

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

On anniversary of Maidan, workers in Ukraine discuss road forward
— PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 78/NO. 44 DECEMBER 8, 2014

Syria: Kurds, allies capture territory from Islamic State

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Kurdish forces in northern Syria are beginning to take offensive actions against Islamic State, further frustrating the reactionaries' more than two-month campaign to take the city of Kobani and inspiring millions of Kurds and other working people.

Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and allied forces in Kobani captured six buildings from Islamic State in a strategic location near the main municipal offices in the northern part of the city Nov. 18, taking much needed rocket-propelled grenade launchers, arms and machine gun ammunition, reported Reuters.

Three days later YPG forces near Sere Kaniye in Syria, about 125 miles east of Kobani, captured several Islamic State operating bases, seizing

Continued on page 3

Unite for Kurdistan Rally
White House, Washington D.C.
Nov. 29 ♦ 12 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Protesters in Ferguson prepare response to grand jury decision



AP Photo/David Goldman
Lesley McSpadden, center, speaks at Nov. 22 rally at site where her son Michael Brown was killed by officer Darren Wilson. "Don't agitate the police. Don't let the police agitate you," she told some 60 participants before they marched to Ferguson police station.

BY JOHN HAWKINS

FERGUSON, Mo. — Working people and youth outraged over the Aug. 9 shooting of Michael Brown, an un-

US postal workers fight cutbacks, union busting



Andy Parkhurst
Postal workers rally in front of Omaha, Neb., post office Nov. 14. Actions took place across U.S. that day to protest job cuts, outsourcing and other union-busting measures.

BY MAGGIE TROWE

In a national day of action organized by four postal unions Nov. 14, several thousand people demonstrated outside 150 U.S. Postal Service facilities in all 50 states to protest job cuts, outsourcing and other union-busting measures — as well as to defend the

basic mail service that working people above all depend on.

Nearly 200,000 postal jobs were cut between 2006 and 2013 and more

Continued on page 4

Join nationwide protests against Walmart

Now is the Time for \$15 and Full Time!

Black Friday Nov. 28

At hundreds of stores

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With 'accountability order,' Obama decrees shift in immigration policy

BY JOHN STUDER

President Barack Obama announced Nov. 20 new immigration policies he was enacting by executive decree. When the Immigration Accountability Executive Action goes into effect next year, it will allow more than a third of the estimated 11.4 million immigrants without legal papers to apply for a three-year stay

ric data, pass background checks [and] pay fees," according to a White House fact sheet.

An estimated 1 million more will be able to apply for protected status through expansion of programs

Continued on page 4

**NO DEPORTATIONS!
UNIONIZE! ORGANIZE!**
— See editorial page 9

of deportation and work permission, while "cracking down on illegal immigration at the border" and stepping up deportation of "criminals."

The new temporary work permission applies to an estimated 3.7 million immigrants who can prove they have been in the country at least five years, have at least one child born in the U.S., pay back taxes and "come forward and register, submit biomet-

Inside

Exonerations draw attention to frame ups, plea bargains 2

Protests blame Mexico gov't for student 'disappearances' 6

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Los Angeles university workers demand wage hike
Wash. health workers say staff cuts 'recipe for disaster'

Hyatt hotel workers fight to organize union in Seattle

As we go to press, St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Robert McCulloch announced Nov. 24 that the grand jury he convened decided not to indict officer Darren Wilson.

Continued on page 7

Exonerations draw attention to frame-ups, plea bargains

BY JOHN STUDER

Successful fights to free working people who have been framed up and railroaded to prison — pressured to accept a plea bargain or in a few cases after being found guilty in a trial — are growing. The National Registry of Exonerations has recorded 1,474 exonerations since it began keeping track in 1989.

Struggles by prisoners from Chicago, for example, led to revelations about a reign of terror led by Chicago Police Lieutenant John Burge on the city's South Side in the 1970s and '80s. The frame-up victims, mostly African-American males, were waterboarded, beaten, tortured with electric shock and other brutal measures to elicit confessions.

Burge was fired in 1993 as the revelations piled up. In 2006 a Cook County prosecutors' investigation concluded that Burge had tortured people, but because the time passed exceeded the deadline in the statute of limitations, he could not be prosecuted. In 2010 Burge was convicted on federal perjury and obstruction of justice charges for lying about the torture gang.

More than 110 people imprisoned through the cop frame-ups have pressed for exoneration. Dozens have succeeded. One of them, Mark Clements, tortured by the Burge gang and framed up at the age of 16 for the deaths of four people, served 28 years behind bars.

"As the number of torture cases under Burge has come out along with evidence of broader police misconduct, the bill to the people of Chicago to pay for settlements with people who were wrongly

sent to jail has jumped," Clements told the *Militant*. "This torture couldn't have happened without other cops and higher ups covering their backs."

More than four dozen convictions in Brooklyn, New York, dating back to the 1980s and '90s are being reviewed amid evidence of a frame-up operation by former Brooklyn Detective Louis Scarcella.

Those exonerated include David Ranta, who served 23 years for the murder of a rabbi; Jeffrey Deskovic, imprisoned for 16 years for rape and murder; Derrick Hamilton, who served 20 years for murder; and David McCallum, jailed 28 years for murder. A number of murder convictions were based on the testimony of the same police informer.

"The disturbing thing is the way they are making this look like a rogue detective," Joel Rudin, a lawyer who won the exoneration of Jabbar Collins, who spent 16 years behind bars for murder, told the *Times*. Prosecutors "knew what was going on and took advantage of it to get convictions."

The way plea bargaining is used to deny the constitutional right to trial by one's peers was thrown into sharp relief by federal Judge Jed Rakoff in an article in the Nov. 20 *New York Review of Books* titled "Why Innocent People Plead Guilty."

Protests by workers and farmers at the time of the American Revolution won the right to a "speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of your peers" in the Bill of Rights as a shield against tyranny, Rakoff says.

But today it is a mirage. Some 95 percent of all those charged "agree" to

Burkina Faso fight inspires anti-gov't protest in Togo



Thousands took to the streets Nov. 21 in Lomé, Togo, demanding a term limit that would prevent President Faure Gnassingbé from running in 2015, after 10 years in power. Police attacked demonstrators with tear gas and rubber bullets.

"The police attack didn't dampen the people's spirit," said Togo-born Farida Nabourema, 24, who lives in Washington, D.C., and was in touch with people on the scene. She hosts the "African Awakening" French-language program on SaharaTV website and is a member of the "Faure Must Go" movement. The next day opponents of Gnassingbé called for a Nov. 28 demonstration.

The Gnassingbé family has ruled the country since Gnassingbé Eyadéma, Faure's father, led a military coup in 1967. Faure Gnassingbé assumed power after his father's death in February 2005.

The anti-government protests were inspired by the mass popular demonstrations in Burkina Faso last month that overthrew Blaise Compaoré, who had been president since taking power in a 1987 coup in which Thomas Sankara, leader of the 1983 revolution there, was assassinated.

Lt. Col Isaac Zida, who took over after Compaoré fled, appointed Michel Kafondo, former ambassador to the United Nations, president last week. Kafondo then appointed Zida prime minister, who in turn named a transitional government that promises to organize elections next year.

