Elected Venezuelan gov't beats back coup attempt

By John Catalinotto

Bulletin, Jan. 22—The Bolivarian Ministry of Defense announced today that the Bolivarian Armed Forces had repelled an attempted attack on their facilities in Caracas. At 2:50 a.m. local time, “a small group of assailants assigned to the zone commando No. 45 of the Bolivarian National Guard, betraying their oath of allegiance to the Homeland and its institutions, moved on two military vehicles, then broke into the headquarters of the urban security outpost located in the town of Petare, Sucrem, removing a cache of weapons of war and kidnapping under threat of death, two officers and two national guard members of the aforementioned outpost,” said Captain Gerson Soto Martínez, commander of the Macarao police coordination post. (Telesur English, Jan. 22)

The captain also said that the criminals surrendered and were captured, their weapons recovered, and they are providing information to intelligence agencies. The Bolivarian Armed Forces categorically rejected the acts of the low-ranking officers of the National Guard.

While the immediate coup attempt appears crushed, it takes place amid a growing effort by U.S. imperialism and reaction to overthrow the legitimate Bolivarian government of Venezuela, using sanctons, subversion and economic sabotage to impoverish the masses. Under those conditions, those who oppose imperialism and colonialism should consider any steps the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela uses to defend itself as legitimate.

Jan. 21—U.S. imperialism and its lackeys governments in this hemisphere, with the strategic collaboration of West European imperialism, have opened up an intensified attack on the sovereign Bolivarian government of Venezuela and its president, Nicolás Maduro.

The new offensive began Jan. 6 when the 14-country Lima Group, formed in 2017 allegedly to peacefully resolve conflicts within Venezuela, voted 13 to 1 to preclude the legitimate government in Caracas from entering their countries. Only the new Mexican government led by President A.M. Lopez Obrador voted against the resolution.

Jan. 11, a politician with little name recognition inside Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, who headed the now defunct National Assembly, said he was ready to assume the responsibilities of executive power. Since this sounds exactly like he was calling for a military coup, he was arrested on Jan. 13.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence immediately denounced Maduro’s taking office as illegitimate. Pence and Trump lost the popular vote in the U.S. election in 2016, but that did not stop this arrogant attack on the Venezuelan president.

On Jan. 11, a politician with little name recognition inside Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, who headed the now defunct National Assembly, said he was ready to assume the responsibilities of executive power. Since this sounds exactly like he was calling for a military coup, he was arrested on Jan. 13.

Pence, Bolton, Pompeo attack Maduro

Guaidó then got further verbal support from Pence, National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. That means he has the blessing of the most aggressive militarist faction of U.S. imperialism.

One can hardly imagine any administration other than the one in Washington openly and unashamedly calling for the overthrow of a sovereign elected government.

Continued on page 11
Reclaiming the radical legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

The legacy of the historic Black Civil Rights and Freedom Movement, and the contributions of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., were remembered in the U.S. on Jan. 21 in thousands of small and large events. Noteworthy was the highlighting of the radical foundations of MLK Day by emphasizing Dr. King’s condemnation of the devastation of U.S. wars, racism, imperialism and capitalism.

In Detroit, Gail Walker, keynote speaker at the 48th annual Martin Luther King Day event, emphasized King’s radical legacy. Walker, executive director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization/Pastors for Peace, contrasted King’s actual, radical politics to the sanitized portrayal most people in the U.S. hear about. Walker also paid tribute to her late father, IFCO/PFP founder and previous director, the Rev. Lucius Walker.

Despite bitter cold leading to the cancellation of a planned march, hundreds attended the spirited indoor rally called by the Detroit MLK Day Committee and sponsored or endorsed by over 50 community and labor groups.

Keynote speaker Gail Walker emphasizes radical politics of Dr. King at Detroit celebration.
Women's marches hit all forms of bigotry

By Kathy Durkin

Tens of thousands of protesters marched in 89 cities around the world on Jan. 19 in conjunction with the Women’s March in Washington, D.C. The massive demonstration there two years ago — to protest Donald Trump’s inauguration as president — also coordinated actions across the U.S., marked the largest protests in U.S. history. Millions participated. In solidarity, actions were held around the globe.

This year, U.S. demonstrations took place from coast to coast to protest the racism, xenophobia and misogyny emanating from the White House and to demand rights for women, people of color, workers and gender nonconforming people. However, there were deliberately divisive racist and Islamophobic slogans against Women’s March Inc. leaders of color.

Spurious accusations were levied by the corporate media and Zionist and other right-wing forces against Tamika Mallory, Carmen Perez-Jordan and Linda Sarsour for alleged “antisemitism.” They were also criticized for supporting Palestinian republicanism. Sarsour, who is proudly Palestinian and Muslim, is recognized as a strong defender of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign exposing Israel as an oppressor of the Palestinian people.

Even though many march organizers around the country had supported women Democratic candidates running for Congress in the midterm elections, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) came in and dropped its sponsorship of the Washington demonstration in response to the attacks. A rival group, Women’s March Alliance, which organized separate marches in some cities, did not address racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia.

However, Planned Parenthood stated strongly, among many other groups, as did Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, who is Jewish.

Around the country, marchers lined up with one grouping or the other. In some cities, there were two actions. Unfortunately, a few march organizers from the Women’s March, Inc. mobilized stresses the importance of leadership by women of color in movements.

In an interview with CBS, Sarsour said the real controversy should be about a president who cages migrant children, shuts down the government, sides with white supremacists and is complicit with the war on Yemen. (Jan. 17)

Unity march in Washington

Tens of thousands of people gathered at Federal Plaza in Washington. Many in the multinational, multigender and multigenerational crowd traveled there to support inclusivity and equality for all women. The appointment of immigrant-bashing Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court had motivated some women to participate. Government workers showed their anger at the government shutdown and withheld paychecks.

A Jewish Woman of Color contingent led the march. Hand-held signs supported the Los Angeles “teachers’ strike” as well as im/migrant rights and women’s reproductive health. Some signs stressed that Black Lives Matter. Other placards opposed Trump’s border wall and the shutdown.

A group of high school students, wearing the hijab, chanted, “Refugees are welcome here!” Other Muslim women carried signs with various slogans. Speakers, mainly long-time activists and women of color, called for the shutdown to stop and federal workers to be paid. They raised many women’s issues and promoted the rights of LGBTQ people. The need for an intersectional women’s movement was stressed. Perez-Jordan reiterated that she and the other women leaders condemned anti-Semitism, homophobia and transphobia.

Mallory stated her solidarity with her Muslim, Latina, Asian, disabled and Jewish sisters.

Three Jewish speakers addressed the crowd: Abby Stein, a transgender woman and rabbi; Yavilah McCoy, founding member of Ayehva, an advocacy group for Jewish people of color; and April Baskin, a Women’s March, Inc. steering committee member.

Near the stage, Indigenous women held a banner calling attention to the number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirits.

Solidarity at New York’s Foley Square

In New York City, there were three protest tests. The Women’s Unity Rally held near government buildings in Foley Square drew between 4,000 and 5,000 people. It was organized by the Women’s March NYC, which was affiliated with the D.C. Women’s March Coalition. It brought in a myriad of issues, struggles and forces, including im/migrant rights, sexual abuse, and workers’ and LGBTQ rights.

