

# THE MILITANT

**INSIDE**  
**For Tom Fiske 'revolutionary politics was pure enjoyment'**  
 — PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 79/NO. 23 JUNE 22, 2015

## 'Workers need a voice': fund, subscription drives hit goals

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Black Lives Matter, \$15 and a union, no worker has to die on the job — these expressions of a growing response by working people to conditions imposed on us by the capitalist rulers in the U.S. and beyond were reflected in the results of the seven-week *Militant* subscription campaign and Militant Fighting Fund.

At protests against cop killings, in actions for raising wages and unionization, at picket lines and plant gates, at doorsteps in cities and rural areas, at political meetings and candidates' debates, partisans of the paper won more than 2,200 new and renewing

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## LA raises minimum wage, but at snail's pace

BY BERNIE SENTER

LOS ANGELES — As nationwide protests calling for \$15 an hour and a union have spread and picked up steam, the City Council here approved June 10 a snail's pace incremental increase of the minimum wage from the

**KEEP UP FIGHT FOR \$15 AND A UNION**  
 — SWP statement, page 9

current \$9 an hour to \$15 in July 2020. The first increase would not take effect until next summer.

In addition to confronting the usual claims by the bosses that raising wages will increase prices and cost jobs, workers involved in this fight face efforts by some top labor officials to exempt unionized companies — meaning some union members would be paid less than the minimum wage. The demand for "\$15 and a union" would be turned into "\$15 or a union."

At least 23 state, county and city governments have passed laws over the last few years raising the minimum wage, but only a handful are go-

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## Ukraine workers fight gov't attacks on unions

Capitalist regime weakens defense of sovereignty



Militant/John Studer

Hundreds of workers in Kiev, members of both Federation of Trade Unions and Confederation of Free Trade Unions, join June 2 protest demanding payment of outstanding back wages, end to closure of state industries, higher pay and respect for union rights.

BY JOHN STUDER

DNEPRODZERZHYNKA, Ukraine — "In 2014, our titanium processing plant reverted from private back to state ownership," Sergei Alexeivych, head of the independent trade union at the plant in Volnogradsk, told the *Militant* here June 4. "The 4,500 workers were transferred, with one exception — me, the head of

the union. They 'lost' my application, the journal with my job number, everything about me.

"Titanium is one of the most profitable products worldwide, used in making rockets, airplanes, submarines and replacement joints for people," he said. "Now the state wants to privatize the plant again, so someone

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**More than 2,200 subscribers!**

April 11 - June 2 (Final)

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Oakland*	180	190	106%
Chicago	155	162	105%
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Philadelphia	115	120	104%
Nebraska*	181	188	104%
Omaha*	170	174	102%
Lincoln*	11	14	127%
New York	355	365	103%
Washington	100	102	102%
Boston	63	64	102%
Atlanta	150	143	95%
Twin Cities	65	61	94%
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<b>PRISONERS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>147%</b>
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London	105	113	108%
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<b>UK Total</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>106%</b>
<b>CANADA</b>			
Calgary	50	60	120%
Montreal	75	79	105%
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<b>AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>101%</b>
<b>NEW ZEALAND</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>103%</b>
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<b>Should be</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Raised goal

## 'We have history of winning,' one of Cuban 5 tells meeting

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

TORONTO — "We are aware that the intention of the U.S. is to overthrow our revolution," Fernando González, one of the Cuban Five, told a May 30 meeting here on "Cuba in the Struggle for a Better World." He was responding to a question on the recent moves to re-establish diplomatic relations between Washington and Havana and the stated intention of President Barack Obama to end the U.S. embargo of the island. "But we know our history and are ready for it. McDonald's is not going to own Cuba. We have a long history of struggling and winning, and we're going to win this too."

More than 250 people attended the meeting at the Steelworkers union hall that featured González and Dr. José Portilla García, a Cuban doctor who was finishing a cross-country tour entitled "Africa Called, Cuba Answered." The event was held in conjunction with the Seventh Convention of the Canadian Network on Cuba.

Many of those in the audience were partisans of the successful fight to free the Cuban Five, revolutionaries framed up by the U.S. government in 1998 on charges that included conspiracy to commit espionage. A large number of participants came from Toronto's Latin American community.

Among those on the platform were Julio Garmendia Peña, Cuban ambassador to Canada; Sandra Ramirez from the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples; and other Cuban diplomats in Canada.

Portilla, who had headed Cuba's medical missions to the Congo and Angola, spoke first. "Today there are 52,000 health care workers in 67 countries around the world. We sent 256 of these workers to Africa where we worked very hard to fight Ebola,"

Continued on page 9

## Tehran sends troops to back Syria's Assad as Kurds battle Islamic State

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The dictatorial rule of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, facing some of its biggest military challenges since the civil war began more than four years ago, is increasing its reliance on military reinforcement from Iran.

Moscow and Tehran back the Syrian regime to the hilt. Washington, while nominally seeking a diplomatic road to replace Assad, relies on Da-

maascus and Tehran to help stop the advance of Islamic State and stabilize the region in the interests of U.S. imperialism. This is an important element in President Barack Obama's recent shift toward closer relations with Iran and Russia.

"Assad must go" was never a serious U.S. policy," wrote Aaron David Miller in a March 15 "Think Tank"

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### Inside

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Textile unionists in Egypt: 'Reinstate fired worker!'

NY-NJ airport workers: 'We need better pay!'

# Pro-choice picket challenges anti-abortion court case in NZ

BY FELICITY COGGAN

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — “They seem to be trying to make abortion as dysfunctional and inconvenient as possible,” Terry Bellamak, an executive board member of the Abortion Law Reform Association of New Zealand, told more than 100 supporters of women’s rights picketing the High Court here June 2. The court was hearing a suit by the anti-abortion group Right to Life aimed at limiting access to medical abortion.

Their target is the Family Planning Clinic in the North Island city of Tauranga. The clinic has provided medical abortion, which is not widely available in New Zealand, since 2013. Right to Life claims it’s illegal to operate a clinic that provides only medical abortion with no surgical facilities.

In New Zealand, abortion is legal only in cases of serious danger to the life or mental health of the woman, severe handicap of the fetus or severe mental incapacity of the woman. Access is delayed, due to a requirement for approval from two government-appointed “certifying consultants.” The vast majority of abortions are approved on grounds of danger to mental health.

Georgia Gasper, a student at the

picket, said she thought attacks on abortion access are out of step with popular opinion. “Most New Zealanders don’t know that the law is so narrow,” she said.

“This case is harassment really,” Dr. Margaret Sparrow, a long-time leader of the struggle for women’s right to choose abortion, told the protesters. “It’s being put forward on the grounds of safety, but Right to Life are not concerned about safety at all.”

The same week as the picket, abortion doctor Simon Snook launched a free national telephone service to try to streamline the consultation and approval process.



Militant/Baskaran Appu

Defenders of women’s right to choose abortion rally June 2 outside High Court in Wellington, New Zealand, where restrictive laws make access to procedure very difficult.

## Ireland gay marriage vote a victory for equal treatment

BY PAUL DAVIES

MANCHESTER, England — Thousands celebrated in Dublin May 23 as the results of the Marriage Equality referendum were announced. The constitutional amendment makes Ireland the 20th country where same-sex marriage is legal, and the first where it has been adopted by popular vote.

The “yes” vote carried with 62 percent. It included people across generations from both urban and rural areas, reflecting broad opposition to anti-gay prejudice and support for equal treatment under the law. All major capitalist parties supported the amendment.

“We changed forever what it means to grow up lesbian, gay in Ireland,” commented Michael Barron, a leader of one of the coalitions that cam-

aigned for a “yes” vote.

“The referendum forced a discussion on something that people often don’t want to talk about,” Kate Brennan Harding, a radio producer and “yes” campaigner from Sligo, told the *Militant*. “Local priests didn’t instruct people how to vote, but said to vote with their conscience.”

Around 85 percent of the Irish population is Catholic. While the church hierarchy called for a “no” vote, some priests refused to back that call and publicly announced they would vote in favor. This registers a big change to the hierarchy’s aggressive campaign against the 1995 referendum on divorce that narrowly passed.

