

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

José Ramón Fernández:
Revolutionary of exemplary integrity
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Florida voting rights victory spurs fights in Iowa, Kentucky

BY SETH GALINSKY

The successful fight to restore voting rights to more than a million former prisoners in Florida has spread to Iowa and Kentucky. Constitutional provisions in those two states continue to bar the right to vote to most people released after serving time on felony convictions, as had been the case in Florida before last November's overwhelming passage of Amendment 4.

What these three states had in common was that only a successful appeal to the governor could win the right to vote.

Now those convicted of felonies in Florida automatically regain their right to vote once they've completed their sentence, including probation or parole and paying fines, except for those convicted of sex offenses or murder. That's a step forward toward eliminating all restrictions there and across the country.

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UK capitalist rulers 'Brexit' political crisis continues on

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

MANCHESTER, England — A "Brexit-in-name-only" deal negotiated by the U.K. government with the European Union — two and a half years in the making — was overwhelmingly voted down in the House of Commons Jan. 15. This reflects the deep political crisis of the capitalist rulers here.

Very few in the bosses' political parties favor a break with the EU. Prime Minister Theresa May's predecessor, former Conservative Party Prime Minister David Cameron, put leaving the EU on the ballot in hopes it would be defeated. Instead, it passed — with significant support from working people fed up with what they face from the ongoing crisis of capitalism.

Rival factions of all capitalist parties continue to slug it out over how to negotiate the U.K. rulers' relationship with their rivals in Europe in the face

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Los Angeles teachers won with broad strike support

Fight inspires teachers in Denver, Virginia, Oakland



Militant/Thabo Ntweng

Teachers picket Dorsey High School in Los Angeles Jan. 17 before strike settled. Capitalist rulers there underestimated widespread support teachers strike got from working people.

BY DEBORAH LIATOS AND BERNIE SENTER

LOS ANGELES — A spirited and popular six-day strike by more than 30,000 teachers here ended Jan. 22 after a majority voted to approve a new contract. Teachers won widespread support from students, parents and other workers as they demonstrated their determination to address decades of deteriorating conditions in the schools.

Los Angeles is the second largest

school district in the country, with 600,000 students and 1,000 schools. The contract expired in 2017.

The new contract gives the teachers a 6 percent pay raise. A reduction in class size for some subjects will be phased in over a number of years. Three hundred full-time nurses will be hired over the next two years to ensure every school is staffed five days a week, as well as full-time teacher librarians for every secondary school.

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SWP Dallas campaign attracts working-class interest in Texas



Front page of *Novedades*, Dallas/Fort Worth Spanish language newsweekly, features campaign of Socialist Workers Party candidate Alyson Kennedy, under headline "Ex-presidential candidate runs for Dallas mayor."

BY PAUL MAILHOT

DALLAS — "Really the only way to change things is what they are doing," Katelyn Galbreath told Socialist Workers Party campaigner Sarah Ullman, pointing to the photo of Kentucky teachers protesting at the state Capitol last year depicted on the front cover of *In Defense of the US Working Class*, a new book by Mary-Alice Waters. "The advantage we have is that there are more of us."

Ullman was knocking on doors here campaigning for Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate

for mayor. Following their discussion about the conditions working people face, and how it is possible to fight to change them, Galbreath told Ullman, "I'm probably a socialist too."

Kennedy and her campaign supporters have been going door to door in working-class neighborhoods in Dallas and the greater Dallas-Fort Worth region. "We have gotten a good response everywhere we go talking about the Socialist Workers Party," SWP campaign director George Chalmers told the *Militant*. "We get

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Liberal, FBI anti-Trump 'resistance' is a threat to working people's rights

BY TERRY EVANS

Democrats, middle-class "resisters" against President Donald Trump, and Republican "Never-Trumpers" have all cranked up their hysteria around his presidency. Their efforts to drive him out of the White House intensified after the Democrats took control of the House of Representatives in the midterm elections.

The *New York Times* editors printed what they claimed was a new "exposé" Jan. 11 saying "agents and senior FBI officials had grown suspicious of Mr. Trump's ties to Russia during the 2016 campaign" and then began an investigation of the president immediately after he fired FBI boss James Comey in 2017. This was days before Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein set up the special counsel investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

The *Times* says FBI leaders' "concerns" about Trump's relations with Moscow were aroused by former British spy Christopher Steele. But

the paper omits any mention of the fact that Steele's dossier of unproven claims against Trump was paid for by Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign. These kind of smears have long been used by the FBI, which is the capitalist rulers' domestic political police. The agency has a long record of spying on and disrupting working-class

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Win spurs voting rights fights

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“The push to change the Iowa constitution is definitely getting attention because of Florida,” Michelle Heinz, executive director of the Inside Out Reentry Community, told the *Militant* by phone from Iowa City Jan. 19. “We feel a little gassed up and want to get things moving.” Inside Out helps former prisoners get jobs, housing and medical care.

Some 52,000 people convicted of felonies are unable to vote in Iowa. Blacks are hardest hit by the undemocratic restrictions, with nearly one in 10 blocked from voting.

The Iowa Constitution says that “no idiot, or insane person, or person convicted of any infamous crime, shall be entitled to the privilege of an elector” unless the governor restores their right personally. The state Supreme Court has ruled that all felony convictions are “infamous” crimes.

In 2005, then-Gov. Tom Vilsack issued an executive order automatically restoring those rights. By the end of 2010 some 115,000 former prisoners regained their right to vote.

But in January 2011, incoming Gov. Terry Branstad reversed the executive order. By the time he left office last year, he had restored the right to vote to only 206 people.

Unlike in Florida, the only way a constitutional amendment can get on the ballot in Iowa is for the legislature to approve it two years in a row. After that it’s put on the ballot for a popular vote.

Since the victory in Florida, newly elected Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds has said she plans to submit a bill to get things going.

“We want the governor to issue an

executive order like Vilsack did so people can get back their right to vote right away. And we don’t want any types of felony convictions excluded,” Heinz said. “But the only way to really guarantee these rights is to change the constitution.”

Doren Walker, 56, who was released from prison in December 2016 after serving more than 10 years on a felony charge, recently applied to get his rights back from the governor.

“It’s rough getting out of prison and at first getting my right to vote back was not a priority,” he told the *Militant* from Kalona, Iowa. “I’ve been very lucky. I’m driving a milk truck and the community I live in has a lot of Amish and Mennonites. They treat you how you are today and don’t judge you for a mistake in the past.”

Walker volunteers with Inside Out. A staff member there convinced him to apply to get his rights restored. But the process is convoluted, Walker said. You have to fill out a form and pay \$15 to get the state Department of Criminal Investigation to generate a report. The governor’s office said it could take up to two years.

“I’m like, why?” Walker said. “They said the application has to go through a lot of departments and that’s just how it works.”

Walker’s story was featured on the front page of the *Iowa City Press-Citizen*. The next day, he was informed that his request had been approved. “Ideally this will bring awareness so that the constitution is changed,” he said.