The spirit of solidarity permeated the multinational, multigender, multigenerational crowd. Maya Edery of Jewish Voice for Peace stressed: “We should always be following the leadership of those most impacted by oppression, and this rally really uplifts the leadership of women of color, which is why I chose to be here.” (Gothamist.com, Jan. 20)

As Women’s March NYC director Agudah Okeyo spoke, a right-wing Zionist seized the microphone to disrupt the rally, but was quickly escorted offstage. Okeyo refused to be silenced.

Some political figures promoted voting as the means to make social change. Many other speakers stressed the need for an intersectional women’s movement, led by women of color, low-income workers, immigrants and LGBTQ people.

Representatives of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and other labor groups attended and spoke. Speakers denounced all forms of bigotry. A Palestinian-Jewish speaker linked Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people to U.S. abuse of migrants — and called for solidarity. Congressperson Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, well-known feminist organizer Gloria Steinem and actor Christine Lahti also spoke.

Workers World Party was there in a contingent with the People’s Power Assembly/ NYC, Gabriela, the International Working Women’s Day Coalition and International Women’s Alliance. With them were Honduran activists holding placards calling for solidarity with the Honduran resistance and honoring murdered Indigenous leader and environmentalist Berta Cáceres.

A powerful Non-March for Disabled women held inside Grand Central Station after the Unity Rally demanded rights for people with disabilities, including accessible subway transportation. Rise and Resist organized it and Women’s March NYC supported it. People’s Power Assembly/ NYC participated.

The Women’s March Alliance, the group that had split from the Women’s March Unity Rally over the bogus charge of anti-Semitism, was organized by Kimberly Dietz, co-founder of the New York-based Sachs vice president. It held a march on Manhattan’s Upper West Side.

Boston: ‘Until all voices are heard’

Gathered behind a beautiful red banner that declared, “No More Stolen Sisters!” the Indigenous people’s contingent, organized by the United American Indians of New England (UAINE), led the crowd of thousands through Boston’s streets. The theme of this Women’s March was “Until all voices are heard.”

UAINE leader Mahtown Munro opened the rally with an impassioned speech, focusing on the epidemic of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirits (MMIW/G2S). She connected this racist, anti-women violence to the rise of white supremacy, coupled with the construction of pipelines on Indigenous lands.

Munro further addressed the colonial borders that strangle migrant women and their families and demanded that “this genocidal U.S. government policy must be stopped.” She called for action to support Indigenous peoples’ resistance across the globe, from Palestine and Puerto Rico to Chile and British Columbia. She gave support to struggles for land rights by the Mashpee and Aquinnah Wampanoag people and the movement to eliminate racist depictions, from sports mascots to the bigoted Massachusetts flag.

Tigenerational crowd traveled there to protest the government shutdown and withheld paychecks. They denounced the Trump administration and sang the song of the American Indian Movement. Abigail Echo-Hawk, author of a book on Native lands.”

Denver: ‘No to Trump’s wall!’

About 80,000 people turned out at the Women’s March in Denver. Members of Indigenous nations and many other people of color and sexual orientations were among the mostly young protesters. Signs demanded equality, and many expressed anger at Trump and the Republican Party for their mistreatment of migrants and demands for government funds to erect a barrier wall on the southern border with Mexico.

Seattle: Indigenous women and girls matter!

In Seattle, a large contingent of Indigenous people rode the mile-long Woman’s March of 20,000, which was peppered with signs and chants on various issues.

The next day, 500 Indigenous people and their supporters marched to Seattle City Hall in the MMW/G2S March. Rally leader Earth-Feather Sovereign of the Colville Confederated Tribes said: “There’s an undeclared war against our people, especially toward our women, and especially from the corporate cartels which dig up and destroy Native lands.”

At the spirited rally, marchers drummed and Kristin Turgone, the organizer of the American Indian Movement. Abigail Echo-Hawk, author of a study by the Urban Indian Health Institute, reported on the thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women, adding that many city police departments do not classify Indigenous women in compiling their reports.

Contributors to this article include Jim McMahan, Monica Moorehead, Viviana Weinstein and the Workers World Boston bureau.
By Ted Kelly
Philadelphia

Supporters of former Black Panther and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal held a press conference on Jan. 15 to determine the highly suspicious, delayed release of new evidence related to Abu-Jamal’s case by the office of Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner. Among those present were news media and activists in West Philadelphia, Mike Africa Jr., son of recently freed MOVE 9 member Debbie and Mike Africa Sr., and attorney Rachel Wolkenstein, who represented Abu-Jamal in a 1995 appeal, made clear what Mumia’s advocates have known for decades: Authorities are hiding evidence to keep this innocent man behind bars.

As Workers World reported earlier (“Philadelphia DA reveals hidden Mumia evidence after court ruling,” Jan. 14), the DA’s office made the fantastical claim that on Dec. 28—one day after Philadelphia Commonwealth Publics Judge Leon Tucker’s ruling granting Abu-Jamal new rights to appeal his unjust conviction—Krasner personally found secret boxes filled with evidence related to the case in a previously “inaccessible” storage room while looking for office furniture in the fourth floor of the DA’s office building.

The boxes were marked “Mumia” or “Mumia Abu-Jamal” on one side and as “confidential” or “confidential and privileged” on the other, according to the DA’s office. District Attorney Edward McCann, who had close ties with the Fraternal Order of Police, leaked the story.

In an interview with his assistants then kept this bombshell revelation secret for a full six days before officially notifying Judge Tucker and Abu-Jamal’s current attorneys, Judith Ritter and Sam Spital, that these hidden documents had been uncovered. They offered no explanation for the delay.

Midway through the press conference, it was learned that Tucker had issued an amended Post Conviction Relief Act order one day earlier so the Commonwealth must verify by a supervising attorney the location and status of boxes 1 through 29 referenced in the DA’s Jan. 3 correspondence. Tucker further stipulated that his court would maintain jurisdiction over the stolen evidence and previously discovery orders in April and June of 2017 would remain “perpetual.”

‘Evidence of cover-up of a frame-up’

Rachel Wolkenstein stated: “These boxes were secreted away. They were hidden. There’s only one reason you hide boxes. You hide them because you are hiding evidence of Mumia’s innocence … evidence of the cover-up of a frame-up.”

Tucker’s ruling hinges on the involvement of former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice and DA Ronald Castille, a virulent racist and hanging judge. Castille’s desire to execute alleged “cop killers” was so notorious that he became the subject of a U.S. Supreme Court case in 1995. By law, Pennsylvania must set new legal precedent that it is unconstitutional for a judge to rule on an appeal in a case they were previously involved in.

As Wolkenstein explained: “Judge Tucker found that this has the appearance of bias and impropriety, and was as such a violation of due process rights to have what’s considered a fair and impartial tribunal whether at the trial level or at the appellate level. This is a very broad finding that goes way beyond Mumia.”

The ruling will allow Abu-Jamal to re-appeal his conviction before a new panel of the PA Supreme Court on all the issues that were brought up over 20 years of litigation, including being denied a jury of his peers when African Americans were excluded from the jury and being denied the right of representation—even the self-representation he requested.

Witnesses in the case were coerced, threatened or given promises to get them to lie outright about Abu-Jamal. Wolkenstein noted: “The U.S. Justice Department as well as then District Attorney Ed Rendell were absolutely personally and politically involved in the falsification of the confessions that Mumia supposedly made and did not make when he was critically ill and in the hospital and could not speak.”

Tucker’s ruling means that all this flagrant misconduct can be brought before an appellate judge. And it’s clear that Philadelphia DA Krasner has been with- holding evidence that could aid in that appeal.

