

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Founding of Communist League in Iceland

— PAGE 4

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 66/NO. 30 AUGUST 12, 2002

Capitalist financial crisis threatens working people

Washington's answer is war and domestic military command

The precipitous slide in the stock markets has already wiped out billions of dollars in pension and retirement funds that working people had put aside, urged on by corporations and government officials, such as U.S. president George Bush, who also proposed some Social Security funds be "invested" in an overinflated stock market.

A yet wider threat is posed to working people the world over as the markets tumble and economic uncertainty mounts. All workers and farmers who have been engaged in

EDITORIAL

struggles against the employers and their government can begin to discuss and advance an immediate set of demands to defend themselves and their brothers and sisters around the world from the economic ravages that capitalism will more and more impose on humanity.

The recession last year in the United States, combined with a "jobless recovery" in which unemployment has continued to rise, has not only deeply affected millions of working people in the United States. As the articles in this issue of the *Militant* report, the capitalist crisis has deepened in Latin America, tightening its squeeze on the wages, living and working conditions, and access to basic services across the continent. The articles also point out the widespread struggles of workers and peasants—allies of working people in the United States who face the same enemy: U.S. imperialism.

As the air continues to whistle out of a financial bubble on Wall Street, no one knows how far down the stock markets might go. With a string of huge corporate bankruptcies, financial scandals, and signs of continued economic weakness, the "irrational exuberance" of the wealthy investors is a distant memory, the vaunted Fed-

Continued on Page 10

Garment workers in Florida demand union recognition



Rally outside Point Blank Body Armor plant, July 19, in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

BY MARK HAMM

OAKLAND PARK, Florida—Workers at Point Blank Body Armor, a major south Florida garment factory, launched a battle to win union recognition for UNITE, organizing rallies at the plant and mass meetings.

About 375 workers are employed by the Ft. Lauderdale area clothing company, up from 100 a year ago. Point Blank Body Armor workers make bulletproof vests and riot gear that are sold to the military and police forces. Pro-

duction is booming, and the company is boasting about its huge sales, government contracts, and profits.

A delegation of workers went to the company office Thursday morning, July 18, during their first break. "We presented the company two options. Either they could begin to negotiate and have the [union certification] elections very soon, or they could stay neutral and see what happens," Isma Sadius told the *Militant* the following day. "They refused,

Continued on Page 5

Peasant groups fight frame-up in Paraguay

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL AND ROMINA GREEN

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay—"This is a victory. I will continue to fight the false accusations that are directed against me and against other members of Free Homeland Movement. We will not be intimidated," said Juan Arrom at a July 12 press conference here.

Supporters of civil liberties and workers' rights in Paraguay celebrated a judge's denial of a motion by prosecutors demanding that Arrom, a leader of the Free Homeland Movement (Movimiento Patria Libre—MPL), be jailed while they seek to prosecute him on false charges in relation to the kidnapping of María Edith Debernardi, a member of a prominent bourgeois family. Arrom remains free on bail.

The fight against the frame-up of Arrom and four other MPL members and supporters, who six months ago were detained and tortured by cops, has become a focal point in the fight to defend and expand political space and democratic rights in Paraguay. The issue touches a nerve in this country because of the legacy of a 35-year U.S.-backed dictatorship and the current rise in struggles by farmers and workers pressing their rights. In targeting the MPL the government is also seeking to intimidate the peasant movement, whose leadership in-

cludes that left-wing party.

In an interview, Arrom explained that on January 17 he and MPL member Anuncio Martí were kidnapped by plainclothes cops. For two weeks the cops tortured them, trying to get them to sign a fake confession that they were responsible for the kidnapping of Debernardi. They interrogated them about supposed MPL ties to guerrilla groups

such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Túpac Amaru of Peru.

On January 30 Arrom's relatives received an anonymous tip about the prisoners' whereabouts and, accompanied by the media, discovered them at a house owned by a police official on the outskirts of Asunción.

Continued on Page 6

Public employees stage one-day national strike in United Kingdom

BY ANTONIS PARTASIS

LONDON—About 1.2 million council workers employed by local governments in England, Wales, and British-occupied Northern Ireland walked off their jobs in a 24-hour strike July 17 to protest the bosses' offer of a 3 percent pay raise.

The workers are demanding a 6 percent increase, which would still only bring the pay of the lowest-paid council worker up to £11,000 per year. The unions say that 275,000 local authority workers earn less than £5 per hour. (£1 = US\$1.57)

The strike was called by the main unions that organize council workers: Unison, the

General Municipal and Boilermakers Union (GMB), and the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). A spokeswoman for Unison, the biggest union, said that 750,000 of its members had walked out. The GMB said that the strike was "very solid" with 9 out of 10 of its members having downed tools.

The workforce includes cleaners, school meals staff, refuse collectors, social workers, architects, and housing benefit employees.

The strike followed a vote last month by more than 1.4 million local government workers for a series of one-day stoppages.

Continued on Page 11

'We're fighting to defend workers in Venezuela'

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS, OLYMPIA NEWTON AND CARLOS CORNEJO

VALENCIA, Venezuela—"During the April coup we placed ourselves under the military command of Chávez and his people, and we'll do it again, if necessary," said Orlando Chirino in an interview here July 18. "But we don't agree with many policies of the Chávez government, before and after the coup—especially more conciliation with the oligarchy since April 11. We are fighting to defend the interests of working people. There is more space to do



this now, compared with what we faced before 1998."

Chirino is the executive secretary of the Workers Federation of Carabobo State (FETRAC). He was a textile worker for more than 20 years before becoming full time for the union. An affiliate of the Confederation of Workers of Venezuela (CTV), FETRAC includes most unions in the state of Carabobo, one of the most industrialized in the country. Valencia, Carabobo's capital, is the country's largest industrial center.

The union leader's remarks were indicative of similar opinions expressed by most workers interviewed by the *Militant* here and in Caracas, the country's capital, in mid-July. Political discussion and debate over how working people can defend themselves against the increasingly harsh economic and social conditions are widespread in the country today. In addition, protests by peasants, workers, and youth around the need to push ahead with an agrarian reform, for jobs, and against ongoing probes and assaults by the bosses take place on a daily basis.

Tens of thousands of youth and working people are joining the Bolivarian Circles.

Continued on Page 7

Also Inside:

- Spanish imperialists stage military provocation against Morocco 2
- Havana meeting honors Cuban internationalist volunteers 3
- Bush administration takes new steps for deployment of military in United States 3
- Russian Duma adopts bill authorizing sale of land 5
- Huge protests defend Iranian sovereignty 11

Spanish gov't stages military provocation against Morocco

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Helicopters of the Spanish army lifted several dozen soldiers off the island of Leila July 20, temporarily ending an imperialist military provocation against Morocco. The Spanish rulers claim the island as their own, even though it is located across the Strait of Gibraltar and 600 feet off the shores of the north African country.

Watching from the Moroccan mainland, hundreds of fishermen and other citizens of Morocco cheered the action and jeered the Spanish military. "They have lowered the flag!" one man shouted.

Morocco has long been a base of Spanish colonial and imperialist exploitation, and the island is called Isla del Perejil or Parsley Island by the Spanish government. Amidst nationalistic propaganda, Madrid sent an "armada" to "recapture" the island July 17 after the regime of King Mohamed VI sent a half dozen troops there to set up a base. The Moroccan government said the deployment was aimed at stopping drug smugglers and immigrants from making the 12-mile crossing to Spain. Madrid has been pressuring the Moroccan regime to clamp down on such activity.

The Spanish landing party stormed Leila on July 17, capturing the six Moroccan gendarmes. The 28 commandos were supplied by military helicopters and backed up by five warships and a submarine. The warships blocked access to the area by other vessels, including Moroccan fishing boats.

Other Spanish troops landed on Isla de Lobos an uninhabited island off Morocco's Atlantic coast, while 7,000 Foreign Legion troops were placed on military alert in Ceuta.

The Moroccan government denounced the "unjustified aggression" and demanded the "immediate and unconditional withdrawal" of the Spanish forces, stating that "the island is an integral part of Moroccan territory." The Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Arab League, representing a number of governments in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, backed Morocco's

stance.

Washington, which is seeking to expand its economic ties and political influence across north Africa to the detriment of its imperialist rivals in Europe, stepped in to broker the Spanish withdrawal and a meeting of the foreign ministers of Spain and Morocco for July 22.

"The two sides have agreed to restore the situation regarding the island that existed prior to July 2002," said U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell.

While the agenda of the negotiations has not been announced, the Moroccan government has indicated that it wants to discuss the status not just of Leila, but of the Spanish city-enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla located in northern Morocco, and of other Spanish-claimed islands that lie within Moroccan territory. Fishing rights in the area are also a point of contention. Moroccan fishermen described the waters around Leila as a "gold mine."

"Let's be realistic," said Mohamed Benaissa, the foreign minister of Morocco. "Sooner or later, we must confront this subject. Spain says it has a treaty, but it is a treaty of occupation. You can change it."

To date, the Spanish government has refused to discuss these issues with its Moroccan counterpart.

Territorial disputes between the Spanish and Moroccan governments date back to the declaration of Moroccan independence in 1956. At that time, Madrid held onto several areas that had been part of a protectorate officially granted it under a 1912 treaty with France.

The treaty gave Paris the lion's share of Moroccan territory but reserved an area in the north for the Spanish government. That situation was maintained by Spanish and French troops until after World War II, when independence struggles throughout the African continent, including in Morocco, forced a retreat by the European imperialist powers from a number of their colonial possessions.

The coastal enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla,



Spanish coast guard vessel patrols the Strait of Gibraltar near Leila island. The Moroccan mainland, just 600 feet from the island, looms in the background.

with Spanish-speaking populations of 75,000 and 69,000 people respectively, are the most prosperous of the areas still held by Madrid. Separated from Morocco by barbed wire barriers, they are home to garrisons of the Spanish Foreign Legion.

Relations between the two governments have deteriorated over recent months. In October the Moroccan government withdrew its ambassador from Spain. Earlier this month it protested the deployment of Spanish warships just 600 yards off the Mediterranean port of Al Hoceima.

The regime of King Mohamed VI and his predecessors have served as a pro-imperialist bulwark in the region, opening the natural resources of the country to foreign exploitation and brutally suppressing the

struggle for the independence of Western Sahara. In the 1960s it opened a military campaign against the victorious Algerian revolution, which had torn the country out of the grips of French imperialism.

Since the 1970s, Washington has provided more than \$1 billion in funding to the Moroccan armed forces, which uses the aid to prosecute its ongoing campaign against the independence struggle by the people of Western Sahara.

Whatever the government's stated reasons for the action, however, the assertion of Moroccan national rights to territory at land and sea clearly touched a chord among working people in the country, as evidenced by the many who gathered on their coastline to protest the Spanish action.

Cuban unionists will address Canada solidarity conference

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—Pedro Ross Leal, general secretary of the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), and three other leaders of Cuba's trade unions will speak to a "Solidarity Conference with Cuban Workers" July 26–28 in Windsor, Ontario. The other CTC leaders are: Diana Maria Garcia, general secretary of the Public Administrative Workers Union; Leonal González González, director of foreign relations of the CTC; and Manuel Montero Bistilliero, Americas department director, foreign relations of the CTC.

The conference agenda includes discussions on the economic and political situation in Cuba; the role of Cuba's unions in building socialism in Cuba; social and human rights in Cuba; how the world economic crisis affects Cuba; Cuba's role in the fight against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas; and the fight to free five Cuban revolutionaries currently in U.S. prisons after being framed up on spying and other charges.

The conference was originally scheduled for last October after Washington canceled the visas of the union leaders who had earlier been invited to speak in 25 U.S. cities and Puerto Rico. The event was postponed

to the current date following the September 11 events.

The solidarity conference is being held in Windsor across from Detroit to make it possible for trade unionists in the United States to attend. In the United States it is being organized by the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange and in Canada by the Worker to Worker, Canada-Cuba Labour Solidarity Network.

Sponsors of the conference include the Canadian Labour Congress; United Food and Commercial Workers Union; United Steelworkers of America; Canadian Union of Postal Workers; Canadian Union of Public Employees (Canada); the National Union of Provincial and General Employees; and others. Ontario Federation of Labour president Wayne Samuelson will co-chair the event.

The conference will be held in the Canadian Auto Workers union hall, 1855 Turner Road. Registration is US\$35 or Can\$55. Phone or fax (313) 561-8330 for more information or e-mail laborexchange@aol.com. In Canada, for further information E-mail wtw@web.net.

John Steele is a meat packer and member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 175.

THE MILITANT

Eyewitness reports from South America

Workers, peasants, and young people are organizing resistance to imperialist exploitation and the ravages of the capitalist crisis in Latin America. 'Militant' correspondents are taking part in reporting trips to Argentina, Paraguay, and Venezuela to bring firsthand accounts of these struggles. Don't miss a single issue!



SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

NEW READERS

☐ \$10 for 12 issues

RENEWAL

☐ \$15 for 12 weeks

☐ \$27 for 6 months

☐ \$45 for 1 year

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

UNION/SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION

PHONE

CLIP AND MAIL TO THE MILITANT,
410 WEST ST., NEW YORK, NY 10014.

The Militant

Vol. 66/No. 30

Closing news date: July 22, 2002

Editor: GREG McCARTAN

Business Manager: JACK WILLEY

Editorial Staff: Röger Calero, Martin Koppel, Jack Willey, Brian Williams, and Maurice Williams.

Young Socialists column editor: ROMINA GREEN

Published weekly except for one week in June, August and December.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Telephone: (212) 243-6392; Fax (212) 924-6040.

E-mail: TheMilitant@compuserve.com

The Militant website is: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to The Militant Business Office, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Subscriptions: **United States:** for one-year subscription send \$45 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: for one-year subscription send \$65, drawn on a U.S. bank, to

above address. By first-class (airmail), send \$80.

Asia: send \$80 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

Canada: Send Canadian \$75 for one-year subscription to Militant, 1237 Jean-Talon est, Montréal, QC. Postal Code: H2R 1W1.

Britain, Ireland: £36 for one year by check or international money order made out to Militant Distribution, 47 The Cut, London, SE1 8LL, England. **Continental Europe, Africa, Middle East:** £40 for one year by check or international money order made out to Militant Distribution at above address.

France: Send 65 euros for one-year subscription to Militant, Centre MBE 175, 23 rue Lecourbe, 75015 Paris; chèque postale: 40 134 34 U.

Iceland: Send 6,500 Icelandic kronur for one-year subscription to Militant, P.O. Box 233, 121 Reykjavik. **Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark:** 550 Swedish kronor for one year. Pay to Militant Swedish giro no. 451-32-09-9.

