

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Washington intends to be  
'intrusive' in Pakistan

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 75/NO. 3 JANUARY 24, 2011

## Workers' pensions on the chopping block

### Most in U.S. now lack retirement fund

BY SETH GALINSKY

Millions of state and municipal government workers in the United States, who once thought they had a secure pension waiting for them when they retire, are facing a different reality. State pension funds alone are under funded by at least \$1 trillion, probably more.

In the last nine years at least 39 states have raised retirement ages, cut benefits, or increased pension deductions from workers' paychecks. Under the banner of "pension reform," state and local governments are accelerating these attacks on workers who retire.

City workers in Prichard, Alabama, on the outskirts of Mobile, learned firsthand in 2009 that the pension law is just a piece of paper. Saying the pension fund had run dry, the city government filed for bankruptcy and stopped sending monthly pension checks to 150 retired workers.

After skipping a \$3.1 billion payment to the state employees' pension fund, New Jersey governor Christopher Christie proposed almost tripling the amount workers must contribute. He also wants to raise the retirement age to 65 years for all state workers. According

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## Food price jumps protested in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco

BY ANGEL LARISCY

Prices of basic food items have rocketed in the last year, hitting the world's least developed countries the hardest, where working people commonly spend half or more of their income on food.

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization announced in January that the food price index rose 32 percent between June and Decem-

ber 2010. Prices are expected to climb even further in the coming year. One billion people in the world don't get enough to eat, according to the UN.

So far this year corn is up 63 percent; wheat, 84 percent; soybeans, 24 percent; and sugar, 55 percent.

Protests have broken out in Morocco, Tunisia, and most recently Algeria, over increased prices for milk,

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## Fighters value the 'Militant' for reporting union struggles

BY ANGEL LARISCY

For the next month supporters of the *Militant* around the world will be reaching out to subscribers to win them to renewing their subscriptions to the socialist newsweekly. The chart of quotas adopted by cities and countries will appear in next week's issue.

"We now have three renewals in

Chicago," writes Alyson Kennedy. "We met with an Afro-American worker tonight for over an hour. He renewed and had read some of *Malcolm X*, *Black Liberation*, and the *Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes." Supporters in Chicago began organizing teams to make calls over the weekend

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Militant/Maggie Trowe

David Rosenfeld (left), Socialist Workers candidate for Iowa governor in 2010, showing *Militant* newspaper to locked-out grain mill workers in Keokuk, Iowa, January 4.

## 1,400 more U.S. marines headed into Afghan war



Gunnery Sgt. William Price

U.S. Marines patrol in Sangin District, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, December 30.

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Washington is sending 1,400 to 3,000 more marines to Afghanistan in an effort to preempt an expected offensive by Taliban forces in early spring, as the Barack Obama administration further distances itself from the goal of withdrawing troops beginning in 2011.

In an editorial welcoming the decision, the *Wall Street Journal* noted wryly that the administration's annual review of the war said its "strategy in Afghanistan is setting the conditions to begin the responsible reduction of U.S. forces in 2011." Adding another 1,400 troops now is an "interesting" definition of "reduction," the *Journal* commented.

U.S. vice president Joseph Biden

visited Afghanistan January 10–11. "We've largely arrested the Taliban momentum here in some very important areas," he told a press conference in Kabul, speaking alongside Afghan president Hamid Karzai. "But these gains—as you pointed out to me, Mr. President—we know are fragile and reversible."

Biden went on to say that the U.S. government would keep its troops in Afghanistan past 2014 "if the Afghan people want it."

Most of the new levy of marines are headed for Sangin, Helmand Province, a Taliban stronghold. The British government withdrew its troops from that area last September after 100 of them were killed over four years. U.S.

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## 'Post-recession' joblessness longest, deepest since WWII

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

U.S. business profits are booming while growing numbers of working people face the prospect of long-term joblessness.

In the third quarter of 2010 annual corporate profits rose by \$1.66 trillion. This is the seventh consecutive quarterly increase.

At the same time more than 21 million workers are without jobs. The official unemployment rate in December was 9.4 percent. This is the 20th consecutive month the official rate has topped 9 percent, "the longest such streak on record," noted the Associated Press.

December's jobless rate dropped from 9.8 percent in November. The decline, however, was not because more jobs were available, but because more workers were not being counted as part of the workforce. Those categorized by the government as "dis-

couraged" topped 1.3 million in December, with 5 million other workers who want a job not counted.

U.S. government officials say the recession ended in June 2009. But massive joblessness is continuing

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# Protest in Chicago set to condemn FBI probe

**BY LAURA ANDERSON**

CHICAGO—A January 25 protest at Federal Plaza will take place here in defense of 23 antiwar and Palestine solidarity activists and others recently subpoenaed to appear before grand juries. Nine of the 23 have been ordered to testify that day.

Fifty people attended a press conference December 23 to protest the four latest subpoenas issued December 21.

“As someone who has been leading the support work around the raids and subpoenas in Chicago, I have seen firsthand that this is not about 23 individuals,” said Maureen Murphy, co-chair of the Chicago Committee Against Political Repression. “The rights of us all are at stake.” Murphy, an activist with the Palestine Solidarity Group here, was issued a summons two days earlier to appear before the federal grand jury in Chicago January 25.

“The government’s motivation in issuing these subpoenas is to have us name names of other activists,” she added, “not only here in the U.S. but also places like Palestine and Colombia where many of us have traveled to learn about the human rights situation in those places.”

On September 24, in a coordinated raid, more than 70 federal agents burst into the homes of members of political groups in the Midwest, seizing cell phones, computers, and documents. So far no one has been charged with any crime and no arrests have been made.

Others who spoke at the press conference included Murphy’s lawyer Michael Deutsch of the People’s Law

Office; Amina Sharif, Council on American Islamic Relations; Kristin Szremski, American Muslims for Palestine; and Joe Iosbaker, whose home was raided by the FBI in September. Iosbaker chaired the conference.

When asked, “What’s wrong about going before the grand jury?” Deutch explained that the government is given power, without a lawyer being present, to ask a witness “about their political activities, who they associate with, what meetings they go to, who is present at those meetings, what was said at those meetings, and what their political beliefs are. These are questions that are private. The government shouldn’t be allowed to force you to answer these questions.”

The Barack Obama administration is continuing the policies of the Bush administration, Deutch said. “Preven-

## Parole official opposes freeing Puerto Rican activist

**BY BRIAN WILLIAMS**

Mark Tanner, a U.S. Parole Commission official, recommended January 5 that Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López Rivera not be granted parole. Tanner’s proposal came after a closed hearing at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, where López is currently incarcerated. The full commission will make a final decision within the next three to four months.

“He’s not being held for anything he did. He is being held for what he stands for,” commented Jan Susler, López’s attorney, after the hearing.

López, 68, has been incarcerated



Militant/Laura Anderson

Maureen Murphy, from Palestine Solidarity Group in Chicago, speaks at news conference December 23 to protest subpoenas issued by FBI to antiwar and Palestine solidarity activists.

tive detention, rendition, spying on people. That is all continuing.”

