

THE MILITANT

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discussed at Havana book fair
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 79/NO. 10 MARCH 23, 2015

Nat'l oil workers strike for safety grows stronger



Marty Poche

Strike support rally in Texas City, Texas, March 6 near Marathon oil refinery. Solidarity for oil workers' fight for safety is expanding as first national walkout since 1980 stays solid.

BY JOHN HAYS

CATLETTSBURG, Ky. — “We were the first to go out at midnight Jan. 31,” Dave Martin, vice president of United Steelworkers Local 8-719 here, said with pride. “The bosses didn’t believe we would do it.”

Martin was describing the opening of the first national strike of oil workers since 1980 and the most important labor battle in the U.S. today, a fight that now involves nearly 7,000 workers at 12 refineries and three chemical plants.

The main issue in the strike is the safety of workers and the communities around the refineries. On the picket lines strikers describe how the company’s refusal to hire more workers means they are regularly forced to work long hours with inadequate rest time between shifts, leading to fatigue.

The union is also fighting to win back maintenance jobs crucial to safe opera-

tions, now done by contract workers.

The USW represents 30,000 oil workers at more than 200 plants.

Five weeks into the strike workers here are standing strong. “Not a single one of the 420 USW members at the refinery has crossed the picket line,” Martin told the *Militant* March 6.

Workers have maintained 24-hour pickets at the plant’s gates with regular union-organized delivery of firewood and food.

“I worked a nonunion job,” striker Jeff Camer said. “The boss told me I didn’t need a union. Then one day he fired me for no reason. Without a union you have nothing.”

The company cuts corners on routine maintenance. “It’s about time we stand up. We’ve let a lot of stuff go over time,” said striker Trish Jackson.

“People have to understand this is not a strike, it’s a movement,” Brandon Marshall told the *Militant*. “This is the first time we have done something of this magnitude in over 30 years. It will take time but we will change, and the union will change.”

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UK communist candidates join protests, advance class independence

BY CAROLINE BELLAMY

MANCHESTER, England — Communist League candidates in the United Kingdom are joining workers’ struggles and advancing a program to unite working people as part of an international class with common interests, in the midst of a continuing crisis of capitalist production and trade in the United Kingdom and a tepid recovery that has yielded little in jobs or pay for working people.

Paul Davies, Communist League parliamentary candidate for Manchester Central, is joined by Catharina Tirsén (Bradford ward) and Andrés Mendoza (Moston ward) standing for election to Manchester City Council for the May 7 elections.

In London, engineering worker

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Indian gov’t ban of film on rape spurs debate

BY MAGGIE TROWE

On the eve of the release of a BBC documentary on the 2012 gang-rape and killing of 23-year-old Jyoti Singh in New Delhi, India, and the huge protests that ensued, a magistrate’s court there blocked the film’s broadcast anywhere in the country March 3. The film’s interview with one of the men convicted of the crime, the court said, could “cause a huge public outcry” and “create law and order problems.”

On Dec. 16, 2012, six men raped Singh, a call-center worker and medical student, when she and a male

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Selma march marks gains in overthrow of Jim Crow

Protests attacks on voting rights today



Militant/Bob Braxton

March across Edmund Pettus Bridge March 8, where 50 years before cops brutally beat protesters. Large turnout shows importance of gains won and readiness to fight for rights today.

BY SHARON LASSEN

SELMA, Ala. — The streets of this small city were filled to overflowing March 7 and 8 as tens of thousands of workers, young people, veterans of the mass proletarian movement to overthrow Jim Crow segregation and others from around the country gathered to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the civil rights battle here to demand voting rights for Blacks that culminated in the 1965 march to Montgomery, Ala-

bama’s capital.

Along with the Battle of Birmingham two years earlier, where Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth led thousands of youth into the streets in the face of the police dogs and water cannons of Eugene “Bull” Connor, the Selma protests were pivotal battles in the victorious struggle to overthrow Jim Crow segregation in the South. The Birmingham battle ushered in a new stage in the fight for Black

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Obama seeks Iran deal, Netanyahu attacks talks in speech to Congress

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a controversial and much-publicized speech to a joint session of the U.S. Congress March 3, expressed strong opposition to negotiations between the administration of

President Barack Obama and Tehran on limiting Iran’s nuclear program.

Netanyahu spoke at the invitation of the Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner, extended without consulting the president. Obama refused to meet with the Israeli prime minister, saying it was out of place coming only two weeks before elections in Is-

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New Canada rail safety law has nothing to do with safety

BY ANNETTE KOURI

MONTREAL — On July 6, 2013, a 72-car Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway train carrying highly volatile crude oil from North Dakota derailed and exploded in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, killing 47 and demolishing the heart of the town. More than a year and a half later, the Canadian government Feb. 20 proposed legislation to require rail companies that ship oil to carry more insurance and pay into

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Baluchistan coal miners fight for rights, safety, higher pay
Part-time university instructors organize national protests

Rail workers initiate forums to discuss fight for safety

BY JACK PARKER
AND JIM ALTENBERG

OAKLAND, Calif. — “Railroads are on people’s radar” for the first time in decades, Ron Kaminkow, general secretary of Railroad Workers United, an engineer on Amtrak in Reno, Nevada, and member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, told the *Militant* March 5. Recent oil train derailments, explosions and fires have “galvanized the general public to the point that many people want to stop oil transportation by rail altogether.”

“Railroaders may not agree but everyone can agree that oil trains, and any trains, need to be moved safely and securely,” Kaminkow said.

Rail workers face growing attacks, including demands that they operate trains with only the engineer on board.

In the summer of 2014, BNSF Railway “overplayed its hand,” Kaminkow said, when it demanded that SMART union members agree to the single-person “crew.” As word of the contract proposal got out, workers across the system organized a successful drive to defeat it.

Out of these experiences, Kaminkow explained, Railroad Workers United decided to organize two conferences on “The Future of Railroads: Safety, Workers, Community and the Environment.” Endorsed by some 40 community, environmental and labor organizations, they will take place March 14 in Richmond and March 21 in Olympia, Washington.

“The BNSF thought it would be easy to sell the one-man crew to workers,” he said, because they had pushed through previous contract concessions and because the SMART-Transportation Divi-

sion leadership tried to sell the deal.

SMART — the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers — represents railroad conductors, brakemen, switchmen and yardmasters.

BNSF workers mobilized and defeated the crew proposal by a 3,056 to 623 vote. They held public protests, debated officials at union meetings and won support from families, other unionists and people who live near the tracks.

Railroad Workers United, with members in many of the rail unions across North America, issued weekly updates, on aspects of the contract and protests against it. They distributed newsletters, email and Facebook announcements and stickers urging a “no” vote.

“The RWU’s campaign was quite visible in BNSF terminals from big cities like Seattle and Tacoma, Washington, to small towns like Creston, Iowa,” Ka-

Canada ‘rail safety’ law is not about safety

Continued from front page
a national compensation fund to pay damages in future rail disasters.

“The government is not concerned about the safety of the public,” Chris Yeandel, an engineer and chairman of Locomotive Engineers Division 689 of the Teamsters at Canadian Pacific Railway in Montreal, told the *Militant* in a Feb. 21 interview. “The new regulations only deal with the companies having enough insurance to cover accidents — that is *after* there is a derailment and a town blows up.” Yeandel also chairs the local’s health and safety committee.



Canadian National train carrying volatile crude oil derailed near Gogama, Ontario, March 7. Conferences of workers, community groups will advance fight against dangers of 1-man crew.

minkow said. “This increased RWU’s membership and prestige.”

Railroad Workers United is organizing the two West Coast conferences jointly with Backbone Campaign, a group supporting numerous environmental issues. The Richmond conference will kick off with a workshop fo-

cusing on worker fatigue, single-worker crews, and long and heavier trains. It will be followed by workshops on related environmental and other questions.

Railroad Workers United is discussing holding similar conferences in Iowa, Chicago, and Albany, New York, Kaminkow said.

