

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Eyewitness report: Protests against gov't attacks spread in Nicaragua
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 82/NO. 22 JUNE 4, 2018

Build, join workers' protests, win solidarity!

BY DAN FEIN

The explosion of strikes and protests by teachers across the country had a big impact on the Socialist Workers Party's effort to expand the reach of the *Militant* and books by party leaders, and to raise at least

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY SPRING DRIVES

\$112,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund. Party members and other workers made their way to join the teachers and bring solidarity. They then returned home to discuss with co-workers and others how the actions were changing politics, opening the door to advance and transform our unions.

Hundreds of teachers and other participants — and those elsewhere looking to the example the school workers were setting — eagerly grabbed up subscriptions to the *Militant* and revolutionary books. Many gave or increased their contributions to the fund. We're poised to make our goals.

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Teachers' protests point way forward for workers

'We can change things,' say N. Carolina teachers



Militant/Mike Shur

20,000-strong protest May 16 in Raleigh, North Carolina, drew broad working-class solidarity.

BY SUSAN LAMONT

RALEIGH, N.C. — "We did it! Who would have thought we could? But we can change things," Jameel Williams, a teacher from Vance County who joined over 20,000 other teachers, school workers and their supporters to protest at the state Capitol

here May 16, told the *Militant*. They were demanding increased funding for schools, pay raises, more staff and smaller class sizes at North Carolina's biggest-ever action by teachers.

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Right of Israel to exist is at the heart of Mideast fights

BY TERRY EVANS

The recent barrage of Hamas-organized attacks on the Israel-Gaza border, alongside concerted efforts by the counterrevolutionary rulers of Iran to deploy their military forces and Hezbollah allies within striking range of Israel, reflect how the Jewish question is at the center of conflicts in the Mideast today. This involves Israel's right to exist as a place of refuge in the midst of a worldwide capitalist economic and political crisis that has bred new rounds of Jew-hatred.

Acting in the interests of the U.S. imperialist rulers, the Donald Trump administration is working with both Israel's rulers and Sunni Arab regimes in the region to push back Tehran's recent advances and broker a deal between the Israeli government and Palestinian officials.

Hamas mobilized its fighters and other Gaza residents to join provocative attacks against the well-fortified Israeli border. They consciously mis-

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Judge rejects NYC gov't moves to overturn verdict against cops



Militant/Seth Galinsky

Hawa Bah, center, after May 17 hearing in New York where city lawyers tried to overturn \$2.21 million verdict finding cop who killed her son Mohamed guilty of "excessive force."

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — Carrying out their vow to "take whatever legal steps are necessary" to defend the cops who killed Mohamed Bah, officials in the New York City Law Department are fighting to overturn the civil jury verdict that found two NYPD cops guilty of excessive force in the 2012 shooting. The jury that heard the federal civil suit brought by Bah's fam-

ily against Detective Edwin Mateo and Lt. Michael Licitra awarded them \$2.21 million in compensation.

Judge Kevin Castel announced his ruling May 21, saying he rejected the city's demand for the award to be reversed.

"We have a victory," Hawa Bah, Mohamed's mother, told the *Militant*. "We need to hold every cop who mur-

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Plans advance for US-NKorea summit on denuclearization

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Plans for the summit meeting on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong

Un — a meeting with the potential to lead to historic openings for working people — continue to move forward for June 12 in Singapore.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in met with President Trump in Washington May 22 to discuss the talks. The next day high-ranking diplomats from Japan and China, including Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, were in Washington to meet with U.S. officials to help facilitate an agreement.

A planeload of U.S. and other international reporters flew to North Korea

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Venezuela toilers face deepening capitalist crisis, US rulers' anger

BY SETH GALINSKY

Middle-class professionals and workers have been abandoning Venezuela in droves — seeing no way forward in the face of the deepening political and capitalist economic crisis there. As many as 250,000 Venezuelans have crossed the border into Colombia since last August.

The crisis is exacerbated by the punishing economic and political measures taken by the U.S. rulers in their ongoing efforts to isolate and undermine the government of Nicolás Maduro.

Against this backdrop, early presidential elections called by the Maduro government had the lowest voter turnout in decades — just 46 percent.

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New Zealand nurses protest low pay, understaffing

Sentsov starts hunger strike, says ‘Free political prisoners!’

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Oleg Sentsov, an internationally known filmmaker and supporter of a Ukraine independent of Moscow’s control, was arrested in his home in Crimea shortly after the Russian government seized that province in 2014. This move came in response to the victory of the popular Maidan mass movement that brought down the pro-Moscow regime of Viktor Yanukovich in Ukraine a month earlier.

Sentsov was taken to Russia, framed up on false charges of terrorism and sentenced to 20 years in prison. He has maintained his support for Ukraine.

On May 16 Sentsov’s lawyer, Dmitry Dinze, released a letter he got from Sentsov in the Siberian Polar Bear prison, announcing he had begun a hunger strike.

“I, Oleg Sentsov, Ukrainian citizen, sentenced illegally by a Russian court and held in a prison in Labytnangi, declare a hunger strike, beginning 14 May 2018,” he wrote. “My sole demand is the release of all Ukrainian political prisoners held in the Russian Federation.

“Together to the end. Glory to Ukraine!” he said.

Sentsov demands the release of 64 Ukrainian political prisoners. Dinze said Sentsov had prepared for the hunger strike for a month and a half, eating smaller amounts of food, adjusting his body to starving.

The timing is no coincidence. The soccer World Cup, one of the largest sports events in the world, is due to begin in Russia in a month. “If I die before or during the World Cup, there will be publicity that will help other political

prisoners,” Sentsov told his lawyer.

Prison officials have placed Sentsov in isolation and threatened to force feed him if his condition gets critical.

In addition to seizing Crimea, Moscow led an armed uprising in eastern Ukraine, taking over some of the Donbas region there. Working people have borne the brunt of the war. Thousands have been killed and wounded in fighting against the Russian-backed forces, a big chunk of the population is displaced, and coal mines and other factories and infrastructure have been seized or destroyed.

Opposed Moscow’s occupation

Sentsov immediately joined those opposing the occupation of Crimea. He delivered food supplies to Ukrainian army soldiers trapped in their barracks. The Russian navy had a huge base in Sevastopol, under a treaty with Kiev, and those troops were used to surround the Ukrainian forces.

He was arrested in May, along with three other opponents of Moscow’s seizure of Crimea, Alexander Kolchenko, Gennady Afanasiev and Oleksiy Chirniy. They were kept totally isolated for three weeks, during which all four said they were tortured.

Sentsov gave a detailed account about this and was threatened with 20 years behind bars if he didn’t confess. But neither he nor Kolchenko broke. They have maintained their innocence all along.

“I don’t know what your beliefs can possibly be worth if you are not ready to suffer or die for them,” Sentsov told the court in Rostov-on-Don in August 2015. He was sentenced to 20 years



Yevhen Spiriv/Hromadske

Rally in downtown Kiev, Ukraine, May 11, 2017, demands release of Oleg Sentsov and Alexander Kolchenko, framed up on fake terrorism charges for opposing Moscow’s 2014 seizure of Crimea. Sentsov, imprisoned in the gulag in Siberia, launched hunger strike May 14.

and Kolchenko to 10.

