

THE MILITANT

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Bay Area truckers strike,
win rate increases

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Venezuelan gov't arrests Colombian coup plotters

Mass protest denounces U.S.-backed plan to oust gov't

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL
AND MARION TALBOT

CARACAS, Venezuela—In a huge march that snaked through the streets of this capital city for more than four hours, hundreds of thousands of people, overwhelmingly workers, turned out May 16 to protest “foreign intervention and paramilitaries in Venezuela.”

In a sea of signs and banners, many of them hand-made, marchers aimed their fire at the presence of Colombian rightist troops in Venezuela and Washington’s support to the wealthy opposition forces seeking to oust the elected government headed by President Hugo Chávez.

Two days earlier, Defense Minister Jorge García Carneiro reported that since May 9 authorities here had arrested more than 100 Colombian soldiers, disguised as “paramilitaries,” as well as three Venezuelan military officers. They were accused of involvement in a plot to bring down the government organized by sections of the U.S.-backed opposition.

García Carneiro also reported that the U.S. military mission in the country, providing military attachés to the Venezuelan armed forces, had been ordered to vacate its offices in the Fort Tiuna military base before May 25.

In a related development, the president of Venezuela’s National Electoral Council (CNE) threatened to expel representatives of the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States (OAS) and of the Carter Center, a group run by former U.S. president James Carter. These self-proclaimed “observers” are here to back the efforts by the Coordinadora Democrática opposition coalition, so far unsuccessful, to stage a recall referendum to oust the Chávez government. The CNE head accused the foreign “monitors” of intervening on the side of the opposition, and said sharp limits on their activities will be imposed if they are allowed to stay.



Reuters/Jorge Silva (above); Howard Yanes (right)

Colombian rightists (above) arrested May 9 by Venezuelan army outside Caracas. Venezuelan government said they were planning a coup. Hundreds of thousands marched in Caracas May 16 (right) to protest U.S.-backed campaign to oust President Hugo Chávez.

As part of rationalizing Washington’s escalating offensive against Venezuela and Cuba, U.S. government officials have

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Longshore union on West Coast expands support for Co-Op strike

BY GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) on the West Coast is expanding its support for the coal miners on strike against CW Mining here. Several ILWU locals in Seattle and surrounding areas in the Pacific Northwest have invited Co-Op miners to speak at their meetings June 9–10 to extend solidarity and financial backing to the strike by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

“The struggle of the Co-Op coal miners in Utah is a struggle for all workers,” said Wolf Loera, a member of ILWU Local 19 in Seattle, in a May 18 interview. “We have extended an invitation to the miners to speak before various longshoremen locals in the state of Washington and Oregon. Besides raising money through each local, we are

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Abuse of prisoners a feature of all imperialist wars

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—U.S. government officials and military spokespersons have repeatedly argued that the systematic abuse and torture of Iraqis detained at the U.S.-run Abu Ghraib prison is the work of a few rogue and “ill-trained” soldiers. “This is not how we do things in America,” exclaimed U.S. president George Bush.

Liberal critics of the White House have also recently attempted to present the abuses in Iraqi prisons as an aberration of the Bush administration by lying through their teeth about the past. In an article in the May 24 *New Yorker* magazine, for example, Seymour Hersh said unnamed senior military legal officers had told him that “with the war on terror, a fifty-year history of exemplary application of the Geneva Conventions [by Washington] had come to an end.”

The historical record, however, quickly cuts through such falsifications.

Humiliation and abuse of prison-
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Massive march in Havana protests new U.S. government sanctions against Cuba

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—In a massive march on the Malecón, Havana’s waterfront, hundreds of thousands of Cubans demonstrated in front of the U.S. Interests section May 14 to denounce recent measures by the White House tightening

Washington’s sanctions against Cuba.

U.S. president George Bush had announced the measures at a May 6 press conference at the White House. A report by the so-called Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba—appointed by Bush last October and headed by U.S. secretary

of state Colin Powell—detailed the new sanctions. They include new limits on travel to Cuba by Cuban-Americans and on the number of family members on the island remittances can be sent to. Anyone in Cuba who is a member of the Communist Party is now prohibited from receiving such remittances.

On May 10, the Cuban government
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Getty/AFP/Niurka Barroso

In mass march in Havana May 14, Cubans protested U.S. economic war. Sign depicting abuse in U.S.-run prison in Iraq says, “In Cuba this will never happen.”

Case of 1955 lynching of Emmett Till to be reopened

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Emmett Till, a 14-year-old Black youth from Chicago, was kidnapped and tortured to death by racist thugs in 1955, while visiting family in Money, Mississippi. The lynching became one of the most well-known cases of racist brutality that helped spark the civil rights movement.

New evidence, recently revealed through a New York filmmaker’s documentary about the murder, is prompting the reopening of the case. The film reportedly provides new

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SWP names slate for 2004 elections in state of Florida

BY SETH GALINSKY

MIAMI—“U.S. president George Bush claimed that the torture of Iraqi prisoners is not the way ‘Americans’ treat people,” said Norton Sandler in the main report to the May 2 Florida state Socialist Workers Party convention. “But there is no such thing as ‘one America.’ This is a class-divided society.”

Workers in the United States have nothing in common with torturers, Sandler stated, “but Washington’s brutality in Iraq shows the true face of U.S. imperialism around the world.”

The delegates to this one-day meeting decided on candidates for the upcoming elections and voted on the outlines of a state election platform. Twenty-three SWP campaign backers attended.

The state convention nominated Nicole Sarmiento, 22, a student at the University of Miami as the SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Florida; Karl Butts, a vegetable farmer in Plant City for Congress in the 11th C.D. in Tampa; and Omari Musa and Seth Galinsky for U.S. Congress in the 17th and 21st Districts, respectively, in the Miami area. Musa and Galinsky are garment workers.

The convention also nominated Lawrence Mikesch, a meat packer, as the party’s candidate for mayor of Miami-Dade County.

Sandler noted that Washington is carrying out its assault on working people at home and abroad under the banner of the “war on terrorism,” as they seek to redivide the resources and the wealth working people create around the world through our labor in favor of the handful of billionaire families who rule the United States, while dealing blows to their imperialist rivals in Paris, Berlin, London, and Tokyo. This assault is being led by the politicians from the Democratic and Republican parties alike, Sandler said, and will continue regardless of which of these parties is in office after the November election.

“We will campaign vigorously against their war party,” Sandler said, referring to both the Democrats and Republicans. “Our campaign will say, ‘not one penny,

not one man or woman for the imperialist war machine.’ We will urge others to join us in campaigning for the immediate and unconditional removal of U.S. troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Haiti, Colombia, the Korean Peninsula, and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.”

In his report, Sandler said workers in the United States are working longer and longer days while millions are unemployed. In Florida alone, nearly 400,000 are out of work according to the government’s own figures, while tens of thousands of immigrants, and those who have stopped looking for jobs or exhausted their benefits, are not counted in the “official” statistics.

“The bosses are combining jobs, speeding up the assembly line, putting the life and limbs of workers in the mines, factories, and mills increasingly in danger,” said Sandler. “The rulers’ attacks on rights, including secret detentions and trials, especially targeting the foreign born, and stepped-up government spying and disruption attempts are their necessary counterpart to the war the employers are carrying out against working people in this country.”

Sandler said the SWP slate of candidates in Florida will call for shortening the workweek to 30 hours while guaranteeing 40 hours pay to spread the available work around. “We also call for a federal government-financed massive public workers program to build desperately needed housing, schools, hospitals, and day-care centers, and to repair the decaying roads and bridges across the United States and Florida. These measures will put millions back to work,” he said.

At the same time, prices are climbing higher for gasoline, milk, and other commodities. “SWP candidates are going to demand that the energy industry be nationalized and placed under workers control. Committees of workers and farmers can inspect the books of these energy trusts, exposing their secret deals, their war plans, their contrived shortages, and price rigging,” said Sandler.

“By running the oil and chemical plants



Militant/Frank Forrestal

Nicole Sarmiento, just-nominated SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Florida, campaigns in Los Angeles Sept. 23, 2003, for socialist gubernatorial campaign in California.

ourselves, we will gain valuable experience that is part of preparing the working-class for running all of society,” he said.

Sandler noted that Florida is a vast agricultural state with 44,000 farms. Some 60 percent of these farms have less than 50 acres. Small farmers across the state have difficulty making ends meet and many are being forced off the land. The Socialist Workers Party election campaign will demand an end to farm foreclosures and access to cheap credit for small farmers. We will stand side by side with farmers who are Black who are fighting to keep their land,” said Sandler.

During the discussion, Cheryl Goertz from Tampa presented figures that show the impact of the deepening economic and social crisis in Florida on workers who are Black and Latino, and the changing face of the working class in this state.

In Florida, 23 percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home; in Miami-Dade County it’s 68 percent. The per capita income in the United States is roughly \$33,170, and in Florida it’s \$30,730. For Black Floridians, however, per capita income is only \$18,750 and for Latinos even less, \$18,000. While the official “poverty rate” for whites is 10 percent, in Florida for Blacks it’s 30 percent and 24 percent for Latinos

Recent figures indicate that 1.3 million employed workers in Florida have no access to health-care coverage, including 700,000 people in Miami-Dade and Broward counties alone.

Several delegates noted that the SWP campaign calls for the establishment of federal government-guaranteed social security and health-care coverage for all.

The report and the discussion pointed to the example of workers in Florida and elsewhere fighting back against the rulers’ attacks. Sandler highlighted the successful fight at the Point Blank Body Armor plant in Oakland Park, where workers won union recognition and a contract. He also pointed to coal miners in Huntington, Utah, fighting to win union recognition there.

“We will campaign from inside the resistance,” said Seth Galinsky from Miami. “We

were part of the April 25 March on Washington to defend a woman’s right to choose.” Galinsky said at the Point Blank plant where he is employed that workers born in Haiti and various Latin American countries including Cuba came together to win this fight. “They are part of making the U.S. working class stronger,” said Galinsky.

Omari Musa, also from Miami, said that one aspect of the 2000 election in Florida was the attempt to disenfranchise Black voters. We should resist all attempts to deny workers who are Black the right to vote, and we should also oppose denying the right to vote to people who have served time for felony convictions.

Karl Butts from Tampa noted how the rise in fuel prices is affecting independent truckers and what farmers are paying for off-road diesel fuel for their tractors and other farm implements and petroleum-based farm in-puts. He said the SWP’s campaign plank calling for nationalization of the energy industry under workers control will win support among farmers.

Lawrence Mikesch from Miami noted that there is a strong possibility that Ralph Nader will be on the Florida ballot for the fall presidential election in addition to George Bush and John Kerry. Mikesch said that while the Democrats and Republicans are the SWP’s main opponents, the party will also campaign against Nader. “Nader was quoted as saying he is pushing the Democrats to be more progressive,” Mikesch said. “But we’re pushing for working people to fight to take power out of the hands of the war makers, including the Democrats.”

Martin Koppel, who attended the meeting for the Socialist Workers National Campaign Committee explained, “We won’t say ‘open the borders’ as a general slogan. We have to start by addressing the concrete situation. We raise demands to stop the deportations, stop the factory raids, end restrictions on drivers licenses, and end ‘no match’ letters.”

In deciding on the SWP slate, the delegates noted that Nicole Sarmiento’s opponents in the race to replace Democrat

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THE MILITANT

U.S., Iraqi prisons: face of imperialism

The systematic humiliation of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. military personnel mirrors practices rampant in U.S. jails. Such abuses are the modus operandi across the U.S. prison system. The ‘Militant’ brings out the facts and working-class analysis on these issues. Don’t miss a single issue!



Texas guard instruction video shows 1996 assault.

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Life imprisonment rising sharply in U.S.

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Nearly 10 percent of all those serving time in U.S. prisons today are there on a life sentence, an 83 percent increase since 1992, says a new report by the Sentencing Project, a research and advocacy group. Using data from the Federal Bureau of Prisons and state agencies, the report also details a marked increase in length of time prisoners spend behind bars before being released on parole. This is the result of “policy changes beginning in the 1970s and increasing in recent decades,” write the authors of *The Meaning of ‘Life’: Long Prison Sentences in Context*. “These changes include such policies as mandatory sentencing,” they say, “and cutbacks in parole release.”

The area of the greatest legislative change has centered on those the report terms “lifers.” The report cites in particular California’s “three strikes and you’re out” law, under which any felony following two previous convictions can result in a life sentence.

The study adds to new statistics that were recently documented on the boom in prison construction across the country over the last quarter century, a period when the prison population mushroomed to over 2 million, and humiliation and abuse of inmates by U.S. prison guards was rampant.

Of the 1.3 million men and women in state and federal prisons, more than 127,000 are now serving a life sentence. In 1992, just before William Clinton was elected president, the figure was around 70,000. Of this number, 26 percent are facing life in prison without the possibility of parole, a jump from 18 percent in 1992.

Seven states—Alabama, California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, and Pennsylvania—have more than 1,000 prisoners each serving sentences of life without parole. In six states—Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota—by law *all life sentences* are imposed without the possibility



Inmate locked up at “The Wall” prison in Huntsville, Texas.

of parole. Prisoners in those states that don’t mandate a life sentence without parole don’t necessarily have a much better prospect of getting out. In Tennessee, for example, prisoners on a life sentence must serve 51 years before their request for parole can be considered.

The length of time lifers spent in prison

jumped by 37 percent, from 21.2 to 29 years, between 1991 and 1997—most of which was during the two terms of the Clinton presidency.

The increase in the time each individual spends in prison helped fuel the unprecedented boom in prison construction over the last 25 years. Between 1979 and 2000, the Urban Institute reported in April in *The New Landscape of Imprisonment: Mapping America’s Prison Expansion*, the number of state prisons alone increased from 592 to 1,023. The number of those locked up in city and county jails, and state and federal prisons, doubled to more than 2 million over the same period.

The state of New York has the highest rate in the country of those serving life sentences among all prisoners—nearly 20 percent, twice the national average. It is followed closely by Nevada, California, Alabama, and Massachusetts, all at between 17 and 19 percent. There are 28,807 men and women facing life sentences in California, more than twice the number of any other state. Florida has the highest number of those on a life sentence without the possibility of parole—4,478.

