

THE MILITANT

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Capitalism's World Disorder:
The book to sell, be seen with

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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'Spy scare' is aimed against workers in China, U.S.

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

"China Stole Nuclear Secrets for Bombs, U.S. Aides Say," blared the front page of the *New York Times* March 6. Since then the big-business press and politicians — Republicans and Democrats alike — have worked to whip up a scare over the alleged spying for Beijing. The propaganda blitz is not only part of Washington's bipartisan moves against China, but is aimed against the rights of working people in the United States.

The *Times* article claimed "espionage is believed to have occurred in the mid-1980s," but "it was not detected until 1995, when Americans analyzing Chinese nuclear test results found similarities to America's most advanced miniature warhead."

Two days later U.S. energy secretary William Richardson dismissed Wen Ho Lee, a computer scientist who worked in the nuclear weapons design area of the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. The Taiwan-born scientist was fired "for failure to properly notify Energy Department and lab officials about contacts with people from a sensitive country, specific instances of failing to properly safeguard classified material and apparently at-

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Rally builds solidarity for Continental Tire strikers

BY CLIVE TURNBULL

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina — More than 150 workers attended a solidarity rally for United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 850, on the picket line outside the Continental General Tire plant, on March 13. The strikers also organized a blood drive at the rally.

The 1,450 workers have been on strike for six months to protest a union-busting drive by the company. Only 14 union members have crossed the picket line. The company has brought 700 nonunion workers into the plant as strikebreakers.

Members of Union Cities and the Charlotte Labor Council, which represents about 25 local unions in the area, joined members of Local 850 at the rally. Members of United Auto Workers Local 5285 who work at the Freightliner truck plant in Mt. Holly, North Carolina, provided food.

One of the main speakers was USWA Local 850 president Earl Propst, who had just returned from the London Tire Expo, the largest tire show in Europe. Union members from several European countries had joined Propst in distributing handbills at the tire show denouncing Continental's union-busting tactics.

Propst also reported how 125 strikers had crashed a tire industry conference on March 4 at the Hyatt hotel in Hilton Head, South

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Free José Solís, all Puerto Rican political prisoners!

The conviction of Puerto Rican independence advocate José Solís on fabricated "terrorism" charges by the FBI is a serious attack on supporters of independence for that U.S. colony in the Caribbean. It is also aimed at all working people and others who seek to exercise their rights free from government disruption and victimization.

This frame-up and FBI harassment is a taste of what the wealthy rulers of the United

EDITORIAL

States will increasingly resort to against working-class fighters — tomorrow as well as today. But this and similar attacks can be combated by waging a broad public effort to tell the facts about the frame-up of Solís, to demand his conviction be reversed, and to demand freedom for the other 16 Puerto Rican political prisoners in U.S. jails.

For decades the U.S. government — Democratic and Republican administrations alike — has waged a campaign of harassment and repression against the Puerto Rican independence movement. Over the past 20 years they have used federal grand juries to drag *independentistas* to jail. The exposure of the FBI's Cointelpro operation in the 1970s led to greater public knowledge of its use of snitches, wiretapping, mail interception, disruption programs, and blacklisting of independence supporters and militant trade unionists. In face of public outrage,

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Militant/Eric Simpson

March 12 picket outside Chicago prison where independence activist is incarcerated

Solís is convicted in frame-up trial

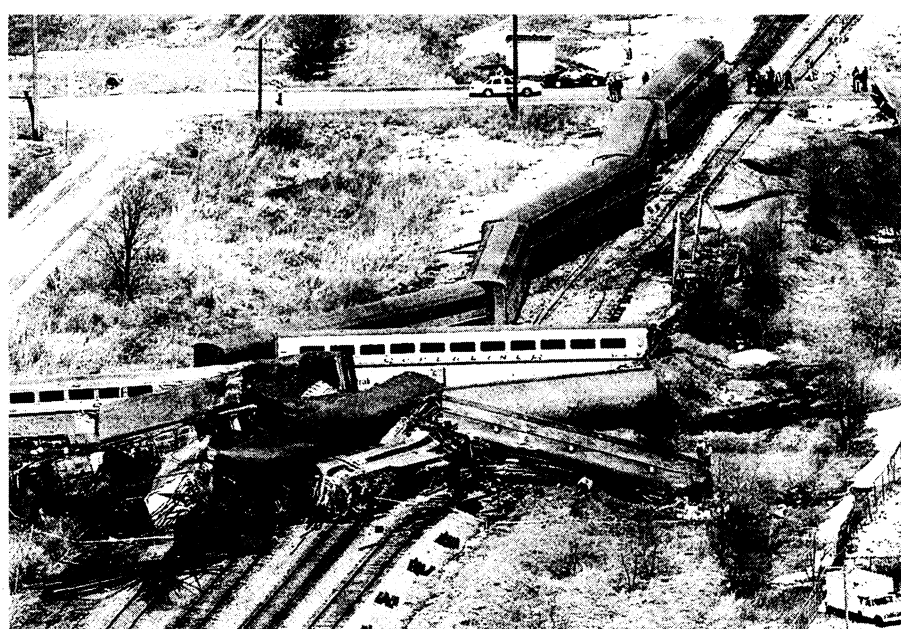
BY PATTIE THOMPSON
AND JOSHUA CARROLL

CHICAGO — A federal court here convicted longtime Puerto Rican independence activist José Solís Jordán on false "terrorism" charges March 12. Based in large part on the testimony of a paid FBI informer and provocateur and of a string of FBI agents, Solís was framed up on charges of bombing a military recruitment facility here in 1992.

The sentencing by Judge Blanche Manning is scheduled to take place July 7. Solís

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13 die in Amtrak train wreck



Site of Amtrak train derailment March 15. Thirteen were killed and 119 injured.

BY J. PARADISO
AND BETSEY STONE

CHICAGO — Thirteen passengers were killed and 119 injured as an Amtrak train crashed into a steel hauling truck March 15 in Bourbonnais, Illinois, 55 miles south of Chicago. This was the third-deadliest accident in Amtrak's history.

The initial investigation and press coverage has focused on blaming truck driver John Stokes for the accident, ignoring the dangers inherent in rail crossings. Stokes reportedly told the authorities that he did not see the train or the warning lights until he had started driving across the tracks and that the gates closed before he could get out of the way.

Since 1964, there have been three fatal accidents and four injuries at this rail crossing, according to records of the Illinois Commerce Commission. Nationally, there were 422 deaths in crossing accidents last year.

A number of people who live in the area commented on the malfunctioning crossing gates at the intersection of the crash site. A worker at Birmingham Steel, the steel mill near the accident, said, "I drive through there every day, and several times, while I'm going to work. I've seen that gate going up and down without a train in sight." Several workers, including some at Birmingham Steel, aided injured passengers and searched for survivors.

Iowa action pushes back attack on immigrants

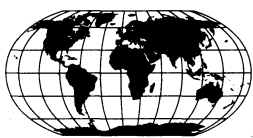
BY MAGGIE TROWE

MARSHALLTOWN, Iowa — Organized protest activity by immigrant packinghouse workers and their supporters in this rural Iowa town pushed back a proposal to deputize city police with the power to arrest and begin the deportation process for those they suspect of lacking valid immigration papers.

The plan to give the police powers that now are limited to Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) agents is being promoted by Sen. Charles Grassley, Republican from Iowa. Marshalltown city officials indicated in February they would adopt the program.

This caused concern among workers at the Swift pork processing plant, where many of the 1,950 workers are members of the

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Austria: rightists win local vote

Ultrarightist Joerg Haider's Freedom Party won a gubernatorial race in Carinthia, Austria, in early March. The results were: Freedom Party, 42 percent; Social Democrats, 33 percent; and conservative Austrian People's Party, 21 percent. Haider's party did not win a majority, so he will need votes from his opponents to become governor of the province. The ultrarightist is known for his anti-immigrant stance. Haider was earlier elected governor in 1990, but was voted out of office 15 months later for praising "decent employment policies" of the fascist regime of Adolph Hitler. Conservatives and social democrats say they oppose his election as governor. Social Democratic leader Michael Auserwinkler resigned from his post, and outgoing conservative governor Christof Zernatto said he would not run again. Social Democratic officials hint they will stand aside for Haider to avoid the weeks of wrangling.

Paris arrests Basques

Herri Batasuna, the leading party fighting for independence for Basque people, called for protests on March 12 to oppose the French cops' seizure of six Basques they allege are ETA members. ETA stands for Basque Homeland and Freedom — an armed organization fighting for independence in the territory straddling Spain and France. The arrest of Javier Arizeuren-Ruiz, allegedly the head of the ETA, and five others took place as Spanish prime minister José María Aznar was in Paris. The French and Spanish governments have teamed up against Basque nationalists. "I want to emphasize that it [the arrest] represents the success of Franco-Spanish cooperation in the fight against terrorism," boasted Aznar. At least 60 Basques in French jails are accused of "terrorist" activity. The ETA has observed a cease-fire since last September.

New Zionist party in Israel

Former Israeli defense minister Yitzhak Mordechai has banded together with former army chief Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, former finance minister Dan Meridor, and former mayor of Tel Aviv Roni Milo to form the Center Party. Mordechai is running for prime minister. The Center Party is a challenge to



U.S. warplanes hit several more defense sites in northern Iraq March 12. Washington has bombed that country more than 100 times since December 28. U.S. government wants to "create the political and military conditions that will permit a successful change in the [Iraqi] regime," said U.S. defense under secretary Walter Slocombe. Above, Iraqi family surveys damage to their home after U.S.-led bombing in January.

the largely two-party system dominated by the conservative Likud and the social democratic Labor parties. According to Mordechai, so far 85,000 people in Israel have been "recruited" to the Center Party, including Likud supporters. The Center Party has no platform and calls for unity to oust current prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Mordechai also took on Labor candidate Ehud Barak during his party inauguration speech, saying, "He is incapable of healing social ills, like I can. He cannot unite the left and right." While Barak has been campaigning for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon, Mordechai also draws support from a layer of Israeli Arabs.

Palestinians oppose execution of men who allegedly shot cops

March 12 marked a second day of clashes

in Rafah, Gaza, where scores of people protested a death sentence issued by a Palestinian court to an alleged member of Hamas convicted of killing a Palestinian Authority security officer. Demonstrators hurled stones at police, who responded with tear-gas, clubs, and live ammunition. According to a medical worker, 70 cops were injured and 15 protesters were wounded, two by bullets.

Mexico students protest fee hikes

Thousands of students at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) shut the school down and occupied major roads to protest a planned tuition hike. Under Mexico's constitution, state-run schools must offer free education. University president, Francisco Barnes de Castro, proposed raising tuition 4,533 percent — from three cents to \$136. By the university's own estimates, at least 70 percent of the students cannot afford this sum. Students oppose the direction of the plan even though it reportedly contains a waiver for students who can't afford the fee. Truck driver José Luis Sánchez told reporters he supports the students. "These kids have a right to an education. We understand why they are protesting."

Panama gets back U.S. navy base

Washington formally handed over Rodman naval base to Panama March 11, the first of five bases to be returned to the Central American country by the end of 1999. A 1979 treaty signed by former U.S. president James Carter requires the U.S. government to restore control of the entire canal to the Panamanian government by years' end.

Washington contends its operations there since the turn of the century have been designed to protect the canal.

In fact, the U.S. flag that has flown over Rodman base is drenched in blood. In 1903 Washington intervened in Panama to nab land to build the canal and control the zone around it "in perpetuity." Thousands of workers from Panama and other countries died building the canal. U.S. bases in the Canal Zone served as a military center for U.S. imperialism during World War II.

On Dec. 20, 1989, Washington bombed Panama and invaded the country "to restore democracy." Panamanian president Manuel Noriega was seized and jailed in the United States, and a new president, Guillermo Endara was sworn in on a U.S. military base. Armed men and women from working-class neighborhoods known as Dignity Battalions — denounced as "terrorists," "thugs," and "looters" by the imperialists — fought to defend their sovereignty to the death. Thousands of Panamanians were killed and even more were wounded and left homeless.

Court: jail OK for man who quit job, couldn't pay child support

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a federal law, the so-called Child Support Recovery Act, that makes it a jailable crime to "willfully" fail to pay child support by rejecting jobs. The March 11 ruling is binding in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington State, and Guam.

The case was that of Jeffrey Ballek from Alaska, who had worked in construction and then quit for undisclosed reasons. The next series of jobs he took were at lower wages that did not allow him to pay support for his three children. He accumulated a nearly \$57,000 debt over several years. Ballek was put on trial. The court said he broke the law by opting out of the higher-paid job, whether he did so for health reasons, poor working conditions, or any other reason. He was sentenced to six months in jail and still has to pay the debt.

Remarks by racist N. Carolina town official spark boycott

Some Black residents in the Trenton, North Carolina, area organized a week-long boycott of white-owned businesses in early March after the town's mayor made racist remarks. Trenton is a farming town of about 200 residents, one-fourth of whom are Black. Some residents filed a federal lawsuit against the town of Trenton January 12, alleging discrimination against Blacks for not annexing three surrounding communities that would bring the ratio close to 50-50. Also at issue is the fact that no Blacks have ever served on the town council. Tensions came to a head when Joffree Leggett, the town's mayor for 16 years, said, "They [Blacks] are not leaders. A Black man would rather work for a white person." Shortly after boycotts began, Leggett was forced to resign.

— BRIAN TAYLOR

THE MILITANT

Workers' rights vs. the secret police

From the FBI frame-up of a Puerto Rican independentista in Chicago to the U.S. Marshals deployed on the RMI strike picket line in Ohio, Washington is using its police forces to try to close workers' political space. The 'Militant' explains why workers need to defend those under attack by the rulers and their cops. Don't miss a single issue!



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Editor: NAOMI CRAINE

Business Manager: MAURICE WILLIAMS

Editorial Staff: Megan Arney, Hilda Cuzco, Martin Koppel, Argiris Malapanis, Brian Taylor, and Maurice Williams.

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Miners in Australia fight for union

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia — The fight by coal miners, members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), picketing the Gordonstone mine in central Queensland has intensified.

On February 10, Rio Tinto took over the mine from previous owner ARCO, a U.S.-based company, and hired nonunion labor. Rio Tinto, the world's largest mining company, has spearheaded the assault in this country on coal miners and the CFMEU, especially targeting seniority rights.

Gordonstone is the longest-running picket in the history of the bituminous coal industry in Australia. In October 1997, in an attempt to break the union, ARCO sacked all 312 workers. Miners decided to fight the sackings and have maintained a round-the-clock picket at the mine ever since.

On February 11, unionists rallied to the picket lines. Twenty-two people were arrested as they formed a human roadblock for three hours in front of a bus containing 40 replacement workers. The next day the company was forced to airlift most of the nonunion workers out.

Over the following weeks, mass picket lines twice blocked the bus carrying out the nonunion workers and forced them to remain in the mine overnight. The second time was on February 23, after the company announced it would start cutting coal for the

first time. To date, 146 people have been arrested on the picket line including Jim Pearce, a member of parliament from the governing Labor Party in Queensland. Those arrested were released on bail conditions that prevent them returning to the picket.

Tony Maher, general president of the mining and energy division of the CFMEU, said, "This is simply a union busting exercise by Rio Tinto." The nonunion workers will "find themselves in the same position as the Patrick Stevedores' scabs". Strikebreakers hired by Patrick were dumped after dock workers won their union jobs back after a month-long battle on picket lines last year.

Members of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) have been in the forefront of workers who have mobilized to ensure that 100-200 people are on the miners' picket line 24-hours a day. Jim Lambley, CFMEU district vice-president, said that the MUA was supportive after also being victimized by the federal government's push to destroy unionism in Australia.

The CFMEU filed unfair dismissal applications in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) on behalf of the miners when they were sacked by ARCO. In February 1998 the AIRC ordered ARCO to make compensation payments to the miners and in August to reemploy the sacked workers on the basis of seniority if they re-



Gordonstone mine bosses sacked 312 workers in October 1997 in an attempt to break the union. But miners decided to fight back, maintaining pickets at the mine ever since. Above, a miner and supporter on the picket line late last year.

open the mine. Rio Tinto had claimed that the dispute was not of their making and that they should not have to employ workers sacked by ARCO. However a federal court order on February 24 joined Rio Tinto as a party to the proceedings over the status of the sacked miners to be heard in April.

On February 27 a mass union rally of more than 1,200 miners and their supporters marched through the streets of the nearby town of Emerald. Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams, who was visiting Australia sent a message of support saying, "We are

with you in your struggle".

At the rally John Maitland, president of the CFMEU, said that this was a fight of national significance and that national action was being discussed. He said rolling stoppages could begin at Rio Tinto mines. CFMEU members, according to one worker, are planning to fill a plane with wharfies and construction workers from Sydney to rally in solidarity at the mine.

Linda Harris is a member of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union in Sydney.

A LETTER FROM EUROPE

European Union plans farm austerity, meets resistance

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — Up to 50,000 farmers from across Europe demonstrated in Brussels, Belgium, February 22, as the agriculture ministers of European Union member states met there to begin talks on the European Commission's proposed changes in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). These changes include big cuts in price subsidies on most agricultural products produced within the European Union.

After nearly three weeks of debate over their competing interests and how much farmers would accept, the agriculture ministers adopted measures March 11 that fall well short of the original proposals in cutting price supports.

Government officials throughout Europe violence-baited the farm demonstration, including moving a meeting of the EU foreign ministers from Brussels to Luxembourg claiming fears it would be disrupted. Roads, metro stations, and schools around the European Council building were closed. The government deployed about 5,000 gendarmes and police, and the march was under virtual military escort.

Farm protests have picked up from Sweden to France and Ireland in recent months, as farmers are increasingly squeezed by falling commodity prices. Conditions for farmers in some countries are now the worst since the 1930s. Most of the demonstrators in Brussels were from France, Germany, and the Netherlands, but some came from as far away as Italy and Spain.

Many demonstrators expressed concern that the proposed cuts in subsidies would force many more working farmers off the land. Some right-wing groups took part in the action, seeking to promote nationalist demagoguery in the name of opposing the EU measures.

The proposed cuts in CAP subsidies are part of the six-year EU budget proposal that is being negotiated under Bonn's chairmanship of the European Union. Under the rubric "Agenda 2000," Bonn and some other EU member states are trying to cut agricultural and regional subsidies to bolster the competitiveness of big business in Europe in relation to their counterparts in the United States, especially prior to the next round of talks on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Their pretext is preparing for taking several new member states from Eastern and Central Europe into EU membership. Bonn and the other dominant powers in the EU are particularly concerned that they not have to guarantee large subsidies to new members.

The budget debate highlights the fracture lines of the European Union. About half of the EU's budget goes to agricultural subsidies, and an additional portion to regional subsidies that are often veiled agricultural supports.

Fracture lines in European Union

It is the capitalist powers in Europe who consider themselves net contributors to the EU budget — including Germany, Sweden, Britain — that are pushing the cuts in the subsidies and demand that they should pay less into the budget. Paris and other net receivers resist the proposed changes. This is putting a strain on relations between Bonn and Paris. German officials are floating a proposal to "renationalize" much of the agricultural subsidies.