Nearly one in 10 residents of Kentucky — including one in four African-Americans — are barred from voting because of felony convictions. In early

Chicago cop who killed Laquan McDonald gets prison



AP Photo/Teresa Crawford

CHICAGO — Former Chicago Police officer Jason Van Dyke was sentenced to 81 months in state prison by Judge Vincent Gaughan Jan. 18 for the October 2014 killing of African-American teenager Laquan McDonald. He had been convicted of second-degree murder and 16 counts of aggravated assault with a firearm. Van Dyke is the first Chicago cop to be convicted of murder in an on-duty shooting in nearly 50 years.

“We’re involved in a march of a million miles,” Rev. Marvin Hunter, above, McDonald’s great-uncle, told the press. “This is a good first step.”

The day before, Judge Domenica Stephenson acquitted Chicago Police Department detective David March and officers Joseph Walsh and Thomas Gaffney of all counts of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and official misconduct.

“This is the reason we don’t trust the police or justice system,” Jennifer Moore, a worker at Walmart in the Chicago suburb Villa Park, told the *Militant*.

Walsh and Gaffney were on the scene with Van Dyke when he killed McDonald. March oversaw the investigation into the shooting. The reports written by all three were almost identical and contradicted the cop video of the killing. The cops hid the video until public protests forced its release.

“The entire ‘justice’ system, the cops, courts, and prisons, function to ‘protect and serve’ the interests of the wealthy rulers,” Socialist Workers Party candidate for Chicago Mayor Dan Fein said in a statement released to the media.

— JOHN HAWKINS

January, the Fair Elections Center and the Kentucky Equal Justice Center joined a lawsuit by several ex-prisoners challenging the restrictions.

In November 2015 outgoing Gov. Steve Beshear issued an executive order automatically restoring voting rights to more than 100,000 ex-felons. But current Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin upon assuming office overturned the order. He says he has personally restored the right to more than 1,000 former prisoners who applied, but he opposes the lawsuit.

The Socialist Workers Party in Kentucky is one of the groups pushing to change the constitution there. “My party defends the right of all workers who’ve been behind bars to

vote. Our campaign calls for a fight to overturn this law,” said Amy Husk, SWP candidate for Kentucky governor, in a statement released to the press Jan. 9.

“The Socialist Workers Party campaigns for class solidarity between workers behind bars and those outside. Prisons and the capitalist rulers’ whole criminal ‘justice’ system aren’t set up to dispense justice, but to intimidate and keep working people in their place,” she said.

“Winning voting rights for all former prisoners is part of the fight to unify the working class,” Husk said, “to bring us together as equals in the struggle to overturn capitalist oppression and exploitation.”

THE MILITANT

Demand U.S. rulers end 68-year-old Korean War!

The U.S. rulers destroyed almost all buildings in North Korea during the war they fought and lost against the people of Korea in the 1950s. The ‘Militant’ explains why the government should finally sign a peace treaty and withdraw its troops and warplanes from the peninsula.



U.S.-led United Nations forces destroy bridge in 1950 during Korean War.

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SWP takes books, 'Militant' broadly to working people

BY ROY LANDERSEN

"You ask what's it like here," said 28-year-old Rachel Meeler when Anthony Dutrow, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Miami City Commission, and campaign supporters met her in Clewiston, Florida, 100 miles north of Miami, Jan. 19. They were knocking on doors to introduce the party in towns on the shores of Lake Okeechobee. "I'll

SWP SPEAKS IN INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

tell you what it's like — there's no jobs and no housing, and you can thank U.S. Sugar for all that's bad about it. They'd rather have us all poor and desperate so we'll put up with their rotten pay and dangerous conditions."

The reclaimed wetlands area is dominated by the sugar industry with miles of cane fields dotted by sugar refineries.

"In Clewiston the sugar company won't let a new casino be built because they're afraid wages will go up," Meeler said as she rounded up her four kids to go to the store. "I used to work for the Seminole Casino in Immokalee, but they forced me out when I got pregnant."

"We think working people in cities like Miami have more in common with people in rural areas like this than we know," Dutrow said. They discussed what working people face today amid the ongoing crisis of capitalism that

bosses try to lay on their backs. Meeler bought a copy of the new book, *In Defense of the US Working Class*, by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters, along with a subscription to the *Militant*.

Teams of campaigners from the Socialist Workers Party and from the Communist Leagues in the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and Australia are driving down highways and byways to cities, towns and rural areas and stopping to knock on doors in working-class neighborhoods.

The goal of the weekly campaigning is to learn more about what working people face from the blows of the capitalist rulers in areas where a majority live outside the big cities. Workers, small proprietors and the self-employed, as well as farmers are looking to share experiences on how the dog-eat-dog capitalist bosses are impacting their lives and ways to fight back.

Uncertainty about jobs, housing, rising costs of living, debt problems, the difficulty of starting a family today, and the ways imperialism's wars devastate people at home as well as abroad are topics that come up. The campaigning is aided by SWP candidates the party has fielded across the country.

SWP members introduce the party, books to read, study and discuss by party leaders, and the *Militant* newspaper. They discuss workers' struggles taking place and seek to build solidarity and participation. They point to the example



Militant/Steve Warshell
Rachel Meeler, laid-off casino worker in Clewiston, Florida, gets *Militant* subscription and *In Defense of US Working Class* from Anthony Dutrow, SWP candidate for Miami Commission.

of the revolution made by Cuba's workers and farmers. The goal is to expand the party's reach and win new members.

'Come in, it's cold outside'

In Canada, Jean Grant, an 85-year-old retired nursing instructor, greeted Communist League members Michel Dugré and Katy LeRougetel Jan. 16 at her door in Merritt, a town of 7,000 in British Columbia's southern interior. "Come in, it's cold out," Grant said, who was interested in talking about politics. She described her years of activity, first in the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and then, with increasing disillusionment, in the New Democratic Party. "The CCF began as a farmers' party,"

she said, "but the NDP is just another corporate entity now."

"The yellow vest protesters in France, the teachers' fight in West Virginia and across the U.S. last year, show what working people can do when we begin to organize and fight, and gain confidence in our own capacities," LeRougetel said. Dugré showed her *In Defense of the US Working Class*, which is available at the special price of \$5 through March 1. It contains a talk Waters gave last year at a workers' conference in Havana.

Besides buying the book along with a *Militant* subscription, Grant got three other books on special: *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* and *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record*, both by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes; 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*."

Grant said she would help get out the word about the Communist League, including telling her son in Vancouver. She offered to put up League members when they come back to the area for more discussions with her and others. "Thank you for helping lift my frustrations of the past few years!" she said.

While talking to workers and farmers, SWP members are building the April 21-May 5 International May Day Volunteer Brigade to Cuba. This annual brigade provides an opportunity to see a living revolution. One highlight is joining hundreds of thousands of Cubans in the May Day march and celebration in Havana.

Brigadistas learn firsthand how working people took political power and carried out a deep-going social transformation in their interests that they've successfully defended for the last 60 years.

The campaigners use the books on special, and dozens of others from Pathfinder Press on the history and politics of working-class struggle, to help explain how the Cuban Revolution is an example for workers and farmers everywhere to emulate, and to show that working people have the capacity to unite and make a socialist revolution.

