

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
**Revolution, counterrevolution
 and war in Iran**

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 82/NO. 13 APRIL 2, 2018

SWP drive to expand reach of 'Militant,' books begins

BY DAN FEIN

The Socialist Workers Party begins an eight-week drive, March 24-May 22, to take its political program and activities deeper into the working class — winning 1,400 subscribers to the party's paper, the *Militant*, and selling the same number of books on revolutionary politics by party leaders. Join us in expanding the party's reach! As part of the campaign we'll raise \$112,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund.

Members of the Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and others who look to the party around the world, will join in the party-building effort.

The party's campaign takes place following the successful nine-day strike battle by teachers and school workers across West Virginia. Workers picked up by that struggle are

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US rulers seek Israel-Arab bloc to target Tehran

BY TERRY EVANS

The White House hosted a meeting with Israeli officials and representatives of seven Arab governments March 13 to discuss the prolonged and worsening crisis in the Gaza Strip. While the ostensible topic was humanitarian aid, the goals were political.

"The situation in Gaza must be solved for humanitarian reasons and for ensuring the security of Egypt and Israel," the White House said in a statement.

The conference was a way for Washington to draw Mideast allies further into common discussions as it seeks both to combat Tehran's rising military presence in the region and to advance a new Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

The governments of Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia — who say they do not have relations with Israel — attended the meeting.

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Teachers build movement to fight government attacks



AP Photo/Bruce Schreiner

"This fight is worth fighting," teachers and supporters chant at March 21 protest in Kentucky capital.

School workers mobilize in Oklahoma, Arizona, Kentucky

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

STILLWATER, Okla. — The next showdown in the battle pitting teachers and other school workers against state governments is shaping up in Oklahoma. As the April 2 strike deadline approaches, support is building and preparations put in place. Inspiration from the West Virginia strike victory, where members in different unions stood together and organized a broad social movement in a nine-day walkout, has mobilized workers here.

"This is the right thing to do,"

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Join March 28, April 2 school worker protests!

After a decade without a raise and facing ongoing attacks on their health care, Oklahoma teachers and state workers plan to strike April 2, with a mass rally that day in Oklahoma

EDITORIAL

City. Arizona teachers fighting similar conditions have called for a protest at the state Capitol in Phoenix March 28 from 4 to 7 p.m. Dozens of schools in Kentucky shut down March 21 as teachers walked out and protested in

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Idaho silver miners mark one year on strike against Hecla



Spokesman-Review via AP/Becky Kramer

March 17 protest in Mullan, Idaho, shows silver miners' determination to continue their strike.

BY EDWIN FRUIT

MULLAN, Idaho — Chanting "One year longer, one year stronger!" and "Mullan is a union town!" over 150 silver miners, family members and supporters marched here March 17, marking the one-year anniversary of the strike by United Steelworkers Local 5114 against Hecla Mining Company. The miners were forced out on strike when the company moved to unilaterally impose unsafe operations under a new contract the union had voted down.

Hecla bosses want to gut the union-

enforced system under which workers bid on job crews based on seniority, a system miners say helps protect their safety and lives. The company also wanted to increase miners' medical insurance payments and cut bonuses and silver premiums, an important part of what miners take home.

On March 7 the unionists voted 123-51 to oppose handing the contract battle over to arbitration. "We don't want a panel of federal judges who have never seen the inside of a mine to make decisions affecting our

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Toys 'R' Us to shut down US stores, put 33,000 workers out on the street

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Facing stiff competition from retail giants Walmart and Amazon, whose head-to-head battle for top dog is hitting other retailers hard, Toys "R" Us announced March 15 that it is closing all 800 of its U.S. stores, throwing 33,000 workers to the curb.

The company declared bankruptcy in September, saddled with a more than \$5 billion debt from a leveraged buyout in 2005 by Vornado Realty Trust and private equity firms Bain Capital and KKR & Co. The new owners hoped to see company bosses return the company to profitability by "cutting costs" — code words for going after workers' jobs, wages and conditions.

"With debt payments siphoning off cash every year," the *New York Times* reported, "Toys 'R' Us could not properly invest in its worn-out suburban stores or outdated website. Sales plummeted, as Amazon cap-

tured children's desires — and their parents' wallets."

In aggressively pushing its toy sales, Amazon set up a comprehensive, online showroom. Seeking not to be outflanked, Walmart has been dropping its prices to capture more of the market share. In 2016, Toys "R" Us

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Dean Foods tells dairy farmers 'We no longer want your milk'

BY KAY MCFADDEN

More than 140 dairy farmers across eight states took another blow this month. As these farmers are now into the fourth year of low milk prices, Dean Foods, one of the country's major processors, sent them a letter saying that the company will stop buying their milk May 31.

The letter, which was received by farmers in Indiana, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, gave them just 90 days' notice before they'll be cut off.

"It's kind of dirty," Sweetwater, Tennessee, farmer Caleb Watson told *USA Today* March 13, commenting on the way Dean Foods is treating him. "Ninety days ain't much for a dairy farmer to make a decision like this."

Dean Foods says that increased national milk production, decreased demand and competition from a new Walmart milk-processing plant in Indiana are the reasons they are cutting back on purchases. The company intends to rely on fewer but larger farm businesses with bigger herds that produce more and charge less.

After a milk shortage in 2014 led to higher prices, many dairy farmers plowed money into expanding their herds and production, increasing their debt. This created a glut and led to massive milk dumping by farmers in 2016 — 43 million gallons — and financial ruin for many.

Prices have remained depressed, falling below farmers' cost of production for more than three years.

"We're trying to weather the

storm, but the storm just got a little rougher," Joe Kelsay, a dairy farmer in Indiana cut off by Dean, told the *Progressive Dairyman*.

As milk prices contracted, several major retailers moved to cut out middlemen like Dean. Kroger Co. — the largest U.S. supermarket chain — and Albertsons both put hundreds of millions of dollars into opening their own in-house milk processing plants. And now Walmart, which competes with just about everybody for just about everything and is the largest seller of groceries in the U.S., is doing the same.

Farmers dropped by Dean Foods are trying to find other processors to take their milk, but without much success.

Cathy Heim of Stoneboro, Pennsylvania, a sixth-generation dairy farmer, told the *Militant* none of the processors in her area are interested.

Heim said many people told her she needed to "get bigger." "But to get bigger you have to have money," she said, adding that if she had done so, she would now not only have to sell out, but she'd have a huge debt.

Dean's letter included a number to call. Heim, who drives a school van when not working on the farm, phoned. "Are we going to get severance pay? Unemployment?" she asked Dean. "Are you going to send my husband to school to get retrained?"

Heim sees this crisis as very different from ones in the past. She has told neighbor dairy farmers who sell to other companies that "you're next." She told farmers still under contract that "there are going to be no small farms left."

In the past there were government



Some 200 dairy farmers meet in Lebanon, Pa., March 19, to discuss fighting Dean Foods' move to stop buying milk from farmers in 8 states. Dean says reason is competition from Walmart.

buyout plans to help dairy farmers when there was an overabundance of milk. But these have all been eliminated. "The government doesn't care about us," said Heim.

The low prices are bringing dairy farmers together to talk about alternatives to the present pricing system in the U.S. The Wisconsin Farmers Union recently organized meetings to hear farmers from Canada in five Wisconsin towns. The Canadians explained how the quota system there guarantees farmers a price for their milk that covers the

cost of production, plus a surplus that ensures farmers a living.

