

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Bitsy Aspy: from her youth built communist movement
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 79/NO. 22 JUNE 15, 2015

Conference for workers active in struggle set for June 18-20

BY MAGGIE TROWE

A three-day Active Workers Conference sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party is set for June 18-20 in Oberlin, Ohio. It will offer an opportunity for workers involved in labor battles, the fight for \$15 an hour and a union, the movement against police brutality and defense of the Cuban Revolution to learn from talks, classes and informal discussion and debate.

Several hundred participants are expected from across the U.S. and around the world. The gathering is held on the Oberlin College campus.

Talks by Socialist Workers Party leaders Jack Barnes and Mary-Alice Waters, as well as classes and displays, will address questions such as:

- Openings to build the party as proletarian resistance strengthens in response to the world capitalist crisis, with labor battles becoming more intertwined with the fight of African-Americans and others against police brutality, the developing social movement for a higher minimum wage and other struggles.

- The victory registered by revolution

Continued on page 3

NY, Puerto Rico rallies: 'Free Oscar López now'

Jailed 34 years in US for independence fight



"We should run Puerto Rico ourselves," said framed-up independence fighter Oscar López leading up to May 30 march in New York (above). He has spent 34 years in U.S. prisons.

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — More than 1,000 people marched in Harlem May 30 to demand freedom for Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López, who has been imprisoned in the United States for 34 years, 12 of them in solitary confinement. The day before, hundreds marched in San Juan, Puerto Rico. (See article on page 9.)

Participants came from all over the East Coast and further, including Chicago; Boston; Orlando, Florida; Philadelphia; Cleveland; Detroit; and Nashville, Tennessee. There were contingents from several church groups, as well as Service Employees

Continued on page 9

Crimean Tatar leader: End Moscow's occupation!

BY JOHN STUDER

KIEV, Ukraine — "The Crimean Tatars have been fighting very hard and long to return and live in our native homeland," said Mustafa Dzhemilev, the decades-long leader

INTERVIEW WITH MUSTAFA DZHEMILEV
More Ukraine coverage p. 7

of the Tatars' fight for their national rights. "The conditions imposed on the Crimean Tatars by the Russian occupation are getting worse."

Dzhemilev spoke with Frank Forrester, a former coal miner and meat packer from Minneapolis; Catharina Tirsén, a food worker from Manchester, England; Oksana Demyanovych, our Ukrainian collaborator and translator; and myself here May 31.

We met in his office just off Independence Square, the center of the popular Maidan mobilizations 15 months ago that overthrew the Moscow-backed regime of Viktor Yanukovich, reasserting Ukrainian sovereignty

Continued on page 7

Texas oil strikers reject latest Marathon concession contract



Militant/Bernie Senter

Striking Steelworkers in Texas City rejected Marathon's latest proposal that includes attacks on safety. Above, March 23 commemoration of 2005 fatal explosion at refinery there.

BY BERNIE SENTER

Oil workers at Marathon's Galveston Bay refinery in Texas City, Texas, remain on the picket lines after overwhelmingly rejecting the company's latest contract offer on May 18 that would have imposed new concessions. In addition to requiring off-duty workers to wear pagers and re-

port to the refinery within an hour of getting a call, the company wants the ability to force workers to work their scheduled days off and prevent them from going home at the end of their shift.

The 1,100 Texas City oil workers were part of a nationwide strike at

Continued on page 4

Washington seeks deals with Tehran, Moscow to press its Mideast interests

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Over the recent period President Barack Obama's administration has signaled a major shift in U.S. foreign policy, centered on two moves that are aimed at increasing Washington's dominance and stability in the Middle East.

First, the U.S. administration is

driving to complete a deal with Tehran to slow down its nuclear program and aid Washington in attacking Islamic State, in return for phasing out sanctions against Iran. Obama's aim is to open possibilities for Washington and Tehran to work together to stabilize the region.

Second, the Obama administration is pursuing a relationship with the Russian government that includes

Continued on page 6

Workers value revolutionary perspective of 'Militant'

BY EMMA JOHNSON

We have gone well over our goal of signing up 2,000 new or renewing subscribers! The success of the seven-week international subscription campaign for this working-class news-weekly is a reflection of the growing self-confidence of working people in the U.S. and around the world and the desire to stand up to the dog-eat-dog mentality fostered by capitalism.

For those involved in labor and

Continued on page 3

Inside

Improved online 'Militant' is valuable tool for workers 2

Cleveland: 'It's not right for cop to walk' in 2012 killings 4

New Ukraine group seeks to renew Cuba's Chernobyl aid 7

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Walmart workers rally in L.A. against company retaliation

Turkish auto workers' sit-down strike wins concessions

Improved online ‘Militant’ is valuable tool for workers

BY VIVIAN SAHNER
Readers of this socialist newsweekly have a valuable new tool in the online *Militant* — an index of subjects and authors. And it’s getting better.

Since 1995 the articles in each issue have been available on the website to readers around the world, from recent subscribers to longtime participants in the workers’ movement. Now more than 100 volunteers are working to put the *Militant* at your service from 1994 back to its founding in 1928.

The index helps workers involved in struggles find the accurate story of fights by working people over decades, and political lessons for today from a revolutionary working-class perspective on the biggest questions we face world-wide.

You’ll find news and analysis of the growing labor resistance and new rise in the Black struggle centered on the fight against police brutality; the deepening world capitalist crisis since 2008; the 1979 revolutions in Nicaragua, Grenada, and Iran, and Cuba’s internationalist mission in Angola that helped bring down white-supremacist rule in Namibia and South Africa; the Vietnamese liberation fight and movement against the U.S. war in Indochina; the Black struggle from the Montgomery bus boycott in the mid-1950s to the victories that defeated Jim Crow; the Cuban Revolution of 1959; the mass social movement in the 1930s that built the industrial unions; the fight against fascism and anti-Semitism; and much more.

You’ll find weekly coverage of communist workers’ activity in the unions

and social struggles over these years, including Socialist Workers Party election campaigns and efforts to expand the readership of the *Militant* and books on revolutionary politics.

The improved website is invaluable for understanding shifts in Washington’s foreign policy in order to chart a way forward for working people from the Americas to the Mideast, Ukraine and beyond. It politically arms workers and youth defending the socialist revolution in Cuba, and points to the example of workers and farmers there taking political power from the capitalist rulers and transforming themselves in the process.

The index allows readers to look up articles by subject and author, as well as search headlines by keyword. So far it covers issues from 2006 to 2015, with more years on the way soon.

Since mid-2013 a PDF file of the full issue of the *Militant* has been added with each week’s articles, so readers can see the pages as they appear in print. PDFs are now posted back to 2006, and volunteers are scanning bound volumes to produce clean, searchable copies going

‘All lives will matter, when Black Lives Matter’

BY DAN FEIN
CHICAGO—The rising Black struggle in response to police violence was the focus of a May 23 Militant Labor Forum entitled, “Malcolm X: Revolutionary Working-Class Leader—Lessons for Fighters Today.”

The panel included Aislinn Pulley,

THE MILITANT Subject Index for 2006 - 2015

SubjectsAuthorsIssue-by-IssueSearchReturn to

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To open articles by clicking on the title, you must set your browser to allow popups from themilitant.com.

Issue	Date	Page	Click title below to view article on
3	Feb 2, 2015	2	Houston grand jury lets another killer cop walk
3	Feb 2, 2015	4	'We have to speak out against police brutality'
4	Feb 9, 2015	3	Protests denounce killing by New Jersey cops
6	Feb 23, 2015	1	Does 'broken windows' policy cause police brutality?
7	Mar 2, 2015	1	Wash. rally: Charge cops who killed farmworker
8	Mar 9, 2015	2	Cop killing of deli worker in Georgia sparks protest
8	Mar 9, 2015	3	Pussy Riot protests police brutality, Ukraine war
9	Mar 16, 2015	1	NJ protesters demand: 'Charge cops who killed Jerame Reid'

THE MILITANT

Vol. 79/No. 18 May 25, 2015

—ON THE PICKET LINE—
MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help make this column a voice of workers' resistance!
This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about the labor resistance that is unfolding today. It seeks to give voice to those engaged in battle and help build solidarity. Its success depends on input from readers. If you are involved in a labor struggle or have information on one, please contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018, or (212) 244-4899, or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.
—Maggie Trowe



Yale Law
Athens, Yale University students and supporters gave a powerful plea to the off of 25 of the 200 officers. Student May 17th back fight against faculty.