The state’s frame-up case was based on written statements from Afanasiev and Chirniy. But at the trial, Afanasiev retracted his “confession,” saying it had been gotten through torture. Chirniy wasn’t put on the stand because he refused to testify.

Sentsov denounced the frame-up. “A court of occupiers by definition cannot be just,” he told the court.

He also spoke out against the false propaganda Russian President Vladimir Putin was pushing about Ukraine. “Putin is great. There are fascists in Ukraine. Russia is never wrong,” he said sarcastically to the judge. “This is very good propaganda.”

“We also had a criminal regime, but we came out against it,” he said, talking about the Maidan. “In the end, we won.”

Sentsov’s case has gotten publicity internationally and he has received substantial support. In February a “Worldwide Day of Action for Oleg Sentsov” was held in cities around the world. Pedro Almodovar, Mike Leigh, Wim Wenders and other prominent filmmakers have called for his release.

Sentsov backed by Crimean Tatars

Also framed up and imprisoned in Russia are Akhtem Chiogoz and Ilmi Umerov, deputy heads of the Mejlis, the national assembly of Crimean

Tatar people, which has been a target for repression by the Russian government’s occupying troops. In October they won their freedom and pledged to fight for the release of other Ukrainian citizens in Russian jails.

The Tatars are the indigenous people of Crimea. In May 1944 the Stalinist regime in Moscow deported every single Tatar from Crimea, falsely accusing them of collaborating with Nazi occupation troops. As the Soviet Union was collapsing in the 1980s, Tatars started returning to their homeland. They have resolutely opposed Moscow’s annexation of Crimea.

Chiogoz and Umerov especially stressed the case of Sentsov, who had been transferred to Siberia a few weeks earlier. Conditions are much harsher in the gulag prison there than where he had been held, a punishment meted out by the Russian government for his refusal to break.

In a letter smuggled out in September 2016, Sentsov said he was a “nail that will not bend.”

“For three years I’ve been sitting in a Russian prison. For those three years a war has been conducted against my country,” he wrote. “The enemy is fighting like a coward, vilely, pretending he’s got nothing to do with this. Nobody believes him.”

THE MILITANT

Support workers’ struggles worldwide

From teachers’ protests across the U.S., to 50,000 hotel workers in Las Vegas voting to strike June 1, to New Zealand nurses protesting work conditions, the ‘Militant’ backs workers’ efforts to organize and transform unions to fight attacks by the bosses and their government.

Culinary Workers Union Local 226
Palms Casino Resort workers in Las Vegas
celebrate April union-organizing victory.

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The Militant

Vol. 82/No. 22
Closing news date: May 23, 2018
Editor: John Studer
Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Terry Evans, Seth Galinsky, Emma Johnson, Martin Koppel, Jacob Perasso, 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.
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Build workers’ struggles!

Continued from front page

When SWP member Leroy Watson and I went out to Broadview, Illinois, May 19 to knock on workers’ doors and discuss these developments, we met Alan Cabanlilt, who works in a lab.

“I’ve seen the teachers’ demonstrations on TV and I think they’re great,” he said. “And I think I could learn something from the *Militant* and that book,” pointing to *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes, one of five books on special offer with a subscription.

Rob Pearlman, a member of the Communist League in Australia, was visiting the U.S. and grabbed the opportunity to join the mass May 16 teachers’ rally in Raleigh, North Carolina.

“Demetrius, a young Black student, approached the SWP literature table,” Pearlman said.

“I’ve read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and I think I’d like to read that book,” Demetrius said, pointing to *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, also by Barnes.

They talked about Malcolm, how he became a leader of the entire working class, and the class-struggle road ahead to overthrow capitalist exploitation and oppression. Demetrius decided to get a subscription as well as the book. “How can I keep in touch with you?” he asked. He exchanged numbers with SWP members from Atlanta.

More than 1,000 people joined the annual Malcolm X Festival May 19, reported Alyson Kennedy from Dallas. It was held in the parking lot outside the Pan African Connection Bookstore there. The Socialist Workers Party had a tent displaying party books published

by Pathfinder Press, with several big stacks of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*. Thirty copies were sold, along with a number of copies of the other titles on special, *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record, Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible? Are they Rich Because They’re Smart?* and “*It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System.*”

“We sold copies of *The Communist Manifesto, On the Jewish Question* by Leon Trotsky, *Final Speeches* by Malcolm X, *Our History Is Still Being Written*, by three Chinese-Cuban generals in Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces, and *Che Talks to Young People* as well as 12 subscriptions,” Kennedy said.

Hundreds of people came by the SWP booth, which had signs in solidarity with the teacher mobilizations and the Cuban Revolution. Many people got a copy of the SWP statement, “For recognition of a Palestinian state and of Israel” and wanted to discuss the road forward for workers and toilers in the Mideast today.

“I’ve always wanted to go to Cuba, because of what I’ve learned about the ties between the Black struggle in the U.S. and the Cuban Revolution,” LaKatheryn Shaw told Kennedy when she looked at the books. “The Cubans knew about the Black struggle.”

She got a copy of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power, “It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System”* and *The Communist Manifesto* and signed up for information on future Cuba brigades.

Kristen Baker-Fletcher, a Southern Methodist University student, also met SWP members at the festival. She said she wants to set up a meeting for them with students she knows on the campus. She picked up a subscription and four of the campaign books.

“We have to fight against U.S. colonial policy in Puerto Rico. It’s criminal,” Faustino Perez, a former Walmart worker, told SWP member Ilona Gersh. They met as he was visiting the store in Chicago where



Militant
Malcolm Jarrett, center, and Sergio Zambrana, right, joined May 16 mass rally in Raleigh, North Carolina, building teachers’ fight and introducing workers to the Socialist Workers Party. Actions spiked interest in the *Militant*, books by party leaders and Militant Fighting Fund.

he used to work. He said he is shocked by the living conditions working people face on the island.

“I told him that the editor of the *Militant* was leaving for a solidarity and reporting trip to Puerto Rico in a few days, and after returning he will testify in support of Puerto Rico’s working class and against U.S. colonial rule at the U.N. Special Committee on Decolonization meeting in June,” Gersh said.

“That’s important,” Perez responded. “We have to get the truth out about why the ruling class isn’t interested in help-

ing working men and women there.” He gave \$5 to the Militant fund to help pay for the trip. His wife, who also reads the *Militant*, pitched in another \$5. The trip to Puerto Rico was reported to over 50 people attending a May 19 Militant Labor Forum in Oakland, California. Participants raised more than \$700 towards funding it.

If you’d like to go with SWP members and supporters joining in teachers’ and other workers’ battles, contact the party branch nearest you listed on page 8.

Workers give ‘blood money’ to Socialist Workers Party

“Enclosed please find ‘blood money’ checks of \$20 each for the Socialist Workers Party from several retail workers in Philadelphia,” writes Janet Post.

“The company ‘awarded’ the workers at a number of stores based on how many customers signed up for online delivery there. The bosses are trying to bribe workers to do more to help them deal blows against their competitors and increase profits,” Post says. “There should be more to come by the end of May.”

Some retail workers in Atlanta received similar bribes from their managers because “workers who shop in the store decided to download the company’s app,” writes Janice Lynn. She forwarded their “blood money” to help build the revolutionary movement.

In Oakland, California, Jeff Powers sent in \$1,848.61, a bonus he had received from his former employer, Amtrak.