That would make it possible for Bonn to continue paying subsidies to farmers in Germany, while substantially cutting the payments to the European Union. French officials would not discuss it.

Another proposal — supported by all except London — is that the UK government should no longer receive a rebate on EU contributions that Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher negotiated in the 1980s. Still another scheme, agreed upon by the net contributors but opposed by the net receivers, is that if London has a rebate all the net contributors should have it.

Franz Fischler, the EU commissioner for agriculture, had proposed cutting the guaranteed prices that farmers get by as much as 30 percent. The watered-down version adopted March 11 reflects the hesitancy and weakness among the European ruling classes to carry out attacks on the farmers.

The compromise says the guaranteed prices on beef, wheat, and other cereal grains will be lowered in stages by 20 percent between the years 2000 and 2003. Guaranteed prices on milk will be lowered by 15 percent, but only beginning in 2003.

The costs of this agreement will exceed the present annual budget of 40.4 billion euros (\$44.4 billion) by 7 billion euros (\$7.7 billion) in the years 2000-2006. This compromise will be on the table when the EU heads of government and finance ministers meet in Berlin March 24-25 for final negotiations on the "Agenda 2000" budget.

Weakening of economies and euro

Following a week of deadlocked talks on the agricultural subsidies, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder told the *International Herald Tribune* February 26 he was worried that failure to reach an agreement on

the EU "reforms" in March in Berlin could damage the European single currency, the euro. Since its launch on January 1, the euro has fallen 10 percent against the U.S. dollar, and the economic outlook is gloomy across Europe. In the last quarter of 1998 Germany's Gross Domestic Product shrank 0.4 percent. Unemployment, which Schröder had promised to reduce, rose from 10.9 to 11.5 percent after his Social Democratic-Green coalition government came to power last fall. Economic output is also slowing in Italy, Britain, Sweden, and Norway.

Finance Minister Oskar Lafontaine, the politician most identified with the left turn in bourgeois politics in Germany, resigned both his government post and his chairmanship of the Social Democrats March 11. He had been demanding the European Central Bank (ECB) cut interest rates, saying a cut was needed to stimulate the economy and avoid a deflationary spiral like that in Japan. But Wim Duisenberg, the Dutch head of the ECB, rejected this course.

Chancellor Schröder has distanced himself from Lafontaine's economic schemes lately, seeking support from the center-right forces in bourgeois politics in Germany for his policies. Lafontaine's resignation makes it more likely that Bonn will strengthen its relationship with London on economic policy within the EU, while further strain will be put on the relation between Bonn and Paris.

Defense of the euro against the dollar is Duisenberg's main priority, regardless of the unemployment figures. The dollar has

been rising on better-than-expected economic growth in the United States since last fall, when the euro project looked strong relative to the dollar. The mantra of the coming euro for a brief time buffered the effects on capitalism in Europe of the deflationary pressures from the crises in Asia and Russia.

The recent wage agreement after warning strikes by hundreds of thousands of metalworkers in Germany included a 3.2 percent wage increase over 14 months, at a time when inflation is zero. The public workers union signed a similar contract, again after warning strikes involving hundreds of thousands. Now bank and commercial employees are demanding 6 percent wage increases, threatening a nationwide strike March 17-20. This labor resistance remains a major pressure against the euro.

British prime minister Anthony Blair committed himself in late February to gear up to rapidly join the euro, assuming it becomes a success. In response an anti-euro block was formed led by a former Chancellor of the Exchequer from the Labor Party Denis Healy, who is now in the House of Lords.

In a TV interview, Healy stated that a recession would require members of the European Union to have different interest rates and exchange rates. "I myself believe that EMU [European Monetary Union] will probably break down before Blair is called on to take a decision whether or not Britain should join," Healy declared.

Carl-Erik Isacsson is a member of the metalworkers union in Södertälje, Sweden.

PATHFINDER

Imperialism's March toward Fascism and War

Jack Barnes

"There will be new Hitlers, new Mussolinis. That is inevitable. What is not inevitable is that they will triumph. The working-class vanguard will organize our class to fight back against the devastating toll we are made to pay for the capitalist crisis. The future of humanity will be decided in the contest between these contending class forces." In *New International* no. 10. \$14.00

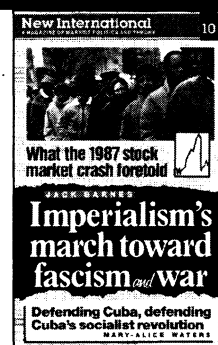
Europe and America

TWO SPEECHES ON IMPERIALISM

Leon Trotsky

In two speeches in the mid-1920s, Russian Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky explains why the emergence of the United States as the dominant imperialist power is the decisive factor in world politics. He describes the sharpening conflicts between Washington and its European rivals and highlights the revolutionary prospects for the workers of the world. \$6.00

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.



Puerto Rico independence activist convicted

Continued from front page
could be sentenced up to 55 years in prison. Defense lawyers said they plan to appeal.

Chanting and carrying signs, candles, and Puerto Rican flags, more than 100 protesters held a vigil the following evening in front of the federal prison in downtown Chicago where Solís is being held. They shouted "Grand jury, FBI, U.S. justice is a lie!" and "The human rights problem in the world today is right here in the USA!" Prisoners responded to the protest by tapping on windows and flicking lights on and off on many floors of the 20-story building.

"This lets them know that just because José was convicted, it doesn't mean he was defeated," declared Miguel Morales, an activist in the Committee in Solidarity with José Solís Jordán. "We're letting them know we're still standing up."

After a two-week trial, Solís was found guilty on all four counts with which he was charged: conspiracy to destroy government property, destruction of government property by means of explosives and arson, attempted destruction of government property by explosive devices, and illegal possession of explosives.

Solís, a professor at the University of Puerto Rico who taught at DePaul University in Chicago in 1991-95, denied he was involved in any bombing and explained that the FBI targeted him because of his political activities and to go after the Puerto Rican independence movement.

The prosecution's main witness was FBI informer and provocateur Rafael Marrero. On the witness stand Marrero admitted he had built two pipe bombs and placed them at the military center. The devices did not explode, but one reportedly set fire to a government car. Marrero accused Solís of conspiring with him in the bombing as part of an alleged group called "Frente Revolucionario Boricua" (FRB, or Puerto Rican Revolutionary Front).

Marrero acknowledged he had received \$119,000 from the FBI over the past three and a half years for his work against the Puerto Rican independence movement. Marrero was also the key government witness in an Illinois state legislative committee investigation last year, which unsuccessfully sought to accuse the local school council and supporters of Puerto Rican independence at Roberto Clemente High School in Chicago of misusing federal funds.

The FBI produced a second individual, Eddie Brooks, who testified that he had been part of the alleged conspiracy but dropped

out a few months before the incident. In 1996, when questioned by the FBI, Brooks had said only he and Marrero had scouted out possible bombing targets, according to the FBI reports. Now, however, on the witness stand, Brooks changed his account, claiming Solís had accompanied them.

In addition to the testimony by Marrero and Brooks, the government presented two main pieces of "evidence." One was a tape recording Marrero said he made while wearing a concealed wire — fitted by the FBI — to dinner with Solís and his wife in a restaurant in Puerto Rico in January 1997. Most of the conversation heard on the tape that was played in the courtroom was unintelligible, and of what could be heard, most was in Spanish. There were no native Spanish-speaking members of the jury.

Jurors had to rely on a written "translation" prepared by the government. The text makes no references to any bombing or anything else illegal. The court used Marrero's interpretation of what was being said on the tape as evidence against Solís.

Phony confession

The second piece of alleged evidence, described by the prosecution as a "confession," was a document written by FBI agent William Matthews, summarizing what government agents claim Solís told them the day he was arrested in November 1997. On the witness stand, Solís testified that the unsigned document was a fabrication.

In an effort to buttress the government's case, three FBI agents testified that Solís had confessed while being interrogated at the U.S. government building in San Juan, Puerto Rico, immediately following his arrest. The pro-independence activist was arrested in San Juan on the morning of November 6, 1997, by more than a dozen heavily armed FBI agents who surrounded his home, released pepper spray into the house, and then dragged him off for questioning.

Solís testified that he was not allowed to speak to his lawyer for five hours as the U.S. cops carried out their interrogation. In response, the prosecution paraded eight FBI agents before the jury who asserted that Solís did not request to speak to a lawyer.

Assistant U.S. attorney Virginia Kendall asked Solís on the witness stand if it was possible that the testimonies of the FBI agents and the two "co-conspirators" could be fabrications. Solís replied, "It wouldn't be the first time it happened in history."

During the trial, prosecutors tried to smear the Puerto Rican independence movement,



Militant/Eric Simpson

José Solís was convicted by words of paid informer and a slew of FBI agents

citing José López, director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and a prominent advocate of Puerto Rico's independence, as "the brains" behind the bombing. Assistant U.S. attorney Jonathan Bunge told jurors during opening arguments that López wanted the "FRB" to "carry out acts of violence."

López was also one of the main targets of the government slander campaign during the state legislative hearings on Clemente High School. In a statement published by his defense committee, Solís explained that when he was arrested, the FBI agents "told me if I delivered José López to them they'd help me. They said they could perform miracles, they could relocate me, help me out...they could make all my problems disappear. They asked me questions about other nationalists."

FBI agent Matthews suggested he wear a wire. Solís refused to act as a fink in exchange for avoiding prosecution.

In another attempt to smear the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, government witness Brooks asserted on the witness stand that he had been a member of another organization, the Movement for National Liberation (MLN), that he said held meetings in the basement of the Cultural Center. The MLN is one of the groups the big-business media portrays as terrorist.

The government also attempted to associate Solís with "terrorism" by the fact that he and his wife, Martha González, had visited some of the Puerto Rican political prisoners in U.S. jails. The prosecutors painted these prisoners as dangerous "terrorists." A broad international campaign has been under way for years to win the release of 15 *independentista* prisoners.

Over the past several months, Solís has spoken and lectured frequently in both Chicago and Puerto Rico on his case and on the struggle against U.S. colonial domination of the island. He has repeatedly explained how his case fits into the long history of political repression by the U.S. government against independence fighters, including Cointelpro and FBI disruption operations and "the 20 years of federal grand jury investigations that never end."

Solís has participated in numerous pro-independence events both in Puerto Rico and during his years in Chicago, including at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and on the DePaul campus where he was teaching a full course load at the time. Some of the several dozen supporters who attended the trial know him well from this work.

"The Solís problem has united us all in a way we never thought we would. I didn't expect this breadth because not everyone is an *independentista*," said Carlos Ramírez, a professor from Puerto Rico who flew to Chicago with his wife to attend the trial. He called back every night to report on the proceedings to leaders of Solís's defense committee on the island.

'I will keep fighting'

The night before the verdict was reached Solís was the featured speaker at an event called by the Union for Puerto Rican Students at Northeastern University in Chicago. Fifty students attended.

Before the verdict of guilty was announced, a reporter from a local Spanish-language television station asked him what he would do if found innocent. Solís replied that he would "keep fighting."

The reporter then asked what he would do if found guilty. Solís replied, "Keep fighting.... That's my life."

After the jury announced its verdict, Solís turned to his supporters and said "Number 16." He was referring to the fact that there would now be one more Puerto Rican political prisoner held in U.S. jails.

The National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners has called for events on April 4 demanding the release of imprisoned Puerto Rican independence fighters.

Contributions to the defense campaign can be sent to the José Solís Jordán Defense Fund, c/o The Law Offices of Jed Stone, 434 W. Ontario, Suite 400, Chicago, IL 60610.

The Committee in Solidarity with José Solís Jordán can be contacted at P.O. Box 577826, Chicago, IL 60657-7826; tel.: (312) 409-0801; Email: solis42566@aol.com. The committee's web site is www.defendsolis.org

Pattie Thompson is a member of the International Association of Machinists. Joshua Carroll is a member of the United Steelworkers of America.

Rightists assassinate Irish rights lawyer

BY MEGAN ARNEY

Daily protests broke out across British-ruled Northern Ireland following the assassination of Rosemary Nelson, a high-profile lawyer who was well known for defending nationalist fighters and exposing the brutality of British occupation forces. Nelson was killed by a car bomb in Lurgan, Northern Ireland, March 15. A pro-British "loyalist" death squad, The Red Hand Defenders, claimed responsibility.

More than 300 local residents marched to the Lurgan Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) barracks the day of the killing. The RUC is the heavily armed police force that upholds British rule in the occupied six counties. Later that night, youth threw projectiles at the RUC and British troops, holding them responsible for the killing. Residents pointed to the saturated presence of RUC and British soldiers in the area at the time, which had increased over the past two weeks. Hundreds staged protests outside several RUC barracks in Belfast March 16.

At meetings held across the United States as part of a 40-city tour by leaders of Sinn Féin, the party leading the struggle for a united Ireland, the focus immediately became that of protest against the slaying.

"Rosemary Nelson worked on behalf of many people, especially the youth who were harassed" by the police force, said Alex Maskey of Sinn Féin. Maskey, who sits on the Belfast City Council, was speaking to about 30 people March 16 in South Orange, New Jersey. He pointed to Nelson's unflinching stance for justice in the North, especially nationalists who are still fighting rightists on Garvaghy Road in Portadown, Northern Ireland.

Nelson was the lawyer for the Garvaghy

Road Residents Committee, who have for nearly one year been fighting to keep the sectarian, rightist Orange Order from marching triumphantly through the nationalist area. She had successfully defended republican Colm Duffy from frame-up charges of killing two RUC officers. Nelson represented the family of Robert Hamill, a Catholic who was beaten to death in 1997 by a loyalist mob while RUC cops stood nearby. She also took other civil law clients, both Protestant and Catholic. Last year Nelson said she received RUC death threats.

The Red Hand Defenders say they are opposed to the agreement, reached on April 10 of last year in Belfast, by the British and Irish governments and all the major parties in Northern Ireland. The agreement, which registers the advance of the Irish struggle, included the establishment of a Northern Ireland Executive, cross-border bodies, and the release of political prisoners.

Irish activists in the United States have condemned the Nelson killing. Paul Doris, national chairman for Irish Northern Aid, said, "All we've heard for months and months is that the IRA [Irish Republican Army] needs to give up its weapons before Sinn Féin can enter the executive. The reality is that some people are more worried about the threat of violence than actual violence. Loyalist death squads have gone on murdering Catholics while the IRA guns have been silent for 20 months."

Doris was referring to the refusal of Unionists — supporters of the continued "union" with Britain — to allow Sinn Féin to participate in the newly established Northern Ireland Executive. The Unionists have demanded the IRA surrender weapons before the nationalist party can take its seats.

The day following Nelson's murder a dozen people protested in the city center of Manchester, in the United Kingdom, carrying placards that demanded "Bring the killers to justice!" and "Disband the RUC!"

Nelson's assassination comes in the wake of media revelations highlighting the involvement of the British state in the murder campaign waged over the last 30 years by loyalist death squads. In a March 7 BBC television documentary, Bobby Philpott, a former leader of a loyalist terror gang, the Ulster Defense Association (UDA), just released from prison, alleged that he received detailed RUC and British army reports to aid his murder of Catholics.

The *Sunday Times* printed a February interview with former RUC officer John Weir, who explained how he and other RUC members colluded with loyalist death squads.

To deflect the growing claims of RUC participation in Nelson's killing, Ronald Flanagan, the RUC chief constable, announced March 16 that chief constable David Phillips of Kent, England, would lead the inquiry into the murder. He also announced the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation will assist in the investigation.

Touring the United States, Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams dismissed these moves as "unacceptable" and called for a "fully international-based, public inquiry."

Meanwhile, thousands of republicans marched in Belfast February 28 to express outrage at the failure of the London and Dublin governments to challenge the Unionists' attempts to block Sinn Féin from sitting in the new assembly's executive.

Paul Davies from Manchester contributed to this article.

YS hosts forum on Palestine at Iowa State University

This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists (YS), an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS write to: Young Socialists, 3284 23rd St., San Francisco, California, 94110. Tel: (415) 824-1429. E-mail: 105162.605@compuserve.com

BY GUSTAVO HERRARTE

AMES, Iowa — The Young Socialist Club at Iowa State University (ISU) sponsored a forum here March 11 entitled "Palestine: Why There Is No Peace." The program included a video, *Jerusalem: an occupation set in stone?*, followed by talks by ISU graduate student Stephen Gasteyer and Ray Parsons, a member of the United Steelworkers of America and the Socialist Workers Party.

Gasteyer related his experiences living in the Israeli-occupied territories. Both speakers highlighted the ongoing resistance of Palestinian workers, farmers, and youth to the dispossession of their land. Among the 35 participants were a number of Palestinian students from the West Bank and Gaza, who enriched the discussion.

The video exposed the discrimination in housing faced by Palestinians in the occupied territories. Large areas are designated as "Green Areas" by the Israeli government and no Palestinian is allowed to build or farm there. Palestinians retain property rights on the land but they are not allowed to live or use it. Authorities demolish Palestinian dwellings that allegedly violate these regulations. The restrictions on the free movement of Palestinian people in Jerusalem was discussed. Special permits are granted to some for work or study in Jerusalem, but these permits are temporary and the government closes the main entrance to the city at will.

The forum took up Washington's role in supporting Tel Aviv. Conditions for Palestinians in the occupied territories have worsened since the October 1998 Wye River accord brokered by Washington. The setbacks Palestinians face are also a product of the policies of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leadership, who rely increasingly upon support from the U.S. government, turning their eyes away from Palestinians who continue to resist.

In his presentation Parsons stressed that these fighters live in a world of increasing working-class resistance and national liberation struggles, from Ireland to the fight of the Kurdish people in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, and have more opportunities to build solidarity than ever before.

Two people bought *Militant* subscriptions and several others picked up copies of the paper featuring a two-part series by a recent reporting team that covered the Palestinian struggle in the West Bank and Gaza.

N.Y. rally protests anti-gay killing

BY RYAN LEWIS

NEW YORK — More than 800 people took part in a March 15 rally here to protest the brutal beating and killing of Billy Jack

Gaither, who was gay, in Sylacauga, Alabama. "Hey, hey! Ho, ho! Homophobia has got to go!" and "No more silence!" chanted demonstrators marching from 59th Street to Times Square. Organizers of the event built it as a political funeral for Gaither, as well as for a number of other gays murdered by rightists and victims of police brutality.

The rally attracted a small layer of militant workers who came out to show their intolerance for these attacks. Ronald William McLean Duncan, a 24-year-old member of Plumbers Union Local 1, hopped a train downtown to get to the protest after seeing it on the news after work. He built solidarity for the 1997 Teamsters strike against UPS, and has been a part of actions demanding a new trial for framed-up Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Andrea Ryan, a young writer, carried a sign denouncing New York City police brutality and quickly drew a parallel between the killing of Gaither and the recent killing of Amadou Diallo, a street vendor from Guinea, by four city cops. This was on many people's minds as "Arrest the Diallo Four!" was chanted at the march's final rallying point. Ryan has taken part in some of the protests against Diallo's killing as well as an October rally here against the murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay student, in Wyoming.

