

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**From Washington to Kiev to Greece:
Events demand US gov't free Cuban 5**
— PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 78/NO. 43 DECEMBER 1, 2014

Moscow sends arms, troops for separatists in Ukraine

BY JOHN STUDER

In recent weeks Moscow has been sending more heavy weapons and troops across the border into the Luhansk and Donetsk provinces of eastern Ukraine. From war devasta-

**DEFEND UKRAINE SOVEREIGNTY!
NO TO SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA!**

tion in the east to anti-working-class measures of the capitalist government in Kiev, working people across Ukraine face a growing economic and social crisis.

Meanwhile, workers, farmers and others in Ukraine are preparing to mark the anniversary of the first Maidan demonstration in Kiev's Independence Square Nov. 21 that led to months of popular mobilizations and street battles culminating in the overthrow of the pro-Moscow

Continued on page 9

Syria: Kurds open another front against Islamic State

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

It's been more than two months since Islamic State began its assault against Kurdish forces in Kobani in northern Syria, expecting that the city would easily fall as had been the case with large swaths of Syria and Iraq over the past year. But not only have Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) pushed back Islamic State forces from major parts of the city, Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria

**NO TO US-LED IMPERIALIST
WAR IN IRAQ AND SYRIA!**

— who have been blocked from joining the battle for Kobani by the Turkish government — have launched an offensive there to retake areas from Islamic State, opening a new front to divert the reactionaries' forces.

Meanwhile, Washington has been

Continued on page 9

As grand jury decision nears, actions protest cop's killing of Michael Brown



Reuters/Jim Young

Opponents of police brutality across country are preparing to respond to grand jury decision on killing of Michael Brown by officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. Above, Nov. 17 demonstration in Clayton, Missouri, outside building where grand jury was meeting.

BY JOHN HAWKINS

CHICAGO — The St. Louis County grand jury investigating the Aug. 9 fatal shooting of unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri, police officer Darren Wilson has been deliberating for nearly three months. Across the country opponents of police brutality are organizing to respond with demonstrations and other actions if the jury decides to let Brown's killer walk. Meanwhile, local and state officials are preparing

by mobilizing cops and the National Guard, as much of the capitalist media seek to discredit demonstrators and erode widespread support for their message.

In anticipation of the grand jury decision, the capitalist press, through presentation of irrelevant facts and speculation, is seeking to make a case for no indictment. These include a toxicology report that Brown had marijuana in his system, police al-

Continued on page 4

'We're workers, not owners' say port truckers on strike

As dockworkers press safety at congested ports



Slobodan Dmitrov

Truckers at California ports struck Nov. 13, demanding end to bosses' use of "independent contractor" label to pay them less and weaken union. Above, Nov. 17 picket at ITS Terminal.

BY BILL ARTH

LOS ANGELES — Labor resistance in West Coast ports is catching workers' attention and drawing the ire of shipping bosses and the news media that speaks in their interest.

Short-haul port drivers at Pacific 9 Transportation Co. and Total Transportation Services Inc. began a strike Nov. 13, their fifth in the last year demanding union rights and fighting to tear down the bosses' scheme to keep them divided and more exploitable as so-called independent contractors.

At the same time, members of the International Longshore and Ware-

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Black Friday Nov. 28

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house Union — who have been working without a contract since July 1 — are calling attention to unsafe conditions on the docks and countering the shipping bosses' propaganda cam-

Continued on page 6

Dupont bosses' toxic leak in Texas kills 4 workers, threatens residents

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

LA PORTE, Texas — Family members of two of the workers killed Nov. 15 in a major toxic gas leak at a chemical plant at the Dupont complex here filed lawsuits two days later accusing the company of negligence. The leak also threatened the health and safety of residents in working-class neigh-

borhoods for miles around.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has cited the Dupont facility in La Porte 51 times since 2009, including for failing to prevent pollution leaks and not maintaining

Continued on page 3

Inside

Rally protests abuse of inmates in Texas prison 2

Protests of cops' abduction of students sweep Mexico 6

—On the picket line, p. 5—

California recycling sorters win substantial pay increase

Nurses strike over inadequate Ebola safety precautions

Minnesota home care workers win union

Fund to build Socialist Workers Party goes over top!

BY PAUL MAILHOT

The SWP Party-Building Fund wants to extend thanks to contributors from all over the country. The fund is over the top with \$103,980 contributed toward the work of the

Continued on page 3

Rally protests abuse of inmates in Texas prisons

BY MIKE FITZSIMMONS

AUSTIN, Texas — “Our loved ones are human beings, not numbers, and should not be treated like animals,” Olga Torres, whose son is incarcerated in the Eastham Unit prison in Lovelady, told the *Militant* at a rally of some 300 on the steps of the Capitol here Nov. 7 to protest abusive treatment of prisoners in the state.

“We want decent medical care for all prisoners; an end to beatings, torturous heat in summer, and cold in winter; and training and education to prepare for lives outside prison,” said Yolanda Dryden, who like Torres came from Corpus Christi with the Texas Inmate Families Association.

“Buses, vans and cars came from Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Fort Hood, Fort Worth, Houston, Killeen and San Antonio. At least 200 people in prison are fasting in solidarity today,” said Josh Gravens of Texas Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants.

Many at the rally pointed to the denial of education, housing, and jobs to former prisoners. At the same time, unpaid work is mandatory for prisoners in the state. According to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice website, prisoners who “refuse to work lose their privileges and are placed in ‘special cell restriction,’ ... remaining in the cell 24 hours a day, with no trips to the day room, commissary, or recreation yard. Meals are also eaten in the cell, and personal property is taken away.”

Most of the protesters carried

handwritten signs highlighting prison conditions, such as “Texas prison heat = death sentence” and “solitary confinement is torture.”

“Since 2007, at least fourteen inmates incarcerated in various TDCJ facilities across the state of Texas have died from extreme heat exposure while imprisoned,” said a report published in April by the University of Texas Law School’s Human Rights Clinic, which characterizes state prison conditions as a violation of the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution barring cruel and unusual punishment, and a violation of international human rights standards.

One rally participant, who asked that her name not be disclosed for fear of retaliation against her imprisoned son, said that he regularly sleeps on the floor in the summer because of the extreme heat and is forced to shower in cold water during frigid winters.

“If you’re labeled a gang member, you get administrative segregation,” said Louise Elzner. “My son spent 10 and a half years in ad seg., which has the same cells and conditions as solitary — 24-hour lockup, except one hour in a room with a chin-up bar and you go anywhere else in shackles with two guards. But solitary is for infractions and the maximum is 30 days.”

“I want them to end or reduce ad seg. My husband is wasting away. I thank God he still has his mind, probably because he wants to better himself,” said Emily Hanebuth of

Minn. march slams ‘Redskins’ football team name



Militant/David Rosenfeld

MINNEAPOLIS — At least 3,500 Native Americans and others took to the streets outside TCF Bank Stadium here Nov. 2 to protest the racist name of the Washington Redskins before kickoff with the Minnesota Vikings. It was the largest action ever against the name of the National Football League team.

Protesters came from throughout Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa and other states. Chants of “Who are we? Not your mascots!” rang out as the march wound through a predominantly Somali neighborhood and then across the campus of the University of Minnesota.

