

UK meeting learns about revolution in Burkina Faso

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — Some 200 people, mainly students, packed the Khalili lecture hall at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies March 6. They had come to hear a panel presentation on "Sankara: World Bank & CFA Franc — the Tyranny of African Debt." Thomas Sankara was the central leader of the 1983-87 revolution in Burkina Faso.

The seminar, hosted by London University's Centre for African Studies, was organized by Riccardo Dujany, author and director of a play — "Sankara" — that will run at London's Cockpit Theatre March 20 through April 14.

In his remarks to the meeting, Dujany pointed to the books by Sankara published by Pathfinder Press, saying one of his goals was to get people to read what the revolutionary leader said. "This is where you can read all of Sankara's major speeches. They're published in English, French, Spanish

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As White House, NKorea agree to talk, US rulers keep up squeeze

BY SETH GALINSKY

When South Korean National Security Adviser Chung Eui-yong visited the White House March 8 to talk to U.S. officials about his meeting a few days earlier with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, President Donald Trump asked him to come to the Oval Office and report directly to him. Chung reported that Kim was willing to discuss ending the North's nuclear weapons program and was eager to meet with the U.S. president. Trump immediately said, "Yes."

This would be the first time a sitting U.S. president has met with a central leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"Kim Jong Un talked about denuclearization with the South Korean Representatives, not just a freeze," Trump said in a Twitter statement later. "Also, no missile testing by North Korea during this period of time. Great progress being made but sanctions will remain until an agreement is reached."

Trump reported the plan for talks to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping. According to the White House, the Chinese government assured him it remains

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Uptick spurs jobs, picks up confidence of working class

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

There's an uptick in the capitalist economy, more jobs are open, and that's giving workers more confidence. If you have options, can look for higher-paying work, and don't have to worry every working hour how to make ends meet, you're more willing to take on the boss and join in fights for better pay, benefits and a union.

But when you look at recent figures on pay increases, there's a sharp class difference in who gets what. The biggest raises are going to the bosses and their henchmen, while workers get much less — and see much of that eaten up in growing inflation.

Those with the lowest pay have to shell out higher proportions of their income for basic necessities. "The highest inflation is in the goods and services over which people have the least discretion," investment adviser John Mauldin said in his Feb. 25 newsletter.

"Inflation affects the bottom 50% more than it does the top 50% by income," wrote Mauldin. "Because there are certain necessities of life that must be purchased, and because many of those goods and services (such as housing, and health care)

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Inspired by W.Va. victory workers organize to fight



Kentucky Education Association

Teachers protest government attacks March 12 at state Capitol in Frankfort, Kentucky.

Get in a car, take a plane, join workers in struggle!

Teachers and other school workers are locked in bitter battles today with state governments in Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Arizona and else-

EDITORIAL

where. The *Militant* urges workers, youth and the labor movement across the country to get in a car or a plane and join these fights! Build solidarity

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Washington pushes back against Beijing rulers' challenge in Africa



Chinese-owned Huajian shoe factory in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Inset, banner over the factory.

BY TERRY EVANS

Sharpening competition between Washington and Beijing marked the five-nation African tour begun by then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson March 7. He had to break off his visit when he was dismissed by President Donald Trump six days later.

The rulers of the world's dominant imperialist power are acting to defend their economic and political interests against both Beijing and Moscow, who are challenging Washington in the cutthroat battle for markets and political influence in Africa and else-

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Victory of W.Va. teachers builds labor movement

BY EMMA JOHNSON

BOONE COUNTY, W.Va. — The March 6 victory in the strike of teachers and all school workers in West Virginia came out of a powerful social movement, where union members took ownership of their struggle and won solidarity from coal miners, students and other workers across the state and beyond. Their unity, discipline and organization pushed back all attempts by the government to divide and conquer the workers. They showed that the working class can use their unions to fight and to win.

These workers built on the growing anger in West Virginia against the effects on working people of continuing assaults by the bosses and their government, assaults that grow out of the crisis of their capitalist system. Coal miners have been special victims of these attacks, as union jobs have dried up and deadly black lung disease has roared back in the coalfields. There is a long history of miners' battles and

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Appalachia telecom workers strike against Frontier

Calif. protest continues fight to end solitary confinement

BY JEFF POWERS

SAN FRANCISCO — Opponents of solitary confinement rallied at the federal courthouse here Feb. 23 to support legal moves demanding California prison authorities comply with a landmark court settlement won by prisoners in 2015 that limits use of the brutal practice.

Leaders of three hunger strikes in California prisons, including a strike in 2013 that involved 30,000 prisoners at the high point, were plaintiffs in Ashker vs. Governor of California, the lawsuit that won an end to indeterminate-length sentences to solitary confinement and led to the release of nearly 1,500 prisoners held in the notorious Security Housing Units.

The fight continues today because in hundreds of these transfers prison officials shuffled inmates into extremely restrictive “Level 4” prisons in conditions that mirror those in the SHUs.

“Out of cell time is regularly cancelled or restricted,” Luis Esquivel, one of the prisoners released from the SHU, explained in a statement read at the rally. “Yard time is often available only 1 or 2 times per week. Showers and telephone calls, which are supposed to be available every other day, are infrequent and we must choose one or the other.”

Jules Lobel, the lead attorney from the Center for Constitutional Rights, who argued the motion in court, told the rally that prison authorities cannot satisfy the agreement by just moving prisoners to units they call “general population.” They must end the use of ongoing solitary confinement that the settlement said would be stopped.

A letter to the rally from four leaders of the hunger strikes — Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa, Arturo Castellanos, Todd Ashker and George Franco — marked the second anniversary of the *Ashker* settlement. They described some of the abuses that continue — the lack of out-of-cell time and vocational programs in Level 4 prisons, new regulations that give prison authorities discretion to put people back in the SHU, and the denial of parole to prisoners simply because they had previously been housed in the SHU.

“We must stand together, not only for ourselves, but for the future generations of prisoners,” they wrote, “so that they don’t have to go through the years of torture that we had to.”



Militant/Betsey Stone

Above, protest in Sacramento, California, July 2013. Recent action demanded authorities carry out 2015 court order to release prisoners from solitary confinement into general prison population. Ruling was product of hunger strikes conducted by thousands of state’s inmates.

Sign up for International May Day Brigade to Cuba!

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The May Day International Brigade to Cuba presents working people and youth with a unique opportunity to learn about the Cuban Revolution firsthand and the lessons it provides for advancing struggles by workers and farmers against capitalist rule worldwide.

The Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples, which is sponsoring the trip, set a March 16 deadline for getting in applications to join the April 22-May 6 brigade. For a few more days it may still be possible to sign up. The cost for everything — including food, lodging and all travel inside Cuba — is \$675. Airfare is extra.

In addition to joining the giant May

Day march in Havana, brigadistas will participate in an international conference of solidarity with Cuba the next day. They will also visit workers on the factory floor, join farmers for work in the fields, and exchange views with leaders and members of the unions, the

national women’s federation and other mass organizations.

For more information and to get an application, go to ICanGoToCuba@nnoc.com or contact the nearest Socialist Workers Party branch, listed on page 8.

