

# THE MILITANT

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**Capitalism turns Ecuador**  
**quake into a social disaster**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 80/NO. 18 MAY 9, 2016

## Washington, Moscow seek to impose new Mideast 'order'

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Washington and Moscow are scrambling to hold together an agreement to impose some stability and order in Syria and the broader Mideast region. But the competing interests of different ruling classes and factions, including between the U.S. and Russian governments themselves, keep getting in the way. Millions of workers and farmers in the region pay a terrible price for the ongoing bloodshed.

Talks on ending the five-year war in Syria hit a stumbling block when forces opposing the regime of President Bashar al-Assad declared a pause in their participation April 18. They accused the Syrian government of refusing to end hostilities or to allow humanitarian aid to reach 15 besieged towns. U.N. envoy Steffan de Mistura has asked Moscow, Washington and regional powers to help get the negotiations going again.

More civilians were killed in Aleppo April 22 when Syrian and Russian warplanes bombed the opposition-held city to back up ground attacks by government troops and their Iranian allies.

Since the reduction of hostilities  
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## Verizon strikers stand up to attacks on their unions

Workers rally, answer bosses' propaganda



CWA District 2-13

Strikers and supporters picket Philadelphia Verizon store April 22. Verizon wants to contract out more work, raise health costs and assign workers to be out of town for extended periods.

BY JANET POST

TRENTON, N.J. — Two weeks into their strike, Verizon workers across the Northeast have been holding rallies, pickets and following strikebreakers around as they press their fight against the telecommunication giant's concession demands.

Nearly 40,000 members of the Communications Workers of America and the International Brotherhood

of Electrical Workers in nine states and the District of Columbia struck April 13. Their contract expired Aug. 1. The company wants to raise health

**VERIZON STRIKE IS FIGHT FOR ALL WORKERS!**  
 — SWP campaign statement, p. 7

care costs, outsource jobs and force some unionists to work out of town for up to two months at a time.

The strikers work for Verizon's landline, Internet and television ser-  
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## 'Workers, unions need to control job safety'

BY JOHN STUDER

"My job at Verizon has gotten more dangerous. I've been electrocuted twice on the job, once while they made me work by myself," John Hop-

**Socialist Workers Party candidates speak out**

per, a 25-year outside field technician from Rockland County, New York, told Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy and campaign supporter Tony Lane as they joined a strike rally in Trenton, New Jersey, April 25. "You put your life on the line but the company is ungrateful."

"The working class has to take control over safety conditions on the job," Kennedy said. "I worked as a coal miner, and our union waged big battles in the 1960s and '70s over safety. We were able to win the right to refuse to work when things were unsafe. The union safety committees controlled the situation in the mine. That's eroded, and most mining is nonunion today."

"Since the early 1970s, the bosses' rate of profit has been declining. They've stopped putting money into production and new machinery because they don't get a big enough return," Kennedy said. "Instead, they  
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## Join with SWP to back strikers, get on ballot, build conference!



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

David Rosenfeld, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in Minnesota, at St. Paul rally for \$15 an hour and a union April 14. SWP candidates call for solidarity with union battles.

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Across the country — from Fort Morgan, Colorado; to Opelousas, Louisiana; to Rutherford, New Jersey — communist workers are explaining the Socialist Workers Party program, engaging in political discussion and

making progress in several states putting the party's presidential ticket of Alyson Kennedy and Osborne Hart on the ballot.

SWP members and supporters have been walking East Coast picket lines  
**Continued on page 3**

## Chernobyl disaster points to need for workers power, not 'No nukes'

BY JOHN STUDER

Thirty years ago, on April 26, 1986, the worst nuclear disaster in history took place in Soviet Ukraine when the Chernobyl nuclear power plant exploded. The blast set off an uncontrolled meltdown in the reactor core and a fire that burned for 10 days, showering Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and parts of Europe with highly radioactive material.

Some opponents of nuclear power are using the anniversary to argue that Chernobyl proves this energy source should never be used. The facts, however, point to the need for workers to take political power and control over safety. The cause of the disaster lies squarely on the extraordinary neglect of the Stalinist regime then in power in Moscow and its contempt for working people — a contempt also shown by the capitalists and their governments around the world.

The social calamity was a result

of the carelessly flawed design of the plant, the government's decision not to construct any containment vessel around it, and a series of disastrous decisions and delays by government bureaucrats attempting to hide the existence and severity of the meltdown.

Chernobyl released roughly 400  
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# Protests of 1994 Clinton law spur debate on crime, prisons

BY SETH GALINSKY

A sharp debate broke out when Bill Clinton was heckled April 7 by protesters in Philadelphia, who shouted slogans against an anti-crime bill and other anti-working-class laws signed by the former president and backed by presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

The hecklers, who have been part of Black Lives Matter protests against

cartels,” Hillary Clinton said in a 1996 speech defending the 1994 law. “These are not just gangs of kids anymore. They are often the kind of kids that are called ‘superpredators.’ No conscience, no empathy” and “we have to bring them to heel.” She now says that her choice of words was unfortunate. Actually, her words express the contempt the wealthy ruling class has toward all working people.

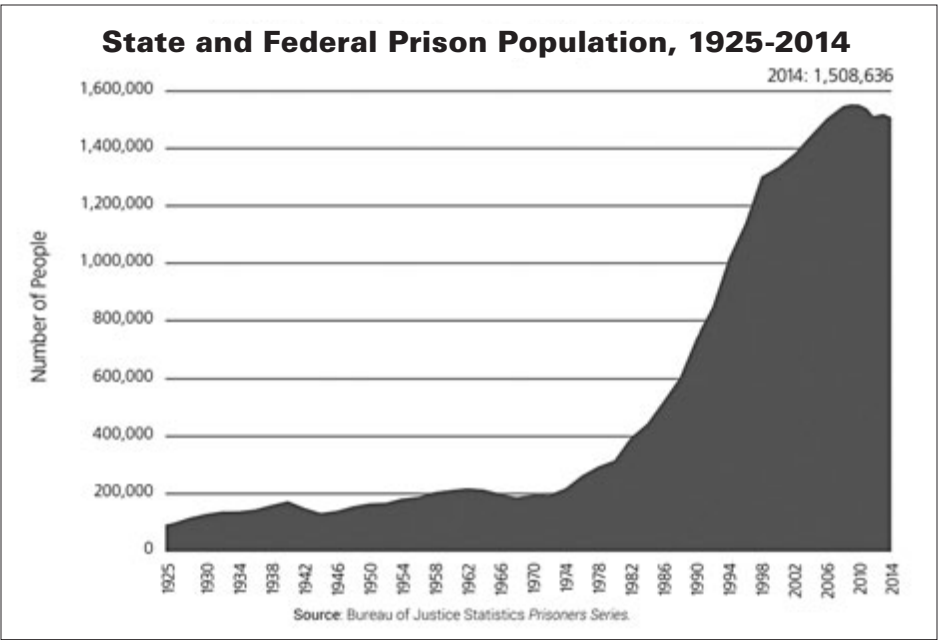
### Gangs emulate capitalists

The gangs *are* often connected to the drug trade, but she misses the key point: the gangs emulate the capitalist class. The goal of the gang leaders is to get rich. And they don’t care how many people they step on to get there. They’re just like the propertied rulers, but with higher risks.

In Philadelphia Bill Clinton heatedly defended the law with arguments that still get resonance among working people — regardless of nationality — because they deal with the fallout of gang violence and other anti-social behavior in their daily lives.

“I don’t know how you would characterize the gang leaders who got 13-year-old kids hopped up on crack and sent them out on the street to murder other African-American children,” he said, wagging a finger at the hecklers. “You are defending the people who kill the people whose lives you say matter.” He said the law drastically cut murder rates.

The 1994 law strengthened existing trends that sent more working people of all nationalities to jail for longer terms, especially Blacks. It was just one piece of what led to the United States having



the largest absolute numbers and percentage of prisoners in the world.

