

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

'Culture and Revolution in Cuba' by Abel Prieto

— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 85/NO. 1 JANUARY 4, 2021

## Ala. Amazon workers win right to vote to have a union

BY SUSAN LAMONT

ATLANTA — Despite objections from Amazon, the National Labor Relations Board ruled Dec. 16 that workers at Amazon's warehouse and distribution center in Bessemer, Alabama, have shown enough support for the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union to hold a vote on representation. Hundreds of workers at the huge facility, which opened in late March, have signed union cards over the past two months.

The board held a hearing beginning Dec. 18 to decide on the details of the election, after the bosses and union officials couldn't reach agreement on who would be eligible to vote and when it will be held.

The stakes are high. If the union wins the vote, it would be the first unionized Amazon facility in the U.S.

"This will be good," Sharon Franklin told the *Militant* Dec. 19 by phone from Bessemer. Because of her fear of retaliation by Amazon bosses, the *Militant* is using a pseudonym. Franklin, who used to work in house-keeping in the area, started at Amazon in June.

The union says the bargaining unit and vote should be for the 1,500 per-

Continued on page 5

## Workers need to organize, fight for jobs, health care



Health care workers at Stroger hospital in Chicago during one-day strike by 1,500 workers at Cook County facilities Dec. 22. Nurses, health workers have gone on strike across the country.

### Cuban Revolution points road forward for working people

Millions of working people in the U.S. — and throughout the capitalist world — are being thrown out of work.

## EDITORIAL

The bosses and their government are intensifying layoffs and shutdowns of small businesses that isolate workers.

Continued on page 9

### For-profit health industry, boss attacks deepen crisis

BY TERRY EVANS

After refusing for months to pass any relief measures for working people, Congress adopted a package of short-lived handouts to small-business owners, some government services and to some of the spiraling numbers of workers thrown out of their jobs.

The measures provide neither benefits for as long as workers need them, nor any steps to expand hiring. This guarantees that the burden of today's economic, social and health crisis will continue

Continued on page 7

## India farmers battle gov't attack against price supports

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Hundreds of thousands of protesting farmers in India remain in a standoff with the government over new laws introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that would lift state controls on the pricing and marketing of their crops. Since the end of November, they've set up large, sprawling camp cities and blocked half a dozen highways leading into New Delhi, the capital.

The protesters are mainly from the northern farming states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The farmers, many of whom are Sikhs, include a large number of older people and growing numbers of women. They are defiant even as a bitter cold winter has caused some deaths in the encampments. Talks between farmer and government representatives remain stalemated.

"The new laws will end the minimum price farmers get for their crops and turn the farms over to the big corporations to make profits," Lakhwinder Singh Kang told a *Militant* Labor Forum in Montreal Dec. 19. He and several others in the audience were active in solidarity protests Dec. 6 and 12.

The Modi government has offered to concede and keep some state price supports for now. But the protesting

Continued on page 9

## Protest actions demand, 'End US gov't economic war against Cuba!'



Dec. 17 Minneapolis picket was one of several in U.S. as part of day of protest against U.S. economic war on Cuba. For over 60 years, Washington has tried to overturn Cuban Revolution.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

With Jan. 1 marking the 62nd anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the National Network on Cuba and local coalitions have laid out a program of solidarity actions over the next several months demanding: End

the U.S. embargo against Cuba! U.S. out of Guantánamo now! and End U.S. travel restrictions against Cuba!

As part of this schedule, street actions, meetings and press conferences were held in several cities Dec. 17 mark-

Continued on page 9

## Help extend reach of the 'Militant,' win readers to renew subscriptions

BY SETH GALINSKY

Socialist Workers Party members are organizing to expand the readership of the *Militant* and books by party leaders and other revolutionaries, and campaigning to win new readers of the paper to renew their subscriptions. They're especially looking out for those who are interested in joining them in these efforts, in cities, towns and rural areas.

The *Militant* is unique. No other newspaper campaigns consistently for the interests of workers, farmers and all those exploited or oppressed under capitalism and points a road forward. It is written and distributed by working people.

Wherever we take the *Militant* we also bring books on revolutionary politics and the party's action program. Together they place our struggles today within the history of working-class battles over decades, explain why the rule of the capitalist families is at the root of the problems we face and why working people are capable of replacing capitalist

rule with our own government.

"We don't tell the people to believe. We tell them to read!" said Fidel Castro, the central leader of Cuba's socialist revolution. Castro acted on the fact that de-

Continued on page 3

## Inside

Give gov't 'stimulus' payout to the 'Militant'! 4

Workers protest all across Iraq, demand back pay, jobs 4

Ohio protest: 'Prosecute cop who killed Casey Goodson' 4

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Thousands of Ukrainian miners strike over pay, conditions

Moroccan workers end sit-in at mine after bosses agree to talks



# Workers in Scotland speak out against economic, health crisis

BY PETE CLIFFORD

GLASGOW, Scotland — Opposition parties turned on U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson after he told a Conservative Party meeting that the devolution of political powers from London to an assembly in Scotland had been a “disaster” and the “biggest mistake” of former Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Scottish National Party spokesperson Drew Henry said Johnson’s comments Nov. 17 show his “contempt” for people north of the border. They come as polls show rising support in Scotland for its independence from the U.K.

Mounting anger among working people in parts of the U.K. worst hit by decades of assaults on jobs and living standards drove a revival of Scottish nationalism. This fueled moves by Blair in 1999 to establish a Scottish parliament and give it powers over health, education, transport and housing. A similar assembly was set up in Wales and a year earlier in Northern Ireland. Blair’s goal was to hold the different nations that make up the U.K. together amid growing tensions, and to prevent moves toward independence.

Since then the impact on working people of the worldwide capitalist crisis that underlies these frictions has deepened. The U.K. rulers have also declined as a world power relative to their rivals.

In the nine months since the pandemic began the SNP’s Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland’s first minister, has presented her government as more competent than London’s, while placing blame for the economic and health disaster at Westminster’s door.

The number of COVID-19 deaths per week per head of the population in Scotland was 20% higher than in England by mid-November. Reflecting the depth of the crisis of care for the elderly during the first wave of the pandemic, 47% of all deaths from COVID-19 in Scotland were residents in nursing homes, compared to 30% in England.

Still, opinion polls show rising support for the Scottish National Party, which heads a minority Scottish government. It hopes to win a majority in elections due in May and is stepping up calls for a new referendum on Scottish independence. The U.K. rulers are determined to prevent this. They see the unraveling of the U.K. as a serious threat to their place in the world, especially as they leave the European Union and seek new trade alliances.

In 2014 a referendum in Scotland rejected the SNP’s call for independence by 55%. The Conservative and Labour parties campaigned together against it. Support for separation in that vote was not driven by a struggle by working people against discrimination or national oppression. Instead, the contest was marked by conflicts between rival capitalist parties each claiming the road to prosperity would be better achieved as part of, or independent of, the U.K.

Two years later the referendum for the U.K. to quit the EU was rejected by a 62% majority in Scotland. In the rest of the U.K. a majority voted to leave. Seizing on the outcome of that referendum, the SNP claims Scotland will flourish as a sovereign nation free of London and remain within the EU trading bloc. Tens



Edinburgh Live

Some 400 Edinburgh Royal Infirmary nurses march Aug. 18 demanding pay raise. Like working people elsewhere in U.K. they are looking for ways to resist assaults on their livelihoods.

of thousands marched here in Glasgow in January 2020, calling for Scottish independence. Johnson says the U.K. government will prevent such a referendum from being held, undercutting the rights of the Scottish people to determine their own future.

### Road forward for working people

Communist League members campaigning here in November found real interest in discussing a road forward for workers.

“They say the National Health Service is open and running, it’s not,” dental nurse Marianne Kennedy told CL members. The dental practice where she works sees only a handful of patients a day compared to up to 250 before the pandemic.

