



Dec. 13, 2014 march against police violence, NYC.

People with disabilities tell court:

Health care, not police killings

By Joyce Chediak

A case before the U.S. Supreme Court which seeks police exemption from the Americans with Disabilities Act has critical importance for all those seeking to stop unwarranted police killings. This case involves police shootings of people with mental illness.

The city of San Francisco brought the case of Sheehan v. San Francisco to the high court. Oral arguments are set for March 23. More than 40 civil rights and disability activist groups have signed a letter urging San Francisco officials to drop its appeal. They warn that the appeal imperils the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, “the most comprehensive civil rights law for Americans with disabilities.” They ask that concerned people join this write-in campaign. (Bazelon Center for Mental Health, Jan. 12)

Half of people killed by police have mental health disabilities

The ADA mandates accommodations for those with disabilities and applies to every interaction between government and people with disabilities. It would be especially chilling if police are exempted from the ADA. Even with the law in place, “at least half of the people shot and killed by police each year in this country have mental health problems,” states a 2013 report by the Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs’ Association, which assessed data from 1980 to 2008. (“Justifiable Homicides by Law Enforcement,” TACReports.org)

In many cases, it was police who responded to requests for assistance from family or neighbors to get an individual mental health care. Many of those involved were people of color.

In San Francisco, the toll is even higher. A KQED radio review of 51 San Francisco police-involved shootings between 2005 and 2013 found that 58 percent — or 11 of 19 individuals killed by police — had a mental illness that was a contributing factor in the incident.

Police shoot woman in psychiatric distress

San Francisco seeks to overturn a Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruling which said that San Francisco police violated the ADA in the 2008 shooting of a woman in psychiatric distress whom they were called to help.

Teresa Sheehan, a woman in her mid-50s with a history of psychiatric disability, was off her medication and in the midst of a psychotic episode. She had barricaded herself in her room at her group home residence with a knife in her hand. Her caseworker, Heath Hodge, who was there, called police for help in transporting her to a mental health facility for involuntary commitment and treatment.

The SFPD had a team capable of responding to individuals in psychiatric distress and trained in de-escalation techniques to get people the care they needed. Instead of waiting for backup from this team, two police officers entered Sheehan’s room with guns drawn and shot her five times, including in the face.

The force was deadly, but Sheehan survived. She sued and successfully argued that the ADA applied to her interaction with police, so they are liable for civil rights violations as they did not take her mental disability into account.

The question now before the Supreme Court is not whether the police were right or wrong. It is simply about Sheehan’s

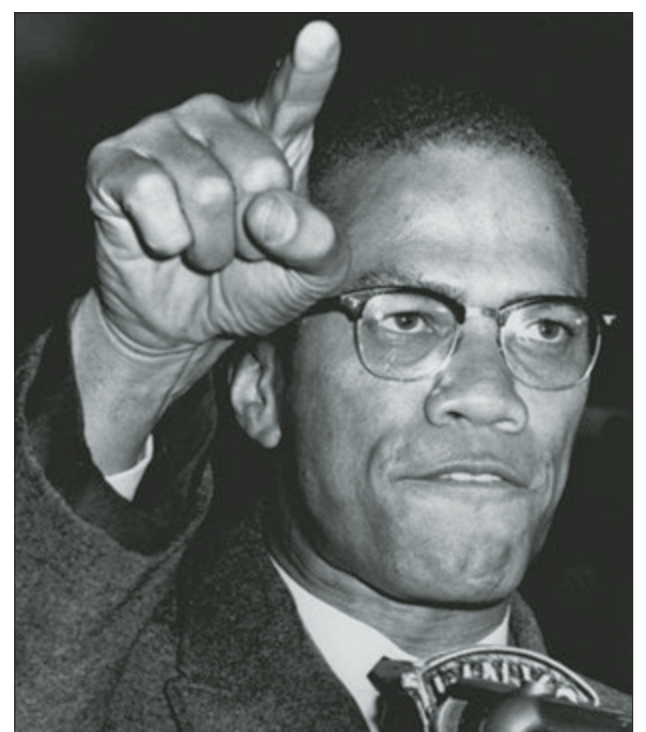
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Justice for Mike Brown! End police terror!



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Marking the six-month anniversary of the police murder of Michael Brown, activists held a protest Feb. 9 in New York City that included a press conference, rally/sing-in and reading of names of victims of police brutality, culminating with a direct action at Grand Central Station, (above). The murder of Brown and the non-indictment of his killer, Darren Wilson, helped to ignite the national Black Lives Matter movement. The protest was called by the People’s Power Assembly and Occu-Evolve.



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Michigan corporations get richer

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Drop charges on 'Black Friday 14'!



PHOTO: PEN HARSHAW

BART shutdown, Nov. 28, 2014, West Oakland, Calif.

On so-called Black Friday 2014, considered the busiest shopping day of the year one day after “Thanksgiving,” 14 Black activists pulled off a daring action at the West Oakland, Calif., Bay Area Rapid Transit station to protest racist police and state violence. These heroic activists chained themselves to train cars on both sides of the platform and to each other — shutting down the system for hours. One of the organizers, Celeste from the Blackout Collective, told the San Francisco Bay View newspaper: “Until there’s an end to the war on Black people, until there’s an end to state-sanctioned violence, we’re going to keep shutting down the system, because we don’t agree with the system.”

The “Black Friday 14” went to court on Feb. 4 to demand that the district attorney drop the call for “restitution” and dismiss the misdemeanor trespassing charge. A chanting, youthful crowd of 120 greeted them at the courthouse, singing “Which Side Are You On? (on Freedom’s Side!).” A new coalition, “Asians for Black Lives,” which had pulled off another militant action during

Oakland’s stunning “96 hours” over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend, helped lead the chants, along with Latino/a and Palestinian activists. The rally turned into a teach-in.

An African-American man told of growing up in West Oakland when it was a thriving, self-sufficient Black community — until the profit-minded powers-that-be conspired to destroy it, to blot it out, and replace it with a maze of freeways and that very same West Oakland BART station.

— Dave Welsh

BLACK HISTORY MONTH MATTERS: SUPPORT WW

The Black Lives Matter movement, which started in response to the killing of unarmed Michael Brown by a racist cop in Ferguson, Mo., is the latest heroic chapter in the centuries-long struggle to end the vile saga of racism and national oppression, including slavery, that permeates the history and everyday reality of life in the United States.

Black History Month, founded in 1926, is in essence Black Liberation Month. As part of our commemoration, Workers World will write about some of the many sacrifices and struggles carried out by people of African descent to throw off their chains and end institutionalized racism. But WW doesn’t just cover the Black struggle in February. We write about the struggle against racism in depth all year, every year. WW has had continual coverage of the ongoing protests in Ferguson and the national movement that exploded after grand juries failed to indict the racist cops who killed Brown and unarmed Eric Garner in Staten Island, N.Y.

Our coverage of the Black struggle here and around the world is based on the principle of supporting national self-determination:

Oppressed people have the right to fight to end all forms of inequality and injustice — by any means necessary. Those words were first spoken by the great Malcolm X, assassinated 50 years ago on Feb. 21, 1965.

If you appreciate this coverage, it’s time to join the Workers World Supporter Program.

Please help us continue to publish anti-racist, working-class truth and build the struggles needed to make revolutionary change.

For the past 38 years, WW subscribers have helped maintain the paper by joining the WW Supporter Program.

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And thanks!

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Vol. 57, No. 7 • Feb. 19, 2015
Closing date: Feb. 10, 2015
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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$30; institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from NA Publishing, Inc, P.O. Box 998, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0998. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at workers.org/email.php.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl. New York, N.Y. 10011.

WORKERS WORLD PARTY

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 56 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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'Sleep out for justice' for Kevin Davis

Feb. 4 would have been Kevin Davis' 45th birthday.

The popular restaurant worker and beloved brother and uncle was killed by a DeKalb County, Georgia, police officer after calling 911 seeking help. His partner, who had been stabbed in the arm by another person, says that officer Joseph Pitts did not announce himself as a police officer when he entered the apartment, killed Davis' dog and then shot Kevin on Dec. 29.

The Davis family has been demanding a thorough investigation into his death,



Kevin Davis

concerned that the police report differs from several witness accounts of what happened. In the 40 days since the fatal shooting of an innocent man, the family has heard nothing from police officials, not even an expression of sympathy.

The DeKalb County Courthouse in downtown Decatur, just east of Atlanta, was once again the location for a gathering of Kevin's family, friends and other community members demanding justice.

Following a brief ceremony, reflecting on the cheerful and helpful personality of Kevin Davis, the plaza was turned into a temporary camp as several dozen youth set up tents and unrolled sleeping bags, determined to be there in the morning to greet court officials, including the district attorney and all those entering the building, with their Black Lives Matter message demanding justice. Hundreds and hundreds of flyers were distributed to workers using the nearby Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority station, high school students and those with business in the court building.

Television crews recorded the "Sleep Out For Justice," bringing attention to another suspicious death at the hands of police.

The youthful activists sent pictures and tweets throughout the night.

Assisted by their lawyers and community supporters, the family is prepared to continue the fight for an independent investigation and changes in police policy. As Delisa Davis, Kevin's sister repeats at every opportunity: "Kevin was a good guy. He didn't deserve this."

— Dianne Mathiowetz

Another legal victory for Angola 3's Albert Woodfox

Albert Woodfox, one of the Angola 3 political prisoners, has spent 42 years in solitary confinement in Louisiana. On Nov. 20, a three-judge panel of the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled unanimously to uphold a lower court's decision to overturn Woodfox's conviction for killing a prison guard (see workers.org: "Court rules for Albert Woodfox, now let him go!"). The following email update was released by the International Coalition to Free the Angola 3 on Feb. 3.

Today the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the unanimous decision of

their own three-judge panel and denied Attorney General Buddy Caldwell's request for an "en banc" rehearing of Albert's case. This was the state's last shot to reinstate Albert's third overturned conviction through the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Though we expect they may continue to delay justice with a vain attempt to convince the U.S. Supreme Court to undo decades of solidly established constitutional law, Judge Brady's original February 2013 decision throwing out Albert's murder conviction stands stronger than



Though there are still weeks and months yet to go before he is released, he has never been closer to freedom.

Please take a moment to send him a note letting him know that we will continue to fight every day until he is freed — this will be the last birthday he will spend in a solitary cell!

Albert Woodfox #72148
David Wade Correctional Center
670 Bell Hill Road
Homer, LA 71040

ever before and it is now only a matter of time until the state is forced to either release or retry him.

In just over two weeks, on Thursday, Feb. 19, Albert will turn 68 years old.

Marriage equality movement progresses

Bulletin: As of Feb. 9, the U.S. Supreme Court will not stay a federal court ruling ordering same-sex marriages to be conducted in Alabama. More updates to follow.

By Martha Grevatt

The Michigan state government in Lansing — from the governor to the attorney general to the majority of state senators and representatives — is dominated by bigots who oppose marriage equality.

But the reality that they are fighting a losing battle is beginning to set in. On Feb. 4, Republican Gov. Rick Snyder announced that the state would not fight a court order to grant legal recognition for 323 Michigan same-sex couples. These couples were married on March 22, 2014, the day after federal Judge Bernard Friedman overturned Michigan's ban on same-sex marriage in three counties where the clerks had made special arrangements to conduct weddings on a Saturday. By the end of the day a higher court had stayed Friedman's ruling, blocking any addition-

al legal unions.

The federal government recognized the 323 marriages but the state would not, denying the couples state benefits. The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan sued the state on behalf of the couples. On Jan. 15, U.S. District Judge Mark Goldsmith ordered the state to recognize the marriages.

Snyder, along with Attorney General Bill Schuette, fought in court to uphold a marriage ban passed by voters in 2004. The state opposed Metro Detroit nurses

April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse, who sued for the right to marry and to jointly adopt their three children. The U.S. Supreme Court will hear their case, along with cases from Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, in April.

