



La Consigna - FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front)

PEOPLES SCHOOL FOR MARXIST-LENINIST STUDIES™



Nicaragua Sandinista Revolution with Brian Willson

PSMLS 7/21/2026



What we'll be learning today:

- History of Nicaragua
- US Support of Contras
- Interview with Brian Willson



History of Nicaragua



United Fruit & The Banana Republics

In the late 1800s, several fruit companies conglomerated to form United Fruit (now known as Chiquita Banana), operating banana plantations in various Central America, the Caribbean and some Southern American countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Panama, Cuba, and Jamaica

The company's deep economic footprint and extensive political power—often referred to as *el pulpo* (the octopus)—gave rise to the term "banana republics" in countries like Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua.

For the seasonal workers in the fields life is harsh. Working conditions are physically dangerous, work is seasonal and the toxic chemicals used in the crop are a permanent hazard.





School of Americas/WINSEC

Contras and other terrorist groups were trained in the CIA-backed School of Americas/Western Institute of Security & Cooperation (WINSEC) in Somoza. The program was designed to disrupt any leftist movements in South America.



Questions for Brian Willson:

- What was the School of Americas/WINSEC?
- How did they prop up the Somoza Dictatorship?

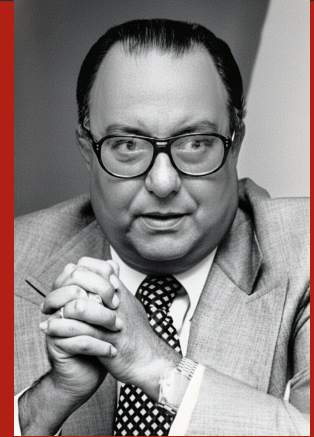


Somoza Dictatorship & the Sandinistas National Liberation Front

The Somoza regime, which had been in power in Nicaragua for over four decades, was characterized by widespread human rights violations and corruption, with Somoza and his associates amassing vast wealth at the expense of the populace.

Inspired by the Cuban Revolution, the Sandinistas National Liberation Front (FSLN) was founded in 1961, forcing Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the last Somoza dictator to flee into exile in 1979. Daniel Ortega, an FSLN commander, became first a member of the 5-person junta of National Reconstruction, and later president from 1985 to 1990. At the time, he considered himself a Marxist-Leninist.

Reforms included the nationalization of over 2,000 properties owned by the Somozas, and ambitious social programs.



FSLN



Discussion & New Members Introductions



New Member Introductions

- What is your name, pronouns and state (or country/territory)?
- Where do you work? Is it unionized?
- How did you find out about the People's School?
- What do you think about tonight's class?



US-Backed Contras



Creating the Contras (1981)

- **March 1981:** Reagan authorized CIA to recruit, arm, and train anti-Sandinista forces. Two main groups emerged:
- **FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Force):** Largest group, led by former Somoza National Guard officers. Based in Honduras. Composed of:
 - Ex-National Guard members (Somoza's brutal military/police)
 - Displaced landowners who lost property to land reform.
 - Some peasants recruited through coercion or payment
- **ARDE:** Smaller southern front based in Costa Rica, led by Edén Pastora ("Commander Zero"), a disillusioned former Sandinista.
- **The Leadership Problem:** The Contras were led by Somoza's former military officers—the same people who'd tortured and murdered Nicaraguans under the dictatorship. This made Reagan's "freedom fighter" rhetoric absurd.