Communists use the term “blood money” to describe production, attendance, safety and other so-called bonuses the bosses “give” in an effort to bribe workers to hold back resisting speedup, low pay and unsafe working conditions. By giving this money to the party’s Capital Fund, class-conscious workers turn those bribes into their opposite — funds to build the working-class movement and strengthen the party’s long-term work.

If you would like to donate some “blood money” your boss tries to bribe you with, contact the Socialist Workers Party branch nearest you, listed in the directory on page 8.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

Campaign to expand reach of ‘Militant,’ books, fund						
March 24–May 22 (week eight)						
Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold	Fund quota	Received
UNITED STATES						
Albany+	95	111	95	102	\$5,400	\$4,568
Atlanta	90	91	90	82	\$9,700	\$5,569
Chicago*	120	128	120	103	\$11,500	\$9,737
Dallas*	50	52	40	55	\$1,900	\$1,660
Lincoln*	25	27	20	20	\$300	\$301
Los Angeles+	125	135	125	125	\$10,500	\$10,098
Miami	35	36	35	38	\$3,200	\$3,023
New York	165	163	165	152	\$16,700	\$12,030
Oakland	85	89	85	74	\$13,000	\$11,070
Philadelphia	65	70	65	67	\$3,600	\$2,243
Seattle+	95	104	95	97	\$9,625	\$8,422
Twin Cities*	85	85	85	73	\$4,500	\$2,957
Washington	70	79	70	78	\$7,500	\$7,308
Total U.S.	1,105	1,170	1,090	1,066	\$97,425	\$78,986
Prisoners	25	31				
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	70	77	70	70	\$2,500	\$2,500
Manchester	50	54	50	53	\$950	\$1,050
Total U.K.	120	131	120	123	\$3,450	\$3,550
CANADA						
Montreal	60	66	60	57	\$5,700	\$6,840
Vancouver	45	45	45	49	\$3,000	\$3,030
Total Canada	105	111	105	106	\$8,700	\$9,870
NEW ZEALAND	45	51	45	33	\$4,000	\$4,037
AUSTRALIA	40	46	40	20	\$800	\$967
FRANCE					500	502
Other			12			548
Total	1,440	1,540	1,400	1,360	\$114,875	\$98,460
SHOULD BE	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	\$112,000	\$112,000
Raised *sub, *fund quota. Final chart in next issue						

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To subscribe or purchase books at these prices,
contact Socialist Workers Party or Communist League branches listed on page 8

20,000 march in N. Carolina

Continued from front page

The protest was marked by determination, growing self-confidence and a good bit of humor, captured on the thousands of homemade signs.

In the days before the rally, growing numbers of school districts announced they would have to close, as thousands of teachers called in to say they'd be taking a "personal day" off.

At least 42 districts, including the state's six largest, canceled classes, affecting nearly 1 million public school students. Teachers, parents and other volunteers organized to try to make sure the students had a place to go and food to eat during the rally. Teachers who came from districts that stayed open were each fined \$50 for taking off.

Uprising against decades of attacks

North Carolina teachers were following in the footsteps of a movement that kicked off in West Virginia in late February, moving to Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona and Colorado. Tens of thousands have joined strikes, walkouts, walk-ins, picket lines and marches, saying, "Enough is enough!"

Union and nonunion teachers have organized with imagination, a distrust of legislators of all stripes and a search for ways to maximize the weight of the

rank and file. They have won solidarity from other workers and transformed their fight into a broader social movement. They forged unity among the different school workers in the face of attempts by state governments to pit them against each other.

"I'm for the teachers getting more pay," Wake County school bus driver Spencer Jenkins said at the rally. "But don't forget the bus drivers, mechanics, custodians and cafeteria workers." Like teachers, he said, many bus drivers also work a second job, some even a third.

"The fact that everyone is not a teacher, that means we're bringing a community together," Lindsay Harris, a Johnston County teacher, told ABC News. "We're making changes together. We can't do it alone as teachers."

Diana Niemann, a science teacher from South Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, told the *Militant* that a parent offered to pay for gas money so teachers could make the trip to Raleigh to join the action.

Many participants scoffed at the figures widely reported in the bourgeois media that claim teachers in the state make an average of \$50,000 a year. With paltry or no raises year after year, inflation has pushed real wages down 9 percent since 2009.

Over the past years the state legislature has chipped away at teachers' tenure, which protects those with seniority. The politicians have pushed "merit based" pay schemes, aimed at giving administrators arbitrary power over jobs and pay. Legislators are also moving to replace pensions with a 401(k) plan for all future state employees and to eliminate health coverage when they retire.

Budgets for supplies, textbooks and school technology have been slashed in half since 2009. "We have a library, but no librarian," said Rachel Holdridge, a special education teacher at Wilmington's Alderman Elementary School. "The library is for storage and meetings. The books are on the floor."

"I'm concerned about the inequities, where some counties have more resources than others, like supplies, technical equipment, teaching assistants, especially in classes for stu-



Militant photos/Janet Post

Union and nonunion teachers have organized with imagination, a distrust of legislators of all stripes and a search for ways to maximize the weight of the rank and file. Top, 20,000 strong protest May 16 in Raleigh, North Carolina, which was marked by thousands of homemade signs. Bottom, teachers and students at sign painting party in Raleigh on day before march.



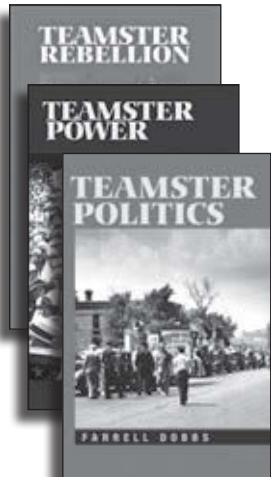
Militant/Pat Travis

"Teacher Union thugs want to control the education process!," Union County State Rep. Mark Brody said on Facebook May 11. More than 1,000 teachers there took the day off for protest, forcing county to close schools.

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For special offer see list of distributors on page 8

dents with special needs," said Lauren Abraham, a second-grade teacher in Garner, a Raleigh suburb. Those who live in more working-class or rural areas have less access to local money to supplement inadequate state funding.

Hard to get genie back in the bottle

Thousands of teachers crowded into the legislative building May 16, chanting and waving signs. Much of the coverage in the capitalist media emphasized this side of the day, underscoring the union officials' perspective that lobbying and campaigning for Democrats they claim are "friendlier" to public education is the main job for school workers between now and the November elections.

But the fact is the capitalist rulers and their politicians are not really interested in public education. For them it's only a way to impose obedience, not open learning. They use it to create a workforce that's easier to control and exploit.

Legislators in Raleigh seemed most interested in getting the teachers out of the building, Mario Black, a middle school social studies teacher, told the May 17 *Charlotte Observer*. He was one of some 30 teachers who took part in a rally in Charlotte's Marshall Park the day after the Raleigh protest to continue pressing their demands.

"When I got home from the rally I had tons of messages from teachers wondering what was next," Greensboro middle school teacher Susan Skinner said by phone May 20.

"We decided to wear red to school the next morning and many of us did, including teachers who weren't able to attend the march. After school a dozen of us met to discuss all kinds of ideas to continue our fight."

Even though the legislature is done for the year, several hundred teachers and other state workers rallied outside the Statehouse in Columbia, South Carolina, May 19, demanding more funds for schools and better pay.