Many signs and chants at the action blamed "hate" for all these killings. Some people called for more "hate crimes" laws. When it was pointed out that these laws would be used primarily against fighters for social justice, a number of protesters began shifting their position.

Referring to the protest as one of the most effective ways to oppose the killing, Gabrielle Bossau, a 23-year-old gay rights activist said, "I think visibility is very important."

In anticipation of the protest, the city government deployed more than 800 police, who encircled the march as it moved down the street. They were unable to disrupt it, though.

B.C. projectionists win solidarity

BY AIDEN BALL AND GREG MILLAR

COQUITLAM, British Columbia — More than 200 people rallied here February 27 at a



Militant/Brian Taylor

More than 800 rallied in New York March 15 to protest killing of gay man in Alabama

picket line organized in support of projectionists locked out by Famous Players and Cineplex Odeon. The projectionists, members of International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 348, refused to take a 60 percent cut in wages over three years as well as other concessions. The fight has become a focus of broad solidarity. There are 64 projectionists locked out across British Columbia. Rallies are held at many of the theaters, especially on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday, the busiest movie nights. Projectionist Greg Larson remarked, "These rallies recharge your batteries, you feel like you can do this another couple of weeks."

The February 27 Coquitlam rally was one of the largest so far. It was very upbeat, with a live band and a broad range of supporters, including members of the Teamsters, International Association of Machinists (IAM), United Food and Commercial Workers, United Steelworkers of America, the B.C. Government Employees Union, and others. The picket line rally was effective in turning back many potential moviegoers.

A contingent of 23 workers from IAM Local 11 at Avcorp, which produces airplane parts in Delta B.C., were there. Workers at Avcorp have been organizing weekly Tuesday night teams to boost projectionist's pickets. Serge Proulx, a young worker from Avcorp, said at first there were six or seven

people on these teams and that the 23 that came out on Saturday is a sign "that people are beginning to open their minds." Serge added that the most important thing "is the unity of all workers coming out of this fight."

Reaching out to young people has been a major part of the projectionist's strategy as many of those crossing the pickets to watch a film have been youth. Damon Faulkner, president of the projectionist's union, has spoken at both Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia.

Also present at the rally were members of the Kurdish community fighting against the Turkish government's abduction of Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan. Jawit Atmani, spokesperson for the Kurdish Canadian Information Center, expressed solidarity with the projectionists and received warm support at the rally for his people's struggle.

Support for the projectionists is growing. In Prince Rupert, a town in northern B.C., the community managed to shut down the local theater since early in the strike and they have continued to hold solidarity rallies regularly. Other rallies have taken place in Victoria, Kamloops, Kelowna, and elsewhere.

Gustavo Herrarte is a YS member at ISU. Aiden Ball is a YS member at Simon Fraser University. Greg Millar is a student at Centennial School in Coquitlam, B.C.

Chicago-area stores order 210 Pathfinder books

BY RICK YOUNG

CHICAGO — *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* and the newest issue of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist* featuring the article "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War" will soon be on the shelves of a number of bookstores and libraries in Chicago.

Over the course of three days in mid-March, local sales reps along with Michael Baumann from the Pathfinder staff in New York visited more than a dozen bookstores and libraries. Immediate orders, from five different stores, totaled 210 books, including six copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* and

five copies of *New Internationalist* no. 11. Other stores and two campus libraries asked for follow-up visits to pick up their orders.

Sales reps planned in advance to increase the effectiveness of the visits, making appointments well ahead of time. Pathfinder supporters reviewed the current holdings in the libraries on the Internet or through card catalogs and prepared suggested orders. At bookstores, a review of the stock and suggestions of books that would complement their existing titles helped net orders.

The buyer at one bookstore in a community college with a predominantly Black student body of 4,000 placed an order for 55 books, including *Capitalism's World Disorder* and *New Internationalist* no. 11.

During a visit to a large chain store in Evanston, Illinois, the buyer was particularly interested in *Capitalism's World Disorder*. He had just seen a television special on "greed." Its back-to-back interviews with wealthy big-business figures and hard-pressed strikers had an impact, he said.

While in Evanston, the sales representatives stopped at a large independent store where many students and professors shop for books. The owner's first question was, "Why haven't you been here before?" This stop netted an order for 51 books.

One university library in the area already had all but 25 of Pathfinder's English-language books and pamphlets. The bibliographer there said he intended to have every Pathfinder book on the shelves, and that he would order the missing titles. In addition he took an extra copy of the catalog to photocopy sections for others, including professors he thought might be interested in using Pathfinder titles in their classrooms.

The openness to Pathfinder titles was also apparent by the response of customers who happened to be in stores during the visits. At one community-college store, a student

that the manager described as her "best customer" showed interest in the Pathfinder titles. This played a role in the manager's decision to broaden her order to 27 books. And the interest expressed by a customer in *The Jewish Question* at a Black-oriented bookstore on Chicago's north side — a long-time account that had several Pathfinder posters prominently displayed — prompted the owner to include it for the first time in his order of 72 books.

Volunteers in Chicago are organizing visits to nail down the remaining orders, as well as a trip to central Illinois focused on promoting *Capitalism's World Disorder*.

Continental General Tire strike

Continued from front page

Carolina, as a Continental General boss Chris Dickson was speaking. The strikers spoke and handed out leaflets explaining the stakes in their fight.

Striker Rose Sanders explained later that before leaving, the strikers sang four verses of "Solidarity Forever" as loud as we could. "The police tried to arrest one of us for assault, saying that a glass of water had been spilt on someone. We said, 'Arrest all of us or none of us.' So they let us go."

"They can't squash us and they can't shut us up. They want to bust the union. If they won that, their profits would go through the roof," Sanders added. "This Thursday [March 18] we're organizing a march and rally in downtown Charlotte."

The strike is the biggest in Charlotte's history. The *Charlotte Observer* noted March 5 that a victory for the company would be "an important symbol," following the move of the Continental General headquarters from Akron, Ohio, in 1994 to Charlotte, "minutes from the border of the two states

with the nation's lowest rates of unionization."

"While 14.1 percent of private sector workers are union members," only 3.7 percent of S.C. [South Carolina] workers and 3.8 percent of N.C. [North Carolina] workers are unionized, according to 1997 figures compiled by the Bureau of National Affairs."

The March 13 rally included a blood drive, which Sanders said was initiated from picket line discussion among strikers trying to widen publicity and support for the strike.

Three members of the Catfish Workers of America from Belzoni, Mississippi, and one supporter, drove more than eight hours to join the rally. The catfish workers were fired from Freshwater Farms Catfish in November 1998 after protesting inhumane working conditions. They are planning an April 9 rally followed by the annual African-American Heritage Buffalo Fish Festival on April 10, both in Belzoni.

Olympia Newton and Jill Fein contributed to this article.

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Garment workers in Montreal win contract

BY MICHEL DUGRÉ

MONTREAL — The struggle by the 1,300 members of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), who work for the Bas Iris stocking company in Montreal, "reached a new stage in mid-February when we decided to end our strike," said Jean-Wilford Sanon. "We did make gains through our strike," he said. "But I think that we deserve more. This was a strike for respect. And this fight is not over yet."

Iris workers make stockings in two different plants. More than 90 percent of them are Black, the vast majority are from Haiti. About half the workforce are women.

Workers went on strike January 21 after rejecting the company's contract offer by a 93 percent majority. This offer would have meant a wage freeze for hundreds of workers, especially among the older and more experienced. Iris workers earn CAN\$8 (US\$5.20) per hour on average, less than most other garment workers in Quebec.

After more than three weeks on the picket lines workers voted 83 percent in favor of a contract, agreeing to a 70-cent wage increase over three years for all workers. Unionists will be allowed to either take the wage increase or get the equivalent in lump sums. Workers also won a 20-cent bonus for the afternoon shift and an increased bonus for night shift from 30 to 40 cents. The company will also pay 40 percent of health insurance premiums. Until now workers were paying the entire cost of insurance.

Many workers say they will take the lump sums, especially those who think they will go back to school or look for another job soon. Sanon said many of those paid by piecework, like himself, will take the lump sums, "because we know that the company

will do everything possible to deny us a real wage increase."

"While we need more than what we got, it is important to appreciate what we have accomplished through our strike," said Sanon.

This strike was for a first contract. The union at Iris was certified in July 1998. "Before we had a union and we went on strike each worker at Iris had to negotiate their wage individually with the boss. This created divisions among us. Now our wages are the results of what we won together."

During the strike workers described the conditions in the plant. "Before we built our union we were treated like animals," said Marie-Florence Sanon. "You couldn't even scratch yourself without a supervisor yelling, 'Get back to work.'" Workers insisted that the conditions have improved with the introduction of the union. They waged a strike a year ago, even before the union was certified, in order to get improvements in their working conditions. In December workers waged another strike over the company's refusal to give them their annual bonus. In some cases this represented hundreds of dollars. The recent strike was before members of the UNITE local had even elected an executive. Sanon said the it was organized by the most combative workers.

The gains made by workers at Iris follow the victory won in December by 4,000 UNITE members in the Montreal men's clothing industry. And 2,500 other garment workers at the Peerless company in Montreal are currently fighting for their first contract. They joined the Teamsters union a few months ago.

Michel Dugré is a UNITE member at the SFI Apparel plant in Montreal.

Farmers, unionists exchange experiences at Toronto forum

BY JOHN STALEY

TORONTO — At a Militant Labor Forum here last month involving an exchange between farmers and unionists, Gary Gilliard told participants, "I went to the demonstration at Queen's Park in December last year because we had been losing \$5,000 a week for months selling hogs." He was referring to a protest of 700 hog farmers.

Gilliard, a hog farmer in Forest, Ontario, spoke on a panel with Jose Pereira, a butcher at the Quality Meats hog-slaughtering plant who had returned to work a week earlier after an eight-week strike. The third panelist was Guy Tremblay, a member of the United Steelworkers of America who had been building support through his union for both the struggle of the hog farmers and Quality Meat strikers.

As soon as the meeting opened for questions and comments from the audience, Gilliard turned to Pereira and asked if the freezers in the plant were full before the strike. "Processors told us that they couldn't pay us much because there was an oversupply of hogs and the freezers were full," said Gilliard.

"Not true" replied Pereira, explaining that the hogs are for export and that there was no problem like that.

In response to another question about the falling price of hogs, Gilliard said he thought that the banks and meatpacking companies encourage the hog farmers to produce more to drive the price down.

In March 1998 United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) members ended a four-month strike against Maple Leaf Foods, Canada's largest meat processor. UFCW members ended up taking up to 40 percent wage cuts, a pattern which Quality Meats forced on its employees in the just-ended strike.

"Instead of making millions, Shwartz, the owner is going to make billions," Pereira said. "My wages have gone from \$17.26 an hour to \$11.26 (Can\$1 = US\$0.65)."

Gilliard expanded on the situation he and his brothers face as well as other farmers. "We built a new barn in 1979," he said. "We got more per hog then than now and prices of everything else have gone up. We can't invest in new equipment now. We pay \$100,000 in interest a year for bank loans, with a turnover of \$1.5 million. We actually each earn \$15,000 to live on."

Pereira's first language is Portuguese, as is true for many Quality Meat workers. He complained that "here in Canada people are just concerned about money. They just stay home by themselves. In Portugal they wouldn't take a wage cut."

"You can't measure what we have done at the end of a strike just by what's in the contract," explained Guy Tremblay. "It's always better to fight and if we make links with each other we come out stronger."

"There is more resistance today," Tremblay said. "Links are being made and this is new." He pointed to the support from workers on strike to farmers in the United States who are fighting to defend their land and protesting racist discrimination fostered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"I think the December protest (at Queen's Park) was good," said Gilliard. "If you don't protest nobody knows what is happening to you."

"The next step is to support other strikers," said another steelworker.

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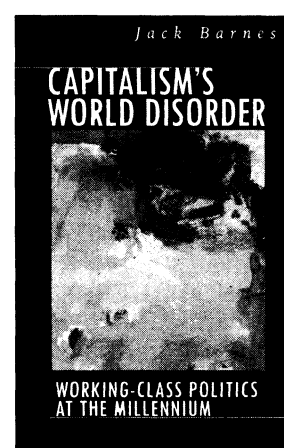
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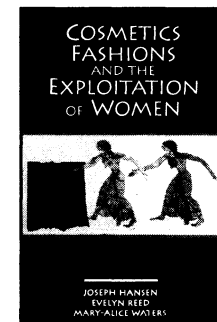
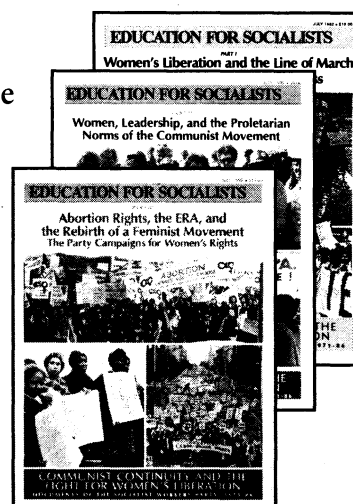
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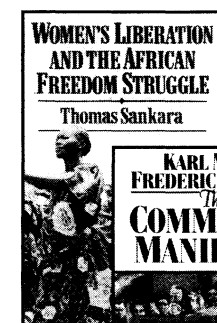
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Sweden bus strikers win some concessions

BY CATHARINA TIRSÉN

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — "We could have stayed out for weeks longer," said one of the bus drivers hurrying in to work at the Hornsberg depot in Stockholm March 12.

Late on March 9 the Municipal Workers Union and the bus companies signed a new two-year contract giving a wage raise similar to other national contracts in Sweden. The strike was then called off. By the morning of March 10 most buses were running again.

Margareta Klang at the Märsta bus depot north of Stockholm has been a bus driver for 18 years. "What's most important for me is the schedule, that we get rid of the stress and get regular breaks," she said while picketing on March 5.

Since 1993 local governments have contracted out public transport to private bus companies, who underbid each other to get the contracts. "When Swebus took over, we lost five holiday days and the retirement age was raised from 63 to 65 years. We really lost a lot," Klang said.

"We get no extra pay for working Christmas, New Years, and other holidays. We get 11 kronor [1 kronor = \$0.68] per hour for nights and weekends. Same thing for major holidays," said another driver at the Hornsberg bus depot March 4, serving her first picket duty.

The new contract raises pay for nights and weekends by 6 percent and stipulates extra pay of 42 kronor per hour for the "major" holidays.

The new contract reduces the maximum workday, which often includes several hours of breaks in the middle of the day, to 13.5 hours from 16 hours. This can be adjusted in local contracts. The right to regular, brief coffee and toilet breaks has been written into the contract as a starting point for local negotiations that now are beginning county by county.

This was the central demand of the strike; drivers wanted at least 10 minutes every two hours. There is a deadline that if local negotiations don't resolve the issue in about 18 months, the breaks would be between 6–11 minutes after two hours, or 8–15 minutes after three or three-and-a-half hours.

"We're back at where we started," said a driver at the Hornsberg bus depot March 12. "We have tried for three years to resolve the right to breaks in local negotiations and not made any headway."

"We'll only see if the strike has changed anything when negotiations start," said another driver.

Bus driver Mikael Wiessner said he was disappointed over the contract and its agreement on the breaks. "We had support from a ruling from the Industrial Inspections Com-



Militant/Dag Tirsén

Striking bus drivers Siv Hellberg, Börje Lindström, and Lena Stålnacke, center, speak with Militant reporters Daniel Ahl, far left, and Claudio Burgos, far right during strike at Swebus garage in Kiruna.

mittee, we still had the support from 98 percent of the population, and the negotiators gave in. It's unbelievable."

Drivers point out the widespread support they got from passengers and other workers. While Militant supporters visited the pickets at Hornsberg March 5, a metro train driver brought a box of chocolate.

A group of eight women from the health-care section of the Municipal Workers Union joined the picket line too, bringing hot dogs. "I am still surprised at the support we get," one of the strikers said as she watched people

at the gates. "On my four-hour shift just before the strike started, eleven passengers spontaneously wished us good luck!"

There were forces campaigning against the strike, though. A representative of the youth organization of the Liberal Party accused the strike of being "an attack on equality," speaking on national radio on March 3. The implication was that the bus drivers' demands would make less money available for wages for nurses and others where the workforce is predominantly women.

Around 20 percent of all bus drivers are women according to the statistics of the Municipal Workers Union. Strikers who are women played a very prominent role on many picket lines, being in the forefront of explaining the fight to supporters and visitors.

The national strike followed several years of fights by bus drivers. Three thousand drivers in Stockholm struck in 1995 against the deteriorating conditions. Earlier there had been local strikes in the nearby towns of Södertälje and Bromma, and also refusals to work overtime.

"The bus drivers in Södertälje struck against changes in the work schedules that would reduce their breaks," Ulf Broström, one of the bus drivers at the lunch restaurant, explained March 10. "The bus drivers succeeded in stopping the reduction at that time. Now we have it anyway. The bosses got what they wanted through the outsourcing instead."

Jarl Christian Hörnig described how drivers from Stockholm had gone to Aarhus, Denmark, during the bus drivers' strike there in 1995–96.

"We almost filled two buses that the local union had organized. We brought our union banners, and carried them in a demonstration through the city together with workers from Denmark, Britain, and other European countries."

Catharina Tirsén is a member of the Metal Workers Union in Stockholm. Dag Tirsén and Anita Östling contributed to the article.

SWP candidate for Birmingham mayor says prosecute cops who beat Black man

BY EVAN ROBERTS AND STEPHEN BLOODWORTH

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama — "My campaign calls for protests demanding the prosecution of the cops who, without provocation beat, maced, and jailed for six weeks Jonathan Thomas. Government attacks on democratic rights and actions like this on the part of the cops further embolden terrorists like those who murdered Billy Jack Gaither," said Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of Birmingham, Ardella Blandford.

The charges of police brutality came to light just days after hundreds of people attended a standing-room-only memorial service here to show their opposition to the brutal killing of Gaither, a gay man beaten and burned to death in Sylacauga, Alabama, a few weeks ago.

On January 30 Birmingham police stopped Jonathan Thomas, 49, as he was walking home from a service station about 10:30 p.m. The cops had no legal justification for stopping Thomas, who worked at a nearby grocery store, but demanded to see his identification and forcing him to raise his hands in the air. The cops then beat him severely and maced his eyes and mouth, holding his eyes open as he resisted. They handcuffed Thomas so tight that he still has scars on his wrists. Doctors used seven staples to close a gash on the back of his head, and he still has blurred vision in his right eye from the attack.

Thomas, who is Black, was charged with trying to kill two police officers, supposedly while trying to take their weapons. He spent six weeks in jail. District judge Robert Cahill dismissed the charges against him after a preliminary hearing on March 8. County prosecutor Laura Petro acknowledged that the hearing revealed the charges against Thomas were based on "misinformation" from arresting officers. "Everybody testified differently," said Petro. "If he [Judge Cahill] hadn't dismissed it, I would have stood up and asked him to dismiss it," stated the prosecutor.

