

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 74/NO. 2 JANUARY 18, 2010

N. Korean cargo plane seized by Thai police

BY BEN JOYCE

In an act of aggression, Washington instigated the seizure of a North Korean plane and its cargo December 12 after it landed in Thailand. Thai authorities report the plane was carrying weapons allegedly destined for Sri Lanka.

Police in Bangkok impounded the aircraft and arrested the five crew members on board—four from Kazakhstan, one from Belarus—after authorities were prodded by the U.S. government to do so. Officials say there were 35 tons of weapons on board.

The confiscation of the cargo was done under the mandate of a UN resolution adopted last June that expanded sanctions imposed on North Korea. The resolution widened a 2006 UN ban on North Korean arms imports and exports and calls for inspecting and destroying “all banned cargo” to and from North Korea “on the high seas, at seaports, and airports.”

The sanctions were slapped on North Korea this summer for the
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‘Surge’ in temp hiring no relief for U.S. jobless

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The capitalist media describes the hiring of some temporary workers over the past several months as a sign that the economy is recovering. But conditions are not improving for more than 7 million working people whose jobs have been eliminated over the past two years. Many of them, if not currently unemployed, are doing other jobs at steep cuts in pay or are forced to accept part-time work.

According to the Labor Department, 52,000 temporary workers were added to the workforce in November, which the *New York Times* hailed as a “surge” in temp hiring. The unemployment rate that month was 10 percent, with nearly 18 million workers without jobs.

In some cases companies bring back laid-off full-time workers as temporary employees, noted Joanie Ruge, senior vice president of the temp agency Adecco.

While some callbacks have occurred, the level of production is still
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U.S. gov’t sets stricter airport ‘security’ rules

Part of curb on rights, broader war drive



Reuters/Mario Anzuoni

Airport cop with dog inspects passengers’ belongings at boarding area in Los Angeles International Airport December 29. Washington issued orders for additional “security” procedures and special scrutiny of passengers on U.S.-bound flights that originate, or pass through, 14 specific countries following attempted bombing of Detroit-bound flight December 25. President Barack Obama also said “watch lists” will be expanded.

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Under the guise of combating “terrorism” Washington is further curbing the rights of working people as it increases the militarization of airports, expands its “watch lists” of individuals, and prepares more military actions abroad.

In what he said were just initial steps, President Barack Obama announced January 5 his determination “to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat” so-called terrorist networks “in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in Yemen and Somalia, or in

other countries around the world.”

He announced that more names are being added to the “no-fly” list of persons not allowed to board planes bound for the United States, more U.S. marshals will be stationed on flights, and more dogs used in screening passengers. Some 35 Yemenis at the Guantánamo U.S. prison camp in Cuba who were to be released to their homeland will now remain incarcerated, he said. There are no charges against them.

The day before Obama’s announce-

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Iran: hundreds of thousands march for democratic rights



Funeral procession for Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri in Qom, Iran, December 21, turned into giant march for expanded political rights. Montazeri spoke out for freeing political prisoners and ending censorship, and was part of bourgeois opposition to current Iranian government. Amid mass protests for democratic rights, workers have increasingly pressed for relief from economic crisis with demands for jobs, higher wages, and back pay.

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Demonstrations in Iran—some of the largest yet for democratic rights since the summer—erupted in late December. They showed that the government remains incapable of halting those demanding political freedoms.

Crowds estimated at hundreds of thousands poured into Qom, the religious capital of Iran, December 21 for the funeral of Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, who died at the age of 87.

Montazeri had denounced the results of the June 12 presidential elections as fraudulent and said “no one in their right mind” could believe that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had won 2-1 against the leading contender, former prime minister Mir Hossein Mousavi.

Montazeri was designated in 1984 to succeed Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as the Supreme Leader of Iran, the most powerful position in the
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‘Militant’ launches campaign to win long-term readers

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Beginning January 16 the *Militant* is launching a four-week campaign to increase our long-term readership. The renewal drive, which runs through February 17, provides *Militant* supporters with an opportunity to get to know the many workers and students who recently subscribed to the paper, talk to them about politics, and encourage them to take advantage of a special offer to purchase Pathfinder’s new book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*.

Last fall *Militant* supporters sold more than 2,000 subscriptions through a successful nine-week campaign. A highlight of the drive was subscriptions sold to industrial workers. This included 30 at the Dakota Premium Foods plant in South St. Paul, Minnesota; 18 to workers at the American Apparel garment plant in Los Angeles; and 18 at the JBS Swift meatpacking plant in Marshalltown, Iowa.

Many of these workers and others will be interested in discussing the *Militant*’s unique and invaluable cov-

erage on the worldwide capitalist economic crisis, Washington’s escalating war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and examples of resistance by working people around the world.

Those renewing their subscriptions during the drive can purchase Pathfinder’s new book at the special price of \$10, a 50 percent discount. This offer is also available for new subscrib-

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Morocco gov’t fails to exile fighter for Sahrawi rights

BY SETH GALINSKY

Aminatou Haidar, a prominent supporter of independence for the Western Sahara, returned to her home in El Aaiún in the Moroccan-controlled territory December 18 after a 32-day hunger strike.

Haidar was arrested November 13 at the airport as she attempted to return to Western Sahara from an awards ceremony in New York. Her passport was confiscated and she was expelled from Western Sahara, forced onto a plane that landed at the Lanzarote airport in the Canary Islands, a Spanish possession.

Morocco’s regime has occupied Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony with rich phosphate and iron ore deposits, since 1975. The Polisario Front fought a war for independence from 1976 until 1991.

That war ended when the Moroccan government agreed to a UN-sponsored referendum on self-determination for the Sahrawi people. But since then, the Moroccan regime has blocked carrying out the accord and instead is pushing an “autonomy” plan.

The Socialist Party government of Spain tried to get Haidar to end her hunger strike and accept forced exile in Spain, but she refused. She won support in Spain and internationally for her right to return to Western Sahara, embarrassing Madrid.

The Moroccan ambassador to Spain, Omar Azziman, said in a press conference that the signing of a Morocco-Spain trade pact two days before “had nothing to do” with the agreement to

allow Haidar to return home.

Azziman noted that a press release on Haidar’s return by Spanish president Luis Zapatero recognized that “Moroccan law applies to the Western Sahara.”

Moroccan police broke up a demonstration by hundreds of people in front of Haidar’s home in El Aaiún, celebrating her return. Made up mostly of women and children, they chanted slogans in support of the Polisario Front and self-determination for Western Sahara, reported *El País*.

There were similar demonstrations in the downtown neighborhood of Matallah and working-class suburbs of Bucrâa, Skaikima, and Mesuar, the paper said.

