

# Spring drive wins workers to 'Militant,' Pathfinder

BY MARY MARTIN

The spring campaign to introduce the Socialist Workers Party, the *Militant* newspaper and books on revolutionary history and politics from Pathfinder Press to working people ended the fifth week — with two left to go — with a number of areas preparing to go over their quotas and boost the international drive. Party members report that follow-up discussions with fellow workers on the central place of the fight for amnesty for immigrant workers — the question posed at widespread May Day protests — as well as joining in solidarity with union strikes and organizing drives, marked the efforts in many cities.

SWP and Communist League branches are making plans to bring home the spring campaign on time and in full.

The party aims to get to know and work with those interested in learning more about building a revolutionary party. The drive runs concurrently with the Militant Fighting Fund to

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## Spring Campaign to expand the reach of 'Militant,' books

April 1–May 23 (week five)

Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold
UNITED STATES				
Albany	60	70	60	43
Atlanta	65	65	65	48
Chicago	80	64	80	35
Denver	25	18	25	10
Lincoln	20	20	20	20
Los Angeles	110	85	110	67
Miami	35	17	35	20
New York	135	96	135	118
Oakland*	100	91	140	128
Philadelphia	50	48	50	28
Seattle	70	75	70	50
Twin Cities	50	36	50	23
Washington	50	58	50	44
Total U.S.	850	743	890	634
Prisoners	15	15		
UNITED KINGDOM				
London	50	41	50	54
Manchester	45	40	45	27
Total U.K.	95	81	95	81
CANADA				
Montreal	40	30	40	31
Vancouver	30	27	30	14
Total Canada	70	57	70	45
NEW ZEALAND				
New Zealand	40	36	40	20
AUSTRALIA				
Australia	35	34	35	22
Total	1,105	966	1,130	802
SHOULD BE	1,100	786	1,100	786
*Raised goal				

# Trump foreign policy seeks to stem decline of US imperialism

BY TERRY EVANS

The administration of Donald Trump is advancing a foreign policy course in the interests of the U.S. ruling capitalist families, and making gains. He seeks to expand Washington's alliances across the Pacific in order to preserve the supremacy Washington won in the second imperialist world slaughter in 1945, in the face of China's economic growth and heightened competition.

At the same time, he seeks to widen sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in a conflict rooted in Washington's division of the Korean Peninsula and unrelenting hostility to the North, which handed the U.S. rulers their first military defeat in 1953.

The challenge before the U.S. rulers is to find ways to work with Beijing and others in the region as Washington — still the strongest world imperialist power by far — is declining.

At stake is sustaining relations and trade with long time U.S. allies that are increasingly drawn into relations with China as its economic clout grows. As part of sharp shifts away from priorities that shaped the actions — and inactions — of the adminis-

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# Silver miners in Idaho win broad support, prepare for long strike

BY EDWIN FRUIT

MULLAN, Idaho — Members and supporters of United Steelworkers Local 5114 maintain picket lines 24 hours a day outside the Lucky Friday silver mine here, nestled in the Coeur d'Alene mountains, in their two-month-long strike against Hecla Mining Company.

There have been no negotiations since the current contract expired in May of 2016, local union President Phil Epler told Socialist Workers Party members who came to offer solidarity. The bosses decided to impose their "final" concession contract offer, which led to the March 13 strike.

The company wants to increase miners' medical insurance payments and cut the silver premium and bonus payments, an important part of miners' overall pay. Hecla bosses also want to gut union safety provisions, including a worker team-bidding sys-

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# SWP: 'End US colonial rule in Puerto Rico!'



Reuters/Alvin Baez

May 1 demonstration in San Juan, Puerto Rico, was larger than past years, fueled by U.S.-imposed Fiscal Board pushing colonial government attacks on jobs, wages and benefits.

## Oscar López will be free May 17! Welcome back!

The following statement by Osborne Hart, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York, was issued May 10. It has been submitted to the editors of the New York Post in answer to attacks the paper ran against Oscar López.

## SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

A week from today independence fighter Oscar López Rivera will walk out the door of his daughter's home in Puerto Rico, where the U.S. government has kept him under house arrest for the last few months. A few hours later he will join his first public dem-

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# Kurdish parties in Iraq plan referendum on independence

BY JIM BRADLEY

The recent decision by the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the two main political parties in Kurdistan, to hold a referendum on independence before the end of 2017 throughout the northern Iraq territory governed by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), is a step forward in the historic struggle of the Kurdish people for a national homeland. It impacts on the concurrent struggles of the Kurdish populations of Syria, Turkey and Iran.

The formation of the KRG was one

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## Washington pushes cuts on Puerto Rican people

BY SETH GALINSKY

Just days after approving measures to further slash the standard of living of working people in Puerto Rico, the government there filed for a form of bankruptcy May 3. The move puts on hold lawsuits over the government's inability to pay a \$74 billion debt to bondholders and \$49 billion owed to workers' pension funds.

It's an unusual bankruptcy because Puerto Rico is a U.S. colony. Under U.S. law, the colonial regime couldn't file the request without the approval of the Financial Oversight Board, appointed last year by Washington. The board has dictatorial power over all financial and budget decisions of the Puerto Rican government.

And when a U.S. judge orders the start of negotiations over "restructuring the debt," no representative of the Puerto Rican government will be at the table. Instead, Washington's fiscal board will "negotiate" in the name of

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Iran: Dozens of coal miners killed in methane explosion



# US, OAS press Venezuela, back anti-Maduro protests

BY PATRICIA MARSHALL

As weeks of opposition-led protests aimed at bringing down the government in Venezuela continue, Washington is increasing its pressure on President Nicolás Maduro.

The latest protests come in response to Maduro’s decision to set up a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. This has sparked a flurry of criticism from the White House and some Latin American governments, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Paraguay. They join the opposition in criticizing Maduro’s move to put off national elections.

In stark contrast, Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, secretary-general of the Cuban Workers Federation (CTC), reaffirmed revolutionary Cuba’s “unflinching support” to the fight for Venezuela’s sovereignty and independence during his speech to hundreds of thousands of Cubans in Havana on May Day to demonstrate support for their socialist revolution.

At the heart of Washington’s opposition to both Maduro and his predecessor, Hugo Chávez, has been their relations with the revolutionary government of Cuba. The U.S. rulers would like to replace Maduro with a more compliant government, and do so without provoking deeper economic breakdown and class conflict.

The street protests are led by pro-imperialist parties, organized in the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD). Many of their protests have been marked by violent clashes between opponents of

Maduro and government forces, with 36 killed so far. State buildings and enterprises have been attacked, gas tankers hijacked and businesses looted in a number of states.

Calls by opposition leaders for more democracy are not convincing for many workers who remember the role of those forces in the U.S.-backed failed coup against the Chávez government in 2002 and know they come from the same families that ruled Venezuela in dictatorial fashion for decades.

Nor do they address the devastating economic crisis bearing down on working people, who face widespread unemployment, runaway inflation, and scarcity of food, medicine and other basic goods.

### Workers face economic crisis

Conditions have been deteriorating for several years as the world capitalist economic crisis impacts Venezuela and the price of oil — which accounts for 95 percent of the country’s export earnings and has been used by both Chávez and Maduro to fund social programs — has dropped by half since 2014.

Steps have been taken to try to address food shortages and the spiraling price of goods. Local Provisioning and Production Committees have been set up that provide bags of subsidized food and other basic goods to nearly 6 million households. A wage increase — the third this year — of 60 percent was implemented May 1.

Since 2003 some 135,000 Cuban volunteers have provided health care in areas that previously had no clinics



AP photo/Ariana Cubillos

**Government supporters in Caracas, Venezuela, protest U.S., OAS interference March 28. Placard demands, Almagro, lackey of the yankees, get out of the OAS. Respect Venezuela!**

and have helped train 22,000 new health professionals. When the Barrio Adentro mission began, 57 percent of the population had no access to health care services, Dr. Roberto González Martín, head of the Cuban medical mission in Venezuela, told *Granma* April 16.

Cuban medical aid is much needed, with infant mortality, maternal mortality and cases of malaria, diphtheria and Zika all rising. According to the Pharmaceutical Federation of Venezuela, shortages of medicine reached 85 percent in 2016, seriously affecting the availability of hospital and specialist care.

