

Oscar López Rivera

FREE AT LAST!

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

The long-awaited day finally arrived. Oscar López Rivera’s confinement ended on May 17 after he had spent the prior three months under house arrest at his daughter Clarisa López Ramos’s house. That was a requirement of former President Barack Obama’s commutation of his 70-year sentence for “seditious conspiracy.” Finally, Oscar could meet his people, face-to-face, freely. Finally, those people who joined in the claim for his release could hear his voice, clear and strong.

To publicly welcome him, dozens of people began gathering around 6 a.m. in front of the building where he lives with his daughter. The student choir from the University of Puerto Rico serenaded him with what has become a second national anthem, “Verde Luz.” The song’s lyrics include the verse, “For you I want to have the land free, with only one star.” It’s a hymn for Puerto Rican independence.

Then, at 11 a.m. in the Escambrón, in front of the sea for which he had been yearning for 36 years, Oscar began his first press conference, which was full of symbolism. He began by explaining his request that it be facing the sea, to highlight both its importance for the Puerto Rican archipelago and the role it could play in fostering the economy. This alluded to the measures to privatize goods and resources that the dictatorial Board of Fiscal Control, imposed by the U.S. Congress, wants to apply to the archipelago to pay off the illegitimate debt of more than \$70 billion.

Oscar was dressed all in black, in mourning. He mentioned six reasons for this, which shows his great humanity and solidarity: because in prison he could never wear mourning after the death of comrades and loved ones, including the death of his mother; in solidarity with the LGBTQ community on the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia; in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement; for the love of his people; in solidarity with political prisoners in U.S. prisons including Puerto Rican Ana Belén Matos; and in solidarity with the students of the University of Puerto Rico, who have been on strike since March 28.

This national hero expressed important statements, ranging from his plans and objectives to his revolutionary political positions. His firm denunciation of the Fiscal Control Board made clear his position in defense of the people and against imperialism. “No solution coming out of the Fiscal Control Board is good for the people,” he said.

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PHOTO: MINH - MOVIMIENTO INDEPENDENTISTA NACIONAL HOSTOSIANO
Puerto Rican national hero Oscar López Rivera in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on May 17, the historic day of his freedom.

CHELSEA MANNING: ‘Here I am!’

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Boston

WWP writer on GI resistance in Vietnam

By Noel Sanders
Boston

The Boston branch of Workers World Party hosted activist and revolutionary John Catalinotto on May 19. Catalinotto, a managing editor of Workers World newspaper, is the author of “Turn the Guns Around,” a book detailing how U.S. soldiers during the U.S. war against Vietnam developed an anti-capitalist and anti-war revolutionary culture in forming a union called the American Servicemen’s Union.

The book shows readers how a movement of anti-oppressive consciousness can stop colonialism through strategic activism. Other examples of people’s resistance were also heavily discussed, including the Paris and Portuguese uprisings of 1968 and 1974, respectively.

Catalinotto’s presentation focused on two crucial elements of what V.I. Lenin called revolutionary defeatism (i.e., supporting the defeat of one’s “own” bourgeoisie in an imperialist or colonialist war): what has successfully shaken colonialism in the past, and how we can bring such actions into a modern revolutionary reality.

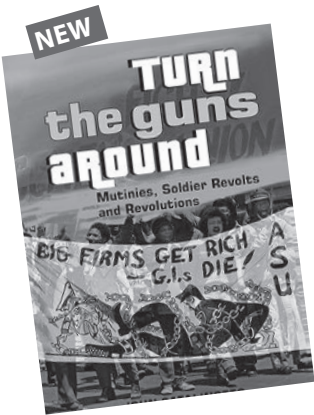
Catalinotto brought solidarity and hope to the meeting. Many of those attending had brought friends, family and coworkers. His words reminded all present that no system is too big to fail when met by solid, conscious organizing.

Activists complemented the meeting theme with stories of their resistance to U.S. aggression, including Greg Laxer, a former member of the ASU, and Frank Neisser, an anti-war activist who was charged with treason for reporting U.S. troop movements to North Vietnamese fighters.



John Catalinotto and Diva Williams share their amusement about a 1969 GI letter comically reporting how GIs tried to get rid of an oppressive sergeant.

Activist mYia X paid tribute to international revolutionary leaders Malcolm X, Yuri Kochiyama and Ho Chi Minh, all of whom had birthday anniversaries on May 19. □



TURN THE GUNS AROUND
Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions

by John Catalinotto
Available at online booksellers

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Contact a Workers World Party branch near you:

National Office
147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443.221.3775
baltimore@workers.org

Chicago
312.630.2305
chicago@workers.org

Bay Area
1305 Franklin St. #411
Oakland, CA 94612
510.600.5800
bayarea@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.286.6574
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
712 Main St #113B
Buffalo, NY 14202
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202
313.459.0777
detroit@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
804 Old Fayetteville St.
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Huntington, W. Va.
huntingtonww@workers.org

Lexington, Ky.
lexington@workers.org

Los Angeles
5278 W Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90019
la@workers.org
323.306.6240

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Pittsburgh
pittsburgh@workers.org

Portland, Ore.
portland@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
585.436.6458
rochester@workers.org

Rockford, Ill.
rockford@workers.org

Salt Lake City
801.750.0248
SLC@Workers.org

San Diego
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego, CA 92163
sandiego@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Virginia
Virginia@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300
Washington, DC 20037
dc@workers.org

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New York, NY 10011
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Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Kris Balderas Hamel, Monica Moorehead, Minnie Bruce Pratt; Web Editor Gary Wilson

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Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis
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WW Commentary

Kaepernick: ‘This generation’s Muhammad Ali’

By Monica Moorehead

Last October, Colin Kaepernick, the African-American former quarterback for National Football League’s San Francisco 49ers, was asked after a game why he was wearing a Muhammad Ali t-shirt. He said, “To pay homage. [Ali] fought a very similar fight and was trying to do what’s right for the people. ...

“He is someone who helped pave the way for this to happen. What he did and what he stood for, people remember him more for that than ... as a boxer.

“I can’t let him die in vain. I have to be able to carry that on and try to fight that same fight until we accomplish our goal.” (nbcbayarea.com, Oct. 17)

The “similar fight” Kaepernick referred to is the ongoing struggle against racist oppression, especially police violence, which he protested by taking a knee during the national anthem at every 2016 regular season NFL game. Kaepernick remarked that he could not respect a flag of a country that did not respect the lives of Black people.

After Kaepernick’s symbolic protest demanding justice for Black and Brown victims and survivors of police brutality made national and international headlines, similar protests were carried out by teams and individual athletes in many sports on all levels — elementary, high school, college and professional.

Kaepernick paid homage to the Muhammad Ali who came to global prominence not only as the heavyweight boxing champion, but also as an activist who fought U.S. governmental repression against national liberation movements during the late 1960s. Ali was stripped of his boxing title and denied matches during his prime boxing years, 1967 to 1971, after he refused to be inducted into the U.S. military to fight in Vietnam. He



Colin Kaepernick (center foreground)

refused because of his religious beliefs as a Muslim and his opposition to the war.

Although Kaepernick has gained millions of admirers, including NFL players from other teams, he has also been ostracized by right-wing politicians, NFL owners and coaches. Since his release from the 49ers following the 2016 season, he has not been signed by another NFL team.

Kaepernick has organized “Know Your Rights” conferences in the Bay Area, Chicago, New York City and other places to help bring about positive change for youth of color who are prime targets for “stop and frisk” harassment by the police and for mass incarceration.

Kaepernick was criticized for publicly saying he was not going to vote for either Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump for president due to their racism.

Carrying forth Ali’s legacy

Dr. Harry Edwards is a sociologist, activist and founder of The Olympic Project for Human Rights. He attempted to organize a boycott of Black athletes during the 1968 Summer Olympics, where Black sprinters John Carlos and Tommie Smith

gave the Black Power salute.

Recently Edwards called Kaepernick, “This generation’s Muhammad Ali.” (Chicago Sun-Times, May 18)

Just as Ali was willing to give up his livelihood for his political convictions, the same holds true for Kaepernick, who has stated that to resist white supremacy, he is prepared not to ever play again in the NFL.

Kaepernick’s Twitter feed continues to bring to light police terror. For example, he broadcast the fact that a white police officer, Betty Shelby, was found not guilty on May 18 of fatally shooting yet another unarmed Black man, Terence Crutcher, in Tulsa, Okla. Crutcher’s murder was captured on videotape last September.

To help put into perspective how Black lives are dehumanized, Tyler Jones, a young Black man from Cincinnati, was sentenced to 19 years in prison, also on May 18, for multiple felonies, including wounding a police dog. Jones did not fatally shoot anyone.

Kaepernick is fighting against endless racist atrocities. In the early morning of May 22, Richard Collins, a 23-year-old Black man scheduled to graduate from

Bowie State University the next day, was stabbed to death while simply waiting at a Maryland bus stop. His attacker? A white supremacist and neo-Nazi belonging to the “Alt Reich: Nation” Facebook group. A Baltimore FBI agent had the nerve to question whether this horrendous murder was a “hate crime” or not. (nbcwashington.com, May 22)

A 7-year-old special-needs Latinx child, Yosio Lopez, was put in handcuffs at his school by Dallas police on May 16 after being Tased by school officials for banging his head against a wall. Lopez is diagnosed with “attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and another mood disorder.” The child was then sent to a mental hospital without his mother’s permission. She was denied the right to visit her son for nearly a week. (cnn.com, May 19)

Acting head coach for the National Basketball Association’s Golden State Warriors, Mike Brown, who is African American, was nearly arrested by the California State Highway Patrol for trying to enter a gate at his own home arena before the May 16 playoff game in Oakland. The patrol was escorting the San Antonio Spurs, the visiting team, into the Oracle Arena when Brown was stopped and harassed.

Even as Brown kept telling the police that he was the Warriors coach, a cop yelled at him, “I don’t care. You, stop!” (Mercury News, May 16) If this had been the Warriors head coach, Steve Kerr, who is white, the police would have responded very differently.

