

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Priscilla March: Cadre of Socialist Workers Party for 62 years
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 80/NO. 1 JANUARY 4, 2016

Fed ups rates while workers face grinding depression

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Federal Reserve Bank Chairwoman Janet Yellen announced Dec. 16 the national bank was raising its base interest rate to 0.25 percent, up from the zero percent that has been in effect for the past seven years. Yellen and the Fed claim the U.S. capitalist economy is back to full employment and healthy growth, and has to be protected from over-heating.

But in fact their moves take place under grinding depression conditions for working people and the capitalist economy worldwide is entering a period of manufacturing contraction.

There's no government monetary or fiscal policy that can reverse this deepening economic crisis, which is rooted in a decades-long trend of a declining rate of profit and a slowdown in capitalist production, trade and employment.

In response to the steep economic downturn beginning in 2008, the

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Steelworkers locked out in fight over two-tier wages

Boss: 'Once-in-a-generation' chance to cut pay



United Steelworkers

Delegation from Unite union in United Kingdom joins Steelworkers picket line in Brackenridge, Pennsylvania, Dec. 1 to back fight against four-month lockout by Allegheny Technologies.

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

Since Allegheny Technologies Inc. locked out 2,200 Steelworkers at 12 plants in six states Aug. 15, the company has not budged from its concession contract proposals. The company says it sees a unique opportunity to cut wages — and boost profits.

ATI, a specialty metals manufacturer, has brought in vanloads of replacement workers. On Nov. 30, the company terminated health coverage of locked-out workers.

At the heart of ATI's demands is a two-tier wage structure that would pit workers against each other. Bosses also want to slash health care, institute 12-hour shifts, cut pensions, reduce wages and overtime pay, and contract out more work. Some 30,000 members of the Steelworkers union at ArcelorMittal and U.S. Steel, whose contracts expired Sept. 1, face similar concession demands.

"We are faced with a once-in-a-

Continued on page 6

Washington talks of Syria cease-fire, but steps up war

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Washington and Moscow collaborated to push through a United Nations Security Council resolution Dec. 18 backing talks on a cease-fire in Syria. But bombing, shelling and other destruction — at the hands of Washington, Paris, Moscow and the Bashar al-Assad regime in Damascus — continue to rain devastation across the country.

The U.N. resolution was prepared by a trip to Moscow three days earlier by Secretary of State John Kerry, who said, "The United States and our partners are not seeking regime change in Syria."

The administration of President Barack Obama acts as if the interests of U.S. capitalism and those of the rulers of Russia, Iran and Turkey can converge through negotiations, when all they have in common is seeking to advance their own sharply counterposed national interests.

At the same time, government spokespeople and political aspirants continue to scapegoat Muslims and Islam as the source of recent terror attacks in Paris and California, debating how severe new restrictions on basic rights should be and spawning assaults on mosques and Muslims.

The Washington-led coalition ramped up its air attacks on Islamic

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Protests in Paradise say, 'Charge cop who killed Andrew Thomas!'



Alicia Brogden Photography

Dec. 19 protest in Paradise, California, demands cop who killed Andrew Thomas be charged. "Drinking and driving or not, Andrew didn't deserve to be shot," said friend Joshua Turner.

BY SETH GALINSKY

"That police officer ought to be fired, there's no question about it," Dick Miller, 88, told the *Militant* by phone from Paradise, California. He was referring to Paradise cop Patrick Feaster who shot Andrew Thomas, 26, in the neck Nov. 25 after Thomas' SUV crashed. Darien Ehorn, Thomas' wife, was thrown from the vehicle and died at the scene. Thomas died three weeks later.

According to police, Feaster followed the SUV after Thomas and Ehorn left a bar a little before mid-

night. Less than a mile away from the bar, the SUV hit a highway divider and flipped on its side.

Feaster, who is Caucasian as are Thomas and Ehorn, is well-known in Paradise. In 2012 the *Chico News* featured him in an article headlined "Personal Mission: Paradise Cop Pursues Drunken Drivers in Honor of His Late Uncle."

"Whether or not Andrew was driving and drinking, he was trying to get out of the vehicle and he didn't deserve to be shot," Thomas' friend

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'Climate' summit: Imperialist rivalry and attacks on semicolonial peoples

BY EMMA JOHNSON

After two weeks of squabbling, government officials from nearly 200 countries attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris signed an accord Dec. 12, ostensibly to cut carbon emissions — a

They ignored the pressing need for electrification and other industrial development in the semicolonial world.

Ever since the 2009 round of talks in Copenhagen, Denmark, collapsed

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DEFENSE OF NATURE FALLS TO WORKING CLASS
 — Editorial, page 11

by-product of burning fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal that dumps greenhouse gases and other pollutants into the atmosphere.

But like its predecessors, the Paris talks actually centered on imperialist rivalries, as the ruling families in Washington, Berlin, Paris and elsewhere vied for business and trade advantage, efforts to suppress competition from "emerging nations" like China, India and Brazil, and steps to keep the toilers there under control.

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Phila. Fight for \$15: 'Reinstate fired McDonald's workers!'

Quebec public workers strike against cuts, concession contract

NY union construction workers demand safety for all on the job

BY EMMA JOHNSON

NEW YORK — Several thousand unionized construction workers marched to City Hall Dec. 10, protesting the deadly conditions on nonunion worksites across the city. Rows of coffins at the front of the march called attention to the growing number of workers killed on the job.

There has been a sharp increase of construction deaths and injuries here over the recent period. So far this year 16 workers have been killed across the five boroughs, up from nine last year and seven in 2013. Injuries are up by more than 50 percent. Bosses’ claims that this is the natural result of the “building boom” ignore the fact that death and injury rates have risen much faster than new construction. Protesters say bosses are pushing speedup and cutting corners on safety to make more profits, and workers are paying with their lives and limbs.

“Many construction workers are non-union,” said Jamarle Jones, a member of Ironworkers Local 11 in Newark, New Jersey. “We need to work union to work safe. Most of those who are killed work the most dangerous jobs, many don’t have papers. Contractors exploit their situation. If you have no union protection and you run the risk of being deported, no wonder you are afraid to speak up.”

Less than half of private-sector construction in the city is done by union members, down from 80 to 90 percent just 15 years ago, and the unionization rate is much lower in the public sector. The City of New York and its housing

agencies have overwhelmingly contracted nonunion outfits to build so-called affordable housing, making it the least unionized and lowest paying construction segment in the city.

According to the 2015 report “The Price of Life,” issued by the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, 40 percent of the 124,000 laborers in New York state are immigrants, many of them undocumented, as are a quarter of the nearly 90,000 carpenters and roughly one-third of dry wallers and roofers.

“Of the 16 workers who have been killed this year, 14 were nonunion, 14 were Latinos,” said Gary LaBarbera, president of the Building and Construction Trades Council, at the City Hall rally. “They have lower wages, no health care, no benefits, no pension. The non-union workers have no voice. We pledge to be their voice.” But neither he nor any of the other speakers talked about organizing these tens of thousands of workers.

LaBarbera introduced politicians he called “real friends of labor,” among them Councilman Corey Johnson and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, both Democrats. They are co-sponsors of a bill that would require companies that build over 10 stories high to have their employees go through an apprenticeship training program.

Falls are the single most common cause of deaths on the job. Investigations show that many worksites lack guardrails and safety nets, and that workers are often not provided with safety har-



Laborers Local 79

Several thousand New York union construction workers marched Dec. 10 protesting deadly conditions nonunion workers face. “Nobody should have to die on the job,” one worker said.

nesses, which can be the difference between life and death. Most of the deaths occur at sites lower than 10 stories.

A member of Laborers Local 79 who declined to give his name marched carrying a sign with the name of his friend Rodolfo Vasquez. Vasquez, 27, was killed in September 2014 while working on the foundation for a 22-floor hotel. He was crushed when a concrete slab that hadn’t been secured fell on top of him.

“I’m in the union, Rodolfo wasn’t,” the unionist said. “It’s true he might have been alive today if he had been. But that’s no excuse. Nobody should have to die. More and more construction in New York is nonunion. That will bring pressure down on union construction, it will get less safe, too. Unions are not getting stronger, they are getting weaker. I don’t know if Rodolfo had papers, I don’t care. He should have had the same protection that I have.”

Construction deaths of Palestinians in Israel show need to organize unions

BY SETH GALINSKY

In November five construction workers fell to their deaths in a single week in Israel. Over the last five years, official government records report 184 have died in falls. The overwhelming majority are Arab citizens of Israel, Arabs from the West Bank or immigrant workers, mostly from China, Russia, eastern Europe or Eritrea.

The dangers that construction workers face in Israel and the United States are “strikingly similar, only with local variants, Palestinians instead of Latinos,” Hadas Tagari told the *Militant* Dec. 18 by phone from Hod Hasharon. In September 2014 the government increased the quota for Palestinian construction workers from the West Bank

by 5,000. Roughly 30 construction workers die on the job every year and some 6,000 are injured. There are only 17 government safety inspectors for 12,000 construction sites, according to a recent report by the Knesset, Israel’s parliament.

“I got up on the morning of Nov. 10 and saw that the previous day three construction workers were killed,” Tagari said. She formed the Coalition for Fighting Construction Accidents, which includes Kav LaOved (Workers’ Hotline), the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Physicians for Human Rights and the Workers Advice Center.


The Histadrut, the largest union fed-

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THE MILITANT

‘How little they know Cuban revolutionaries!’

The ‘Militant’ tells the truth about the Cuban Revolution and the example it sets. Gerardo Hernández, one of Cuban 5 framed up and imprisoned by Washington for 16 years, told Dec. 6 event in Cárdenas, Cuba, that Cuban revolutionaries “neither surrender nor sell themselves.”



Militant/Róger Calero

Dec. 6 event in Cárdenas celebrates return of Cuban 5 and fight to end U.S. embargo.

