

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Lessons of 1979-83 Grenada Revolution debated in UK

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 82/NO. 16 APRIL 23, 2018

## Deep interest in teachers' fight fuels 'Militant,' book, fund drive

BY DAN FEIN

"After hearing the speakers and discussion tonight, I'm doubling my pledge to the Militant Fighting Fund," said Wisconsin grain farmer Randy Jasper as he wrote out his check for \$200. Jasper was referring to the Mil-

### SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY SPRING DRIVES

itant Labor Forum held in Chicago April 6 where Laura Anderson and I gave firsthand reports on the rallies by teachers and their supporters in Frankfort, Kentucky, and Oklahoma City. Twenty-three people attended the meeting.

Socialist Workers Party members and supporters from around the country have traveled to West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky and Arizona to join a rising wave of teachers strikes and protests. As they stand with the school workers, they have also been introducing books by party leaders and the *Militant* to other workers in-

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## Teachers' battles inspire workers, draw solidarity

'We all need to learn from what they're doing'



Militant/Alyson Kennedy

Striking teachers and supporters at end of 110-mile march from Tulsa to Capitol in Oklahoma City join thousands of others demanding action from state legislature April 10.

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

OKLAHOMA CITY — "I've been here since last Monday and it just keeps growing," Jimmy Acevedo, a teacher from Guymon in the Oklahoma Panhandle, told the *Militant* as we joined in protesting outside the state Capitol

here April 9. "Teachers are on fire. We have to use the momentum to keep going, we won't get this shot again."

The uprising by teachers and school workers keeps rolling across the country, gaining in momentum and solidarity. Workers from other unions are joining in, hungry for a fight after decades of being pushed back and discounted by the capitalist rulers and their political parties in Congress and state Capitols.

In Oklahoma workers walked out

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## US rulers, allies weigh step-up in Syria conflict, missile strikes

BY SETH GALINSKY

President Donald Trump announced April 11 that missiles "will be coming" to strike targets in Syria, retaliation for a Syrian government poison gas attack a few days earlier on civilians in Douma, a Damascus suburb then controlled by opposition forces.

"If there is a strike by the Americans," Alexander Zasytkin, Moscow's ambassador to Lebanon, replied, "the missiles will be downed and even the sources from which the missiles were fired."

Washington is discussing with its imperialist allies in France and Britain joining in the attack.

With the defeat of Islamic State, and the Russian and Iranian rulers' success in helping Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad rout armed opponents of his regime, the civil war in Syria is winding down. But sharp conflicts among the rival capitalist powers in the region — including Washington and Moscow, Tehran and Tel Aviv, and Ankara, Riyadh and others, all seeking to defend their interests — are heating up.

U.S. imperialism and its allies care little about the victims of the Syrian regime. Their central goal is to prevent Tehran from strengthening its

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## Hundreds protest New York cop killing of Saheed Vassell



Reuters/Lucas Jackson

March in Brooklyn April 5 demands justice in cop killing of Saheed Vassell, who was unarmed.

BY TERRY EVANS

NEW YORK — Over 1,000 people marched and rallied here in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, April 5 to protest the police killing the previous day of Saheed Vassell, an unarmed Black man. Chanting "Justice for Saheed," demonstrators marched from the site of the killing to Brooklyn's 71st Police Precinct.

Three of the four cops who gunned Vassell down were undercover spe-

cial operations officers. They shot 10 times. The cops say he pointed an object at them they believed was a gun, even though they took less than 10 seconds to start shooting after getting out of their unmarked car. Vassell was actually holding a small metal pipe from a welding torch. Years before he had worked as a welder before being diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

"The police that did this should be

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## Coming class battles pose need to defend political rights today

BY TERRY EVANS

Millions of working people are looking to the example set by labor battles waged by teachers and other school workers for wages, conditions and dignity. As the bosses continue to press workers to pay for the crisis

of their capitalist system, many more will be drawn into sharper class battles in the years ahead. And the capitalist rulers will increasingly turn to rightist gangs to unleash violent assaults on workers in an effort to break our strikes and unions. This is the lesson of the history of capitalist rule.

Political preparation for what is coming has a decisive bearing on how working people should respond to the stepped-up calls by liberals today for

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## Florida prison officials back off new moves to censor 'Militant'

BY JOHN STUDER

The *Militant* geared up for another fight when it got a letter from a reader behind bars in Florida saying his paper had been impounded by authorities at the Santa Rosa Correctional Institution. He sent us the impoundment notice after officials seized issue no. 12, falsely claiming it "depicts, de-

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### Inside

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US gov't uses immigration policy to divide workers, lower wages 2

Marx, Engels, fighting workers converge, form communist party 6

# Gov't uses immigration policy to divide workers, lower wages

BY SETH GALINSKY

President Donald Trump is continuing the trend of previous administrations of tightening control of the border with Mexico and increasing criminal penalties for workers without papers. At the same time his administration has expanded the number of workers that can enter the country on temporary visas.

The Trump administration has increased “sweeps,” where immigration cops target workers they want to deport on the street or in their homes, often picking up others who happen to be there at the time, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents organized the first major factory raid in 10 years.

On April 5 ICE, along with the Internal Revenue Service and state police, carried out a major factory raid. They surrounded the Southeastern Provision meatpacking plant in Bean Station, Tennessee, and arrested 97 workers. The plant was raided after police learned that the bosses were paying many workers in cash and had reported to the IRS that there were only 44 employees.

The George W. Bush administration ended large-scale factory raids in 2008, after almost every raid was met by protests against deportations. U.S.-born workers often helped their fellow workers without papers to hide or escape from the immigration police.

These measures need to be answered by the labor movement with protests demanding an end to deportations and calling for amnesty for immigrants. This is a life and death question for the trade unions.

Trump is also pushing changes that

would make it harder for migrants seeking asylum, especially women and children from Central America, to get permission to enter the country. But nothing that the White House put in place is a radical departure from the course of previous administrations.

The president’s anti-immigrant demagoguery is aimed at dividing the working class. At an April 5 speech in West Virginia, Trump referred to a caravan of Hondurans traveling through Mexico, with hopes of entering the U.S. He claimed that on the caravan “women are raped at levels that nobody has ever seen before.” Then he added, “This is the kind of stuff and crap that we’re allowing into our country, and we can’t do it.”

The same day the president authorized sending up to 4,000 National Guard troops to the Mexican border “until we can have a wall and proper security.” It’s up to the governor of each state asked to participate whether or not to send the guardsmen, which would be funded by the federal government only until the end of September.

## Not the first time

President Bush sent 6,000 National Guard troops to the border with Mexico from 2006 to 2008 and President Barack Obama sent 1,200 from 2010 to 2011. As of April 7 only Arizona and Texas have responded, saying they will start with 400 Guard members. According to the memo approved by Defense Secretary James Mattis, the troops will not perform law enforcement functions or “interact with migrants or other persons detained.”

On April 6 President Trump directed



Farmworkers pick strawberries in Florida 2017. To compete with rivals worldwide U.S. capitalist farmers rely on immigrant labor forced to accept low wages and harsh working conditions.

ICE to quickly report to him on what the agency is doing to end what he calls “catch and release.” The same day Attorney General Jeff Sessions said he was ordering U.S. Attorney’s Offices in the Southwest to bring charges against first-time offenders accused of illegal entry before they are deported so that if they get caught again they can be charged with the felony of illegal re-entry and sent to prison.

In fact, since 2011 the overwhelming majority of those picked up by the immigration cops are *already* subject to deportation under the equivalent of a judicial order and to felony charges and jail time if they are caught again.

