

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Arthur Lobman,
SWP rank-and-filer for 45 years

—PAGES 6-7

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Washington prepares intervention in Africa

Troops sent to Liberia aimed at stronger U.S. foothold on continent

BY SAM MANUEL

Washington is moving rapidly toward sending troops to Liberia. U.S. president George Bush asked the Pentagon July 4 to dispatch a unit of 10-15 "military specialists" to the West African nation to determine how U.S. forces could be deployed. These troops arrived July 7 by helicopter at the U.S. embassy in Monrovia, Liberia's capital.

The Liberia intervention is a cover

U.S. hands off Liberia!

—See editorial, page 10

under which Washington seeks to gain a larger foothold throughout Africa, eyeing especially oil fields in West Africa and off the region's coast.

Speaking to a group of African journalists July 3, shortly before departing for a five-day trip to Africa, his first expedition on the continent, Bush indicated that his administration is now seriously considering intervention into Liberia's civil war. Citing the "unique history" between Liberia and the United States, which "creates a certain sense of expectations," Bush said U.S. troops could be deployed soon, most likely after Liberian president Charles Taylor departs from the country. He called on Taylor to resign and leave Liberia.

On July 6, Taylor announced he is ready to run off for nearby Nigeria. Olusegun



The first unit of U.S. soldiers landed by helicopter at U.S. embassy in Monrovia, Liberia's capital, July 7 to prepare Washington's intervention.

Obasanjo, Nigeria's president, appeared at a joint news conference with Taylor that day and stated that his government has offered refuge to Liberia's president.

Under the time-worn guise of "peace-keeping," Pentagon officials stated they are planning to send 500 to 2,000 troops to the country. The U.S. forces would lead

additional units of up to 3,000 soldiers from various West African countries. The Pentagon has reportedly directed the U.S. European Command in Stuttgart, Germany, to prepare a "planning order," a euphemism for the deployment of military forces. The command has responsibility for U.S. mili-

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Tokyo suspends oil deal with Tehran, aiding imperialist campaign against Iran

Iranian students mark anniversary of protests for democratic rights

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

The Japanese government has delayed the signing of a \$2.5 billion oil deal with Tehran, citing "suspicion about Iran's nuclear development." The decision reflected Tokyo's firm place in the U.S.-led lineup of imperialist powers applying intensifying pressure on the Middle Eastern nation to end its nuclear program and make other concessions.

Washington stepped up its long-standing campaign against Iran as it bombed, invaded, and then occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, with firm backing by London. These actions placed U.S. and British forces along Iran's northern and western borders. White House and Pentagon officials have since been quoted speaking of their desire for "regime change" in Iran, while emphasizing that military action against the country of 66 million people is not a short-term option.

Meanwhile, students in Iran are gearing up to lead actions marking the July 9 anniversary of large protests and government repression four years ago. On that day in 1999, pro-regime goons, backed by the police, attacked students in the dormitories, injuring many and killing a conscript soldier who had participated in the student-led protests.

The July 1 announcement by Tokyo followed a joint U.S.-European Union statement targeting Iran and north Korea for their alleged role in the "proliferation of weapons of mass destruction." The EU stance has put at risk a planned trade and cooperation agreement between European Union governments and Tehran, reportedly



Students protest in Tehran, July 1999. Marking anniversary of those demonstrations has become rallying point for current student actions for democratic freedoms.

worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Iran.

Two days later, the U.S. government slapped economic sanctions on one north Korean and five Chinese enterprises that it claimed had assisted Tehran's weapons programs. China's foreign ministry responded to the measures with "strong dissatisfaction and stern opposition."

The U.S. State Department said that ship-

ments by the companies had "the potential to make a material contribution to weapons of mass destruction or missiles." According to the *New York Times* a White House official said, "In China, in Pakistan, in Russia, you get government cooperation, and then you discover all the side deals that companies have made with rogue states."

The sanctions, which remain in effect for

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FBI frames 12 Vieques activists in Puerto Rico

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

A defense committee based in Puerto Rico has launched a campaign to demand the U.S. government drop frame-up charges against 12 people active in the movement that forced the U.S. Navy to stop its bombing practice on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. The 12, arrested by FBI agents June 25, face up to 20 years in prison on charges of conspiracy to destroy federal property.

The U.S. government accuses them of acts of vandalism during a victory celebration by residents of Vieques on May 1, the day the Navy ended its military operations there.

Among those arrested are Nilda Medina, a well-known leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques (CPRDV), and Jesús Delgado, president of the Federation of Teachers of Puerto Rico.

They were indicted by a federal grand jury, supposedly on the basis of videos and photos taken by the Puerto Rican police. The U.S. government has a long history of

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Meat packers strike at Hunts Point, N.Y., to unionize plant

BY DEAN HAZLEWOOD

BRONX, New York—Over 20 workers at Garden Manor Farm, a packing house at the Hunts Point Market here, went on strike July 3. They set up a picket line among the trees and benches opposite the loading dock. They walked out to press their demand that the boss stop delaying and agree to a date for a union certification election. The workers overwhelmingly back representation by the United Food and Commercial Workers.

UFCW representative Johnny López said the company told workers to sign up with the office workers' union or be fired.

Workers from several unionized plants at the market have visited the line to offer their solidarity. "We need benefits. We have children," said Fili Villa, who has worked at Garden Manor for more than four years. "We have no benefits, no sick pay," stated Felipe Vega, who has been at the plant over three years. "And they mistreat us."

On the first day of the walkout, López was arrested, charged by the police with disorderly conduct, and then released. Meanwhile, the bosses are running the plant with labor hired from a temporary agency.

Dean Hazlewood is a member of UFCW Local 342 and works at Hunts Point.

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Vieques frame-up

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using grand juries to railroad Puerto Rican independence activists and unionists.

"This is a frame-up," said Medina after she was released on bond. "The federal government wants to criminalize the movement."

For six decades the residents of Vieques, with broad support among the Puerto Rican people, waged a fight against the U.S. Navy, which had evicted them from their lands and used the small island for bombing practice and war maneuvers.

The death of local resident David Sanes by an "errant" Navy bomb in 1999 set off a renewed wave of protests. This mass movement, with demonstrations, picket lines, mass civil disobedience actions, and international protests, finally led the U.S. government to cut its political losses and agree to withdraw the Navy by May 1 of this year. The Navy turned over the land to the U.S. Department of Interior—over the protests of Vieques residents, who demand that control of the land be returned to them.

The Navy pulled up stakes April 30. That night residents celebrated outside the entrance of the abandoned Camp García base. At midnight they pushed down the perimeter fence and poured through the gate.

The big-business media and U.S. officials, however, violence-baited the demonstrators, trying to smear the Vieques movement to undercut the political impact of its victory.

Since then FBI agents have harassed community members on the island they claim were involved in "destruction of federal property." U.S. cops have been snooping and taking notes from parked cars in front of private homes, according to CPRDV leaders.

On the night of June 20, FBI agents raided the committee's organizing center in front of Camp García. The cops left a search warrant on the floor signed by U.S. judge Aida Delgado. Along with the search warrant was a receipt telling the judge that the FBI was

looking for "concealed" items such as "a Vieques map, documents such as photos, pictures, address and phone books, and any other property that constitutes evidence of the commission of a criminal offense."

In a predawn raid on June 25, five FBI agents along with Tactical Operations Unit cops showed up at Medina's home. "We were asleep and heard the pounding on the door and shouts of 'FBI! FBI!' When we went outside they took Nilda away," said Deborah Santana, speaking to the press.

As word of the arrests spread, a crowd of supporters gathered outside the U.S. court in San Juan, where some of the detainees were released on \$5,000 to \$10,000 bond. Four were denied bail.

U.S. prosecutors have accused the 12 of "conspiracy" to destroy a guard post and setting fire to a Navy boat and a Humvee. If convicted, they face between five and 20



Jesús Delgado (left) and supporters outside San Juan, Puerto Rico, courthouse June 25. Delgado and 11 other activists in Vieques have been framed up by the FBI.

years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, said U.S. prosecutor Humberto García.

The CPRVD has continued to "organize and mobilize the community to pressure government agencies—Puerto Rican and federal—to carry out a complete environmental cleanup, the return of all the land to the people, and sustainable development in

the hands of the Vieques community," said the group in a statement.

"That is why the FBI has unleashed this repression against our organization."

A committee to defend those arrested June 25 has been formed. Protests demanding all the charges be dropped have taken place both in Puerto Rico and New York.

Cops step up harassment of Tyson strikers

BY MAURICE WILSON

JEFFERSON, Wisconsin—Members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 538 on strike against Tyson Foods continue to get backing in their fight against the employers' takeback demands, while extending their solidarity to other embattled workers. On June 30 about 20 workers on strike against Waukesha Engine joined the meat packers on the picket line here. The next day the striking UFCW members traveled from here to Waukesha, Wisconsin, to walk the picket line with the Waukesha Engine workers.

"We have mutual interests," said UFCW member Greg Peters in a telephone interview. "Both companies are trying to hit us the same way. Across the country [the bosses] are taking a whack at the unions." Peters, a 17-year veteran at the Tyson plant, was part of a contingent of 30 Tyson strikers who joined members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 1377 on their picket line in Waukesha.

Also on July 1 a contingent of about 150 women from the Midwest School for Women Workers joined the Tyson picket line at the conclusion of a five-day seminar. "It was great," said Sheila Reed, a Tyson striker who coordinates picket duty. "We had a nice turnout. There were women there from all across the country." Reed said that among those

who joined the picket line were members of the Teamsters, Communications Workers of America, and other unions.

The nearly 480 meat packers at Tyson went on strike February 28. For the first time in the plant's history, they rejected the company's contract offer. The food giant is demanding a two-tier wage scale, slashing hourly pay for new hires to \$9 from \$11.09 and freezing wages for others over a four-year period. The company also demands the elimination of pensions for new hires and of health-care supplements for retirees.

A little over a month later, on May 2, some 460 Machinists walked off the job at Waukesha Engine to defend their health benefits and seniority system. One IAM Local 1377 member has two brothers on strike at the Tyson plant in Jefferson, which is about a 30-minute drive from Waukesha.

Other outreach efforts by UFCW Local 538 include preparations by the union for more "Truth Squad missions," according to a union strike update. The Truth Squads have been used by the strikers to win support from other UFCW locals. The strike update also thanked all those who participated in the June 22 solidarity rally organized by Local 538. Some 13 tons of food were donated for the strike pantry by other UFCW locals in New York, Canada, and Michigan. "These locals also raised over \$9,000 for our strike fund," the union notice stated.

"There are times when morale is low," said Reed, who has gone on the road as part of the Truth Squads. "We hold the rallies to boost morale and to let people know what's going on and to show solidarity."

Reed and other workers noted that the company has stepped up harassment of the strikers through the use of cops, security guards, and scabs working in the plant.

About 15 strikers recently received citations for trespassing. On June 25 two UFCW international representatives were given tickets for disorderly conduct and each paid a \$286 fine. The cops gave Sheila Reed three citations for "disorderly conduct," using prohibited language because she said "shit," and allegedly obstructing an intersection.

Her husband, Dave Reed, was arrested at his house and charged with disorderly conduct in an incident involving a scab. He was later charged with a felony—the scab claimed Reed threatened to kill him.

A judge issued an injunction barring Dave Reed from the picket line at the Tyson plant. In response to this, Reed said he has done more picketing at the Holiday Inn in nearby Watertown, Wisconsin, where the company conducts interviews for scabs. The Tyson strikers try to convince these workers to refuse to be used as strikebreakers.

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U.S. troops to Liberia

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tary operations in most of Africa.

U.S. government officials have said that “chaos” in Liberia caused by a 14-year-long civil war is threatening Washington’s interests in the region—which is rich in oil and other natural resources. They are also linking intervention plans to Washington’s worldwide “war on terrorism.” National Security adviser Condoleezza Rice told the press, referring to Liberia, that “failed states” can spawn “so much instability that you begin to see greater sources of terrorism.”

Washington enjoys backing for this intervention from its imperialist competitors and overwhelming bipartisan support for it in the United States. Paris and London, both former colonial powers in Africa with substantial interests there, have urged Washington to intervene. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan has done the same. Annan has also led calls for a “robust peacekeeping force” in the Republic of Congo, which has already been dispatched, led by French troops (see article on page 11).

“As President Bush prepares to visit the continent of Africa, it is imperative that he announce our intervention immediately,” said Donald Payne, a Democrat and leader of the Congressional Black Caucus. At the end of June the caucus called for deployment of U.S. troops to Liberia, citing the examples of intervention by Paris and London in their former colonies of Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone respectively.

These plans were put into motion as Bush prepared to leave July 8 on a visit to the African nations of Senegal, South Africa, Botswana, Uganda, and Nigeria. Washington continued to deny that a final decision has been made on sending troops. At the same time, they increased their calls for Taylor to step down and leave the country. Taylor, a politically easy target, has been indicted by a UN-sponsored tribunal for “crimes against humanity,” based on his support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), one of the main factions in Sierra Leone’s civil war. Taylor is accused of supplying the RUF with arms in exchange for diamonds. In 2000 the UN placed an 18-month ban on the international sale of diamonds from the region in an attempt to undermine the RUF and the following year it imposed sanctions on Liberia.

The indictment against Taylor was unsealed while he and Liberian insurgent forces attended “peace talks” in Ghana. David Crane, a U.S. jurist and the chief prosecutor for the imperialist tribunal, expressed disappointment that West African leaders did not order Taylor’s arrest at the talks in Ghana. “The unfortunate situation in Liberia is on their shoulders,” he claimed.