Haidar condemned the Spanish statement recognizing Moroccan law in Western Sahara. “That’s against international law,” Haidar told the press from her home. “Spain is responsible for the territory because it withdrew before carrying out the decolonization of the Western Sahara.”

N.Y. event celebrates Cuban Revolution



Roberto Mercado

NEW YORK—Pedro Núñez Mosquera, Cuban ambassador to the United Nations, addresses crowd of 175 people at a New Year’s Eve event here celebrating 51st anniversary of the victory of the Cuban Revolution. The celebration was dedicated to the five Cuban revolutionaries who have been held in U.S. prisons for more than 11 years: Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, René González, Ramón Labañino, and Fernando González, known internationally as the Cuban Five.

“Last year was a year of victories and setbacks for the Cuban Revolution,” Núñez Mosquera said. Although Cuba faces a difficult situation due to the worldwide economic crisis, maintaining key gains of the revolution is possible, because the Cuban people know what is at stake, the ambassador stated.

Nancy Cabrero, president of Casa de las Américas, at right, also spoke.

—SETH GALINSKY

North Korean cargo plane seized by Thai police

Continued from front page

“crime” of conducting its second nuclear explosion test. Washington and its allies have gone to great lengths to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons, including through sanctions that have had a devastating impact on the livelihood of working people there.

By contrast, the U.S. government maintains thousands of active nuclear

warheads—some 5,400 according to 2007 estimates by the Federation of American Scientists. By official count, Washington conducted 1,054 nuclear tests between 1945 and 1992 and it remains the only government to ever use a nuclear bomb on human beings.

In response to another incident—an exchange of fire in November between South Korean and North Korean naval ships—Pyongyang has pledged to defend its right to its territorial waters off the west coast of the Korean peninsula.

On December 21 the North Korean government announced it would defend its territorial waters by carrying out artillery fire exercises in the disputed region. The Navy Command of the Korean People’s Army has stated its actions are in response to “reckless military provocations” and warned the South Korean military and fishing boats to stay clear of the disputed maritime area or risk being fired on.

Pyongyang made its announcement six weeks after South Korean warships

fired on a North Korean patrol boat while it was near its sea border.

A statement by the North Korean military said its patrol boat was attacked as it was returning to the north side after investigating an unidentified object near the sea border. After the North Korean ship returned fire, it was directly fired upon.

Since U.S. imperialism’s 1953 defeat by the workers and peasants of Korea, Washington has maintained the division of the peninsula with thousands of U.S. troops on the ground and surrounding seas. Today the U.S. military has some 28,000 military personnel deployed in South Korea.

Though the conflict ended with a truce, the U.S. government has never accepted any of the peace agreements offered by Pyongyang. At the end of the war, Washington unilaterally drew the “Northern Limit Line,” dividing the West Sea of Korea above the 38th parallel separating the two countries, which Pyongyang has disputed ever since.

THE MILITANT

U.S. out of Afghanistan, Pakistan!

Washington carried out more than 50 aerial drone strikes in Pakistan last year, far more than 2008. The ‘Militant’ delivers the facts and explains the reasons behind the escalation of Washington’s war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Don’t miss a single issue!



U.S. aerial drone firing Hellfire missile

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Immigrant prosecutions, deportations at new high

BY SETH GALINSKY

Federal prosecutions of immigration violations jumped nearly 16 percent in the 2009 fiscal year. The record high numbers are a clear signal the administration of Barack Obama is stepping up its attacks on undocumented workers.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deported 387,000 immigrant workers last year—the highest recorded number in U.S. history. An immigrant worker can expect to be herded through the court system in two days, while the federal government takes an average of 460 days to prosecute someone accused of a “white collar” crime.

In November ICE announced it had ordered immigration audits of at least 1,650 companies, triple the number in 2008. Employers use these audits to fire workers whose papers are considered inadequate.

Because of pressure from the U.S. government, the number of companies currently using E-Verify is increasing by nearly 2,000 a week. More than 175,000 companies participate in the program, which allows bosses to check the immigration and work status of potential and current employees through the Internet, making it more difficult for workers without papers to find jobs.

Over the last year, the Obama administration has expanded two programs: “287 (g),” which gives local police the authority to act as immigration cops, and “Secure Communities,” which seeks to check the fingerprints of every prisoner in the United States, including in local jails, with FBI and Department of Homeland Security databases to find and deport those without papers.

According to an October report by

Dora Schriro, former Special Advisor on ICE Detention and Removal for the Department of Homeland Security, there are more than 300 ICE jails in the United States and its possessions.

On a typical day some 31,000 immigrants are in ICE custody. Of the almost 379,000 immigrants who passed through ICE detention in 2008, 58 percent were from Mexico and 27 percent from Central America.

ICE claims that about half of the immigrant workers it detains are “felons” although it admits that less than 6 percent of those held are accused of violent crimes.

By downplaying high-profile factory raids and painting many detained workers as criminals, the U.S. government aims to undercut support for legalization of undocumented immigrants.

The federal government wants to keep the supply of immigrant workers coming in—the bosses need them to boost their profit margins and maintain their competitive edge against capitalists in Europe and around the world—but the employers want to increase their control of the labor supply in a time of economic crisis.

As deportations, prosecutions, and firings of immigrant workers mount, demonstrations continue to be called to press for legalization and the overturning of anti-immigrant laws.

The National Day Laborer Organizing Network and Puente Arizona have called for a protest January 16 in Phoenix, home to notorious anti-immigrant sheriff Joseph Arpaio.

The demonstration calls for an end to the 287 (g) and Secure Communities programs and for providing “legal status and political equality to undocumented immigrants.”

“Proud to hand over Christmas ‘bonus’ bribe to the workers’ movement”

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

MINNEAPOLIS—Around the holiday season a number of checks came rolling in for the Capital Fund, which is dedicated to the long-term publishing projects of the communist movement. Here are a few of the notes that accompanied the checks.

“[I’m] proud to hand over this Christmas ‘bonus’ bribe to the workers’ movement, who can be counted on to put it to good use,” wrote Joe Kapsner, a worker from Birchwood, Minnesota. “I can only reject this blood-soaked pittance as a worker. It has come in the face of significant speed-up on the job. Happy to see that this discussion on blood money is being thoroughly covered in the *Militant*. Keep up the good work!”

In Los Angeles, four workers at Farmer John, a large pork slaughterhouse, sent in “holiday bonuses” totaling \$400. “The company has been running the line faster than ever, with resulting injuries,” wrote Naomi Craine, who works at the plant. “In the last 10 days one worker cut his fingers with the wizard knife and needs surgery. Another broke two fingers trying to unjam a belt.”