These recent examples of white supremacy help to deepen the legitimacy of Colin Kaepernick’s heroic protest, spurred on by the defiance of the great Muhammad Ali of the 1960s. Both continue to inspire millions of people into actively defending Black and Brown lives. □

Michigan

Release date set for Rev. Pinkney

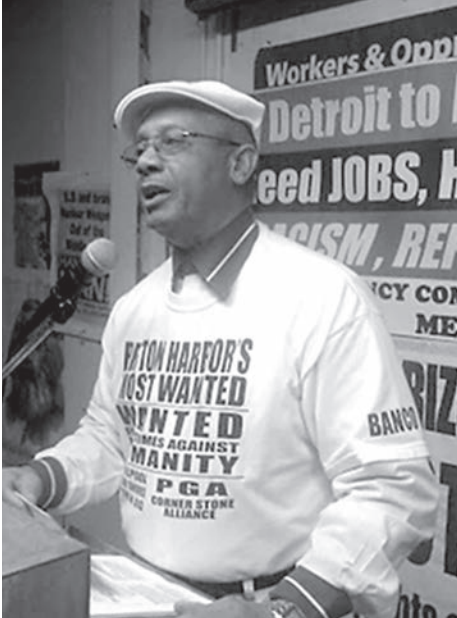
By David Sole

The Michigan Board of Parole has announced that political prisoner the Rev. Edward Pinkney will be released on June 13. This is exactly two and a half years from the date of his sentencing and the minimum time in the two-and-a-half-to-10-year sentence of this 68-year-old African-American activist.

Rev. Pinkney had been a target for many years in the small town of Benton Harbor in western Michigan. He led protests against police brutality and misconduct. He exposed Whirlpool Corp., headquartered in Benton Harbor, for racism in hiring and layoffs. The giveaway of public park lands for a fancy private golf course was also a target of Rev. Pinkney’s organizing. Politicians who collaborated in these injustices found Rev. Pinkney in the streets campaigning for their recall.

In 2013, Rev. Pinkney led a petition campaign to recall then-Mayor James Hightower. Although more than enough petition signatures were turned in, the recall was never held. Berrien County’s prosecutor decided that the dates on several of the petitions had been altered and a judge threw out the entire recall effort.

Five felony charges of forgery were



Rev. Pinkney at Moratorium NOW! Oct. 20, 2014.

then brought against Rev. Pinkney, alleging that he had altered the petition dates, although absolutely no evidence implicated him — no confession, no witnesses and no forensic evidence!

A militarized SWAT team surrounded his home with weapons drawn in April

2014. Fortunately, Rev. Pinkney and his spouse, Dorothy Pinkney, were out to dinner and were warned away by neighbors. Many believe that, had he been home, he would have been killed. Later tried by a white prosecutor, a white judge and an all-white jury, he was found guilty.

Rev. Pinkney was transferred to different prisons across Michigan. During his stay in remote Marquette Branch Prison, 500 miles from family and friends, a national campaign was organized by his supporters, who exposed that racist prison guards had targeted him with threats of injury and death.

State high court responds to appeal

In August last year, the Michigan Court of Appeals upheld Rev. Pinkney’s conviction in a bizarre opinion that based itself on the idea that Pinkney must be guilty because he had the most animosity to Mayor Hightower, the recall’s target. That decision was immediately appealed by Tim Holloway, Rev. Pinkney’s attorney.

With less than one month left to serve of Rev. Pinkney’s sentence, the Michigan Supreme Court has asked for further briefs to be filed. In an order dated May 17, the court requested more extensive written arguments on two points raised

on appeal. One issue is “whether the trial court abused its discretion when it admitted evidence ... that related to the defendant’s political and community activities other than the mayoral recall effort for the purpose of showing the defendant’s motive to commit the instant crimes.”

The other issue involves whether a Michigan election law should be interpreted to include any person or just the election officials to whom the law clearly applies. This request for further briefs does not insure that Rev. Pinkney’s appeal will actually be heard, as the Michigan Supreme Court refuses to hear the vast majority of cases submitted to it. Nevertheless, Holloway wrote that the court order “definitely is a step in the right direction.”

Rev. Pinkney is eager to walk out of the prison doors on June 13 and resume his political activities. He especially wants to draw attention to the miserable and dangerous conditions inside the prisons and lend support to fellow inmates who gave him so much backing and protection while he was behind bars.

Supporters in southeast Michigan are preparing for a July 8 mass meeting in Detroit to welcome home this heroic community leader. □

Mumia challenges court-cop collusion

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

In a breakthrough in the struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, Judge Leon Tucker agreed on April 24 to hear an appeal to overturn Mumia’s 35-year-old wrongful conviction in the death of a Philadelphia police officer. Tucker is a Common Pleas judge in the city.

One week later came a second breakthrough. Tucker ordered the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office to produce, within 30 days, all documents relevant to former District Attorney Ronald Castille’s role as a top prosecutor during Mumia’s initial appeal process.

Abu-Jamal’s attorneys, Judith Ritter and Christina Swarns of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, contend that Mumia was denied the right to due process, as protected by the U.S. Constitution, because Castille refused as a Pennsylvania Supreme Court justice to step down from hearing state appeals cases he was involved in at a lower level.

The challenge to Castille is based on a 2016 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Williams v. Pennsylvania*. SCOTUS found that the constitutional right to due process is violated when a judge presides over a case in which they had prior signif-



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

On April 24 protesters gathered outside of a state court in Philadelphia to demand Mumia Abu-Jamal’s freedom.

icant or personal involvement as a prosecutor. In addition to Abu-Jamal’s appeal based on this ruling, 17 other cases involving Castille were heard by Tucker; all were ruled in favor of the petitioners.

Racist cops, courts and DAs, hand-in-hand

Tucker’s decision in favor of Abu-Jamal is important as it undermines legal roadblocks that deny or limit the right of people to appeal their convictions. One such limit was *Teague v. Lane*, a 1989 U.S. Supreme Court ruling made during a climate of neoconservatism.

In *Teague*, SCOTUS ruled that new constitutional rules of criminal procedure would not apply in cases where petitioners had exhausted their appeals pro-

cess before the new rule was announced.

One exception allowed in *Teague v. Lane* was if “the new rule was a watershed rule of criminal procedure.” This appears to be the case with the SCOTUS 2016 ruling in *Williams v. Pennsylvania*.

In an April 24 hearing, Pennsylvania District Attorney Ronald Eisenberg argued against Mumia, but acknowledged due process denial might be relevant.

His objection was that if the court ruled for Abu-Jamal, this might open a floodgate of appeals, overburdening his office and the courts.

Unsaid was that Mumia’s appeal would also create a firestorm for prosecutors who have gone on to become judges.

The tainted and widespread link among the courts, local district attorneys and the cops is observable in the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office, under increasing scrutiny for its history of racism, corruption and collusion with the Fraternal Order of Police. Castille’s election to the state’s Supreme Court was heavily backed and financed by the FOP.

During the 1997 Philadelphia District Attorney election, news surfaced that Jack McMahon, a prosecutor running

for that office, had trained fellow prosecutors to ignore a U.S. Supreme Court ban on using race to make jury selections. In a 60-minute videotape, McMahon instructed prosecutors: “Blacks from low-income areas are less likely to convict ... [Y]ou don’t want these people on your jury.” McMahon was in the District Attorney’s Office in the 1980s when Abu-Jamal’s case was being prosecuted.

The overturning of Mumia Abu-Jamal’s death penalty conviction in 2011 was due in large part to continued international support and mass demonstrations, organized over many years. Recently, supporters, working with Abu-Jamal’s attorneys, won a ruling that the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections must provide Mumia with anti-viral drugs needed to cure hepatitis C that was dangerously compromising his health.

That victory for Mumia may be responsible for a recent decision by Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf that prisoners who are state Medicaid recipients with at least stage F1 liver cirrhosis be given anti-viral drugs.

Building on these victories, Abu-Jamal supporters are calling for people to call the District Attorney’s Office to demand compliance with Tucker’s orders in favor of Mumia.

A press conference and protests are called for May 30, starting at the District Attorney’s Office in Philadelphia at 2 p.m. EDT. For more information, see Mobilization4Mumia on Facebook or contact mobilization4Mumia@gmail.com.

Death at the hands of ICE

GEORGIA

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

Within 24 hours, two immigrants died in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody in Georgia.

First came the shocking news of the death of 27-year-old Panamanian national, Jean Carlos Jiménez-Joseph, found in a solitary confinement cell at the Stewart Detention Center early on the morning of May 16, with his bed sheet wrapped around his neck.

Described by his family and friends as a talented musician and high school athlete, Jiménez-Joseph had lived most of his life in the U.S.

ICE took custody of him on March 2, following a conviction for motor vehicle larceny in Wake County, N.C., and brought him to the Stewart Detention Center, the for-profit prison operated by CoreCivic, formerly known as the Corrections Corporation of America. Stewart is located in rural Lumpkin, Ga., about 100 miles south of Atlanta.

It currently is the second largest immigrant detention facility in the U.S., with a capacity of 1,752 detainees. Stewart is often cited for its human rights violations, including poor medical care, unsanitary conditions, inedible food and prolonged solitary confinement practices.

When Jiménez-Joseph died, he had been held in solitary for 19 days, following what prison officials described as “an attempt to get attention” by jumping off a second floor walkway to the ground. There is no indication he was receiving any mental health services.

ICE policies limit the use of solitary confinement as a punishment to 14 days. Even though international law con-

demns solitary confinement as a form of torture, it is used regularly in the U.S.

Jiménez-Joseph’s mother had traveled from North Carolina to visit him on Saturday, May 13. Alarmed at his mental state, she asked members of El Refugio to visit him on Sunday. El Refugio is an immigrant advocacy group that operates a hospitality house in Lumpkin, where visiting families can stay since there are no motels in the area.

However, prison officials refused her visit, saying that since he was in solitary, Jiménez-Joseph was allowed only one visit a month.

By early morning, May 15, Jean Carlos Jiménez-Joseph was dead.

The very next day, May 16, ICE announced that Atul Bahibhai Patel, a 58-year-old Indian man, had died in Atlanta’s Grady Hospital.

Patel had been arrested May 10, upon arriving at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, for having incomplete travel documents. He was transferred to the Atlanta City Detention Center on the next day. The ACDC is a huge city jail that also serves as an immigration detention facility under contract with ICE.

A preliminary medical screening indicated that Patel suffered from high blood pressure and diabetes.

On May 13, he was taken to Grady Hospital. He died three days later, reportedly from congestive heart failure. Atlanta’s Indian

community facilitated a Hindu cremation ceremony and the return of his ashes to his family in India.