Venezuela’s government is saddled with sizable debts to bondholders in the U.S., China and elsewhere, and puts timely payment as a first priority. In April \$2.2 billion was paid and a further \$3.5 billion is due later this year on a total debt of \$120 billion. The government has only \$10 billion left in its foreign currency reserves.

### Defend Venezuela’s sovereignty

Luis Almagro, secretary general of the Washington-backed Organization of American States, has spearheaded attacks on the Maduro government. On April 27 Maduro announced Venezuela would leave the OAS. Cuba’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its “support and solidarity to the people and government of Venezuela” on their decision to break with the pro-Washing-

ton group.

On May 2 Almagro claimed the calling of a constituent assembly in Venezuela was “a new coup d’état.” About half the representatives of the new assembly would be directly elected. It would include representatives of workers, farmers, youth and women’s organizations, CNN reported.

A bipartisan bill calling for more sanctions against Venezuela was introduced in the U.S. Senate May 3.

At the request of the Venezuelan government, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States met in El Salvador May 2. Addressing the representatives of the 26 countries in attendance, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla pointed to both the complicity of the OAS in U.S.-backed coups in the hemisphere and to the appeals for talks made by Pope Francis. He called for resumption of negotiations and a political solution in the framework of Venezuela’s national sovereignty.

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## THE MILITANT

### Amnesty for undocumented workers in US

*In cities and towns across the U.S. tens of thousands marched May 1 against deportations of undocumented immigrants. The ‘Militant’ reports on this fight and explains why the Socialist Workers Party calls for amnesty to help forge working-class unity.*



John Rothwell

Thousands join march against deportations in Grand Rapids, Michigan May 1.

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



# SWP drive wins new readers

**Continued from front page**  
raise \$112,000 for the paper’s operating expenses and to respond to special opportunities when breaking developments take place in the class struggle.  
The fund is lagging a little behind and needs a boost (see chart below).

Deborah Liatos reports from Los Angeles that discussions with her co-workers at a mattress factory after the May Day demonstrations have been lively. “As a result, one co-worker purchased an introductory \$5 subscription after our United Steelworkers union meeting,” Liatos said. Another, Cedric Wright, renewed for six months. He said he liked having a newspaper “with socialist ideas on what the workforce needs.”

“My father and my mother read it too,” he said.

From Australia, Linda Harris writes that Joanne Kuniansky, Communist League candidate for Canterbury-Bankstown Council in Sydney, and Patrick Brown from the Communist League in New Zealand joined up for door knocking in Sadleir, a suburb of Sydney. They met Rachel Proberts, a young mother who is studying at the university.

“I got involved in politics when I got angry when [former conservative Prime Minister] Tony Abbott got elected,” she said. “But I found I was too left wing for the Liberal Party or the Labor Party.”

“I am standing for the Communist League because no policies can change the crisis of capitalism. We need to build a revolutionary party of workers that fights independently to change the system itself,” Kuniansky responded.

Proberts was excited to get a *Militant* subscription and decided to buy all three of the Pathfinder books on special. She said she wanted to get back together with Kuniansky and other Communist

League members to talk more.  
The three books on special for \$5 each with a subscription are: *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* and *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record*, both by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, and *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters.

“We got a great response at the May Day rally in New York City,” John Studer said. “Brian Williams and I lugged a table and a big box of *Militants* and Pathfinder books to Foley Square and set up. We were joined by three people we’ve met at different activities, along with four party supporters, and campaigned in the crowd for over three hours.

“We sold three subscriptions, four books on special, four other titles, and 38 copies of the paper,” he said. “We ran into one woman, a doctor who spent time working alongside Cuban volunteer doctors fighting the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. She took one of us to an ATM machine where she got the money to buy a copy of *Zona Roja*, a book from Cuba on this effort, and made a donation to the Militant Fighting Fund.”

### Active Workers Conference

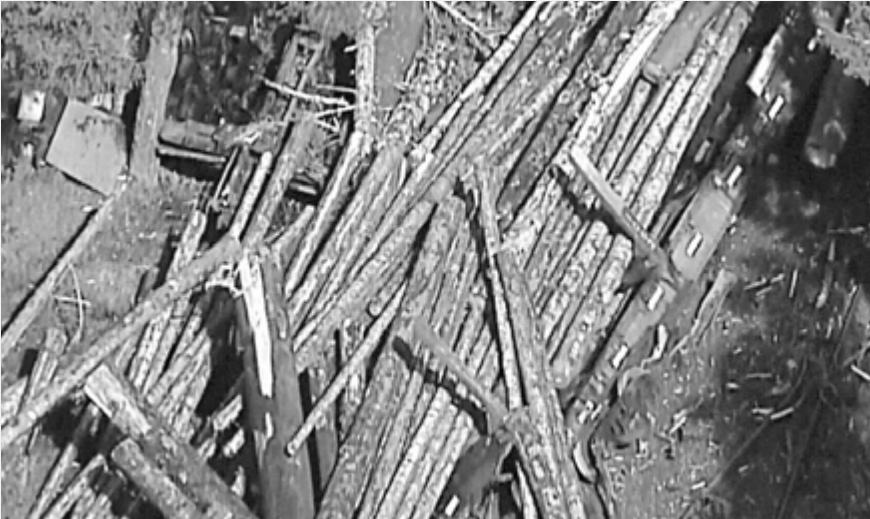
Party branches are inviting workers and youth who have joined in such activities to participate in the SWP-organized Active Workers Conference in Ohio June 15-17. Party leaders will give reports on developments in class politics worldwide, the place of the Cuban Revolution and upcoming party-building perspectives; classes will address questions of program; and participants will have the opportunity to exchange experiences.

Arlene Rubinstein reports that party members in Washington, D.C., have made several trips to Harrisonburg, Virginia, to bring solidarity to poultry workers involved in a United Food and Commercial Workers union-organizing fight at the Cargill turkey plant there and to work with them on *Militant* coverage.

“Talking to workers there we sold six subscriptions to the paper along with several campaign books and 16 copies of the *Militant*,” Rubinstein said.

Eric Simpson from Oakland, California, reports that SWP members went door to door in Hayward to discuss the

### Logging train derails in British Columbia, kills 3 workers



VANCOUVER ISLAND, British Columbia — On April 20, 10 rail cars loaded with logs broke free from cable in a reload yard near Woss, a village of under 200, and sped down the track, spilling the logs upon colliding with a track maintenance car where a crew was working. Jacob Dorino Galeazzi, Roland Gaudet, and Clem Reti were killed. Two other workers were injured.

It took about 60 loggers, firefighters, police and paramedics almost five hours to get the last man out from under the logs.

All the workers, members of United Steelworkers Local 1-1937, work for Western Forest Products. “We pass on our condolences to the families,” Brian Butler, USW local president, told the *Militant* April 26. “We believe it to be mechanical, not human error.”

Butler said there were two questions central to finding the cause: Why did the rail cars uncouple from the cable, and why did the train, which was diverted onto a safety derail track, go back onto the mainline and continue downhill?

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police announced no criminal charges will be laid. Investigations by the federal government’s Transportation Safety Board, the provincial WorkSafeBC, and a joint investigation by the company and union are ongoing.

In nearby Port McNeill workers expressed a variety of opinions on the deaths as the *Militant* talked with them on their doorsteps April 25. “I’ve worked in logging, fishing, mining for years — right about 50 years. All told, I’ve seen four fatalities and many near misses,” Don Labbey said. “You have to say how can this be prevented in the future.”

— KATY LEROUGETEL AND MARY MARTIN

impact of the May Day actions. They also discussed incidents in the area where conservative speakers had engagements shut down.

Jesus, a 15-year-old high school student, and his father, a construction worker, were interested in what SWP members had to say. “There’s a highly charged political atmosphere at my school,” Jesus said. “Many say that anything that goes against what they believe should be called ‘hate speech.’”

Simpson said attacks on the right to speak come back on the working class. “We are for civil discussion and political debate about what advances the interests of the working class,” he said.

Jesus said he wanted to learn more

about Simpson’s working-class perspective and purchased *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* His father got a subscription for the family.

Edwin Fruit reports that SWP members found interest in what they had to say participating in a union solidarity picnic by Steelworkers Local 5114 silver miners on strike at the Lucky Friday mine in Mullan, Idaho. In discussions with workers on their doorsteps in nearby Smelterville, four signed up for subscriptions and got Pathfinder books.

