

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
**Cuban Revolution involves all,
 with sight or not**
 — PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 82/NO. 11 MARCH 19, 2018

See Cuba's revolution on May Day Brigade!

Despite the lies and slanders against Cuba and its socialist revolution that fill the boss press in the U.S., more and more workers, farmers and youth are becoming interested in learning what's different there. We know from

EDITORIAL

our own lives that the capitalist system here doesn't work for working people.

How do you explain the selfless sacrifice, valor and heroism of those Cuban fighters who gave their lives to overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and bring a workers and farmers government to power? The way Fidel Castro and the Rebel Army insisted that moral values above all were the road forward?

The literacy campaign that inspired some 100,000 young people under age 18 to volunteer for a year in 1961 to work side by side with peasants in the fields in all corners of the island during the day, and teach them to read and write at night?

The 425,000 Cuban volunteers who
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As Syrian rulers devastate Ghouta, US rulers aim to hold on in Syria

BY TERRY EVANS

The Bashar al-Assad regime is stepping up its murderous air and ground assault on the heavily populated eastern Ghouta suburb of Damascus. The dictatorial regime has laid siege to the 400,000 people there for five years, creating shortages of food and medical supplies. This newest offensive, backed by Moscow's air power and in concert with Iranian-backed militias, has pounded urban areas with bombs and artillery, killing 800 people, mainly civilians. The ground offensive is moving through lightly populated farmlands seeking to cut Ghouta in two.

Washington, Moscow, Tehran, Ankara and other capitalist governments in the region are seeking to assert their economic and military interests since the defeat of Islamic State.

For four years the Assad regime lost ground in the Syrian civil war. It owes its strengthened position today to Moscow's entry into the fighting in

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Washington, Pyongyang move toward nuclear talks

BY SETH GALINSKY

"The North Korean side clearly stated its willingness to denuclearize," South Korean government officials said after meeting with Kim Jong Un, central leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, March 6. "It made it clear that it would have no reason to keep nuclear weapons if the military threat to the North was eliminated and its security guaranteed."

The talks increase the possibility of direct negotiations between Washington and the government of the DPRK.

Chung Eui-yong, national security adviser to South Korean President Moon Jae-in, and Suh Hoon, director of the National Intelligence Service, both of whom met with Kim, are expected to fly to Washington this week to discuss the talks with the White House.

President Donald Trump is determined to push North Korea back and avoid war. He seeks to be known as a "peace president," using draconian economic sanctions and the threat of Washington's military superiority to

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West Virginia school workers win strike!

Unity, solidarity show power of working class



Wheeling New Register & the Intelligencer via AP/Scott McCloskey

Woodsdale Elementary teachers, Wheeling, West Virginia, celebrate strike victory March 6.

BY EMMA JOHNSON

PUTNAM COUNTY, W.Va. — "I think this will start a movement across the country of working people rising up," Phillip Eastep, a steelworker in Huntington, told Socialist Workers Party members when we joined him picketing with school bus

workers outside the Hurricane bus depot here March 6. "This is the strongest rank-and-file movement I've seen in my 10 years in the union. I hope this makes every union in West Virginia stronger."

Later in the day, school workers on the picket line learned they had won. As thousands of teachers and school workers filled the Capitol in Charles-

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'Cuban Revolution opened road for people to think for themselves'

BY JANICE LYNN AND SHARON LOGAN

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — "Our revolution opened the road for people to advance, to think for themselves, to have access to more information," Cuban revolutionary Griselda Aguilera told some 30 students, professors and others at a Feb. 19 meeting at the University of Tennessee here.

At the age of 7, Aguilera was the youngest person to participate in Cuba's 1961 mass literacy campaign.



Griselda Aguilera, left at age 7 in 1961, hands literacy certificate to worker she taught to read and write. Aguilera spoke about literacy campaign and Cuban Revolution to hundreds on college campuses, churches and union halls during recent U.S. tour.

Some 250,000 volunteers, many of them teenagers, spread out across the country to teach more than 700,000 adults to read and write. The campaign was one key result of the historic victory won when workers and farmers, led by Fidel Castro and the July 26th Movement, overthrew the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship on Jan. 1, 1959.

"It was a huge and beautiful thing we did. We answered the call by Fidel. By Dec. 22, 1961, Cuba was free of illiteracy," Aguilera said. She explained how the campaign had other important results — "for the first time the countryside was united with the city, and blacks and whites were united together." Racist attitudes and regional prejudices began to be broken down by working together, she said.

Because of her age, Aguilera was assigned to stay in Havana, where she taught a 58-year-old street
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Free trade or protectionism: Workers go to the wall either way

BY SETH GALINSKY

The *Wall Street Journal* calls President Donald Trump's proposed hefty tariffs on steel and aluminum imports "the biggest policy blunder of his presidency." The tariffs — announced

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Moscow looks to expand reach, weaken U.S. rulers' dominance 4

J.C. Penney's full-time workers are now part time 5

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Ukraine miners fight for back pay, raises, better conditions

Workers celebrate victory in nine-month-long fight at Mears

Alabama authorities forced to stop grisly execution attempt

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

On the evening of Feb. 22, the state of Alabama spent two and a half hours in a grisly attempt to execute 61-year-old Doyle Lee Hamm, who is dying of cancer and has been on death row for the past 30 years.

After the U.S. Supreme Court cleared the execution to proceed, Hamm was stabbed at least a dozen times with needles in his ankles, legs and groin in an unsuccessful effort to find a vein to inject the drugs to kill him. As Hamm writhed in pain, bleeding all over the table, the execution was finally called off just before midnight. It wasn't stopped because of the horror of what transpired, but because the death warrant only authorized his killing that day and it was about to expire.

"This was a bit of butchery that can only be described as torture," wrote Hamm's attorney, Bernard Harcourt. "The IV personnel almost certainly punctured Doyle's bladder, because he was urinating blood for the next day. They may have hit his femoral artery as well because suddenly there was a lot of blood gushing out."

Hamm became one of the few inmates to walk out of an execution chamber — just the fourth since 1946 — but the state hasn't backed off. A federal judge will hold a hearing in March to review the execution attempt and decide whether to permit prison authorities to try again.

"I wouldn't necessarily characterize what we had tonight as a problem," Jeff Dunn, Alabama Department of Corrections commissioner, told reporters, shortly after the execution

was called off.

Hamm was diagnosed in 2014 with lymphoma, a cancer that causes your lymph nodes to swell. He also has basal cell carcinoma. An examination by a doctor from Columbia University Medical Center in September 2017 concluded that Hamm had no usable veins and that "the state is not equipped to achieve venous access in Mr. Hamm's case."

At one point in the court hearings that led to the attempted execution, Harcourt told the judge that if he ordered the execution, he should order the state to give the chemical poison orally. The judge refused.

Hamm was convicted of shooting a motel clerk to death in 1987 and has been sitting on death row ever since. While arguing for the death penalty at his trial, prosecutors said a robbery Hamm supposedly committed a decade earlier showed he was a serial criminal, but now there is evidence that robbery never happened.