The government-appointed Transportation Security Board conducted a review of the Lac-Mégantic disaster last August, saying that Transport Canada, the federal agency responsible for regulating the railroads, allowed the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway to continually break its own security rules.

Oil shipments by train across Canada and the U.S. have increased dramatically in recent years, as production has outstripped pipeline capacity. In 2014, rail lines in North America carried more than 1.2 million oil tankers.

Just days after the government announced these new laws, the Transportation Security Board released reports that pointed to neglected track and maintenance as major factors in two other derailments.

“There used to be 4,300 and now there are 3,000 workers” at Canadian Pacific, Yeandel said. “But we are doing the same amount of work. Everything CP does is for profit. They have cut back on maintenance. They have leased or sold most of their locomotives, which means the ones they have kept don’t go in for

maintenance as often. Combined with engineer fatigue, this means that another Lac-Mégantic is a matter of time.”

The Teamsters organize the majority of workers on the railways in Canada. In recent negotiations with Canadian Pacific, they’ve raised reducing mandatory hours and overtime that cause workers’ fatigue. In February, workers at Canadian Pacific struck for a day before the federal government began preparing back-to-work legislation, and union officials accepted binding arbitration.

“I think there is a change in the unions because something needs to happen,” Yeandel said. “People are starting to band together and it is time for all the unions to help each other.”

Auditor General Michael Ferguson issued a report in November stating that the rail bosses carried out a paltry 14 safety audits over the last three years on the 31 railways Transport Canada is responsible for, just a quarter of the number required. Most “were narrowly focused and provided assurance on only a few aspects of railway safety management systems,” Ferguson said.

THE MILITANT

Protest Jew-hatred, anti-Semitic attacks!

Jew-hatred is on the rise with the deepening crisis of capitalism, but it reaches its limits as working people and youth stand up against it. the ‘Militant’ covers protests against Jew-hatred and anti-Semitic attacks, explains where they come from and how to fight them.



Muslim youth and supporters form defense ring at Oslo, Norway, synagogue Feb. 21.

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

Oil strike grows stronger

Continued from front page

Some 1,100 members of Steelworkers Local 7-1 have been on strike against BP in Whiting, Indiana, since Feb. 8.

“One day longer, one day stronger,” chanted more than 150 strikers and supporters at a “Strike Picket Party” at the refinery March 9.

Family members, retirees and Steelworkers from the nearby ArcelorMittal steel mill, who are printing thousands of strike support yard signs, joined the expanded picketing.

“Don’t blow up the refinery before we come back to work!” strikers yelled at management and replacement workers.

At the “Rockers and Relief Fund 2015” event March 7, more than \$7,200 was raised for strikers with pressing financial needs. Striker Ken Dianda told the *Militant* he organized friends and fellow unionists in rock bands to play at the affair. “We did it to show we can count on ourselves,” he said.

Dianda took the mic and asked, “Can we win?” The crowd of several hundred yelled back “Yes!”

Local 7-1 is organizing a rally in front of the BP headquarters in downtown Chicago March 19.

Articles in the bosses’ press attempt to deny and undercut the growing strength of the strike. The *Wall Street Journal* March 4 quoted a statement by Royal Dutch Shell claiming that by midsummer its Houston facility would be operating at normal staff levels with “newly trained employees who aren’t affiliated with the USW.”

In Anacortes, Washington, members of Steelworkers Local 12-591 on strike against Tesoro stop each vehicle at every shift change. A Skagit County judge March 4 rejected Tesoro’s request for a

restraining order to end the traffic slowdown.

Picket Mike Ingram’s leg was gashed when “a nonunion contractor refused to stop,” he told the *Militant* March 3.

“When a catastrophe occurs like in 2010 where seven union members were killed in an explosion here, *then* the company acts like they are interested in fixing problems at the plant,” said striker John Anderson.

In Houston, some 300 striking oil workers and supporters marched in front of Shell, Motiva and LyondellBasell headquarters March 6. Later that day 500 in Texas City marched to the Marathon refinery.

“The company wants to take labor out of the safety committees,” Chris Battles, who works at Shell in Deer Park, told the *Militant*. “But what happened here at Marathon can happen at Deer Park,” he said, referring to the 2005 explosion at the Texas City plant.

“I want to go home to my daughter at the end of the day,” said Kimberly Perez, 36, a technician at Motiva in Port Arthur. “That’s why it’s important to be in the union, to be safe. It’s important for the environment. It doesn’t just have to



Militant/John Naubert

Traffic backs up as Steelworkers-organized strikers picket Tesoro refinery in Anacortes, Wash., March 9. Court denied Tesoro’s request for injunction against strikers briefly stopping vehicles.

do with us, but everyone.”

On the picket line at the Martinez, California, Tesoro plant, Steve Croft, 38, said that a year ago he and another operator received extensive acid burns when improperly installed tubing burst.

As union maintenance workers retired, “Tesoro stopped replacing them and began contracting the work out. We need trained people to do the maintenance,” Croft said.

Mitchel Rosenberg, a member of USW Local 10-1 in Philadelphia; Josefina Otero, a member of USW Local 7139-05 in Washington, Pennsylvania; Ilona Gersh and Anne Parker in Whiting, Indiana; Danielle London in Houston; Mark Shaeffer in Martinez, California; Bill Arth in Los Angeles; and Edward Foote in Anacortes, Washington, contributed to this article.

Oil strikers, Selma marchers subscribe to ‘Militant’

BY MAGGIE TROWE

The *Militant* is getting around. Participants in the March 7-8 actions in Selma, Alabama, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery march and the fight to defend voting rights today, bought 22 subscriptions to the *Militant*, 58 books (including 17 copies of *Malcolm X*, *Black Liberation*, and the *Road to*

Workers Power by Jack Barnes) and 187 single copies of the paper.

At a March 7 rally in Charleston, West Virginia, against a proposed “right-to-work” law, 25 people got *Militant* subscriptions and 35 bought single copies.

Striking oil workers are subscribing to the paper in growing numbers. At the Feb. 24 march and rally in front of the Marathon Oil headquarters in Findlay,

Ohio, 14 workers subscribed.

Seven refinery workers in the Los Angeles area, including four strikers against Tesoro in Carson, got subscriptions.

“We bought a subscription. We save the papers because they give an accurate description of our struggle,” Brandi Sanders, a warehouse worker at Marathon Galveston Bay Refining in Texas City, Texas, told *Militant* volunteers.

In Catlettsburg, Kentucky, *Militant* supporters spent the evening on the picket lines March 6 with workers on strike against Marathon there. Three workers picked up subscriptions to the paper, and two bought copies of *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs, a book about the 1934 strikes that built the industrial union movement in Minneapolis.

“I’m glad to see a newspaper like this,” Al Vandergriff told *Militant* supporters who visited him and his wife, Ida, in Pasco, Washington, Feb. 25, the day of the funeral of Antonio Zambrano, a 35-year-old agricultural worker killed by police.

“It’s important to protest these police killings,” Ida added. The couple also bought a copy of *Teamster Rebellion*.

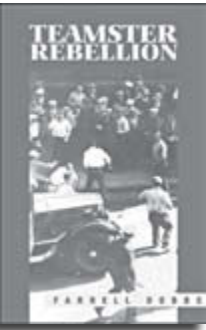
Two people subscribed to the paper while picketing a Safeway grocery store in Olympia, Washington, March 2 in support of the fight by berry pickers at Sakuma Farms in Burlington for recognition of their union, Familias Unidas.

Each week the lead article from the *Militant* is translated to French in Canada and posted on the website www.themilitant.com. While Philippe Tessier from Montreal was attending the Haiti International Book Fair last December, workers signed up to receive French-language articles by email.

“Thanks for your weekly articles,” wrote Jean-Jacques Toussaint from Haiti Feb. 23, Tessier reports. “I’m circulating them among students and plan to distribute them among workers leading up to May Day.”