Workers donate ‘blood money’ bribes to build SWP

“I am sending \$780 of ‘blood money’ to the Socialist Workers Party from a retroactive pay raise we got under the recently signed new rail contract at Norfolk Southern,” Linda Armstrong wrote March 2. Bosses use bonuses and other payouts like Armstrong got as bribes — or “blood money,” as she says.

SWP members and others turn this money over to the party to help build the working-class movement. They also discuss with co-workers how the employers seek to weaken the workers and their unions. And they ask workers to join with them in giving such bonuses to the SWP.

“The lure of the back pay was one of the main things that was supposed to win over workers to vote for the contract,” Armstrong said. “The union officials needed something like this to get votes, because there was no real fight organized to push back the cuts that the bosses demanded.

“Many here voted against the contract. The cost of health care rose significantly for many, and most workers think the raise wasn’t enough,” Armstrong said. “In general, people are sick of being treated like dirt; of bosses blaming us for the deteriorating job conditions and increasing safety hazards; and of how we are spoken to on a daily basis.”

If your boss gives you some blood money and you want to use it to advance the fight for “dignity and safer conditions” of the working class, Armstrong said, give it to the party. Contact the SWP branch nearest you, listed on page 8.

— TERRY EVANS

THE MILITANT

Moscow looks to weaken US rulers’ dominance

Washington is the world’s most powerful military power, but faces new challenges from the capitalist rulers in Moscow. The ‘Militant’ explains what is driving their sharpening conflicts with the U.S. rulers, in East Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere.



George Malets

Protest in Moscow in August 2016 opposes Russian military intervention in Syria.

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W.Va. victory reverberates

Continued from front page

use of their union, which the school workers used, holding “red shirt” days, the color the miners wore in some of their biggest battles. And a tradition of distrust of government at all levels.

Their victory has had a special impact on teachers in other states where their pay, health care, pensions and working conditions are set by the state government, including in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Mississippi and Arizona. Conditions facing school workers there mirror those in West Virginia, and strike talk is growing.

Alberto Morejon, a 25-year-old junior high school history teacher and junior varsity baseball coach in Stillwater, Oklahoma, says he was inspired by West Virginia teachers and decided to emulate their example. He started a Facebook page — “Oklahoma Teacher Walkout—The Time Is Now” — for teachers and other public workers to discuss what they could do. Some 65,000 workers have signed up as of March 12.

The Oklahoma Education Association union held a March 8 press conference, where Morejon spoke, and announced that unless the state government agrees to their demands they will go on strike April 2 and call for a mass protest at the Capitol that day.

A team of Socialist Workers Party members went to West Virginia to join in solidarity with the school workers and learn more about the growing social movement there. They joined protests in the capital, traveled around the state, and spent a day in three southern counties — McDowell, Wyoming and Boone.

Workers in the south — in the heart of West Virginia’s coal country — took the lead in getting the movement going. Back in November, they started building unity among members of the three unions — the West Virginia Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers-West Virginia and the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association. They mobilized for meetings and held “walk-ins,” gatherings outside schools to inform parents about the issues and protests they were planning.

On Feb. 2, workers in four southern counties got the “Blue Flu” and went to rally outside the Capitol in Charleston. And then the movement grew fast all over the state.

Students in Boone County stood up and made it clear that legislators couldn’t use them against the teachers. To make the point, they reached out to students across the state and organized more than 1,000 students to march in Charleston in solidarity with the strike March 2.

Influence of battles in the coalfields

Workers on the picket line make the point that students learned more from their strike and the discussions and organizing that prepared for it than anything in the classroom could have taught them. Many students volunteered for food packing and distribution operations with union members and others to provide meals for those who depend on the food they get in school.

Retired coal miner Fred Powers gave a history lesson to students and their families at the Bramwell Train Depot in nearby Mercer County. He told them about what conditions were like when he started working underground, using a mechanical canary in a cage to illus-

trate how they warned miners about rising methane levels.

“So long as the bird was singing, the air was safe, but if it stopped you’d better get out,” Powers said. “A canary cost a day’s pay and working days were often 12 to 14 hours.” Miners also liked rats for company, he said, because they too would alert miners, fleeing when they sensed the tunnel was becoming unsafe.

The influence of the history of the battles of coal miners marked the school workers’ fight. Workers wore red bandanas in honor of the historic coal miners’ war against local cops and company goons at Blair Mountain in 1921. Teachers and students discussed the bloody battle there, where thousands of armed miners took on machine guns and hired planes dropping tear gas and shrapnel. Because of their bandanas, the miners were called the “Red Neck Army.” Countless strikers and students here belong to coal mining families.

Steve White, a Boone County native and third-generation miner in his 40s, gave us a tour of the area around Bim, his home town.

“I worked underground for 17 years,” he said. “But I decided to quit for health reasons a couple years ago. My father died of black lung a short while back and I have the first symptoms of it myself.”

Southern West Virginia is where miners fought bloody battles to retake their union in the late 1960s and ’70s — a revolution in the United Mine Workers union to fight for miners’ right to safe working conditions with power to stop production when needed. Free health clinics were established throughout the region. Incidents of black lung declined more than 90 percent.

“Black lung never really went away and now it’s back,” said White. “People strongly support the teachers. We need a fight and we need a victory.” White’s wife Kim is a teacher’s assistant.

West Virginia has been ravished by the moral, political and economic crisis of capitalism today. Boone County, with a population of 25,000, has lost more than 5,000 mining jobs in the last half decade, with ripple effects on jobs, schools, social services, health care and retail.

As the union’s strength has waned,



Militant/Emma Johnson

Volunteers gather at Church of Nazarene in Hurricane, West Virginia, March 6 to pack and organize distribution of food boxes to families who needed them. Union members organized such daily operations across the state. Large numbers of volunteers were students.

black lung has roared back, mainly in the southern counties, and is hitting younger miners. Under these conditions pain medication is widely available and southern West Virginia has one the country’s highest rates of opioid overdoses.

Coal mines are reopening

As White guides us along Route 85, we can see many abandoned mines, but we also see some that have reopened. “The one we just passed I didn’t even know about, it must have opened in the last few days,” White said.

“A lot of people here voted for Donald Trump,” he continued. “Clinton said we were ‘deplorables,’ while he talked about the carnage and beautiful coal and said jobs would come back.”

“The strike comes from the same place,” Emily Comer, a teacher in Kanawha County, told a March 10 meeting in New York. “It comes from a place of economic desperation. That’s why people voted for Trump and that’s why people went on strike.”

And for the same rea-

son, workers don’t trust the government. Gov. Jim Justice announced Feb. 27 that he was going to get strikers a 5 percent raise and their union officials said they should go back to work. Strikers used their union — they convened local meetings in all 55 counties, debated it, and voted to stay out on strike. “We don’t trust the legislature,” they said. Their strike stayed solid and nine days later they won.

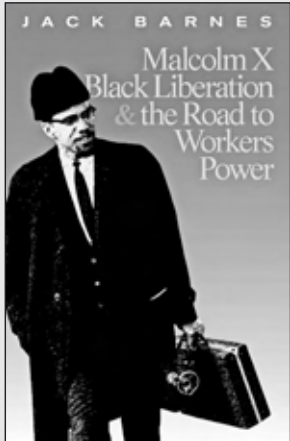


Militant/Emma Johnson

“I hope this starts a movement of working people rising up,” said Phillip Eastep, member of Steelworkers Local 40 in Huntington, West Virginia, picketing with school bus drivers on strike at bus depot in Putnam County March 6. Marsha Armstead, right, was his bus driver when he was in school.