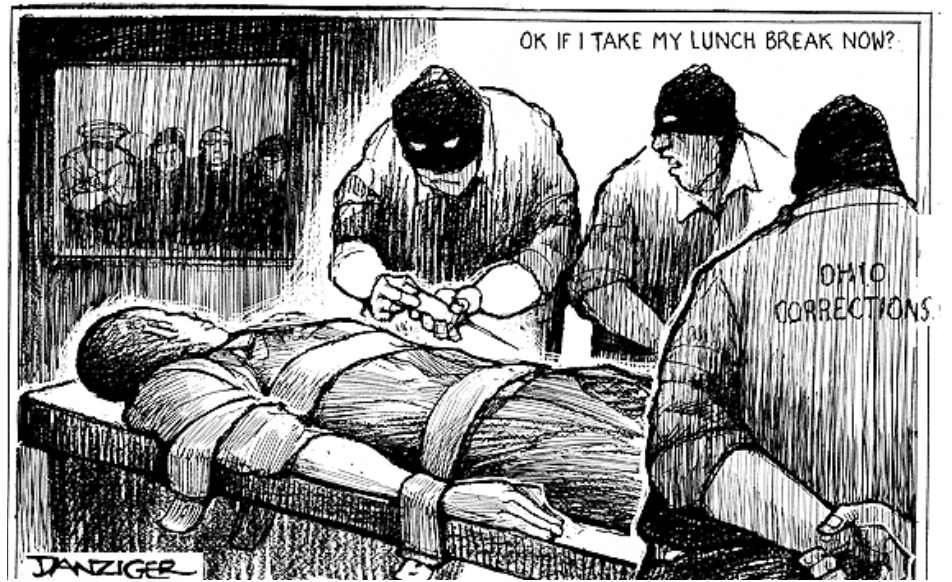
Botched executions have occurred in other states, including in Arizona, Ohio and Oklahoma, where injection of the drug midazolam to render inmates unconscious has resulted in prolonged agony.

Cubans help put out fire at US-occupied Guantánamo base

BY SETH GALINSKY

Cuban and U.S. firefighters worked closely together in February to put out a fire that raged on the perimeter of the U.S. military base in Guantánamo, Cuba.

Ohio Prison Staff Try for Two Hours to Execute Convict and Fail



In 2009 the state of Ohio tried to execute Romell Broom, stabbing him 18 times over two hours, including a 45 minute lunch break, while attempting to put an IV into his veins. "There were 15 people in the room, all intent on executing me," Broom wrote. He is still on death row. Ohio Supreme Court voted 4-3 that state can try to kill him again, no date has been set.

In November, state of Ohio officials had to halt the execution of Alva Campbell, 69, after failing to find a vein to inject him with the lethal drugs. Campbell suffered from cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and couldn't breathe lying down. So prison authorities purchased a wedge-shaped pillow to prop him up on the gurney to be able to kill him. Campbell died March 3 in his death row cell, prior to the new execution date Gov. John Kasich had set for him.

In recent years opposition to the death penalty has risen, and the num-

ber of executions has declined. In 2017 there were 23 executions nationwide, compared to 98 in 1999. Illinois, Connecticut, New Mexico and Maryland have recently abolished the death penalty. Over 20 drug companies have prohibited their products from being used for lethal injections, making it harder for authorities in some states to put anyone to death.

According to polls by Pew Research Center and Gallup last year, 40 percent of the U.S. population now opposes the death penalty, the highest figure in 44 years.

"The illegally occupied territory of Guantánamo constitutes an open wound to Cuban sovereignty, a situation the country has endured for 115 years," *Granma* reported Feb. 28. But acting on the moral values and principles that have always guided Cuba's revolution, Cuban officials informed U.S. officers when they discovered the fire on the Cuban side of the fence around the base Feb. 21.

Pentagon-employed Jamaican and U.S. firefighters tried to contain the blaze. But after the fire burned for more than a day, whipped by high winds in dry conditions, Navy Capt. Dave Culpepper asked the Cubans for help.

The Cubans promptly sent three fire trucks, a command vehicle, about a dozen military firefighters and a heli-

copter with a 500 gallon water bucket dangling beneath. A U.S. Marine opened the base's Northeast Gate to let the Cubans inside.

"It worked great. I was pleasantly surprised both at their response time and our ability to put it all together exactly as we trained," Culpepper told the *Miami Herald*.

By Feb. 23 the fire was contained. During the two days the fire and heat it generated set off some 1,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines in the Cuban minefield that separates the two sides.

For about two decades U.S. Navy and Cuban Frontier Brigade members have conducted an annual "team-building exercise" on how to provide mutual as-

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THE MILITANT

Join fight against cop brutality!

Andrew Kearsse died from a heart attack in the back of a cop car after they ignored his pleas for help in Schenectady, New York, last May. Protesters demand arrest of cop who refused Kearsse's appeal. Read *The Militant* for more coverage on this and other fights against cop brutality.

John Carl D'Annibale/Times Union
Feb. 10 protest after Andrew Kearsse died in back of cop car in Schenectady, New York.

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School workers win strike

Continued from front page

ton, the legislature voted up a 5 percent raise — not just for them, but for all state employees — and agreed to the workers' demand to set up a task force to find ways to fund their health care. The strike inspired workers across the state and nationwide and forced the rulers to back down.

Eastep, a member of United Steelworkers Local 40, had come directly from getting off work to join the picket line. He said he has a special reason to join the workers at this depot.

"She drove my school bus when I was a kid," he said, pointing to one of the pickets, Marsha Armstead, a driver with 21 years seniority. "They deserve more than what they get, all of them."

"Our local contract is coming up this fall," he said, "and I hope they set the example for us to stand up and fight."

Workers support and are inspired by the strike. Drivers passing by honk and wave, a man shows up with donuts. Workers have come by with pizza, fruit and coffee.

"What we're seeing is a movement in the U.S. Not just a labor movement," Sam Brunett, an art teacher at Morgantown High School, told the Associated Press. "It's a class of people rising up."

This was the ninth day of the walkout. It's the first strike by school workers in the state since 1990, the first ever coordinated across all 55 school districts and first time all three unions representing them have gone out together.

In West Virginia the state legislature sets the wages and benefits for all state employees and workers in the public school system. Gov. James Justice had originally proposed a 1 percent pay increase each year for five years. This wouldn't even cover the raise in health premiums he proposed at the same time. Teachers' pay in West Virginia ranks 48th lowest of the 50 states.

School workers started mobilizing and preparing for a walkout. The legislature responded by voting to freeze the health premiums and up the wage increase for the first year to 2 percent. The members of the three unions voted and overwhelmingly rejected this deal. On Feb. 22 they walked out.

In addition to picket lines outside schools and bus depots, thousands of union members and their supporters gathered outside and inside the state Capitol every school day. Over 5,000 poured inside March 5, forcing state officials to lock the doors for an hour.

After meeting with union officials Feb. 27, Justice announced they had reached a deal for a 5 percent raise the first year, for a task force on health care, and said the unions agreed that schools would reopen two days later.

"I was outside the Capitol, when I heard about this," a bus mechanic picketing by the depot here said. "I was furious and I used language you should never use. I had to apologize to a woman standing next to me. They're trying to bust the union, that's how I saw it. I knew we had to stay out. If you start something you see it through."

Many workers expressed anger at the deal and frustration that union officials had agreed to call off the strike even though the legislature hadn't

voted to accept it. They said they just didn't trust the elected officials.

"We went back and voted again," said Jan Henson, a teacher and one of the pickets outside Morning View Elementary School a couple miles down the road. "'No' it was. So we stayed out."

Henson said the vast majority of people going by the picket are supportive, but some give them thumbs down or roll down their windows and yell, "Go back to work."

Fight popular in working class

They've gotten support from coal miners across the state. Many strikers wore red bandannas, a symbol of past pitched battles against mine bosses and state cops.

"People are starting to get angrier and remember our history, remember our roots," Jenny Craig, a middle school special education teacher in Triadelphia, in coal country, told the press.

Most school workers say health care is the biggest issue. "We need a fix, not a freeze" was one common chant.

But what a "fix" would look like, and whether it's possible under capitalism, is a debate among workers on the picket lines. Some point to the state-financed health system in Canada as a model, some propose taxing shale oil exploration, others put forward various schemes to raise money for the state budget expenses to cover health insurance.

"I agree that we need health care and not health insurance," Henson said. "I'm not sure how we can fix it, but I know it has to be fixed. So we'll just have to see."

