

Cuba literacy fight veteran to tour US East Coast

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Supporters of the Cuban Revolution are taking advantage of the exciting opportunity to organize an East Coast tour for Griselda Aguilera Cabrera Jan. 31-Feb. 23. At the age of 7, Aguilera was the youngest participant in the revolution’s mass literacy campaign in 1961 that taught workers and peasants across the island how to read and write, eliminating illiteracy in less than year. She is featured in the documentary “Maestra” (Teacher), produced by Catherine Murphy, about the campaign. Murphy helped organize Aguilera’s trip to the U.S.

Tour stops are currently set for Boston; Hartford, Connecticut; New York; New Jersey; Washington, D.C.; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Miami.

Through Aguilera’s meetings hundreds of people will have the opportunity to learn more about Cuba’s socialist revolution and what a difference it makes when working people take political power for themselves.

Over 250,000 Cubans volunteered in the literacy effort. Some 100,000 of them were under the age of 18, the majority female. Many went into

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Frame-up of ranchers in Nevada thrown out

Government lied, withheld evidence, judge says



K.M. Cannon/Las Vegas Review-Journal via AP

From left, Carol Bundy, rancher Cliven Bundy, his lawyer Bret Whipple, and his son Ammon, in back in hat, leave Las Vegas court after judge ruled government can’t retry Cliven, Ammon and Ryan Bundy, as well as supporter Ryan Payne, because of prosecutors’ deliberate misconduct.

BY DENNIS RICHTER

LAS VEGAS — The frame-up of Cliven Bundy, his sons Ammon and Ryan, and supporter Ryan Payne, was tossed out by federal Judge Gloria Navarro Jan. 8. She made her ruling “with prejudice,” which means gov-

ernment prosecutors are barred from refiling charges.

The Portland *Oregonian* called the decision a “stunning blow to [the] government.”

Some 125 people packed the court-

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Weeks after lifting ban, Florida prisons censor ‘Militant’ again

BY SETH GALINSKY

Despite repeated rulings by the Florida prison system’s own Literature Review Committee overturning the impoundment of the *Militant*, prison officials at Charlotte Correctional Institution in Punta Gorda and at Santa Rosa Correctional Institution in Milton, Florida, have impounded another issue of the socialist weekly.

Several prisoners wrote in to inform the *Militant* that the Dec. 18 issue of the paper was censored. The notice they received says the article headlined “Join Fight to Overturn Ban Against ‘Militant’!” presents “a threat to the security, good order, or discipline of the correctional system or the safety of any person.” One of the notices complains the *Militant* article “promotes fight against censorship in Florida prisons.” In violation of Florida Department of Corrections rules, prison officials have not informed the *Militant* of the impoundments.

At least one prisoner so far has filed an appeal to overturn the ban.



Dec. 18 *Militant* impounded by Florida prison officials.

A new subscriber at Santa Rosa Correctional Institution wrote Dec. 25 to tell us the impounded *Militant* would have been his first issue. Prison officials “are committing police abuses against prisoners even to the point of death,” he said, pointing to news reports that a prisoner there was beaten to death.

“Florida’s prisons have long been considered among the most brutal in the nation,” the *Miami Herald* reported last year. “The elimination of parole dramatically increased the inmate population, especially swelling the ranks of older

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Puerto Rican protests say, ‘Stop abuse of the poor’

BY SETH GALINSKY

“The upper and middle class neighborhoods are getting electricity restored, but most poorer neighborhoods don’t have light,” Rufino Carrión told the *Militant* by phone Jan. 6 from Gurabo in the center of Puerto Rico. A few days before, Carrión, a pastor at a local church, organized a demonstration of dozens of residents of this small town to protest the slow pace of recovery efforts.

“I don’t blame the electrical workers,” Carrión said. “They have to do what their supervisors tell them. Sometimes they are working in a poor sector and they’re ordered to stop and go to a wealthier neighborhood.

“I stood up and organized the protest because nobody was doing anything for the people, no political party, no government official,” he said. “Enough already of the abuse of the poor!”

The protest in Gurabo is just one of many that have taken place across the island recently.

Protests were “really strong” at one of

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Working-class discontent continues to spread in Iran

BY TERRY EVANS

Protests by working people and youth rapidly spread to 80 cities and rural towns across Iran since Dec. 28. They began amid widespread frustration and anger among working people against rising prices, high unemployment and new government budget proposals that would have eliminated many subsidies for workers.

This working-class discontent came on top of mounting dissatisfaction with policies restricting political and individual rights and exacerbating class divisions in Iran. In a budget that hiked fuel prices 50 percent — now rescinded — and slashed subsidies for workers, President Hassan Rouhani also revealed increases in the vast amounts lavished on religious institutions that function as businesses filling the pockets of wealthy members of the ruling hierarchy.

The *New York Times* Jan. 2 cited a video interview with a protester who supported the 1979 revolution against the U.S.-backed shah of Iran and who himself was a veteran of Iran’s defensive war in the 1980s to stop U.S.-backed attacks by the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. What he is protesting today, he said, is “bribery, injustice, embezzlement. Who is accountable? Those living in palaces,

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Profit-driven retail buyouts threaten more bankruptcies

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

While the big-business media has boasted that retail sales were up during the 2017 holiday season — 3.8 percent higher than the year before — the crisis of the bosses in the retail

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Ukraine miners’ union leads fight for pay rise, faces attacks

Bitcoin speculation is driven by capitalist economic crisis

BY TERRY EVANS

For millions of working people forced to live paycheck to paycheck, the speculative mania gripping capitalist investors and middle-class wannabes scurrying to trade in bitcoins today is something out of another world.

Accelerating bitcoin sales, and the recent opening of bitcoin futures markets, drove a 17-fold price rise for the digital cryptocurrency in 2017, most coming in the last few months. In December alone its price doubled and then plunged 30 percent.

Created anonymously in 2008, bitcoin — an internet currency — was touted by its meritocratic inventors as a libertarian, transnational answer to the paper currencies printed by different capitalist ruling classes around the world. The owners of vastly expensive specialized computer hardware obtain bitcoins by contesting with each other to use programs that release the digital token into their accounts.

Like the parasitic layers involved in speculation on the stock market, or in other financial instruments, those engaged in the frenzied purchase of bitcoins share the delusion that while *they* have the digital tokens there will always be a greater fool willing to take them off their hands for more than they paid.

Paper currencies are made legal tender by government fiat. The dollar has not been exchangeable for a set amount of gold for decades. But the dollar’s value is backed by Washington’s predominant economic and military power. It is the

world’s currency. Such paper currencies are the means the capitalist rulers use to exchange commodities that workers produce, in order to turn a profit.