Saskatoon bus drivers fight for compensation in illegal lockout
CALGARY, Alberta — Public transit bus drivers in Saskatoon are still without a contract and are fighting for compensation during a monthlong illegal lockout that ended Oct. 17.
"We're going to remain strong and hopefully we can make headway," transit operator David Strangell said by phone May 18.
Some 300 members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 615 were locked out in a conflict over wages and pensions. The Labour Board declared the lockout illegal, but ruled in favor of the city government's unilateral move to downgrade the p

Volunteers are expanding online index, above, and posting *Militant* going back to 1928 founding, providing an unparalleled record of revolutionary, working-class experiences and lessons. At right, upgraded “On the Picket Line” column.

back 87 years. The new index is an addition to the searchable issues themselves.

Other features have been added too. The weekly “On the Picket Line” column has been redesigned to include the entire column online together with the main photo.

The Cuban documentary “Cuba and Chernobyl,” which tells the story of the 1986 nuclear catastrophe and Cuba’s ex-

emplary international medical program that treated more than 25,000 Ukrainians, is available to view and download. Volunteers translated the Spanish sound track to provide English subtitles.

a leader of Black Lives Matter here; Juanita Young, a veteran fighter against police killings in New York; and Alyson Kennedy of the Socialist Workers Party. Pulley described how the previous week fighters against police brutality rode the subway carrying signs and talking to passengers about joining the fight.

Black Lives Matter and other organizations are campaigning for the firing of Chicago cop Dante Servin, who was just acquitted in the 2012 killing of Rekia Boyd. “At an April 29 teach-in at DePaul University 100 cops and a SWAT team came,” said Pulley. “They closed the school and put it in lockdown. But still over 200 came to protest the acquittal of Servin. It is only through sustained political organization that we will get him fired.”

“Since we formed Mothers Fight for

Justice, the list of families who are affected by cop killings keeps getting bigger,” said Young. She spoke about other fights she has supported since her son Malcolm Ferguson was killed by a New York cop in 2000.

“Malcolm X was a revolutionary who appealed to our self-worth so we could see our capacity to organize to fight to change the world,” said Kennedy. “His lessons are important for today, as the Black struggle and working-class resistance is growing. Police killings and brutality against Blacks is not accepted and there are immediate responses when it happens.”

“All lives will matter, when Black Lives Matter,” Pulley said in the discussion. She announced that Black Lives Matter is co-sponsoring a national conference on the fight against police brutality in Cleveland in July.

The Militant

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Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

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

THE MILITANT

Workers behind bars fight for dignity

Prisoners across the U.S. and beyond have staged hunger strikes and other protests against dehumanizing conditions and censorship, joining a long, proud history of workers behind bars who refuse to be broken. The ‘Militant’ champions and tells the truth about these struggles.



Inmates negotiate with prison commissioner during rebellion at Attica, N.Y., in 1971.

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2 The Militant June 15, 2015

Active Workers Conference

Continued from front page

tionary Cuba in defending its sovereignty and socialism for 55 years, forcing Washington to begin talks on opening diplomatic relations and ending its decades-long economic war against Cuba — even as the U.S. government seeks other avenues to achieve its goal of reversing the socialist revolution.

- Class politics in the Mideast.
- The need for workers to organize independent working-class political action relying on our own power, as capitalist politicians — Democrats, Republicans and so-called independents and socialists such as Bernie Sanders — launch campaigns for president and other public offices.

As part of the conference, Socialist Workers Party members who are part of the growing workers' resistance in various industries will meet to discuss their political work on the job as communists, union-builders and workers active in social movements and labor struggles.

Talks and classes will draw on the article "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War," a 1990 resolution published in issue no. 11 of the magazine *New Internationalist*. It explains that world capitalism suffered a historic defeat with the collapse of counterrevolutionary Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, which had served as imperialism's "most reliable instruments for the transmission of capitalist values into the workers states and more broadly into the international workers' movement."

For revolutionary fighters the world over, the resolution explains, it is not enough to recognize that imperialism lost the Cold War. That alone does not allow revolutionaries to chart a way forward. They need the living example of Cuba, as well.

John Studer and Frank Forrestal, currently on a reporting trip in Ukraine, will present a class on "Washington, Ukraine and the Putin Regime's Fight to Maintain Russia's 'Near Abroad' — The Stakes for Working People."

Steve Clark and Lea Sherman will present: "Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia and U.S. Imperialism: Class Politics in the Middle East Today."

"Cuba: Leveraging a Victory Over U.S. Imperialism and Organizing to Emulate and Defend Cuba's Socialist Revolution" will be the topic of a class by Dave Prince and Jena Kendall.

Norton Sandler and Diana Newberry will initiate discussion on "How a Bolshevik Nucleus Becomes a Proletarian Party of Mass Action: Lessons from *Teamster Politics* on Party Building, Revolutionary Centralism and the Fight for Workers Power." The class draws lessons for communist workers from the new edition of *Teamster Politics* by Farrell Dobbs, a leader of the Teamsters union during the 1930s and longtime central leader of the SWP, and from *The Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party* adopted by the 1965 SWP convention.

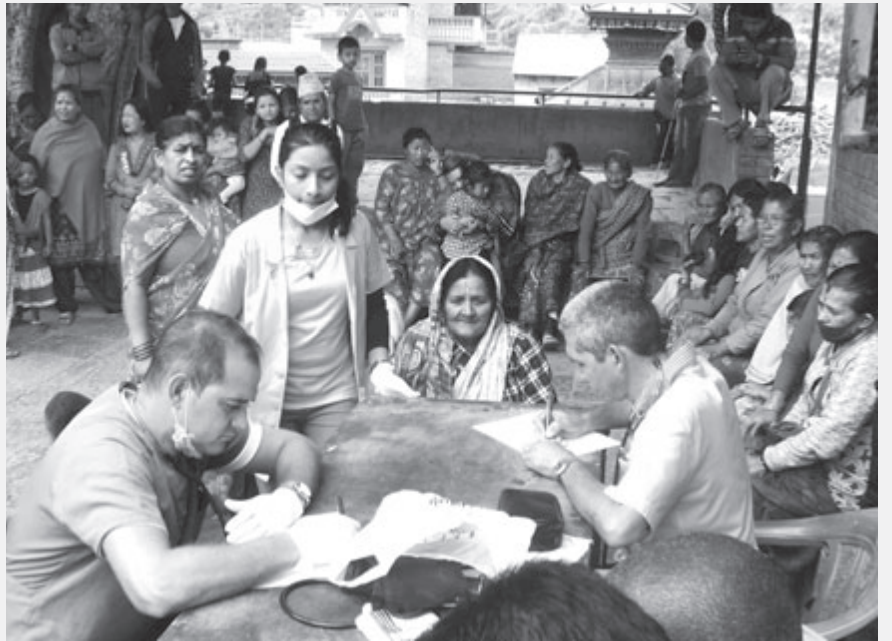
Tables will be loaded with Pathfinder books for conference participants to thumb through and buy at special prices.

Participants can also look at displays that use photos, maps and text to expand on themes of classes and talks, including one titled "Proletarian Resistance Grows: Joining the Battles and Unfurling the Party's Political Banner" and another called "From the Print Project and Monthly Appeal to Walmart, the Railroads and the Black Struggle: Strengthening the Supporters as an Auxiliary 'Who See the Party as Their Vehicle to Carry Out Communist Politics.'"

There will be plenty of time for informal discussion and relaxation. Participants get to know each other and exchange experiences and ideas during buffet-style meals at the college cafeteria and at evening socials.

Conference summaries on Saturday will draw together the three days of discussions. An evening panel will feature participants involved in labor resistance and social struggles; international work in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Ukraine and other

'Cubans show meaning of solidarity in Nepal'



Cuban internationalist medical workers have treated more than 4,600 people after the April 25 earthquake and aftershocks in Nepal. The brigade, composed of 49 volunteers, including 25 doctors and 10 nurses, arrived May 12.

"Our people are very glad the Cubans are here because the doctors are very friendly, they are experts, energetic and are true comrades," Surendra Raj Gosai, president of the Cuba Solidarity Committee Nepal, told the *Militant* by phone June 1.

The Cubans set up a field hospital on the grounds of the university campus in Kirtipur outside of Kathmandu. They have also traveled to other areas, including Bhaktapur, another of the hardest hit neighborhoods, at the initiative of the Cuba Solidarity Committee, and in Lalitpur (above).