Contact the SWP branch nearest you listed on page 8 to join in the campaign, contribute to the fund, or to find out more about the Active Workers Conference.

<i>Militant Fighting Fund</i>			
April 1- May 23 (week 5)			
Country	Quota	Paid	%
UNITED STATES			
Albany	\$4,100	\$3,120	76%
Atlanta	\$10,725	\$6,709	63%
Chicago	\$11,850	\$2,583	22%
Denver	\$750	\$455	61%
Lincoln	\$350	\$294	84%
Los Angeles	\$8,450	\$5,431	64%
Miami	\$3,200	\$1,600	50%
New York	\$16,600	\$9,846	59%
Oakland	\$13,700	\$9,009	66%
Philadelphia	\$3,600	\$1,466	41%
Seattle	\$7,300	\$4,868	67%
Twin Cities	\$4,100	\$1,007	25%
Washington	\$7,350	\$2,708	37%
Total U.S.	\$92,075	\$49,096	53%
CANADA			
Montreal	\$5,100	\$4,060	80%
Vancouver	\$3,000	\$547	18%
Total Canada	\$8,100	\$4,607	57%
NEW ZEALAND	\$4,575	\$2,981	65%
AUSTRALIA	\$1,175	\$1,300	
UNITED KINGDOM			
London	\$2,450	\$1,270	52%
Manchester	\$925	\$490	53%
Total UK	\$3,375	\$1,760	52%
FRANCE	\$450	\$288	64%
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Total	\$109,750	\$60,432	54%
Should be	\$112,000	\$80,000	71%

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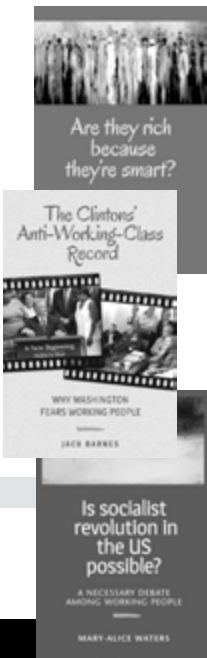
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To subscribe or purchase books at these prices, contact Socialist Workers Party or Communist League branches listed on page 8.



# Oscar López will be free on May 17, tour Puerto Rico, US

BY SETH GALINSKY

Nearly 36 years after he was imprisoned for his activities opposing U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico — serving more than 12 years in solitary confinement — independence fighter Oscar López Rivera will be free May 17.

López has said he intends to throw himself into the struggle to end U.S. colonial rule over Puerto Rico. He has often explained that the Cuban Revolution is “a beacon of hope and an example to emulate.”

The last three months he has been under house arrest in San Juan, denied the right to speak publicly. President Barack Obama commuted his sentence before leaving office in the face of a growing international campaign for López’s release.

“It’s the end of a long struggle,” Alejandro Molina told the *Militant* May 8, “and the beginning of new opportunities that are pregnant with possibility.” Molina is a spokesperson for the National Boricua Human Rights Network and has been centrally involved in the fight to free López.

López’s release comes just two weeks after May Day protests in Puerto Rico, Molina said, which focused on opposing the U.S.-imposed fiscal board’s dictates that have deepened cuts in pensions, slashed medical coverage and hiked prices of essential services.

López will be the main speaker at an afternoon rally and concert May 17 at the Plaza de la Convalecencia in the Río Piedras neighborhood of San Juan. The plaza is a short walk from the University of Puerto Rico where students are on strike, protesting massive cuts to the university budget.

The next day López will be in Chicago for a march and rally in Humboldt Park. López and his family moved to Chicago when he was 14, where he was drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Vietnam. Many in Chicago still remember López coming back politicized, fighting against job discrimination, police brutality and demanding independence for Puerto Rico.

On May 20 López will be back in Puerto Rico for a rally in San Sebastián, where he was born. On May 31 he will speak in Berkeley, California, along with his brother José López, director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago.

López will speak at a wide variety of events in New York City June 8-11. A highlight will be his participation in the Puerto Rican Day Parade there, where he is designated as a “National Freedom Hero.”

On June 19 he will speak at the annual United Nations hearing on decolonization of Puerto Rico.

There are cops, red baiters, opponents

of ending U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico and others who despise the fact that López will soon be free and speaking out. They are trying to whip up a counter-campaign to minimize the response he gets.

The May 7 *New York Post* featured an op-ed column attacking López. Headlined “Puerto Rican Day Parade Honors the Terrorists Who Killed My Dad,” it was written by Joseph Connor. His father was killed when a bomb exploded at the Fraunces Tavern in New York in January 1975. The Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), a group that demanded independence for the U.S. colony, took credit for the explosion.

What Connor does not mention is that López was never charged with participating in a single bombing or act of violence. The main charge against him was a frame-up charge of “seditious conspiracy.”

## Slander targets independence fight

The real target becomes clearer when Connor asserts that the Puerto Rican people are not “for independence from



Militant/Laura Anderson

**Puerto Rican feeder march of 200 at May Day march against deportations in Chicago. Contingent members, above, carry signs saying, “Breaking the chains of Puerto Rico’s debt.”**

America” because in 2012 “60 percent voted for statehood.” And he hates revolutionary Cuba, which he calls a “tyranny.” He says López has no interest in freedom for Puerto Ricans, but wants to place them in “subjugation in a Cuba-like state.”

“We should answer the slander cam-

paign by mobilizing to get as many people as possible to join the Oscar López contingent in the Puerto Rican Day Parade,” Molina said.

For more information on upcoming events with Oscar López, from Philadelphia to New England visit: <http://boricuahumanrights.org>.

# Washington pushes cuts on Puerto Rican people

Continued from front page

Puerto Rico.

Kowtowing to the board’s dictates, Gov. Ricardo Roselló signed the “Law to Carry out the Fiscal Plan” April 30, tearing up union contracts for public employees, cutting vacation and sick days, reducing overtime pay and gutting seniority rights.

“They’re undoing all the gains we have made since 1940,” Ángel Figueroa Jaramillo, president of the electrical workers union UTIER, told the *Militant* by phone May 5.

“They slashed our vacation days in half and cut double time pay for Sundays we had fought for and won. Now they’re only going to pay time and a half,” Figueroa Jaramillo said. “We accumulate sick days. They’re taking that all away.” In a separate move the junta ordered the government-run electrical utility to prepare to privatize energy generation as well as to cut pensions and other labor costs further.

The new law also “increased the charge for water, which had already been increased, and takes away many medical benefits. It increases driver license fees and adds 100 new taxes,” Frank Pizarro, secretary treasurer of the AFL-CIO affiliated FCT union federation, said by phone. “They are lowering our wages and benefits and increasing the cost of living at the same time.”

Already household electrical bills often reach hundreds of dollars, a gallon of milk costs \$6.25 and workers face an 11.5 percent sales tax.

## Blows to the working class

These measures come on top of more than a decade of devastating blows to the living conditions of working people on the island. Puerto Rico’s gross national product has contracted by 18 percent since 2006. Nearly one-quarter of the government workforce has been laid off and many pharmaceutical and other factories have closed down.

The island’s Department of Education announced May 5 the closure of 184

more public schools this year. Officials closed 150 schools from 2010 to 2015. Enrollment has dropped 42 percent in the past three decades as Puerto Ricans abandon the island for the United States to escape the economic and social devastation.

But the squeeze on the island’s workers hasn’t satisfied bondholders, who say that the \$800 million a year the fiscal board has approved toward payment on the debt is not enough. That’s far less than the \$3.5 billion a year the coupon clippers demand.

Many of the hedge funds had scooped up bonds at cut-rate prices as Puerto Rico’s economy was gutted. With the bankruptcy filing, the fight between creditors on who gets paid most and when will intensify.

## “The plebiscite is a farce”

In the midst of the crisis and protests against the fiscal board — including a strike, protests by tens of thousands on May 1 and a student strike at the University of Puerto Rico — Roselló advanced plans for a June 11 plebiscite “for the immediate decolonization of Puerto Rico.” Initially voters would have had two choices, either “Statehood” or “Free Association/Independence.” If the second option won, there would be a run-off between “Free Association” — often translated as “Commonwealth” — and “Independence.”

Most proponents of free association say that they want an “enhanced” relationship to give the island-nation more autonomy from Washington.