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US rulers face Beijing rivalry

Continued from front page
where around the world.

Tillerson met with government officials in Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria, all countries whose rulers are conducting military action against Islamist forces with Washington's backing. These operations take place against the backdrop of sharpening class antagonisms on the continent built on developing capitalist economic and social relations there.

Prior to the trip, Tillerson said Washington's approach to the continent "stands in contrast to China's," which he claimed "encourages dependency," using "predatory loan practices" that "undercut their sovereignty."

The propertied rulers in both Washington and Beijing compete to exploit the toilers of the continent. Both are driven to extend abroad their profit-driven assaults on working people at home. They seek fields of profitable capital investment to loot the continent's natural resources and to market their exports. In so doing, they impose more debt bondage on the peoples of Africa — with ruinous consequences for working classes there.

Beijing tried to disrupt Tillerson's efforts. At a joint press conference with Moussa Faki Mahamat, chair of the African Union Commission, a reporter from the China Global Television Network pressed him on reports that Trump called Africa a bunch of "s--hole countries."

Contrary to claims in the liberal press that Tillerson's tour was just a "fence-mending" operation to apologize for the U.S. president, Washington aimed to build on its increasing military collaboration with governments in a number of African countries. Over several administrations — Democratic and Republican alike — the U.S. rulers have sought to put down destabilizing threats to their interests.

Acknowledged U.S. troop deployment in Africa rose from some 6,000 last year to 7,500 today. Washington has doubled its forces in Somalia, where they operate alongside Somali troops combating al-Shabab terrorists. U.S. airstrikes there are increasing.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta told Tillerson that Washington should launch a "surge" against al-Shabab, which holds territory in the country's rural areas. He also pressed for a re-

view of the decision to withdraw all African Union troops, including Kenyan forces, from Somalia.

Tillerson met government leaders in Ethiopia, who have been a staunch military ally of Washington. The country is wracked with political instability, growing class antagonisms and tribal divisions. The rulers have been unable to find a replacement for Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, who resigned in February, but hangs on while the struggle over his successor drags on.

Days before Tillerson's arrival, strikes were organized across the Oromia region by opposition forces fighting a government-imposed state of emergency that restricts political activity.

This follows over two years of protests by people in Oromia against government seizure of farmers' lands, high unemployment and suppression of political rights, where over 1,000 people have been killed. For years the governing coalition has been dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, which has sought to limit the influence of parties based on other tribal groups. Tigrayans make up only 6 percent of the country's 100 million people.

Washington has begun construction of a new military base in Niger, where four U.S. special forces troops were killed in a 2017 military reconnaissance mission.

U.S. rulers challenged by Beijing

Chinese bosses replaced their U.S. counterparts as the largest traders across Africa in 2009. The big expansion of Chinese industrial production over the last 35 years has driven Chinese capitalists to seek markets and sources of raw materials abroad. As they've built new factories and large infrastructure projects in several African nations, they have drawn more toilers off the land and into the working class.

Chinese bosses are building roads and hospitals in the Democratic Republic of Congo in exchange for a 68 percent stake in Sicominex — a vast copper and cobalt mine — rather than asking for cash.

Alongside the Chinese-built rail line connecting Addis Ababa with the

Mass march for abortion rights in Argentina March 8



Maxi Luna/Télam

Hundreds of thousands marched in Buenos Aires, Argentina, March 8, International Women's Day, to demand the right of women to choose abortion. The march was organized by the National Campaign for the Right to Safe, Legal and Free Abortion, a coalition of more than 300 organizations that includes women's rights groups, unions and students. The action also protested violence against women and demanded equality.

"We've had mobilizations before, but this is the largest one yet," Marta Alanis, a leader of Catholics for the Right to Choose, told the *Militant* by phone March 12. "The number of very young women with the green bandana of our national campaign for a woman's right to abortion took us by surprise. It was like nothing we've seen before."

Abortion is illegal in Argentina, except if there is a threat to the woman's life or health and in cases of rape. Technically "a woman can sign a statement saying she was raped and she is supposed to be able to get an abortion" with no questions asked, Alanis said, "but in practice many women are not aware of this and many doctors and hospitals will still refuse." Complications from back-alley abortions are the leading cause of maternal deaths in Argentina.

The large turnout also reflects broader social discontent, including with the government's economic "adjustment" measures. The economic crisis today hits women particularly hard, Alanis said.

Argentines are watching carefully what is going on around the world. "We knew about the strike by teachers in West Virginia," she said. "Workers' struggles in the U.S. have often had an impact around the world."

One sign of the campaign's growing strength, Alanis said, is that 70 members of the Argentine Congress from all the political parties have introduced a bill to allow abortion during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy.

— SETH GALINSKY

Red Sea port at Djibouti, thousands of Ethiopians work 13-hour days at the Chinese-owned Huajian shoe factory. Workers there interviewed by Deutsche Welle described the low wages and daily indignities they confront. Abu Ibrahim, a leather cutter at the plant, complained that the bosses constantly berate workers, pressing them to work faster. He said the bosses fired workers who tried to organize a union in 2015.

As the Chinese rulers expand their economic interests in Africa they have begun to establish a military footprint too. Last year Beijing opened its first military base in Africa, in strategically located Djibouti. In September Beijing assigned an additional 8,000 troops to participate in U.N. "peacekeeping" operations in Liberia, Sudan, the Republic of the Congo and in Mali, where they gain combat experience.

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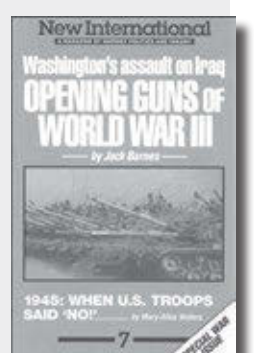
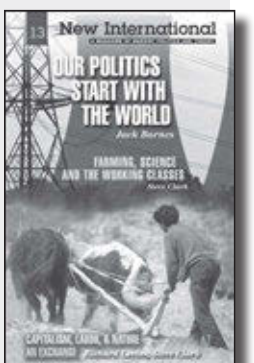
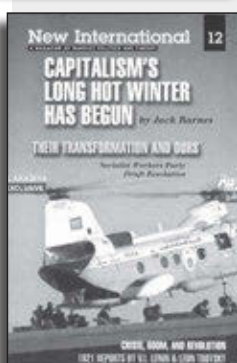
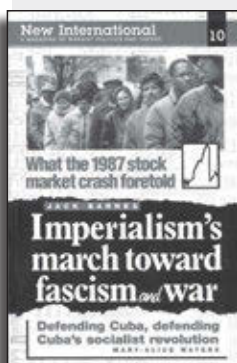
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Bosses disregard for safety led to Washington Amtrak derailment

BY EDWIN FRUIT

SEATTLE — Debate continues in Washington state over who is responsible for the derailment of Amtrak's maiden voyage over new track between Tacoma and Portland, Oregon, that led to the death of three people and injured dozens Dec. 18. While Amtrak bosses insinuate that the train's engineer was responsible, inadequate training, management's hurry to get the service going to generate income and the bosses' disregard for safety lay behind the disaster.

