

THE MILITANT

SPECIAL FEATURE INSIDE

Crisis, boom, and revolution

by Jack Barnes, V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky

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Columbus, Georgia: 8,000 march against police brutality, racism

Protesters demand justice for Kenneth Walker, killed by cops in 2003

BY BILL ARTH

COLUMBUS, Georgia—More than 8,000 people marched January 15 from the Civic Center here to the Columbus Government Center to demand justice for Kenneth Walker and to protest cop brutality and anti-Black discrimination.

Walker, a 39-year-old African American, was killed Dec. 10, 2003, by two bullets to the head fired by Muscogee County deputy sheriff David Glisson. Walker was a passenger in a vehicle stopped by Glisson and other deputy sheriffs from the local police Special Response Team. The cops claimed they were looking for drug dealers who they suspected would be armed. But the police officers did not find any incriminating evidence against the four men nor did they provide any plausible explanation as to how Walker was shot dead. Muscogee County Sheriff Ralph Johnson called the shooting a “tragedy.”

Glisson was subsequently fired from the police department. On November 23, however, a grand jury decided not to indict him after deliberating for about 40 minutes.

Attorneys for Walker’s family filed a civil lawsuit the week prior to the march here, seeking \$100 million in damages from the city of Columbus, Glisson, and Johnson, the country sheriff.

Warren Beulah, Daryl Ransom, and Anthony Smith—the other men in the vehicle where Walker was killed—also filed a civil suit in U.S. District Court January 10 charging that their constitutional rights were violated and seeking damages of \$3.5 million.



Thousands demonstrated in Columbus, Georgia, January 15—on anniversary of Martin Luther King’s birthday—to demand justice for man killed by cops in December 2003 and to condemn anti-Black discrimination.

The men were stopped as they drove down Interstate 185 on that fatal night a little more than a year ago. The three survivors told the press later that the police ordered them to get out of the vehicle with their hands in the air and get on the ground as officers advanced, guns drawn. In the ensuing moments, Walker was shot twice

in the head. Beulah, Ransom, and Smith were then handcuffed and searched. The police found no weapons or drugs in their possession or in the car. The men were taken to the sheriff’s department where they were held in separate cells and questioned by deputies. No charges were ever

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Utah miners describe how they were fired for union fight

BY GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL

PRICE, Utah—Coal miners in Utah who have fought a relentless battle for safe working conditions, livable wages, and respect and dignity on the job for 16 months at the Co-Op mine near here are pressing for resolution of several issues pending with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Despite delays on the part of the NLRB, Co-Op miners say they remain confident their efforts to be represented by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) will prevail. Miners say they have been encouraged in recent weeks by an outpouring of letters to the NLRB urging the board to rule in favor of the workers’ demands and other messages of solidarity and financial donations from the labor movement in the West and beyond.

The miners’ demands include that they be reinstated to their jobs and that the national labor board stick with an earlier ruling that votes by relatives of the mine owners not be counted in the union representation election. On December 9, a week before the union election at the Co-Op mine, the company, which is owned by

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Washington weighs cuts in U.S. military programs

Debate shows factionalism among U.S. rulers

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of Defense is seeking to cut several weapons programs, particularly in the Air Force and Navy, which do not fit what the Pentagon describes as the “transformation” of the U.S. military. According to a December 6 report in the *Defense News*, top commanders of the Air Force and Navy have balked at proposals to cut back on purchases and modernization of warplanes and ships in order to qualitatively expand the Army’s resources—most importantly Special Forces.

The debate on possible cuts in the U.S. military budget highlights a growing factionalism among the U.S. rulers as well as the increasing politicization of the officer corps.

Last November the defense department convened an advisory commission to help improve the military’s “transformation.”

This is a strategic reorganization of the U.S. armed forces, prompted by the rulers’ conclusions that their military was not up to snuff to defend Washington’s imperialist interests worldwide more than a decade after the end of the Cold War.

U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld has been at the center of leading these changes in the U.S. military, which relied primarily on heavy armored divisions, bombers and long-range land and sea-based missile systems aimed at the former Soviet Union. In testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee last September, Rumsfeld said, “We have entered an era where enemies are

in small cells scattered across the globe. Yet America’s forces continue to be arranged especially to fight large armies, navies, and air forces, and in support of an approach—static deterrence—that does not apply to enemies who have no territories to defend and no treaties to honor.” He added, “We are still situated in a large part as if little has changed for the last 50 years—as if, for example, Germany is still bracing for a Soviet tank invasion across the northern plain.”

The reorganization underway includes closing bases and cutting troop levels in western Europe and moving units toward the east. It also includes upgrading the role of the Special Forces, relying more on modern weapons technology and infiltration of enemy forces, combining commands of various branches of the military, outsourcing jobs like running prisons and hospitals to nonmilitary entities in order to upgrade the army’s “warrior ethos,” and organizing military units into smaller and more agile brigades that can be deployed within days anywhere in the world.

