is a market for its products, that it has proposals in place to obtain necessary parts and materials and provide safeguards for the workers, and that its cost accounting records and procedures are in order. This third point is important, Carrillo emphasized. "In perhaps a majority of Cuban enterprises, the accounts are a fiction," he said.

Implementing strict cost accounting norms in order to put enterprise finances in

order is a major objective. This includes raising workers' knowledge and competency to review reports on the enterprise's balance sheet.

When a manager affirms there is agreement in the plant management, union, and party leadership that the conditions to adopt the new guidelines have been satisfied, the ministry then carries out a financial inspection and audit. "Only after the enterprise has passed inspection will the relevant ministry give the go-ahead" for management to start making decisions on a range of policies that have previously been decided on a centralized national level, Carrillo said.

The reforms affect matters of vital importance to every worker, such as wages, hours, job security, working conditions, and unemployment benefits. Most workers we talked to—not only at the shipyard, but several Havana-area factories, as well—indicated they favored the reforms and expressed expectations that their wages would rise and working conditions in their plant would improve. But it is not surprising that the reforms have generated considerable discussion in many workplaces.

Special Period

The proposed changes are in line with a retreat Cuba's Communist Party has had to lead since the opening of the 1990s, when what is known in Cuba as the Special Period began. The term refers to the economic dislocation and severe shortages that followed the collapse of aid and trade at preferential rates with the Soviet Union and countries of Eastern Europe a decade ago. Some 85 percent of Cuba's trade had been with these countries. Washington took advantage of these harsh and unexpected economic shocks to intensify its own reactionary trade and financial warfare against Cuba.

The revolutionary government recognized that objective conditions were narrowing the scope of effective economic planning and of the state monopoly of foreign trade, while increasing social inequalities in the working class and other layers of the population. And they instituted a series of measures to meet pressing immediate needs for food, industrial goods, and basic social services.

Five years into the Special Period, the CTC leadership prepared theses for the 1996

congress of the federation that were circulated and discussed beforehand by workers in enterprises across the island. The document stated that politically conscious workers in Cuba were aware of "our country's need to introduce elements of capitalism, of the inequalities these inevitably breed and of our duty to continue defending the revolution's values and principles in this new context."

The theses continued that what "distinguishes our economic transformation is that [the measures implemented by the government] are being carried out under the sponsorship and control of the state, and their highest objectives are to safeguard the interests of the revolution and the workers. This includes the aspiration of resuming the construction of socialism when the conditions for doing so are created."

Through the efforts of Cuban working people and their vanguard party, unions, and other mass organizations, the most severe shortages of food and other essentials began to ease by the latter half of the 1990s, and the drop in industrial and agricultural production bottomed out (see accompanying article).

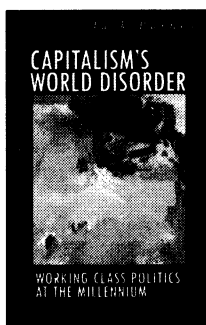
With the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the USSR, however, Cuba faces much greater economic sensitivity to the world capitalist market. It is in that framework that further shifts in the system of management are being discussed and, in a measured way, have begun to be implemented in Cuba today.

Rectification process

Decree-law 187 traces the proposed reforms to a process initiated in enterprise run by the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) more than a decade ago.

At that time the "rectification process" was in full swing in Cuba. Rectification was the name given to the policy course adopted in 1986 by the leadership of the Communist Party to reverse the spread of corruption and privileges that benefited a relatively better-off layer of functionaries and professionals, alongside a growing depoliticization and demobilization of working people. These were social realities that had begun to accelerate following a decade and a half of the consequences of copying the political policies and methods

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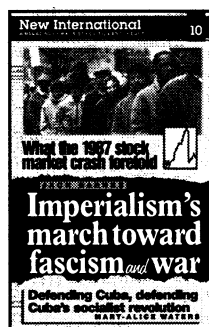
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Management challenges of the revolution

of economic organization used in the Soviet Union.

Rectification was not a set of economic reforms. It constituted a change in political direction that gave more weight to politics and increased working-class mobilization. It strengthened working people in the cities and countryside in face of growing middle-class layers.

One of the principal measures taken was the reintroduction of voluntary work to build housing, schools, child-care centers, clinics, and other much-needed social facilities.

In the decade prior to the opening of the rectification process, Cuban president Fidel Castro explained in October 1987, "Voluntary work...was steadily on the decline.... The bureaucrat's view, the technocrat's view that voluntary work was neither basic nor essential gained more and more ground."

Thousands upon thousands of workers volunteered to be part of work brigades and construction contingents that took on even larger projects such as roads, dams, and hospitals. In the process, a genuine social movement began to develop that brought the weight of the working class to bear in advancing the revolution and solving some of the most pressing social needs working people had. The extension and deepening of this course were cut short by the sudden and severe economic disruptions of the Special Period.

Contemporaneous with the developing social movement, pilot economic reforms have been launched during rectification. One such reform was launched in enterprises run by the FAR under the designation "Perfeccionamiento Empresarial." According to Noel Carrillo, it was implemented in workplaces such as the Ernesto Che Guevara armaments plant in Las Villas, "where political consciousness and work discipline is high."

Armando Pérez Betancourt, a former colonel in the FAR, is today secretary of the government-established group that oversees the decree-law 187 reforms. Its president is Carlos Lage, vice president of the Council of State and executive secretary of the Council of Ministers. Established by the decree-law, the group includes a number of government ministers as well as the general secretary of the CTC, who is invited to each of its leadership meetings. "The intention is that all of Cuba's 3,000 enterprises will eventually operate under the improved management system," Pérez Betancourt told the *Militant*.

The new system "means that a plant must be 'self-financing,'" said Jeovany Cuesta Vaillant, union secretary at the main dairy plant in Havana, in an interview. Echoing views expressed by others as well, he explained, "It means producing more, and better, with less. It's up to the plant to decide how to take the best from capitalism and apply it to the Cuban economy where we're developing a socialist market. The measures taken must 'fit the individual enterprise like a tailor-made suit.'"

The decree-law states that in covering annual operating costs of raw materials, parts, transportation, and wages, enterprises under the new system are to be "self-financing"—that is, they are to cover such recurring expenses out of revenues from sales. Major capital outlays for expansion and renewal of plant and equipment remain centralized through the appropriate government ministries and state banking system.

For example, Orlando Borrego, an advisor to the Transportation Ministry, told the *Militant* that "self-financing" for the railroads did not mean the enterprise was expected to generate income sufficient to finance replacement of rolling stock or expansion of rail beds. Major investment of that character is the responsibility of the ministry.

Incentives and a stable income

The discussion at the Asticar assembly focused mainly on what the consequences of the proposed reforms would be for the wages and conditions faced by the workers employed at the shipyard, about which many workers expressed concern. One proposal was that wages be tied more directly to production goals, including through the

increased use of bonus payments. Out of a total workforce of around 5 million, there are 781,000 workers in Cuba whose wages are now linked in some way to production results. Workers at Asticar are among them. Currently bonuses for meeting or surpassing production targets are paid to the shipyard workforce as a whole.

According to the proposals put forward by the management and union, such collective incentives would be replaced by production-related premiums to individual workers or smaller groups of workers. At the efficiency assembly, Felipe Hernández, a machinist, expressed strong reservations about this change. "It's not good that one shipyard worker could earn much more than another simply because of where they work," he said.

"We're very concerned about the proposed payments system" said David Reyes, a sheetmetal worker, who, like Hernández, spoke a number of times at the assembly. "What happens, for example, when there's no work? You can't have a situation whereby for a couple of weeks we get good wages

but then for the next couple of weeks we're laid off and our wages go right down."

The prospect of wage differentials according to workshop and the issue of frequent short-term layoffs were raised by various speakers at the assembly. Some pointed to the nature of shipyard production: when a workshop has completed its tasks on a

ship, the workers may have no work for a while until the next ship arrives for repair. One worker recalled that there had been very little work during the last quarter of 1999.

"What happens if a workshop runs out of work?" asked a machinist whose first

Continued on page 10



Arnaldo Santos

Members of volunteer work brigade from Boyeros district march in 1997 May Day parade in Havana. Banner reads "Viva May Day in Free Cuba." Ever since they swept out capitalist rule more than 40 years ago, Cuban working people have successfully defended a government that is genuinely theirs, against Washington's unrelenting determination to overthrow it.

Cuban production continues recovery

HAVANA—Arriving at night at Havana's José Martí international airport, I was struck by the street lights. "When were you last here?" the taxi driver asked. "In 1996" I replied. "Oh, that was during the Special Period," he commented.

"Special Period" is the name given to the extreme economic dislocation and hardship that marked Cuba following the unexpected and abrupt ending of aid and trade at preferential rates with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe a decade ago.

Between 1989 and 1993 the Cuban economy contracted by an estimated 35 percent. Food became in desperately short supply. Oil consumption was cut in half during that period. Factories closed. Tractors, buses, cars, and trains stopped running. Blackouts for up to 12 hours became common in Havana during the worst of the crisis in 1993. Street lighting was nonexistent.

"We are still in the Special Period," remarked Zenen Enrique Santana Delgado of the Institute of International Relations. The sugar harvest, he noted, which remains the backbone of the Cuban economy, is still at half the level reached in 1990. "But the taxi driver's remark is significant. It reflects the growing confidence that people feel with the economic recovery," Santana said.

Cuban Central Bank statistics indicate that the Cuban economy grew by 6.2 percent last year, the sixth consecutive year of growth and double the 2.5 percent growth forecast. The Central Bank forecasts 4.5 percent growth for the year 2000.

Speaking at the National Assembly of People's Power meeting at the end of December, José Luis Rodríguez, vice president of the Council of Ministers, said that the growth was due to four factors: the continued expansion of tourism, a dramatic increase in domestic oil and gas production, the beginning recovery of the sugar industry, and a 5.4 percent improvement in overall labor productivity.

The 1999 sugar harvest totaled 3.783 million tons, Rodríguez reported, more than half a million tons up on the previous year. Labor productivity reports in this sector showed significant improvement, registering a 22 percent reduction in the costs per ton of raw sugar produced. Seventy-five percent of the harvest is now mechanized. At a January conference in Havana, the sugar industry minister, Gen. Ulises Rosales del Toro, reported that this year's harvest is expected to increase by between 300,000 and 600,000 tons.

