

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Higher taxes or attacks on teachers? A fake trade off

— PAGE 4

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 82/NO. 14 APRIL 9, 2018

‘The Militant spreads the word about our fights’

BY DAN FEIN

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — “I support our teachers in their fight to defend their pensions,” Raven Stephens, 17, who attends Fern Creek High School here, told me March 23. She was pointing to the picture of the March

JOIN SWP‘MILITANT,’ BOOK, FUND DRIVE

21 teachers’ protest at the state Capitol in Frankfort on the front page of the *Militant*. The day before the action, the state Senate passed a bill that would slash \$1 billion from the teachers’ retirement fund.

I met Stephens going door to door in her neighborhood to talk with workers about the Socialist Workers Party, its politics, and its paper and books by party leaders. As we talked about the fights of teachers and other school workers here and in West Virginia, Oklahoma and elsewhere, she

Continued on page 3

US rulers seek ways to meet challenges from Moscow

BY TERRY EVANS

The U.S. propertied rulers — who head the dominant imperialist power in the world — face growing challenges from both Moscow and Beijing. The Chinese bosses rule the world’s second largest capitalist economy, but their military reach is more limited than Moscow’s. Russia’s rulers exert their military power across Europe and the Middle East, posing a larger test for the U.S. rulers.

The Donald Trump administration is seeking a closer relationship with Beijing, collaborating on efforts to increase stability in Korea and elsewhere, in order to focus more intently on dealing with Moscow.

Vladimir Putin runs the country in the interests of capitalist oligarchs whose wealth came from plundering the former Soviet state. He uses his control over the cops, spies and media to maintain control and rule.

He was re-elected president March 18 against little serious opposition.

Continued on page 10

Teachers’ protests call for support from all workers

Seek to build movement for pay, benefits, dignity



Militant/Bernie Senter

Thousands march in Phoenix and across Arizona March 28 against attacks on teachers.

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Teachers, other school workers and their supporters rallied outside the state Capitol in Phoenix March 28 to press their demand for higher pay and better conditions. Similar actions are planned in Tucson and seven other cities across Arizona. Over the past

month they’ve organized and built for these protests. They have staged “RedForEd” days wearing red T-shirts to work, held several smaller rallies outside the Capitol, picketed at schools before working hours and then done “walk-ins” together.

Continued on page 4

Hundreds protest Sacramento cop killing of Stephon Clark



AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

Action in Sacramento, California, March 22 protests police killing of 22-year-old Stephon Clark. Cops claim they mistook his cellphone for a gun. More protests have been called.

BY BETSEY STONE

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Hundreds of people have taken to the streets here to protest the police killing of 22-year-old Stephon Clark March 18. Cops fired more than 20 bullets at Clark, who was unarmed, standing in the backyard of his grandmother’s home where he lived. The cops claim they heard reports someone was breaking into cars and mistook the cellphone Clark was holding for a gun.

“As soon as they did the command to put his hands up, they yelled ‘gun’ and shot,” Clark’s grandmother, Sequita Thompson, said after viewing police video of the shooting, as have thousands since the cops released it. From the first glimpse of Clark on the patio to the first gunshot takes just six seconds.

For five minutes the cops did nothing to render first aid to Clark, who is African-American, as he lay motion-

Continued on page 3

Second Amendment important for rights of the working class

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — Liberal politicians and media pundits from the editors of the *New York Times* to former Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens are using the killings at Marjory

Washington seeks deal with Beijing to end NKorea’s nukes

BY TERRY EVANS

President Donald Trump announced a 60-day “consultation process” prior to imposing tariffs on selected imports from Beijing March 22. The protectionist measures would target competitors from China, where the expansion of capitalist industry and trade over the past three decades has led to sharpening competition for markets and political influence with the U.S. propertied owners.

In their relentless campaign to paint the Trump presidency as dangerous and out of control, liberal commen-

Continued on page 10

Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and supposed concern for the youth there to target the Constitution’s Second Amendment and the rights of working people.

Hundreds of thousands took to the streets coast to coast March 24 in what they called a March for Our Lives. The well-financed marches were promoted by Democratic Party politicians and liberal celebrities, with an unprecedented volume of unpaid

Continued on page 8

Inside

Kurds: ‘Atrocities can’t kill our quest for freedom’ 2

Rail bosses use drones to spy on, victimize workers 6

Support for abortion rights grows in Ireland 9

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Rail, public sector workers protest gov’t attacks in France
Solidarity builds for locked-out Quebec aluminum workers

Kurds: ‘Atrocities don’t kill our quest for freedom’

BY ANNA ROSEN
WASHINGTON — “Thirty years ago, on March 16, 1988, Iraqi aircraft attacked the people of Halabja with chemical weapons. Children were lost in the chaos that followed, families died, and thousands more were injured by poison gas. Today, we mourn and honor them,” said Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the Kurdistan Regional Government’s representative in the U.S. Her remarks welcomed 200 participants to the “Halabja: Echoes of Genocide in Kurdistan” conference held here March 13 at the Newseum.

Activities to commemorate the 30th anniversary of then Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein’s chemical weapon assault on Halabja — part of his regime’s Anfal campaign against the country’s Kurdish people — were held across Kurdistan in Duhok, Erbil, Halabja, Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah.

“We have heard the cries of ‘Never again,’” Abdul Rahman said, “but genocides continue and chemical weapons are a part of the arsenal. Innocent civilians have been gassed and starved in Syria and Rohingya flee violence in Myanmar.”

In the 1988 Anfal campaign of extermination and forced removal of Kurds, 182,000 people were killed and 4,500 Kurdish villages destroyed. The genocidal drive was led by Ali Hassan al-Majid, Saddam’s cousin, who became known as “Chemical Ali.” Over 5,000 people died and thousands more were injured in Halabja, where Iraqi warplanes dropped a deadly combination of mustard gas, Sarin and VX. Tens of

thousands were forcibly driven from Iraq, many taking refuge in Iran. The campaign took place during the Iraqi regime’s eight-year war against Iran. While Washington and its imperialist allies claimed neutrality in that war, they in fact backed the Iraqi rulers’ aggression against Tehran, hoping it would deal a deathblow to the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The U.S. rulers have a long record of using, and then abandoning, the Kurds and will do so whenever it serves their imperialist interests. Washington’s acquiescence in the Turkish rulers’ invasion of the Kurdish province of Afrin in Syria today is the latest example.

‘We are one nation’
A highlight of the conference was the testimony of Zimnako Mohammed Ahmed, who participated by Skype from Halabja. “These atrocities do not kill our hope and quest for freedom. We are Kurds. We want our statehood. We are one nation,” said Ahmed. He was an infant at the time of the Anfal. His mother put him in the yard and they were separated while she ran for a wet cloth for his brothers. He was raised by a family in Iran, and later returned to Halabja and was reunited with his mother. “That’s when I learned what happened to us. We were five days away from Newroz, the new year. We thought it was a regular bombardment. We didn’t know that the smell of apples was actually the scent of death,” he said. “Within seconds, people were dying. I saw a photo of a man with a smile on his face, as if

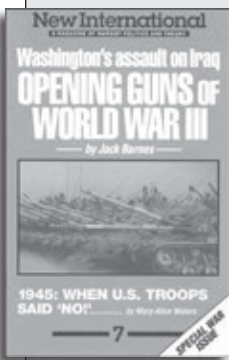


Militant
Muhammad Aziz from Nashville, Tennessee, lived in Halabja, Kurdistan, during Iraqi regime’s chemical attack 30 years ago. His lungs were permanently damaged. Aziz was speaker at Washington, D.C., conference marking Halabja and discussing fight for Kurdish independence.

he was cut off in the middle of a joke.” The Kurds — more than 30 million strong — are the largest nationality in the world without their own country, divided among Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. Despite opposition from Baghdad, Washington, Moscow and almost every capitalist regime in the region, millions of people in the Kurdistan Regional Government-ruled areas of Iraq voted overwhelmingly for independence Sept. 25. Washington turned a blind eye when the capitalist rulers in Iraq launched a brutal assault against the Kurds in Kirkuk and elsewhere after the vote. This brought an end for now to moves toward autonomy. “The Kurdish people have come to the center stage in world politics as never before,” Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes wrote in *New International* magazine no. 7, “not primarily as victims, but as courageous and determined fighters for national rights.” Their fight is in the interests of all working people. “The western side of the city is where the wind blew,” Muhammad Aziz, another veteran of Halabja who now lives in Nashville, Tennessee, told the conference. “Many like me have permanent lung issues.” He carried a portable oxygen tank. “I need a lung transplant,” he said, “but I’m not on the transplant list

because I cannot afford the support and care needed post-surgery. Of the tens of thousands injured, I was one of 75 brought to the U.S. for treatment.” Efforts by the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) to defend Afrin from the Turkish rulers’ invasion was discussed by many at the meeting. Seyid Riza Dersimi, from the Kurdish-based Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) in Turkey, who lives in the U.S., left the conference early to join a protest demanding “Turkey Hands Off Afrin” outside the White House.

Opening Guns of World War III: Washington’s Assault on Iraq
by Jack Barnes
In *New International* no. 7



“The Kurdish people have come to the center stage in world politics as never before, not primarily as victims, but as courageous and determined fighters for national rights.”
—Jack Barnes
\$14. Also in Farsi, French, Spanish, Swedish

www.pathfinderpress.com

THE MILITANT

Revolution, counterrevolution and war in Iran

‘Militant’ reports how 1979 upheaval in Iran was a deep-going, popular social revolution that reverberated in the Middle East and beyond.