New Zealand: Send New Zealand \$90 to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand. **Australia:** Send Australian \$90 to P.O. Box K879, Haymarket, NSW 1240, Australia. **Pacific Islands:** Send New Zealand \$90 to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant's views. These are expressed in editorials.

Event honors Cuban volunteers in Africa

BY RÓGER CALERO

HAVANA—"The peoples of Latin America must free themselves from the imperialist yoke and then lend their help to other countries. I believe it is a hard fight and that today they need the solidarity of the proletarian masses. We must help with everything we can." These were the words of Victor Valle Ballester, one of the six Cuban combatants who gave their lives fighting together with anti-imperialist forces in the Congo in 1965. Valle was one of the 128 internationalist volunteers who fought under the command of Ernesto Che Guevara, one of the central leaders of the Cuban Revolution.

Valle's words were read to a gathering of nearly 200 people here June 29 at an annual event dedicated to the example of the proletarian internationalism Guevara stood for. The presentations highlighted Cuba's contributions to the struggles against colonialism and for national liberation around the world since Cuban working people toppled the corrupt U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959 and opened the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

Under the theme "From Africa to La Higuera," the gathering brought together combatants from internationalist missions in Africa and Latin America, including many who were part of Che's column in the Congo and longtime fighters who worked closely with Guevara in the guerrilla campaigns in Argentina and Bolivia in the 1960s. Representatives from the diplomatic missions of several African countries in Cuba, including the ambassador of Angola, also attended the event.

La Higuera is the name of the village in Bolivia where Guevara was taken by government troops after he was wounded and captured in battle. After consulting with Washington, on Oct. 9, 1967, the Bolivian government ordered Guevara's execution along with two other guerrilla fighters.

Among the institutions sponsoring the event were the Cuba-Africa Friendship Association, Casa Africa, the Center for Che Guevara Studies, the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, the Africa Department of Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Relations, as well as the Che Guevara Studies group at the Latin American School of Medicine, and the Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAL).

This year the meeting coincided with the 37th anniversary of the battle at Front de Force, in what was then Congo-Leopoldville, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. Four of the six Cubans killed in the Congo died in that fight. The internationalist mission to the Congo was Cuba's first in sub-Saharan Africa. The event served as an occasion to commemorate the contributions of the volunteers who were part of that mission.

Ana Morales, a professor at the Latin American Medical School in Havana, who in the 1980s helped found Cuba's medical mission in the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, chaired the program.

The featured speakers at the meeting were Victor Dreke, who was second-in-command of the Cuban column, and today the vice president of the Cuba-Africa Friendship

Association; and Ulises Estrada, director of *Tricontinental*, the magazine of OSPAAL. Estrada served as the liaison with Che and the forces in the Congo, and played a central role in the preparations of the guerrilla campaign in Bolivia, where Che and a number of other internationalists who fought with him in the Congo died in 1967.

Dreke gave a careful account of the battle at Front de Force and reviewed with the combatants in the audience the lessons drawn by Guevara and other Cuban revolutionaries from that experience.

The Cuban contingent had gone to the Congo at the request of leaders of the national liberation movement to help train and fight alongside the forces combating pro-imperialist troops and mercenaries backed by Belgium, France, and the United States.

Washington and Brussels had intervened in the Congo under the cover of the United Nations just a few months after the Congolese people had won their independence from Belgium in 1960. Through a series of maneuvers and support to counterrevolutionary forces inside the country, they succeeded in removing the prime minister and anti-imperialist leader Patrice Lumumba from office, installing a pro-imperialist regime, and orchestrating the assassination of Lumumba in January 1961.

Many of Lumumba's followers refused to submit to the new regime and organized armed resistance for many years after Lumumba's death.

Dreke described how at the height of their mission in 1965, which lasted for seven months and ended with the withdrawal of the Cuban volunteers, the leadership of the Congolese forces proposed the attack on Front de Force, where a large and heavily armed concentration of pro-imperialist troops were located near a hydroelectric power plant vital to the region.

Dreke explained that Guevara tried to persuade the Congolese leaders that an attack on Front de Force was premature. "Instead, he proposed engaging in smaller actions so that the Congolese fighters could gain enough experience and cohesiveness in combat," he said. "But once the decision was made by the Congolese leaders, Che accepted it," and we were at the front of the battle, Dreke noted.

The original plan of attack included an assault on the hydroelectric plant supplying electricity to the fort, a frontal attack against other fortified positions, and the setting up of ambushes to prevent enemy reinforcements from joining the battle.

But the assault by the rebel forces soon turned into a rout. The Congolese and Rwandan fighters fled the battle scene, abandoning their weapons and their wounded under heavy fire from the enemy. The bulk of the fighting fell to the Cuban combatants.

After hours of battle, with only a handful of Cubans holding their positions and many casualties among the Congolese and



Militant Róger Calero

Participants at annual event in Havana, June 29, highlighting Cuba's contributions to the struggles against colonialism and for national liberation around the world, included many combatants from internationalist missions in Africa and Latin America.

Rwandans, the Cuban combatants had to retreat.

"It was a painful decision to leave behind the bodies of the four fallen combatants," Dreke said, stressing a strong tradition that exists within Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces of never abandoning those who had fallen. "It was impossible to reach our comrades because of the intense, close enemy fire. Retrieving their bodies would have meant even greater casualties." Up to this day the bodies of the four combatants have not been recovered, the Cuban leader explained. "It was a difficult decision but 37 years later I would make the same one again," concluded Dreke.

Dreke said the conditions in the Congo, including the lack of a revolutionary leadership and the deep divisions among the Congolese and Rwandan fighters, didn't allow the Cuban volunteers an opportunity to forge a fighting force together with the Congolese combatants. The story of the Cuban internationalist brigade and the lessons drawn from the experience are recounted in full in Che Guevara's *The African Dream: Diaries of the Revolutionary War in the Congo*, as well as Dreke's own account in *From the Escambray to the Congo*, published this year by Pathfinder Press.

Another special part of the program was the presentation of the new book *Ernesto Che Guevara en Punta del Este, 1961*, by Carlos D. González, published by Editora Política in Havana. The book contains the speech delivered by Guevara in 1961 at the Inter-American Economic and Social Conference at Punta del Este, Uruguay. At the meeting, which was sponsored by the Organization of American States, Guevara responded to

Washington's mounting military and economic aggression against the Cuban Revolution and exposed the exploitative character of Washington's Alliance for Progress launched in response to the Cuban victory. The book also includes a series of interviews with other members of the Cuban delegation that participated at that meeting.

The day of activities included presentations of works on the revolutionary legacy of Che Guevara, including the presentation and sale of books and other multimedia materials. Several students from Argentina and El Salvador, who are part of the Che Guevara Studies group at the Latin American School of Medicine, also gave presentations.

"When we speak of Che Guevara's internationalist example, we can not only refer to his participation in the revolutionary struggles in Cuba, Congo, and Bolivia," said Ulises Estrada in his talk.

Estrada pointed to the close collaboration Guevara developed with other Latin American fighters in the 1960s with the aim of forging a revolutionary vanguard to lead workers and peasant to deepen the struggle against imperialist domination across the continent.

In 1954 Guevara witnessed the CIA-backed military coup that overthrew the government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, Estrada said. The events "reaffirmed to Che that the only way to defeat the enemy and win national liberation was through unity, with arms in hands and the will to win or die."

"The only thing Cuba and its revolutionary leadership did was to provide assistance to those who wanted to take up arms against neocolonialism," affirmed the Cuban revolutionist.

Bush seeks way to deploy military domestically

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Top Bush administration officials have called for a review of laws prohibiting the use of the U.S. military as a domestic police force.

The White House has directed the Justice and Defense departments to review the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, along with other laws that bar the armed forces from conducting arrests, searches, seizure of evidence, and other police-type actions on U.S. soil, and to come up with proposals on how to change the statutes to give greater powers to the Pentagon to deploy troops inside the country.

The 1878 act bars the use of "any part of the Army or Air Force as a posse comitatus or otherwise to execute the laws" of the United States.

Until recently the Pentagon's military command structure covered all parts of the globe except for North America. Since the latter part of the administration of William Clinton, who officially established a North American Command, the U.S. rulers have been openly preparing to set up a homeland command within the U.S. armed forces, establishing the structure while testing the waters for a change in the law. Picking up the ball from his predecessor, Bush has appointed a four-star general to head up the homeland command.

Now named the Northern Command, with

authority to cover Canada, the United States, Mexico, and parts of the Caribbean, the new outfit will begin operations from Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado October 1.

"We need to be talking about military assets, in anticipation of a crisis event," said homeland security chief Thomas Ridge on July 21. "If you're talking about using the military, then you should have a discussion about Posse Comitatus."

Sen. Joseph Biden, a Democrat from Delaware, agreed that changes need to be made to allow the military to be deployed inside the United States. "The law has to be amended, but we're not talking about general police power," he said.

The general appointed to head the new military command, Ralph Eberhart, also favors changing the laws to grant more domestic powers to the armed forces. "We should always be reviewing things like Posse Comitatus and other laws to see if we think it ties our hands," he said. "There are some situations where there's no other alternatives, and federal forces have to be used."

Eberhart said that the military's domestic activities could involve the use of remote-controlled surveillance blimps, flying at 70,000 feet, and of unmanned Predator drones to patrol U.S. coast lines.

In the aftermath of the September 11 events the U.S. government deployed National Guard troops on the Canadian bor-

der and mobilized 5,000 federal troops at the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah. According to the *New York Times*, White House lawyers opined that the president would have violated Posse Comitatus if he had called up National Guardsmen for deployment at airports nationwide, so he requested governors to use their authority for the mobilization. The Coast Guard and National Guard troops under the jurisdiction of state governors are excluded from the law.

The Posse Comitatus law was enacted in 1878 to end the use of federal troops in guarding voting stations and in enforcing other rights in the former Confederate states. It came into being as a result of opposition by reactionary forces, including former slaveholders and growing layers of the U.S. ruling class, to the use of soldiers in defense of Radical Reconstruction governments in the South.

In the decade following the Civil War Congress had expanded the role of the military in the former slaveholding states where federal troops also arrested Ku Klux Klan members who sought to terrorize freed slaves, small farmers, and other working people.

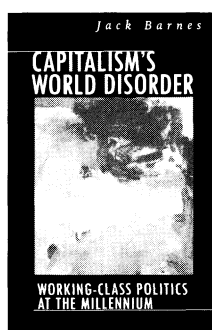
The Posse Comitatus law was amended by Congress in 1981 and 1989 to allow U.S. Marines to patrol and conduct drug raids on U.S. soil. The National Guard is also now permitted to fly over rural property to conduct surveillance under these amendments.

from Pathfinder

Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium

BY JACK BARNES

"The capitalist rulers offer us social disaster. They offer us depression. They offer us death from curable disease. They offer us war. They offer us fascism. They offer us an unending list of horrors. But we offer ourselves the ability to prevent those horrors from becoming the final reality, the confidence that we can transform that future."



Also available in

Spanish and French. \$23.95

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8.

Communist League founded in Iceland

BY ÓLÖF ANDRA PROPPÉ AND SIGURLAUG GUNNLAUGSDÓTTIR

REYKJAVIK, Iceland—Several generations of revolutionary workers and youth voted to form a Communist League during a convention held here over the last weekend in June. The meeting registered the successful work the founding members had been carrying out together within the working class in Iceland over the previous months.

In addition, a public meeting held over the weekend celebrated the publication in Icelandic of the first issue of *Nýtt Alþjóðlegt*, the Icelandic edition of *New Internationalist*. The issue contains a translation of the 1990 resolution of the Socialist Workers Party, "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War." Having the magazine available for the convention also registered the conquests of the new organization in gaining agreement on a world communist program, as well as its members' determination to bring a Marxist explanation of the central issues of the international class struggle to workers, farmers, and youth in Iceland.

The public meeting was held on the Saturday under the banner, "Working-class Resistance to Capitalism's World Disorder: Join the Communist League and the Young Socialists."

In his report to the founding convention Ögmundur Jónsson said the central task of the new Communist League is to establish a regular, weekly rhythm of activity connected to the resistance of working people. This includes regular sales of Pathfinder books, the *Militant*, and *Perspectiva Mundial* in working-class communities, the regular staffing of the Pathfinder bookstore, and the organization of a weekly forum series connected to the *Militant*.

Jónsson said that CL members will begin regular sales of socialist periodicals and revolutionary books at the plant gates of factories where members of the Communist League and the Young Socialists work. This will help make the activity of these communists more political, he stated, and give the League a better feel for the dynamics of the class struggle. This perspective was tested with initial success in the days immediately following the convention.

League members also plan to continue regular study and discussion of key works of the communist movement, along the lines of the current socialist summer school, which has focused on the soon-to-be released new edition of *Their Trotsky and Ours*, by Jack Barnes, and the *History of American Trotskyism, 1928-38--Report of a Participant* by James P. Cannon.

Builds on earlier work

The decision to found the Communist League, Jónsson explained, builds on important experiences over the past seven months of the Organizing Committee for a Communist League.

Established at the end of November 2001, this committee grew out of the work of the members of the YS and other communist cadres in Iceland over the preceding years. Through relating and responding to political developments in Iceland and internationally, working with the communist movement, and studying Pathfinder books, a layer of revolutionary-minded youth attracted to the YS was able to develop in a proletarian direction.

In the latter part of the 1990s a sea change in working-class politics in Iceland reinforced this trajectory, as sections of the working class, farmers, and other exploited layers in society showed their determination to resist the employers' attacks and to fight to defend their unions.

YS members built and participated in the anti-imperialist World Festival of Youth and Students in August 2001 in Algiers. They then turned to fighting against the imperialists' war in Afghanistan and their domestic "war against terrorism" in Iceland and elsewhere.

Through these experiences members of the YS became convinced that the next step along the road to building a leadership capable of leading working people to make a socialist revolution in Iceland was to form a Communist League. As they stepped up their involvement in the struggles of workers in the country, a majority of organizing committee members decided to get hired in

key industrial plants in order to build fractions and carry out communist work on the job among their co-workers.

In a report entitled "How the organizing committee has responded to what is happening in Iceland and the world," Sigurlaug Gunnlaugsdóttir said that in pursuing their war drive the governments in imperialist countries have also sought to expand police powers and curb workers' rights, in an attempt to intimidate working people and limit their political space. But the rulers cannot simply declare a new relationship of forces, she said, and workers will continue to resist erosion of their rights in many countries in the world.

In Iceland, the capitalist economic crisis has deeply affected workers and farmers. The country's currency has dropped drastically in relation to the U.S. dollar over the past year. Although the impact of this has eased somewhat lately owing to the dollar's decline against many major currencies, there are stirrings of demands by working people for protection of their wages and living conditions.

