

# THE MILITANT

**INSIDE**  
**Cuban 5 respond to letters from kids at NY community center**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 78/NO. 29 AUGUST 11, 2014

## Join effort to get 'Militant' into hands of more workers

BY SETH GALINSKY

If you like what you read in the *Militant*, we invite you to join in getting the socialist newsweekly around. Unlike any other paper, the *Militant* covers news and political questions from the vantage point of how to advance the interests of working people.

In the midst of today's capitalist economic crisis, many workers are looking for ways to resist bosses' efforts to boost their profits on our backs. Meatpackers at JBS company in Greeley, Colorado, who overwhelmingly refused to accept a

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**Fall campaign set to expand 'Militant' readership**  
 — Sept. 6 to Oct. 28 —

As *Militant* volunteers begin a one-week vacation, we're announcing our seven-week fall subscription drive. Through this campaign, supporters of the paper will join in today's simmering labor resistance and tap into interest in the *Militant* we find in workers' neighborhoods in the U.S. and beyond. We encourage all readers to join us in this effort!

## Israeli assault devastates working people of Gaza

Hamas' sacrificing of civilians deals blow to Palestinian struggle, workers' solidarity



Active Stills/Omar Sameer

Inset: Active Stills/Keren Manor  
 Israeli assault on Gaza that began July 7 has killed more than 1,100 people, mostly civilians. Some 170,000 have fled their homes. Photos show protests in Israel against Tel Aviv's assault, above, in Umm al-Fahm, July 25; right, in Tel Aviv, July 26.



BY SETH GALINSKY

The death toll from Tel Aviv's assault on the Gaza Strip has surpassed 1,100 — three-quarters of them civilians, including at least 218 children. More than 6,000 Palestinians have been injured and at least 170,000, about one-tenth of the strip's population, have fled their homes. As of July 27 the Israeli army had destroyed more than 3,540 buildings, damaged

120 schools, six hospitals, and water, electricity and sewage systems that affect nearly all of Gaza's 1.8 million people.

After a two-day lull, Israeli forces renewed airstrikes and artillery fire across Gaza, killing 30 people July 28 and knocking its only power plant out of commission. Most of Gaza's electricity comes from Israel, but many of those power lines have been damaged since fighting began July 7.

The Israeli assault began after Hamas fired scores of missiles aimed at populated areas in Israel, they said in protest of the arrest of Hamas sup-

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## Separatists in Ukraine lose further ground after shutdown

BY JOHN STUDER

The area of eastern Ukraine under separatist control has steadily shrunk in face of a dwindling base of recruits and support since the July 17 shutdown of Malaysia Airlines passenger Flight MH17 there, which killed all 298 on board and fueled growing op-

**DEFEND UKRAINE SOVEREIGNTY!  
 NO TO SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA!**

position among working people and others.

At the same time workers in Ukraine continue to join actions in defense of the country's sovereignty and against bosses' attacks on jobs, wages and working conditions — conditions that have been exacerbated in the east by the separatists' disruption and sabotage.

Meanwhile, Washington and its imperialist allies in Europe announced a new round of sanctions against Moscow July 29, hitting banks, sections of the oil industry and individuals — measures designed to impose hardships on working people as part of bringing pressure to bear on the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

As the separatists' influence wanes and internal fissures widen, the paramilitaries' ties to Moscow have become more transparent.

"I'm a mercenary from Russia. I

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## Postal workers defeat anti-union scheme to contract jobs to Staples



Protest April 24 in Washington, D.C., against setting up of mini post offices in Staples as part of USPS moves to slash jobs and weaken union. Staples announced July 14 it was ending program.

BY KEVIN COLE  
 AND NORTON SANDLER

LOS ANGELES — Postal workers scored a victory when Staples Inc. announced July 14 that it was ending a pilot program to set up mini post offices in the company's retail outlets. Staples began the program last fall, offering U.S. Postal Service-branded

counters in 82 stores in four states.

The Staples program is widely viewed by postal workers and their supporters as part of an anti-union privatization and cost-cutting campaign, targeting jobs and working conditions.

In recent months, postal workers

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## Opposition to death penalty grows after 2-hour execution in Arizona

BY EMMA JOHNSON

For nearly two hours Joseph Wood gasped for breath before he died. The July 23 gruesome spectacle in Arizona was the latest in a string of protracted executions that have fueled opposition to this weapon of terror against the working class.

"We've finally got some traction to raise the issue of the death penalty and why you should oppose it," Dan Peitzmeyer, president of Death Penalty Alternatives for Arizona, said by phone from Phoenix July 26. "During the last three days there has been a great deal of interest. People are talking about it, media are asking, facts are coming to light."

The same two-drug combination that killed Wood — who was sentenced to death in 1991 for killing his ex-girlfriend and her father in 1989 — was used for the first time in the 26-minute execution of Dennis McGuire in Ohio Jan. 16. McGuire repeatedly gasped for air,

making snorting and choking sounds. When Clayton Lockett was injected with a three-drug combination in Oklahoma April 29, it took 43 minutes before he died.

In 2009 the main pharmaceutical

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# Capitalist rulers weary of Obama 'soft' foreign policy

BY JOHN STUDER

"Obama contends with arc of instability unseen since '70s," said a *Wall Street Journal* headline July 13. "Convergence of security crises poses serious challenge to Barack Obama's foreign policy," added the subhead.

The article, and others like it, reflects growing dissatisfaction among the ruling families of America with the "soft" foreign policy of the Obama administration and the weakness it projects to their enemies around the world.

For more than half a century, Washington's unmatched military capacity has been the cornerstone of advancing the U.S. rulers' foreign policy goals, as well as those of world imperialism. The use and credible threat to use a U.S. boots-on-the-ground force has diminished. But the challenges to imperialist interests in a capitalist world marked by economic rivalry, political instability and social crisis — from the Middle East to East Asia — have grown.

"Mr. Obama campaigned for the presidency in 2008 as the alternative to George W. Bush, as a leader who would wind down the U.S.'s Mideast wars and reach out diplomatically to historic adversaries such as Iran, Syria and Russia," the *Journal* wrote. "He promised to de-emphasize the role of U.S. military force and intensify the country's diplomatic and moral persuasion."

"The world sometimes seems as if it is flying apart, with Mr. Obama unable to fix it," the *New York Times*

editorial board wrote in May. "It does not feel as if he is exercising sufficient American leadership and power."

Criticisms are coming from bourgeois liberal and conservative voices alike, pointing to examples of what they see as mounting failures for U.S. imperialism, including: "Leading from behind" in the Libyan civil war of 2011 and the Sept. 11, 2012, assault on the U.S. "Diplomatic Mission" in Benghazi; the 2009-2011 U.S. troop pullout in Iraq that left parts of the country to Iranian influence and Islamist rebellion; the rapid drawdown in Afghanistan, giving the war-torn country in large measure back to the Taliban; last year's deal with Moscow that breathed new life into the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad; and recent negotiations that relieve pressure on the Iranian government and its pursuit of nuclear technology.

The administration has little more than diminishing influence and greater resentment to show for its increased "dialogue," sensitive speeches and diplomatic "resets," and its greater reliance on hunter-killer operations by special forces and aerial drone strikes in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

Under the current administration, the Pentagon has also reduced U.S. army troop levels to the lowest size since before World War II.

"America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire," Obama said in a June 2009 speech at Cairo University.

The world outlook behind the

## Rally in Greece protests ultra-rightist Golden Dawn



Vagelis Gonatas

MAROUSI, Greece — More than 1,000 people marched July 24 to protest the ultra-rightist Golden Dawn party, which recently opened an office in this northern Athens suburb of 72,000. Chanting, "Not in Marousi, not anywhere, chase the fascist out of every neighborhood!" the demonstration wound through the center of town, but refrained from approaching Golden Dawn's office, which was protected by a large force of police in riot gear.