The 19-member Transformation Advisory Group includes retired military officers, executives of arms industries and private “intelligence” firms, Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton, and Newton Gingrich, former Republican Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Cuts in warplanes

The Pentagon plans to cut purchases in half for a new warplane, the F/A-22 Raptor

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Thousands in Russia protest cuts in social wage

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Thousands of retirees and others protested in cities across Russia for more than a week in mid-January against government “reforms” that substitute miserly cash payments for a series of essential social entitlements. Demonstrators have blocked highways and demanded that the Kremlin “bring back everything” taken from them “and go.”

“Pensioners in several cities, angry at having to pay for public transport when the changes were introduced, fought with bus conductors and hijacked buses,” reported the Reuters news agency. “Many elderly people have to work to supplement their meager pensions and rely heavily on public transport to get to their jobs.”

President Vladimir Putin has stood by the measures to “monetize” social benefits, which took effect January 1. Faced with ongoing demonstrations, however, he has blamed other government officials for the consequences. “The motives for the decisions taken by the State Duma and the government are understandable. The question is how they are carried out in practice,” he said on national television January 17. “The government and regions have not completely carried out their task that we spoke of, which was to not make the situation of those who depend on state assistance any worse.” Putin also announced a hike in the monthly pension allotment as a means of

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U.S. troops in Iraq unleash raids in Mosul

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. military carried out a series of rapid raids against forces loyal to the former Baathist party regime of Saddam Hussein and their allies in Mosul January 16, according to the Associated Press. Mosul, with a large Sunni population, is Iraq’s third-largest city and is located in one of four provinces the U.S. military says are likely to be “unsafe” for the U.S.-orchestrated elections for a national assembly scheduled for January 30.

More than 8,000 U.S. and Iraqi troops will be in Mosul prior to the vote, reported Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Meanwhile, about 650 British troops have arrived in Basra in southern Iraq to aid U.S. occupation forces and the Iraqi interim government of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi leading up to the elections, according to the January 17 British daily *Telegraph*. With this deployment, London’s forces in Iraq exceed 9,000 troops.

At about the same time, on January 14, Baathist forces assassinated a key aid to Iraq’s leading Shiite cleric, Ali al-Sistani, as part of an ongoing campaign to derail

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Montreal poultry workers strike for livable workweek

BY SYLVIE CHARBIN

MONTREAL—The 90 members of the Union of Volailles Marvid Workers, affiliated to the National Confederation of Trade Unions (CSN), have just entered their fifth month on strike. The employer, Volailles Marvid, is the largest certified kosher poultry abattoir in Quebec. “We’re fighting for a guaranteed minimum 30-hour workweek, because 15 to 20 hours isn’t enough,” said Luc Dufour, 38, who has worked at the company for eight months. “We’re not asking for much.”

In February 2003, after the company started a second production line, workers saw their former 39-hour workweek cut in half or less. Their weekly take-home pay fell to between CAN \$150 and \$200 (CAN \$1 = U.S. \$0.82). Strikers told the *Militant* that since February 2002 the bosses have selectively used temp agency workers for tasks normally done by union members, often bringing them in while union members are told to stay home because there’s no work.

Despite often freezing temperatures, both the company owners and the city of Montreal has denied the union permission to set up a picket trailer. The city has also denied workers permission to set up a wood-burning barrel to warm their hands. So when temperatures plunge well below zero the union has been making sure that no-one pickets for more than 15 minutes at a time and that a few cars, engines running, are at their disposal to warm up.

“Our numbers on the picket line have dropped off because of the cold,” said Carlo Désir, the union president. “But others have decided not to look for other jobs in order to support the strike. We all agree that we won’t go back with our heads down and that we have to wage this battle to the end.”

On November 30, the striking workers voted 96 percent against the first company offer since their contract expired in December 2003. The contract contained no guaranteed hours, and made no mention of wages, vacations, pensions, or paid leaves for illness or other reasons, with the exception of legal holidays.

The union has had to confront a number of challenges since the strike began September 13. At the beginning of November, striking workers were handed an

injunction that limited pickets to 18 at a time and forced strikers to move the line to the other side of the street. Two weeks later, however, workers were able to get the injunction modified to allow them to resume picketing on the sidewalk in front of the plant.

The union has been able to push the bosses back on some other points. On October 30, the union filed a complaint before the Quebec Labor Relations Board (CRT), charging the company with using some 40 replacement workers to maintain production, in violation of the Quebec Labor Code, which bans the use of salaried workers, other than supervisory personnel, to replace striking or lock-out workers.