In an effort to appease Washington, Taylor appealed for U.S. intervention following a failed effort by Liberian insurgents to capture Monrovia, the country’s capital. In a June 27 statement Taylor called on Washington to lift “Liberia and Liberians out of this mess.” On July 3 Taylor told CBS radio that U.S. troops would be welcomed inside the country. He would be willing to leave Liberia, Taylor said, and asked that the “war crimes” charges against him be dropped.

A long history of U.S. domination

The U.S. rulers have a long history of domination of Liberia. For decades Washington backed a string of regimes loyal to U.S. corporate interests. The U.S. government pressed Monrovia to enter World War II, providing the U.S. allies with much needed rubber and strategic transport facilities. Throughout the Cold War governments in Liberia provided Washington with important communications, navigational, and foreign broadcast installations.

While the civil war in Liberia has been going on for 14 years, Washington’s decision to intervene now is politically calculated. With Taylor discredited internationally, U.S. forces will meet virtually no opposition worldwide for being deployed in a region rich in oil and other natural resources. This will place Washington in a better position to dominate and exploit current and future oil fields and displace Paris and other imperialist competitors.

The current fighting in Liberia began with a factional struggle following the overthrow of the U.S.-backed regime headed by Samuel Doe. As in other countries on the continent, this fighting is fostered by the imperialist powers that first colonized Africa, and have subsequently kept it under debt

bondage in order to maintain and expand their superexploitation of natural resources and African labor.

In late 1989, forces led by Taylor in the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invaded the country from bases in the French-dominated Ivory Coast with the aim of overthrowing Doe’s regime. Doe was assassinated in 1990 by a group rival to the NPFL. His killing was followed by a succession of cease-fire agreements and interim governments sponsored by West African nations. Taylor’s party won legislative and presidential elections in 1997. New fighting broke out in September 2000.

The main armed opposition group is the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). It is a loose association of military groups led by defectors from Taylor’s regime and the previous Doe administration. Its leaders include Laveli Supuwood, former Minister of Justice in Taylor’s government, and Sekou Conneh who served in the Ministry of Finance.

Shortly after its formation, LURD established a liaison with the British military. The LURD forces are armed and trained by the governments of Guinea and Ivory Coast, but also receive indirect aid from Washington and London, according to an exposé in the *Liberian Post* magazine.

In 1996, under the guise of protecting U.S. embassy personnel, the administration of William Clinton stationed three warships with 4,000 Marines off the country’s coast. The U.S. embassy security there was beefed up to 300 Marines.

The American Colonization Society

U.S. economic interests go back to the settlement of the West African area sponsored by the American Colonization Society (ACS) in the early 1800s. The ACS was dominated by southern slave holders who saw repatriation of free Blacks to Africa as a way to avoid a repetition of the successful slave insurgency on the Caribbean island of Santo Domingo, which led to the founding of the Republic of Haiti. The ACS excluded Blacks from membership.

Other societies for the repatriation of Blacks, organized independently of the ACS, established colonies in the area. Among them were groups from Maryland, Virginia, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania.

The ACS dispatched agents to “negotiate” agreements with leaders of the indigenous Dey and Bassa peoples for the purchase of land for the settlements. They were persuaded—by some accounts at gun point—to part with a “36-mile-long and three-mile-wide” strip of coastal land. In exchange, they received goods worth about \$300.

In 1824 the advance settlement was named Monrovia, after U.S. president James Monroe, and the colony as a whole became the Republic of Liberia. The Liberian flag,

Tokyo delays signing oil deal with Tehran

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two years, outlaw any trade by U.S. firms with these enterprises. The impact will be largely symbolic, since most of these companies are banned by existing sanctions from conducting such transactions.

The economic impact of Tokyo’s announcement will be greater. The decision suspended an agreement with Tehran by one private and two government-run companies in Japan to develop the newly discovered Azadegan oil field in collaboration with the National Iranian Oil Company. Touted as Iran’s biggest oil find in 35 years, the field is expected to yield 300,000 barrels per year over two decades.

“Suspicion about Iran’s nuclear development is not an issue affecting only our country,” said Yasuo Fukuda, the chief cabinet secretary. “We can’t sign the crude oil accord ignoring it.”

An “Iranian oil source” told Reuters that “Japan has been looking at Azadegan for a long time.” Tokyo imports almost all its oil requirements, some four-fifths of it from the Mideast. The article noted that officials of U.S. oil giants like Exxon-Mobil, Chevron, and Conoco “are showing increased interest in Iran” and have even spoken against the sanctions that shut them out of the Azadegan field and other potential investments.

Washington has not budged on the sanctions, however. The day before the Japanese announcement, State Department

Metal workers are set back in Germany



Metal industry workers picket an auto parts plant in Brandenburg June 25. Unionists returned to work June 30 after four weeks of rolling strikes shut down plants across eastern Germany. The strikes, organized by IG Metall, the giant metal workers union, were called to demand a reduction of the workweek from 38 hours to 35 hours for the union’s 310,000 members in eastern Germany. The demand was aimed at ending the disparity in the length of the working week in the industry between the east and west. The bosses organization counterposed a proposal to reduce the working week by one hour. On June 30 IG Metall officials called off the strike. “We’re admitting defeat,” said union chairman Klaus Zwickel.

Germany currently has an official jobless rate of 9.4 percent. In the east unemployment is almost double the national figure at 18.6 percent. The German economy, officially in a recession, contracted 0.2 percent in the first quarter of this year.

German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the leader of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), said that the strike’s outcome proved the need for greater “flexibility” in labor relations—a buzzword for more local as opposed to national bargaining and other measures to weaken union power. Schröder’s SPD-Green coalition government is pressing for “reforms” aimed at reducing unemployment benefits and strengthening the employers’ ability to hire and fire.

comprised of a lone star on a blue field with red and white stripes, is modeled on the U.S. Stars and Stripes. Over the next four decades, 19,000 African Americans—also known as Americo-Liberians—and another 5,000 Africans recaptured from slave ships were repatriated to Liberia.

Under the pressure of the advancing colonization in the region by Paris and London, the rulers of Liberia formally declared a republic there and adopted a constitution in 1847. The document gave extensive privileges to Americo-Liberians, descendants of freed slaves, over the indigenous African populations.

Before World War II, the main foreign investor in Liberia was the U.S.-based Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. From 1926 to 1951 Liberia’s dependence on the rubber processing giant was so complete it was

dubbed the “Firestone colony.” Goodrich and Uniroyal soon joined in exploiting the country’s extensive rubber resources. The U.S. steel giants Bethlehem Steel Corp. and Republic Steel Corp. held large investments in Liberia’s iron ore mines. Postwar foreign investments in Liberia exceeded \$1 billion, among which was the largest Swedish investment abroad and the largest German investment in the region.

The super profits enjoyed by these companies were boosted by the generous tax relief policies of the Liberian government. In 1951 the after-tax profits of the Firestone-Liberia company amounted to three times the total income of the Liberian treasury. Revenues of the wholly foreign-owned Liberian Mining Company surpassed the total revenues of the Liberian government until 1960.

spokesman Richard Boucher reiterated the administration’s opposition to the deal. “This would be a particularly unfortunate time to go forward with major new oil and gas deals in Iran,” he said, “given recent revelations about Iran’s nuclear programs and efforts being made through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to deal with the threat Iran poses.”

The IAEA head, Mohammed elBaradei, is scheduled to visit Iran July 9. He is expected to press Tehran to sign an additional protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty giving the green light to more intrusive inspections of its nuclear facilities, including short-notice or surprise visits.

“We would like to have Iran sign... an additional authority to be able to do more comprehensive verification,” ElBaradei said on the eve of his departure.

Khalil Mousavi, spokesman for Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization, indicated that ElBaradei would be welcome and that Iranian officials are open to “expanding cooperation between Iran and the IAEA.” Tehran has continued to hold off signing the protocol, using its refusal as a bargaining chip in its demand that it be allowed to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. IAEA officials have replied that the protocol is non-negotiable.

Reporting on the planned trip, Reuters journalist Parisa Hafezi noted that “the United Nations, United States, Russia and

the European Union...all urged Tehran to allow more intrusive, short-notice nuclear inspections.”

On July 2, Bush paid tribute to Russian president Vladimir Putin’s cooperative stance. “I thanked him for keeping the pressure on the Iranian government to dismantle any notions they might have of building a nuclear weapons,” Bush said.

Putting a positive spin on Moscow’s position vis-à-vis relations with Tehran, Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov told Gholmarez Aghazadeh, head of Iran’s nuclear program, that such inspections would “be another confirmation of the peaceful character of the Iranian nuclear program.” Russian experts are helping their Iranian counterparts construct a nuclear power reactor at Bushire—a project that has repeatedly come under Washington’s fire.

The Israeli government has continued to back the U.S.-led course. “The radical regime in Iran is threatening the stability not only of the state of Israel, but the European countries also,” stated Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom July 4. “Iran is a danger to the world.”

The Israeli liberal *Haaretz* daily reported the same day that Iran had launched a successful test of a ballistic missile with the range to reach Tel Aviv. The Shahab-3 missile “is a modified version of North Korea’s Nodong-1 surface-to-surface missile,” reported the Associated Press.

Tyson strikers build solidarity in Omaha

BY JACOB PERASSO

OMAHA, Nebraska—A June 26 plant-gate collection at the Swift slaughterhouse here and participation in a meeting to celebrate the victory of Róger Calero against government efforts to deport him were the highlights of a visit here by two Tyson strikers. United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Local 271 hosted the two-person Truth Squad that canvassed for support for their fight against the giant meat and poultry company. The squad traveled to Omaha on the invitation of a group of six Swift workers.

Some 480 members of UFCW Local 538 have been on strike for four months in defense of their wages, benefits, and conditions against Tyson Foods in Jefferson, Wisconsin (see front-page article). The strikers had previously sent out Truth Squads in mid-March to meatpacking plants in Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Nebraska, carrying donation cans and information about their struggle.

Squad member Mike French, a worker for 28 years at Tyson and vice-president of Local 538, spoke about the four-month strike as part of a panel of speakers at a June 26 public meeting at Local 271's union hall.

The event was held to discuss the lessons of the successful fight against the deportation of Róger Calero.



Militant/Elizabeth Olsen

Truth Squad member Mike French (second from right) greets representatives of UFCW Local 271, including President Donna McDonald, at Omaha meeting on Calero victory. The squad built support for the Tyson strike at the Swift plant.

French said that he never thought he would be out on strike against Tyson. "When you got a job at that plant, you thought you had a job for life. It is not

uncommon to have 40 years of seniority in the plant," he said.

The union leader asked participants at the meeting to think about Tyson's slogan,

"What your family deserves," while he read a list of company demands on the workers and their families. The concession demands include a four-year wage freeze; a wage cut for new hires of \$2.10 per hour; the elimination of "profit sharing" payments; reductions in disability pay by 50 percent and cuts in vacation time; a freeze on pensions; and the abolition of severance pay.

The cure for corporate greed

"We voted 400-9 that we weren't going to take that," said French. "We have been on the picket line 24/7 since then and are proud to take a stand."

"The cure for corporate greed is solidarity. And if corporate greed ever comes a knockin' on your door, Local 538 will come here and say 'it ain't gonna happen here either.'"

French had been especially keen to come to Omaha, he said, after Swift workers and UFCW staffers from Local 271 had made the eight-hour journey three times to Jefferson to attend rallies in solidarity with the Tyson strike.

Earlier that day the two strikers had been joined by Local 271 officials and members outside the Swift plant entrance to greet workers leaving the plant. The workers were very receptive to their fight, French said, and contributed \$207 to strike funds.

News about the strike had already gotten around inside the Swift plant thanks to efforts by union activists to build support and bring workers to the solidarity rallies. One kill floor worker, who asked that his name not be used, told the *Militant* that Swift workers are "in solidarity with their fight, and know well that a victory for them will be a victory for us, and that if they lose, we lose." He and other workers had hung fliers about the Jefferson rallies in the lunch room and locker room and had organized to notify every worker possible that the Truth Squad was going to visit the plant that day.

Workers at the Swift plant won a UFCW organizing drive last year by voting for union representation by a two-to-one margin after a hard-fought battle that took several years.

Saudi student taken into secret custody

BY JULIAN SANTANA AND CHRIS FLOESS

TUCSON, Arizona—Muhammad Al-Qudhai'een, a U.S. resident who is a Saudi Arabian citizen and graduate student at the University of Arizona, was taken into secret custody by the FBI on June 13. His family had no idea why or where he was taken. After a week the authorities informed them that Al-Qudhai'een is being held as a material witness in Alexandria, Virginia, where a federal grand jury is conducting an investigation into the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon.

No explanation for Al-Qudhai'een's detention has been forthcoming. The results of his appearance before a federal court on June 25 and 27 have not been made public. The little information that is available suggests that in the eyes of the government he suffers from guilt by association.

Al-Qudhai'een, a linguistics student at the University of Arizona, was an acquaintance of Zakaria Soubra, a former aviation student in Prescott, Arizona. An FBI agent in Arizona had raised suspicions about Soubra in a memo prior to September 11. Following the attacks, Soubra was called to testify before the Virginia jury. In spite of

the fact that he never faced criminal charges, the authorities used their wide powers under the immigration laws to deport him to his native Lebanon in May.

Al-Qudhai'een also brought himself to the attention of the "justice" system when he and fellow student Hamdan Al-Shalawi filed a racial profiling suit against America West in 1999. The two men had been handcuffed and removed from a plane after a flight attendant said that Al-Qudhai'een had touched the cockpit door—an accusation that he denied. A federal judge dismissed the suit in June of this year. The

government has used the material-witness provision in holding dozens of people in post-9/11 sweeps, many of whom have never been summoned before a grand jury. Conferring this status on an individual allows prosecutors to hold him or her indefinitely if a judge agrees that there is a risk of flight. Members of the Islamic Center of Tucson have protested Al-Qudhai'een's jailing. "He is in FBI custody and for what?" said Omar Shahin. "They do not tell us anything. His wife knows nothing. We came to this country for independence and freedom and it has been destroyed."

