

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Cuba's decisive role in fighting Ebola in West Africa
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 80/NO. 17 MAY 2, 2016

New decline looms within worldwide capitalist crisis

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The U.S. economy is “pretty darn great right now,” President Barack Obama declared March 4 at a news conference presenting the government’s official job estimates for February.

But many workers know, from their own experience and others around them, that the reality isn’t so rosy. Real unemployment is way higher than the government’s showcase figure of 5 percent, and real wages remain at their 1970 level while production per worker has more than doubled.

And a look at what’s happening in production and trade shows that another downturn is looming, within the worldwide capitalist crisis that has been smoldering for nearly a decade.

U.S. industrial production continues to contract, dropping for six of the last seven months, according to the Federal Reserve Bank. New orders for manufactured goods declined 1.7 per-

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‘Workers need our own party, a labor party’

BY RUTH ROBINETT
AND ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

“We underestimate our power. The working class is strong, but most of us don’t see it yet,” Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, told members of United Steelworkers Local 10-234 at the

Socialist Workers Party candidates speak out

Monroe Energy refinery in Trainer, Pennsylvania, when she spoke at their union meeting April 18.

She pointed to the importance of building labor solidarity with nearly 40,000 workers on strike at Verizon. “I was on their picket line, and a few days ago joined Teamsters in a protest against the threat to cut their pensions in half,” Kennedy said. “Joining these actions is part of building a working-class movement that can defend us as

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Socialist Workers Party joins labor struggles, goes for ballot



SWP presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy joins discussions at April 18 Teamsters protest in Washington against threatened slashing of 400,000 workers’ pensions (see article page 4).

BY MAGGIE TROWE

The Socialist Workers Party’s program to build a revolutionary working-class movement that can put an end to the rule of the capitalist class and replace it with a workers and farmers government was taken out widely last week by party members and supporters. They joined marches for \$15 an hour and a union around the country, walked the picket lines with unionists on strike against Verizon from Massachusetts to Virginia,

and knocked on doors in rural and urban New Jersey to introduce the SWP and put the party’s presidential ticket of Alyson Kennedy and Osborne Hart on the ballot.

Kennedy and other members of the Socialist Workers Party joined an April 14 rally in Washington, D.C., by several thousand Teamsters protesting pension cuts, and a demonstration four days later at the Supreme Court defending immigrant workers. Ken-

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Verizon strikers: Time to say no to concessions!

Stand in solidarity with 40,000 strikers



Reuters/Shannon Stapleton

Strikers demonstrate outside a Verizon Wireless store in New York City, April 18.

BY TAMAR ROSENFELD

NEW YORK — The nearly 40,000 workers on strike at telecommunications giant Verizon in nine states and the District of Columbia are receiving support from working people throughout the region. They walked off the job April 13 in the face of demands by the company to raise health care costs, outsource jobs and force out-of-town transfers for two months at a time. Their contract expired Aug. 1.

The strike by members of the Communications Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of

Electrical Workers affects the company’s operations from Massachusetts to Virginia.

“In 2011 we had a lot more people asking, ‘Why are you going on strike?’” during that two-week walk-out, said Joe Pacheco. “Now we’re getting more words of encouragement.”

“We’re on strike because we’ve given back in the last three contracts,” striker Tony Mondie told the *Militant*. “At some point we have to stop going downhill, we have to say, ‘Enough!’”

Continued on page 4

Rivalry of Saudi, Iranian rulers grows as Mideast alliances shift

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Sharp competition between the ruling classes of Saudi Arabia and Iran ensured the collapse of an already shaky attempt by some of the world’s biggest oil producers to freeze production and boost oil prices.

Rivalry between the Iranian regime and the Saudi monarchy for economic and political domination in the Mideast is also evidenced by the two capitalist powers taking opposing sides in military conflicts in Yemen and Syria. Washington’s pivot toward Moscow and Tehran to establish a Mideast order in its imperialist interests — a shift away from its longstanding alliance with the governments of Israel and Saudi Arabia — has increased tensions between Riyadh and Tehran.

Officials from Russia and most of the members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries showed up for an April 17 conference in Doha, Qatar. The meeting was called after the governments of Rus-

sia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Venezuela made a preliminary oil freeze pact in February and sought to convince more oil producing countries to join.

Oil prices rose from \$28 to over

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Labor actions rise in China as bosses slash jobs, wages 11

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Protests across country demand \$15/hour and union

Union recycling workers in Calif. back Washington farmworkers

US, Puerto Rican gov'ts squeeze workers for debt

BY SETH GALINSKY

The colonial government of Puerto Rico declared a “fiscal state of emergency” April 5 and authorized Gov. Alejandro García Padilla to impose a moratorium on payments on its \$72 billion debt. *Fortune* magazine ran an article with a headline proclaiming, “Puerto Rico Has Decided It Doesn’t Need to Pay Its Debts.”

But the temporary measure is simply a maneuver to win a better deal than a so-called rescue plan being debated in the U.S. Congress. Proposed by Republicans and backed by some Democrats, that plan would set up a U.S.-appointed fiscal control board, which would decide which debts get paid first and would have the power to impose “haircuts” on bondholders, the equivalent of bankruptcy.

García’s main demand is that more Puerto Rican capitalists be represented on such a board.

“A lot of the bondholders bought the bonds at half price,” retired hospital worker Luis Epardo said by phone from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, April 9. “But they want to get paid 100 percent. Then there would be no money to pay the police, teachers, pensions. They don’t care about the people of Puerto Rico.”

Some bondholders who oppose bankruptcy because they are worried their competitors will get paid first are threatening to sue. But *Investor’s Business Daily* argued that Puerto Rico needs “debt relief,” saying the choice is “between order and chaos.”

An editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* April 7 called on the Congress to

“impose tough love in exchange for relief” — a rather arrogant statement in light of Washington’s imperialist record on the island.

Ever since the U.S. military took control of Puerto Rico in 1898, U.S. imperialism has plundered billions from the island’s resources and labor of its workers and farmers.

Washington encouraged the expansion of U.S.-based sugar companies that drove many small farmers off the land. Today some 85 percent of the fruits and vegetables consumed there are imported from the United States.

In 1920 Congress passed the Jones Act, requiring all maritime cargo to Puerto Rico be carried on U.S.-owned ships, which doubles the cost of imports. During the late 1940s Washington began giving U.S. companies in Puerto Rico big federal and local tax breaks.

After the victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Puerto Rico’s fame as “the Poorhouse of the Caribbean” was an embarrassment to the U.S. capitalist rulers. Washington extended federal minimum wage laws to the island and additional tax breaks to U.S. companies there, part of an attempt to transform Puerto Rico into its “Showcase of Democracy” to combat the attraction of workers and farmers in the region to the Cuban Revolution. In 1976 the federal government completely exempted U.S. companies there from corporate taxes.

From 1996 to 2005 Washington phased out many tax breaks, accelerating the impact of the worldwide economic crisis, and highlighting once



Reuters/Alvin Baez

Retired members of Teachers Federation of Puerto Rico protest March 18 in San Juan against government shorting payments to pension funds to keep up payments to bondholders.

again that Puerto Rico is a U.S. colony with no say in its own affairs.

While Puerto Rico is still a world center for pharmaceutical manufacturing, the drug companies slashed their workforce from about 20,000 in 2000 to less than 11,000 in 2014. Employment in manufacturing overall dropped more than 24 percent from 2007 to 2012.

Puerto Rico never recovered from a 2006 recession, its economy shrinking for nine of the past 10 years. The government laid off thousands of public workers, raised the retirement age, raised sales taxes, cut pensions and took out more loans to pay the debt.

Gutting pension funds

To keep paying the bondholders, the government also shorted its payments to pension funds. According to Reuters, the main pension funds for 330,000 workers and retirees “are virtually penniless ... with about \$1.8 billion in assets to pay \$45 billion in liabilities.”

More than 1,200 people are leaving the island for the United States every week, especially youth and middle class professionals.

“Industry is disappearing and young people can’t find work,” cattle rancher Armando Arcelay told the *Militant* by phone from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, April 11. “In my neighborhood, out of 70 homes, 10 are abandoned. The young people are emigrating to Florida.” The

official unemployment rate in Puerto Rico is 11.8 percent, more than double the U.S. average.

There are thousands of small cattle ranchers on the island, many with just 20 to 25 cows, Arcelay said, but slaughterhouses have begun delaying payment for their cows and credit is harder to get.

“As much as 20 percent of beef used to be produced here,” he said. “But now we’re down to 5 percent.”

Despite the mosquito-borne Zika virus epidemic, Arcelay said, the municipal government has stopped spraying pesticides. “They say there is no money to fumigate.”

“The government didn’t use the loans they got correctly,” Arcelay said. “But that’s not the fault of future generations.”

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THE MILITANT

Back miners’ fight against pension cuts

U.S. coal companies are using bankruptcy courts to try to tear up United Mine Workers contracts and gut pension and health benefits for retired miners. The ‘Militant’ builds the fight against drive by bosses and government to make workers pay for the capitalists’ profit crisis.



Militant/George Chalmers

United Mine Workers march in Waynesburg, Pa., April 1 to defend retirees’ pensions.

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CLIP AND MAIL TO THE MILITANT,
306 W. 37TH ST., 13TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10018.

The Militant

Vol. 80/No. 17

Closing news date: April 20, 2016

Editor: John Studer
Managing Editor: Naomi Craine

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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.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: For one year send \$35 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

Africa, Asia, and the Middle East: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

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SWP joins fights, goes for ballot

Continued from front page
nedey and a team of socialists knocked on doors in coal-mining communities around Waynesburg, Pennsylvania.

The SWP has begun collecting 1,500 signatures, almost twice the required 800, to get Kennedy and Hart on the ballot in New Jersey. Among the state’s 9 million residents are 238,000 manufacturing workers, 152,000 construction workers, nearly 70,000 truck drivers and thousands of farmworkers.

Party members joined an April 18 Justice Monday protest against police killings in Newark, New Jersey, got support from Walmart workers and Verizon strikers, and visited farming communities around Glassboro in the southern part of the state.

Among the SWP’s 14 presidential electors in New Jersey are refinery, pharmaceutical, rail, postal and retail workers active in union and social struggles. In the first three days of campaigning more than 400 people signed petitions, 21 subscribed to the *Militant* and several dozen bought single copies of the paper.