Officials of the Federation of Labor in Iceland have taken the offensive against store owners and importers around the prices of necessities, in order not to have to reopen contract negotiations with the bosses. The most recent general labor contracts include "red lines," meaning that if the cost of living increases above an agreed-on level, negotiations over union contracts can be reopened. The red lines have not been seen since the early 1980s, Gunnlaugsdóttir said, noting that the pressure to reinstate them comes from the unfaltering demands of working people that the buying power of their wages be defended.

Contesting on political questions

Over the past several months the organizing committee has joined in protests, as well as political debate, over world events as they are reflected in Iceland. For example, members of the CL have participated in actions in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, where they have been able to sell papers, books, and pamphlets.

As well, a protest involving various forces was organized during a high-level NATO leadership meeting in the spring.

At each of these events, the members of the organizing committee have contested political questions with social democratic and other currents that claim to speak in the interests of working people, and have gained a hearing from young people who are becoming interested in revolutionary politics.

Among the questions discussed at the founding convention was the communist approach to the work of the organization Iceland-Palestine, which is mobilizing young people to travel to Palestine to act as human shields and to provide moral witness to the struggle of the Palestinian people.

Convention delegates discussed the fact that far from being the "suffering people" portrayed by social-democratic forces and petty-bourgeois leftist outfits in Iceland and elsewhere in Europe, the Palestinians have set an example to working people around the world through their tenacious struggle against Israeli repression. Their ongoing resistance and refusal to be dispersed as a people have divided the Israeli ruling class and made the conflict and its consequences—including the mounting death toll—less one-sided.

Convention delegates stated that the CL can offer those young people who want to join the battle on the side of the Palestinians a revolutionary perspective in the struggle for a democratic, secular Palestine. Instead of becoming "witnesses," they can become part of a fighting, working-class movement that is out to change the world. The formation of the CL in Iceland is one more crucial step in charting such a road forward for humanity.

Taking on anti-China campaign

An anti-China campaign organized during the recent visit to the country by Jiang Zemin, the president of the workers state, was another political development that the organizing committee responded to. Icelandic government institutes and companies have trade and business relations with China, ranging from the construction of ships to water projects in areas prone to



Gudmundur Jónsson

Young Socialists in Reykjavik, Iceland, selling revolutionary literature at rock concert hosted by the Iceland-Palestine Organization in May 2001. By responding to political developments in Iceland and internationally from a communist point of view a layer of revolutionary-minded youth were won to the perspective of building a proletarian party.

water shortages.

Members of the organizing committee exposed and answered the two reactionary sides of this campaign. One involved a push by the Icelandic authorities to undermine workers' rights and to expand their ability to make arbitrary decisions on who is banned from the country and who can be arrested. The other involved an effort by left-wing parties and right-wing politicians alike to smear the image of China (see the July 8 issue of the *Militant*).

During these events members of the Communist League who work in the fishing industry, in which a big component of the workers are immigrants, learned that Chinese co-workers and others were taking off work in order to greet the Chinese president, standing along the route of his vehicle to bid him welcome. These actions, a sign of Chinese national pride, countered the reactionary anti-China demonstrations.

Having a fraction in this industry gave the organizing committee a completely different view of the class forces involved, the response by a layer of the working class to the reactionary probes, as well as a way to respond that would have otherwise not been possible.

A few weeks before the founding convention, members of the organizing committee and the YS visited farmers in the northwest of the country. Convention delegate Hildur Magnúsdóttir described the three farms visited by the team and explained what she had learned about the different classes in the countryside and the conditions farmers face.

In recent years a growing number of farmers have been forced off the land. Those who remain are frequently forced to take a job outside the farm in order to make ends meet. One farmer who runs a medium-sized sheep farm told members of the team that more families would have to abandon their land as a result of new "quality control" regulations that have more impact on working farmers than on larger operations. One team member found a ready interest from the farmer's spouse when she described conditions at her workplace and the political discussions on the job.

The convention and public meeting also featured the participation of leaders of the communist movement from several other countries. Norton Sandler of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States described Washington's new "preemptive" strike doctrine against countries deemed part of the "axis of evil."

The U.S. rulers' war at home, including "pre-crime" detentions, the extension of the powers of the FBI, and the establishment for the first time of a domestic military command, runs parallel to this doctrine. But the U.S. rulers are not having a easy time convincing working people that they must give up their rights, he said. How far they can progress along these lines will be decided in struggle, he added.

Other guests at the convention represented Communist Leagues in Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Sweden. Peter Clifford of the CL in the United Kingdom said the political work of communists employed in the fishing industry in Iceland is important for the world movement, since it involves questions like quotas, the social conditions of independent fishermen, overfishing by big corporations, and inter-imperialist competition.

Gylfi Páll Hersir, a delegate at the convention, pointed out that the Icelandic rulers are attempting to diversify the economy. Fish products have dropped from about 75 percent of total exports a decade ago to around two-thirds today. Aluminum is a growing industry, making up about 20 percent of exports. Given the growing centrality of this industry, the Communist League has built a fraction there, working alongside new generations of workers in the big plants.

Using *Nýtt Alþjóðlegt*

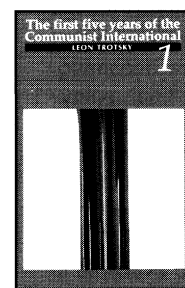
At the public meeting Ögmundur Jónsson said the publication of *Nýtt Alþjóðlegt* has already made a difference in the new CL's political work. "In answering the recent anti-China campaign, we were able to use it to increase our understanding of the nature of the workers states and the stakes tied up in defending them, and to explain this to others," he said.

Leaders of the CLs in Sweden, United Kingdom, and New Zealand also addressed the meeting. Annalucia Vermut from New Zealand described the opportunities to work with other revolutionary-minded fighters internationally and to bring the program of the communist movement to them. Following up on initial political discussions at the Algiers event and other such gatherings, communists in New Zealand have been invited to visit Kanaky (New Caledonia), a country in the South Pacific under the boot of French imperialism. There they will meet workers and youth who are interested in deepening ties and collaboration with the communist movement.

from Pathfinder

The First Five Years of the Communist International Leon Trotsky

During the early years of the Communist International, from 1919 through 1922, its course was recorded in reports and resolutions shaped above all by its central founding leader, V.I. Lenin, as well as by Leon Trotsky. This two-volume collection contains speeches and writings by Trotsky on the struggle for working-class power in the imperialist epoch, the worker-peasant alliance, the fight for national liberation, defense of the Soviet republic, and much more. \$25.95 for each volume.



Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8; or visit www.pathfinderpress.com; or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Russian Duma debates allowing sale of land

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

On June 21 the Russian parliament took a step toward the removal of long-standing legal prohibitions on the buying and selling of the country's farmlands. The "Law on Agricultural Land Turnover" will establish national guidelines for the transfer of land titles and strengthen the legal status of private land titles.

According to reports in the big-business media, the legislation has provoked some vocal opposition in the countryside, including among workers on collective farms, small farmers, government officials, and heads of agricultural enterprises.

The measure, which was sponsored by President Vladimir Putin, passed by 245 votes to 150. It must win further votes in both the lower and upper houses of the parliament, or Duma, before Putin will be able to sign it into law.

In a compromise to win passage of the bill, supporters allowed an amendment that prohibits the sale of land to foreigners or foreign-owned companies, although they can lease land for up to 49 years. Capitalists in Russia, along with their imperialist advisors, have been pressing for the denationalization of the land in order to expand large private holdings and exploitation of farm labor.

The conflict is a reflection of one of the remaining conquests of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, in which workers and peasants expropriated the capitalists and landlords, opening up the land to millions of landless working people. One of the first acts of the new revolutionary regime headed by the Bolshevik Party was the abolition of landed proprietorship, the socialization of the land, and direct participation of the peasants in agrarian reform.

Despite the blows dealt to the worker-peasant alliance by the forced collectivization under the counterrevolutionary regime of Joseph Stalin, working people in Russia have continued to resist attempts to begin the open buying and selling of land, opening farmers to reimposition of debt slavery and land foreclosures that mark capitalist countries.



Above, a worker herds horses at the Rodina collective farm near Kursk, in the west of Russia. Less than 10 percent of Russia's 1 billion acres of farmland is owned by individuals today. The rest remains under the control of the state or former collectives.

In the current debate in the Russian Duma the "no" lobby has been led by deputies from the Communist Party, representing the remnants of the Stalinist apparatus that ruled the Soviet Union for more than five decades up to the late 1980s, and the Agrarian Party.

Putin pushed through a preliminary step on October 30 of last year, when the Duma passed a new Russian Land Code giving building owners the right to purchase the land on which their buildings stand. Prospective builders and investors were also granted permission to buy land on which they planned to build, providing they received official approval.

The major impact of the code was on land in urban districts, covering only 2 percent of the country's total area but encompassing most of its population.

The controversial law now under discussion would ease some restrictions on the sale of land that is zoned agricultural—a bit less than one-quarter of Russia's land surface, according to the *Russia Journal*, a weekly magazine published in the United States for prospective investors in the workers state.

Although only a sketchy outline of the legislation has been reported in the big-business media, it is clear that the new measure stops short of declaring open season on trade in land. Under its provisions, local authorities would have the power to limit the amount a single owner can purchase.

Limited impact of 1993 constitution

Steps toward land privatization were promoted by Putin's predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, who attempted to build on a series of changes incorporated into a revised constitution adopted in 1993. Under those "reforms," workers in the countryside, like their counterparts in the cities, were handed pieces of paper representing shares in state enterprises. Today, almost 13 million Russian citizens own such shares in farming concerns.

This highly touted move, urged on Yeltsin by imperialist "advisors" to the Russian government, proved to have a limited impact on the actual social relations in the Russian countryside.

For many the "right" to buy and sell these

shares had little meaning, since the majority of collective farms never divided up their properties into actual plots of land. The small minority of people who were able to buy up shares and establish individual farms have been hampered in their attempts to raise funds by prohibitions on mortgaging their land.

Some agricultural companies have grown up by renting land from shareholders. The fact that the legislation promoted by Putin would do away with such arrangements has aroused the criticism of the managers of such enterprises.

Deep opposition in countryside

While viewing the situation through its pro-capitalist lens and from the standpoint of hostility to the workers state, the June 20 *New York Times* has noted the deep opposition to any wholesale privatization among Russian working people. "The prospect of change has terrified farmers and others who cling to the dream of the kikhholzy, or collective farms, that still operate more than 90 percent of the nation's farms," wrote Steven Lee Myers in the June 20 issue.

Many collectives still function much as they did before the 1993 constitutional changes. Although they have provided minimal cash income to the workers, particularly as old equipment has deteriorated and state subsidies have been slashed, they continue to provide food, essential health care, and other social services.

"It's stupid to sell," said Vasily Sorogin, 47, a member of the Rodina collective in Kursk. "What if something changes? The kikhholz [collective farm] will become better off, and they'll be able to give me more."

In areas like the Kursk region, in the west of Russia bordering Ukraine, reported Myers, "many fear the free sale of land will strip peasants of what share they have in the land as wealthy investors buy up plots. Few peasants would be able to buy enough land to do more than subsistence farming."

"In Russia's vast farmlands," noted the big-business paper, "one of the most striking features is the absence of fences, and few believe they will soon appear."

According to Russian economists, individuals today own less than 10 percent of Russia's 1 billion acres of farmland. The rest remains under the control of the state or of former collectives.

Garment workers in Florida fight for union

Continued from front page

and asked us all to leave the plant at eleven."

Isma is a sewing machine operator with six years in the plant, making \$6.40 an hour. After the meeting with the company, Isma said the bosses gave him a letter saying he no longer worked for Point Blank.

"They said I organized people to say *si se puede* (Yes, we can) during work hours. But that's a lie. We said it during break!" Isma told the *Militant*. "I am not the leader of the union, but the company has chosen me. And even though they have fired me, I will not give up the fight." Later that day, the 31-year-old immigrant from Haiti was arrested on the charge of "breach of the peace." "They said I was blocking traffic,"

he explained.

"Eight workers comprised the delegation that presented the company with its options. But hundreds more backed them up" outside, said Scott Cooper, Southern District organizing director for the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). "The workers decided to give Point Blank the chance to sign an agreement recognizing the union immediately."

In response to the workers' demands, the company locked them out of the plant and called in more than two dozen deputies from the Broward County Sheriff's Office to help enforce its antiunion moves. But rather than head home, most workers began to organize a protest outside the plant.

Many took advantage of the time to sign union cards as they rallied in the parking lot. The union had begun collecting signatures four days before and a "majority of the workforce signed in two days," Cooper explained.

The protest turned into a marathon mass union meeting, which adjourned to a local motel and then to the nearby headquarters of the Communications Workers of America (CWA). In addition to the workers speaking about their grievances and what should be done, State senator Kendrick Meek, a Democrat from Miami, and Bruce Raynor, the president of UNITE, addressed the workers.

Workers organized another pro-union action outside the plant the following morning, July 19. The company lifted its lockout and the workers returned to their jobs.

"No water." "Dirty rest rooms with no light and no toilet paper." "No place to eat lunch amid the dust." "The heat." "Favoritism." "Discrimination." This is how Point Blank clothing workers at the Friday protest explained why they are involved in the fight for a union. But their number one complaint is the low wages.

"They don't treat us like humans," Point Blank worker Jorge Ramos told a local TV station that afternoon. "The salary they give us isn't anything."

Point Blank has estimated it will generate \$350 million in sales from a contract to

produce bulletproof vests for the U.S. armed forces, and local, state, and federal police forces. These include the Marine Corps., Army, Navy, Coast Guard, federal marshals, the INS, the FBI, the U.S. Secret Service, NATO, and the New York Police Department.

A recent press release from Point Blank's parent company DHB Industries claimed that revenues for the first quarter of 2002 rose 67 percent to a record \$33.6 million.

"They pay us the minimum," a 21-year-old inspector told this reporter at the rally. She had met the union four days before. "Today," she said with a smile, "we are in struggle." The worker emigrated from Cuba four years ago and has worked at the plant for a year.

A sewing machine operator explained in Haitian Creole that she has had no raise during three years at the company. "We need a change in the working conditions. There is discrimination. God has given us the union in order to fight."

"They treat you like animals," one worker told the *Militant*. "They yell at us to get us to work harder" she said.

"The company has its favorites who pal around with the bosses and get more pay. I just work at my machine; but you don't get recognition for good work. Twice I have gotten a raise. After seven years I only receive \$6.65 an hour," another operator told the *Militant*.

Asked what she would do at work that day, the 21-year-old inspector said, "Continue inspecting, and continue the struggle!"

That day workers won the first fruits of their union struggle: the company provided enough water for the workers and put lights in the rest rooms.

A meeting to gather support for the union-organizing effort is scheduled for July 25 at the CWA union hall in Oakland Park at 7:00 p.m. The struggle will also be featured at the first Jobs with Justice Workers Rights Board Hearing July 27 at the United Teachers of Dade auditorium at 9:30 a.m. This will be followed by an action at Mt. Sinai Hospital, where the largely Haitian nursing home workers are fighting to organize a union.