"Our actions helped inspire them," Skinner said.

In cities and towns across the country, other teachers are joining the uprising. In National City, California, teachers voted May 22 to authorize a strike if the school board refuses to meet their demands for higher pay and more teaching supplies.

Help fund 'Militant' reporting trip to Puerto Rico!

The *Militant* is sending editor John Studer and correspondent Martin Koppel on a fact-finding and solidarity trip to the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico May 25-28. A few weeks later Studer will speak for the Socialist Workers Party at the June 18 annual meeting of the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, explaining why the fight for revolutionary change and independence for Puerto Rico is in the interest of working people there, in the U.S. and around the world.

Studer and Koppel will meet with unionists and with students at the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan. They will visit some of the smaller towns outside San Juan that are still without electricity and talk with working people there who have been part of the recent protests.

Help make this trip possible! Send contributions, payable to the *Militant*, to 306 W. 37th St, 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

This column gives a voice to those engaged in labor battles and building solidarity today — from school workers in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Colorado, to retail and factory workers looking to stand up and fight. Send in articles, photos and letters on picket lines and other labor protests to themilitant@mac.com or mail them to: 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018; or call us at (212) 244-4899.

New Zealand nurses protest low pay, understaffing

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — More than 700 nurses, other hospital workers and supporters marched here May 12 to protest low pay, understaffing and deteriorating conditions in public health care.

“We need more on the floor,” read one hand-written placard, highlighting a near unanimous complaint about inadequate staffing. Marchers told the *Militant* that tiredness caused by overtime and piled-up responsibilities endanger the quality of care they can provide.

“Two percent won’t pay the rent,” another sign said. The signs explain why members of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation here voted against the contract proposal by district health boards.

All 27,000 workers in the union are currently voting nationwide on whether to authorize a strike in July.

Fifteen such protests were organized by nurses across the country May 12. Union members delivered a petition signed by 47,000 people supporting the nurses’ fight to Parliament in Wellington.

Timed to coincide with International Nurses Day, the national mobilization — the latest in a series of protests by nurses, midwives and others — was called by the organizers of “New Zealand, please hear our voice,” a Facebook page set up for nurses to discuss the conditions they face. It includes posts on chronic understaffing, lack of necessary supplies, missed breaks, unpaid overtime, unfair wages and a myriad of other abuses.

— Patrick Brown



Militant/Mike Tucker

Nurses, hospital workers rally in Auckland, New Zealand, May 12, part of nationwide day of protests against low pay, understaffing, worsening conditions for both workers and patients.

Fight to win voting rights for ex-prisoners picks up

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Workers who’ve been released from prison after serving time on felony charges are leading fights in Florida and other states over regaining the right to vote. Since the capitalist rulers’ criminal “justice” system is racist, Blacks are disproportionately impacted by the undemocratic restrictions on voting rights for workers released from prison.

Laws vary state by state. The governments in only two states, Maine and Vermont, allow people who are in prison on felony charges to vote while serving their sentences. In 14 states and the District of Columbia, state officials have ruled your right to vote is restored when you walk out of the prison. In 21 states, those jailed on felony raps only get back their voting rights after they are released from parole or probation. And in the remaining 13 states, you lose your voting rights forever, unless the governor or state legislature grants you a pardon.

These anti-working-class restrictions are being challenged in Florida, New York, New Jersey and Mississippi. “We have no say,” New Jersey construction worker Dameon Stackhouse, who is on parole and has been unable to vote since his release after a decade in prison, told

the *Wall Street Journal* May 10.

Nationwide, some 6.1 million people who have been behind bars are disenfranchised, a more than fourfold increase since 1976. The vast majority — over 97 percent — were pressured to plea bargain, with few actually convicted on felony charges.

A disproportionate number are African-Americans. In New Jersey 60 percent of state prisoners are Black, while African-Americans only make up 13 percent of the state’s population, reports the Sentencing Project.

A bill backed by members of the Black Caucus in the New Jersey legislature that would restore voting rights to prisoners and to people who are on parole or probation has made little progress.

In Florida, over 1 million people have signed petitions to place an amendment to the state constitution on the November ballot reinstating voting rights to those who have gone to prison on felony charges. Some 1.5 million people — more than 10 percent of the state’s population — are barred from voting. For African-Americans the figure is 23 percent.

In February, federal Judge Mark

Walker ruled Florida’s lifetime ban on voting for those sent to prison on felony charges — part of the Florida constitution for 150 years — violates the U.S. Constitution’s protections against government interference with free association and speech, due process and equal protection under the law.

But at the end of April an appeals court granted Florida Gov. Rick Scott’s appeal for a temporary injunction on the ruling.

In response, hundreds of people marched on the Capitol in Tallahassee April 26, demanding that ex-prisoners’ voting rights be restored and urging people to vote for the amendment changing the state constitution.

The Southern Poverty Law Center and the Mississippi Center for Justice have filed lawsuits charging that Mississippi’s ban on voting rights for felony prisoners released from jail is unconstitutional, arbitrary and discriminatory. Nearly 10 percent of the state’s adult population and 16 percent of African-Americans can’t vote because of this ban.

Anyone who loses their right to vote in Mississippi can only get it reinstated through a gubernatorial pardon or a special bill passed by the legislature. This rarely happens. Only 335 of 166,494 persons who completed their sentences between 2000 and 2015 had their rights restored, according to the Sentencing Project.

In New York people who did time on felony charges and are now out on probation can vote, but not those who are on parole. Gov. Andrew Cuomo, hoping to boost his chances for winning re-election in November, signed an executive order April 18 that would grant conditional pardons to up to 35,000 of those on parole, allowing them to vote.

New York State Senate Republican leader John Flanagan protested the change, complaining that Cuomo using an executive order, rather than going to the state house for a vote, is a “radical departure from the way legislation should be enacted.”

“No one should be denied the right to vote because they are in jail or on probation,” said John Studer, chairman of the Socialist Workers Party campaign committee. “From beginning to end, the capitalist rulers’ cops, courts, prisons and parole system exist to harass and intimidate working people. I join those fighting to win back the right to vote for all workers who have been thrown behind bars.”

Coming soon! The Militant's new website

The *Militant*’s upgraded website will soon be in place, offering easier access to the paper’s coverage of working-class politics — from today back to 1928.

Readers will also be able to purchase subscriptions online.
www.themilitant.com

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



June 7, 1993

“Mark Curtis will not get a fair trial,” said Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party at a rally in Des Moines, Iowa.

“No one in the world is obligated to prove Mark Curtis’s innocence,” he said. “The presumption of innocence has taken hundreds of years for working people to win. We shouldn’t take it for granted because the Des Moines police department, Polk County prosecutor, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the liberal newspapers, all are trying to take it away. Not only from Mark, but from everyone.

“It’s the presumption of guilt which dominates in the ‘democratic’ United States,” he explained. “Saturday night is open season on any young Black man in the United States. For every young Puerto Rican. It’s open season for women much of the time. The presumption is not the presumption of innocence, it’s the horror of guilt.”



June 7, 1968

General de Gaulle launched his counteroffensive in defense of capitalist rule by threatening civil war against the 10 million workers and students of France who have been on strike for two weeks and have occupied factories and universities throughout the country.

He postponed the national referendum. The relation of forces has been so unfavorable that the government has not been able to get ballots run off because of the printers on strike.