Thomas' lawyer, Erskine Mathis, himself a former policeman, said his client "had not done one thing except be Black and have to live in North Birmingham."

The north side of Birmingham is a mostly Black, working-class community where neighborhoods are interspersed among the rail yards, a steel and pipe mill, fabrication shops, and a coke plant. Socialist campaign supporters found residents in Thomas's neighborhood to be appalled by what happened and some related their own experiences with the cops.

"Mr. Thomas walked through here all the time, he would always offer to help people and never bother anyone. They just dragged that poor man off and beat him in that back yard over there. There were cop cars all over the place. It's time we let them know they can't do this to poor people anymore," commented one local resident who asked not to be named.

The eight cops involved—Deven Heathcock, Elliot Ingram, Patrick Green, Alvin Fortson, Kenneth Plemmons, Anthony Clark, Ashanti McKinney, and F. Glasscock—remain on duty. The Birmingham Police Department says its Internal Affairs Division is "conducting an investi-

gation into the events involving the victim."

Birmingham police spokesman Lt. Moody Duff boasts of the city's "zero-tolerance" and much touted "crime fighting" plan, patterned after that of New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani, saying "Zero tolerance is a good plan, a good philosophy, a good policy. It's been instrumental with us reducing crime."

In response, Socialist candidate Blandford said, "Zero tolerance is just business as usual for the cops. As always, in reality it means the capitalists' government's zero tolerance for democratic rights and their scapegoating of Blacks, immigrants, and workers. From the gunning down of West African immigrant Amadou Diallo in New York to the rain of cop bullets that killed Tyisha Miller in Riverside, California, working people must organize to demand justice and stop these attacks."

Evan Roberts is a member of UAW Local 1155 and Stephen Bloodworth is a member of UTU Local 1291 in Birmingham.

Iowa: action pushes back attacks on immigrants

Continued from front page

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1149. More than half are immigrant workers from Mexico. At the same time, workers are concerned because the INS recently announced it would extend "Operation Vanguard" from Nebraska into Iowa. Under Operation Vanguard, INS officials will seek subpoenas to enter packinghouse personnel offices and take files to their offices to check against national data. They then intend to make lists of "illegal" workers and order companies to fire them.

Workers began discussing these attacks in the company lunchroom. "We've got to do something to protest this," one worker said. Several unionists who are part of the Hispanic Ministry group at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Marshalltown initiated the idea of a protest.

A meeting of 12 workers, who called themselves the Ad Hoc Committee for Human Rights, called for a protest at the Marshall County courthouse for March 7. This was postponed to March 28 when the mayor of Marshalltown refused to grant a permit.

Undaunted, the workers put their focus on a March 10 public meeting of the City Council's Community Protection Committee, which was called to hear the proposal

to deputize the police. Flyers encouraging a large turnout at the public meeting were posted and distributed at the Swift plant.

As a result, some 150 people — more than half of them packinghouse workers — showed up for the hearing at the City Council chambers. Marshalltown chief of police Lon Walker was clearly shocked by the large turnout, which spilled out into the corridor. He announced that for the time being he was recommending the city not pursue the deputization. He said the reason was lack of funds in this year's budget.

After Walker's announcement, a number of people spoke against the proposal. Speakers included UFCW Local 1149 secretary-treasurer Ross Boyer, Father Bernie Grady of the Hispanic Ministry, and others.

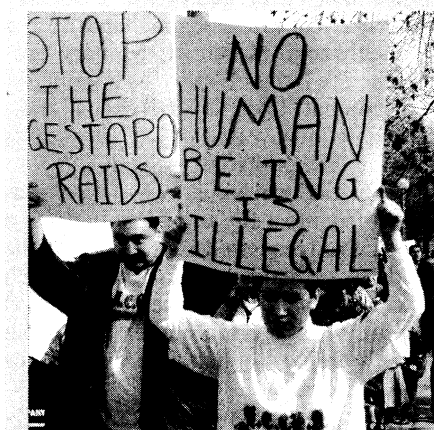
The mood of the crowd was festive as they filed out of the meeting hall.

The next night 32 people met to plan the upcoming vigil. At the vigil, participants will march around the courthouse, carrying candles and placards, before assembling for a rally. Rally speakers will include a representative of the Hispanic Ministry, unionists, immigrant rights activists, and local farm activist Larry Ginter.

Maggie Trowe is a member of UFCW Local 1149 in Marshalltown.

Come to a vigil
DEFEND RIGHTS FOR IMMIGRANT WORKERS

STOP 'Operation Vanguard' and English only



**Sunday, March 28, 2:30 p.m.
Marshall County Court House
Marshalltown, Iowa**

Sponsored by the Ad-Hoc Committee for Human Rights and the Hispanic Ministry at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church.

CORRECTION

A photo caption in last week's issue on the bus drivers' strike in Sweden gave the wrong size for the March 8 strike support rally in Stockholm. The rally was 400–500 workers attended the rally, not 4,500.

Protests planned to denounce 'Oscar' for gov't snitch Kazan

BY JOHN BENSON

LOS ANGELES — Elia Kazan was the director of many films — *On the Waterfront*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Gentleman's Agreement*. He was also a star stool pigeon for the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1952, giving names of colleagues he claimed had been members of the Communist Party (CP).

Dozens of screenwriters, playwrights, actors, and directors were blacklisted for years through the HUAC hearings in the late 1940s and early '50s. Ten were imprisoned for refusing to give names to the committee. Even greater numbers of militants were witch-hunted out of the industrial unions.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences plans to give Elia Kazan a Lifetime Achievement Award March 21. This unanimous decision by the 39-member board of governors of the academy, on the proposal of board member Karl Malden, has sparked a debate that reaches far beyond Hollywood.

An ad signed by members of the Academy, blacklisted writers and directors and their relatives will appear in the March 19 issue of *Variety*, a trade publication, encouraging those attending the award ceremony not to stand and applaud Kazan. At the awards ceremony itself, those protesting the award are planning to sit on their hands in silence rather than applaud when Kazan is presented the "Oscar" statue.

A demonstration across the street from the ceremony has been called by The Committee Against Silence. The committee is co-chaired by Bernard Gordon, a formerly blacklisted screenwriter, and immigration attorney Leone Hankey. The action is being endorsed by other formerly blacklisted writers and numerous political organizations.

Layer of liberals oppose protest

The award is fueling debate, especially among a layer of liberal and left-wing forces. Many who in the past have spoken against the witch-hunt have come out in support of the "lifetime achievement" award for Kazan.

Playwright Arthur Miller, who had also been called before HUAC and refused to give names, said he personally faced "blacklist-

ing not of offensive works but of a person, something that, incidentally, was common Soviet practice," adding a red-baiting note.

Writing in the liberal weekly *The Nation*, Miller stated, "My feelings toward that terrible era are unchanged, but at the same time history ought not to be rewritten; Elia Kazan did sufficient extraordinary work in theater and film to merit its acknowledgment."

Nation publisher Victor Navasky, author of a book about the witch-hunt in Hollywood titled *Naming Names*, "acknowledged some ambivalence" about the award, the *New York Times* reported. Navasky said that "with the passage of time, some of the passions are cooled."

Phoenix Pictures chairman and CEO Mike Medavoy publicly refused to sign the *Variety* ad protesting the award. "The Academy Awards honor people's art, not politics," he wrote. "I don't agree with [Kazan's] choice of having given names, but it was his choice."

In reply, protest organizer Gordon noted that the Academy did not separate art and politics during the blacklisting.

Gale Anne Hurd, who helped prevent Kazan from being given an American Film Institute Lifetime Achievement Award a decade ago, said that at that time the arts were under attack from the extreme right wing. But now "Kazan absolutely deserves an honorary Oscar," the March 15 *Los Angeles Times* quoted her saying.

Two days later, the *Los Angeles Times* published an Op-Ed column by actor Richard Dreyfuss explaining why he would be "sitting on his hands" if he were in attendance at the Academy Awards. "Elia Kazan is a great director, and he has been amply rewarded for that by the Academy in the past. But if this award becomes something else, if it endorses the idea that it would somehow fulfill a debt that hasn't been paid, then I object.... If we are being asked to say, 'Let us forgive it, it was such a long time ago'... or worse, if we are being asked to say that what was done was morally right, then, no, this is all poppycock."

Kazan has not only never apologized for his testimony, which helped drive people from their jobs. He has vigorously defended



Laura Gray

From the loyalty oaths and Hollywood blacklisting to the execution of the Rosenbergs, the McCarthy-era witch-hunt trampled democratic rights.

it and the anti-communist witch-hunt.

After testifying before HUAC, Kazan took out an ad in the *New York Times* in which he declared that "liberals must speak out" against the "dangerous and alien conspiracy" of communism. The hero of his 1954 movie *On the Waterfront* decides to inform on alleged mob control of the union. And in his 1988 memoirs Kazan says that he acted honorably and would testify again.

Writing on the controversy in his February 25 syndicated column, conservative columnist Joseph Sobran declared, "Some of Kazan's defenders argue that he should be 'forgiven' for testifying and honored for his artistic achievements. The truth is he should be honored for both.... Kazan helped rid Hollywood of people who were using movies as a vehicle for communist lies. Personally, I'm glad what he done to them."

Witch-hunt was aimed at working class

When Kazan appeared before the HUAC hearings in Los Angeles on April 10, 1952, he testified that he had briefly been a member of the Communist Party in the 1930s and named various of his friends from the Group Theater who he said had also once been members of the CP.

Kazan's testimony came at the height of the witch-hunt and Sen. Joseph McCarthy was riding high. HUAC had been in Detroit the month before the Los Angeles hearings, witch-hunting for "communists" in Local 600 of the United Automobile Workers, which had a militant local leadership that opposed the red-baiting of UAW president Walter Reuther.

But the red scare and the loyalty program that began during President Harry Truman's first term was aimed at housebreaking the labor movement. On March 21, 1947, Truman issued Executive Order 9835, which directed all government departments to set up boards to determine the loyalty of employees. On Nov. 24, 1947, Attorney General Thomas Clark issued a list of organizations deemed subversive as a guide to implement the loyalty program.

Within months this list was used to begin forcing people to quit or be fired from government jobs. HUAC began investigating "communist influence" in the labor movement. In 1948 twelve members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party were indicted under the Smith Act for conspiring to advocate the overthrow the government by force and violence. The CP had earlier supported the jailing of members of the Socialist Workers Party and Teamsters union under this law for their opposition to U.S. imperialism in World War II.

The HUAC hearings on Hollywood were part of this broader attack on democratic rights. The first hearings began Oct. 20, 1947. Nineteen "unfriendly" witnesses were subpoenaed and 10 were forced to appear. All 10 refused to answer questions, citing their rights under the First Amendment of the Constitution, and were imprisoned for

contempt of Congress in 1950. Almost immediately after the hearings all 10 were fired and the Hollywood blacklist developed.

This assault on democratic rights coincided with the decision of the Truman administration to break the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union. Washington, confronted with the rising colonial revolution and the 1949 victory of the Chinese revolution, launched the Korean War in 1950. The loyalty program was part of the preparation for war. And the witch-hunt grew out of the loyalty program.

The loyalty program and the witch-hunt were an extension of the assault on democratic rights begun earlier under the Roosevelt administration to prepare for World War II, from the Smith Act indictments to FBI targeting of the NAACP and newspapers read mainly by Blacks that encouraged fighting for equal rights while the war was going on.

As the U.S. rulers depend on greater use of the cops, courts, and government informers against working people today, they have an interest in gaining political acceptance for a star witch-hunter like Kazan.

The debate over the blacklisting, reignited by the Academy Awards, "is not just an issue of historical importance, but one that has its reflection and consequences in today's world," remarked Hollywood director Nick Castle in an interview. "It is part of the continued attacks on democratic rights. It is part of the culture war that's being fought on all kinds of issues. This award can be seen as giving credence to what Kazan did. I intend to join the protest at the academy awards along with those who will be there to oppose the lifetime achievement award being given to Elia Kazan. I encourage others to join us — protest to remember the act and to see that it doesn't happen again."

The picket at the Academy Awards will take place in Los Angeles on Sunday, March 21, at 3:00 p.m. across from the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, on Hope St. between First and Temple.

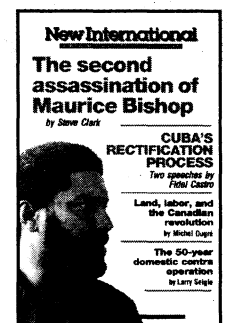
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U.S. Navy, Marines hold war games in Bay Area, California

BY RYAN KELLY
AND JIM ALTENBERG

OAKLAND, California — The sound of automatic weapons fire and helicopters echoed throughout the city here, while heavily armed Marines staged amphibious landings on the beaches of nearby Alameda. Large navy ships, including a new radar-evading "Stealth" cruiser, plied the waters of San Francisco Bay. Troops in chemical suits joined those in regular camouflage on street corners in Monterey, 100 miles south of here.

This is "Operation Urban Warrior," a series of military exercises by the U.S. Navy in the Bay Area, which began March 15 and will last through March 21. Military officials describe Urban Warrior as training for "urban combat" to quell "civil chaos" and a "breakdown of law and order," as well as practicing "humanitarian assistance."

"Using a fictional scenario, Monterey was transformed into a city in a friendly foreign nation that had requested assistance from the United States," said an article in the March 14 *Oakland Tribune*. "One setup replicated a Korean village and another tested the military's ability to neutralize weapons of mass destruction."

The war games come weeks after the announcement by the Clinton administration that it plans to set up a North American command for the Pentagon, giving the U.S. military policing powers and structure inside the United States.

Six thousand sailors and Marines are taking part in Urban Warrior. Pentagon offi-

cials said that only 700 will be actively involved in the war games at any one time.

Similar exercises have been held in Chicago, New York City, and Jacksonville, Florida. Navy Col. Gary Scheckel told the *Oakland Tribune* that such training was necessary because 70 percent of the world's population will live in coastal cities like Oakland by 2025, making them likely places that Washington's enemies attack.

Protests against Urban Warrior were organized as soon as news of the operation became public. In Monterey, environmental groups demanded that no amphibious landings take place due to the sensitivity of marine life in Monterey Bay. Although a state environmental agency ruled that no landing could take place, hundreds turned out anyway March 13 at the beach to protest the whole operation.

As Urban Warrior began March 15, state and local cops in riot helmets videotaped some 100 demonstrators picketing the area in Alameda where giant Sea Stallion helicopters and Hovercraft landing vehicles unloaded 550 Marines and their weapons. A few pro-military spectators cheered the soldiers as they arrived. Helicopters and tour buses then took the Marines to the closed-down Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland. There groups of soldiers bashed down doors and fired into rooms, tanks rolled through the streets, and remote-controlled sniper locating equipment was tested out.

Their "enemy" consisted of actors por-

Continued on Page 14

'Capitalism's World Disorder': the book to sell and the book to be seen reading

BY DOUG JENNESS

CHICAGO, Illinois — "I'm half way through *Capitalism's World Disorder*. It is like a light coming on in the middle of the night. It places an entirely new view on events and it makes a lot of sense." This is how retired Pennsylvania dairy farmer Linn Hamilton described Pathfinder Press's most recent book in a letter to Frank Forrestal, director of the Socialist Workers Party's work among farmers.

Reading Hamilton's letter to a gathering of Socialist Workers in five industrial trade unions here March 13-14, party leader Joel Britton explained that the presentations collected in this volume — the earliest from 1992 — are more timely than ever. *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, by Jack Barnes, SWP national secretary, Britton explained, "is an important handbook" to get into the hands of hundreds of other fighting workers and farmers.

Initial quotas in a drive to sell this book total 415. They were adopted at separate meetings of members of the United Auto Workers (UAW), United Steelworkers of America (USWA), Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), and the International Association of Machinists (IAM). Socialist workers in the United Transportation Union (UTU) will meet in Newark to discuss this campaign and adopt a quota, as will members of Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Union (PACE) in Houston.

Party members will soon meet with supporters of the Socialist Workers Party to ask for help in the campaign to sell *Capitalism's World Disorder*. "We aim to get our supporters to each buy two or three copies — one for themselves — and one or two to sell to co-workers, friends, or others with whom they have political discussions. The explosion of help from supporters of our movement in the past year," Britton said, "shows the kind of response we can expect in this effort too."

He reported that since July supporters and members of the party have contributed more than \$700,000 to the Pathfinder Capital Fund and that an additional \$250,000 in capital investment is needed to advance the productivity and lower the costs of producing books and pamphlets needed by workers and farmers engaged in struggle. This will allow a substantial upgrade to the press room, including improved dust control, lighting, and a new floor. He cited the important role that the trade union members of the SWP have played in contributing bonuses.

Arrows from politics to tasks

Britton stated that the political underpinning of this campaign is the new mood and growing confidence among workers and farmers throughout the country. He quoted from the preface by Mary-Alice Waters, that this book is so timely today "precisely because there are increasing opportunities to apply in practice, to use as a guide to action, the facts and ideas encountered in these pages. There are increasing opportunities to measure these analyses against our own daily conditions of life and struggle, correcting and adjusting them as necessary." There are many arrows going "directly from the politics of this book," Britton stated, "to the daily activities and tasks of socialist workers and young socialists."

Many examples were cited by participants in the discussions. Ted Leonard, a textile worker from Massachusetts, for example, described discussions in his break room on legislation proposed by the governor to mandate that all public school students wear uniforms. "I explained," he said, "that this new book *Capitalism's World Disorder* discusses this very issue and takes it up as a class question, as one of the ways that the capitalist system attempts to regiment working-class youth. I haven't sold a book there yet, but think there's a good basis to do so." Leonard also related that he's been urging co-workers to go with him to protests initiated by students against eliminating affirmative action in admissions policies at nearby Amherst College.

Leonard was hitting on one of the themes

of the weekend meetings — that is for working-class fighters to participate in broader social protest actions. "We should help draw vanguard workers who we are working with to participate in actions against police brutality, immigration raids, the death penalty, attacks on abortion clinics, and so on," Britton urged. "We have to see these as union issues."

A panel discussion organized by the Chicago Militant Labor Forum as part of the weekend's activities helped point the way forward along this course. The panelists included Larry Lay, member of UAW Local 974 and a worker at Caterpillar in Peoria, Illinois; Theodore Wynn, a member of USWA Local 15271-02 that has been on strike against Tool and Engineering in Chicago since November 30; Ramona Chávez, a member of the UFCW Local 1149 at the Swift meatpacking plant in Marshalltown, Iowa; and Miguel Morales, active in the Committee in Solidarity with José Solís Jordan.

One of the main threads of the presentations and discussion was the role of police repression against fights of working people from the picket line to political and social fights. Lay, who belongs to UAW Local 974's Tactical Response Team, the "Blue Shirts," a grouping of workers that was formed to help mobilize the rank and file in the Caterpillar strike and continues to fight to defend Caterpillar workers and build solidarity with other fighting workers, recounted the role of the "police force that belongs to the wealthy." He cited an incident at the nearby strike at the Tazewell Machine Works in Pekin, Illinois, where a city cop singled out a union picket who is Black to harass. Other unionists, who are white, immediately came to his defense against this provocation.