Despite claims by President Trump that there is a new crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border, the number of people deported by ICE declined every year from 2005 to 2017, a reflection of the lower numbers trying to cross into the U.S. without official travel documents. This has been due to years of high unemployment.

With Trump’s election the monthly figure reached a new low. But by December the figure had risen to the level it was when Obama left office. But the administration is still deporting fewer immigrants than Obama did in his first years in office.

U.S. capitalists depend on immigrant labor to compete with their rivals around the world. Their goal is not to deport all immigrants but to intensify competition among workers and maintain a pariah layer of the working class, forced to ac-

cept lower wages and harsher work conditions who live in fear of deportation and won’t speak out. This pushes down wages for the working class as a whole.

At the same time that the White House is cranking up anti-immigrant rhetoric, it has quietly continued the trend to increase the number of H-2A “guest” visas for farmworkers. More than 200,000 were approved for 2017, up from 134,368 the year before. Farmworkers with these temporary visas can be rapidly deported if they quit or are fired.

Even with the increase, big capitalist farmers are still complaining that there is a labor shortage at the wages they are willing to pay.

The Republican-led government in Colorado decided March 23 to make it easier for undocumented workers to apply for driver’s licenses. With the current uptick in the economy bosses there are keen to ensure that the workers they hire can get to work.

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## THE MILITANT

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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' fund, sub drive

Continued from front page  
 inspired by these labor battles.

The Militant Fighting Fund is raising \$112,000 to help cover the paper's expenses, as well as to upgrade its website. The eight-week drive goes from March 24 through May 22.

Malcolm Jarrett, a chef in Pittsburgh, pledged \$100 to the fund. "The political perspective in the *Militant* is decisive. I just love it," he said. Jarrett went to West Virginia during the nine-day teachers strike several weeks ago to show solidarity. When teachers struck in Oklahoma April 2, he drove 16 hours to get to their rally that day. He joined SWP members at a party literature table, helping to make books on the lessons of previous working-class struggles available to fighting school workers attending the rally.

A medical practitioner gave \$CA20 for the fund to members of the Communist League going door to door in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Jacquie Henderson and I met Alejandra Sanchez and Sergio Gomez when going door to door in their working-class neighborhood in the small town of Marietta, Oklahoma, April 4, the third day of the statewide strike by teachers there. Gomez was born in Mexico and worked in California as a welder before moving to Marietta with Sanchez and their children and getting a job as a chef. "I fully support the teachers strike," he said. "Where I work they don't pay us enough. But the real problem is the immigrants who keep coming and coming. They drive the wages down for all of us."

"The capitalists get labor as cheap as they can." I replied. "That's why the unions must fight to organize undocumented workers into their ranks and fight for amnesty for all workers

without papers. The capitalists benefit from divisions in the working class — we don't."

Sanchez and Gomez got a subscription to the *Militant* and a copy of *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes.

The book is one of five titles on special at half price with a subscription to the *Militant*. Members and supporters aim to sell 1,400 subscriptions to the party's newspaper, and 1,400 copies of the books on special. (See ad below.)

Henderson also joined Helen Myers campaigning in Elk River, Minnesota, where teachers have rejected an offer from the school board. While going door to door there they sold a sub to Scott, a construction worker, who also got a copy of *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?*

A team organized by the Washington, D.C., branch of the SWP sold four *Militant* subscriptions knocking on doors in Ashland, Kentucky, including two to school cafeteria workers. Although they don't have a union, one of the new subscribers said she's been joining teachers' protests and will let the *Militant* know about the next one.

"I'm one of those single women Clinton kicked off of welfare," said another new subscriber. "In Kentucky, there's a two-year lifetime limit, but only if you work." Team member James Harris replied, "This attack and its consequences are aimed at the



Militant/Jacquie Henderson  
 Dan Fein introduces Alejandra Sanchez and Sergio Gomez to the Socialist Workers Party on their doorstep in Marietta, Oklahoma, April 4, on third day of statewide teachers strike. They purchased *Militant* subscription and *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?*

working class, to divide us," pointing to the cover photo of the book, *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record* by Barnes. "I'll get that book when you come back," she replied.

"The whole system needs to be overhauled. It should be 'we the people' making decisions," Sandra Vint told Susan Anmuth when she knocked on her door in Wharton, West Virginia, April 6. Vint picked up a copy of *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible* and signed up for a subscription.

Anmuth was part of a two-day team of party members and supporters from New York and Philadelphia

who traveled to coal-mining areas of West Virginia and sold 12 subscriptions to the paper and two of the campaign titles.

SWP members and supporters will continue getting out to towns, cities and states where working people are putting up a fight. Look for reports in next week's issue!

If you would like to contribute to the fund, checks can be made out to The Militant and addressed to 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018. To join the party campaign contact the SWP branch nearest you listed on page 8.

## Florida prisons back off from 'Militant' censorship

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 scribes or encourages activities which may lead to the use of physical violence or group disruption."

In the space on the form where officials have to indicate the "specific written or pictorial matter" that led them to censor the paper, Santa Rosa authorities wrote, "ALL PAGES DISCUSS PROTEST."

If upheld the arbitrary and unconstitutional impoundment could mean every issue of the *Militant* would be banned — and most other publications also. In today's world, even

the most conservative bourgeois papers frequently report on workers strikes, protests by teachers, marches against cop killings and other demonstrations.

The *Militant* has fought almost a dozen efforts by Florida prison officials to bar the paper from its readers behind bars. We have won the majority of them.

This record has had an effect. *Militant* attorney David Goldstein contacted the Florida statewide Literature Review Committee April 9 to request they overturn the ban. Committee Chair Allen Peterson wrote back that they had in fact rejected the impoundment four days earlier. "This means the issue will be allowed into FDC institutions," Peterson said.

"Maybe Florida prison officials have

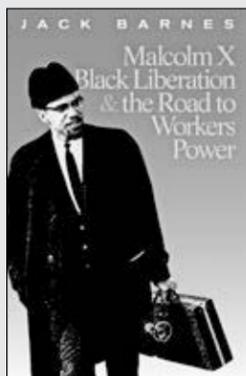
decided to back off on censoring the *Militant* for a while. That would be great for our readers in Florida prisons," said John Studer, the paper's editor. "Readers behind bars should let the *Militant* know if their subscriptions are impounded."

### Campaign to expand reach of 'Militant,' books, fund March 24–May 22 (week two)

Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold	Fund quota	Received
UNITED STATES						
Albany	95	27	95	15	\$5,000	\$300
Atlanta	90	15	90	13	\$9,700	\$1,080
Chicago	110	40	110	35	\$11,500	\$443
Dallas	30	19	30	11	\$1,900	\$0
Lincoln	20	6	20	2	\$300	\$116
Los Angeles	125	33	125	15	\$10,000	\$975
Miami	35	8	35	10	\$3,200	\$993
New York	165	44	165	32	\$16,700	\$1,312
Oakland	85	15	85	9	\$13,000	\$1,700
Philadelphia	65	18	65	12	\$3,600	\$791
Seattle	95	28	95	19	\$7,900	\$185
Twin Cities	65	29	65	13	\$4,500	\$320
Washington	70	23	70	12	\$7,500	\$1,525
Total U.S.	1,050	305	1,050	198	\$94,800	\$9,740
Prisoners	25	8				
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	70	32	70	21	\$2,500	\$480
Manchester	50	12	50	4	\$950	\$71
Total U.K.	120	44	120	25	\$3,450	\$551
CANADA						
Montreal	60	8	60	14	\$5,700	\$910
Vancouver	45	11	45	6	\$3,000	\$257
Total Canada	105	19	105	20	\$8,700	\$1,167
NEW ZEALAND						
	45	15	45	8	\$4,000	\$3
AUSTRALIA						
	40	17	40	10	\$800	\$195
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,385</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>1,360</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>\$111,750</b>	<b>\$11,656</b>
<b>SHOULD BE</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>\$112,000</b>	<b>\$28,000</b>

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 PO Box 162767  
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 Or visit [pathfinderpress.com](http://pathfinderpress.com)



# Teacher fights win solidarity

Continued from front page

April 2, determined to reverse years of declining wages and working conditions. The walkout is now in its second week. Thousands of teachers, other school workers and supporters hold daily rallies and marches outside the Capitol. Hundreds enter the building when the state legislature is in session, chanting “Fund our schools” and “We’re not leaving.”

