

WORKERS WORLD

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People's Korea defuses U.S. war provocation

By Fred Goldstein

The dangerous military crisis on the Korean peninsula has been defused for the moment. The Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea did not retaliate, even though the U.S. imperialists and their south Korean clients on Dec. 20 staged provocative live-fire exercises from Yeonpyeong Island, eight miles from the mainland of the DPRK.

The DPRK, which had warned of retaliation if the exercises went forward, declared that the limited exercises carried out by the south Korean military were "not worth it." The U.S. and the south Korean regime were shown up as military provocateurs willing to risk a major war.

Furthermore, by taking a strong stand, the DPRK had forced the imperialists to deal with the situation diplomatically at the U.N. Security Council and by sending an unofficial negotiator, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, to Pyongyang.

The south Korean regime, with U.S. backing, had staged similar exercises on Dec. 7 after being warned by the DPRK that there would be retaliation. The DPRK responded with a missile barrage on the island after having phoned the south Korean government hours earlier, reiterating its earlier warning and asking Seoul not to go through with the exercises.

After the Dec. 7 incident, the government of the Peoples' Republic of China had proposed that the crisis be dealt with through diplomacy by resuming the six-party talks that included China, the U.S., Russia, Japan, the DPRK and south Korea. The U.S. and Japan flatly rejected any diplomacy as "rewarding" the DPRK.

Instead, Washington called a meeting of the U.S., Japan and the south Korean regime in Tokyo to formulate military strategy against the DPRK. Washington also carried out military maneuvers with the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George

Washington and more than 20 other ships in waters near China and Korea.

The south Korean military then went ahead with its second provocation, with the full backing of the U.S. government, the Pentagon and the State Department. Twenty U.S. soldiers were placed on Yeonpyeong Island. Adm. Michael Mullen, chair of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other top military leaders were in the Pentagon around the clock monitoring the situation.

These military confrontations around the island come from the drawing of the so-called Northern Limit Line in the sea west of Korea. The line gave south Korea territorial waters just eight miles from the mainland of the DPRK.

This line has been an extreme encroachment on the territory of the DPRK since U.S. Gen. Mark Clark drew it in 1953. Instead of extend-

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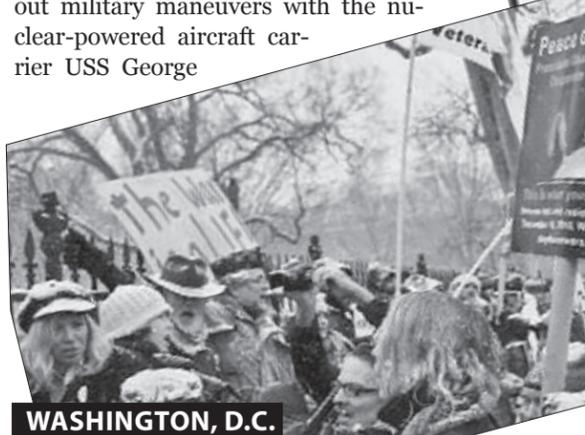


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From exclusion to power

Workers, community converge at Southern Human Rights conference

By Dante Strobino
Birmingham, Ala.

Under the theme “From Exclusion to Power,” hundreds of workers and community members gathered in Birmingham, Ala., from Dec. 10 to 12 for the eighth Bi-Annual Southern Human Rights Organizers Conference.

Jaribu Hill, conference founder and executive director of the Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights, opened up with a call for human rights and social justice activists from across the country “to retool and rethink, plan and build. In these critical times of unjust wars and economic decline, it is urgent that we forge unity based on common struggles and experiences.”

The gathering opened with a press conference — on International Human Rights Day — that highlighted the work of the Excluded Workers Congress and announced a new report that examines the plight of workers barred from labor protections and the right to organize.

The report said that in 1983, 20.1 percent of the U.S. workforce was unionized, whereas in 2009 that proportion was only 12.3 percent. In so-called right-to-work states, union density now averages 6 percent. (www.excludedworkerscongress.org)

Included in the press conference were the congress’s nine sectors, including domestic workers, farmworkers, taxi drivers, restaurant workers, day laborers, guest workers, workers from right-to-work states, workfare workers and formerly incarcerated workers.

“I came from Peru to work in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina,” stated Daniel Castellanos, founder of the Alliance of Guest Workers for Dignity, “but my boss told me that I couldn’t organize. But we decided to organize anyway.”

Organizations active in the congress include Domestic Workers United, the National Domestic Worker Alliance, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, All of Us or None, Community Voices Heard, the Southwest Workers Union, Black Workers for Justice, Alabama Day Laborers and Jobs with Justice. Their members addressed workplace conditions and their fights for recognition, dignity and better wages.

Araceli Herrera Castillo, a 20-year domestic worker from San Antonio, Texas, and SWU and NDWA member, said that they are demanding that the International Labor Organization pass a convention on domestic workers’ rights in June 2011 at their 100th labor congress. “We are demanding our basic rights to be implemented here, like the basic right to organize,” stated Herrera.

Activists marched down Birmingham sidewalks to support domestic worker organizing. They chanted, “Free, Free Domestic Workers! End, End Slavery!” and “!Mujeres marchando, el mundo van cambiando!” They went to the bus terminal, a hub from which domestic workers go “over the mountain” to the suburbs to clean homes and take care of wealthy families.

The Excluded Workers Congress first convened at the U.S. Social Forum in June. Many of its partner organizations gathered for its official founding in September at the AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The congress is fighting these workers’ exclusion from the National Labor Relations Act, which excludes farmworkers and domestic workers; from the Fair Labor Standards Act, which bars many workers from minimum wage and overtime laws; from the Occupational Safety



WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

March on opening day of Southern Human Rights Organizers Conference, in Birmingham, Ala. Carrying lead banner are Daniel Castellanos; Pamela Brown, Community Voices Heard; and Araceli Herrera Castillo (left to right).

and Health Act, Civil Rights Act Title VII anti-discrimination protections; and from state labor laws related to the Taft-Hartley Act.

The congress has made gains: Rep. George Miller has agreed to introduce the POWER (Protect Our Workers Against Exploitation and Retaliation) Act in the House of Representatives, and Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis said she would meet with excluded workers. The act was introduced in the Senate in April by Sen. Robert Menendez, among others.

Its supporters say that the law would strengthen workers’ and immigrants’ rights, that it would provide legal protection for workplace organizing, and from immigration enforcement and deportation. It would give workers a way to hold employers accountable. Activists assert that millions of undocumented workers could access their legal rights and would be protected if employers call Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (www.excludedworkerscongress.org)

SHROC provided opportunities for other issues and movements to converge. Workshops and strategy sessions focused on the national fightback to defend education and to end the school-to-prison pipeline. Others discussed expanding the fight for human rights to include environmental justice and health care.

An international panel spoke on U.S. imperialism’s impact around the world. On the Haitian people’s fight for human and democratic rights, Wadner Pierre stated, “You cannot have an election in Haiti without including Fanmi Lavalas,” criticizing the U.S. role there. Fanmi Lavalas, which was banned from participating in Haiti’s recent election, is the party of democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted in a U.S.-led coup in 2004.

Emria Woods, from Liberia, discussed the negative global role of the U.S. in the fight for human rights. She addressed the struggle in Africa against the U.S. African Command (Africom) and stressed that the U.S. goal there is to secure oil markets. “The fact that 25 percent of U.S. oil now comes from Africa was the leading cause for the establishment of Africom,” stated Woods. Other panelists were Jorge Guerrero Veloz, from the Red Afrovenezolana, and Charo Mina Rojas, from the Black Communities’ Process in Colombia.

Organizers left Birmingham strengthened by the unity at the conference and the fightbacks going on across the South, vowing to move ahead. Organize the South! □

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Labor and community activists shut down construction company CEO

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

An impressive outpouring of union members, community activists and supporters shut down a planned Dec. 15 speaking event by Pulte Homes CEO Richard Dugas in Troy, Mich. Busloads of protesters packed into the Troy Marriott hotel to confront Dugas, who was scheduled to address a Detroit Economic Club meeting.

A multistate, multiyear campaign by the Building Justice campaign is targeting Pulte for its anti-union activities and shoddy residential construction, which the campaign says has put thousands of families under immense hardship. Pulte, based in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., is the largest residential construction company in the U.S. and has its own mortgage company. The campaign, led by the Sheet Metal Workers International Association and the Painters' union District Council 15, with assistance from the AFL-CIO, has held speaking tours, set up booths at

events, targeted work sites, confronted shareholders meetings, conducted postcard and petition campaigns, staged rallies and more.

Although a DEC spokesperson said the meeting was postponed due to circumstances beyond their control, the protesters claimed victory in shutting down the event. Labor and community members had bought tickets to attend, but Dugas ran away instead of facing the workers and their communities.

A victory rally was held in a hotel ballroom by more than 300 protesters from dozens of unions across the U.S. as well as community organizations, including Centro Obrero of Detroit, the Detroit Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice, Jobs With Justice, the Grey Panthers, the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice, the National Lawyer's Guild, the Restaurant Opportunities Center, the Sugar Law Center and the Justice Caucus.

Especially strong delegations from the Laborers union, the Painters union and the Sheet Metal Workers participated. The unions are particularly incensed because Pulte refuses to hire workers and continues layoffs despite having received \$917 million as part of the Worker, Homeownership and Business Assistance Act of 2009. Thousands of other corporations are receiving billions under this act, through which the government is handing over taxpayer funds in the hopes that the corporations will create jobs — with virtually no penalties if they don't. The unemployment rate for construction industry workers is one of the highest in the U.S.

At the rally Sandra Williams, the first African-American woman president of the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, brought greetings of solidarity and demanded Pulte use the funds given to it by the federal government to fund jobs and stop laying off workers. A representative of Congressman John Conyers Jr. read a statement, in

which Conyers promised to look into corporations that received funds under the Act. A spontaneous booming chant arose from the crowd when union members held up individual letter placards spelling out "Where is the \$900 million?"

Other speakers included Pastor John Pitts Jr., president of the Detroit Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice; representatives from the Sheet Metal Workers and the Painters union; and longtime Office and Professional Employees union member and activist Ethel Schwartz, who said: "We have a good beginning here today. Let's keep it up."

Angel Rangel, a Latino sheet metal worker from Phoenix, Ariz., demanded, "Where are the jobs?" Many Latino/a workers and their loved ones in the Southwest, in particular in Arizona and Nevada, have been affected negatively by Pulte's actions.

For more information visit www.poorlybuiltbypulte.info, e-mail Jrostan@aflcio.org or call 202-230-4689. □

The tax deal:

A fraud on the workers, a bonanza for the rich

Based on a talk given by Fred Goldstein to a Workers World Party forum in New York on Dec. 17.

I want to address the question of the tax deal that was just cut in Congress. It's a big fraud on the workers of this country, carried out by a whole layer of capitalist politicians who are demagogic to the 10th power.

This bill was sold as a tradeoff. The politicians will give the rich some money for two years through tax benefits, but in return, they said, they would give a lot of money to the workers, plus it will create jobs.

Neither thing is true. It's not going to solve the economic crisis by a long shot. It's not going to make a dent in the 15 million officially unemployed and the 30 million people — probably more — who are unemployed and underemployed.

What the workers are going to get is nothing but a pittance in return for this huge gift to the rich and the super-rich. Furthermore, millions of workers are going to lose money from this tax deal.

What this bill shows is the strengthening of the ruling class and its command over society. And it has widened the chasm between the rich and the poor. Everybody decries this trend and says how horrible it is, but this move has widened the chasm.

