



Charleston, S.C., see page 4.

Mass protests planned FIGHT TRUMP!

#J20
RESIST

PROTEST TRUMP'S INAUGURATION
WASHINGTON D.C.
FRIDAY JANUARY 20TH
AGAINST RACISM
AGAINST SEXISM
AGAINST OPPRESSION
FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM!
J20RESIST.ORG
WORKERS WORLD PARTY

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By Stephen Millies

Jan. 1 — People are organizing all over the United States to go to Washington, D.C., on Friday, Jan. 20, and spoil Donald Trump’s “inhoguration.” The racist, sexist predator threatening to ramp up the nuclear arms race will be met with mass protests at #J20Resist.

J20 organizers are calling for people to gather at what they are renaming “Anti-Columbus Plaza” in front of D.C.’s Union Station at 6 a.m. on Jan. 20. A march on the White House will begin at 10 a.m.

The cops and agencies of the state are trying to stop people from saying “No to Trump!” Racist cops love Trump, who called Mexican immigrants “rapists” and who wants to crush the Black Lives Matter movement.

Ludicrous limits are being set to attempt to stop demonstrators. Among the items the cops are trying to prohibit at checkpoints are backpacks, balloons and even signs larger than 8 by 6 by 4 inches — about the size of half a sheet of typing paper!

“Many restrictions are vague, all-encompassing, contradictory and open to police interpretation,” said New York J20 organizer Taryn Fivek. “All are intended to restrict people’s freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and freedom of expression.”

Organizers not deterred by restrictions

But none of these police state measures are stopping organizers from filling buses. J20 organizer Nate Peters says

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From a Pennsylvania prison: The torture chair

By Sehu Kessa Saa Tabansi

Dec. 26 — Power to the people!
Since this has been the holiday season of consumer shopping frenzies and enlarged corporate profiteering, I thought it would only be fitting to offer a present of my own to the millions of workers out there who rarely get a glance inside the U.S Torture Centers to see firsthand the American torture devices right off the assembly line. So here is an exclusive exposé to the masses who read Workers World newspaper.



Here is the clever publicity photo of just one of numerous U.S. companies pushing a sanitized, sterilized version of the so-called “Compliance Chair.” This product’s original purpose was for immobilization and “secure” transportation of a human being to a vehicle or a close destination within Bureaus of Corrections and other judicial centers.

The machine may not appear too threatening. At a quick glance or to the inexperienced public, it would be easy not to see the enormous pain inflicted by this sadistic device.

But it is this monstrous machine that prison plantations nationwide have co-opted and adapted into a torture device where human beings are strapped in for hours of severe pain.



Straight from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, here is a picture of this torturous mechanical device as it is used absent the inviting display by companies marketing the “Compliance Chair.” This torture chair is used throughout every prison plantation in Pennsylvania, on men, women and children.

What you are seeing at the top of the photo are called the “shoulder straps,” which bend the shoulders backwards on a decline. In the middle of this barbaric chair

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MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

Who we are & what we’re fighting for

Hate capitalism? Workers World Party fights for a socialist society — where the wealth is socially owned and production is planned to satisfy human need. This outmoded capitalist system is dragging down workers’ living standards while throwing millions out of their jobs. If you’re young, you know they’re stealing your future. And capitalism is threatening the entire planet with its unplanned, profit-driven stranglehold over the means of production.

Workers built it all — it belongs to society, not to a handful of billionaires! But we need a revolution to make that change. That’s why for 58 years WWP has been building a revolutionary party of the working class inside the belly of the beast.

We fight every kind of oppression. Racism, sexism,

degrading people because of their nationality, sexual or gender identity or disabilities — all are tools the ruling class uses to keep us apart. They ruthlessly super-exploit some in order to better exploit us all. WWP builds unity among all workers while supporting the right of self-determination. Fighting oppression is a working-class issue, which is confirmed by the many labor struggles led today by people of color, immigrants and women.

WWP has a long history of militant opposition to imperialist wars. The billionaire rulers are bent on turning back the clock to the bad old days before socialist revolutions and national liberation struggles liberated territory from their grip. We’ve been in the streets to oppose every one of imperialism’s wars and aggressions. □

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WORKERS WORLD

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The crisis in drug costs, Part 1

Big Pharma prices, profits soar

By Betsey Piette

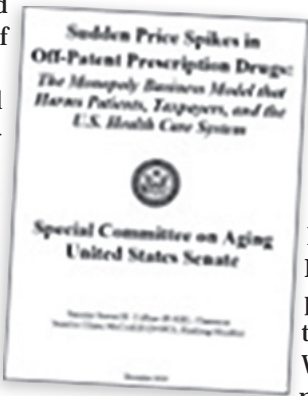
Affecting all population sectors in the U.S., the costs of prescription medicines are skyrocketing, fueled by the pharmaceutical industry's greed and monopoly control of the market.

The U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging released on Dec. 23 a 130-page report detailing how four pharmaceutical companies enriched themselves by acquiring drugs with patents that had expired decades ago and then drastically increasing the cost to consumers, just because they could.

The four companies — Retrophin, Rodelis Therapeutics, Turing Pharmaceuticals and Valeant Pharmaceuticals International — invested nothing for research or development. They had no real increase in the cost of production or distribution. However, all four drastically spiked the cost of their drugs to consumers — from 310 percent to an incredible 5,000 percent.

The study noted that the four companies were able to take advantage of the U.S. health care system to enrich themselves, often at taxpayers' expense. While private insurers have restricted reimbursements on many drugs in recent years, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services provides reimbursement for any medication covered by Medicare Part D.

The study concluded that more pharmaceutical companies need to be investigated.



One in 10 seniors cannot afford drugs

In the richest country in the world, 1 in 10 seniors cannot afford prescription medicines. In 2015 the average cost for a year's supply of a brand-name drug in the U.S. was around \$5,800, with seniors on average taking 4.5 different prescriptions.

Half of all people on Medicare make \$24,150 or less a year, while one in seven survive on income below Supplemental Poverty Measure thresholds. Basic Medicare does not cover prescription drugs — you have to purchase Medicare Part D. Without that coverage, seniors needing to buy 4.5 prescriptions would on average pay \$26,100 — considerably more than their annual incomes.

Quantifying the scope of this crisis, the AARP Public Policy Institute reported on Dec. 14 that the “retail cost of brand-name drugs most commonly used by older Americans rose more than 130 times the rate of inflation between 2006 and 2015.” While the AARP study concentrated on brand-name drugs, there is also growing concern about huge price increases for many generics.

Generic drugs, which account for 80 percent of all prescriptions, used to be considered one of the few health care bargains. But an August 2015 AARP study found that around 27 percent of generic prescription drugs were also experiencing serious price increases.

Decreased competition fuels price spikes

The reports found no change in production costs to account for these sudden and in many cases drastic price spikes. But they did find a growing number of

mergers and acquisitions in the drug industry that decreased competition.

For example, when the number of manufacturers of one heart medication fell from eight to three, the drug's cost soared by 637 percent. A record \$724 billion worth of pharmaceutical company mergers and acquisitions took place in 2015. (wallstreetdaily.com, June 3)

One particularly scandalous example was the August 2013 acquisition of Turing Pharmaceuticals by former hedge fund manager Martin Shkreli, which resulted in an drastic overnight spike in the price of a 62-year-old drug considered the standard of care for treating a life-threatening parasitic infection. Shkreli raised the cost of Daraprim from \$13.50 per tablet to \$750 — an increase of over 5,000 percent. He was arrested in December 2015 on allegations that he had plundered his own companies in a Ponzi-like scheme.

A recent scandal involved a drastic increase in the price of the EpiPen, a life-saving injection device containing medication for people with severe allergies. Mylan Pharmaceutical acquired it in 2007 and raised the price from less than \$100 for a two-pen set to over \$600 last May.

EpiPen commands over 90 percent of the market. There is no real competition. Allergy patients are advised to carry two EpiPens at all times. Depending on expiration dates, the injectable drug needs to be replaced annually.



Mylan CEO Heather Bresch, while defending the sharp increase in the EpiPen's cost, saw her own annual salary grow from around \$2.5 million to more than \$18 million. Martin Shkreli offered to raise funds to defend Bresch.

More people die from curable diseases

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in May that across the U.S. hepatitis C now claims more lives than HIV/AIDS, despite the existence of drugs that can cure the disease. The CDC found that by 2013 “hepatitis C-related mortality surpassed the total combined number of deaths from 60 other infectious diseases, including pneumococcal disease and tuberculosis.”

Globally, from 350,000 to 500,000 people die every year due to complications stemming from untreated hepatitis C. These deaths did not have to happen.

In 2013 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the new, direct-acting antiviral drug Solvaldi with a 90 percent cure rate. In 2011 Gilead Sciences acquired this drug through a takeover of Solvaldi's developer, Pharmasset. While initially charging \$84,000 (\$1,000 per pill) for a 12-week course of treatment, in 2013 Gilead introduced a slightly modified version called Harvoni, with a 95 percent cure rate, at the increased cost of \$94,500 per treatment course. Gilead's profits skyrocketed.

At the 2016 Glasgow HIV Congress, Dr. Andrew Hill reported a 1,000-fold mark-up in the price of drugs for HIV, HCV and cancer in high-income countries, including the U.S. Hill also cited the wide disparity between the production cost of new antiviral drugs for hepatitis C — only about \$57 per treatment course — and their astronomical market price in the U.S. (The Body Pro, Oct. 24)

Next: Abundant gov't investigations but no end to crisis.

From a Pennsylvania prison: The torture chair

Continued from page 3

are the “waist restraint straps,” which pull the pelvis and abdomen in such a manner as to cause an arch in the spine between the shoulder blades and the lower back spinal cord. The waist restraint straps guarantee that the victim of this torture is unable to move, often for periods of eight to 14 hours or more.

On the sides are two planks of plastic with straps. These are called the “wrist restraint straps,” and they cut off the blood circulation to both hands. The arms are laid into these restraints, a hard surface with no cushion or anything of that nature. There is nothing cozy or comfortable about this instrument of pain!

The oppressors apply these straps in a deliberate manner so that they are so tight against the flesh that the poor soul's hands can swell three times their normal size. Discoloration occurs in phases, from blue to green, then purple to black, while the fingers sting and then eventually go numb from lack of blood circulation.

At the bottom of the chair are the “ankle restraint straps,” which, like the wrist restraints, stop the bloodflow to the lower extremities. When the agents of repression assemble these plastic-coated straps around the ankles, there is no space left between the ankle straps and the skin, thus no blood circulation to the feet. The

human being tortured in this fashion will feel their feet swell, turning blue, green and purple, causing incredible pain.

For the victim of this torture device, there can be no movement from head to toe. The pain is so unbearable that, over the course of 8- to 14-hour confinement in the chair, the victim will travel outside their body in shock and will hallucinate.