Increased torture and detention of immigrants

The torture at the Stewart Detention Center was back in the headlines when it was revealed that, on May 12, federal Judge Leslie Abrams had ordered the force-feeding of Vitaly Novikov, a 61-year-old Ukrainian refugee who first came to the U.S. in 1989 and became a permanent resident in 1992.

Following his conviction on a domestic abuse charge in February, he was arrested and held at Stewart. He was ordered to be deported on April 18 and began a hunger strike on April 20. Stewart officials say he has lost at least 35 pounds.

According to the May 18 Daily Report, Alejandro Hernández, an ICE supervisory detention and deportation officer, wrote in a court filing requesting the force-feeding order that Novikov’s death “could lead to acts of detainee violence and disruptions,” and threaten the safety of staff. He furthered stated that No-

vikov’s death “might spur more hunger strikes to gain benefits ... including transfer or release from Stewart.”

Abrams’ order also gives permission for prison staff to forcibly restrain Novikov to take blood samples and conduct other medical tests. Stewart has released no further information about Novikov other than to confirm that there is a detainee on hunger strike.

These stories of incarcerated people highlight the ramped-up enforcement of immigration laws since Trump’s inauguration as U.S. president.

Between Jan. 20 and April 29, there has been a 75 percent increase in ICE arrests in Georgia and North and South Carolina compared to the same period in 2016. (Atlanta Journal Constitution, May 18)

Nationwide, the increase in arrests from 2016 is 38 percent. In 2017 so far, over 41,000 people have been picked up at their jobs, taken from their homes, arrested on the street without warning and taken into custody in advance of deportation. (TIME, May 17)

Even ICE figures show that, among those arrested immediately after Trump’s inauguration, more than 25 percent of these working people had no criminal records at all, and another 25 percent had been convicted only of traffic offenses. (Washington Post, April 28)

“The human rights of tens of thousands of immigrants are in constant peril at the hands of racist police forces, ruling class judges and courts, and for-profit prisons,” stated Kevin Caron of the Georgia Detention Watch, which has ongoing campaigns to shut down the Stewart Detention Center and the Atlanta City Detention Center. □



PHOTO: ATLANTA JOBS WITH JUSTICE

A contingent from the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights on May Day 2017 in Atlanta.

AT&T hit by coast-to-coast strike

By Martha Grevatt

At 3 p.m. EDT on May 19, 21,000 workers began streaming out of AT&T retail outlets across the U.S. These AT&T Wireless workers in 36 states and the District of Columbia were joined by almost as many striking wireline, call center, internet service and DirecTV workers in Nevada, California and Connecticut.

A strike was on, called by the Communications Workers.

The walkout of AT&T retail workers might be the largest retail strike in U.S. labor history. Workers at DirecTV, recently acquired by AT&T, are striking for their first contract ever. The action comes a little more than a year after the victorious Verizon strike by 39,000 members of the CWA and Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

CWA mobilized the strike, closing retail outlets for the entire weekend, over AT&T's "failure to present serious proposals that invest in good jobs with a future." (cwa-union.org) CWA has filed a charge with the National Labor Relations Board about the company's refusal to provide job sourcing information the union requested. Data on vacations, sick days, training, job transfers and benefits have also been illegally withheld by the company.

Because AT&T workers pay for part of their health care benefits, rising costs are eroding their earnings. They badly need



New York City

WW PHOTO: SARA CATALINOTTO

an adequate pay increase to offset this burden. Instead, AT&T wants to increase employee contributions to health benefits. The meager raises offered to workers would be eaten up by inflation. AT&T has also forced retail workers to take what amounts to a pay cut when it unilaterally restructured their sales commission formula, which CWA wants to negotiate in the new contract.

CWA revealed that AT&T has subcontracted 12,000 call center jobs since 2011. Workers in the Dominican Republic, employed by third-party contractors, perform the same work as CWA members for a fraction of what U.S. workers make. CWA staff went to the Dominican Republic to investigate and saw the union-busting tactics Dominican workers face for trying to improve their situation.

Multi-billion-dollar behemoth vs workers

AT&T is number 10 — just after General Motors and Ford — on the Fortune 500

list of the biggest U.S. companies. AT&T makes about a billion dollars in profit every month. The more the company squeezes out of worker pay and benefits, the more AT&T profits. The telecommunication giant is poised to acquire media entertainment giant Time Warner, pending approval by the Department of Justice.

CWA alerted union supporters in advance when and where to show up for picket line actions. Many were outside AT&T stores, ready to show solidarity, as workers marched out of stores across the U.S.

At a Manhattan store, the line of strikers and family members grew to 150 in the first 10 minutes of the action, and kept growing. A multinational crew of picket captains led the crowd in chants like "We built it up, we take it down!" and "Every job a Union job!" A striker from the Bronx told Workers World proudly, "The Fordham Road store has been shut down completely since Friday. Not a single scab." A crew from a Washington Heights store said theirs was open but only with managers.

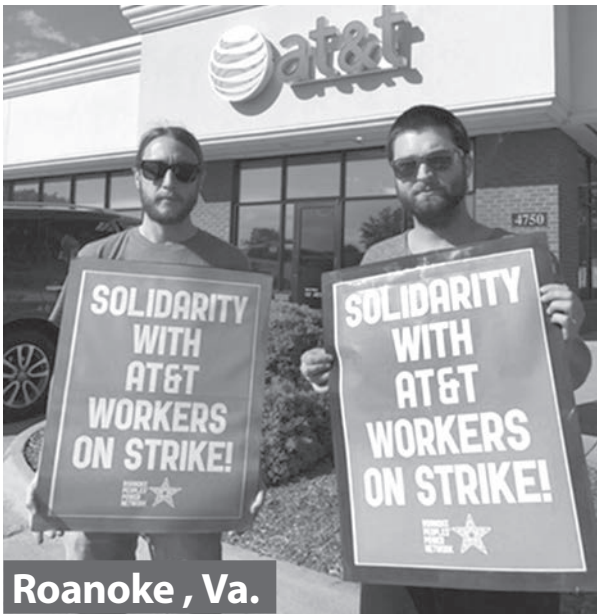
These CWA Local 1101 members were joined by the

president of the Clerical, Administration and Technical Staff (UCATS) Local 3882 at New York University, along with an editor of CWA 1180's magazine, and members of the American Federation of Teachers and the Professional Staff Congress of City University of New York.

Nobody passing by attempted to enter the store as workers marched to three other midtown stores and back. More coordinated support actions took place during the weekend.

The union states that members "have vowed to do what they have to do if AT&T violates their rights or an open-ended strike becomes necessary." (cwa-union.org)

Sara Catalinotto contributed to this article.



Roanoke , Va.

PHOTO: ROANOKE PEOPLES' POWER NETWORK

The hard work of keeping the trains running

By G. Dunkel
New York

The 600,000 or so people who daily use the transportation hub at Penn Station here depend on maintenance-of-way (MW) workers. These people maintain the tracks so trains can operate safely. Signal maintainers are also needed. Other workers provide information, sell tickets, clean cars and clean the station itself.

All these workers must confront the dilapidation of the 107-year-old Penn Station. Amtrak, which is controlled by the U.S. government, has been underfunded since it was founded in 1971.

Both New Jersey Transit and the Long Island Railroad are commuter railroads that use Penn Station, with a big increase in the number of passengers since 20 years ago. Their 1,200 daily trains make repairs difficult.

April 3 derailment

The key role that MW workers play can be seen in the April 3 derailment of a NJT commuter train carrying about 1,200 passengers. Three cars in the middle of the train, which was traveling very slowly, came off the rails. This was the second derailment in less than two weeks.

The workers' first task was to get all passengers off the train; there were no major injuries because of the slow speed. Then the re-railing of the cars was a tricky and risky job for workers partly because of overhead electrical power wires.

The derailment occurred near where switches are thrown to direct incoming trains to their platforms. The MW workers had to be protected from the trains. Dispatchers provided some protection, but workers needed to spot trains and sound a warning to pause the work.



Penn Station.

This small safeguard was mandated by the 2016 amended Roadway Protection Act, one of the rare national worker-protection laws passed in the U.S. in the last 30 years.

Amtrak, demonstrating a reckless attitude toward worker and rider safety, later admitted that a wooden tie had rotted and that it knew about the problem, but didn't think it serious enough to replace.

May 3 sewage leak

On May 3 a big sewage leak came down from an office tower in the LIRR waiting area.

For the cleanup, maintenance workers needed rubber gloves and mops. Some had hats or handkerchiefs over their hair.

Based on photo coverage by the Daily News, it doesn't appear any other protective gear was issued to workers handling the seemingly raw sewage.

As the sewage flow lasted until the late afternoon, both Amtrak and the LIRR made a point of announcing that train service wasn't interrupted.

The Penn Station MW workers are covered by a union affiliated with the Teamsters, but many workers in the passenger areas don't have union protection.

Meanwhile, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo is using the Penn Station incidents to call for turning Amtrak construction and management over to "a private-sector operator." (Albany Times-Union, May 21)

But a move to privatization will not provide better safety, wages or benefits for Penn Station workers.

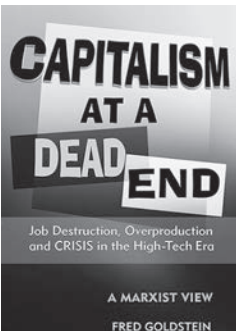
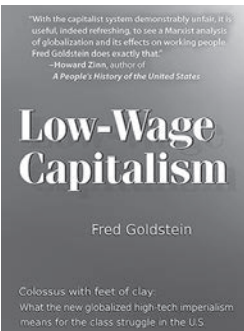
Workers know this, and those at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey have been rallying for months to improve their working conditions.

Service Employees Local 32BJ announced May 16 that it is organizing for legislation to raise wages to \$18 an hour for workers at New York airports and at private companies providing services at bus terminals and train stations. (New York Times, May 16)

The union campaign would cover as many as 40,000 workers in those locations. □

Low-Wage Capitalism

Colossus with feet of clay
What the new globalized high-tech imperialism means for the class struggle in the U.S.



Capitalism at a Dead End Job destruction, overproduction and crisis in the high-tech era

For more information on these books and other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to LowWageCapitalism.com
Available at all major online booksellers.