What the workers got and what the rich got is worth going over, at least in the big details, though I am not an expert on this bill.

Every millionaire in this country got a tax cut, amounting to \$137,000 per millionaire on the average. The top 2 percent of the rich altogether got \$139 billion. The 6,600 very richest families in this country — out of a total of 65 to 70 million families — got \$25 billion in income tax gifts. The 45,000 richest families, by avoiding estate taxes, also got between \$25 billion and \$50 billion — though there are discrepancies on this.

Attack on Social Security

What did the workers get? They were supposed to get a "tax holiday." That was the big thing — getting a payroll tax holiday.

What the workers are going to get is nothing but a pittance in return for this huge gift to the rich and the super-rich.

What does that mean? When you get your paycheck, it has all the deductions on it: federal tax, state tax, city tax and Social Security and Medicare.

Since the Roosevelt administration, workers have paid a fixed amount of their gross income to the Social Security fund for their retirement and the retirement of workers in the future. Right now that percentage is 6.2 percent. Until this tax deal the Social Security deduction was inviolable — no one could change it.

Social Security is supposed to be taken out of workers' paychecks every week, every month — whenever they get paid — to finance the Social Security fund. The so-called "tax holiday" reduces the workers' contribution to the Social Security fund by 2 percent. This is an attack on the inviolability of Social Security. It's not supposed to be taken down, even for a year. It opens the door to reducing it further or even eliminating it. It's supposed to be ironclad.

The Social Security fund comes from wages that get contributed to the social wage of the proletariat. The Republicans and plenty of Democrats want to get rid of it or reduce it. This move is a foot in the door. The Social Security fund is going to lose \$114 billion this year because of it. You can see that Social Security is not a payroll tax. This is not a reduction in workers' taxes. This is just the capitalist politicians taking money out of the fund that the workers are going to need when they retire. So it's a fraud to say it's a payroll tax holiday.

51 million low-paid workers get tax increase

What else did the workers get? Well, because of the great "payroll tax holiday," President Barack Obama agreed to remove a tax credit that he had instituted in 2009 as part of the Recovery Act. And this is worth paying attention to. It was

called the Making Work Pay tax credit.

With this tax credit, all workers who earned under a certain income — \$75,000 for an individual — got up to a \$400 tax credit. They just paid \$400 less in taxes. A couple who made up to \$150,000 paid \$800 less in taxes. Just take that \$800 and put it in your pocket. The Republicans proposed the "payroll tax holiday" in return for removing the Making Work Pay tax credit for the workers.

How does this work out? You've got to do a little bit of math. If you make \$10,000 a year and your Social Security deduction is reduced by 2 percent, this saves you \$200. But you will be losing the \$400 you would have received under the MWP credit, which has been discontinued. So your taxes actually go up by \$200.

If you make \$15,000, you take \$300 off your Social Security, but you lose the \$400 MWP credit, so your taxes go up by \$100.

If you're a working couple making \$30,000, instead of the tax credit of \$800 you would have gotten in 2009, you wind up with \$600. So you lose \$200.

It's a scam on the poor and the oppressed — especially Blacks, Latinos/as, women — the lowest paid in the country. And it encompasses millions of workers. There are various estimates of how many workers this affects and how many will lose money from the tax deal. One authoritative study has come from the Tax Policy Center of the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institute. It shows that 51 million families will lose money from this tax bill and have an average annual tax increase of \$210.

The workers don't know what happened behind closed doors when Obama agreed to a Republican "payroll tax" proposal.

So, after it's all over, the rich walk away with the bank. And the workers will get a pittance, if anything.

The workers did get supplementary unemployment insurance extended for 13 months. That's a desperately needed benefit which was held hostage in the negotiations. Anyone whose state benefits have been exhausted can apply for federal benefits. But the bill didn't do anything for the 99ers, who have no more benefits after 99 weeks of unemployment. And the number of 99ers is going to increase. Once you're out of a job for 99 weeks, the chances of getting back in are very, very limited.

This was called a jobs program. Why did Obama do this? Because they sold him a bill of goods: This is going to create jobs; it's a new stimulus package. The bankers, the rich who want to get their money, told him this is going to create jobs. And he's thinking of the elections in 2012. He's desperate. The unemployment rate — 9.8 percent — won't budge! Nothing makes it budge. He probably feels that's why the Democrats lost their majority. And he's looking at the next election and saying, "I'll do anything just to get jobs going. So some people got unemployment insurance and everybody got the Social Security 'holiday.' Those will put money in some people's pockets. Of course, the rich get their money. But at least we'll get elected in 2012." That's how politicians think.

But you know what? It's not going to work out that way. The bosses are already sitting on \$2 trillion which they refuse to invest because they see no profit in it. And whatever stimulus comes from this bill, it will be a pittance, and won't make a dent in the 30 million people or more who are already unemployed or underemployed, let alone the 1.2 million new workers who are going to join the workforce next year.

Maybe some jobs will come. Maybe there'll be a little growth in the economy. This is possible. But it's not going to change the conditions of the millions and millions of workers who are not going to get jobs.

The only way workers are going to get jobs is when they stop watching bourgeois politicians from both capitalist parties debate the fate of the proletariat and take matters into their own hands by opening up a struggle against capitalism. □

Boston School Department refuses to listen as Community unites to say NO to school closings

By Frank Neisser
Boston

Hundreds of parents, students, teachers, school bus drivers and community activists overflowed a Boston School Committee meeting in the auditorium of English High School on Dec. 15, vociferously opposing a Boston School Department proposal to close 10 Boston schools and merge eight others. The committee was scheduled to vote on the proposal, and throughout the evening the crowd chanted “No vote!” and “Save our schools!” The outpouring was the climax of weeks of mobilizing by parents and teachers at the impacted schools since the department first announced the proposal. These forces packed School Committee meetings on Oct. 27, Nov. 3, Dec. 2, Dec. 8 and Dec. 15.

The vote was originally scheduled for Nov. 3, but the department withdrew the proposal and said they would revise it. When they presented the revised plan, it was clear they had not been listening to the voices of the outraged school communities, but instead to the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, which represents Boston’s big banks and financial institutions. As the BMRB had demanded in the pages of the Boston Globe, all of the schools slated to be closed in the initial plan were still on the target list, with four additional schools slated for closure and others for merger.

The mobilizations in response to this assault were angry and powerful. On Dec. 13 students walked out of the Brook Farm Academy high school, 175 strong, and went downtown to protest at School Department headquarters and the mayor’s office. On Dec. 14, students of the Engineering School at Hyde Park High did the same. And on Dec. 15, parents and teachers from the East Zone Early Learning Center went to the mayor’s office to demand their school remain open. Throughout the mobilization, organizational support was provided by the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, which provided sound systems, placards, flyers and buses bringing school bus drivers from all four bus yards to the hearings and meetings. More than 50,000 leaflets were distributed. The coalition includes the Boston School Bus Drivers, Steelworkers Local 1111; the Black Educators Alliance of Mas-



WWW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

sachusetts; Work for Quality, Fight for Equity; Mass. Citizens for Public Schools; and other groups, parents, students and community activists.

It was clear from the moving testimony at the hearings that the schools being closed were in the heart of communities of color; were unique in the system for serving English language learners and special needs students, who would not be able to get the necessary services elsewhere; and represented extraordinary educational communities where great academic gains were being made. These schools had long waiting lists of students wanting to attend them, and no empty seats. As teachers and students of the Agassiz Elementary School said, “Why would you close some-

thing that’s working?”

The real agenda was laid bare by Mayor Thomas Menino when, the day before the Dec. 15 vote, he gave a highly publicized speech to the Boston Chamber of Commerce that drew repeated standing ovations for his plans to attack the schools. In it, he campaigned for the school closings plan and every BMRB demand. He demanded drastic union-busting concessions from the Boston Teachers Union and announced plans to cut transportation and revamp the student assignment plan to return to racist neighborhood schools.

After decades of school closings in communities of color, this will cut off access to quality education options and spell a re-

Mass. forum opposes FBI repression

By Frank Neisser

The house was packed on Dec. 17 in Cambridge, Mass., as a wide spectrum of organizations and activists came out to a forum on the growing menace of FBI repression. The program was organized by the new Boston chapter of the United National Antiwar Committee, along with 17 Boston-area anti-war and social justice organizations, including the International Action Center.

The program featured Meredith Aby, one of several anti-war and international solidarity activists from the Minneapolis area whose home was raided by the FBI on Sept. 24. Aby was subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury that was supposedly investigating “material aid to terrorism” charges. (Details can be found at stopfbi.net.) The program was part of a

four-stop New England tour for the Committee to Stop FBI Repression, including two forums in Western Massachusetts and one in Connecticut.

Also speaking on Dec. 17 was Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner, who has been falsely convicted in a targeted attack by the FBI and a campaign by the U.S. Attorney’s Office to smear and take down progressive African-American elected officials. A petition demanding no jail time for Chuck was circulated and can be signed online at iacoboston.org.

Kathy Manley and Lynne Jackson of Project Salam spoke of the hundreds of cases of Muslims who have been victims of “preemptive prosecution,” convicted on secret evidence and secret charges and given long prison sentences. Their prosecution has been based on the FBI conclusion that the individuals had the

turn to the segregated past. Martin Luther King led a march in the Boston streets in the 1960s, and in 1974, when racists attacked school buses carrying Black school children, 25,000 came out from Boston and around the country to support the Black community’s right to equal quality education by the means of their choice.

The mayor and the School Department have highlighted claims of empty seats in the school system. But the real agenda is the privatization of public education. The number of empty seats projected over the next few years is the same as the number of seats that are opening up in new charter schools, funded with taxpayer dollars at the expense of the public school system. This attack on public education is countrywide and is being pushed by the federal government, which demanded expansion of charter schools as a condition for “Race to the Top” federal education aid.

So it was no surprise that the School Committee — which is not elected but appointed by the mayor — voted 7-to-0 for the closings plan. But as Stevan Kirschbaum of the Boston School Bus Union said to the crowd at the meeting, the fight must continue at a new and higher level, including marches in the streets and occupations, if necessary, to save the targeted schools. □

Miss. residents say a lynching took place as

Black man found hanging from a tree

By Monica Moorehead

The myth of a post-racial U.S. society in light of the election of President Barack Obama was shattered once again when the body of Frederick Jermaine Carter, a 26-year-old Black man, was discovered Dec. 3 hanging from a tree in a predominantly white area in the town of Greenwood, Miss.

This hanging conjured up painful memories and images of racist lynchings of Black men, especially in the Deep South. Greenwood is a mere 10 miles away from Money, Miss., where in 1955 Emmett Till, a 14-year-old Black youth, was tortured and murdered by racist whites. Two of the whites indicted for Till’s murder were acquitted. Years later these same whites publicly admitted, in a Life magazine article, to committing this atrocity. Till’s alleged offense was whistling at a white woman. His murder came

three months before the historic Montgomery bus boycott.

While Till’s death garnered national and international attention, Carter’s killing has yet to be covered by any major big-business media.

Leflore County Sheriff Ricky Banks, along with the county coroner, has ruled Carter’s death a suicide. Banks claimed that since Carter had a mental disability, he used a table frame to attach a rope from his neck to the tree. He then allegedly kicked the table from beneath himself.

Sunflower, Miss., Mayor Michael Pemberton, a cousin of Carter’s, commented: “He didn’t have a mental problem. His problem was he tended to not defend himself against others in conflict but he wouldn’t kill himself. The family is requesting a second autopsy and want to also have an autopsy done by someone out of the state of Mississippi.”