Pope Francis did not intervene in the debate. In response to changing attitudes among working people, he has sought to recast the church with a more inclusive image. In contrast to his predecessor Pope Benedict, Francis told reporters in 2013, “If a person is gay ... who am I to judge?”

“I remember gay classmates being bullied out of school. I would never have imagined this happening,” said Micheál Hughes, a 25-year-old “yes” campaigner from the rural area of Monahan, in a phone interview. He added that just because gay marriage is legal “doesn’t mean that all the prej-

udice has gone.”

Advances in the fight against anti-gay discrimination are bound up with the gains made in the fight for women’s rights internationally and the growing place of this struggle in politics.

In Ireland homosexuality was decriminalized in 1993 and civil unions for same-sex couples legalized in 2010. Opponents of the amendment argued this made gay marriages unnecessary. However, civil unions don’t cover all the same legal rights as civil marriage.

Prime Minister Edna Kenny argued for a “yes” vote as a way to counter the declining influence of the family, an institution the capitalist rulers are keen to foist greater social and economic burdens on.

In Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, same-sex marriage is still illegal, unlike in the rest of the U.K.

Campaigners for abortion rights have seized on the victory to step up pressure. In the *Irish Times*, Anthea McTeirnan wrote that the “yes” vote showed “we love equality,” but without the right to control their own bodies, there can’t be full equality for women. “The eighth amendment to the Constitution is the first obstacle. It needs to go.” The amendment bans nearly all abortions.

### ‘Militant’ publishing break

This is a three-week issue.

*Militant* no. 24 will be mailed out July 2.

## THE MILITANT

### Join campaign to free Oscar López!

The ‘Militant’ backs the growing campaign to free framed-up Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López. After 34 years in U.S. jails he remains unbroken, continues to call for independence and encourages fellow inmates to speak out against abusive prison conditions.



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May 30 East Coast march in New York.

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

# NY forum debates way forward for Mexican toilers

BY MAGGIE TROWE

NEW YORK — The dire conditions facing workers, peasants and indigenous people in Mexico and whether the way forward is a movement for local autonomy and cooperatives or a working-class fight to take state power were the subject of an animated discussion and debate at the Militant Labor Forum here May 29.

“Working people in the U.S. and Mexico face the same system, the same class forces — the capitalist rulers and their police,” said Steve Clark, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party who chaired the meeting. “We have a long history of connected struggles.”

The three panelists — David Valle, speaking for the group Somos los otros (We are the others); Nellie Moctezuma, a construction worker; and Andrés Pérez, representing the Socialist Workers Party — have been active in different ways building actions in response to the “disappearance” of 43 students in the state of Guerrero, Mexico.

Students from the Ayotzinapa rural teachers college were preparing for a political demonstration when they were attacked by police in the town of Iguala last September. Three were killed and 43 others have not been seen since. The federal government says local officials had them turned over to a drug cartel and killed. The mayor of Iguala, his wife and about 100 others have been charged.

Many people don’t trust the government’s account. There have been many large protests in Mexico, the United States and other countries, including a march to the United Nations here in April led by relatives of the missing students, demanding a full and impartial investigation.

Valle said disappearances are common in Mexico, but this case inspired a rising protest movement that is “the biggest threat yet to the government of

President Enrique Peña Nieto.” Valle pointed to the autonomous communities of indigenous people in Mexico led by the Zapatista movement as a way forward.

Beginning in 1994, the Zapatista National Liberation Army led protests in the southern state of Chiapas against the conditions of indigenous rural poor there. The Mexican government responded by occupying Chiapas with 50,000 troops, and continued repression over the next several years despite a cease-fire. Today the Zapatistas organize autonomous municipalities, independent of local government, on land seized in the struggle in the 1990s.

The Ayotzinapa students “were poor, mostly farmers. They were considered rebellious by the authorities,” Moctezuma said. In contrast, most schools “don’t teach indigenous people any of our real history or beauty.”

Many indigenous farmers are being driven off their land and forced to move to other parts of Mexico or other countries, he said. “We have to pay someone to help us cross the border. We find jobs that don’t pay enough.”

Moctezuma applauded the 30,000 farmworkers in Baja California who recently won a strike for higher pay and against sexual harassment of female workers. “Out of this oppression, people realize they have to get together.”

“The Socialist Workers Party champions the fight to get the truth out on the

## Texas march condemns cop attack on teen pool party



Above, Reuters/Mike Stone

Hundreds of people demonstrated June 8 in McKinney, Texas, a suburb of Dallas, protesting a police assault on unarmed teenagers, the vast majority African-Americans, at a June 5 pool party the cops say got too rowdy. A video taken by one of the teens shows police officer Eric Casebolt cursing the youth, handcuffing some and ordering others to disperse. He then grabs the head of 15-year-old Dajerria Becton (inset), shoving her face into the ground and putting his knee on her back. He also pulled his gun on a few teenagers trying to help her. After the video surfaced, Casebolt was placed on administrative leave. He resigned June 9.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

43 students,” Pérez said. He noted that the owners of the drug cartels are part of the capitalist class of Mexico. “The drug trade is totally intertwined with the legal economy. You can’t get rid of organized crime without getting rid of the capitalist class.”

“In our hemisphere one country dealt

a mortal blow to capitalist rule, legal and illegal,” Perez said. “That’s Cuba, where workers and peasants led by the July 26 Movement organized to take power, get rid of organized crime, destroy the repressive apparatus, carry out a land reform and a massive literacy campaign

Continued on page 8

## ‘Workers need a voice; I’ll keep subscribing’

Continued from front page readers and raised more than \$117,000 to keep the *Militant* coming out.

“I like the *Militant* because it covers the working person,” said Kenny Lewis, who works at Ford’s assembly plant in Chicago. “We have got to have a voice. I am going to keep subscribing.” Lewis is a member of United Auto Workers Local 551 with 19 years in the plant. He is one of a dozen workers there who signed up during the drive.

The United Auto Workers contracts for Ford, General Motors and Chrysler are set to expire Sept. 14, and members are discussing how to reverse two-tier wage concessions and fight to boost wages. “We haven’t had a raise in 10 years,” Lewis said, while “these companies are making record profits.”

Dan Fein, a Walmart worker in Chicago, signed up his co-worker Tawaski Hughes a few weeks ago. “The *Militant* has a revolutionary outlook that I like,” Hughes said. “The fight for \$15 an hour is important to me and the community.”

Hughes bought a copy of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes, taking advantage of the offer during the drive to buy any Pathfinder book or *New International* magazine at half price with a subscription. “I look forward to reading the book,” he said. “I am tired of fiction. I want something relevant to the struggle today.”

Yesenia Gonzalez, a college student, bought an introductory subscription at a rally during a five-day strike by port truck drivers in Los Angeles.

“The paper is very interesting because there are topics that I haven’t really heard about before,” even if she doesn’t have time between work and

school to read all of it, she told *Militant* supporter Deborah Liatos. “My father also reads it.”

Her father, Alfredo Gonzalez, a port truck driver for 20 years, spoke at a May 29 Militant Labor Forum on “The Growing Movement for Increased Wages and a Union.”

“On Sept. 2, 2014, I was injured after I slipped and fell,” he told forum participants. “Now I’m on disability with no pay. We work hard and want a fair contract. We want to be members of the Teamsters union. That’s why I’m here in the struggle.”

A few days later Gonzalez told Liatos on by phone, “The forums are very useful. I would like to come back when I can. It’s also very useful for people to read the *Militant*.”

Larry Sells, a machine operator in La Vista, Nebraska, is a long-term reader of the paper. At a June 5 Militant Labor Forum in Omaha, he got a statement issued by the Socialist Workers Party opposing the death penalty. He made 20 copies and used it in discussions with a neighbor, two bank tellers and workers at FedEx and UPS, as well as some co-workers. One of the tellers told him that her parents are for the death penalty but she is not.

“Sells told this story at a social organized to raise money to get people to the Active Workers Conference,” Rebecca Williamson reported. “He said most of the 20 copies were gone by then.”

The conference, sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party, takes place in Oberlin, Ohio, June 18-20. (See ad on page 7.)