Wynn described how the bosses attempted to pit white workers against Black workers at the beginning of the strike at Tool and Engineering.

Chávez related the fight Swift workers and others conducted against moves by the Marshalltown city officials to deputize city cops with powers to examine the immigration papers of people they take into custody. As a result of the protests, the chief of police said the deputization plan was off for now due to lack of funds (see article on front page). Reflecting the spirit of the workers, Chávez said, "They can throw us out, but we'll come right back."

Morales reported that José Solís, a Puerto Rican independence fighter was convicted March 12 of frame-up charges in connection with placing bombs outside a military recruitment center in Chicago more than six years ago. Morales said that just before the verdict came down, Solís said, "If convicted, I'll continue to fight. If I'm not convicted I'll continue to fight."

Just before the forum 100 protesters held a candlelight vigil outside the jail where Solís is being held. Joshua Carroll, a steelworker and recently the SWP mayoral candidate in Chicago, who participated in the action, read a message to Solís from the forum participants. "Your courage and fighting spirit in the face of the government and FBI attack," the message affirmed, "has inspired us and deepened our resolve to continue the struggle to expose their vicious frame-up."

Scope of resistance

During the weekend's discussions all the participants got a better sense of the widespread character of the working-class and farmer resistance that is unfolding throughout the country. But there was still an element of being surprised at openings that suddenly appear or are discovered. For example, John Sarge, an auto worker from Detroit, recounted that during the recent drive to get *Militant* subscribers to renew their subscriptions, a subscriber in Toledo was called and asked if he could meet to



Militant photos: Tony Lane (above), Tim Mailhot (left)



Above, March 10 rally in Pittsburgh to support strikers at RMI Titanium. Left, panelists at Militant Labor Forum in Chicago. Puerto Rican independence activist Miguel Morales is speaking. Seated from right are USWA striker Theodore Wynn, Caterpillar worker Larry Lay, meeting chair Betsey Stone, meatpacker Ramona Chávez, and translator Francisco Picado (both partly hidden). A theme of the meetings was working-class fighters participating in broader social protest actions.

discuss renewing his subscription. "He said he couldn't," Sarge recalled, "because workers at the Jeep plant where he works had just walked off the job to protest an attempt to impose mandatory overtime. That was the first we knew about this job action," Sarge said. "We got down there right away and worked together with our subscriber to sell *Militants*. We sold six new subscriptions on the picket lines and got to know a bunch of workers. I think," Sarge added, "that this shows the kind of potential that exists for selling *Capitalism's World Disorder*."

A worker from a UAW-organized plant in Springfield, Illinois, described a sales team she was part of earlier this month in central Illinois. The team went to mine portals where UMWA workers had struck late last year, Caterpillar plants, and to the picket lines where UAW workers are on strike against Tazewell. They sold scores of copies of the *Militant*.

At Freeman Crown No. 2 mine, they sold nine papers. "One miner asked if this was the new issue," she reported. "He was one of 13 who had bought the paper at the portal the previous week and wanted to be sure he was getting the current issue." She said that when she went to the National Farmers Union convention in Springfield a farmer from Minnesota asked what she thought about Jesse Ventura, the Reform Party governor of Minnesota. "I explained that I thought his victory was a serious matter and posed a threat to working people. He liked my response. These are the kind of questions being asked more and more that are dealt with in *Capitalism's World Disorder*," she said.

The scope of the resistance was underlined by Brian Williams, who works at the Bethlehem steel mill in Baltimore, in a report to the socialist steelworkers. He said that current or recent struggles of steelworkers involved over 8,000 workers at 16 companies. He pointed to the possibility of additional contract fights coming up — at the Newport News shipyard, and at a Ravenswood, West Virginia plant.

During the course of the joint session,

participants discussed a calendar of upcoming farm and labor actions.

Universal character of changes

In a summary to all the participants, Britton said, "We're continually being reminded that we are running behind the changes in consciousness and the breakout of struggles that are occurring and consequently are being surprised. It may be that in some jobs, particularly where we have only one person," he said, "that we've become so routinized in just getting to work that we haven't been initiating the kind of discussions or activities that could help test whether changes in the working class are being reflected there."

Even though there may be no strikes or Blue Shirts in some area at the moment, Britton added, "There is almost certainly workers and farmers who are more receptive to our ideas and will respond favorably to learning about *Capitalism's World Disorder* and other materials we have."

Each fraction decided to encourage socialist workers to organize sales of the new book beyond the workers in their own plants. The quotas reflect sales that members of local fractions will organize to workers and farmers on picket lines and at protest rallies, conferences, and plant gates. The quotas adopted are: USWA — 80; UFCW — 80; UAW — 75; UNITE — 70; and IAM — 110.

At meetings last fall the national fractions had made helping to rebuild the fractions of socialist workers in the UFCW, UNITE, and the UMWA a major priority. Considerable progress in this effort was registered at the meetings in Chicago. Both the UFCW and UNITE fractions are now comparable in size to the other fractions and have expanded their geographical distribution. They are getting involved in a broad range of activities. Reports were presented on recent teams to the western coal fields and the prospects for getting jobs in the mines.

Maggie Trowe, Betsey Stone, Gale Shangold, and Danny Booher contributed to this article.

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Louisiana farmers: It's lose our land or fight

BY JERRY FREIWIRTH

BATON ROUGE, Louisiana — Four hundred farmers and their families poured into an auditorium here March 10 at Southern University and A&M College. They came to hear details of a proposed settlement in a class-action discrimination lawsuit filed against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) by farmers who are Black.

This was the 13th such meeting held around the country in recent weeks by the plaintiffs' lawyers. It was one of the first meetings after the March 2 "fairness hearing" in federal district court in Washington, D.C.

Some 450 farmers attended that hearing. Many expressed opposition to the proposed settlement, explaining that the provisions for cash payment and debt relief are woefully inadequate and will not stop the discriminatory practices that have forced thousands of farmers off their land. Others at the Washington hearing told the presiding judge in the case that they supported the settlement, but urged that it be strengthened.

At the Baton Rouge meeting, many farmers were more generally disposed to the settlement, although some had big questions. "I think this settlement can help," said Bernard Pierre, a sugar cane farmer from New Iberia. Pierre, like many at the Baton Rouge meeting, is of French-speaking, Creole origin. "I'm not saying this will solve all our problems. The people [in the USDA] responsible

for years of discrimination against Black farmers should be prosecuted. But they ain't going to do that, so what can I say?"

As farmers walked into the auditorium they were given a number and put on a list to talk to one of more than a dozen lawyers present. The lawyers organizing the meeting stopped passing numbers out after 130. The rest were told to come back for the next such meeting scheduled for April 14. Some farmers and their families had traveled considerable distances and were clearly angry about having made a wasted trip.

Alexander Pires, the lead counsel for the plaintiffs, lauded the consent decree, declaring it a "historic settlement." He made no mention of the considerable opposition voiced by farmers the week before in Washington, D.C. Nor did he mention the fact that lead plaintiff Tim Pigford, speaking on behalf of all the named plaintiffs in the case, called on the judge to overturn it.

According to Pires, 14,000 farmers have applied so far to receive compensation under the settlement. The meeting was organized so that no discussion of the consent decree would take place. Pires abruptly adjourned the meeting and farmers who had gotten numbers were ushered one-by-one to meet with a lawyer about their particular case. None of the farmers groups that have organized opposition to the settlement were visibly present at the gathering.

One of those who was told to come back was Jodie McGuire. She had traveled all the way from Chicago, where she works as a municipal bus driver after being forced to shut down her farm in Chatham, Louisiana, some years back. McGuire clutched a sheaf of documents she hoped would prove the discriminatory treatment she had received at the hands of a USDA country committee. Her family had farmed their land for generations, and she had painstakingly put together the necessary equipment so that they could begin chicken farming again. "But when it came time to get the loan," McGuire said, "the loan officer told me, 'Sorry, honey, you don't know anything about raising chickens.' How dare he say that! And there was no appeal. I'll tell you, a lot of us are hurtful."

Waiting to see a lawyer, Bernard Pierre stood with a group of sugar cane farmers from the New Iberia area quietly talking among themselves. They spoke of the large number of Black farmers who have been forced off the land, in part due to the discriminatory policies of the USDA. Black farmers are losing their land at a rate two and a half times that of other farmers. "Lots of people have lost their farms, and not just their land, but their homes, too," he explained. Pierre and his friends started figuring out how many Blacks were actually farming in the towns where they live in St. Martin Parish in southwestern Louisiana. "In St. Martinville there

are now only five Black farmers, and in Loreauville there is only one," Pierre said.

Reolan Anderson grows sugar cane, working alongside his two sons, on a farm just west of Lafayette. He also works as a carpenter, and his sons work part-time, non-farm jobs, too. "It's almost impossible these days to make it without a job off the farm," he explained. Anderson pointed to the fact that the price farmers receive for their sugar cane crop has not increased more than a few pennies since 1991. But farmers' costs for seed, fertilizer, insecticides, and the like have increased sharply over the same years. "I bring my cane to the Patou-Jeanerette sugar mill. As payment for processing the crop, the mill takes anywhere from 43-51 percent of its value," he added.

Anderson strongly supports the class-action suit against the USDA, telling how Black farmers in the region regularly received their loans so late that they were unable to buy the necessary material for a successful crop. He is still weighing the adequacy of the proposed consent decree. "But one thing is for sure," Anderson said, "the choice for most of us is to be driven out of farming or to fight back. For me, I have no intention of walking away."

Jerry Freiwirth is a member of Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers Union Local 4-367 in Pasadena, Texas.

Florida farmers discuss suit against gov't discrimination

BY RACHELE FRUIT

BROOKSVILLE, Florida — "I found out that we are not in this struggle alone," said Frances Sesler at a meeting here on March 7. "It feels so good to see so many farmers get together. I am glad to be part of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association," the BFAA. Frances Sesler's husband, Clyde, is a plaintiff in the national class-action suit brought by Black farmers against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). They, along with other plaintiffs from this part of Florida, went to the February 13 meeting in Albany, Georgia, to hear about the government-proposed settlement of their suit.

Of the 70 people who gathered at Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church, 16 stood when the chairperson asked for farmers to stand. Many others were part of farm families from Hernando, Sumter, and Pasco counties. The meeting was organized to hear Gary Grant, the president of the BFAA, speak.

Grant spoke of the importance of the fight for land. He and his family have been fighting to keep their land since 1973. "All the wars around the world are being fought for land," said Grant, who is from Tillery, North Carolina. In the 1930s, "113 farm settlements were formed, mostly across the South. Eight were all African American settlements, of which Tillery was the largest. Three hundred Black families settled there, and today not one of them is farming," Grant said.

Mable Sims, who was born and raised on a farm nearby, explained how the land was stolen from Black farmers in this community of Twin Lakes through racist attacks, including lynchings. A February 14 article in the *St. Petersburg Times* described the origins of the Black settlements here after the Civil War and some of the racist terror they

experienced after the introduction of Jim Crow segregation.

"I am a small pig farmer," said Joe Sampson in the discussion, "and I have made it for more than 40 years by myself. But," he said, "I recently took 5,000 pounds of hog to market, and I brought back home less than \$1,000. When you go to the supermarket you have to pay a big price for pork, \$2 to \$3 a pound, and I got about 18 cents a pound."

Brian Sesler, who farms watermelon with his father Freddie Sesler, spoke during the discussion about the discrimination they encountered at the county Farm Services Administration office. "When we went back to the office, after filing for disaster relief, they said that they couldn't find our file for 1998. What happened to that paperwork?"

Six members of the executive board of the NAACP in Hernando County were present at the meeting and both the president and the vice-president spoke to welcome Grant. Both of them had grown up on a farm and expressed shock and anger at the statistic that there are less than 200 Black farmers under the age of 25 in the United States today.

Yvonne Woods gave a moving account of how the Black farmers' fight against discrimination began in this region. Her husband, Willie Woods, is a watermelon farmer and plaintiff in the lawsuit. She explained how he was denied government relief even though the county had received money allotted to help farmers who had lost their crop in 1995 and 1996. She took it upon herself to continue the struggle, writing letters to the gov-

ernor and state representative and continuing to file complaints. "That's how it started," she said, "and since then more have joined the struggle. I know we will get to victory."

Yvonne and Willie Woods, along with 450 other farmers, participated in the Washington, D.C., rally and hearing on March 2, telling the judge in the case the proposed settlement is not justice.

In south Florida Grant also addressed the Haitian rights group Veye-Yo, the Church of the Open Door in Liberty City, and a meeting organized by a campus chapter of the National Organization for Women. About 100 people attended these meetings. He was interviewed by the local Black paper *Miami Times*, a farm radio network, Haitian radio Pep-la, the *South Dade*



Joe Sampson explains devastating effect of collapse in hog prices

News Leader, and the Dade Monroe Grower.

Rachele Fruit is a member of International Association of Machinists Local 1126.

Former death row prisoners speak out

BY M.J. RAHN

BOSTON — In response to Massachusetts governor Paul Celucci's campaign to reinstitute the death penalty in the state, two events opposing the death penalty took place here in early March.

A picket and rally were held March 8 at the Statehouse in Boston's government center during a frigid, windy rush hour. The demonstration of about 50 people was called by the Campaign to End the Death Penalty and was mostly college students. Numerous drivers passing by honked support for the banners and picket signs.

The next night, at Boston College, four former death row inmates, three Black and one Puerto Rican, told how they were freed as a result of beating frame-ups. One of them, Joseph Shakaba Brown, was within 13 hours of execution when he was released from a Florida prison in 1987. The forum was titled, "I Was Innocent but the State Tried to Kill Me." The auditorium was packed with 300 students, area residents, and representatives

of various media.

Delbert Tibbs was freed in 1977 from a rape and murder conviction in 1974 following a defense campaign. The prosecutor admitted the investigation "had been tainted from the beginning," he said. "I was a simple case of the wrong man being in the wrong place at the wrong time. And it could happen to any one of you."

Wilbert Lee spent 12 years on death row with Freddie Pitts, for the same double murder, between 1963 and 1975. They were pardoned by Florida's governor after another man confessed to the killings. Lee said, "I thought there was our case and maybe a few others like it. But last fall I went to a conference at Northwestern University in Illinois and found 30 others who were innocent and got released. I was shocked! And there are others. Who knows how many didn't get out because they couldn't get the legal help or had no outside support?"

Brown described his frame-up and gave a brief picture of life on death row. "You're

locked up in a little cell 23 hours a day, you get an hour out for recreation or exercise — if the weather's good. You get six minutes twice a week for a shower. And I mean six minutes, not six and a half. The last 30 days they move you to a cell just down the hall from the electric chair, where they test it twice a day. They warm it up just to make sure it's working, for you. A lot of guys went crazy before they got executed."

Rolando Cruz, from Chicago, was in prison for 12 years. He put together his own defense and investigative team, which eventually won his freedom. He is now putting police officers and his former prosecutor on trial in Chicago for abusing their power and falsifying evidence.

An announcement was made for the April 24 march in Philadelphia in defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a journalist and Black rights fighter who is framed up on death row.

M.J. Rahn is a member of Union of Needle-trades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

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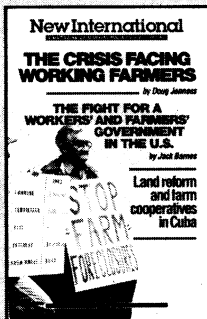
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Solidarity was key in strike at Inco Alloys

BY DANNY BOOHER
AND TONY LANE

HUNTINGTON, West Virginia — Workers at Inco Alloys ratified a new contract here February 24 after a determined strike. Inco Alloys is the largest employer in town. The 840 workers are members of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 40.

According to strike captain Bob Adkins, "We had 688 people who voted on the contract. Twelve voted no. We were able to get supplemental pension guarantees and a successorship clause in case the plant was sold again. We won that foreman can no longer work production in the plant, and we won guidelines on how overtime is administered. We had 30 to 40 workers who were fired for strike related incidents. All were given amnesty and brought back into the plant." Adkins added that during the 10-week strike, "not one person crossed our picket line." According to Adkins the company and union agreed that 500 of the workers would be brought back immediately and the rest would be back in the plant in 30 days.

In a March 16 phone interview, Randy Moore, vice president of USWA Local 40, said the company has laid off 179 workers at the plant since signing the contract. "We believe the layoffs are connected to the strike because of our unsettled unemployment claims," he said. "The company is trying to show that they lost orders during the strike and if that can be proved, our claims could be denied and the company would not have to pay their share. The first hearing on our unsettled claims was canceled. The hearing was rescheduled for May 17."

The strike began on December 12. The central issues were contractual guarantees on the workers' retirement pensions and outsourcing of work. According to Moore the company had refused to put these issues in the contract. The company also refused to guarantee in writing union recognition if the plant was sold. Other issues in the strike were medical deductibles, safety and health

issues, and the disciplinary policy.

The company carried out limited production with office staff and supervisors.

Inco Alloys is a producer of nickel alloys used in auto parts, household appliances, and industrial equipment. The company was recently purchased by Special Metals Corp. for \$365 million and many workers there suspect the company may be sold again.

Harassment and arrests

During the 10-week strike the local union had to contend with the cops, courts, and company hired thugs. Inco hired guards from the Property Protection Agency. Pickets said they harassed strikers, shining large spotlights directly on the picket line and videotaping strikers and their supporters.

On February 1 company security guards took things further. Adkins told the *Militant* at the time, "Six of the company guards came out and stood face to face with our pickets. They brushed up against us and tried to provoke us into a confrontation. When the scab trucks crossed the picket line they'd go back inside. When another scab truck came up to the gate they'd repeat the same thing." The scab trucking firm is operated by Werner Enterprises.

More than 50 strikers showed up the next day at the Elm Street gate where the harassment was taking place. Seven police cruisers from Huntington were dispatched to the gate after alleged reports that the pickets had thrown rocks at the trucks. When the strikers challenged this report and asked the cops why they were not stopping the Werner trucks running the stop signs, the cops arrested one of the pickets. Striker Garret Mayo related, "I told the police, 'They have no right to do that.' The arresting officer let go of the picketer and came over to me. The cop then said to me, 'It's over,' and I said, 'No it ain't.' The cops then grabbed me, threw me over the hood of their car and handcuffed me. I was arrested, taken to jail and charged with disorderly conduct."



Militant/Matt Herreshoff

Inco Alloy strike activists in January proudly show food bank they set up

Later that day Michael Childers, 22, was hit by one of the Werner trucks while walking picket at the Elm Street gate. Adkins said, "The driver swerved to hit him. Everybody saw it happen.... The company used intimidation tactics to get us to react. The company wanted to get an injunction."

The truck driver was arrested later that day for leaving the scene of an accident.

On February 4 a Cabell County court judge slapped an injunction on the strikers limiting the pickets to seven per gate.