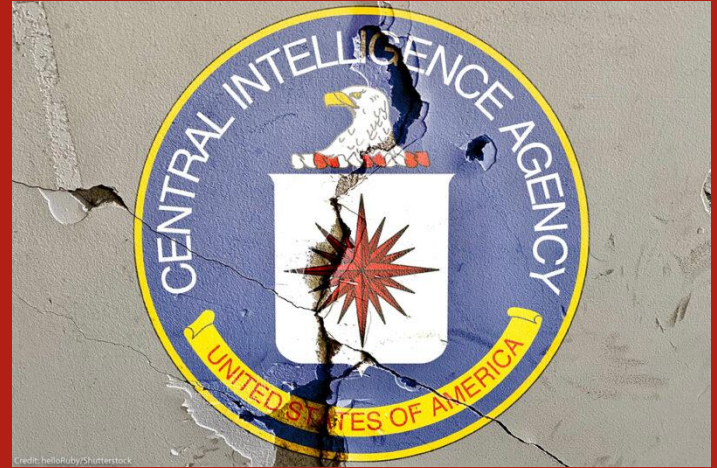


Contra group from FDN and ARDE Frente Sur in the Nueva Guinea area in 1987



CIA Operations

- **Training:** CIA established camps in Honduras and Florida teaching guerrilla warfare, sabotage, assassination, psychological operations.
- **Funding:**
 - 1982: \$19 million
 - 1983: \$24 million
 - 1984: \$24 million
 - Eventually totaling \$300+ million official funding
- **The CIA Manual (1983):**
 - Assassinate Sandinista officials
 - "Neutralize" (kill) judges, police, state security
 - Create "martyrs" by provoking government reprisals against civilians
 - Blackmail and coerce civilians into cooperation
- When exposed, this manual caused scandal—the CIA was teaching terrorism.
- **Mining Harbors (1984):** CIA operatives mined Nicaragua's harbors, damaging commercial ships. The International Court of Justice ruled this violated international law. The U.S. rejected the ruling.





Contra Tactics: War Crimes

Human rights organizations (Americas Watch, Amnesty International) documented systematic atrocities:

- **Rape:** Systematic sexual violence against women in Sandinista-sympathetic villages.
- **Torture:** Mutilation, eye-gouging, castration, burning victims alive.
- **Civilian Targeting:** Murdered teachers (literacy campaign workers), health workers, agricultural cooperative members—anyone associated with Sandinista programs.
- **Kidnapping:** Forced recruitment, especially of teenagers. Contras press-ganged peasants into service.
- **Destruction:** Burned schools, health clinics, agricultural cooperatives to sabotage Sandinista development programs.
- **Example:** In 1984, Contras attacked Pantasma killing 16 civilians including children. They raped women, mutilated bodies, and destroyed the town's clinic.
- **The Pattern:** Contras didn't fight Sandinista military; they terrorized civilians to make the country ungovernable.



The Boland Amendments (1982-1984)



Edward Boland (right), author of the Boland Amendment

Congress grew uncomfortable funding Contras after atrocity reports and the harbor mining incident.

Boland I (December 1982): Prohibited funds for "overthrowing" Nicaragua's government (loophole: could fund "interdicting arms to El Salvador").

Boland II (October 1984): Banned all military aid to Contras—no loopholes.

Reagan faced a choice: obey the law or find illegal workarounds.

He chose illegal workarounds.



Iran-Contra: Breaking the Law

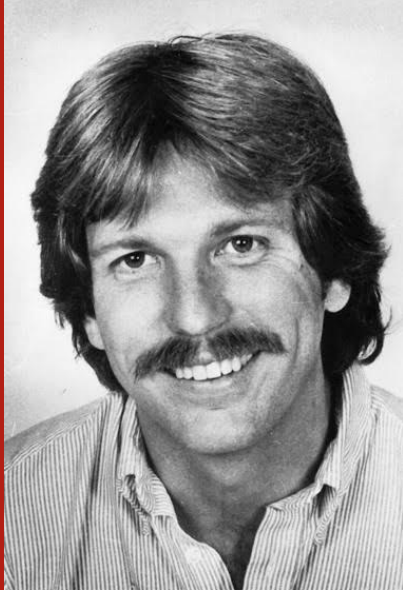
- **The Scheme:** NSC staffers Oliver North and John Poindexter:
 - Secretly sold weapons to Iran (America's enemy, holding hostages)
 - Diverted \$18 million in profits to Contras
 - Solicited donations from Saudi Arabia (\$32 million), Brunei (\$10 million)
 - Created front companies and Swiss bank accounts to launder money
- **Exposed (November 1986):** Lebanese magazine revealed arms-for-hostages deal. Attorney General Ed Meese announced Contra diversion. Scandal exploded.
- **The Cover-Up:** North shredded thousands of documents. Officials lied to Congress. Reagan claimed ignorance.
- **Prosecutions:** 14 indicted, 11 convicted—then President George H.W. Bush pardoned six (December 1992), ending investigation.