Global poor, especially women, under attack

By Sue Davis

Health care for the poor is under attack globally as well as in the United States. Trump’s expanded, deliberately mis-named global gag rule, “Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance,” was announced May 15. As Slate noted that day, “PLGHA [is] the sound you’ll make when you consider the cruelty written into its provisions.”

Under past Republican administrations starting with Ronald Reagan, the rule (officially the Mexico City Policy) only blocked U.S. funding for foreign organizations that provide abortion care, information about abortions and advocate for abortion legalization, amounting to \$600 million annually. Now it will include health care dispensed by the U.S. Agency for International Development and departments of State and Defense, involving \$8.8 billion earmarked for HIV/AIDS prevention, malaria and Zika treatment, maternal and child health programs as well as reproductive health and family planning. PLGHA will also affect men and children.

Slate wrote: “The U.S. is the largest government provider of global health aid in the world. In 2006, it delivered more than one-third of all donor support for the whole planet’s contraceptive supplies. After George W. Bush reinstated the global gag rule in 2001 ... millions of women

went without contraception ... [and] rates of unintended pregnancy rose in some of the world’s poorest populations. So did abortion rates, as they do when women have no way to prevent pregnancy. ... Under Trump’s rule, countries [in Africa, the Middle East and Asia] won’t get any contraceptives at all.”

To knowingly deny people the means to control their fertility is a grave abuse of human rights. There’s a connection between health care and other essential human needs for survival: food, water, clothing, shelter, education and jobs. All combine in an intricate web. “If a health clinic closes because the U.S. pulls funding due to its reproductive health work, people who depended on that clinic for all kinds of services will have nowhere to go. That’s ‘protecting life’ under Donald J. Trump,” concluded Slate.

After Trump announced his gag rule on Jan. 23, Dutch Minister Lilianne Ploumen set up an international fund for contraception, abortion and health education to fill the gap. (WW article, Feb. 2) Representatives from more than 50 countries attended a one-day “She Decides” conference on March 2 in Brussels, aiming for pledges of \$600 million. Meanwhile, global reproductive choice group Marie Stopes International estimates the rule will cause 6.5 million unintended pregnancies, 2.2 million abortions, 2.1 million unsafe abortions and 21,700

maternal deaths. (cnn.com, March 2)

National assault on abortion, contraception

Misogynist in chief Trump is stacking the Department of Health and Human Services with virulently anti-choice haters topped by Dr. Thomas E. Price, secretary of HHS. So anti-woman is Price that he stated “not one” woman has ever had a problem paying for birth control! (theatlantic.com, Nov. 29)

Charmaine Yoest, named HHS assistant secretary for public affairs on April 28, is former CEO of Americans United for Life (2006-16), the source of legislation passed by many states to restrict access to abortion. However, two AUL laws in Texas were overturned by the Supreme Court in 2016. (WW article, July 7) Before that, Yoest was vice president of the Family Research Council, classified as an anti-LGBTQ hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Teresa Manning, a former lobbyist for the National Right to Life Committee and legislative analyst for FRC, was appointed deputy assistant secretary for Population Affairs on May 1. That office administers the Title X program subsidizing contraception, Pap tests and other preventive services for 4 million low-income women. (WW article, April 6) Manning told National Public Radio in 2003, “Contraception doesn’t work.”

“This is the fox guarding the hen house,

and women with low incomes will pay the price,” said Dawn Laguens, executive vice president of Planned Parenthood. “It is a cruel irony to appoint an opponent of birth control to oversee the nation’s only federal program dedicated to family planning.” (Huffington Post, May 1)

It’s also deliberately racist, sexist and anti-poor since the majority of women who benefit from Title X are poor women of color and other low-wage workers.

Both Yoest and Manning allege abortions cause breast cancer (a scientific untruth) and want to make them illegal, with no exceptions for rape, incest or preserving a woman’s health and life. Yoest believes embryos have legal rights and opposes intrauterine devices and Plan B (morning-after pills) due to their “life-ending properties” (another medical lie). Manning calls abortion “legalized crime.”

All this flies in the face of current statistics. The U.S. is at an all-time low for abortions and teen pregnancies and a 30-year low for unintended pregnancies, thanks to the Affordable Care Act’s provision of family planning as a preventative service.

Trump and his ilk only like “alternative facts,” which allow them to kowtow to the religious right and his racist, bigoted base.

But working-class women of all ages, nationalities and genders won’t go back. Proud and determined, women will continue to resist oppression! ☐

Midwest meeting exposes U.S. imperialism

By Jeff Sorel
Chicago

An enthusiastic audience attended a May 19 forum in Chicago on combating the U.S. war drive from the Middle East to the Philippines.

Randi Nord, a Workers World Party member from Detroit and journalist with Geopolitics Alert, spoke on Yemen. She characterized the horrific war in Yemen as an effort by the United States and its proxy, Saudi Arabia, to suppress a broad-based popular movement struggling for sovereignty and democracy.

Kousay Ahmad, a representative of the Syrian American Will Association, described the widespread support for the democratically elected government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and how the Syrian army and its Russian supporters are protecting civilians from terrorist carnage.



WW PHOTO: JEFF SOREL
From left:
Randi Nord,
Kousay Ahmad,
Joe Mshahwar,
Edmund Nabua
and Adjoa
Achiaa,
May 19.

Joe Mshahwar, a young Syrian-American activist with the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice and WWP in Detroit, explained the historical background and genesis of the war in Syria and why the U.S. has unleashed terrorist groups to destroy the most democratic and secular state in the region.

Edmund Nabua, from Anakbayan Chicago, linked these struggles in the Middle East to the struggle for national liberation and democracy in the Philippines, and stressed that the vast resources used to wage U.S. wars abroad are taken from education, health care and housing here at home.

The forum, co-sponsored by Workers World Party and Anakbayan Chicago, was chaired by Adjoa Achiaa of Chicago WWP, who noted that May 19th — the birthday of heroic liberation fighters Ho Chi Minh, Malcolm X and Yuri Kochiyama — is a particularly suitable date to mobilize support for the global struggle against imperialism and all forms of oppression. ☐

‘Almagro no! Hands off Venezuela!’

— Report and photo by Greg Butterfield



People in solidarity with Bolivarian Venezuela held a lunchtime picket at the Council of the Americas in New York City on May 17 to protest a scheduled talk by Organization of American States General Secretary Luis Almagro, a stooge of the U.S. counterrevolutionary campaign against that country.

Protesters took over the sidewalk in front of the Upper East Side mansion housing the Council of the Americas. They chanted, “¡Almagro, asesino!” (“Almagro, murderer!”) “¡Maduro, amigo! ¡El pueblo está contigo!” ([President Nicolás] “Maduro, friend! The people are with you!”) and “USA, hands off Venezuela!”

The OAS head cancelled his appearance, apparently afraid of being confronted by Chavistas and supporters, and the picketers declared a victory.

Protesters then decided to march to the Venezuelan Consulate several blocks away to show their solidarity with the Venezuelan government. Solidarity activists saw for themselves the actions of right-wing gangsters, who had defaced the consulate with counterrevolutionary slogans and blood thrown on the building. Venezuelan government officials came out of the consulate to greet the demonstrators and thank them for their solidarity.

The action was called by the Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle and endorsed by the International Action Center, Workers World Party, Cuba Solidarity New York, Alianza PAIS, Libre Resistencia Hondureña, Pastors for Peace, Answer Coalition, International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Cuba and Venezuela Solidarity Committee. ☐

Chelsea Manning finally free!

By L.T. Pham

Chelsea Manning was released on May 17 from a military prison after serving seven years of her 35-year sentence. Former President Barack Obama commuted Manning’s sentence in January due to unending pressure for her freedom from activists around the world.

A former U.S. Marine intelligence analyst, Manning turned over several hundred thousand files to WikiLeaks, a well-known whistleblower website. She was sentenced in 2010, her actions condemned by the ever-profit-greedy, power-hungry U.S. empire intent on hiding their war crimes she sought to expose.

A day after Manning was sentenced, she came out publicly as a transgender woman. For the past seven years she has been held in a federal men’s prison.

Manning’s release is a huge victory for the movement, for LGBTQ people and for all political prisoners who have taken a stand against U.S. imperialism. Her release comes at a time when political developments within the U.S. indicate that the ruling class is vying for yet another war — while the anti-war movement

fighters to make a comeback to oppose U.S. intervention and militarism in Syria and Venezuela, among several other countries the U.S. preys on.

Manning’s freedom should serve as a torch to keep our movement’s fire going.

In celebration of this victory, we continue to raise the banner for freedom for all political prisoners, including Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Ky Peterson — a black transgender man sentenced to 20 years in prison for defending himself against sexual assault. And we say Freedom! for the countless Black and Brown LGBTQ people forced into prison systems that are concentration camps for the poor.

The U.S. empire has constructed its prison system to suppress workers and oppressed people who dare blow the whistle on the heinous crimes of this system, who dare to resist by leaking military intelligence or by fighting back against the police. The system that held Manning in a male prison to delegitimize her gender identity is not simply a system lacking moral conscience or compassion. It is a very calculated system attempting to legitimize its attacks on workers and oppressed people by further alienating sec-

tors of the working class from each other.

The movement refused to play into the military’s divide-and-conquer strategies vis-à-vis transphobia. Instead, the movement fought to free Manning and stayed strong for years to ensure her safety, well-being and the ultimate release of this people’s hero.

Now as we celebrate Manning’s freedom, we remember the legacy of transgender revolutionary fighters such as Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera and Leslie Feinberg, who showed us that the struggle for transgender liberation is inseparable from the struggle against capitalism and white supremacy; that no world is safe for transgender people so long as the U.S. empire is able to wage war, exploit workers and displace the oppressed; that there is no true vanguard of



the working class without the leadership, bravery and determination of transgender people. □

[HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/P/BUPBWx0HTRW/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BUPBWx0HTRW/)

Oscar López Rivera FREE AT LAST!

Continued from page 1

Critical moments

The physical presence of Oscar in the movement occurs in the most critical moments for Puerto Rico. The struggle in this period will decide whether the Boricua nation — Borikén, by its Taíno name — will remain and advance toward its sovereignty, or if it will revert to the “Porto Rico” — a name the U.S. gave when it assumed control — thus making it openly a backyard for speculation by foreign capital, primarily from the U.S., and where the dwindling Puerto Rican population will only provide servants to the new inhabitants.