"There's still a lot more that will come out concerning the derailment," John Hiatt, a former Burlington Northern Santa Fe engineer and 25-year veteran railroad accident investigator for the Bremseth Law firm in Minnesota, told the *Militant*. Hiatt lives in Washington and has talked to Amtrak workers there about the accident. "A big concern is that the engineer had only one trip on the throttle in the southbound direction and that was at night."

The National Transportation Safety Board released an interview with the unnamed engineer. He said he had no reservation about his readiness to make the run, that he had operated the equipment on three training runs — one southbound and two going north. He said he knew there was a sharp curve and speed reduction after milepost 18, but that he didn't see the sign.

He said the fact that there was a conductor training on the run on the engine with him didn't distract him. When he did see a sign posted 30 mph he jammed on the brake, but it was too late and the train derailed. He was seriously injured in the accident.

Garrick Freeman, the training conductor on the engine, filed a lawsuit against Amtrak Jan. 3. The suit said Amtrak violated the Federal Employers' Liability Act, which requires management to ensure a workplace free of dangerous conditions. It also said Amtrak bosses failed to adequately train its employees to operate trains safely on the new route. Freeman also was injured in the derailment and spent the month of January in a rehab facility.

Pennie Cottrell, a passenger on the train who suffered broken ribs, a fractured clavicle and internal injuries, filed a lawsuit charging Amtrak management with responsibility. They ran the train after installing Positive Train Control,

which can stop trains that fail to slow down, the suit explains, but they didn't make the system operational.

In response to the public outrage over the Amtrak derailment and deaths, the state Senate Labor and Commerce Committee held hearings on rail safety Feb. 22. A number of rail workers, members of the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation union, known as SMART, testified about unsafe operations BNSF managers pressed on workers.

"I have operated an unsafe train, safely over territory," former engineer Lacy Rodriguez testified. "The reason that I and others have done things like that is because of harassment from the railroad."

Mark McGaffey, a conductor and a safety representative for the SMART union, described a rescue of rail workers his crew had to make after BNSF sent trains out into a blizzard, stranding one crew in a tunnel for 10 hours.

State Sen. Patty Kuderer, from Bellevue, responded to the testimony, saying federal safety rules are stacked against workers, who can't match the money and power of the railroads.

"Their health and safety were threatened, their lives were put in jeopardy for real," she said. "That happened because of decisions made by management at BNSF, and nobody's taking responsibility for it."

Appalachia telecom workers strike against Frontier



Militant

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. — Some 1,400 members of the Communications Workers of America have been walking the picket line here, across the state and in Ashburn, Virginia, since March 4, after 10 months of negotiations for a new contract between the union and Frontier Communications broke down. The contract had been extended twice since it expired in August.

Since Frontier bought Verizon's landline operations in West Virginia in 2010, the company has slashed 500 jobs.

The two dozen strikers walking the line say they get a lot of solidarity. One woman stopped by to show a large photo of her husband picketing during the 1983 nationwide telephone workers strike by the CWA and a coalition of other unions. Cars passing by honk in support.

"We're energized, we're not moving," Brandon Simmons, a cable splicer and union steward with CWA Local 2105, told the *Militant*. "The company wants to contract out the call center jobs. We're fighting for everybody's job security. The teachers have been extremely supportive."

— NED MEASEL

Ky. teachers fight threat of government pension cuts

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Following the example of school workers in West Virginia, over a 1,000 teachers, retirees, other public workers and their supporters crowded the state Capitol in Frankfort, Kentucky, March 12, protesting a bill brought before the state Senate that would slash retired teachers pensions and their cost of living adjustments. The rally was called, "The People's Movement — United We Stand."

The proposed pension cuts hit teachers particularly hard, as they're not covered by Social Security.

"We've got to fill up this building everyday," Josh Trosper, assistant principal at Knox Central High School, told the *Lexington Herald-Leader*. "We've got to be loud, we've got to fight back."

Because of low pay and bad conditions, Kentucky schools have already lost hundreds of teachers. Lisa Poor, a school librarian and member of the Campbell County Education Association, said she has to work at a number of schools because district administrators say they can't afford to staff each one.

The Senate was scheduled to vote on the bill three days earlier, but in the face of protesting teachers and others packing the Capitol, legislators decided to send it back to the committee. Senate and House leaders said they didn't know when it would be taken up again, clearly hoping the protests will go away.

Among the rally sponsors were Kentucky Education Association, the state AFL-CIO, Teamsters, Service Employees International Union and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 29, 1993

LOS ANGELES — Rodney King's testimony in the trial of the four cops who brutalized him dealt a setback to the racist campaign by the police and government officials to turn him from victim into criminal.

King's testimony confirmed what was plain to see in the famous videotape of the incident — that he was the victim of police violence, not a "PCP-crazed giant" who posed a threat to the cops, as the defense has systematically and falsely argued.

In his testimony King reaffirmed that, after the police stopped him on the night of March 3, 1991, he fully complied with commands given to him by the cops.

He told the court that he did not try to resist arrest, nor did he attempt to attack the cops, as the defense lawyers have claimed. "I was trying to stay alive," he said, "and they never gave me a chance to stay still."



March 25, 1968

The University of Rome has been occupied by its students for 47 days now, and the struggle between the students and the Italian government is far from over.

The major grievances of the students are directed against the archaic structure of the universities and the authoritarianism of the professors and the administration. In Rome, there are close to 70,000 students enrolled at the University, and there is physical room for only 6,000.

The students are not alone in this fight, which began in Turin and rapidly spread across the country. Last week every single public university was occupied by the students; university education had come to a standstill; the struggle was spreading to the high schools; attempts to use police power to force the reopening of the universities had brought only more determined resistance from the students.

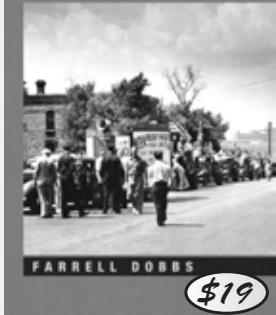


March 27, 1943

No matter what the final version of the motion picture, "Mission to Moscow," will show when it is presented on the screen a few weeks from now, it has been definitely established that the purpose of its authors, advisers and producers was to film the biggest frame-up lie in the history of motion pictures.

Warner Brothers produced the picture from the book by ex-Ambassador Joseph E. Davies. The book and film give the official Stalinist version of the infamous Moscow Trials of 1936-37, which were staged to discredit and eliminate many of the working class opponents of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR, and were rejected by world labor opinion as crude frame-ups. The trials were filled with all kinds of false charges against [Russian revolutionary leader Leon] Trotsky, all of which were later irrefutably disproved.

TEAMSTER POLITICS



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

— Farrell Dobbs

pathfinderpress.com

Revolution in Burkina Faso

Continued from front page

and Farsi,” he said. Dujany had invited Pathfinder to have a table at the seminar, and at every showing of the play.

The Pathfinder table featured an attractive display of photographs and quotes from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, *We Are Heirs of the World's Revolutions* and *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*. The table was mobbed. Participants bought 104 books by Sankara, 142 books in all, and two subscriptions to the *Militant*. A dozen people left their contact information, saying they'd get books when they went to the play or volunteering to help get the books around.