Similar walkouts and mass teacher protests are taking place in Kentucky, where Gov. Matt Bevin has called teachers “thugs” and the legislature voted to eliminate pensions for new teachers. The Kentucky Education Association and local teachers’ groups have called for a mass protest at the Capitol April 13.

The Oklahoma legislature and Gov. Mary Fallon tried to defuse teachers’ anger and stave off the walkout at the last minute. On March 28, after months of claiming there was no money, legislators passed and Fallon signed a bill increasing annual wages for teachers by an average of \$6,100, for staff by \$1,250, for state workers by \$750 to \$2,000, and adding \$50 million to school funding. This fell short of the demands by the teachers union, the Oklahoma Education Association. Teachers haven’t had a raise in over a decade. Fallon’s efforts failed to prevent the walkout.

And the bill imposed a slew of new taxes on personal consumption — like gas and tobacco — that fall hardest on working people.

## ‘Teacher Walkout — Time is Now!’

“When talking to West Virginia teachers, they told me the most important day of the walkout was the 2nd Monday,” posted Alberto Morejon April 9 on the Facebook group he set up, “Oklahoma Teacher Walkout – The Time is Now!” The group now has over 70,000 members. Morejon started the group after watching the school workers’ walkout in West Virginia, a widely supported fight that won substantial pay raises for all state workers.

“They thought this would go away, but there are more people here today than last week,” said Rhonda Pruet, who has taught for three years in Lexington. “Now some superintendents have threatened to fire teachers.”

When the school board in the Western Heights Public Schools district here voted to limit support to one day, four

of the teachers, including the former head of the high school English department, chose to resign and stay with the walkout.

Acevedo has been here since the first day of the walkout. He described the widespread support and solidarity they’ve gotten, both in the city and across the state.

“We’re getting so much donations that you don’t need to buy water or food,” he said. “The school cafeteria in Guymon is staying open to make sure students get meals. There have been local demonstrations in support of the teachers.”

Guymon, with a population of 11,000, is over four hours from Oklahoma City. It’s an oil town with a big slaughterhouse and a lot of agriculture. Acevedo grew up in a migrant family that moved from state to state following the harvests.

“A lot of immigrant workers have come there for jobs, 40 different languages are spoken in the town,” he said. “Recently there has been big influx of workers from Puerto Rico.”

Teachers from Inola, close to the Cherokee Reservation, filled seven vehicles and drove down to take part in the rally today. One of them said there had been public actions in support of the teachers there.

In Stillwater, volunteers report that donations of money, snacks, drinks and gas cards have come in every day since the walkout began.

The Capitol Hill High School here opened its field house April 8 for teachers living more than 60 miles away to



“RedForEd” rally in Phoenix March 28 demanding pay raises for teachers and school workers. Uprising started in West Virginia, where school workers built broader social movement that laid basis for victory in walkout and is example emulated in other states.

stay at.

State officials’ efforts to pit the students against the teachers for walking out hasn’t worked. Big numbers of students attend the daily rallies. On April 4 they organized their own demonstration outside the Capitol to support the teachers.

Thousands of homemade signs graphically express workers’ opinions about the conditions they face. Adjusted for inflation, the state government’s funding for schools is down 28 percent per student since 2008. Buildings aren’t maintained, textbooks are a decade outdated and tattered, hallways aren’t heated and the lights are often turned off. Some 20 percent of the

state’s school districts have moved to four-day weeks.

“In one year I can easily spend \$1,000 myself on supplies for my class,” said Laura Hardee, who teaches at Putnam City Schools here. “Until this fight, the general public didn’t know how bad the school situation is. Teachers have picked up the slack for years.”

The Oklahoma Public Employees Association, the state workers union, also walked out April 2 and has encouraged members to join the rallies. The “raise the Legislature just passed won’t even cover the health insurance increases you’ve had to eat every year for the last five years,” the union said in

Continued on page 5

# Bail bondsmen use power to jail workers to extort them

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Under the U.S. capitalist “justice” system, hundreds of thousands of working people are incarcerated without having been convicted of any crime, the vast majority stuck behind bars for days, months or years because they can’t afford bail.

The United States has the world’s highest incarceration rate. Some 1.5 million people are in federal or state prisons, 615,000 in local jails and 4.8 million on parole or probation. Over 70 percent of those in jails have not been convicted of anything, according to the Prison Policy Initiative.

Seeking to make big profits off this situation, bail bondsmen, backed by

large corporations, offer to fund prisoners’ release pending trial, but at a very steep price.

If you have access to ample cash — sometimes tens of thousands of dollars or more — to meet bail requirements, you’re immediately released and get your money back after showing up in court for subsequent hearings.

But many workers facing charges have to turn to bail bondsmen. They charge a nonrefundable 10 percent fee. Those who can’t cover this are saddled with loan payments and high interest rates, as well as other arbitrary fees and intrusions into one’s personal life. Given this harassment, some people decide to plead guilty to crimes they did not commit to escape from the financial demands of a bondsman. This is just one of many ways the presumption of innocence is undermined.

“Bondsmen have extraordinary powers that most lenders do not,” described an April 1 *New York Times* article titled, “When Bail Feels Less Like Freedom, More Like Extortion.”

“Some states give them broad latitude to arrest their clients for any reason — or none at all. A credit card company cannot jail someone for missing a payment. A bondsman, in many instances can,” the article said.

Bond agents have also imposed curfews on their clients, searches of their cars or homes at any time, and access to medical and other records.

“When a home health care aide wanted to bail her son out of Rikers Island in New York City,” reported the *Times*, “she was charged \$1,000 to have a courier walk her money a few

blocks to the courthouse.” Some have been forced to wear ankle monitors at a cost of \$300 a month.

In Santa Clara County, California, Gregory Chiotti received a bill from Jake’s Bail Bonds for \$39,755 and a notice of foreclosure on his house he had put up as collateral for the bonds taken out on his daughter. At the time she already had been convicted and was in jail, the *Times* reported. After paying these extortion funds, Chiotti got a second notice of foreclosure six years later, saying he now owed the bondsman \$117,500.

Up until the end of the 19th century, those accused of a crime were released without having to make upfront cash payments as long as a person or entity took responsibility for their return for trial. Payment was only required if a defendant didn’t appear.

With a 60 percent increase of the U.S. prison population under the Clinton administration in the 1990s, use of bail became more extensive. According to the Pretrial Justice Institute, both dollar amounts of bonds and the number of crimes for which bail is set increased by 50 percent during this time.

