

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

'La Gaceta de Cuba' now available in U.S.

—PAGES 8-9

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Rail strike idles trains in Canada

BY ROGER ANNIS
AND SUSAN BERMAN

MONTREAL — A strike and lockout involving 31,000 workers across Canada has shut down most of the country's railway operations.

Eleven thousand track maintenance workers, engineers, and conductors at Canadian National Railways (CN), Canada's largest freight railroad, walked out March 18. They joined 3,200 track maintenance workers who have been on strike at CP Rail since March 13. Six hundred workers at VIA Rail also walked out March 18, closing down Canada's passenger rail network.

The rail strike is the first major national walkout since federal government employees and postal workers struck in 1991.

"We're out because negotiations have totally broken down and because we are in solidarity with the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees," explained Roger Doiron, United Transportation Union (UTU) Local 414 chairperson, while walking the picket line at the CN Taschereau yard in Montreal as the strike began.

The Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW), the main rail union, has not joined the strike. It has 4,500 members at CP, 10,500 at CN, and 3,000 at VIA. But many CAW members, who repair railcars and locomotives at the three railroads, are joining picket lines. In response, CP Rail locked out thousands of CAW members.

"Freight Transport Paralyzed" was the headline of an article in the March 21 *Globe and Mail*. Ford Motor Co. closed its

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Peasants in Chiapas demand land and rights

BY LAURA GARZA

SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LAS CASAS, Chiapas — The hills are steep and much of the terrain is rocky. But the corn stalks growing between the stones are testimony to the tenacious work of the farmers tending their fields along the road between this city and the town of Comitán de Domínguez to the south. From the early hours of the morning, people can be seen walking along the road carrying large bundles on their heads or shoulders, many dressed in the distinctively colored traditional clothing of the indigenous peoples of this region.

"We don't eat well, we don't have enough land for our children to work," said Marta, a peasant from the village of Bella Vista del Norte. She was helping to serve lunch to hundreds of small farmers and farm workers attending the third national convention of the Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization (OCEZ), held March 4-6 in Trinitaria, a rural community near the Guatemalan border.

Marta explained she has been active in the OCEZ for six years. "Our goal is that everyone should have something to eat."

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Ireland: 'now another voice can be heard'

Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams concludes successful U.S. tour

BY GREG ROSENBERG

"For 25 years the British government has been able to publish in the United States all the propaganda that it wanted about its occupation of Ireland," said a participant in a St. Patrick's Day benefit in New York City for three Irish activists imprisoned in the United States. "Now another voice can be heard too," he noted. "The tour of Gerry Adams is a big advance."

Thousands of working people and other supporters of the fight for Irish self-determination crowded into meeting halls to hear Adams, president of Sinn Féin, during his March 11-19 tour of the United States.

Alongside many more who heard Adams's message in print and over the airwaves, they celebrated the Sinn Féin leader's successful tour, the current cease-fire in Northern Ireland, and the opportunity that now exists to intensify the fight to get Britain's troops out of Ireland so the Irish people can determine their own destiny.

Adams's visit, moreover, registered a shift in how the U.S. government has been forced to deal with Sinn Féin.

"On television screens all over the world," declared an article in the *New York Times*, Adams "achieved the major Republican goal of getting international attention for his argument that the British should relinquish power in their Northern Ireland province."

"We still have over 30,000 heavily armed British troops in the North of Ireland," Adams told 1,000 people who packed into a meeting hall in the New York City borough of Queens at the outset of his tour.

"We want those troops decommissioned, permanently. We want every single prisoner, Loyalist and Republican, here in the USA and back home in Ireland with their families, where they belong — and we want discrimination and inequality permanently decommissioned also," Adams emphasized to thunderous cheers and applause. "We want all guns—British, Unionist, RUC [Royal Ul-

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Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams at Pearl River, New York, St. Patrick's Day Parade. Thousands of working people applauded his call for London to get its troops out of Northern Ireland.

Students take initiatives to help build April 9 national rally for women's rights

BY DAMON TINNON

Up and down the east coast, women's rights activists, students, and others are stepping up activity to build the April 9 national Rally for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C. The rally, called by the National Organization for Women (NOW), will demand: stop all violence against women, stop antiabortion violence, stop the war on poor women, and stop the Contract on America.

Nearly 500 organizations have endorsed the event, including the Appalachian Women's Alliance, Catholics for a Free Choice, American Civil Liberties Union, Medical Students for Choice, Mexican American Legal Defense & Education Fund, AFL-CIO, National Abortion & Reproductive Rights Action League, Planned Parenthood, Socialist Workers Party, U.S. Student Association, and the YWCA (USA).

Supporters of the march have organized extensive leafleting of college campuses, cultural and political events in many cities. In New York, flyers have been widely distributed at marches and rallies being organized to protest proposed cuts in education funding.

In Boston, student groups are taking the initiative to organize transportation and encourage others to go. The Women's Center at Boston College has organized two buses and has a waiting list for a third. Harvard professor Noam Chomsky recently spoke at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and students there took advantage of the crowd to leaflet for the rally.

Alisha Berry, president of the University of Pennsylvania NOW chapter, reports that "a lot of people are talking about the rally, and not only women's groups. Some people who can't go are buying tickets to sponsor others."

Scores of volunteers are joining the effort to spread the word in Washington, D.C., and surrounding areas. The United Food and Commercial Workers union mailed 1,000 leaflets to workers at Food Giant and Safeway, two area grocery store chains.

A Young Feminist conference is scheduled for April 7-8 and many young women are organizing to get to the capital early to take part in the gathering. For more information on the march or conference call NOW at (202) 331-0066.



Boston abortion rights demonstration, January 22. Hundreds of organizations and other defenders of abortion rights are building April 9 rally in Washington, D.C.



Sanctions against Iraq upheld

At the Clinton administration's urging, the United Nations Security Council on March 13 renewed the sanctions it has imposed on Iraq since the Persian Gulf War. The trade embargo bars virtually all Iraqi oil exports, which were the country's main source of income. Widespread shortages of food and medicine have resulted, with devastating consequences for the population.

As part of its campaign against the sanctions, the Iraqi government announced it will allow foreign companies to develop some of its largest oil fields once the sanctions are lifted. No other oil-producing nation in the Middle East has opened its reserves to foreign companies on the scale projected by Iraq at a meeting with oil industry executives in Baghdad. Among those negotiating with Iraq are French, Italian, and Spanish oil companies.

Israeli workers face pension loss

Half a million workers are in danger of losing their pensions, according to Haim Ramon, chairperson of the Israeli Histadrut trade union federation. The pension fund faces deficits estimated at more than \$9 billion and Ramon is demanding the government step in and rescue the pension funds.

Paris bails out 'Debit' Lyonnais

For the second time in a year the French government will step in to bail out Crédit Lyonnais, Europe's biggest financial institution. Paris pledged \$27 billion in loan guarantees to the bank, which is facing \$10 billion in losses. The bank is supposed to pay back the loan by selling assets and with future profits. In the meantime, Crédit Lyonnais announced a restructuring plan which calls for laying off 1,500 workers within a year. More job cuts are expected.

London execs managed Leeson

Speaking out for the first time since the collapse of Barings bank, two former executives in its Singapore office said the activities of Nick Leeson were supervised in London. Barings executives have claimed that 28-year-old Leeson, a manager of the



The Turkish government deployed 35,000 troops and began bombing runs March 20 against Kurds in northern Iraq. Some 200 Kurds were killed by March 21. U.S. president Clinton expressed "understanding for Turkey's need to deal decisively" with groups fighting for an independent Kurdistan.

bank's futures operation in Singapore, was a "rogue trader" who engineered the bank's downfall to enrich himself. But Singapore-based executives Simon Jones and James Bax, in statements released through their lawyers, said that "Mr. Leeson's trading activities on Simex [Singapore's futures exchange] were managed and controlled by the financial products group of Barings in London." According to Jones, Leeson reported "daily" on his Simex trading activities to London.

Vietnamese face deportation

The government of the Philippines evicted several hundred Vietnamese from a refugee camp in preparation for their forced return to Vietnam. The refugees protested the deportation plan, with some slashing themselves and threatening suicide. Thirty people escaped from the camp before it was eventually cleared out. The Vietnamese had been living with no water or electricity since December 31, the official closing date for the United Nations-financed site. They managed to survive thanks to the help of local farmers.

The Vietnamese traveled to the Philippines — some as far back as eight years ago — with hopes of being allowed into the United States under a program offering citizenship to Amerasian children and their families. Washington now says that most of the 46,000 Vietnamese in camps throughout Southeast Asia are economic migrants and will not be allowed entry. So a similar fate awaits these refugees, almost half of whom are being held in camps in Hong Kong.

Singapore hangs Filipina worker

Ignoring protests from the Philippines, the government of Singapore executed 42-year-old Flor Contemplacion by hanging March 17. Contemplacion was one of tens of thousands of Filipinas who work as household maids in Singapore. She was convicted of the murders of a child and another Filipina domestic worker. Testimony from another maid pointed to Contemplacion's employer as the source of a frame-up. She stated that the child, in the care of one of the family's maids, drowned by accident in the tub after an epileptic fit. The enraged father murdered the maid he held responsible and then the family plotted to pin both deaths on Flor Contemplacion.

Due to public outrage in the Philippines, Singapore prime minister Goh Chok Tong canceled a state visit to that country. "If the Singaporeans came to town now, there would be riots in the streets of Manila," a Philippines official said.

China steps up population curbs

Beijing will offer rural couples who have one child "special treatment in supplying fine seeds, information, technical training and funds so as to raise their incomes to a level higher than the local average," the New China News Agency said recently. But in spite of such measures the government's family planning is "unpopular," conceded an official in a Jilin Province village. Schools administrators there post charts listing the marriage and menstruation dates of every woman of child-bearing age as part of the effort to cut the birth rate.

The government imposes fines for having more than one child, which have risen over the years to \$710. Officials do make an exception if the first child is a girl, so that a family can try for a boy. Beijing also passed a law effective June 1 forcing couples with hereditary diseases to be sterilized before marriage.

Starvation stalks Rwandans

Three million refugees from Rwanda have had their food rations cut in half and are facing starvation as supplies dwindle. While estimates are that the United Nations would need at least \$385 million to provide food and support to the Rwandans during 1995, only \$155 million has been pledged. Currently, rations for those in camps in Zaire and Tanzania have been cut from 1,900 calories a day to about 1,000, a third of what a sedentary person normally requires.

Strike paralyzes Swaziland

A nationwide strike by 20,000 workers March 12-13 paralyzed businesses, gas stations, and small shops in the southern African nation of Swaziland. The Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) called the strike to force the government to accept union demands, including for legislation that would allow workers unfairly dismissed to be reinstated by courts.

The strike was ended after the government gave in to union demands. "The government has agreed to unconditionally put into action all workers' demands within the next seven days. We are grateful and we hope the government will keep their word," said Jani Sithole, a spokesman for the SFTU.

Venezuela and Colombia deploy troops to the border

Venezuelan president Rafael Caldera sent 5,000 troops to the border with Colombia and declared the 1,378-mile boundary "a theater of operations." Earlier Venezuelan soldiers had deported 1,000 Colombians, mostly peasant families, burning some of their houses and crops.

Caracas claims that its troops have the right of "hot pursuit" against guerrillas operating in Colombia. The Colombian government subsequently increased its military presence to 6,200 soldiers.

There are 1.5 million undocumented Colombian immigrants in Venezuela. Critics of Caracas have pointed to Venezuela's deteriorating economic situation as the source of the current attempt to whip up nationalist support for a military drive targeting Colombians.

— BY LAURA GARZA

THE MILITANT

Solidarity with workers struggles

As the capitalist class around the world drives to slash jobs, wages, and working conditions, workers need solidarity. 'Militant' correspondents from Canada to New Zealand gather first-hand news at picket lines and labor rallies, covering the resistance of workers and joining the fight.



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Castro: 'Gap between underdeveloped and developed countries getting bigger'

BY MARIA HAMBERG

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Some 4,500 people cheered and applauded Cuban president Fidel Castro for more than five minutes as he arrived at the Falkoner Center here March 11. The packed meeting hall overflowed onto a parking lot outside, where 1,500 mostly young people watched and listened to Castro on a big screen, undeterred by the cold, windy weather. People had waited for hours beforehand to get a seat.

It was the first time Castro visited northern Europe. He came here to participate in the United Nations Summit for Social Development. Of more than 150 heads of state delivering speeches to the UN meeting, Castro and South African president Nelson Mandela were the only ones to receive applause before they spoke. Castro's visit received particular attention in the Danish and Swedish media. *Den Frie Aktuelt* ran front-page photos of Castro and Mandela with the headline "The Leaders Came at Last."

In the Swedish *Svenska Dagbladet*, under the headline "U.S. favors free enterprise," U.S. vice-president Al Gore was quoted as saying, "Our opinion is that lasting progress can only be achieved if we encourage free markets and individual initiatives." He declared, "The market system liberates mankind's potential more than any other system."

The article also carried Castro's rejection of this view. The revolutionary leader condemned capitalism for widening the gap between the rich and the working peo-

ple of the world. "Now capitalists talk about solving the problems of underdevelopment, which is truly a giant contradiction," Castro told the audience at the public meeting. "With neoliberalism there can be no social development."

"Unemployment," he added, "is proof of the inability of this model to solve certain problems." These remarks got big applause from the youthful audience.

The meeting had been announced as an international solidarity meeting featuring both Castro and Mandela.

But the Cuban president explained he had spoken to Mandela that morning and he unfortunately was unable to come because of important responsibilities but sent his greetings. Castro expressed his support for the African National Congress-led government and his strong confidence in Mandela's leadership.

At the UN summit, the Cuban delegation won inclusion in the conference's final draft resolution of a paragraph that was interpreted as condemning the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba.

It asks governments to "refrain from any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that creates obstacles to trade among states."



Fidel Castro speaking in France March 13. He traveled there after addressing events in Copenhagen, Denmark.

teacher has been left jobless. Just the opposite; every day there are more teachers. Not a single doctor has been left jobless; there are more and more doctors. Not a single hospital, school, or child-care center has been closed.

Why do they blockade Cuba?

Cuba is blockaded. Why? What country has done more for the people than Cuba? Not just for its own country. The revolution has sent teachers, doctors, and workers to dozens of Third World countries without charging a penny. It shed its own blood fighting colonialism, fighting apartheid and fascism. The revolution forged a consciousness of solidarity — solidarity not only with its own compatriots but with other peoples. At one point we had 25,000 Third World students studying on scholarships. We still have many scholarship students from Africa and other countries. In addition, our country has treated more children who were victims of the Chernobyl tragedy than all other countries put together. More than 13,000 children from Chernobyl have been treated and continue to be treated despite the huge difficulties in our country.

They don't talk about that, and that's why they blockade us — the country with the most teachers per capita of all countries in the world, including developed countries. The country with the most doctors per capita of all countries; there is one doctor — and a good doctor — for every 214 inhabitants in our country. The country with the most art instructors per capita of all countries in the world. The country with the most sports instructors in the world. That gives you an idea of the effort involved. A country where life expectancy is more than 75 years....

Why are they blockading Cuba? Because no other country has done more for its people. It's the hatred of the ideas that Cuba represents. It's the hatred of the resistance it has been able to put up.

For us, international solidarity has extraordinary value.... We know that for almost 30 years, Nordic brigades have visited our country, working very hard and sharing our sacrifices and our hopes. You are showing us that we are not alone or isolated, that there are many people like you everywhere.

Our commitment, our combativeness, our hopes grow. The hopes of all men and women will grow. And let no one doubt that we shall build a better world.

it's a pretext to block the Third World's products from the markets of the developed countries.

There is talk about political clauses. After a hard fight, and by sweetening some words, it was possible to achieve some kind of statement against the blockade [imposed by Washington on Cuba]. Blockades have become a weapon to combat ideas. In the case of our country, there has been a 35-year-long blockade by the most powerful country on earth — with the most economic resources — aimed at destroying the economy and the revolution in a small country like Cuba, which they have always wanted to take over....

With neoliberalism there can be no social development, because wherever neoliberalism has been imposed, funding for education, health care, social security, and construction of hospitals and schools has been eliminated....

I shouldn't take too much time telling you about the things we have done and have been able to maintain even under the terrible conditions in which we are living, in the middle of the increasingly cruel blockade, after the disappearance of the socialist camp and the USSR, when we lost 70 percent of our imports. Not a single

of money leaving those countries every year is greater than the amount entering them. How can there be development? How can they eradicate poverty?...

At this conference they don't talk about the foreign debt, or they speak in terms of forgiving the debts of the poorest nations — by an inadequate amount — but the [Third World] foreign debt is now more than \$1.5 trillion. And each year it grows. How can there be social development?...

Everyone expected that with the end of the cold war, resources used for arms could be used for development. There are resources for arms spending — arms spending is about \$1 trillion a year. Why and what for, now that the cold war is over?...

With these resources there could be economic development in the Third World and social development in the entire world. Why do they maintain those policies? These are the realities. These are the realities that they talk about: fighting poverty, fighting for development. Well, speculative capital, speculative investment is not productive investment. And now it is starting to produce catastrophes in some countries. In the last few days, in fact, there has been a big panic in Europe over monetary problems due to the devaluation of the dollar and several other currencies. With those problems there won't be any resources for development....

At this conference there is no mention of the self-determination of peoples. There is no talk of national sovereignty, yet there is a strong tendency toward intervention and gutting the principles of independence and national sovereignty.

Now they also talk about ecological clauses for the Third World countries. That doesn't mean concern for the environment. In fact, the biggest ecological violation is hunger, which kills nearly 14 million children every year. Two billion people are illiterate; 2.2 billion live in poverty, absolute poverty; millions of children suffer malnutrition; 1.5 billion people do not have access to health care. It is truly a human disaster. But when they talk about ecological clauses, what they have in mind is protectionist measures to block access to the markets of certain countries.

There is talk about social clauses, but

Reprinted below are excerpts of the talk given by Cuban president Fidel Castro March 11 in Copenhagen, Denmark, at a public meeting in solidarity with Cuba held during the United Nations World Summit for Social Development, which took place in the same city. The translation from Spanish and subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY FIDEL CASTRO

Now there is talk about social problems, about the problem of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, and lack of health care that exist in much of the world, including in many developed countries.... There is talk about social development in a world where social development is in total contradiction with reality.

The truth is that part of the world is very wealthy, very developed, increasingly wealthy and developed, yet the big majority of humanity lives in poverty, increasing poverty and underdevelopment.

The terminology of the United Nations uses the word "developing countries." That's a kind word, because they don't like the word "underdevelopment." We're talking about economic underdevelopment, of course. That's why they call them developing or emerging countries. Actually, we are *underdeveloping* countries, because the difference, the notorious gap between the underdeveloped and developed countries, is getting bigger, not smaller.