His henchmen count upon cooperation from the Communist, Socialist and Catholic union bureaucrats to break up the unity of the workers by settling the strike piecemeal.

The workers are ready, able and willing to stand firm until they win their economic, social and political demands. But their official leaders are looking for some sort of compromise and are disposed to capitulate under the pressures of capitalist reaction.



June 5, 1943

An interesting letter from a union man in the armed forces is prominently featured in *Aero Mechanic*, organ of aircraft workers organized in Lodge 751 of the International Association of Machinists in Seattle. In part the letter says:

“We are not all ‘Sons of Wall Street’ in the army, as most of the newspapers would like to have the public think. We are just as much against unconstitutional special privileges as we ever were. We are willing to die only for the common security of all people, regardless of race, creed or nationality.

“There are many of us who don’t like the way things are going at home. Every day we read of more sneak punches at the common working man and more clamoring by the dupes of Wall Street for more special privileges. These small men must be met on their own ground and defeated. We are depending upon our brothers in the unions.”

Protests against government attacks spread in Nicaragua

BY RÓGER CALERO
AND MAGGIE TROWE

MASAYA, Nicaragua — Thousands rallied here and in cities across the country May 19 to demand the resignation of President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo. In Managua, workers and middle-class layers gathered in peaceful protests on street corners and drove in caravans around the city. They stopped and visited university campuses occupied by students since protests exploded a month ago to express solidarity.

Thousands of others gathered in León, Matagalpa, and Estelí, marching in city streets where paving-stone barricades erected since April by residents in working-class neighborhoods to defend themselves from attacks by police and pro-government thugs remain in place. Some were the sites of pitched battles that have left more than 70 dead and hundreds wounded.

Widespread protests exploded April 19, the day after goons organized by the Sandinista Youth, an organization led by the ruling party, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), attacked some retirees in León protesting against government proposals to increase workers' contributions to the country's pension fund and cut benefits.

University students rallying on campuses in support of the pensioners were attacked by riot police and government-organized paramilitaries. To defend themselves, students at the Polytechnic, Agrarian, and Engineering universities occupied campus buildings and barricaded themselves inside.

The killings and wounding of the students — and Ortega and Murillo's denial of brutal repression by police and paramilitary thugs and their dismissal of protesters as miniscule groups of looters, right-wing gangs and youth manipulated by opposition forces — have generated even more indignation and incited more protests. "They were students, not delinquents!" is a slogan heard in all the actions, seen as well as on T-shirts, signs and graffiti on walls everywhere.

"We stand behind our elderly and our young people," said craft vendor Ervin Potosme, 57. Potosme, like many of the protesters, still considers himself a supporter of the revolutionary ideals fought

for by the FSLN, which led the struggle that overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza on July 19, 1979, opening a deep-going popular anti-capitalist revolution.

The government that came to power on the shoulders of that mass insurrection mobilized workers and peasants to fight for land reform and workers' rights; build their own organizations; take greater control of factories; and carried out other measures in favor of the toilers.

But the FSLN leadership became increasingly dominated by those, like Ortega, who backed away from a revolutionary course, rejecting any idea of following the example of Cuba and its socialist revolution. This evolution accelerated in the late 1980s, marking the beginning of the FSLN's degeneration into a bourgeois electoral party. By 1990 the Sandinista revolution was over.

Potosme took part in the 1978 insurrection that exploded in the Monimbó



Militant/Maggie Trowe

Rally at Rotonda Metrocenter in Managua, Nicaragua, May 20, against attacks on pensioners, students and others by government of President Daniel Ortega that have left dozens dead.

neighborhood of this city against the Somoza dictatorship. This working-class neighborhood, whose population is largely of indigenous descent, has served as an inspiration and as an emblem of courage and resistance to tyranny for Nicaraguan toilers.

The main rally here was held at La placita, the main plaza and heart of Monimbó. Protesters came from all sec-

tions of Nicaraguan society and from a wide range of viewpoints, including supporters of opposition parties, longtime opponents of the Sandinista Front, as well as workers who were part of the revolution in the 1980s.

Calero and Trowe are in Nicaragua reporting for the Militant. We will carry further coverage next week.

Venezuela toilers face capitalist crisis, US rulers' anger

Continued from front page

Maduro was re-elected, getting 68 percent of the vote.

The U.S. rulers hope the economic hardships will open up rifts in Venezuela's armed forces, leading to a coup and a government more to their liking. But they have no intention of invading, and are not likely to impose a ban on U.S. imports of Venezuelan oil. They fear these steps would throw the country into complete chaos. Instead, they have banned U.S. capitalists from buying new Venezuelan bonds and freezing the assets and bank accounts, if any, in the U.S. of members of the government.

Washington, which has never masked its hostility to Maduro or his predecessor Hugo Chávez and their relations with revolutionary Cuba, called the vote "sham elections." Fourteen Latin American governments, including Brazil, Mexico and Colombia, announced they will not recognize the government and pledged to back Washington's stepped-up pressure campaign.

Maduro, like Chávez before him, has

attempted to "manage" capitalist social and political relations. They funded "welfare" programs that foster a corrupting dependence on government largesse. These steps were consciously counterposed to leading a working-class revolution, giving workers and farmers greater confidence in what they can accomplish in struggle, as was done by the July 26 Movement in Cuba.

After the collapse of oil prices and production, the government just printed money to make up for the drop in hard currency and inflation has soared.

But these policies only exacerbated the capitalist crisis and its impact on workers. Inflation is an estimated 50 percent *per month*. A quarter of working-class families eat two meals or less a day and shortages of basic medicines are widespread. Electricity and water outages are frequent.

Oil production in free fall

The Venezuelan government was hard hit by the steep drop in the price of oil — its main source of hard currency

— to \$50 a barrel last year. Even though oil is back up to \$80, it has done little to refill the government's coffers. Production has plummeted at the state-owned oil company, because of breakdowns in production facilities, corruption and bureaucratic mismanagement. Thousands of oil workers have quit and creditors have begun seizing company assets in other countries.

Many workers are taking action to try and combat the effect of the crisis. According to VPI-TV there were 927 protests against bosses or the government in April, 25 percent more than in the same period last year.

Thirty-five office workers at the Social Security Institute in Táchira, near the Colombian border, walked off the job May 2. "This is our first time ever on strike," one worker told the press. "Our wages aren't enough to take the bus to work." Some 35 of the 70 workers have quit and left the country, she said. "If we can't get a raise, I might leave too, even though I don't want to."

Workers at Masisa, a Chilean-based company in Anzoátegui that makes wood products for export, held a two-week strike in April to demand higher wages and investment to increase production. "What we earn is not even enough to feed our children," union Secretary General Oniel Mendoza told VPI. Some 400 workers have quit.

Leading up to the election, Maduro appealed to the bosses to help him. "To the business class, who want to work together," he said, "I am ready."

Crumbling infrastructure

"We're not protesting against that disgraceful Maduro," a resident of a working-class area of east Caracas told the representative of the water company there during an April 27 demonstration. "We just want water."

The official apologized, blaming the shut-off on a broken main and power outages. He said that they hoped to fix the problem soon and the water supply should go back to "normal" — three and

Continued on page 7

More reading



See distributors page 8 or
pathfinderpress.com



Reuters/Carlos Garcia Rawlins

April 16 protest at Caracas Health Ministry in Venezuela against shortage of medicine, part of rising unrest. Strikes for higher wages, actions against water shortages have also taken place.