The report also links the use of the death penalty—reintroduced in 1976 by Supreme Court ruling—to the expanded use of life sentences. “Since sentencing systems are generally established on a proportional basis—more serious crimes are punished more severely,” it states, “the presence of the death penalty in the sentencing serves to exert upward pressure on the severity of penalties imposed for all offenses.”

While support for capital punishment, restricted rights of appeal and parole, and stiffer penalties in general is widely attributed to the Bush administration and the Republican Party, the liberal media hardly mention the equally horrendous record of the Democrats in boosting these weapons of class terror.

The Clinton-Gore administration, for example, was responsible for two major federal laws expanding the death penalty: the 1994 Federal Death Penalty Act, which made some 60 additional federal offenses punishable by death; and the 1996 Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (even the name speaks volumes!), which further restricted federal court appeal rights of those in state prisons.

U.S. gov’t slaps new sanctions on Cuba

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announced measures it would take in response. They include suspending, temporarily, sales at dollar stores of all goods except food and soap or other personal hygiene items. A number of the measures are of a long-term character, indicating the Cuban government is making further preparations to defend the Cuban people in case of an assault by Washington. They are also aimed at enabling Cuba to withstand economic pressures stemming from rising oil prices on the world market and making its economy less vulnerable to any possible interruption of its oil supplies from Venezuela. These steps come as the U.S. and other imperialist governments have intensified a propaganda offensive this year claiming Cuba is “destabilizing” Latin America, especially Venezuela.

The Cuban government measures include increasing the use of draft animals and decreasing the dependency on oil- and petroleum-derived inputs in agriculture; diversifying agricultural production; raising nickel and cobalt production; and intensifying the search for oil and gas reserves on the island.

According to the new U.S. sanctions, Cuban-Americans will be permitted to visit relatives on the island only once every three years, as opposed to once a year up till now. In addition, they will now be required to apply for permission for each trip where previously they were allowed to travel under a general license that covered visits to family members. Any Cuban who immigrates to the United States would not be eligible to apply for such a license until three years after they left Cuba.

A Cuban government statement noted that as Havana is taking more steps to facilitate visits to the country by Cubans living abroad, Washington is increasing the obstacles.

The restrictions on remittances to relatives in Cuba are aimed at reducing the amount of hard currency available to the Cuban economy. A limit of \$1,200 per year on remittances and packages sent to family members in Cuba remains in place, but the new measures restrict those who can receive them to “immediate family members”—thus excluding cousins, aunts, and uncles, among others. In addition, Washington now prohibits remittances to anyone in Cuba who is a member of the Communist Party.

U.S. police agencies will reportedly set up “sting” operations to entrap “mule” networks and others who carry money to Cuba illegally and assist in any way in unauthorized remittances, according to a summary of the measures issued by the State Department.

While visiting family members, Cuban-Americans previously were allowed to spend up to \$164 per day on expenses. That is now reduced to \$50 per day. The State Department report justifies the cut by saying that “travelers will stay with family.” This measure is also aimed at the Cuban hotel and tourist industry.

The Powell commission report also increased U.S. government spending from \$7 million to \$36 million a year to back “civil society” groups—that is, groups collaborating with Washington in its campaign to overthrow the Cuban government.

The two governments have not had diplomatic relations since Washington broke them off in January 1961, as part of the U.S. rulers’ response to the victory of the 1959 revolution, when Cuba’s toilers brought down the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and rapidly installed a government defending the interests of workers and farmers. When the property interests and prerogatives of the wealthy U.S. families and local capitalists and landlords were affected by democratic measures like the land reform instituted immediately after the revolution, Washington adopted the course it has followed for more than 40 years of attempting to overthrow the revolutionary leadership and roll back the gains of Cuba’s working people.

In announcing the new measures Roger Noriega, the U.S. undersecretary of state for Latin American affairs, said the \$45 million in funding to implement the measures will come from already allocated resources, eliminating the need to seek congressional approval, according to the *Miami Herald*.

The measures include funding for an airborne broadcasting platform aboard a C-130 military plane that will attempt to transmit U.S. propaganda opposing the revolution into Cuba. Washington has spent millions in funding for such broadcasts from land-based transmitters by the misnamed Radio Martí and TV Martí. Havana, however, has succeeded in jamming those transmissions.

A May 6 statement released by the campaign for Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry said the Bush administration’s

recommendations are an election-year tactic.

The Massachusetts senator, the statement said, “will fight for a free and democratic Cuba every single day, not just when election time comes around.”

At a well-attended press conference here on May 10, Dagoberto Rodríguez, ambassador at the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., denounced the new measures as a “flagrant interference in the internal affairs of Cuba.” He drew special attention to the restrictions on remittances to family members, calling them “a massive effort to divide our families by redefining who is or is not a family member.” Rodríguez said the measures, along with the “scandalous fact of keeping a concentration camp—which has met worldwide criticism—in a territory occupied by force in our country, constitute unheard-of acts of provocation.” He was referring to Camp Delta at the U.S. military garrison in Guantánamo, Cuba, where Washington has been holding some 600 men indefinitely without charges under humiliating and harsh conditions as part of its worldwide “war on terrorism.”

Addressing the May 14 rally, Cuban president Fidel Castro said, “This is an outraged protest and a denunciation of the brutal, ruthless, and cruel measures against our country that your country has just adopted.” Castro said Washington has no moral ground to stand on to accuse Havana of human rights violations when it brutally assaults and occupies countries like Afghanistan and Iraq and its military engages in degradation and abuse of prisoners.

“The unbelievable torture applied to prisoners in Iraq has rendered the world speechless,” he said.

The measures Havana announced in re-

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U.S. gov’t can now board, search Panama-flagged ships

BY DOUG NELSON

In a further expansion of Washington’s widespread piracy on the high seas, the Panamanian government signed an agreement May 13 permitting U.S. officials to board and search ships with Panamanian registration it suspects may be transporting cargo related to “weapons of mass destruction” to nations targeted in Washington’s “war on terror.”

Under the agreement, if a Panamanian-flagged vessel is suspected of carrying such cargo, Washington can ask the Panamanian government to confirm the nationality of the ship and authorize its boarding, search, and seizure. It expands on an accord signed two years earlier that allows the U.S. Coast Guard to board ships with Panamanian registry in search of “narcotics.”

Earlier this year Washington signed a similar agreement with Liberia, which has the second-largest registry. Panama and Liberia account for about 30 percent of the world’s commercial shipping tonnage.

The agreements with the two regimes are

part of Washington’s Proliferation Security Initiative established in June of last year. The initiative’s stated purpose is to “stop shipments of WMD, delivery systems and related materials flowing to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern.” Washington has used the measure to target the governments of Iran, north Korea, Syria, and Libya.

At a news conference in September before a meeting of the initiative’s “core participants” in Paris, a U.S. spokesman said, “Particularly important to these efforts [is cooperation from] countries that are key flag, coastal or transit states, as well as countries that are used by proliferators in the Weapons of Mass Destruction and missile trafficking efforts.” Washington claims that the governments of China and Pakistan are the source of nuclear weapons technology acquired by Iran, north Korea, and Libya.

In addition to Washington, the “core participants” of the initiative include the governments of Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal,

Spain, the United Kingdom, and Poland.

Cooperating countries agree to exchange information on shipments and allow ships and aircraft to be searched when they enter the countries’ waters or airspace.

Three of the participating governments—Washington, London, and Paris—have and continue to develop nuclear weapons. Of the three, Washington has far and away the world’s largest nuclear arsenal and continues to conduct intensive research to develop new variants, from nuclear bunker-buster bombs aimed at north Korea’s underground defenses, to the so-called missile defense shield aimed at giving Washington first strike capability.

In September, German and Italian authorities stopped and seized a German-owned ship allegedly loaded with parts used in the manufacture of enriched uranium after passing through the Suez Canal bound for Libya. The U.S. and British governments used the seizure to pressure Libya to abandon its nuclear weapons program, which it agreed to do last December.

Dockworkers back Utah miners

Continued from front page

also making T-shirts as a way to raise more funds for the miners.” The ILWU will cover all expenses for bringing the strikers up north, Loera added.

In January, the Utah miners went on a labor tour of the San Francisco Bay Area, organized by the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (AFL-CIO) in San Jose. During that tour, they addressed many union bodies, including executive board and membership meetings of ILWU Local 10. That local responded enthusiastically to an invitation by the miners to come to Utah for a solidarity rally and expanded picket line the next month. The longshoremen flew their entire 17-member drill team into Utah to join the picket line.

“It was important for the longshoremen from San Francisco to be here with us when the bosses drove by and see that we are not alone,” said Juan Salazar, a leader of the Co-Op strike who visited California. “Now this invitation to Washington and Oregon is an opportunity to spread the word about our struggle to another part of the United States.”

Two striking miners will speak before ILWU locals in the Seattle and Portland areas. “We need more trips like this one for more economic and moral support,” added Salazar.

The 75 coal miners here have been on strike for more than seven months. They were fired Sept. 22, 2003, for demanding safe working conditions and representation by the UMWA, and protesting the victimization of union militants by the bosses.

Since the walkout began, the miners have traveled to several states to spread the word about their struggle and expand support—including Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Wyoming. They have also received letters of support and funds from unions in many other states as well as New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and other countries.

The strikers recently spoke before UMWA local meetings in Utah and Colorado and have been invited to speak at the next meeting of the UMWA local at the Deer Creek mine—one of the two union-organized coal mines in Utah. UMWA Local 9959, which represents about 50 workers at the landfill in the town of East Carbon also decided to organize a barbeque for strikers at their picket line in early June.

The growing support for the struggle has helped striking miners push back attempts by the Kingstons, the Co-Op owners, to weaken the walkout.

On April 13, a delegation of Co-Op strikers, UMWA officials, and UMWA retirees forced the Utah Department of Transportation and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to back off from their collusion with the Kingstons in an attempt to remove the strikers’ picket trailer. Prior to this visit, the state officials told strikers they had received some 40 phone calls, including from out of state, protesting their decision to ban the miners’ picket trailer.

Before the BLM decided to renew the strikers’ permit for the trailer and picket shack, the Co-Op owners had told the 20 or so scabs working in the mine that the picket line was about to come down.

The determination of the miners and the expanding support for their cause in the labor movement, have caused some layers of the ruling class in Utah to show signs of embarrassment at the refusal of one of their own—the Kingston family—to consider any kind of compromise.

“It’s time that state and federal agencies responsible for mine safety and workers rights get to the bottom of allegations that the Co-Op Mine in Huntington exploits workers and is unsafe,” said an editorial in the May 8 *Deseret News*, one of the two main dailies in Utah.

Titled, “Resolve Co-Op mine dispute,” the editorial was published by one of Utah’s most influential newspapers, which has close ties to the Mormon Church. “The dispute over working conditions and the mine managers’ refusal to meet with workers who want to align themselves with the United Mine Workers of America is at a tense stalemate,” the editorial continued. “Striking workers, most of them Mexican nationals, have conducted a round-the-clock picket line at the mine entrance since they were fired seven months ago for what John Kingston terms an ‘illegal walkout.’”

The Kingstons are a multi-millionaire family with businesses in six western states. In addition to their notoriety for super-exploiting their employees, prominent members of this polygamous Mormon

clan have been convicted on charges of physical abuse of young women in the family who have tried to escape from forced marriages with relatives.

The *Deseret News* editorial addressed the glaring issue of government agencies—which are supposed to rule on the dispute—dragging their feet in responding to union charges of company violations of the law. The UMWA filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) last September against the Co-Op mine owners for illegally firing the miners for union activity, forcing workers to join a company union, and refusing to reinstate the workers with back pay.

Meanwhile, the federal agency in charge of monitoring and enforcing safety at the mines, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), has been conducting an investigation of the Co-Op mine for its lack of proper training procedures since last October. Although the MSHA has issued citations against the mine owners, the striking miners said they are getting reports from inside the mine that working conditions continue to be unsafe. The scabs, many of whom are relatives of the mine owners, don’t get



Militant/Guillermo Esquivel

Co-Op miners and a supporter at UMWA Local 1984 union hall in Rangely, Colorado, after speaking May 2 to fellow unionists there. From left, Ana María Sánchez, Zamaria Salazar, Jesús Salazar, and Alyson Kennedy.

proper training, strikers said.

For more information on the strike or to make a donation write to: UMWA District 22, 525 East 100 South, Price, Utah 84501. Checks should be earmarked “Co-Op Miners Fund.”

Bay Area truckers strike, win rate increases

BY MARK GILSDORF
AND LAURA ANDERSON

SAN FRANCISCO—Truck drivers in Oakland, California, have returned to work for 30 days, following the conclusion of an agreement with the 40–45 trucking firms that service the Port of Oakland. The port bosses had also threatened to call for the arrest of the truckers if they continued the shutdown. “Independent truck owners/operators and trucking companies...will spend the next 30 days with a focus on addressing the concerns raised and negotiating contracts,” said Tay Yoshitani, the Port of Oakland executive director.

“I’d say about 98 percent of the companies we spoke with agreed to a rate increase—no one said less than 20 percent,” said Irviner Dhanda, a driver who represents many of the owner-operators who have been protesting rising diesel fuel costs at the Oakland port.

Delph Jean, a driver who speaks on behalf of other truckers in Oakland, agreed that most truckers had returned to the road. He told Channel 4 news that truckers are still boycotting four trucking companies that are refusing to increase fuel surcharges to help truckers deal with the rapidly rising price of diesel fuel.

The rate hikes are being negotiated from company to company, with some of them going into effect immediately.

Beginning April 30, truck drivers in Oakland joined freight haulers along California’s coast in a series of strikes and protests aimed at winning a 30 percent increase in the rate they are paid for hauling containers and a fuel surcharge from the trucking companies to make up for skyrocketing fuel prices.