You can join efforts to spread the reach of the *Militant*. Contact distributors in your area, listed on page 8.

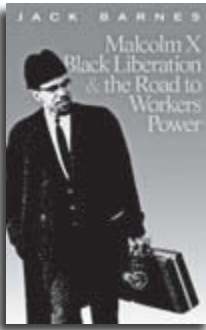
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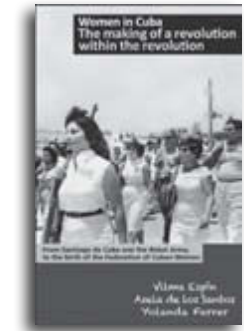
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Also in Spanish, Farsi



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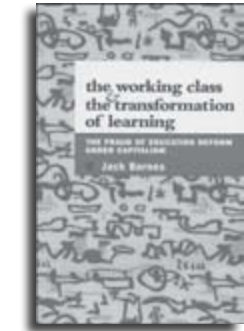
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Communist campaign in UK

Continued from front page

Jonathan Silberman is the Communist League candidate for Hackney North and Stoke Newington.

“Whatever happens on May 7 won’t change which class rules,” Davies told interviewer Lou Beckett on Miners Internet Radio in Moston, a working-class area of Manchester. “Working people need to organize independent of big business and advance what we have in common on a path to overthrow capitalist rule. This is both necessary and realistic in today’s world marked by economic stagnation, declining living standards and attacks on the social wage.”

“These aren’t the results of mistaken government policies,” Davies said, “but the bosses’ response to the crisis of production and trade — as they make working people pay for their crisis.”

The economy is the central issue in the election. While admitting that the poor and young are “paying a heavy price” because of the economic crisis, incumbent Conservative Chancellor George Osborne said a small uptick in real wages at the end of 2014 showed change was just around the corner.

“We need a recovery that reaches kitchen tables across Britain,” countered Cathy Jamieson, opposition Labour Party shadow financial secretary to the Treasury, “not one which has left working people worse off.”

The U.K., which used to boast that the “sun never set” on its colonial empire, is now the sixth largest world economy, trailing Germany and France in Europe. Industrial exports remain stagnant.

Real wages in the U.K. have fallen nearly 10 percent since 2008. Temporary and part-time jobs have mushroomed,

many where workers have “zero hours” contracts — that is, no guaranteed hours of work each week. While union membership stands at 56 percent for government workers, it has fallen to 14 percent in private industry and trade.

“Wages look better than they are,” Elizabeth McDougall, who used to work in a café and now looks after her granddaughter, told Davies and supporters of the Communist League campaign who knocked on her door in Newton Heath. “After paying rent, water, electricity, heating and food there’s not much left.”

“The problem is competition for jobs that the bosses use to lower wages,” replied Davies. “The Communist League proposes a massive public works program that can open up work for millions, at wages set by the unions. Fighting for this will increase our self-confidence and unity as a class.”

“We need to take power out of the hands of the ruling rich and govern ourselves,” Davies said. “History shows what workers can do.”

“That’s right,” said McDougall. “But they don’t think we can do it. Because we’re on the bottom of the pile, they think we’re too stupid.”

“It will take action by workers in their millions to overturn capitalist rule,” Davies said. “And we’ll need to build our own party to lead that struggle.”

Bosses scapegoat immigrant workers

The bosses’ parties target immigrant workers, in an attempt to weaken the unity and fighting capacity of the working class.

“Do you agree with controlling immigration so our economy and local services deliver for hardworking taxpayers?” the Conservatives say on their website. “Do you agree with the Conservative policy of banning EU migrants from getting in-work benefits and social housing for four years?”

The Labour Party is for requiring new EU migrants to wait two years before claiming welfare, while bemoaning firms that exploit legal loopholes to employ foreign workers at lower wages.

The populist U.K. Independence Party recently won two parliamentary by-elections and is looking to win more

Australia unionists protest wage, benefit cuts



Militant photos by Ron Poulsen

SYDNEY — Thousands of unionists and other protesters chanting “Stand up, fight back!” demonstrated here March 4 outside the Parliament of New South Wales. Similar

demonstrations took place in other major cities around the country against threatened attacks on wages and social services by the federal Liberal government of Prime Minister Anthony Abbott.

“Resistance is starting to grow in Australia,” Joanne Kuniansky, inset, right, Communist League candidate for Parramatta in the upcoming March 28 New South Wales state election, told workers as she joined the protest. She pointed to growing resistance worldwide, from Walmart workers in the U.S. fighting for \$15 an hour and full-time work, to the national oil workers strike, to garment workers in Bangladesh fighting for safer working conditions.

Contingents of nurses and construction workers walked off the job at city sites to join the rally.

Real wages in Australia declined last year for the first time in 17 years and official unemployment topped 6 percent. Thousands of miners have been laid off following the worldwide slump in iron ore and coal exports. The bosses response is to propose lowering the minimum wage and “penalty rates” — higher pay for overtime and weekend work.

The rally also opposed moves to privatize public hospitals, reduce nursing staff and introduce patient “co-payments” for national health insurance.

— RON POULSEN



—CALENDAR—

NEW YORK

New York

Hear Leaders of the Federation of Cuban Women. Sat., March 14. Reception, 6 p.m.; program 7 p.m. *Fordham Law School, Constantino Room, 150 W. 62 St., Manhattan.* For information: www.july-26coalition.org. Sponsor: *July 26 Coalition of New York and New Jersey.*

Sharing the Struggle: Parents Against Police Brutality Exchange Experiences with Cuban Women. Sun., March 15, 4 p.m. *2nd Christian Church, 595 E. 169 St., Bronx.* Tel.: (718) 364-2879.

‘If You Don’t Give Up, You Can’t Lose’ — Story of Gangjeong Village Against Naval Base Construction. Part of national speaking tour by two village peacekeepers returning to U.S. after two and a half years in Gangjeong, Jeju Island, South Korea. Sun., March 22, 2 p.m. *The New School, 55 W. 13th St., Room 1205, Manhattan.*

TEXAS

Houston

Join Rally with Parents of 43 Disappeared Students in Mexico. Wed., March 18, 5 p.m. *Mexican Consulate, 4507 San Jacinto St.* Email: asambleapopularhouston@gmail.com.

WASHINGTON

Olympia

The Future of Railroads: Safety, Workers, Community and the Environment. Sat., March 21, *Longhouse Educational and Cultural Center, 2700 Evergreen Parkway NW.* For information: www.railroadconference.org. Sponsors: *Railroad Workers United, Backbone Campaign.*

Seattle

Exhibit of ‘I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived’: Paintings by Antonio Guerrero, One of Recently Freed Cuban Five. March 7 — April 7. Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (closed for lunch 12:30-1:30). *Musicians Association of Seattle, Local 76-493, AFM, 3209 Eastlake Ave. E.* Email: guerreroexhibit@gmail.com.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis

Moscow Troops Out of Ukraine! End the Sanctions Against Russia! Speaker: Frank Forrestal, Socialist Workers Party, *Militant* reporter to Ukraine in 2014. Fri., March 20, 7:30 p.m. *416 E. Hennepin Ave., Suite 214.* Tel.: (612) 729-1205.

CANADA

Calgary

In Alberta Elections, the Communist League Campaigns for the Working-Class Alternative: Workers Need to Fight for Political Power. Speakers: Katherine LeRougetel, Communist League nominee in Calgary East; Philippe Tessier, spokesperson for Communist League federal election campaign; representative, Socialist Workers Party. Sun., March 15, 3 p.m. *Little Saigon Centre Mall, 4909 17 Ave. SE, Unit 154.* Tel.: (403) 457-9044.

Montreal

No to Sanctions! Venezuelan Toilers Bear Brunt of Oil Price Drops, U.S. Pressure. Speaker: Annette Kouri, Communist League. Fri., March 20, 7:30 p.m. *7107 St-Denis, #204.* Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

seats in May. It blames low wages on immigration and calls for the U.K. to get out of the EU.