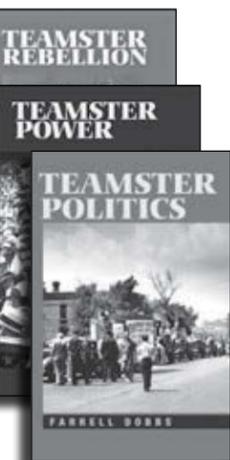
The for-profit bail bonding industry rakes in \$2 billion in annual revenue, according to the Justice Policy Institute. Its operations are only legal in the U.S. and the Philippines.

In New Orleans, for example, 63 percent of individuals accused of misdemeanors and 87 percent accused of felonies had to pay a bondsman as a condition of release before trial, according to the Vera Institute of Justice.

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# 'We all need to learn from what teachers are doing'

Continued from page 4  
a March 30 statement.

"Cuts in state services have been going on for 10 years," said Kathleen Broudrick, who does food stamp and Medicaid certification for the Department of Human Resources in midwestern Oklahoma. "I have homeless clients who can't get the medicine they need for mental problems. I make about \$100 less a month than I did 10 years ago and pay more for health insurance."

Teachers, parents and supporters of their fight organized a seven-day, 110-mile march from Tulsa to Oklahoma City, gaining support as they went. They arrived here April 10. When they marched up to the Capitol, thousands of teachers and other workers lined both sides of the streets, cheering so loudly it was deafening.

This reporter joined the march, carrying a sign saying, "Walmart workers support teachers, state workers."

Since the march started, others have followed their example, starting early in the mornings and walking together to the daily rallies at the Capitol. Hundreds turned up here today, having marched from Edmond, 64 miles north of here. In a show of solidarity 50 students from U.S. Grant High School ran, walked and jogged eight miles to a rally

here April 6.

Members of the Socialist Workers Party in New York and Philadelphia organized a team of workers to West Virginia April 5-8 to talk to workers in the coal fields about the school workers strike and victory there that helped kickoff the uprising across the country.

## 'We need to be ready to do this'

"We went door to door in rural neighborhoods in Boone County in the south and Monongalia County in the north," reported SWP member John Staggs from Philadelphia. "The support for the teachers' fight was overwhelming and there was real pride among workers in general in how effectively they organized, stood together and won."

Many West Virginia teachers said they were inspired by past United Mine Workers union battles that showed what a determined and disciplined fight could accomplish.

The team met three miners going into the night shift at the new Blackhawk mine. They said miners there had voted to go union, but the company had tied it all up in court. They said the teachers' victory had them thinking they could do what the teachers did to get things moving.



Militant photos: Above, Alyson Kennedy; right, Hilda Cuzco. Above, 7-day, 110-mile march from Tulsa, Oklahoma, arrives at state Capitol April 10, greeted by thousands. Inset, SWP leader and Walmart worker Alyson Kennedy, right, joined march April 8 as it passed through Chandler.



"Going door to door talking to coal miners, construction workers, retirees and their family members was an amazing experience," Craig Honts, who works on the Long Island Rail Road in New York, told the *Militant*. "One young construction worker said he was inspired by the teachers' fight. 'This is how you win — everyone stands together,' he told me. 'This is what we all need to be ready to do.'"

## Hundreds protest N.Y. cop killing of Saheed Vassell

Continued from front page

punished," Shaneqa Jervis, a 28-year-old nurse, told the *Militant*. Jervis was one of several people at the protest who knew Vassell. He was well known in the community, doing odd jobs and helping people out on his good days. His family and friends have set up a memorial at the site of the killing.

"Everyone in the local area knew Saheed had problems, but he didn't bother anyone," Jervis said.

Vassell "took a two-handed shooting stance and pointed an object at the approaching officers," NYPD Chief of Department Terence Monahan alleged, in an attempt to justify the shooting.

"They didn't say 'freeze, hands up, drop your gun,' none of that," Jacquot Hinds, Vassell's neighbor, told WCBS-TV. "They didn't say nothing. All they did was start shooting."

"Law enforcement should not just come out and shoot and ask questions later," Eric Vassell, the dead man's father, told WABC-TV.

New York cops were quick to release

video footage showing Vassell pointing the pipe in the faces and chests of people in the area on the day that they killed him, as they sought to paint Vassell as violent. The pro-cop *New York Post* and *New York Daily News* have joined the smear campaign, highlighting police reports that they were responding to 911 calls saying Vassell was "menacing passersby." Mayor Bill de Blasio also defended the cop shooting.

Vassell's closest friend, Ortanzo Bovell, had been shot in the back and killed by Brooklyn cops in 2008. The killing strongly affected Vassell. Cops said that shooting was "accidental." Last year a jury concluded the cop killing was intentional and Bovell's family was

awarded \$2.5 million.

Vassell's death is the latest of many instances where New York cops have gunned down someone exhibiting mental problems. In 2016 they killed Deborah Danner, who suffered from schizophrenia, after neighbors called for help when she began behaving erratically. In 2012 cops shot and killed Mohamed Bah after his mother called 911 to ask for medical help to take him to the hospital.

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman announced an investigation into the killing. Cops rarely face trial for shooting deaths and are even less likely to be convicted. The laws are skewed to protect them.



Militant/Theresa Kendrick. In thousands of homemade signs at teachers' rallies, workers expressed views about wages, conditions and a determination to fight.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 26, 1993

Some important local fights by miners are unfolding in West Virginia and Indiana. Miners at Buck Creek, the largest underground mine in Indiana, went on strike April 1 because of the company's failure to negotiate a contract with them. The Sullivan, Indiana, miners voted in October 1991 to join the UMWA. Since then, negotiations on a basic union contract have gone nowhere.

The miners at the Ziegler Coal Company's Marrowbone complex in Mingo County, West Virginia, have won another round against the company in their fight to bring the union into their mine.

Four hundred workers there walked off the job March 24 after the company announced cuts in benefits and bonuses. Four miners were fired. The other workers then went on strike until April 2, when the company agreed to reverse the firings. Almost 400 of 435 miners signed union representation cards.



April 22, 1968

You see many things in Cuba that make you understand that this is an island under siege, where the people sacrifice and work hard to carry through with their stubborn plan to develop their country despite the U.S.-created obstacles.

There are also other sides of Cuba — sides of Cuba that are so lovely that they almost take your breath away. When you see them, you find it difficult to remember that this is a blockaded fortress. You get a glimpse of the future society. One such thing is Cubanacan, Cuba's National School of the Arts.

There are 600 full-time students at the school, which opened in 1962. The age level varies with the art form. Ballet and modern dance students are taken from the age of eight. The age for musicians varies with the instrument. Tuition, including room and board, is absolutely free.



April 24, 1943

DETROIT, April 17 — Over 10,000 Negro and white workers marched to Cadillac Square last Sunday afternoon to hold a mass demonstration against Negro discrimination. The march and meeting were sponsored by the Detroit branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in cooperation with the CIO United Auto Workers and Negro fraternal groups. There was also a small contingent of Negro soldiers who spontaneously stepped into the line of march as the parade swept by a Negro USO center.

Most of the speakers protested against job discrimination in war plants, police brutality, refusal to serve Negroes in Detroit restaurants, failure to give Negro women jobs to which their skill entitles them, the defeat of anti-poll tax legislation by Democrats and Republicans, Jim Crow housing. Some of the placards demanded freedom for India.

## MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

### CALIFORNIA Oakland

**The Uprising of Teachers — Example for Labor Movement.** Speaker: Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., April 20, 7:30 p.m. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

### CANADA Montreal

**Thomas Sankara and the Awakening of Working People in North America and Africa.** Speaker: Patrick Tremblay, Communist League. Fri., April 20, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Room 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

# Marx, Engels, fighting workers converge, form communist party

The Young Karl Marx, 2017 film, directed by Raoul Peck.