As part of the discussion, Randy Jasper, a part-time grain farmer and former dairy farmer, said that there is no milk surplus problem. "There are people in the U.S. who need the milk. There are hungry people in the United States," he said.

"We should do what the farmers of Cuba would do — work together to produce for the country and donate the surplus to people who need it in the U.S. and around the world."

In victory for prisoners, political rights, Herman Bell wins parole

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

After 44 years in prison, former Black Panther Herman Bell has won parole and is slated to be released in mid-April. Bell, 70, along with Albert Washington and Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom) were convicted in the 1971 killing of two New York City cops. Each was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison.

Muntaqim's parole hearing is scheduled for June. Washington died in prison in 2000. Over the last 14 years, the board denied Bell parole seven times.

Among those calling for Bell's release was Waverly Jones Jr., the son of one of the officers killed. "The simple answer

is it would bring joy and peace as we have already forgiven Herman Bell publicly," he wrote, speaking for his family, in a letter to the parole board.

The New York cops, and their backers in the editorial offices of the *New York Daily News* and *New York Post* blasted the decision to free Bell, as did liberal New York Mayor Bill de Blasio. The mayor said he was willing to call the board members in an effort to reverse Bell's release, The Associated Press reported, but "reversing a parole board decision is highly unlikely."

Bell's freedom would represent a victory for him, for prisoners' rights and for all supporters of political rights.

THE MILITANT

Fight for abortion key for women's rights

Some 200,000 march for abortion rights in Argentina on International Women's Day. The right to decide when or whether to bear children is key for women to control their own lives. The *'Militant'* explains the fight for the emancipation of women is a fight for all working people.



Protest March 8, Buenos Aires, Argentina, for women's right to choose abortion.

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

SWP drive to expand reach

Continued from front page

preparing for battles of their own in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona and other places. Party members are joining with co-workers, others in the labor movement and those inspired by these fights to go to the picket lines and extend solidarity. They take the *Militant* and Pathfinder books with them, to help strengthen the working-class movement and carve out a revolutionary vanguard.

An important part of the drive will be knocking on doors in working-class neighborhoods, talking about what needs to be done to advance our struggles. Millions are looking for answers to capitalism's deepening social and moral crisis, and the devastating impact of the rulers' wars. They are open to discussing how to replace the rule of the capitalist class with a workers and farmers government and reorganize society to meet the needs of the toiling majority.

The stirrings in the labor movement and discussion about the road forward today occur during an uptick in the capitalist economy. As jobs increase so does workers' mobility, self-confidence and readiness to fight bosses' attacks. At the

same time we continue to face the competition-fueled assaults of the propertied rulers on our wages and conditions, and the divisions they impose between employed and unemployed, immigrant and native-born, women and men, Black and Caucasian, to weaken our struggles.

Decades of capitalist assaults have worsened the conditions we work and live in — from teachers and other workers forced to work two or three jobs to get by, to the spreading drug epidemic.

The fight for women's rights, developments in Korea and the Middle East, and the fight to defend and emulate the example of Cuba's living socialist revolution are addressed in the pages of the *Militant* and in the books on special offer during the campaign.

It is the big political questions — war and attacks on political rights, women's rights and the need to advance culture — that workers worldwide want to discuss and debate.

The books on special offer are *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*; *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?*; and *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record*, all by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes; *Is*



New Jersey Education Association

Teachers rally for new contract in Jersey City, N.J., during one-day strike March 16. Socialist Workers Party is joining in labor battles and discussions on workers' doorsteps on road forward, introducing the *Militant* and books by party leaders and raising Militant Fighting Fund.

Socialist Revolution in the US Possible? by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters; and *"It's the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US 'Justice' System."*

And we'll distribute widely the SWP National Committee statement "For Recognition of a Palestinian State

and of Israel," which is available on the *Militant's* website.

Hospitality worker Alberto Victorino picked up a subscription to the paper when Nancy Boyasko and Terry Evans knocked on his door in Union City, New Jersey, March 4. He told the SWP members he had worked at one of President Donald Trump's businesses, but left after Trump's opponents protested outside the workplace, targeting the workers. "I want the book with the joke title," Victorino said, pointing to *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?*

"The rulers say they're the smart ones because they want workers to believe we aren't capable of taking power and organizing society," Evans said, handing the book over.

The *Militant* depends on financial contributions from supporters of the paper to meet its costs, and is not beholden to any other financing that places conditions on its politics. Party members will ask all those who respond favorably to kick in a donation and work to expand the number of new contributors to the Militant Fighting Fund.

If you would like to be part of the drive, or make a contribution to the fund, contact the nearest SWP or CL branch listed on page 8.

Dan Fein is the circulation drive director.

Idaho silver miners mark one year on strike

Continued from front page

lives," Dave Roose, chief negotiator for the local, told the *Militant*. "We're the ones who know how to operate safely."

USW District 12 Director Robert LaVenture said no new talks are scheduled with the company.

Roose chaired rallies at both the beginning and end of the march. He and other strikers spoke to the importance of solidarity from other unions and the community. Among those attending the protest were USW Local 338 members from the Kaiser plant in Spokane, Washington; International Association of Machinists Local 86 members from the Triumph plant in Spokane; United Food and Commercial Workers members from Spokane; and USW officials from Arizona.

Unions bring solidarity

Armindo deMedeiros, president of USW Local 480 in Trail, British Columbia, which represents workers at the smelter where ore is worked from the Hecla mine, spoke to the rally. "We represent 1,100 workers and the unions can't bow down to the company," he said. "Our company told us we were too weak to go on strike, but when they saw the overwhelming vote for it, they knew we meant business."

Four members of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 23 from Tacoma, Washington, participated. Brian Skiffington from the local's Young Workers Committee spoke, explaining they had already given \$5,000 to the strikers and he had brought more. Skiffington emphasized the importance of building fighting unions, pointing to

the West Virginia teachers strike and victory as an inspiration.

"Today is not a celebration but a show of solidarity. We couldn't be here without the financial and other help we've received from labor and the community," said striking miner Rick Norman, one of the union road warriors who have traveled around the U.S. and Canada to confront Hecla management at trade shows and corporate meetings. He read off the names of the union locals and groups who had helped, including the *Militant*, which has championed their fight.

Sandra Noble, the wife of a striker, told Pat Scott, a Walmart worker from the Seattle area, that it "was awesome" to see her there with a sign saying "Walmart workers support silver miners."

"This is about the livelihood of the workers and the sustainability of the community," Pam Kohn, whose brother-in-law is one of the strikers, told the *Militant*. "I came to the

rally to show support and I think the younger generations need to know the history of this valley and to see people fighting for their rights."

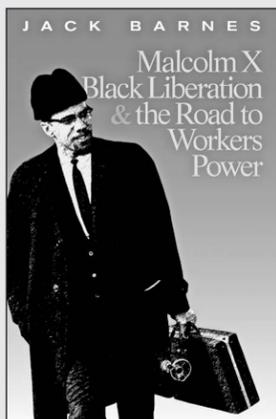
This writer and other Socialist Workers Party members who came to the rally went door to door in the town of Silverton, a few miles west of Mullan, to talk to workers about the strike, what working people face today, and introducing them to the *Militant* and the party. We met retired miners, a member of the fire department and others who all said they supported the strikers.

