

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

'Alone we will be defeated,
together we can win'

— PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 87/NO. 20 MAY 22, 2023

Defend political freedoms under assault from the Democrats, FBI

BY TERRY EVANS

Since before the 2016 election, Democrats and their backers in the middle-class left have gone after Donald Trump and his supporters, using their main political police agency, the FBI, and the capitalist court system to attack them, especially the working people Hillary Clinton called “deplorable.”

In doing so, they have trampled on constitutional freedoms working people need to fight to advance our interests and to speak on behalf of all those oppressed by the capitalist rulers. Defense of political rights, regardless of who is targeted, remains central to defending our unions and vanguard fighters today.

The liberals’ assaults have been met by tit-for-tat attacks by the new Republican-led House majority, which destroys any pretense Republicans try to present of occupying the moral high ground.

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Residents demand the truth about East Palestine disaster

Rail union speaks out, blames profit drive of bosses



Rail union paper says Norfolk Southern bosses’ profit drive is responsible for disaster in East Palestine, Ohio. Fight put up by area residents, rail unionists shows potential for them to work together to take control of working conditions on the railroad, living conditions in that region.

BY TONY LANE

Working people in East Palestine, Ohio, continue to fight to get the truth out from the rail bosses and Environmental Protection Agency representatives who

claim everything is safe now after the Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern derailment and release of highly toxic chemicals that got into the soil, water and air.

They turn out for weekly EPA “informational sessions.” When agency spokesman Mark Durno told them May 4 private wells have all tested clean, the *Salem News* reports, residents forced him to admit that “the wells have tested at acceptable levels of chemicals — for now.”

Durno also had to agree when residents presented reports that it takes years for any contamination to seep into private wells. Meeting participants challenged the EPA’s initial plan, which only included testing within a quarter mile of

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Continuing protests in Baluchistan press fight against gov’t repression



Rasad Baluchistan News Agency

May 5 march in Zahedan, in Baluchistan province in Iran, marks 32nd consecutive weekly protest there, called for end to death penalty and for freeing political prisoners. Banner says “You who claim to be for justice, free Maulana Moradzei,” an imprisoned Sunni cleric.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Demands to end the death penalty and free political prisoners in Iran — including recently arrested Sunni religious teachers — were at the center of the sizable protests in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-Baluchistan province, May 5. This is at least the 32nd consecutive week of mass actions there since the death of Zhina Amini, a young Kurdish woman who died after her arrest by the hated “morality” police in Tehran. The protests take place after Friday prayer services. The oppressed Baluch nation-

ality is the majority in the province.

In the first week of May the Iranian government executed more than 20 people, most of them Baluchs accused of drug charges. Baluchs, who are Sunni Muslims, face systematic discrimination by the counterrevolutionary Shiite-based bourgeois-clerical regime in Tehran.

“These executions are against Islam and international law,” said prominent Sunni cleric Maulana Abdul-Hamid at the Zahedan mosque

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Back Ukraine independence! Moscow out of Ukraine now!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Hit with a new wave of cruise missile strikes on Kyiv and aerial attacks on other cities, working people in Ukraine deepened their determination to resist Moscow’s assaults on their independence. At home, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s regime is tightening restrictions on free speech, but more Russians are finding ways to speak out against his war.

Moscow is far from subjugating the areas of eastern Ukraine it has seized. Putin visited occupied Mariupol for a propaganda stunt March 19. Some residents in a new apartment building were filmed for Russian TV effusively thanking him for invading. But as he was leaving, a barely audible voice in the distance cries out in Russian, “It’s all lies!”

To counter mounting Russian losses, students are now a target for Putin’s goal

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Extend the reach of SWP campaigns, ‘Militant,’ books and Fighting Fund

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Socialist Workers Party and Communist League candidates and members are responding to political opportunities opened up by the continuing crisis of capitalism and the working-class resistance it spawns to meet and exceed this spring’s goal of signing up 1,350 *Militant* readers, sell the same number of books by SWP and other revolutionary

Continued on page 3

What are stakes for working people in US banking crisis?

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Government officials and the owners of the country’s largest banks keep insisting the U.S. banking system has been stabilized and is under control. Is that true? The answer is no, as the deepening crisis of their capitalist system continues to unravel and they aim to take it out on the backs of the working class.

Over the last few months, three of the four largest-ever U.S. bank failures have played out. The latest collapse was San Francisco-based First Republic Bank, which had assets of over \$200 billion. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation seized control of the bank May 1, then promptly sold it off on the cheap to banking gi-

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US Supreme Court halts Richard Glossip execution

BY JANET POST

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled May 5 to block the state of Oklahoma from executing death row inmate Richard Glossip. The execution had been scheduled for May 18 after the state's Pardon and Parole Board voted 2-2 on his appeal for clemency April 26.

The high court put the execution on hold while it decides whether to hear Glossip's appeal.

The justices gave significant weight to an unprecedented appeal on Glossip's behalf by Oklahoma's new attorney general, Gentner Drummond. "I believe it would be a grave injustice to allow the execution of a man whose trial was plagued by many errors," Drummond had told the clemency board.

"I'm not a murderer and I don't deserve to die for this," Glossip told the board.

Part of the appeal by Glossip's attorneys will be challenging the tie vote of the five-person parole board that determined Glossip's fate. One board member recused himself because his wife was a prosecutor in the case.

Glossip, now 60, has had nine separate execution dates and eaten three last meals during his 26 years in prison. In 2015 he was hours away from the death chamber when prison officials realized they had the wrong drugs.

In 1997 Glossip was the manager of Best Budget Inn in Oklahoma City. Justin Sneed, a maintenance worker there with a criminal record and addicted to methamphetamine, beat motel owner Barry Van Treese to death with a baseball bat and stole cash from Van Treese's car. Sneed had previously

beaten and robbed motel guests.

Sneed told police Van Treese's death was a "botched robbery." But detectives led him to say he had been scapegoated and suggested several times that Glossip had paid Sneed to kill Van Treese.

Glossip was convicted and sentenced to death but the trial was so egregiously flawed that a second trial was ordered in 2004. There is no physical evidence tying Glossip to the killing.

Sneed was given a life sentence. Fellow prisoners have testified Sneed bragged about framing Glossip. Prisoner Paul Melton said Sneed told him one detective said, "This is the only way you're going to live, buddy." In a letter to his attorney from prison Sneed asked, "Do I have the choice of recanting my testimony at any time during my life?"

Calls for a new hearing

Sixty-two state legislators have called for a new hearing. Republican State Representative Kevin McDugle said, "Oklahomans — including both those who support and oppose the death penalty — will not tolerate Mr. Glossip being executed while there is so much proof that the police and district attorney lost and destroyed important evidence, wrongfully altered critical testimony, and continue to purposely hide evidence to this day." McDugle said he would "fight to end the death penalty" if Glossip is executed.

Especially infuriating to authorities supporting Glossip's execution is that along with other Oklahoma death row inmates, he filed a lawsuit in 2014 challenging the three-drug "cocktail" used there, saying it violates the Eighth



AP Photo/Sue Ogrocki

Death penalty opponent Sister Helen Prejean speaks at protest against execution of Richard Glossip May 4 at Oklahoma Supreme Court. State attorney general also opposes his execution.

Amendment to the Constitution, barring cruel and unusual punishment.

In 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that the prisoners had failed to prove the drugs would cause a level of pain that violates the Constitution. The court said it was *up to the prisoners* to propose an alternative for their own executions.

On July 1, 2022, the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals set a schedule to put to death 25 of the state's 43 death-row prisoners before the end of

2024. This includes "prisoners with severe mental illness, brain damage, and claims of innocence," the Death Penalty Information Center protested. This past January, Attorney General Drummond slowed that schedule down to one every 60 days.

In an interview earlier this year, Glossip told CNN how he feels as each execution date gets closer. "It's still scary, it will always be scary until they finally open this door and let me go, or remove this from over my head completely."