More than 8,000 people died in the earthquake and hundreds of thousands are living in tents or staying with relatives as the monsoon season begins. "We are busy removing mountains of debris and clearing roads," Gosai said.

Nepalese doctors and paramedics are assisting the Cubans and other local residents are translating, Dr. Luis Orlando Oliveros, head of the brigade, told Prensa Latina.

"Not less than 150 medical teams from different countries came after the earthquake. They took photos and many have already left," Gosai said. "But the Cubans are still here. They understand the real meaning of solidarity."

— SETH GALINSKY

parts of the world; and Socialist Workers Party election campaigns. It will be followed by a party and dance.

On Sunday, June 21, SWP supporters who volunteer to help produce Pathfinder books and raise monthly financial

contributions will meet with party leaders to discuss their work.

It's not too late to register and organize to drive or fly to the conference with others. To learn more, contact SWP members near you (see list on page 8).

Workers value revolutionary view of 'Militant'

Continued from front page

social struggles the *Militant* is an indispensable tool to learn about each other's fights and get political clarity needed to make further advances.

As we go to press, we've received just shy of \$100,000 toward the \$115,000

Militant Fighting Fund goal. All checks that arrive in our office by June 9 will be counted.

"That's simple," Luis Chiliquinga told Arlene Rubinstein in Washington, D.C., when she asked why he supports the *Militant*. "The economic struggle is not sufficient. The *Militant* has a revolutionary perspective that's needed in this country and around the world."

Chiliquinga attended a May 23 Militant Labor Forum titled "How to Advance the Fight Against Police Brutality. Defending the Cuban Revolution Today" with Omari Musa from the Socialist Workers Party as the keynote speaker. Musa recently returned from a solidarity conference in Cuba.

Chiliquinga is a leader of the fight for \$15 and a union at McDonald's in D.C. "This is the right moment to sharpen the pressure and build our movement," he told forum participants. "Things have changed because we started pushing."

"We've sold way more renewals to people we've met going door to door in the previous months than we anticipated," Katy LeRougetel reported from Calgary, Alberta, June 1. "Three of the four readers who renewed this week are workers who signed up on the doorstep."

A construction worker renewed for 12 weeks and bought four books, *50 Years of Covert Operations in the US*, *I Will Die the Way I've Lived*, *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* and *Teamster Rebellion*.

"He asked if all the money 'went to the cause,' so I explained the Militant Fighting Fund," LeRougetel wrote. "He decided to make a donation along with the renewal and book purchase."

Nat London in Paris reported June 1 that three contributions from sailors and ship maintenance workers on the Marseille waterfront have helped put the fund over the top in France.

"Everyone was really impressed to learn about the massive iron miners' strike in Mauritania and glad to know that resistance has been building to police violence in the U.S.," Marc Kinzel, a ship maintenance worker on the SNCM ferryboat line, told London. "It reminded us of the way the police attacked our picket line on the waterfront here."

Kinzel has been signing up co-workers to receive weekly *Militant* articles that supporters translate into French. The SNCM workers have been engaged in a long struggle to defend their jobs in the face of company plans for layoffs of sailors and maintenance workers.

The effort to expand the readership of the *Militant* and build a working-class movement continues. Join us! Contact distributors nearest you listed on page 8. Send your contributions to the *Militant* at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

Next week's issue will feature the final scoreboards for the international subscription campaign and the Militant Fighting Fund.

For further reading...

U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

by Jack Barnes

in *New Internationalist* no. 11 \$16

Also in Spanish, French, Farsi, Swedish, Greek, Icelandic

U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War. ... That's what the Socialist Workers Party concluded in the wake of the collapse of regimes and parties across Eastern Europe and the USSR that claimed to be Communist. Contrary to imperialism's hopes, the working class in those countries has not been crushed.

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

by Jack Barnes

\$20

Also in Spanish, French, Greek, Farsi, Arabic

Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?

A Necessary Debate by Mary-Alice Waters

\$7

Also in Spanish, French, Farsi, Swedish

pathfinderpress.com

Contact a distributor listed on page 8

Cleveland: ‘It’s not right for cop to walk’ in 2012 killings

BY JOHN HAWKINS

CLEVELAND — The May 23 acquittal of Cleveland cop Michael Brelo for the 2012 killing of Malissa Williams and Timothy Russell confirmed for many working people here what they suspected all along — that the legal system is weighted in favor of the cops.

Russell and Williams, both unarmed, died in a hail of 137 bullets after being chased at high speed through this city’s streets by as many as 62 cop cars. Brelo fired 49 shots. Cuyahoga County Judge John O’Donnell found him not guilty of felony voluntary manslaughter in a non-jury bench trial.

Three days after Belo’s acquittal, Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson and the U.S. Department of Justice announced a settlement over a pattern of excessive force and civil rights violations by the city’s police department. The consent decree was based on a Justice Department report issued in December following an investigation initiated in the wake of the killings of Williams and Russell.

The agreement is an effort by the government to rein in the police, in response to the rising struggle around the country against cop brutality and abuse. Under the consent decree, the Cleveland Police Department is supposed to institute new policies, such as not firing guns from and at moving vehicles and prohibiting use of force on people who are handcuffed — with some exceptions.

But as many workers know from long experience, such agreements don’t change the basic class character and bias of the cops and courts.

“I already knew what the verdict was going to be,” Jerry Townsend, a

self-employed African-American construction worker who lives on this city’s predominantly Black east side, told the *Militant* May 25. “They convict people all the time and send them away every day based on little or no evidence. Here you have a mountain of evidence against this cop, and the judge can’t convict him of anything? He didn’t want to.”

Police say the Nov. 29, 2012, incident began after Russell and Williams drove away from a traffic stop. A few minutes later their car backfired as they passed the police station. A cop reported the incident as a gunshot and the chase was on. Some officers said someone was shooting at them. But the *Washington Post* reported that at least one radioed: “Passenger just put his hands out asking us to stop. He does not have a gun.”

When the vehicle Williams and Russell were in came to a stop, 13 cops fired into their car. According to prosecutors, Brelo fired the last 15 shots downward through the windshield of the car. Williams and Russell were Black, Brelo is Caucasian.

In announcing his verdict, O’Donnell said prosecutors had not proven that Brelo’s shots alone had killed Williams and Russell. Five police supervisors still face misdemeanor charges in relation to the killings, but none of them were among those who fired on the pair.

Hundreds of workers and youth took to the streets in protest that afternoon and night after the judge’s ruling and again the next day. Among the actions on May 23 was a protest of more than 100 marking the six-month anniversary of the killing of 12-year-old African-American Tamir Rice by Cleveland police officer Timothy Loehmann.

“You can’t really say that only the bullets fired by Brelo caused their deaths,” Terrance Hood, who works at McDonald’s, told the *Militant* May 25. “But that doesn’t mean Brelo should have gotten off. They should have charged all 13 of

‘Stop turning back refugee ships with Rohingyas’



Militant/Ron Poulsen

SYDNEY — Myanmar and Bangladeshi residents and some supporters chanted “Rescue the Rohingyas, let them land, let them stay!” and “Stop the turnbacks!” outside Town Hall here May 22. The Refugee Action Coalition called the 200-strong demonstration in response to the desperate conditions of asylum-seekers from Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Boatloads have been prevented from landing in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia by being turned or towed back out to sea. On May 20 the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia agreed to temporarily take some refugees. But as many as 2,500 are still adrift on old trawlers, according to the U.N. and the International Organization for Migration.

In mid-May Australian Prime Minister Anthony Abbott applauded those governments for turning away boats, as Canberra has for the past two years. “I don’t apologize in any way for the action that Australia has taken to preserve safety at sea by turning boats around,” he said.

There are more than 1 million Rohingyas, a Muslim ethnic group, in majority-Buddhist Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. “The Myanmar government denies Rohingyas citizenship or passports,” Sirnjl Mustafa, 21, told the *Militant* at the protest. They are blocked from owning land, accessing basic services and traveling. Hundreds have been killed in recent assaults led by Buddhist monks.

About 150,000 Rohingyas are held in concentration camps in their home state of Rakhine, while another 200,000 live in squalid camps across the border in Bangladesh.

Indonesian fishermen from Aceh province have brought ashore hundreds of asylum-seekers. “How can we not help destitute people like this? It would be a big sin,” fisherman Muchtar Ali told the *Australian* newspaper.