The country attracted 1.65 million tourists in 1999, the National Assembly report

noted, a 16.5 percent increase over 1998, accompanied by an 11 percent increase in revenue. More than 2 million tourists are expected to visit Cuba this year.

Improved oil and gas production

The biggest improvement, said the report, was in domestic oil and gas production. Oil extraction grew 25 percent, while gas production showed a 260 percent rise. While the latter figure reflects a low base for comparison, the increase registered the introduction of new technology that captures gas that was previously burnt off. The country produced 41 percent of the energy it used.

The agricultural sector altogether grew by 15.1 percent, the Cuban government reported, with nonsugar farm production growing by 18.2 percent. Rodríguez pointed to increased production of root vegetables (13.4 percent), urban market gardening (56.3 percent), beans (29.2 percent), fruit (64.7 percent), eggs (17.9 percent), and hogs (10.7 percent) as being notable. Milk production declined 7 percent. While rice production grew, it did not achieve the targeted increases.

"Although the levels of production mark a positive direction, they are still far from satisfying the population's needs" Rodríguez noted.

Farmers markets, where individual farmers and cooperatives sell produce along with state farms, including those run by the

armed forces, continue to provide an important source of people's food; they registered a 35 percent increase in sales from the previous year.

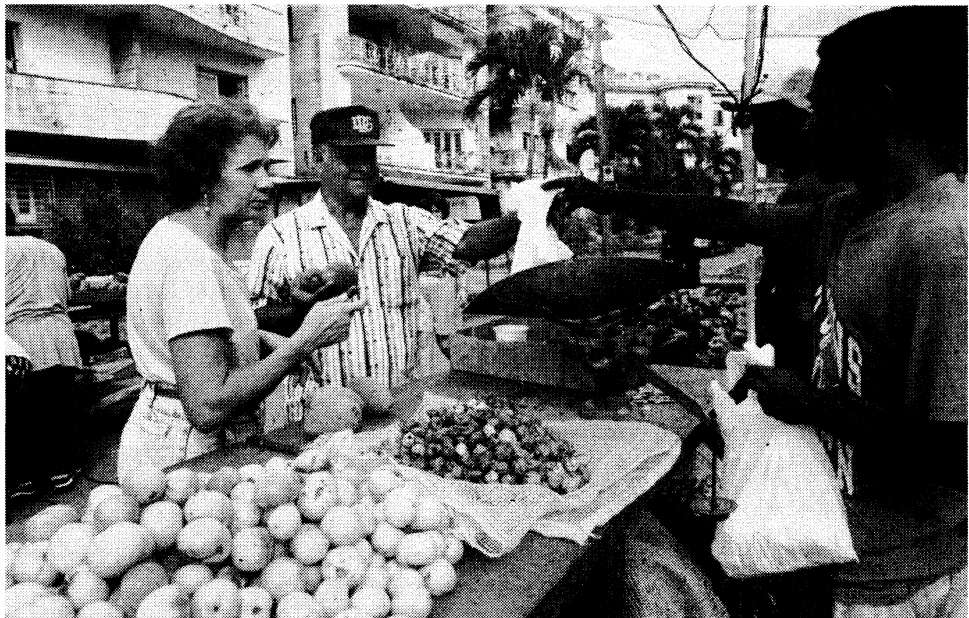
Other factors affecting workers' living standards included a 5.7 percent rise in average wages. More than 60 percent of workers had significant raises, Rodríguez said, ranging from 12 to 40 percent. Unemployment was cut to 6 percent, with 87,000 new jobs being created in the eastern provinces between January and September.

Some 62 percent of Cubans now have dollar bank accounts (up from 56.3 percent in 1998), the National Assembly was told. About 1.8 million Cubans today receive bonuses or part of their wages in convertible currency, a 6 percent increase over the previous year. Inflation is minimal and the peso's semiofficial exchange rate to the dollar has stabilized at 20:1, from more than 120:1 in 1994.

Forty thousand new telephone lines have been installed; power cuts declined by 25 percent; more newspapers and books were printed; and the list of unavailable medicines dropped from 266 to 225.

Cuba's balance of payments deteriorated due to a negative shift in the terms of trade, Rodríguez reported, due especially to the collapse of international sugar prices and a rise in world oil prices.

- J.S.



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

Farmers market in Havana, 1997. These markets, where individual farmers, cooperatives, and state farms sell produce, provide an important source of Cubans' food. Last year they registered a 35 percent increase in sales, a sign of Cuba's continuing recovery from the worst of the economic crisis known as the "Special Period."

Cuban workers discuss economic reforms

Continued from Page 9

name is Néstor. "And what will happen to bonus payments if there's no work? Will it be up to the brigade head to decide if a worker gets a bonus?"

"What happens if we don't reach the production targets we set?" asked another worker. "What happens if we're off sick?" said another.

Benefits and training

Under the current laws every worker in Cuba receives 60 percent of wages when laid off and 80 percent when sick, paid by the government.

"Under the improved management system, it will be the responsibility of the enterprise to make these payments," explained plant manager Jorge Muñoz following the Asticar assembly. Workers were clearly concerned that this shift, combined with the emphasis on eliminating state subsidies, might result in pressure to curtail such benefits in some ways.

Wages at Asticar are relatively high for industrial workplaces in Cuba; they have risen substantially over the last three years with the shipyard's improved economic performance. Three years ago there were 350 workers at Asticar with an average wage of 180 pesos per month; last year 625 workers received an average 382 pesos per month. By working longer than Cuba's common 44-hour workweek, Asticar workers said that they can earn between 500 and 700 pesos per month, depending on their skill level and the amount of work. (By law workers are currently permitted to work a maximum of 240 hours per month, averaged over a year.)

"The heart of our concerns is that wages don't fluctuate hugely and that there is security," said Felipe Hernández. "There is a need for guaranteed work and guaranteed wages. This must be approached from the framework of paying attention to the workers' needs."

"I'm concerned about the training provision," said María Elvira Lozano, a representative of the National Union of Merchant Marine and Fishing Workers. Under Cuban law, CTC representatives explained, should a worker's job be redundant, the worker is offered three alternatives by the enterprise and retrained if necessary. The quality manager at Asticar, Tomás Miguez, had reported that this guarantee will no longer apply under the new proposals. Efficient production will be given priority over retraining, he said.

In line with this goal, all skilled workers at the yard would be tested, Miguez added.



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

Delegate speaks at Congress of Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC) in April 1996. Discussion on proposed economic reforms will be part of preparations for next CTC Congress in May 2001, in a nationwide process of organized discussion by the Cuban working class.

"If, for example, a certified welder didn't pass the appropriate test, they would be downgraded, given retraining, and retested. Failing the test a second time would result in the welder losing their job," he warned.

"We're operating in an industry that has rigorous international standards," said Jorge Muñoz. "If we're going to win more work from foreign-owned ships—we want this to be the best repair yard in the entire Caribbean—we have to be able to demonstrate good quality work, low prices, and fast turnaround. Our aim is for these changes to result in more work, not less. And we're not looking for workers in one workshop to make a bundle while others earn nothing."

"But your concerns are normal," he told the assembly delegates.

Conceding that a recession in international shipping—something beyond Asticar's control—would have consequences that need to be addressed, and that individual incentives could be divisive, Muñoz said these issues would be among those taken up in the coming round of discussions.

"This is very complex question," said engineer Manuel Mengano, who supported the proposed changes. "We must produce more. We should never be satisfied, with or without the new system. We need to be working eight hours, not 12. People work very hard," he said, "but we haven't shown

that we're conscious of costs."

No vote was taken at the end of the assembly. Instead, the delegates agreed there would be a further round of seminars and brigade and workshop meetings, following which the assembly would reconvene.

Broad discussion

The same issues are being discussed at factory assemblies across Cuba. *Militant* reporters had an opportunity to participate in the assembly at Sigma, which does maintenance work on machinery used in the garment industry, and to talk with workers at Suchel Frangancia, a factory producing concentrate for the manufacture of perfume.

Workers we met in a tour of the Quintín Banderas factory, which produces steam, gas, and water tanks and other equipment, were generally favorable to the reform measures proposed for their plant and had high expectations, as did workers at Sigma and Suchel. Workers and management at Quintín Banderas had been through a round of discussions and had submitted a proposal to the ministry. They were waiting for the ministerial financial inspection and audit.

Javier Williams, an operative who's worked there for two years, said he thought the reforms would lead to an overall increase in efficiency and production. "The union in the plant will become more important, because every decision will be subject to discussion with the union," Williams said. Yoel Linares, a UJC member who started work at Quintín Banderas last November, said he thought greater input by the workers would lead to "much needed safety improvements."

Jacinto Videaux, a center lathe turner, said he was very much in favor and was convinced that "wages will improve. I worked for four years in East Germany. Plants there operated under a system similar to this, and wages were quite good," he told us.

Videaux now earns a basic wage of 217 pesos per month, supplemented by an additional 10 percent for length of service and another 10 percent for special qualifications he has trained for. Like all workers in the plant, if his on-time record and work discipline are good, Videaux also receives a "bolsa de aseo," a shopping bag of goods such as detergent, tooth paste, and cooking oil frequently available in Cuba only for hard currency.

Videaux also offered the opinion that "socialism is good for things like health and education and social solidarity, but it's inefficient economically." It is not unusual to hear such views expressed in Cuba today, including among workers. This is not only

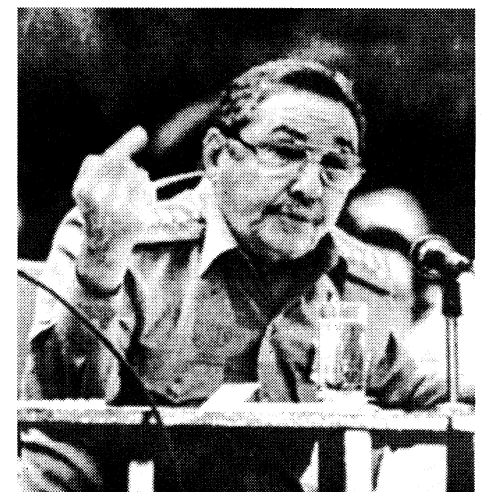
the product of capitalist propaganda, and the enormous difficulties faced in Cuba over the last decade, but also lack of clarity over what led to the fall of the so-called socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

As shown by even the limited discussions *Militant* reporters had in February, a layer of workers are concerned that management reforms such as those being introduced will accentuate unevenness in the social wage in Cuba and pit workers in one enterprise against those in others over the scramble for resources.