The U.S. prison population tripled from 300,000 to 1 million from 1974 to 1994 — *before* the law was passed. The prison population peaked in 2007 and has declined slightly since then.

The jump was caused by increased arrests, more discretion for prosecutors in what charges they could bring, and mandatory state sentencing laws adopted as capitalist politicians jumped on the bandwagon of the “fight against crime.” It’s no secret how it works. The prosecutor says, “Agree to a plea bargain, or I’ll throw the book at you and you’ll do triple the time.”

In the early 1960s about one-third of all criminal defendants insisted they were innocent and went to trial. Today only one out of 20 do so. And when a person is found guilty at trial, mandatory sentencing requires judges to impose longer terms.

### Crime drop at what cost?

The combination of more people in prison for longer times and more police on the street using more aggressive measures, including stop and frisk, did help lower crime rates. But at what cost?

Wouldn’t a military dictatorship that suspends all constitutional rights and shoots people down in the street without the pretense of a trial also “bring down crime?” How about chopping off the hands of alleged thieves? Or worse?

Class-conscious workers oppose mandatory sentences, three-strikes-and-you’re-out laws, stop and frisk, soli-

tary confinement, the death penalty.

Through fighting against these measures and joining other social struggles, working people will learn that “the purpose of the cops is to keep workers in line, to make an example of you if you come from the wrong class — and more so if you also happen to be the wrong color or the wrong nationality,” Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, says in the book *Capitalism’s World Disorder*. That is true for the entire “justice system,” from the courts to the prisons, under the dictatorship of the capitalist class — it can’t be reformed. It must be replaced.

When working people in the millions engage in struggle in the street and on the picket line, we begin to replace the me-first and look-out-for-number-one mentality of capitalism — the moral values of the gangs and capitalist exploiters alike — with solidarity captured by the union slogan: “an injury to one is an injury to all.”

Those are the moral values that became common through the Cuban Revolution, in the course of overthrowing the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959 and afterward. “When people talk about the achievements of the revolution,” Cuban revolutionary Gerardo Hernández notes, “hardly anything is ever mentioned about the tranquility of our everyday life ... the fact that a child can play until dawn on a street corner near his home and nothing will happen to him.”

That is the result of a society based on human solidarity.

## THE MILITANT

### Cuban Revolution’s internationalism

*The ‘Militant’ reports on how Cuba’s internationalist volunteers led the way in fighting Ebola in West Africa, just as they did in defeating the South African apartheid regime’s 1975-88 invasions of Angola. Their example shows what a difference a revolution makes.*



Cuban Medical Brigade in Guinea-Conakry  
Cuban medical volunteers with Ebola survivors in Guinea during 2014-15 epidemic.

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



Join with SWP in action

Continued from front page and building solidarity for the 39,000 workers on strike against Verizon. At an April 25 rally of hundreds at the statehouse in Trenton, New Jersey, communist workers introduced Verizon strikers to the party and its paper, the *Militant*. Some 30 of them signed to put the SWP on the New Jersey ballot.

SWP teams have fanned out across that state knocking on workers’ doors, discussing the deepening crisis of capitalism and the need to build a powerful movement of workers, who through struggle will become capable of ending the dictatorship of the billionaire rulers. In 10 days of campaigning, 800 people have signed petitions toward the 1,500 goal, and several dozen have subscribed to the *Militant*.

The *Militant* feature last week on Cuban internationalist medical volunteers fighting Ebola in West Africa gave a



Militant/Ellen Haywood Participant in April 14 Oakland, California, Fight for \$15 action signs up for *Militant*.

vivid example of why workers should make a revolution and build a society based on human solidarity, the opposite of the dog-eat-dog social relations that prevail under capitalist rule. It helped convince many people to subscribe.

Presidential candidate Kennedy campaigned in New Jersey and took part in the monthly 34 Women for Oscar López protest in New York. She will speak on behalf of the SWP supporting independence for Puerto Rico at the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization hearings in June.

West Coast SWP campaign organizer Joel Britton traveled to Denver to speak at a house meeting April 24 where \$1,000 was raised to cover efforts to put the party on the ballot in Colorado. Four people picked up copies of *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class: “It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System.”* This and other books that help explain the party’s program are on special for *Militant* subscribers (see details on page 8).

Ballot drives expand the party’s geographical reach and its contact with labor and social struggles. “We learned that Teamsters meatpackers in Fort Morgan had voted down a contract offer from Cargill,” said Karen Ray from Denver. “We went there and learned that Somali meatpacking workers are fighting Cargill’s challenge to unemployment benefits paid out after the company fired 150 Muslim workers in December in retaliation for their job action protesting the denial of prayer breaks.”

When Osborne Hart joins supporters April 29 to file the party’s application for ballot status, he will visit Fort Morgan.

International conference June 16-18 As socialists join labor and social struggles and introduce workers and young people to the Socialist Workers Party, they are also inviting them to at-



Militant/Chris Hoepfner SWP presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy talks with retired pharmaceutical worker Henry Stellwag on his porch in Riverside, New Jersey, April 17 during drive to put SWP on ballot.

tend the party’s conference in Oberlin, Ohio, June 16-18. Participants in the international gathering will take part in presentations, classes and discussion on how to strengthen working-class struggles and build a revolutionary party.

“I’m motivated to go to the conference by the clarity the party gives to so many issues,” Rose Engstrom, a worker in Minneapolis, said in a phone interview April 26. Engstrom got involved in the fight against police brutality after cops killed 24-year-old Jamar Clark last November. “Some of the people demanding the police be prosecuted came to hear Alyson Kennedy when she spoke here,” Engstrom said.

Kennedy presented the importance of this fight in the context of what the working class needs to move forward. “I got good feedback from several of the people who were there,” Engstrom said. “We announced the conference at the meeting, and I’m following up. It would be great if some of them could come.”

Workers behind bars also value the political perspective of the Socialist

Workers Party and the *Militant*. At prisons across the U.S. more than 120 workers are subscribers, and their papers get around.

“I am a past subscriber,” writes a prisoner in South Carolina. “I have moved to another prison and missed getting it. Thank you for sending this great newspaper to prisoners and your support.”

Joe Swanson and Chris Steffen in Lincoln, Nebraska, have won new readers among young people who organized an April 9 abortion rights rally at the state Capitol. They convinced five long-time readers to renew and four of them to get *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class*. Five subscribers contributed to the *Militant* Fighting Fund, which helps keep the paper going.

At the end of the third week of the six-week subscription and fund drives, 773 subscriptions have been sent in toward the quota of 1,550 and \$28,760 toward the fund quota of \$110,000.

To join the Socialist Workers Party in its political campaigns, contact a party branch listed on page 6.

Workers discuss how to take on steel job cuts in UK and world

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

PORT TALBOT, Wales — “Our people make the difference,” is emblazoned on the huge Tata steelworks that dominate this town — words that ring hollow as thousands of steelworkers here and across the United Kingdom face layoffs or cuts in wages and pensions.

Complaining of high pension costs, “dumping” from China, the global “oversupply” of steel and high energy prices and taxes in the U.K., steel bosses have already laid off thousands over the past year. Claiming that its operations are losing £1 million a day (\$1.45 million), Tata, which owns the bulk of U.K. steel production, announced it’s moving out of the country altogether, putting a further 15,000 steelworkers’ jobs in limbo, as many as 4,000 here.

U.K. Business Secretary Sajid Javid announced April 21 that the government would be ready to take a 25 percent stake in Tata’s U.K. operations as part of any sale. No buyer is likely to take over Tata’s £15 billion pension fund, which covers over 130,000 current and former workers, and claims a £485 million deficit. A government takeover of the fund would mean workers losing from 10 percent to 30 percent of their pensions, according to the *Financial Times*.