“This is not just a Rohingya problem, it is a problem for humanity,” Salimul Kalam, a young Rohingya man, told the Sydney rally.

— RON POULSEN

the cops.”

Sheila Lopez, an office worker who is Caucasian, echoed Hood’s opinion. “There’s no way one man could be held accountable for all that happened that night. But it’s still not right for him to walk away with nothing,” she said. “Any

time you go against a police officer the odds are against you, because they protect their own.” She added, “No one deserves to die like that simply because they are fleeing.”

Leroy Watson contributed to this article.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

GEORGIA

Atlanta

Behind Washington’s ‘Reset’ of Policy Toward Russia and the Struggle for Ukraine’s Sovereignty. Speaker: John Benson, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., June 12, 7:30 p.m. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel.: (678) 528-7828.

NEW YORK

New York

Israel, Iran, the Obama Administration and the Unfolding Class Struggle in the Mideast. Speaker: Ma’mud Shirvani. Fri., June 12, 7:30 p.m. 989 8th Ave., Room 2A. Tel.: (646) 434-8117.

CANADA

Montreal

Behind Washington’s ‘Reset’ of Its Policy Towards Russia and the Fight for Ukraine’s Sovereignty. Speaker: Aimée Kendergi, Communist League. Fri., June 12, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Suite 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

—CALENDAR—

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

Cuba, the United States and the Future of the Revolution. Speaker: Kenia Serrano, president of Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples and member of Cuba’s National Assembly. Wed., June 10. Reception, 6:30 p.m., program, 7 p.m. Western Springs Garden Community Hall, 956 Great North Road. Tel.: 021-071-5495. Email: cubafriends.ak@gmail.com

Texas oil strikers reject latest concession contract

Continued from front page

15 refineries and chemical plants that started in February. Strikers fought for safety on the job, less forced overtime and the end of contracting out daily maintenance. A national agreement was reached March 12. Union members returned to work after settling local issues at all but two refineries, Marathon’s refinery in Texas City and BP in Toledo, Ohio.

Members of United Steelworkers Local 7-1 at the large BP refinery in Whiting, Indiana, ratified a contract May 11 and returned to work.

“We held the line,” Ebony Parker told the *Militant* by phone June 1. The agreement “addressed all of the items, including bargaining rights,” Parker said. “We did not give up our bargaining rights, and backed off BP on this. A lot of folks thought we wouldn’t make it, but we did.

“A lot of us had never experienced a strike,” she said. “This taught us a lot and we gained strength. The USW retirees encouraged us and helped us a lot. We fought one of the biggest industries in the country and had a very small percentage that crossed our line.”

“The company acted during the strike like a bully in the playground and expected more union members to cross the

line. But only 13 out of 1,100 did,” Steven Kallies, a maintenance worker at BP in Whiting, said in a phone interview. Scabs will be dismissed when their contract expires June 7, Kallies said.

In Texas City, Marathon is “trying to gut the benefits we bargained for,” Aaron Maldonado, an operator at the plant, told the *Houston Chronicle*. He noted that the pager requirement would make it impossible to take his family on even a short trip.

Throughout the strike workers have pointed to the massive overtime and punishing schedules as a threat to safety of workers and the communities. A 2005 explosion at the Texas City refinery, then owned by BP, killed 15 workers.

Reuters reported that after announcing the results to more than 100 cheering union members, Steelworkers Local 13-1 Vice President Larry Burchfield said, “There are too many takeaways at one time. That has really solidified the membership.” Picketing continues and community support is strong. The union hall is stocked with donated food.

Workers at the Marathon refinery in Catlettsburg, Kentucky, who returned to work in April, are building support for their union brothers and sisters still on strike against Marathon in Texas.

“We go from control room to control room throughout the refinery” collecting funds to send to striking Local 13-1, Tim Thirion, an operator in Catlettsburg, told the *Militant* June 1.

Under the new contract at the Catlettsburg refinery, workers went from eight- to 12-hour shifts. “We were the last to give up the eight-hour day,” Thirion said. “There’s a reason our forefathers fought for shorter hours. When I get home now, I just hit the couch and get ready to go back to work the next day.”

The 350 striking workers at the BP-Husky refinery, members of Steelworkers Local 1-346, took down picket lines May 27 and sent BP an unconditional offer to return to work. This put the ball in the company’s court to make a contract offer. “If they do not, it’s considered a lockout,” Local President Chad Culbertson told WTOL TV in Toledo, “and at that point the members would be able to collect unemployment.”

BP-Husky made an offer May 30, which union officials said would be voted on within a week.

Alyson Kennedy and Dan Fein in Chicago and Mitchel Rosenberg, a member of USW Local 10-1 in Philadelphia, contributed to this article.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help make this column a voice of workers' resistance!

This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about the labor resistance that is unfolding today. It seeks to give voice to those engaged in battle and help build solidarity. Its success depends on input from readers. If you are involved in a labor struggle or have information on one, please contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

—Maggie Trowe

Walmart workers rally in L.A. against company retaliation

LOS ANGELES — Dozens of current and former Walmart workers and supporters rallied here May 28 against what workers call retaliatory firings and store closings by the retail giant.

Some 150 people marched through Chinatown sporting stickers saying "Walmart, end retaliation now." Some had just ended a 24-hour fast. Supporters included port truck drivers, the Teamsters and United Food and Commercial Workers unions, Fight for \$15 and Chinatown Community for Equitable Development.

"After working at the Placerville Walmart for 12 years, I was fired on a bogus reason," Cherie Carpenter told the *Militant*. "A month ago three of us were taken out the same day. Two of us were active with OUR Walmart and all three of us were higher-paid associates. They accused me of stealing water they were supplying to us." OUR Walmart is a nationwide movement fighting for \$15 an hour, regular hours and respect.

"Walmart shut down its most active store," Venanzi Luna told the crowd. Luna is a spokesperson for OUR Walmart and one of the 530 workers put out of work when the Pico Rivera store closed in April, supposedly to repair plumbing. "Are we going to show Walmart how it is to be united?"

"Yes," responded the protesters.

"Plumbing issues have nothing to do with it," Luna said. "It is retaliation, and we're going to stand up. We're here united to help each other out and we're here to show Walmart that OUR Walmart is here to stay."

Walmart shut down four other stores in Florida, Oklahoma and Texas in April, leaving 2,200 workers unemployed.

"They try to fire me on a daily basis. I fight for my rights," Edgar Gonzalez, who has worked at McDonald's for two years and is part of the Fight for \$15, told the rally. "We're going to lose some battles but we're going to win some, too."

—Danielle London

Turkish auto workers' sit-down strike wins concessions

Some 5,000 workers at the Oyak Renault factory in Bursa, Turkey, began a sit-down strike May 15, demanding better wages and working conditions and the right to choose their union. The action began after the Turkish Metal Union, which represents them, signed a three-year agreement with a 3 percent wage increase in a country where inflation far exceeds that rate.

According to the Turkish daily *Today's Zaman*, "Workers said the dispute was sparked after union Turk Metal last month negotiated a 60 percent wage hike for workers at a plant run by parts maker Bosch Fren, but failed to secure a similar deal elsewhere."

"This strike has led to other strikes at a number of companies, some with

factory occupations, in Bursa as well as other cities such as Istanbul and Ankara," said a statement by the French General Confederation of Workers issued May 28 in French and Turkish and distributed to workers in the Renault plant in Paris.

On May 14, more than 1,500 Oyak Renault night shift workers did not clock in and gathered in front of the plant. The company is a joint venture between France's Renault and the Turkish army's pension fund.

The strike spread to Tofas, a joint venture between Fiat and Turkey's Koc Holding, and to Koc Holding's subsidiaries, Ford Otosan and Turk Traktor, as well as supplier factories in Bursa.

The booming automotive industry in Turkey generated \$22.3 billion a year.

Renault workers resumed production May 27 after the company agreed to no punitive actions against strikers, official recognition of workers' delegates elected during the strike, workers' right to join the union of their choice, two bonuses, a wage increase to be announced within a month, no criminal charges against strikers and pay for the 13 days of the strike.

—Yasemin Aydinoglu and Nat London

Boston hotel workers protest unsafe working conditions

BOSTON — Some 75 members of UNITE HERE Local 26 and supporters protested unsafe working conditions with an informational picket line in front of the Wyndham Boston Beacon Hill Hotel May 27.

Workers say the hotel fails to provide proper protective equipment when they must deal with biohazards.