"This valley has a long history of labor struggles," Bill Albinola, a retired logger and saw mill worker who still works part time to make ends meet, told us. "My grandfather was an immigrant from Italy and in the 1890s he got arrested and jailed with hundreds of others as they fought to unionize the mines here."

Donations and messages of support should be sent to USW Local 5114, P.O. Box 427, Mullan, ID 83846.

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Some Israeli settlers join Bedouins in eviction fight

BY SETH GALINSKY

“This was the first time a group of Israeli settlers ever came to talk with us,” Eid Abu-Khamis, a leader of Bedouins fighting eviction from the West Bank village of Khan al-Ahmar, told the *Militant* by phone March 12. Some residents of the Kfar Adumim settlement, just a mile away, had decided to meet their Bedouin neighbors last year after learning the Israeli government wanted to demolish their village school. The school was built there in 2009.

After seeing the school, a dozen Kfar Adumim residents added their names to a petition to Israel’s Supreme Court. “They wrote to their government. ‘Don’t demolish. These are our neighbors,’” Abu-Khamis said. This shows that Israeli settlers aren’t monolithic in their views.

Israeli authorities have been trying for years to evict the 35 Bedouin families from the Jahalin clan who live in Khan al-Ahmar, northeast of Jerusalem. The Israeli government wants to use the land to expand the settlement.

Many Bedouin — traditionally nomadic herders raising goats and camels — were expelled from the Negev Desert in southern Israel between 1948 and 1951, including the Jahalin clan. They moved north and leased land from an Arab landowner in the then-Jordanian-ruled West Bank. Then Israeli authorities took control of all of the West Bank after the 1967 Six Day War.

The Israeli state started confiscating Arab land, including the area around Khan al-Ahmar. Israeli soldiers would demolish some of the Bedouin’s tent-like homes in Khan al-Ahmar every few years, saying they were built without permits.

The Israeli settlement of Kfar Adumim was begun in 1979, one of many similar settlements, part of the Israeli government’s strategy of extending its control throughout occupied Palestinian territory on the West Bank. Today more than 2,500 people live in the settlement, a mixture of religiously motivated ideological supporters

of Israeli expansion and more secular Jews drawn to the area because of its cheap housing and proximity to jobs in Jerusalem.

“Why are my community’s homes, which were built a very long time ago, illegal, while the settlement nearby, which was built just a couple of decades ago, is legal?” Abu-Khamis told the *Jerusalem Post*.

Some Bedouin work at Kfar Adumim as gardeners, electricians and in building maintenance, earning wages much higher than they can get in areas under Palestinian control. After Khamis became well-known for his activity opposing the evictions, his permit to enter the settlement was cancelled. He had worked in construction there for 15 years.

Settlers oppose the forced moves

The visit to the Bedouin school was organized by Dan Turner, who has lived in Kfar Adumim for 20 years. Turner is a physician and director of the Shaare Zedek Institute of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition in nearby Jerusalem.

“When I heard for the first time that the school was going to be demolished ‘on my behalf,’ I put on Facebook that I was going to go see them,” Turner said by phone March 13. “I was sure I was going alone, but over the course of several visits more than 70 people joined in, and we had serious discussions with the Bedouin.”

“I’m part of a small minority and many of my friends tell me I’m making a huge mistake,” Turner said. “But that’s the beauty of Israel, that you can say what you like. You’re free to



Olivier Fitoussi

Bedouin residents of Khan al-Ahmar in West Bank are fighting eviction and closure of their school, above, by Israeli government. They have support of some neighboring Israeli settlers.

agree or disagree.”

Turner knew Abu-Khamis, because he helped build Turner’s home, but had never visited Khan al-Ahmar. He was impressed by the elementary school, which is built out of old tires and mud mixed with falafel oil. Some 170 children from surrounding Bedouin communities attend classes there.

“It doesn’t matter if you are Jewish, Muslim or Christian. Everyone should be treated the same. The Bedouin have been there for almost 50 years. They have the right to the land,” Turner said. “The school is wonderful. And to imagine that it is going to be demolished and people forced to move 15 kilometers away [9.3 miles] — it’s not a good solution.”

“Personally, I would be happy that they stay there and more than happy to have them teach us Arabic,” he said, “and we can teach them English or Hebrew. That would be beautiful.”

The Supreme Court has ruled

against the demolitions and evictions several times, Shlomo Lecker, a lawyer who represents the Jahalin clan and other Bedouin communities fighting evictions across the West Bank, told the *Militant*. The court said that the Bedouin couldn’t be evicted unless the state agreed to relocate them. But none of the alternate locations are acceptable to the Bedouin.

The Israeli government’s goal “is to take over as much of the area from Jerusalem to Jericho to the Dead Sea as they can,” Lecker said.

If the government succeeds, this would essentially split the West Bank in half, undermining the Palestinians’ just fight for a sovereign, contiguous state of their own.

Several petitions to the Supreme Court to block the demolitions have been consolidated and will be heard April 25, Lecker said. “I hope the court will make a decision that encourages the state to negotiate with the Bedouin.”

Toys ‘R’ Us to shut down US stores, cut 33,000 jobs

Continued from front page

Us controlled 13.6 percent of the U.S. toy market, with Amazon at 16.3 percent and Walmart at 29.4 percent.

A number of other retailers who were taken over in leveraged buyouts also “collapsed in recent weeks,” the *Times* reported. One of the biggest, Southeastern Grocers, LLC, which took over the 582-store Winn-Dixie supermarket chain in 2012, filed for bankruptcy March 15. It says it will close 94 “underperforming” stores. The company has almost 50,000 workers.

Toys “R” Us officials said that the company is likely to liquidate in France, Spain, Poland and Australia, and intends to sell its operations in Canada, Central Europe and Asia. Its U.K. affiliate also filed for bankruptcy and will close more than 100 stores. Worldwide, the company has some 1,600 stores, employing 60,000 workers.

When jobs are eliminated, the U.S. company says, workers will be cut off from benefits in about two months.

Walmart expands grocery deliveries

Walmart, the largest purveyor of groceries nationwide, is taking further steps to solidify its position in its cutthroat competition with Amazon. Walmart officials announced March 15 plans to expand its grocery home delivery services to more than 100 cities by the end of the year, up from the six now in operation. According to the company, this service would

then be available to more than 40 percent of U.S. households.

Orders will be fulfilled at more than 800 Walmart stores by 18,000 worker “specialists,” who will face more strictly imposed speedup conditions. For a \$9.95 fee, deliveries will come within four hours of orders by drivers contracted through Uber, Deliver and other services.

Walmart also announced that it’s expanding curbside grocery pickup services to 1,000 more locations this year, in addition to the 1,200 where it’s currently available. You drive to the store’s parking lot and a worker comes out to hand you your groceries.

In addition, Walmart filed a patent for robot bee drones that would pollinate crops just like real bees. By expanding its operations into farming, the Walton family-owned company hopes “to grow more of the food it sells to ensure greater control over its food supply chain,” said the *New York Post*.

Both Walmart and Amazon have gone up against each other on patents for futuristic delivery schemes. Each has filed designs for blimp warehouses that would hover over cities and release drones to carry packages to your door.

Amazon, which purchased Whole Foods Market in an effort to compete with Walmart in groceries last year, is also looking to expand fast delivery services. Amazon officials say it hopes to expand grocery delivery from the current six cities to the rest

of the country later this year. Contract drivers will be required to make deliveries within two hours after your order is placed.

