

Readers close in on subscription drive goal

BY EMMA JOHNSON

“We went over the top!” wrote Katy LeRougetel from Montreal May 12. “We have another evening of door-to-door sales planned and three callback appointments to pick up subscriptions. We’re pushing to help go over the international goal.”

Going into the last few days of the five-week *Militant* subscription and books campaign ending May 14, supporters of the *Militant* have 130 more subscriptions to go to hit the 1,800 goal. During the last week supporters signed up more than 400 readers, taking working-class politics onto doorsteps in cities and rural areas, as well as to picket lines, political events and social protests.

Félix Vincent Ardea and Beverly Bernardo sold four subscriptions as they participated in a 300-strong postal workers march in Montreal against the threatened end of home letter de-

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Spring ‘Militant’ subscription campaign April 5 - May 14 (week 5)

Country	quota	sold	%	Should be
UNITED STATES				1670
Seattle	100	110	110%	
Los Angeles	115	119	103%	
Des Moines	85	87	102%	
Philadelphia	80	81	101%	
San Francisco	110	111	101%	
Houston	50	50	100%	
Twin Cities	100	99	99%	
Miami	65	64	98%	
Omaha/Lincoln	120	118	98%	
Chicago	75	72	96%	
Atlanta*	100	94	94%	
Boston	40	35	88%	
New York	300	224	75%	
Washington	75	56	75%	
Total U.S.	1415	1320	93%	
PRISONERS	10	20	200%	
UNITED KINGDOM				
London	100	100	100%	
Manchester	65	66	102%	
UK Total	165	166	101%	
CANADA	65	69	106%	
NEW ZEALAND	50	45	90%	
AUSTRALIA	50	50	100%	
Total	1755	1670	93%	
Should be	1800	1710	95%	
*Raised goal				

*Raised goal

UK authorities ban inmates from receiving books, parcels

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

LONDON — The United Kingdom’s Justice Ministry issued new regulations in November 2013 banning prisoners from receiving almost any parcels from friends and rela-

**DEFEND PRISONERS’ RIGHTS!
NO TO BOOK BANNING!**
— See statement, p. 9

tives. The major change, signed by Justice Secretary Chris Grayling, was implemented without publicity as an administrative “shakeup” of the “Incentive and Earned Privileges” system.

The fact that new rules prevented prisoners from receiving books came to public attention in a March 23 article by Frances Crook, chief executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform. “Book banning is in some ways the most despicable and nastiest element of the new rules,” Crook wrote.

Grayling has defended the ban on parcels as necessary to prevent “drugs

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Workers defend Ukraine in face of fraudulent vote

Respond to thug attacks by secessionist minority



Independent Trade Union of Coal Miners of Ukraine

May 11 march in Kriviy Rih by miners demanding higher wages. Miners’ union has also joined demonstrations in support of Ukraine sovereignty and organized self-defense units.

BY JOHN STUDER

Miners and other workers across eastern Ukraine continue to mobilize in defense of the country’s sovereignty in face of ongoing interference by the Russian government, highlighted May 11 by a fraudulent “people’s referendum” calling for secession from Ukraine.

The May 11 vote was organized by small groups of heavily armed paramilitary units. These forces have

seized Ukrainian government, military and police facilities in roughly a dozen cities in Donetsk and Luhansk provinces and employed kidnappings, beatings and murder to intimidate working people.

“The activities of trade union organizations have become considerably hampered because of intimidation and physical violence against trade union activists,” Mikhaïlo Volynets, president of the Independent Trade

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Demonstrations in Turkey respond to profit-driven slaughter of miners



Reuters

Protest in Ankara, Turkey, May 14 over mine disaster in Soma, blaming government for disregard for safety. Banner says, “Government has to resign. What happened in Soma is not an accident, it was murder.” Protester is writing “murder” with a piece of coal.

BY EMMA JOHNSON

The Turkish government has confirmed that at least 238 coal miners were killed May 13 at the Soma mine, in the country’s western province of Manisa, and that rescue efforts were going on for another 120 trapped underground.

Most of the miners died from carbon monoxide poisoning after an explosion and fire at a power distribution unit in the mine. The mine employed

nearly 800 workers.

Workers and students across Turkey responded immediately.

“We extend the actions that are carried out in workplaces across Turkey today. At 9 a.m. on May 15 we are standing in silent homage for three minutes in all workplaces across Turkey. After three minutes we are initiating a work stoppage and marching to the Labor and Security Head Of-

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Prison art event in San Francisco draws new forces to back Cuban 5

BY ERIC SIMPSON

SAN FRANCISCO — A showing of Antonio Guerrero’s “I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived” prison paintings here May 4 drew together people from the working-class and historically African-American Bayview neighborhood, fighters for rights of immigrants and prisoners, unionists and students to learn about the U.S. government’s frame-up of the Cuban

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Oklahoma execution spurs opposition to death penalty

BY SETH GALINSKY

The botched execution by lethal injection of Clayton Lockett in Oklahoma April 29 has helped draw attention to the fight against the death penalty and put supporters of the barbaric practice on the defensive. It took 43 minutes for Lockett to die, clearly in agony. So far this year 20 people have been put to death in the U.S.

Lockett is at least the second botched execution in the U.S. this year. On Jan. 16 Dennis McGuire was executed by lethal injection in Ohio. His ordeal lasted 26 minutes.

Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin appointed Michael Thompson, her cabinet secretary for public safety, to investigate why the execution didn't go as planned.

U.S. prison officials have been experimenting with new drug concoctions since last year when U.S. and European pharmaceutical companies stopped selling a standard three-drug "cocktail" in the face of opposition to the death penalty.

Lockett was given a sedative, then drugs to stop respiration and the heart, the first time the new three-part poison had been used in the state.

"The investigation is a political move to try to wash the blood off her hands," Rev. Adam Leathers, co-chair of the Oklahoma Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, said in a phone interview May 12.

"From my standpoint even if the death penalty were perfect, flawless and painless and only done on terribly guilty people, I would still oppose it," Leathers said. "Why do we want to find the right way to do the wrong thing?"

Of the 54 people currently on Oklahoma's death row, 21 — 39 percent — are Black, 3 are Latino and 27 are Caucasian. Blacks make up less than 8 percent of the state's population. Nationally 34 percent of death row inmates are Black, and 56 percent are Caucasian.

"The system does not work fairly, justly for all people," Garland Pruitt, president of the Oklahoma NAACP, told the *Militant*, noting the disproportionate number of Blacks facing execution.

Oklahoma legislator Mike Christian, a supporter of the death penalty, told News9 that he doesn't care whether inmates are executed by injection, electric chair, firing squad, hanging, the guillotine or "being fed to the lions."

President Barack Obama told the press May 2 that he still supports the death penalty in cases such as "mass killings, the killings of children," but said there are "significant questions about how the death penalty is being applied."

Governor Fallin staged the April 29 execution as a major press event to win support for the death penalty. She had planned a double execution of men accused of heinous crimes, with Charles Warner scheduled to follow Lockett. Lockett was convicted of shooting a teenage girl and burying her alive.

It took 51 minutes for a phlebotomist to find a vein to hook up the intravenous line to Lockett. Finally they decided to hook the tubes to a vein in his groin.

"Let the execution begin!" announced prison warden Anita Trammell after the curtain to the death room was raised so that the witnesses could watch from an adjoining room.