Union officials have refused to organize a fight for jobs, subordinating workers’ interests to calls to “Save Our Steel”

— to make the capitalist industry profitable again. At the Scunthorpe works in North Lincolnshire, where hundreds have already lost their jobs, workers voted for a 3 percent pay cut and reductions in pensions for the next year, a concession recommended by union officials as part of a buyout of the Tata works there by Greybull Capital.

Union leaders have backed steel bosses’ demands that the government cut taxes on steel companies and use only British-made steel for construction projects. Roy Rickhuss, general secretary of the steelworkers union Community, and Karl Koehler, director of Tata’s European operations, jointly led a contingent of hundreds of steelworkers from the U.K. at a “mass lobby” in Brussels Feb. 15, calling on the European Union to slap tariffs on Chinese steel imports.

Ignored in all this is the fact that at least half a million Chinese steelworkers face layoffs, along with 1.3 million coal miners.

Communist workers from London and Manchester went door to door in Port Talbot to discuss a working-class response to this crisis.

Jean Cody, whose husband, Bernard, is a retired steelworker, spoke with Jonathan Silberman, Communist League candidate for mayor of London. “It started with the mines. Now it’s steel,” she

Continued on page 6

Spring subscription drive			
April 2 - May 17 (week 3)			
Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
Lincoln*	17	14	82%
Oakland	110	67	61%
Washington	115	64	56%
New York	220	118	54%
Philadelphia	90	48	53%
Chicago	125	58	46%
Seattle	100	45	45%
Twin Cities	80	35	44%
Miami	50	20	40%
Los Angeles	200	75	38%
Atlanta	100	29	29%
Total U.S.	1207	573	47%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Manchester	60	39	65%
London	75	43	57%
Total U.K.	135	82	61%
CANADA			
Calgary	45	24	53%
Montreal	55	28	51%
Total Canada	100	52	52%
AUSTRALIA	60	31	52%
NEW ZEALAND	50	23	46%
PRISONERS	15	12	80%
Total	1567	773	50%
Should be	1550	775	50%
*Raised goal			

Militant Fighting Fund			
April 2- May 17 (week 3)			
Country	Quota	Paid	%
UNITED STATES			
Lincoln*	\$240	\$111	46%
Oakland	\$14,500	\$6,485	45%
Atlanta	\$10,000	\$4,085	41%
Los Angeles	\$8,600	\$2,995	35%
Chicago	\$11,500	\$3,255	28%
Miami	\$3,000	\$720	24%
Twin Cities	\$3,500	\$770	22%
Washington	\$7,700	\$1,600	21%
New York	\$21,000	\$3,675	18%
Seattle	\$7,500	\$260	3%
Philadelphia	\$3,200	\$0	0%
U.S. Total	\$90,740	\$23,956	26%
CANADA			
Montreal	\$4,000	\$1,725	43%
Calgary	\$3,200	\$1,054	33%
Canada Total	\$7,200	\$2,779	39%
NEW ZEALAND	\$4,000	\$1,046	26%
AUSTRALIA	\$1,100	\$650	59%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Manchester	\$700	\$329	47%
London	\$2,000	\$0	0%
U.K. Total	\$2,700	\$329	12%
Total	\$105,740	\$28,760	26%
Should be	\$110,000	\$55,000	50%
*Raised goal			



# ‘Teamster Politics’: lessons of 1930s battles for fighters today

*Teamster Politics*, by Farrell Dobbs. 345 pages. Pathfinder Press, second edition 2015.

BY MARY MARTIN

As the 2016 U.S. elections unfold, the effects of capitalism’s crisis of production and trade are pressing working people to look for new political perspectives, and for ways to defend their jobs, wages and working conditions, and political and social rights.

I recommend reading *Teamster Politics* by Farrell Dobbs, a longtime central leader of the Socialist Workers Party. A new, expanded edition was published

## IN REVIEW

last year, including 20 pages of photos that draw readers into the book.

Through the living experience of workers’ battles during the 1930s, it shows how we face a dictatorship of capital — not just the bosses, but their cops, courts, administrative apparatus and political parties. This won’t end until the working class takes political power out of the hands of the boss class once and for all. To fight to win, we need to organize not only in trade unions, but on the broadest political level.

This is the third volume of a four-part series. *Teamster Rebellion* and *Teamster Power* describe the series of organizing drives and strikes by Minneapolis truck drivers in 1934 that forged a powerful fighting union there, and how the Minneapolis Teamsters, guided by a class-struggle leadership, built on those victories to strengthen the labor movement throughout the Midwest over the following years.

In *Teamster Politics*, Dobbs looks at the broader political framework in which these battles took place — part of the upsurge that forged the industrial unions and the CIO. President Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933, when the

capitalist depression had made workers’ conditions “so intolerable that rebellious moods were rapidly spreading,” Dobbs writes. “Fears of a revolutionary uprising gripped the capitalists so they allowed the incoming president wide latitude in acting to stem the threat to their rule.”

This is how the measures called the New Deal came about. Dobbs explains how, with the help of trade union bureaucrats and other misleaders, Roosevelt and the propertied rulers he spoke for used these measures to try to contain the labor upsurge and prevent it from challenging their political rule. But depression conditions, with ups and downs, dragged on until the U.S. rulers’ entry into the second world imperialist war.

To stifle the labor upsurge and opposition to the rulers’ war moves, “the FBI openly began to assume the role of political police,” says Dobbs, restricting civil liberties and targeting the unions.

The final book in the series, *Teamster Bureaucracy*, describes how the rank-and-file Teamsters leadership organized to oppose World War II, racism, and government efforts — backed by the international officialdom of the AFL, the CIO and the Teamsters — to gag class-struggle-minded workers.

### A participant’s account

Dobbs was a participant in this history. He was a young coal yard worker when he joined the 1934 Minneapolis organizing drive and became a leader of the strike battles. He was later the central organizer of an 11-state union organizing drive that drew tens of thousands of over-the-road truckers into the Teamsters.

Dobbs joined and became a leader of the revolutionary party that was at the heart of these union battles, the Socialist Workers Party. He left the Teamsters organizing staff in 1940 to become the party’s labor secretary, served as SWP national secretary from 1953 to 1972, and was the party’s presidential candidate four times.

In the class battles unfolding on each page we learn just as the workers themselves learned in the process about the true character of all institutions in capitalist society.

The book is divided into four sections. The first, titled “The Politics of the Trade-Union Movement,” describes how a class-struggle leadership built the union while confronted with the narrow, self-serving perspectives of the Teamsters bureaucrats and their devotion to Roosevelt and other supposed friends of labor.

The second section, “Political Conflict in Minnesota,” takes up in depth why workers need to organize politically independent of capitalist parties such as the Democrats and Republicans.

### Need for union-based labor party

Dobbs explains why in 1938 the Socialist Workers Party decided to call for a labor party based on the unions. The party knew the working class might make a direct leap to revolutionary politics, as happened in Russia in 1917, where the Bolshevik Party, led by V.I. Lenin, led the toilers to power. The explosion of the labor movement in the 1930s, drawing millions of men and



Top, three-mile cavalcade from Minneapolis to state Capitol in St. Paul, June 2, 1939, part of nationwide protests against Roosevelt administration slashing a million workers from Works Progress Administration jobs. Bottom, members of Local 544 union defense guard that pushed back threat by fascist Silver Shirts to raid Minneapolis Teamster headquarters in August 1938.

women into the unions and political activity, showed that potential.

“The CIO movement had arisen with unanticipated rapidity and power; and the revolutionary party had not been able to recruit CIO militants at the rate and on the scale needed to gain effective leadership influence among the mass of industrial workers,” Dobbs writes. “The time had come to support the development of a more elementary form of independent working-class political action, namely formation of a labor party based on the trade unions.” This remains a pressing question for the working class today.

The book features concrete examples of how the fight for independent working-class political action unfolded in Minnesota, where a reformist Farmer-Labor Party existed, independent of the Democrats and Republicans.

