

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**'What does Cuba teach?  
That revolution is possible'**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 83/NO. 1 JANUARY 7, 2019

## Join SWP in taking books, 'Militant' to workers doors

BY ROY LANDERSEN

At the heart of the political work of the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.K. is taking the *Militant* and books by lead-

### SWP SPEAKS IN INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

ers of the SWP out to working people on their doorsteps in cities, towns — large and small — and rural areas. We introduce the party and its program, along with discussion of political developments worldwide important to the working class. A big boost to this will be the launching of the party's 2019 election campaigns.

We offer five books on special — *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*; *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record*; and *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* all by Socialist Workers Party

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## New Year's greetings to our readers behind bars!

Over the last year working people along with our brothers and sisters behind prison walls have won some important victories against the propertied rulers who look to restrict our

### EDITORIAL

rights and make us pay for the deepening economic, political and moral crisis of capitalism.

In November, Florida's Amendment 4 passed overwhelmingly, restoring voting rights to well over a million former prisoners who have completed their parole. Workers in Kentucky, Iowa and other states where the laws restrict prisoners' right to vote are organizing to build on this victory.

Opposition to death penalty executions in the U.S. — which is the epitome of "cruel and unusual punishment" — continues to grow, and the number of executions to decline.

We celebrate the release of for-

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## 'We are human beings, not robots!' Amazon workers protest conditions



Militant/David Rosenfeld

Amazon workers and supporters protest outside Shakopee, Minnesota, warehouse Dec. 14.

BY HELEN MEYERS

SHAKOPEE, Minn. — Chanting "We're humans, not robots!" and "Amazon: Hear our voice!" some 300 Amazon workers and their supporters protested Dec. 14 outside the recently built Amazon warehouse here. Between 30 to 45 percent of the 2,500 workers at the plant are East African, mostly from Somalia, and they made up a large number of the protesters. The demonstration was called in

response to the company imposing intense speedup and the workers' demand that they be treated with dignity. The rally was sponsored by the Awood Center, a community organization that advocates for East African workers in Minnesota. Awood is the Somali word for "power."

Over 70,000 Somalis live in the state. Awood estimates 60 percent of Amazon's 3,000 workers in the area,

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## 'Yellow vest' protests force gov't concessions

Actions show need for unity of workers, rural poor



Maxime Jegat

Dec. 15 yellow vest protest in Lyons, France, part of nationwide actions. "I never thought we'd be doing this," bus driver Sylvie Orquin told *Militant* at traffic circle protest in Normandy.

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

FORGES-LES-EAUX, Normandy, France — "Yellow vest" demonstrations across France were smaller on Saturday, Dec. 15 after further government concessions. President Emmanuel Macron is hoping this, combined with massive police deployments, will put an end to the nationwide protests by workers and small traders that erupted in mid-November.

But in this department of Seine-Maritime, typical of the smaller towns and rural areas in France's suburbs and countryside, which have been the heart of the protests, the round-the-clock roadblock actions are continuing.

Protesters ignored government de-

mands that they call off their actions after a terrorist shooting in a public market in Strasbourg earlier in the week. "France needs calm, order and a return to normal," said Macron, who the protesters call the "president of the rich."

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## Rail bosses push crew cuts, longer trains, risk lives in drive for profit

BY JOE SWANSON

Dog-eat-dog competition for higher profits are driving rail bosses to risk the lives of rail workers and people who live in communities near the tracks, and to foul the air, soil and water used by millions.

At least 22 rail workers have died

Continued on page 4

## Turkish rulers threaten to attack Kurds seeking autonomy in Syria

BY TERRY EVANS

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has spent the last few weeks repeatedly threatening to unleash a military assault on Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) that control a swathe of eastern Syria. These forces have won a measure of autonomous rule over much of the Kurdish cantons in Syria, an advance for the Kurds who suffer national oppression in Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. For this reason they've gained the undying enmity of Turkey's capitalist rulers who call them terrorists.

President Donald Trump urged Erdogan not to carry through on his threats, while the Turkish president

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United flight attendants protest crew size cuts, grueling schedules

Walmart worker quits, hits bosses' abuses over intercom



# Hungary protests oppose law letting bosses force overtime

BY TERRY EVANS

Up to 15,000 people took to the streets of Budapest, Hungary, Dec. 16, capping four days of protests against recent anti-working-class government measures. The protests targeted a law passed a few days earlier that authorizes bosses to force more overtime from workers. The protest was organized by trade unions, students and some opposition parties. Similar actions took place in seven other cities around the country.

The measures adopted by the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban give bosses the power to increase the number of mandatory overtime hours from 250 to 400 a year, and companies will have up to three years to pay workers for these hours. Bosses there confront a labor shortage, with a government that refuses to allow increased immigration. Facing lower wages and worse working conditions, some 600,000 of the country's 9.8 million people have left to seek work abroad.

To counter pressure on workers to work overtime, the Hungarian Trade Union Confederation is demanding a double-digit increase in the minimum wage. The federation organized a protest days before the new law was adopted, with its members wearing yellow vests, emulating protesters across France who forced President Emmanuel Macron to raise the minimum wage for some and retreat on proposed fuel tax hikes.

Among the beneficiaries of the new forced overtime laws will be bosses

at auto plants in Hungary, which account for nearly a third of all industrial output. To take advantage of conditions that yield higher profits, German car manufacturers Audi and Daimler have set up factories in Hungary. BMW announced it would build a new plant there in July. "We work for German automotive companies for low pay, and they sell their cars for the same price [as elsewhere in Europe]," retired factory worker Antonia Raday told Al Jazeera. "Either they should pay us more or lower their prices."

Some 2,000 protesters rallied outside the state media's headquarters during the Dec. 16 action in Budapest, chanting "factory of lies!" They were dispersed by cops firing tear gas. Some demonstrators also voiced opposition to a new court "justice" system to be controlled by the government's justice minister. He will oversee newly created courts to rule over the legality of strikes and protests, and to regulate the cops and electoral laws.

The new overtime laws come in the wake of other government assaults on working people. Orban in October "abolished" homelessness — by banning people from sleeping on the streets. Within days of the law's passage, cops began arresting some of the country's estimated 30,000 homeless people.

### Orban gov't built on anti-EU anger

Orban was re-elected prime minister in April, campaigning against EU



Zoltan Balogh/MTI via AP

Protesters march on Szabadsag Bridge in Budapest, Hungary, Dec. 14 against government's anti-labor measures, including authorizing bosses to impose more forced overtime on workers.

pressures by the richer capitalist rulers in Berlin and Paris against smaller, weaker countries like Hungary. Protests have grown as he's used his power to strengthen the bosses' advantage over working people.

Orban continues to clash with capitalist rivals in Europe. He campaigned against refugee quotas proposed by the European Union, winning the support of anti-immigrant

governments in the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia.

EU bureaucrats do little to hide their scorn for Orban. The EU parliament launched a disciplinary probe against Orban's administration in September. It adopted a report by Dutch Green Member of the European Parliament Judith Sargentini indicting the Hungarian government for the "crime" of a "breach of the values of our union."

## Workers donate 'blood money' bribes to build SWP

"Enclosed are four checks totaling \$900.86 from bonuses retail workers recently received," wrote Milly Townsend from Albany, New York. "It's a pleasure for all of us to turn this 'blood money' to good use building the Socialist Workers Party!"

"The bosses give us these bribes to discourage us from fighting for a union, higher wages, and safe working conditions. They try to make us think the owners 'share' with the workers," she said. "The fact is the bosses make enormous profits exploiting us and paying us low wages."