In another act of colonial arrogance, the U.S. Department of Justice rejected the wording on the ballot, claiming it would not “accurately reflect the current popular will of the people of Puerto Rico.” To meet Washington’s dictates, Roselló added a third option, “Current Territorial Status.”

In response, the National Hostosiano Independence Movement, the Puerto Rican Independence Party and the Popular Democratic Party are now calling

for a boycott of the plebiscite.

“The plebiscite was always an optical illusion,” said electrical union leader Figueroa Jaramillo. “It wasn’t even a binding vote.”

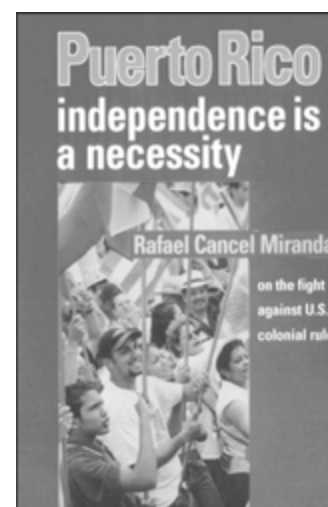
“I’ve never participated in a plebiscite,” longtime independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda told the *Militant*. “Independence isn’t something to be discussed, it’s to be respected. It’s our right. The plebiscite is a farce.”

Many unions and student groups are calling for the debt to be audited, but the colonial regime has refused.

“They don’t want it audited because they’re hiding something. The debt is not ours. They owe us, we don’t owe them,” said Cancel Miranda, pointing to the billions of dollars in profits that U.S. corporations have made in Puerto Rico.

“They’re sinking Puerto Rico,” he said. “The only alternative is independence.”

## Recommended reading



Rafael Cancel Miranda — one of five Puerto Rican Nationalists imprisoned by Washington for more than 25 years until 1979 — speaks out on brutal reality of U.S. colonial domination, campaign to free Puerto Rican political prisoners, example of Cuba’s socialist revolution. \$6

**pathfinderpress.com**

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### UNITED KINGDOM Manchester

**Reportback from May Day in Cuba.** Speaker: Hugo Wils, participant in Young Trade Unionists Brigade from U.K., member of Communist League. Fri., May 19, 7 p.m. Donation: £2.50. Room 301, Hilton House, 26-28 Hilton Street, M1 2EH. Tel.: (0161) 478-2496.



# Iran: Dozens of coal miners killed in methane explosion

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

A methane gas explosion at a coal mine in northeastern Iran May 3 killed at least 42 miners, with others still trapped underground. The blast occurred during shift change at the Zemestan-Yurt mine near the city of Azadshahr. The mine employs more than 500 workers.

“We complained a hundred times about safety issues,” one of the workers said in a May 4 YouTube interview. “They have created private companies and the nature of these employers is they only think of coal and money.” The mine is owned by private and state shareholders, including Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh.

According to Iran’s FARS news agency, 21 of the casualties were miners “who were outside and rushed to help trapped miners through a tunnel that collapsed.” Dozens of miners were trapped in two different sections of the mine, Pir-Hossein Kolivand, head of Iran’s Emergency Center, told the media. Dozens more were also injured in

the blast.

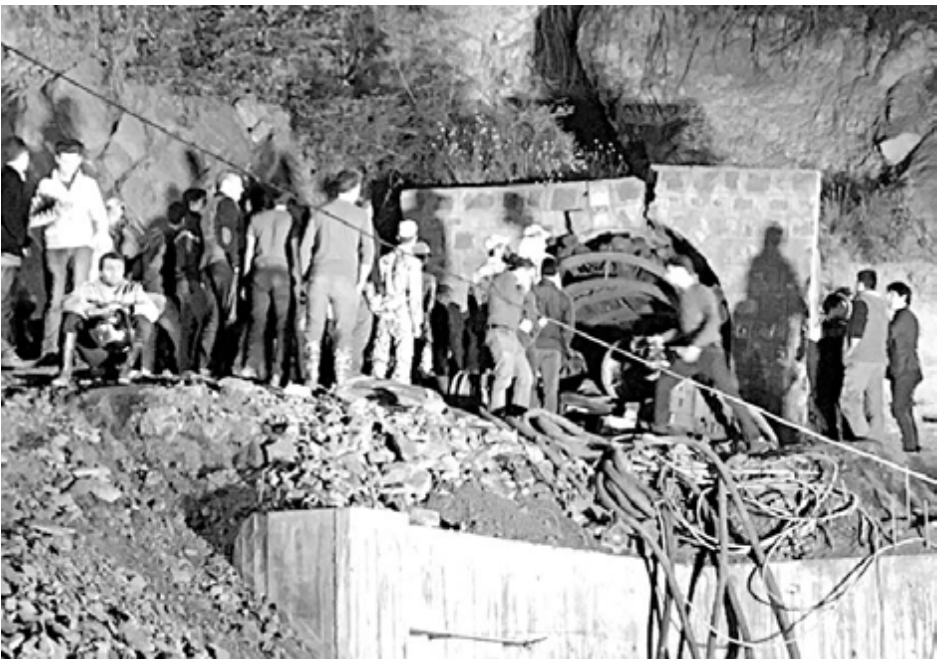
Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who is in a tight re-election race with conservative rival Ebrahim Raisi, visited the mine May 7 and spoke to miners and family members of those killed in the explosion there. The election is scheduled for May 19.

“Those responsible and anyone who had a fault in the incident must be found and dealt with accordingly, without any exceptions,” Rouhani told over 100 miners.

### ‘Why is there no safety at the mine?’

“Why is there no safety at the mine? Why does no one care?” a spokesman for the miners yelled at him, captured on video and posted on social media. “Last year we gathered in front of the governor’s office together with our wives because we were unpaid for 14 months. And you, the president, didn’t even notice.”

The miner said that workers at the mine earn the equivalent of \$265 a



Iranian Labour News Agency

Portal into Zemestan-Yurt mine in northeastern Iran where methane gas explosion killed at least 42 miners, trapped others underground. Miners protested lack of safety protection.

month.

“Can you live with that?” he told Rouhani. “Look at this mother with seven children. We have nothing to eat.”

Chanting “it’s a day of mourning for workers,” miners pounded on Rouhani’s car as he left the area.

Workers were trying to keep the miners alive by pumping air down to them,

while high levels of the methane gas in the area have slowed rescue efforts. Hamidreza Montazeri, deputy head of the provincial emergency services, told PressTV that 25 people involved in rescue operations had to be taken for treatment for gas inhalation.

The government said the mine would be shuttered for six months.

# Idaho silver miners’ strike over pensions, safety wins support

Continued from front page

tem based on seniority that miners say helps protect their safety.

“You are an outstanding example for all of labor by standing up to the attacks on your union by your employer at Hecla,” says a letter of solidarity brought to a May 2 miners’ picnic here by Mark Downs, a member of Seattle International Longshore and Warehouse Union Pensioners’ Club. “The demand for recall rights being reduced from three years to three months equals gutting seniority and safety. You work in a very dangerous industry that depends on a strong union for decent working conditions.” Downs presented the miners with a check from the ILWU pensioners for \$500.

Safety is a key issue in the strike, a number of miners told us at the union picnic. After several rock bursts at Hecla in 2011 killed Larry “Pete” Marek, Brandon Gray and severely injured seven others, the Mine Safety and Health Administration forced mine bosses to close down for a year to do repairs. Marek’s relatives and others injured in the blasts sued Hecla, saying management knew the mine was unsafe and knowingly placed workers in harm’s way. In the end, the pro-boss Idaho Supreme Court in 2016 ruled for the company.

“The company wants to take away from us the right to decide who works on which crews, no matter what your experience,” said Dwayne Campbell, who has worked at Lucky Friday for four and a half years. “Under the current system, we have the right to say who works where. We have to be able to put our trust in who we are working with and watch each other’s back.”

We visited a memorial not far from the now closed Sunshine mine near Kellogg, a few miles west of Mullan, where 91 miners perished in a fire on May 2, 1972. People told us they support the Lucky Friday miners against the company’s efforts to break their union.

Signs are up in stores and restaura-

rants in the area saying, “We support the Lucky Friday miners.” Members of the SWP visiting with workers on their doorsteps in area towns found little sympathy for the silver bosses.