Irish republican in New Jersey fights deportation by U.S. government

BY RÓGER CALERO

Supporters of former Irish political prisoner Ciarán Ferry have launched a campaign to demand his immediate release from prison in Colorado. They are calling on the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (BICE) to drop all deportation proceedings against him.

Ciarán—pronounced KEE-ran—was detained by the immigration police after he and his wife Heaven turned up for what they thought would be a routine interview for his permanent residency January 30. The interview was conducted at the BICE offices in Denver, where the couple had stayed briefly after moving from Ireland in 2001. They live in New Jersey with their two-year-old U.S.-born daughter.

Ferry, 31, is a former member of the Irish Republican Army who served seven years of a 22-year sentence in the notorious H-block wing of Northern Ireland's Long Kesh prison. He was released in the summer of 2000 under the Good Friday Agreement signed by the British and Irish governments along with republican and loyalist representatives.

Ferry married Heaven, who is a U.S. citizen, soon after his release. They lived in Belfast until emigrating to the United States—a decision that followed news that Ferry was on the death list of pro-British loyalists in Belfast.

At the Denver BICE office, the couple was separated after a few minutes' interview. It was then that Heaven was told that Ferry was being taken into custody. Two hours later she was allowed to see him as he was taken away shackled and handcuffed to solitary confinement in Englewood prison.

Prison authorities claim that Ferry is a "security risk." They later transferred him to the Denver County Jail where he is being held in 23-hour lockdown.

Ferry is charged with overstaying his 90-day visa waiver and is now under final deportation orders. His attorney Jeffrey Joseph said the charge is unfounded, and noted that Ferry had been granted a work permit by the time of the interview.

Although Ferry's visa has expired, said Joseph, he is entitled to stay since

the old Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) had already approved his application on the basis of his marriage to a U.S. citizen. Ferry is also due for a hearing in August on his request for political asylum.

In an interview conducted before the prison authorities banned contact with anyone outside his immediate family, Ferry told the *Boulder Weekly* that—in the words of the newspaper—"the extreme treatment he has received is a form of retaliation for his refusal to cooperate with the FBI."

The day after his detention, explained Ferry, FBI agents visited him in his cell. "The FBI came and said, 'You can live free if you work for us,'" he said. "They wanted me to be a spy for them against a dissident Irish republican group that was opposed to the peace process."

The government has admitted that Ferry is under investigation for his past association with a "known terrorist organization," the *Boulder Weekly* reported.

"For American citizens, this is a scary situation," Ferry told the paper. "Even as a non-citizen, I have constitutional rights." In February, Ferry's application for permanent residency was summarily denied. His case is currently being appealed. Meanwhile Ferry's lawyers have filed a petition before the Colorado district court, arguing that his detention and removal are unconstitutional.

Letters demanding the release of Ciarán Ferry and an end to the deportation proceedings should be sent to Scott Webber, District Director, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 4730 Paris St., Denver, CO 80239. For more information about the case or to help with the defense campaign contact Irish American Unity Conference at (800) 947-4282 or visit www.iauc.org and www.freeciaranferry.com

CALENDAR

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the launching of the Cuban Revolution, and send off Los Angeles Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange delegation Speakers include: Jose Estevez, Cuban American activist; Adrián García, National Committee to Free the Five; Carole Frances Likens, 14th Pastors for Peace Cuba

Cuba, S. Africa sign pact

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Cuba and South Africa signed an agreement July 4 to promote investment in energy and mining. Martha Lomas, Cuba's minister of economic cooperation and investment, and Susan Shabangu, deputy minerals and energy minister of South Africa, signed the pact.

Shabangu said the agreement paves the way for South African mining and energy companies to invest in Cuba, which is already engaged in talks with South Africa's state-owned oil company.

The accord was signed just days before U.S. president George Bush's visit to South Africa, whose government has resisted Washington's pressures to cool its close relations with revolutionary Cuba.

Friendshipment Caravan; Laurence Shoobs, U.S.-Cuba Sister Cities Association; Mary-Alice Waters, President, Pathfinder Press; Don White, Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador; and delegates to the 3rd Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange. Friday, July 18, 7:30 p.m. *Romero Hall, CARECEN, 2845 W. 7th Street, half a block west of Hoover. For information call (310) 419-2983 or (213) 383-9283*

OHIO

Cleveland

Send-off Party for the Cleveland delegation to the 3rd Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange Saturday, July 19, 5:30 p.m. *Guilford Parlor, Case Western Reserve University, \$4.00 for students and \$7.00 for adults, includes dinner, program, and short film, for information email ClevelandCubaExchange@hotmail.com.*

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Attack on the Moncada Barracks. An Evening in Solidarity with Cuba. Saturday, July 26, 6 p.m. *Martin Luther King Labor Center, 1199 Health and Hospital Workers Union, 43rd Street (between 8th and 9th Aves.)*

Send-off event for New York delegation to Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange Sunday, July 20, noon to 6 pm, *Brecht Forum, 122 W 27th St., 10th Floor; program, music and food, donation \$10. For information call 212-234-1352.*

Packing locals in Nebraska, Iowa host 'fight to win' tour against deportations

BY JACOB PERASSO

OMAHA, Nebraska—Róger Calero's fight was "not a fight for one, but a fight for all," said Donna McDonald, president of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 271, at a program held at the local's union hall here June 26. Some 30 workers, youth, and others gathered to discuss the lessons in the victorious struggle to win Calero's fight against deportation and how they can be applied to similar confrontations with the government. Eight packing-house workers from Omaha attended. Two workers on strike against Tyson Foods in Jefferson, Wisconsin, took part as well.

Calero, associate editor of *Perspectiva Mundial* and *Militant* staff writer, won a fight against the effort by the U.S. government to deport him. His visit here is part of an international tour to spread the lessons from his struggle to other working people.

Calero said that Washington did not initially see "the political price it was going to pay when the INS began deportation proceedings against me." Pointing to a May 22 court ruling calling him "nondeportable" as an admission by the government that it had picked the wrong fight at the wrong time, Calero said that workers continue to face systematic violations of their rights, especially immigrants, and that through the tour he is finding example after example of this employer offensive. These attacks are driven by a worldwide economic crisis, he said.

"These objective conditions and how we organized to fight are what made it possible to achieve the victory in my case," he noted. Some argued against a public campaign because they said it would only provoke the government and make it come down harder, Calero stated, but "I countered that in the face of the enemy, you can show no fear. They will use it against us and hope we panic and get disorganized."

McDonald said that Calero's fight against deportation and the Tyson workers' strike share similarities. "The INS was trying to take away Róger's existence in the U.S.—his family and job," she said. "Tyson is trying to take away these workers' very existence. Their income, health plan, and pension."

"Róger became on the surface deportable, but because of public outcry, attention, and good legal help, we are celebrating tonight," said Ed Leahy, coordinator of the Immigrant Rights Network of Iowa-Nebraska, who also helped lead efforts to reach out for support in defense of Calero in Omaha.

Jorge, who asked that his last name not be used, is a packinghouse worker at Swift & Co. who had recently attended a Tyson

strike rally in Jefferson. He introduced Mike French, a worker for 28 years at Tyson and vice president of UFCW Local 538. French explained the deepgoing takebacks that Tyson is demanding. "We've been on the picket line 24/7 for the past four months and are proud to take a stand," he stated.

An immigrant worker and his U.S.-born wife told the gathering that they, like Calero and thousands of others, are fighting against an unjust deportation. After renewing his visa and work permit successfully several times, he was arrested in March by immigration officers intent on deporting him because of an arrest many years earlier—although he was never charged with any crime. "We have to do something," he said.



BY JOE SWANSON

PERRY, Iowa—On June 25, Róger Calero spoke to 20 people at the Perry Public Library and thanked them for their support in his six-month fight against the immigration authorities' attempt to deport him.

This was a homecoming of sorts, since Calero had worked on the cut floor of the Perry IBP meatpacking plant in 1999–2000. From there he had moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, joining other workers at Dakota Premium Foods to organize a union.

The Perry meeting was sponsored by United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Local 1149, the local that Calero had been a member of in his time here. Local 1149 shop steward Dave Edwards brought greetings to the meeting. "We will continue to stand beside Róger and will offer our help whenever he needs to call on us," he said. Four other workers from the IBP plant attended the meeting.

Attacks on democratic rights and workers' rights have accelerated in the name of national security and the "war on terror," Calero said. He added that government plans to deport 13,000 U.S. residents, mostly Arab and Muslim, who had complied with a federal order to submit to "special registration," and other such attacks, build on bipartisan policies years prior to the current administration.

Another example Calero pointed to was Chicago's Operation Landmark, in which federal authorities are planning to check the files of employees at the Sears Tower and other so-called sensitive locations.

Janet Lemmermann, a legal assistant with the Des Moines law firm of Hedberg, Owens, & Hedberg, P.C., told the meeting about a recent victory by workers at Iowa

into deportation proceedings as a result of a 1996 law that penalizes lawful immigrants for past run-ins with the law.

Calero is a Nicaraguan native who has been a permanent resident 12 years and is married to a U.S. citizen.

His plight began Dec. 3, 2002, when federal agents arrested him at the Houston airport as he returned from a reporting assignment in Cuba and Mexico. He is associate editor of *Perspectiva Mundial* magazine and writer for the *Militant* newspaper.

The basis for the arrest and deportation attempt was a 1988 conviction for selling one ounce of marijuana to an undercover officer while he was a high school student in Los Angeles.

Immigration officials say that a law passed by Congress in 1996 makes an immigrant with a past offense such as Calero's deportable.

In May, following a six-month public campaign that included a January stop in Omaha, an immigration judge signed an order dropping Calero's case, saying he was not deportable.

Like Calero, the 48-year-old painter who



Militant/Elizabeth Olson

Róger Calero (at podium) speaks at June 26 gathering in Omaha, Nebraska, at UFCW Local 271 union hall. Local 271 president Donna McDonald (obscured) and Mike French (far left), UFCW Local 538 vice-president and Tyson striker, also spoke.

Packing Company in Des Moines.

The workers had been fired in 2001 for stopping work over working conditions, overtime pay, and an abusive supervisor. At the same time that Calero was beginning his fight against deportation in December 2002, a federal administrative judge ruled that the workers should be reinstated with back pay, in addition to other sanctions against Iowa Packing Company. That decision was reaffirmed by the National Labor Relations Board in April of this year.

Lemmermann became a supporter of the case after meeting activists in Calero's fight at a meeting of the Iowa-Nebraska Immigrant Rights Network.

Activists from the Immigrant Rights Network videotaped Calero's remarks to show at a future meeting. The meeting in Perry was also sponsored by the Drake University chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, and the Spanish-language newsweeklies *El Enfoque* and *El Latino*. Calero was also interviewed by the *Des Moines Register* (see article reprinted in last week's *Militant*).



BY BETSEY STONE AND MAURICE WILSON

CHICAGO—Róger Calero's tour here included meeting with braceros demanding government compensation for their labor during World War II, joining a protest by day laborers fighting to establish a hiring hall, and attending a meeting of trade unionists and others organizing to fight the Social Security Administration's "no-match" program.

"My fight struck a chord among workers," Calero said at a June 24 gathering at the Decima Musa restaurant here, which was chaired by Gerardo Sánchez, a leader of the local Calero defense committee and a member of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1546. Calero stressed that his defense campaign was nonpartisan, "inviting anyone interested to join, and turn to, and receive support from other fighters."

Julieta Bolivar, a member of the Latino

Union, an organization of day laborers who is also fighting deportation by the immigration police, took part in the gathering. "I didn't come prepared to speak, but to show my support for Róger," she said. Bolivar was arrested by cops in Pennsylvania while traveling to a conference of day laborers. She now has a court hearing scheduled in Pennsylvania November 5. "As you can see I'm still here and we are going to keep fighting," she declared to a big applause.

Amancia Alverado, one of the activists in the Calero defense committee here, spoke about her visit to El Paso, Texas, where a network of groups is being organized to protest deaths of immigrants at the U.S.-Mexico border. "We deserve the right to live here and work here," she said.

Discussion lasted over an hour after Calero's presentation to a meeting of the Union of Mexican Braceros on June 23. The braceros formed the group in 2000 to fight for wages not paid to them when they were brought from Mexico to the United States to labor on farms and railroads during and after World War II.

Several of the braceros were former meat packers who were interested in Calero's experiences in the successful fight for union recognition at Dakota Premium Foods, where Calero worked before joining the *Militant* staff. One of them was Lupe Peña, a retired meat packer and staunch supporter of the Calero campaign who organized a presentation on the defense case at a braceros' meeting last March, collecting 30 signatures to stop the deportation. "It is a great victory," he said. "We won because of all the work we did, all the different people, the organizations, everyone."

The next day Calero joined a protest of day laborers who are fighting for a hiring hall in the Albany Park neighborhood of Chicago. Some of them attended earlier rallies in support of Calero and welcomed the news of his victory. José Landaverde, a leader of the Latino Union, invited him to speak at the action. Calero noted how the employers seek to hire immigrant workers to break strikes and push down wages. The day laborers described how they have been asked to cross picket lines, including during an organizing drive at a laundry. They said they instead put up their own picket lines in defense of the laundry workers.