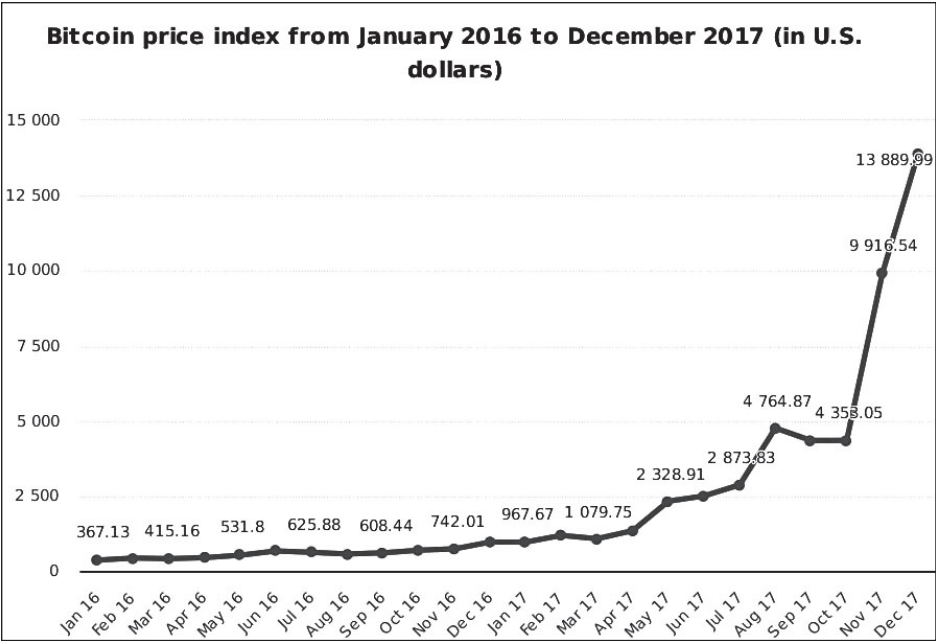
That isn’t true for bitcoin. It is not a step towards an international currency, free of the conflicting national interests that mark the capitalist economic system. While some dabblers in bitcoin use them to “buy” things in cyberspace, its main use today is as an object of speculation.

Growing numbers of capitalist investors, desperate not to miss out, are flocking to the bitcoin casino. Markets in bitcoin futures were recently sanctioned, the first opening in Chicago Dec. 10. Previously you could only profit by buying bitcoins and hoping they keep going up. Now you can profit by betting they’re going bust.

“Bitcoin is better than gold,” *Forbes* proclaimed, intoxicated with the hype. But unlike digital currencies, gold embodies value as a result of the labor workers put into mining and processing the precious metal. The high current price of bitcoins is an expression of market relations — and bubble hysteria — not of any intrinsic value.

Speculation in stocks and currencies is nothing new. Frederick Engels, a founder of the communist movement, described how “all nations characterized by the capitalist mode of production are periodically seized by fits of giddiness in which they try to accomplish the money-making without the mediation of the production process.”

The results of such giddiness are explained in “Capitalism’s Long Hot Win-



Speculative mania has driven spectacular price rise in bitcoins in 2017. Cryptocurrency bubble reflects efforts by propertied rich to make profits without investing in production and trade.

ter Has Begun,” in *New International* no. 12. Author, Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes, explains speculative bubbles are “a manifestation of what Marx called commodity fetishism, the illusion that commodities and capital somehow have a social meaning in their own right, independent of the social labor that went into creating them, a life of their own.”

For decades, as capitalist profit rates have tended to decline, the bosses have been plowing their cash into speculation — or hoarding — rather than investing in capacity-expanding plant equipment and employment. The bitcoin investment frenzy is just more of the same. And it sucks in those in the middle classes with a modicum of spare cash and a disregard for risk.

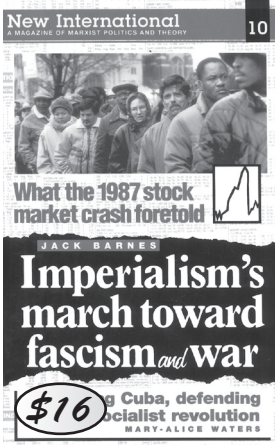
The speculative mania driving the soaring prices of the digital token is irrational. But so were past speculative bubbles blown up by capitalist investors, like the market in overvalued stocks today, financial instruments built on toxic subprime mortgage debt in 2007, and the Tulip Mania in the Netherlands in the early days of capitalist speculation in the mid-1630s.

The same stagnation in the rate of capitalist accumulation and profits that leads the propertied rich to chase after bitcoin also drives the rulers to go after the wages, dignity and rights of working people. They attack our jobs and pay, safety on the job and hard-won social benefits to boost their competitive edge

and their profits.

Workers today are looking for ways to stand up to these assaults, and to cut across the divisions among working people the bosses impose. As struggles develop in coming years, workers will have a chance to build a revolutionary movement that can lead millions to put an end to the crisis-ridden capitalist system. That’s what the Socialist Workers Party is all about.

In *New International* no. 10
What the 1987 Stock Market Crash Foretold
by Jack Barnes



The average profit rate in U.S. industry peaked in 1950. For the subsequent two decades a slow descent in the rate of profit was more than offset for the owners of industrial capital by huge growth in their mass of profits. By the 1960s this expansion

began to give way to a crisis of decelerating capital accumulation.

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The Militant

Vol. 82/No. 3

Closing news date: January 10, 2018

Editor: John Studer

Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Seth Galinsky, Emma Johnson, Jacob Perasso, Maggie Trowe, Brian Williams.

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

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

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Website: www.themilitant.com

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

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

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

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Fight in Chicago to overturn cop frame-ups makes gains

BY JOHN HAWKINS

CHICAGO — Two more frame-ups perpetrated by former Chicago Police Detective Reynaldo Guevara unraveled in court here Dec. 21 when Cook County prosecutors dropped charges against Gabriel Solache and Arturo Reyes in a 1998 double homicide.

Solache, 43, and Reyes, 45, who have been in prison for nearly two decades serving life sentences in the frame-up, have always maintained their innocence. They said Guevara beat them into making false confessions.

County Circuit Court Associate Judge James Obbish threw out their “confessions” Dec. 13. The Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office, which tries to paint itself as a friend of the wrongfully convicted, had fought to uphold the convictions, including giving Guevara immunity from prosecution in exchange for testifying again. Calling parts of Guevara’s testimony “bald-faced lies” — including his denial he beat Solache and Reyes into confessing — Obbish threw out their conviction.

Friends and family of Solache and Reyes were on hand at the Leighton Criminal Courthouse for the judge’s decision. Esther Hernandez, a leader of the Innocent Demand Justice Committee, and others demonstrated outside before the hearing.

“We’re out here today to support all the people who were framed by Detective Guevara,” Hernandez told the *Militant*. She is the mother of Juan and Rosendo Hernandez, who were railroaded to prison for murder and attempted murder in 1997. “I have two sons who were framed by Guevara, and there are over 51 other cases of people who he framed, a lot of them still in prison. We want the charges dropped against all these guys.

