

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Fidel Castro defends nations' right to nuclear power, rejects atomic weapons
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 76/NO. 13 APRIL 2, 2012

Sugar workers press fight on several fronts

American Crystal maintains lockout of 1,300



Scott Ripplinger

Locked-out workers at weekly “scab-change” rally March 5 outside American Crystal plant, Hillsboro, N.D. Bosses lockout began after workers rejected concession contract last July.

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

ST. PAUL, Minn.—Members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union are pressing their fight on several fronts against a nearly eight-month lockout by American Crystal Sugar.

Some 1,300 workers were locked out after they rejected a concession contract July 30 by a margin of 96 percent. The lockout affects all of American Crystal’s five factories in the Red River Valley of northern Minnesota and North Dakota and two smaller processing plants in Chaska, Minn., and Mason City, Iowa.

American Crystal has kept the

plants running with scabs brought in through Strom Engineering, an employment agency that specializes in strikebreaking and union busting.

Lee Schlichtmann, who worked for one year at American Crystal’s plant in Hillsboro, N.D., and Becki Jacobson, a locked-out worker from Moorhead, Minn., spoke here March 20 to a couple dozen people at the offices of Take Back Minnesota, a community-labor group.

“We see corporate greed everywhere, not just in the Red River Valley,” Schlichtmann told the meeting. “We see more lockouts, company

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Int’l campaign to win long-term ‘Militant’ readers ‘best in years’

BY LEA SHERMAN

The campaign to gain long-term readers of the *Militant* newspaper was a resounding success! Partisans of the paper sold 559 renewals and long-term subscriptions, 112 percent of the 500 international goal. All but one area made its local quota.

The success shows the opportunities today to expand circulation of the socialist newsweekly among working people, who become more open to communist politics as they confront and resist the assault by the bosses and their governments on our living standards, working conditions and political rights.

“This has been our best renewal effort in years. We picked up 12 this past week, putting us at 52 for the drive,” said Frank Forrestal, who joined other communist workers from the Twin Cities visiting locked-out American Crystal Sugar workers in North Dakota last week. “Many are long term: 13 are for

six months and 14 are for one year. Eighteen are to locked-out sugar workers.”

“The *Militant* has done right by us. I am very impressed. The time and effort that goes into it, and the range of things it covers,” Terry Holm, a locked-out sugar worker who renewed for a year and bought a copy of *Teamster Rebellion*, told members of the Socialist Workers Party. “It is a really good newspaper. I also like the Spanish section although I don’t speak Spanish. Another thing I like is that it is not just about our lockout and the Red River Valley, it covers struggles all over the world.”

“I like the paper because it’s objective,” said Manuel Jérez, a worker in an elevator repair shop in Miami who renewed for a year. “By objective, I mean on the side of workers. It’s what we look for to tell the truth. The truth is in the paper.”

Maggie Trowe and Helen Myers

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Imperialists ratchet up economic war on Iran

BY LOUIS MARTIN

The Washington-led economic squeeze against Iran is tighter today than at any point since imperialist sanctions began six years ago to force Tehran to abandon the development of advanced nuclear technology.

The Belgium-based Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, used for most financial messaging between banks of different countries, announced March 15 it was expelling some 30 Iranian financial institutions, including Iran’s central bank. The move hinders Iran’s ability to electronically recover billions of dollars from sales of oil and other products—exports that finance as much as half of the Iranian government’s budget.

A day earlier, President Barack Obama had warned Tehran, “The window for solving this issue diplomatically is shrinking.” The Democratic

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Fukushima 1 year later: nuke panic vs. real disaster

BY LOUIS MARTIN

This month marks the one-year anniversary of the so-called nuclear disaster in Fukushima, Japan, which touched off an international hue and cry from opponents of nuclear power that has overshadowed the *real* colossal social disaster wrought by capitalism.

COMMENTARY

Some 20,000 people were killed and tens of thousands more injured in the wake of a massive tsunami triggered by a 9.0 earthquake. The figure is staggering, more than 12 times the number killed in the capitalist-made disaster that followed Hurricane Katrina. Entire coastal villages and towns were wiped out or severely damaged.

The earthquake knocked the Fukushima
Continued on page 6

Protests help put Philadelphia cop behind bars for murder



Militant/John Staggs

Dec. 6, 2009, Philadelphia march demanding cop who killed Billy Panas Jr. be prosecuted. With megaphone outside cop’s house is Panas’ father, William Panas Sr.

BY JANET POST

PHILADELPHIA—On Feb. 23 a jury here found Philadelphia police officer Frank Tepper guilty of first-degree murder in the shooting of William “Billy” Panas Jr. The verdict carries a mandatory life sentence with no chance of parole.

Panas, 21, was shot and killed by Tepper, who was off duty, on Nov. 21, 2009, in the Port Richmond neighborhood. Tepper claimed he shot in self-defense while breaking up a fight in front of his house.

Throughout Port Richmond—a ma-

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Class struggle, union power is answer to ‘right-to-work’ 9

Art exhibit helps get out truth about Cuban Five, revolution

BY BETSY FARLEY

CHICAGO—More than 75 people attended the opening reception March 9 for “Humor From My Pen,” a collection of cartoons by Gerardo Hernández, at the Calles y Sueños gallery here.

Hernández is one of five Cuban revolutionaries imprisoned in the United States since 1998 on frame-up charges, including “conspiracy to commit espionage.”

The Cuban Five, as they are known, which includes Antonio Guerrero, René González, Ramón Labañino and Fernando González, were carrying out assignments from the Cuban government to monitor Florida-based counterrevolutionary groups that operate with Washington’s complicity and have a long history of violent attacks against Cuba and supporters of the Cuban Revolution.

Three of them were given life sentences. Hernández was also framed up on the charge of “conspiracy to commit murder” and received the stiffest sentence, double life plus 15 years.

The work the five carried out played an important role in helping to end dangerous provocations by these groups, including Brothers to the Rescue, which had repeatedly violated Cuban airspace between mid-1994 and February 1996, despite numerous protests by the Cuban government to Washington.

On Feb. 24, 1996, Cuban pilots shot down two Brothers to the Rescue planes that had entered Cuban airspace heading toward Havana, after they refused warnings by Cuban air traffic control-

lers to turn back.

Washington falsely charged that Hernández was responsible for the shutdown, a sovereign act of the Cuban government.

Hernández, 46, joined the Union of Young Communists when he was in high school in Cuba. Like René González and Fernando González, he was one of more than 375,000 Cuban volunteers who served as internationalist combatants in Angola, helping the Angolan people defeat invasions by the white supremacist South African apartheid regime between 1975 and 1991.

“I am learning about the Cuban Five for the first time,” said Isabel Valenzuela, a worker at a Mexican community center. “I can see that Cuba is not what the U.S. government says it is.”

“It’s wrong to put someone in prison for life on unfounded charges,” said Gabrielle Goldstein, a DePaul University student. “This exhibit will help their cause.”

The exhibit, which continues through April 28, includes a series of programs and film showings. Both “Humor From My Pen” and an exhibition of artwork by Antonio Guerrero, “From My Altitude” have toured several U.S. cities.