Black Panther Alumni Association member Paula Peebles; Deacon Matthew Smith with the National Action Network; Sister Empress Dr. Philipe Chionese, organi- zer of the Million Women’s March; and Rowan University Professor Sandra Joy also spoke at the press conference.

Michael Africa Jr. and Sister Empress Dr. Philipe Chionese at Jan. 15 press conference for Mumia.

Peelies, whose organization supported Krasner’s campaign for district attorney in 2017, stated: “DA Krasner needs to come forward and do what’s right. When he was campaigning, he came to the African-American community for support. We were there when he needed votes, so Krasner, return the favor.” She urged people to confront Krasner when ever he speaks in public and demand he do right by Mumia.

“Never before has there been more abundant evidence of the cover-up of the frame-up. The charges against Mumia Abu-Jamal must be dismissed immediately and our brother must be released. Every day that this case languishes in the arcane bourgeois legal process means another day has passed that an innocent man sits, sleeps and lives in a cage.”

For nearly 40 years, Mumia has been the voice of the voiceless, echoing from within the darkest dungeons of this prison nation. The time has long since come for Mumia Abu-Jamal to be free, so his voice may be heard even clearer out side the walls that now confine him.

**By Ted Kelly
Frankville, Penn.**

When Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf ordered an unprecedented statewide lockdown of prisons last summer, the state’s Department of Corrections said the crisis was prompted by prison staff becoming sick from illicit drugs somehow slipping into facilities. The authorities said, as noted in the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Moreover, prisoners are never notiﬁed when their outback mail has been opened or rejected. Grounds for rejection are sometimes as simple as writing the recipient’s name incorrectly on the envelope. Commonly, letters are sent back by Smart Communications without any indication of the reason why.

**Lockdown measures persist**

In Frankville State Correctional Facility in central Pennsylvania, the lobby and visiting room look much the same today as they did last July. Rows of vending machines that were previously stocked with snacks and drinks for visitors to pur- chase and consume with their loved ones stand empty, six months after their con- tents were emptied by correctional ofﬁcers for “safety reasons.” No prisoners have been allowed to take photographs with their visitors since the lockdown, either. While these lockdown measures were supposed to be lifted after 90 days, just in time for inmates to break bread and take pictures with their families for the fall and winter holidays, the state arbi- trarily extended the ban. Photos and items won’t be allowed back into visitors’ room until sometime this Spring, authorities say. And the microwave that was in the visiting room to heat up commissary food items like small frozen pizzas has been permanently removed.

**Prison activist for 25 years speaks out**

“They’ve made the innocent pay the piper for everyone else,” says Bryan Arroyo, folding his hands in front of him. “Including my family.”

Arroyo is an indefatigable 47-year-old prison activist. Mumia Abu-Jamal once dubbed him “the world’s first jailhouse environmentalist” for his successful campaign to cancel a $100 million plan to build a toxic coal plant near the Frackville facility. Twenty-ﬁve years ago he was sen- tenced to life without parole for a crime he didn’t commit. He has led a boycott of the new third-party mailing system, as well as against the draconian new visitation policy. As he has said previously, “I’m not going to subject my grandchildren to this.” (“Inmates in Pennsylvania prisons launch boycott of prison profiteers,” WW, Sept. 25)
FEDERAL SHUTDOWN:

Who gets paid and who doesn’t

By Betsey Piette

As the longest federal government shutdown in U.S. history enters month two, and Trump and congressional leaders appear incapable of resolving the crisis they have created, and unwilling to do more than repeatedly trade barbs or blame each other for the crisis. But then, unlike some 800,000 federal workers, neither Trump nor members of Congress have been financially hurt by the shutdown.

Stories of the president and his office staff, including appointees, members of Congress and Supreme Court justices, are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and will be uninterrupted throughout the shutdown. While some Congress people have said they will forgo being paid during the shutdown, it is their choice to make.

No one is forcing Trump, his staff or the members of Congress to work without pay or risk losing their jobs. None are living paycheck-to-paycheck like 78 percent of all U.S. workers, according to a Jan. 11 report by Forbes.com. No one in the White House or in the halls of Congress faces the loss of food and housing security resulting from the extended shutdown.

In fact, a majority of the members of Congress, including both Republicans and Democrats, are millionaires. In 2016 the median net worth of U.S. Congress members was $1.2 million and continuing to grow, at the same time that net incomes for most workers in the U.S. were on the decline. The recent November election may have resulted in some lower-income people being elected as representatives in the House, but by and large it remains a millionaires’ club.

The majority of political appointees are also guaranteed to be paid by the Office of Personnel Management, which considers them to be “entitled to the pay of their offices solely by virtue of their status as an officer, rather than by virtue of the hours they work.” While 400,000 federal workers are forced to work without pay, political appointees get paid whether or not they show up for work.

War and espionage essential to ruling class

The administrators of this capitalist state aren’t the only ones whose incomes are protected from the impact of the extended shutdown. In September 2018, legislation was passed to guarantee funding for a few select programs considered “essential” to the capitalist state.

This advance funding protected two key areas of state repression: the National Security Agency and the Department of Defense, which funds the military. Because 43,000 Coast Guard employees fall under the Department of Homeland Security, and not Defense, they were not extended the same protection so they are not receiving paychecks.

Trump announced Jan. 17 that all U.S. employers and other State Department employees would be called back to work, as money had somehow been found to guarantee their salaries. Given recent stock market fluctuations, it appears that Trump wants to assure his friends on Wall Street that he can protect their overseas investments.

In the 2018 budget, and proposed again for 2019, the military brass received everything they wanted and more — $700 billion in 2018 and $716 billion this year. Contrary to Trump’s recent claims, this increased funding is not going to raise GIs’ pay. It is lining the pockets of top executives of weapons contractors like Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin and more. This benefit for the rich comes on top of massive cuts in the tax rate for corporations.

Assistance for food, housing, water called ‘nonessential’

While programs like WIC programs, housing assistance, Indigenous people’s health care, and protection of food and water are treated as “nonessential” services, relying on the entire civilian population is seen as “vital” to ruling-class interests. The NSA, the U.S. government’s surveillance tool, is also exempt from the shutdown. Wiretapping phones, collecting mega amounts of electronic communications personal data, and tracking the whereabouts of people through their cell phones are all seen as “vital” to the interests of protecting the capitalist class.

The budget of the U.S. government’s other major spy network — the Central Intelligence Agency — is largely hidden from the public record, so it’s not possible to know if any staff (other than janitors, etc.) are impacted by the shutdown. It is probably safe to guess that the answer is no.

Shutdown = war on workers

In reality, Trump’s government shutdown is a war on workers, and not just those employed by the federal government. Meeting the needs of the population for food security and safety, health care, education, housing, employment and public safety are not considered “essential services” by the capitalist class.

To Trump and members of the bourgeois ruling class, the functions they value most, and have sustained funding for, are the tools of state repression, both domestic and international.

The shutdown lays bare the true reason for the existence of the capitalist state.

Reclaiming the radical legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.

The effort to restore affirmative action through ballot initiative I-1000 was summarized by former State Rep. Jesse Wineberry. He announced that 380,000 signatures had been gathered and approved to bring I-1000 before the legislature and the voters.

Some of the most blatant forms of discrimination allowed since the overthrow of affirmative action include the loss of 83.5 billion in contract jobs for people of color and women. As part of community pushback, the march was preceded by a career opportunities fair, two dozen activism workshops and a rally.