When readers helping to get the *Militant* and books by party leaders around have similar back-and-forth discussions, please write them up for this column. What working people have to say, their reactions to the party, as well as accompanying photos help enrich the paper.

To join in the campaigning or to find out more about the party, contact the SWP or Communist League branch nearest you. (See directory on page 8.)

Readers contribute to winter appeal for 'Militant'

BY TERRY EVANS

Oil refinery worker Ben Fields in the Bay Area contributed \$100 to the *Militant* to help the socialist newsweekly meet expenses in the winter months.

Fields explained he got a *Militant* subscription for his sister as a gift recently. After looking over the paper, she told him, "You don't see this kind of coverage anywhere else." Socialist Workers Party members in Oakland report additional contributions will be coming from the Bay Area.

The *Militant* is asking for contributions to its ongoing work amidst the deteriorating conditions of life millions of workers and farmers confront. The paper speaks in the interests of *all* working people, as they face the consequences of the capitalist crisis.

The contributions will help meet expenses over the next few months, until the paper launches its annual appeal. These expenses include expanded reporting and costs related to establishing the *Militant's* new website, which makes the paper's unparalleled coverage of working-class struggle over its more than 90-year history more easily accessible.

It also promotes the specially featured campaign books that contain the program of the SWP. The weekly Books of the Month column makes the continuity of the working-class movement available to those seeking a way to advance working-class interests today.

The *Militant* has been devoting resources to helping lead the ongoing fight against prison censorship in Florida and elsewhere.

Jon Teitelbaum in Cary, North Carolina, contributed \$200. "When you read the *Militant* you can see the opportunities that exist to build the

revolutionary movement," Teitelbaum told Susan Lamont, from Atlanta. He pointed to the paper's coverage of the SWP's election campaign across Texas where the party is running Alyson Kennedy for Dallas mayor, and its reporting on efforts to build the May Day International Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba.

You can donate at www.themilitant.com or by mail to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018. The paper will report on further progress made in winning contributions from its readers.

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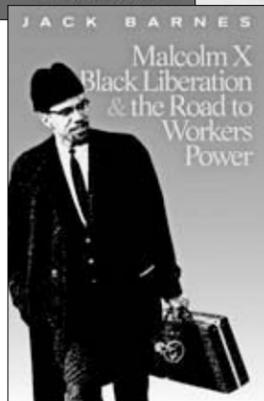


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SWP draws interest in Texas

Continued from front page

out the map to plan where we're going town to town. We've been to Midlothian, Waxahachie, Weatherford, Tyler, Canton and other places in the region, as well as all over Dallas. We've found that many of the smaller cities and towns have substantial industries and farming areas around them, where workers have been harder hit by the capitalist economic crisis than in Dallas."

After meeting Kennedy when she knocked on his door in West Dallas, 26-year-old Manuel Palacios came to a public campaign meeting Jan. 19 featuring Kennedy; Dan Fein, SWP candidate for Chicago mayor; and Osborne Hart, SWP candidate for mayor in Philadelphia. "I came to find out more about the Kennedy for Dallas campaign," Palacios told the *Militant*, "but I got interested in what the other candidates had to say too — about the police on trial for murder in Chicago, the high suicide rate among struggling farmers, and the solidarity of construction workers in Pittsburgh supporting nurses on strike there."

Some 25 people attended the event marking the first full week of campaigning. A co-worker of Kennedy's,

and others we meet want to talk about immigration and the border wall being promoted by President Trump," Kennedy said. "They see this as an important issue for working people to discuss. We explain to everyone that we advocate amnesty for the millions of undocumented workers in this country, many of whom have lived and worked in the United States for years. Their children have grown up here, and spent their years in school here."

"We find a lot of support for this position," she said.

"Amnesty is needed to strengthen the entire working class. When millions of workers here are forced into second-class status, fearful about deportation if they speak out and fight for their rights, for higher pay and safe working conditions, and for unions, it means all workers are less capable of making gains," Kennedy said. "In addition, I talk about the need for the labor movement to build solidarity with workers' struggles in other countries. The solution to the devastating conditions around the world isn't for every worker to pour into the U.S.; it's for solidarity among workers across borders and for the working class in all countries to fight for political power, just like we need to do here."

'How can I help?'

Kennedy described some of the workers she and her campaign supporters are meeting door to door, what they're discussing, and how they're buying books about working-class politics and the *Militant* newspaper, and their willingness to sign the petition to get her on the ballot. Many have offered to help.

One worker wrote to Kennedy after reading about her campaign. He wants to help after he is

finished with a maintenance shutdown at a GM plant where he is working seven days a week, 10 to 12 hours a day.

Another worker at the Lockheed Martin-Marietta plant, who campaigners met on a trip to Weatherford, said he agreed with the socialist candidate that raising a family is no longer affordable for young people. He bought *Malcolm X*, *Black Liberation*, and *the Road to Workers Power* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes and emptied out his coin jar to contribute \$37.

In East Dallas, Kennedy met Kelly Alford and spoke to her about the SWP campaign. "How can I help?" Alford asked. "How can we expect



Militant/EdwinFruit

Kelly Alford in East Dallas said she wanted to help petition to get Alyson Kennedy, right, SWP candidate for Dallas mayor, on the ballot, and to consider joining the May Day brigade to Cuba.

originally from Mexico, who has been helping to campaign door to door with her, was also on hand for the meeting.

Kennedy thanked all those who had come to Dallas to fan out and talk to working people throughout the region about the Socialist Workers Party. "When we go door to door, workers want to tell us what they're going through," Kennedy said. "And there's a lot of interest in the SWP's program, which points to the need for the working class to take political power to end the system of exploitation that is damaging so many working people.

"A lot of workers, self-employed laborers and drivers, small proprietors



Militant/George Chalmers

"I'm probably a socialist, too," Katelyn Galbreath told Socialist Workers Party campaigner Sarah Ullman, right, after they talked when Ullman knocked on her door in East Dallas, Jan 17.

changes when no matter who we vote for the same kind of people always end up in power?"

"The capitalists' response to today's crisis of their system is to try and drive down wages and our standard of living to ensure their profits," Kennedy said. "The government of the Democrats and Republicans backs this setup."

Alford said she is concerned about police brutality, racism, capitalism, women's rights and the environment. She got a subscription to the *Militant* and signed the petition to put Kennedy on the ballot. "Can I have a petition to take to the dry cleaners where I work?" she asked. "I think I can get some signatures." She also wants more information on the upcoming May Day brigade to Cuba.

Widespread press coverage

Novedades, a Dallas/Fort Worth Spanish-language newspaper with a press run of 100,000, featured a front-page lead article on Kennedy's campaign, titled, "Former Presidential Candidate Aspires to Dallas Mayor's Office." The lengthy article outlines the SWP candidate's working-class program. And it describes her participation in the 2003-06 United Mine Workers union struggle in central Utah where she joined with her Mexican co-workers to fight for a contract.

The *Dallas Observer* assigned a writer to interview Kennedy and to go with her as she campaigned door to door. SWP campaigners have met many people door to door who have read coverage of the campaign in the *Dallas Morning News* and other papers and have been impressed by the serious articles about a working-class candidate.