In the absence of an independent working-class leadership, the UKIP gets a hearing from some workers.

“We’re too soft in this country,” unemployed care worker Elizabeth Downer said at her doorstep. “I am not a racist, but we need to stop immigration.”

“Newspapers, politicians, the BBC, they all talk about ‘we,’ as if working people have something in common with the bosses because of where we’re born,” Davies said. “But workers in Britain have more in common with fellow workers around the world. The bosses use immigration to lower wages for all workers. The only way we can counter this is by building unity within the working class regardless of nationality.”

National health care — won by workers after the Second World War — is a major issue in the election campaign, both for the capitalist parties and for working people. All the main capitalist parties say they want to keep the National Health Service, while looking for ways to cut costs.

Working people see health care being cut away with declining quality.

Hazel Bond is a former doctor’s receptionist who currently looks after her children. “I have to wait four days for an appointment to see my GP (family doctor), because there just aren’t enough doctors. The government always thinks it knows what’s best for us,” she told Davies when he knocked on her door. “But they haven’t a clue what our lives are like. They can afford to pay for private health care.”

“This is because for them health care is a commodity, something to make money out of. For us, it’s about everyone having access to the care they need,” Davies responded. “These are the values you see in Cuba, because workers and farmers took power there in 1959.”

“They are internationalists, acting in the interests of workers worldwide,” he said, “Two hundred fifty-six Cuban medical volunteers are in West Africa helping lead the fight against Ebola.”

“The only way for working people to defend and improve access to health care is to join those fighting for it. That’s why I joined the recent picket lines of National Health Service workers fighting for a wage rise, and care workers in Doncaster who struck for a total of 90 days last year to defend their wages from massive cuts,” Davies said.

What Will Changes With Cuba Mean for U.S.-Cuba Relations?

Panelists:

Hendrik van den Berg, professor, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; **Rebecca Williamson**, Socialist Workers Party; **Frances Mendenhall**, recent visitor to Cuba, advocate for Code Pink; **Dan Schlitt**, advocate for fair treatment for Cuba

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help make this column a voice of workers' resistance!

If you are involved in a labor struggle or have information on one, please contact me at (212) 244-4899 or themilitant@mac.com

—Maggie Trowe

Baluchistan coal miners fight for rights, safety, higher pay

Some 60,000 coal miners in the Baluchistan region of southwestern Pakistan launched a countrywide campaign March 7 to win higher wages and improved safety conditions, just days after at least seven miners died in a mine explosion in the Duki area coalfields. Unsafe conditions, including high levels of methane gas in the region's mines have killed hundreds of miners.

With no rescue facility nearby, some 15 workers from other mines rushed to the mine where the explosion took place. One volunteer died from suffocation from methane inhalation, bringing the death toll to eight. Some 14 other miners were also injured.

The National Labour Federation, which announced the miners' campaign, will hold a convention in Lahore March 10 to press for greater safety measures in the mines, federation leader Shamsur Rehman Swati told the Associated Press of Pakistan.

"Coal miners die every day at the hands of tyrant masters," Fazal Huda, a miner in Duki, said after the recent explosion. According to the *Frontier Post*, most miners working in the Duki area of Baluchistan are Afghan nationals.

— Sharon Lassen

Part-time university instructors organize national protests

CLEVELAND — On the first "National Adjunct Walkout Day" Feb. 25, part-time instructors in higher education, some of their students and other unionists participated in teach-ins, rallies and other actions to protest low pay and lack of benefits. Adjuncts at Seattle University, San Francisco Art Institute and the University of Arizo-

na organized walkouts.

The action came after a series of union-organizing victories by adjuncts over the last couple of years, including at Boston University, Tufts, Hamline University in Minnesota, Georgetown University, the University of Massachusetts at Lowell and Seattle University.

In Ohio part-time faculty passed out buttons imprinted with the scarlet letter A+ (for "Adjuncts Add") and circulated flyers at Cleveland State University, Cuyahoga Community College, John Carroll University, Kent State University, Ohio University, Ohio State University and University of Cincinnati.

"Over the last 15 to 20 years colleges and universities have moved toward a corporate model of 'just-in-time' education by resorting to part-time instructors," Andrew Bonthius, co-chair of the Tri-C Part-Time Faculty Association at Cuyahoga Community College, told the *Militant* Feb. 25.

— David Wilder

W.Va. unionists march against 'right to work' bills



Militant

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — A delegation of oil workers from United Steelworkers Local 8-719 on strike at Marathon Oil in Catlettsburg, Kentucky, holding banner, joined several thousand working people here March 7 protesting "right-to-work" bills before the legislature. Demonstrators also opposed attacks on mine safety, public education and the prevailing-wage law, won through union struggles that entitles all workers in state-funded construction projects to be paid union wages.

Delegations from the United Mine Workers of America, Teamsters, Steelworkers, United Food and Commercial Workers, building trades, teachers and public workers unions swelled the boisterous crowd.

— MITCHEL ROSENBERG

Indian gov't ban of film on rape spurs debate

Continued from front page

friend boarded a bus at 8:30 p.m. after seeing "The Life of Pi" film. Using an iron rod, they raped, beat and eviscerated her for an hour, beat her friend and dumped them both in a ditch. She died of massive internal injuries and brain damage nearly two weeks later.

In the days and weeks following the assault, thousands took to the streets. "There has been a huge reaction, almost like an explosion," Sudha Sundararaman, general secretary of the All India Democratic Women's Association, told the *Militant* at the time. Authorities in New Delhi banned the protests and unleashed tear gas and water cannons on demonstrators.

Filmmaker Leslee Udwin's documentary walks through the events that occurred the day of the rape and interviews Jyoti Singh's parents and a friend. She also interviews in prison Mukesh Singh — the bus driver and one of the men convicted of the crime. All four of the adults convicted are appealing their death sentences. A 17-year-old boy was also convicted

and is serving a three-year prison term.

"You can't clap with one hand," Mukesh Singh tells the film crew. "It takes two hands to clap. A decent girl won't roam around at 9:00 at night. A girl is far more responsible for rape than a boy." While he never says he was involved in the attack, he says the victim would not have been killed had she not fought back.

Udwin also interviewed two attorneys for the convicted men, A.P. Singh and M.L. Sharma.

"If my daughter or sister engaged in premarital activities and disgraced herself," A.P. Singh says, "I would most certainly take this sort of sister or daughter to my farmhouse, and in front of my entire family, I would put petrol on her and set her alight."

"In our society, we never allow our girls to come out from the house after 6:30 or 7:30 or 8:30 in the evening with any unknown person," Sharma said. "She should not be put on the streets, just like food."

The film contains substantial foot-

age of some of the protests against rape, including police clubbing demonstrators. It features interviews with some leaders and participants in the fight for women's rights, who give viewers a sense of the rapid changes taking place as women by the millions join the workforce and fight to end women's second-class status. These battles are winning increasing support in the working-class and broader layers of society, male and female.

The mass debate and protests around the rape and murder of Jyoti Singh are not a sign of rising violence against women, people interviewed in the film explain, but the opposite — increasing intolerance of that violence.

"There are many gang-rapes that take place in India and they've been taking place over the years," Leila Seth, former chief justice of Himachal Pradesh state and a member of a government committee set up after the 2012 protests to review laws pertaining to violence against women, says in the documentary. "But somehow this caught the imagination of people."

Seth's committee rejected calls for the death penalty for rape or for lowering the age limit of 18 below which juvenile offenders cannot be charged or sentenced as adults. It proposed ending the "marital exemption" in rape laws, which makes it impossible for a woman to accuse her spouse of rape.

Before 1975 every U.S. state had a "marital exemption," but as a product of the fight for women's rights they were all struck down by 1993.

Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh backed banning the documentary March 4. The government can't permit anyone "to leverage such unfortunate incidents for commercial benefits," he said.