During the strike, Henson volunteered at the nearby Church of the Nazarene, preparing and distributing food to kids who depend on their school meals. Food donations came from stores, farmers, restaurants, strikers and other workers. Dozens of volunteers — mainly teachers and students — pack bread, vegetables, fruit, drinks and snacks. Similar operations were organized in every county across the state and have been important in building support for the strike.

A car stops and the driver tells us that the state Senate has just approved the 5 percent wage raise and



Militant

School bus drivers and their supporters on picket line at Hurricane bus depot, Putnam County, West Virginia, during statewide strike of teachers and school workers. Fight over rising health insurance costs, low wages and disrespect from state won solidarity of miners, other workers.

health coverage task force.

Senators had originally rejected the Feb. 27 deal between the governor and the unions, saying the state couldn't afford it. The pressure from the continuing strike changed their minds.

More drivers stop by to tell us the deal passed unanimously in both houses of the legislature. "For some reason, they suddenly found the money," one of them said. "This was going places they don't want it to go."

Teachers and school workers went back to work March 7.

The 41,000 teachers in Oklahoma face the same setup as here — prohibited by state law from negotiating contracts and the state legislature sets wages and benefits. They haven't had a raise in 10 years and pay ranks at the bottom of the 50 states.

They say they're inspired by what happened here and are threatening to strike in April. One teacher set up a Facebook site titled "Oklahoma Teacher Walkout — The Time Is Now!" In less than a week, 36,000 people joined up.

W.Va. telecom workers strike Frontier to defend jobs

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Some 1,400 members of the Communications Workers of America went on strike across West Virginia and in Ashburn, Virginia, March 4, when 10 months of negotiations for a new contract between the union and Frontier Communications broke down. The contract had been extended twice since it first expired last August.

"This strike is about job security. I've had this job for two years and without a contract that defends me, I'll be axed," Jeff Ware told the *Militant* on the picket line here March 6. He works in the company's offline department. "Those who've got more seniority were offered better pay to sign, but refused in solidarity with those like me," he added.

Workers at the picket line said that since 2010 the company has cut 500 jobs at its sites in West Virginia and in Ashburn and now wants to cut 200 more beginning next month.

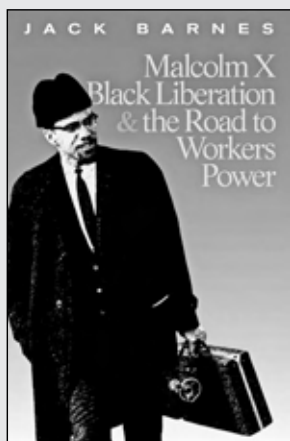
"Frontier wants to grant seniority only to those hired before 2003," Ware said. "They say we're greedy, but this isn't about wages. This is about our jobs and having a union."

"The school workers strike is an inspiration to us," Ware said. "But we had no choice but to walk out anyway."

— EMMA JOHNSON

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Moscow looks to expand reach, weaken US rulers' dominance

BY TERRY EVANS

Russian President Vladimir Putin seeks to sustain the gains the country's capitalist rulers have made in extending their influence through Moscow's military intervention in the Mideast and Ukraine without provoking unrest at home. The U.S. rulers want to push back Moscow's growing clout in parts of the world where Washington has held sway for decades.

When alleged Russian mercenaries returned in body bags from a fire-fight with U.S.-led forces in Syria last month, the government at first refused to admit there had been any deaths, then acknowledged some Russians had been killed, but insisted they had no connection to Moscow's military. In order to hide the extent of its military operations in Syria, the Russian government keeps its spending on wars abroad top secret.

They've refused to respond to continuing indications that significantly more Russian fighters were killed in Syria, or that they had been trained at Moscow's bases there and treated in Russian military hospitals.

Putin has insisted the Syria and Ukraine wars are popular in Russia.

But a September opinion poll shows nearly half of those asked thought Moscow should end its military campaign in Syria.

While Putin says he is winding down military involvement there, fighting continues and he has no intention of relinquishing the expanding influence Moscow has won through its brutal air war on behalf of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria. It has given Russia's capitalist rulers a stronger political hand against the U.S. and other rivals in the Mideast. They have drawn the rulers in Turkey, who had sought the overthrow of the Assad regime, closer to their orbit.

Last year Putin secured Assad's agreement to expand the Russian naval base at Tartus on Syria's Mediterranean coast. Syrian government official Tareq al-Jawabra told the *Financial Times* March 2 that Russian companies get a cut from revenue generated by Syrian oil fields captured from Islamic State by Russian private military contractors.

Moscow is preparing a deal with the rulers in Egypt to deploy its warplanes there.

Russia's capitalist class emerged and developed as the U.S. rulers — acting on the illusion they had won the Cold War — moved to extend the reach of U.S. imperialism's armed might closer to the borders of Russia. Washington took eastern European countries into membership in its NATO military alliance and deployed anti-ballistic missile systems in Romania and Poland.

Putin has developed allies in Europe from both left parties and anti-EU groups.

Moscow sought to defend Russian capitalist interests by creating a buffer zone in territories near the Russian border, organizing military interven-



George Malets

August 2016 protest in Moscow against Russian military interventions from Syria to Ukraine. Signs says, "Fellow Citizens! Why do we have a war in Syria? It's just like Afghanistan, Chechnya, Donbass. Syrians are not feeling better after our bombs!" Without a hard-to-get permit, the government only allows protests one person at a time.

tion in Georgia and Ukraine, including the annexation of Crimea, dealing blows to the sovereignty of both countries.

In his annual State of the Nation address March 1, Putin announced the development of new low-flying cruise missiles with nuclear warheads that can avoid detection by U.S. missile defense systems. None of Washington's anti-ballistic missile defense systems give it the capacity to cripple intensive long-range missile strikes targeting U.S. territories.

Between them Washington and Moscow have the overwhelming majority of the world's nuclear warheads, with the capacity to destroy human life on earth many times over.

"No one has managed to restrain Russia," Putin boasted in his address.

US Defense Strategy targets Moscow

Washington remains the most powerful military power worldwide, but it faces new challenges from both Moscow and Beijing.

"Russia seeks veto authority over nations on its periphery in terms of their governmental, economic, and diplomatic decisions, to shatter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and change European and Middle East security and economic structures to its favor," Secretary of Defense James Mattis wrote in the U.S. rulers' new National Defense Strategy, released Jan. 19.

The U.S. capitalist rulers' dominant place in the world depends on finding ways to win out in the sharpening "great power competition" with Mos-

cow, as well as Beijing, he said. The document proceeds to outline steps to make Washington's military machine a "more lethal, resilient and rapidly innovating Joint Force."

Moscow's military intervention in Syria, following its assaults on national sovereignty in Georgia and Ukraine, is an extension of the Russian rulers' efforts to increase the exploitation of working people at home. In their drive for profits and competitive position they press against workers' wages and conditions, and at the same time are driven to confront rival capitalists for markets abroad. U.S. sanctions and the cost of Moscow's wars has led the government to belt-tightening measures at home. Actions like last year's truck drivers strikes — which won broad working-class support — are one result.

Despite efforts to detain or silence their political opponents, the Russian rulers have been unable to quash those finding ways to speak out against their war moves. Three members of Russian political punk rock group Pussy Riot were briefly detained Feb. 27 in Crimea where they went to protest against the imprisonment of Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov. Framed up on conspiracy charges, Sentsov is an outspoken opponent of Moscow's annexation of Crimea.

The radio station Echo of Moscow reports there were rotating one-person pickets — the only kind deemed legal without a hard-to-get permit — outside the Russian Ministry of Defense opposing Moscow's Syria intervention Feb. 11.