But Jeff Bezos and Amazon’s other bosses have been ineffective in breaking through Walmart’s domination of the grocery business.

As the U.S. capitalist economy continues an uptick today, with some more and better paying job opportunities open, retail bosses feel pressure to find ways to keep workers. But they’re also forced to push harder against each other, and here the key to success is to squeeze the most for less from their workers.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

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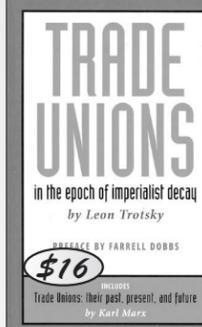
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“More food for thought (and action) than will be found in any book on the union question.” —FARRELL DOBBS



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Revolution, counterrevolution and war in Iran

Social and political roots of workers' protests that swept 90 cities and small towns

The article below corrects the initial weeks of Militant coverage of the large working-class protests that began in Mashhad, Iran, on Dec. 28 and swept some 90 cities and towns across the length and breadth of that country in early January. The article is based on reports by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes discussed and adopted by the party's National Committee.

The Militant, echoing bourgeois media coverage, inaccurately presented those actions as largely a response to economic grievances and Tehran's cut-backs of subsidies and social expenditures. This was captured by headlines in the Jan. 15 and Jan. 22 issues: "Economic Crisis Behind Protests in Iran Cities" and "Working-Class Discontent Continues to Spread in Iran." While improved coverage appeared in subsequent articles, the failure to publish an explicit correction denies readers the facts and analysis they need to understand the political roots of these events and their significance in the ongoing class struggle and wars in the Middle East and today's world.

BY STEVE CLARK

A political crisis is shaking Iran, as the bourgeois clerical regime presses workers and farmers there, as well as working people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon and elsewhere, into military service across the Middle East. The Iranian bourgeoisie's aim is to increase its regional power and influence by force of arms, extending beyond Iran's borders the nearly four-decade-long political, cleric-dominated counterrevolution that pushed back the workers, farmers, women and oppressed nationalities who carried out the historic Iranian Revolution of 1979.

That upheaval was a deep-going, modern, popular social revolution in city and countryside, not a religious jihad as it is falsely portrayed by bourgeois voices. The revolution reverberated across the Middle East and the world.

Two centuries of experience have taught politically conscious workers that neither popular revolutions, nor resistance by working people to the consequences of defeated revolutions, are fueled primarily by "economic discontent." Much deeper social and political questions of class, sex, sect and race push working people into action in our tens and hundreds of thousands (and, at decisive points, in our millions). Above all, it is the class and social inequities and indignities of capitalist exploitation and oppression that erode the moral legitimacy of the rulers and their state. And nothing propels mounting resistance more than the privileged classes' military adventures and wars, as the rulers' nationalist and religious rationalizations (*Persian* and *Shiite*, in the case of Iran) begin dissolving in blood.

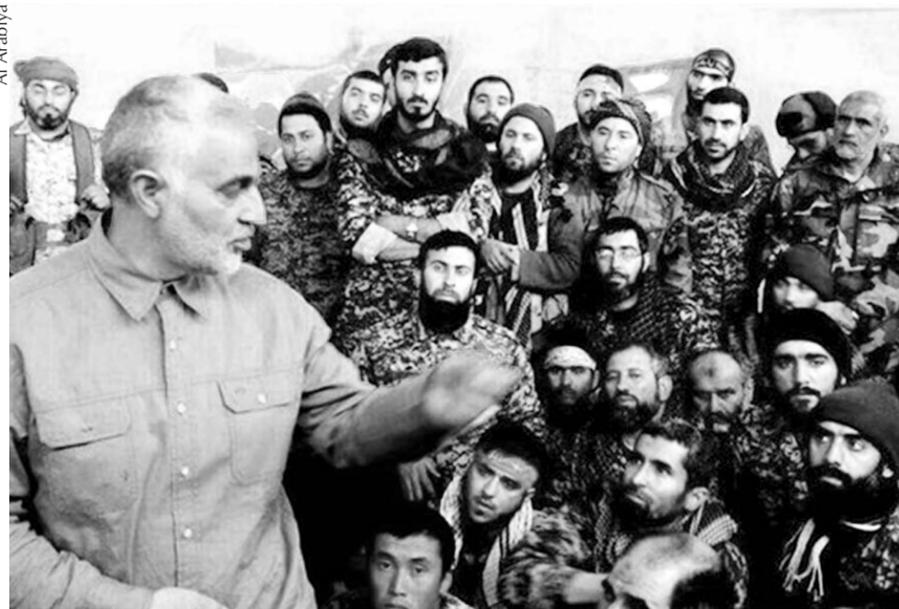
"We were charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government by armed revolution," wrote Farrell Dobbs in *Teamster Bureaucracy* about the indictments handed down by Washington in July 1941 against 29 leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and Local 544-CIO. The true goal of those frame-up charges was to undercut the political



Nima Najafzadeh



Al Arabiya



Protests in December and January were centered in urban workers' quarters, small cities and rural towns across Iran, where the bitter toll hit hardest from mounting deaths and disfigurement during regime's murderous and destructive wars in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. **Top**, protest in Mashhad, where actions began. **Center**, Afghan refugee in Iran holds photos of relatives who died in wars. Tehran offers citizenship to families of refugees who "volunteer." **Bottom**, Qasem Soleimani, commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Quds Force, addresses militia in Aleppo, Syria, in 2016. No section of the Iranian bourgeoisie has any intention of pulling back from regional wars to defend and preserve their counterrevolutionary regime at home.

campaign led by Minneapolis Teamsters to organize working-class and union opposition to the U.S. rulers' imperialist aims in World War II, Dobbs wrote, but "the word war appeared nowhere in the federal indictment ... because it would have been unpopular at that juncture to persecute us as opponents of imperialist foreign policy."

The cover of the new edition of *Teamster Bureaucracy* — the final of Dobbs' four-volume account of the Minneapolis-based class-struggle leadership that transformed the U.S. labor movement

during the Great Depression — reproduces the banner headline from the *Militant* in June 1941: "Why We Have Been Indicted: SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY IS THE ANTI-WAR PARTY."

It's not just in imperialist countries such as the United States that an accelerated drive toward militarization and war becomes inevitable at a certain stage for the propertied classes. In Iran today, faced with rising unrest among working people and the oppressed, the only way for the capitalist rulers to try to defend and preserve their counterrevolutionary

regime at home is to continue extending political reaction throughout Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and divided Kurdistan. The bourgeois clerical regime rationalizes its bloody course under the banner of rectifying the historical oppression of Shiites in Iraq and across the Arab world, a divide-and-rule oppression manipulated and amplified by more than a century of French, British and U.S. imperialist domination.

From left to right in bourgeois politics in the United States and across the imperialist world, however, this political counterrevolution in Iran is presented as if it were the 1979 revolution itself; the two are identified as the same thing. Those the capitalist media hold up as "leaders of the revolution" are, in fact, leaders of the counterrevolution — a "through-the-looking-glass" vindication of false claims by these bourgeois Iranian figures and their political apologists.