During municipal elections in May, "they beat up two observers from left-wing parties leaving the polling station in nearby Kifisia," said Vagelis Gonatas, 53, who was assaulted and threatened by Golden Dawn thugs July 23 while distributing flyers for the march. "On July 11 they inaugurated a headquarters here. That day people began to organize out of the teachers' union hall."

The fascists responded to the march with a flyer declaring Golden Dawn as "the only force opposed to the current Greek regime run by agents of Germany," and accused march organizers of being "agents of international money lenders" who "seek to terrorize every Greek citizen who wishes to fight and remain free."

— NATASHA TERLEXI

Obama administration's foreign policy is not directly representative of any wing of the U.S. capitalist rulers. Instead, it is an extension of the cosmopolitan and naïve views that distinguish a bourgeois-minded meritocratic social layer of highly paid — and, they believe, highly intelligent — supervisory personnel, attorneys, staffers, professors in academia, media, NGOs, foundations, think tanks, etc. This social layer, which has grown substantially in recent decades, has neither the confidence nor experience of the ruling propertied families to which they are ultimately beholden. Consistent with this social outlook and base of support, the administration's bent has been to resist engaging in world conflicts and challenges

to U.S. government interests, believing they can be discussed away — but with a dangerous tendency to lash out militarily when things inevitably don't go as planned.

Impatience with Washington's for-  
Continued on page 4

## 'Militant' publishing break

This is a two-week issue of the paper. We'll be taking a vacation next week. The next issue of the *Militant* will be mailed out on August 15.

## THE MILITANT

### Support workers' resistance to boss attacks

As bosses and their government seek to drive down wages, benefits, and working conditions, more workers are looking to resist. The 'Militant' covers these struggles, from port workers in Los Angeles fighting for a union to postal workers standing up to privatization of their jobs.



Slobodan Dimitrov

Port drivers and supporters march at Terminal Island, Port of Los Angeles, July 11.

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**France:** Send 76 euros for one year to Diffusion du Militant, P.O. Box 175, 23 rue Lecourbe, 75015 Paris.

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**Australia:** Send A\$50 for one year to P.O. Box 164 Campsie, NSW 2194, Australia.

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Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

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

# Expand 'Militant' readership

Continued from front page  
proposed contract until the company backed off on many of its concession demands, are one example.

Workers bought 27 copies of the *Militant* outside the plant at shift change July 22, Jacquie Henderson reported after supporters of the paper from Omaha, Nebraska, went there to learn about their fight. Another eight papers and six subscriptions were sold door to door and to United Food and Commercial Workers voting on the new contract proposal.

The *Militant* is preparing a seven-week subscription campaign starting Sept. 6 running through Oct. 28. You can join by planning to get co-workers, friends and relatives to take advantage of the 12-week introductory offer.

Eleven Pathfinder Press books on politics today and lessons from previous revolutionary working-class battles are on special for subscribers. (See ad below.) A number of new readers took advantage of the deal this week to get *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes.

One of them was Vietnam veteran and retired merchant marine Carlos Irizarry, who signed up in Brooklyn, New York, July 27.

"The struggle by Blacks for their rights opened doors for everybody, for Puerto Ricans like myself, for Jews," Irizarry said. He also purchased *Voices From Prison: The Cuban Five*

Participants in the annual convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Las Vegas July 19-23 bought 20 subscriptions to the *Militant*, eight copies of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, eight books on the fight to win freedom for the Cuban Five, and 32 other books, according to Betsey Stone, who staffed a booth there.

"I heard Malcolm X changed at the end of his life. I want to learn more about this," retired auto worker Rose Jones-Wade said at the convention as she bought the *Workers Power* book, which describes Malcolm's development as an internationalist working-class leader in the



Militant/Maggie Trowe

Restaurant worker and student Kaela' Shope, 18, right, signs up for *Militant* subscription at her door in Kansas City, Missouri, July 19. She was interested in coverage of fight by Kurdish workers in Turkey and region. "I went to school with a lot of Kurds," she told Joanne Murphy.



Militant/Eric Simpson

Rose Jones-Wade, right, buys *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* and subscription from Betsey Stone at July 19-23 NAACP convention.

battle "between those who want freedom, justice and equality and those who want to continue the system of exploitation."

"It's taken generations in our fight," she said. "Today we have to keep this up, to raise the minimum wage, for women's rights, for workers' rights."

"We've sold four subscriptions since Wednesday and 42 single copies," wrote Katy LeRougetel July 28 from Calgary in Alberta, Canada, where one of two new branches of the Communist League has been established.

"It's good to get a fresh perspective," said construction worker Jason MacEachern, who bought a subscription from LeRougetel and François

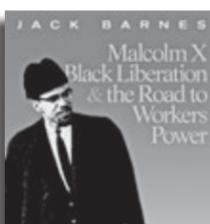
Bradette, when they knocked on his door. "I tried the *Calgary Herald* and it doesn't work for me."

Supporters of the *Militant* have been selling the paper at protests against the Israeli assault on Gaza. Fifty-five participants in a July 25 demonstration of 3,000 in New York bought single copies of the *Militant* and two bought subscriptions. At a July 25 action in Calgary, 23 copies of the paper and a subscription were sold. Protesters at a July 26 demonstration in London bought 12 subscriptions, dozens of single copies and eight books.

In Auckland, New Zealand, several dozen copies of the *Militant*, four subscriptions and two books on the fight to free the Cuban Five have been sold at Gaza protests over the last couple of weeks.

To join efforts to expand the readership of the *Militant* see page 8 for the distributors nearest you or contact the *Militant* at themilitant@mac.com or call us at (212) 244-4899.

## Special offers with 'Militant' subscription



**Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power**  
by Jack Barnes  
\$10 with subscription (regular \$20)



**The Cuban Five**  
Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free  
from pages of the 'Militant'  
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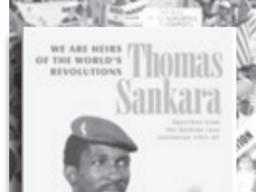
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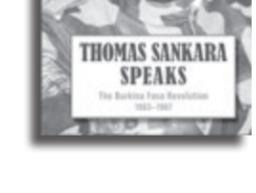
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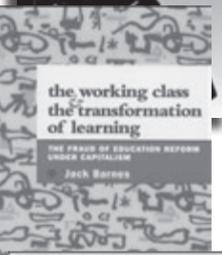
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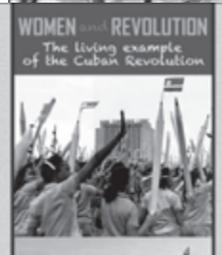
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The Living Example of the Cuban Revolution  
by Asela de los Santos, Mary-Alice Waters and others  
\$3 with subscription (regular \$7)



See distributors  
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## MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

### CALIFORNIA

**San Francisco**  
Washington's Political Police and the U.S. Working Class — 50 Years of Covert Operations. Speaker: Eric Simpson, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Aug. 8, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

### GEORGIA

**Atlanta**  
End Tel Aviv's Military Assault! Israeli Army Escalates War in Gaza. Speaker: John Benson, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Aug. 8, 7:30 p.m. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel.: (678) 528-7828.

### CANADA

**Montreal**  
Video: Chernobyl in U.S.-Cuban TV Report on Cuban Aid to Those Affected by the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster. Fri., Aug. 1, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Room 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

### NEW ZEALAND

**Auckland**  
1986 Nuclear Meltdown at Chernobyl, Ukraine: Contrast Between Havana Solidarity, Moscow Brutality. Speakers: Baskaran Appu and Felicity Coggan, Communist League. Fri., Aug. 8, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5 waged, \$2 unwaged. 188a Onehunga Mall. Tel.: (09) 636-3231.