Attorney Valerie Hicks Powe, repre-

senting Carter’s family, stated on Dec. 13, “A crime scene was never established. They never roped the scene off and this has not been treated as a crime. There is no reason to believe that he would commit suicide. We appreciate attention being brought to this because we need an outcry from the people.”

Wendol Lee, president of the Memphis-based Operation Help Civil Rights, said, “The area where he was found hanging is an area that Black people do not go into according to what residents have told us. Blacks get harassed and stopped by the police in that area so why would this young man go way over there to kill himself? We believe someone took him over there and killed him.” Hundreds of Black residents have petitioned Lee’s group to do a thorough investigation of Carter’s death.

This killing of Carter is just the latest incident in the all-too-long, sordid

“mindset” or “ideology” to commit or aid terrorism. Information on these cases can be found at projectsalam.org.

Laila Murad described the case of Tarek Mehanna, a respected leader in the Muslim community in Sudbury, Mass., who, after refusing to talk to the FBI about his friends and neighbors, is being locked down in solitary confinement 23 hours a day. His support committee can be contacted at www.freetarek.com.

Nancy Murray of the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts described the refocus of law enforcement away from solving crimes and toward using massive databases to data-mine in order to “predict” who will commit crimes and then arresting them. She also reminded the audience that they should not allow the FBI into their homes without a warrant or speak to them without a lawyer. □

racist legacy of injustice in Mississippi. Along with Emmett Till, there were also the murders of civil rights activists James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman in Neshoba County, Miss., by the Ku Klux Klan and police in 1964. Once again, there were no convictions for these murders.

African-American sisters Jamie and Gladys Scott have each been serving life sentences for the past 16 years in a Mississippi prison, even though witnesses testified under oath that the Scott sisters did not take \$11 from a convenience store. There is a growing national movement to force Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour to release them.

Quotes come from the Dec. 14 Final-Call.com article “Blacks doubt death in small Southern town is a suicide — they want answers now” written by Jesse Muhammad.

The significant prison strike in Georgia

Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

What conclusions or lessons can be drawn from the historic Georgia prisoners' strike that lasted close to a week and involved as many as 10 institutions across the state?

One of the most remarkable elements of the job action by prisoners who refused to continue working for free was the broad unity among Black, Latino, white, Muslim, Christian, Rastafarian and other groups.

The active promotion of divisions among inmates through favored treatment, rumor-mongering and directed violence to one group or another is standard operating procedure by prison authorities. Although most people readily understand that the vast majority of people incarcerated in the U.S. are poor and quite often are people of color, the recognition that prisoners are workers too is less apparent to many of the public.

Yet the Georgia prisoners' first demand was that they be paid for their labor; that they were not slaves or animals to be worked without remuneration or human dignity. This is a profound message sent by the most exploited members of the working class, denied by law from receiving any wages for their labor.

The sheer audacity of using contraband cell phones to plan, organize and mobilize a synchronized "lock down for liberty" in statewide facilities speaks to the ingenuity and skills of these men. Although most of these phones are supplied by guards at a high price to inmates, it is a felony for a prisoner to have an unauthorized phone in Georgia. During the week-long strike, as prisoners remained in their cells, refusing to come out, it was through these phones that they were able to communicate with each other, media outlets and supporters on the outside.

Although the corporate media, particularly the major TV news stations, largely ignored the strike, alternate media such as Democracy Now and Hard Knock Radio, as well as Black Agenda Report, provided extensive coverage day by day.

Former chair of the Black Panther Party and long-time prisoner rights' advocate Elaine Brown, who acted as a voice for the strikers, was interviewed extensively. The Internet petition initiated by the International Action Center generated tens of thousands of emails supporting the strikers' demands and calling for no reprisals.

Solidarity demonstrations took place in several cities including Detroit; Oakland, Calif.; Richmond, Va.; Denver; Raleigh, N.C.; and New York City. Messages of support came from people around the globe, including prisoners in other countries. It is fair to say that the Georgia prisoners' strike brought a measure of worldwide solidarity and attention to the deplorable conditions commonplace in U.S. prisons, in a way not seen since the upstate New York Attica rebellion in 1971, almost 30 years ago.

In fact, the manifesto released by the Attica prisoners, declaring they were "men not animals," and detailing demands for access to health care and educational opportunities, the end to arbitrary punishment and brutal guards, decent living conditions and the right to unionize are echoed in similar demands made by the Georgia strikers.

In truth there have been many struggles by prisoners in the intervening years that exposed the inhuman policies and practices deemed normal or acceptable for those convicted of a "crime." Quite often, these actions were labeled "riots," involving the spontaneous seizure of a cellblock or taking of hostages following some instance

of guard brutality. Most often, the state employed immediate, massive violence to regain control of the prison, resulting in injury, death or increased sentences for those involved. Little to no publicity was given to the prisoners' grievances.

Prisoners need ongoing solidarity

In contrast, the Georgia prisoners' strike released a list of nine demands just before the action took place on Dec. 9. The prisoners had a unified plan of action agreed to by the leadership within prison society. They had stockpiled foodstuffs, knowing there would be no meals. They deliberately chose a time later in the year when the temperatures would not be sweltering in their closed-in and overcrowded cells.

Unfortunately, the strike occurred during a most unseasonable cold snap that caused temperatures to plummet below freezing in parts of Georgia. But the determined strikers endured. They had a diffused and publicly unidentified leadership which prevented immediate removal of their spokespeople. In other words, this was a most carefully conceived and executed plan to deliver a list of concrete demands drawn from their experience as workers and their insistence on human dignity.

Although the strike was declared over and the Department of Corrections preemptive lockdown of four prisons ended on Dec. 16, reports continue to come out that some prisoners are still refusing to go to their work assignments. There are persistent accounts that a number of inmates have been sent to the "hole" or transferred to unknown locations. One possible transfer site mentioned in continuing phone calls from inside the walls is Reidsville, the state's maximum security prison where Georgia's death row is located. Physical retaliation against some prisoners has been claimed.

On Dec. 17 representatives of the Concerned Coalition to Protect Prisoners Rights met with the Department of Corrections to press for action on the strikers' demands. The coalition, made up of the NAACP and the Nation of Islam, among other community organizations, reported no positive results from the meeting but pledged to continue their support for the strike's demands.

The need for continued solidarity action is critical. These striking workers did no harm to anyone. They employed a time-honored tactic of workers everywhere — withholding their labor to press their demands. For a week, they prepared no meals, scrubbed no floors, made no license plates or furniture. The truth is whether in a prison, on a factory assembly line, at a computer or behind a store counter, nothing is produced, transported, distributed or serviced without the labor of a worker.

The full impact of the Georgia prisoners' strike is yet to be seen. Will others adopt similar strategies and tactics? In many states, huge corporations like BP, TWA, Compaq, JCPenny, Best Western Hotels, Honda, Chevron, IBM, Microsoft, Victoria's Secret and Boeing, to name a few, employ thousands of prisoners, especially in call-in centers, paying on average 40 cents an hour.

This growing phenomenon of a captive workforce is a dream come true for many a capitalist. But as Karl Marx and Frederick Engels described in "The Communist Manifesto" and the Georgia prisoners' strike showed, class conscious and organized workers — be they inside or outside the prison walls — are the "specter haunting" this exploitive, profits-before-people system of capitalism.

To sign the online petition and contact prison authorities, go to www.iacenter.org. □



Protest hits CNN for failure to cover prison strike

Some 30 people gathered in front of the Time Warner Building at Columbus Circle in New York City on Dec. 17 to protest the failure of television news channel CNN to cover a strike of prisoners across Georgia during that week. Demonstrators emphasized their solidarity with the unity of the Black, Latino, white and Native prisoners in raising demands for education, pay, medical care and decent working conditions, and pointed out how these were similar to demands by workers outside the prisons.

One of the demonstrators was Bob Zellner, a professor at the Southampton

College of Long Island University who teaches the history of the Civil Rights Movement and related subjects. Zellner, shown above, told Workers World he was one of the early activists in SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) in Georgia in the early 1960s. "I was arrested quite a few times in those days demonstrating against discrimination, and I spent some time on the Georgia chain gangs. Once I heard about the strike and that there would be a protest tonight, I had to come in from Long Island to participate."

— Report and photo
by John Catalinotto



PHOTO: ZEPAKTLI ARAGON



WW PHOTO: BRYAN PFEIFFER

Members of the Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoners' Rights and All of Us or None of Us protest at the Mound Road prison in Detroit Dec. 14.

MARXISM, REPARATIONS and the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

Edited by Monica Moorehead. • **Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination** Larry Holmes • **Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery** Sam Marcy • **Black Youth: Repression & Resistance**

Leilani Dowell • **The Struggle for Socialism Is Key** Monica Moorehead •

Black & Brown Unity: A Pillar of Struggle for Human Rights & Global Justice! Saladin Muhammad • **Alabama's Black Belt: Legacy of Slavery,**

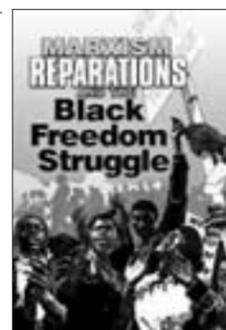
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The struggle to control information

WikiLeaks, the printing press & the Bible

By Sara Flounders

New forms of technology are inherently destabilizing to the established order.

This is the whole basis of a materialist understanding of history. But this reality can sometimes be confirmed in a manner that catches everyone by surprise. Dominance that was once unchallenged is suddenly contested on all sides. The struggle for change breaks out in new and unexpected ways.

U.S. imperialism cannot put back into the box or shut down what has been opened by WikiLeaks. Instead, the struggle to contain WikiLeaks has the potential to bring millions of people into political consciousness and conflict with the established order.

The effort to suppress the release of information on WikiLeaks by the arrest of Julian Assange and calls for his assassination or trial on terrorism charges; the imprisonment of Bradley Manning and the threats against WikiLeaks activists; along with the cancellation of its services by Amazon, PayPal, American Express, MasterCard, and U.S. and Swiss banks is radicalizing many highly skilled youth internationally. Hundreds of thousands of cyber attacks were organized on the multinational information corporations and banks that attempted to shut WikiLeaks down.

Every effort to shut it down has only served to spread it further and make it far more widely available. Thousands of mirror sites were set up within days of the effort to close WikiLeaks.

Even if the U.S. government succeeds in temporarily shutting down WikiLeaks, millions of people worldwide know that it is possible to break U.S. government and corporate secrecy. Many new sites are sure to follow.

The denunciations and attacks on the courageous individuals who have helped to provide access to government and corporate secret information will inspire many others who may have access to restricted information on all kinds of criminal and corporate skullduggery to join in leaking it.

All this undercuts the endlessly polished image of U.S. imperialism as an invincible power with all the most advanced technology at its disposal.

So much of cyber warfare is dominated by theft of information for profit or espionage. The impact of many thousands of cyber activists all over the world working simply for the idea that information and communication should be free and available — not kept secret or owned for private profit — has revolutionary implications.

WikiLeaks has exposed government secrets through the cooperation of courageous, highly skilled individuals who are able to communicate and willing to risk everything in the name of freedom of information. But those forces alone would not have had the mass access of the corporate media.

The choice of documents and the steady, well-publicized daily release of hundreds of documents provided by WikiLeaks on the front pages of newspapers in Germany, France, Spain and Britain may reflect that the U.S.'s own imperialist allies are no longer willing to just be pulled in tow by the U.S.-dominated military alliance known as NATO.