Redskins team owner Daniel Snyder and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell have argued that the team name honors Native Americans. Many handmade signs answered, “Racist slurs are not an honor.”

— DAVID ROSENFELD

Houston.

“The rally was the best idea we’ve had in a long time,” David Collingsworth, chair of the Texas Inmate Families Association in Houston at a

meeting of the group a few days after the rally. “We feel we’re not alone.”

Deborah Liatos contributed to this article.



Yolanda Dryden

Hundreds rally at Capitol in Austin, Texas, Nov. 7 to protest state’s abuse of prisoners, including denial of medical care, beatings, extreme temperatures and solitary confinement.

THE MILITANT

Learn about the working-class alternative!

Socialist Workers Party election campaigns present a fighting course for the working class and its allies. They point to the need to break with the bosses’ Democratic and Republican parties and to organize independent labor political action along the road to the fight for power.



Militant/Alyson Kennedy

Dan Fein, left, SWP candidate for Illinois governor, speaks with taxi driver in Chicago.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

Party fund over the top!

Continued from front page
Socialist Workers Party! During the drive six areas raised their goals, and all went over.

The SWP Party-Building Fund is organized once a year to help meet the expenses of the party whose goal is to educate and organize the working class

to fight for political power and join the worldwide struggle for socialism.

Party members recently helped lead the effort to expand the readership of the *Militant*, winning more than 2,500 new and renewing readers to the paper. Many of those were workers and young people met on door-to-door sales in working-class communities or on union picket lines and at social protest actions. Among them were new contributors to the revolutionary party.

Working-class resistance across the country is growing among Walmart workers, port truck drivers, rail and airport workers and others. This development has opened new opportunities for communist workers to join in struggle with others in the day-to-day resistance to bosses' assaults on our living standards and dignity, and to expand the reach and influence of the revolutionary workers party.

In addition to first-time contributors from among those who subscribed to the *Militant* newspaper over last spring and fall, socialist workers in a number of cities picked up donations from fellow workers on the job who have been reading the *Militant*. This along with long-time supporters of the SWP and new regular readers of the *Militant* took us over the \$100,000 SWP Party-Building Fund goal.

In political discussions about the fund drive, many new con-

Calif. Walmart workers rally for \$15 an hour



Militant/Bill Arth

PICO RIVERA, Calif. — Nearly 500 Walmart workers and supporters rallied outside the Walmart store here Nov. 13 to demand \$15 an hour and full-time work. They were also protesting the company's retaliation against workers fighting for these demands.

Cheers rang out when workers walked out of the store and joined the demonstration. Twenty-three marchers were arrested after they sat down at the nearby busy intersection of Washington Blvd. and Paramount blocking traffic. Earlier in the day workers sat in at the Walmart store in the Baldwin Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles.

A week before the protest, Evelin Cruz, a worker at the Pico Rivera store, was fired after posting on her Facebook page, "We can't pay our bills, but we can STRIKE against Walmart's illegal retaliation. I am ready to strike!"

"Both Victoria Martinez and I are known as leaders of this fight," Cruz told the *Militant*. They were fired, she said, on the pretext of a labeling and paperwork mistake that they weren't even responsible for.

Walmart workers are planning more nationwide protests on Nov. 28.

"I am going to stay involved and the best thing people can do is to come out on Black Friday," Cruz said.

— BILL ARTH

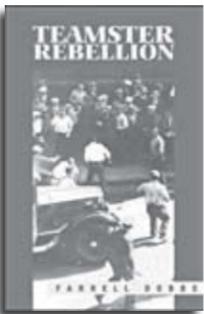
Area	Quota	Collected	%
New York	\$10,000	\$10,650	107%
Atlanta	\$8,600	\$9,045	105%
Chicago***	\$11,000	\$11,463	104%
Los Angeles	\$8,000	\$8,293	104%
Washington*	\$8,000	\$8,350	104%
Houston	\$3,300	\$3,405	103%
Philadelphia	\$4,200	\$4,311	103%
Seattle	\$7,600	\$7,808	103%
Boston*	\$3,750	\$3,810	102%
Nebraska*	\$3,350	\$3,408	102%
Lincoln*	\$150	\$155	103%
Omaha*	\$3,200	\$3,253	102%
Brooklyn	\$10,000	\$10,021	100%
Miami	\$2,800	\$2,813	100%
Twin Cities	\$5,000	\$5,002	100%
San Francisco*	\$14,500	\$14,501	100%
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Total	\$100,100	\$104,130	104%
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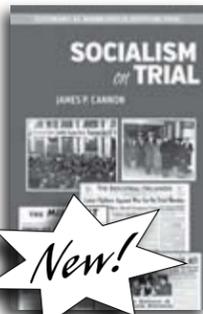
tributors expressed their support for the party's work. "I'm making a contribution because I appreciate the work the party is doing to get out the truth about the struggles of working people around

the world," said James Bouse, a new contributor in the Chicago area. "I'm glad to help financially to make it possible."

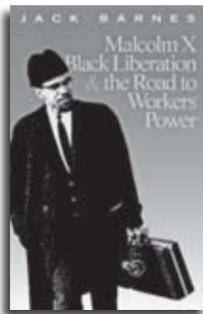
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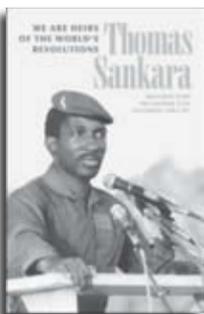
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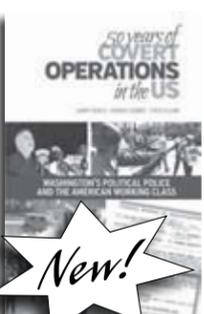
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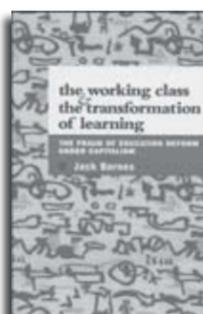
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Toxic leak

Continued from front page
through records.

Three workers and a supervisor died from the leak from a malfunctioning valve that began about 4 a.m. Nov. 15. Other workers at the 800 acre site were instructed to "shelter in place" while the valve was changed and the gas dissipated. They weren't able to leave until 4 p.m. The workers who died were Robert Tisnado, his brother Gilbert Tisnado, Crystal Wise and manager Wade Baker. One worker was hospitalized.

The wrongful death suit by Michelle Tisnado, the widow of Gilbert Tisnado, states that the company showed "conscious disregard for the safety of its employees."

The law firm of Brent Coon, which is representing Wise's daughter, stated that "once again, we see these companies place their workers in undue harm to pad the bottom line."

The gas — methyl mercaptan — is used to make insecticides and fungicides and to give natural gas its rotten-egg smell. Exposure can cause respiratory, skin and eye irritation. It can also cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, coma and death, especially in high concentrations.

The odor from the leak spread across La Porte, a town about 20 miles east of Houston, and reached about 40 miles to Rosenberg and Sugar Land.

The company in a statement said the leak "at no time posed a danger to the community."

"I live in Pasadena and smelled it. I got a headache because it was very strong. Many people got headaches,"

Continued on page 4

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Fighters speak out against cops' killings in Bay Area

BY BETSEY STONE

BURLINGAME, Calif. — Members of three families with relatives killed by police told their story at a speakout at the International Association of Machinists hall here Nov. 15.