It's true the developed countries have many problems; different countries have many different kinds of problems. One of the most serious problems in the developed world is unemployment, which is proof of the inability of this model to solve certain problems....

Unequal terms of trade

Now capitalists talk about solving the problems of underdevelopment, which is truly a giant contradiction. Looking at the Third World, we see problems that aren't even taken up in the declaration, in the action program of this summit conference. It talks about the struggle against poverty and so forth, but it doesn't mention the problem of unequal terms of trade, where the prices Third World countries get for their exports keep going down, while the prices of products purchased from the developed world keep rising. And here it analyzes what has occurred since World War II, but the purchasing power of sales of basic products is not even 30 percent of what it used to be. In fact, countries are exporting more and more while importing fewer and fewer commodities.

There is no mention of capital flight. In reality, the underdeveloped world is financing the developed world. The amount

Revolutionary books sell briskly to Denmark crowd

BY BIRGITTA ISACSSON

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Communist workers traveling from Sweden were very successful in getting out revolutionary literature and ideas at events organized around the United Nations Summit for Social Development, held here March 11-12.

At five literature tables set up around the city, working people, youth, and others came up to discuss politics. Many discussions centered on the topics covered in issue 10 of the Marxist magazine *New International*: the worldwide capitalist depression, imperialism's march toward fascism and war, and the example of Cuba's socialist revolution. Three people purchased copies of that issue of the magazine.

Two Swedish youths who shared a copy of the *Militant* commented, "There must be something wrong when they can blame a 28-year-old yuppie for the collapse of a big bank. I think Castro has a lot to say."

Many wanted to discuss why Wash-

ington's hostility toward Cuba does not end. Three copies of the Pathfinder book *To Speak the Truth*, a collection of speeches by Ernesto Che Guevara and Fidel Castro at the United Nations, were sold.

The Pathfinder title *How Far We Slaves Have Come*, with speeches by Castro and Mandela, drew a lot of interest. Seven people bought the book in English and two in Spanish.

A man from Nicaragua bought the issue of *New International* on "The Rise and Fall of the Nicaraguan Revolution" as well as the corresponding issue of *Nueva Internacional* in Spanish. A young man from Nairobi, Kenya, bought a copy of the *Militant*, as well as *New International* no. 10, *To Speak the Truth*, and *How Far We Slaves Have Come*. He also joined the Pathfinder Readers Club.

A total of 22 Pathfinder books and six pamphlets, at a value of \$482, were sold in one day, along with 29 copies of the *Militant* and 8 of *Perspectiva Mundial*.

Students in L.A. hear Cuban youth

BY ROBERTO MOLINA
AND REINA APARICIO

LOS ANGELES — On a jam-packed three-day visit to Southern California, Cuban youth leaders Kenia Serrano and Rogelio Polanco spoke at five area campuses and a union meeting.

There was a Saturday night reception, a Sunday brunch, and several media interviews, including a half hour on Pacifica radio station KPFF. At each event there was an abundance of questions. Of these, only a handful were hostile.

Many questions were about the economic crisis that has gripped Cuba since the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was its major trading partner.

Audience members wanted to know about the overhead price of Cuba's programs to develop tourism to gain badly needed hard currency. There were numerous questions about the Cubans who have left for Miami.

Many people asked about elections and democracy in Cuba. And invariably someone wanted to know if the revolution could survive without Fidel Castro.

Eighty percent of imports lost

Discussing Cuba's "special period" of coping with the economic crisis, Polanco said that with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, "we lost 80 percent of our imports and numerous factories were paralyzed due to the lack of materials.... But we decided we couldn't just sit still and do nothing, because the revolution had to be maintained."

At a Glendale Community College class, students were visibly impressed when Serrano told them that even though voting is not obligatory, there had been a 98 percent turnout for the election of the National Assembly. She said the voting age is 16.

And students seemed equally impressed when she added, "To be elected to the National Assembly you need only be 18 years old, a Cuban citizen, and want to

struggle in the interest of the people."

There were a number of questions about U.S.-Cuban relations. At the University of California, Los Angeles, one person asked if Cuba would consider returning property that had been confiscated by the revolution, or paying compensation.

Polanco responded that Cuba was ready to negotiate on the issue, but any settlement would have to take into account the billions of dollars the U.S. embargo has cost Cuba.

There was strong applause when he added: "We will never give back the factories that belong to the workers!"

Discussing the recent exodus from Cuba, Serrano and Polanco reiterated that the main cause was economic hardship.

Serrano said, "We understand why they left and we accept it." But, she stated, one thing Cubans can't help but be angered by is seeing youth who have been provided a free education by the revolution leaving for the United States to use that education for personal gain.

Commenting on their first-visit impression of the "consumer society," Polanco said he was struck by some of the seeming irrationality, citing an ad he had seen for an electric bar for warming bath towels.

'We have other values'

Serrano added, "Of course we would like to have a better life. There are things we would like to have. But we have other values too."

Describing the difficulties of maintaining the public health system in the face of the embargo, Polanco said there were some positive aspects. Researchers are focusing on replacing unavailable medicines with "green" or natural ones. And there has been a new emphasis on preventive medicine.

At the University of California, San Diego, 150 students crowded into a classroom to hear Polanco and Serrano. At nearby Cal State San Marcos, 80 students attended. More than 100 people partici-



Militant/Lisa Rottach

Kenia Serrano (left) and Rogelio Polanco (center) visit the production line at a Ford assembly plant in St. Paul, Minnesota, during their 13-city tour in the United States.

pated in a public meeting at Los Angeles City College, and 150 turned out for a meeting at UCLA.

At Glendale Community College, more than 100 students heard them at Prof. Carlos Ugalde's three Latin American studies classes.

Serrano and Polanco spoke at UC San Diego at the invitation of Prof. Peter Smith. At Cal State San Marcos they were invited by Prof. Anibal Yañez.

Sponsors of the UCLA meeting included the Chicano/Latino newspaper *La Gente*, the Chicano student organization MEChA, and the Latin American Student Association.

The public meeting at Los Angeles Community College (LACC) was sponsored by the Coalition in Solidarity with Cuba and several campus groups, including the Latino organization SOL, and the Black Student Union. At both LACC and UCLA, the sponsoring groups provided monitors to help ensure against any possible disruption.

Gale Shangold and Harry Ring contributed to this article.

Meetings to plan actions against U.S. Cuba policy

BY DAMON TINNON

Affiliates of the National Network on Cuba (NNOC) and other activists are organizing regional conferences in Chicago on April 8 and in San Francisco on April 9 to help plan activities in defense of Cuba.

"This all day conference will be a working meeting and an opportunity for Cuba activists in the Midwest to meet and share ideas and strategies," reads a letter sent out by the Chicago Cuba Coalition to publicize the meeting. A number of other activities are taking place around the time of the conference. On April 7, Joel Ajo, a Cuban minister, will be in Chicago participating in public events around Cuba. On April 8, the conference will break for lunch at noon in order to participate in a demonstration opposing anti-immigrant legislation in Illinois.

The primary focus of the Chicago gathering will be to develop proposals for a regional action on October 14 to oppose U.S. policy towards Cuba. A national meeting of the NNOC in February voted to sponsor and build regional demonstrations in several areas of the country on that date.

Activists from the Minneapolis-St. Paul area report that 14 people will be carpooling to the Chicago gathering.

Cuba solidarity activists in San Francisco will discuss three main topics at their regional meeting: how to organize against the bill sponsored by North Carolina senator Jesse Helms proposing to tighten the U.S.-organized embargo against Cuba; proposals for an October 14 regional demonstration; and events to commemorate the life of Cuban revolutionary leader José Martí, who fought for the independence of Cuba from Spain and the United States. He died in battle in 1895.

Unionists eager for discussion on Cuba

BY CRAIG HONTS

LOS ANGELES — A high point of the Los Angeles tour of Cuban youth leaders Rogelio Polanco and Kenia Serrano was a membership meeting of International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 1910. Workers joined in a discussion for more than an hour and a half with the two young Cubans during a regular business meeting. Serrano began by explaining how glad they were to be able to speak before a meeting of union members because of the importance of the struggles of workers in the United States for justice and a better life. "We want to learn about conditions you face here, and we want to explain a little about the reality of Cuba today," she said.

Some 900 workers are organized by IAM Local 1910 at American Racing, a car wheel factory. The union first won a contract in 1990 after carrying out a three-

day work stoppage. The workforce is overwhelmingly Spanish-speaking and union meetings are conducted entirely in Spanish. Before taking questions and comments, Polanco made some brief observations about how the reality of Cuba is very different from what gets presented in the media in the United States.

He pointed to some of the social gains of the revolution, such as health care and education, and explained that Cubans now face a difficult situation as a result of the U.S.-organized embargo and the collapse of trade with the former Soviet Union. "The measures taken to confront these problems are not imposed on workers," he said, "but come out of big discussions by the workers themselves in large assemblies taking place in every factory."

Following his short speech workers shot up their hands to field questions and comments. "Why did the Soviet Union col-

lapse, and how is Cuba different from the Soviet Union?" one asked. Another wanted to know, "How is the thinking of workers in Cuba different from that of workers in the United States? Why do people leave Cuba?" The discussion unfolded non-stop until finally the agenda point was ended so that the rest of the business meeting could be completed.

When the hat was passed around for donations another discussion ensued about how much money to contribute. After various amounts were proposed and debated, the meeting voted to send \$500 to aid the tour. After hearing the young Cubans speak at the union meeting, three workers came to hear more and continue the discussion at another meeting on campus a few days later.

Craig Honts is a member of United Transportation Union Local 1674.

YOUNG SOCIALISTS AROUND THE WORLD Socialist Club gets organized at Salt Lake City high school

This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists, an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS or to join write: Young Socialists, P.O. Box 2396, New York, NY 10009, or call (212) 475-6482

BY KELLI PETERSON
AND JOELLYN MANVILLE

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah — The Socialist Club at East High School has been involved in many different political activities, from demonstrating against the cuts in the social wage, to defense of framed-up political activist Mark Curtis, to events in defense of Cuba. The Socialist Club has been actively building defense of the Cuban revolution. At the meeting on

March 9, the National Trade Union Director of the Socialist Workers Party, Joel Britton, spoke on "Cuba and Socialism" to a gathering of eight interested youth who had all attended previous meetings. Two of those who attended are members of the Socialist Club who have also recently joined the Young Socialists.

On March 10 around 80 youth came to a Cuban revolution support concert where five local bands played, including an East High School band and the band State of the Nation, whose members have been participants in Cuba solidarity activities. The crowd responded enthusiastically to an announcement that the government had returned the illegally seized passports of three members of the International Youth Brigade to Cuba. The Socialist Club campaigned to send letters to the U.S. State

Department protesting the seizure of the passports. Four people signed up for more information on the Young Socialists.

On March 19, club members participated in a demonstration of about 80 people who gathered at the federal building to protest against the cuts on social benefits. Many were carrying signs protesting the cuts in education.

As a representative for the East High School Socialists Club and as a member of the Young Socialists, Tami Peterson spoke to the demonstrators. She explained that we support demonstrations like this one and others around the world where workers and youth are linking up with other fighters against the brutal attacks of the capitalist system.

The Socialist Club recently sponsored a video showing of "The Frame-up of Mark

Curtis," which turned out to be a huge success. Four East High School students and faculty signed endorser cards and ten people signed up for more information about the fight to defend Mark Curtis. One of the student endorsers of Curtis's case, Daniel Walton, said "It's an obvious example of the government trying to supersede our rights."

Upcoming activities include supporting Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Salt Lake City, Nelson Gonzalez, and participating in the April 9 national demonstration in Washington, D.C., to defend women's rights.

Joellyn Manville and Kelli Peterson are both members of the Young Socialists in Salt Lake City and participants in the East High Socialist Club.

Chiapas peasants demand land and rights

Continued from front page

Some of us have a small plot of land and we support those without land who are fighting to get some."

She described some of the activities OCEZ members have organized, including land seizures and occupations of local government offices to press demands for land, credit, and better conditions in the rural areas. The convention was held on land seized from a wealthy landowner by some 55 families.

The fight for land is at the center of the political battles taking place in Chiapas today. While peasants have carried out many land occupations throughout this southern state over the years, the actions have mushroomed since the Jan. 1, 1994, uprising launched by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN).

The multitude of peasant organizations that exist throughout Chiapas have escalated their activities in the last year. Emboldened by the outpouring of nationwide and international solidarity with their struggles—which has put the conduct of the government and ruling landlords under a spotlight—peasants have pressed their demands for land, freedom from repression, and basic needs like electricity, water, health care, housing, and schools.

Land takeovers

Eugenio Herrera and Bernardo Alvarado, both from the village of San Francisco, reported there had been 16 land takeovers organized by the OCEZ in their area in the last year. "In one case we took land to build housing for 200 families" on part of a cattle ranch, said Alvarado. "The government had offered to buy only 20 hectares for us but we took 120 hectares [1 hectare = 2.47 acres]. The rancher had 400 head of cattle, so we let him come and get them" but told him the land was now theirs. He said they were armed only with sticks and machetes.

The rancher, who lives in Comitán, "had seven ranches and the one we took is said to be the smallest," said Alvarado.

Trinidad Martínez, a leader of the OCEZ, said the group has led about 250 land takeovers in the last year. He added that the organization involves 15,000 families, mostly in the western region of Chiapas, and has existed for about 14 years.

Onécimo Hidalgo of CONPAZ, a human rights organization in San Cristóbal, said he knew of 563 land takeovers in the last year throughout the state, involving thousands of hectares.

Many farmers attending the OCEZ convention grow corn. They graphically described the difficulties of eking out a living on small plots of land, noting the price they get for corn has dropped from about 750 pesos a ton to around 600.

Chiapas, with a population of 3.2 million, also accounts for roughly one third of Mexico's coffee production, and most farmers growing coffee have less than 4 hectares. The drop in prices of agricultural products over the years means many

barely scrape by. Chiapas is also a center for cattle raising but convention participants pointed out that buying meat in many cases is well beyond their reach.

The government has maintained policies to promote the production of beef, coffee, and other products for the export market, but they favor capitalist farmers at the expense of small producers. Measures legalizing the sale of formerly communal lands and other policies have accelerated the accumulation of land in the hands of a small number of wealthy landowners and agribusinesses.

"I remember when we got 970 pesos a ton for the corn we sold, and meat cost 8 pesos a kilo," said one peasant during a discussion at the conference. "I have both tilled the land and worked as a laborer, and I have felt the blows of this government's policies. Today meat costs 16 pesos but we get only 600 for a ton of corn. After the harvest I only have enough to pay my debts, with nothing left. We are like slaves—we don't even have our own houses. But those who do the least work have their nice houses. This is why we must be organized," he emphasized.

Peasants at the meeting described how electricity rates were being raised. OCEZ has led fights demanding lower prices and many rural communities, taking advantage of the stepped-up level of political activity, have refused to pay the higher rates. They have also protested the arbitrary fines and taxes that local authorities impose on many peasants.

Ferment on campuses

The political ferment in the countryside has spread to the cities and towns of Chiapas. Students from the university at Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the state capital, explained in an interview that after the army was redeployed in Chiapas, they organized four marches, drawing between 800 and 1,500 youth.

Rubén Gil Rodríguez, 19, the student government president at the university in Tuxtla, was among those attending the OCEZ convention along with another student, Octavio Hugo Morales, also 19. Gil said the student demonstrators had demanded "that the army must withdraw and that there must be a political solution, not a military one, to the conflict in Chiapas. We also demanded the tuition at the university, which was raised 20 percent in February, be cut in half."

The students said that in 1988 the governor of Chiapas had closed the university for one year to try to defuse the political activities organized at the campus, issuing arrest orders for some 50 student leaders. The administration cleaned out the school library, eliminating books such as the Bolivian diary of Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara and the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The authorities also destroyed political murals the students had painted.

Before the school reopened, student activists were forced to sign statements stating they would refrain from participating in protests. The situation has since changed, and after the January 1994 uprising students stepped up political activities, Gil and Morales reported.

Rightist landlords lash out

The explosion of struggles and organization in Chiapas, especially by peasants, has sparked a counterreaction by the wealthy ranchers and businessmen who have long dominated the area, and has led to polarization within some of the peasant communities as well. The ranchers have hired gun thugs known as the "white guards."

Clashes over land have resulted in several deaths in recent months. In the wake of the army's recent redeployment in the region the ranchers have stepped up mobilizations demanding a crackdown against the peasants and the return of occupied land.

San Cristóbal has been a focal point in this confrontation. For several consecutive weekends, right-wing landowners and businessmen have organized demonstrations of several hundred to march past the downtown cathedral, calling for the ouster of Samuel Ruiz, the Catholic bishop who has acted as mediator in talks between the government and the EZLN. In the first march the demonstrators attacked the church, hurling objects and injuring five people. They have carried banners calling for the death penalty for Ruiz and others, as well as burning effigies and, in one case, a coffin labeled with Ruiz's name.

The ranchers, businessmen, and merchants, who are largely white or of mixed descent, play on racist prejudices against the Indian peasants, billing themselves "the real Chiapas citizens."

They demand the army remain in the area and act more forcefully to defend their interests. Constantino Kanter, one of the rightist leaders, claims ranchers have lost more than 400,000 pesos due to the disappearance of cattle; he is demanding compensation from the government for

occupied lands.

In response to the right-wing demonstrations and threats against Ruiz, hundreds of peasants from indigenous communities have mobilized to maintain a 24-hour guard in front of the cathedral. The volunteer defense guards organize daily meetings, with discussions of the latest developments and articles from the press read aloud and translated into different Indian languages. At one side of the church, a table is set up every afternoon where clippings from the national papers can be obtained for a small donation, since many working people here cannot afford to buy the newspapers. People gather around and read posted copies of the articles.

Among those defending the cathedral was a group of Tzeltal Indians from the town of Oxchuc. Alfonso López Santiz, 23, one of those in the group who spoke Spanish as well as Tzeltal, explained that their organization, Tres Nudos de Oxchuc (Three Knots of Oxchuc), coordinated people to participate in the defense activities. He was there for a 15-day stint and would then be replaced by someone else from the village.

López, a member of Tres Nudos for the eight years it has existed, described what happened when the army moved into the area. "They detained 12 farmers and teachers. They took money from people's houses. Now there are daily military patrols, and sometimes they come through in the middle of the night." He said he supported the EZLN, adding that his town was evenly divided on the issue.

López lives in a two-room dwelling with his family of 12. Indians in Mexico face some of the worst conditions and brutal exploitation. Disproportionately high numbers lack electricity, running water, or sewer systems. Illiteracy is 75 percent in rural areas of Chiapas and malnutrition is rampant.