The impact of the strike was beginning to be felt throughout the Bay Area. The NUMMI automobile plant, a Fremont-based joint venture between General Motors and Toyota, said it has been monitoring the situation “hour by hour” during the strike saying that it could potentially halt its manufacturing line. The plant receives 92 containers a day from the port in Oakland. The deliveries are part of NUMMI’s “just-in-time inventory,” in which the car parts move straight from the containers to the assembly line.

John Bromley, a spokesman for the Union Pacific railroad, reported that by May 5 the company’s operations at the port had been closed for two days due to the back-up in cargo. “There’s no traffic in or out,” said Bromley.

Port spokeswoman Marilyn Sandifur estimated that only about 25 percent of the trucks that normally operate out of the Oakland port were running at the height of the protest. The Port of Oakland is the fourth-busiest port in the United States.

On May 4 port officials stepped in and

convened a meeting of the truckers, shippers, and brokers to hammer out an accord that would end the shutdown. Dhanda told KRON Channel 4 News that the agreement reached at that meeting was a step in the right direction. He added that most truckers had decided not to return to work until another meeting could be held on May 6.

At the second meeting the truck drivers rejected the proposed settlement, saying it did not meet their demands. When they resumed their pickets the following day the trucking firms and port officials went to court to try to force them back.

On May 7 the Port of Oakland got a temporary restraining order against the truckers barring them from gathering in front of the trucking terminals in protest. The court order followed a meeting the previous evening between the trucking firms and the drivers where the truckers agreed to return to work in return for the establishment of a committee to address the truckers’ concerns. The committee will meet four times a year to field complaints about pay rates, fuel surcharges, and working conditions.

The panel will include independent truckers, trucking company representatives, port officials, brokers, shipping companies, terminal operators and railroad representatives.

As of May 10, most of the 300 truckers in Oakland had returned to work.

Diesel fuel prices have risen sharply in May and were the spark that caused the shutdown by the truckers. In Modesto, just outside of Oakland, diesel fuel prices have soared by 28 percent in the last year, according to a pricing survey by AAA, climbing to \$2.36 a gallon.

Most truck drivers own their own rigs and pay for all of the maintenance, fuel costs, insurance, and other expenses related to trucking. They receive between \$50 and \$200 per container pulled, depending on where they are taking the load. Factoring in the above expenses, drivers’ wages work out to be about \$8 to \$9 an hour.

Although the Oakland drivers are not organized into a union, they have received the backing of the Teamsters union. Chuck Mack, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 70 in Oakland and director of the Teamsters Port Division, presented a resolution May 4 to the Port of Oakland backing the drivers. The resolution demanded a fair fuel surcharge and the establishment of a registry of trucking companies. “These workers are the most exploited group of truck drivers in the country,” said Mack. The registry would allow drivers to verify whether the steamship lines and motor carriers are truly passing along the fuel surcharge.

Health-care strike ends in British Columbia

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN
AND STEVE PENNER

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—The provincial government and the B.C. Federation of Labor announced an agreement just before midnight May 2 to end the weeklong strike by 43,000 health-care workers here. Officials of the Hospital Employees Union (HEU) and the labor federation immediately called off province-wide solidarity strike actions planned the next day that were expected to draw tens of thousands of workers.

Earlier that day a judge from the provinces’ supreme court ruled that the strikers were in contempt of court and ordered them back to work for continuing to maintain picket lines in defiance of Bill 37, passed on April 29 by the Liberal party government. The anti-union legislation ordered the strikers back to work, imposed a 15 percent wage rollback retroactive to April 1, and gave the government unlimited powers to fire health-care workers and contract out their jobs.

On April 25 hospital workers went on strike at 320 hospitals and health-care

facilities across British Columbia to fight the contracting out of worker’s jobs to low-wage, nonunion companies and the government’s attempt to impose other concessions. Since January 2002, 6,000 union health-care workers have been fired as a result of contracting out.

Solidarity from other unions began to grow as the hospital workers continued to defy the government’s anti-strike law. Many hospital workers and their supporters saw the government assault as an attack on all unions, on health care, and on the gains women workers had won through past union battles. The large majority of the HEU members are women. In 1992 the HEU went on strike and won pay equity measures for women that strengthened the union.

A massive display of support for the health-care workers had been expected in the May 3 solidarity actions. The B.C. Teachers Federation and school maintenance staff had announced they would be shutting down the provincial school system. According to the *Globe And Mail*, “Trains,

transit services and ferries were expected to be stopped. Mill workers, steel workers and forest workers said they would walk off their jobs in support of health-care workers.”

In the days leading up to May 3 thousands of other workers walked off the job for a day to demonstrate their support, including B.C. rail workers, Hydro workers, school maintenance and municipal workers, woodworkers at several mills, and dam workers.

Under the agreement, hospitals can contract out 600 union jobs in the next two years, in addition to the 1,300 workers who have already been given layoff notices. The pact includes a \$25 million severance package.

The wage cut mandated by Bill 37 will be reduced from 15 percent to 14 percent and will come into effect May 1 instead of April 1. The workweek will be increased to 37 ½ hours from 36 hours, with no increase in pay.

Chris Hoeppe in Seattle and Tony DiFelice in Vancouver contributed to this article.

Double victory for ‘Militant’ supporters in sales, fund drives

BY PAUL PEDERSON

“We welcome the more than 2,000 subscribers who signed up to get the *Militant* and the 500 who subscribed to *Perspectiva Mundial* the last two months,” said *Militant* editor Argiris Malapanis, as this issue went to press. “We also thank all the readers and many other working people who contributed generously at the same time to make sure we went well over the goal of the *Militant* fund drive.”

Partisans of the socialist publications are celebrating and planning to build on the double victory in the circulation and fund campaigns, which ran together from March 20 to May 17. A total of 2,131 people subscribed to the *Militant* and 527 to its sister publication in Spanish, *Perspectiva Mundial*. This means 131 subscribers over the top on the *Militant* goal and 73 subscriptions short on *PM*.

Workers, farmers, and others also contributed \$95,000 to finance the production and circulation of the socialist publications—\$10,000 over the international goal.

At the start of the drive, the *Militant* editors announced that the introductory subscription rate, formerly \$10 for 12 weeks, would be cut in half to take advantage of increased interest and qualitatively increase the paper’s readership. The \$5 rate was at that point 16 cents below the cost of printing and shipping, requiring a higher subsidy—one of

the reasons for the fund.

But the jump in the number of subscribers has meant a reduction in mailing and printing costs per issue for subscriptions that go out in U.S. second-class mail. “At the beginning of the drive we had under 1,000 subscribers in the U.S.,” reported Michael Italie, the *Militant’s* business manager. “By the end, the total subscriptions have reached over 2,200. The larger number of subscribers pushed us into a lower mailing rate with the Post Office. Printing and mailing costs for an introductory subscription have now dropped to \$4.57.”

“One cost that has gone up is bundle shipping,” Italie noted. “That’s a good problem to have. At the new rate of a buck a copy, we’re selling a lot more single issues. So the bundles to distributors have gotten larger.” The *Militant* reduced its cover price to \$1 from \$1.50 in March.



Militant/Nicole Sarmiento

***Militant* supporter in Venezuela (left) talks to participants in May 16 march to protest U.S.-backed campaign to topple elected government (see front page article).**

A highlight of the sub campaign was higher sales to members of industrial unions and other workers in industries where attacks by the bosses have generated labor resistance and militancy.

Socialist workers in slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants across the United States, for example, set a goal of winning 233 packinghouse workers to subscribe

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Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Spring Subscription Drive March 20–May 17: Final results					
Country	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold
NEW ZEALAND					
Auckland	32	40	125%	1	0
Christchurch	26	30	115%	1	0
N.Z. total	58	70	121%	2	0
UNITED KINGDOM					
London	50	62	124%	10	5
Edinburgh	20	21	105%	0	0
UK total	70	83	119%	10	5
AUSTRALIA	45	50	111%	7	8
UNITED STATES					
Birmingham	30	38	127%	8	9
Craig, CO	30	36	120%	15	15
Pittsburgh	50	58	116%	3	3
Washington	85	98	115%	20	21
Chicago	100	110	110%	35	39
Philadelphia	70	77	110%	10	4
Cleveland	30	32	107%	8	5
NE Pennsylvania	45	48	107%	10	8
Tampa	30	32	107%	10	8
Des Moines	50	53	106%	25	25
New York	200	212	106%	60	66
Newark	125	132	106%	35	33
Atlanta	55	58	105%	20	17
Price, UT	40	42	105%	15	17
Omaha	70	75	104%	40	43
Miami	95	97	102%	18	12
Detroit	50	51	102%	8	8
Houston	65	66	102%	15	16
San Francisco	120	121	101%	40	28
Boston	85	85	100%	50	33
Twin Cities	75	75	100%	35	21
Los Angeles	135	132	98%	50	43
Seattle	60	40	67%	10	4
U.S. total	1695	1766	104%	540	477
CANADA					
Montreal	35	38	109%	15	15
Toronto	75	74	99%	15	14
CANADA total	110	112	102%	30	29
ICELAND	18	18	100%	1	0
SWEDEN					
Göteborg	22	22	100%	4	4
Stockholm	15	11	73%	6	4
SWEDEN Total	37	33	89%	10	8
Int'l totals	2033	2132	107%	600	527
Goal/Should be	2000	2000	100%	600	600
IN THE UNIONS					
Country	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold
AUSTRALIA					
AMIEU	10	11	110%		
UNITED STATES					
UFCW	110	112	100%	123	132
UMWA	50	38	76%	12	10
UNITE	50	37	74%	40	38
Total	210	185	88%	175	180
SWEDEN					
Livs	2	1	50%	1	0
NEW ZEALAND					
NDU	2	1	50%	1	0
MWU	2	0	0%		
Total	4	1	25%	1	0
CANADA					
UFCW	13	5	38%	5	2
UNITE	9	0	0%	5	5
Total	22	5	23%	10	7

AMIEU—Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union; LIVS—Food Workers Union; MWU—Meat Workers Union; NDU—National Distribution Union; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA—United Mine Workers of America.

Emmett Till lynching case is reopened

Continued from front page

evidence that could lead to additional prosecutions in one of the most well known cases of racist brutality that helped spark the civil rights movement.

On Aug. 24, 1955, Till and some young friends went to a store for snacks in the rural town of Money. According to Till’s cousin, Emmett whistled at a young white woman behind the counter, Carolyn Bryant, who ran the store with her husband Roy Bryant.

Four days later, Roy Bryant and his brother, J.W. Milam, went to the home where Till was staying and took him away at gunpoint. They threatened to kill anyone in the house if they talked about it. The two whipped Till with .45 caliber pistols, shot him in the head, tied a 75-pound fan around his neck with barbed wire, and threw his body into the Tallahatchie River. Bryant and Milam were arrested and tried for the murder but were acquitted by an all-white, all-male jury.

Filmmaker Keith Beauchamp told the Associated Press that he gave federal investigators 100 hours of footage he collected during the nine years he worked on his documentary, “The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till.” Beauchamp said he interviewed everyone who was at the store when Till was there and all those who were in the house from which he was subsequently abducted.

The filmmaker said he believes that others were involved in the murder and that at least one could face charges. “I can honestly tell you at least one is still alive, and I can confidently tell you there can be a prosecution,” Beauchamp said.

Beauchamp has been showing his 90-minute work-in-progress widely since 2002, including to audiences at the United Nations and National Press Club. He said he showed it to the Mississippi District Attorney and the U.S. Attorney for the state’s northern district in an effort to get the case reopened.

Alexander Acosta, U.S. Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, said that renewed interest in the matter suggested the possibility that others were involved in the murder. The statement said that despite the expiration of a five-year federal statute of limitations then in existence, prosecutions could be carried forward by state courts in Mississippi.

Last year NAACP president Kweisi Mfume wrote Mississippi Attorney General Michael Moore urging him to reopen the case. In response to the decision to do so, Mfume said in a May 10 statement, “I am glad the case is being reopened, but it is sad that it has taken so long.”

Till’s killers were acquitted even though they admitted to the murder and described it in detail in an interview with William Bradford Huie published in the Jan. 24, 1956, issue of *Look* magazine. “We were never able to scare him,” the killers said of Till. He would not back down and told them, “You bastards, I’m not afraid of you. I’m as good as you are.” Milam, who pulled the trigger, said, “Well, what else could we do? He was hopeless.”

When Till’s body was returned to Chicago for burial, his mother, Mamie Till, made the courageous decision to have an open casket funeral. The coffin had been returned nailed shut and she was instructed not to open it. But she told the funeral home, “Let the people see what I’ve seen.” More than 50,000 people viewed the horribly disfigured body. They witnessed a graphic example of the naked brutality of the Jim Crow South.

Black anger at Till’s death would soon explode across the southern United States in the form of the civil rights revolution that over a 15-year period would break the back of segregationist rule and irreversibly strengthen the possibilities of working-class unity.

During the trial, the sheriff, a local plantation owner,

jailed and threatened potential prosecution witnesses. Two such witnesses had to be smuggled out of Mississippi because of threats to kill them. Till’s mother, Rep. Charles Diggs from Detroit—one of the few Black congressmen—and Black observers, photographers, and journalists were forced to sit at a card table in the corner of the courtroom.

“Hello niggers,” was how the sheriff greeted them daily as he passed their table. The all-white jury took just one hour to acquit Till’s killers.

Mamie Till and thousands of others wrote President Dwight Eisenhower requesting federal action, but the White House never even acknowledged the request. Mamie Till died Jan. 6, 2003. Though she was suffering from kidney failure, she continued speaking around the country about the lynching of her son, right until the end. “People have told me to let this thing die,” she once said. “But people need to be aware.”