The Scottish government, like its U.K. counterpart, has gutted broader health care, saying they only have resources to treat people with COVID-19. Kennedy said the government only pays her 20% of her previous wage under its furlough scheme.

CL member Pamela Holmes told Kennedy about the 400-strong protest by health workers at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in August calling on the Scottish government to give them a pay raise.

Some 700 jobs were recently cut at the Rolls-Royce jet engine manufacturing plant in Inchinnan, a small town near Glasgow. Speaking to Andy Cowan in Inchinnan Nov. 14, this reporter described the current strike against 350 job

cuts by workers at the same company’s plant in Barnoldswick, England. Cowan trains construction workers.

“That’s good,” he said on hearing about the strike. Bosses at the Barnoldswick plant had blamed the job cuts on the collapse in air travel following the pandemic. “It’s the same for my job,” Cowan said.

He has been furloughed. His bosses shelved a planned pay raise and now intend job cuts. Cowan pointed to the challenges in standing up to these attacks.

“That’s why every fight is important for us all,” I responded. “Rather than cut jobs we need to fight for a government-funded public works program to put us back to work and to build the things working people need.”

“I stopped backing the Labour Party when Jeremy Corbyn became its leader,” Cowan said. “But I don’t like the SNP either.”

“I thought the only hope for socialism was with Corbyn,” retired government worker Jim McAlister in Garthamlock, Glasgow, told CL campaigner Holmes. “Now that he’s finished it has to come through Scottish independence.”

“Key for advancing working people is not placing our reliance on parties that protect the rule of those who exploit us,” Holmes replied. “Real changes can be won through working-class struggle. Workers need to build our own party, a party of labor to help organize our struggles today and to chart a course to take political power into our own hands.”

## THE MILITANT

### Workers need their own party, a labor party

*Workers today face spreading unemployment, attacks on wages and working conditions, and a crisis as the medical ‘care’ industry puts private profit over our health. The ‘Militant’ covers this unfolding crisis, and the efforts of workers to organize to defend ourselves.*



Hundreds line up at Albuquerque food bank Nov. 24 for Thanksgiving food packages.

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



# Help extend the reach of the ‘Militant’!

Continued from front page

fending the conquests of their revolution required working people to deepen their self-confidence and class consciousness as they fought *and* studied together.

Take advantage of the special offer of 20% off for all Pathfinder books through the end of January, and even larger discounts for subscribers on selected titles. See ad on page 4 for more details. If your subscription is running out, you can renew online so that you don't miss a single issue.

Workers, working farmers, independent owner-operator truck drivers and other small proprietors are all feeling today's intertwined capitalist economic, social and health crisis. Many are discussing what workers can do to defend ourselves.

"I'm a nurse and I work in private home care," Tina Ruest told Communist League members Michel Prairie and Katy LeRougetel when they knocked on her door in Montreal Dec. 20. Home care workers "don't even have any sick days," she said. "They don't have a union. They don't have health benefits.

## The ‘Militant’ is on holiday break

This is a two-week issue.  
The next issue will be mailed out January 7.

They don't even have protective equipment. This has got to change."

"Our unions have to fight for this. We have to rely on ourselves," LeRougetel said. Prairie pointed to past strikes in Quebec that won increases in the minimum wage and better conditions.

Ruest wasn't convinced, pointing to a strike she was involved in. "Did it change anything?"

Organizing to change what workers face "starts with talking to each other and offering solidarity," LeRougetel said. "One union can't go it alone." Ruest decided to subscribe to the *Militant* to learn more about what workers can do.

The paper explains why today's massive unemployment necessitates organizing to fight to get workers back into jobs. It describes how workers learn from our own experiences and see our capacities in struggle.

This worker-correspondent discussed these questions with a taxi driver during weekly campaigning at cab lines by members of the SWP in New York Dec. 22. He agreed when I told him there needs to be one union for all drivers, whether they work for Yellow Cab, Uber or a car service, to stand up to the bosses. He had seen how looting and other violent acts had undermined protests against cop brutality. Those kinds of actions are of no use, he said.

When workers organize ourselves, I said, we make sure that protests are led in a disciplined way to maximize

the numbers who join the actions, and their effectiveness. He got a copy of the *Militant* and we traded phone numbers to talk some more.

The *Militant* encourages all those who want to change the miserable conditions workers face to read books like *Malcolm X*, *Black Liberation*, and *The Road to Workers Power* and *The Turn to Industry: Forging a Proletarian Party* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes, as well as *Tribunes of the People* and *The Trade Unions*.

### More workers' struggles

Even in the midst of the capitalist crisis and government-imposed lockdowns, health care workers, teachers, poultry workers and others in the U.S. have gone out on strike to demand higher wages, job safety and better working conditions. Millions of farmers have taken to the streets in India. Working people are protesting in the Kurdish region in Iraq.

The next uptick in employment will create conditions that can give workers more confidence in our abil-



Militant/Lisa Potash

Rachele Fruit, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from Georgia, talks with truck driver Cody Martin outside Hormel plant in Tucker, Georgia, Dec. 17. "Prices of essentials have been going up for years," he said. Workers and our unions need to fight to keep people on the job, said Fruit, and for cost of living increases in all contracts to combat inflation.

ity to join together and stand up to the bosses' assaults on our living and working conditions.

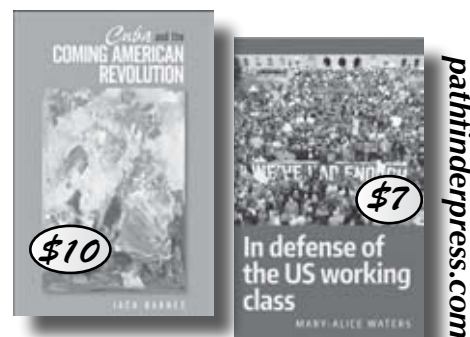
What we do now can strengthen today's fights and those to come.

Some *Militant* readers are taking their own initiatives to promote the paper. A subscriber in South Carolina said he's been showing his *Militants* around and a waitress at a restaurant he frequents is especially interested. He's going to invite her to subscribe.

We frequently get letters from our subscribers behind bars telling us they are showing the paper to others and more inmates have been subscribing.

Do you have friends, co-workers, neighbors or relatives who should be reading the *Militant* and books? Encourage them to subscribe and get some of these books.

Would you like to join with others to win new readers to the revolutionary press on workers' doorsteps, at strike picket lines and protests? See page 8 to contact distributors nearest you.



## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS— ILLINOIS

### Chicago

Celebrate the 62nd Anniversary of the Cuban Socialist Revolution. Fri., Jan. 1. Reception, 7 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$10. 1858 W. Cermak Road, 2nd floor. Tel.: (312) 792-6160.

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

Celebrate the 62nd Anniversary of the Cuban Socialist Revolution. Speaker: Omari Musa, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Jan. 2. Reception, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7 p.m. Donation \$10. 7603 Georgia Ave. NW, Suite 303. Tel.: (202) 536-5080.

## Socialist Workers Party action program

**THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY PRESENTS A FIGHTING WORKING-CLASS PROGRAM. WE NEED TO ORGANIZE TO FIGHT GROWING EMPLOYER ATTACKS ON OUR JOBS, WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS.** Build solidarity with workers' struggles to organize and defend themselves. On this course, we can build and use union power on our own behalf, and for all those suffering blows by the bosses and their government. One union for all drivers — taxi, Uber, Lyft and other app-based and car service drivers!

**MILLIONS NEED JOBS TODAY!** Our unions need to fight for a federal government-financed public works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages building hospitals, schools, housing, mass transportation and much more that workers need. Fight for a sliding scale of hours and wages to stop layoffs and the effects of runaway prices. Cut the workweek with no cut in pay! For cost-of-living clauses in every contract that raise pay and retirement benefits to offset every rise in prices!

Demand immediate national government unemployment benefits at union scale for *all* those thrown out of work as long as they need it.