Kennedy and other SWP campaigners in Riverside, New Jersey, knocked on the door of retired pharmaceutical worker Henry Stellwag. “I don’t know what the answer is,” he said, “but everything is getting worse and it goes on and on. What can we do? I don’t like any of the presidential candidates. I used to like Trump, because he says what everyone else is afraid to say. But I’m afraid if he gets in, we’ll end up in a war.”

“The elections won’t change what we face,” Kennedy told Stellwag. “It’s going to take a movement by workers, a revolutionary struggle to put working people in power, to begin to transform this society into one organized by and

serving the interests of the overwhelming majority.”

“Now I have a candidate to vote for,” Stellwag said. “I’ll sign your petition.”

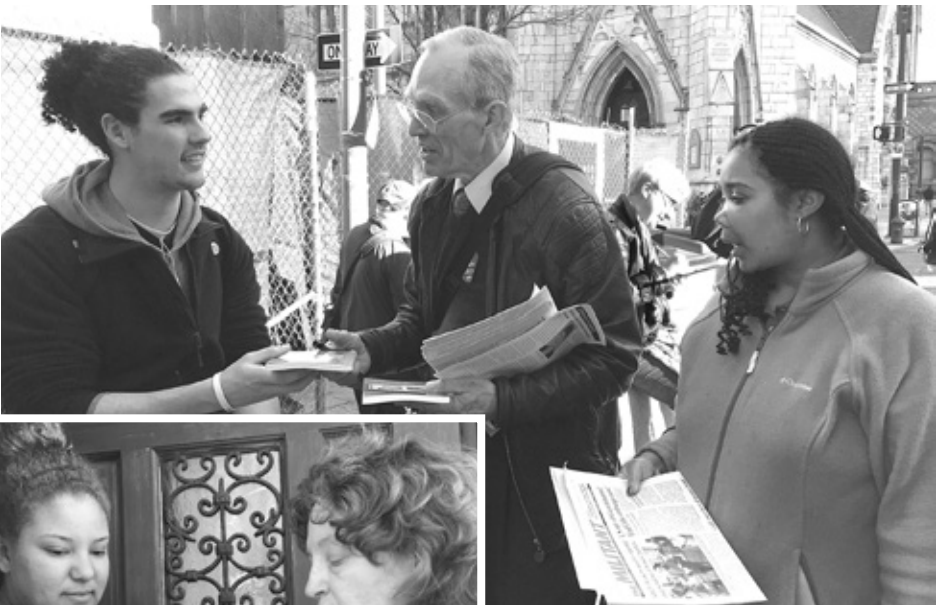
Eleanor García, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in California, is already on the ballot there. The party is organizing to put Kennedy and Hart on the ballot in Louisiana, Tennessee, Minnesota, Washington state and Colorado, as well as New Jersey, and is discussing further ballot efforts.

SWP members are encouraging workers and youth they meet to visit and join Verizon picket lines. John Staggs, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania, walked the picket line in Philadelphia April 13. Striker Tom Devine told Staggs no one had crossed the line there. When managers couldn’t get through the downtown picketers, Bob Koptcho said, they went looking for smaller Verizon workplaces to enter.

After Staggs, a cashier at Walmart, told striker Susan Smith he is part of the fight for \$15 and a union, she said, “When Bernie gets elected, you’ll get your union at Walmart.”

“Capitalist politicians, both Democrats and Republicans, including Sanders, have been an obstacle to wage increases and the struggle to organize and strengthen unions,” Staggs replied. “It is only because working people are in the streets and fighting for our rights that any of the capitalist candidates address this now.”

Communist League members in Canada helped publicize the recent cross-country tour of Gerardo Hernández, one of the Cuban Five. The Five were framed up and jailed for 16 years in the United States for defending the Cuban Revolution by gathering information on paramilitary groups with a history of violent attacks on Cuba. At Hernández’s meeting in Vancouver six participants subscribed to the *Militant* and eight picked up copies of *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class: “It’s the Poor Who Face the*



Militant photos: Above, Janet Post; inset, Maggie Trowe Above, John Staggs, center, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania, speaks with Tom Wynne, a biology student at Temple University, at April 14 protest for \$15 an hour and a union in Philadelphia. At right is Cecelia Brown, a co-worker of Staggs at Walmart. Inset, Gale Shangold, right, discusses SWP campaign and effort to get party on ballot in New Jersey with Luz De Llanos at her house in Linden, April 17.

Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System,” one of seven Pathfinder books on special for subscribers.

SWP members are inviting youth and working people who have begun to read the *Militant* or Pathfinder books to attend the Socialist Workers Party conference in Oberlin, Ohio, June 16-18. Participants in the fight against police brutality, activists opposing deportations of immigrant workers, unionists who have been through strike battles and lockouts, and working farmers who see the need to ally with the labor movement will be coming to the conference from around North America and the world. They will have a chance to exchange experiences on how to stand up more effectively to the bosses’ campaign to make working people pay for the crisis of capitalism.

The conference will include classes and workshops on key questions for working people today and lessons from the history of the Marxist movement.

The international campaign to win readers and financial supporters of the *Militant*, a key part of all these efforts, is going well. Last week 248 subscriptions were sold, bringing the total after two weeks to 576 toward the quota of 1,550 for the six-week drive, slightly ahead of schedule. More than \$8,600 arrived for the Militant Fighting Fund for a total to date of \$13,429. Oakland leads the effort, with more than a third of their \$14,500 quota sent in. The money is being put to good use as it arrives!

To join with the Socialist Workers Party in its spring political campaigns, contact a party branch listed on page 11.

Spring subscription drive			
April 2 - May 17 (week 2)			
Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
Lincoln*	15	10	67%
Oakland	110	54	49%
New York	220	94	43%
Washington	115	44	38%
Chicago	125	47	38%
Los Angeles	200	67	34%
Twin Cities	80	26	33%
Miami	50	15	30%
Seattle	100	27	27%
Philadelphia	90	23	26%
Atlanta	100	19	19%
Total U.S.	1205	426	35%
UNITED KINGDOM			
London	75	35	47%
Manchester	60	27	45%
Total U.K.	135	62	46%
CANADA			
Montreal	55	20	36%
Calgary	45	19	42%
Total Canada	100	39	39%
AUSTRALIA	60	24	40%
NEW ZEALAND	50	19	38%
PRISONERS	15	6	40%
Total	1565	576	37%
Should be	1550	517	33%
*Raised goal			

Militant Fighting Fund			
April 2- May 17 (week 2)			
Country	Quota	Paid	%
UNITED STATES			
Oakland	\$14,500	\$4,871	34%
Lincoln	\$200	\$61	31%
Atlanta	\$10,000	\$1,835	18%
Twin Cities	\$3,500	\$455	13%
Miami	\$3,000	\$320	11%
Los Angeles	\$8,600	\$900	10%
Washington	\$7,700	\$570	7%
New York	\$21,000	\$1,210	6%
Chicago	\$11,500	\$0	0%
Philadelphia	\$3,200	\$0	0%
Seattle	\$7,500	\$0	0%
U.S. Total	\$90,700	\$10,222	11%
CANADA			
Calgary	\$3,200	\$1,054	33%
Montreal	\$4,000	\$400	10%
Canada Total	\$7,200	\$1,454	20%
NEW ZEALAND	\$4,000	\$949	24%
AUSTRALIA	\$1,100	\$475	43%
UNITED KINGDOM			
London	\$2,000	\$0	0%
Manchester	\$700	\$329	47%
U.K. Total	\$2,700	\$329	12%
Total	\$105,700	\$13,429	12%
Should be	\$110,000	\$36,667	33%

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Five Cuban revolutionaries, framed up by the U.S. government, spent up to 16 years as part of the U.S. working class behind bars. In this 2015 interview they talk about U.S. capitalist society and its “justice” system, and about the future of the Cuban Revolution. **\$10** (regular \$15) Also in Spanish

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

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\$4 (regular \$7) Also in French, Spanish

Teamster Politics

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\$14 (regular \$19) Also in Spanish

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

JACK BARNES

\$7 (regular \$10) Also in French, Spanish

Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution

VILMA ESPÍN, ASELA DE LOS SANTOS, YOLANDA FERRER

\$15 (regular \$20) Also in Spanish

50 Years of Covert Operations in the US
Washington’s Political Police and the American Working Class

LARRY SEIGLE, STEVE CLARK, FARRELL DOBBS

\$8 (regular \$12) Also in Spanish

IF YOU SUBSCRIBE OR RENEW, THESE SPECIAL OFFERS ARE FOR YOU.
CONTACT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY OR COMMUNIST LEAGUE BRANCHES LISTED ON PAGE 11.

Teamsters hold DC rally to demand halt to pension cuts

BY JAMES HARRIS

WASHINGTON — Three thousand Teamsters and their supporters rallied at the U.S. Capitol here April 14 protesting drastic cuts to their pensions. The retirement benefits of some 400,000 workers covered by the Central States Pension Fund are threatened. Many of these workers may see their benefits reduced by one half or more on July 1.

A lot of the protesters were in their 60s or 70s, some using walkers or canes. They included workers already receiving benefits and others who are about to be eligible. They demanded the Treasury Department block the gutting of their pensions, which they learned about through form letters sent out by fund administrators last October. Many carried these letters with them.

“This is not what I expected after 36 years of working on the road,” said Maxwell Cole, a truck driver from Kentucky. His pension is set to fall from \$2,200 a month to \$1,200. “I don’t see how my wife and I can make it.”

The funds that were supposed to guarantee retirees’ payments for the rest of their lives were gambled away by money managers assigned to administer them. The Teamsters Central States fund lost 42 percent of its assets as the stock market dropped during 2008 and 2009.

A provision in a 1,600-page federal

spending bill adopted in December 2014 allows trustees of multiemployer retirement plans to slash benefits if the fund is projected to run out of money within 15 years and its failure is likely to overwhelm the federal Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation insurance.

Administrators of plans like the Central States Pension Fund can apply to the Treasury Department for permission to cut retiree benefits temporarily or permanently. In this case, the Treasury Department has until May 7 to decide whether to approve the cuts. Recipients are also supposed to be able to vote on them, in a rigged process that counts anyone who does not submit a ballot as a vote in favor.



Militant/Ved Dookhun

Teamsters and supporters rally at U.S. Capitol April 14 against plans to slash benefits for some 400,000 workers under Central States Pension Fund through law adopted in 2014.

Verizon strikers: Time to say no to concessions!