Communist political leadership

Unlike capitalism, however, the construction of socialism is not the product of blind laws; it is the work of conscious—and free—men and women. Communist leadership is decisive.

Speaking at a series of provincial party assemblies last fall, Raúl Castro—second secretary of the Communist Party, Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, and General of the Army—stressed, according to an article in the November 28 issue of Cuba's



Granma

Raúl Castro, second secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, explained at meetings last fall that the party must not become bogged down in administrative tasks. He said party cadres must "devote ourselves more to political and ideological work, which is vital, has always been so, and is more vital today than ever."

weekly *Granma Internacional*, that "it is not possible to move ahead on the country's improved management plan without defining the tasks of the Party, so that it doesn't continue to assume administrative responsibilities which hinder its true function."

The article went on to quote Raúl Castro as saying to cadres at the Guantánamo provincial meeting:

As the party's participation in administrative tasks decreases, we will be able to devote ourselves more to political and ideological work, which is vital, has always been so, and, as Fidel has explained, is more vital today than ever.

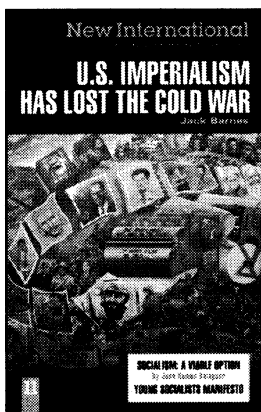
We are not playing the role of revisionists here, but making a review of errors, and we're not discovering anything new. Look at Lenin's work: it was he who put forward the idea that administration was not the Party's role in society....

We're still not accustomed to telling it like it is, looking each other in the eye, face-to-face.... I'm saying that because in the Party cells that include the head of the enterprise, a minister, or the director of an agribusiness complex, that aspect is not functioning well.

"Telling it like it is"—explaining the objective conditions that make a temporary but substantial and orderly retreat necessary; telling the unvarnished truth about the consequent social inequalities and their political dangers to the proletarian solidarity and worker-farmer alliance on which the revolution is based; advancing communist political perspectives to unify and mobilize working people in face of class enemies both at home and abroad; staying on the lookout for opportunities to reach out to revolutionary struggles elsewhere in the world that can speed the end of the retreat and a resumption of the advance toward socialism.

That was indeed at the center of Lenin's work in the early 1920s, when the young Soviet republic and its Bolshevik leadership

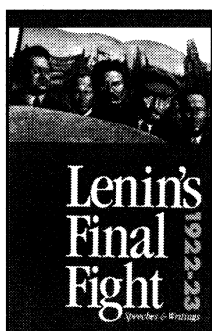
Continued on Page 14



U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

by Jack Barnes

In *New International* no. 8
\$14.00



Lenin's Final Fight Speeches and Writings, 1922-23 V.I. Lenin

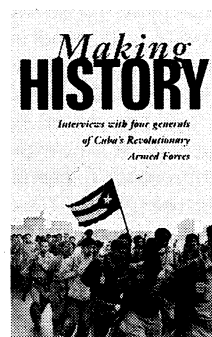
In the early 1920s Lenin waged a political battle in the leadership of the Communist Party of the USSR to maintain the course that had enabled the workers and peasants to overthrow the tsarist empire, carry out the first successful socialist revolution, and begin building a world communist movement. The issues posed in Lenin's political fight remain at the heart of

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W. Virginia meeting on black lung discusses the battle for coal miners' safety and health

BY TONY LANCASTER

BARBOURSVILLE, West Virginia—Speaking at a conference on black lung disease here May 19, Joe Main, United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Safety and Health administrator, called the May 17 rally in Washington by miners and retirees the “biggest action by miners since the black lung rally in 1981.” The action, he said, will have “an impact beyond the Coal Act.”

Main pointed out that 70,000 to 80,000 retirees depend on the Coal Act. Despite a \$68 million infusion last year, the fund needs additional financing by the end of this year. “The rally went well,” he said, “but we have got a lot of work to do.”

The May 17–19 conference was sponsored by the West Virginia Black Lung Clinics program. In attendance were clinic staff, National Black Lung Association activists, health-care workers, and others. Main gave a presentation on legislative issues concerning health and safety matters facing miners

and retirees. According to the original conference agenda, UMWA president Cecil Roberts was scheduled to be part of a panel set for May 17 on the future of coal mining in West Virginia. The panel was canceled as the Washington rally that day built into a sizable action.

Main pointed out that miners and retirees face battles on the fight against black lung, which is a preventable disease caused by breathing coal dust. Despite federal legislation enacted to prevent it, black lung still remains the number-one killer of coal miners in the country. The UMWA estimates that it kills 1,500 miners every year.

Today, only 7 percent of those seeking benefits for black lung are successful, and of those some require lengthy legal battles. In response to growing exposure of widespread denials, and determination by miners and their union not to let the issue get swept under the rug, the U.S. Department of Labor proposed new regulations last Oc-

tober, but they are still tied up in the department. The UMWA is pushing to strengthen the regulations and thwart efforts at derailment. This included a lobbying effort by miners and retirees on Capitol Hill on March 22. Main pointed to the hostility of the mine bosses to any reform, noting that “the coal operators want this shut down so badly.”

Alongside the fight for benefits for those who contract black lung, miners are demanding improved conditions in the mines to prevent and reduce the disease and other health risks.

The UMWA has sued the government in an effort to force it to take over monitoring of dust levels, which is a crucial part of enforcing regulations and reducing risk of dust to miners. At present, operators are responsible for measuring dust levels. Since 1990 there have been 200 prosecutions for dust fraud, Main pointed out.

Personal dust monitors and constant monitoring devices are being developed, but

the government will not make it a requirement for the mines to have these devices. The union official said that on each of these matters the UMWA had a lawsuit or a threat of a lawsuit against the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and that they were “highly disappointed in this administration.”

The current issue of the United Mine Workers *Journal* points to strengthened ties between the UMWA and the National Black Lung Association (NBLA) and the National Coalition of Black Lung Clinics. NBLA president Lewis Fitch said, “We will continue to push the Labor Department to put these long-overdue black lung rules and regulations into effect.” He added that the NBLA is also working to invigorate the black lung clinics, established with UMWA assistance. The National Black Lung Association conference will be held in the coalfields October 14–16 in Bristol, Virginia.

New Mexico coal strikers firm

Continued from front page

der police escort crossed the line along with local mine management.

Joining the miners on the picket line were several members of the Laborers International Union, who are contracted by P&M to do reclamation work at the McKinley mine.

The miners held their expanded picket along busy Route 264. A majority of the truck drivers and cars that went by honked in support of the strikers. Miners wore T-shirts saying, “Behind every light switch is a coal miner” and “UMWA Strike Force 2000—Whatever It Takes.”

A total of 311 of the 387 nonmanagement employees at the McKinley mine went on strike May 15 over major concession demands by the company, including health care, overtime pay, and pensions.

The company, owned by Chevron Corp., is pressing for union members to give up double-time pay for work on Sundays and triple-time pay for holidays and birthdays. The bosses also demand an end to overtime pay except after 40 hours' work.

One of the central issues in the strike is P&M's move to set aside the company medical plan, which covers 100 percent of miners' health-care costs. The company wants to take that away from Native American miners and give them \$100 a month instead, along with the suggestion they use the government health care provided under Indian Health Services.

Although the plan would be voluntary, the unionists point out the move is discriminatory. The company denies this, claiming its

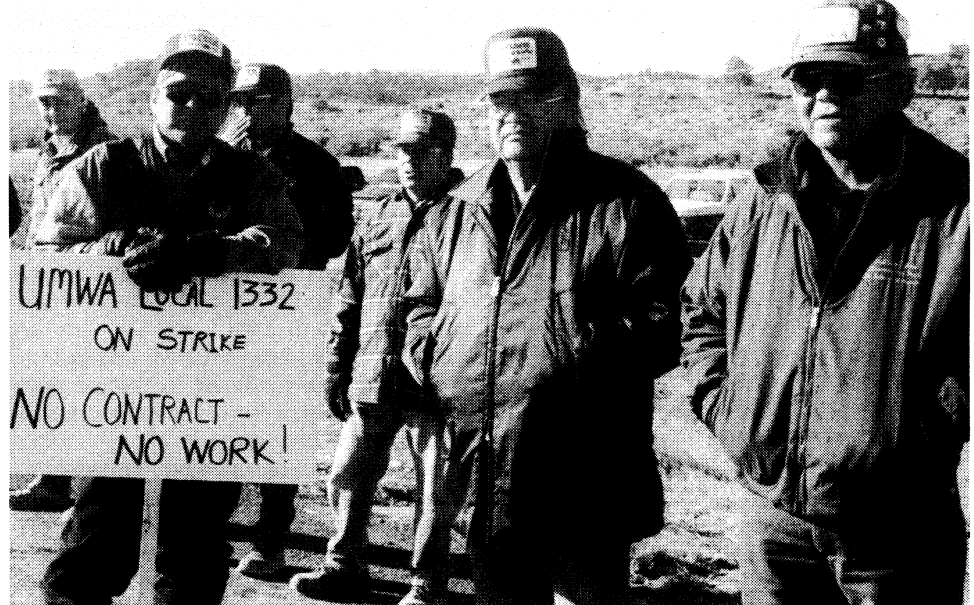
proposals were “special incentive plans.”

The UMWA miners at McKinley must reach the age of 62 to retire with full pensions or 55 for a partial pension, no matter how many years they have worked in the mine. The union is demanding a retirement plan after 20 years of service and that the company contribute the same amount of money to the pension fund as do companies under the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA). According to an article in the May 18 *Navajo Times*, BCOA member companies contribute \$50 a month for each year of service while Pittsburg and Midway only gives \$28. The McKinley mine left the BCOA in 1995.