The Socialist Workers Party uses the term "blood money" to describe production, attendance, safety and other so-called bonuses the bosses give workers in an effort to bribe us to keep quiet about problems on the job and to push us to work harder.

By giving this money to the Socialist Workers Party's Capital Fund, class-conscious workers turn those bribes into the opposite — funds to build the labor movement and strengthen the party's long-term work.

Joel Britton and Andrea Morell sent in \$86.73, their 'cut' from a class action suit filed several years ago on behalf of Walmart workers in California over inaccuracies on wage statements on their paychecks there. "We're sure this blood money will be put to good use by our party," Britton said.

In the midst of the holiday season, when many bosses try to get workers to acquiesce to another year of exploitation with a paltry bribe, we urge readers to contribute similar Christmas or other such "bonuses" to the SWP. Contact the party branch nearest you listed in the directory on page 8.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

## THE MILITANT

### Students in Kurdistan stand up for dignity!

*Despite college authority's threats, students in Sulaymaniyah, in the Kurdish region of Iraq, refused to back off fight against undignified living conditions in dormitories. The 'Militant' described how women defied college-imposed curfew on female students to initiate protests.*



Sulaymaniyah students highlight demeaning living conditions with slogans on umbrellas.

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## The Militant

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



# Take politics to workers' doors

Continued from front page

National Secretary Jack Barnes; *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters; and “*It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System*”: *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class*.

These books explain that the carnage inflicted on working people today is the only future capitalism has to offer. They tell how working people need to break with the capitalist rulers’ political parties and state, to chart a course to take political power. And they draw on the lessons of past revolutionary struggles — including the two great revolutions of the 20th century, in Russia and Cuba — as examples for working people to emulate today.

SWP member Sara Lobman reported that she and Paul Mailhot knocked on apartment doors in the Marble Hill neighborhood of New York City Dec. 16. They discussed with workers how the decisions of tech bosses at Amazon and Google to draw tens of thousands of young professionals to work in their planned new offices in New York will cause rents to soar even higher.

This will make it even more difficult for workers to live there, let alone raise a family. “The crisis of capitalism is so deep and has gone on for so long that even in a ‘recovery’ workers can’t make ends meet,” Lobman said.

“I know exactly what you mean,” said Damaris Vargas, a dental hygienist who only gets 35 hours work each week. “It’s not enough to live on,” she said. After her mother became ill, she moved in with Vargas and her husband. “We only have a one-bedroom apartment. So it’s difficult.” Vargas decided to get a subscription to the *Militant*.

Another woman in the same building had heard about the yellow vest protests in France and was pleased to hear they had forced concessions from the government. Lobman and Mailhot explained that the protests, centered in the French countryside, are led by working people who face the same conditions as workers in the U.S. — those whom Hillary Clinton had described as “deplorables” during her 2016 presidential campaign.

“I think you’re right,” the woman said,

getting a copy of *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?*

“These were useful discussions,” Lobman told the *Militant*. “But with a little more work, we could have made even better use of the books in explaining what young workers face if they want to raise a family today.”

She pointed to the section in *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record* that describes how working-class families were devastated after the Clinton administration axed “welfare as we know it” in 1996. “Clinton’s 1996 act was the first time that an entire group of working people — single mothers and their children — has been eliminated from the kinds of protections Social Security is supposed to offer retirees, children, workers injured or thrown out of a job, and others vulnerable to the instabilities and devastations inherent in capitalism, both in good times and in bad,” Barnes writes. Today 25 percent of families are headed by single women.

## SWP campaigns in 2019

Early in 2019, the SWP will be launching campaigns for state and municipal offices across the country. Party candidates will speak out as tribunes of the people, raising the disasters, large and small, afflicting workers and the rural poor that are a product of the workings of capitalism today. Party candidates will be outspoken supporters of the struggles of the oppressed and exploited all around the world.

They will point to the inspiring exam-



Militant/Bernie Senter

Teamster truck driver Alberto Alvarenga signs up for *Militant* subscription at his doorstep in Los Angeles in August. Socialist Workers Party member Laura Garza explained workers need to build their own party. “It’s doable if you keep doing what you’re doing,” Alvarenga replied.

ple of the yellow vest upsurge in France covered in the *Militant*.

The party will also be building the April 21 to May 5 international May Day brigade. It provides a unique opportunity for workers and young people to see the Cuban Revolution for themselves in its 60th anniversary year.

This column covers discussions among party members and workers we

meet campaigning door to door every week. We welcome reports from readers on how fellow working people describe what they face today as well as exchanges that lead to expanding the reach of the party’s paper and books.

To join us in campaigning, contact the SWP or Communist League branch nearest you. (See directory on page 8.)

# Celebrate Nan Bailey’s five decades building SWP

BY NORTON SANDLER

LOS ANGELES — Nan Bailey, 66, a leader and cadre of the Socialist Workers Party for 50 years, died here Dec. 12 after a 15-year battle with chronic lung disease. A meeting to celebrate her contributions to building the SWP will be held in Los Angeles Dec. 30.

Bailey helped lead the party’s work in the industrial trade unions, in the struggle for Black liberation, and in building party branches in a number of cities. She served 18 years on the SWP’s National Committee, the leading body of the party.

In the early 1980s Bailey helped lead the party’s participation in the National Black Independent Political Party. NBIPP was launched in Philadelphia in November 1980 at a convention attended by 1,500 people, with the goal of establishing a political party independent of the Democrats and Republicans, the capitalist rulers’ two main parties.

“The convention offered a glimpse of the extent to which the capitalist system has exposed itself in the eyes of millions of Black people. Many pointed to capitalism as the root of the racist oppression and economic exploitation of Blacks,” Bailey wrote in a Dec. 12, 1980, *Militant* article on the founding convention.

The National Black Independent Political Party adopted a far-reaching charter to fight national oppression and capitalist exploitation. It dissolved a few years later as many in its leadership retreated from the founding program and the independent course fought for by SWP members, instead trying to steer members into the Democratic Party.

In the late 1980s Bailey was working as a meatpacker in Des Moines, Iowa, when Mark Curtis, a fellow meatpacker

and member of the SWP, was framed up on rape charges as he helped to lead a fight against government attacks on immigrant co-workers. She joined many in the area and across the country in waging a vigorous defense of Curtis that won widespread support.

Bailey was the organizer of the party’s trade union committee in the late 1990s and a leader of its fraction in the International Association of Machinists. She worked in aerospace plants, in meatpacking plants, and as a sewer and a presser in garment and textile factories.

Bailey ran for public office as an SWP candidate numerous times.

In 1981, she attended the party’s leadership school for an intensive six-month study of the writings of Marx and Engels.

In 1970, as a student at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, Bailey joined the Young Socialist Alliance, the youth organization in political agreement with the SWP. She was recruited by the YSA’s leadership role in the fight against Washington’s imperialist war in Vietnam. She was a leader of

the YSA for many years afterward. She joined the Socialist Workers Party after leaving Brown.

In early 1972, she volunteered in the offices of the Women’s National Abortion Action Coalition in Washington, D.C., that was coordinating protests demanding a woman’s right to choose an abortion.

During the battle to desegregate the Boston schools in the mid-1970s Bailey spoke across the country winning support for the fight to overturn segregation in Boston’s schools, where Black youth were facing assaults by racist mobs.

Bailey carried out many important SWP leadership assignments over the decades. She served as part of the secretariat for SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes. She was a volunteer staff writer for the *Militant*, and also did a stint in the party’s print shop.