"This is not a film for profit," Udwin responded. BBC covered some 40 percent of the cost of production, she said. "The rest was funded by myself."

"All I was trying to do was thank India for leading the world by example," Udwin said, "for championing women's rights."

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 23, 1990

PANAMA CITY, Panama — Condemning the December 20 invasion by U.S. forces and calling for the total removal of the troops from Panamanian soil, 200 people gathered here to commemorate International Women's Day.

"This is going to be a different kind of March 8," said Teodora Rodríguez, "because it takes place in an occupied country with a government that is against the people."

"This meeting will be a tribute not only to those women who died in a fire in the United States," said Rodríguez, referring to the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire in New York City that killed 145 women garment workers, "but a tribute to those who died December 20, victims of the U.S. invasion."



March 22, 1965

NEW YORK, March 14 — In the largest single demonstration in Harlem's history, some 25,000 persons marched today in support of the freedom fighters of Selma, Alabama. The virtually unanimous mood of the demonstration was criticism of President Lyndon B. Johnson for not sending federal troops or marshals to Alabama.

About half the marchers were white. They — as well as many of the Negro marchers — had come from other parts of the city in response to the call of the two organizations sponsoring the march: CORE and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. They were joined by thousands of Harlem residents.



March 23, 1940

More than eight hundred thousand WPA [Works Progress Administration] workers — more than one man in every three of the 2,321,000 now on WPA rolls — are to be fired during the coming weeks, the WPA Administration has announced. Two hundred thousand are to be fired during April, the rest in batches so that, by the end of the fiscal year, June 30, there shall be no more than 1,500,000 on the rolls.

The New Deal has transformed itself completely into the War Deal. Federal funds have one main purpose in the hands of Roosevelt: war preparations. The index for war expenditures has been going up like a skyrocket. The index for WPA expenditures has been going down nearly as fast.

Report details abuse by authorities in Ferguson

BY NAOMI CRAINE

A report issued by the Justice Department March 4 details how workers in Ferguson, Missouri, especially those who are Black, face rampant and illegal harassment, arbitrary arrests and abuse from the police and municipal court. Ferguson, a suburb of St. Louis, became a household word last August after cop Darren Wilson shot and killed 18-year-old Michael Brown, and after police met protests with tear gas, rubber bullets and arrests. Attorney General Eric Holder was dispatched to Ferguson as part of federal and state government efforts to defuse the demonstrations.

The same day the Justice Department issued a separate report saying there were no grounds to bring federal charges against Wilson, following the November decision of a St. Louis grand jury not to indict him for killing Brown.

The Ferguson Police Department has a “pattern of unconstitutional policing” that “violates the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, and federal statutory law,” the report states. The cops’ actions “disproportionately harm Ferguson’s African-American residents.”

In March 2010, the city finance director complained to the police chief that “unless ticket writing ramps up significantly before the end of the year, it will be hard to significantly raise collections next year.” The cops obliged. Court fines and fees have become the city’s second-largest source of income.

A class-action lawsuit filed against the city of Ferguson in February describes how workers are shaken down by this scheme, and chronicles similar policies in surrounding towns. The local jails serve as debtors’ prisons where those who can’t pay are subjected to inhuman conditions.

“Ferguson is mild compared to some other municipalities,” Rodney Martin told the *Militant* in a phone interview March 9. “Ferguson just got caught, and that put them in the hot seat.”

Martin, a worker at Home Depot, was a victim of the traffic ticket scam last fall, spending a week in jail, while being shuffled from one municipality to another. “Theoretically it was great for them to recognize that there is a system of injustice and that racism is behind it,” he said, “but I’m skeptical about any real change coming out of it.”

According to the Justice Department, Ferguson police regularly violate the Fourth Amendment, which protects against “unreasonable search and seizure” and says the cops and the gov-

ernment can’t come after you without “probable cause.” In November 2013, a cop arrested five Black youth who were simply listening to music in a car, claiming they were “gathering in a group for the purposes of committing illegal activity.” Another cop said he demands identification from every person in any vehicle he stops, and arrests anyone who exercises their legal right to refuse for “Failure to Comply.”

The report said use of force by Ferguson police “is routinely unreasonable and sometimes clearly punitive.”

African-Americans “are more than twice as likely as white drivers to be searched during vehicle stops ... but are found in possession of contraband 26% less often than white drivers, suggesting officers are impermissibly considering race as a factor when determining whether to search,” the report said.

Circulation of racist emails and “jokes” among Ferguson city officials is documented. Mayor James Knowles fired the top court clerk, Mary Ann Twitty, March 4 over the emails, claiming they were “in no way representative” of the city. Two police supervisors connected to them resigned the next day.

Municipal Judge Ronald Brockmeyer and City Manager John Shaw also resigned in the wake of the report.

“There is no credible evidence to refute Wilson’s stated subjective belief that he was acting in self-defense,” the simultaneous Justice Department report on

‘Stop US sanctions, threats against Venezuela’



Militant/Jacob Perasso

NEW YORK — A March 5 picket line here protested Washington’s ongoing attempts to undermine the government of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela.

Four days later President Barack Obama signed an executive order declaring a “national emergency” to meet what he called an “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States” caused by alleged human rights violations in Venezuela. Obama ordered the freezing of U.S. assets of seven Venezuelan military and police officials. Since December Obama has frozen the assets or denied visas to more than 60 Venezuelans.

“How is Venezuela a threat to the United States?” the Cuban government said in a statement later that day. “Without strategic arms and without using resources or officials to conspire against the U.S. constitutional order, the declaration is not credible in the least and reveals the real aims of those behind it.”

“Nobody has the right to intervene in the internal affairs of a sovereign state,” the statement said. “Just like Cuba was never alone, Venezuela won’t be either.”

— JACOB PERASSO

Brown’s death concluded. “There are no credible witness accounts that state that Brown was clearly attempting to surrender when Wilson shot him.”

Brown’s parents, Lesley McSpadden and Michael Brown Sr., said in a written statement they were disappointed that “the killer of our son wouldn’t be

held accountable for his actions.” They said they welcomed the report on the Ferguson Police Department, and said if it helps bring about change, “our son’s death will not have been in vain.”

John Hawkins in Chicago contributed to this article.

Selma march marks gains in overthrow of Jim Crow

Continued from front page

rights, drawing tens of thousands of industrial workers into mass actions. The Selma fight led to the passage of the historic 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Many participants pointed to the profound effects of the overthrow of Jim Crow. And many came to protest current efforts to chip away at voting rights, especially the 2013 U.S. Supreme Court decision that unconstitutionally struck down key provisions of the 1965 act.

On March 7 President Barack Obama, former President George W. Bush, dozens of federal and state legislators and thousands of other took part in official commemorations, including a rally of some 40,000.

The next day some 80,000 people joined veterans of the 1965 protests to march over the Edmund Pettus Bridge — named after an early Ku Klux Klan leader — and return for a rally.

Everyone’s spirits were buoyed by the turnout. The march was made up overwhelmingly of workers, including some organized in union contingents from the United Auto Workers, Teamsters, postal workers’ unions, UNITE HERE, Service Employees International Union and others. Their self-confidence stamped the demonstrations both days.

“I started thinking about coming when my grandson said he wanted to see the movie ‘Selma.’ So I brought him with me this weekend,” said UAW member Cheryl Temple, who works at a truck plant in Gastonia, North Carolina.

“I came today because I believe in civil rights and because workers need unions,” said Temple, who is Cauca-

sian. The factory where she works was the first truck plant in the South to vote in a union. Now there are five truck assembly and parts plants within 50 miles of Gastonia that are organized, she said. The UAW locals there chartered a bus to bring union members to Selma.

Dozens of other buses came from Atlanta, Birmingham and other cities, organized by the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, local churches and community groups, and many other organizations. Also present in large numbers were students and others who have been part of protests against police brutality and killings around the country in recent months.