In the past these imperialist countries and their corporate media have been willing to ignore clear evidence of U.S. crimes and conspiracies. Previously, these crimes were not even considered newsworthy or relevant.

Now these imperialist countries — long-time thieves and robbers themselves — can see that today U.S. imperialism is in a long period of decline and decay. It is unable to prevail in a long ground war in Central Asia against one of the poorest, least-developed countries in the world: Afghanistan. It is unable to reverse the global capitalist economic crisis or solve the growing unemployment faced by millions of workers. Its industrial capacity is now a mere fraction of global production.

It is hardly a secret that in order to maintain its deteriorating monopoly on power, U.S. imperialism has used invasions, occupations, coups, bribery and military dictatorship. To hold in place an archaic, corrupt system of exploitation, it has openly engaged in the most repressive measures, including mass raids, disappearances, secret detentions, targeted assassinations, preventive prosecutions and frame-ups.

Both the Bush administration and now the Obama administration have politically defended the use of the most brutal forms of torture, including waterboarding, sensory deprivation, solitary confinement and electric torture. And they have used and sold weapons of torture around the world, from stun guns to white phosphorous and anti-personnel grenades.

Much of the information and even some of the pictures, videos and documents now being released were already known both in some specifics and in general outline. But concrete information can have radical consequences.

To understand how futile the U.S. efforts to shut down WikiLeaks are, it is worth looking back to a struggle at the dawn of capitalism against the old feudal order in Europe.

In the 16th century the Roman Catholic Church was the largest landowner in feudal Europe, controlling a third of all land. As an institution, it had a stranglehold on enormous amounts of property, privilege, titles, inheritance and especially ideas. The privileged clergy had a total monopoly on law, politics, science and "salvation."

But new technology, trade and communication were bubbling beneath the surface. It was the newly invented printing press and its ability to widely disseminate information that broke the authority not only of the Catholic Church but also of feudal class relations.

The printing press & indulgences

In 1440 Johannes Gutenberg built the first wooden press, which used movable metal type. It took another 15 years, until 1455, to develop the rudimentary technology of movable type, metal molds, a special press and oil-based inks that together created mass production of the first printed book: 200 copies of the Bible. By 1499 — less than 50 years later — printing houses had been established in more than 2,500 cities in Europe. An estimated 15 million books had been printed of 30,000 titles, including hundreds of political and religious-political tracts which were distributed far and wide.

This new technology broke the monopoly of information once available only to a select few who had access to handwritten manuscripts that took years to individually copy or produce by laboriously inking carved wooden blocks.

The cost of Gutenberg's first run of a two-volume printed Bible was the equivalent of approximately three years' wages for an average clerk. This was far cheaper than a handwritten Bible, which could take a single monk 20 years to transcribe. (ideafinder.com)

As Gutenberg was developing the technology to print an entire book, he sustained himself by mass producing for church officials tens of thousands of printed "indulgences." These were printed slips of paper sold by the Catholic Church that promised to remit punishments in the afterlife. These aggressively marketed notes could only be sold by agents or commissaries, who bought the rights to sell them from the pope in Rome.

Indulgences quickly became an enormous new source of wealth for Rome — a commodity that could be bought and sold. It was a new form of extracting profits: onerous taxation and mass exploitation for all who wished for salvation. For 50 years it appeared that the wealth and power of Rome was growing based on indulgences, the currency of the age.

All these enormous changes — a new marketable source of wealth, an emerging capitalist class, new technology, new communication, a beleaguered peasantry and growing numbers of poor, urban workers — were brewing when a monk, Martin Luther, challenged Rome's absolute authority.

Nailing a declaration of 95 theses to the cathedral doors in Wittenberg in 1517, Luther opposed the buying and selling of indulgences and demanded the right to interpret the Bible. This bold challenge to papal authority is credited with unleashing 100 years of revolutionary upheaval known as the Protestant Reformation.

Luther's translation of the Bible from Church Latin into the vernacular German spoken by common people had an even more revolutionary impact.

The Peasant War

For hundreds of years historians described the resulting wars that convulsed Europe as religious wars. The burning issue that moved millions of people to revolutionary action was the freedom to read the vernacular Bible and the right to interpret it. It was a break with the absolute power of the Catholic Church and its privileged clergy.

In the small book, "The Peasant War in Germany," Fredrick Engels shed new understanding on this period of upheaval with his explanation of the class forces emerging that challenged the authority of decaying, corrupt Rome. Local princes, lower nobility and landlords could quickly grasp the advantage of breaking with Rome and thereby lessening its enormous taxation and tithes. It was an opportunity to seize the wealth of church lands and be free of the burden of buying indulgences.

By 1524 large sections of the besieged German peasantry, who were being hammered by the tithes and taxations of both the church and the feudal lords, took the right of each person to interpret the Bible to heart, along with the right to seize the lands of the church and free themselves from ownership by lords and abbeyes.

A radical challenge to property took root. The idea that all wealth of the church and the local lords should be held in common led to peasant uprisings that convulsed Germany for two years.

Thomas Munzer, the leader of the most radical thinkers, merged his biblical interpretations with the Anabaptist movement, a peasant-based, communist mobilization with the rainbow flag as its symbol. In this struggle millions of peasants and plebeians acted for the first time in their own interests, though following a religious program. They built a revolutionary army and contended for power.

Munzer, the Anabaptists and their movement were militarily defeated within

two years. To make an example to other insurrectionary efforts, the leaders were horribly tortured and publicly executed. But revolutionary peasant uprisings continued across Europe.

The upheavals spread to Scandinavia, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands and England. The peasant movements, too disorganized, unskilled and illiterate to prevail, were again and again defeated by a bloc of the newly rising capitalist class and frightened princes and landlords.

The Catholic Church used every form of repression to reclaim its authority and privilege. Inquisitions used secret detention, horrendous forms of torture, mass campaigns of terror and witch-hunts that consumed thousands in flames. Whole countries faced papal excommunication — a punishment similar to sanctions today.

Rome financed military campaigns and invasions, such as the Spanish Armada's attempt to invade Britain in 1588 in an effort to reverse the British monarchy's break with Rome. But no form of threats, terror or torture could restore the Church's uncontested position in feudal Europe.

Technology cannot be turned back. And the new ideas that arise from a society changed by technology cannot be stamped out by threats and repression.

No turning back for U.S. imperialism

U.S. imperialism cannot shut down the flow of information or the drive it ignites for wider access and the end to the impossibly narrow constraints of private property and ownership of information and communication. The U.S. military may have originally developed the Internet for its own emergency military communication in time of war. But the Internet has long since escaped those bounds.

U.S. corporate power cannot shut down the Internet without totally disrupting their own businesses, production and marketing. The contradiction is that the immediate financial interests of the bourgeoisie make the Internet ever more accessible.

The much bigger problem for U.S. imperialism is that today, as consciousness grows and access to communication technology expands to include the whole world, it is not facing an isolated, illiterate and oppressed peasantry.

It is facing the increasingly educated and skilled multinational working class whom they created. This class will come to a consciousness of its own interests in unexpected and uneven ways. But this class is a force that cannot be stopped by feudal or modern repression and threats.

The rising consciousness of millions of the powerless can be more powerful than technology. □

TOP 10 Reasons the Pentagon other they are winning

1. The Afghan soldier who turned around and shot six U.S. mercenary advisers, then escaped, didn't join the Taliban after all.
2. The population is throwing much smaller rocks at U.S.-NATO troops when they march by than they used to. Or so our informants report.
3. The government in Kabul isn't nearly as corrupt as the one in Washington.
4. We are starting to get a bigger cut of the poppy seed business.
5. The U.S. population is tired from the war, not tired of the war. There's a big difference.

130-plus veterans arrested near White House

Special to Workers World

Veterans for Peace and their supporters and friends demonstrated Dec. 16 in front of the White House to protest the ongoing U.S.-led wars and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. While hundreds demonstrated, 131 were arrested for a civil disobedience action. One of the participants in the veteran-led protest, Army veteran and International Action Center activist Mike Gill, told Workers World:

“Daniel Ellsberg [the U.S. government official who copied and leaked the Pentagon Papers in 1971, exposing the fraudulent pretext for the war against Vietnam] got a sustained round of applause and cheers when introduced. Like the rest of us, he was handcuffed and led

away from the White House by the cops. Although the main focus of the veterans was to demand that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq stop immediately and U.S. troops and mercenaries be withdrawn, tremendous emphasis was also put on supporting and defending WikiLeaks and its founder, Julian Assange, as well as accused Pentagon war crimes whistle-blower, Army Pfc. Bradley Manning. Every mention of Assange and Manning received loud cheers and applause from the veterans.

“I was able to get out 100 copies of Workers World newspaper with the front-page headline ‘No war against Korea, U.S. jets and warships are the real threat.’ This was eagerly received by the veterans and their civilian supporters.” □



WWW PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

Political prisoner update

Bradley Manning isolated & abused

By Gene Clancy

On Dec. 17 Bradley Manning turned 23 in a cell at the Marine Corps base in Quantico, Va. For him, it was just another day of isolation and abuse at the hands of the U.S. military. From the beginning of his detention in late April, Manning, a U.S. soldier suspected of releasing the thousands of documents published by WikiLeaks, has been held in intensive solitary confinement.

For eight straight months, Manning has sat alone in his cell for 23 out of 24 hours of every day. Even inside his cell, his activities are heavily restricted. He is barred from even exercising and is under constant surveillance, so that the restrictions are enforced. For reasons that appear wholly punitive, he's being denied many basic necessities, including even a pillow or sheets for his bed. For the one hour per day when he is freed from this

isolation, he is barred from accessing any news or current events programs. (www.armycourt martialdefense.info)

Outside his cell, Manning is forced to wear shackles. His limited contacts with friends and family are from behind a thick glass screen. According to David House, a computer researcher from Boston who visits Manning twice a month, he is starting to deteriorate. “Over the last few weeks I have noticed a steady decline in his mental and physical wellbeing.” (The Guardian, Dec. 16)

House said many people are reluctant to talk about Manning's condition because of government harassment, including surveillance, warrantless computer seizures and even bribes. “This has had such an intimidating effect that many are afraid to speak out on his behalf.”

Manning has not even been formally charged or convicted of anything. Yet the conditions under which he is being detained were once recognized in the United

States — and are still recognized in most nations — as not only cruel and inhumane, but torture. This is true for many political prisoners, immigrants and other detainees, who have faced or are facing similar mistreatment and injustice in U.S. military and civilian prisons.

International treaty organizations and human rights experts, including the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture and the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture, have concluded that solitary confinement amounts to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment. They have criticized supermax solitary confinement in the United States because of the mental suffering it inflicts.

According to some chat logs released by Wired.com of Manning's online conversa-

tions with Adrian Lamo — who says he reported Manning to U.S. military authorities — Manning was very disturbed by evidence that he saw of crimes committed by the U.S. government and military. He was first arrested following the WikiLeaks release of a video showing the U.S. Apache gunship massacring Iraqi civilians. Later, his army captors also attributed to Manning the release of documents showing substantial U.S. government deceit, brutality, illegality and corruption.

Whether or not Manning is responsible for any or all of the WikiLeaks documents, he must be regarded as a hero and an example to all those who desire peace and justice around the world. All progressive forces should demand that the illegal confinement and torture of Bradley Manning stop immediately and that the real perpetrators of the brutal crimes revealed through WikiLeaks and elsewhere be brought to justice. □

Holbrooke: imperialist diplomat, war criminal, or both?