Israel's right to exist key in fights

Continued from front page
led participants to think they could do so without Israeli reprisal. But Hamas Prime Minister Yahya Sinwar described the real aims of their actions: "We will take down the border and we will tear out their hearts from their bodies." Since March 30, some 116 Palestinians have been killed, mostly by Israeli army gunfire.

Much of the U.S. liberal press falsely blamed the Trump administration's decision to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem for the confrontation and prettied up the inflammatory character of the Hamas-organized actions. "Battle Weary, Hamas Gives Peaceful Protests a Chance," headlined an April 16 *New York Times* article.

Since Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007, thousands have died as the result of its strategy of sacrificing Palestinian lives in provocations that draw brutal reprisal from Tel Aviv. Hamas' strategy is to win sympathy and support in bourgeois public opinion for its goal of destroying Israel and driving the Jewish people there out.

The capitalist rulers in Egypt and Israel have maintained a virtual blockade of Gaza, causing severe shortages that are felt most sharply by working people.

Following Hamas-led charges on the Israeli border May 14 that led to the killing of over 60 Palestinians, the Egyptian government pressed Hamas to halt the actions. Hamas promptly did so, in exchange for Cairo opening a border crossing and allowing

aid deliveries. Egyptian government officials hung out the promise of additional assistance to Gaza to encourage the reactionary Hamas group to negotiate with Tel Aviv.

The Egyptian government has deepened its links with Tel Aviv, opening its airspace for Israeli airstrikes on Islamist forces operating in the country's Sinai desert and against weapons smugglers in Gaza.

Washington presses peace deal

The Trump administration is pushing Cairo, the Saudi monarchs and its other allies in the region to press Palestinian authorities to agree to talks with Tel Aviv.

Speculation is rife among Israeli capitalist politicians about the Trump administration's coming peace plan proposal and the possible location of a Palestinian capital in east Jerusalem. Yair Lapid, leader of the Israeli Yesh Atid opposition party, claimed the U.S. plan, due to be announced in June, would include the neighborhood of Abu Dis as the site of a Palestinian state's capital.

An emergency May 17 meeting of the Arab League heard a call from Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki for all league member states to withdraw their ambassadors from the United States following the opening of the new U.S. Embassy. So far none of the bloc's 22 members have done so.

For years many of these governments as well as the rulers in Iran have pos-

Protests against school closures in Puerto Rico



Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico

Students, parents and teachers protest May 3 against the closing of the Clemente Ramírez de Arellano school in Manatí, Puerto Rico. Many of the signs say, "Enough already."

The closing, one of nearly 300 planned by the island's colonial government, is part of deepening anti-working-class measures being carried out to free up funds to maximize payment to wealthy bondholders on the government's \$74 billion debt.

On May 22 Puerto Rico's legislature approved slashing the government budget 22 percent. The Financial Oversight and Management Board imposed by the U.S. government — known in Puerto Rico as the junta — is demanding deeper cuts to social services, pensions and labor rights.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of workers and farmers still have no electricity or reliable drinking water or are living in storm-damaged homes, eight months after Hurricane Maria devastated the island. Protests against the school closings, cuts to the University of Puerto Rico, the slow pace of restoring electricity and other attacks on workers and their unions are frequent in towns large and small.

— SETH GALINSKY

Venezuela toilers face capitalist crisis

Continued from page 6

a half days with water on, then three and a half without.

The May 20 elections did nothing to solve the crisis. The pro-imperialist opposition, discredited and with little support from working people, is divided and demoralized, with many of its leaders out of the country. The main group, the Democratic Unity Roundtable, urged a boycott. Its two most prominent figures, Leopoldo López and Henrique Capriles, were barred from the ballot. Months earlier they had organized a series of provocative and violent anti-Maduro actions, but virtually nothing leading up to the vote.

Two candidates did challenge Maduro, Henri Falcón and Javier Bertucci. Falcón, a former Maduro ally, launched his candidacy over the objections of the opposition. His program to solve the

economic crisis centered on replacing the country's currency with the U.S. dollar to try to stem runaway inflation, halting subsidized shipments of oil to Cuba and other Caribbean and Latin American nations to "save money," and asking for international food aid.

Bertucci, a Pentecostal minister, said the answer was a return to Christian values. He attracted workers to his rallies by giving away free bowls of soup, but won few adherents or votes.

Maduro government officials set up what they called "red spots" right next to the polling places, where voters were told to bring the ID cards that entitle them to monthly government-subsidized food baskets — which most workers depend on to try and squeeze by each month — to prove they had voted. Many feared they would lose access to the cheaper food if they didn't.

tured as defenders of the Palestinians. They use their demagogic "support" for the Palestinians to point away from class exploitation at home and bolster the rule of the capitalist class.

The Iranian rulers, their ally Hezbollah and the leaders of Hamas all falsely claim the conflicts in the region stem from Israel's existence. In reality these clashes are fueled by imperialist competition and intervention alongside the region's rival capitalist rulers vying for profits and influence.

Jewish leaders declared the state of Israel on Palestinian soil in 1948 coming out of the Holocaust by the Nazi regime in Germany that slaughtered over 6 million Jews, abetted by Washington's and London's refusal to allow any significant Jewish immigration. The Israeli rulers consolidated their state in the course of a series of devastating wars against neighboring Arab rulers.

A statement by the Socialist Workers Party issued last December — and available on the *Militant's* website — explains there is only one road forward for the toilers in the Middle East, for the contending regimes to recognize both Israel and an independent Palestinian state. Along that course, it says, working people can "defend their space to speak, organize and begin redressing the blood-drenched legacy of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation."

The statement adds that this includes the "national oppression across the Arab and Muslim countries as well as the genocidal crimes of the Holocaust, the murderous

pogroms preceding it across Eastern and Central Europe and Russia, the enduring reality of Jew-hatred in today's crisis-ridden capitalist world."

U.S. to expand Iran sanctions

Washington says it will reimpose sanctions on Iran following its decision to pull out of the 2015 deal struck among the Barack Obama administration, Tehran, and the governments of China, France, Germany, Russia and the U.K. That deal eased sanctions in exchange for restrictions on Tehran's nuclear weapons program.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced May 21 that the administration plans to expand sanctions on the Iranian rulers, part of the White House's efforts to force Tehran to accept new, more long-lasting restrictions. Above all the U.S. imperialists want to end the Iranian rulers' expanding reach in the region — a result of its intervention in the wars in Syria and Iraq.

Pompeo said Washington would impose the "strongest sanctions in history" on Iran. The effect of Washington's moves will fall most heavily on working people, who also bear the deadly brunt of being the cannon fodder for the Iranian rulers' wars.

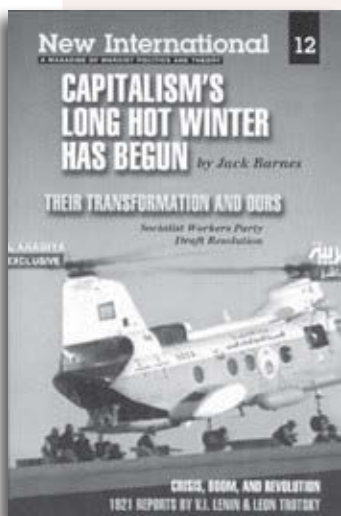
Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun

"The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was a profound political and social upheaval, not a religious jihad. It was a deep-going, modern, popular social revolution."