We want readers to know that, in addition, prisoners are naked, and that it is not unusual for there to be cold air blowing, for the victim to be sprayed with pepper spray and for the victim to have to sit in their own urine and feces until released.

In this holiday season, besides Christmas, New Year's, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, there is “Watch Night.” I've been told that this is the night that slaves knew at midnight they would be free because of the Emancipation Proclamation — or so they thought.

With instruments of torture, the whip has simply evolved. So I ask readers and workers, are we really free? What's the difference between whips and straps?

Sehu Kessa Saa Tabansi is currently incarcerated in the Pennsylvania prison system. He is a founding member of the New Black August Collective and is serving a life sentence after having been wrongfully convicted.

Revolted by Trump? Ready to fight back?

Workers World exposed Trump's racist, bigoted agenda throughout his 18-month campaign — and was part of militant protests against both him and Clinton all across the country. Now he's won and is putting together an anti-working class administration: a die-hard white supremacist for attorney general, a Wall Street billionaire for the Treasury, an adversary of Medicare and the Affordable Care Act for Health and Human Services, a gung-ho ex-general for Defense Secretary.

U.S. workers and oppressed people need a fighting voice for the big struggles ahead!

Workers World is ready for that challenge. We believe Marxism is now more needed than ever to pinpoint where capitalist reaction comes from. And Leninism shows that fighting oppression of all kinds is absolutely necessary to unify the working class and abolish this decaying profit system.

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past 39 years — during spring and fall special fund drives and regular donations to the Workers World Supporter Program — we've welcomed your contributions that help put WW's revolutionary socialist outlook into action.

We asking you to contribute now to help counter Trump with a people's agenda. Write one-time checks to Workers World, or join the Workers World Supporter Program with either a yearly lump sum or monthly donations. Members receive a year's subscription to WW, a monthly letter about timely issues and five free trial subscriptions to give to friends — all for a donation of \$75 a year. For \$100 you also get any book from World View Forum. For \$300 a year (only \$25 a month) you get your pick of five books or PVN videos.

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We invite you — sign up today! Write checks to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or donate online at workers.org/donate/.

Charleston, S.C.

Retrial set for killer cop

By Gene Clancy

In Charleston, S.C., on April 4, 2015, Michael Slager, a white cop, killed Walter Scott, an African-American man, by shooting him five times in the back after a “routine” traffic stop. The incident was caught on cellphone video by a bystander, who also filmed Slager planting his own Taser near Scott’s lifeless body.

Despite this clear, incontrovertible evidence, and after hearing from 55 witnesses over five weeks, one African-American and eleven white jurors were unable to come to a unanimous verdict. The judge declared a mistrial on Dec. 5.

Whether or not the state of South Carolina would retry the case remained moot until Dec. 30, when the state’s

Ninth Circuit solicitor, Scarlett Wilson, announced she would retry the case beginning March 1.

The state is not required by law to retry this or any other case ending in a mistrial. In fact, in order to carry out its true mission of acting on behalf of the ruling elites, the state repressive apparatus makes use of what in legal terms is called “discretion.” In practical terms this means that the entire judicial system — the cops, the prosecutors, the judges — can pretty much do whatever they want so long as they believe it advances the goals of their capitalist masters.

Like the actions of infamous Dylann Roof, who murdered nine parishioners at worship in a historic Black church, also in Charleston, the case of the killer cop



PHOTO: PAUL BOWERS

Local community protests the shooting of Walter Scott, North Charleston City Hall, April 8, 2015.

Slager has revealed the racism and oppression inherent in the criminal justice system, not only in South Carolina, but across the U.S.

One reason the murder of Walter Scott

has received so much publicity is because it is extremely rare for cops who shoot Black people to be charged or held accountable at all. Most often these cases are shunted off to a grand jury, which secretly decides not to prosecute the cop.

The people of the United States are led to believe that if crimes are committed, then arrests and trials automatically follow. But this is not the case.

For poor working people, and for people of color, it is the cops who often decide most “legal issues,” frequently with lethal results. In a 1999 study, about half of the discretionary decisions made by criminal justice agencies were found to be made by police. (National Institute of Justice, ncjrs.gov)

In a racist, oppressive society, the consequences of this “discretion” — the power to arrest and even kill people with impunity — falls most heavily on the African-American community. A 2016 study conducted by the Washington Post found: “Of all of the unarmed people shot and killed by police in 2015, 40 percent of them were Black men, even though Black men make up just 6 percent of the nation’s population.” (Washington Post, July 11) □

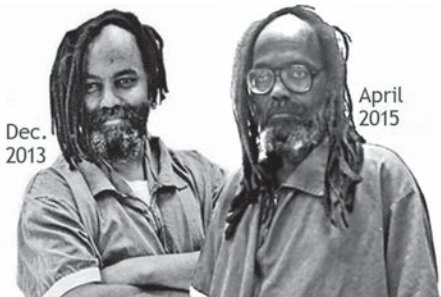
A crack in the wall of death

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

For Dylann Roof, the next few days and weeks of his young life will prove his most memorable. That’s saying something, considering his slaughter of nine sweet souls in a Black Charleston church.

For, in the next few days and weeks, a jury will convene to decide whether he gets a death sentence or life.

As someone who lived a lifetime on Death Row, my opposition is unequivocal. Even in a case such as this, my opposition to the State taking life doesn’t fal-



Demand adequate health care for Mumia and all prisoners. Photos show the gravity of the denial of medical treatment for hep C. Free Mumia NOW!

ter. Even in this case, of a witless white supremacist, a killer of nine Black Christian souls.

If I know anything, it’s Death Row. I’ve seen it drive men stark raving mad.

That said, my one opinion carries no real weight in this case, for unless I miss my guess, no juror will ever hear these words. They will decide Roof’s fate after

he delivers his own closing arguments, which will hardly endear him to his jurors.

A death verdict for Roof strengthens the repressive powers of the State, and gives it the false patina of “justice.” If a death sentence fails, it helps show the inherent injustice of the death penalty. It would help all the men and women on Death Row.

My decision to oppose death for Roof wasn’t an easy one, but I believe it’s the right one.

No matter his beliefs, decades on Death Row, as well as in solitary, are mind-frying experiences. Nothing he has experienced in his brief life can prepare him for such outcomes.

For life, in prison, is no picnic. □

Transcribed from a Jan. 2 Prison Radio recording. prisonradio.org

Palestinians celebrate release of hunger striker Bilal Kayed

By Joe Catron

Over 1,000 Palestinians gathered Dec. 12 in the town of Asira ash-Shamaliya, near Nablus in the occupied West Bank, to welcome Bilal Kayed and celebrate his hard-fought release from an Israeli prison after 15 years.

Kayed, a leader in the prison branch of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, had been imprisoned by Israel since 2001 on charges of membership in the PFLP’s Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades and armed struggle during the first Intifada.

A PFLP statement marking Kayed’s freedom said, “His victory is one for the entire Palestinian people and the prisoners’ movement that will only strengthen the prisoners’ spirit of confrontation against the jailer and its tools of repression.” (pflp.ps)

Kayed’s 14-and-a-half year sentence expired June 13, but the morning of his expected release, he instead was ordered into “administrative detention” — indefinite internment without charge or trial — by secret decree of an Israeli commander.

The next day, Kayed launched a hunger strike to demand his freedom.

Unprecedented mobilization

His fast, lasting 71 days, mobilized both Palestinian and solidarity activists, ultimately forcing Israel to agree to a deal securing his release.

Kayed and his supporters feared that by ordering him into “administrative de-

tention,” Israel sought to establish a new precedent for interning Palestinian political prisoners beyond the fixed sentences issued by Israeli military courts.

The unabashedly political nature of his case energized Kayed’s defenders and spurred an unprecedented global campaign for his release.

In Palestine, the PFLP mobilized inside and outside Israel’s prisons, with hundreds of prisoners from different factions joining Kayed’s hunger strike, as thousands of supporters filled public squares across the occupied country.

Internationally, Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network coordinated repeated days and weeks of action, with over a hundred demonstrations and educational events across the world.

In New York, Samidoun organized nine rallies for Kayed, while joining protests by Students for Justice in Palestine groups outside the Israeli Consulate and the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia. It also participated in educational events, including a packed gathering in the Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Center, and a report by New York City Students for Justice in Palestine members at the Solidarity Center only hours before Kayed ended his strike.

Samidoun activists held and joined events in Amman, Amsterdam, Athens, Beirut, Brussels, Copenhagen, Istanbul, Malmo, Vancouver and Lebanon’s Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp, while coordinating the visit of a delegation of European

Bilal Kayed in Asira ash-Shamaliya upon his release from prison, Dec. 12.

PHOTO: MOHAMMED SHOULI



parliamentarians to Palestine.

Other events, including in Algeria, Austria, Brazil, Chile, the Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Tunisia and the United Kingdom, made the mobilization one of the largest in support of the Palestinian prisoners’ movement.

Political prisoners showed their solidarity, from a three-day fast by Lebanese revolutionary Georges Abdallah and six other Arab and Basque prisoners in France, to a statement of support by Black activists, including Mumia Abu-Jamal and Sundiata Acoli.

‘An incomplete happiness’

The effort to free Kayed spurred fresh gains for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. The British-Danish security conglomerate G4S, a contractor with Israeli prisons, has been targeted by many protests in support of Kayed. On December 2, G4S finalized a deal to sell its main Israeli unit. This was a victory for Kayed and the Palestinian prisoners’ movement, whose hunger strikes and prison struggles inspired campaigns against G4S across the world.

In a letter to supporters, released by

Samidoun on Aug. 1, Kayed wrote: “What I have received from you through your struggles, your sit-ins, your demonstrations, gives me more determination to continue forward until victory. Either freedom or martyrdom.” (samidoun.net)

On the day of Kayed’s release, his brother Mahmoud Kayed told Al-Jazeera, “We cannot express how happy we are that he has been released, but it is an incomplete happiness because he carries the message of all the other prisoners who remain in Israeli jails.”

Samidoun and other supporters of Palestinian political prisoners will continue weekly protests in 2017, in Manhattan on most Fridays between 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Currently these are located outside Best Buy in Union Square, a store selling products manufactured by Hewlett Packard, a contractor with the Israeli prison system and major target of the BDS movement.

For more information, visit samidoun.net and subscribe to eepurl.com/XFjr9.

Catron is a member of Al-Awda New York: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition and an organizer with Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network.

On the picket line

By Matty Starrdust and Sue Davis

Las Vegas hotel workers beat back Trump — finally

After a vicious, two-year struggle, 500 workers at Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas emerged victorious Dec. 21, winning their first four-year contract guaranteeing annual raises, job security, health care and pensions. The majority are Latinx women workers, who joined UNITE HERE Culinary Workers Union Local 226 and Bartenders Union Local 165, and withstood illegal anti-union retaliation, intimidation and even physical assault by management. According to the Huffington Post, Donald Trump's hotel spent over half-a-million dollars on consultants to try to stop employees from unionizing. The unions countered by exposing hotel co-owner Trump as not worker-friendly and called a boycott of all his properties. The victory shows that even up against a rich, powerful, racist enemy, worker solidarity and fighting spirit can defy expectations.