March organizers aimed to focus on the fight against efforts to chip away at voting rights today. “From voter photo ID, proof of citizenship to register and reduction in voting and voter registration days,” Alabama state Sen. Hank Sanders said when he joined leaders of the SCLC to announce the action in February, “Americans are losing the right to vote, which so many people sacrificed their lives and blood to secure.”

“I was 14 years old in 1965,” said Ruth Anthony, of Selma. “I marched in all three protests at the bridge.”

“The older people wouldn’t march, a lot of them, because they were afraid of losing their jobs,” Anthony said. “My mother worked as a maid and thought she’d be fired if she went to the protests. So I went, me and my friends.

“I didn’t want to see my mother have to step behind little white kids to get waited on, if they came into a store after she did. Things like that we lived with

every day. We didn’t want to press our noses against the windows at restaurants we couldn’t get into,” she said.

Some 450 Delta Airlines workers flew in. “It’s so important to be here today,” said Wanda Bell, a flight attendant from Los Angeles. Delta’s 20,000 flight attendants are currently locked in a battle to win union recognition and a contract.

“All workers need unions,” said Jackie Johnson-Avery, 50, who works at the Mercedes Benz auto assembly plant in Vance, Alabama. “You are no one if you try to go up against a multi-million-dollar corporation like Mercedes by yourself. You can’t do it.”

A group of Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way rail union members, now affiliated with the Teamsters, came to Selma from half a dozen cities. “Having more people on a train crew makes the train safer for us on the ground,” said Matt Weaver, a member from Toledo, Ohio, backing rail workers’ growing opposition to train bosses’ efforts to slash the crew size to one.

“We are honoring the picket lines at the struck oil refinery in Toledo,” Weaver added. “We don’t cross.”

Several hundred immigrant workers, most originally from Latin America, came from more than a dozen cities in Alabama, organized by the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice.

The morning of March 9, demonstrators set out on a 54-mile march to Montgomery, to re-enact the 1965 protest. The journey will culminate March 13 with a rally at the state Capitol to press for full reinstatement of the Voting Rights Act.

Further Reading

FEBRUARY 1965

The Final Speeches

by Malcolm X

Speeches from the last weeks of the life of the leader who became the face and the authentic voice of the forces of the coming American revolution. \$19



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Cuba's internationalism in Africa discussed at book fair

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN
AND RÓGER CALERO

HAVANA — “Fifty years ago, on Feb. 2, 1965, a column of 130 Cuban combatants headed by Commander Ernesto Guevara de la Serna — our Che — began preparing to leave for the Congo” to support the liberation struggle there, Víctor Dreke told an audience at Casa de Africa (Africa House) here.

Dreke, second in command of that column, spoke Feb. 20 at one of two meetings during the Havana International Book Fair that presented books by Pathfinder Press that help tell the story of the Cuban Revolution's unparalleled record of internationalist support to struggles for African freedom and development.

Welcoming the audience of 60, Alberto Granado, director of Casa de Africa, noted that 50 years later, Cuban doctors are in West Africa combating Ebola.

Casa de Africa is a cultural center and museum that illustrates the history and culture of Africa and Cuba's African roots. It includes archives on revolutionary Cuba's internationalist solidarity with the struggles for African liberation. Introducing the panel, Granado expressed appreciation for the donations of Pathfinder books that have been made to the center's library over the years.

Two of these books — *How Far We Slaves Have Come*, by Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro, and *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution*, by Dreke — were featured at the meeting. Sharing the platform with Granado and Dreke was Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder president and editor of both titles.

Dreke is president of the Cuba-Africa Friendship Association. As a youth he joined the urban underground and Rebel Army in the popular struggle that led to the 1959 revolutionary victory in Cuba. In the early 1960s Dreke commanded the volunteer battalions of working people that defeated U.S.-backed counter-revolutionary bands in the Escambray mountains of central Cuba. After the 1965 Congo mission, he headed the Cuban military mission in Guinea-Bissau, training independence forces fighting Portuguese colonial rule. These experiences are described in *From the Escambray to the Congo*.

When the Cuban internationalists went to the former Belgian colony of

the Congo in 1965, “it was an important time in the revolutionary struggles in Africa,” Dreke said. “Liberation battles were taking place in the Congo as well as in Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Angola and Mozambique.”

Dreke noted that the Cuban volunteers in the Congo joined national liberation fighters — followers of Patrice Lumumba, the assassinated leader of the Congolese independence struggle — who were combating the pro-imperialist regime. In neighboring Congo-Brazzaville, a former French colony, another unit of Cuban combatants, led by Jorge Risquet and Rolando Kinde-lán, trained independence fighters of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

These struggles, Dreke said, “culminated in the great battles in Angola” in 1975-91, when Cuban internationalists helped defend newly independent Angola against invasions by the South African apartheid regime. Victory in that 16-year mission also led to the independence of Namibia and the end of white-supremacist rule in South Africa.

It is because of those advances, which also strengthened the Cuban Revolution, that “our commander-in-chief could say, ‘How far we slaves have come,’” Dreke said.

He was referring to a speech that Cuban President Fidel Castro gave when South African revolutionary leader Nelson Mandela visited Cuba in 1991. Mandela called the Cuban-led defeat of the apartheid forces in 1988 at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale a “milestone in the history of the struggle for southern African liberation.” The Pathfinder book *How Far We Slaves Have Come* contains the speeches by Mandela and Castro.

Waters said the books “are not about the past. They help to prepare working people, faced with the assaults of the propertied rulers driven by capitalism's world crisis, for the battles ahead.”

More than 21,000 copies of *How Far We Slaves Have Come* have been sold, the bulk in the United States. Waters also recalled the 3,000 people who heard Dreke speak about the Cuban Revolution and its support for African freedom struggles during a 2002 tour of U.S. cities.

Waters pointed to the consistency of the Cuban Revolution's solidarity in Africa, from aid to the Algerian Revolution in the early 1960s

to the Congo and Angola to “confronting the challenge of the Ebola crisis,” in West Africa today.

Neighborhood meeting

The following day, three dozen people attended a street meeting in Cojimar in East Havana on *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa*. The book, by Waters and Martín Koppel, was a product of visits to Equatorial Guinea in 2005 and 2008.

The meeting was hosted by the new African cultural center and



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Cuba-Africa Friendship Association President Víctor Dreke, left, who was second in command to Che Guevara during 1965 internationalist mission in the Congo, and Pathfinder President Mary-Alice Waters speaking at Casa de Africa event in Havana during international book fair.

restaurant Africa Mía (My Africa). It drew people from the neighborhood, including an elementary school teacher who brought her students who have been studying the history of precolonial peoples of Cuba and slavery in colonial times.

The audience was welcomed by Ana Morales, director of Africa Mía. Morales served as a doctor in Guinea-Bissau and later as first secretary at the Cuban Embassy in Equatorial Guinea from 2003 to 2008, when Víctor Dreke, her husband, was ambassador to that country.

Joining Waters were Col. Alain Hernández, who was an internationalist volunteer in Nicaragua in 1981-83 and currently is an elected delegate to the municipal assembly; and Iraida Aguirrechú, who in 1971-74 served in the

Cuban diplomatic mission in Equatorial Guinea.

Waters noted that the title of *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa* is designed to make readers stop and think. “Hundreds of books have been written about the imperialist rape of Africa,” she said. “What this book addresses is how the social force that can put an end to imperialist domination and exploitative capitalist social relations — the working class — is being born in countries such as Equatorial Guinea.

“More than once we’ve been asked by a reader, ‘Aren’t you socialists, communists? Why do you give capitalism credit for the transformation of Africa?’” It’s important for working people to recognize that “every step that narrows the gap between semicolonial Africa and

Continued on page 9

How Cuban combatant withstood eleven years in Somali prison

BY RÓGER CALERO

HAVANA — More than 500 people attended a Feb. 17 meeting at the international book fair here where Col. Orlando Cardoso Villavicencio, a Hero of the Republic of Cuba, presented his book *Reto a la soledad* (Challenge to solitude), a vivid account of his nearly 11 years of resistance under brutal conditions as a prisoner of war in Somalia.