Nine candidates have announced they are running for mayor here. They include lawyers, real estate developers, former aides in the Bill Clinton campaign, CEOs who describe themselves as philanthropists, and others who represent the wealthy beneficiaries of capitalist exploitation. Kennedy's short biography, run alongside all the others in each *Morning News* article about the mayor's race, presents Kennedy's starkly different working-class life and perspective:

"Occupation: Wal-Mart employee. Kennedy was a minor candidate for president in 2016, earning a spot on seven states' ballots. Now, the socialist candidate says she wants to improve conditions for workers in Dallas."

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

by Jack Barnes

The 1959 Cuban Revolution had a worldwide impact. As the proletarian-based struggle for Black rights was advancing in the U.S., the social transformation fought for and won by Cuban toilers set an example that socialist revolution is not only necessary — it can be made and defended.



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Correction: The working class needs discipline

In last week's *Militant* we ran a statement by Los Angeles Socialist Workers Party candidates Dennis Richter for City Council District 12 and Laura Garza for School Board calling for solidarity with the teachers strike there.

But we introduced an error. In describing the reality of education under capitalism, the statement said that "the ruling rich are only interested in a learning system that inculcates discipline and rewards following orders."

It should have said "obedience," not "discipline." It's not a small difference. "The employing class doesn't need for us to be disciplined. Obedience on the job, yes; discipline in life, no," Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes writes in *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* "In fact, indiscipline in life puts us more in their grasp."

Discipline is absolutely essential for working people to unite and organize effectively against the blows of the bosses and their government, and to build a mass popular movement capable of taking political power.

— Editor

Special offer \$5 through March 1



"Without understanding the devastation of the lives of working-class families in regions like West Virginia, and the vast increase in class inequality since the 2008 crisis, you can't understand what's happening in the United States."

— Mary-Alice Waters

A GIANT HAS BEGUN TO STIR. Hillary Clinton calls them "deplorables" who inhabit "backward" regions. But tens of thousands of teachers and school employees from West Virginia, Oklahoma, and beyond set an example in 2018 with their victorious strikes. Working people across Florida mobilized and won restoration of voting rights to more than one million former prisoners.

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LA teachers won broad support

Continued from front page

"There's still a lot of work to do," physical education teacher Rosanne Altin told the *Militant* in front of Los Angeles High School, where she had organized the voting by teachers on the contract. Altin is chapter chairperson of the United Teachers Los Angeles union at the school.

"The class-size reduction is only for math and English classes, not social studies. I was expecting it to be more significant and comprehensive," she said. "But it's been a unifying, fun and exciting week."

Special education teacher Christina Lewis said, "We couldn't get everything this time around. It's a start. There's an awakening now."

The capitalist rulers, and their representatives in City Hall and the

Altin said. "They paved the way for our movement."

The successful nine-day strike by teachers and other school workers in West Virginia last spring gave an impetus to a wave of strikes and protests in Arizona, Kentucky, Oklahoma and other states. These actions gave more confidence to teachers here and elsewhere.

One teacher's sign at a large Jan. 18 rally said, "¡El Maestro luchando también está enseñando!" (The teacher fighting is also teaching!)

The school board kept the schools open with administrators and substitutes. But few parents brought their children to school. By the fourth day of the strike only 17 percent of students showed up.

"Teachers stood strong and supported each other," Thomas Howard, a sixth grade teacher at John Muir Middle School, said at another big rally Jan. 21. "We did it for the students currently in school and the ones in the future. I was a student in 1989 and I remember the teachers' strike then, and now I'm a teacher."

The strike began Jan. 14 after more than 21 months of negotiating between United Teachers and the Los Angeles Unified School District broke down.

In addition to higher wages, the union demanded smaller class sizes and schools that are fully staffed with librarians, full-time nurses and more counselors. They also demanded a cap on privately run charter schools.

School district superintendent Austin Beutner claimed the district could not meet the teachers' demands because of "budget problems." But the union pointed out that the school board is sitting on a cash reserve of \$1.86 billion.

Responding to worsening conditions in the public schools, many



Militant/Thabo Ntweng
Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party candidate for L.A. City Council, joins teachers protest Jan. 18 during strike.

school district, badly underestimated the teachers' determination and the degree of public support by working people for the strike.

Large numbers of teachers picketed in front of schools to a cacophony of drivers honking support; neighbors brought coffee and food and opened their homes; and parents and students swelled the picket lines. They converged downtown by the tens of thousands in several rallies and marches. "We studied the West Virginia and Oklahoma teacher strikes last year,"



Militant/Norton Sandler

Teachers in Los Angeles review proposed contract before vote after six-days on strike Jan. 22.

L.A. residents have put their kids in charter schools. A fifth of all students now attend charters, which are publicly funded but privately run. Most are nonunion. The settlement says the board will consider asking the state government to put a cap on charters.

Strike gets widespread support

"I'm in the marching band and about 15 of us go out to the picket line to hype them up," 17-year-old Theodore Roosevelt High School student Miguel Rosas told the *Militant* at the Jan. 18 rally. "I'm proud of my teachers for doing what they believe in and for the students."

In the last few days of the strike Service Employees International Union Local 99 members at 10 schools had voted to begin walking off the job for one or more days to support the strike.

Teachers' fights are brewing in other areas. Virginia Educators United are building a statewide march and rally at the Capitol in Richmond Jan. 28. Teachers in the Bay Area have been meeting and organizing protests.

And the teachers in Denver, Colorado, announced Jan. 22 they had voted by 93 percent to authorize a strike after negotiations failed. This would be the first teachers strike there in 25 years.

Join May Day International Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba April 21 - May 5

Meet Cuban working people; do voluntary farm work; join hundreds of thousands at Havana May Day.

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Applications due by March 15



25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 7, 1994

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — One hundred forty members of the Congress of Industrial Unions who work for a grain importer here received an early Christmas present when management locked them out of the plant October 26. The company, Molinos de Puerto Rico, is owned by the giant food corporation, Con Agra.

Jorge Reyes, 53, is a forklift operator and has worked for Molinos for 28 years. "The company wants to cut my wages from \$8.25 to \$4.50 per hour," Reyes said on the picket line.

The union has given the company concessions in the last several contracts. One of these was allowing the bosses to institute a two-tier wage scale. This time the company demanded even deeper givebacks. In previous contracts the company paid 100 percent of employees' health insurance. Their current proposal is for workers to pay a third.



February 7, 1969

HAVANA — For the Young Socialist Alliance visitors here, one of the high points of our stay in Cuba has been a series of visits with the spokesmen of the mission of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam to Cuba. We obtained a better understanding of the Vietnamese people's struggle for self-determination.

The powerful message that came through was that Vietnam will win. The only question is, what expense in lives and destruction will the U.S. impose before it is completely halted?

We met with Huynh Van Ba, acting head of the mission. He began his fight for Vietnamese national liberation in the 1940s when he joined the struggle against the French. "In 1965 we functioned almost totally underground. Today, it is the enemy who must live in holes and behind great fortifications. It is we who mingle freely with our people."