Flying Foods workers strike at LAX

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

LOS ANGELES — Chanting "Flying Foods escucha! Estamos en la lucha!" (Flying Foods listen! We're in the fight!), Flying Food Group workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 11, picketed in front of their workplace here April 28. Then they led a 50-car caravan through nearby Los Angeles airport.

The company employs more than 350 workers at LAX preparing and transporting in-flight meals to more than a dozen airlines. On March 15, the workers rejected the bosses' contract offer and voted 99% to authorize a strike.

"Now I get paid \$18.04 an hour, but it's still not enough for my family and me to afford to live a dignified life in Los Angeles," said Olga Tirado on the

union website. She has worked at Flying Food Group for 13 years and is in its cold-food team. "And because the company refuses to provide us with pensions, I also worry about our quality of life in retirement."

"We are striking because FFG must respect our rights and pay us a fair wage," she said.

"We are fighting for a better salary," striker Ofelia Jacinto told the *Militant* before the caravan took off. "They want to take away our benefits. We need more mats to stand on, better gloves and more earplugs. When we finish work, we don't have enough brooms and dustpans to clean up."

Strikers said they are getting a lot of support from other unions and workers. Support the strike! Join the picket line at 901 W. Hillcrest Blvd.

THE MILITANT

Support Teamster push for new UPS contract!

Teamster members at UPS demand an end to two-tier wages for drivers, a raise for part-time workers and a limit to forced overtime in their fight for a new contract. The 'Militant' has been building solidarity and joining union rallies leading up to the July 31 contract deadline.



Militant/Mike Shur
Teamster rally at UPS depot in New York April 28, raising demands for contract.

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The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.
Telephone: (212) 244-4899
Fax: (212) 244-4947
E-mail: themilitant@mac.com
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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant's* views. These are expressed in editorials.

SWP campaigns, 'Militant'

Continued from front page
leaders, and raise \$165,000 to help cover the cost of producing the paper.

Book sales have already gone way over the top. The eight-week campaign ends May 16.

The *Militant* is the only place where working people can find out about the skirmishes workers and farmers are waging, seeking to push back against moves by the bosses and their government to offload the crisis of their system on our backs.

Examples are our coverage of the battle by working people in East Palestine, Ohio, to force Norfolk Southern bosses and the government to clean up toxic contamination from the train derailment there and provide for long-term health care; mushroom workers in Washington state fighting to defend their union; and to UPS workers mobilizing to win a new contract that meets their needs.

The *Militant* covers SWP candidates across the country explaining that working people need to break from the bosses' two parties, the Democrats and Republicans, and form our own party, a labor party based on our unions. In the May 6 election for mayor in Fort Worth, Texas, SWP candidate Alyson Kennedy popularized this perspective in her last statement featured in the media. "We need a fundamental class change," she said, "a government of workers and farmers.

"Another challenge is defending constitutional freedoms," she said, "freedom of the press, freedom against arbitrary search and seizure, freedom of assembly — needed by working people to carry out our struggles for better conditions." Kennedy got credit for 2,206 votes, 5.2% of the total.

While knocking on doors in the South

Shore neighborhood of Chicago, SWP members Dan Fein and Leroy Watson spoke with Ebony Scott-Anderson May 7. Three days earlier she attended a community meeting to discuss the city's plans to house immigrant asylum-seekers at the shuttered South Shore High School in her neighborhood.

"I've got nothing against migrants coming here," Scott-Anderson said, "but city authorities should have consulted us before making their decision to house them in our neighborhood. At the school they will get just a bed, a toilet and food."

"The capitalist rulers use divide and rule to pit immigrants against U.S.-born workers," Watson said. "We need solidarity, not divisions in the working class."

Scott-Anderson still wanted to see the new immigrants housed elsewhere. "The convention center is better equipped for the immigrants," she said.

"Leroy and I marched on May Day with signs calling for amnesty for undocumented workers," Fein said. "Our unions must take the lead in fighting for this demand. It's a question of uniting the working class for struggle against the bosses."

After more discussion, Scott-Anderson got a *Militant* subscription and *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*, by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark. The book contains the political resolution adopted at the last party convention and other SWP statements.

A team of campaigners from the SWP in Seattle participated in the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association



Militant/Carole Lesnick

SWP member Andrea Morell, right, selling *Militant* subscription at Berkeley, California, book fair May 7. At one-day fair, 21 subscriptions and 63 Pathfinder books were sold amid lively discussions on union solidarity, constitutional rights and the fight against antisemitism.

conference in Tacoma May 6. Its theme was "Labor Resurgence: Learning from the Recurring Conflict with Capital."

"Things are getting worse. We need to do something," Cynthia McGill told SWP member Michele Smith upon spotting the party's literature table set up there. Smith showed her *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us* and raised the upcoming confrontation between UPS bosses and Teamsters fighting for a new contract. McGill wanted to learn more about these kinds of questions and bought that book along with eight other Pathfinder titles for herself and her son. Participants got a total of 11 *Militant* subscriptions and 21 books there.

Just a few weeks after the spring campaigns are concluded, the SWP-sponsored International Socialist Edu-

cational Conference will take place at Oberlin College in Ohio, June 8-11.

The conference will include reports by SWP leaders, classes and discussion about using the party's upcoming 2023 and 2024 election campaigns to deepen participants' political understanding of the party, its communist continuity and the road forward for working people today.

At the center of the conference will be discussion on the political course presented in *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*.

There is still time for readers to join in making our goals! Contact the SWP or Communist League branch nearest you, listed on page 8, or contact the *Militant* directly. The final chart will appear in next week's *Militant*.

Thousands join May Day protests around the world

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Squeezed by inflation and worsening job conditions, hundreds of thousands of workers worldwide took to the streets May 1 determined to fight against the capitalist bosses' attempts to push their growing economic crisis onto our backs.

Tens of thousands of workers marched in South Korea. "The price of everything has increased except for our wages. Increase our minimum wages!" one union speaker told a rally in Seoul. "Reduce our working hours!"

The actions followed widespread protests in March that forced the government to drop plans to increase the maximum workweek from 52 to 69 hours. Many young Koreans had joined those actions, pointing to the negative impact on families and the birth rate, one of the lowest in the world. The bill would have made it "legal to work from 9 a.m. to midnight for five days in a row," said one union leader. "There is no regard for workers' health or rest."

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol has been going after the

unions. "The government is calling the rummaging through accounting books, the levying of 1.5 million won [\$1,135] fines ... a 'labor reform,'" Kim Dong-myung, chairperson of the Federation of Korean Trade Unions, told a rally in Seoul.

"Raids have become routine," Yang Kyung-soo, chair of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, told the crowd. "Their aim is to dissolve democratic unions by labeling them illegal, corrupt, violent and accusing them of espionage."

In France, close to 800,000 took to the streets. The actions marked the first time since 2009 that all eight of France's main unions joined together for the annual May Day protest.

On April 15 French President Emmanuel Macron signed a law raising the retirement age from 62 to 64, after his prime minister wielded a special constitutional power to impose it without a vote in parliament, despite weeks of protests.

"The way the reforms were passed was revolting," Nathi, a young student, told the press at a rally of over 100,000 in Paris.

The next day unions announced more nationwide protests for June 6. "Still united, numerous and determined to get the [pension law] withdrawal and social progress," the unions' joint statement said.

Hundreds of workers turned out in cities across Canada. Led by members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada — some 35,000 of whose members were still on strike — hundreds

of workers and supporters marched May 1 in St. John's, Newfoundland.

"The fight by the PSAC for better wages to keep up with inflation and better working conditions doesn't just benefit their members today, but workers right across this country," Jessica McCormick, president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, told the crowd.

In Winnipeg hundreds of workers and union supporters, including members of the Manitoba-Cuba Solidarity Committee, marched to the Manitoba Legislature to demand 10 paid sick days for all workers and access to health care for all regardless of immigration status.