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The Militant

Vol. 80/No. 1

Closing news date: December 23, 2016

Editor: John Studer

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Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Naomi Craine, Seth Galinsky, Emma Johnson, Jacob Perasso, Gerardo Sánchez, Maggie Trowe, Brian Williams, Rebecca Williamson.

Published weekly except for one week in January, one week in June, one week in July, one week in August and one week in September.

Business manager: Lea Sherman

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018. Telephone: (212) 244-4899

Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

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Socialist Workers campaign against Washington’s war drive

BY NAOMI CRAINE

“We’ve been discussing the war drive and why it’s important to fight against the rulers’ scapegoating of Muslims as we participate in the ongoing protests against police brutality here,” wrote Alyson Kennedy from the Socialist Workers Party in Chicago. “Like the abuse the cops mete out on the street, it’s designed to protect the interests of the wealthy rulers. We’ve sold dozens of *Militants* and several subscriptions at these actions.”

Taking this discussion to workers and young people involved in social protests and labor struggles is an important part of the SWP’s working-class campaign against imperialism and its accelerated war drive today.

Kennedy and another party supporter visited Wheaton College, near Chicago, Dec. 18. Two days earlier students at the private evangelical Christian college held a sit-in demanding the reinstatement of Prof. Larycia Hawkins. College officials suspended Hawkins for posting on her Facebook page, “I stand in religious solidarity with Muslims because they, like me, a Christian, are people of the book. And as Pope Francis stated last week, we worship the same God.”

“Signs saying, ‘We Welcome You’ in Arabic and English dot front yards near the campus,” Kennedy continued. “Students told us they are in solidarity with Syrian refugees. Carly Bothman, 20, said she and some other students planned to wear the hijab on their flights home for Christmas, to ‘show solidarity with Muslim brothers and sisters.’”

“We set up an SWP literature table and took part in a Dec. 20 action outside one of Donald Trump’s towers in New

York opposing the scapegoating of Muslims,” writes Lea Sherman. “Many of the 200 participants were from Bangladesh, Egypt, Pakistan and Yemen.

“We explained that Trump is not a fascist — as the protest organizers claimed — any more than President Franklin Roosevelt had been when he ordered the incarceration of Japanese into concentration camps during World War II,” she said. “The imperialist war drive, including attacks on workers at home, is bipartisan, whipped up by both the Democrats and Republicans, as Washington increases its military intervention in the Middle East.”

Sherman said they discussed why working people need a labor party based on the unions to organize independently of the Democrats, Republicans and other capitalist parties and explained why attempts to shout down those you disagree with, including bourgeois politicians such as Trump, sets back the workers’ movement.

A handful of members of the Revolutionary Student Coordinating Committee from Hunter College confronted the SWP members. “They had read and opposed the *Militant’s* coverage on the Middle East and on the importance of free speech in the working-class movement, and tried to shut us up, accusing us of being racists,” Sherman said. “Other protesters came around to see what was going on.”

“Three people subscribed to the *Militant*, including a young Bangladeshi man who said he thought Trump has a right to his opinions,” Sherman said. “And we sold more than a dozen single copies and a pamphlet of speeches by Malcolm X.”

Demand SKorea gov’t free union president!



Hankyoreh/Shin So-young

A growing international campaign is demanding the release of Han Sang-gyun, president of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, who was arrested Dec. 10 for participating in protests against government attacks on South Korean workers’ rights. He was taken prisoner, (above), at the Jogye Buddhist Temple, where he had taken refuge.

After a Nov. 14 demonstration of 100,000 against a bill aimed at weakening South Korea’s labor laws, the government charged Han was responsible for attacks on police, obstruction of public affairs and blocking traffic.

“The police have added one more charge, sedition, with a penalty of up to 10 years in prison,” Mikyung Rhu, international director of the KCTU, said by phone from Seoul Dec. 21. “The last time the anti-sedition law was used was 29 years ago, under the military dictatorship.”

At least 24 other KCTU members have also been arrested, she said. “Some of them are charged with harboring a criminal because they surrounded Han during a Nov. 14 press conference and prevented his arrest.”

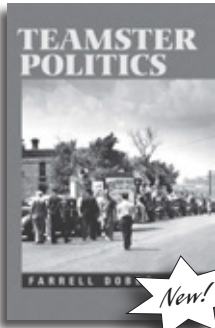
“I am fighting to stop the government’s regressive labor policies, which will make it easy to fire workers,” Han said just hours before his arrest. “This the real crime.”

The International Trade Union Confederation, International Transport Workers’ Federation, the AFL-CIO in the U.S. and the Federation of Korean Trade Unions — the other union federation in South Korea — are among those demanding the charges be dropped.

Send messages demanding the government free Han and other jailed unionists to Korean President Park Guen-hye, 1 Cheongwadae-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul 110-820, Republic of Korea; or email: president@president.go.kr. Send copies to kctucampaign@gmail.com.

— SETH GALINSKY

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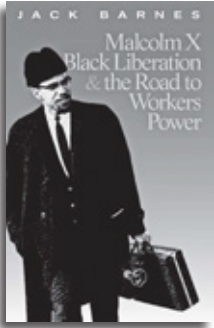
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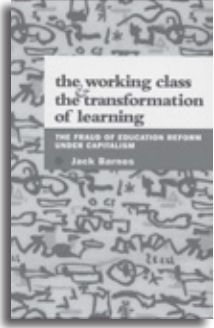
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Cuban doctor discusses revolution’s internationalism at Australia events

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY — “As a black, I could only become a doctor as a product of the Cuban Revolution, which was a revolution of the people,” world-recognized Cuban pediatric neurosurgeon Julio Brossard Alejo told the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society meeting here Dec. 3. Brossard also spoke on medicine in Cuba and the world at two other public meetings in Sydney.

Despite the “changed relations with the U.S.,” Washington’s embargo of the island’s economy remains in force, he said. It is difficult to buy medical books and supplies from the U.S. because of the government’s punishing blockade of the Cuban Revolution, which has lasted over half a century.

Despite this, “Cuba’s infant mortality rate is lower than Australia’s,” one of the most developed nations in the world, he said. “This is because the Cuban Revolution puts human life at the center.”

“The American government wants the younger generation in Cuba to forget the gains of the revolution,” he said. “They still want to overthrow the revolution,” but recognize brutal aggression hasn’t been successful.

“This was why they lifted the restrictions on Internet companies,” he said, while keeping the embargo in place. “Internet access is more important to them than supplies of medicine or food.”

“If we make mistakes in Cuba and we

lose the revolution,” he told the solidarity activists, Cuba will end up “a poorer capitalist country like Nicaragua, not a developed one like Australia.”

He said he had been inspired by the example of Argentine-born Cuban revolutionary leader Che Guevara, who, in the heat of the battle, chose the revolution over medicine.

“This is why Cuba has shared all that it has with other poorer countries of the world,” he said, “to repay the debt Cuba owes the world.”

Cuba trains medical students from “many different countries, including the Solomon Islands and East Timor,” he said. In the Southern Infant Hospital in Santiago, where he practices, “many students from Latin America and Africa train who don’t have to pay anything.”

The hospital “just graduated the first five neurosurgeons from Mali,” he said.

Brossard visited Sydney as the guest of Charlie Teo, an internationally renowned neurosurgeon who pioneered minimally invasive keyhole surgical techniques for brain cancer treatment.

‘Militant’ takes holiday break

This is a two-week issue. *Militant* no. 2 in 2016 will be mailed out January 7.

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Grinding depression

Continued from front page

government dropped interest rates effectively to zero as a “stimulus” measure, coupled with a “quantitative easing” money-printing scheme, to pump funds into the financial system. They claimed easy money would boost investment, production and jobs.

But for the vast majority of bosses it simply isn’t profitable to invest in expanding productive capacity and hire more workers. Instead, the propertied families ploughed their idle cash into all kinds of fictitious capital, speculating on stocks, bonds, derivatives and other paper values, where the rate of return promised to be much greater than industrial production.

“The Federal Reserve has actively encouraged the channeling of trillions of dollars ... into speculation,” wrote fund manager John Hussman in a Dec. 14 letter to investors.

“Market conditions presently feature a Pandora’s Box of rich valuation, vulnerable profit margins, rising default risk, rapidly deteriorating market internals, failing support levels, and accumulating evidence of oncoming recession,” he said.

Some bourgeois economists and financial commentators have challenged the Fed’s moves, fearing it will worsen capitalism’s crisis. “This is a time of considerable financial and geopolitical fragility around the world,” wrote former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers in the Dec. 15 *Washington Post*. The rate increase, he says, risks “setting off instability which could snowball.”

Over years of zero interest rates, many investors poured funds into what Wall Street calls junk bonds, with high interest rates based on greater risk of default; real estate schemes; and all kinds of stocks, bonds and government paper throughout “emerging markets” — semicolonial countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

But much of this is starting to come apart. The \$1.3 trillion junk bond market — more than \$700 billion of which was issued in 2012 and 2013 — is on course for big losses for the first time in seven years.

The money ploughed into speculative endeavors in the semicolonial world — not to develop production but to profit off interest payments — have exploded government debts there owed to U.S. investors to \$3.4 trillion. With much of this debt increasingly unpayable, panicky investors have hurried to withdraw \$500 billion from these markets.

Of the 22 largest “emerging markets” tracked by U.S. banking behemoth J.P. Morgan, 21 have had their economic forecast downgraded. The lone exception, the Czech Republic, is projected to stay flat. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, Brazil’s finance minister Joaquim Levy resigned Dec. 18.

Declining industrial output

U.S. industrial output had its sharpest decline in more than three and a half years in November, dropping 0.6 percent. This was the third straight month of declines, with a sharp drop in mining production and oil and gas well drilling. Eighteen percent of oil rigs have halted output over the past several months.