The hotel is located across the street



Militant/Bernie Senter

Walmart workers and supporters rally in Los Angeles May 28 against retaliatory firings and store closures by retail giant. Some workers had just ended 24-hour fast.

from Massachusetts General Hospital and offers a special rate to its patients. "Many MGH hospital patients stay at the Wyndham while recovering from surgery or receiving treatment for illness," states a brochure distributed by pickets.

"I once cleaned a room so full of blood that it was on the carpets, the walls, and in the bathroom," Jose Berciano, a houseman at the Wyndham Boston for 17 years, explains in the brochure. "The only additional protections I received were plastic trash bags taped to my body."

In an April UNITE HERE survey of Wyndham housekeepers, they reported finding "bandages, gauze, syringes, insulin, pills, saline bags, respirators, oxygen tanks and colostomy bags in the hotel." Housekeepers also reported they had not been provided a way to safely disposal of blood, vomit and other bodily waste or needles, the brochure states.

"They need to protect us and respect us," Berciano told the *Militant* on the picket line. "Fighting is the only way things will improve." Since they began fighting for a union and a contract, he said, the company has started buying better gloves and masks for them.

In a statement, Wyndham Hotel Group said, "On-property associates undergo safety training, which includes chemical safety, fire prevention, and blood-borne pathogen training," and denied that hotel associates are forced to

handle hospital waste, reported the *Boston Globe*.

In mid-May the Occupational Safety and Health Administration began an inspection at the hotel based on a complaint by the workers.

—Ted Leonard

Quebec valve workers locked out after rejecting contract

MONTREAL — Some 400 valve workers, members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions, were locked out by Velan Inc. May 25 after voting down by 78 percent the "final offer" by management that had been endorsed by union officials.

Picket lines are up at four gates around the large plant. Many truckers and others honk their horns in solidarity.

"Velan wanted an important change in 'labor flexibility,'" Local President José Sousa told the media. "In other words, the company wanted the option to transfer employees to other jobs. The membership said this was unacceptable, fearing that the company would abuse its right to transfer workers and that this could lead to job losses."

The bosses' proposal included a 2.5 percent annual wage increase over three years. Velan President Yves Leduc accused the union of organizing a slowdown in the weeks before the lockout. Quebec-based Velan employs more than 2,000 workers at plants in 11 countries.

—Jim Stanton

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



June 8, 1990

Tens of thousands of workers and farmers in East Germany staged a massive strike May 10 demanding protection for wages and pensions and from rising unemployment.

The strikes came as top economic officials of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) negotiated a treaty on monetary, and aspects of political, unification.

A main feature of the treaty is establishing the FRG currency, the deutsche mark, as the single currency in both Germanys. The GDR's currency will be traded for deutsche marks at a rate of one-to-one for wages and pensions.

In ratifying the treaty, the East German parliament would agree to adopt the FRG's economic and tax policies and open up its economy to the capitalist market.



June 14, 1965

The Deacons for Defense and Justice, the armed self-defense organization of Negroes which originated in Jonesboro, La., last summer, is spreading across the South.

A report by Roy Reed from Bogalusa, La., published in the June 6 *New York Times*, says that the organization now claims 50 to 55 chapters in various stages of organization in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. "The organization," says Reed, "was formed largely out of a belief that Negroes could not expect impartial treatment from white lawmen and that, if they were to be defended against church burnings, bombings, beatings, killings and terrorism, they would have to do it themselves."

The Deacons are organized strictly for defense and are highly disciplined. They consider one of their main jobs to be defense of civil rights workers.



June 15, 1940

HARRISON, N.J. — Refusing to be browbeaten by talk about their interfering with "national defence," 155 workers in the electric furnace department of the Crucible Steel plant here, working on shell casings for the Navy, went out on strike last week and are still out.

Theirs is a desperate revolt against grievances which they have vainly sought to resolve for two years. They are the lowest paid furnace men in the area, and are forced to work under a stagger system — each man works five days but the days' off are rotated so that the plant is in continuous operation — which is actually a speed-up system.

These men are demanding a 10% increase in wages and an end to the stagger system. In October, too, they struck against the stagger system, but were sent back to work by the CIO Steel Workers Organizing Committee.

Bitsy Aspy: From her youth built communist movement

BY BETSEY STONE

OAKLAND, Calif. — “Bitsy began her political life as a rebellious teenager who dropped out of high school,” Socialist Workers Party leader Mary-Alice Waters told 60 people gathered at the International Longshore and Warehouse Union hall here May 13 to celebrate the life and political contributions of Elizabeth “Bitsy” Aspy. “From her earliest years, however, the most important thing in Bitsy’s life was helping to build a revolutionary working-class party in the U.S. She did that to the maximum of her ability.”

Aspy, who was a member and supporter of the Socialist Workers Party for more than 50 years, died on April 28 after a battle with cancer.

“Her lifelong course of action was based on a deep conviction rooted in her own experiences as well as study,” Waters said. “Bitsy grew up in a working-class family. Her parents were garment workers, founding members of the Socialist Workers Party. She was an avid reader and knowledgeable about the history of the modern working-class movement, and the lessons that have been paid for in blood by our class.”

“That’s what underlay her conviction that only if the working class takes political, economic and military power out of the hands of the U.S. capitalist ruling class, transforming itself in the course of that struggle, can we begin to fight for the kind of social justice working people aspire to,” she said, “a world free of war, racism, the exploitation of labor and de-

struction of our environment, women’s inequality, and all the other social relations that so many of us are fighting to eliminate.”

Waters and Bitsy first met when they were in their early 20s, members of the Young Socialist Alliance and Socialist Workers Party in California in the 1960s. “We were both part of that generation of youth in the United States whose lives were transformed by two world-shaking class battles,” Waters said. One was the victorious Cuban Revolution. The other was the mass proletarian struggle in the U.S. that brought down Jim Crow segregation, “a social revolution that taught us the power of the working class in our own country, capable of carrying out here the kind of revolutionary struggle that we saw in Cuba.”

“The civil rights movement in the 1960s was powered by young people who poured into the streets across the South, brushing aside the fears, objections and cautions of their elders,” she said. “Young people who said, ‘No, we’ve had enough. We’re going. Come with us.’” And they did.

“We’re being reminded of this today as we see another social movement being born with a new generation in the lead: yes, Black Lives Matter.”

Janice Lynn, a member of the Socialist Workers Party in Atlanta who worked with Aspy building the Young Socialist Alliance and Socialist Workers Party in the 1960s in Berkeley and Oakland, spoke about the party’s leadership role in the anti-Vietnam War



Inset: Militant/Hank Scheer

Above, Bitsy Aspy, standing at right, with co-workers from steel mill in Washington, Pennsylvania, in early 1990s. Bitsy led by example in fights to end sex segregation on the job and to strengthen union. Inset: Socialist Workers Party leader Mary-Alice Waters speaks at Oakland, California, celebration of Aspy’s life and political contributions. Also on panel from right are Jim Altenberg, rail worker who worked with Aspy at Caltrain, and Anthony Dutrow, SWP organizer in Miami.

movement. “We always fought to lead the movement to reach to the working class. That meant winning GIs to the movement too,” Lynn said. “In the fall of 1968 some 500 active-duty GIs joined thousands in a protest march here in San Francisco demanding bring the troops home now,” she noted.

In the early 1970s, Bitsy and her companion, Ove Aspy, moved to Washington, D.C., where they joined the volunteer staff of the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam and National Peace Action Coalition building the massive April 24, 1971, anti-Vietnam War demonstration. Over a million poured into the streets that day in Washington and San Francisco, one

of the largest demonstrations in U.S. history.

In the 1960s and early ’70s, “We were part of serious class battles with international ramifications — from Vietnam to Latin America, to national liberation struggles across Africa, the May-June 1968 events in France, the rise of the women’s movement, the ghetto explosions and Black Power movement, the radicalization of the Chicano movement,” Waters said. “But the organized labor movement was largely on the sidelines of all this even as the working class was being deeply affected. And that set limits on what could be accomplished.”

Party’s turn to industry

By the late 1970s, the accelerated expansion of U.S. capital, born out of the destruction of World War II and U.S. imperialism’s victory over its competitors, had run its course. As profit rates began to decline, the owners’ attacks on the working class and its organizations began to intensify. “Workers began to resist,” said Joel Britton, organizer of the SWP in Oakland, who chaired the meeting. “The party organized to be part of this resistance in the most powerful section of the working class — workers in basic industry organized in the industrial unions. We became a party of coal miners, steel and autoworkers, workers in refineries, garment and other industries.”