A broad coalition of activists, workers, students and community members came out in Oakland, Calif., in the fifth annual event to “Reclaim the Radical Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.” Organized by the Anti-Poverty Project, the event’s multiple actions commemorated the 50th anniversary of the police murder of Oscar Grant, a young Black man who died at the hands of Bay Area Rapid Transit police. Grant’s murder sparked resistance to police terror in the entire Bay Area.

Beginning with a sunrise ceremony, the day included a militant march through downtown Oakland past the police department, city jail and court buildings. Led by a sound truck driven by APPT activists and supporters such as Third World Resistance, the march echoed with chants against white supremacy and racism. Speakers tied together the fight against racism, the migrant rights movement and the growing struggle against gentrification in the city.

Later at Oscar Grant Plaza, people’s assemblies were held on a multitude of resistance issues. Organizers occupied the plaza for 10 hours to mark the anniversary of Grant’s murder.

Contributing to this article were Judy Greenspan, Martha Greenwatt and Jim McMahon.
Oakland teachers ready to strike

By Judy Greenspan
Oakland, Calif.

Jan. 20 — As a large banner was hoisted today on the walls of the union headquarters, President Keith Brown of the Oakland Education Association announced a strike vote will take place from Jan. 29 to Feb. 1. The banner read: “Oakland teachers ready to strike!”

On Jan. 18, hundreds of Oakland teachers took their contract fight to the streets to demand that the school district bargain fairly and meet the demands of teachers, students and the community. Their “sick-out” was a one-day wildcat strike action — not authorized by the Oakland Education Association — held by high school and middle school teachers despite threats from district heads of retaliation and no pay.

Teachers and students from all over Oakland rallied early in the morning at Oakland Technical High School. A large contingent came from East Oakland schools. After picketing for an hour, the demonstrators — led by Fremont High School, one of the schools on the district’s closure list — took off for the school district office in downtown Oakland.

Many passing cars honked their horns in solidarity, showing community support for Oakland teachers is high.

The march ended in front of Oakland Unified School District headquarters. Teachers and students began a strong picket line there that spilled over into the street, and a speak-out and teach-in of students and teachers was held in front of the district building.

Kelsie Salter, a teacher at Fremont, asked, “Do you know what’s supposed to be a right in this country? Public education?” She went on to criticize the privatization of education and the refusal of the system to adequately fund public schools.

Teachers from more than a dozen schools addressed the crowd, describing their poorly funded schools and deteriorating working conditions.

While the rally was going on, students began tapping signs and post its on the doors of the district offices. Students and community members pounded on drums, chanting, “We are Oakland, stop the school closures” and “The people, united, will never be defeated.” Others chanted slogans on the sidewalk in front of the building.

Their demands mirrored the bargaining points of the OEA. Teachers in Oakland earn at least $11,000 less than teachers in other Bay Area school districts. Lower wages are forcing many teachers to leave Oakland and move to other areas where they can afford to live.

Contract demands include smaller class sizes, more school nurses and a smaller students-to-counselor ratio.

The wildcat action also protested district plans to close 24 public schools — most of them in the flats of East Oakland. No schools are targeted to close in the more privileged Oakland hills.

Teach er s and students stage sick-out

Teachers at Roots International Academy, a public middle school, recently received notice that their school would be closed in June and both students and teachers would be consolidated with another school. This was done without consultation with the teachers, students or neighboring community.

Roots is a neighborhood school. Roots teachers and students participated in today’s sick-out. Students testified about how their teachers have supported them and helped them be successful. Roots teacher Kelsie Salter said the Jan. 23 school board meeting when the school closure will be under discussion.

The sick-out was an indication of the tremendous energy and potential of teacher and student activism against attacks on public education. After the sick-out, hundreds of teachers, students and community members, led by local artists, made signs and banners at the OEA headquarters. The message from this weekend is “keep teachers in Oakland” and “Oakland teachers are ready to strike.”

Greenspan is an Oakland middle school teacher and OEA member who participated in the Jan. 18 sick-out.
Hundreds rally outside auto show to save jobs

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

Detroit’s well-heeled had to pass through a gauntlet of hundreds of protesters this year to get to the annual black-tie event known as the North American International Auto Show. Before it opens to the public, the show hosts a “charity preview.” Billed as “the hottest night this winter,” it allows attendees to get a sneak peek at the latest new vehicles — if they can afford the $400 ticket.

The protest on Jan. 18, called by the Detroit Coalition for a Green New Deal, came together in response to General Motors’ announcement of plant closings in the U.S. and Canada.

In addition to demanding that the plants in the states of Michigan, Ohio and Maryland as well as in Ontario, Canada, not be shuttered, the coalition is demanding “green jobs.” Protest organizers advocate the use of “emis- nent domain” to seize the Detroit Hamtramck Assembly Plant (DHAM), not only to save jobs but to combat climate change by building green products such as solar panels, wind turbines, and buses and trains for mass transit.

GM plans to discontinue its greenest vehi- cle, the electric hybrid Volt, built at DHAM, in favor of highly profitable trucks and sport utility vehicles.

The coalition, initiated by Democratic Socialists of America, also included Autoworker Caravan, a rank-and-file auto worker organization that has demonstrated outside the auto show on many occasions. Over two dozen organizations endorsed the action. Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib spoke at the rally.

Both the United Auto Workers union and Canada’s UNIFOR were invited to participate in the protest, but declined. The UAW held a candlelight vigil a block away from the show prior to the coalition rally. Many autoworkers and community sup- porters attended the vigil and then marched as a group to the auto show. Chanting “GM got bailed out, we got sold out,” they massed right outside the doors to the show at one point.

Members of CSP Contluas, one of the GM workers’ unions in Brazil, also came to Detroit to attend the protest and various meetings. This union has militantly and successfully fought mass layoffs.

The same day as the protest, Oshawa GM workers drove around their plant and stopped trucks from getting in and out for two hours. A day earlier UNIFOR members at Inteva, a low-er-wage parts firm that supplies the Oshawa plant and DHAM, held a one-day walkout to protest the closings.

Workers are not going to let GM destroy their livelihoods without a fight.

Brazilian autoworkers join protest outside Detroit event.

A slice of Hell: Working at Villa Italian Kitchen

By Mike Kuhnebeck
Des Moines, Iowa

The first taste of Hell in my working life was in the fall of 2012 when I was hired as a part-time dishwasher and cook at Villa Italian Kitchen in the Merle Hay Mall food court.

Villa opened its first location in New York City in 1964 before expanding into a national franchise. For many the restaurant had been a hot spot in the mall, but Merle Hay had fallen on hard times.

Retail suffered after the financial meltdown of 2008, and the prevalence of online shop- ping continues to damage retail. This has led to store closings, layoffs and fewer customers.

Many restaurants were expected to work more for less and with a smile.

By age 23, I had graduated college with a journalism degree and student loan debt. Job opportunities were scarce, and I needed work. A couple of my friends working at Villa helped me secure an interview with the man- ager and I was hired that same day.

I was grateful, at first. As a former customer, it did seem strange that the restaurant rarely kept the same staff for more than a month. Not long after I started, I realized why they didn’t stick around.

Entering ‘Hell’s Kitchen’

The kitchen was hardly built for efficiency, let alone safety.

The cramped kitchen would overheat from the pizza ovens displayed out front and old stoves hidden in the back. A massive steel table, a giant freezer, electronic dough mix- ers, overpacked cupboards and two large sinks leaking water made it difficult to move around.