Women and revolution in Iran

An article in the Feb. 4 issue of the *New York Times*, for example, was headlined: "Compulsory Veils? Half of Iranians Say 'No' to Pillar of Revolution." Thomas Erdbrink, Tehran bureau chief for America's "newspaper of record," reported the release of an Iranian government survey showing widespread opposition to women "being forced to wear the veil, a symbol of Iran's revolution" [emphasis added]. The article describes recent protests in Iran against obligatory head cover and adds that the "law regarding the scarf has been enforced since the 1979 Islamic Revolution."

But the compulsory hijab — a headscarf covering the hair and neck — is not "a symbol of Iran's revolution." To the contrary.

Yes, most working people and youth who made the 1979 revolution opposed the royal decree imposed in the 1930s by the imperialist-backed shah of Iran, in the name of capitalist "modernization," denying women the right to decide for themselves how to dress in public. The shah's cops who ripped veils off women's heads and faces were the same ones who dragged workers and youth to torture centers and prisons across Iran.

But in March 1979, when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini declared that female employees of government ministries must not go to work "naked" but be "clothed according to Islamic standards," students, workers and other women and men took to the streets by the tens of thousands across Iran — the largest International Women's Day outpouring anywhere in the world that year. Demonstrators fought off organized thugs and forced Khomeini to back down.

What's more, the government's labor ministry later that month announced that women in factories and other workplaces were entitled to equal rights on the job, including the right to participate in elections to the workers councils (*shoras*) and to hold office.

It was not until mid-1983, as the counterrevolution consolidated its stranglehold, that the Iranian regime was finally able to impose legislation barring women from "appear[ing] in public without

Continued on page 6

Revolution, counterrevolution and war in Iran

Continued from page 5

religious hijab.” Over the next couple of years, the government increasingly unleashed special “anti-vice” squads to confront women on the streets and compel observance.

The acts of public defiance of this law since December, as well as longer-term resistance to enforcement the regime has met in recent years, are a manifestation of mounting consciousness about and struggles against the indignities, abuse and discrimination faced by women *the world over*. Far from being a hobby horse of wealthy and middle-class women in Iran (as often caricatured in the bourgeois press), demands for women’s rights — in word and deed — were central to struggles by millions, including working women and men, during the 1979 revolution. They are among the revolution’s eroded conquests. Prospects for defense and advance of such gains have been renewed by the recent working-class protests and others to come.

There will be no end to Tehran’s counterrevolutionary wars, expansionism and reactionary social policies without an end to the counterrevolutionary bourgeois clerical regime. The factional divisions within the bourgeois government and ruling layers are creating greater political space for workers and farmers, who acted on these openings in late December and early January.

Fake ‘axis of resistance’

“Today, throughout the region, Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran are greater than ever,” said President Hassan Rouhani, the leading figure among those labeled “reformists” today, in an October 2017 speech in Iran.

“Can anyone take any action in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, North Africa and the Persian Gulf without considering Iran’s viewpoint?” — Iran’s “viewpoint” is hardly the issue! Rouhani continued: “This is due to the nation’s consciousness and unity, and the vigilance of the Leader,” that is, of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The President Rouhani who signed the 2015 nuclear pact with Washington (along with London, Moscow, Paris, Beijing and Berlin) is the same President Rouhani who has presided over the military operations in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere by Iran’s Quds Force (the “foreign legion” of its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), along with



Tehran, March 8, 1979: 100,000 women and men poured into streets to protest attempts to impose compulsory head covering on women after overturn of U.S.-backed shah. Regime wasn’t able to enforce restrictive dress legislation until 1983, as counterrevolution consolidated.

other Tehran-backed, Shiite-based militias. Deploying forces from what Iran’s bourgeois clerical regime cynically calls the “axis of resistance,” it has opened a corridor of military power, political influence and economic exploitation all the way to the Mediterranean Sea and Turkish border, as well as in Yemen and pockets elsewhere in the Middle East.

The Iraqi regime is the first Shiite-dominated Arab government in history, with large Sunni Arab, Kurdish, Turkic and other non-Shiite minority populations. Baghdad is dependent for its military defense on Revolutionary Guard-organized Shiite militias of Iraqi, Iranian, Lebanese, Afghan and other combatants, sometimes with Iranian or Hezbollah officers.

A similar situation exists in Syria, where such forces stepped into the vacuum created by Bashar al-Assad’s collapsing army and — with Russian air, naval, and some ground support — salvaged that tyrannical regime at a horrific toll of more than 10 million Syrian toilers displaced, killed or maimed.

Hezbollah, after taking blows at the hands of Israeli forces in the 2006 war, has bolstered its position politically and militarily vis-à-vis Sunni- and Christian-led bourgeois forces in Lebanon.

Rival ruling classes throughout the region know that, despite the 2015 agreement, Tehran is close to being able to produce nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Such arms, however, would provide no defense for Iran against military threats from U.S. imperialism and other nuclear powers, nor any relief from the inhumane and unconscionable sanctions Washington and other imperialist governments have imposed on the Iranian people. To the contrary, weapons of mass destruction would merely provide a rationalization for the Saudi Arabian and other regimes in the region to enter the nuclear arms race, as well as for the Israeli government to maintain and bolster its existing nuclear arsenal.

The Socialist Workers Party demands Washington’s immediate unilateral nuclear disarmament. We call on the eight other regimes in the world that currently have these catastrophic weapons to get rid of them, and we oppose their development and deployment by *any* government. In this regard, as in many others, the SWP points to the proletarian internationalist example set by the leadership of Cuba’s socialist revolution. (See box on page 8.)

Counterrevolution takes hold

In 1980 workers and small farmers volunteered by the hundreds of thousands to fight the invading forces of the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein, tacitly backed, armed and financed by Washington, Paris and other imperialist powers. Working people in Iran recognized that invasion as an attempt to deal a deathblow to their revolution. Their mobilizations gave a brief second wind to popular resistance to the counterrevolution at home. These bourgeois clerical forces targeted political rights; workers’ shoras (councils) in the factories, refineries and other workplaces; farmers’ demands for land; the rights of Kurds and other oppressed nationalities; and women’s rights.

Members of the communist party in Iran at that time — the Socialist Workers Party (HKS), later renamed the Workers Unity Party (HVK) — were in the thick of the revolutionary class struggle. They were workers in factories, refineries

and other industrial workplaces, as well as volunteer soldiers combating the Iraqi invasion. Many of that party’s cadres and leaders had been recruited and trained by the Socialist Workers Party in the United States while studying or working here during the tyrannical reign of the shah. Other workers, soldiers and students were won to the party in Iran during the opening years of the revolution.

The HVK advocated “extension and unification of factory shoras”; “land distribution under the control of peasant shoras”; “the right of self-determination [and] autonomy” of Kurds and other oppressed nationalities; and equal rights for women, including “the right to work and equal pay for equal work,” “child care,” and “against compulsory veiling and any kind of discrimination and humiliation of women.” The HVK demanded full political liberties and the release of “all anti-imperialist and working-class political prisoners,” and called for “the extension and unification of workers, peasants, soldiers and Pasdaran [Revolution Guard] shoras. For a workers and peasants government.”

In the United States and around the world, it was only in the pages of the *Militant* (and its sister international news magazine, *Intercontinental Press*) that working people could find accurate, firsthand accounts of the Iranian Revolution and efforts by working people and the oppressed to defend and advance it in face of assaults by U.S. imperialism, by hostile regimes in the region, and by bourgeois forces in Iran itself. Members of Socialist Workers Party branches and trade union fractions in the United States took the truth about the revolution and our defense of it to co-workers in factories, mines and other workplaces, as well as into the streets.