“Humor From My Pen” at Calles y Sueños 1900 S Carpenter is free. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For information on events, call the Chicago Cuba Coalition at (773) 208-0553 or (312) 952-2618 or visit ChicagoCubaCoalition.org.

Puerto Rican independence fighter speaks in NY

NEW YORK—Carlos Alberto Torres, a Puerto Rican independence fighter and former political prisoner, spoke at two classes and a public meeting at Hostos Community College March 15. He is in New York City to promote the campaign to free Oscar López Rivera, one of the longest-held political prisoners in the world.

Torres was released on parole July 26, 2010, after spending 30 years in prison. He was arrested in April 1980 along with 10 other supporters of Puerto Rican independence and framed up on charges of “seditious conspiracy,” armed robbery, and being a “terrorist,” based on alleged membership in the Armed Forces of National Liberation of Puerto Rico. López, now 69, was arrested the following year and convicted on similar charges.

At the public meeting Torres said Hostos students had asked him if he feels he wasted his life in prison. “I never ceased being part of the struggle while I was in prison,” Torres responded. “And I was able to raise the consciousness of other prisoners while I was there.”

“I don’t regret anything because it was part of my responsibility in the fight for my homeland,” he said.

—SETH GALINSKY



Militant/Naomi Craine

Bosses’ bribes turned over to communist movement

Over the last nine months class-conscious workers have contributed more than \$25,000 to the Socialist Workers Party Capital Fund. The fund helps finance long-term work of the party.

Dean Hazlewood in Miami sent in a \$280 production bonus from a temp agency. “At the same time as they sent me this blood money,” he writes, “they told the state unemployment agency that I had abandoned the job, instead of the truth that I was laid off.”

Blood money is a term used by the communist movement to describe “bonuses” and other bribes from the bosses to make workers accept speedup, wage cuts, concession contracts and dangerous working conditions.

Tom Tomasko, a machinist and Teamster union member at United Airlines in San Francisco, contributed \$3,330, from a contract signing bonus paid out to get workers to accept the elimination of pensions from the contract.

Ted Leonard, a worker at Gillette razor company in Boston, sent in \$265. “We got this 1 percent bonus in lieu of a pay raise,” he writes. “Meanwhile, our ‘team’ was reduced from six to five workers and the material handler position in the department was eliminated. (So we do the work instead!) No thanks, I’ll take the road to workers power.”

To contribute blood money to the SWP Capital Fund, contact *Militant* distributors on page 8.

—EMMA JOHNSON

THE MILITANT

The ‘Militant’ unifies workers

“What I like about the ‘Militant’ is how it unifies workers. It exposes the disheartening conditions that capitalism has brought upon us. At the same time, it manifests the struggles that are being overcome by ordinary people, by simply standing up. It has been a tool of empowerment for me.”

—Jason Madera
member of ILWU Local 13
in Wilmington, Calif.



Militant/Wendy Lyons
Longshore worker Jason Madera.

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The Militant

Vol. 76/No. 13

Closing news date: March 22, 2012

Editor: Steve Clark

Managing editor: Doug Nelson

Business manager: Lea Sherman

Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Naomi Craine, Harry D’Agostino, Maura DeLuca, Betsy Farley, Seth Galinsky, Emma Johnson, Louis Martin, Jacob Perasso, John Studer, Brian Williams, Rebecca Williamson.

Published weekly except for one week in January, two weeks in June, and two weeks in August.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Telephone: (212) 244-4899

Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

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Protests condemn killing of Black youth in Florida

BY NAOMI CRAINE

MIAMI—Protests have spread in the three weeks since a neighborhood watch captain killed an unarmed Black teenager in Sanford, in central Florida. The cops have refused to file any charges against George Zimmerman, who claimed he shot 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in self-defense Feb. 26.

Calls to a 911 dispatcher released by the police indicate Zimmerman followed Martin, who was walking from a store to a relative's house, saying the youth looked like he was “up to no good.” Zimmerman then got out of his car, confronted Martin, and shot him in the chest.

“The evidence and testimony we have so far does not establish that Mr. Zimmerman did not act in self-defense,” said Sanford Police Chief Bill Lee.

“How can you claim self-defense and you are the aggressor?” Tracy

Martin, Trayvon's father, told The Associated Press.

Hundreds rallied in nearby Titusville March 18 demanding Zimmerman's arrest. The next day the Black Law Students Association from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University protested in front of the Seminole County Courthouse.

More than 1,000 people protested in New York City's Union Square March 21 to protest the killing of Trayvon.

As protests mount, Sanford City Manager Norton Bonaparte insists that police are “prohibited” from arresting Zimmerman.

Police Chief Lee announced March 22 he was “temporarily” resigning.

Further protests are planned.



Sybrina Fulton, front right, and Tracy Martin, second from left, at New York City protest March 21 to demand arrest of vigilante who killed their son Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Fla.

Cop in Philadelphia convicted of murder

Continued from front page

majority Caucasian working-class neighborhood with many Polish-American and Polish workers—numerous houses today still display orange ribbons in support of the “Justice for Billy” campaign, which has been ongoing since 2009. Supporters in the area raised funds, organized rallies and sold orange T-shirts to place a memorial plaque in the sidewalk where Panas was killed.

Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey did not suspend Tepper until 45 days later, one day after a Port Richmond march protesting the killing. He was not formally charged until Feb. 2010.

Tepper, a cop for 16 years, last worked for the Civil Affairs Unit, a squad that polices demonstrations and labor disputes.

“They should have gotten Tepper a long time ago,” Rocco Fischetti, a neighbor of Panas, told the *Militant* after the conviction.

The day of the shooting Panas was on his way to pick up Chinese food. He walked by a house party where a brawl

had broken out, according to the *Spirit Community Newspapers*. At the trial an eyewitness testified that Tepper was wildly waving his gun at everyone. Panas asked Tepper, “What, are you going to shoot me?” After Tepper fired, Panas walked a few steps and collapsed.

“Billy was shot down in the street, like a dog,” neighbor Maggie Cooper told the *Militant* following the verdict.

“It is right that the cop is in prison,” said Anthony Young, a student who lives nearby.

Neighborhood residents had filed complaints about Tepper's behavior for years.

In 1995 Tepper chased two men down with his car after he had been drinking in a bar. The complaint to police Internal Affairs said he reached into the men's car and beat one of them with his pistol, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

After the verdict, William Panas Sr. told the media, “They should have fired him in 1995. The city did nothing.”

Several residents saw the case not as a question of a rogue cop, but of police brutality.

“I was pulled over once because I was wearing gloves,” said Michael Olsen, a neighbor of Panas. “The cops asked me, ‘What are you going to do, rob someone?’”

“I don't like walking to the corner for cigarettes, because the cops might stop me,” said Maggie Cooper.

The formal sentencing hearing for Tepper by Judge Shelley Robins New will be held on March 29.

‘Militant’ drive

Continued from front page

sold six renewals during a visit to Keokuk, Iowa, the scene of a hard-fought battle against a 10-month lockout by Roquette America that ended last July. Two members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union Local 48G renewed their subscriptions at the plant gate. And two members of the Lee County Labor Council in Keokuk signed up for six-month subscriptions. A health worker, whose brother was a stalwart on the picket lines during the lockout, got a one-year renewal.