“We were out here last month to support Jose Maysonet,” she said. “And in the spring to support Jose Montanez and Armando Serrano, all of them were framed by Guevara.

“This is my passion and I won’t stop until I win the release of my sons and all the other men Guevara victimized,” Hernandez said.

But in a blow to the rights of Solache and Reyes, instead of being freed, the two frame-up victims were turned over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and are threatened with deportation.

Fight against frame-ups builds

The ruling throwing out the convictions of Solache and Reyes was one of a number of victories against cop frame-ups won here recently.

On Dec. 11 Kenneth Wadas, supervising judge of the Criminal Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County, threw out the murder conviction of John Velez. Prosecutors recommended the move after the cops’ main witness against Velez recanted her testimony, saying authorities forced her to lie.

Velez — who spent 16 years in prison for a murder he did not commit — was in federal prison in California, transferred there after staging a hunger strike to protest abusive conditions at Menard Correctional Center in southern Illinois.

That same day the Chicago City Council’s Finance Committee voted to authorize a \$31 million settlement for Michael Saunders, Vincent Thames, Harold Richardson and Terrill Swift, known as the Englewood Four. DNA evidence had cleared them of 1994 rape and murder charges in 2012.

They filed lawsuits accusing a Cook County prosecutor and several Chicago Police detectives of using “deceit, intimidation and threats” to force a confession from them.

This “is nice,” Swift told the press, “but it doesn’t make me whole and it doesn’t give me back what I lost.”

Betsy Farley contributed to this article.



Militant/Betsy Farley

Protesters at Chicago courthouse Dec. 13 demand charges be dropped against Gabriel Solache, Arturo Reyes and others framed up and sent to prison by former Police Detective Reynaldo Guevara. Second from right is Esther Hernandez, whose sons were railroaded to jail in 1997.

Profit-driven retail buyouts threaten bankruptcies

Continued from front page

industry continues to unfold as growing numbers of U.S. retail and apparel companies face increasing debt, bankruptcy and competition.

Moody’s rating agency reports that 26 major U.S. retail companies are on their “distressed list” — that is, their “junk” rating puts them at risk of default or bankruptcy. The list surpasses levels reached during the recession a decade ago. And it includes a wide variety of well-known companies from high-end Neiman Marcus Group to Sears Holdings, the supermarket chain Fairway, General Nutrition Centers, Payless Shoes and 99 Cents Only Stores. All retail outlets face stiffening competition from behemoths Walmart and Amazon today. But the crisis in retail that Moody’s details is a product of something else — the effects of the capitalist bosses’ crisis of declining production and trade. Facing a long-term decline in profit rates, the propertied families see no point in putting their capital into expanding productive capacity and jobs. Instead, they speculate on various forms of commercial paper, seeking higher returns.

In the retail sector they’ve sought to make a profit through issuing bonds to finance highly leveraged buyouts. While generating short-term gains for investors, this gambit saddles the newly pur-

chased retail chains with huge debts.

Part of the bet was that these outfits — many with a positive sales history — would continue to make money to service the debt. But recession conditions, coupled with heightened competition from the rise of Amazon and internet retail, has taken a toll.

According to the Dec. 29 *Financial Times*, “more than half of the largest leveraged retail buyouts completed since 2007 have either defaulted, gone bankrupt or are in distress.” Out of the 31 deals reviewed by the paper, 19 leveraged buyouts worth a combined \$43 billion are “in trouble.”

“Over the next two years,” the paper said, “\$68bn of US retail debt will fall due.”

In September Toys R Us, which has been in business for 70 years, declared bankruptcy. Private equity firms Bain Capital and KKR, and real estate group Vornado, took over ownership in a 2005 leveraged buyout, saddling the company with soaring debt levels.

In addition to Toys R Us, at least 50 other U.S. retailers filed for bankruptcy in 2017, the most in six years.

The hardest hit by the bankruptcy wave are the nearly 16 million workers employed in these stores. Growing numbers face job losses or cuts in hours, pay and benefits.

Nationwide, more than 5,000 retail store closures have been announced over the past year, including by Macy’s, Kohl’s, Kmart, J.C. Penney, Gap and Best Buy. Payless announced closure of about 500 of its shoe stores as it filed for bankruptcy.

Nearly \$6 billion in high-yield retail debt is set to fall due in 2018.

Sears Holdings Corp., which owns both Sears and Kmart stores, lost \$565 million during the first 10 months of 2017, bringing its cumulative losses since 2011 to \$11 billion. At the beginning of 2017, the company’s long-term debt stood at \$4.2 billion, twice as much as a year earlier. Company bosses gave up buying national TV ads during this year’s holiday season.

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North, South Korea hold talks as US sanctions press DPRK

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

For the first time since 2015, representatives of the North and South Korean governments met at the border village of Panmunjom Jan. 9, and “agreed to actively collaborate for the success” of the Winter Olympics taking place in South Korea in February, a joint press statement said.

Pyongyang agreed to send a sizable delegation, including athletes, cheerleaders, a cultural performance troupe and taekwondo demonstration team, along with high-level government officials.

“Officials in Seoul said they would consider temporarily lifting sanctions on certain officials” from North Korea, the *Financial Times* reported, “to allow the delegation to legally enter South Korea.”

The meeting was facilitated by the announcement from Seoul and the U.S. government that they had agreed to “postpone” yearly military exercises — named Foal Eagle and Key Resolve — that involve up to a quarter million troops in provocative practice runs for invading the North to “detect, defend, disrupt and destroy” military facilities there.

As part of announcing this decision, a White House statement said that President Donald Trump promised to send a substantial delegation to the Olympics, including members of his family.

Seoul reported the two Korean delegations discussed having their representatives march together in the Games’ opening ceremony. Further meetings to work out logistics, including how the North Korean delegation will come through the demilitarized zone dividing the country, are in the works.

Officials also agreed to hold military talks to reduce tensions, the two governments said in their joint statement, and to “facilitate contact, exchange and cooperation in diverse fields.”

A cross-border telephone hotline at the demilitarized zone was reopened Jan. 3 for the first time in 23 months. The majority of South Koreans support the moves, including Seoul covering travel expenses for the North Korean athletes and cheerleaders, the *Korea Herald* reported.

“Talks are a good thing!” tweeted Donald Trump Jan. 4. A couple days later he told reporters that he would “absolutely” be willing to talk on the phone with Kim Jong Un if circumstances were right.

While admitting that he has some differences with Washington, South Korean President Moon Jae-in Jan. 10 gave credit to the U.S. president and the “U.S.-led sanctions and pressure” for helping spark the talks with the North. The State Department said the U.S. would be interested in joining future talks, with the aim of denuclearizing the North.

Harsh sanctions imposed on NKorea

These developments occur as Washington has pushed through the U.N. Security Council ever stiffer sanctions against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea for its nuclear weapons and intercontinental missile programs. These economic attacks — which include banning DPRK exports of coal and sea products and curtailing employ-

ment of North Korean workers abroad — hit working people the hardest.