The company says it will increase the contribution to the pension fund to the BCOA standard if workers will agree to the changes in overtime pay. The *Navajo Times* reported that UMWA Local 1332 president Lawrence Oliver rejected this trade-off.

“Oliver said P&M informed the union that the money that the company saved from not paying premium benefits to its workers would go into their pension plan to raise it to the national standards,” the paper reported. “P&M's proposal to raise pension benefits is nothing because the money is coming from the pockets of the workers, he said.”

Georgia Ashley, who has worked at the McKinley mine for 17 years, told the *Militant* that her response to the company's offer on health care was, “We're not using



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Expanded picket line of strikers from UMWA Local 1332 in Gallup, New Mexico.

glass beads anymore.”

The union wants a six-year contract instead of five because the company says the coal seam will run out in 2006 and it plans to close the mine. The union does not want to negotiate a contract for one last year.

In addition, the “20 years and out” demand will allow miners who now have 20 years' service but are not at the company's

current retirement age to collect a pension when the mine closes in 2006.

Unionists here started strike preparations many months in advance. Local union leaders visited the 110 chapters (communities) on the Navajo Nation, urging miners to save up money and make preparations for the strike.

No new negotiations have been set.

Canada Natives block road in fight for land

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN AND DERRICK O'KEEFE

CHILLIWACK, British Columbia—Dressed in battle fatigues, members of the Cheam First Nation set up camp on the Rosedale Ferry Island Access Road in the Fraser Valley, 50 miles east of Vancouver.

The Cheam fighters closed the road April 7 in response to government inaction and encroachment on their land. Provincial authorities state they will not negotiate until the Cheam nation removes its barricades.

“The provincial government wants to turn this land into provincial parks without our input and make our land claims invalid,” explained Cheam nation member Denise Douglas. Cheam nation chief June Quipp added that the government is continuing to stall in resolving land issues that go back some 40 years.

“It is time to take action, never mind just talking any more and being educated because it's been a long time that they have been stealing our lands,” she said. “They talk about blockades. But they've been blockading us for many, many years, doing it very silently, and getting away with it.”

Cheam leaders have said if there is no progress made they will escalate their action and set up a toll on Highway 9, a major road running through the reserve.

Polarization around the issue is evident in the area. There is racist graffiti scrawled on boulders stating, “This is white man's

land” and “will kill f—ing indjan.” Young Cheam fighters, who make up the majority of those defending the roadblock, joke that “these racists can't even spell properly.”

The Cheam have received broad support for their actions and have indicated that support has increased since the beginning of the blockade.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN), which represents close to 1 million Native peoples in Canada, passed a resolution, noting that the “federal and provincial governments have consistently, for the last 40-odd years, trivialized, ignored, and stonewalled the concerns of the Cheam Indian Band.”

Leaders of the AFN from Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta have visited the blockade. First Nations representatives from every nation in British Columbia have spent time with the Cheam fighters, according to Quipp, and have expressed their solidarity, as have many non-Native people from nearby communities.

The vitality of the Cheam fight is evident in the comments of the youth who are defending their rights. Dwayne Douglas explained, “To the government this may just be swamp land, but it's our land. We've been fighting for it for a long time. We are going to spend our lives here, we are going to fish here, and we can't let them take it away from us.”

Thirty-two Native youth had just completed a month-long course in self-defense, involving physical training as well as study,

when the roadblock was established. Bobby Douglas, another young Cheam, said they decided to learn self-defense following a number of incidents of harassment and intimidation by armed Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) officers, who have repeatedly clashed with natives asserting their right to fish.

The dispute with the government involves some 25 square miles of land. This has already been infringed upon by the Canadian National railway, British Columbia Hydro power lines, highway construction, and a gas pipe line.

The 200 Cheam living on the reserve now face the loss of a major source of income, a landfill they operate on the site, because the federal Department of Indian Affairs is threatening to shut it down, claiming the Cheam need a permit to operate it. The federal government has pressured the trucking companies to pull out of dealing with the Cheam.

The Cheam roadblock is part of the increased disenchantment with the treaty negotiation process in British Columbia. The vast majority of the province was never ceded to the European colonizers through treaties.

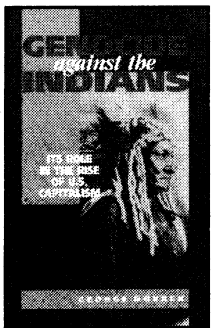
Ned Dmytryshyn is a member of Machinists Local 11 in Delta, British Columbia. Derrick O'Keefe is a member of the Young Socialists.

from Pathfinder

Genocide against the Indians

George Novack

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NY mayor withdraws from Senate race

BY GREG McCARTAN

NEW YORK—Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani announced at a May 19 press conference here that he will not run for U.S. Senate. Rep. Richard Lazio of Long Island, New York, promptly launched his bid for the Republican nomination, winning the endorsement of much of the party's New York establishment.

Three days earlier, Hillary Rodham Clinton secured, without opposition, the nomination as Democratic Party candidate for U.S. Senate at a state convention in Albany.

Giuliani's resignation came some two weeks after a swirl of exposés about his personal life began dominating media coverage here, including front-page stories scandalizing the mayor. It developed into a soap opera-like media display of emotional press conferences and marital intrigues, and holier-than-thou moral condemnations by opinion columnists and talk show hosts.

Giuliani's decision to separate from his wife Donna Hanover, and Hanover's accusations of marital infidelity against her husband, became the top news story in the city.

"Donna rips Rudy on relationship with aide," "Hanover Returns Fire," "3 Kids Facing 'Earthquake' of Stress, Therapists Say," "A Woman Scorns," and "Giuliani's Marital Uproar Brings Wincing and Sighs," were among the lead headlines in the city's newspapers day after day until Giuliani withdrew from the Senate race.

The mayor attributed his decision not to run to his need to get medical treatment for prostate cancer, for which he had been diagnosed several weeks earlier.

Prior to the public frenzy around the mayor's intimate life, politics in New York had been marked by sharp debates and conflicts on the policies and actions of the Giuliani administration. Giuliani aggressively pressed his defense of police methods that have led to repeated killings and victimizations by cops, attempts to restrict freedom of expression and other democratic rights, moves to curtail union organization and workers' ability to hold street actions, and other issues.

There have been an increased number of strikes and rallies by workers, protests against police brutality and killings, and demonstrations in defense of democratic



Militant/Marc Lichtman

Funeral march and protest of cop killing of Patrick Dorismond in Brooklyn. Debate and protests over mayor's policies have been replaced by salacious news articles about his private life and relationships—a blow to working people (see editorial on page 14).

rights. There have also been sharpening conflicts within the ruling class here, reflected in divisions not only between the Democrats and Republicans but within both parties.

For example, former congressman Joseph DioGuardi challenged the mayor when he announced as a candidate for U.S. Senate. DioGuardi said he would seek the endorsement of the Conservative, Right-to-Life, and Independence parties. All three parties have ballot status in the state. "We have two social liberals in the race," he said. "There's a clear need for a conservative alternative." No Republican candidate has won a statewide race in New York without Conservative Party backing since 1974.

The latest actions by working people included several mass protests and condemnation of the police killing of Patrick Dorismond, shot by cops who approached him trying to sell drugs as part of a sting operation. Dorismond rebuffed the undercover cops and was dead seconds later. Giuliani immediately released a previously sealed arrest record and portrayed the dead man as a criminal.

The mayor was pushed back in his attempt to stymie the right to union organization at the meatpacking and wholesale fruit and vegetable market at Hunts Point, which is fast becoming a centerpiece of food distribution in the city, employing thousands of workers.

Giuliani recently retreated on one of his attacks on democratic rights, which was to withdraw funding for the Brooklyn Museum after it staged a show the mayor deemed inappropriate. The attempt to muzzle free speech was met by protests by defenders of democratic rights and artistic freedom in the city.

The publicity surrounding the mayor's personal life represented a sharp shift from these kinds of political issues. Media reports, television shows, and public figures delved into aspects of the mayor's marriage, speculated on the mental health of the couple's children, and commented on the various wardrobes and attire of a woman who was termed the mayor's "gal pal." The emotional state of Giuliani, Hanover, and others who are or were alleged to have been personally

involved with the mayor were the subject of media speculation.

The New York *Daily News* opened one "news" article with the view that "Rudy Giuliani and Donna Hanover don't quite match up to Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner. But Gracie Mansion [the mayor's residence] could soon look like the set from the flick 'The War of the Roses' as the mayor and his wife live under the same roof while fighting their way through a nasty separation."

The New York *Times* asked a series of questions on its front page about which spouse was to blame for the dissolution of the marriage and if it was "unfair of Ms. Hanover, or beneath her, to publicly accuse the mayor of having had a relationship with a member of his staff?" It reported on discussions on "street corners and Internet chat rooms" where "people said the drama of a political-marriage soap opera was riveting" and at the same time said they were "ashamed that their mayor and first lady seemed to have taken the news media's bait, lowering themselves to participate in a slightly more decorous version of 'The Jerry Springer Show.'"

In the end, Giuliani said he "used to think the core of me was in politics. It isn't. When you feel your mortality and your humanity...you realize that the core of you is first of all being able to take care of your health."

The collapse of the Giuliani Senate bid is another example of what has repeatedly emerged in recent years in the United States with the pornographication and soap-operatization of politics, as seen in the impeachment trial of U.S. president William Clinton last year. It is marked by the attempt to draw working people and middle-class layers into becoming "riveted" to gossip, sexual innuendo, and "exposures" of the dissoluteness and corruption of the "elites," and to suck them into the morass of the politics of resentment.

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Impress your friends—You may not have anything left to put in it, but at posh Beverly Hills



Harry Ring

stores, you can pick up a Louis Vuitton leather wallet for \$445.

'Damn! Why can't they be thrifty like us?'—“Most households not saving enough for retirement, analysis shows—Low in-

come and minority workers are especially likely to be caught short, according to a study of Federal Reserve data”—*Los Angeles Times* headline and subhead.