President Reagan Meeting with Senior Staff regarding Nicaragua and the Central American Peace Proposal in the oval office with Robert McFarlane, Oliver North, Langhorne Motley, David Chew, John Poindexter and Donald Regan - 04/04/1985



The Cocaine Connection



The award-winning investigative reporter, Gary Webb (1955–2004)—best known for his Dark Alliance series that linked a Northern California drug ring with the CIA and the United States' burgeoning crack epidemic

- Gary Webb Investigation (1996): San Jose Mercury News reporter documented Contras trafficking cocaine into the U.S., with CIA knowledge, to fund operations.
- **The Allegations:**
 - Contra supporters sold cocaine in Los Angeles (fueling crack epidemic)
 - Profits funded weapons purchases
 - CIA turned blind eye because Contras were anti-communist allies
- **CIA Inspector General Report (1998):** Confirmed CIA knew about Contra drug trafficking but didn't stop it. Admitted dozens of Contras trafficked drugs while receiving U.S. support.
- **The Tragedy:** American taxpayers funded Contras officially; crack cocaine in American cities funded them unofficially—with CIA complicity.



The War's Impact

- **Deaths:** 30,000+ Nicaraguans killed (in country of 3 million—equivalent to 3 million Americans).
- **Refugees:** Hundreds of thousands fled to Honduras, Costa Rica, United States.
- **Economic Devastation:** War destroyed infrastructure, agriculture, economy. Nicaragua became Western Hemisphere's second-poorest country.
- **Prosecutions:** 14 indicted, 11 convicted—then President George H.W. Bush pardoned six (December 1992), ending investigation.



(Left) Sandinista guerillas arrive triumphant in the Nicaraguan capital of Managua following the resignation and expropriation of Dictator Anastasio Somoza - Tony Comiti



The Soviets and the Sandinistas

The USSR developed great relations with the Sandinistas after the overthrow of the Somoza family as part of the 1979 Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, to the point that Victor Volskii, president of the Soviet Association of Friendship with Latin American Countries, called the revolution a "model" for global armed revolution. During the 1980s, the Soviet Union provided full political, economic, military, and diplomatic support to the left wing government of Nicaragua. This was both a reaction to the right-wing Contra resistance movement and the Sandinista government working towards a full-fledged alliance with the Soviet Union. These efforts resulting in Nicaragua receiving free credit, economic subsidies, technological support, and heavy weapon grants. Soviet economic investments to Nicaragua consisted of both direct aid, economic/industrial investments, and trade. For example, in 1983, Nicaragua received between \$200 million and \$250 million from the Soviet bloc, with investments ranging from \$100 million - \$150 million from 1981 to 1984. As further relations with the US deteriorated due to foreign policy of the Reagan administration, Nicaragua relied heavier on Soviet trade. By May 1985, Nicaragua became the second largest importer of Soviet goods (after Cuba), with Soviet exports to Nicaragua growing three times from 1983 to 1984. Nicaragua voted consistently for Communist causes during the 1980s, shown especially with the 1984 Nicaraguan general elections where the Sandinistas garnered 66.78% of the total votes in the nation. While the Soviet Union rapidly withdrew both economic and military investments to various Latin American nations (including Nicaragua) in the beginning of the 1990s leading up to the dissolution of the USSR, Russia continued to invest in the economic, technological, and infrastructural success of Nicaragua.