Washington has also been keeping up pressure on Beijing to cut trade with Pyongyang, the vast majority of whose trade is with China. While welcoming the joint Korean talks, Beijing continues to implement the U.N. sanctions it joined Washington in voting for.

The roots of the conflict go back 70 years when Washington, with agreement from Moscow, divided the Korean Peninsula. U.S. troops occupied southern Korea and installed the puppet regime of Syngman Rhee, crushing widespread revolutionary struggles in 1948.

After revolutionary mobilizations in the north led to the establishment of an independent government, U.S. troops invaded in 1950. As they neared the Chinese border, Beijing sent its army to join the North Koreans in repelling Washington’s advance. During the course of the war more than 4 million people were killed, including at least 2 million civilians. U.S. bombing flattened Pyongyang and other cities in the North. A cease-fire was signed in 1953, but the U.S. rulers to this day refuse to sign a peace treaty with the DPRK.

Since 1948 the Socialist Workers Party has campaigned for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the peninsula; for the fight of Korean workers and farmers for one, united Korea; and for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and Pacific.

Workers use bosses’ ‘blood money’ to build SWP

BY TERRY EVANS

“They give us this money to make us feel happy for one week,” a co-worker at a bag factory in upstate New York told Alonso Hernández after their boss doled out a small Christmas bonus. Hernández and Emily Barnett, another worker at the plant, told co-workers they were turning their bonus over to the Socialist Workers Party. “We’re glad it can be used to help build the party,” Hernández said.

Communist workers use the term blood money to describe production, attendance, safety and other “bonuses.” Bosses use these as bribes to discour-

Washington threatens to deport 200,000 Salvadorans



AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais

“We are here because of the misfortunes that the rulers of the United States have caused in our country,” Sara Ramírez, an organizer for Casa Maryland, told protesters in front of the White House Jan. 8, after the U.S. government announced it would be revoking Temporary Protected Status for nearly 200,000 Salvadoran immigrants. “We only came here to work. Why do you want to kick us out now and take away our right to live honorably in peace?”

Salvadorans with TPS status will have until Sept. 9, 2019, to leave the country or “seek an alternative lawful immigration status,” Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielson said announcing the cutoff. The delay will give Congress time to come up with a way for the Salvadorans to stay, she said. In November the U.S. government ended TPS for 50,000 Haitians, with a deadline of July 22, 2019, and for 2,500 Nicaraguans, who have a deadline of Jan. 5, 2019.

Temporary legal status was granted to Salvadorans after earthquakes devastated the country in 2001. The destruction exacerbated a social and economic crisis, a result of U.S.-backed dictatorial regimes that killed thousands of working people and an 11-year civil war that ended in 1992.

In September, President Donald Trump ordered the phasing out of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that protected some 800,000 youth from deportations and allowed them to work. Trump has called on Congress to pass legislation that would make the protection permanent, but only if it’s linked to his proposals for reducing “legal” immigration overall.

U.S. imperialism depends on maintaining millions of immigrants in pariah conditions — earning lower wages — to compete against its capitalist rivals.

— SETH GALINSKY

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Ukraine miners' union leads fight for pay rise, faces attacks

BY JOHN STUDER

Tens of thousands of iron ore miners and steelworkers toil in the industrial city of Kryvyi Rih in the center of Ukraine, working for ArcelorMittal, Evraz and other companies. For years they have fought to build and strengthen independent unions that can take on the bosses and their backers in the government.

Over the past year there have been a series of mine occupations and other protests, demanding payment of wage arrears, raises and safer working conditions. Last May members of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine (NPGU) at three of the main mines in Kryvyi Rih — Evraz Sukha Balka, ArcelorMittal and the Kryvyi Rih Iron Ore Combine — stayed underground and rallied in the streets for days until they won a 50 percent wage increase.

In an interview Dec. 31, Yuri Samoilov, head of the union in Kryvyi Rih, and Sergei Barabashuk, leader of the union at the Evraz mine, told the *Militant* that the union is growing and gaining respect in the region.

There have been a number of mine sit-ins and battles across the country, especially around unpaid wages. In October miners stayed underground, stopping production, at the “Rodinska” mine in Donetsk province, and went on strike at the “Volynvyhillia” mine on the Polish border in the far west.

Because of the difficult conditions miners face, and because of the role of the NPGU in leading fights for higher wages, there is growing support for the union in the region, Samoilov said.

This has led to attacks on the union by the bosses. At the “Ingulska” uranium mine in Kropyvnytskyi, northwest of Kryvyi Rih, 94 miners have been sued by the company after they stayed underground to demand a raise in November.

“The union has been involved in a growing number of strikes and court cases,” Barabashuk told the *Militant*. “We’re winning many of these fights.”

Because of this, Barabashuk has come under attack. After the May strike, he noticed that he was being followed. He was assaulted by a pro-company miner, who is still working there.

“The company put a camera up outside the union office in the mine,” he said. “They told me it was for my protection. But the fact is it takes pictures of every miner who comes to talk to me, to discuss moves against workers by management. We demand they take it away.”

Other workers report they have been searched and interrogated by bosses asking them about union activities and about Barabashuk. “We want to let workers around the world know about this, so we are in a better position to defend ourselves,” he said.

There is still a sizable miners’ union in Ukraine that was the official government union before the Stalinist regime in the country collapsed in 1990. “It tries to make things go smoothly for the bosses at Evraz and has made it harder for workers to fight,” Barabashuk said.

“There are 3,000 workers in the



Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine
Miners march in Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine, May Day 2017, part of fight to raise wages. Inset, Sergei Barabashuk, union leader at Evraz mine, faces attacks from bosses, their thugs.



mine,” he said. “A layer is newly hired, without previous experience with a union. The union explains we want to improve their lives. We say there are

thousands like them across Ukraine and around the world.

“We send our greetings to workers in the U.S.,” he said.

Frame-up of ranchers in Nevada is thrown out

Continued from front page

room and spilled out into the lobby of the federal courthouse here to celebrate with the Bundys, their fellow defendants and their families. They had been held in jail since early 2016.

The legal battle stems from April 2014 protests against federal agents who seized the Bundys’ cattle in Bunkerville, Nevada, threatening to put them out of business.

Hundreds of supporters mobilized and forced Bureau of Land Management and FBI agents to back down. They got support from across the state and beyond. Bonnie McDaniel told the *Militant* after the hearing that she and a group from Las Vegas “went to Walmart and bought underwear, clothes, food. We would clean out Walmart, then fill our van and go to Bunkerville to support them.”

Eight of 12 regular jurors and four alternates attended the hearing. Some had come to admire the ranchers and distrust the government.

“The last witness we had was a BLM ranger,” one juror told the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, “I don’t think her answers were very truthful at all.”

Judge Navarro pointed to “flagrant

misconduct” and “substantial prejudice” by the prosecutors and the FBI in not disclosing key evidence to the defense. “The government’s conduct in this case was indeed outrageous,” she said.