— MAGGIE TROWE

plea bargains when given the "choice" of pleading guilty or facing even stiffer charges and sentences by taking a chance on a trial where the state has all the advantages.

Traditionally, before considering release, parole boards demand that prisoners "own their own crimes" and admit guilt. Workers who maintained their innocence had little chance of parole. But the growing revelations and fights against frame-ups are changing this.

A Nov. 12 article in the *New York Times* titled "A Claim of Innocence is No Longer a Roadblock to Parole" points to four Brooklyn men who "won their freedom despite not admitting guilt," among them Sundhe Moses,

framed up in 1995 on charges of killing a 4-year-old child. He won parole in 2013.

On Nov. 20, a federal appeals court overturned the conviction of Albert Woodfox, one of the Angola 3 prisoners who joined the Black Panther Party in prison and was framed up for the 1972 death of a guard at the state penitentiary in Angola, Louisiana. Woodfox has been in solitary confinement ever since.

The next day the *Times* ran an editorial urging Woodfox be released, calling his four decades in solitary "barbaric beyond measure." The editors said Woodfox "would most likely have been released from solitary many years ago if he had pleaded guilty."

THE MILITANT

Back Walmart workers' fight for \$15

The *Militant* covers and supports the fights of workers at Walmart and fast-food restaurants for \$15 per hour, full-time work and a union. Next week's issue will report on Nov. 28 Black Friday protests at Walmart stores across the country.



Militant/Bill Arth
Walmart workers in Pico Rivera, Calif. protest Nov. 13 against retaliatory firings.

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Kurds capture territory

Continued from front page
weapons and ammunition, reported ARA News.

In the course of the more than three-year civil war in Syria, Kurds in the north and northeast of the country, which they call Rojava (western Kurdistan), took control of their lands and set up an autonomous administration. At the same time the YPG was formed as a voluntary militia to protect the Kurds from any invading force.

"We do not have the kind of weapons or training that a modern army has, but we have principles and beliefs that are guiding us," YPG spokesman Redur Xelil told Rudaw News. More than one-third of the YPG combatants are women. "We have enough fighters and forces, and we are ready to defend our land, but the problem lies in shortage of sufficient and heavy weaponry."

Fighting alongside the YPG in Kobani are 150 Peshmerga fighters from the semi-autonomous Kurdish areas of northern Iraq, and 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. Many members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) of Turkey eager to join the battle are blocked by border restrictions imposed by Ankara.

Islamic State "is not a big threat anymore," Ahmed Gerdi, commander of the Peshmerga forces in Kobani, told Rudaw Nov. 20, commenting on the military situation in the city, half of which is under full Kurdish control. At the same time, "making advances isn't that simple," Gerdi said. "This is

not a village that can be controlled in a single attack. It is a slow street fight. We need to secure every alley that we take."

The Kurds, a people oppressed for centuries, have been divided among Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran since the borders of that region were established by the imperialist victors of World War I. Since that time, the propertied rulers of the U.S., Europe and the Middle East have sought to undermine the Kurds' fight for a homeland.

Two months ago Peshmerga forces, the most trained and effective force battling Islamic State in Iraq, asked Washington for heavy weapons, including helicopters, tanks and artillery pieces. The Pentagon has taken no action on this request, "concerned that providing heavier weapons to the Iraqi Kurds would inadvertently encourage them to seek independence from Iraq," noted the *Wall Street Journal*. "Without these weapons," Kurdistan Regional Government chief adviser Fuad Hussein told the paper, "we cannot liberate other areas," like Mosul and Sinjar.

Meanwhile, Turkish army special forces are being sent to northern Iraq to train Peshmerga soldiers, reported *Hurriyet Daily News*. The move is aimed at strengthening Ankara's growing economic ties with Iraqi Kurdistan, where some 1,200 Turkish companies operate. But Ankara, even more than Washington, opposes arms transfers to the YPG because of the group's ties to the PKK, which is labeled by both governments as a "terrorist" organization.

Washington's efforts in Iraq have focused on trying to build up and train

Atlanta forum discusses Kurdish struggle



Militant/Janice Lynn

ATLANTA — Alan Baran, right, president of the Kurdish Cultural Center here, speaks at a Militant Labor Forum titled "Fight for a Kurdish Homeland Is in the Interests of Workers Worldwide."

"We are a people of 40-50 million without a country, and with roots in the region that go back 3,000 years," said Baran. "We have been fighting since World War I against the governments of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, all of which have tried to obliterate our culture and make us disappear."

"Any socialist worth the name must back the demand of the Kurdish people for complete freedom and for their own country," said John Benson, left, of the Socialist Workers Party, adding that the Kurdish men and women fighting Islamic State in Iraq and Syria have inspired working people around the world.

— RACHELE FRUIT

the largely inept Iraqi military, both to fight Islamic State and to serve as a counterweight to the increasingly autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan.

Islamic State fighters launched an attack on government offices in Ramadi Nov. 21 in a bid to take full control of the Anbar provincial capital, which is mostly in their hands.

Unable to wait for promised help

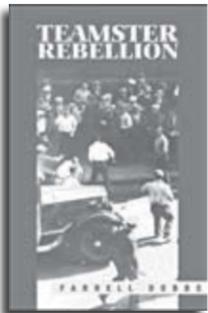
from Washington or the Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad, some Sunni tribes in Anbar have taken up arms to defend their lands from Islamic State's advance.

"We have no food, no medicines, no gasoline and no weapons," said Mal Allah Berzam Hamden, a senior sheikh of the Obeidi tribe from Khan al-Baghdadi, an Anbar town fighting Islamic State, McClatchy news reported Nov. 3.

After the Sunni Albu Nimr tribe agreed to a cease-fire with Islamic State Oct. 22 on condition that no civilians would be harmed, Islamic State's forces drove hundreds into the desert, slaughtering more than 400 by early November.

Bodies of at least 25 members of the Albu Fahd tribe, which has opposed the Islamic State invasion, were found Nov. 22 without any signs of a fight, suggesting they were among many slaughtered in the reactionaries' campaign to terrorize those who would resist subjugation.

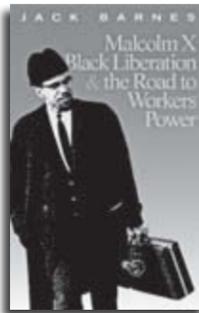
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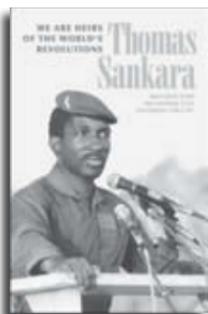
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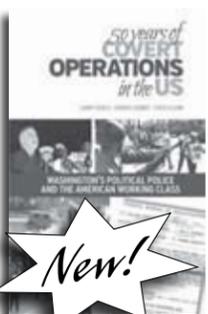
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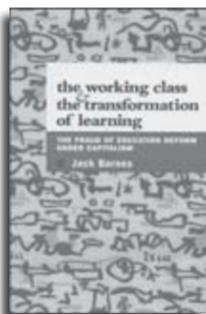
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Immigration policy shift

Continued from front page

for undocumented youth in college, skilled professionals and “foreign entrepreneurs.” Parents of eligible college students — dubbed “Dreamers” — are not included.