She was a member of SWP branches in Washington, D.C.; Detroit; New York; Newark, New Jersey; Des Moines; Seattle; and Los Angeles.

The *Militant* will carry a full report of the Dec. 30 meeting to celebrate Bailey’s political life.

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‘Militant’ online at  
[themilitant.com](http://themilitant.com)**

## —CALENDAR—

### CALIFORNIA

#### Oakland

Stand with Oakland Teachers. Join the Fight. Rally to Fund Public Education Now! Sat., Jan. 12, noon. *Frank Ogawa Plaza*.

### NEW YORK

#### New York

Celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Music, food, presentation, fundraiser. Sat., Jan. 5, 6:30 p.m. *307 W. 36 St., 13th floor*. Tel: (646) 964-4793. Sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party.

### VIRGINIA

#### Richmond

Virginia Educators United March and Rally. Mon., Jan. 28, 11 a.m.. *Gather at VCU-Monroe Park, 620 W. Main St. March to State Capitol*.

## Celebrate the life of Nan Bailey Five decades of building the Socialist Workers Party

### Sunday, December 30

Reception: 1:00 p.m. Program: 2:00 p.m.

Japanese American Cultural Center  
244 South San Pedro St., Los Angeles  
Hosted by the Socialist Workers Party  
For more Information: (323) 643-4968  
Email: [swpla@att.net](mailto:swpla@att.net)





# French ‘Yellow vest’ protests

Continued from front page

Government spokesperson Benjamin Griveaux told protesters they should be “reasonable” and stay home, saying the cops and other security forces were under “strain” trying to deal with the protests as well as the shooting. The CFDT union federation joined in calling for the protests to end. While the government considered banning the protests, it ultimately decided not to.

Working people here have faced years of accumulated carnage imposed on them by the propertied rulers’ efforts to make them pay for the crisis of French capitalism. They’ve seen jobs, industries and government services dry up, small businesses crushed by giant retailers, while government taxes and fees pile up.

A team of Communist League members from the U.K. went to Normandy Dec. 10-11 to meet with yellow vest militants there, to express solidarity with their fight and cover the protests for the *Militant*.

The yellow vests get their name from the high visibility jackets the French government forces all motorists to keep in their car.

“We’re not looking for mealy-mouthed words from Macron. We want his resignation,” Nadia Lemerud told us. Lemerud and fellow school bus drivers Sylvie Lerouelle and Sylvie Orquin were on a yellow vest roundabout — traffic circle — protest in this town of 4,000, surrounded by farmland.

They’ve set up a stall here, with a protest shack and highly visible signs. Cars and trucks passing by hoot their horns in support.

Born and bred in Forges, “we’ve never before been on any political protest. Even a few months ago, I never imagined we’d be doing this,” Orquin told the *Militant*. “But we’ll probably be spending Christmas here.”

The women were speaking the day after a televised address in which Macron announced a rise in the national minimum wage and other concessions to the protesters. A week before the government had conceded that planned fuel tax rises — which triggered the rebellion — would be cancelled.

The administration has combined these concessions with slanderous violence-baiting attacks on the yellow vests, charging them with “smashing our businesses,” “our heritage” and

“our republic.”

“The minimum wage is index-linked, so there would have been a rise in January anyway,” protester Arnold Lesort-Pajot told the *Militant* in a Dec. 16 phone interview. “And what Macron announced is not in fact a rise in the minimum wage. He’s announced that workers on the minimum wage can apply for state benefits that amount to €100 a month (\$113) — but only if there’s only one wage earner in the household and only if they’re working a full 35-hour week. Moreover, the application process for such state benefits, including a working tax credit, is so intrusive that many simply don’t apply.”

After it became public that these measures would apply to just 30 percent of low-paid workers, Macron announced further concessions which the media says will boost this figure to 55 percent.

## Popular support for yellow vests

Lesort-Pajot, 27, was among the hundreds of thousands who joined the rebellion from its outset. He arranged for our visit to Normandy, introducing us to fellow yellow vest protesters, to small farmers, and joined us knocking on workers’ doors in the area. From these experiences it’s clear there is widespread support for the protests. And broad opposition both to the massive police use of tear gas, water cannons and other assaults against protesters, as well as to “black bloc” antifa and similar outfits that have burned cars and carried out other acts of vandalism during recent demonstrations in Paris. These actions play into the hands of the government’s violence-baiting.

In the coastal town of Dieppe yellow vests maintain round-the-clock protests at three roundabouts at the entry to retail and industrial parks. They allow cars and buses to pass, but block the key exit roads to commercial trucks and “divert” them on what for many becomes a wild goose



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

**Yellow vest protesters at roadblock in Dieppe in Normandy region of France Dec. 10. From right is U.K. Communist League member Debra Jacobs and area worker Arnold Lesort-Pajot, who organized League members’ visit to join protesters and meet workers and farmers in area.**

chase. Many truck drivers support the yellow vests and are quite content to return to base having found it “impossible” to deliver their cargo.

The broad anger at Macron and his disdain for working people was palpable. Like Hillary Clinton, who dismissed workers in the U.S. who didn’t back her as “deplorables,” Macron spoke in June about so-called populists being a case of “leprosy.”

“Macron thinks those who labor are dumb,” said protester Nathalie Girard. “But the opposite is the case. The work we do — that’s intelligence, that’s creativity.”

On arrival at one Dieppe roundabout, we were greeted by van driver Claude Hermay, cook Delphine Frebourg and bricklayer Davide Leidle, along with Caroline Mason, who is unemployed. When we apologized for our poor French, they replied, “The language of solidarity is international!” These roadblock gatherings are a hive of discussion. A prominent topic is what appears to be a universal hatred of the European Union, of which Macron is a fervent supporter.

Philippe Martínez, head of the

CGT, the main trade union federation, has been at pains to distance the unions from the yellow vests. While it’s good that they’ve taken up some of the unions’ demands, he says, the yellow vests include forces of the extreme right and small businesspeople who are enemies of the unions. Many yellow vests welcome participation from trade unionists, and many unionists have been won to the protests.

Like in the U.S., the percentage of workers in France who are in unions has shrunk, both because of boss attacks and the class-collaborationism of the union officialdom.

We explained that the road forward is for the working class and the unions to join the protests and reach to unite with the rural poor in a common struggle against the impositions of capitalist rule. If we don’t succeed in this, then the road is open, as conditions worsen, for pro-capitalist ultrarightist elements to try and move in.

Yellow vests we talked to were glad to discuss with us and for support from the Communist League.

# Rail bosses threaten lives with crew cuts, longer trains

Continued from front page

on the job so far this year in North America. Eight have died in Canada since April 2017 when three workers were killed after an Englewood Railway forestry train derailed and rolled into the work equipment vehicles they were on. The most recent death was 33-year-old Pierre-Luc Levesque, a trainee working for Canadian National who was killed Dec. 4 in Edmundston, New Brunswick.

The deaths represent a sharp increase over recent years in Canada. Rail workers there carried out a strike against Canadian Pacific in May, protesting long and exhausting work schedules that compromise safety.

“In recent years, the railroads are running mega-trains, up to 250 rail cars plus seven to eight locomotives, and this is a huge safety issue,” Lance Anton, a 41-year-old conductor and SMART union member in Lincoln, Nebraska, told the *Militant*. “Rail bosses do this to cut crews, but the union should fight such work conditions in the interest of rail workers and the people who live near the rail.”