### Support for strike grows

“As wives (or significant others) it is so important to support EVERYONE as the strike progresses,” Angela Thompson wrote in a letter published in the *Shoshone News-Press* entitled “Union Women, Unite.”

“Don’t let HECLA push the new contract on us. Don’t let HECLA think we, as women, are a weak link. Remember that there are parts of the ‘last, best, and final offer’ that could hinder safety, diminish our quality of living, diminish our healthcare options and take away from our quality family time,” she wrote.

Solidarity from other unions is

increasing. USW Local 12-591 oil workers from the Tesoro refinery in Anacortes, Washington, sent a check for \$3,000, and coal miners in USW Local 9346 at Teck Resources Ltd in British Columbia sent \$1,000.

Dan Coffman, former president of ILWU Local 21 in Longview, Wash., where longshoremen fought off a long and bitter lockout by Export Grain Terminal, also sent a letter of support.

“When I started looking into this strike, it became obvious to me that this is about ‘power and control,’ which many struggles are,” said Coffman’s “Open Letter to HECLA Management,” which was posted on the USW Local 5114 Facebook page. “I saw on your latest PR ad, ‘The safety and health of our employees and contractors is the top priority.’ Who knows better of the safety than the workers themselves? Workers that are

underground and risk their lives every day.”

Epler showed Downs and Mary Martin, the SWP candidate for mayor of Seattle, letters of solidarity posted on the bulletin board at the union hall, including a letter and photo from a group of union miners in Mexico. Also posted is a photo of Walmart workers in Federal Way, Washington, accompanied by a solidarity poem to the miners by Pat Scott, one of the workers.

“The solidarity has really been unbelievable,” Epler said. “Some of our newer members say they never expected such an outpouring of support for our fight from all over the place” The backing is important, he said, because they expect a long fight.

Donations and messages can be sent to USW 5114, P.O. Box 427, Mullan, ID 83846.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 22, 1992

MONTREAL — The second jury trial stemming from the 1990 confrontation between the Mohawk Indian people and the Quebec and Canadian governments will begin here May 11.

Joe Deom, a defendant from the Mohawk territory of Kahnawake, told reporters, “We expect the trial to be political. They are charging us as criminals, but we have only done what our conscience made us do.”

On July 11, 1990, the Quebec provincial police stormed a barricade that Mohawks had established at Kanesatake, Quebec, to prevent the extension of a local golf course on land claimed by them.

The police raid provoked an armed standoff at Kanesatake and Kahnawake, also near Montreal, that lasted 11 weeks. Three weeks into the standoff, the Canadian army was sent in.

A demonstration in solidarity has been called for the first day of the trial.



May 22, 1967

An enthusiastic and youthful crowd of 2,500 turned out to hear Muhammad Ali speak at an anti-war rally at the University of Chicago fieldhouse May 10. Ali told them that, “My intention is to box and win a clean fight — but in war the intention is to kill, kill, kill and continue killing innocent people.”

He said, “They say a prize fighter’s main goal is violence. There is a helluva lot of difference between fighting in the ring and going to war in Vietnam. Boxing is nothing like going to war with machine guns, bazookas, hand grenades and bomber airplanes.

“Right now, at this very moment, in Louisville, Ky.,” Ali said, “My people are being clobbered and stoned! Women beat up, kicked! For what? Just simply demanding the right to live in the neighborhood which they choose!

“And they turn around and send us to war!”



May 23, 1942

One recent day a Norwegian freighter entered the port of New Orleans. As the vessel was coming alongside, a group of Pinkerton guards appeared on the wharf. Their job was to see that no member of the 37-man Chinese crew left the ship. This has long been the practice whenever a ship with an Oriental crew enters a port of the United States.

The practice stems from the policy of American imperialism in its dealings with Oriental peoples. It is legalized in the Immigration Act of 1924 which barred Orientals from entering this country.

The fact that Washington, despite its tireless eulogies of the “brave Chinese nation,” continues to treat Chinese and other Orientals as coolies, is an indication of what is in store for the Asiatic people if, failing to win and hold their independence, they fall under the heel of dollar imperialism.

# Palestinian prisoners protest harsh conditions in Israeli jails

BY SETH GALINSKY

The hunger strike by more than 1,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails that began April 17 raises basic demands for dignity, respect and democratic rights working people around the world can identify with and support.

The hunger strikers' demands include access to public telephones to talk with relatives, twice a month family visits of more than 45 minutes per visit, permission to take photographs with their families, adequate health care, air conditioning and an end to solitary confinement.

There are roughly 6,500 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails, most from the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including more than 500 administrative detainees. Under administrative detention the Israeli military can hold people indefinitely on secret information without right to a trial.

The strike was initiated by Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, who has been in prison since 2002.

"This is not a campaign to free the prisoners, we're talking about improving their conditions," Khalida Jarrar, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and a prominent supporter of the hunger strike, told the *Militant* from Ramallah May 6. Jarrar spent 14 months in prison in Israel herself and was re-

leased in May 2016. She was first placed in administrative detention and later charged in a military court.

"In the women's prison we were allowed only two books a month," she said, and faced widespread overcrowding.

Israeli authorities only permit close relatives — parents, spouses and children — to visit, but often arbitrarily deny permits, Jarrar said. "Even if you have a permit when you reach the checkpoint between the West Bank and Israel," she said, "sometimes the guards confiscate it and you've lost your chance."

The worst conditions are when prisoners are transported for court hearings or medical treatment. "They would take us early in the morning in a special vehicle called a 'Bosta,'" Jarrar said. "It's like being transported in a metal box with very small cells, metal benches and your hands and legs are shackled."

You're kept in there for hours, she said sometimes from early in the morning to late at night.

So-called common prisoners, including Jewish Israelis, are housed in the same prisons, in separate wings. "They transport us in the same van, but in different compartments. We can't see each other, but they sometimes shout to us," said Jarrar. Thousands have demonstrated in the West Bank to back the hunger



ActiveStills/Faiz Abu Rmeleh

**April 29 protest in Jerusalem in support of Palestinian hunger strikers in Israeli jails. Prisoners demand end to solitary confinement, more family visits, better conditions.**

strike but support inside Israel has been limited.

The news media and government supporters "present the political prisoners as terrorists and murderers and make fun of the hunger strike," said Muna Haddad by phone May 9. Haddad is a lawyer with Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. "You don't hear clear voices from inside Israel saying that these are humane demands."

But the political line of many of the strikers is also an obstacle to winning broader support. In an April 17 op-ed column in the *New York Times*, Barghouti correctly points out that

"Israel has established a dual legal regime." Palestinians from the West Bank face Israeli military courts with different standards of proof and fewer rights for the accused. Palestinian citizens of Israel, like all Israeli citizens, for the most part face civilian courts.

But Barghouti weakens the case by claiming this is "judicial apartheid," linking the hunger strike to an international campaign that paints Israeli society as the same as South Africa under apartheid rule, qualitatively different than other capitalist countries.

This false argument by those calling for boycotting Israel gets in the way of common struggle against capitalist injustice by Palestinians and Israelis alike.

Some 20 percent of Israeli citizens are Palestinians, who face discrimination in jobs, housing and access to government services. They make up 43 percent of the prisoners jailed in the country.

At the same time, Jewish, Arab and foreign-born workers inside Israel are members of the same unions and have gone on strike together for higher wages and better work conditions. Many of the lawyers defending the hunger strikers are Palestinians who graduated from Israeli universities.

"The general prison population in Israel faces similar conditions — not enough family visits, lack of access to timely medical care, overcrowding, solitary confinement, deplorable conditions for transporting prisoners," Michael Mahpud, from People for Prisoners, said by phone from Israel May 9. "The whole prison system has to be changed."

These shared conditions show that openings exist for winning broader support for the hunger strikers' demands.

## Fight grows against Illinois prison censorship of 'Militant'

BY JOHN HAWKINS

CHICAGO — The six-month-long fight against censorship of the *Militant* at the 2,000-inmate Illinois River Correctional Center in Canton is winning new support. Prison authorities there denied a long-term subscriber three issues of the socialist newsweekly last fall.

Prison authorities claimed that each of the issues — which contain articles reporting on the *Militant's* fight against censorship at the Attica Correctional Facility in New York — is "detrimental to security, good order, rehabilitation, or discipline or it might facilitate criminal activity or be detrimental to mental health."