'Government doesn't provide schools'

"We began to organize because the government doesn't give us any help with schools or drinking water," López said, noting they have potable water in his community thanks to their own efforts.

Like other members of his group, he has worked in the city to supplement his meager farming income. Eligio Vicente, 19, said he earned 10 or 12 pesos a day working as a bricklayer in San Cristóbal. The current minimum wage in Mexico is 16.43 pesos a day, but no one among them earned that much. Porfirio López Gómez, from the town of Teopisca, said he was paid 70 pesos a month at a bakery in San Cristóbal. The employer deducted for room and board.

López reported the cost of attending school from grades 7 to 10 was 100 pesos a year, a sum few families can afford, and the cost for pre-university schooling was 300 pesos a year.

Some 25,000 peasants in this state fled their communities during the initial clashes between the army and the EZLN last year and many are still refugees. According to Onécimo Hidalgo of CONPAZ, many fled because of air force bombings and fears that the conflict would expand. The government forces placed them in several refugee camps. As part of its strategy to divide the peasants and win their allegiance, the authorities have offered to provide some of those returning under army escort with household provisions and food.

Some of the 10,000 people who fled their homes after the most recent army occupation are returning to homes and fields that were destroyed but have received no aid, Hidalgo reported.

The government announced March 14 it would pull back its forces from some towns to encourage the EZLN to agree to join in new talks. The guerrilla group announced it would consider entering into negotiations, to be coordinated through a mediation commission headed by Ruiz. The EZLN continues to call for the withdrawal of the army from the area.

Margrethe Siem of Houston and Miguel Zárate of Atlanta participated in the reporting trip and contributed to this article.



Peasants gathered to protect church in San Cristóbal de las Casas. Rightists have organized actions supporting army occupation and threatening a bishop known for working with Indians.

Militant/Margrethe Siem

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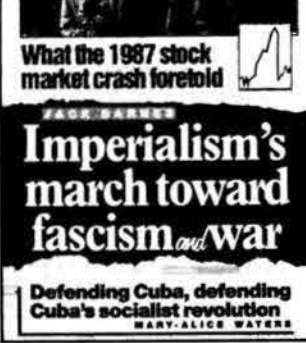
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Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams tours U.S.

Continued from front page

ster Constabulary], Republicans — permanently taken out of Irish politics," he said.

Many of those in attendance at public meetings where Adams spoke were young workers — a number of them newly arrived in the United States. "This tour represents a good thing," said James, a 24-year-old worker from Belfast who moved to the Bronx two months ago. "Everybody likes the peace," he said, "but I still came because there are no jobs."

Some 600 people, representing several generations of working people born in Ireland as well as others, packed the Ancient Order of Hibernians hall in Albany, New York, March 12. Sprinkled amid the crowd were young construction workers from Belfast. A member of Local 370 of the carpenters union led the singing of the Irish and U.S. anthems. Mayor Jerry Jennings of Albany, the capital of New York state, read a proclamation welcoming the Sinn Fein president.

Adams began his speech in Gaelic, the Irish language. He pointed out that British imperialism has tried to stamp out the language, and that many political prisoners, including himself, learned to speak Gaelic while in jail.

More than 800 supporters of the Irish freedom struggle rallied March 18 at the Commodore Barry Club/Irish Culture Center in Philadelphia. "In comparison to Adams's previous tour," reported Roy Inglee, who attended the event, "the audience was younger, more working-class, and judging by accent, more recently immigrant Irish."

Release all political prisoners

In Philadelphia, Adams defended the call to release Loyalist political prisoners as necessary to advancing the process of negotiations on Northern Ireland and to "the building of a secular Ireland where both Catholic and Protestant can have political and religious rights." He added that "peace cannot mean a return to the status quo of the 1960s, with a lack of human rights for the nationalist people in the North."

In the current negotiations on the future of Ireland, the Conservative Party government in London has attempted to gloss over the centrality of its 25-year military occupation of Northern Ireland as the wellspring of violence and repression. British prime minister John Major continues to try to shift the onus of violence onto Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Army.

The effort to violence-bait Adams during his U.S. tour fell flat, however, and boomeranged into an embarrassment for Major.

"Even by John Major's standards," said an article in the British *Sunday Business Post*, "picking an international row with the Clinton administration over Adams's fundraising, in the very week you are to be seen in all the television news shows, tramping around the refugee camps of Gaza with Yasser Arafat, is pure Monty Python."

In the north of Ireland, meanwhile, many working people have taken advantage of the six-month cease-fire to press for an end to British repression. On March



Thousands of British troops are stationed in Northern Ireland. During his U.S. tour Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams hammered away to demand their withdrawal.

5, thousands marched in Pomeroy to demand the disbanding of the RUC police force.

Adams opened the Friends of Sinn Fein office in Washington, D.C., during his trip and launched its diplomatic mission in the United States, which is headed by Mairead Keane of Sinn Fein's national executive.

Only a short time ago, Sinn Fein was banned from the United States as a front for a "terrorist" organization. Washington denied Adams a visa eight times over the course of 20 years before finally allowing him into the country in January 1994. Even then, he was allowed to stay for only 48 hours, prohibited from traveling more than 25 miles from New York City and from raising money.

Adjusting to the new situation in Ireland, and the desire of millions to bring an end to London's occupation and the violence in Ulster, politicians of both the Democratic and Republican parties went out of their way to be seen with Adams. Washington is also pressing to improve its trade position against capitalist families in Britain.

Among those who met the Sinn Fein president were U.S. president Bill Clinton, New York governor George Pataki, and numerous members of Congress. Luminares attending Sinn Fein fund-raisers in-

cluded Donald Trump, former New York mayor David Dinkins, and Ray Flynn, ambassador to the Vatican.

Adams met Clinton briefly on two occasions: at a St. Patrick's Day event at the White House, and again at a reception hosted by House Speaker Newt Gingrich in honor of Irish prime minister John Bruton. Bruton, however, played a distant second fiddle to Adams. So did three leaders of the Ulster Democratic Party, affiliated with the rightist Ulster Defense Association, who attended the White House affair.

Several Irish-American organizations and politicians had threatened to boycott the White House event if Adams was not invited. Gingrich, who had vowed to bar Adams from the Capitol Hill luncheon, did an about-face after the White House announced it would allow the Sinn Fein president into the country on a fund-raising tour. "The president has now...determined that's what American foreign policy is," said Gingrich spokesperson Tony Blankley, in explaining Adams would be invited to lunch.

In contrast to the positive reception, there were four small protests outside events for Adams. Four people from the Belfast-based Families Against Intimidation and Terror, a group financed by the British government, staged picket lines.

In the midst of the Adams tour, London announced the 400 troops of the 5th Regiment Royal Artillery will be withdrawn from Northern Ireland in April. While thousands of troops remain on Irish soil, it is the first significant cut in the British force since the cease-fire began last August.

Major has little to show for effort

The Major government persisted throughout Adams's tour in applying pressure on Washington to try to take away the momentum from the Sinn Fein leader, but in the end there was little to show for the effort.

Adams continued to hammer away on the central themes of getting London's troops out, freeing political prisoners, and stepping up substantive talks by all sides in the conflict. "The British government have yet to grasp the nettle of making a peace treaty," said Adams in New York.

Shortly before his trip to the United States, Adams removed a straw man set up by the British government as a major hindrance to negotiations. He said Sinn Fein would be willing to discuss the issue of disarmament, on condition that talks be held at a ministerial level. "Sinn Fein representatives will enter into discussions with British Ministers on all the matters," including "repressive legislation, prisoners, and the decommissioning of weapons." Adams said the "demilitarization" of British troops must also be on the agenda.

The *Irish People*, a newspaper published in New York that describes itself as "the voice of Irish Republicanism in America," urged its readers, "Don't Stop Now," in a March 18 editorial. "All these events inform us of the new power and responsibilities that we are beginning to demonstrate and take on," the paper said. "We must now take this momentum and make it an irresistible movement towards a just and lasting peace."

The newspaper, along with other organizations and activists for Irish self-determination, is publicizing demonstrations to demand justice for Irish political prisoners in the United States that will be held April 8 in various U.S. cities including New York; Chicago; Newark, New Jersey; Philadelphia; Minneapolis; Phoenix; Tucson, Arizona; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Portland, Oregon; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; St. Louis; and Buffalo, New York. The list is growing.

Larry Lane in Albany and Francisco Picado in New York contributed to this article.

Officials reject shortening lock-up for Curtis

BY NORTON SANDLER

DES MOINES, Iowa — Officials at the Iowa State Penitentiary in Ft. Madison have now adopted a unified policy rejecting cuts in the time Mark Curtis must serve in a punitive lock-up unit at the maximum security prison for an alleged assault. These officials are also rejecting cuts for other inmates similarly charged with assault.

Curtis is a union and political activist who has spent more than six and half years in the Iowa prison system after being convicted on frame-up rape and burglary charges in 1988. He was working on a "gate pass" in the prison hospital last August when guards accused him of attacking another inmate and threw him into lock-up in a special segregation unit. They convicted Curtis of assault in a kangaroo court-style internal hearing with guards as the only witnesses.

At four previous monthly meetings, the Classification Committee that reviews the status of inmates in lock-up had recommended cuts in the time Curtis must stay in the segregation unit's 5 by 7 foot cell for 23 hours a day.

Prison officials get 'ducks in a row'

In February, as part of recommending another 30 day time cut, the committee even commented on the alleged assault charge. "There were no injuries because of this and no one required medical treatment," they wrote on the monthly report form circulated to prison tops.

Acting Warden Paul Hedgepath and Security Director John Emmett rejected this recommendation from the Classification Committee just as they had several times before. They claimed time cuts are not applicable to inmates found guilty of assault by prison officials.

When Curtis met with the Classification Committee on March 8, the tune had changed and everybody had their ducks in a row. He was flatly told that the commit-

tee was rejecting recommending time cuts for him from now on. Curtis is slated to be released from lock-up on September 22, 1995. The time reductions recommended previously would have knocked some three months off this.

At the same time, new support is being registered for Curtis's defense effort. From Oka, Quebec, Louis Cape recently sent in a card endorsing the Mark Curtis Defense Committee. Cape is a leader of the defense campaign for Tony Rios, a Native American imprisoned in South Dakota. "I would appreciate receiving any up-to-date literature on Mark's case," Cape stated. "I hope that Mark is well on his way to receiving justice."

In Auckland, New Zealand, Peter Richie, Branch Secretary, New Zealand Meat Workers Union; Moli Pani, Site Delegate of the Meat Workers Union at Atley Tannery; Sami Pauli, another member of the union; and George Talbot, member of the United Food, Beverage and General Workers Union at the New America Ice Cream Factory, have all become endorsers of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee.

In Miami, Florida, six new endorsers have been won including Michael Ray, South Regional vice-president of the National Lawyers Guild, and Maria Gonzalez, an activist in the Alliance of Workers of the Cuban Community and the Antonio Maceo Brigade.

To get information on Mark Curtis's fight for justice write the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa, 50311, or phone (515) 246-1695.

Coming soon from Pathfinder

WHY IS MARK CURTIS STILL IN PRISON?

The Political Frame-up of a Union Activist and Socialist and the International Campaign to Free Him

Mark Curtis is a union activist and socialist who was framed up by police on false charges of rape and burglary. He was in the midst of a struggle to defend 17 Mexican and Salvadoran co-workers arrested in an immigration raid at the packing-house where he worked in Des Moines, Iowa, in March 1988.

Seven years later Curtis is still in jail. Every day he remains behind bars, the political basis for his imprisonment becomes clearer.

This new pamphlet explains what happened to Curtis, and the stakes for workers, farmers, youth, and other democratic-minded people in demanding his release.



Mark Curtis at 1987 rally to support striking meat-packers in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Available in English April 6, in Spanish April 20 at bookstores, including those listed on page 12, or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Tel: (212) 741-0690. Fax (212) 727-0150. Or contact the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, P.O. Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa, 50311. Tel: (515) 246-1695.

How unions aided struggle of unemployed

Minneapolis Teamsters championed united action with youth, jobless in 1930s

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

As Democratic and Republican politicians plan to hack away at social spending, *Militant* readers will find it useful to review how a fighting labor movement approached the fight for jobs and public assistance during the depression years of the 1930s.

The following excerpt is taken from *Teamster Politics*, the third book of a four-volume series on the rise of the Teamsters union in the Midwest. The author, Farrell Dobbs, emerged as a militant Teamsters leader during the historic 1934 Minneapolis strikes. He worked as the editor of the *Militant* from 1943 to 1948 and served as national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party from 1953 to 1972.

The selection below illustrates how Teamsters Local 574 organized unemployed workers into an auxiliary unit, the Federal Workers Section (FWS). It fought for jobs, for increased relief benefits, and against the abusive treatment by the government welfare agents of the day. Above all, it offered the jobless workers a perspective of joint struggle against the bosses and the backing of organized labor. Thousands of unemployed workers joined the Teamsters picket lines during a series of hard-fought strikes. Through this approach, the leadership of Local 574 strove to forge unity between the employed and unemployed sections of the working class.

In 1939, U.S. congressman Clifton Woodrum from Virginia, at the behest of President Franklin Roosevelt, led a bipartisan drive to slash federal relief spending and cut the wage rate of workers on the public works projects organized by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Using demagoguery similar to that of today's politicians, who rail against "welfare cheats," Woodrum said his efforts "would strike a body blow at the relief racketeer." In reality they were aimed at ending the public assistance the working class had fought for and won in previous struggles.

Rather than accept the cuts, 500,000 WPA workers, with the support of trade unionists across the country, went on strike to defend and expand their benefits. "The strike of WPA workers continued to mount and roll across the country like a tidal wave," said Local 574's newspaper, the *Northwest Organizer*, in its July 13, 1939, issue. "America has never seen such a popular strike. Not even the great nationwide strike for the eight-hour day in 1886 approached the present strike in numbers."

With the cry, "You can't strike against the government," Roosevelt came down hard on the WPA strike, railroading many of its leaders to jail. The strike was eventually defeated through government repression and leadership defaults.

"The 1939 WPA strike was the culmination of mass protest and anger at a system that robbed the unemployed of the dignity of workers engaged in productive labor," said Max Geldman, a central leader of the FWS, commenting on the action many years later. "I can't say we won the 1939 WPA strike, but we gave a good account of ourselves and left a bright chapter in the history of American class struggles."

The four-part Teamster series is published by Pathfinder Press. This excerpt is reprinted with permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY FARRELL DOBBS

While preparing this segment of Teamster history I asked Max Geldman, an organizer of the unemployed in the 1930s, for his recollections about conditions and events during that period. One of my questions concerned the prevailing mood among workers who had lost their jobs because of economic depression.

"Let me illustrate," he responded, "what I consider the general reaction of the unemployed to the indignities of being on relief. I'm not speaking here of anger at the authorities, or of militant struggles waged by the jobless. It's the indignity of having

to fill out forms and of being interrogated by relief interviewers: such as, how much money do you have, when were you last employed, why do you need relief, etc., etc.?"

"On the workers education program, a project developed after the Works Progress Administration was set up by Roosevelt, we used to write and enact plays dealing with the plight of the unemployed. I wrote one which didn't have much of a plot. The opening scene told how Mr. Smith, employed on a good job for years and years, comes home and informs his family he has been laid off and

that there was not much satisfaction working on WPA projects. In the cities they were usually paid \$60.50 a month, plus distribution of surplus food products. The wage was less in rural areas, around \$40.00 a month in northern states and even lower in the South. Whatever the rate, it was hardly enough to keep body and soul together. Besides, there was little dignity in the assigned work....

"Considering the billions spent that could have been used to creative ends, it was like dumping products to maintain high prices and fat profits. The labor power of millions was wasted, so as not to

of preceding events

When Local 574 launched its 1934 campaign for bargaining rights in the Minneapolis trucking industry, there was great potential for support from the city's unemployed. The jobless were in a deeply rebellious mood. Generally speaking, they looked upon any struggle against the status quo as their struggle. Some among them were, of course, susceptible to being tricked into serving the bosses as strike-breakers; but that danger could be minimized if organized labor sought to promote united action by the employed and unemployed in defense of their collective interests.

Being conscious of those factors, Trotskyists in the General Drivers' leadership initiated policy measures designed to forge the necessary working-class unity. In effect they were saying to the unemployed: "Help us now to win our battle against the trucking employers, and we will then back your cause with the full power of the union."

Jobless join combat

Thousands of jobless workers responded to the appeal during the hard-fought trucking strikes that followed. Voluntarily accepting discipline in combat, they stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the strikers in defending picket lines against the cops. Many were arrested before the battle was finally won; scores suffered injury from police clubs and guns; and one of them, John Belor, gave his life for the cause....

Right after the Federal Workers Section was formed, it began a fight for improvements in the local welfare setup. There were two immediate aims: correction of abusive practices followed by the city authorities; and an increase in the budgets allocated to families on relief.

A series of clashes with relief investigators and their superiors followed, which put an end to the worst abuses they had been heaping upon jobless workers. That accomplishment, in turn, helped to stimulate mass action in the battle for higher family budgets. When the city council held a hearing on the question, the unemployed turned out in force. Not only did they pack the council chamber, but further demonstrations followed in which the determined workers held their ground against the cops.

The militant struggle forced the authorities to expand the food budgets for those on relief. Increased allowances were also granted for rent, clothing, utilities, coal, and medicine. Minneapolis had, in fact, emerged from the confrontation with one of the highest relief budgets of any city in the country....

During the depression, young workers had dim prospects of securing meaningful employment. Students, as well, found it tough to get jobs upon their graduation

Continued on Page 12



Workers march past the White House in 1939 demanding an expansion of funding for jobs under the WPA program. Minneapolis Teamsters helped organize the unemployed in fights against humiliating conditions of relief programs and for jobs.

there is no possibility of his being rehired or finding a new job. The next scene has the family gathered in their living room. A woman in a fur coat, note pad and pen in hand, is seated before them and conducting an interview along the lines of the customary abusive treatment received by applicants for public relief. This scene had a devastating effect on every audience before which we played. Those present sobbed, lived again through their bitter experiences, hissed and booed our actress relief investigator.

"The mass of unemployed hated the relief setup; resented the indignities they were subjected to; shed tears over their plight; and broke out in angry actions: such as protest demonstrations, sit-ins at state capitals, hunger marches, and raids on food warehouses in which food was expropriated and distributed to the needy."