In the U.S. many of the subscriptions were longer term. Some 115 for six months, 91 for one year and 17 two-year subscriptions were sold along with 229 three-month renewals and 181 introductory subscriptions.

This successful renewal campaign puts us in a strong position for the *Militant* spring subscription drive.



Militant/Bernardino Montemayor
Selling the *Militant* to workers at Tenaris company plant gate in Houston March 3.

Over the top!

‘Militant’ Renewal Drive			
Feb. 11- March 18 Final Scoreboard			
Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
Lincoln	6	8	133%
Twin Cities*	45	53	118%
Miami*	25	28	112%
Los Angeles	30	33	110%
Philadelphia	20	22	110%
Seattle*	43	47	109%
San Francisco*	40	43	108%
Boston	15	16	107%
New York	55	58	105%
Des Moines*	32	33	103%
Atlanta	35	36	103%
Chicago*	40	40	100%
Houston*	20	20	100%
Washington, D.C.	15	15	100%
Total U.S.	421	452	107%
UNITED KINGDOM			
London*	25	29	116%
Manchester	10	7	70%
UK Total	35	36	103%
NEW ZEALAND*	25	27	108%
CANADA*	27	28	104%
AUSTRALIA	15	16	107%
Total	523	559	112%
Should be	500	500	100%
* Raised goal			

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The contributions for the prisoner fund helps subsidize subscriptions for workers behind bars.

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Militant subscription rates on page 2



Pathfinder Press

12-hour shifts underground 'not safe,' say Arizona miners

BY ELLIE GARCÍA

LOS ANGELES—Urged by mining giants Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton, joint owners of a copper mine being built near Superior, Ariz., the state House of Representatives approved by a big majority March 19 a law allowing underground miners to work shifts of up to 12 hours. Until now the law limited their workday to eight hours, including the time needed for the underground elevator ride.

The bill also deletes a section of the law that says underground mining “is declared injurious to health and dangerous to life and limb.” The legislation, opposed by the United Steelworkers union and the state AFL-CIO, now awaits approval by the governor.

“Working 7,000 feet below the surface and 12-hour shifts is not safe for the workers. That’s ludicrous,” Mike Isley, member of USW Local 5252 and a heavy equipment operator at the ASARCO Ray open pit mine, told the *Militant*. “It is only to the company’s advantage as history has proved.”

“This updates an old, ancient law,” Bruce Richardson, communications director for Resolution Copper Company, which owns the new mine, told the *Militant* in a phone interview. “It will give us flexibility.”

According to Resolution Copper, it takes at least 20 minutes of a miner’s workday to descend into an underground mine on top of time spent putting on safety gear. “If we can reduce preparatory time we can be more productive and competitive,” Richardson said.

The longer days decrease time lost for injuries and a three- or four-day workweek is better for workers “because this means more time at home, less time commuting and more time with the family,” Adam Hawkins, a Resolution Copper adviser, told an Arizona House committee considering the bill.

“Working underground is much more hazardous than working on the

surface,” Orlando Perea, a retired miner who lives in Superior, said by phone. “Working 12-hour shifts is unsafe and it is also a way to get out of paying overtime. The rocks under there are 175-180 degrees. The humidity is tremendous. I am not opposing the mining but the methods they want to use.”

The mile deep mine is scheduled to open in 2021. According to Resolution Copper, the mine will employ 1,400 workers and produce more than 1 billion pounds of copper a year. “Based on current usage, that’s enough to meet 25 percent or more of the annual US demand for copper,” says a company brochure.

The mine will use a mining method known as panel caving, which builds a tunnel to drill and blast underneath the rock and then uses gravity to break the rock ore. The Resolution Copper mine will be the deepest mine of its type in the world.

When asked if panel caving, which company literature describes as “technically very challenging,” is



Phelps Dodge Morenci open pit copper mine, Clifton, Ariz. With tripling of copper prices since 2008, bosses are ramping up “productivity.” Arizona legislature approved law March 19 to increase the maximum workday from eight to 12 hours in underground mines.

more dangerous than other mining methods, Richardson replied that the “kind of ore body at this mine cannot be mined by any other method in an economic way.”

Ten of the 16 largest U.S. copper mines are in Arizona. With a jump

in copper prices to more than \$4 per pound today from \$1.33 per pound in 2008, mining companies are rushing to increase production.

Wendy Lyons contributed to this article.

Deal lets bosses off hook in 2007 Utah mine deaths

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

A four-year federal probe into the disaster at the Crandall Canyon coal mine in Emery County, Utah, that killed nine workers ended March 9 with a judge approving a deal letting the company off the hook for the mine’s collapse.

Crandall Canyon’s operator, Genwal Resources Inc., a subsidiary of Murray Energy Corp., which owns the mine, agreed in an out-of-court settlement to plead guilty to two misdemeanors and pay a \$500,000 fine.

The first count said the company failed to rapidly report a cave-in in March 2007, five months before the disaster occurred. The second, that three days before the miners’ deaths Genwal Resources mined into a barrier of coal crucial for holding up a section of the mine roof in violation of regulations.

The plea deal says that no further charges can be brought against the mining companies or individuals.

On Aug. 6, 2007, six miners at the Crandall Canyon mine working 12-hour shifts nearly 2,000 feet underground were entombed when roof-supporting pillars collapsed. Ten days later three others were killed during

rescue efforts when the mine imploded again.

“This is the most unjust settlement that I’ve ever seen,” Mike Dalpiaz, United Mine Workers District 22 president told the *Militant* from Price, Utah, in a phone interview. Crandall Canyon is a nonunion mine and the company has prevented the union from being part of investigations, Dalpiaz pointed out.

“I would have liked to have seen more drastic measures taken to make sure the people who were involved or helped cause this were held responsible,” Frank Allred, whose brother Kerry was killed in the collapse, told the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

A March 9 statement from Genwal Resources said “the agreement reflects the lack of evidence that any conduct by the Company caused the accidents of August 6 or 16, 2007. Genwal has always maintained that its plan for mining the Crandall Canyon Mine was safe—a belief that was shared by MSHA (which approved the plan).”

The company was using retreat mining, one of the most dangerous methods, in which pillars of coal that support the roof are mined as

the crew retreats. Shortly before the collapse the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration approved its use where the miners were working.

At Congressional hearings held after the disaster, the Bureau of Land Management said that it warned in 2004 that further mining of roof support pillars at the mine was unsafe.

In another development, MSHA released a report March 6 admitting that it failed to enforce safety regulations at Massey Energy Co.’s Upper Big Branch Mine in Montcoal, W.Va., prior to an April 2010 explosion that killed 29 miners. The report says that its inspectors failed to examine parts of the mine, including areas affected by the blast, and didn’t impose stiff penalties on the company despite repeated violations.

A week earlier a federal judge sentenced former Massey Energy’s security chief to three years in prison for obstructing a criminal probe into the Upper Big Branch explosion. A jury convicted Hughie Stover last October of lying to federal authorities about a company policy of providing advance notice that MSHA inspectors were arriving, and of ordering the destruction of more than 50,000 documents.