Solidarity and support in the strike

The strike at Inco was one of several labor battles in the Ohio Valley region. These battles include the recent victory by Steelworkers members after a 22-month strike against MSI in Marietta, Ohio, and the ongoing 25-month strike by rubber workers at Monarch Rubber in Spencer, West Virginia.

Another strike that is having an impact on the region is the strike by 500 Steelworkers at RMI Titanium in Niles, Ohio. They have called for another solidarity rally for their strike for 12 noon on March 28 in Niles. Letters and leaflets have been sent out re-

gionally to USWA locals and other unions for all to come to Niles to support their strike. Local 2155 at RMI sent out a February 25 letter to "fellow union members" announcing the March 28 rally and calling on "all fellow unions to show solidarity." The letter also asks for "any support you can give us and our food bank." A feature of rallies like the one called for in Niles has been the growing number of unionists and others who are involved in contract fights, strikes, and other protests coming to show support and explain the fights they are involved in.

"When the Local 1199 Cabell Huntington Hospital workers went on strike in September, 50 of our members marched up to show support and walk picket," said Adkins. Another striker pointed out that 20 Local 40 members went to an MSI rally last year.

"We received checks for \$1,000 each from the USWA in Ravenswood and Local 37 at Steel of West Virginia. Both have contracts coming up. They're going to face the same thing we did," Adkins said. "We got financial support and donations to our food pantry from many area unions and individuals."

There were two support rallies during the strike. One held in a vacant lot near the main gate of the plant drew 500 strikers, their families, and supporters. The other was sponsored by USWA Local 37 at its union hall in Huntington, and was attended by several hundred strikers and supporters.

Angela Wolford has worked at the plant for three years. She told the *Militant*, "We had gotten a lot of support from the community. Part of your responsibility is to support this fight. They were out to hurt this union. I am a single mom. If we didn't take a stand now, we would lose everything. People need to know that when we are out on strike, we have to help each other."

The local had a strike fund that it used to help the strikers meet some of their basic monthly expenses. They also had a well stocked food pantry where they served hot meals and dispensed donated groceries for the strikers. The food pantry was operated by the Women's Support Group.

Danny Booher and Tony Lane are members of the USWA in Pittsburgh.

Locked-out oil workers plan further actions

The following article is excerpted from *Defending Workers Rights*, a newsletter produced by a locked-out member of **Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers Local 4-227 at Crown Central Petroleum in Pasadena, Texas.**

BY DEAN COOK

Ralliers gathered at Local 4-227 February 5 to protest the lockout at Crown Central Petroleum in Pasadena, Texas. Rally events were held at both the union hall and the refinery.

At the hall, ralliers heard from locked-out Crown workers as well as members of the Catfish Workers of America from Belzoni, Mississippi; Steelworkers on strike at Titan Tire in Natchez, Mississippi; Steelworkers locked out at Kaiser Aluminum; and Eddie Slaughter, farmer and vice-president of Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association....

Dean Alexander and Jim Byrd, both officers of PACE, spoke at the rally. Jim Byrd read a letter from PACE president Boyd Young offering words of encouragement.

Incidentally, the weekend following the rally, one of the scabs bumped several picketers with his white Dodge truck at the picket line. The Pasadena Police were called. Thirty minutes later, when they finally showed up, they informed us the area was out of their jurisdiction. Funny, when Crown calls, they have no problem hassling us outside their jurisdiction.

I was asked why we included a farmer as a speaker at the rally. Farmers have played an important role in workers' struggles in this country. For example, in the 1930s when the Teamsters were on strike in Minneapolis, it was only with the cooperation of the farmers that the strike was a success. The same goes for the civil rights movement of the '50s and '60s. The farmers used their land to bail the civil rights activists out of jail on many occasions.

Lawsuit update

Crown's lawsuit against locked-out workers claiming sabotage continues to drag on.

The company and its lawyers have been taking depositions from many of the locked-out workers. Recently, Phyllis Miller, 23-year employee, was deposed. They questioned her about responsibilities as a Health and Safety Representative while at Crown and as a member of the Hardship Committee. The Company's lawyers implied that Phyllis, as a member of the Health and Safety Committee, was responsible for sabotage as well as the rest of the Committee members. According to Crown's lawyers, it is not only the Committee's responsibility to inform the company of safety hazards and equipment in ill repair. It is also the Committee's responsibility, after the company has failed to make the needed repairs, to hound the company from now to eternity, or until the repairs are made....

Workers on the road

Locked-out Crown workers have been traveling around town and around the country offering their solidarity and receiving the same. We recently went to a rally in Natchez, Mississippi, for Steelworkers on strike at Titan Tire. While there, we were able to meet with Steelworkers locked-out at Kaiser Aluminum, and workers unjustly fired by Freshwater Catfish in Belzoni, Mississippi.

Kaiser Aluminum is owned by MAXXAM Corporation, which is headquartered here in Houston. Some of the Kaiser workers are here in Houston at all times picketing the home of CEO, Charles Hurwitz, and the company headquarters. Two rallies were held in as many days recently in Houston while Hurwitz was on trial for a savings and loan failure and scandal. Crown workers Ronnie Smith, Tom Boots, Hector Saenz, Robert Bridges, and Dean Cook were at one or both rallies.

Karen Sloan and Dean Cook just returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., for a rally and hearing for the Black Farmers who are suing the Department of Agriculture for discrimination....

Dave Delahoussaye and his wife, Rita, just returned from a Jobs with Justice convention in Louisville, Kentucky. They were

able to meet workers from all over the United States and distribute information about the lockout.

Rally again

The February 5 rally was unlike any rally we've had. It was so well liked, we decided to do it again. And since May Day was the original Labor Day in this country, and since May Day is now recognized around the world as a day of protest for workers, it seemed like the logical choice for our next rally day. May Day is May 1, Saturday. Make plans to come and bring your family.

If you would like to join in the planning efforts, or would like to go on the road with the locked out workers to meet up with other fighters, contact us at 713-475-9560, or at dcook@nwwin.com. Visit our website at www.nwwin.com/~ocaw4227.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR Upcoming Labor and Farm Actions

Sun., March 28
RMI Titanium Strike Support Rally
Niles, Ohio

For more information call: (330) 652-0288.

Thurs., April 1
Mitchell Day — Miners
Celebrate the Eight-Hour Day
Events throughout coal fields

Wed. April 7— Fri., April 9
Coal Miners Black Lung Conference
Beckley, West Virginia

Fri., April 9 — Sat., April 10
Rally to Support Catfish Workers
Fight for Justice (April 9)

Fourth Annual African-American
Heritage Buffalo Fish Festival (April 10)
Belzoni, Mississippi

For more information call: (601) 247-2694
or 247-1471; Fax: (601) 247-1384

Sun., April 18
Farm Worker Organizing Rally
Salinas, California

Sat., April 24
New Trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal!
End the Death Penalty!
March and Rally, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
For more information call: (215) 476-8812;
Fax: (215) 476-7551

Sat., May 1
Rally for Locked-Out
Crown Oil Workers
Pasadena, Texas
For more information call: (713) 475-9560

Rally for striking United Steel-
workers of America at Titan Tire
Des Moines, Iowa
For more information call: (515) 262-4935

Washington steps up threats against China

Continued from front page
tempting to deceive lab officials about security matters.”

There is bipartisan agreement among the U.S. rulers to try to prevent Beijing from becoming the dominant power in Asia. The Clinton administration has floated plans to deploy a network of missile systems in Japan, south Korea, and Taiwan that would effectively give Washington the capacity to launch a first nuclear strike against China.

But conservative politicians and rightists who led the failed impeachment campaign against Clinton have also seized on the charges of “Chinese spying” to attack the Democratic administration for not being tough enough on Beijing.

“This could well be one of the most serious security breaches in the nation’s history,” declared Sen. Richard Lugar, top Republican in the Senate Foreign Relations and Intelligence committees. He claimed the United States may be at significantly greater risk from a Chinese ballistic missile attack.

“The allegations surrounding the transfer of atomic secrets to a potential enemy are the most serious since the Rosenbergs went to the electric chair in 1953,” asserted ultrarightist presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan. He called for the resignation of National Security Adviser Samuel Berger, accusing him of “dereliction of duty” for not pursuing the charges more vigorously.

No evidence presented by FBI

So far, Lee has not been charged with committing any crime. After being questioned by FBI agents, Lee “continued to insist he had done nothing wrong,” the *Washington Post* reported March 9. In recent months FBI agents administered two polygraphs (so-called lie detector tests) to Lee. The FBI was “unsatisfied” with the results of the first test, conducted last December, the *New York Times* reported. They claimed the second test in February indicated Lee was being deceptive. A two-and-one-half year investigation by the government snoops has yielded no concrete evidence against Lee. The spy agency states the case against him may be “unprosecutable.”

But the big-business press is barreling ahead to paint Lee up as a spy. A March 15 *Wall Street Journal* news article, headlined “U.S. Scientist in Secrets Flap Sought Invitations to China” tries to cast a sinister light that in the 1980s the scientist requested to attend two conferences in his field held in Beijing. There Lee presented theoretical papers that had been cleared by his bosses at Los Alamos. His laboratory colleagues described him as “baffled” by the FBI probes and interrogation linking him to espionage.

Beijing called Washington’s spy allegations a “farce” and “fabrication.” The New China News Agency described the *Times* article claiming Chinese espionage as launching a “smear campaign against China.”

According to the press accounts, the only evidence of spying is the assertion by U.S. officials that scientists in China could not have developed the supposed small

bombs on their own. “I think the question of China’s theft of military secrets from the United States is a tale from *The Arabian Nights*,” said Chinese prime minister Zhu Rongji at a press conference March 15. “China is fully capable of developing any military technology,” he asserted.

An earlier “China spy case” now receiving a lot of coverage involved the 1997 arrest of another Taiwan-born physicist, Peter Lee. He was charged with giving “classified national defense information” to Chinese scientists during a trip to Beijing in 1985. He plead guilty and was sentenced to one year in a halfway house, ordered to pay a \$20,000 fine, and to do 3,000 hours of community service. The information Peter Lee (no relation to Wen Ho Lee) supposedly released was declassified by the time of his arrest. He was among dozens of scientists in the United States authorized by Los Alamos laboratory officials to travel to China.

In another probe against democratic rights, a federal grand jury in Boston indicted Yao Yi from China and Collin Shu from Canada March 10 on charges of conspiracy to violate export control laws. They tried to ship fiberoptic gyroscopes to China. Yao was arrested in late February at a scientific conference in San Diego.

Recalling the Rosenbergs’ execution

New York Times writer William Safire asserted the “stolen nuclear secrets” were the “most damaging atomic spy coup since the Rosenbergs” in his March 15 column. This comparison is becoming a familiar refrain.

In 1951 Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were sentenced to death on charges of violating the Espionage Act, based on cooked-up evidence of supplying atomic “secrets” to the Soviet Union. They were electrocuted two years later. The Rosenbergs were framed-up and executed during the McCarthy witch-hunt era, which was an extension of the government assault on constitutional liberties that had begun at the end of the 1930s under the administration of Democrat Franklin Roosevelt. In the name of vigilance against subversives, Roosevelt greatly expanded the powers of Washington’s political police in an effort to

tame the labor movement and stifle opposition to the U.S. rulers’ impending entry into World War II against their imperialist rivals.

The U.S. government’s propaganda campaign against “Chinese spying” coincides with the Pentagon’s recent proposal to set up a domestic military command and the increased prominence of Clinton’s “counterterrorism” chief, Richard Clarke. U.S. rulers have increased the budget of their counterterrorism program to \$11 billion a year.

Clarke’s post on the National Security Council involves coordinating the Pentagon program for military action with local police forces throughout the continental United States. He played a prominent role in Washington’s decision to launch cruise missiles at Afghanistan and Sudan last August.

In a profile interview with *New York Times* reporter Tim Weiner, Clarke pointed to the White House campaign to gain assent for the increasing use of military might against “rogue states,” while the encroaching on civil liberties to attack “rogue groups” at home. He spoke of the “threat of cyberwar,” as one pretext for using military firepower and curbing democratic rights. “There is a problem convincing people that there is a threat,” Clarke said, referring to a hypothetical attack on the computer network of a telephone or transportation system.

“An attack on American cyberspace is an attack on the United States, just as much as a landing on New Jersey,” Clarke declared. “The notion that we could respond with military force against a cyber-attack has to be accepted.”

Combining this “cyberwar” propaganda with the anti-China campaign, the March 16 London’s *Financial Times* headlined an article “China studies computer warfare.” It reported on Pentagon claims that Beijing is researching how to penetrate “into US military networks which control deployments in the Asian region.”

Washington-Beijing tensions heighten

The U.S. big-business media and ruling-class figures are using their espionage concoction to press a military campaign against Beijing. “With or with out the [advanced nuclear] warheads, China is able to threaten

the United States,” said former defense secretary William Perry in early March after returning from a visit to China.

Over the past two months incipient fascist politician Buchanan has campaigned for military action against China. His presidential campaign website declares, “Communist China... now uses our currency to expand its military, steal our technology and buy weapons to target U.S. Marines on Okinawa and the sailors of the Seventh Fleet.”

Tensions have been escalating between Washington and Beijing, especially since Clinton announced the plan to deploy a “missile shield” in countries that surround China. As part of this scheme, the U.S. government is considering plans to sell a fleet of Aegis destroyers to the Taiwan government, which the Pentagon would equip with anti-missile systems with the capacity to shoot down Beijing’s ballistic missiles. The missile system is purportedly designed to protect U.S. bases in Asia from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

This military encirclement of China and north Korea by Washington is preparation for attempting to overturn the gains of the workers and farmers in China and north Korea, who overturned the rule of the capitalists and landlords through revolutionary struggle. It is also aimed in the longer run against the workers state in Russia, as is the move to expand the U.S.-dominated NATO military alliance into Eastern Europe.

An unnamed Chinese official was quoted in the March 8 *Washington Post* saying Washington and Tokyo were exaggerating military threats from north Korea as a pretext to implement the missile system, “strengthen their military alliance,” and maintain their imperialist domination in the region.

Any effort to deploy the U.S. missile system in Taiwan “would amount to an encroachment on China’s national sovereignty and territorial integrity and also be an obstruction to the great cause of reunification with the motherland,” stated Tang Jiaxuan, China’s foreign minister at a March 7 news conference. Tang said Washington should butt out of China’s affairs. “Whether we should deploy missiles on our own territory is our own business,” he added.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Raging Fire Takes Death Toll at Bay Area Tosco Refinery, and the Company’s Guilt. Speaker: Jim Altenberg, Tosco worker, member Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers (PACE). Fri., March 26, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Donation: \$5. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

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Palestinian Resistance in the West Bank and Gaza. Eyewitness Report. Speaker: Argiris Malapanis, who was on a recent *Militant* reporting trip to the region. Sat., March 27, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6:30 p.m. 59 4th Avenue. Donation: Program \$4. Dinner: \$5. Tel: (718) 399-7257.

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Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium. Speaker: Dan Rita, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 26, 7:30 p.m. 3967 Main St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (604) 872-8343.

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CALENDAR

ALABAMA

Birmingham

Youth Leaders from Cuba Speak on the Cuban Revolution Today. Hear: Itamys Caridad García Villar and Luis Ernesto Morejón Rodríguez. Tue., March 30, 7 p.m. Civil Rights Institute, community Meeting, Room 520, 16th Street North.

GEORGIA

Atlanta

Youth Leaders from Cuba Speak on the Cuban Revolution Today. Meet two young leaders from Cuba on an eight-city tour of the United States sponsored by the Committee on Cuban Youth and Education based at UCLA. Hear: Ytams Caridad García Villar and Luis Ernesto Morejón Rodríguez. Fri., March 26, 7:30 p.m. Emory University, White Hall, Room 206. Sponsors: Emory University International Student and Scholar Programs; Emory University Office of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Life; Emory University Office of Multicultural Programs and Services; Atlanta Network on Cuba. For more information, call (404) 377-4980.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

Young Socialists Fund-raising Barbecue. Saturday, March 27, at 5 p.m. Includes the showing of a documentary video on the life of Malcolm X. For more information, call (9) 379-3075.

How about a mortician's bill? — Memo by the chair of Bear Stearns, the Wall Street folks, on sick days: "No excuse. We will no longer accept your doctor's state-



Harry Ring

ment or note. It is clear that if you are well enough to get to the doctor's office, you are well enough to come to work."

'Socialist' Sweden (con's) — Last week we picked up the disclosure that in the 1940s, the Swedish government permitted a group of severely retarded patients to starve to death. Now it's reported the government is readying compensation for people, mostly women, subjected to sterilization between 1936 and 1976. A Reuters dispatch called it a "Nazi-style program," which targeted many because they were deemed "racially or socially inferior."

A Big Apple a day... — "People who live in New York City — and even those who are just visiting the city — are more likely than other

Americans to die of heart attacks, according to researchers...." — News Item.

'A Rusty on rye!' — Canadian food officials have approved iron oxide as an additive for ham. It replaces caramel as a coloring agent because it's cheaper and easier to use. Iron oxide, we learned, is plain old rust. The director of the Institute of Food Science was dubious, observing, "I can't see [that] it would be popular with consumers."

Baubles — If you're souvenir-hunting in London, drop in at D.R. Harris and Co., a drug store that's been serving the royal family and others, since 1730. These days they

offer a range of items. Like: A nasal hair clipper, about \$150; silver toothpicks, \$265; a swizzle stick for removing bubbles (?) from champagne, \$265; and a king-size sea sponge, \$750.

Thy rod shall comfort me? — In Gray, Kentucky, a new ordinance permits the clergy to pack a gun during services. The law came after one reverend's congregation was taken for \$400 in the midst of a sermon.

No federal aid? — A cool million buys less than ever in Southern California. Many homes in pricey seaside locales no longer come with swimming pools or ocean views.

Many have only three or four bedrooms.

No consideration — The sale of retirement home units in New Zealand had been reaping a bundle, but a warmer winter slowed down the profit-taking. The milder weather led to fewer deaths. This, in turn, reduced the number of units available for resale.

Thought for the week — "Without the power to enter, to eavesdrop and to search, you can't be an effective modern security service..." — Dame Stella Remington, former head of Britain's MI5, addressing a special committee of New Zealand's parliament.

'False witness': story of a McCarthyite witch-hunter

The decision to give a "lifetime achievement" Oscar to director Elia Kazan has reopened debate on those like him who gave names to the House Un-American Activities Committee during the McCarthyite witch hunt. In 1952 James P. Cannon, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, wrote a series of articles for the *Militant* about another star snitch, Whittaker Chambers. Below we reprint major excerpts of one of these articles, "False Witness," first published in the June 9, 1952, *Militant*. It is included in *Notebook of an Agitator: From the Wobblies to the Fight against the Korean War and McCarthyism* by James P. Cannon. The book is copyright © 1958 Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BOOK OF THE WEEK

BY JAMES P. CANNON

Experience over the ages has taught most people that it is imprudent to trust the unsupported word of a police informer against another person or persons who may have been associated with him. There is always a suspicion that he may be lying to save his own skin, or otherwise to benefit at the expense of others. So far as criminal cases are concerned, this well-grounded skepticism has been crystallized into the legal maxim that the testimony of an accomplice is inadmissible as evidence without independent corroboration. This principle of law should be extended to impose a double caution with regard to the testimony of an informer who switches sides in a social conflict and stands to benefit from his apostasy.