**WORKERS NEED THEIR OWN PARTY, A LABOR PARTY.** For our unions to lead a class break from the parties of the bosses, the Democrats and Republicans. A labor party can organize workers in our millions to fight in our own interest and in the interests of all those exploited and oppressed by capital. It can chart a course to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and establish a workers and farmers government.

**WORKERS CONTROL OF PRODUCTION.** Workers need to fight to wrest

control of production out of the hands of the bosses. Employers care about profits, not the dangerous conditions we're forced to work under. This is the only road to take control of and enforce safety and health on the job. Demand the bosses open their books for inspection by workers and consumers. Workers control of production is a school for learning to run the economy ourselves, in the interests of all producers, a crucial step alongside building a labor party to fight to take political power.

**FARMERS — WORKERS' ALLIES ON THE LAND.** Fight for immediate government relief to fully cover farmers' production costs, including living expenses for themselves and their families. No more foreclosures! Nationalize the land, guaranteeing its use by those who live on and till it, not "repo" seizures by absentee bankers, landowners, or capitalist farmers.

**AMNESTY FOR ALL UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS** in the US, a life-and-death question for the unions to unite workers and cut across divisions the bosses use to drive down wages. For access to driver's licenses for all.

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**FOR RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL AND OF A CONTIGUOUS PALESTINIAN STATE.** The leaders of Arab states, of Israel and Palestinian leaders need to meet and recognize both the state of Israel and an independent Palestinian state. For the right of Jews to return to Israel as a refuge in the face of capitalist crisis, Jew-hatred and murderous violence.

### CUBA'S REVOLUTION — AN EXAMPLE.

The Cuban Revolution in 1959 showed it is possible for workers and farmers to transform themselves in struggle, to take political power and uproot capitalist exploitation. End the US rulers' economic war against Cuba; US out of Guantánamo.

**FIGHT POLICE BRUTALITY!** Demand that cops who kill and brutalize people be prosecuted. Fight racist discrimination and the entire capitalist injustice system, with its frame-ups, "plea bargains," onerous bail and "three strike" prison sentences, all of which disproportionately hit workers who are Black. For the right to vote for ex-prisoners and all workers behind bars.

**HEALTH CARE FOR ALL.** Fight for universal, government-guaranteed cradle-to-grave health care, and retirement income for all.

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**DEFEND POLITICAL RIGHTS.** Defend the right to vote, to free speech and assembly and to bear arms, under attack from Democrats and Republicans alike. Defend freedom of worship. Stop FBI and other government spying, harassment and disruption. No to reactionary "cancel culture" and efforts to shut up people by public lynching through social media.

**DEFEND RIGHTS OF PRISONERS.** End solitary confinement. End suppression of the *Militant*, books and other newspapers by prison authorities. Abolish the death penalty, an anti-working-class weapon in the hands of the rulers.



# Workers protest all across Iraq, demand back pay, jobs

BY TERRY EVANS

Following days of protests across Iraqi Kurdistan by public sector workers demanding back pay, jobs, public services and an end to corruption, thousands more working people took to the streets of Basra and Baghdad to demand a halt to Iraqi government assaults on their livelihoods.

Workers in Basra blocked roads around oil refineries Dec. 20 demanding nine months of unpaid wages. Many are day laborers recently hired after the government promised to create jobs in an area where vast oil resources provide a big part of state revenue. But working people there face large-scale unemployment and worsening conditions.

The capitalist rulers in Baghdad face an economic crisis rooted in the collapse of oil prices and the cost of a bloated government payroll.

The government hopes to prevent a resurgence of the monthslong protests that swept Baghdad and cities across southern Iraq in 2019. Working people joined those actions demanding jobs, an end to rule by the sectarian political parties that dominate the government, and a halt to military interventions and plunder of the country's resources by Tehran and Washington.

"We are not violent. We just want our rights," Ammar Sarhan told Rudaw news agency in Basra Dec. 20, vowing to sustain the oil field blockade until the government pays up. Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi visited Basra in August pledging to pay 30,000 unpaid workers. They are still waiting.

A day after the actions in Basra the central bank in Baghdad devalued the Iraqi currency, the dinar, over 20% against the dollar, sending hundreds into the streets to demand the move be reversed. The devaluation exacts further hardship on working people, slashing the value of their wages and threatening damaging inflation in food and other prices. Among demonstrators were

many elderly workers, protesting the plunge in the value of their pensions.

Traders at Sulaymaniyah's market in Iraqi Kurdistan raised food prices rapidly after the devaluation.

Hundreds also marched against the measure in Kut, near the Iranian border, and in other cities.

## Roots of the devaluation

Opposition to the devaluation includes the Tehran-backed Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia in Iraq, headed by Qais Khazali, and other pro-Tehran Shiite forces. Militias organized by the Iranian rulers were prominent in Baghdad's repression of the 2019 anti-government protests, killing at least 700 people. Over the years these militias have led the consolidation of Tehran's growing influence in the country.

Prime Minister Kadhimi came to office last May after a six-month struggle over who should succeed former Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, who quit in the face of deepening anti-government protests. Kadhimi has done little to act on his pledge to provide justice for families whose relatives were killed by pro-government forces during those actions.

Iraq's governing parties are looking for ways to defend the rulers' profits on the backs of working people. In addition



AP Photo/Jamil al-Jurani

Workers block road leading to oil complex in Basra Dec. 23. Fight against unpaid wages, for jobs, services, cuts across divisions among toilers in Iraq and Kurdistan, and Sunni and Shiite.

to the devaluation, the government's draft budget levies an income tax, a 20% sales tax on gasoline and further taxes on small businesses.

The government in Iraq is the country's largest employer. One reason is that rival political groups use revolving positions in office to put supporters on the payroll to buy loyalty. This was one of the things that helped fuel the 2019 protests. The public sector has tripled in size since Washington's invasion in 2003, and Baghdad has fallen deeper into debt trying to pay salaries. Now the economic crisis facing the rulers

has led them to stop paying.

The Kurdistan Regional Government pays public salaries there, but their budget is based on receiving an annual percentage of the federal budget. Because of Baghdad's financial crisis and conflicts with the KRG over oil sales, the Iraqi rulers haven't paid for a long time.

Iraq's rulers have reached out to the International Monetary Fund seeking aid. But the IMF insists on deeper attacks on working people as a condition, insisting Baghdad prioritize "reversing the unsustainable expansion of wage and pensions bills."

# Ohio protest: 'Prosecute cop who killed Casey Goodson'

BY JANET POST

Rallying at the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus Dec. 19, dozens of people protested the killing of Casey Goodson Jr. by Franklin County, Ohio, sheriff's deputy Jason Meade. Tamala Payne, Goodson's mother, has led protests demanding authorities charge Meade for the killing.

Goodson, a 23-year-old Black man, was shot dead on his grandmother's doorstep as he was returning home after a dentist appointment and picking up sandwiches for her and his

5-year-old brother Dec. 4. Goodson was a laid-off truck driver who was working at a Gap store.

"He didn't do anything. And he was killed and murdered, cold-bloodedly," Payne told the press Dec. 10.

Eighteen days after Goodson was gunned down there is no evidence that Meade has been interviewed by authorities about the killing. When WCMH-TV asked a representative of Southern Ohio U.S. Attorney David DeVillers if Meade had been interviewed, he could not confirm he had.

The record of police dispatch calls show that arriving cops ordered Goodson's family to keep away from where he lay dying in the house, making it impossible for them to render medical or other assistance to him.

"My grandson just got shot in the back when he come in the house," Goodson's grandmother, Sharon Payne, reported to a 911 operator. "I don't know if he's OK."

"They're threatening everybody in the house," Payne told the dispatcher.

Meade is part of a police fugitive task force that had been searching the area.

But the day he confronted and then killed Goodson he was by himself in an unmarked vehicle. Goodson was not the object of any police investigation. The family refutes police claims that Goodson was waving a gun in the air. He did have a gun, but Ohio is an open-carry state and Goodson had a valid concealed handgun license.