The union won a partial victory November 2, when the CRT ruled that relatives of supervisory personnel, as well as rabbis who were paid to insure that chickens are slaughtered according to strict Jewish ritual before the strike began, could not work during the strike. The CRT also ruled, however, that persons who voluntarily offer their services to Volailles Marvid out of religious conviction could legally work during the strike. The company has continued to use this loophole in the Labor Code to its advantage. But it was caught violating the ruling December 29 when a CRT board member, through the vigilance of the union, witnessed three of the rabbis named in the ruling entering the plant.

Désir estimates that the abattoir is presently running at about 25 percent of capacity. An article published in the November 11 internet edition of *The Canadian Jew-*



Militant

Poultry workers on strike against Volailles Marvid in Montreal for a 30-hour minimum workweek return to picket line January 12, after a union meeting.

ish News said, “In a rare move... the city’s main kosher certification body... the Vaad Ha’ir, began to allow suppliers from outside Montreal—most prominently from the U.S.-based Empire Kosher Poultry—to bring kosher chickens into the city to cope with the shortage,” which was caused by the strike.

In another CRT ruling handed down November 23, the company was ordered to reinstate Arnold Fertil, a worker who was fired for union activities August 11, a month before the strike. Léo Ouellette, the CSN counsellor assigned to the strike, told the *Militant* that the company has recently appealed this ruling.

Glorieuse Dorvil, who has worked at Marvid for 26 years, told this reporter that on December 28 strikers received their weekly \$200 strike pay, plus a Christmas bonus of \$150, drawn from the some \$9,000 contributed so far by other CSN-affiliated unions.

On that snowy day, a group of strikers, in high spirits, returned to the picket line and began to dance and sing to a rhythmic popular carnival tune in Haiti called “Don’t give us that.” The strikers, 80 percent of whom are Haitian, have adapted the lyrics of this song to include the main demands of the strike.

At one point, one of the bosses came out of the plant, walked toward them, stared at the workers contemptuously for several minutes while leaning on a shovel, then shook his head in disbelief and slowly turned back toward the plant.

“Since the November 30 vote,” said Dorvil, “we’ve heard nothing from the company, but what’s encouraging is that the solidarity among us is strong and our morale remains high.”

Aimée Kendergian, a meat packer in Montreal, contributed to this article.

Success! SWP supporters contribute \$316,000 to party in 2004

BY PAT O'REILLY

SEATTLE—“We’ve achieved a great success: \$316,642.50 donated by party supporters and contributors to the Socialist Workers Party national office in 2004! We surpassed our national goal of \$315,000. Congratulations on a job done well, in full, and on time!”

That’s how a January 12 newsletter by the SWP supporters’ financial steering committee addressed to the party’s monthly contributors begins. The committee is based in Seattle and is made up of Scott Breen, Sara

Gates, and Pat O’Reilly.

SWP supporters adopted this goal in July 2003, after exceeding the \$300,000 they had set to raise for the period from August 2002 to July 2003.

In cities across the United States, SWP supporters collect regular monthly pledges, record them in an electronic database, and mail them to Seattle. Here, the financial steering committee verifies the checks received, prepares and makes the deposits, and sends the funds to the SWP national office in monthly installments. The committee also sends out a monthly newsletter to supporters reporting on the status of the campaign.

“Our labors resulted in the steady, consistent, dependable collection and transfer of an average of \$26,551 monthly to the SWP National Office—just as we promised,” the latest newsletter states. “Out of the 12 months of 2004, we met our \$26,250 monthly goal eight times. In the course of this national campaign, there were 92 contributor pledge raises totaling \$1,502, and 42 new contributors joined us, adding \$1,365. These successfully offset pledge drops and people who stopped regular monthly contributions. Several areas established financial committees to help organize the reach out and collection work of supporters’ groups, bolstering our fund-raising efforts. All of these were necessary to win this victory.”

The last two weeks of the effort the steering committee sent a daily e-mail to local financial directors and committees. The e-mail included a daily running total of funds posted to the database, checks received in Seattle, and checks still outstanding. Many local supporters’ groups went the extra mile to collect pledges at the last minute and send them special delivery overnight mail to compensate for the holiday delays. This final push helped assure that the total donations went over the top. But the achievement was mainly due to being on course all year long.

“The successful campaign to raise \$315,000 in 2004 organized by Socialist Workers Party supporters is a big victory and a big boost to building the communist movement,” said SWP leader Dave Prince in a note to the steering committee. “We salute your effort. The party budgeted in the income every month and contributors made sure their generous pledges arrived each month as promised—an essential part of enabling the SWP to respond in a timely way to political developments as they have unfolded over the last year. Based on the results we can look forward with confidence to budgeting these contributions for our work in 2005.”

Those interested in becoming regular contributors to the SWP can contact party supporters in their area (see directory on page 8).

THE MILITANT

The fight for job safety is international

The ‘Militant’ regularly covers workers’ battles for safer job conditions in face of the bosses’ profit drive. From the United States to around the world, this is at the heart of fights to organize and strengthen unions and use union power to defend workers’ life and limb. We give you the facts. Don’t miss a single issue!



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