Oscar noticed these developments only a few hours after he toured some of the old streets he remembered as a young man. He commented on the process of gentrification of former working-class neighborhoods and the noticeable increase of U.S. residents. He warned of the potential danger that Puerto Rico would become another Alaska or Hawai’i, where new U.S. residents constituted a majority, thus affecting electoral and decisive power.

He lamented the brain drain. This flight, which depletes the productive capacity of Puerto Rico through the emigration of young professionals — most of them educated in the public university with funds from the Puerto Rican people — will benefit the economy of the same country that has imposed a debt on the archipelago and destroyed all possibility of economic development that could benefit the Puerto Rican people and not the foreign corporations.

He criticized foreign firms such as DuPont and Monsanto that have flooded the country, using Puerto Rico as the basis of experiments that poison the environment and destroy the island’s capacity.

Commitment is strong, hopeful

Despite the exposition of the harsh Puerto Rican reality, Oscar’s message



Chicago

WW PHOTOS: JEFF SOREL



Former Palestinian political prisoner Rasmea Odeh greets Oscar Lopez Rivera in Chicago, May 18.

PHOTO: TELSUR / TWITTER / JUSTICE4AMEA

to their concerns, and thus be able to work for decolonization and independence more effectively.

International greetings

An important part of Oscar’s message was gratitude to the people who waged a united struggle for his liberation, even though they held

different ideological perspectives.

But special thanks went to the governments of Cuba and Venezuela, and he also mentioned individually each of the Cuban Five.

Oscar also received calls and messages from President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela and Raúl Castro from Cuba. The message from Fernando González, one of the Cuban Five, was especially moving, as they shared the same cell for four years.

With respect to Venezuela, and in response to hostile questions from the media accusing him of defending President Maduro, Oscar responded that it is U.S. intervention that is guilty of violence in Venezuela and that is why he demands that the U.S. stop its interference there. □

I believe we can create a broad tent where all of us who love our homeland can fit, because we need to love our homeland in order to make Puerto Rico the nation that it has the potential of being.

“If we truly love our homeland, then it should not be so difficult to unite. Do it because we love our homeland, because if we do not do it, we will lose her. I can say with complete confidence that loving the homeland costs nothing. What is expensive is if we lose her. If we continue on the path we are going, Puerto Rico will not be our homeland.” (telesurtv.net, May 21)

Once in the land of Boricua, he wants to make what he called his pilgrimage: to go to every one of the 78 municipalities to have dialogues with the people, listening

China builds new type of globalization

By Sara Flounders

The People’s Republic of China hosted a summit May 14 called the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, also known as the New Silk Road project. Twenty-nine heads of state and representatives of 130 countries attended from across Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. Seventy countries signed agreements with China to participate.

The “Belt” refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt. It encompasses land route development from central China to Central Asia, Iran, Turkey and Eastern Europe. The “Road” refers to the Maritime Silk Road. This involves ports and coastal infrastructure from Southeast Asia to East Africa and the Mediterranean.

The plan projects a network of trade routes with new rail lines, ports, highways, pipelines, telecommunications facilities and energy centers linking countries on four continents. It includes financing to promote urban planning, potable water, sanitation and food development. China is calling it the “plan of the century.”

China describes the project as a revival of the ancient Silk Road with 21st-century technology. It is projected to be 12 times the size of the U.S. Marshall Plan, which rebuilt Western Europe after World War II.

Major corporate media around the world warn that the gathering signals the end of the American Century — the U.S. claim to be the world’s sole superpower. Numerous analysts suggest the project could shift the center of the global economy and challenge the U.S.-led world order.

Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Charles Freeman described the OBOR project as “potentially the most transformative engineering effort in human history. China will become the center of economic gravity as it becomes the world’s largest economy. The ‘Belt and Road’ program includes no military component, but it clearly has the potential to upend the world’s geopolitics as well as its economics.” (NBC News, May 12)

In a May 13 article, “Behind China’s \$1 Trillion Plan to Shake Up the Economic Order,” the New York Times predicted: “The initiative ... looms on a scope and scale with little precedent in modern history, promising more than \$1 trillion in infrastructure and spanning more than 60 countries. Mr. Xi is aiming to use China’s wealth and industrial know-how to create a new kind of globalization that will dispense with the rules of the aging Western-dominated institutions. The goal is to refashion the global economic order, drawing countries and companies more tightly into China’s orbit. It is impossible for any foreign leader, multinational executive or international banker to ignore China’s push to remake global trade. American influence in the region is seen to be waning.”

U.S. infrastructure is collapsing

Meanwhile, the U.S. infrastructure is literally falling apart. Crumbling roads, bridges, dams and schools have been given an overall D+ grade by the American Society of Civil Engineers. Investment in infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and wastewater treatment plants, is at a 30-year low.

Donald Trump, with his “America First” campaign slogan, pledged to rebuild the country’s broken infrastruc-

ture. But since becoming president, his administration has instead opted for cutting taxes on the rich while increasing the military budget. Meanwhile, the U.S.-initiated Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, which was designed to exclude China, has collapsed.

China’s OBOR project has generated enormous interest because U.S. imperialism has less and less to offer any developing country, except weapons sales and military bases. Weapons quickly become obsolete, leaving only debt and underdevelopment.

Where U.S. infrastructure projects are in place around the world, they are focused on building and maintaining a vast high-tech network of 800+ military bases and servicing an armada of aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines and destroyers. Each base is an expense to and an attack on the sovereignty of the host country. U.S. foreign aid ranks near the bottom of such expenditures of all developed countries, amounting to less than 1 percent of the federal budget. It is largely military aid to Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Egypt and Pakistan.

U.S. wars have resulted in great profit for U.S. corporations while massively destroying vital civilian infrastructure in developing countries under attack. Water purification plants, sanitation, sewage, irrigation, electric grid, communication centers, hospitals and schools have been intentionally destroyed in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Afghanistan. By contrast, China has no foreign military bases. Its ambitious OBOR initiative does not include military equipment or facilities.

Nevertheless, U.S. corporate power sees all other economic development as a threat to its global domination. Its aim is to protect at all costs the irrational capitalist system.

Response to U.S. pivot to Asia

The pivot to Asia begun during the Obama administration is an aggressive military plan that includes the U.S. nuclear arsenal and the Pentagon’s new THAAD missile battery in South Korea. Its focus is containing and threatening China’s growing economic influence in the region.

U.S. military planners brag of their ability to strangle China and cut its vital shipping lanes, such as the Straits of Malacca. This narrow transit point between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea handles 80 percent of China’s crude oil and other vital imports.

China, now the world’s largest trading nation, has responded with the nonmilitary OBOR plan that will open many trade routes through surrounding countries. Trade routes, unlike U.S. military bases, offer immediate benefit to the development of these countries. China is expected to invest up to \$1.3 trillion in OBOR infrastructure projects.

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: Challenge to IMF and World Bank

Past U.S. practices of seizing the assets of countries holding substantial funds in U.S. banks meant that the \$1.26 trillion that China has held in U.S. Treasury notes was especially vulnerable. Until six months ago, China was the number one investor in U.S. Treasury notes. Now



Imperialism is worried that China’s huge global infrastructure projects could challenge the U.S.-led world order.

China is divesting.

China has used a part of its significant reserves to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The AIIB plays an essential role in encouraging trade and economic cooperation with other countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America. This Chinese initiative is seen as a counter to the U.S.-dominated World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

As the Cuban news outlet Granma wrote on March 6: “AIIB aims to rescue those areas of the region somewhat abandoned by both the World Bank and the Asian Investment Bank (AIB), as well as encourage trade and economic cooperation.”

Both the IMF and the World Bank exert enormous leverage through “structural adjustment” policies. Debt repayment requires countries to cut spending on education, health, food and transportation subsidies. Their real goal is to force developing countries to privatize their national assets.

Phony concern for environment

Corporate-funded nongovernmental organizations and social media campaigns claim that China will not show the same respect for the environment and human rights as the U.S. and other imperialist powers do. They claim that China might not follow environmental restrictions on loans imposed by the World Bank and IMF.

This is sheer hypocrisy. The U.S. military machine is the world’s biggest institutional consumer of petroleum products and worst polluter of greenhouse gas emissions and many toxic pollutants. Yet the Pentagon has a blanket exemption in all international climate agreements.

U.S. wars have contaminated the soil and water of vast regions under U.S. occupation with depleted uranium, benzene and trichloroethylene at air base operations and with perchlorate, a toxic ingredient in rocket propellant.

Despite U.S. pressure, AIIB grows

Despite strong U.S. efforts to discourage international participation in the OBOR infrastructure fund, Russia, Iran and Latin American countries promptly joined and contributed substantial capital. Breaking ranks, Germany and South Korea then became major shareholders, followed by Britain, France, Italy, Spain and Australia. The Philippines and even Saudi Arabia saw the advantages of participation. The AIIB, founded on June 29, 2015, began operations last year.

According to a Times editorial of Dec. 5, 2015, “Countries are finding they must increasingly operate in China’s orbit. The United States worries that China will use the bank to set the global economic agenda on its own terms.”

In addition to the AIIB, the China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China already finance big-ticket projects in Asia and Africa. By Chinese estimates, their combined overseas assets stand at \$500 billion — more than the combined capital of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Socialist planning to overcome underdevelopment

China’s past decades of development and modernization and its current surpluses are what make these new global plans possible. China has an estimated \$4 trillion in foreign currency reserves. Its granaries are full and there are surpluses in cement and steel.

In 1949, when the revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party took power, China was an underdeveloped, war-torn country with a largely illiterate, majority peasant population. Western and Japanese imperialist powers had looted and carved up China for their own profits. Breaking their hold was the first step in liberation, but China was deeply impoverished.

After nearly 30 years of heroic efforts to modernize the economy based on the organization and efforts of the masses, the Chinese Communist Party in 1978 opened the country up to some forms of capitalist ownership and foreign capitalist investment.

This still risky policy has continued for nearly 40 years. It has allowed Chinese millionaires and even billionaires to develop and spread corruption. Foreign capital, ever hopeful of totally overturning the Chinese state, invested because profits could be made. But the Communist Party has used the years of capitalist investment to build up a modern, state-owned infrastructure alongside the growth of private capital.

Now China ranks as a developing country with a majority urban population living in modern, planned cities. The working class is now the largest social class in China. Wages for shop-floor workers in China have tripled in the last decade to become the highest in developing Asia.