UNITE HERE Local 25, which represents workers at Trump's Washington, D.C., hotel, announced a separate agreement Dec. 21 for "an orderly organizing campaign." Far from acting in good faith, the hotel reveals its minimal willingness to comply with existing labor laws. Local 25 could still expect a fight from Trump and company. (prnewswire.com, Dec. 21)

Employees denounce IBM CEO for reaching out to Trump

When news broke that Trump was elected president, people of color, women, immigrants, LGBTQ individuals, people with disabilities and low-wage workers flocked to the streets and social media to express their disgust and fear. But Ginni Rometty, CEO of tech giant IBM, saw only dollar signs. In a Nov. 14 letter, she offered IBM's solutions to help Trump "advance [his] national agenda." IBM founder Thomas Watson, who received the Nazi Merit Cross of the German Eagle for collaborating with Hitler's regime, would be proud. (theguardian.com, Feb. 18, 2001)

IBM workers, however, objected. An online petition signed by current and former employees denounced the idea that IBM would help create a national Muslim registry and asserted "our right to refuse participation in any U.S. government contracts that violate constitutionally protected civil liberties." The petition also called on IBM to expand diversity programs "targeting women, people of color and LGBT people with the goal of doubling recruitment of these groups in 2017." As of Dec. 23, the petition had collected over 500 signatures. (ibmpetition.org)

A Dec. 19 Intercept article noted that the IBM petition is similar to the "Never Again Pledge," signed by about 1,700 tech workers from various companies agreeing to never "participate in the creation of databases of identifying information for the United States government to target individuals based on race, religion or national origin" and to "minimize the collection ... of data [to] facilitate ethnic or religious targeting." (neveragain.tech)

Airport workers: strike in D.C., win contract in Minn.

"We are on strike today to send a message that we mean business," said baggage handler Marvin Lynch on Dec. 14 at Washington, D.C.'s National Airport. The workers at both National and Dulles airports were protesting poverty wages and lack of respect from their contract employer, Huntleigh Corp. Contracted airport service workers are excluded from the airports' living wage law and earn as little as \$3.77 an hour plus tips. Workers are demanding that all contractors pay workers \$15 an hour. (dclabor.org, Dec. 15)

Meanwhile, contract workers at the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport won union representation on Nov. 14. Service Employees Local 26, which began organizing them in 2013, will negotiate on behalf of 600 mostly East African contract workers. The union statement noted that their campaign aims to "eliminate Minnesota's racial economic inequalities" and is part of the national Fight for \$15 movement for contracted airport workers. Now "85,000 airport workers nationwide have won wage increases or other improvements, including health care, paid sick leave and worker retention policies." (seiu26.org, Dec. 5) For more about this ongoing struggle, see airport-workersunited.org.

25 minimum wage victories in 2016; 34 planned for 2017-18

A Dec. 21 study by the National Employment Law Project reported there were more minimum wage victories in 2016 than in any year since the Fight for \$15 campaign was initiated by fast food and other low-wage workers four years ago. Twenty-five states, cities and counties raised pay for 11.8 million workers in 2016. Workers in another 21 states and cities will receive raises in 2017, and new campaigns are underway for 8 million workers in at least 13 states and cities during 2017-2018. (For detailed data, see nelp.org.) □



Worker solidarity launches lunch-rush Fight For \$15 protest at Roanoke, Va., Burger King, Nov. 4.

Haitian and African migrants stranded at U.S. border



Haitian refugee shelter on a building rooftop in Tijuana. PHOTO: JOSÉ PARKER

By Gloria Verdieu
Tijuana, Mexico

On visits from San Diego to Tijuana, Mexico, I was able to learn from Makeda Makossa and Professor Wilner Metelus about the serious humanitarian crisis facing more than 5,000 Haitian and African refugees stranded in Tijuana as they attempt to seek asylum in the United States. The two activists pointed out the horrors facing the refugees and the efforts to assist them.

Makossa is the heroic founder and developer of San Diego's World Beat Center (WBC) in the city's historic Balboa Park and of the Casa del Túnel across the border in downtown Tijuana. Both are important progressive venues in their respective cities.

The two facilities' cultural activities attract many youth of color, and are frequently the sites for important political events. Makossa has fought tirelessly and successfully to keep both centers open in the face of resistance from local reactionary forces.

Makossa has devoted much time and effort to raising awareness about the serious humanitarian crisis just over the border. She makes frequent trips to Tijuana's Casa del Túnel-Cultural Arts Center, where she recently made contact with some of the 5,000 or more Haitian and African refugees stranded at the border with few resources, but hoping to be able to enter the U.S. eventually.

Makossa transports food, clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, toys and other needed supplies donated by individuals and organizations in the U.S. Making that journey is no easy task. She has to pass through a highly militarized border, coming and going, and many times her van is subjected to searches and scannings, which means a lot of wasted time spent waiting.

My first trip to Tijuana with Makossa and the WBC family was on Dec. 17. We visited a Haitian art exhibit celebrating International Migrants Day at the Casa del Túnel. Makossa drove a van full of the supplies needed to prepare a Haitian feast for the evening celebration, which was a special tribute to all the workers and organizers supporting the Africans and Haitians in Tijuana.

Our second trip together was on Dec. 21 for a special ceremony for Professor Metelus at one of the hostels hosting Haitian migrants.

My hosts explained to me that this shelter, which is located at a church, is one of the better facilities because it has two bathrooms with showers, a kitchen for food preparation and everyone sleeps inside. There is a court-

yard for exercise, play and other activities, which are so important for people living under much stress.

Horrendous conditions in Tijuana shelters

Professor Metelus was on a 15-day tour to inspect the shelters in Tijuana so that he could corroborate the many complaints about them. People told him that services provided to the Haitian and African migrants are totally inadequate. They include bedbug-infested facilities, insufficient food, unsanitary bathrooms and a lack of electricity.

In one hostel with a capacity of 60 people, he found up to 500 Haitians. Some of the hostels are roofless, or located near dumpsters, and women and children share space with unrelated men.

On my third visit to Tijuana on Dec. 22, I had the opportunity to ask Professor Metelus a few questions.

Gloria Verdieu: Where are you from?

Professor Metelus: I'm from Gonaïves, Haiti, but I live in Mexico.

GV: How many Haitian migrants are there in Tijuana?

PM: Over 5,000 have shown up. That is the registered number, but there are many more. There is an urgent need for help for this migration crisis.

GV: How many shelters are there in Tijuana?

PM: There are 35 shelters total. Hundreds of Haitian and African migrants continue to be sustained in overcrowded shelters in Tijuana, experiencing inclement weather and a lack of resources. I have visited many shelters, one located in El Alacrán, an impoverished neighborhood away from the city center.

The Mexican authorities are relocating migrants of African descent to shelters in areas like this, plagued by lack of food, care and hygiene. I was deeply shocked [by what I saw] and sent a message with requests for the governments of Mexico and the United States to do something.

Some Haitians are being committed to rehabilitation centers, saying that they are mentally ill. This is not true. They are being placed in these centers because they have no place else to put them.

GV: How did the Haitian migrants get to Tijuana from Haiti?

PM: They did not come directly from Haiti. They came from Brazil or Colombia, for example. They came by foot, by bus — encountering corrupt police — lots of money paying guides — predatory smugglers — robbery, rape, murder — finally reaching Tijuana

only to be housed in shelters not prepared or equipped for this influx.

GV: What can we do to help?

PM: Let people know what is going on. Bring people to Tijuana to see for themselves what is happening. This is a crisis. African Americans should join in making an appeal to the U.S. government to take some action in regard to this crisis. Join the efforts of [Makossa] ... and help the Haitians to become self-sufficient, to get jobs and begin their lives where they are. □



WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU
Professor Wilner Metelus speaking at a shelter housing Haitians in Tijuana.

AUGUST 1968

Black GIs resist ‘riot-control’ duty, 43 arrested

By John Catalinotto

Anger radiated through the barracks when orders reached the Black troops of the 1st Armored Division that they would be sent to Chicago on riot-control duty. GIs spread a message throughout Fort Hood, Texas, on Aug. 23, 1968: They would meet on the grassy area at the main intersection of the fort to start an all-night discussion. More than 100 GIs showed up to plan what to do. It was more than a rap session. It was a protest. To the generals and colonels whose orders allowed no refusal, it was mutiny. Some of the GIs had won medals for bravery. Some had been wounded. After a year of heavy combat in Vietnam, the fed-up Black troops were outraged at being ordered to occupy African-American neighborhoods in Chicago. What these soldiers believed — and it was true — was that the government feared a Black uprising and planned to use the U.S. Army to shoot down their sisters and brothers. Some of the Black GIs had been among those sent to Chicago in April 1968 to do “riot control” after Dr. Martin Luther King’s assassination sparked a mass Black rebellion. Chicago’s Mayor Richard Daley told them then that they should “shoot to kill any arsonist and to shoot to maim or cripple anyone looting.” (chicago68.com) Now Chicago was the venue for the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Rebellious youth were coming by the thousands to protest the Vietnam War. “Boss” Daley wanted federal troops on hand to shoot down Black people should

the anti-war protest spill over into the Black community. With their midnight meeting, the Black GIs were saying, “No way!” GI revolts in Vietnam — and the U.S. A week earlier, on Aug. 13, Black Marines at the Danang brig in Vietnam tore the place apart and burned a cellblock. It took a force of MPs firing shotguns to crush the rebellion among the 228 unarmed men. Also in Vietnam, at U.S. Army prison Long Binh Jail on Aug. 20, a band of prisoners rushed the gate between the medium security section and the main administrative part of the compound. Then they broke through. They proceeded to burn down the building, which contained all their records, and nine other large buildings. Black soldiers led this revolt. Back in the U.S., the Black GIs at Fort Hood were rising up. They knew they would be ordered to shoot their own people if sent to Chicago. During the July 1967 mass rebellion in Detroit’s Black community, Michigan Gov. George Romney had ordered in the Michigan National Guard and President Lyndon Johnson deployed the 101st Airborne. Some 17,000



From left, Pfc. Ernest Bess, attorney Michael Kennedy, Pfc. Guy Smith, Sp/4 Albert Henry, Pvt. Ernest Frederick, Sgt. Robert Rucker, Sp/4 Tollie Royal. October 1968 at Fort Hood, Texas.