“What’s happening here is the government is targeting groups that are publicly opposing its foreign policy,”

he added.

More information on upcoming protest actions is available at the Committee to Stop FBI Repression website at stopfbi.net.

for nearly 30 years, one of the longest-held political prisoners in the world. He was accused of being a leader of the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), which called for the independence of Puerto Rico from U.S. colonial rule. Washington said the FALN was responsible for a series of bombings beginning in 1974.

López was convicted of “seditious conspiracy.” Like 11 other independence supporters arrested in 1980, he refused to recognize the authority of the U.S. courts and was sentenced to 55 years in prison.

Before his arrest, López was a political activist in the Puerto Rican community in Chicago. He was a founder of the Rafael Cancel Miranda High School and helped launch the Committee to Free the Five Puerto Rican Nationalists.

In response to protests against U.S. colonial domination of Puerto Rico, U.S. president William Clinton pardoned 11 of 17 Puerto Rican political prisoners in 1999. López refused to accept the commutation offer, because it required him to serve 10 more years and did not include all the Puerto Rican political prisoners.

Support continues to grow for López’s release. A petition released in mid-De-

cember by the Puerto Rico Mayors Association describes his incarceration as “ideological punishment.”

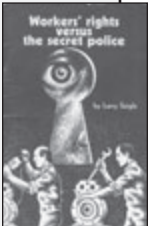
“It is high time for this brother, whose only crime is his activism in favor of Puerto Rico’s independence, to come back home,” Comerío mayor Josean Santiago told the media.

The National Boricua Human Rights Network announced it will be collecting signatures on a new letter rejecting the parole official’s recommendation and calling for the commission to grant López parole.

### Workers’ Rights Versus the Secret Police

*by Larry Seigle*

How, since the inception of the modern revolutionary workers movement in 1848, the ruling classes have responded with police spies, agents provocateurs, and political frame-ups. **\$5**



### Cointelpro: The FBI’s Secret War on Political Freedom

*by Nelson Blackstock*

Describes the decades-long covert counter-intelligence program against socialists and activists in the Black and anti-Vietnam War movements. **\$15**

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# THE MILITANT

## Independence for Western Sahara!

*The Sahrawi people are fighting for independence of Western Sahara from Moroccan domination. Moroccan authorities recently arrested Sahrawi youth who traveled to South Africa for the 17th World Festival of Youth and Students. Learn more by reading the ‘Militant.’*

A black and white photograph showing a group of people, mostly women wearing headscarves, at a demonstration. They are holding up flags and banners, and some are shouting or singing. The background shows trees and other people.

Militant/Gordon Brown

Demonstration in Pretoria, South Africa, December 15 in support of liberation for Western Sahara.

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# Prisoners in Georgia protest dismal conditions

BY LISA POTASH

ATLANTA—The NAACP and families of prisoners have recently charged that Georgia prison guards beat at least three handcuffed inmates in late December in retaliation for an earlier work stoppage to protest prison conditions.

Prisoners in at least six Georgia state prisons carried out the strike earlier that month in support of demands to be paid for their work, more educational and vocational opportunities, improved health care, an end to cruel and unusual punishment, livable conditions, nutritious meals, access to family members, and just parole decisions.

There are approximately 53,000 people held in Georgia's 30 state prisons. One in every 13 adults in the state is in prison, on probation, or paroled.

The beatings of inmates followed a visit to two prisons by a delegation headed by the NAACP to investigate conditions the prisoners had brought to light. Edward DuBose, president of the Georgia State Conference of the NAACP, told reporters the men were beaten with hammers. One incarcerated at Macon State Prison in Oglethorpe was struck in the head so severely he was in a hospital intensive care unit for several days. Other beatings occurred at Smith State Prison in Glennville shortly after the civil rights delegation visited.

Except for about 20 people in two state prisons who earn \$7.25 an hour, Georgia inmates are prohibited by state law from receiving wages for their labor. Inmates work in prison kitchens, laundries, and maintenance. They work in shops manufacturing furniture, clothing, signs, and other items sold to government agencies. They also clean and repair nearby state roads and government buildings.

In a telephone interview with the *Militant*, Victor Hixon in Rome described the situation facing his cousin, who is now in a Floyd County work-release program primarily of men behind on child-support payments. "Each person is required to pay \$140 out of their weekly wages for food, housing, and transportation," he said. Hixon called imprisonment in the United States a "new form of slavery."

Educational opportunities are not available beyond obtaining a GED. Prisoners are required to pay for some medical services and phone calls.

Smith State prisoners began discussing a protest after the state in September

imposed a ban on prisoners having cigarettes. Using cell phones that are considered "contraband" but are routinely purchased from guards for hundreds of dollars each, prisoners in different jails began communicating with each other. "We have to come together and set aside all differences—white, Blacks, those of us who are affiliated in gangs," an inmate named Mike told the media.

On December 9 at Hays, Macon, Smith, and Telfair state prisons, inmates locked themselves in their cells after the normal morning unlocking by the prison administration. They stayed in there as part of a strike from all work. In response, the prison administration enforced a "lock-down," which was lifted after prisoners ended their strike six days later.

The inmates are continuing to press their demands. On December 20 the Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoners' Rights, formed in response to

## Fighters value 'Militant' on union struggles

Continued from front page

and have set up a number of similar meetings as a result.

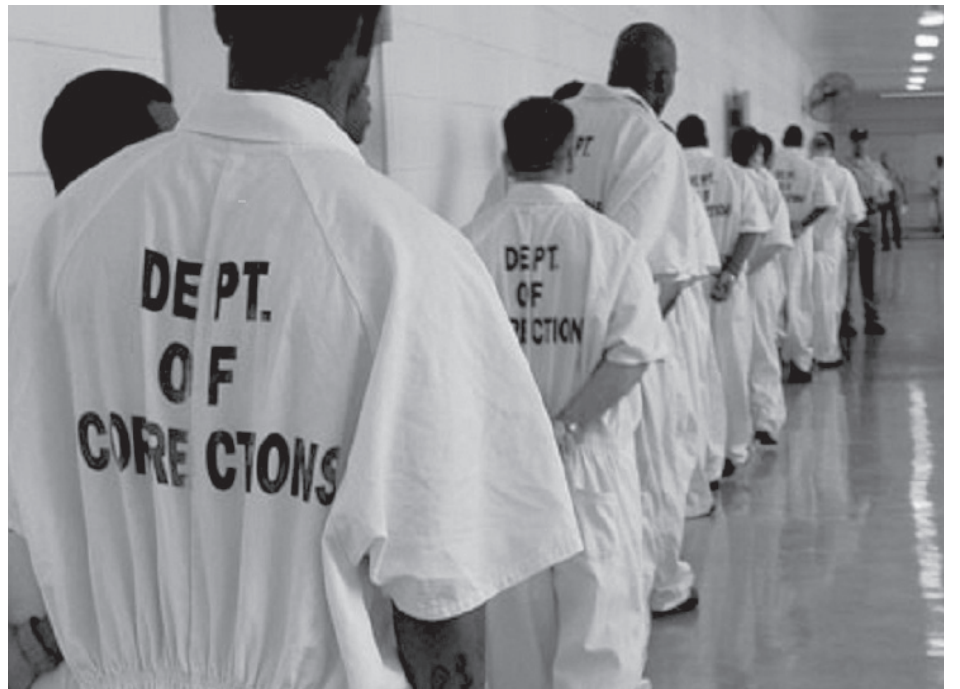
In Twin Cities, Minnesota, Frank Forrestal reports, "We picked up a renewal from a Delta worker who spoke at our forum on labor struggles a few weeks ago." Supporters there also signed up two participants at their most recent Militant Labor Forum to renew.