The thousands of Michigan same-sex couples who did not get married last year — including Rowse and DeBoer, who chose to wait until the legal process was completed and their marriage could not be challenged in court — are waiting on the high court to make a decision on their

basic civil right. The tide is turning in their favor. Ten years after Michigan voters enshrined discrimination in the law, public opinion polls now show that a majority of Michigan residents support the right to marry.

This shift, forged through the resilience and determination of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer movement, is what created the pressure on Lansing politicians to recognize 323 married couples as, in fact, married. □



MARXISM, REPARATIONS and the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead.

GRAPHIC BY SAHU BARRON

Available at major online booksellers.

People with disabilities tell court: Health care, not police killings

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right to proceed with a civil suit against police for failing to accommodate her disability. This case could have implications for how police conduct themselves in a wide range of scenarios, including the many in which police officers shoot someone who is not carrying anything that could be construed as a weapon.

While disability groups are concerned about the situation in San Francisco, of much greater concern is that the Supreme Court is likely to go much further in its ruling than even what San Francisco requests. Pointing to the gutting of the Voting Rights Act by the current high

court, disabilities activists are trying to get San Francisco to drop the appeal and to resolve the matter locally.

ADA: Most important legal protection for people with disabilities

Susan Mizner, a disability counsel with the American Civil Liberties Union, recently stated: "Many people recognize the names Eric Garner, Michael Brown and Tamir Rice, all African Americans killed by the police. Less well known are the names Milton Hall, James Boyd, Ezell Ford, Kajieme Powell and Tanisha Anderson. They are people with psychiatric disabilities — most of them people

of color — shot and killed by police. In many cases, police were responding to requests for assistance to get the person mental health care." ("There Is No Police Exception to the Americans with Disabilities Act," ACLU.org, Jan. 8)

Jessie Lorenz, executive director of the Independent Living Resource Center San Francisco, stresses in the Jan. 20 San Francisco Examiner: "The highest court in the land is poised to decide the case based on the following question: 'Does the ADA apply during encounters with the police?' Frankly, even asking the question is a miscarriage of justice. The ADA is a nondiscrimination law that is

always in effect. It was designed to provide broad protections for some of the most vulnerable and gravely misunderstood people in society. [This] suit could open the floodgates to weakening the only protection people with disabilities have. This is incredibly dangerous."

Lorenz concluded with this appeal: "The disability community cannot allow this to happen. We are organizing a public commitment campaign. I urge you to join us by writing to Mayor Ed Lee and [City Attorney Dennis] Herrera and demanding that they heed the call of civil-rights advocates and San Franciscans alike by dropping the appeal." □

Michigan corporations eligible for billions

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

The capitalists and their servants have no shame when it comes to taking from the poorest and giving to the rich.

Michigan has been devastated for decades by factory closings, massive unemployment and ever-deepening poverty. Like in other states and nationally, the economic crisis of 2008 and the ensuing years was used as the pretense at all levels for increasing cuts to remaining social services while bailing out the very banks and corporations which created the capitalist economic collapse to begin with.

From 2000 to 2010, Michigan suffered its greatest job losses since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Approximately 750,000 jobs were eliminated, primarily decent-paying industrial jobs. During that same decade, because of massive unemployment and home foreclosures caused by racist, predatory loans, Detroit lost 237,000 residents. By 2009, General Motors, Chrysler and Ford — what used to be called the “Big Three” auto companies — eliminated 112,000 jobs in the state, or a whopping 52 percent of their Michigan workforce. (Report by Paul Traub, Federal

Reserve Bank of Michigan, Jan. 24, 2012)

Social services in Michigan were slashed to the bone as a result of the financial crisis caused by this massive job loss. Yet from 2003 to 2013, the state government diverted to state coffers \$6.2 billion in funds earmarked for revenue sharing to the cities. Detroit alone was deprived of \$732 million in revenue sharing funds during those years, a huge factor in precipitating Detroit’s financial crisis and ultimate bankruptcy, with the devastating reduction in pensions for Detroit retirees that ensued. (“The Great Revenue Sharing Heist,” by Anthony Minghine. Michigan Municipal League, March 2014)

In addition, African-American cities like Detroit, Flint, Benton Harbor and Pontiac were placed under emergency management to facilitate attacks on workers’ pensions and basic services.

The corporations that caused these job losses and cuts, however, were rewarded with massive tax breaks.

How did this happen?

The state of Michigan faces a budget deficit of \$325 million this year, and similar deficits for years to come, as corporations have started to cash in on huge tax

credits given to them by previous Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm and current Republican Gov. Rick Snyder. A tax credit is a direct reduction in a corporation’s total tax bill.

Under the so-called Michigan Employment Growth Authority, corporations could claim tax credits on business taxes owed for a period of up to 20 years if they only promise to maintain 70 percent of their post-recession job levels. If a corporation was not profitable in one year, it could roll over the tax credit to the next.

Tax credits under MEGA amount to \$4.9 billion, with \$3.3 billion left from the Granholm years and \$1.6 billion in additional credits since Snyder took office in 2010. An additional \$1.7 billion in tax breaks for the corporations occurred when Snyder eliminated the single business tax in 2010.

With auto profits returning to huge levels — \$2.8 billion for GM in 2014 (even after writing off \$2.8 billion to pay for recalls), \$3.2 billion for Ford and \$1.2 billion for Fiat-Chrysler (even with writing off \$1.2 billion for a one-time contribution to the United Auto Workers health care fund) — the auto companies are now lining up to begin cashing in

their tax credits.

GM, Ford and Chrysler can claim refundable tax credits totaling \$4.5 billion if they retain 86,000 jobs in Michigan, or 70 percent of their current workforce, through 2032. It was reported that one “unnamed” corporation, undoubtedly one of the auto companies, has claimed \$224 million in tax credits for 2014, in large part creating the state’s fiscal deficit, which is being taken out of the hides of the poor. (Detroit News, Feb. 5)

General Motors and Chrysler were bailed out at a cost to taxpayers of \$9.3 billion as part of federal-government-engineered bankruptcies in 2009, making it especially reprehensible that the auto companies will be cashing in on huge tax credits for years to come at the expense of desperately needed human services in Michigan.

An economic system organized rationally to provide for all human needs, including jobs or income and pensions for all, is what will bring Detroit and all of Michigan bouncing back from years of capitalist crises, greed and exploitation. That system is called socialism, where the people come first and not the corporate bloodsuckers. □

Workers strike Big Oil for safety

By Jim McMahan
Anacortes, Wash.

In the first national strike in decades, 3,800 refinery workers represented by the United Steelworkers union went on strike against major oil companies on Feb. 1. The union’s major demand is for safety improvements in what has become an increasingly hazardous industry, with many fatalities.

Nine refineries in Texas, Kentucky, California and Washington were initially struck, but the numbers are growing. On Feb. 7, it was announced at a picket line at the Tesoro Corp. refinery near Anacortes, Wash., that two BP refineries in Ohio and Indiana had just been struck by the USW.

The strike is a bold and difficult move by the refinery workers, responding to dangerous working conditions. In 2010, seven workers were killed in a huge explosion at the Anacortes refinery.

Feb. 7 was a national day of support for the USW strike. Over 200 workers, with

their supporters and families, picketed outside the main gate of Tesoro. The gate was locked during the protest, but the plant was still in operation.

The workers explained that most of the struck plants are still running, with untrained, nonunion personnel. This greatly increases the risks in an already dangerous situation and greatly concerns the workers.

Ryan Muyoff, USW staff representative, told Workers World that the union wants safety guarantees for the workers. The refineries are understaffed, and there is a big problem with fatigue, with workers given 12-hour shifts. The union is also fighting against having jobs contracted out.

The April 2, 2010, explosion which killed seven workers at the Tesoro-Anacortes refinery was due to company negligence. That was the determination of the Chemical Safety Board and the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries.

A team of workers was trying to re-

start a piece of equipment called a heat exchanger. It had been operated for decades at superheated temperatures without being inspected for the corrosion that caused it to explode.

Negligence in making repairs and the lack of inspections are problems throughout the industry. Fires and other incidents happen almost daily at refineries across the U.S.

The USW and environmental groups, including “Rising Tide,” say the oil company’s negligence is also a threat to community safety.

No criminal charges were brought by the government for the industrial murder of seven workers at Anacortes. The Labor and Industries Department found Tesoro had willfully broken workplace safety laws 39 times and assessed it a \$2.39 million fine that’s been reduced to \$658,000 after company appeals. This is pocket change for a Fortune 100 company with seven U.S. refineries.

“Out of Control,” a video produced by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Work-

ers union in 1991 and recently updated, points out that refinery workers are eight times more likely to die on the job from an industrial accident than in any other industry. It reports that the top five oil companies — BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell — made over \$1 trillion in profits between 2000 and 2010!

In 2014, Tesoro machinist and USW Local 12-591 president, Steve Gary, told Seattle’s KUOW radio: “The refining industry in general, they know what they’re supposed to do, and we believe they don’t always do it. That’s why we lost seven at Tesoro. That’s why we lost 15 at Texas City eight years ago. It’s why we lost 11 people and polluted the entire Gulf of Mexico. It’s the reason Cherry Point, Wash., burned a few years back, and it’s the reason the Chevron Richmond, Calif., plant burned and nearly killed 20 people and put thousands in the hospital.”

Industrial murder goes far beyond Anacortes and workers are saying enough is enough! □

Oil refinery workers walk the picket line

Benji Pyles
Catlettsburg, Ky.

Feb. 5 — Oil refinery workers here are on what they say is their biggest strike since 1980. The strike was forced on the workers after the energy industry failed to reach a deal with the union and renew their contract.

The United Steelworkers Union represents workers at more than 200 oil refineries, terminals, pipelines and chemical plants in the U.S. The USW announced a work stoppage starting Feb. 1 at nine refineries in the U.S., including the Marathon Petroleum Company’s refinery here in Catlettsburg.

According to the MPC, the refinery produces 242,000 barrels each day at the Catlettsburg facility. What that really

means is that the approximately 775 employees and 800 contract workers produce that much oil.

Explaining the reasons for the strike, USW International Vice President Gary Beevers wrote, “This work stoppage is about onerous overtime; unsafe staffing levels; dangerous conditions the industry continues to ignore; the daily occurrences of fires, emissions, leaks and explosions that threaten local communities without the industry doing much about it; the industry’s refusal to make opportunities for workers in the trade crafts; the flagrant contracting out that impacts health and safety on the job; and the erosion of our workplace, where qualified and experienced union workers are replaced by contractors when they leave or retire.” (usw.org, Feb. 1)



WW PHOTO: BENJI PYLES

Workers on the picket line at refinery in Catlettsburg, Ky.

The refineries and oil facilities that are not under the work stoppage are under a rolling 24-hour contract extension.

“Shell refused to provide us with a counter-offer and left the bargaining table,” said USW International President Leo W. Gerard. “We had no choice but to

give notice of a work stoppage.” (usw.org)

Dave Martin, vice president of USW Local 719 (District 8), told Workers World that the union’s main concern was safety. “Safe working conditions, including proper staffing levels, could provide 150 to 200 good local jobs,” said Martin. □

On West Coast

Bosses threaten lockout of longshore workers

By Terri Kay
Oakland, Calif.

The Pacific Maritime Association announced on Feb. 4 their intent to lock out the International Longshore and Warehouse Union's longshore workers at 29 West Coast ports if they don't accept the PMA's "last and final offer." Then, on Feb. 6, they announced what amounts to a partial lockout until 8 a.m. on Feb. 9.

Despite an original agreement to hold negotiations between the PMA and the ILWU negotiating committee in secrecy, which has been upheld on the union's side since the contract expired on June 30, the PMA has chosen to go public with their offer in an attempt to negotiate the contract through the media. In taking these steps, the PMA is putting out an all or nothing proposition and challenging the union's right to negotiate the contract under normal fair bargaining practices.