# Israeli assault on Gaza

Continued from front page

porters. According to the Israel Defense Forces, since July 7 Hamas has fired more than 1,000 rockets, with the full expectation that it would draw a massive counterattack. Most of Hamas' widely inaccurate projectiles landed in unpopulated areas. The IDF says Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system has intercepted nearly 500 rockets.

Politically hostile to mounting a mass popular struggle that could mobilize Palestinian workers and farmers and win support throughout the region, including among Jewish working people, Hamas' anti-working-class strategy maximizes the sacrifice of civilians in Gaza. Their aim is to gain sympathy in wings of bourgeois public opinion that might bring diplomatic pressure on Tel Aviv. Hamas systematically places its targeted rocket launchers and other weaponry in densely populated working-class neighborhoods, as well as schools, hospitals and other public facilities.

And the group's promotion of Jew hatred and explicit targeting of Jewish civilians cuts off the possibility of winning solidarity for the Palestinian struggle from Jewish working people in Israel, which would help end the blockade of Gaza, open the borders for work and travel, and advance other national demands.

There are fewer and fewer refugees for workers and farmers in Gaza, a narrow strip and one of the most densely populated regions on earth. According to the United Nations, Israel's military has declared at least 44 percent of the territory a "no-go zone" that residents should evacuate.

The Israel Defense Forces say that they give civilians in Gaza advance notice to flee targeted areas through leaflets and text messages.

A letter to the Israeli government from nine human rights groups in Israel notes that "one is hard put to consider the dispersal of leaflets 'effective warning'" when residents of the Gaza Strip have "no way to completely evacuate the targeted area."

In the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority government of President Mahmoud Abbas had tried to restrict protests in solidarity with Gaza. But as outrage grew, Abbas' governing Fatah party backed a July 24 protest of 10,000 near the Kalandia checkpoint between Jerusalem and the West Bank village of

Ramallah. At least two protesters were killed and more than 100 wounded when Israeli soldiers and border police attacked.

## Opposition inside Israel

While polls indicate widespread support among Israeli Jews for the military assault, opponents of the war have sought to get out their views inside Israel.

Hundreds of Jews and Palestinians protesting in Haifa July 18 were joined by Basel Ghattas, Jamal Zahalka and Haneen Zoabi, three Palestinian members of the Knesset, Israel's parliament. The protest was initiated by Hadash, a political party established by the Communist Party. Counterprotesters chanted "Death to Arabs, Go to Gaza."

Haifa police had refused to grant a permit for the demonstration but under pressure from Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, allowed the action to take place.

Several thousand opponents of the assault, most of them Jewish, protested in Tel Aviv July 26.

*Haaretz* columnist Ilene Prusher noted in a July 20 article on the liberal Israeli daily's website that a "deluge" of criticism poured in after she wrote, "Think of the horror of being a parent in Gaza and knowing nowhere is safe, there are no shelters," unlike in Israel where there is a widespread network of shelters.

## Tel Aviv intensified blockade in 2007

Israeli forces occupied Gaza for 38 years after capturing it in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. They withdrew in September 2005 but retained control of its borders and airspace. Thousands of Gaza residents were no longer allowed to enter or work in Israel. Since 2005 Hamas and other Islamist groups have fired thousands of missiles into Israel. In June 2007, after Hamas wrested control of the territory from Fatah in pitched street battles, Tel Aviv intensified its blockade.

Even before the recent assault, "35 percent of Gaza's farmland and 85 percent of its fishing waters were totally or partially inaccessible due to Israeli imposed restrictions," the United Nations said.

Power outages took place up to 12 hours a day. More than 90 percent of the water supply is unsafe for human consumption without treatment. The Israeli government has denied visas to all



Reuters/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa

Palestinians view destroyed and damaged houses from Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis in southern Gaza July 30. Since bombardments began 170,000 Gaza residents have fled their homes.

but a handful of Gaza students to study abroad.

The second largest employer in Gaza after the government is the United Nations and 80 percent of the population is dependent on U.N. agencies for at least some of their food. Unemployment is estimated at 50 percent.

Residents of Gaza are not only cut off from Israel, but Egypt where the Cairo government has repeatedly bombed, flooded or bulldozed tunnels linking Gaza to the Sinai Peninsula, most recently late last year.

Farmers are unable to get pesticides, fertilizers and other basic supplies needed for their crops or permits from the Israeli government to export what they manage to produce.

Over the last several years, Hamas has lost support in Gaza and throughout the Middle East. Bourgeois regimes in the region, many in crisis themselves, have retracted support for Hamas and less and less feign support for the Palestinian cause.

From New York and Chicago to London and Athens, Greece, tens of thousands have joined protests against the Israeli assault and continued blockade of Gaza.

In Paris, protests July 19 and 20 were marred by dozens of masked youth

who set fire to synagogues and Jewish-owned stores.

An article posted July 23 on +972, a website based in Israel and Palestine that opposes the Israeli occupation, responded to the anti-Jewish actions in Paris. "We, as supporters of the Palestinian people, too must actively push back against any form of bigotry or violence against Jewish communities," wrote Yasmeen Serhan, a Palestinian-American student at the University of Southern California. "Ultimately, such violent actions are no better than the right-wing extremist 'Death to Arabs' protests taking place throughout Israel."

Writing in March in the Saudi daily *Asharq al-Awsat*, Tunisian poet Amal Mousa criticized Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyah for stating, "We are a people that love death for the sake of Allah as much as our enemies love life."

Mousa added that Hamas' course has "not brought the Palestinians any significant results."

"In fact, Palestinian and Arab blood has been wasted," she said.

The Israeli government has stated it will only accept a permanent ceasefire if Hamas destroys all its missiles, demilitarizes Gaza and destroys all its tunnels.

## Arc of instability

Continued from page 2

eign policy is shared by many of the U.S. rulers' imperialist allies.

Clemens Wergin, foreign editor of the German media conglomerate Die Welt, pointed to the dangers for ruling imperialist classes worldwide in "Is Obama's Foreign Policy Too European?" an opinion piece in the *New York Times* July 8.

"I have long been a critic of the German foreign policy debate — of its freeloading on the American security umbrella," Wergin wrote, "coupled with moral grandstanding whenever the Americans did things their way."

Germany, France and other European imperialist powers have steadily demobilized their military forces over past decades, content to depend more and more on the U.S. rulers to wield military might to defend the imperialist world order.

But as the Syrian civil war expanded, "I suddenly understood the problem with this American president and his foreign policy," Wergin said. "He sounded just like a German politician: all moral outrage, but little else."

When Obama was elected, Wergin said, he was hailed in Europe "as a president with almost European sensitivities and worldviews." Obama's likeminded

European boosters delivered the Nobel peace prize to him just months after he took office.

"It turns out that soft power cannot replace hard power," Wergin said. It was fine for European rulers to talk soft and do less, so long as Washington brought its troops, bombs and gunboats to bear whenever and wherever imperialist interests were threatened.

More and more the propertied rulers, here and abroad, are impatiently awaiting a new administration in Washington.

## Postal workers victory

Continued from front page

organized protests against the program in cities across the country.

"APWU [American Postal Workers Union] rallies forced postal management to modify their agreement with Staples," Maileen Au, a floor clerk from Huntington Park, told the *Militant*.

Staples' decision came two days after the 1.6 million-member American Federation of Teachers decided at its convention to boycott the stores in solidarity with postal workers. At a rally of several hundred teachers and postal employees across the street from the Staples Center July 12, during the AFT convention here, members of the teachers' union tore up Staples Rewards cards.