The drop in production and jobs

in China, the world’s second-largest economy, is generating workers’ resistance to factory closures and job cuts. Industrial employment in China has fallen to the lowest level since 2000, reported the *Financial Times*, including a 12 percent cut in iron ore miners.

Strikes and labor protests are on the rise, nearly doubling in the first 11 months of 2015 to 2,354, according to the Hong Kong-based China Labour Bulletin.

The contraction of production in China has sent ripples across the capitalist world. Over the past year, the S&P Goldman Sachs Commodity Index has fallen to its lowest level since the 2008 financial crisis. Base metals are down 49 percent from their highs nearly five years ago. At the same time U.S. crude inventories climbed to the highest level for this time of year since 1930.

Working people bear the brunt of the economic crisis, as bosses try to shore up profits by attacks on wages, safety and social protections. A recent Pew Research Center survey reports that one-fifth of U.S. adults now live in or near poverty levels. There are 48.9 million adults who are part of a three-person household earning less than \$31,402 a year — up from 43.2 million in 2008 and 21.6 million in 1971. About half of these workers are part of households making less than \$19,000.

Despite official government figures, real unemployment remains well above the 5 percent official rate. Millions more are without a full-time job and the labor force participation rate is at a nearly four-decade low. “Cooling off” the economy is likely to make things worse.

Protests say ‘Charge cop who killed Andrew Thomas’

Continued from front page

Joshua Turner, who has organized a number of protests against the shooting, told Channel 7 News.

Police video shows Feaster walk right by Ehorn, who is lying in the street gravely injured, then pulling his gun and shooting Thomas as he attempts to get out of the overturned vehicle. Thomas falls back inside. Feaster looks inside the SUV at Thomas and then, still ignoring Ehorn, pulls out his flashlight and appears to be looking for his spent bullet casing.

It’s not until other police officers arrive on the scene that a call is made to get an ambulance. After another officer begins aiding Ehorn, Feaster still doesn’t mention to anyone he has fired his weapon.

The cops order Thomas to get out of the vehicle. When Thomas says he’s been shot, Feaster replies, “No you haven’t.” After Thomas tells the cops a second time he’s been shot, and despite the fact he says “the cop” shot him, the other officers speculate among themselves that he had been shot at the bar. It’s only then, 11 minutes after the shooting, that Feaster admits he fired his gun — by accident he says — but doesn’t think he wounded Thomas. “I wasn’t even pointing at him,” he claimed.

During all this time none of the cops give any medical care to Thomas, whose spinal cord was severed by the bullet.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey initially said no charges would be filed against Feaster, but that he would charge Thomas with drunk driving and

‘Prosecute Minneapolis cops who killed Jamar Clark’



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

MINNEAPOLIS — More than 300 people marched here Dec. 19 demanding the prosecution of Minneapolis cops Mike Ringgenberg and Dustin Schwarze, who killed 24-year-old Jamar Clark Nov. 15. The march, which was organized by the Twin Cities Coalition 4 Justice 4 Jamar Clark, also demanded release of videos the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension has of the killing.

Clark was shot in the head in front of several neighbors who spoke out in protest. They said Clark was handcuffed when he was shot, which police officials dispute.

The spirited march began outside the 4th Precinct police station in North Minneapolis, down the street from where Clark was killed, and marched to the Government Center downtown. Rallies were held at a number of stops along the way. The majority of participants were young, including college and high school students.

Dave Scherer, a musician who joined the march along with a group of more than 50 people from the Redeemer Lutheran Church, explained how he and others made signs and organized their contingent along with one of Clark’s relatives who is part of their congregation.

“I don’t think they know how serious we are and how dedicated we have become,” Alexander Clark, a cousin of Jamar Clark, told the press.

Mel Reeves, one of the organizers, encouraged participants to keep on protesting until their demands are met.

— JACQUIE HENDERSON

vehicular manslaughter by intoxication in the death of Ehorn.

“I saw the video and it upset me,” said Miller, a retired construction contractor. “I’ve been hunting all my life and I’ve never pulled the trigger accidentally.”

Protests demand ‘Fire Feaster!’

“Fire Feaster,” “Ramsey Step Down,” “Stop Killer Cops” and “All Lives Matter: Where is the Justice? We Want it” were among the handwritten signs at a Dec. 19 protest Turner organized.

Miller joined the action, saying it was the first time he has ever protested in his life. Other protests have been organized.

Feaster “needs to be brought up on criminal charges,” Bert Morrissey, whose son knew Thomas, told the *Paradise Post* at a Dec. 12 protest. “There was no reason to pull a gun and shoot an

unarmed kid.”

“The officer was wrong and the DA was wrong,” Judy Morrissey told the *Post* at the protest. “I think if they admitted it, people would not be so upset.”

“It’s incredible, the story he’s trying to sell to the public,” Wes Oppenheim told the *Post* during the Dec. 19 demonstration. “His answer is that he ‘might’ have shot him. Are you kidding me?”

After the protests and Thomas’ death Dec. 19, the District Attorney said he was now considering filing charges against Feaster for criminal negligence, but would not decide before the new year.

“The question is would Thomas still be alive today had Feaster told his superiors earlier,” Ramsey said. “That’s a medical determination that has to be made.”

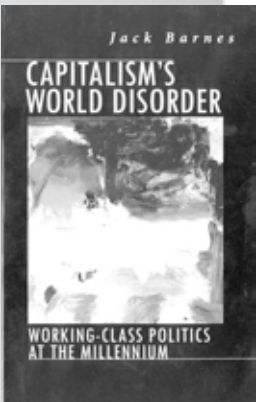
Capitalism’s World Disorder

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by Jack Barnes

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles across the country!

This column gives a voice to those engaged in battle and building solidarity today — including workers fighting for \$15 and a union; locked-out ATI Steelworkers; steel, Verizon and building workers opposing concessions. I invite those involved in workers' battles to 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

Phila. Fight for \$15: 'Reinstate fired McDonald's workers!'

PHILADELPHIA — Fighters for \$15 an hour and a union demonstrated at a McDonald's here Dec. 8 to defend two fired workers who are part of that struggle.

Alicia Hamiel, fired for a uniform violation, and Nykeemah Dawkins, fired for calling in sick, were part of the protest, along with co-worker Safiyyah Cotton. Chanting, "We can't live on \$7.25!" protesters went inside the restaurant and appealed to workers and customers to support the fight.

"You have a right to a union, and we will stand with you," Diane Mohny of the Coalition of Labor Union Women told workers.

Dawkins was fired a couple of weeks ago, she told the *Militant*, for calling off sick one day. The company refused to accept the note she brought in from an area hospital. Dawkins, Hamiel and Cotton had attended the Nov. 10 "Fight for \$15 and a union" protest in Philadelphia, part of a national day of action.

Gregory Holston, pastor of New Vision United Methodist Church and a supporter of the \$15 campaign, led a prayer inside the restaurant, while workers behind the counter listened and business stopped. Then the demonstrators marched around the building, giving leaflets to drive-through customers explaining the protest.

— Janet Post

Chicago area Teamsters fight Coca-Cola threats, demands

ALSIP, Ill. — More than 300 members of Teamsters Local 727 at Coca-Cola plants in this Chicago suburb and in nearby Niles went on strike Dec. 3. After meeting with the company 12 times since Oct. 28, the union filed unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board. Disputed issues include pay, benefits and mandatory overtime.

Coca-Cola Refreshments forced the strike by bargaining with no intention of settling the contract, intimidating workers and threatening union members with job loss, a Local 727 statement explains. "Managers will walk around carrying baseball bats asking workers about the status of ongoing negotiations," Will Petty, communications director for Teamsters Joint Council 25, told laborpress.org.

"I'm with that \$15 an hour fight at Burger King, McDonald's and especially at Walmart," Don Prince, a maintenance worker here, told the *Militant* on the picket line. "It is important so we can keep up with the economy. Coca-Cola wants to give a small wage increase that will be eaten up by increased health insurance costs."

As Local 727 entered federal mediation with the company Dec. 14, more than 300 strikers and supporters rallied at the Niles plant. The next

day the company handed the union a partial proposal for wage increases of 50 cents a year for five years while increasing health care costs from 10 to 37 percent, and demanded Teamster officials bring the offer to the membership for a vote.

"Local 727 made it clear during the past eight weeks that it cannot and will not recommend a partial proposal to members for a vote," union officials replied Dec. 15.

— Alyson Kennedy

Quebec public workers strike against cuts, concession contract

MONTREAL — Schools, health centers and most government offices were closed across Quebec Dec. 9 as 400,000 public workers, members of the Common Front of unions, participated in the largest strike in Quebec since 1972. In addition, some 34,000 teachers organized by the Autonomous Teachers Federation struck for three days across the province. The strikers were protesting the provincial government's demands for budget cuts and contract concessions.

Several thousand members of the teachers federation gathered at Parc Faubourg just east of downtown.

"Stop the quiet demolition," read Patrice Gagnon's placard. "During the 1960s and '70s" — a period known in Quebec as the "Quiet Revolution" — "we fought for better education and health care," Gagnon told the *Militant*. "Now the government is in the process of destroying it."

The teachers marched downtown to join a rally of 40,000 organized by the Common Front.

Picket lines were up at hospitals. Cars honked support as dozens of placard-waving, horn-blowing strik-



Militant/Janet Post

Marchers circle a Philadelphia McDonald's Dec. 8 to protest firing of two workers active in fight for \$15 and a union. Nykeemah Dawkins, with "I am a woman" sign, is one of those fired.

ers lined the sidewalk and the median in front of Maisonneuve Hospital.

"The government is cutting jobs and demanding 'flexible scheduling,' which means losing overtime pay," said union representative Johanne Verret in front of the Jeanne Mance Community Health Center, where she works.

"The unions have gotten weaker since I started here, but it's important to be out here today to show support for our fight," Normand Beaudoin, a cook for 22 years at the Jean Talon Hospital, told the *Militant*.