February 5, 1944

Speed-up, hazardous methods, inadequate safety devices — all part of the bosses' drive for war profits — have caused industrial accidents which since Pearl Harbor have exacted the frightful toll of 37,600 dead workers, 210,000 permanently disabled and 4,500,000 temporarily injured.

According to the Office of War Information, this is 60 times the number of total casualties suffered by the entire American armed forces in this war. The industrial deaths alone numbered 5,000 more than combat deaths.

The administration has been trying to incite the soldiers against the workers, claiming that the soldiers alone are facing injury and death while the workers are getting luxury wages without physical risk. In reality the profiteers are coining wealth out of the blood shed by the workers both on the assembly line and on the battle line.

'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

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

— CALENDAR —

CONNECTICUT

Hartford
Puerto Rico and Cuba: Two Wings of the Same Bird; Two Different Responses to Natural Disaster. Tues., Jan. 29, Reception 5:30 p.m.; Program 6 p.m. *Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, 79 New Park Ave. Tel: (860) 794-7384. Sponsored by Connecticut Puerto Rican Agenda, CICD Puerto Rican Parade Committee and Greater Hartford Coalition on Cuba.*

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia
Cuba 2019. Moonstone Poetry @ the Pub. Includes discussion on the 2019 May Day International Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba. Sun., Feb. 3, 2 p.m. *Fergie's Pub, 1214 Sansom St. Tel: (215) 735-9600. Sponsored by Moonstone Arts Center.*

José Ramón Fernández: Revolutionary of exemplary integrity

Fernández held himself to highest standards of revolutionary selflessness, human solidarity, proletarian discipline

Cuban revolutionary leader José Ramón Fernández died Jan. 6 at the age of 95. Mary-Alice Waters, a central leader of the Socialist Workers Party and president of Pathfinder Press, collaborated with Fernández on three Pathfinder books.

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

In the presence of José Ramón Fernández, you quickly sensed you were with a human being of exceptional integrity. His posture alone communicated that fact.

He held himself to the highest standards of revolutionary selflessness, human solidarity and proletarian discipline. Even more important, he knew the men and women he led were capable of acting with the same selflessness and discipline, and he drew the best from them.

His strength was not only his moral clarity. It lay in the consistency of his conduct, a trajectory followed throughout his life as a revolutionary soldier and then as a leader of the Communist Party of Cuba.

Several of us in the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S. had the privilege of working with José Ramón Fernández for some two decades in the process of preparing three books. He was one of the four contributors to the small jewel of a book, *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*.

He was the principal author of *Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs, 1961: Washington's First Military Defeat in the Americas*, a book that contains his testimony in 1999 before the Provincial People's Court of the City of Havana (an excerpt from the book was run in last week's *Militant*).

And Fernández's collaboration in the work that produced *Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution* by Vilma Espín, Asela de los Santos, and Yolanda Ferrer — and his unflagging enthusiasm and encouragement — was equally indispensable.

All three are published by Pathfinder Press in Spanish and English, and two are published in Farsi. They've been distributed around the world and featured at book fairs and political events from the Philippines to Iran, Australia to Sweden, the Dominican Republic to Iraq and beyond.

What left the most profound impression on us in working with Fernández was the attentiveness, courtesy and respect he extended to all around him, including and especially those who to the bourgeois world are the "invisibles" — the men and women who worked with him as drivers, translators, secretaries, cooks, housekeepers, security and more. The dignity, pride, loyalty — and discipline — he inspired in return was always in evidence.

A bourgeois army, or one cast in its mold, imposes its command through "established norms based exclusively on hierarchy and rank," Fernández told us more than 20 years ago during the interview that appears in *Making History*. By total contrast, in our army, a socialist army, he said, "discipline is achieved through conscious methods, and the commanding officers derive their authority from the consent of their subordinates; they earn that authority every



José Ramón Fernández, center, during April 1961 battles at Bay of Pigs where he was field commander of main column of revolutionary forces that defeated U.S.-organized invasion. Discipline of revolutionary army "must be very just, very humane, with highest moral standards," Fernández said.



Left, Fernández and Fidel Castro award diplomas to teaching college graduates in 1985. Fernández held many leadership responsibilities over the years, including minister of education and vice president of Council of Ministers. Above, from left Fernández; Chinese-Cuban generals Gustavo Chui, Armando Choy, Moisés Sío Wong, and Socialist Workers Party leader Mary-Alice Waters, presenting *Our History Is Still Being Written* at Havana International Book Fair, Feb. 6, 2006.

day by their ability, work and example."

The army requires very strict discipline, he insisted, "There can be no concessions on that. But it must be very just, very humane, and it must be carried out with the highest moral standards."

Fernández contrasted the norms of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces to the attitudes that exist among instructors in the U.S. Marine Corps, which he called "bestial" and "contemptible." He said he was not talking only about the young recruits [in "training"]. I'm talking about the dehumanizing and denigrating methods of treating young people. That's unacceptable. It exemplifies the difference between the two types of armies."

His comments were doubly striking because only a few days earlier, Division Gen. Enrique Carreras, the father of revolutionary Cuba's air force and one of the other generals who contributed to *Making History*, had made a similar point. Carreras was talking with us about the differences he knew from his own experience between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba and the Soviet army. "If you'll pardon my saying so," he commented, "armies have their own traditions. The Soviets have theirs, of course, very strong ones. We have our own traditions — very appealing ones, which we fight to maintain and guard."

"For one thing, we are incapable of laying a hand on a soldier. That is the greatest abomination we can imagine," he said. "Yet once, right in front of several of us, I witnessed a Soviet general strike a soldier for being drunk. I can put up with a lot, but seeing that made me so angry I had to get out of there. Laying a hand on a soldier shows a lack of respect, and that's something we do not allow. That's just the way we are."

A combat leader

To those of us who knew him, Fernández reminded us above all of the combat leaders of the U.S. working class — men like Farrell Dobbs and Vincent Raymond Dunne — who during the tumultuous years of the early 1960s recruited many of our generation to the Socialist Workers Party and taught us what combat by a politically conscious proletarian vanguard could achieve.

Those were the years during which we learned from the men and women of Cuba what a socialist revolution could

accomplish; how working people fighting to transform their world transformed themselves. In the process, they helped begin the transformation of some of us as well. We learned from their example and, first and foremost, wanted to emulate them. Joining those in the United States who were building a proletarian party capable of making such a revolution, we set out on that lifetime course.

It was during those years we also learned firsthand the fighting capacities of the oppressed and exploited toilers of the U.S. Their powerful, unstoppable movement for Black rights brought down the entire institutionalized system of Jim Crow racism that had for nearly a century imposed the terror of its reign throughout the post-Civil War South. That social revolution at the same time began the transformation of race relations in the North and changed the U.S. forever.

A legendary figure

Fernández was already a legendary figure among vanguard fighters in Cuba at the time of the triumph of the revolution in January 1959. A junior officer of the armed forces, he initiated a conspiracy to overthrow the Batista dictatorship, leading a group of military men who became known as los puros — the pure ones. Arrested and convicted for his activities, he had been incarcerated on Cuba's Isle of Pines, today the Isle of Youth, where many cadres of the July 26 Movement and other revolutionary fighters were imprisoned. Among them

was Armando Hart who had led the urban underground before his capture.