China adopted a new industrial policy in 2015: “Made in China 2025,” which intends to upgrade manufacturing capabilities for high-tech products. These plans are supported by \$150 billion in public or state-linked funds. It is this kind of long-term socialist planning that is the motor behind China’s new One Belt, One Road plan.

While the U.S. attempts to block these needed infrastructure efforts, move missiles and aircraft carriers off China’s coast, and send the lowest possible diplomatic delegation to China for the OBOR summit, Washington had the audacity and arrogance to warn China against north Korean participation. The DPRK sent a high-level delegation. □

U.S. gay activist honored in Cuba

By Bob McCubbin

From its initiation in 2007, Cuba’s yearly International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia has marked the serious, ongoing effort of the country’s National Center for Sex Education (Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual or CENESEX) to eliminate the vestiges of sex/gender prejudice in Cuba, the harmful residue of 500 years of first Spanish and then U.S. colonial domination.

Mariela Castro Espín, the daughter of Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz and Cuban revolutionary leader Vilma Espín, is the founder and director of CENESEX and a member of the country’s National Assembly. Castro Espín used the occasion of the 10th International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia on May 12 to present U.S. gay activist the Rev. Dr. Troy Perry with a CENESEX award in recognition of his lifelong efforts in the struggle for LGBTQ liberation.

As a spiritual leader, Perry has, for many years, acted in strong opposition to the homophobic and transphobic positions of the world’s major patriarchal religious organizations. His Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, originally a gathering of 12 people in his Los Angeles living room, now encompasses over 300 congregations in 16 countries, safe spaces which meet the spiritual needs of many LGBTQ people. Perry was an early advocate for marriage rights for same-sex couples and performed such marriages long before they were legal in the U.S.

‘End the U.S. blockade now!’

Perry described the award ceremony at Havana’s Karl Marx Theater on his website: “By the time the 10th Cuban Gala Against Homophobia and Transphobia started, over 4,000 people were present. ... The program started with music and then my introduction was made and I spoke for ten minutes on my journey in [U.S.] America as a gay man and drew a parallel between the LGBTQ community in both our countries in the 1960s when gay men were arrested and sent to prison.”

He continued that following the pre-

sentation of the award “was the most beautiful experience of entertainment from the LGBT community I have ever witnessed! Ballet dancers from the National Cuban Ballet Company, a Flamenco dancer, who tore down the house! Jazz musicians, the choir and dancers from the Santería religion, drag performances, and numerous songs by Spanish vocalist, Falete, and more.”

In a statement to the press before leaving for Cuba, Perry denounced the murderous blockade that the U.S. imposed on Cuba soon after the revolutionary overthrow of the Batista dictatorship. “I am still saddened that the government of my country, the United States of America, still has not lifted the embargo against this wonderful country and its people. I call, again, for our government to make that change now!” (PR Newswire, March 7)

In the Introduction to her highly informative book, “Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba,” Workers World Party leader and internationally known transgender activist Leslie Feinberg wrote: “The history of the Cuban Revolution is a process from which we who have not yet made our revolutions have a great deal to learn about the struggle for sexual liberation, based on concrete historical conditions.” And while we continue to mourn the long illness and ultimate loss of our beloved Comrade Leslie, the process she alludes to continues, and continues to inspire a new generation of LGBTQ revolutionaries.

McCubbin is the author of “The Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression,” a Marxist analysis first published by Workers World Party in 1976, before the progressive movement in general was able to embrace a consistently supportive view of the first-wave Gay Liberation movement.

PHOTOS: FACEBOOK - REV. TROY PERRY AND CENESEX
Rev. Troy Perry and Mariela Castro Espin, top. Scenes from Cuba’s 10th Celebration of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia in Santa Clara, Cuba.



General strike brings Greece to a standstill

By G. Dunkel

Even though there have been many general strikes in Greece in the past 10 years, the one on May 17 stands out as one of the most successful. Some workers, like the sailors who run the ferries, struck the day before, the day of and took their time going back to work the day after.

Relying on its parliamentary majority, the Syriza government rammed through a harsh, draconian austerity program May 18. This meant Syriza’s act contradicted its electoral platform of 2013, which reads: “From the very beginning, the government’s task was to end the extreme austerity policy in Greece.” (tinyurl.com/pnjfc8r)

Greece’s economy has shrunk 27 percent since 2010, mainly under the impact of austerity measures imposed by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. Overall unemployment is at 23.5 percent and youth unemployment is nearly 50 percent.

According to the organization diaNEO-

sis, nearly 1.5 million Greeks — 15 percent of the population — currently live in “extreme poverty,” with just enough income to survive, which means pay for food and shelter. (tinyurl.com/lqob84y)

PAME, the All Workers Militant Front, which is closely associated with the Greek Communist Party (KKE), was very active in getting its members and supporters out to demonstrations that reinforced the strike on May 17. According to the French newspaper Le Monde, 12,000 people came out in Athens, 8,000 from PAME.

According to photos on the PAME website, there were marches in Thessaloniki, Heraklion, Larisa, Giannena, Chania, Volos, Agrinio, Karditsa and Rodos — basically all over Greece, including islands in the Aegean, as well as in its two largest cities.



Thessaloniki, Greece’s second-largest city, May 17.

Speaking in Athens, General Secretary of the KKE Dimitris Koutsoumpas said, “The class war is now in progress, it is a marathon, not a rifle shot in the air. The class war must be a daily and continuous one. The harsh anti-people measures, the

Fourth memorandum along with the previous memorandums must be thrown in the dustbin of history and the only ones who have the authority to do this are the Greek people, the labor-people’s movement.” □

WORKERS WORLD editorial

Stop escalating U.S. attacks on Syria

The action of U.S. warplanes bombing a Syrian government military convoy near the town of al-Tanf on May 18 marks a sharp escalation of the U.S. campaign to overthrow the elected Syrian government and to dismember the country. It must be protested by all who oppose U.S. imperialism's aggression.

With bloody irony, the Pentagon claimed it attacked the Syrian government convoy because the Syrian trucks had entered "an established 'de-confliction zone'." (latimes.com, May 18) The convoy had moved within 18 miles of a U.S. military base, where U.S., British and Norwegian soldiers were occupying Syrian territory, along with a group hostile to the Syrian government called the "Army of the Revolution's Commandos."

The Pentagon set up this base without permission by the Syrian government, which constitutes a de facto invasion of the country.

A Syrian official said, "This brazen attack by the so-called international coalition exposes the falseness of its claims to be fighting terrorism." (al-jazeera.com, May 19) The official said that "the Syrian army was fighting terrorism and no one else had the right to decide which areas it can carry out operations." (cbsnews.com, May 19)

The Russian government called the U.S. attack a breach of Syrian sovereignty.

The air attack took place as President Donald Trump left the U.S. to visit Saudi Arabia. The first thing Trump did when he arrived in the kingdom was to sign a \$110 billion weapons deal, and an additional \$250 billion in "other investments" with the Saudi regime.

The Saudi Arabian monarchy has been a chief collaborator with Washington's intervention in Syria, funneling money and arms to reactionary terrorist groups there, including the Jabhat Al-Nusra group linked to al-Qaida.

The U.S. bombing also comes just after an agreement creating "de-escalation" zones in Syria was signed by Russia, Iran, Turkey, Syria and non-al-Qaida groups that operate in Syria. The signing took place in Astana, Kazakhstan, on May 8. Representatives from Turkey, Russia and Iran will monitor ceasefires in four zones in the country. The campaign against the Islamic State group will continue under the plan.

The U.S. bombing was clearly designed to torpedo this agreement. Its goal is to re-enforce U.S.-defined "safe zones," continue the terrible conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands of Syrians and displaced millions, protect Washington's proxy militias, partition Syria and overturn the Bashar al-Assad government.

The U.S. wars in that oil-rich region of the world have enriched the weapons contractors and oil companies. But they only increase the austerity cuts that are being pushed on the workers at home. Health care, education, pensions — all this and more are on the chopping block to feed the Pentagon's war machine.

Only by combining the struggles to block the cutback campaign with a strong solidarity movement with the oppressed victims of the Pentagon war drive can workers and oppressed peoples in the U.S. help turn back this terrible attack on Syria that harms all of us. □

Cholera in Yemen spread by Saudi war

By Abayomi Azikiwe

Thousands of people are suffering from cholera in Yemen, so the Health Ministry of the National Salvation Government declared a state of emergency.

The president of the Supreme Political Council, Saleh al-Sammad Sanaa, chaired a meeting with other leading officials in Sanaa, Yemen's capital, to assess the cholera epidemic and develop a plan to halt and eliminate it.

The Ministry of Health indicated that 8,567 cases of the disease had been documented and that the government had insufficient capacity to effectively address the crisis. An appeal for assistance was issued to international organizations.

Hospitals in Sanaa are already overcrowded, and further spread of the infectious ailment would be catastrophic.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has said that there have been 11,000 cases of diarrhea confirmed in Yemen, with many of them related to cholera. At a press conference in Geneva on May 16, UNICEF spokesperson Christophe Boulhierac said that 130 people had died from cholera and that a third of these cases involved children.

This disease results from the contamination of drinking water and lack of sanitary conditions. With the daily bombing and shelling of civilian populated areas by the Saudi Arabian and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) forces, the basic infrastructure of the country has been severely damaged.

U.N. reports reveal that its agencies and their partners are supplying diarrheal disease kits, oral rehydration salts and water treatment tablets to residents in the affected areas. Nevertheless, the disease's spread is more widespread than the previous epidemic during October 2016.

Approximately 7.6 million of the 27 million people in this most impoverished country in the region reside in areas designated as high risk for cholera infection. The targeting of civilian areas, electricity sources, health care facilities, water supplies and food storage centers indicates that the U.S.-backed military intervention is aimed at forcing the people of Yemen into submission to Riyadh, Washington and London.

The Pentagon supplies intelligence coordinates, refueling technology and military hardware for the Saudis, who carry out the war.

Trump visit to reinforce militarism

In his first trip to the Middle East, President Donald Trump is seeking to maintain the firm alliance between U.S. imperialism and Riyadh. The war against the Yemeni people has escalated since Trump took office.