In Quebec City 350 buses from all over Quebec brought some 20,000

strikers to march to the Parliament buildings.

"We won't give up as long as the government doesn't commit to invest in education," Josée Scalabrini, president of the Federation of Teachers Unions, representing 60,000 teachers, told the crowd. Issues such as student-teacher ratios, salaries and retirement were far from settled, she said.

Richard Goldfinch, president of the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers, which represents 8,000 teachers in the English schools, also spoke.

— Josette Hurtubise
and Beverly Bernardo

Construction deaths in Israel

Continued from page 2

eration in the country, has contracts with some big construction companies, but most work is contracted out and 75 percent or more of those workers are unorganized.

The bosses intimidate undocumented workers and keep them from speaking out about dangerous work conditions or forming a union, Shay Cohen, an organization secretary of Koach La Ovdim (Workers Power), the second largest union federation in Israel, said by phone from Givatayim.

"Only unionization can solve the problem in the long term," he said. "We've had some success organizing crane operators who are mostly Russian immigrants and Arab citizens of Israel. But that is just the very beginning of what is needed."

Deaths on the job are rarely reported in the press and usually without the names of the workers who die, Tagari said.

"In recent decades not one contractor has ever paid for a worker's death with prison time," *Haaretz* reported.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 11, 1991

As Washington counts down the days until its January 15 deadline for Iraqi forces to be withdrawn from Kuwait, the massive and speedy deployment of U.S. forces to the Mideast continues. On December 28, 16,000 U.S. sailors and marines left from several ports for battle stations in the Arab-Persian Gulf.

The troops were aboard a 17-ship fleet led by two aircraft carriers, each carrying about 90 warplanes. They will join four other carrier groups already in or on their way to the Middle East, part of an overall deployment involving 430,000 U.S. military personnel.

The U.S. State Department lists 54 countries that have made some kind of military or monetary contribution to the imperialist war drive against the Iraqi people.



January 3, 1966

DEC. 29 — Two Iranian youths sentenced to death by a military court because of their opposition to the dictatorship of Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlevi have had their sentences commuted to life in prison following an international defense campaign sparked by Iranian students studying abroad. The two men were among 12 youths sentenced Nov. 1.

The students — five of whom had returned to Iran after completing their studies in Britain — were arrested last Spring. They were subject to torture. It is common practice in Iran's U. S.-backed regime for such trials to be closed and for prisoners accused of political opposition to disappear. But there are over 20,000 Iranian students abroad, mainly in Western Europe and the U.S., and a campaign begun among them threw a spotlight on the fate of their colleagues.



January 4, 1941

President Roosevelt's "fireside chat" last Sunday night was the equivalent of a military engagement of considerable magnitude. Roosevelt, proponent of measures "short of war" to aid Britain, in this speech went up almost to the final point short of an actual declaration of war in aligning this country on the world war front.

Roosevelt dropped all diplomatic pretenses as far as the fundamental issues were concerned. He served notice on the Axis that U.S. imperialism regards itself as the prime object of the tri-powered Axis alliance. He ruled out any question of a "negotiated" peace and in doing so accepted on behalf of American imperialism the gage thrown down by German imperialism, which has already indicated that it likewise regards this war as an "all-or-nothing" affair.

Gov't policies in UK turn flooding into social disaster

BY CAROLINE BELLAMY

CARLISLE, England — For the third time in 10 years, widespread flooding hit this largely rural northwestern region Dec. 5. Across Cumbria, Storm Desmond left nearly 7,000 homes flooded, 44 schools shut and 2,625 households without electricity.

While record rain fell on already saturated ground, what transpired was not mainly a natural disaster, but a social and class catastrophe. Like Hurricane Sandy in New York, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and past flooding in Britain, the refusal by capitalist governments to fund needed defenses guaranteed greater destruction, with the burden falling largely on workers and farmers.

The British rulers have been slashing public services and funds in the name of balancing the budget. Their National Audit Office reports that funding for flood defenses has fallen 10 percent since 2010. Protecting smaller communities is just not cost effective, they say.

Driving through the worst affected streets here a week after the storm, big piles of sodden carpets, furniture and personal belongings line the pavements, awaiting collection by local authorities. Largely left to fend for themselves, people have depended on working-class solidarity.

Among groups providing assistance is the Muslim-based Al-Imdaad Foundation, which has sent more than 60 volunteers. “We’ve been providing hot food, fresh water and helping people clear their homes,” 23-year-old volunteer Sufyaan Valimulla told the *Independent*.

“I’ve got no gas, no electric, no water,” Martin Wilson told *Militant* worker-correspondents who came to extend solidarity and get the facts out about what people face in the working-class area of Caldewgate. “Everyone’s pulling together. We’ve been told not to drink the water, but the only place giving it out is the church up the road. The electricity board has been here, but we need a certificate from an electrician to get the power back on. That costs £50 [\$75].”

Steve Parker drove up with a load of donated sandbags that he and Wilson laid in the doorways of neighboring houses. “In the last flood the council provided sandbags,” said Karen Tyler, who lives in the area. “This time you have to get them yourself.”

“The insurance companies are making millions out of what has happened to us,” said Mary Hay. “I got a quote of £660 [\$980] for renewing my house insurance just before the flood. This was £250 more than last year, then the flood happened and they told me the quote was changed to £950 [\$1,415].” The insurance for a similar sized house in

Manchester last year was £175 (\$260).

Workers were told disastrous floods were a thing of the past after the government spent \$56 million for new protections since the last major floods in 2005.

“I thought it could never happen again, they claimed it was a 1 in 100 chance, and now we’ve got this,” said hospital worker Tricia Irving. “It’s always housing for less well off people that gets hit.”

The Environment Agency opposes large-scale dredging to allow rising water to escape, saying it is costly, ineffective and damages wildlife habitats. River Eamont, a tributary of the Eden, one of Carlisle’s three rivers, has not been disturbed because the government says protecting otters and crayfish is a higher priority.

“I’m all for looking after wildlife,” Irving said, “but start with us first. They must dredge the rivers.”

A flood defense scheme for the Cumbrian town of Kendal has been repeatedly postponed. Last week it was submerged in up to five feet of water, leaving 1,397 people homeless.

More than half of Cumbria’s population lives in rural areas, and many farmers lost livestock, feed, fences and use of waterlogged fields.

Local people took matters into their own hands in rural Glenridding, turning out twice during the week of the floods with their diggers to help deepen the bed of the river that flows through the village. Residents formed a human chain to pull people to safety as torrents of water poured through the streets.

ATI Steelworkers fight against two-tier wages

Continued from front page

generation opportunity to bend the cost curve on a major part of our costs,” Robert Wetherbee, president of ATI’s Flat-Rolled Products, told *New York Times* labor reporter Steven Greenhouse in a Dec. 3 interview. He said up to a third of the workforce could retire in four years and ATI wants to be able to pay new hires significantly less.

“If we’re going to be competitive, we have to be in a position where we have a different benefit structure for the next generation we hire,” he said. “We decided we couldn’t kick the can down the road any further.”

Steelworkers have maintained 24-hour picketing, organized expanded solidarity picket lines and rallies and won support from other union and nonunion workers in communities near the mills. Through social events, from spaghetti dinners to dart tournaments, locked-out workers, their families and supporters have gotten to know each other. Not one union member has crossed the line.

Dan Greenfield, vice president for investor relations, would not answer questions from the *Militant*, referring this reporter to the company website.

“Once you read it over, you’ll see why we are so up in arms,” said Terry Stinson, a picket captain at the Vandergrift, Pennsylvania, mill and member of Steelworkers Local 1138. “The company claims our average annual earnings are \$94,000. I’m average, and if I made \$94,000 last year, the company owes me about \$35,000!”

Building a new rolling mill in Brackenridge, Pennsylvania, “we invested

China: Construction boom causes deadly mudslide



Reuters/China Daily

A massive man-made mountain of dirt and construction debris broke apart in Shenzhen, China, Dec. 20, and turned into a landslide, knocking over dozens of factories and workers’ dormitories. More than 15 acres were covered with 20-foot deep mud. The unstable dump was the product of capitalist greed and disregard for the thousands who lived and worked in its vicinity. Government sources say 91 people are missing, but no one knows how many lie buried beneath the muck.

In the frenzy of capitalist expansion Shenzhen was transformed from a fishing village in the 1970s to a “special economic zone,” expanding to become one of China’s main industrial hubs with more than 10 million residents.

An abandoned and water-logged quarry was turned into a trash dump for construction waste licensed by the city several years ago. In spite of warnings from the Zongxing Environmental Technology company that the huge and growing heap was unstable and a landslide possible, the local government allowed dumping to continue until the inevitable happened. Eight other such dumping sites are still operating in the city.

Breakneck construction by Chinese capitalists, aided by government stimulus and subsidies, has led to numerous disasters for working people. In August a warehouse close to a residential area in the northeastern city of Tianjin exploded, killing 173 people. The construction industry is notorious for its unsafe working conditions. On Oct. 30, at least 17 workers were killed and another 23 injured when a building collapsed in Henan, one of more than 150 major incidents officially reported this year.

— MAGGIE TROWE

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

FLORIDA

Miami

Defending Free Speech: What’s at Stake for Working People? Speaker: Amanda Ulman, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan. 8. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 7911 Biscayne Blvd., Suite 2. Tel.: (305) 390-8310.

bricklayers, some of whom have crossed the picket line to replace heat-resistant furnace bricks at the ATI mill there.

Nearly 100 workers from several ATI plants rallied at the Bagdad, Pennsylvania, mill Dec. 18 in response to ATI’s announcement it would idle that mill and one in Midland in 2016, eliminating 600 jobs. “This is a scare tactic against the union,” Stinson said.