Staples, which is struggling financially and has closed a number of stores this year, announced it was replacing

the program with an "approved shipper" program, which would include the Postal Service and other shippers.

"Management is combining and deskilling jobs all the time to make them ripe for lower wages if private industry takes them over," said Lourdes Montana, a postal window clerk in Mission Viejo.

The Staples program is part of a much broader attack on postal workers and their unions, as well as on working people dependent on postal services. According to the Letter Carriers Union, the Postal Service has eliminated more than 193,000 jobs since 2006, 630 post offices have been closed and post office bosses say they plan to close 229 facilities by the end of the year. Eliminating Saturday mail delivery is also being considered.



www.pathfinderpress.com

## ON THE PICKET LINE

### Meatpackers in Colorado push back concessions

GREELEY, Colo. — Workers at the JBS beef slaughterhouse here, which employs about 3,000 workers, voted 97 percent to approve a new contract July 22. Members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7 had worked without a contract during 10 months of stalled negotiations, but bosses backed off concession demands after workers voted in late June to authorize a strike.

The strike vote, which took place a couple weeks after a worker died on the job, passed by 99 percent.

“They thought we were weak but we stuck together,” said Steven Baca, 46, who has worked seven years in the hide department. “We won even though we didn’t get everything we wanted.”

More than 20 different languages are spoken in the plant; many workers are immigrants from Myanmar, Somalia, Latin America and Nepal. Eight years ago, 262 workers at the slaughterhouse were arrested in an immigration raid that targeted six meatpacking plants across the country.

“It doesn’t matter where we are from. If we are not all united, they will work us like donkeys,” said Antonio, who did not want to give his last name.

“The strike vote moved the company on a number of issues,” said Kim Cordova, president of UFCW Local 7.

The union refused to accept JBS’s contract demands, which would have doubled workers’ health care costs and allowed bosses to change their health care plan at will.

The approved contract includes “affordable health insurance ... guaranteed for the life of the contract,” according to a press release from UFCW Local 7. Details have not been released.

The agreement stipulates a \$1.80 hourly pay raise over the five-year agreement, including 60 cents the first year, paid retroactively to the contract expiration date of Sept. 29, 2013, according to a union press release. In addition, 21 specific jobs will be classified at higher pay grades.

Several workers spoke to the *Militant* about working conditions in the plant.

“There are daily injuries that are not reported,” said Basilio Chaires, 50, who has worked 12 years in the plant, noting that many safety issues are not addressed in the new contract.

Ralph Horner, 54, was killed while working at the JBS plant June 10. He was killed after being trapped in a conveyor belt while working the night shift. Workers say they have asked, but have not been given information on his death. Representatives of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration say they are investigating.

— *Jacquie Henderson and John Parry*

### San Francisco transit workers ratify new contract after sickout

SAN FRANCISCO — One month after a sickout that tied up bus, light-rail and cable car service here, members of Transport Workers Union Local 250-A ratified a contract July 14, in a 634-485 vote. The three-year pact with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency covers 2,000 workers.

After voting 96 percent to reject a previous contract proposal, hundreds of workers called in sick June 2-4, shutting down most of the railway service.

The contract imposes a new employee contribution to the pension plan

of 7.5 percent of wages. But instead of being effective immediately, as stipulation in the rejected contract, it will be implemented in stages over three years. Dropped from the approved contract was the company’s demand that newer employees pay an extra 5 percent toward the pensions fund.

“We didn’t make any progress on this until Muni stopped” operating during the sickout, said driver German Marroquin. “Then they started to consider the drivers’ position.”

Previously new hires reached full pay — about \$29 an hour — after 19 months. The new contract changed this to five years.

“It’s wrong. It’s unfair,” said Reggie Jones, a Muni driver for 14 years. “The new hires work the same routes and pick up the same people. Why should they get paid less?”

— *Jeff Powers*

### NZ casino workers protest contracting out jobs

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Some 60 workers picketed at the SkyCity Casino complex here July 18 to protest moves to contract out the jobs of nearly 100 cleaners. The complex includes two hotels and 23 bars and restaurants. Two unions, Unite and the Service and Food Workers Union, organize one-third of the complex’s 3,000 workers.

Unite member Tina Barnet, who works on the gaming floor, said that outsourcing cleaners’ jobs is a threat to all SkyCity workers.

Workers in the butchery department, which services restaurants in the complex, are fighting similar outsourcing attempts, said Jose Aquilino, a butcher and member of the Service and Food Workers Union.

Contractors who take over the cleaning are required to meet the current contract terms, said Lynette Blacklaws, an organizer for the Service and Food Workers Union, but they expect contractors would start slashing hours and targeting workers for disciplinary action.

“Seven hundred sixty workers signed a petition protesting the company’s moves to contract out the



Militant/Baskaran Appu

Cleaners who are resisting outsourcing of jobs have support of hundreds of co-workers in other departments at SkyCity Casino complex in Auckland, New Zealand. Above, July 18 picket.

cleaners’ jobs,” said Unite organizer John Crocker.

— *Annalucia Vermont*

### Tentative contract announced on Long Island Rail Road

NEW YORK — Officials of unions representing workers at the Long Island Rail Road and Metropolitan Transit Authority officers announced a tentative agreement July 17, three days before a strike deadline set by the unions. Some 300,000 people ride the LIRR daily.

Local newspapers including the *New York Post* and the *Daily News* backed the rail bosses with anti-union editorials calling workers “the best paid in the nation,” making \$60,000 a year plus \$30,000 in overtime pay.

On July 16 Gov. Andrew Cuomo called on the unions and MTA to resume negotiations to avoid “Long Islanders from being held hostage by a strike.” A deal with eight unions in the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation coalition representing 5,400 workers was reached the next day.

The proposed contract includes a 17 percent wage hike spread over 6.5 years. MTA had proposed the increase over seven years and union officials had proposed six. Instead of MTA’s public stance that new hires not reach full pay for 12 years — double the current six

— the two sides agreed on eight years. All workers will start paying 2 percent of wages for medical insurance. MTA had been demanding new hires pay 4 percent. They will also pay more into the pension fund.

“They say it’s inevitable that we have to pay for the medical. Why is it inevitable?” said a worker at the train cleaning facility in Queens, who did not want his name used. “They make it seem like we’re the ones bleeding the railroad because we need health care. But our wages aren’t keeping up with inflation.”

Chris Robles, a conductor with seven years seniority, said the deal is “pretty fair. I like the whole thing.”

“The MTA threw us under the bus the way they described us as ‘greedy, lazy and overpaid,’” said Kevin, a conductor who did not want his last name used.

“The reason there is so much overtime is because crew cuts mean that we do the work of two to three workers,” he said. “I often work seven days a week.”

“When it concerns safety, it’s always about money,” Kevin said. “The track from Speonk to Montauk on the LIRR is ‘dark territory’ with 150-year-old technology.”

Union members will vote on the contract by August 15.

— *Dan Fein*

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



August 11, 1989

MONTREAL — In a massive outpouring of anger and determination thousands of people demonstrated in cities across Canada on July 27 in support of women’s right to decide whether to have an abortion.

The cross-Canada mobilization took place the day after the province of Quebec’s Court of Appeal decided to uphold a lower court injunction preventing 21-year-old Chantal Daigle from having an abortion.

Chanting “Neither pope, judge, doctor, or spouse, it’s a woman’s decision” and “Maternity a choice, abortion a right,” more than 10,000 people took to the streets of Montreal.

Demonstrations of several hundred took place in many other cities across Canada, including Calgary, Saskatoon, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Quebec City, Halifax, and St. John’s.



August 10, 1964

NEW YORK — “All U.S. warships, planes and troops should be immediately withdrawn from Southeast Asia,” today declared Clifton DeBerry, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, as the news came of bombing attacks by U.S. planes on coastal installations in North Vietnam.