BY NADINE CARR

The development of the first revolutionary international workers association, the Communist League, and The Communist Manifesto, the program it adopted in 1847, are a rich treasure for study by workers today. Unfortunately, and contrary to what a review in the Nov. 27 *Militant* said, the movie “The

## IN REVIEW

Young Karl Marx” doesn’t tell the true story of what happened.

For anyone watching the film, and anyone interested in advancing the organization and self-confidence of the working class, I strongly recommend reading “On the History of the Communist League,” an 1885 article by Frederick Engels.

The film covers the period from 1843 to the beginning of 1848. We see the start of what became the lifelong political collaboration of Marx and Engels, both then young revolutionaries in their 20s. It gives a glimpse of the conditions and struggles of the working class in the English textile mills; of the artisans who were part of the proletariat-in-becoming throughout western Europe; of the battle of the peasants in Germany. It depicts what seem to be debates Marx and Engels had with opponents, such as the Young Hegelians and Pierre Proudhon, as they worked to clarify their revolutionary outlook. But the film doesn’t reflect the real politics they’re developing and debating.

And on the crucial question of the formation of the Communist League, the film is a total distortion. A key scene shows Marx and Engels meeting for the first time with three seemingly distrustful leaders of the League of the Just in February 1846, with the aim of pushing them aside and taking over the organization. These leaders of the League, who aren’t identified, are portrayed as narrow-minded, clueless workers, and Marx and Engels as scheming connivers.

### ‘First revolutionary proletarians’

In “On the History of the Communist League,” Engels describes how the League of the Just evolved from its founding in 1836 as a secret society of

German political refugees, first in Paris and later in London and elsewhere, into a revolutionary working-class party. Far from being bumbling fools, its leaders were workers and artisans such as Karl Schapper, Heinrich Bauer and Joseph Moll — all of whom had spent years organizing to fight capitalism and its effects on the lives of their class. They had faced jail and deportation, been wounded in battle, and had dealt with police and provocateurs.

“I came to know all three of them in London in 1843,” Engels wrote. “They were the first revolutionary proletarians whom I met, and however far apart our views were at that time in details — for I still owned, as against their narrow-minded egalitarian communism, a goodly dose of just as narrow-minded philosophical arrogance — I shall never forget the deep impression that these three real men made upon me, who was then still only wanting to become a man.”

Marx got to know leaders of the League of the Just in Paris around the same time. He and Engels “published a series of pamphlets” criticizing the hodgepodge of radical political nostrums “which formed the secret doctrine of the ‘League’ at that time,” Marx wrote in 1860. “In its place we proposed the scientific study of the economic structure of bourgeois society as the only tenable theoretical foundation. Furthermore, we argued in popular form that it was not a matter of putting some utopian system into effect, but of conscious participation in the historical process revolutionizing society before our very eyes.”

Marx and Engels also joined other emigres to found a German Workers Educational Association in Brussels. They maintained contact with the revolutionary-minded section of the English Chartist labor movement, with the French Social Democrats, the League and others looking to advance the interests of the working class.

Through their own experiences, the worker-leaders of the League in London became increasingly convinced that the positions of Marx and Engels were correct, that they needed to break free of the old conspiratorial organizational forms. “In the spring of 1847 Moll ... invited us repeatedly, in the name of his comrades, to join the League,” Engels wrote. “Should we join, we would be given an opportunity of expounding our critical Communism before a congress of the



Painting of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, center, checking issue of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* as it comes off the press in 1848. Paper built on program of Communist League.

League in a manifesto, which would then be published as the manifesto of the League.”

They accepted. The political and organizational questions involved were debated at length over two congresses, in the summer and winter of 1847. The group renamed itself the Communist League, and set out to build a public propaganda organization.

The film ignores how Marx and Engels were won to these workers and their organization at the same time as its leaders were won to their revolutionary program and outlook. And the working class is depicted as objects — a suffering class — not as actors capable of transforming human history.

The movie refers to Engels’ 1845 book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. But it doesn’t even hint that the book includes a substantial description of the development and activity of the English trade unions and the Chartists that evolved into an independent working-class political movement. The young Engels and Marx were attracted above all to the proletariat as a *fighting* class.

The film ends with brief notes stat-

ing that revolutionary struggles broke out across Europe in 1848, “the international workers’ movements arose from these ruins.” The Communist Manifesto remains in print, and “Marx would keep writing his key work, *Capital*, until his death.”

Viewers wouldn’t have a clue that Marx, Engels and many other cadres of the Communist League remained active, lifelong *party builders*, seeking ways to organize the working class into effective labor and political action. When downturns in the class struggle led to dissolution of the Communist League in 1852 — following the defeat of the revolutionary wave in 1848 — they would grab the opportunity in new upsurges to rebuild. They founded the International Workingmen’s Association in 1864 as the class struggle deepened again.

If you want to know who Marx and Engels were, the program they fought for, how they immersed themselves in the working-class movement, and how their ideas and activities are relevant for our struggles today, get in touch with the Socialist Workers Party and join us to read and discuss what they wrote — and to *act* to put it in practice.

## Judge stays parole for Herman Bell as NY cops campaign to halt release

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Twelve days before the scheduled release of former Black Panther Herman Bell from prison April 17, a state court judge has put Bell’s parole on hold. The decision comes in response to a lawsuit filed by the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association on behalf of Diane Piagentini, widow of one of the officers killed in 1971.

Bell, 70, along with Albert Washington and Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom) were convicted in the 1971 killing of two New York City cops. Each got a sentence of 25 years to life.

Washington died in prison in 2000. Bell has been incarcerated for over 44 years and was assaulted by prison guards last September.

In early March the parole board on its eighth hearing on Bell’s case granted him parole. Impacting their decision was a letter to the board from Waverly Jones Jr., the son of one of the officers killed, urging Bell’s release. “It would bring joy and peace as we have already forgiven Herman Bell publicly,” he wrote.

The parole board’s decision was

blasted by the cops and editors of the *New York Daily News* and *New York Post*. New York’s liberal Mayor Bill de Blasio wrote a letter backing the cops, urging the state parole board to reverse its decision.

The PBA’s lawsuit contends parole board members failed to consider remarks made by the sentencing judge and prosecutors 43 years ago that they didn’t think Bell should ever be released from prison. The PBA has campaigned against Bell’s release at every one of his parole hearings.

Bell’s attorney, Robert Boyle, called the suit frivolous. “The parole board considered everything they were required under the law to consider,” Boyle told The Associated Press.

A hearing on the suit is set for April 13 to decide whether to dismiss the case or allow it to continue. If it’s dismissed, Bell’s stay in prison will be prolonged for a few more weeks.

Meanwhile, Muntaqim is scheduled for his next parole hearing in June.

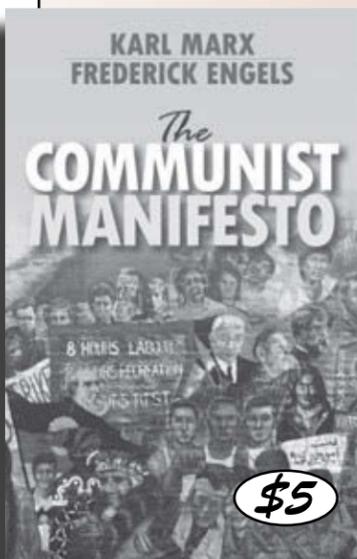
The release of Bell and Muntaqim would be an important advance for prisoners’ rights and political rights.

“Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers.

— Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

Written in 1848, the Communist Manifesto explains why communism is the line of march of the working class toward power, “springing from an existing class struggle, a historical movement going on under our very eyes.”

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# Lessons of 1979-83 Grenada Revolution debated in UK

Meeting participants rebut counterrevolutionary leader's pretext: 'It was a tragedy, we all made mistakes'

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — “No, I did not murder Maurice Bishop. No, I did not order his death,” said Bernard Coard in opening his talk to a March 27 meeting here.

Coard was trying to rationalize his treacherous leadership 35 years ago of the bloody overthrow of a mighty revolution that had opened on March 13, 1979, on the small Eastern Caribbean island of Grenada. Maurice Bishop was the central leader of the revolution and prime minister of the workers and farmers government it brought to power.

The Grenada Revolution, said Fidel Castro, along with the Nicaraguan Revolution of July 1979, joined Cuba as one of the “three giants” in the Caribbean on the very doorstep of imperialism.”

But four years later the revolution was destroyed in a coup led by Coard, the deputy prime minister and organizer of a Stalinist faction in the governing party, the New Jewel Movement. Bishop, other New Jewel leaders, and the majority of Grenada's working people rose up to turn back the counterrevolution.

## Audience challenges Coard's lies

Murmurs of “lies” and “counter-revolutionary” could be heard from participants as Coard claimed the revolution had “imploded.” It was a “tragedy,” he said, for which “we were all responsible. We all made errors.”

The Grenada revolution's significance for working people today, along with Coard's self-serving assessment, were sharply debated at the “Audience with Bernard Coard,” as the event was billed.

“The Grenadian people launched an uprising to free Bishop from house arrest and restore their government to power,” Ólof Andra Proppé told the meeting during the discussion.

“Troops loyal to Coard, turned their guns on a mass demonstration on Oct. 19, 1983,” she said. “They assassinated Bishop and five other revolutionary leaders — Fitzroy and Norris Bain, Jacqueline Creft, Vincent Noel and Unison Whiteman. They killed or wounded many others in the crowd.



Maurice Bishop, central leader of Grenada Revolution, meets members of Nurses Association. He said revolution's “great strength ... lies in the unbreakable link between the masses,” the party and the government. In contrast, when majority of Grenada's working people took to streets to free Bishop in October 1983, Bernard Coard imposed shoot-to-kill curfew on them.

Coard's forces then unleashed a bloody reign of terror, including a four-day, round-the-clock, shoot-to-kill curfew imposed on the entire population.”

Proppé, who explained she was a member of the Communist League, got applause. There were a number of Grenadians in the audience who knew the real story of the revolution and Coard's counterrevolutionary betrayal. The overthrow of the revolution opened the door for Washington to invade a week later.

Proppé held up copies of *Maurice Bishop Speaks* and *New Internationalist* no. 6 with the article “The Second Assassination of Maurice Bishop” by Steve Clark, a leader of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. “In these books you can learn the real record of the Grenadian Revolution and Coard's role in its overthrow,” she said.

“She speaks for me,” said Gale Jerome George, originally from Grenada, who spoke next. “I felt I had to come to this meeting despite this being an emotional issue for me. I was very young at the time. Other Grenadian friends of mine felt they couldn't come.”

“I wanted to know what you had to

say,” she said, addressing Coard. “Now that I've heard your ‘there's-blame-on-all-sides’ view, I see it's to try to excuse you of blame. It doesn't wash. Why was Bishop placed under house arrest? Where are the bodies?” George was referring to the fact that the bodies of Bishop and other slain leaders were removed and never recovered.

Others who spoke from the floor also defended Bishop and the revolution. “You talk about collective responsibility,” said Natasha. “What was your responsibility?”

The March 27 event was the last of a two-week U.K. book tour for Coard to promote his recently published, *The Grenada Revolution: What Really Happened?* The book, which Coard said is the first of five volumes, is pushed as a “must-read” by the *Morning Star*, the daily newspaper associated with the Communist Party of Britain. *Morning Star* supporters were sponsors of several book tour events.

The tour began with a book launch at the headquarters of the National Education Union. The March 27 meeting was held in the offices of the Unite Union's London and Eastern Region, jointly sponsored by Caribbean Labour Solidarity and the union's regional Black and Ethnic Minorities Committee.

In a letter to Unite Regional Secretary Peter Kavanagh, union member Hugh Robertson urged that the “regional committee and all union members condemn the event.” Robertson is a Lineside production worker at the Ford engine plant in Dagenham and the Communist League candidate for Plaistow South in the London Borough of Newham in May 3 local elections.

Robertson circulated his letter at the meeting, quoting Bishop that the “great strength of the revolution, first and foremost, lies in the unbreakable link between the masses and the party; between the masses and the government; between the masses and the state.” He contrasted this to the Coard faction's counterrevolutionary contempt for working people, reflected in Coard's condemnation of what he called the “herd psychology” of a large crowd — referring to the massive Oct.

19 popular mobilization to free Bishop.

For Coard “the exploited producers in city and countryside were not the *subjects* of revolutionary social change, not its *makers* but instead the *objects* of policy by an administrative apparatus,” Steve Clark explains in the “Second Assassination of Maurice Bishop.” The title refers to how Coard and his backers lied and slandered Bishop both before and *after* they had him killed. Coard's new book and public talks continue that slander.

## Opened way for imperialism

Coard was joined on the platform by Alan Scott, secretary of the misnamed Committee for Human Rights in Grenada. For years the committee has campaigned in support of Coard under the banner of opposing his imprisonment by the U.S.-imposed regime following Washington's invasion.

Coard's political supporters use this 26-year imprisonment to try to garner sympathy for his *political* course, especially from people who know little about the revolution and its overthrow.

Also on the platform was Dennis Bartholomew, who worked in the Grenada High Commission in London during the revolution. He is a leader of Caribbean Labour Solidarity and co-author of *By Our Own Hands — A People's History of the Grenadian Revolution*, an apology for Coard's political course.

Although directly challenged about the four-day shoot-to-kill curfew, Coard never addressed it. Instead, he sought to deflect a real exchange, charging that those who did not share his view were “echoing the imperialist narrative.”

Was Fidel Castro “echoing the imperialist narrative?” this reporter asked from the floor. At a rally of more than 1 million people in Havana to honor Cuban internationalist construction workers killed during the U.S. invasion, the Cuban leader said that Coard's “Pol Pot-type group that murdered [Bishop] would never have been forgiven” by the Grenadian people. The counter-revolution handed Grenada to Washington on a silver platter, Castro said.

Coard, in his summary remarks, tried to get off the hook by absurdly claiming there had been no political differences between him and Bishop. And Castro later changed his mind, Coard said (citing no evidence, since Castro never said any such thing).

“I support Bernard's view of what happened,” Bartholomew said, “and encourage you to buy his book.”

But Bartholomew had to acknowledge those who challenged Coard. “You can also buy ‘The Second Assassination of Maurice Bishop’ and make up your own minds,” he said. Five people did so, and others who didn't have money placed orders. Seventy-five copies of it have been sold in recent years in the U.K.