All three killings took place in cities south of San Francisco and in each case they were followed by protests by family and community members.

"The police killed my brother. We were also failed by the health system," said Matt Chang, whose brother, Errol Chang, suffered from schizophrenia.

Chang said that instead of being able to get the treatment needed for his mental illness, his brother was put in jail, including in solitary confinement for four months. "Then they offered him a plea bargain," he said. "So my brother emerged from this, not as someone who needed help, but as a convicted felon."

Chang showed a video of the tank and SWAT team the police brought to their home in Pacifica March 18, the day his brother was killed. Errol Chang, who was having a psychotic episode, had barricaded himself inside the house and at one point leaned out the window with his hands up. Before shooting him, the cops threw flash grenades at the house, as well as at bystanders who were filming outside.

After the killing family members, friends and neighborhood residents and others held a vigil in Pacifica that received widespread news coverage. "People from the community called the TV station and told them they need to cover this," said Teresa Gutierrez, a childhood friend of Errol's, who attended the speak-out.

"There's a disconnect between the citizens and the cops. They are supposed to protect and serve. Instead they are killing," said Tony Serrano, the brother of Yanira Serrano, who was gunned down by a San Mateo County sheriff on June 3 in Half Moon Bay, a few miles down the coast from Pacifica.

Yanira Serrano, 18, also suffered from a mental illness. Tony Serrano described his experience trying to get help when his sister refused to take her medication. Instead of the medical assistance he asked for when he called 911, Sheriff's Deputy Menh Trieu arrived. Within 30 seconds he fatally shot Yanira, who had a knife in her hand that she had been using to cut fruit.

While his sister lay dying on the ground, Trieu pointed his gun at Tony Serrano and prevented him from coming to Yanira's aid.

"I am here to support these other families," said Dolores Piper, who described the police killing of her nephew, 15-year-old Derrick Gaines, in South San Francisco in 2012. "The police had no business stopping him on that day," she said. "He was taken from us."

The meeting was co-sponsored by the Militant Labor Forum and the three family members who spoke. Among the 45 people in attendance were members of area unions, including a member of the American Postal Workers Union who brought information on the struggle against the slashing of jobs and facilities at U.S. Postal Service.

Eric Simpson, a *Militant* correspondent who covered the police killing of Yanira Serrano, praised the courage of the families who protested the killings

with news conferences and disciplined protest actions.

"Police are never friends of labor," Simpson said. "During a strike they protect scabs and attack strikers. The job they're trained for is to preserve the privileges of a tiny minority." Simpson encouraged active support for growing fights against police brutality across the country, from California to Chicago to Ferguson, Missouri.

"I'm really proud of my people that helped me organize the rallies," said Serrano. "By coming out into the streets, by screaming about this, we are opening doors. We are seeing more people talk about these things."

The Serrano family and many of those who participated in the protests in Half Moon Bay are residents of Moonridge Housing Apartments, a complex built for workers in local flower and mushroom greenhouses. During the speakout, a mural painted by Moonridge residents was projected on the wall. Serrano said they are fighting to have the mural, titled "Yanira Serrano's Mariposa Mural," set up in a location that can be a reminder of his sister and their fight.

"They try to put you in the position that you're the evil ones. But we're not going to let them," Serrano said. "We're going to keep on fighting."

Actions protest police killing of Michael Brown

Continued from front page

legations that Brown scuffled with Wilson in the cop's squad car prior to the killing, or that Brown was moving toward Wilson when the cop gunned him down some distance away.

Brown was shot at least six times, twice in the head, by Wilson. According to several witnesses, he had his hands up, giving rise to the chant "Hands up, don't shoot" as a popular slogan of protesters around the world.

Demonstrations continue almost dai-

Toxic leak

Continued from page 3

José Peña, a truck driver, told the *Militant* in La Porte the day after the leak.

La Porte convenience store worker Julio Garcia was at home during the chemical release. "There are alarms all over La Porte to let people know of leaks or explosions at the plants nearby and none of them sounded," he said at the store Nov. 16. "Why didn't they go off? Why didn't they let people know there was a leak?"

"You say something, you lose your job," said Brent Gibson, a welder. "I've been working in those plants for 15 years. You can be laid off in an instant."

"Everybody says the 'right thing' about safety at work — they hold safety meetings, even in Spanish. But when you actually get on the job it's a different story. You see things you know aren't right. But if you say anything, you're fired," José Ezekiel told supporters of the *Militant* who knocked on his door. He works at an oil refinery for a nonunion contracting company.

Ezekiel pointed to the soot on his house from the flares that burn at nearby plants and other contaminants. "We live with this — the flares, the soot."

Atlanta forum discusses fight against cop brutality



Militant/Rachele Fruit

ATLANTA — Fighters against police brutality came from Thomaston and Savannah to speak at a Militant Labor Forum of some 30 people here Nov. 1. The event was an opportunity for those involved in struggles across Georgia to get to know each other.

"We want you to know that the fight is not yours alone," Rhondalynn Traylor (speaking), president of the Thomaston Improvement Association, told Penny Nelson, mother of Charles Smith. Smith was shot five times and killed by Savannah police Sept. 18 while handcuffed in the backseat of a police car. Also at the program were his sisters Janie and Katherine Smith.

"There is a broad-based campaign of intimidation" against Smith's family and supporters, aimed at blocking further protests and whitewashing the police killing," Smith family attorney Chadrick Mance told the audience.

"Police brutality is part of maintaining the privilege and power of the capitalist class. It's not a question of a few 'bad apples,'" said Dave Ferguson from the Socialist Workers Party, who took part in protests against police brutality in Thomaston and Savannah and in Ferguson, Missouri.

— RACHELE FRUIT

ly in Ferguson demanding Wilson's indictment and prosecution. In University City near Ferguson several dozen demonstrators staged a die-in Nov. 16. The next day in Clayton, where the grand jury is convened, about 100 demonstrators turned out for an action billed as "The Injustice Freak Show."

These actions take place as protests against police brutality are happening across the country.

As protest organizers such as the Don't Shoot Coalition have been conducting training sessions to prepare for peaceful protests, officials from Jefferson City, Missouri, to Ferguson are turning up the volume on what has become over the last several weeks a steady drum beat of violence-baiting against looming protests.

State of emergency declared

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon declared a state of emergency Nov. 17, citing "the possibility of expanded unrest" and prepared to send the National Guard to the St. Louis area, invoking a law authorizing use of troops "in the event of ... actual or threatened public catastrophe."

"Governor Nixon's decision to declare a state of emergency without evidence of violence or danger only threatens to stir up tensions and denigrate the peaceful efforts of countless nonviolent activists," said NAACP President Cornell William Brooks in a statement the same day. "We at the NAACP will work tirelessly to ensure that the civil rights of the demonstrators are upheld. ... We commend as well as stand with those practitioners of democracy who have stood strong for over 100 days."

The state of emergency "is designed to provoke fear and discourage people from protesting for Michael Brown," Abrahama Keys, an office worker in St.

Louis who has taken part in numerous demonstrations against the killing, said by phone.