Collaborating closely with Hart, Fernández organized and gave military training to the political prisoners who were held in what was called the "Model Prison" — because its design had been copied from a recently built state prison in Joliet, Illinois, then considered the most "secure" penal institution in the world.

As Batista and his top henchmen fled Cuba in the wee hours of Jan. 1, 1959, a massive popular insurrection swept the country in response to the Rebel Army's call for a general strike. Fernández, along with other imprisoned military officers, was released. It was part of a maneuver by the desperate Cuban bourgeoisie to put together a government and military command that could block the revolutionary forces from taking power.

While others headed straight out of the prison for a military plane sent to carry them back to Havana, Fernández struck out for the military garrison on the Isle of Pines itself. He convinced the troops stationed there to surrender their weapons and, accompanied by an armed escort, returned to the prison. With a machine gun aimed on the gates, he ordered the release of all the incarcerated revolutionaries. After a brief show-down the warden complied, and the battalion Fernández had trained formed ranks and marched out of confinement.

With Hart in civilian control and Fernández in charge of the military, they established on the Isle of Pines

one of the first revolutionary governments of Cuba, one that was utterly opposed to the maneuvering bourgeois forces in Havana and utterly loyal to Fidel's revolutionary movement and its Rebel Army.

Transforming the Rebel Army

José Ramón Fernández will always be remembered as the field commander of the main column of militia forces — trained and led by him — that fought under Fidel's leadership to defeat the 1,500 mercenaries that invaded Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. The counter-revolutionary invaders, organized and financed by Washington, were routed in less than 72 hours, and the name Playa Girón became known to history as the first military defeat of U.S. imperialism in the Americas.

But Fernández himself did not consider that his most important or enduring contribution to the revolution.

Having been a junior officer in the Cuban army, who had also received training at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, Fernández told us, "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 the revolution's early days, he said, "There was not, in general, a clear and firm consciousness of the need for structures, for discipline, for the norms indispensable to a modern-day military force. The members of the Rebel Army — although excellent combatants who had been capable of defeating the corrupt army of the Batista tyranny — needed training along these lines. It was essential to organize and train these cadres in the handling of weapons, in tactics, in combat engineering, in communications, and in all those specific areas of knowledge essential for any armed force."

Raúl, as minister of the armed forces, "was decisive" in this process, he added.

"Participating in a modest way in building the Rebel Army in the early years, as I did, coming to be vice minister of the armed forces with Raúl under the leadership of Fidel, has been the true fulfillment of my life, this is

what has given it meaning. The fact that I was able to participate in the armed struggle in defense of the country at Girón has contributed greatly to this personal fulfillment."

The significance of the transformation of the Rebel Army and revolutionary militias of 1959 into what became the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba was nowhere confirmed more decisively than some 30 years later in southern Angola in what has become known as the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. That's when the invading forces of the apartheid South African Defense Force, then the strongest army on the continent, were dealt a crushing defeat by Cuban, Angolan and Namibian forces under the command of internationalist combatants from Cuba.

The spirit of victory

With characteristic insistence, Fernández was always the first to point to the Cuban toilers as the force that won the victory of Playa Girón. "The mercenaries came well organized, well armed, and well supported," he testified before the People's Court in Havana in 1999.

"What they lacked was a just cause to defend. That is why they did not fight with the same passion, courage, conviction, valor, firmness, bravery, and spirit of victory as did the revolutionary forces. ... The outcome can be explained only by the courage of a people who saw the Jan. 1 triumph as the genuine opportunity to determine their own future."

That "spirit of victory," that conviction among the working people of Cuba that with the leadership of Fidel, Raúl, and cadres like Fernández, they were capable of carrying the day militarily against an invading force organized by the strongest imperialist power in the world — that was the example that inspired millions around the world, including here in the United States.

With the truthfulness that marked him, Fernández never failed to point out it was the caliber of Fidel's leadership that made possible the victory at Playa Girón, and many others.

"History will one day record that few statesmen in the modern epoch of humanity have had the talent, wisdom, courage, and capacity to take advantage of the opportunities of the moment that Fidel has exhibited in defending the revolution," he told us.

"For almost 40 years [now more than 60] we have been navigating



Inset, courtesy José Ramón Fernández and Museum of the Revolution; right, Lee Lockwood. Inset, Fernández during his 1956 court-martial for leading revolt in armed forces against Batista dictatorship. Above, Havana, Jan. 1, 1959, just-released prisoners, still in white prison clothes, join working people taking over streets to ensure victory of Rebel Army.

along the edge of a possible attack, firmly defending our sovereignty, the revolution, and socialism." We have "proved capable of defending our principles while avoiding war."

Defending principles while avoiding war — that is the ultimate strategic goal of revolutionary armed forces. Only along that road can there be space for the class struggle to unfold, involving the largest possible numbers of the toilers, and experience through which we can transform ourselves.

Fernández shouldered many other responsibilities in Cuba's revolutionary leadership, including as minister of education for some 20 years, vice president of the Council of Ministers for 30, and president of the Cuban

Olympic Committee.

The impact on others of the ongoing march of the revolution to which he gave his loyalty and every fiber of his being will continue. And the importance of that ongoing march will be registered not only in Cuba but far beyond.

Making the example of the Cuban Revolution — and of the men and women like Fernández who made it — known to working people in the United States and around the world is above all our responsibility. That example is needed by the millions looked upon by the rulers as "deplorable" or worse, whose revolutionary capacities will one day prove no less powerful than those the Cuban toilers have already demonstrated for more than 60 years.

An Unconditional Soldier of the Revolution

The following excerpt is from "El Gallego' Fernández — An Unconditional Soldier of the Revolution," the speech given by José Ramón Machado Ventura, second secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, at the memorial tribute to José Ramón Fernández in Havana Jan. 8.

A book containing his memoirs, with a forward by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, came off the press some two months ago, with the idea of presenting it to the public on the occasion of his 95th birthday.

That didn't happen. Already bedridden when he received the first copy and heard about the idea, he insisted — strongly — that the book presentation not take place on that date. "That would be rather pretentious on my part," he said. That's the way Fernández was.

At the end of the book, he wrote these lines that by themselves explain the meaning of his long and fruitful life as a revolutionary:

"My greatest pride, in the healthy sense of the word, is to have had the confidence of two great men of our revolutionary process, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz and Army General Raúl Castro Ruz."

Fernández continued: "My experiences were shaped by these two individuals, who I have followed throughout all these years, and by my commitment to my homeland and the people of Cuba, who I cherish with all my heart. They are the incentive to continue contributing my physical and mental energy to this great work of the Cuban socialist revolution. My only duty is to be faithful to that confidence as long as there is life in me."

So end his words, to which could only be added — You did so until the last moment of your existence.



"Those not willing to fight for the freedom of others will never be able to fight for their own" — Fidel Castro

Making History: Interviews With Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces

Néstor López Cuba, Enrique Carreras, José Ramón Fernández, Harry Villegas

How the people of Cuba, as they struggle to build a new society, have held Washington at bay for 60 years.