Continued from front page

On the first day of the strike downtown streets echoed with strikers’ chants and truck drivers honking horns in solidarity as some 400 workers gathered at 6 a.m. in front of a Verizon building in midtown Manhattan. Co-workers exchanged embraces, a scene repeated across the city as pickets were dispatched to different locations, including Verizon Wireless stores.

“I think we are getting more solidarity because with harder times a lot more people are aware of the importance of unions,” Anne Wray-Penders, 51, a network services coordinator, said on the picket line April 19.

“Verizon is making billions,” said Rohan Seales, who works at a Verizon construction garage. “Why are they trying to take away the benefits our union has fought for years to get? Workers hired after 2000 have no pension, only a 401(k). They sign a contract with the company for a maximum of two years,” and must start over, never working their way up the wage scale.

“The company doesn’t give us anything,” said Herman Maxwell, a field technician who started working for the company in 1988, when it was called NYNEX. “People have fought for what we have, even given their lives. Gerry Horgan was killed on the picket line in 1989.” Horgan was struck by a vehicle operated by a scab during that four-week strike and died the next day.

Maxwell described how managers track workers on the clock or the GPS. “People are being suspended because they can’t account for where they were for a few minutes,” he said.

The strikers work for Verizon’s landline, Internet and television service of copper wire and fiber optic cable. The company’s lucrative and expanding wireless division is largely nonunion. Organizing the wireless workforce is one of the biggest challenges facing the CWA.

Workers at Verizon’s six wireless retail stores in

Brooklyn and one in Everett, Massachusetts, are unionized. “The company fired one of the main organizers, Bianca Cunningham,” CWA Local 1101 steward Fitz Boyce said. “We’re fighting for her. The nonunion store workers are treated worse than we are. The company holds weekly in-house meetings to talk against the union. Some work on commission and their wages are low.”

“The National Labor Relations Board ruled in favor of Bianca’s union complaint,” CWA Local 1109 Vice President Mike Gallo said in a phone interview April 19, “but the company appealed. We’re keeping up the fight as we negotiate a first contract for the Brooklyn store workers.”

Marches, rallies across New York

Hundreds of strikers marched across the Brooklyn Bridge April 14, rallied in downtown Brooklyn and then marched to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, where Democratic presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders were debating that evening.

Dozens of strikers in high spirits honking all kinds of horns created a din April 18 in front of the Renaissance New York Midtown Hotel where Verizon is housing managers replacing striking workers. Later that morning they and several thousand others rallied at a nearby Verizon building.

In a phone interview April 20, Verizon spokesperson Ray McConville said

the company’s demand to make mandatory out-of-state transfers for up to two months “is not a must-have item,” but “we have to have added flexibility to move workers around.”

Verizon prepared for the strike, training thousands of managers and others to take over strikers’ jobs.

The company is running full-page newspaper ads in the region’s dailies with titles like, “What’s there to strike about?” They declare that “technicians in the New York area have wages and a benefit package that averages \$130,000 a year.”

“Not us!” was the response of picket Nancy Glennon, an office worker who started in 1983 at age 22. “Our top pay after four years is about \$71,000. Techs get about \$82,000 and some do a lot of overtime. I think Verizon is counting all the benefits and overtime.”

At the April 18 rally Tommy Ballard, a CWA member and technician, said, “It’s disgusting that Verizon makes billions and they want us to give something back. They want us to pay double for our medical. Even with the 6.5 percent wage increase they offered, we would lose overall.”

“Part of the reason we’re in the mess we’re in,” Ballard said, “is because we shouldn’t have made major concessions in the 2011 contract.”

Others shared this view. “In the 2011 contract our deductibles all got higher,” said Wray-Penders. “My husband takes a medication that used to cost \$3 per tablet, but it went up to \$8 in 2011.”

Strikers are picketing at Verizon offices and wireless stores every day.

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—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

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NEW YORK

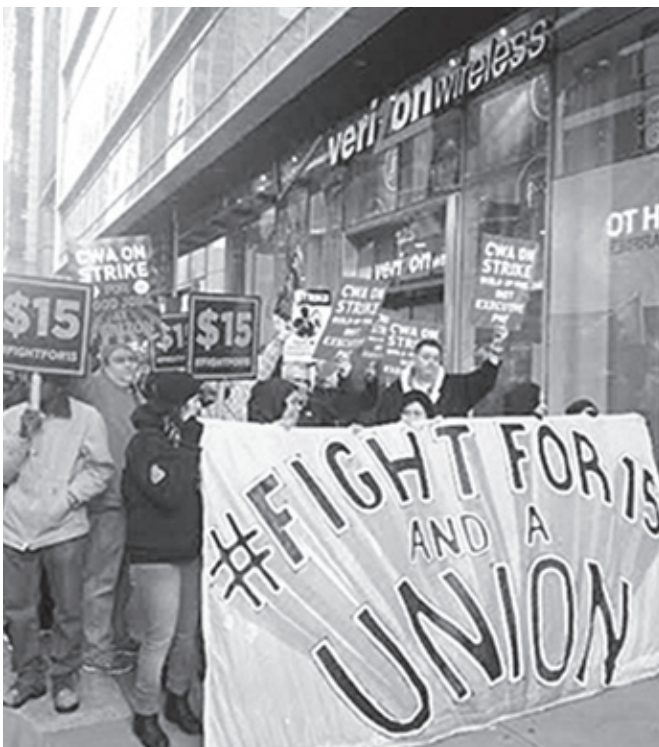
New York

Thirty Years After the Nuclear Meltdown in Chernobyl, Ukraine: Nuclear Power, Cuba’s Socialist Revolution and Proletarian Internationalism. Speaker: Nancy Boyasko, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., April 29. Dinner, 6:45 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 227 W. 29 St., 6th floor. Tel.: (646) 964-4793.

CANADA

Montreal

Cuba and Chernobyl: A Video of the Internationalist Medical Program Aiding Victims of the Chernobyl Disaster. Fri., April 29, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Suite 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.



Verizon strikers join Fight for \$15 and union march in NY April 14.

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and Worker Rights

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles around the world!

This column gives a voice to those engaged in battle and building solidarity today — including striking Verizon workers, Steelworkers opposing concessions, construction workers demanding safe conditions and workers fighting for \$15 and a union. 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

Union recycling workers in Calif. support Washington farmworkers

OAKLAND, Calif. — Some 35 recycling workers, members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 6, heard leaders of the Familias Unidas por la Justicia (Families United for Justice) farmworkers union from Washington state at a meeting at the local's hall here March 29.

Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer Fred Pecker welcomed them. Ramon Torres, president of Familias Unidas por la Justicia, explained the union's boycott of products sold by berry distributing giant Driscoll's and appealed to the local to organize monthly pickets at Costco and Whole Foods stores that sell them.

"We in Local 6 fought for a good contract from 2012 to 2014, and finally we got it," said Josefa Solano, who works at the BLT Enterprises recycling plant in Fremont, at the event. "It was because we got the support of many organizations and a lot of other unions. The fight of these farmworkers needs the support of all unions."

About \$250 was collected to assist the farmworkers' fight.

— Carole Lesnick

Junior doctors in England strike against understaffing, pay cuts

MANCHESTER, England — Junior doctors picketed Wythenshawe Hospital here April 6 at the beginning of a 48-hour strike in hospitals across England. This was the fourth stoppage to protest a new contract the government will impose in August that will reduce overtime pay and eliminate it altogether on Saturdays before 5 p.m. The government wants a seven-days-a-week National Health Service without increasing staff. Hundreds of junior doctors and their supporters from across northwest England later held a protest march in the center of Manchester.

"Nurses have a heavy workload too," junior doctor Miriam Bennett told the *Militant*. "We will get the same pay whether we are working at 3 a.m. or 3 p.m. We already work 24/7. But if we are going to have more staff working weekends, where will they come from?" Ben-

nett said most shifts are understaffed already.

"The teachers are upset about their workload," added Rebecca Hyde, a radiology registrar. "Every public service sector is being hit. It seems like we are all just coming together against this!"

Another strike is planned April 26-27.

— Tony Hunt and Catharina Tirsén

Protests across country demand \$15/hour and union

BY MAGGIE TROWE

"We work, we sweat, put \$15 on our check!" was one of the chants as thousands of workers across the U.S. rallied April 14 demanding \$15 an hour and a union. Fast-food, retail, home health care, airport, child care workers and others were part of the actions. Protests took place in many other countries, including Bangladesh, Brazil, France, South Korea and the following day in Canada.

Unionists on strike against telecommunications giant Verizon bolstered the protests in New York and elsewhere on the East Coast.

Fast-food workers from the East Bay Organizing Committee led a march in San Francisco and another of 500 in downtown Oakland, California. The state government recently passed a law to raise the minimum wage to \$15 over six years, with an "off-ramp" clause to cancel the increase if there is an economic downturn or budget deficit. "2022 is not soon enough," said Isaiah Mitchell, 20, who works at Jack in the Box. "With the high cost of living, we need \$15 now and \$17 or \$18 later!"



Militant/Deborah Liatos

Fight for \$15 and union protests took place April 14 across U.S. and in several other countries. Above, some 1,500 workers and young people marched in downtown Los Angeles.

Activities began on Chicago's South Side at dawn and took place throughout the day. About 1,000 people, led by a mariachi band, converged at the Rock and Roll McDonald's to complete the day with a rally, joined by high school students and members of neighborhood and immigrant rights organizations.

"We are not afraid," Lucina Gutierrez told the *Militant* at the rally. "If you are afraid, you will never win anything." Gutierrez has worked at McDonald's in nearby Cicero for 18 years.

That sentiment was echoed by McDonald's worker Timothy Thigpen at a rally of 100 people in St. Paul, Minnesota. "I am out here to tell the community, don't be scared. We need \$15."

Some 750 people rallied at the University of Pittsburgh, including 30 members of the United Food and Commercial Workers from Giant Eagle grocery and workers from the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, whose protests recently won a promise for raises over several years. "This victory came with hard work, and it is just a promise," said medical center worker

Lou Berry. "We need \$15 and a union."

In Atlanta, 120 workers rallied outside a downtown McDonald's. "It's not right we have to work two or three jobs just to provide for our families," said Ileshia Reid, 30, a home health worker at her first demonstration.

"We shall not be moved," sang several dozen members of Service Employees International Union Local 1199 at a vigil at the Hillcrest Health Care and Rehabilitation Center in Hollywood, Florida. They and workers at 18 other nursing homes owned by Consulate Health Care were holding a 24-hour strike for \$15 an hour. "We barely get by, and we have no retirement or health benefits," nurses assistant Theadora Greensmith told the *Militant*.