Social and political questions of class, sex, sect and race pushed working people into action in their tens and hundreds of thousands.



Militant/Cindy Jaquith
Auto workers mobilize outside U.S. Embassy in Tehran in December 1979.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

NEW READERS

☐ **\$5 for 12 issues**

RENEWAL

☐ **\$10 for 12 weeks**

☐ **\$20 for 6 months**

☐ **\$35 for 1 year**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

UNION/SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION _____

CLIP AND MAIL TO THE MILITANT,
306 W. 37TH ST., 13TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10018.

12 weeks of the *Militant* outside the U.S.: Australia and the Pacific, A\$10 • United Kingdom, £3 • Canada, Can\$7 • Caribbean and Latin America, US\$10 • Continental Europe, £10 • France, 8 euros • New Zealand, NZ\$7 • All other areas, US\$16 (Send payment to addresses listed in business information box)

The Militant

Vol. 82/No. 14
Closing news date: March 28, 2018
Editor: John Studer

Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Seth Galinsky, Ellie García, Emma Johnson, Martin Koppel, Carole Lesnick, Jacob Perasso, Maggie Trowe, Brian Williams.

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

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.
Telephone: (212) 244-4899
Fax: (212) 244-4947
E-mail: themilitant@mac.com
Website: www.themilitant.com

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

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: For one year send \$35 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: For one year send

\$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

Africa, Asia, and the Middle East: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

Canada: For one year send Canadian \$45 to the Militant, 7107 St. Denis #204, Montreal, Quebec H2S 2S5.

United Kingdom: Send £26 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London, 2nd Floor, 83 Kingsland High St., Dalston, London, E8 2PB, England.

Republic of Ireland and Continental Europe: Send £85 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London at above address.

France: Send 100 euros for one year to Diffusion du Militant, BP 10130, 75723 Paris Cedex 15.

New Zealand: Send NZ\$55 for one year to P.O. Box 13857, Auckland 1643, New Zealand.

Australia: Send A\$70 for one year to P.O. Box 164 Campsie, NSW 2194, Australia.

Pacific Islands: Send NZ\$55 for one year to P.O. Box 13857, Auckland 1643, New Zealand.

Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

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

‘Militant spreads the word’

Continued from front page

decided to get *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* a book by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes. “I like the title,” she said with a smile.

The book is one of five titles the Socialist Workers Party is offering at half price with a *Militant* subscription in its eight-week drive to take its program and activities deeper into the working class. The books are featured in the ad below. Through the drive party members and others aim to win 1,400 subscribers to the *Militant* and sell an equal number of the five books. As part of the campaign we’ll raise \$112,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund.

Members of Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and others who look to the party around the world, are part of the party-building effort. We all found real interest in the teachers’ fights as we knocked on doors and participated in union pickets and protest actions.

SWP campaigners also met power plant worker Phil DuVall here. DuVall said that he helped to get rid of the fake union company bosses had set up years ago and bring in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers instead. DuVall was skeptical about whether working people could unite. “Too many people just sit around and don’t take action,” he said.

After talking with SWP campaigners about the example set by the West Virginia teachers in getting all the school workers together and gaining support from coal miners and others to win their nine-day strike, DuVall signed up for a subscription.

‘I followed that West Virginia strike’

Lawrence Graves is a 39-year-old appliance assembler at General Electric Co. and a member of IBEW. “We have seven tiers under our current union contract, which divides the workers,” he said. “We need one tier. I followed that West Virginia strike.”

Graves got a *Militant* subscription and a copy of *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record*. “What you’re doing, spreading the word, is very important,” he said.

Another worker we met, who works

a shear in a machine shop, got two copies of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Barnes — one for himself and one for his friend — and gave a \$23 donation to the Militant Fighting Fund.

The fund is key to finance the publication of the *Militant*, which is not beholden to any other financing than from its readers.

Party members went to rallies in Washington, D.C., and across the country March 24 to discuss the recent killings in Parkland, Florida, and the road forward for working people. (See article on front page.) SWP members set up a table with books and the *Militant* at the large D.C. march.

Chris, a 25-year-old restaurant worker, told SWP members that he was interested in a wide range of issues and hoped protests to change things would grow. “We explained that crime and violence are an inescapable product of the dog-eat-dog morality of the capitalist system and diminishes when workers unite in struggle, like during the mass Black-led protests that overthrew Jim Crow segregation, and in revolutions like the one made by workers and farmers in Cuba,” Janet Post wrote. “He got interested in what we said, asking what made Cuba and its revolution different than what happened in Russia and China.”

He bought copies of *Cuba and Angola: The War for Freedom, Two Speeches by Malcolm X* and the *Militant*. “I want to learn more about the SWP,” he said.

Members of the Communist League in the U.K. went to Dublin, Ireland, to join the International Women’s Day demonstration there supporting a woman’s right to choose abortion. Afterwards they knocked on workers’ doors



Militant/Dag Tirsén

Communist League member Pamela Holmes, right, shows *Militant*, books to Alan Norman and partner Gillian on their doorstep in Dublin, Ireland, March 9. Attracted to fight for workers and farmers government, Norman got subscription and *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?*

in Drumcondra where they got into a discussion about the wars in the Middle East with Alan Norman, a worker at the Port of Dublin, and his partner Gillian.

“The fighting needs to stop. All foreign troops should get out of Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East,” CL member Pamela Holmes said. “Working people need the time and space to think and to organize politically, to find a way forward to resolve all these problems. The way the teachers and other school workers in West Virginia reached out to draw broader layers of working people into their fight shows what our class is starting to do.

“We point to the Cuban Revolution as an example of what our class is capable of,” she said. “We need to build parties here that can do the same.”

Norman liked the perspective of fighting to replace the capitalist rulers with a government of workers and farmers. He got a subscription and *Are*

They Rich Because They’re Smart?

Anna Rosen reported on staffing a booth with party literature at the March 23-25 Association of Asian Studies Conference in Washington, D.C. “A Chinese student studying here at John Hopkins came into our booth and looked at the books. ‘Malcolm X changed my life,’ he said, pointing to the cover of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*. ‘My parents are members of the Chinese Communist Party, but they’re not really communists,’ he said. ‘What about you?’

“After we told him about the party and its participation in the class struggle, he bought the book, along with a subscription, and we made plans to get together again to do politics together,” Rosen said.

If you’d like to join the campaign, contact the SWP or Communist League branch nearest you listed on page 7.

Hundreds protest cop killing of Stephon Clark

Continued from front page

less on the ground. They were waiting for backup, expressing concern about the number of neighbors coming out of their homes and hearing the shots. Both the shooting and the cops’ comments are caught on their body cameras and a video shot from a police helicopter.

On March 26, Thompson and other

members of Clark’s family joined civil rights lawyer Benjamin Crump and Black community leaders in a press conference. They demanded criminal charges be brought against the two cops, Jared Robinet, who is Caucasian, and Terrence Mercadal, who is Black.

“I want justice for my baby,” Thompson said. “Please give us justice.”

Crump has represented the families

of earlier victims of vigilante and cop killings, including Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. At the press conference he called the killing an “execution.” Representatives of the California and Sacramento NAACP also spoke, vowing to keep pressure on the district attorney to bring charges.

Clark left behind two young sons, Cairo and Aiden, as well as his fiancé, Salena Manni.

Protests against the killing made national news when hundreds of demonstrators chanting Clark’s name blocked fans from entering a game by the Sacramento Kings basketball team.

At the Kings’ next game, players from both the Boston Celtics and the Kings wore black warm-up T-shirts with Stephon Clark’s name. The teams collaborated on a video showcasing players protesting the killing, saying, “We will not shut up and dribble.”

While in Sacramento to join in solidarity with those calling for the arrest and prosecution of the cops, members of the Socialist Workers Party spoke with people in the area where Clark lived.

Sameerah Muhammad, a home care worker, told us she was appalled at the number of bullets fired. Her mother, Kareemah Muhammad, said, “I don’t trust the cops. They get away with murder. If we did what they did, we’d get life in prison.”

More protests are scheduled throughout the week. Clark’s funeral is set for March 29.

MILITANT
SUBSCRIPTION
& BOOK
SPECIALS

Malcolm X, Black Liberation,
and the Road to Workers Power
by Jack Barnes

\$15. With subscription: \$10

These books just \$5 each with a Militant subscription (trial offer for new readers: 12 weeks \$5)

Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?

Class, Privilege and Learning Under Capitalism
by Jack Barnes

The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record

Why Washington Fears Working People
by Jack Barnes

Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?

A Necessary Debate Among Working People
by Mary-Alice Waters

“It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System”

*The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the
US Working Class*

\$7 EACH WITHOUT SUBSCRIPTION

To subscribe or purchase books at these prices,
contact Socialist Workers Party or Communist League branches listed on page 7

The Militant April 9, 2018

3

Support teachers' protests

Continued from front page

On March 21, teachers in the Pendergast Elementary District near Glendale called in sick, closing nine out of the district's 12 schools. Many of the 350 teachers who didn't show up for work were among the hundreds in red protesting at the Capitol that day.