The many perjuries admitted by Whittaker Chambers under cross-examination in the [Alger] Hiss case¹ raised an uneasy doubt in the public mind over the value of any of his testimony. Is his evidence against communism any more trustworthy? There seem to be widespread doubts about this too; and Chambers has now offered a

book of 800 pages in an effort to dispel them. This book, *Witness*, is being highly touted by the beneficiaries of privilege and their literary apologists who badly need a believable witness against communism. The unprecedented advertising and publicity campaign behind it is designed to make an impression by sheer volume. Chambers is recommended as a "sincere" witness whose numerous admitted lies in the past should not be held against him, and as an authentic ex-Communist who has finally seen the light and now recognizes that the present social system, being designed by God, shouldn't be tampered with.

Chambers' record, however, does not justify such a recommendation. He does not tell the truth about his time in the Communist Party, nor about the reasons for his long delay in breaking with it, nor about the motivation for the break when it occurred in 1938. *Witness* is an attempt to rewrite the actual record in terms more suitable to his role of convert touched, as he claims, by the finger of God and, by special dispensation, getting his reward without waiting for the next world.

I wrote last week that Chambers "was never a Communist as he pretends, but merely a Stalinist who consciously practiced the Stalinist methods of double-dealing and betrayal". Formally speaking, the first half of that sentence was a slight exaggeration. The second half, however, needs no amendment. Chambers joined the Communist Party in 1925 when the process of Stalinization was far from completed, and a party member had a right to think he was a Communist, or wanted to become one. But American communism was then already in the grip of an internal crisis which had its source in the creeping degeneration of the Soviet Union. As in all political organizations, the principal issues at stake, first latent but eventually clearly defined, could not be resolved otherwise than by factional struggle.

Every party member worth his salt took a position and took part in these factional conflicts. Chambers piously explains that he stood aloof from all the factions and stayed away from unit meetings in order to avoid involvement. That says a lot about the seriousness of his membership in the Party, but somewhat discredits his present claim to give an accurate report of what happened there. He took no risks and accepted no consequences. When American communism was fighting for its life in the factional struggle of those years, he was a bystander. Chambers does not write about the experiences of those times with the authority of a participant.

He took no part; but as the factional struggles came to climax and split, he had an interest and sympathy which he lacked the moral courage to act upon. Even worse, he befouled his sympathy with a petty betrayal. Shortly after we were expelled from the Party in 1928 because of our support of Trotsky and the Russian Opposition, Chambers furtively expressed interest and sympathy with our cause. We had an important document in German — Trotsky's appeal to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern — which we wanted to publish. [Max] Shachtman showed Chambers the document. He read it, expressed interest and offered to translate it for us so that we could publish it in *The Militant*.

Shachtman gave him the copy, the only copy we had, and that's the last we ever saw of it. We waited impatiently for the translation to be completed, but heard nothing from Chambers. Finally Shachtman called him up and asked when the translation would be ready. Chambers answered that he had turned it over to the Central Committee of the CP. A small incident, perhaps, but more revealing for the judgment of a man's character than 800 pages of self-serving apologia.

In the fateful years 1936-1937, the years of the Moscow Trials and Purges, when the old guard Bolsheviks, who had really borne witness for communism, were being framed and slaughtered because they were Communists, Chambers held his peace and continued to serve the dominant power — the Stalinist murderers and their GPU. Now that he has gone whole hog in his "conversion" to another power, he tries to wash out the truth about that awful time and to exculpate himself in the process. He dumps the Stalinists and the Trotskyists, the traitors and the revolutionists, the murderers and the victims, into one sack. The issues between them, drawn by a great river of blood, were "merely quarrels over a road map". Going beyond the boundaries of shame, this "witness" for God's justice even excuses the slaughter of the irreproachable Old Bolsheviks. "Acting as a Communist, Stalin had acted rightly." That's what Chambers says now.

But that's not the way I heard it the first time. Chambers knew the truth about the Moscow Trials. And that is what bothered him, as it was bound to bother anyone with a glimmer of communist conscience. This is clear even from his own back-written, doctored-up account of his first reaction to

the trials. Listing the names of the most prominent victims, he inadvertently remarks: "The charge on which they were one and all destroyed, the charge that they had betrayed their handiwork, was incredible. They were the Communist Party." The Moscow Trials, not the afterthoughts about God and the FBI, are what moved Chambers finally, after two years of intellectualistic mulling and moping, to break with the Stalinist apparatus in 1938.

We knew about it first for the simple reason that, after his break with the GPU, he came to us first — to us and to others who had cooperated to expose and discredit the Moscow Trials, those who had spoken out against that infamy when he had remained silent in the service of its monstrous authors. He didn't go to the Church, or the Quaker Meeting House, or the FBI; he came to us. He expressed, and no doubt felt, a great admiration for Trotsky as the incorruptible representative of the communist faith which Chambers imagined that he also professed. The question was: What to do about it?

We did not represent a power of the present — only a program by means of which a future power can and will be created through struggle against any odds whatever. We didn't have much to offer him but a part in the struggle for ideas as a member of an isolated and persecuted minority. Chambers didn't have what it takes for that....

There, in a nutshell, is the life story of Whittaker Chambers. All that is left out of his autobiography which purports to be a full and true confession. That is why the whole book is a lie. It is not a "witness" against communism, but against Chambers and all his ilk, and against a social system in decay which can find no better heroes.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



March 29, 1974

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Seventeen hundred Black people made the trip to Little Rock March 15-17 for the Second National Black Political Convention.

The point was made again and again that through organizing to gain political power, Black people could begin to deal with unemployment, rotten housing, racist education, and so on. Unfortunately, a strategy did not emerge out of the convention that could lead toward gaining real political power for Black people. This was because the convention organizers and most of the delegates were oriented toward working through the two-party system.

A resolution calling for a Black party was submitted to the resolutions committee by the Georgia delegation. The Democratic Party supporters at the convention did everything they could to prevent a real discussion of this resolution. Maynard Jackson, mayor of Atlanta, put pressure on members of the Georgia delegation to withdraw it. The call for a break with the Democratic and Republican parties and for launching an independent party won the support of a number of delegates. The Wisconsin delegation, which included delegates from the Black Masses Party in Milwaukee, supported the original and later the amended resolution.



March 28, 1949

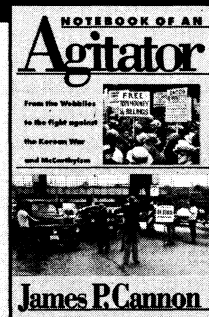
DETROIT, March 21 — George Novack, National Secretary of the Kutcher Civil Rights Committee, last night made a stirring appeal on "The Case of the Legless Veteran" to more than a hundred unionists and civil liberties defenders at a meeting here sponsored by the Greater Detroit and Wayne County Kutcher Civil Rights Committee.

Joining in this appeal for the defense of James Kutcher, who had lost both legs in action in Italy and was fired last summer from his Veterans Administration job for membership in the Socialist Workers Party, were a number of prominent speakers from labor, liberal and church groups.

They included Tom Clappitt, personal representative of Emil Mazey, Secretary-Treasurer of the CIO United Auto Workers; Rev. Charles A. Hill; George Schermer, Chairman of the Michigan Committee on Civil Rights; Dr. Harold L. Sheppard, sociology professor at Way University; Frank Marquart, Educational Director of UAW Briggs Local 212, was chairman of the meeting.

Novack gave a powerful statement of the fact and issues in the Kutcher case. "The cold war against government workers represented by the loyalty purges," he said, "is a threat to all workers. These are police state methods."

Pathfinder



Notebook of an Agitator

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JAMES P. CANNON

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Free José Solís!

Continued from front page

the government in Puerto Rico was forced in 1992 to begin releasing illegal spy files it had kept on 135,000 residents of the island.

Washington's dirty war against the Puerto Rican independence struggle exploded into the open with the exposure of the 1978 Cerro Maravilla case, in which the colonial police, with FBI complicity, murdered two pro-independence youths. They were entrapped by undercover cop and agent provocateur Alejandro González Malavé, who recruited them to a fake clandestine pro-independence group and lured them to the Cerro Maravilla mountaintop where they were executed by the cops.

Revelations in the case confirmed this cop operation was part of a systematic campaign by the U.S. and colonial authorities to paint the pro-independence movement as terrorist. For example, the FBI bombed a post office in the town of Ciales in 1978. González Malavé himself placed bombs at two post offices and several communications towers the same year.

The U.S. political police continued their repression with the arrest of the Hartford 15 in 1985. The frame-up trials against these pro-independence fighters were based largely on the testimony of FBI agents and hundreds of hours of illegal tape recordings, including doctored tapes.

Many aspects of Washington's dirty war on political rights were exposed in the lawsuit filed in 1973 by the Socialist Workers Party against spying and harassment by the FBI, CIA, immigration cops, and other political police agencies. The political campaign and lawsuit ended in 1986 with an important victory for all working people. A federal court ruled that the FBI's spying, use of informers, and other Cointelpro operations violated fundamental political rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

To frame up José Solís, the FBI resorted to its usual tactics: an informer-provocateur; a fake, unsigned confession; a secretly obtained tape recording "interpreted" by the cop informer; and testimony by a parade of FBI agents against Solís's word. As with other trials of Puerto

Rican independence activists, Solís did not have a jury of his peers. And the judge did her part, allowing prosecutors to introduce the phony confession and other fraudulent "evidence." Under those circumstances it's not surprising the U.S. government got a conviction.

Why is there a step-up in police harassment and disruption of Puerto Rican activists today? It is in response to the rise in the struggle for Puerto Rico's independence, most graphically seen in the general strike of half a million workers on the island last July against the sale of the state-owned telephone company. The nationalist sentiment has also been evident in the increased activity in defense of 16 Puerto Rican political prisoners, especially among a new generation in the United States.

The frame-up trial of Solís is not an isolated injustice. The Clinton administration has taken steps to beef up police forces, expand FBI wiretapping, curtail the rights of defendants, establish a domestic military command, and other undemocratic measures under the pretext of "fighting terrorism." In Chicago, government officials have made it clear they are still targeting the Roberto Clemente High School and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, including the center's director, pro-independence activist José López, who has refused to be intimidated.

The goal of the U.S. government's "antiterrorism" campaign is to instill fear and to isolate and silence fighters for social change. But in mobilizing support, defenders of José Solís can draw strength from the growing resistance among working people in the United States today. Workers such as the Illinois coal miners and Crown refinery workers in Texas have experience with FBI harassment and frame-ups on sabotage charges.

A public campaign that tells the truth can win backing, not only among independence supporters but much more broadly. This support can be won through forums, picket lines, and other public activities — between now and the July 7 sentencing of Solís, and beyond.

Free José Solís and all the Puerto Rican political prisoners!

Washington prepares to bomb Yugoslavia

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

After the delegation of Kosovar Albanians reportedly acquiesced to a U.S.-crafted "peace" deal, the U.S. media cranked up Washington's propaganda for launching air strikes on Yugoslavia. Round two of the negotiations in Paris is winding down with Belgrade still intransigent to accepting U.S. demands to deploy a NATO occupation force in Kosova.

"We continue to leverage the parties with the credible threat of NATO force," U.S. Gen. Wesley Clark told the House Armed Forces Committee March 17. The NATO commander said the military alliance is ready to bomb Yugoslavia if Belgrade doesn't buckle.

"No matter the pressure, blackmail, and ultimatums from abroad, Serbia won't agree to the NATO presence," declared Serbia's minister of information Aleksandar Vucic.

"The Serbs seemed to be bracing for war instead of preparing for peace," said the *New York Times* March 17. The big-business media reported on the movement of Yugoslav tanks and thousands of troops near the province.

Belgrade has stepped up a military offensive against the Kosova Liberation Army (UCK) of Albanian rebels, who are waging an armed struggle for independence. Serbian military and police forces pounded the Podujeva villages with artillery and mortar fire all night long March 14. The next day a Serb military unit launched artillery attacks on the villages of Mitrovica, Skenderaj, and Vushtrri, the Kosova Information Center reported. On March 13 three bombs exploded in northern Kosova, killing seven people and injuring 58, mostly Albanians.

The Clinton administration, which opposes independence for Kosova, has used Belgrade's war against the Albanians' struggle for self-determination as a pretext to campaign for military intervention. Meanwhile, Belgrade is doing Washington's dirty work of attempting to crush the independence movement.

"There is broad consensus that, if necessary — and it may be necessary quite soon, that NATO is prepared to use military force," said U.S. defense under secretary Walter Slocumbe. NATO officials in Brussels said 10,000 NATO soldiers are already in neighboring Macedonia for a rapid deployment and 26,000 troops could start occupying the province within one week from the time an agreement is reached.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said the imperialist arsenal of some 400 NATO warplanes are in the region ready for action, including 250 U.S. aircraft. The air power also includes B-52 bombers flying from Britain. Several U.S. warships are also poised for attack in the Adriatic Sea, armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles.

NATO officials are now making political preparations for launching a military assault, according to the Associated Press. The scenario would presumably open with a European foreign ministry delegation traveling to Belgrade to press Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic to relent. If that fails top NATO officials would make the trip, delivering Milosevic a deadline to agree or face air strikes. A similar performance led by U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright ended in a fiasco at Rambouillet, France, last month when the Albanians refused to swallow the imperialist agreement.

The Kosova delegation announced March 15 that they are ready to sign the U.S.-drafted plan. The next day, however, head Albanian negotiator Hasim Thaci said he would not actually sign until the Serbs did, according to the March 16 London's *Financial Times*.

The accord mandates the UCK rebels to disarm and drop their struggle for independence in return for limited autonomy. Some Albanian commanders say they will continue fighting for independence. Adem Demaci, who opposed the deal, resigned March 2 from his post as UCK political representative.

Washington's plans for intervention in Kosova has accelerated its collision course with Moscow, exemplified in NATO's expansion in Eastern and Central Europe over strong objections by the Russian government and U.S. government threats to scuttle the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia. The U.S. rulers are setting the stage for a possible military confrontation with the Russian workers state, aimed at reestablishing the domination of capitalist property relations throughout the former Soviet Union.

This lies behind the NATO expansion into Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, which formally joined the Atlantic military alliance March 12. This opens the immediate prospect of deploying U.S. troops near Russia's borders. Already, Polish troops are deployed in Bosnia and a Hungarian army engineering unit has rebuilt bridges there. Next month marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of NATO, to be commemorated with a summit held in Washington, D.C.

Thirst for profit = train crashes

The massive train crash in Illinois that killed 13 people was a disaster that could have been prevented. As the *Militant* goes to press, two days after the accident, the cause of the disaster is undetermined, according to government investigators. But this is false. The main cause of the accident is known: throughout the United States, highway and rail traffic are forced to intersect at thousands of railroad crossings, causing a major safety hazard.

Driven by their thirst for profits, railroads historically refused to run tracks through tunnels and over bridges in populated areas, nor did government regulatory agencies require it. Today, of the 260,000 grade-level railroad crossings only about 62,000 have an active warning system, some of which are merely lights. Last year 422 people were killed in train-vehicle collisions.

Acknowledging the problem, the federal government adopted a strategy in 1991 to close about 60,000 more crossings — leaving 200,000 untouched. In a moment of frankness, one transportation department official admit-

ted, "The best crossing is the one that doesn't exist."

The thousands of road crossings are not a necessity. The Northeast corridor from Washington, D.C., to New York that Amtrak runs on does not have one grade-level crossing. The U.S. rail system is designed to make profits for the rail bosses, not to ensure safety.

The labor movement, led by the rail unions, should demand a massive public works program to build the overpasses, bridges, and tunnels needed to provide safe transit in this country. Such a demand would require billions of dollars. It would mean jobs for thousands of workers.

As Jack Barnes explains in *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, "class conscious workers *must* take questions such as safety seriously. Labor must convince broad layers of the population as a whole that it is the working-class movement above all that cares about these questions.... It is a question of the working class taking the moral high ground in the battle against the exploiting class and for human solidarity."

Military maneuvers in California

Continued from Page 8

traying people said to be sheltering "terrorists," "rioters," and hungry "earthquake victims" penned into a compound surrounded by barbed wire and Marines.

"Money for education, not militarism," and "War is not a game," read some of the signs. A few supporters of the military also showed up to counter the protest. Wayne Morris, who was in the military during the Korean War, came with a sign reading "Go Marines — kill, kill, kill."

The protests continued March 16 when 200 people filled the Oakland City Hall for an open forum held by the City Council. Many of those who spoke against the military operation were youth. A good number of pro-military speakers took the floor as well in a sharply polarized debate. A few Marines in dress uniforms were present, although they did not speak. The City Council itself had divided in a 4-4 vote March 9 over whether to support Urban Warrior. Officials in San Francisco had earlier rejected Pentagon plans to stage the exercises there.

Gustavo López, a high school student in Oakland, spoke against the war games and the Marines in general, asking, "Why do I want to kill my brothers and sisters in Africa and down in Iraq?" A cheer went up after this remark and after other comments critical of the military exercises.

Antonio Icasiano, a member of "Real Urban Warrior Coalition," told the meeting that the title of the operation was picked consciously. "One day the Marines will come and handle us," he said.

Earlier in the day, 22 people were arrested after they barricaded themselves inside the office of Oakland mayor Jerry

Brown, an enthusiastic supporter of Urban Warrior. As Oakland cops pushed their way in and dragged people away, other demonstrators stood on the sidewalk chanting "Marines, no! Schools, yes!" and videotaping the cops' actions.

Residents of the predominately Black, working class east Oakland neighborhood around Oak Knoll also complained bitterly about the military actions. "They lied to us," neighborhood resident Barbara Sutherland told the *Oakland Tribune*. "They had assured us that the blanks would be no louder than the sound of a hand clapping. It sounds like we are in a battle zone." A Pentagon official admitted that flying helicopters around the neighborhoods was not in the announced plans.

A little-noted aspect of Operation Urban Warrior is what is termed a "strategic planning war game." It will include 15 Silicon Valley corporate executives and a group of Navy admirals. This meeting was set to take place March 15 at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business.

Supporters of Rashaad Ali, Socialist Workers candidate for California State Assembly, District 16, which includes most of Oakland and Alameda, distributed a statement at the protests explaining the real purpose of Operation Urban Warrior. "These war maneuvers have nothing to do with fighting 'terrorism' or chemical attack," Ali said. "Nor are they practice for humanitarian aid missions, as their boosters in the military brass and Oakland city government claim. The Urban Warrior activities are deadly serious preparations for the use of U.S. military power against working people in every U.S. city who fight for their rights."