— Socialist Workers Party statement —

- For recognition of a Palestinian state and of Israel
- For repeal of U.S. Jerusalem Embassy Act
- For workers' solidarity in Israel, Palestine, the world over

Download text of statement at www.themilitant.com

Socialist Workers Party: No nuclear weapons!

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced March 1 that Russia is developing new nuclear weapons that he says are capable of evading U.S. missile defenses. This comes shortly after the Pentagon said it would produce nuclear-tipped sea-launched cruise missiles. The U.S. rulers seek to protect their dominant position in the world imperialist order and advance their predatory interests.

For decades the Socialist Workers Party has fought for Washington's immediate, unilateral nuclear disarmament. The party believes that all other governments that possess nuclear weapons — China, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, North Korea, Russia, the U.K. — should get rid of them, and those that seek to acquire them — like Iran — should stop.

Disarming the nuclear arsenals of the capitalist rulers is a burning necessity for workers worldwide. The expansionist drive of the capitalist class, seeking markets and profits at the expense of their rivals, always bears the threat of war and destruction. The U.S. rulers are the only ones to have ever used nuclear weapons — in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Revolutionaries have no need for such weaponry. "No one should have the right to produce nuclear weapons, much less the privileged right demanded by imperialism to impose its hegemonic domination," explained Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro in his biography *My Life*.

"We have never considered the idea of fabricating nuclear weapons, because we don't need them," Castro said in 2005.

"We possess a weapon as powerful as nuclear ones and it is the magnitude of the justice we are fighting for," he said. Cuba's working people made a socialist revolution that is worth defending. And they have proved over decades that they have the capacities to defend this working-class conquest from Washington's relentless efforts to overthrow it.

"A world free of nuclear weapons would create better conditions for working people to advance our struggles," said a statement issued by SWP national campaign director John Studer on Jan. 30. "There is no better reason to build a movement capable of overturning capitalist rule and replacing it with workers power than to be able to take nuclear weapons out of the hands of the propertied owners and end the possibility of their use."

— T.E.

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Ukraine miners fight for back wages, raises, better conditions

Wage arrears owed to working people in Ukraine reached a staggering 2.37 billion hryvnia (\$88 million) as of Jan. 1, a 33 percent increase over the past year. About 80 percent is owed to workers in the mining and heavy industry sectors, and nearly half affects the Ukraine government-controlled parts of Donetsk and Luhansk.

On Feb. 14 workers in four Donetsk mines, part of the state-owned Selydivvuhillia complex, had enough and a big majority of the 10,000 working there walked out. Miners at the Novogrodivka mine set up round-the-clock picketing, stopping anybody from crossing the line. Similar protests took place at the other three mines. After two days of the strike, the government transferred 365 million hryvnia of the 945 million hryvnia owed to workers to state coal enterprises, 90 million of which was earmarked for the Donetsk mines.

“We were given part of our money, but it’s just throwing dust in our eyes,” 35-year-old miner Sergei Durov told ChannelNewsAsia on the picket line in Novogrodivka. He explained how the government bosses try to keep all information about the mine secret. “Nobody knows who we sell our coal to, every-

thing is surrounded by mystery,” he said.

The Moscow-backed separatist war launched against Ukraine after the popular Maidan protests overthrew President Viktor Yanukovich in 2014 has meant many of the settlements in mine areas have been bombed, and many businesses shut down. “We have no other jobs. If our mines are closed, the towns are simply going to die,” miner Leonid Shebanov said. “We are here to draw the attention of politicians to our situation.”

These actions followed a series of strikes last year throughout Ukraine, including shipyard workers in Mykolayiv, coal miners in Lviv and Volyn, and iron ore miners in the Dnepropetrovsk region, demanding payment of back wages, raises and improved working conditions.

Workers at the four mines in Donetsk — Novogrodivka, Kotlyarevskoho, Kurakhivka and Ukraina — sent a delegation of nine members and leaders of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine to Kiev, the capital, to meet with the government and demand payment of all arrears. When the government refused to pay any more, the delegation staged a sit-in and hunger strike at the Ministry of the Energy and Coal Industry. After nine days, when a number of the miners got ill, they decided to



Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine

After walking out of work Feb. 14, coal miners in Donetsk region of Ukraine, joined by family members, protest at company headquarters during strike demanding payment of back wages.

end the hunger strike March 1.

“Our struggle was for miners’ rights and for justice,” Sergei Pavlov, one of the nine unionists, said in statement. “We’ve attracted attention to the problems of miners and state enterprises.”

— Emma Johnson

Workers celebrate victory in nine-month-long fight at Mears

MANCHESTER, England — After a nine-months battle, and more than 80 days of strike protests, the 180 housing maintenance workers employed by the contractor Mears won a 20 percent pay raise. Their main demand was to end the wage differential of several thou-

over 1,000 more jobs.

As the industry’s bleeding continues, many retail bosses are looking for some niche they can fill to keep going and generate profit. Target is incorporating CVS pharmacies and, in some stores, mini-Starbucks. Kohl’s just made a deal with German-owned Aldi to start selling groceries in some of its stores.

Kohl’s could have trouble though, since arch-competitor Walmart is the largest purveyor of groceries on the planet.

One niche J.C. Penney bosses are hoping to boost is its beauty department. The company just announced it would hire 6,500 stylists to expand its hair salons.

sand pounds between the Mears workers and other housing maintenance workers here.

The deal means they will reach parity by 2020. Attacks on pensions, working conditions and annual leave were withdrawn.

“The workforce has become more militant and united. We’re stronger to stand up to the managers now,” UNITE union shop steward Bill Sinclair told workers and supporters at a victory celebration at a Manchester pub.

The Labour Party-dominated Manchester City Council contracts out maintenance work on 37,000 homes. In 2017 they shifted the contract on over 13,000 of the units on the north side of the city to Mears. This meant the 180 workers had a new boss, and their wages and working conditions worsened.

Sue Abbott, chair of the board that manages all the flats, bragged about the deal, saying, “Mears offers good value for money, with the preset price of each repair job decreasing 3.01 percent.”

“That was meant to come out of our pockets,” said shop steward Bill Nugent.

UNITE provided strike pay to the workers, which strengthened their ability to stick with the fight.

“We won because we stuck together,” Nugent told the *Militant*. “We didn’t give up. We organized protests against the Manchester City Council, we reached out to the tenants with information about our strike, and we reached out to other Mears employees all over the country.”

— Dag Tirsén

J.C. Penney’s full-time workers are now part time

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Hammered by stiffening competition from retail giants Walmart and Amazon, department store chain J.C. Penney is making moves to stay afloat by targeting its workers’ hours, wages and benefits.

The company plans to eliminate most full-time jobs, converting them to part-time positions, the *New York Post* reported Feb. 27. Formerly full-time employees will be cut to 25 hours a week from 35. “On top of giving it more staffing flexibility,” the *Post* says, “the move to a part-time sales staff allows JC Penney to cut costs, since part-timers don’t qualify for health benefits.”

The company says it also plans to hire additional part-timers. This means they can give them a few hours on busy evenings and parts of the weekend. To make room for them, the company laid off 360 workers March 2.

“I’ve been working part time, getting up to 25 hours on a good week, for the three years that I’ve been here,” one worker employed at the J.C. Penney store in Manhattan Mall in New York, who asked that her name not be used, told me. “All the workers here are part time, except for managers and supervisors. When this store opened, a lot of people worked here, but that’s been cut back a lot.”

These moves by J.C. Penney come amid sharpening competition in retail as brick and mortar stores are battered by expanding sales online. The weaker store chains — like Macy’s, Kmart,

Target, Kohl’s, Payless Shoes and others — have been forced to retrench and malls are closing. And they all face declining profits as they try to compete with the industry behemoths Walmart and Amazon, who, in turn, are at each other’s throats.