\$85,000 Militant/PM Fund March 20—May 17: Final results			
	Goal	Paid	%
SWEDEN	500	650	130%
AUSTRALIA	1,500	1,806	120%
NEW ZEALAND	1,600	1,726	108%
UNITED STATES			
Price	1,500	1,860	124%
Northeast PA	1,600	1,950	122%
Twin Cities	4,000	4,570	114%
Tampa	1,300	1,470	113%
Los Angeles	8,000	9,005	113%
Des Moines	1,100	1,214	110%
Houston	3,500	3,760	107%
Newark	3,500	3,752	107%
Seattle	6,000	6,360	106%
Birmingham	2,000	2,095	105%
San Francisco	8,500	8,851	104%
Miami	1,700	1,770	104%
New York	11,000	11,405	104%
Washington D.C.	2,800	2,849	102%
Boston	3,000	3,050	102%
Atlanta	5,000	5,005	100%
Omaha	440	412	94%
Philadelphia	3,300	2,857	87%
Cleveland	1,200	1,005	84%
Pittsburgh	3,800	3,182	84%
Detroit	3,000	2,500	83%
Craig	2,000	1,550	78%
Chicago	5,000	3,835	77%
U.S. Total	83,240	84,307	101%
ICELAND	200	200	100%
UK	1,000	800	80%
CANADA	5,000	3,864	77%
BELGIUM		775	
Other		1,110	
Int'l Total	93,815	95,238	112%
Goal/Should be	85,000	85,000	100%

Abuse of prisoners

Continued from front page

ers—along with other atrocities against the civilian population of occupied nations—has been inherent in the conduct of imperialist armies in every war carried out by Washington and other imperialist powers. During most of these wars in the past century, moreover, the Democrats were running the White House and liberals were in charge of the Department of Defense and the Pentagon. That was the case with Harry Truman, for example, who was president during most of the 1950-53 Korean War and with John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson who occupied the Oval Office from 1960 to 1968—during most of the U.S. war against Vietnam.

Tiger Force, ‘tiger cages’

In April, *Toledo Blade* journalists won the Pulitzer prize for investigative reporting for a series they did exposing the horror committed by an elite U.S. Army unit 35 years ago in Vietnam. The 45-member volunteer unit, known as the “Tiger Force,” was part of the 101st Airborne Division. The reporters scoured military documents and interviewed 43 surviving members of the unit. They traveled to Vietnam to interview survivors of the attack and their family members. The series documented the atrocities committed by the unit, which included torture of prisoners, rape of civilian women, mutilations of bodies, and the murder of at least nine and possibly well over 100 civilians.

A four-and-a-half-year investigation by the army concluded that 18 soldiers from the unit had committed crimes ranging from murder and assault to derelictions of duty. The cases never reached a military court, however, and no one was ever charged. Six soldiers were allowed to resign from the army during its investigation specifically to avoid prosecution.

Equally notorious in Vietnam was the U.S. 172nd Military Intelligence unit. According to formerly classified army documents, reported the *Blade*, a military investigation disclosed that from March 1968—when Johnson was president—through October 1969, “Vietnamese [civilian] detainees were subjected to maltreatment” by no fewer than 21 separate interrogators of the 172nd Military Intelligence Detachment.

Unit members not only beat prisoners and civilian detainees but also employed a variety of brutal methods, including a particular torture called the “Bell Telephone Hour.” This involved using a hand-cranked military field telephone to generate electrical shocks through wires attached to hands, feet, nipples, and genitals. Another method involved forcing water down a person’s throat until he or she passes out or drowns. U.S. troops who fought in the occupation of the Philippines in the early 20th century also used this method, which they dubbed the “water cure.”

The U.S. military and the CIA also helped set up and maintain the infamous “tiger cages” at the Con Son island prison in the South China Sea. On that island, the South Vietnamese U.S.-puppet regime had its largest jail for non-combatants, about 9,600 prisoners, with no legal rights. The cages were built by RMK-BRJ, a Texas military contractor.

Tiger cages were dank concrete pits—four feet wide, nine feet long, and six feet deep. Each held three to five prisoners. Steel grates covered the top of each pit. Prisoners were shackled to the concrete floor. Their guards often beat them without mercy. Above each tiger cage was a bucket of lime. Wardens would throw down clouds of it onto the chained prisoners as a form of “sanitary torture.” After months of internment, prisoners would lose the use of their legs or develop tuberculosis, gangrenous feet, and life-threatening dysentery.

Throughout most of the war, U.S. officials claimed the cages did not exist. Frank Walton, director of the U.S. Public Safety

Program in Vietnam, said about the Con Son prison, “This place is more like a Boy Scout recreational camp.”

The cages came to light in 1970—during Richard Nixon’s presidency—after Vietnamese students who had been brutally tortured after being tried and convicted by a U.S.-run military court, put themselves on display in a room in the Saigon College of Agriculture, prompting an investigation into the conditions of prisoners in Vietnam and subsequent reports in the U.S. and other media.

Military intelligence in Vietnam also used as a common method of interrogation taking prisoners on a helicopter, tying their hands with wire attached to the craft, and pushing them out the open door if they refused to talk.

My Lai massacre

On the morning of March 16, 1968—again during Johnson’s presidency—Charlie Company, a unit of the Americal Division’s 11th Infantry Brigade, killed more than 500 Vietnamese civilians in cold blood in the village of My Lai. Villagers were ordered out of their homes, which were dynamited if made of stone and burned if made of wood. This was standard operating procedure for “search and destroy” missions by U.S. troops during the Vietnam War.

According to the media and historical accounts of the attack, troops began to gun down groups of villagers without provocation. When one soldier refused to shoot a group of 60 villagers, the unit’s commanding officer, Lt. William Calley, carried out the killing himself with a burst of gunfire from close range. Women in the village were gang raped. Other men and women were beaten, clubbed with rifle butts, and stabbed with bayonets. Some were mutilated with the signature “C Company” carved into their chests. Only 132 of the 799 men, women, and children in the village survived. Many did so by lying underneath the dead bodies of their relatives and neighbors until their murderers left.

The unit’s orders were to search for and engage the 48th battalion of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front. They never found the battalion, and the U.S. soldiers were never fired upon.

The story of the massacre would not come to light for another year. One of the reasons was that indiscriminate killing of non-combatants was not uncommon in Vietnam, especially by U.S. air strikes. In fact, officers and troops involved in the massacre tried to cover it up by reporting that only 20 to 28 villagers had been killed by gunship and artillery fire.

As in the case of Abu Ghraib, the killings at My Lai were revealed by a soldier.



Aftermath of massacre of 100 Chinese and Korean prisoners of war by U.S. troops on Kojedo Island, Korea, June 16, 1952.

In the case of My Lai it was Ronald Ridenhour, who also had the ambition of becoming a journalist. Ridenhour first became aware of the massacre after listening to a member of Charlie Company bragging about the killings after a few beers. For his remaining eight months in Vietnam, Ridenhour spent his spare moments gathering and sifting through accounts of the killing. When he returned to the United States in early 1969, he sent a substantial dossier and summary of the event to the White House, secretary of defense, and a number of senators. He received one visit



Vietnamese liberation fighters held in U.S. “tiger cage” in South Vietnam, 1970.

from an army investigator.

In September of that year, the army announced, as quietly as possible, through the command at Fort Benning, Georgia, that an officer had been charged with the murder and deaths of an unspecified number of civilians in Vietnam in 1968. Seymour Hersh resurrected Ridenhour’s dossier and summary. He found three GIs who witnessed the killings at My Lai and arranged for one of them to appear on television. The story could no longer be ignored.

The army established two commissions that questioned more than 400 witnesses, resulting in 20,000 pages of testimony. One of the official reports concluded that at least two high-ranking officers knew of the massacre and did nothing about it. The commission recommended charges be brought against 28 officers. Army prosecutors decided to bring charges against just 14 of them. Only one was ever brought to trial, and he was acquitted.

Another 30 soldiers were charged for their role in the massacre. Among them, charges were dropped against 17 who had already left the army. Charges against the remaining 13 were either dismissed or they were found “not guilty.”

Lieutenant Calley was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor. Three days after sentencing he was released, pending appeal, on the orders of President Nixon. Calley spent three years under house arrest at Fort Benning. In 1974 he was freed on bail and his sentence was reduced to 10 years. Later that year he was paroled after completing one-third of his sentence.

‘Oriental cattle’ in Korean War

During the 1950–53 Korean War—fought under the presidency of Truman and under the banner of the United Nations—thousands of U.S. troops occupied Sinchon County, now located in what is today north Korea, for 52 days. A museum in the city now contains dozens of photographs and artifacts documenting the roundups and executions of Korean patriots and indiscriminate killings of men, women, and children.

One historical site marks mass graves where the slaughtered were buried. Ri Song Jin, a witness to the massacre in the city, told reporters for the *Militant* visiting the country in 2002 that the imperialist forces tortured many Korean patriots in the basement of the Sinchon church.

In August 1952 Maj. Dawney Bancroft, a young British officer who commanded a unit sent to the island of Kojedo to run a prison camp where 3,200 North Korean officers were held, wrote a scathing report about the treatment of north

Korean prisoners held by U.S. troops. His report accused U.S. troops of “ill-discipline, abuse and breaking the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners.” He wrote that early in his command he had to intervene to stop the mistreatment of a sick prisoner by a U.S. soldier who had been assigned to take the prisoner to a hospital.

He also described the killing of 100 prisoners in clashes by U.S. troops attempting to clear a camp. “It became evident,” he wrote, “that the U.S. officers and soldiers responsible thought the Chinese and Korean POW (prisoners of war) were Oriental cattle who

were to be given quite different treatment to a European.”

French record in Algeria

These are only a few of the examples of U.S. imperialism’s unbroken record of brutality and abuse of prisoners at times of war. All other imperialist powers, however, including those that have recently criticized Washington about the war in Iraq, have similar if not worse records. One of the outstanding examples is the record of French colonialism in Algeria.

The BBC reported that a French court convicted a former French general who served during the war against Algerian independence with trying to justify the use of torture. The Algerian war for independence from France lasted from 1954 to 1962 and resulted in an estimated 1 million deaths.

In May 2001, 83-year-old Paul Aussaresses published memoirs in which he calmly described the torture and murder of two dozen Algerian prisoners of war. Aussaresses, reportedly, could not be tried for torture because of the terms of the treaty ending the war. Following his conviction the general was unrepentant saying that torture does serve a purpose and that he would do it all over again—especially if he had Osama Bin Laden in his hands today.

Aussaresses wrote that his actions were known to top government officials including François Mitterrand who was then justice minister. Mitterrand, a leader of the French Socialist Party, would go on to become president of France.

Of those brought to Tourelles (a torture center run by the French army’s intelligence service), Aussaresses wrote, “there was no way we were going to release them alive. On busy days, when all the regiments were overwhelmed with prisoners, they would send me everybody they had no time to interrogate. At Tourelles, as at regimental headquarters, torture was always used if a prisoner refused to talk.... When the suspects had talked and seemed to have nothing more to say...my men would take a batch of them out in the bush, 20 kilometers or so from Algiers, shoot them down with a machine-gun burst, then bury them.”

Regimental headquarters also sent the general prisoners they had already interrogated and were deemed to have no further useful information. “Nobody ever asked me what I planned to do with these people,” Aussaresses wrote. “Long story short: when the army wanted to get rid of somebody, he would end up at Tourelles.”

Notebook of an Agitator

“The most dangerous animal on earth is the man who has nothing to lose and everything to gain...From such a conviction comes the fanatical courage of the Kojedo prisoners—you can even call it heroism and you won’t go wrong—to face all the military power of America unarmed and defiant.”—James P. Cannon on the Kojedo Island massacre in Korea 1952. \$21.95



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What was behind '71 Attica prison revolt?

The following article, “The Attica Rebellion,” by Derrick Morrison, a staff writer for the *Militant* in the early 1970s, was written at the time of the events described below. Morrison was a reporter for the *Militant* in Attica, New York, during the prison revolt. We are publishing this article because it graphically depicts conditions that have been, and remain today, prevalent throughout the U.S. prison system. Interest in this question is now wider as a result of the revelations of the systematic humiliation of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. military and intelligence officers in U.S.-run jails in Iraq, which mirror U.S. prisons. The article below, dated Nov. 14, 1971, was compiled from reports published in the *Militant*. It appeared in the Pathfinder Press pamphlet *Attica: Why Prisoners Are Rebelling*, which is now out of print. It is copyright © Pathfinder Press 1972 and is reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY DERRICK MORRISON

“Officials of Attica state prison knew that real trouble was brewing on the morning of Aug. 22, [1971] just a few days after the killing at San Quentin of Black Panther George Jackson and just a few short weeks before the rebellion at Attica itself.

“The prisoners arrived at the mess hall at the usual time that day, about quarter past seven. But there was a huge difference, as Correction Officer Sgt. Jack English recalls: ‘It was the weirdest thing. They all walked in as usual, divided into two lines and walked through the serving area. But nobody picked up a tray or a spoon, and nobody took any food. They just walked through the line and went to their seats and they sat down. They looked straight ahead and nobody made a sound. You could have heard your wrist-watch ticking. It was eerie.

“Then we noticed that almost all had some black on them. Some had black cloth armbands, some had black shoelaces tied around their arms, others had little pieces of black cloth or paper pinned on them.

“It scared us because a thing like that takes a lot of organization, a lot of solidarity, and we had no idea they were so well organized.”

This guard’s statement, quoted in the October 5, 1971, New York *Daily News*, gives us an incisive glimpse of the forces that were to erupt into open view in the Attica prison rebellion on September 9.

Close to 1,500 inmates participated in the September events. They seized one of the four cellblocks and its adjoining yard and took forty-odd guards and civilian workers as hostages. About 85 percent of the rebels were Black and Puerto Rican.

The inmates set up an executive council. Among its members were Brothers Richard Clark, Herbert X. Blyden, Charles “Flip” Crowley, Roger Champen, Elliot Barkley (also known as “L. D.”), and Jerry Rosenberg. The council, with the consent of all the inmates, elaborated a list of thirty demands for changing the conditions inside the prison.

The rebellion lasted until the morning of September 13, when a thousand-man assault force composed of state troopers, prison guards, and National Guardsmen burst into the prison area held by the inmates. Firing indiscriminately, the assault force murdered twenty-nine inmates and nine guard hostages—according to official figures—and wounded over 300 other inmates.