Continued Support for Nicaragua

The Nicaraguan armed forces received a variety of Soviet equipment at no cost, including heavily armed Mi-24 attack helicopters (Hinds), and Mi-17 transport helicopters, along with T-55 main battle tanks, BM-21 "Grad" multiple launch rocket systems, trucks, and various forms of artillery (ranging from 152mm howitzers to anti-aircraft guns). Along with military equipment, the Sandinista government received various forms of support from allied leftists governments' militaries, with there being, as of 1985, "some 8,000 Cubans, 50 Soviets, 35 East Germans, 50 Palestine Liberation Organization and Libyan personnel," and an unknown number of North Korean and Bulgarian foreign advisors and support staff engaging in military, security, medical, and educational (both political and academical) matters to increase the readiness of the Nicaraguan military. Some further 1,000 construction workers also supported in infrastructure development in the country, building and maintaining airfields, radars, dams, bridges, and telecommunication companies.

After Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega returned to power in 2007, positive relations continued with Russia taking over the patron role for Nicaragua. Nicaragua was the second country after Russia to recognize the disputed territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In September 2008, perhaps in response to Nicaragua's support over the breakaway Georgian territories, Russia offered to strengthen ties with Nicaragua and to provide aid to Nicaragua to help rebuild areas damaged by hurricanes.