New Deal sets up 'made work'

During the first period of the depression, jobless workers had to depend on Scrooge-like doling out of public relief by local agencies, as described by Max. Then, with the advent of Roosevelt's New Deal in 1933, the federal government instituted a series of relief programs based on "made work." After one program had existed for a time, it was deliberately scrapped and replaced by another. Each such change threw into confusion whatever unemployed organizations had come into existence. The jobless lost at least part of the gains they had made through struggle, and in general they found it necessary to reorganize themselves and begin all over again in their fight with the government.

The third and most extensive of these programs was the Works Progress Administration. Its essential character was outlined by Geldman as follows:

"After the WPA was established the life-style and reaction of the great mass of unemployed differed from the previous period in two main respects. There were feelings of satisfaction at the outset over what they expected would be useful labor; also, gratification at not having to face relief investigators with requests for necessities like clothing, fuel, and other 'extras' beyond food and rent.

"The workers soon found, however,

upset the balance of the capitalist system. No wonder the symbol of WPA was a worker leaning on a shovel, and so also was the national song of the unemployed called 'Leaning on a Shovel.'

"How could anyone have any satisfaction in labor that often consisted of one group of workers digging a hole and of another group filling it up?"

New vehicle for unemployed

Shortly before the WPA came into being, a new formation appeared within the Minneapolis labor movement, one that was to have a significant effect on later mass struggles against Roosevelt's stingy policies. In the spring of 1935, General Drivers Local 574 expanded its structure to include an auxiliary unit known as the Federal Workers Section. This unit was especially designed as a vehicle for organization of the unemployed under the local's direct sponsorship. Its creation marked a pioneer step in trade-union activity, and for that reason the way had been carefully prepared during the course

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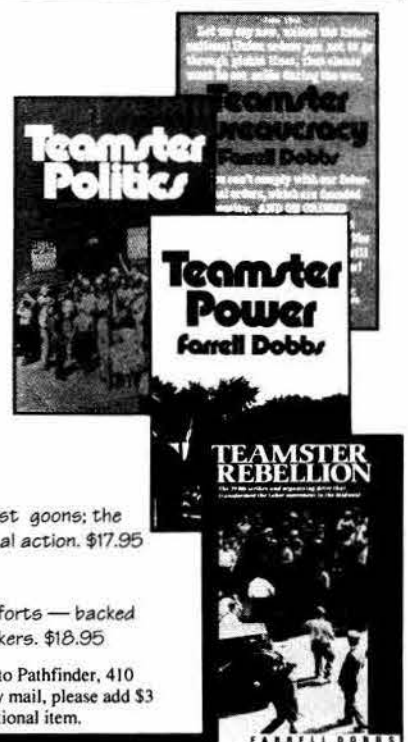
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from Pathfinder



Cuba journal is forum on culture, politics

'La Gaceta,' to be distributed by Pathfinder, highlights a wide range of views

BY MIKE TABER

Pathfinder Press has announced it will begin distributing *La Gaceta de Cuba*, a journal published six times a year by the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC).

La Gaceta is a forum for discussion on culture, politics, and the challenges facing the Cuban revolution today. Its pages reflect the wide range of viewpoints being considered and debated in Cuba and throughout the Americas.

Recent issues of the magazine have included:

- An exchange of articles on Cuba's cultural policy, its history, and the political debates that have surrounded it since the early years of the revolution.

- Discussion on the need for a fresh examination of Marxism, freed from the straitjacket of concepts copied from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

- An interview with film director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea discussing his award-winning *Strawberry and Chocolate* and questions of artistic freedom.

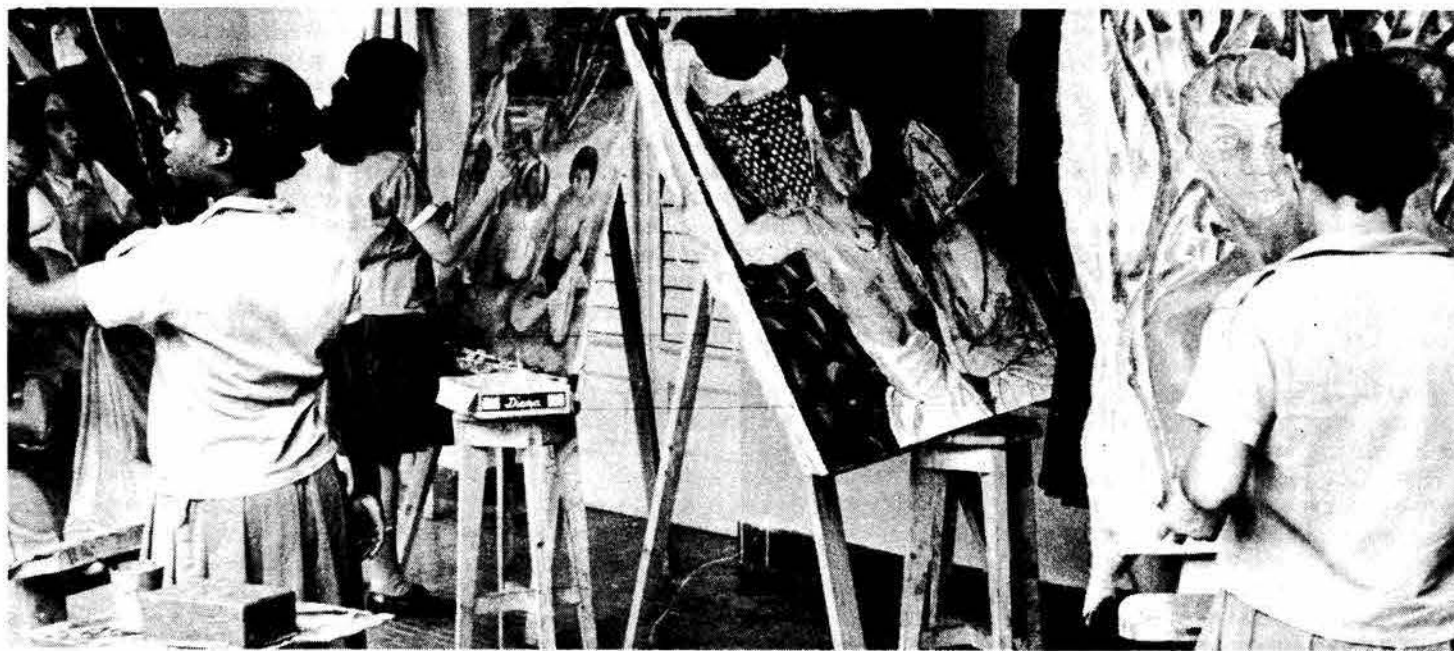
- Articles by and interviews with prominent writers, musicians, artists, and political figures. Among these are UNEAC president Abel Prieto, singers Silvio Rodríguez and Carlos Varela, longtime Communist Party leader Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, minister of culture Armando Hart, and writers Roberto Fernández Retamar, Lisandro Otero, Pablo Armando Fernández, and Miguel Barnet.

- News of recent developments in Cuban literature, music, and the visual arts. Plus essays, short stories, and poems.

Because of *La Gaceta's* popularity, the large-format journal was recently expanded to 64 pages.

This is the second Cuban publication Pathfinder is now distributing. Also available is *Granma Internacional*, a weekly newspaper published in Havana in English, Spanish, French, and other languages.

Subscriptions to *La Gaceta de Cuba*, which is in Spanish, are US\$40 for one year (6 issues). The journal will be airmailed directly from Cuba. To subscribe, send a check or money order in U.S. dollars (made out to Pathfinder Press) to Pathfinder, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.



Young painters in Cuba in the early 1960s. "The Cuban revolution is still alive, and has always been able to confront the most adverse conditions precisely because it has not permitted errors to be transformed into dogmas," Alfredo Guevara said.

On the Cuban revolution's cultural policy

An interview with Alfredo Guevara, founder and longtime leader of the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC), provoked an exchange of articles in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, excerpts of which appear below. The final item in this section is from an interview with leading Cuban filmmaker Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, director of the award-winning *Strawberry and Chocolate*.

Interview with Alfredo Guevara
July-August 1993 issue

Q: Beginning with the showing in Cuba of *La Dolce Vita*, *Accotone*, *The Exterminating Angel*, and *Alias Gardelito* in 1963, you participated in a public debate in defense of ICAIC's strategy on film exhibition and of a policy of spiritual openness very far removed from "shepherding" and "pontifical command." What are your thoughts today on those debates?

A: That debate was necessary. Strictly speaking, it involved whether or not to imitate the Soviet policy of concealment and

darkness in the cultural field. And above all, heading off in time every attempt to impose on us that grotesque exercise of intellectual sterility known as "socialist realism," today rated as one of the clearest examples of kitsch in the history of art. But at the time it was a more than evident danger. That debate was necessary but I regret that necessity. I was required to engage in it with Blas Roca,¹ whose aesthetic ideas I did not share then, nor do I now....

Q: Toward the end of the 1960s the revolutionary process interrupted the artistic-cultural evolution that had been generated in the country, producing a retreat that was crystallized in the 1971 Congress of Education and Culture. Although ICAIC maintained a consistent position and protected creators and works that were marginalized by the prevailing current, it could not on its own escape the pervading ideas. In the opinion of numerous Cuban intellectuals, the consequences of those errors have not been totally uprooted, and we are still faced with a deep-going discussion to prevent distortions at the present time. What is your view in this regard?

A: ... I do not believe that resolutions, decrees, or lines adopted at meetings transform or determine reality — when it is real and not merely scenery or a mask. For that reason I must begin my response by rejecting the imputation that the 1971 agreements were unjust....

Revolutions are not strolls down the Riviera. They always have been, and always will be, upheavals that sometimes unleash their violence beyond precise cycles....

The Cuban revolution is still alive, and has always been able to confront the most adverse conditions precisely because it has not permitted errors to be transformed into dogmas, nor has it let the virtues of one day be sanctified for all eternity.

BY LEÓN DE LA HOZ
March-April 1994 issue

One can speak of three periods characterized by different contexts, different visions and modifications of policy, as well as different expectations and developments in the cultural movement. The first period was one of expansion, the second of contraction, and the third of recovery and expansion. To order them in some provisional way — although any listing of periods is polemical, above all when there has been a lack of study on the topic — I would give these as 1959-68, 1969-75, and 1976 to the present....

The second period has evoked most attention, highlighted by the Congress of

Education and Culture in 1971. This is so not because of any spectacular character, but because it codified in resolutions with significant ideological and political arguments, problems and tendencies that had been building up in the preceding years.

Those polemical accords were based on an indiscriminate transgression of creativity, of the cultural tradition, and of elementary norms of ethics and the rights of citizens on the part of ideology and policy. Its agreements fell on the cultural movement with the entire weight conferred by the authorities who backed them, and because of their character as an instrument of cultural policy, during moments of confusion and protagonism by some inept functionaries and by opportunistic writers and artists who frequently held all the positions of responsibility....

Dogmatism, facile answers, a priori ideologicalization, aesthetic homogenization, silencing, idealization of reality, discouragement of experimentation — these were some of the results of this distortion of cultural policy that the 1971 congress represented. This was corrected with the founding of the Ministry of Culture [in 1976]. In the case of literature it would not have palpable consequences until the early 1980s.

BY PEDRO DE LA HOZ
March-April 1994 issue

When Alfredo Guevara says that "revolutions are not strolls down the Riviera," he is referring to more than a metaphor. Revolutions, when they are authentic ones like ours, imply unprecedented historical commotions, profound changes, and at certain moments, traumatic events.

Cultural policy, like all other policy, is part of this reality through design and through practice. By this I mean it has not been free of the tensions and convulsions that have characterized the entire revolutionary process....

Now, to review these years one can perceive errors, arbitrariness, expressions of voluntarism, and capricious and narrow interpretations of the revolution's cultural policy. At times, in the face of specific conjunctures and tensions, policy adjustments have been made that gave rise to so-called lurches that harmed and contradicted the very essence of the policy.

But at the same time, it would be a major error to identify these "lurches" — which in every epoch the opportunists and mediocre people are accustomed to committing — with the nature of the policy itself, and by extension, with the entire social process. The "lurches" are conjunctural and are condemned by this fact to be overcome by life....

The idea has often been repeated that the 1960s were the revolution's golden age of culture, that at the end of the decade

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¹ Blas Roca (1908-1987) was general secretary of the Cuban Communist Party from 1934 to 1961. Following the creation of a new Communist Party after the revolution, he served as a prominent member of its Central Committee until his death.

the "honeymoon" ended between the intellectuals and the political leadership, that the 1970s were worthless, and that only in the 1980s were the doors of splendor opened once again.

History is much more complex and of course much richer. In the supposed rose garden of the 1960s we suffered, without having to look very far, the silencing of rock, the attacks by *Lunes de Revolución* on the Orígenes group, and the dismantling of Ediciones El Puente. In the 1970s, in the midst of a colossal "lurch," we lived through the rise of the New Song Movement and the experiences of a movement in theater that began to seek out a new audience, such as the Escambray theater company. In recent times, the reaction to the film *Alice in Wondertown* is not a particularly edifying example.²

It seems to me that it is equally wrong to ignore the weight of the 1971 Congress of Education and Culture on the intellectual life of the country as it is to assign this forum an absolutely devastating role, or to assign it a theatrical symbolism on the part of anonymous forces in power. When one correctly attributes to the creation of the Ministry of Culture in 1976 a substantial role in establishing a climate of confidence in the artistic sector, it seems to overlook the fact that this decision was the result of a policy and not the fruit of chance....

We cannot forget that the congress responded to the conjunctural needs of an ideological struggle characterized by attacks on the part of international reaction that took advantage of and tried to channel in its favor the confusion and questions of broad sectors of Western European and Latin American intellectuals surrounding the so-called Padilla case, one of the most painful episodes in Cuban cultural history of recent decades.³ (I should recall that its principal protagonist, the poet, was the first to manipulate his situation by making a caricature of the famous Stalinist trials and by flinging invectives against his literary colleagues, many of whom demonstrated a higher ethic than Padilla ever had.)....

I believe that the debate around our cultural policy, questions of intellectual life, can and should progress on serious foundations. In May 1992 the writers and artists meeting in the National Council of UNEAC defended "the need to consolidate institutional space for debate" and pronounced themselves in favor of the confrontation of ideas as "part of the very nature of intellectual work... and as the irreplaceable stimulus for its development."

Those who agreed to this, who throughout the process heading toward the Fifth Congress of UNEAC openly discussed these questions, those who in the pages of *La Gaceta* in the last two years have expressed their opinions on polemical topics, those who in forums and workshops have expressed their views, merit recognition and respect, even when the debate, as a daily practice of our intellectual life, has not matured in line with our needs.

But to make this practice a reality, I am in favor of banishing prejudices, apologetics, prosecutions, and pejorative terms, so that one can call things by their real names (not their appearances) and not cease to defend principles.

Interview with Tomás Gutiérrez Alea September-October 1993 issue

Q: Senel [Paz] has put it very well that the topic of his story [*Strawberry and Chocolate*] is intolerance. Is this also the topic of the film?

A: Yes. Intolerance that might exist toward homosexuals, in the same way as many other things arising from established norms, schemas, or narrow confines.

Q: Do you feel such intolerance exists in Cuba today?

A: Of course it continues to exist. The story — and also the film — takes place twenty years ago, when homophobia was sharpest together with actions that went so far as the persecution of homosexuals. Fortunately, those truly abominable and extreme acts do not occur today. A certain rejection and lack of understanding of this phenomenon continues to be shown, not only in this society but throughout the world....

Q: What is art — recreation, polemic, or necessity?

A: ... Our island is 90 miles from the United States, a country with which very tense relations exist. When we exercise criticism many people get up and say: if you criticize our reality you are supplying ammunition to the enemy. I frankly do not believe this. I do not believe it.

There are many ways to criticize, it can be done from without and from within. When the enemy criticizes us, it does so to destroy us; but when we criticize our reality we do so precisely for the opposite reason, to improve it.

Marxism and the future of Cuban revolution

The following excerpts discuss some of the political challenges facing the Cuban revolution today. The first two articles refer to an international symposium held in Havana by Casa de las Américas on the Peruvian revolutionary leader José Carlos Mariátegui, on the 100th anniversary of his birth.

The Relevancy of Mariátegui BY PEDRO PABLO RODRÍGUEZ September-October 1994 issue

It is necessary to reanalyze and reassimilate Marxism. This involves understanding and assimilating its development prior to 1959, as well as examining its presence since socialism was established. Despite the obvious need to do so, this task has long remained in front of us. Today it cannot be postponed given the great challenges posed by the current reality.

And in this job of creating anew — daring and adventuresome like any other endeavor of this type, although never with greater risks than those imposed by historical circumstances — one must not and cannot ignore the history of Marxist thought in the world, and in Latin America in particular. This is especially true when in doing so one finds such outstanding individuals — both for the breadth and vigor of their work and for the self-sacrifice of their actions — as Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci, and José Carlos Mariátegui. Paradoxically, these individuals are almost unknown among us....

The Cubans who spoke at and who attended [the seminar] agreed to propose a reading of works by Mariátegui in relation to the problems that the Cuban nation and Cuban ideas are currently going through:

What type of Marxism do we know? What conception of socialism we have held? How can Marxism and socialism be rooted in national traditions? How can the social conquests of the Cuban revolution be maintained at a moment when the country is being reinserted in the capitalist world? What ideas and currents of thought have influence in Cuba, and how should these be taken up from a Marxist standpoint? Is Marxism in Cuba undergoing a crisis? How can Cuban thought and culture contribute to maintaining the nation's identity and developing it under new circumstances?

Mariátegui and the Crisis of Marxism Today BY PABLO GUADARRAMA GONZÁLEZ July-August 1994 issue

It has become common today to recognize that the crisis of Marxism is neither of recent origin nor has it been caused exclu-



Militant/Argiris Malapanis
Union assembly discusses economic efficiency at cigar factory in Havana. "We criticize our reality...to improve it," says film director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea.

Recently a film entitled *Alice in Wondertown* became the centerpiece of a scandal. Was it perhaps a counterrevolutionary film?

I am convinced that *Alice in Wondertown* is an honest film that tries to criticize some aspects of our reality with the healthy aim of contributing to the process of "rectification of errors" that was proclaimed some time ago.

A big, clumsy political campaign was directed against *Alice*, which served only

sively by the collapse of "socialism in practice."

This disaster has undoubtedly been one of its most convincing manifestations, even for the most devoted followers of the alleged universal all-knowing character of Marxism. These people also sense that the failure involves more than just the practical experience of socialism. It is necessary, without prejudice, to revise — no longer with fear of utilizing this verb with the taboo of the suffix "ism" — the foundations of the very theory that served to sustain it....

The crisis of Marxism today owes much to the lack of attention, and even the persecution, that entrenched orthodox Marxism has given to creative Marxists such as Trotsky, Gramsci, or Mariátegui.