Direct bombings and a deadly commando unit raid on a village in Yemen after only days in office illustrated the expansionist program of the Trump presidency. U.S. coordination and support for the airstrikes and ground assaults against the Ansarullah-led government in Sanaa are designed to wage a proxy war against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Ansarullah (Houthis) movement has denied that it receives direct military and economic support from Tehran. Meanwhile, the coalition of U.S.-Saudi allied forces continues its relentless attacks on Yemen. Official estimates of deaths since the bombing and ground campaign

that began in March 2015 range from 5,000 to 12,000 people.

Meanwhile, the war has created the monumental health crisis that worsens week by week. The relentless bombing and shelling by the Saudi-GCC coalition and their allies have destroyed the ports, preventing the distribution of medical supplies, food, water, tents and blankets.

A May 16 article from the UN News Center reported the difficulties in distributing aid in "the embattled district of Mokha, in Yemen's Red Sea governorate of Taiz. Hostilities in Taiz escalated in January, with nearly 50,000 people displaced. ... The governorate also hosts about 304,000 additional displaced people."

This same report emphasizes that "aid workers noted 'a huge spike' in needs" in Al Hudaydah, north of Taiz, and that "more than three million have been uprooted since the start of the conflict two years ago."

Trump's visit also reinforces the arming of Saudi Arabia so it can act as a surrogate to imperialist aims in the region, with a military contract worth over \$100 billion. Conditions surrounding the weapons consist of both arms sales and maintenance services. This is only the initial phase of the program, which will eventually be valued at \$300 billion.

Deadly strikes intensify

Many people are being killed in daily airstrikes and ground operations in Yemen. In response, the forces allied with the Ansarullah and the military units of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh are inflicting casualties on the U.S.-backed units.

Saudi fighter jets carried out four bombing raids in the Serwah district of Marib province on May 17. Armed groups aligned with the Saudi-GCC coalition launched artillery missiles into numerous neighborhoods of the same district. Extensive destruction was evident, with damaged homes and other structures.

Later on the same day, 23 people, including women and children, died as a result of a U.S.-backed Saudi-GCC aerial bombardment against the Mawza'a district in Taiz province.

Nonetheless, the anti-U.S. forces have continued their attacks on Saudi-GCC allied fighters operating on the ground. Despite the air campaign and ground attacks in various parts of the country by armed forces operating in conjunction with the exiled regime of ousted Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, along with commandos from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other states, the popular forces are quite capable of retaking territory and eliminating threats.

According to a May 17 report from Saba News, based in Yemen, "The army and popular forces destroyed a military vehicle of the Saudi-paid mercenaries in northern Midi desert ... and shelled groups of the mercenaries in the same desert." They also hit a headquarters building in Suqami and gatherings of Saudi soldiers in the region.

Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia connotes the continuing U.S. war policy toward Yemen, Syria, Iran, Hezbollah and Palestine. The objective of the White House and its surrogates is to stifle the alliance of revolutionary anti-imperialist forces throughout the Middle East in favor of pro-Western organizations and states. □

Chicago Fight for \$15



More than 2,000 workers — mostly young, Black or Brown and minimum-wage — rallied and marched in the rain in Chicago on May 23 to demand that McDonald's pay its workers a living wage. The company just doubled its CEO's annual pay to \$15 million and is spending hundreds of millions on a new corporate headquarters here while its work-

ers are struggling to survive. Speakers from Fight for 15, the Service Employees union and other organizations told the crowd: "We are marching because this is not only a worker's issue, but also an immigrant, racial, women's, LGBTQ and environmental issue. When we beat McDonald's, we will all win!"

— Report and photo by Jeff Sorel

From the book ‘Generals over the White House’

In 1980, Sam Marcy, founder of Workers World Party, wrote the book “Generals over the White House,” assessing the relationship of the Carter administration to the Pentagon and the utter dependency of the capitalist economy on military spending. Below is a chapter from the book, slightly edited for space, that sounds eerily familiar today, despite the differences in personality and image of the politicians occupying the White House. The entire book can be read at workers.org/marcy/cd/samgen/index.htm.

Following up on his bellicose proclamation of the so-called Carter Doctrine, in which he carved out the Persian Gulf as a virtual American lake to be defended with “all the force necessary,” President Jimmy Carter has proposed an unprecedented peacetime defense budget — a budget that projects a most dangerous turn towards military brinkmanship.

The “goal of President Carter’s proposed defense budget,” said the Wall Street Journal of Jan. 29, 1980, “is reminiscent of the Cold War of the 1950s rather than the detente efforts of the 1970s.” It has been recognized almost universally in the bourgeois camp as a break with the more moderate pace of Pentagon expenditures in the recent past, vast though they have been.

At the time Carter was about to submit his budget message for 1981, there was widespread speculation that a new recession was virtually on the way. Carter was advised to include a prediction that the recession would be mild. The whole idea of an incumbent president officially declaring the onset of a recession is rather extraordinary.

Selling guns with promises of jobs

The point of including this prediction, however, was to convey the impression (without saying so) that the defense budget would really cushion a recession and curb unemployment. This idea that military expenditures, especially very heavy ones, can soften or totally avoid a capitalist recession has been a recurrent theme among capitalist economists and has operated as a rationalization over the past three decades for the swollen defense budget.

“Love it or loathe it, the military-industrial complex is back in business,” said the New York Times on Jan. 20, 1980, in its business and finance section. “The tension in Iran and Afghanistan has given the defense industry a multi-billion dollar shot in the arm and the economic consequences could mean more jobs, higher inflation, a larger federal budget deficit, a strong stock market and an end to recessionary expectations.”

The Wall Street Journal of Feb. 1, 1980, was even more explicit in its front-page headline. “Military spending rise,” it said, “will soften recession, many economists say.”

“Even before the Pentagon decides,” said the Journal, “how and where to spend its billions, some defense contractors are expected to begin hiring workers and building inventories in anticipation for contracts. A few companies say they already have. Thus the rising defense bill is likely to give the economy a boost during 1980 as unemployment drops and orders rise.”

The business correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor was equally lyrical about Carter’s defense budget. “The on-again off-again recession now has probably been put on the back burner, thanks to the new defense spending that could reach a whopping \$230 billion annually by the mid-1980s. At the least, any recession is expected to be sharply mitigated.”

What has happened to this rosy picture? Have the unprecedented peacetime

War & the economic crisis

defense expenditures wiped out the prospect of a capitalist crisis or cushioned a mild recession, as the Pentagon apologists put it?

Stimulant or depressant?

The Commerce and Labor Department statistics released on May 2 showing a sharp drop in production and a steep increase in the unemployment rate to 7.2 percent completely exploded the myth that only a mild recession was coming. They fully confirmed that the serious capitalist crisis which has already been on for some time is still deepening. The more sober of the capitalist economists are predicting that it will be of considerable duration. ...

Of course, increased military production can stimulate and absorb a good deal of the basic industrial apparatus of the country, especially if it is followed by a general mobilization of the whole national economy. However, it should be noted that military production if it is relied on as a stimulant and administered over a protracted period, as it has been in the U.S. for more than three decades, like any other stimulant ultimately turns into its opposite and becomes a devastating depressant. What is true about drugs in general is also true in the field of political economy.

Unlike the 1930s

It was, of course, the huge military program that the U.S. embarked upon in the early thirties that ultimately pulled this country out of the most devastating economic collapse it has ever experienced. There are, however, vast differences between the early thirties and today.

There were at that time millions upon millions of unemployed. Industry and commerce were stagnant, some at a virtual standstill. There was not much of a standing U.S. army or navy. There was no universal military service as yet.

Most striking of all was the prevalence of a worldwide capitalist deflationary cycle. Prices of most basic commodities had not only reached low points but were at rock bottom. The huge drop in worldwide prices subsequently entailed a trade war, which later took on the form of currency wars among the capitalist powers.

As against the conditions prevailing then, the prospect today of revitalizing the economy through militarization on a truly massive scale is wholly different. Instead of a vastly deflated capitalist economy, there is today a grossly inflated one.

Worldwide inflation

The World Bank reports that in 1977 as many as 125 nations in the capitalist world were suffering from inflation. For the years 1970-77, the average annual rates ranged from 4 to 7 percent for a dozen or so so-called low-income countries, to Argentina’s 107.3 percent and Chile’s 267.8 percent. Most countries suffered rates of 20 to 30 percent. Even OPEC nations had high rates of inflation for the period: Saudi Arabia, 32.9 percent; Libya 25.1 percent; Kuwait, 31.3 percent.

If the U.S. were to seriously attempt to try to reduce inflation, it could scarcely proceed at a time when on a world scale it has, with slight ups and downs, been generally on an increase, as we have just shown.

Both the worldwide inflationary spiral of today, as well as the deflationary period of the early thirties, are merely different manifestations of the same intractable capitalist disease, in which production is destined for a blind market,

for profit and not for human use.

This capitalist disease has also grown out of the tremendous worldwide military expenditures, incurred mostly by the U.S., which has exported devalued, inflated dollars in the billions abroad.

It is also fueled by the growing power of the multinational corporations and the control they exercise over the world capitalist market in basic raw materials as well as finished industrial products. ...

The new militarization envisioned by the Carter defense program, unlike during the thirties, comes on top of a bloated military establishment which has milked the country of hundreds and hundreds of billions as a result of the Vietnam war. To this must be added the broad sociological significance of military production in capitalist society.

Do weapons have use value?

Military production in the epoch of imperialism is a special case of commodity production. “The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails,” wrote Karl Marx in his opening chapter of Capital, “presents itself as ‘an immense accumulation of commodities.’” The products of the military-industrial complex are by Marxist definition commodities. However, in addition to having an exchange value, commodities must also have a use value. According to Marx, a commodity is “a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another.”

The products of the military-industrial complex enter into the process of capitalist production not as commodities in general but as commodities sui generis — they are commodities of a peculiar type. While they are use values in the narrow economic sense, their broad sociological significance is that of a cancer which tends to consume the entire body politic.

The process of capitalist production and exchange in the final analysis does mean that the capitalists, in order to realize their profit, must produce a useful product. If not, it undermines the very process of capitalist reproduction.

The sum total of the product that emanates from the military-industrial complex is devoid of usefulness to society. This is not readily apparent in the U.S., which was the victorious country in World War II. At the end of the war, after having spent billions and billions of dollars, the U.S. appropriated most of the profitable world markets and sources of scarce raw materials which had belonged to its allies and its adversaries, thereby vastly enriching monopoly capitalism at home.

