

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Canada truckers stand firm
in face of order to end strike
— PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 78/NO. 13 APRIL 7, 2014

Get ready for 'Militant' drive to win new readers

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Militant supporters are gearing up for the spring international subscription and book sales campaign, taking the working-class paper to neighborhoods in city and countryside, on the job, to social protests and other political events.

They will be encouraging other readers of the socialist press to join them in these activities as they campaign to free the Cuban Five, back the fight for Ukrainian sovereignty and oppose Washington's economic sanctions and military threats against Russia.

Last week, New York *Militant* supporters took part in speaking engagements by representatives of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), who were in the city participating in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, March 10-21.

The FMC leaders spoke at a meeting in Brooklyn's Haitian community organized by Lakou New York and another at the National Black Theatre in Harlem. They also gave presentations at two classrooms at John Jay

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Moscow troops grab Crimea, US sanctions target workers

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

KIEV, Ukraine — Russian troops took over the last of 189 Ukrainian military bases in Crimea March 23 as part of their seizure of the peninsula and have taken up threatening positions along Ukraine's eastern border.

Meanwhile, the imperialist powers of America and Europe imposed financial

**Back Ukrainian
working people's fight
for sovereignty!**

Russian troops out!

**No to US, European
sanctions, threats
against Russia!**

sanctions, for which working people of Russia will bear the brunt. And Washington beefed up joint military maneuvers in the Black Sea with a number of former Soviet republics and other governments in central and eastern Europe.

Col. Yuli Mamchur, former head

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Miners in Ukraine discuss fight for sovereignty, rights

Coverage from coal region near Polish border



Militant/Dag Tirsén

"It's not true that people from my region don't support the struggle against Russian occupation," Xenia Kuznetsova, left, student from Donetsk in eastern Ukraine, told *Militant* correspondents Joanne Holowchak and Ned Dmytryshn, right, in Kiev's Maidan March 21.

BY JOHN STUDER

SOKAL, Ukraine — "While the trade unions themselves didn't play a central role in the Maidan, workers and unionists certainly did," former miner Yuriy Demkiv told the *Militant* March 23. The Maidan, Kiev's Independence Square, was the scene of bloody street battles with riot police leading up to the fall of the pro-Moscow government of President Viktor Yanukovych.

Militant worker-correspondents spoke with a number of miners and other working people during a couple days spent in and around this town of roughly 20,000 on the western border with Poland. The area is host to seven coal mines; a coal processing plant with 900 workers, the majority women; and a garment plant with a workforce of 800 that makes socks.

"What we have accomplished is

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Unionists locked out by Kellogg: 'We're fighting for all workers'



Militant/Susan Lamont

Workers locked out by Kellogg picket March 15 in Memphis, Tenn. From left: Roger Brown, Harrison Edrington, Christy Small, James Redden, Harold Phillips and Otha Phillips.

BY SUSAN LAMONT
AND DAVE FERGUSON

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Workers at Kellogg Company's cereal plant here continue to staff picket lines around-the-clock as they head into the sixth month of a lockout by the food-processing giant. The 226 members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Inter-

national Local 252G are fighting to prevent Kellogg bosses from dealing a blow to their union by hiring temporary, part-time workers at the plant — at \$6 an hour less and with fewer benefits and rights than employees working under the BCTGM contract.

"We're not only in this for ourselves," Marvin Rush, who has

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Atlanta art exhibit spurs interest in campaign to free Cuban Five

BY JANICE LYNN

ATLANTA — "I learned something new today and I want to make a presentation in my class to let them know about it," said Aries Brown, 20, a senior at Spelman, a historically

Black women's college here. Brown was among three dozen who came to the March 20 opening at the college of "I Will Die the Way I've Lived," an exhibit of paintings by Antonio Guerrero, one of five Cuban revolutionaries framed up and jailed by Washington.

Guerrero painted the collection of 15 watercolors last year — the 15th year of the Five's incarceration. Together they depict in vivid colors, and

Continued on page 4

Deaths in NY jail draw attention to reality of US capitalist 'justice'

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — The Feb. 15 death of Jerome Murdough, 56, has put the spotlight on conditions at Rikers Island prison complex here and the U.S. "justice" system.

Murdough was arrested for trespassing after cops saw him sleeping in a public housing stairwell on a cold night Feb. 7. The homeless man was sent to Rikers and placed in a mental-observation unit where he

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Rally marks 2nd anniversary of killing by cops in England

BY DAG TIRSÉN

MANCHESTER, England — Some 50 people gathered in the city center here March 2 for a vigil and rally on the second anniversary of the police killing of Anthony Grainger. Grainger was unarmed in his car in Culcheth village near Manchester when he was gunned down. The action was organized by the Justice4Grainger campaign.

“With the support of the government, they think they have the right to go out and kill,” said Carole Duggan, who spoke about the killing of her nephew Mark Duggan by cops in 2011.

The killing of Duggan triggered protests and riots in several cities. In January an inquest jury ruled Duggan’s killing as “lawful,” despite the established fact that he had no weapon at the time.

On Jan. 16, a few days after the Duggan ruling, the Manchester Crown Prosecution Service decided not to charge the cop who shot Grainger. Instead, it charged Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police Peter Fahy under the Health and Safety at Work Act for “failing to ensure that unnecessary risk to the suspects was avoided.” He will not have to appear in court and “does not share the criminal liability,” reported Salfordstar.com.

“Fahy won’t pay a thing and the money will go straight back to the same justice system,” said Wesley Ahmed, Grainger’s cousin, who chaired the rally.

Also speaking was Janet Alder, whose brother Christopher Alder, 37, was choked to death by cops in a Hull police detention center in 1998. An inquest jury in 2000 ruled the killing “un-

lawful,” but the five cops involved were acquitted on manslaughter charges two years later. In 2011 Hull city officials confirmed that the Alder family was given someone else’s body for burial. Participants were encouraged to attend an April 5 action in Hull to protest the police cover-up and killing of Alder.

“The killings by the police were not mistakes, not police departments out of control,” Pete Clifford from the Communist League told participants. “It is part of a system that criminalizes the working class. It goes hand in hand with the erosion of the legal aid system, moves toward limiting jury trials and plans for 100-year sentences.”

Caroline Bellamy contributed to this article.