Organized under the theme of "Who benefits from inflation? Not us!" 500 people — including some of the 40 striking members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions at the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery and a big contingent of unionized construction workers — marched and rallied in Montreal.

Campaign to expand reach of 'Militant,' books, fund March 18-May 16 (week seven)

Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold	Fund quota	Fund received
UNITED STATES						
Atlanta	50	45	50	56	\$9,500	\$8,066
Chicago*	100	78	125	124	\$14,000	\$10,629
Cincinnati*	55	43	55	48	\$6,000	\$4,200
Dallas-Fort Worth	60	49	60	52	\$5,000	\$4,965
Lincoln	15	16	15	16	\$500	\$520
Los Angeles*	90	121	110	142	\$16,000	\$9,077
Miami*	45	36	70	106	\$5,500	\$4,405
Minneapolis	70	60	70	76	\$5,500	\$4,711
N. New Jersey	85	73	85	78	\$7,000	\$5,864
New York	100	88	115	113	\$20,500	\$18,690
Oakland	90	90	90	90	\$15,000	\$14,079
Philadelphia*	50	48	60	59	\$6,000	\$5,710
Pittsburgh	45	30	45	27	\$6,000	\$5,546
Seattle	75	72	75	88	\$14,000	\$10,492
Washington	50	49	50	50	\$4,500	\$3,662
Other		102		287		\$600
Total U.S.	980	1000	1075	1412	\$135,000	\$111,216
Prisoners	50	81				
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	40	43	40	55	\$2,450	\$1,460
Manchester	35	33	40	44	\$1,200	\$960
Total U.K.	75	76	80	99	\$3,650	2420
Canada	90	83	90	120	\$12,000	\$10,265
Australia	35	31	35	48	\$6,000	\$4,300
Total	1,230	1,271	1,280	1,679	\$156,650	\$128,201
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Residents demand the truth

Continued from front page

the site. Under pressure, the area being tested was expanded, but officials say that is as far as they'll go. EPA representatives told the meeting anyone outside that area would have to pay for private testing themselves.

While two toxic compounds were detected in earlier samples, Durno said they no longer screen for either chemical. While the EPA initially tested for 180 compounds, he said, the list has been cut to 29.

Several residents pointed to urinalysis tests they had taken that show vinyl chloride residue. Durno doubled down on the agency's insistence any positive reading can't be connected to the derailment.

From sessions like this, working people here have growing distrust in the government's claims and are more determined than ever to press for the truth and force comprehensive action. The next EPA meeting is set for May 11.

Rail union speaks out

The fight being waged in East Palestine got a boost from the latest issue of *SMART News*, the quarterly put out by the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers — Transportation Division. SMART-TD is the largest rail union, with over 36,000 members.

"Rail disasters make the nation take notice," the headline says. It describes how the rail bosses "continued to prioritize profits above safety," and "on Feb. 3, 2023, it all exploded."

"Thirty-eight cars from a Norfolk Southern train, including 11 carrying hazardous materials, left the tracks in East Palestine, Ohio. Toxic chemicals being carried by tanker cars were released," the union said. "Soil was contaminated and chemical-laden smoke permeated the area after a 'controlled release' by NS days after the derailment, extending across the border into Pennsylvania. The disaster left people in the region to contend with concerns about their long-term health and the environmental impacts of the accident from that day forward."

"Each subsequent derailment (a labor tally of media reports shows at least

37 have happened since) brings up the specter of East Palestine and the question from anyone living near or who encounter rail tracks — am I safe and what can be done to make things safer?"

"By speaking out and supporting efforts to hold the nation's rail carriers accountable," the union concludes, "we do our part to keep what happened in East Palestine from happening again."

The rail unions getting more involved in this fight is important. The conditions rail bosses have created in their drive to maximize profits are the source of the problem. Workers toil with irregular schedules, overly long hours, on crews that are too small, on equipment without enough workers, hauling wildly over-long, heavy trains, often carrying toxic cargo in every kind of weather.

The operating principles of the rail bosses, which most call Precision Scheduled Railroading, were crafted to result in the conditions rail workers face. This has made them, and their investors, a tidy sum.

This new issue of the SMART-TD paper carries a full-page list of what the seven Class 1 railroads in the U.S. are raking in. Norfolk Southern took in \$3.3 billion in profits in 2022. BNSF got \$5.95 billion; Canadian National, \$3.8 billion; CSX, \$4.17 billion; Kansas City Southern, \$982 million; Canadian Pacific, \$2.6 billion; and bosses at Union Pacific cleared a whopping \$7 billion. That's a total of \$27.8 billion in profits!

Just as the residents of East Palestine are fighting for maximum control over the cleanup of their town and for lifelong health care for everyone in the region paid for by Norfolk Southern, rail workers are looking for how to gain union control over the conditions and procedures they work under, to put human needs over profits.

Workers control over the rails

"I explain we need to use our union to fight for trains that are limited to no more than 50 cars, with a full crew of four — two on the engine and two in the rear of the train, with a strict limit of eight hours on the job," retired rail worker Joe Swanson from Lincoln, Nebraska, told the *Militant*.

owned by Occidental Petroleum.

The *New York Times* reported April 17 that workers in La Porte and at another OxyVinyls plant nine miles away in Deer Park are discussing the dangers of toxic chemical production.

"You get headaches, you get nauseous and you get chronic respiratory issues that affect you. It could be a normal day, and all of a sudden there's a siren that goes off," Sema Hernandez, who lives a half mile from OxyVinyls in La Porte, told the *Times*, and we need "to shelter in place."

Juan López, who supervises the cleaning of tanks that hold toxic chemicals at the Deer Park facility, said he comes home to find clouds of toxic chemicals floating over his house. While he wears protective gear at work, this isn't realistic for his family, López told the *Times*.

In March, a five-hour "emission event" there released nearly 15,000 pounds of hydrogen chloride, a gas that irritates the eyes and throat.

Toxic wastewater from East Palestine has been trucked back to the processing plant in Deer Park. Vinyl chloride has

NY action demands end to US-South Korea war games



Militant/Sara Lobman

NEW YORK — Some 120 people gathered here April 29 to demand an end to the bellicose annual U.S.-South Korea war games, an end to all sanctions imposed on North Korea by the U.S. government, and an end to U.S.-imposed restrictions on the right to travel to North Korea. They called on Washington to sign a peace treaty, which the U.S. rulers have refused to do since they agreed to a 1953 armistice.

They also demanded the removal of all U.S. troops from Korea and for the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Korea was forcibly divided by Washington, with the connivance of the Stalinist regime in Moscow, at the end of the second imperialist world war.

Washington occupied the south of Korea after Japan surrendered, installed the puppet government of Syngman Rhee and used its armed forces to crush rising struggles by workers and peasants. Then the U.S. provoked the Korean War in 1950.

After a spirited rally inside Grand Central Station, participants marched to the United Nations South Korean Mission. The original plan, to form a human chain between the North and South Korean Missions, had to be changed due to heavy rain. The action was organized by the 6.15 NY Committee for Reunification of Korea in coalition with other Korean organizations.

— SARA LOBMAN

"Liberals and others argue we need more federal regulations and 'friends of labor' in Congress to exert pressure," Swanson said. "But our experience — including when President Joseph Biden and a bipartisan Congress voted to deny us the right to strike and imposed a contract that a majority of rail workers had voted against last fall — shows we are the only ones we can depend on to preserve our safety and job conditions. That's why we need to fight for workers control and to look to forming our own party, a labor party based on our unions."

Without workers gaining control, derailments continue. Six cars on a

Canadian National train derailed May 5 in Kingston, Ontario. Two of the derailed cars fell into the Little Cataraqui Creek, part of a marshland conservation area. One, loaded with adipic acid, began leaking, but the railroad said it was controlled. Other cars that ran off the rails contained a far more toxic chemical, hexamethylenediamine, which luckily didn't bust out.