Calero was invited by José Oliva, executive director of the Interfaith Workers Rights Center and a chairperson of the national Róger Calero Defense Committee, to attend a meeting of representatives of unions, immigrant rights groups, churches, and community groups involved in fighting against the Social Security Administration's "no-match" program. Under this plan, the government agency sends a letter to workers or employers notifying them of a discrepancy on the workers' W-2 forms and government records. Bosses have been using the letters to fire workers, including singling out many fighting for better job conditions. Javier Ramírez, vice president of the UFCW Local 1546, was one of the main speakers. He urged the unions to press companies to make a contractual agreement not to victimize workers who receive no-match letters.

Calero got interviews with a popular Spanish-language talk show at *La Tremenda* radio station; *World View*, a national radio program; and the Northeastern University radio station. The June 24 meeting was videotaped by CANTV, an alternative network. Lorenzo Martin, editor of *The Standard*, a newspaper in Chicago Heights oriented to the Black community, covered the event.

Omaha daily covers Róger Calero visit

The following article appeared in the June 27 *Omaha World-Herald*, published in Omaha, Nebraska, under the headline "Immigrant says rights battle goes on."

BY CINDY GONZALEZ

A former Iowa meatpacker-turned-reporter who waged and won a public fight against U.S. government efforts to deport him came to Omaha on Thursday to thank supporters.

The celebration tone was tempered, however, when an immigrant painter stepped up and described his recent Omaha arrest and ongoing battle to stay in the country.

Many of the nearly 35 people attending the program at a downtown United Food and Commercial Workers union hall said the cases of New York-based journalist Róger Calero and the Omaha painter reinforce the work yet to be done on immigration reform.

"It's time to speak up," said Clemente Velasco, a local union representative who is a Mexican native with permanent residency status. "What happened to them can happen to me, too."

Both Calero and the painter were thrust

Arthur Lobman: SWP rank-and-file

Joined communist movement through struggles against segregation

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

NEW YORK—More than 100 people gathered here July 6 to celebrate the life and political contributions of Arthur Lobman, who died June 29 at the age of 78. Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, chaired the event held at the Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan.

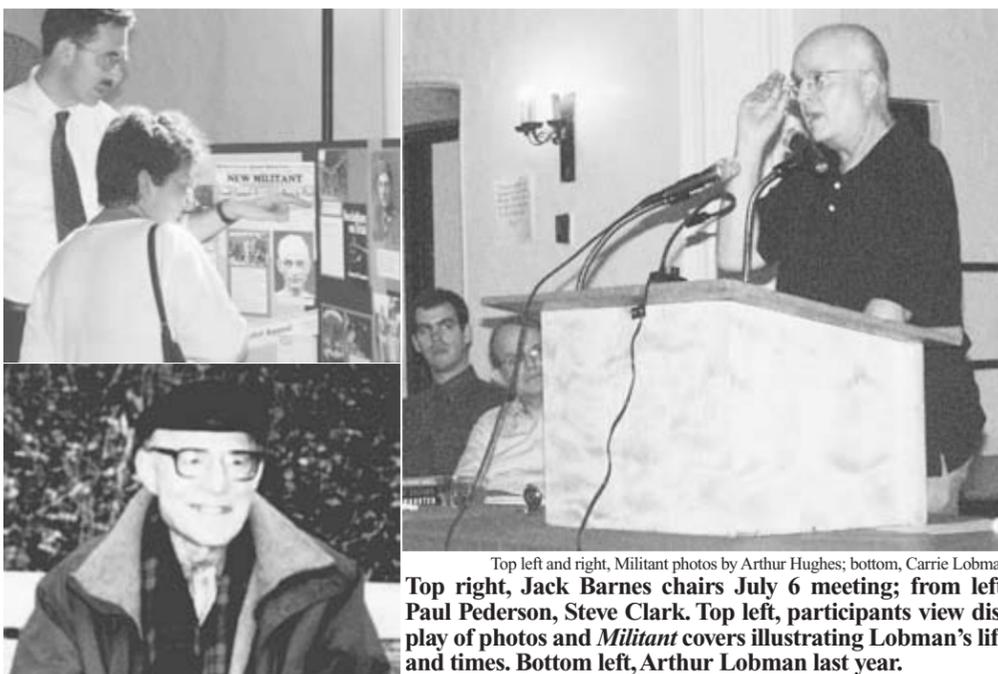
SWP members in New York—Lobman's party branch for nearly 45 years—and other party members, Young Socialists, and supporters of the communist movement from Newark, New Jersey; Boston; northeast Pennsylvania; and Washington, D.C. attended the event. Some two dozen of Lobman's relatives and family friends took part as well.

A large display of photographs and drawings depicting the big political battles during Lobman's lifetime, and his involvement in them, gave participants in the gathering a picture of his political life and development as a rank-and-file member of the revolutionary party for 44 years. These included photos of Lobman as a draftee into the army in World War II, as a delegate from Alabama to the Progressive Party convention in 1948, at his job as an "answer man" for Grolier's Encyclopedia, and staffing tables with socialist books and periodicals while campaigning for SWP candidates for office.

"To get to know Arthur, you had to do something with him," Barnes told the gathering. The SWP leader said he first met Lobman in 1960 at the SWP leadership school at the Mountain Spring Camp in New Jersey. But Barnes, at that time a new recruit to the revolutionary movement, said he first really got to know Lobman later when they were on a petitioning team together in Schoharie, upstate New York.

New York state laws at the time, Barnes explained, required candidates other than Democrats and Republicans to collect not only a good number of petitions, but to ensure distribution of the signatures in each county across the state in order to put additional roadblocks in the way of working-class parties from getting their candidates on the ballot and gaining a hearing. He noted that the teams that would travel to the hardest counties were comprised of "our professional petitioners and innocent newcomers who didn't know any better. Arthur was the former, while I was the latter." Also on the team was SWP leader Clifton DeBerry, who was later the party's candidate for president in the 1964 elections.

"When Arthur opened his mouth he sounded like many of my school mates and immediately made me feel at home," Barnes said. "He never lost his Alabama ac-



Top left and right, Militant photos by Arthur Hughes; bottom, Carrie Lobman
Top right, Jack Barnes chairs July 6 meeting; from left, Paul Pederson, Steve Clark. Top left, participants view display of photos and Militant covers illustrating Lobman's life and times. Bottom left, Arthur Lobman last year.

cent. Together with him and DeBerry, who was from Mississippi, I learned much about politics in the South and the fight against Jim Crow." Lobman, as often occurred, was the top signature gatherer on the team, which faced the risk of harassment from the right-wing American Legion there.

The SWP leader commented on several messages to the meeting from Lobman's comrades, describing events that captured his life and spirit. He said many of the messages, like one from comrades in New Zealand, told the story of being put up for a night or more at the apartment of Arthur and his companion, Ethel. "There were probably thousands who stayed there," said Barnes. Ethel Lobman, an SWP cadre for 55 years, died in 1999. Messages to the meeting were also received from leaders of Communist Leagues in Canada and Iceland.

Arthur was a 'blurter'

A letter from party member Jacquie Henderson in Houston described a time she was at the Lobmans' apartment. They were watching a documentary video on Jim Crow segregation and anti-Jewish prejudice. From time to time Arthur Lobman gave a running commentary over the soundtrack, wrote Henderson, relating his own experiences growing up in Montgomery, Alabama, in a Jewish family, in the Jim Crow South. "Arthur was a 'blurter,'" said Barnes. "He'd wait a while in a conversation while he was thinking, then blurt out his thoughts, a story."

Lobman had an extensive library that was marveled at by many, with many books on the history of the Civil War in the United States—a particular favorite. He would

often reach for a book from his shelves to make a point or encourage someone to read.

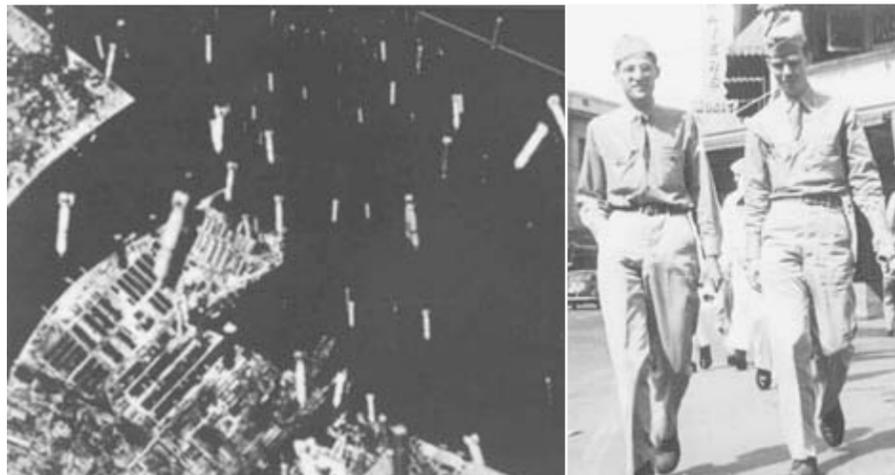
Henderson wrote that she asked Lobman for advice on selling socialist literature on the streets, Barnes said. "Get out early and put in a lot of hours," Lobman responded, "and talk to everyone. Don't start with

the orientation it gave him in politics, and the way he saw his party speaking through it. He took great care and paid attention to detail because he wanted to make the paper as good as it could be."

Barnes then read from a message to the meeting from Joel Britton, a party leader in Los Angeles, who said, "Arthur didn't have to say a lot to express his enthusiasm for our steps forward." Last winter Britton introduced Lobman to Lawrence Mikesch, a party cadre and YS leader who was going to be staying at his apartment. "Arthur shook his hand," Britton said. Britton then described to Lobman how Mikesch had just returned from Europe, speaking on the fight against the U.S. government's efforts to deport Róger Calero, and that he had been able to give a talk on Calero's fight and the U.S. class struggle to a large gathering of high school students in their cafeteria in Iceland. "Without a word," Britton wrote, "Arthur smiled and grabbed a surprised Mikesch's hand once more."

Seeing the present as history

"History and Arthur lived together in a peculiar way," Barnes remarked. He pointed to many of the big events Lobman lived through and was shaped by, along with hundreds of millions of others—the Great Depression of the 1930s, the military draft, World War II, the Korean War, the struggles



Left, U.S. bombs rain down on Osaka during World War II. Right, Lobman (with glasses) with friend John Kennedy in Hawaii before being sent to Japan. Impact of U.S. bombing of Japan played a role in Lobman drawing revolutionary conclusions.

prejudice about who may or may not buy the *Militant* or a book." Arthur knew from his own experience how people can change and grow, said Barnes. "He didn't assume anything about anyone."

Barnes also remarked on a letter from party member and Young Socialist Romina Green in Cleveland, hitting on a recurring theme in the meeting: Lobman's "maneuvering" to get out of the party headquarters and into the streets with socialist literature. Green wrote that she had been assigned to the party bookstore committee with Lobman, said Barnes. After a while discussing with Green the various tasks involved, Lobman turned to her and said, "Now let's go out and sell the books."

SWP member Patrick O'Neill from Newark, New Jersey, who had roomed with Lobman for a year, was the first speaker. He told the gathering that Lobman was often a ready volunteer for special petitioning efforts on the other side of the Hudson river. At the end of a cold, windy day petitioning to put Maurice Williams on the ballot for mayor of Newark, Lobman had told O'Neill, "You know, I'm usually one of the best petitioners." This was the closest Arthur ever came to boasting, O'Neill noted, because he was a modest person. "But it was not boasting. It was justified pride in his contribution to the party that had won his loyalty."

That loyalty and respect also came through in Lobman's regular stints of twice-a-week or more as a proofreader for the *Militant*, in which he drew on his experience as a proofreader at Grolier's Encyclopedia. "But more important than that professional experience," said O'Neill, "was Arthur's love for the *Militant*, the information it brought him,

against segregation in the South. "But it was always Arthur's tendency," Barnes explained, "to take a step back and see the present as history, as part of building a proletarian party."

Barnes then introduced the featured speaker, Steve Clark, who spoke on behalf of the National Committee of the SWP, outlining the impact of these world-changing events on Lobman, leading to his decision to join the revolutionary party. Clark pointed out that Lobman joined the party at the age of 35, having already been an adult for nearly two decades before joining the communist movement.

Lobman was born in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1924. His family—on both his mother's and father's sides—was part of the relatively small Jewish population in the South, going back to before the Civil War. One of the last books Lobman read, said Clark, was *Rich Man's War; Class, Caste, and Confederate Defeat in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley* by David Williams. It tells the story of how poor white farmers in parts of Georgia during the Civil War resisted the draft by the Confederate government and joined with Blacks to resist the war plans of the slavocracy. Lobman was interested in the subject, and then to his surprise discovered a passing reference in the book to a distant relative, Louis Merz, who served as a private in the Confederate army.

"As a youth in Alabama, Arthur was repelled by the indignities and brutalities of Jim Crow segregation," Clark said, and his parents encouraged him in that direction. "Arthur remembered, in particular, the case of the Scottsboro Boys that began in 1931—nine young Blacks framed up on charges of



The campaign to defend the Scottsboro Boys (above), Black youth framed up in Alabama on rape charges in 1930s, was led by Communist Party. Joe Gelders (inset), Lobman's cousin, was a trade union and CP leader active in the defense effort. During a Steelworkers organizing drive in Birmingham in 1936, Gelders was badly beaten by Klansmen acting at the behest of U.S. Steel. These events had an influence on Arthur Lobman as a youth growing up in Alabama.

filer for 45 years ation and imperialist war

raping two white women.” Its impact on him was due in part to relatives of Lobman, who were leaders of the Communist Party, who were involved in the case.