“During the Bagdad rally we got the news that the National Labor Relations Board will issue a complaint that the lockout is illegal,” said Alan Braden, Local 1138 safety coordinator. “What we have done has won a lot of support. At a local grocery store later that night some supporters broke into cheers as some USW members were shopping.”

To send solidarity messages or contributions, go to <http://www.usw.org/act/campaigns/ati-bargaining>.

Alan Braden, a member of USW Local 1138 in Bagdad, Pennsylvania, contributed to this article.

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Paris ‘climate’ summit

Continued from front page
without a deal, President Barack Obama has been pushing for some kind of agreement as part of his “legacy.” He hailed the Paris accord as a “turning point for the world” and “the best chance we have to save the one planet that we’ve got.”

Previous climate gatherings have foundered as conflicting capitalist interests made it impossible to reach any concrete overall plan and enforce it.

So in Paris, this approach was abandoned. The new agreement sets only an abstract “goal” — to allow global temperature increases to go no higher than 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit over temperature levels before the onset of the industrial revolution, and then “pursue efforts” to do better. Its only binding requirement is that signers make and publicize a plan to cut emissions at home, and, starting in 2023 to reconvene every five years to hear how everyone’s doing.

Obama had an additional reason to insist on a nonbinding deal. That way he can sign it as an executive order, avoiding having to submit it to the Senate for a vote, where he would lose. Most Republicans and many Democrats oppose the deal as interference with Washington’s imperial power.

After the Kyoto climate conference in 1997, several governments in Europe committed to reduce carbon emissions. The Paris deal nullifies these promises. French President Francois Hollande immediately announced Paris would revise its targets downward before 2020 and invited others to do the same.

This was an easy promise, since it will cost Paris nothing, while putting pressure on its rivals. France derives more than 75 percent of its electricity from nuclear power — which does not produce carbon emissions — far more than any other country in Europe.

The German government decided in 2011 to phase out nuclear power and replace it with solar and wind energy. In the meantime, reliance on coal, which accounts for nearly half of the country’s electricity production, has increased.

The “cap and trade” business in carbon emissions, which took off in the beginning of the 2000s, was left undisturbed and virtually undiscussed. These schemes involve setting overall caps on emissions but allow businesses and governments to buy and sell the “right” to pollute. The abundant supply of these credits has led the price to plunge from \$32 to \$4 per ton of carbon, making it much cheaper to buy them than to invest in cleaner technology.

Capitalist traders hope that a new

Chinese cap-and-trade plan will revive this market and make it more profitable.

Many capitalists expect the conference decisions will open new opportunities for “green” profit. “The global market for low-carbon goods and services is already worth \$5.5 trillion a year and this deal will turbochange the amount of capital chasing new low-carbon investment opportunities,” Abyd Karmali, managing director for climate finance at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, told the *Financial Times* Dec. 13.

A feature of all the climate talks has been attempts by Washington and other imperialist governments to blunt rising competition from China, India and a variety of “emerging economies.” Arguing that China is the world’s biggest carbon emitter and India the fourth, they make pious proclamation about saving the environment, then demand capitalists in these countries make deep cuts in their carbon emissions.

But U.S. emissions are nearly three times higher per capita than China’s and 10 times higher than India’s.

The conference — attended by some 40,000 people — was surrounded by hordes of delegates from nongovernmental organizations, environmental profiteers and groups best known for claiming the world will come to an end unless all working people give up their “privilege.”

The *Weekly Standard* complained Dec. 14 that Beijing scored too many victories. “The first was the right to continue using carbon-emitting fossil



Neil Palmer Photography

Farmer in Kenya, cultivating by hand. Recent U.N. “climate” conference ignored energy needs of toilers in countries held in underdevelopment by workings of capitalist system.

fuels to keep its factories running at a low cost while we force ours to switch to more costly fuels,” the paper said. The second was “in the competition to provide new power plants for developing countries. The Obama administration has ended most public financing of coal-fired power plants. Not China.”

The target here is the Chinese government’s financing of 92 new coal-powered plants in 27 countries, many in Africa, “to the probable tune of over \$100 billion” the *Standard* laments.

Expansion of energy is an absolute necessity for developing the economic and cultural level of working people in Africa, Asia and Latin America. According to the International Energy Agency, 1.2 billion people, 17 percent of the world’s population, still had no

access to electricity in 2013 and “many more suffer from supply that is of poor quality.” More than 2.7 billion rely on “solid biomass for cooking, typically using inefficient stoves in poorly ventilated spaces,” with deadly health effects.

Working people have an interest in fighting shoulder to shoulder with toilers of the semicolonial world for energy expansion and industrial growth there. These steps build the working class and open the door to greater solidarity worldwide.

Officials from governments in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean grouped in a Least Developed Countries coalition called for \$100 billion a year in aid from the imperialist countries. Washington and other imperialist powers brushed the demand aside.

Ukraine ban on Communist Party blow to workers’ rights

BY SETH GALINSKY

A district court in Kiev ruled Dec. 16 that a government edict banning the Communist Party of Ukraine is legal and should be enforced. The court rejected the party’s challenge to a July 23 order by the Justice Ministry prohibiting it from running candidates in elections. The new ruling goes further, outlawing any activity by the party.

The CP backed the regime of Viktor Yanukovich, which was overthrown in February 2014 by popular mobilizations seeking Ukraine’s independence from Moscow’s boot. Since then the party has faced physical and legal assaults on its members, offices, newspapers and its right to exist. These attacks are a threat to the working class and labor movement in Ukraine and the political rights of all working people there.

Facing pressure from Washington, the European Union and International Monetary Fund, the capitalist government in

Kiev consolidated under billionaire Petro Poroshenko has conducted a relentless drive against workers and farmers aimed at weakening the labor movement and ramping up employers’ profitability. At the same time, Ukraine continues to face aggression from Moscow and pro-Moscow forces occupying areas in the east of the country and Crimea.

The July 23 Justice Ministry order, which also banned two parties that split from the CP from participating in elections, was based on a set of “decommunization” laws passed by the Rada, Ukraine’s parliament, in May. The laws make it illegal to display communist or Nazi symbols, with penalties of up to 10 years in prison; ban parties from using the word communist in their names; and make it a crime to distribute communist propaganda or to deny “the criminal character of the communist totalitarian regime of 1917-1991 in Ukraine.”

The Justice Ministry charged that the CP “carries out actions aimed at changing the constitutional order through violent means” and conducts “propaganda of war, violence and incitement to inter-ethnic enmity” as well as makes systematic “calls to create armed formations.”

“They’ve accused the Communist Party of so many things that I think it’s a little like Shakespeare ‘thou dost protest too much,’” said Halya Coynash, a member of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, by phone Dec. 19. She said the government has not made public any evidence of violent acts by the party.

Working people in Ukraine played a key role in the overthrow of Yanukovich. The Communist Party echoed Moscow’s slander that the Maidan mobilizations were the work of “fascists” and agents of Washington.

The CP’s candidate for president re-

ceived 39 percent of the vote in 1999. In the 2012 parliamentary elections, the party received 13 percent of the vote. Petro Symonenko, the CP candidate for president, withdrew from the 2014 presidential campaign after receiving threats of physical violence and the interim government’s announcement it planned to file criminal charges against him.

The party was widely discredited because of its opposition to the Maidan movement and its political connections to separatist groups in the eastern part of the country.

Poroshenko, who won the 2014 elections, has taken advantage of that isolation to push for its destruction, encouraging rightist attacks. It has also attempted to smear coal miners and others as “fifth columnists” for fighting attacks on jobs, wages and social benefits.

The European Commission for Democracy Through Law, better known as the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, made up of representatives of 47 European governments, issued an opinion Dec. 18 criticizing the criminal penalties in the decommunization laws as “disproportionate” and overly severe. At the same time, the commission said Kiev has the right to “ban or even criminalise the use of certain symbols of and propaganda for totalitarian regimes.”

“The banning of the Communist Party in Ukraine sets a very dangerous precedent,” said Amnesty International spokesperson John Dalhuisen in a Dec. 17 statement. “Expressing your opinion without fear of prosecution, particularly if that opinion is contrary to the views held by those in positions of power, was one of the principles behind the Euro Maidan protests. Snuffing out the Communist Party flies in the face of these ideals.”

Workers give Walmart ‘bonus’ bribe to SWP

’Tis the season for some capitalists to give holiday “bonuses” designed to bribe workers not to report injuries and to refrain from fighting low wages, speedup and unsafe job conditions. Class-conscious workers are turning these blood-money bribes into a contribution to the Socialist Workers Party’s Capital Fund to help finance the party’s long-range work.

“Enclosed is a \$214.06 check for the Capital Fund,” wrote Osborne Hart, a Walmart overnight stocker who was the 2015 SWP candidate for mayor of Philadelphia. “This money comes from the Walmart ‘MyShare’ bonus for reaching the quota they set for sales profits and the fact that there were no accidents reported by workers at the Super Center where I work.

“As you know, ‘MyShare’ is the bosses’ euphemism for what we know as blood money.”

So far Hart and 10 other Walmart workers have sent in contributions from such year-end bonuses totaling \$2,587.90! “Now is the time to build the workers’ movement,” wrote Dean Hazlewood from New York, enclosing his check for \$175.

— MAGGIE TROWE

Priscilla March: Political cadre of SWP for 62 years

BY NAOMI CRAINE

LOS ANGELES — “Priscilla March was a political cadre, grounded in working-class politics and the program and continuity of the Socialist Workers Party. That is what sustained her for 62 years of building the party,” said Norton Sandler, speaking for the SWP’s National Committee at a Dec. 19 meeting here celebrating the life and political contributions of March, who died Nov. 30 at the age of 95.

The previous weekend party branches in Los Angeles and Minneapolis hosted celebrations of the political lives of two other cadres, Betsy McDonald and Frank Forrestal. Articles on those meetings appeared in the Dec. 28 issue of the *Militant*.