David Goldstein, the *Militant's* attorney, filed a Feb. 16 appeal, calling for reversal of the censorship. Despite numerous inquiries, nothing further has been heard from Illinois prison authorities. Goldstein is with the prominent New York civil liberties firm Rabinowitz, Boudin, Standard, Krinsky & Lieberman.

"As a clinical law professor whose work focuses on the First Amendment rights of prisoners, I write in opposition to the decision to censor the October 31, 2016, November 28, 2016, and December 12, 2016 Issues of the *Militant* at Illinois River Correctional Center," David M. Shapiro, clinical assistant professor of law at the Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, wrote to prison authorities. Shapiro is also director of appellate litigation of the Roderick and Solange MacArthur Justice Center. Prior to joining the faculty at Northwestern, he was a staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union National Prison Project.

"I have reviewed the articles that were identified as the basis of the censorship.

It is clear that none of them satisfy the standard for censorship of publications established by the Supreme Court," Shapiro said. "There is simply nothing here that would pose a risk to the good order of a prison in any way."

David Schweickart, professor of philosophy at Loyola University and author of several books on "Economic Democracy," wrote protesting the ban on the *Militant's* coverage of its fight against Attica's censorship "concerning the much-publicized rebellion at that prison forty-five years ago."

"I urge you to allow access to those back issues, and all subsequent issues, unless, of course, they can be shown to somehow constitute a serious threat to prison security, which 'the currently-censored issues surely do not,'" he said.

The prison system in Illinois is well known for its brutal and inhumane treatment of workers behind bars. But prisoners here recently won a small victory in court. The ACLU of Illinois announced May 1 that federal Judge Jorge Alonso had ruled that a legal challenge to another aspect of the brutality routinely meted out to workers behind bars — woefully inadequate health care that results in needless suffering and hundreds of untimely deaths — could move forward as a class action.

### No 'legitimate interest'

Among those adding their voice in support of inmates' right to read the *Militant* is noted civil rights attorney Flint Taylor. Taylor and his colleagues helped lead the legal and political effort to hold the Chicago Police Department, Cook County State's Attorney and FBI accountable for the 1969 shooting death of Black Panther Party leader Fred Hampton. He and his associates also played a

central role in bringing Chicago police torturer Jon Burge to justice and winning release of — and compensation for — the survivors of Burge's gang.

"I write as a long-time civil rights lawyer who has, with my law partners at the People's Law Office, litigated many significant prisoner rights cases for the past five decades," said Taylor. "My law partners and I strongly oppose the IDOC's [Illinois Department of Corrections] decision to censor the October 31, 2016, November 28, 2016, and December 12, 2016 Issues of *The Militant* newspaper at your prison and urge the IDOC to end its censorship of these issues."

"It is clear that the censored articles, as a matter of established First Amendment law, do not meet the standard for censorship of publications established by the U.S. Supreme Court," Taylor wrote. "There is no legitimate penological interest in denying access to these, or any other, issue of *The Militant*."

Michelle Howard, former staff member of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty and wife of Burge torture survivor Stanley Howard — who is still fighting for his release from prison — also wrote to support the *Militant's* effort to end censorship at the prison.

"I am deeply troubled by your decision to deny subscribers to *The Militant* at The Illinois River Correctional Center copies of the periodical," wrote Howard. "I urge you in the strongest possible terms to reverse your decision to censor this publication."

To send a statement of support or make a financial contribution to the *Militant's* fight against censorship, contact themilitant@mac.com or write the paper at 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

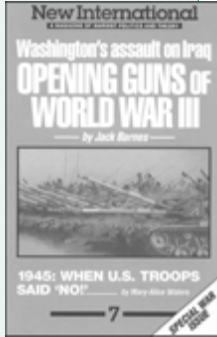
### Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq

by Jack Barnes  
In New International no. 7

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# Dallas cop fired, charged after cover up of killing unravels

BY TERRY EVANS

Former cop Roy Oliver has been charged with murder six days after he shot Jordan Edwards, 15, dead on April 29 in Balch Springs, a suburb of Dallas. An attempted cop cover up of the police killing quickly unraveled one day after the shooting, when Police Chief Jonathan Haber retracted the original description of the shooting and pressure grew for Oliver's prosecution.

Edwards, who is African-American, was killed as the car he was riding in headed away from a Saturday night party. Oliver alleged the car was being driven at him, a lie first repeated and then retracted by Haber, who then fired Oliver. Haber said he reviewed videos of the shooting and had to act. "Dallas County has not indicted a cop involved in a fatal shooting in over 40 years," Minister Dominique Alexander, president of the Next Generation Action Network, a Dallas civil rights group, told the *Militant* May 4. "Yet they pay out millions of dollars to the families of victims of cop killings."

NAACP President Cornell William Brooks attended an interfaith service in Balch Springs May 3, telling participants that if Oliver was not charged they should be "prepared for unrest in the most constructive sense of the word." The following night 300 people attended a vigil in Edwards' memory, sponsored by a wide range of area religious groups, Mothers Against Police Brutality and others.

The same week former cop Michael Slager pled guilty to depriving Walter Scott of his civil rights by killing him in North Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015. Authorities there saw no choice but to charge him after release of a graphic video taken by a bystander and given

to the family that showed Slager shoot Scott eight times in the back as he was running away. Daily protests, vigils and meetings took place demanding Slager be prosecuted.

Under the plea agreement, state murder charges against Slager will be dropped. Slager had gone to trial last December, but the case ended in a mistrial.

At the hearing, Slager took responsibility for the killing. He admitted he didn't shoot Scott in self-defense and there was no justification for his actions.

"Today is rare," Chris Stewart, attorney for the family of Alton Sterling, who was shot dead by cops in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, last July, told the press. "And hopefully this will be the blueprint of future successes for civil rights because it's got to change."

Ironically, the same day it was made public that the Justice Department declined to press charges against the cops who killed Sterling, despite video evidence of them holding him down and shooting him point blank.

Washington officials announced their decision to the press without having the decency to inform Stewart, Sterling's family or Baton Rouge authorities.

## Brigade participants learn about Cuban revolution



Militant/Willie Cotton

HAVANA — Over 300 people from 29 countries joined in the 12th May Day International Brigade to Cuba April 23 to May 8. Participants learned about the Cuban Revolution and the challenges facing workers and farmers there today, preparing to return home to fight more effectively against Washington's economic and political attacks on Cuba's socialist revolution and tell the U.S. rulers to get out of Guantánamo!

"I've never experienced anything like this," said Michael Tidmore during the march of hundreds of thousands in Revolution Square here May 1. Tidmore, from Chicago, was one of over 50 people from the U.S. who were part of the brigade, above, the first time a U.S. contingent has been in the annual brigade.

We visited museums and hospitals, heard political talks on the revolution, talked with leaders of mass organizations and people on the streets, attended an international solidarity conference and visited Playa Girón — site of the U.S.-organized invasion in April 1961, defeated in less than 72 hours by the mobilization of the Cuban people.

"The brigade was an empowering experience," said Jonathan Batres, from Los Angeles. "Cuba shows we can change the world."

— DAN FEIN

# Trump seeks to stem decline of US imperialism

Continued from front page

trations of both Barack Obama and George W. Bush, the White House has downgraded promotion of "human rights." Trump sees such policies as an obstacle to defense of Washington's economic interests.

Trump's decision to invite Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte for talks in Washington drew a howl of criticism from the liberal media and Democratic Party politicians, who focused on the Duterte government's involvement in the killing of thousands in his war on drugs. Administration officials defended the invitation as a move to get a U.S. ally back on board.

Duterte has tried to play Washington and Beijing off against each other to make space for Philippine capitalist interests. And he has scaled back joint military exercises and limited U.S. access to military bases, steps Washington would like to reverse.

Following his decision to scrap the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a move welcomed by Beijing, Trump met with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Among other topics, he sought collaboration in increasing pressure on the DPRK. In deference to Beijing, Washington has paused "freedom of navigation" exercises by the U.S. Navy around disputed areas in the South China Sea.

Beijing has stepped up pressure on Pyongyang to back off threatened nuclear tests. This led to an unusual public rebuke by the government's Korean Central News Agency, charging Beijing is "dancing to the tune of the U.S."