Just four years earlier, James P. Cannon and other CP leaders had been expelled from the party for fighting to continue the course of Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin against the political counterrevolution in the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. In *The First Ten Years of American Communism*, Cannon pointed out that the revolutionary movement had no forces in the South at the time. Despite the Stalinist degeneration of its leadership, the CP led the fight against the racist frame-up of the Scottsboro Boys, making it an international case. It was also the only party in the workers movement to run an African-American for vice president at the time.

“By the mid-1930s, however,” said Clark, “applying the Popular Front strategy in the United States, the CP increasingly subordinated the struggles and interests of workers and the oppressed to the reactionary—and utopian—hope of a long-term alliance with a ‘progressive’ section of the capitalist class.” Concretely, this meant an alliance with the wing of the Democratic Party represented by Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

But to the steel, mine, and other bosses in Alabama, “a Communist was still a Communist,” Clark said. “The most prominent leader in the mid-1930s of the Alabama CP was Joseph Gelders, Arthur’s cousin,” Clark continued. In 1936, while Gelders was working to free a union organizer from jail in Birmingham, he was picked up by Ku Klux Klan goons, beaten up, and left to die in a field outside the city. He later regained consciousness and found his way to a hospital. Clark noted that the details of that incident can be found in *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama—The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* by Diane McWhorter. Arthur recalled the impact on him when his father received a call at home to pick up Gelders at the hospital.

Drafted into army, sent to Japan

In 1941 Lobman began classes at Harvard University. Two years later he was drafted into the armed forces. “After Arthur had become a revolutionist some 15 years later,” said Clark, “he recognized that World War II was in fact not a single war, but three wars in one.

“It was a war by the toilers of the Soviet

workers state against the invasion by German imperialism aimed at overturning the social conquests of the October 1917 revolution,” Clark said. “Second, it was a war by the Chinese people and other colonized peoples around the world to throw off their oppressors—whether Japanese, British, French, or American. In these wars, revolutionists stood unreservedly in support of a Soviet victory and of the colonial toilers. But what was called World War II was at the same time a war among the rival imperialist powers to redivide and dominate the world. Washington’s targets were not only the Axis enemies—Germany, Italy, and Japan—but its allies, above all the United Kingdom. And in that war, as with Lenin’s course during World War I, communist workers stood for the defeat of ‘our own’ government in Washington.”

But Lobman did not hold this view in 1943, said Clark, who noted that Lobman’s daughters, Carrie and Sara, had made available some of his letters home during the war. Like millions of others, Lobman was convinced by the U.S. rulers’ propaganda that this was “a war for democracy” against Nazism and the Japanese empire. Lobman was stationed in Hawaii for much of the war, and wrote back home in elation at the time of the Japanese surrender in August 1945. “Now I still can hardly believe it... God Save the United States of America!” He added in the letter that he was a little tipsy at the time.

Lobman was sent to Japan in September of that year as part of the U.S. occupation force. By the end of 1945 he wrote about the “current fake ‘Liberal’-‘Progressive’ parties” in Japan put in power by the occupation forces headed by Gen. Douglas MacArthur. They are “only a front for the landowners, capitalists,” Lobman wrote at the time.

After the war Lobman returned to Harvard, graduating in 1947. Aside from a few subsequent short-term jobs elsewhere, he remained a New Yorker the rest of his life.

In the summer of 1948 Lobman was a delegate from Alabama to the convention of the Progressive Party, a short-lived capitalist party that nominated Henry Wallace, a former vice president under Franklin Roosevelt, as its candidate. Wallace had been fired as secretary of commerce by President Harry Truman for expressing public reservations about Washington’s increasingly aggressive course toward the Soviet Union. The CP backed Wallace and hoped the campaign would offer a way to slow down the U.S. war drive against the USSR.

“Arthur had not yet met up with the SWP,” said Clark. “He was shaken up two years later when Wallace supported the Truman administration’s launching of the brutal war against the Korean people to keep their country divided.” Lobman attended a Militant Labor Forum in New York to discuss and protest the war on Korea and the McCarthyite witch-hunt that was well under way.

Clark read from a letter from SWP national secretary James P. Cannon to Truman and Congress in July 1950. “I disagree with your actions in Korea, and in my capacity as a private citizen I petition you to change your policy fundamentally, as follows: Withdraw the American troops and let the Korean people alone,” Cannon wrote. “But before opening the argument, I beg your permission, gentlemen, to tell you what I think of you. You are a pack of scoundrels. You are traitors to the human race. I hate your rudeness and your brutality.”

The 1958 ‘regroupment’

During the 1950s Lobman took part in actions to support various labor struggles in New York and was attracted to the rising struggle for Black rights. His mother Dorothy and sister Jane were active in the 1955–56 Montgomery bus boycott, sparked when Rosa Parks refused to give



Arthur Lobman (foreground, with flowered tie) was Alabama delegate at 1948 Progressive Party convention, which nominated Henry Wallace for president. Lobman was shaken up two years later when Wallace backed U.S. assault on Korea. Right: Lobman selling *Militant* in New York in recent years. Throughout his 45 years as a member of the Socialist Workers Party, Lobman was an enthusiastic promoter of the books and newspapers of the communist movement and a crack petitioner in campaigns to put socialist candidates on ballot.



up her seat and go to the back of the bus consigned to “colored people.” Parks at the time was the secretary to labor leader E.D. Nixon, who organized the boycott. Lobman was also active in the American Labor Party (ALP), a New York political group initiated in 1936 by the CP to give left cover to supporting Democrat Franklin Roosevelt. The ALP folded in 1956, as did the Progressive Party.

“In 1958 the SWP proposed an independent socialist ticket in the New York state elections,” said Clark, “regrouping all those who could agree to run on an openly socialist platform independent of the Democratic and Republican Parties. Arthur rallied to this effort.”

When the results in November of that year were just a few thousand votes for the socialists, most individuals involved in the campaign concluded that the experience had been a fiasco, and drifted back to the Democratic Party. Based on this and his other experiences, Lobman drew the opposite conclusions, said Clark, “That a socialist revolution was necessary in the United States; the working class needed to build a disciplined party—like the one Lenin had forged and led in Russia. That the working class had to maintain its independence of the parties of the imperialist exploiters—the Democrats and Republicans—and any other parties that stood on a program of maintaining and reforming capitalism. And that propaganda efforts such as socialist election campaigns, sales of a working-class newspaper like the *Militant*, the production and circulation of revolutionary books and pamphlets were at the heart of gathering the cadres of the essential nucleus of such a party.

“And so in January 1959 Arthur made what turned out to be a lifetime decision—to join the SWP,” Clark said. In October of that same year he married Ethel Bloch, a 15-year

member of the party at the time. They remained companions and comrades until her death in 1999.

The month Arthur joined the SWP was, by coincidence, the same month as the victory of the Cuban Revolution. “Arthur and Ethel visited Cuba in the summer of 1960,” said Clark, “along with Priscilla March and *Militant* reporter Harry Ring.”

In Cuba at opening of revolution

They were there during the opening stages of the revolution, when more and more imperialist-owned enterprises were being taken over by mass mobilizations of Cuban workers and farmers. Clark noted that Ring recounted at the time that “when Ethel picked up the phone at their hotel on the second day of the trip, the operator greeted her with the message: ‘Good morning. Today we work for Cuba!’”

Clark pointed out that for the next 45 years of Lobman’s life he joined the effort to build a party in the United States that could emulate what the workers and peasants of Cuba had accomplished. He said Lobman was fond of a remark by Bartolomeo Vanzetti, an immigrant fish peddler framed up on bombing charges and executed by the U.S. government in 1927. The defense of Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco became a worldwide movement led in the United States by the International Labor Defense, of which James P. Cannon was executive secretary at the time. Shortly before his execution Vanzetti told a reporter, “If it had not been for all these things, I might have lived out

Continued on Page 9



Clockwise from left, *Militant* reporter Harry Ring, Priscilla March, Ethel Lobman—Arthur’s lifelong companion—and Arthur Lobman in Havana restaurant in 1960, a year after victory of Cuban Revolution. The four comrades and friends visited Cuba as working people there were mobilizing to take over imperialist-owned companies.

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How POUM betrayed Spanish Revolution

Below is an excerpt from "Interview with Havas," taken from *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, one of Pathfinder's books of the month in July. The author, Leon Trotsky, was a leader of the October 1917 Russian Revolution. After the death of V.I. Lenin—the central leader of the Bolsheviks and of the Russian Revolution—Trotsky led the international fight to continue implementing Lenin's political course and the program developed by the Communist International under Lenin's guidance, in opposition to the Stalinist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. Havas was a French newspaper agency. The interview was published in 1937.

Less than a year earlier the fascist general Francisco Franco had launched a war against the republican government in Spain. The republic had been established in 1931 amidst an ascending wave of revolutionary struggles by workers and peasants.

Marxist Unification. Trotsky explained that in verbally proposing revolutionary solutions to the crisis, while hesitating to take decisive steps to put them into practice, the POUM acted as a principal roadblock to the formation of a revolutionary socialist party with broad popular support in Spain. Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Footnotes are by the *Militant*.

BY LEON TROTSKY

On the left wing of the Spanish governmental coalition, and partly in the opposition, is the POUM. This party is not "Trotskyite." I have criticized its policies on many occasions, despite my warm sympathy for the heroism with which the members of this party, above all the youth, struggle at the front. The POUM has committed the error of participating in the electoral combination of the "Popular" Front; under the cover of this combination, General Franco during the course of several months boldly prepared the insurrection which is now ravaging Spain. A revolutionary party did not have the right to take upon itself, either directly or indirectly, any responsibility for a policy of blindness and criminal intolerance. It was obliged to call the masses to vigilance. The leadership of the POUM committed the second error of entering the Catalan coalition government; in order to fight hand in hand with the other parties at the front, there is no need to take upon oneself any responsibility for the false governmental policies of these parties. Without weakening the military front for a moment, it is necessary to know how to rally the masses politically under the revolutionary banner.

In civil war, incomparably more than in ordinary war, *politics dominates strategy*. Robert Lee, as an army chieftain, was surely more talented than Grant, but the program of the liquidation of slavery assured victory to Grant.¹ In our three years of civil war the superiority of military art and military technique was often enough on the side of the enemy, but at the very end it was the Bolshevik program that conquered. The worker knew very well what he was fighting for. The peasant hesitated for a long time, but comparing the two regimes by experience, he finally supported the Bolshevik side.

In Spain the Stalinists, who lead the chorus from on high, have advanced the



Fascist troops escort captured republican fighters, November 1936, during Spanish Civil War. Backing of Popular Front by centrist POUM helped ensure fascist victory.

formula to which Caballero, president of the cabinet, also adheres: *First military victory, and then social reform.*² I consider this formula fatal for the Spanish revolution. Not seeing the radical differences between the two programs in reality, the toiling masses, above all the peasants, fall into indifference. In these conditions, fascism will inevitably win, because the purely military advantage is on its side. *Audacious social reforms represent the strongest weapon in the civil war and the fundamental condition for the victory over fascism.*

The policies of Stalin, who has always revealed himself as an opportunist in revolutionary situations, are dictated by a fear of frightening the French bourgeoisie, above all the "200 families" against whom the French Popular Front long ago declared war—on paper. Stalin's policies in Spain repeat not so much Kerensky's policies in 1917 as they do the policies of Ebert-Scheidemann in the German revolution of 1918. Hitler's victory was the punishment for the policies of Ebert-Scheidemann. In Germany the punishment was delayed for 15 years. *In Spain it can come in less than 15 months.*³

However, would not the social and political victory of the Spanish workers and peasants mean European war? Such prophecies, dictated by reactionary cowardice, are radically false. If fascism wins in Spain, France will find itself caught in a vise from which it will not be able to withdraw. *Franco's dictatorship will mean the unavoidable acceleration of European war*, in the most difficult conditions for France. It is useless to add that a new European war would *bleed*

the French people to the last drop and lead it into its decline, and by the same token would deal a terrible blow to all humanity.

On the other hand, the victory of the Spanish workers and peasants would undoubtedly shake the regimes of Mussolini and Hitler. Thanks to their hermetic, totalitarian character, the fascist regimes produce an impression of unshakable firmness. Actually, *at the first serious test they will be the victims of internal explosions. The victorious Russian revolution sapped the strength of the Hohenzollern regime...⁴ The task of the true Spanish revolutionists consists in strengthening and reinforcing the military front, in demolishing the political tutelage of the Soviet bureaucracy, in giving a bold social program to the masses, in assuring thereby the victory of the revolution and, precisely in that way, upholding the cause of peace. Therein alone lies the salvation of Europe!*

¹Robert Lee led the proslavery southern forces and Ulysses Grant commanded the northern armies in the 1861-65 American Civil War.

²Francisco Largo Caballero was a leader of the Socialist Party and prime minister of the Spanish republic from mid-1936 to mid-1937.

³Alexander Kerensky was the most prominent figure in the Provisional Government in Russia established after the overthrow of the tsar in February 1917. That government was overthrown in the October Revolution. Friedrich Ebert and Philipp Scheidemann were Social Democratic Party leaders in the 1919-25 Weimar Republic in Germany. They helped crush a workers' uprising in 1919.

⁴The Hohenzollern dynasty was the ruling house of imperial Germany from 1871 to 1918.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

The main forces in the workers movement, however, squandered the opportunity to lead the overthrow of capitalist rule. They increasingly allied themselves with representatives of the liberal bourgeoisie, formalizing this class collaboration in the Popular Front—a coalition of the Socialist and Communist parties with liberal capitalists, backed by the anarcho-syndicalists and centrists, which won the national parliamentary elections in February 1936. The Popular Front policy was promoted internationally by the Stalinized Soviet Communist Party.