Unions fight for sick days

Unions representing workers on the Class 1 railroads are still fighting to win sick days, which the bosses refused to grant in the contract imposed by the government. They have succeeded in a few cases.

But the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen union explains the rail bosses are still asking for too many other concessions in return for sick days, instead of just providing what workers are entitled to. "They want to take the money out of our pocket somewhere else and give it back to us in the form of sick time," said Rob Cunningham, one of the BLET's general chairmen.

Even on railroads that have offered engineers sick time, bosses still intend to write up workers who take time off under anti-worker attendance policies.

"We're going to have locomotive engineers and conductors making a choice of whether to work sick and handle some of the most dangerous items that any transportation group handles, but they're going to work sick or be subject to attendance policies," said Mark Wallace, BLET's second-highest official.

The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, which represents track maintenance workers, reports the union has been able to reach sick time deals with Union Pacific, CSX and Norfolk Southern, but they had to beat back boss demands for other concessions.

Bosses' profit drive threatens more toxic chemical disasters

BY JANET POST

Since the Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern derailment and controlled burn-off of five tankers that spewed 700,000 pounds of toxic vinyl chloride onto the soil, water and air in East Palestine, Ohio, in February, attention there and around the country has been focused on how to deal with the danger of more such disasters. Working people there are setting an example by fighting for information and some control over their lives.

Vinyl chloride is a highly volatile colorless gas produced by combining ethylene and chlorine. It is used to make polyvinyl chloride, known as PVC, widely used in plastic products.

The gas is a known carcinogen, linked to liver, brain and lung cancers, lymphoma and leukemia. It breaks down in the air forming hydrochloric acid, formaldehyde, and other chemicals.

More than 20 billion pounds of vinyl chloride are made each year by chemical companies along the Gulf Coast. The vinyl chloride hauled by Norfolk Southern came from the OxyVinyls plant in La Porte, Texas, near Houston, which is

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

DHL Express workers vote in the Teamsters at DHL's largest hub

CINCINNATI — Over 1,100 ramp workers and tug drivers at the DHL Global Hub at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport scored a victory April 28 when they voted 505-287 to be represented by Teamsters union Local 100. The key issues in their fight now for a contract are safety on the job and higher wages.

In 2022 at least 22 workers injured on the job had to be taken to the hospital. The starting wage is between \$20 and \$23 an hour, and workers say promised wage increases don't happen.

Steven Fightmaster, a ramp worker and DHL Workers United for Change committee member, told the *Guardian* that workers know what it means to have a union. "Not only are they treated a lot better, but they're also compensated much, much better than we are."

Bosses and security harass union supporters, Fightmaster said, telling them they can't wear union shirts, and threatening to call police on workers talking about the union in the parking lot. Workers have been followed by DHL corporate security. "I was followed to my home on one occasion. I was followed to a union meeting on another," he said. "We don't have the dignity and respect in the workplace that we deserve, and people are getting fed up with it."

In addition to ramp workers, DHL has 2,000 workers there sorting packages.

— Ned Measel

UAW strikers win first contract at Illinois steel plant

BEDFORD PARK, Ill. — "After 65 days on the picket line, workers at Metal-Matic [here] have ratified their first union contract, winning equal pay for equal work, and an end to major pay disparities," the United Auto Workers union announced April 28.

The 140 workers at the steel tube plant voted to join UAW Local 588 in June 2021. "These UAW members held a 24/7 picket line for two months through torrential rain, hurricane-force winds and bitter cold," UAW Region 4 Director Brandon Campbell said in a statement. "They showed us

all the power of solidarity."

"It was definitely worth going on strike," Marco Aguilera, who has worked there for 26 years, told the *Militant* by phone May 3. "Now the union is set in stone, we have it as long as we want it." He said they will get annual raises and a pay scale that closes the gap more quickly between new hires and longtime workers. The bosses had demanded workers take a pay cut if they didn't cross-train on more machines.

Aguilera said they also pushed back the company's attempt to greatly increase deductibles in their health insurance. "We got a few little extra things, like doubling the boot allowance," he said. "And we went back to the old vacation system," explaining the bosses had recently started cutting vacation time if workers had "too many" absences.

— Naomi Craine

Washington mushroom workers rally in fight for union rights

SUNNYSIDE, Wash. — Over a hundred workers, family members and other supporters rallied here April 18 outside the Windmill Farms plant demanding the new bosses recognize the United Farm Workers union. Last year workers at the plant, then called Ostrom Mushroom Farms, voted for the union to combat discrimination against women workers and win better job conditions. Ostrom never recognized the union.

After Windmill Farms took over bosses fired and rehired the workers, pushing them to sign individual contracts without the union. Isela Cabrera, a leader in the workers' committee, said bosses have been imposing backbreaking production quotas.

In the days following the rally, committee leader José Martínez and at least three other workers were fired on the pretext of failing to meet a quota of picking 50 pounds an hour. They are fighting the firings, including speaking out on Radio Cadena.

"We want equality, dignity and respect as human beings," Martínez had told the crowd.

"We are not going anywhere," said United Farm Workers President Teresa Romero. "We all benefit from the work

Oakland teachers strike for higher pay, smaller classes



Militant/Carole Lesnick

OAKLAND, Calif. — After seven months of contract negotiations nearly 3,000 public school teachers, counselors, nurses, social workers and other school employees organized by the Oakland Education Association went on strike at 80 schools here May 4. The union is demanding a pay increase of 23% over the next four years, smaller class sizes and the hiring of more staff.

— JEFF POWERS

that these men and women do, day in and day out." A dozen workers from UFW-organized Chateau Ste. Michelle vineyards in eastern Washington came to show support.

Members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 9 and United Food and Commercial Workers Local 3000 who work at a Safeway supermarket in Seattle, along with Local 3000 community organizer Odalys Gonzalez, brought a card with solidarity messages from about a dozen co-workers. As a baker and member of the BCTCM at Safeway, I said, "We support any fight by workers to unionize. Your fight is our fight too."

Windmill Farms bosses are replacing local workers with temporary workers with H-2A visas, who are often paid more, but have fewer rights. Safeway worker and UFCW member Arnoldo Alvarado told the *Militant*, "Whether you are an immigrant, H-2A worker or legal citizen, you deserve respect."

Henry Dennison, a rail conductor and member of SMART-TD Local 324, read a message from his local's president, Nathan Morris. "Rail workers understand well how corporate

greed puts profits above the needs of the workers, safety, and decent pay," Morris wrote. "To win what we need we must stand together as union members in solidarity with each other."

— Vincent Auger

British Columbia bus drivers strike enters fifth week

ABBOTSFORD, British Columbia — "Every day we're out we become more determined. The support we get on cold wet days means a lot to us," picket organizer Elizabeth Roux told more than 100 striking members of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 561 and supporters at a solidarity picnic here sponsored by the Fraser Valley District Council of CUPE April 22.

The 213 bus drivers and mechanics went on strike March 20, setting up picket lines in the Fraser Valley region. The main issues are wages, humane scheduling and a pension plan.

"Our wages are 42% behind bus drivers in the Vancouver area. With rising costs we're falling further and further behind and long-time members can't afford to retire," Roux told the *Militant*. She's been a driver and trainer for 12 years.

Members from other CUPE locals, the United Steelworkers, International Association of Machinists, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada joined the rally.

"When we get together and build support for each other, we have a lot of power," said Doug Smith, a shop steward for IAM Local 11, who delivered a message of support and a gift card of \$50.

Raj, a driver we met at the First Transit Abbotsford yard picket line, said split shifts are a key issue. "You work from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., and then 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. You aren't paid for the four hours in between," he said. "It's difficult to go back home to rest and then come back. Your day is 13 hours long and you get paid for eight. It's terrible for family life."

Sara and James Strocel and their son, Gavin, brought coffee and donuts to the picket line. "In the 16 years I've been teaching, I've been on the picket line at least three times," said Sara, who teaches at the Clayburn Middle School. "We wanted to let them know they are supported."