Supplies were stored on a large space above the freezer. The only way to reach these items was to climb a rickety ladder with rusted rungs. I always feared using the ladder in case the bottom steps gave out or I lost my balance, potentially causing me to hit the floor or crash onto a hot stove.

The first time I burned my hand during a busy lunch service, I grabbed the first aid kit with my left hand from the wall and stuck it in the other hand. It was empty, with the exception of a few bandage scraps.

Above the first aid kit was a sign depicting a stick figure falling backward. It was a mocking reminder of how bosses blame workers if they are injured on the job, calling them “careless,” meanwhile ignoring the dangerous conditions and thebreakneck pace demanded of kitchen workers.

The top reasons for youth worker injury and illness, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, are unsafe equipment, inadequate safety training, inade- quate supervision, pressure to work faster and stressful conditions.

As defined by OSHA, workplace hazards continued on page 8

On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

Farmworker walkout stops pay cut

The 1,800 mostly Latinx farmworkers who pick Halo mandarin oranges and clementines for the Wonderful Fruit Company in Kern County, Calif., have successfully forced the houses to retract a pay cut — which would have reduced their earnings from $53 a bin to $48. On Friday, Jan. 11, these contract workers walked off the job. They showed up on Monday to protest at the Halo plant in Delano. (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 14)

Workers won by spreading word of their protest on social media and also inviting the United Farm Workers to join the picket. After four days, the company agreed to restore the higher pay rate. UFW leader Armando Elizares noted: “This is another example of how when farm workers organ- ize together to defend themselves, we win!” Before ending the strike, the workers announced that they “stand in solidarity with the United Teachers of L.A. and their strike for a fair union contract.”

General Mills workers vote union

The 520 sanitation, production and maintenance workers at the General Mills cereal plant in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, voted Jan. 6 to join the Department Store Union (RWDSU) Local 110 after they realized the company was whit- tling away their benefits and using temp agencies to exploit cheaper labor.

Having the company cut the number of workers’ absences from five to three days a year eroded their health care coverage. (Des Moines Register, Jan. 10)

In a Local 110 statement, General Mills worker Tim Sarver said, “I’m proud to say I’m now part of the RWDSU and I know everyone who works alongside me knows that representation from the union will change our future here. It’s about time General Mills workers had a real seat at the table with the company and we’re ready to get to work on a fair contract.” The RWDSU, with 100,000 members nationwide, is affiliated with the Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) and represents workers at a nearby Quaker Oats plant.

Florida McDonald’s workers strike for safe working conditions

After a New Year’s Eve attack on a McDonald’s cashier in St. Petersburg, cashiers, cooks and custodians there and in Tampa and Orlando restaur- ants held a wildcat strike on Jan. 8, in partnership with Fight for $15 and Black Lives Matter. They demanded store security protocols, protection for workers and a voice for the mostly Black and Brown women workforce. Gail Rogers, a Tampa worker who helped organize the walkout, told WFLA-TV, “I’m going on strike because at McDonald’s we’re subjected to all types of behavior that has no place at work — from physical attacks and armed rob- beries, to sexual harassment, to racial discrimination. We won’t back down until McDonald’s takes responsibility for protecting all workers on the job.” (Newsweek, Jan. 8)

NYC area car washers collect stolen wages

Some 88 car wash workers, including immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nigeria, Mali and El Salvador, will receive as much as $90,000 in back pay as part of a more than $5 million wage theft settlement with the owner of four car washes in Manhattan, the Bronx and Elizabeth, N.J. The men worked outside with chemicals and water under brutal con- ditions in all kinds of weather, with no meal or rest breaks, for $4 to $5 an hour — well below the minimum wage. The settlement covers employment from 2007 through 2014, when court-appointed trustees were put in place to manage the car washes and pay a legal wage. (amny.com, Dec. 20)

Frontier pilots fight for, win five-year contract

After almost three years of contentious negotiations, Frontier Airlines and its pilots, represented by the Air Line Pilots Association, signed a five- year working agreement on Jan. 10, which went into effect Jan. 16. The con- tract includes an average 53 percent across-the-board pay increase, along with a $75,000 ratification bonus. “Frontier pilot compensation now reflects the pilot market,” said Tracy Smith, chair of ALPA’s Frontier Master Executive Council. “Our new contract retains superior work rules, sched- uling flexibility and improves our retirement, benefits and job security.”
Homeless through a logo or company colors." It is not allowed if the uniform identifies the business from an employee's paycheck is not permitted to work part time.

"Twenty-five birthdays, 23 Christmases, 25 New Year's Eves. Twenty-five of a lot of things. If there's somebody who could say 'I've lived to the age of 85,' I've lived to the age of 85.' Instead, Arroyo is intent on freeing himself and freeing everyone subject to the form of modern slavery called mass incarceration.

"For that reason, I am calling on everyone to contact their local leaders and representatives to support SB842 and HB1835. This is an all-hands-on-deck moment. I want better for everyone else because I want better for myself."

Arroyo also expressed solidarity and support for Philadelphia rapper Meek Mill, who was recently a victim of the "capricious and arbitrary" U.S. justice system and released on "extraordinary relief" after his arresting officer's history of rampant abuse and evidence tampering was revealed. Since then, Mill has voiced support for prison reform movements. Arroyo says this is the perfect campaign for Mill and other prominent musicians and activists to join.

"Meek, it's time to put your money where your mouth is."

Meanwhile, Arroyo continues to try to support his fellow inmates and be a good father behind bars. In the 25 years since he was unjustly incarcerated, Bryant has become a grandfather. He tells stories of how he had to meet his daughter behind a bulletproof windscreen during her 18th birthday—obvious retaliation against the Arroyo family because of his advocacy for other prisoners.

He relates how photos of him and his daughter would sometimes be confiscated by male prison guards. A disgusted but faultless calm Arroyo once retorted to guards: "I'm not going to tell you why you're taking the photos away. You tell her why." An abashed guard returned the photos.

Arroyo also declares the sexist treatment of female visitors who are forced to remove their bras and undergo numerous body scans, "It's cruel. It's unusual. It's perverted," Arroyo says.

A two-strike policy where individuals who are caught passing contraband face the indefinite suspension of their visits rights. The third-party mailing system could likewise be imposed in specific cases of misconduct, Arroyo says.

"I don't need to tell you what the threat of mass incarceration for others," says Arroyo, who speaks often of his inexhaustible love for his daughter, Genesis Hernandez, whom he had to "raise from between the bars."

"There are times I think nobody's paying attention except her. But whenever there is a moment that, for whatever reason, you feel alone or abandoned or trapped in an uncomfortable situation, you are given a reminder of the people God has given you."

The sound of his daughter's laughter, Arroyo says, always gives him that reminder.

End prison slavery — aka 'life without parole'

Arroyo's newest campaign is dedicated to freeing all lifers from prison. Last year, he was a co-sponsor of the legislation that is now Senate Bill 942 and House Bill 135. This is an all-hands-on-deck effort it has on prisoners.

"My wall is bare now. And I don't have any tape to put the stuff back up. But that's okay. Because I'm getting out of here, too. Slowly but surely."

Free Meek, Free Mumia! Free em' all! ☐

A slice of Hell: Working at Villa Italian Kitchen

Continued from page 7

for food service workers include hot cooking equipment, sharp objects, heavy lifting, slippery floors and electricity. My coworkers and I were exposed to these hazards on a daily basis.