Actions took place across Canada April 15, including some 18 protests in Ontario, the most populous province.

Carole Lesnick in Oakland, California; Anthony Dutrow in Miami; Janice Lynn in Atlanta; Toni Gorton in Toronto; Phil Norris in Pittsburgh; and Helen Meyers in Minneapolis contributed to this article.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 3, 1991

The U.S. Congress acted swiftly April 17 to force railroad workers back to work ending a strike against major freight carriers across the country.

The House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly, 400-5, and was followed by approval without dissent in the Senate to halt the 19-hour-long strike. The emergency legislation was then signed by President George Bush.

Under the Railway Labor Act, Congress can directly intervene to stop rail and airline strikes. Since 1963, Congress has intervened in at least 11 rail strikes.

In the weeks leading up to the deadline, solidarity rallies involving hundreds of unionists and supporters were held for rail workers in Wyoming, Nebraska, New York, Virginia, Illinois, Washington and elsewhere.

On April 17, 235,000 members of eight rail unions struck freight carriers, including Burlington Northern, CSX, Chicago and North Western, and Norfolk Southern.



May 2, 1966

HAYNEVILLE, Ala. — For the first time since Reconstruction, large numbers of Alabama Negroes will be voting this year. Some Negro leaders in the state are doing all they can to corral the Negro vote for the Democratic Party. But in at least one county, Lowndes, the Negro people have decided they are going to organize their own party, and run their own candidates.

In February 1965, four SNCC workers entered Lowndes County, and started working with local people who had begun registering Negroes. In the course of struggling to register, and protesting inadequate schools, unpaved roads, and police brutality, the people of Lowndes County decided that they needed their own political party. They wanted to elect their own sheriff, and to control the courthouse and the local government. So they decided to build their own political organization, independent of the Republican and Democratic parties to put their candidates in office.



May 3, 1941

TRENTON, N.J. — A fighting picket line of thousands of workers has defeated the attempts of the bosses and local police to smash by violence the strike of 6,000 members of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (CIO) employed at the plants of the Roebling Steel and Wire Company here and in Roebling, New Jersey.

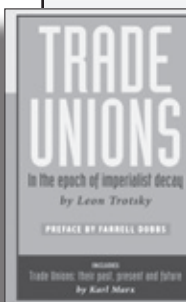
With the aid of hundreds of union brothers from Trenton, the Roebling workers rallied their ranks, after company police had smashed a thin picket line by turning four high pressure fire hoses on the pickets, and forced the sheriff of Burlington County to disarm his deputies and take them out of town.

Both plants are shut down completely, a back-to-work movement organized by the Company in Roebling has been broken, and the strike is more solid than at any time since its beginning on April 25.

Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

by Leon Trotsky

Includes: "Trade Unions: Their Past, Present and Future" by Karl Marx



Food for thought — and action — from leaders of three generations of the modern revolutionary workers movement. Invaluable for militant workers who are relearning today what a strike is and how it can be fought and won. \$16

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‘We need our own party’

Continued from front page

the crisis of the capitalist system spirals downward.”

Kennedy had a back-and-forth exchange with 15 members of the local before their business meeting.

Monroe Energy, a subsidiary of Delta Airlines, bought the refinery in 2012. In the meeting and over pizza afterward, oil workers described the company’s attacks on their union and working conditions — from forcing workers to use vacation days after sick days run out to refusing to settle grievances to forcing injured workers to get quack treatment from the company doctor.

“Profit rates are falling, so the bosses cut wages, speed up work and cut jobs,” Kennedy said. “Underneath the support for candidates who aren’t from the ‘party machine,’ like Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, is the deep anger over these conditions and at the bosses and their government. But all the capitalist candidates say the problem is caused by ‘rip-offs’ or the greed of a handful. All of them join in covering up the fact that the problem is the capitalist system itself.”

“Working people need to overturn the rule of the employing class, to take the reins of government ourselves,” she said. “We need a labor party, based on our unions, to lead a fight for power.”

Fight for health care as social right

“What is your solution to the mess of Obamacare?” refinery operator Joe Gustitus asked the SWP candidate.

“We need to mobilize working people to fight for health care from cradle to grave as a social right for all,” Kennedy replied. Through its labor the working class transforms nature and produces all wealth, she said. “But that wealth is appropriated by the capitalist class.”

She pointed to the example of workers’ social power shown in battles by coal miners in the 1960s and ’70s for safety and protections against black lung disease and to strengthen the United Mine Workers union. One result of those struggles was winning health clinics in mining communities where they had never existed before.

After the meeting, Kennedy encouraged the Steelworkers members to come and continue the discussion at the conference the Socialist Workers Party is organizing in Oberlin, Ohio, June 16-18.

Kennedy and other Socialist Workers Party campaigners took part in an April 18 rally outside the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., opposing deportation

of immigrant workers. Some 2,000 people joined the action, held as the court heard a challenge to President Barack Obama’s 2014 executive decree ordering a temporary stay on deportations of millions of undocumented workers, while “cracking down on illegal immigration at the border” and stepping up deportation of those deemed criminals.

Kennedy spoke with Jerry Redwine, 26, who came on a bus from Arkansas with 50 others. “I’m from the land of Tyson Foods,” he told her, where the poultry giant’s profits “come before things like getting a paycheck or a bathroom break. It’s a pleasure to meet a candidate who is not bought off.”

‘No deportations, unionize everyone’

“The Socialist Workers Party supports every fight against deportations and victimization of immigrant workers,” Kennedy said. “This is essential if we’re going to unionize everyone. But Obama’s executive order, which is temporary and partial, is not a step forward for working people.

“It’s not in the interest of the working class to have government by presidential decree or court orders, which are arbitrary and undermine constitutional protections *against* the government that our class needs,” she added. “And we shouldn’t let ourselves be channeled into voting for one of the capitalist candidates because of who they might appoint to the Supreme Court.”

“I have to agree,” said Redwine. “Anything the two parties touch starts with us compromising.” He took copies of the Socialist Workers Party campaign literature to share with friends and discuss inviting an SWP candidate to meet with them in Arkansas.

“What *you* are doing is very important,” Kennedy told Alba Morales, a ca-



Militant/Tamar Rosenfeld

Osborne Hart, left, Socialist Workers Party candidate for vice president, talks with striking members of Communications Workers of America April 18 at rally in New York.

shier who signed up for a subscription to the *Militant* and sold one to a co-worker during a rally for \$15 an hour and a union in Washington April 14. “Look to yourself and your class, not the capitalist candidates,” Kennedy said.

This point is important as union officials push workers to look to one or another of the bourgeois candidates as a savior, however flawed. Verizon strikers marching across the Brooklyn Bridge April 14 show the working-class power that could be unleashed if workers had their own party based on their unions. But union officials directed the march to the Democratic Party primary debate that evening. The same day, organizers of Fight for \$15 actions in New York led a march to join an anti-Trump rally, fostering the illusion that electing a Democratic Party candidate would be an advance for working people.

Kennedy and supporters went door to door talking to workers in coal-mining communities near Waynesburg, Penn-

sylvania, April 15, two weeks after 3,000 coal miners marched to protest attempts by Alpha Natural Resources to tear up its contract with the Mine Workers.

“My brother-in-law was laid-off from a contractor job at a Murray mine, and told he could come back at \$8 an hour,” nurse’s aide Juanita Riley told Kennedy. “When he said no, he was denied unemployment.”

“I was a coal miner in Utah, and I know about Murray Energy Corp. Nine people were killed by the profit drive at a Murray mine in Crandall Canyon in 2007,” Kennedy said. “Safety issues and working conditions were a big part of a 10-month strike I was part of at the Co-Op coal mine. Miners there, mostly immigrants making \$5 to \$7 an hour, set an example of how to reach out for solidarity. The fight for workers control of conditions on the job to enforce safety is part of the fight to transform the unions for the big fights that are coming.”

Reporter’s notebook: SWP candidates on campaign trail

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. — Socialist Workers Party vice-presidential candidate Osborne Hart met here April 8 with more than a dozen relatives of people killed by city or county cops.

“In 2013 we started to do protests week after week because we needed answers, and more families came,” Nicole Ramirez Moran told Hart. Her brother Jorge Ramirez Jr. was killed by Bakersfield police in September 2013.

“The media pull up things done when people who have been killed were young” to justify the actions of the cops,

said Serena Gonzales, who hosted the meeting. Her unarmed brother James De La Rosa was shot and killed in 2014 by cops who claimed he reached for his waistband as he exited his car. “Enough is enough,” she said.

“As Malcolm X pointed out, they try to turn the victims into the criminals and the criminals into the victims,” Hart said. “Police brutality isn’t a case of bad apples, but of the system that uses cops to keep the working class in line, to serve and protect the wealthy rulers. The protests around the country have had an impact. You see charges against some cops now.”

Hart said several mothers active in the fight against police brutality, who were invited by the Federation of Cuban Women, would join May 1 workers’ celebrations in Cuba. “They made a revolution there and the role of police is totally different because of it,” he said.

— Laura Garza

LONGVIEW, Wash. — Osborne Hart and Mary Martin, SWP candidate for governor of Washington, met here April 5 with union dock and paper mill workers who have gone through labor struggles in recent years.

Dan Coffman, former President of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 21 and a leader of the 2011-12 fight against EGT Development’s union busting, told Hart and Martin he appreciates *Militant* coverage of the fight of ranchers and farmers in the West.

“Robert Finicum was murdered by the government and the Hammonds never should have been put in prison, let alone twice,” he said, referring to the FBI and police killing of Finicum in Oregon Jan. 26 and the frame-up of ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond that Finicum and others were protesting by occupying a wildlife refuge.

— Edwin Fruit

WASHINGTON — “We need \$15 and a union right now. These politicians never think about the cost of living. When I was 15, I made 99 cents an hour and it went further than \$11.50 today,” Danielle Hendrix, a cashier at the National Zoo, told Glova Scott, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress here at a protest by federal site contract workers April 14.

“It will be a fight,” said Scott, “but it’s not impossible for millions of working people to organize unions and use them to fight for workers power.

— Arlene Rubinstein

Nebraska: ‘We called our own action to support abortion rights’

BY JOE SWANSON

LINCOLN, Neb. — “Women should be allowed to have control over their own bodies instead of being the property of the government and the churches,” said Chris Steffen, 55, a factory worker speaking at an April 1 forum held at the Indigo Bridge Book store here. The event was organized to build support for an April 9 rally in defense of abortion rights.