— Jack Barnes

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Socialist Workers Party statement

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‘Cuba’s revolutionary armed forces are the people in uniform’

Below is an excerpt from Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces, one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for May. “The Revolutionary Armed Forces are the people in uniform,” Cuban Brig. Gen. José Ramón Fernández said in a 1997 interview in Havana. Mary-Alice Waters, a leader of the SWP and president of Pathfinder Press, asked the questions. Fernández was the field commander at Playa Girón in 1961, where the popular militias and the Revolutionary Armed Forces defeated the U.S.-organized Bay of Pigs invasion force in just 72 hours. The book is a powerful introduction to the Cuban Revolution. Copyright © 1999 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

MARY-ALICE WATERS: Perhaps we could begin with how you became involved in the struggle against the Batista dictatorship before the revolution, and your responsibilities in building the new revolutionary army once the old regime had been destroyed.

JOSÉ RAMÓN FERNÁNDEZ: I was imprisoned for three years during the struggle against Batista. I had been part of a movement formed in early 1956 by young officers mainly from the military schools and the Havana garrison. We attempted to overthrow Batista and



Courtesy José Ramón Fernández

José Ramón Fernández, center, field commander of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces, during counterattack that defeated U.S.-organized invasion at Bay of Pigs in 72 hours in April 1961.

restore the bourgeois democracy that had existed here. Although the scope of the 1940 constitution of the Republic of Cuba was quite advanced, it was never enforced, as you know.

Batista’s March 10, 1952, military coup was prepared and organized by a group of active-duty army and navy officers neither whose ideas nor records augured anything good for the country in any way. ...

On April 4, 1956, a military movement, which the people referred to as “los puros”—“the pure ones”—tried to topple Batista. It failed and a large number of those involved were sent to prison; others went into exile, retired, left the army, or were transferred to distant commands. ...

When the revolution triumphed, I joined the Rebel Army as a first lieutenant, the same rank I held previously. Since I was a trained professional (and I say this with no vanity), I was given the task of helping to train the Rebel Army—more than to train it actually, to help transform the Rebel Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces in general. ...

WATERS: It would be useful to return to a point you made earlier about the difference between a bourgeois army and a revolutionary army—the difference in the treatment of soldiers, and the relations between soldiers and officers.

FERNÁNDEZ: As a rule, a bourgeois army imposes its command, with some variation, through law, through

established norms based exclusively on hierarchy and rank. A socialist army, our army, also uses norms and requires obedience. But discipline is achieved through conscious methods, and the commanding officers derive their authority from the consent of their subordinates; they earn that authority every day by their ability, work, and example.

In this army nobody can give orders who is not respected, who does not have the approval of one’s subordinates. Command, clearly, isn’t conferred by elections, but it’s essential to have the consent and approval of one’s subordinates. The army requires very strict discipline; there can be no concessions on that. But it must be very just, very humane, and maintain the highest moral values.

There have been tremendous abuses in other armies we know, or have known. To me, the attitudes that exist in the U.S. Marine Corps and among its instructors are often bestial; they’re often criminal, inhumane, and unworthy. They are truly contemptible in a military institution. I’m not talking about the young people who have drowned in the swamps. I’m talking about the dehumanizing and denigrating methods of treating young people. That is unacceptable. That is an example of the difference between the two types of armies.

When someone who exercises authority or enforces discipline must do

so, this often rankles those who are the objects of the command. You have to remember, however, that in our armed forces there are the units of the party; there are units of the UJC [Union of Young Communists]. These organizations strive for discipline and at the same time defend and guarantee the rights of individuals. There are places where one may speak frankly and say everything, regardless of rank. That doesn’t happen in other armies. ...

We are sometimes accused of violating human rights. As our foreign minister has pointed out, this is part of a selective campaign carried out by our adversaries to create hostility against Cuba and undermine our prestige. As far as I am concerned, the first human right is the right to live, to receive an education, to live with dignity, to have the possibility of always receiving health care, to a job, to hold a place in society based on one’s capacities, technical training, talent, and desires. And to have a right to a country that exists with dignity, as a sovereign nation.

Not a single prisoner has been tortured here in Cuba; not a single person has disappeared—not one, in thirty-eight years. Who among those who accuse us of human rights violations, or who act as accomplices by voting to condemn us, could raise their hand and say the same thing? We do not permit anyone to be mistreated for reasons of sex, religion, or the color of one’s skin. I’d like to know how the human rights of Hispanic immigrants or Blacks are observed in the United States. Look at California, Florida, New York. Could they say what I have just said? They can exert pressure and muster votes to condemn us, but they are following a selective policy toward us, and we do not feel guilty.

Few places guarantee human rights as Cuba does—not just in word but in deed. Very few—if anyone—among those who condemn us on the basis of human rights has any moral standing whatsoever to do so. That’s a point I wanted to be sure to make, since we have spoken of struggle, of ethics, and of morality.

We are poor, but we have dignity. We are not ashamed of our poverty. We would be ashamed to be rich as a result of theft, of exploitation, of corruption. We would be ashamed to become rich that way.

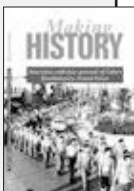
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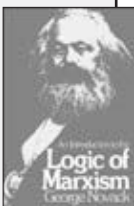
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Join workers’ struggles, build unions!

Working people — who bear the brunt of the social, economic and moral crisis of capitalism today — are the source of powerful and sorely needed solidarity when we confront the bosses’ assaults. The social movement teachers have drawn around their union battle shows the potential power of labor.

Make these struggles your own! Help spread the word about the teachers and other union fights and other protests the working class champions, organize with your co-workers to join their protests and picket lines, and bring signs saying where you’re from. Get workers together and send messages of support from yourselves and your union, if you have one. Talk the battles up if you don’t, it will lay the groundwork to fight to organize.

These actions can reinforce the courage and confidence of those on the frontline. Those bringing solidarity gain a greater sense themselves what workers are capable of and become better able to fight.

Above all we gain confidence that workers have the numbers and the power — if we can unite — to change the daily indignities and unacceptable conditions we confront. Retail workers and others face part-time hours and low pay that make life harder. We face the disdain and opprobrium of those like Hillary Clinton who call us “deplorables” and try to shut us up.

Other workers confront speedup, dangerous conditions and the bosses’ disregard for workers’ lives. Millions of toilers worldwide confront the brutal consequences of the capitalist rulers’ wars.

The past 30 years have been marked by big struggles — from the 11-month battle of 1,700 miners at Pittston Coal in 1989 that drew solidarity strike action from 40,000 other miners; to the millions who stayed off the job on May Day in 2006 demanding, “No deportations!” of immigrant workers; to the 22-month lockout of sugar workers in the Upper Midwest in 2011.

But throughout this period our unions have continued to get weaker as officials have refused to build on the courage and tenacity displayed by workers in battle. Instead, they’ve directed labors’ efforts into the dead end of backing Democratic and Republican politicians — who are bought and paid for by the capitalist exploiters who attack us. This has led a stunning decline in union membership.