“I’m not used to being free, put it that way,” Cliven Bundy said outside the courthouse. “I’ve been a political prisoner for right at 700 days today. I came into this courtroom an innocent man and I’m going to leave as an innocent man.”

He stressed that the central issue in his fight is the rights of ranchers and farmers to have access to the land.

‘They fought tooth and nail’

“They fought tooth and nail for everything they got today. Nothing was just handed to them,” Kelli Stewart, a supporter from Oregon, told the crowd. “Had they not had a legal team and supporters out here they would have been run over in this courtroom.”

Stewart now believes that all those behind bars are getting a raw deal. “Everybody who is in jail at this point has not received a fair trial. As awful as it sounds to say, everybody needs to be set free,” she said. “They need due process, a jury of their peers, rep-

resentation of their choice, and they need a speedy trial.”

She pointed in particular to Dwight Hammond and his son Steven, Oregon ranchers who are in prison, railroaded by federal agents for setting two backfires on their ranch, to protect against an approaching wildfire and to destroy invasive juniper growth. They were framed on charges of “maliciously damaging” federal property and prosecuted under the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act.

“There were 53 ranchers in Clark County just a few years ago. There is only one left, Cliven Bundy. And he’s been sitting in prison for the last two years,” John Lamb told the crowd. He drove from Montana with his wife and 11 children to be at the hearing. “There are four more defendants still awaiting trial — Joel O’Shaughnessy, Jason Woods, Dave Bundy and Mel Bundy.”

Most Bundy supporters who’ve gone to trial in the last year were acquitted. Because of Navarro’s sweeping decision, those who were found guilty can file to have the convictions thrown out.

Ammon and Ryan Bundy were also acquitted in 2016 when federal agents brought charges against them for the 41-day standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. Protesters demanded release of the Hammonds.

“I have spent two years in prison on a lie,” Ammon Bundy told the *Militant*. “I’m not done fighting by any means.”

The day before the hearing Socialist Workers Party members went to Mesquite, near the Bundy ranch, to discuss with workers how they viewed the government’s frame-up case.

Ron Martinez, a steelworker for 30 years, had just moved to Mesquite from Golden, Colorado. “When I heard about the Bundys, I wondered why is this going on,” he said. “I have great admiration for these guys because of their stand. I wanted to visit them in jail.”

Knocking on doors in the Summer Winds apartment complex here, we found real interest in the *Militant* and its coverage of the Bundys’ fight. We sold one subscription and six single copies.

Deborah Liatos contributed to this article.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 22, 1993

CARDIFF, Wales — Amid jubilation by their supporters, three men framed up nearly five years ago, known as the Cardiff Three, were freed December 10 by the Court of Appeal in London. The three — Tony Paris, Yusef Abdullahi and Stephen Miller — had been sentenced to life for murder after the longest trial in British legal history.

The release of the Cardiff Three follows several other miscarriages of justice that have been overturned. In 1989 the Guildford Four, wrongfully convicted for a pub bombing in 1974, were freed after spending 14 years in prison. In 1991 the Birmingham Six, framed up for the murders of 21 people, were released.



January 22, 1968

WASHINGTON, D.C., Jan. 15 — Five thousand women marched and rallied here today, demanding that Congress resolve to end the war in Vietnam and “immediately arrange for the withdrawal of all American troops.”

Women came from 40 states, including Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Kentucky, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Many of the women had not been on antiwar demonstrations before.

In the afternoon, the women met in a “Congress of American Women” which consisted of a full program of reports and speakers. A number of younger women from New York and Chicago elected coordinators to organize women’s groups in their own regions.



January 23, 1943

After three weeks of the strike in the anthracite coal mines, President Roosevelt yesterday ordered the miners to return to work. His order contained a thinly veiled threat to use troops if the miners persisted in their strike to win a \$2 a day wage increase.

Three days before Roosevelt’s order the War Labor Board had ordered miners to return to work without guaranteeing them their wage demands. But the majority of the miners refused to comply.

The strike has been used by the anti-labor press and union busting-politicians and employers to whip up a reactionary crusade against labor. The miners’ strike is the most significant strike since the entrance of the U.S. into the war.

Activities in Cuba pay tribute to Antonio Maceo Brigade

‘It’s a big lie that all Cubans in the United States are opposed to the revolution’

BY STEVE WARSHALL
AND MARTIN KOPPEL

HAVANA — “Today we are celebrating 40 years of continuous activity” defending the Cuban Revolution in the United States, said Andrés Gómez, national coordinator of the Antonio Maceo Brigade. He was speaking at a Dec. 19 event here honoring the work of the brigade. Held at the headquarters of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), the celebration was attended by 150 people.

The meeting was part of a three-day program of activities for a delegation of nearly 50 members of the Antonio Maceo Brigade and the Alianza Martiana coalition. Most of them are Cubans living in the U.S. Two came from France.

The brigade is a Miami-based organization of Cubans founded in 1977 that opposes Washington’s hostile policies against the Cuban Revolution. Today it is part of the Alianza Martiana (Martí Alliance, after Cuban national hero José Martí), a coalition of Cuban groups formed in Miami in 2000.

Speaking at the ICAP-sponsored event, Gómez noted that over the years the brigade and Alianza Martiana have organized many public activities — including numerous car caravans through Cuban neighborhoods in Miami — as part of the fight to lift all U.S. sanctions against Cuba. Ending restrictions on travel by Cuban-Americans to visit their families has been an important part of that campaign.

The groups played an active role in the international campaign that by 2014 won the release of five Cuban revolutionaries framed up and imprisoned by Washington, known here as the Five Heroes. And they have persistently defended the right of opponents of U.S. government policies toward Cuba to gather publicly and speak out, defying physical attacks and threats by counter-revolutionary Cuban forces.

The Dec. 19 tribute to the Antonio Maceo Brigade was attended by a number of Cuban leaders and others who have worked with the organization over the years. Among them were four of the Five Heroes — Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González,

and René González, along with many of their family members.

Fernando González, who is today president of ICAP, noted that despite attacks by rightists, brigade members “have never wavered in their support to the revolution.” He said the group’s efforts to strengthen ties between Cubans abroad and on the island have helped reinforce the Cuban government’s approach “that our emigrants are an essential part of the Cuban homeland.”

The delegates took part in a range of events. These included a press conference, a visit to an elementary school and an exchange with students at the University of Havana, as well as conferences on the economic challenges the Cuban people face today, U.S.-Cuba relations, the Cuban leadership’s response to Hurricane Irma and the revolution’s advances in the development of medicines.

They took part in a ceremony at the monument to Antonio Maceo, a central leader of Cuba’s 19th century independence wars, who was black. They also visited the historic Colón cemetery to honor the memory of Brigade members, some of whom were murdered by counter-revolutionary Cuban groups, and other pro-revolution Cubans resident in the United States who are buried there.