Lincoln High School student Alexandria Smith told the forum, “We decided to call our own action to support a woman’s right to choose abortion” after she and fellow students took part in a Jan. 30 counterprotest at an anti-abortion “walk

for life” at the state Capitol.

On April 9, Smith and her classmates led the march with signs and chants through downtown Lincoln and back to the Capitol grounds. Some 50 people attended, the majority in their teens or early 20s.

“This is the first pro-choice rally in at least a couple of decades” that isn’t just a reaction to anti-woman demonstrations, said Jackson Meredith, 31, a University of Nebraska cafeteria worker who has helped organize counterprotests against anti-abortion actions since 2002.

“We will meet soon and discuss what we should do next to build broader support for women’s rights,” said Smith.

Join the Socialist Workers Party campaign in 2016!

To get involved, for information, or to make a contribution, contact SWP units listed on page 11 or:

SWP 2016 Campaign
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‘We carried out a duty that is true to the moral values of Cuban Revolution’

Book describes Cuban internationalists’ decisive role in fighting Ebola in West Africa

BY RÓGER CALERO

HAVANA — “I’ve been part of medical missions in other African and Central American countries, but this was the most challenging one I’ve had in my life,” said Dr. Jorge Delgado, head of the Cuban emergency medical team that went to Sierra Leone in late 2014 to fight the Ebola epidemic.

“Seventy percent of the people of Sierra Leone live in poverty; the illiteracy rate is 70 percent; 70 percent have no access to radio or television. All that contributed to the spread of the disease,” Delgado said.

“When we got there the mortality rate for those with Ebola was 80 percent. The treatment we helped provide brought it down to 29 percent.”

Delgado spoke at a Feb. 12 meeting here to launch the book *Zona Roja: La experiencia cubana del ébola* (Red Zone: The Cuban Experience with Ebola). The author, Enrique Ubieta, headed a team of three reporters who accompanied the Cuban medical teams in West Africa for several weeks. The book was published by Casa Editora Abril of Cuba’s Union of Young Communists.

Zona Roja paints a graphic picture of the social disaster that unfolded in West Africa in 2014-15, the callously inadequate response by the world’s major capitalist powers, and Cuba’s decisive role in pushing back the epidemic. It brings to life the internationalist example of the Cuban Revolution. As one of the doctors interviewed by Ubieta put it, “We simply carried out a duty that is in line with the moral values of the revolution.”

The book presentation was one of the high points of the Havana International Book Fair in February. The meeting was standing-room only. In the audience were two dozen members of the 256-strong contingent of Cuban doctors, nurses and health care technicians who proudly served as volunteers in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to combat the deadly Ebola epidemic, from October 2014 through May 2015. One of them was Félix Báez, the only member of the



Cuban Medical Brigade in Guinea-Conakry Facebook page
Cuban internationalist volunteers with Guineans recovering from Ebola. Some 12,000 Cuban doctors, nurses and medical technicians volunteered to go fight Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014-15. “It shows solidarity is very much alive in the Cuban people,” said Enrique Ubieta, author of *Zona Roja*, at Havana presentation.

Cuban contingent who contracted Ebola, who returned to the battle front after recovering abroad.

Carlos Castro and Juan Carlos Dupuy, heads of the Cuban medical brigades in

Guinea and Liberia, respectively, spoke along with Delgado. The main presentation was given by Abel Prieto, long-time minister of culture and currently an adviser to Cuban President Raúl Castro.

(Excerpts of his remarks appear below.)

Citing numerous interviews Ubieta did with Cuban volunteers and local residents, Prieto gave a picture of the powerful story told in the book.

He quoted a doctor who explained that the Cubans were the first ones to touch their patients in the clinic’s “red zone,” where those confirmed to have the disease were isolated and treated. Until then, the other international medical personnel, as a “safety” policy, did not touch Africans they were treating — not even to provide intravenous hydration, a simple but decisive procedure in saving lives.

While maintaining the strictest safety procedures, the Cuban volunteers approached the patients and their family members as fellow human beings and equals, winning their trust and cooperation.

“The book describes how recruitment to the mission was organized as a volun-

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‘Motivated by solidarity, not material interest’

The following are major excerpts of remarks by Abel Prieto at the Feb. 12 launching of Zona Roja: La experiencia cubana del ébola (Red Zone: The Cuban Experience with Ebola) during the Havana International Book Fair. The book, by Enrique Ubieta, was published in Havana by Casa Editora Abril. Prieto, today an adviser to Cuban President Raúl Castro, is a former president of the Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba (UNEAC) and served as minister of culture for many years. Prieto and Ubieta spoke along with Jorge Delgado, Carlos Castro, and Juan Carlos Dupuy, heads of the Cuban medical brigades in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia, respectively. Translation and subheadings are by the Militant.

BY ABEL PRIETO

Ubieta tells me we have here with us doctors Jorge Pérez — director of the Pedro Kourí Institute of Tropical Medicine, who was in charge of the brigade’s training in Cuba — and Félix Báez, the only Cuban who contracted Ebola.

Jorge went to Geneva to the hospital where Félix was being treated. He spoke to him by phone, separated by a window, and Félix told him, “Hey Prof, I’m going back to Sierra Leone.” In fact, he was seriously ill. But he did recover and he did go back.

That’s the example set by our three brothers here and the other compañeros from the Ebola brigade who are present today.

I want to begin by confessing that when Ubieta asked me to present this book at the fair, I told him immediately that of course I would. But when I said

that, it was in the midst of our daily madness, thinking that it was purely an informational book — that it would give me more facts, a better-organized report on something I already knew about through the media and through Ubieta’s own journalism.

Cuban leader ABEL PRIETO on internationalist mission to fight Ebola

But the book knocked me over — it’s so much more than what I expected. Dr. Delgado put it very well. It’s a book of firsthand accounts, but it’s much more than that. It presents the drama of Africa. It takes up the subject Ubieta has dealt with in many of his essays, the whole question of cultural colonization. It gives an overview of Cuba’s epic battle against Ebola.

A book to promote among youth

As I read it I realized that *Zona Roja* is about people, facts, processes, and situations I really knew nothing about. I believe many other readers will have a similar reaction. It’s a book we should promote especially among the youth.

It recounts the selflessness, principles and convictions that sustained the Cuban doctors and nurses. It begins with a quote from a speech by Fidel [Castro] on Oct. 17, 1962, when the Playa Girón Medical School was inaugurated:

“When I spoke today with the students, we said 50 volunteer doctors were needed to go to Algeria. ... And we’re

sure we’re going to get those volunteers.”

We’re speaking here of 1962. Ubieta recounts how half of the doctors in Cuba at that time — 3,000 out of 6,000 — left after the triumph of the revolution.

“Within eight or 10 years, who knows how many [we’ll be able to send],” Fidel said. “We’ll be able to help our sister nations.”

In one of his *Reflections*, on Oct. 18, 2014, as Cuban volunteers were beginning the Ebola mission, Fidel commented, “The medical personnel who will go anywhere to save lives, even at risk of losing their own, are the greatest example of solidarity a human being can offer, above all because they aren’t motivated by material interest.”

When Ubieta and his team arrived in Guinea and met with the son and the widow of [the former French colony’s first president, Ahmed] Sékou Touré, they spoke of Fidel’s first visit to Guinea and his relationship with the Guinean leader. Mohamed Touré, son of Sékou Touré, said, “If we’re going to speak of the great historical leaders of Africa, we have to begin with Fidel Castro Ruz, who is for us an African, a Cuban, a man of the world, a hero in the fight for the liberation of Africa.”

A half-century of solidarity in Africa

“In Guinea,” said Ubieta, “I realized that if I wanted to write about the great internationalist feat of our doctors in the fight against Ebola, I’d have to begin by noting Cuba’s half century of solidarity in Africa.”

Jorge Lefebvre, Cuba’s ambassador in Sierra Leone and Liberia, who is here

Continued on page 8



“The heroism of the Cuban doctors and nurses emerges from their own accounts and actions” in *Zona Roja*, said Abel Prieto.

Cuba’s aid in Ebola fight motivated by solidarity

Continued from page 7

today, remembers the call he got from Raúl, “We’ve evaluated everything. We’re going to send help to Africa. You must talk with the presidents of Sierra Leone and Liberia because tomorrow we’re going to announce our decision publicly.”

“This was mid-September,” Lefebvre said, “and by Oct. 2 the first plane was landing in Sierra Leone.”

Along with forceful descriptions, stories, and firsthand accounts, Ubieta outlines the story of Africa in all its dramatic scope.

As he arrives in Liberia, he writes, “Our minds get filled with false images that TV and film, and more recently the Internet, infiltrate into our retinas and predetermine what we see. It’s not that they are totally false — it’s that they create almost insurmountable stereotypes.”

“I want to meet the human beings who live in the city. To understand a doctor you must understand the patient. In the streets, many complain when we try to take out our cameras. Africans don’t like arrogant photographers, foreigners who come to record poverty and turn the human beings who inhabit the continent into a landscape, plundered and humiliated over and over again. They’re tired of being exotic objects for travelers who care nothing about them.”

Later he points to a pathetic initiative — supposedly an act of solidarity — by some famous musicians from Europe and the United States. In November 2014 “they recorded a song of ‘solidarity’ with those stricken by Ebola.” But, Ubieta says, “they didn’t make the slightest effort to find out about the culture of the people suffering from the epidemic. ... The title of the song — ‘Do They Know It’s Christmas?’ — was disastrous as an attempt to connect with a population that is majority Muslim in two of the three affected countries [Sierra Leone and Guinea]. And the lyrics, far from being educational, gave an inaccurate description of the epidemic and instilled fear among Europeans. In Africa the song of “solidarity” was met with rejection.

He quotes a Liberian scholar who says, “They ask if we know what Christmas is. Yes, we know. But we don’t celebrate it.”

That song is an example of celebrity philanthropy, an approach that leads the rich and famous to buy children from the Third World, adopt them, and uproot them from their land and cultural heritage.

Obstacle of cultural colonialism

Other foreigners who have gone to Africa bring the blinders of cultural colonialism as well — but not the Cubans. Our revolutionary training, our experience in extending solidarity, makes unthinkable any paternalistic or colonial relationship with the people who are afflicted.