Hundreds of teachers in the Chandler Unified School District wore their red shirts and marched together to the district's annual staff assembly March 26. Seeking to emphasize teachers' demands for higher pay — theirs is among the lowest in the country — Alex Kimble held up a piece of paper saying, "Can't afford a sign."

Katie Nash, a biology teacher at Chandler High, was one of the organizers. In addition to low pay, she said teachers face huge class sizes, pipes leaking lead and playgrounds falling apart.

The March 28 rally was organized through Arizona Educators United, a Facebook group with 36,000 members. Save Our Schools Arizona and the Arizona State PTA joined the action.

Educators United leader Noah Karvelis, who set up the Facebook page, told a March 26 press conference that the group's full demands would be announced at the rally two days later, but would focus on raising wages. Karvelis said a walkout is not on the agenda, but that it may come to that, depending on how the legislature treats their demands.

The actions of teachers in Arizona are similar to those being carried out by school workers in Kentucky, Oklahoma and a number of other school districts. Many of the features of these mobilizations in Arizona were inspired by the successful nine-day school strike in West Virginia. Union members there built a powerful social movement, drawing in other unionists, students and parents and community organizations that helped provide places for students to go during the strike and food for the youth who get their meals at school. This laid the basis for forcing the state legislature to meet their demands. While teachers in other areas seek to follow their example, and they're getting a response, nowhere else has the movement reached the same breadth.

Some 1,400 members of the Communications Workers of America went on strike against Frontier Communications in West Virginia and Virginia March 4, taking on bosses' moves to eliminate jobs and force speedup on those who remain.

Backed by the United Mine Workers union, hundreds of workers and their supporters rallied March 24 in front of Frontier's office in Charleston, West Virginia. Many workers said they hoped to win solidarity like the teachers had. The president of the state local of the American Federation of Teachers spoke, urging the workers to stand united. UMW President Cecil Roberts brought solidarity.

The next day the CWA announced the company had dropped its demand to cut more jobs and signed an agreement. Workers will go back to work March 28 and vote on the contract after having a chance to review it.

Oklahoma, Kentucky mobilizations

The Oklahoma Education Association, the biggest union for state school workers, has set an April 1 deadline for the state legislature to meet its demands or schools will shut the next day, when the union has called for a mass rally outside the state Capitol in Oklahoma City.

Many school boards have authorized their superintendents to close schools in the event of a strike and some boards have passed resolutions in support of a teachers' walkout.

Union officials, however, have launched a proposal of tax increases that will hit other workers to fund education and raises for teachers. This will undercut the basis for solidarity. (See article this page.)

Workers and farmers in Oklahoma have been deeply affected by the crisis of capitalist production and trade today. More than 60 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch at school. This is similar to West Virginia. During the strike there union members organized volunteers daily, including a lot of students, to collect, pack and distribute meals. The unions also organized transportation to churches



West Virginia CWA Facebook

Striking Frontier workers protest March 24 outside company office in Charleston, West Virginia, with solidarity from teachers and United Mine Workers Union. Next day strikers won.

and community centers for students so their parents wouldn't miss work.

In Oklahoma, places for students to stay and get fed are being organized by school district officials, not by the unions drawing volunteers into the strike.

In Kentucky, school workers' protests center on proposed cuts to pensions. Future teachers would get a 401(k)-type account instead of a regular pension, and cost-of-living allowances for retired teachers would be cut.

In a radio interview, Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin called the teachers "selfish," "shortsighted" and "thugs" for protesting the bill.

Teachers across the state held pickets and "walk-ins" March 19. Nearly 60 teachers, students and supporters rallied outside Atherton High in Louisville. Many wore red as a show of unity. Heather Waters, who works in the school library, held a sign appreciated by all — "Bevin, don't make us go W[est] V[irginia] on you!"

Two days later hundreds of school workers rallied outside the Capitol in Frankfort as five eastern Kentucky school districts closed schools down. Teachers from different districts take turns in holding regular protests there, one on March 27, another March 29.

Higher taxes or attacks on teachers? A fake trade off

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The victorious strike by teachers and other school workers in West Virginia, and the preparations put in place beforehand to effectively organize it, unified workers and built a broad social movement. School workers were inspired by the history of independent struggle and distrust for elected officials by the coal miners, who were the heart of labor battles there for decades.

Teachers organized to unite with miners, other unions, students and their families, creating ways for children to

AS I SEE IT

have safe places to go and get meals while the strike shut down the schools.

This experience raises important questions for all workers. How can we use our unions effectively to take on the capitalist rulers and win?

In West Virginia coal miners waged a series of powerful battles in the late 1960s and '70s that fueled a revolution in the United Mine Workers union. Workers regained their union from the bureaucratic grip of union president Tony Boyle and used it to wrest control over safety in the mines and helped push back the spread of black lung disease. While the bosses' push for profits has weakened the union since then, lessons from this history of combat continue to impact working-class struggles there today.

The capitalist rulers claim that public workers must accept that there's a "limited pie" of state income and workers have to fight among themselves over who gets what. But it's false we must accept a trade-off between cuts on teachers' pay and benefits or higher taxes. What's involved is a question of

social priorities and the relationship of class forces between the workers and the propertied rulers — the profits for the capitalists versus meeting the needs of all working people. We should oppose *all* taxes that fall on workers, ranchers and farmers.

Teachers, other school workers and all public workers in Oklahoma have faced decades of no pay raises and other cuts. They are organizing in schools and communities across the state to build on some of the things that made the West Virginia strike so powerful. They've called a statewide labor rally and strike for April 2 that's gotten people's attention.

Oklahoma Education Association Executive Director David DuVall together with other public union officials there unveiled March 23 their own plan for who to tax and impose fees on to raise teachers' wages and improve conditions. Their plan calls for some taxes on oil producers and includes hefty tax increases on cigarettes, gas, alcohol and other things that hit working people the hardest.

The proposals by the union officials are a body blow to the workers. Instead of charting a course to mobilize the broadest support and involve all workers, they hand the government a tool to pit workers against each other and weaken their fight. They accept the false notion that workers must choose between more taxes or more cuts. History shows that as long as the capitalist families hold power, workers will face *both* higher taxes and layoffs and cuts.

Our labor power creates all the wealth in the country (and the world!). The capitalist rulers expropriate the lion's share from us, and fight to continue to do so, from labor battles at home to their wars abroad.

Nothing workers get in schooling, medical care, pensions or anything else is a gift from the employers. We create it all. How much workers get and keep is the result of decades of class struggle.

Our eyes have to be on building a working-class-led social struggle to take control over all the wealth we produce. Along that road we can make the most progress in protecting our conditions today.

Karl Marx, writing about the working-class movement some 150 years ago, said some important things about the role of unions. In a resolution adopted by the International Working Men's Association entitled "Trade Unions: Their Past, Present, and Future," Marx explained unions "must now learn to act deliberately as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation. They must convince the world at large that their efforts far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions."

Rather than depending on capitalist politicians to solve workers' problems, as union officials seek to convince us to do, the labor movement needs to break from the parties of capitalist rule — the Democrats and Republicans — and take the road of independent working-class political action. On this road we can make a social revolution and take power, transforming ourselves in the process.

The increasing numbers of teachers' protests, from Oklahoma to Arizona to Kentucky and elsewhere, inspired by the teachers' victory and the social movement forged in West Virginia, point the way forward. That course leads to transforming and building unions and strengthening the working-class movement.

Discounted books for prisoners

Pathfinder Press offers books at a 50% discount plus \$2.75 shipping per order. Prisoners can mail their prepaid orders to: Pathfinder Press, PO Box 162767 Atlanta GA 30321-2767 Friends and family members can order for them online. For more info: www.pathfinderpress.com

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Rail, public sector workers protest gov't attacks in France

PARIS — Hundreds of thousands of rail and other government workers took to the streets in 180 cities across France March 22. Close to 25,000 rail workers — almost one-quarter of the workforce at the state-run SNCF (French National Railway Corporation) — took part in the demonstration here. More than one-third of rail workers nationwide struck for the day, paralyzing much of the French rail network. Financial daily *Les Echos* said the strike was much larger than expected.

The SNCF workers were protesting a series of government attacks, including the threatened closing of 5,600 miles of local rail lines and steps towards privatization of the railroad.

The government of President Emmanuel Macron has been campaigning to weaken the unions in both private and public sectors in France and protections they have won over decades of class combat. Many of these attacks, including those on the rail workers, are conducted in the name of opening up jobs for young people. Unemployment among youth is over 20 percent, and those who do have jobs are hired under temporary contracts, with lower pay, no benefits and no union protection.

In particular, the Macron government demands an end to strong legal protections many unionists have won against layoffs and firings. They are demanding that new hires in the SNCF be stripped of these protections, creating a two-tier system where younger workers would have weaker job rights and benefits.

The bosses say they give rail workers unjustified privileges and lifetime job protection. These arguments have some effect on unemployed workers. Rail workers seek to explain the government's attacks on these gains are part of an attack on all workers.

In face of the protests, the government has backed off from closing down rail lines — at least for now.

The public sector workers — in-

cluding the national education and public health systems, the metro and bus system of Paris, municipal sanitation workers and others — were responding to government moves to cut spending for public services and reduce the workforce by 120,000. And they're concerned the attacks on rail workers will eventually lead to an attack on similar protections they still have.