Villavicencio has appeared at several recent public events, often together with the Cuban Five revolutionaries, three of whom were released in December after more than 16 years in U.S. prisons. His book is one of the most sought-after titles among working people here.

Villavicencio, today a colonel in

Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), took part in two of Cuba's internationalist combat missions in the 1970s, first in Angola and then in Ethiopia. In the Horn of Africa in 1977-78, Cuban volunteers helped defend Ethiopia — where an anti-feudal land reform and deepening anti-imperialist struggle was unfolding — from a U.S.-backed Somali invasion.

In 1978 he was wounded in combat, captured by invading Somali forces and imprisoned in Lanta Buur, Somalia. A 20-year-old lieutenant at the head of an artillery scouting unit, Villavicencio was the only survivor from his unit. He was held in solitary confinement, with-

Continued on page 9



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Feb. 17 presentation of book *Reto a la soledad* (Challenge to Solitude) by Col. Orlando Cardoso Villavicencio, inset, during Havana book fair. The book recounts Villavicencio's resistance and aid to other inmates during nearly 11 years as a prisoner of war in Somalia.

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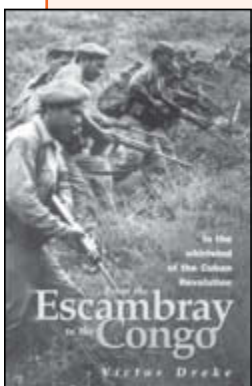
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Mary-Alice Waters, Martín Koppel **\$10**

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Cosmetics, fashions and the exploitation of women

To commemorate International Women's Day, March 8, the *Militant* is printing an excerpt from *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women* by Joseph Hansen, Evelyn Reed and Mary-Alice Waters. It is one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for March. International Women's Day originated in the struggles of women garment workers in the U.S., then spread to revolutionary-minded women workers in Russia and around the world. The selection is from the introduction by Mary-Alice Waters titled "The Capitalist Ideological Offensive Against Women Today." Copyright © 1986 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

In 1954 a sharp debate broke out in the pages of the *Militant*, the weekly newspaper that reflects the views of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. The controversy, surprisingly enough, was over the relation of the marketing of cosmetics and fashions to the oppression of women. *Militant* editor Joseph Hansen, using the pen name Jack Bustelo, wrote an item headlined "Sagging Cosmetic Lines Try a Face Lift." This book opens with Bustelo's article. It is a lively, short exposé of the ways in which the owners of the big cosmetics companies try to manipulate



Ad encouraging women to look more "attractive" by buying cosmetics. "Owners of the big cosmetics companies try to manipulate women's insecurities and fears to sell commodities and rake in profits," *Militant* editor Joseph Hansen wrote under the pen name Jack Bustelo.

women's insecurities and fears to sell commodities and rake in massive profits.

The article prompted a rapid letter of protest to the editor, charging that Bustelo was ridiculing women. The reader said Bustelo was challenging the right of working-class women to strive for "some loveliness and beauty in their lives." Bustelo's response in the *Militant* letters column evoked a further round of protests.

It soon became clear that the substantive political questions emerging from this at-first seemingly minor controversy merited a more extensive discussion than could be aired in the pages of the *Militant*. Since many of the contributors to the letters column were also members of the Socialist Workers Party, the SWP's Political Committee decided to open an organized debate in the party's internal *Discussion Bulletin*.

This book, *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women*, is drawn from the record of this debate, which came to be known in the history of the Socialist Workers Party as the "Bustelo controversy."

While the expanding production and marketing of cosmetics hardly seems to be a topic of great importance, this discussion was neither frivolous, nor an academic sociological dispute. It was one expression of the struggle to main-

tain a proletarian party and Marxist program throughout the cold war and anticommunist witch-hunt of the early 1950s.

Three decades later, many women will recognize that most of the questions discussed here — and the social pressures they reflect — are still with us. ...

Both [Evelyn] Reed and Hansen (still using the pen name of Bustelo) also wrote major articles for the *Discussion Bulletin* taking up the issues raised directly by the "cosmetics" debate. The polemical tone and language of their contributions reflect their origin and purpose, which was to advance political clarification within the SWP. No attempt has been made to change the authors' original styles. Readers will find in these pages all the rich flavor of a real debate, the product of the political conditions and social pressures of the time.

Bustelo's article, entitled "The Fetish of Cosmetics," is a basic piece of Marxist education on capitalism and commodity fetishism. It explains the controversy in the context of the economic and social conditions of post-World War II U.S. society. The author's sense of humor, moreover, makes for enjoyable reading.

Reed's reply, "The Woman Question and the Marxist Method," takes up the issues from a materialist standpoint, as well: norms of beauty, like human-

ity itself, are the historical and changing product of social labor and cannot be dissociated from the development of the productive forces or from the class struggle.

Reed also comments on the social and political context of the debate. The "past fourteen years of war boom and prosperity have produced a conservatizing effect upon the working class which we describe as a 'bourgeoisification,'" she states. "One of the forms this takes is the readiness of the workers to accept bourgeois opinions and propaganda as scientific truth and adapt themselves to it.

"Like the whole working class," Reed emphasized, "the party is under constant pressure and bombardment from this massive bourgeois propaganda machine." Some of the discussions taking place in the SWP indicate that "a certain amount of adaptation to bourgeois propaganda has arisen which, although probably unwitting, is a signal that should alert us to the danger."

That is what the cosmetics controversy clearly revealed. "When the comrades defend the right of women to use cosmetics, fashions, etc.," Reed stated, "without clearly distinguishing between such a right and the capitalist social compulsion to use them, they have fallen into the trap of bourgeois propaganda."

It is true, she went on, that "so long as capitalism prevails, we must abide by these cosmetic and fashion decrees." ... We must give at least a token recognition of the harsh reality. But this does not mean that we must accept these edicts and compulsions complacently, or without protest. The workers in the plants are often obliged to accept speedups, pay cuts, and attacks on their unions. But they always and invariably accept them under protest, under continuing struggle against them, and in a constant movement to *oppose* their needs and will against their exploiters.

"The class struggle is a movement of *opposition*, not *adaptation*," Reed said, "and this holds true not only of the workers in the plants, but of the women as well. ..."

That conclusion, we could add, holds equally true for today. And in that spirit, the following book has been prepared.

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Defeat of Jim Crow milestone for workers

The March 7-8 events marking 50 years since the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery march for voting rights speak volumes about how the U.S. was changed forever by the revolutionary movement that overthrew Jim Crow, as well as the unfinished tasks of that struggle.

The Montgomery bus boycott in 1955-56, the Battle of Birmingham in 1963, the Selma fight for voting rights two years later and innumerable other battles were waged by workers and farmers in the South and their allies from the North, who exercised discipline, courage and steadfast reliance on their determination and the power of their numbers.

The movement was one of truly mass actions that permanently changed the consciousness not only of the thousands who marched, fought brutal attacks and prevailed, but of the millions across the country who were won to the cause. The battles strengthened the entire working class. The overthrow of Jim Crow wiped out a key tool the employers and their government had used for almost a century to divide and weaken working people.

The fight strengthened the Cuban Revolution and its internationalist aid in Africa, the Irish Republican fight against British imperialism, the African National Congress-led battle to bring down the hated apartheid system in South Africa and more.

It produced a revolutionary leader of the caliber of Malcolm X, who saw the Black movement in the U.S. as part of the world fight against the propertied classes and exposed the U.S. government and both capitalist parties as the enemy of humanity. His writings are kept in print today by Pathfinder Press.