Ubieta quotes an anthropologist from Senegal who says, “An absurd and harmful conflict developed between the people and the authorities — the people tried to evade the health measures the authorities established. They were angry, frustrated, and scared by a disease that was killing them and by recommendations that clashed with their belief system. They felt misunderstood and abandoned by the entire world.”

The Cuban brigades had to overcome these cultural obstacles as well. And what Ubieta describes shows they managed to do it well thanks to their dedication. The genuine dedication and solidarity that sustained the brigades’ efforts became apparent to the patients and the communities.

Ubieta describes the preceding devastation that resulted from more than 10 years of war between Liberia and Sierra Leone, which destroyed the health care structures of both countries. He explains how colonialism created the so-called ethnic conflicts:

“In Africa the colonialists divided up territory like they were cutting a cake. Each one took the biggest or most appetizing piece, or as much as they could, of ‘nature’ (meaning natural resources). In the process they divided cultures, languages, and local traditions.

“For the colonist it was more impor-



Inset, Courtesy Victor Dreke
Cuban President Raúl Castro sees off medical volunteers Oct. 2, 2014, on their way to Sierra Leone. Even before Ebola epidemic, Cuba was widely respected in Africa for sending volunteer combatants to aid national liberation struggles. Inset, Cuban combatants in Guinea-Bissau in 1967.



tant to protect a diamond or gold mine than a culture. It also made domination easier. They used some ethnic groups against others.”

Ubieta explains how ethnic conflicts mask the social tragedy, the economic tragedy, the inequality.

He devotes a chapter to Cuban women. He mentions a female doctor who was already there as part of the Comprehensive Public Health Program and sent a letter [to Havana] insisting that the female doctors and nurses wanted to stay to join in the fight against Ebola.

Ubieta concludes, “Poverty, with all its social and cultural consequences, is the biggest factor producing and transmitting deadly diseases. And African poverty is the daughter of modernity, that is, of capitalism. Capitalism generates poverty, biological weapons, the profit drive and ecological catastrophes.”

One of the doctors interviewed by Ubieta is Graciliano Díaz from Santiago de Cuba — he’s here today. I’ve been submerged in all your eyewitness accounts but I’ve never met you.

Lack of basic health care

Graciliano told Ubieta the following about Guinea, “There are no statistics, no data, so it’s difficult to talk about the state of health and hygiene in the country. There’s no health and hygiene awareness at any level and that has helped to spread the disease.”

Today we’re dealing with Ebola, says Graciliano, but way before that it was malaria, encephalitis, cholera, typhoid, tuberculosis and AIDS.”

Ubieta provides some terrifying facts. [See box on page 9.]

As Ambassador Jorge Lefebvre told Ubieta, when the medical brigade from the Comprehensive Public Health Program arrived in Sierra Leone, the health minister said something that pulls at your heart when you read it. “You can’t imagine how much we appreciate the medical help Cuba is giving us,” she said. “Everywhere else in the world, a woman becoming pregnant is a source of happiness for the family. In my country, it’s a source of deep sadness. It means that at the end of pregnancy one of the two will die — the mother or the child. You’re bringing help so that does not happen.”

Liberia’s foreign minister told Ubieta, “In September and October [2014], Liberia seemed like hell. ... Our people were dying in massive numbers. ... Cuba

sent medical personnel and they shared the risks with us. They said they were brothers who had come from across the ocean to help us. ... When the story is told of how we defeated this disease, an important chapter will be devoted to the role of Cuba and the Cuban doctors.”

People you’d like to have at your side

Zona Roja contains no rhetoric. The heroism of the Cuban doctors and nurses emerges from their own accounts and actions. I listened to Dr. Juan Carlos, who spoke of the strictly voluntary nature of the mission. For many of the internationalists the most difficult moment wasn’t the decision to join the mission. It was when they had to tell their families. Ubieta collected several accounts about this.

Kike [Dr. Ángel Enrique Betancourt] says, “They called me, and my wife told me not to say yes. ... But I had a history. If my father died the way he did, how could I not go?” Kike’s father was [Mozambican President] Samora Machel’s doctor. He died in 1986 in the attack that brought down the presidential plane, clearly the work of the South Africans. “I have to fulfill my duty,” Kike said.

Those are the people you’d like to have by your side in combat, in the heaviest fighting.

A nurse, Eduardo Rodríguez Almora, was interviewed in Monrovia. He said, “My mother was really upset when she heard I was going. She started crying.



Bottom, Zona Roja
Top, Cuban medical personnel arrive in Freetown, Sierra Leone, October 2014. Bottom, survivors of Ebola treated by Cuban doctors in Guinea. Sylla Aboubacar, left, with child who lost parents to the disease, who he volunteered to look after. “We had to change the idea that you couldn’t touch the sick,” said Dr. Rotche Rios Molina. “We began to treat them and more of the sick began to survive.”

“Please be careful,” she told me over and over. But at no time did she say, ‘No, don’t go.’”

Nurse Rogelio Labrador Alemán was supported by his brothers — one of them was an internationalist combatant in Angola. But, he explained, “I told my mother, who at that time was 93 years old, that I was going to Haiti to teach. ... By the end of the mission, my mother had heard where I really was. When I returned she was very excited. She went over to the provincial health ministry office to wait for me. ... She had prepared to welcome me several days in advance. My flight was delayed. People told her to go home and wait there. ‘No,’ she said, ‘my son the hero is arriving today.’”

When Dr. Félix Báez’s son learned from the Ministry of Health that the Ebola diagnostic test done on his father had come out positive, he sent a message

that serves as the title to a chapter in this book, “Dad, be strong. Everything will be all right.”

Alejandro — I believe that’s the name of Félix’s son — sent a second message, “Yes, my father got sick, but that doesn’t mean, as many say, that he shouldn’t have gone. I say the opposite, my father went there because he felt it was his duty to help those most in need, even if it meant putting his life at risk. ... What makes us human is putting the common good above our personal well-being. It’s being capable of giving our all in order to help someone who needs a hand.”

That’s what was said by the son of a doctor who contracted Ebola, a man whose life hung in the balance at the time. And you all heard what Báez said to Dr. Pérez at the hospital where they were trying to save his life, when it was still not clear how he was going to be affected by the illness.

Dr. Iván Rodríguez Terrero, interviewed for [the popular Cuban monthly magazine] *La Calle del Medio* [The street in the middle] by Ubieta when he was training at the Pedro Kourí Institute, said, “We knew this was a mission we were undertaking with no guarantee we would return. Your children feel the pain but are proud. Your wife is sad ... but at the same time feels proud.”

The nurse and *babalawo* [santería priest] Orlando O’Farrill Martínez explained, “It was a mission for my country but I had to consult my *orishas* [gods of santería]. They gave me permission.”

That is, the *orishas* are with us. Not just [Russian Orthodox] Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis — the *orishas*, too.

When the Cuban personnel arrived, Monrovia, Liberia, was “a ghost town,” Ubieta said. Later the epidemic began to



FEMMES DE GUINÉE MOBILISONS-NOUS 115 CONTRE EBOLA



Billboard says, “Guinean women: Let’s mobilize against Ebola.” In Zona Roja Ubieta notes that before Africans won their independence, colonial powers “divided up territory like they were cutting a cake. In the process they divided cultures, languages, and local traditions.” Inset, map of three West African countries where Cuban volunteers helped combat Ebola.

subside and the city began to revive as people returned.

Dr. Leonardo Fernández compares the Monrovia he saw on his arrival with the city as it was reborn, “We found a deserted city. There were hardly any cars or people in the streets, nobody around. ... And now, we were just talking about that — man, what a difference! So we’re leaving with a little bit of pride: that I contributed something so this city could once again be filled with people.”

In Kerry Town, Sierra Leone, an Ebola Treatment Unit was set up where doctors and nurses from Cuba and other countries worked together.

Cuban brigade was heart of response

Andy Mason, the British director, said at the farewell for the Cuban brigade, “Here we were: Save the Children [a British NGO], the Cuban brigade, the British Department of Health ... and our brothers and sisters of Sierra Leone. But at the center of the ability to respond was the Cuban brigade. They were the heart of the response here.”

“I’m confident,” he continued, “that our statistics will show ... how the mortality rate has dropped. That wouldn’t have been possible without conscientious care for patients. And our Cuban colleagues were essential in that care.”

Forty-two brigade members were assigned to Maforiki–Port Loko, also in Sierra Leone, Ubieta reports. “During the Cubans’ stay, 499 patients were cared for ... and 132 lives were saved. ‘More

than three lives saved for every volunteer,’ Dr. Manuel Seijas Glez proudly told me.” He’s here — he was the coordinator of the Cuban team in that unit.

Dr. Rotche Rios Molina, head of the Cuban team in the Ebola Treatment Unit at the ADRA hospital in Waterloo, Sierra Leone, offered a balance sheet on the mission:

“First and foremost, it left me with the enormous satisfaction of having saved so many lives. ...

“The second thing was our knowledge and competence, knowing we are international doctors. ... You might hear about a doctor from Harvard, or one who works at this or that British clinic. But those people had nothing on us. We’re on the same level. Our professional training rivals the education any of those doctors from other countries receive.

“The third thing was the spirit of solidarity, of fellowship, of brotherhood. I think that’s what brought us all back here safe and sound, except for the two we lost.”

As you all know, those two cases were not from Ebola. They died from malaria.

This book provides an extraordinary balance sheet in ethical terms as well.

Leonardo Fernández, is he here? Dr. Leonardo Fernández, 63 years old, almost my generation. When I read that he’s a rock and roll fan I identified with him. We should get together in a Yellow

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Ebola epidemic: Bred by imperialist plunder

	LIBERIA	SIERRA LEONE	GUINEA
Infant deaths per 1,000 live births	56	117	65
Maternal deaths per 100,000 live births	990	860	980
HIV/AIDS per 100,000 inhabitants:	521	965	1,031
Tuberculosis per 100,000 inhabitants:	495	1,304	274
Doctors per 100,000 inhabitants	1	2	(N/A)
Life expectancy (yrs.)	62	46	58
Population with access to electricity	10%	14%	26%
Population with access to potable water	76%	63%	77%

Sources: World Health Organization, World Bank, Cuban Ministry of Public Health

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“Being internationalists is paying our debt to humanity”
— Fidel Castro

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AP Photo/Rebecca Blackwell
Youth study under parking lot lights at airport in Conakry, Guinea, 2007. Only a fifth of Guinea’s 10 million people have access to electricity. Mission to fight Ebola was a learning experience for Cuban volunteers, who saw firsthand the conditions of exploitation and underdevelopment bred by imperialism.