The hourly wage was $7.50, just 25 cents above the state minimum. Even then it was not enough to support me, the constant stress and lack of sleep led to physical and mental health problems.

The other restaurants in the food court ran similar schedules—erratic, randomly assigned and seldom repeated. For me, the constant stress and lack of sleep led to physical and mental health problems.

It turns out that I was not alone—millions of workers share these grievances.

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Villa at Merle Hay Mall has since closed, leaving only three locations in Iowa. The experience did not benefit me as an employee; it did educate me as a worker-journalist.

We conquered.

"You can't find these news reports and analysis elsewhere! We cover peoples' fightback from coast to coast. It could be a rally for trans rights in New York City or a celebration of Chicano culture in San Diego. Or about Black women call center workers in Mississippi fighting for a raise and a union. Or Indigenous history at the annual National Day of Mourning in Massachusetts.

Life imprisonment—for profit—is the crime

Continued from page 4

"No matter glass, concrete or steel. Nothing can hold back my love for my daughter and her children. I conquered. We conquered."

Shortly before our last meeting, Arroyo's cell was shaken down by prison guards. After a late-night shouting match in which he abusively insulted officers who arbirarily confiscated, corrections officers took down the photos and inspirational posters he'd hung on the walls. His last cellmate was transferred to a different facility and no one has replaced him yet. It's the first time Arroyo has been alone in a cell for over 25 years.

"It feels foreign and awkward. It's weird, being alone," Arroyo says. He prides himself on never having been thrown in the hole (solitary confinement), even after a quarter of a century. He has a monk's calmness and the decades-long foresight of what Mumia calls a "long-distant revolutionary." Being alone, he thinks about solitary confinement and the effect it has on prisoners.

"My wall is bare now. And I don't have any tape to put the stuff back up. But that's okay. Because I'm getting out of here, too. Slowly but surely."

Free Meek! Free Mumia! Free em' all! ☐

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"Meek, it's time to put your money where your mouth is."

Skeptics have long said that "organizing the food service industry can't be done" or "hourly wages of $15 or higher are unrealistic." But food service workers are proving the skeptics wrong. The Fight for $15 movement is only getting stronger.

Thanks to these ongoing efforts, over 5.3 million workers in 19 states and 21 cities will see an increase in the minimum wage this year. Nonunion workers are organizing and more people are joining this struggle every day.

Workers are hungry for revolutionary change. ☐

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Massive strikes grip Tunisia, Morocco

By G. Dunkel

Around 700,000 Tunisian workers—public employees and workers in state-owned companies—carried out a one-day general strike on Jan. 17. They want a raise that keeps up with inflation and an end to the meddling of the International Monetary Fund. In Morocco, 150,000 municipal employees joined civil servants working for the district and other local government institutions in observing a 24-hour strike to protest what they called “catastrophic” working conditions. Negotiations between the local governments and the unions representing the workers had broken down.

In Tunisia, the strike was called by the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), the largest and most powerful trade union confederation in the country. In Morocco, the strike was called by the Moroccan Workers’ Union (UMT), the Democratic Federation of Labor, the Democratic Federation of Labor and the General Union of Moroccan Workers.

Abdennacer Jamal el-Khabbouli, deputy secretary-general of the Democratic Organization of Local Municipalities, said dialogue with the government had been strained since 2007.

“Many agreements reached with the government in 2007 have not been implemented,” he said. UMT said in a statement that the strike was “a protest against the targeting of trade union freedoms, the right to organize trade unions, the delay in social dialogue and the infringement on workers’ rights.” (Al Jazeera, Jan. 18) All the unions involved in the strike asserted that workers need a substantial raise, even though inflation is only 1.5 percent, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The union alliance in Morocco underlined its demands: “Despite the appeals launched by the unions, the minister of the interior has remained resistant to the demands of the working class.”

In Tunisia, the UGTT held a number of rallies, even in remote cities on the edge of the Sahara. Rail, bus and air traffic stopped while schools, ports, hospitals, government offices and state media were affected.

The IMF, which advanced Tunisia a $2.8 billion loan in December 2016, has been putting pressure on the Tunisian government to tighten spending on public service workers, which accounts for 15.5 percent of government outlays. According to the IMF, this is one of the highest levels in the world.

Sami Tahri, deputy secretary-general of the Popular Party, joined the demonstration, carrying signs and banners in support of the Palestinian struggle. Activists distributed flyers about Palestine and Palestinian prisoners to passersby, including information about the case of Ahmad Sa’adat, the imprisoned general secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Sa’adat was arrested 17 years ago by the Palestinian Authority in the context of “security cooperation” with the Israelis.

In 2006, he was seized from a Palestinian Authority prison in Jericho, where he was being held under U.S. and British guards, and brought before an Israeli military court. There he was sentenced to 30 years in prison for leading a prohibited organization and “incitement.”

The PFLP is a major organization in Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation. From behind bars, Sa’adat has been a leader in both the Palestinian prisoners’ movement and the Palestinian national liberation movement. He stands alongside nearly 6,000 fellow Palestinian political prisoners as a symbol of international terrorism to capitalism, racism, apartheid and colonization.

On Jan. 24, Khaled Barakat, the international coordinator of the Campaign to Free Ahmad Sa’adat, will be speaking at a forum and discussion about the campaign hosted by the International Action Center and Workers World Party. The forum will be held at 147 West 24th St. in Manhattan and starts at 6:30 p.m.

Free Ahmad Sa’adat & All Palestinian prisoners!

By G. Dunkel

As one of the events opening the International Week of Action to Free Ahmad Sa’adat and all Palestinian prisoners, a protest was organized here on Jan. 15 under the famous arch in Washington Square Park. It was called by Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network. The crowd chanted, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!” and other slogans in support of justice for Palestine. A number of left parties and organizations, including Workers World Party, joined the demonstration, carrying signs and banners in support of the Palestinian struggle. Activists distributed flyers about Palestine and Palestinian prisoners to passersby, including information about the case of Ahmad Sa’adat, the imprisoned general secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Sa’adat was arrested 17 years ago by the Palestinian Authority in the context of “security cooperation” with the Israelis.

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Appeal for Iranian journalist held in U.S.

By Taryn Fivik

On Jan. 13, U.S.-born journalist Marzieh Hashemi was arrested at St. Louis Airport while on her way to visit a sick family member in Denver. Hashemi, an African-American Muslim, has not been charged with a crime.

Yet she was transported from St. Louis to Washington, D.C., in chains, stripped of her clothing except for a t-shirt to wear, and offered pork meals in a disgust- ing effort by her kidnappers to humiliate and degrade her. Meanwhile, the U.S. government served subpoenas to her and degrade her. Meanwhile, the U.S.

It is no unusual thing for a Black woman, or any Muslim woman for that matter, to be treated in such a disgusting and criminal way by the so-called U.S. justice system. Some advocates voice legitimate concern that Hashemi’s work on the Black Lives Matter movement is what earmarked her for state repression. It is also likely that her kidnapping and detention are part of the ongoing effort by her kidnappers to humiliate and degrade her. Meanwhile, the U.S. government served subpoenas to her and degrade her. Meanwhile, the U.S.

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We urge readers to sign them. Let’s not stop until Marzieh is free! Hands off Marzieh, her family, and the Islamic Republic of Iran!
Where are leaders of the left in the current struggles in France?