WW PHOTO: ELLEN CATALINOTTO

troops fired 155,000 rounds at the population, killing most of the 43 people who died during the struggle. That same month in Newark, N.J., the National Guard entered the city and was responsible for most of the 26 deaths there. At Fort Hood, as Black GIs met all night resisting orders, the commanding officer of the 1st Armored Division, Maj. Gen. John Boles, tried to talk the men back to their barracks. That failed. The provost marshal, Lt. Col. Edwin Kulo, came out among the troops several times between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. and “instructed” them to go back to their barracks for their own good. The Black GIs stayed strong: No commands from an officer would change their decision to refuse to kill their people. Hours passed. Orders went out to the military police: “Arrest them at dawn.” At 6 a.m., two MP companies were ordered to clear the grassy area where the soldiers were meeting. They arrested 43 soldiers and took them to the post stockade and then to the stockade annex. When the troops refused orders to enter this prison, MPs attacked and beat them, in- Continued on page 8

Mass protests planned FIGHT TRUMP!



Milwaukee, Nov. 10

PHOTO: MILWAUKEE COALITION AGAINST TRUMP

Continued from page 1

that 100 people have already signed up to go from New York City. Buses are leaving from 147 W. 24th Street in Manhattan at midnight on Jan. 20. The deadline for NYC ticket sales is Jan. 11. Baltimore activists at the Harriet Tubman Solidarity Center are organizing a Martin Luther King Jr. march on Saturday, Jan. 14, to kick off a week of action leading up to J20. The MLK Day march will link the student and youth movement against Trump with the movement by community residents. It will demand an end to police terror; jobs, not jails; and a \$15 minimum wage with union rights. The Baltimore and Maryland Organizing Committee for J20 Resist will also be getting people on MARC trains to go to D.C. for J20. Tickets are \$8. Boston is sending a bus to J20 with tickets at \$60.



Raleigh, N.C., Dec 3

WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

Natalie in Port Huron, Mich., says she is “pretty excited to go to D.C.” Two buses are leaving from Detroit, organized by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice and the Moratorium Now Coalition. Tickets are \$85. Buses will leave Detroit at 9 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 19, and return on Saturday, Jan. 21, around 4 a.m.

- For more information about buses leaving from your area, or local anti-Trump actions in your city, go to J20resist.org
- For information on New Orleans contact info@takeemdownnola.org
- and for Oakland contact aptspokescouncil@gmail.com
- To order bus seats, contact New York 212-627-2994
- Baltimore and greater Maryland area 443-221-3775
- Boston 617-522-6626
- Detroit 313-680-5508
- Huntington, W.V. 304-690-6048
- North Carolina J20resist.org
- Philadelphia 610-931-2615
- Rochester, N.Y. 585-436-6458



Buffalo, N.Y., Dec. 1

PHOTO: IVY YAPELLI

Buses will be going from Charlotte, Durham and Raleigh in North Carolina. Departure time in Charlotte will be 11 p.m., Jan. 19, while buses will leave from Durham and Raleigh at 1 a.m. on Jan. 20. Go to J20resist.org and look for Charlotte, Durham or Raleigh under the tab “Get Organized!” Click on “Buy bus tickets online here.” A van is coming from Huntington, W.Va.; some seats are still available. “Don’t give racist, fascist, union-hating Trump a chance” is what Philadelphia activists are saying. Workers World Party is organizing buses with tickets at \$30. Go to J20resist.org and look for Philadelphia under “Get Organized!” A fundraiser for the Philadelphia bus will be held at Service Employees Local 688 hall at 1924 Spring Garden on Jan. 6, starting at 8 p.m. Good music from local bands will be featured with a \$7 to \$10 donation. No one will be turned away for a lack of funds. The International Action Center in Rochester, N.Y., is sending a bus to protest Trump. It leaves Rochester at 11 p.m. on Jan. 19 and returns by 1:50 a.m. on Jan. 21. Seats are \$60; ask about scholarships and subsidized seats. Activists in New Orleans are organiz-

Women say ‘No to misogyny!’

By Monica Moorehead

Millions of women were shocked, outraged and disgusted when the extremely misogynistic and racist Donald Trump was selected by the Electoral College to succeed Barack Obama as the next U.S. president. Many of those women had voted for Hillary Clinton, who won the popular vote by nearly 3 million more votes than Trump. The undemocratic nature of how a president in the capitalist U.S. is elected was once again on full display with the Electoral College all but dismissing the fact that Trump lost the popular vote.

The reasons many women voted for Clinton varied from those who viewed her as a “feminist” — that is fighting for the rights of women — to those who wanted to see the first woman become president on the heels of the historic 2008 and 2012 elections of the first Black president.

Let’s go on the record now that Clinton is not and never was a feminist. She is an all-out imperialist — check out her record of interventions in Honduras, Libya, etc., as Obama’s secretary of state — as well as the candidate that most of Wall Street backed for president.

In the days following the election, tens of thousands of people, many of them women of all ages, spontaneously poured into the streets from high schools, college campuses and workplaces, to protest Trump under the popular Twitter hashtag #NotMyPresident.

Then on Nov. 21, a national press release announced a Women’s March on Washington for Jan. 21, the day after Trump is inaugurated.

‘Defend the most marginalized’

Backed by more than 70 endorsers, including Planned Parenthood, the NAACP, Gloria Steinem and Harry Belafonte, the Women’s March on Washington stated in part: “The rhetoric of the past election cycle has insulted, demonized and threatened many of us — immigrants of all statuses, Muslims and those of diverse religious faiths, people who identi-



International Working Women’s Day 2016 rally in Harlem, N.Y., at Harriet Tubman statue. At left, Monica Moorehead.

WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

fy as LGBTQIA, Native people, Black and Brown people, people with disabilities, survivors of sexual assault — [so] that our communities are hurting and scared. We are confronted with the question of how to move forward in the face of national and international concern and fear.” (womensmarch.com)

Organizers continued: “In the spirit of democracy and honoring the champions of human rights, dignity and justice who have come before us, we join in diversity to show our presence in numbers too great to ignore. The Women’s March on Washington will send a bold message to our new administration, Congress, Senate, state and local governments on their first day in office, and to the world that women’s rights are human rights. We stand together, recognizing that defending the most marginalized among us is defending all of us.

“We support the advocacy and resistance movements that reflect our multiple and intersecting identities. We call on all defenders of human rights to join us. This march is the first step towards unifying our communities, grounded in new relationships, to create change from the grassroots level up. We will not rest until women have parity and equity at all levels of leadership in society. We work peacefully while recognizing there is no true peace without justice and equity for all. HEAR OUR VOICE.”

Beyond J21

First called the “Million Woman’s March,” the organizers of the Women’s March on Washington issued an official apology to Dr. Phil Chionesu, an African-American woman who initiated the original MWM, where more than 2 million, majority Black women and other women of color flooded the streets of Philadelphia in 1997 under the broad banner of unity and sisterhood in the aftermath of the Million Man March in 1995.

The J21 call recognizes other important past demonstrations like the 1963 March on Washington, which merged the Civil Rights Movement with the fight for economic justice; the 1965 March on Washington for Peace in Vietnam; and the four marches on Washington for the rights of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people in 1979, 1987, 1993 and 2000.

In early December, J21 organizers announced that permits had been approved by various D.C. agencies for a gathering near the U.S. Capitol at Third Street SW and Independence Avenue at 10 a.m. for a march and rally. Local and statewide Facebook pages have attracted tens of thousands of people mobilizing for the march. Nationally coordinated J21 solidarity protests have also been called for those unable to travel to Washington.

A very important question about the Women’s March on Washington concerns whether or not J21 will be used to try to

divert more women into the Democratic Party. Or will this movement really attract the most oppressed and marginalized women? These are the women who are involved in and leading struggles such as the ongoing Fight for \$15 and a union; against police brutality and killings; the right to health care including reproductive justice; for housing and quality education; and an end to all forms of sexism and patriarchal attitudes.

One thing is clear: Women of all ages, nationalities, gender identities and expressions, and range of abilities will be descending upon Washington or gathering in their cities on Jan. 21 to be seen and heard, many for the first time, which is a progressive step forward.

The intervention of the left wing of the big-business Democratic Party, which J21 will definitely reflect, makes it all the more important for the progressive political movement to be there in solidarity with the many women who not only want to protest the Trump administration, but who will be interested in building and leading a long-term, independent, multinational, multigender, grassroots movement for real social and economic change.

Moorehead was the 2016 Workers World Party presidential candidate and is a co-coordinator of the International Working Women’s Coalition in New York City.



WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

ing an “Anti-Trump Inauguration Rally & March” on Jan. 20 at 3 p.m. in Duncan Plaza. That’s in front of City Hall at 300 Perdido Street. The action is being initiated by Take ‘Em Down NOLA and the New Orleans Working Group.

The Anti Police-Terror Project in Oakland, Calif., “is ramping it up in preparation for Trump.” They’re beginning a “week of action with a Reclaiming King’s Radical Legacy March” and say this will be “120 hours of autonomous direct action in resistance to the fascist Trump agenda. This year we are focused on immigrant rights, protection of our Muslim brothers and sisters, women’s reproductive rights, loving our LGBTQ sisters, brothers and siblings, and the defense of Black life.” □

Chicago protest greets Pence

Hundreds of demonstrators greeted Vice President-elect Mike Pence as he arrived to address well-heeled luncheon goers at the Chicago Club on Dec. 30. Protesters chanted, “Racist, sexist, anti-gay! Mike Pence go away!” and other slogans outside the wealthy private club.

— Report and photo by Jeff Sorel



Chicago transit workers take to the streets

Bus and rail operators, members of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 308 whose contract expired over a year ago, picketed Dec. 21 at three sites to demand the Chicago Transit Authority bargain seriously toward a new contract. The CTA instead has proposed no wage increases, fewer holidays, an 18 percent increase in health insurance premiums and conversion of many full-time to part-time positions. Chanting “They say cutback! We say fight back!” the workers showed powerfully that effective bargaining must sometimes be done in the streets.

— Story and photo by Jeff Sorel



AUGUST 1968

Black GIs resist ‘riot-control’ duty, 43 arrested

Continued from page 6

juring some. One who had been wounded in Vietnam had the stitches on his kidney reopened.

When the dust cleared, 43 Black GIs were under arrest. Thirty-one faced special courts-martial, with a maximum sentence of six months in prison. The other 12 faced general courts-martial that could bring much longer sentences. The officers considered six of those 12 the “ringleaders.” They faced years in prison.

They were to be tried by officers under the command of the ranking officers of the division. In the normal operations of the Army, if the generals want convictions, they get them — if the defendants are isolated. In this case, however, the defendants had support.

American Servicemen’s Union

In the summer of 1968, I was circulation manager of The Bond, the monthly newspaper of the American Servicemen’s Union, an anti-war and anti-racist organization of low-ranking GIs. As of mid-1968, the union had some 4,000 active-duty members and about three times that number read each issue of The Bond.

The ASU’s founder and chairperson, Andy Stapp, and I were in the union office on Saturday morning, August 24, 1968, doing paperwork and discussing whether to go to the anti-war protest at the DNC. Cars were leaving that day from New York.