Rail unions announced a three-month series of rolling strikes starting in April.

— Nat London

Solidarity builds for locked-out Quebec aluminum workers

BÉCANCOUR, Quebec — “We will fight for our rights. Through the struggle we have the opportunity to meet other workers and solidify the fight,” Danny Pilotte, a foundry worker, one of over 1,000 locked-out ABI Bécancour aluminum workers, told Communist League members on the picket line here March 4. The plant is the second largest aluminum smelter in the country, a major export industry here.

The workers, members of United Steelworkers Local 9700, have been locked out since Jan. 11. Alcoa and Rio Tinto bosses, the joint owners of the plant, are demanding concessions in pension coverage, seniority and other conditions. The company seeks to sharpen divisions between younger and more experienced workers by disregarding seniority in making job assignments.

Government officials in Quebec have been pressing the bosses and workers to reach an agreement and restore full production. But the company announced March 8 they have taken their final contract offer — voted down overwhelmingly by the workers on the eve of the lockout — off the table.

“The plant needs fundamental changes to succeed long-term,” plant director Nicole Coutu claimed. Coutu accused the union of using pressure tactics during the negotiations, causing “major deterioration of operational conditions” in the plant. She called on union officials to work with the company to increase productivity and competitiveness.



Militant/Nat London

Hundreds of thousands of rail and public workers rallied in Paris and around France March 22 against government attacks on unions and two-tier system proposed for new hires in rail.

Company owners felt extra pressure from Washington's threats of punitive tariffs against aluminum imports from Canada. The Donald Trump administration then exempted Canadian exporters from the tariffs for now. Some 80 percent of Canada's aluminum production is exported to the U.S.

ABI bosses got a compliant judge to limit the number of pickets to 15 at a time and to restrict the ability of the workers to talk to truck drivers and others going into the plant.

The union has reached out to other workers and is winning broad solidarity. The Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) in Baie-Comeau recently donated \$30,000. Others making contributions include Unifor, the largest private sector union in Canada; the Central of Democratic Unions (CSD); and other USW locals. The 400 Micro Bird bus factory workers in Drummondville are donating \$1,000 a week.

“ABI management personnel are running one of three production lines,” Local 9700 President Clément Masse told the *Militant*. “The stoppage of two production lines costs ABI around \$100 million.”

Many workers think the lockout is also aimed at pressuring Quebec for lower electric rates for the company.

The smelter owners already have an advantage over their U.S. competitors because of relatively cheaper electricity prices from abundant hydropower here. ABI bosses want to do even better.

“The question of electricity rates probably justifies this lockout for them,” Masse said.

The lockout is having an impact on Quebec. The primary aluminum industry in Canada employs 10,000 workers. In 2017, Canada's 10 smelters — nine in Quebec and one in British Columbia — produced 3.2 million tons of aluminum. Since January, the Bécancour lockout has reduced Canada-wide aluminum monthly output by 10 percent.

This is the second shutdown at ABI since the plant opened in 1986. A several monthslong strike in 2004 centered on defense of seniority, job classifications, control of the pension plan and opposition to contracting out work.

“Bosses try to lower conditions of all workers,” said Steve Montambault, a laboratory technician at the plant. “In 2004 we said no to contracting out. The more experienced workers backed us when we all went out then. We will do the same in this lockout. We want to defend the younger workers so they will get the same conditions we've won.”

— John Steele and Paul Landry

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

UNITED KINGDOM

Manchester

‘The Future is Coming Toward Us’ — Documentary on 1979-83 Revolution in Grenada. Speaker: Dag Tirsén, Communist League. Sat., April 7, 6 p.m. Donation: £2.50. Room 301, Hilton House, 26-28 Hilton St. M1 2EH. Tel.: (0161) 478-2496.

—CALENDAR—

CANADA

Vancouver

Elections and Democracy in Revolutionary Cuba. Speakers: Juan Carlos Rodríguez Díaz, member of Cuba's National Assembly of People's Power, professor of history; Yamil Martínez Marrero, Canada Desk of Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). Mon., April 2, 2 p.m. Centre for Socialist Education. 706 Clark Dr. Organized by Canadian Cuban Friendship Association. Tues., April 3, 7 p.m. Vancouver Public Library Central Branch. 340 W. Georgia St. Organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba. Tel.: (778) 882-5223 or (778) 879-2759.

—25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO—



April 12, 1993

LONDON — Three thousand British workers, one-third of them coal miners, marched and rallied here March 29 to protest pit closures. The demonstration, called by the Trades Union Congress, the British labor federation, coincided with a debate in the Parliament on a government plan to close several mines. The closures would eliminate up to 30,000 jobs of miners and 70,000 other workers in rail, engineering, power, and other industries.

The same day, the Parliament voted to immediately close 19 mines, leaving 12 others operating for now that had been scheduled to close.

The TUC action was a prelude to a 24-hour strike called for Friday, April 2, by the National Union of Mine Workers, the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, London bus workers, and others to protest job losses.



April 8, 1968

MEMPHIS, March 8 — Hundreds of Black people were injured and one Black youth was killed here today when police made a brutal attack on a peaceful march of more than 15,000 people demonstrating in support of striking sanitation workers.

At Hamilton High School large numbers of Black students left school to join the demonstration, and cops entered the school grounds to prevent them from doing so. They started to club students. There were reports of cops shooting tear gas and Mace at high school students.

Dr. Martin Luther King had come to Memphis that morning to lead the massive demonstration in support of the 1,300 striking sanitation workers.

After police suppressed the demonstration, Mayor Henry Loeb called 4,000 national guardsmen into Memphis. A 7 p.m. curfew was imposed.



April 10, 1943

Those workers who have been following the countless scandals of World War II now know that part of the money taken from their wages in the form of the “Victory tax” and other taxes goes back into the coffers of Big Business.

While Washington sets down a “Little Steel” formula for freezing workers' wages, “Big Steel” is handed out billions. And not they alone. The Aluminum barons, the auto kings, the Banking tycoons and others are also getting in on the *Big Steal* — the greatest raid on the U.S. Treasury in history.

How can this menace of the monopolists be removed? There is one really effective way: Organize politically to drive out the Looters' Legion!

Expropriate the war industries, shipbuilding, steel-making, power plants, aluminum factories! Let them be operated under workers control!

Bosses' profit drive caused fatal Triangle fire, kills workers today

BY EMMA JOHNSON

NEW YORK — The 1911 fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company here is one of the country's deadliest disasters for working people caused by the boss class's disregard for safety and human life. As the flames began to leap over piles of cloth that littered the garment shop's floor, the workers flocked to the narrow stairway leading to the single fire escape. It collapsed under their weight and workers plunged to their deaths. Others headed for the exit doors, but found them locked. The fire moved so fast that corpses of some were found still sitting in front of their machines. In less than 15 minutes that Saturday March 25 a total of 146 workers were killed.

"It's important to remember what happened here out of respect for the workers who died and because it's not a thing of the past, it's still happening," Don Weiner told the *Militant* at the March 23 commemoration of the fire outside the 10-story building that housed the Triangle shop on its three top floors. His aunt, Rosie Weiner, was one of those who didn't survive. "At the commemoration a few years ago we talked about the workers who were killed in Bangladesh. For the same reasons, greed and dangerous workplaces."

The bosses' relentless drive for profits at all costs continues to maim and kill workers today — in construction, logging, coal mines, oil refineries, on the railroad, and everywhere line speeds are cranked up and up.

In their chase for cheap labor, garment bosses, retail capitalists and other factory owners have moved their production centers to Asia. And they've taken their disdain for workers' health and safety with them.

In April 2013, more than 1,100 garment workers were killed when a building at Rana Plaza housing five garment factories collapsed in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The outer walls were cracked and at first workers refused to go in that day. When bosses threatened not to pay their wages, they went in. An hour later the building collapsed.

In two factory fires the previous year, one in Pakistan and one in Bangladesh, more than 400 workers died, the vast majority young women. The

descriptions of what happened in both of them — and the bosses' responsibility — are strikingly similar to those in the New York disaster.

Too few staircases, fire extinguishers that didn't work, flammable stacks of yarn and clothes blocking parts of the stairs, iron-grilled windows. And bosses who locked exit doors.

"They said the workers at Triangle would steal material if they weren't locked in," Weiner said. "Aunt Rosie was 19 years old and had come here from Russia in 1902. He sister Katie, 16, was the last one to make it out alive."

Young, immigrant, women workers

Triangle was then the largest shirtwaist manufacturer in the city, with 700 workers. Most of them were women in their teens and early 20s, immigrants from Italy, Russia and eastern Europe. They worked for subcontractors 13 hours a day, six days a week. Their average weekly pay was \$6.

Most workers in the garment industry in Asia today are also young women, the first generation in countries like Bangladesh to join the industrial working class, working together in factories by the hundreds and thousands. And while they're not immigrants, they are part of massive internal migrations where peasants move from rural areas and small towns to big cities and manufacturing slums.

Triangle was a nonunion shop, but some workers there were members of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. In November 1909, the union called for a strike against Triangle and over the next few weeks it spread to other shirtwaist factories. The number



Detail from mural *Victory of Light over Darkness* by Ernest Fiene, 1944, depicting a scene from Triangle garment factory fire, New York, March 25, 1911. N.Y. unions commemorate 146 workers killed there every year. Hundreds of garment workers died in 2013 fire in Bangladesh.

of strikers swelled to over 20,000.