Contributing these “bonuses” to the Capital Fund is part of the proud tradition of workers in the revolutionary socialist movement not accepting company “blood money” bribes. They’re called that because they’re used to buy our silence about speedup, long hours, and unsafe working conditions. They come with our blood and that of fellow workers on them.

Among the many contributions, Chuck Guerra, a meat packer at the JBS Swift plant in Marshalltown, Iowa, sent checks from three workers, each one for \$28 from a \$25 gift card and a “free” pound of ground meat the boss gave them for the holidays.

Janet Post, John Staggs, and Brian Nevins sent in a total of \$72, including two \$12 bonuses they received at a glove factory in Delaware.

Contributions of \$139.35 came in from Dennis Richter, Leroy Watson, and Laura Anderson, three workers at Quantum Foods in Chicago. The money came from \$75 in gift certificates for Jewel, a grocery chain, and a “safety bonus” of \$64.35 that Anderson received.

Florida students start immigrant rights walk



Alejo Stark

MIAMI—More than 100 people attended a New Year’s Day press conference and send-off (above) here for four youth who are marching 1,500 miles to Washington, D.C., to demand rights for undocumented immigrants.

The youth, members of Students Working for Equal Rights, plan stops in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. They are encouraging others to organize solidarity actions and join them in the nation’s capital May 1. Since 2006, May 1 has been a day of immigrant rights rallies across the United States.

Juan Rodriguez, 20, one of the marchers, is originally from Colombia and is now president of the student government at Miami-Dade College’s InterAmerican Campus. He and the others say they were inspired by the migrant farm workers who walked the length of California in the 1970s and by the civil rights marches of the 1960s.

Also walking the entire distance are Felipe Matos, 23, born in Brazil; Gaby Pacheco, 24, from Ecuador; and Carlos Roa, 22, born in Venezuela. All came to the United States as young children.

“I’m going to walk because even though many promises were made by the Obama administration, nothing has changed,” Rodriguez said. “There are more raids, more deportations.”

—DEBORAH LIATOS

U.S. gov’t tightens ‘security’

Continued from front page

ment, new U.S. regulations went into effect for passengers on flights to the United States that originate in, or pass through, 14 specific nations. These passengers will be subjected to “intense screening” through the use of body scanners, pat downs, and searches of luggage. The targeted countries are the four countries on the State Department list of “state sponsors of terrorism”—Cuba, Iran, Sudan, and Syria—as well as Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Yemen.

The pretext for the measures was an attempt to blow up an airplane as it approached the Detroit International Airport on Christmas Day. Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab, a 23-year-old Nigerian, is charged with attempting to destroy an aircraft and placing a destructive device on the plane. He has a January 8 bail hearing and will be tried in a civilian court.

A U.S. official told Associated Press that Mutallab said al-Qaeda told him to blow the plane up over U.S. territory. A

statement by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which is based in Yemen, said it trained and armed Mutallab for the operation. The U.S. National Counterterrorism Center had Mutallab’s name on its list of more than half a million people with alleged connections to terrorists.

Former Republican vice president Richard Cheney said in late December, “President Obama is trying to pretend we are not at war. . . . He seems to think if he gives terrorists the rights of Americans, lets them lawyer up and reads them their Miranda rights, we won’t be at war.”

Appearing on four Sunday TV talk shows January 3, Deputy National Security Adviser John Brennan sought to counter the attacks on Obama. “We’re working very closely not just with the Yemenis, but with our other international partners, with the British, with the Saudis, and others, to make sure that we provide the Yemeni government the wherewithal to carry out this fight against al-Qaeda,” he told ABC’s “This Week.” Brennan noted in particular the U.S. role in missile strikes against al-Qaeda in Yemen in December. According to the *Yemen Post*, thousands of Yemenis demonstrated to protest a December 17 strike they said had killed dozens of civilians.

On NBC’s “Meet the Press,” David Gregory asked Brennan, “Should the American people expect military action by the United States in Yemen?” Brennan answered, “Everything is possible.”

Brennan said that contrary to Cheney’s complaint that a civilian trial for Mutallab is too lenient, the U.S. government has a long record of convictions in such “antiterror” trials. In fact, these trials have been used to significantly weaken workers’ rights in the courtroom, from presumption of innocence, to the right to see evidence and choose an attorney.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco

Fraud of Climate Change Reform: Why the Stewardship of Nature Falls to Working Class. Speaker: Eric Simpson, Socialist Workers Party, Fri., Jan. 15, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

NEW YORK

New York

U.S. “Antiterror” Trials, Expansion of “Watch” Lists, Aimed at Workers Rights. Fri., Jan. 15, 8 p.m. 307 W. 36th St., 10th floor, north side. Tel.: (212) 736-2540.

UK: protesters counter anti-immigrant rightists

BY ALEX XEZONAKIS

HARROW, England—Some 20 ultrarightists, who oppose immigration by Muslims to the United Kingdom, were greatly outnumbered here December 13 by a lively countermobilization of some 200 people, mostly youth.

The ultrarightist outfit Stop Islamisation of Europe (SIOE) was targeting a new mosque being constructed here.

In September, SIOE attempted to hold a similar action in this town just northwest of London that was called off at the last minute in face of a thousand-strong counterprotest. Leading up to both actions, leaders of the mosque and government ministers appealed for calm and urged people not to respond to the rightists by countermobilizations.

Many Asian youth swelled the ranks of the counterprotests once the ultrarightists showed up. With hundreds joining these actions, the mosques provided legal observers and contact in-

formation of lawyers in case protesters faced arrest. In a statement the mosque thanked people for their support.

Niki Joshi, student union vice president at Harrow College, told the *Militant* the rightists are not welcome here. “If they are attacking Muslims, they are attacking us,” she said. Other students came from as far away as Manchester, Bradford, Huddersfield, and Leeds.

Hamed, 17, who was born in the United Kingdom after his parents emigrated from Afghanistan, joined the countermobilization with other friends from high school. “We’re here to protect the mosque,” he said. Another friend, who did not want to give his name, added, “We are peaceful, but if they [SIOE] get physical, we’ll do anything to protect ourselves.”

In a copy of his planned speech, which was released to the media, SIOE leader Stephen Gash said that the mosque “stands there with its unnecessarily high



Militant/Ögmundur Jónsson

Some 200 people turned out in Harrow, England, December 13 to demonstrate against 20 rightists protesting construction of mosque. Some 800 cops escorted racists away.

40m minaret, piercing Harrow’s skyline. This mosque is not a symbol of integration or coexistence with other, non-Muslim, communities. Just the opposite, it is a symbol of triumphalism and the hubris of Islam, and therefore Muslims, over everything and everybody else.”