The PMA is an employers association, coordinating the labor to support the estimated \$1 trillion in annual international trade which moves through these ports. They represent the interests of giant multinationals, like Stevedoring Service of America, Hanjin, Maersk Lines and Evergreen Marine.

The union's official response, by ILWU President Robert McEllrath, has been guarded, stating essentially, in a Feb. 4 press release, that "we've dropped almost all of our remaining issues to help get this settled — and the few issues that remain can be easily resolved".

Workers World reached out to Clarence Thomas, past secretary/treasurer of ILWU Local 10 in the Bay Area, to get some perspective from a rank-and-file viewpoint on what the threat of the lockout is all about and some understanding on the issues as they concern the ILWU rank and file. Thomas is a third generation longshore worker who has been on the waterfront for 30 years. He was on the local's executive board in a term which just expired in January 2015. Please note that he is not a member of the ILWU's negotiating team.

Workers World: What do you think of the PMA's lockout and statements on the contract?

Clarence Thomas: The threat of a lockout will not intimidate or weaken our resolve to achieve a fair and nonconcessionary contract. Neither will the actions of the employer in calling what some rank and filers have termed a "mini lockout" undermine our rank-and-file solidarity.

It's very interesting that the employer has only been making the threat of a lockout since they announced what was said to be their last and final offer to the ILWU a few days ago. The Port of Long Beach's cargo saw a 2.1 percent growth in November compared to the same month

last year. It's kind of difficult to make the argument on locking out the workers when the ports are productive. However, there are certain infrastructure challenges because the ships are bigger, they carry more containers, and the shipping companies have gotten out of the chassis [trailer to transport shipping containers] business, so consequently there is an insufficient number of chassis available to handle the explosive growth in containers on larger vessels coming to the West Coast.

WW: On its face, the PMA offer sounds okay, but it comes with assertions claiming over-inflated wages, "Cadillac" health benefits and accusations of slowdowns by the ILWU. What rank-and-file concerns aren't being addressed by this publicly stated offer?

Clarence Thomas: Mr. James McKenna, who is the president and CEO of the PMA, which represents a consortium of 72 shipping/stevedoring companies and terminal operators, has made assertions and false claims about the ILWU: facts about how much money we make, blaming the ILWU for congestion at the ports, blaming the ILWU for problems attributable to lack of capacity to accommodate the increased volume of containers.

ILWU members have fought, shed blood and died for the health care benefits we have today and for the future. We have won these benefits through struggle. In 2002, the ILWU Pension and Welfare Committee reported that our health care and wages cost the employers only 1.5 to 3 percent of their gross earnings.

In today's "crises of the capitalism economy," where the bosses disdain paying living wages and steer workers to a global race to the bottom, James McKenna inflates basic longshore wages to build public resentment towards the ILWU and erode solidarity support from other unions and the community.

In my opinion, the PMA will fail because labor and the community know the ILWU has not only fought for good wages and benefits for its own members, but it has also fought for and advanced the interests of the working class. That is why we organized the Million Worker March in 2004 demanding national health care, living wages and pensions for all workers locally, nationally and around the world; the Justice for Oscar Grant movement to end police violence and repression in communities of color; support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movements for both South Africa during the anti-apartheid struggle and more



PHOTO: DELORES LEMON THOMAS

Clarence Thomas

recently for Palestine; support for the Wisconsin workers' occupation of the state Capitol in 2011; and the Occupy Wall Street movement. Our record on matters of economic and social justice for the working class and the oppressed speaks for itself.

The ILWU dockers deserve a living wage for the work that they do and the dangers we face on the job.

WW: Knowing that the PMA has surely shared details of the negotiations with its board of member corporations, how has the one-sided secrecy between the ILWU leadership and its rank-and-file members affected the strength of this negotiating process?

Clarence Thomas: In my 30 years on the waterfront, these contract negotiations are unprecedented in terms of their duration. When my father was active on the waterfront in 1971, there was a strike that lasted a little over 100 days, but the negotiations weren't nearly as long as these. The contract negotiations have gone on for nine months. Very early on in the negotiations, a decision was made by the leadership not to provide much information to the rank and file about the negotiations, which is a departure from previous years. The reasons that were given had to do with information being placed on the Internet that would somehow compromise them at the bargaining table. I disagree with that. Suffice it to say the rank and file are the backbone of the union. That's where the strength comes for the leadership. No matter how well versed and articulate the leadership may be, it's the rank and file that provides the muscle.

The employer and the union have been pretty closemouthed as to the issues that they have been grappling with. As a result the rank and file has been in many ways alienated from the discussion. That's different from previous negotiations, where there have been talking points on the issues of the contract, rank-and-file committees to deal with issues concerning publicity, research, organizing and mobilizing. My contention is that anything that the employer knows, and that the contract negotiating committee knows, the rank and file should know as well.

I can't say that the negotiations between the ILWU and the PMA wouldn't have gone on for nine months had the ILWU rank and file been more involved, but one thing that I do know is that the employer is very well acquainted with the power of the rank and file. That's one of the major reasons why they have been trying to lay the blame for the congestion on us slow-

ing down, because they understand that our leverage is at the point of production.

WW: What about the PMA's accusations about ILWU slowdowns?

Clarence Thomas: One of the continuing assertions of the employer is that the ILWU has been engaged in slowdowns. The employer is interested in speed/production. The union is interested in safety, first and foremost, because we don't want people to be injured or killed in an effort to meet employer's speed and production quotas. Production is certainly important, and the ports on the West Coast have been very productive over the years. But the issue concerning safety over speed is an ongoing struggle. The Port of Oakland in 2014 broke all of its cargo handling records, with a 5.3 percent increase in imports with a 20 percent surge in December. This proves we can work safe and be productive.

WW: Talk about the nature of the jobs which longshore workers do.

Clarence Thomas: The first thing we need to understand is that longshore workers are responsible for the loading and unloading of cargo at the 29 West Coast ports. It's the longshore ILWU members that are responsible for making the ports safe, efficient and productive. Longshore workers are some of the most important workers in the global economy because it is the longshore workers who actually move international commerce.

We are highly skilled, very dedicated and quite diligent at our work sites out of necessity, because the waterfront is a very perilous work environment. We handle various sizes of containers that carry massive tonnage. If you should be nudged by any piece of equipment or cargo it could kill or maim you. During the years of 2002-2008, longshore workers suffered a mortality rate of 17.3 deaths per 100,000 employees. Compared to the death rates of police officers or firefighters, the ILWU has higher mortality rates.

On the waterfront there are a number of environmental challenges that the workers face. For example, at many of the terminals there are warning signs alerting workers that the premises they are about to enter contain known carcinogens. Ships, cargo handling equipment, trucks and locomotives emit soot from diesel fuel which causes respiratory illnesses, lung disease, asthma, cancer and even premature births. Mr. McKenna greatly exaggerates the wages longshore workers make, but longshore workers pay the real cost with their health for handling the maritime cargo.

(Workers World will continue to monitor the developments of the contract negotiations, together with Clarence Thomas, in future issues of the paper.)

Railroad crossings cause train deaths

By a railroad worker

Six people died horrible deaths when a Metro-North commuter train collided with a sports utility vehicle in Valhalla, N.Y., a northern suburb of New York City, on Feb. 6. Five of the bodies were burned beyond recognition.

Even more people would probably have perished if it wasn't for the heroic actions of locomotive engineer Steven Smalls Jr. Despite being injured, Smalls helped passengers get off the train.

This tragedy occurred when a SUV

stopped on the Commerce Street railroad grade crossing in Valhalla. Although engineer Smalls applied emergency braking, it was impossible to stop his train, which was moving at 58 miles per hour at the time.

Two hundred eighty-eight people died in railroad crossing accidents in 2013. Railroad workers were among the victims.

Amtrak Conductor Laurette Lee died when a truck slammed into the California Zephyr train at a grade crossing 70 miles east of Reno, Nev., on June 24, 2011.

Not a "top priority" says Cuomo

How can these tragedies be prevented? To eliminate grade crossing fatalities, eliminate grade crossings. But New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo doesn't think so.

"In theory it's a nice idea," said Cuomo. "In practicality, do we have the money, do we have the time? And is it one of the top priority safety projects? I would say no." (New York Times, Feb. 5)

Try telling that to the three children of Ellen Brody, who was driving that SUV that got stuck on the Commerce Street crossing and was burned alive.

Even the Rail Safety Bureau of Andy Cuomo's own state Department of Transportation admits that "the safest option regarding highway-railroad grade crossings is to eliminate or close them." (dot.ny.gov)

New York's Public Service Commission was ordering railroads a century ago to eliminate grade crossings by building over or under highways.

No money, Andy? Your father, Mario, stole billions from the Urban Develop-

Continued on page 10

LONG LIVE THE LEGA

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

February 21 marks the 50th anniversary of the martyrdom of Malcolm X, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, who was gunned down by three men at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, N.Y., in 1965 as he prepared to address several hundred people. The meeting was sponsored by the Organization of Afro-American Unity, founded by Malcolm X on June 28, 1964, at the same location.

At the time of his assassination, Malcolm X had been working to build two new groups: one religious, the Muslim Mosque, Inc., and the OAAU, which was secular and committed to Pan-Africanism and anti-imperialism. In April 1964, he made a hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca, fulfilling his obligation as a devout believer in Islam.

Since his formal break with the Nation of Islam in March 1964, Malcolm X worked tirelessly to reframe the debate and ideological struggle in the African-American freedom movement of the 1960s. During his tenure with NOI, he had been a strong proponent of the program of Elijah Muhammad, the spiritual leader of the Chicago-based organization. Muhammad was from Georgia and had relocated to Detroit where he was recruited by NOI founder Master Fard Muhammad (W.D. Fard), who resided there from 1930 to 1934.

Racist violence against the Little family

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Neb., on May 19, 1925, as the fourth of eight children. His parents, Earl and Louise Little, were members of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL), formed by Marcus Garvey and Amy Ashwood Garvey in 1914. The Garveys moved the UNIA headquarters to the United States when they migrated here in 1916.

The Littles met at a UNIA convention in Montreal in 1919. The following year the UNIA gained international prominence through its New York City gathering, which attracted tens of thousands of people to Garvey's message of Pan-Africanism that stressed economic empowerment and reparations for enslaved Africans.

Malcolm's early life was impacted by racism and white mob violence. His family became targets of the Ku Klux Klan and similar terror groups as a direct result of his parents' militancy.

In "The Autobiography of Malcolm X," written by Alex Haley during the last two years of Malcolm's life, he told the writer, "When my mother was pregnant with me, she told me later, 'a party of hooded Ku Klux Klan riders galloped up to our home.' Brandishing their shotguns and rifles, they shouted for my father to come out." (Grove Press, 1965)

In 1926, the Little family moved to Milwaukee, Wis., relocating in 1928 to Lansing, Mich., the state capital. It was there in September 1931 that Earl Little was found dead near streetcar tracks, prompting the family to conclude that a white racist group, such as the Klan or the Black Legion, killed him.

Earl Little had been in conflict with Lansing authorities when he was ordered to vacate a home in a white neighborhood. Before the family moved, the home was torched and Little was charged with arson, which was later dropped. The family maintained that the home was burned down by racists in retaliation for Little's defiance of white authorities.

The impact of Earl Little's death, which was classified as a suicide, therefore preventing the family from collecting insurance benefits, devastated the family. Louise Little's personal struggle to earn a living during the Great Depression years and constant harassment by state welfare officials, resulted in her deteriorating mental health and placement in a psychiatric institution.

Malcolm and most of his brothers and sisters were sent away to live in youth homes and foster care settings. Although he was an outstanding student, the racist atmosphere of the time resulted in his dropping out of school after the eighth grade and moving to Boston to live with an older half-sister, Ella Collins.

During the war years, Malcolm worked at menial jobs in Boston and engaged in petty criminal activities to survive. He was arrested and prosecuted for burglary in 1946 and was imprisoned for six years in Massachusetts.