DeBerry termed the attacks ordered by President Johnson “open, unabashed acts of aggression carried out in contemptuous disregard of international law and of all humane and civilized sentiments.”

The Negro candidate for President said that the attack on North Vietnam had been planned in the White House and Pentagon for a long time. “The incidents between the U.S. destroyer and the PT boats were the pretext not the cause of the U.S. air attack,” he asserted.



August 8, 1939

CHICAGO — A mass demonstration of over 10,000 Negro workers, called to protest an injunction preventing construction of a Federal Housing unit on the South Side was turned into a victory celebration, July 30. Speakers at the demonstration were able to announce that the militant stand of the workers in the Negro neighborhood had forced the lifting of the injunction.

Prominent real estate interests are violently opposed to the housing project which they fear will force them to lower rents and make repairs on their holdings.

Negro housing on Chicago’s South Side is the nation’s worst. White chauvinism forces the Negroes to live in a real ghetto. Unable to move, they are exploited unmercifully by big real estate companies which exact exorbitant rents for the vilest kind of housing facilities.

# Ukraine: Separatists lose ground



Above, protest by independent rail unions in Ukraine July 15 at Cabinet of Ministers in Kiev against wage cuts, layoffs and conditions on job. Inset, Sergey Lashka, president of Free Trade Union of the Southern Railroad, addresses rally. At his side is Mikhailo Volynets, leader of Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine.



## Continued from front page

don't give a damn about any of this," a separatist officer who called himself Denis told *New York Times* reporter Sabrina Tavernise when she was seized by his troops in Luhansk July 15. They have trouble holding recruits, he said. Some people signed up in a burst of emotion early on, but quit within weeks.

The shutdown has also accelerated opposition to the separatists in Russia, among working people as well as the capitalist rulers and their mouthpieces.

"Ukrainian Rebels' Aren't Ukrainian or Rebels," read the headline of a July 28 *Moscow Times* article. "They are outsiders and usurpers, men with either mercenary or imperial motivations."

The Moscow-based *Novaya Gazeta* printed a front-page apology July 25, headlined "Forgive Us, Netherlands," written in Dutch, above a picture of a convoy of hearses carrying the first victims of the plane shutdown home for forensic investigation.

Reporting that separatist forces "saw some of their worst battlefield setbacks in weeks Monday," the July 28 *Wall Street Journal* noted that Alexander Borodai, head of the separatists' so-called Donetsk People's Republic, had "left for Moscow for consultations." His new chief aide, Vladimir Antyufeyev — who recently came in from Russia and has experience intervening in Transnistria and Georgia — said he didn't know when Borodai would return.

"A total breakdown of law and order and a reign of fear and terror have

been inflicted by armed groups on the population," said a United Nations report on Ukraine released July 28. The report documents separatists' "abductions, detentions, torture, murder, executions, extortion, and destruction of property."

Thousands of workers are leaving Donetsk and other cities still under separatist control, going to other parts of Ukraine. "The separatists destroyed some of the tracks," Sergey Shevchuk, who helps find housing and other assistance for refugees coming to Kiev, told the *Militant* July 29. "But they've been repaired and trainloads are coming again, along with cars, buses, whatever people can get their hands on."

Donetsk, with a population close to 1 million, "has largely become a ghost town since rebels dug in," Reuters reported July 28.

"There has been deliberate targeting by the armed groups of critical public utilities like water, electricity and sewage plants that have shut down essential supplies to the residents," the U.N. reported. "Hospitals and clinics were forced to shut down and essential medicines and emergency medical services became scarce or totally unavailable." Railways have been blown up and coal mines attacked, it said.

At the same time, Shevchuk said, "many who fled earlier are returning home" to areas where separatists have relinquished control to the Ukrainian government.

Shortly before the shutdown separatists had been pushed out of Metalist, Oleksandrivsk, Bile and Roz-

## 'Workers should support people of Ukraine'



LOS ANGELES — "Workers worldwide should support the people of Ukraine in their struggle," Vanessa Balenko, a participant in the Maidan movement in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, told some 30 people at a Militant Labor Forum here July 26. The protest movement — which centered on the Maidan, or square, in Kiev — led to the ouster of President Viktor Yanukovich in February. "A year ago it seemed impossible that such a movement could take place." Above, demonstration last March in Kharkiv defending Ukrainian sovereignty.

"The combat that is taking place today is not a war between Ukraine and Russia, or between eastern and western Ukraine," Balenko said. "It is Russian government interference in Ukraine to prevent the people of our country from deciding our own destiny."

"Workers from Kiev to Kharkiv, Chernobyl to Kryvyi Rih, were eager to talk with us about the conditions they face and fights they are waging," said John Studer, who was part of a recent *Militant* reporting trip to Ukraine. "Working people in Ukraine face both violent provocations from separatists and bosses' attacks on wages and working conditions."

Ukraine miners have the second highest mortality rate in the world, Balenko told the meeting.

"When we talked with working people in Ukraine about what workers in the U.S. face, their eyes opened wide," said Studer. "Many agreed that we face the same kinds of attacks, the same need to organize effective resistance, the same interest in learning the history of working-class struggles, the same need to find a road to independent working-class political action."

After the meeting, Olga Dzubenko, one of four Ukrainians there, said she liked how the forum put Ukraine in the context of what workers face around the world and how to advance the struggles of working people in the U.S.

The next day Studer spoke at a lively brunch forum in San Francisco of more than 30 people, including participants in recent battles against cop brutality.

— BILL ARTH

kishne. According to several news reports, towns they've been forced to abandon since include Avdiivka, Rozsypne, Debaltseve and Shakhtarsk, a city of 72,000.

## Workers protest bosses' attacks

The independent rail unions organized a protest July 15 at the Cabinet of Ministers in Kiev. Workers carried signs reading, "Down with the thieves of Ukrainian railroads," "No reduction of the working class," "Privatization: Enemy of the people," and "Medical care for hazardous working conditions."

"We oppose the railroad cutting our wages, while the price of everything keeps going up and up," Sergey Lashka, president of the Free Trade Union of the Southern Railroad, told protesters, reported the July 21 *Aspect*, the newspaper of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine.

"Workers' incomes are falling while prices for goods, services and public transit are skyrocketing," Mikhailo Volynets, head of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions and of the independent miners' union, said at the rally, *Aspect* reported. "But today you are taking an important step in fighting for your rights."

Rail workers in Ukraine, like miners and other workers, have been part of resistance to attacks by bosses and their government in recent years and took part in the popular Maidan

protests that ousted President Viktor Yanukovich in February. In September 2012, for example, rail workers marched in Kiev after the national rail company slashed trains, laid off workers and piled overtime on those who still had jobs, a profit-driven course that led to a 26 percent increase in injuries within a year.

"If the International Monetary Fund presses the government to force more of the cost of social services onto the backs of working people," Volynets said. "We will organize more and more powerful protests."

## Sydney, Australia

**Hear** Ailí Labañino-Cardoso, daughter of Ramón Labañino, one of the Cuban Five, who is participating in Australian speaking tour Aug. 3-18.

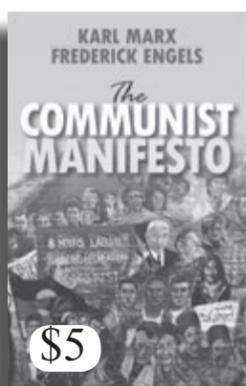
**View** "I Will Die the Way I've Lived," 15 prison paintings by Antonio Guerrero.

**Sat., Aug. 16, 7 p.m.**

Reception, 6 p.m.