Having been out mobilized, the ultrarightists were escorted away by some of

the 800 cops surrounding the area. The *Harrow Observer* reported that Gash has since said that the SIOE will not return to Harrow.

A series of demonstrations by different ultraright forces, such as the English Defence League (EDL), have taken place throughout the country in recent months, and have been met with counterdemonstrations. Hundreds of EDL members marched through Nottingham December 5 chanting, “We want our country back,” reported the *Guardian* newspaper. An EDL spokesman said that the group had timed its protest to coincide with the “homecoming” parade of 500 British soldiers from Afghanistan.

Andrés Mendoza contributed to this article.

Workers pick up ‘Militant’ at factory-gate sales

BY ELLIE GARCÍA AND WENDY LYONS

VERNON, California—“This is in my language—Mandarin!”

Two Chinese workers, mother and daughter, stopped at a table here displaying the *Militant* and books from Pathfinder Press outside Farmer John, a hog slaughterhouse with 1,200 workers.

The mother, a longtime meat packer, recognized a member of the team, Wendy Lyons, who had worked in the plant a few years back. She had seen the *Militant* and Socialist Workers Party election campaign literature previously but can’t read English.

She bought *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution* in Chinese, and her daughter bought the pamphlet *Malcolm X Talks to Young People* in English.

When communist meat packers joined the team, workers were drawn to the table and stopped to chat.

A weekly sale at the plant gate was reestablished about a month ago. Four sales have been organized since then, the first resulting in three subscriptions. At each sale two or three meat packers have picked up the *Militant* and two have bought a book. One aspect of every sale has been people asking about the union. There have also been discussions on working conditions.

Distributors of the *Militant* are carrying out weekly propaganda teams at factory gates around the country to expand the readership of the paper among

workers. The plant gate teams often help to reinforce the activities of communist workers inside the plants.

Send reports on workers’ responses to the *Militant* and Pathfinder books at these factory gate sales to themilitant@mac.com for inclusion in an upcoming issue.

Subscription renewal drive

Continued from front page
ers won during the renewal drive.

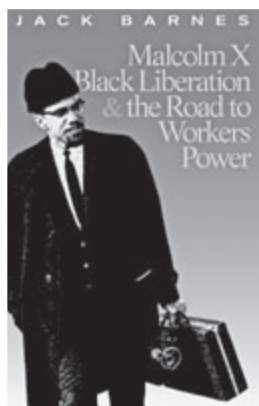
Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power, which includes more than 130 drawings and photographs, explains how workers who are Black have been in the vanguard throughout the history of the class struggle in the United States, and how it is only by the working class taking political power that an effective

fight can be waged to rid society of the dictatorship of capital and all its forms of racism and exploitation. The book rolls off the press January 15 and will be available in Spanish in March.

An international goal for the drive will be set over the coming week as *Militant* distributors meet and adopt quotas for the renewal campaign and sales of Pathfinder’s new book.

New from Pathfinder Press

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power
By Jack Barnes



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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 18, 1985

NEW YORK—The capitalist media here continues to give massive favorable coverage to the attempted murder of four Black teenagers on a subway by racist vigilante Bernhard Goetz. On December 22, Goetz shot Barry Allen, 18; Daryl Cabey, 19; Troy Cauty, 19; and James Ramseur, 18. Cabey, paralyzed for life from the wounds inflicted on him by Goetz, slipped into a deep coma on January 9.

Since the shootings, working people have been bombarded daily with television, radio, and newspaper reports painting Goetz as a hero.

Right-wing commentators, such as columnist Patrick Buchanan, hail Goetz as a hero who decided to take on “crime in the streets.”

Goetz says that the four youths he shot asked him for \$5. Goetz then reportedly said, “I have \$5 for each of you” and pulled out his gun. He shot all four Blacks—two in the back as they fled.



January 18, 1960

The anti-Semitic vandalism that began in Cologne on Christmas and then swept around the world now appears to be subsiding, although in the United States reports are still coming in about the daubing of Nazi symbols and slogans on public buildings like foul words on latrine walls. The problem remains, however, of accounting for it and of drawing what lessons we can.

Anti-Semitism is endemic in capitalist society like a smoldering plague of the days before modern drugs. It feeds on the frustrations, the insecurities, the fear of the future which capitalism imposes on people. It is actively fostered by the hatred for everything but the sacred dollar that pours down from the top levels of society in a thousand forms.

If the anti-Semitic smallpox should jog us about anything, it is to get on with the job of putting capitalism on the scrap heap before social conditions ripen for another Hitler.



January 19, 1935

Just what is it, when the capitalistic state writhes in the agonies of depression, which “unbalances” the Federal budget? If we listened to the President, if we heeded the daily press, we might get the idea that relief expenditures are to blame; whence, the conclusion is drawn, cut down on relief.

Let us, instead, look at the record as displayed in the recent Treasury report and set forth in the President’s budget message. Some 750 million went to meet interest on the public debt; 850 million more to retire part of the debt outstanding. In short, over a billion dollars was devoted to the support of bondholders.

The Army and the Navy took between them another half billion dollars for the current needs of the military and naval establishment. In sum, considerably more than 2 billion dollars was expended upon the luxuries of imperialist war, past, present, and future.

Jazz: A story of Black music and white business

Printed below is an excerpt from Black Music, White Business by Frank Kofsky, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January. The book probes the principal contradiction in the jazz world: that between black artistry on the one hand and white ownership of the means of jazz distribution—the recording companies, booking agencies, festivals, nightclubs, and magazines—on the other. Kofsky brings to light the exploitation to which jazz creators historically have been subjected and the racist contempt with which many industry executives view jazz. The piece below is from the chapter titled "If you're black, get back: double standards in the recording industry." Copyright © 1998 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FRANK KOFSKY

In the spheres of production and distribution, as in so many others, the position of the artist in capitalist society is unique, ambiguous and, above all, perilous in the extreme.

In contrast to the manual laborer, the artist, as I remarked in chapter 1, does own the tools of his or her trade. Unlike the skilled craftsman or artisan, however, the artist does not



Express Newspapers/Getty Images

U.S. jazz musician and composer Miles Davis performing Jan. 1, 1955. At end of 1960s, Columbia Records came under fire, "particularly from Miles Davis," wrote Kofsky, "for its failure to bring more black jazz artists onto its roster."

have complete control over the production and distribution processes; consequently, he or she is dependent on others. Hence where an automobile mechanic may be able to establish her own repair shop, a glazier his own stained glass works, or a baker his own bakery, very few painters or sculptors will possess their own galleries.