Militant photos by Dag Tirsén
Above, Janet Alder speaks at March 2 rally in Manchester, England, on second anniversary of police killing of Anthony Grainger. Alder’s brother Christopher Alder was choked to death by cops while in police detention center in 1998. Inset, Carole Duggan speaks about killing of her nephew Mark Duggan by police in 2011.

Judge blocks Arkansas abortion ban after 12 weeks

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

A federal judge March 14 struck down an Arkansas law banning abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy — one of the most restrictive bills passed by state legislatures nationwide.

In her ruling, U.S. District Judge Susan Wright wrote that the law “impermissibly infringes a woman’s Fourteenth Amendment right to elect to terminate a pregnancy before viability.” The court, however, upheld the provision requiring a woman seeking an abortion to undergo an ultrasound and be informed in writing if a heartbeat was detected.

The Center for Reproductive Rights

and the American Civil Liberties Union filed a suit against the law in April 2013. The following month Judge Wright issued a temporary injunction against implementing the 12-week ban, a ruling that has now become permanent.

Supporters of abortion rights in North Dakota won a victory in their fight to keep the Red River Women’s Clinic in Fargo open, the only abortion clinic in the state. A 2013 law mandated doctors who perform abortions to obtain admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of the clinic, a requirement very difficult to meet for the three out-of-state doctors who perform abortions there.

Last month, Sanford Health, a Fargo and Sioux Falls, S.D.-based health system, provided the physicians at Red River Women’s Clinic with the required credential.

“While this settlement is good, we still need to overturn the law as it sets a precedent for anti-choice forces to keep pressing legislation in other states,” said Jen Hoy of Stand Up for Women North Dakota, in a phone interview from Fargo March 16.

The North Dakota law bans abortion when a fetal heartbeat is detect-

ed, which through use of an intrusive vaginal ultrasound can be as early as six weeks into a pregnancy. A federal judge has temporarily blocked this provision pending outcome of a legal challenge.

“The North Dakota law is unconstitutional,” said Hoy. While the heartbeat issue is being fought out, “there is already a 20-week ban in effect here, less than federal guidelines provide.”

In Texas, a law requiring admission privileges at nearby hospitals for doctors performing abortions at clinics has led to the closure of a number of clinics in working-class areas. Two more were closed March 6 — in McAllen, the last one in the Rio Grande Valley; and in Beaumont, the only site performing abortions between Houston and the Louisiana border.

In 2011, before these restrictions were passed by the state legislature, 44 clinics performed abortions in Texas; the number has now dropped to 24. It is expected to further decrease to six by September, when an additional regulation takes effect requiring clinics to perform abortions in “hospital-style operating rooms,” reported the *New York Times*.

THE MILITANT

Capitalist neglect puts life and limb in jeopardy

From the eight killed in an explosion from a gas main leak in New York City to the hundreds dead as a result of GM bosses’ refusal to fix known defects, the ‘Militant’ shows how the rulers’ profit drive puts the lives of working people last, especially in periods of capitalist crisis.

Reuters/Brendan McDermid
Gas explosion in East Harlem, N.Y., March 12 destroyed two buildings, killing eight.

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

The Militant April 7, 2014 3

Cuban Five exhibit

Continued from front page with creativity and humor, their first 17 months in jail at the Miami Federal Detention Center, the first six of which were spent in solitary confinement. What comes through is not only the routine prison practices designed to demoralize and break workers behind bars, but the fighting spirit and social solidarity that marked the Five's conduct under these conditions.

The exhibit will be on display in a traveled hallway on the Spelman campus through April 6.

"I wanted to generate interest in this case at Spelman and eventually in the city of Atlanta," said Spelman English professor Alma Jean Billingslea, who welcomed everyone to the opening reception and was part of the effort to bring the exhibit to the college. Exhibit sponsors included the English, World Languages and Literature, and History departments; Facilities Management and Services; and the Honors Program.

A timeline of events related to the government frame-up along with photos and information on each of the Five

was on display with the paintings.

Next to a photo and biography of Gerardo Hernández is his tribute to Nelson Mandela following Mandela's death last year and part of a 1991 speech Mandela gave in Havana recognizing the decisive role that Cuba's 1975-91 internationalist combat mission in Angola played in the final defeat of apartheid.

Also displayed is a description by Fernando González of his experience in Angola and part of an interview with René

González about his arrest and time in prison. Hernández, Fernando González and René González were among some 425,000 Cubans who volunteered to take part in the Angola mission.

Together with Labañino's photo was a message he sent to family and supporters of Troy Davis Sept. 23, 2011, two days after Davis was executed by the state of Georgia. For decades protests in Georgia and across the country demanded the release of Davis — an African-American who was framed for the 1989 killing of a policeman in Savannah — and used this fight to campaign against the death penalty.

"Learning about the Cuban Five, you also learn about others in the U.S. prison system and the conditions they face, about the use of solitary confinement, also used against immigrants who are detained for just crossing the border without proper documentation," said Bernardo Gómez, a founder of the Atlanta Network on Cuba. Gómez encouraged people to support the Pastors for Peace Friendshipment to Cuba, which will stop in Atlanta the first week in July.

"The Five are being punished because they were defending the sovereignty of Cuba, which has been under attack since the 1959 Revolution," said



Above, Opening of "I Will Die the Way I've Lived" watercolor exhibit by Antonio Guerrero, of Cuban Five, at Spelman College in Atlanta, March 20. English professor Alma Jean Billingslea, whose department was one of event's sponsors, is in forefront at left. Morehouse College student Casey Jones is at right. **Inset,** Spelman student Aries Brown picks up material on the Cuban Five to present to her class.



Militant/Cheryl Goertz

Militant/Janice Lynn

Showings of paintings by Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five

I Will Die the Way I've Lived



Exhibits

Atlanta

March 17-April 6

Spelman College, Cosby Building, 3rd Floor, in the Cloister. 350 Spelman Lane SW.

Chicago

March 21-April 13

Beverly Arts Center, 2407 W. 111th St. Tel.: (773) 445-3838. Exhibition schedule: Mon.-Fri., 9AM-9PM (closes at 5 p.m. if no evening event); Sat., 12PM-5PM.; Sun., 1-4PM.

New York

April 1-29

Opening program: Fri., April 4, 7PM, Bronx Library Center, 5th floor, 310 East Kingsbridge Road. Call (718) 579-4257 for exhibit hours and tours. Closing program, Fri., April 25, 5:30 p.m., Room C21 on concourse level.