With regard to Trotsky the Peruvian [Mariátegui] was able to adequately differentiate his errors from his merits, among the latter being his outstanding work during the October revolution, his analysis of a host of international problems such as the development of U.S. imperialism. But above all, Trotsky's critical vigilance that avoided "formalist bureaucracy," which Mariátegui also criticized early on in the Soviet state, but which was ignored by other Latin American Marxists.

Emigration, Exile, and Dialogue BY LISANDRO OTERO March-April 1994 issue

Influential newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Financial Times*, and *The Economist* have already openly called for an end to the blockade. When they do so it is because irresistible interests are moving in this direction. Wall Street knows that it is losing precious time in investing capital in Cuba. Despite a few recalcitrants in Miami who insist on an archaic and obsolete anticommunism, everything seems to indicate that the immense majority of emigrants are tired of the sterile verbiage of hate and are positioning themselves for reconciliation.

By the end of the century — a short span of time — the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States will be fully worked out. We must look ahead. What will happen in Cuba in the new century, which is only a few years away? Some tend to see the Miami group as a financial reserve for a new development of Cuba. They think that they can play the same role of capital suppliers that the Federal Republic assumed for East Germany, or that Taiwan did in the economic expansion of continental China.

According to these people Cuba could imitate the role of Hong Kong, or turn itself into a Singapore: supplying labor

to demonstrate the lack of confidence of many functionaries in the revolution's capacity to assimilate criticism and use it as an effective instrument in the process of building a more just society.

The positive outcome of this lamentable incident was seeing how filmmakers responded in a united way against the attack without letting themselves be manipulated by forces opposed to the revolution. Another encouraging sign was the position of the National Council of UNEAC.

power cheaper than in the United States, to attract industry and become an important market. The proximity of both countries would be a considerable factor in cheapening the cost of transport and reducing delivery times. Cuba has an extensive infrastructure of transport that would not require excessive investments to modernize, and it possesses highly qualified personnel. As if this were not enough it is offering exemptions from taxes and facilities for exporting utilities without parallel in southeast Asia. Others think of an endogenous development as a preferable alternative, with a broad investment spectrum that would include Europeans and Japanese.

The demonstrated talent of Cubans to develop, their capacity of initiative, their dynamic spirit of enterprise could be motors for a future advance. The Cuban perspective is tempting for any investor who does not let himself be influenced by political propaganda and knows that the true homeland of capital is the bank vault.

The Other Death of Dogma BY RAFAEL HERNÁNDEZ October-November 1994 issue

The effects of the fall of the socialist camp and its impact on the world ideological context have also been felt in Cuba.... In a surprisingly relevant text written in 1950, Isaac Deutscher stated: "The intellectual ex-communist no longer throws out the dirty water of the revolution to protect the baby; he discovers that the baby is a monster which must be strangled. The heretic becomes a renegade."

In Cuba some intellectuals — including some who have never even been heretics — reject these ideas today rather than seeking to revise them. Left-wing values, conceptions, and viewpoints tend to be perceived as totally and hopelessly antiquated....

Nevertheless this "ex-communist syndrome" has other, explainable causes. One of the clearest is the scholastic, ritualized, dogmatic Marxism that, much earlier than the fall of European socialism, failed to provide us an intellectually creative perspective. It was this Marxism that several generations of Cubans were trained in....

Without ignoring the domestically produced anthologies, one could demonstrate that dogmatic Marxism in Cuba imitated that of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe — adopting in fact its presuppositions, logic, and implications. Although the central nucleus of Cuban revolutionary ideology has been, in great measure, the antithesis of dogma, there have been plenty of people who have tried to reduce it to an easily learned and immutable formula of truth.

² *Alice in Wondertown*, a satire targeting bureaucrats, was closed down by the Cuban government in 1991. The decision sparked a wide debate in Cuba.

³ Heberto Padilla was a Cuban writer whose arrest in 1971 on unspecified charges sparked protests by many supporters of the revolution around the world. The author issued a public "self-criticism," written in the style of the Moscow trial "confessions" of the 1930s.

Railroad strike idles trains across Canada

Continued from front page
auto assembly plant in St. Thomas, Ontario, on the first working day of the strike and placed other factories in Windsor and Oakville, Ontario, on four-hour shifts. Half the country's coal exports cannot be shipped. Grain shippers in western Canada as well as paper mills, mines, and chemical producers across Canada are also being hit hard by the strike.

Rail workers have been without a contract for more than a year. Claiming higher labor costs than their U.S. rivals, the Canadian rail companies are proposing sweeping cuts in workers' wages and harsher working conditions. CP Rail is the same company whose concession demands provoked a 46-day strike by UTU members on the Soo Line, the company's U.S. subsidiary.

Thousands of jobs eliminated

CP, CN, and VIA Rail want to eliminate job security measures that were granted to higher-seniority workers during the 1980s and early 1990s when the companies implemented massive downsizing. In exchange for those guarantees, the railway unions had accepted the elimination of thousands of jobs as well as reductions in already-negotiated wage increases and benefits.

"Since 1988," explained UTU member Claude Proulx at the Taschereau picket line, "we've given many concessions to CN. When the weather was good, they gave us an umbrella. Now that it's raining, they want to take it away."

The key job security provision gives workers with eight years' seniority the right to full pay if their job is eliminated through technological change or restructuring. The companies now want to force workers to move to other regions of the country where there may be job openings.

"But once we move to a different region," noted CP Rail machinist Ron Ellison, "we go to the bottom of the seniority list there. We'll be the first out the door when there are new layoffs." Ellison works at CP Rail's St. Luc yard in Montreal.

"If we don't stand up now," said Howie

McInnes, a track maintenance worker in Calgary, "we'll be making \$8 per hour."

Newly hired workers at lower pay

CN strikers in Montreal explained that over the past few years the company has hired several hundred workers at the former Point St. Charles repair yard. They are paid starting wages that are \$5 an hour less than the full wage. CN spun off the yard in 1991, transforming it into a subsidiary. The company offered large buyouts to workers who agreed to quit.

At the bargaining table, CN has demanded a 20 percent wage cut and starting wages for new hires that are 50 percent of the full wage and would take five years to catch up. Among the multitude of concessions the company is demanding is to extend beyond 12 hours the unpaid time that a worker who finishes an out-of-town run is required to wait for a return run.

VIA wants to eliminate its pay-per-mile formula for train operators and replace it with an hourly wage, meaning deep cuts in pay.

CN strikers are concerned about the Canadian government's stated goal to privatize the rail line, a company currently owned by the government. "They want to break down our wages and working conditions to make the company more attractive to potential investors," said François Guérin while walking the picket line in Montreal.

Big profits and economic hardship?

On picket lines across the country, rail workers are expressing anger at the companies' claim of economic hardship. CN announced March 16 it had made \$245 million in profits in 1994. CP had earlier announced a cool \$277 million for the same year.

"I think it's a big turnaround, but it's not enough" said CN chief executive Paul Tellier. "We must do better."

To put pressure on the companies, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE) and CAW officials had agreed to a strategy of conducting local strikes of just one or two days' duration. They called for no strike at CN. The



Railworkers picket in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Bosses are screaming for government action to end walkout. "All we're trying to do is protect our jobs," said a striker.

unions took out newspaper advertisements urging CP customers to make alternative transportation arrangements.

The officials said the aim was to avoid an all-out strike that would provoke punitive anti-strike legislation by the federal government. Previous national rail strikes in 1950, 1966, 1973, and 1987 were met with such legislation. The strike by more than 130,000 rail workers in 1950 won the 40-hour week. Rail workers defied anti-strike laws for brief periods in 1966 and 1973.

The union officials' strategy blew up March 8 when CP responded by locking out track workers and cutting benefits. Since then union officials have been attacking each other publicly.

Contrary to CAW officials' wishes, more than half of the union's members across Canada refused to cross the track workers' picket lines. CAW members at the Agincourt CP yard in Toronto explained that before the March 18 shutdown they had tried to press union officials to set up picket lines with BMWE workers and picket a major CN yard

nearby.

On March 20, federal labor minister Lucienne Robillard sought special legislation ordering an end to the strike at CN.

Members of Parliament from the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party refused to give their approval to a speedy introduction of the legislation, delaying adoption of the law for several days. Lucien Bouchard, the Bloc's leader, asked during the parliamentary debate, "Does the right to strike still exist in Canada?" At the same time he indicated the organization is prepared to vote for a law mandating a 60-day mediation period.

Reform Party member of Parliament Elwin Hermanson said the government should outlaw all future railway strikes.

CAW president Buzz Hargrove held a press conference March 21 to explain that he did "not blame Labor Minister Robillard for legislating them back to work. The union broke their word to her by shutting down CN and she did not break hers." Hargrove said Robillard had agreed the government would not intervene in the strike as long as CN remained open.

Bosses demand anti-strike actions

CP claims it is running at 85 percent. In reality, service to many of its customers is crippled. Employers are screaming for government action against the strikes.

"We tied up CP Rail real good last week," explained one track worker at the VIA yard in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. "The BLE [Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers] and UTU members refused to cross our picket lines. Since honoring picket lines is not in their contract, they were supposed to go back to work after two days. So they booked off sick or took their holidays."

"Tell your readers that this strike is not the workers' fault," said striking CN worker Jacques Deschambault. "It's CN's fault. All we're trying to do is protect our jobs and our working conditions. They're trying to take everything away from us."

Susan Berman is a member of CAW Local 1285 in Toronto. Roger Annis is a member of Local 841 of Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada in Montreal. Beverly Bernardo and Ned Dmytryshyn in Vancouver contributed to this article.

Peoria socialist launches campaign

BY MARTIN DUNNE

PEORIA, Illinois — "We provide a working-class alternative to the two political parties that represent the bosses and owners of the factories, mills, and mines we labor in," Stephen Bloodworth explained at a recent press conference announcing his candidacy in the April 4 city council elections.

"The Socialist Workers Party will use this campaign to put forward ideas to put the working class movement in the best possible position to defend itself from the current and deepening crisis," is how the Peoria *Journal Star* quoted Bloodworth in its March 19 issue.

The campaign's demand for a 30 hour workweek for 40 hours pay, support for

the fight to protect a woman's right to choose abortion, and defense and extension of affirmative action programs were also highlighted on the channel 31 television evening news. Bloodworth talked about the "need to unite ourselves as an international class and demand the cancellation of the Third World debt. The bankers and bondholders should be forced to remove this burden from the backs of workers around the world." He went on to say that "all border restrictions creating a layer of undocumented, superexploited workers should be removed."

Responding to a journalist's question as to how relevant working people would find issues which didn't deal specifically with Peoria, Bloodworth explained that "every week we go to the picket lines, plant gates and campuses with the *Militant* newspaper and find a real openness and interest in discussing the world."

'People better think about the world'

After the press conference, campaign supporters fanned out to working-class communities and met strikers on the picket line at Caterpillar's Mapleton plant. John Jacobs, a member of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 974, commented favorably on the internationalist perspective of the campaign. Jacobs said "people better think about the world, better care about the world — because until all workers come together, we are all going to suffer."

"Our campaign stands in solidarity with workers who are fighting the bosses attacks," Bloodworth told those he met during the day. "We support the steadfast and resolute UAW members on strike against Caterpillar, the corporation which runs the city of Peoria."

The demand for a massive jobs program that provides employment at union-scale

wages to repair badly needed housing, schools, hospitals, public transportation and other facilities also prompted much discussion.

Points to example of Cuba

Bloodworth pointed to the example of the Cuban revolution, calling for an end to the U.S. trade embargo and travel ban against that country. He said, "U.S. workers should have the democratic right to travel to Cuba and see in action what our campaign and party is fighting for — a workers and farmers government run in the interest of those who actually produce the wealth."

That same day in Decatur, Illinois, Betsy Farley, the Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of that city, participated in the St. Patrick's Day parade. She marched with a contingent of 35 trade unionists, which included members of the UAW, United Rubber Workers, and the United Paperworkers International Union.

Caterpillar and UAW resume talks

BY ANGEL LARISCY

PEORIA, Illinois — Representatives of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and Caterpillar Inc. resumed negotiations on March 16 in Indianapolis, Indiana. The two-day meeting was a continuation of discussions that began in Louisville, Kentucky, January 31. Those talks recessed after several days with the agreement to meet again in the near future.

According to the Peoria *Journal Star*, the Indianapolis discussions included bargaining on such issues as health and safety, committeeman representation, and the grievance procedure. UAW Interna-

tional Secretary-Treasurer Bill Casstevens said the union's proposal to the company included 40 modifications of its non-economic demands. While Caterpillar continues to say the union must offer deeper economic concessions, when the talks adjourned on March 17 Caterpillar's labor relations director Jerry Brust said, "We have narrowed the gap a little bit." Both parties agreed to schedule future discussions. As the strike enters its tenth month, many union members on the picket lines in the Peoria area say there won't be a quick resolution to the struggle, but that they will eventually get a contract.

the

Communist Manifesto

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Available at bookstores, including those listed on page 12, or write, Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. If ordering by mail include \$3 to cover shipping and handling.

\$2.50

Malcolm X documentary comes up short

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Brother Minister hit movie theaters in several major U.S. cities in February to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X. Anyone going to see this documentary with the idea of learning about Malcolm's revolutionary political legacy will be sorely disappointed and a few dollars poorer.

The movie attempts to clarify the circumstances surrounding the assassination of Malcolm X on Feb. 21, 1965. While it largely rehearses facts already known for

fronted with indisputable evidence of his own statements and political role around the time of the murder, however, even Farrakhan himself has had to acknowledge that he and other leaders of the Nation helped create the political climate that made the killing possible.

Ten weeks before the assassination, for example, in the Nation of Islam's newspaper at the time, *Muhammad Speaks*, Farrakhan had written, "Only those who wish to be led to hell, or to their doom, will follow Malcolm." In the same article, run in the Dec. 4, 1964, issue, Farrakhan said, "Such a man as Malcolm is worthy of death."

In an interview earlier this year, Muhammad Abdul Aziz, formerly Norman 3X Butler and one of three men convicted of Malcolm's murder, told the Nation's current newspaper, *The Final Call*, "At that time nearly every minister in the Nation of Islam was making incendiary speeches about Malcolm." Aziz, who refused to be interviewed for *Brother Minister*, was released from prison on parole in 1985 after serving 20 years.

Malcolm's house was firebombed Feb. 14, 1965, just a week before the assassination. The bombs were tossed into the house in the middle of the night when Malcolm, his wife Betty Shabazz, and their three young daughters were sleeping. In a speech the next day, Malcolm reported that Joseph X, the leader of the Fruit of Islam goon squad at the Nation's Mosque No. 7 in Harlem, New York, had "made the statement that I had bombed my own house." The New York City cops and local press made similar insinuations.

Malcolm suspected that Joseph was involved in the firebombing and suggested during a live radio interview that Joseph "submit himself to a lie detector test since he has implied that the bombing was done by people other than himself." (Those interested in reading the entire interview will find it in Pathfinder's *The Final Speeches: February 1965*, a collection of Malcolm's political speeches, interviews, and writings from the last month of his life.)

Cop involvement

In the final days before he was shot to death on the stage of the Audubon Theater in Harlem, Malcolm was convinced that bigger forces had to be involved in the growing pattern of attempts on his life.

In the epilogue to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Alex Haley, the writer who was helping prepare the autobiography, describes a phone call he received from Malcolm just the day before the assassination. "I'm going to tell you something, brother," Malcolm said, according to Haley. "The more I keep thinking about...the things that have been happening lately, I'm not at all sure it's the Muslims. I know what they can do and what they can't, and they can't do some of the stuff recently going on."



Malcolm X at rally against discrimination at New York medical center in July 1963. Malcolm's revolutionary course propelled his break from Nation of Islam in 1964.

Zak Condo, author of the recently published book, *Conspiracy: the Assassination of Malcolm X*, was interviewed in the documentary. Condo pointed to the probable role of the New York City and federal cops in the assassination and subsequent cover-up. He reviewed the record of the FBI's Counterintelligence Program (Cointelpro), mentioning its record of spying and harassment against the Black Panther Party and Socialist Workers Party.

The best single source of information about the February 1965 murder is *The Assassination of Malcolm X*, published by Pathfinder. "Assessing the known facts," says Steve Clark in his introduction to the 1991 edition, the book "demonstrates that the official government version of how the assassination occurred is not credible. The evidence points to government complicity in the murder."

Summarizing the evidence presented in the book, Clark says that "the most likely scenario" is the involvement of government officials "who hated Malcolm X's revolutionary example and internationalist outlook...agents of cop organizations that were surveilling and harassing Malcolm," and "Black Muslims being used by government agencies."

The book photographically reproduces and quotes from various Cointelpro documents released through the federal Freedom of Information Act. One of these documents records the government's aim as being "to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters." (Readers interested in learning more about these cop disruption programs can also refer to *Cointelpro: The FBI's Secret War on Political Freedom* by Nelson Blackstock and *FBI on Trial: The Victory in the Socialist Workers Party Suit Against Government Spying* edited by Margaret Jayko, both published by Pathfinder.)

The Assassination of Malcolm X also "takes up the widespread misrepresentation of Malcolm's ideas since his death," Clark says in the introduction. "It aims to stimulate the study of his views and a recognition of their importance for effective political action against racism, war, the oppression of women, and the exploitation of working people all over the world."

New facts, new questions

Brother Minister does a credible job of reviewing some of the facts that have become known since 1965 that undermine the official government version of the assassination.

Talmadge Hayer was caught by members of the audience at the Audubon, arrested by the New York City cops, and subsequently tried and convicted. Hayer, who does not appear in the film, confessed to involvement in the murder and remains in prison. He has repeatedly denied having been a member of the Nation of Islam and insists that the two men convicted with him — Norman Butler and Thomas Johnson, both known members of the

Nation — were not involved. Hayer says he was hired to do the job and has named four other Muslims from New Jersey as his accomplices. "Maybe I was manipulated, maybe I was a pawn — I don't know," he admitted in 1979.

Johnson, who has now taken the name Kalil Islam, did agree to appear in *Brother Minister* and reasserts his innocence.

One of Malcolm's bodyguards, Gene Roberts, figures prominently in the documentary. Roberts explains his assignment as an undercover cop assigned by the New York Police Department's "Red squad" to infiltrate Malcolm's Organization of Afro-American Unity. Roberts says he was sitting in the front row in the audience when Malcolm was killed.

Despite all the discrepancies in the government's original case and all the new revelations, however, authorities still refuse to reopen the matter.

Young fighters of all skin tones

One aspect of the film's treatment of cop involvement in the assassination, however, ends up seriously distorting what Malcolm came to represent as a revolutionary internationalist in the closing year of his life. During one scene in the documentary, the narrator comments about forces that didn't have the OAAU's best interests at heart that had begun coming to its meetings, and the film flashes a still shot of two young whites attending one of Malcolm's public speeches.