— Ned Dmytryshyn and Beverly Bernardo

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 25, 1998

MIAMI — For the first time in years, a prominent leader of the fight for Puerto Rican independence spoke in this city. Rafael Cancel Miranda was the featured speaker May 2 at a meeting that joined the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico and the defense of the Cuban revolution. More than 175 people attended the public forum, called "100 Years of Resistance."

Speaking about U.S. imperialism in Puerto Rico, Cancel Miranda said, "They've got all kinds of weapons and they control the mass media. But they haven't been able to defeat my people."

Turning to Cuba, the Puerto Rican leader declared to loud applause, "It's been a long time since I've wanted to say this in Miami — I support the Cuban socialist revolution and I have a profound admiration for Fidel Castro. To be here today standing up for Cuba is as important as being in Cuba."



May 25, 1973

Big business, the federal government, and the top union bureaucracy got a rude shock on May 8 when 10,000 United Rubber Workers employed by the Goodrich Company refused to accept the "model" contract entered into between the URW and the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company. A strike began in six states immediately after negotiations were broken off.

The contract is a danger signal for all unions. With prices leaping into the stratosphere, the URW bureaucrats signed a no-strike contract with no cost-of-living escalator clause and no wage reopening provision. They sought "labor peace" with a vital industry employing hundreds of thousands of workers.

The fact that the Goodrich employees have taken the bit in their teeth to fight for their rights is a good omen for the millions of workers whose contracts are due to be negotiated this year.



May 24, 1948

In a nation-wide radio broadcast, Farrell Dobbs, Socialist Workers Party nominee for president, on May 15 called on the American people to "unite with the Socialist Workers Party" in order to stop war by ending the capitalist system that breeds war. James P. Cannon, SWP National Secretary, opened the program with an introductory statement:

"Farrell Dobbs has spent most of his active life in the socialist and labor movement. He was one of the leaders of the great Minneapolis truck drivers' strikes. For years he served as secretary-treasurer of Local 544 of that city. As international representative of the Teamsters Union, he was the chief organizer of more than 200,000 transport workers in eleven states.

"Dobbs was one of the 18 leaders of the SWP and Local 544 who served prison sentences in 1944 and 1945 for their opposition to the war."

Defend political freedoms

Continued from front page

Four members of the Proud Boys were convicted May 4 under seditious conspiracy laws for opposing “the lawful transfer of presidential power by force.” The government’s evidence included claims by ex-Proud Boy Jeremy Bertino that the group advocated “all-out revolution.” This targets its members for their thoughts and statements, all protected by the First Amendment.

Enrique Tarrío, Ethan Nordean, Joseph Biggs and Zachary Rehl could be imprisoned for up to 20 years. The prosecution relied on testimony and leads from an extensive network of FBI informants inside the group.

Primarily at issue for working people is not the anti-working-class views espoused by the Proud Boys, nor any attempts their members made to “disrupt” Congress. It’s the government’s prosecution of anyone for what they say. Seditious conspiracy laws are a formidable thought-control weapon in the rulers’ arsenal, and have been used to frame up working-class fighters for decades.

Eighteen leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and Teamsters union were convicted and imprisoned under the Smith Act in 1941, charged with “conspiracy to advocate the overthrow of the government by force and violence.” However, they were found not guilty of violating the 1861 Seditious Conspiracy Act. Their real “crime” was campaigning in the labor movement against the U.S. rulers’ drive to enter the unfolding imperial-

ist slaughter for markets and dominance in World War II.

After the war the Smith Act was also used to go after the Communist Party, and remains on the books today.

Fourteen Puerto Ricans were convicted in the 1980s under sedition laws for participating in the struggle for their country’s independence from U.S. colonial rule. During their trial it was revealed the FBI had conducted a massive spying and wiretapping operation against them.

Writing in the *Washington Post*, columnist Eugene Robinson lauds the conviction of the Proud Boys and calls for Trump to be jailed alongside them.

As Democrats drive ahead with multiple criminal probes and legal actions against Trump, Republicans are responding in kind. The Republican-controlled House Oversight and Accountability Committee issued a subpoena demanding files from the FBI May 3, alleging they would reveal that President Joseph Biden took bribes when he was vice president.

Every time one of the capitalist rulers’ parties uses the cops or the courts to go after the other, working people can be sure they will do the same and worse to us.

Days before the FBI raided Trump’s Mar-a-Lago estate last summer, armed agents burst into the homes and offices of members of the African People’s Socialist Party. Subsequently four of its members were charged with violating laws requiring alleged “foreign agents” to register with the government. On May 2 APSP Chair Omali Yeshitela and



FBI agents raid Socialist Workers Party Minneapolis headquarters, June 1941, opening move in rulers’ assault on SWP’s opposition to imperialist war. Prosecutors won conviction of party, Teamsters leaders on frame-up charge of “conspiracy to advocate overthrow of government.”

Penny Hess were brought into court in Tampa, Florida, handcuffed and in leg irons. They were only released on bail after turning over their passports.

Liberals’ assault on Supreme Court

The liberals’ drive to upend crucial constitutional protections also involves attacks on some U.S. Supreme Court justices after the court overturned the unconstitutional *Roe v. Wade* ruling last year.

The leak of a draft of the Dobbs decision was aimed at intimidating the justices and to prevent the draft “from becoming the decision of the court,” Justice Samuel Alito told the *Wall Street Journal* last month. He also said the leak aimed to make members of the high court and their families “targets for assassination.”

In the weeks after the disclosure, opponents of the decision held actions outside the justices’ homes and released the locations of their churches and their children’s schools. Nicholas John Roske was arrested outside Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s house with a loaded handgun June 8, telling cops he intended to kill him.

Since then the liberal media has continued to disparage conservative justices in order to make them appear “illegitimate,” Alito said.

The Democrats view the Supreme Court as a vehicle to put political rulings on the books when they can’t get their policies passed in the legislature. But the Constitution gives the court no lawmaking powers. It is tasked with upholding the Constitution and the law as it is.

Freedom of speech and assembly, due process and many other protections won by the toilers in struggle over more than two and a half centuries are essential whenever workers organize to resist bosses’ attacks. Defending these rights will be central to the class struggles that lie ahead, including when workers decide to break with the bosses’ parties, enter the political arena themselves and advance the fight to take political power into their own hands.

of stagnation, where continuing inflation is combined with stagnating capitalist production and job losses.

“I think we’ve got a bit of a stagflationary problem developing,” Larry Summers, former treasury secretary under the Bill Clinton administration, told Bloomberg TV April 28. Referring to the Federal Reserve’s hope to get the official inflation rate down to 2% through raising interest rates, he adds, “I don’t think that’s going to get back to target without a meaningful slowdown in the economy.”

U.S. manufacturing declined in March to its lowest level in nearly three years as new orders plunged. Housing sales shrank for the eighth consecutive quarter.

While federal officials “acknowledge that wage gains did not initially cause rapid price increases,” wrote the *New York Times* May 5, “they worry that it will prove difficult to return inflation to normal with pay gains rising so rapidly.” In fact, when wages go up as a product of union struggles, it just means profits go down. That’s why the bosses target our wages.

Like many workers, Scott Raileanu with his family of four in Deerfield, Illinois, feels squeezed by rising prices for day care, groceries, utilities and gasoline. “The extra things that I don’t need, that beforehand I wouldn’t have batted an eye at purchasing,” the 33-year-old technology worker told the *Wall Street Journal*, “I’m holding off on. I need that money for groceries.”

What are stakes for working people in banking crisis?

Continued from front page

ant JPMorgan Chase.

This came on the heels of the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank in March. All three catered to a wealthy clientele most of whose deposits were uninsured; that is, the funds they put in the banks were way over the FDIC’s \$250,000 insurance limit.