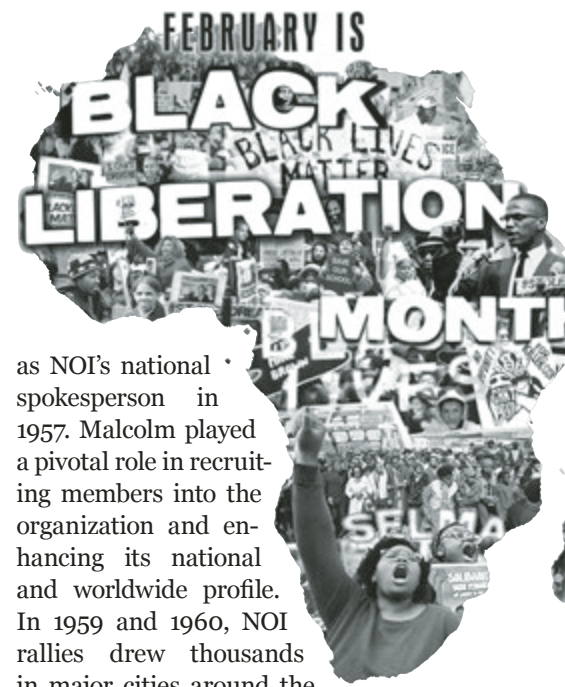
During his incarceration, he was transferred to Norfolk Prison Colony, a facility Malcolm described as far superior to other institutions, with less restrictions and a large library. There, he read voluminously and participated in debating teams.

Speaker, organizer, revolutionary

Malcolm's brothers and sisters joined NOI while he was in prison, and eventually recruited him after his initial rejection of all religions. He converted to NOI in 1948 while incarcerated.

In 1952, after he was paroled and went to live with family members in Inkster, Mich., near Detroit, Malcolm became a devout follower and NOI organizer, and was appointed an assistant minister in Detroit. In 1953, he became the minister of temples in Boston and Philadelphia. The following year, he was named minister in a temple in Harlem, N.Y., where he was based after 1954.

Elijah Muhammad appointed Malcolm



as NOI's national spokesperson in 1957. Malcolm played a pivotal role in recruiting members into the organization and enhancing its national and worldwide profile. In 1959 and 1960, NOI rallies drew thousands in major cities around the U.S. A national newspaper, Muhammad Speaks, was launched in 1961 under the aegis of Malcolm X.

The organization advocated the building of an independent Black nation of people of African descent in the U.S. NOI's program, which was published weekly on the back of Muhammad Speaks, said that this nation would be either inside or outside the U.S. and that the federal government should pay reparations to African Americans for decades, as compensation for unpaid slave labor over the centuries.

By 1963, internal problems within the NOI resulted in Malcolm's suspension and his complete departure by March 1964. The Federal Bureau of Investiga-



With Shirley Graham DuBois in Accra, Ghana, 1963.



With Fidel Castro, Harlem, N.Y., 1960.

Workers World forum

By Kris Hamel

With the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X on Feb. 21, activists worldwide are taking time to remember this African-American revolutionary icon and his legacy of struggle "by any means necessary." In the U.S., Workers World Party branches, members, friends and allies are commemorating the life of Malcolm X with meetings and programs in several cities. These events will coincide with a national call made by activists in Ferguson and St. Louis, Mo., to organize shutdowns against police and state repression in honor of Malcolm X.

In **HUNTINGTON, W.VA.**, the group Workers and Students for Appalachian Socialism will honor Malcolm X with a panel discussion on Thursday, Feb. 19, on "Racist injustice, police terror and the system that promotes it." The panel will feature Professor Keelon Hinton, who teaches "Race and Culture" at Marshall University, and Lamont Lilly, a Durham, N.C.-based activist who is a contributing

editor at the Triangle Free Press, a Human Rights Delegate with Witness for Peace and an organizer with WWP. The event starts at 7 p.m. at Marshall University, Shawkey dining room, 2nd floor of the Student Center.

In **DETROIT**, the WWP Black History Month forum on Saturday, Feb. 21, will include videos and recordings of Malcolm X, the "voice of struggle and liberation," as well as a featured talk by Detroit revolutionary leader Abayomi Azikiwe, editor of the Pan-African News Wire and contributing editor of WW newspaper. The event leaflet notes that Malcolm X's "militancy, political candor, and revolutionary leadership gave voice to a movement at a time much like today, when the Black community faces racial violence, economic stagnation, staggering unemployment, police murder, brutality and oppression." The program starts at 5 p.m., with dinner served (donation requested but no one turned away for lack of funds), at 5920 Second Ave., just north of Wayne State University.



LEGACY OF MALCOLM X

tion, along with local police agencies, monitored and infiltrated the NOI, which contributed to the heightening of divisions between Malcolm X and other leaders in the organization.

Malcolm X's contributions: then and now

With the formation of the Muslim Mosque, Inc. and the OAAU in 1964, Malcolm X pointed the way forward for the urbanized African-American working class and poor. His emphasis on the need for mass organization, broad united fronts and political education was paramount in his outlook.

After making hajj in April 1964, Malcolm X visited numerous African, Middle Eastern and European states to broaden his intellectual horizon and form alliances for a renewed struggle by African Americans against the U.S. capitalist and imperialist system.

During another trip overseas from July to November 1964, Malcolm X visited the Organization of African Unity's second summit in Cairo.

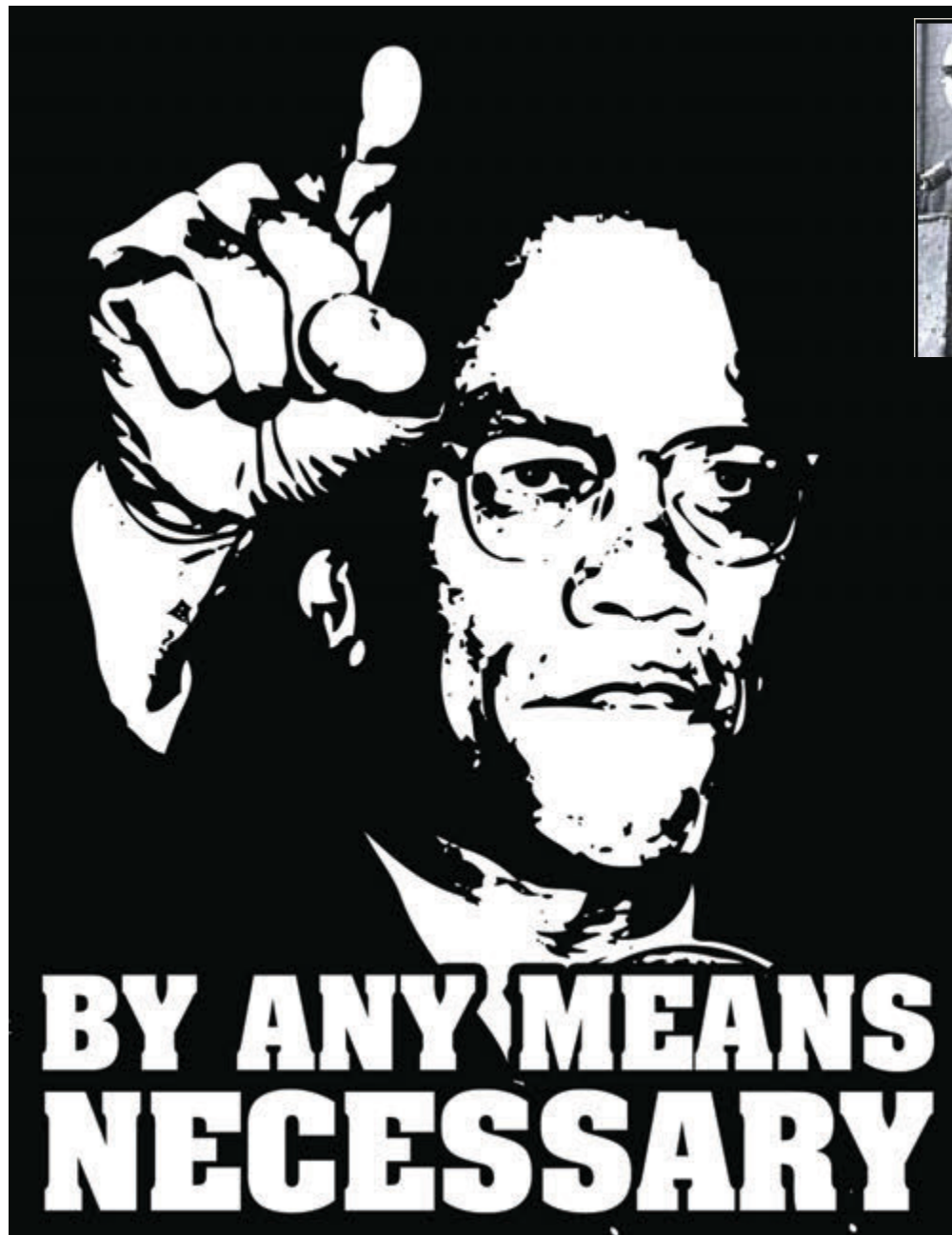


He issued an eight-page memorandum, which called on newly independent African states to support the liberation movement of African Americans.

In addition, the OAAU sought to bring the plight of African Americans to the United Nations to demand sanctions against the U.S. government for its refusal to recognize the human rights of this oppressed nation. This effort drew upon the work of William Patterson, Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois of the Civil Rights Congress, which issued an appeal to the U.N. entitled "We Charge Genocide" in 1951.

Since mid-2014, there has been a resurgence of mass demonstrations and rebellions throughout the U.S. protesting the blatant and unpunished killings of African Americans by law enforcement agents. These protests have prompted the intervention of state police agencies and National Guard units in Missouri. Moreover, Pentagon-sponsored militarization of police departments around the country has been laid bare before the world.

Malcolm X remained in an organization from the time of his release from



prison until the time of his assassination. He recognized that the liberation of African Americans would require a collective effort based on militancy including the right to self-defense, anti-imperialism, Pan-Africanism and eventually anti-capitalism.

In order to move the anti-racist movement forward in the U.S., there must be consolidation and organization of the popular forces fighting police terrorism and judicial impunity. Institutional racism is an integral part of the world capitalist system. One cannot be fought without rigorous opposition to the other. This is part of Malcolm X's enduring legacy. □



With Dr. King, March 1964.



How we link Malcolm X to Black Lives Matter

In **NEW YORK CITY**, the WWP Black Liberation Month forum on Feb. 21 will focus on a tribute to Malcolm X and the special meaning of his enduring legacy, especially as it relates to today's Black Lives Matter movement. The program, including a soul food dinner (small donation requested), is from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Solidarity Center, 147 West 24th St., 2nd floor, Manhattan.

In **BALTIMORE**, WWP and the youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) will host a discussion and meeting for Black History (Liberation) Month on Sunday, Feb. 22. The featured speaker will be WWP First Secretary Larry Holmes, who will discuss the legacy of Malcolm X and the uprising against police terror across the United States. The meeting starts at 5 p.m., with a light dinner at 4:30, at the Solidarity Center, 2011 North Charles St.

In **PHILADELPHIA**, Monica Moorehead, a WWP national leader, editor of "Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle," and a managing ed-

itor of WW newspaper, will be the featured speaker at a public meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 24. Called "From Selma 1965 to #BlackLivesMatter 2015 — Malcolm X's Legacy & Black Liberation," the free event is sponsored by Mundo Obreiro/Workers World Party and the Philadelphia International Action Center. Moorehead travelled to Ferguson, Mo., in August and October as a People's Power Assemblies organizer, and has been actively building the growing national movement against racist police killings. The event starts at 7 p.m. at Calvary Church, 48th and Baltimore Avenue.

The **Durham, N.C.**, branch of WWP is hosting a community forum on Malcolm X on Feb. 21 at the Hayti Heritage Center. Speakers will include representatives from the Black movement, Manzoor Cheema from Muslims for Social Justice on the growing racist violence against Muslims and Larry Hales, a WW contributing editor and organizer for the People's Power Assembly Movement, on a national tribunal against police terror. □



Boston protest against racist police terror, Dec. 4.

WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Novorossiyan militia encircle Kiev regime's troops

By Greg Butterfield

European Union leaders made a flurry of diplomatic visits in early February, holding panicky negotiations with Kiev and Moscow to reach a ceasefire in the war between Ukraine and the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, also called Novorossiya.

On Feb. 9, German Chancellor Angela Merkel met with President Barack Obama in Washington to discuss U.S. plans to openly arm the Ukrainian coup regime of oligarchs, neoliberal politicians and neo-Nazis installed with Washington's help one year ago.

This followed whirlwind visits by Merkel and French President Francois Hollande to Kiev and Moscow. The leaders of the two dominant EU economic powers met face to face with Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin for five hours on Feb. 6 to present a ceasefire proposal.

Held with no other diplomats or media present, the meeting fed speculation that the EU bosses wanted to speak frankly with Putin about the U.S. attempt to push Europe into conflict with Russia. The EU is being economically hurt by sanctions on Russia, imposed at Washington's insistence.

French media reported that Hollande and Merkel undertook the trip without consulting Washington — a highly unusual step. Other reports suggested that a section of the Obama administration shares the European concern that the West may lose out by escalating the war. (RT.com, Feb. 6)

The Hollande-Merkel proposal is to be the focus of reconvened negotiations in Minsk on Feb. 11.

A high-ranking source in German intelligence told the newspaper Frankfurt Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung Feb. 8 that the real death toll of the Ukraine civil war is nearly 50,000, including civilians and troops. This is almost 10 times the "official" United Nations figure.

Interest from the EU and perhaps U.S. leaders has little to do with stopping civilian casualties in the besieged Donbass region. Rather, it is prompted by the

Novorossiyan militia's successful encirclement of an estimated 6,000 to 7,500 Ukrainian troops in the region of Debaltsevo in northern Donetsk and southern Lugansk.

The looming defeat of the latest Ukrainian offensive — begun by Kiev in early January — also stepped up calls by the U.S. Congress to provide the coup regime with more powerful weaponry.

McCain admits Ukraine used banned weapons

Senate Armed Services Chair John McCain — who has based his long career on support for war crimes — leads the charge for openly arming Kiev, with \$3 billion in heavy weaponry as a starter. At a Feb. 5 Washington news conference, he admitted that the Ukraine junta has used internationally banned cluster bombs in its war against Donbass. McCain said this war crime was a reason to give Kiev more weapons: "I think that if we had provided them with the weapons they need, they wouldn't have felt they had to use cluster bombs." (Sputnik News)

The overwhelming majority of Congress — both Republicans and Democrats — plus Secretary of State John Kerry and outgoing Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, back the plan to arm Ukraine, as does Ashton Carter, Obama's nominee to replace Hagel. (Sputnik, Feb. 4)

Washington has been arming Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's government, both through proxies like Poland and directly in secret, since at least mid-December. Novorossiyan militias have captured U.S.-made and NATO-distributed weapons during the past month.

Kerry and State Department official Victoria Nuland, an architect of last year's coup, rushed to Kiev Feb. 5, a day ahead of Merkel and Hollande's visit, in an attempt to stiffen Poroshenko's backbone with a pledge of another \$1 billion in economic assistance.

The same day, NATO announced it would increase its "Rapid Response Force in Europe" to 30,000 troops, from the current 13,000.

Poroshenko's government showed no

signs of wanting peace. In the past week, Ukraine's armed forces, National Guard and volunteer fascist battalions continued to terrorize civilians throughout the Donbass by shelling homes, schools and hospitals. They killed five people by striking a hospital in the capital of Donetsk Feb. 4. Even after Kiev agreed to create a "humanitarian corridor" in the area around Debaltsevo, the National Guard Aydar Battalion fired on civilians fleeing Chernukhin, Lugansk, as the people's militia attempted to evacuate the village. (News-Front.info, Feb. 6)

And overnight Feb. 8-9, a Ukrainian missile struck a chemical plant in central Donetsk, shaking the entire capital city. (Rusvesna.su, Feb. 9)

'Minsk warmed over'

In a Feb. 3 interview with Cuba's Prensa Latina news agency, Deputy Chair of the Donetsk Supreme Soviet and chief negotiator Denis Pushilin said, "Kiev's troops apply the methods used by the U.S. military in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. They unload heavy artillery against the population from afar until they know the area is destroyed, and then send in soldiers to kill those who remain alive and clean out the city."

In the face of this brutal situation, Hollande and Merkel appear to be offering to turn the clock back to the September Minsk agreement, with some additional language on "federalization" meant to appease Russia, and the introduction of "peacekeepers" — that is, troops taking orders from the West. (Slavyangrad.es, Feb. 6)

Donetsk and Lugansk would be forced to roll back the progress they have made in the past month against the Ukrainian occupation forces, including the situation in the Debaltsevo.

Saving the Ukrainian military from defeat and its hardware from confiscation by Novorossiya is the most immediate purpose of the EU proposal.

"Minsk warmed over" is how anti-imperialist media analyst Daniel Patrick Welch described it.

Will the Novorossiyan leadership, much less the population, be willing to



PHOTO: ANTIMPERIALISTISCHE AKTION

Anti-fascists protest war against Novorossiya by Ukraine and Western powers outside the Munich Security Conference, Feb. 7.

go along with a re-run of Minsk after so much death, destruction and broken promises by the Ukrainian junta and its Western backers? It will be a very hard sell.

Donetsk Prime Minister Alexander Zakharchenko has stated that the people's republics intend to reclaim the entire territory of the former Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine, including occupied cities like Mariupol and Slavyansk.

Alexei Mozgovoi, the radical commander of the Lugansk "Ghost Brigade" that is slamming shut the "Debaltsevo cauldron" on Ukrainian occupation forces, made a Feb. 1 political appeal to all people of Ukraine: "Our goal is to remove the oligarchs and big business which destroy the economy that belongs to the people, and build a fair system, creating equal conditions and equal opportunities for all segments of the population." (Red Star Over Donbass blog)

The leaders and people of the Donbass have every right to take advantage of whatever differences exist within the imperialist camp to defend themselves, further their goals of liberating the primarily Russian-speaking southeastern region of Ukraine, and provide internationalist assistance to Ukrainian anti-fascists.

The global anti-war, anti-imperialist and workers' movement has a responsibility to support their struggle and to oppose every manifestation of U.S.-EU imperialist intervention. This means stopping the U.S. and EU from arming the fascist-oligarch regime in Kiev. □

At Russia's border

NATO mobilizes 30,000 troops

By Manlio Dinucci

The author is an Italy-based military strategist. This article was published in *Il Manifesto*, Feb. 6.

For NATO's defense ministers meeting in Brussels yesterday, it was "a very busy day." After the bilateral meeting, in which U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel sent instructions to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the Nuclear Planning Group met. (Italy participates in this group, violating the Non-Proliferation Treaty.) What they decided is unknown, since they issued no press statements. But, since Washington has reiterated that "NATO will remain a nuclear alliance," it can be deduced that they decided to accelerate the "modernization" of U.S. nuclear forces deployed in Europe (including Italy) and the strengthening of the French and British forces.

Then the NATO-Georgia Commission met and gave its appreciation for Georgia's contribution to operations in Afghanistan and the "NATO Response Force" (encouragement for the now certain admission of

Georgia into the Alliance).

After this constructive beginning, the North Atlantic Council met with the participation of 28 defense ministers, announcing that NATO has decided to strengthen its military forces to conduct "the full range of missions" and "meet the challenges that come from any direction." Particularly, it referenced Ukraine, where "violence is growing" because "Russia continues to violate international standards, supporting the separatists," and because "violent extremism" is spreading in North Africa and the Middle East." For this purpose the "NATO Response Force" will be strengthened, raising its size from 13,000 to 30,000 troops and establishing command and control units in six countries of Eastern Europe. At the same time a "strike force" will form, consisting of 5,000 troops, deployable in a few days.

NATO (and with it Italy) is therefore at war on two fronts, eastern and southern. How did we get to this situation? After the Cold War ended, the U.S. began using NATO to maintain its leadership of Western Europe and at the same time conquer

Eastern Europe. It demolished Yugoslavia with a war, then extended NATO eastward, encompassing all the countries of the former Warsaw Pact, two of the former Yugoslav republics and three republics of the former USSR. When they enter NATO, the Eastern European countries come to depend more on Washington than Bruxelles [e.g., the European Union].

But something is jamming up the U.S. plan for conquest: Russia adapts to the crisis and tightens growing economic relations with the EU by providing the bulk of Western Europe's natural gas needs and opens up new business opportunities with China. This endangers U.S. strategic interests. It is at this point that the crisis breaks out in Ukraine: after using years of preparation to take control of key positions in the military and training the neo-Nazi groups, NATO promotes the Kiev putsch. Thus, it forces Moscow to move in defense of the Russian-speakers in Ukraine, exposing Russia to the sanctions of the U.S. and the EU. And the Russian counter sanctions, damaging especially the EU, facilitate the plan of the

transatlantic partnership for trade and investment through which Washington seeks to increase U.S. influence in the EU.

At the same time, U.S.-led NATO extends its strategy to North Africa and the Middle East. The demolition of Libya with the war, the same operation launched in Syria, the revival of the war in Iraq, the use of double-edged Islamic formations (supported to bring down governments that NATO targeted, and then used as a pretext target to justify other armed interventions) all part of the U.S./NATO strategy.

Translated by Workers World managing editor John Catalinotto.

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,
Available online and in bookstores around the country.
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As bankers prepare to stonewall Syriza Tsipras pledges to fight austerity but 'observe euro norms'

By Fred Goldstein

Feb. 9 — A showdown in Greece in the struggle between the newly elected leftist Syriza government and the European bankers, who are trying to squeeze every last euro from the Greek masses, may come to a head Feb. 11-12 at meetings of the finance ministers in Brussels.

The bankers are taking a hard line while the Syriza government is pledging to reverse austerity. The bankers show absolutely no signs of backing down. Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, in his first speech to the Greek Parliament, strongly repeated his anti-austerity message, but also pledged to pay the loans and act within the norms of the eurozone.

"Greece wants to service its debt and invites its partners to join it in finding a way to work together," he said. "It will comply with the rules of fiscal balance and a balanced budget but at the same time deal with social destruction, putting an end to austerity and a humanitarian crisis." (Tsipras speech summarized in Business Insider, Feb. 8)

These aims — to conform to the rules of the bankers and at the same time to end austerity — are mutually incompatible. They are signs of either illusions or vacillation, or both, given the hard-line messages of the Berlin, Paris, Rome and London bankers, as well as all the other parasitic bankers who are sucking the blood of the Greek people and of all the people of southern Europe.

Already Syriza has silently dropped its demand for cutting the debt in half. In any case, the Syriza leadership is giving an ambiguous message that could confuse and disarm the Greek masses. Hopefully, Syriza will take a more consistent anti-austerity line at the upcoming Brussels meeting of ministers.

Tsipras reaffirms anti-austerity program

According to the Business Insider, Tsipras emphasized "tackling the big

wounds of the bailout, tackling the humanitarian crisis. ... After five years of bailout barbarity, our people cannot take any more."

The anti-austerity measures that he pledged to follow included giving free food, electricity and health care to those worst affected by the economic crisis and ending an unpopular annual levy on small private property.

Among other commitments outlined in parliament were:

- A gradual rise in the monthly minimum wage to 751 euros (\$850) by 2016.
- Payment of a bonus to low-income pensioners.
- Reinstatement of public sector employees "fired illegally."
- Restoring the national broadcasting network.
- Raising the tax-free annual income for the poor from 5,000 euros to 12,000 euros.
- An end to privatization of public facilities.

Tsipras also demanded reparations from Germany for forced loans imposed on Greece during the Nazi occupation in World War II.