In the third section, titled “Ruling-Class Offensive,” Dobbs takes up how the bosses and their government used everything from lawsuits smearing the unions for “corruption” to anti-labor legislation to try to tame the labor movement as the Roosevelt administration geared up for war.

One particularly interesting chapter describes how workers pushed back a threat from a fascist outfit known as the Silver Shirts, which in August 1938 talked of an armed raid on the Teamster headquarters. “Local 544, acting with its customary decisiveness, answered the threat by organizing a union defense guard,” Dobbs says.

In the final section, called “Plight of the Jobless,” Dobbs explains the alliance forged by the union with unemployed workers who were part of the government Works Progress Administration make-work projects, many of whom joined the Federal Workers Section affiliated to Local 544.

As part of the labor movement, they fought for increased unemployment compensation and forced local and state officials to back down on humiliating means testing for jobless workers to get relief. Minneapolis was one of the strongest centers in a nationwide strike by WPA workers in 1939.

Readers will appreciate learning of the role of women fighters who fought unflinchingly alongside men on picket lines in this battle. Some were arrested,

faced frame-up trials and jail time.

Through the battles described in *Teamster Politics*, many participants became transformed into different men and women. Dobbs introduces some of the individuals, and tells how they became capable of acting and leading others in solidarity in ways neither they nor the bosses had thought possible.

This marked the beginnings of a politically conscious, class-struggle union leadership in Minnesota and the region. But similar developments did not happen nationwide.

As Dobbs describes vividly, one of the chief reasons was the counterrevolutionary betrayals and thuggery of the Stalinized Communist Party, which was substantially larger than the SWP.

### Challenges working class faces today

Because of the bosses’ moves to wrap the unions in red tape and legal restrictions, and the class-collaborationist outlook of the trade union bureaucrats and their subordination of the working class to the bosses’ political parties, especially the Democrats, the power of the labor movement has been eroded in the decades since. Today just 7 percent of industrial workers are in unions.

But new winds are blowing — from the movement for \$15 an hour and unionization, to fights against two-tier wages and union busting, to mobilizations against police brutality and abuse.

Dobbs explains that the Teamsters’ experiences showed that “unionism and politics can’t be separated.”

As I read this I can name farmworkers, longshore workers, retail workers, shellfish gatherers, and paperworkers who I know are thinking about this question based on their own experiences with the brutality of capitalism and the necessity for a union. They are looking for a way forward.

Dobbs says, “Power generated at the trade-union level can be shattered by government blows. Workers must enter the political arena as an independent class force, with their own party.” *Teamster Politics* is a powerful tool for the new generations learning this lesson today.

Mary Martin is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Washington state.

## Read the 4-part Teamster series!



### Teamster Politics

“Unionism and politics cannot be separated. Power generated at the trade-union level can be shattered by government blows. Workers must enter the political arena as an independent class force, with their own party.”

— Farrell Dobbs

#### Other books in series:

*Teamster Rebellion*

*Teamster Power*

*Teamster Bureaucracy*

\$19 each or all four for \$65

[pathfinderpress.com](http://pathfinderpress.com)



# Convicted NY cop gets no jail in death of Akai Gurley

BY DEAN HAZLEWOOD

NEW YORK — Police officer Peter Liang was sentenced to five years probation and 800 hours of community service April 19. Liang was convicted of manslaughter in February for the shooting death of Akai Gurley in a stairwell at the Louis Pink Houses complex in Brooklyn, Nov. 20, 2014.

Liang's conviction was the first of a cop here in a fatal shooting in over a decade. It carried a potential sentence of up to 15 years. But State Supreme Court Judge Danny Chun reduced the jury's manslaughter verdict to criminally negligent homicide and said "incarceration is not necessary." Brooklyn District Attorney Kenneth Thompson had recommended that Liang serve no jail time.

Liang, with his gun drawn was on patrol with partner Shaun Landau, claims that it went off accidentally. The bullet ricocheted, striking Gurley, who was with his friend Melissa Butler a floor below, in the heart. Neither cop rendered aid to the dying man. Butler and a neighbor called for an ambulance.

"Another Black man has been murdered by the hands of the Police Department and the officer is not being held accountable," Gurley's aunt Hertencia Petersen told a crowd outside the court building after the sentencing.

Nearby about 100 people, mostly Chinese, carried signs saying Liang was being scapegoated because he is Chinese American. "This was just very bad luck," said Alex Li. "He didn't have enough experience for duty like this."

Some other workers share this view. Many are glad that Liang was found guilty, but point out that Staten Island cops killed Eric Garner with a choke-

hold in 2014 have never been charged.

"It's a bad set of circumstances, sad on both ends," Thomas James, who is Black, told the *Militant* outside the courthouse, "but Gurley was not doing anything wrong."

"We are outraged that Peter Liang has escaped accountability for killing Akai Gurley," said a joint statement initiated by CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities and signed by other Asian and Chinese American organizations. "As grassroots organizations working with Asian/Chinese Americans, we continue to stand with the family of Akai Gurley and other innocent victims of police killings to hold all police officers accountable, regardless of race."



Relatives of Akai Gurley and others killed by New York police rally at Brooklyn District Attorney's office April 15 demanding jail time for Peter Liang in death of Gurley in 2014. Militant/Jacob Perasso

## Verizon strikers stand up to attacks on unions

Continued from front page

vice of copper wire and fiber optic cable.

At a rally of hundreds outside the New Jersey Statehouse April 25, many workers took issue with Verizon's media ads claiming the average pay package for a technician is \$130,000 a year.

"If we had everything they're claiming, we wouldn't be on strike!" said Larry Fowler, a technician in Somerset.

Fowler's co-worker Isa Woods said Verizon has not hired in more than a dozen years. "We are working six-day weeks," he said. "We are seeing a lot of injuries. During every disaster, we are out there seven days a week. And Verizon keeps on making big profits."

"In some fields, such as customer service, operator and administrative assistant where there's high turnover, there's some hiring," New York technician Miguel Pimentel told the *Militant* in a phone interview April 26. "For technicians, there's very little. But the company contracts out similar work to nonunion contractors. For example, they get contractors to install molding in a building, and then we run cable through it. We're constantly fighting to take back work Verizon contracts out."

"The most important issue is job security," Crasner Francois, 34, a call cen-

ter worker in Livingston, said. He and co-workers help workers at call centers in other parts of the world. "When a worker there needs help, they put a caller on hold and call us to talk it through."

Francois's family worked on the land in Haiti. "Everyone in the world needs jobs," he said, "but companies go where people are paid less. We need to create more work for everybody."

Some other unions joined in solidarity, including Amalgamated Transit Union Local 824, Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ, and International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 194, representing New Jersey Turnpike workers.

Henderson Fleming said Local 194 beat back efforts to privatize the highway. "Working on the turnpike, like at Verizon, can be rough," he said.

"When we picketed, the Verizon workers joined us," said Douglas Armstrong, a member of ATU Local 824 from the Freehold area.

"When people say the strike is all about money, I tell them, no, it's about health care for retirees and active workers," IBEW Local 827 Business Agent Rich Spieler said. "It's about how the company is sending jobs away."

Verizon wants to cap pensions at 30 years, and take away pension credits for

those with more than 30 years.

The union is organizing roving pickets that follow strikebreakers to work locations, then picket nearby.

A group of CWA Local 1000 members from the 411 information call center in Manahawkin, spoke with the *Militant*. "They call us all 'surplus' workers, meaning they want to get rid of us," said Jodi Grant, vice president of the local's operator services.

"We must average 22.7 seconds per call or can be disciplined," said operator Mary Compton. The operators must follow a script, have their keystrokes monitored, and cannot "oversearch" for information. Supervisors listen in. "I can easily come home with a headache every day," she said.

"We are trying to help people," Compton said. "It's a normal interaction among human beings to talk with courtesy. It is not right that I could be disciplined for responding 'thank you' twice in a call or for going over 22.7 seconds."