“Through these three comrades you get a picture of the Socialist Workers Party over six decades and the individuals it’s made of,” Sandler said. “None of us picks when we are born or how long we live, and much of what happens in the class struggle is out of our control. Whatever the circumstances, communists build the party and try to advance the line of march of the working class toward power.”

March was born in 1920 and grew up in Mount Vernon, New York. Her father was a doctor. She was independent-minded for a woman of her time. She went to college, worked as a nurse, went through a brief marriage, and traveled in Europe, wearing out her shoes visiting museums, before she found the SWP.

When March joined in New York in 1953, it was at the height of a deep-going political fight within the SWP over whether a revolutionary working-class party organized along the lines of the Bolsheviks in Lenin’s time could and should be built in the United States.

The centers of the faction fight were in New York and Detroit, Sandler said. A minority in the New York branch aligned with Michel Pablo, then a leader of the Fourth International in Europe. The election of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower as president, they argued, made a nuclear war with the Soviet Union inevitable. Moscow would attract progressive-minded people everywhere and end up victorious, and this would give impetus to the growth of Stalinist parties and the overturn of capitalism, establishing “centuries of degenerated workers states” in a number of countries.

The task before communists, according to Pablo’s supporters, was to enter

these Stalinist parties, with a perspective of spending many years in them — rather than seeing them as a counter-revolutionary obstacle as the party, following Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky, had for decades.

The majority of the Detroit branch was conservatized by the relative prosperity that followed U.S. imperialism’s victory in World War II and the pressures of the anti-communist witch hunt. They were in full retreat from the perspective of building a revolutionary party. Both groups that opposed the party majority lacked confidence in the working class and its revolutionary capacities.

March and Harry Ring, who was already a party member and became her life-long companion, had friends in both factions. March was won to the political view of the SWP majority, led by party National Secretary James P. Cannon, and built that party for the rest of her life.

Party responds to new openings

Developments in the class struggle soon brought home the correctness of the party’s confidence in the fighting capacity of the working class.

This included an outpouring in 1955 for the funeral of Emmett Till, a Black youth from Chicago who was lynched in Mississippi, and the start of the historic bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama — milestones in what became a mass, proletarian-led movement that brought down Jim Crow racist segregation and transformed the U.S. working class in ways that continue to be felt today.

Workers in Hungary rose up in 1956 against the bureaucratic abuses of the pro-Moscow regime. This revolutionary upsurge was crushed by Soviet tanks, but it showed new rebellious moods and cracks in the world Stalinist monolith.

On Jan. 1, 1959, the workers and farmers in Cuba, led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement, overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship, Sandler said, opening the road to the first socialist revolution in the Americas. This proved in practice that it was possible to construct a non-Stalinist leadership capable of leading the toilers to power.

“Harry and Priscilla were among the first party cadres to visit revolutionary Cuba,” Sandler said. They were there in 1960 when many of the U.S.-owned companies that dominated Cuba’s economy were nationalized through working-class mobilizations.

New generations were won to the revolutionary working-class movement. Wendy Lyons, a member of the Los Angeles SWP branch who joined in 1963, spoke of how she and many others spent Saturday evenings in Harry and Priscilla’s tiny New York apartment. “There was food, jazz, poker and, above all, hours of political discussion, helping knit the continuity between the generations to advance the struggle of the working class toward socialism.”

Lyons recalled travel-



Inset, Militant/Ellen Haywood
Priscilla March addresses Young Socialists convention in 1998. Inset, Wendy Lyons, speaking at Dec. 19 meeting celebrating March’s political life, shows front page of *Militant* they sold at historic 1963 March on Washington, supporting call for civil rights activists to break from the capitalist Democrats and Republicans and build the Freedom Now Party.



ing with March on a bus to the historic August 1963 demonstration for Black rights in Washington. “We took 7,500 copies of the *Militant* to the demonstration,” Lyons said, “and halfway through we ran out. Priscilla was the top seller.”

March was picked up by the rise of the women’s rights movement. “She knew how important women’s right to choose abortion was,” Lyons said, “and with her party helped build the movement to win it.

“Like many of us at that time, she stopped using her husband’s name. Most of us went back to the name we were born with. But Priscilla said, ‘If I wanted a man’s name I’d keep Harry’s. I picked March from the calendar,’” Lyons recalled.

“The 1960s brought class struggle developments among Mexican Americans,” said Joel Britton, organizer of the Oakland SWP branch, who chaired the meeting. These included “farmworker battles for union recognition, mass high school walkouts in Los Angeles, the 1970 Chicano Moratorium march of 30,000 against the Vietnam War and the growth of La Raza Unida parties.”

The party opened a Southwest Bureau of the *Militant* organized by Ring, and he and March moved to Los Angeles in 1971. “Harry traveled all over reporting on these struggles,” Sandler said. And he gave classes on party history throughout the region.

Continuity with struggles today

At the 50th Anniversary Convention of the United Farm Workers in 2012, “some veterans asked party members attending about Harry and Priscilla,” Britton said. “They were links in a chain of unbroken continuity of support by the party to this still-vital social struggle. Just two days ago, members and supporters of the party in Oakland, working with leaders of the ‘\$15 an hour and a union’ fight, organized a vanload of fast-food and other workers to participate in a UFW Christmas party in Fresno.”

For decades, March was centrally involved in organizing the distribution of books on the party’s history and politics, today published by Pathfinder Press. She drove all over the country, visiting stores and libraries. Betsey Stone, a member of the SWP branch in Oakland, recalled how when she joined in the early 1960s the party had a few books that were essential in recruiting a new

generation. Over the next decade as the party grew, “we got some presses and published many more. Priscilla’s work was to help get them out.”

Mike Tucker sent a message on behalf of the Communist League of New Zealand. “It was through comrades like Priscilla,” he wrote, “that we learned firsthand the rich history of the class struggle in the United States and worldwide, and learned of the efforts of these comrades to build a party and world movement. They brought to life politics and class battles that we had read about in books. This helped us to understand and become part of the continuity of the communist movement, which is a living movement, the vanguard of working-class struggle, and not a set of abstract ideas.”

When the party turned in the late 1970s to opportunities to get the large majority of its members working in industry and the trade unions, some of the older cadres of the party didn’t think it could or should be done. “Priscilla and Harry discussed and argued with some of their generation and helped win them over to the party’s course,” Sandler said.

“Priscilla was a stalwart of classes to systematically study the writings of Lenin in the early 1980s,” he added, as part of deepening an understanding of communist continuity throughout the party.

March helped organize Militant Labor Forums and petition drives for party election campaigns. She “loved to sell the *Militant*, to knock on a worker’s door and begin discussing the struggles going on, and how you can join in. She kept doing it well into her ’80s,” Lyons said.

Some 50 people attended the meeting. Among them was Anita Wills, who is active in the fight against police brutality in the Bay Area. She had also attended the event celebrating the life of Betsy McDonald. Wills said she could identify with these women, who “made a difference in the party. A lot of times in this society when you’re older you’re not considered relevant. The meetings made me feel connected to these ladies and to the party.”

Participants enjoyed an excellent buffet, looked at displays on the class-struggle events and political activity that shaped Priscilla March’s life and read messages sent to the meeting. More than \$2,200 was donated to advance the work of the Socialist Workers Party.



Militant
From left, SWP members Harry Ring, Priscilla March, Arthur Lobman and Ethel Lobman during 1960 visit to revolutionary Cuba. Workers there were organizing mass mobilizations against Washington and nationalizing U.S.-owned industries.

Int'l farm groups meet in Cuba, discuss gains of revolution

BY SAM MANUEL

GÜIRA DE MELENA, Cuba — Some 250 farmers and others gathered here Nov. 22-27 for the Fifth International Conference on Agroecology, Sustainable Agriculture and Cooperatives. They visited farms and discussed efforts by Cuban working people and their revolutionary government to boost food production.

Led by Fidel Castro, the July 26 Movement led workers and farmers to power in Cuba in 1959 in the first socialist revolution in the Americas. One of the first measures of the revolutionary government was a far-reaching land reform, ousting the hated landlord class and turning the land over to the farmers themselves.

Under Law 259 passed in 2008, the Cuban government has distributed millions of acres of idle land for free to anyone who will farm it. Tens of thousands of working people from the cities and countryside have responded, including a significant number of youth.

International delegations came from the Union Paysanne in Quebec, Canada; the Basque Farmers Union from Spain; the Federation of Indonesian Peasant Unions; farm groups in El Salvador, Haiti, Guadeloupe, Congo, and India; and some 65 farmers and others from the U.S., to name a few.

Many work small farms averaging three to five acres, along with associated small businesses such as organic farmers' markets and production of honeys, jams and other products. Others manage large farms that employ dozens of farmworkers.

Participants included academics and specialists in organic and agroecology farming methods who work for non-governmental organizations and related foundations.

The meeting was hosted by Cuba's National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) and co-sponsored by Via Campesina, an international organiza-



Braulio Marín Arbeláez, with basket, at his coffee farm in Villa Clara, Cuba, talks with Willie Head, U.S. farmer from Georgia, Nov. 24 as part of international conference on agroecology.

tion that promotes ecological and organic farming methods.

Participants visited some 130 cooperative farms across the island over the first three days of the conference. ANAP organizes small farmers in two kinds of voluntary cooperatives, Credit and Service Cooperatives (CCS), which are associations of peasants who maintain their individual farms but pool efforts to organize supplies and sell their produce, and Agricultural Production Cooperatives (CPA), associations of farmers who combine their land and machinery and farm collectively.

"The Cuban Revolution has been an inspiring example for us throughout Africa," Melamiseli Ncube, a coordinator with the Zimbabwe Small Holder Organic Farmers Forum, told the *Militant*. "They have not only survived the economic embargo and loss of trade but they continue to make progress. You can see and feel the confidence in the revolution here."

"Things look better here now than when I visited Cuba in 2000 and 2002.