The bosses' attempts to break the strike, including mass arrests and sending thugs to beat up workers, didn't work. The strike won broad support among working people in the city and solidarity from the union movement. Coming out of the Triangle disaster the garment workers union won increasing support, with thousands of new members pouring in.

Kimberley Schiller, a teacher at the Finley Middle School in Huntington, Long Island, has brought her students to the annual Triangle commemoration since 2000. Every year she organizes them to learn about what happened.

"We read *Ashes of Roses*, a book about the disaster, and dig into the life of the workers," she told the *Militant*. "My students can't believe it happened."

Schiller noticed the *Militant's*

front-page article on the West Virginia teachers strike and its connections to the struggles of mine workers there. The miners made a revolution in their union in the late 1960s and '70s that made it possible for them to drive back deaths from black lung and gain control over safety in the mines. The bosses have driven the union out of many mines since and black lung is once again on the rise.

"Those teachers are awesome," she said. "Working with the Triangle fire led me to learn about the 2010 Upper Big Branch Mine disaster in West Virginia. Did you know that Don Blankenship who ran that mine is running for senator? He's responsible for 29 miners losing their lives, he should be in jail."

The fight for workers control over safety conditions on the job remains just as critical today as it was 100 years ago.

Rail bosses use drones to spy on, victimize workers

BY SETH GALINSKY

Feigning concern for safety, Union Pacific bosses began using drones to spy on workers at 14 of its rail yards in December. A new crew of drone operators has been hired to look for "behaviors that deviate from the railroad's rule books," like workers "passing between railcars that are less than 100 feet apart" or "climbing off moving equipment," the *Wall Street*

Journal reported March 14.

But rail workers know that "safety" rules are designed to blame and victimize workers for train wrecks, on-the-job injuries and deaths. Those who work on the rails have often had supervisors tell them to "work safely" with a wink of the eye, and then tell them to get the work done fast. Some workers have already been written up on charges from drone surveillance.

Over the last several decades, rail bosses — in their drive for profits — have slashed crew sizes to the point where most freight trains run with a crew of just two, down from the four or five that was standard into the 1980s. Railroad owners are pushing to cut that to a one-person "crew," but have met resistance by workers.

One-person operation has been a key factor in more than one recent train disaster, from the runaway train that derailed and exploded in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, killing 47 people in 2013, to the Amtrak train that derailed and killed eight people near Philadelphia in 2015.

Rail bosses are not the only ones making fewer workers produce more, in less time. Corporate associations in both chicken and hog slaughter have asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture to allow them to jack up line speeds. A cooperative USDA has allowed 20 companies to speed up their lines to 175 birds a minute.

While squeezing more out per worker, the rail bosses have been skimping on rail and train maintenance, increasing the dangers. They keep increasing train lengths and run times. Some trains are now more than two miles long and fatigue is a growing challenge for workers.

Union Pacific says it suspended drone operations temporarily March 1, to try to get agreement from rail union officials. Meanwhile, it already has 126 operatives certified to fly the drones, using them to inspect bridges and flood damage as well as spying on yard crews. UP says it plans to double that number by the end of the year.

Officials of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and SMART — the two main unions of operating craft rail workers — have challenged drone surveillance. BLET National President Dennis Pierce told Trains News Wire the spying "will reduce safety because the drones will distract crews."

SMART General Chairperson Steve Simpson agreed, saying they would be a serious hazard.

An engineer in Boone, Iowa, who asked to remain anonymous, told the *Militant* he found out about the drones from co-workers. "Nobody I talked to approves," he said. "They say if they see one they'll stop working. They told me, 'I don't feel safe if I see a drone up there. How do I know who's controlling it?'"

SPECIAL OFFER: The Teamsters Series

Lessons from U.S. labor battles of the 1930s by Farrell Dobbs

New, enhanced edition

"The principal lesson of the Teamster experience is not that under an adverse relationship of forces, the workers can be overcome, but that with proper leadership, they can overcome."
— Farrell Dobbs.

\$15 each (normally \$19)
all four for \$40 (normally \$76)



For special offer see list of distributors on page 7

Socialist Workers Party in 1950: ‘US out of Korea!’

Below is a July 31, 1950, letter from Socialist Workers Party National Secretary James P. Cannon to President Harry Truman and members of Congress demanding they end the U.S. rulers’ war against the Korean people. It is the first of three letters the SWP leader sent to the U.S. president during that war. They are all printed in Notebook of an Agitator, one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for April. Copyright © 1958, 1993 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

To the President and Members of the Congress:
Gentlemen:

I disagree with your actions in Korea, and in my capacity as a private citizen I petition you to change your policy fundamentally, as follows:

Withdraw the American troops and let the Korean people alone.

I am setting forth the reasons for this demand in detail in the following paragraphs. But before opening the argument, I beg your permission, gentlemen, to tell you what I think of you. You are a pack of scoundrels. You are traitors to the human race. I hate your rudeness and your brutality. You make me ashamed of my country, which I have always loved, and ashamed of my race, which I used to think was as good as any.



“The American intervention in Korea is a brutal imperialist intervention,” SWP National Secretary James P. Cannon wrote in 1950 letter to Truman. Above, 1953 Laura Gray cartoon in *Militant*. In same book, Cannon wrote about Gray, the party and the fight to advance culture.

The American intervention in Korea is a brutal imperialist invasion, no different from the French war on Indo-China or the Dutch assault on Indonesia. American boys are being sent 10,000 miles away to kill and be killed, not in order to liberate the Korean people, but to conquer and subjugate them. It is outrageous. It is monstrous.

The whole of the Korean people — save for the few bought-and-paid-for agents of the Rhee puppet regime — are fighting the imperialist invaders. That is why the press dispatches from Korea complain more and more about “infiltration” tactics, increasing activities of “guerrillas,” the “fluid” fighting front, the “sullenness” and “unreliability” of the “natives.”

The Korean people have a mortal hatred of the Wall Street “liberator.” They despise unto death the bestial, corrupt, U.S.-sponsored Syngman Rhee dictatorship that made South Korea a prison camp of misery, torture and exploitation.

The high morale and fearlessness of the North Koreans and the hostility of the South Koreans toward their U.S. “liberators” alike testify to the unity of the entire Korean people in this unflinching opposition to imperialistic domination.

The explosion in Korea on June 25 [the date the U.S. rulers’ war on

the Korean people started], as events have proved, expressed the profound desire of the Koreans themselves to unify their country, to rid themselves of foreign domination and to win their complete national independence. It is true that the Kremlin seeks to take advantage of this struggle for its own reactionary ends and would sell it tomorrow if it could get another deal with Washington. But the struggle itself has the overwhelming and wholehearted support of the Korean people. It is part of the mighty uprising of the hundreds of millions of colonial people throughout Asia against western imperialism. This is the real truth, the real issue. The colonial slaves don’t want to be slaves any longer.

This is more than a fight for unification and national liberation. It is a civil war. On the one side are the Korean workers, peasants and student youth. On the other are the Korean landlords, usurers, capitalists and their police and political agents. The impoverished and exploited working masses have risen up to drive out the native parasites as well as their foreign protectors.

Whatever the wishes of the Kremlin, a class war has been unfolding in Korea. The North Korean regime, desiring to mobilize popular support, has decreed land reforms and taken nationalization measures in the ter-

ritories it has won. The establishment of people’s committees has been reported. These reforms, these promises of a better economic and social order have attracted the peasants and workers. This prospect of a new life is what has imbued a starving subject people with the will to fight to the death. This is the “secret weapon” that has wrested two-thirds of South Korea from U.S. imperialism and its native agents and withstood the troops and bombing fleets of mighty Wall Street.

American imperialism was quite willing to turn northern Korea over to Stalin in return for control over South Korea, which it ruled through the bloody dictatorship of Syngman Rhee. Now Washington is seeking, against the resistance of the Korean people, to reimpose its imperialist puppet rule, to enforce the division of Korea and to maintain it as a colony and military base for future war on the Soviet Union.

There is not an iota of concern for the wishes and rights of the Korean people in this brutal invasion. The attempt to prop up the Syngman Rhee regime by armed force is part of Wall Street’s planned program to dominate and exploit the whole world. Your undeclared war on Korea, Mr. President, is a war of enslavement. That is how the Korean people themselves view it — and no one knows the facts better than they do. They’ve suffered imperialist domination and degradation for half a century and they can recognize its face even when masked with a UN flag.

The right in this struggle is all on the side of the Korean people. Like the colonial peoples everywhere in Asia, they want no part of U.S. or even UN “liberation.” They want the American troops to get out of Korea. They want freedom from all foreign domination. They want to decide their own fate.

The American people well remember the War of Independence that brought this nation its freedom from British tyranny. In the spirit of this revolutionary and democratic tradition of ours, I call upon you to halt the unjust war on Korea. Withdraw all American armed forces so that the Korean people can have full freedom to work out their destiny in their own way. I submit this to the Congress as a motion.

James P. Cannon

April

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

PATHFINDER

READERS CLUB

SPECIALS

25%

DISCOUNT

Notebook of an Agitator

by James P. Cannon

Articles spanning four decades of working-class battles by a founding leader of the Socialist Workers Party and leader of the communist movement in the U.S. following the 1917 October Revolution in Russia.