San Francisco

May 4

Exhibit and reception: 2PM, San Francisco Public Library, Bayview Branch, 5075 Third Street.

Auckland, New Zealand

April 5-24

Opening program: Sat., April 5, 5-7PM. Artstation, 1 Ponsonby Road. Tel.: (09) 376-3221; (09) 303-1755. Exhibition schedule: Mon.-Fri., 9AM-5PM; Sat., 9AM-4PM.

Rachele Fruit of the Socialist Workers Party. "The fight to free them is part of the fight of the working class in the U.S. and around the world. When we fight for their release, we are fighting for ourselves." She encouraged participants to help build the "5 Days for the Cuban 5" in Washington, D.C., June 4-11.

Reactions to paintings

"The watercolors are very stirring," said Casey Jones, 21, a junior at nearby Morehouse College. "In one of the captions, Antonio Guerrero says, 'You don't control the light.' That short statement says a lot about the conditions in prison, about something as basic as being able to sleep and having your sleep constantly disrupted." Jones said he plans to help spread the word about the fight to free Hernández, Guerrero and Labañino, the three of the Cuban Five still in prison.

"I was moved by the resilient spirit that is evident in these paintings," said filmmaker Gayla Jamison. "It's an example of the resiliency of the Cuban people and their creativity."

"As a music major, I was very interested to see how art could be used to build a movement, to get people to look at an issue," remarked 20-year-old Spelman student Janae Bryant. "I was

amazed at how Antonio Guerrero did that with his paintings."

Several professors said they would like to integrate the paintings with their courses. Many stayed around for light refreshments, Cuban music and informal discussion about other possible venues for the exhibit in Atlanta.

Participants bought seven copies of *I Will Die the Way I've Lived*; four of *Voices From Prison: The Cuban Five*; and one each of *The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free*; *United States vs. the Cuban Five: A Judicial Cover-Up*; and *Hoping in Solitude*. One *Militant* subscription was also sold.

"This exhibit is a powerful reminder that even under the toughest adversity, no one can take away your joy," commented Bilal Asim, a young worker who came with his wife and infant child at the end of the evening.

Susan LaMont contributed to this article.

Who are the Cuban Five?



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

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

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

René González returned to Cuba in May 2013, halfway through his parole. Fernando González was released Feb. 27 and arrived in Cuba the next day.

Voices From Prison: The Cuban Five

The dignity and integrity of the Cuban Five has won them the respect of thousands around the world as well as fellow prisoners. Here three who have known them behind bars speak out. Also accounts of prison life and resistance by Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Elizabeth Palmeiro and Puerto Rican independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda. Also in Spanish.

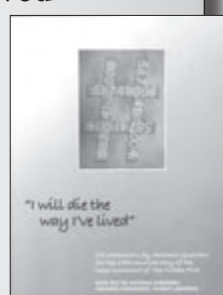
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'I Will Die the Way I've Lived'

Fifteen watercolors by Antonio Guerrero for the 15th anniversary of the imprisonment of the Cuban Five. With text by Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino. Also in Spanish.

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Strikers at Cambodia shoe factory win increase in pay



FTUWKC
More than 95 percent of workers at Wing Star Shoes in Kompong Speu, Cambodia, took part in strike March 14 -24.

BY EMMA JOHNSON

More than 5,000 workers at Taiwanese-owned Wing Star Shoes in Kompong Speu, about 50 miles west of Phnom Penh, went on strike March 14-24. Workers wrested some gains and returned without reprisals in what was the largest industrial action since a bloody government crackdown on nationwide garment strikes in January.

“More than 95 percent of the workers at the factory took part in the action,” Say Sokny, general secretary of the Free Trade Union, told the *Militant* by email March 22. FTU is one of four unions in the plant. “Members of all unions as well as nonunion workers joined in.”

Workers had 11 demands, including an increase in the monthly food and

transportation allowance from \$10 to \$15, an end to forced overtime, no pay cuts during strikes and removal of male security guards from outside the factory’s women’s restrooms.

Thousands of workers rallied outside the company gates on the mornings of March 17 and 18. Workers’ representatives walked out of negotiations March 18 after company officials refused to agree to the \$5 allowance raise.

The following day thousands of workers set up a two-hour roadblock outside the factory, shutting down National Road 3. On March 21, a provincial court called on workers to return to their jobs. Workers responded by organizing another rally of thousands outside the factory.

On March 24, workers ended the strike after bosses agreed to increase the monthly allowance by \$2 and not cut pay during the walkout.

“This is a small solution, but our workers agreed to accept this agreement, and we will continue to negotiate for the rest of the demands,” Phorn Phal, deputy secretary-general of the Free Trade Union, told *Cambodia Daily* March 25.

Kellogg unionists: ‘We’re fighting for all workers’

Continued from front page

worked as a mechanic at the plant for seven years, told the *Militant*. “We’re fighting for all workers. When you’re in a fight, you have to realize that’s what it is — a fight.” Like a growing number of Local 252G members, Rush recently got another job while continuing to be part of the fight.

The locked-out workers recently established the Coalition for Organizational Protection of People and Equal Rights to involve other unions, churches, civil rights groups, community organizations and a few elected officials. The coalition organized a “Unity in the Community” meeting March 15 at the sanitation workers’ union hall. It drew some 75 people, including several dozen locked-out BCTGM members; representatives of the United Auto Workers, Teamsters and United Food and Commercial Workers; the NAACP; Southern Christian Leadership Conference; area ministers; and others.

“Kellogg’s decided to make an example of the Memphis BCTGM members for the rest of their plants in this country and around the world,” Bill Lucy, retired president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, told the gathering. “‘It’s only 220 workers,’ they thought. ‘No one will care.’ But people in Memphis do care about Local 252G.”

“Having more people behind us puts us in a stronger position,” Bubba Harbin, a mechanic who has worked at Kellogg for 38 years, told the *Militant* after the program. “And getting our fight known is super for us.”

The Congressional Black Caucus and National Football League Players Association recently sent letters to Kellogg’s CEO John Bryant urging an

end to the lockout.

A few locked-out union members have lost their homes or cars in recent months, said Local 252G President Kevin Bradshaw. “And many more are threatened with such losses.” Harold Phillips, a maintenance worker with 23 years at the plant, said his daughter might have to leave college.