There is more food and types of it," said Willie Head, an African-American farmer from Georgia. He joined 14 conference participants that visited farmers in Villa Clara province. He noted the presence of new harvesters and excavators made by International Harvester, a U.S. farm equipment company.

"Cuba changed my life," Head said. "I came to be recharged and energized, and that happened beyond my expectations."

Gains of the socialist revolution

Several Cuban farmers in Villa Clara told us they had gotten land under the new law.

Farmers here have a proud history dating back to the 1959 revolution. On the eve of victory, Ernesto Che Guevara led rebel troops in consolidating control of the province and in the capture of its capital, Santa Clara. U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista fled Havana and workers and farmers took control of their country.

"My father and three brothers were fighters in the rebel army," said Braulio Marín Arbeláez, who works 10 acres of coffee and grows fruits and vegetables. They also fought against counterrevolutionary bandits in the Escambray Mountains after the revolution. "The revolution made all you will see here possible," he said.

In addition to the land, farmers receive a range of support from the government, such as bank credits and crop insurance, Marín said. "The insurance includes everything on the farm — equipment, animals, the family home, farm structures and family members," Marín explained. Farmers who choose to join can get additional credit from the cooperative.

Marín said coffee prices have been rising, and that has boosted his production, most of which is exported.

Specialists from the university work with Marín and other farmers to develop experimental varieties of coffee plants, seeking products that are more adaptive to the climate and resistant to disease and pests.

"Farmers also have access to a doctor and other health care specialists as needed," Dr. José Pérez Ríos told visitors from the conference.

"I am not from a peasant family," said Manulo González, who farms coffee on the steep slopes in Manicaragua. "My father was a mechanic and my mother

worked in a tobacco factory."

González, who farms the land with his wife and two sons, received the land three years ago in exchange for agreeing to clear and work it. Many farmers secured land this way due to Law 300, adopted in 2012 to put more land into food production.

Like Marín, González plants experimental varieties of coffee trees, maintaining records of their yields and overall hardiness. He receives a credit from the government for this and for soil conservation measures.

Asked if he ever longs for the city or would like to move to Havana, he said, "No! Never! I am doing what I love — producing for the Cuban people."

Women and revolution

"My father was a landless peasant. The revolution gave us this land," Gladys López López, one of the founding members of ANAP in Villa Clara, told us. She works an eight-acre farm with her husband, two sons, their wives and two grandchildren.

In addition to vegetables López raises cows and pigs. The government buys all the meat and at least 5 percent of the family's produce. These purchases ensure that the elderly, children and hospital patients have their basic food needs met, she said. Small independent farmers who are not part of the cooperatives or ANAP members also have their prices guaranteed.

Joined by the Federation of Cuban Women and the Union of Young Communists, ANAP formed two brigades in 2013 aimed at encouraging women and young people to return to farming. Idalinis Almaguer Domínguez, an ANAP leader in Havana province, told us.

According to ANAP, over 6,000 of the 38,170 people associated with farming in the province are women. "The revolution had a big impact on women," López said. "It liberated us."

'Not one acre for sale'

Some conference participants expressed fears that U.S. and European capitalists will try to take advantage of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Havana to take control of agriculture and production in Cuba, seeking to overturn the socialist revolution.

"Not one acre of land in Cuba is for sale to any U.S. company or from any other country, not one acre!" María del Carmen Barroso, a leader of ANAP, said during the visit to Marín's coffee farm. "Not even for experimental purposes. Not one acre!"

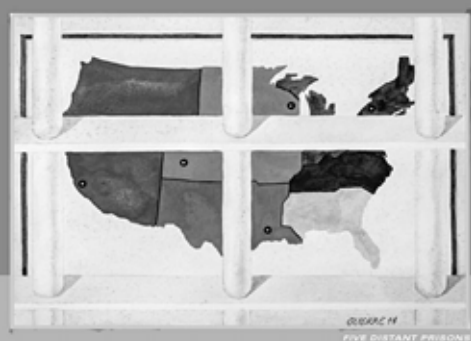
"We welcome the discussions with the U.S.," Magdalena González Pérez, another ANAP leader, said. "We know that among the people in North America there are many friends of Cuba. We will never change our principles, our ideals, the revolution we have defended for 50 years, the health care. Anyone here can have a heart operation if needed at no cost. It doesn't matter if you are a professional or a peasant. That we will never give up!"

The conference adopted a declaration calling for an end to Washington's embargo against Cuba and normalization of relations between the two countries.

Linda Joyce from Charleston, West Virginia, contributed to this article.

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—Ramón Labañino

In interviews conducted in August and December 2015, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and René González talk about their experiences as part of the US working class during their up to 16 years behind bars on federal frame-up charges of "conspiracy" to commit espionage. Known the world over as the Cuban Five, they discuss prospects for Cuba's socialist revolution as well.

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‘Art is incompatible with lies, hypocrisy and conformity’

Art and Revolution by Leon Trotsky, a central leader of the 1917 October Revolution, is one of the Books of the Month for December. From the vantage point of a leader in the early Soviet republic along with V.I. Lenin, and then its defender against the political counterrevolution after Lenin died led by Joseph Stalin and the bureaucracy he spoke for, Trotsky examines the place of art and artistic creation in building a new, socialist society. Expelled from the Soviet Union in 1929, Trotsky got asylum in 1936 in Mexico with the aid of Diego Rivera, the country's leading artist. The excerpt is from “Art and Politics in Our Epoch,” originally published as a letter to the August 1938 Partisan Review, a political and cultural magazine published in the U.S. Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LEON TROTSKY

You have been kind enough to invite me to express my views on the state of present-day arts and letters. I do this not without some hesitation. Since my book *Literature and Revolution* (1923), I have not once returned to the problem of artistic creation and only occasionally have I been able to follow the latest developments in this sphere. I am far from pretending to offer an exhaustive reply. The task of this letter is to correctly pose



From left, French surrealist André Breton, Mexican artist Diego Rivera and Leon Trotsky, in Mexico in 1938. They collaborated on *Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art*. “Art can become a strong ally of revolution only insofar as it remains faithful to itself,” Trotsky wrote.

the question.

Generally speaking, art is an expression of man's need for a harmonious and complete life, that is to say, his need for those major benefits of which a society of classes has deprived him. That is why a protest against reality, either conscious or unconscious, active or passive, optimistic or pessimistic, always forms part of a really creative piece of work. Every new tendency in art has begun with rebellion.

Bourgeois society showed its strength throughout long periods of history in the fact that, combining repression and encouragement, boycott and flattery, it was able to control and assimilate every “rebel” movement in art and raise it to the level of official “recognition.” But each time this “recognition” betokened, when all is said and done, the approach of trouble. It was then that from the left wing of the academic school or below it — i.e., from the ranks of a new generation of bohemian artists — a fresher revolt would surge up to attain in its turn, after a decent interval, the steps of the academy. Through these stages passed classicism, romanticism, realism, naturalism, symbolism, impressionism, cubism, futurism. ... Nevertheless, the union of art and the bourgeoisie remained stable, even if not happy, only so long as the bourgeoisie itself took the initiative and was capable of maintaining a regime both politically and morally “democratic.” This was a question of not only giving free rein to artists and playing up to them in every possible way, but also of granting special

privileges to the top layer of the working class, and of mastering and subduing the bureaucracy of the unions and workers' parties. All these phenomena exist in the same historical plane.

The decline of bourgeois society means an intolerable exacerbation of social contradictions, which are transformed inevitably into personal contradictions, calling forth an ever more burning need for a liberating art. Furthermore, a declining capitalism already finds itself completely incapable of offering the minimum conditions for the development of tendencies in art which correspond, however little, to our epoch. It fears superstitiously every new word, for it is no longer a matter of corrections and reforms for capitalism but of life and death. The oppressed masses live their own life. Bohemianism offers too limited a social base. Hence new tendencies take on a more and more violent character, alternating between hope and despair. ...

The October Revolution gave a magnificent impetus to all types of Soviet art. The bureaucratic reaction, on the contrary, has stifled artistic creation with a totalitarian hand. Nothing surprising here! Art is basically a function of the nerves and demands complete sincerity. Even the art of the court of absolute monarchies was based on idealization but not on falsification. The official art of the Soviet Union — and there is no other over there — resembles totalitarian justice, that is to say, it is based on lies and deceit. The goal of justice, as of art, is to exalt the “leader,” to fabricate a

heroic myth. Human history has never seen anything to equal this in scope and impudence. ...

The style of present-day official Soviet painting is called “socialist realism.” The name itself has evidently been invented by some high functionary in the department of the arts. This “realism” consists in the imitation of provincial daguerreotypes of the third quarter of the last century; the “socialist” character apparently consists in representing, in the manner of pretentious photography, events which never took place. It is impossible to read Soviet verse and prose without physical disgust, mixed with horror, or to look at reproductions of paintings and sculpture in which functionaries armed with pens, brushes, and scissors, under the supervision of functionaries armed with Mausers, glorify the “great” and “brilliant” leaders, actually devoid of the least spark of genius or greatness. The art of the Stalinist period will remain as the frankest expression of the profound decline of the proletarian revolution. ...

The real crisis of civilization is above all the crisis of revolutionary leadership. Stalinism is the greatest element of reaction in this crisis. Without a new flag and a new program it is impossible to create a *revolutionary* mass base; consequently it is impossible to rescue society from its dilemma. But a truly revolutionary party is neither able nor willing to take upon itself the task of “leading” and even less of commanding art, either before or after the conquest of power. Such a pretension could only enter the head of a bureaucracy — ignorant and impudent, intoxicated with its totalitarian power — which has become the antithesis of the proletarian revolution. Art, like science, not only does not seek orders, but by its very essence, cannot tolerate them. Artistic creation has its laws — even when it consciously serves a social movement. Truly intellectual creation is incompatible with lies, hypocrisy and the spirit of conformity. Art can become a strong ally of revolution only insofar as it remains faithful to itself. Poets, painters, sculptors and musicians will themselves find their own approach and methods, if the struggle for freedom of oppressed classes and peoples scatters the clouds of skepticism and of pessimism which cover the horizon of mankind. The first condition of this regeneration is the overthrow of the domination of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

December

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Defense of nature falls to working class

In this week’s issue, articles about the United Nations “climate” conference in Paris, floods in England and the industrial waste mudslide in Shenzhen, China, lead to the same political conclusion — capitalism is a deadly threat to both land and labor. The stewardship of nature depends on the power and organization of the working class and its successful fight to end the dictatorship of capital.