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TEXAS

Houston

No Justice for Workers in Capitalist Courts. Speaker: Jacquie Henderson, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 30, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 4800 W. 34th St., Suite 50L-C. Tel.: (713) 688-4919.

—LETTERS—

Journey to picket lines of locked-out sugar workers

I recently completed a 1,700-mile journey to the picket lines of the BCTGM sugar beet workers locked-out by Crystal Sugar.

I met so many courageous people—from the picketers in Hillsboro who clear the snow away after the company piles it up, to the husband and wife owners of the Hillsboro Inn who refuse to take down their sign of support for the workers, even after several businesses have done so for fear of their livelihood.

I stayed at the Inn and

watched as a scab was turned away. They don’t allow scabs.

I was at Chaska, Minn., when the BCTGM/United Steelworkers caravan [Feb. 22 to 27] came through on their way to Findlay, Ohio, where USW workers were locked out by Cooper Tire (and have since returned to work). There was support from many unions there to send them off.

In Grand Forks I joined a determined group at scab change and we gave the job stealers hell as they slimed across the picket line.

The next day in Drayton,

as the temperature dipped below zero, I was a little disappointed as I picketed for about an hour by myself and left a note in their shack from our union. I didn’t want to leave town without speaking to someone so I knocked on a door of a locked-out sugar worker who insisted on taking me to meet Vice President Brad Nelson.

I was totally surprised to see about 20 workers unloading food from the Teamsters semi which was at Chaska a couple of days before. Many were there from Grand Forks who I picketed with the night

before. This made my day.

I thank my union and the Lee County Labor Council for sending me to stand with these brothers and sisters. If you are in their area please join this fight by giving some time on the line.

If you aren’t close and you or your union don’t have the funds to make it to the front lines, send what you can.

An Injury To One Is An Injury To All.

In Solidarity,
Buddy Howard
President Lee County Labor Council, member BCTGM 48G

ON THE PICKET LINE

Quebec plastic workers strike over wages and unpaid work

SAINT-HYACINTHE, Quebec—On Feb. 27 members of Canadian Auto Workers Local 167 rejected by 98 per cent the latest contract offer from VIF Plastics. After efforts to reach a settlement failed, the 90 union members went on strike March 13. Workers picket around the clock.

Among the key issues are “a decent wage increase, after five years without one; eliminating forced overtime; and establishing double-time rates after four hours work on Sunday,” François Levac, the union president at VIF, told the *Militant* in a phone interview.

Workers are demanding an end to 10-minutes unpaid work they are forced to give the company for handoffs at shift change. On the picket line March 17, one sign read: “Ten minutes—that has to be paid for.”

—Beverly Bernardo

UK hospital workers demand union recognition and holidays

SWINDON, England—Some 200 hospital workers and supporters marched here March 17 to press their fight for union recognition and holidays and against bosses harassment at Great Western Hospital. The following day workers began a one-week strike.

“Other hospital workers can take up to six weeks holiday,” said housekeeper Jenny Baretto on the picket line.

“Our holidays were reduced a few years ago from 20 to 10 days a year,” added Paulo Fernandez. “Our central demand is for union recognition, but we also want an additional four days holiday for porters and five for housekeepers.” Housekeepers include cleaners and catering workers.

Most of the workers are from Goa, India, and are members of the General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union. “We are constantly given disciplinaries,” Fernandez told a rally in February. “All we want is justice and respect and they are not giving it to us.”

—Paul Davies

March 31 Quebec rally will back locked-out smelter workers

MONTREAL—Locked-out workers at Rio Tinto Alcan’s smelter in Alma, Quebec, are organizing a solidarity rally for March 31. More than 750 members of United Steelworkers Local 9490 have been locked out since Jan. 1.

Rio Tinto Alcan is seeking to increase the number of subcontractors, who receive half the pay and none of the benefits of union members.

To promote the rally, locked-out workers addressed meetings of the Quebec Federation of Labour General Council and its regional councils.

Pierre-André Lebeuf, vice president of the Alma College students association, told the *Militant* students would be joining the union march.



Militant/Debra Jacobs

Hospital workers in Swindon, England, demonstrate March 17 in fight for union recognition, holidays and against harassment by bosses. They began a one-week strike the next day.

On April 21 women will take over picketing, Suzie Fournier, a locked-out worker, said by phone. This is in response to comments by Rio Tinto Alcan Vice President Jacques Étienne that the “Wife Influence Factor” would lead women to push the men back to work.

To reserve places on Federation of Labor buses from Montreal for the March 31 action, call (514) 387-3666.

—Katy LeRougetel

British Columbia teachers defend right to strike, class size limits

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—

The provincial government here March 15 imposed a “cooling-off period” that suspends teachers’ right to strike for six months, after 41,000 teachers walked out for three days March 5-7.

The “Education Improvement Act” would impose daily fines of \$475 on individual teachers and \$1.3 million on the teachers union for striking.

The act also prohibits union-negotiated contracts from including requirements for minimum numbers of teachers or limits on class size and imposes a wage freeze.

Up to 10,000 teachers and their supporters demonstrated against the bill in Victoria March 6 and 2,000 in Vancouver the following day.

“I don’t think any government has the right to say when and how an individual can strike or take a stand,” said Grace Win, a teacher in Surrey.

—Steve Penner and Ned Dmytryshyn

Sugar workers fight lockout in Upper Midwest

Continued from front page

bullying, and refusals to negotiate. If these companies prevail, who will be next?” At the meeting more than \$1,000 was donated to the sugar workers’ fight.

On March 12 some 60 American Crystal workers from across the Red River Valley picketed outside the Hillsboro plant at evening shift change. “We will continue organizing weekly scab-change rallies as long as it takes,” Scott Ripplinger, from the East Grand Forks plant, said by phone.

On March 14 and 15, more than 100 locked-out workers picketed outside the 50th International Sugarbeet Institute trade show in Grand Forks, N.D. A couple thousand sugar beet farmers, many of them capitalist farmers, attended the event. The region is the largest producer of sugar beets in the U.S.

“For the most part we got a cool reception from the farmers,” said Ripplinger. “At the same time, we were able to have some civil discussions. A couple of them said they weren’t doing well and thought the lockout should end.”

In an attempt to get local workers to cross the picket lines, American Crystal in mid-March sponsored four job fairs near the Drayton, N.D., plant that union supporters attended. “I think workers think hard about crossing a picket line,” said Brad Nelson, vice president of the union local and locked out from the Drayton plant. “We went to all four fairs and counted about a total of 25 workers who came.”

Nelson and Brad Knapper, a worker from the Moorhead plant, are fighting trumped-up criminal charges for alleged incidents while picketing in front of American Crystal plants. Nelson is falsely accused of spitting on a scab during a Dec. 14 shift change, a misdemeanor. Knapper is also charged with

a misdemeanor for allegedly scratching a scab’s car the same day, and faces a frame-up felony charge of property damage.

Another challenge in the fight is the denial of unemployment benefits to more than 400 locked-out workers in North Dakota. While those locked out in Minnesota and Iowa receive unemployment payments, the state of North Dakota, with support from American Crystal, has been successful in what many union supporters see as an attempt to starve out the workers.