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

by Vilma Espín, Asela de los Santos, Yolanda Ferrer

Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs: Washington's First Military Defeat in the Americas

by Fidel Castro, José Ramón Fernández

www.pathfinderpress.com

Jew-hatred incited by capitalist rulers in times of crisis

The excerpt below is from chapter one of *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* by Abram Leon, one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for January. Leon was won to Marxism from Zionism by supporters of Leon Trotsky. He led the communist movement in Belgium, up to and during the second imperialist world war. His history of the Jews and anti-Semitism was written as the crisis for the capitalist rulers in Germany and elsewhere led them to turn to fascism and anti-Jewish terror. It was completed while he led underground resistance against the Nazi occupation. The fate of the Jews and all humanity, he wrote, was tied to the victory of proletarian revolutions against imperialist war and fascism. In 1944, he was arrested and sent to Auschwitz where he died in the gas chambers, aged 26, along with over a million others. Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Fleeing Nazi terror, over 900 Jewish refugees on ship St. Louis in 1939. Imperialist "democratic" governments in Washington and Ottawa refused asylum, forcing refugees back to Europe.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY ABRAM LEON

Only a study of the economic role played by the Jews can contribute to elucidating the causes for the "miracle of the Jew."

To study the evolution of this question is not exclusively of academic interest. Without a thorough study of Jewish history, it is difficult to under-

stand the Jewish question in modern times. The plight of the Jews in the twentieth century is intimately bound up with their historical past. ...

In the sphere of Jewish history, as in the sphere of universal history, Karl Marx's brilliant thought points the road to follow. "Let us not look for the secret of the Jew in his religion, but let us look for the secret of his religion in the real Jew." Marx thus puts the Jewish question back on its feet. We must not start with religion in order to explain Jewish history; on the contrary, the preservation of the Jewish religion or nationality can be explained only by the "real Jew," that is to say, by the Jew in his economic and social role. The preservation of the Jews contains nothing of the miraculous. "Judaism continues to exist not in spite of history, but owing to history."

It is precisely by studying the historical function of Judaism that one is able to discover the "secret" of its survival in history. ...

From the eleventh century on, Western Europe entered a period of intensive economic development. The first stage of this evolution was characterized by the creation of a corporative industry and a native merchant bourgeoisie. The penetration of mercantile economy into the agricultural domain determined the second stage.

The growth of cities and of a native merchant class brought with it

the complete elimination of the Jews from commerce. They became usurers whose principal clientele consisted of the nobility and the kings. But the mercantile transformation of agricultural economy resulted in undermining these positions as well.

The relative abundance of money enabled the nobility to throw off the yoke of the usurer. The Jews were driven from one country after another. Others became assimilated, being absorbed mainly by the native bourgeoisie.

In certain cities, principally in Germany and in Italy, the Jews became primarily loan-makers to the popular masses, the peasants, and the artisans. In this role as petty usurers exploiting the people, they were often the victims of bloody uprisings.

In general, the period of medieval capitalism was that of the most violent Jewish persecutions. Jewish "capital" came into conflict with all classes of society. ...

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was principally the English, the Irish, the Germans, and the Scandinavians who formed the bulk of immigrants to America. The Slavic and Jewish element became dominant toward the end of the nineteenth century among the masses streaming to the New World.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Jewish masses sought new roads of immigration. But at first it was

toward the interior of Russia and Germany that they headed.

The Jews succeeded in penetrating the great industrial and commercial centers where they played an important role as merchants and industrialists. Here we come upon a new and important fact: For the first time in centuries a Jewish proletariat was born. The people-class began to differentiate socially.

The Jewish proletariat, however, remained concentrated mainly in the sector of consumer goods industry. It was primarily of the artisan type. In the same measure as large-scale industry expanded its field of exploitation, the artisan branches of economy declined. The workshop was superseded by the factory. And it thus turned out that the integration of Jews into capitalist economy still remained extremely precarious. It was not alone the "precapitalist" merchant who was forced to emigrate, but also the Jewish artisan worker. Jewish masses streamed in ever larger numbers from Eastern Europe to the West and to America. The solution of the Jewish question, that is to say, the complete absorption of the Jews into economic life, thus became a world problem.

The decline of capitalism

By socially differentiating Judaism, by integrating the latter into economic life, and by emigration, capitalism has laid the bases for the solution of the Jewish problem. But capitalism has failed to solve it. On the contrary, the fearsome crisis of the capitalist regime in the twentieth century has aggravated the plight of the Jews to an unparalleled degree. The Jews, driven from their economic positions under feudalism, could not be integrated into a capitalist economy in utter decay. In its convulsions, capitalism casts out even those Jewish elements which it has not yet completely assimilated.

Everywhere is rife the savage anti-Semitism of the middle classes, who are being choked to death under the weight of capitalist contradictions. Big capital exploits this elemental anti-Semitism of the petty bourgeoisie in order to mobilize the masses around the banner of racism.

The Jews are being strangled between the jaws of two systems; feudalism and capitalism, each feeding the rottenness of the other.

January **BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

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'Don't make us go West Virginia on you!'

In the light of the strike by teachers in Los Angeles and upcoming battles by teachers in other cities and states, we print below an excerpt from In Defense of the US Working Class by Mary-Alice Waters. Copyright © 2019 Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

When the [West Virginia] teachers and other school employees walked out, when they saw the strength of their numbers, their confidence and determination soared too. With support from their pupils, families, unions, and churches — and a living memory of the many bitter strikes fought by the miners — they organized emergency food services for the students and strikers. Daytime activities for the children were put in place. ...

In the best traditions of trade unionism — and a precursor of the fighting labor movement that will again be built — the strike took on elements of a genuine social movement, battling for the needs of the entire working class and its allies.

"What we're seeing is a class of people rising up," one striking worker proudly told a reporter.

And he was right. These were the men and women whom Hillary Clinton during her presidential cam-

paigned so contemptuously labeled "a basket of deplorables." People from the "backward" (that was her word!) expanses of the country between New York and California. People she described as "racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic," and especially women, "married white women" who, she told audiences, were too weak to stand up to "pressure to vote the way your husband, your boss, your son" tells you to. Is it any wonder Trump won West Virginia by a vote of 69 percent to 27 percent for Clinton?

The *better* class of people who engaged in this struggle across West Virginia not only kept every school closed for nine days. They sent thousands of demonstrators to occupy the state capitol day after day. Midway through the walkout, teachers rejected their union officialdom's call to accept the governor's promise of a deal. *They'd heard promises before.* They stayed out until they forced the legislature to pass, and the governor to sign into law, a 5 percent pay raise — not only for school personnel, but for every single state employee. ...

And as word spread across the country, teachers in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona, and other states were preparing their own strike actions. "Don't make us go West Virginia on you!" became their battle cry.

UK capitalist rulers' political crisis continues

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of the precipitous decline of British capitalism on the world stage. Prime Minister May wants an ongoing form of EU affiliation even after the March 29 date for the U.K. leaving the EU comes due; others maneuver across party lines seeking the votes to stay in the single market, or to cancel the referendum's outcome altogether.