Chain of events that led to the revolt

The chain of events leading to September 9 began in early July when a group known as the Attica Liberation Faction sent an eight-page manifesto to the new state corrections commissioner, Russell G. Oswald.

Oswald styles himself a liberal. After being appointed to his position on January 1, 1971, he repeatedly talked about the need for prison reform. What prompted the manifesto was a directive by Oswald allowing the inmates to send confidential letters to prison authorities, elected officials, or their attorneys without being subject to any reprisals.

The manifesto was mild in tone: “These demands are being presented to you. There is no strike of any kind to protest these demands. We are trying to do this in a democratic fashion. We feel there is no need to dramatize our demands.” Yet Oswald was unresponsive.

Later, in August, when a reporter who had gained entrance to the prison asked Oswald about the manifesto he was told it was under study. The reporter, Richard J. Roth of the Buffalo *Courier-Express*, said at the time that the inmates he talked with felt shortchanged and slighted by Oswald. They felt that his performance hadn’t matched his rhetoric.

Justice of prisoners’ demands

The demands submitted by the inmates during the September rebellion were essentially the same as those that had been drawn up in July. The inmates wanted to be allowed more than one shower a week. They asked that the bugs be washed off the lettuce and flies be kept off the food. Since many of them were Muslims, they demanded that less pork or no pork at all be served. Because of the suppression of the Islamic faith, they wanted freedom of religion.

Inmates were being paid slave wages of 25 cents to \$1 a day. They demanded that all work done in the prison come under the New York State minimum wage law. To allow for ongoing discussion of grievances with prison authorities, they called for the organization of an inmate council. As a step toward humanizing the prison, the inmates wanted the guards to cease banging and clanging on the steel bars with pieces of wood, which the guards dubbed “nigger sticks.” Such was the language employed by an all-white guard force in a prison of close to 2,300, of which—according to the State Corrections Department—54.9 percent were Black and 6.9 percent were Puerto Rican.

These demands were obviously reasonable. But it was only after the San Quentin assassination of George Jackson and the demonstration of inmate solidarity at the August 22 breakfast that Oswald decided to come to Attica. In a tape-recorded broadcast on September 3, he demanded for himself that which the inmates had already had enough of—time.

The inmates sensed that if the impetus for prison reform was not going to come from the top, if the “prison reformers” could not even respond to the submission of a concrete set of demands, then some action had to be taken by those on the bottom.

A spark was all that was needed

Given the charged atmosphere, a spark was all that was needed to set off the conflagration. This was provided by a routine case of guard brutality on Wednesday night, September 8. The news circulated, and on the very next day the whole country heard about Attica. It was to become the most important prison revolt in the history of the United States.

Oswald and the authorities had no sense of the determination of the prisoners. They thought that after a sufficient amount of “talk” and “reasoning together” the inmates would go meekly back to their cells and release the forty-odd hostages they had taken. However, this turned out not to be the case.

The inmates demanded complete amnesty, convocation of a group of prominent individuals to serve as a committee of observers, and the entry of the press to relay their demands for prison reform to the public. Among the individuals they listed to form the observer committee were William Kunstler, the civil liberties lawyer; Huey P. Newton of the Black Panther Party; Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Harlem Muslim Mosque; Tom Wicker, an associate editor of the *New York Times*; and Jim Ingram, a columnist for the *Michigan Chronicle*, a Black weekly published in Detroit.

Two people to whom Oswald had to give recognition during the first stages of negotiation with the inmates were Herman Schwartz, a professor at the law school of the University of Buffalo and persistent crit-



Prisoners at Attica give Black Power salute Sept. 10, 1971, during prison revolt assembly. In an assault three days later, National Guard and state troopers massacred dozens.

ic of the penal system, and Arthur O. Eve, a Black state assemblyman from Buffalo who had agitated for prison reform. These two helped assemble and became part of the observer committee. They also were instrumental in getting a court order early Friday morning giving amnesty to the inmates for any damage done to prison property. But the inmates tore it up because it was valid only for September 9, Thursday.

Oswald, who said he could agree with twenty-eight of the inmates’ thirty demands, declared unacceptable the demands for amnesty and for the removal of the prison warden, Vincent Mancusi. The amnesty demand became crucial. Many of the inmates had taken part in rebellions in other prisons of the state or in the New York City jails, and they knew that heavy reprisals followed every one of these actions. So they stood fast for complete amnesty from any criminal prosecution.

The observer committee of about twenty people met with the inmates for the first time on Friday night, September 10. They were to meet twice more—on Saturday and Sunday—before the Monday morning massacre.

Typical of how the observers felt before and after meeting with the inmates was the reaction of William Gaiter, head of a Black organization called BUILD (Build Unity, Independence, Liberty, Dignity) in Buffalo. He told *The Militant*: “Prior to going down, we had been told by Oswald that he would not go into the yard again. I understand that he had been down a couple times Thursday, and he was quite shaken. He decided that he would not go down again. The man was just scared to death.

“But after being down in the block awhile, my apprehension and tension were relieved. I began to feel related to the people there. They made it very clear to us that they did not intend for us to negotiate their demands, but simply to relay the demands, interpret them, and to make provisions for negotiations between them and the prison authorities.”

Tom Wicker, a native of North Carolina, related his impressions in an article in the September 15 *New York Times*. “Late Sunday [September 12] afternoon...a Black prisoner seized the microphone. ‘To oppressed people all over the world,’ he shouted, ‘We got the solution! The solution is unity!’ The Black inmate’s impassioned cry also suggests several other aspects of that strange society—its strikingly effective organization, its fierce political radicalism, its submergence of racial animosity in class solidarity....”

As the rebellion persisted, Oswald’s use of the carrot began to wear thin in the eyes of state officials. So they began to make preparations for the use of the stick. It had gone on too long, and it was damaging the government’s image as many discovered for the first time the abominable reality behind the prison walls.

As Oswald prepared the assault force—in collaboration with Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who was in turn consulting with President Richard Nixon—he engaged in a game of duplicity with the observer committee, the only medium of contact the inmates had with state officials.

The brutal assault

And on Monday morning, September 13, instead of continuing promised negotiations, Oswald issued an ultimatum to the inmates,

followed up at 9:45 a.m. by the assault. Just before the invasion, two CH-34 Army helicopters lifted off the ground to drop their cargo of CS gas on the inmate-held section of the prison. This was followed by the massive, military-style assault—just as in Vietnam.

After it was all over, prison officials and police told bloodcurdling stories of how the inmates had slit the throats of the hostages and castrated some of them. Police reported they shot only those inmates who resisted.

But in a matter of twenty-four hours, what the capitalist news media had accepted and purveyed to the public as holy writ became pure bunk. Autopsies on the bodies of the dead guards showed that no throats had been slit and that nobody had been castrated. All had died of gunshot wounds, and state officials had to admit that only the assault force had had guns.

These facts prove that the police gunfire was indiscriminate, since the guards held hostage surely had no reason to offer resistance. Furthermore, since a simple examination would reveal whether genitals had been removed, the statements issued by Oswald and his subordinates were not the result of indiscretion or carelessness, but products of design and calculation.

While the state and prison officials have easy access to the press and communications media, the Attica inmates are not allowed to speak out. Information that has trickled out of the prison by way of visiting relatives and lawyers suggests a reign of terror prevailing at Attica after the rebellion. Inmates’ glasses, legal papers, and other personal possessions were smashed and destroyed by rampaging state police and guards. This destruction was not just visited upon the rebelling inmates but upon the total prison population.

Lawyers from the Legal Aid Society and American Civil Liberties Union who were allowed into the prison reported and documented cases of brutality, including situations where guards resorted to torture by applying lighted cigars and cigarettes to the bodies of the inmates.

Accompanying this sadism were round-the-clock interrogations by a state investigating committee. This committee, headed by Deputy State Attorney General Robert E. Fischer, can in theory indict either inmates or police. But in all likelihood, the inmates will bear the brunt of any prosecution. Police officers directly involved in the assault are included on the committee, so any investigation it conducts will be a farce. The criminal cannot investigate the criminal.

Moreover, after crushing the Attica rebellion in blood, Oswald declared his previous acceptance of twenty-eight of the inmates’ demands null and void.

These are only bits and pieces of the circumstances at Attica.

As yet, no ongoing campaign—despite the rash of demonstrations and protest meetings—has been organized to defend the victims and enable them to get their side of the story out. And no independent investigating committee has yet been convened by Black and Puerto Rican community leaders to educate the masses about Attica.

Nevertheless, the Attica rebellion has left its mark—on the prison system and on the consciousness of millions of Americans. The courageous stand of the Attica inmates proves that no layer of U.S. society is too oppressed or too brutalized to assert its humanity, to fight to be treated like human beings.

Imperialism's bloody redivision of the world

Below are excerpts from *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite!* The two-volume collection of the proceedings and documents of the Second Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow in 1920, is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for May. The delegates from 37 countries who attended the congress had to risk being captured by the ring of hostile armies that were attempting to destroy the young Soviet workers' and peasants' republic.

The excerpt below is from the report titled "The World Political Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International," presented to the delegates at the congress by

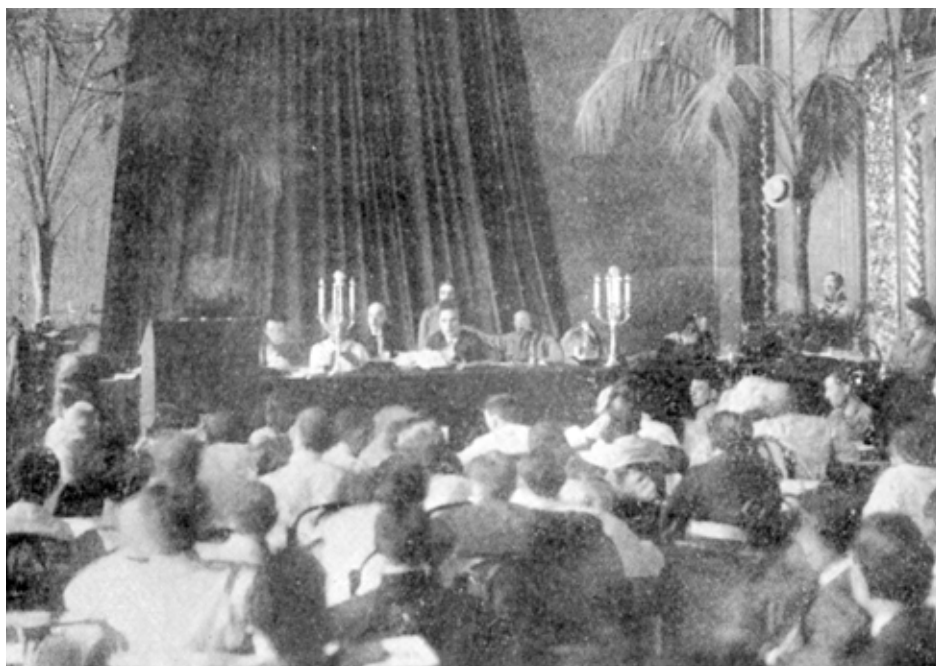
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

V. I. Lenin, the central leader of the October 1917 Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik Party. The entire report can be found in the first of the two volumes. In it, Lenin reviews the rise of imperialist monopolies out of the capitalist "free market." He explains how these monopolies and finance capital came to dominate the economies of a few developed capitalist countries, which in turn divided the world among themselves and subjected entire nations to imperialist domination as direct colonies or semicolonies. Copyright © 1991 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.



BY V.I. LENIN

Comrades, the theses on the questions



Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin addresses delegates to the Second Congress of the Communist International, held in 1920 in Moscow.

of the fundamental tasks of the Communist International have been published in all languages and contain nothing that is materially new (particularly to the Russian comrades). That is because, in a considerable measure, they extend several of the main features of our revolutionary experience and the lessons of our revolutionary movement to a number of western countries, to western Europe. My report will therefore deal at greater length, if in brief outline, with the first part of my subject, namely, the international situation.

Imperialism's economic relations constitute the core of the entire international situation as it now exists. Throughout the twentieth century, this new, highest and final stage of capitalism has fully taken shape. Of course, you all know that the enormous dimensions that capital has reached are the most characteristic and essential feature of imperialism. The place of free competition has been taken by huge monopolies. An insignificant number of capitalists have, in some cases, been able to concentrate in their hands entire branches of industry; these have passed into the hands of combines, cartels, syndicates, and trusts, not infrequently of an international nature. Thus, entire branches of industry, not only in single countries but all over the world,

have been taken over by monopolists in the field of finance, property rights, and partly of production. This has formed the basis for the unprecedented domination exercised by an insignificant number of very big banks, financial tycoons, financial magnates who have, in fact, transformed even the freest republics into financial monarchies. Before the war this was publicly recognized by such far-from-revolutionary writers as, for example, Lysis in France.

This domination by a handful of capitalists achieved full development when the whole world had been partitioned, not only in the sense that the various sources of raw materials and means of production had been seized by the biggest capitalists, but also in the sense that the preliminary partition of the colonies had been completed. Some forty years ago the population of the colonies stood at somewhat over 250 million, who were subordinated to six capitalist powers. Before the war of 1914 the population of the colonies was estimated at about 600 million, and if we add countries like Persia, Turkey, and China, which were already semicolonies, we shall get, in round figures, a population of 1 billion people oppressed through colonial dependence by the richest, most civilized, and freest countries. And you

know that, apart from direct political and juridical dependence, colonial dependence presumes a number of relations of financial and economic dependence and a number of wars, which were not regarded as wars because very often they amounted to sheer massacres, when European and American imperialist troops, armed with the most up-to-date weapons of destruction, slaughtered the unarmed and defenseless inhabitants of colonial countries.