\$28. Special price: \$21

Rosa Luxemburg Speaks

\$30. Special price: \$22.50

Lenin’s Struggle for a Revolutionary International

Documents, 1907-1916; the Preparatory Years

\$38. Special price: \$28.50

Problems of Everyday Life

Creating the Foundations for a New Society in Revolutionary Russia

by Leon Trotsky

\$28. Special price: \$21

Cuba’s Internationalist Foreign Policy

Speeches, vol. 1, 1975-80

by Fidel Castro

\$23. Special price: \$17.25

Thomas Sankara Parle

(Thomas Sankara Speaks)

\$24. Special price: \$18

Join Pathfinder Readers Club for \$10 and receive discounts all year long

ORDER ONLINE AT

WWW.PATHFINDERPRESS.COM

OFFER GOOD UNTIL APRIL 30

IF YOU LIKE THIS PAPER, LOOK US UP

Where to find distributors of the *Militant*, *New International*, and a full display of Pathfinder books.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: **Oakland:** 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Zip: 94621. Tel: (510) 686-1351. Email: swpoak@sbcglobal.net **Los Angeles:** 2826 S. Vermont. Suite 1. Zip: 90007. Tel: (323) 643-4968. Email: swpla@att.net

FLORIDA: **Miami:** P.O. Box 380641. Zip: 33238. Tel: (305) 420-5928. Email: swpmiami@icloud.com

GEORGIA: **Atlanta:** 777 Cleveland Ave. SW Suite 103. Zip: 30315. Tel: (678) 528-7828. Email: swpatlanta@bellsouth.net

ILLINOIS: **Chicago:** 1858 W. Cermak St., 2nd floor. Zip: 60608. Tel: (312) 455-0111. Email: SWPChicago@fastmail.fm

MINNESOTA: **St. Paul:** 1821 University Ave. W Suite S-106A. Zip: 55104. Tel: (651) 340-5586. Email: twincities.swp@gmail.com

NEBRASKA: **Lincoln:** P.O. Box 6811. Zip: 68506. Tel: (402) 217-4906. Email: swplinc@windstream.net

NEW YORK: **New York:** 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor. Zip: 10018. Tel: (646) 964-4793. Email: newyorkswp@gmail.com **Albany:** P.O. Box 8304. Zip: 12208. Tel: (518) 903-0781. Email: albanyswp@gmail.com

PENNSYLVANIA: **Philadelphia:** 2824 Cottman Ave., Suite 16. Zip: 19149. Tel: (215) 708-1270. Email: philaswp@verizon.net

TEXAS: **Dallas:** dallasswp@gmail.com

WASHINGTON, D.C.: 7603 Georgia Ave. NW, Suite 300. Zip: 20012. Tel: (202) 536-5080. Email: swp.washingtondc@verizon.net

WASHINGTON: **Seattle:** 5418 Rainier Ave. South. Zip: 98118-2439. Tel: (206) 323-1755. Email: swpseattle@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA

Sydney: Suite 22, 10 Bridge St., Granville, NSW 2142. Tel: (02) 8677 0108. Email: cl_australia@optusnet.com.au

CANADA

QUEBEC: **Montreal:** 7107 St. Denis #204 H2S 2S5. Tel: (514) 272-5840. Email: clcmontréal@fastmail.com **BRITISH COLUMBIA:** **Vancouver:** 190 E. 48th Ave., Suite 201A. V5W 2C8. Email: clcVancouver@fastmail.fm

FRANCE

Paris: BP 10130, 75723 Paris Cedex 15. Email: militant.paris@gmail.com

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland: 188a Onehunga Mall, Onehunga. Postal address: P.O. Box 13857, Auckland 1643. Tel: (09) 636-3231. Email: clauk@xtra.co.nz

UNITED KINGDOM

ENGLAND: **London:** 2nd Floor, 83 Kingsland High St., Dalston. Postal code: E8 2PB. Tel: (020) 3583-3553. Email: clondon@fastmail.fm **Manchester:** Room 301, 3rd floor, Hilton House, 26–28 Hilton St. Postal code: M1 2EH. Tel: (016) 1478-2496. Email: clmanchr@gmail.com

The Militant April 9, 2018 7

Second Amendment rights

Continued from front page
publicity by media bosses. Some see this as the issue to use to defeat Republican candidates in the upcoming elections and get at President Donald Trump. Others see the working class as dangerous “deplorables” who must be disarmed and restrained.

It comes at a time when workers increasingly see the need to rebuild the labor movement and fight the tyranny of capitalist class rule.

March organizers demanded a ban on semi-automatic weapons, raising the age limit for buying guns, stricter background checks for gun purchases and other restrictions and regulations on gun ownership.

Former Justice Stevens says the Second Amendment is a long outdated relic that should be repealed. This, he says, would “eliminate the only legal rule that protects sellers of firearms in the United States.”

The protests were answered by some rightist forces. These deadly opponents of the working class also anticipate growing class combat and are interested in protecting their guns accordingly.

The debate takes place as working people are engaged in strikes and labor protests in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, Kentucky and elsewhere, drawing attention and solidarity from workers everywhere, and beginning to point a way forward for the labor movement.

In this context, our political rights are crucial.

Restrict rights, more armed cops

On the eve of the march, school district officials in Broward County, Florida, announced that starting in April Parkland students will be allowed to use only see-through backpacks and must wear identification badges at all times. And they are planning to install metal detectors. Florida Gov. Rick Scott is sending eight armed state cops to guard the school. And from now on the district will station at least one armed cop at every school there.

Similar measures are being taken

around the country. So the call for restrictions and regulations on the right to bear arms are coupled with moves to increase the presence of armed cops, in the schools and on the streets.

“That’s an invasion of privacy,” New York high school student Felix Rodriguez told the *Militant* at the march here when he heard about the clear backpacks.

Importance of Second Amendment

Like Stevens, some march participants carried signs saying, “Repeal the Second Amendment.” The amendment says, “The right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.”

It was enacted because of popular pressure as part of the fight for the Bill of Rights — a series of defense measures against the interference of the government with the rights and struggles of workers and farmers by the newly created U.S. government. Taken together with bars against government attacks on free speech, free exercise of religion, the right to protest, against unreasonable search and seizure, against being forced to testify against yourself, for the right to a speedy trial and not to be deprived of life, liberty and property without due process of law, these protections are crucially important to the working class today and its ability to fight.

No working-class voice

Absent from the debate in bourgeois politics over “gun control” is a working-class point of view.

With the exception of the Socialist Workers Party virtually every organization in the U.S. that calls itself socialist — including the Communist Party, Workers World Party, International Socialist Organization, Socialist Alternative and others — has caved into the pressure from the liberal left and embraced the protests as a road forward.

Mass shootings like in Parkland, gang violence and crime are not new. They’re not products of the existence of guns. They are products of the dog-eat-dog morality and violence of the

Philadelphia rally backs jailed rapper Meek Mill



PHILADELPHIA — Hundreds turned out at Irvine Auditorium here March 13 for a program in defense of imprisoned rapper Meek Mill. The program, “REFORM: Bringing Justice to Light,” was sponsored by Gathering for Justice and student groups at Drexel, Temple and the University of Pennsylvania.

Mill was jailed in 2008 for drug and gun possession and released after serving eight months. He was put on five years probation, and has repeatedly been dragged into court on charges of violating his parole by Common Pleas Court Judge Genece Brinkley. In 2017 the judge ordered Mill back to prison for two to four years. Because of revelations about the lack of credibility of Reginald Graham, Mill’s original arresting officer, he has now won the right to a new trial.

Mill’s mother Kathy Williams, left; Rev. Al Sharpton, right; and Mill’s attorney, Joe Tacopina, center, spoke. Mill was applauded when he talked over the phone from prison. Tacopina said that fully one-third of the 50,000 prisoners in Pennsylvania are there for violations of parole. Others at the event included Philadelphia Eagles player Malcolm Jenkins and retired boxer Bernard Hopkins.

One of those in the audience was Fashionette White, an in-home nurse, along with her daughter Davia. She said she knows “plenty of people who are doing life for being wrongfully accused.”

— GEORGE CHALMERS

workings of capitalism, exacerbated today by the crisis of capitalism and its effects on working people — from drug addiction to crime. Capitalism’s anti-working-class culture of “look out for number one” and “step on anyone who gets in your way” breeds anti-social violence.

The biggest threat to working people today is the violence of the propertied rulers — deaths and maiming on the job, premature deaths from their refusal of medical care, cop brutality, the U.S. rulers’ bloody wars to defend their imperialist interests abroad.

“Graft and crime and extortions and rackets are the symptomatic products of a diseased social system and its false values,” James P. Cannon, one of the founders of the Socialist Workers Party and its first national secretary, wrote in 1951. “These dark and evil symptoms can’t be eliminated, or even seriously curbed, until they are tackled at the source. A party that says this ... is not excusing crime and criminals or evading the issue; it is, rather, deal-

ing with the issue realistically and fundamentally.”

As the class struggle heats up, the rulers will be more and more interested in curtailing our rights and at the same time assuring that their cops and rightist goons are armed to the teeth. The stakes for the working class — and most everyone else — are huge.