While those who apply for the three-years permission must meet strict eligibility and fee requirements, they are not offered a road to permanent residency or citizenship and remain barred from federal benefits, including food stamps, welfare, disability or Obamacare health insurance credits.

The order represents the government’s most significant immigration policy adjustment in recent years. But it’s not similar to legalization measures of past decades, which have been traditionally done under Republican administrations. The administration of President Ronald Reagan, for example, granted a broad amnesty to more than 3 million immigrants, the great majority of those without papers. “Mass amnesty would be unfair,” Obama said, while “mass deportation would be both impossible and contrary to our character.”

Obama said the new program will allocate “additional resources for our law enforcement personnel” and continue to step up policing of the U.S.-Mexico border, as his administration and those before him have done. “Today we have more agents and technology deployed to secure our southern border than at any time in our history,” the president said.

The new policies build on the record of the Obama administration, the fact sheet says, which “has already increased the removal of criminals by more than 80 percent.” As part of a growing trend, the Obama administration has issued a record number of “removal order” deportations, which carry possible felony charges for those who return. The number of such orders has increased from some 50,000 in 1995 to more than 400,000 in 2012.

The executive order will replace the government’s Secure Communities program with a new Priority Enforcement Program “to remove those convicted of criminal offenses” and “recent border crossers,” said the fact sheet. No specific differences between the two were explained and both would rely on checking the status of those in police custody with immigration records. The implication of Obama’s phrases like “felons, not families,” is that the new program would use more discriminating guidelines on who is deported

— which currently includes workers charged with minor infractions, such as traffic violations.

A 33-page Justice Department memo issued to provide legal justification for Obama’s decree says the president has unfettered “prosecutorial discretion.” Because the order seeks to further prosecution and deportation of “criminals,” the memo argues, it represents an exercise of those powers.

The White House move to sidestep opposition in Congress was rebuked by many Republican legislators. Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California, the Republican House majority leader, called it a “brazen power grab.”

Some Democratic officials also criticized Obama, who has issued nearly 200 executive orders since taking office in 2009. “The president shouldn’t make such significant policy changes on his own,” Indiana Sen. Joe Donnelly said in a statement.

The reaction among Republicans to the new policy itself was varied. On the far end, Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann accused Obama of trying to increase the number of “illiterate” Democratic voters. “If you overreact, it becomes about us, not President Obama,” said South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, one of several Republican politicians who voiced concern about alienating Latinos.

Some 100 immigrants and others came to watch Obama’s talk at the CASA de Maryland center in Hyattsville. Many who fit the criteria for tem-

Penn. vigil demands release of Mexican immigrants



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

NORRISTOWN, Penn. — Some 30 people gathered for a vigil and march to the county courthouse here Nov. 6 to protest the detention of Francisco Avila and Víctor Ibarra, both originally from Mexico, by Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the York County Detention Center. Avila, a cook, was arrested April 21 as he left a laundromat. ICE refused to release him even after he passed a “reasonable fear” interview, based on his having been kidnapped when he lived in Mexico. Ibarra, a construction worker, was arrested May 15 when he went to pay a traffic ticket. He has lived in the U.S. for a decade. “When you are talking about human lives, it doesn’t matter where you’re born,” said Pilar Molina. She led a campaign that won release of her husband Israel Reséndiz from the Pike County Correctional Facility in June.

— GEORGE CHALMERS

porary permission were ecstatic, others were not. “I’m so sad, I don’t know what I’m going to do,” Marta Moran, an undocumented worker who came to the U.S. from Mexico with her son six years ago, told the *New York Times*. “My son was not born here. I do everything I can — I pay taxes, I’m learning English —

but I don’t know what else to do.”

“If you meet the criteria, you can come out of the shadows and get right with the law,” Obama said. “If you’re a criminal, you’ll be deported. If you plan to enter the U.S. illegally, your chances of getting caught and sent back just went up.”

US postal workers fight cutbacks, union busting

Continued from front page

than 140 mail-processing facilities have closed since 2012. Another 82 mail processing and distribution centers are on the chopping block for Jan. 5, 2015, and the Postal Service plans to virtually eliminate overnight delivery, as well as direct-to-door delivery in most new housing developments.

“Over 100 jobs, including mine, will be abolished on my shift this week,” Rinda Ma, a mail handler at the Pasadena, California, rally of 50, told the *Militant*.

“Their intention is to bust the unions,” Maurice Anderson, a postal worker and shop steward in Hialeah, Florida, said as he passed out flyers at the action at the Pembroke Pines distribution center. “That’s what the Staples deal is about,” he said, referring to the Postal Service campaign to outsource some postal service to more than 1,500 Staples stores across the country.

“They want to use Staples as a knock-off post office, not using postal employees and not paying a living wage,” said William Flanagan, one of 60 pickets at the central post office in Atlanta.

Two hundred gathered on the steps of the main post office in New York. “We’ve organized informational pickets at 18 of the 23 Staples stores in Manhattan,” Mike Suchomel said. “We don’t want the workers at Staples to lose their jobs, and we’re for expanding service, but they should become postal workers and get the same wages and benefits as we do.”

Anderson said management is encouraging early retirement “in order to save on benefits. The career employees are replaced by ‘postal support employees,’ who get less pay and benefits and

don’t have set hours and days off.”

Some 250 filled the lobby of the Postal Service headquarters in Washington, D.C. They chanted, “Let us in!” and “You might be next,” when denied entry to the meeting of the Board of Governors where Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe was giving a report. Donahoe announced the same day his plan to retire early next year.

Postal workers were joined by other unionists who support their fight, including members of the American Federation of Government Employees, Communications Workers of America, Amalgamated Transit Union, Coalition

of Labor Union Women, Screen Actors Guild, Teamsters, Musicians Association, United Food and Commercial Workers and American Federation of Teachers.

Kevin Cole, American Postal Workers Union shop steward in Los Angeles; Naomi Craine in Miami; Sara Lobman in New York; Sergio Zambrana in Washington, D.C.; Janice Lynn in Atlanta; Mary Martin in Seattle; Andrea Morell in San Francisco; Jacquie Henderson in Omaha and Joe Swanson in Lincoln, Nebraska, contributed to this article.

White House orders increased US combat role in Afghanistan

BY JOHN STUDER

President Barack Obama has signed a secret executive order authorizing an increased combat role for U.S. forces in Afghanistan extending into 2015, the *New York Times* reported Nov. 21.

In addition to maintaining some 10,000 troops on the ground, the order unleashes U.S. jets, bombers and drones to support Afghan troops on combat missions. The Air Force intends to use F-16 fighters, B-1B bombers, along with Predator and Reaper drones.

At the same time, the new Afghan government of President Ashraf Ghani lifted a more than yearlong ban on nighttime military raids on suspected Taliban combatants’ homes. Afghan special forces plan to resume the raids, which, under Obama’s new order, can include U.S. special operations units.