The most prominent among the centrist groups was the POUM, or Workers Party of

July BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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And save imperialism from imperialists?—Brendan Barber, recently chosen top official of the United Kingdom's Trades



Harry Ring

Union Congress, declared in his first major speech that the unions must press the capitalists to use their capital wisely. Perhaps, he declared, "our job now is to save

capitalism from the capitalists."

And the poor?—"A U.S. tax agency report confirms rich are getting richer"—News headline.

He who gets partnered—The U.S. and Mexican governments have agreed that Washington will create an agency to lend up to \$250 million to U.S. firms to develop new enterprises in Mexico. Each loan will include "political risk insurance." The deal is called "Partnership for Prosperity."

No-risk insurance—"Study finds Americans No. 1 in hours worked"; "Big Increase Reported in Tempo-

rary Hiring"—More headlines.

Good place to be from—In Coral Gables, Florida, folks who park a pickup in their driveway overnight are no longer able to do so. City officials deem it unsightly. Coral Gables is the place where an ordinance provides what colors may be used to paint homes, outside and in.

Some franks not his best favorites—In Kennebunk, Maine, restaurant operator Brian Bartley is filing a suit against a city statute barring outdoor table umbrellas with advertising on them. A cop told Bartley that he found it "personally offensive" to see an umbrella ad for

Hebrew National hot dogs.

Half the care, twice the money—"On average, doctors provide appropriate health care only about half the time, a landmark study of adults in 12 metropolitan areas suggests."—USA Today.

Better means worse?—"The health and well-being of Delaware's children continue to rank among the worst in the nation, kept down by high rates of infant deaths and babies born too small."—News Journal, Delaware.

Figures don't lie, but...—The News Journal says the data on

babies is troubling to the "experts" because the state's income is higher than average, and child poverty lower.

Could it be that the swollen income of the giant DuPont chemical company, which virtually owns Delaware, boosts the "high" state income. And/or caused the chemicals fouling the atmosphere that boosts the children's death rate?

Beat the system—Why pay snail mail postage for those clippings you've been meaning to send us? Bring them to the international socialist conference in Oberlin, Ohio, and seek us out. Thanks.

Veteran SWP member honored at N.Y. meeting

Continued from Page 7

my life talking at street corners to scorning men." Lobman did a lot of talking at street corners, though not to scorning men, said Clark. He used the *Militant*, and "petitioning and campaigning for candidates whose socialist program could become the political foundation of a mass socialist movement of workers, farmers, and youth."

Following Clark's presentation, Barnes pointed to a phrase in the 1950 letter to Truman in which Cannon said, "I hate your rudeness." That was something that Arthur could never be charged with, said Barnes, "Arthur wore his learning lightly," he said, "never giving anyone the feeling that he was putting them down, that he held superior knowledge and intelligence. He simply offered what he knew with modesty. Some of his best jokes taught you something."

Barnes noted that in a message to the meeting, Harry Ring wrote that Lobman had been a volunteer staff member for the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (NECLC) in the 1950s. This group would defend anyone regardless of their political affiliation, and refused to succumb to pressure by the Stalinized Communist Party to deny support to the CP's political opponents, said Barnes. One such example was the fight by World War II veteran and SWP member James Kutcher to win back his government job against Washington's witch-hunt. The story is told in the Pathfinder book *The Case of the Legless Veteran*.

It's usually harder to unlearn than to learn, Barnes said. But if someone unlearns and learns at the same time, the result is profound conviction. That was the case with Lobman and the early influence on him by Stalinism. "It shows Arthur knew exactly what he was doing, and the depth of his decision to join the SWP."

Paul Pederson of the New York Young Socialists told the meeting about a New York Militant Labor Forum in August of last year on the anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the presentation at that forum Pederson had explained that Washington had carried out a deliberate incendiary bombing of dozens of Japanese cities where buildings with wood structures were common, in an effort to terrorize the population. These bombings were carried out against Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, and many other targets, killing some 200,000

Japanese. The forum also addressed the "Bring the troops home" movement among soldiers, in which thousands of active-duty troops protested their continued deployment in Asia and Europe after the war had ended.

"Arthur was the first to speak in the discussion period," said Pederson, and described his experiences as a young GI while he was stationed in Osaka. "There couldn't be much less of it" after the firebombing, Lobman had written at the time after a visit to the city of Okayama. He also told the 2002 meeting, said Pederson, that the troops "knew that the U.S. rulers had their eyes set on China and Korea and wanted to claim the newly conquered Japanese empire for Washington. But Arthur saw the way that the movement among the troops prevented the U.S. rulers and their military tops from achieving these aims, through a powerful working-class movement among the ranks of the U.S. Army."

Arthur's smile was his trademark

You can't separate Arthur from Ethel, Barnes added, but they were different people. "Ethel would prowling the back of the room at a meeting like this, talking to people, organizing tasks," said Barnes, "while Arthur would sit quietly, letting you know with his smile what he thought of what someone was saying." Arthur's smile was his trademark.

Barnes pointed to a message from Maggie Trowe, a party leader in Boston, who explained, "another characteristic of Arthur I didn't know: he was a good dancer."

Olga Rodríguez, a leader of the New York SWP, told the meeting that on one of her stays in the Lobman apartment in the 1970s "Arthur drew my attention to an account of the Brownsville riots of 1906." There had been several run-ins between townspeople and members of an all-Black regiment stationed in Brownsville over racial slurs against the troops and official signs warning "No niggers or dogs allowed." The troops were falsely accused of instigating a fight in the town leading to the death of a bartender and wounding of a cop. After 12 of the Black soldiers were framed up for the events and the rest of the troops refused to back the accusations, all 167 members of the



Above: Lobman works with fellow volunteer Angel Lariscy to tally signatures on petitions to gain ballot status for SWP candidates in 1990. Inset: with Norberto Codina, the editor of Cuban cultural magazine *La Gaceta de Cuba*, and SWP member Ellie Garcia.

battalion were dishonorably discharged.

"You see, Arthur and I shared something in common: we were both reared in the Jim Crow South. I was born in Brownsville, Texas. Arthur opened up a chapter in the history of my birthplace that was utterly unknown to me by pointing to that book." She added that in recent years Lobman was especially excited about the relocation of the New York SWP branch to the garment district of the city, where tens of thousands of clothing workers labor.

Toward the end, Barnes read from a message to the meeting from Jim Lambrecht, who had been a member of the New York SWP branch that voted Lobman into party membership. Among other points, Lam-

brecht said that "Art didn't tire or become discouraged," Barnes pointed out. "I don't think that's true," said Barnes. "Especially after Ethel's death, Arthur did grow tired, discouraged, or frustrated at times. He had human frailties like anyone else." What Lobman did do, said Barnes, was put together a pattern of activity and discipline under which he kept becoming slightly different through his entire life, and which had an impact on others around him. While it is often said at events like this, noted Barnes, its worth repeating, "We would all be better in our lives to live like him."

An appeal to contribute to Pathfinder Press as part of honoring Arthur Lobman's life raised \$1,500.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



July 21, 1978

WASHINGTON—She had come on a bus from Chicago: "I always thought the Equal Rights Amendment would sound so reasonable to people that there would be no question of its passage. When I realized the trouble it was in, that's when I decided to become more involved."

She was a middle-aged Black auto worker from Detroit: "I never went on any of the civil rights marches. Wish I had. This is my first time on a women's march. I'm proud to be here."

First they gathered by the hundreds, then by the thousands, and soon tens of thousands of marchers. They felt they were making history—and they were right. The July 9 National March for the ERA—the first march on Washington for the ERA—was the biggest demonstration for women's rights in U.S. history.

As the action drew closer, the urgency of marching sharpened. On June 7, the Illinois House defeated the ERA, leaving three states still needed to win ratification by the March 1979 deadline.



July 20, 1953

Washington and Bonn have tried to make what propaganda capital they can out of the workers' uprising in East Germany. But their efforts are noticeably lacking in any attempts to encourage a continuation of the same type of revolutionary struggle. As the July 1 *Wall Street Journal* noted, the American capitalist leaders want the East German and East European peoples to resist their Kremlin overlords "short of open revolution."

The reaction of the political spokesmen of Wall Street and their puppet rulers of West Germany has not been one of un-mixed elation at the terrible blow dealt the oppressive rule of the Kremlin and its East German gauleiters by the independent action of the workers.

All the evidence points to the fact that the anti-Stalinist uprising in East Germany was a class battle conducted by socialist-minded, anti-capitalist workers. That is enough to render it mortally dangerous in all capitalist eyes.



Militant front page, June 14, 1948, campaigns against segregation in the armed forces, points to use of antidemocratic election laws against challengers of twin ruling parties.

U.S. hands off Liberia!

As U.S. president George Bush conducts a five-nation visit to Africa, the Pentagon has begun the deployment of what could be up to 2,000 troops to the West African country of Liberia. The troops are supposedly sent for “humanitarian relief” or “peacekeeping.”

Neither is true. The purpose of the deployment is to safeguard and extend Washington’s domination in West Africa, where Paris has been until recently the main power with former colonies and a sizeable military presence. When added to the several thousand Marines now training at a U.S. base in the former French colony of Djibouti, U.S. forces readied for Liberia will augment the number of “boots” on the ground—Pentagon parlance for troops—in Africa.

Washington is using Liberia as a cover for gaining a stronger foothold throughout Africa, eyeing particularly the oil fields in West Africa and off the coast there, and in the rest of the continent. This is what is behind Bush’s Africa tour, like that of his predecessor William Clinton in 1998. Under the pressure of sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry, the U.S. rulers aim to redivide control and influence over Africa’s natural resources and human labor in favor of U.S. imperialism.

The Liberia civil war has lasted 14 years. Washington is intervening now, selecting

carefully an easy political target—President Charles Taylor, who has been branded a “war criminal”—to gain an edge on its rivals.

That’s the hidden reason behind Condoleezza Rice’s statements that Liberia is an example of a “failed state” becoming one of the “greater sources of terrorism.”

During his Africa tour Bush will dangle the carrot of a few billion dollars—a pittance compared to the need—to fight AIDS for a select group of countries with which Washington has increasingly “cooperative” relations. That’s the same government whose policies result in reinforcing the imperialist domination and superexploitation of the African people, thus contributing greatly to the spread of AIDS!

All these moves, including intervention in Liberia, aim to alter the relationship of forces between Washington and its imperialist competitors in Africa and to reinforce the debt bondage of the continent’s peoples—a key means for siphoning off the wealth produced by Africa’s toilers and nature into the coffers of the imperialist ruling families.

These are the interests Washington is planning to safeguard by sending troops to Liberia. Working people should demand: U.S. hands off Liberia! All imperialist troops out of West Africa! Cancel the immoral and unpayable Third World foreign debt!

Top U.S. officers back affirmative action

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

The landmark Supreme Court decision upholding affirmative action in university admissions drew national attention. Seeking to influence the ruling in the University of Michigan case, more than 300 organizations weighed in with “friend of the court” briefs. The overwhelming majority of these backed the UM affirmative action programs.

Briefs were submitted by more than 60 Fortune 500 corporations, dozens of universities and colleges, 22 state governments, and a number of members of Congress. The statements made it clear that the majority of the U.S. rulers today back affirmative action in higher education—a gain won as a result of the mass civil rights battles of the 1950s and ’60s, which shaped the social attitudes of tens of millions in the United States.

The *amicus curiae* brief that attracted the most attention was the one filed on behalf of 30 prominent retired military officers. They argued forcefully in support of affirmative action issues from the standpoint of the interests of the U.S. military. The statement was signed by three former joint chiefs of staff—Gen. John Shalikashvili, Gen. Henry Shelton, and Adm. William Crowe—as well two former defense secretaries and 11 retired four-star generals, including Norman Schwarzkopf and Anthony Zinn.

The officers argued that affirmative action is needed “not only to remedy past discrimination, but to further other compelling government interests.” They said they have had to take special steps to increase the number of Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans in the officer corps to maintain the cohesion and morale of the armed forces.

They noted that “race-conscious” policies are used by the military academies at West Point, Annapolis, and the Air Force Academy. A court ruling against affirmative action would have affected those institutions as well as the hundreds of colleges and universities that have Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs, which provide 48 percent of active-duty officers.

Flatly rejecting the Bush administration’s argument in favor of “race-neutral” policies, they said, “At present, no alternative exists to limited, race-conscious programs to increase the pool of high quality minority officer candidates and to establish diverse educational settings for officers.”

The 30-page document bluntly spelled out some of the problems the military brass have confronted in recent decades and how they have tried to address them by recruiting more members of oppressed nationalities into the officer corps.

Despite the official end of racial segregation in the U.S. armed forces through a 1948 Executive Order issued by President Harry Truman, the brief said, the last segregated unit was officially abolished only in 1954. “The Army initially resisted President

Truman’s command to integrate, until heavy casualties and slow troop replacements during the Korean War required that African-American soldiers be assigned to fight with undermanned white units,” it noted.

After the units were integrated, however, only a small number of officers were Black or Latino. During the Vietnam War, Blacks constituted as much as 17 percent of the rank and file in the armed forces. But in 1968 Black enrollment at West Point and Annapolis was less than 1 percent, and by the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, barely 3 percent of commissioned officers were African-American.

“In the 1960s and 1970s, the stark disparity between the racial composition of the rank and file and that of the officer corps fueled a breakdown of order that endangered the military’s ability to fulfill its mission,” the document stated.

The officers stated that “perceptions of discrimination were pervasive” and that “white officers were simply unaware of intense African-American dissatisfaction with job assignments and the perceived lack of respect.” Of course, these were not just “perceptions” but rampant racism against Black soldiers. Nor was the problem that white officers were “unaware” of racism—they were the main source of it.

As a result, “Hundreds of race-related incidents occurred,” the brief reported. “In Vietnam, racial tensions reached a point where there was an inability to fight.”