Workers protest layoffs in E. Europe

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

A number of factory occupations and other actions by workers in Eastern Europe have jolted plans by capitalist investors from Western Europe and North America to carry through widespread layoffs.

The *Wall Street Journal* noted this "snag" in investors' paths with some alarm in a June 28 article entitled "In Eastern Europe, Workers Go Sour on Foreign Owners." The big business daily reported, "Across Eastern Europe, a workers' revolt is threatening the continuing sale of old state enterprises."

The *Journal* continued, "More than a decade of economic reforms and industrial restructuring has given workers a taste for a better life, but a bellyful of the free market's downside: layoffs, production targets and profitability goals, sometimes with scant unemployment benefits. Tired of smartly dressed foreign investors spouting buzzwords and grand plans that often boil down to job cuts, workers are turning against privatization, sometimes with violence."

The paper cited examples from the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. In the latter country, 5,000 state railway workers stormed the capital in 2001 to stop proposals to privatize the rail system. In Romania, steelworkers at a recently privatized mill threw chairs at the U.S.-based manager, and locked him in a canteen after he proposed layoffs.

Rebellions have tended to break out as job guarantees of two to five years offered by the new private investors have begun to expire, and the capitalists have attempted to slash workforces and institute other cutbacks.

The *Journal* also pointed to the weak position of the "pro-market" governments that typically rule these countries. "Governments are reluctant to side with investors," it wrote, in part because they "need the workers' votes...to win coming referendums on joining the European Union."

NEW FROM PATHFINDER in English, French, and Spanish

Their Trotsky and Ours Jack Barnes

"History shows that small revolutionary organizations will face not only the stern test of wars and repression, but also the potentially shattering opportunities that emerge unexpectedly when strikes and social struggles explode. As that happens, communist parties not only recruit many new members. They also fuse with other workers organizations moving in the same direction and grow into mass proletarian parties contesting to lead workers and farmers to power. This assumes that well beforehand their cadres have absorbed and grown comfortable with a world communist program, are proletarian in life and work, derive deep satisfaction from doing politics, and have forged a leadership with an acute sense of what to do next. *Their Trotsky and Ours* is about building such a party. **Special price: \$12** (normally \$15).

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8

Workers, peasants in Paraguay fight gov't frame-ups

Continued from front page

the country's capital. As the cops fled the premises, Arrom and Martí emerged from the house, showing signs of severe torture. They reported that several top government officials had known about their kidnapping, and that Justice Minister Silvio Ferreira and Interior Minister Julio Fanego had even telephoned them to pressure them into signing the false confession. The case has been front-page news since then.

On February 1, some 2,000 people rallied here to celebrate the release of the political activists and to demand the resignation of the implicated ministers as well as President Luis González Macchi. Under public pressure, Ferreira and Fanego resigned.

Arrom, however, was placed on parole as government prosecutors announced they would press kidnapping charges against him—a frame-up campaign that continues today. In the most recent attempt to revoke his parole and put him in jail, prosecutors had filed a motion claiming he was a “flight risk.” Defenders of the MPL leader mobi-

lized public support, and the judge ruled against the prosecutors' motion. But cops have continued to stand outside his home and try to intimidate him and others.

Interview with political prisoner

Two days after Arrom and Martí's abduction, cops burst into the home of MPL member Víctor Colman and Ana Samudio and arrested them together with Ana's brother Jorge Samudio. The three were accused of taking part in the Debernardi kidnapping and remain in detention.

Militant reporters visited Ana Samudio at the women's prison in Asunción. She reported that up to 20 heavily armed cops, including police official Javier Cazal, had burst into her home on January 19. “They subjected me to verbal and physical abuse. They tortured my husband and my brother, who was living with us. And they planted \$50,000 in my house trying to claim it was part of the ransom money.”

Samudio, an MPL sympathizer, said that almost six months later the authorities have



Militant/Martin Koppel

Peasants on land they have occupied near Caaguazú, Paraguay. The area was a focal point of mass peasant demonstrations in May and June that pushed back an ‘antiterrorism’ bill and economic measures demanded by International Monetary Fund.

failed to present any credible evidence to win an indictment against her, so she expected to be released shortly. She added that the abduction of Debernardi, who was released after 64 days when a large ransom was paid, was very murky, with Debernardi changing her story repeatedly.

Defenders of Arrom have launched an international campaign against the frame-up, winning broad support. The MPL is also planning to run Arrom and Martí as candi-

dates in the 2003 elections, taking advantage of the respect they have won as fighters against government repression.

Defeat of ‘antiterrorism’ bill

The frame-up campaign against MPL members has coincided with efforts by the Paraguayan regime to pass an “antiterrorism” law that would target working people and others involved in social and political struggles. César Báez, head of the Human Rights Coordinating Committee of Paraguay, told *Militant* reporters that the “antiterrorism” bill is modeled on the USA-Patriot Act adopted by the U.S. government. It would give the government wide powers to arrest individuals on vague charges of “terrorism,” giving a green light to wiretapping, spying, and other attacks on basic rights.

“The U.S. government carried out an aggressive public campaign in favor of this law,” Báez said. “The U.S. embassy’s anti-terrorism adviser even met with Paraguayan congresspeople to pressure them to pass the bill.”

The undemocratic bill was withdrawn by Congress in June in face of large demonstrations by peasants throughout the country. Interviewed by *Militant* reporters, several members of the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights—all of them belonging to the ruling Colorado Party or another capitalist party—complained that many in Paraguay had reacted strongly to the anti-terrorist bill because it reminded them of Stroessner’s infamous Law 209, which allowed the regime to arbitrarily detain people without the presumption of innocence. They said they favored an “improved” version of the antiterrorism bill.

Anti-Muslim campaign at Triple Border

One target of the “antiterrorism” campaign has been working people in the area known as the Triple Border, where Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina meet. This area, which includes Paraguay’s second-largest city, Ciudad del Este, as well as the adjacent Brazilian city of Foz do Iguaçu, has a substantial Arab immigrant community, mostly of Lebanese origin. There are several Muslim cultural centers, two mosques, and two Islamic schools.

On a visit to Ciudad del Este, *Militant* reporters met with both political activists and Arab residents who described the anti-Muslim campaign of intimidation by the Para-

Continued on Page 10

Socialists from U.S. address forum in Paraguay

BY ROMINA GREEN

SAN IGNACIO, Paraguay—Thirty people attended a forum held July 16 at the public library in this town to hear two socialists from the United States. Martín Koppel, who is the Socialist Workers candidate for governor of New York, and Romina Green, a leader of the Young Socialists, spoke about building the communist movement in the United States and the worldwide fight for a socialist revolution.

The meeting was organized by a newly-formed group of revolutionary-minded university students and workers in their early 20s who have been working with Casa de la Juventud (Youth House), a youth group in the capital city of Asunción. San Ignacio is a rural town of 35,000 in southeastern Paraguay.

The youth organized their U.S. visitors to be interviewed live on two radio programs at Radio Libertad and Radio Arapysandú. Koppel and Green described the political work carried out by the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialists in factories, in workers districts, and at university campuses to win others to the communist movement. Some people heard the interviews and the announcement of the meeting and came to the event from nearby towns.

“As the working-class resistance to the employer offensive grows in the United



Militant/Ignacio González

July 16 public forum in rural town of San Ignacio, Paraguay, where two socialists from the U.S. spoke. They were invited by a group of revolutionary-minded youth.

States, socialist workers are finding themselves in the midst of labor struggles breaking out among meat packers, coal miners, and garment workers, among others,” Koppel said at the public forum. “And as we fight together with fellow workers, we are getting a positive response to the revolutionary perspective we explain, using our newspapers and books.”

The presentations given by Green and Koppel were followed by a lively discussion and debate. Questions ranged from the Marxist perspective on protecting the environment, to the collapse of the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union, to the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. In reply to a question, Green said that, as the fights by coal miners for safety show, workers and farmers are the only social force that has both the class interest and the power to protect the environment, which is devastated by the profit-driven actions of the capitalist rulers.

Laws protecting the environment that are won through struggle will continually be undercut by the capitalists, the YS leader said, and working people will have to make a revolution to take political power out of the hands of the exploiters. Marx and Engels were the first to take up this issue as a social question and offer a way forward, Koppel added.

One questioner asked whether communists think religion is a political obstacle to building a revolutionary movement, especially in countries such as Paraguay where the Catholic church hierarchy long has played an influential role.

Koppel explained that communists have always organized working people to fight together regardless of their views on religion, and pointed to the example of Cuba’s revolutionary leadership. Liberation theology and other forms of religion are not a vehicle for progress, however, and commu-

nists always fight to raise the broad cultural level of working people as part of gaining a scientific understanding of the world.

After the meeting more than a dozen youth, including high school students, continued the political discussion. Many browsed through a table covered with Pathfinder literature. One older forum participant argued that the guerrilla campaign launched by Ernesto Che Guevara and other revolutionary fighters in Bolivia in 1966-67 was an adventure, and he pointed to the writings of Noam Chomsky as a correct interpretation of the world.

Several students listened closely to communists who explained why Guevara’s course in Bolivia, far from an adventure, was oriented toward linking up with the mass revolutionary developments that were brewing in South America—including Bolivia—at that time; and that what working people need is not an anarchist critique of capitalism such as Chomsky’s but a working-class course of action to change the world, as working people did successfully both in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and the Cuban Revolution, by fighting to replace the capitalist government with one of workers and peasants. In response, a high school student decided to get a copy of the Pathfinder title *Che Guevara and the Imperialist Reality* by Mary-Alice Waters. Other books purchased ranged from the *Communist Manifesto* to James P. Cannon’s *Socialism on Trial* in Spanish.

The meeting was the first public forum organized by the group of youth in San Ignacio. They viewed it as a success in being able to discuss politics and attract more revolutionary-minded youth toward them. Among other activities, the group has been organizing classes on basic works of Marxism. They recently studied Pathfinder’s edition in Spanish of the *Communist Manifesto*.



Militant/Diego Verón

July 14 meeting in Asunción sponsored by Casa de la Juventud. At this and San Ignacio meeting, the youthful audiences were hungry for revolutionary literature.



Militant/Martin Koppel

Ana Samudio at women’s prison in Asunción. She said government prosecutors have failed to present evidence to back up their frame-up kidnapping charges.

'We fight to defend workers in Venezuela'

Continued from front page

initiated last November, after a call by Chávez for more popular participation in solving social problems. They are loose formations organized on a voluntary basis at workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and elsewhere mostly to do social work and organize defense guards. Many, however, assume a more overtly political character.

There are more than 100,000 of these circles around the country, and their number has increased substantially since the April coup, we were told.

Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, elected with a large popular vote in 1998, was deposed April 11 in a short-lived military coup backed by Washington. This was preceded in March and early April by bosses' "strikes" and large street *cacerolazos*, or pot banging protests, made up overwhelmingly of middle and upper classes demanding the president's resignation.

Fedecámaras, the country's main business association, called for a nation-wide shutdown of companies April 8-11 to bring down Chávez. The CTV's officialdom backed the reactionary bosses' strike, giving popular cover to the employers' drive to get rid of Chávez. Violence erupted during a demonstration of hundreds of thousands called by the bourgeois opposition April 11, with 18 people killed and dozens wounded, many by gunfire.

Reactionary coup

The top military brass seized on the shootings as a pretext to intervene. The generals who led the coup installed an "interim administration" headed by Pedro Carmona, a wealthy oil man and president of Fedecámaras. The next day, Carmona announced his regime had annulled the country's constitution—approved with a 71 percent vote in a referendum in December 1999, dissolved the National Assembly, ended oil shipments to Cuba on favorable terms, and revoked 49 laws approved by the government last year.

These overturned measures included a land reform program and limits on the ability of foreign investors to extract profits from superexploitation of Venezuela's resources and labor. A number of these laws benefited Venezuela's toilers and were despised by the bourgeoisie. Carmona's sweeping moves—announced as the businessmen and generals who seized the presidential palace held a celebration with whisky glasses held high—shed a spotlight on the reasons for and character of the reactionary coup.

Within two days divisions in the armed forces and huge popular mobilizations throughout the country demanding Chávez's reinstatement caused the coup to collapse. Chávez returned to Miraflores, the presidential palace, April 13.

Since then, the Chávez administration has shifted to the right, seeking conciliation with the employers, who still have a firm hold on the country's economic power. Measures along these lines have included virtual immunity for the coup plotters, appointments of new ministers with ties to the employers, reversal of the previous decision to bring the state oil company under government control, and a halt of oil shipments to Cuba.

Despite this turn by the president, and because Chávez's term in office has raised expectations and self-confidence among working people, the capitalist class continues to try to find ways to undermine his regime and eventually overthrow him.

How working people fought back

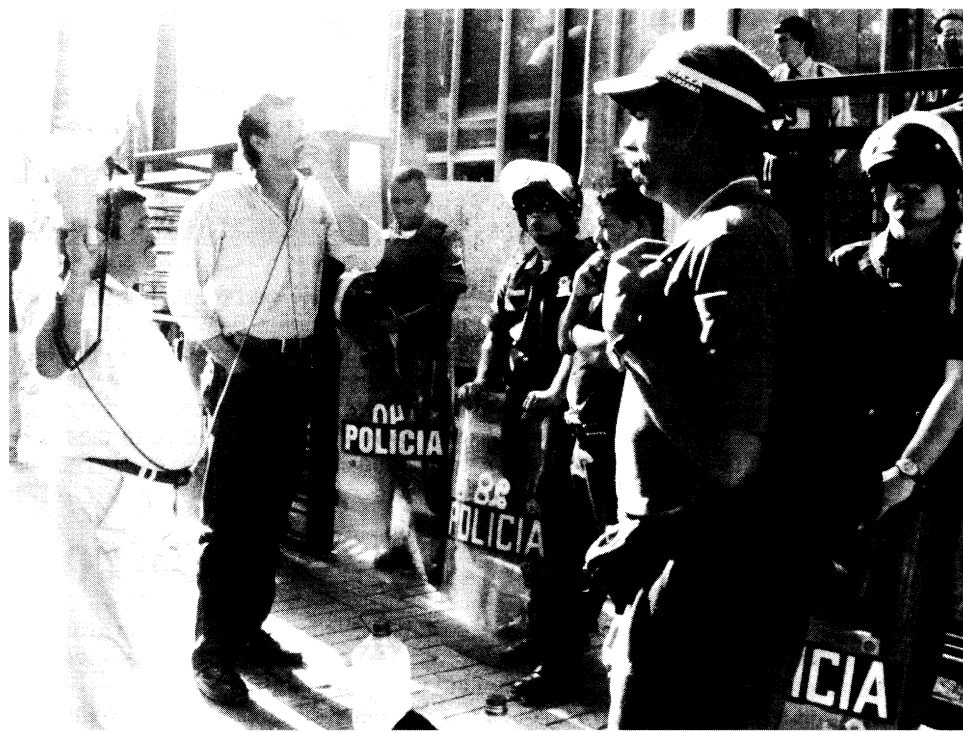
Chirino; Ismael Hernandez, a textile worker in Valencia; Abel Bovada, who is an independent truck driver here; and others explained what they did to resist the drive to oust Chávez in April.