The capitalist rulers are deeply worried that these bank failures will spread, threatening a broader economic crisis in the U.S. and worldwide. The first thing they did was to prioritize protecting the funds of the wealthy. The FDIC shelled out billions of dollars to reimburse capitalist depositors at the Silicon Valley and Signature banks, and Chase guaranteed depositors at First Republic would be fully reimbursed.

Banks seek to grow wealthier by borrowing cheap from the government and then buying bonds from the same government that pays them a higher interest rate — a neat deal, to be sure, in “ordinary” times. But today’s crisis was precipitated by the Federal Reserve’s moves to slow inflation, raising interest rates from nearly zero to 5% over the past 14 months. The value of bonds, mortgage loans and other assets these banks had invested in then declined, and depositors rushed to withdraw their funds — \$100 billion from First Republic in just a few days.

While it’s impossible to predict what will happen next, the volatility of the capitalist rulers’ banking system has

been a bellwether in past economic crises. “The next recession will take place under the cumulative effects of a new set of destabilizing economic conditions,” Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes wrote in “U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War” in *New Internationalist* no. 11. This means “worsening banking crisis; large-ever debt balloon; continuing stock and bond market instability; renewed vulnerability of working farmers; and stagnant capital investment.”

Some 2,315 U.S. banks sitting on \$11 trillion still have fewer assets on their balance sheets than they would need if they were forced to cover their liabilities.

Showing the class divisions in society, neither the FDIC nor any other government agency offers a guarantee to cover the rising debts workers and farmers face from the Fed’s increases in interest rates. These are being reflected in growing debt on our credit cards, auto loans, and home mortgages, as well as rents.

New York City workers’ pension funds invested in Silicon Valley Bank saw \$28 million disappear when that bank collapsed. The funds weren’t covered by the FDIC’s bailout of depositors.

Days after First Republic’s collapse there was a run on other regional banks. Stock prices plunged 50% at PacWest, 38% at Western Alliance, along with double-digit declines at Zions, Comerica and others.

What’s posed today is the increasing likelihood of an extended period

‘Alone we will be defeated, together we can win’

Meeting in Havana discusses working-class course of the Socialist Workers Party

BY LAUREN HART AND MARTÍN KOPPEL

HAVANA — Amid preparations by working people across Cuba to celebrate May 1, International Workers Day, a special event was held here to discuss a new book by Pathfinder Press, *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark.

Waters, a National Committee member of the SWP and president of Pathfinder Press, was the featured speaker. The April 25 book presentation was initiated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and held at the national headquarters of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). Noemí Rabaza, first vice president of ICAP, spoke alongside Waters and chaired the meeting.

Leima Martínez, ICAP’s director for North America, welcomed the audience, which included José Ángel Maury, Americas coordinator of the Central Committee’s international relations department; Olga Yipsi González from the Central Committee’s ideological department; and other party representatives.

Martínez took special note of the presence of Commander Víctor Dreke, who fought in the revolutionary struggle that overthrew the Batista dictatorship in 1959. From 1962 to 1965 Dreke commanded the forces in the Escambray mountains of central Cuba that defeated counterrevolutionary bands supported by Washington. In 1965 he was second in command to Ernesto Che Guevara in the Cuban internationalist mission aiding anti-imperialist combatants in the Congo. And in 1966-68 he commanded the Cuban volunteers who fought alongside pro-independence forces in Guinea-Bissau led by Amílcar Cabral. Few of the young people at the meeting had ever met Dreke, and they were excited to learn about his revolutionary record.

The audience of more than 50 included leaders of Cuba’s Union of Young



April 25 presentation in Havana discussed Pathfinder Press book *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*. Bottom, from left, Mary-Alice Waters, Socialist Workers Party; and Noemí Rabaza, Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples.

Communists (UJC), the Federation of University Students (FEU), a representative of the Fidel Castro Center, and a large participation from the Federation of Secondary School Students (FEEM).

In introducing Waters, Rabaza thanked the Socialist Workers Party for its contribution to work in defense of the Cuban Revolution, including its role at the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference that took place in New York in March, where Rabaza led the Cuban delegation. Pathfinder, she said, “has published numerous books that tell the truth about our country” in face of Washington’s implacable economic war.

Workers in Cuba are celebrating May Day “amid the difficulties imposed by the worldwide economic crisis,” Rabaza said. “We are convinced the international workers movement can be built” as workers in countries around the world resist these conditions.

The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us “highlights the struggles of the working class,” she noted. “It defends Marxism and unity in action against imperialism.”

Stakes in fight for workers power

“We live in the imperialist epoch, at a time when the world order imposed by the victors in the Second World War is unraveling, accelerated by the first major land war in Europe in eight decades,” Waters told the audience.

“Amid the crises, conflicts and wars that are coming, one thing is certain. Another world war of unimaginable destruction will be unleashed on humanity unless the working class and its allies develop the consciousness and confidence that we must take the power to wage war out of the hands of the capitalist rulers in the U.S. and other imperialist countries.”

This is not a reason to despair, the SWP leader said. “That future isn’t inevitable. It depends on the actions of the international working class and its vanguard. It depends on us,” on working people in the U.S., Cuba and worldwide.

Waters briefly highlighted some of the main points of the resolution adopted by the Socialist Workers Party at its national convention last December, which is the centerpiece of the new book.

She drew attention to its concluding

section on the need to forge a revolutionary workers party. “Only the working class has the social and economic power to lead the battles necessary to establish a government that will defend the interests of working people,” she said.

“For us, defense of Cuba’s socialist revolution is not just an act of international working-class solidarity,” Waters said. “It’s inseparable from a revolutionary course in the United States.”

The hatred, fear and lies that the U.S. ruling class directs against the Cuban people “are an extension of their hatred, fear, and lies about the toilers in the United States.” They discount the revolutionary capacities of working people at home as much as they discount those of the workers and farmers in Cuba. “In both cases they are wrong.”

Interest in U.S. workers’ fights

In the discussion period, Luis González Méndez, a 12th grade student and president of the FEEM in Havana province, said he welcomed the opportunity to learn more about the conditions and struggles of working people in the United States. “We know the working class there faces problems, but we only see them from afar,” he said.

Raúl Alejandro Matos, a 10th grader and president of the FEEM in Havana’s La Lisa neighborhood, asked what is the main concern of workers in the United States today.

Above all, Waters replied, “it’s the uncertainty about the future that working people and their families face. For decades the bosses have been on a brutal offensive to increase their profit rates. In one industry after another, the owners have imposed speedup and other measures that disregard workers’ safety and intensify exploitation.” As a result, she said, millions are “looking for ways to respond to these attacks.”

Speaking from the floor, Angela Nelson, a freight rail conductor and member of the SWP, gave examples of recent strikes and union struggles in the U.S., including for wages to keep up with inflation and against inhumane work schedules. Nelson explained how Congress and the White House intervened in December on behalf of rail bosses to bar a strike and impose a contract workers had rejected. She also

described discussions among working people about the ongoing consequences of the train derailment and toxic fire in East Palestine, Ohio.

“We find more people open to discussing why this is happening and what to do,” Nelson said. “A growing number realize neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party offers us any solutions, and that workers need to organize in our own interests.”

Róger Calero, a leader of the SWP in New York and former meat-packing worker, expanded on what Waters had said about the centrality of defending protections and freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution in face of assaults by the federal government and the Democratic and Republican parties.

Workers, he said, should never applaud attempts by figures in the capitalist government to use the police and courts against their political opponents, such as the Democrats’ multiple legal assaults on Donald Trump.

“If they do that to an ex-president, you know they’ll try to use those same methods against us,” Calero said. Today, he noted, the federal government is going after leaders of the African People’s Socialist Party, four of whom were recently charged with “conspiring” to act as “unregistered foreign agents.” The FBI has also sought to interrogate members of a Cuba solidarity brigade in Puerto Rico.

“This is an important discussion, because conditions are difficult for workers all over the world,” Rabaza said.