Analogously, very few jazz musicians control their own recording companies,* and fewer yet have any share in running the nightclubs, festivals, and booking agencies on which most musicians rely for their survival. As a result, the way in which the white executives who do command these economic institutions regard black music in general and jazz in particular is of crucial significance for the well-being of the jazz artist. If these executives are favorably disposed toward jazz, then of necessity

employment opportunities for jazz musicians will be relatively plentiful. If, conversely, these same executives are indifferent or antagonistic toward jazz, then the working jazz performer will find it that much more difficult to eke out a livelihood.

This concentration of power over the means of production and distribution gives the executive class almost unlimited control over the professional life of a jazz artist. Should such an artist happen to displease these executives, he or she will for all practical purposes cease to exist, at least so far as the public is concerned. At the dawn of the 1960s, for instance, singer Abbey Lincoln collaborated with Max Roach and others in recording a pair of powerful and explosive albums, *We Insist! The Freedom Now Suite* and *Straight Ahead*, that excited a great deal of active hostility from the white Establishment in jazz; as a result, Abbey Lincoln's once-thriving career as a recording artist came to an abrupt halt. "I haven't been invited to record in this country" since the Candid discs were initially released, she told me sixteen years after that event.

As easy as it is to stifle an individual voice, those who dominate the political economy of jazz find it hardly more difficult to silence an entire

group of artists. As Abbey Lincoln pointedly observed in the same interview, "It's the recording industry—that's how much power those people have." Indeed it is, and indeed they do. The vast and growing wealth and power of the recording industry vis-à-vis other entertainment media has been one of the most striking developments of the last few decades. From being the tail of the dog, the business of making and selling records has become the dog itself. Thus, where sales of soundtrack recordings were once ancillary to the production of motion pictures, those pictures often are concocted as a means of publicizing the records with which they are associated. Similarly, it is a commonplace that the leading popular music performers now embark on tours not because they want to perform in public, but rather to promote a recording whose release has been timed to coincide with the tour.

If this suggests that the recording industry has come to exert a predominant influence in determining the relative economic success or failure of a musical artist, the suggestion is well taken. From a theoretical standpoint, it is always possible that an artist may become popular even without extensive sales of his or her recordings. In practice, this happens about as often as objects spontaneously falling upward. There may be other paths to musical fame and fortune, but the tried-and-true approach consists of the following sequence: (1) recordings; (2) promotion by the recording company (or companies); (3) sizable and growing sales of the recordings; (4) another round of recordings and promotion. And so on, ad infinitum.

In this scheme of things, the recording firms hardly play the role of reluctant candidates patiently waiting to have greatness thrust upon them. On the contrary, as befits their lofty position in a sector of the economy that each year accounts for tens of billions of dollars in sales revenues, recording company executives do their utmost to insure that none of their investments will be disastrous and all of them, if possible, will be monumentally profitable.

January

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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* To be sure, a number of jazz artists have established their own recording operations; but it is doubtful if all such artist-owned firms together account for one percent of the total number of jazz recordings released each year. For the recording industry as a whole, the importance of the artist-owned jazz recording firm is, naturally, more marginal still.

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The Militant January 18, 2010 5

‘1961 victory of Cuban people surprise

Preface by Cuban commander for book on Bay of Pigs invasion expl

Printed below is the preface by José Ramón Fernández to the book *The Inevitable Battle: From the Bay of Pigs to Playa Girón*. The book by Juan Carlos Rodríguez presents a valuable account of the events of the April 1961 U.S.-organized invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs.

The author tells the story of how ordinary men and women took up arms in defense of the Cuban Revolution, which had conquered state power in the name of the workers and farmers of the island just two years prior. With arms in hand, working people from across the island rallied to the defense of the conquests they had made and were continuing to build upon.

The book tells how, mobilized by a proletarian leadership of the highest caliber, Cuba’s revolutionary militias and armed forces soundly defeated the invasion in less than 72 hours of combat. Despite the well-organized, well-resourced U.S. operation, the book explains, the Cuban people issued Washington its first military defeat in the Americas, testimony to the popular support among Cuba’s working people for the deep-going social revolution that decisively broke the economic power of the wealthy landholders in Cuba and the United States.

José Ramón Fernández was commander of the main column of Cuban forces that defeated the invasion at the Bay of Pigs and the mercenaries at Playa Girón. An account by Fernández of these events is also contained in *Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs: Washington’s First Military Defeat in the Americas* from Pathfinder Press.



BY JOSÉ RAMÓN FERNÁNDEZ

Bay of Pigs: The Inevitable Battle is testimony exploring the origins, development, and climax of one stage of the U.S. effort to destroy the Cuban Revolution—a stage that ended in the defeat of Assault Brigade 2506 on the sands of Playa Girón.

Based on thorough research, the book highlights previously unpublished and little-known aspects. Most striking, perhaps, is the magnitude of the CIA’s plan, told in all its military, economic, and political detail: the preparation for and launching of an insurgent war in the mountains; the subversive destabilization of the country, including, in its worst form, terrorism; the creation of a psychological climate. The plan in-



Washington came up with many rationalizations for its defeat at Playa Girón in April 1961. But none of these, Fernández writes, mention the decisive factor—the uncompromising determination on the part of the Cuban people to defend their socialist revolution. Above, members of revolutionary militia celebrate victory. Left, front cover of April 18, 1961, issue of *Revolución*. Headline reads, “Everyone to their combat and work positions!”

cluded the setting up of recruitment and training centers, and giving top-quality training to the counterrevolutionary forces for conventional clashes of a limited scope. It included details as sophisticated as providing mosquito hats for protection against irritating insect bites, and placing technical resources at the disposal of these forces. It included assembling and structuring these forces, and the ideological work done toward them. In all of this, U.S. military leaders and politicians played a manipulative and dominant role.

The Playa Girón disaster is one of the events that generated the greatest number of analyses, reports, articles, and books in the United States. It produced profound bitterness in political circles and in the agencies of the administration, which were forced to explain what had failed in the almost-always perfect U.S. military apparatus. With very few exceptions, it is hard to find an explanation today in U.S. literature for what happened on those beaches that is not loaded with preconceived notions and assumptions. Not enough air raids; difficulties with supplies; perhaps the invasion should have been at Trinidad or somewhere else; and so on. Most U.S. analyses do not mention the obvious factor—which turned out to be decisive and is completely valid forty-five years later. That is, the unquestionable fact

that the Cuban population was living through a revolutionary apex, and was in full agreement with Fidel’s political ideas. And at the same time we were expecting an invasion, including a direct U.S. invasion. For the Cuban people it was a question of confronting, repelling, and defeating a foreign invasion. And there is one force more powerful than steam, electricity, or atomic energy: the determination of man.

“The cause the invaders were defending was neither right nor just. That’s why they did not fight with the same valor and spirit as the revolutionary forces...”