By Stephen Millies

Fawning eulogies that appeared in the capitalist press after Richard Holbrooke died on Dec. 13 mention that his nickname was “the bulldozer.” This fit, for more than one reason. For nearly 50 years Holbrooke “bulldozed” poor people to death all over the earth. President Obama's “special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan” was a war criminal.

Holbrooke is best known for his role in the Balkans and the destruction of Yugoslavia, but he carried out similar anti-pop-

ular tasks earlier regarding Vietnam, East Timor and south Korea.

Holbrooke joined the State Department in 1962, as a 22 year old. He was in charge of “pacifying” a province in Vietnam's Mekong Delta for the United States Agency for International Development. “Pacification” meant driving peasants out of their villages into concentration camps called “strategic hamlets.”

Death squads organized through the CIA's Operation Phoenix hunted Vietnamese liberation fighters and killed entire families. Tens of thousands of local Vietnamese organizers were killed.

Holbrooke helped carry out these bloodbaths in Vietnam. He served as an aide at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon to Ambassadors Maxwell Taylor and Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. He was also part of the U.S. delegation to the Paris peace talks in 1968 and 1969.

Covering up genocide in East Timor

Following a meeting with President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in December 1975, Indonesian dictator Suharto invaded newly independent East Timor. The occupiers eventually killed a third of the Timorese population. After Democrat Jimmy Carter was elected, Holbrooke was appointed assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs. In that job he justified U.S. delivery of A-10 Bronco airplanes to the

Indonesian military that were then used to strafe people in Timor.

Holbrooke also supported the South Korean military in its killing of thousands of people during the Kwangju uprising in 1980. According to journalist Tim Shorrock, Holbrooke “took it upon himself to prevent the democratic Korean opposition from speaking out against military intervention, and then kept his mouth firmly shut when the Kwangju disaster struck.” (timshorrock.com)

Breaking up socialist Yugoslavia

Holbrooke is best known for his role as President Clinton's point man in the project of destroying Yugoslavia, the last remaining socialist state in Eastern Europe.

Socialist Yugoslavia was a multinational country that was forged through a guerrilla resistance war against German imperialist occupation during World War II. Holbrooke was ringmaster at the 1995 negotiations at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, that ended the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As journalist Diana Johnstone mentioned in her Dec. 15 article in CounterPunch, the same agreement could have been reached in 1992 except for U.S. sabotage. An earlier agreement would have saved years of war and hundreds of thousands of deaths.

Holbrooke backed Croatia in its expulsion of over a quarter million Serbian people from their homes in Krajina in 1995.

Bill Clinton launched 78 days of bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 after U.S. machinations failed to overthrow that country's President Slobodan Milosevic. All the NATO countries joined in this class war. The war's pretext was to “protect” Albanians in Serbia's Kosovo province, but its result was to destroy Yugoslavia and bring the most reactionary forces to power in a U.S.-occupied Kosovo.

With the acquiescence of the U.S. and other NATO occupying forces, the “Kosovo Liberation Army” was allowed to persecute and kill Serbians, Roma, Jews and other minority people in Kosovo province and to oppress and exploit Albanian-origin workers too.

The Council of Europe has charged that KLA leader Hashim Thaci — now Kosovo's prime minister — harvested body organs from Serbian prisoners of war and political opponents. The Pentagon's largest military base in the region, Camp Bondsteel, is in Kosovo.

President Milosevic died under suspicious circumstances while being held in Scheveningen Prison in The Hague, Netherlands, in 2006. The International Criminal Tribunal on the Former Yugoslavia had failed in all its attempts to prove war crimes charges against Milosevic. Holbrooke said he found Milosevic's death “a just end.” The truth is that Clinton, the other NATO leaders and yes, Richard Holbrooke, should have been on trial instead. □

BY PAUL WILCOX

Generals tell each other in Afghanistan

6. A clear majority of 38 percent of the U.S. population doesn't seem to mind the war.
7. After a thorough assessment, the Pentagon has confidently promised to withdraw someday.
8. Unlike the war against Vietnam, we generals have much better press control over what people at home know about the war, except for WikiLeaks.
9. We polled the Afghans we bribe. A clear majority want us to stay.
10. U.S. soldiers don't seem to mind five or six stints in a war zone. They can see their loved ones on Skype. The high-tech revolution. The Taliban can't do that for its troops. □

After U.S. warning

Nigeria drops charges against Halliburton, Cheney

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

After the George Bush-Dick Cheney ticket stole the 2000 presidential elections, Halliburton Corporation became a household word in the United States. Vice President Cheney had been Halliburton's CEO during 1995-2000. With its subsidiary, Kellogg, Brown and Root, Halliburton won lucrative government contracts during the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq.

In late November the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission raided KBR-affiliated offices inside the country and arrested 23 Nigerians and foreigners, charging them with bribery involving \$180 million. KBR is no longer formally associated with Halliburton since 2007. The charges involve alleged bribes paid by Halliburton/KBR officials to win contracts to develop the Bonny Island liquefied natural gas project in the resource-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Other firms associated with the criminal investigation in Nigeria include Technip SA, Europe's second largest oilfield services provider; ENI SpA, Italy's biggest oil company; and Saipem Construction Co., a unit of ENI.

Yet on Dec. 17 the EFCC announced that charges against Dick Cheney and Halliburton/KBR were being dropped in exchange for the payment of \$250 million in fines to the Nigerian government. The decision prompted much consternation in Nigeria, Africa's most populous state, which just recently dropped a civil lawsuit against Pfizer pharmaceutical company in

exchange for the payment of \$75 million to the government.

The EFCC said that it reached the settlement in London at meetings with lawyers and other officials representing Cheney and Halliburton/KBR. Though KBR had admitted last year to paying out the bribes to officials during a period spanning 1994-2004, it has sought to avoid criminal prosecution in the U.S., France and Switzerland as well as in Nigeria. In the U.S., KBR has reportedly paid out a \$579 million settlement to avoid convictions and prison time for its executives. (Al Jazeera, Dec. 17)

Other firms associated with the bribery scandal also paid fines in the U.S. "Panalpina, Royal Dutch Shell and five oil-services companies agreed to pay \$236.5 million to resolve a U.S. probe of overseas bribery." (Times of Nigeria, Dec. 1)

The EFCC is still pursuing criminal complaints against Nigerian nationals and others associated with the bribery scandal.

Deal follows State Dept. warning

Just one week before the charges were dropped, U.S. assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Johnnie Carson, said at a press briefing that Nigeria should "carefully review the 16-count corruption allegations made against a former U.S. vice-president, Dick Cheney, in the Halliburton bribe-for-contract scandal." Carson indicated that the U.S. was speaking to Nigerian authorities about the case and wanted the case to be reviewed and the charges to be carefully and deeply substantiated as they were "very serious." (Nigeria Tribune, Dec. 11)

The Human Rights Writers' Association of Nigeria severely criticized the decision on Halliburton, saying, "President Goodluck Jonathan, through the office of the federal attorney-general and minister of justice had set a bad precedent which conveyed the impression that corruption thrived in Nigeria provided you were clever enough not to be caught or buoyant enough to settle out of court if eventually caught." (Nigeria Punch, Dec. 20)

Nigeria has been the focus of a number of recent high profile criminal cases that have been discharged after multimillion dollar settlements.

The pharmaceutical giant Pfizer was recently allowed to avoid potential liability in a \$6 billion lawsuit involving the use of tainted antibiotics in a purported "clinical trial" of the drug Trovan, used to treat meningitis. The lawsuit alleged that the drug caused the deaths of 11 children and sickened dozens of others. The Nigerian attorney general dropped the claim after Pfizer exerted pressure and managed to settle for a mere \$75 million.

Oil industry key to Nigerian-U.S. relations

Unrest arising from the exploitation and oppression of the people in the Niger Delta has continued. The U.S. energy firm Chevron announced on Dec. 20 that it was suspending production from an oil pipeline that was damaged three days before. Chevron said that it was investigating the sabotage of the Dibi-Abiteye pipeline, which transports 123,000 barrels of crude oil per day. (Reuters, Dec. 20)

The Niger Delta Liberation Force claimed responsibility for the attack on

the Chevron facility. As a result of the escalation of attacks against oil facilities in the Niger Delta, crude oil production has declined in recent years in Nigeria, despite a 2009 amnesty program aimed at ending militant activity in the region. Prior to 2009, Nigeria was Africa's largest exporter of oil into the U.S. Now Angola is. With the failure of the federal government to curb militant activity against the oil industry, this trend will likely continue.

Despite the billions of dollars in profits generated annually through the exploitation of Nigerian oil and natural gas, the overall living conditions of the workers and farmers have worsened since the advent of the world economic crisis. A recent column by Moses John published Dec. 20 in the Nigerian Leadership newspaper reports that though the Nigerian labor movement began its latest demands for a new national minimum wage two years ago, the results were small.

John continued: "For this reason, among others, Nigeria is rated among the poorest nations of the world. This disgraceful condition of widespread poverty amidst a vast ocean of material prosperity breeds frustration, anger and hatred from the impoverished sections of the populace."

These conditions require that the Nigerian people organize on a national level to take control of their government and the natural resources of the country. When this occurs the U.S. government and the multinational corporations that prop it up will inevitably be held accountable for the horrendous crimes committed in the interests of profit and economic control. □

People's Korea defuses U.S. war provocation

Continued from page 1

ing it from the land line that divided Korea along the 38th parallel, Clark bent the sea line north so as to threaten the DPRK and deprive it of waters that would, by all international standards, belong to it.

All the propaganda in the big business media about the DPRK being a dangerous aggressor is a pack of lies. The U.S. has 28,000 troops stationed in south Korea at dozens of bases, including one in the capital city of Seoul. The Pentagon also has hundreds of bombers and fighter planes based in Japan, Guam and other nearby areas, as well as dozens of warships. And the U.S. still commands all military forces in south Korea in times of war.

The DPRK has reportedly agreed to allow inspectors back into its Yongbyon nuclear facility, where it has developed the technology for nuclear power. The DPRK has a long history of offering to dismantle any nuclear technology that could be used for military purposes in return for peace and security. These demands have been rebuffed by Washington for decades.

There has been no peace treaty ending the Korean War. The U.S. and its clients

Low-Wage Capitalism

What the new globalized high-tech imperialism means for the class struggle in the U.S.

Fred Goldstein's book provides an easy-to-read analysis of the roots of the current global economic crisis, its implications for workers and oppressed peoples, and the strategy needed for future struggle.

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in south Korea will not sign one. The imperialists in Washington, for all practical purposes, maintain a permanent state of war against socialist north Korea.

During the Korean War, the U.S.-led forces of world imperialism bombed the north ruthlessly, to the point where not one building above one story was left standing. It was a war to destroy socialist Korea, led by the Workers' Party of Korea. Its leader, Kim-Il Sung, had liberated the territory from Japanese imperialism and was more popular in the south than the hated U.S. puppet government, led by Syngman Rhee.

Despite the massive military assault, the Korean Peoples' Liberation Army, with the aid of Chinese volunteers and logistical support from the USSR, drove the U.S. forces out of the north and fought the Pentagon to a standstill. It was the first defeat for the U.S. ruling class.

The Pentagon has never forgotten this and has never given up on its vengeful drive to destroy the socialist north and unify the country on a capitalist basis.

In the wake of the Dec. 7 crisis, the U.S. moved to consolidate a Washington-Tokyo-Seoul military axis, directed primarily against the DPRK but also against China.

Admiral Mullen visited Seoul on Dec. 8 and met with the south Korean high command, giving them the go-ahead to change the rules of engagement. These changes involve giving the south permission to bomb the DPRK. Up until now, bombing the north was not permitted, even during military provocations. Dur-

ing the Dec. 7 incident, F-15 fighter bombers in the south were scrambled but were told not to go ahead with bombing missions. Mullen and the south Korean military have changed that.