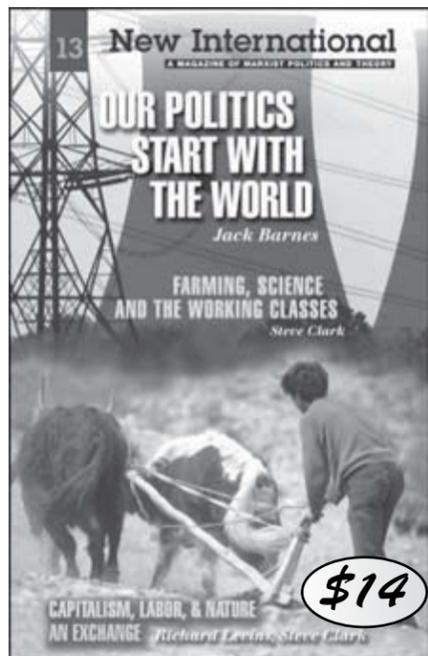
The move is a turnaround from

Obama’s May 27 press conference announcing that combat operations in Afghanistan would end in 2014.

The shift comes as Taliban forces have made gains in Helmand province, home to the thriving opium poppy trade, which accounts for 20 percent of Afghanistan’s gross domestic product. This year’s harvest jumped 17 percent.

Washington’s shift also reflects growing concern among the propertied rulers about the rapid expansion of Islamic State, the disintegration of the Iraqi army, and events from Syria to Ukraine, all of which stand in contradiction to Obama’s May statement that “it’s time to turn the page on more than a decade in which so much of our foreign policy was focused on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.”

On Nov. 24 Obama pushed Chuck Hagel to resign as defense secretary.



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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help ‘Militant’ cover Black Friday Walmart Actions

Walmart workers and their supporters will be demanding “\$15 and full time” Nov. 28 at Black Friday protests at stores across the country. The actions are part of a nationwide struggle by Walmart workers for a union and an important part of growing working-class resistance. The *Militant* is covering this fight, giving a voice to those involved. Send me articles or letters, quotes and photos to: 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or themilitant@mac.com; or call 212-244-4899.

—Maggie Trowe

Los Angeles university workers demand contract, wage hike

LOS ANGELES — Food service, custodial and other workers at the University of Southern California rallied here Nov. 12 to demand a contract with higher wages.

The workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 11, were joined by students and other supporters in a march around the campus during a gala feting some of the university’s million dollar donors.

Genesis Diaz, a member of the union’s negotiating committee, said the administration offered a 25 cents per hour annual raise. Local 11 wants 90 cents per hour for each of the first three years of a five-year contract and \$1 for the final two years.

Thomas Sayles, a university vice president, said in a statement that the college is “offering a very fair proposal.”

“They keep proposing the same thing over and over again,” Diaz said, adding that she’s had to juggle whether “to pay rent or buy groceries.”

“On average we make \$18,000 a year,” said cashier Tiana Martinez. “But we’re getting our hours cut, too. I’ve been cut to six and a quarter hours a day from six and a half.”

“My father was able to take care of seven people on one paycheck. I’m not able to even take care of myself on mine,” said university worker Leticia Rodriguez.

“Everything is going up, rent, food, everything but our pay,” said Reyna Sanabria, a university pantry worker. “Even the most skilled workers, the chefs, don’t make more than \$16 an hour.”

—Baxter Smith

Wash. health workers say staff cuts ‘recipe for disaster’

TACOMA, Wash. — Some 1,100 workers walked off the job at Tacoma’s St. Joseph Medical Center and St. Clare Hospital in Lakewood Nov. 18 in a 24-hour strike for a higher staff-to-patient ratio, a pay raise, and better health coverage.

The workers are members of SEIU Healthcare 1199 Northwest, which is in contract negotiations with CHI Franciscan Health, the hospital’s owner.

“When I started this job we had five Certified Nursing Assistants for every 40 patients,” Gail Carriker, 61, a CNA at St. Clare for nine years, said at a rally here. “Then it went to four, to three, to two and some shifts have only one CNA for 40 patients. How do we choose which bed alarm to answer first? I pride myself on giving good care to patients. Yet we are subject to disciplinary write-ups for not being in two places at one time. The staff cuts are a recipe for disaster.”

“We are out here because we care

about the patients,” Chrystal Thompson, who sterilizes medical equipment, said on the picket line. “We will go back into work with our heads held high.”

—Mary Martin

Hyatt hotel workers fight to organize union in Seattle

SEATTLE — Some 90 people joined a picket line at the Grand Hyatt Hotel here Nov. 13 to win support for hotel workers fighting to organize a union.

In July 2013 the Hyatt hotel chain agreed to sign contracts with UNITE HERE or remove obstacles to union recognition elections. But two Seattle hotels aren’t part of the deal — the Grand Hyatt and Hyatt at Olive 8.

The union called for a boycott of the



Militant/Wendy Lyons

Nov. 12 rally by University of Southern California workers, who make average of just \$18,000 a year.



Militant/John Naubert

Pickets at St. Joseph Medical Center, Tacoma, Washington, Nov. 18, during 24-hour strike by 1,100 health care workers for more staffing, higher wages and better health coverage.

two hotels a year ago, when the owner refused to negotiate, Levi Pine, an organizer for UNITE HERE Local 8, told the *Militant*.

Robert Kelly, a part-time server at the Grand Hyatt, told the crowd he also works at the Westin Hotel. “Hyatt pays less than my union-organized job at the Westin,” Kelly said. “Hyatt demands we carry hot plates without using trays. I have burned my hand as a result. Hyatt offers medical insurance but at a rate that I can’t afford for me or my family.”

“At my union job I have affordable medical coverage,” he continued. “We need a union at Hyatt to be a space between the workers and the company and to address these issues.”

“Over 30 supporting groups, including labor and others, have allied with and endorsed this fight,” Pine said. “Five of these have cancelled contracts for events at these hotels, including the State Bar Association.”

—Mary Martin

Kaiser nurses in California strike against understaffing

SAN FRANCISCO — Nurses at 86 Kaiser Permanente hospitals and clinics in northern California staged a two-day strike Nov. 11-12. The more than 18,000 members of the California Nurses Association at Kaiser are protesting under-

staffing, service cuts, and inadequate Ebola preparations. Hundreds of nurses attended a rally in Oakland Nov. 12 calling for better Ebola safety standards.

“Above all, we need more nurses,” said Marilu Ramirez, a nurse at the Kaiser facility in South San Francisco.

Under the Affordable Care Act, Kaiser enrolled 422,000 new patients. “Even before Obamacare, we were short,” Ramirez said, as she picketed in front of the hospital. “Now it’s much worse.”

Maria Margot, an operating room nurse, said the time for preparing operating rooms for surgeries has been cut. “It’s very stressful,” she said.

Kaiser bosses attacked the strike with a full-page ad in the Nov. 10 *San Francisco Chronicle*, claiming the nurses “were fueling more fears” of Ebola unnecessarily.

“We still haven’t had the full training with hazmat suits that is needed,” said Diane Koorsones, a nurse at Kaiser’s South San Francisco Medical Center. Pointing to the hundreds of doctors that Cuba is sending to West Africa in response to the Ebola crisis, she said, “We aren’t doing that here, but we should be.”

After the protests, the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued more stringent regulations on Ebola.

—Betsey Stone

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 8, 1989

Czechoslovakia, a country in Eastern Europe of more than 15 million people, was almost completely shut down on November 27 as millions joined a two-hour walkout to press the Communist Party to give up its grip on power.