The first imperialist war of 1914-18 was the inevitable outcome of this partition of the whole world, of this domination by the capitalist monopolies, of this great power wielded by an insignificant number of very big banks—two, three, four, or five in each country. This war was waged for the repartitioning of the whole world. It was waged in order to decide which of the small groups of the biggest states—the British or the German—was to obtain the opportunity and the right to rob, strangle, and exploit the whole world. You know that the war settled this question in favor of the British group. And, as a result of this war, all capitalist contradictions have become immeasurably more acute. At a single stroke the war relegated about 250 million of the world's inhabitants to what is equivalent to colonial status, namely Russia, whose population can be taken at about 130 million, and Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Bulgaria, with a total population of not less than 120 million. That means 250 million people living in countries, of which some, like Germany, are among the most advanced, most enlightened, most cultured, and on a level with modern technical progress. By means of the Treaty of Versailles, the war imposed such terms upon these countries that advanced peoples have been reduced to a state of colonial dependence, poverty, starvation, ruin, and loss of rights; this treaty binds them for many generations, placing them in conditions that no civilized nation has ever lived in. The following is the postwar picture of the world: At least 1.25 billion people are at once brought under the colonial yoke, exploited by a brutal capitalism, which once boasted of its love for peace and had some right to do so some fifty years ago, when the world was not partitioned, the monopolies did not as yet rule, and capitalism could still develop in a relatively peaceful way, without tremendous military conflicts.

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Sky's the limit?—Washington has long beamed false, poisonous propaganda to Cuba from a TV and radio set-up in Miami. But



Harry Ring

Cuba has successfully jammed the stream of lies. Now the White House is weighing broadcasts from military aircraft. Our inside dope says this is to ensure that the Cuban people get the facts on

U.S. torture of prisoners in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Tell it to the Cubans—With their free medical care, Cubans may be interested in free-market medical blessings. Like Davita Inc., which operates kidney dialysis centers. In the first quarter of this year Davita's profits jumped 45 percent—to \$52.9 million.

They knew what was coming?—On the eve of the media revelations of U.S. crimes against Iraqi prisoners, the editor and most of the staff resigned from the U.S.-funded Baghdad paper, *Al Sabah*. In an editorial, the staffers said they were boxed in by U.S. inter-

ference, and that the experience was a "nightmare."

Astonishing—The El Paso Corp., owner of the biggest U.S. natural gas pipeline, advised shareholders that reports on gas reserves for the past five years should not be taken as good coin. Top dogs said "employees" persistently inflated reports on reserves. They said the employees knew or "should have known," that the numbers were false. Meanwhile the innocent honchos were busy taking home their loot.

Petty larceny—Adelphia Communications is in court with former top executives charged with stealing

\$100 million and concealing \$2.8 billion in debts. One ousted vice prez, James Brown, pleaded guilty and testified that they had two sets of books. One to conceal the financial juggling, the other to secretly record the actual state of affairs.

'Blessed are the poor'—The poor are 44 percent more likely to suffer from heart failure and 25 percent less likely to see a doctor regularly, says a Glasgow, Scotland, study published in the *British Medical Journal*.

Lucky you can't afford one—Thousand of Jaguars have been recalled worldwide. Several have turned up with a faulty gearbox

that, unexpectedly, puts the car in reverse.

A pit bull?—"Boeing watchdog to monitor ethics rules"—News headline.

Surplus value—Months afterward, the *Houston Chronicle* picked up a story on the closing of a Tennessee textile mill owned by the Dan River (Virginia) company. The workers, with seniority up to 23 years, received an apparently meager severance package. To spice it up, the company threw in a \$100 Wal-Mart gift card, a Dan River cap, and—dig this—three identical, red-headed Barbie dolls.

Women in industry and fight for affirmative action

Below are excerpts from "New stage of revolutionary working-class politics," a report by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes adopted by the SWP National Committee on April 29, 1979. The entire report appears in *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* by Barnes. The portion below can also be found in Part I of the three-part Education for Socialists series *Women's Liberation and the Line of March of the Working Class*. Copyright © 1981 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.



BY JACK BARNES

We face a similar crisis of leadership in the women's movement. And this crisis is not lessened by the existence of NOW [the National Organization for Women] as a national organization.

The political problem is evident when you read the *National NOW Times*. Last month, for example, an award was given by Philadelphia NOW to the first woman to become a police detective in that city. That's literally true. A cop! The *National NOW Times* also ran a several-column article, with photo, of a meeting organized by NOW to have a "dialogue" and seek "consensus" on the issue of birth control with antiabortion groups.

There is a crisis facing women in this country regarding abortion. The right to abortion—that is, economic, social, and political access—is being brutally cut back. This is not because workers are turning against abortion rights. A Gallup poll released just a few days ago showed there has been no decline whatsoever since 1975 in the percentage of people who support abortion rights. But the economic possibility of having an abortion, and the availability of facilities, have been sharply limited by federal and state legislation. This is one of the "take-backs" the ruling class has implemented since the offensive began in 1974–75.

It will take a social battle to reestablish this right in real life. The "one-sided class war" has come down especially hard on Black and Chicana women, on women of the other oppressed nationalities, and on all working women.

The fight for the Equal Rights Amendment is in crisis, too. The NOW leadership has reduced this struggle fundamentally to organizing political support for Democratic Party politicians, together with attempts to talk people out of taking their vacations in states that have not ratified the ERA.

We give the same answer to the crisis of NOW as we do to that of Black organizations such as the NAACP. There is no "independent strategy" for women that can win. There is no tricky tactic that can

circumvent the crisis. There are correct tactics, tactics that can move the struggle ahead, but they must be timely expressions of a strategic vision that places the women's liberation movement in a class perspective. That's the only way to assemble the necessary social forces to win the abortion fight, or win the ERA.

Key to the road forward is the transformation, the revolution, that is taking place as women in the labor force push their way into industry. This transformation began as one of the repercussions of the gains of the Black struggle. When the Civil Rights Act was being debated in Congress in 1964, the southern senators tried to prevent its passage by outlawing discrimination in employment on the basis of sex as well as race. They figured that made Title VII, as that clause of the act is known, so ridiculous, even northern liberals would have to vote against it. But it was passed.

Affirmative-action drive

This provided a legal opening for the affirmative-action drive by women. It gave women a legal club to use to force their way not just into jobs, but into basic industry, with its higher wages and greater unionization. Thousands of suits were filed. One stride forward came with the 1974 consent decree in the basic steel industry which established plant-wide seniority and set hiring goals for women, Blacks, and Latinos. From 1975 to 1979, women made a big push into auto, mining, and steel.

Jobs in industry are key to women for several reasons. One is that secretaries, teachers, and social workers simply do not have the raw power that industrial workers have when it comes to winning women's rights or anything else.

But it's more than that. Opening the doors to basic industry has a powerful impact on the consciousness and self-confidence of women, and on the way that men view their female co-workers. Many deeply ingrained attitudes change rapidly. The interconnections between the workers' struggle against class exploitation and women's struggle for economic independence and full equality come to life. Sexist prejudices begin to break down.

The women's movement needs to make the same kind of shift that is necessary for the Black and Chicano movements. To win the ERA, abortion rights, and the other demands of women today will take a stronger, different kind of movement than a decade ago, with a different kind of leadership. But the forces exist to build such a movement.

Working women, and especially women in industry, have to lead this process, orienting the women's movement towards a strategic axis that can push the movement forward. This includes, of course, the fight against discrimination and harassment on the job. It's not sexual harassment only. The term is too narrow. The fight against sexual harassment is one aspect of the much broader fight of working women—the fight against the harassment of women as a sex, against discrimination, and for the right to get jobs, to hold them, and to have full rights on those jobs.

At the same time that working women need to become involved in the women's movement, they must also take their struggles into the unions, to win support for abortion rights, pregnancy benefits, the



Linda Sabo, a coal miner in Ohio, shovels coal onto belt in a 1981 photo.

ERA, and other needs.

This is the direction the women's liberation movement must go. Not toward the antiabortion forces that support birth control. Not toward women cops or detectives.

This is what we have been raising and ar-

guing in organizations like NOW for nearly two years, ever since we and women we were allied with in NOW drew up the "Defending Women's Rights" resolution in 1977.

What faces the women's movement is

Continued on Page 11

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



June 1, 1979

The U.S. government's continuing efforts to isolate and threaten Cuba are being accompanied by rising violence on the part of counterrevolutionary Cuba exiles. These terrorists have recently targeted Cuban-Americans who are beginning to take an open and even sympathetic attitude toward the Cuban revolution.

On May 19, a bomb exploded outside the Cuban diplomatic offices in Washington. It did extensive damage, but no one was injured. All diplomatic offices are supposed to have round-the-clock U.S. protection, but the cops obviously looked the other way.

The following Sunday morning, churchgoers found five bullet holes in the door of the Christian Reformed Evangelical Church in Miami. The church is headed by Rev. Manuel Espinosa, a central figure in the developing dialogue between the Cuban community in the United States and the Castro government. Many advocates of the "dialogue" call on the U.S. government to lift its economic blockade against Cuba and open diplomatic and trade relations with the country.

Earlier, Espinosa escaped an assassination attack.

One such attempt was successful. That was the April 28 murder in Puerto Rico of Carlos Muñoz, a leader of the Antonio Maceo Brigade. The brigade is composed of young Cubans who support the dialogue. Many of its members are also supporters of the revolution. It has organized extensive visits to Cuba.

Credit for the murder of Muñoz was taken by a gang of thugs calling themselves "Commando O." This gang is associated with Omega 7, the group that took credit for the Washington bombing.



May 31, 1954

The Voice of America has been broadcasting the lie to all parts of the world that racially-segregated public schools have been "outlawed" in this country. But the battle against separation of Negroes from whites in public education, far from being over, has in fact entered its most crucial phase. Both sides in the struggle are lining up for what is likely to be the bitterest part of the fight.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on May 17 that segregated public schools are unconstitutional, it reserved indefinitely the decision on how and when its ruling shall be put into effect. Thus, while Wall Street imperialism can use the ruling as a propaganda weapon to impress the people in Asia, Africa and Latin America with our "democratic way of life," the white supremacists and race-haters are afforded ample time and opportunity to prepare new defenses against the ruling.

The anti-segregation forces, with the Negro organizations taking the lead, are preparing to launch an offensive with the new legal weapon placed in their hands by the Supreme Court. At the same time, the white supremacist leaders are rallying the Jim Crow forces to resist, from their long-established and deeply-entrenched positions, any effective assault on segregated schools.

While elated over their legal and moral victory, the Negro people by and large have few illusions that the court's ruling will automatically end segregation in the schools. This is indicated by the prompt action of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in calling a conference of Southern Negro leaders in Atlanta, Georgia, May 22 and 23, to map out plans to secure enforcement of the court ruling.

The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-class Politics and the Unions

By Jack Barnes

Building the kind of party the working class needs to prepare for the coming class battles—battles through which they will revolutionize themselves, their unions and all of society. \$23

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Defend Venezuela! Defend Cuba!

The government of Venezuela just uncovered another U.S.-backed plot to topple the elected president of the country. The “paramilitaries” just arrested there are nothing but members of the Colombian armed forces, which have received massive financial and other backing from Washington. To what end? Not only to drench in blood all opponents of Colombia’s right-wing regime, but also to create provocations against Venezuela and set the stage for an imperialist assault on Caracas down the road.

U.S. imperialism’s aims are also shown by the provocative role of the “election monitors” in Venezuela—the snoops of the Carter Center and associates. These “democracy experts” are aiding and abetting the majority of the capitalist class that’s waging an uphill battle to oust the Hugo Chávez government through a recall referendum. It’s not an accident that these “observers” are organized by former president James Carter—a Democrat. The liberal wing of the war party in the United States—with John Kerry in the lead—has been clamoring for some time now for tougher measures against Venezuela. And this is what Kerry can be expected to do if he gets in office.

What’s the crime workers and peasants in Venezuela have committed in the eyes of the wealthy? They have fiercely resisted, and twice defeated, attempts by local capitalists and their imperialist backers to the north to overthrow the elected government. Working people have used increasing political space since Chávez’s election to fight for land, jobs, housing, and decent health care. They have taken advantage of laws adopted by the government that, if implemented, would strengthen the ability of those who toil for a living to defend their interests. Through these struggles millions of working people have become more self-confident and developed higher expectations. By developing the leadership they deserve, the exploited producers of Venezuela can more and more see the need through the struggles they are engaged in to carry out a social revolution, overthrow the rule of the capitalists and landlords, establish a workers and farmers government, and join the fight for socialism—that is, follow the historic line of march of the working class.

This is what a majority of the local bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialism fear. Even though Venezuela is not like Cuba, the U.S. rulers believe their own propaganda and are getting ready more and more to act on it. This is one of the reasons Washington has taken steps in the last year to smooth its working relations with the monarchy in Saudi Arabia—the number one oil producer in the world—including by cutting its large military presence there. The prospect that oil shipments to the United States from Venezuela—its third-largest petroleum supplier—could dry up is not so far fetched if the U.S. rulers qualitatively escalate their provocative course toward Caracas.

In any such offensive against Venezuela, U.S. imperialism can also be expected to strike against Cuba. The Yankee colossus cannot

stomach the presence in Venezuela of thousands of internationalist volunteers from Cuba—from doctors, to literacy instructors, to agricultural specialists—and the normal trade and other ties between the two countries.

The latest U.S. sanctions limiting travel to Cuba by Cuban-Americans and the number of relatives on the island they can send money to—including banning anyone in the Cuban Communist Party from receiving such funds—is an ominous escalation of Washington’s threats and provocations against the Cuban Revolution.

These measures, along with Washington’s cynical campaign at the UN and beyond to brand the Cuban government as a violator of human rights, have nothing to do with concern for humanity, democracy, or freedom. They are carried out by an imperialist regime that has invaded and occupied Iraq to safeguard its plunder and secure its strategic bases in the Middle East—a regime that’s the number one jailer in the world, and now notorious in the eyes of millions for abusing prisoners at home and abroad.

The arrest, frame-up, and conviction on conspiracy charges of five Cuban revolutionaries working to protect their fellow countrymen from armed groups operating from U.S. soil is one more dramatic proof of the hypocrisy of U.S. claims for “justice” and “humanity.”

Washington’s use of its military garrison in Guantánamo—Cuban territory occupied against the will of the Cuban people—to jail indefinitely, without charges or rights, hundreds of men accused of “terrorism,” and to subject them to what can only be described as systematic torture, is among the greatest provocations.