The sanctity of the human body—The National Organ Transplant Act of 1984 bars profit-making for dealers in body parts. Skin, tendons, heart valves, veins, and corneas are worth \$110,000. Include bones, and a cadaver will fetch \$220,000. With the annual take nearing \$1 billion, execs at these “nonprofit” companies pocket hefty salaries.

Days of yore—Folks under 50 may not remember there was a time

when, if a person was too sick to go to a doctor, a doctor would come to the house. Commenting on those days, a friend recalled a 1960s *New Yorker* cartoon. A man is sick in bed. His wife and a friend are at the bedside. At the foot of the bed, a witchcraft doctor is doing his number. The wife is saying to the puzzled friend: “At least he makes house calls.”

And oozes from the pores of the system itself—“WASHINGTON—A black youth is six times more likely to be locked up than a white peer, even when charged with a similar crime and when neither has a prior record, says a civil rights report contending racial bias exists

throughout the juvenile justice process.”—Associated Press.

'Say it ain't so, Bill'—We're inexcusably tardy in reporting that Bill Gates may not be the richest man in the world. What with the feds on his case, and the “volatility” of the market, the Gates money bag has been sliced in half. According to *Forbes* magazine (self-described “capitalist tool”), the king of the Microsoft software empire is now reduced to competing for that title with Larry Ellison, top dog at Oracle software. Stay tuned.

Crime rate down?—In Adelanto, California, a desert town, police patrol cars gas tanks are run-

ning dry. When the police operating budget was drawn up, gas was \$1.10 a gallon. Now it's \$1.80.

Cyberspace part of the Lord's empire?—In England, the Archbishop of York warned ominously of the Internet as a “potential for evil.”

'Capitalism's World Disorder'—What disorder?—“Kabul [Afghanistan]—Alia Auddin is the only refuge for children in Kabul. It may also be the world's only orphanage where most children have at least one living parent. But poverty is rampant in Kabul: Up to 70 percent are unemployed, and a middle-level civil-service job pays about \$10 a month.”—News item.

Labor must fight for entitlements to cover a lifetime

The excerpt below, dealing with the bipartisan assault on social security, is taken from “Capitalism's Deadly World Disorder,” a talk given April 10, 1993, at a regional socialist educational conference in Greensboro, North Carolina, and the following day to a similar gathering in Des Moines, Iowa. This excerpt can be found on pages 247-49. The entire presentation appears in *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*. Copyright © 1999 Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

The rulers try to convince people, for instance, that the conditions faced by the elderly are not the problem of the middle-aged or the young. The capitalist does not care about the first thirteen years of workers' lives; then he cares about our ability to work hard for the next fifty years; then he hopes

from the pages of *Capitalism's World Disorder*

we die quickly. That coarse attitude is what the rulers try to get layers of the working population to accept as well.

The most revealing explanations of what the bipartisan assault on Social Security is all about are those made by some of the more boldly forthright statisticians and economists. They say: when we passed Social Security legislation in the mid-1930s, when we conceded to the rising industrial union movement there was a need for it, we never expected to have to pay out most of it, because average life expectancy in the United States was lower than the retirement age of sixty-five. (Yes, lower, by about five years on average, much lower than that for workers, and more than ten years lower for Blacks.)

But now workers live some ten years longer than retirement age, on average. So our lifespan has become a big problem for the rulers. Why won't you people face this? the “experts” ask.

Read their economic articles; read their

debates and arguments about the Social Security fund. This is the capitalists' complaint. To them, Social Security was a concession. It might ameliorate some problems that could otherwise become destabilizing, but they never intended for workers to live on it for very long.

The insurance specialists, the actuaries had it all figured out: Look at the averages, they said; few will get much of anything for more than a year or two. We can handle that; don't worry.

Workers had a different view. For us, Social Security was the beginning of the attempt to moderate the dog-eat-dog competition imposed on the working class under capitalism. Social Security was an initial step by our class—by those who produce wealth—toward conquering the social organization of conditions necessary for life, such as education and health care, for a lifetime.

Workers think of each other in terms of a lifetime. We cannot think of each other the way capitalists think of us. We cannot make ourselves think of other human beings as though they do not exist up to the age of thirteen or after the age of sixty-five. That is not how workers function. We have a different class view, a different moral view of society. Elementary human solidarity is in our interests, not in conflict with them.

For the working class, there is no real Social Security that does not cover the entire lifetime of a worker. For the working class, there is no real education that is not lifetime education.

That is what the battle for Social Security was and remains. It was never just about pensions. What we won in 1935, with all its inadequacies, nonetheless encompassed the first federal-guaranteed universal unemployment benefits and the first guaranteed disability compensation. It established the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program that politicians in both parties are talking today about dumping.¹ Out of the Black rights battles of the 1950s and early 1960s, the working class won the extension of Social Security to include health benefits like Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid for workers with very low incomes.

To the political vanguard of the working class, Social Security has always been about the battle to bring all welfare payments, all medical claims, all supplemental payments for education and child care into a compre-



Militant/Stu Singer

Thousands of mine workers rally in Washington May 17 to demand Congress guarantee lifetime health coverage of retirees and widows. For working class, education, health care, and social security must be for a lifetime and for our entire class.

hensive, nationwide, government-guaranteed entitlement. That is why the term “the social wage” is a useful one. We are talking about something that goes beyond the wage

any individual worker receives from an employer. We are talking about something that the working class and labor movement fight to establish as social rights for all.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



June 6, 1975

HIDALGO, Texas—Melon grower Chesley Miller declared “open season” on a group of striking farm workers here May 26, wounding eleven with pellets fired from an automatic shot gun.

The shooting came as a strike against cantaloupe melon farms in Starr County spread to this and other parts of the Rio Grande Valley, an important agricultural area adjacent to Mexico in the southernmost part of Texas.

We were there to encourage the several thousand Mexicans who cross over each day to respect the UFW strike, which had been under way since May 19 against growers in Starr County, just west of Hidalgo. They were excited to learn that something was being done about the miserable condition they face.

After discussions were held they decided to strike all the farms in the area. Over a period of several hours, 3,000 workers gathered by the bridge and none had gone to the fields.

Then suddenly we saw Miller coming toward us very fast in a pickup truck. Without any warning, he began firing, wounding eleven workers. When the police arrived, they refused to arrest Miller.

That night the union had a news conference, which drew 300 people. So far, the receptivity to the UFW has been tremendous. Many have signed union cards. Mexican workers have been the backbone of the strike, making up about three-fourths of the

total number of strikers.



June 5, 1950

Truman's Secretary of Commerce, Charles Sawyer, has demanded the resignation of two Department of Commerce employees, William W. Remington and Michael Lee, who are being harried by the McCarthyite witch-hunters, although both were previously acquitted of “disloyalty” charges by the government's top Loyalty Review Board.

Senator McCarthy, spearhead of the “communist” smear campaign against the Truman administration, renewed his attacks on the basis of Sawyer's own action in attempting to force Lee and Remington to resign while under “disloyalty” fire.

Truman himself launched the gigantic “loyalty” purge and smear system that McCarthy and the other Republicans are now using to such advantage against the Trumanites.

By tossing two sacrificial offerings to McCarthyism, Truman hoped to appease the Republicans and get them to quiet down their witch-hunt and smear tactics on the Democratic administration. But it has only whetted the appetites of the McCarthyites. Their cases show that no matter how “pure” a person is found, how often he is acquitted of disloyalty charges, that is no protection against the witch-hunters. The witch-hunt demands endless blood-sacrifices and grows more voracious with every innocent victim.

June 5, 2000 The Militant 13

¹ Acting on his 1992 campaign pledge “to end welfare as we know it” and “move people from welfare to work,” Clinton in the fall of 1996 signed into law the bipartisan “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act,” eliminating federally guaranteed Aid for Families with Dependent Children. AFDC payments were replaced by federal “block grants” to each individual state—a shift that both reduced the overall funds for such payments, and transferred to state governments the power to disburse. The so-called welfare reform act also cut off food stamps and Medicaid to many working people.

In early 1999 Clinton boasted that welfare rolls in the United States were down 44 percent from 1994, failing to mention that up to 50 percent of those denied payments had no jobs at all and the majority of the rest were employed at makework jobs paying minimum wage with no benefits.

A federal study released in early 1999 also revealed that one-quarter of the \$12 billion allotted to state governments for welfare payments in 1998 had actually been used for other purposes.

Shoulder to shoulder with miners

The United Mine Workers of America had its day in Washington on May 17 when thousands of union retirees, active UMW members, students, and other supporters rallied to defend lifetime health benefits. The action registered the fact that more and more coal miners see the necessity to defend the hard-won gains of their union, which is fighting for its life. It was the largest UMW-organized demonstration since the March 1981 black lung benefits protest.

The UMW-led rally showed the way forward for the entire labor movement. The mine workers' demands point toward social rights—health care, education, and other needs—that should be lifetime entitlements, never held hostage to profit demands and assured to the entire working class.

The rally registered the fact that a social movement, based in the eastern and western coalfields, is growing. It showed the determination of retired miners, many of whom traveled two or three days on buses to get to the rally. It registered that a growing number of active rank-and-file miners are beginning to take the lead in the fight to defend lifetime health benefits. A sizable layer of high school students put their imprint on the rally too. Many of these youth will be the next generation of coal miners. One of the popular T-shirts worn at the rally said: "Coal miner's daughter"—meaning: don't mess with my father's union.

Another important component of this movement is the union's effort to join forces with the National Black Lung Association and reinvigorate the fight for black lung benefits and stronger action against coal dust in both underground and strip mines. At the rally there were a number of retired union veterans who were part of the black lung movement in the late 1960s and '70s and played a decisive role in regenerating the UMW through a powerful movement for rank-and-file democracy.

Despite its size and significance, the rally received little coverage in the big-business media. But just because the news editors decided not to write about it, would be a mistake to think the rally didn't have an impact on the government and the coal bosses. It did. For example, U.S. Steel Mining's Oak Grove mine in Alabama was idled for

three days because miners walked off the job to go to the rally. Citing a company official who was "concerned about the timing of this," the *Birmingham News* complained that the miners "refused to apologize for leaving their mines even though the operators can little afford the lost production."