They shudder at the idea of a sharp break with their rivals, also their allies, on the Continent. A definitive break would put workers in the U.K. in a better position to fight for their own interests against their main enemy — the capitalist rulers at home.

There is growing pressure among propertied rulers and their mouthpieces in Parliament for a delay as the deadline for Brexit — deal or no deal — looms ever closer. Labour Party Members of Parliament, as well as within May's government itself, are seeking cross-party support for a bill to require the government to seek a nine-month extension, while EU officials are reportedly drawing up proposals for Britain to maintain "pay-as-you-go" membership while talks go on and on.

The day after the government's defeat, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn moved a motion of "no confidence" in the government, which also was defeated. Then Corbyn refused May's invitation for cross-party talks unless, he said, she rules out "the threat of a disastrous 'no deal' outcome."

In a letter to the prime minister, he reiterated the call for "a new comprehensive UK-EU customs union; a strong Single Market deal; and guarantees that there can be no race to the bottom on rights and standards." Corbyn, like many liberals and middle-class radicals, puts forward the false notion that workers' rights can be protected by EU regulations, rather than through working-class struggles.

Corbyn faces his own leadership challenges. Some leading Labour MPs broke ranks and met with May. Others press for the party to push for a new referendum. Tens of thousands of party members have walked out in recent months.

Workers cheer for end to stalling

Speaking on the BBC's political talk show "Question Time" Jan. 17, journalist Isabel Oakeshott argued that Theresa May should just walk away from the EU. Asked if she really meant the U.K. should walk away, deal or no, she said yes. There was an instant, loud cheer from the audience.

"This cheer — from an audience in the largely working-class, Labour-leaning city of Derby," Brendan O'Neill wrote in the *Spectator*, "was a stark reminder that there are people out there, a great many people, who do not share the political class's fear of

No Deal."

"It was a statement — a noisy, rebellious statement of the people's continuing and profound attachment to the idea of leaving the European Union, deal or no deal," he said.

As Communist League members discuss a road forward with fellow workers in the face of the protracted economic and social crisis, they explain why EU membership in any form is a blow to workers' interests. "They're all talking about a deal, but what people voted for was to leave," CL member Pete Clifford told care worker Rebecca Murphy on her doorstep in Wythenshawe, south Manchester.

Murphy said the politicians' Brexit "debate" was hard to follow. "I voted remain, but I think we'll be fine either way," she said.

"With the U.K. out of the EU," Clifford responded, "the real fight will be much clearer — which class controls the country."

"Right now, it's the rich," said Murphy.

"Yes, and they're the real enemy we have to take on," Clifford said. "Workers need to take political power here in the U.K."

Like many workers, Murphy said she was following the yellow vest actions by working people in France. Clifford responded, "They need our solidarity."

Inspiration from yellow vest protests

For the 10th week in a row, tens of thousands of French workers, farmers and small proprietors turned out for protests across France Jan. 19.

Eric Drouet, a lorry driver from Melun, east of Paris, one of the initiators and leaders of the yellow vest movement, was at the Paris protest. Drouet had been arrested Jan. 2 in a crackdown on protesters by the government of French President Emmanuel Macron. The yellow vests call Macron the "president for the rich."

"There's never been anything like this movement," Drouet told the *Militant*. "This is going to be hard, and we're not about to win in a single day. But this is a movement that's going to grow."

That chills the rulers in France and across Europe, including in the U.K. In these protests, and in the workers in the U.K. who call for the British rulers to "get out" of the EU, they see the continued coming apart of the misnamed European "Union." This bloc — formed in the name of greater protection in competition with the dominant U.S. bosses — is a tool to enrich the rulers in Germany, and to a lesser degree Paris. They use it to suck profit out of their rivals in Greece, Spain, Italy and the other weaker capitalist "partners."

The ones who pay the highest price as a result of the rulers' conflicts are working people everywhere.

Liberal threat to rights

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fighters, defenders of Black rights and opponents of Washington's wars.

But in this case the unidentified agents are using their political police methods as part of the campaign to oust a real estate mogul who was elected president. Their probe against Trump is a reflection of the sharpness of the protracted political crisis wracking the rulers' twin parties. Robert Mueller, the anti-Trump special counsel, like Comey, is a former FBI chief. Since the *Times* article hit the newsstands, it has been used to pump up cries for the president to be brought down. "With a newly seated Democratic majority, the House of Representatives can no longer dodge its constitutional duty," proclaims Yoni Applebaum, a senior editor at the *Atlantic* magazine, in a cover story headlined "Impeach Donald Trump."

House leader Nancy Pelosi says the timing is not right and there isn't the bipartisan support needed to impeach the president. A slew of House committee chairs, now all Democrats, say they will probe Trump's family, his tax returns and Russians he's met.

Rehash of past slanders

But, in fact, the whole *Times* "exposé" is a rehash of past slanders and innuendo. The only FBI employee the papers' editors quote by name is Lisa Page, who they present as an expert. But Page resigned in disgrace in May 2017 when it came to light she had exchanged some 10,000 cellphone messages, including derogatory attacks on Trump with FBI counterintelligence agent Peter Strzok when they worked together going after the president.

Strzok helped rewrite a report that allowed Hillary Clinton to avoid indictment for running her government communications off a private server. He was fired by the FBI when his part in the anti-Trump campaign became public. One of Strzok's messages to Page — "America will get what the voting public deserves" — showed his contempt for working people.

Page and Strzok didn't leave the FBI because top FBI spooks disagreed with what the two did. Retaining the two anti-Trump zealots made the agency look too politically biased after their communications became public, so FBI bosses pushed them out.

The anti-Trump frenzy is also reflected in press coverage of the composition and character of the U.S. Supreme Court. Liberal commentators flew into a panic when Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was diagnosed with cancer, sparking speculation that the 85-year-old would have to leave the court. They fear this would open the door for "arch-reactionary" Trump to nominate yet another justice in his image. Liberals view the court, and Ginsburg, as the agent for adopting political policies they favor but are unable to get through Congress, not as a court that makes rulings based on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Trump strives to govern in the interests of the capitalist rulers. As working people begin to organize to defend our interests we will need to use rights that the liberals are undermining in their efforts to oust him.

"Women's" marches held on Jan. 19 weren't organized to fight for women's right to abortion, which is under attack, or other steps toward the emancipation of women, but to recruit for the "resistance" to the Trump presidency. Organizers aim to mobilize support for installing a Democrat in the White House in 2020, if not before.

Liberals growing fear of working people

The uproar against Trump's presidency is rooted in liberals' growing fear of working people. "They fear us because they recognize that more and more working people are beginning to see that the bosses and their political parties have no 'solutions' that don't further load the costs — monetary and human — of the crisis of *their* system on *us*," Socialist Workers Party leader Steve Clark wrote in the introduction to *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes.

Over two years later the situation Clark describes continues to bear down on working people. The book is one SWP members and supporters use to introduce the party to working people on their doorsteps. The goal is to build a working-class fight against the capitalist rulers' assaults and a course toward independent working-class political action.