Many workers who are being approached about renewing their subscriptions are talking about the value of the *Militant* in learning about other workers' struggles and appreciate the integrity of the paper's reporting about their fights.

One worker involved in the fight against the lockout by Roquette Industries in Keokuk, Iowa, commented positively about seeing his coworkers reading the *Militant* in the union hall and at the picket shack.

The campaign to win hundreds of readers to re-up on their subscriptions will go hand in hand with deepening discussions on politics today and introducing workers to revolutionary books such as the new Pathfinder title *Soldier of the Cuban Revolution* by brigadier general Luis Alfonso Zayas.

The introduction to the book by Mary-Alice Waters has been printed in English and Spanish in the *Militant*. The book is available at a special



Inmates in line to enter Diagnostic and Classification Maximum Security prison cafeteria in Jackson, Georgia. Prisoners at some six Georgia state prisons struck in December to protest conditions. At least three handcuffed inmates were later beaten by guards.

the protest, organized the fact-finding delegation to visit Georgia Department of Corrections officials and the prisons themselves. In addition to the NAACP, members of the delegation included Georgia American Civil Liberties

Union, Nation of Islam, U.S. Human Rights Network, and the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition. The NAACP has called on the U.S. Department of Justice to intervene under the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act.

price of only \$14 through April 15.

A feature of the renewal drive will be communist workers in factories signing up coworkers for long-term subscriptions. "Before the drive began we already had four coworkers renew," reports Dan Fein, who works at a pharmaceutical factory in the Bronx. Fein said he was confident other coworkers would renew, while at the same time new readers will be won to the paper.

In addition to renewals, all new subscriptions of six-months or longer will count toward renewal drive quotas.

Over the past weeks a couple dozen workers and students who bought introductory subscriptions in the fall have sent in renewals directly to the *Militant*. They often include notes like "Keep up the good work," and "I love to read the *Militant*!" One reader's wife called the office to make sure his renewal had been received. She said a one-year subscription to the paper is what her husband wanted for Christmas.

The *Militant* has also increased its prison subscriptions by 15 in the past year, as workers behind bars seek out answers to the crisis of capitalism and want to read about working-class struggles.

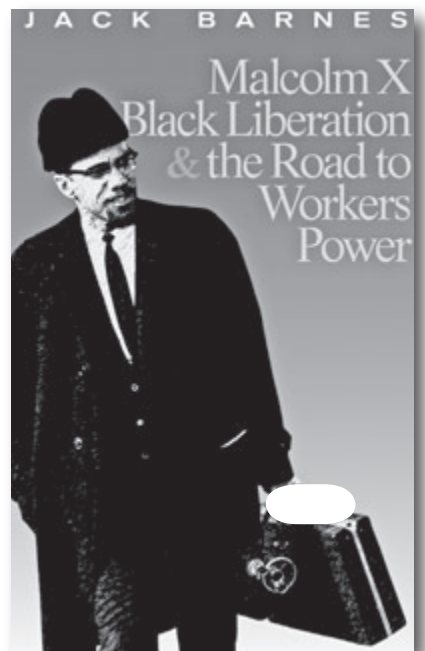
Over the next four weeks areas should chart a campaign to talk to every subscriber won during the successful fall circulation campaign. As this is done supporters of the paper will be able to deepen relationships with those who are looking for answers to the worldwide economic crisis and want to discuss the possibilities for the working class to take political power.

The renewal campaign runs through February 8 so select a quota that is challenging and will help increase the long-term readership of the paper. Readers and supporters of the *Militant* are encouraged to send in reports of how the campaign is going in their area, what is being done to successfully sign up readers, as well as what workers like about the paper.

## Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

by Jack Barnes

"This is a book about the dictatorship of capital and the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat. A book about the last century and a half of class struggle in the United States—from the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction to today—and the unimpeachable evidence it offers that workers who are Black will comprise a disproportionately weighty part of the ranks and leadership of the mass social movement that will make a proletarian revolution. . . ."



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### —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

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**The Capitalist Crisis and the Fight for Women's Rights.** Sat., Jan. 22. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

#### FLORIDA

##### Miami

**The Colonial Roots of the Crisis in Sudan.** Fri., Jan. 21, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 719 NE 79 St. Tel.: (305) 757-8869.

#### IOWA

##### Des Moines

**Revolutionary Cuba and the World Capitalist Crisis: Strengthening the Worker-Farmer Alliance.** Speaker: Maggie Trowe, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Jan. 22, 7:30 p.m. 3707 Douglas Ave. Tel.: (515) 255-1707.

#### MINNESOTA

##### Minneapolis

**Workers Rights under Attack: 40th Anniversary of the Frame-up of Omaha Black Panther Party Members Ed Poin-dexter and Mondo we Langa.** Speaker: Joe Swanson, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan. 21, 8 p.m. 1311 1/2 E. Lake St., 2nd Floor. Tel.: (612) 729-1205.

#### WASHINGTON

##### Seattle

**The Lynching of Emmett Till and the Real History of the White Citizen's Councils.** Video introduced by representative of Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan. 21, 7:30 p.m. Suggested donation: \$5. 5418 Rainier Ave. S. (#7 or #9 bus to Orcas, walk two blocks north). Tel.: (206) 323-1755.



# Texas inmate's conviction overturned after 30 years

BY STEVE WARSHHELL

HOUSTON—After serving 30 years in Texas prisons for a crime he did not commit, Cornelius Dupree, Jr. was exonerated in court January 4. Dupree had been sentenced to a 75-year prison term in 1980 on charges of rape and robbery.

According to the Innocence Project, a New York legal center that specializes in wrongful conviction cases and that represented Dupree, he had already served more time for a crime he didn't commit than any other Texas inmate cleared by DNA evidence.

"Whatever your truth is, you have to stick with it," Dupree, 51, told reporters minutes after a Dallas judge overturned his conviction. Nationally, only two others discharged because of DNA evidence had spent more time in prison: James Bain, who was wrongly imprisoned for 35 years in Florida; and Lawrence McKinney, who spent more than 31 years in a Tennessee prison.

Texas leads the country in wrongly convicted prisoners being released through DNA testing. Since 2000 the state has been forced to release 42 inmates. Two others, including Dupree,

have been released pending formal exoneration by the state. Nine of these were Houston-area prisoners.

Dupree was scheduled for release in 2004 and thought he was going home, until he learned he first would have to attend a "sex offender treatment program."