Bosses have succeeded in imposing one-person train operation over the

road in some places and on some yard jobs. One effort to impose the one-person crew by the BNSF Railway in 2014 was defeated. SMART union members campaigned against a draft contract that would have allowed it and voted it down.

One consequence of smaller crews is that new hires do not get to work as a brakeman or switchman for their first few years on the job before being required to work as conductors, with full responsibility for commanding train movement. “New hires get training of only 12 weeks. Though the union has some influence in the training, it is far from enough,” said Anton, “It takes two to three years just to become knowledgeable of large rail yards.”

CSX Transportation bosses have reduced rail school for new hires from six to three weeks. They have also cut job training time in some cases. In the last six months bosses at both CSX and Norfolk Southern have implemented new rules that will require workers to ride oil tanker cars with only one vertical grab iron while making a shove, despite proven dangers of doing so.

Cost cutting measures that increase workload and expose crews to greater

dangers helped CSX achieve larger returns for their stockholders. They have sought to win support from workers for these changes by making stock shares available at discounted rates and paying blood money bribe bonuses to engineers if they help bosses meet their profit goals.

## Runaway iron ore train in Australia

On Nov. 5 a fully loaded 268-car BHP freight train hauling iron ore in Western Australia’s Pilbara region rolled 57 miles with no one at the controls. The train reached speeds of 110 mph, after the lone crew member dismounted to inspect a car.

Operators some 800 miles away were able to remotely derail the train in a desert area. Mangled tracks and wrecked rail cars scattered among mounds of spilled iron ore halted rail operations there for at least a week.

Nevertheless, bosses are pressing ahead not only on one-person crews but on running driverless trains. At the end of November, three-quarters of the iron ore trains operated by Rio Tinto PLC in the Pilbara region were driverless. U.S. rail bosses are looking into launching crewless trains as well.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### CALIFORNIA

#### Oakland

**Support ‘Yellow Vest’ Protests in France.** Speaker: Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Dec. 28, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 675 Hegenberger Road., Suite 250. Tel: (510) 686-1351.

### MINNESOTA

#### St. Paul

**Celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.** Documentary footage of the revolution; music and food. Fri., Jan. 4, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 1821 University Ave. W., Suite S-106A. Tel: (651) 340-5586.



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

This column gives a voice to those engaged in labor battles and building solidarity today. Send in articles, photos and letters on picket lines and other labor protests to [themilitant@mac.com](mailto:themilitant@mac.com), post them directly on our website, or mail them to 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

## Mental health clinicians strike across California

OAKLAND, Calif. — Mental health clinicians — members of the National Union of Healthcare Workers — organized picket lines at 33 Kaiser facilities across the state during their five-day strike that ended Dec. 14.

They were joined at the Oakland Medical Center and many other picket sites by registered nurses, members of the California Nurses Association, who went on a sympathy strike. “Standing in SOLIDARITY with our sisters and brothers” read the nurses’ picket signs.

The clinicians are demanding more staff and better patient care.

“We must serve patients’ needs, not Kaiser’s greed,” Michele Anders told the *Militant* on the picket line. A veteran of many strikes during her 30 years as a nurse and California Nurses Association member, Anders said, “Mental health services are very important.” She added, “I’m out here to back their fight.”

National Union of Healthcare Workers member Grace Soghomonian wore a yellow safety vest to the picket line here to express solidarity with the massive “yellow vest” movement of workers and rural poor in France.

“I’m a little militant,” she said. “The issues the yellow vests are confronting in France are very similar to the corporate and government greed we face.”

—Joel Britton

## United flight attendants protest crew size cuts, grueling schedules

CHICAGO — More than 200 United Airlines flight attendants and their supporters picketed at O’Hare airport here Dec. 13 demanding the company reverse planned job cuts and improve attendants’ grueling schedules. Pilots, airline catering workers and other unionists joined the picket in solidarity. It was part of a systemwide day of actions in 11 U.S. cities and London, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Guam, and Frankfurt, Germany.

“Sick of getting Cored” was a popular sign and chant. Flight attendants ex-

plained this was a reference to United bosses’ hypocritical blather about what the company says are its “Core4” values — “safe, caring, dependable, efficient.”

“The boiling point was their decision to cut staffing on international flights,” Erica Levy, local council president of the Association of Flight Attendants here, told the *Militant*. United is planning to reduce the number of flight attendants assigned to wide-body international flights from 11 to 10 as of Feb. 1. “It will affect safety and service,” Levy said. “The airlines are cutting staff to give more money to their stockholders.”

Other grievances include schedules flight attendants consider unsafe — particularly long overnight shifts — and problems with a new computer system that has led to delays in workers being paid and getting hotel rooms so they can rest between flights. As the company reconfigures planes to squeeze in more passengers, it has affected their ability to safely move around the cabin, Levy said.

—Nadine Carr

## Oakland teachers rally for smaller class sizes, higher wages

OAKLAND, Calif. — Dozens of public school teachers, members of the Oakland Education Association, and supporters protested after school at a busy intersection here Dec. 11. They held a banner saying, “Teachers ready to strike.” Similar protests were held at several locations to spread the word about a “rally to fund public education now!” being organized for Jan. 12.

Teachers gave out a flyer on their demands — smaller class sizes, more support for students and higher wages.

“We’re fed up,” Katherine Gilbert, a teacher at Greenleaf Elementary and a member of the union bargaining committee, told the *Militant*. “We’ve had no contract since July 2017. We’ve been bargaining since last December without any real movement.” She said the school district’s last proposal was for a 5 percent raise spread over three years. The



Militant/Dennis Richter

National Union of Healthcare Workers members picket Kaiser’s Los Angeles Medical Center Dec. 12 during 5-day statewide strike at 33 hospitals for increased hiring, better patient care.

teachers are demanding 12 percent.

Jeremiah Smith, a Spanish teacher at Castlemont High, said many teachers leave their jobs because of low pay. “A \$200 raise — it’s not much to stop teachers from leaving,” he said.

Because of a loss of state funds, the school district has an unpublished list of 24 schools it is planning to close. Most are reportedly in working-class areas.

“Our school is on the list,” said Castlemont senior Jerrard Franklin. “We are out here protesting for our rights. We support our teachers.”

“The district wants to consolidate facilities and cut labor costs,” special education teacher Mara Randle said.

The number of students enrolled in charter schools has climbed to over 30 percent here. These schools are publicly funded but privately managed, often for profit. The charters are exempted from having to serve all students. For example, the Oakland school district produces materials in five languages but charter schools don’t have to.

Because of the number of students who’ve moved to charter schools, the Oakland school district has lost \$57.3 million in state funding annually. District officials responded by cutting hot meals after school and closing 30 percent of school libraries, including in 14 of 17 high schools. One student’s sign at

the protest said, “We need a library.”

Frustration with the lack of motion on a new contract led to an unsanctioned sickout and protest by teachers at Oakland High, Fremont High and Madison Park Academy Dec. 10.

The January 12 rally is set for 12 noon in front of Oakland’s City Hall.

—Eric Simpson

## Walmart worker hits bosses’ abuses over intercom

Seventeen-year-old Jackson Racicot was fed up with the way the Walmart bosses where he worked constantly mistreated workers. What attracted a lot of attention is how he went about making his opinions public.

He handed in a letter of resignation and then went on the intercom system at the Grande Prairie Walmart where he had worked in Alberta, Canada, Dec. 6. “Attention all shoppers, associates and management,” Racicot announced. When he had gotten everyone’s attention, he said, “I’ve been a loyal employee here for over a year and a half, and I’m sick of the bulls---, bogus write-ups, and my job.”