The union filed a civil suit March 4 against Job Service North Dakota. American Crystal Sugar filed its re-

sponse on March 9 and the Job Service on March 16.

“We hope the district judge rules in our favor, but we know the decision will be a political decision more than anything,” Terry Holm, a locked-out worker from the Hillsboro plant and former president of the union local there, told the *Militant* during a recent visit to Gardner, N.D.

Neither North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple nor American Crystal responded to requests from the *Militant* to comment.

Send messages of solidarity and funds to BCTGM Local 167G, 100 N 3rd St. Suite 50, Grand Forks, ND 58203.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 3, 1987

The Pentagon has announced plans for its most massive military maneuvers yet in Central America and the Caribbean. Slated for May, the operation will involve a total of 50,000 air, sea, and land forces.

Military officers said the maneuvers will coincide with a projected “spring offensive” by the U.S.-sponsored *contras*, who have suffered crippling blows from Nicaraguan troops.

Such U.S. maneuvers have often been used in the past to cover arms shipments to the *contras*, and to step up pressure on Sandinista forces while the *contras* attempt to infiltrate Nicaraguan territory.

The operation, dubbed “Solid Shield,” will also include special operations on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. In Honduras, 5,000 U.S. ground troops will be deployed.



April 2, 1962

Premier Fidel Castro has launched an all-out campaign to cleanse the Cuban Revolution of whatever anti-democratic abuses may have crept in and to nip a growing bureaucratism in the bud.

In his speech to the students at the University of Havana, Castro denounced tampering with or falsifying the facts of history as cowardly and anti-Marxist, decried privilege and called for a spirit of self-sacrifice by revolutionists.

The second speech took the form of a withering exposure and denunciation of methods employed by Anibal Escalante, Communist Party leader, who had been entrusted with the key post in organizing the new party. Escalante, Castro charged, had abused his position to build an “apparatus” of Communist Party appointees in key posts regardless of their abilities, merits or the desires of the people.



March 27, 1937

CHICAGO—Fighting militantly against boss and police intimidation that has attempted to raise a red scare, the taxi drivers who struck spontaneously have organized the Midwest Taxi Drivers Union and cleared the streets of cabs by militant strike action. The offices of the union were raided by the police last week, the strikers frisked for guns and weapons and the files ransacked without a warrant. In face of the violent reign of terror in which dozens of cabbies have already been arrested, the union has organized solidly 75 per cent of the drivers in Chicago.

They demand union recognition [and] an increase in wages, which are now about \$15 a week and often sink as low as \$6 or \$8.

Although many of the drivers have never before been engaged in strike activities, their morale is excellent.

Fukushima 1-year later

Continued from front page

shima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station off the power grid, halting the cooling system for fuel rods. The tsunami then destroyed the plant's backup generator, causing three of six reactors to overheat and release radioactivity in the atmosphere and the ocean.

The near meltdown revealed how the Tokyo Electric Power Company, with the blessing of four government administrations, disregarded the most elementary precautions in its drive for profit.

The basic facts today are well known. The plant used a cheaper containment vessel for fuel rods prone to rupture in the event of a cooling system failure. Tepco's owners never adequately raised the elevation of the backup generator, despite the potential for tsunamis in the area. Company officials deliberately delayed action to cool down the reactors in order to protect their investment. Surely, if private profit didn't drive the reactor's operation, the entire incident would have been avoided.

But we see this approach everyday in every part of the world where capitalist social relations dominate production. It flows from the way the capitalist system always has and always will function: to maximize profits while simultaneously undermining the source of all wealth, the earth and the worker.

Despite all this, zero is the number of people who have reportedly died as a result of nuclear radiation poisoning related to the Fukushima plant. Another striking figure, given the combination of the bosses' recklessness and the destructive power of earthquakes and tsunamis. The basic facts about what is considered the second worst nuclear disaster in world history actually provides a very strong

argument against the assertion that nuclear power presents a special inherent danger to humanity.

The so-called environmentalist opposition to nuclear power—or other forms of energy—is anti-scientific and reactionary. The various “green” forces and their nostrums provide no earthly option for maintaining modern civilization, let alone for advancing industrial development. They stand in opposition to the development of semicolonial nations oppressed by imperialism and are antagonistic to the needs of the great majority of humanity.

In contrast, the communist movement champions the expansion and extension of electrification and industrialization worldwide, and along with it growth of the proletariat and culture. This is essential for closing the gap between the imperialists and semicolonial world and bringing the world's toilers closer together in common struggle.

A capitalist-made catastrophe

On the other hand, the deaths of 20,000 people cannot be chalked up to an avoidable natural disaster.

Social relations under capitalism, not nature, determined that hundreds of thousands of people—workers, farmers, fishermen and small business owners—would inhabit low-lying, tsunami-prone coastal areas. The Japanese capitalist rulers, like their counterparts worldwide, have no financial interest in providing housing and transportation on better-protected higher grounds—the very locations where they and well-to-do middle-class layers and professionals can afford to live.

Japan sits on volatile tectonic plates. The government there had not instituted a sufficient tsunami



Town of Rikuzentakata, Japan, after March 2011 tsunami. Nearly 20,000 people were killed in total, none from near meltdown of nuclear plant in Fukushima. Deaths were result of economic and social relations of capitalism, which puts profits above human needs.

warning system, despite the fact that more than six years earlier a massive earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean killed more than 225,000 people—mostly in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand.

The Japan Meteorological Agency erroneously projected that day that a 10-foot plus tsunami would hit north-eastern Japan.

Concrete walls line about 40 percent of Japan's coastline, many places 33 feet high. But in the region hit by the tsunami, the walls were about 10 feet high. The waves turned out to be 40 feet high on average. The whole warning and protection system had been built for a lesser case—and cost-saving—scenario.

While not one person has reportedly died from the nuclear leak, people did die as a result of the anti-nuclear hysteria promoted by the government. According to recent coverage of the events by the *New York Times*, an unknown number of tsunami sur-

vivors—people trapped in the rubble, sick people, elderly and others unable to leave on their own—“probably starved to death” as the government ordered rescuers to evacuate the area for weeks “for fear of radiation.”

The dislocation is ongoing. One year after the disaster, hundreds of thousands of working people still live in shelters and lack employment.

Example of the Cuban Revolution

This contrasts sharply with Cuba, where workers and farmers got rid of capitalist social relations of property through a powerful revolution and have since used their government to meet human needs, not private profits.

Cuba has been hit by a series of powerful hurricanes in recent years that have killed thousands of people in the Caribbean and southern United States. But only 30 people have died in 16 major hurricanes there over the last decade. Prevention and evacuation are organized as a social undertaking, on the basis of working-class solidarity from the neighborhood and town to national level.

US gov't denies aid to tornado-hit mining areas

BY BETSY FARLEY

HARRISBURG, Ill.—As working people continue to clear the wreckage from the tornado that whipped through this southern Illinois coal-mining town on Feb. 29, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has declined disaster aid. State officials are appealing the decision.