By Rémy Herrera

Paris

Dec. 28 — Many Yellow Vests say it over and over again: They have no leaders, and they don’t want them. Spontaneity has its virtues, and its charms, certainly, but also its limits and its illusions — carrying the most terrible dangers. Contemporary history has shown this time and again, from the German Spartacist Revolution of 1918-19 to the uprisings of the “Arab Spring” in 2011. If any popular uprising is to lead to concrete social progress, what it needs — in addition to the energy and confidence of the people — is unity, coordinated by a partisan fighting organization with a political program.

However, the least we can say is that in today’s France, during a generalized repression, divergences among progressive forces are extreme and sustained by the often more personal than political quarrels among its leaders. This is a tragic division of the left, which completelyimens. Adding to that paradox is that this situation exists at the very moment when a popular consensus is building to reject not only neoliberal policies, but also President Emmanuel Macron himself.

“France Unbowed”

The leader best placed in the internal battle on the left is probably Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the current head of France Unbowed (France Insoumise). Mélenchon had a significant accomplishment in 2017: when he won nearly 20 percent of the votes cast in the first round of the presidential elections in April 2017. That was barely four points less than Macron, the candidate who was allowed to move into the presidential Elysée Palace.

The Communist Party, despite some tenacious dissent, chose to rally to Mélenchon’s flag. In fact, he only lacked votes of his "old friends" to come in first. These were, ironically, the Socialists on the one hand (whose candidate Benoît Hamon obtained 6 percent of the vote), and the Trotskyists — Nathalie Arthaud of Lutte Ouvrière who got 1 percent and Philippe Poutou of the New Anti- Capitalist Party who got 0.6 percent.

With this electoral defeat swallowed and pain- fully digested, Mélenchon was quick to seize the opportunity provided by the emergence of the Yellow Vests mobilization. It is true that he had a great need to regain his popularity and reputation tarnished by a series of legal charges related in particular to his campaign accounts, which the corporate media enjoyed publicizing. Also an internal strug- gle affected the leadership of his own movement, causing the resignation of several lieutenants. As a result, after some hesitation, as early as November he posted on social networks his support for the Yellow Vests and his intention to march among them — but "discretely."

Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s political role has been, in recent years, eminently positive for the collective left in France. And even beyond. His real talents as a public speaker have brought crowds together, re-inspir- ing and giving them, set them in motion, given them hope and instilled in them once again the idea that pro- gressive change for the country is not only necessary, but doable above all possible.

Correctly, and better than anyone else, he has formulated, sys- tematized and rad- icalized the Marxism of "the system."

Finally, he has talked again about international solidarity, especially with regard to struggles in Latin America. In these particularly difficult times, it is fortunate for the French left that a politician like him has been around.

However, do not forget that Jean-Luc Mélenchon for more than 32 years was a member — general counselor, secretary of the — of a Socialist Party that betrayed absolutely every- thing that could be betrayed regarding the hopes of leftist people. Moreover, his deeds chained the country to a ultra-capitalist European Union — hidebound, pro-NATO, anti-democratic and hell-bent to destroy national sovereignty and the remaining social gains of the working class.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, one of his close collaborators reminds us that for a time he was active in the International Communist movement, which gave France such "remarkable" men as a Lionel Jospin — a Socialist Prime Minister who privatized as much as the right had done before him — or a Jean-Christophe Cambadélis — the "ex-right arm of the "lamentable" Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

As he himself likes to repeat, Mélenchon’s model remains François Mitterrand — former president of France who was domesticated with youthful charisma with a special award from Marshal Pétain, head of the Vichy puppet regime under German occupation during World War II. Mitterrand is remembered as the one who introduced neoliberal conservatism in France, on a par with Margaret Thatcher in Britain or Ronald Reagan in the U.S. Mitterrand implemented the “unemployment challenge” which was implemented from 1983 onward by Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, a “socialist.” When he became president, Mitterrand and his party even went through a period of socialist intervention in the economy, but he agitated to go to war against Syria! And it is “om- rade Fabius” whom Mélenchon chose to support as the Socialist Party candidate in the 2017 presi- dential elections.

We understand that there is very little risk of seeing Mélenchon as the head of France Unbowed leading a possible break with capitalism. He is the leader of a party who in 2003 called for the rejection of the Maastricht Treaty, establishing the European Union, because he thought he saw it as “the begin- ning of a citizens’ Europe.” You can make some mistakes in life, but if you do it almost all the time, it sticks.

French Communist Party and others

As the heir to a long history of heroic anti-fas- cist and anti-colonial resistance, the French Communist Party (PCF) retains a significant mil- itant base, still in the vanguard of the fight against its ability, several municipalities with popular and complicated sociological profiles.

But not in the internal battle on the left, which is largely reformist and whose strategy is narrowly restricted to the electoral arena, has led the PCF on the most flattened and dull path, tailing the social democrats and replacing class struggle with the "struggle for posts."

Once “at the vanguard of the proletariat,” the PCF is now under the control of leaders without convic- tions. They follow the lead of social democrats who are themselves completely rudderless and who have become, for the most part, the worst neoliberalists. The myriad of tiny parties that are authentic or communist and that revolve around the PCF — and against its leadership — are torn between being “for” or “against” Yellow Vests. In other words, their various positions on the ongoing mobilizations go unnoticed.

The leaders of the Trotskyist parties — singularly numerous in France — are for their part surrounded by rivalries and social contradictions. In the wake of the 2018, or the unspeakable Daniel Cohn-Bendit), they still have not understood that the most fundamen- tal cause of the devastating shock group that have affected the capitalist system itself. Do they need more time?

Continued on page 11
Where are leaders of the left in the current struggles in France?

Continued from page 10

Finally, the leaders of anarchist movements remain locked in the contradictions between useful activism (during the occupation movements last spring, in partic-
ular) and passivity, which are sometimes confused, if not counter-
productive, program of action.
The people who are the foundations of these various progressive forces are therefore, so to speak, left to their own devices. And invited by their respective leadership to maintain mistrust between all of them — even hate. Of course, this is totally absurd and suicidal. This sad observation is all the more terrible because entire sections of the impoverished French population are no longer represented by any of these left-wing organizations.

The 'new poor'

For instance, the “new poor,” as they are called, are immensely numerous, hit by unemployment and precari-
ousness. They are small family farmers crippled with debt, isolated, desperate; young people in the suburbs, idle, ghettoized, abandoned by everyone except the police, and befriended by the police (sectors of chaotic gangsters and promoters of sectarian conflict). This has happened even though these young people are most probably the safest bulwark against racism in the country and had already risen up during the 2005-07 rebellions.

Also among the new poor are immigrant families, left on the margins of society; homeless, without a roof or a right; “unemployables,” dehumanized; wandering ghosts, with faces distorted by the poverty we could see every-
where, if anyone looked.

And many others still. Are these a lumpenproletar-
iat? These are all above the millions of French people whose lives have been sacrificed on the altar of modern capitalism.

How could the leaders of our left parties give up fight-
ing also for them? What happened in our ranks to con-
vince us to give up so much?

Faced with the lamentable spectacle offered by this fragmented, nebulous left, the French bourgeoisie has adopted a velvet-glove approach, at least for the time being.

The right — and the far right

The bourgeois right has certainly impled. The component that we will call “centrist” — in the French case today, the Socialist Party — has sold its soul for more than three decades (including the presidency of Mitterrand) by converting to the dogmas of neoliberalism and aligning itself in a combat position behind NATO’s armies.