Racicot said managers “will make promises and never keep them.” He also said that his boss was disdainful, and had called Racicot “a waste of time.”

He described some of the things he’d seen while working there. “They preach to us about how they care about their employees,” Racicot said. “But management will try and save money every step of the way, cutting benefits and a full-time associate down to part time.”

On a one-minute video he made of his announcement and posted to his Facebook page, cheers and applause can be heard after Racicot finished his speech. They came from both customers and some other workers. The video has since gone viral, viewed over the next week more than 180,000 times, attracting thousands of “likes” and comments.

“I’m just a customer and we get treated pretty bad at Walmart, so I can imagine how bad they would treat their employees!” said one.

In an interview with the *Star Edmonton*, Racicot said that he decided to quit publicly to raise awareness of working conditions and other “labor issues” at the country’s largest retail company. “Don’t be treating your employees as if you own them, as if they are your property,” he told the paper.

Racicot said he’s been contacted by other Walmart workers and they’re discussing other pro-labor actions.

—Brian Williams

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 10, 1994

MORGANTOWN, West Virginia — Eight members of United Mine Workers of America Local 5958 will stand trial January 24 in Charleston, West Virginia. The miners were framed up in the July 22 shooting death of nonunion contract worker Eddie York.

The frame-up stems from the recently concluded strike by 18,000 coal miners against selected companies of the Bituminous Coal Operators Association.

The mine owners and their hired guards carried out numerous violent provocations against miners on the picket lines, including at the Arch Mineral Corp.’s Ruffner mine. Elite Security employees often threw rocks at strikers and fired guns in the air. York was shot in the back of the head as he drove out of a side entrance to the Ruffner mine. The pickets were in front of York’s car when the shooting occurred.



January 10, 1969

CHICAGO — Rudolph Bell, one of the Fort Hood 43, is now fighting an attempt by the army to punish him further by illegally extending his period of service and very possibly sending him back to Vietnam.

The 21-year-old Black combat veteran told his story at a press conference held here Dec. 27 by the GI-Civilian Antiwar Conference.

On Aug. 24, 1968, Sp/5 Bell joined some 300 other Black GIs at Ft. Hood, Texas, in a peaceful protest against their possible deployment to Chicago for “riot control” duty during the Democratic Party national convention. Along with 42 other participants in the demonstration, Bell was court-martialed for “refusing to obey a direct order” to disperse, an order which he did not hear and which, it was actually admitted at a later trial, had never been given.



January 8, 1944

On New Year’s Eve 18 leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and the Minneapolis Truckdrivers Local 544-CIO were put behind bars.

They were put behind prison bars by a government which represents the interests, not of the broad masses of the American people, but of a small clique of the rich and privileged.

These real masters of America, who are coining gold out of the agony and havoc of the 2nd world war, have determined to silence every voice of labor opposition to their government of criminal misrule. They have determined to hamstring and throttle the powerful labor movement of America. No wonder they chose as their first victims eighteen individuals, who above all others, represent the Socialist consciousness of the awakening American working class.



# UK out of EU is best terrain for workers' struggles there

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

MANCHESTER, England — The failed attempts by Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative government in the U.K. to strike a "withdrawal deal" with the European Union that can pass in the House of Commons has led to sharpening divisions and a deepening political crisis here.

Facing certain defeat, May cancelled a Dec. 11 vote on a 585-page "deal" with the remaining EU member states. That agreement would have kept the U.K. in the protectionist bloc for as long as possible, without any vote on its decisions. After she axed the vote, May then faced a "vote of confidence" by Conservative Members of Parliament, which she won by 200 votes to 117 — but only after promising that she would step down from leading the party before the 2022 general election.

May scuttled back to Brussels to ask for tweaks to the agreement, which might placate enough of her opponents to pass it, but she came back empty-handed.

May came into office following the resignation of her predecessor, David Cameron, who called a June 2016 referendum on withdrawal from the EU, hoping it would be soundly defeated. But a majority voted for the U.K. to get out, reflecting the anger of millions of workers who used the vote to protest against years of attacks on living standards, lack of jobs, seemingly endless wars and contempt by Westminster politicians and EU bureaucrats alike.

"If you're from an ordinary working-class family," May said, then "life is much harder than many people in Westminster realize." While England as a whole voted to leave, as did Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain.

Since then, she has defied the vote, instead seeking to reach a deal with the capitalist rulers that run the EU that would combine formally withdrawing with in fact staying in. With the deal dead in the water, there is

now a flurry of moves and counter-moves among politicians of all parties, including warring factions within her cabinet.

Those who from the start sought to overturn the majority vote — like former Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair — have stepped up their campaign for a second referendum, demagogically dubbed a "People's Vote." Some members of May's own Conservative Party are backing the proposal.

Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the Labour Party, has resisted calls within his party to back another referendum, hoping the Conservatives will take the blame for what millions would see as a slap in the face for their vote to get out. Corbyn has also rebuffed calls by smaller opposition parties to propose a parliamentary vote to bring down the government. His stance is based on hopes of cobbling together a majority of both frustrated pro-Brexit and pro-EU voters to put him in as prime minister.

## What course for the working class?

"The weakness, heterogeneity, and loss of nerve and self-confidence in



Militant/Anne Howie

School cleaners, cooks, home-care workers, other local council workers in Glasgow, Scotland, on strike Oct. 23. The working-class struggle for emancipation in the U.K. can only be fought and won inside the capitalist nation-state there. U.K. workers and their allies in the countryside need to fight to establish a workers and farmers government.

the British ruling class" is a consequence of the breakup of its colonial empire, disproportionate economic decline compared to its competitors, and the uneven development of the regions and countries that make up the not-so United Kingdom, Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes said in a 1993 talk printed in *Capitalism's World Disorder*. Twenty-five years later, that assessment rings truer than ever.

Workers look on the hesitancy and infighting in the ruling class with

growing disgust. When Communist League members campaign knocking on doors in working-class areas to introduce the party and discuss politics, workers say things like, "They want us to vote over and over until we vote the way they want," or, "Oh, just get on with it, get out!" Others are concerned about the effects on their jobs and lives if warnings from the Bank of England and other ruling-class figures that there will be price rises, shortages and a recession in case of a

Continued on page 9

## Turkish rulers threaten to attack Kurds in Syria

Continued from front page insists Washington abandon its support for the YPG.

On Dec. 19 Trump announced the war against Islamic State had been won in Syria and he was beginning the withdrawal of U.S. troops there. Two days later Erdogan said Ankara would postpone any offensive against Kurdish forces in northern Syria for at least a month to give the U.S. time to withdraw.

Even with this drawdown, the U.S. rulers have the most formidable military force in the Middle East, deployed to protect their imperialist interests.

Though the complete figures are secret, the Pentagon admits to some 50,000 troops there, along with a powerful armada of fighter jets,

bombers, artillery and missiles, and the Fifth Fleet.

Unwilling to deploy U.S. troops on the ground to defeat Islamic State, the U.S. rulers relied on the YPG to lead the effort to drive the reactionary sect out of Syria, backed by Washington's air power. As a result, the YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) now controls 25 percent of the country east of the Euphrates River, both in Kurdish areas near the Turkish border and majority Arab areas that were former IS strongholds like Raqqa. Some of these areas are home to most of the oil in Syria.

Washington wants to continue pushing back against Tehran's expanding military reach in the region. The rulers in Iran provided decisive forces, along with Moscow's air power, to save the collapsing rule of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, following a popular uprising aimed at overturning his tyranny. Assad threatens he will bring the area east of the Euphrates back under Syrian government control.