Among the Cuban leaders who attended these events were José Ramón Balaguer, head of the Cuban Communist Party’s international relations department; Josefina Vidal, director of U.S. affairs at Cuba’s foreign ministry; and Ricardo Alarcón, former president of Cuba’s National Assembly and previously Cuban ambassador to the United Nations.

Groundbreaking 1977 visit to Cuba

At the Dec. 18 press conference opening the three-day program, Andrés Gómez described how the Antonio Maceo Brigade was born. “In December 1977 a group of 55 young Cubans living in the United States visited their homeland for the first time,” he said. “They were seeking the truth about Cuba that had been hidden from them.”

Most had been born in Cuba and taken to the U.S. as children in the first few



Cuban leader Raúl Castro, third from left, with members of Antonio Maceo Brigade during group’s 1978 visit to Cuba. Second from right is Vilma Espín, president of Federation of Cuban Women. To right of Castro is Carlos Muñiz Varela, murdered in Puerto Rico by Cuban counterrevolutionaries in 1979.

years after the January 1959 victory of the Cuban Revolution. Gómez himself was 13 when he arrived in Miami with his family in November 1960.

Growing up in the 1960s and early ’70s, they had been surrounded by propaganda against the Cuban Revolution peddled by the U.S. government and counter-revolutionary Cuban groups in Miami. But they were radicalized by the rising Black liberation and Puerto Rican independence struggles and expanding opposition to Washington’s war against the Vietnamese people.

They increasingly questioned the accuracy of the charges made against the revolution and wanted to see for themselves.

“Our enemies always tried to portray the entire Cuban émigré population as opposed to the revolution,” Alarcón said, addressing the event at the Maceo monument. “But that was a big lie.”

The revolutionary leadership’s initiative to invite a group of young Cubans from the U.S. to Havana — the first such visit since 1959 — also began to shatter preconceived ideas on the island about the Cuban-American population.

The newly formed brigade organized a second trip in 1978. Cuban President Fidel Castro launched a broader process the same year that became known as “the dialog” — conferences and other exchanges with Cubans living in the U.S. who yearned to visit their loved ones on the island and opposed U.S. sanctions.

“That’s how the Antonio Maceo Brigade was born,” Gómez said at the news conference. “It became a key organization in defense of the independence and freedom of the Cuban people and their revolutionary process. Today, 40 years later, we are returning to Cuba — a little weathered by time, but with the same zeal to defend Cuba.”

Work in Miami against US policy

Gómez noted that over time, the composition of Cuban emigration to the United States shifted and increasingly opposed Washington’s economic war against the revolution. This led to the founding of the Asso-

ciation of Workers in the Cuban Community (ATC), which by the early 1990s grew to hundreds of members, in their big majority working people. The ATC helped facilitate family visits to Cuba and organized actions in Miami in defiance of efforts at intimidation by a small minority of wealthy right-wing businessmen who had less and less of a political hold over the Cuban-American community.

Gómez said the Antonio Maceo Brigade and Alianza Martiana continue to fight to end U.S. travel restrictions. He pointed out that the current administration, while maintaining diplomat-

ic ties with Cuba that were restored in 2015, recently withdrew most of its embassy personnel from Havana, making it virtually impossible for Cubans to obtain visas to visit relatives in the United States.

Max Lesnik, a central leader of the Alianza Martiana and director of the internet-based Radio Miami, described some of the struggles the group has championed over its 17-year history. One of the first was the 1999-2000 fight to demand that Washington return Elián González to his father in Cuba. The child, picked up at sea after his mother drowned

Cuba’s response to hurricanes: ‘No one is abandoned’

HAVANA — During the Dec. 18-20 events here on the 40th anniversary of the Miami-based Antonio Maceo Brigade, delegates heard a special presentation on revolutionary Cuba’s response to Hurricane Irma. Col. Luis Angel Macareño, second in command of Cuba’s Civil Defense, explained that every time they face a dangerous storm, “our first priority is to protect people and their belongings, along with our country’s infrastructure and resources.” He reported that in Cuba there have been a total of only 66 deaths from 30 hurricanes and tropical storms over the last 20 years.

The U.S. visitors recalled that in contrast, more than 1,500 people died in Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Today in Puerto Rico, three months after Hurricane María, half the residents of the U.S. colony remain without electricity, and the real death toll is unknown — as the colonial authorities have tried to cover up the facts.

Macareño said Irma caused widespread destruction of housing, crops and infrastructure across much of Cuba. Ten people died, a higher number than usual given Cuba’s decades-long record. The recovery, however, was relatively rapid because millions of Cubans and their leadership were prepared and organized.

Before the hurricane, nearly 2 million people were evacuated to safer ground, mainly to homes of other families. Brigades of electrical workers, dispatched as soon as the storm subsided, restored most electrical power within a week. In areas where schools were damaged, many working people volunteered their homes to allow classes to continue uninterrupted. Although some hospitals and clinics were affected, the system of neighborhood-based family doctors ensured that no one lacked access to basic health care.

The government quickly made supplies available to working people to rebuild their homes. Families were charged only 50 percent of the normal cost for construction materials. Long-term, low-interest loans were provided on the spot to cover that expense so no immediate outlay was necessary. In addition, Cuba sent volunteers and aid to storm-devastated Caribbean neighbors.

The U.S. rulers refused Cuba’s offer to send a team of 39 doctors, crews of electrical workers and other volunteers to help in Puerto Rico.

“Our motto is to abide by Fidel’s words — no one here is ever abandoned,” Macareño said in concluding his presentation. The audience, mostly Florida residents who suffered the callous disregard of U.S. government agencies in the wake of Irma, responded with applause.

The reason Cuba is able to prevent a natural disaster from becoming a social disaster as happens in other countries, Macareño underlined, is that “we have a social system that allows us to do this” — that is, a socialist revolution in which working people hold state power.

— STEVE WARSHALL AND MARTÍN KOPPEL



Andrés Gómez, national coordinator of Antonio Maceo Brigade, speaks to students and teachers at Carlos Muñiz Varela School. Visit was part of three-day program in Cuba celebrating 40th anniversary of brigade.

trying to cross the Florida Straits in a small boat, was turned over to distant relatives in Miami. For months the U.S. government refused to return the boy, and Cuban-American rightists mobilized to try to prevent that from happening.

Elián González was finally reunited with his father and family thanks to the insistent demands of Cuba’s revolutionary government and mass demonstrations across the island.

Visit to Carlos Muñiz school

The delegation was invited to the Carlos Muñiz Varela school, in the small rural town of Ariguanabo, west of Havana. It’s named after a founding member of the Antonio Maceo Brigade who was gunned down in Puerto Rico by Cuban counterrevolutionaries in 1979 at the age of 25.

The visitors received a joyous welcome from the elementary and high school youth at the school, which was decked out in Puerto Rican and Cuban flags. Students offered performances of poems and songs on what they have

learned about the life of Muñiz Varela, who was born in Cuba, grew up in Puerto Rico, and became a defender of the Cuban Revolution and partisan of Puerto Rican independence.