A former colony of France, Burkina Faso — then called Upper Volta — with more than 7 million inhabitants was among the world's poorest countries. Under Sankara's leadership, the revolutionary government mobilized peasants, workers, craftsmen, women and youth to carry out literacy and immunization drives; to

combat the oppression of women; end exploitative relations on the land; to sink wells, plant trees, build dams, erect housing; to free themselves from the imperialist yoke and stand with all those engaged in that fight internationally.

“The most important thing for us,” said Sankara, “is the transformation of people's attitudes.” Each Burkinabè “feels that wielding power is now his business.”

Sankara fought for a world built on different economic and social foundations. They can't be created by “technocrats,” “financial wizards,” or “politicians,” but only by masses of workers and peasants whose labor, joined with the riches



Militant photos by Jonathan Silberman

Participants at March 6 meeting at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies hear about Thomas Sankara, leader of 1983 revolution in Burkina Faso, a powerful example for toilers today. Inset, Ike Chuks, actor who plays Sankara in upcoming play, reciting speeches by Sankara.



of nature, is the source of all wealth, Mary-Alice Waters, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S. and president of Pathfinder Press, said

at a 2005 presentation of one of Sankara's books in Cuba. “Sankara stood out among the leaders of the struggles for national liberation in Africa in the last half of the 20th century because he was a communist.”

“Sankara was not only a leader of the people of Africa. He was not only a spokesman for the oppressed and exploited of the semicolonial countries,” she said. “He gave leadership to working people in the imperialist world as well.”

The revolution was overthrown on Oct. 15, 1987, when Sankara and a number of other leaders were slain in a counterrevolutionary coup organized by Blaise Compaoré.

Panelists at the seminar included Becky Branford, a journalist at BBC News who had met Sankara when she won a “young journalist of the year” award at age 16 and was sent to Burkina Faso; Lamine Konkobo, a youth in Burkina Faso during the revolution and today a journalist for BBC Afrique; Rachel Oliver of Positive Money UK; and Dujany. The event was chaired by Seraphin Kamdem, a senior fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

The highlight of the night was a five minute monologue from Sankara's speeches taken from the play and delivered by Ike Chuks, who plays the title role. Chuks and the rest of the cast were in the front row at the seminar. As Chuks concluded, they broke into anti-imperialist chants, joined by the bulk of the audience.

NY Forum: ‘Sankara spoke for oppressed and exploited’

BY LEA SHERMAN

NEW YORK — “Thomas Sankara spoke for the oppressed and exploited, and against the imperialist world order, which he showed can be fought and explained must be replaced,” Socialist Workers Party speaker Peter Thierjung told some 40 participants at a March 3 Militant Labor Forum here. “Thomas Sankara and the Political Awakening of Working People in the U.S. and Africa” was the title.

In recent months, Thierjung said, massive protests against government repression, corruption, for democratic rights, and for relief from the economic and social devastation wracking the African continent have taken place in Chad, Togo, the Congo, Zimbabwe, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Gabon, Cameroon and Ethiopia.

“And in the U.S. discontent among working people has also been deepening. Like toilers in Africa, millions here are searching for answers and alternatives to a capitalist world order they don't yet fully understand,” he said. The forum was held as West Virginia teachers were waging their successful strike.

“Sankara and the Burkina Faso Revolution stand as examples of what is possible, not only for Africa, but for working people the world over, including right here in the U.S.,” Thierjung said.

At the age of 33, Sankara led a popular uprising in the West African nation of Burkina Faso, one of the world's poorest countries.

From meetings with farmers in Burkina Faso to speaking before the United Nations, Sankara denounced imperialist interference in the colonial world. He joined Fidel Castro to champion the fight to renounce the debt the imperialist rulers saddled the people of Africa and the rest of the semicolonial world with.

“Sankara stands out because he was a communist,” Thierjung said. “He didn't reject Marxism as European ideas. He drew on the lessons of previous revolutionary struggles, including the American, French and the 1917 Russian revolutions, and the Cuba Revolution.”

The SWP responded to the Burkinabè

Revolution by sending reporting teams to the country and campaigning with articles in the *Militant* that told the truth about the unfolding revolution. “We printed Sankara's speeches for all to read,” he said.

On Oct. 15, 1987, Capt. Blaise Compaoré, a close associate of Sankara, carried out a military coup, murdering Sankara and 12 of his aides, destroying the revolutionary government from within. In 2014, Compaoré was driven from power by a popular uprising after 27 years of dictatorial rule. “The question posed today is what course forward now for the toilers,” Thierjung said.

“Since Sankara's murder, the SWP has fought to prevent his enemies from burying his example and the lessons of the revolution,” Thierjung said. Pathfinder Press rapidly published *Thomas Sankara Speaks* to get his speeches and interviews in print. Hundreds attended meetings to launch the book in New York; London; Stockholm; Montreal; Toronto; Lyon, France; Sydney; and Auckland, New Zealand.

Thomas Sankara Parle, a French edition, has since been published, along with *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* and *We Are Heirs of the World's Revolutions*, in French, English, Spanish and Farsi. They're among Pathfinder's most popular titles.

The books contain speeches like “Building a New Society, Rid of Social Injustice and Imperialist Domination”; “The Revolution Cannot Triumph Without the Emancipation of Women”; and “Our Struggle Draws Strength from Cuba's Example and Support.”

“When African workers here — and there are tens of thousands in the U.S. today — see the books with Sankara's picture on the cover, they say things like ‘That's my man, that's my president,’” Thierjung said. He described a recent discussion with a New York cab driver from Mali who drove him to the new movie “Burkinabè Rising.” He was excited to know about workers in the U.S. who promote books by Sankara. He bought *We Are Heirs of the World's Revolutions* and kicked in a \$5 contribution.

“A revolution is being prepared in the U.S. by the deep-going crisis of the capitalist system,” Thierjung said. “The SWP aims to help prepare the working class for what is coming. Reading and studying Thomas Sankara, along with books by Fidel Castro, V.I. Lenin, Malcolm X and leaders of the Socialist Workers Party is important to charting a course forward.”

“Thomas Sankara stands out from other African leaders. The course he charted was an example for working people, not only in Burkina Faso and Africa, but everywhere in the world,” Mary-Alice Waters, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and author of the preface to *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, said in the discussion. “Every revolutionary struggle has its own conditions and history. But no revolution triumphs without battles through which working people develop confidence and pride in ourselves. Battles through which we transform ourselves. And that's the course of struggle Sankara led.”

Sankara's books — and many more on lessons on past revolutionary struggles and key political questions facing working people today — are available from SWP branches listed on page 8 or at www.pathfinderpress.com.