These hostile actions are of a piece with the more than 40 years of the unrelenting attempts by every U.S. administration—Democrat or Republican—to overthrow the Cuban Revolution. In the face of the determination, consciousness, and preparedness of Cuba’s working people all these efforts have failed.

But why does Washington’s economic war against Cuba never end? By its example, Cuba represents a mortal danger to the property interests and prerogatives of the U.S. ruling families. Cuba shows that working people—including in Venezuela, and the United States—are capable of forging a revolutionary leadership, taking political power out of the hands of capitalist exploiters, and joining the worldwide struggle for a society based on human solidarity and the needs of the earth’s majority, not the dog-eat-dog reality and morality of capitalism.

Working people should demand:
 End all U.S. restrictions on trade with and travel to Cuba!
 Normalize diplomatic relations with Havana!
 U.S. out of Guantánamo!
 Free the Cuban Five!
 U.S. hands off Venezuela!

U.S. sanctions

Continued from Page 3

sponse to Washington’s new sanctions were outlined in a statement by the Cuban government. It said nickel and cobalt production would be increased along with the search for oil and gas reserves in areas of the country that have had promising studies.

Cobalt and nickel are among the commodities Cuba exports to earn hard currency.

In agriculture, priority would be given to export items and the orderly production of food. The use of draft animals for cultivation would be increased in order to reduce the cost of imported fuel, machinery, and parts. Further steps would be taken to diversify agricultural production by using the lands where sugar cane was grown previously, before a recent restructuring of the sugar industry.

The statement also said that the new U.S. sanctions would “unfortunately bring about an increase in prices of goods available in the hard currency shops and in the gas stations.”

Two days later Cuba’s ambassador to the United Nations, Orlando Requeijo, said the measures taken by his government aim to “concentrate our resources and finances in order to provide the food and hygienic products that the Cuban people need.” The suspension of sales at the dollar stores is a temporary measure, he said, according to Reuters.

The Cuban government added that none of the social programs of the revolution—from sales of products at subsidized prices to health care free for all to the universalization of higher education—will be affected.

Many Cubans living in the United States have indicated they oppose the new limits on family visits and remittances.

Upon arriving at Havana’s international airport and meeting family members, Gladys Ruiz said, according to the Associated Press, “I have my children here. I can’t wait three years.”

Venezuelan gov’t arrests Colombian coup plotters

Continued from front page

claimed recently that Cuban advisors are being placed in key positions in government ministries and in the Venezuelan intelligence services.

Speaking to the crowd at the conclusion of the march, Chávez said, “I’m calling for the massive integration of the people into the defense of the nation.” This is in addition to steps by the government to expand the size of the regular army and reserves. The Venezuelan president announced that retired and reserve officers would be named to head up a campaign of military training “in every neighborhood, field, university, and factory for the territorial defense” of the country. He said such a step was provided for in the Venezuelan constitution.

Sharpening confrontation

Many demonstrators interviewed by the *Militant* pointed out that the U.S. government has been escalating its campaign of threats against Venezuela. Through Plan Colombia, which funnels billions in aid to the Colombian military, Washington has encouraged the Colombian army to carry out provocative maneuvers near the Venezuelan border.

Several of those interviewed at the march said they wanted the government to organize them into military defense in response to U.S.-backed threats against their country and the political and social gains they have won over the past five years.

“I attempted to sign up as a reservist, but the waiting list was too long. I want to receive military training to defend our country, and many other people feel the same way,” said María Roa, a worker at the Venezuelan oil company, PDVSA, who took part in the march.

The sharpening confrontation between most capitalists here, who have Washington’s support, and working people in Venezuela is intertwined with the latest moves by the U.S. government to tighten its four-decade-long economic war against revolutionary Cuba (see article on front page). One target of the U.S. rulers’ offensive is the fact that Cuba has sent thousands of doctors, teachers, agricultural technicians, and other volunteers to Venezuela.

Major sections of the capitalist class in Venezuela, backed by Washington, are determined to remove the Chávez government because of policies—such as a land reform law, a measure strengthening state control of Venezuela’s oil resources, and legislation protecting small fishermen from exploitation by large fishing firms—that the domestic capitalists and their imperialist backers view as a threat to their prerogatives. They are also concerned about the internationalist volunteers that Cuba has offered Venezuela to boost the nationwide literacy campaign and offer quality medical service to workers

and peasants through free neighborhood clinics across the country staffed by volunteer doctors from Cuba.

Over the past three years workers and farmers have carried out large mobilizations that have defeated three efforts by bourgeois forces to remove the Chávez government—a military coup in April 2002, a bosses’ lockout launched in December 2002, and more recently an effort to hold a recall referendum against the elected president. Through these struggles Venezuelan working people have gained self-confidence and heightened expectations.

Arrests of ‘paramilitary’ troops

On May 9 the police arrested 53 Colombians wearing Venezuelan army uniforms at a ranch on the outskirts of Caracas that is owned by Roberto Alonso, a wealthy Cuban exile. Alonso’s ties to the proimperialist opposition in Venezuela and to Cuban-American rightists in Florida are well-known. Over the course of the week the total number of arrests surpassed 100; most of those apprehended face trial before a military tribunal on charges of military rebellion.

Venezuelan officials said the individuals arrested had been undergoing military training at the ranch after they secretly entered Venezuela in March. In a May 14 press conference, Chávez said that among the arrested were Rafael Omaña and José Ernesto Ayala, two commanders of Colombia’s banned ultrarightist group United Self-Defense (AUC), who led forces near the Colombia-Venezuela border.

The term “paramilitary” is widely used in Colombia and elsewhere to describe these forces. This is done in order to hide the fact that these are simply units of Colombia’s military spun from the army to have a freer hand to carry out killings of peasants and other atrocities, while letting the right-wing government save face publicly.

Chávez said many of those arrested were workers or peasants who had been duped into entering Venezuela with promises of work. A few, he said, were minors.

Defense minister García Carneiro said that 13 Venezuelan military officers had been ordered to appear in court over their possible ties to the plot.

The Venezuelan president said May 15 that “most of the opposition had nothing to do with” this case.

Leaders of the opposition, however, dismissed the arrests. They claimed they were simply a ruse to divert attention from their recall campaign.

Chávez stated that the plot originated with right-wing Venezuelans living in Miami and that the U.S. government knew about it, an accusation U.S. officials denied. “There are people in the United States who keep thinking of how to start a war in Venezuela so that they can justify an invasion,” Chávez said.

The U.S. ambassador to Venezuela, Charles Shapiro, said the arrested Colombians “are international terrorists just like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia,” referring to the antigovernment guerrilla group FARC.

U.S. military attachés expelled

On May 12 the Venezuelan government ordered a U.S. military mission to vacate its offices at the Fort Tiuna base within two weeks. In 2001 the government had issued the same order but U.S. officials did not move. U.S. officers have been in Venezuela supposedly to advise on antidrug operations and training Venezuelan pilots flying U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets. Asked by reporters why the new order had just been issued, García Carneiro said, “Because they are still there.”

To justify Washington’s campaign against the Venezuelan government, U.S. officials have declared that Cuban advisors are being placed in key positions in government ministries. The May 8 *Miami Herald* quoted an unnamed U.S. State Department official, who said, “We see a very worrisome spread in Castro’s infiltration of Venezuela under Chávez.” The *Herald* cited unnamed officials claiming that Cuban advisors are now in Venezuela’s secret police, DISIP, the Interior Ministry, the Central Bank, and the immigration service.

In response to the sharpening confrontation between the U.S. rulers and Venezuela, the president of the National Electoral Council, Francisco Carrasquero, threatened to expel foreign election “observers”—representatives from the Carter Center and the OAS—from the country. Carrasquero stated that, far from being neutral, these “experts” were taking the side of the proimperialist opposition’s efforts to stage a recall referendum against Chávez. Both the OAS and the Carter Center have representatives in Venezuela.

Carrasquero noted that the so-called monitors had falsely declared on May 12 that individuals who signed petitions to demand a presidential recall referendum would not be able to withdraw their signatures during the scheduled May 27–31 process of “repairs.”

Last December, opposition leaders delivered 3.4 million signatures to demand a referendum; they needed 2.4 million. The elections council announced that only 1.8 million signatures were valid, leaving the opposition about 600,000 short of the requirement.

In a final gasp for the recall campaign, which until now has largely fizzled, a procedure was established to determine the legitimacy of the signatures that were filled out by people other than the signer. Between May 27 and 31, nearly 900,000 Venezuelans will have the opportunity to verify their signatures. If they do not, their names will be declared invalid on the recall petition.

Women in industry and fight for affirmative action

Continued from Page 9

a political question and a class question, the same as with the Black movement. The leadership of the women's movement is petty-bourgeois. But the forces coming forward in struggle are working-class women. At the same time there is a growing radicalization among other layers of the working class, including male workers.

The fact that we now have many more comrades in industry allows us to alter the way we do our women's liberation work. Comrades in industry must play an increasing role in the various women's organizations. We need to take another look at what we do in NOW. Instead of shaping our work in the unions to work in NOW, we need to orient our proposals in NOW to meet the changing needs and potential of women in industry. We have to fight in NOW for involving the labor movement in the battle for women's rights.

Our work in the factories and the unions must become the axis of our women's liberation work. We need to pay close attention to the women's caucuses and committees in the unions and in the plants. We should even take a new look at various local units of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). No organization of this type should be written off. Because the fighting women's organizations that are going to emerge from the struggles beginning today will not look like anything that exists right now.

The character of NOW as a large national organization gives it a special importance. Its links with the labor movement are also important....

Against bosses, foremen, politicians

The axis of women's fight is against the employers, their foremen, their courts, and their politicians—not against fellow workers. To the contrary, women should aggressively *appeal* to all the class-struggle-minded workers on the job, seeking support for women's rights. From our initial experience, we know there is usually a positive response when women fight along these lines. Women in and out of industry

can see the attractive power of the labor movement and the potential for support from layers of young, militant workers.

This came through clearly at a District 31 conference of United Steelworkers of America. An older, Black, male worker got up at this conference and explained:

We have to support the women. The bosses are doing to them just what they did to us when we first came in the mill. They're trying to drive them out. Women still have to fight to establish their right to remain in industry.

This Black steelworker predicted that with the next major downturn, women will face a concerted drive to push them out of industry.

He was absolutely right.

This is one reason we should approach women's committees or caucuses in the unions differently today than Black or Chicano caucuses.

We favor and sometimes help initiate women's committees or caucuses, while we don't initiate Black or Chicano caucuses for the reasons I outlined earlier. Of course, we know that working women, like Blacks and Chicanos, will help blaze the trail toward a class-struggle left wing in the unions. They will play a vanguard role in the transformation of the labor movement.

But we have to recognize the different positions of Blacks and women in industry today, the different stage women are at in getting into industry and staying there.

Women face greater obstacles because of their small numbers and their newness in industry. They have to fight the bosses, the foremen, and the whole setup just to prevent themselves from being driven out of the plants. Often the forms don't exist for women to work through these problems and figure out how to use their unions to defend their rights. Special women's committees, as in District 31 of the USWA and in many auto locals, can provide such a form.

Added to this are the special obstacles women face, because of the character of women's oppression in class society, in

becoming self-confident leaders of their class and their unions in leading their male co-workers. This is a bigger problem for women than for Blacks, Chicanos, and other oppressed national minorities.

It's another reason why women's committees can play a very positive role.

Importance of fighting 'Weber'

The fight by women to get into industry and hang on there also underscores the centrality of the affirmative-action question and the *Weber* case.¹ The importance we have given this fight has been proven correct by one simple thing: the growing number of workers, including male workers and white workers, who are beginning to understand that affirmative action is a *class* question, a question that involves the effectiveness of their unions. The ability to explain this through the Weber case is made easier by the fact that the suit also challenges union collective bargaining rights around the issue of job discrimination and upgrading.

Today, Black, Chicano, and women workers as a group comprise a significant percentage of the membership of the major industrial unions. This makes it easier for other unionists to see why, in the interests of solidarity against the bosses' offensive, they must combat discrimination. This mounting pressure from below, in turn, has forced the majority of the labor officialdom to come out in formal opposition to *Weber*. It is responsible for the USWA bureaucracy's decision to fight the case in the courts and to call the recent civil rights conference.

This is an important new development, a promising new trend in the American labor movement.

Of course, it's just a beginning. There is still a big fight ahead to demand that the labor officialdom throw union power behind this struggle, which it has no intention of doing today. There is still a big job in

educating workers, especially white workers and male workers, about their stake in the fight and mobilizing them into action around it.

But the opportunities to do this are greater than ever before. More and more workers are willing to listen and agree when opponents of discrimination explain that affirmative action is vitally and directly in the interests of the working class as a class. Affirmative action is not a charity to make up for the past. It's not—as some argue—a morally correct position but materially disadvantageous to males and whites....

But we must add the point we made in the March 30, 1979, *Militant* editorial: The kinds of struggles that established the principle of affirmative action will not be sufficient to defend or extend it. More powerful forces and a more conscious leadership are going to be necessary for that.

The *Militant* editorial noted that the civil rights laws were won without the unions really entering the fray. The editorial continued: "This is a new period, in which the capitalist economy is wracked by crisis; in which the employers are driven to harsher and harsher antilabor attacks in order to defend their profits. This is a period of polarization of class forces.

"The only class that has an interest in defending affirmative action is the working class. And the fight to defend affirmative action must be taken right to the center of the only mass organizations of the working class—the unions."

1. Brian Weber, a white lab technician for Kaiser Aluminum in Gramercy, Louisiana, sued to overturn a United Steelworkers of America-negotiated plan for affirmative action in 1974, claiming "reverse discrimination." The USWA came to the defense of the program and the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the legality of the affirmative action program in a June 1979 ruling.

Success in sales, fund drives

Continued from Page 5

to the two periodicals. They made both goals, winning 112 new subscribers to the *Militant* and 132 to *Perspectiva Mundial*. Lisa Rottach, a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 271 in the giant Swift slaughterhouse in Omaha, describes how she and others there helped lead the way in this effort.