Join in the work to expand the readership of the *Militant*. Contact the distributor nearest you listed on page 8.

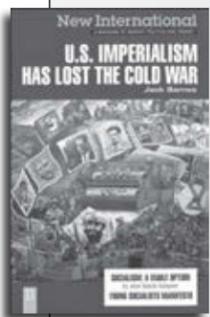
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April 11- June 2 (Final)

Country	Quota	Paid	%
<b>UNITED STATES</b>			
Houston	\$1,000	\$1,265	127%
Miami	\$2,000	\$2,403	120%
Philadelphia	\$3,200	\$3,840	120%
Twin Cities	\$3,600	\$4,045	112%
Chicago	\$10,000	\$10,840	108%
Boston	\$3,750	\$3,916	104%
Los Angeles*	\$8,000	\$8,236	103%
Atlanta	\$8,600	\$8,839	103%
Nebraska	\$3,500	\$3,540	101%
Omaha	\$3,300	\$3,333	101%
Lincoln*	\$200	\$207	104%
Washington	\$8,000	\$8,041	101%
Seattle	\$8,600	\$8,637	100%
New York	\$20,000	\$20,026	100%
Oakland	\$13,500	\$13,500	100%
Other		\$1,400	
<b>Total U.S.</b>	<b>\$93,750</b>	<b>\$98,528</b>	<b>105%</b>
<b>CANADA</b>			
Calgary*	\$3,300	\$3,511	106%
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<b>Total Canada</b>	<b>\$8,460</b>	<b>\$8,801</b>	<b>104%</b>
<b>NEW ZEALAND</b>			
	\$4,400	\$4,885	111%
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>			
Manchester	\$600	\$790	132%
London	\$2,000	\$2,440	122%
<b>Total U.K.</b>	<b>\$2,600</b>	<b>\$3,230</b>	<b>124%</b>
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	\$300	\$383	128%
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<b>Should be</b>	<b>\$115,000</b>	<b>\$115,000</b>	<b>100%</b>
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### U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

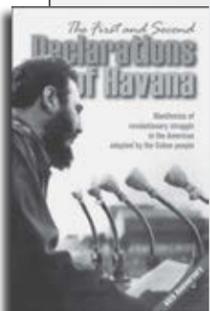
by Jack Barnes



*U.S. imperialism has lost the Cold War, the Socialist Workers Party concluded after the collapse of regimes and parties across Eastern Europe and the USSR that claimed to be Communist. Contrary to imperialism's hopes, the working class there has not been crushed.*

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# Cuban 5's example and art speak to today's fighters

BY ERIC SIMPSON

RICHMOND, Calif. — “I look at the art work, and see those handcuffs,” Rick Perez told those attending an exhibit of paintings by Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five, at the public library here. “They stand out in my mind because a police officer tackled my son from behind and knocked him to the ground trying to get handcuffs on him.” Perez’s son, Richard “Pedie” Perez, 24, was shot multiple times and killed by a Richmond cop Sept. 14, 2014.

Perez was one of a number of speakers at the one-day exhibit who highlighted the relevance of Guerrero’s paintings to working-class struggles today.

The May 30 event was sponsored by the Friends of the Richmond Public Library. It featured recent paintings by Guerrero contained in the book *Absolved by Solidarity* that depict the 2001 frame-up trial of the Cuban Five, as well as earlier ones that portray the 17 months they spent in punishment cells in the Miami Federal Detention Center awaiting trial.

After 16 years in U.S. prisons, the final three of these Cuban revolutionaries returned to Cuba in December in a victory for the Cuban Revolution and the international campaign to free them. Since then Guerrero and his four comrades — Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González — have continued defending Cuba’s socialist revolution and supporting other working-class struggles internationally. Guerrero’s prison paintings are a contribution to those efforts.

Librarian Catherine Ortiz, who helped organize the exhibit, welcomed the more than 80 people who attended.

Anita Wills, executive director of the Inter Council for Mothers of Murdered Children, announced plans to build the Movement for Black Lives national conference in Cleveland, July 24-26. She invited people to preregister. “It’s about what’s going on not just in Cleveland, but with Eric Garner, Walter Scott, and all these young and old people being killed by the police,” she said.

“What do we do next?” asked Vylma Ortiz. “We are all going to work to free Oscar López Rivera!” Ortiz and Willye Rivera, who also spoke, have been active in the campaign to free López, a Puerto Rican independence fighter who has been jailed in the U.S. for 34 years, 12 of them in solitary confinement. They urged everyone to join the campaign and to sign a petition requesting a presidential pardon. The Cuban Five have been speaking

out in support of López and other political prisoners.

Tarnel Abbott, one of several members of the Richmond/Regla (Cuba) Friendship Committee at the exhibit, spoke about the work of the group.

Patti Iiyama, who recently visited Cuba with Tsukimi Kai, a predominantly Japanese American group that organizes cultural interchange with Japanese Cubans, reported on visiting the museum in Cuba where the originals of Guerrero’s paintings are exhibited.

Iiyama noted that “120,000 Japanese Americans were put in concentration camps; the Cuban Five were also framed up. Both groups were imprisoned unjustly, and both had similar responses — to use art to assert their humanity.”

“The five Cuban revolutionaries are examples of how it is possible to stand up and prevail against brutalities and injustice and emerge from 16 years in prison stronger than ever,” said Betsey Stone, a member of the Socialist Workers Party and editor of *Women and the Cuban Revolution*, who helped organize the exhibit. She described the decades of



Militant/Hank Scheer

Ino Guizar, left, and Vylma Ortiz study paintings by Antonio Guerrero of the Cuban Five, who spent 16 years in U.S. jails, during event at public library in Richmond, California, May 30.

attacks by the U.S. government on the Cuban Revolution, including supporting violence by counterrevolutionary groups that the Cuban Five were sent to the United States to prevent. “The economic embargo is still in full force,” she said. “We should join in demanding that it be ended.”

Participants took time to study the prints and read the explanatory captions. “I admire the Cuban Five,” said Inga

Frolova, originally from Vladivostok, Russia. “They went through hell and kept their dignity in a situation where there is no dignity left.”

Areceli Guizar, a participant in the fight against solitary confinement whose fiancé is in prison, looked carefully at each painting. “My favorite is the one with the bird,” she said, “because it shows how you can be in solitary confinement and still rise above it.”

## Cuba debated at Latin American studies conference

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL AND JIM ALTENBERG

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Discussion and debate on the Cuban Revolution was a feature of this year’s congress of the Latin American Studies Association, held here May 27-30. Substantial participation from Puerto Rico also marked the discussions.

More than 5,000 professors, students, publishers, and others from across the Americas, as well as Asia and Europe, joined panels on a wide range of issues.

Among the participants was a delegation from Cuba of about 160 — the largest so far at a LASA congress. At the same time, the U.S. government — which maintains colonial domination over Puerto Rico — denied visas to more than 50 Cuban academics, including some who have previously traveled to the United States.

Dozens of the nearly 1,200 panels took up topics related to Cuba, including the ongoing talks with Washington on restoring diplomatic relations, which the U.S. government broke off more than 50 years ago. A number of U.S. panelists and some from Cuba argued that Washington has now softened its policy of hostility toward the Cuban Revolution, and that the Cuban government should move to allow freer rein to the influence

of the capitalist market.

Several Cuban participants responded to these arguments. Speaking on one panel, Elier Ramírez, a historian at Cuba’s Council of State, noted that Washington has changed tactics but not its goal of overturning Cuba’s socialist revolution, and that is because “the Cuban Revolution represents a challenge to the U.S. empire.” He reiterated statements by Cuban President Raúl Castro that Washington continues its brutal trade embargo against Cuba, and that Cuba’s sovereignty and socialist course are not negotiable.

At another panel, Concepción Nieves Ayús of the Institute of Philosophy in Havana was asked, if Cuba has foreign investments, why can’t Cubans own private property beyond small family-run operations. Nieves said Cuba needs foreign investment, under strict government control, to generate income to meet social needs. But, she added, the last thing Cuba needs is a concentration of property in a few hands. She said we need to learn from V.I. Lenin, and from the example of the Russian Revolution under his leadership, that socialism is only possible with mass participation in management.