To bolster Erdogan's threats, the Turkish army has mobilized thousands of troops and tanks close to the country's border with Syria. They have rallied 15,000 fighters from Syrian opposition groups that Ankara arms to take part in an assault.

Washington tried to take steps to allay Ankara's fear of YPG interference in Turkey. It invited Turkish forces to join joint patrols in Manbij to assure no attacks on Turkey were being organized. Similarly, Washington established 12 "observation posts" along the border, saying it would guarantee that no incursions into Turkey took place. Ankara says this is aimed at keeping an eye on Turkish troops.

Despite the U.S. rulers' inability to resolve the conflicts across the Mid-

east, they are determined to protect their interests in the region.

## Struggle for Kurdish sovereignty

The U.S. rulers have betrayed the Kurdish national struggle over and over for decades, but find it necessary to provide Kurdish forces here and in Iraq with some assistance for now in order to advance Washington's interests.

Earlier this year the U.S. government imposed sanctions on Turkey, accelerating the decline of the country's currency, the lira. In addition to bearing the brunt of Ankara's military intervention in Syria and its crackdown on political rights at home, working people in Turkey face food prices that have risen 20 percent this year.

As the capitalist rulers in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey seek to advance their conflicting interests, they remain determined to prevent the 30 million Kurds living within their borders from exercising national rights. For decades they've quelled Kurdish demands for sovereignty, banned their language, restricted land ownership and waged murderous assaults on Kurds who resist, often with Washington's complicity. But they have been unable to crush Kurdish national aspirations.

As the U.S.-dominated imperialist order in the Mideast has come apart in the wake of wars the U.S. rulers have been unable to win, Kurdish parties have taken advantage of the weakening of regimes in Iraq and Syria to carve out a degree of self-rule. But the rulers in the region remain determined to constrain these moves, as was demonstrated when the Iraqi government — with the backing of Tehran and Ankara — organized to use force to quash the vote for independence in the Kurdish region of Iraq in September 2017, without Washington lifting a finger.

## Join fight against prison censorship of 'Militant'!

The *Militant* is continuing to press Florida prison officials to cease and desist from their unconstitutional censorship of the socialist newsweekly. Florida officials had impounded at least 18 issues of the paper sent to its subscribers behind bars in less than two years, including six issues in a row during the summer. This was unusual even for Florida, which has interfered with the delivery of the *Militant* more than any other prison system in the nation.

The last impoundment was in mid-September. Since then the *Militant* has published 13 issues and has not been informed of any further impoundments. This is the direct result of public pressure from Amnesty International USA; PEN America; the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida; the National Coalition Against Censorship, made up of more than 50 organizations; and from other organizations and individuals.

But the prison system's Literature Review Committee continues to defend the frequent impoundments, while feeling heat and overturning most of them.

Each impoundment, even if later rescinded, infringes on the constitutional rights of the *Militant* and its readers behind bars. **Join the fight!**

**Get out the word.** Download copies of *Militant* articles on this fight from our website to copy and distribute.

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**Send a check** to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018, earmarked "Prisoners Rights Fight."



# ‘What does Cuba teach? That revolution is possible’

Fidel Castro presents ‘Second Declaration of Havana’ to over a million people in the capital Feb. 4, 1962

On the 60th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the Militant is reprinting excerpts from The Second Declaration of Havana. This manifesto was presented by Fidel Castro, the central leader of the revolution, to over 1 million people gathered in Havana’s Plaza of the Revolution, Feb. 4, 1962. In the following days, hundreds of thousands more adopted the document at rallies as well as in workplaces, fields and schools around the island. Copyright © 2007 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

Cuba affronts the imperialists in a special way. What is it that is hidden behind the Yankees’ hatred of the Cuban Revolution? What is it that rationally explains the conspiracy — uniting for the same aggressive ends the richest and most powerful imperialist power in the contemporary world and the oligarchies of an entire continent, which together are supposed to represent a population of 350 million human beings — against a small country of only 7 million inhabitants, economically underdeveloped, without financial or military means that could threaten the security or economy of any other country?

What unifies them and incites them is fear. What explains it is fear. Not fear of the Cuban Revolution, but fear of the Latin American revolution. Not fear of the workers, peasants, intellectuals, students, and progressive layers of the middle strata who by revolutionary means have taken power in Cuba, but fear that the workers, peasants, students, intellectuals, and progressive sectors of the middle strata will take power by revolutionary means in the oppressed and hungry countries exploited by the Yankee monopolies and reactionary oligarchies of the Americas; fear that the plundered people of the continent will seize the arms from their oppressors and, like Cuba, declare themselves free peoples of the Americas.

By crushing the Cuban Revolution



AP/Harold Valentine

People in Colón, Cuba, greet Fidel Castro, above left, Jan. 7, 1959, as “Liberty Caravan” went to Havana. Castro led Rebel Army, Cuban workers and farmers to victory, then led millions to carry out, defend socialist revolution.

they hope to dispel the fear that torments them, the specter of revolution that threatens them. By eliminating the Cuban Revolution, they hope to eliminate the revolutionary spirit of the people. They imagine in their delirium that Cuba is an exporter of revolutions. In their sleepless merchants’ and money lenders’ minds lives the idea that revolutions can be bought, sold, rented, loaned, exported and imported like a piece of merchandise. Ignorant of the objective laws that govern the development of human societies, they believe that their monopolistic, capitalistic, and semifeudal regimes are eternal. Educated in their own reactionary ideology — a mixture of superstition, ignorance, subjectivism, pragmatism, and other mental aberrations — they have an image of the world and of the march of history conforming to their interests as exploiting classes. ...

Cuba is the Latin American nation that has made landowners of more than 100,000 small farmers and ensured year-round employment on

state farms and cooperatives to all agricultural workers. It has transformed garrisons into schools; given seventy thousand scholarships to university, secondary, and technical students; created classrooms for the entire population of children; totally wiped out illiteracy. It has quadrupled medical services; nationalized foreign interests; suppressed the abusive system that turned housing into a means of exploiting people. It has virtually eliminated unemployment; suppressed discrimination on account of race or sex; rid itself of gambling, vice, and administrative corruption; armed the people. It has made the enjoyment of human rights a living reality by freeing men and women from exploitation, lack of culture, and social inequality. It has liberated itself from all foreign tutelage, acquired full sovereignty, and established the foundations to develop its economy in order, no longer, to be a country producing only one crop, sugar, and exporting only raw materials.

And yet it is Cuba that is expelled

from the Organization of American States by governments that have not realized for their people any one of these achievements. How will they be able to justify their conduct before the peoples of the Americas and the world? How will they be able to deny that, according to their political conceptions, it is the policy of land, bread, work, health, liberty, equality, and culture; of accelerated development of the economy, of national dignity, of full self-determination and sovereignty that is incompatible with the principles of the hemisphere?

The people think very differently. The people think the only thing incompatible with the destiny of Latin America is misery, feudal exploitation, illiteracy, starvation wages, unemployment; the policy of repression against the masses of workers, peasants, and students; discrimination against women, Blacks, Indians, mestizos; oppression by the oligarchies, the plundering of their countries’ wealth by the Yankee monopolists; the moral suffocation of their intellectuals and artists; the ruin of the small producers by foreign competition; economic underdevelopment; peoples without roads, without hospitals, without housing, without schools, without industries; submission to imperialism; renunciation of national sovereignty and betrayal of the country.