## 'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

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

## For further reading

### Maurice Bishop Speaks The Grenada Revolution and Its Overthrow 1979-83

By Maurice Bishop

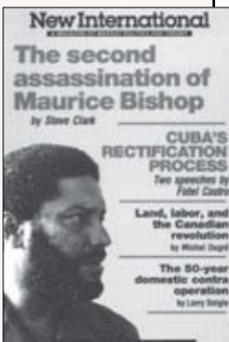
Lessons from the triumph of the 1979 revolution in Grenada and the workers and farmers government it bought to power in the words of its central leader Maurice Bishop. Includes Fidel Castro's 1983 speech honoring Cuban volunteers who fought during U.S. invasion \$25

### The Second Assassination of Maurice Bishop

By Steve Clark

Explains the roots of the 1983 coup that led to the murder of revolutionary leader, Maurice Bishop and destruction of the workers and farmers government by a Stalinist faction within the governing New Jewel Movement \$16

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MAURICE  
BISHOP  
SPEAKS



THE GRENADA  
REVOLUTION AND ITS  
OVERTHROW 1979-83

# Israeli shoot-to-kill, Hamas provocations lead to deaths

BY SETH GALINSKY

The death toll among Palestinians is rising in the Gaza Strip as the Israeli army continues to shoot protesters who approach the border area that Israeli officials have declared off limits. More than 30 protesters have been killed since March 30 and over 1,000 wounded, by live fire from snipers or tanks, tear gas or rubber bullets.

Israel Defense Forces officials say that they are targeting armed individuals and those who try to breach the fence. But Hamas, the ruling party in Gaza that organizes the “March of Return,” says that some of those killed were running away. Palestinian journalist Yaser Murtaja, who wore a flak jacket with the word “PRESS” in large letters, was killed April 6.

“Is a fence more important than a human life?” Israeli human rights lawyer Michael Sfar asked during a phone interview with the *Militant* April 4.

The March of Return protests culminate May 15, the day after the 70th anniversary of Israel’s declaration of independence. The new U.S. Embassy is due to open in Jerusalem by then. Palestinians mark the same day to commemorate the expulsion of hundreds of thousands from their land.

Hamas’ provocative actions included organizing protesters to burn thousands of tires to create a curtain of smoke April 6, blocking Israeli forces’ view of the border. That protest was smaller than the week before.

Hamas ordered its civilian employees to join the actions at the five camps set up near the border, according to the *Fi-*

*nancial Times*. Much of Gaza has been destroyed in the course of three wars between Hamas and the Israeli government since 2008, a year after the group took over Gaza in bloody street fighting with Fatah.

Charging that aid is diverted to back terrorism, the Israeli and Egyptian governments have imposed severe restrictions on what is allowed to enter Gaza.

While the small capitalist class and high-ranking Hamas officials in Gaza are doing OK, only 10 percent of Gaza’s population has access to safe drinking water. Unemployment is about 50 percent. Some 70 percent of the strip’s 2 million people are dependent on aid from the United Nations Relief and Welfare Agency.

The situation worsened this month when the Palestinian Authority — despite giving lip service to supporting the protest — cut off wages to tens of thousands of its employees in Gaza. Last year it suspended payments to Israel for electricity, leaving residents with power only four hours a day. Now Tel Aviv has banned the import of tires there.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh vowed April 9 that the group will never recognize Israel or make any concessions.

And Hamas’ strategy of trying to get unarmed civilians killed is nothing new. It followed the same course during previous wars to create martyrs that could bolster its support among Gaza’s workers and to get international sympathy in its fight against Israel.

The way the March of Return is being organized is a sign of weakness. The Israeli government has thwarted Hamas’



Reuters/Amir Cohen

Israeli soldiers shoot tear gas at Palestinian protesters at Gaza “March of Return” April 6.

terror attacks with improved methods of blocking tunnels into Israel and has blocked missiles fired from the territory. And Hamas’ bankrupt course has meant that there have been few actions in the West Bank and Israel opposing the Israeli army assaults on the March of Return. Both the Egyptian and Saudi governments have urged Hamas to scale back the protest.

A Dec. 11 statement on behalf of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee points a course forward: “The political necessity for the Israeli and Arab governments and leaderships of Palestinian organizations to begin immediate talks to recognize both Israel and an independent Palestinian state.”

“Negotiations to reach such an agreement must recognize the right of Jews everywhere to take refuge in Israel in face of the global rise of Jew-hatred and anti-Semitic violence, as well as the unconditional right of the dispossessed Palestinian people to a contiguous, sov-

ereign homeland on territory — including East Jerusalem — conquered and occupied by the Israeli government during the 1967 war.”

“It is along this road that working people of all national backgrounds, religious beliefs and political allegiances in Israel and Palestine can use and defend their space to speak, organize and begin redressing the blood-drenched legacy of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation.”

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

A leadership that fought for this course would win working people inside Israel to oppose the embargo of Gaza and give working people there a road forward out of the dead end the Hamas leadership has created.

## US rulers, allies weigh step-up in Syria conflict

Continued from front page

new position in Syria and the region.

The chemical attack took place after negotiations between Russian officials and a Saudi-backed armed opposition group based in Douma, the last anti-Assad-controlled area near Damascus, had reportedly broken down. Moscow, Tehran and Damascus deny any chemical attack took place.

Amid calls in Washington, London and other imperialist capitals for a military response, Moscow vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning the attack and calling for an independent investigation. Instead, Moscow said the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons based in the Hague agreed to come to Douma to investigate the deaths.

However, after the chemical attack the opponents of Assad in eastern Ghouta surrendered and are now being bused to

Turkish-patrolled areas in northern Syria. Douma is now in the hands of Russian troops, who have been filmed patrolling in areas where photographs had earlier shown rows of gassed victims. It means finding definitive evidence about the attack may now be unlikely.

The Syrian civil war began in 2011 after the Assad regime sent tanks and soldiers to crush unarmed demonstrations demanding political rights and the fall of the dictatorship. In the face of a vacuum of working-class leadership, the reactionary Islamic State seized a wide

swath of territory, deepening the misery of working people who fell under their sway.

The only effective force against Islamic State was the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. Backed by U.S. air power and special forces, these fighters drove IS out of Kobani, Raqqa and elsewhere. They now control some 25 percent of the country — Kurdish and other areas north of the Euphrates, including the largest oil fields in the country. There are some 2,000 U.S. troops based

Continued on page 9

### For recognition of a Palestinian state and of Israel

- For repeal of U.S. Jerusalem Embassy Act
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 Join Annual May Day March. 2:30 p.m., gather at Judkins Park and Playfield. March departs at 3:30 p.m. Sponsored by El Comité and May 1st Action Coalition. Tel.: (206) 465-5511.

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 Day Without Latinos and Immigrants. No to Federal 287g Program. Statewide march, Tues. May 1. 10 a.m., gather at Cutler Park on Wisconsin Ave. Sponsored by Voces de la Frontera. Tel.: (414) 643-1620.

# Cop brutality is a blow to all workers!

The refusal to accept cop brutality and killings has grown among working people in recent years. These murderous assaults are aimed at the working class as a whole and disproportionately hit workers who are African-American. Outrage against this violence builds on the gains of the powerful working-class-led Black rights movement that overthrew Jim Crow segregation in the 1950s and '60s and the recent round of actions against cop assaults since the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Millions around the country were outraged at the police killing of Stephon Clark in Sacramento, California, and Saheed Vassell in Brooklyn, New York.

Cop brutality is endemic to capitalist exploitation. Its role — part of the rulers' criminal "justice" system — is to intimidate and punish workers.

The number of cops arrested and indicted for murder or manslaughter has risen a bit as protests have taken place in recent years. But Democratic and Republican politicians and the court system work together to ensure that very few police officers are ever convicted.

It will take a more powerful, disciplined working-class-led social movement to win victories in the fight against the brutal and arbitrary violence the cops inflict on our class.