Those who say nothing has significantly changed, or who see a “new Jim Crow” like that imposed after the bloody defeat of Radical Reconstruction in the 1870s, are mistaken. The civil rights revolution dealt a deathblow to lynchings, to segregated public facilities, to laws barring marriage between African-Americans and Caucasians and much more.

Many tasks in the fight to end race discrimination remain. Racist oppression is endemic to capitalist rule.

While segregation has been rooted out in Selma, the city is one of the poorest in Alabama. It’s 80 percent Black, official unemployment is 11 percent and 42 percent of the residents are below the federal poverty line.

In 2013 the Supreme Court dealt a blow to the very Voting Rights Act the Selma marchers shed blood for. That ruling opened the door to discriminatory measures that fall disproportionately on workers who are African-American or Latino.

The large, overwhelmingly proletarian turnout for the Selma march; the continual explosions of resistance to police brutality; the determination to win control over safety on the job by oil and rail workers; the actions of Walmart workers for \$15 an hour, full-time work and a union — all these fights increasingly reinforce each other. They pose the necessity — and the possibility — of building a mass, internationalist revolutionary movement of millions that will, through experience and drawing on lessons of the past, grow strong enough to end the dictatorship of capital, pull up the material basis of racism by the roots and build a new society based on human solidarity and the interests of the toiling majority.

Cuban withstood 11 years in Somali prison

Continued from page 7

out contact with Cuban representatives or his family, for the first five years. In the book he describes how he withstood the isolation, the brutal conditions, and the anguish of not knowing what happened to the rest of his unit or even the outcome of the war.

Hundreds of soldiers, sailors — including dozens of young cadets — and FAR officers attended the presentation, which launched the third edition of the book, issued by Verde Olivo, publishing house of the FAR.

“It was his human qualities of humbleness and kindness” that allowed him to survive the long isolation and prison conditions, Army Corps General Alvaro López Miera, the FAR’s chief of staff, told the gathering. “That’s what makes him equally qualified to command a BM-21 artillery unit and to write children’s books.” Several books of children stories by Villavicencio were also on sale at the book fair as well as his first novel written for adults.

In the Lanta Buur prison, Villavicencio shared medicines and other essential items he received from Cuba with Ethiopian prisoners of war and Somali political prisoners, often without them knowing the items were from him.

In 1988, when the Somali government agreed to repatriate thousands of Ethiopian prisoners, Villavicencio was not among those slated to be released. When his fellow inmates learned this, they refused to leave unless he went with them.

In August 1988, as a result of the Cuban government’s efforts and the solidarity he had won from fellow prisoners, Villavicencio was on the first Red Cross-chartered flight out of Somalia together with 176 Ethiopians.

Villavicencio said his book had been dedicated and sent to the Cuban Five when they were in U.S. prisons. Four of the five were present at the event, and Villavicencio invited René González to take the floor.

“Orlando’s book was an inspiration for us in prison,” González said. “If he had been capable of resisting in Somalia, we knew that we too had to resist.”

It was also one of the most popular books of those the Cuban Five circulated among fellow inmates, he added.

Cuba’s role in Africa

Continued from page 7

the imperialist world — in health, sanitation, education, communications, electrification — strengthens the struggle against imperialist domination,” Waters said. “It makes it harder to drive a wedge between working people in Africa and the imperialist world.”

Jumping into the lively discussion after the presentations, Ali, a medical student from Chad studying in Cuba, asked, “What can I do to advance the struggle in Africa?”

“I don’t pretend to know a great deal about Chad,” Waters replied. “But for all of us, two things are important. Take advantage of your opportunity to travel and read. Study and learn from the accumulated lessons of the working class internationally, the history and lessons you will find in many of the books available here today. And second, to paraphrase José Martí, ‘Join your fate to that of the oppressed and exploited’ — to the working class, which has the power to transform the world, as the Cuban Revolution has taught us.”

LETTERS

Rail bosses and safety

In the late 1980s I worked on Norfolk Southern. Very early one morning my train struck a car at a small road crossing leading to a factory, as the night shift streamed out. What followed revealed the real approach of the rail bosses toward safety.

We were taken into the office to meet with the railroad’s “claims agent,” who asked what happened. I

said that the crossing had no warning lights, bells, or gates. It had only *one* unlit warning sign, on the side *opposite* the factory.

The claims agent yelled, “That crossing had all the markings it was required by law to have! There was nothing wrong with it!”

The rail bosses say crossing collisions are the fault of careless, stupid or reckless car drivers and

sponsor programs such as “Operation Lifesaver” to get rail workers to participate in media scolding of drivers. Rail workers should reject participating in these programs, which serve only to help the rail bosses evade their responsibility to eliminate the crossings by building bridges or tunnels.

Ray Parsons
Delmar, New York

Debate on Iran talks

Continued from front page

rael. A few dozen Democratic legislators chose not to attend the speech.

Shortly after Netanyahu’s address, 47 Republican senators took the highly unusual step of sending an open letter to the Iranian government, saying that any nuclear deal the White House reaches with Tehran might last only as long as Obama remains in office, through January 2017.

These senators “engaged in treachery,” said a March 10 editorial in the *New York Daily News*, “cutting the legs out from under America’s commander-in-chief.” While opposing the pact, “we strenuously condemn their betrayal of the U.S. constitutional system.”

The agreement being proposed by Washington would last some 10 years and limit Iran’s capacity to enrich uranium, the number of centrifuges it can operate and impose a regime of “inspections” by U.N. authorities. Washington together with other members of the U.N. Security Council — China, France, Russia and the U.K. — joined by Germany have set a deadline of the end of March for Washington and Tehran to reach a deal, with a final pact to be signed by June 30.

Leaders in Tehran argue Washington’s demands are too harsh. “Iran will not accept excessive and illogical demands,” Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told Fars news agency March 3.

Zarif also took advantage of the letter from the 47 senators. “This kind of correspondence,” he said, “tells us that the United States is not trustworthy.”

Obama views reaching an agreement and ratcheting down tensions with Iran as a key foreign policy objective, and believes his skills at diplomacy and dialogue can achieve more than threats and acts of war.

Washington is also in a tacit alliance with Tehran in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Political figures close to Obama, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, former national security adviser under James Carter, have said Washington will take military action to prevent Tel Aviv from bombing Iran should the Israeli rulers decide to do so alone.

To pressure Tehran to sign an agreement, Washington and its imperialist partners in Europe have imposed a series of economic sanctions, hitting working people the hardest. This has led workers to protest against layoffs, rising prices and to demand payment of back wages. Tens of thousands of teachers demonstrated outside parliament in Tehran March 1 demanding higher pay.

The Iranian government maintains its nuclear program is to produce electricity and for medical purposes, not to produce nuclear weapons, and demands the sanctions be lifted as part of the agreement.

In his speech before Congress, Netanyahu described the close alliance of Israel and the U.S. over decades, but derided the anticipated agreement as a “bad deal.” He said, “Even if Israel has to stand alone, Israel will stand.”

In a campaign speech in a West Bank settlement outside Jerusalem Feb. 25, Netanyahu said that Washington and its partners negotiating with Tehran seem to “have given up on that commitment” to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear bomb, *Haaretz* reported. “Maybe they can live with it, but I can’t.”

Israeli opposition Labor Party leader Isaac Herzog, the leading challenger to Netanyahu in the March 17 elections, opposed the prime minister’s visit to Washington. “You will cause strategic damage to Israel’s standing and to the relationship with the United States,” he said, the *New York Times* reported Feb. 26.

Netanyahu and his supporters in Israel say Obama is meddling in Israeli politics in an effort to defeat him. Polls in Israel show that Herzog’s Zionist Union bloc with Tzipi Livni is running neck and neck against Netanyahu’s Likud.

Bills authored by Republicans and some Democrats are circulating in Congress demanding Obama allow Congress to vote on any nuclear pact with Iran and calling for a new round of sanctions if talks fail.

The president has said he will veto any new sanctions and views an agreement with Iran as a matter of “executive prerogative.”