On April 8, the beginning of the bosses' strike, workers gathered outside MAVESA, a condiment-producing factory, and other nearby plants, Bovada said. "We had signs saying: 'Chávez, we want to work' and 'Down with the bosses' strike.'" Up to 3,000 workers demonstrated that day, he said. The next day many leaders of FETRAO organized a caravan of 600 vehicles throughout Valencia with the same demands. A similar car caravan April 10 was shot at and dispersed by the police.

"On the morning of April 11, before any

news arrived from Caracas, we held a press conference at the union hall stating our belief a coup was in the works and explaining we would fight against it," Chirino said. Next day more than 5,000 people, mostly workers and students, gathered around the local army barracks, defying police blockades and fraternizing with the soldiers. Similar mobilizations took place in nearby Aragua, where 20,000 people poured into the local army garrison. Similar actions took place across the country, we were told.

Meanwhile, up to 200,000 people were protesting in the streets of Caracas, demanding the reinstatement of Chávez. Buses from Valencia and many other cities were stopped by the police from transporting workers from the provinces to the capital to fight the coup, Hernandez said.



Protest in front of offices of Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV) July 15 to condemn CTV leadership for proposing another nationwide antigovernment strike.

Opposition to the coup was strong throughout the working class, including workers who have turned against Chávez. "The government is only words and no action," said Nicolas Contreras, who transports vehicles for Hyundai of Venezuela. "I don't support Chávez, but I was against the coup. That would have been a big step backwards for us."

"We were elated after we brought Chávez back," said Abner Lopez, an assembly-line worker at the Chrysler auto plant here. "We thought now is the time to take more radical measures against Fedecámaras, the bosses, and all their lieutenants. But that's not what has happened."

No plotters jailed

None of the coup plotters have gone to jail, Lopez, Chirino, Hernandez, and others said. The Supreme Justice Tribunal held an initial hearing July 18 to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to try four of the 127 military officers involved in the April coup on charges of leading a military rebellion. "No one knows what will happen to these generals," Lopez said. "They should have been in jail already, and all the others, including Carmona, who was allowed to leave the country and move to Miami. Already, people are protesting this."

Hundreds of people protested outside the court hearing in Caracas July 18, hurling cans, eggs, and blunt objects over National Guard cordons and demanding justice against the coup organizers.

Hernandez added that Fedecámaras is now pushing new antilabor measures, with the support of some government ministers, such as increasing job probation from three to nine months.

"Chávez dismissed his former finance minister for repeated acts of corruption, but instead of going to jail he was given another lucrative job at a state bank," Chirino said. "The new finance minister and the minister of planning are now telling us to tighten our belts to deal with the economic crisis. We will pay for this, not these ministers or the bosses. These people are from the oligarchy."

According to the July 19 *El Nacional*, one of Venezuela's main dailies, and other press

reports, Minister of Planning and Development Felipe Pérez, and Finance Minister Tobías Nóbrega, are pushing the National Assembly to raise value-added-tax from 14.5 percent to 16 percent and to increase interest rates. These tax reforms must be approved immediately, Pérez reportedly told parliamentary deputies, "regardless of the political cost of this decision, and we must all tighten our belts."

Deep economic crisis

Venezuela is the fifth largest oil-producing country in the world. It has many mineral resources and a relatively high level of industrialization for Latin America. At the same time, it is ranked among the top one-fifth of countries in the world on class inequality. While the top 10 percent of the

This was a theme of the latest anti-Chávez march in Caracas July 11. According to various accounts, more than half-a-million people took part in this action demanding Chávez's resignation. Juan Pablo Torres, attorney for the Liberator municipality of Caracas and a supporter of the government, said in a July 15 interview that "for the first time it wasn't just the middle and upper classes marching against Chávez. Some contingents of the humble classes were also visible." It was a typical observation among other defenders of Chávez interviewed by the *Militant*.

The CTV leadership has also tried to use the economic downturn to put a popular veneer on its reactionary call for organizing a new general strike to bring down the president. "The proposal of the CTV is to call a national civic strike to demand the resignation of President Hugo Chávez," said CTV general secretary Manuel Cova July 15. "We have over 2 million people that are without work. Jobs are being destroyed."

Workers blame bosses and capitalism

Most workers interviewed by the *Militant*, however, blamed the bosses, not the Chávez government, for the deteriorating recession.

"The problem in this country is that the bosses make millions of bolivars a month in profits and we workers can barely survive," said José Sanchez, who works in a carton manufacturing plant in Valencia. "I support Chávez because even though he hasn't done everything he promised he has put the breaks on the bosses. They can't do anything they want against us as they did before."

On May 1, under increasing pressure from workers, Chávez signed a decree prohibiting further layoffs for 60 days. The labor movement succeeded in winning an extension of the decree to July 28. "When that expires, we expect many firings, especially of union militants," said Abner Lopez. "They are already preparing the lists, as they did in June when they posted the layoffs the day before Chávez extended it another month."

"This is true especially of the Yankee bosses," Lopez added, expressing his deep anger at Washington's intervention in support of the April coup, a view held by many workers *Militant* reporters spoke to.

"It's capitalism that's leaving us and our families on the streets, not Chávez," said Wilmer Mejias, a former auto worker at GM who now works as a truck driver after being laid off. Pointing to the recent closing of Sudantec, a textile company that received subsidies from the government and employed about 5,000 workers, Mejias said the government should take over such companies and ask workers to run them.

Such proposals for nationalizations of companies that shut down are a minority view. "But demands like these will grow," said Chirino.

Workers have increasingly rejected the CTV leadership's call for another nationwide strike. "The CTV never did anything for workers," said Pedro Jose Rodriguez, a truck driver, in a typical comment. "Now they are somehow concerned about unemployment. I've been working for 38 years and the CTV never did anything for workers. It went with the bosses April 11. No worker in their right mind wanted these 'strikes.'"

Strike call loses steam

Under increasing pressure from workers, the CTV campaign for another nationwide antigovernment strike is rapidly losing steam. Between July 15 and July 19, officials of Fedepetrol, the oil workers union, Fedeunep, the 600,000-strong United Federation of Government Workers, the steelworkers union, and the Union of Workers of the Metro in Caracas denounced the CTV's call for a strike.

A number of those interviewed said that it was Chávez's earlier labor policies that gave the CTV tops some legitimacy for a period of time. "The labor policy of Chávez was reactionary, trying to tie the unions to the state and telling workers he would not honor labor contracts," Chirino stated.

Chirino was referring to the December 2000 referendum organized by Chávez to suspend the national leadership of the CTV

Continued on Page 8

'We fight to defend workers in Venezuela'

Continued from Page 7

until elections would be held. The majority of the CTV officialdom supports the social-democratic Democratic Action Party (AD). A minority backs the Social Christian COPEI party, or the Venezuelan Communist Party and smaller groups in the workers movement. That referendum was approved by a 65 percent majority, but only 22 percent of the 11 million eligible workers turned out to the polls. The referendum was opposed by officials of the four established trade union federations. Officials of a fifth, the Bolivarian Workers Force (FBT) founded that year, align themselves with the Chávez regime. Chávez won some support for his attempt to shackle the unions more tightly to the state by taking advantage of widespread hatred for the labor bureaucracy, which he termed "corrupt and rotten."

Opposition to this move, however, by the bosses and most trade union officials, along with many workers, forced the government to shelve implementation of the referendum's result. Chávez recently recognized the CTV with its current leadership as legitimate.

"We can only overthrow the CTV leadership from within," said Chirino, "while supporting complete independence of the trade union movement from the state."

Bolivarian circles

The CTV's outright sellout to the bosses has led a number of working people seek-

ing ways to defend their interests to turn to other forms of organization.

As José Bonilla, a truck driver for a large transportation firm in Caracas, put it, "We never succeeded in bringing a union to the company, so a number of us have now organized a Bolivarian circle."

The Bolivarian circles are nationally coordinated out of Caracas, from what is called "the political command of the Bolivarian revolution." While largely organized by the Movement for the Fifth Republic (MVR), Chávez's party, the circles include a range of political forces and many working people and youth who have no political affiliation.

At the University of Carabobo in Valencia, for example, there are more than 51 Bolivarian circles incorporating a large percentage of the student body. Each focuses on different tasks—from scientific seminars in the evening, to social work in the community, to volunteer labor to repair houses or infrastructure in working-class neighborhoods, to street protests against police repression.

The police in a state whose governor Romer Salas is a prominent figure in the bourgeois opposition, has tried to brand them as "terrorist cells."

Joel Pantón, a leader of the Alma Mater student group, has helped initiate several of



Above: Enrique Ramos; inset: Argiris Malapanis
Above, tens of thousands of working people rally in Valencia April 12 to foil a U.S.-backed coup against President Hugo Chávez. Left, workers at Hyundai assembly plant in Valencia.



these circles. He said the authorities organized a provocation June 20 in which four assailants entered a school bus full of students, poured gasoline on the floor, and lit a fire. A number of students, and the bus driver, were seriously injured in the arson attack and are still in the hospital. The bus

1,000 rally for workers locked out by Videotron

Continued from Page 12

by as much as 30 percent.

Videotron has also called on the services of Nexxlink to take over a part of the technical support work and of Joncas, which is owned by Quebecor, to take over customer service. "We're not part of the company's plans," explained a striker who works in technical support but preferred not to be identified. "Contracting out has gone from 15 percent to 100 percent since last year," he added, pointing out that customer calls go to these companies on a priority basis rather than to Videotron employees.

Unionists have also occupied the Montreal offices of the Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec, a Québec government financial agency that owns 45 percent of the shares in Videotron and had lent \$3 billion to Quebecor so it could buy Videotron.

The company has succeeded in getting a court injunction that limits the number of pickets to 12. In response to this attack, the union has organized secondary picket lines in front of stores and video clubs belonging to Quebecor. This has allowed the strikers to be more visible and establish links with

workers in the districts where the video clubs are located.

The company has led a sustained campaign against the strikers, accusing them of sabotage and vandalism against its installations. It is offering up to \$25,000 for any information against the union or its members. Police raided union offices June 10, confiscating union records. Videotron is also suing CUPE for \$5 million in damages.

The company has been hiring strikebreakers, especially students. Videotron is using its status as a telecommunications company

covered by federal jurisdiction to avoid the provisions of a Québec law that prohibits employers from hiring scabs.

In another development, the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) announced July 13 that 4,000 workers would go on strike for 24 hours if progress was not made in negotiations covering 23 hotels in Montreal.

Érick Desmarais is a member of the Young Socialists. Christian Cornejo contributed to this article.

—IF YOU LIKE THIS PAPER, LOOK US UP—

Where to find Pathfinder books and distributors of the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, *New International*, *Nouvelle Internationale*, *Nueva Internacional* and *Ny International*.

UNITED STATES

ALABAMA: Birmingham: 3029A Bessemer Road. Zip: 35208. Tel: (205) 780-0021. E-mail: bhmSWP@bigfoot.com

CALIFORNIA: Los Angeles: 4229 S. Central Ave. Zip: 90011. Tel: (323) 233-9372. E-mail: 74642.326@compuserve.com
San Francisco: 3926 Mission St. Zip: 94112. Tel: (415) 584-2135. E-mail: sfswp@hotmail.com

COLORADO: Craig: 6 West Victory Way. Zip: 81625. Mailing address: P.O. Box 1539. Zip: 81626. Tel: (970) 826-0289. E-mail: westerncoloradoswp@yahoo.com

FLORIDA: Miami: 8365 NE 2nd Ave. #206 Zip: 33138. Tel: (305) 751-7076. E-mail: miamiswp@bellsouth.net; **Tampa:** 1441 E. Fletcher, Suite 421. Zip: 33612. Tel: (813) 910-8507. E-mail: TOC1004@aol.com

GEORGIA: Atlanta: 2791 Lakewood Ave. Zip: 30315. Mailing address: P.O. Box 162515. Zip 30321. Tel: (404) 763-2900. E-mail: atlpathfinder@cs.com

ILLINOIS: Chicago: 1212 N. Ashland Suite 201. Zip: 60622. Tel: (773) 342-1780. E-mail: ChicagoPathfinder@compuserve.com

IOWA: Des Moines: 3720 6th Ave. Zip: 50313. Tel: (515) 288-2970. E-mail: swpdesmoines@cs.com

MASSACHUSETTS: Boston: 12 Bennington St., 2nd Floor, East Boston. Mailing address: P.O. Box 261. Zip: 02128. Tel: (617) 569-9169. E-mail: 103426.3430@compuserve.com

MICHIGAN: Detroit: 4208 W. Vernor St. Mailing address: P.O. Box 441580 Zip: 48244. Tel: (313) 554-0504. E-mail: DetroitMISWP@netscape.net

MINNESOTA: St. Paul: 113 Bernard St., West St. Paul. Zip: 55118. Tel: (651) 644-6325. E-mail: TC6446325@cs.com

NEW JERSEY: Newark: 168 Bloomfield Avenue, 2nd Floor. Mailing address: Riverfront Plaza, P.O. Box 200117. Zip: 07102-0302. Tel: (973) 481-0077. E-mail: swpnewark@yahoo.com

NEW YORK: Brooklyn: 372A 53rd St. (at 4th Ave.) Mailing address: PMB 106. 4814 4th Ave. Zip: 11220. Tel: (718) 567-8014. E-mail: swpbrooklyn@earthlink.net
Garment District: 545 8th Ave., 14th Floor. Mailing address: P.O. Box 30. Zip: 10018. Tel: (212) 695-7358. E-mail: swpnygd@attglobal.net;
Upper Manhattan: 599 W. 187 St. #1A Zip: 10033. Tel: (212) 740-4611. E-mail: swpuptown@usa.net

NORTH CAROLINA: Charlotte Area: 2001A N. Cannon Blvd. Kannapolis Mailing address: P.O. Box 5624, Concord. Zip: 28087. Tel: (704) 932-0821. E-mail: CharlotteSWP@aol.com

OHIO: Cleveland: 11018 Lorain Ave. Zip: 44111. Tel: (216) 688-1190. E-mail: 103253.1111@compuserve.com