Tsipras told parliament that Syriza's "irreversible decision is to implement in full our pre-elections pledges." (BBC, Feb. 8)

Tsipras also rejected any more bailout money. Greece is supposed to apply for 7.2 billion euros by Feb. 16 and receive it on Feb. 28. If Greece does not have enough money to pay 1.4 billion euros by March and 3.5 billion euros in June, it could default on its loans.

This, of course, has enraged the bankers. The European Central Bank has cut off access of Greek banks to cheap loans.

The Syriza government is asking instead for a bridge loan to be able to pay debts until negotiations can be worked out. The ECB has refused, saying the only money Greece can get is bailout money, with all conditions of austerity attached.

Greece at Brussels: 'One versus 18'

At the coming meetings in Brussels, the Greek government, which owes 320 billion euros (\$360 billion) to the bankers, is supposed to present a financial plan that will allow the government to keep its promises to end austerity.

The bankers have already signalled a hard line. The ECB has told Greece not to expect any concessions at the Feb. 11-12 meetings.

At a preliminary meeting between Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis and all the other finance ministers in Brussels last week, "It was Greece against all others, basically one versus 18," one official said, describing the discussions. (Reuters, Feb. 5)

Washington and Wall Street have tried to maintain a low profile during this crisis. But the U.S. government quietly made its position known.

"The U.S. urged Greece to exercise fiscal prudence and continue structural reforms in meetings between U.S. Treasury Department Assistant Secretary Daleep Singh, Varoufakis and other Greek officials in Athens Friday, the U.S. Embassy said in a statement on its website.

"The United States believes that it is very important for the Greek government to work cooperatively with its European colleagues, as well as with the [International Monetary Fund],' U.S. Ambassador to Greece David Pearce said in the statement." (Bloomberg News, Feb. 8)

Not discussed is that the U.S. is the dominant force in the IMF, which, along with the ECB, is one of the two primary forces imposing austerity on Greece.

Alan Greenspan, former head of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board, predicted, according to the BBC, that Greece would have to leave the eurozone. It is not known whether this is a warning or a threat in the guise of a prediction. But in any case, it points up the dangerous situation that the Greek government and the Greek workers, peasants and middle class

are facing.

Pointing to challenges, mobilizing for struggle

In fact, breaking with the euro would be a step toward ending the debt slavery Greece is in. But it also sets the stage for economic aggression by the world capitalist investors and severe economic hardship. Economic strangulation could only be answered by strong working-class measures to fight back.

With the Brussels meeting coming up, it is urgent to tell the workers of the potential dangers ahead, not hold out hopes of a settlement. And it is equally urgent to mobilize in the factories, workplaces, campuses and countryside for a struggle. This battle should not be carried on by government leaders in negotiations over the heads of the people. It must become a political struggle in the streets involving the masses, not only against the euro-bankers and Wall Street, but against the Greek ruling class, which is complicit in all the rotten deals made with Berlin and Brussels.

Right now the Syriza leaders are publicly underestimating the enemy. Instead, preparations for a financial and economic assault should be underway. And all revolutionary forces in Greece should be looking for ways to unite in the struggle in the face of the crisis. This applies especially to the working-class organizations and the strategically situated trade unions, which have a glorious history of resisting political reaction, repression and exploitation.

Any strong initiative taken by the Greek masses to ward off the coming attacks would undoubtedly resonate in southern Europe and other European countries. Taking a struggle initiative in Greece is the most certain way to generate international solidarity.

The struggle against austerity and economic strangulation must lead down the path of class struggle and working-class organization for defense of the people. □

Greek debt, austerity and past military contracts

By Sara Flounders

Since the 2008 capitalist downturn sparked the debt crisis, Greek working people have held huge demonstrations, general strikes and now have voted in the Syriza government to oppose the brutal austerity program imposed by U.S. and European, especially German, banks. Syriza has pledged to have half the debt written off and to roll back the austerity measures of the previous government. At this time, the European Union's bankers refuse and are digging in their heels.

While massive unemployment and social service cuts have also hit hard in Portugal, Spain, Ireland and Italy, austerity and unemployment in Greece have brought the proportion of people living under the poverty line from 3 percent in 2010 to 44 percent today. (Public Policy Analysis Group, Athens University).

Why did this austerity hit Greece with the most devastating blow?

The Wall Street Journal of July 10, 2010, answered this question for its business audience: "Greece, with a population of just 11 million, is the largest importer of conventional weapons in

Europe — and ranks fifth in the world behind China, India, the United Arab Emirates and South Korea. Its military spending is the highest in the European Union as a percentage of gross domestic product. That spending was one of the factors behind Greece's stratospheric national debt."

Since the 2008 global economic crisis struck, the bankers in Berlin, London and Wall Street have gone into overdrive to convince the Greek workers — and workers everywhere — that the debt crisis in Greece arose because the Greek workers were living "beyond their means." This was a constant theme, not only of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, but also of the corporate media internationally. They claimed that the Greek government had taken out unsustainable loans in order to guarantee full health care, a minimum wage, decent pensions, libraries, schools and parks.

But the standard of living of Greek people, modest by European standards, was not the reason Greece had the highest rate of unsustainable debt in Europe.

The corporate media tell the same

lie to workers in Ireland, Portugal and Spain, and to the workers in Germany whose incomes have shrunk, and in the U.S. to the working people of Detroit. This lie must be challenged politically on every front so that the people understand that their modest gains are not the source of the problem. The capitalist system and its inevitable crises are the problem.

Military spending

The bankers understand very well, but are not telling the workers who the major culprit is, especially behind the Greek debt.

An article in the April 19, 2012, British newspaper the Guardian explained the impact of the years of weapons purchases:

"According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute ... from 2002 to 2006, Greece was the world's fourth biggest importer of conventional weapons. It is now the 10th.

"As a proportion of GDP, Greece spends twice as much as any other EU member on defense. ... Well after the economic crisis had begun, Germany and France were trying to seal lucrative

weapons deals even as they were pushing us to make deep cuts in areas like health," said Dimitris Papadimoulis, who now represents Syriza in the European Parliament."

For many years, Greece was the biggest customer in Europe for German military corporations and also a major purchaser of French weapons. These are the two imperialist countries that hold the largest share of Greek debt.

The contracts for these weapons purchases and decades of maintenance and parts supplies are provided by bank loans from the countries supplying the weapons — Germany, France and the United States. The incentive for the huge unneeded purchases is a network of bribes from the military corporations, especially to the generals and top political leaders.

Angelos Philippides, a prominent Greek economist, explained: "For a long time Greece spent 7 percent of its GDP on defense when other European countries spent an average 2.2 percent. If you were to add up that compound 5 percent from

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WORKERS WORLD editorial

Confront 'American Sniper'

Try to imagine this movie: Iraq's urban population, angered by a foreign invasion, mobilizes to resist an army of occupation. The robocop occupation troops are weighed down with body armor and heavy weapons. They drive armored Hummers decorated with death heads and kick down doors to invade Iraqi homes. Young Iraqis wearing tatters risk death to challenge the robocops. Whole families support this resistance.

If you already understand U.S. imperialism's crimes in Iraq, that's what you might take away from the movie, "American Sniper." But many viewers, unaware of the truth behind the war, receive a distorted message. Directed by Clint Eastwood, the film looks at the events only through U.S. eyes. It twists the truth, falsifying historical context while adding poisonous anti-Arab bigotry.

Because this film is a box-office hit and is being pushed for multiple Academy Awards, including Best Picture, it is a weapon in the hands of the Pentagon generals planning future wars from Iraq to Ukraine to Somalia to Venezuela. Workers World urges its readers who know the truth about the U.S. war on Iraq to confront the film wherever possible.

The movie's central figure is Chris Kyle, a real sniper whose memoir is the basis for the film. In the film version, Kyle starts out as a Texas cowboy, gets patriotic upon seeing the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya on TV, and enlists as a Navy SEAL. After seeing the World Trade Center collapse on TV, Kyle aches to leave his beautiful, pregnant wife and fight in Iraq, where he returns for four tours totaling 1,000 days and makes 160 "confirmed kills" of those he considers "savages."

Most of the Pentagon's million "kills" in Iraq were done with drones, bombs and rockets, and by wrecking the infrastructure and sowing sectarian civil war. Kyle's kills are up close and personal. In other words, like the earlier Rambo slaughtering Vietnamese, he's a racist serial killer on steroids.

Railroad crossings cause train deaths

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ment Corporation to build 30 prisons. This money was supposed to be spent to build low-cost housing.

No time, Andy? The Long Island Railroad spent 30 years, from 1950 to 1980, to eliminate all the grade crossings on its Montauk branch from Jamaica to Babylon. This program must have saved dozens of lives.

Metro-North's New Haven line doesn't have any grade crossings. Neither does the Amtrak line between New York and Washington.

So why can't the Rail Safety Improvement Act be funded and expanded to start eliminating the most dangerous railroad crossings?

Crossing gates were only installed at that Commerce Street crossing after Gerard Dunne was killed there in 1984. This crossing is dangerously sited on a turnoff from the Taconic State Parkway.

Nine teenagers were killed at the Long Island Railroad's Herricks Road crossing

The U.S. Marines and Navy SEALs kicking down doors kill dozens of Iraqis for each U.S. troop killed. But the film shows how the bodies and minds of U.S. troops are also damaged by warfare. When they come home, many can't cope — and they get little psychological support.

The context Eastwood omits is that these troops' political leaders have lied to them about Iraq, which had no connection to the bombings in Africa or with 9/11. In the real world of 2002-2003, the George W. Bush administration lied hundreds of times, claiming Iraq had ties to terrorists and held "weapons of mass destruction."

Bush lied so that people like Kyle would risk their own necks for the billionaires, bankers and oil magnates who rule the United States and wanted to conquer Iraq. Today, the Pentagon uses a movie like this one to deceive U.S. youth into thinking a career in the armed forces defends their families and neighbors.

Despite some hints of disillusionment with the war among Kyle's buddies, "American Sniper" is just another example of typical Hollywood war propaganda. From early racist "Cowboy and Indian" movies through the Rambo films of Vietnam to today, these movies slander "the enemy" as inhuman brutes.

If the audience could view the film through the eyes of the mass of ordinary Iraqis who defend Fallujah, Ramadi and Sadr City from the U.S. occupation troops, they could get closer to the truth of this criminal, genocidal U.S. war.

Eastwood once made a pair of films about the U.S. war with Japan. "Flags of Our Fathers" tells of the battle for the strategic island of Iwo Jima from the U.S. viewpoint, while "Letters from Iwo Jima" tells the same story from the Japanese side. But don't hold your breath waiting for Eastwood and Hollywood to make a sequel showing the Iraqi viewpoint. Speak out against "American Sniper" and make it part of an anti-war debate. □

in Mineola on March 14, 1982. It wasn't until 1998 that a bridge was finally erected there, eliminating the bloody crossing.

Long freight trains at grade crossings also block ambulances and fire trucks. Cudahy, Wis. — a Milwaukee suburb with less than 20,000 people — had to have two firehouses because of the Chicago & North Western (now Union Pacific) slicing through their town.

What's needed is a massive program — like the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s — to begin getting rid of these dangerous grade crossings. Tens of thousands of workers could be hired.

Only a movement of the people will make this happen. □

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What's going on among the filthy rich

By Deirdre Griswold

It's easy to get angry at the super rich these days.

The percentage of households in the U.S. feeling the pangs of real hunger — euphemistically referred to as "food insecurity" — remains at high levels more than six years after the economic crash of 2008. Wages are stagnant at best, and real unemployment, if you include those who have given up looking for work and probably can't afford the transportation and clothing required for job interviews, remains high.

But business has never been better for those companies that sell high-end luxury goods to the very, very, very rich.

Obviously, there haven't been enough protests here — yet — against this vicious capitalist system, because multimillionaires are flocking to this country from all over the world to buy, and flaunt, such items as "personal aircraft," rare gems and floor-through, multistory, dazzling, Manhattan condos facing Central Park.