Meade is on administrative leave. He gave a sermon at the 2018 Ohio State Association of Free Will Baptists convention, saying "People I hit, you wish you could hit. Trust me, right?"

A preliminary autopsy ruled Goodson's death a homicide. The family has ordered their own autopsy, saying he was shot at least three times in the back.

In the midst of this, Andre Hill, a 47-year-old Black man, was shot and killed by a Columbus cop who had been dispatched to check out a nonemergency noise complaint Dec. 22. The man was visiting a friend, was in his garage, and walked toward police with a cell-phone — not a weapon — in hand. The footage "documents a delay in rendering first-aid to the man," Columbus Department of Public Safety said.

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John Studer

John Studer  
Editor

4 The Militant January 4, 2021



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

## Thousands of Ukrainian miners strike over pay, conditions

For the past few months thousands of workers at state-owned iron ore, coal and uranium mines in Ukraine have been involved in a series of protests, including strikes, work-to-rule actions and underground sit-ins, over nonpayment of months of wages and worsening working conditions.

Some 5,000 workers from three state-owned uranium mines in the Kirovograd region at the Eastern Mining and Processing Plant refused to work beginning Dec. 16. They're demanding "payment of wage arrears that amounted to 83 million Ukrainian hryvnia [\$3 million]," Olesia Briazgunova from the international department of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine wrote to the *Militant* Dec. 21.

That day workers continued "an open-ended protest action" disrupting traffic on some national highways and plan "to spend the night in tents near the road," she said.

The previous week miners and union officials picketed government offices in Kyiv over nonpayment of wages. The miners are demanding the

government pay what they are owed in full and take steps to ensure mining is carried out safely. If not, they warn, radioactive leaks and other environmental threats are likely.

The current wave of actions started when some 400 miners at the Kryvyi Rih Iron Ore Plant (KZRK), a traditional center of worker militancy, stayed underground Sept. 8, shutting down production.

Backed by rallies on the surface by other miners, unionists and family members, the workers demanded higher wages, reinstatement of early retirement, reversal of government relaxation of restrictions on harmful working conditions in the mile-deep mines and the replacement of the plant's management.

"On Oct. 9," Briazgunova wrote, "they ended their underground protest after an agreement with the employer was reached." However, the KZRK bosses promptly breached the agreement on salary payments and sued the miners.

From the Mena cheese factory to doctors and nurses at hospitals from Volyn to Kyiv, workers' fights over wages and conditions have increased across the country. The Ukrainian government is pushing new measures to close unprofitable state mines and gut rights workers have won in struggle.

— Roy Landersen



Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine

As part of strikes across Ukraine demanding back wages, uranium miners blocked major highways in Kirovograd Dec. 16. Coal miners, nurses and others are fighting over wages, conditions.

## Moroccan workers end sit-in at mine after bosses agree to talks

Some 100 Moroccan workers ended a 10-day underground occupation at the Jebel Aouam mine near M'rirt in Khenifra province Dec. 21 after Touissit Mining bosses agreed to rejoin talks on improving workers' wages and conditions. The sit-in, backed by another 200 workers protesting above ground, nearly halted production of silver, gold, lead and zinc at the mine.

The action protested management's repeated violations of a 2019 agreement with their UMT union.

Talks are restarting on union demands

that the bosses implement improved working and safety conditions that had been written into the agreement signed last year. That contract also included occupational health and safety measures to alleviate chronic illnesses caused by unsafe conditions in the mine, further exacerbated by the onset of the pandemic.

CMT, a subsidiary of French-based mining group Auplata, is the leading producer of lead and silver in Morocco. There have been a series of union actions at the almost century-old mine since 2017, including a previous mine occupation.

— Roy Landersen

## Teamster Rebellion

by Farrell Dobbs

The story of the strikes and union organizing drives the men and women of Teamsters Local 574 carried out in Minnesota in 1934 paving the way for the continent-

wide rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations as a fighting social movement.

pathfinderpress.com

## Alabama Amazon workers win right to vote for a union

Continued from front page

manent full- and part-time warehouse and distribution center workers. Amazon wants the vote to include office staff, engineers, software workers and other employees not on the shop floor — which it claims would bring those eligible to vote to more than 5,700. The company hopes this would kill the organizing effort.

"People get sick in there every day," Franklin said. "But if you go to the Wellness Office and say you're sick and need to leave, the manager says, 'I need you here.' You're not given the time and

equipment to clean your own area."

"Every day they come up with new rules," she said. "The work is too much, 10 and 12 hours a day. We get written up for all kinds of things. Everything is 'TOT' — 'time off task.' If you take more than five minutes to use the bathroom, they start docking your time."

According to the *Washington Post*, Amazon said in October that nearly 20,000 of its U.S. employees had tested positive or showed symptoms of COVID since the pandemic began.

Union organizers are continuing to get workers to sign authorization

cards. Bessemer is near Alabama's unionized coalfields and is part of the greater Birmingham industrial area, long a center of steel production, with strong union traditions.

After the NLRB decision "the company sent us two long texts right away about why we shouldn't sign union cards," Franklin said, trying to intimidate workers. "They said if we signed a union card, we'd be giving up the right to speak for ourselves and that if we feel like we were misled by the union, we should ask for our card back."

While thousands of small proprietors and other retail bosses are being driven out of business in the wake of government-ordered lockdowns and other pandemic-justified restrictions, Amazon's online sales are booming.

The second-largest U.S. employer after Walmart, Amazon has some 1.1 million workers worldwide and 760 fulfillment centers in the U.S. and touts its hourly jobs as great. Since July it has averaged hiring 2,800 workers every day.

Amazon's real impact, however, has been to drive down the average wages of warehouse and delivery workers in areas it moves into.

"Six years ago, before the company opened a giant fulfillment center in Robbinsville, New Jersey, warehouse workers made \$24 an hour on average, according to BLS [Bureau of Labor Statistics] data. Last year the average hourly wage slipped to \$17.50," reported a Dec. 17 article on the Bloomberg News website titled, "Amazon Has Turned a Middle-Class Warehouse Career Into a McJob." Amazon is also pushing down wages of truck and other delivery drivers.

Amazon hasn't responded to the *Militant's* request for comment.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 8, 1996

LAWRENCE, Massachusetts — "Everyone knew it was a time bomb waiting to go off," Pedro Bares, a production worker from the apparel division, described the fire that consumed the Malden Mills textile plant December 11. Thirty workers were hospitalized, a dozen of whom were in critical condition one week after the blaze. In the end 2,400 people were left jobless.

The fire began where a synthetic upholstery fabric was produced. Workers report that a boiler exploded. A similar explosion in 1993 left six workers hospitalized. Nothing had been changed in the way production was organized.

"We have had safety problems for a long time. We knew something would happen — it was just a matter of time," explained Willie Sanabria, who was working at the time of the explosion.

"Co-workers ensured that everyone was accounted for," Julio Soto said.



January 15, 1971

The uprising of Polish workers last month culminated with a major upheaval of the country's top leadership. The revolt, which began in Gdansk, triggered by huge hikes in the price of food, clothing and fuel, spread quickly, affecting at least a half dozen major cities and tens of thousands of workers.

"What happened in Gdansk was a revolution — and a successful one," Swedish reporter Kurt Karlsson, who was there, wrote.

The *New York Times* Dec. 31 wrote: "The shipyard workers returned to the yards and began a sit-in strike. By the next day, other workers joined them and strike committees had been formed."

A significant development was the frankness that several Polish newspapers began to express. The weekly *Polityka* stated that "the party is responsible for the causes that gave rise to the tragic events."



January 5, 1946

Battle weary, homesick marines, forced to remain in China to support the brutal Chiang Kai-shek dictatorship, know Japanese troops are being used against the Chinese Stalinist forces. A *Stars and Stripes* correspondent reports officers have been "afraid the marines' rigid training and discipline would not be sufficient to check the tide of resentment."

The troops refuse to believe it is necessary for them to guard Chinese railroads and British-owned coal mines.