The teacher’s actions today give a glimmer of new opportunities to rebuild the labor movement. What’s in store for workers and farmers as the death agony of capitalism continues to unfold is deepening assaults by the bosses and more battles that can transform the working class. Our unions can become the fighting mass organizations that we need, that unite *all* workers, union and nonunion, native-born and immigrant, Black and Caucasian, women and men.

This is the road toward breaking from the bosses’ political parties and fighting for independent working-class political action — the struggle to take political power into our own hands and join the fight for a socialist world. Join Socialist Workers Party members and growing numbers of others on the picket lines!

Plans advance for US-NKorea nuclear summit

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May 22 to observe the promised dismantling of the North’s Punggye-ri nuclear testing site, scheduled to begin the next day.

The back-and-forth of positive and negative statements about the meeting by figures in the governments involved has led some in the U.S. liberal press — whose line is filtered through their hatred for the Donald Trump presidency and for the workers who voted for him — to speculate the meeting won’t happen. They have alternated between saying Trump’s belligerency will lead to war and claiming his alleged erratic incompetence will lead to the U.S. rulers being flummoxed at the talks.

White House officials said work on the summit was continuing, and a crew has been sent to Singapore to set up for the meeting.

“We’re moving along. We’ll see what happens,” Trump told the press before his meeting with Moon at the White House. “There are certain conditions we want to happen. I think we’ll get those conditions.” If not, the meeting might be postponed, he said. This is all a normal part of negotiations, the president said.

‘Trust-building’ measures

Both Washington and leaders of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea have continued what they call “trust-building” measures. And they continue to trade complaints and demands seeking concessions heading into the talks.

After the DPRK complained about the provocative nature of Max Thunder, an annual joint U.S.-South Korean air exercises with U.S. F-22 fighter planes, Washington cancelled upcoming Blue Lightning military exercises, saying it did so at Seoul’s request.

DPRK officials also complained when White House National Security Adviser John Bolton said Libya was a “template” for the denuclearization of North Korea. Trump disavowed Bolton’s statement, saying Libya’s voluntary disarmament in 2003 did not have protections for President Muammar Qaddafi, who was deposed and killed in an uprising eight years later.

Trump said that the U.S. rulers would guarantee Kim’s position. “He will be safe. He will be happy. His country will be rich,” Trump said.

At the White House press conference with Moon, Trump said that the Chinese, South Korean and U.S. governments would channel billions of dollars to North Korea for economic development.

The Chinese government is a key player. Some 90

percent of North Korea’s trade is with China. After Beijing over the last year began strictly enforcing U.N. economic sanctions pushed by Washington, thousands of workers were laid off in North Korea, deepening pressure on the regime.

President Trump has pressed Beijing to keep exerting pressure on the North to come through on the summit. He told the press May 22 he was concerned that Chinese President Xi had started encouraging North Korea’s leaders to push against Washington in preparation for negotiations — and to help Chinese capitalists in their sharpening trade talks with the U.S. rulers.

“I can’t say that I’m happy about it,” Trump said.

It’s clear that North Korea’s massive conventional missile arsenal, thousands of missiles bunkered near the South Korean border and aimed at Seoul 30 miles away, will be part of negotiations as well. And Trump has ordered the Pentagon to prepare to draw down the number of U.S. troops deployed in the South.

Forced division of Korea

North and South Korea have been divided since 1945 when Washington and Moscow split control of the country following the defeat of Japan’s capitalist rulers in the second imperialist world war. They did so against the will of the Korean people, who had spent decades fighting to throw off Japanese occupation.

The U.S. rulers placed the South under military rule and then imposed a puppet government, crushing a revolutionary uprising by workers and farmers. When the 1950-53 Korean War erupted, U.S.-led forces drove deep into the North, almost all the way to the Chinese border. North Korean combatants fought back, and, with the help of hundreds of thousands of Chinese volunteers, were able to push Washington back to a stalemate at the 38th parallel, the first defeat ever for U.S. imperialism.

The U.S. government agreed to a cease-fire, but has refused to sign a peace treaty with the North. Some 4 million people died in the war.

If Washington and Pyongyang reach an agreement that scales back the arsenal on the border and takes steps toward removal of nuclear weapons from the peninsula, it would open the door to gains for working people. Coupled with ending the draconian economic sanctions on the North, and increasing trade and travel between North Korea and the rest of the world, it would give a renewed impulse to the fight for reunification of the country.

Verdict against NY cop

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ders anyone accountable. The true fight is to get justice so no other mother faces this. I hope this victory helps.”

Some 50 supporters of the Bah family packed the courtroom May 17 to oppose the city’s attempt to overturn the verdict.

“This is one of the few cases of killings at the hands of the cops that has gone to any kind of trial and the cops were found guilty,” Randolph McLaughlin, one of the Bah family’s lawyers, told supporters outside the courthouse after the hearing. “The cops who killed Eric Garner, Ramarley Graham and others never went to trial. Trying to get the ruling thrown out is rubbing salt in the wound. It’s an outrage.”

Bah, 28, was shot eight times by cops on Sept. 25, 2012. His mother had flown in from her native Guinea to see Mohamed and found him depressed and acting strangely. She called 911, asking for an ambulance to take him to a hospital. Instead, a group of heavily armed cops showed up.

They refused her repeated requests to talk to him and get him to come out. The cops made her stay outside the building while they went in and demanded Mohamed Bah open the door. When he told them he was fine and to go away, they removed a peephole in the door and tossed a chemical light through it to illuminate the room. They used a hydraulic jack to crack open the door and inserted a camera on a pole.

The cops claim that once the door was open, Mohamed Bah threatened them with a knife. But they never presented a knife as evidence, claiming it was lost. Then later they said they found it, but it had been contaminated in storage.

Once inside the apartment the cops shot at him with an anti-riot gun and used a Taser stun gun twice.

According to testimony at the trial, Detective Mateo was hit by one of the Taser shots aimed at Bah and fell to the ground. “He’s stabbing me. Shoot him,” Mateo yelled twice. Mateo and two other cops shot at Bah, hitting him at least eight times.

Then Mateo changed his story. When he was questioned by Bah family attorneys in a deposition, he admitted that the youth never stabbed him.

The cops also said the clothes worn by Mohamed Bah when he was killed had been destroyed. All the missing evidence played a role in the decision of both federal and Manhattan prosecutors to decline to indict the cops.

Then a few days into the civil trial they admitted they had the clothes all along.

“It is unforgivable to me that, either through malevolence or incompetence, this would not have been discovered,” Judge Castel said in the civil trial.

The jury found Mateo guilty of excessive use of force, and Lt. Licitra, Mateo’s supervisor, guilty of failing to properly supervise him.

In ruling on the city’s appeal, Judge Castel vacated his decision against Licitra.

At the May 17 hearing City Attorney Joshua Lax told Castel that there was “no evidence that disputed that Mr. Bah posed a threat of death or serious injury at the time Mr. Mateo fired.” This means that Mateo is entitled to “qualified immunity,” he claimed, based on laws that give cops wide latitude if they think they’re in bodily danger.

The judge challenged that assertion. He noted that Mateo has changed his story several times and that his fellow officers all claimed they didn’t see what happened before the shooting started. “It was perfectly plausible for this jury to conclude Mateo told an untruthful story,” Castel said.

After the judge ruled against their appeal, a representative of the city Law Department said, “We are reviewing the decision to determine what further action we take.”

‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

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