Trump has also put together the strongest foreign policy and military leadership team for the U.S. rulers in decades, based on a layer of experienced military brass and businessmen. He is moving to implement what he campaigned

for — a stronger military as a standing threat, combined with moves to forge alliances and increase trade to get results for the propertied rulers while minimizing shooting wars. The administration's missile attack on a Syrian military base had the same goal.

The Pentagon announced a plan to increase naval spending by \$8 billion in the Pacific region May 7. Beijing has sharply expanded its military in recent years, but it can't begin to match Washington's firepower.

As Washington seeks to hold onto its domination of the region, it confronts the Korean people's 70-year-long aspirations for reunification of their country. U.S. forces occupied Korea, trying to turn back a revolutionary struggle that spread across the peninsula and then waged a devastating war from 1950 to 1953. But Washington failed to roll back the overturn of capitalist property relations in the North and open the door to placing its military on the border of China.

North Korea has faced sanctions from Washington and the U.N. since its first nuclear test in 2006.

Seeking to mollify Beijing, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson made it clear April 28 that Washington has no interest in war in Korea. "We do not seek regime change, we do not seek an accelerated reunification of the peninsula," he said.

And Washington is considering further sanctions on North Korea that will continue to fall most harshly on working people, restricting money earned by North Koreans working abroad going back to the DPRK.

## Elections in South Korea

Washington will now face a new government in South Korea, ending nine years of conservative rule. Incoming

Democratic Party President Moon Jae-in favors collaboration with North Korea and rediscussing the deployment of Washington's Terminal High Altitude Area Defense anti-missile system, or THAAD, in South Korea.

However, Washington has been able to overcome shifts in emphasis by previous liberal governments and found ways to collaborate to pursue its interests.

The elections were held as workers in South Korea face carnage millions around the world know only too well: high levels of youth unemployment with more and more young people forced to stay with their parents; growing numbers of workers of all ages working temporary contract jobs; and low wages and mandatory workdays of 14 hours or more. South Korea's aging population has one of the world's highest rates of elderly poverty levels.

Because of the capitalist economic crisis bearing down on working people, youth in South Korea began calling themselves the "3 Give-Up Generation" — unable to date, marry or raise children. Today they say they face 5 Give-Ups, adding on the inability to get a permanent job or their own place to live.

Moon pledged to address these conditions.

## Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

by Jack Barnes

The 1959 Cuban Revolution had a worldwide impact. As the proletarian-based struggle for Black rights was advancing in the U.S., the social transformation fought for and won by

Cuban toilers set an example that socialist revolution is not only necessary — it can be made and defended. \$10



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Send contributions to the Militant, 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor  
New York, NY 10018



# Equatorial Guinea: The future being born in the present

Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa by Mary-Alice Waters and Martin Koppel is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for May. The selection is from the introduction by Waters, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and president of Pathfinder Press. Copyright © 2009 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

*Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa: Reports from Equatorial Guinea* is not an account of how centuries of colonial domination, the slave trade, and imperialist pillage have ravaged the peoples of Africa and plundered the natural resources of the continent. That history, in all its brutality and with all its consequences, has been lived by countless millions and documented thousands of times over.

The authors do not pretend to be experts on Equatorial Guinea, much less on the vast and richly diverse African continent. We do not cast the toiling people of central Africa as helpless victims. Nor do we call on our readers to join the chorus of wealthy rock stars and imperialist-funded NGOs weeping over Africa's misery.

Our focus is quite different. We spotlight the transformation of the instruments of production and the new



Militant/Martin Koppel

Contingent of oil workers employed by ExxonMobil march in Evinayong, Equatorial Guinea, Oct. 12, 2005, to celebrate the country's independence from Spain in 1968.

class relations emerging today in Equatorial Guinea. We look at the working class, drawn from the four corners of the earth, that is beginning to develop — in the same measure as a bourgeoisie is being formed, together with expanding layers of traders, middlemen, and professionals.

This is a book about the future being forged in the present. It is about the fight to make it a future that advances the interests of toiling humanity, different in all ways from the only past we have known. It is about the heightened expectations and the growing confidence, pride, consciousness, and combativity of the women and men who are themselves both agents and products of this ongoing transformation.

In 2005 and 2008, during two trips to Equatorial Guinea recorded in these pages, the authors and the reporting teams we were part of had the opportunity to see with our own eyes these accelerating changes, and to talk with hundreds of people whose lives are today deeply affected by them.

Equally important, those visits enabled us to see and record the living example of Cuba's socialist revolution, without which the road forward for working people in Africa, as elsewhere in the world, would be far more difficult to discern. The hand of proletarian solidarity extended by the more than 230 Cuban internationalists working in Equatorial Guinea as doctors, nurses, medical technicians, teachers, electricians, and others registers the kind of social relations — and human beings — that only a socialist revolution can

produce.

When spun together, these seemingly disparate threads — the beginning transformation of production and class relations in Equatorial Guinea, and the practical example of Cuba's socialist revolution — produce the rich and complex fabric from which the future not only of Africa but the rest of the world will be cut.



Barely fifteen years ago, it was confirmed that vast deposits of oil and natural gas lay beneath the continental shelf surrounding Equatorial Guinea. U.S. oil companies contracted with the government to exploit those resources, making the country the third-largest oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa today, trailing only Nigeria and Angola. In the blink of an eye, historically speaking, one of the most capital-intensive, technologically complex, and highly monopolized international industries has been superimposed on a foundation of labor productivity that was the product of thousands of years of hunting, fishing, and subsistence agriculture — and on largely precapitalist social relations distorted by centuries of colonial domination and inhuman trafficking by African and European slave traders to meet the labor demands of plantation owners in the Americas.

Royalties and other income from the exploitation of oil and natural gas are now being used in part by the government of Equatorial Guinea to begin to develop the basic infrastructure on which modern industry and rising la-

bor productivity depend: electrification, paved roads, modern deepwater ports, cell-phone and high-speed communications networks, safe water distribution and sewage disposal systems, primary health care and improved medical facilities, the establishment of a national university, a medical school, public libraries. And more.

As this process advances, to put it in the words of the Communist Manifesto, "all fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify."

The millennia-old social formations begin to dissolve as changing class relations emerge, full of glaring unevennesses, contradictions between old and new, and increasing class antagonisms.

What draws one's attention above all in Equatorial Guinea today is not the expanding exploitation of the country's natural resources, as striking as that is. Far more pervasive, and far more important historically, is the evidence that as the people of Equatorial Guinea are drawn inexorably into the world market — and as the legacy of colonial domination, which thwarted such a development for centuries, recedes — a modern capitalist class structure is emerging.

More than 160 years ago, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the young founders of the modern working-class movement, who gave voice to its line of march, charted the birth of capitalism in Europe with unmatched insight and eloquence, as they lived through its heady expansion across the globe. Capital comes into the world, Marx wrote, "dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and filth." The constant revolutionizing of the instruments of production that drives its never-ending search for profits is attained at the expense of the lives, limbs, and livelihoods of the class of propertyless laborers it creates.

Throughout each stage of class society, from slavery to feudalism to capitalism, Engels wrote, "every advance in production is at the same time a retrogression in the condition of the oppressed class, that is, of the great majority."

But Marx and Engels were the last to decry the tremendous advances in the productivity of social labor engendered by the rise of capitalism.

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# End US colonial rule in Puerto Rico!

## Continued from front page

onstration since he was sent to jail 36 years ago on frame-up charges of seditious conspiracy. And from there he will be speaking out against the island’s domination by U.S. imperialism as he tours the island and cities across the U.S.

This is a victory not just for the people of Puerto Rico but for working people in the U.S.

It comes as we are living through the carnage visited on working people by today’s slow-burning crisis of capitalism — a crisis like none of us have seen before. Increasingly the propertied ruling families fear working people as they sense that deeper struggles — *class struggle* — lie ahead.

Part of their reaction is to slander us as “deplorables” and “trash.” In response to López’s freedom and the boost it gives to workers’ struggles, the *New York Post* ran a scurrilous attack on him.

Washington’s Financial Oversight and Management Board, imposed on the island by the U.S. rulers, is using its dictatorial powers to squeeze every last drop of sweat and tears from working people in Puerto Rico to pay the “debt” to the hedge funds and capitalist families that hold the island’s bonds.

These measures helped make this year’s May Day protests in Puerto Rico the largest in many years. This bodes well for the fight against Washington’s assault on workers’ standard of living and the fight to throw off U.S. colonial domination — with Oscar at our side.