The next dozen years were the most important period of Bitsy’s political life as she helped lead the party’s work in

Continued on page 9

Washington seeks deals with Tehran, Moscow

Continued from front page

collaboration to strengthen the Syrian government’s role in fighting the Islamist forces that both Washington and Moscow oppose. To get that, the president is willing to back off sanctions against Russia and accommodate Russian President Vladimir Putin’s insistence on maintaining a territorial buffer in Ukraine and the Baltics.

The erosion of political stability and U.S. influence in Iraq over the past 25 years are at the root of the shift. After years of U.S. bombings, invasions, special forces operations and attempts to cobble together functioning political alliances, Iraq is less unified than ever. Kurds have established an autonomous regional government in the northeast and the south is controlled by Shia forces. In the Sunni western area, U.S.-backed Iraqi government troops have been routed by Islamic State and driven out of major cities, most recently Ramadi. Over the recent period Washington has had tacit collaboration with Shiite militias backed by Tehran, which along with the Kurdish forces have been successful in pushing back Islamic State.

To advance these goals, Obama is pressing the Israeli government to accept the deal with Tehran and come to a settlement for a Palestinian state.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran’s nuclear program, signed April 2 by officials from the United States, United Kingdom, Ger-

many, France, Russia, China, European Union and Iran, is to be finalized by June 30.

The plan includes Iran’s commitment to cut the number of its centrifuges, reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium and not enrich beyond the level used to generate nuclear energy for 15 years. The deal ostensibly extends to one year the time it would take for Iran to acquire enough fissile material for a weapon, for the accord’s 10-year duration.

Tehran’s compliance is to be monitored by inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In an April 5 *New York Times* interview, Obama said that the U.S. must be prepared to take some risks to reach a diplomatic arrangement that “ushers a new era in U.S.-Iranian relations.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has campaigned against any agreement that doesn’t include the total dismantling of Iran’s nuclear program, calling it “an existential threat to the state of Israel.”

Obama says there is no way a deal can be struck with Tehran on that basis, and Tel Aviv has to realize the stakes and get on board.

U.N. resolution on Palestinian state

As part of the foreign policy reorientation, Washington, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, is unlikely to veto a resolution recognizing statehood for

Palestine the next time it comes to a vote — a shift from its previous stance that Palestinian statehood can only be achieved by negotiations with Israel.

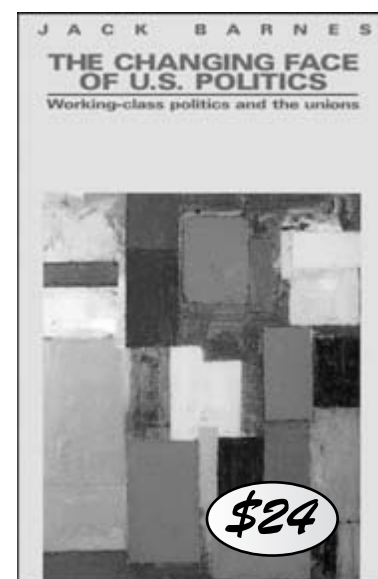
In a May 19 *New York Times* op-ed, Henry Siegman, former senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, wrote that a two-state agreement “can only be achieved if the United Nations Security Council, with strong support from the United States, presents the parties with clear terms for resumed peace talks that will produce an agreement within a specified time frame.”

“America has made an unconditional commitment to Israel’s security — and rightfully so,” Siegman said. “But that commitment is in danger of eroding if the Obama administration continues to prevent the Security Council from pursuing a two-state agreement.”

Last October the U.K. Parliament passed a motion calling on the government to “recognize the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel, as a contribution to securing a negotiated two state solution.” Iceland and Sweden have recognized Palestine and on May 13 the Vatican followed suit.

“Intervention of the U.N. and the superpower countries is important to convince Israel to reach a peaceful settlement,” Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah told the *Washington Post* May 31. “We have had certain assurances from the United States that after the Iranian deal, they will resume negotiations between us and the Israelis,” he added.

Recommended reading



pathfinderpress.com

New Ukraine group seeks to renew Cuba's Chernobyl aid

BY CATHARINA TIRSÉN

KIEV, Ukraine — Efforts are well underway here to relaunch the internationalist medical program in Tarará, Cuba, for victims of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear meltdown in Ukraine. From 1990 through 2011, the revolutionary Cuban government provided free medical care to more than 25,000 people, overwhelmingly children. The program was suspended when the Ukrainian government stopped providing funds for transportation.

“We organized a scientific conference here May 16 that was a big step towards relaunching the Cuban health care program,” Liliya Piltyay, who helped organize to get the children and others in need of medical attention to the island from 1990 onwards, told the *Militant* May 31.

“Ukraine needs this help just as much as before,” she said. “Some of the original children — now grown up — still need help. And now there is a new generation of their children, some of whom are showing effects from Chernobyl,” the worst nuclear power disaster in history.

The conference at the Radiology Institute here brought together more than 150 participants, including former beneficiaries of the program; well-known doctors Victor Chumak, a former vice minister of health, and pediatrician Berezhnoy Vyacheslav; other Ukrainian medical personnel; and two former ministers of health, Mykola Polishchuk and Illya Yemets. Some of the doctors present spent considerable time with children in Cuba while they received care.

“It was very important for Ukrainian doctors to go with the children to follow their development and watch the way the Cuban medical personnel treated them,” Piltyay said. “They helped us convince the government to fund the airfare to Cuba for the children beginning in 1998.”

The Ukrainian government had approved participation in the Cuban internationalist program in 1990, but for the first eight years Piltyay and other volunteers helped the families collect the money from donations in Ukraine and other countries.

Cuba remains willing to help

The Cuban government organized volunteers who rebuilt a special seaside medical center outside Havana for the program. It views such efforts as a moral duty and remains willing today to continue the effort.

Julio Medina, the pediatrician who directed the Tarará program, told the *Militant* in 2014 that he remains hopeful that a way will be found for Cuba to continue to provide care for those in Ukraine who need treatment.

“One of the results of the conference is that we decided to form a NGO called Tarará Children,” said Piltyay. Yulia Panasiuk, one of those who benefited from the Cuban program as a child, will head up the organization.

“The Cuban doctors fought to help me,” Panasiuk told the *Militant* in an interview in Kiev last year. “I am really glad destiny gave me the chance

to go to Cuba. The experience taught us a different attitude toward people.”

“We need support from the government to begin again,” Piltyay said. “They can send information to organizations in other countries through the Ukrainian embassies and inform them of the need for help to restart the program.” There is already an initial group of 100 youth prepared to participate when the program starts again.

“We are forever in debt to Cuba for the help they have given and they stand ready to help again,” she said. “This kind of solidarity seems so natural for the Cuban people.”

Crimean Tatar leader: End Moscow's occupation!

Continued from front page

eighty. It is a beehive of activity, with Tatar activists poking their heads in every few minutes during our hour-and-a-half conversation.

Dzhemilev has been banned from Crimea by Moscow, which seized the peninsula shortly after Yanukovych fled. He is an elected member of the Ukrainian parliament and Ukraine's Commissioner for the Affairs of the Crimean Tatars.

“Crimean Tatars are stopped on the street and harassed. Some have ‘disappeared,’ many turning up dead a few days later, showing signs of torture,” Dzhemilev said.

“Ukrainians in Crimea also face brutal treatment. Everyone is fearful that if they speak out they will be attacked,” he said. “Those who continue to support the Russian occupation are encouraged to spy on people and to report things they say to the authorities. Tatar activists know their phones are tapped.”

“Even many of those who had relocated to Crimea from Russia over the last few decades and welcomed the arrival of their troops are now having second thoughts,” Dzhemilev told us.

“We will never give up our struggle,” he said. “The overwhelming majority of Crimean Tatars back our fight. Ordinary people stop me here in Kiev and wish us success. I have gotten a hearing at conferences of the United Nations and around the world.”

The Crimean Tatars are native inhab-



Militant/Frank Forrester
“We will never give up our struggle,” said Mustafa Dzhemilev, decades-long leader of Tatars' fight for national rights.