The U.N. conference was a fraud. It had nothing to do with protecting labor or nature. At its heart was imperialist rivalries and efforts to suppress economic competition from “emerging” and semicolonial nations. It was most noteworthy in what it refused to discuss — the urgent need for electrification in the countries held in underdevelopment by imperialism.

It was accompanied by ecological panic-mongering by liberal and radical “environmentalists,” claiming the end of the world is nigh. This feeds the clamor against billions of people — like the 620 million in Africa who have no access to electricity — who need energy, light, economic advancement and the openings they provide to advance culture, construction of a working-class movement and class struggle.

President Barack Obama said the parley could be “the best chance we have to save the one planet that we’ve got.” But there is no “we” in the United States or the world. There are workers and small farmers on one side, and the capitalist exploiters and their hand-

maidens on the other. The climate conference was an offensive spectacle of representatives of U.S. capital proclaiming themselves saviors of the earth, when their system’s very existence rests on contempt for the safety of workers, farmers and the land, air and water. They lecture others while under their class rule the U.S. has the highest per capita carbon dioxide emissions of any imperialist country.

So-called natural disasters or work “accidents” don’t stand above class relations. In a 1993 talk called “Capitalism’s Deadly World Disorder,” Jack Barnes, Socialist Workers Party national secretary, said, “If we translate everything commonly thought of as an environmental issue into how to advance the protection of the working class, and how the working class can extend that protection to all, then we can hardly ever go wrong. With that approach, we will increase the possibilities for concrete solidarity in fighting against ecological abuses and outrages.”

“[Karl] Marx explains how human creativity is turned into its opposite under capitalism, how advances in the forces of production simultaneously increase the forces of destruction of nature itself,” Barnes said. “How the sources of all wealth — land and labor — are increasingly the victims of the domination of capital. And, most importantly, why the working-class-led struggle for a socialist revolution opens a way forward on this front as well.”

Washington talks Syria cease-fire, steps up war

Continued from front page

State positions in Syria and Iraq, while Moscow and the Assad regime kept pounding forces fighting the brutal Syrian government.

Opponents of Assad were forced to retreat Dec. 9 from their longtime stronghold in Homs.

Tensions between Moscow and Ankara have escalated sharply since the Turkish air force shot down a Russian fighter plane Nov. 24 and Russian President Vladimir Putin retaliated with economic sanctions. The war of words between the two regimes contains the threat of military conflict.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has taken advantage of the focus on Islamic State to step up a bloody assault on Kurds and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in southeast Turkey. Some 10,000 police and troops backed by tanks have killed hundreds and forced nearly 200,000 people to flee their homes.

The civil war in Syria, begun when Assad met mass mobilizations against his regime with bloody force in 2011, has left more than 250,000 people dead and more than half the population displaced. Islamic State has stepped into the vacuum created by decades of betrayals of the fight for national liberation by bourgeois nationalist and Stalinist forces and taken control of hunks of Syrian territory and Sunni areas in Iraq.

Aided by U.S. bombing, the Iraqi government is fighting to recapture Ramadi from Islamic State. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter met with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in Baghdad Dec. 16, but al-Abadi rebuffed Carter’s offer of air assistance in a campaign to retake Mosul, fearing opposition from Iranian-backed militias allied with his government.

Attacks on Muslims

“We’re hitting ISIL [Islamic State] harder than ever in Syria and Iraq. We are taking out their leaders,” Obama said in a speech at the National Counterterrorism Center in McLean, Virginia, Dec. 17, and adding “additional layers of security for visitors who come here under the Visa Waiver Program.”

Most Republican presidential candidates derided Obama’s perspective of talks and bombing, arguing he should escalate Washington’s military involvement. Ted Cruz said he would bomb Islamic State “into oblivion.” Donald Trump said, “I would bomb the s--- out of them.”

Trump also said he agreed “100 percent” with Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders that Washington should back off efforts to topple Assad. They agreed the Middle East would be more stable with Assad, and with Saddam Hussein and Moammar Gadhafi still in

power. Democratic politicians from Obama to Hillary Clinton and the liberal press excoriated Trump for his call for a ban on Muslim immigration. However, since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, both Democratic and Republican administrations have taken measures to exclude Muslims. “For the past 14 years, authorities have steadily and silently implemented variants of the proposed Muslim exclusion,” human rights attorney Diala Shamas wrote in the *Washington Post* Dec. 17.

A little-known federal program “results in delays or outright denial of citizenship or immigration benefits for otherwise eligible Muslims,” she said.”

The Obama administration has confiscated the passports of a number of U.S. citizens of Yemeni origin when they visited the U.S. Consulate there on routine matters, and uses its no-fly list to bar Muslims from boarding flights to or from the U.S. “We should be far more concerned by well-oiled federal programs vigorously defended by a Democratic administration than by bombastic election-season proclamations” by Trump, Shamas wrote.

Obama blames the working class, particularly those who are Caucasian, for attacks on Muslims. In an NPR interview aired Dec. 21, he attributed Trump’s popularity to the fact that “blue-collar men have had a lot of trouble in this new economy, where they are no longer getting the same bargain that they got when they were going to a factory and able to support their families on a single paycheck. You combine those things, and it means that there is going to be potential anger, frustration, fear — some of it justified but misdirected.”

He made similar anti-working-class comments in 2008, saying workers in rural Pennsylvania areas where he campaigned were facing shrinking job opportunities and “they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren’t like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.”

Meanwhile, attacks against Muslims continue. Swastikas were painted on two businesses owned by people of Middle Eastern descent in the Salt Lake City area last week.

Wheaton College, a private evangelical school, suspended professor Larycia Hawkins after she donned a hijab in solidarity with Muslims and posted on Facebook Dec. 10 that Christians and Muslims “worship the same God.” Students and others at the Chicago-area college protested the suspension.

Some 200 people attended a press conference Dec. 18 in San Francisco against scapegoating of Muslims.

Islamic State getting weaker, not bigger

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Do the recent terrorist attacks by Islamic State show that the reactionary group is getting stronger and becoming more attractive, particularly to Muslims around the world? Using this pretext, rulers from Paris to Washington, from Moscow to London have unleashed a witch hunt against working people of the Muslim faith and expanded and intensified bombings in the Middle East.

The reality is the opposite. Islamic State is a tiny sect that is getting weaker. Its victims are overwhelmingly Muslims. Hundreds of thousands who hate the regime of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad have fled the country rather than fall under Islamic State rule.

IS extended the area it controlled in eastern Syria and swept into western Iraq in June 2014, as the Iraqi army fell apart and fled. Since then, IS has lost as much as one-third of its territory in Iraq, most recently the city of Sinjar.

After Kurdish forces halted Islamic State’s advance at Kobani in Syria in January, it has lost key areas along the Syrian border with Turkey, including important transfer hubs for fighters and materials. In both countries Kurdish militias have been the strongest fighters pushing IS back.

Daily brutality, onerous taxation

An estimated 5-8 million people live in areas controlled by Islamic State. Residents who have fled, others living there and groups like Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently, which opposes both the Assad regime and Islamic State, have described the rule of the terrorist jihadi group.

Detailed regulation of personal life combined with brutal punishments for any violations amount to a daily reign of terror. Morality police patrol the streets.

Smoking and drinking are punished with flogging, theft by amputation of a hand. Men accused of adultery are thrown from a high building, women are stoned to death. Public executions are a daily occurrence.

Islamic State funds its military and bureaucracy through myriad taxes and fees and some \$500 million from oil sales. “Only the air people breathe is not taxed,” Abu Mujahed, who recently fled with his family from Islamic State-controlled Deir al-Zor in eastern Syria, told the *Atlantic*.

IS exacts tolls and traffic tickets; taxes income, crops and cattle; levies fines for smoking, drinking, wearing the wrong clothes and keeping a shop open during prayer hours. It collects car registration fees, utility payments and a cut of small business revenues.

Last year Islamic State issued an urgent appeal for “experts, professionals and specialists.” As support for the reactionary groups has dwindled, money is drying up. Many construction projects have stopped because workers are not paid, there are frequent blackouts, and water is only available a couple days a week.

The National Hospital in Raqqa, paraded as the pride of health care in the caliphate, hardly functions now because many doctors have fled. There are shortages of medicine for chronic diseases. The cost of food in Deir al-Zor is up as much as 1,000 percent.

Pressure is increasing on families to deliver their sons as cannon fodder for Islamic State’s military. The lure is permission to leave the area. Some youth, facing high unemployment and dwindling job openings, feel they have no choice but to sign up.

Half of Syria’s prewar population is internally displaced or has fled the country’s civil war. Virtually none have sought refuge in IS-controlled areas.

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center in countries with mainly Muslim populations shows the vast majority have an unfavorable view of Islamic State. In Lebanon less than 1 percent view it favorably, in Jordan, 3 percent. After the terror attacks in Paris that killed 130 people, protests against Islamic State by Muslims took place in France until the government banned demonstrations.

The terror group is now seeking to set up shop in the Libyan city of Sirte, where there is no government. This isn’t a sign of expansion or strength, but an attempt to compensate for losses in Iraq and Syria. Residents are forced to witness executions and lashings, but get no basic services. “No services, just punishment,” said a resident who fled recently.