Addressing the assembled students and teachers, Gómez pointed out that U.S. authorities have never prosecuted anyone for Muñiz’s assassination, despite evidence pointing to the culprits. The Antonio Maceo Brigade has consistently demanded the arrest of those responsible for that crime — as well as for other murderous attacks by right-wing Cuban groups in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Many members of the delegation lived through such violent assaults. For example, during the 1970s and ’80s Lesnik was editor of a magazine, *Réplica*, whose Miami offices were bombed 11 times.

‘We don’t compete, we cooperate’

One of the highlights of the three-day program was a visit to the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB), the largest of Cuba’s pharmaceutical research facilities. CIGB

researcher Manuel Raíces outlined some of the center’s achievements, including development of vaccines for hepatitis B and prostate cancer and a treatment for skin cancer. Another product, Heberprot-P, heals diabetic foot ulcers, sharply reducing the number of diabetic patients who have to undergo amputations.

In contrast with drug monopolies in capitalist countries, “what is most important to us is not to make money but to make medicine,” Raíces said. In the U.S. “there is fierce competition among research centers. In Cuba we share the results of our work and rely on cooperation.”

Raíces noted that because of Washington’s trade sanctions, none of the medicines produced in Cuba can be exported to the U.S. — where 30 million people are diabetic and 108,000 a year undergo amputations due to diabetic complications.

“My father was a building janitor in Miami and he developed skin cancer,” Edilia Gálvez, a member of the Alianza Martiana, said after the visit to the biotechnology center. “But he couldn’t afford an operation for three years. When he was finally able to get medical insurance, the doctors had to remove half his nose.

“That wouldn’t have happened in Cuba,” Gálvez said.

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Cuban literacy fight veteran to tour East Coast

Continued from front page
rural areas, living and working with the peasants — a real learning experience for both the poor farmers and the young literacy volunteers from the cities. And they did so in some areas facing armed counterrevolutionaries seeking to destroy the new government.

The literacy campaign was one of the major steps in the transformation of Cuban working people, enabling them to run their own country. It was implemented after the July 26 Movement led by Fidel Castro overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in January 1959.

Aguilera participated in the literacy effort in Havana, teaching Carlos Perez Isla, a 58-year-old street cleaner who was totally illiterate, how to read. She explains how they learned from each other.

Like the vast majority of the literacy volunteers, Aguilera became a firm supporter of the revolution. She became an adult educator in Cuba’s construction industry. Heading up the training department, she gave classes on the economic and cultural aspects of workers running industry in a socialist country. Topics included everything from how to expand productivity to benefit Cuba’s people to

health and safety on the job to how to work while maximizing protection of the environment. Learning about this can be a real education for workers in the U.S.

She also developed and coordinated the campaign for workers in the industry to reach first a sixth and then a ninth grade educational level.

“I’m super excited about this tour,” Samir Hazboun from Knoxville told the *Militant* in a phone interview Jan. 5. Through the literacy campaign, “those growing up in cities learned about how hard it was to live in the countryside and helped bridge these two worlds.”

Hazboun is helping set up an event for Aguilera to speak at the Communications Workers of America hall there. “The union is restarting an education series so they’re pretty excited about it,” he said. Hazboun is also working with a professor to set up a meeting at the University of Tennessee.

“The tour can help build participation in the upcoming May Day brigade to Cuba,” he said. Hazboun joined the



Griselda Aguilera speaks at tour event in Chicago.

“In the Footsteps of Che” Cuban brigade last October. “People of all walks of life are hungry to learn about Cuba, to learn about what an alternative to capitalism can look like.”

Film showings of “Maestra” will be included in tour events.

For more information on the tour, contact Ike Nahem at (917) 887-8710, or email: ikenahem@mindspring.com.

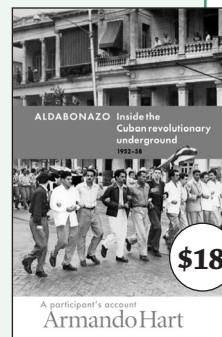
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Amnesty now! No more deportations!

The U.S. government is taking measures to eliminate federal programs that could lead to deportation of more than a million immigrant workers and youth, many who have lived in the U.S. for decades.

Over the last couple months, the Department of Homeland Security has announced that over the next 18 months it will end Temporary Protected Status for hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans, Haitians and Nicaraguans.

In November President Donald Trump announced phasing out Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which prevents deportation of some 800,000 youth.

The White House is using these moves as bargaining chips to win a bipartisan “reform” that would tighten control of the inflow of immigrant labor.

Deportations are not popular in the working class. U.S.- and foreign-born workers toil together in the same factories, mines and other workplaces. We live on the same streets. And we confront the same attacks by the bosses and their government against our jobs,

wages and working conditions.

Democratic and Republican administrations alike turn immigration and deportations on and off to meet the needs of the employing class. They always maintain a section of workers without legal papers, to intimidate them, increase competition for jobs and drive down the wages for *all* workers.

As part of their divide-and-rule strategy the propertied rulers pit those with papers against those without, employed against unemployed, men against women, Black against Latino against Caucasian against Asian.

The Socialist Workers Party campaigns for workers to fight for “Amnesty for immigrants now! No more deportations!” Not just those with Temporary Protected Status, or for “dreamers,” but for *all* immigrants living here today.

This is a life-and-death question for uniting the working class and building strong, effective unions, to defend our class interests and opening the road to fight to take power out of the hands of the capitalist class.

Puerto Rico protests: ‘Stop abuse of poor’

Continued from front page

the public housing complexes, Ivan Vargas, a member of the union at the Aqueduct and Sewer Authority, said by phone from Mayagüez Jan. 5. “Not only didn’t they have electricity, housing authorities wouldn’t let them use gas stoves, saying it was too dangerous. Residents there don’t have money to eat out every day.” After several demonstrations they finally got power restored.

More than three months after Hurricane Maria ravaged the U.S. colony more than a million people are still without power.

Electrical workers at the state-owned power company are working overtime, Sundays and holidays, Ángel Figueroa Jaramillo, president of the electrical workers union UTIER, said Jan. 5. Less than half the 50,000 poles needed to restrung electrical cables and less than half the 6,500 miles of cable needed have arrived from the U.S.

And the U.S. government has refused to respond to the offer of revolutionary Cuba to send four brigades of electrical workers to pitch in.

“They even rejected the offer of Mexico to send workers,” Jaramillo said.

The crisis in Puerto Rico — and in the U.S. colony of the Virgin Islands — flows from more than 100 years of U.S. colonial exploitation of the island’s people and resources. Intertwined with this, today’s worldwide capitalist economic crisis has meant that production in Puerto Rico has dropped almost every year since 2006.