There’s a little more optimism today because an uptick in the economy has boosted sales at some stores. But last year industry bosses announced some 7,000 retail store closures nationwide, eliminating tens of thousands of workers. J.C. Penney shut nearly 140 of its over 1,000 stores, and has said another eight stores and one of its fulfillment centers will close over the next few months, eliminating

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 19, 1993

The big-business media and the FBI have used the explosion that shook New York’s World Trade Center February 26 to whip up a campaign against “terrorism.” Six days after the blast FBI agents and other cops arrested Mohammed Salameh, a Palestinian immigrant worker who lives in Jersey City, New Jersey.

The FBI also arrested Ibrahim Elgabrowni, a carpenter in his Brooklyn, New York, home. He is detained without bail, although police say they have no evidence linking him to the explosion. Federal cops arrested three more men near a Brooklyn mosque and raided several homes of Egyptian immigrants.

The evens indicate that federal authorities have been guided not by the pursuit of facts but by political considerations. From the beginning authorities were determined to pin the explosion on “foreign terrorists.”



March 18, 1968

General Westmoreland’s request this week for gigantic reinforcements of 206,000 more troops to Vietnam has touched off an unprecedented debate in the American ruling class.

Never in the course of the war has the division over Vietnam policies been so deep. Few times in American history have such sharp disagreements in ruling class circles come to public attention.

The *New York Times* revealed the existence of a secret Pentagon report on Vietnam attacking the administration policies from top to bottom.

This division takes place as the full extent of Washington’s defeat in the Tet offensive is beginning to be assimilated — and to a certain extent admitted — by top policy makers. It occurs when casualty figures for American soldiers rose above the 500 level for the second week in a row.



March 20, 1943



After five days of fruitless wage negotiations, United Mine Workers President John L. Lewis warned the operators that if a new contract was not negotiated, “the miners will not trespass upon your property, the first or second of April.”

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US, NKorea move toward talks

Continued from front page
do so. He had insisted that Washington would only join talks if the DPRK government agreed they would lead to ending its nuclear weapons program.

“I think they are sincere,” Trump said about the North Korean March 6 offer. He said it was “because of the sanctions and what we’re doing in respect to North Korea.” He thanked “the great help we’ve been given from China.”

At the same time, the U.S. government has no intention of easing its “maximum pressure” campaign against North Korea.

Washington is pushing to get other governments to join in tightening draconian economic sanctions against the people of North Korea. At U.S. urging, the U.N. Security Council approved a new round of sanctions at the end of December.

U.S. sanctions hit workers hardest

Washington has worked hard to get Beijing to join in the sanctions, as China accounts for 90 percent of North Korean trade. And the Chinese rulers have responded, say three *Wall Street Journal* reporters who recently traveled to Hunchun, China, near the North Korean border. Six months ago “hundreds of vehicles queued up on the Chinese side each morning, bearing food, building materials and consumer goods bound for North Korea, to return later with North Korean exports of seafood, garments and coal,” they wrote. “Not any more.”

“There were more than a dozen garment factories like ours in Rason and thousands of people in the seafood industry,” a Chinese capitalist who had to shut down his garment shop in the North Korean port city told them. “Now, none of those people have jobs.”

U.N. sanctions banning other governments from employing North Korean citizens are also having an impact. Superexploited North Korean workers in Poland, the United Arab Emirates and other countries are filling trains as they return to Pyongyang through China.

Washington and its imperialist allies hope their squeeze and the resulting steep cuts in hard currency, fuel, spare parts and raw material to North Korea will cause severe food shortages.

On Feb. 23 President Trump announced new sanctions targeting 28 ships registered in China and seven other countries, allegedly used by North Korea to transfer coal — North Korea’s main export — and oil on the high seas, evading sanctions.

Decades of U.S. assaults on Korea

Washington is the most powerful nuclear power in the world and is the only

government that has ever used nuclear weapons, when it incinerated large parts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, during the second imperialist World War.

Washington, the chief victor in that war, occupied south Korea with the collusion of the Stalinist regime in Moscow, dividing the country in two. The U.S. rulers then moved to take over the whole country. During the 1950-53 Korean War, U.S. imperialism carpet-bombed the cities in the North. With the aid of Chinese troops, the North Korean people fought Washington to a draw.

To this day, Washington refuses to sign a formal peace treaty ending the war, which killed more than 4 million people, including 2 million civilians. Washington has 28,500 U.S. troops stationed permanently in the South.

As part of the steps that led to the March 6 meeting, the two Korean governments fielded a joint team in the Winter Olympics and Washington agreed to postpone the annual joint South Korean-U.S. military exercises that had been scheduled during the games. Washington and Seoul say they will mount the provocative maneuvers after the Paralympics, which end March 25.

Chung said Kim Jong Un told the South Korean representatives that “he could understand why” the joint military exercises would resume in April, but expects them to be “readjusted” in the future.



Kim Jong Un, right, North Korean head of state, greets Chung Eui-yong, South Korean national security adviser, March 5. They discussed talks between DPRK and U.S. on nuclear weapons.

Signaling its wish for an agreement, Pyongyang has not conducted any nuclear tests since Sept. 3 and says it will not do so as long as momentum toward talks proceed.

Thousands cheered the joint South-North Korean women’s hockey team at the Winter Olympics, a reflection of the longstanding desire by many in Korea for reunification of the country. But after more than 70 years of division and the development of two sharply different social systems, reunification can’t simply be proclaimed.

There are only two examples of reunification of similarly divided nations in recent history. Capitalist West Ger-

many absorbed the deformed workers state in East Germany in 1990, after the implosion of the Stalinist regime there, and extended capitalist social relations throughout the reunified country.

North and South Vietnam were reunited in 1975 following a powerful fight for national liberation and wars that lasted nearly three decades. The Vietnamese fighters first defeated the French imperialists and then forced the withdrawal of U.S. military forces in the South, dealing a stunning blow to U.S. imperialism and leading to reunification of the country.

There are no developments of these sorts taking place in Korea today.

‘Revolution opened way for people to think for themselves’

Continued from front page
cleaner to read and write.

Meeting organizers showed the film “Maestra” (Teacher) by Catherine Murphy, who accompanied Aguilera to Tennessee. It features interviews with a number of those who participated in the literacy campaign, including Aguilera. The documentary shows how they were transformed by their experiences, becoming more disciplined, more revolutionary-minded and more confident to continue to fight to improve society.

Cuba took many of the lessons learned from the literacy drive and developed a special program, *Yo si puedo* (Yes I Can), Murphy told the meeting. Cuban volunteers have used it to combat illiteracy among adults in more than 30 countries across Latin America, Africa and elsewhere, especially in rural areas and among indigenous populations, like Aboriginal people in Australia.

Aguilera contrasted Cuba’s continuing solidarity with working people around the world — sending doctors and teachers to “help other countries in the fields of health care and education” — to the U.S. government, which carries out “many armed conflicts around the world.”

One woman who said she had visited Cuba, commented, “It seems like Cuba is getting more capitalistic. Would you say Cuba is in a postrevolution phase?”

Cuba has faced a continuous economic war by the U.S. govern-

ment, Aguilera said. “In 1967 private property was eradicated in Cuba. But several years ago, we decided to allow self-employment which was necessary to deal with our economic challenges. But this also created contradictions as economic differences arose between workers in our factories and those who got into the private sector. The government is taking measures to keep this to a minimum.

“If this doesn’t work, we will try something else. We’re determined to keep the achievements of the Cuban Revolution,” she said. “North Americans can do a lot to support our revolution by working to get rid of the economic blockade.”