At the call center only one worker at a time may go to the bathroom, and workers must hold up a flag to indicate they need a break, Compton and Grant said.

"We've gotten more support than ever in the past," said Grant. "Shore Medical Center nurses, who had their own contract fight, have joined us."

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### GEORGIA

#### Atlanta

**What Road Forward for Toilers of Israel and Palestine in Face of Capitalist Crisis?** Speaker: Lisa Potash, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., May 6, 7:30 p.m. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel.: (678) 528-7828.

### CANADA

#### Montreal

**Why Censorship and Anti-Hate Laws Harm Working-Class Fight Against Jew Hatred.** Speaker: John Steele, Communist League. Fri., May 6, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Suite 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

### UNITED KINGDOM

#### Manchester

**EU Referendum: Is It in Workers' Interests for the UK to Remain in the EU? For Independent Working-Class Political Action.** Speaker: Tony Hunt, Communist League. Sat., May 7, 6:30 p.m. Donation: £2.50. Room 301, Hilton House, 26-28 Hilton St. Tel.: (016) 1478-2496.

## —CALENDAR—

### CANADA

#### Calgary

**Justice for Colton Crowshoe Walk.** Thurs., May 5, 8 p.m. Crowshoe, 18, was killed and his body found on July 24, 2014. Three weeks earlier, before he disappeared, he was beaten by the police. 4825 Mount Royal Gate SW., Mount Royal University. Tel.: (587) 968-5610.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 17, 1991

The devastation that is unfolding in Bangladesh — where at least 125,000 have died and tens of thousands more will — is being portrayed as a "natural" disaster that nothing much can be done about. This is false. The toilers of this flood-stricken country are suffering a *social* disaster produced by capitalist relations on the land and exploitation of semicolonial countries by the imperialist banks and lending agencies.

Millions of toilers in immediate danger of deadly diseases and the 10 million made homeless are denied massive aid needed from imperialist countries. Vast numbers of the dead could have been saved if a fraction of the billions spent by Washington and its allies on the slaughter of the Iraqi people had been used to aid the victims. Yet Washington has so far contributed only \$125,000.



May 9, 1966

WATTS, Calif. — Philip Bently Brooks, Negro father of four, was freed April 26, after a jury declared him innocent in the shooting death of a deputy sheriff during the Watts uprising of last August.

Deputy Ronald Ludlow was killed during the disorders when the shotgun of his partner Deputy William Lauer discharged, striking him in the stomach. He was the only white person killed in the Watts revolt.

Brooks, Joseph Lavine Jr., and Harold Potts were driving in Watts when approached by the deputies. After one deputy shot the other, the three Negroes were dragged from their car, beaten, carted to the jail section of the county hospital and charged with murder, although none had a weapon or touched the trigger that fired the fatal shot.



May 10, 1941

LONDON — The Labour "Leaders" in the War Cabinet would like to believe the working class is solidly behind the imperialist war and that they acquiesce in the repressive measures. Figures in the "Ministry of Labour Gazette," comparing industrial disputes in 1940 and 1939 tell a different tale.

Government legislation has declared strikes illegal, and strikers can be charged with sabotage. In spite of this there were 914 strikes in 1940 involving 300,500 workers as compared with 940 in 1939 involving 337,300 workers.

As the trade union bureaucrats frown on all strikes in this "period of national crisis," the leadership of these strikes has devolved on the rank-and-file committees and especially on the Shop Steward movement, which is coming to the fore as the leaders of militant struggle.



# SWP candidate on job safety

Continued from front page

squeeze the workers, jack up productivity and things get more unsafe.”

“That’s for sure at Verizon,” said Hopper, a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. “There it’s all about profit.”

“The working class produces all the wealth,” Kennedy said. “But the employing class appropriates it for their private profit. Whichever capitalist politician gets elected, their class controls the government.

“We’re a revolutionary party. We say workers need to fight for our own government that can use the wealth we produce to take on the problems working people face, here and worldwide,” she said.

“I kind of like some of the things Bernie Sanders says,” Hopper said. “And I like what you’re saying.”

He got a copy of the *Militant*. “I’m going to take it to the union hall and get the local to get a subscription,” he said.

“There are a number of politicians speaking at the rally here today,” Communications Workers of America member Dina Bazley told Kennedy. “I’m glad for the support, but they don’t ever seem to *do* anything.”

“We need our own political party, a labor party, based on our unions,” Kennedy said. “That way we can use our own party to build solidarity with struggles like you’re in at Verizon.

“Pulling a lever for a Democratic or Republican politician who sounds better than the last one doesn’t get the working class anywhere,” the Socialist Workers Party candidate said. “The only way we win anything is through struggle. Your strike is an example of what we need more of. And a labor party built from these experiences can help point the way toward fighting for political power.”

Bazley works in Newark, New Jersey, near where Lane works at Walmart.

They made arrangements to meet again on the Verizon picket line later in the week.

### Elections rattle union officials

The grinding depression conditions facing working people as capital’s crisis of production and trade deepens worldwide generate a thirst for a new perspective for what can be done to change things. It finds reflection in growing interest in the SWP, as well as in frictions and fissures in the Democratic and Republican parties.

This is creating political difficulties for the union officialdom, who seek to tie labor’s fate to capitalist “friends of labor,” mostly through the Democratic Party machine. Today there’s widespread working-class interest in the “outsider” campaigns of Donald Trump and Sanders. And hysteria over the Trump campaign will only grow after April 26, when he swept the primaries in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island.

“Donald Trump’s Working-Class Appeal Is Starting to Freak Out Labor Unions,” ran a headline article in *Huffington Post* online several weeks ago.

“We hear the same refrains all the time,” Karen Nussbaum, head of the AFL-CIO-affiliated Working America, told the *Post*. “That people are fed up and they’re hurting. That their families have not recovered from the recession. ... And then a guy comes on the stage and says, ‘I’m your guy who will blow the whole thing up.’”

Jobs is one big factor. “My country is going to hell,” Brian Sepe, a Massachusetts utility worker and member of the United Steelworkers, told *International Business Times* in March. “You look



Militant/Tony Lane

Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy, right, discussed need for labor party based on unions with Verizon strikers at April 25 rally in Trenton, New Jersey.

back at all the different trade agreements over the past 30 years. It’s always been to move jobs out of the country. ... We don’t have good jobs left.”

Trump’s declaration he will “bring back American jobs” echoes the protectionist, American nationalism long promoted by the labor tops.

Union officials fear support for Trump will undercut their relations with Democratic Party bosses. “I am deeply concerned about what is stirring, even in our membership,” Mary Kay Henry, president of the Service Employees International Union, said in January, “where our members are responding to Trump’s message.”

Sanders’ rhetoric about a “political revolution” and complaints about the “1 percent” get a similar response. A number of union locals and a few national unions have backed Sanders, including the Communications Workers

of America, American Postal Workers and International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

Many workers who back Sanders or Trump say they see similarities in the two candidates. Sanders told CBS’ “Face the Nation” that he is courting Trump supporters who are “working-class people” with “legitimate” angers and fears because of decreasing wages.

Sanders, Trump and company all aim to convince workers that “we Americans” have a common interest against other workers around the world and that we should fight for “our” jobs at their expense. But there is no “we.” The interests of the working class are diametrically opposed to those of the boss class, whose profits and privileges are based on exploitation of workers, here and around the world.

Tony Lane contributed to this article.

## Workers discuss how to take on steel job cuts

Continued from page 3

said, referring to the obliteration of coal mining in the U.K., including in South Wales, in the 1980s and ’90s. Silberman responded that the steel industry is part of a worldwide crisis of production and trade.

“It’s absurd to say that there’s too much steel in the world today,” Silberman said. “Doesn’t Africa need roads, railways, bridges, dams and other projects? Building such infrastructure would help close the gap between work-

ers in semicolonial nations and countries like the U.K. When companies speak of too much steel, what they really mean is too much steel to sell at the profit they require.”