PENNSYLVANIA: Hazleton: 69 North Wyoming St. Zip: 18201. Tel: (570) 454-8320. Email: swpnepa@intergrafix.net
Philadelphia: 5237 N. 5th St. Zip: 19120. Tel: (215) 324-7020. E-mail: PhiladelphiaSWP@yahoo.com
Pittsburgh: 5907 Penn Ave. Suite 225. Zip: 15206. Tel: (412) 365-1090. E-mail: 103122.720@compuserve.com

TEXAS: Houston: 619 West 8th St. Zip: 77007. Tel: (713) 869-6550. E-mail: swphouston@evl.net

WASHINGTON, D.C.: 3437 14th St. NW Zip: 20010. Tel: (202) 387-1590. E-mail: dc-swp@starpower.net

WASHINGTON: Seattle: 5418 Rainier Avenue South. Zip: 98118-2439. Tel: (206) 323-1755. E-mail: swpseattle@qwest.net

AUSTRALIA

Sydney: 1st Flr, 3/281-287 Beamish St., Campsie, NSW 2194. Mailing address: P.O. Box 164, Campsie, NSW 2194. Tel: (02) 9718 9698. E-mail: cl_australia@bigpond.com

BRITAIN

London: 47 The Cut. Postal code: SE1 8LL. Tel: 020-7928-7993. E-mail: clondon@onetel.net.uk

CANADA

Montreal: 1237 Jean Talon E. Montréal, QC. Postal code: H2R 1W1. Tel: (514) 284-7369. E-mail: Librpath@sympatico.ca

Toronto: 2761 Dundas St. West, Postal code: M6P 1Y4. Tel: (416) 767-3705. E-mail: milpathtoronto@sympatico.ca

Vancouver: 2645 E. Hastings, Room 203. Postal code: V5V 1Z5. Tel: (604) 872-8343. E-mail: clvancouver@cs.com

FRANCE

Paris: Centre MBE 175, 23 rue Lecourbe. Postal code: 75015. Tel: (01) 47-26-58-21. E-mail: 73504.442@compuserve.com

ICELAND

Reykjavik: Skólavordustig 6B. Mailing address: P. Box 0233, IS 121 Reykjavik. Tel: 552 5502. E-mail: milpth@mmedia.is

NEW ZEALAND

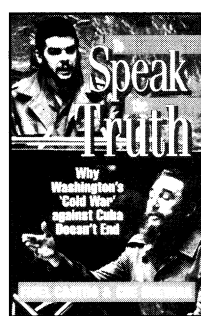
Auckland: Suite 3, 7 Mason Ave., Otahuhu. Postal address: P.O. Box 3025. Tel: (9) 276-8885. E-mail: milpath.auckland@actrix.gen.nz

Christchurch: Gloucester Arcade, 129 Gloucester St. Postal address: P.O. Box 13-969. Tel: (3) 365-6055. E-mail: pathfinder.militant@paradise.net.nz

SWEDEN

Stockholm: Domargränd 16, S-129 47, Hägersten. Tel: (08) 31 69 33. E-mail: pathfbkh@algonet.se

From Pathfinder



TO SPEAK THE TRUTH

Why Washington's Cold War against Cuba Doesn't End Fidel Castro and Che Guevara

In speeches before the United Nations and UN bodies, Guevara and Castro address the workers of the world. **\$16.95**

SELECTED SPEECHES OF FIDEL CASTRO

Includes 1962 speech "The Revolution Must Be a School of Unfettered Thought." **\$14.00**

New International No. 11

Includes U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War, by **Jack Barnes**; Socialism: A Viable Option, by **José Ramón Balaguer**. **\$14.00**

Available from bookstores, including those listed on this page.

Sam's executive club—In Kansas City, Missouri, Verette Richardson was headed to her car when a Wal-Mart manager ordered



Harry Ring

her to return to the apparel department and clean it up. She had just finished a 10-hour graveyard shift, but was reluctant to challenge the boss.

She tidied the racks. Other nights, she untangled shopping carts in the parking lot. It took an hour and she received nothing. It was the common Wal-Mart "off-the-clock" practice. Later, she was one of the 40 employees, past and present, who gave media interviews on the swindle.

'Route 6 in holding pattern'—Faced with a sagging auto market, Toyota is preparing a small, easy-to-fly plane that it anticipates could become as common as cars. How the skyway cops will pull over profile pilots remains to be seen.

?—According to the *Times* of

London, an Ethiopian infant whose mother is an HIV-positive asylum seeker, was denied milk that she is entitled to.

The ruling was handed down by London's high court. Why? We read the item three times and didn't understand.

Capitalist education—As graduation approached, college students in England received warnings that if they had outstanding school loans, they would not receive their diplomas.

Oh well—The Queen of England has doubled the allowance of Prince Edward, boosting it to around

\$375,000 a year. The prince has gone from working part-time on royal duties to full-time.

On a grim note—Between 1996 and 2000, more than 160 elderly Maine residents took their own lives. This made the state the eighteenth worst on suicide rates in the country.

Golly, Con Agra terrorist?—At Louisiana State University, the school of Veterinary Medicine has set up a team to check meat lines for signs of bioterrorist contamination.

Meanwhile in Colorado, Safeway markets stopped buying

beef from giant ConAgra after an outbreak of E. coli infection from ground beef. A recall was issued.

God and a ten spot—"Virginia unveiled a 'Fight Terrorism' license plate called 'Remembrance.' Its design reflects the Pentagon and World Trade Center towers. The plates cost Virginians an extra \$10."—News item.

Yoicks, they're back—"State [California] is Hit with Power Emergency—Several generating plants interrupt service amid rising temperatures.... Energy Prices soar."—Headline, *Los Angeles Times*.

Stock market slide portends deeper crisis

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Since the end of May the major U.S. stock market indexes have lost more than 20 percent of their value, in what commentators in the capitalist media are referring to as one of the fastest falls in Wall Street history. More than shattering the confidence of wealthy investors, the stock market decline has decimated workers' 401(k) retirement accounts and pension funds that have been invested in the market. The downward slide of the indexes poses the real threat of a sell-off that would threaten the banking system.

Over this nine-week period the Dow Jones industrial average has fallen 2,333 points to the 8,000 mark, losing 22.5 percent of its value. The decline has now wiped out more points than were in the total index in January 1989. The Standard & Poor's 400 index is down almost 45 percent from its highs two years ago, and the Nasdaq is off nearly 75 percent. In fact, some \$7.7 trillion in paper values have been lost since the market peaked in March 2000. Since then the Dow Jones has declined by 31.6 percent.

The stock market decline of 14.5 percent from July 8-19 was "its worst two weeks since the 1987 crash," reported the *New York Times*.

"The crash of 2002: Stocks' four-month slide has left investors battered and bloodied. How bad will it get," was the headline of a story by CNN/Money July 22, one of many such reports appearing in the big-business media. "Ten trading days, 1,360 points off the Dow. Let's start calling the 'sell off' what it is. Let's call it a panic. Let's call it a crash," the article stated.

"There hasn't been any news in the last 12 weeks that has made anybody feel confident," noted Thomas McManus, the equity strategist at Banc of America Securities. "You never know when it's going to be over," stated Dexter Williams, who works in risk management on Wall Street. "It's going to take a long time to restore investor confidence."

Compounding this problem is the growing number of financial scandals that have involved the reporting of billions of dollars in illusory earnings by some major companies that were prominent players in the stock market boom of the 1990s.

The latest example is WorldCom, a Mississippi-based telecommunications giant, which admitted in June that it had falsely converted operating expenses into capital costs, artificially boosting its income by \$3.8 billion. On July 21 the company filed for bankruptcy, becoming the largest company

in U.S. history to do so. WorldCom, with \$107 billion in assets, eclipses Enron, which with \$63 billion in assets filed its petition for bankruptcy in December. More than half of the 10 largest bankruptcies since 1980 have occurred in the last 18 months.

The stock market expansion through the 1990s was built on a speculative binge; today no one knows how far it will fall. Because of declining corporate profit rates and lack of sources of solid investment in industry, capitalist investors poured their money into gambling on the stock market rather than into expanding productive capacity equipment in the plants. The rising stock prices, which more and more became divorced from the actual value of these companies, had expanded into greater balloons of debt. "Especially the technology sector," noted the *Times*, "had become a bubble" that sooner or later had to burst.

One example of the declining confidence by investors in the stock market is the stepped-up pace at which money has been flowing out of stock mutual funds. According to AMG Data Services, there were net outflows of \$18.5 billion from stock funds just over the first three weeks of July, following an \$11.1 billion outflow in June. "If investors continue to pull money out of funds," reported the *Times*, "they will have to sell more stocks to meet the demand," further fueling the market's decline.

Of growing concern to economists is the impact the stock market fall will have on consumer spending, especially as more companies announce downsizing measures and layoffs. Even before declaring bankruptcy, WorldCom, for example, had announced the layoff of 17,000 people, one-quarter of its total workforce.

"While corporate spending has been nonexistent for months," the *Times* noted, "consumers have kept their wallets open." But as "consumers recognize the extent to which the falling stock market has decimated their retirement accounts or their children's college plans, their spending may come to a halt."

Economists at Goldman Sachs, predict that the weakness in consumer spending will

Locked-out workers in Texas City demand city council back their fight



Militant/Steve Warshell

Madeline Goldenschue, picket captain for workers locked out at Sterling Chemical and a general mechanic at the plant for 26 years, points to photos of protests and rallies by union members against Sterling and Dow Chemical in Texas City, Texas. On July 18 more than 130 union members locked out by the company and their supporters marched to City Hall demanding the city support their fight. "The supposedly neutral position the city has maintained in this entire situation actually appears to condone the antilabor practices of Sterling management," Goldenschue said. "Especially since the city recently granted Sterling a discount on its city taxes." The union has established a relief fund for the locked-out workers and asks that donations be sent to: Sterling Workers Locked Out, 2800 Texas Avenue, Texas City, Texas, 77590.

curb economic growth not only for the remainder of this year, but well into 2003. Commenting further on this development, Richard Hastings, chief economist at Cyber Business Credit, a retail advisory firm in New York, noted that this could "impact

aggregate demand in a way that has not been seen since the 1930s."

A declining U.S. stock market affects markets around the world. Major European indexes are down more than the 21 percent this year.

Farm leader polls second in Bolivia's presidential race

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In a strong show of support, farm leader Evo Morales came in second in the race for president of Bolivia, with nearly 21 percent of the vote. Since no candidate won a majority, the Bolivian Congress will choose the next president from the two-front runners by August 6.

Washington wasted no time in making known its opposition to Morales becoming president of the country.

After 10 days of vote counting, the National Election Council announced the official results of the June 30 election. Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, a millionaire, and the country's former president from 1993 to 1997, came in first with 624,126 votes or 22.46 percent of the vote; Morales received 581,884 votes or 20.94 percent; and Manfred Reyes Villa, also a millionaire and a former army captain, had 721 votes less than Morales, or 20.91 percent.

Support for Morales surged as the U.S. ambassador to Bolivia, Manuel Rocha, intervened in the election to warn voters not to elect the peasant leader to the presidency,

otherwise U.S. aid to the country would be cut off. Morales, who leads the Movement for Socialism party, has pledged to stop payments on Bolivia's \$6.6 billion national debt; renationalize industries sold to foreign investors in the 1980s and '90s; halt the government's coca eradication efforts, which have driven tens of thousands of poor farmers deeper into poverty; and end the operations of the U.S. Drug Enforcement agency in the country, through which Washington has deepened its military intervention in Bolivia.

In the elections held for Congress the same day as the presidential vote, the Movement for Socialism party won enough seats to become the second largest party in the legislature.

"This is a bad sign," stated Gary Rodriguez, president of the Institute of Foreign Trade, speaking on behalf of the class of millionaire employers who run the country.

Continuing U.S. imperialism's drive to influence the outcome of the election, the U.S. ambassador held meetings with lead-

ing legislators in an effort to convince them to block Morales's presidential bid. In a televised interview July 9, Reyes said he had recently met with the ambassador. "I did not receive any pressures," he said, but "what the ambassador did make clear is that there should not be any kind of an alliance with Evo Morales."

Otto Reich, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, reiterated this point in an appearance in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, July 11. He said that the inclusion of Morales in a government coalition could lead to the cutoff of millions of dollars in U.S. funds for Bolivia. "We do not believe we could have normal relations with someone who espouses these kinds of policies," Reich said, referring to Morales's political positions.

State Department spokesman Philip Reeker also spoke up in defense of Rocha's intervention in Bolivia's election, claiming that all the ambassador was doing was correcting "incendiary and wrong statements" made by Morales.

in *New International* no. 10

• What the 1987 Stock Market Crash Foretold

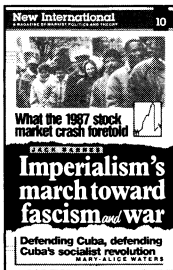
• Imperialism's March toward Fascism and War

• Defending Cuba, Defending Cuba's Socialist Revolution

by *Mary-Alice Waters*

• The Curve of Capitalist Development by *Leon Trotsky* \$14.00

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8, or order at www.pathfinderpress.com



Peasant groups fight frame-up

Continued from Page 6

guayan government, backed by Washington.

Two Lebanese-Paraguayan merchants in Ciudad del Este, who asked not to be quoted by name, explained that the anti-Arab campaign in that area was first whipped up after the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed more than 80 people. Government officials and others immediately blamed "Islamic fundamentalists," but years later it turned out rightist Argentine cops had been involved, and today several cops have been jailed in connection with the case.

A few years ago, the merchants noted, the Paraguayan government created an "Antiterrorism Bureau" at Washington's urging. It began to accuse Arab immigrants of fund-raising for groups tied to the Lebanese resistance organization Hezbollah, and targeted Ahmed Barakat, an acknowledged supporter of Hezbollah, and his fund-raising activities. "Many merchants here had green boxes in their stores to collect donations for Islamic charities, an effort headed by Barakat. But the authorities couldn't prove Barakat was misusing funds since all the money was accounted for," one merchant said.

After September 11, the U.S. government accelerated its "antiterrorism" campaign as a cover for increasing its military intervention around the world, including in South America. Pressed by Washington, the Paraguayan government carried out police raids in Ciudad del Este and other cities in the Triple Border area, arresting 21 people; three remain in jail on minor charges such as expired visas or tax problems. *Militant* reporters were told. Arabs continue to be harassed by cops who stop them on the street or in their cars.

In late June the Brazilian government arrested Barakat at the request of the Paraguayan government, but released him for lack of evidence. Washington has demanded his extradition, but it doesn't have an extradition treaty with Brazil, the merchants noted.

Increasing U.S. military presence

Members of the municipal workers union in Ciudad del Este reported that the antiterrorism campaign has also provided a cover for the government to go after unionists and workers trying to organize unions.