Today's labor struggles by teachers in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky and other places are setting an example of how workers can unify and win allies, steered with a healthy distrust in the capitalist two-party swamp. Workers like these, gaining confidence and increasing class consciousness, set an example and form a pool to win to the fight against police brutality.

As working-class struggles deepen in the years ahead, millions will learn from direct experience with cops and company goons on picket lines and in broad social struggles that the police exist to "serve and protect" the bosses' class interests. The capitalist rulers seek to defend their profit rates by pushing the crisis of their system onto the backs of working people. They will need their police to keep us in check and cop killings will not end.

When Cuban workers and farmers, led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement, rose up in a mighty revolution to overthrow the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship and take power, one of the first things they did was to dissolve the government's cop apparatus and replace it with revolutionary worker combatants. Emulating their example is the road to ridding society of the scourge of police violence.

# Coming class battles show need to defend rights

**Continued from front page**  
restrictions on our rights, including the Constitution's Bill of Rights.

A steady stream of articles lauding the "children's crusade for gun control" has filled the pages of the liberal media and the papers of the left since March 24, when hundreds of thousands joined demonstrations across the country. They were demanding a new range of tests and restrictions on gun ownership, following the brutal killing of students at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida.

Many of these commentators praise the young age of those at the actions. "Students Lead Nationwide Crusade for Gun Control," wrote the online People's World, which reflects the views of the Communist Party. That young people would want to take to the streets in the midst of teachers' protests across the country and protests against the cop killings of Stephon Clark and Saheed Vassell should be of no surprise.

But whether an action advances working-class interests has nothing to do with the age of the participants. That depends on whether it strengthens the unity and self-confidence of working people and points a road forward for independent political action. Protests demanding more restrictions and regulations on our hard-won rights head in the opposite direction.

Liberals have made such calls for years and it is the political outlook of these capitalist politicians that shaped the March 24 protests.

They increasingly see workers as "deplorables," as Hillary Clinton said in the 2016 campaign. She doubled-down on this last month in India, where she said President Donald Trump won support from workers in smaller towns in the middle of the country who were "looking backwards." She claimed working women turned against her under pressure from their husbands and bosses.

In 2008 former President Barack Obama connected gun ownership with his broader scorn for working people. He described workers who had lost their jobs in small towns in Pennsylvania and the Midwest, saying, "It's not surprising ... they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy toward people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment."

After the killings in Florida, former Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens called for repeal of the Second Amendment to the Constitution, saying it's outdated.

He took aim at a 2008 U.S. Supreme Court ruling written by Justice Antonin Scalia that confirmed that the Second Amendment says people have the right to bear arms to defend themselves. At the same time, he also said states have the power to establish some restrictions on weapons in places like schools.

What's important for workers today is not that individuals can get guns to fight the cops and company agents. That would be an adventure and lead to nothing but defeats for the working class.

## Lessons from past working-class battles

In the 1930s the explosive growth of the labor movement led to sizable and sharp clashes with the employers and their government — in Germany, elsewhere in Europe and in the U.S. Fearing their rule was threatened, the capitalist rulers turned to rightist thugs and fascist gangs to try to attack working-class struggles and bust up the unions. This isn't happening today.

"The sharpening of the proletariat's struggle means the sharpening of the methods of counterattack on the part of capital," Leon Trotsky, a leader of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, wrote in 1938. "The bourgeoisie is nowhere satisfied with the official police and army." As the capitalist rulers turned to armed thugs to attack the workers, Trotsky said, "only armed workers' detachments, who feel the support of tens of millions of toilers behind them, can successfully prevail against the fascist bands."

The course outlined by Trotsky is contained in the "Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution," which was adopted by the Socialist Workers Party.

The leadership of the Teamsters union in Minneapolis responded decisively in 1938 to an organizing drive in the city by the fascist outfit called the Silver Shirts. The goons' leader, Roy Zachary, called for an armed raid on the union's headquarters. The union organized a workers defense guard.

"Members of the guard were not armed by the union, since in the given circumstances that would have made them vulnerable to police frame-ups," explained Farrell Dobbs, a leader of the union and the Socialist Workers Party, in his book *Teamster Politics*. "But many of them had guns of their own at home, which were used to hunt game; and those could quickly have been picked up if needed to fight off an armed attack by Silver Shirt thugs."

The emergency mobilization of several hundred determined and disciplined members of the guard convinced the Silver Shirts to back off and leave town.

The workers defense guard grew out of intensified union and social struggles. Union leaders sought to draw into its ranks the widest layer of workers. It relied on battle-tested, disciplined cadre and leaders capable of avoiding provocation.

Today the rulers prepare for bigger struggles to come by seeking to restrict our rights to organize and defend ourselves, including limiting workers access to guns. That's why workers today need to oppose government measures that restrict workers' rights, like their right to bear arms.

# US weighs Syria strikes

**Continued from page 8**

in these areas and at two bases in southern Syria.

Assad was only able to survive with the help of tens of thousands of troops from Lebanon's Hezbollah and other Iran-backed militias, supported since September 2015 by Moscow's air power. Caught in the middle, millions more workers and farmers fled Syria or became refugees in their own country. More than 400,000 have been killed.

By saving Assad, and intervening against Islamic State alongside the government in Iraq, Tehran gained a land route to ship arms to Hezbollah. Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah boasts that they gained "great military experience" — at the price of some 1,500 combatants.

## Israeli rulers face off with Tehran

Israeli planes fired missiles from Lebanese airspace April 8 at an airbase used by Iranian military forces, near Homs in Syria, killing 14 people including at least seven Iranians. The attack took place shortly after the chemical bombs were dropped on besieged Douma.

In 2006 more than 10,000 Israeli troops invaded Lebanon while Hezbollah at times launched 100 to 200 missiles into Israel a day. Nearly 2,000 residents of Lebanon and more than 160 Israeli soldiers and civilians were killed during that war, which ended without a clear victor.

Today, Hezbollah is better armed, holding a stockpile of some 150,000 rockets and missiles. The Israeli government is determined to stop further Iranian arms shipments, especially of weaponry with precision strike capability, and to stop Iranian-backed militias from setting up permanent areas of control near the Israeli border. Israeli forces have bombed weapons convoys and other Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria more than 100 times since 2012.

After Israel Defense Forces Maj. Gen. Nitzan Alon told Army Radio that a conflict with Hezbollah is possible in the coming year, Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami, a member of Iran's Assembly of Experts, threatened that Hezbollah "will turn Haifa and Tel Aviv into ghost-towns." Khatami didn't mention that 10 percent of the population of Haifa are Palestinian citizens of Israel.

At least 1,000 Iranians have died in Syria defending the Assad regime, including senior members of the Revolutionary Guard. Opposition to the war was a key factor in the wave of protests that swept Iran earlier this year.

The Israeli rulers' opposition to Tehran has won support and growing relations with the Saudi monarchs and their allies in the Gulf.

On April 4 Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin met in Ankara to try to maintain their recent uneasy alliance in Syria. Erdogan wants acceptance of Turkish intervention in northern Syria. He wants to force some 3 million Syrian refugees in Turkey to repopulate territory wrested in the Turkish rulers' war against the Kurds in Afrin last month.

All they were able to agree on was maintaining "de-escalation" zones, supposedly to help end the civil war, that in fact tend to mark their separate spheres of influence.

During the summit, Iranian President Rouhani called on the Turkish government to turn Afrin over to Assad. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov made the same demand a few days later.

Erdogan refused. He says the Turkish rulers have more unfinished business attacking the Kurds and in solving their refugee "problem."

## Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq

by Jack Barnes

In *New International* no. 7

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