Pushed by Washington, the Puerto Rican government made paying its \$74 billion debt to capitalist bondholders its top priority, while laying off tens of thousands of public workers, cutting pensions, raising

sales taxes, closing schools and skimping on maintenance of the electrical grid. Under legislation passed by the U.S. Congress last year, the Puerto Rican government has declared bankruptcy and its economy was placed under the control of an all-powerful board, appointed by President Barack Obama.

U.S. District Court Judge Laura Taylor Swain, who oversees Puerto Rico’s bankruptcy case, ruled Dec. 20 that the island’s government must keep paying some \$13.9 million a month in interest on pension bonds alone.

The delays in restoring power have had repercussions in the U.S. Hospital officials say a nationwide shortage of intravenous bags has worsened, the *Wall Street Journal* reported Jan. 7. The Puerto Rican plants of Baxter International, which makes the bags are still getting only intermittent power.

“After more than 106 days, there are still people dying, because they don’t have electricity to keep medicines cool, or for oxygen,” veteran independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda told the *Militant* Jan. 6 from San Juan. “That’s not the fault of Hurricane Maria. It’s colonialism that’s responsible.

“I’m in solidarity with the protests. It’s been the people in each neighborhood taking to the streets,” he said. “We saw a picture here of homeless people living in a tunnel in New York. And among them were Puerto Ricans. That’s what association with Washington offers us — the equal right to be homeless.”

Cancel Miranda said that unlike in Puerto Rico, revolutionary Cuba has recovered rapidly from damage caused by Hurricane Irma. “It’s different in Cuba, because they had a revolution and the government looks out for the people,” he said. “Under capitalism the government just looks out for capital.”

Florida prisons censor ‘Militant’ again

Continued from front page

prisoners. The abuse of inmates, particularly those who suffer from mental illnesses, has been a part of the prison system’s culture for decades.”

Some workers behind bars have told the *Militant* they are routinely denied the paper, without notice or reason. “I have not had any issues from November or December,” a subscriber at Charlotte Correctional Institution wrote Dec. 28.

Some prison subscribers write us when they *do* receive their papers. “Greetings to you and all the working men and women out there making this paper possible,” wrote a subscriber from Hamilton Correctional Institution in Jasper, Florida. “I just received four papers dating back to October.”

He says he’s filing a grievance to get the mailroom to turn over other issues of the paper not received.

In recent fights against prison censorship the *Militant* has won broad support from civil liberties groups, churches and others, including Amnesty International USA, PEN America, New York’s Riverside Church Prison Ministry, the Alianza

Martiana in Florida and others.

Florida prison officials impounded nine issues last year; six of those were overturned, including several banned for covering the censorship fight.

The *Militant*’s lawyer, David Goldstein, is contacting the Florida Literature Review Committee to find out why local prison officials are not carrying out the committee’s decisions.

“Florida prison officials are not above the law,” said *Militant* editor John Studer. “Prisoners have the constitutional right to read literature of their choosing. And the *Militant* has the right to have its views reach subscribers behind bars.

“Workers behind bars are part of the world,” Studer said. “They are just like their fellow workers seeking a way to take on attacks from the bosses, their government and their criminal ‘justice’ system. We look forward to deepening our collaboration as we build a working-class party.”

Send messages of support for the fight against censorship to the *Militant* at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

Discontent in Iran

Continued from front page

ministers who have never been hungry.”

Protesters also raised demands against Tehran’s wars in Syria, Iraq and Yemen and its backing for Hezbollah and Hamas. These military conflicts, involving Washington and Moscow as well as Tehran, have had a devastating impact on working people. The human costs and consequences are class differentiated — largely unseen by Iranians in better-off middle-class areas — while signs and monuments to the martyrs are a mainstay in workers’ neighborhoods and towns.

Supported by Moscow’s air power, Iran’s Revolutionary Guard forces and Tehran-backed militias pushed back the Syrian people’s struggle to overturn the Bashar al-Assad dictatorship and to win more political space. They have also dealt blows in recent months to Kurdish aspirations for independence in Iraq.

On Dec. 29 some protesters chanted, “Reformists! Hardliners! The game is over!” urging an end to rule by both wings of the clerical regime, which consolidated capitalist rule in a counterrevolution against the deep-going 1979 revolution. That popular uprising, spearheaded by working people and reinforced by countrywide working-class strikes, forced the hated monarch, the shah, to flee Iran. The revolutionary upsurge was broken when the clerical regime used increasing repression in order to counter independent political action by workers and peasants.

The clerical regime falsely rationalizes its wars today as the continuity of the 1979 revolution. In reality, today’s conflicts are aimed at extending the counter-revolutionary influence of Iran’s capitalist rulers across the region, establishing a land bridge linking the regime with its Hezbollah allies in Lebanon, and ensuring Tehran access to the Mediterranean.

None of this is in the interests of working people in Iran, much less anywhere else in the region.

Arrests and killings

Both wings of the regime — represented by Rouhani, on the one hand, and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on the other — give lip service to the right of Iranians to peacefully protest “legitimate” grievances. At the same time, Iran’s rulers have slandered working-class protesters as “saboteurs,” claiming their actions have been instigated by Iran’s “enemies” in Washington, Tel Aviv, Saudi Arabia and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq.

What’s more, both governing factions are wagging fingers at former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose base among working people and worse-off middle layers in smaller cities and towns has been a center of the recent discontent.

Above all, Iran’s rulers have joined in bringing down repressive measures against demonstrators. The regime has arrested nearly 3,700 people, mostly young, according to parliament member Mahmoud Sadeghi, and more than 20 have been killed. The regime shut down parts of the internet to block communication.

The government and its supporters mobilized actions backing Ayatollah Khamenei. The Revolutionary Guard deployed troops to three of Iran’s provinces to quell protests. Maj. Gen. Mohammed Ali Jafari, head of the Revolutionary Guard, declared the defeat of the “sedition.” The regime’s moves, combined with the lack of any disciplined leadership of the actions, have led to a decline in large street protests.

On Jan. 5 thousands of fans in Tabriz, in Iran’s East Azerbaijan province, stood during a soccer match and chanted, “People of Azerbaijan won’t accept humiliation!” A video of the protest was posted on the internet. On Jan. 7, over 100 people gathered outside Evin prison in Tehran to demand the release of protesters.

The widespread discontent within the working class that fueled the unrest continues to percolate.

Washington, the biggest military power in the Middle East, is concerned that Tehran’s gains threaten U.S. imperialist interests in the Middle East. It demagogically poses as a supporter of Iranian protests. Washington pushed for an emergency U.N. Security Council meeting Jan. 5. But the capitalist rulers of most other nations were wary that a U.N. resolution could backfire, deepening struggles by working people in Iran.

Tehran’s Saudi rivals have not backed the protests challenging the Iranian government. “While they are on opposite sides in regional conflicts, Iran and Saudi authorities share a low tolerance for domestic dissent,” the *Wall Street Journal* wrote Jan. 5.