Some of them are the European and Asian wealthy who find it more difficult to either acquire or display their decadent lifestyles at home. But most are the home-grown U.S. filthy rich.

In the U.S., "spending on personal luxury goods rose a steady 5 percent last year to about \$73 billion," reports the consulting firm Bain and Co., "compared with negative growth in previous juggernauts like China and Russia." ("Makers of Luxury Goods Rush to Cater to American Millionaires," New York Times, Feb. 7)

In China, where the Communist Party took power in 1949 after a monumental revolutionary struggle, capitalism has been allowed to flourish for decades now, but within a centralized economy controlled by the state. There began to be millionaires and even billionaires in China. But beginning last year, a crackdown on corruption led to a significant decline in the Chinese market for luxury goods. Some of the super rich, those not in jail in China, are now in the United States, the "free world," giving interviews on how unjustly they were treated back home.

The luxury goods market has also declined in Russia, perhaps partly because of the sanctions imposed by the Western imperialists.

But the "bright spot" in the luxury goods market, says the Times, "was the United States, where annual revenue jumped 8 percent from the previous year." In the last 18 months, the number of millionaires in the U.S. has increased by 1.6 million. That's not the total number, just the additional millionaires.

Much of the growing wealth — for the rich — comes from equity markets. In other words, ownership of stocks. No work is involved, not even make-work. Just checking their bank balances from time to time to see how many millions more dollars have landed in their laps.

They spent at least 8 percent more on luxury goods last year. Wouldn't we all like to be able to spend more, even if just on living expenses. Social Security this year went up 1.7 percent. Wages are

stuck in the "low" position. But for the super rich, their only problem is what to do with all that money. One reason they're going bananas spending it on every type of luxury you can (and can't) imagine is that they're reluctant to invest it in real production.

How the rich got richer

This is what every worker, every oppressed person, needs to know. As much as we can and should get angry at the politicians in Washington, our problems go a lot deeper than the corrupt political system in this country.

Our problem is that we are under the boot-heel of an economic system and a ruling class that have long outlived any social usefulness. Instead of developing the material underpinnings that could improve life immeasurably for everyone on this planet in this age of high technology, capitalism can only go on making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

The ability to produce anything that can be sold for a profit has advanced so far with high-tech that it takes fewer and fewer workers to bring about abundance. Read high, permanent joblessness. More and more, this abundance chokes further production, instead of being distributed to all who need it.

There are, of course, all kinds of "nonprofitable" things that also need to get done. Dealing with climate change should move to the top of the list. In this modern world of great abundance, the means exist to figure out the right strategies and carry out serious programs to reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It is now blanketing the earth, causing enormous ecological damage which is predicted to get much worse. But doing this is not "profitable" in the immediate sense, the capitalist sense, of giving a healthy return on an investment. So it's not happening on any meaningful scale, despite all the dire warnings.

Instead, capitalist potentates build vast air-conditioned palaces in the desert. They fly in their private planes to private island estates equipped with temperature-controlled wine cellars.

The new generation is already cursing this horribly destructive system. The challenge is to build an anti-capitalist movement that can liberate the energies and creativity of the great masses of workers and oppressed, who have every reason to want to pull it down. □

Greek debt, austerity

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1946 to today, there would be no debt at all.

"If Athens had cut defense spending to levels similar to other EU states over the past decade, economists claim it would have saved around €150bn — more than its last bailout. Instead, Greece dedicates up to €7bn a year to military expenditure — down from a high of €10bn in 2009." (Guardian, April 19, 2012)

"Since the 1974 invasion of Cyprus, Greece has spent 216 billion euro on armaments," said Katerina Tsoukala, a Brussels-based security expert." (Guardian) This amount is far larger than the Greek debt at the time the 2008 capitalist crisis hit. The purchases included German submarines, Mirage fighter jets from France and F-16 jets from the U.S. and 1,300 tanks.



Relevance of Puerto Rico at the CELAC Summit

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

On the international level there are many unknowns about the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico. This often leads to simplistic ideas and criticisms about the Puerto Rican struggle, at times even negative ones without any understanding of the complexity of a struggle that for over a century has been waged within the limits of life in a colony.

It is a struggle that has cost many lives in U.S.-perpetrated massacres and murders, long incarcerations in the prisons of the empire, frame-up charges, accusations and dossiers (collecting information about persons involved in political organizations related to independence), constant monitoring by local and federal agencies, along with the continuous harassment of pro-independence activists.

By imposing colonial status, the U.S. empire committed a crime against humanity, which not only robs Puerto Rico's workforce, resources and sovereignty, but tries to strip its people of their own history and Afro-Taíno-Caribbean identity. Puerto Rico's struggle for independence has been an uphill battle. It remains one.

This is true even within the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), an organization whose goal is to unite in action every country of the Americas and isolate them from the interference of U.S. and Canadian imperialism. It was not until CELAC's recent Jan. 28 summit, its third since CELAC was founded in 2011 at the initiative of the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, that there was an active presence of Puerto Rican independence fighters.

We remember that at the CELAC Summit of 2011 in Caracas, the Puerto Rican band Calle 13, along with famous Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel, opened the conference with the Puerto Rican song "Latinoamérica." However, there was no seat at the summit then for the Puerto Rican nation.

U.S. strategy has always been to isolate Puerto Rico and its struggles from its neighbors. For decades, Puerto Rico was seen as a U.S. appendage, separated from the Latin American and Caribbean context. That's what makes what happened on Jan. 28, the first day of the meeting of heads of state, so important.

The theme of this year's summit, held in Costa Rica, was "Latin America, free of extreme poverty." Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega emphasized that CELAC should continue its progressive policies

and stay alert against U.S. conspiracies. He gave as an example the continuing blockade of Cuba and the destabilization plans against Venezuela. Then Ortega used his platform to call upon the leader of the Puerto Rican Independence party, Rubén Berrios, saying: "Come, Rubén, finish my talk!"

Berrios then explained the need for CELAC to act in solidarity with Puerto Rico's independence and for the release of pro-independence political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, who has spent 34 years in prison.

When Berrios finished, the president of Costa Rica and host of the event, Luis Guillermo Solís, reprimanded Ortega for not following the "procedures" of the summit. Ortega replied, "You bring up procedures," but "you decided to give the floor to the OAS, the instrument of Yankee colonialism." Ortega then said, "Puerto Rico's voice is Nicaragua's voice." A few days later, Ortega appointed Berrios as advisor to Nicaragua on decolonization.

This incident, together with disagreements among some countries over whether to support independence for Puerto Rico, reveals the hidden hand of U.S. imperialism trying to intervene in this forum. In fact, as there was no mandatory consensus, the final declaration adopted regarding Puerto Rico was the same as at the 2014 summit in Havana: "To reiterate the Latin American and Caribbean character of Puerto Rico and to take note of the resolutions on Puerto Rico adopted by the Special Committee on Decolonization of the United Nations, we reiterate that this is a matter of interest for CELAC."

However, the wall of silence about Puerto Rico was broken, at least partially, when the discussion between Ortega and Solís was widely covered by international media — in the United States only CNN reported something. The struggle for independence is now part of the tasks of CELAC, when Cuba, Venezuela and Ecuador — whose President Rafael Correa will preside in CELAC the next year — endorsed the proposal to include the demand for sovereignty for Puerto Rico.

Crisis in Puerto Rico

The reality of the great social, financial and economic crisis the Puerto Rican government is undergoing right now gives this incident a special meaning. This crisis has been caused not by the misguided policies of the current govern-

ment, which are in fact enormous, but by Puerto Rico's colonial status, with the consequent lack of sovereignty to solve problems for the benefit of its people.

The list of the huge problems facing the country is long; prominent among them is privatization of public agencies and services, the high cost of living, rising unemployment, violence caused mostly by the increase in illicit drug commerce, and a huge public debt, which according to a lengthy report in the Feb. 5 *El Nuevo Día*, exceeds \$160 billion. Add to this the bleeding of the population, which is migrating to the United States, most of them at the most productive ages, that is, 20 to 44 years old. According to *El Nuevo Día*, in 2013 some 73,000 people left Puerto Rico, mostly migrating to southern states in the U.S. At the same time, the government of Puerto Rico is giving incentives to wealthy U.S. businessmen to move to Puerto Rico.

The Feb. 6 *New York Times* article entitled, "While the middle class flees, Puer-

to Rico tries to attract rich people," illustrates one of the erroneous policies of the local government. Using the pretext that its policy will bring in investors and jobs, the government's steps basically will result in the replacement of the population — very similar to what happened in Hawai'i. This article arouses great anger among those who know that thousands of Puerto Ricans are driven to leave the island precisely by the lack of jobs and the high cost of living. This substitution has already caused extremely negative political and social outcomes in Culebra, Vieques and the Big Island (Puerto Rico).

That is why the anti-colonial struggle needs international solidarity more than ever. Berrios said, as he finished: "It is the Puerto Ricans' responsibility to bring about independence; to Latin America and the Caribbean, however, belongs the task of showing solidarity with our right to independence and our demand to the U.S. to put an end to colonialism."

Long live a free Puerto Rico! □

4,000 protest NATO in Munich



While NATO officials from the 28 current member countries of the U.S.-dominated military alliance met in Munich, Germany, 4,000 people demonstrated outside. The sharpening crisis in Ukraine brought a sense of urgency to the protest, which gathered Feb. 7 in the Bavarian city under the slogan, "With NATO, no peace." A second demonstration focused

its attention on protesting the appearance of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and then joined the main march. Sevim Dagdelen, a member of the Parliament (Bundestag) for the Left Party, called for "Germany to send no weapons to Ukraine." (German daily *Junge Welt*, Feb. 9)

— John Catalinotto

and past military contracts

According to SIPRI statistics, even though Greek military spending has declined since the crisis, Greece is the second-biggest defense spender (in relation to its GDP) among the 27 NATO countries, after the U.S.

Past military regime in Greece

Since the beginning of the Cold War between the imperialist West and the Soviet Union, the Greek military has played an extremely privileged and thoroughly reactionary role in maintaining capitalist rule and keeping Greece within the U.S.-commanded NATO military alliance. With full support of U.S. and British imperialists and Greek fascists, the Greek military fought a violent civil war from 1945 to 1949 against anti-fascist workers organized by the Communist Party of Greece — the KKE. Com-

munist-led partisans had driven out the German occupation forces at the end of World War II.

U.S. President Harry Truman in 1947, in what became known as the Truman Doctrine, pledged unlimited military support to defeat growing workers' movements throughout the world following the World War II surrender of Nazi-led Germany. This policy facilitated brutal coups and decades of military repression in Greece, Turkey and Iran. In Greece in 1947, the communists were defeated militarily and outlawed.

In 1967, using a NATO strategic plan, Greek colonels again seized power and set up a ruling junta, which stayed in control until 1974. The army moved in 1967 to stop the Socialist Party under George Papandreu from taking office with a center-left coalition. This brutal military

junta, called the Regime of the Colonels, ruled by martial law, mass arrests, torture and disappearances. Today's extreme right-wing fascist party, Golden Dawn, has its origins in the police units that operated with impunity during the junta's rule.

Although ousted by a mobilized mass movement in 1974, the military and police hierarchy was untouched, except for the prosecution of a handful of coup leaders.

Source of corruption

Greek military contracts have always been the greatest source of corruption, payoffs, kickbacks and secrecy. The bribery by major military corporations infects every level of the military. Continuing scandals surrounding military contracts have rocked past administrations. The most notorious bribery scandal involves

billions paid over 12 years and billions still owed for six yet-undelivered German submarines. Former Minister of Defense Akis Tsochadzopoulos was convicted in 2013 of accepting \$8 million in bribes connected to these submarines.

Given this history, the appointment of the right-wing Greek Independence Party to head the Defense Ministry in the Syriza cabinet is an especially ominous development. It certainly implies that the past onerous military loans and secret payoffs will not be challenged.