The clear implication is dead wrong, and reactionary to boot.

During the last year of his life, Malcolm's rapidly evolving revolutionary ideas began to attract a broad layer of radicalizing young people, including whites. Malcolm spoke to multinational audiences on campuses across the United States, as well as in Britain and Africa. He also addressed several meetings of the Militant Labor Forum in New York City, each time to audiences that were mixed but predominantly white.

"It's the third time I've had the opportunity to be a guest of the Militant Labor Forum," Malcolm said in opening his talk Jan. 7, 1965. "I always feel that it is an honor and every time that they open the door for me to do so, I will be right there." (These three talks and the question-and-answer periods can be found in *Malcolm X Speaks* and *By Any Means Necessary*, both published by Pathfinder.)

At public meetings sponsored by the OAAU, Malcolm X also did his best to make sure that the small but growing numbers of whites who came to hear what he had to say felt welcome and were treated courteously. Moreover, as the record shows, skin color proved to be a poor guide as to whom among those in the audience may have been cops or assassins.

As it happens, I recognized the two white youths whose faces were flashed briefly in *Brother Minister*. They were Jack Barnes and Jon Britton, members at that time of the Young Socialist Alliance, a multinational revolutionary socialist youth organization. Barnes, who today is national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, interviewed Malcolm in January 1965 for the *Young Socialist* magazine; the interview appeared in the March-April

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IN REVIEW

up to 30 years, the film does present some specific aspects of the assassination attempts against Malcolm X and his family during the last months of his life.

1993 Farrakhan speech

What catapulted this otherwise unremarkable documentary into a few commercial movie houses is a clip taken from a speech Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan gave to his followers in 1993. The footage created a stir in the media in early 1994 when it was first released as part of the advance publicity for the film.

"I loved Elijah Muhammad enough so I would kill you," Farrakhan said. Elijah Muhammad was the Nation of Islam's central leader from the 1930s to his death in 1975. Malcolm had broken with Muhammad in early 1964. Over the next year, Malcolm went on to launch the Muslim Mosque Inc., as well as the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). The OAAU was a secular political organization that aimed to draw fighters for Black liberation, regardless of religious beliefs, into a movement to battle racism, national oppression, and economic super-exploitation.

"We don't give a damn about no white man's law when you attack what we love," Farrakhan boomed in the 1993 talk. "Did you teach Malcolm? Did you clean up Malcolm? Was Malcolm your traitor or ours? And if we dealt with [Malcolm] like a nation deals with a traitor, what the hell business is it of yours? You just shut your mouth and stay out of it."

"Because pretty soon, we're gonna be a nation. And a nation has gotta be able to deal with traitors and cutthroats and turncoats."

Farrakhan referred approvingly to the murder contract put out on Indian-born author Salman Rushdie by the regime in Tehran for writing the novel *Satanic Verses* and remarked, "There are certain paths you don't cross."

Both before and after the makers of *Brother Minister* released this footage a little more than a year ago, Farrakhan has insisted in public statements that he was not involved in the assassination. Con-

for further reading

February 1965: The Final Speeches

MALCOLM X

Speeches from the last three weeks of Malcolm X's life, presenting the accelerating evolution of his political views. A large part is material previously unavailable, with some in print for the first time. \$17.95

The Assassination of Malcolm X

George Breitman, Herman Porter, Baxter Smith
Exposes the cover-up surrounding the murder of Malcolm X and probes the once-secret FBI files that shed light on the government's hostility to him and point toward its complicity in the crime. \$14.95

Cointelpro: The FBI's Secret War on Political Freedom

NELSON BLACKSTOCK

The FBI's spying and disruption against socialists and activists in the Black and antiwar movements. Includes FBI documents. \$15.95



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How unions aided fight of unemployed in the 1930s

Continued from Page 7

from school, which caused them to coin the ironic phrase, "WPA here we come." As a means of stemming restlessness among these young people, Roosevelt created a National Youth Administration, designed to steer them into the federal "made work" setups.

With an eye on that development, the FWS established a Youth Committee in mid-1938.... The first major youth rally filled the big Teamster hall.

Those present at the rally adopted the following demands upon the government: WPA projects for youth sixteen to twenty-five, based on their right to work; National Youth Administration benefits to all youth, whether or not their families are on relief; free textbooks in high schools; free tuition in universities; a minimum wage of \$15 a month for high school students, \$60 for university students; no deduction of youth earnings from the budgets of families on relief; divert all military funds to work relief....

Roosevelt prepares for war

Roosevelt, of course, had an opposite line in mind. He was tapering off the "pump priming" domestic expenditures of the New Deal period and preparing to expand the outlay for armaments. His aims now were to prop up industry with war orders; to balance the federal budget at the expense of the unemployed; and in doing so, to pressure the idle component of the labor force into accepting, on the bosses' terms, any jobs that might be offered by private industry....

Roosevelt set Representative Woodrum, one of his Democratic wheelhorses in Congress, to work on a more deceptive whittling job. As chairman of a House appropriations subcommittee, Woodrum pushed through a series of policy recommendations that emanated from the White House....

One provision decreed that all who had been on WPA for eighteen months would automatically be removed from the rolls. This harsh step was palmed off as a "rotation" process, under which the workers being dropped had to spend thirty days seeking employment in private industry before they could reapply for "made work" jobs. In reality, though, the pretended thirty-day layoffs were meant to be permanent....

The causes of the job crisis were inherent in the system of production for private profit, which had not been changed. Roosevelt had in no way tinkered with the fundamental capitalist structure.

At terrible cost to the working class, he was alleviating the economic problems by putting the country on a war footing. That was the ultimate capitalist "solution" for unemployment.

— CALENDAR —

MISSOURI

Unionville

April 1 Rally: National Campaign to Save Family Farms and the Environment. Sat., April 1, noon. Lincoln Township in Unionville. For more information, including directions, call: Prairie Fire (515) 244-5671 or Missouri Rural Crisis Center (314) 449-1336.

FRANCE

Paris

The Cuban Revolution Today. Speakers: Representative, Association France-Cuba; a participant in the January 1995 International Youth Brigade to Cuba; and Jonathan Silberman, member editorial board of *Nouvelle Internationale*. Fri., March 31, 12 noon. University St. Denis, Room Z-1. Sat., April 1, 12 noon, University of Nanterre, Room B-32; 6:30 p.m. at AGECA 177 rue de Charonne 75011 (metro: Alexandre Dumas). Organized by supporters of the Marxist magazine *Nouvelle Internationale*. For more information, call 46-79-71-70.

— MILITANT LABOR FORUMS —

The Militant Labor Forum is a weekly free-speech meeting for workers, farmers, youth, and others. All those seeking to advance the fight against injustice and exploitation are welcome to attend and participate in these discussions on issues of importance to working people.

At the Militant Labor Forum you can express your opinion, listen to the views of fellow fighters, and exchange ideas on how best to advance the interests of workers and farmers the world over.

MINNESOTA

St. Paul

The Crisis for Family Farmers Today. Sat., April 1, 7:30 p.m. 2490 University Ave. (east side of Hwy 280, on 16A bus line). Donation: \$4. Tel: (612) 644-6325.

NORTH CAROLINA

Greensboro

Video show: "Cuba Va!" Sat., April 1, 7:30 p.m. 2000C South Elm-Eugene St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (910) 272-5996.

OHIO

Cleveland

The Crisis of the United Kingdom and The Struggle for Irish Self-Determination. Speaker: Mike Fitzsimmons, Socialist Workers Party, member of United Auto Workers Local 420. Sat., April 1, 7 p.m. 1832 Euclid Ave. Donation: \$3.50. Tel: (216) 861-6150.

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh

Keep Abortion safe and Legal: Defend the

Clinics from Attack. Speakers: Cecelia Moriarity, clinic defender and participant in January 22 march in Boston to protest abortion clinic shootings; representative of Pittsburgh National Organization for Women. Sat., April 1, 7 p.m. 1103 E. Carson Street. Donation: \$3. Tel: (412) 381-9785.

TEXAS

Houston

Socialist Educational Weekend: 1. Racism, Anti-immigrant Discrimination and the Trade Unions: The case of the West Coast Maritime Unions from the California Gold Rush to the Korean War. Speaker: Tom Leonard, former merchant marine, long-time union activist, and leader of the Socialist Workers Party. Sat., April 1, 2 p.m. **2. Defending Cuba's Socialist Revolution Today.** Speaker Aaron Ruby, participant on recent Militant reporting teams to Cuba. Sat., April 1, 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 5 p.m. Both events at 6969 Gulf Freeway #250 (Woodridge exit off of I-45). Donation: \$3 per class. Dinner: \$5. Entire event: \$10. Tel: (713) 644-9066.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Eyewitness Report from Mexico: The Response of Workers, Peasants, and Youth to the Fall of the Peso and Austerity Measures. Speaker: Miguel Zárate, visited Mexico City and Chiapas as part of Militant reporting team in March, member of Socialist Workers Party and United Auto Workers Local 882 in Atlanta. Sat., April 1, 7:30 p.m. 1802 Belmont Rd., NW (in Adams Morgan near 18th St. and Columbia Road). Donation: \$4. Tel: (202) 387-2185.

BRITAIN

London

Nationalization, Privatization and the De-

bate on Clause 4. Panel discussion with Caroline Bellamy, member of Transport and General Workers Union; and Jim Spaul, member of Rail, Maritime and Transport Union. Sat., April 1, 6 p.m. 47 The Cut (near Waterloo). Donation: £2. Tel: 0171-401 2409.

Manchester

Work Can Be Dangerous To Your Health-Safety Is a Class Issue. Speaker: Paul Galloway, member of the National Union of Mineworkers and the Communist League. Sat., April 1, 6 p.m. 1st floor, 60 Shudehill. Donation: £2. Tel: 061 839 1766.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

The Communist Manifesto Today. Speaker: Daryl Godfrey, member of the Young Socialists. Sat., April 1, 7 p.m.

Socialist Education Day: Saturday, April 8, 1. The Russian Revolution - Lessons for Revolutionary Fighters, 2 p.m. 2. The Socialist Revolution in Cuba in the World of the 90s, 3:45 p.m. Dinner: 5:30 p.m.

Forum: Freedom and Justice for Mark Curtis, 7 p.m.

All events held at 203 Karangahape Road (opposite McDonald's, down arcade). Dinner: \$5. Tel: (09) 379-3075.

Christchurch

Socialist Education Day: Saturday, April 1, 1. Defending Cuba, Defending the Socialist Revolution. Speaker: Ruth Gray, Communist League. **2. The Crisis of Capitalism and the Rightward Shift of Politics.** Speaker: Patrick Brown, Communist League. Dinner: 5:30 p.m. **Forum: Waitangi Day, The Fiscal Envelope and the Fight for Maori Rights.** Speaker: Janet Roth, Communist League.

All events held at 199 High Street. Donation: \$5 for whole day or, \$2 per session, \$3 for the forum. Dinner: \$5. Tel: (03) 365-6055.

Malcolm X documentary comes up short

Continued from Page 11

issue, just after Malcolm had been murdered. Barnes also spoke along with OAAU leader James Shabazz and others at a March 5 memorial meeting for Malcolm in New York. Both the interview and Barnes's talk can be found in *Malcolm X Talks to Young People: Speeches in the U.S., Britain, and Africa*, published by Pathfinder.

Young people around the world "are the ones who most quickly identify with the struggle and the necessity to eliminate the evil conditions that exist," Malcolm told the *Young Socialist*. "And here in this country, it has been my own observation that when you get into a conversation on racism and discrimination and segregation, you will find young people are more incensed over it — they feel more filled with an urge to eliminate it."

Malcolm had made the same point in a nationally televised talk to students a month earlier at Oxford University in Britain: "In my opinion the young generation of whites, Blacks, browns, whatever else there is — you're living at a time of extremism, a time of revolution, a time when there's got to be a change. People in power have misused it, and now there has to be a change and a better world has to be built....

"And I for one," Malcolm said, "will join with anyone, I don't care what color you are, as long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth."

Is there any wonder that there were those in the U.S. government and New York City administration who had reason to want to see Malcolm X dead? But *Brother Minister* comes up short in presenting the developing revolutionary, in-

ternationalist, and anticapitalist course that made Malcolm a target for assassination.

Fortunately, workers and young people today trying to think out how to fight rising joblessness, cop brutality, racist abuse, immigrant-bashing, attacks on affirmative action, bloody wars, and other ills bred by capitalism don't have to rely on *Brother Minister* or other films, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses.

The speeches of Malcolm X are in print for anyone to read and study the ideas of this revolutionary leader of the fight against anti-Black racism and for the rights of all oppressed and exploited working people.

Those books are invaluable political weapons for the new generation of revolutionary-minded young people who "want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth."

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Christchurch: 199 High St. Postal address: P.O. Box 22-530. Tel: (3) 365-6055.

SWEDEN

Stockholm: Vikingagatan 10 (T-bana St Eriksplan). Postal code: S-113 42. Tel: (08) 31 69 33.

Cops will be cops — "RALEIGH, North Carolina — A Wake County sheriff's deputy assigned to protect high school students was arrested on suspicion of assaulting and exposing himself to



Harry Ring

a female student." — News item.

Golly — When House Speaker Newt Gingrich suggested to corporate execs that they consider not advertising in papers that don't

support them because they have "socialists" on their boards, his press secretary offered an assurance. "Certainly," he declared, "there's nothing un-American about being a socialist."

Class education — María Martínez, an undocumented Mexican immigrant, and Alan Morris met and married in San Diego and are expecting their first child. As the spouse of a U.S. citizen, she can now apply for legal residence. The catch is it costs a total of \$1,000 and Morris is making \$6.41 an hour.

Not hopefully, he's asking the feds to take installment payments. Morris observed: "It seems to me like class separation. If you can

afford \$1,000, you're an American. If you can't, you're a criminal."

'Fearless, independent' — "Last year 40 car dealers canceled \$200,000 worth of advertising in the San Jose [California] *Mercury News* to protest an article offering tips on negotiating with dealers. The publisher apologized to the dealers and ran a full-page ad touting the paper's 'long-standing' partnership with them." — *Washington Post*.

Somebody's gotta pay — American Airlines directors have been busy pushing for more give-backs from employees. But they did squeeze in a week-long meet-

ing in Paris. Board members and spouses crashed at the Ritz. The board chairman paced about in the Imperial Suite. (\$9,800 a night.) They had 300 guests for a private dinner and performance at the opera, and did side trips to London, Frankfurt, and Normandy.

Crackle and crunch — "You know you have a problem when a minimum-wage worker has to work an hour to buy a box of cereal." — Rep. Sam Grejdenson on price-gouging by the big four cereal monopoly.

Cure as bad as disease — Responding to the festering problems of a law that bars divorce without the husband's consent, the Israeli

parliament gave rabbinical courts greater power in dealing with stubborn husbands. The rabbis can now have them barred from leaving the country and from working in licensed professions, such as medicine and law. They can also have them jailed for up to 10 years.

Road to dustbin of history — With opinion polls indicating a 40-point lead over the Conservatives, the leaders of the British Labor Party are hell-bent on proving their devotion to capitalism. They scored a famous victory March 10 with a majority vote by the Scottish Labor Party in favor of removing a pro-socialist phrase from the party's charter.

Chicago oil workers killed in refinery explosion

BY TOM CAMPION AND FRANK FORRESTAL

CHICAGO — Two oil refinery workers — Gary Szabla, 37, and Michael Forsythe, 50 — were killed March 13 in an explosion and fire at the Clark Oil refinery in Blue Island, a southwestern suburb of Chicago. Three other refinery workers were hospitalized with burns from the fire.

The refinery, which has a spotty safety record going back many years, is located near a working-class neighborhood in a heavily industrialized area. About two hundred workers are employed at the facility.

While workers were removing a valve, a flammable product was released. The resulting vapor cloud was ignited by a large heater. The two workers that were killed were eating their lunch when the fire spread to an adjacent building.

The gasoline processing unit, where the explosion occurred, had been shut down a few days earlier after a Commonwealth Edison power outage.

According to news reports, the power failure caused the release of an unknown amount of sulfur dioxide from the processing unit.

Workers from the surrounding area described the explosion as a huge fireball. Flames shot 100 feet up from the processing tower and vibrations shook the area. Black smoke could be seen miles away. Freight rail lines were shut down, causing train backups for miles. It took five fire departments to contain the blaze.

Next to the refinery a truck driver was dropping off freight when he heard the explosion. "I saw the flames and black smoke," he said. "I looked for a second and jumped out of the truck and ran. You could sure feel the heat."

In response to the fatal fire, investigators from the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, and local fire inspectors have been on the scene. The day after the incident the state attorney general asked the Circuit Court to order a partial shutdown of the plant. "We

want clear answers as to what happened before that part of the plant resumes operations," stated Attorney General Jim Ryan.

The court-ordered partial shutdown has been in force since March 14. The 53-year-old refinery has had many incidents involving health and safety violations going back several years. Some of the more recent include:

- The release of 10 tons of catalyst on Oct. 24, 1993, prompting cancellation of a football game at a nearby park.

- Last fall the refinery spewed 10 tons of a "black sandlike substance into the air, sending 43 students and three teachers" from a nearby high school to hospitals, according to the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

- Clark was fined \$133,000 for excessive emissions of sulfur dioxide between 1991 and 1993.

The company was also ordered, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, "to hire an independent investigator to review operations in every unit of the facility." So far no review has been completed.

Officials carrying out the investigation are pointing to "human error" rather than mechanical failure for the cause of the

fire. However, one worker familiar with the situation in the plant said there has been speedup and job combinations over the last couple of years affecting safety. Many more workers are responsible, he said, for work that used to be carried out by supervisors.

The refinery workers are organized by the Clark Oil & Refining Independent Union. Several attempts by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) to organize the refinery were defeated in the 1960s and 1970s.

A union representative is working with OSHA and Clark Oil officials in the investigation, according to *The Illinois Times*.

Jeff Tangle, a leader of the South Cook County Environmental Action Coalition, said "we're disgusted with Clark Oil. I think this company has pretty much demonstrated they can't operate. The risk we live with already is completely unacceptable."

Tom Campion is a member of the Clark Oil & Refining Independent Union and works at BTL Specialty Resins. Frank Forrestal is a member of United Auto Workers Local 551.

White youth receives life sentence for racist murder in Georgia town

BY LEA BOCKMAN

ATLANTA — Some 150 people demonstrated on March 4 in Soperton, Georgia, to protest the brutal murder of James Chatmon. The 16-year old Black youth was shot 8 times last summer. Chatmon was killed by Anthony Johnson, a white youth who had taunted him with racial insults in the past. The protest took place on the eve of Johnson's trial.