“The labor movement should be leading the fight for a crash program of government-funded public works to provide jobs, and build the homes, schools, hospitals and infrastructure projects working people need,” he added.

Cody replied that “I can’t see the government doing that.” Silberman said

that when the sugar industry in Cuba was cut back, the revolutionary government collaborated with sugar workers through thousands of meetings, guaranteed their wages and organized training for other jobs. “This was the product of a revolution that put workers in power and replaced the dog-eat-dog values of capitalism with human solidarity,” he said. “We should demand that the government guarantees wages of steelworkers. That would involve a real fight by the unions.”

### Join the Socialist Workers Party campaign in 2016!

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

**SWP 2016 Campaign**  
**227 W. 29th St., 6th Floor**  
**New York, NY 10001**  
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# Verizon strike is fight for all workers!

*The following statement was released April 27 by Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, and Osborne Hart for vice president.*

Workers on strike at Verizon need your support and solidarity. In a multimillion dollar ad campaign run daily since the strike began, Verizon bosses want you to turn your back on the workers. Verizon claims they get “outstanding compensation,” “exceptional retirement benefits” “very reasonable” health insurance and “numerous perks.” And that the company has “put a fair offer on the table.”

Don’t fall for it!

Verizon bosses say they want a deal that “positions our wireline business for success in the digital world” and that makes “changes to legacy constraints in our contracts.” Translation: Verizon wants to keep speeding up the work pace, disregard job safety, reduce health care benefits, cut wages by using more contractors to increase their profit rates and fill the owners’ bank accounts.

This is not just a fight for union workers at Verizon. The strikers are fighting for all of us. If Verizon gets away with this it will encourage other bosses to do the same. Workers across the country have a vested interest in mobilizing the broadest solidarity possible.

The fight by construction workers for job safety in the face of increasing numbers of deaths on the

job will gain strength if Verizon strikers, who face similar conditions, can push their bosses back.

Fast-food and Walmart workers fighting for \$15 an hour and a union also have a stake in this fight. Every blow the bosses deal to our fellow workers is a blow against us. Every victory by our brothers and sisters puts us in a better position to move forward and would boost the fight to organize the unorganized.

Other unionists face concession demands from their bosses, who seek to make us pay for the deepening crisis of capitalist production and trade.

Members of the Utility Workers Union of America Local 1-2 at Con Edison in New York just voted to authorize a strike in the face of that company’s attempts to push through further cutbacks. Their contract expires June 25.

We call on our fellow workers: Join the Verizon workers’ picket lines and demonstrations. Take up collections for their strike funds. Invite strikers to speak to your union meetings or to your neighborhood association and other community groups.

The Verizon strike shows both the power of working people in action and that our struggles would be even more powerful if we had our own party, a labor party based on our unions, instead of relying on bourgeois politicians who claim to be “friends of labor.”

An injury to one is an injury to all! Solidarity with the striking workers at Verizon!

## Cargill fires workers, challenges jobless pay

BY KAREN RAY

FORT MORGAN, Colo. — “Cargill is challenging the workers’ unemployment” claims, granted after mass firings by the giant meatpacker late last year, said Khadar Ducaale.

Ducaale volunteers his time every weekend to help other Somali workers negotiate with landlords and bill collectors and in other ways. He has been busy since Dec. 23 when Cargill Meat Solutions fired nearly 150 Muslim workers here. The firings were in retaliation for workers walking off the job after the company changed its long-standing practice of allowing them to take breaks to pray.

Workers are now being called for telephone interviews by state unemployment officials, Ducaale told the *Militant* April 24. These are “interrogations, really,” he said, that “can take four or five hours with a translator, the company lawyer and a lawyer from CAIR,” the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which is representing the workers. They are repeatedly asked the same or similar questions regarding their firings and “are very worried they will have to pay back the unemployment payments,” he said.

On March 7, lawyers representing about 130 workers filed complaints with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission charging Cargill Meat Solutions with religious discrimination.

A similar lawsuit is being pursued against JBS USA, which operates a packinghouse in Greeley. It charges that “JBS engaged in wide-scale religious discrimination” when they fired more than 100 Muslim workers in 2008 for not reporting to work after the company refused them a prayer break at sundown for Ramadan.

In another development, members of Teamsters Local 455, which represents Cargill meatpackers in Fort Morgan, rejected a company contract proposal April 15 by 98 percent. The union press release stated the company “not only offered the more than 1,700 workers inadequate wage increases, but drastically slashed healthcare benefits while increasing the cost. Access to affordable, quality healthcare is critical for those that work in an industry that the Occupational Safety & Health Administration reports has an injury and illness rate 2.5 times higher than the national average.” Cargill and the union are scheduled to reopen negotiations May 12, overseen by a federal mediator.

### Correction

The article “Verizon Strikers: Time to Say No to Concessions” in the May 2 issue said the 1989 NYNEX strike lasted four weeks. It was four months.

## —LETTERS—

### ‘Cuba and Chernobyl’

*Cuba and Chernobyl*, a video about Cuba’s medical aid program to children affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, was shown at the Ukrainian-American Citizens Hall in Cohoes, New York, sponsored by Albany Cuba Solidarity. The audience of about 40 included a few members of the local Ukrainian community. After the film, Mira Peck, who was born and raised in Poland near the border with Ukraine, talked about her recent visit to Cuba and what she learned during that trip.

*Mindy Brudno*  
*Albany, New York*

### Sanders is what we have

I know you don’t see the Sanders candidacy as representative of your values. But I think a transition for his campaign to more militancy is desperately needed. He is what we have now, and his

followers are prime for this shift, especially since the loss in NY on the heels of Clinton corruption and voter suppression. Mobilizing the disenfranchised to a further pro-socialist, anti-capitalist shift is perfect for the current Sanders base.

*Vincent G.*  
*Riverside, California*

### ‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

The Prisoners’ Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked “Prisoners’ Fund” to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

**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.**

## New Mideast ‘order’

Continued from front page

brokered by Washington and Moscow began in late February, anti-Assad protesters have been coming out for street demonstrations, an echo of the mass mobilizations demanding Assad’s ouster in 2011. Assad responded then with massive military force, initiating the war that has killed close to half a million people and displaced millions.

In this context, brutal anti-working-class Islamic State forces have seized sections of Syria and Iraq, increasing the misery of residents. That reactionary group is a terrorist split from al-Qaeda and backed by military commanders who previously served the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein.

President Barack Obama announced April 25 Washington will send 250 special forces to Syria, bringing the total to 300. This follows a deployment of additional troops to Iraq. These moves, he said, aim to strengthen the fight against Islamic State in both countries.

### Divisions in Iraq

In Iraq, the Shia-led government of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi faces a political and economic crisis exacerbated by the drop of oil prices and friction among the country’s three ethnic populations. Shia Arabs in the southeast have close ties with Iran. Some are organized into militias hostile to Sunni Arabs in central Iraq, as well as to Kurds in the autonomous region in the oil-rich north, who are calling for independence.

Fighting broke out between Shiite militias and Kurdish peshmerga troops in Tuz Khurmatu north of Baghdad April 24, but the next day leaders of both groups announced a truce. Many thousands responded to a call by powerful Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr — long an opponent of Washington’s role in Iraq — for a “million-man march” in Baghdad April 25 to protest government corruption and demand Abadi appoint a new cabinet.

Washington is backing the Iraqi military and Kurdish forces in northern Iraq with airstrikes, part of its effort to drive against Islamic State. The Iraqi government says it is preparing to take Mosul, the largest city held by Islamic State. Top Pentagon officials, concerned about the state of the government and its army, have visited Iraq recently to consult on the offensive.

“Ensuring that a cohesive, well-equipped Iraqi force advances into Mosul is at the core of the renewed U.S. mission in Iraq,” the *Washington Post* wrote April 21. U.S. military leaders are trying “to make up for flaws exposed in the [Iraqi] army’s partial collapse in the same city in 2014.”