Seven people here were killed in the tornado, including 77-year-old retired coal miner Donald Smith, who succumbed in mid-March to injuries from

the storm. One hundred were injured, 441 homes and more than 100 businesses were either damaged or destroyed.

Ironically, among the pretexts FEMA gave for denying disaster funds is the large number of volunteers helping out in the wake of the storm. The agency also said the damage wasn't bad enough. Congressman John Shimkus, who represents Harrisburg as part of his district, said to The Associated Press March 17, “The lesson again is that people need to

have private insurance.”

According to Shimkus, only 20 percent of those whose homes were destroyed had insurance to cover the damages.

“It's just wrong,” Bonita Humphrey told the *Militant*, as she cleaned up damage to her home. Her renter's insurance will pay for items damaged inside the house, “but it turns out the owner didn't keep up insurance payments, so we have nothing to repair the structural damage.”

For two weeks Humphrey's family has been living in motels, which she says have raised their prices. “We paid \$1,800 for two motel rooms for nine days.”

United Mine Workers of America Local 5929 opened a food pantry for people impacted by the storms the day after the tornado struck. “We worked with the city to reopen a closed-down supermarket to store the donations so we can stay open as long as it's needed,” said Greg Fort, president of the recently organized union at the Willow Lake Mine outside of Harrisburg.

“It's ridiculous that the government says there's not enough damage here for federal aid,” he continued. “A lot of people are out of work and many are elderly.”



Area devastated by tornado that swept through Harrisburg, a southern Illinois coal-mining town, Feb. 29. Seven were killed, 100 injured, and over 400 homes damaged or destroyed.

New International no. 14

The stewardship of nature also falls to the working class

Statement by Socialist Workers Party



“So long as extraction of surplus value for profit dictates production and distribution of wealth, land will remain private property and rental housing for the toiling majority will be built where propertied classes don't want to live. It will be constructed where workers can ‘afford’ rent, including often on flood plains.”

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Fidel Castro on defense of Iran's right to nuclear power

‘Cuba never considered, doesn’t need nuclear weapons’

Below is an excerpt from a speech Fidel Castro gave at the University of Havana on Nov. 17, 2005, at a time when Washington and its allies were intensifying their campaign of economic sanctions and military threats against the government of Iran over its nuclear program.

Castro, then president of Cuba, takes a position reflecting the morals and historic interests of the international working class, unconditionally siding with Iran in face of imperialist hostility and championing the right and necessity of nations oppressed by imperialism to develop nuclear power. At the same time, he explains the Cuban revolutionary government’s longstanding opposition to nuclear weapons. The rejection of any military tactics that could lead to the slaughter of innocent people is a matter of proletarian morality, which has, without any exception, distinguished the Cuban Revolution from its inception.

In March 2005 Washington had won the backing of London, Paris and Berlin for a coordinated plan, including sanctions, to step up pressure on Tehran. Around the same time, the London *Sunday Times* reported that the Israeli government had been practicing simulated attacks on Iran’s nuclear sites.

In September 2005 the U.N. nuclear energy agency ruled that Tehran was in “non-compliance” with provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and that there was an “absence of confidence that Iran’s nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes.”

Translation of the excerpts from Castro’s speech is by the *Militant*.



BY FIDEL CASTRO

Right now the empire is threatening to attack Iran if it produces nuclear fuel. Nuclear fuel is not nuclear weapons; it’s not nuclear bombs. To prevent a country from producing the fuel of the future is like forbidding someone to explore for oil, the fuel of the present, which is due to run out in a very short time. What country in the world is prevented from seeking fuel, coal, gas, oil?

We know that country very well. It is a country with 70 million inhabitants bent on industrial development and believing, quite correctly, that it is a great crime to use its gas or oil reserves to

feed the potential of thousands of millions of kilowatt hours urgently needed by this Third World country for its industrial development. And the empire is there wanting to ban this and threatening to bomb them. There is already an international debate on what day and at what time a surprise pre-emptive attack will be launched on the research centers for production of nuclear fuel and on whether it will be the empire that does it, or its satellite Israel as was the case in Iraq. ...

The U.S. is trying to secure possession of oil by any means possible, in any corner of the world. However, that source of energy is running low and in 25 or 30 years, there will only be one fundamental energy source for the mass production of electricity—aside for some solar and wind power, etc.—nuclear energy.

The day is far away when hydrogen could become a more suitable fuel, through technology that is at its beginnings. Meanwhile, mankind has reached a certain level of technical development and cannot live without fuel. This is a current problem.

* * *

Our Minister of Foreign Affairs has just visited Iran, since Cuba will be the venue within a year of the next Non-Aligned Countries meeting. Iran is demanding its right to produce nuclear fuel just like any industrialized nation and not be forced to destroy the reserves of a raw material, one that can be used not only as an energy source but also as a source for numerous products, such as



Angra nuclear power plant in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Nations oppressed by imperialism need and will develop nuclear energy in order to advance industrial development. In 2005 speech Fidel Castro defended the right of the Iranian government to develop nuclear power, while explaining why the revolutionary government of Cuba rejects nuclear weapons.

fertilizers, textiles and an infinite number of materials that are currently used worldwide.

That’s the way of the world. Let’s see what happens if it crosses their mind to bomb Iran in order to destroy any facility that could be used in the production of nuclear fuel.

Iran has signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as has Cuba. We have never considered producing nuclear weapons because we don’t need them. Even if they were accessible, how much would they cost and what sense would it make producing a nuclear weapon in the face of an enemy who has thousands of nuclear weapons? It would mean joining the game of nuclear confrontation.

We have a different type of nuclear weapon: it’s our ideas. We possess a weapon as powerful as nuclear ones and it is the magnitude of the justice we are fighting for. Our nuclear weapon is the invincible power of moral weapons.

That is why we have never considered producing them, nor has it crossed our mind to seek biological weapons, what for? Weapons to combat death, to combat AIDS, to combat diseases, to fight against cancer, that’s what we dedicate our resources to. That jerk—I can’t recall the name of that guy they appointed ... [former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton]—the man who is nothing less than the representative of the United States at the United Nations, a super-liar, shameless, who fabricated the idea that Cuba was doing research in biological warfare in the Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Center.

They have also accused us of collaborating with Iran, transferring technology for that purpose, when what we are doing is building a factory in partnership with Iran for anti-cancer products; that’s what we are doing. And if they want to put a stop to that as well, they can all go to hell or wherever they want to go!

Imperialists ratchet up economic war on Iran

Continued from front page

administration stated its intention is to stay on the current “diplomatic” course of intensifying economic warfare. At the same time, it has threatened on several recent occasions to resort to military force to prevent Iran from “obtaining nuclear weapons.”

Tehran maintains that its nuclear program is solely directed toward energy production and medical research.

The Israeli government is carrying out an independent policy toward Iran, threatening to launch airstrikes on that country’s nuclear facilities in the nearer term if Tehran doesn’t comply with imperialist demands to abandon development of its nuclear program.

Tel Aviv’s stance has brought additional pressure on Washington and its allies to intensify the sanctions.