Discussion



Interview With Brian Willson & Preston Harp



Interview With Brian Willson





Discussion & Wrap Up



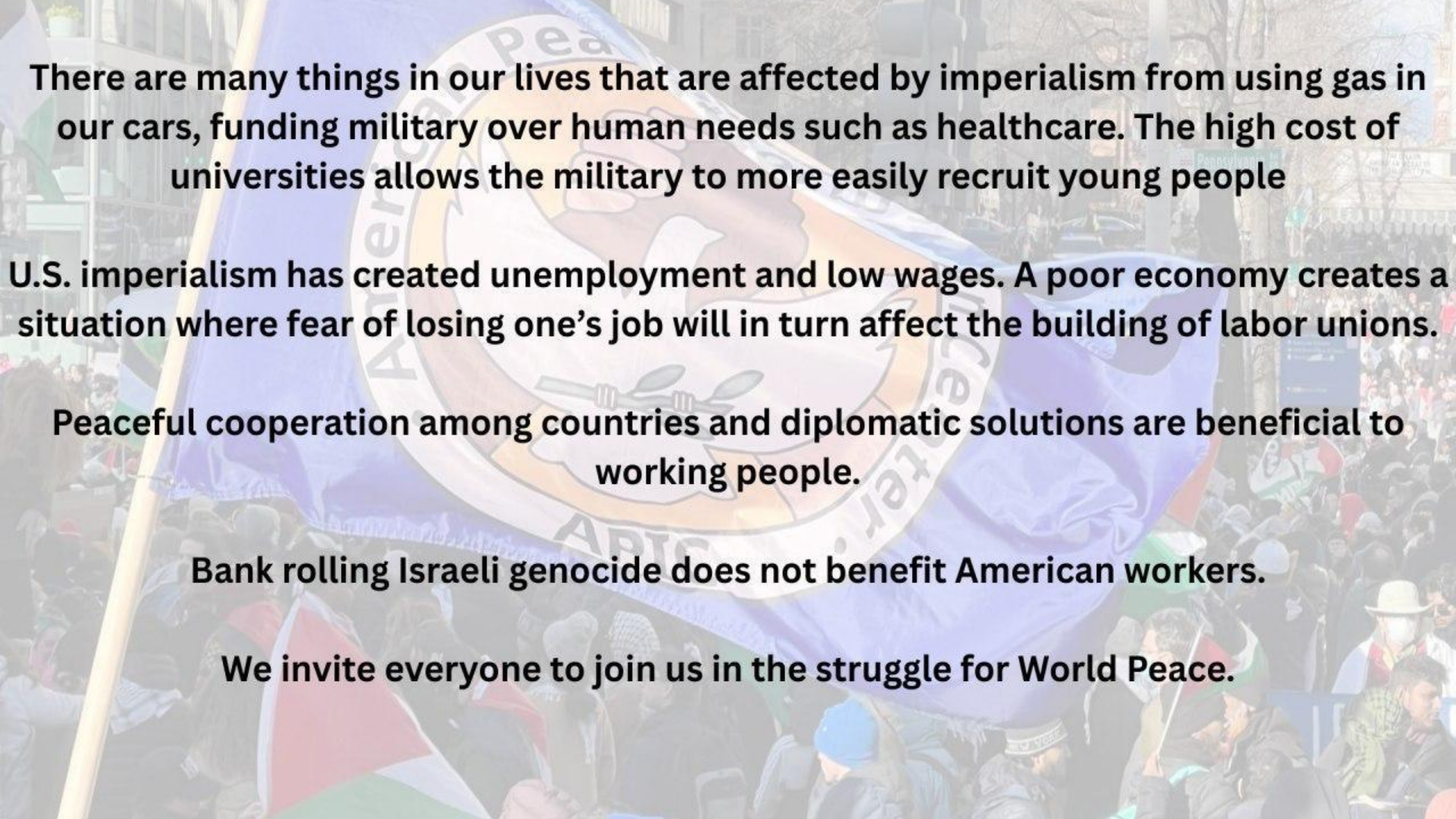
American Veterans Committee

Peace is Patriotic

The American Veterans Committee, founded in 1947, is a veterans organization that promotes networking opportunities for US veterans globally. The American Veterans Committee (AVC) aims to combat American intervention in other countries & military - industrial complex. It promotes re-directing the defense budget towards domestic products & services at home & opposing ROTC in our schools.

Promoting democracy & supporting our veterans through fraternal relationships with International and National Veterans Associations. We aim to make it easier for US veterans to connect with veterans from other countries, expand new employment, while also promoting a people's diplomacy. We oppose discrimination of all forms in the military such as sexism, racism, LGBT+ discrimination, ethnic and national discrimination.

We aim to convert our National Guard to a domestic force for civil service and crisis relief by creating local AVC Chapters to survey the needs of local areas, providing mutual aid to the homeless veterans in need. We acknowledge that the United States military is the biggest polluter of the environment. Respond to Climate Change disasters by relying on the National Guard.



There are many things in our lives that are affected by imperialism from using gas in our cars, funding military over human needs such as healthcare. The high cost of universities allows the military to more easily recruit young people

U.S. imperialism has created unemployment and low wages. A poor economy creates a situation where fear of losing one's job will in turn affect the building of labor unions.

Peaceful cooperation among countries and diplomatic solutions are beneficial to working people.

Bank rolling Israeli genocide does not benefit American workers.

We invite everyone to join us in the struggle for World Peace.



Announcements

- Reminder that PCUSA Cadre attendance to Jones-Foster Continuing Education class on the first wednesday of every month is mandatory!
- PCUSA Cell Chairs need to call members of their cells to remind them about attendance.
- The next issue of New Masses (2026) has begun production. If you have art you want us to feature, email it to info@partyofcommunistsusa.net.



Volunteers Needed!

We are in need of volunteers for the staff of the People's School! Here's a few roles we need filled:

- People to help manage posting on our social media and podcast platforms
- Video Editors, Audio Editors, Graphic Designers, Artists, Narrators
- Web Controls, Moderators

Email info@peopleschool.us if you're interested and try to attend our next staff meeting if possible.



View From Left Field

<https://viewfromleftfield.libsyn.com>



The Old PSMLS Youtube is now the Youtube of View From Left Field, a podcast of analysis and discussion of current events from a progressive perspective.

Like the Youtube videos and subscribe with 5 star ratings on your podcast platforms.