Recommended Reading

Speeches of Thomas Sankara: Thomas Sankara Speaks

The Burkina Faso Revolution, 1983-87
In English and French. \$24

We Are Heirs of the World's Revolutions

In English, French, Spanish, Farsi. \$10

Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle

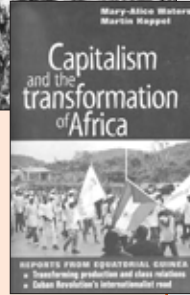
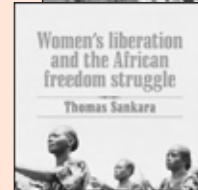
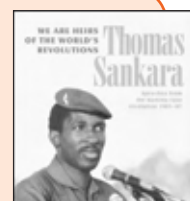
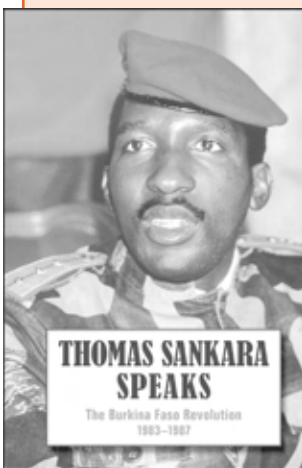
In English, French, Spanish, Farsi. \$8

Also recommended: Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa

by Mary-Alice Waters and Martin Koppel

Reports from Equatorial Guinea: Transforming production and class relations; The Cuban Revolution's internationalist road.

In English, Spanish, Farsi. \$10



Growing conflicts between Iran, Israel mark Mideast wars

BY TERRY EVANS

Decadeslong conflicts between the capitalist rulers of Iran and Israel have sharpened as Tehran expands its military presence in Syria. At home the Iranian rulers confront growing working-class opposition to their wars abroad, and also to their enforcement of second-class status for women.

Israel's indispensable place as a refuge for Jews in face of the global rise in Jew-hatred and anti-Semitic violence has been targeted by the counterrevolutionary rulers in Tehran for decades. Putting themselves and their Hezbollah allies in Lebanon in a better position to threaten the people of Israel has been a central goal driving their intervention in Syria.

Israeli officials say Tehran has established at least 10 military bases inside Syria, stationing Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces near the Israeli border. Tel Aviv responded rapidly to a drone dispatched into Israeli airspace by Iranian forces with airstrikes Feb. 10 on Iranian troops in Tiyaas military airbase near Palmyra, Syria. Iranian Brig. Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh boasted March 7 that Tehran has increased its production of ballistic missiles threefold.

Washington and Tel Aviv demand Tehran restrict production of these weapons and end the presence of its military forces and militias in Syria. The U.S. rulers continue to deploy their own troops and massive firepower there to protect their imperialist interests in the region and to counter Tehran.

Revolution ousts U.S.-backed shah

Iranian workers and peasants rose up in a popular revolution in 1979, overthrowing the dictatorship of the U.S.-backed shah. The revolution opened up political space for workers, landless peasants, women, oppressed nationalities like the Kurds, and communists. Iran's capitalist rulers, led by Shiite clerical forces, carried through a counterrevolution in the early 1980s to push back what working people had conquered.

To preserve their rule at home, the capitalist rulers have been driven to extend their counterrevolutionary influence abroad — backing Hezbollah and later intervening in bloody wars in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Tehran-backed forces and Moscow's airstrikes were decisive in shoring up the Bashar al-Assad dictatorship in Syria. Through its intervention there Tehran carved out a corridor to channel more advanced weapons to Hezbollah.

Tehran-backed militias are helping Assad retake parts of the Syrian Golan Heights, positioning their forces closer to Israel's border. The rest of the Golan Heights was captured by Israel during



Reuters/Baz Ratner

Photo taken from Israel, less than a mile from pro-Assad forces shelling opposition-held town Jubata Al Khashab in Syrian Golan Heights in 2016.

its 1967 war against Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Tel Aviv provides aid to Syrian opposition forces that hold parts of the Syrian Golan Heights. The Israeli rulers seek to create a buffer between Israel and Iranian-backed forces operating in Syria.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has repeatedly called for the destruction of Israel, for driving the Jews into the sea. He denies that the Holocaust took place, the murder of 6 million Jews by Nazis in Germany and their thugs in Europe following a crushing defeat of the working class there. Tehran's allies — from Hezbollah to Hamas, to those leading Houthi forces in Yemen — echo Khamenei's Jew-hating tirades.

In response to Tehran's rising military clout, the Israeli rulers have sought allies among Arab governments in the region. This includes the ruling capitalist monarchy in Saudi Arabia, which previously insisted that its relations with Tel Aviv depended on Israel's withdrawal from territories seized during the 1967 war. Increasingly the Sunni rulers in Saudi Arabia and Tel Aviv share an interest in pushing back a common foe — Tehran. In November Israeli military chief Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot told Saudi newspaper *Elaph* that Tel Aviv would share military intelligence with Riyadh to help curb Tehran.

The bourgeois rulers in Saudi Arabia have long shunned the state of Israel, claiming to speak for the Palestinian people who have been pushed into refugee camps across the region and Balkanized on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Road forward for toilers in Mideast

"Immediate talks to recognize both Israel and an independent Palestinian state" is a precondition for progress for working people in the Middle East, a Dec. 11, 2017, statement by the Socialist Workers Party National Committee explains.

"It is along this road that working people of all national backgrounds, religious beliefs and political allegiances in Israel and Palestine can use and defend their space to speak, organize and begin redressing the blood-drenched legacy of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation," the statement says. "These historic outrages include ruthless colonial and national oppression across the Arab and Muslim countries, as well as the genocidal crimes of the Holocaust, the murderous pogroms preceding it across Eastern and Central Europe and Russia, and the enduring reality of Jew-hatred in today's crisis-ridden capitalist world."

Conflicts between different wings of

Iran's capitalist rulers help keep space open for working people to advance their interests there. Khamenei blamed "ignorant" elites — rivals around President Hassan Rouhani — for encouraging recent protests against restrictive dress codes for women.

In February Rouhani, who was one of the architects of these restrictions, released a 2014 opinion poll showing that nearly half of those asked thought what women wear should be a private matter. The study also revealed a sharp decline since 2006 in the number of people who thought women should face charges and prison for not wearing a hijab.

Individual protests against anti-woman dress codes spread across the country earlier this year in the weeks following working-class unrest over the impact of Tehran's wars.

Enforcing the clerics' edicts on wom-

en's attire was a product of the counter-revolution carried through by the country's capitalist rulers, not a consequence of the 1979 revolution, as they are falsely described in the press. Millions of women participated in that working-class rebellion, gaining confidence to advance the fight for women's rights. The regime wasn't able to deny women the right to choose whether or not to wear the hijab until 1983. One product of the revolution that the rulers never reversed was the growing number of women who entered the workforce.

In the wake of the widespread December and January working-class protests against Tehran's wars more unrest is percolating. The *New York Times* reports that hundreds of steelworkers employed at the Iran National Steel Group who had gone unpaid for months took strike action in early March.

Kurds worldwide protest against Ankara's assault on Afrin



CrowdSpark/Quentin Vernault

Thousands of people responded around the world to calls for protests against the Turkish government's bombing and invasion of the Kurdish province of Afrin, in Syria, March 11 and 12. Actions took place in Rennes, France, left, and dozens of other cities in Europe, North America and in the Kurdish au-

tonomous region in Iraq. Kurds and their supporters also took to the streets in five cities in Iran, according to the Kurdistan Human Rights Network. — T.E.