Eight local members have decided to retire, as a way to restart health insurance, which the company cut off the day they locked out the workers. “Our medical plan at this point is to stay out

SF rally protests Russian occupation of Crimea



Militant/Carole Lesnick

SAN FRANCISCO — More than 200 people rallied in downtown here March 23 to protest the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine by Moscow and to support the struggle against Russian domination.

Participating in the rally was Olga Ryzhko, who was visiting from Kiev. She was part of a strike at a video game company in support of the Maidan demonstrations in Kiev. She and her husband helped by bringing food and clothes to protesters. “It was the attack on the students in November that got us involved,” Ryzhko said. “The students were beaten just because they wanted to spend the night in the square. In the next days over a million people were protesting. The entire nation was saying, we don’t want this.”

— BETSEY STONE

While Cambodian garment production has been expanding, wages in the industry dropped 22 percent in real terms between 2001 and 2011. Between 2010 and 2012, the number of strikes in Cambodia increased by nearly 170 percent.

Garment workers won a raise from \$50 to \$60 a month in 2010 and another

\$20 in May 2013. On Dec. 25, hundreds of thousands began a nationwide strike in response to the government’s decision to raise the monthly minimum wage to \$100, far short of the workers’ demand for \$160. Protests and strike actions subsided after riot cops and soldiers opened fire on demonstrators, killing five workers and injuring dozens. Twenty-one participants in the strike are still in prison.

of the rain,” said Mike James, who works in Kellogg’s warehouse.

The company is operating the plant with scabs and supervisory personnel.

“For a long time, the company tried to project a ‘we are family’ image,” said Harrison Edrington, as he walked the picket line March 15. “What they should say is ‘we are dollars.’”

Contributions can be made payable to “Local 252G Hardship” and sent to BCTGM Local 252G, 3035 Directors Row, Building A #1310, Memphis, TN 38131-0417.



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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 7, 1989

Exxon’s tanker operations off the Alaska coast were an environmental disaster waiting to happen. And on March 24, when a giant oil spill took place, it did.

As recently as a month ago Exxon and other companies that own the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline assured concerned fishers and environmentalists they had a cleanup plan that could contain a major spill within five hours of a rupture.

More than 11 million gallons of crude oil have already poured into southern Alaskan waters, and there is the continuing danger that the reef-stranded *Exxon Valdez* may break up completely.

Exxon officials, and the media, were quick to try to pin the blame on the crew. Four days after the spill, an Exxon official admitted that with the equipment available, it was impossible to contain it.



April 6, 1964

One of the lies spread in the U.S. about the Cuban Revolution is that the Castro government has suppressed freedom of religion. The latest refutation of the lie is contained in a dispatch from Havana by Juan de Onis to the March 29 *New York Times*. It reads in part:

“HAVANA, March 28 — Roman Catholic Churches have been thronged since Thursday. The Ministry of Labor declared a two-day holiday out of respect for traditions and the principle of the religious idea.

“At the Jewish Community Center, a Passover supper was served last night for 200 persons from the four congregations in Havana. Food is tightly rationed in Cuba, but the government ordered special quotas of chickens, eggs and cooking oil so that all Jews might celebrate Passover.”



April 4, 1939

When the Generals and the bosses sit down together to lay plans for another war to save “democracy” and prepare to protect the financial interests of America’s “60 Families” in Europe or South America or the Far East, they immediately take stock of the available cannon-fodder.

Without large numbers of men and boys who will bear the brunt of the fighting, to receive the bayonets through their stomachs and fill their lungs with poison gas, a war could not be successful.

And the 15,000,000 unemployed workers and youth of America have not been overlooked — in fact they are already the very first consideration in the plans to throw this country into another world slaughter.

The entire relief and W.P.A. administration is now in the hands of the Army.

Rally backs hunger strikers at immigration jail in Wash.



Militant/John Naubert

Rally outside detention center in Tacoma, Wash., March 11 in solidarity with hunger strikers.

BY EDWIN FRUIT

TACOMA, Wash. — Some 250 people rallied outside the Northwest Detention Center here March 11 to support hunger strikers inside. The protesters chanted “You are not alone” and “Out of the shadows into the streets!”

The prison is privately owned by GEO Group, Inc., and under contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement to house immigrants pending deportation.

Prisoners’ handwritten list of demands was presented at the action. It included, “halt deportations, bond so we can fight our cases at home with our children; no deportations for parents or spouses of citizens”; and “faster resolution” of immigration cases. They also demanded better food, an end to abusive treatment, more than \$1 a day pay for prison work and lower commissary prices.

Maru Villalpando, founder of Latino Advocacy, said protests last month blocked a bus and two vans of immigrants being deported from leaving the facility.

Some 750 of the 1,300 inmates refused food beginning March 7, according to a statement from immigration officials.

“It’s time to tell the world what’s happening here,” German Ruvalcaba, 36, a construction worker from Mexico, told the *Militant*. He spent 18 months at the jail after being picked up for a speeding ticket. His case is pending. “Inside we were always in struggle, but finally there is enough support inside and outside to have a hunger strike.”

“I told my children I would come here today to support all the hunger strikers,” said Maria, a fast-food worker whose husband is among the strikers.

“We are out here to add to the voice of those inside,” Nadia Bucio of El Comité Pro Reforma y Justicia Social (Immigration Reform and Social Justice Committee), told the *Militant*. “We have seen deportations of 2 million under this president.”

Juan Jose Bocanegra of the May 1 Action Coalition in Seattle said prison authorities have threatened to force-feed those on hunger strike.

“I’m proud of my dad,” said Anthony Garcia, 19, a college student who had just visited his father inside. “It takes a lot of courage to do what he did. I think they are going to win something.”

“People in detention can’t wait any

longer,” said Sandy Restrepo, an attorney representing several hunger strikers. “They are human beings, not criminals, and they deserve better treatment.”

On March 15, supporters of the inmates held another rally outside the immigration jail. Three detainees were still on hunger strike by the ninth day, March 17. That day inmates at an immigration facility in Conroe, Texas, initiated a hunger strike.

Moscow grabs Crimea, US sanctions target workers

Continued from front page

of the last Ukrainian base in Crimea, had become a symbol of resistance to the Russian annexation for his refusal to evacuate the air force barracks. He was whisked into Russian custody after he and the troops under his command finally surrendered the Belbek base in face of overwhelming force.