Revolution's moral values

Continued from page 7

tary effort, which for us is a basic principle. And there was a big response,” said Dr. Dupuy. Soon after the Cuban government received a request for aid, it issued an appeal for trained medical personnel. Within three days, more than 12,000 doctors, nurses and technicians responded. Of these, 256 were selected after intensive training.

The Cuban volunteers are part of the Henry Reeve International Contingent, launched at the initiative of then President Fidel Castro in September 2005 to provide aid to New Orleans residents after Hurricane Katrina devastated the U.S. Gulf Coast. The U.S. government rejected Cuba's offer to send 1,500 medical personnel, and instead left working people in the region to fend for themselves.

A month later, a brigade of 2,500 Cuban medical personnel went to Pakistan, where they provided care for 1.8 million people affected by an earthquake that devastated the mountainous northwestern region. Since then, the Henry Reeve Contingent — named after a Brooklyn-born volunteer in Cuba's war for independence from Spain that began in 1868 — has continued to assist other

countries facing natural disasters and epidemics, from Haiti to Nepal.

As *Zona Roja* notes, Cuban medical volunteers have served in countries around the world since the revolution began in 1959. At the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic, Cuban doctors, nurses and health care technicians were already working in 32 African countries, including Sierra Leone and Guinea. And Cuba has won widespread respect in Africa for sending volunteer combatants to aid national liberation struggles, from the Congo to Guinea-Bissau to Angola.

“I knew Cuba was not going to leave us on our own,” said Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma when he was informed of Cuba's decision to send volunteers. “You're true to your heritage, to your African roots. It's what Fidel has taught you. Tell [President] Raúl Castro and the people of Cuba we will never forget this.”

Values of socialist revolution

Despite initial concerns among some that returning volunteers could introduce Ebola to Cuba, the selfless example of the internationalists in West Africa was very popular on the island. Millions followed closely the news of

‘Motivated by solidarity, not material interest’

Continued from page 9

Submarine! But anyway. ...

Dr. Fernández has served in Nicaragua, Pakistan, East Timor, Haiti, and Mozambique. “When they say they need volunteers,” he said, “I raise my hand and then ask what for.”

‘We simply carried out our duty’

Regarding the fight against Ebola, he said, “The impact of the media coverage on this mission ... has caused some of us ... to see ourselves as heroes. In my opinion, we simply carried out a duty that corresponds to the moral values of the revolution and of medical practice. ... I had heard about Ebola. I'm familiar with Africa, I've treated hemorrhagic fever in Mozambique, so I raised my hand and here I am. Nothing out of this world. It's life,” he said, dismissing the idea that this heroic decision had any importance.

The matter-of-factness with which Dr. Fernández refers to his life of repeatedly proven service is something that comes up again and again in the accounts gathered by Ubieta. They are heroes, of course, worthy of the greatest admiration. But they tell of the most distressing experiences with modesty, without dwelling on details.

Dr. Rotceh Ríos Molina, who I mentioned earlier, said, “When we arrived in Sierra Leone on Oct. 9 [2014] and walked into an Ebola ward, it looked like a warehouse for the diseased, not a hospital. Many were lying on the floor, without any IV, without medication. We had to change the idea that you couldn't touch the sick. We began to treat them, and more of the sick began to survive.”

Nurse Juan Carlos Curbelo, in that same unit at ADRA Waterloo, tells about “a pregnant woman diagnosed with Ebola who needed a transfusion. But the hospital didn't have money to buy blood.” The Cubans took up a collection on the spot to buy it. Everyone gave what they could at the time.

“The chief nurse told us it was hope-

less, that no matter what we did the woman was going to die. But we couldn't stop ourselves from doing whatever we could to save her. After a few days the woman did die, but we felt at peace with our conscience,” that compañero says.

Another nurse, Víctor Lázaro Guerra, “the youngest member of the brigades serving in the three countries,” celebrated his 26th birthday during the mission. He told of “a child who urgently needed an IV and a transfusion. No member of his family wanted to donate blood, and they didn't have money to pay for a transfusion. So we pulled together a little money ... and we got a blood bag. Thanks to that we saved him.”

Ubieta briefly sums up all these heroes, “Without the special suits they are indistinguishable from other mortals. They touch death with their hands but they arrive telling jokes that ease things up for them, the sick, and colleagues from other countries. They're afraid but they overcome it, even forget it and become fearless.”

They — you who are here today — have always had that important component of Cuba's ability to resist: *humor*. And it couldn't be otherwise. In many pages of *Zona Roja*, in the midst of the horrors of the epidemic, in the midst of death, there's also a lot of kidding around, joking, Cuban laughter. Volunteers from rival provinces in baseball banter with each other. Some play music on a cellphone for patients who have been saved and are being discharged, and these patients dance with their saviors. Others tell of the trainers who were supposed to prepare them in Freetown but who were like fifth-degree black-belt karate experts who had never stepped onto the mat.

The ethical and moral conduct of the Cubans who confronted the Ebola epidemic presents a stark contrast in this degraded 21st century world. Their struggle, patient by patient, to defeat death and save defenseless human be-



Juventud Rebelde

Feb. 12 launching of *Zona Roja* at Havana International Book Fair. From left, Drs. Juan Carlos Dupuy, Carlos Castro and Jorge Delgado, heads of Cuban medical brigades in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone; Ubieta; Abel Prieto, adviser to President Raúl Castro; Javier Dueñas, director of Abril publishing house of Cuba's Union of Young Communists.

their experiences.

It was also a learning experience — about the conditions of exploitation and underdevelopment bred by capitalism as well as the working-class values of solidarity that are a cornerstone of Cuba's socialist revolution.

“This was a big experience for the younger members of the brigade who had never been part of a mission abroad,” said Dr. Castro, head

of the brigade in Guinea, at the Feb. 12 meeting. “They were able to compare what we have in Cuba with what people as poor as those we treated do not have,” he said. “They witnessed social conditions that explain why the epidemic was so ferocious.”

Ubieta previously wrote two other books about Cuba's medical cooperation abroad, based on his firsthand reporting — in Central America and Haiti following the 1998 hurricanes there, and in Venezuela, where tens of thousands of Cuban medical personnel have served over the past 15 years.

“People have asked me why I write about the Cuban doctors,” Ubieta told the audience at the book launch. “I don't write about the doctors. I write about the solidarity and internationalism that is at the heart of the revolution. I write about the seeds we are sowing inside and outside of ourselves. Every time a Cuban doctor takes part in a mission abroad, they renew themselves as revolutionaries.”

Today there are some who say “that the epic moments of the Cuban Revolution are a thing of the past,” Ubieta said, “that Cubans should concern themselves only with their own individual, everyday problems, which can sometimes be overwhelming.

“And then suddenly you hear the battle cry, like the request for aid we received. And thousands turn out and volunteer to go,” he said. “It shows solidarity is very much alive in the Cuban people.”

Philippe Tessier contributed to this article.



Cubans in West Africa, assisted by local staff, put on protective clothing before entering “red zone” where Ebola patients were treated. “When story is told of how we defeated this disease, an important chapter will be devoted to the role of Cuba,” said Liberia's foreign minister.

Labor actions rise in China as bosses slash jobs, wages

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Strikes and labor protests increased sharply in China last year, as workers took action against unpaid wages, massive layoffs and factory closures. Under the impact of a worldwide slowdown of capitalist production and trade, the Chinese rulers, like bosses everywhere, attack workers' wages and working conditions. In doing so, they risk provoking what they are mortally afraid of: a growing movement and organization within a working class numbering hundreds of millions.

China Labour Bulletin, a Hong Kong-based workers' rights group, recorded 2,700 strikes and protests throughout China last year, twice as many as in 2014. The overwhelming majority took place in construction, manufacturing and mining, with unpaid wages being the single most common reason. In the garment and shoe industries there were numerous actions opposing factory closures and relocations.

The manufacturing explosion has created a huge modern working class in China. Hundreds of millions have moved from rural areas into rapidly growing urban centers since the government turned to capitalist market methods and increased foreign investment starting in the late 1970s. Many got jobs in factories that employ tens of thousands. In the beginning this working class had one foot in the village and one in the city. But today most workers were born in the city or have lived there for decades.

Slashing jobs in coal and steel

State enterprises accounted for some 40 percent of the country's industrial output and employed around 37 million people as of 2013. Officials project slashing this workforce by 5 million to 6 million in the next couple years, the Associated Press reported March 2.

Yin Weimin, minister for human resources and social security, announced Feb. 29 plans to lay off 1.3 million coal miners and 500,000 steelworkers in the coming years. That's on top of 890,000 jobs slashed from the coal industry since 2013.

The government has set aside \$15 billion it says will help these workers find new jobs. What happened at Longmay Group coal mines in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang shows why officials are nervous about workers' response. In September the company announced that it would lay off 100,000

workers, some 40 percent of the workforce at 42 mines.

In March, provincial Gov. Lu Hao bragged that Longmay was a good example of how industries could be restructured and said its miners weren't owed back wages. This provoked protests by workers whose pay had been shorted since November. On March 11, 1,000 people marched with banners reading, "We must live, we must eat" and "Lu Hao is a liar" to rally in front of the mining authority in the town of Shuangyashan. The next day Lu Hao admitted he was wrong and by March 15 workers said the provin-

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China Labour Bulletin

Coal miners rally March 11 in Shuangyashan in northeastern China demanding Longmay Group pay wages owed since November. Bosses denied claim but days later backed down.

New decline looms within world capitalist crisis

Continued from front page

cent in March, while companies' use of their industrial capacity dropped to 74.8 percent, the lowest level in five and a half years.

In the United Kingdom industrial output had its "sharpest fall in four years" in February, the *Spectator* reported. Manufacturing production dropped 1.8 percent, its ninth consecutive monthly decline.

Declining production from China to Brazil, combined with the plummeting of commodity prices, has slowed trade to the lowest level since 2009. The Baltic Dry Index, a measure of global trade in raw commodities, including coal, iron ore and grain, dropped to its lowest level on record in February.

Last year the value of goods that crossed international borders fell 13.8 percent in dollar terms. U.S. exports fell 6.3 percent. Particularly devastating was the collapse in exports from Africa and Middle East by 41.4 percent, a result of plummeting of oil prices.