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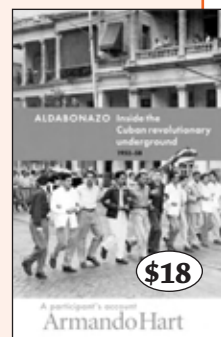
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— Socialist Workers Party statement —

- 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

Cosmetics, fashions and the oppression of women today

In honor of International Women's Day March 8, the Militant is reprinting an excerpt from the preface to the Cuban edition of *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women* by Evelyn Reed, Joseph Hansen, and Mary-Alice Waters. The Cuban publishing house Ciencias Sociales launched the Spanish-language edition at the Havana International Book Fair in February 2011. The English edition — published in 1986 — is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March. The preface is copyright © 2010 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Two questions asked by thoughtful readers since the initial publication of *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women* are useful to consider.

First, are questions addressed in a debate over cosmetics and fashions more than fifty years ago still relevant? Aren't they long bypassed?

Second, isn't Reed's article on "Anthropology: Marxist or Bourgeois?" outdated? Hasn't knowledge of the earliest human societies moved far beyond what was known in the mid-1950s?

The response to the first question is underscored by Hansen's rhetorical question in "The Fetish of Cosmetics."



"Impact of the twenty-first century capitalist advertising industry is more insidious as it spreads into areas of globe previously buffered to some extent from imperialist world market. In large areas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, siren song of the commodity fetish is an imperialist weapon like none other," writes Mary-Alice Waters in *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women*. Evelyn Reed explains how norms of beauty and fashion are above all class questions and how their ever-changing standards perpetuate women's oppression.

In the whole history of capitalism, he asks, "has the bourgeoisie ever gone about cultivating the fetish of commodities more cold-bloodedly than American big business?" ...

The "marketing" Hansen pokes such fun at in the 1950s seems amateur by comparison to the sales techniques employed today. "Shop until you drop" has gone from being a humorous exaggeration to a description of an actual social condition pushing increasing numbers of working-class families into more and more debt at usurious rates.

The impact of the twenty-first century capitalist advertising "industry" is, if anything, even more insidious as it spreads into areas of the globe previously buffered to some extent from the imperialist world market. In large areas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, marked by imperialist-enforced agricultural and industrial underdevelopment, as well as in countries previously part of the now-defunct economic and trading bloc once dominated by the Soviet Union, the siren song of the commodity fetish is an imperialist weapon like none other.

In the eloquent words of the Communist Manifesto, "the cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which [the bourgeoisie] batters down all Chinese walls. ... It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one

word, it creates a world after its own image."

As the not-so-outdated polemic of the 1950s makes clear, in periods of working-class retreat such as we have lived through the last quarter century — a period of retreat far longer and more devastating than the relatively brief post-World War II interlude — the "heavy artillery" of capitalism takes its greatest toll, including among the most politically conscious layers.

The answer to the second question is equally important. ...

The focus of the sharp polemic in *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women* is what Reed often referred to as the "Hundred-Year War in Anthropology." Here, as elsewhere, Reed defends the historical materialism of nineteenth-century anthropologist Lewis Morgan, whose work Karl Marx and Frederick Engels drew on extensively in their writings on the subject, and Morgan's twentieth-century continuator Robert Briffault.

As Reed points out, one of the major battle lines in this century-plus war over historical materialism has been the question, does something akin to the modern bourgeois "patriarchal system of marriage and family relations [go] all the way back to the animal kingdom"? Or did what is often referred to as "patriarchy," and the second-class status of women, arise in relatively recent times, on the scale of evolution, as a cornerstone of class-divided societies? As private rather than communal

property came to dominate all social relations, including those between men and women, didn't a small handful of men emerge for the first time as a ruling class, subjugating other men — and, in the process, women as well?

"Concealed behind the debate," Reed explains, is "a question of class struggle and class ideology."

If class society and the accompanying subordinate status of women is only a stage of human history, one that arose at a certain historical juncture for specific reasons, then it can be eliminated at another historical juncture for other specific reasons.

If there has been an evolution of social relations through distinct stages of the prehistory and history of human society, determined by increasing levels of labor productivity and changing property relations — and accompanied by enormous, and extended, conflict and violence — *then capitalism is no more permanent than the property and social relations that preceded it*.

Those studying and writing today about the development of social labor and the earliest stages of social organization are able to draw on a larger and richer body of research than the earliest anthropologists, or even those of Reed's generation. Of that there is no doubt. Light will continue to be shed on the complexities and variety of human social evolution. But as Reed points out, recognition of diversity "is no substitute for probing into social history and explaining the *evolution* of human society as it advanced through the ages."

To argue that different marriage forms are found in the relics of primitive groups the world over, thus "all you have to do is pay your money and take your choice," Reed explains, is like saying "that because there are still relics today of feudalistic and even slave class relations, there was no historical sequence of chattel slavery, feudalism, and capitalism; that all we have is merely a 'diversity of forms.'"

The hundred-years war in anthropology is far from over. If anything, the dominance today of "politically correct" ideologues, comfortable in their middle-class academic and professional sanctuaries, who dissolve difficult questions of history and the forms of class struggle into the soothing balm of "cultural diversity," only sharpens the debate.

March

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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The Militant March 26, 2018

Join, learn from workers in struggle!

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with them everywhere! This is the road to organize and strengthen the labor movement, cut across the divisions the bosses and their government try to impose on us and open up space for workers to make gains.

Workers across the country looked at West Virginia. Teachers, bus drivers, cooks and other school workers there went on a nine-day strike — a strike the state government said was illegal — and won. They built a broad social movement of working people and our allies. It’s a breath of fresh air.

Inspired by the victory and the way it was won — with careful preparation, discipline, unity, through the unions, reaching out for support — teachers and other workers elsewhere are stepping up their own fights for better wages, health care, pensions and dignity.

How did the workers in West Virginia win? Standing on the shoulders of the tradition of class struggle waged by union coal miners, they organized to win broad support from parents, students, farmers and other workers. At the initiative of the teachers, food distribution and day care for students were organized. They relied on their own strength, not on promises from capitalist politicians.

From coast to coast and around the globe, the bosses and their governments have been making working people pay for the capitalist economic crisis. They lock us out, break our unions, get their Democratic and Re-

publican brethren to pass laws that smother us in red tape. Too often, union officials tell us we shouldn’t fight, we can’t win, and to rely on the politicians. Our unions get smaller and weaker — a little over 6 percent of workers in private industry are organized today.

Small towns have been devastated by factory closings. Drug addiction is ravaging sections of the working class from rural areas to big cities. Seeking to divide us and keep wages down, the rulers in Washington arrest and deport workers without “proper” papers.

Millions of workers are looking for answers in the face of the social and moral crisis of capitalism. They are beginning to learn through our own experience that there are two opposing classes — the capitalist rulers and the working people, who have nothing but their hands and their millions-strong numbers.

Look to the lessons of past class battles. We strongly recommend you read, study and emulate the example of the revolutionary-minded Teamsters union in the Midwest in the 1930s recorded in the four-volume *Teamsters* series by Farrell Dobbs, one of the central leaders of these battles and of the Socialist Workers Party. Get them from party branches listed on page 8, or pathfinderpress.com.

Build on the victory in West Virginia! Organize the unorganized! Solidarity with the school workers in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Mississippi and Arizona! An injury to one is an injury to all. And a victory for one is a victory for all.