It added, “African-American troops, who rarely saw members of their own race in command positions, lost confidence in the military as an institution.”

The officers explained that the U.S. military’s “racial problem was so critical that it was on the verge of self-destruction.”

In response, “the armed services moved aggressively to increase the number of minority officers and to train officers in diverse educational environments,” they state. “The service academies and the ROTC have set goals for minority officer candidates and worked hard to achieve those goals.”

Today, the brief reported, “almost 40 percent of servicemen and women are minorities.” About 22 percent are Black, 10 percent Latino, 4 percent Asian, and 1.2 percent Native American.

Some 19 percent of active-duty officers are members of oppressed nationalities—9 percent Black, 4 percent Latino, 3 percent Asian, and 0.6 percent Native American. This is a big change from the early 1970s, but still a substantial gap in composition between the ranks and the officers.

The report concludes that “the officer corps must continue to be diverse or the cohesiveness essential to the military mission will be critically undermined.” It argued that this is especially true now with an all-volunteer force.

What did recent elections in Scotland reveal?

BY PETE WILLIAMSON

EDINBURGH, Scotland—In a letter printed in the June 16 issue of the *Militant*, reader Ken Ferguson wrote, “Your piece on the Scottish elections (Vol. 67/18) is totally inadequate, ignoring as it does the importance of the growth of the SSP [Scottish Socialist Party] with a pejorative ‘reformist’ label. Taken along with the Greens we are looking at major growth in anti-capitalist forces in Scotland—you wouldn’t know that from reading Pete Williamson’s article.” He added, “You also need a bit deeper look at Farmers For Action—going on a demo doesn’t make you automatically left, and their Welsh rep is a Tory candidate.”

REPLY TO A READER

The latter point is a good place to start. Working farmers throughout the United Kingdom are facing, to a degree before other sections of the working population, a shift towards depression conditions. Many farmers are selling their products, whether milk or pork, at a loss to the big food processors and supermarkets. As London, taking advantage of European Union decisions, seeks to end farm subsidies that largely favored capitalist farmers, working farmers find themselves in growing debt. This is behind the radicalization of working farmers, especially since the “fuel price” protests at oil depots by rural producers in the year 2000.

A class, not ideological, approach toward working and capitalist farmers

The growth of Farmers for Action, based among small farmers, and the relative weakening of the National Farmers Union, which is dominated by large capitalist farmers and has sought to block mass political action by exploited producers on the land, are a byproduct of this process. In other words, this is the beginning of a sharper class differentiation in the countryside. *Militant* articles on the protests by dairy farmers described how they blockaded supermarket depots for more than 10 hours, successfully halting the attempt by the large merchants to cut the price of the milk they pay to the producers.

As a meat factory worker I know well how the thirst to maintain their profit rates is leading the owners of supermarkets and food processing companies to increase speedup on the job and lower wages. Weren’t the farmers’ protests then, and their success in pushing back the same class enemies of the workers, something to take heart from? Aren’t these exploited producers potential new allies of the working class? As these actions showed, this is a class, not an ideological, question—that is, what matters above all is whether these farmers are exploited by the capitalist system and how they respond to this class exploitation, not their current political affiliations or leanings. Taken along with the gains made by crofters (small farmers) in weakening the hold of the big landowners in Scotland, the recent dairy farmers’ actions tell us that as the fight for national rights and the class struggle deepen, the land question will come more to the fore. If we start from the importance of the recent actions by dairy farmers, we can see that working people have some new openings to forge closer ties with their allies on the land, and, in doing so, help shape the political evolution of new organizations of farmers. Forging a worker-farmer alliance, which through revolutionary struggle can overturn capitalist rule and establish a workers and farmers government, is at the center of proletarian practice and a revolutionary socialist program.

It’s this framework of the line of march of the toilers towards conquering state power that informed the *Militant* article on the Scottish elections.

Despite the military victory of the U.S./UK forces in the Iraq war, London, even more so than Washington, can’t translate that into reversing the downward slide of the capitalist economy, which pushes working people to resist the bosses’ attacks at home. Since the election in Scotland, for example, some 4,500 nursery nurses have for the first time organized protest days of strike action. In addition, the relative weakness of British imperialism means the trend towards a fragmentation of the United Kingdom continues, with a growing nationalist sentiment in Scotland.

The June 16 *Militant* article indicated that the Scottish elections showed a slight weakening of all the main capitalist parties. The Scottish Socialist Party and the Greens, with their radical demagoguery, took advantage of the vacuum this situation created in bourgeois politics, securing 13 seats between them and 14.2 percent of the vote. This result, however, doesn’t translate, as Ferguson suggests, into a step forward in either the fight for Scottish independence or the long-term struggle for a socialist society based on human solidarity rather than the dog-eat-dog morality and reality of capitalism.

Scottish Socialist Party seeks reform of capitalism, not revolutionary change

The Greens are a middle-class radical current that’s for reforming capitalism. The SSP, likewise, stands for taming imperialism and turning it into a more “humane” system. Its manifesto points to the supposed viability of Denmark—“a small independent nation the size of Scotland”—and Norway to make its case for Scottish independence. “Neither Denmark and Norway are socialist countries,” the SSP document says. Yet many policies adopted by these governments are progressive, it argues. “Yes, you can tax the rich. Yes, you can have public ownership of North Sea oil and other profitable industries. Yes, you can impose higher taxes on big business. Yes, you can invest in top quality public services. It is not economics, but politics that dictates that big business in Scotland and across the United Kingdom makes sky-high profits while poverty runs rampant and public services disintegrate.”

I don’t agree. Politics is concentrated economics. As long as the economic system of capitalism reigns, whatever gains working people make in struggle will be eroded, especially as the profit system sinks into depression.

The SSP suggests the problem is the “excesses” of capitalism, not the system itself. One heading in its manifesto, for example, says, “Racism has no place in our society.” The truth, however, is that racism is endemic to capitalism, and can’t be eradicated without overturning capitalist rule and joining the worldwide struggle for socialism.

In an article printed in the May 29, 2001, *Scotsman*, SSP leader Alan McCombes argued, “Scotland is not Cuba 1959, nor Nicaragua 1979, both of which stood up to the might of U.S. capitalism. We live in an infinitely wealthier, more literate, more skilled, more technologically advanced society.” But the Cuban road—a social revolution, with whatever variations in tactics from country to country—is the only realistic way to end capitalist exploitation and guarantee and maintain national independence. The struggle for Scottish independence is a dagger pointing at the heart of British imperialism. That’s why the British rulers fear it, just as they fear the Irish republican struggle.

One final but decisive note on the SSP is that in its 55-page manifesto the party fails to comment on, let alone call for an end to, the British occupation of northern Ireland. It also fails to explain up front that anti-Irish discrimination has been and remains at the heart of capitalist rule in Scotland today, and has been key to London’s ability to maintain Scotland as part of the United Kingdom. There is no way to chart a course toward independence for Scotland, that is, a break from the United Kingdom, without taking a clear stance on this. In fact, it is the progress of the Irish national struggle that has accelerated the prospects for Scottish independence more than anything else.

French troops extend combat role in Congo

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—After French troops killed two Congolese near the northeastern town of Bunia in the Democratic Republic of Congo June 17, Paris claimed the two men, supposed members of a militia group led by the Lendu-dominated Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), had attacked the patrol.

French authorities made the same claim following a clash with RCD forces three days earlier. Reuters correspondent Dina Mahtani, however, reported that French soldiers were aggressively deployed against the RCD combatants, made no effort to avert the confrontation, and collaborated with armed forces of the RCD's rival, the Hema-dominated Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC).

Mahtani reports that a French force of 15 armored vehicles and 70 troops came across a UPC militia unit retreating from a battle with RCD forces. The UPC members signaled to the French troops the location of the RCD group. "The French troops immediately headed toward the fighting," Mahtani said. The RCD units attempted to repel the French forces with machine-gun fire and mortars. French troops responded with machine-gun fire and grenades, then units retreated when two French Mirage warplanes flew overhead, Mahtani reported.

The fact that French forces initiated the firefight was confirmed by UPC security chief Saba Rafiki. "We were advancing on our traditional enemy and the French troops came from behind us and told us to stop and that they would go ahead of us," Rafiki told the Associated Press. "The Lendu attempted to fight the French but fled after a short while when the French began using heavy weapons."

French army official Col. Gerard Dubois said the French did not take any casualties. The number killed or wounded among the Congolese was not known, according to a CNN report.

The UN Security Council authorized the deployment of the French-led "peacekeeping" force to Bunia May 30, endorsing French imperialism's second-largest military intervention in Africa this year. Paris currently has some 9,000 troops deployed throughout the continent. Nearly half of these forces are



French Special Forces patrol in Bunia June 9, in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

stationed in the former French colony of Ivory Coast to shore up the regime of Laurent Gbagbo, in an effort to protect French investments in that country.

Since the recent confrontation, French authorities have made it clear they will fire

upon anyone who "as much as pointed a gun" in their direction, said UN spokesman Mounoubayi Madnoje. On June 22 French commanders gave RCD and UPC forces 72 hours to withdraw from Bunia or face disarmament.

"What are the French doing over there?" said Nicole, a young woman fighter with the UPC, according to a June 25 Reuters dispatch. "When the French see us they point their weapons at us," she explained while handling an AK-47 rifle, and as a pair of French all-terrain vehicles mounted with machine guns kept watch over the UPC camp.

The French forces are supposed to depart September 1 when a reinforced UN "peacekeeping" force is scheduled to replace them. They augment the current force of 8,700 "peacekeepers" already in the country. On June 26 the UN Security Council extended the mandate for the military intervention to the end of July while it considers Secretary General Kofi Annan's request to increase the size of the force to almost 11,000 and station them in Congo for another year.

Those forces not yet deployed in Bunia have orders to shoot only in self defense. Paris has made new proposals that would give all

UN forces deployed in Ituri, the region where Bunia is located, and in Kivu, the same orders as the French-led units—shoot to kill.

Bunia has been at the center of the five-year-long civil war in the Congo, during which an estimated 3 million civilians have been killed. More than 80 percent of Bunia's population fled in the wake of the fratricidal fighting between ethnic Hema and Lendu, fostered by the government and its opponents for control of the mineral rich region.

The RCD is the main group opposing the government of Congolese president Joseph Kabila, son of Laurent Kabila who led the military campaign that overthrew the U.S.-backed regime of Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997. The RCD had been backed by the governments of Rwanda and Uganda, which relied on it to defend their borders from attacks by armed Rwandan and Ugandan opposition groups operating in eastern Congo. In 1998 the RCD controlled much of the eastern provinces of the country. It was on the verge of taking the Congolese capital but was turned back after troops from Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia intervened and came to the aid of the Kabila government.

General Electric workers sign four-year pact

BY ELLEN BRICKLEY

LYNN, Massachusetts—Members of the International Union of Electronic Workers-Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA) and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) approved new four-year national contracts with General Electric (GE) by a 74 percent margin in June. The contracts were approved by membership votes in IUE-CWA and UE locals with a smaller approval percentage than the 2000 contract. Similar terms have been offered to 11 other unions that have local contracts with GE and agreements have been reached with most of these units. GE employs more than 24,000 workers nationally, of whom 16,500 are members of the IUE-CWA and the UE.

Workers in several large locals, including the ones in Lynn, Massachusetts, and Schenectady, New York, carried out a four-day strike in November 2002 over the issue of job security. In January 2003 IUE-CWA members carried out a nationwide two-day strike

focused on defending health-care benefits for current and retired employees.

In the new four-year contract, pay increases in yearly raises and eight cost-of-living adjustments will amount to about 16 percent over four years. Some of that will be lost to an 18 percent increase in health insurance costs, down from GE's initial proposal of more than double that amount. A clause, which was part of the previous pact, allowing GE to increase medical costs mid-contract is gone in this agreement. Retirees will receive a one-time bonus payment, a "13th check," in December.

Before the membership vote, the national IUE-CWA GE Conference Board recommended that union members approve the tentative agreement, but the delegates from the locals in Lynn, Massachusetts, and Louisville, Kentucky, voted to oppose the contract. The membership in Lynn approved the contract with a vote in favor of 51 percent to 49 percent opposed.

As he entered a meeting on the proposed contract, Gene Day, an IUE-CWA Local 201 member in Lynn, commented, "It's the worst contract we've negotiated. It doesn't take care of retirees or those who are going to retire." Local 201 officials issued a statement urging a no vote, pointing out that the wage offer was less than the last contract, medical costs had increased, and retirees had no inflation protection clause on their pension.

In Louisville, local union officials criticized the contract for not providing enough early retirement options. According to an article in the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 1,800 of the workers at GE's Louisville plant will be eligible to apply for early retirement during the course of the four-year pact, but the contract provides for only 1,020 early retirement opportunities for IUE-CWA-organized workers companywide.

GE's stated plan is to reduce the union workforce from 13,000 IUE-CWA members to 9,000 by 2007.

LETTERS

Tyson fight is our fight

The strike at Tyson Foods Processing facility in Jefferson, Wisconsin, is now well into its fourth month, as I pen this article. The workers of Union Local 538 remain resolute and firm in their demands for a decent living wage with meaningful benefits. The packinghouse giant, Tyson Foods, continues to march forward, oblivious to the needs of the very people who provide the enormous profits that the company and its namesake enjoys. It may seem futile to some to continue to fight the injustice and corporate greed of a huge company, a giant of Tyson Foods's size. In truth, it is much like the Lilliputians attacking Gulliver, but even so, giants have their weaknesses. David slew Goliath, did he not?