Slumping trade with China is slowing industrial production in Germany, the dominant capitalist power in Europe. Nine of Germany's 10 biggest exports to China fell last year, according to the German Federal Statistical Office, including automobiles by 29 percent.

With average industrial profit rates declining — part of the normal workings of the capitalist market — for several decades the great majority of bosses have shied away from invest-

ing in expanding productive capacity and hiring workers. In fact, since the 1980s, less than 10 cents of each borrowed dollar is invested in production, reported Bloomberg News. Instead, the propertied rulers plough their money into stocks, bonds and other forms of commercial paper in search of higher returns, building up bubbles of corporate debts to unforeseen heights, nearly \$30 trillion.

Coal and oil company bankruptcies

A growing number of companies, particularly in the mining industry, are using bankruptcy to target workers' jobs, wages, pensions and union contracts, while the wealthy bondholders insist they get their interest payments first.

Peabody Energy Corp., the largest U.S. coal mining company, filed for bankruptcy April 13, following similar moves by Arch Coal Inc., Alpha Natural Resources Inc., Patriot Coal Corp. and Walter Energy Inc. Since September 2014, 185,000 miners' jobs have been eliminated, according to the Department of Labor. Miners in Appalachia and Wyoming have been particularly hard hit.

On April 15 Goodrich Petroleum Corp. declared bankruptcy, just as 51 other North American oil and gas companies have done since the beginning of 2015. The *Wall Street Journal* notes that one-third of all U.S. oil producers could end up in bankruptcy. Worldwide, a

quarter of a million oil workers have been laid off, as oil prices dropped 70 percent from \$100 a barrel nearly two years ago.

The three biggest U.S. auto companies reported record sales of 17.5 million vehicles last year. But the figures can be deceiving. "Automakers have been goosing sales," wrote Bloomberg News, "pushing leases that count as 'sales,' and dumping their sedans onto rental car companies and other bulk buyers."

Auto sales are increasingly being fueled by subprime loans, which are being packaged and sold as securities — as were subprime housing loans that collapsed in 2007, helping trigger a steep recession. The average new subprime auto loan is for six years at 10 percent interest. In February nearly 5 percent of these loans were past due by 60 days or more, the highest level since 2009.

At the same time, as many as 1 million workers will be cutoff from receiving food stamps over the coming months. Citing lower official jobless rates, 22 state governments are once again implementing a 20-year-old federal rule that says adults without children or disabilities must have a job to get food stamps. If you're out of work, you can only get food assistance for three months over any three-year period. The average time a worker spends unemployed is almost 30 weeks. Many people began hitting the three-month limit April 1.

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Fight for pensions for entire working class

From the Central States Teamsters to coal miners across Appalachia, workers are facing attempts by the bosses and their government to slash the pensions they counted on for retirement. The bosses at Verizon talk of “legacy” issues. That’s just a euphemism for their drive to cut pensions and health benefits — one of the reasons 39,000 workers there are now walking picket lines.

Cement and warehouse workers in Montreal and Teamster mechanics at United Airlines have also been fighting bosses’ attacks on pensions.

All workers need to support these struggles. The Socialist Workers Party stands shoulder to shoulder with these unionists, and with fast-food and other workers who are demanding \$15 an hour and a union. Most low-paid workers have no pension or medical insurance and can’t survive on the paltry Social Security benefits they get when they retire.

Defending hard-fought gains is essential. At the same time, the attacks our class faces today illustrate why fighting for health care and pensions company by company is a dead-end in the long run. Even at the most profitable companies, what you think is a safe “nest egg” can easily go up in smoke, when pension funds are “invested” in supposedly sure stocks, bonds and other financial schemes and then the bubble bursts.

During the world capitalist economic expansion from the late 1940s through the early 1970s, “good

times made it possible for workers to win modest but real wage increases and ‘fringe benefits’ without increasing conflicts with the employers,” Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, notes in *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*. The union officialdom largely “ignored the needs of unorganized workers ... as well as the political fight for health care and other social programs for the entire working class.”

A 1985 SWP resolution in the same book points to “the need for the labor movement to fight for social rights such as health care and adequate pensions for all working people. These should be government-financed on a nationwide scale, not tied to the bosses’ profits on an industry-by-industry basis. The unions should take the lead in resisting the continual drive by the government and employers to make meeting these life-or-death needs the responsibility of individuals and their families.”

A labor party based on the unions, organizing independently of the bosses’ parties, would join the fight for government-funded social security to safeguard the entire working class by protecting its most vulnerable members. It would point the way forward to ending the rule of a handful of capitalist families and establishing a workers and farmers government, which would reach out to working people all over the world.

Labor actions rise in China as bosses cut jobs

Continued from page 11

cial government had paid the wages through January and promised February wages would be paid soon.

In recent years workers in China have won improvements in wages and conditions, a result of a labor shortage during the industrial boom as well as their growing capacity to apply their social weight in militant strikes and protests. These advances are now under attack by the government and capitalist bosses.

During the annual gathering in March of China’s legislature, the National People’s Congress, Finance Minister Lou Jiwei declared recent pay raises “unsustainable” because they outstrip productivity increases. He said it should be easier for bosses to fire workers. And he complained that a 2007 labor code “is based on fixed working hours, which does not fit in with the model of labor flexibility.”

In Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province in the south, several hundred workers at the state-owned Angang Lianzhong steel plant went on strike in February protesting plans to cut wages in half and extend the workday to 12 hours for some workers.

In Liaoning province the state-owned Benxi Iron and Steel company has cut wages substantially and many employees have been laid off. One worker told CNN he’d been sacked and then rehired as a day worker, meaning he no longer gets company health insurance or benefits.

Growing income inequalities make it difficult to sell the idea to workers that they need to tighten their belt. “We ordinary workers are doing much more work than the management and yet they can get paid almost 10 times more than us,” a worker in Chongqing, where protests have surged in recent months, told China Labour Bulletin.

LETTERS

Oregon story should be heard

Thanks to the *Militant* for interviewing Erin Maupin and letting her tell the story from Oregon in the April 11 issue. “Maupin used to see people protesting police brutality in big cities as rioters. ‘But now I wish that LaVoy [Finicum]’ s family and the mothers and wives of people killed by the cops in New York could communicate and see that they have something in common.”

For farmers, ranchers, Black Lives Matter fighters, and the whole working class, that’s pure gold.

Steve Marshall

Marietta, Georgia

EU referendum in UK

I was in London and went campaigning with the Communist League. Most of the discussions involved the topic of the referendum on whether Britain should stay in the European Union. Workers we spoke with took different sides, yes or no.

What I learned most was the political effect of the referendum was to build up and reinforce a “Britain

first” attitude within the working class. Both sides of the bourgeois debate have this as their framework. They aim to deepen the divisions inside the working class, and between “British” workers and workers elsewhere in Europe and the world.

It has many parallels with the “America first” focus of the Trump and Sanders campaigns, along with the other candidates.

Greg McCartan

Oslo, Norway

Protests and cop indictments

The truth of the article “Jump in Charges, Firing of Cops in Killings Result of Street Protests,” in the March 28 issue, is strikingly brought home by the editorial

pages of the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. Both opined on March 18 on recent elections in Chicago and Cleveland that resulted in the ouster of prosecutors who refused to prosecute police for murdering, respectively, Laquan McDonald and Tamar Rice.

Despite their nuanced differences both editors agree that Black Lives Matter should now channel its energies into the electoral process. But the protests, not elections, explain the more than four-fold increase since 2014 in the number of cops brought to heel — a lesson that all opponents of police brutality should absorb.

August Nimtz

Twin Cities, Minnesota

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The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Saudi-Iran rivalry

Continued from front page

\$40 a barrel after the February accord, even though a production freeze would not end the oil glut. The world capitalist contraction of production and trade has resulted in plummeting prices for commodities such as oil, which brought in more than \$100 per barrel until mid-2014.

The Iranian government sent no one to the Doha meeting and refuses to freeze oil output. Tehran is ramping up production, as crippling trade sanctions finally began to be eased in January under the deal brokered by Washington and its allies in return for Iran curbing nuclear fuel production.

The talks fell apart when the Saudi government said it won’t freeze production if Tehran doesn’t.

Riyadh is banning vessels carrying Iranian crude from entering Saudi waters, and, according to some oil traders, blocking Tehran from shipping oil from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean through pipelines it used before sanctions. A price war has developed between the two countries in what they charge Asian buyers.

Oil workers strike in Kuwait

Many oil-producing countries are slashing budgets to adjust to low oil prices. When the government of Kuwait said it may cut oil workers’ wages and benefits, thousands of them struck April 17-20, the first such action since 1996.

Tehran, which is increasing trade with European capitalists, signed 12 agreements with Italian firms April 13.

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, in a joint press conference with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif April 16, said, “We are doing all that we can” to encourage closer banking ties with Iran. Iranian officials have blamed Washington’s continuation of some sanctions for discouraging European bank involvement in Iran.

Executives of U.S. airplane producer Boeing held public talks with Iranian authorities in Tehran in early April, the first such visit by a U.S. company since the 1979 Iranian Revolution that overthrew U.S.-backed dictator Shah Reza Pahlavi.

Boeing’s European rival Airbus is planning to deliver the first batch of planes Iran ordered when sanctions were lifted, but must first get U.S. export licenses because more than 10 percent of the planes’ parts are U.S.-made.

Tehran has begun deploying regular army troops to Syria to back up the brutal regime of President Bashar al-Assad, in response to Moscow signaling it might agree to demands for his removal. Washington has worked with Moscow and Tehran to impose a new order in Syria, where war has raged for more than five years since Assad responded with overwhelming military force to crush mass mobilizations calling for an end to his regime. The war has cost some 500,000 lives and displaced millions of people.

Assad’s flagging fortunes were reversed in recent months by the backing of Moscow’s airstrikes and ground troops, including Tehran’s elite Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah, Iran’s proxy force in Lebanon.

Iranian Major Gen. Qassem Soleimani, commander of foreign operations for the Revolutionary Guards, flew to Moscow April 15 for talks, days after the first delivery of Russian S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to Tehran. U.S. officials complained this trip violated United Nations travel sanctions against Tehran that are still in place.

Frictions between Washington and Riyadh are mounting. A bill before the U.S. Congress would allow the Saudi government to be sued in American courts for any role in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Riyadh responded with threats to sell off up to \$750 billion of U.S. assets, although such a move, which would deal a blow to the Saudi economy, is unlikely.

President Barack Obama says he will veto the bill, while Republican presidential front runner Donald Trump and Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders support it.