We can push back anti-social violence of every description in only one way — with working people in their millions standing up and fighting for better working conditions, against police brutality, for women’s rights, against imperialism’s wars around the world. A byproduct of young people and others having something to fight for, of seeing solidarity in action, will be a decline in crime and in senseless acts of violence.

This can only be made permanent through a social revolution, where the working class takes political and economic power out of the hands of the capitalist class once and for all, transforming ourselves in the process, and joins the worldwide fight for socialism.

Books for working-class fighters



Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

Jack Barnes — \$10

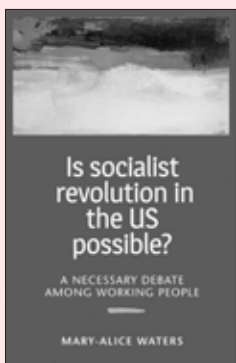


Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution

Villa Espín, Asela de los Santos, Yolanda Ferrer — \$20

See list of distributors p. 7 or visit:

www.pathfinderpress.com



Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible? A Necessary Debate Among Working People

Mary-Alice Waters — on special \$7



Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution

Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, Moisés Sio Wong — on special \$12

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

Download ready to print flyer at www.themilitant.com



Support for abortion rights grows in Ireland

BY PAMELA HOLMES
AND CATHARINA TIRSÉN

DUBLIN, Ireland — “Abortion has to be free, safe and legal. We will discuss calmly, courteously and intelligently. Get the vote out and vote for repeal,” was the message when some 5,000 campaigners for the repeal of the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution rallied here on International Women’s Day March 8. The amendment, adopted 35 years ago, “acknowledges the right to life of the unborn” and effectively prevents women’s access to abortion.

A growing campaign for abortion rights led Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar to announce Jan. 29 that a new referendum to repeal the amendment will be held this spring.

Many young people joined the protest, carrying banners like “School students for the repeal of the Eighth Amendment” and “School students for choice.”

Nadia Paez Dieter, a 32-year-old teacher from Argentina, told us she was surprised to learn about the situation for women in Ireland. She has been part of the fight going on in Argentina to win safe and legal abortion. “Women die in dangerous and illegal clinics there,” she said. “It’s our freedom that’s at stake.” That same day hundreds of thousands marched in Buenos Aires, demanding a woman’s right to choose abortion.

Catharina Tirsén, one of the authors of this article, is standing as a candidate for the Communist League in the United Kingdom for Manchester City Council. “Your fight is one example of a political awakening and growing resistance around the world,” read a message of solidarity she got out to fellow marchers. “Women and men in their hundreds of thousands took to the streets in Iran in December against the regime’s wars in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, its assaults on women’s rights and other attacks on working people. Teachers and other school workers struck in West Virginia in the United States. They say: ‘We’re fighting for all workers.’”

She was joined by other members of the Communist League on the march, who carried a sign reading, “Women’s right to choose strengthens unity on road to workers power.”

Changes in social attitudes

There have been significant changes in social relations and attitudes in Ireland. The number of working women jumped 20 percent since 1993. Restrictions on the sale of contraception were dropped in 1993, divorce was legalized in 1996, votes in 1992 and 2002 altered the law to permit abortion if a woman



Militant/Dag Tirsén

Students join March 8 action in Dublin, Ireland, to support women’s right to abortion. At left is Catharina Tirsén, Communist League candidate for Manchester, England, City Council.

was deemed a suicide risk, and same sex marriage was legalized by a 62 percent vote in 2015.

There remains substantial opposition to changing the abortion ban. After the pro-repeal demonstrations, tens of thousands gathered here March 10 in an “All Ireland Rally for Life” called by the Save the Eighth campaign, backed by the Roman Catholic Church.

“I have convinced my parents and my sister to vote for repeal,” a woman named Amy told us as we demonstrated March 8. “But my brother is very much against abortion. He says that is what the referendum is about, not a woman’s right to choose. ‘I’m worried because it’s not certain repeal will win,’ she said. “It is important to reach outside

Dublin and into the countryside.”

Communist League members spent two days going door to door in working-class neighborhoods in Dublin to discuss the referendum and broader politics. We explained we’re building a party that can lead the fight to get rid of capitalism and replace it with a government of workers and small farmers. We said we were in Dublin to support the repeal demonstration and to learn about what’s facing working people.

Linda O’Sullivan, a young special needs teacher, spoke with Ólof Andra Proppé and Dag Tirsén on her doorstep in Finglas, about how the abortion question is connected to the broader crisis of capitalism, to the fights by school workers in West Virginia and other working-

class struggles. “This is a good time for you to come and raise these ideas here,” she said. “Ireland is changing.”

Lively debate

“I keep thinking about it, I don’t know what to vote,” one woman told Proppé. “Abortion shouldn’t be too easy. But I have accompanied two of my friends to England for abortions.”

One young man said he was concerned because a young woman he knew had had an abortion without telling her boyfriend. “But I am going to vote yes, it has to be the woman’s decision,” he said.

“I don’t agree with repealing the Eighth Amendment and making abortion legal. A lot of people have abortions on very loose grounds,” Annette Brennan, a hairdresser from Finglas, told Pamela Holmes and Dag Tirsén. “People should take more responsibility for their own actions.”

“It’s not a question of being for or against abortion,” responded Holmes. “It’s who makes the decision. Women need the right to control their own bodies, not the government.”

“One hundred years ago women were part of the Russian Revolution and gained the right to vote, to divorce and to legal abortion — three of the most important conquests for women,” Dag Tirsén said. “Without them women can’t be full citizens.”

“You’ve got a point there,” Brennan said. “I may reconsider how I vote. Things are changing and maybe you can’t stop the changes.” She got a subscription to the *Militant* and we promised to stay in touch.

Women’s right to abortion under attack in Mississippi

BY LEA SHERMAN

So far this year state officials in Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, South Carolina and others have proposed laws that would ban abortions from six to 20 weeks after conception. In Ohio a bill introduced March 19 would ban all abortions, with no exception.

Mississippi legislators passed the “Gestational Age Act,” banning abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. A day after Gov. Phil Bryant signed it March 19, federal Judge Carlton Reeves blocked it. Only one clinic performs abortions in the state, the Jackson Women’s Health Organization, which worked with the Center for Reproductive Rights to challenge the new law.

The clinic, which opened in 1995, has withstood many attempts to shut it

down — from a 2006 Operation Rescue “siege” to a 2012 law that required hospital-admitting privileges for all doctors who work there.

By 2014 no clinics were providing abortions in 90 percent of U.S. counties.

Mississippi and many other states have already passed sharp restrictions that hit working-class and young women the hardest. Women are required to receive counseling, to discourage them from having an abortion. Then there’s a 24-hour waiting period, meaning two trips to the clinic. You have to undergo an ultrasound. Medicaid will pay only if your life is endangered, or in cases of rape or incest. Women under 18 must get the consent of their parents.

In some states Democrats are leading the charge. In Louisiana, Democratic state Sen. John Milkovich has introduced a bill that would imprison for 10 years any doctor who performs an abortion after 15 weeks.

The Ohio bill to ban all abortions isn’t intended to go into effect. Its purpose is to become part of a legal challenge to Roe v. Wade, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in 1973.

Hundreds of laws restricting abortion rights have been enacted since 2010. Many have centered on efforts to shorten the period after conception in which the procedure is legal. Many have been overturned.

These attacks have “been made easier by the character and content of the 1973 court ruling,” Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party,

wrote in *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People*. “Roe v. Wade was based not on a woman’s right ‘to equal protection of the laws’ guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, but on medical criteria instead. During the first three months (‘trimester’), the court ruled, the decision to terminate a pregnancy ‘must be left to the medical judgment of a pregnant woman’s attending physician’ (not to the woman herself, but to a doctor!).”

“At the same time, the court allowed state governments to ban most abortions after ‘viability,’... something that medical advances inevitably make earlier and earlier in pregnancy.”

A number of Democratic Party officials and pundits have called for the party to drop support for abortion rights, in the name of the higher interest of bringing down the Donald Trump presidency. Writing “The Abortion Memo” in the *New York Times* last month, columnist David Brooks posed this very question, saying, “Let’s try to imagine what would happen if Roe v. Wade was overturned.”

“Roughly 21 states would outlaw abortion,” he estimates, a small price to pay, he says, for shifting the political “landscape.”

What is needed is for women, the labor movement and others to take to the streets to fight to defend a woman’s right to choose. And to get out of the two-party shell game and build our own independent working-class party to chart a course to take political power.

Further reading...



Communist Continuity and the Fight for Women’s Liberation

Documents of the Socialist Workers Party, 1971-86

This three-part series helps politically equip women and men joining battles in defense of women’s rights today. \$12 each; all three for \$30

Vol. 1: Women’s Liberation and the Line of March of the Working Class
Vol. 2: Women, Leadership, and the Proletarian Norms of the Communist Movement
Vol. 3: Abortion Rights, the ERA, and the Rebirth of a Feminist Movement

www.pathfinderpress.com

Defend women’s right to abortion!

The right of women to control their own bodies — to *choose* whether to bear children, when and how many, the right to access to abortion — is a precondition for women’s emancipation. And it is in the interest of *all* workers because it makes it possible for men and women to unite in common struggle as equals in the fight against the bosses and their government.