Next the Pentagon announced it had agreed with Tokyo on integrating the Japanese military more closely with the U.S. military. (New York Times, Dec. 13) Mullen encouraged Japan to participate in future joint military exercises off the Korean coast. This surely raised the anger of all Koreans; Japanese imperialism colonized Korea from 1910 to 1945.

Shortly after the meeting with Mullen, the Japanese military issued new National Defense Program Guidelines. (Washington Post, Dec. 17) They will move mobile units from Japan's northern islands, where they were stationed during the Cold War facing the USSR, to the southern islands, where they are closer to Korea and China. The guidelines, for the first time, declare that China is a "source of concern." The PRC has denounced the new guidelines as a provocation.

U.S. bosses want to exploit all Asia

The U.S. ruling class has always considered its destiny to be bound up with the conquest of Asia, where the bulk of the world's exploitable masses reside.

This trend in U.S. military history follows the class interest of the capitalists. The U.S. took over Samoa and Hawaii in the late 19th century and conquered the Philippines in 1898. In three big wars in the 20th century, Washington tried to

fight its way into Asia. The U.S. entry into World War II in 1941 began as a struggle with Japan over China and Southeast Asia. The war in Korea was aimed at occupying the whole country and securing a U.S. military presence on China's border. The Vietnam War was to stop the spread of socialism, get hold of the riches of Vietnam and get near the Chinese border.

Given this history, a shift in the relationship between the U.S. civilian and military establishments is quite alarming. During the recent crisis Admiral Mullen has emerged as the spokesperson on foreign policy. During and after the Dec. 7 crisis, it was Mullen, not Vice President Joseph Biden or Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who appeared on talk shows, at think tanks and press conferences, telling China to crack down on the DPRK or face rising military pressure. This should have been regarded as insubordination and a usurpation of civilian authority by the Obama administration. But President Barack Obama remained silent throughout the crisis, except when, probably at the behest of the Pentagon, he lectured Chinese President Hu Jintao about controlling the DPRK.

The workers and the oppressed in this country burdened by the present economic crisis should follow these developments and see the connection between the way the bankers and the bosses deal with them and the U.S. war drive against Korea. Both the economic crisis and the war threats are driven by the needs of the capitalist ruling class for ever-greater profits. □

GREECE

Unions, youth in streets protest slashed wages & services

By G. Dunkel

Tens of thousands of workers in Greece took to the streets Dec. 15 to protest the drastic austerity measures the Greek government has imposed on them, under pressure from the banks that loaned money to cover its financial crisis.

Some 80,000 workers marched on the parliament building in Athens, where they confronted the cops. Some demonstrators confronted Kostis Hatzidakis, a former conservative minister of transportation, as he left the parliament building, yelling, "Thieves! Shame on you!" (L'Express, Dec. 15)

Blood running down his face, Hatzidakis managed to escape into another building. The cops arrested a dozen people and injured three, while making liberal use of tear gas, according to many media reports.

The slogans of the demonstrators were directed at the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, which put

together the loan package, and at the wage cuts parliament proposed. Under the recent law, private employers are allowed to cut wages up to 35 percent, and public employees can have their wages cut by 15 percent. Layoffs and strict salary caps, which prevent workers from using overtime to maintain their income, are also allowed.

However, it doesn't appear likely that these wage and benefit cuts will resolve Greece's financial crisis. Greece's public external debt is \$405.7 billion, which is 113 percent of its gross domestic product. Its exports are \$18.64 billion and its imports are \$61.47 billion. (CIA World Fact Book)

The cuts in wages and pensions and in government spending on things like roads and ports will not cut the deficit enough to pay off the banks. According to The Economist, the cuts will put Greece into a deeper recession, reducing its GDP and making it more difficult to pay its debt.

Caught between the demands of the EU



PHOTO: APAS

Students protesting in Thessaloniki in memory of Alexis Grigoropoulos, who was killed by police two years ago.

and the IMF on one hand and the anger of its people on the other, the Greek government made its choice — go with the banks.

Whether or not this saves the Euro for the bankers, this choice will continue to arouse struggle among workers in Greece. □

Bangladeshi garment workers protest factory fire deaths

By Larry Hales

From 2006 to 2009, 414 garment workers in Bangladesh died in 213 factory fires.

A fire on Dec. 14 at Ha-Meem Group's That's It Sports Wear factory in Ashulia, a suburb of Dhakar, Bangladesh's capital, killed 29 workers. Many jumped, trying to avoid the flames. More than 100 were injured. The fire started on the ninth floor of the 11-story building where the company employs thousands of workers. Witnesses reported that at least two emergency exit doors and a stairway gate were locked.

Tragedy struck again on Dec. 18 when the factory reopened. The eighth floor collapsed, injuring more than 25 workers. Then factory workers, many still in shock from having seen co-workers leap to their deaths, staged a protest inside the building and barricaded the Dhakar-Tangail highway. (Daily Star Bangladesh)

It is reprehensible that the factory was reopened so soon, after the fire had compromised the integrity of several top floors. That the fire occurred because of an electrical short circuit makes it criminal.

Ha-Meem supplies clothing to transnational corporations, such as the Gap and JCPenney. The ready-made garment industry, which also supplies Wal-Mart, H&M and other major U.S. and European brands and department stores, is the largest industry in the country and the third largest clothing producer in the world. It brought in \$12.7 billion in 2009, 14 percent of the country's gross domestic product, and it makes up 80 percent of Bangladesh's exports.

Bangladesh's garment industry employs 3 million workers in more than 4,500 factories throughout the country. Seventy percent of the workers are women. (Workers World, Aug. 29)

The year 2010 has seen great unrest in this industry. In July tens of thousands of workers demonstrated. Police attacked the demonstrations and arrested 20 labor leaders.

On Dec. 12 protesters at large, militant demonstrations in Gazipur, outside of Dhaka, barricaded streets and rebelled. Police killed four workers.

The demonstrations have been over the struggle for a living wage. A government-appointed wage board approved a wage in-

crease to only 3,000 taka (\$43) per month, less than \$2 per day. Workers were demanding 5,000 taka (\$72) per month. Before the raise, there had not been an increase in garment workers' wages since 2006.

The paltry increase to 3,000 taka comes at a time of rising food prices in Bangladesh and across the globe, especially in the Third World. In rural areas food inflation has been more than 9 percent, in a country where more than 40 percent of the people live on less than \$1 per day and where most people spend 70 percent of their income on food.

Even though the government board approved the wage increase to 3,000 taka, many factories still pay the old wage of

1665 taka (\$24) per month. The demonstrations in Gazipur were spurred not only by the demand for a higher wage but also by the factory owners' refusal to submit to the new wage structure.

According to the Bangladesh Daily Star, not only have the garment manufacturers not heeded the new wage law, but they rarely pay workers within seven working days of the wage period, in violation of the Labor Act 2006. (Dec. 16) They also routinely ignore safety, security and other regulations.

It would be entirely too simple to blame the conditions of Bangladeshi workers solely on the country's ruling class. This would be ignoring the reality of imperial-

ist globalization. Companies and financial institutions in the imperialist world dictate working conditions in the Third World.

Wal-Mart, for instance, forces those in its global supply chain to cut costs and rewards those who can be the most cut-throat and give Wal-Mart the lowest price for merchandise. Wal-Mart is the world's largest retailer; its owners, the Walton family, have a combined wealth of more than \$90 billion.

Notoriously anti-union Wal-Mart keeps its prices low because it pays its workers so little, not just the 2 million who work in its stores, but the tens of thousands who are super-exploited and work under brutal, unsafe conditions mostly in the Third World. □

Reports distort truth about cholera in Haiti

By G. Dunkel

Cholera has spread through the 10 departments of Haiti since Oct. 16 when the first case was confirmed. By Dec. 7 the disease had killed at least 2,100 people and infected more than 92,000. Many experts say these estimates undercount the isolated and extremely poor areas of rural Haiti.

Cholera spreads through human fecal matter in water or on food. A number of reports from Haiti, video from Al Jazeera and pictures on various web sites bear out the contention that most Haitians do not have access to clean water. There is no sewage treatment plant in all of Haiti. (Huffington Post, Dec. 1)

This cholera strain, which had not existed before in Haiti, is particularly virulent. Unless people are treated immediately, some will die within two hours after showing symptoms and everyone else within a day. Treatment generally includes rehydration, needed to replace body fluids lost through explosive diarrhea, and antibiotics to control the disease, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

The death rate and infection rate in Haiti are much higher than they were during the last major outbreak of cholera in the Western Hemisphere, in Peru in the early 1990s.

There is a major controversy over the origins of this epidemic. Almost all Hai-

tians believe the U.N. troops, called the Minustah, occupying their country since 2004, brought the disease to Mirebelais in central Haiti. The U.N. had vehemently denied responsibility, but U.N. head Ban Ki Moon announced a commission in mid-December to investigate how it happened. (Associated Press, Dec. 16)

Blaming the victims

Outrageously, some of the big-business media, the Red Cross and certain sections of the U.S. government have invented a new way of blaming the victims for the crime — blaming Haitians for the cholera epidemic. They say it will take additional funds to train Haitians in cleanliness.

The New York Times in a Dec. 18 editorial wrote: "The disease is relatively easy to treat, given adequate supplies of fresh water and prompt medical attention — two things most Haitians lack. Haitians," the Times spit out, "also need more education in preventive hygiene."

The U.S. State Department in a Dec. 6 press conference said: "On the prevention side, we're mobilizing to train health workers and increase public awareness campaigns so that the Haitian population understands the importance of health hygiene, of drinking clean water" — as if Haitians didn't know this.

The Red Cross reported that it "is engaged on multiple levels — from leading

cholera prevention activities in camps such as hygiene promotion to educate thousands of Haitian earthquake survivors." Its press release went on about how Red Cross personnel went tent to tent "to personally teach vulnerable Haitians about basic hygiene practices." (redcross.org)

The Centers for Disease Control, a unit of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which is tasked with providing accurate information about diseases and their causes to both medical professionals and the general public, reported on Dec. 7: "In 2008, only 63 percent of Haiti's population had access to an improved drinking water source, and only 17 percent had access to adequate sanitation." For the CDC "improved drinking water" is any water not scooped up from a river and "adequate sanitation" is a latrine or outhouse.

After the earthquake, whatever water supply or sanitation in Port-au-Prince and its surrounds — for over 2.5 million people — fell completely apart. If you don't have soap, clean water to drink and wash with, and reasonably clean sanitary facilities, all the education that is spewed out by the U.S. State Department, the Red Cross and so on won't help.

Cuba, which has had a significant aid mission in Haiti for years, decided to reinforce it after the cholera epidemic began.

Continued on page 11

No monopoly on information

The FCC's Dec. 21 ruling on "net neutrality" attempts to put into law the corporate monopolization of the Internet.

The ruling not only tries to seal the rise of corporate control of the Internet; it also enforces a two-tier system on the Internet's "super highway" — a fast lane for the rich, and a slow lane for everyone else.

This is the "neutrality" of the giant imperialist monopolies.

Two major changes are being introduced. First, all wireless Internet connections will be exempted from any open access rules, allowing AT&T, Verizon, the big wireless service providers to decide which websites you can access and which you can't. They will probably start charging a fee to website owners to allow access, making access available only to the sites backed by big money.

The second big change that is coming is that wired access companies can create a divided highway, with fast and slow lanes. Both Internet companies and those accessing the Internet will be charged more money for the fast lane services.