“A uniform is not for sale. You cannot buy it. You cannot sell it,” Ukrainian Capt. Aleksandr Lantukh told reporters outside the base in Belbek a day after it was taken by Moscow, reported the *Washington Post*. Most of the troops on the base remained loyal to Ukraine.

But Ukraine’s interim Defense Minister Ihor Tenyukh, who resigned after Moscow snatched Crimea, said only about one-quarter of Ukrainian troops stationed throughout Crimea are expected to leave the peninsula and remain under Ukrainian command, with most of the rest joining the Russian military, reported McClatchy news service.

About 12 percent of the population in Crimea is Tatar, an oppressed nationality that has lived there for centuries. “Nearly 30 percent of Crimean Tatars voted in favor of reunification with Russia,” Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Temirgaliyev of the new pro-Moscow Crimean government announced March 18, two days after a rigged referendum there. Temirgaliyev also said Crimean Tatars will have to vacate part of their lands.

“Considering that only 0.54 percent of Tatars actually voted; it’s disingenuous to say that 30 percent supported Russia,” a reader commented online in response to Temirgaliyev’s statements as reported in the *Moscow Times*.

“My family is in Crimea and I am

NJ bakery workers fight firings after immigration audit



Militant/John Staggs

SWEDESBORO, N.J. — More than 50 people assembled outside the La Brea Bakery here March 17 to protest the recent firing of some 100 workers following a company audit of immigration records. Demonstrators read a letter to La Brea Bakery management demanding either reinstatement, severance pay or “some compensation for their years of service.”

La Brea Bakery, which employs about 250 workers on three shifts, conducted an internal review of I-9 employment authorization forms and fired anyone who couldn’t present the requested paperwork. Many of the fired workers have 10 or more years seniority.

“We were unjustly fired and weren’t given a chance to prepare for this step,” said Francisco Cuevas, who worked in the sanitation department.

Two years ago the plant, which bakes organic bread, was bought by Arytza, a giant international food corporation. Soon afterwards the company rolled back medical benefits, eliminated paid sick days and speeded up production.

Organizers of the protest included representatives from the Farmworker Support Committee.

— GEORGE CHALMERS AND JOHN STAGGS

very concerned,” Lenara Smedlyaeva, who works at a Tatar restaurant near the Maidan here, told the *Militant*.

“I try to visit my family every three months, but I don’t know if that is possible now,” said Smedlyaeva, who works with Crimea SOS, an organization of Crimeans in Kiev. Her grandmother was deported by the Russians during World War II, she said, when the Soviet government of Premier Joseph Stalin forcefully expelled the entire Tatar population from Crimea; nearly half did not survive the exodus.

“My grandmother was deported on May 18, 1944, to Perm in the Urals,” Smedlyaeva said. “She spent the next 45 years in the south of Russia working in the forests as a laborer, a very hard job. Our family was so glad when she returned to the Crimea in 1989.”

Top NATO commander Philip Breedlove described Russian military forces conducting maneuvers along Ukraine’s eastern border March 23 as “very, very sizable and very, very ready,” reported Reuters. Moscow has its eyes not only on eastern Ukraine, but Transnistria, which declared independence from Moldova in 1990 and lies some 300 miles from Ukraine’s eastern border. The speaker of parliament there has called for the province to be incorporated into Russia.

Interim Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk has called for decentralization of power in eastern Ukraine in an effort to blunt Russian designs and provocations there.

Donetsk Mayor Oleksandr Lukyanchenko is among many political figures in the east who support Yatsenyuk’s calls for greater regional powers while opposing any Moscow-engineered referendums for closer ties with Russia.

Washington has imposed sanctions on 20 individuals and a major bank in Russia. “Billions of dollars were wiped off the value of companies linked to some of Russia’s wealthiest oligarchs yesterday as the effect of U.S. sanctions on President Vladimir Putin’s ‘inner circle’ shook the country’s financial sector,” reported the *Financial Times*.

Russian Deputy Economy Minister Sergei Belyakov told a local business conference in Moscow March 24 that “the economic situation shows clear signs of a crisis.” The ruble is down 11 percent against the dollar this year.

Washington reinforced joint naval and air exercises in the Black Sea, adding at least a dozen F-16 fighters jets. The March 21-April 4 maneuvers, which had been planned since 2013, involve the militaries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, as well as Turkey, Belgium and NATO representatives.

Moscow has stepped up economic pressure on Ukraine, sealing the border to most trucks, raising prices of natural gas pumped in from Russia and shutting down a chocolate factory in southern Russia owned by Ukrainian capitalist Petro Poroshenko, who announced plans to run for president of Ukraine in the May 25 elections.

The government of Ukraine has requested \$15 billion in loans from the International Monetary Fund to maintain bond payments and stave off financial collapse. IMF officials are demanding Kiev slash 20 percent from its budget, cut energy subsidies, devalue its currency and take steps to squeeze higher “productivity” from the working class as conditions for the loan package.

Canada truckers stand firm in face of order to end strike

BY STEVE PENNER

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — After driving a tractor-trailer convoy from nearby Delta, hundreds of striking truckers rallied at Port Metro Vancouver March 21 to protest threats by the provincial government to enact a back-to-work order.

“Do they really think these threats are going to work?” asked Iqbal Grewal, a trucker for 15 years. “We have the right to strike and to protest,” he told the *Militant*.

Grewal, a nonunion trucker, pointed out that the British Columbia government has used back-to-work legislation in the past against striking teachers and health care workers, a number of whom were at the rally in solidarity with the truckers. Representatives from the B.C. Federation of Labour, telephone and electrical workers and several other unions also took part.

The strike by some 1,500 truckers has substantially reduced shipments from Canada’s largest port, which processes more than \$170 billion worth of goods each year. The majority of the truckers are of Punjabi descent.

Roughly 1,200 nonunion truckers affiliated with the United Truckers Association and about 250 union truckers organized by the Unifor-Vancouver Container Truckers’ Association are part of the fight. About 60 percent of Unifor members are also members of the United Truckers Association, according to UTA representative Manny Dhillon. There are owner-operators and truckers who drive company-owned rigs in both organizations.

The nonunion truckers walked off the job Feb. 26. Union members joined the strike March 10. “In this day and age a lot of people think of themselves first,”

said Charlie Mann, a former dispatcher who has been a trucker for less than a year. “Here union and nonunion are united. It makes us very strong.”