It was soon clear things were not go-

Socialist candidate in Minn. backs Ukraine sovereignty



Militant/Diana Newberry

MINNEAPOLIS — "Working people the world over should stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine's fight for sovereignty," Frank Forrestal, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Minnesota, told 75 people here at a May 9 protest against the Russian government's interference in Ukraine. "Ukrainian toilers overthrew Moscow's puppet government of Viktor Yanukovich, opening up space to debate, discuss, organize and gain self-confidence."

"Moscow is worried that Russia's working people will follow the example of the mass uprising in Ukraine," said Forrestal, who took part in a March *Militant* reporting trip there. "The propertied rulers of Russia and Ukraine — as well as in Western Europe and America — fear the mobilization of working people."

"Workers in the U.S. and Western Europe should demand their governments provide unconditional economic aid, not more loans, and cancel Ukraine's debts," Forrestal said. "The Socialist Workers Party is opposed to imposing sanctions against Russia, as this will come down hardest on working people in Russia and play into Moscow's game of dividing Russian workers from workers of other nationalities and ethnic groups."

The demonstration was organized by Maidan Minnesota, and included a range of speakers, several of whom were recently in Ukraine and Crimea.

Participants picked up six subscriptions and 36 copies of the *Militant* along with Forrestal's campaign statement.

— TOM FISKE

ing right and Lockett began twitching, mumbling and writhing. According to CNN, Lockett got out the words "Man," "I'm not," and "something's wrong" before Trammell ordered the blinds lowered 16 minutes later. Prison officials said Lockett died of a heart attack 43 minutes after the first injection. Warner's killing was then suspended.

The conditions of imprisonment of death row inmates are themselves a form of cruel and unusual punishment, Lydia Polley, a former co-chair of the Oklahoma Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, told the *Militant*. She has been visiting Donald Grant, who has been on death row for the last eight years.

"The people on death row are never allowed any physical contact with visitors," Polley said. "I visit him through a very thick plate glass. It's cold in the winter, hot in the summer."

"They are in total isolation 23 hours a day, five days a week. On weekends they are isolated 24 hours a day," she said. "When they're on suicide watch, they wake them up every hour."

"The exercise yard is really just a small cell with plexiglass at the top, so if they're out between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., they might get some sunshine," Polley said. "But for Donald Grant, he's usually allowed in only before 5 a.m. He never sees sunlight."

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

THE MILITANT

Power of labor, women grows in Asia, Africa

The international working class is growing with the spread of capitalist exploitation throughout Asia and Africa. The 'Militant' covers the resulting labor battles and social transformations, including the fighting role of women being rapidly drawn into the workforce.



Reuters/Andrew Biraj

Bangladeshi garment workers protest May 1.

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Subscription campaign

Continued from front page

livery, while three other teams fanned out going door to door in the city.

Annette Kouri and John Steele visited Shajia, who subscribed last summer and had just returned from a month's visit to Bangladesh. "I was there at that demonstration!" she exclaimed when she saw the photo in the *Militant* of women garment workers marching in Dhaka May 1. She bought two copies of that issue and donated \$8 to the Militant Prisoners' Fund, which helps workers behind bars get the paper in the mail.

Eric Solovjovs and his wife Val, originally from Latvia, were among the participants in a May 9 action in Minneapolis against the Russian government's efforts to destabilize Ukraine. "It turns out they have been reading the *Militant* for more than a year," Frank Forrestal reported. "Eric got the sub at a labor protest supporting higher wages for janitors in front of Target."

Visits to 'Militant' readers win contributors for Fighting Fund

BY LEA SHERMAN

Supporters of the *Militant* are organizing in every area to win contributions to the Militant Fighting Fund.

At the end of the fourth week of the April 5-May 27 campaign to raise \$115,000, nearly \$56,000 has been received and put to good use to cover the expenses of publishing and distributing a weekly paper and make possible reporting trips to cover developments in working-class politics around the world, like the paper's recent trips to Ukraine, Egypt, Cuba, Lebanon, Mali and Burkina Faso.

Supporters of the socialist paper in Philadelphia have been getting together with other readers to talk about

"The paper is the only source of information I get that I trust," Eric Solovjovs said. "It's the best paper out there on what is going on in Ukraine."

"I think the whole system is broken," T.P. Dwyer, a retired Boeing worker said as he signed up for the *Militant* on his doorstep in Auburn, Washington, May 11. "The Democrats are as bad as the Republicans. They made promises about being for working people and as soon as they got elected they put more taxes on working people and small businesses and gave tax breaks to companies like Boeing."

"Three members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union renewed their subscriptions when we visited them," Edwin Fruit said from Seattle. Byron Jacobs was a leader of the longshoremen's fight against the union-busting lockout by EGT Corp. in 2011 and 2012. He was framed up on assault charges stemming from a peaceful

its coverage. "Talking through the political situation in Ukraine was a big help in clarifying those developments for me," retired Verizon worker Ginny Port told Janet Post. Port pledge \$200 to the fund.

To make a contribution, contact distributors on page 8 or send a check or money order to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018-2482.



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

"This newspaper talks about how working people can unite," Sadig Werah said as he signed up for *Militant* subscription after Jim Spaul came to his door in Edmonton, north London, May 5.

union protest and sentenced to 32 days in jail. He spent 36 hours in solitary confinement.

"I can relate to what these paintings show," he said when he looked at *I Will Die the Way I've Lived*, a book with Antonio Guerrero's prison paintings depicting the conditions faced by the Cuban Five in solitary confinement. "While I was in solitary, they handcuffed me to a pole so I could hardly move. Guerrero reflects just what it is like in the hole."

The book is one of 11 on revolutionary politics from Pathfinder Press on special offer with a subscription (see ad below).

Four people decided to try the introductory offer and two others renewed in connection with another showing in support of the Cuban 5 at the Bayview

library in San Francisco May 4 (see article on front page).

"One was to an artist who called out from her second-story window when she recognized me as several of us walking to the event," Joel Britton reported May 5. "She had gotten a single issue a few days earlier and came downstairs with her \$5. Later, she joined us for the exhibit."

The final scoreboard — counting all subscriptions sent in by 9 a.m. EDT May 15 — will be printed in next week's issue.

Check us out online!
TheMilitant.com

Special offers with 'Militant' subscription

Militant Fighting Fund			
April 5 - May 27 (week 4)			
Country	Quota	Paid	%
UNITED STATES			
Los Angeles	\$8,000	\$5,702	71%
Atlanta	\$8,600	\$5,017	58%
Miami	\$2,800	\$1,572	56%
Des Moines	\$2,800	\$1,550	55%
San Francisco	\$13,500	\$7,406	55%
Boston	\$3,500	\$1,675	48%
Washington	\$7,800	\$3,105	40%
Chicago	\$9,500	\$3,570	38%
New York	\$19,000	\$7,050	37%
Omaha/Lincoln	\$2,700	\$899	33%
Twin Cities	\$6,500	\$2,010	31%
Seattle	\$8,400	\$2,570	31%
Houston	\$3,500	\$840	24%
Philadelphia	\$3,800	\$866	23%
Other		\$850	
Total U.S.	\$100,400	\$44,682	45%
CANADA	\$7,000	\$4,560	65%
NEW ZEALAND	\$5,000	\$3,020	60%
AUSTRALIA	\$1,500	\$1,440	96%
UNITED KINGDOM			
London	\$2,000	\$1,300	65%
Manchester	\$750	\$780	104%
Total UK	\$2,750	\$2,080	76%
France	\$400	\$200	50%
Total	\$117,050	\$55,982	49%
Should be	\$115,000	\$65,714	57%



Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power
by Jack Barnes
\$10 with subscription(regular \$20)

The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning
The Fraud of Education Reform Under Capitalism
by Jack Barnes
\$2 with subscription (regular \$3)

Women in Cuba
The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution
by Vilma Espín, Asela de los Santos, Yolanda Ferrer
\$10 with subscription (regular \$20)

Women and Revolution
The Living Example of the Cuban Revolution
by Asela de los Santos, Mary-Alice Waters and others
\$3 with subscription (regular \$7)

Los cosméticos, las modas, y la explotación de la mujer
(Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women)
by Joseph Hansen, Evelyn Reed, Mary-Alice Waters
\$10 with subscription (regular \$15)



The Cuban Five
Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free
from pages of the 'Militant'
\$3 with subscription (regular \$5)

Cuba and Angola
Fighting for Africa's Freedom and Our Own
by Nelson Mandela, Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro; Cuban generals; Gabriel García Márquez
\$6 with subscription(regular \$12)

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Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions
by Jack Barnes
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Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?
A Necessary Debate
by Mary-Alice Waters
\$5 with subscription (regular \$7)

We Are Heirs of the World's Revolutions
by Thomas Sankara
Speeches from the Burkina Faso Revolution 1983-87
\$5 with subscription (regular \$10)

Thomas Sankara Speaks
The Burkina Faso Revolution 1983-1987
\$10 with subscription (regular \$24)

SF event: ‘Free Cuban 5!’

Continued from front page
Five and the international fight to free them.

Guerrero’s 15 watercolors tell the story of the first months the Cuban Five spent in the “hole” in Miami’s Federal Detention Center, awaiting trial on trumped-up charges that included conspiracy to commit espionage. (See “Who Are the Cuban Five below.”)

Welcomed by Beverly Hayes, branch manager of the Bayview library, which sponsored the meeting, the crowd overflowed the library’s community room. More than 80 people attended the event, which included a panel of speakers.

“I have two children in prison,” Guillermina Castellanos, a leader of La Colectiva de Mujeres, an organization of home cleaners and caregivers, told the crowd. She wanted to be part of the event, she said, “to focus attention on the broken prison system and to fight for our Cuban brothers.”

“The fight for the rights of immigrants is my life,” Castellanos said. “When I was in Washington, D.C., as part of a two-day hunger strike, I was struck by how many children are on the verge of being deported, traumatized psychologically, in tears because of their experiences. They are criminalizing our husbands, deporting them for minor traffic infractions.”

Referring to a video of interviews with wives of the Cuban Five that was recently shown at a meeting of La Colectiva de Mujeres, Castellanos said, “We were impacted by the courage and strength of these women. Immigrant families know what the case of the Cuban Five is about.”

Tamika Chenier, program director of the African American Art and Culture Complex, said that after reading about the Five in the book *Voices From Prison: The Cuban Five* and elsewhere, she was “inspired by their solidarity, their willingness after so many years to never give up.” At the art center, “we teach the importance of telling your story through art,” she said. “The stories behind these

images have so much meaning. We must encourage people to read more about the case and organize more exhibits of the watercolors.

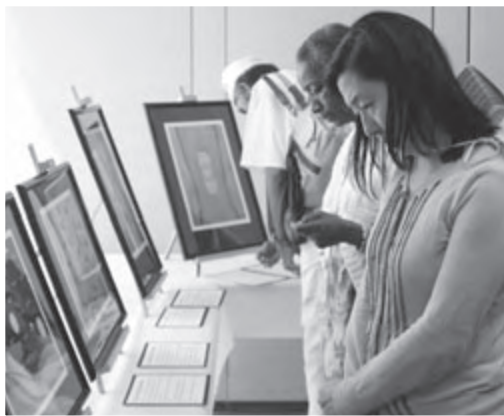
“During their 15 years in jail the Five have become part of the struggles waged by workers caught up in the prison system here in the U.S., said Betsey Stone, a member of the Socialist Workers Party who has covered for the *Militant* the recent hunger strikes by prisoners in California against solitary confinement and other abuses. “Many might wonder what the title of this exhibit means, ‘I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived.’ The Five are products of the Cuban Revolution, and they are saying they will remain what they have been — revolutionaries.”

“We need to believe in the union, like the Cuban Five believe in each other,” said Richard Kuan, an organizer for UNITE HERE Local 2. “The Cuban Five stick together. They know they were wrongfully convicted and know that they can last one day longer than the authorities.”

Jose Guerra, a janitor and member of Service Employees International Union Local 87, said after the meeting that he liked the link the speakers made between the immigration system and the Cuban Five. “In our union, 800 people



Militant photos by Ellen Hayward
Above, Tamika Chenier, program director of African American Art and Culture Complex, speaks at showing of prison paintings by Antonio Guerrero, one of Cuban Five, at Bayview library in San Francisco, May 4. To her right are chairperson Willie Cotton and translator Miguel Pendas. Inset, participants view paintings.



were taken out of work by ‘E-Verify’ two years ago.”

Several students came from Skyline College with their Spanish teacher. “The U.S. court system is becoming more and more conservative — like the secret courts,” said David Latt, 20, a student from Myanmar.

“I feel that here, today, we are seeing

the truth,” Luis Ortiz, 29, a warehouse worker, told the *Militant*. “The media and newspapers don’t tell us the truth about what’s going on. This exhibit is good. People need to stand up.”

Coal miners killed in Turkey

Continued from front page
fices in the provinces,” said a May 14 statement from four unions, including the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) and the Confederation of Public Employees’ Trade Unions (KESK), two of the largest organizing miners, industrial workers and public employees.

According to DISK, the government has deployed hundreds of military troops and police forces to Soma and the nearby miners’ village of Eynes to head off protests.

In Ankara, some 800 students tried to march to the Energy Ministry May 14, but were stopped by cops with tear gas and water cannons.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan traveled to Soma, where he held a

press conference May 14, saying for hundreds of years workers have died in the mines. “Take America with all of its technology and everything ... 361 miners died there in 1907,” he said. “These accidents are things which are always happening.”

Erdogan was booed by protesters, who called for the government to step down.

Erdogan needn’t have gone back to 1907 to find miners killed in the U.S. Eric Legg, 48, and Gary Hensley, 46, were killed May 12 in Wharton, West Virginia, in a coal outburst — a violent ejection of coal — during especially dangerous retreat mining in Patriot Coal Corp.’s Brody mine, which has a long history of federal citations for serious safety violations.

Exhibits of paintings by Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five I Will Die the Way I’ve Lived

Omaha, Nebraska

May 17
Malcolm X Center, 3448 Evans St.

June 4-7
Gallery 72, 1806 Vinton St. Reception, Wed., June 4, 7PM. Gallery Talk, Sat., June 7, 1PM

June 8-14
McFoster’s Natural Kind Café, 302 S. 38th St.

New York

May 3-17
Jackie Robinson Center, 110 E. 129th St., Manhattan. Exhibit hours: Mon.-Fri. 7-9PM. Sat. 12-5PM. Closing program, Sat., May 17, 12-3PM. Tel.: (212) 348-7900.