### Tehran protests U.S. sanctions

A key component of Washington’s course in the Mideast is to move toward better working relations with the Iranian government to advance U.S. interests in the region. That was the aim of the “nuclear deal” negotiated with Tehran last year.

Following an April 19 meeting at the U.N. with Secretary of State John Kerry on implementation of the deal, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told the *New York Times* that Washington needs to assure European countries they may do business in Iran without fear of being penalized. The agreement lifted some nuclear-related sanctions against Tehran, but the U.S. government maintains others prohibiting Iranian access to U.S. banks and limiting its use of the dollar.

At the same time, the U.S. Supreme Court, with State Department backing, authorized the transfer of \$2.65 billion in Iranian assets Washington had frozen to relatives of those killed in attacks attributed to groups linked to Tehran — the 1983 bombing of a U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut and the 1996 attack on the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia. An Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the ruling mocked international law and “amounts to the appropriation of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s property.”

As part of the nuclear accord and efforts to advance relations, the Obama administration announced April 22 it had agreed to buy 32 tons of heavy water — an essential component for producing nuclear weapons and power — from Iran.



# Capitalism turns Ecuador quake into a social disaster

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The earthquake that struck Ecuador April 16, with mounting deaths, injuries and devastation, is a social disaster magnified by capitalist exploitation and imperialist plunder.

The 7.8 magnitude quake on the country's northwest coast destroyed cities, towns, fishing villages and resorts. As of April 23, nearly 650 people were confirmed dead, 130 missing, and 12,500 injured. Nearly 10,000 buildings were destroyed or damaged and more than 25,000 people are now staying in temporary shelters, according to the government. Others are sleeping outside.

Large amounts of stagnant water in the affected areas pose increasing health risks from mosquito-born diseases, such as dengue fever and Zika.

A week after the quake workers and farmers in many areas have received little government-organized aid. Supplies that arrive are often held in distribution centers and dispatched slowly.

In Manta, where soldiers erected fenced barricades, "some had waited in line for 10 hours the day before, only to come away empty handed," reported the *Washington Post* April 21.

"I've lost my house and I'm living on the street. The same goes for these other women," Sandra Alvía 37, told the paper. "We have no water, no power and nothing to eat. We've lost everything."

In their drive for profit, construction companies with government complicity erected buildings with substandard materials prone to collapse in areas well known for regular seismic activity. Ecuador is located along the "Ring of Fire," a string of volcanoes along the edges of the Pacific Ocean. On April 14-15 earthquakes in Japan, which is also part of this seismic zone, killed at least 41 people, and injured more than 900.

While a few countries, including the U.S. and Japan, have some form of early warning system for earthquakes, Ecuador and most other semicolonial countries don't, since they're expensive to deploy and maintain.

Responding to the disaster, the government of President Rafael Correa

declared a state of emergency and sent 10,000 soldiers and 4,600 national police to the devastated areas.

To reconstruct the quake-damaged areas, Correa proposes taxes that will hit working people the hardest. Sales taxes would increase from 12 to 14 percent for a year. Workers earning over \$1,000 a month would have a day's wages deducted; those making \$5,000 a month would be docked five days' pay. Individuals with more than \$1 million in assets would be charged a one-time tax of 0.9 percent on their wealth.

Correa is considering selling off unspecified state assets, according to the Associated Press. He said it will take billions of dollars over years to rebuild the devastated areas of the country.

U.N. officials say \$73 million is needed for immediate relief such as food, water, medicine and shelter. Washington has so far offered less than \$1 million.

### Cuba sends more doctors

The revolutionary government of Cuba immediately stepped up efforts to provide needed health care throughout the country. A team of more than 700 doctors and medical workers had been stationed in Ecuador over the past two years, providing working people with free medical care. Three of these doctors died in the earthquake when a building collapsed in the town of Pedernales.

The Cuban government sent an emergency contingent of volunteer doctors experienced in disasters and epidemics. On arrival April 18, they helped set up a makeshift hospital in Bahía de Caraquez, replacing one that had collapsed, and treated patients in the rural communities of Jama and Canoa, reported *Prensa Latina*.

Correa was elected president in 2007 on a program of increased government spending for education, health care and subsidies for housing and fuel. He called such reforms through the capitalist state "21st century socialism."

The worldwide economic crisis of the capitalist system has had a deep impact in Ecuador. The price of oil, which accounts for nearly 60 percent of Ecua-



Above, Reuters/Guillermo Granja; inset, CubaSi  
Above, workers clean up debris in Pedernales, Ecuador, after earthquake that left hundreds dead, thousands injured. Inset, Cuban Health Minister Roberto Morales, left, sends off contingent of doctors April 17 to join hundreds of Cuban health workers already in Ecuador.

dor's exports, has plummeted, cutting deeply into income the government has depended on to fund social programs. Other exports, including bananas, shrimp and flowers, have dropped. The country's gross domestic product had already been predicted to contract 4.5 percent this year.

The country's foreign debt has doubled to \$27 billion since 2009, and the interest rate on government bonds soared to as high as 14 percent over the last year. This acts to siphon the wealth produced by the labor of workers and farmers in Ecuador into banks in the U.S. and other imperialist centers.

## Wash. showing of Cuban 5 prison paintings: 'Fighting for the future'

BY EDWIN FRUIT

PUYALLUP, Wash. — "Unlike most artists whose work graces the walls of museums around the world, Antonio Guerrero has not exactly been classically trained as a painter," said an article on the Pierce College website promoting the opening there of "I Will Die the Way I've Lived," a series of his paintings. "With the help of his fellow prisoners, Guerrero managed to create works of art that portray the struggles he faced during his incarceration."

The watercolors depict the experience of Guerrero and the rest of the Cuban Five in the "hole" during their first 17 months in prison after their arrest by the FBI in 1998 on frame-up charges, including conspiracy to commit espionage. The five revolutionaries had been gathering information about paramilitary groups in Florida, to help prevent violent attacks on Cuba. The last of the Five were released and returned to Cuba in December 2014.

"The way they survived prison is by drawing on their training as products of the Cuban Revolution," Mary Martin told the college online news service. "They were fighting not just for themselves, but for the future."

Kathy Swart, a teacher and librarian, brought the exhibit to the college and chaired the April 12 opening, which featured Marisela Fleitas-Lear, professor of Hispanic Studies at Green River College, and Martin of the Socialist Workers Party.

Fleitas-Lear told how Washington made Cuba into a virtual colony through military occupation and the Platt Amendment, signed by the Cuban government essentially at gunpoint in 1903, which allowed the U.S. to intervene in Cuban affairs, take over Guantánamo Bay and set up a naval base in perpetuity.

The establishment of U.S.-Cuba diplomatic relations is a victory for the Cuban Revolution, Martin said. She noted that three of the Five served in Angola as part of Cuba's internationalist mission that defeated repeated Washington-backed invasions by the white supremacist apartheid regime in South Africa.

A student asked, "Are the Cuban Five all alive and well today and what are they doing?" Martin said the Five are still on the front lines defending their country, strengthening the revolution and speaking across Cuba.

"These 'conspiracy to commit a crime' charges when they have no evidence, like the Cuban Five had, are getting more widespread," Brenda Bresnahan told the *Militant* as people viewed the exhibit. Her son is serving eight years on a federal conspiracy conviction in the penitentiary in Florence, Colorado, where Guerrero spent many years.

"These paintings speak to the experiences my son relates to me," she said, "the nighttime flashlights, the roaches and the serial number assigned to inmates. Like Guerrero explains, 'they try to make you become a number and attempt to strip your identity from you.'"