The phone rang. Stapp picked it up. After a few seconds, he signaled for me to get on the extension. A Spc.5 from Fort Hood, Texas, was on the call. He told us of the arrests that morning.

One look between us and we knew this was our priority. I kept getting more details while Stapp called up the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee — an organization of progressive attorneys. They told Stapp to get the names of the arrested GIs.

It was the kind of lucky break in organizing that comes from hard work. The GI, who lived on base, called us because he had just seen an article in the August 1968 Esquire Magazine based on an interview with Stapp and “knew right away I had to join this union.” His Black MP friend would transmit the names to this GI’s spouse, who would call them in to us.

By the end of the weekend we had civilian attorneys for the GIs and were sending out the first press releases.

We managed to visit the six “ringleaders” on Sept. 7 and get their stories before the MPs ran Stapp and me off the base. They served Stapp with an order barring his return.

Four days later, Stapp and two other ASU staff GIs, Bill Smith and Richard Wheaton, were arrested by the local sheriff in Killeen, Texas. They were fined the \$600 they had with them after being found guilty of “vagrancy.” (This sum was roughly equivalent to \$4,000 in 2016.)

The trial of the six ‘ringleaders’

The military officers running Fort Hood knew they had a problem with the 43 Black GIs arrested: If they just let everyone go, it might encourage further resistance. But a hard crackdown could arouse sympathy, bring more publicity and spark further resistance.

They made a quiet concession. Fort Hood’s courts-martial allowed the defense to use a legal technicality to get many of the troops off without serving time. Some others got sentences ranging from three to 11 months.

The technicality was that some of the GIs were in an automobile and thus couldn’t hear the order to disperse. During different courts-martial, a couple dozen GIs were “placed” in that car.

Stapp couldn’t venture into Fort Hood without facing arrest and six months in prison. The Bond’s Vietnam editor Bill Smith, journalist Ellen Catalinotto and I went in late October to attend the court-martial of the six soldiers Stapp and I had visited in September: Pfc. Ernest Bess, Pfc. Guy Smith, Spc.4 Albert Henry, Pvt. Ernest Frederick, Sgt. Robert Rucker and Spc.4 Tollie Royal.

For their attorney, the ASU lined up Michael Kennedy, one of the most effective defense attorneys for political cases at that time. During the 1960s and 1970s, Kennedy represented Black Panther leader Huey Newton as well as members of the American Indian Movement involved in the epic 1973 struggle at Wounded Knee in South Dakota.

To avoid the Killeen sheriff, our ASU delegation stayed at the on-base home of the GI and his spouse who had called in the names to the ASU. This hospitality

was a sign of support for the Black troops among the other soldiers on the base, including some of the white troops.

Life Magazine and the New York Times had reporters at the trial, and our delegation covered the court-martial for The Bond and Workers World newspaper.

Ellen Catalinotto wrote in the Nov. 10, 1968 issue of WW:

“[In statements to the courtroom,] Pfc. Guy Smith ... told the court, ‘I demonstrated against Army policy here and in Vietnam. ... There is racism and prejudice here. General Boles said he would do something about it, but nothing has been done. ... There are clubs in Killeen [the base town] where Black GIs can’t go. ... The Black man has been held back because of his color. Your convictions add to the injustice.’ ...

“The court-martial of six Black GIs who demonstrated along with 100 others against racism and riot control duty ended here tonight after four days. Two men were acquitted, two got sentences of three months hard labor and the others received bad conduct discharges. The sentences, considerably less than the maximum, were an indication of the Army’s fear that harsher punishment might backfire and lead to open rebellion. ...

“Morale was high as the men left the courtroom, shaking hands and gathering around the jeep that was to take Henry to the stockade. The relatively lenient sentences were a victory — not of justice, but of the strength and determination of the Black soldiers not to be used against their

brothers.”

Kennedy, the six GIs and the ASU delegation celebrated the successful outcome. Even the GIs who had to spend a few months in the stockade said they felt they had won.

For the Pentagon, what the Black GIs did was a direct challenge to the chain of command.

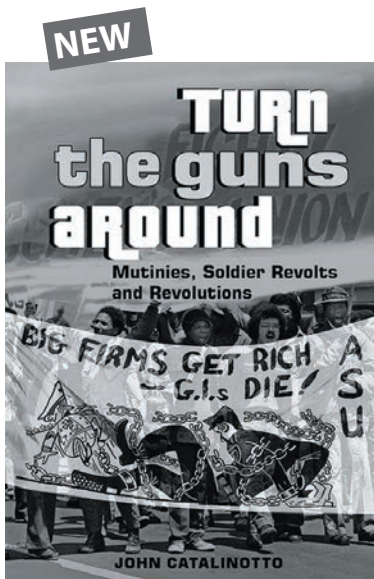
The goal of the founders of the ASU was to break the chain of command by forming an organization that represented the rank-and-file soldiers. ASU organizers knew that in 1968 they would most likely find command-defying attitudes on a mass scale among Black GIs who identified with the Black Panthers or other Black Liberation organizations backing national liberation struggles worldwide.

The ASU not only endorsed the rebellion of the Black troops. To further shatter ties to command, the ASU succeeded in convincing others, including white GIs, to express solidarity with Black resistance.

The lesson for the Pentagon was that the conscripted Army, especially one politicized by an unpopular war, might be unreliable if used against rebellions in the African-American communities in the United States.

The lesson for revolutionaries was that it was possible to weaken the main repressive organ of the imperialist state, the U.S. Armed Forces.

Based on a chapter in Catalinotto’s, “Turn the Guns Around: Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions,” available Jan. 1 at online booksellers.



TURN THE GUNS AROUND Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions

Weaving together GI letters, interviews and first-hand narratives with historical research, the author brings to life GI resistance in the Vietnam War era, shows its relation to capitalist state power and highlights why breaking the military chain of command is an essential step to ending oppression around the globe.

“If schools in the United States really wanted to impart historical truth, Catalinotto’s ‘Turn The Guns Around’ would be required reading. He tells the true story of this epoch. Few participants know more about the massive GI rebellion against the Vietnam War, the anti-war veterans’ movement or the history of soldier revolts from the Paris Commune to the Portuguese coup.”

— Pvt Larry Holmes GI resister and organizer for the American Serviceman’s Union 1972-74.

Available at online booksellers

Syria wins in Aleppo: What next?

By Chris Fry

The Syrian military has successfully liberated the entire city of Aleppo, which, up until the current conflict broke out in 2012, was the largest city in Syria. For more than four years, much of Aleppo had been occupied by U.S.-supported “rebel” forces, including groups tied to al-Qaida, and many thousands of non-Syrian mercenaries.

The people in Aleppo are jubilant. Christians, who make up 10 percent of Syria’s population, were able to conduct a religious Christmas ceremony in Aleppo for the first time in five years.

Dr. Nabil Antaki, a physician who stayed and served his patients in western Aleppo through the war, told a reporter: “The situation in Aleppo is now much better than it was in the last four years. It is now almost liberated from the rebels-terrorists. The inhabitants of Aleppo have a feeling of safety, there has been no mortar shelling in the last few days as it was daily during the last four years.

The inhabitants of East Aleppo are free now from the terrorists, who used them as human shields.” (tinyurl.com/jp3tt3r; Zenit, Dec. 26)

Many Aleppo residents have returned to inspect homes that were damaged or destroyed by the intense warfare. Some 400,000 people have been killed in the Syrian conflict. Another 4.8 million Syrians have been forced to flee the country, 6.1 million more are homeless in their own country, and a once-modern infrastructure has been largely destroyed. (worldvision.org, Nov. 15)

On Dec. 28, a ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey was announced in Moscow. Negotiations for a political settlement to the war are scheduled for January in Kazakhstan’s capital city of Astana. Turkey had been a main conduit of the Pentagon and CIA’s billions of dollars of weapons and training to the “rebels,” that is, the reactionaries.

The agreement came just days after the shocking assassination of the Rus-

sian ambassador to Turkey, Andrey Karlov, by a Turkish police officer. Karlov had previously been the ambassador to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. If this was an attempt to torpedo Syrian peace negotiations, of which Karlov was a key participant, it backfired.

U.S. imperialism out of negotiations

U.S. imperialism, ignoring the terrible suffering that this war has caused for the Syrian people, has tried to overturn the elected government of President Bashar al-Assad and install a regime tailored to serve Wall Street.

Now it finds itself closed out of the upcoming negotiations, which will include the Syrian government, Russia, Turkey, Iran and several opposition groups. The Islamic State group and the al-Qaida affiliate in Syria are excluded. The United Nations Security Council has passed a Russian-authored resolution backing the ceasefire and negotiations. Although forced to go along with this, Washington

is obviously enraged by this resolution, as it fails to demand that President Assad step down.

Pro-war Sen. Lindsey Graham wrote on Twitter, “I fear what is being hailed as a ceasefire in Syria will become a capitulation to Russia and Iran.” (bloomberg.com, Dec. 29)

Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center, told Press TV in an interview on Dec. 31 that the very fact that a Syrian ceasefire agreement was reached without the participation of the U.S. is an extremely important development. She added that it shows Washington was the “biggest impediment” to peace all along.

U.S. imperialism, stymied for now, refuses to stop its efforts to get a grip over Syria and the whole Middle East. “It is not for certain that this is ending,” said Flounders. “I think the U.S. efforts to destabilize the entire region will very much continue. That is a real danger we need to be aware of.” □

Financial distress imperils EU banks

By G. Dunkel

Jan. 1 — The European capitalists created the European Union to encourage the exchange of goods, services and capital. Its greatest beneficiaries have been the big banks, especially those based in Germany and France. It grew to include 28 states with 24 official languages and 507 million people and significantly increased the profits of the big capitalists in each country, even though the EU’s existence imposed limits on national sovereignties.

In almost all the countries in the EU, citizens of other EU countries are allowed to live and work without restrictions.

The so-called bailouts of Greece and the impending bailouts of Italian banks have in essence bailed out the French- and German-based banks that have major positions in the securities of Greek and Italian banks.

According to Nobel economist Joseph Stiglitz, in 2014 the EU was the world’s largest economy; by 2015, it had slipped back slightly behind the U.S. (From his book “The Euro: How a Common Currency Threatens the Future of Europe”) Calculations for 2016, though incomplete, should show a major drop in goods and services produced.

In 2014, one euro at its highest bought \$1.33. By the end of 2016, one euro traded for \$1.04. While only 19 out of the 28 EU countries use the euro as their official currency, which amounts to 337 million Europeans, the currency is officially used by EU institutions and four other European countries. It is second to the U.S. dollar as a reserve currency throughout the world. It began circulating Jan. 1, 2002.

Greek crisis

The Greek economy is about 27 percent smaller than it was in 2008 and is still shrinking. (Forbes, Dec. 28) Almost all of the three “bailouts” that the Greek government has received since 2008 have gone to pay debt service, that is, to subsidizing German and French banks that lent Greece money. Very little was used to preserve the Greek people’s living standards. The EU didn’t even reduce the interest the Greek government had to pay to borrow — which was 22.5 percent in 2012, according to Stiglitz.