As for the other component of the right, which we call “traditional” — currently represented by the Republicans — it has liquidated (with Nicolas Sarkozy’s presidency) its identitarien-territorialist ideals to wallow at the feet of globalized finance and U.S. imperial belligerency.

From the inevitable decay of these two distorted com-
trol that collapsed and became — the “valves left” that President Francois Hollande’s Socialist Party and the “new right” of Sarkozy — with their interchangeable world views and programs, their synthesis logically emerged: the “Macron fiction.”

This extreme right has always been the guard dog of capitalism. Every bourgeois ruling class in power nour-
ishes this bull mustf with scrofula, harsh criticism, and keeps its firmly on a leash.

Will Macron be forced to release that dog against the French people in revolt when the time comes? The cap-
italist class did this elsewhere a thousand times in the 20th century.

The French left and the Yellow Vests

The dark picture of the French left that is being drawn here will not win clicks of friendship, smiles and thumbs up. No doubt about it.

Unfortunately, this view is also likely to be shared by a number of Yellow Vests, as well as by the distressed cohort of comrades who, out of disgust or exhaustion, have stopped being militants and instead have blown into the invisibility of the approximately 50 percent of the French people who prefer to abstain from voting in elections.

This inventory is not intended to offend, let alone demoralize. It should instead remind us of the need to overcome divisions and unite progressives in the service of people who are struggling and showing the way. It should remind us of the rage that is driving people today and the reasons for their rejection of parties of the left.

The inadequacies of the progressive forces alone, how-
ever obvious they may be, cannot explain, of course, the underlying reasons for this revolt and rebellion — far from it. A complete change of system is required.

On the left, however, few people say it very clearly: An exit from destructive capitalism is what is needed.

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that Yellow Vests — and large parts of the union rank and file with them — struggle alone. They mistrust every left-wing political formation.

Left-wing forces have no program to exit from capital-
ism — or even from the euro! No surprise then that the demands of the Yellow Vests are heterogeneous. They go in all directions. But their rallying cry, “The Yellow Vests” — far from it. A complete change of system is required.

A point of no return seems to have been reached.

The extreme right has always been the guard dog of capitalism. The bourgeois rule is a target of world imperial-
ism — or even from the euro! No surprise then that the extreme right has always been the guard dog of capitalism. The bourgeois rule is a target of world imper-

Venezuela, back attacked coup

Continued from page 1

The posture of this administration makes it imperative for progressive forces inside the United States to defend the sovereignty of Venezuela and thus defend its legitimately elected government.

Keep in mind that Venezuela’s National Assembly no longer exists. It was declared dissolved and annulled by the Venezuelan constitutional court, the so-called “Lima Group,” on June 20, 2017. This is not the legitimate government of Venezuela, but the government of the oligarchy and its economic interests.

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza tweeted on Jan. 16, “Venezuela demands respect for its democracy. While President Maduro calls for respectful dialogue with the U.S., Secretary Pompeo and other extremist spokesmen look to destabilize the country and incite vio-

Venezuela gov’t beats back attempted coup

The Communist Party of Venezuela has expressed outrage at the new coup attempt led by President Maduro government over some parts of its domestic program, nevertheless made clear that it will mobilize working people and the poor, those of Venezuelan society, to defend the government against imperialism. In a Jan. 7 statement answering the Lima Group, the PCV wrote: “The Political Bureau of the PCV repu-
dicates and condemns the pro-imperialist and anti-democratic pronouncement

issu on the so-called “Lima Group,” [... whose position] corresponds to the plan for the recomposition of imperialist domination, advanced in Latin America and the Caribbean by the United States of America and its European allies, in the context of the sharpening of inter-cap-
italist and inter-imperialist contradictions for a new distribution of the world, its natural wealth and energy sources. [... To achieve this goal, they propose to bury the social, political and cultural con-
quests of the Bolivarian process and the construction of a new Latin American and Caribbean socialist project, counter- imperial, and anti-imperial policies led by President Hugo Chávez Frias. [...

“To go in reverse, in spite of the incon-
sistency of the proposals of the Lima Group and its direct democracy, but allow referendums of citizens’ ini-

Also, create assemblies of citizens deciding laws by direct democracy, but allow referendums of citizens’ ini-
tiatives; increase social spending, but without the promotion of new interventionist policies; change the “traditional” — currently represented by the Republicans — it has liquidated (with Nicolas Sarkozy’s presidency) its iden-
Crisis económica en desarrollo: ¿política, sistemática o ambas?

Por Deirdre Griswold

23 de diciembre — No hay duda de que el BDI político en la USA está contribuyendo al aumento del pánico en la bolsa de valores. El cierre del gobierno por la exigencia de Trump de que el Congreso asigne $5 mil millones para construir un muro en la frontera con México, no sólo es obsceno desde el punto de vista político, sino que también afecta a toda la economía.

Lo mismo ocurre con la creciente hostilidad hacia China, como se ve con la imposición de aranceles por parte de la administración Trump a cientos de miles de millones de dólares en productos chinos, que comenzó en abril pasado. Luego, China impuso una cantidad igual de aranceles a los productos estadounidenses, afectando particularmente a los agricultores en los Estados Unidos que producen soja y carne de cerdo. Los precios de la soja y la carne de cerdo estadounidense ya han bajado.

Pero estos choques a la economía que se han originado a partir de los edictos políticos de la administración de Trump no son toda la historia. Hay muchos indicios de que el caos en los mercados de valores refleja tendencias mucho más profundas en la economía capitalista.

Mercados bursátiles y precios de mercancías

Las acciones estadounidenses acaban de tener su tercera semana desde agosto de 2011, cayendo un 17 por ciento desde sus máximos históricos. Los giros de la bolsa de valores, que no son más que suposiciones fundamentadas en la mayoría de los productos generalmente de largo plazo?

Las acciones, mercancías y bonos. Como se señala después de las reuniones de los mercados, argumentando que las reformas son una manada de lobos que se atacan mutuamente incluso cuando se unen para degradar a las/os trabajadoras y jóvenes empresas en los Estados Unidos. Crisis capitalistas y sobreproducción

¿Qué es una crisis económica capitalista? ¿De dónde viene? ¿Pueden las medidas paliativas evitar que estos colapsoo pros perséudos ocurran?

Pero qué pasa con la perspectiva a largo plazo?

¿Cuándo va a terminar? ¿De lo que se trata la crisis económica? Como escribió Karl Marx, “es la insatisfacción de las necesidades de la humanidad”. Y con ella, la contradicción esencial de la economía capitalista: una desigualdad del poder que lleva a una concentración extrema de riqueza.

Además, esa concentración de riqueza y venida no es una mera consecuencia de la sobreproducción, sino que es una característica de la economía capitalista. Marx argumentó que el subconsumo y la sobreproducción son dos de las características del capitalismo.

En la economía capitalista, las empresas producen más de lo que se puede vender a un precio aceptable. Esto significa que las empresas deben reducir sus inversiones para ajustarse a la demanda.

Por supuesto, las/os trabajadores que instiga y propaga todo tipo de discriminación y opresión, y la lucha para acabar con el capitalismo, no es solo para tener un estilo de vida más rico para ellos mismos, sino también para volver a incorporar en sus negocios los medios para expandir la producción, así como creando un nuevo capitalismo que instiga y propaga todo tipo de discriminación y opresión. Y con ella, la destrucción de un nuevo capitalismo que instiga y propaga todo tipo de discriminación y opresión.