Wall Street is completely indifferent to the effect of war on American soldiers. Washington is anxious to protect imperialist interests and bolster up dictator Chiang Kai-shek. They act as they do because there, as in other parts of the Far East, the fate of the colonial system in the most populous area of the world is at stake in the outcome of the conflict.



# Prieto: ‘US gov’t is unable to grasp deep links between culture, revolution in Cuba’

This article by Abel Prieto appeared in the Dec. 4 issue of the Cuban daily *Granma*, with the headline “Culture and Revolution.” Prieto is director of Casa de las Américas, a renowned Cuban cultural institution. Prieto, an author, was the president of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba from 1988 to 1997. He served as minister of culture from 1997 to 2012 and from 2016 to 2018. He also served as an adviser to Raúl Castro.

Prieto, born in 1950, is respected by several generations of Cuban artists for his unflinching defense of the Cuban Revolution, for speaking his mind and for promoting the revolution’s cultural policy, which he explains is “open, plural, anti-dogmatic and an enemy of sectarianism.”

On Nov. 26 the Cuban government broke up a small “hunger strike” by the so-called San Isidro Movement, a group backed by Washington that looks for ways to undermine the revolution by claiming to speak for censored artists and musicians. The next day some 200 people, including artists, writers and students who are not part of the group, gathered outside the Ministry of Culture in Havana to express concern over the government’s action and to discuss freedom of expression. Thirty participants were invited into the Ministry of Culture for what became a four-hour discussion.

Prieto’s article answers the false picture painted by Washington claiming that the Cuban government represses artistic liberty and freedom of speech. He also takes up the damaging effect of “social media,” an important question for the working class.

The translation is by the *Militant*.



## BY ABEL PRIETO

Not by chance, Oct. 20 was chosen as the Day of Cuban Culture. I remember how, with so much pride, Armando Hart<sup>1</sup> stressed the fact that on that date, when the Hymn of Bayamo [Cuba’s national anthem] was sung for the first time, it served to pay tribute to the men and women who are central figures in the nation’s cultural life.<sup>2</sup>

It showed, Hart said, that the fundamental identification between creators of art and the patriotic, anti-slavery and anti-colonial ideals of 1868 — later enriched by [José] Martí, [Julio Antonio] Mella, [Antonio] Guiteras, and Fidel<sup>3</sup> — had been synthesized in a remarkable way.

The victorious revolution in 1959 won enthusiastic support from the overwhelming majority of Cuban artists and

writers. Many, even those living abroad, returned to the island to join in building a new world.

Although the aggressiveness of the U.S. began very early — through pressure and threats, attacks, bombings, financing armed gangs, and a fierce media campaign — the revolutionary government did not neglect to advance Cuban culture. It founded ICAIC [national film institute], Casa de las Américas, the National Printing Institute, and the first school for art instructors, while also carrying out the literacy campaign.

As [Alejo] Carpentier<sup>4</sup> said, times of loneliness had ended for the Cuban writer and those of solidarity had begun. That’s because the revolution created a massive and eager public for arts and letters. It also gave space to the most genuine and historically discriminated against expressions of popular traditions and to the most audacious efforts in various artistic genres.

Unable to fathom the deep links between culture and revolution, the Yankees repeatedly tried to organize groups of “dissidents” in intellectual circles. But they failed again and again.

The case of Armando Valladares was an act of desperation. He was exhibited before the world as an invalid, a poet prisoner-of-conscience. They even published a highly publicized book of his poems, dramatically titled *From My Wheelchair*.

But he was neither a poet nor crippled (he nimbly climbed the airplane steps when he was pardoned). He had a murky past in the Batista tyranny’s police and had been sentenced to prison for terrorist activities.

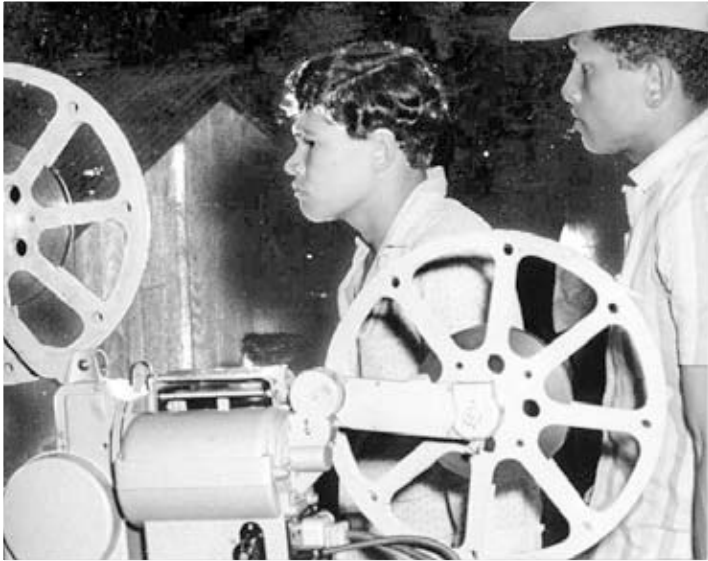
Today, many years later, they present an alleged “movement” (San Isidro), an alleged “rapper” who was prosecuted for contempt, and an alleged hunger strike conducted by a dozen alleged “young artists.” They were backed by a big campaign in the foreign press, in digital media paid to carry out political subversion, and in social media. They had the immediate support of [Secretary of State Mike] Pompeo, [Sen.] Marco Rubio, [OAS General Secretary Luis] Almagro, and other individuals.

Social networks were used to create a rarefied climate, intensely charged emotionally, to arouse expressions of backing and moral support against a supposed injustice.

As studies by many analysts have shown, using social networks to appeal to the emotions brings people into



Cuban Revolution fostered widespread interest in “arts and letters” among working people, Abel Prieto says. After the 1959 revolution peasant youth, right, were trained how to run projectors to show movies, often for the first time, in the countryside, including in the Sierra Maestra, above.



Granma/Mario Ferrer

transitory communities of shared feelings. At the same time, it paralyzes their ability to reason, judge, and verify the boundaries between reality and fiction.

Many (most) of those who gathered Nov. 27 outside the Ministry of Culture were influenced by the atmosphere created on social networks. Few knew what actually happened at San Isidro or who was involved. Perhaps some of them had had one or another bad experience and they felt hurt. I think they honestly wanted to have a dialogue with the institution.

Others (a minority) participated with complete consciousness in an operation against the revolution. They used social networking to amplify what was happening and to spread it in a distorted way. Fake news was broadcast about an imaginary crackdown that included tear gas, pepper spray and alleged traps set for participants. They knew that their lies were helping to justify Trump’s policies against their country. Their only interest in “dialogue” was to turn it into news, into a show, and score it as a victory. Some needed to justify the money they’re paid.

However, it’s necessary to clearly separate the comic-strip actions of the marginal elements of San Isidro from what actually happened at the Ministry of Culture. Among the latter, there were valuable young people who must be listened to.

The cultural policy of the revolution has opened a wide and unprejudiced space for creators to work in total freedom. It’s true that there have been errors, misunderstandings, and blunders, but the revolutionary process itself has set out to rectify them.

These institutions, together with UN-

EAC [Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba] and the Asociación Hermanos Saiz<sup>5</sup> [Saiz Brothers Association], are open to frank discussion with artists and writers. If for some reason this dialogue is interrupted, there are appropriate channels of communication to reopen it.

It’s totally legitimate to discuss how to consolidate the links between artistic creators and institutions. To discuss experimental artistic expressions that haven’t yet been sufficiently understood. To discuss the essential critical function of the artistic creation, the “anything goes” part of the postmodern vision, freedom of expression, and many other topics.

What is not legitimate is disrespect for the law, the attempt to use blackmail against institutions, to disparage the symbols of the nation, to seek notoriety through provocation, to participate in actions paid for by the enemies of the nation, to collaborate with those who work to destroy it, to join the lying anti-Cuban chorus in social networks, and to stir up hatred.