This action and the massive protests leading up to it have shattered the CP and the structures of Stalinist repression. For the first time in 40 years the door to practicing politics has been opened for working people.

The stunning success of the protest strike was the culmination of an upsurge triggered 10 days earlier, on November 17, when Czechoslovak police attacked a student demonstration, beating beyond recognition and killing 20-year-old Martin Smid. The killing galvanized the population’s revulsion for the regime’s four decades of Stalinist terror and police state regimentation.



December 7, 1964

NEW YORK, Nov. 30 — Malcolm X denounced the “criminal action of the United States government in conjunction with Belgium in the Congo” last night at the first Harlem rally of the Organization of Afro-American Unity since his return from Africa.

“We want the world to know we don’t like what Sam is doing to our brothers in the Congo,” the black nationalist leader declared.

At a press conference held upon his arrival at Kennedy International Airport on Nov. 24, Malcolm X was asked about the alleged massacre of white hostages in the Congo. He replied: “When Lyndon B. Johnson began to finance Tshombe’s white mercenaries, it was only natural to expect such things. The weight of the guilt is on the white mercenaries. It’s too bad they had to die, but when you shed tears for those hostages, shed tears for the Congolese who died too.”



December 9, 1939

CAIRO, Ill. — The Labor Board election which was scheduled for Dec. 2 was called off at the request of AFL Federal Local 22199 because of the actions of Valley Steel Co. and the Cairo Association of Commerce in attempting to buy votes at \$10 a throw.

The moment the union agreed to end the month-old strike for recognition by consenting to an election, the company agents and the businessmen began to circulate the rumor that the plant would move if the union won the election and offering \$10 to any man who informed them that he had voted against the union provided, of course, that the union lost the election. The union called off the election and decided to continue to show the company officials their majority — on the picket line.

The two other strikes in this town are still completely effective with 170 Negro workers holding the lines militantly.

Protests blame Mexico gov't for student 'disappearances'

BY SETH GALINSKY

More than half a million people marched in Mexico City Nov. 20 to protest the abduction of 43 college students and the killing of six people by police in the city of Iguala in Guerrero state Sept. 26.

The parents of the disappeared students and their classmates from the Rural Teachers' College in Ayotzina-pa, Guerrero, headed the marches that converged on El Zócalo Square, after crisscrossing the country in three bus caravans over the last week.

"This is not the first time that agents of the state have murdered students or carried out extrajudicial killings," Román Hernández, spokesperson for the Guerrero-based Human Rights Center of the Mountain and a central organizer of the bus caravans, said by phone from Mexico City Nov. 22. "But what is happening today is a general indignation at the accumulation of abuses, a reflection that the people of Mexico are no longer willing to allow this to continue."

"There is indignation at the more than 30,000 disappeared, the tens of thousands killed because of the security policies of the government, the systematic dispossession of the native people of their lands and the unsolved killings of women in Juárez," he said.

The government of President Enrique Peña Nieto says the mayor of Iguala had the 43 students turned over to the Guerreros Unidos drug cartel, which murdered them and incinerated their bodies. But DNA tests on the remains uncovered in a mass grave where arrested gang members say the students were disposed have not confirmed any connection with the students.

Most put primary blame on the Mexican government. A popular chant at the march was, "It was the state."

Tens of thousands of students attended the Nov. 20 march along with trade union contingents of teachers, electricians and transportation workers. Some 60,000 telephone workers held a one-day strike in solidarity with the protest.

"We are shouting really loud so that Peña Nieto can hear us," Mario Reyes Contreras, a street vendor, told the *Los Angeles Times*. "We demand he resign. We demand an end in the country to the thousands of dead and disappeared."

At several points during the protest, groups of masked anarchists sought to carry out violent provocations. But the determination and discipline of the bulk of the marchers prevented actions that would have given the police a handle to attack the demonstration. Writing in *Milenio*, journalist Carlos Puig described how marchers surrounded a masked group and chanted, "Take off your masks. No violence!" After a few tense moments the group took off their masks.

Marches in solidarity with the Mexico City action took place around



AP photo/Rebecca Blackwell

March of more than half a million in Mexico City Nov. 20 protests killing of six people and abduction of 43 students in state of Guerrero Sept. 26. Protests continue in Mexico and U.S.

the world, including in Buenos Aires, Argentina; Madrid; London; Paris; Frankfurt, Germany; and New York.

The Cuban daily *Juventud Rebelde* published "A statement in solidarity with the Mexican students by the students of Cuba," Nov. 19. "We emphatically condemn the tortures, crime and disappearances, and state that we stand with the Mexican people in their call for justice and every school in Cuba is also a trench in your fight for truth."

"Today it's the 43, tomorrow it could be others," said Eliana Miranda

Rosales, a pharmacy worker, at the protest of more than 300 in front of the Mexican Consulate in New York City. "The Mexican government must find those who are responsible and jail them."

Peña Nieto criticized the demonstrators, claiming the protests were aimed at "generating instability, generating social disorder."

On Nov. 21 students from the main universities in Mexico City continued holding demonstrations, rallies, sit-ins and roadblocks.

US, Cuban volunteer doctors contract Ebola

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Physician Félix Báez Sarria, one of several hundred Cuban doctors and nurses treating Ebola patients in three West African countries, recently contracted the deadly disease. At the same time — just days before the World Health Organization had Báez flown from Sierra Leone to Switzerland for treatment — Dr. Martin Salia, a U.S. resident who had been working in hospitals in his native country of Sierra Leone, died in Omaha, Nebraska, Nov. 17 where he had been flown for Ebola treatment.

It seems Báez, who remains in stable

condition, may have contracted Ebola because he allowed his compassion to impinge on adherence to safety protocol. His family was told he contracted the virus after instinctively helping a patient who was falling down, reported ABC News. A similar "weakness" may have led to the death of Salia. The U.S. government billed his widow \$200,000 for transport costs.

Salia, who for years had taken part in medical missions in Africa, worked at several hospitals in Sierra Leone. The United Methodist Great Plains Conference is raising money to help cover the bill.

The Cuban government, which has more than 50,000 medical workers in more than 60 countries, has sent 256 doctors and nurses recruited from 15,000 volunteers to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, where the majority of the more than 15,000 Ebola cases have been identified. The reported death toll as of Nov. 18 was 5,459.

"We are ordinary people educated under principles of humanism, altru-

ism and internationalism," Ronald Hernández Torres, a Cuban doctor serving in Liberia, said in an interview published Nov. 19 on the Cubadebate website.

Báez's condition is the subject of daily articles in *Granma*, the newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party. "Millions of Cubans are at his bedside" was the headline of a Nov. 19 article on messages of support the Cuban doctor is receiving.

U.S. troops are on course to complete 13 Ebola treatment centers in Liberia by the end of November. But Washington provides staff at just one clinic, which is strictly for treatment of medical personnel.

The World Health Organization announced Nov. 21 that the rate of transmission of the virus remains intense in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Conakry, the three countries at the center of the epidemic. Several new cases were reported in neighboring Mali Nov. 22, where five people have died of the disease.

Join int'l campaign to free 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."

A growing international campaign is fighting for the release of Hernández, Labañino and Guerrero.

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.