“It’s impossible to live on what we make,” said Mann. “This is because of low container rates, unpaid waiting times and rising costs for fuel, insurance, maintenance and fees, all of which we pay for ourselves.”

“Rates, licensing, wait times, any concerns truckers have will only take place once truckers go back to work,” said Transportation Minister Todd Stone prior to the March 21 rally.

Courts have already imposed injunctions against picketing at the port and at CN Railway’s container yards. The government introduced back-to-work legislation March 24. If passed, it would impose \$10,000 daily fines



Militant/Dan Grant

Striking union and nonunion truckers rally March 21 at port in Vancouver, British Columbia. Walkout of 1,500 has greatly slowed down shipments at Canada’s largest port.

on the union for as long as the strike continues and \$400 on each striker. Meanwhile, Port Metro Vancouver authorities announced they have begun suspending licenses and permits of striking truckers.

Vancouver Port Authority officials say that as many as 40 percent of truck-

ers are returning to work under the threats. But truckers’ representatives say the claims are exaggerated.

“We are not going back to work,” said Raj Dhami, a nonunion trucker. “We are staying on the picket lines.”

Mike Barker contributed to this article.

Deaths, abuse at Rikers Island jail in NYC

Continued from front page

was supposed to be checked every 15 minutes. But temperatures in the cell reached at least 100 degrees. “He basically baked to death,” one official said. Prison authorities say heaters malfunctioned.

Overheated cells are common in the prison, Joaquan Smalls told the *Militant* outside the prison March 23. “A lot of times the cells were so hot my throat dried up,” said Smalls, 21, who was released from Rikers a few weeks ago after charges against him were dismissed.

Three Rikers guards were indicted March 7 for assaulting Carl Williams a year ago and then covering it up after Williams cursed at them for confiscating a bag of food.

On March 24 former Captain Terrence Pendergrass was arrested on charges that he deliberately let inmate Jason Echevarria die after Echevarria, who had psychological problems, ingested cleaning powder. When guards reported that Echevarria required medical attention, Pendergrass replied that he didn’t want to be bothered unless the guards needed help with extracting the inmate from his cell or if there was a dead body, according to the *Daily News*.

While such incidents have recently gotten some media attention, abuse by prison authorities is a daily occurrence, Smalls said. “I’ve seen guards punch prisoners in the face just for talking back. Sometimes prisoners fight back.”

Rikers Island is one of the largest jail complexes in the U.S., with a daily population of nearly 12,000, most of them awaiting a verdict or sentencing. According to the *New York Times*, the use of force by guards there has jumped nearly 240 percent over the last decade.

The proportion of prisoners at Rikers diagnosed with mental illness has doubled to 40 percent in the last eight years, the *Times* said. According to the Huffington Post, state governments cut spending on mental health by \$4.35 billion from 2009 to 2012.

Between 1972 and 2000 the imprisonment rate in the U.S. increased fivefold. Capitalist politicians, Democrats and Republican alike, strove to outdo each other with demagogic calls for more convictions and stiffer sentences. The “war on drugs” that began in the 1970s, mandatory minimum sentencing, three strikes and you’re out laws of the 1980s and ’90s and what the *Times* calls placing “the justice system almost entirely in the hands of prosecutors” all played a role in the skyrocketing numbers of workers behind bars. By the end of 2010, 3 percent of Black men were in prison.

A hunger strike by 30,000 prisoners in California last year against solitary confinement and other abuses won public attention and sympathy. And the consequences of unprecedented rates of incarceration and the blatant character of the justice system’s

frame-up mill have become a growing social, political and economic problem in the eyes of layers in the U.S. ruling class, spawning books, reports, articles and public debate.

Political problem for U.S. rulers

In the U.S. “the criminal-justice system is a gigantic and ravenous monster that convicts 99.5% of the accused, 97% without trial, because of the corrupt operation of the plea-bargain system,” conservative columnist Conrad Black wrote March 19. “In other civilized countries, defendants do win sometimes, up to nearly 40% of cases in Canada and rather more than that in Britain.” Workers who go to trial in the U.S. for drug cases get sentences three times longer than those who accept a plea bargain.

“My cousin was accused of selling drugs and assault on an officer,” said José, who asked that his last name not be used, while waiting for the bus after visiting hours at Rikers March 23. “But it’s not true.”

“They keep pressuring him to sign a paper to say he’s guilty. They say if he doesn’t sign he’ll be here at least until June because the judge is going on vacation. He’s a permanent resident and they tell him he’s going to have problems with the immigration authorities. The public defenders are not good either. They keep pressuring him to sign too.”

“You’re supposed to be innocent until proven guilty,” said Sabrina Cruz, a subway conductor, during a trip back from Rikers to visit her son, “but they treat the inmates and those of us visiting them like we are animals.”

In 2010 Congress revised drug laws, reducing the disparity in sentencing crack cocaine-related crimes compared to those involving powder cocaine from 100-1 to 18-1. Attorney General Eric Holder recently endorsed shortening the average sentence for drug dealers by a year.

The per capita rate of prisoners peaked in 2007 and has declined since, but is still the highest in the world. Today there are more than 2.4 million in prisons and jails, with 7 million more on probation or parole.

Lea Sherman contributed to this article.

Leader of Egyptian farmers’ group fights gov’t frame-up

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN

ATHENS, Greece — Karam Saber, president of the Land Center for Human Rights based in Cairo, was convicted March 11 in Beni Suef, Egypt, and sentenced to five years imprisonment. The verdict was based on an article in the constitution that makes it a crime to “promote sedition or contempt of heavenly religions or harm national unity.” He is free for now, pending appeal.

“The charge against me was filed on April 12, 2011, by individuals who are close to the Muslim Brotherhood,” Saber said in a March 14 phone interview. “The General Prosecutor pursued the charge, which claims my 2010 novel *Where Is God?* was in violation of the constitution. The novel was declared as being against religion both by the Christian diocese of Beni Suef and officials of the Al-Azhar Mosque.”

In May 2013, one month before the Muslim Brotherhood government of President Mohammed Morsi was overthrown, “the police violated the premises of the Land Center in Cairo and tried to take me into custody,” said Saber. “I refused to go and called upon lawyers and others to come to our defense,

which many did.”