The author extensively describes the work carried out by the Revolution to confront and defeat the enemy’s plans. He highlights the actions against banditry, the penetration of the CIA’s center in Havana, and of its counterrevolutionary organizations in Cuba and the United States. He details the fight against sabotage, which reduced to ashes some of the country’s most important commercial centers and various factories. He tells how plots were foiled to assassinate the Commander in Chief, plots that reached a record number in the period leading up to Girón. He highlights Fidel’s work of education and clarification in face of the plans to intimidate the people through psychological operations. He lays bare the entire arsenal of resources, methods, and techniques used in the subversive war of propaganda, including its main weapons: Radio Swan, disinformation and rumor campaigns lacking a shred of ethics and displaying unprecedented cynicism, exemplified by the “parental custody” operation aimed at violating the purest values of the Cuban family.

From the standpoint of strategy and tactics, the operation as it was conceived cannot be faulted. They chose an area to land that had an airstrip and infrastructure but was separated from solid ground by a swamp crossed by only three access roads—and it was over

these three roads that the paratroopers were dropped. They came well-organized, well-armed, and with good support. But the cause they were defending was neither right nor just. That’s why they did not fight with the ardor, courage, firmness, valor, and spirit of victory shown by the revolutionary forces.

This explains the extraordinary scope of the Cuban people’s victory, which must have come as a great surprise to the United States government, which expected a different outcome. The outcome can only be explained by the courage of a people that saw in the triumph of January 1, 1959, the real possibility of controlling their own destiny. That is why they proudly wore the blue denim shirt and olive-green beret, and were willing to fight with the certainty that “No pasarán”—the enemy shall not pass.

The men who cheered Fidel Castro as he traveled through almost the entire island in victory in those early days of January 1959 were the same ones, now convinced of their cause, rifle in hand, who on April 17, 1961, were determined to resist and defeat the U.S. aggression. In that short period of time, the work of the Revolution, and especially Fidel’s words, took deep root in the feelings of the Cuban people. They took as their



Cuban field commander José Ramón Fernández, ce

For further reading...



The Inevitable Battle

by Juan Carlos Rodríguez

Rodríguez explains that the failure of the attack on Playa Girón was not due to poor strategy and tactics on the part of the invading forces. Cuba defeated the invasion because the human material available to Washington could not match the courage and determination of a people fighting to defend what they had gained through the continent’s first socialist revolution.

Available in English (\$20) and Spanish (\$15).

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ed the world and preserved revolution'

ains why U.S. mercenaries were no match for revolutionary forces

own the concepts of national sovereignty, social justice, equality, and dignity. The Revolution had solved the problem of the land. It was taking sure and tangible steps to eliminate racial discrimination and discrimination against women. It was ensuring the great masses access to jobs, education, public health, sports, and culture. Its effort to eradicate every type of corruption was becoming rooted in popular consciousness.

In addition to the esthetic and political merits of the author's narration, his account of the changes that began to take place in 1959 in the Zapata Swamp—the future theater of operations—is a concrete demonstration of the economic and social achievements the Revolution attained in that short period.

"The Cuban people were experiencing intense moments of patriotism and revolutionary fervor. Support for the Revolution and for its leader Fidel Castro had risen to a level never seen before for any other leader in the hemisphere," the author said, and that would be the main cause of the mercenaries' defeat.

"Get up, the invasion is here and the Americans are attacking! The Americans are in the swamp!" Those were the voices that ran from house to house in the town of Jagüey Grande, the closest to the landing site. They thought they were Yankee Marines, and began gathering at militia headquarters, the municipal government, and Rebel Army headquarters, asking for weapons and instructions.

The millions of Cubans who were preparing to resist, like the inhabitants of Jagüey, those who directly faced the invasion and gave their lives or were victorious, and those who neutralized the genuinely pro-annexation internal counterrevolution knew why they were doing what they did. In contrast to the situation of other nations, ours was not unarmed or disorganized when the attack occurred.

Moreover, not even the necessity of defending the Revolution against such an enormous danger led Fidel to make concessions. Being a militia member was not easy. You had to win that right.

I was at the camp of the School of Cadets in Managua, at the mouth of the La Magdalena River on the southern side of the Sierra Maestra. From there we climbed Turquino Peak. The order was to climb to the top twenty times, and

when we had completed half the mission, I received the order to appear before the Commander in Chief here in Havana. He told me to find a place to set up a school where we would give classes to a large group of selected workers, union leaders, and students who would, in turn, lead the militia battalions. I should mention that by the time I had contact with the first class, its members—following Fidel's instructions—had climbed the Turquino five times.

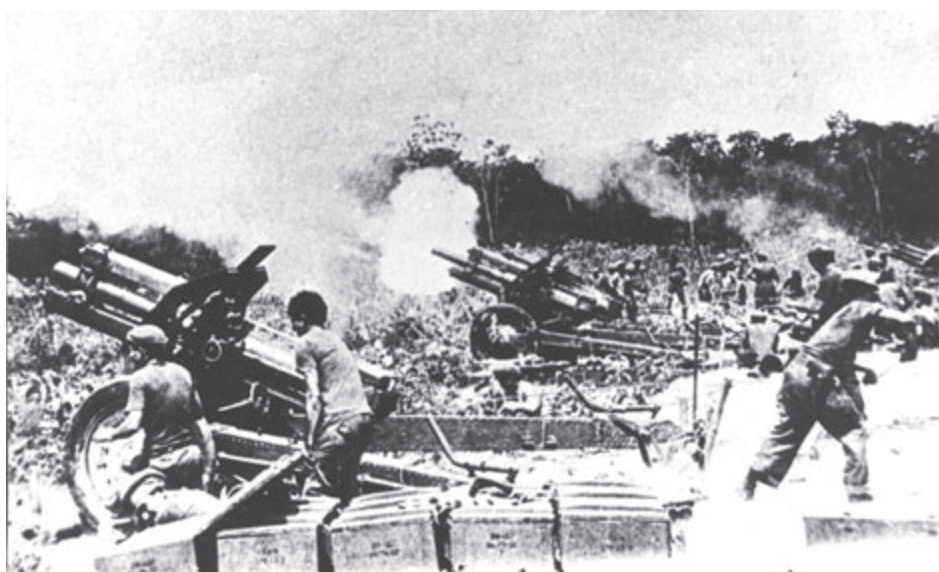
A few weeks after this class was held at the Militia Leadership School in Matanzas, the militia battalions began to be organized. Fidel sent for me to lead the training of battalions in the capital. That was when he asked us what test we would give to the volunteers in order to measure their determination, firmness, and drive to become militia members.