Each and every union brother and sister is part of a larger whole, and together we are our own giant, the giant known as the UFCW [United Food and Commercial Workers]. As members, we must believe that one person can make a difference, and exercise our rights of speech and peaceful assembly! We must use our right to vote and take part in our national and local elections, and vote for those people who support us and our families!

No one needs much common sense to realize what happens to our basic liberties and standards of living if we fail to act or speak up, and simply expect someone else to speak for us. All you have to do is pick up the latest paper or watch the evening news to see our

own sloth in action and watch our rights slip away from us!

We are all together in this battle of wills, it is a fight for not only our respective futures but for that of our children, and our retiring (retired) parents. If we fail to speak for them, and for ourselves now, who will? What kind of future will they have? Corporate giants like Tyson Foods determine much about our lives. Through our pay and our benefits they determine what kind of vehicles we will drive (a new car or a 10-year-old clunker); what kind of homes we will live in (will we rent or will we own); what kind of education our children will receive; and even what kind of food we will eat! (will it be steak or hamburgers again?)

All of these things, these issues, are the basis of our society and the fuel that runs the economy! Is it any wonder that the economy is in such bad shape? It is good wages and benefits that provide long-term financial gains, not tax rebates, nor smoke and mirrors! It is no wonder that the giants of Industry oppose Unionism or that they have the money to do so. They are, after all, using the money that used to be our wages to do so!

The International Unions need to apply their strength to the fight, and be as strong and resolute as the members of Local 538 are doing even now! We have all paid for their support and paved the way, each small Union supporting the other. No one wants to see another debacle like the air traffic

controllers strike in the 80s!

Tyson has weaknesses. He is an egomaniac and hypocrite just for starters. He would love nothing more than to have his name on every food product known to mankind. He would have the general public believe that he is a moral, generous man, who donates food and services to those in need, and certainly that is commendable. What is left untold, however, is that his generosity is a tax write-off and does not come out of his own pocket! Image, not substance, is his stock-in-trade.

Publicity is a two-sided sword, however, and what company can survive if the truth is known? What company can survive if no one buys his products? We must challenge distorted images and questionable morality. We must demand a decent living, with meaningful benefits, and if denied them, use our right to strike! We must support each other and striking workers, now and until a resolution is reached. We can no longer afford to pretend that what happens in another plant, another state, in another town much like our own, does not affect us too! Time passes quickly and the struggle in Jefferson, Wisconsin, will be on our doorstep soon enough!

Troy R. Chindlund
member, UFCW Local 179
Cherokee, Iowa

Iran correction

Issue number 23 featuring the editorial "Support student protests in Iran," just arrived in

today's mail. I was very happy to read the clarification of editorial opinion. After the troubling coverage in last week's issue, the return to the long-standing positions the *Militant* has defended in the past was very welcome.

Geoff Mirelowitz
Seattle, Washington

Thanks for your work

Thank you for this paper, and the work you do. I would be proud to associate myself with you.

James Buffaloe
Wartburg, Tennessee

Turkic or Turkish?

I sent an e-mail, in a format for sending an e-mail to the *Militant* that I can't find now, by the way. I want to just say that looking at the overall tone of the article there is no need to make a correction.

In the earlier e-mail, I had suggested a correction to a sentence in the article "Europe and America: to the victors go the spoils," which said, "He [Ma'mud Shirvani] displayed a special issue of a magazine published by Turkish students at Tehran University commemorating that revolution."

I was honored to be invited to the meeting. To quibble over whether I heard correctly Turkic or Turkish is really immaterial. I had been reading *To See the Dawn: Baku 1920—First Congress of the Peoples of the East* and noticed that translations were made into Turkic, which I looked up on the internet and found is sometimes called Azeri. Perhaps

when I heard Ma'mud I wanted to hear Turkic, and extrapolated in my mind on its significance.

Denis Hoppe
Ann Arbor, Michigan

The reader is correct. The article he refers to—which was published in issue no. 23, dated June 30, 2003—should have said Turkic students, not Turkish.

—Editor

Donate to the Militant's Prisoners Fund

The fund makes it possible for workers and farmers behind bars to receive a subscription to the *Militant* at reduced rates: \$6 for a six month subscription and \$12 for one year.

Checks or money orders earmarked "Prisoners Fund" should be made out to the *Militant* and sent to 152 W. 36th St. Suite 401, New York, NY 10018.

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

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.

Montreal workers fight boss lockouts

BY SÉBASTIEN DUMAIS

MONTREAL—More than 90 members of Communications, Energy and Paper Workers Local 1205 have been locked out by their employer, Ipex, in the Montreal suburb of Ville St-Laurent, since April 22, after nearly 89 percent voted against the company's initial contract offer. With some 15 plants in Canada, including four in Quebec, Ipex is the largest producer of industrial and commercial plastic pipes in North America. On June 25 union members turned down the company's second contract offer by a 70 percent margin, despite management's threat to move six of the 10 pipe-producing machines to plants outside of Quebec if the workers didn't accept the company's offer.

"Before the lockout we kept pretty much to ourselves, but this lockout is the best thing that could have happened to us because it brought the union together," said Carmel Gaugeal, a Haitian-born composite mixer who has worked at Ipex for 15 years.

"Morale is still good despite everything that's happened," said Christian Martin, 27, president of Local 1205.

Workers brought in the union in 1998 and signed their first contract in 1999. Martin said the union's main demands include wage parity with the other plants in Quebec, which for some jobs would mean increases of up to Can\$2 an hour (US\$1=Can\$1.35); the same number of paid sick days as the Edmonton, Alberta, plant; and ending the practice of bosses working production jobs. Other demands include a \$2.50 an hour wage raise and a decrease in annual deductions for health benefits.

Across the street is a lot full of Cabano trucks. Drivers from this company used to deliver Ipex pipes, but they have refused to cross the picket line since the beginning of the lockout, as have most drivers who deliver material to the plant from Canadian National railway cars.

Over the course of the last two months, four other conflicts erupted in Montreal and the vicinity, most in the form of employer lockouts.

These include the lockout of 360 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada at the Old Port Tourism installations in Montreal (see article below). At Novabus, a bus assembly plant in St.-Eustache, 330 members of the Confederation of Democratic Unions at Novabus were locked out June 23. The company had previously announced that on that day it would permanently lay off 157 of the 330 workers in the plant and begin a major restructuring of production. And in Laval, just north of Montreal, 170 members of the Union of Multi-marques Distribution Workers of Laval were locked out May 18 at Multi-marques Distribution Center (Canada Bread). They are trying to prevent the company from using replacement workers, which is illegal under Quebec law.

In addition, 950 members of the Union of Labatt Brewery Workers (CSN) have been on strike since June 16. The Labatt plant is located in the Montreal suburb off Lasalle. Workers there have been without a contract since Dec. 31, 2002. They affiliated with a new union in February of this year. Pensions are a major issue since some 400 Labatt workers will be retiring over the next four years.

The union is also demanding more permanent jobs and protection against contracting jobs out. Some workers at the plant have been in temporary posts with lower wages and no benefits for over 15 years. On June 25, for the second time in less than 10 days, union members rejected Labatt's latest contract offer by a vote of 97 percent.

Sylvie Charbin contributed to this article.



BY SYLVIE CHARBIN

MONTREAL—As thousands of tourists visiting the Old Port of Montreal on July 1, Canada Day, looked on, over 300 mostly young members and supporters of Local



Militant/Sylvie Charbin

Members and supporters of Public Service Alliance rally at Montreal waterfront complex they have been locked out of since May 26. Construction workers and other unionists, along with students, brought their solidarity.

10333 and 1A333 of the Public Service Alliance of Canada defied an injunction by entering and marching through the grounds of the waterfront complex that they have been locked out of since May 26. They were joined by about 75 construction workers, affiliated to the Quebec Federation of Labour. Using union balloons and noisemakers and chanting "So-so-so-solidarity," the marchers wore bright green union T-shirts that read "Young and locked-out."

A group of students representing the Quebec Federation of University Students

(FEUQ) brought a large banner to the march. Henri Massé, president of the Quebec Workers' Federation (FTQ), addressed the rally following the march.

The union members working for the Old Port Corporation provide services on the many installations located on the mile-long harbor front, which includes a marina, locks, an Imax cinema, information booths, guided tours, and a science center. Since their functions fall under federal jurisdiction, Quebec law, which prevents employers from using replacement workers, does

not apply to them. So far, scabs have been hired at the Imax cinema and the marina.

Old Port workers have been circulating a petition demanding that the federal government ban the use of replacements. The petition has been posted on several union web sites. About 9,000 signatures have been collected so far, many from tourists who are also encouraged to boycott the harbor front. The union bulletin cites the example of one group of union-minded tourists from the United States who turned away from the entrance, contributed \$40 to the union, and pledged to post information on the lockout on their union web site. An injunction limits pickets to six workers at each of the eight entrances.

The union's main demands are job security and a wage increase, which they have not had since 1997. Only about 20 percent of the 360 union members have permanent jobs with benefits. The rest are considered part-time or seasonals, with no job security and few benefits. Martin Rose, 22, said that he has been working there five and a half years, but because he gets laid off for about three weeks twice a year, he is considered a "seasonal" worker.

On June 27, the corporations' latest offer was sent to union members by mail without the knowledge of union negotiators. Before they were slated to vote on it, and following the July 1 rally, the employer agreed to go back to the negotiating table. A tentative agreement was reached July 4 and endorsed by union members three days later.

"We want to go back to work", said Amélie Séguin, 19, an information booth agent, at the July 1 action. "But we want to go back only with our heads held high."

Yannick Duguay contributed to this article.

Sahrawi leader speaks in Australia

BY LYN SCOTT AND ADRIAN MCGREGOR

SYDNEY, Australia—"We need your solidarity and support," said Fatima Mahfoud, a representative of the Sahrawi people's national liberation struggle at a meeting here June 22. "There is no money that can replace human contact," she continued, stressing the importance of organizing an Australian delegation to visit the Sahrawi refugee camps in the Algerian desert.

This meeting, held in the working-class district of Campsie, was Mahfoud's last in a monthlong tour of Australia and New Zealand organized by the Australia Western Sahara Association (AWSA).

Mahfoud is a leader of Polisario, which has led the struggle for independence of Western Sahara, first against Spanish rule, and then against the Moroccan and Mauritanian invasion of their land after Spain's withdrawal in 1975. Polisario fighters defeated the Mauritanian forces and continued the struggle against Morocco until a UN-brokered cease-fire was signed in 1989.

In presentations at meetings during her tour, Mahfoud explained that Sahrawis living in the refugee camps, which were established after Morocco invaded their country, are impatient with the long, drawn out process of negotiations through the United Nations. A UN-sponsored referendum in which the Sahrawi people would vote on their status, scheduled for 1991, has been continually delayed.

Kamal Fadel, who has been the representative of Polisario in Australia since the office was first opened over four years ago, accompanied Mahfoud on her tour here.

At the June 22 meeting Fadel explained that there is a lot of frustration in the camps because the status quo only favors Morocco. The Moroccan government is "playing for time, buying arms and strengthening the wall," he said, referring to the 1,500-mile wall constructed by the Moroccan

regime that runs the length of Western Sahara, dividing the fertile occupied zone in the west from the liberated zone in the east that's in the desert.

In this situation, "it is hard to maintain morale and a feeling of purpose among combatants in the camps," Fadel said. There is "nothing worse for the liberation movement than no peace and no war." He said that Polisario has to keep the combatants prepared, with both military exercises and cultural programs.

"We want peace but there is no progress," he said. In the current international situation, the moment fighting starts again "they will label Polisario a terrorist organization and blame us for breaking the cease fire. It's a Catch-22."

In response to a question about the interests of imperialist powers in Western Sahara, Fadel stated, "There is no doubt that the natural resources of the country have become attractive to Morocco and the big powers," including oil. Morocco has signed contracts with both French and U.S. oil companies.

Mahfoud explained that the majority of people in the camps see that the 12 years of negotiations have only given the Moroccan regime the opportunity to sell off the resources of their country. "They don't accept that Polisario should go on with the cease-fire," she said. At a Polisario conference, scheduled for October, Sahrawis in the camps will assess the situation and choose their leadership.

"The youth who left in 1991 have now come back, with degrees and with the ability to build a new country, but they still have to live in the camps. Young people need a country," she said.

At the citywide public meeting in Sydney on June 10, Mahfoud said that there were only a small number of people with higher education when they first set up the camps. Most of the women were of nomadic background. Now 90 percent of

population can read and write, she said.

"Life in the camps was very hard, but we have tried to build a normal life," Mahfoud explained. Strong organizations of women, youth, and workers were formed. Most of the institutions in the camps are run by women.

At first there were no secondary schools, so children were educated abroad.

Mahfoud spent nine years studying in Cuba, at high school on the Isle of Youth and then at university in Santa Clara. She said that the students "who have come back from Cuba are very hard working, a lot of them are running things in the camps." They learnt this in Cuba she said. "At school you go for three hours to work in the fields every day and at the university you are working in the field in which you are studying."

Recently satellite television has become available to people in the camps on a limited basis. This, she noted, was having a positive impact, especially Al Jazeera broadcasts that are giving people a broader understanding of the Arab world and the situation facing other refugees such as those from Rwanda and Somalia.

People in the camps still feel isolated. That is why solidarity is so important, Mahfoud explained, especially sending a delegation to visit the Sahrawi.

This was the first time a Sahrawi woman has visited Australia or New Zealand to build solidarity with the liberation struggle in Western Sahara. Meetings were held on three university campuses in Sydney and one in Melbourne. Mahfoud also visited Fort St. High School in Sydney. Meetings were also organized with different women's and refugee groups.

Mahfoud addressed a meeting of the Labor Council of New South Wales and met with Sharan Burrow, president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. She also met with a number of both state and federal members of Parliament.