Martin Salia, left, Sierra Leone-born doctor from United States, died Nov. 17 after contracting Ebola while working in hospitals in his native country. His wife was billed \$200,000 by U.S. gov't for transporting him for treatment. Cuban physician Félix Báez, right, infected with virus in Sierra Leone, is being treated in Switzerland.



Maidan anniversary: Ukraine workers discuss road forward

BY JOHN STUDER

Thousands rallied Nov. 21 in Kiev's central square — known as Maidan — marking the one-year anniversary of the first demonstration that touched off three months of mobilizations and pitched street battles that led to the overthrow of hated President Viktor Yanukovich on Feb. 22. The powerful movement brought millions into political struggle and had a deep impact on the confidence and fighting spirit of working people throughout the country.

The ouster of Yanukovich upset the Russian government's plans to deepen its economic and political domination of Ukraine. The Russian regime of President Vladimir Putin responded with a military occupation and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and a proxy separatist war in the eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk.

"Many ask me: if there hadn't been Maidan, maybe the annexation of the Crimea would not have happened? And so many people would not have died," said Mustafa Dzhemilev, a long-time leader of the Crimean Tatar people, reported Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group the day after the anniversary action. "If dignity and the longing for freedom have meaning for a person, they should not accept totalitarianism or authoritarian rule."

Since the Russian annexation the Crimean Tatar people have faced raids of mosques, exile and disappearances of Tatar activists, and closing down of their political council — the Mejlis — which Dzhemilev, 71, headed for decades.

As a result of the Maidan struggle, which took the lives of some 100 fighters for Ukrainian sovereignty, Dzhemilev said, "Ukraine took a step forward. Thanks to such acts society consolidates and a nation emerges. Please note how we have united, regardless of origin or faith. We all say that we are Ukrainians. I can't therefore have regrets, the sacrifice was not in vain."

"Not one dictator who spilled blood has escaped punishment," Dzhemilev said from the stage in Maidan Feb. 18, as the regime's snipers began to pick off demonstrators four days before Yanukovich was forced to flee to Russia. "They will answer for the blood of each patriot. I call on my fellow citizens everywhere to create centers of resistance. I am proud of you, my dear fellow Ukrainians."

Officials of the government that replaced the Yanukovich regime took part in the Nov. 21 anniversary action, including President Petro Poroshenko, a billionaire with interests in chocolate, cars, television and boats. But officials were confronted by shouts led by relatives of the "heavenly hundred" who were killed by the regime's forces during the Maidan battles. "Where are the killers?" they asked, demanding to know why virtually no one has been charged with the murders.

Leaders of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine and the Confederation of Free Trade Unions also took the occasion to express their opinions on the accomplishments of the Maidan and the challenges facing working people in Ukraine today, which appeared in a center-spread feature in *As-*

pect, the confederation's weekly newspaper.

"We accomplished some big things through Maidan. We ousted a corrupt president and his government," Sergey Sokolovsky, a member of the miners' union at the Evraz iron ore mine in Kryvyi Rih said. "But those who became the new government on a wave of popular protests, unfortunately, do not always justify the confidence of the people. And in local areas like Kryvyi Rih the authorities are still dominated by Yanukovich's party, the Party of Regions."

The Poroshenko government is moving to implement tax increases and cuts to jobs, wages and social services as part of conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund for loans. This includes the closure of dozens of state coal mines. In addition to rising prices, many working people face layoffs or unpaid wages.

"But Maidan was not in vain!" Sokolovsky said. "After the Maidan and Russian aggression, the Ukrainian people have changed a lot. We have become parties to the birth of a nation. Free people who are learning how not to be fooled."

"Maidan was very important," said Oleksandr Bondar, chair of the miners' union at Evraz. "But the position of the working class has not changed. Why are



AP Photo/Sergei Chuzavkov

Tens of thousands rallied in Kiev on the first anniversary of Maidan, three months of massive mobilizations that overthrew the pro-Moscow regime of President Viktor Yanukovich.

wages and pensions so low? Why do the oligarchs and dishonest officials have so much power?"

"We, the working class, must have our say," Bondar said.

"A year ago, along with other activists from our independent trade union, we were participants in the Maidan from the beginning," said Vladimir Saputo, chair of the Association of Free Trade Unions of the Luhansk region, which is under occupation by Moscow-backed separatist paramilitaries. "We fought not only to overthrow the criminal regime, but primarily for freedom and human dignity."

"The most important achievement of the Maidan was that people woke up

and realized that together we are strong and able to change things. To do things ourselves, not look for someone else to do them."

"At first we sought only to defend our honor and dignity," said Mikhailo Volynets, chair of the union confederation. "But increasingly we took note of all the problems that accumulate every day in society."

"We are concerned that the current government has not fully justified the hopes of ordinary people, of working people," Volynets said. "Therefore we have to be persistent and fight to fulfill the aspirations of Maidan, and now another challenge — to end the war and win peace."

Protesters in Ferguson prepare response

Continued from front page

Local groups like the Don't Shoot Coalition have been organizing training for those planning to protest. The Canfield Watchmen, named after the street where Brown was shot, has distributed more than 200 cameras to volunteers to monitor cops' response to protests.

To help make a public case for no indictment ahead of the grand jury decision, the capitalist press has reported a steady stream of "leaks" from the jury's deliberations. These include a toxicology report that Brown had marijuana in his system, as well as police accounts that Brown scuffled with Wilson in the cop car prior to the killing.

"I don't think any of that is relevant — not even the alleged scuffle with that policeman," Walls said.

"Why shoot that many times? Why was he left in the street for four hours?" she said. "Whatever Wilson's state of mind he didn't do the right thing. He didn't have to kill that young man."

"Whatever happened inside the car, it had nothing to do with the fact that the man was unarmed and 20 to 30 feet away," said Everett Hartfield, who repairs and resells used cars. "All that is just a smokescreen to take away from the main thing."

"I'm 62 years old and I've lived here almost my entire life," said Hartfield. "I knew that at some point in time people would stand up and say that cops killing Black people is not OK. That Black lives have value."

"When I saw how they were treating the demonstrators — threatening them, telling them 'we'll kill you too if you get out of line,'" Hartfield said, "seeing that

made me come out and protest too."

Standing in front of the memorial to Brown on Canfield Drive here, Markese Mull, a neighbor of Brown's mother Lesley McSpadden, talked about why he and others joined the demonstrations demanding prosecution of Wilson. "Things just reached a boiling point. What happened to Mike has happened so many times. And it can happen only so many times before people just get tired of it."

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon declared a state of emergency Nov. 17 and announced plans to send the National Guard to the area.

"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 non-violent 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 demonstra-

tors are upheld. ... We commend as well as stand with those practitioners of democracy who have stood strong for over 100 days."

More than 100 FBI agents have been stationed in this area. Almost immediately upon their arrival they arrested two alleged members of the New Black Panther Party on gun and weapons charges.

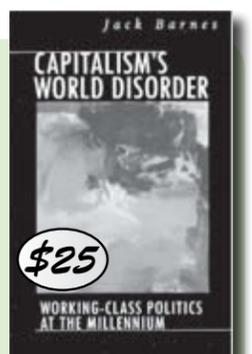
The Jennings school district cancelled classes for Monday and Tuesday following the November 22-23 weekend.