Above, Granma/Luis M. Batista; inset, Militant/Catharina Tirsén
Victims of 1986 nuclear disaster in Chernobyl, Ukraine, arrive in Cuba for treatment in 1991. Liliya Piltyay, inset, helped organize to get children in need of medical attention to Cuba, which provided care free of charge, starting in 1990. New group in Ukraine has launched effort to restart program, suspended in 2011 when Ukrainian government stopped funding transportation.



itants of the peninsula and have suffered national oppression since they were conquered by the czarist Russian empire in 1783. After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the Tatars established an autonomous socialist republic in the newly formed Soviet Union, as did the Ukrainians. Use of native languages and culture flourished and national pride grew.

But in the late 1920s, a growing Soviet bureaucratic caste, led and epitomized by Joseph Stalin, carried through a bloody counterrevolution against the policies of the Bolsheviks under V.I. Lenin. National rights were trampled, both in Crimea and Ukraine.

In 1944, Stalin slandered the Tatars en masse as Nazi collaborators, forcibly deporting every one of them to Uzbekistan, Siberia and the Urals. More than 40 percent perished on the journey or during the first months in exile. Moscow organized a special Russification program in Crimea, relocating thousands of Russians on land and homes left empty by the forced exodus of the Tatars.

Dzhemilev, less than a year old, was deported with his family to Uzbekistan. He became a leader of the fight to return to their homeland and against the dictatorial Stalinist rule. He was repeatedly imprisoned, serving a total of 15 years. The *Militant* was part of the international campaign fighting for his release.

When the Soviet Union imploded at the opening of the 1990s, the Tatars stepped up their struggle to return to Crimea. Dzhemilev came back in 1991 and was elected chair of the Mejlis, the national organization of the Tatar people. He served for 22 years, stepping down in 2013.

Tatars fight for land

“When we returned, we did not demand the new occupants of what had been our lands be forced off,” Dzhemilev said. “People have a right to their lives. We demanded the government provide us with land where we could settle and rebuild, and compensation.

“The new Ukrainian government said they could not make full restitution,” he said. “They promised they would allocate social programs and payments that would allow us to build new housing.”

“Crimean Tatars had lost 80,000 properties in 1944,” he said. “The government only built 7,000. It was the same with giving us land.”

“The government privatized the land, but only made land grants to those who

could prove they worked on a collective farm. We had just returned, so we had no rights,” he said. “This is why thousands of Crimean Tatars organized to occupy free land and build their homes.”

“So opponents of the Tatar people and Ukrainian politicians who supported Moscow accused us of being criminals,” he said. “The Yanukovych regime told the Ukrainian troops in Crimea they had to watch out for the Tatars, not moves from Moscow.”

In February 2014, “after Yanukovych fled, Russian ‘green men’ and a handful of their supporters in Crimea began to occupy government buildings in Sebastopol and Simferopol,” Dzhemilev said. “It was only 110 men.”

“We mobilized thousands of people, Tatars, Ukrainians and Russians who wished to remain with Ukraine,” he said. “We pushed them back.”

“But the Ukrainian troops did nothing,” he said. “The government and the Western embassies said we should not fight back, because [Russian President Vladimir] Putin will use it as propaganda that they are the victims.”

“This was a mistake,” he said. “If somebody enters your land, you don’t count how many troops they have, you defend your land.” Moscow mobilized thousands of troops from their Crimean naval base and took over.

Systematic repression

“Since then the new rulers have systematically attacked our rights and victimized us,” Dzhemilev said. “Leaders of the Mejlis have been arrested, jailed, tortured and killed. Refat Chubarov, the current leader of the Mejlis, and I are banned. Tatar language media outlets have been closed.”

“But support for Putin’s occupation is weakening,” he said. “He promised economic conditions would improve, but they have gotten worse. So more people agree with the Tatars we should be with Ukraine.”

“I was quite concerned when I saw the Minsk agreement that is supposed to stop the fighting in the east of Ukraine,” Dzhemilev said. “There is no mention of Crimea at all. I saw U.S. Secretary of State [John] Kerry go to meet with Putin last month. It looks like some leaders are willing to accept a frozen conflict here.

“We need the support of peoples all over the world,” he said. “For the occupation of Crimea to stand would be a blow to the rights of everyone.”

Involvement in Cuban Revolution transformed women

Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for June. It contains interviews with Vilma Espín, Asela de Los Santos and Yolanda Ferrer, describing the participation of women in the fight to overthrow the tyranny of Fulgencio Batista in the early years of the Cuban Revolution, where ordinary women transformed themselves as they transformed their world and the men they fought alongside. The excerpt is from an interview with Espín, president and central leader of the Federation of Cuban Women from its founding in 1960. Copyright © 2012 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

In January 1961 the first of what would eventually be more than twenty-one thousand peasant women enrolled in the Ana Betancourt School, established at Fidel's initiative. Both the federation and the revolutionary leadership understood the importance of women becoming fully conscious of what the revolution was, of what women could become as a political force. By the time counterrevolutionary actions began in some mountainous areas, it was evident that many campesinas had already begun to see what the revolution could do to benefit their families and children.

The leaders of the counterrevolutionaries in the mountains were generally



Above, Bohemia; inset, Federation of Cuban Women Ana Betancourt School, established in early 1960s on initiative of Fidel Castro and Federation of Cuban Women, helped take revolution into homes of peasants by winning support of their daughters. Above, learning to measure and cut fabric. Inset, scene from graduation of first class, 1961.

landlords. They counted on ignorance to get people to follow their orders or accept their arguments. So it's no accident the counterrevolutionary bands chose to focus on areas with a higher rate of illiteracy, and where people had the least knowledge about what the revolution meant.

When Fidel saw what was happening in some of the most undeveloped mountain areas, we began the work to recruit young women from there to come to the campesina schools. As Fidel suggested, the federation worked together with the National Association of Small Farmers, which was preparing its founding meeting. We began to encourage peasant families to bring their daughters to Havana to learn how to sew.

Women all over the country were interested in taking these classes. Most families were poor, and there was little financial leeway to buy clothes of any quality in a store. Even before the victory of the revolution, Cuban women wanted to learn how to sew, how to cut material for an attractive dress. It was something they were excited about and could learn quickly.

The offer of the classes met an enthusiastic response. By January 1961, the first of thousands of young women from the countryside had arrived in Havana by train. Most were housed in the Hotel Nacional. Others stayed in abandoned

homes of bourgeois families who had left the country.

These young peasant women often arrived with health problems. Many had intestinal parasites and little knowledge of nutrition. The first thing we did was take them to dentists and doctors. They received medical examinations and treatment to eliminate parasites. Many had lost teeth due to cavities, so they got dental restoration work. After the first month of their stay in Havana, they had begun to change. Their physical condition improved. They learned new habits of hygiene. And they overcame a series of taboos previously accepted through ignorance.

The counterrevolutionaries saw how dangerous it was for these daughters of peasants to learn the truth about the revolution. So they organized campaigns to scare the parents. The girls were going to be turned into prostitutes, the counterrevolutionaries said. Or they were going to be sent to Russia and returned to their families as canned meat!

These were horror stories, but many peasants were frightened by them and came to Havana to take their daughters back. When they got there, they found their daughters in school. They saw young women who had changed. They looked healthier. They were happy. They were all learning to sew. Those who had been illiterate were beginning

to read and write.

So when parents came to find their daughters who had spent two or three months in Havana and take them home, the young women started to cry. Nothing in the world could make them leave before they finished their courses, they said. They were going to fulfill their promise to Fidel. And, they added, Fidel was going to give every one of them a sewing machine, so each of them could give classes to ten more campesinas when they went home.

That was the plan, and it was carried out very quickly. It was another reason the first political cadres who emerged in these mountain areas were women. I remember the comments of many of the parents when, later, we'd run into them in the mountains.

"Just imagine," they'd say. "It used to be that when visitors came, my daughter would hide behind the door. Nobody could get her to come out. But after she returned from those courses, she'd grab a table, put it in the middle of the *batey* [sugar mill housing complex], and begin to call all the campesinos together to explain what the revolution was."

The young women hadn't just learned to read and write. They hadn't just learned to sew. They had also learned about the revolution. They had come to Havana and seen all the possibilities that existed here, things that were eventually going to be brought to their own communities. They'd learned about the programs for health care, for education, how schools were being built in areas that never had them before. They'd become aware of what the revolution meant.

So no one was going to "pull the wool over their eyes," as the saying goes.

"No one can fool my daughter," parents would say. "When she came back, she was very clear about everything. And the very first thing she did was to begin to convert me!" ...