How can the imperialists make their conduct toward and condemnation of Cuba understood? What words and what arguments will they use to speak to those whom, all the while exploiting them, they have ignored for so long? ...

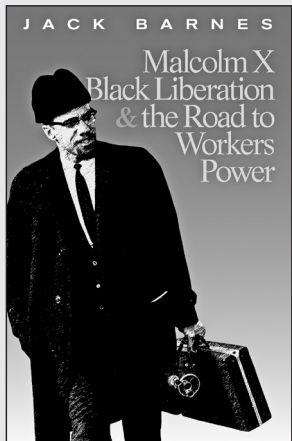
To the accusation that Cuba wants to export its revolution, we reply: Revolutions are not exported, they are made by the peoples.

What Cuba can give to the peoples, and has already given, is its example.

And what does the Cuban Revolution teach? That revolution is possible, that the peoples can make it, that in the contemporary world there are no forces capable of halting the liberation movement of the people.

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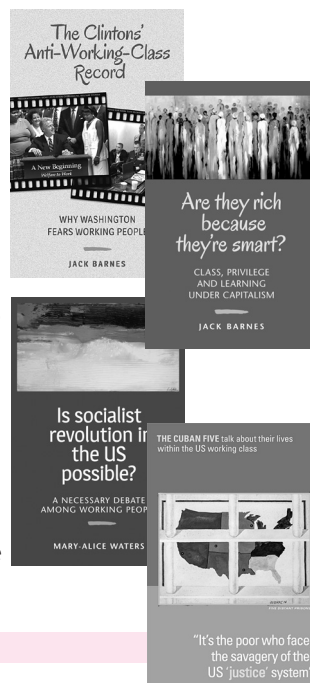
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# Workers take political power or face ‘Iron Heel’ of capitalist rule

The excerpt below is from *Art and Revolution: Writings on Literature, Politics and Culture* by Leon Trotsky. It is one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for January. Trotsky was one of the leaders of the Russian Revolution and of the early Communist International. After V.I. Lenin's death, he continued Lenin's fight for proletarian internationalism against a bloody political counter-revolution led by Joseph Stalin. The review is of Jack London's *The Iron Heel* that was published in 1908. London was a well-known novelist and propagandist for socialism. His daughter, Joan London, sent Trotsky a copy. This excerpt is from Trotsky's reply, written in October 1937. Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LEON TROTSKY

The book produced upon me — I speak without exaggeration — a deep impression. Not because of its artistic qualities: the form of the novel here represents only an armor for social analysis and prognosis. The author is intentionally sparing in his use of artistic means. He is himself interested not so much in the individual fate of his heroes as in the fate of mankind. By this, however, I don't want at all to belittle the artistic value of the work, especially in its last chapters beginning



Leon Trotsky in exile in 1931. Jack London's daughter, Joan London, sent Trotsky his book *The Iron Heel*. Trotsky was impressed, saying the American novelist correctly describes the "abyss the bourgeoisie will hurl you down," if a proletarian revolution doesn't "finish with them."

with the Chicago commune. The pictures of civil war develop in powerful frescoes. Nevertheless, this is not the main feature. The book surprised me with the audacity and independence of its historical foresight.

The world workers' movement at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century stood under the sign of reformism. The perspective of peaceful and uninterrupted world progress, of the prosperity of democracy and social reforms, seemed to be assured once and for all. ... *The Iron Heel* bears the undoubted imprint of the year 1905. But at the time when this remarkable book appeared, the domination of counter-revolution was already consolidating itself in Russia. In the world arena the defeat of the Russian proletariat gave to reformism the possibility not only of regaining its temporarily lost positions but also of subjecting to itself completely the organized workers' movement. It is sufficient to recall that precisely in the following seven years (1907–14) the international social democracy ripened definitely for its base and shameful role during the World War.

Jack London not only absorbed creatively the impetus given by the first Russian Revolution but also courageously thought over again in its light the fate of capitalist society as a whole. Precisely those problems which the official socialism of this time considered to be defi-

nately buried: the growth of wealth and power at one pole, of misery and destitution at the other pole; the accumulation of social bitterness and hatred; the unalterable preparation of bloody cataclysms — all those questions Jack London felt with an intrepidity which forces one to ask himself again and again with astonishment: when was this written? Really before the war?

One must accentuate especially the role which Jack London attributes to the labor bureaucracy and to the labor aristocracy in the further fate of mankind. Thanks to their support, the American plutocracy not only succeeds in defeating the workers' insurrection but also in keeping its iron dictatorship during the following three centuries. We will not dispute with the poet the delay which can but seem to us too long. However, it is not a question of Jack London's pessimism, but of his passionate effort to shake those who are lulled by routine, to force them to open their eyes and to see what is and what approaches. The artist is audaciously utilizing the methods of hyperbole. He is bringing the tendencies rooted in capitalism: of oppression, cruelty, bestiality, betrayal, to their extreme expression. He is operating with centuries in order to measure the tyrannical will of the exploiters and the treacherous role of the labor bureaucracy. But his most "romantic" hyperboles are finally much more realistic

than the bookkeeperlike calculations of the so-called sober politicians. ...

[T]he thirty-year-old "romanticist" saw incomparably more clearly and farther than all the social democratic leaders of that time taken together. But Jack London bears comparison in this domain not only with the reformists. One can say with assurance that in 1907 not one of the revolutionary Marxists, not excluding Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, imagined so fully the ominous perspective of the alliance between finance capital and labor aristocracy. This suffices in itself to determine the specific weight of the novel.

The chapter "The Roaring Abysmal Beast" undoubtedly constitutes the focus of the book. At the time when the novel appeared, this apocalyptic chapter must have seemed to be the boundary of hyperbolism. However, the consequent happenings have almost surpassed it. And the last word of class struggle has not yet been said by far! The "Abysmal Beast" is to the extreme degree oppressed, humiliated, and degenerated people. Who would now dare to speak for this reason about the artist's pessimism? No, London is an optimist, only a penetrating and farsighted one. "Look into what kind of abyss the bourgeoisie will hurl you down, if you don't finish with them!" This is his thought. Today it sounds incomparably more real and sharp than thirty years ago. But still more astonishing is the genuinely prophetic vision of the methods by which the Iron Heel will sustain its domination over crushed mankind. London manifests remarkable freedom from reformist pacifist illusions. In this picture of the future there remains not a trace of democracy and peaceful progress. Over the mass of the deprived rise the castes of labor aristocracy, of praetorian army, of an all-penetrating police, with the financial oligarchy at the top. In reading it one does not believe his own eyes: it is precisely the picture of fascism, of its economy, of its governmental technique, its political psychology! The fact is incontestable: in 1907 Jack London already foresaw and described the fascist regime as the inevitable result of the defeat of the proletarian revolution. Whatever may be the single "errors" of the novel — and they exist — we cannot help inclining before the powerful intuition of the revolutionary artist.

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# Holiday greetings to workers behind bars

**Continued from front page**

mer Black Panthers Herman Bell and Robert Seth Hayes, after more than 40 years in prison; of father and son Oregon ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond, framed for standing up to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management; and of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy and his sons Ammon and Ryan, after the frame-up case against them for standing up to government attempts to confiscate their cattle was tossed out.

Our class also won fights against prison censorship, from defeating the most recent attempt by Florida authorities to keep the *Militant* out of prisons there, to attempts to restrict access to books in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland, as well as in federal prisons.