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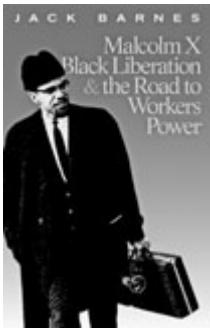
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# Chernobyl disaster

Continued from front page

times more radiation than the atom bombs U.S. imperialism dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Yet for 36 hours, officials told the 50,000 residents of Pripyat, built a mile from the reactor to house workers from the power plant, not to worry. When they finally ordered an evacuation, they told workers they would only be gone for a several days and not to take more than a few clothes. Scientists now say no one should live in Pripyat for 24,000 years.

The Stalinist regime ordered some 600,000 troops and volunteer miners, firemen and others — known as “liquidators” — to join plant workers to put the fire out, try to cover the leaking reactor and clean up the area. Few were provided with protective gear and all were exposed to threatening levels of radiation.

With radioactive dust still falling, Stalinist party leaders went ahead with massive May Day rallies in Kiev, Ukraine’s capital, some 80 miles from Chernobyl, and Minsk, the capital of Belarus, instead of cautioning people to stay inside.

Two workers died in the explosion and 28 plant workers, firemen and others died of acute radiation within weeks. United Nations officials estimate that 4,000 more deaths have resulted since. Tens of thousands were sickened, especially children who contracted thyroid cancers and diseases from contamination by iodine-131 produced along with cesium-137 when the reactor exploded.

The government continued to cover up the real extent of the social disaster until it was blown open by angry workers and scientists three years later.

In a powerful poem about the Stalinist treachery, Lyubov Sirota, who had witnessed the explosion when she went outside to get some night air in Pripyat, wrote:

Thousands of “competent” functionaries  
count our “souls” in percentages,  
their own honesty, souls, long gone —  
so we suffocate with despair.  
They wrote us off.  
They keep trying to write off  
our ailing truths  
with their sanctimonious lies.  
But nothing will silence us!

## Cuba’s internationalism

When the scope of the social catastrophe became clear, revolutionary Cuba, consistent with its unbroken record of internationalist working-class solidarity, offered to provide medical care free of charge. Beginning in 1990 and over the next 25 years, more than 25,000 people, overwhelmingly children, traveled to a special medical facility in Tarará, Cuba, built by workers’ voluntary labor, for treatment.

They received love and care from Cuban doctors and volunteers alike. “This kind of social support comes from the people, from individuals,” Julio Medina, director of the Tarará program, told the *Militant* in a September 2014 interview. “Those values are the product of the revolution and its policies, our way of life.”

Many of those evacuated from Chernobyl were housed in special complexes in Kiev. “In my building, a ‘Chernobyl’ building where 3,000 of us live, when a

sign goes up for a medical trip to Cuba, everybody wants to go,” Sasha Sirota, Lyubov’s son, told a Minnesota meeting in 1996.

The International Chernobyl Foundation in Kiev helped choose the sickest children to send for treatment. “The main Tarará miracle,” the group wrote last year, “is a genuine attitude for care, separated from the greed for money.”

The Soviet Union came apart about the same time the Tarará program began. Moscow slashed its trade and aid to Cuba. Even under these difficult conditions, which Cubans call the Special Period, the revolutionary government expanded the program to treat Ukrainian youth.

The new pro-capitalist government in Ukraine sought ties with Washington and the European Union. “At the United Nations, Ukraine joined the U.S. in voting against us on our human rights record,” Dr. Xenia Laurenti, deputy director of the Cuban program, said in a 2007 film on Chernobyl by Sic-Tv in Ukraine. “Had this been a political project, we would have broken off our relations.”

“But this is not political,” she said. “It’s an example of international solidarity.”

In 2012, under President Viktor Yanukovich, the Ukrainian government ended funding for transportation to Cuba, forcing the suspension of the Tarará program.

Yanukovich was overthrown by a mass popular movement known as the Maidan the next year. In the absence of a revolutionary working-class leadership, his pro-Moscow regime was replaced by a government led by President Petro Poroshenko, himself a multimillionaire.

An organization of medical personnel and victims of Chernobyl and others was formed in 2015 to urge the Ukrainian government to restart the treatment program. There are hundreds of young people on a waiting list to go to Tarará and the Cubans have pledged to help them.

With the goal of increasing profits for Ukrainian capitalists, and under pressure to adopt further anti-working-class “reforms” by the International Monetary Fund and Washington, the Poroshenko government has slashed social funds, including programs to aid victims of Chernobyl.

In 2015 the government stopped a school lunch program that fed 350,000 children, many in the 1,300 settlements near Chernobyl, the only sure source of food not affected by lingering radiation.

“I am ashamed to look people in the eye,” Valery Kashparov, head of the Ukrainian Institute of Agricultural Radiology, told Associated Press April 22.

Both the Stalinist government of the

## NY action demands freedom for Oscar López



Militant/Seth Galinsky

NEW YORK — This May will mark Oscar López’s 35th year in U.S. prisons on frame-up charges of “seditious conspiracy” for his activities in support of independence for Puerto Rico. The monthly protest here April 24 by 34 Women for Oscar was bigger than usual, including the participation of his daughter Clarisa López, center. Scores of passersby at Union Square took flyers for a June 20 protest at the United Nations that will be part of an international day of action demanding his freedom.

After chanting for 34 minutes — one for each year of his captivity — participants stayed for a special presentation. Lourdes García, far right, one of the organizers of 34 Women, introduced Socialist Workers Party leader Mary-Alice Waters, left. Last year Waters won a raffle for a sculpture of López carved out of wood by artist Jesús Mangual, standing in back.

“By passing on this beautiful bust to Oscar’s daughter, it can continue to be part of the fight for his freedom,” Waters said.

She noted that Fernando González, one of five Cuban revolutionaries who spent 16 years in prison in the U.S. for their defense of the Cuban Revolution, had shared a cell with López for several years. “If there’s anything I would call my best years in prison,” González told Waters in an interview after his release, “it would be those years with Oscar.” That interview is published in *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class*.

“A thousand thanks.” Clarisa López said, in accepting the sculpture. “Fernando is one of the kindest, most intelligent people I know. We have a date pending to drink coffee in Havana when Oscar is free.”

— SARA LOBMAN

Soviet Union in 1986 and the capitalist regime in power in Ukraine today cared nothing for the lives and conditions of the working class.

Groups such as Greenpeace and the Centre for Research on Globalization argue the problem at Chernobyl was nuclear power itself. They claim massive numbers of deaths were caused, some estimating as high as a million. They say the only way future Chernobyls can be prevented is shutting them all down, even if it means that millions in Africa, Latin America and Asia will be unable to gain access to electrification.

## Problem is what class rules

But nuclear power is neither good nor bad in itself. As Chernobyl proves, the question is who *controls* it in the interests of what social classes.

“The dangers of nuclear power are not an argument against its potential benefits in advancing electrification of the

world, but an argument *for* organizing the toilers to take power from the hands of the capitalist exploiters,” Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes wrote in “Our Politics Start with the World,” in *New Internationalist* no. 13.

Electrification opens the door to the extension of culture and deeper collaboration of working people across the world.

“The communist movement does not have ‘a position on nuclear power,’ for or against,” Barnes said. “We have a proletarian internationalist course to advance the revolutionary struggle for national liberation and socialism.”

The internationalist course of the Cuban Revolution toward thousands of Ukrainians in Tarará, embodied in the idea that Cuba doesn’t share what is “left over,” but all that it has, regardless of cost, shows that such a revolution can transform our class to make a world worth living in.

## Watch ‘Cuba and Chernobyl’ video

*Cuba and Chernobyl* (Chernóbil en nosotros), a 2006 Cuban TV documentary, tells the story of Cuba’s revolutionary internationalist program that provided medical care to more than 25,000 victims, the majority of them children, following the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine. In Spanish with English subtitles. It can be viewed on the *Militant* website — [www.themilitant.com](http://www.themilitant.com) — or ordered on DVD for \$7 from the Militant, 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018, or email: [themilitant@mac.com](mailto:themilitant@mac.com).



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