L.A. airport workers march for wages, union

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

ON THE PICKET LINE

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 other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

LOS ANGELES — Three hundred airport workers and supporters marched through the airport here March 5 in a picket sponsored by a number of AFL-CIO affiliated unions. Among the chants was "Minimum wage ain't working for me, we might as well work for free!" The protesters' demands included better wages and benefits, as well as the right to organize unions. This action came on the heels of the recent union victory of 74,000 Los Angeles County home-care workers who joined the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) after a 10-year effort.

The SEIU and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) are organizing the bulk of the airport workers for union recognition and a "living wage" for nearly 8,000 airport workers. Members of the SEIU and HERE have held regular demonstrations and one-hour walkouts over the past several months. This included a protest of food service workers and janitors marching and merging with a rally of Teamsters-organized flight attendants who were fighting for a better contract from Northwest Airlines late last year. These events forced the Los Angeles City Council in November to require all large city contractors and their subcontractors to pay the citywide "living wage" — which is higher than the federal minimum wage of \$5.75 an hour — to their employees. The airlines and airport companies had used a loophole to avoid paying subcontracted workers the \$7.39 per hour with health benefits or \$8.64 without benefits stipulated in the city ordinance. Only about 1,000 out of the 8,000 who now earn below the city's minimum have received the "living wage" increases so far. The raises only take effect as

leases and contracts come up for renewal. Some contracts, such as the one covering workers in the Delta terminal, are not set to be renegotiated until 2025.

The March 5 demonstration included members of the Association of Flight Attendants, Teamsters, International Association of Machinists (IAM) from United and Northwest airlines, Transport Workers Union from American Airlines, the Brick Layers Allied Craft Union, nonunion ramp workers from Continental, and others.

Many participants were union officials and organizers. But the spirited chants and variety of handheld signs gave the event a fighting character. José Avilez, a driver for the food preparation service CA 1, held up his "H.E.R.E. Local 814" sign. The 300 members of his union are fighting for a new contract with better wages and benefits, similar to what 700 Host Marriott food workers got in January. They won a new contract with significant wage increases, medical coverage, and vacations for the first time.

"Fight for Better Wages and Pensions," read the sign carried by George Turner, a UPS worker and Teamsters member. "I grew up in the union," he said, "and united we stand divided we fall."

Fellow UPS worker Zack López Jr., held a sign that read, "Argenbright STOP THE HARASSMENT!" Argenbright is the largest subcontractor of nonunion airport "security" workers in the airport's seven terminals. Argenbright workers, including baggage screeners, are paid the federal minimum with no benefits, sick or vacation days. The company has tried to intimidate those who try to unionize.

Janitors, baggage screeners, and wheel chair attendants are organizing to get into the SEIU. They are fighting airlines like United, Delta, and Northwest, which control the board of directors at each concourse that hire subcontractors for inside terminal work. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney announced at the protest that 250 airport security workers signed up to join the SEIU.

Jose Morales, an airport janitor, has been speaking to IAM union meetings and to Northwest workers. He told the rally, "We are here to demand respect and we are not going to permit the airlines and contractors play with the Living Wage Law or to trample on our rights."

Juan Lima has been a welder for seven years and is in the Brick Layers Allied Craft Union. "I don't work at the airport, but we found out last night about the demonstration," he said. "If we would have known sooner I could have called more people.... From what I see the unions need to stick together." Lima thought the

American Airline pilots were courageous for calling in sick recently, effectively closing down the airline for days.

United Airlines mechanic Martin Chávez commented, "More demonstrations are needed. Higher wages for airport workers are needed, many workers earn below poverty level."

"We are asking for justice," said Host Marriott food service worker Araceli López. "We are here from different unions with different jobs to show we are united."

Workers rally to back Tyson poultry strikers

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky — A rally sponsored by Jobs with Justice was held at the Kentucky Fried Chicken headquarters here February 26 on behalf of members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) on strike at Tyson in Corydon, Indiana. The purpose of the rally was to ask CEO David Novak to sign the poultry workers code of conduct, guaranteeing basic standards of workplace justice, and to contact Tyson to encourage them to resume bargaining.

The rally of several hundred did not last long. After a few chants, a song or two, and a few brief speeches, a KFC representative said they would meet with two representatives of the rally February 29. Then a security guard asked everyone to leave. Since the company agreed to meet, everyone reboarded the buses in the same peaceful manner as when they had arrived.

The strike at the Tyson chicken processing plant in Corydon is entering its third month. The mostly rural community, not far from the Kentucky border, is very much in support of the strike. The plant, located near the main square of town, is well known by most people in the



Militant/Gabriel Charbin
Some 14,000 school support staff, organized by Canadian Union of Public Employees, struck February 27 over wages and conditions. Above, a March 9 picket.

area, who have known someone who worked at the plant. The plant was first owned by ARPAC, and then Hudson Foods. Tyson took over a little over a year ago. When the contract expired, the company demanded sweeping concessions.

Elaina Willis, a 24-year-old striker who has worked in the poultry plant for five years, explained on the picket line, "Tyson thought that a small union wouldn't have a chance against a big company. They said our wages and benefits are better than other Tyson plants and they have to come down. They kept putting off a settlement with contract extensions until January and cold weather. They said if we walked, we'd be back in a few weeks. But we've already proved them wrong!"

The strikers' week is busy. In addition to maintaining the picket line, on Mondays they travel to different Tyson plants. Wednesday is the weekly solidarity dinner. Thursdays they go to the county food bank, and on Saturdays they hand-bill stores selling Tyson products.

Alaska Air workers rally for contract in Seattle

SEATTLE — Nearly 250 members of the International Association of Machinists who work at Alaska Airlines and their supporters rallied here March 5, demanding new contracts that would include substantial wage increases, an end to forced overtime, and increases in pensions. The IAM is currently negotiating two separate contracts at Alaska — one for ramp and stores workers, the other covering customer service and reservations agents.

Unionists at Alaska have had concessions forced on them for 14 years. Some baggage handlers, for example, have had only a 3 percent wage increase in 15 years, while some customer service representa-

tives make less than 13 years ago.

Two rallies were held to accommodate different shifts. Cheri Glover, a baggage handler participating in her first rally, said, "I was impressed with how many people came out and supported our fight, workers I never saw before, especially rampers from Northwest Airlines. Next time we have to put more effort into getting mechanics to come out and support us. I talked to several on second shift who didn't know about our activity and said they would have come."

Mechanics at Alaska are represented by the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association; a few did join the two rallies. A delegation from United Steelworkers of America, locked out by Kaiser Aluminum in Tacoma, participated in the rally. USWA member Richard Dolph spoke about their struggle.

A group attended from the SEIU, who recently won a strike at the West Seattle Psychiatric Hospital. IAM members from Northwest and Boeing also came. And workers from the Association of Flight Attendants at Alaska Airlines gave greetings.

One speaker who got an enthusiastic response was Anna Maria Guzmán, a member of the Teamsters union and a leader in the fight against the recent firings of hundreds of immigrant workers at the apple packing warehouses in the Yakima Valley. These firings, organized by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, were intended to intimidate workers and undercut union organizing at the warehouses.

Laura Anderson and Mark Friedman, members of the IAM in Los Angeles; Jim Horn, member of the UFCW in Louisville; and Mark Severs, member of IAM Local Lodge 2202 at Alaska Airlines in Seattle, contributed to this column.

— LETTERS —

Injustice for Black farmers

It is strange, as we become aware of the enormity of the offenses by the USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] against Black farmers that the Justice Department is not prosecuting the offenders. Instead, the Justice Department is defending the ADMITTED offenders.

The only answers seem to include incredible ignorance or corruption. A partial list of offenses by the USDA includes menacing with a deadly weapon, misappropriation of funds (stealing), discrimination in lending practices, displaying subversive emblems on government property, and name-calling, among others. These offenses happen both allegedly and admittedly to thousands of Black farmers. This information was brought to the attention of the hearing Judge at the courthouse in Washington, D.C., March 2, at the hearing on the proposed settlement to the Black farmers' class-action lawsuit.

This is the situation. Because the USDA was able to use the Justice Department to defend the admitted violations, the cost of the defense is concealed and is essentially free. This gives the defense (the USDA) unlimited funds and unlimited time while the Black farmers are working with practically no funds under time constraints, desperately needing whatever crumbs are offered, however unfair.

The privilege of a free legal defense has not been extended to other government officials accused of wrongdoing, including elected or appointed officials accused of tax evasion, drunk driving, perjury, sexual harassment or obstruction of justice. If it were the usual procedure to provide free defense, why was it not made available to these other government officials? If it is provided because of the violations made in the course of duty, is assault with a deadly weapon, misappropriation of funds and conspiracy

also covered?

In the course of his description of the case, Judge Friedman stated that there should be no collusion between the lawyers for the plaintiffs and those of the defense. Doesn't the acceptance of free defense for the defendants by plaintiffs' lawyers suggest possible collusion?

If the Department of Justice is being used to protect a Government agency that has already admitted illegal, if not criminal actions, the said department is supporting injustice, not protecting the public against injustice. It is defending illegal, immoral, and unjust actions. In fact there is no contention that there was any illegal or unjust actions by the Black farmers. Why then, is the Department of Justice involved in legal action against people who are accused of no wrongdoing? Is there any specific law or constitutional amendment giving any government agency a

directive to act against citizens who have not been accused of a crime or violation?

Since there is no such directive for any government agency, then the Department of Justice is exceeding its authority and acting illegally. Since said department is involved in defending unjust acts against citizens, it can only be concluded that it is not only obstructing justice, but compounding injustice! It would seem the judge could protect the farmers against this transgression!

A farmer

Johnstown, New York

More on prisoners' rights

I think the *Militant* is very informative and the subjects covered are well written and very in depth. My only suggestion would be that a bit more attention be given to the issues and the ordeals faced by prisoners. The injustices and abuses that are suffered by prisoners are increasing daily at the hands of the

oppressive, money making privatized prison corporations that are running more and more prisons, and by the state D.O.C. [Department of Corrections] such as Connecticut's, who have been waging a war of demeaning and humiliating tactics against the prisoners in this state. I believe that the subscription base for the *Militant* consists of exactly the type of readers who, after learning of these abuses, will make a serious effort to bring about change for the better treatment of prisoners of all races and political and religious beliefs across the country.

A prisoner
Somers, Connecticut

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.

E. Timor independence fight advances

Australia and U.S. governments push for UN 'peacekeeping' force

BY BOB AIKEN
AND JOANNE KUNIAANSKY

SYDNEY, Australia — Over the last few weeks the Indonesian government's brutal 23-year occupation of East Timor has entered its deepest crisis. Under the growing pressure of the East Timorese fight for self-determination, momentum is building towards a vote by the East Timorese people on independence.

The proposed "direct ballot" was agreed to March 12 in United Nations-sponsored talks between the governments of Indonesia and Portugal, the former colonial power in East Timor. A UN "peacekeeping" force and an initial UN administration are being planned as imperialist powers in the United States, Australia, and Portugal seek to place their stamp on the emerging nation of 850,000.

While no date has been set yet for the UN-organized ballot, nor the form of voting agreed to, UN secretary general Kofi Annan told SBS television March 14 he expects the vote will take place in July or August this year. The overwhelming majority of East Timorese are expected to reject the Indonesian government's proposals for autonomy in favor of independence.

450-year struggle for independence

The eastern half of the island of Timor was held as a colony of Portugal for 450 years; the western region was a Dutch colony along with the rest of what became Indonesia. There were anticolonial uprisings against the brutal Portuguese rule, including throughout the 20th century. Slave labor existed at least into the 1940s, and as of early 1970s, the illiteracy rate in East Timor was 90 percent. The average income was among the lowest in Southeast Asia.

The freedom struggle in East Timor gained momentum in 1974-75, as other Portuguese colonies won independence. The leading pro-independence group Fretilin (the Portuguese acronym for the Revolutionary Front for Independence for East Timor) issued a declaration of independence in November 1975, following its victory over the Timorese Democratic Union and the Timorese Democratic People's Association, both of which called for incorporation into Indonesia.

It was immediately after this declaration that Indonesian troops seized East Timor in an invasion that was backed by the major imperialist powers. The U.S.-backed regime of General Suharto, who came to power through the massacre of some 500,000 Indonesian workers and peasants in 1965, launched a brutal repression against the civilian population of East Timor, which in its big majority wanted independence. The Jakarta regime feared that a free East Timor would spur independence struggles



Pro-independence rally at the University of East Timor in the capital Dili, June 1998. Resignation of Indonesian president Suharto that month spurred upsurge in struggle.

throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

The steps towards a ballot today come out of the refusal of the East Timorese people to buckle under the Indonesian occupation, which has cost as many as 200,000 lives. Following the May 1998 resignation of Suharto in face of massive student-led protests across Indonesia against his dictatorial 30-year rule, tens of thousands of East Timorese have stepped forward to seize the opportunity to make it "East Timorese time!" Demands for the withdrawal of Indonesian troops and a referendum on self-determination have been at the center of the political ferment there.

In the largest mobilization against Indonesian rule to date, some 50,000 East Timorese took part in the February 16 funeral procession of 25-year-old Benedito de Jesus Pires, shot two days earlier by Indonesian police. Tens of thousands more lined the 2 mile route of the march.

In response to the upsurge in East Timor, the Indonesian army had increased troop numbers in East Timor to more than 20,000 by August 1998 and has been rearming anti-independence paramilitary forces since November. Faced with deepening social and political crisis across Indonesia, however, the government of President B.J. Habibie, with the urging of its imperialist backers, has moved to settle the East Timor question.

Habibie declared January 27 that if the East Timorese rejected an autonomy package his government was preparing, they could opt for independence. Then on February 10 the central East Timorese leader, Xanana Gusmao, was moved from Cipinang jail, where he was serving a 20-year sentence for leading the East Timorese armed resistance against Indonesian rule, to house arrest in Jakarta to facilitate playing a central political role in negotiations over East Timor's future.

"I feel that with talks with East Timorese from all sides, I can create an East Timorese nation," Gusmao declared as he was moved from the prison. He had already been receiving a constant stream of visitors in prison over the previous months.

Gusmao and other prominent East Timorese leaders have for some time called for the

deployment of UN forces to help organize a cease-fire and disarmament, and monitor the withdrawal of the Indonesian army.

Megawati Sukarnoputri, one of the leading candidates for president of Indonesia in the June 7 elections by the parliament, has declared her opposition to granting East Timor independence. "The integration of East Timor into the state and the nation of Indonesia is politically and constitutionally legal in accordance to the will of the people of East Timor," she declared January 29. Megawati reiterated her stand that "Indonesia has always been a united country" at a mass rally of more than 100,000 supporters February 14.

In response Habibie has stated that, although he may not be reelected for another term, his successor would not be able to drop or put off the decision on East Timor. "It will roll like a snowball and no one can stop it," the February 16 *Jakarta Post* quoted him as saying.

Fight against pro-Indonesia militias

In East Timor itself, the human rights group Kontras has detailed the disappearance, shooting, and torture of dozens of people by the pro-Indonesian militias. This reign of terror, backed by the military, has created thousands of refugees — 1,800 in the Manufahi district, 30 miles southwest of Dili; 1,000 in Dili itself; and 6,000 in Suai.

However, many East Timorese youth are defending their neighborhoods and standing up to the vigilante forces. Pires was killed in one of these confrontations.

Despite these rising tensions East Timor is "no longer a place of pervasive fear," *Sydney Morning Herald* journalists Lindsay Murdoch and John Martinkus wrote in a March 13 article. Reflecting the opening of political space that the Indonesian military has been unable to block, they wrote that "for the first time since Indonesian troops invaded East Timor in 1975 the leaders of anti-Indonesian groups, including the outlawed Fretilin, are regularly meeting openly at a two-story colonial house on the outskirts of Dili. Just up the road Indonesian soldiers lounge under trees at a military base, sharpening their knives and looking bored."

They also reported that "high in the mountains of eastern Timor a squad of 200 anti-Indonesian guerrillas — part of a force of up to 1,000 across East Timor — have become the unchallenged authority, mocking a demoralized and discredited Indonesian military apparently unwilling or incapable of attacking. The pro-independence guerrillas have created new "liberated zones," they wrote "where they are greeted with waves, laughter, and food."

In recent weeks thousands of non-Timorese migrants, including traders, teachers, doctors, and government personnel, have begun leaving the territory. In the name of easing overcrowding on the island of Java, Jakarta has organized to settle thousands of people in East Timor over the years, often on the land of native residents. Shortages of food are reported to be looming in East Timor as traders leave, or balk at supplying stocks.

Australian gov't eyes oil in Timor Gap

The Australian government meanwhile has been stepping up preparations for intervention. "Behind the scenes," the *Australian* reported February 22, "East Timor has been the constant preoccupation of [Australian Foreign Minister Alexander] Downer and a team of diplomats in Canberra and Jakarta for the past six months."

Canberra, one of the few governments to formally recognize Indonesia's annexation of East Timor, is preparing to play a leading role in organizing the elections and providing "aid" to East Timor. A combat-ready battalion of 3,000 troops is to be based in Darwin, Australia, 300 miles southeast of East Timor, doubling the number of combat-ready troops at its disposal — the highest number since the Vietnam war.

One of the Australian rulers' central concerns is the future exploitation of oil and gas reserves in the Timor Gap sea between Australia and Timor. These reserves were divided up between Indonesia and Australia in the 1989 Timor Gap Treaty, with Indonesia's stake reverting, under international law, to East Timor if independence is won. The first field to be developed, with the Australian corporation BHP having a major stake, went into production in 1998.

The public stance of Australian prime minister John Howard has been that "in the short term a period of autonomy with Indonesia would be better.... If we just have an arbitrary grant of independence without much preparation or ongoing assistance you can have a lot of internal collapse in East Timor, even more than now, and there would be an enormous potential burden on Australia," he stated February 12.

Downer, in a March 1 speech to the Australia-Asia Institute, foreshadowed that Australian troops, police, and civilians would be the backbone of a UN "peacekeeping" force of up to 2,000. "Events have moved with breathtaking speed in the past few months. But they have not passed us by," he declared.

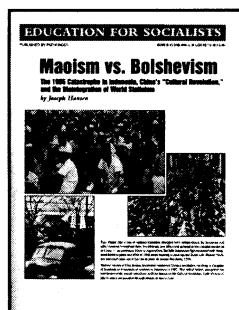
Downer was reported as saying that if the people of East Timor chose independence, Australia would provide police, under UN command, to work alongside East Timorese police, and civilian administrators to help establish a transitional government and assist in running hospitals, schools, transport, the customs system, revenue raising, and setting up a central bank and new currency.

Speaking to a meeting of 100 civic leaders in Jakarta March 6, U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright admonished that "the goal must not simply be to slice East Timor apart or cast it adrift, but rather to ensure its cohesion and viability — whether through autonomy or independence." Washington supports "confidence-building measures, such as a reduction in the number of troops, and an international presence to reduce the prospects for future violence," Albright stated. A United Nations "contact group" on East Timor comprised of the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Britain, and possibly Canada is being formed.

Maoism vs. Bolshevism

The 1965 Catastrophe in Indonesia, China's 'Cultural Revolution,' and the Disintegration of World Stalinism

JOSEPH HANSEN



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