She noted that in Cuba, in contrast with capitalist countries, workers are backed by their government, which defends their rights. The working class in Cuba is leading the fight to confront the economic problems we face. “We can’t lose hope, we can’t lose our faith in the struggle,” Rabaza said. “That’s what this book points to.”

“What Noemí says is important,” Waters said. “Working people in capitalist societies are taught we don’t have the power to change things and must accept that.” But it’s not true, she added. “It’s why the example of Cuba’s socialist revolution remains a beacon throughout the world. In Cuba, workers and farmers took power out of the hands of a capitalist ruling class fully backed by U.S. imperialism and established a government that serves the interests of working people.”

“That changed everything for us in the United States too,” Waters said. It renewed prospects for building a revolutionary workers vanguard capable of leading the exploited and oppressed majority to power in the U.S.” That perspective and the defense of the Cuban Revolution are intertwined.

“Alone we will be defeated. Fighting together, we can have much more than hope — we can win,” she concluded. After the program, many in the audience went to the Pathfinder book table to get *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us* and other titles on revolutionary struggles. Several people said they especially appreciated the concrete descriptions given during the discussion about what working people in the U.S. face and how they are responding.

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'The woman question can't be divorced from the class question'

Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women by Joseph Hansen, Evelyn Reed and Mary-Alice Waters is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for May. What began as a 1954 debate in the Militant over how big-business marketing of cosmetics and fashions was tied to the oppression of women became this Marxist classic. The excerpt is from "The Woman Question and the Marxist Method" by Reed, who was a leader of the Socialist Workers Party. The author of several books on the origins of women's oppression, she was active in the fight for women's emancipation in the 1960s and '70s, speaking around the world. Copyright © 1986 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine
Women workers from coal processing plants join miners' protest demanding payment of back wages on Independence Square, Kyiv, Ukraine, June 30, 2020. Evelyn Reed wrote that beauty comes out of humanity's evolution through labor, not profit-driven fashions and cosmetics.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY EVELYN REED

The *class distinctions* between women transcend their *sex identity* as women. This is above all true in modern capitalist society, the epoch of the sharpest polarization of class forces.

The woman question cannot be divorced from the class question. Any confusion on this score can only lead to erroneous conclusions and setbacks. It will divert the class struggle into a sex struggle of all women against all men. ...

Through the feminist movement, a number of important reforms were won

for women. But the bourgeois feminist movement has run its course, achieved its limited aims, and the problems of today can only be resolved in the struggle of class against class.

The woman question can only be resolved through the lineup of working men and women against the ruling men and women. This means that the interests of the workers as a *class* are identical; and not the interests of all women as a *sex*.

Ruling-class women have exactly the same interest in upholding and perpetuating capitalist society as their men have. The bourgeois feminists fought, among other things, for the right of women as well as men to hold property in their own name. They won this right. Today, plutocratic women hold fabulous wealth in their own names. They are completely in alliance with the plutocratic men to perpetuate the capitalist system. They are not in alliance with the working women, whose needs can only be served through the abolition of capitalism. Thus, the emancipation of working women will not be achieved in alliance with women of the enemy class, but just the opposite; in a struggle *against* them as part and parcel of the whole class struggle. ...

The bourgeois myth has arisen that since all women want to be beautiful, they all have the same interest in cosmetics and fashions which are currently

identified with beauty. To buttress this myth, it is claimed that fashion beauty has prevailed throughout all ages of history and for all classes of women. As evidence, they point to the fact that even in primitive society, women painted and decorated their bodies. To explode this myth, let us briefly examine the history of cosmetics and fashions.

In primitive society, where there were no classes, no economic and social competition, and no sexual competition, the bodies of *both* women and men were painted and "decorated," and it was *not* for the sake of beauty. It was a necessity that arose out of certain primeval and primitive conditions of labor. ...

It was necessary at that time for each individual who belonged to the kinship group to be "marked" as such. These "marks" were not merely ornaments, rings, bracelets, short skirts, etc., but actual gashes, incisions, tattoo marks, etc. as well as different kinds of painting. These marks indicated not only the sex of each individual but the changing age and labor status of each individual as he matured from a child to an elder.

These marks identified the kindred members of the same group or labor collective. Since primitive society was socialist, these marks also expressed *social equality*. ...

Then came class society. The marks that signified, among other things, *so-*

cial equality under primitive socialism, became transformed into their opposite. They became fashions and decorations that signified *social inequality*: the division of society into rich and poor, into rulers and subjugated. Cosmetics and fashions became the marks of social distinction between the classes. ...

[A]s capitalism developed, there arose an enormous expansion of the productive machine and with it the need for a mass market. Since women represent half the population, profiteers in "beauty" eyed this mass and lusted to exploit it for their own purposes. And so the fashion field was expanded out of the narrow confines of the rich. ...

Today, billions are coined out of every department in the fashion field; cosmetics, clothes, hairdos, slenderizing salons, beauty salons, jewelry, fake and real, and so on. Beauty, it was discovered, was a very flexible formula. All you had to do to become rich was to discover a new aid to beauty and convince the whole population of women that they "needed and wanted" this aid. ...

The fashion world became a capitalist gold mine with virtually unlimited possibilities. All a big businessman had to do was to change the fashions often enough and invent enough new aids to beauty and he could become richer and richer. That is how, under capitalism ... the myth arose that beauty is identical with fashion. ...

Beauty has no identity with fashions. But it has an identity with *labor*. Apart from the realm of nature, all that is beautiful has been produced in labor and by the laborers. Outside the realm of nature, beauty does not exist apart from labor and never will. For the beauty of all the products of labor, and of all the arts produced in and through labor, are incorporated within these products and these arts.

Humanity itself, together with the beauty of humanity, was produced in and through the labor process. As [Frederick] Engels pointed out, when the humans *produced*, they produced themselves as *humans*. They cast off their apelike appearance and became more and more beautiful. When the capitalist social disfigurement of exploited labor is removed, the true beauty of labor and of the laborers will stand forth in their true dimensions.

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SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY CAMPAIGN STATEMENT

For a labor party based on the unions

The following is a statement by Alyson Kennedy, who was the SWP 2023 candidate for mayor in Fort Worth, Texas. She won 5.2% of the vote.

The 2024 presidential election is well on, with Democratic and Republican candidates throwing their hats in the ring, starting again with Joseph Biden and Donald Trump. How should working people respond? In 2020, union officials overwhelmingly backed Biden, and what did he do? On Dec. 2 he led a bipartisan Congress to cram a contract down the throats of 115,000 rail workers, who had voted against it, and barred them from striking.

The Democrats say “Trump” is the issue and have spent years in a no-holds barred effort to drive him out of politics. This has led to a dangerous assault against our constitutional freedoms — rights sorely needed by working people to fight against the relentless attacks of the bosses and their government.

Many workers vote for what they see as the lesser evil, whether it be a Republican or Democrat. A growing number have said none of them are worth anything and stayed home. From an early age it is drummed into our heads that you can’t fight City Hall, there is nothing we can do to change things. But it is possible to build a better future for ourselves and our children.

We see this today in the growing number of workers who say, “enough is enough” and use their unions to

fight for better conditions. We see this in the struggle being waged by the residents of East Palestine, Ohio, and in Ukraine, where working people are fighting to preserve their country’s independence and defend their rights and their unions at the same time.

We can break with the capitalist rulers’ two-party shell game and organize our own party, a labor party based on the unions. No one will do it for us. We can begin by discussing this with fellow workers and in the unions. Why should labor try to find a “lesser evil” election after election from the Democrats and Republicans? They’re parties that we know will defend the interests of the ruling families who are responsible for today’s social, moral and economic crisis.

A labor party can speak and act in the interests of the working-class, working farmers and the oppressed in cities and rural areas. It would tell the truth — that *all* political questions, from how the bosses run the factories and economy to their predatory foreign policy, are class questions — and chart a working-class road forward.