One sign carried by a miner at the protest said: "Pittston Again," referring to the 1989-90 strike by miners who fought off Pittston's attempt to deny medical benefits to retired members. This sign shines a spotlight on the stakes in the current fight to safeguard the health benefits of retired UMW members, which has been at the heart of a union-busting counteroffensive by the coal bosses for more than a decade. It has been a central issue in several strikes in the late 1990s—from the 1998 UMW strike against Freeman United Coal Co. to those at Jeddo Coal Co. in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, and the Deserado mine in Rangely, Colorado, in 1999.

Today it is a central issue in the strike by UMW Local 1332 against the Pittsburg and Midway Coal Co. in New Mexico. The company is also trying to eliminate overtime pay for weekend work, lower wages, and lower contributions to the workers' pension plan. The issues in this strike will be at the center of what the coal bosses will be demanding when the contract with the Bituminous Coal Operators Association expires at the end of 2002. The coal bosses are closely watching this strike, especially with the contract about to expire at P&M's sister mine in Kemmerer, Wyoming.

Coal miners continue to reach for solidarity in response to company efforts to discipline, suspend, and fire union militants. The recent attempt to "discharge" a member of UMW Local 1969, David Yard, from Freeman United in central Illinois is a case in point. Yard was framed for "intentionally" shutting down the belt line, which carries the coal out of the mine. Miners organized to beat back this move against the union and Yard was reinstated.

To strengthen our ranks, labor everywhere should join shoulder to shoulder with the miners on all these fronts—from throwing support behind the New Mexico strikers to championing the fight for cradle-to-grave health benefits for miners—and our entire class.

Gutter politics aimed at workers

The pornographication of politics, intrusion into the private lives of public officials and their relations, and turning of politics into a soap opera drama that convulsed the final weeks of the Senate campaign of New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani is a serious threat to the working class.

In fact, working people were dealt a blow by the spectacle, egged on by the big-business media, public officials, and bourgeois pundits of various stripes.

Giuliani is no friend of working people. Neither are any of his opponents in the race—Democrat, Republican, Conservative, or Right-to-Life. He faced growing working-class resistance in the city against the policies his administration pursued.

The mayor has been leading the charge for the super-wealthy ruling class on a range of central questions. This includes targeting democratic rights in the guise of "fighting crime" and "terrorism," seeking to weaken or co-opt labor unions, and justifying increased police brutality. At the same time he sought to criminalize whole sections of the working class, and restrict free speech, freedom of expression, and the right to stage public protests by claiming he was "cleaning up New York."

These issues and assaults were increasingly being fought out as political policy questions, with different class views being articulated and mobilized around. They were more and more seen as social questions on the level of the city and state government. Various parties and currents—bourgeois and working class—took stands on these questions and sought to bring forces to bear—in the courts, in the streets, and in elections, to influence and change them.

This was replaced, almost overnight, with its opposite: an explosion of gossip, speculation, and "news" about details of the private lives of Giuliani, his wife Donna Hanover, and their children, as well as other women the mayor is or was charged with associating with. Fashion insights, sentimentalism, emotion, and TV-style divorce court spectacles ruled the day.

The aim of this is to divert working people into the gutter of the politics of resentment, fascination with the problems and "exposures" of the moral character of the "rich and powerful," and titillation over "facts" about the private lives of public figures. The purpose is to get working people—victimized by the policies carried out by the Giuliani administration—to start thinking, "At least he got his."

In this context, clearly dealing with policy issues, taking up questions on the level of class politics, and posing

the question of government responsibility, can get side-tracked and diffused. To the degree workers were drawn into this spectacle—urged on by capitalist politicians and the big-business media—blows were dealt to them as a class.

"The 'pornographication' of politics," writes Jack Barnes in *Capitalism's World Disorder*, "whoever its alleged target, ultimately redounds to the detriment of the rights of the working class. The fight for the moral high ground, and against the coarsening of political discourse, is a fight by the working class both for allies and for the space to practice politics free from harassment by the government, the bosses, and rightist thugs." The book's explanation of this class question bears reading and studying.

An individual capitalist politician "getting his" through such means is not how working people will confront the assaults by the employers and their government. It targets every hard-won right, starting with the right to privacy. It corrodes human solidarity, the dignity the working class brings to human relations. It cuts across the need to fight to solve the manifestations and effects of the growing social crisis caused by capitalism through the collective organization, education, and mobilization of working people charting a course to take power.

This kind of assault on the working class is what was bound up in the impeachment drive against U.S. president William Clinton last year. That rightist drive, which harnessed the most undemocratic portion of the U.S. Constitution—that of impeachment—with detailed "reports" by lawyers on his personal relations—ultimately targeted the rights and conquests of workers and farmers.

Millions across the country, especially among African-Americans, opposed the impeachment effort because they sensed its undemocratic character and the fact that women's rights, affirmative action, equality before the law, and other social conquests would be in the gun sights of the same forces sooner or later.

Recognizing the poison of these assaults within bourgeois circles can help strengthen the working class by drawing the lessons of why these should be rejected and campaigned against whenever they arise. It can help gird us for when the same methods are used by rightist and fascist forces against union fighters, leaders of struggles against police brutality, defenders of women's rights, and those in the forefront of the battles of working farmers today.

100,000 defend sovereignty of Cuba at Mariel

BY MYRNA TOWNER

MARIEL, Cuba—Tens of thousands of people from around this port city and the surrounding area, many of them carrying Cuban flags, marched the two miles from their bus drop-off points to the huge paved area where trucks bring cargo to and from the docks. Work at the port—as at farms, schools, and factories in the area—was suspended for the day to allow people to gather there.

The crowd, which grew to 100,000, gathered for a speakout to demand that the U.S. government return Elián González to his country and to protest Washington's hostile policy against the Cuban revolution. The U.S. government has yet to return the six-year-old since he was found adrift off the Florida coast in November. The boy and his father, Juan Miguel González, are currently housed at an estate in Maryland, awaiting a decision by a federal court before being allowed to return to Cuba. The court is expected to decide in the coming weeks on a request for political asylum for the boy filed by distant relatives living in Miami.

Rallies like the May 20 event are held every Saturday in a different part of Cuba. They are organized by the Union of Young Communists and other mass organizations.

Vice president Raul Castro attended the Mariel rally, where speaker after speaker—students, a sugar mill worker, a teacher, local officials, and others—explained how Washington's policies seek to destroy the Cuban revolution. They condemned the Helms-Burton and Torricelli laws, which tighten the four-decade-long U.S. trade embargo against the Caribbean nation, and the Cuban Adjustment Act, which encourages Cubans to emigrate outside legal channels by granting them U.S. residency if they make it to U.S. soil.

Mariel, located about 50 miles from Havana, was the launch area in 1980 for tens of thousands of Cubans who set out in small boats and homemade rafts to emigrate to the United States. At that time, in response to a series of aggressive actions by the Carter administration and its provocative claims that Havana prevented people from emigrating, the revolutionary government opened the port of Mariel, calling Washington's bluff.

Several speakers underlined the importance of having the rally at this port city and giving a different meaning to the word "Mariel."

Cuban workers discuss economic reforms

Continued from Page 10

entered into a retreat, the so-called New Economic Policy, in the wake of their hard-won victory—at an enormous human and material cost—over imperialist invading forces and home-grown counterrevolutionaries who had killed hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants, destroyed crops and livestock, and paralyzed industrial production and both internal and foreign trade.

That's why Lenin emphasized in 1922 that if the party "becomes wholly absorbed in administration, the result will be a disastrous one." It had to provide *political* leadership to the vanguard of the workers and rural toilers.

The economic reforms being tested in Cuba today are being implemented through a process of extensive, organized discussion and evaluation by the working class as well as in government ministries and institutions. The efficiency assemblies are part of that process, and one of the sources of the many corrections and adjustments necessary to protect the interests of working people.

Debate on these issues will be an important part of the preparations for the congress of the CTC scheduled to culminate on the international holiday of the working class—May 1, 2001.

Jack Barnes and Steve Clark contributed to this article.

CORRECTIONS

A headline in the May 29 issue was incorrect. The article, on page 14, should have been headlined, "Miami meeting sends off farmers to Cuba congress." The meeting sent off U.S. farmers to attend the congress of the National Association of Small Farmers of Cuba, and heard reports by two youths, Michael Martinez and Christina Newman, on the Congress of Latin American and Caribbean Students held in Havana in April.

The article in the May 22 issue titled "Two conflicting class views" refers to several strikes by the Steelworkers union, and incorrectly lists the union struggle against Ormet Aluminum among these. Workers at Ormet have not been on strike. They waged a contract fight including pickets, marches, and efforts to reach out for labor solidarity.

Child-care workers in Australia speak out for rights, dignity

BY DOUG COOPER

SYDNEY, Australia—"We care for children, who cares for us?" and "What do we want? Recognition! When do we want it? Now!"

These were the chants of more than 100 child-care workers who rallied here May 15 to oppose moves by the Employers Federation to cut their award working conditions.

Awards are legal documents established by arbitrators that set uniform minimum pay and working conditions in a particular job or industry. Depending on their collective strength and other social factors, workers in many industries actually receive over-award pay and conditions.

The workers, carrying handmade signs, came from at least 15 child-care centers around the city to protest outside a hearing on their award at the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission. They are members of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU). There are some 20,000 workers, overwhelmingly women, employed in child-care centers around the state, working long hours for low pay.

"We're doing this ourselves," said Maggie Scott, who works four hours a day as a cook at SDN Children's Services in Marrickville. "We organized this stop-work rally and the union came in behind us," she explained. "We haven't had a pay raise since September 1997."

Scott went in to work early to precook meals for the day. "I didn't want to see the kids suffer because we had to take this action," she said. Scott also works as a nurse in order to make ends meet.

If successful, the Employers Federation's application to the commission would gut working conditions, which are already bad. The bosses seek to increase use of casual labor in the industry by starting temporary work contracts, eliminating 12 paid rostered days off a year, and ending paid lunch breaks in exchange for a 2 percent pay raise.

"If they get temporary contracts in, our four weeks' paid annual leave will be lost," said Andrew James, who works at the SDN center in Bellevue Hill. "They don't want permanent employees on their books in the summer months when there are fewer kids in care." Many workers had plastered themselves with stickers that read, "Temporary contracts: there's no future in that."