The total number of people in the U.S. prison system continues its slight decline, the trend since 2008. But over 90 percent of those locked up were strong-armed into signing plea bargains under threat of draconian sentences.

Despite the small decline the capitalist rulers in the U.S. still have the distinction of presiding over the highest incarceration rate in the world, with nearly 2.2 million behind bars and 4.6 million on parole or probation.

Working people in city and countryside are all too familiar with the cops, courts and prisons of the rulers' so-called criminal justice system. They are all part of the rulers' arsenal used to intimidate the working class from struggle, and to foster divisions among us. It falls disproportionately on Blacks, who

make up some 34 percent of those convicted of felonies, even though African-Americans are just 13 percent of the country's population.

We call for the release of all remaining Black Panthers who are in prison, including Ed Poindexter in Nebraska and Jalil Muntaqim in New York; of Leonard Peltier, a Native American activist framed on murder charges and cruelly imprisoned for decades far from his family; and Mumia Abu-Jamal who was railroaded into jail in Pennsylvania in 1982 and has had to fight to get the medical care he needs. And of all class-struggle and political prisoners worldwide, like Crimean film director Oleg Sentsov framed up and imprisoned in Moscow's gulag.

The rulers and their meritocratic state bureaucracies look at all workers as "outlaws."

The working class is the future of humanity. As Malcolm X explained from his experiences behind bars, the key for us isn't our oppression, but to recognize our self-worth. In struggle we can be transformed, throwing off the self-image the rulers impose on us, and conquer the capacity to wrest political power out of their hands.

To be able to organize effectively and intelligently we need to learn the lessons and history of past working-class struggles. This is key to building a working-class party and movement that can change the miserable conditions created by capitalism.

We invite workers behind bars to get a subscription to the *Militant* and order books from Pathfinder Press, invaluable tools in advancing ourselves and our participation in the class battles unfolding today.

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# UK out of EU best terrain for workers' struggles

**Continued from page 6**

"no-deal Brexit" — propaganda widely described here as Project Fear.

"It's difficult to follow and I don't think they know what they're doing," food factory worker Laurya Verbickaite told this reporter and fellow Communist League member Anne Howie on her doorstep in Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester. "They said there would be more money for public services like health care, but that's not happening."

"Capitalist politicians try to confuse us," I responded. "They all talk about the national interest, but they're not talking about working people."

"The EU is a bosses' club," Howie said. "Its purpose is to squeeze profits out of working people in the EU, to benefit the rulers in the stronger countries in Europe at the expense of the weaker ones, and to compete with their rivals around the world."

"Getting completely out of the EU would put workers here in a better position to fight for our own interests," I added, "in solidarity with fellow workers in Europe, like the yellow vests in France. Our main enemy is the capitalist rulers here at home. The answer is to chart a course to take political power out of their hands, which has to be done right here."

## EU coming apart at the seams

"It's a profound mistake for Europe to pull the British economy out of Europe's single market, which is the biggest commercial market in the world, and pull British politics out of the political union, which is the most powerful political union in the world," Tony Blair had said, arguing for a second referendum. The European project, so staunchly defended by Blair, was never just about trade. The utopian aim of political integration has

always been at the heart of it.

The idea of one big European state, better able to compete with Washington and other capitalist rivals, is a pipe dream. The EU is tearing apart at the seams. The capitalist powers that dominate the EU — the German rulers, and to a lesser degree the French — are not interested in making concessions to London. Their aim is to make an example of the U.K., worried that with the first breakaway, the whole thing will come unstuck.

Take Italy, with the fourth largest economy in Europe where working people have faced years of stagnation, with no recovery in sight. The government is saddled with a debt that's 1.3 times the annual output. An "anti-establishment" coalition of the 5-Star Movement and the League came to power this year in an election reflecting the same kind of disgust with the capitalist rulers' disdain for working people as did the get-out vote in Britain.

When the new government adopted a budget with a 2.4 percent deficit, partly to fund new welfare payments, the EU threatened Rome with sanctions. The rulers in Berlin and Paris fear that the U.K. getting out would inspire similar moves in Rome.

No matter what happens, there's no end in sight for the capitalist crisis, and there will be more struggles like the yellow vest "people from nowhere" in France, as workers and farmers look for ways to fight for our interests.

## The 'Militant' is on holiday break

This is a two-week issue. The next issue will be mailed out January 3.

# 'We are not robots'

**Continued from front page**

including at other facilities, are East Africans.

Protesters cheered as about 40 workers walked off the job at 4 p.m., an hour before the end of their shift, and joined the rally. More workers joined after they clocked out.

"They don't respect us. They want us to work like machines," Amazon worker Hibaq Mohammad told the *Militant*. "They don't respect our religion or our health. Ninety-eight percent of workers who get fired here are fired for not being fast enough. It's unfair."

Alamger Mohammad has worked at Amazon for 13 months. "I quit my old job thinking this would be better, but we are treated like animals, not humans," he said.

Abdi Mohammed said, "They work people like robots, change the rate. It's constant pressure. If you can't keep up with the machines you get a warning. Three warnings and they fire you."

While the majority of those who joined the protest were from Somalia, workers from Bangladesh, Mexico, Ethiopia and the United States also took part. A Mexican worker who walked out said they are all working 60 hours per week because of the Christmas holiday. "You get breaks but they count that against your rate," he said.

The Service Employees International Union, the Communications Workers of America and a sizable delegation of Teamsters, wearing union jackets and hats supported the protest.

Several of the Amazon workers put on "Teamsters 120" hats. "We're here to support the workers, and we want to see an organizing drive of Amazon workers nationwide," Wayne Perleberg, a business agent for Teamsters Local 120, told the *Militant*.

A number of workers at the rally said they agreed that they needed to get a union.

One sign read, "Walmart workers support Amazon workers." Four workers who came from a Walmart store in the Twin Cities area brought a solidarity card signed by 17 co-workers that was given to rally organizers.

The Dar Al Farooq Islamic Center in nearby Bloomington brought a busload of supporters. "People in our community are struggling and we're here to give support," high school student Nabira said.

## Bosses disdain for workers' needs

Khadra Kassim, who told the rally she has worked at the warehouse for a year and a half, said she almost had a miscarriage after lifting a heavy box and passing out. She went to the company health office for help, but was told that because she was new she wasn't eligible for medical care. "Nobody called an ambulance, nobody even called my husband," she said. "Thank God, my daughter survived."

Workers who spoke raised the need for management to provide easier access to conduct prayers, for more Somali managers and other proposals they thought would cut across discrimination on the job.

Speakers included Ilhan Omar, just elected as the first Somali-American to Congress and Jaylani Hussein, executive director of the Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

An information sheet distributed by Awood said the workers have been speaking out and protesting against injustices for months. Because of this, Amazon management met twice with a delegation of workers from three facilities, as well as drivers and truckers, together with local religious and civil rights leaders.

"Although respectful, Amazon management responded to our concerns by only wanting to solve small individual problems — and not change the BIG problems that impact us all," the flyer said. "Some workers have been offered better jobs if they abandon their community — but they have refused!"

Amazon spokeswoman Shevaun Brown told the *Shakopee Valley News* the day of the rally that "the workers wouldn't suffer repercussions for walking out Friday." She also said that Amazon is looking to hire managers from the Cedar-Riverside community of Minneapolis, where many Somalis live.

At the end of the rally, protesters marched onto Amazon property. They chanted at the main entrance as workers inside the building lined the windows from the second-floor cafeteria to watch. Local, county and state police appeared within minutes to block the door. As they left, the workers chanted, "We will be back."