Under capitalism, even where it is “legal,” the right to abortion is under attack. Since the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision, women’s access to abortion has been chipped away at. Anti-woman, anti-working-class forces have fought relentlessly to impose waiting periods, parental consent laws, denial of insurance coverage, restrictive time limits and other arbitrary regulations. They’ve driven the abortion procedure out of most hospitals and passed restrictions that have shuttered abortion clinics, making it more difficult for working-class women to get an abortion.

These measures are helped by the character of Roe v. Wade. It was based not on women’s right to equal protection under the law guaranteed by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, but left to the “judgment” of a pregnant woman’s doctor and to strictly

medical criteria related to the “viability” of the fetus.

But it’s a woman’s decision, not for the doctor, the government, or the church. This fight is worldwide — hundreds of thousands are marching in Ireland, Argentina, Poland and elsewhere.

The biggest problem is not the right wing. It’s the fact that leaders of women’s groups like the National Organization for Women and NARAL refuse to mobilize women and men to defend a woman’s right to choose. They tell us to keep quiet, not to rock the boat, to vote for Democrats who will look out for us.

This has been a deadly mistake and has emboldened those who are determined to deny women their rights and weaken the working-class movement. These same liberal politicians — like Hillary Clinton — think workers are dangerous trash who should be restrained.

Around the globe more and more workers — battered by the capitalist economic crisis — are looking for ways to stand up for the interests of the working class. It is only our class that takes the moral high ground and fights for the advancement of all humanity. Defending women’s right to choose abortion is a central part of that fight.

US rulers seek Beijing help to end NKorea nukes

Continued from front page

tators scream that his administration will start a “trade war” and exaggerate the extent of the protectionist threats. But U.S. and Chinese officials are using the 60-day period to meet and seek a deal on adjustments in trade.

At the same time that Washington and Beijing clash over trade, the Chinese rulers have been collaborating with the U.S. administration in tightening sanctions on North Korea. The U.S. rulers need Beijing’s backing as they press the leaders of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to abandon their nuclear weapons program. The North Korean government initiated talks with Washington due to be held in May.

Washington seeks greater access to China’s growing markets and seeks to defend bosses here from Chinese competition inside the U.S. The administration has threatened tariffs on up to \$60 billion of imports from China. Beijing’s response was to announce tariffs would be imposed on some \$3 billion of imports from the U.S., but has excluded some of the biggest items, such as soybeans, sorghum and Boeing aircraft.

Protectionist measures carried out by the Trump administration against Beijing are similar to what previous administrations have done. “We’ve brought trade cases against China at nearly twice the rate of the last administration,” boasted former President Barack Obama in 2012. His administration imposed a 35 percent tariff against Chinese tire imports.

Rulers seek to suck workers in

Republican and Democratic administrations alike use their trade policies — both protectionism and free trade — to appeal to workers to defend what they call “American interests,” which are in reality the class interests of U.S. bosses. Whatever course they pursue, the bosses seek to pit workers here against our allies, fellow toilers around the world.

Capitalist rulers elsewhere do the same. The European Union, a trading bloc of conflicting capitalist nations, imposed some 5,657 “directives” that restricted trade with nations outside the EU between 2009 and 2016.

As the largest, most powerful imperialist power, the U.S. rulers have been the greatest beneficiaries of trade pacts and conflicts for decades. But there has been intensifying competition between the exploiting class in the U.S. and China. Washington considers its domination of the Pacific and Asia to be one of its most precious spoils from its victory in World War II. And it seeks to preserve its domination there against the rising clout of Chinese capital.

The U.S. capitalist economy is overwhelmingly the world’s largest, producing 24.9 percent of total gross domestic product, compared to 15.1 percent for second-place China.

The Chinese capitalists have gained a competitive

edge in the fight for some markets by the sheer size of their economy and by imposing low pay, long hours and dangerous conditions on the millions of toilers drawn into China’s expanding industries in recent decades.

These conditions fuel class tensions as Chinese workers look for ways to defend themselves. Some 1,000 workers at the Guangzhou Panyu Simone Handbag company struck for nine days in March to force the bosses to make back payments to their social insurance funds. Protests and strike actions are reported almost daily by the China Labour Bulletin.

Beijing presses North Korea

As Washington looks toward face-to-face talks between Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, it also seeks to advance ties with its allies across the Pacific, including the rulers in Japan and South Korea. Trade disputes among these allies take place at the same time. The U.S. government has been pressing Seoul to open South Korean markets to more U.S.-made cars.

Washington needs Beijing to help deepen economic pressure on Pyongyang. China accounts for 90 percent of the DPRK’s trade. But that fell to a four-year low in January, as the Chinese rulers implement the U.N.’s trade sanctions. Workers in North Korea now face factory closures, job losses and rising prices. Some parts of the country have as little as three hours of electricity a day.

While Beijing has increased its pressure, the rulers there don’t want to provoke a collapse of the North and the instability that would provoke. Beijing has growing economic ties with South Korea and Japan. Japanese bosses have started collaborating with Beijing in its “Belt and Road” projects aimed at strengthening Chinese trade routes and influence across Asia, Africa and Europe. Tokyo and Seoul, which don’t have nuclear weapons, have long pressed for an end to the DPRK’s efforts to develop them.

Most importantly, Beijing wants conditions that allow it to continue to expand its own economic and military reach.

Washington, with Moscow’s complicity, seized south Korea at the end of the second imperialist world war, trampling on the Korean people’s national sovereignty. The U.S. rulers crushed a popular rebellion there, imposing the Syngman Rhee dictatorship. Workers and farmers in the north carried through a popular revolution, establishing the DPRK.

Washington waged a murderous war against the North from 1950 to 1953, leveling towns and cities, as well as in many parts of the South. To this day, the U.S. rulers have refused to sign a peace treaty with North Korea. Washington continues to station 28,500 troops in South Korea and its Pacific fleet submarines are armed with nuclear missiles.

Moscow challenge

Continued from front page

Alexei Navalny, organizer of anti-corruption protests last year, was barred from running. Andrey Bazhutin, leader of nationwide truckers’ protests against anti-driver road taxes, said he had to stop campaigning after cop harassment and being jailed.

The Russian Communist Party ran Pavel Grudinin, the owner of a large formerly state-run farm, as its candidate. He came in a distant second to Putin. Grudinin, a former member of Putin’s United Russia Party, made little criticism of the Russian president.

The Russian capitalists operate from weakness today. Stagnation of an economy over-dependent on oil, and the effects of Moscow’s wars abroad have spurred growing working-class discontent. Tens of thousands protested across Russia against Moscow’s military intervention in Ukraine.

Putin visited Kemorovo March 27, two days after at least 64 people were killed in a fire at a shopping mall there. Just days after his election thousands protested in the city center, calling for his resignation.

With contempt for the lives of working people in this coal-mining region of Siberia, the mall managers and local officials had failed to repair a broken fire alarm and locked fire exits. Putin promised to punish those responsible while six busloads of riot police were mobilized to confront the growing numbers of protesters.

U.S. rulers aim to push Moscow back

“Russia aims to weaken U.S. influence in the world and divide us from our allies and partners,” says the U.S. government’s new National Security Strategy released in December. Moscow’s “growing military capabilities creates ... the risk of conflict due to Russian miscalculation,” it states.

Putin pragmatically tests what Moscow can do to extend its influence without — he hopes — facing severe U.S. reprisals or sizable protests at home. Moscow was able to reinforce its ally, the tottering Bashar al-Assad dictatorship in Syria, and expand its military and political presence in a part of the world where the U.S. rulers have fought brutal wars over years to maintain their supremacy.

But Moscow’s military moves abroad exceed the Russian capitalist rulers’ economic reach in the world.

The Russian rulers’ moves in Syria, on the heels of their seizure of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine, were met by heavier sanctions by Washington and the EU, worsening the conditions for workers in Russia.

The U.S. rulers are particularly concerned that Moscow’s advances in Syria are tied to those of Tehran. The counterrevolutionary Iranian rulers intervened there early on, sending Revolutionary Guard officers and ground troops from Hezbollah and other Tehran-backed Shiite militias. They have established military bases closer to the borders of Israel and a corridor across Iraq and Syria to ferry advanced weapons to Hezbollah. Washington is increasing its collaboration with Israel and Saudi Arabia to counter Tehran.

The government of Vladimir Putin has taken other steps to increase its sway over Russia’s “near abroad” — as the rulers call the former Soviet republics on Russia’s borders. It backs the thug rulers in Transnistria, a Moscow-sponsored breakaway from Moldova.

In January this year Moscow deployed surface-to-air missiles to Crimea, consolidating its position there. And the Russian rulers assault on the Crimean Tatars continues unabated.

Moscow has established close ties with Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik, the president of Republika Srpska, a region of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dodik calls for the region’s breakaway from Bosnia and was hit with U.S. sanctions last year for “obstructing the Dayton Accords.” After U.S. airstrikes devastated the former Yugoslavia, Washington marched representatives from Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia to Dayton, Ohio, in 1995 where it dictated an agreement. The “peace” accord coincided with the U.S. rulers’ expansion of the NATO military alliance eastward, setting up a collision with Moscow.

On March 26 Washington expelled 60 Russian diplomats, part of similar moves across Europe and elsewhere, after the U.K. government said Putin ordered the attempted killing of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in England.

Finding a way to push back Moscow’s outsized use of its military power remains ahead of the U.S. rulers.