As authorities stoke anxiety and fear, demonstrations continue. Sixty people marched to the Ferguson police station Nov. 22 after hearing McSpadden speak at the memorial to her son on Canfield Drive. "It's a long time coming, but it's still coming," she said, "justice. I just want you all to be careful. Don't agitate the police, don't let the police agitate you. I don't want any of you to get hurt. When I go into court, I want all of you with me."

"How do the rulers transform the way they have trained the cops for decades to use brutality as a matter of course? How do they deal with racism among the cops? None of that can or will be changed either, because the purpose of the cops is to punish, not patrol. The purpose of the cops is to keep workers in line, to make an example of you if you come from the wrong class — and more so if you also happen to be the wrong color or the wrong nationality."

— Jack Barnes from *Capitalism's World Disorder*

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Thomas Sankara honors Che Guevara, Cuban Revolution

Below is an excerpt from *We Are Heirs of the World's Revolutions*, a collection of speeches by revolutionary leader Thomas Sankara and one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for December. On Oct. 8, 1987, a week before his assassination, Sankara spoke at the inauguration of an exhibition paying tribute to the life of Ernesto Che Guevara, a leader of the Cuban Revolution who had been killed 20 years earlier. A Cuban delegation that included Guevara's son, Camilo Guevara March, was in attendance. Copyright © 2002 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Granma

Che Guevara and Cuban internationalist volunteers in Congo, 1965, assisting Congolese forces fighting proimperialist regime. "Ideas do not die," said Sankara, leader of 1983-87 Burkina Faso revolution, "That's why Che Guevara, an embodiment of revolutionary ideas, is not dead."

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY THOMAS SANKARA

We've come this morning, in a modest way, to open this exhibition that seeks to trace the life and work of Che. At the same time, we want to tell the whole world today that for us Che Guevara is not dead. Because throughout the world there are centers of struggle where people strive for more freedom, more dignity, more justice, and more happiness. Throughout the world, people are fighting against oppression and domination; against colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism; and against class exploitation.

Dear friends, we join our voices with

everyone in the world who remembers that one day a man called Che Guevara . . . his heart filled with faith, took up the struggle alongside other men and, in so doing, succeeded in creating a spark that powerfully disturbed the forces of occupation in the world.

We simply want to say that a new era in Burkina Faso has come, a new reality is on the march in our country. That's how Che Guevara's call to action must be understood — Che, who wanted to light fires of struggle throughout the world.

Che Guevara was cut down by bullets, imperialist bullets, under Bolivian skies. And we say that for us, Che Guevara is not dead.

One of the beautiful phrases often recalled by revolutionaries, by the great Cuban revolutionaries, is the one that Che's friend, his companion in struggle, his comrade, his brother, Fidel Castro himself repeated. He heard it from the mouth of a man of the people one day during the struggle — one of Batista's officers who, despite being part of that reactionary, repressive army, managed to connect with the forces fighting for the well-being of the Cuban people. Right after the assault on the Moncada garrison had failed, when those who had attempted it were about to be put to death by the guns of Batista's army — they were going to be shot — the

officer said simply, "Don't shoot, you cannot kill ideas."¹

It's true, you cannot kill ideas. Ideas do not die. That's why Che Guevara, an embodiment of revolutionary ideas and self-sacrifice, is not dead. You have come here today [from Cuba], and we draw inspiration from you.

Che Guevara, an Argentine according to his passport, became an adopted Cuban through the blood and sweat he shed for the Cuban people. He became, above all, a citizen of the free world — the free world that we're building together. That's why we say that Che Guevara is also African and Burkinabè.

Che Guevara called his beret *la boina*. He made that beret and its star known almost everywhere in Africa. From the north to the south, Africa remembers Che Guevara.

Bold young people — young people

thirsting for dignity, thirsting for courage, thirsting also for ideas and for the vitality he symbolized in Africa — sought out Che Guevara in order to drink from the source, the invigorating source represented in the world by this revolutionary captain. Some of the few who had the opportunity and honor of being in Che's presence, and who are still alive, are here among us today.

Che is Burkinabè. He is Burkinabè because he participates in our struggle. He is Burkinabè because his ideas inspire us and are inscribed in our Political Orientation Speech. He is Burkinabè because his star is stamped on our banner. He is Burkinabè because some of his ideas live in each of us in the daily struggle we wage.

Che is a man, but a man who knew how to show us and teach us that we can dare to have confidence in ourselves and our abilities. Che is among us.

What is Che, I'd like to ask? Che, to us, is above all conviction, revolutionary conviction, revolutionary faith in what you're doing, the conviction that victory belongs to us, and that struggle is our only recourse.

Che is also a sense of humanity. Humanity — this expression of generosity and self-sacrifice that made Che not only an Argentine, Cuban, and internationalist combatant, but also a man, with all the warmth of a man.

Che is also, and above all, demanding. The demanding character of one who had the good fortune to be born into a well-to-do family . . . Yet he was able to say no to those temptations, to turn his back on the easy road in order, on the contrary, to assert himself as a man of the people, a man who makes common cause with the people, a man who makes common cause with the suffering of others. Che's demanding character is what should inspire us the most.

Conviction, humanity, a demanding character — all this makes him Che. Those who are capable of mustering these virtues within themselves, those who are capable of mustering these qualities within themselves — this conviction, this humanity, and this demanding character — they can say that they are like Che — men among men, but, above all, revolutionaries among revolutionaries.

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Brutal murder setback for workers

Continued from front page

for more revenge attacks,” Hamas said on its Al-Aksa TV station.

West Bank Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas issued a statement condemning the attack, but didn't speak publicly on it until pushed by Secretary of State John Kerry.

A few liberal imperialist media outlets themselves appeared conflicted over “political correctness” in their reporting. When the British daily *Guardian* reprinted a Reuters article, it lifted out references to the attackers' Palestinian nationality, referring to them as “two men.” CNN at one point erroneously ran a banner headline that read, “Deadly Attack on Jerusalem Mosque” and then another that said, “4 Israelis, 2 Palestinians Dead in Jerusalem,” without indicating that the two were the attackers. CBC's headline was “Jerusalem Police Fatally Shoot 2 after Apparent Synagogue Attack.”

The attack on the synagogue came in the aftermath of Tel Aviv's July-August war on Gaza, in which both the Israeli regime and Hamas, which governs Gaza, dealt a major setback to the Palestinian people. Israeli forces conducted a seven-week assault on Gaza in retaliation for rocket launches by Hamas and its allies targeting civilian areas of Israel. A central piece of Hamas' strategy was to create civilian “martyrs” and win public sympathy by launching its rockets from working-class neighborhoods in the expectation of drawing Israeli counterattacks.

By the time the war was over the Israeli assault left more than 2,100 people dead and 11,000 wounded. More than 17,000 homes were destroyed and 120,000 Palestinians left homeless. More than 100 factories were ruined along with greenhouses, livestock pens and orchards. Hamas leaders called this a “victory.”

After imposing a cease-fire on Israeli terms, Tel Aviv further retaliated by expanding Israeli settlements in the West Bank and evicting Arabs from homes in East Jerusalem. Some Israeli settlers in the Palestinian West Bank have attacked Palestinian farmers and torched a mosque near Ramallah.