Those in the program had to go through what is known as the "four R's"—recognition, remorse, restitution, and resolution. Upon learning that he would have to acknowledge guilt as part of the "recognition" phase, he refused to participate and remained in prison indefinitely.

In Dupree's case, accepting release would have meant confessing to a crime he never committed and ruining his chances to clear his name.

At the hearing where Dupree was finally released, at least a dozen other exonerated former inmates from the Dallas area, who collectively served more than 100 years in prison, upheld a local tradition by attending the court proceeding and welcoming the newest member of this fraternity of fighters.

Dupree's accused accomplice, Anthony Massingill, who was convicted



Cornelius Dupree, Jr. celebrates with lawyers January 4 his exoneration on rape and robbery charges. Dupree, who refused to submit to "sex offender treatment program," served more time for a crime he did not commit than any other Texas inmate cleared by DNA evidence.

in the same case and sentenced to life in prison on another sexual assault, remains in jail. The same DNA testing that cleared Dupree also cleared Massingill. He says he is innocent, but remains behind bars while authorities test DNA in the second case.

Three days after Dupree was freed, a panel met in Austin to investigate the execution of another man for the deaths of his three small children in a 1991 house fire. The Texas Forensic Science Commission called addition-

al witnesses in the case of Cameron Willingham, who was executed by the state seven years ago.

The panel was scheduled to convene in 2009, but commission chairman John Bradley canceled that meeting in an attempt to close the case with a determination that investigators didn't commit professional misconduct in the case. Other members of the commission objected to Bradley's efforts, leading to the January 7 hearing.

The state forensic commission's involvement was delayed for more than a year by Texas governor Rick Perry's removal of three members in 2009, days before they were to review reports casting doubt on Willingham's guilt.

## Workers give bosses' 'Christmas spirit' bribes to build communist movement

Employers are fond of showing "Christmas spirit," after taking it out of our hides all year long. A number of workers decided to send these holiday "gifts" from the boss to the Socialist Workers Party for its Capital Fund, which helps finance long-range plans to build the communist movement.

One-off payments of this kind from employers—safety and production bonuses, contract-signing incentives, holiday gifts, and the like—are referred to as blood money by communist workers, because they are bribes to convince workers to be grateful to the boss instead of standing up and fighting for our interests. All the while the bosses are speeding up jobs, paying us little, and treating us without dignity day-in and day-out. A few of the letters that accompanied recent contributions tell the story.

"Enclosed is a \$150 blood money contribution," wrote Naomi Craine and Bernie Senter from Miami. "We have each received \$75 in gift cards—incentives for showing up to work on time and working faster.

"The job is a project to digitize 60,000 home-foreclosure files of one major Florida bank. Among our co-workers are a number who themselves have recently lost their houses. As a result of our talking politics on the job one coworker has already bought a copy of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, and several others are considering buying the book."

"I've had no raise in over three years," wrote Vivian Sahner from Atlanta. "So this \$561.75 check amounts to little more than a quarter raise over that time! Please put it to good use."

"Enclosed is a \$25 blood money contribution," wrote Norton Sandler from Los Angeles. "Management handed out equivalent gift cards to a local supermarket before Christmas. The cards were accompanied by a note that read, 'We would not be where we

are today without everyone's support and dedication to a common purpose. It is that effort that makes YOU very special.'

"That from a company that hasn't given workers a pay raise in more than half a decade."

And this letter was received from Jacquie Henderson from Houston: "The bosses at the mill where I work gave us 'year-end bonuses' for our 'good work' throughout the year. At a company meeting they pointed to plant improvements, including the new sign at the door flashing nearly 1,000 days without an injury.

"A coworker asked about workers he had seen with injuries who were still working, and was told those

weren't 'lost time injuries.' In other words, workers are being pressured to come to work hurt. Two days later the worker who asked the question found himself back at the temporary agency—the mill suddenly had no more work for him.

"Many workers see the \$100 we got as a cheap bribe to cover up for low wages and bad conditions. Several commented it is also to pressure us not to report accidents. I am glad to be able to contribute to the party's work to end the dictatorship of capital."

Workers who want to contribute blood-money bonuses can do so by writing or calling distributors of the *Militant* listed on page 5.

—PAUL MAILHOT

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 24, 1986

Chester Crocker, the Reagan administration's assistant secretary of state for African affairs, arrived in South Africa January 12 for a three-day visit.

Crocker's mission was to reaffirm the U.S. government's long-standing alliance with the South African regime and refusal to break ties with it.

The Crocker trip is a part of the Reagan administration's stepped-up support to South African aggression against Angola and other countries in southern Africa.

South Africa invaded Angola with 4,000 troops on December 2, the third invasion in eight months.

Crocker visited Angola to press for the removal of thousands of Cuban internationalist volunteers from the country.

Since South Africa first massively invaded Angola in 1975, Cuban troops have provided a line of defense.



January 23, 1961

BRUSSELS, Jan. 16—At the end of three weeks of struggle, the workers of Belgium stand firm in the whole of the heavy industrial region of the French-speaking South as well as in the more class-conscious sections of the Flemish North.

The afternoon of Jan. 5 saw a massive demonstration in Liege which showed the insurrectional temper of the Walloon (French-speaking) working class.

The southern part of the country is the oldest industrial region in continental Europe. Its wealth is founded on coal and heavy industry. It possesses a large and tightly knit industrial working class with a high level of class consciousness.

The unions are largely under the control of relatively young and dynamic leaders who emerged during the war or the postwar period.



January 25, 1936

In the investigations by the Nye Senatorial Commission of the part played by the House of Morgan in the last world war, the fact—previously so well known to Marxists—that the real cause of America's entrance into the war was furnished by the interests of finance capital, has now become clearly established. The quest for profits by the great financiers determined, in each decisive instance, the policy of the Wilson administration. Their fear of the loss of hundreds of millions, already invested, together with the fear of cutting off profits and prosperity for American business finally decided the issue.

The voluminous evidence introduced into the committee hearings should remove all doubt of this fact. Viewed in the light of the present Roosevelt neutrality policy all this evidence should receive added attention.

**The Changing Face of U.S. Politics**  
*by Jack Barnes*  
Building the kind of party working people need to prepare for coming class battles through which they will revolutionize themselves, their unions, and all society. A handbook for those seeking the road to overturn the exploitative system of capitalism.  
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# Socialism and transformation of productive forces

*Below is an excerpt from Humanism and Socialism by George Novack, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January. Can the conflicts that arise in society be resolved through education and appeals to conscience? Or do they reflect irreconcilable antagonisms between classes with conflicting interests? Novack explains how Marxism bases itself upon the decisive role of the revolutionary struggle of working people to bring forth a world free of national oppression and class exploitation. Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

## BY GEORGE NOVACK

Humans began to make history, Marxism explained, as soon as they acquired the ability to cooperate in the production of the means of life. In the course of transforming their conditions of existence they fashioned and refashioned themselves. The material basis for the making of history, and the main propulsion of its progress, consisted in

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

the development of the social productive forces and all the skills and culture growing out of them.