I remember that Fidel proposed that they go and return in a single day from Managua to Santa Cruz del Norte. We looked for the map and measured the distance. It was more than one hundred

"The militias became giant schools of revolutionaries. From the anonymity of their ranks came the leadership cadres; they did not come from castes. . ."

kilometers there and back. A man would have to be in exceptional physical condition and well-trained to do it in one day. It was almost impossible. Finally, the route chosen was through Managua, taking the highway that leads to Batabanó, continuing to San Antonio de las Vegas, and from there to Ruda, then taking the Central Highway to San José and Cuatro Caminos and returning to Managua. That was the start of the famous sixty-two-kilometer test.

The first battalion to pass the test and the school was the 111th. Each militia member was given a small card that was marked at different points to prove the course had been followed. That night, there was a tremendous rainstorm. Fidel joined in the march at one point as it was raining. The next morning, nobody had returned at the estimated hour. We assumed that they were going to start arriving a little after sunrise, but the sun rose and nobody came. At about 10 a.m., the first ones arrived, and then at 11 and 12 and 1, little by little, they began to show up, exhausted. Later, the ones who didn't pass the test began arriving in any vehicle they had managed to find. At about 4 p.m., we assembled the leadership cadres and I was there analyzing and reviewing our performance in a classroom when the door opened and Fidel came in. I explained to him what was going on. He ordered me to have the battalion form ranks. We organized those who were there, some more cheerful than others. Fidel spoke to the militia members. To those who didn't pass the sixty-two-kilometer test, he said they had to do so in order to be part of the battalion; but he noted that it was voluntary. He grouped together the ones who had arrived first and told them they were a "light combat company," which was a unit with a different purpose and weapons, a shock



Granma

Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces and popular militias soundly defeated U.S.-organized invasion in less than 72 hours. Above, Cuban artillery units in action.

force. In his final comments, he said to those who hadn't passed but who wanted to leave that they could do so if they liked; those who decided to stay would have to do the march again. Nobody left. "When do we do it?" they asked. There are always those who get carried away and that day there were some. "Let's do it today!" many of them said passionately. It was decided to do it two days later. And everybody passed.

It's important to say that throughout the course, the militia members did not live or sleep indoors; it was the hammock, under the trees. They cooked outdoors with firewood; used rudimentary latrines dug in the ground, and lived without running water or showers. The only light they had was the moon and stars. When it rained, they lived in water and mud. They did military exercises all day and guard duty at night. It wasn't easy. And each battalion had 995 troops.

When the two-week course was over, each militia member was given the green beret that became an emblem. The presentation of the beret was cause for celebration. The militias became a giant school of revolutionaries. From the anonymity of their ranks came the leadership cadres; they did not come from castes. They were industrial and agricultural workers, intellectual workers, and students.

The soldiers and officers of the Rebel Army and the National Revolutionary Police were also subjected to very hard tests. They were knowledgeable about guerrilla warfare and were just beginning to learn about the new weaponry and the art of conventional warfare when the landing happened. The tank crewmen were learning how to load the guns

on the road as they headed for the battlefield. The few pilots we had took off in planes that they themselves described as "Homeland or Death"; the planes were not in or out of commission, they simply flew because of the inventiveness of their mechanics and the courage of their aviators. The soldiers in the main columns were constantly mobilized.

All of those tests and Fidel's concepts—which were not new, they were from the Sierra—contributed much to the high morale of the militias and the Revolutionary Armed Forces, above all among men from the city who had never led such a rough life, day and night; so difficult, out in the open, under the rain, the night dew. These factors were decisive to the defeat of the armed bands and the mercenaries at Girón and were important during the October [Missile] Crisis. It is a requirement that has been repeated many times, and is now a popular tradition.

I should not fail to mention that the same spirit, the same revolutionary passion that Fidel implanted in the Sierra in the early days of the struggle are the same spirit and passion in which our Revolutionary Armed Forces continue today to be educated, under the leadership of Raúl. They are examples of austerity, honor, selflessness, and patriotism.

It is a passion like the one demonstrated in recent times, above all, in face of a real, imminent danger like Girón, a passion that produced a victory that surprised the world and preserved the Revolution, because Fidel had unleashed the strength of the people. That is the only way we can explain the defeat of an undertaking as enormous and aggressive as the one described in this book.



Courtesy of José Ramón Fernández

enter, during Bay of Pigs invasion.



AP/Wide World Photos

Operations at Bay of Pigs and Playa Girón were conceived, organized, financed, and carried out by Washington. Above, U.S. president John F. Kennedy flanked by military advisors.

Oppose U.S. ‘antiterror’ operations

Washington aims to gain greater acceptance for chipping away at democratic rights and a freer hand for military action abroad after the attempted attack on a plane coming into the Detroit airport Christmas Day. Working people should oppose the demagogic appeals by Democratic and Republican party officials alike, in the name of preempting “terrorist” attacks, to rationalize restrictions on democratic rights at home and further military assaults on workers in other countries.

When President Barack Obama declared January 5 that the U.S. government will take the fight against so-called terrorist groups wherever they are, “be it in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in Yemen and Somalia, or in other countries around the world,” he was talking about defending the class privilege and economic interests of the tiny U.S. capitalist class. His order for intense screening of passengers on U.S.-bound flights that have originated in, or passed through, 14 specific countries is aimed at further justifying Washington’s foreign policy—be it the 50-year effort to overturn Cuba’s socialist revolution or the widening “antiterror” operations of U.S. military forces throughout the Middle East,

Central Asia, and parts of Africa.

The government attempts to curtail rights, won through hard-fought battles by the working class over decades, are not primarily aimed at small pockets of suspect “foreigners.” Working people in the United States and organizations of the working class must be especially alert to protest government frame-up trials and oppose trampling on the presumption of innocence; Fourth Amendment protections against arbitrary search, seizure, and wiretaps; and freedom of association without spying and harassment by government informers and agent provocateurs.

The U.S. rulers are preparing for their future. As they press their assault on the living and working conditions of workers and farmers in the United States, they will be met by growing struggles. That’s why Washington is utilizing every incident like the one at the Detroit airport to systematically strengthen its hand against the battles it knows are coming. That’s why the working class has a big stake in exposing and opposing what’s really behind Washington’s war drive and attacks on democratic rights.

Temp hiring no relief for unemployed

Continued from front page

far below what it had been. “Signs of Revival in Heartland,” headlined a December 23 *Wall Street Journal* article, citing the callback of 250 workers by a recreational vehicle company in Elkhart County, Indiana. The company had laid off 900 workers.

For those employed, the bosses have succeeded in boosting speedup, producing more goods with fewer workers. This “productivity” output rose 8.1 percent in the third quarter of 2009, the largest gain in six years.