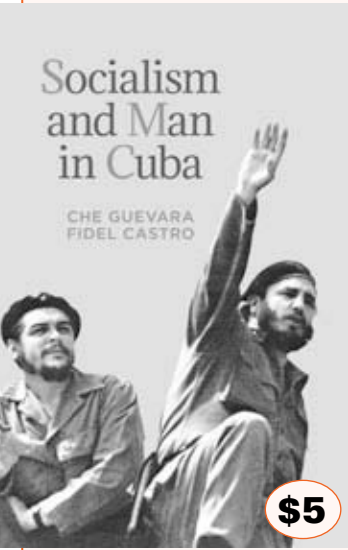
In the midst of the worldwide crisis created by the pandemic and global neoliberalism, Cuba also confronts unprecedented harassment from the U.S. That’s why they’ve chosen this particular moment to finance spectacles that distort the image of our country.

Any artistic creator who approaches Cuban institutions with legitimate objectives will find representatives willing to listen and provide support. With fakes and frauds there is no possible dialogue.

5 The Asociación Hermanos Saiz is a cultural organization for young people, formed in 1986.

1 Armando Hart was one of the historic leaders of the Cuban Revolution. When the revolutionary government established the Ministry of Culture in 1976, he became its minister, serving through 1997. He preceded Prieto as head of the José Martí Cultural Society. Hart died in 2017.  
2 Cuba’s national anthem was sung for the first time on Oct. 20, 1868. It is also the date when the Cuban independence army freed the eastern city of Bayamo, launching the first war of independence against Spanish colonial rule.

3 José Martí — revolutionary, poet, writer and journalist — is Cuba’s national hero. He founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1892. Julio Antonio Mella was founding president of the Federation of University Students and a founding leader of the Communist Party in 1925. Antonio Guiteras was a student leader of the fight against the Gerardo Machado dictatorship in the 1920s and ’30s.  
4 Alejo Carpentier, a leading Cuban and Latin American writer, is considered one of the best novelists of the 20th century. He returned to Cuba in 1959 and joined the revolution. He served as a Cuban diplomat in Paris until his death in 1980.



## Further reading on the Cuban Revolution

### **Socialism and Man in Cuba**

By Che Guevara and Fidel Castro

“We must not create either docile servants of official thought, or ‘scholarship students’ who live at the expense of the state — practicing freedom in quotation marks. Revolutionaries will come who will sing the song of the new man in the true voice of the people. That is a process that takes time.”

— Che Guevara

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# Workers need to organize, fight for jobs, wages, health care

Continued from front page

falling heaviest on workers' shoulders.

The package adopted Dec. 20 provides a one-time "stimulus" check for \$600, and \$300-a-week federal unemployment supplement to those who qualify for benefits, for up to 16 weeks only. Some 12 million working people were set to lose their benefits at the end of December. Millions of undocumented workers who are thrown out of work will go without any benefits. The relief package also includes copious subsidies to the owners of U.S. airlines and other bosses, dressed up as "payroll assistance."

The moratorium on evictions, ignored in practice by many landlords, will be extended only until the end of January. Over 6 million adults could face eviction or foreclosure in coming months, according to a Census Bureau survey.

For the week ending Dec. 11, new jobless claims reached the highest level since September, with just under a million filing new claims, as government lockdowns force restaurants, bars and other small businesses to close. Millions are unemployed, and many more who've been without work for months are no longer even counted.

## Cut workweek, with no cut in pay!

"Workers and our unions need to fight for unemployment benefits to *all* those thrown out of work, set at union scale and available for as long as workers need them, not one-time payments," said Rachele Fruit, Socialist Workers Party candidate in the special Jan. 5 election for U.S. Senate from Georgia.

"My party says our unions need to fight for shortening the workweek with



DeAndria Turner; inset, Facing South/Olivia Paschal  
Above, over 400 members of United Steelworkers union went on strike Dec. 16 at Constellium aluminium plant in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Bosses are demanding concessions on safety, seniority, scheduling and health care. Constellium has 25 plants worldwide. Inset, poultry workers walked off the job at nonunion George's plant in Springdale, Arkansas, Dec. 8, to protest crowded conditions, lack of safety and low pay. George's, one of 10 biggest poultry producers in U.S., received government waiver in April to kill and process 175 birds per minute.

no cut in pay to prevent more layoffs," Fruit said. "We call for a government-funded public works program at union scale to create millions of jobs building hospitals, schools, housing and other things workers need.

"Above all, workers need to be back at work," Fruit said. "That is the one place where we can join together and stand up to the employers' drive to make us pay for their crisis. This is the cornerstone for rebuilding the labor movement.

"Workers at Amazon's Bessemer warehouse in Alabama are setting an example, fighting for better pay,

working conditions and representation by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union," Fruit said. The National Labor Relations Board ruled Dec. 15 that workers there will hold a unionization vote.

"Their fight merits the backing of all workers," she said. Establishing a union at Bessemer will boost the confidence of workers everywhere, including at Walmart, Amazon's main competitor.

Unlike these giant retailers, who are raking in profits and have cornered even greater market share during the pandemic, small businesses are going under

in record numbers. The government's Paycheck Protection Program, resurrected in the new bill, is slated to make \$285 billion in loans to small-business owners. But loans come due, and tens of thousands of restaurants and other small shops have already closed.

The pandemic continues to spread and hospitalization rates mount. People needing emergency care were shunted into tents at the Corona Regional Medical Center in Los Angeles, as the hospital's emergency room is overflowing. For-profit health industry bosses did next to nothing to prepare for this inevitable second wave.

This has led to strikes and protests by nurses and other workers at hospitals across the country, including a one-day strike at Chicago's Stroger Hospital of Cook County Dec. 22.

Nursing home bosses continue to pack residents into overcrowded and understaffed facilities. And they bar family members from coming to visit and help care for them. One report shows that 25% of all COVID deaths in New York in the five weeks leading up to Nov. 29 were in nursing homes, despite the fact that residents are less than 0.5% of the state's population.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's response to rising hospitalization rates was to blame workers for not being careful enough and then threaten an even more restrictive shutdown of commerce, travel and jobs after Christmas.

## For-profit vaccine rollout

The federal government is doing nothing to marshal its immense resources to accelerate production of the vaccines and distribute and dispense them. Instead, it's relying on capitalist owners of the pharmaceutical industry, Walgreens, CVS, UPS and FedEx. The biggest medical supply middleman in the U.S., McKesson Corp., got the contract to move the Moderna vaccine. They take the vaccine from the for-profit producers to airport hubs for for-profit delivery by UPS and FedEx. For this, they get \$746 million.

CVS and Walgreen bosses have been contracted to give the shots to staff and residents in the country's nursing homes. But they don't have nearly enough staff to do this. So, as the *New York Times* reported Dec. 22, they're in a "hiring frenzy" to take on tens of thousands of new people with little experience.

In the first week of immunization only an estimated 128,000 people got the vaccine. The big majority of working people will wait many months.

The COVID-19 immunization program will be a windfall for the owners of the two main capitalist monopolies that manufacture these vaccines. Moderna bosses got billions in government research grants, while Pfizer benefited from massive advance orders. After haggling with authorities over the price of its vaccine, Pfizer may reap up to a 60% profit margin on each shot.

And these pharmaceutical monopolies are fighting to protect their patents. The World Trade Organization put off until March discussion on proposals from the Indian and South African governments to allow production of generic versions of the vaccine.

The dog-eat-dog capitalist system is the root of the crisis working people face today.

## 1 in 5 workers behind bars suffer COVID in US prisons

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Workers behind bars are among those being hit hardest by COVID-19. One in five state and federal prisoners in the U.S. has tested positive for the virus, a rate over four times higher than in the general population. In some states more than half the prisoners have been infected, reported The Associated Press.

New cases this month are reaching some of their highest levels in any time since the 10-month pandemic began. At least 275,000 prisoners have been infected and more than 1,700 have died.