“These charges are an attack on the Land Center and its activities on behalf of small farmers and fishermen for the past 15 years,” said Saber. “We have helped organize 30 farmers’ unions and 10 unions of fishermen. We have been part of farmers’ fights for land; we have encouraged cooperative farming and fought against farm debts.

The fight against Saber’s frame-up has received support from prominent Egyptian authors, including Bahaa Taher and Ibrahim Abdel Meguid; the Lawyers’ Union; and dozens of unions. The Commission of Story Writers, which is affiliated with the government Ministry of Culture, condemned the ruling, saying “the constitution states that the state must protect the freedom of expression and must prevent actions aimed at artists or their work.”

Letters of protest can be addressed to the President of the Republic of Egypt, Federal Palace Heliopolis, Cairo; to the Prime Minister at Al-Kasr Al-Ainy Building, Council of Ministers, Cairo; and to the Attorney General, July 62 Street, Supreme Court, Cairo. Copies should be sent to the Land Center for Human Rights at lchr@lchr-eg.org

Lessons of Russian, Cuban revolutions show how to fight and win

The following Books of the Month excerpt is from *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* by Mary-Alice Waters, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and president of Pathfinder Press. The selection is from a presentation by Waters at the 2007 Venezuela International Book Fair in Caracas. Copyright © 2008 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Workers in the United States, wherever they were born, face the same class enemy, and determined struggles on any front tend to pull workers together in face of the attempts to divide us. That is what is beginning to happen.

The massive, national, Black-led march on Jena, Louisiana, two months ago by some 20,000 demonstrators — Black, white, Latino and more, native-born and immigrant — protesting the unjust treatment meted out by the courts to six Black teenagers in that town, is a good example of the ways in which the growing proletarian resistance in the United States has already been registered in the strengthening of a broader fighting vanguard. It was the first national action of its size and character in decades in the United States, and the march on Jena was undoubtedly nourished by the power of the recent May Day mobili-



Militant photos: Top, Jorge Lertora; bottom, Jacob Perasso

“Determined struggles on any front tend to pull workers together in face of attempts to divide us,” says Waters. **Top**, March in Chicago May 1, 2007, demanding end to deportations and other anti-immigrant measures. **Bottom**, Sept. 2007 protest against racist bigotry in Jena, La.

zations and related actions. ...

We learn from the traditions of struggle coming together from all parts of the world. As we fight shoulder to shoulder, it becomes harder for the bosses to pit “us” against “them.” It becomes more possible to see that our class interests are not the same as those of “our” bosses, “our” government, or “our” two parties.

As decades of deepening crises and intensifying class struggle open ahead of us, we have something else in our favor. The revolutionary potential of the great radicalization in the 1930s was squandered and diverted into support for capitalism’s “New Deal” and then its inevitable accompaniment, the “War Deal” — the imperialist slaughter of World War II.

It was the resources and attraction of a powerful bureaucratic social caste in the USSR camouflaging itself as a communist leadership on a world scale that made this possible. Today, however, that enormous political obstacle no longer stands across the road toward indepen-

dent working-class political action and revolutionary socialist leadership. Imperialism can no longer rely on it as enforcer of peaceful coexistence, of “spheres of influence” around the globe. And the most combative and courageous leaders of working-class battles, of national liberation movements, of radicalizing youth, will no longer be drawn toward that Stalinist negation of everything Marx and Engels and Lenin fought for, falsely believing it is communism.

The lessons of the Russian Revolution and the Communist International under Lenin will be sought after once again as new generations of vanguard fighters search for historical experiences from which they can learn not only how to fight but how to fight *to win*. That is why, as these battles politically deepen, the real history of the Cuban Revolution too will again be increasingly sought after.

Why has the Cuban Revolution followed a completely different course the last twenty years, salvaging and fortifying its socialist revolution, as the bureaucratic regimes of Eastern Europe

and the Soviet Union — which many falsely thought Cuba resembled — imploded?

How has it been possible for the Cuban people to hold at bay the most powerful empire history has ever known — or ever will know — for almost fifty years?

Why to this day, despite decades of struggle throughout the hemisphere, does Cuba remain the only free territory of the Americas?

To state that fact is not to diminish the importance of the space that has been conquered by the people of Venezuela these last years, nor the new ground still being taken in struggle. It simply registers the indisputable fact that what will be Venezuela’s January 1 [date marks victory of Cuban Revolution] lies ahead of us, not behind. ...

As the Cuban people have proven in practice, a better world is indeed possible. But in any radical or enduring manner, only through socialist revolution.

The stakes posed in the questions we are discussing here at this forum are immeasurable. We confront not only the destruction of the health, welfare, and environment of the earth and all toiling humanity — the destruction of land and labor, the wellsprings of all human progress and culture. Those are and will be the inevitable, devastating consequences of the workings of capitalism. The limits we can impose on those consequences are and can only be a by-product of our revolutionary struggle. And should we fail, we can be sure that we all ultimately face a future of nuclear devastation as well.

Every revolutionary struggle, anywhere in the world — not least important right here in Venezuela — is a vital piece of the international battle. But until power is taken from Washington’s hands by the workers and farmers, and Yankee imperialism is thus decisively disarmed, nothing lasting is settled.

That is why it is no small matter to answer: Yes, revolution is not only possible in the United States, it is coming. Yes, revolutionary struggles are on the agenda — but their outcome depends on us. Yes, fighting shoulder to shoulder with others determined to triumph along this course is the most meaningful life possible.

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April **BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

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Coal miners in Ukraine

Continued from front page

an important victory for the entire nation,” Demkiv said. “But we don’t trust the new government, or any of the political parties. We support the people staying in Maidan. Those in the Ministry of Energy and the Coal Industry today are the same people who served under Yanukovych.”

“But we don’t just need to change the faces,” he said. “We need to change the social and political policies, to get rid of the regime of bribery. We say freedom or death.”

As we talked in Demkiv’s apartment, the television was tuned to continual coverage of the Russian government’s seizure of Crimea and Moscow’s provocations in the east and south of the country, sections with the largest concentration of coal and steel production.

“Having understood that the people cannot be defeated even by force, Viktor Yanukovych and his associates fled, leaving the country devastated,” Mikhailo Volynets, chairman of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine, said in a March 11 statement on behalf of the nationwide Confederation of Free Trade Unions. “Ukraine was subjected to aggressive interventions by the Russian Federation.”