Speakers at the rally included Patricia Chatmon — the victim's aunt — representatives from the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and others. Protesters came from several cities in Georgia and anti-racist fighters brought information about other struggles in the area.

After he fired the last shot into Chatmon's body Johnson said, "Now there's one less nigger to deal with." Police officer Bobby Jones witnessed the killing but refused to intervene to stop it.

Local NAACP president Al Harden, who videotaped the crime scene, was arrested several days after the murder and charged with inciting to riot and obstructing a police officer. The charges were brought by Bobby Jones.

In a related development the town's police chief was fired. Shannon Gillis, who is white, was dismissed by city officials after instructing his officers to be impartial when writing tickets.

He also publicly supported the Black community's right to protest the Chatmon shooting, contrary to the wishes of city authorities.

During his trial, Johnson tried to argue that his gun went off accidentally, but police who were nearby testified that he pulled his .358-caliber semiautomatic from underneath his shirt and continued firing even as Chatmon tried to crawl away. Johnson was convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

THE MILITANT

Published in the Interest of the Working People
April 3, 1970 Price 10¢

CHICAGO, March 23 — As part of a chain reaction produced by the strike of New York postal workers, over 30,000 Chicago postal employees hit the bricks.

Led by the more than 6,000 strong Chicago letter carriers, postal service has ground to a halt all throughout the Chicago area and picket lines of up to 100 have been set up at every branch post office in the city.

On Saturday, the Chicago Student Mobilization Committee met and voted to mobilize antiwar students to support the strike. In announcing its support, the SMC stated that while the government seemingly can't pay the workers a living wage, it is able to pour \$80 million a day into the war in Vietnam.

One striker told newsmen: "I've been working two jobs for 15 years now just to survive. I'm tired of working 16 hours a day. I'm a waiter when I finish my job which means I spend 16 hours a day on my feet. After our last raise in July, I ended up taking home a dollar less than before the raise. State income tax took it."

THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

March 31, 1945

Two weeks ago before the Senate hearings on the price control act lobbyists of the Meat Trust threatened to impose a "meat famine" upon the country unless OPA "inconsistencies," meaning price

ceilings, were promptly removed. They issued this ultimatum even though the packers have boosted their profits almost eight times during the war and their spokesmen admitted that "the country has the raw beef."

OPA Director Chester Bowles announced to the Senate Banking and Currency Committee that the government is granting an additional subsidy of 50 cents a hundred pounds to the cattle slaughterers. He further revealed that previously the government had quietly granted a subsidy of 75 cents a hundredweight on hogs.

At the same time, Roosevelt himself provided a cover for the existing scarcity in part deliberately created by the food profiteers to force up prices. He declared that the American people must "tighten their belts" because, he falsely claimed, the "humanitarian" capitalist government intends to "feed" starving Europe.

Actually, during 1944, only 6.8 percent of all the nation's meat, and but seven-tenths of one percent of the beef, was shipped in Lend-Lease to all the "United Nations," according to official government figures.

The government's generous treatment of the meat profiteers, who openly admitted that 90 percent of the civilian meat supplies have been diverted into black market channels, is in striking contrast to the Roosevelt administration's ferocity against workers forced to strike for a few cents more wages to meet the insatiable demands of the pricegougers.

Instead of throwing the criminal meat profiteers into prison for withholding supplies and diverting a major food necessity into the black market to force up prices, the government gives them another fat subsidy out of the public treasury.

Here is what these parasites, who thrive on the desperate needs of the people, mean by "fair profits." Between 1940 and 1944 the eight largest meat packing firms secured total net profits equaling 80 percent of their total capital investments!

JACK BARNES

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from Pathfinder

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Irish struggle is making headway

Despite its 25-year military occupation of Northern Ireland and long-standing efforts to stamp out the Irish struggle for self-determination, British imperialism has been unsuccessful in imposing its wishes.

In the present standoff between London and the forces fighting for Irish national unification and independence, those demanding self-determination for the Irish people are making headway throughout the world.

Thousands of working people in the United States — and many more around the globe — rightly celebrated the recent U.S. tour of Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams. The reception he got in the United States registered London's weakness in its attempt to hold together the United Kingdom, as well as important new openings to tell the truth about the fight for a united, independent Ireland. The six-month cease-fire in Ulster has provided more elbow-room for working people to debate, discuss, and organize for their rights.

The U.S. government, the principal enemy of workers and farmers the world over, has been forced to modify its attitude toward organizations in the Irish struggle. Just a few years ago, Washington barred Adams and oth-

ers from even visiting the United States, on grounds that Sinn Fein was a front for a "terrorist" organization.

Supporters of the Irish struggle now have wider opportunities to spread the message among working people about what is at stake in Ireland, counterposing the truth to British imperialism's lies.

From Manchester to Manhattan, the demands should be raised with renewed vigor: British troops out now; repeal the Government of Ireland Act; release Irish political prisoners in UK jails — and jails abroad; abolish the non-jury Diplock courts; disband the Royal Ulster Constabulary police; open the border roads; repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Special Powers Act; affirmative action for Catholics to reverse the institutionalized discrimination they continue to face.

The working people of Ireland have paid in blood for the British government's occupation and repression, but they never stopped fighting. Their determination has won the support of fellow workers and farmers around the world.

Now is the time for all supporters of Irish national unification and independence to intensify the struggle.

United rail action sets example

Thirty thousand striking rail workers in Canada are involved in a struggle that deserves the support of all working people. Their fight is an indication the bosses' attempts to cut deeply into the working class's standard of living will be met by resistance. Rail workers have overcome many of the roadblocks the bosses put in their way. They defied company threats and united regardless of what job they worked or what company they worked for. They put solidarity among themselves first, in many cases ignoring calls for some to work while others were walking the picket lines.

By taking strike action and bringing large sections of the economy to a standstill, rail workers have demonstrated the potential power of the working class when we use our numbers to fight.

Bosses say that in these economic times job security in rail is "an outdated privilege" that prevents them from being competitive. They try to paint rail workers as selfish and lazy, expecting wages for sitting at home.

The reality is that 24 percent of rail workers in Canada lost their jobs through restructuring from 1989 to 1994. Track maintenance crews were cut. Crews on trains were reduced to two people. And both Canadian National Railways (CN) and Canadian Pacific Railways (CP) plan major new downsizing.

In their search for profits, the employers try to convince workers it is in our interests to make the companies more competitive. But the record indicates otherwise. Previous concessions made by rail workers on job conditions and wages have only led to more job losses.

The employers' drive to cut costs and enhance their bottom line also undermines safety on the rails — some-

thing of concern to rail workers and passengers alike. With decreased track maintenance and smaller train crews, life-threatening accidents become more likely.

Today the Canadian government is preparing to order rail workers back to work. Federal labor minister Lucienne Robillard says "we" can't afford a rail strike because of the fragility of the economy. She is not talking about rail workers or the millions of other working people in Canada. Her "we" is the employers who use replacement workers, court injunctions, cops, and strike-breaking legislation to shore up their profits.

The employers and their governments don't give a tinker's damn about jobs, decent wages, or safety. Workers and their unions are the only ones who can defend these working-class conquests.

The strike-breaking legislation being prepared today is an attack on the rights of all workers to use our most powerful weapon in defense of our class interests. All working people and those fighting for social justice have a stake in backing the rail workers and opposing government attacks on the right to strike.

By telling the facts about their struggle and appealing for solidarity, rail strikers will find powerful allies. Support can be won from other unionists, working farmers, and students. Rail workers will find support especially among other industrial unionists, like the longshore workers, who are going through their own struggles against rapacious bosses.

This is the "we" that counts. As working people, we can't afford *not* to fight as the bosses continue their offensive against our rights to a job, decent wages, and safe working conditions.

Why 'Time' hates Social Security

"As expectations of financial security recede," said a March 19 article launching an expanded business section of the *New York Times*, "Americans increasingly need to grapple with complex spending and saving decisions." The article assumes the Social Security system is on its way out the door "as working people become more responsible for their own retirement plans."

Since the *Militant* has published numerous articles defending workers' social wage, we couldn't help but notice a similar thread running through "The case for killing Social Security," the cover story in the March 20 issue of *Time* magazine. "As Social Security nears its 60th birthday, it is ripe for retirement," wrote the authors.

Both articles underscore the real target of the frenzied propaganda campaign by big-business politicians — Democrats and Republicans alike — against welfare, education funding, and other programs in the name of cutting the budget. These representatives of capital need to find a way to gut the Social Security system as part of their desperate attempts to reverse the decline in the average rate of industrial profit that has dragged world capitalism into economic depression.

Carrying out this attack isn't so easy, though. Tens of millions of workers, as well as broad layers of the middle class, view Social Security as a basic right that they aren't about to give up. Hence the propaganda blitz.

Last year, the Clinton administration appointed a bipartisan commission on "entitlement reform." This panel considered a scheme that called for raising the retirement age to 70, reducing Social Security pensions, and forcing working people to invest part of their wages in private retirement accounts. The *Time* article chides the commission's "political cowardice" for dropping the plan.

Workers shouldn't be taken in by the false argument in *Time* magazine that "earlier retirees make out like

bandits" while "fleecing" the "younger workers, who pay much higher rates of Social Security tax." The *Time* article notes that the \$58 billion "surplus" the Social Security Administration will collect this year will go into a trust fund to buy Treasury bonds. The article fails to mention that the bulk of the bonds are held by a wealthy minority who will get their cut from Social Security taxes, whether old folks get their pension checks or not. Who's fleecing whom?

The Social Security system, which went into effect in 1938, is a conquest of the working class won through the massive battles to organize industrial workers during the depression years in the 1930s. Far from being a "New Deal" gift of Franklin Roosevelt or a "burden" for young workers, this gain was wrested by a fighting labor movement as part of a social wage that includes unemployment benefits, workers compensation, and the minimum wage.

The ruling class and their political servants in the Democratic and Republican parties seek to end universal entitlements, which are a pittance compared to the enormous wealth produced by the labor of working people. To do this they try to convince working people to view ourselves as they see us — only of value as long as we're fit to work for their profit.

After slaving a lifetime for capitalist vultures, producing massive profits, and often ending up with our health ruined in the process, workers and working farmers deserve the right to enjoy the last years of our lives with a decent income and living conditions. That's why the labor movement should not budge one inch on Social Security or any other aspect of the social wage that working people rely on. Working people will "get it right" when they rid the world of a system that demands society accept tossing people aside like worn shoes when they reach retirement age.

Is use of nuclear weapons more likely today?

In a letter that appears on the opposite page, reader Michael Italic questions a point made in the editorial "Why rulers hate Hiroshima display" in the February 20 issue of the *Militant*. Italic does not agree with the statement that "the likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons is growing, not decreasing, as both Democratic and Republican politicians would have us believe."

DISCUSSION WITH OUR READERS

Italic correctly points out that the working class will face intensified attacks on our rights and standard of living as the capitalists seek to defend their profits. What is driving this assault and the ever-sharpening competition among the bosses and their governments is a crisis of the capitalist economic system. Although there are temporary upturns, we have entered a period of world depression. It was just such a crisis that led to the events culminating in the slaughter of World War II.

As Italic points out, the big battles necessary to reverse the historic gains of the labor movement are yet to come. But the capitalists' profits crisis puts them on the road to greater confrontation. They make demagogic appeals to the "national interest" in an attempt to drag working people behind in defending *their* interests. Under these conditions more conflicts break out, as we have seen with the war against Iraq, the battle in Bosnia, the civil war in Algeria, and the growing number of border disputes in Latin America. These armed actions occur simultaneously with spreading crises such as the collapse of the peso, growing numbers of bank failures, and heightened trade competition.

As the problems confronting the capitalist rulers increase they will resort to harsher methods. In doing so they can also set off events that more quickly spin out of control.

Nuclear weapons, like all armaments, are among the items capitalist profiteers offer up for sale in the international arms market; their proliferation will continue. Spreading farthest and fastest are tactical nuclear weapons, under the control of battlefield commanders who could use them someday in one of the many armed clashes around the world. The use of tactical nuclear weapons somewhere could set off a broader exchange.

This fact doesn't mean big class battles won't have to be fought by the capitalist rulers as they head toward a third world war, or that the working class won't have its chance to stop the warmakers in those fights.

It does highlight the importance of exposing and opposing the war moves of the employing class. It also raises the stakes in pointing out why the imperialist rulers in Washington — Democrats and Republicans alike — continue to justify as necessary the horror unleashed by dropping atomic bombs on Japan and why they insist on maintaining a nuclear arsenal today.

— BY LAURA GARZA

Socialists say end the death penalty

Below are excerpts from a statement by Ray Parsons, Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of Chicago, protesting the recent executions of James Free and Hernando Williams.

This double execution, the first in over 40 years in Illinois, is part of a nationwide drive by the capitalist rulers and their two parties — the Democrats and Republicans — to make the death penalty "business as usual." They are urging working people to accept longer sentences, harsher prison conditions, and greater police powers....

The two big-business parties claim these measures will make ordinary workers safer from violent crime and stave off the social and moral breakdown of society.

The truth is that the death penalty is a weapon of class intimidation that the employers seek to hold over the heads of working people. It is not used against members of the ruling class, but falls with a special vengeance on the most exploited and oppressed....

The labor movement has much at stake in the fight to overturn the death penalty. We should oppose the government attacks on the most fundamental rights of the accused and convicted.

In the years ahead as resistance deepens, the death penalty will be used more and more by the ruling class and its courts against the working class, especially the most oppressed sectors, in order to keep them cowed.

My campaign urges the labor movement and all defenders of democratic rights to demand that the death penalty be abolished!

Workers fight privatization of Athens shipyard

This column is devoted to reporting the resistance by working people to the employers' assault on their living standards, working conditions, and unions.

We invite you to contribute short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or

union executive board member Georgos Stefanopoulos. "There were 7,000 workers in 1981. Now there are 3,100. Although they need to hire more people, they are talking about force reductions again," he said.

The pitch being made by union officials to maintain the yard under state ownership centers on its "strategic importance" to "national defense."

Workers raised that fighting

Kaiser Aluminum workers accept pact

Some 3,000 members of the United Steel Workers of America (USWA), at five Kaiser Aluminum plants, concluded a nine-day walkout March 1, after strikers approved a new contract by a vote of 1,673 to 1,050. It will last for 47 months.

The strike shut down production in Spokane and Tacoma, Washington; Gramercy, Louisiana; and Newark, Ohio.

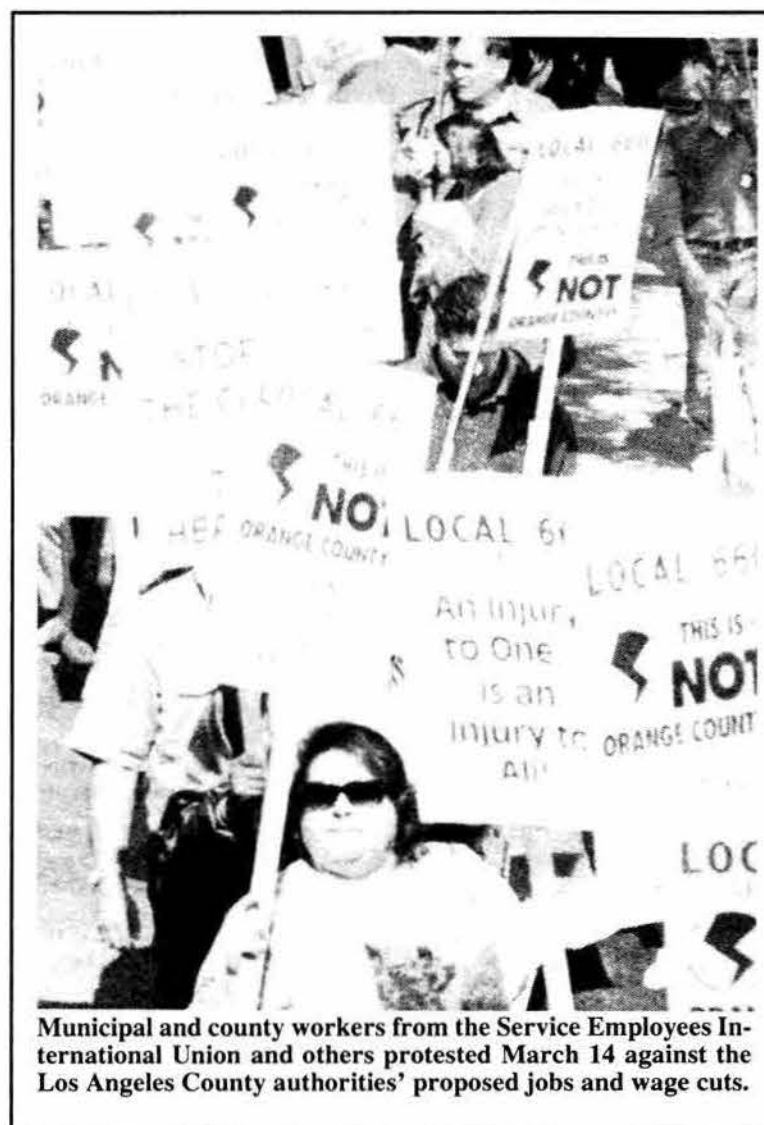
Kaiser workers have gone through 15 years of concession packages and seen their wages, benefits, pensions, safety and working conditions eroded by the company. Workers told the *Militant* that their wages are less than they were in 1983.

Thousands of jobs have been lost through combinations, speed up, and out-sourcing. The Newark plant employed 3,000 USWA members in 1981. Today the number is 350.

Faced with another concession proposal from Kaiser, workers stayed on the job for 90 days after the expiration of the old contract as negotiations continued. After the company's concession-laden "final offer," the union struck February 20.

The settlement ultimately voted on was little different from the final offer. Union members got a \$200 signing bonus and a promise of improved medical benefits for retirees. At the same time, USWA members were hit with increases in co-payments for health insurance and strict limits on coverage for family members.

The company had wanted even deeper concessions from the union on job combinations but



Municipal and county workers from the Service Employees International Union and others protested March 14 against the Los Angeles County authorities' proposed jobs and wage cuts.

agreed to no changes. "We were angry and fed up," said one union member who voted for the contract, "but we felt alone. The negotiators told us it was either vote for this garbage or face a very, very long strike on our own."

The company fired seven strik-

ers during the walkout for supposed picket line incidents.

Contributors to this week's column include Linos Pantelakis and Natasha Terlexis in Athens, Steve Warshell in Cleveland, and Jeff Powers in Seattle.