**CFMEU Headquarters  
Level 2, 12 Railway St.,  
Lidcombe**

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Explains that communism is not an ideological doctrine but a social movement. Communists act on the basis not of preconceived principles but of facts springing from the actual class struggle. Communism, to the degree it is a theory, is the generalization of the historical line of march of the working class, and of the political conditions for its liberation.

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# NY event marks opening of the Cuban Revolution

BY ROGER CALERO

NEW YORK — “Sixty-one years ago today, Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro and other great comrades embarked on what was the beginning of the march of what became the Cuban Revolution,” Oscar León González, Cuba’s deputy ambassador to the United Nations, told 100 people here at a celebration at the Martin Luther King Jr. Labor Center July 26.

On that day in 1953, a group of some 160 men and women led by Fidel Castro carried out simultaneous attacks on the Moncada army garrison in Santiago de Cuba and the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes barracks in Bayamo, with the aim of sparking a popular revolt against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Less than six years later, on New Year’s Day 1959, the revolutionary war initiated two years earlier by the Rebel Army under Castro’s command culminated in the victory of the country’s workers and peasants, opening the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

“Today there are more openings to win support for the Cuban Five,” said César Sánchez, one of the chairs of the event, sponsored by the July 26 Coalition. “As they learn the basic facts, more will be sympathetic. Millions are exposed to the frame-ups, brutality, stop-and-frisk harassment and as in the

most recent case of brother Eric Garner, murder at the hands of the obscenely unequal and racist criminal justice system in the United States.”

Garner was killed in Staten Island July 17 after cops put him in a chokehold, harassing him for selling cigarettes on the street. The killing has sparked protests led by his relatives and others.

U.S. imperialism’s 55-year-long drive to overthrow the Cuban Revolution has included a mercenary invasion, bombings, assassination attempts, an economic embargo and other attacks, León said. “The Cuban Revolution has overcome all these challenges due to the steadfastness of working people in Cuba. Imperialism is no match to the Cuban Revolution nor will it ever be.”

León spoke about economic measures being introduced in Cuba that aim to increase production, particularly in agriculture, and lighten the weight of government bureaucracy. In response to challenges imposed by the world economic and political situation, these moves include self-employment and small-scale business operations. “The changes we’re making are to preserve the basic principles of socialism, the social ownership of the basic means of production and the socialist principle of distribution,” León said. “This is not an easy task to accomplish amidst an international economic crisis and Washington’s economic blockade against Cuba.”

During the discussion León spoke about Cuba’s expanding trade and diplomatic ties with governments in Latin America; its current internationalist medical and literacy missions around the world, including its care for victims of the 1986 nuclear disaster in Chernobyl, Ukraine; its opposition to the Israeli assault on Gaza; and other questions.



Militant/Bernie Senter

Oscar León González, Cuba’s deputy ambassador to U.N., speaks July 26 at N.Y. meeting celebrating Cuban Revolution.

## Who are the Cuban Five?



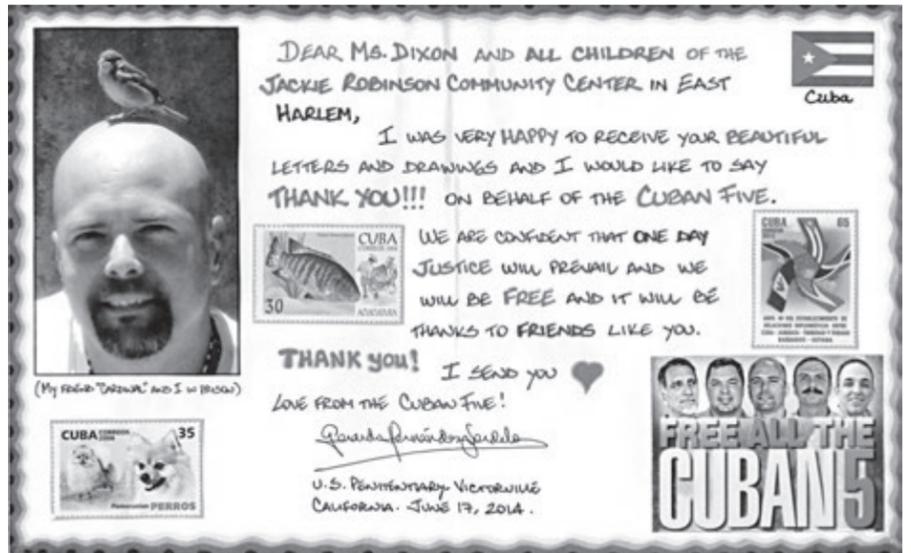
Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González are Cuban revolutionaries who during the 1990s accepted assignments from the Cuban government to gather information on the operations and plans of Cuban-American paramilitary groups based in southern Florida. These rightist outfits, organizing on U.S. soil with virtual impunity, have a long record of carrying out bombings, assassinations and other attacks, both against targets in Cuba and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in the United States, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

On Sept. 12, 1998, the Five were arrested by the FBI. They were framed up and convicted on a variety of charges, which included acting as unregistered agents of the Cuban government and possession of false identity documents. Without a shred of evidence, three were charged with “conspiracy to gather and transmit national defense information.”

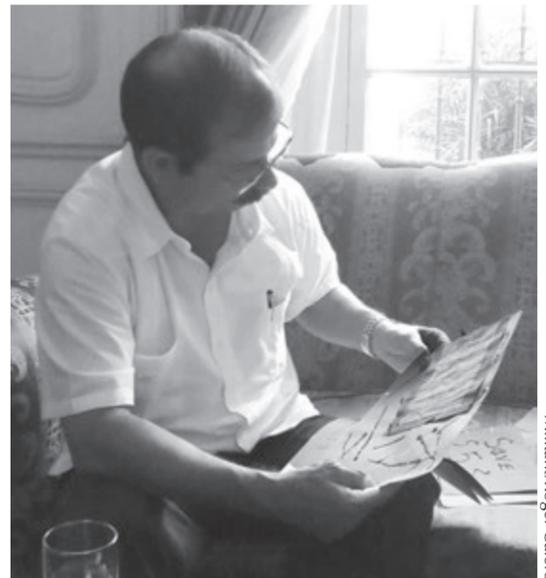
Hernández was also convicted of conspiracy to commit murder, based on the pretext that he bore responsibility for the Cuban government’s 1996 shoot-down of two Brothers to the Rescue aircraft that had invaded Cuban airspace in disregard of Havana’s repeated warnings. He is serving two life terms plus 15 years. His wife Adriana Pérez is barred from entering the United States.

René González returned to Cuba in May 2013. Fernando González returned Feb. 28.

## Cuban 5 respond to letters from children at community center in New York



HAVANA — Gerardo Hernández sent the beautifully illustrated thank-you message, above, to children at the Jackie Robinson Community Center in Harlem, New York, and to the center’s program director, Shakiema Dixon. Hernández made the card in response to messages of support the kids had sent the Cuban Five after learning about their fight for freedom. In May, the center hosted a two-week showing of 15 watercolors by Antonio Guerrero, titled “I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived,” portraying the first 17 months the five revolutionaries spent in punishment cells after their 1998 arrest on frame-up charges. The children crafted 20 colorful letters, each addressed to one of the Five, which were displayed at the center along with Guerrero’s paintings and biographies of the Five. Residents of the public housing complex where the center is located were among those who came to view the package.