"At Swift there are a number of long-term readers," Rottach said. "Four of the 10 *Perspectiva Mundial* subscriptions Swift workers bought recently were renewals.

"At one of our union meetings, the local president encouraged union members to go to the April 25 march in Washington, D.C., to defend a woman's right to choose abortion. One co-worker, who subscribes to *PM*, decided to go," Rottach said. "The next day, I got into a discussion with a friend over why it is important to defend this right. 'I can't go along with abortion,' he told me. Then the co-worker who planned to go on the march joined the discussion. 'This is a very important right for women, their right to decide,' he said. 'That's why I'm going to march in Washington.' Several workers were surprised and interested when he announced that he was going.

"The next day, the guy who had told me he was opposed to abortion rights came up and said he would like to subscribe to *Perspectiva Mundial*," she said.

Rottach reported that the union coverage draws a lot of interest because of ongoing struggles in the packing plants throughout the region to use the union to fight against the speed-up and attacks on wages, working conditions, and union rights.

"At Nebraska Beef, a big non-union slaughterhouse in Omaha, workers have renewed their efforts to organize the plant after losing a union vote in August 2001," she said. "Our local had a float in the Cinco De Mayo parade. One of the signs read, 'We have the union at Omaha Steaks, Nebraska Beef, you can do it too.' Another worker at Omaha Steaks signed up for a *PM* sub at a table we set up at

that parade."

In addition to winning dozens of new subscribers, Rottach and other partisans of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* got a good response for the fund campaign in the plants. "At Swift seven workers contributed a total of \$61 to the fund," Rottach said. "Many threw in another \$5 or \$10 when they bought their subscriptions."

Fund supporters organized special fundraisers. A May Day program in Seattle featured Tom Leonard, a longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party who was a merchant seaman and active in the National Maritime Union during and after World War II.

The theme of the meeting was the book *Aldabonazo, Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground 1952-58*, recently published by Pathfinder. Leonard described the importance of the revolutionary struggle that unfolded in Cuba then to workers on ship and in ports across the globe.

To top it all off, as this issue went to press, an unexpected contribution of \$775 arrived from supporters in Belgium.

"A job well done!" the *Militant* editor said.

LETTERS

U.S. abuse of prisoners

The *Militant's* editorial's statement in the May 18 issue that the U.S. rulers conduct abroad is an extension of their daily brutality against workers and farmers at home, in reference to the widely documented torture of Iraqi prisoners by the U.S. occupiers, received backhanded confirmation in the May 6 *Newsday* from liberal columnist Jimmy Breslin. American troops stripping the prisoners and toying with them, he remarks, shouldn't be so jarring to people here in New York, pointing out the more than \$50 million dollars in public funds recently paid out by City officials to people strip-searched and humiliated by New York police when arrested for cheap misdemeanors. He reminds readers that

these settlement payouts, which are used to cover up abuses by the cops, are paid for by the working class, their target (in the files of this city there can be found case after case of a civilian assaulted by police and the working people of the city are charged.)

All true. Of course, the liberal Breslin carefully ignores the fact that these abuses are an integral part of capitalist class rule and sustained jointly and without exception by Democratic and Republican officials, choosing instead to lay all the blame at the feet of the Bush Administration on Iraq and the few cops actually prosecuted in New York. His aim is clear: to pave the way for the removal of the discredited wing of the War Party (the Republicans) and the

installation of the more reliable one (the Democrats).

In his characteristically subtle and populist fashion, Breslin seeks to channel the widespread outrage working people feel about government abuses in Iraq and in New York City into the safe harbor of the rulers' two-party framework.

Peter Anastos
San Francisco, 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.



Militant/Nicole Sarmiento

Garment workers at Point Blank in south Florida celebrate a victory in union fight, July 2003. Seth Galinsky, who works at the plant, is SWP candidate for Congress in the 21st C.D.

the November election.

"We will campaign together, in action, with young people and others who want to go with us to the factory gates, on campus, street corners, door to door," Sandler said in his concluding remarks. "We will raise our platform. We will defend the Cuban Revolution. We will win access to the media to gain a wider hearing for a revolutionary socialist perspective."

Tel Aviv demolishes parts of Gaza

Washington cuts trade ties with Syria, accuses Damascus of aiding ‘terror’

BY PAUL PEDERSON

In an escalation of the Israeli offensive against the Palestinian people, Israeli occupation forces carried out a large-scale two-day assault focused on Gaza City’s Zeitoun neighborhood and the southern Gaza refugee camp of Rafah May 11–13, killing at least 33 Palestinians, wounding hundreds, and leaving hundreds homeless.

Israeli tanks and jeeps, backed overhead by attack helicopters, entered the Zeitoun neighborhood shortly after midnight, May 10, in a raid that Israeli military spokespeople said was aimed at the “terrorist infrastructure.” Residents mobilized to resist the invasion and a wide-ranging gun battle broke out. At about 6:30 a.m. May 11, an armored personnel carrier blew up when it struck a mine, killing six Israeli soldiers.

Claiming it was hunting for the dead soldiers’ remains, the Israeli army stepped up its assault. Troops rampaged from house to house as a large armored force entered the city. Buildings and homes were shelled from helicopters, tanks, and gunboats off the Gaza City seacoast.

During the two-day invasion, the Israeli forces targeted the entire population, destroying at least four multi-story buildings and dozens of homes and shops, and shelling the district’s main electrical generator, cutting off electricity. Army bulldozers dug up water mains and sewage pipes—flooding a one-mile stretch of Salah al Din Street, the main thoroughfare that runs through the neighborhood—and uprooted hundreds of olive trees in nearby groves.

“This is total destruction aimed at making our people kneel down,” said Palestinian Authority housing minister Abdel Rahman Hamad. “It is an act of terrorism.”

In the first 10 days of May, Israeli bull-



Reuters/Mohammed Salem

Israeli tanks and armored vehicles tear up Salah al Din Street in Gaza City’s Zeitoun district May 12, during two-day offensive in which Israeli forces killed 33 Palestinians.

dozers and bombs destroyed some 131 residential buildings in the Gaza Strip, leaving 1,100 people homeless, reported the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) in a press release issued the day before the Gaza City raid.

Describing this as “one of the most intense periods of destruction since the start of the intifada,” the report pointed out that the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip has been a particular focus of Israel’s assault. “Intifada”—or uprising—refers to the resistance by Palestinians in the occupied territories touched off in September 2000 by the provocative visit by Likud Party leader (and now prime minister) Ariel Sharon to a Muslim holy

site in Jerusalem accompanied by at least 1,000 Israeli soldiers. The term originated with the first Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories that began in the late 1980s. Since September 2000, UNRWA reports, the Israeli army has destroyed the homes of 17,594 people in Gaza—11,215 of them in the Rafah camp alone.

Following a May 12 attack on an Israeli armored car near the Egyptian border that left five soldiers dead, the Rafah camp was again the focus of a Tel Aviv assault. Twelve of Rafah’s residents were killed when Israeli forces fired missiles May 13 in separate attacks from helicopter gunships into crowds of people in the camp.

The next day, Israeli bulldozers began

demolishing rows of homes in the camp with the purported aim of widening the “buffer zone” that the Israeli army patrols along the border between Gaza and Egypt. “Carrying white flags and belongings, Palestinians in Rafah fled the path of armored bulldozers, which knocked down two clusters of five houses each in an initial assault and threatened many more structures,” reported a May 14 Reuters dispatch.

Tel Aviv has promised to destroy hundreds more homes in the camp. Paul McCann, a UNRWA spokesman, said the destruction was causing “a humanitarian catastrophe.”

An Israeli army official told Reuters that laying flat a section of the densely populated refugee camp is “a measure we are taking...to reshape the theater of war so we will enjoy an advantage and not the Palestinians.”

The stepped-up offensive by Tel Aviv against the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza is part of the Israeli government’s preparation for implementing its so-called disengagement plan. The plan includes the withdrawal of the 7,500 Israeli settlers that currently occupy more than one-fifth of the Gaza Strip. Some 1.3 million Palestinians live in the remaining territory.

The plan aims to consolidate the Israeli government’s grip on territory in the West Bank that has been expropriated from the Palestinian population and is today home to the bulk of the 223,000 Israeli settlers there. The plan also aims to legitimize Tel Aviv’s carve-up of the West Bank into separate cantons sealed off by a military cordon and a massive wall. This “separation” wall—which will be some 400 miles long when complete—will confine the majority of the Palestinian population on the West Bank to just 42 percent of the territory.

Washington has voiced support for the plan, including Israel’s aim to annex a portion of the West Bank, permanently recognize its settlements there, and refuse the right to return to their homes of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees and their descendants expelled from their lands by force in the 1940s. Despite a May 2 non-binding vote in the ruling Likud Party that rejected the plan, Sharon has vowed to press forward with some similar variant.

Washington slaps sanctions on Syria

The imperialist offensive in the Middle East has included not only U.S. backing for these plans by Tel Aviv and the brutal occupation of Iraq, but pressure by Washington on other governments in the region.

U.S. president George Bush announced May 11 that his government will impose economic sanctions on Syria to pressure Damascus to fall into line with Washington’s plans in the area. Congress authorized the administration to apply the punitive measures in the Syria Accountability Act last December, accusing the Syrian government of “sheltering terrorists,” seeking to develop “weapons of mass destruction,” and working to undermine the Anglo-American-led war and occupation of Iraq.

The measure bans U.S. exports to Syria, with the exception of food and medicine, and bans Syrian airlines from flying to or from the United States. The law also restricts relations between Syrian and U.S. banks and authorizes the U.S. Treasury Department to freeze assets of Syrians who Washington deems “terrorists.”

The U.S. government began ratcheting up its pressure on Syria’s Baath Party government after the invasion and occupation of Iraq last year. Washington is also demanding that Damascus assist in its efforts to weaken Palestinian groups resisting the Israeli occupation that operate out of Syria. One of the U.S. government’s demands is that Damascus close the offices in Syria of the Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, as well as the Lebanon-based Hezbollah.

Steelworkers end strike in Venezuela

BY CARLOS CORNEJO
AND MARTÍN KOPPEL

CARACAS, Venezuela—More than 4,500 steelworkers returned to their jobs May 13 after a 19-day strike at the giant SIDOR steel works in Ciudad Guayana, in eastern Venezuela. The workers, members of steelworkers union SUTISS, were fighting for improved job safety and back payment of bonuses.

Workers approved a settlement in which each union member will receive a \$1,500 lump-sum bonus offered by the government. SIDOR agreed to establish a joint safety committee made up of officials from the union, company, and government.

The company had insisted from the beginning that the strike was illegal, and the government sent in the National Guard at the request of the company. On April 29 National Guard troops fired on striking workers with rubber bullets and tear gas.

In telephone interviews, union officials and workers reported that while they had not won some of their demands, the strikers had stood up to the boss assault on the union. “The company was not able to break our strike,” said Carlos Ramírez, a member of SUTISS. No workers, including contract workers who are not in the union, crossed the picket lines, SUTISS members said.

SIDOR, the fourth-largest steel producer in Latin America, was a state-owned company until 1997. At that time the government of Venezuelan president Rafael Caldera sold a majority share to foreign investors and local businessmen. Today a consortium of capitalists in Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela own a 60 percent stake in the company; the state owns the other 40 percent.

Since the sale of the company, the bosses have slashed size of the workforce from 18,000 to 12,000. Today almost half the

employees are contract workers—temporary workers hired through subcontractors. The contract workers, who are not members of SUTISS, are subject to arbitrary dismissal and are often not paid the official minimum wage, which equals about \$125 per month, one-third the average wage paid to union members.

As a result of the bosses’ productivity drive, forcing fewer workers to do more work, the number of employees killed or maimed on the job has increased. “Over the past six years, 11 workers have been killed due to unsafe working conditions. Nine of them were contract workers,” said Valdemar Alvarez, a member of the SUTISS executive board, in a May 13 telephone interview.

The workers won their demand for a joint union-company-government committee to be established to monitor health and safety conditions. The company also pledged to enforce the contract stipulation that subcontractors pay workers the minimum wage.

The union demand for payment of profit-sharing bonuses due to workers for 2003 was rejected by the company, which stated it made no profits that year and so owed nothing to the workers. This claim was rejected by the union. Under the strike settlement, the union accepted an offer by the government of a one-time “productivity” bonus totaling \$6.3 million—about \$1,500 for every worker.

The government deployment of hundreds of National Guard troops outside and inside the facilities was a blow to the strike. “They had the plant militarized,” said Alvarez.

During the strike the company fired 200 workers, including the entire SUTISS executive board. As part of the settlement the bosses agreed to reverse the firings of about two-thirds of these workers. Alvarez

told the *Militant* the union is negotiating to reverse the remaining dismissals.

To mobilize support for the strike, SIDOR workers held a march May 6 of more than 3,000 through the streets of nearby Puerto Ordaz. Unionists said that demonstrators included contract workers and members of other unions and neighborhood organizations. One of the demands of the march was that the government renationalize SIDOR. Alvarez reported that sentiment in favor of nationalization has grown among the steelworkers as a result of their latest battle with the bosses. During a visit to the SIDOR steelworks last September, *Militant* reporters found that only a small minority of the workforce supported nationalization at that time.

“Now I am in favor of nationalization,” said maintenance technician José Marín in a phone interview. “Privatization has benefited only the owners, who have created nothing but problems for us.”

Alvarez said the union had been preparing to send a large delegation of workers to Caracas to ask the national government to back their fight. Shortly before the scheduled trip, the settlement was announced and the trip was cancelled.

The SUTISS members at SIDOR have faced the bosses in a number of ongoing struggles. Last October thousands of steelworkers there carried out job actions demanding improved safety and health as well as wage increases stipulated in the contract. In December 2002, when the SIDOR owners joined a nationwide employer “strike” as part of an effort by capitalists to destabilize and remove the government headed by President Hugo Chávez, the steelworkers mobilized to oppose the bosses’ sabotage of production. The national lockout was finally defeated through the actions of working people across the country.