At the same time controversy has been heating up over Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. After the Israeli military occupied Jerusalem in the 1967 war, the Israeli government agreed to allow Muslims access to the site at all times, while non-Muslims have limited visiting hours and Jews are not allowed to pray there.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says that his government is not proposing any changes in the arrangement, but statements by some members of the ruling coalition that propose dividing the site, and provocative acts by rightists have angered Palestinian Muslims.

Collective punishment

In another example of collective punishment that is sure to deepen resentment among Palestinians, Israeli authorities have been demolishing the homes of accused terrorists, including the Jamal cousins in East Jerusalem who died during their attack, leaving their families homeless.

Just days after the massacre at the synagogue, Ashkelon Mayor Itamar Shimoni fired Arab construction workers at preschools there.

The firings were denounced from across the political spectrum. Israeli Finance Minister Yair Lapid

called the firings racist. “The vast majority of Israeli Arabs live with us and we don't need to insult them and behave like this,” Lapid said.

“It is unforgivable that in the State of Israel someone would take away a person's right to work because of his religion or ethnicity,” Histadrut labor federation Chairman Avi Nissankoren said at a meeting with the Manufacturers Association, reported the Israeli press.

“Tensions between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians is the worst since at least 2000,” Assaf Bondy, an organizer with the Koach La Ovdim labor union, said by phone from Beersheba Nov. 24. “Cooperation between workers of the two nationalities is much more difficult, but we are trying to focus on the labor issues we have in common.”

“A lot of employers are firing Palestinians or refusing to hire them,” Bondy said. Koach La Ovdim counts orthodox Jews, Palestinians and immigrant workers among its members.

“Now when I go to Jewish towns near here I make sure I leave nothing in the car in Arabic,” Wehbe Badarne, director of the Arab Workers Union in the Nazareth region, said by phone Nov. 23. “There are Jewish people who are afraid to send their children to schools where there are Palestinians.”

Workers pay price of this war

Palestinian working people get hit from all sides. “Hamas says the war on Gaza was a big victory,” Badarne notes. “But it's the poor people who pay the price of this crazy war.”

At one time the Popular Front was supposed to believe in revolution in Cuba, in Venezuela, in Nicaragua, Badarne said. “But to kill people in a mosque or a church or a temple, as a human I can't justify this. How do you wake up one day and exact this kind of revenge?”

But few Palestinians will publicly criticize the attack, Badarne said.

“There is another side. People see how the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank cooperates with Israel and allows the Israeli army to enter Ramallah, Jenin and arrest anyone they want. The people are angry.”

The divide between Jewish and Palestinian workers is shown by the reaction to the death of Yusuf al-Ramuni, a bus driver in northwestern Jerusalem, just days before the attack on the synagogue. He was found hanging from his vehicle Nov. 16 before the start of his shift at the Egged bus depot. A government autopsy ruled his death a suicide, but Arab co-workers believe he was killed by Israeli settlers and went on strike. Their Jewish co-workers continued to work. Hamas used the belief that Ramuni was lynched to justify the attack on the West Jerusalem synagogue.

In the midst of the heightened tensions, labor unions in Israel continue to look for ways to resist the bosses' offensive against living standards, working conditions and dignity of working people.

The Histadrut, the largest union federation, has said that it will begin a nationwide strike Dec. 4 if its demands for an increase in the minimum wage, an end to contract labor and improved opportunities for disabled workers are not met.

“The strike planned by the Histadrut is important,” Bondy said, reporting that Koach La Ovdim is encouraging all its workers councils to participate in the actions.

EDITORIAL

No deportations!

Labor must champion the fight against deportations, second-class status, background checks, firings, indefinite jailing and the criminalization of immigrant workers. We must say with one united voice: “We don't care what language you speak, what side of the border you were born on or whether you did time in prison. Your ‘papers,’ or lack thereof, have meaning only to the bosses and their government.”

The exploiting class constantly seeks ways to divide working people and weaken our solidarity. Any chance they get, they pit employed against jobless, young against old, Caucasian against Black, male against female, native-born against foreign-born.

In their eyes the working class is a class of outlaws, honeycombed with millions of criminals — from striking workers to “felons,” from “illegals” born in the wrong country to “suspects” born in the wrong neighborhood who must be constantly stopped, frisked and shot, if necessary. That's why they build so many prisons, deploy so many cops, and employ plea bargains and other frame-up methods to railroad millions to prison.

The criminalization of immigrant workers is part and parcel of the capitalist assault on the living standards, working conditions, rights and dignity of all working people. This sharply poses the need for working people to organize unions without distinction of national origin or status. At the same time, labor must simultaneously engage in political action, independent of the bosses' Democratic and Republican parties, and champion the struggles of all the exploited and oppressed.

The rulers' goal has never been to drive out all immigrants. Their ever-shifting policies are driven by their interests — foremost by their needs for labor and their desire to drive down wages. In pursuit of these two goals, the propertied rulers have brought in immigrants during periods of economic growth, while making sure millions are “illegal” with less rights and less expectations in order to leverage economic disparities and foster divisions among workers.

For the working class, immigration is a strength. It broadens our international scope and breadth of class-struggle experience. In 2006, for example, immigrant workers organized massive mobilization against the Sensenbrenner bill that sought to brand all workers without “proper” papers as felons. On May 1 that year, some 2 million carried out a nationwide political strike. These actions not only pushed that attack back. They won sympathy and respect among native-born working people, and showed in practice that it's actions such as these that can defend our rights and force the rulers to adjust their policies to our favor.

President Obama's self-extolled Immigration Accountability Executive Action is just another periodic adjustment in the rulers' immigration policy. It removes the threat of deportation for some, while increasing it for others. The minority who are eligible for renewable three-year reprieves are supposed to be “accountable,” pay taxes and accept they are undeserving of federal benefits. Meanwhile, the background checks, firings, guest-worker status, criminalization and deportations continue.

There is another important issue raised by Obama's executive decree. Working people should recognize and be concerned about moves that strengthen the powers of the executive branch of the bosses' government, treating Congress as if it doesn't exist. The separation of powers and curbs on executive powers drafted into the U.S. Constitution are good for the working class. They afford us more space to organize and act in our separate interests. Sometimes they even “gridlock” the ability of the capitalist rulers to make and carry out decisions, which is never a bad thing.

Our immigration policy should be simple. It doesn't require pages of text or bureaucratic red tape.

No deportations! No background checks! No firings! No arrests! No raids! No “accountability!” Unionize! Organize!

LETTERS

Keeps me in touch

Thank you so much for keeping me in touch with the outside. Words cannot describe how grateful I am!

A prisoner
Florida

On the real

I love this paper. It keeps me up on the real and deals with matters that matter.

A prisoner
Florida

Insightful information

It is greatly appreciated to have

the opportunity to receive and learn from the enlightening and insightful information provided in your newspaper

A prisoner
California

Militant Prisoners' Fund

The Prisoners' Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked “Prisoners' Fund” to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

Optimism in struggle

The *Militant* abounds with optimism that reminds me from week to week that workers of the world will have their chance, that they have a world to win!

Ken Kawakubo
Seattle, Washington

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.