Unemployment and decreasing living standards “have worsened,” said Volynets, who opposes proposals from Washington and European Union governments for “policies of austerity.”

“This targeting of average people is unacceptable and counterproductive,” he said, all the more so in Ukraine, where “wages, pensions and other social payments are the lowest in Europe.” He called on unionists worldwide to support Ukrainian workers in their “struggle for peace for our country, its independence, integrity and the inviolability of its borders” and for “a decent level of life for Ukrainian workers.”

The economic and social crisis workers and farmers in Ukraine face has spurred their struggle to throw off Russian domination and open political space for discussion, debate and action.

In its coverage of a public protest by railroad workers in November, the confederation reported that there had been more than 331 workers’ actions from January through October 2013. In 43 percent of them workers were demanding unpaid wages from bosses or the government.

“We have not been paid since November,” said Olga Shkoropad at the union’s office in the Public Stakeholder Coal Company of Lviv, the coal enrichment plant here, where some 520 women make up the majority of the workforce. The company is 37 percent state-owned with the rest divided among individual

capitalists.

The plant supplies three power plants, Shkoropad said. After these were privatized in 2012, they began to import processed coal from eastern Ukraine, cutting back production in the west.

Workers believe Rinat Akhmetov, the richest man in Ukraine, who is reported to control half of the country’s coal, steel, iron ore and thermoelectricity industries, is among the plant’s controlling owners, Shkoropad said. Ukraine’s capitalist class is drawn from those who were well-positioned through ties to the government bureaucracy to claim ownership of state-owned industry and banking after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The Ukrainian Prosecutor General’s office reported March 22 that a search of an apartment owned by Eduard Stavytsky, former Minister of Energy and Coal Mines who fled with the fall of Yanukovych, contained \$4.8 million in U.S. cash, 110 pounds of gold bars and diamond, gold and platinum jewelry.

Workers fight for back pay

The union has been organizing actions near the coal enrichment plant and in Kiev demanding back pay, Shkoropad said. The plant produces 11 rail coaches of processed coal a day, down from 37 a couple years ago.

“We are also demanding the government keep the coal mines and processing plants open so that we can keep our jobs,” she said.

The potholed-filled road to the plant outside the city reflected the decay of infrastructure that runs alongside the road to capitalism here. “When I first saw people driving I thought they were drunk,” said Volodia, a cab driver. “Now I know what they were doing.”

“The mine equipment we have is decades behind modern technology,” said Yura Sheremeta, a 32-year-old miner who builds tunnels at the Chervonograd No. 2 coal mine. Some 1,500 work at the mine, 800 underground.

“We have low seams of coal, with miners on their hands and knees,” he said. “We put explosives into the coal face, set them off, and go in with shovels to fill up the trams and get the coal out. Nothing has changed under either of the last two regimes.” Sheremeta was referring to the rule of Yanukovych and his rival, former President Yulia Tymoshenko, who was jailed on charges of corruption. Representatives of Tymoshenko’s Fatherland party dominate the interim government now in power.

“There is no safety protection in the mine,” Sheremeta said. “Workers sign off on safety forms everyday, but it means nothing. One of my co-workers was killed in 2006, crushed



Militant/John Studer

Working people played central role in fight to oust Moscow-backed Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovych. Above, barricade on Instytutska Street in Kiev’s Independence Square. Inset, Berkut riot police water cannon truck destroyed by demonstrators during Feb. 18-20 battles.

to death by a shuttle coach.”

“The union officials did little in response,” he said. “Workers rely on themselves for safety, not on the union or mine managers.”

Profit drive kills miners

One hundred sixty-one coal miners in Ukraine were killed on the job in 2011, according to official reports, roughly two workers for every million tons produced. This is among the highest mining fatality rates in the world.

In July 2011, 28 miners were killed in an underground explosion at the Suchodilska-Shidna mine in the Luhansk region, southeast of Kiev. The law says that the trade union representing miners who are killed must be involved in the official investigation. Seven of the dead miners were members of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine, but none of the union’s representatives were allowed to take part.

Seven coal miners were killed last month in an underground methane explosion at the Pivnichna mine near Donetsk in the east, BBC reported.

“There were 300 mines in Ukraine in Soviet days,” Volynets said March 20 in the union’s Kiev office. “Today there are 143. Forty-three of those are private, and they are the richest mines with the biggest reserves. The others are the most dangerous with more deaths.”

“Our independent union was born out of big battles in 1989 and ’90, breaking from the old Soviet official union, fighting for pay they wouldn’t give us and higher wages,” he said. The union led a mass march of miners from every mining area in the country.

“One of the main problems we face today,” Volynets said, “is the

spread of illegal mines in the east.”

These mines, known as *kopanki*, reportedly produce some 10 percent of the country’s coal output. Kopanki miners work under dangerous conditions and receive no government benefits.

The illegal mines were born after the fall of the Soviet Union, when many state-owned mines and other industries closed and tens of thousands were thrown out of work. Today they are a big business. The coal, greased by corruption, flows onto the state coal market and is counted as production from state mines.

“My soul is with the people in the Maidan,” said Sheremeta. “I was deeply upset when I saw Russia take over Crimea without any fight. I was inspired by some of the soldiers who showed spirit and resistance. And I admire the Tatars who spoke out and protested against the invasion.”

“We are a sovereign nation,” he said. “We have spirit and we will continue to fight. If we don’t succeed this time, we will have another Maidan.”

“And I think there will be one in Russia too.”



Militant/John Studer

Squares and streets throughout Ukraine are named for Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861), national hero, poet and symbol of fight against Russian domination. Painting on wall behind his statue in Sokal depicts him in Che Guevara-style beret.



Militant/John Studer

Workers at Public Stakeholder Coal processing plant near Chervonograd, Ukraine, organized by Independent Trade Union of Miners have not been paid since November 2013.

Contribute to ‘Militant’ reporting team in Ukraine

As Moscow uses its troops to rip Crimea from Ukraine and maintain Russian domination of the country, worker-correspondents from the U.S., Canada and the United Kingdom are on the scene reporting on the conditions of life and range of views among workers, farmers, youth and others — and talking with them about workers’ struggles and efforts to build proletarian parties in the countries they are from.

The team is traveling across Ukraine, speaking to people of various national backgrounds and solidarizing with the fight to defend Ukrainian sovereignty. Help defray the substantial costs of this unique coverage. Send a check or money order to: The *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.