Militant/Roger Calero

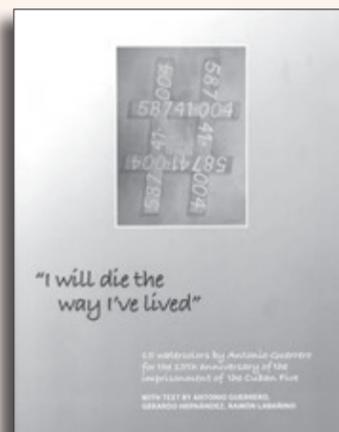
“I feel sad that you were wrongly convicted and that you had to go through this when you were just trying to help Cuba,” one of the children wrote Guerrero. Another wrote Hernández, “I am seven years old and in the second grade. I don’t have a job so I can’t pay for a good lawyer. I hope my letter will encourage you and I will pray for you.”

Copies of the 20 letters were sent to each of the Five. The original messages were delivered to Havana for use by the relatives of the imprisoned revolutionaries and by Fernando González and René González, the two who have returned to Cuba after completing their sentences.

Pictured here is Fernando González reading Hernández’s thank-you card and the children’s messages in Havana, July 16. “We have received similar letters over the years from children in Cuba,” González told the *Militant*. “But this is the first time we have gotten such letters from kids in the United States,” he added with emotion.

“I was really moved by their tenderness and their thoughtful and humorous observations,” Hernández wrote in a letter to Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, that she shared with Dixon and others at the Jackie Robinson Community Center. “It was a very nice gesture by these children, and I’m glad to hear that our families will receive the original messages.”

— RÓGER CALERO



Fifteen watercolors by Antonio Guerrero for the 15th anniversary of the imprisonment of the Cuban Five. With text by Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino. Also in Spanish. \$7. **Special publication offer \$5**

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## Exhibit of paintings by Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five *I Will Die the Way I've Lived*



**Miami, Florida August 9**

Reception, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. Sweat Records, 5505 NE 2nd Ave. Tel.: (786) 267-2677 or (786) 899-9453.

# In 1960s Bolivia was 'fertile ground' for revolution

Below is an excerpt from *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia*, one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for August. It's a firsthand account by Rodolfo Saldaña, one of the Bolivians who joined ranks in 1966-67 with Ernesto Che Guevara to forge a revolutionary movement that could overthrow the military dictatorship in Bolivia and open the road to socialist revolution in South America. Copyright © 1997 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

**QUESTION:** Many who disagree with the revolutionary perspectives Che Guevara fought for argue that he and his fellow combatants were mistaken in going to Bolivia in 1966. Can you give us some background on the class struggle in Bolivia that shaped this decision?

**SALDAÑA:** The Bolivian people have a long history of struggle. There have been moments of really violent confrontations between the people and the repressive forces, though the two sides were not equal. More than once in the history of the country there have been true popular insurrections that toppled governments. There have also been massacres of miners, peasants, factory workers, and other working people in the cities, mainly La Paz.

Perhaps the defining moment of popular struggle was 1952. At that time a military junta ruled the country. As head



Above, Granma

**Above, demonstrators march beneath banner of Bolivian Workers Federation in support of Cuban Revolution, early 1960s. Inset, march by miners' militias in La Paz, Bolivia, July 1953, one year after popular insurrection brought down military junta.**



of the police force, the minister of the interior conspired and launched a coup, but popular participation began changing the character of events, giving rise to a popular insurrection. For several days there were armed confrontations in the streets of La Paz, Oruro, and other cities, and the popular forces came out on top.

That's how the revolutionary process of April 1952 began, with the fall of the military junta that was governing the country and the rise of the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR). Wherever there was a confrontation, the popular masses defeated the military forces. For all intents and purposes, in those cities where there were confrontations the army came apart. ...

**QUESTION:** Did the miners have their own militias?

**SALDAÑA:** Right after 1952 there were workers and peasants militias, which were armed. But over the years, in various ways, they were disarmed. If workers militias still existed, it was more or less in name only. But some workers, both in the cities and in the mining areas, kept their weapons. In the first years, after 1952, the peasants also purchased weapons, but little by little these were taken away.

At the end of October 1964, after the

events of Sora Sora, there was a massive wave of arrests in La Paz of workers and students. ...

René Barrientos, general of the Bolivian air force and vice president of the republic at that time, organized a coup d'état on November 4, 1964. President Víctor Paz Estenssoro, the MNR leader who in 1952 had decreed the nationalization of the mines, the agrarian reform, and universal suffrage, was deposed. In the course of the coup there were armed confrontations with workers and others, in the streets of La Paz, for example. And there were even popular confrontations with the army itself, although the army adopted the stance that it was placing itself on the side of the people in carrying out the coup.

On November 4, 1964, workers seized a series of places, including the Panóptico jail in downtown La Paz. All the political prisoners there were set free, many of whom had been arrested at the end of October. There were also union leaders who had been in jail for months. All these people went out into the streets. ...

After November 4, Barrientos opened things up a little. The especially repressive measures against the workers were lifted. The workers' radio stations were

permitted to resume. The union locals were reopened. But Barrientos soon faced growing working-class resistance to the dictatorial measures of his regime.

In May 1965 the government decreed a lowering of wages in the mines and ordered a massive wave of arrests of workers leaders. They were immediately deported, sending large numbers into exile in Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay. They were taken as far as possible from the Bolivian border — to the south of Argentina, to the south of Chile. Soon, little by little, they began to return to the country secretly.

In October 1965, the same year as the large-scale arrests, there were massive strikes by workers demanding freedom of their union leaders and the restoration of wage levels. The political movement was again heating up. There were armed confrontations in the main cities and mining centers.

In October, once again armed confrontations took place, and the military occupied the Central-Southern Council, a series of mines located in the south of the Department of Potosí, an area in which nothing had ever happened, that is, there had been no violent confrontations. The workers occupied other mines, too. So these armed confrontations in the cities themselves presented a new situation to us, to revolutionaries in Bolivia.

This was more or less the situation in the country at that time. We can thus answer the question of whether or not Bolivia was fertile ground for initiating the kind of revolutionary struggle Che envisioned.

**QUESTION:** What do you think?

**SALDAÑA:** I believe it was. The conditions existed. There was repression; there were aspirations of the population that had not been satisfied and urgently required a solution; and the people could not fulfill their aspirations in the existing situation. There were solid reasons for the people to fight, to struggle, and they were increasingly doing so, but without results.

I also want to recall here the situation in Latin America as a whole. This was taking place in Bolivia in particular. But the same situation was being repeated, to different degrees, with its own characteristics, in the rest of Latin America.

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# No recovery for workers as economy stagnates

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

It's more than five years since economists declared the 2008-2009 recession to be over, but for working people there has been little recovery. Long-term joblessness remains high, despite official government figures showing it has been gradually declining. The bosses have pressed to drive down wages, benefits, and to attack safety on the job to reap profits off our backs, amidst a worldwide capitalist crisis of declining production, trade and employment.

In hopes of spurring economic growth, the Federal Reserve by the end of 2008 slashed interest rates to zero to make it cheaper for companies to borrow funds to boost production and hire workers. But under conditions of an economic slowdown it has not been profitable for the great majority of bosses to invest in production. Instead, they've accumulated hoards of cash reserves or sought higher returns through investing in stocks or other forms of speculative bets on values of commercial paper. Stock prices, for example, have reached new heights, but they're "near record levels of overvaluation," Richard Russell wrote in *Dow Theory Letters* July 7.

The government has also tried unsuccessfully to stimulate the economy through "quantitative easing," where the Fed began buying billions of dollars of mortgage-backed securities from banks and \$85 billion of government bonds monthly. This giant money-printing operation has in real terms lowered federal interests rates to near negative 3 percent, Matthew Kerkhoff wrote in the July 9 issue of the *Letters*, having the biggest impact on workers with the lowest wages and through inflation whittling away at any savings accounts they've been able to accumulate.