Humans are the subject of history—and history acquired a general objective meaning running through the successive stages of its unfolding by what it did to



Hershey chocolate factory in 1930s. "Capitalist society brought productive forces to a new threshold of maturity," noted Novack. "But the socialist movement of the working class was the first to supply both scientific understanding and the consciously organized force that could align the further course of social evolution with aims and aspirations of the laboring masses."

and for humanity. The end result of the collective endeavors through the millennia has been the discovery of many new human capacities through the development of productive forces. The nature of these capacities could not have been calculated in advance nor interpreted without a knowledge of the motive forces of the seemingly dispersed and chaotic character of historical development.

Even though individual activities and partial collective enterprises were purposeful, the overall development of the social productive forces and the relations issuing from them have proceeded in a wholly unconscious and unplanned manner that Marx characterized as "natural-historical." Their outcome was not decided upon and enforced by any prior aim. The consequences were determined for humankind by laws and forces beyond their control or comprehension through a myriad of conflicting acts and cross-purposes. No centrally directing agency—divine or human—willed, foresaw, or directed the actual course of events or what eventuated from it.

Civilization at large could not be brought under the deliberate control of its members until three prior conditions were fulfilled: (1) The powers of production had to be raised to a qualitatively new level through science and technology; (2) the laws of historical development had to be ascertained; and (3) a social power that could act consciously in accord with these laws had to acquire economic, political,

and cultural supremacy.

The successive forms of social organization from tribal life through feudalism lacked the material means, the collective knowledge, and the social forces for such an undertaking. These prerequisites were first made possible through the evolution of capitalism. . . .

[T]he competitiveness and anarchy of the capitalist system forbade the orderly and rational fostering of economic growth or assuring of social equality. Capitalist society brought the productive forces to a new threshold of maturity. But the socialist movement of the working class was the first to supply both the scientific understanding and the consciously organized force that could align the further course of social evolution with the aims and aspirations of the laboring masses. . . .

The ends that human society could realize and its members recognize at each stage of this journey were not arbitrarily decided by people but set for them by the level of the productive forces at their disposal and the position they occupied in the march of historical progress. These aims were given a definite concrete content during each period of development. Each epoch presents a specific set of tasks to be achieved that may be more or less clearly perceived and solved with greater or lesser success by its contemporaries. These could be surpassed and displaced by other and grander objectives only when a new era of advancement was inaugurated by the

revolutionary consequences of the further growth of the productive forces.

At certain times, as in the Middle Ages, people thought that the final meaning of human life had been revealed to them. This was an illusion. However absolute the ends of humanity may be for a specific span of socioeconomic evolution, they are essentially relative, provisional, and changing because of the continued expansion (and, at times in the past, the contraction) of its social powers.

The deepest meaning of human destiny certainly cannot be ascertained at the present rudimentary stage of evolution when our species has hardly been given the chance to cultivate its unique capabilities. Indeed, any further significance could be wiped out if human life were to be ended by a natural or human-made planetary catastrophe.

All the same, it is possible to comprehend what the past achievements of universal history amount to and what their proximate meaning is for us at this juncture. If the objectives for progressive humanity are determined at each stage by the real possibilities and material conditions of life, the primordial task of the present is predicated upon the actual achievements of our predecessors and the inherent limitations they were incapable of overcoming. Under class society it was impossible to avoid the conflicts of interests over the social surplus of wealth and the attendant consequences. This antagonism is no longer inevitable.

The work of humankind and its worth have been to raise the powers of production to a level where every member of the human race can be guaranteed whatever is required for the unfolding of her or his capacities and the enjoyment of life. This fact determines the paramount goal of enlightened humanity. It is to do away with the private ownership of the sources of wealth and the privileges and powers this confers in order to construct a society of superabundance that can throw off the tyrannies of labor, money, and the state; that can shed the alienation these produce and proceed to realize the potential of a free humanity.

This liberating prospect depends upon the continued progress of science and technology and the equitable distribution of their fruits. This can be assured only by the rationally reorganized society that will emanate from the world socialist revolution.

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January

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# UN troops bolster up Ivory Coast intervention

BY SETH GALINSKY

Washington, Paris, the European Union, and the African Union are calling on Laurent Gbagbo to step down as president of the Ivory Coast following a November 28 run-off election. They say that Alassane Ouattara won the UN-supervised contest with 54 percent of the vote.

UN troops are protecting Ouattara, who set up a competing government in Abidjan, the capital city, in a luxury hotel being blockaded by government soldiers. UN helicopters ferry foreign diplomats and provisions to the hotel every day.

The European Union and U.S. government have imposed visa bans on Gbagbo and more than 50 of his allies, and frozen their assets. African officials said in late December that they were granting check-signing privileges only to representatives of Ouattara for government funds held by the BCEAO regional bank.

Gbagbo has been president of the Ivory Coast, a former French colony, since 2000, when a popular uprising ousted Gen. Robert Guei following what was widely criticized as a rigged election. Guei had prohibited Ouattara from participating in the ballot because his parents were born in neighboring Burkina Faso. At the time, Gbagbo's assumption to the presidency was strongly backed by the French Socialist Party.

In 2002 Gbagbo gave four ministerial posts to Ouattara's party. Later that year a civil war broke out after the Ivory Coast Patriotic Movement took control of the northern part of the country. A thousand French troops and some U.S. soldiers were deployed under the guise of evacuating U.S. and French citizens. The French troops remained, at first helping to defend the Gbagbo regime from the rebel forces.

In 2003 a cease-fire was signed under pressure from Paris and a new government formed that included nine members from the rebel forces. But tensions between the contending sides continued and the country was effectively divided between north and south.

## UN troops intervene in 2004

UN troops were first sent to the Ivory Coast in April 2004, ostensibly to enforce the cease-fire. Today there are some 10,000 UN troops, including 900 from France. In another blatant trampling of Ivory Coast sovereignty, the UN mission has set up its own radio station, which broadcasts to most of the country.

During the election Gbagbo blamed Ouattara for the 2002 civil war and questioned his nationality. Ouattara in turn charged that Gbagbo was corrupt and that Ouattara, a former International Monetary Fund official and economics graduate from the University of Pennsylvania, was better qualified to turn around the country's economic crisis. Ouattara has more support in the north, where there are large numbers of immigrants from neighboring countries. Gbagbo's strength is in the south.

Although the Ivory Coast was granted independence from France in 1960,

its reliance on French imperialism continued. At least until the 1980s French citizens dominated private businesses and held key advisory posts in the government.

## World's largest cocoa exporter

Under colonial rule, French authorities forced Ivory Coast farmers to cultivate cocoa. After independence cocoa production took off, more than doubling from 1973 to 1983. Today the Ivory Coast is the world's largest producer and exporter of cocoa beans.

A railroad linking Abidjan with Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) was built during French colonial rule. After independence light industry was developed and the international airport became a hub for West Africa. The economic and agricultural advances made the Ivory Coast a magnet for workers across West Africa. About 25 percent of the country's 21 million people are immigrants from West Africa, especially Burkina Faso and Nigeria.