Crippling impact on Iran’s economy

Tehran announced it had restarted uranium enrichment in August 2005, following the election of current President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Washington responded immediately by mobilizing international support for sanctions aimed at stopping Tehran’s nuclear program.

Since 2006, the U.N. Security Council has imposed four rounds of sanctions. The U.S. and European Union have leveled dozens of additional punitive measures on Iranian banks, engineering

conglomerates, shipping companies, port operators, energy companies and individuals.

At the end of last year, the Obama administration adopted new sanctions targeting foreign financial institutions that do business with Iran’s central bank, aimed at hampering Tehran’s international oil sales. A month later the European Union imposed an oil embargo and froze the bank’s assets.

With Tehran less able to convert crude oil exports into hard currency, the value of the Iranian rial has collapsed since the end of last year, losing 60 percent in value against the dollar on unofficial currency markets, according to the *Financial Times*.

The squeeze is coming from more and more places beyond Europe and the U.S. In January, China, South Korea and Singapore sharply cut their oil purchases from Iran. India canceled an Iranian shipment because its European insurers refused to provide coverage for the tanker. And Japanese oil refiners have asked for clauses to be added to oil-purchase contracts so they can back out if they can’t obtain tanker insurance.

Noor Islamic Bank in Dubai announced last month it had severed relations with Iranian banks in response to the new U.S. sanctions.

Earlier this month Japan and Spain reduced Iranian oil imports and switched

to Saudi crude. Japan has been Iran’s third largest customer and Spain one of Iran’s top three clients in the EU.

Previous sanctions have deprived Iran of the technology it needs to maintain oil production. According to the International Energy Agency, the latter fell in February to a 10-year low.

The economic warfare has imposed hardship on working people of Iran. Prices of food like rice, red meat, milk and eggs “double, sometimes triple, within a few weeks,” according to a March 1 report posted on the French-language TV5 network website.

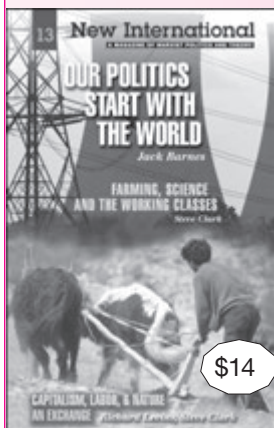
According to rice exporters, Reuters reported in February, “Iranian buyers had defaulted on payment of 200,000 tons of rice from their top supplier India.” The dispatch added, “grain ships are docked outside Iranian ports, traders are not booking fresh cargoes and exports of staples to Iran such as maize are falling as collecting payment from buyers gets harder.”

The imperialist sanctions appear to have the intended effect of inflaming factional tensions among Iranian rulers. The big-business press is doing its part, drawing attention to growing conflicts between Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and President Ahmadinejad. Despite differences, neither faction has voiced any intention to retreat from the government’s nuclear ambitions.

New International no. 13

‘Our Politics Start with the World’

by Jack Barnes



Vanguard workers in imperialist countries support extension of electrification to billions around the world forced to live and toil without it. Dangers of nuclear power are not an argument against its potential benefits in advancing electrification of the world, but an argument for organizing the toilers to take power from

the hands of capitalist exploiters.

or see distributors on p. 8

1962: Mobilization of Cuban toilers prevented US invasion

October 1962: The “Missile” Crisis as Seen from Cuba by *Tomás Diez Acosta*, is one of *Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for March*. Below are excerpts from the book’s preface. Copyright © 2002 by *Pathfinder Press*. Reprinted by permission.

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

In October 1962, during what is widely known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, Washington pushed the world to the precipice of nuclear war. Scores of books on the subject have been written by partisans of Washington and of Moscow. Here, for the first time, the story of that historic moment is told in full from the perspective of the central

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

protagonist, the Cuban people and their revolutionary government.

The author, Tomás Diez Acosta, joined the ranks of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba in 1961 as a literacy worker, one of the three hundred thousand young Cubans who mobilized to the mountains, factories, fields, barrios, barracks, and fishing villages during Cuba’s Year of Education to teach every Cuban how to read and write. He was fourteen years old. In the midst of an exploding revolutionary struggle there was no “minimum age” for combatants, Diez says with a laugh. When he retired



Granma

Cuban militia members during October 1962 “missile” crisis. Preparation of Cuban workers and farmers to defend revolution thwarted U.S. rulers’ plans for massive military assault.

from active military service thirty-seven years later he held the rank of lieutenant colonel. For the last fifteen years, as a researcher at the Institute of Cuban History, he has been assembling the material to tell the story that appears here, much of it in print for the first time.

Presenting a wealth of new information from Cuban archives and from interviews with direct participants, Diez details:

- the determination and readiness of Cuba’s working people to defend the country’s newly won sovereignty and the achievements of their unfolding socialist revolution against the increasingly aggressive designs of U.S. imperialism, including the full-scale bombing and invasion it was preparing during the October Crisis;
- the decision by Cuba’s revolutionary leadership to allow Soviet missiles to be stationed on the island, not because they thought such weapons were needed to defend Cuba from U.S. military assault, but as an act of international solidarity as the USSR was being ringed by U.S. strategic nuclear arms;
- the carrying out of Operation Anadyr, the code name for the eventual deployment of some 42,000 Soviet troops and missile units in Cuba between August and November 1962;
- the day-by-day unfolding of what Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara called the “brilliant yet sad days” of the October Crisis, and the

course followed by the revolutionary government as it worked simultaneously to defend Cuba’s sovereignty and move Washington back from the brink.

Drawing on declassified White House, Central Intelligence Agency, and Pentagon files available largely to “specialists,” the author makes the record of U.S. government policy accessible to the average reader. He documents Washington’s plans for a massive military assault on Cuba in 1962, exposing the protestations of defenders of the administration of John F. Kennedy who have claimed the U.S. government had no such intentions.

On April 19, 1961, after fewer than seventy-two hours of hard-fought combat, the Cuban armed forces, national militias, revolutionary police, and fledgling air force had dealt a stunning defeat to a U.S.-trained, -organized, and -financed mercenary invasion force of some 1,500 at Playa Girón close by the Bay of Pigs on Cuba’s southern coast. From that day on, as the pages that follow amply attest, U.S. policy makers at the highest levels acted on the conclusion that the revolutionary government of Cuba could be overthrown only by direct U.S. military action. And they marshaled seemingly limitless resources to prepare for that moment. Under the personal guidance of the president’s brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, “Operation Mongoose,” with its multifaceted plans for sabotage, subversion, and assassi-

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AUSTRALIA

Sydney: 1st Flr, 3/281-287 Beamish

nation of Cuba’s revolutionary leaders, was unleashed to pave the way.

In October 1962, when U.S. spy planes photographed Soviet missile launch sites under construction in Cuba, the U.S. rulers recognized that the military and political costs of such an invasion were being qualitatively transformed, and they initiated the adventure detailed in these pages. ...