The unionists said that Washington has increased its military presence in Paraguay. The Pentagon has established an unofficial military facility near the Triple Border city of Concepción under the pretext of helping peasants build health-care centers and other facilities.

Gen. Gary Speer, head of the U.S. Southern Command, made a high-profile visit to Paraguay in mid-July. He met with Paraguayan president González Macchi and supervised a "joint hostage rescue operation" by an "antiterrorist squad" of Paraguayan troops. An article in the July 11 issue of *Noticias* reported on Speer's visit and stated that the U.S. military "offers its counterparts in our country cooperation in training for antidrug, antiterrorist, and peacekeeping operations."

During a visit to the rural town of Caaguazú, farmers described the wave of protests in May and June that pushed back the government's antiterrorism bill and several economic measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund.

"We knew the antiterrorism law would be used against peasant leaders and unionists," said Diosnel Aguilera, a leader of the peasant settlement near Caaguazú. "It reminded us of the repression under the Stroessner dictatorship, which would terrorize people in the countryside with its system of *pyrague*" the Guaraní term for "wool feet" or informers.

The peasant demonstrations were the largest political



actions in Paraguay in many years. Caaguazú was one of the centers of these protests. Nimio Méndez, a local leader of the National Coordinating Board of Peasant Organizations (Mesa Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas—MCNOC), one of the two main peasant organizations, said, "We blocked the highway for more than a month. Every day there were between 3,000 and 11,000 peasants gathered on the highway."

In addition to opposing the antiterrorism law, the peasants protested legislation that would authorize the sale of the state-owned telecommunications, railroad, water and sewer companies, and banks, as well as a value-added tax on agricultural products. The peasants marched toward Asunción in face of police and army repression. In one deadly police attack, a peasant was killed in the nearby town of Londres. After weeks of sustained peasant protests, combined with the threat of a general strike by unions, the government backed down and suspended the privatization measures, repealed the tax, and withdrew the antiterrorism bill.

A major factor driving the step-up in peasant struggles is the growing land crisis. While Paraguay has historically been underpopulated, the capitalist development and economic crisis in recent decades has drawn peasants and workers to migrate to the rich agricultural lands of the east. The resulting shortage of land has driven peasants to organize takeovers of idle lands belonging to absentee landlords. Diosnel Aguilera explained that 35 families living in crowded conditions near Caaguazú had crossed the highway in 1999 and occupied land belonging to an absentee German landlord. They are now fighting to legalize the status of their settlement, named *Koe-ti*, or dawn in Guaraní, the primary language of many of the mestizo farmers of Paraguay.

The increased combativity by farmers and other working people is a sign of the social and political changes in Paraguay since the end of the Stroessner dictatorship, which ruled the country from 1954 to 1989 and suppressed dissent with an iron fist. The previous wave of land struggles, led by the Agrarian Leagues tied to the Catholic Church, was crushed in the 1970s. Many of the farmers leading the *Koe-ti* occupation are in their 20s, and they do not bear the scars of previous defeats.

The successful peasant mobilizations have helped expand political space for working people. As a result, battles for democratic rights such as the campaign against the frame-up of Arrom and other MPL members are in a stronger position.

U.S. airlines demand concessions

BY RÓGER CALERO

US Airways and United, two of the largest airlines in the United States, are demanding hundreds of millions of dollars in concessions from cleaners, maintenance staff, ramp workers, and flight attendants, along with pilots and other employees.

United has demanded 10 percent in wage cuts from the International Association of Machinists (IAM), representing 23,000 workers at the company, which is second in size to American Airlines. The IAM has rejected the demand, while accepting the deferment of almost \$500 million owed workers in back pay.

To date IAM representatives at US Airways have also not signed on to the cuts demanded by the bosses. "Our negotiators do not feel that any type of agreement is im-

minent," said union spokesman Joe Tiberi. The union representing flight attendants at the airline has tentatively agreed to cost-cutting measures worth \$77 million each year until 2008.

The organization representing 4,800 pilots at US Airways has agreed to reductions in salaries and benefits of \$465 million a year. At United, officials of the Air Line Pilots Association have said they will accept pay cuts of 26 percent on condition that other outstanding issues are resolved. However, the agreement has reportedly been thrown into doubt by the IAM's rejection of the takeback demands.

The ongoing losses of these companies, and the general overcapacity and intensifying competition in the industry, are fueling the bosses' drive for such cuts. US Airways, for example, reported a loss of \$269 million in the quarter to June. In 2001 its total loss was \$2 billion.

The airline bosses pitch the concessions as necessary to qualify for government loans from the Air Transport Stabilization Board, a body established by Congress under White House direction after the September 11 attacks. On July 10 the board gave conditional support to a \$900 million loan guarantee to US Airways that would enable the airline—the country's sixth largest—to gain \$1 billion in private financing, but only if it carried through the wage and benefit cuts.

For its part, United has requested \$1.8 billion worth of government guarantees for the \$2 billion in private loans that it is seeking. Federal backing means the government will be responsible for 90 percent of a given loan if the airline defaults.

EDITORIALS

Capitalist financial crisis threatens working people

Continued from front page

eral Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan's shine is dulling in some business quarters, and fear replaces greed among top monied layers in the United States.

The deflating bubble is one sign of the fundamental economic crisis of world capitalism. Despite the much ballyhooed "productivity miracle," the 1990s boom was built on the backs of working people, through speedups, wage cuts, and other measures. Although they made some gains, the employers were unable to fundamentally reverse their long-term profit slide, meaning the stock market's upward glide looked more attractive than investing in capacity-expanding plants and equipment. Within this speculative bubble there has lurked the threat of a banking collapse and other financial shocks that would trigger a sharp fall in industrial production.

The shaky economic situation generates other pressing questions working people will need to address. Today, the threat of new military adventures by Washington remains real. The Bush administration has been criticized by big-business newspapers for not doing enough about the economy. But the White House does have a plan for dealing with the growing economic problems of U.S. imperialism: it is seeking to launch a new war against Iraq and taking steps such as setting up the Pentagon's Northern Command at home in order to confront the struggles of workers and farmers. Protectionist measures and massive export subsidies to grain and other agricultural monopolies are other weapons of Washington's wars. These will be used not only against semicolonial countries, but to target Washington's imperialist rivals as well.

In *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*, Jack Barnes explains that vanguard militants can find ways to present some very basic, immediate demands "to defend the conditions and solidarity of the working class and other toilers in face of rising joblessness, deepening indebtedness, and the ever-present danger of ruinous bursts of inflation or financial panic. These are what worker-bolsheviks can offer our class as a proletarian alternative to being whipsawed between choices presented by the Democrats and Republicans as a matter of 'take it or leave it.'" The program outlined in the book is one being advanced by Socialist Workers candidates around the country today, as well.

Workers should demand a massive program of government-funded public works to ensure jobs for all at union-scale. Such a program is needed to build housing, schools, hospitals and clinics, day-care centers, public transportation, libraries, gyms, parks, and other social infrastructure the capitalists are allowing to crumble rather than fund out of their profits.

Labor must demand a shorter workweek with no cut in pay, binding on all employers as federal law and to increase the minimum wage. "Given the competition for jobs under capitalism, wage levels are set from the bottom up, not from the top down," Barnes points out.

Labor must demand, once again as federal legislation, that all wages be covered by full and automatic cost-of-living protection. The capitalists' efforts to pull themselves out of a downturn in sales and profits can spark sudden and unexpected inflationary explosions that devastate the living standards and any small savings of working people.

Labor must reach out for allies among working farmers, joining with them to demand a halt to all foreclosures. The working class and labor movement in the United States must demand that Washington and other imperialist government and financial institutions immediately cancel the foreign debt that has been imposed on the semicolonial countries.

Workers and farmers in the United States should demand that Washington lift all tariffs and other obstacles to trade and travel erected by the U.S. rulers. This includes the elimination of all "anti-dumping," "fair labor," "environmental protection," and other trade weapons wielded with often devastating consequences by the U.S. government under the banner of "free trade."

By demanding cancellation of the Third World debt," Barnes says, "and opposing all measures used by the propertied classes to magnify the unequal terms of trade intrinsic to the world capitalist market, working people in the United States can strengthen our unity with the toilers of these countries in the international battle against our common enemy, the imperialist ruling families who exploit us all to maintain their wealth and power. We can deepen the effort to transform our unions into revolutionary organizations of the working class that will inscribe these internationalist demands on our battle flag."

Notice to our readers

This week's issue of the *Militant* will be a two-week issue. Our next issue will be printed August 8.

The *Militant* office will be closed July 24-29 in order for the editorial staff to participate in and cover the upcoming convention of the Socialist Workers Party.

Huge rallies defend Iran's sovereignty

BY MA'MUD SHIRVANI

Hundreds of thousands demonstrated across Iran July 19 to defend their country's sovereignty against U.S. imperialism. In Tehran the demonstrators, many of whom came with their families, assembled early in the day at five staging areas. They marched under a scorching sun to Tehran University where the weekly Friday prayer meetings are held, chanting, "Death to America," "Death to Bush," and "Death to Israel," and burning effigies of Uncle Sam and U.S. president George Bush.

This was the second such mass mobilization in Iran this year. On February 11, the anniversary of Iran's 1979 revolution, millions poured into the streets in defiance of threats from Washington. At the time Bush had just labeled Iran, North Korea, and Iraq as the "axis of evil."

The July 19 demonstrations followed another statement by Bush, issued July 12. The Iranian people have voted for political and economic reforms, he said, yet "their voices are not being listened to by the unelected people who are the real rulers of Iran... Members of the ruling regime and their families continue to obstruct reform while reaping unfair benefits.

Bush added that "talented students and professionals, faced with the dual specter of too few jobs and too many restrictions on their freedom, continue to seek opportunities abroad rather than help build Iran's future at home."

Probe by imperialism

The U.S. president's statement was a maneuver to probe the possibilities of winning influence among layers in the population who are dissatisfied with the policies pursued by Iran's government.

On July 9 some 3,000 students around the



Hundreds of thousands demonstrated across Iran July 19 in protest of statements by U.S. president George Bush.

University of Tehran and in the streets of affluent north Tehran had clashed with security forces and extralegal vigilantes who often show up to disrupt demonstrations. It was the third anniversary of a brutal attack in 1999 on students protesting in the dormitories of Tehran and Tabriz universities. The students express frustration at the lack of action by the government in prosecuting those responsible for the attacks.

The ministry of the interior did not issue a permit for the action this year, and major student organizations canceled their call for demonstrations. Among those who joined the protest, some 140 people were arrested.

The same day, Ayatollah Jalaeddin Taheri, the popular religious leader of the southern city of Isfahan, resigned. In a letter explaining his action, he said that civil and elected institutions were being "paralyzed" in the name of religion, and condemned "the increasing power of irresponsible unelected institutions, the undermining of the elected parliament, the distasteful slaughter of the press, the illegal imprisonment of writers, [and] the paralysis of the elected government."

He also wrote that "unemployment, inflation, and the hellish division

between poverty and wealth and class divisions" are increasing. "Is this the pact we made with the oppressed at the onset of the 1979 revolution?" he asked rhetorically.

After Ayatollah Taheri's resignation some 125 parliamentary deputies, associated with the "reform" faction of the government, signed a letter in his support.

In a July 17 interview with the Iranian Students' News Agency, Ayatollah Taheri

against women pensioners.

Six days later workers at the Caparo steel works in Tredegar, south Wales, began a work-to-rule action over company moves to end the workers' "final salary pension" scheme—a pension based on a worker's wages prior to retirement—and replace it with a "stakeholder" pension scheme which is dependent on the performance of investments in the stock market.

According to the union at the plant, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC), the action involves the withdrawal of the workers' "goodwill and cooperation," and follows the imposition of an overtime ban at the plant the previous week.

ISTC general secretary Michael Leahy said that management at Tredegar, and at Caparo's sister plant in Scunthorpe, had failed to listen to pleas not to scrap the workers' final salary pension scheme. A majority of ISTC members at both plants had voted for strike action if necessary in defense of the pension scheme. Workers at a plant in Wreham have also been balloted.

"Our members at Caparo feel that they have no alternative but to escalate their industrial action," said Leahy.

Public employees stage strike in the U.K.

Continued from front page

the first national council workers' strikes since the so-called 1979 "Winter of Discontent."

According to the *Guardian* newspaper, "three-quarters of the 1.3 million staff are women." The July 17 action was "the biggest strike by women in British history," the paper said.

The London *Evening Standard* reported that there were "strong pickets" outside more than half the 33 town halls in the London area, including Ealing, Hillingdon, Harrow, Redbridge, Richmond, Barnet, Tower Hamlets, and Lewisham.

Workers at 26 district councils in Northern Ireland also participated in the action in big numbers, according to the unions. Refuse collection, leisure services, and street cleaning were among the main areas affected, along with Derry City airport.

Joe Donaghy of Unison said, "If the employers believe as they had stated that there was no support for the day of action, they have been proved totally wrong." The BBC reported that picket lines were in place at council offices, education and library boards, libraries, and numerous other areas.

Union leaders say that the July 17 action was "just the start" and further action will follow unless the demand for a 6 percent increase is met. Another one-day strike has been called for August 14.

The unions are demanding that the Labour government of Anthony Blair fund the wage increase. Blair's government has maintained that the pay claim is a matter for local councils to sort out. Meanwhile, Brian Baldwin, chairman of the employers' negotiating team, said, "There is no good reason to improve this pay offer."

One GMB official stated that the 3 percent offer from the employers amounted to an increase of less than 15p an hour (US 22 cents) for the lowest-paid workers.

Militant reporters joined Southwark council workers in south London at a rally of about 100, before marching from Peckham Library to Southwark town hall.

Unison Branch secretary John Mulrenan told the marchers that the strike "is the beginning, not the end of our campaign. We are no longer prepared to tolerate poverty pay, or to allow the Government to use low pay to subsidize public services."

Militant reporters later visited a picket line of around 30 people at Brixton Town Hall where there was a lively picket of council workers and their children, shouting and

giving out leaflets in support of their demand for wage increases.

Other workers have been following these developments. Geoff Ellis, an official of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) told the BBC that the FBU would be balloting firefighters to take strike action over their pay claim.

At 8:00 p.m. on July 18, the Rail Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) members on the London Underground or "Tube" began a 24-hour strike. The stoppage proved to be solid, with only a few trains running, most stations closed, and pickets set up at depots. The Tube workers were striking over safety and to oppose steps toward privatization.

Meanwhile, TGWU members at the airport in Manchester walked out for two hours on July 20 in a long-running dispute over jobs. More two-hour stoppages are planned for July 30 and August 3.

In addition, workers have been taking action over pensions. On July 4 retiree organizations staged a mass lobby of the parliament buildings in London, demanding an immediate and substantial rise in the basic state pension, a restoration of the link with earnings, and an end to discrimination

— LETTERS —

Liked union rats interview

Jack Willey and Maggie Trowe deserve the "*Militant* reporters of the Month" award for their interview with New York's union rats in the July 8 issue. All the article in the *Militant* are important, and many are inspiring. But this one was inspired!