Washington, D.C.

May 17
Showing 6-9PM, program at 7PM. Westminster Presbyterian Church, 400 I St SW. Tel: (202) 641-8220

Montreal

May 5-24
Exhibit hours: Mon. 8AM-4PM, Tues., Wed. 8AM-7PM, Thurs., Fri. 8AM-8PM, Sat. 10AM-8PM. Café l’Artère, 7000 Ave. Du Parc Tel: (514) 232-1917.

Manchester, England

May 17-31
Opening event, Sat., May 17, 6PM. Exhibit hours: Mon.-Sat. 9AM-5PM. Moston Miners Community Arts and Music Centre, Teddington Road, Moston. Tel.: 0161 682 6253.

London

June 15-July 13
Bernie Grant Arts Centre. Town Hall Approach Road, Tottenham.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

GEORGIA

Atlanta
Cosmetics, Fashions and the Exploitation of Women. Speaker: Lisa Potash, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., May 16, 7:30 p.m. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel.: (678) 528-7828.

IOWA

Des Moines
The Working Class and the Fight Against Jew Hatred. Speaker: Helen Meyers, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., May 23, 7:30 p.m. 3707 Douglas Ave. Tel.: (515) 707-1779.

NEBRASKA

Omaha
Their Morals and Ours: The Working Class Should Fight Against the Death Penalty. Fri., May 23, 7:30 p.m. 3302 Q St., 2nd Floor. Tel.: (402) 779-7697.

CANADA

Montreal
Defend Public Services: The Postal Workers’ Fight to Maintain Home Delivery. Speakers: Félix Vincent Ardea and Annette Kouri, Communist League. Fri., May 23, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Room 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

Who are the Cuban Five?



Fernando González, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino and René González are Cuban revolutionaries who during the 1990s accepted assignments from the Cuban government to gather information on the operations and plans of Cuban-American paramilitary groups based in southern Florida. These rightist outfits, organizing on U.S. soil with virtual impunity, have a long record of carrying out bombings, assassinations and other attacks, both against targets in Cuba and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in the United States, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

On Sept. 12, 1998, the Five were arrested by the FBI. They were framed up and convicted on a variety of charges, which included acting as unregistered agents of the Cuban government and possession of false identity documents. Without a shred of evidence, three were charged with “conspiracy to gather and transmit national defense information.”

Hernández was also convicted of conspiracy to commit murder, based on the pretext that he bore responsibility for the Cuban government’s 1996 shoot-down of two Brothers to the Rescue aircraft that had invaded Cuban airspace in disregard of Havana’s repeated warnings. He is serving two life terms plus 15 years. His wife Adriana Pérez is barred from entering the United States.

René González returned to Cuba in May 2013. Fernando González returned Feb. 28.

Report shows bosses, gov't responsible for Texas blast

BY STEVE WARSHALL

HOUSTON — The explosion of 30 tons of ammonium nitrate that killed 15 people, injured another 226 and devastated the town of West, Texas, on April 17 last year “was preventable. It should never have occurred,” Rafael Moure-Eraso, chairman of the U.S. Chemical Safety Board, said at a press conference in Dallas April 22, announcing the federal agency’s preliminary conclusions on the disaster.

The report confirms what many area residents know firsthand: West Fertilizer Company and government agencies put maximizing profits ahead of the lives of working people.

West Fertilizer stored highly flammable ammonium nitrate in wooden bins inside a wooden warehouse, which is common throughout the country. “The building lacked a sprinkler system or

other systems to automatically detect or suppress fire,” the agency report said. The chemical was stored near “significant amounts of combustible seeds, which likely contributed to the intensity of the fire.”

Ammonium nitrate itself can be easily mixed with limestone that “practically eliminates any risk of explosion,” the agency said. This is a common practice in Europe, but not in the United States.

More than 10 years ago, the Chemical Safety Board recommended that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency issue regulations on the storage and handling of the chemical, but the two agencies have not taken any action, the report added. OSHA had not inspected the storage site since 1985.

The blast in West, a town of about 3,000 people in central Texas, occurred after workers had gone home for the day and a fire started in a warehouse.

The explosion registered 2.1 on the earthquake Richter scale and destroyed more than 150 homes, a nearby school, a nursing home and two other buildings. The area water supply was unusable for weeks. A majority of those killed were firefighters trying to put out the blaze, including one who was a worker at the plant.

Joe Pickett, chairman of the Texas House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security and Public Safety, told the *Houston Chronicle* he planned to introduce a bill on ammonium nitrate storage. He said it would not be “too onerous” and would not “step on too many toes.”



Texas Attorney General's Office

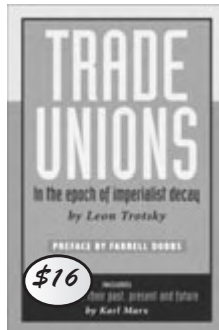
West, Texas, apartment complex destroyed by explosion from ammonium nitrate stored by West Fertilizer Company. Federal Chemical Safety Board says disaster was preventable but government and company didn't take most elementary safety measures to protect residents.

Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

by Leon Trotsky

Also “Trade Unions: Their Past, Present, and Future” by Karl Marx

Trade unions “must convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions.” — Marx



PathfinderPress.com

Steelworkers in Greece fight frame-up

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN AND NATASHA TERLEXI

ATHENS, Greece — “On April 9, 24 members of our union were convicted and sentenced to jail terms of between 21 and 23 months,” Panayotis Katsaros, a member of the Workers’ Union at Elliniki Halivourgia steel mill and a former leader of the nine-month strike there, told the *Militant* May 1. “The prosecution claimed that the strike was illegal because no secret ballot had been held at the onset.”

“Our strike against the company’s proposed wage cuts of 40 percent began in October 2011 and ended in July 2012, when the riot police stormed the picket line and arrested the six pickets at the gate,” said Sophia Roditi, who was a leader of the spouses’ auxiliary during the strike.

“The courts claim workers were ‘psychologically terrorized’ by pickets at the plant gate, that pickets violated their right to go to work,” said Katsaros. “This is an attack on the right to picket.”

“Since the court ruling we have launched an appeal and our co-workers are free until then,” said Roditi. “We have received many statements of solidarity from trade unions throughout the country, as well as from other countries, including from the PEO union federation in Cyprus, unions in India, coal miners in northern Spain and elsewhere.”

“The convictions and heavy prison sentences of the 24 steelworkers is inspired by the dogma of ‘law and order’ of the government of the employers,” said a

statement from the Union of Workers in Companies at the Athens International Airport. “This dogma was inaugurated in July of 2012 with the repression of the steelworkers’ strike by the riot police. It then continued with civil mobilizations [government back-to-work orders with threats of imprisonment] of public

transport workers and longshoremen, repression of farmers, and the intermittent banning of other strikes and demonstrations. ... The convictions are part of these other attacks designed to terrorize and criminalize workers’ struggles.”

Messages of solidarity can be sent to pame@pamehellas.gr

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 26, 1989

PANAMA CITY, Panama — Nearly 2,000 U.S. troops have arrived at Howard Air Force Base as Washington intensifies its drive to overthrow the government of Panama. The soldiers bring to 13,000 the number of GIs stationed here in violation of Panamanian sovereignty.