The FBI issued an intelligence bulletin to police departments across the country saying it "assesses those infiltrating and exploiting otherwise legitimate public demonstrations with the intent to incite and engage in violence could be armed with bladed weapons or firearms, equipped with tactical gear/gas masks, or bulletproof vests to mitigate law enforcement measures."

"I don't trust these people to do the right thing," said Markese Mull, a member of The Mighty 13, a group demanding prosecution of Wilson. "Everyone's been trying to tell the governor and the chief that the demonstrations are going to be peaceful. The cops are who I'm worried about. They have been training to initiate their kind of violence."

"They're preparing for the worst that could happen from their point of view," Brian Hutton, a lab worker who lives in Ferguson, told the *Militant* in a phone interview. "The real problem is it's murder and they want to give Darren Wilson a pass."

Dan Fein contributed to this article.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

UNITED KINGDOM
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Back Kurds in Battle of Kobani and War Against Islamic State! Speakers: Kazim Asutay, activist for Kurdish rights; Paul Davies, Communist League. Sun., Nov. 30, 2 p.m. Room 301, Hilton House, 26-28 Hilton St. Tel.: 0161 478 2496.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help make this column a voice of workers' resistance!

This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about the labor resistance that is unfolding today. It seeks to give voice to those engaged in battle and help build solidarity. Its success depends on input from readers. If you are involved in a struggle with the bosses or have information on one, please contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or 212-244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

—Maggie Trowe

California recycling sorters win substantial pay increase

SAN LEANDRO, Calif. — After a seven-day strike that ended Oct. 30, some 130 sorters at Waste Management's recycle plant here won a substantial wage increase — \$1.48 per hour immediately and subsequent increases that raise hourly pay over the next five years from \$12.50 to \$20.94 an hour by 2019.

Strikers are members of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 6. Garbage truck drivers in the Teamsters union and mechanics organized by the Machinists did not join the strike, despite appeals by the strikers, who distributed a flyer that said, "Let's stand together like we did to win in 2007 ... by respecting the picket line." ILWU and IAM members stayed out when Waste Management locked out the Teamsters seven years ago.

Francisco Chavez, a Teamster driver, joined the picket after work, saying, "I'm with them because I've seen their working conditions."

A group of 70 recycling sorters at Alameda County Industries joined the ILWU a few days before the strike.

—Eric Simpson

Nurses strike over inadequate Ebola safety precautions

Members of National Nurses United held strikes and protest actions in 16 states Nov. 12 over a range of issues, including inadequate safety equipment, training and procedures for Ebola treatment to protect nurses and patients.

In California some 18,000 registered nurses and nurse practitioners who are in contract negotiations with Kaiser Permanente struck 86 hospitals and clinics Nov. 11-12.

At Providence Hospital in Washington, D.C., some 400 nurses, who unionized last year and are fighting for a contract, took part in the Nov. 12 strike action demanding reduced patient loads and Ebola safety.

"We are asking for four patients per nurse" instead of seven, Jowita Lyn, an emergency nurse at Providence, told the *Militant*. She added that basic supplies and personal protection equipment are always in short supply.

At a press conference in Houston, National Nurses United spokesperson Carol Moore, a nurse and a leader of the NAACP there, condemned the treatment of Thomas Duncan, who died of Ebola in Dallas Oct. 8. When someone "comes to a hospital with a 103 degree fever and is turned away for lack of insurance — that's a crime," she said.

—Glova Scott and Steve Warshell

Thousands across Quebec fight day care cost increase

MONTREAL — Thousands of day care workers, parents with their young children and others demonstrated here and across Quebec Nov. 9 against increasing child care fees.

Earlier in the week the media report-

ed that Liberal Party Premier Philippe Couillard plans to raise the current fee of \$7.30 per child per day to \$8 for those who qualify for full subsidies, and to as much as \$20 for parents with higher incomes.

The fee was raised on Oct. 1 from \$7 — the second increase since subsidized child care was won in 1997 by decades of struggles by unions and women's rights supporters.

The Quebec Association of Day Care Centers responded by organizing a coalition that included Quebec's three major union federations to organize protest actions.

Many participants carried homemade signs with slogans such as "Raising day care fees equals women at home."

—Beverly Bernardo

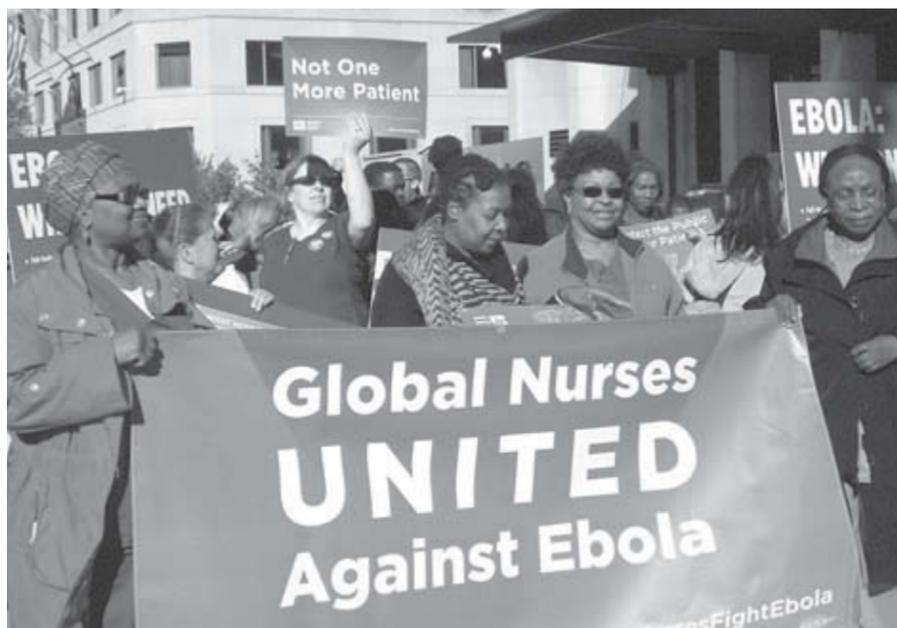
Minnesota home care workers win union

MINNEAPOLIS — Some 27,000 personal care attendants in Minnesota joined the Service Employees International Union after months of organizing. The workers, who care for disabled people on Medicaid in their homes, receive a median wage of \$11.09 per hour and no health benefits.

"We knocked on doors, we began meeting people at work, neighbors, family members," Emma Woodward, a Certified Nurse's Assistant and SEIU member, told the *Militant*.

In July hundreds of health workers and supporters, which included clients and their families, took part in a pro-union rally in St. Paul.

The anti-union National Right to Work Legal Foundation filed lawsuits to try to block the election and contract



Militant/Glova Scott

Striking nurses and their supporters march in Washington, D.C., Nov. 12 demanding tougher Ebola safety precautions. Actions called by Nat'l Nurses United took place in 16 states.

negotiations, but the court ruled against both. The successful election results were announced Aug. 26.

—Helen Meyers

New England communications workers strike, win solidarity

PORTLAND, Maine — "Two weeks into this we're holding strong," said Barney McClelland, a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, as he walked the picket line against FairPoint here Nov. 1. Nearly 2,000 members of the IBEW and the Communications Workers of America went on strike Oct. 17 against the North Carolina-based company that provides telephone and Internet service in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

Some 400 unionists and supporters, including Verizon workers from Boston and New York, held a downtown rally here Nov. 8.