The "Computer Age of Discovery" cartoon in the subscription ad is also clever, but it needs a contrast boost in the dialog balloons. They are too hard to read.

Dean Denno
by email

Capitalism in crisis

I've noticed that the web site of the *Financial Times* now has a section called "Capitalism in Crisis," so that the reader can more easily track the various investigations of Enron, Arthur Andersen, WorldCom, Tyco, Qwest, Global Crossing, Vivendi Universal, Adelphia, etc.

What the editors of the *Financial Times* cannot do is offer a scientific basis for these so-called scandals. In his book, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin does precisely this. "The development of capital-

ism," he writes, "has arrived at a stage when although commodity production still 'reigns' and continues to be regarded as the basis of economic life, it has in reality been undermined and the big profits go to the 'genius' of financial manipulation. At the basis of these swindles and manipulations lies socialized production; but the immense progress of humanity, which achieved this socialization, entirely goes to benefit the speculators."

Lenin also explained why no amount of regulation and "public accountability" would resolve their crisis. He wrote, "None of the rules of control, the publication of balance sheets the public auditing of accounts—the things about which those imbued with the good intention of defending and prettifying capitalism—are of any avail. For private property is sacred."

Bill Kalman
Albany, California

Palestinians' potential allies

The crisis of Palestinian leadership is starkly illustrated by a recent bombing near the central bus station in Tel Aviv. The area is a neighborhood of non-Jewish immigrant

said that he "would defend the revolution to his last breath." He encouraged people to participate in the July 19 demonstrations against Washington, saying that "a massive and all-inclusive participation in these demonstrations insures the country's future and prevents enemies from being tempted to commit aggression against our holy land."

Working people not heeding siren call

In rejecting the U.S. president's statement, the July 19 demonstrations showed that the working people in Iran were not heeding the siren call of democratic imperialism. Protesters converged at the Friday prayer meetings around the country. Speakers pointed to Washington's deeds in the last half a century in relation to Iran. Most notably, they referred to the U.S. government-engineered military coup in 1953 that overthrew an elected and popular government in Iran and imposed the 25-year despotic rule of the shah. The 1979 revolution overthrew the shah, one of U.S. imperialism's strongest allies in the Mideast.

Hojatoleslam Hassan Rowhani, a speaker at the Tehran rally, said, "Bush talks of human rights, but after September 11 they have declared torture to be legal, they have legalized terrorism by the CIA in various countries, and have legalized military tribunals where the lawyer does not have the right to participate and the convict has no right to appeal." Former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told the rally, "We tell the Americans to put aside their arrogant behavior. Then this nation could start dialogue with you and talk to you."

Iran's president, Mohammad Khatami, who was elected on his promises to introduce democratic reforms, responded to Bush's statement July 17. "The ones who are threatening the world with war through their warmongering policies and misinterpretations should abandon them and apologize to Iran and the Iranian government," he said.

After the president issued his statement, Iran's clerical head of state, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said that Khatami had given Bush a "slap in the mouth" by condemning his interference in Iran's internal matters.

Wide endorsements for action

Ayatollah Khamenei issued the call for the July 19 demonstrations. Within two days the call gained the endorsement of a large number of parties and organizations, including those identified with the reform movement, which is associated with calls for more openings for democratic rights and individual liberties. Ahmad Ali Aminiha, a student in Tehran, told Reuters, "We don't want the United State's support, we want reforms."

A day after the demonstrations, Ayatollah Khamenei said that the presence of multitudes in the streets the previous day had announced to the world that "this great nation will not turn back from the road it has taken." The U.S. regime is "homogeneous in its aggressiveness and greed," he said, adding that just as Washington's attempts to divide Iran's government "are enemy plots, by the same token attempts to find divisions among the ruling groups in Washington are excuses for conciliation and compromise with it."

workers, and appears to have been chosen because most of the city was closed for a Jewish holiday. Many wounded resisted medical care, for fear of deportation.

A conservative estimate of 300,000 undocumented immigrants live and work in Israel. Like their counterparts in London, Atlanta, Sydney, and Toronto, they are driven by the political and economic crisis in their homelands. Since the intifada of the 1980s and '90s, workers from the Philippines, Colombia, Romania, Nigeria, and Thailand perform work once done by Palestinians. Their children attend school with Palestinian children.

These are potential allies in the fight for a democratic, secular Palestine.

Kathleen Denny
Oakland, California

The letters column is an open forum for all 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.

Canadian rulers step up attacks on immigrant rights

BY SÉBASTIEN DESAUTELS

MONTREAL—A new immigration bill went into effect here June 28 after being approved last November by the Canadian parliament in Ottawa. While aimed at increasing the influx of so-called “skilled” workers into the country, Bill C-11 introduces anti-democratic measures against immigrants and makes it harder for refugees, especially those without papers, to come to Canada.

The law boosts the number of points awarded those immigration claimants who have a second diploma and a certificate of competence, and raises from 44 to 49 the upper age limit for qualifying for maximum points. The total points required on various criteria drop from 80 to 75, a figure that will be lowered again to 70 at the end of March 2003. While supporting the thrust of the measures, Nancy Anthony, the chair of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, described them as “insufficient for sectors of the Canadian economy to expand and follow the rhythm at the international level.”

At the same time the law takes away the right of welfare recipients, whether immigrants or Canadian-born citizens, to sponsor their spouses or children, blocking the reunification of their families. It also introduces a new “Maple Leaf” permanent residency card, which will allegedly be harder to falsify. The federal immigration minister, Denis Coderre, has announced that he will push for the inclusion of biometric identification devices on the card.

The bill reduces from two to one the number of commissioners who will determine at a hearing whether or not a refugee claim is “receivable,” making the process more arbitrary. It also puts in place a new appeals tribunal to review the cases of refugees who have been turned down. This tribunal will not start to function until next year, however, meaning that the record 44,000 new refugees denied legal status last year cannot appeal these decisions. Coderre justified this move as a way to cut down on the volume of refugee claims and reduce delays in processing applications.

One of the main changes that will affect many refugee claimants is a new ban on their submitting claims as they enter Canada from the United States, forcing them to do it at a Canadian consulate or embassy there. In the weeks leading up to implementation of the new law, hundreds of refugees rushed to the U.S.-Canadian border trying to enter Canada under the previous rule.

Any refugee claimant coming into Canada without identification papers can be subject to detention.

Moves to deport Algerian refugees

Meanwhile, hundreds of Algerian refugees continue their struggle against the April 5 federal government decision to lift the moratorium on deportations. This moratorium, which had been in effect since 1997, allowed Algerians who were not recognized as refugees by the Canadian government to stay in the country because of the civil war raging in Algeria.

Although they have identification papers and are not considered illegal by the government, these individuals do not have legal status. Unlike officially recognized refugees, they have no right to a medical insurance card, and must pay a \$150 fee for the yearly renewal of their work permits. They also have no right to study if they have a work permit, and have no access to grants or loans for studies. Their children don't have the right to family allocations even if they were born in Canada.

The moratorium was lifted while Canadian prime minister Jean Chrétien was on a business trip to Algeria, seeking to increase

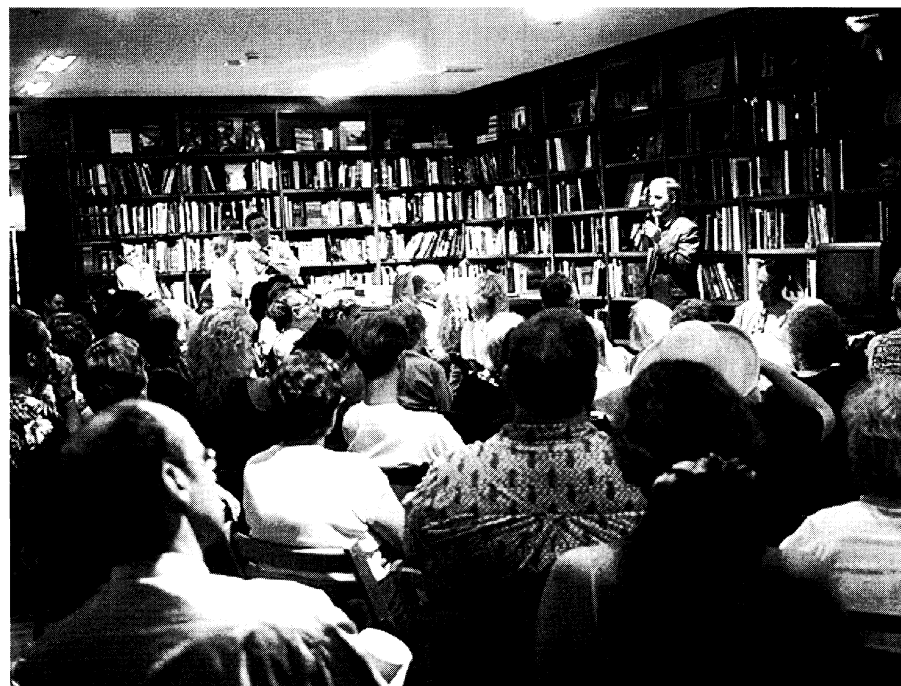
Canadian trade with and investments in the north African country. Around 1,000 refugees are affected by this decision, the overwhelmingly majority of whom reside in Montreal. Coderre said that he is considering lifting similar moratoriums on Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda.

On June 24 several Algerian refugees participated in the celebrations of Quebec's national holiday in Montreal, distributing hundreds of flyers with information about their fight. They are demanding that the moratorium be reinstated, that the situation of all the refugees without status be regularized, and that none of them be deported.

The Action Committee of Those Without Status is planning a march on July 26 at the offices of the Ministry of Immigration, 1010 St-Antoine in downtown Montreal. The march will proceed to the Guy-Favreau Complex, the main federal government building in Montreal, after going to Concordia University to pick up another contingent of supporters. The committee has been organizing vigils every Monday at 4:00 p.m. in front of the immigration offices. For more information, call (514) 848-7585.

Sébastien Desautels is a garment worker and a Teamsters union member. Michel Prairie contributed to this article.

ACLU meeting in Florida discusses ‘Freedom of Speech in Time of War’



Militant/Eric Simpson

Over 75 people gathered July 18 at Book and Books bookstore in Coral Gables, Florida, for a meeting on “Freedom of Speech in Time of War,” sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union. The program focused on the six-month fight for workers' rights and freedom of speech by Michael Italic, the 2001 Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of Miami. He and his supporters initiated this fight after his boss, Goodwill Industries of South Florida, fired him from his job as a sewing machine operator for speaking against the U.S. war in Afghanistan and in support of Cuba's socialist revolution. At the event Italic announced that he had just launched his campaign as Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in the 17th Congressional District in Florida. He is the only candidate running against Democrat Kendrick Meek. In addition to Italic, other speakers included Fred Frost, president of the south Florida AFL-CIO. Max Castro, columnist for the *Miami Herald*, moderated the event.

Strikers in Australia: ‘What we want is a union’

BY BRENDAN GLEESON AND LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia—“What we lack in numbers we make up for in determination,” Rudy Kresevic told *Militant* reporters on the picket line outside Dayson. Eleven workers at this compressor remanufacturing plant in the Sydney suburb of Rydalmere have been on strike since May 24 demanding a union contract. At peak the plant employs 25 workers.

Because he works for the sales division in the parent company Trane, rather than its subsidiary Dayson, Kresevic wasn't part of the initial strike action. “I wouldn't cross the picket line. That's how I got involved,” he said.

Workers at Videotron in Montreal win solidarity in fight against lockout

BY ÉRICK DESMARAIS

MONTREAL—In a powerful display of solidarity, more than 1,000 people rallied in front of the offices of Quebecor July 8 to back the 2,200 workers locked out by the company for the past two months. The action was organized by the Union of Videotron Employees and Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 2815.

“This rally gives us energy to take the next steps,” stated Antoine Comtois, 25, who has worked in the company's technical service department for two-and-a-half years. Describing their action as “the carnival of hoodlums,” the protesters poked fun at the company's public description of the locked-out workers and its phony accusation that strikers have been involved in sabotage. Participants came with drums and trumpets, disguising themselves as “hoodlums.”

Videotron employees on May 7 overwhelmingly rejected the company's contract offer, with more than 99 percent of the workers voting for a strike mandate. At midnight on the following day, the workers walked out. Fifteen minutes later the bosses of Quebecor declared a lockout. The struggle

is centered around a series of issues with important stakes for workers: contracting out, who belongs to the union, job security, wage cuts, and the prolonging of the workday by 30 minutes without an increase in wages.

Quebecor owns printing plants in many countries, daily papers, a television network, magazines, publishing houses, the second most important bookstore chain in Quebec, and video rental stores. Videotron, which was bought by Quebecor last year, has television cable and internet services, principally in Quebec.

Under sharp competition by expanding satellite dish technology, Videotron adopted a restructuring plan following its acquisition by Quebecor that includes transferring a substantial number of jobs done by its employees to other companies. An agreement was signed with a subsidiary of En-tourage selling them the service and installation departments, covering 650 employees, shortly after the union's contract expires, which prohibited such a move. Many of these workers may see their wages cut

a meeting and voted to go on strike. “All the guys believe we are fighting for workers' rights—what we want is for the union to represent us,” said Kresevic.

The company has continued to put pressure on individual workers in an attempt to divide the strikers and get them to return to work one by one. They instituted court action against a number of pickets, including Serge Polyakov, the new delegate and picket captain. This particular action came to nought, however, as the charges were dismissed at a July 16 hearing in the Industrial Relations Court.

The workers are visiting different factories and work sites to build solidarity, said Kresevic, and are meeting a good response. He was among a group that drove almost three hours to Newcastle to talk at a building site where a banner advertising Trane could be seen attached to a crane. After they talked to the workers, it came down immediately.

The AMWU is organizing a “community picket” morning each week. Support from other workers on the picket line is important, said the pickets—especially from those with experience in recent union struggles. Polyakov mentioned a visit by a worker at Joy Mining Machinery in Moss Vale, where in 2000 unionists won a dispute after more than six months on the picket line. Cochrane reported that after a visit to a nearby Rheems factory to explain their fight, a bunch of Maori workers, originally from New Zealand, turned up on their rostered day off to help out on the picket line. “Six big blokes standing firm made a difference,” said Cochrane. “It made the couriers think twice about crossing the picket line.”

Such solidarity is decisive, commented a number of AMWU pickets at Dayson, pointing out that most truck drivers have refused to cross the line. The strikers are confident they will win, noting that as the struggle continues Dayson is losing business to its competitors.

Brendan Gleeson and Linda Harris are members of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union.

Continued on Page 8