Samir Hazboun, who helped organize the Knoxville leg of Aguilera’s tour, encouraged those at the meeting to sign up for the May Day International Brigade to Cuba. “I urge you to see Cuba for yourselves and learn about the gains of the Cuban Revolution,” he said. Sixteen people signed up to find out more about the brigade during Aguilera’s three-day tour in Tennessee.

On Feb. 20 Aguilera spoke to two classes at Bearden High School, one composed of students who are native Spanish-speakers. They had a lively discussion, including asking her about Cuba’s medical and education systems. “My mom had to pay hundreds of dollars for a simple blood test here,” one student said. Others humorously begged Aguilera to take them with her back to Cuba.

Aguilera’s tour ended with a day at Pellissippi State Community College, where she spoke to some 75 students, teachers and others at two morning classes and an evening event.

“The literacy campaign broke the tradition in Cuba of women and girls staying at home,” Aguilera said at one of the classes. “We went out into the world for the first time, to areas with no electricity, no running water, no roads. So different than the life we were used to in the cities. We were converted from students to teachers!

“We showed we were capable of living and working with the field workers. This was a fundamental part of the literacy campaign — and it transformed the young people,” she said. “It wasn’t just the volunteers. The whole country was involved in the literacy campaign and helped with all aspects of it.”

There is still an organization of former literacy volunteers who meet together, Aguilera said. “We became and remain strong supporters of the revolution.”

“The literacy campaign was the first big campaign of the revolution,” she explained at the evening meeting. “It helped prepare Cuban workers and peasants for their responsibilities in running the country.”

From the beginning, the revolution made concerted efforts to develop the countryside and close the gap between conditions there and in the cities, Aguilera said. “We have built roads and bridges where there were none before. The homes of the peasants have improved. There is electrification throughout the country. We have created rural communities with schools, libraries, shopping centers, doctors and hospitals.”

“Education has been a priority of the revolution,” Aguilera said. “We may lack a lot of material things, but spiritually we are a very elevated country.”

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

by Jack Barnes

The 1959 Cuban Revolution had a worldwide impact. As the proletarian-based struggle for Black rights was advancing in the U.S., the social transformation won by Cuban toilers set an example that socialist revolution can be made and defended.

—\$10

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Cuban Revolution involves all, with sight or not

Cinema clubs with audio descriptions expand access to culture for visually impaired

BY RÓGER CALERO

HAVANA — In February I learned about “Tocando la luz” — Touching the light — a cinema club for the visually impaired in Cuba. So, while I was here for the Havana International Book Fair, I went to the Infanta Theater and joined 50 sighted and nonsighted participants to see “Café amargo” (Bitter coffee). It’s a 2015 film set in the Sierra Maestra mountains during Cuba’s revolutionary struggle in 1958. It is one of 92 films featuring audio description that have been prepared so far by the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) in the seven years of the project’s existence.

A joint project of ICAIC and the National Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ANCI), the cinema club began in Havana and is now expanding to other provinces.

Audio description is a technique used to describe scenes and visual effects that take place between dialogue without detracting from the artistic experience. In Cuba, rather than listening through special headsets — as is done in theaters in the few capitalist countries where audio described movies are available — sighted and nonsighted moviegoers alike listen to a single movie soundtrack. The added descriptions often have been recorded by well-known actors who perform in Cuba’s radio drama series.

“Everyone is welcome here,” Jorge González Frómata, the project’s creator, told me. And many come with friends and relatives.

“It’s been a great initiative,” said Marisabel Tamayo, who lost her eyesight when she was 8 years old. “I’ve always loved the movies. I used to go with my mom, she would whisper to me things I couldn’t catch. Now, I don’t have my mom, but I have the cinema club.”

“It allows us to socialize with others, get out of the house,” said 62-year-old Juan Osborne. He became blind in 1984 from a traffic accident. Osborne works as a gardener and rehab technician for the blind. He also performs in the theater group “Sin bastón.” (Without a cane.)

Moviegoers can enjoy an audio described movie once a month, and nine more during the summer, ranging from Cuban film classics to current hits. A list



Radio Bayamo

Expanding access to culture for all working people has been at center of Cuban Revolution. Havana’s “Touching the light” cinema club provides visually impaired moviegoers soundtracks with audio description of scenes and visual effects. Above, similar club in Bayamo Nov. 18.

and description of movies scheduled is available in Braille at the theater. Most are Cuban films, but they have also shown some from Argentina, Mexico and Spain. Copyright costs make it prohibitive to include U.S. films in the program. Even if ICAIC could afford the rights, there would be no way to buy them because of the U.S. rulers’ economic embargo against Cuba.

Production of audio description movies is costly, and it’s largely subsidized by the Cuban state. The theater’s take from the showing I saw couldn’t have been more than US\$20. Admission is the equivalent of 10 cents, and ANCI members pay half price.

Conquest of Cuba’s revolution

During and after the victory of the Cuban Revolution, with the overthrow of the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship in 1959, the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army led by Fidel Castro fought to include all working people in running the country and enjoying the fruits of their struggle.

“We have always fought to be included in society,” said Tamayo, describing the gains made by the blind and disabled in access to education and job opportunities. “Before the revolution there was no social inclu-

sion for the blind or for the poor.”

The expansion of access to education and culture for millions of workers and peasants has been at the center of the revolutionary transformations of both the Cuban people themselves and their conditions of life. This got a big boost from the mass literacy campaign in 1961, involving hundreds of thousands of working people in city and countryside. (See article on front page.)

The trade unions and other mass organizations intertwined the literacy campaign with other efforts by workers and farmers to take control of their own destiny — such as land reform and the fight for jobs for all. These efforts laid the groundwork for other popular initiatives, including reopening the national ballet, which Batista had shuttered, and the flowering of libraries, bookstores, art galleries, movie theaters, theater groups, choirs and community cultural centers. And the revolution always strove to include workers with disabilities, as “Touching the light” demonstrates.

Special schools for the blind

In 1959, there was only one special school for the blind, said Tamayo. Now there are 15, one in every province.

“Because we have the reputation of having good hearing skills we were recruited for a special training course, and I ended up working as a piano tuner for 41 years,” she said, explaining that in the 1970s the number of art and music schools grew and there was a shortage of piano tuners. Tamayo was also part of the 1979-83 literacy campaign for those who needed to learn Braille to read and write, one of three organized by the revolutionary government.

Since 2012 ANCI has had a booth at the Havana International Book Fair. Despite the economic difficulties confronting Cuba, the association this year produced 19 books in Braille and two audio books, available free of charge there. And every year the association surveys members about their reading interests to decide what to publish.

In the United States today there is a crisis in Braille literacy, due to government budget cuts and other attacks on public education. Some 40 to 50 percent of blind students don’t finish

high school in the U.S., and only 32 percent of the blind have a job.

When I got back to New York I spoke about this experience with Juanita Young, a longtime fighter against police brutality who became visually impaired years ago. She described a summer camp for the visually impaired that she attends. Eighty percent of the movies shown there don’t have audio description, she said, especially the newer films. They say they don’t have the funds. “I’d rather see an old audio described movie 1,000 times over than one where I have no idea what’s happening,” she said.

“Touching the light” has recently expanded to Granma province in the eastern part of the country. “You should not be denied your rights because of where you live,” said project creator Frómata. “To do this in a small town in Granma is like having a festival.”

And in Cuba there are also national chess and dominoes tournaments, as well as baseball leagues, for the blind.

Join April 22 - May 6 May Day International Brigade to Cuba!

Meetings with mass organizations; voluntary work; join Havana May Day march and more.

Contact: National Network on Cuba
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Guantánamo

Continued from page 2

sistance in case of a fire, earthquake or hurricane, but “this was the first time we used it for real,” Culpepper said.

Against the will of the Cuban people, the U.S. military has occupied the 28,000 acres that surround Guantánamo Bay since 1903. Washington has used the base to intervene in the internal affairs of Cuba, Haiti and other nations to protect U.S. imperialist interests.