"That number is a vast undercount," Homer Venters, former chief medical officer at New York's Rikers Island jail

complex, told AP. "I still encounter prisons and jails where, when people get sick, not only are they not tested but they don't receive care."

The disease has spread rapidly because prisoners are crammed into overcrowded and poorly ventilated facilities with inadequate health care, and little or none made available to those who get the disease. Some are just thrown into solitary confinement. Guards and other prison personnel who have come down with coronavirus facilitate its spread.

At the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, New York, where more than 100 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19 just since the beginning

of December, some sick inmates have been placed in cells with healthy individuals, reports Federal Defenders of New York, a prisoner advocacy group.

Felix Collazo, an inmate infected with coronavirus at this federal jail, was thrown into the hole after speaking to the *Daily News* Dec. 10 about the appalling medical conditions there.

Half the prisoners in Kansas have been infected with COVID-19. One of them, Donte Westmoreland, who was recently released from Lansing Correctional Facility, caught the virus while incarcerated on a marijuana charge.

"It was like I was sentenced to death," he told AP.

Westmoreland lived with more than 100 virus-infected men in an open dorm, where men were sick on the floor, unable to get up on their own, he said.

In Arkansas, where over 9,700 prisoners have tested positive and 50 have died, four of every seven have had the virus, the second-highest prison infection rate in the country.

Despite calls by groups like the National Academies of Science, Medicine, and Engineering to release older prisoners and others most medically vulnerable to COVID-19, little has been done.

In the first three months of the pandemic, more than 10,000 federal prisoners applied for compassionate release. Wardens denied or didn't respond to the vast majority of these requests, approving only 156 in the whole country — less than 2%, AP said.



AP Photo/Eric Risberg

Rally near San Quentin State Prison in California July 9, where 20 inmates who tested positive for COVID-19 spoke out against conditions. Over 2,200 inmates were infected and 28 died.



# The crisis of the capitalist rulers is visited on working people

The Spanish edition of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working Class Politics at the Millennium* by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. The book explains the economic and political developments that led to the decadeslong downturn in the arc of capitalist development we've lived through. This excerpt is from the chapter "So Far From God, So Close to Orange County: The Deflationary Drag of Finance Capital." It helps explain the underlying forces, accelerated by the capitalist rulers' responses to the pandemic, at work in today's global capitalist economic crisis. Copyright © 1999 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JACK BARNES

The world capitalist economy has entered a long-term deflationary crisis, a contraction that cannot be fundamentally reversed by the ups and downs of the business cycle. With their profit rates under long-term pressure, the capitalists are in their "lean and mean" period, their "just-on-time" period, their "downsizing," "computerizing," and "de-layering" period. They are laying off workers and other employees, speeding up production, and raking in short-term cash in the bargain.

But the one thing the capitalists are not doing, and are incapable of doing, is expanding productive capacity to anywhere near the degree they need to fuel another gigantic boom, set industrial profit rates on a long-term upward course, and accelerate capital accumulation. Even as capitalists temporarily boost their returns by cutting costs and taking a bigger slice of market share away from their rivals, the long-run profit expectations of capital are such that they are still not investing in new plant and equipment that draws more and more workers into expanded production.

The money that is going into new equipment goes largely into ways to make us work faster to produce more with fewer co-workers. That does not expand productive capacity, however. It intensifies speedup and extends the workweek. But that alone does not create the basis for the rising profit rates and capital accumulation that marked the post-World War II capitalist boom until it began running out of steam by the early 1970s.

In fact, instead of issuing stock to finance expansion — the classic source of "capital formation" extolled in standard economics textbooks — U.S. corporations for most of the 1980s and 1990s have actually bought more previously offered stock from each other than they have issued in new shares. Capitalists have also issued large quantities of high-interest corporate bonds — gone deep into debt, in other words — to finance takeovers and buyouts.

So, the world's propertied families have been fighting among themselves more and more to use credit to corner a bigger cut of the surplus value they collectively squeeze from working people. They have been blowing up great balloons of debt. But ever since the 1987 stock market panic, and at an accelerated pace since the onset of world depression conditions at the opening of the 1990s, the capitalists have been plagued by the problem that first one balloon, then



A cartoon from 1950 *Militant* "The 'Welfare State'" depicts how the capitalist rulers use their state to boost profits of the bosses while grinding down the conditions of those who produce all wealth, the workers and farmers.

another, and then yet another begins to deflate. And they have no way of knowing which balloon will go next until they start hearing the "whoosh," and by then it is often too late. ...

With returns on investments in capacity-expanding plant and equipment under pressure since the mid-1970s, owners of capital have not only been cost cutting; the holders of paper have been borrowing larger and larger amounts to buy and sell various forms of paper securities at a profit. They blew up a giant balloon of debt in Orange County over a period of years; the bondholders thought they had died and gone to heaven. Then the balloon began to deflate, as they learned the hard way that interest rates go up as well as down. When the balloon international bankers had inflated in Mexico in the 1980s began to collapse, the bondholders stepped in and blew it back up for a while. But in Orange County, the more local officials borrowed to make a killing using public funds to gamble with bond merchants, the greater their vulnerability became. Earlier this year, when rates started rising and low-interest bond issues were suddenly no longer available, the moment of truth arrived.

Now the capitalists and their public representatives — and not just in Mexico or Orange County — have been given another warning of the long-run possibilities of an uncontrollable deflation.

Over the past couple of decades, upturns in the business cycle have relied on floating large amounts of fictitious capital — ballooning debt and other paper values. The capitalists are now paying the piper for the lack of sufficient economic growth during that period to keep rolling over the loans.

The financial press has a term for this explosive process; they call it "de-leveraging." ...

Wall Street has already offered up Orange County's treasurer as a scapegoat. But their bottom line is going to be that it is working people like us who are really to blame. If we would accept

fewer schools and hospitals, if we would agree to pay higher tuition, if we would demand less public transportation, if "illegals" could be kept off the public rolls, then there would not be so much pressure on poor fund managers to pour billions into high-risk investments. And public workers are already the first to suffer layoffs in Orange County.

Municipal bonds, together with U.S. Treasury bills, are the prerogative of the very rich. ... And written on each and every one of these pieces of paper are the words "Full faith and credit." That means the only collateral they are ultimately backed up by is the "full faith and credit" of the government or agency that issued them. The "faith" derives from the guarantee to the wealthy bondholders that they are *always* at the head of the line to be paid out of taxes and other revenues. First comes the interest — then, if there is anything left, the schools, roads, hospitals, and payroll. It is never the other way around.

No cuts! That is the bondholders' slogan too!

And since governments produce no wealth, we are the ones the debtors come to in order to demonstrate their "full faith and credit." The blood money is squeezed from us.

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December

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# Cuban Revolution points road forward

**Continued from front page**

The for-profit hospital industry turns away those needing life-saving treatment, and nursing home residents are crammed into conditions that ensure rapid spread of the virus. Pharmaceutical bosses insist on the inviolability of their patents, motivated only by profit, guaranteeing large swaths of the semicolonial world won't see vaccination for months, maybe years. Pfizer says its doses won't reach millions in the U.S. until June or later, while other plants capable of producing the vaccine have been shut down.

This disregard for the lives of working people is an integral part of social relations built on dog-eat-dog capitalist morality.

The ruling families, the meritocratic middle-class layers who serve them, and their Democratic and Republican parties all consider working people "deplorable." This is true even of workers the capitalists claim are "essential," while cutting staff and ignoring safety in search of profit off their labor.

It doesn't have to be like this.

Workers and farmers in Cuba proved that our class is capable of organizing and fighting to replace capitalist rule with something better — our own government.

Led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement, millions of workers and peasants overturned the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship on Jan. 1, 1959. The *Militant* joins in celebrating the 62nd anniversary of Cuba's living revolution — a conquest for working people the world over!