The defeat of the invasion force at the Bay of Pigs had bought precious time for Cuba to organize, train, and equip its Revolutionary Armed Forces. Even more decisive, the people of Cuba used that time to consolidate the agrarian reform; win the battle of the literacy campaign; build schools, homes, and hospitals; extend electrification; advance social equality among Cuba’s working people; and strengthen the worker-farmer alliance that was the bedrock of the revolution and of the respect Cuba had earned among the world’s toilers. As they navigated the contradictory dialectic of the greatly appreciated aid they received from the USSR, the Cuban people were not only defending themselves against the Yankee predator. They stood *for* the future of humanity, as they stood *down* the power of U.S. imperialism.

And despite all odds they prevailed.

On October 26, at a decisive moment in the unfolding crisis, John F. Kennedy asked the Pentagon for an estimate of the U.S. casualties that would be incurred during the invasion they were weighing. He was informed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff expected 18,500 casualties in the first ten days alone—greater than the casualties U.S. troops would suffer in the entire first five years of fighting in Vietnam. And knowledgeable Cuban military personnel say U.S. casualties would have been far greater. From that moment on, Kennedy turned White House strategists away from their well-advanced plans to use U.S. military forces in an attempt to overthrow the revolution. The political price such body counts would entail continues to this day to hold off any direct U.S. military attack against Cuba.

As Cuba has proven not once but multiple times over the last forty-some years, the empire, despite its pretensions to hegemony, is in fact a tethered monster when a determined people, with a leadership worthy of it, does not flinch.

March

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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The Militant April 2, 2012

Class struggle, union power is answer to ‘right-to-work’

BY NAOMI CRAINE

A number of state governments are pressing so-called right-to-work laws, which prohibit “closed shop” contracts requiring workers in a unionized workplace to be dues-paying members.

Working people should vigorously oppose these and other efforts to weaken our unions, the basic defensive organizations of the working class. At the same time, it’s important to recognize that laws by themselves are not the main obstacle we face. They can’t and won’t stop workers

a distorted way, the relationship of class forces, which is decided not in the courtroom or congressional halls but in struggle—on the factory floor, on picket lines, in the streets.

In any workplace or industry, the union is *the workers*. Only by looking to ourselves—to mobilizing our collective power—can we resist assaults by the employer class: from the shop floor to the broader political arena.

‘Let the senators dig the coal’

In 1947, as part of the bosses’ efforts to undercut the massive labor upsurge that followed World War II, the U.S. Congress adopted the anti-union Taft-Hartley Act. It authorized numerous restrictions on the rights of workers, including the passage of “right to work” laws, which several states did.

After Taft-Hartley was enacted, 212,000 coal miners walked off the job in defiance of the new law. “Let the senators dig the coal!” was their battle cry. They won significant wage increases.

In 1978 the coal miners again waged a successful strike, standing down a Taft-Hartley strikebreaking injunction by “friend of labor” President James Carter.

More recently, port workers in Longview, Wash., won a victory against union busting. The EGT company attempted to shut out members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union from its new grain terminal. The bosses disregarded an agreement with the city government mandating the use of ILWU labor at



AP Photo/ Michael Conroy

Unionists protest Feb. 1 outside Indiana Statehouse in Indianapolis against “right to work” state bill aimed at weakening workers’ organizations. Bill was signed into law later that day.

the port, a concession won in past struggle. After a militant fight that won broad working-class support, EGT was forced to recognize the union—while at the same time it got an agreement with the city stipulating it was not required to hire ILWU labor.

The next round is the battle against massive fines and felony charges facing ILWU militants. The outcome will be determined by the longshore workers’ ability to fight and win backing from fellow workers.

Within the labor movement, the Employee Free Choice Act, is sometimes put forward as a counter to “right to work.” This bill would grant union recognition without a vote after

a majority of workers sign authorization cards. Similarly, some pin hopes on electing Democratic “friends of labor,” or look to the National Labor Relations Board to defend workers’ interests.

Looking to the capitalists’ government to weigh in on our side is the opposite of the class-struggle approach. Workers should insist that the bosses’ government stay out of our unions. We should decide who is a member, how we vote, who are our leaders and so on.

“Right-to-work” laws can’t be an excuse for not organizing unions or using union power. The fact that practically every state in the South has such legislation is sometimes portrayed as the reason unionization rates there are so low.

Those laws stem from the historic weakness of the labor movement in the South—not the other way around. This is due above all to the refusal of the union officials over decades to lead a fight against Jim Crow segregation, which kept the working class deeply divided along racial lines until it was smashed by the mass Black rights mobilizations of the 1950s and ’60s.

‘Anything you’re big enough to do’

In 2000-2001, members of the International Longshoremen’s Association on the docks of Charleston, S.C., waged an effective struggle against union busting. The state government, in the name of upholding the “right to work,” tried for two years to frame up five union members on felony charges stemming from a police assault on a peaceful union picket. By organizing working-class solidarity throughout the region and nationally, this attack was defeated.

In *Teamster Power*, the second of four volumes on the Teamster battles of the 1930s and ’40s, Farrell Dobbs describes the advice he gave as the central organizer of an 11-state organizing drive of over-the-road truckers in the Midwest.

“When a local leader asked if the union could do one or another thing,” Dobbs said, “my opening reply was usually: ‘You can do anything you’re big enough to do.’ ... This helped to instill in the workers a reflex tendency to think always in terms of using their class power.”

COMMENTARY

from organizing unions and bringing the power of our class to bear—unless we let them.

On Feb. 1 Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels signed a “right-to-work” bill, as thousands of workers protested inside and outside the statehouse.

The next day Republican politicians in Minnesota announced plans to place a similar measure on the ballot in November. “Right-to-work” laws have recently been floated in other states, including Kentucky, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire and Ohio.

Twenty-three states, half of them in the South, have enacted such anti-union legislation since 1947. Indiana is the first state in more than a decade and the first in the industrial Midwest.

Daniels promotes the new law saying it will attract business and jobs to the state. “Right to work” may very well provide an incentive for some employers to choose Indiana. Of course, to them it means “the right to work for less.”

Where struggles are settled

If a “right to work” measure is conceded without a fight, it will be used to benefit the employers. On the other hand, when workers wage a strong enough fight and win enough solidarity, we can push back employer and government attacks and strengthen our unity and capacity for future struggle. As a result of such fights, the propertied rulers are sometimes compelled to change some of their laws.

A law is a piece of paper—it only has meaning to the degree it can be enforced in practice. It registers, in

Atlanta rally protests state law attacking freedom of speech

BY JACOB PERASSO

ATLANTA—More than 1,500 people protested March 17 in front of the State Capitol here against a bill passed by the state Senate that restricts picketing and makes it harder for unions to have dues deducted from paychecks.

Members of some 20 unions participated. They were joined by immigrant rights activists and students.

SB 469 would add protesting at private residences to an already existing law that bans “mass picketing” that could “obstruct or interfere with” a

workplace or public street, railroad or airport. In addition, any picketing that interferes “with the resident’s right to quiet enjoyment” would be banned. The bill allows bosses to sue those who carry out “prohibited activity” under the law.

The bill also says that deducting union dues from paychecks is only allowed with a written authorization, renewed annually, from the employee.

Dave Ferguson contributed to this article



Militant/Jacob Perasso

March 17 union-led protest in Atlanta, against state bill that restricts the right to picket was joined by defenders of immigrant rights. Bill also puts up obstacles to collecting union dues.



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