Many Cuban workers are especially offended that Washington maintains a prison there where the U.S. rulers have incarcerated hundreds on charges of terrorism and today that still holds 41 prisoners. They have all been held more than 10 years and more than half have never been charged or convicted of anything.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order at the end of January to keep the prison open indefinitely.

The *Miami Herald* reports the Pentagon has a \$69 million line item in its 2019 budget released Feb. 12 to build a new Camp 7 on the base with updated facilities intended to last 40 years. The military classifies Camp 7 “Top Secret,” and reporters are barred from even looking at it. All 15 current prisoners there were previously held in CIA “black sites” overseas and tortured for three to four years, the *Herald* said.

The same day the fire was contained, students in Cuba joined a protest calling for an end to the U.S. occupation of Guantánamo, part of an international day of actions. Feb. 23 marks the 115th anniversary of the U.S. military’s seizure of the land.

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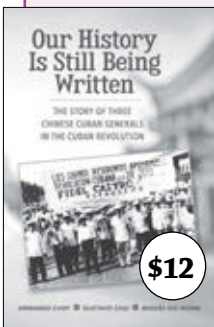
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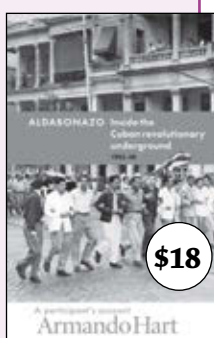
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by Armando Hart

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\$18

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Sankara: 'The foreign debt is unjust, should not be repaid'

Below is an excerpt from Thomas Sankara Speaks, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March. Sankara led the revolution in Burkina Faso from 1983 until his assassination in 1987. Workers and peasants in this West African country established a popular revolutionary government that began to fight the hunger, illiteracy and economic backwardness imposed by imperialist domination, and the oppression of women inherited from millennia of class society. This excerpt is from "Dare to Invent the Future," a series of interviews conducted in the capital Ouagadougou in 1985 by Swiss journalist Jean-Philippe Rapp. Copyright © 1988, 2007 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



UN Photo

Popular revolution in Burkina Faso is "aimed at restoring the dignity of the Burkinabè people," said Thomas Sankara, president 1983-87. "Our foreign debt comes from needs imposed on us," he said. "It should not be repaid." Above, Sankara speaks at U.N., Oct. 4, 1984.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

RAPP: A related question is that of the foreign debt. At the conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, the participants were quite divided on how to deal with the question of paying back this debt.

SANKARA: As far as we're concerned, we say very clearly: the foreign debt should not be repaid. It's unjust. It's like paying war reparations twice over. Where does this debt come from, anyhow? It comes from needs imposed on us by other countries. Did we need to build mansions or to tell

doctors they would receive a fabulous salary at the end of the month? Or foster the mentality of overpaid men among our officers? We were coerced into running up very heavy debts, and the economic enterprises made possible by these loans have not always run smoothly. We entered into weighty financial commitments on their account — often suggested, proposed, organized, and set in place by the same people who lent us the money.

They have quite a system. First come the members of the assault squad, who know exactly what they are going to propose. Then they bring out the heavy artillery, and the price keeps going up. These are wonderful investments for the investors. They don't put their money in their own banks because at home the returns aren't good. They have to create the need for capital elsewhere and make others pay.

Do we really need to smoke this or that brand of cigarette? They've convinced us, "If you smoke such-and-such brand you'll be the most powerful man on earth, capable of seducing any woman." So we took up smoking, and got cancer as a bonus. The most privileged among us have gone to Europe to be treated. And all to give a second wind to your tobacco market.

RAPP: But does refusing to pay the debt make any sense if only one or two countries do it?

SANKARA: The pressure to pay the debt does not come from the isolated usury of a single banker. It comes from an entire organized system, so that in the event of nonpayment, they can detain your planes at an airport or refuse to send you an absolutely indispensable spare part. So deciding not to pay the debt requires we form a united front. All the countries should act together — on the condition, of course, that each one of us is open to looking critically at the way we ourselves manage these funds. People who have contracted huge debts because of their own lavish personal expenses don't deserve our support. We said this clearly in the message we delivered to the OAU [Organization of African Unity]: "Either we resist collectively and refuse categorically to repay the debt or, if we don't, we'll have to go off to die alone, one by one."

RAPP: But this point of view was not unanimous?

SANKARA: Though everyone understands the logic behind such a legitimate refusal to pay, each of us thinks he's smarter, more cunning than the other. A particular government will skirt the need for collective action to

go and see the moneylenders. This country is then immediately portrayed as the best organized, the most modern, the most respectful of written agreements. They're given more loans, so further conditions can be imposed. When the discontent spills out into the streets, they suggest sending in the "heavies" to break those who won't fall into line — and to put someone of their choice on the throne.

RAPP: Aren't you afraid of a violent public reaction against your internal economic measures?

SANKARA: The general support we're finding as we impose measures that are not in themselves very popular shows the nature of our revolution. It's a revolution directed not against any people or any country, but rather one that's aimed at restoring the dignity of the Burkinabè people, at allowing them to achieve happiness as they define it.

In other countries happiness and development are defined by ratios — so many hundred pounds of steel per inhabitant, so many tons of cement, so many telephone lines. We have different values. We're not the least bit embarrassed to say we are a poor country. Within international organizations we're not at all afraid to get up and speak and to block discussions in order to gain a reduction of a dollar or two in the dues or contributions countries must pay. We know this irritates a good many delegations that are capable of throwing thousands, if not millions, of dollars out the window.

When we receive a foreign ambassador who has come to present his credentials, we no longer do so in this presidential office. We take him out into the bush, with the peasants. He travels on our chaotic roads and endures dust and thirst. After that we can receive him, explaining, "Mr. Ambassador, your Excellency, you have just seen Burkina Faso as it really is. This is the country you must deal with, not those of us who work in comfortable offices."


We have a wise and experienced people capable of shaping a certain way of life. While elsewhere people die from being too well-fed, here we die from not having enough food. Between these two extremes there is a way of life to be discovered if each of us meets the other halfway.

March BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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See Cuba on May Day Brigade!

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served in Angola from 1975 to 1991 to protect that country from invasions by the army of the apartheid regime of South Africa backed by Washington? Cuba took nothing back in return except the remains of their comrades who fell in combat.

The thousands of Cuban internationalist volunteer health workers, including those who went to West Africa to combat the deadly Ebola epidemic? And the electrical workers who volunteered to go to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria to aid recovery, only to be callously rejected by Washington?

If you're fed up with the assaults of the bosses and their government, their endless wars against peoples worldwide, their disregard for working people, growing homelessness, police brutality and attacks on the rights of women; if you're inspired by the example of the fight of the school workers in West Virginia — you have a unique opportunity this May.

We encourage you to join members of the Socialist Workers Party and others and sign up for the May Day International Brigade to Cuba April 22 to May 6.

Hundreds of brigadistas from around the world, including a sizable U.S. contingent, will meet Cubans

from all walks of life, visit workers on the factory floor, work side by side with Cubans in the fields, and exchange views with leaders and members of the unions, the women's federation and other mass organizations. You'll join in the May Day march in Havana, as the Cuban people demonstrate their commitment to do whatever it takes to defend their revolution from Washington's economic and political attacks.

You'll also learn about the problems and challenges the Cuban Revolution faces firsthand. You'll come back to the U.S. able to explain to others why they should oppose the U.S. embargo and economic war against the Cuban people and why the U.S. military should get out of Guantánamo.

Information on the brigade's complete itinerary, the inexpensive cost of \$675 for everything except airfare and how to get an application is available at ICanGoToCuba@nnoc.com or from the SWP branch nearest you, listed on page 8.