At a panel on Cuban economic policy, María de los Angeles Arias, from the University of Holguín in eastern Cuba, said, “We have had to carry out certain economic measures that have led to greater social inequalities. But we must take steps to combat these inequalities, both in the city and the countryside.”

Discussion on the Cuban Revolution was constant in the book exhibit hall, including at the Pathfinder Press booth. Books on that subject, including on the five Cuban revolutionaries who successfully resisted years in U.S. prisons, were among the top-selling Pathfinder titles.

One of the programs held at the exhibit hall featured Pathfinder’s *Cuba and Angola: Fighting for Africa’s Freedom and Our Own*. The presenter was Carlos Alzugaray, a member of the editorial board of the Cuban magazine *Temas* who spent many years in Cuba’s

diplomatic service. He described Cuba’s 1975-91 internationalist effort in Angola, where 425,000 volunteers helped defend Angola’s independence against invasions by apartheid South Africa, also hastening Namibia’s independence and the overthrow of the white supremacist regime in South Africa.

Alzugaray said the book highlights the decisive role of Fidel Castro and Raúl Castro in leading the Cuban forces in Angola. Despite the fact that the Cuban government “staked everything in Angola,” seemingly weakening its defenses at home, the revolution “became strengthened” by its internationalist actions in southern Africa, he said.

The economic crisis gripping Puerto Rico and the effects of U.S. colonial rule here were discussed in numerous panels and informally. A young Puerto Rican woman who visited the Pathfinder booth described protests against deep cuts in government funding for health care, schools and social programs. She didn’t think it was possible for Puerto Ricans to assert control over the island’s natural resources, land and factories, but decided to read about the perspective argued by *independentista* leader Rafael Cancel Miranda in *Puerto Rico: Independence is a Necessity*.

The growing place of Chinese investment and trade in Latin America was taken up in many panels. Heightened interest in the history of Jews and the fight against anti-Semitism was registered in several panels and at the Pathfinder booth, where participants bought copies of *The Jewish Question* by Abram Leon and issues of the *New International* magazine taking up the class struggle in the Middle East. Other publishers offered several new books on Jews in Latin America.

The Cuba Solidarity Committee in Puerto Rico and pro-independence organizations here hosted a well-attended evening reception in honor of the Cuban delegation. They paid tribute to Cuba’s revolutionary leadership and its unwavering support to the Puerto Rican independence struggle.

**“Those not willing to fight for the freedom of others will never be able to fight for their own” — Fidel Castro**

*Cuba & Angola: Fighting for Africa’s Freedom and Our Own* tells the story of Cuban internationalism in Angola, that dealt a blow to South Africa’s apartheid regime. \$12

*Absolved by Solidarity: 16 Watercolors for 16 Years of Unjust Imprisonment of the Cuban Five* by Antonio Guerrero \$15

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# —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 labor struggle 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

### Textile unionists in Egypt: 'Reinstate fired worker!'

ATHENS, Greece — Leaders of the independent trade union movement in Egypt's textile industry are fighting for reinstatement after being fired by the state-owned Mahalla Textile Company.

The workers at this mill, who were prominent in organizing mass strikes in 2006, 2008 and 2011, were in the vanguard of the fight to overthrow the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. They were also part of mass nationwide demonstrations pressing the military to oust the repressive Muslim Brotherhood government of Mohammed Morsi in 2013.

"There was a strike Jan. 13 addressing management corruption and demanding that our yearly bonus be paid," said fired union leader Kamal Fayoumy in a May 30 phone interview. "The bonus is an important part of the workers' yearly income. The strike was peaceful and had broad participation. The company's response was to fire two strikers, Gamal Gad and Nagi Heidar, on Jan. 26. On April 20 I was fired as well. The aim is to silence workers who speak out and organize."

The Egyptian government refuses to recognize independent trade unions, Fayoumy said, and will only negotiate with the "official unions," many of whose leaders were put in place under Mubarak.

"The question here is not about simply defending three workers who were unjustly dismissed," he said. "This is about the rights of workers to organize unions, to speak out and to defend their rights. We have steadfastly fought for these things for years. Many workers in the factory understand this and support us."

—Georges Mehrabian

### NY-NJ airport workers: 'We need better pay!'

NEW YORK — "We work long days with no breaks," said Dominise Wright, a cabin cleaner at Ultimate Aircraft Appearance at JFK Airport. "We need better pay, better everything. I'm down for the \$15 an hour. We deserve it, and we just need to see people fighting for it."

Wright was one of half a dozen airport workers who spoke at a May 28

rally of more than 100 workers from the three New York-area airports and supporters in front of the World Trade Center headquarters where the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey board was meeting. A Domino's Pizza worker from Brooklyn also addressed the rally. According to the *Daily News*, cleaners from Newark and JFK airports spoke before the board.

"The Port Authority has approved a \$3.6 billion project to refurbish LaGuardia Airport," said Michael Carey, a security guard at Aviation Safeguards at JFK, who emceed the event. "Work-



Militant/Tony Lane

Workers from three New York-area airports rallied for \$15 an hour outside World Trade Center, where Port Authority of New York and New Jersey board was meeting May 28.

ers have been waiting nine months for the Port Authority to improve our wages and benefits package. How can they refurbish the airport and not refurbish workers' wages and benefits?"

There are 12,000 contract workers at

the three airports, according to Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ, which organized the protest. Two City Council members and Sen. Charles Schumer spoke at the rally.

—Tony Lane

## LA raises minimum wage, but at snail's pace

### Continued from front page

ing up to \$15 an hour, including San Francisco, Seattle and SeaTac, Washington.

Nearly half of this city's workforce earns less than \$15 an hour. Under the proposed ordinance the minimum wage for companies with more than 25 employees would go up to \$10.50 on July 1, 2016, from the state minimum of \$9, with yearly increases to follow.

Businesses with fewer workers and so-called nonprofits would have an extra year before they have to implement each increase.

At a May 19 City Council hearing, Ruben Gonzalez, a senior vice president of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, argued that many local businesses will lay off workers, cut hours or close down if the hike is approved. "It's simple math," he claimed. "There is simply not enough room, enough margin in these businesses to absorb a 50-plus percent increase in labor costs over a short period of time."

But fast-food, Walmart, home

health care, car wash, airport and other workers who have gained confidence through protests for \$15 and a union and against police brutality see it differently.

"People are hungry *now*. Companies can afford to pay \$15 *now*, and we deserve it *now*," OUR Walmart member Barbara Collins told the *Militant* at a May 28 rally of 150 Walmart workers and supporters in downtown Los Angeles.

"It's not fair that we have workers working 30-plus years who are still making \$9 an hour," Manuel Valdovinos, a worker at Skychef, organized by the UNITE HERE union, said at a May 18 march demanding the City Council approve the minimum wage hike.

### Union officials propose loophole

A week before the vote on the ordinance, Rusty Hicks, executive secretary-treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and a leader of the Raise the Wage coalition, called for amending the ordinance to grant companies with union contracts

an exemption. Many local minimum wage laws around the country include similar waivers.

"With a collective bargaining agreement, a business owner and the employees negotiate an agreement that works for them both," Hicks said. "The agreement allows each party to prioritize what is important to them. This provision gives the parties the option, the freedom, to negotiate that agreement. And that is a good thing."

Hicks' statement gave the Chamber of Commerce a handle to claim that the minimum wage hike was a maneuver to allow union officials to negotiate sweetheart contracts that would increase the union dues base without benefitting workers.

"I was kind of shocked," Los Angeles McDonald's worker and Fight for \$15 activist Edgar Gonzalez told the *Militant*. "We're fighting for a union and a raise, not only a raise. We're winning because we keep on fighting and putting a lot of pressure on them."

The City Council has postponed considering an exemption for union-organized workplaces for further study.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



June 22, 1990

CHICAGO — The worldwide significance of the unfolding struggles of working people in the United States, the momentous events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and building parties of communist workers were the central themes of the 35th Convention of the Socialist Workers Party.