*Time* magazine in 1966 and 1968 featured the Ivory Coast as an "Oasis in a Desert" and an "economic miracle" that proved that imperialist domination and promotion of unbridled capitalist development was superior to the road taken by other African nations breaking free from their former colonial masters.

## French companies still dominate

Battered by unstable cocoa prices and wracked at times by violent clashes between competing capitalist



French troops in Ivory Coast. Some 10,000 UN forces occupy country.

factions, the Ivory Coast is no longer looked to as Black Africa's most flourishing country. But French corporations still play a dominant role: Bolloré manages Abidjan's harbor, the most modern port in West Africa; Bouygues runs the country's telecommunications; and Total is a major player in oil exploration.

French capitalists face increasing competition from Canadian, British, U.S., Chinese, and Indian companies for shares of the petroleum reserves, estimated at 250 million barrels. U.S. capitalists in particular are looking to increase their take of the wealth and to push Paris aside, as Washington seeks to extend its influence in Africa.

"Cote d'Ivoire's civil war in the early 2000s did not register a single dent on the country's rising oil production trend," notes an April 2010 special report on the Ivory Coast oil industry by U.S.-based IAS Group. The report adds that the oil

fields are offshore, limiting "exposure to political volatility both in the country and along transportation routes."

In the face of Gbagbo's refusal to step down, the head of the UN forces in Ivory Coast has requested 1,000 to 2,000 more blue-helmeted troops. Ouattara has called on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to send forces to remove Gbagbo.

But neither the Nigerian government, with the largest army in ECOWAS, or Ghana, with the second largest army, have shown enthusiasm for getting deeper into the conflict. Ghana's armed forces leadership issued a statement calling it a "needless war."

With ECOWAS so far not willing to unleash a strike to remove Gbagbo and Gbagbo digging in, Ouattara hedged his bets. In a BBC interview released January 10, Ouattara's ambassador to the UN said that a coalition government was a possibility.

# Democrats seize on Arizona shooting rampage

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Liberals and Democratic Party figures unleashed a campaign of groundless claims that conservative political forces were responsible, at least in part, for the January 8 shooting of 20 people in Tucson, Arizona. Six died, including federal judge John Roll and a nine-year-old child, Christina Green. Gabrielle Giffords, a Democratic congresswoman from Arizona, was critically wounded.

Jared Loughner, 22, is in custody, having so far been charged with one count of attempted assassination of a member of Congress, two counts of killing a federal employee, and two counts of attempting to kill a federal employee. The shooting took place at a public event for Giffords.

Loughner has made no public statements since his arrest. News reports say he was suspended from Pima Community College last year after campus police were called five times for disruptive behavior. The school administration told him he had to get a mental health clearance before he could return. Other students and neighbors described his behavior as erratic. There is no evidence of any political leaning on his part one way or the other.

Setting the tone for the attempt to lay blame on Republicans was Pima County, Arizona, sheriff Clarence Dupnik. He held a press conference January 8 where he called Arizona a "mecca for racism and bigotry" and blamed "vitriolic rhetoric" on the airwaves from conservatives. "That may be free speech,

but it's not without consequences," he said. Dupnik is a well-known liberal opponent of Arizona's draconian anti-immigrant law.

"Where's that toxic rhetoric coming from?" asked Paul Krugman, a columnist for the *New York Times*, in a piece the next day. "Let's not make a false pretense of balance: it's coming, overwhelmingly, from the right."

Initial *Times* news coverage of the shootings played up the fact that Republican Sarah Palin put on the Internet a map marking with cross hairs congressional districts where Democrats should be unseated. Giffords's district was one of them. The *Times* pointed out the congresswoman opposed the Arizona anti-immigrant law, although she has called for beefed-up border patrols. It reported that a window was broken at her office in Tucson after she voted in favor of the health-care "reform" law last spring, and tea party activists frequently picket outside the office.

A January 8 *Times* editorial said, "It is facile and mistaken to attribute this particular madman's act directly to Republicans or Tea Party members. But it is legitimate to hold Republicans . . . responsible for the gale of anger" over government policy. "Many on the right . . . seem to have persuaded many Americans that this government is not just misguided, but the enemy of the people," it lamented. Arizona should stiffen its gun control legislation, the editors added.

Keith Olbermann, NBC anchor for

"Countdown," accused Sarah Palin January 8 of guilt because of the cross hairs. "If Sarah Palin . . . does not repudiate her own part in amplifying violence and violent imagery in politics, she must be dismissed from politics—she must be repudiated by the members of her own party," he said. Olbermann also demanded right-wing commentators Glenn Beck and Bill O'Reilly "begin their next broadcasts with solemn apologies" and called for them to be fired if they refused. "Those of us considered to be 'on the left'" should likewise purge themselves of "suggestions of violence," he added.

Palin released a video January 12 expressing "sadness" over "irresponsible statements from people attempting to apportion blame" for the shootings. Those accusing her of guilt were committing "blood libel," she said.

Jack Shafer was a lone voice among liberals in a piece titled "In Defense of Inflamed Rhetoric" that appeared January 9 on the Slate website. Shafer objected to Dupnik's assumption that "strident, anti-government political views can be categorized as vitriolic, bigoted and prejudicial" and that "those voicing strident political views are guilty of issuing *Manchurian Candidate*-style instructions to commit murder." The logic of that, he said, is that "we should calibrate our political speech in such a manner that we do not awaken the Manchurian candidates among us. . . . Any call to cool 'inflammatory' speech is a call to police all speech."



# Washington intends to be ‘intrusive’ in Pakistan

BY CINDY JAQUITH

U.S. vice president Joseph Biden made a sudden trip to Pakistan January 12 to try to shore up a fragile government buffeted by war, mounting economic crisis, and sharp divisions among the capitalist rulers. He is to meet separately with President Asif ali Zardari, Prime Minister Yousuf Gilani, and Army general Ashfaq Kayani.

Among recent developments heightening insecurity was the January 4 assassination of Salmaan Taseer, governor of Punjab Province and a leader of the ruling Pakistan People’s Party, by one of his security guards. The killer, Malik Mumtaz Qadri, told police he did it to protest Taseer’s call for reform of the blasphemy law, which mandates the death penalty for anyone convicted of insulting Islam.

At the same time, Gilani’s coalition government almost unraveled, when the prime minister cut energy subsidies, raising fuel prices 9 percent. After coalition partner Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) joined the opposition, Gilani quickly retreated, restoring the subsidy. The MQM agreed to return to the ruling coalition.

U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton warned restoring subsidies was “a mistake” and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) called the subsidy “inefficient and untargeted.” The IMF has demanded an end to the fuel subsidy, steeper taxes, and privatization of state-owned enterprises as a condition for loans.

U.S. ambassador Cameron Munter was more direct about Washington’s intention to impose its will in Pakistan. “We appear to be intrusive because we care. We are the largest donor,” he said in a talk January 7 in Islamabad, the capital. “Yes we are demanding,” he added. “We’ll continue to be this way.”