On May 15 at a news conference on Panamanian soil, U.S. Ambassador Arthur Davis called on “officers of the Defense Forces” of Panama to oust Gen. Manuel Noriega as their commander in chief.

U.S. President George Bush ordered 1,900 U.S. troops to Panama the next day, stating “I am concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens.” But no threats of violence or actual physical attacks on U.S. citizens have been reported here, even by the U.S. military television station Southern Command Network.



May 25, 1964

The U.S. is stepping up its anti-Cuba drive. The past week saw a new raid on Cuba’s coast, carried out by U.S.-armed, supplied and directed exiles. The U.S. press is playing up extravagant threats by these counter-revolutionary groups of more attacks on Cuba.

At the same time the U.S. Commerce Department imposed even tighter restrictions on shipment of food and medicines to Cuba, extending the embargo to these items, which in theory though not in fact, had previously been exempted.

Some people, taking State Department statements at face value, assume that raids like this are made by exiles “on their own” from points outside the U.S. However, a similar raid on Cuba’s north coast last Oct. 21 was exposed beyond doubt as a direct CIA operation from U.S. territory.



May 26, 1939

Two years ago this Memorial Day ten strikers fell dead under police bullets at Republic Steel’s South Chicago plant. Scores of their fellow-strikers were wounded.

They had come, several hundred of them, in peaceful parade to demonstrate their demand for union recognition.

That was two years ago. But the martyrs who lost their lives then in the workers’ cause are as fresh in our minds and hearts as though Memorial Day, 1937 were today. And lest we forget, every day of boss rule piles added horrors before us.

Against the armed might of bossdom, against the armed forces of fascist hatred, let us pit the organized ranks of working class militants, banded together in Workers Defense Guards, ready to defend workers’ lines from murderous assault.

Working class in Canada strengthened as decade

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE
AND BEVERLY BERNARDO

MONTREAL — For most of Canadian history, the owners of the mines, mills and factories have been able to foster divisions among working people based on systematic discrimination of the French-speaking majority in Quebec. Through decades of struggle, the working class in Canada has dealt major blows to this cornerstone of the rulers' divide-and-rule strategy. The suppression of language and culture and inequalities in employment, wages, education and health imposed on workers who are Quebecois have been largely overcome today. This has strengthened the prospects for independent working-class political action in Canada.

The progress made in the fight against national oppression and its impact on working people of all backgrounds was brought home April 7 when the governing Parti Québécois lost the provincial elections by a wide margin. Most workers, whether English-speaking, foreign-born or Quebecois, were turned off by the party's brazenly anti-working-class platform — which included an assault on the rights of immigrants and religious freedoms, couched in demagogic appeals to Quebecois nationalism. And many were repulsed by the party's lead candidate Pierre Karl Péladeau, a capitalist popularly known among working people as the “lockout king” for leading more than a dozen union-busting lockouts, including one that lasted 764 days against workers at *Journal de Montréal* in 2009-2011.

This historic strengthening of the working class in Canada has also reinforced the possibilities for building a revolutionary party rooted in the industrial working class across the country. This is the course charted over several decades by the Communist League in Canada, a party whose goal as stated in its constitution is the establishment of a “workers and farmers government, which will abolish capitalism in Canada and join the worldwide struggle for socialism.”

For more than a century and a half the ruling class in Canada has used the national oppression of the Quebecois to reap superprofits and pit workers whose first language was English against fellow workers who spoke French. Discrimination against French speakers in Quebec was institutionalized following



AP Photo/The Canadian Press, Darryl Dyck

Working class in Canada is stronger today as result of struggle over decades that has pushed back discrimination against Quebecois. **Top**, Truck drivers rally in Vancouver, British Columbia, March 21, during four-week strike that shut port there. **Bottom**, Workers at *Journal de Montréal* rally May 2010 against lockout by media company then owned by Pierre Karl Péladeau, Parti Québécois' lead candidate in April 7 provincial elections.

the defeat of a 1937-38 rebellion against British colonial domination by farmers and other working people in Ontario and Quebec.

In 1961 those who spoke French in Quebec had on average incomes 35 percent lower than English speakers, according to government figures. Quebecois had an average schooling of eight years, compared to 12 years for those who spoke English. There were two English-language universities in Montreal and only one in French. In the factories of Quebec the vast majority of workers were Quebecois, while bosses and management were English speakers. Union contracts were written in English, public signs were often only

in English. New immigrants would overwhelmingly send their children to English-speaking public schools, which usually enjoyed superior facilities.

The growing mass struggle for Black rights in the U.S., as well as the revolutions in Cuba, Algeria, and Vietnam had a big impact on workers and youth throughout Canada. Supporters of the Cuban Revolution organized defense committees and thousands marched to protest Ottawa's complicity in the Vietnam War and demand U.S. troops out.

Starting in the late 1960s in Canada, as in the United States, women began to organize to fight for their liberation — with the struggle for the right to choose abortion and repeal the federal anti-abortion law at the center of the campaign.

Struggles strengthened working class

Over the next two decades in Quebec, a movement that would grow to involve hundreds of thousands of workers and youth began to mobilize in the streets against the national oppression of Quebecois. Throughout the decade, hospital workers and teachers led strikes to win the right to unionize and better their conditions. In 1968, pre-university and university students occupied campuses for weeks, demanding the creation of a second French-language university in Montreal. The movement also found expression in factories and other workplaces. In September 1970, for example, some 2,300 workers at a GM plant near Montreal went on strike for better wages and the right to speak French at work.

In October 1970, the federal government seized on provocations by the Quebec Liberation Front (FLQ), an armed ultra-left pro-independence group, to move against the rising struggles in Quebec, which at the time included steps toward forming a labor party based on the unions in Montreal. In response to the FLQ's kidnapping of British Trade Commissioner James Cross and of Pierre Laporte, labor minister and vice-premier of Quebec, who was subsequently killed, the Canadian government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act and deployed 8,000 army troops to Montreal.

In response, large rallies took place in several cities across English Canada to demand the withdrawal of soldiers from Montreal and the release of more than 500 political prisoners — among them two members of the Ligue socialiste ouvrière/League for Socialist Action, the predecessor organization of the Communist League — rounded up without a warrant in thousands of raids by soldiers and cops. Under the military occupation, mobilizations of workers and students were banned. The military occupation of Quebec failed to quell the fight. In May 1972, a spontaneous general strike broke out across Quebec after three union leaders were imprisoned for refusing to obey a decree ordering back to work some 210,000 government workers on strike for a minimum wage of \$100 per week. It was the biggest union action in North America since the post-World War II strike wave.

Bosses' anti-worker offensive

By the mid-1970s, the long post-World War II capitalist economic boom had ended, prompting a new assault by bosses on the living standards and working conditions of working people throughout the country. These attacks provoked a response that drew English- and French-speaking workers together in common struggles, helping to break down national divisions and strengthen the confidence of working people of all backgrounds.

Workers took to the streets against the new system of wage controls imposed by the federal government limiting pay increases to less than inflation and effectively tearing apart union contracts. In 1976 up to a million workers throughout the country participated in a union-organized day of protest against the wage caps. In several industrial cities, such as Saint John, New Brunswick; Sept Îles, Quebec; Sudbury, Ontario; and Thompson, Manitoba; workers responded to the call for a one-day general strike.