"Negative real rates amounts to the Fed imposing a regressive tax on the poor although it lacks the authority to collect taxes," writes financial analyst Charles Gave July 8. This is compounded by rising prices of rent, food and energy on which increasing amounts of workers' wages are spent. Gave created what he calls a "Walmart CPI," which measures the increase in these three categories, which official Consumer Price Index figures ignore. Since 2000 there has been more than a 15 percent increase in the Walmart CPI compared to standard U.S. CPI, he notes.

Facing massive government and corporate debt balloons, the Fed through its quantitative easing scheme has transferred to its coffers \$3 trillion of these "assets" over the past five years. The capitalist rulers hope that given enough time, they can deleverage and eliminate this debt, eventually laying the basis for a new period of growth. But their hopes rest on the assumption that the working class will not resist stepped-up attacks by the bosses and their government.

Since the beginning of the year the Federal Reserve has gradually been reducing its monthly government bond purchases and announced July 9 that it will halt the quantitative easing program in October. But it has

no plans to raise the interest rates, Federal Reserve Chairwoman Janet Yellen said in her semiannual report to Congress July 15.

## Shrinking workforce

While official unemployment has steadily declined over the past several years from 10 percent to 6.1 percent last month, these figures are the result of government statisticians continually shrinking the pool of people considered "part of the workforce." Over the past six and a half years more than 13 million workers have been eliminated from the workforce count.

The percentage of the population with a job dropped from 63.3 percent in January 2007 to below 59 percent by September 2009, and it has hovered around this figure for the past five years. In June it was 59 percent.

The government reported that 288,000 jobs were created last month, but 275,000 of them were part time, raising to 7.5 million those wanting full-time jobs who are forced to accept reduced hours.

Some spokespersons for the U.S. rulers admit that this lack of recovery in jobs following the 2008-2009 recession is unlike any that occurred after previous recessions. Former U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers in a speech last November referred to this economic crisis as "secular stagnation," noting that it will last over a long drawn-out period. Some describe this as "the new normal." One aspect of this is the drive by the bosses to increase production with fewer workers through imposing faster line speeds and cutting corners, sharply eroding safety on the job. It took nearly six years before industrial production reached pre-recession levels last October — since then it has risen by a total of 4 percent through June — with 1.6 million fewer manufacturing jobs since the recession.

While these figures underline the success the bosses have had in driving down the living standards of working people, they also point to the ability of employers to do some hiring and openings for workers to press for higher wages.

The bosses seek to promote divisions among workers born in the U.S. and immigrant workers in order to lower wage levels for all workers. A recent survey by the Center for Immigration Studies reports that from 2000 to the first quarter of 2014 employment of immigrants accounted for the net growth in U.S. jobs. The number of U.S.-born workers with jobs remained virtually unchanged over these years — 114.8 million in 2000 and 114.7 million in 2014 — while the working-age population in this period grew by 17 million.

The employment rate of working-age immigrants has increased since 2000, rising by 43 percent since 2010, the report said. But most of these jobs are at lowest pay. Over the past year such jobs in food services, retail and temporary help accounted for more than 40 percent of new jobs.

# Arizona death penalty

Continued from front page

company that supplied drugs used for lethal injections ceased production in face of growing opposition worldwide to their use in executions. State officials have since been experimenting with new drug combinations and pursuing alternative techniques to legally kill people, including firing squads, the electric chair and hanging.

The death penalty is on the books in 32 states and so far this year 26 people have been put to death. Last year the U.S. carried out the fifth most executions worldwide after China, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Since 2007 six states have abolished the death penalty. Another seven states, including Ohio and Oklahoma, have put executions on hold either because of legal challenges or a moratorium declared by the governor. U.S. District Court Judge Cormac Carney ruled July 16 that there are so many arbitrary delays when death row inmates appeal California death penalty sentences that it amounts to a violation of the Eighth Amendment's protection against cruel and unjust punishment.

Between 1996 and 2007, opposition to the death penalty has risen from 18 to 37 percent, according to the *Washington Post*. One factor has been a growing number of cases in which DNA, other evidence or legal appeals have exonerated those sentenced to death — 144 since 1993.

While most states use lethal injection in executions, eight allow electrocution; three allow the gas chamber (Arizona, Missouri, Wyoming); three allow hanging (Delaware, New Hampshire and Washington); and two states the firing squad (Oklahoma and Utah) if other methods are found unconstitutional.

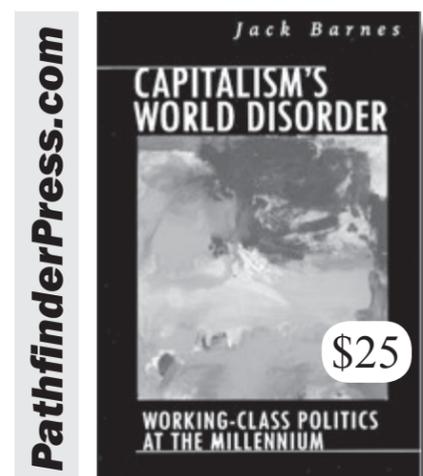
For three decades most executions relied on the same three-drug combination: an anesthetic, a paralytic drug and a drug that stops the heart. When an increasing number of manufacturers stopped supplying these drugs state governments scrambled to find others. As the experimentation increased, so has the secrecy about it. Oklahoma officials, for example, have been buying the drugs using the prison agency's petty-cash.

In Texas, officials bought pentobarbital in Houston without a prescription from a compounding pharmacy unregulated by the Food and Drug Administration.

"While justice was carried out today, I directed the Department of Corrections to conduct a full review of the process. One thing is certain, however, inmate Wood died in a lawful manner and by eyewitness and medical accounts he did not suffer," Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer said in a July 23 statement.

On July 21, the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had granted a stay of Wood's execution for lack of detailed information about the drugs that would be used to kill him. Ninth Circuit Court Chief Judge Alex Kozinski dissented, writing that the government should stop trying to "mask the brutality of executions by making them look serene and peaceful. ... and return to more primitive — and foolproof — methods of execution. The guillotine is probably the best, but seems inconsistent with our national ethos. And the electric chair, hanging and the gas chamber are each subject to occasional mishaps. ... The firing squad strikes me as the most promising." The U.S. Supreme Court lifted the stay a day later.

"We think it's absurd to talk about *how* to kill instead of asking *why*," said Peitzmeyer. "We are opposed to the death penalty. It's a weapon against the poorest, the weakest, the most vulnerable. Rich people don't get sentenced to death."



## LETTERS

### Hamas' strategy

To conclude that Hamas' strategy is to maximize the number of civilians killed by Tel Aviv to gain world sympathy, without one example as to why, is reckless. It belies other reasons. All of them show Hamas' dead-end bourgeois leadership and motives that continue to put the Palestinian people needlessly at risk.

K.M.

Baltimore, Maryland

### Paper 'empowers my mind'

Thank you for empowering my mind with wholesome information. I am an indigent individual and if I was able to procure funds for your publication I would. Without your publication so much would remain in the shadows. As a trade electrician this information and truth provided informs and establishes a better ideal on my re-

turn outside these walls in two years five months.

A prisoner  
Texas

### Tomás Villanueva

Longtime farmworker advocate and union organizer Tomás Villanueva died in Seattle on June 6. He was 72. Villanueva was a founding member and president of the United Farm Workers of Washington state founded in 1986. During the 1970s, '80s and '90s thousands of farmworkers in east-

ern Washington fought for better wages, housing and working conditions in the apple orchards, and fields of hops, asparagus, cherries, grapes and pears.

In September 1986 Villanueva spoke to the *Militant* about the farmworkers' fight in the Yakima Valley: "Although we do not have a contract as of yet we have had a lot of success. People are starting to lose their fear and work together." In 1995 the union won an eight-year battle at the Chateau Ste. Michelle winery.

Mary Martin  
Seattle, Washington

### 'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

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