'On the go all day'

James and others were eager to describe what they do in the centers. "We're on the go all day, from the minute we walk in," said Kim Lewis, who works at Liverpool Hospital Childcare Center with 11 others. "It's draining. You're greeting parents and kids with a bubbly smile, getting everyone organized, dealing with staff shortages, giving medications, writing assessments of each of the kids; everything has to be documented." Lewis leaves home at 6:00 a.m. and returns at 7:00 p.m. "I hardly see my husband," she exclaimed.

"We're not appreciated," James remarked. "People think we get lots of holidays and play with kids all day. They think we're glorified baby-sitters—but even baby-sitters get paid more than we do!"

Maria Nguyen, a worker at House at Pooh Corner on the grounds of the University of



Militant/Doug Cooper

Sydney child-care workers rally for dignity and better pay conditions May 15

New South Wales who was born in Vietnam, said, "We work very hard. We want to defend our RDOs [rostered days off] and we want more pay." Workers pay for their RDOs by working, for example, 40 hours per week but only receiving 38 hours' pay, thus accumulating 8 hours pay per month. Nguyen explained that she has a diploma in child studies, which took her three years to get.

Purnima Chand, who works at SDN's Paddington center and is originally from Fiji, explained that with tertiary qualifications, workers get \$13 an hour or \$A395 [\$US225] take-home for a 38-hour week. "If you don't have qualifications, you get \$10 an hour." It is common for workers to be on the job for 11 hours a day to deal with working parents' schedules. They do not receive overtime pay rates for work beyond the eight-hour day.

The union has countered the bosses with a claim for a \$A41-per-week increase and

no cuts in working conditions. "Even with that kind of increase, these workers would still be underpaid," said Annie Owens, LHMU branch secretary.

Peter Mina, after working 10 days straight as a guard (conductor) on the railways, came to the rally on his day off to support his wife Colette, who works at the Liverpool Hospital center. "She comes home stressed every night," he said.

Mirjana Djuric, who left Yugoslavia seven years ago, worked full-time in child care there. She now works part-time at the Liverpool center while she improves her English. Djuric described the different situation and status child-care workers have in Yugoslavia. "I was considered a teacher. It is physically and mentally demanding work. For that reason we only worked six hours a day" as full-time workers. "Here there is too much stress, too much bureaucracy."

Djuric's workmate Kim Lewis pointed out, "Ten years ago I worked as a cashier at the supermarket. Today I'm only getting \$1 an hour more than I did then," with huge responsibilities for people's kids.

Summing up the militant mood, Maggie Scott explained, "If we don't fight, we won't get anywhere."

Doug Cooper is a member of the Maritime Union of Australia.

State bill to end death penalty heightens debate

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The New Hampshire legislature May 18 approved a bill abolishing the death penalty. This is the first time such a bill has been passed by a state legislative body since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976. The 14 to 10 vote by the state Senate comes after the House passed a similar measure in March.

However, the next day Gov. Jeanne Shaheen, a Democrat, vetoed the bill.

The New Hampshire vote comes at a time of declining support for the use of capital punishment and an expanding rift among the capitalist rulers over this issue. A Gallup poll in February showed that public support for capital punishment has reached its lowest level in more than a decade.

"After years in which legislatures reenacted death penalty statutes, expanded eligible capital crimes and hastened appeals processes, many capital punishment observers find it oddly significant that New Hampshire, which last executed a prisoner in

1939...has taken a dramatic stand," observed an article in the *Washington Post*.

Last January, Gov. George Ryan of Illinois admitted that it was routine for people to be improperly convicted and sentenced in the state, following revelations of frame-ups, inadequate legal representation, and actions by the police and judiciary that violated legal protections. Ryan, a Republican and a longtime proponent of the death penalty, ordered a moratorium on executions in that state.

Since 1987 Illinois authorities had freed 13 prisoners from death row because of overwhelming proof that not only were they not proven guilty, but they were in fact innocent.

This is more than the number of people executed there during that time.

Thirty-eight states impose the death penalty, and about 3,600 inmates remain on death rows nationwide, according to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics.

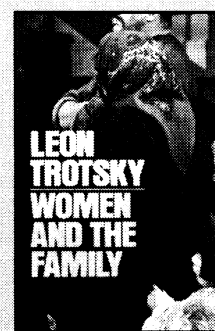
Last year, a record 98 prisoners were executed, one-third of them in Texas. However, a growing number of inmates are being exonerated. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, 87 death row prisoners have been freed since 1973.

At an April 24 hearing before the New Hampshire Senate Judiciary Committee, Kirk Bloodworth of Cambridge, Maryland, told the legislators that before being freed in 1993 as a result of post-trial DNA testing, he spent nearly a decade in prison on murder and rape charges.

Another witness, Paris Carriger, testified a few months earlier that he was on Arizona's death row for 21 years, and came within three hours of being executed before being released.

According to an article in the *New York Times*, "death penalty opponents in the New Hampshire Legislature appear unlikely to be able to muster the two-thirds vote in both houses necessary to override the governor's veto."

Women and the Family



Leon Trotsky
How the October 1917 Russian revolution, the first victorious socialist revolution, opened the door to new possibilities in the fight for women's liberation. \$9.95

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LETTERS

Birmingham bombing

I want to comment on the indictment of the two individuals involved in the 1963 Birmingham church bombing. Recently I saw an interview on National Public Radio with Morris Dees, the old civil rights lawyer in Atlanta. He pointed out that the FBI in fact knew back in 1963 that these two were involved in the murders. According to Morris Dees, they were not indicted on direct orders of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.

It would be good to see an article detailing the FBI's real role of bitterly opposing the civil rights movement at every step. I see this indictment as an attempt by the FBI to refurbish its image by turning on some of its old buddies (no honor among thieves!). In an article in the *New York Times* there was a report alleging that the U.S. government's "Intelligence Agencies [Are] Not Up to the Job." This will certainly

be followed by increased congressional funding to enable these agencies to better spy upon and violate the basic democratic rights of new generations of union, farmer, civil rights, and women's rights fighters in this country and around the world.

Robert Dees
Palo Alto, California

Weaponry in Ireland

It may come as a surprise to anyone who is crowing over an alleged Provisional Irish Republican Army surrender or concession on the decommissioning of its weaponry that the IRA has actually consistently held to its policy of refusing to disarm until the new political institutions established by the Good Friday Agreement have truly established a government in which the human and civil rights of the Catholic nationalist population in British-occupied Ireland have been guar-

anteed.

The cause of peace has already been served since the second IRA cease-fire. The arms of the IRA have, in essence, been put "beyond use." Would that it could be said about the 135,000 legal weapons held mostly in the hands of unionists.

Unfortunately, sporadic killing of Catholic nationalists continues in British-occupied Ireland. The IRA will not be laying down its arms tomorrow.

Orange bigotry has yet to be deposited in the ash can of history. When that actually happens, then and only then will a bona fide decommissioning of weaponry on the part of the IRA take place.

William Gartland
Rio, Wisconsin

China and Taiwan

After reading the article "U.S. rulers maneuver to pressure China"

in the May 22 issue, I would like to make two suggestions.

Always be very careful when referring to Taiwan "independence." While the country really functions independently, the issue, as you know, is volatile. Few people really advocate declaring independence. Most such calls are posturing. We shouldn't give them a weight that Taiwan workers don't.

There is no "indigenous majority." The "Taiwanese," the majority, are the descendants of immigrants from Fujian over the last three or four hundred years. They may feel oppressed but they are definitely not indigenous and are decidedly Chinese. Their language is a derivative of Fuzhou and is not understood by Mandarin speakers. Whether they are a distinct nationality is debatable. Many are intermarried with the Hans who came around or after the revolution.

There are, however, genuine in-

digenous people in Taiwan; some nine groups, I think. They are in no way "Chinese," have their own languages totally unrelated to any Chinese dialect, and are seriously oppressed. I don't think they make up even 1 percent of the population. They were largely dispossessed by the Taiwanese. In *Guns, Germs and Steel*, Jared Diamond says their ancestors were the source of all Asian island and Oceania populations with the exception of the Australian aboriginals.

Marty Anderson
Staten Island, New York

The letters column is an open forum for different viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Washington presses for assault in Sierra Leone

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

The Clinton administration is preparing the political groundwork for UN troops to launch a crushing military assault against the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. Government troops and pro-government forces have been advancing toward Makeni and other rebel-held towns.

They are also expanding their denial of the country's sovereignty by laying the groundwork to try the central RUF leader and vice president of the country in an international war crimes tribunal.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council has increased the size of its military force in Sierra Leone by 2,000 troops. With some 11,000 currently deployed in the country, it is the largest UN military operation in the world.

The military deployment is expected to be enlarged to 16,500 troops the *New York Times* reported May 20.

Washington is demanding the RUF, which says it has 15,000 troops, give up its rural bases and the diamond-rich territory under its control. It is using the history of brutality by the RUF against the civilian population to justify the intervention. The U.S. rulers and their imperialist allies in London cranked up the pressure on the RUF after their central leader, Foday Sankoh, was captured May 17 and flown to Lungi airport, which is now occupied by British troops.

Washington, taking further steps to establish itself as the preeminent imperial power in Africa, has sought out the regime in Nigeria to serve as its proxy force in Sierra Leone. "We have in fact been in contact with the Nigerians to see how and if they can participate in a very active role and what will be required to support their efforts," U.S. secretary of defense William Cohen announced at a Pentagon briefing May 16.

Washington uses Nigerian government

Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo said his government would supply as much military force as necessary, provided they get stronger backing from the UN and receive logistical and air support from Washington and other countries. Obasanjo made the offer to Democratic Party politician Jesse Jackson, appointed by U.S. president William Clinton as Washington's special envoy in Africa. He called Obasanjo's pledge to carry out imperialism's dirty work on the ground "a very bold commitment and one that the U.S. government appreciates."

Jackson embarked on a tour through West Africa to seek military support for the UN operation. During his May 18 visit with Obasanjo, several West African military leaders were meeting in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, to approve a plan to send 3,000 troops to Sierra Leone.