In 1981, 100,000 people demonstrated in Ottawa in an action called by the Canadian Labour Congress against skyrocketing inflation and rising unemployment. As workers from Quebec marched across the Ottawa River bridge, cheers went up as workers from English Canada assembled on Parliament Hill greeted them enthusiastically.

In another powerful expression of working-class solidarity, in 1981 members of the United Steelworkers at Stelco steel in Hamilton, Ontario, refused to sign an agreement until bosses at the company's three smaller plants in Quebec agreed to terms with the union.



Workers in Saint John, New Brunswick, demonstrate Oct. 14, 1976, against federal government's wage freeze and demands that workers pay back some of their wages to companies. Similar mass labor protests occurred in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba that day.

es of struggle push back oppression of Quebecois

Because workers in Quebec were at the forefront of many of these labor battles, several pan-Canadian unions elected Quebecois to leadership positions.

The Quebecois' fight for their national rights continued throughout this period, leading to the election for the first time of the Quebec nationalist Parti Québécois in November 1976, one month after the countrywide protests against Ottawa's wage freeze. The first PQ government adopted a series of measures that codified the gains of the Quebecois struggle.

These include Law 101, which made French the language of work, government and law in Quebec; imposed French on signs; and enrolled children of new immigrants in French public schools. They also passed a law that made it illegal for bosses to hire scabs during labor conflicts.

And the PQ government refused to implement the federal anti-abortion law, strengthening the fight for woman's rights across the country and leading to the law's repeal in 1988.

The PQ organized two referendums on Quebec sovereignty in 1980 and 1995. In both cases, the three main union federations in Quebec took their campaign for the "yes" into workplaces throughout the province.

The prominent place of Quebecois workers in labor battles and their fight for national rights, which directly challenged the prerogatives of the capitalist owners, helped undercut the chauvinist anti-Quebec campaign waged by the Liberal Party government in Ottawa among workers across the country.

For example, in the months leading to the 1980 referendum vote, four major pan-Canadian unions — the United Autoworkers Union, the Steelworkers, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers — adopted resolutions recognizing Quebec's right to self-determination without interference by the federal government.

At the Canadian Labour Congress convention in May that year in Winnipeg, Manitoba, almost all delegates from Quebec wore the "oui" button pinned to their lapels. They were joined by many delegates from English Canada, who wore the buttons in solidarity with the fight against discrimination and in support for the Quebecois people's right to self-determination, including independence.

Both the 1980 and 1995 referendums were narrowly defeated. The close results and what they showed about the resolute struggle of the Quebecois shook up Canada's rulers and eventually led to concessions from the federal government, which included recognition in 2006 that Quebec constitutes a distinct nation within Canada.

Inequalities largely overcome

According to the 2006 census, the median income among French-speaking men was \$30,854, compared to \$27,008 for English speakers; the mean average is about \$4,000 higher for Anglophones. While English speakers still comprise a greater proportion of capitalists and highly paid professionals, the disparity in living standards among working people no longer exists. Dif-

ferences in average years of schooling have also largely been overcome.

Today, French is the common language of communication in Quebec. By 2006, nearly 70 percent of those whose first language is English also spoke French. As a result of these conquests and the self-confidence earned in struggle, English is no longer viewed as a language of oppression. Bilingualism among Quebecois is growing fast, particularly among young people.

In the 1960s communist workers in Canada, then members of the League for Socialist Action, threw themselves into the struggles developing in Quebec. After years of having an organized presence in Toronto and Vancouver, they opened a branch in Montreal in 1964 under the name of Ligue socialiste ouvrière, and began publishing a newspaper in French, *Lutte ouvrière* (Workers Struggle).

Shortly before the proclamation of the War Measures Act, the LSO/LSA included in its program the call for Quebec independence as thousands of workers and youth in the province were taking to the streets demanding their rights and winning support across the country. A door was opening that created new possibilities for the working class across Canada to come together in a common struggle for workers power.

Fusion strengthens workers party

In 1977, the LSO/LSA and three other revolutionary organizations — the Groupe marxiste révolutionnaire in Quebec, the Revolutionary Marxist Group in English Canada, and the pan-Canadian Young Socialists League/Ligue des jeunes socialistes — fused into a single new organization, the Revolutionary Workers League/Ligue ouvrière révolutionnaire. The fusion in Canada was part of a positive response by revolutionaries in North America in the late 1970s to increased openings to build proletarian parties, as labor struggles and changing attitudes among workers about the ability of capitalism to meet the needs of working people deepened around the world.

In the U.S. the Revolutionary Marxist Committee fused with the Socialist Workers Party in 1977. The fusion brought together two organizations determined to build a revolutionary proletarian party to fight for working-class political power in the United States. And three revolutionary workers parties also fused in Mexico.

The coming together of revolutionary forces in Canada was the result of growing common action in the fights of the working class, like the Oct. 14, 1976, cross-country Labor Day of Protest against Ottawa's wage freeze, and the deepening national struggle in Quebec.

In the years following its founding, the Revolutionary Workers League clarified that its goal was the establishment of a revolutionary workers government in Canada as part of a united



Militant/Lou Howort

Communist movement in North America was strengthened in 1977 by fusion of revolutionary proletarian organizations in Canada and U.S. Above, Socialist Workers Party convention in August 1977 welcomes members of Revolutionary Marxist Committee, standing at right. That same month in Canada, four organizations joined to form Revolutionary Workers League, predecessor of today's Communist League.

struggle for power by working people across the country against Ottawa, with the call for Quebec independence strengthening that fight.

As the international economic crisis spread beginning in the mid-1970s, the league decided in 1979 to organize the vast majority of its members to get jobs in basic industry in response to new opportunities to join in the battles of working people.

The perspective of building a revolutionary workers party with a presence across the whole country made it possible for communist workers to carry out unified political work with the same goals throughout Canada. This included solidarity with labor struggles, campaigning for Quebec's right to self-determination, supporting women's rights, defending the revolutions then unfolding in Grenada and Nicaragua, and circulating newspapers and books on revolutionary working-class politics.

At the beginning of the 1980s, with fights in Quebec still at the center of the class struggle in Canada, the Revolutionary Workers League decided to establish its political center in Montreal. Along with that decision, the party took several steps for a significant layer of leaders and cadres to become bilingual in English and French.

In the mid-1980s the party undertook a sustained program of publishing communist books in French, an effort

that became over time Pathfinder Press' stock of French-language titles.

In December 1989, the Revolutionary Workers League changed its name to the Communist League. It made that decision as the Stalinist regimes that had falsely claimed to represent the continuity of communism were collapsing in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But above all the name marks the progress over the previous decades in building a centralized countrywide organization — never before accomplished by the communist movement in Canada — of revolutionaries fighting for workers political power.

By rejecting, as working people recently did, the Parti Québécois' chauvinist, xenophobic campaign, workers in Quebec have shown that they won't be diverted by reactionary bourgeois demagoguery. The blows dealt to the capitalist rulers' ability to wield the club of discrimination against Quebecois has made it easier for working people in Canada to more clearly see their common interests as a class. The demand for independence is no longer needed to address an oppression that has been largely overcome.

This strengthening of the working class has opened new opportunities for revolutionary action, the building of a party of communist workers, and the fight for socialism in Canada and North America.