Greece’s debt is around 315 billion euros, which is 180 percent of gross domestic output this year, according to the latest EU data. The International Monetary Fund, no friend of the poor and oppressed, has made it clear that Greece won’t be able to pay off its debt if banks

don’t reduce the total.

Leading up to a general strike at the beginning of December that all the Greek unions supported, the General Confederation of Greek workers issued a statement: “We are reacting to repressive austerity, poverty and destitution. ... Once again we face absurd demands by [Greece’s EU-IMF] creditors.” (AFP, Dec. 8, 2016)

Greek unemployment was officially figured at 23.1 percent in September 2016 and has gotten worse since then.

The new budget that the general strike was called to protest contains around 1 billion euros from new taxes on items like cars, fixed telephone service, pay TV, fuel, tobacco, coffee and beer. Public spending on salaries and pensions will also be cut by 5.7 billion euros.

These figures reveal the deepening misery of the Greek people, forced into hunger and homelessness to pay the big banks.

Italian banks

Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena SpA (BMP), the oldest bank in the world and the third largest bank in Italy, is in danger of foundering if it isn’t bailed out. Not just BMP but other banks, too, are probably shaky.

Wolfstreet, a website concentrating on

the seamy side of Wall Street, pointed out in July: “The total exposure of French banks ... to Italian government debt exceeds 250 billion euros. Germany holds 83.2 billion worth of Italian bonds. The other banking sectors most at risk of contagion are Spain (44.6 billion euros), the U.S. (42.3 billion), the UK (29.8 billion) and Japan (27.6 billion).”

JPMorgan Chase, a major U.S. bank, has won a very profitable contract from the Italian government to organize and manage the bailout of BMP. It is generally conceded that if a major bank like BMP fails, contagion could take down many more banks, if not the whole Italian banking system and, with it, banks throughout the eurozone.

The euro’s creation and institutions like the European Central Bank, which was designated to manage it, reinforced French and German economic domination of Europe. Rather than sustaining and improving the living standards of all European workers, it has turned into a tool to increase their exploitation and oppression.

Workers’ struggles should have no borders. On the other hand, the national bourgeoisies of Europe have erased some of their borders to better control their workers. □

Haiti: Election protests continue

By G. Dunkel

Beginning shortly after the Nov. 20 Haitian election and continuing almost daily since, over 30 massive, militant demonstrations have filled the streets of Port-au-Prince, the country’s capital, condemning the latest “electoral coup d’état” and demanding fair and free elections.

The cops have been growing increasingly aggressive as the protests have continued. Wendy Lерisse, a Haitian videographer, has posted YouTube clips of many of the protests. One of the Christmas Eve demonstrations included footage showing cops using a water cannon against a group of demonstrators. As a protester

falls down, the cops continue to spray her.

As the protests have continued, there appears to be some resistance in the Provisional Electoral Council to certifying Jovenel Moïse, the candidate of the Haitian Tèt Kale Party (PHTK), as president. The official announcement has been postponed from Dec. 28 to Jan. 3.

Michel Martelly, the founder and leader of the PHTK, was president of Haiti from May 2011 until Feb. 2016. Martelly was imposed as president by then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and he ably assisted Washington in maintaining its hold on Haiti during his presidency.

The first attempt to continue the PHTK’s hold on power, the elections of Aug. 9, 2015, failed. The fraud was so massive and

blatant that a majority of Haitians rejected the election’s legitimacy. □

Police step up repression of Haitian protests over contested election of banana exporter and political newcomer Jovenel Moïse.

PHOTO: REPEATINGISLANDS.COM



WORKERS WORLD editorial

A tragic anniversary

December 25 marked the 25th anniversary of the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Two historic centennial anniversaries will take place this year. Next month will usher in the 100th anniversary of the February 1917 Revolution in Russia, which started with a great demonstration of women textile workers on International Working Women's Day, and which within five days overthrew the czar.

Revolutionary upheavals continued throughout the czarist empire, culminating in October of the same year (November by our calendar) with the uprising of workers, peasants and soldiers, led by the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin, that not only ended the monarchy for good, but overthrew the capitalist class and the entire land-owning aristocracy.

In future issues of Workers World we will write more on the tumultuous events of 1917 that ushered in the world's first workers' state.

For now, we take up what happened just 25 years ago and what it meant for the workers and farmers of the former Soviet Union, also called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or USSR.

Since its birth, the USSR had fought to survive in a hostile capitalist world. Its greatest human losses came in World War II when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union in the biggest invasion in world history. Called Operation Barbarossa, Germany deployed 4 million troops along an 1,800-mile front.

After four bloody years, in which the USSR lost more than 27 million people and most of its industry, Soviet troops beat back Hitler's armies, liberated Eastern Europe from fascism and planted the red flag on top of the Reichstag parliament building in Berlin.

The U.S. suffered practically no physical damage in World War II. In fact, it emerged from the conflict with an economy that produced half the world's manufactured goods. From 1946 on, the Western imperialists, led by the U.S. and Britain, started a new war — the Cold War — targeting the Soviet Union.

Cold War and arms race take toll

The USSR was still struggling to rebuild and could do little for the East European countries now allied to it, while the U.S. pumped billions of dollars into Western Europe through the Marshall Plan, stabilizing the capitalist economies there. A huge arms race accompanied the Cold War and was meant to bankrupt the weakened Soviet economy.

All these enormous pressures on the first workers' state trying to build socialism took their toll on the Soviet system from the beginning. There eventually emerged leaders in the Communist Party who were desperate to accommodate to imperialism. By the late 1980s, two of these figures — Premiers Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin — made concessions that allowed the imperialists to restore capitalism in Eastern Europe. They broke up the Soviet Union into 15 separate countries and turned over its state-owned industries to private ownership, both domestic and foreign.

Many critics of the USSR who professed to be socialists welcomed these developments, hailing them as bringing a more democratic form of socialism. But they were sorely mistaken.

What followed the pulling down of the Soviet Union was a full-blown counter-revolution. Foreign capital and corrupt former Soviet officials joined in a feeding frenzy to snatch up what had been state property, while the material conditions of the great masses of the people spiraled downward, out of control.

Margaret Thatcher, the Conservative Party leader in Britain who attacked the unions there and gutted social programs, was the first to openly give imperialism's blessings to the changes in the Soviet leadership when she said in 1984, "I like Mr. Gorbachev. We can do business together."

Once the Soviet Union was gone, Gorbachev got his "reward" by appearing in commercials for Pizza Hut. Quite a comedown for someone who led a country of 287 million people, but nothing like what the workers in the former Soviet republics were going through.

Conditions under capitalism

Average life expectancy in the Russian part of the USSR was 70 years in 1991. By 1994, after the restoration of the "free market," it was only 65. The total population actually declined for the first time since World War II as the death rate exceeded the birth rate. The free health care system was discarded, along with the dismantling of all the social guarantees for employment, retirement income, paid vacations and other advantages enjoyed by Soviet workers.

Rampant alcoholism, drug abuse and prostitution reflected the desperation of millions who had been thrown to the wolves while "entrepreneurs" created profitable new markets in the trafficking of women and addictive drugs. Conditions in other parts of the former Soviet Union became at least as bad as in Russia, if not worse.

During this period, Russia was considered a "friend" of the United States. Leaders like Gorbachev and Yeltsin, who went along with this vicious dismantling of what the workers had built, were embraced, no matter how venal and even buffoonish they became.

It was only after Russia, now an openly capitalist country, was able to take back control of some of its vital resources, like oil, and consolidate a political and economic structure that put the interests of Russian development ahead of the demands of the imperialist banks and corporations, that the attitude of the U.S. ruling class changed. In the current period, conditions for the masses have improved, and even the imperialist media have to acknowledge that Vladimir Putin is popular compared to those who sold out the Soviet Union.

Now, most of the U.S. ruling class establishment are openly hostile to Putin, going so far as to demagogically blame Russia for Trump. Maybe the incoming U.S. president thinks he can charm the Russian ruling class into opening up to the whole Trump empire of golf courses, luxury hotels and casinos. But that won't stop the Pentagon from building new bases in Eastern Europe and moving more troops to Russia's border.

In future issues, we'll write about the great revolutions that allowed the Soviet Union to develop into a world power despite all the efforts of the imperialists to crush it. □

Anti-Russia campaign diverts fight against Trump

By John Catalinotto

Demonstrating the U.S. intent to continue punitive sanctions against Russia, the lame-duck Barack Obama administration took further measures. Obama declared new sanctions on Dec. 30, including expelling 35 people working with Russia's diplomatic corps as "spies."

Obama claimed this anti-Russian assault was in response to Russia's alleged hacking of U.S.-based computer servers and interference in the U.S. elections.

These attacks on Russia are intermingled with the Democratic Party leadership's attempt to undermine the incoming administration in all areas, especially attacking its public positions conciliatory to Russia.

By focusing on Trump's friendlier approach to Russia, the Obama-Hillary Clinton grouping can collaborate with Republican reactionaries like Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham. It can avoid confronting the racism, sexism and xenophobia of the new President-elect. To attack him on these issues might promote a mass mobilization such as those scheduled for Jan. 20 and 21 to protest the new administration.

Internet security experts like John McAfee have said there is no way to prove Russia has been doing the hacking. Thus assertions by the CIA, the FBI and other U.S. security agencies against Russia are smoke, as recent Workers World articles by Stephen Millies have shown.

But this particular smoke fits the needs of elements in the U.S. state and government apparatus, including many Democratic and Republican Party leaders. It is a problem for the new President-elect, at least for now.

More 'fake news' and threats

The U.S. corporate media, which is unanimous in its hostility to Russia and President Vladimir Putin, stepped up its "fake news" production.

The Washington Post reported Dec. 31 that Russian hackers penetrated the U.S. electric grid in Vermont. The article was filled with dire warnings that the Russians might cut off heat and light in the New England winter.

The Post was forced to retract this. An Editor's Note posted at the beginning of the Dec. 31 article read: "An earlier version of this story incorrectly said that Russian hackers had penetrated the U.S. electric grid. Authorities say there is no indication of that so far. The computer at Burlington Electric that was hacked was not attached to the grid." (tinyurl.com/z52pxot)

Progressive journalist Glenn Greenwald issued a full exposure of the Washington Post's "fake news." (tinyurl.com/zb7xhg2)

The corporate media's anti-Russia attacks gloss over the 1989-91 counterrevolution that dismantled the Soviet Union. This event replaced the anti-capitalist structure of the Soviet republics, includ-

ing Russia, with a capitalist system.

From 1917 to 1989 the U.S. ruling class hated Russia and the Soviet Union. These rulers considered the Soviet Union their main enemy because it had a diametrically opposed social system that promised to expropriate the capitalists' property and hand it to the workers.