ON THE PICKET LINE

other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

The 3,100 workers at the Skaramagas shipyards in Athens are fighting the proposed privatization of the facility. Workers feel their jobs are on the line. "We have to try to fight this, as hard as it may be, because there are no jobs out there if you get laid off," said one shipyard worker.

The yard is organized by the Triana union, part of the metalworkers federation. During the first two weeks in March, the union held two rallies and numerous work stoppages opposing the sale of the shipyard. The most recent drew in power plant workers and bus drivers from nearby Piraeus.

Representatives of a Swedish company looking into purchasing the facility had also been blocked from entering the shipyard by workers.

"We have been fighting this since 1991 when this round of efforts to privatize began," said

against the government's plan is a matter of survival. "We can build anything here," said one worker at the sprawling facility. "Why should they shut us down?"

On March 13, more than 1,000 workers, many of whom traveled to Athens by bus from the shipyard, gathered outside Parliament as a committee began discussing the proposed privatization. "Hands off the shipyards," they chanted, along with "We want jobs, not unemployment."

The General Federation of Greek Workers has called for a four-hour work stoppage throughout Athens and Piraeus on the day Parliament as a whole discusses the privatization.

The Triana union has announced a 24-hour strike for the same day, as well as additional protests in Athens.

The government had earlier voted to privatize the phone company, but quickly shelved the idea.

The capital's bus system was actually renationalized after workers put up stiff resistance.

LETTERS

Protest against Guatemala regime

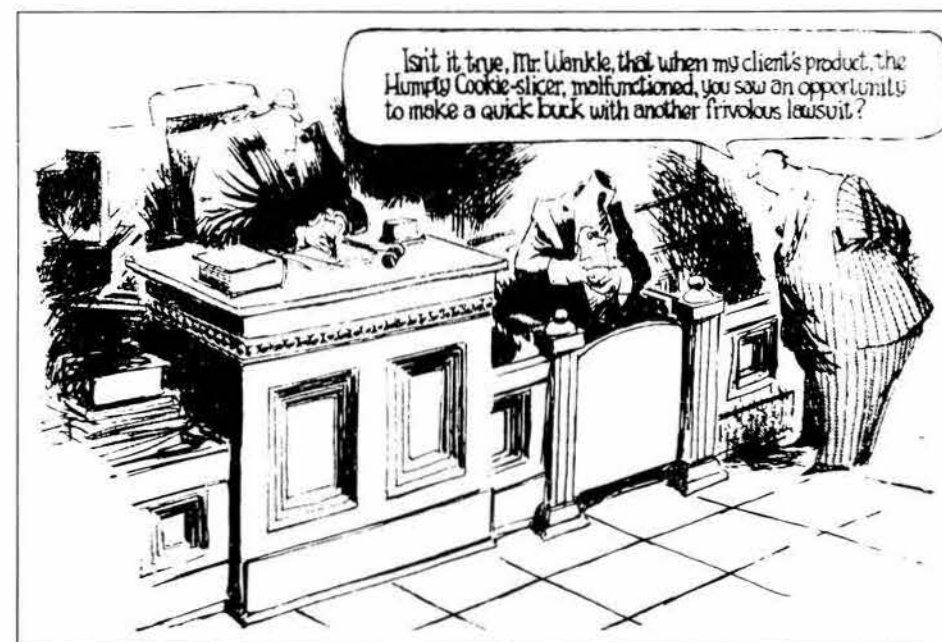
Some 300 people rallied March 12 in Lafayette Park across the street from the White House to protest U.S. government complicity in tortures and killings by government forces in Guatemala.

The predominantly youthful crowd carried signs and banners saying, "Break the Wall of Impunity in Guatemala," "Stop U.S. Aid for Genocide in Guatemala," and "Stop Supporting the Guatemalan Army. 503 Years of Racism, Oppression, and Stolen Land is Enough."

Over the last 35 years, some 150,000 people have been killed in political violence in Guatemala, the vast majority by the country's armed forces and paramilitary groupings. According to the Catholic Church, there have been 356 political executions just in 1994. Washington has been involved in training Guatemalan military personnel and has stationed National Guard members in the country.

The featured speaker at the rally was Jennifer Harbury, wife of guerrilla leader Efraín Bamaca Velásquez, who was captured by Guatemalan armed forces three years ago. Harbury, who suspended a 32-day hunger strike in Guatemala City on November 11, announced she would resume it after the rally to demand the U.S. government immediately release all information they have on the whereabouts of her husband, and that the Guatemalan government resolve the case.

Two days prior to the rally, the Clinton administration announced it was suspending military aid to Guatemala to protest what it called human rights abuses. Posturing as an impartial outsider to the conflict, the White House also



announced that it would deny visas to leaders of the URNG rebel group, which has been fighting the Guatemalan army for more than 30 years.

Brian Williams
Washington, D.C.

Nuke use less likely?

The Feb. 20 editorial "Why rulers hate Hiroshima display" explains why the U.S. government wants to hide the truth about its use of nuclear weapons. However, I disagree with the statement that "in the closing years of this century and the opening years of the next, the likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons is growing, not decreasing as both Democratic and Republican politicians would have us believe."

Working people will face intensified attacks from the capitalists in their drive to reverse their declining rate of profit. Workers and farmers will resist these attacks

worldwide, and it is the outcome of gigantic class battles that will determine the likelihood of the imperialists starting a third World War and launching nuclear weapons. World War II, for example, was carried out after the crushing defeats of workers in Germany, Spain, and elsewhere.

Michael Italie
Atlanta, Georgia

Sweden refugee protest

On March 1 hundreds of refugees from the former Yugoslavia demonstrated in different cities in Sweden, protesting against a decision by the government to deport three families from Bosnia who hold Croatian passports. The Social-Democratic government elected last September continues the policy of the former Conservative Party government: that the 5,000 so-called "Bosnian Croats," many of them deserters or refusers, will be de-

ported to Croatia.

The daily *Svenska Dagbladet* tells the story of one of the three families. The man is a Catholic born in Bosnia and his wife is an Orthodox, also born in Bosnia. That means he is considered a "Bosnian Croat" and she is a "Serb."

He was mobilized against his will into the Bosnian army, wounded and put into a Serbian prison camp. After an exchange of prisoners of war he deserted and fled to Sweden through Croatia. The family couldn't get any Bosnian passports but got Croatian passports.

What the 5,000 "Bosnian Croats" threatened by deportation have in common is that they have Croatian passports. But they do not have the same social rights as other Croatian citizens and if deported many will have to return to Bosnia to try to make a living.

The national authorities also recently put forward a proposal to strongly curtail the right of close relatives of refugees to come to Sweden.

Inge Hinnemo
Stockholm, Sweden

Cop indicted

Residents of the predominantly Black Norwood area of Birmingham have organized a number of meetings to pressure the city to investigate the brutal murder of 26

year-old Dan Davis, Jr. by a cop.

One witness reported that Davis "begged for mercy, 'please don't shoot me,' while the cop stood over him. Then the cop shot him in the back, and killed him. He was helpless already, and wounded. It's not right."

The attack came in the wake of stepped up efforts by the police department to "clean up" areas known for drug dealing. The program is called "Operation Eradication." The main activity of the police is to set up road blocks and check drivers licenses for infractions. Most of those caught are local residents, rather than drug dealers.

The cop, officer Forbes, who is Black, claims self-defense. He was indicted for murder February 10. Bail was set at a paltry \$5,000, which was posted immediately. He is currently on administrative leave with pay from the police department.

Tim Mailhot
Birmingham, Alabama

Subscriber comments

As readers renew their subscriptions, many have taken advantage of a space allotted for comments and suggestions. One such comment follows:

We like the world news. I'd like to have a section where I can find what's going on as far as movies go and meetings and concerts and work camps etc., etc.

Kensington, Maryland

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Strikers in France shake up bosses

Walkouts hit auto, rail, and airlines as workers fight for pay and dignity

BY NAT LONDON

PARIS — In the cold, early morning hours of March 14, hundreds of workers gathered at the gates of the Renault auto parts factory in the Paris suburb of Choisy-le-Roi. By unanimous vote, we decided to strike and block the 150 trucks that normally service the factory daily from either entering or leaving the plant. Within hours Renault, one of the largest companies in France, came to a screeching halt as the lack of parts from Choisy, where there are about 1,000 workers, closed down one assembly plant after another.

By the next day, the auto assembly plants in Sandouville in the Normandy region, Douai and Maubeuge in the north of France, and the assembly plant in Belgium were wholly or partially shut down. The Renault bosses reported that 12,300 out of the 18,250 workers in these four plants were put on temporary unemployment.

In addition, production at the Renault assembly plant in Flins was halted by a strike that began March 8 by a part of the work force there.

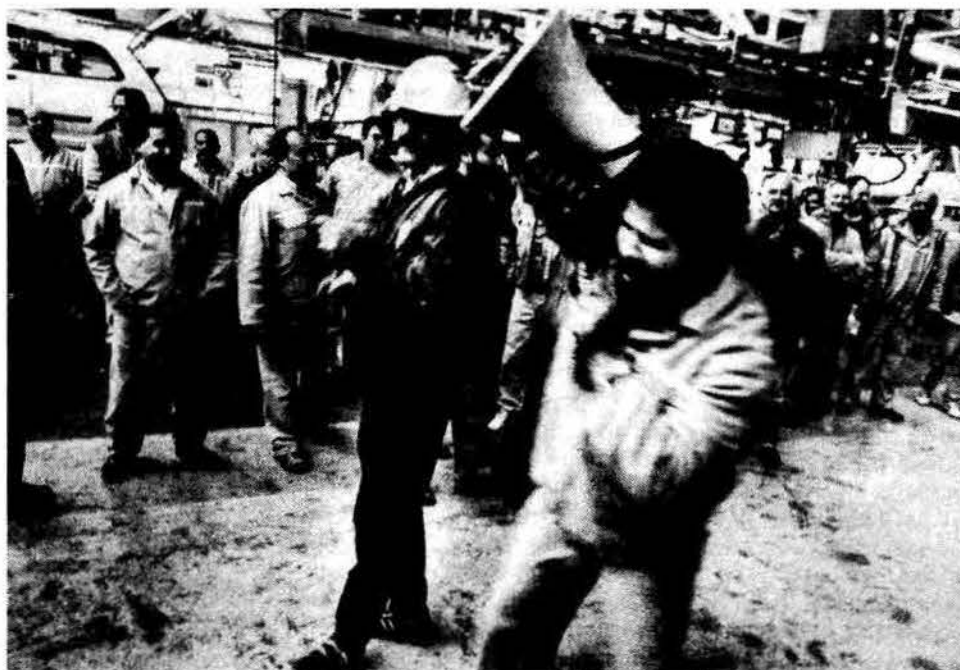
Only one Renault assembly plant in Le Mans and one motor and transmission plant in Cléon are still functioning, but daily work stoppages at the Le Mans plant are already drawing 40 percent of the workers out for two hours a day.

Renault management has been able to partially reopen the Maubeuge assembly plant by shipping in parts from Spain.

Bosses worry over growing strikes

The employers are worried about the actions at Renault and a growing number of other strikes centered on demands for higher wages and better working conditions. This fightback, and the persistence of 12 percent unemployment throughout France, is having an impact on the presidential race scheduled for later this spring.

The three major presidential candidates are all posturing to the left in an effort to win support. Prime minister Edouard Balladur and Paris mayor Jacques Chirac, both known for their conservative views,



Demonstration inside Renault plant at Flins, France. Workers took management's offer of 1 percent pay increase as an insult, and are demanding dignity on the job.

and Socialist Party candidate Lionel Jospin are all claiming they will take measures to alleviate unemployment.

A number of political commentators have pointed to the number of strikes before the elections as indicative of how little workers are looking to the outcome of the presidential race to solve the country's social crisis.

The March 15 business daily *La Tribune* asked, "Can a deep social movement shake the country in the next few weeks, 27 years after [the revolutionary general strike of] May 1968? Uneasiness is growing in the business milieu as the social climate in the shops hardens and tensions over wages grow in both the public as well as the private sectors. The example of Renault, where the workers mobilization promises to be very strong...is beginning to catch on in other companies."

This was followed by an almost page-long list of current or pending strikes. Unions at the French railroad system, the

Paris buses, the subway and regional railroad network, and the two state-run airlines — Air France and Air Inter — have all started walkouts or announced strike action to begin shortly.

At the Yoplait dairy products plant in Le Mans, 400 workers have already won their demand for a 2 percent wage increase after striking for six days. And in the French island colony of Corsica, a long strike by public workers has been gradually developing into a general strike on the island, involving air and sea transport workers as well.

Work stoppages put bosses on notice

The fight at Renault began with a series of temporary work stoppages prior to union negotiations concerning a wage increase for 1995.

On March 7, the company announced a 1 percent general increase for the year and new negotiations in September. Renault made 3 billion francs profit last year

(FF5=\$US1). The 1 percent increase represents about 100 million francs.

Workers at Renault took the offer as an insult. Many of my co-workers said that they had been willing to accept some belt tightening during the years of economic crisis but the recent economic upturn has led them to believe that we are now entitled to catch up on an estimated 30 percent drop in our real wages over the last 10 years.

The day after Renault's wage offer, an explosion of anger among young workers at the Flins assembly plant shut down production. Flins has over 7,000 workers and is the only plant to have hired recently. When the new Renault model, the Twingo, was launched in 1992, Flins put on an extra shift and hired 600 younger workers. However, even with these new hires, the average age of workers at Flins is 47 years.

Since March 8, about 1,500 workers at Flins, mostly young, have been on strike. Periodic calls for temporary work stoppages have brought out other workers as well, leading to demonstrations of about 4,000 workers several times a week.

Management claims that production of the Twingo is at 10 percent of its normal rate. The unions say production is as low as 60 vehicles a day.

With the strike developing at Flins, the CGT and CFDT union federations called for a national day of action at all Renault plants March 14. More than 26,000 workers took part in protests that day, which in most plants were one- or two-hour work stoppages.

But at Choisy, we decided to join the workers at Flins by closing our plant gate to all truck traffic and going on total strike. We also decided to demand a general wage increase of 1,500 francs a month, which would be about a 20 percent increase for most workers, and a reduction in work time with no reduction in pay. The three unions at Choisy — CGT, CFDT and Workers Force — all supported the strike. The CGC, which organizes technicians and white-collar personnel, opposes the action.

"If the CGT — or any other union — had not acted, we would have been totally disavowed by every worker in the factory," CGT shop steward Guy Bertin told the *Militant*. The strike includes about 85 percent of production workers and 25 percent of technicians and white-collar workers. A number of temporary workers are working in the plant since they will be immediately fired if they support the strike.

Fight for dignity

For many workers, the action is a fight for dignity. One young worker, Georges Trébaol, said he will never forget management's refusal to grant him an extra day off in addition to the three contract days to go back to Brittany for his father's funeral.

A forklift operator in the shock absorber shop in Choisy told the *Militant* how his boss had called him "a shit" and ordered him to work on another machine. "I did what I was told," he said, "but I'll never take that again." Another young worker from the motor shop recounted how the head of personnel told him, "I really regret having hired you" when he joined the strike.

On the fourth day of the strike, management began legal proceedings to fire nine workers, including six shop stewards. They have also demanded a court order to open the gates of the plant. Workers have already indicated that they will ignore any such order.

With production at a virtual standstill, Renault management agreed to a new wage negotiation session for March 21.

Nat London is a production worker at Renault in Choisy-le-Roi. He is a member of the CGT.

Students speak up for affirmative action

BY GALE SHANGOLD

LOS ANGELES — Chanting "Justice, justice is our fight! Affirmative action is our right!" some 300 students demonstrated March 16 at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). A leaflet put out by the rally sponsor, UCLA Alliance for Equal Learning Opportunities, pointed to the mounting challenges to affirmative action programs in California. It stated, in part:

"• On January 30, Republican State Assembly member Bernie Richter introduced Assembly Bill 211, the first of four bills that would eliminate all governmental diversity programs.

"• Richter is joined by UC Regent Ward Connerly, who called for the elimination of diversity programs in the UC system at the January 18-20 Regents meeting.

"• On March 3, UCLA Chancellor Young affirmed his support for a diverse UCLA student body.

"• Regents Ward Connerly and Glenn Campbell seek to sanction Chancellor Young for his public commitment to diversity."

According to the March 3 *Los Angeles Times*, Young said society would be far worse off had it not been for affirmative action at the UC system.

In an attempt to dampen resistance to proposed cuts in affirmative action, UC Regent Connerly claimed that he does not intend to repeal affirmative action, but rework it to focus on economic disadvantage instead of race.

This fight at UCLA coincides with a

drive to place an initiative on the 1996 California ballot to end state affirmative action programs in hiring, education, business contracting, and other areas. This effort has received the official endorsement of Governor Pete Wilson and is hypocritically entitled the California Civil Rights Initiative.

Kendra Fox-Davis of the African Student Union opened the March 16 rally by saying that the same forces that brought the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 and "three strikes and you're out" mandatory life sentence legislation are now introducing the California Civil Rights Initiative, which should be renamed the California Jim Crow Initiative.

University of California Student Association spokesperson York Chang added, "What affirmative action is saying is that we have to recognize that merit is not as simple as an SAT or GPA score. There is a real story and real factors and hardships, including race, that students must overcome to get to where they are. We must not be blind to socioeconomic power dynamics which affect access to education.

"As long as there exists a disparity of resources and opportunities there will never exist an objective SAT or GPA which tells us who is the most talented, who has the most potential, or who has worked the hardest, or who has more of a right to an education. If we admit solely on the basis of 'merit,' we are talking about the death of diversity. We are talking about going 30 years backward."

"Asians have been asked by Patrick

Buchanan and the like to jump on the anti-affirmative action bandwagon because affirmative action doesn't affect Asians," said Li'i Furumoto from Concerned Asian Pacific Students for Action. "But we shouldn't. My grandparents didn't have the options I do. It is on their backs that I am able to be here today. The real problem is not women, Asians, or immigrants, but corporate power."

Rachel Redondiez from Samahang Pilipino Education and Recruitment told the crowd that in 1988 administrators at UC Berkeley decided that Filipinos no longer needed affirmative action. Now the incoming freshman class at UC-Berkeley has only 54 Filipino students out of 3,200 and only 160 out of 4,000 at UCLA, even though California has a large, fast-growing Filipino community.

This was the second protest action against the recent attacks on affirmative action. A demonstration took place March 7 outside Regent Tiron Del Junco's medical office in Los Angeles.

J. Jioni Palmer of the African Student Union summed up the sentiment of many students at the event stating, "We view the continuing attacks on affirmative action, raises in registration fees, and cuts in financial aid as reactionary attempts by the gatekeepers of this institution to prevent the university from reflecting the rich diversity of California."

Gale Shangold is a member of International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Local 482.