Negotiations for a new contract began in April. On Aug. 28 FairPoint bosses unilaterally imposed their terms, which included a two-tier wage system, employee pension freezes, cancellation of retirees' health insurance and outsourcing jobs.

"We implemented our pro-



Militant/Sarah Ullman

Strike rally for FairPoint workers in Portland, Maine, Nov. 8.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 1, 1989

On November 19, the very same day the Pathfinder mural was unveiled, the *New York Post* editors launched a scurrilous attack against the artistic landmark headlined, "Off the wall — and that's where it belongs."

For the last two years more than 50 artists from across the United States and some 20 other countries volunteered their labor to complete the mural on the side of the six-story Pathfinder Building on the Lower West Side of Manhattan.

The artwork pictures portraits of figures whose speeches and writings are published by Pathfinder Press including Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Ernesto Che Guevara and Fidel Castro of Cuba, Malcolm X, Maurice Bishop of Grenada, Augusto César Sandino and Carlos Fonseca of Nicaragua, and Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg.



November 30, 1964

The campaign of racist terror in Mississippi suffered a highly significant set-back in the town of Laurel, a town in the south-central part of the state. There a local of the AFL-CIO International Woodworkers of America has publicly urged its members to carry arms to repulse attacks by the Ku Klux Klan.

The union's self-defense recommendation was made following consultation with the local's lawyers after two attacks on the local's secretary-treasurer, Otis Mathews. The local, whose members work at the Masonite factory, had recently agreed with the company to comply with a federal order to upgrade workers on the basis of seniority, not race. This resulted in some Negro workers becoming supervisors. All officials of the local union are white. The Ku Klux Klan began a campaign of threats against the union for negotiating compliance with the order.



December 1, 1939

DETROIT, Nov. 27 — The Chrysler Corporation is now taking the first active steps in launching a back-to-work movement. This morning 200 Negro strikebreakers were escorted under heavy police guard through a picket line of more than 5,000 workers into the Dodge plant. The scabs were jeered by the pickets and a clash was averted only because of shouted orders by Richard Frankenstein, U.A.W. Executive Board member, and Pat Quinn, President of the Dodge U.A.W. local.

Union leaders accurately pegged the aims of the corporation when they called it an attempt to foment a "race riot" in Detroit. The clash that the company officials hope to provoke between Negro and white workers is intended to create a battle between the workers themselves on a racial issue and thereby facilitate widespread strikebreaking and ultimate state intervention.

Protests of cop abduction of students sweep Mexico

BY SETH GALINSKY

Protests have swept hundreds of cities and towns across Mexico since Sept. 26 when police attacked and “disappeared” 43 students in Iguala, in Guerrero state. The determined actions have also inspired demonstrations in cities around the U.S. and elsewhere.

The attack on the students from the Rural Teachers’ College in Ayotzinapa has struck a nerve in Mexico where more than 22,000 people have been “disappeared” in the last eight years amid political repression by the police, army, government officials and the private armies of the narcotics industry.

Police and masked gunmen carried out three attacks on Sept. 26, killing six people and forcing dozens into police vehicles. The students, who had traveled to Iguala to prepare for an Oct. 2 demonstration commemorating the 1968 massacre in Mexico City of student protesters, have not been seen since.

Mexican Attorney General Jesús Murillo said Nov. 7 that the bodies of the students had been found, burned beyond recognition by thugs from the Guerreros Unidos drug gang on the orders of Iguala Mayor José Luis Abarca. The mayor, his wife, and more than 70 people, including 36 municipal cops and alleged members of the gang, were eventually arrested under pressure of growing protests.

But according to an Argentine forensic team working with the students’ families, none of the remains tested so far matches any of the missing students.

Three bus caravans of students and parents set out Nov. 13 from Ayotzinapa to crisscross the country. They were demanding the resignation of Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, a more

aggressive search and prosecution of those responsible for the attacks. They will converge for a nationwide demonstration in Mexico City Nov. 20. Other actions are expected that day in the country, the U.S. and elsewhere.

“There is no respect for human or labor rights in México,” José Humberto Montes, international relations secretary for the Union of Mexican Electrical Workers, said by phone from Mexico City Nov. 15. “The social movements that fight for democratic freedoms and social rights are victims of a permanent campaign of criminalization by the government.”

The protest movement has rattled the main capitalist parties. Iguala Mayor Abarca was a leader of the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD), Mexico’s third largest party. Peña Nieto’s Institutional



Reuters/Jorge Dan Lopez

Nov. 15 march for 43 missing students in Tixtla, Mexico, hometown of student Cristian Rodriguez. Protests across country are calling for resignation of President Enrique Peña Nieto.

Revolutionary Party (PRI) is the dominant party in Congress.

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest on Oct. 28 called the reports about events in Guerrero “worri-

some,” but the Obama administration has avoided comments on Peña Nieto’s government, which has led economic “reforms” that open Mexico to deeper exploitation by U.S. capital.

Calif. port drivers strike, dockworkers press safety

Continued from front page

campaign to blame the union for growing congestion at ports in Los Angeles and Oakland, California, and Seattle and Tacoma, Washington.

Since 2010 drayage drivers have been fighting for their right to join the Teamsters and have a steady paycheck. As “business owners” they are paid by the load with no compensation for waiting time and are responsible for costs of fuel, parking, insurance and maintenance, which sometimes results in negative “pay.”

A five-day strike in July involving 120 workers at three companies ended after Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti negotiated a “cooling off” period and bosses pledged not to retaliate against drivers who took part.

Total Transportation Services nonetheless fired 35 strikers.

‘We’re realizing our power’

“We gave them some time, but they didn’t solve anything, so we restarted the strike,” Daniel Linares, a driver at Pacific 9 Transportation, told the *Militant*. “We’re realizing the power we have.”

Workers set up pickets at the trucking companies in the morning Nov. 13, and sent teams to five terminals at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to picket trucks from the companies.

Port bosses, fearing that pickets would back up traffic at the ports and expecting longshore workers would not cross any picket lines, refused to service trucks from the struck companies. Port Security guards turned away the scab trucks and sent away pickets.

“Nothing stands in the way of goods flowing through the Port of Los Angeles,” said Mayor Garcetti Nov. 13. The next day the picket lines were suspended, as the two companies and the Teamsters agreed to negotiate.

But on Nov. 17 the strike spread to three more companies — QTS Inc., LACA Express and WinWin Logistics, Inc. The next day workers picketed rail yards serviced by Pacer Cartage and Harbor Rail Transport, trucking companies that misclassify drivers as independent contractors.

Meanwhile, negotiations between the bosses’ Pacific Maritime Association and the ILWU have been stalled since a six-year contract covering 20,000 union members expired more than four months ago. Pressed to increased output under dangerous conditions, dockworkers are expressing concerns about safety as containers pile up. Shipping companies up and down the West Coast — backed by the big-business media — are accusing the union of carrying out a slowdown and hurting commerce ahead of holiday sales. An editorial in the *Seattle Times*, for example, carried the headline “U.S. Economy Calls for End of Port Slowdown.”