Nine years of a U.S.-led war in neighboring Afghanistan, as well as battles with Islamist groups inside Pakistan, has taken a toll on Pakistani working people. Hundreds of villagers have been killed in CIA drone attacks aimed at Afghan Taliban forces based in Pakistan. Millions were forced to leave their homes by Pakistani army offensives against antigovernment Islamist fighters inside Pakistan. On top of this a major flood last year displaced millions more and destroyed much of the cotton crop.

Three-quarters of Pakistani work-

ing people subsist on less than \$2 a day. Inflation is about 15 percent and unemployment is rampant. Forty percent of industrial workers are in the textile industry, which is plagued by frequent power outages due to an inadequate electric grid and effects of the flood.

In January women blocked traffic in Faisalabad to protest low gas pressure that affects home cooking.

In 2008, with the Pakistani government on the brink of bankruptcy, the IMF agreed to a \$11.3 billion loan bailout. While \$7.6 billion of that has been delivered, the IMF has postponed further payments, demanding more progress on collecting taxes and other measures targeting workers and peasants. Less than 2 percent of Pakistanis pay income tax. The IMF has also insisted on a stiffer sales tax, which would fall disproportionately on working people. Gilani has said he would not enact this until there was consensus in the government.

Privatization has sparked many strikes and protests by workers. When Pakistan Telecommunication (PTCL) was privatized in 2005, workers walked out. Troops broke the strike, occupying all the telephone exchanges in the country. Since then the communications workforce has been cut in half. A general wage in-

## Food price jumps spark protest actions

**Continued from front page**

sugar, and flour and lack of jobs.

Algerian youth and others took to the streets demanding, “Bring us sugar!” In the first week in January two demonstrators had been killed in protests of thousands in at least five cities. Official unemployment in the country is 11 percent but the real figure is considered to be double that.

Algeria, with large gas and oil resources, is one of the top 10 wheat importers in the world. The Middle East and North Africa are the world’s largest importers of cereals. These countries highlight the imperialist-imposed backwardness in agriculture and industry. Lack of electricity and modern farming equipment, coupled with decades of underdevelopment by colonial powers, limit these resource-rich countries’ ability to be self-sufficient in food production.

The world capitalist system, in which food is a commodity, leaves millions



Marine Corps/Capt. Paul Duncan

**U.S. Marine Corps helicopter flies near Tarbela Dam in Pakistan’s Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, August 2010. Eighteen such helicopters are deployed in Pakistan. Washington’s war in Afghanistan and on Pakistan border has taken toll on working people.**

crease announced for all Pakistani workers in June 2010 was ignored by PTCL’s management, prompting another strike in August. Since then 280 workers have been fired and 35 arrested on terrorism charges.

Washington’s year-end military review concluded that it cannot win the war in Afghanistan without routing the Taliban forces based in northern Pakistan, something the Pakistani government has been reluctant to do. Islamabad has rejected U.S. requests to expand its use of drones to Baluchistan, where some Taliban leaders are based.

Washington faces the dilemma of needing to escalate the war in Pakistan while being forced to rely on the unstable government in Islamabad.

U.S. arrogance toward the Pakistani people and the desperate living conditions, especially in the countryside, have been exploited by Islamist forces to win some support. Thousands demonstrated January 9 in Karachi to support Taseer’s assassin and pledge that more such killings would take place against those seeking to change the blasphemy law. Secular capitalist parties and trade unions organized timid vigils for Taseer.

The governor’s killing came amid a discussion in parliament over whether to amend the blasphemy law. A woman farm worker who is Christian, Asia Bibi, was sentenced to death in November on charges of insulting Islam. Taseer had favored her pardon.

without the ability to increase production, even if their country has a wealth of other resources.

Youth and workers have also been protesting for weeks in neighboring Tunisia. The clashes erupted in mid-December following the death of Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire after police confiscated the fruits and vegetables he was selling without a permit. Dozens of demonstrators have been killed.

In India, a country going through “robust growth” according to statistics, food prices are rising at an annual rate of 18 percent. The steepest increases are for potatoes and onions, which have doubled in price.

Undernourishment is rampant in In-

dia. In 11 out of 19 states more than 80 percent of the population is anemic and more than half the children under the age of five suffer poor physical development because of lack of nutrition.

All indications are prices will continue to rise. A 2009 U.S. Government Accountability Office report showed that U.S. supermarket prices for food have climbed by 128 percent since 1982, four times the increase in crop prices for farmers.

The UN and imperialist governments say that some of the recent “shortages” are due to excess rain and flooding. While this can aggravate the situation, the food crisis is rooted in capitalism’s production for profit rather than meeting human needs.

## 1,400 more marines being sent into Afghanistan war

**Continued from front page**

troops replaced them.

The Afghan government confirmed January 3 that one of the main tribes in Sangin, the Alikozai, agreed to a ceasefire. It will affect about 30 villages in exchange for foreign aid money. One of the tribal leaders who concluded the pact was subsequently attacked by Taliban forces and is in critical condition.

There are about 97,000 U.S. troops and 45,000 from other countries fighting in Afghanistan. More than 2,400 Afghan civilians were killed in 2010, up 20 percent from 2009. More than 700 foreign soldiers died, far more than the previous year’s total of 521.

British Maj. Gen. Phillip Jones reported that one year since Karzai launched a project to grant amnesty to Taliban fighters who agree to stop fighting, only 800 have come forward out of an estimated 30,000. “Most aren’t hard core Taliban,” said Jones, but “low-level community defense forces.” They are not from the parts of the country where the military conflict is most intense but from areas that are relatively peaceful.

Just 15 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces have set up reintegration committees. In the province of Baghlan 12 amnestied fighters were assassinated by the Taliban three weeks into their demobilization.

New International no. 12

### Capitalism’s Long Hot Winter Has Begun

by Jack Barnes

Today’s sharpening interimperialist conflicts are fueled by the opening stages of what will be decades of economic, financial, and social convulsions and class battles. Class-struggle-minded working people must face this historic turning point and draw satisfaction from being “in their face” as we chart a revolutionary course to confront it.

Issue also includes “Their Transformation and Ours,” Socialist Workers Party Draft Resolution; and “Crisis, Boom, and Revolution,” 1921 Reports by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky



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# Arizona killings: A different view

A deranged gunman’s shooting spree January 8 in Arizona quickly became the top national news story in the United States. The early coverage and commentary featured attempts by liberal and Democratic Party spokespeople to put some of the blame for the shootings on figures associated with the Republican Party.

Nothing has been uncovered to date about Jared Loughner, the young man who was arrested for the killings, that would indicate he drew his inspiration from Sarah Palin, Glenn Beck, the tea party, or any other political figure on the left or the right of bourgeois politics. Neither was Loughner connected to any group in the working-class movement.

Workers should be wary of attempts to associate a violent act, such as the killings in Arizona, with political views in order to discredit and suppress those views. The results will ultimately be aimed at curtailing workers’ rights to express and fight for their own political perspectives as they become increasingly critical of the government and its two

parties—the Democrats and Republicans—as well as the capitalist system itself.