Pushed to work harder and faster, many workers face worsening safety conditions, longer workdays, and more mental and physical fatigue.

Unemployment funds ‘going broke’

Those receiving unemployment benefits may soon see these payments reduced. “Twenty-five states have run out of unemployment money and have borrowed \$24 billion from the federal government to cover the gaps,” reported the *Washington Post*. By 2011, 40 states will be out of these funds and will need \$90 billion in loans to keep issuing benefit checks, according to the Department of Labor.

In Kentucky, state authorities are recommending a 9 percent benefits cut. Other states are considering similar reductions. The average weekly unemployment check in Kentucky is about \$300,

reported the *Post*.

Meanwhile, city and state governments are cutting funds for public transit, reducing train and bus service and raising fares. The cost of riding public transit rose by an annual rate of nearly 18 percent in the six-month period ending in November, reported the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In San Francisco fares for a monthly pass for Bay Area Rapid Transit rose 27 percent to \$70, and more than 100 workers are being laid off. Chicago Transit is furloughing nonunion employees, laying off about 1,000 union workers in February, and eliminating nine express bus routes. In New York public transit cuts being planned include eliminating discounted or free MetroCards to more than half a million students.

In another development, Ford Motor Co. has again offered buyouts to all of the 41,000 United Auto Workers union members it employs. Those younger than 55 with at least one year of employment can get \$50,000 and the choice of a \$25,000 vehicle voucher or \$20,000 more in cash.

The proposed buyouts come after workers in November voted down company-demanded concessions that included a six-year ban on some strikes and a wage freeze for new hires until 2015. According to the current union contract, Ford can pay new workers \$14 an hour, way below the average union wage. Workers with high seniority make about \$28 per hour.

Tamil refugees win release in Canada

BY JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL—Despite efforts by the Canadian government to keep them locked up, 50 of 76 Tamil refugees detained in October are being released, although they face onerous conditions imposed by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB).

The Tamils fled Sri Lanka on a ship that was seized by Canadian officials off Canada’s West Coast. Alleging that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) owned the vessel and that many of the Tamils were members of the LTTE, Ottawa arrested the refugees and locked them up in a Vancouver detention center.

The LTTE is an organization that fought a decades-long war against the Sri Lankan army for Tamil independence. Early last spring the army decisively defeated the last of the LTTE fighters and locked up 300,000 Tamils in concentration camps. The camps will be closed by January 31.

Canada is home to up to 200,000 Tamils who fled discrimination and repression at the hands of the Sri Lankan government and army. Ottawa has been

complicit in the repression of the Tamils by officially designating the LTTE as a “terrorist” organization.

Over the past year groups in the Tamil community, mainly centered in Toronto and Montreal, have organized large street demonstrations against the murderous repression by the Sri Lankan army. Today they are demanding that the 76 Tamils in detention be admitted to Canada as refugees.

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is carrying out the “investigation” of the Tamils. In November the Sri Lankan government asked the Canadian High Commission in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo for access to the refugees, saying that they could help the Sri Lankan intelligence services track down remaining LTTE activists abroad.

Ottawa is using special sections of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which permit the CBSA to keep its information secret, including the names of the refugees detained, and at the same time to jail people if there is a “reasonable” suspicion that an individual could pose a “security threat” to Canada.

Protests in Iran

Continued from front page

country. In 1988 he criticized the executions of several thousand political prisoners and Khomeini removed him as his successor. In 1997 Montazeri was put under house arrest for six years after he said that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who became supreme leader upon Khomeini’s death, was not qualified for the job.

Several senior ayatollahs in Iran, including Khamenei’s brother Hadi, joined the funeral procession, a sign of how deeply the clergy and the ruling layers of the country are divided over how to respond to mounting demands for jobs, higher wages and back pay, political rights, women’s rights, and the rights of Iran’s many oppressed nationalities.

Workers from Iran Telecommunication Industries demonstrated December 22 outside a speech by Iranian president Ahmadinejad in Shiraz. The semiofficial Mehr News carried photos, including one of a banner saying, “For 11 months we have not been paid.”

The government banned further mourning ceremonies for Montazeri after the huge turnout in Qom. But marchers in several cities defied the order.

The protests reached a climax on December 27. That is the date of Ashura, an important day of mourning in Shiite Islam. Crowds of tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands marched that day in Tehran and other cities shouting “Death to the dictator!” Security forces opened fire, killing at least eight, including Mousavi’s nephew.

Some troops refused to carry out orders to attack fellow Iranians, the opposition Web site Rahe Sabz reported. It cited one case of a soldier being slapped by his officer and threatened with court martial.

Demonstrations also erupted in Isfahan and Najafabad in central Iran, Mashhad in the far east, Shiraz in the south, Arak in the west, and Babol on the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijanis, an oppressed nationality in the northwest, took to the streets in Zanzan and Tabriz. Rahe Sabz said four protesters were reportedly killed in Tabriz.

Gov’t holds counterdemonstration

Ahmadinejad responded by accusing the governments of the United States and Israel of orchestrating the protests. The government organized marches in Tehran and other cities December 29 to denounce the opposition’s “desecration” of Ashura. Encouraged by free transportation and a day off for public employees, hundreds of thousands turned out. Some demonstrators demanded that Mousavi be executed.

Mousavi responded to the threats January 1 in a statement published on opposition Web sites. “We are neither Britons nor Americans,” he said. “Assuming you impose silence through arrests, violence, threats and muzzling newspapers and websites, how can you remedy the people’s changed attitude toward the regime? How can you address its lack of legitimacy?” He called for the release of political prisoners, a free press, and the right to peacefully demonstrate.

In a letter to Ayatollah Khamenei that same day, Mohsen Rezaie, a conservative politician who also ran in the June 12 presidential elections, urged him to consider what Mousavi had proposed. Rezaie said the statement was positive and could “signal the beginning of a new unifying movement.” Mousavi, he said, “retreated from the position of denying the legitimacy of Mr. Ahmadinejad’s government” and made “a constructive proposal about the role the parliament and the judiciary must play in holding the administration accountable.”

Although an estimated 1,500 have been arrested, the government is deeply divided over how to deal with the opposition. The deputy national police chief, Ahmadreza Radan, announced December 30 that the arrest of top opposition figures “is not on the agenda,” according to Mehr News. He said if protest leaders are arrested they will become heroes.

Amidst the fight for democratic rights in Iran, the Obama administration is focused on what it sees as an opportunity to press harder for new sanctions to block Iran’s nuclear program.

The *New York Times* reported January 3 that unnamed Obama advisers believe “domestic unrest and signs of unexpected trouble in Tehran’s nuclear program make its leaders particularly vulnerable to strong and immediate new sanctions.”