Jack Barnes, national secretary of the SWP, presented the opening report. "The tearing apart of the bureaucratic regimes in Eastern Europe; the beginning of the disintegration of the Stalinist iceberg in the Soviet Union; the progress in Cuba towards reconquering the revolution for the working people, for Marxism and for socialism, the momentous events in South Africa," have changed the world, he said.



June 21, 1965

NEW YORK — Shouts of "that's right!" and applause interrupted Clifton DeBerry, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York, as he addressed a public forum sponsored by the Organization of Afro-American Unity at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem.

Racism would exist here as long as capitalism does, the candidate declared.

DeBerry criticized the strategy of those who were active in the civil rights and antiwar protests, but who at the same time voted for the Democratic Party, which is responsible for the perpetuation of war and racism. DeBerry said that socialism is the only system capable of resolving the problems of oppressed people in all parts of the world.



June 22, 1940

Only three years ago the workers of France stood at the threshold of revolution.

But the French People's Front of Blum-Stalin checked and dispersed the revolutionary wave with the dire warning: "Revolution will open the road to Hitler." So the French workers gave the factories back to the capitalists. And the capitalists left the road open for Hitler.

The great risings of the workers in Spain, France and Belgium offered the only way of avoiding the victory of Fascism in Europe. Messrs. Stalin, Thorez, Blum and all the other Stalinist and Socialist lackeys of Western Europe brought those risings to nought. The result is the present catastrophe.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### NEW YORK

#### New York

**Crisis in Puerto Rico: The Debt Squeeze, the Fight to Free Oscar López and Colonial Rule — Why Working People Should Back the Struggle for Independence.**  
Speaker: Martin Koppel, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., June 26, 7:30 p.m. 939 8th Ave., Room 2A. Tel.: (646) 434-8117.

# For Tom Fiske 'revolutionary politics was pure enjoyment'

BY TONY LANE

MINNEAPOLIS — “Throughout his life Tom Fiske acted on the fact that the lessons learned in struggle through the 165 years of communist continuity are critical for the working class now, and that everything you do to build revolutionary communist parties in the United States and elsewhere today is decisive for the future of humanity,” said Socialist Workers Party National Committee member Norton Sandler at a spirited meeting here May 31 that celebrated the life and political contributions of a 50-year veteran and leader of the party.

Fiske, 71, died May 20 after a battle with cancer. The event took place two months after a similar meeting honored the life of Becky Ellis, a cadre of the SWP and Fiske’s longtime companion.

The 40 participants came from the surrounding area and from Omaha, Nebraska; Chicago; Washington, D.C.; and New York. They included a former co-worker of Fiske and fellow union fighter from LSG Sky Chef at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport, a nurse from the hospice where Fiske stayed shortly before his death and individuals who had worked with him defending immigrant workers. One of them, Jovita Morales, had organized a spot on her weekly Spanish-language radio show that morning saluting Fiske’s life and publicizing the meeting.

Helen Meyers chaired the meeting and read excerpts from some of the more than 25 messages sent from the U.S., Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

## Proletarian internationalist

“Tom was a leader with total confidence in the capacities of the working class, a proletarian internationalist grounded in the traditions of the Russian Revolution and especially the Cuban Revolution,” wrote Minnesota SWP leader Frank Forrester, who was in Ukraine on a reporting trip for the *Militant*.

“Tom spoke calmly and confidently,” said Marty Knaeble, a ramp worker at the Minneapolis airport, describing working with Fiske and Becky Ellis in meetings to build support for the 2005 strike of Northwest Airlines mechanics. Knaeble was one of a small number of ramp workers who refused to cross the picket line of the mechanics, who were organized by a different union. “I wouldn’t have spoken up without the support of Tom and Becky,” Knaeble said, adding that Fiske told him “not to downplay the importance of what I and others had done by not crossing the

picket line.”

“What made Tom the way he was?” Knaeble asked. “It was his party, the Socialist Workers Party.”

Fiske first became active in working-class politics amid world-shaking events, such as the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the proletarian-led Black struggle and its deep impact on politics throughout the United States and around the world, and the movement against the U.S. war in Vietnam.

He grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and attended the University of California at Berkeley in the early 1960s. He moved to Boston to attend graduate school, where he joined the Young Socialist Alliance and, in 1967, the Socialist Workers Party.

In 1968 many young people were backing Minnesota Sen. Eugene McCarthy’s bid for the Democratic Party nomination for U.S. president. The Communist Party actively promoted the Democratic Party “peace candidates.” The SWP argued for forging an independent working-class party based on the trade unions as a counter to “anti-war” candidates like McCarthy and others, explaining that they reinforced the two-party system that the ruling class manipulates effectively to maintain power, Sandler said.

Today the Bernie Sanders campaign for president is a sign we are going to see “more socialists and so-called independents, all reinforcing capitalism, not advancing an independent course for the working class that relies on our own power,” Sandler said.

When Fiske was in the Los Angeles branch in the early 1970s, he was assigned to the household of retired SWP National Secretary James P. Cannon, Meyers said. Andrea Morrell in Oakland, California, and Anthony Dutrow in Miami sent messages to the meeting describing working with Fiske in the Cannon house.

“Our assignment was to make sure Jim was able to keep writing and editing speeches and other materials that have since been published,” Dutrow wrote, explaining that the Los Angeles SWP headquarters had been bombed by Cuban counterrevolutionaries in 1968.

“Tom sat me down and explained the discipline involved in a 24-hour security effort like this,” Dutrow wrote.

Fiske and Ellis, who got together in 1974 while both were members of the Houston SWP branch, anchored many branches over the ensuing decades, Sandler said.

In the late 1970s, as growing resistance of union steelworkers and coal miners confirmed that the labor movement was again at the center stage of U.S. politics, the SWP decided to get its members into basic industry. Fiske got a job in a steel plant in Dallas. He was a leader of the party’s turn to industry from then on, Sandler said.

In 1980 in Atlanta, Lockheed carried out



Above, Militant/Natalie Morrison  
Tom Fiske, center, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Minneapolis, at May Day 2009 march against deportations. Inset, Fiske and companion Becky Ellis in Austin, Minnesota, supporting Hormel meat packers strike in 1986. “Tom was a leader with total confidence in the working class,” said Frank Forrester in message to May 31 meeting to celebrate Fiske’s life and political contributions.



political firings of 15 workers who had been active resisting company speedup and unsafe conditions on the pretext of alleged “falsifications” on their job applications. All were accused of being members of the Socialist Workers Party or Young Socialist Alliance.

## Led fight against political firings

“Tom, a machinist at the plant and organizer of the party fraction, who was not fired, led the fight against these political firings, charting a course of reaching out broadly for support,” Chris Hoepfner, one of those fired, said in a message to the meeting. The struggle “uncovered an elaborate network of company and government spies and political surveillance aimed at the union and at all unionists who held ideas the company disagreed with.”

Fiske ran for public office many times as an SWP candidate, including for governor of Minnesota, for U.S. Senate and Congress and for mayor of Minneapolis.

Messages from Becca Williamson in Omaha and Jacob Perasso in New York highlighted the collaboration they had received from Fiske while working at the Dakota Premium Foods meatpacking plant during the nearly decade-long struggle to establish and maintain a union.

“Tom worked at politics and pushed others to do so as well,” Diana Newberry, a leader of the Twin Cities branch of the SWP, told the meeting. “When the first big attacks by the U.S. government on the Somali community occurred here and explosive meetings and demonstrations took place, Tom led the party right into the middle of the actions, organizing discussions in the party and at Militant Labor Forums. He worked with others on getting articles on the fight into the *Militant*, and spoke out as the SWP candidate for mayor of Minneapolis.”

Newberry described her work with Fiske in recent years responding to the raids by the immigration cops and the protests that followed and the labor struggles by meat packers across the Midwest. “For Tom, revolutionary politics was pure enjoyment, whether meeting and discussing with workers at a demonstration, going door to door with the *Militant* or at a plant gate or on a picket line,” she said. “Other workers picked up on this. He always seemed to sell more subscriptions to the *Militant* than anyone else.”