The future is a more sharply divided Internet: fast and open service for the rich, with limited, slow service for everyone else. The slow service will be slow

enough to make full use of the Internet all but impossible; think of driving on a dirt back road as opposed to an Interstate highway.

It's also a backroom deal that's meant to shut off access to WikiLeaks and other unapproved websites. Apple immediately pulled the WikiLeaks app from its App store. With wireless access the fastest growing segment of the Internet and all restrictions removed, the wireless providers, including Apple, can now say what is and is not accessible.

Capitalism works this way. The big monopolies restrict and control all development of goods and services, always driven by the demand for superprofits.

The Internet has grown to become not only a major source of commerce, through Web stores; it has also become the leading source for media distribution, from music to movies to television. Big profits are made by Google, Facebook, Apple, the New York Times and a few others through their Internet services. This "net neutrality" will enforce a system of control and access that is dominated by just the few richest monopolies, those that can pay for the service and those that can pay to ensure they are accessible.

The only way out of this stifling monopoly is to break the bonds of capitalism. □



Celebrates 40 Years of Struggle

The 40th anniversary of the founding of the Detroit branch of Workers World Party was commemorated at a special dinner and program on Dec. 18. More than 70 people packed the WWP hall in Detroit to remember and celebrate the branch's beginnings in 1970, during the height of the anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights movements.

Four decades of struggle were highlighted in a talk by Jerry Goldberg and a photo slideshow by David Sole, both founding members of the branch. Kris Hamel spoke on the Party's election campaigns in Michigan, and Larry Holmes, WWP secretariat member from New York City, talked about the branch's legacy and what it means to commit one's life to the working-class struggle. Secretariat member Fred Goldstein, author of "Low-Wage Capitalism," also addressed the meeting via Skype.

Solidarity messages from branch founding members Tova Fry and Bill Sacks were read by chair Andrea Egypt, who also presented statements from other branches and WWP members. Friends from around Michigan paid tribute to the Party's work over the years and many comrades took the microphone to express how they had found a political home in the branch, with its multinational composition and deep roots in the working-class struggle.

— WW Detroit bureau

'A revolutionary party makes us effective'

Following are excerpts from a Nov. 14 talk given by David Sole at the Workers World Party national conference held in New York City Nov. 13-14.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of WWP's Detroit branch's founding. The branch began during a period of revolutionary upsurge. The Civil Rights and the Black liberation struggles had swept the country. The Vietnamese national liberation fight was hammering 500,000 U.S. troops, resulting in a mass anti-war movement here. Communists led most of the liberation movements worldwide.

We led the Ann Arbor Students for a Democratic Society and were active in

all the battles then. We read left-wing publications like the Guardian and Workers World. We devoured Marx and Lenin, trying to understand tumultuous world events. We argued about the working class with the Weathermen at their Flint "SDS War Council" in December 1969. Two months later, they went underground, having written off the U.S. working class. In May 1970, we quit the University of Michigan campus to work for the revolution in working-class Detroit.

That summer we issued the first edition of our newspaper, Red Times. We



David Sole

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

sent two delegates to attend the WW national conference. Two weeks later, we joined the party. The oldest of us was 22. Other revolutionary youth collectives around the country joined the party then. The party tripled in size.

Detroit Youth Against War & Fascism promoted anti-imperialism, self-determination and working-class solidarity. Our

first demonstration was in solidarity with the Palestinian people when Jordan massacred thousands of Palestinians in 1970.

We demonstrated in support of the Irish Republican Army and the Quebec Liberation Front. We fought the Ku Klux Klan in a pitched battle in Pontiac when busing for integration of public schools began there. We picketed Jackson Prison in rural Michigan to support the striking Prisoners' Labor Union, and we supported the Attica prison rebellion.

Some of us entered the auto and steel factories to begin the struggle to transform the labor movement. We worked in the movements for women's, LGBTQ and Native American rights. We opened our branch headquarters in 1971 and then another office in a union hall for the party's mass labor organization, the Center for United Labor Action. By 1973, we ended publishing Red Times to push WW newspaper.

Activism alone cannot sustain a revolutionary struggle. One needs to understand economic, social and political developments. Without Marxist economics and historical materialism, no individual or group can withstand bourgeois ideology.

Twists and turns, victories and defeats can disorient revolutionaries who don't have the tools to figure out what's happening. We found that critical element every time we opened our party newspaper. We benefited from consulting experienced party leaders, including Sam Marcy, Dorothy Ballan, Vince Copeland

and Milt Neidenberg.

Each member who was engaged in a union or community struggle brought that struggle to the whole party for discussion and analysis. Today economic conditions are drawing many African-American, Latino/a and white activists toward our branch. They are eagerly deepening their activism by attending classes where we study Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Being part of a revolutionary party makes it possible for us to become an effective force. Our party gathers together the best fighters from many generations and struggles. It creates a tradition of militancy, a body of literature, a coherent ideology and a training ground for new cadres.

Our many interventions in the workers' struggles have brought a revolutionary perspective through transitional demands. We organized the Oil Belongs to the People and Food Is a Right campaigns, the Job is a Right Campaign, which challenged GM's plant closings, and the recent struggle for a moratorium on foreclosures.

The economic collapse has emboldened the capitalists to ruthlessly drive down workers' wages and attack social services and benefits won in decades of struggle. This is a key difference from 1970 when workers' average standard of living was still rising, as it had from the late 1940s.

Unemployment, wage cuts, foreclosures, racism, oppression and war are forcing the working class to ask questions. We must bring the message that socialism is the only answer to the crisis. The ideological setbacks the communist movement suffered with the Soviet Union's collapse have made this imperative.

Our party's ideology has been tested in decades of battle. The party has lost none of its fiery, revolutionary fighting spirit. We are determined to find a way into every mass arena to bring the message of anti-racism, anti-imperialism, self-determination and communism. Now is a great time to join! □

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Police attack striking students at Univ. of Puerto Rico

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

While students on strike for a week were holding a peaceful protest on Dec. 20 at one of the entrances to the University of Puerto Rico campus at Rio Piedras, police holding batons and tear-gas canisters charged. Witnesses saw police use their weapons. Students were unable to escape through the streets as contingents of cops, who had been occupying the campus, guarded every route.

With no other choice available, students had to break the entrance gate at Plaza Universitaria, a new building across from the campus entrance, to take refuge there. Police followed the students, beat them at random and arrested at least 12. Four had to be hospitalized.

Videos show students lying on the floor as three and four cops beat them. You can hear police say, "We have to protect the interests of the state" to justify their brutality. (primerahora.com)

Student Ian Camilo said through a bullhorn: "Not the police nor the SWAT team can stop us. We will continue our struggle." To that the rest of the students responded, "Lucha, sí, entrega, no!" ("Struggle, yes, surrender, never!").

Since the strike started on Dec. 13, the UPR students have taken their struggle to different parts of the city, transforming traditional musical parrandas — Puerto Rican caroling — into political picket lines.

On Dec. 17 they went to the financial

center of the island known as Milla de Oro (Golden Mile) to perform a parranda at the office of Luis Berríos, an adviser to Puerto Rican Senate members from the governor's New Progressive Party, and at the McConnell Valdés' law office, which has contracts with the UPR administration to the tune of \$200,000 a year.

The UPR administration abandoned UPR's own legal divisions to outsource some of its legal work to McConnell Valdés, according to Maria Gisela Rosado, president of the Puerto Rican Association of University Professors. This includes pursuing legal cases against striking students and creating last March 7 the infamous Law 7 aimed at privatizing many services, including education. Law 7's implementation has ruined the university's economic health.

Students went on Dec. 18 to Plaza Las Américas, the largest shopping mall on the island, with a lead banner that read: "This Christmas and always, the university is for all." Shoppers applauded and joined the march, showing how popular the strike is.

The school year ends Dec. 23, but students already have holiday plans. Rosalinda Soto Toledo, the mother of one of the members of the students' National Negotiating Council and a leader of Parents in Support of the UPR Students, spoke with Workers World about these plans.

She said that students and their families, labor unions, UPR-related groups

and community-based organizations have formed a coordinating committee that will announce its campaign at a Dec. 22 news conference. Groups from working-class neighborhoods such as Residencial Lloréns Torres will participate as the committee visits all 78 municipalities on the island. They will present mayors and elected officials with the students' proposal, perform social-cultural presentations and carry out other forms of struggle as December ends. They plan a major united event in January.

Police presence and changing conditions

This strike has been different from the one last spring when the students won all but one of their demands. They continue to demand that the administration eliminate the \$800 quota or tuition increase scheduled to begin in January.

But the government has added a new, more virulent and dangerous factor by ordering a permanent police presence inside the 11 campuses. This includes "regular" police, SWAT teams and the "100" police ("Golpe al Punto" or "hit the drug point"). The last are police assigned to the poorest neighborhoods to fight the "war on drugs" using terrorist tactics.

Police follow the students in each and every action they take, threatening them. To try to protect students from police brutality, a special team of lawyers from the Colegio de Abogados (Lawyers Board) and university professors wearing special

orange vests, has accompanied students' mobilizations.

Education attacked as capitalism restructures worldwide

In a YouTube video entitled "Gov. Luis Fortuño, Puerto Rico at Governor's Mansion CPAC Cruise 2010," produced by Tea Party organizer Lisa Miller from Washington, D.C., Fortuño pompously reports to his U.S. "peers" his efforts to lower corporate taxes and privatize services and education.

The student struggles in Puerto Rico, Ireland, Britain, Italy, Pakistan, France, Greece, the United States and other places indicate that the automation and restructuring of the capitalist productive forces worldwide has made mass education less necessary to the ruling class of bankers and bosses.

But students, families, teachers, the people of PR want more. They are fighting not only against their own home-grown Puerto Rican capitalists, but against U.S. imperialist power. Public education has a proud heritage on the island. The strike is a fight against imperialism.

¡Viva la lucha de los y las estudiantes y del pueblo puertorriqueño! Long live the struggle of the Puerto Rican students and the Puerto Rican people!

¡Los pueblos unidos jamás serán vencidos! The people united will never be defeated!

E-mail: bjceci@workers.org

Free the Cuban Five! Extradite Posada!

By Cheryl LaBash

In El Paso, Texas — far from the White House and Congress, and the media centers in Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C. — facts of the U.S.-based terror campaign to destroy the sovereignty of socialist Cuba will be presented in U.S. federal court beginning Jan. 10, again laying bare the double standard of the U.S. so-called "war on terror."

This exposé provides a new opportunity to push forward demands on the Obama

Cholera in Haiti

Continued from page 9

In the Dec. 7 Granma, Fidel Castro wrote, "In spite of the sudden way in which cholera appeared in the small, but excellent hospital in the service of Haiti, only 13 of the first 2,822 sick persons died, giving a mortality rate of 0.5 percent; subsequently, when the Cholera Treatment Center was set up in a remote area, out of 3,459 patients, five in a serious condition died, giving 0.1 percent.

"[As of] Tuesday, Dec. 7, ... among those treated by the Cuban Mission the mortality rate rose to 0.83 percent. The mortality rate in other hospital institutions stands at 3.2 percent. With the experience acquired, appropriate measures and the reinforcement of the Henry Reeve Brigade, the Cuban Medical Mission, with the support of the Haitian authorities, has offered a presence in many of the isolated 207 sub-communes, so that no Haitian citizen lacks medical attention in the face of the epidemic, and many thousands of lives can be saved."