An enormous battle is ahead for the workers in Greece. Political agitation and clear demands targeting the generals enmeshed with the UE bankers who have enriched themselves in the Greek debt trap will help prepare the workers to understand who their enemy is and what they are up against. □



Manifestación contra la austeridad frente a la embajada de EUA el pasado 17 de noviembre por el aniversario del levantamiento estudiantil de 1973.

Después de votar contra austeridad

Masas griegas esperan cambios

Por Fred Goldstein

El nuevo gobierno izquierdista socialdemócrata del partido Syriza llegó al poder en Grecia con un programa anti-austeridad el 25 de enero. El Partido apuntó contra los fuertes recortes presupuestarios y privatizaciones neoliberales impuestos por la “Troika” – El FMI, el Banco Central Europeo y la Comisión Europea.

El nuevo gobierno inmediatamente tomó medidas concretas contra el programa de austeridad impuesto por los bancos. Como lo expresara el noticiero británico Guardian, en su edición del 28 de enero: “Una por una [medidas de austeridad] se deshicieron, estilo blitzkrieg, sin piedad, con eficiencia.

“Primero fueron removidas las barricadas frente al Parlamento griego. Luego se anunció que los planes de privatización fueron detenidos y las pensiones reintegradas. Y después llegó la noticia de la reintroducción del salario mínimo mensual de €751. ...

“Después de eso, los ministros anunciaron más medidas: eliminación del pago por recetas y visitas al hospital, restauración de los convenios colectivos de trabajo, la recontratación de trabajadores despedidos en el sector público, la concesión de ciudadanía a los hijos de migrantes nacidos y criados en Grecia”.

Las medidas que Syriza anunció relativas al fin de la privatización y la restauración del nivel de vida de las/os trabajadoras se estima que costará €13,2 mil millones. A pesar de que Grecia le debe a la Troika €240 mil millones, el gobierno Syriza no pidió permiso para romper el pacto de austeridad, que estas medidas seguramente hacen. (A partir del 2 de febrero, 1 euro equivale a \$1,13)

Estos actos enviaron una ola de esperanza a las masas y ondas de choque a las juntas del capital financiero.

Austeridad para las masas = ayuda para banqueros

Gobiernos anteriores habían planeado recaudar fondos mediante la venta a capitalistas y constructores privados de los dos puertos más grandes de Grecia, varios aeropuertos, su compañía eléctrica, una refinería y otras instalaciones públicas, junto a despidos y recortes en los salarios, pensiones y beneficios de salud de las/os trabajadoras. Todo esto se planeaba hacer para pagar los préstamos bancarios realizados a los gobiernos capitalistas anteriores.

Vale la pena señalar que el gobierno griego no es realmente soberano. No tiene ningún control sobre su moneda, una función vital de cualquier Estado capitalista. El control de la moneda se encuentra en Frankfurt.

Los antecedentes de la victoria electoral de Syriza son años de dificultades económicas que produjeron años de lucha de masas en las calles y lugares de trabajo.

Grecia en la depresión

Grecia ha estado en depresión por los últimos cinco años, con la tasa oficial de desempleo en 25 por ciento, un 50 por ciento de desempleo juvenil y se estima que la mitad de la población vive en extrema pobreza. El pueblo se ha visto obligado a buscar comida y artículos domésticos en los basureros, leña y alimentos en los bosques y a subsistir de los bancos de alimentos que han sido creados en pueblos y ciudades.

Este es el resultado de la crisis financiera global capitalista. Pero se ve agravada por el hecho de que Grecia ha estado en las garras depredadoras de los banqueros europeos, encabezados por los alemanes y el gobierno de Angela Merkel, con el apoyo de toda la entidad bancaria del continente.

Años de lucha contra la austeridad

Pero ha habido una lucha de resistencia. Manifestaciones masivas contra la austeridad han sacudido a Grecia desde el 5 de mayo del 2010, cuando dos personas murieron.

Desde mayo a julio del 2011, los “indignados” (término originario de España) ocuparon plazas en toda Grecia, y el 5 de junio de ese año 500.000 personas se reunieron frente al Parlamento griego. El movimiento fue violentamente reprimido por la policía.

El 12 de febrero del 2012, unas 500.000 personas se manifestaron frente al Parlamento. El 9 de junio de ese año, hubo una huelga general de 24 horas contra la austeridad. El 17 de noviembre de 2014, decenas de miles se manifestaron en el aniversario del levantamiento estudiantil en 1973 en contra de la dictadura. La manifestación se convirtió en una contra la austeridad.

A través de los años se han producido numerosas manifestaciones masivas, sentadas, ocupaciones y huelgas. Hubo dos huelgas generales en el 2014, en abril y noviembre. Muchas fueron convocadas por el Partido Comunista de Grecia, que tiene una larga historia de lucha de clases y resistencia militante y una fuerte base en la clase obrera organizada. La base de Syriza es más general, entre las/os trabajadoras no organizados, jóvenes y pequeños negociantes empobrecidas/os. También ha tenido logros entre la sufrida población rural.

Este es el trasfondo de la victoria electoral de Syriza. Las manifestaciones, a pesar de su frecuencia y fuerza, no fueron capaces de obligar al establecimiento político griego a retroceder las medidas de austeridad. Los partidos y los políticos de los dos partidos principales son herramientas de banqueros, constructores, navieros y los grandes medios de comunicación. La resistencia de las masas hasta ahora ha sido incapaz de poner fin a la cruel asfixia económica.

Así que las masas griegas optaron por una solución parlamentaria, votando contra los partidos capitalistas tradicionales y votando por Syriza.

Contradicción de Syriza: intentar un ‘nuevo trato’

Pero al ganar el puesto, Syriza ahora se enfrenta a una enorme contradicción. Por un lado, el liderazgo, dirigido por Alexis Tsipras, ha desafiado la austeridad. Pero terminar con la austeridad requiere fondos. Por otra parte, el capital financiero europeo tiene el control de los fondos; fueron los que impusieron la austeridad en primer lugar y ahora están tomando una línea dura sobre cualquier forma de aliviar la deuda. Esto es base para la lucha futura.

El gobierno de Syriza está tratando de negociar un “nuevo trato” con los bancos – para dar a Grecia un respiro de la austeridad y de un duro calendario de pagos para que la economía crezca.

Hay dos partes en sus demandas. La primera y más importante es que la deuda de Grecia se reduzca a la mitad. La segunda es tratar de aflojar el régimen de pago—tasas de interés más bajas, más tiempo para pagar, atar el pago al crecimiento económico y así sucesivamente. Tanto el ministro de finanzas Varoufakis y el primer ministro Tsipras han dicho que tienen la intención de honrar la deuda, pero quieren que el monto y las condiciones de pago sean modificadas.

Horas después de la victoria de Syriza, canciller de Alemania, Angela Merkel descartó cualquier reducción de la deuda. El ministro de finanzas alemán Wolfgang Schäuble advirtió a Grecia sobre sus tácticas de negociación sobre la cancelación de la deuda. En una entrevista con el Guardian de Londres el 30 de enero, Christine Lagarde, directora del FMI, dijo que es “tiempo de pago” para Grecia y “los padres deben pagar sus impuestos”.

La estrategia de Syriza es utilizar el antagonismo contra el gobierno de Merkel para ganarse la simpatía de otras capitales europeas. Varoufakis inmediatamente fue a París para exponer el caso. El ministro de finanzas de Francia dijo que simpatizaba con Grecia sobre la cuestión de aflojar las condiciones de pago de préstamos – pero descartó cualquier alivio de la deuda.

Varoufakis piensa hacer lo mismo en Roma y Londres.

Luchar en las calles para cancelar la deuda

Mientras esta lucha se mantenga dentro de los límites financieros de los banqueros, tratando de negociar para aflojar las cadenas sobre el cuello del pueblo, los banqueros tendrán ventaja abrumadora.

Esto debe convertirse en una lucha política de masas contra la deuda. Para que Syriza tenga alguna influencia en la mesa de negociaciones, la cancelación de la deuda debe convertirse en un grito de guerra en las calles y los

lugares de trabajo. Todas las fuerzas en Grecia que han se han manifestado contra la austeridad y sufrido bajo sus duras condiciones, deben movilizarse para salir a las calles y enviar un mensaje claro a los banqueros. Los financieros necesitan saber que a menos que cancelen la deuda, estarán tratando no sólo con argumentos acerca de las cuestiones contables y financieras, sino con una amenaza a su propio sistema.

Nadie debe abstenerse de participar activamente en esta lucha, independientemente de las diferencias históricas o actuales. Las masas deben estar imbuidas con la idea de que la deuda es ilegítima. Por ejemplo, del rescate original recibido de la Troika por €227 mil millones en 2010, sólo €27 mil millones fueron al gobierno griego para cubrir sus gastos. El resto, €200 millones, fueron a los bancos en repago de préstamos, rescates, pagos de intereses, etc. Mientras tanto, las/os trabajadoras griegas perdían sus puestos de trabajo y servicios, y se hundía en una pobreza a nivel de depresión como condición de los préstamos.

El capital financiero es siempre agresivo y voraz cuando se trata de extraer el dinero del pueblo. El capital financiero alemán es notoriamente agresivo e intransigente. De hecho, el capital financiero alemán es el poder aventurero que provocó dos guerras mundiales. Ahora, en lugar de enviar tanques al sur de Europa, ellos y sus colegas banqueros están enviando cobradores de deudas para aplastar al pueblo.

Esta lucha no se debe perder. Nadie puede darse el lujo de hacerse a un lado. Fascistas como el Amanecer Dorado, están esperando para ver si las masas quedan abandonadas. Entonces Amanecer Dorado y la derecha pueden moverse para sacar provecho del sufrimiento y movilizar las fuerzas del fascismo y pogromos antiinmigrantes.

Apertura para la izquierda revolucionaria

Razones más que suficientes para que la izquierda, especialmente la revolucionaria, deba estar en la vanguardia de la lucha y ganar a las masas. Si Syriza falla o sucumbe a la presión imperialista para aplicar austeridad, entonces la izquierda debe estar preparada para intervenir y dar liderazgo.

Syriza, para obtener una mayoría parlamentaria, ha hecho una desagradable alianza con el antiinmigrante y homofóbico Partido derechista de la Independencia Griega. A este partido se le ha dado la dirección del Ministerio de Defensa, lo que es extremadamente peligroso. El ejército griego históricamente tiene simpatías fascistas. Esta posición da a los militares un puesto de escucha en las reuniones del gabinete Syriza.

Sería mucho mejor, si sin unirse al gobierno, el Partido Comunista de Grecia y otros partidos de izquierda pudieran conjurar un frente unido para votar por auténticas medidas contra la austeridad en el Parlamento, así como la unidad en las calles. Entonces Syriza se aseguraría de una mayoría parlamentaria en su programa anti-austeridad, aunque gobierne como minoritario. Entonces no tendría que confiar en el Partido de la Independencia.

Por otro lado, es muy alentador que el nuevo partido anti-austeridad Podemos en España, fuera capaz de reunir a varios cientos de miles de personas en Madrid a raíz de la victoria electoral de Syriza. Esto apunta hacia la necesidad de ampliar la lucha por todo el sur de Europa, así como Irlanda—en todas partes donde la clase obrera y la población estén viviendo en un estado de esclavitud de deuda a los bancos.

Los banqueros han estado amenazando al pueblo griego con quitarles de la eurozona si el gobierno incumple o viola los acuerdos. Tienen la esperanza de que la amenaza de un caos financiero y ruina económica obligue a todos a ponerse de nuevo en línea.

Pero si Grecia tiene que salir de la zona euro—si los banqueros tratan de sumir al país en un estado de desarticulación y estrangulación económica — sería la señal para que la clase obrera combata la crisis tomando control de la economía y reorganizarla sobre bases socialistas.

A la larga, una lucha internacional para derrocar totalmente al capital es la única forma permanente de salir de la crisis actual. □