“Tom reminded me of leaders from before, who keep fighting till the end, who are never negative, who always see the positive,” Pablo Tapia, a longtime fighter for immigrant rights and a leader of the Asamblea de Derechos Civiles, told the *Militant* after the meeting.

## Confidence in workers’ capacities

Fiske’s confidence in the capacities of the working class was evident in how he worked with those attracted to the party.

“Like many youth, I was attracted to the Black struggle,” Arrin Hawkins wrote in a message. “Tom knew I would read Malcolm X on my own. So instead he directed me to *Teamster Rebellion* and *For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States* and encouraged me to meet with him to discuss these books. I respected him for taking me seriously.”

Other messages highlighted Fiske’s work over the years defending the Cuban Revolution and explaining the necessity for workers in this country to organize a revolutionary struggle that will end the rule of the dictatorship of capital.

Fiske served 15 years on the Socialist Workers Party National Committee. Over the past five years, Sandler said, “Tom took on many difficult assignments that took him outside of the Twin Cities, and though some were not easy for him, he put great effort into them.”

Sandler said Fiske was “old school,” in the best traditions of the Minneapolis branch of the SWP going back to the party’s leadership in the Teamster battles of the 1930s. If a comrade on full-time assignment for the party came to Minneapolis, Fiske made sure he or she had food and gas money and a comfortable place to stay.

In discussions with Fiske in recent months, Sandler said, “Tom understood what was developing in the labor movement and the response of Black working-class youth in particular to cop killings and brutality. He knew that in the midst of this you had to hold the banner of the SWP high and set an example by speaking out and campaigning for a road forward for the working class.”

A collection at the meeting raised \$1,031 for the work of the SWP. Participants stayed after the program browsing through the messages, looking at a display of Fiske’s political life and enjoying food and refreshments provided by supporters of the SWP.



From left, Tom Fiske, Andrea Morell, Anthony Dutrow and SWP leader James P. Cannon in Los Angeles in 1971.

# Ukraine workers fight attacks

Continued from front page

can get rich. Management is running it into the ground.

“Even though they tell us there is no work, you can see the raw ore piled 15 to 20 meters high [49 to 65 feet] all around the plant,” Alexeivych said, showing us pictures.

Andrey Zaykov, who works at a peat plant in the northwestern city of Chernihiv, told a similar story. “The plant, which makes equipment and uses peat to generate energy, has had 19 different managers over the last 10 years,” he said in a June 1 interview. “In 2012 new bosses sucked all the wealth out of the plant — we had no contracts, no power, it was an empty shell while they got rich.

“New managers came in, got it going again and were fired,” said Zaykov, who is the head of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions in his region. “We haven’t been paid since January and the plant has stopped work. I helped lead a campaign for back pay and they trumped up charges against me. I was fired at the end of April.

“They set up a fake private enterprise and got a secret agreement from the state to transfer the company’s assets over,” he said. “This is all about corruption, money and privatization.

“The government doesn’t want to listen to us,” Zaykov said. “The only thing we can do is organize to fight, like we did at Maidan,” referring to the massive movement that led to the overthrow of the pro-Moscow regime of Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014.

Over a week and a half, *Militant* reporters also met with uranium miners at the Smolensk mine in the southeast, iron ore miners in Kriviy Rih, workers at the Yashmash rocket and Interpipe plants in Dnepropetrovsk, rail workers here and in Kiev, and others, learning about their struggles to defend jobs, wages, working conditions and political rights.

The picture they paint is that the

bosses in Ukraine — both in private and state enterprises — and their government in Kiev are engaged in an all-out drive against workers and independent unions. They seek to increase profitability and position themselves to seize mines, mills and plants scheduled for privatization at bargain prices, while battling other oligarchs who have amassed fortunes from theft and corruption.

They also attempt to use workers’ commitment to Ukraine’s national sovereignty to demand economic “sacrifice” and curtailment of rights in face of ongoing attacks from separatist forces in Donetsk and Luhansk, backed by Russian troops and weapons, and Moscow’s continued occupation of Crimea.

## Workers pay for deep economic crisis

Ukraine’s capitalist economy is spiraling into crisis, mostly on the backs of the working class and farmers. Industrial output has dropped 20 percent while \$7 million a day is eaten up by military expenditures. Inflation has soared 61 percent over the last year while jobs have shut down, wages are frozen and often not paid. Prices of many basic necessities have doubled and tripled.

The situation of workers trapped under the so-called People’s Republics in Donetsk and Luhansk is even worse, with mines closed, industry shuttered, and work, supplies and rights gone.

The Kiev government of President Petro Poroshenko, pushed by the International Monetary Fund and imperialist “allies,” has slashed energy and other social subsidies, cut pensions, and plans to eliminate tens of thousands of jobs in an orgy of privatization.

Coal miners, the strongest section of the labor movement, are a special target. According to Energy Minister Volodymyr Demchyshyn, the government’s goal this year is to eliminate 10,000 mining jobs out of 52,000, closing five state-owned mines and idling seven

Ukraine.” The legislation would make it a crime to use the word “communist” in a political party’s name or singing the Soviet hymn, with up to 10 years in prison as punishment.

An April 9 letter signed by more than 40 academics urged Poroshenko not to sign the bill.

Since the uprising in February 2014 that led to the overthrow of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, whose Party of Regions had close relations with Moscow, bourgeois politicians of various stripes have demanded the Communist Party be banned. The party came in fifth in the 2012 parliamentary elections, receiving 13 percent of the vote.

On April 17 the regional council in Ivano-Frankivsk, a city in southwest Ukraine, banned activities of the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Party of Regions, the Opposition Bloc and the Ukraine Development Party.

There have been a number of reports of threats and assaults against activists in the CP and the Leninist Communist Youth League of Ukraine. In a June 6 statement, the World Federation of Democratic Youth condemned the attacks and the new laws.



Coal miners block road near Novovolynsk in western Ukraine Jan. 13, demanding jobs and protesting boss and government attacks. Sign reads “The revolution of dignity goes on.”

more.

“There are 1,800 state-owned companies left,” Poroshenko told parliament in his June 4 national address. “No more than 200 are vital to the state.”

He called the massive primitive accumulation of capital by a layer of emerging capitalists, many with connections to the old Soviet bureaucracy, over the 25 years since the implosion of the Soviet Union, a necessity. “Any scientist who investigates the typology of political regimes says that the so-called competitive oligarchy is really better than authoritarianism,” he said. Poroshenko is one of Ukraine’s richest capitalists.

Claiming it is now time for a “transitional step towards liberal democracy,” Poroshenko is embroiled in a series of fights with other oligarchs over who controls what. “It is not a suitable moment for social democracy,” Poroshenko said, outlining his perspective for who should pay for the “next step.”

“Thatcherism and Reaganomics will be more useful now,” he said. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was the architect of dismantling the coal industry and assaulting the miners union in Britain in the 1980s, at the same time U.S. President Ronald Reagan’s smashing of the air traffic controllers union signaled decades of attacks on working people.

Poroshenko’s government is pushing a new labor code that will place greater obstacles in the way of forming unions and defending workers. He called for slashing state-subsidized health care, saying, “We cannot deceive people with fairy tales about free medicine.”

And he denounced anyone who pro-

tests these moves — which he admitted are “difficult and very unpopular decisions” — as “fifth columnists” aiding Moscow. “The enemy does not hide its plan to convert the discontent of tired and exhausted Ukrainians into the destabilization of the situation in our country,” Poroshenko said. He singled out the independent miners union, saying their mobilizations are nothing but “the clank of weapons of private armies camouflaged as miners.”

## Miners leading fightback

Miners have blocked roads, marched on local offices and mobilized in the nation’s capital. In one protest in the west they sat in the road behind a sign reading, “The revolution of dignity goes on.”

“The government attacks trade union rights and their mine closures and other cuts are tearing up life for working people,” Mikhailo Volynets, president of both the Confederation of Free Trade Unions and independent miners union, told the *Militant* May 29. “The social tensions point toward another Maidan.”

“Our unions are dedicated to the national sovereignty of Ukraine,” he said, “but that has nothing to do with the course of the government. When we need energy and to break with dependence on gas and coal from Russia, they close Ukrainian mines, throw miners out of work and turn to imports.