In the 1990s the U.S. aimed to take over the weak capitalist Russia economically and dominate it politically. Washington professed friendship to the Russian government led by Boris Yeltsin, who was subservient toward U.S. imperialism.

Putin and the now stronger Russian capitalist class he represents play a more independent role. They and the Russian military defend Russian capitalist and nationalist interests, which often collide with U.S. imperialist interests. Syria and Ukraine are two areas where Russian intervention plays a progressive role.

Washington has revved up the threats against Russia, even installing "anti-missile" bases and moving some NATO troops to Russia's border. But since the Pentagon has failed to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan after 15 years, it's hard to imagine its generals being too optimistic about making war on a Russia armed with 7,000 nuclear warheads.

Putin's reaction, and Trump's

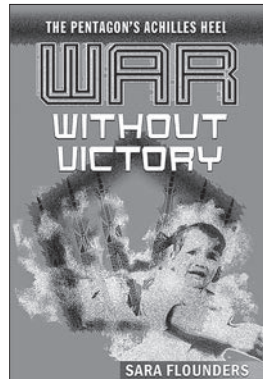
Putin surprised many U.S. observers with his reaction to Obama's latest provocation. Instead of tit for tat, Putin simply said, "While we reserve the right to take reciprocal measures, we're not going to downgrade ourselves to the level of irresponsible 'kitchen' diplomacy. In our future steps on the way toward the restoration of Russia-United States relations, we will proceed from the policy pursued by the [Trump] administration." (New York Times, Dec. 30)

While Obama's new anti-Russian moves were mainly symbolic, previous sanctions by the U.S. and its NATO partners have damaged the Russian economy. They've also hurt individuals who were Putin's allies in rescuing Crimea from a pro-fascist coup in Ukraine.

The economic sanctions block Russian access to international credit and cut off cooperation in oil field technology. Trump appointee Rex Tillerson of Exxon-Mobil would like to end these sanctions so his corporation can increase its profits.

In response to Putin, Trump in one of his many tweets praised the Russian leader for being "smart" to avoid a confrontation with the U.S. that would complicate U.S.-Russian relations.

For his overall reactionary program of vile xenophobia, racism and sexism, the President-elect deserves to be undermined by the mass movement here. Whether or not he continues to defend a rapprochement with Russia, however, the Obama-Clinton-McCain position on Russia is dangerously reactionary and the anti-war movement should protest it. □



WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

"By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to stand up to the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity."

– Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009;
Foreign Minister of Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

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U.S. imperialism foments conflict in Africa

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A group claiming to be in solidarity with the Al-Fatah Revolution of Sept. 1, 1969, headed by Col. Muammar Gadhafi in Libya — who imperialism overthrew and had murdered in 2011 — diverted an Afriqiyah Airways A320 flight to Malta on Dec. 24. No passenger was injured.

The two hijackers who requested asylum in Malta were making a profound political statement that the imperialists in Washington, London, Paris and Brussels, along with their allies in Ankara, Turkey and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, were responsible for Libya’s destruction.

The so-called “Arab Spring,” which had begun in neighboring Tunisia in December 2010 with a mass rebellion, general strike and the eventual seizure of power by the military and security forces in January 2011, was later replicated in February 2011 in Egypt. Unfortunately, the military and police took charge of the transitional process there, effectively nullifying any revolutionary potential.

Nearly six years ago in February 2011, a counterrevolution was launched against the Libyan government under the guise of a fight for “freedom and democracy” as part of the “Arab Spring.”

Nonetheless, it was clear to anti-imperialists that the assault on Libya constituted renewed neocolonialism in North Africa. The imperialists were willing to ignore the African Union’s March 8 peace proposals to halt a planned bombing campaign led by France and the U.S., which started on March 19.

The Pentagon bombed the country again during 2016 under the pretext of fighting Islamic State group strongholds in Sirte and other coastal areas of the oil-rich nation. However, Washington, under outgoing President Barack Obama’s administration with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, was hell-bent on destroying Libya, thereby creating conditions for the emergence of the Islamic State group (IS) in North Africa as war also did in Iraq and Syria. Today Libya is wracked by internecine conflict.

The Obama Doctrine in Africa and West Asia has been an unmitigated disaster for the peoples of both regions. The U.S. is an aggressor nation that has killed, injured and displaced tens of millions in pursuit of its neocolonialist aims.

The Horn of Africa

Although the previous administration of President George W. Bush created the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) in ear-

ly 2008, the military operation in the Horn of Africa has been expanded under Obama. Somalia typifies Washington’s failed Africa policy over the last eight years.

Even though various neocolonial-dominated African states such as Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Burundi and Djibouti have deployed up to 22,000 troops, stability and prosperity have not returned to Somalia. In early 2016 the European Union cut its support to the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), leaving the future of the operation unclear.

Not only has AMISOM been occupying Somalia, but the Pentagon and the CIA maintain a strong presence in the country and neighboring states. At Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, thousands of Pentagon and French troops are stationed, facilitating U.S. and French operations in Africa, throughout the Arabian Peninsula and in the Persian/Arabian Gulf.

A war against Yemen

A war against the people of Yemen, the poorest and least developed state in the region, has killed over 11,000 people and displaced several million since 2015. Yet it is hidden from the U.S. public, as is the occupation of Somalia and other Horn of Africa states. Off the coast of Somalia, the Pentagon and other naval forces are patrolling the Gulf of Aden against “piracy,” though that’s not been a problem for several years.

These military campaigns feed the U.S. military-industrial complex, a multi-trillion-dollar business subsidized by the tax dollars of working class and oppressed people in the U.S.

As long as the American public can be convinced that their principal enemy is “Islamic terrorism” or “communism” through the existence of IS, the People’s Republic of China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Cuba, etc., and not the billionaires of Wall Street and the Pentagon chiefs of Washington who order weapons like regular people order consumer goods, the political status quo will be maintained.

The incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump has appointed leading military hawks, oil magnates, fast food low-wage slave drivers, conspiracy theorists and white supremacists to his administration, ensuring the situation will only worsen.

Ethiopia is essential

In Ethiopia, where a socialist-oriented government was overthrown in 1991, the continuation of U.S. dominance is essential to imperialist imperatives in the Horn of Africa.

The Dec. 24 Washington Post wrote: “It is difficult to overstate the importance of Ethiopia to Africa’s stability.” Noting Ethiopia’s growth, the article continued, “But [its] rapid economic expansion has resulted in strains, especially when new factories and commercial farms are being built on land taken from farmers.”

One of the cornerstones of the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974-91 was its land reform program which took control of huge sections of the country from monarchical rule. Yet today, at the aegis of imperialism, the land is being turned over to multinational corporations for profit-making enterprises.

The same Washington Post article reported: “Protests erupted there in November 2015 over the land grabs, corruption in the local government and lack of services such as running water, electricity and roads.”

A government-imposed state of emergency was lifted in December, along

with the release of 10,000 people arrested during the unrest. Nonetheless, the Washington and Wall Street establishments are nervous about the future political situation in the region.

South Sudan

In South Sudan, where another Obama project pushed for the 2011 partitioning of the country, the two main factions of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army have been split over the last three years.

The United Nations, which already has 12,500 troops and other personnel forming a parallel government, is insisting on deploying yet another 4,000 soldiers. This is straining relations between the government in Juba and its U.S. sponsors.

Before its partition, Sudan was emerging as an oil-producing state independent of Western-controlled petroleum conglomerates. The People’s Republic of China had substantial oil concessions in the country. Today, both the North and the South are suffering from their dependence on imperialism.

The government in Khartoum is now following the lead of Riyadh, having joined the Saudi Arabian and Gulf Cooperation Council proxy war against Iran by participating in the bombing and ground campaign designed to destroy the Ansullah (Houthis) and their growing influence in Yemen.

Imperialist war against Africa continues

After eight years of the Obama administration, it is quite clear to any objective analyst that the conditions for the peoples of Africa and West Asia are far worse than at any time in the post-World War II period. The U.N. Refugee Agency says that the number of displaced persons in the world is the highest ever recorded in human history, some 65 million.

These developments have not happened spontaneously. They are part of a calculated but failed U.S. policy of maintaining world dominance.

In the recent unrest in the Democratic Republic of Congo, opposition groups staged violent demonstrations aimed at forcing the resignation of President Joseph Kabila. Despite over 20,000 U.N. troops stationed in the vast mineral-rich Central African state, the Catholic Church intervened to negotiate an agreement to end the violence. President Kabila will remain in office for at least another year until elections can be organized. A Government of National Unity has been created with Prime Minister Samy Badibanga as its leader.

The DRC has been a source of instability since its national independence from Belgium in June 1960. Its first elected Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, was labelled a communist by the Eisenhower administration and subsequently overthrown, abducted, tortured and executed by the CIA in January 1961.

As long as Africa is divided, the imperialists will be in a position to dictate the terms of political developments on the continent. What is needed is a total break with the Western program of neocolonial dependency.

The coming months of 2017 will prove critical in the future of Africa in light of the uncharted waters of the Trump administration, the instability in Britain and the European Union stemming from the gradual dissolution of the Common Market, and the collapse of the war of genocide in Syria. Africa must develop its own political and economic course or remain in perpetual impoverishment and tutelage. □

Protesters at football events say #NoDAPL



PHOTO: UNICORN RIOT
Minneapolis, Jan. 1.



PHOTO: PRESS ENTERPRISE
Pasadena, Calif., Jan. 2.

By Monica Moorehead

Two important protests against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline near Standing Rock, N.D., gained national attention during football-related events.

On Jan. 1 two protesters courageously hung a “No DAPL” banner high in the rafters of the U.S. Bank indoor stadium during a Minnesota Vikings/Chicago Bears National Football League game in Minneapolis.

The banner demanded that U.S. Bank, a major investor in the pipeline, divest from the project. The banner drop was captured by spectators on social media. The climbers, Karl Mayo, 32, and Sen Holiday, 26, were arrested for their heroic act.

Then, on Jan. 2, activists joined the Rose Bowl Parade to express support for the anti-DAPL struggle. The annual

parade in Pasadena, Calif., which precedes the Rose Bowl college football game, attracts hundreds of thousands of people and millions more on television. The activists’ visibility included a float, a 150-foot-long replica of the pipeline, banners and placards. The slogans read “Water is sacred,” “We are the water protectors” and “Water is life.”

The DAPL has been a major focus of national and international protest since last spring, led by hundreds of Indigenous Nations. The oil pipeline, being built with the backing of Wall Street money estimated to be close to \$3 billion, is to go underground and under the Missouri River near the Standing Rock reservation, violating sacred ancestral lands of the Lakota Sioux Nation and threatening the river. If the pipeline were to suffer an oil leak, which has happened elsewhere, the water supply of at least 17 million people would be poisoned. □



Los retos que plantea la ofensiva de la derecha en América Latina

Esta es la mitad de una exposición presentada por Olmedo Beluche, Analista y autor marxista panameño, profesor de sociología de la Universidad de Panamá y miembro del Polo Democrático. Beluche, hizo su presentación durante un foro titulado “La situación de las Izquierdas en América Latina,” organizado por la Fundación Friedrich Ebert en la ciudad de Panamá el 25 de agosto del 2016.