Working people in Cuba used their state power to take over the factories, land and the banks; turned the land over to all who wanted to till it; mobilized 100,000 young volunteers to eradicate illiteracy; enforced an end to racial segregation; and, virtually from scratch, built a health care system truly worthy of humanity

— a source of pride and admiration around the world.

Through making a revolution, working people discovered their own worth, coming to recognize themselves as the makers of history, determined to put their revolution at the service of others fighting oppression.

They responded to the request of the government of Angola for support in defeating an invasion by South Africa's apartheid rulers — backed by Washington — in the 1970s. Over 400,000 Cuban soldiers and other volunteers fought for 17 years, and the South African invasions were decisively defeated, paving the way for the independence of Namibia and the overturn of apartheid.

Today Cuban volunteer medical workers treat those infected with coronavirus in dozens of countries. Cuba has one of the lowest death rates anywhere in the world.

The U.S. capitalist rulers have never forgiven Cuban working people for taking power into their own hands. For over six decades they have waged an unrelenting economic war aimed at strangling their revolution and the powerful example it sets.

Defending the revolution from Washington's attacks, and telling the truth about it to fellow workers worldwide, is indispensable for advancing working-class interests in the U.S.

In 1961 Fidel Castro said, "There will be a victorious revolution in the United States before a victorious counterrevolution in Cuba." The Socialist Workers Party acts on the capacities of workers and farmers here to emulate the example of Cuba — to make our own revolution. Its members explain workers' interests are irreconcilable with those who exploit us and point to what we can do today to build a party that will lead millions in the struggles that lie ahead.

And we will take political power into our own hands and build a new world.

## India farmers battle gov't attack on price supports

**Continued from front page**

farmers "want the government to withdraw the laws completely," Singh said.

Manufacturing and other industry has rapidly expanded in recent years, but more than half of India's 1.3 billion people remain on the land. While a small minority are wealthy capitalist farmers using wage labor and machinery on larger, more productive acreage, the bulk of India's 146 million farms are only a few acres. These farmers rely on family labor and many are weighed down by debts.

Modi said Dec. 18 that he was "humbly ready to talk on every issue." But he also said sweeping changes are needed to dismantle the decades-old system of state-backed floor prices for grains like wheat and rice as well as government crop or loan insurance. They "cannot be delayed any longer," he said.

### More exploitation of farmers, workers

The new laws are backed by the country's billionaire ruling families. Corporate buyers will be able to dictate terms, driving down prices for farm produce and taking over debt-laden small farms. Big companies such as Walmart and India's Reliance Industries will be able to buy directly, and reduce small landowners to contract farming, increasing their dependency and exploitation.

This is the opposite of a land reform that would make land available to the landless workers and peasants — more than 144 million at last count. In the previous decade the number of landholdings decreased from 127 million to 118 million, as small farms were gobbled up by larger landholders.

And millions of rural toilers will be driven off the land and drawn into India's expanding industrial production, swelling the ranks of the working class.

### Solidarity grows among the rural poor

Earlier this year the Modi government imposed the anti-Muslim Citizenship Amendment Act, which makes religion the criterion by which immigrants can gain citizenship. Deadly rioting by chauvinist Hindu gangs targeting Muslims erupt-

ed. The Indian rulers hope to use the religious divisions and restrictions on Muslims to increase profits and weaken the working class.

Sectarian rivalry and violence is a historical legacy of British colonial rule, which used religious and caste divisions to retain power. These policies have been perpetuated by India's capitalist rulers. Against this, the secular traditions of the Indian independence movement are being reinforced by growing solidarity among India's rural poor.

A headline in the Feb. 26 *India Times* read, "As Delhi Burns, Gurdwaras Offer Help & Give Shelter to Muslim Families Fleeing Violence." Gurdwaras are Sikh places of worship as well as community centers. Mixed community patrols were formed in Delhi to prevent attacks on the homes of Muslims.

In Seelampur, Dalits — derogatorily called untouchables — sheltered their Muslim neighbors. Dalits are the poorest, most exploited and ostracized layer under India's caste system, which was legally abolished in 1950 but its discriminatory legacy still persists.

"The new laws will force Kisaans [farmers] to lose their land," Gurmail Singh told the *Militant* at a Dec. 19 rally in Philadelphia. Solidarity demonstrations continue to be held by Indian immigrants in dozens of cities across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

"We're here to show our support," Singh said, for the protests against "the Modi dictatorship" and for "uniting all of India's farmers — those who are Hindu, Muslim and others."

### Discount on books for prisoners

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## 'End embargo of Cuba!'

**Continued from front page**

ing the sixth anniversary of the agreement reached between the U.S. and Cuban governments to reestablish diplomatic relations, which Washington had cut off in January 1961.

The actions also marked the freedom of the last three of the Cuban Five the same day. The Cuban Five had been framed up in the U.S. for their actions to defend Cuba from counterrevolutionary attacks launched from the U.S. They were imprisoned for up to 16 years.

Holding signs against the U.S. economic war against Cuba, 30 people picketed and rallied with signs alongside Interstate 94 in Minneapolis. "Cars passing by honked in solidarity," reported participant Helen Meyers. The action was called by the Minnesota Cuba Committee.

"The U.S. uses its economic and political power to undermine Cuba's right to national self-determination, and that goes against everything that I stand for," Nick Neeser, 22, a woodworker, told the *Militant*. This was his first protest in support of the Cuban Revolution.

"The Cuban Revolution has inspired all of us," said David Rosenfeld of the Socialist Workers Party, who spoke at the rally, "by its internationalism, medical care and education system. Above all, Cuba has something to teach us: It is possible to make a revolution."

A picket was organized at a busy intersection in Chicago on the same day by the Chicago Cuba Coalition. Participants reached out to passersby with informational flyers about the Cuban Revolution and the need to oppose Washington's economic war against it.

In Washington, D.C., a news conference was held at Busboys and Poets featuring greetings from José Ramón Cabañas, Cuban ambassador to the U.S.; Sandra Ramírez, North American director of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP); and Gail Walker from the National Network on Cuba. Busboys and Poets is a restaurant, bookstore and frequent venue for political and artistic meetings.

The NNOC plans to organize similar public solidarity activities on the 17th of each month.

A resolution passed at the recently concluded meeting of the NNOC projects a series of actions in 2021 for member groups to participate in. They include a "Solidarity Caravan Against the U.S. Anti-Cuba Blockade" for Dec. 27, with plans to organize these on the last Sunday of every month.

A successful such action took place in Miami Nov. 29, with over 100 people in more than 80 cars and on bikes participating in a caravan around the city, including in Little Havana.

### Bay of Pigs, literacy brigades

In April, activities will be organized to mark the 60th anniversaries of two important developments in the Cuban Revolution — Cuba's decisive defeat of the U.S.-backed mercenary invasion at Playa Giron (Bay of Pigs) April 19, 1961, and the launching of the national literacy campaign. In what Cuba's revolutionary government declared the "Year of Education," hundreds of thousands of Cubans, overwhelmingly youths, were mobilized from cities into rural areas to wipe out illiteracy on the island. This involved millions more fully in strengthening the revolution.

The NNOC will also be building the May Day brigade to Cuba, where participants can learn firsthand what the revolution is all about. ICAP has issued an invitation for people in the U.S. and around the world to join in the brigade. This annual brigade, had been put off in 2020 because of the pandemic.

Cuba's community-based health care system — a product of the revolution — has meant everyone on the island is visited and aided in beating back the coronavirus. And the Cuban government plans to vaccinate everyone in the next few months.

Also being projected are brigades organized by IFCO/Pastors for Peace, the Venceremos Brigade and the Che Guevara Brigade, a project of the Canadian Network on Cuba.

On May 21 the United Nations General Assembly is scheduled to hear debate and vote on a resolution demanding the U.S. government end its brutal economic embargo of Cuba. The NNOC is projecting organizing protests at the U.N. in New York, in front of the White House in Washington, D.C., and in other cities.

For more information contact the National Network on Cuba at NNOC20012002@yahoo.com.