Supporters of women's rights from Ontario, Quebec, and across Canada demand right to abortion in Canadian capital Ottawa, February 1971. Responding to struggles in Quebec, provincial government refused in 1976 to implement federal anti-abortion law, fueling fight for its repeal.

Rosa Luxemburg: Marxism is revolutionary fight for power

Below is an excerpt from Mary-Alice Waters' introduction to *Reform or Revolution* by Rosa Luxemburg, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for May. Luxemburg, an outstanding Marxist of our epoch, polemicizes against the attempt by Eduard Bernstein, a central leader of the German Social Democratic Party, to revise Marxism. Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Reform or Revolution was Rosa Luxemburg's first major political work, and one of her most enduring. She herself rightly considered it the work by which she would earn her political spurs in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), and force the "old guard" to take her seriously as a political leader — despite the fact she was still in her twenties, a foreigner, and a woman.

Rosa left Switzerland, where she had recently completed her doctorate, and moved to Berlin in May 1898. Immediately she became embroiled in the growing battle over revisionism in the SPD.

During 1897–98, Eduard Bernstein published a series of articles in *Neue Zeit*, the theoretical organ of the SPD, in which he attempted to refute the basic tenets of scientific socialism, particularly the Marxist assertion that capital-



Rosa Luxemburg, inset, led fight for working-class internationalist course in German Social Democratic Party (SPD) against anti-Marxist program of SPD leader Eduard Bernstein, who advanced the idea that socialism could be achieved through gradual reform of capitalism. Above, anti-war rally of 100,000 in Berlin organized by SPD in 1910.



ism contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction, that it cannot maintain itself forever. He denied the materialist conception of history, the growing acuteness of capitalist contradictions, and the theory of class struggle. He concluded that revolution was not necessary, that socialism could be achieved by gradual reform of the capitalist system, through mechanisms like consumers' cooperatives, trade unions, and the gradual extension of political democracy. The SPD, he asserted, should be transformed from a party of social revolution into a party of social reforms. These ideas were further elaborated in his book, published in English under the title *Evolutionary Socialism*.

When Bernstein's articles began appearing, the leadership of the SPD did not take the controversy seriously. Bernstein was a close friend of the entire leadership of the party — August Bebel, Karl Kautsky, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Ignaz Auer, and others. He was one of the literary executors of Engels's estate, and a former editor of one of the SPD papers. Kautsky, the editor of *Neue Zeit*, thought highly of the articles and accepted them for publication. ...

The position held by the South Germans within the SPD was particularly significant. The SPD itself was formed in 1875 and outlawed by the government in 1878. Despite its illegal status it continued to grow rapidly and when

the antisocialist laws were repealed in 1890, the party emerged as an important, legal, political force with a significant representation in the federal Reichstag and various provincial legislatures. Under its leadership a powerful trade-union movement was built. In the International, the SPD was the unquestioned "great" party, the model looked up to by the whole International.

But the reformist current for which Bernstein became the theoretician began to develop early. During the prolonged period of European peace and relative prosperity at the end of the nineteenth century it found fertile soil in which to grow. One of its first overt manifestations was the policy of "South German exceptionalism."

The official SPD policy of "not a man nor a farthing for this system" was always translated into legislative action, on a federal level, by unconditional refusal to vote for any budgets which would tax the workers and peasants to sustain the tyranny of the German capitalist state, and maintain the courts, police and army of the rulers. But as early as 1891, SPD deputies in the provincial legislatures of Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, and Baden, pleading special conditions in southern Germany, voted for provincial budgets, arguing that since their vote was often decisive, they were thus able to use their political weight to force concessions and obtain a "better" bud-

get to maintain capitalism. While this practice was roundly condemned within the SPD, the myth of southern exceptionalism was maintained, and motions to forbid SPD delegates to vote for *any* budgets, whether federal, provincial, or local, were defeated at national congresses in 1894 and 1895. ...

The discussion continued within the party and Second International for a number of years. The SPD executive at first encouraged a theoretical discussion, maintaining an ambivalent position, but the practical implications of Bernstein's abandonment of a revolutionary perspective could not be ignored for long. One by one most of the major German and International leaders entered the battle against revisionism. The debate spread throughout the entire International.

At the party Congresses of 1901 and 1903, and at the International Congress of 1904, resolutions condemning the theoretical basis of revisionism were adopted. However, Bernstein, Vollmar and the other proponents of revisionism remained securely within the SPD; and the extent to which the defeat of revisionism remained a hollow victory, even at that early date, was indicated by the fact that Bernstein, who had not altered his views, himself voted for the resolutions condemning revisionism.

As Ignaz Auer, SPD secretary, wrote to Bernstein in 1899, "My dear Ede, one does not formally make a decision to do the things you suggest, one doesn't say such things, one simply does them."

Auer's formula was unwittingly followed by the majority of the SPD, as was demonstrated fifteen years later for all the world to see when the party formally voted to support its own imperialist government in World War I, a betrayal of the most elementary principles of proletarian internationalism and revolutionary Marxism.

As Rosa Luxemburg pointed out, the Bernstein controversy posed the question of "the very existence of the social democratic movement."

That she was among the first to realize this and sound the alarm would be sufficient to place Rosa Luxemburg in the revolutionary hall of fame, even if she had done nothing more of importance for the rest of her life.

May BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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STATEMENT BY ‘MILITANT’

Defend prisoners’ rights! No book ban!

The following is a May 14 letter by Doug Nelson, editor of the Militant, to Chris Grayling, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Justice.

The *Militant* calls on the United Kingdom Ministry of Justice to reverse its prohibition on sending parcels to prisoners, effectively banning all subscriptions to newspapers and magazines and sharply limiting the availability of books beyond whatever meager selections may exist in prison libraries. This arbitrary clampdown on basic liberties is nothing but another club in the hands of prison authorities to demoralize, dehumanize and crush the spirit of workers behind bars.

The *Militant* is joining the fight being waged against this attack by defenders of prisoners’ rights and democratic rights around the world — including English PEN, the Howard League for Penal Reform, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot, U.K. poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy, fighter for Kurdish rights Busra Ersanli and many others. This battle is part of a global struggle against “justice” under capitalism, dispensed by cops, court officials and jailers — from Russia to the U.S., from Turkey to the U.K.

Many workers behind bars respond to dehumanizing prison conditions by dedicating themselves to self-improvement through reading and study. This includes books on working-class struggles — the kind of books that prison authorities often label “extremist material,” which you say you don’t want prisoners to have. Self-driven learning by workers behind bars is the direct opposite of your insistence that prisoners “behave well and engage in their own rehabilitation” to earn “privileges.” This is double-speak for falling in line with the jailers’ organization of prison life, which is designed to corrode solidarity, dignity and a sense of self-worth.

The mass incarceration of working people in the U.S. has touched the lives of millions. It has spawned outrage against confessions extorted by torture and plea-bargain frame-ups. It has fueled

sympathy with hunger strikes by prisoners against abuses and indignities from California prisons to immigration jails in Washington. And it has created fertile ground for growing support to free the Cuban Five and other U.S. political prisoners. Similar struggles are taking place in the United Kingdom against killings in police custody and on-the-spot executions by cops in working-class neighborhoods.