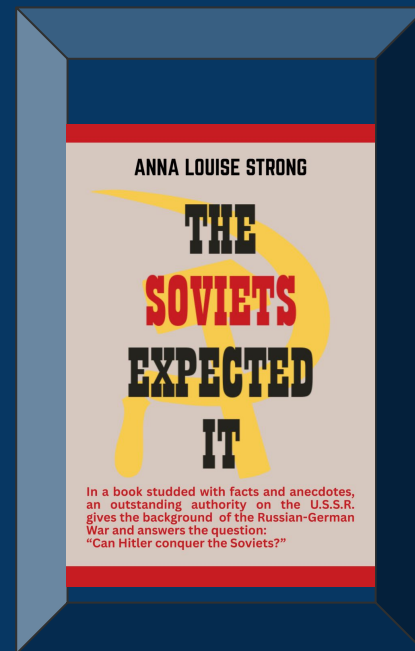
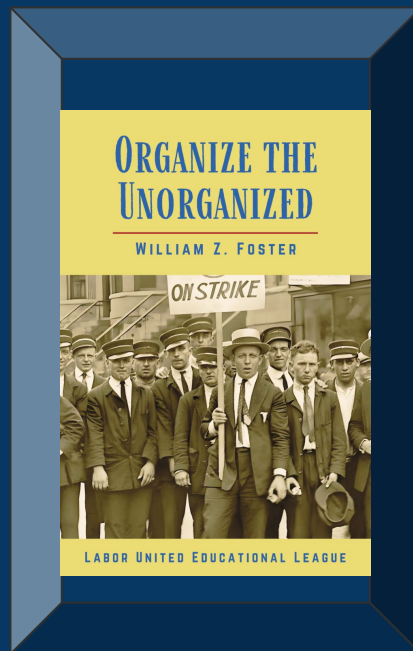
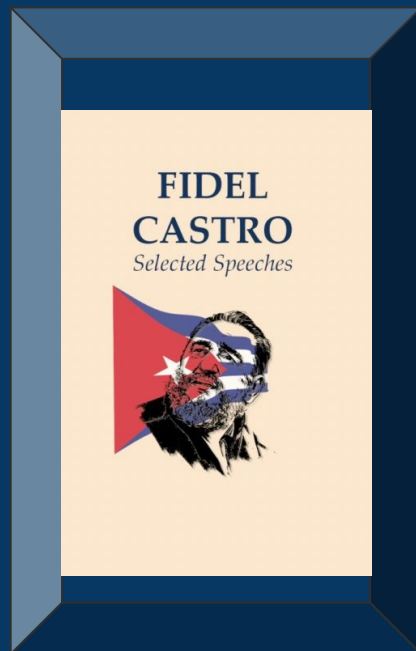
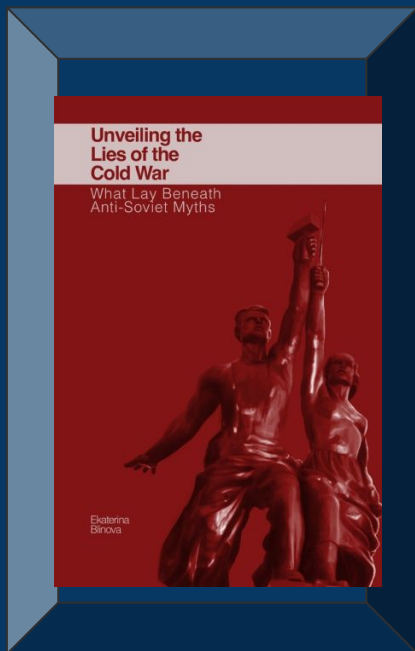




New Outlook Publishers
newoutlookpublishers.store



Relevant and Latest Releases





Harry Bridges School of Labor

luel.us/laborschool/



The Harry Bridges School of Labor is a monthly class covering a variety of topics aimed at building class consciousness among union members. For class schedule and other information, please visit the website at luel.us/laborschool/.





CORRIDO DEL BRIGADISTA - EL INDIO PAN DE ROSA