By the early 1980s, however, the bourgeoisie and Islamic Republic were employing increasingly brutal repression to turn back and defeat struggles by working people and the oppressed, consolidating the rulers’ counterrevolutionary clutch at home.

After Iranian military forces pushed Saddam Hussein’s invading army back across the border in mid-1982, Tehran

THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

Iranian women on the march Equal rights protests push revolution forward



TEHRAN, March 8—Freedom for women—freedom for society, says demonstrator’s sign. See page 4.

Above, *Militant* ran firsthand coverage of 1979 strikes, protests and battles by workers, women, oppressed nationalities in Iran. Below, Feb. 4, 2018, *New York Times* article falsely claiming Iranian Revolution forced compulsory dress on women, when in fact it was the bourgeois counterrevolution. From left to right in capitalist politics worldwide, Iran’s counterrevolution is presented as if it were the revolution.

The New York Times

Compulsory Veils? Half of Iranians Say ‘No’ to Pillar of Revolution

By THOMAS HEDRICK FEB. 4, 2018

sent its own troops into Iraq in large numbers. Whatever defensive purpose this initially served, the Tehran regime over the next several years sent wave after wave of teenage and other young Iranian working people to needless slaughter as it assaulted population centers in Iraq. During that same period, the Sunni-based bourgeois rulers in Baghdad were conducting poison-gas attacks and other atrocities against the Kurds (the murderous “Anfal” campaign commanded by Saddam’s cousin, “Chemical Ali”) and against the majority Shiite population within Iraq’s own borders.

By the end of 1982, a combination of official and government-sponsored thug terror made it impossible for communists to any longer carry out political activity in Iran. The record of the proletarian internationalist course and unbroken continuity of that communist party, however, exists to be studied by new generations and put into practice as conditions permit. A good starting point can be found in issue no. 7 of *New Internationalist*, which includes “The



Auto workers mobilize outside U.S. Embassy in Tehran in December 1979, protesting Washington’s attempts to overturn revolution. The upheaval in Iran was a deep-going, modern, popular social revolution in city and countryside. It reverberated across Middle East and around the world.

Opening Guns of World War III” by Jack Barnes and “Communism, the Working Class, and the Anti-Imperialist Struggle: Lessons from the Iran-Iraq War,” two HVK documents with an introduction by Samad Sharif.

Workers oppose Tehran’s wars

In stark contrast to the voluntary mobilizations by Iranian toilers to the battlefield in 1980, in recent years most veterans of the Iran-Iraq war and their children and grandchildren have urged young men *not* to sign up for Quds Force operations in Iraq and Syria. The Revolutionary Guard have had to rely on financial inducements to recruit and hold the forces they need for those wars. Payment sometimes as high as \$600-\$700 a month is well above the norm for workers and farmers in Iran, and Afghan and other refugees living in Iran are promised citizenship for themselves and their families if they serve.

Mounting war deaths and disfigurement over the past half decade, however, have taken a more bitter toll than can be tallied in Iranian rials. The carnage falls with class-divided disproportion, *shattering disproportion*, not on univer-

sity districts or professional and middle-class neighborhoods, but on workers’ quarters in major cities and smaller towns and farming villages across Iran. That is where the December and January protests were centered, unlike the 2009 mobilizations protesting the results of that year’s presidential election.

Iran’s bourgeois government and rulers initially said little publicly about their wars in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, but that became unsustainable as body bags returned in larger numbers to working-class and farm families. The regime then sought to encourage monuments and memorials to the dead and wounded in workers’ districts and towns, hoping to use the “martyrs” to rekindle patriotism and mobilize popular support for their counterrevolutionary military operations. But as the recent protests showed, these ruling-class efforts backfired.

It is in light of these rising class tensions that divisions within the government and ruling layers have widened in recent years, including fractures *within* older factional alignments.

It’s only in recent years, for example, that the Shiite cleric Hassan Rouhani has been seen, or has presented himself, as a “reformist.” He was Ayatollah Khamenei’s hand-picked representative to Iran’s Supreme National Security Council for 16 years beginning in 1989. He is notorious for having led the brutal suppression of widespread student protests against repressive new press laws in 1999. Similarly, while Rouhani supported statements by Tehran police authorities in late 2017 that they would no longer arrest women for “bad hijab” — “One cannot force one’s lifestyle on the future generations,” the president said — he was directly involved in introducing the 1983 legislation imposing compulsory clothing.

These rifts in Iran’s bourgeoisie are not cosmetic. They’re not a “hard cop/soft cop” charade to hoodwink imperialist governments and Iran’s rival bourgeois regimes in the region. They’re real and volatile, rooted in Iran’s current social relations.

When President Rouhani in December 2017 made the Islamic Republic’s budget public for the first time, his goal was to advance factional political ends against bourgeois opponents in the leadership of the Revolutionary Guard. It’s

as if Rouhani were saying, “I don’t even control most of the government budget” — demagogically hoping to deflect fire from his administration for cuts in needed subsidies, social payments, wages, and earthquake relief.

In releasing the budget, however, Rouhani ended up fueling the protests, since it revealed huge government expenditures on religious institutions linked to the Revolutionary Guard, which has been central to recruiting and organizing the militias fighting in Iraq and Syria.

Meanwhile, as recently as mid-2017, Rouhani boasted that Iran’s military budget has more than doubled since his election in 2013. Those war expenditures are set to increase this year by another 90 percent over 2017.

What’s more, once workers’ protests wound down in early January, Supreme

Leader Ayatollah Khamenei announced that he had approved withdrawing an additional \$2.5 billion from the National Development Fund of the Islamic Republic of Iran — which supposedly sets aside oil and gas revenues to meet infrastructure and welfare needs — to boost Iran’s war chest (already some \$13 billion in 2017).

Why? Because no section of the Iranian bourgeoisie or government has any intention of pulling back from deployments and military operations in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon or Yemen.

Smearing workers as ‘garbage’

In early January, when a well-known Islamic cleric smeared working-class protesters as “garbage” during Friday prayers in Tehran, Rouhani sharply rebuked him for those remarks on state television. “We cannot call everybody who takes to the streets dirt and dust, cow, sheep or trash,” Rouhani said. “What manner of talking is this? Why do we insult? Why do we treat our society impolitely?”

Rouhani’s public response was popular among working people in Iran, as well as among many students and layers of the middle classes. It strengthened his hand against the Revolutionary Guard hierarchy.

The president is also acting on behalf of influential capitalist families by demanding that the Revolutionary Guard divest itself of major assets in Iran’s construction industry, oil and gas companies, banking and insurance, telecommunications — as well as the country’s thriving black market.

As working people take advantage of conflicts among these dominant factions in the government to open political space, other bourgeois-oriented currents are seeking to put their foot in the door as well. Already former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad — barred by the Supreme Leader early last year from again running for president, and then blamed by Khamenei for the recent protests — is beating the drums of “economic discontent” in Iran. Ahmadinejad’s base, separate either from Rouhani’s “reformist” current or the Revolutionary Guard, is concentrated among the petty bourgeoisie and layers of working people in smaller cities and

Continued on page 8

Further reading

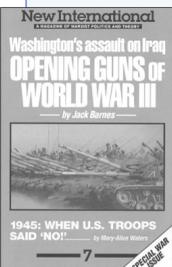
“The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was a profound political and social upheaval, not a religious jihad... It made possible the flowering of political space, debate, and culture that to this day are far from being taken away.” — From “Their Transformation and Ours”

Communism, the working class, and anti-imperialist struggle: Lessons from the Iran-Iraq War in *New Internationalist* no. 7 — \$14

Their Transformation and Ours in *New Internationalist* no. 12 — \$16

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Revolution, counterrevolution

Continued from page 7

rural areas where many of the recent mobilizations took place.