What does emerge from the events in Arizona is a person who was seriously ill for a long time and received no help. A time bomb was waiting to go off. Arizona’s public mental-health system is among the worst in the United States, but it is not unique. Every state in the nation lacks enough beds for the number of people who have been determined to need hospitalization because of mental illness. That situation is worsening as state and local governments look for more ways to cut services.

As the capitalist crisis deepens throughout the world, the effects of wars, joblessness, cuts in social services, and other ills brought on by a dog-eat-dog system will continue to take their toll. The Arizona events illustrate one more reason to join the struggle to overthrow capitalism and fight for a socialist world in which society is organized around the needs of the vast majority, not the profits of a tiny handful.

## ‘Post-recession’ high unemployment

**Continued from front page**

much longer and deeper than coming out of any other recession since World War II. The last long jobs drought, from 2001 to 2004, was finally overcome after 47 months by the expansion of debt through massive housing and credit speculative bubbles. This is something few capitalists expect to see happen again soon. And jobs losses from the most recent recession are triple the 2 percent decline recorded in 2001.

According to government figures, a little more than 1 million jobs were created in 2010, making a small dent in the 8.5 million cut in 2008 and 2009. At this pace, “it would take 70 months—or until late 2016—to make up for the rest of the jobs lost,” stated the *Wall Street Journal*.

These figures don’t even account for the many new workers seeking jobs for the first time. “The U.S. labor force is now smaller than it was before the recession started,” economist Heidi Shierholz of the Economic Policy Institute told CNNMoney, “though it should have grown by over 4 million workers to keep up with working-age population growth over this period.”

U.S. companies are not planning to do much hiring. They’re already sitting on \$1.8 trillion in cash reserves. They prefer to use this money to “make money” by speculating in stocks, bonds, currency,

or derivatives, instead of investing in capacity-expanding plants and equipment.

At a Senate Budget Committee hearing January 7, Federal Reserve chairman Benjamin Bernanke insisted the economy was recovering but expected years of high unemployment. “It could take four to five more years for the job market to normalize fully,” he stated—“normal levels” being 5 percent to 6 percent unemployment prior to the onset of the latest recession.

The same day, President Barack Obama praised the economy for 12 straight months of private-sector job growth. “That’s the first time that’s been true since 2006,” he stated. This increase of 1.1 million jobs, however, is less than the number of “discouraged” workers who are no longer counted as part of the workforce over the same time period.

The president is considering further proposals to stimulate the economy, cut business taxes, and write off the costs of equipment and capital investments, in hopes of convincing bosses to hire workers. To further these objectives, he appointed Eugene Sperling the new director of the National Economic Council, the same job he had under President William Clinton. In addition, William Daley, another former Clinton appointee and top executive at JPMorgan Chase, is Obama’s new chief of staff.

## Pension shortfall

**Continued from front page**

to the website Stateline, Christie “has indicated that an even more aggressive proposal is in the works.”

Capitalist politicians claim they have to “reform” pensions to narrow budget deficits and counter the impact of the capitalist economic crisis on state revenues. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, state tax collections fell by \$66 billion in 2009, the steepest decline since records began being kept in 1951.

Many governors and state legislatures want to follow the example of private capitalist corporations and carry out what the Pew Center on the States calls “drastic overhauls” of pension plans. This involves replacing defined benefit plans, which supposedly guarantee a set monthly benefit on retirement, with defined contribution plans, such as 401(k)s, with payments based on the ups and downs of the stock and other financial markets.

A lot of the money in pension funds is in the form of stocks, bonds, derivatives, hedge funds, and the like. In the fallout of the 2008 financial crisis, pension funds lost huge sums, with the New York State employee fund dropping 26 percent. In spite of this the New York fund invested an additional \$1 billion in hedge funds in 2009.

Many pension funds use creative accounting techniques to give the appearance of meeting funding requirements. For example, in New York local governments are allowed to defer fund payments by borrowing against estimated future gains in the funds’ financial investments. The alleged future gains are really just a gamble on the vagaries of the stock, bond, and other financial markets.

Less than half of the U.S. workforce is covered by employer pension plans. But workers with pension funds see them as an important addition to Social Security and guarantor of an adequate retirement.

The current patchwork of pension and health plans is a result of business unionism and the political retreat by U.S. unions following World War II. Union officials negotiated modest wage increases and fringe benefits, and in exchange they refused to fight for national health care, adequate social security, or national unemployment insurance that meets the needs of laid-off workers—social needs of the entire working class. They abandoned any working-class political action independent of the Democrats and Republicans.

Instead, the labor bureaucracy negotiated contracts company by company, and for government workers city by city and state by state, tying pensions and health care to the well being of a particular corporation or government entity. In 2009 only 12.3 percent of workers in the United States belonged to a union, down from 36 percent in 1945.

### Scapegoating government workers

Capitalist politicians and the big-business media are using the growing budget deficits to scapegoat government workers for the capitalist crisis and deepen divisions among workers, and divert solidarity in the union movement.

They claim that overpaid government workers with “excessive” benefits are responsible for high taxes and cutbacks in social services.

An opinion column by William McGurn in the January 4 *Wall Street Journal* quotes Steven Malanga from the Manhattan Institute saying, “Blue-collar union workers are beginning to appreciate that the generous pensions and health benefits going to their counterparts in state and local government are coming out of their pockets.”

The column notes that the president of the New Jersey Senate, Steven Sweeney, a proponent of pension reform for government employees, is an organizer for the International Association of Ironworkers.

A class war is coming, McGurn argues, “between workers in government unions and their union counterparts in the private sector.”

Not surprisingly McGurn does not give any figures on the supposedly high pensions government workers get. In New York, with one of the highest costs of living in the country, retired members of the largest union, District Council 37, receive an average of \$18,000 a year.

## LETTERS

### Truth and facts

Keep up the great work. Truth and facts have a place in the discussion of America’s future going up against an all surrounding corporate media.

*Thomas Murata  
Brooklyn, New York*

### Len Stanton

Len Stanton, a long-time friend and supporter of the Socialist Workers Party died in Philadelphia December 28. He was 93 years old.

Len became political in his teens and joined the Communist Party during World War II after he was witch-hunted out of a government job. He quit the CP in the 1950s.

In the mid-1960s, two of his sons, Fred and Bob, joined the Young Socialist Alliance and then the Socialist Workers Party. Len became interested in the SWP and what it stood for. He began read-

ing some of the party’s books, including *The Third International after Lenin*, and said his eyes had been opened on questions he had always had about the CP.

Len, along with his wife Emma, attended many national conferences and conventions of the party. While in his ’80s he became active as a formatter in the Print Project, an organization of supporters of the SWP who help organize the production of Pathfinder books. He resigned from the project a few years later when

his health began to deteriorate, but continued to make financial contributions and read the *Militant* and Pathfinder books.

Emma is still active, and says she continues to enjoy the *Militant*.

*John Studer  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

### Very interested in paper

I am very interested in the *Militant* newspaper. I would like to know if you have any issues that you may send me.

*A prisoner  
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’ Prisoners’ Fund

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