Washington, NKorea agree to start talks

Continued from front page

“committed” to keeping up the pressure.

Chung met with Xi in Beijing four days later. “That we were able to get to this stage shows China has played an important role,” Chung told the press.

As a result of years of sanctions by Washington and the U.N., some 90 percent of North Korean trade today is with China. Beijing’s stepped-up implementation of the sanctions over the last six months has had a major impact on the North, hitting hardest on working people. The U.S.-led sanctions has resulted in factory closings, the forced return of North Koreans working abroad who have been terminated, and food shortages.

The liberal media, Democrats and some Republican opponents of Trump — who view all politics through the prism of “resistance” to his presidency — have insisted his administration didn’t know what it was doing and his bellicose verbiage risked leading to war. Many have now turned full circle, saying Trump has caved in to the North.

And they insist President Trump will screw them up. “This is stunning: President Trump has accepted an invitation from Kim Jong-un for a summit,” wrote *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof March 8, calling it “a dangerous gamble and a bad idea.”

“I can’t believe I’m saying that,” he added, noting that for years he’s argued for direct talks between the two governments. But now he’s terrified that it’s Trump, God forbid, who will be negotiating.

“The Republic of Korea, the United States, and our partners stand together in insisting that we not repeat the mistakes of the past,” South Korean security adviser Chung said. One of those mistakes in their view is the way the 1994 agreement between Pyongyang and the U.S. administration of Bill Clinton worked out.

At that time, the North Korean government agreed to halt the development of electricity-generating nuclear reactors that produce plutonium that could be used in nuclear weapons. In exchange, the U.S. government agreed to construct two light-water reactors that generate electricity while producing little recoverable plutonium, deliver heavy oil to generate power until the reactors were built, suspend annual U.S.-South

Korea military exercises, and provide assurances that it would neither threaten nor use nuclear weapons.

The *Financial Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and all the pundits claim that the 1994 agreement failed because of “cheating” by Pyongyang.

But it failed because Washington didn’t honor its side of the bargain. The light-water reactors were never completed. In January 2002, President George W. Bush labeled North Korea part of an “axis of evil” and said Washington was no longer bound by the earlier promises to not use nuclear weapons. At the end of the year, Washington halted oil shipments to the North. The agreement was dead.

US rulers’ long war against Korea

Korea was divided against the will of the Korean people at the end of the second imperialist world war, when Washington, with the collusion of the Stalinist regime in Moscow, occupied the southern half of the country and installed the Syngman Rhee dictatorship.

After the outbreak of the 1950-53 Korean War, Washington and allied U.N. troops drove through the North, almost to the Chinese border. U.S. bombers leveled almost every building in the North. They dropped tons of napalm, burning people alive. More than 4 million people, including 2 million civilians, were killed. But North Korean soldiers, helped by Chinese volunteers, pushed the U.S. Army back to the 38th parallel, dealing U.S. imperialism its first military defeat.

To this day Washington refuses to sign a peace treaty with the North and still has 28,500 troops based in the South.

Pyongyang developed nuclear weapons, saying that having them was necessary to prevent a U.S. attack. But possessing nuclear weapons — and threatening to use them against South Korea and the U.S. — undercuts the moral high ground the Korean people had won from decades of standing up to U.S. imperialism.

The Socialist Workers Party has opposed U.S. imperialism’s intervention in Korea and its artificial division into two countries from the beginning.

In a Feb. 15 letter to the Korean people on behalf of the National Committee of the SWP, Steve Clark reaffirmed the party’s commitment to stand with them, demanding the U.S. rulers sign a peace treaty; end the “provocative and threatening” annual joint U.S.-South Korean war maneuvers; withdraw all U.S. troops and armaments from Korea’s soil, skies and waters; and end all the economic sanctions against North Korea.

Join the fight for a Korean Peninsula and Pacific Ocean free of all nuclear weapons!

Jobs spur confidence

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have higher than average inflation, the bottom half suffers a much higher inflation rate than the overall national average.”

According to the government’s Consumer Price Index, overall inflation over the past 20 years totaled 55.6 percent. Median wages barely went above this figure, with housing and food not far behind. Increases for medical care and child care were more than double the inflation figure. Costs for “hospital services” went up close to 250 percent. At the same time, clothes, household furnishings, TVs, cellphones and software technology declined in prices — big-ticket items that workers can set aside to make ends meet.

The government’s “core” Consumer Price Index rate, which excludes items that eat up higher percentages of workers’ wages, like food and gas to drive to work, was up 1.8 percent over the past year. But average weekly wages didn’t keep pace, rising only 0.4 percent, according to the Labor Department.

Many workers are forced to turn to credit cards or “payday” loans to get by, and rapidly find themselves saddled with rising interest payments and debt.

One reflection of workers feeling they can find better paying work was reflected when the Labor Department announced 313,000 jobs were created in February. As workers look for better options, there’s a shortage in some of the lowest paying and most grueling jobs. That includes farmworkers, so crops are rotting in the fields, *Fortune* magazine reported. Farmers in California and elsewhere are pressing Washington to let in more immigrants, one way or another.

There is a sharp shortage of thousands of long-haul truckers, as higher wages for some is boosting spending and production. But, “it’s a hard life,” driver Greg Gedenberg told CBS News at a truck stop on I-80 in Iowa. “I mean, I’ve got a 36-inch box that I’m sleeping in, in the back of my truck.”

“I think if they want to hire more drivers,” he said, “they’re gonna have to increase the pay.” But fleet owners are resistant, fighting to defend profits amid rising competition.

Pay for U.S. bosses and their henchmen on the shop floor have skyrocketed. From 1978 to 2013, compensation packages for corporate CEOs rose 937 percent. The top bosses at the five largest banks were paid on average \$25.3 million last year, up 17 percent from 2016.

‘Wages have hardly budged’

“Even after eight years of economic recovery and steady private-sector job growth, wages for most Americans have hardly budged,” reported the *New York Times* Feb. 28.

In some areas where one major employer dominates the market, like Walmart in many small towns or coal companies in West Virginia, bosses have pressured workers to sign contracts with “noncompete clauses” that limit workers’ ability to find new jobs after leaving an old one. One in five workers with a high school education or less are saddled with these restrictions.

This situation results from the fact that bosses have taken advantage of the weakening of workers’ unions today. The number of unionized manufacturing workers fell from 15 to less than 10 percent over the last 15 years.

While the number of unionized workers overall has fallen by 2.9 million since 1983, the number of workers grew from 88 million to 133 million, the government says.

The official unemployment rate for February is at a near-record low of 4.1 percent, but this figure excludes workers eliminated from the workforce because they’ve been out of work long-term. The so-called labor force participation rate — those employed or actively looking for work — was 63 percent in February, just a small increase during the capitalist “recovery” and still near its lowest level since the late 1970s. And some 5.2 million people wanting full-time work are employed part time.

Meanwhile, credit card debt has reached a seven-year high. In the fourth quarter of 2017 credit cards accounted for 59 percent of all loans written off by the banks as uncollectable, some \$11.9 billion. Overall consumer debt, excluding mortgages and other home loans, rose 5.5 percent from a year earlier to \$3.82 trillion, the highest on record.

‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

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