That is why the *Post*’s editors ran a May 7 hatchet job titled “Puerto Rican Day Parade Honors the Terrorists Who Killed My Dad.” The column by Joseph Connor recycles all the old slanders against Oscar, insinuating he was responsible for a bombing at the Fraunces Tavern in 1975, despite the fact that he was over 1,000 miles away and even U.S.

prosecutors — who never saw a frame-up they didn’t like — couldn’t fabricate bombing charges against him.

The author never mentions the U.S. colonial occupation of Puerto Rico nor independence struggles dating back to 1898.

The *Post* op-ed says that Lopez’s “vision of ‘freedom’ never involved freedom at all for Puerto Ricans but subjugation in a Cuba-like state.” Instead, Connor claims that the people of Puerto Rico don’t want independence and are happy the way they are under Washington’s boot.

The U.S. rulers’ can’t stand it that Oscar is unrepentant, he refuses to give up the fight for Puerto Rico’s independence. And that he has repeatedly pointed to the Cuban Revolution as an example the people of Puerto Rico should emulate.

Like workers in Puerto Rico, workers in the U.S. face deepening attacks on our wages and working conditions, health care and pensions, and seemingly endless imperialist wars abroad, as the bosses try to make us pay for the crisis of their capitalist system. And there are millions of Puerto Ricans living and struggling with us in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Orlando, and more. Our struggles here and in Puerto Rico are intertwined.

From the founding of the Socialist Workers Party, my party has stood for the immediate and unconditional independence of all Washington’s colonies.

Welcome home Oscar! We look forward to fighting shoulder to shoulder in defense of working people around the world.

We say: End U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico! Puerto Rico, U.S. — We fight together! Emulate the Cuban Revolution! *Independence isn’t granted, it must be fought for!*

# Kurdish parties in Iraq plan independence vote

## Continued from front page

of the unintended consequences of Washington’s 1991 and 2003 “regime change” wars against Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Over the last two years the peshmerga — the KRG’s army — has expanded the Kurdish government’s territory by 40 percent by driving back the reactionary Islamic State.

The 30 million Kurds in the Middle East are the largest nationality without a state. It was denied to them by the imperialist victors of World War I as they imposed arbitrary borders on the toilers.

The Iraqi rulers in Baghdad, along with the capitalist regimes in Ankara, Tehran and Damascus, have denounced the referendum. Washington says it defends Iraq’s “unity and territorial integrity.”

Ammar al-Hakim, leader of the National Alliance, the ruling Shiite coalition in the Iraqi government, said April 19 that Kurdish moves toward independence would unleash a “political tsunami” in the region, threatening to tear Iraq apart.

“The time is right for a Kurdish state,” said Masoud Barzani, president of the KRG, the *Rudaw* paper reported May 3. “Separation from Baghdad will never happen if the Kurdistan region waits for the international community to intervene.”

## Kurdish advances in Syria

As in Iraq, Kurds in northern Syria, who are led by the People’s Protection Units (YPG), have taken advantage of the political and military space opened up by the Syrian civil war to consolidate an autonomous Kurdish area in northeast Syria along the Syrian-Turkish border. They are fighting to link up with Kurds who control the Afrin area in the northwest to establish an autonomous contiguous Kurdish region.

Like the KRG’s peshmerga, which has an alliance with Washington in the monthslong battle to capture Mosul from Islamic State, YPG fighters have proven the most effective military force against IS in Syria. They lead the Syrian Democratic Forces and, with Washington’s backing, are fighting to take Raqqa, the self-proclaimed capital of Islamic State.

Ankara, which fears the YPG will inspire Kurds in Turkey, calls for Washington to break this alliance.

The Turkish government claims the YPG is a wing of the “terrorist” Kurdistan Workers Party in Turkey.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is scheduled to meet with Donald Trump in Washington this month. The dispute over the YPG is on the table.

Moscow and Tehran, supporters of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, and Ankara, which backs anti-Assad groups fighting in the civil war, agreed May 4 to implement and police so-called de-escalation zones in four parts of Syria. The plan, adopted at a conference in Astana, Kazakhstan, was presented as a road to a “political settlement.” Syrian opposition forces walked out when the agreement was announced.

Much remains uncertain. Russian Col. Gen. Sergei Rudskoi told the media May 5 that Washington’s warplanes would be barred from flying over the four zones. The Pentagon said they would continue to do so.

Meanwhile, the Assad government continues to carry out murderous attacks on opposition areas.

The civil war entered its seventh year in March. In 2011 the Assad regime brutally suppressed a wave of mass mobilizations demanding political rights and the fall of the government. Since then an estimated 400,000 Syrians have been killed, over half the population of the country has been driven from their homes and Islamic State emerged and seized power in sections of the country, establishing a reign of terror.

In September 2015 Moscow intervened militarily, seeking to reverse continuing losses suffered by the Assad regime. The Russian government was aided on the ground by Iranian forces and Hezbollah fighters from Lebanon. A turning point took place at the end of December last year when the regime captured Aleppo, Syria’s largest city.

Moscow and Damascus have been carrying out a cynically named “reconciliation” program, laying siege to towns and giving opposition militias and civilians the “choice” of surrendering or being killed. Moscow says over 1,000 of these deals have been signed.

After surrendering, opposition fighters and civilians are transported by Damascus to opposition-held Idlib province where they have been easy targets for Moscow and Damascus.

# ‘How will SWP deal with FEC ruling?’

## How can the SWP do it?

I read with interest the article by John Studer on the recent Federal Election Commission action ending the SWP’s exemption for campaign financial disclosure, including the statement by Alyson Kennedy that “the SWP will continue to actively engage in politics, including running candidates within the law and in ways that maximize protections for contributors and supporters.”

How will you do that?

*William Henckel*

*by email*

## John Studer answers

Thanks for your question, it’s a good one.

The Socialist Workers Party won exemption from having to report the names of contributors to its election campaigns in the 1970s, as the party waged a political fight — a fight that included a lawsuit in federal court against the FBI and other police agencies — that forced out evidence of systematic government spying and disruption over decades aimed at the SWP as well as unionists, Black rights fighters, abortion rights protesters and others.

As part of that political battle, we also won an exemption from federal election campaign disclosure laws. The SWP did so in the face of a campaign by the rulers, supported by liberal groups like Common Cause, to impose “election reform” laws in the name of “transparency,” seeking to rebuild trust in capitalist politics in the wake of mounting opposition to the Vietnam War and exposure of government cop operations, from “Watergate” to assassinations and attempted assassinations at home and abroad.

In fact these campaign “reform” laws were an attack on working people, placing obstacles in the way of independent working-class political action.

From the beginning, the rulers and their Federal Election Commission looked to the day when they could get rid of the Socialist Workers Party’s exemption, the only one the FEC ever granted. They saw it as a barrier to enforcing their anti-working-class “transparency” campaign.

The Socialist Workers Party opposes all these laws. To know what the SWP stands and fights for, all anyone needs to do is read its literature, including coverage of its activity and positions in the *Militant*. You don’t need to know that John Doe gave \$210 to support an SWP election campaign.

What’s more, one of the biggest problems workers face in breaking from the bosses’ two party system and taking the indispensable road of independent working-class political action is the bureaucratic paperwork thrown at them by government probers. The rulers have become past masters at using such red tape as a way to target, fine, and even jail union and other worker militants for alleged “violations.”

Most workers who support the SWP and its campaigns today want people to know about their support. They sign petitions to put us on the ballot, subscribe to the *Militant*, and tell co-workers and friends about the SWP.

Amid the carnage wreaked on working people by the employers and their government, more and more workers are looking for a political alternative to capitalist politics. There are unprecedented political opportunities for the SWP today.

We will run in elections aggressively, to get out our views and win new members. We’ll ask workers and others to give generously to our campaigns, so we can join struggles across the country and around the world and get the party’s program out as widely as possible.

Most contributions to a workers party like the SWP are well below the FEC’s \$200 limit, above which disclosure is required. But if somebody wants to give more than \$200 in a year — and we welcome such contributions — we’ll inform them and follow the law when we file our reports to the FEC.

And the Socialist Workers Party will continue to help lead the fight against attacks on the political rights of working people — including the SWP — by the bosses, the rulers’ political police and right-wing thugs.