After securing a military commitment from Obasanjo and other West African leaders, Jackson flew to Liberia, where he tried some arm-twisting on the Liberian government, demanding the regime break its ties with the RUF and help to destroy the rebel force. "Not only is it wrong, it jeopardizes your own government," he lectured Liberian president Charles Taylor.

At a news conference in Monrovia, Liberia's capital, Jackson said he urged the Nigeria regime to send more troops to Sierra Leone to help defeat the RUF. "They have the power to remove the RUF as a military consideration in negotiations," he declared.

On May 17 Nigerian troops battled RUF rebels in the Sierra Leone town of Port Loko, about 65 miles from Freetown. In that two-hour firefight, which involved mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, one Nigerian and six pro-government soldiers were killed.

Three years ago Nigerian troops fought in Sierra Leone against the RUF, which had formed an alliance with other rebel forces to overthrow the British-backed regime of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. The Nigerian-led West African intervention force drove the RUF alliance from Freetown and reinstalled Kabbah in 1998.

The RUF, which briefly headed a brutal

regime, is holding more than 300 UN troops as hostages. RUF forces captured some 500 UN military personnel when the imperialist-backed government in Sierra Leone and the UN force attempted to seize the diamond-rich territory controlled by the rebels.

Liberian president Taylor, a longtime supporter of the RUF, played a role in securing the release of more than 150 hostages. Taylor, who came to power following the 1990-97 civil war in Liberia, had helped found the RUF in 1991. He supplied the rebel force with arms and territory in Liberia to launch attacks, and sent many of his fighters to Sierra Leone to back the RUF.

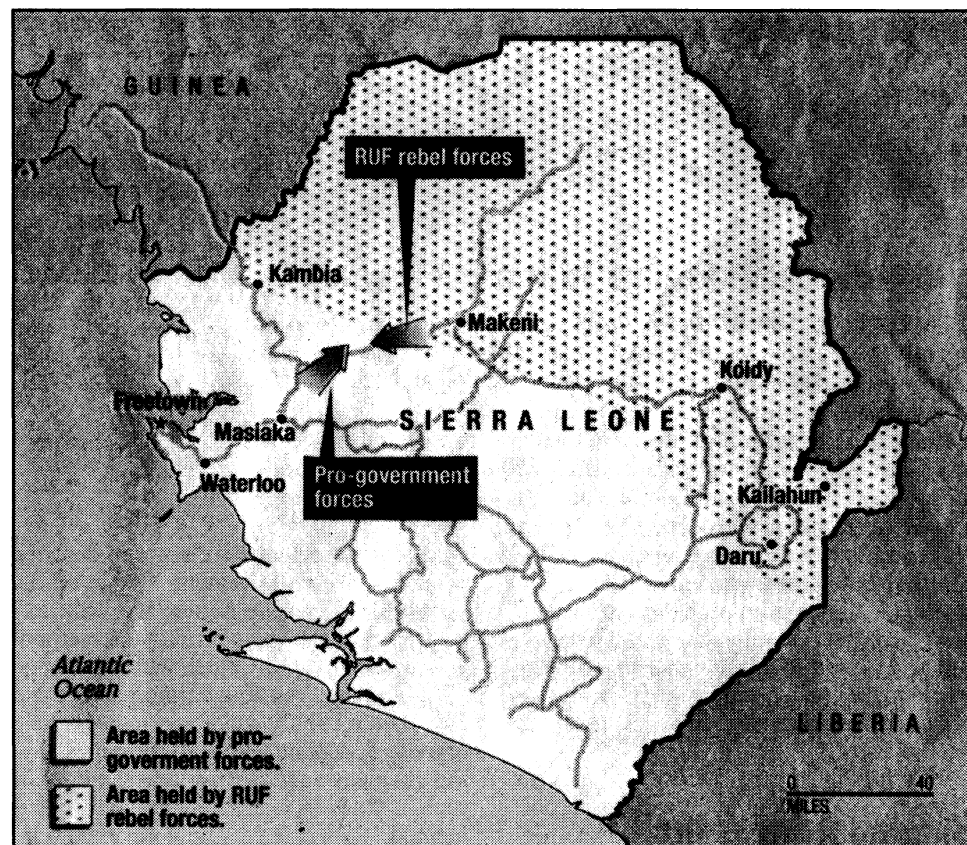
British troops kill rebels

Some 25 British paratroopers killed four RUF soldiers May 17 in a firefight near Lungi airport, where Sankoh is being held captive.

London has more than 1,100 special forces troops, Harrier jets, and attack helicopters deployed in Sierra Leone. Seven British warships are patrolling the coast of Freetown—London's largest naval mobilization since its war to retake the Malvinas islands in 1982.

Sierra Leone, a British colony until 1961, is the world's poorest country despite an abundance of diamonds, gold, bauxite, and other minerals. Life expectancy is 37 years in this civil-war-torn country of 5.3 million people. After decades of imperialist plunder and capitalist exploitation its foreign debt stands at an astronomical \$1.2 billion.

The big-business media has waged a campaign for imperialist intervention, portray-



ing the people of Sierra Leone as prone to lawlessness and "anarchy." Two days after Foday Sankoh was captured, *New York Times* editors declared, "There is the danger of mob justice." They called for setting up an "international tribunal like those the

UN has established for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia." This is necessary, the *Times* asserted, since Sierra Leone "does not have the means to guarantee an orderly trial or due process" for Sankoh and others accused of "war crimes."

In WWII, Canadian army used soldiers as guinea pigs for chemical weapons tests

BY BRIAN HAUKE

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—Some 60 years after Ottawa used 2,500 Canadian soldiers as guinea pigs, it admitted testing chemical weapons on them at a military base in Suffield, Alberta. At a ceremony in Suffield May 5, Canadian defense minister Arthur Eggleton thanked the soldiers, who he claimed were volunteers, for their "sacrifice." He did not offer an apology.

In fact, chemical weapons, including mustard gas, blister gas, and tear gas were used on the soldiers, as young as 16, without their knowledge or consent. Nearly all of them suffered extreme pain and lifelong health problems. Mustard gas destroys human tissue on contact, causing painful blistering of the skin and lungs.

"We weren't told anything about gas. We were only told that Suffield needed volunteers. We thought it was just another army camp," said Jim Dickson, a retired Alberta farmer. "The Canadian government should have been charged with war crimes. These men suffered terribly and died prematurely." Dickson was not invited to attend the defense minister's ceremony.

In 1945 Dickson was a 19-year-old recruit to the Canadian Army when he was transferred to the base, called an "experimental station." In 1939 Ottawa set aside 129 square kilometers at Suffield for scientists to conduct experiments on 2,500 soldiers, which would continue until the end of the Second World War.

Dickson was one of six men ordered into a windowless bunker—he calls it "a gas chamber"—at 11:00 one morning. "They filled the chamber with mustard gas, and by noon two of us were unconscious. When a box of food was put into the chamber, we threw it out right away. They only took us out when everyone lost consciousness. We later learned that if you consume food during a mustard gas attack, it's certain death."

Having been scarred by blister gas and burned by mustard gas, Dickson was taken to the station hospital, which was normally off-limits to him. He found it housed more

than 70 badly burned soldiers. Some of them had been sprayed by planes that dropped either a mustard gas spray or an exploding mustard gas canister. There was also a group of six soldiers who had been ordered into a van with seats contaminated with the gas.

"They were in extreme pain and their testicles had swelled to football size," explained Dickson. "Nothing was done to help the severely burned because the experiments continued in the hospital for another five or six weeks. They wanted us to suffer greatly—the more pain the better."

Many of the Suffield veterans who suffered permanent mental and physical damage from the experiments have renamed the military base "Sufferville." Dickson has been blind in one eye for the past six years as a result of a splash of blister gas that damaged his eye during the army's chemical warfare experiments.

A 'type of torture'

"We got into this mess" he insisted, "because we did everything they said. We thought we were fighting for the country, but it was a useless scam. I don't know how human beings could do that and take a new bunch of men every two months and put them through that type of torture."

Leonard Berard of Red Deer, Alberta, died in 1986 of a rare blood cancer his widow is convinced was caused by the mustard gas experiments. She recalled her husband's agony at Suffield as she dressed the blisters and oozing sores on his skin. "As soon as one blister broke and ran, underneath was another blister," she said. In the end, "Leonard was blind and in so much pain. They'd turn him over in bed and his bones would break."

Neither he nor his widow have received compensation for his ordeal.

The human guinea pigs were ordered to keep their mouths shut. Those who fought for pensions were denied them on the basis that there was no proof of the army's secret chemical tests. The use of human guinea pigs for chemical weapons testing was kept

secret until aspects of it were first documented in the book *Deadly Allies: Canada's Secret War 1937-1947* by John Bryden, which was published in 1989. As a result, some soldiers were able to establish their right to limited pensions in the late 1990s, more than half a century after being injured by the secret tests. Bryden obtained much of his material under the Freedom of Information Act.

Requested by Washington and London

According to Bryden, Washington and London asked the Canadian and Australian armies to find volunteers for mustard gas experiments. The Canadian and Australian governments then "volunteered" soldiers who had no idea that they were going to be used as guinea pigs for chemical weapons testing.

Bryden adds, "Canada was ahead of everybody in the development of chemical and biological war weapons," pointing out that Agent Orange, a highly toxic defoliant widely used in the Vietnam War, was developed at an Ottawa experimental farm. Tens of thousands of Vietnamese, as well as U.S. and other soldiers, are still suffering from its effects.

Norman Amundson, a retired government worker from Regina, was another of the Suffield "volunteers." There was a "bluish rain" that landed on him and other soldiers as a plane dropping mustard gas flew overhead at Suffield Station in 1942. "They didn't tell us what it was or to put on respirators. They said they were just testing our uniforms," he reported. Amundson's lungs and lower body were burned by the gas. Following that experiment, he and others were ordered into a shack and tear-gassed while not wearing any protective equipment.

Amundson said he is insulted by the government's unveiling of the plaque in Suffield thanking the 2,500 soldiers, claiming they "voluntarily suffered injury and hurt." He insisted, "It should be an apology actually. They shouldn't have ever done what they did."