“The ILWU is not responsible for the current congestion crisis at West

Coast ports,” a Nov. 10 press statement on the union website said. The causes of the congestion include “chassis shortage and dislocation; rail service delays, including a shortage of rail cars nationwide; the exodus of truck drivers who cannot make a living wage; long truck turn times; record retail import volumes (increases of 5.3 percent over 2013); larger vessels discharging massive amounts of cargo; container terminals pushed to storage capacities; and the peak shipping season (i.e., the August through October pre-holiday surge),” the statement said.

“Longshoremen are incredibly frustrated,” Craig Merrilees, ILWU spokesperson, told the *Militant* Nov. 17. “We began negotiations in May, but the companies aren’t taking the congestion problem seriously. They are making the docks more dangerous.”

“The men and women of the ILWU will not make up for the current supply chain failures at the expense of life and limb,” Merrilees said in a statement.

When longshore workers honored the port truckers’ pickets in July, an arbitrator ordered them back to work. A pretext for a similar ruling today may be more difficult for the bosses’ courts to defend now that the dockworkers themselves are working without a contract. “The ILWU has a long history of supporting workers’ struggles, and believes an injury to one is an injury to all,” Merrilees told the *Militant*.

Journal of Commerce editor Bill Mongelluzzo said Nov. 10 that Port of Oakland longshoremen this weekend “walked off their jobs for three consecutive shifts.” In discussions with the *Militant*, longshoremen explained that at the big Stevedoring Services of America terminal a wheel fell off a piece of equipment handling containers, creating a dangerous situation, so workers stood down until the equipment was repaired. Then, according to workers, bosses ordered the crew of some 100 ILWU members to leave the terminal, and suspended work for another shift.

Joel Britton in San Francisco contributed to this article.

London protesters: ‘Close immigration jails!’



Militant/Anne Howie

LONDON — Chanting, “Detention centers — shut them down” and “Asylum seekers have the right — here to stay, here to fight,” more than 80 people demonstrated at the Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre near Heathrow Airport here Nov. 8.

The U.K. government holds for indefinite periods between 2,000 and 3,000 people, including children, in Immigration Removal Centres.

Protesters also drew attention to the U.K. Foreign Office’s recent announcement that it will no longer support search and rescue operations for refugees drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. More than 2,500 people are known to have drowned or gone missing in the Mediterranean so far this year. Around 150,000 have been rescued since October 2013.

“Refusing to rescue is murder,” said Karen Doyle of the Movement for Justice. “We have to mobilize.”

— ANNE HOWIE AND ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

DC reception chance to learn about Cuban Five, revolution

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

WASHINGTON — More than 100 people turned out for a “Sip and Salsa” reception with representatives of the Cuban Interests Section at the University of the District of Columbia here. The Nov. 7 event was an opportunity to speak with Cuban diplomats, learn about the Cuban Revolution and the island’s culture and view new prison paintings by Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five.

Participants at the National Network on Cuba annual meeting, which took place from Nov. 7-9, were encouraged to attend the event.

“This is a unique exchange. Cuban food, art, music and great conversation,” said Crisarla Houston, professor of law at the University of the District of Columbia, welcoming participants.

After a performance and lesson by the D.C. Casineros Dance Company, many took to the dance floor. A delicious Cuban dinner was served.

Alexander Rodríguez, Second Secretary of the Cuban Interests Section and co-chair of the event, urged participants to take time to look at Guerrero’s new 16-piece watercolor collection titled “Absolved by Solidarity.”

“This is an injustice of 16 years in prison for the noblest of causes,” said Rodríguez, “defending the Cuban revolution.”

“The paintings bring together our humanity with his,” said Jino Ray, president of the UDC Student Bar Association, one of the sponsoring groups. “We hear his voice and his sense of freedom — not the chains of prison.” Other sponsors included the Black Law Students Association, Black Men’s Law Society, Latino/a Students Association and the National Lawyers Guild.

“Before this event, I heard that they were accused of being spies,” George Duncan, who is originally from Ivory Coast, told the *Militant*. “But once you look at the paintings and read

the explanations you get a pretty good sense that they were denied a fair trial, they were condemned to prison from the start.” Duncan came to the event with Gnaka Lagoke of the Revival of Panafricanism Forum. Lagoke invited participants to attend a public meeting here Nov. 15 titled “Revolution in Burkina Faso and the Downfall of Blaise Compaoré: Significance and Prospects for a New Burkina Faso and a New Africa.” Several workers who recently moved to Washington, D.C., from Burkina Faso joined the event.



Joe Libertelli

Cuban Five were jailed for defending the “noblest of causes,” Cuban diplomat Alexander Rodríguez told participants at “Sip and Salsa” event at University of District of Columbia.

Greece show of Cuban 5 prison art wins solidarity

BY NATASHA TERLEXI

KALAMATA, Greece — About 60 people, including workers, farmers, youth and some public officials, attended an Oct. 25 showing at city hall here of Antonio Guerrero’s watercolor collection titled “I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived.”

The exhibit was followed by a speech by Cuban Ambassador Osvaldo Cobacho Martínez. The event was covered by the local Mesogios TV station.

“This exhibit here is special for us, it is a perspective by revolutionaries from inside the prison walls,” said Cobacho. “These five revolutionaries were in the U.S. to monitor organizations that organize terrorist acts against Cuba from

U.S. territory. We are asking people to join the worldwide movement demanding their liberation.”

“I want to express my solidarity with the people of Cuba in the demand to free the remaining three prisoners,” said Thanasis Petrakos, a member of parliament from the Syriza party. “We will be organizing a delegation of MPs to visit Cuba as a symbolic gesture of support in this fight and against the U.S. embargo on Cuba.”

“With the Ebola epidemic in West Africa we have seen Cuba send doctors and nurses while the U.S. government is sending soldiers. That shows the big

difference between the two societies and explains why we should support the fight to free the Cuban Five,” said Andreas Haikalis, who chaired the event.

Participants picked up 14 books on the case of the Cuban Five, the Cuban Revolution and other titles on revolutionary, working-class politics.

The event was sponsored by the local Greek Cuban Friendship Society and was part of a nationwide tour of the paintings organized by the José Martí Cultural Association, Hasta La Victoria Siempre and the Greek Solidarity Network – La Red Solid@ria.

Events in London, UK

Candlelight Vigil for The Cuban Five
Speakers: Aleida Guevara and others.
Poetry, readings, music
Wed. Dec. 3, 6 pm – 7:30 pm
US Embassy, Grosvenor Square

First UK exhibit of Absolved by Solidarity
16 new paintings by Antonio Guerrero
Wed., Dec. 3 – Sat., Dec. 6
Special event Fri. Dec. 5 7:30 pm.
Bolivar Hall, 54-56 Grafton Way,
More info for both activities: 020 7490 5715

Want to read more? . . .



“We know that right is on our side, but to win we need a jury of millions throughout the world to make our truth known.”
— Gerardo Hernández

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Who are the Cuban Five?



Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González are Cuban revolutionaries who during the 1990s accepted assignments from the Cuban government to gather information on the operations and plans of Cuban-American paramilitary groups based in southern Florida. These rightist outfits, organizing on U.S. soil with virtual impunity, have a long record of carrying out bombings, assassinations and other attacks, both against targets in Cuba and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in the United States, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

On Sept. 12, 1998, the Five were arrested by the FBI. They were framed up and convicted on a variety of charges, which included acting as unregistered agents of the Cuban government and possession of false identity documents. Without a shred of evidence, three were charged with “conspiracy to gather and transmit national defense information.”

Hernández was also convicted of conspiracy to commit murder, on the pretext that he bore responsibility for the Cuban government’s 1996 shoot-down of two Brothers to the Rescue planes that had invaded Cuban airspace in disregard of Havana’s repeated warnings. He is serving two life terms plus 15 years. His wife Adriana Pérez is barred from entering the United States.

René González returned to Cuba in May 2013 and Fernando González on Feb. 28 this year.

Musicians at Kiev concert build support for Cuban 5

A pair of Ukrainian musicians who performed as part of a two-day benefit concert in Kiev to support Ukrainian soldiers wounded in battle with Moscow-backed separatists used the occasion to build support for the international fight to free the Cuban Five. The concert took place at the city’s Maidan square, the center of mobilizations that led to the overthrow of President Victor Yanukovich in February.

“I explained who the Five Cuban heroes are during our performance,” violinist Alexander Shevchenko told the *Militant* by email. Shevchenko performed with guitarist Alina Boyko under the name Fresh Wind (see photo). “I explained how instead of arresting those planning terrorist attacks against Cuba, the U.S. authorities arrested the Five who had gathered the facts about new attacks being prepared against the Cuban people.”

“We have performed and spoken out in defense of the Five many times,” Shevchenko said, “including during the international effort to gather signatures leading up to their appeal hearings two years ago. Eighty-six thousand people from all kinds of political parties and civic organizations, as well as ordinary citizens, signed the petition addressed to U.S. President Barack Obama.”

“I also told those at the Maidan about how Cuba provided free medical care for 25,000 children from here suffering from the [1986] nuclear disaster at Chernobyl,” Shevchenko said. “That got applause.”

— JOHN STUDER



Malcolm X: 'You're living at a time of revolution'

The French edition of Malcolm X Talks to Young People is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month. The excerpt below is from remarks Malcolm X made during a debate at Oxford University in Britain on Dec. 3, 1964. The proposition under debate was "Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice, moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue," a statement made by Barry Goldwater in his 1964 speech accepting the Republican Party nomination for president of the United States. Malcolm X was one of six speakers and one of three who defended this proposition. Copyright © 1965 by Betty Shabazz and Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Malcolm X, left, entering hall prior to debate at Oxford University, Dec. 3, 1964. The people in power "take a person who's the victim of the crime and make it appear he's the criminal, and they'll take the criminal and make it appear that he's the victim," he said.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MALCOLM X

I think the only way one can really determine whether or not extremism in defense of liberty is justified, is not to approach it as an American or a European or an African or an Asian, but as a human being. If we look upon it as different types, immediately we begin to think in terms of extremism being good for one and bad for another, or bad for one and good for another. But if we look upon it, if we look upon ourselves as human beings, I doubt that anyone will deny that extremism in defense of liberty, the liberty of any human being, is no vice. Anytime anyone is enslaved

or in any way deprived of his liberty, that person, as a human being, as far as I'm concerned he is justified to resort to whatever methods necessary to bring about his liberty again. [Applause] ...

When the people who are in power want to use — again, create an image to justify something that's bad, they use the press, and they'll use the press to create a humanitarian image for a devil, or a devil image for a humanitarian. They'll take a person who's the victim of the crime and make it appear he's the criminal, and they'll take the criminal and make it appear that he's the victim of the crime. And the Congo situation is one of the best examples that I can cite right now to point this out. The Congo situation is a nasty example of how a country, because it is in power, can take its press and make the world accept something that's absolutely criminal.

They take American-trained — they take pilots that they say are American-trained — and this automatically lends respectability to them, [Laughter] and then they will call them anti-Castro Cubans. And that's supposed to add to their respectability [Laughter] and eliminate the fact that they're dropping bombs on villages where they have no defense whatsoever against such planes, blowing to bits Black women — Congolese women, Congolese children, Congolese babies. This

is extremism. But it is never referred to as extremism, because it is endorsed by the West, it's financed by America, it's made respectable by America, and that kind of extremism is never labeled as extremism. Because it's not extremism in defense of liberty. And if it is extremism in defense of liberty, as this talk has just pointed out, it's extremism in defense of liberty for the wrong type of people. [Applause]

I'm not advocating that kind of extremism. That's coldblooded murder. But the press is used to make that coldblooded murder appear as an act of humanitarianism.

They take it one step farther and get a man named Tshombe, who is a murderer. They refer to him as the premier or the prime minister of the Congo to lend respectability to him. He's actually the murderer of the rightful prime minister of the Congo. [Applause] They never mention that this man — I'm not for extremism in defense of that kind of liberty or that kind of activity. They take this man, who's a murderer. The world recognizes him as a murderer. But they make him the prime minister. He becomes a paid murderer, a paid killer, who is propped up by American dollars. And to show the degree to which he is a paid killer, the first thing he does is go to South Africa and hire more killers and bring them into the Congo. They give them the glorious name of merce-

nary, which means a hired killer; not someone that's killing for some kind of patriotism, or some kind of ideal, but a man who is a paid killer, a hired killer. And one of the leaders of them is right from this country here. And he's glorified as a soldier of fortune, when he's shooting down little Black women and Black babies and Black children.

I'm not for that kind of extremism. I'm for the kind of extremism that those who are being destroyed by those bombs and destroyed by those hired killers are able to put forth to thwart it. They will risk their lives at any cost. They will sacrifice their lives at any cost against that kind of criminal activity. ...

They came up with what they call a civil rights bill in 1964, supposedly to solve our problem, and after the bill was signed, three civil rights workers were murdered in cold blood. And the FBI head, [J. Edgar] Hoover, admits that they know who did it. They've known ever since it happened, and they've done nothing about it. Civil rights bill down the drain. No matter how many bills pass, Black people in that country where I'm from — still, our lives are not worth two cents. And the government has shown its inability, or its unwillingness, to do whatever is necessary to protect life and property where the Black American is concerned.

So my contention is that whenever a people come to the conclusion that the government which they have supported proves itself unwilling or proves itself unable to protect our lives and protect our property because we have the wrong color skin, we are not human beings unless we ourselves band together and do whatever, however, whenever is necessary to see that our lives and our property are protected. ...

And in my opinion the young generation of whites, Blacks, browns, whatever else there is — you're living at a time of extremism, a time of revolution, a time when there's got to be a change. People in power have misused it, and now there has to be a change and a better world has to be built, and the only way it's going to be built is with extreme methods. And I for one will join in with anyone, I don't care what color you are, as long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth.

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Kurds open new front

Continued from front page

slowly increasing U.S. troop deployment as part of a plan to bolster Baghdad's armed forces to fight Islamic State and to serve as a counterweight to the growing strength and confidence of the oppressed Kurdish people.

In Kobani, Kurdish fighters "are moving freely between the city's neighborhoods following victories against IS militants," said Feras Hamza, an aid worker in the field hospital there, according to ARA News Nov. 17. But Islamic State forces "continue shelling the city's neighborhoods from long distances, causing significant damage to civilian property."