The Ana Betancourt School sessions lasted until secondary schools reached the mountains, when they were no longer needed. They made it possible for these young women to receive an education and become politically active. Many of those first "Anitas," as people called them, are today doctors, teachers, technicians, and political leaders. They had all the opportunities the sons and daughters of our people can have.

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Puerto Rico caravan wins support for Oscar López

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL
AND CHRIS HOEPPNER

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — A monthlong caravan across the island demanding the U.S. government release Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López culminated with a march to the U.S. federal courthouse in the city center here May 29. Amid lively chants, Puerto Rican flags, and bomba and plena music, some 600 people rallied, undeterred by the rain.

Dozens of marchers set off April 25 from the island of Culebra, traveled by boat to the neighboring island of Vieques and then to the main island on the way to San Juan, stopping in 40 towns and cities along the way.

Culebra and Vieques were chosen as the starting point because they are symbols of resistance to U.S. colonial rule. After decades of struggle, the U.S. Navy was forced to stop using them for target practice.

The San Juan march was led by more than half a dozen independence fighters who themselves had been political prisoners in the United States.

Among the demonstrators were teachers, health care workers, butchers, retired workers and a good number of students with “UPR con Oscar” T-shirts. Students recently organized a 48-hour strike at the University of Puerto Rico to oppose proposals by the colonial government to cut university funding and raise taxes on working people to prioritize interest payments to capitalist bondholders. Many marchers said that both the frame-up of López and the island’s economic crisis — the deepest since the 1930s — are expressions of Puerto Rico’s status as a U.S. colony.

William Hernández and Lizzie Díaz, workers at a pharmaceutical plant, said they joined the caravan in Fajardo, on Puerto Rico’s eastern tip. “We’ve been handing out thousands of educational flyers about the fight to free Oscar,” Díaz said. Hernández added, “Some people we talked with were opposed to his release, but a majority were in favor. Some didn’t know much about the case, and we explained it to them.”

Among those marching was Rafael Cancel Miranda, who spent 27 years in U.S. prisons and is a well-known leader of the Puerto Rican independence movement. Cancel Miranda was also an active campaigner for the release of five Cuban revolutionaries imprisoned in the United States, the last three of whom returned home last December in a victory for the Cuban Revolution.

The closing rally was addressed, by



Militant/Martín Koppel

Contingent from southern coastal town of Patillas at May 29 rally in San Juan, Puerto Rico, culminating caravan across island demanding freedom for independence fighter Oscar López.

U.S. Congressman Luis Gutiérrez and Oscar López’s daughter Clarisa López. Also at the rally was San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz of the Popular Democratic Party. Political figures from

all major parties here have joined the call for the freedom of Oscar López. Some 30 local governments in the towns visited by the cross-island marchers issued resolutions supporting his release.

NY: End 34-year jailing of independence fighter

Continued from front page

International Union Local 1199 and SEIU 32BJ. Nearly a dozen elected officials marched or spoke at the rally.

López, now 72, moved to Chicago from Puerto Rico when he was 14. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1965 and sent to Vietnam. After returning López joined the fight against racist discrimination in housing and employment, for bilingual education and against police brutality, and for independence for Puerto Rico.

He was arrested on May 29, 1981, accused of being a leader of the Armed Forces of National Liberation of Puerto Rico, framed up on charges, including “seditious conspiracy,” and sentenced

to 55 years in prison. He was never accused of any act of violence. Eleven fellow independence fighters were framed up the year before. While the last of the 11 was released in 2010, López has been denied parole and cannot apply again until 2026.

“It’s ridiculous that Oscar is in prison for so long for believing that Puerto Rico should be independent. They try to paint Oscar as a terrorist, but he should be painted as a hero,” said Melissa Santana, who came from Cleveland. “Puerto Rico in English means ‘rich port.’ There are tremendous resources but they are being taken by America.”

“Not everyone here today agrees with Oscar’s views on independence,” noted

Raquelle Seda, a leader of the National Boricua Human Rights Network in Detroit. “But they think that the conditions that Oscar has been subjected to for 34 years are inhumane.”

Many passersby took leaflets — for most it was the first time they had heard about the case — and signed petitions asking President Barack Obama to pardon him. *El Diario*, a Spanish-language daily here, featured the march on its front page two days in a row. Many stores had posters in their windows.

Among those speaking at the rally after the march were Oscar López’s daughter Clarisa and his brother José; other former Puerto Rican political prisoners; U.S. Reps. Nydia Velázquez and José Serrano; and New York City Council Chair Melissa Mark-Viverito. The rally was chaired by Ana López, a professor at Hostos College in the Bronx.

A few days before the march, Oscar López, in an interview published in *Claridad*, a Puerto Rican weekly, said he has won solidarity from fellow prisoners and encouraged them to speak out against abusive prison conditions.

In response to a question about the opening of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuban governments, López said, “The support and solidarity of Cuba are very important for us. I believe this strengthens Cuba and if Cuba is strengthened we are also strengthened.”

“One of the more interesting things for me about the Cuban Revolution is how it developed its human resources,” he said. “We don’t need salvation. What we need is to have the opportunity to run Puerto Rico ourselves.”

Bitsy Aspoys: from youth built communist movement

Continued from page 6

Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. From collaboration with veteran leaders of the civil rights movement like Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth to fights to get women into what were then considered “men’s jobs” and breaking down workplace segregation based on sex, Bitsy led by example.

“Bitsy would spend time making sure everyone had the confidence to do these jobs,” said Anthony Dutrow, a machinist and SWP organizer in Miami who worked with Bitsy in Pittsburgh where she landed a job at nearby Washington Steel in 1991. Many of the messages read as part of the meeting paid tribute to Bitsy’s leadership example during these years. Among many other activities, she helped organize union participation in actions against the racist apartheid system in South Africa and joined the Coalition of Labor Union Women as they fought for affirmative action.

Bitsy “was quick to laugh at things that deserved it, and quick to spot anti-working-class prejudice, disdain or any other kind of prejudice,” wrote M.J. Rahn, who shared the years of party building in Cincinnati with Bitsy and Ove.

During the last decade of her working life Bitsy was a conductor on Caltrain commuter rail. Several of her former co-workers attended the meeting.

“Bitsy had a well-earned reputation not only as a serious, safe and competent train conductor, but as a worker who

responded to issues that came up on the job in a spirit of solidarity,” said Jim Altemberg, a member of United Transportation Union Local 1732, who worked with Bitsy at Caltrain. “She fought for civil discourse among workers and was respected for the way she refused to abide racist, anti-women, anti-gay banter and jokes in crew rooms and on trains.”

Barbara Bowman, who also worked with Aspoys at Caltrain, sent a message relating how Aspoys organized the women conductors there to end the way women were relegated to a segregated break room that was a “sorry, cramped, second-thought kind of place” where they could neither sleep nor relax.

“Bitsy took our gripe sessions as an opportunity to organize us to begin using the more spacious engineers’ break room,” Bowman wrote. One day, “in we marched, several of us fearlessly following her lead. After a few minutes of stunned silence on the part of the engineers, Bitsy matter-of-factly explained that craft segregation had to go if there was to be union solidarity. There may have been a few grumbles, but from that day on, we women conductors felt comfortable to take our breaks in the real break room.”

Waters noted that women getting nontraditional jobs in industry was not only a question of combating the super-exploitation of women that is part of the very foundation of capitalism. It’s part

of the transformation of the working class and building class unity. “We often make the point that the relationship of men and women on the job working on a coal seam together is very different from that between a boss and a secretary,” she said.

At the same time, Waters pointed out that Aspoys was also a very good secretary who served in this capacity in the SWP national office for several years in the 1970s, an assignment essential to the functioning of the party leadership.

“She did an excellent job, and didn’t consider this work unimportant or to be ‘women’s work,’” Waters said.

“Bitsy had an unusual ability to walk into a busy, high-pressure situation in the office and spot immediately what she could do to help relieve the tension,” Debbie Lazar wrote.

Waters called attention to some of the adjectives and descriptive phrases about Aspoys that appeared over and over in the many messages sent to the meeting: warm, objective, irreverent, honest, loyal, unflappable and full of the joy of life.

“Bitsy exemplified the kind of working-class cadre who will always be the heart and soul of a revolutionary proletarian party,” she said.

The meeting ended with a collection of more than \$2,500 to help finance the work of the Socialist Workers Party, and many lingered for another hour to talk, eat and enjoy the photo display on Bitsy’s life.