PARTE I La crisis capitalista se ha transformado en una crisis de la civilización humana

Por Olmedo Beluche

Hoy no se puede explicar lo que sucede en ningún país del mundo, menos en un continente como el Latinoamericano, ni las relaciones de fuerza entre las clases sociales y sus partidos políticos, si no se parte por tener claro el contexto general que marca la dinámica de todos los fenómenos: la gran crisis del sistema capitalista mundial, que es de tal grado y abarca factores tan diversos, que ha sido definida como crisis civilizatoria o crisis de la civilización humana.

Estamos ante una profunda crisis económica de superproducción (como la definía Marx); una crisis social enorme de un sistema cada vez más desigual; una crisis humanitaria cuyos precedentes solo pueden encontrarse en las décadas del 30 y 40 del siglo pasado; una crisis ecológica de consecuencias catastróficas; una crisis política de creciente polarización; incluso se podría agregar una crisis cultural y hasta filosófica.

La enormidad de la crisis le da al sistema capitalista un carácter más agresivo, violento y antidemocrático, como muestran las guerras de Afganistán, Irak, Siria, Libia, Palestina, etc. Pero la crisis también es un signo de debilidad del sistema capitalista, el cual, pese a toda su virulencia, no consigue estabilizar ninguna situación, ni asestar derrotas prolongadas que mantengan su dominación sin sobresaltos. Por el contrario, cada acción que toma genera respuestas adversas de mayor calado.

Es el cumplimiento de la ley hegeliana de la “astucia de la razón”, que Nahuel Moreno llamaba del “bombero loco”, es decir que, cuando en un momento histórico la situación objetiva está madura para avanzar en un sentido, todo lo que hagas para evitarlo será fallido, o producirá “un tiro por la culata”.

Estamos ante la concreción del vaticinio lanzado por Rosa Luxemburgo hace cien años: “socialismo o barbarie”. En la medida en que no alcanzamos el primero, la humanidad involucremos hacia el segundo. El capitalismo ha fracasado, tenemos que construir la alternativa socialista o puede perecer la civilización humana.

a. La crisis económica capitalista, síntoma de sus contradicciones insalvables:

La crisis económica persiste, a pesar de que la globalización neoliberal que rige al mundo hace 30 años, logró importantes victorias para el sistema capitalista como: la restauración capitalista en China y desaparición de la URSS; la apertura comercial y financiera para los capitales que se mueven libres; la amplia desregulación del trabajo e imposición de mayores tasas de explotación, bajos salarios, precariedad y desempleo a los asalariados del planeta; privatización

masiva de empresas y servicios estatales; recortes masivos al gasto social, etc.

Esos golpes masivos a las conquistas de los trabajadores y pueblos del mundo sólo produjeron mejoras relativas y momentáneas al crecimiento capitalista y, en el largo plazo, han conducido a un capitalismo en un callejón sin salida (Fred Goldstein), con bajo crecimiento, bajo consumo, casi nula creación de empleos y pérdida masiva del poder adquisitivo de los asalariados. Lo que Carlos Marx llamaba crisis de superproducción, es decir, la gente no puede consumir lo que se produce, no porque no le haga falta, sino porque no tiene ingresos suficientes.

El economista Michael Roberts, la define como un capitalismo de “débil crecimiento económico... elevado desempleo... caída de los ingresos ... bajo crecimiento de la productividad y la muy débil inversión empresarial”^[1].

b. Una profunda crisis social que golpea también a las metrópolis del Norte:

La crisis económica se expresa en consecuencias sociales desastrosas para una parte creciente de la humanidad que se ve sumida en la pobreza, el desempleo crónico, empleos inestables y de bajos salarios, sin cobertura de seguridad social, que viven en suburbios donde predomina la inseguridad y la calidad de los servicios públicos es pésima o, por lo menos deficiente. Sólo en los países del OCDE (“desarrollados”) más de 39 millones de personas carecen de empleo y otras decenas de millones tienen empleos precarios con contratos no permanentes, bajos salarios, “minijobs”, etc.

El desempleo afecta especialmente a la juventud, donde las tasas pueden llegar hasta el 50 por ciento en España, por ejemplo. En Estados Unidos hay 50 millones de personas en la indigencia y decenas de millones más que reciben salarios que apenas les alcanzan para malvivir. Según la CEPAL, “América Latina aumentó en 7 millones sus pobres en 2015”. En total, 175 millones de personas en pobreza extrema, el 29 por ciento de los latinoamericanos se encuentra en situaciones de vida precarias^[2].

c. Una catástrofe humanitaria golpea al mundo:

En este momento millones de personas deambulan buscando un refugio seguro para sí y sus familias. Están compuestas por los que huyen de las guerras de Medio Oriente o África, donde las potencias y su lucha por controlar los recursos naturales han reducido sus países a cenizas; por millones que escapan de países donde no hay empleos ni futuro en Asia, África y América Latina.

Cada mes, decenas de miles de africanos se arriesgan a morir ahogados en el

Mediterráneo para encontrar una vida un poco menos mísera en Europa; o atraviesan hasta América para cruzar las selvas del Amazonas y Darién, uniéndose a la peregrinación de decenas de miles de latinoamericanos con destino a Estados Unidos, en busca de un “sueño” imposible. Sólo en 2015, un millón de personas llegó a pie a las fronteras de Europa pidiendo asilo. Algo así no se veía desde la Primera y Segunda Guerra Mundiales.

d. El sistema capitalista mundial conduce al caos ecológico:

Otro elemento de la crisis global capitalista es la catástrofe ecológica, ya no solo localizada en zonas azotadas por la explotación minera e industrial, sino por el calentamiento global producido por el consumo de combustibles fósiles. Pese a sus cada vez más evidentes efectos climáticos, los gobiernos ni siquiera están cumpliendo las metas mínimas de reducción de CO₂, establecidos en la Conferencia de París de 2015^[3].

e. La crisis del sistema también se manifiesta como polarización política creciente:

La crisis se expresa también en síntomas muy agudos que van desde una creciente inestabilidad política, con sus puntos

PARTE II La crisis de América Latina y los gobiernos “progresistas” es parte de la crisis del sistema capitalista mundial:

¿Cuál es el carácter de la crisis política que vivimos en Latinoamérica? ¿Por qué se habla de “fin de ciclo progresista”? ¿Por qué vuelven los gobiernos de derecha? ¿Ha fracasado todo intento de cambio social en este continente al igual que antes fracasó la Unión Soviética? ¿La crisis de los gobiernos progresistas prueba que el único sistema posible es el capitalismo neoliberal?

Éstas y otras preguntas inquietan a la vanguardia latinoamericana y merecen una respuesta lo más seria posible. Respuestas que no pueden basarse en la negación de la crisis, para no salir del apoyo incondicional, pretendiendo que toda crítica es “traición” y que sólo cabe la adulación a los dirigentes.

Si así procediéramos no habríamos aprendido nada de la degeneración burocrática de la Unión Soviética a manos de José Stalin, su culto a la personalidad y el aplastamiento antidemocrático del pensamiento crítico.

a. Crisis económica latinoamericana desvela continuidad de las economías dependientes mono exportadoras de materias primas:

En el caso particular de América Latina la crisis económica mundial se expresa como una caída pronunciada de los precios de las materias primas de exportación, que encuentra su explicación en la ralentización de la economía China, su principal cliente, que ha disminuido su demanda de minerales para su industria, y también porque sufre la “guerra de divisas” forzada por Estados Unidos para trasladar su crisis a los llamados BRIC’s.

Según Augusto De la Torre, economista jefe del Banco Mundial para América Latina: “Estamos mal, en el quinto año de desaceleración económica... y el año que

más álgidos en el Medio Oriente y África, donde guerras civiles e intervenciones militares se han hecho cotidianas y no llegan a su final. Con la subsecuente catástrofe humanitaria de millones de personas migrando hacia los países del norte en busca de refugio, alimento y trabajo.

Hay una fuga hacia los extremos del espectro político del electorado, que pone en crisis a los partidos tradicionales de centro derecha y socialdemócratas que han sido garantes de la estabilidad por décadas.

En la campaña electoral de 2016, en Estados Unidos, esta crisis se ha expresado en las candidaturas de Donald Trump (por la extrema derecha) y de Bernie Sanders (por la izquierda) que han remecido las estructuras tradicionales de republicanos y demócratas. En Europa la polarización ha dado lugar a nuevos movimientos antisistémicos, como Syriza en Grecia y Podemos en España, y a la extrema derecha neofascista y xenófoba. Otra manifestación de este proceso es el descrédito de instituciones de la Unión Europea ante buena parte de la ciudadanía, lo cual se constituye en una amenaza real de posible disolución. El triunfo del “Brexit”, la salida de Gran Bretaña de la U.E. es la cara más evidente de esa realidad.

viene también puede ser de recesión”^[4]. La razón de la recesión latinoamericana es la baja de los precios de las materias primas. La caída más dramática es la del petróleo que hace 5 años se cotizaba sobre los 100 dólares por barril y que para este año ubica en 41 dólares.

De la Torre señaló que los precios de las exportaciones de minerales y productos agrícolas latinoamericanas bajarán en 5,1 por ciento en 2016. Lo cual, desde la perspectiva del Banco Mundial, obliga a medidas de ahorro por la vía de la disminución del poder adquisitivo forzando caídas del salario real con austeridad.

Queda evidenciado que, luego de medio siglo de orientaciones político económicas “desarrollistas” y de una década de gobiernos progresistas o populistas, no ha cambiado la esencia de la estructura económica de nuestros países latinoamericanos, ni su papel en sistema capitalista mundial. Seguimos siendo, como hace cien años, países capitalistas dependientes basados en la exportación de uno o dos productos agrícolas o minerales.

El funcionario del Banco Mundial resume la respuesta del sistema capitalista a la crisis: disminución del poder adquisitivo de los asalariados, es decir, mayor explotación, empobrecimiento y desigualdad social. Para lo cual necesitan gobiernos dispuestos a aplicar más neoliberalismo, o sea, gobiernos de derecha.

^[1] Roberts, Michael. Los problemas de las economías del G 7. Revista electrónica Sin Permiso, 26 de mayo de 2016.

^[2] CEPAL. “América Latina aumentó en 7 millones sus pobres en 2015”. 22 de marzo de 2016.

^[3] Naciones Unidas. Convención Marco sobre Cambio Climático. París. 12 de diciembre de 2015.

^[4] AFP. La recesión se podría extender al año que viene. BM pide ahorro a América Latina”. La Prensa. Panamá, 28 de julio de 2016.