The YPG stated that Kurdish forces recently killed 28 Islamic State fighters, including three of the group's commanders, all of them "princes" in territory controlled by the caliphate — two in Kobani and one near the town of Sere Kaniye in northeastern Syria.

Kurdish forces have recently driven Islamic State out of several villages near Sere Kaniye. The operation involves "easing the burden on Kobani through opening more than one front against the IS," Orhan Baghok, of the YPG Media

Center, told ARA News, to "weaken its ability and disperse its forces."

Fighting alongside the YPG are more than 150 Peshmerga soldiers with heavy weaponry brought from the semi-autonomous Kurdish areas of northern Iraq, as well as a growing number of Syrian opposition units affiliated to the Free Syrian Army — a coalition of armed groups that came together in 2011 following the bloody crackdown by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on popular protests against his regime. "We promised to the YPG," Ebu Levla, commander of the Shams Al Shamal Battalion, which is affiliated with one of the FSA factions, told *Firatnews*, "to never leave Kobani alone. We will be fighting alongside the YPG till the victory." Levla said that his forces are also working with YPG in fighting against Islamic State in other parts of Syria.

The big-business press has covered little on the gains being made by the Kurdish struggle, except in a few cases expressing concern over the potential consequences for the further unraveling of the capitalist political order in the region, which was stitched together with the drawing of borders by the imperial-



Kurdish People's Protection Units with Peshmerga troops in Kobani, Syria, mid-November.

ist victors after World War I.

The YPG, with more than 30,000 fighters, has said it's willing to work with Washington in driving Islamic State out of northern Syria, notes the *Wall Street Journal*. "One of the many political complications facing the U.S. in the arrangement is that these Kurdish fighters — an offshoot of a group designated by the U.S. and Turkey as a terror organization [Kurdistan Workers Party of Turkey] — want to keep control of

the territory they have seized," the paper said.

"We are ready to cooperate with anyone who respects the will of our people and accepts us as we are," Hussein Koher, a 40-year-old YPG local commander, told the *Journal*. The paper reported that a U.S. State Department official said that cooperation wouldn't mean Washington recognizes Kurdish self-rule.

Meanwhile, Assad's forces continue their assaults against areas controlled by opposition forces. An airstrike Nov. 14 on a residential building in the town of Saqba near the capital Damascus killed at least nine people, including three children, with more likely buried under the rubble, reported the Associated Press.

Nearly 3,000 U.S. troops in Iraq

Earlier this month, Obama doubled the number of U.S. troops in Iraq to nearly 3,000. The move comes amid a debate and growing pressures within the ruling class toward further military moves in Iraq.

Baghdad will need about 80,000 effective military troops to retake territory from Islamic State, including the city of Mosul, Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a House Armed Services Committee hearing Nov. 13. Five months earlier 60,000 troops from the Iraqi army completely disintegrated in battle against 1,200 Islamic State fighters who seized control of one-third of Iraq and much of its heavy weaponry provided by Washington.

An offensive by Iraqi forces next spring is unrealistic, former Iraqi Defense Minister Abdul Qader Obeidi told *Foreign Policy* magazine. The Iraqi army will need at least a year and a lot of U.S. assistance, he said.

Dempsey told the congressional hearing that when Iraqi forces launch a drive to retake Mosul this could require further assistance by U.S. forces. "I'm not predicting at this point that those forces would need to be accompanied by U.S. forces," he said, but he is "certainly considering it."

Peshmerga units in Iraqi Kurdistan haven't received any of the promised heavy weaponry from Washington or other imperialist powers, except for a shipment of German anti-tank missiles, according to Kurdistan Regional Government officials. Recently they asked the Pentagon for mine-resistant armored vehicles and technology, such as bomb-defusing robots, to counter improvised explosive devices. While the Pentagon said it is reviewing the request, it has told KRG officials that they must also get agreement from the Iraqi government in Baghdad.

Russian gov't reinforces separatists in Ukraine

Continued from front page

government of President Viktor Yanukovich.

Maidan protesters in Kiev and cities and farms across the country fought to end Moscow's economic and political domination of Ukraine and political repression by the government in Kiev. Demonstrators wanted greater political rights and a better life, not just new faces in the government.

After the overthrow of Yanukovich, Moscow seized the Crimean Peninsula, launching a campaign to suppress the Tatar people. They also organized a separatist war in the country's mining and industrial region in the east.

In response to Moscow's moves to cement its influence in Ukraine, Washington and its imperialist allies have imposed economic sanctions on Russia, turning the screws on working people there.

Russian President Vladimir Putin walked out of the G20 economic summit Nov. 16 in Australia after being confronted by criticism from U.S. President Barack Obama, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and others.

Miners across the country face

mass closures, layoffs and widespread lack of payment. "Miners in the east in mines in Pavlograd and other areas under Ukrainian sovereignty are still working, but they haven't been paid for four months," Aleksyi Simvolokov, a leader of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine, told the *Militant* Nov. 16 by email from Dnepropetrovsk.

"They organized a two-day protest in October outside the Cabinet of Ministers in Kiev, demanding to be paid," he said. They also demanded mines, including state-owned mines, be kept open to provide jobs and that the minimum wage be raised to fight inflation.

"The free trade unions continue to grow and the employers continue to oppose workers organizing," Simvolokov said. "We need to bring the workers together. We know how to fight: demanding contracts, street protests, strikes, electing regional workers' delegates and the Maidan."

Food protests

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, a multimillionaire known as the "chocolate king," announced Nov. 15 all state and financial services, including for hospitals and schools in the areas occupied by the

forces of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, would be cut off.

Many retired workers in these regions have not been able to receive pensions for months because they have no means to travel to cities under Kiev's control. As a result, the elderly and disabled are getting no help from either side.

"Ukraine should take care of it, seeing as the Ukrainian government considers these regions part of the country," Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said in September.

Most industries are shuttered in the east. Eighty coal mines have been abandoned, flooded or forced to shut. The Severodonetsk chemical plant and Lysychansk oil refinery are closed down.

"I was at a rally for Ukraine in March," a woman in Donetsk who gave her name as Natalya told the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group. "I'm a Ukrainian citizen and was not able to save my country. And because of that I'm supposed to leave my home and wander? Or simply remain here going hungry?"

Actions demanding food supplies and protesting deaths from starvation have started taking place outside separatists' government offices in the so-called Peoples Republics. The main participants are young mothers, elderly, women caretakers and disabled parents.

Some 2,000 people marched in Sverdlovsk Nov. 17 demanding food, according to a report by a correspondent on the *informator.lg.ua* website. Some separatists' units backed the marchers and even fought Russian Cossack paramilitaries. According to the report, someone raised a "Sverdlovsk is Ukraine" banner and shouts rang out for Russian troops to leave.

Several dozen residents blocked the road in Makiivka in the Donetsk People's Republic demanding coupons for free food, Donetsk journalist Olexiy Matsuka reported. Armed paramilitary forces showed up, but the protesters refused to disperse.



Residents in separatist-occupied Pervomaik in eastern Ukraine, Sept. 28 demand Moscow-backed Luhansk "People's Republic" provide wages, food and pensions.