“People are losing their trust in the government,” he said. “They pressure the media not to cover what the union says and they slander us as paid agents of Moscow. Workers come to me on the

Continued on page 9

# Ukraine anti-communist laws: an attack on the working class

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Under the pretext of combating Moscow’s aggression and aid to separatists in eastern Ukraine, the government of President Petro Poroshenko is attacking political rights, including with a new “decommunization” law and moves to ban the Communist Party of Ukraine. This campaign puts wind in the sails of anti-working-class forces, some of whom have carried out physical assaults on supporters of the CP and other opponents of the current regime.

In the president’s annual speech to parliament June 4, Poroshenko targeted the “countless fifth column nourished in Ukraine by the enemy.”

“Unfortunately,” he said, “I see a lot of people in this hall willing to use leftist slogans of the dead Communist Party of Ukraine.”

Poroshenko signed a series of thought-control laws May 15, including one called “On the Condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Ban on the Propaganda of their Symbols.” It makes it a crime to deny “the criminal character of the communist totalitarian regime of 1917-1991 in

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For more information contact the SWP in your area (see list on page 8)

# Titles on revolutionary politics released at Tehran book fair

BY CATHARINA TIRSÉN

TEHRAN, Iran — The 28th Tehran International Book Fair opened May 6 in the gigantic Mosalla Grand Mosque here under the motto, “Reading: Dialogue with the World.” For 10 days the prayer halls are transformed into a labyrinth of Iranian publishers. On a mezzanine you can also find stands of publishers from France and Japan, as well as Armenia, Bosnia, Mexico and other countries.

Hundreds of thousands of people visit the fair, which is free of charge, in order to browse books from hundreds of publishers, enjoy good discounts and look for special titles for their studies.

Three pavilions are set aside for international publishers. Pathfinder Press books have been sold at the fair since 1992. A May 14 dispatch by the semi-official Mehr News Agency reported that the Pathfinder stand this year displayed “documentary works on the Communist International, Fourth International and Socialist Workers Party, writings of Fidel Castro, Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X and other American and international leftist leaders, as well as historical and analytical works on a variety of national and international political issues.”

Visitors come to the Tehran book fair from all over Iran. A man from Kurdistan said he had come this year hoping to find more international publishers “because of the negotiations and the

prospects of easing the sanctions,” referring to talks between the Iranian and U.S. and European governments. He got an issue of the Marxist magazine *New International* featuring “Our Politics Start with the World” by Jack Barnes, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States.

A Farsi translation of this work was released at this year’s fair by the Iranian publisher Talaye Porsoo, which translates and sells many Pathfinder titles. Reviewing the book May 17, a writer for the Iran Book News Agency said that *Two Worlds at Night: The Legacy of Imperialism and the Road to Social and Cultural Advance* — the book’s title in Farsi — gives evidence that poverty and underdevelopment in Africa, the Middle East and much of Asia and the Americas “are a consequence of the workings of capitalism on a world scale.”

The reviewer notes Barnes’ explanation that more than a third of the world’s population has no access to modern energy, and says the SWP leader emphasizes the political fight to enable working people worldwide to use resources and technology to close the gap between the industrially advanced and semicolonial countries.

A young worker from Afghanistan was one of many people who bought collections of speeches by Malcolm X, a revolutionary leader of Blacks and other working people in the U.S. in the



Iranian News Agency

Hundreds of thousands, from all across Iran, attended the 10-day-long 28th Tehran International Book Fair. This year’s motto was “Reading: Dialogue with the World.”

1960s. A number of people who came by Pathfinder’s booth also picked up *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Barnes. One was especially interested after reading Malcolm’s explanation in that book of why he stopped describing his political course as Black nationalism after meeting “true revolutionaries” in Africa and elsewhere who were white.

Pathfinder’s titles on the fight for women’s emancipation were popular, as well as books by Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and other leaders of the socialist revolution in Cuba. The Pathfinder booth featured *Voices From Prison, I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived* and *Abolished by Solidarity* — three recent books about five Cuban revolutionaries who spent years in Washington’s prisons for their actions in defense of the Cuban Revolution. Last December the final three of them returned to a hero’s welcome in Cuba.

In addition to *Two Worlds at Night*, Talaye Porsoo presented three new translations of Pathfinder books at the fair, including *Pages from History: Women and Revolution* by Mary-Alice Waters and Evelyn Reed and volume 3 of the Farsi edition of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*. Its best sellers included *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and *Socialism and Man in Cuba* by Guevara.

A bookstore in Kurdistan bought 225 Talaye Porsoo books during the event. And a bookseller from Afghanistan told

the booth’s staff he had recently bought through a commercial distributor 100 copies each of *Socialism and Man in Cuba* and Barnes’ *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*.

Golâzin, another Iranian publisher that translates and sells Pathfinder titles in Farsi, displayed those books again this year, including *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women; Che Guevara Speaks; and Problems of Women’s Liberation*.

## Mexico forum

Continued from page 3

— in the process transforming their own self-confidence and capacities. That’s what’s needed in Mexico and in the United States.”

There was discussion on the call by some participants in the protests for Peña Nieto to resign, and what alternative is possible. There are three main capitalist parties in Mexico — Peña Nieto’s Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the National Action Party (PAN), and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

“People aren’t willing to vote for these parties any more. What the Zapatistas say about communities governing themselves is right,” Moctezuma said.

If Peña Nieto resigned “it wouldn’t change the system, but it would give people hope,” Valle said. “Creating a new party isn’t the solution either. It would just be corrupted.” What’s needed is a self-governed community without leaders, like the Zapatistas, he said, because leaders inevitably “become oppressors.”

“The Zapatistas are a local social movement,” Pérez said. “They don’t have a program to organize a party of workers, farmers and the indigenous people that can get rid of the capitalist class and organize a workers and farmers government.”

Pérez said that he was a student in Mexico City in 1968 when the Mexican government massacred students at a protest. He then began studying the Cuban Revolution, including the Second Declaration of Havana, a revolutionary program for the continent produced by the working people of Cuba through mass mobilizations in the early 1960s.

“I came to the U.S. and found the Socialist Workers Party, which not only defends the Cuban Revolution, it wants to emulate it and make a revolution here.” Addressing the fellow panelists, he said, “I think that’s what you should do while you’re here.”

Informal discussion continued for some time after the meeting.

## New International magazine #13 Our Politics Start With the World



“All the questions posed by the ongoing crises and breakdowns of international capitalism can only be understood clearly, and answered in practice, if we start from a world perspective. Only then can we begin acting to advance proletarian alternatives, as opposed to the eternally recurring lesser-evil choices which reinforce the current social relations of exploitation and oppression.”

— Jack Barnes

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## Ukraine: stop attacks on political rights!

Working people should condemn the attacks on free speech rights by the Ukrainian government of Petro Poroshenko — from the thought-control “decommunization” law and proposed banning of the Communist Party to attempts to brand the independent miners union and all other critics of Kiev’s anti-working-class policies as “fifth-column” tools of Moscow.

The labor movement and working class oppose restrictions on the right to speak freely. When the rulers move to silence any group, it sets a precedent that will unerringly be aimed at the fighting toilers. And it gives encouragement to the kind of thug actions by the bosses and rightist groups that have been directed against unionists as well as members of the CP in Ukraine.

We likewise condemn the May 28 decree by Russian President Vladimir Putin making it a crimi-

nal offense to report on the death of Russian soldiers during “special operations” — a blatant attempt to stifle criticism of Moscow’s involvement in the separatist war in Ukraine.

The massive Maidan movement that overthrew the pro-Moscow regime of Viktor Yanukovich in 2014 brought new confidence to working people in Ukraine. It opened the door for new experiences, a fresh look at revolutionary continuity buried by betrayals and lies, and deepening discussion about how to chart an independent working-class road forward.

The challenges before workers in Ukraine, Russia and elsewhere demand the freest debate of political views. Protest all moves to criminalize political views and organizations! Demand a halt to assaults and intimidation against people for their political activities!