The *Militant*, along with the *San Francisco Bay View*, *Prison Legal News* and *Prison Focus* — papers with a proud base of subscribers in U.S. prisons — have been part of a series of battles against attempts to deny prisoners the right to read what they want. These and other publications have faced censorship for news coverage of events that wardens don’t like, including the hunger strike waged by some 30,000 prisoners in California in 2013 against solitary confinement and other abuses. In some cases, prison authorities have sought to outright ban newspapers they don’t agree with, including the *Militant*, a socialist newsweekly that connects inmates to struggles of fellow working people outside prison walls.

Last fall the *Militant* — with support from the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, lawyers with the American Civil Liberties Union and others — forced prison authorities in Florida and Washington state to reverse censorship of the workers’ press and deliver impounded issues to subscribers behind bars. At the same time, supporters of democratic rights won a related victory that forced the Randolph County Board of Education in North Carolina to rescind its ban on Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* from school libraries. The ban lasted just nine days, and libraries and bookstores in the area couldn’t keep up with the demand for the classic.

The thought police of the U.S. prison and school system misjudged the sentiments of ordinary working people and their capacity to resist attacks on their most fundamental rights. I’m confident the book-banners in the U.K. Justice Ministry will find they’ve made the same mistake.

UK gov’t bans prisoners getting books

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and extremist materials” from reaching prisoners and to tighten the system of rewards and punishments. “We believe offenders need to behave well and engage in their own rehabilitation if they are to earn privileges and incentives,” he wrote March 24.

Robert Preece, the Howard League’s press officer, explained to the *Militant* that prisoners are now limited to buying books from a small handful of suppliers that make it on a list. Most can’t afford to do so, he said, because inmates are paid an average of £8 (\$13.50) a week for working in-prison jobs and funds sent from family and friends are sharply limited.

Deputy Prime Minister Nicholas Clegg supported the ban, saying people can still send books to prison libraries.

“The prison library is poorly stocked and trying to order an unstocked title can lead to a three-month wait,” Nicholas Jordan, a prisoner at HMP Oakwood wrote in a letter to *Inside Time*. “Though you usually get a slip back saying the title is ‘unavailable.’”

“Denying books is like torture,” Deb Maden told the *Militant* at a May 3 protest of some 50 people against the use of “joint enterprise” charges. Most participants were relatives of prisoners framed up on such charges, based on being an “associate” of someone convicted of a crime. The protest was organized by Joint Enterprise — Not Guilty by Association (JENGbA).

“They want to decide what you wear, what you read, everything in prison, it’s degrading,” Janet Cunliffe, whose son is serving 12 years on a joint enterprise conviction, said at a JENGbA-organized protest in Manchester the same day.

At the initiative of English PEN and the Howard

League, 80 writers, including poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy, Alan Bennett, Salman Rushdie, Ian McEwan and Nick Hornby, signed a March 26 letter of protest. “Books represent a lifeline behind bars,” the letter said, “a way of nourishing the mind and filling the many hours that prisoners spend locked in their cells.”

Duffy led a demonstration of writers and actors outside Pentonville Prison in North London March 28.

Well-known current and former prisoners from a number of countries joined the protest, writing to English PEN about their experiences reading and sharing books in prison.

“Books make up your entire world when you are a prisoner. Because you have books you know that every day you spend behind bars is not a day spent in vain,” wrote Nadezhda Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot who spent nearly two years in a Russian penal colony.

“Your interrogators try to convince you that over the next few years you will become no more than a rotting vegetable in a musty cell,” Tolokonnikova said. “But you spend each and every day of your prison life working on yourself, and this work, in my experience, is more intense, more productive than it would be if you were free. Why? From a need to resist.”

Others joining the fight include Iryna Khalip from Belarus, who was charged with organizing protests against President Aleksandr Lukashenko after his re-election in 2010; Busra Ersanli, a pro-Kurdish political activist in Turkey; Alan Shadrake, who was jailed in Singapore the day after the publication of a book critical of the judicial system; Teresa Toda, editor of a Basque pro-independence daily, jailed for six years by the Spanish government; and a number of others.

Ukraine sovereignty

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Union of Coal Miners of Ukraine, said May 8.

Even in areas under pro-secessionist groups’ control, there were very few voting stations. Armed groups were stationed near ballot boxes where one could vote on the question: “Do you support the act of self-rule of the Donetsk People’s Republic?” In Krasnoarmeisk *New York Times* reporter Andrew Kramer said a poster calling for rejection of the “European Jewish choice” was hung near the ballot box.

Ukrainian government officials and reporters like Kramer say that some 25 to 30 percent of people voted and that supporters of secession showed up with piles of photocopies of “yes” ballots. The commandos, who claimed to have counted the entire vote by nightfall, said the turnout was almost 100 percent for secession.

Meanwhile, demonstrations of thousands in favor of Ukrainian sovereignty have taken place in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Odessa and other eastern and southern cities in past weeks. A recent Pew opinion poll reported that 70 percent in eastern Ukraine favor keeping the country united while 18 percent favor secession.

To maintain an atmosphere of terror, armed thugs have assaulted and threatened unionists and other supporters of Ukrainian sovereignty. An armed squad appeared at the entrance to a coal mine in Makiivka and demanded workers take down their Ukrainian flag, threatening to throw explosives down the mine shaft. The miners sent out their self-defense unit and drove them off.

Olexander Vovk, a leader of the Independent Trade Union of Miners at the “Russia” mine in Novogrodivka, was kidnapped and tortured May 4. He was taken to a detention and torture section at the Donetsk Administration Building, where he met miners and others being held and beaten. Some have “disappeared.”

The Russian government propaganda machine has pumped out fantastic slanders against pro-Ukraine demonstrators as fascist. “What is happening at the moment is not simply marches praising Nazi criminals,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said May 7 about Ukraine, “this is the manifestation of fascism alive.” The last time Moscow’s efforts to smear working-class fighters as “fascists” hit this level was during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, when toilers there rose up and overthrew the Soviet-backed government of Matyas Rakosi — widely known as the “Stalin of Hungary” — fighting for a political revolution, workers’ councils and a return to the revolutionary policies of Lenin.

Miners demand ‘double our wages’

The miners union at the EVRAZ iron ore mine in the eastern city of Krivyi Rih has launched a fight to double the miners’ wages. The union joined protests in support of the overthrow of Moscow-backed former President Viktor Yanukovich and formed self-defense units to protect workers and government buildings.

A union leaflet points to the effect on workers’ wages of skyrocketing inflation while the profits of the company bosses in Russia have doubled over the year before. “We marched through the streets of Krivyi Rih and to mine owners’ offices shouting our wage demands,” Alexandr Bondar, a union leader at the mine, told the *Militant* by email May 12.

Self-proclaimed leaders of the “People’s Republics” in Donetsk and Luhansk announced they were calling for the Russian government to send troops to help them. But Russian President Vladimir Putin has responded cautiously. In an announcement the week before, he urged secessionist forces to put off their referendum and seek negotiations with Kiev. After they went ahead with the vote anyway and announced they had won, the Russian government said it “respects” the referendum and “welcomes all possible efforts to start negotiations between Kiev and separatist regions,” the *Wall Street Journal* reported May 12.

Putin’s government faces opposition to military intervention in Ukraine among Russian capitalists, concerned about capitalist stability and profits, and working people, who face their own struggles against attacks on their living standards and rights and are adverse to war. Russia’s international sales last year were smaller than the Netherlands and heavily dependent on exports of oil and gas, whose prices on the world market are falling.