The Stalinist Tudeh Party leadership, banned and harshly repressed during the height of the counter-revolution in the 1980s, issued three statements from exile between late December and early January. Focusing on the “economic bankruptcy” and “corruption” of the government, the Stalinist misleaders uttered not a word about Tehran’s wars and military adventures, since they share the regime’s support for Assad in Syria, its opposition to Kurdish national aspirations and its Persian nationalism.

In line with their Popular Frontist, procapitalist course, Tudeh leaders called on “progressive and freedom-loving forces” to “increase their presence in the protest movement”; to avoid “divisive slogans”; “to wage a joint and organized struggle of all social layers”; and “to establish the rule of the people,” “a national, popular, and democratic republic.” In short, to replace the Islamic Republic with another capitalist government based on opposition currents, in Iran and in exile, within the officer corps (of Iran’s standing army, *not* the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), propertied families and their middle-class political representatives.

Shifts in Saudi Arabia

In face of the shifting relationship of class forces in the Gulf region in recent years, an increasingly dominant wing of Saudi Arabia’s capitalist rulers (a bourgeoisie forged over the past century from an extended tribal-based family) has recognized that it is being bested in its regional rivalry with Tehran.

In response, a decisive section of the Saudi regime, headed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has decided they must sharply reverse engines on many fronts — *and they are doing so*. These include:

- efforts to accelerate industrial development and trade, instead of ongoing reliance on oil rents;
- steps to stem the drain on capital accumulation from subsidies to the sprawling, privileged ruling family;
- moves to halt the regime’s deference (in reaction to the 1979 jihadist assault on the Grand Mosque) to the Islamist Wahhabi Sunni hierarchy by bringing to heel the “religious police,” secularizing school curriculum and relaxing oppressive social and cultural norms for women in employment, driving, sports and entertainment; and
- mending the blowback for the Saudi regime from their collusion with U.S. imperialism in the 1980s to organize, finance, and train Islamist military squads in Afghanistan, which

came a cropper for both Washington and Riyadh with the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist assaults.

The Saudi rulers are now pressing this course, with open support from Washington and thinly veiled backing from the Israeli ruling class and government. Riyadh has now released most of the hundreds of wealthy Saudis arrested in November 2017, after reaching financial “settlements” with them netting the government some \$106 billion for its capitalist modernization projects. The regime plans to raise another \$100 billion in 2018 by placing for sale on world stock markets 5 percent of the giant Saudi oil and natural gas company, Aramco.

In late January, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu traveled to Russia to inform President Vladimir Putin that the Israeli government will not back off from its determination that Tehran must neither establish a permanent military presence in Syria, nor collaborate with Hezbollah to turn Lebanon into a base for the manufacture and launching of missiles targeting Israel. The Israel Defense Forces report that in recent years they’ve conducted airstrikes and missile attacks on more than 100 Hezbollah convoys and other targets in Syria, and will continue doing so whenever Tehran-organized forces are deployed anywhere near Israel’s borders.

Way forward for working people

The programmatic and strategic course of the Socialist Workers Party in response to the tumultuous and shifting political situation in Iran and across the Gulf region is presented in the closing paragraphs of the Dec. 11, 2017, SWP statement, “For Recognition of a Palestinian State and of Israel”:

“In opposition to Washington, to bourgeois governments and political organizations across the Middle East, and to the middle class left here in the United States, the Socialist Workers Party has a different starting point: the class interests and solidarity of workers and toiling farmers across the Middle East — be they Palestinian, Jewish, Arab, Kurdish, Turkish, Persian or otherwise, and whatever their religious or other beliefs — as well as working people in the United



Office of the President of Iran

Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani, in car, surrounded by coal miners, Azadshahr, Iran, May 2017; 26 miners had been killed in May 3 mine collapse. Workers in Iran are taking advantage of factional divisions in ruling class to open more political space to speak and act.

States and around the world.

“We are *for* whatever helps working people organize and act together to advance our demands and struggles against the capitalist governments and ruling classes that exploit and oppress us and their petty bourgeois political servants and media apologists.

“We are *for* whatever renews our class solidarity and self-confidence, advancing us along a revolutionary course toward a united struggle for

workers power.

“This is the proletarian internationalist course of action, part of our communist program, that members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party are discussing with workers as we campaign door to door in their neighborhoods, with co-workers on the job and their friends and family members, and with those we join in protests against Washington’s anti-working-class policies at home and abroad.”

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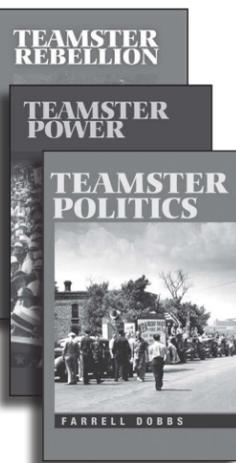
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For recognition of a Palestinian state and of Israel

- For repeal of U.S. Jerusalem Embassy Act
- For workers’ solidarity in Israel, Palestine, the world over

Socialist Workers Party
statement

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Join, build school worker protests!

Continued from front page

Frankfort, the state capital, with more to come.

The nine-day strike by teachers and other school workers in West Virginia proved that it's possible to stand up through our unions to the anti-working-class attacks of the bosses and government and win. Workers in Oklahoma and elsewhere today point to their example.

The *Militant* urges workers, youth and the labor movement to join these fights. Go to Oklahoma or Arizona, stand with the school workers and meet fellow working-class fighters. Get your union, church group, community organization and co-workers to send messages of solidarity and contributions to their strike funds.

In Arizona, teachers have been organizing red T-shirt days, like West Virginia school workers did. In Oklahoma they are setting up food banks to make sure no child who depends on school meals will go hungry during a strike. Doing this, they're winning allies and building a broader working-class movement.

The school workers aren't just fighting for themselves. They're gaining self-confidence and pointing a way forward for working people coast to coast. Their struggles point the way to rebuild a fighting union movement and organize the unorganized.

These fights grow out of a widespread discussion and debate in the working class today. They take place in the midst of political developments around the world that are important for working people — from Korea to Iran to Brexit to Israel and Palestine.

For decades the bosses and their government have pushed the growing crisis of their capitalist system onto the backs of working people. We see it in the spike of drug, suicide and liver disease-caused deaths that has led to life expectancy falling for the first time in 60 years.

We see it in the closings of hundreds of retail stores, the layoffs of thousands of workers and speedup on the job, a consequence of the capitalists' cutthroat competition. We see it in dairy farmers being driven off their farms. And we see it in the workers and farmers in uniform who die or return disfigured from the rulers' wars abroad.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with the school workers. Members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party are using the *Militant* to tell the truth about these fights and getting books by revolutionary leaders into their hands — books that contain valuable lessons for standing up to the bosses and building a movement to take political power out of their hands.

See you March 28 and April 2!