Most importantly, you'll be able to come back and use the example of the Cuban Revolution to help build a movement right here in the United States that can fight for our interests today and lead the working class to take political power.

Free trade? Workers go to the wall either way

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on the pretense of protecting "American" jobs — "will benefit a handful of companies," the *Journal* asserts, but lead to layoffs at others.

MarketWatch, a Dow Jones website, took the opposite view. "Tariffs on steel, aluminum are long overdue," Robert Scott writes, and are needed to protect U.S. bosses from "unfair trade."

Capitalist trade policy — free trade or protection — always favors some section of the bosses at home and abroad at the expense of others. Far from benefiting, workers "go to the wall" either way, Karl Marx explained over 170 years ago.

The Huffington Post tried to have it both ways. The left-liberal news site complains that the new tariffs don't go far enough in putting the hurt on bosses in China, but mistakenly harms "allies" in Canada and the European Union.

Chinese companies produce more than 800 million metric tons of steel a year, the Post complains, compared to just over 70 million made by U.S. bosses. U.S. companies charge that their Chinese competitors dump their "excess" production at super-cheap prices.

United Steelworkers union officials jump on the bandwagon, fearing their dues-paying membership might decline as a result. They back the bosses on this instead of mobilizing workers to unite, stand up to the bosses and offer solidarity across borders.

"Steelworkers and Ohio Lawmakers Welcome Trump's Tariff on Dumped Steel" was the headline in the March 2 *People's World*, the internet-only newspaper of the Communist Party USA. The article favorably quotes United Steelworkers President Leo Gerard, who uses pro-imperialist rhetoric to back the tariffs. "Hard-working Americans," Gerard said, "expect national security, the foundation of which is built with steel and aluminum, to be protected."

Politicians of both capitalist parties line up depending on which bosses live in their area. "You'd expect a policy this bad from a leftist administration, not a supposedly Republican one," Nebraska Republican Sen. Ben Sasse said. Like other tariff opponents, he worries it could set off a "trade war" that would harm corporate farmers and big business in Nebraska.

Trump's response? U.S. capitalists would win any trade war. History teaches workers that trade wars have a way of turning into shooting wars, and the working class would be the cannon fodder.

Stance of class-conscious workers

What stance should class-conscious workers take?

The bosses push their trade policies as what's "good for America." But there is no abstract America — there are two major classes here, as elsewhere, with diametrically opposed interests. On one side are the capitalists and on the other the working class that

owns nothing but its labor power.

"We start with the interests of the working class, which is an international class," Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes said in "Our Politics Start with the World," published in *New Internationalist* no. 13. "We're unconditionally opposed to the rulers of the United States imposing protectionist barriers of any kind under any pretext on imported goods."

"We do everything possible to expose the 'free trade' demagoguery of finance capital," Barnes said. "It aims to advance the national interests of the exploiting class, including balancing the conflicting profit needs of capitalist sectors that are vulnerable to competition on the world market to quite different degrees." That's why you get bosses on both sides of the issue.

"Under the banner of free trade, the U.S. government uses so-called antidumping clauses, 'environmental' and 'labor standards' restrictions, 'human rights' demagoguery, and other measures to carry out brutal and aggressive trade wars not only against its imperialist rivals," Barnes says, "but with special ferocity against the semicolonial countries."

The U.S. rulers and all the big capitalist powers have clawed their way to the top of the heap by plunder of the semicolonial world. The imperialist powers buy up the raw materials and products of light industry from semicolonial countries at low prices and sell back the finished products to them at higher prices. And high interest loans sink those countries deeper in debt.

The workings of the world capitalist market guarantee the looting of the semicolonial world, Barnes explains, not primarily due to "unfair" terms of trade, but as a result of "the differential value of labor power and the gap in productivity of labor between the imperialist countries on the one hand and those oppressed and exploited by imperialism on the other — a differential that not only underlies unequal exchange but relentlessly reproduces and increases it."

That's why class-conscious workers back efforts by oppressed nations to protect their economies.

The capitalist rulers use both free trade and protectionism to try to outsell their rivals. Most trade deals — like the North America Free Trade Agreement and the failed Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact advocated by Barack Obama — combine both.

We can't let the bosses pit us against each other. We need to offer solidarity to fellow workers around the world and refuse to be suckered into the nationalist anti-free trade campaigns.

The 'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. Send a check or money order payable to the Militant, earmarked "Prisoners' Fund," to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

Syria pounds Ghouta

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2015 and the central role of the ground forces of Hezbollah and other Tehran-backed militias.

At the same time, the U.S. rulers and allied Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces control 25 percent of the country, including both the Kurdish cantons and many of the regime's oil fields near the Euphrates River.

Across the region the impact of the Syrian war falls hardest on working people. The war began after a popular rebellion against Assad broke out in 2011 and the regime responded with bloody repression. Over half the country's population has been forced to abandon their homes during the war. More than 5 million Syrians have fled to Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Along with other working people there they confront rising competition for jobs, housing, education for their children and health care.

Two years after Jordan started issuing work permits to Syrian refugees, some 90,000 have received them out of an estimated 1.3 million. The rest seek work without "permits" or are dependent on niggardly government aid.

Of Lebanon's population of 6 million, some 1.5 million are Syrians refugees. In the rural Bekaa Valley, where many Syrians have settled, bosses have used the increased competition among workers to drive down wages by up to 60 percent.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says one key aim of his government's invasion of the Kurdish province of Afrin in Syria is to resettle Syrians that fled to Turkey, even though most of them are not from that part of Syria. The central goal of Turkey's rulers is to deal a blow to the Kurdish people's fight for national rights in Syria, and to intimidate Kurds in Turkey from rising up.

Ankara intensified its airstrikes after the Assad regime organized pro-government militias to enter the province and aid the Kurds. Assad hopes to reassert Syrian government control over Afrin.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu flew to Washington and met with President Donald Trump March 5 to discuss further steps to counter Tehran's growing influence. At the center of their discussions were Washington's efforts to toughen the 2015 deal struck with the Iranian rulers to slow down their nuclear weapons program. They also discussed how to prevent Tehran from making its foothold in Syria permanent, from where weapons are transported to its Hezbollah ally in Lebanon.

The rulers in Tel Aviv intend to use whatever force is necessary to keep Tehran and Hezbollah from threatening Israel.

Saudi rulers seek backing for Yemen war

Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman began a trip to consult with the capitalist governments in Egypt, the U.K. and U.S. March 4. One of his objectives is to win more support for the war the Saudi rulers are waging in Yemen. A Saudi-led coalition is carrying out airstrikes and enforcing a blockade against Tehran-backed Houthis, who seized control of Sana'a, Yemen's capital, in 2015. Some 10,000 people, mainly civilians, have been killed, 2 million displaced and millions face cholera and starvation.

The Saudi monarchy, with Washington's backing, wants to deal blows to Iran's capitalist rulers, its main rival, who have extended their counterrevolutionary sway across the Mideast in the course of the wars in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Riyadh's desire to challenge Tehran is a key reason behind the campaign for capitalist "modernization." Advanced by Prince Mohammed, it seeks to overcome the kingdom's social backwardness, weaken the grip of stifling Wahabi Sunni religious strictures and expand the economy to reduce dependence on oil revenues.

One unintended consequence of the Saudi rulers' steps to draw more women into modern life and the workforce will be to strengthen the working class. When the regime advertised 140 jobs for women at airports and border crossings, 107,000 applied. The government is taking steps to weaken the system of male guardianship, where husbands or male relatives control women's ability to work, travel or start their own business.

Prior to his trip, Prince Mohammed, who is also the country's defense minister, sacked the military's joint chiefs of staff, replacing the central officer corps with forces loyal to him.