The Socialist Workers Party candidates campaign for the labor movement to make a complete break with the two-party system of big business. A labor party, based on the unions, would fight for workers and farmers to take political power into our own hands. To take control of constructing a better future for toilers worldwide. This is a future worth fighting for.

Baluchistan protests target Iran gov’t repression

Continued from front page

prior to the march. “Stop them.”

The Norway-based Iran Human Rights group says that the regime executed at least 582 people in 2022. Those executed are disproportionately from oppressed nationalities, including Baluch, Kurds and Arabs.

Similar to the Kurds — an oppressed nationality spread across Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey — the 2 million Baluch in Iran, 600,000 in Afghanistan and 6 million in Pakistan all face discrimination. Thousands of Iranian Baluchs are denied official ID cards, preventing them from receiving social security, education and other rights. To justify the denial of their rights, the Iranian government claims they are migrants from Afghanistan or Pakistan.

Largely rural Baluchistan is one of the poorest regions in Iran, with one of the highest unemployment rates. The Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers Trade Unions noted May 6 that it has the highest student dropout rate in the country.

The ongoing fight by the Baluch people is inspiring workers, farmers and other oppressed people across Iran to stand up. The regime is trying to limit the influence of the Baluch struggle. On Fridays when

Abdul-Hamid gives his weekly sermon, internet and cellphone service there are frequently interrupted.

Following “Bloody Friday” last Sept. 30, when the regime’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Basij thugs cowardly massacred more than 60 protesters around the Zahedan mosque, Baluch working people created their own defense guard. Its members wear reflective vests and control the roads around the mosque, direct traffic, prevent provocations and ensure protests are disciplined and protected from interference.

Many people have traveled to Zahedan from Tehran and elsewhere to show their support for the protests. One video from March shows a Shiite family coming to visit the Zahedan mosque from Tehran. “I came with my family, my wife and kids,” one says. “We were welcomed in an exceptional manner.”

Abdul-Hamid frequently speaks out for the right of worship of all religions, including the Baha’i religious minority. “Inside the mosque we had complete freedom and we could be without the hijab and wear any head cover we wanted,” one Shiite woman said.

‘Thanks to Baluch, the movement is alive’

One visitor to the mosque told people, “Thanks to the Baluch, the movement [across Iran] is alive.”

“Factories across the country are on strike, and workers say wages are low and they can’t make ends meet,” Abdul-Hamid said April 28. That was the first public reference to the strike by contract oil workers demanding a 79% wage raise to compensate for inflation and for better work schedules. The strike has spread to over 100 workplaces. A day or two later the government-funded Iranian Labour News Agency published its first report about the strike.

In opposition to the government’s call for the destruction of Israel, the Sunni cleric has repeatedly said he is for the recognition of Israel and a Palestinian state, and for negotiations to bring peace.

Despite constant anti-Israel propaganda in the government-run news media, calls for destruction of Israel are not popular. At a recent protest in Zahedan one person held a sign that said, “On Bloody Friday there was no Zionist here!”

Moscow out now!

Continued from front page

to conscript 147,000 people for compulsory service. They were previously exempted from the draft. At some colleges students have been snatched from their dorms and dragged to enlistment offices.

Elsewhere in Moscow, prominent Russian theater director Evgeniya Berkovich and playwright Svetlana Petriichuk were arrested May 5 and accused of “justifying terrorism” for putting on an award-winning play about Russian women who married Islamic State fighters. The production was first staged several years ago. The arrests are the first high-profile criminal case over the content of a work of fiction since the collapse of the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union.

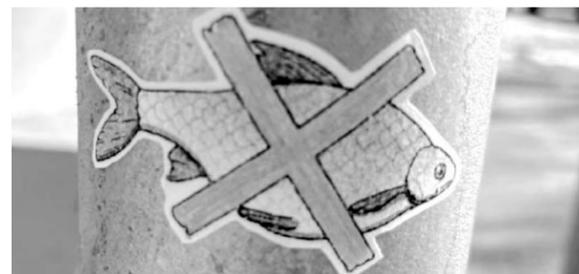
Marina Davydova, editor-in-chief of Teatr, said the persecution of individuals over the content of a well-known play was intended to send “a clear signal: No one is safe.” Petriichuk’s husband was jailed for 15 days after joining anti-war protests last spring.

Alongside Putin’s crackdown on political protest, several actors and artists have lost their jobs for speaking out against the war. Despite this, opponents of the war keep finding creative ways to defy the regime.

A judge in Tyumen, Siberia, cleared Alisa Klimentieva of charges of “discriminating against the Russian army.” She was detained by cops after writing “Nyet v---e!” (“No to w--!”) and a peace sign in chalk on a public pavement last September. In court, she told the judge she was referring not to “voine,” which means war, but “voble,” a type of fish.

“I hate carp. Can’t stand the smell of it,” she said.

When the judge dropped the charges the story of her victory spread like wildfire. Images of fish crossed out in red began to appear everywhere.



As the Ukrainian government readies forces for a counteroffensive, its Azov brigade is rebuilding with thousands of fresh recruits after heavy combat losses. They are attracted by its proud history of combat.

“It is a name that, thanks to the defense of Mariupol, became known to the world,” one of its sergeants told the *Washington Post*. Last year the unit led the defense of the besieged city, as Moscow’s bombardment largely destroyed it. The unit’s action bought Ukrainian forces invaluable time to regroup to defend Kyiv.

One Azov recruit told the *Post* he came from Ternopil in western Ukraine after waiting months to join the brigade. He said the controversy over the unit’s right-wing nationalist origins was an “overblown story.” Its founders quit after less than a year, setting up a political party that has virtually no support. The brigade has been integrated into the Ukrainian armed forces and is open to all.

Putin spoke at the commemoration of the victory of the Soviet Union in World War II May 9, repeating slanders he used to justify eradicating Ukraine. He claimed “Western globalist elites” were “preparing a new march on Russia” and had “brought together neo-Nazi scum from around the world for this.”

Moscow often points to the Azov brigade as evidence of the so-called fascists it alleges threaten the Russian people. The brigade did come out of a rightist-led nationalist militia that fought against Putin’s push to take over eastern Ukraine in 2014. That came after the overthrow of the pro-Moscow regime of President Viktor Yanukovich by the popular Maidan uprising.

The Ukrainian armed forces have been strengthened by volunteers committed to defend their homeland. They’re buttressed by volunteer auxiliary forces.

And many Ukrainians are determined to find ways to continue their lives, despite Moscow’s bombardment and drone attacks aimed at inflicting maximum casualties in urban areas. Several new bookstores have opened in Kyiv, reflecting national pride, optimism and increasing access to culture.

“The winter of blackouts was very good for reading,” author Oksana Zabuzhko told the *Guardian*. Reading a physical book by candlelight was possible when scrolling through a phone was not.

LETTERS

A soldier of the revolution

Tomás Diez Acosta, author of *October 1962: The ‘Missile’ Crisis as Seen from Cuba*, published in English by Pathfinder Press, died in Havana April 17 at the age of 76. Diez wrote over a dozen books about U.S.-Cuba relations; but more than a historian he was a soldier of the revolution. He joined the Revolutionary Armed Forces in 1961, and a year later, then 16, participated in the mobilizations of October as the political officer of his military unit in western Cuba. He retired from active military service in 1998 with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Diez was a leader of the Committee for Defense of the Revolution in his working-class neighborhood in western Havana. He helped organize anniversary celebrations and community fiestas, and he

proudly showed friends the basketball court and playground that he and others had cleaned up and made functional.

Diez spoke frequently at national and international conferences on the October Crisis, most recently at a conference in Havana only six months ago. He loved teaching young people about how the Cuban people had responded to the threats of U.S. invasion in 1962. He often spoke in lecture halls and TV studios, but he much preferred teaching in the open air at the actual missile sites. I remember a slog through the mud with him on a 2-mile trek to a remote missile site. Tomás kept up a soldierly pace, and the students, a half-century younger than him, sometimes struggled to keep up.

Matilde Zimmermann,
New York, New York