The Harry Reeve Brigade is Cuba medical emergency response team. □

administration to free the Cuban Five. These five heroes — now enduring their 13th year of unjust U.S. imprisonment — monitored the Florida-based paramilitaries organizing attacks on Cuba that have cost the lives of more than 3,000 men, women and children there since the 1959 revolution.

On trial: Luis Posada Carriles. The charge? Incredibly, not bombing hotels or blowing up airplanes — only of lying on immigration forms about how he arrived in the U.S. and false denials that he was involved in "soliciting others" to commit bombings. (Miami Herald, Dec. 4)

Posada Carriles entered the U.S. in March 2005 after outgoing Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso pardoned him and three accomplices who were convicted of a thwarted attempt to use a gym bag full of C-4 explosives to assassinate Cuban President Fidel Castro at an Ibero-American Summit held at the University of Panama. (www.radiobaragua.cu)

On June 15, 2005, Venezuela officially requested that the U.S. extradite Posada to face charges of planning the Oct. 6, 1976, midair bombing of Cubana Flight 455, which killed all 73 people aboard. According to the Montreal Convention, Article 7, the U.S. government must either extradite Posada Carriles to Venezuela or prosecute him for the deaths. Yet five and a half years later, Posada is still enjoying freedom in Miami and only charged with lying.

A Cuban radio website, Radio Cadena Agramonte, reports that U.S. District Judge Kathleen Cardone agreed on Dec. 16 to accept as evidence documents provided by Cuba related to the bombs that exploded in Cuba's tourist sector in 1997



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

New York: Sery Colon reads Antonio Guerrero's poetry at Harlem's St. Mary's church to a full house of supporters Dec. 18, at a fundraiser to raise money for an ad about the Five in the Washington Post.

and 1998. On Sept. 4, 1997, a bomb in Havana's Hotel Copacabana killed 32-year-old Fabio Di Celmo, an Italian tourist. Di Celmo's best friend, who was standing beside him during the explosion, is expected to be called as a witness by the U.S. federal prosecutors, along with two Cuban police officers and the Cuban medical examiner who performed the autopsy on Di Celmo. (Miami Herald, Dec. 4)

In July, one of the bombers, Francisco Chávez Abarca, was arrested in Venezuela and extradited to Cuba for trial. Chávez Abarca and at least four others have linked Posada to both the hotel and airline bombings. A Facebook page and series of Cuban-produced English and Spanish YouTube videos entitled "Cuba's Reasons" detail the terror path of Chávez Abarca and Posada Carriles, including recent acts attempting to destabilize Venezuela.

Tapes of an interview with Posada Carriles by investigative journalist Ann Louise Bardach will reportedly also be heard by the jury. Bardach's July 1998 New York Times articles quote Posada Carriles claiming responsibility for the hotel bombings.

It is undisputed that Posada Carriles and a co-conspirator, Orlando Bosch, are dangerous terrorists; they even boast of their acts. Bosch was pardoned by President George H.W. Bush on July 20, 1990, and lives free in Miami. Despite volumes of evidence both from U.S. and Cuban sources, Posada Carriles has received kid-glove treatment.

It is long past time for Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González to go home to their loved ones in Cuba. Letters to President Barack Obama; speakers at churches, unions, and community organizations; resolutions from local government bodies; news media contacts; and more — all efforts to spread the word about this monumental injustice — help. Even Amnesty International, often a supporter of imperialist agendas, has published a 22-page downloadable pamphlet summarizing the history and supporting a review of the convictions. (amnesty.org)

In November, 300 delegates from 50 countries discussed strategies to free the Cuban Five in Holguín, Cuba. To read the action proposals, visit www.antiterroristas.cu. A Peoples' Tribunal and rally are planned by the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five on Jan. 9 and 10 in El Paso, Texas.

For more information about the Cuban Five, visit www.antiterroristas.cu, www.thecuban5.org or www.freethethefive.org. □

ESTUDIANTES PUERTORRIQUEÑOS/AS Defienden la universidad y el pueblo

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Unas 15.000 personas marcharon por las calles de San Juan, Puerto Rico el 12 de diciembre terminando en La Fortaleza, la residencia del gobernador. Exigieron la eliminación de la cuota especial de \$800 que la administración de la Universidad de Puerto Rico impuso, la cual aumentaría la matrícula del estudiantado a partir de enero de 2011. Globos de color rojo a lo largo de la marcha simbolizaban los 10.000 estudiantes que tendrían que abandonar sus estudios si la cuota entra en vigor.

Estudiantes y profesores/as convocaron la manifestación como parte de la continua lucha contra el intento del gobierno colonial de privatizar la educación pública y otros servicios esenciales. Una semana antes, los/as estudiantes celebraron un paro de 48 horas en todo el sistema para forzar a la administración a regresar a la mesa de negociaciones.

El verano pasado, los/as estudiantes ocuparon la mayor parte de los 11 recintos de la UPR en toda la isla. Esa ocupación terminó en una victoria estudiantil, con la promesa del gobierno de que los recintos no serían privatizados y la cuota especial se revocaría en agosto. Pero el gobierno de inmediato trató de revertir el acuerdo.

En una imposición por vía rápida, el gobernador Luis Fortuño aumentó el número de miembros de la Junta de Síndicos de la UPR de 13 a 17 nombrando a cuatro personas cercanas a su administración para poder tener más poder para revocar el acuerdo de junio. Los/as estudiantes se comprometieron a continuar la lucha, y hoy está claro que están manteniendo esa promesa.

La lucha de los/as universitarios/as está relacionada con la guerra de clase que el actual gobernador neoliberal de la isla lanzó contra el pueblo de Puerto Rico. Esta relación se revela en el ubicuo lema "UPR es un país". La lucha estudiantil cuenta con el apoyo de sus familias, estudiantes de secundaria, maestros/as, sindicatos, organizaciones sociales y la gran mayoría del pueblo en la isla que ven la lucha de la UPR como algo que no sólo afecta a los/as estudiantes sino que implica otras exigencias, tales como puestos de trabajo y servicios para todos/as.

Tanto la administración de la UPR



PHOTO: PUERTO RICO INDYMEDIA

como la de la isla utilizan la crisis económica mundial y la financiera de Puerto Rico como pretexto para el ataque a la educación pública. Dicen que no hay dinero pero esto está lejos de ser verdad. Los/as estudiantes han presentado una propuesta detallada y viable para rescatar a la universidad, pero ambas administraciones la han rechazado.

En una entrevista con Fortuño el 9 de diciembre con la radio NotiUno, él reveló las verdaderas intenciones del gobierno: "La Universidad de Puerto Rico debe ser un lugar de excelencia académica donde las generaciones futuras obtengan su sueño, no un lugar de activismo político de izquierda".

Fortuño intentó justificar la presencia policial en los recintos universitarios. La policía había sido excluida de los recintos después de los sangrientos enfrentamientos en la década de 1970 cuando la policía mató estudiantes durante una huelga. En lo que constituye un precedente muy nefasto, el gobierno ha abierto de nuevo el peligro de la violencia criminal contra el cuerpo estudiantil mediante la eliminación de los portones que brindaban seguridad a la universidad, lo que convierte al recinto en una zona abierta y peligrosa.

Entrevista a dirigente estudiantil

El 13 de diciembre, el día antes del comienzo de una huelga universitaria indefinida, Workers World/Mundo Obrero habló con Giovanni Roberto, dirigente estudiantil del recinto de Río Piedras. Roberto comentó sobre la presencia de

la policía y las acciones de los/as estudiantes en el futuro.

Dijo que de acuerdo con los medios de comunicación, el presidente de la UPR José de la Torre está dispuesto a negociar con los estudiantes, pero esto no es con los/as representantes de quienes participan en la lucha. En su lugar, se reunirá con presidentes de los consejos estudiantiles que no están involucrados en la lucha. Roberto advirtió que la administración declarará la huelga ilegal.

Roberto continuó: "Es parte del escenario nuevo y cómo ha cambiado desde el año (escolar) pasado. Primero, no hay portones en los recintos, los que hay los tienen soldados, entonces, ocuparon el recinto el miércoles por la noche pasado, hay bastante policía adentro, un cuartel móvil y se habla mucho de la instalación de cámaras de seguridad. Este es su modus operandi en los barrios pobres, y es importante para mostrar el enlace de clase. Esta es la manera en que actúan contra la oposición, contra los pobres, los marginados y en contra de los negros en este país.

"Con toda probabilidad esta huelga no va a ser como la huelga del año pasado. No va a ser una huelga de portones porque no hay portones, no va a ser una huelga de barricadas dentro del recinto como fue el paro de 48 horas. Con toda probabilidad va a ser una huelga muy móvil. Va a ser una huelga diferente.

"Estamos llamando ahora a la semana de la solidaridad con la UPR y se van a montar dos campamentos del pueblo.

Uno frente a la Ponce de León y otro detrás donde estaba el de la UTIER el año pasado. Esos dos campamentos van a ser permanentes durante esta semana al menos y estamos llamando a todo el pueblo para que suba a esos campamentos, den apoyo a esos campamentos, y que de alguna manera el pueblo esté vigilante a lo que pasa dentro del recinto.

Mensaje a los/as estudiantes en los Estados Unidos

Roberto terminó con un mensaje a los/as estudiantes en los Estados Unidos que también están luchando contra la privatización. "No se quiten como decimos aquí, es importante que a pesar de los altos y bajos que puedan tener los procesos de lucha, en la medida que haya un núcleo, un núcleo de personas que mantenga ese proceso vivo, las posibilidades de que

eso se convierta en un movimiento de masas más amplio que el núcleo existente, para nosotros ha sido bien aleccionador ... a veces el núcleo se reduce, las personas que vienen a una manifestación se reducen pero que la propaganda se mantenga, cuando llega el momento de hacer agitación esa propaganda se capitaliza y se convierte en agitación y es bien importante que simplemente se mantengan en lucha.

"Que si hay planes de construir una huelga lo que hay es que adelantarle a la gente y hablar con la mayoría de las personas sobre por qué ese proceso es el necesario para detener la ofensiva del gobierno, la ofensiva de privatización.

"Como socialista que soy e internacionalista que soy, para mí la lucha de todos los sectores oprimidos es la misma lucha dondequiera que uno esté y esos vínculos están, aunque no están materializados en coordinación siempre es importante para nosotros que en la medida en que haya peleas iguales en otros sitios, el capitalismo global en la ofensiva contra la educación se hace más débil.

"Fortuño está utilizando los ejemplos de las universidades de los EEUU para meter la policía, eso es lo que dice. Esto va a parecerse cada vez más a una universidad de los EEUU. En la medida en que los estudiantes en EEUU también demuestren que no quieren esa misma universidad privatizada, esa universidad llena de policías, la lucha también se fortalece".

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LIBERTAD PARA LOS CINCO CUBANOS

¿Quiénes son los Cinco Cubanos? Los Cinco Cubanos están cumpliendo largas e injustas sentencias en prisiones de EEUU por defender a su patria – Cuba – de grupos terroristas del exilio Cubano en Miami. Los Cinco Cubanos fueron arrestados en 1998 por monitorear las actividades de esos grupos violentos e informar a Cuba sobre sus planes. Por casi 12 años, estos cinco hombres han permanecido en prisiones de EEUU y como un castigo adicional, a dos de ellos se les ha negado el derecho humano básico de recibir visitas de sus esposas. Únase a personas de todas partes del mundo – parlamentarios, Premios Nobel, sindicalistas, activistas comunitarios – que se han pronunciado contra el injusto encarcelamiento de los Cinco Cubanos y continúan demandando su libertad. Para más información visite: www.thecuban5.org