## Tehran backs Syria’s Assad, Kurds advance

Continued from front page

column in the *Wall Street Journal*. “The rise of Islamic State all but cemented Mr. Assad’s presidency.”

Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria are effectively countering Islamic State while opposing Assad’s rule. The Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) have forged alliances with Arab, Christian and other groups in these ground battles.

Their advances have inspired struggles by Kurds in Turkey. This was reflected in recent elections, where for the first time the Kurdish-based People’s Democratic Party (HDP), a left-wing bourgeois party, surpassed the 10 percent threshold to enter parliament.

The Kurds — some 30 million people living in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria — are fighting for a homeland and against centuries of national oppression.

The struggle in Syria began in March 2011 with mass popular protests demanding an end to Assad’s rule. Opposition forces took control of Syria’s largest city Aleppo and other parts of the country. The regime responded with a relentless war that dealt blows to the rebellion and devastated much of the population through starvation sieges and deadly barrel bombs.

More than 220,000 people have been killed since the civil war began. Almost half of the country’s population of 22 million has been forced to flee their homes. Under these conditions, reactionary groups such as Islamic State have been able to seize territory.

Last month Islamic State took control of Palmyra in central Syria, putting nearly half of the country’s territory, mostly desert, under its control. In March forces aligned with the Islamic Front coalition, which opposes Assad and Islamic State, together with the al-Qaeda affiliate al-Nusra Front captured the provincial capital Idlib in northwestern Syria from the government.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said June 2 that his government will back Assad’s rule “until the end of the road,” reported IRNA, Iran’s state news agency. Tehran recently sent 15,000 fighters to Syria with the aim of helping reverse recent government defeats, according to the *Daily Star*, a Lebanese newspaper.

Meanwhile, Islamic State, aided by Syrian government airstrikes, has made advances against several rebel groups fighting against Assad north of Aleppo. At least 59 civilians were killed in the town of al-Bab

## Ukraine workers

Continued from page 7

street and on the subway and tell me they don’t believe the ministers.

“In the fall of 2013, when the students took to the streets in Maidan to demand change and national sovereignty, they were met with truncheons and bullets. The unions and the workers joined and tens of thousands turned out,” Volynets said. “Only then did these politicians show up and build careers and power out of it.”

“Now they tell workers and others that we are anti-patriotic,” he said. “Well, the independent unions are spreading and growing. We have thousands of new members. Some in the old state unions are turning to us. And we are going to continue to fight.”

May 30 when the Syrian air force dropped barrel bombs at a market there, reported Reuters.

Since liberating Kobani from Islamic State forces in January, the YPG has successfully fought to free many areas throughout the region from Islamic State control. In May Kurdish forces and their allies launched an offensive from Hasakah province in the Kurdish region, taking back the strategic Abdul-Aziz Mountain along with 221 Kurdish and Christian villages that were held by Islamic State, reported the *Washington Post*. They’re currently fighting to drive Islamic State out of Tel Abyad, a commercial center near the Turkish border. In early June Islamic State launched attacks against government forces that control part of the provincial capital of Hasakah. “Half the city is under our control in the north and northwest,” YPG spokesman Redur Xelil told Reuters. When Islamic State “reach the borders of our area they will receive a stiff response.” The YPG has said it does not coordinate operations with the Syrian military.

The Islamic State’s seizure of the city of Ramadi in Iraq May 17 exposed once again the combat weakness of Iraqi forces. According to *Politico*, Iraq’s armed forces may have as few as 5,000 “effective troops” under its command, despite U.S. training and airstrikes. Baghdad is increasingly reliant on Shiite militias backed by the Iranian government.

Those most combat ready and determined to hold their ground are the 160,000 Peshmerga troops of the autonomous Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq. But they’re not getting the heavy weaponry they need. Washington sends supplies to Baghdad, which provides very little to the Peshmerga to avoid strengthening the Kurds’ fight for independence.

“They [Islamic State] target us with weapons that were abandoned in Ramadi,” Kurdish Minister for Peshmerga Affairs Mustafa Sayid Qadir told the *Journal*. “Wouldn’t it have been better if the Iraqi army had given them to us instead of giving them to ISIS?”

## ‘We have history of winning,’ says one of Cuban 5

Continued from front page

he said. “Many people asked why the Cuban people have responded in this way. We have a very good teacher, Fidel. He taught us to have solidarity with people everywhere in the world.”

González said that the work of the internationalist medical volunteers had a big impact on the morale of the Five in prison. One day he received “a letter from a Cuban doctor on an island in the Pacific with only 10,000 people — but it had a group of Cuban doctors and nurses. I felt so proud, so happy to be part of a revolution that was able to do such things and determined to do whatever it takes to defend it.”

“We have sent doctors,” he added during the lively discussion period, “but we also sent soldiers to Angola for 14 years and helped Namibia win its independence.”

“In the 1980s the U.S. offered Cuba the possibility of talks if we withdrew from Africa. We were going through hard times, but Cuba’s principles come first,” he said. “Solidarity is part of our culture. It would not

## Keep up fight for \$15 and a union!

This statement was issued June 9 by Bill Arth, chairperson of the Socialist Workers Party in Los Angeles.

Across the country thousands of fast-food, hotel and retail workers have marched and demonstrated for a \$15 minimum wage and a union. The campaign is having a big impact, first and foremost on working people by increasing our self-confidence that when we fight, when we mobilize in massive numbers, our solidarity and unity can score gains. That’s the lesson from the decision by the Los Angeles City Council to raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2020.

Of course, the nearly 50 percent of Los Angeles workers who earn less than \$15 per hour today, need the raise to \$15 *now*, not in five years. That’s why the fight can’t pause. An increased minimum wage benefits all of us because low pay puts downward pressure on everyone’s wages.

The labor of workers and farmers produces society’s wealth. The capitalist class takes away the lion’s share as profits. That’s why bosses want to keep wages as low as they can get away with. When we fight for higher wages we are fighting to get a bigger share of the value we create.

The bosses try to sow fear and division among us by arguing that a higher minimum wage will lead to layoffs, skyrocketing prices and workers losing government benefits because they make too much money. But a strong movement for higher pay puts us in a better position to campaign for other pressing needs like government-guaranteed universal health care from cradle to grave, a federally-funded public works program to create jobs for all, workers control of safety on the job and against capitalism’s wars abroad.

The fight for \$15 is strengthened by its intersection with the growing movement against police brutality that has scored gains such as the recent indictment of six Baltimore cops for killing Freddie Gray.

Workers should soundly reject the proposal by Los Angeles County Federation of Labor leader Rusty Hicks to exempt union workers from being covered by the \$15 minimum. This is a travesty of what the union movement must stand for and plays right into the hands of bosses who argue that unions are a special-interest group concerned only with collecting dues.

Workers built unions to overcome competition among ourselves and to defend ourselves against the bosses’ never-ending assaults. Our strength comes from using solidarity and the collective power of a mobilized workforce. Our unions must embrace the growing movement against police brutality — *Black Lives Matter*. By fighting for the interests of the entire working class, unions will attract more workers and become a more powerful force.

Bosses and workers have opposed interests. Rather than relying on the Democrats, the Republicans or so-called independents and socialists like Bernie Sanders who trail after them — all beholden to the bosses — we must forge a labor party based on fighting unions, a political tool workers can use to better act in *our* interests, not in the interests of the capitalist exploiters.

have been possible without our socialist revolution.”

González described how the FBI tried to get the Five to become turncoats when they were arrested. “The FBI agent told me I was missing the opportunity to live in the land of the free,” he said, “and said Fidel Castro was not going to lift a finger to save me. I had to control my laughter because I knew the long history in Cuba of never leaving a soldier behind.”

González also responded to questions on what the next tasks are for supporters of the Cuban Revolution. Along with fighting to end the U.S. economic, commercial and financial embargo of Cuba and demanding the return of Guantánamo to Cuba, he called for supporting efforts to win freedom for other political prisoners in the U.S., including Mumia Abu-Jamal and Oscar López Rivera, a Puerto Rican independence fighter with whom González “had the honor to share a prison cell for four years.”

The Cuban revolutionary also denounced U.S. threats to Venezuela. “Cuba is never going to abandon its friends,” González said.