Teachers build movement against gov't attacks

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teacher Alberto Morejon told members of the Socialist Workers Party when we met him at the school baseball field here March 16. "We haven't had a raise in 10 years. The state has cut funding, teachers are leaving and classroom sizes are getting bigger."

Morejon, 25, teaches U.S. history and coaches baseball at Stillwater Junior High. He said teachers have to buy their own supplies, poster board, Kleenex, copy paper. His wife buys books for her classroom.

"I was watching what was going on in West Virginia and made a Facebook page 'Oklahoma Teacher Walkout — The Time is Now!'" he said. "In a week and half over 70,000 teachers have joined, tons of them from West Virginia and Kentucky."

At a March 8 press conference, the Oklahoma Education Association, the biggest union for teachers and other school workers in the state, announced that if the state legislature doesn't meet their demands by April 1, the schools will shut down the next day. Days later, the Oklahoma Public Employees Association voted to join the teachers.

Preparations for the strike are underway. "All 10 of the biggest school districts will shut down the schools," Morejon said. Hundreds of people stood up and applauded when the Stillwater school board voted unanimously March 14 to close their schools.

In Tulsa, many teachers are organizing to "work the contract," putting in the stipulated seven hours and 50 minutes per school day, but refusing to stay for after school programs or to take work home.

Morejon and other teachers we talked to said there is widespread support for their fight from the students.

Oklahoma workers hit hard

Oklahoma workers have been hard hit by today's crisis of capitalist production and jobs. Wages are low, unions are weak. Life is affected by the ups and downs of the oil industry, which accounts for some 25 percent of jobs in the state.

When a glut in oil meant prices plummeted a couple years ago, over 21,000 workers were laid off statewide. The downturn meant state tax revenue tanked, and state workers, including teachers, were targeted for more cuts. In 2016 some \$47 million was cut from the state education budget.

Going door to door in Madill, visiting the union offices in Oklahoma City, talking to workers and customers at McDonald's and meeting teachers outside schools before coming to Stillwater, we learned the looming strike is a big discussion.

And there is a widespread debate among working people on how increases in funds for schools and

pay could be won. Both Democratic and Republican legislators say the only way a raise could come about would be to raise taxes on workers. One worker at McDonald's got a good response when he said the oil bosses should pay, not the workers.

Since 2008, funding for public schools has decreased by nearly 9 percent, while student enrollment has increased. Adjusted for inflation, the state's general funding for schools is down 28 percent per student since 2008.

In the Mannford Early Childhood Center, the thermostat is set at 63 degrees and many lights are turned off throughout the day to save money. In about 100 districts, mostly rural, schools are open only four days a week.

Oklahoma ranks second lowest in the country in teachers pay, according to the National Education Association. Many teachers have to work second jobs to get by — at Walmart, the airport or driving for Uber.

"On April 2, schools will close across the state and thousands of teachers and state workers will come to Oklahoma City," said Doug Folks, communications specialist for the union. "The success of West Virginia emboldened our members to see that it's possible."

At a press conference March 15, the Oklahoma City school superintendent outlined plans for how the district will deliver meals for the students by bus during the walkout. The city's Parks and Recreation Department will extend opening hours and the City Zoo will have daily daylong camps for younger children.

"I'm on board. They deserve it. They treat the kids like their own," said Judith Lawler, a Unit director of the Oklahoma City Boys and Girls Clubs. "The food bank is gearing up. They have been putting boxes of food together for the kids to take home. The clubs will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. so the kids aren't left by themselves while the teachers are fighting for what they deserve."

School workers protest nationwide

More than 1,000 Kentucky teachers and supporters rallied outside the Capitol in Frankfort March 21, protesting threatened government attacks on state workers' retirement pay. Five school districts in the state shut down to facilitate workers going.

In Arizona, where average wages are only slightly higher than in Oklahoma, teachers are gearing up for a fight. Arizona Educators United, a closed Facebook group, has gotten 34,000 members across the state in just a couple weeks.

They have organized "Red for Ed" days when teachers have worn red T-shirts to school, and organized a rally outside the Capitol in Phoenix March 14. Now they are building for a big rally March 28 there.

US rulers target Iran

Continued from front page

The Palestinian Authority boycotted. The governments of Egypt and Jordan and 20 other governments and organizations attended. Also present was the "Quartet," officials from the U.S., Russia, the U.N. and EU who are tasked with "shepherding" negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Washington's attempts over decades to secure an agreement between the Israeli rulers and Palestinian organizations that will also accommodate the interests of U.S. imperialism have so far been unsuccessful. The administration of President Donald Trump seeks to organize Arab rulers — who require Washington to combat their rival Tehran's growing clout — to press Palestinian officials to reach an agreement with Israel. The White House statement made no mention of the blockade the Israeli and Egyptian rulers impose on the entry of many basic necessities into the Gaza Strip. This exacerbates the impact of the shortages 2 million Palestinians face there following years of destructive wars. Half the population of Gaza relies on aid to survive and just under half are unemployed.

Hamas, the Tehran-funded Islamist group that has controlled Gaza since 2007, calls for the destruction of Israel, promotes Jew-hatred and has fought three wars with Israel over the last decade. The deadly cycle of Hamas terror attacks and Israeli retaliation have made life hell for the toilers in Gaza.

A statement released Dec. 11, 2017, by the Socialist Workers Party National Committee says it's "a political necessity for the Israeli and Arab governments and leaderships of Palestinian organizations to begin immediate talks to recognize both Israel and an independent Palestinian state. Negotiations to reach such an agreement must recognize the right of Jews everywhere to take refuge in Israel in face of the global rise of Jew-hatred and anti-Semitic violence, as well as the unconditional right of the dispossessed Palestinian people to a contiguous, sovereign homeland on territory — including East Jerusalem — conquered and occupied by the Israeli government during the 1967 war."

The long drawn-out antagonism between the capitalist rulers in Israel and Iran has sharpened as Tehran has moved to extend its counterrevolutionary reach, joining Moscow in helping the Bashar al-Assad dictatorship regain its grip in Syria. In doing so, Tehran, and its allies, Hezbollah and other Shiite militias, have occupied territory close to Israel. Like their Hamas allies, the Iranian rulers call for the destruction of Israel.

The U.S. rulers are determined to push back Tehran's expanding sway and also counter Moscow's rising influence in the region. They seek to end the rift between Sunni-Muslim U.S. allies in the Middle East, to unite them against Tehran. The Saudi monarchy accuse the Qatari government of getting too close to Tehran. President Trump says he will meet with the leaders of these nations in coming weeks.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir backed Washington's efforts to toughen the deal former President Barack Obama struck with Tehran aimed at slowing down the Iranian capitalist rulers' nuclear weapons program. Washington wants to expand restrictions on Tehran's ballistic missiles program and their ability to produce nuclear weapons.

Assault against Kurds in Afrin

After eight weeks of bombardment and invasion, the Turkish rulers March 18 dislodged the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) from the capital of Afrin, one of Syria's Kurdish provinces. The assaults have dealt a blow to the Kurdish people's struggle for national rights. More than 200,000 have fled Afrin.

The rulers of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey have fought for decades to deny the 30 million Kurds who live in these countries a homeland. Kurds from elsewhere in Syria traveled to Afrin to aid the fight there, but Ankara prevailed, based on its air monopoly — granted by Moscow and Washington — and its superior firepower.

'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

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