However, since the Korean War, the U.S. imperialist establishment has consistently lost ground in its military adventures. It has flooded the U.S. as well as the rest of the world with small pieces of paper whose decreasing value gives evidence of the indebtedness it has incurred as a result of military adventures, for which there has been no material return to compensate for the vast expenditures entailed in producing the planes, guns, tanks and other sophisticated equipment employed.

Selling guns abroad

A vivid example of the predicament in which the military establishment finds itself was illustrated in the segment of CBS’s 60 Minutes on May 4, 1980, in which it was alleged by the former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, James Akins, that then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger not only did not try to discourage the Shah

of Iran from raising oil prices in 1974, but actually encouraged him to do so.

This may astonish many who are not acquainted with the problems of the military-industrial complex. Iran and several of the other oil producers were among the few underdeveloped countries that could be induced to buy high-priced, sophisticated weapons in abundance and could pay for them in good currency, gold or oil.

It was an ideal way of actually selling weapons, instead of merely dumping them on reluctant allies or satellites.

Cranking up the war machine in the very early thirties was a stimulus to the capitalist economy. Cranking it up again in a period of hyperinflation and worldwide capitalist stagnation will operate as a depressant instead.

Of course, it is always possible to gain an initial spurt in a segment of industry, but it surely is at the expense of the broader non-defense sector of the U.S.

Congress ‘in hands of the military’

Notwithstanding all that has been said about the continuing encroachment of the military into all phases of civilian life, isn’t it true that Congress and the president have the final say in all matters concerning the political, economic and military direction of the U.S. government?

Isn’t it a fact that Congress, and in particular its powerful Appropriations Committee in the Senate and the Ways and Means Committee in the House, wield vast authority, since they have the power of the purse?

It is they, together with the president, who control the funds that have to be allocated for the military, without which no military establishment could develop on such monstrous proportions as today or prosecute a war. In that sense are they not the final authority?

Now listen to an old-line, conservative, Southern Democrat, speaking in January 1967 about how the U.S. budget is really made up. Sen. Allen Ellender of Louisiana said:

“The truth of the matter is that in many important respects, the Congress and the nation are in the hands of the military. Add to this group the Department of State and you have a combination that calls the shots. The Admirals and the Generals strongly backed by the Department of State seem to have the ways and means of getting just about what they want regardless of the monetary difficulties afflicting the nation.

“In contrast to the immensity of a \$75.5 billion budget for the military, we need only take a glance at the budget estimates for the conservation and development of our natural resources. We find here a national commitment of only \$2.5 billion. It is to the conservation of its land and water that the nation must look if we hope to remain strong and prosperous in the decade ahead, but our investment in this field will represent only a tiny portion of the huge sums to be expended during fiscal 1968.” (From Seymour Melman’s “Pentagon Capitalism.”)

All that has to be changed today in this statement is to raise the figure of \$75.5 billion to Carter’s projected defense budget for fiscal 1981 of \$160 billion. Cuts in environmental and social services are of a commensurate character. ...

The ease with which Carter is pushing through this monumental war budget not only fully confirms the predominant role of the military but underlines once again the dangerous road on which the U.S. government has embarked. □

Oscar está ya junto al pueblo

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

El día tan esperado llegó. El 17 de mayo culminó el confinamiento de Oscar López Rivera luego de pasar los últimos tres meses bajo arresto domiciliario en casa de su hija Clarisa López Ramos como requisito para la conmutación de su pena de 70 años por ‘conspiración sediciosa’, otorgada por el ex-presidente Barack Obama. Por fin podía encontrarse con su pueblo, de cara a cara, libremente. Por fin ese pueblo que se unió en el reclamo por su liberación pudo escuchar su voz, clara y fuerte.

Para darle la bienvenida pública, decenas de personas comenzaron a aglomerarse cerca de las 6 de la mañana frente al edificio donde reside con su hija. El coro de estudiantes de la Universidad de Puerto Rico le ofreció una serenata, cantando lo que se ha convertido en un segundo himno patrio, Verde Luz, cuya letra incluye la estrofa “para ti quiero tener libre tu suelo, sola tu estrella”; un himno por la independencia boricua.

Luego, a las 11 de la mañana en el Escambrón, frente a ese mar que por 36 años estuvo añorando, dio comienzo a su primera conferencia de prensa que estuvo repleta de simbolismos. Comenzó explicando su pedido de que fuera frente al mar, para destacar tanto la importancia de éste para el archipiélago boricua, como por el papel que podría jugar en fomentar la economía. Esto, alusivo a las medidas de privatizaciones de bienes y recursos que la dictatorial Junta de Control Fiscal impuesta por el Congreso de EUA quiere aplicar en el archipiélago para saldar la deuda ilegítima de más de \$70 mil millones.

Iba vestido enteramente de negro, de luto. Mencionando seis razones para ello que muestran su gran sentido humano y solidario: Porque en prisión nunca pudo vestir de luto luego de la muerte de camaradas y personas queridas, incluyendo la muerte de su madre; por solidaridad con la comunidad LGBTQ en ese Día Internacional Contra la Homofobia y la Transfobia; en solidaridad con el Movimiento Las Vidas Negras Importan; por el amor a su pueblo; por solidaridad con prisioneros y prisioneras políticos en cárceles estadounidenses incluyendo a la puertorriqueña Ana Belén Matos; y por

solidaridad con las y los estudiantes de la Universidad de Puerto Rico quienes han estado en huelga desde el 28 de marzo.

Importantes declaraciones fueron expresadas por este héroe nacional. Desde sus planes y objetivos, hasta sus posturas políticas revolucionarias.

Su firme denuncia de la Junta de Control Fiscal dejó bien clara su postura en defensa del pueblo y contra el imperialismo. “Ninguna solución que salga de la JCF es buena para el pueblo” puntualizó.

Momentos críticos

La presencia física de Oscar en el movimiento se da en los momentos más críticos de Puerto Rico. La lucha en este período decidirá si la nación boricua – Borikén, por su nombre taíno – permanecerá y avanzará hacia su soberanía, o si revertirá al “Porto Rico” – nombre dado por los EUA al asumir el dominio, convirtiéndose abiertamente en patio de las especulaciones del capital foráneo, primariamente estadounidense, donde el menguado pueblo boricua que quede, servirá solo de servidumbre a los nuevos habitantes. Ya esto lo notó Oscar a pocas horas de recorrer algunas de las viejas calles que recordaba de joven. Comentó sobre el proceso de aburguesamiento de antiguos vecindarios de clase trabajadora y el notable aumento de residentes estadounidenses. Advirtió sobre el posible peligro de que PR se convirtiera en otro Alaska o Hawái, donde los nuevos residentes estadounidenses se constituyeron en mayoría, afectando así el poder electoral y decisivo.

Se lamentó de la fuga de cerebros. Esta fuga, que merma la capacidad productiva de PR al emigrar jóvenes adiestradas/os, profesionales – la mayoría educada en la universidad pública con fondos del pueblo boricua – irán a producir al mismo país que ha impuesto una deuda al archipiélago y ha destruido toda posibilidad de desarrollo económico que beneficie al pueblo y no a las corporaciones foráneas.

FOTOS: MINHMOVIMIENTO INDEPENDENTISTA NACIONAL HOSTOSIANO



Criticó las firmas foráneas como la Du Pont y la Monsanto que han inundado al país utilizando a PR como base de experimentos que envenenan el ambiente y destruyen la capacidad criolla.

Plan de acción

A pesar de repasar la dura realidad boricua, el mensaje de Oscar fue uno de esperanza y compromiso con la lucha.

Esbozó sus planes. Primero, completar su agitada agenda de viajes – al otro día a Chicago donde vivió desde la adolescencia, de vuelta a PR a las 24 horas para ir a San Sebastián donde nació. Además, visitará varias ciudades en EUA, incluyendo a la Ciudad de Nueva York donde depondrá ante el Comité de Descolonización de Las Naciones Unidas.

También estará presente el 11 de junio en la Parada Puertorriqueña de Nueva York, lo que ha sido objeto de críticas derechistas. La compañía Goya, cuyos productos son altamente consumidos por la comunidad latina, ha retirado su apoyo al Desfile en Nueva York por lo que informalmente se ha comenzado una campaña de boicot a esa firma por muchos de las/os activistas que han luchado por la liberación de Oscar.

Luego de estos viajes, dijo que quiere concentrarse en levantar una fundación cuyo propósito es lograr la unidad, la Fundación Oscar López Rivera, Libertad.

La unidad del pueblo boricua la ve como esencial en lograr la descolonización. Sin ninguna clase de sectarismo,



señalando que, “Creo en la unidad, creo que podemos crear una carpa amplia donde quepamos todos y todas las que aman la patria porque necesitamos amar la patria para lograr que Puerto Rico sea la nación que tiene el potencial de ser. Si verdaderamente amamos la patria entonces no debe de ser tan difícil unirnos. Hacerlo porque amamos la patria. Porque si no lo hacemos la perderemos. Puedo afirmar con plena confianza que amar la patria no cuesta nada, lo costoso es si la perdemos. Y si continuamos por el rumbo que vamos, Puerto Rico no va a ser nuestra patria”. (telesurtv.net, 21 de mayo)

Una vez en el terruño borincano, quiere hacer lo que llamó su peregrinaje. Ir a todos y cada uno de los 78 municipios para tener diálogos con el pueblo, escuchar sus preocupaciones y así poder trabajar por la descolonización y la independencia más efectivamente.

Saludos internacionales

Parte importante del mensaje de Oscar fue el agradecimiento al pueblo que luchó unitariamente por su liberación, incluso bajo diferentes banderas ideológicas.

Pero un especial agradecimiento fue para los gobiernos de Cuba y Venezuela, mencionando de forma individual a los Cinco Cubanos.

Asimismo, Oscar recibió llamadas y mensajes del Presidente Nicolás Maduro de Venezuela, y de Raúl Castro de Cuba. El mensaje de Fernando González, uno de los Cinco, fue especialmente conmovedor, pues ambos compartieron una celda durante cuatro años.

Con respecto a Venezuela, y en contestación a preguntas hostiles de los medios que lo acusan de defender al Presidente Maduro, Oscar respondió que quien es culpable de la violencia en ese país es la intervención de Estados Unidos. Por eso exige que EUA abandone su injerencia allí. □

Manifestantes contra oleoducto cierran bancos

Por Jim McMahan
19 de mayo de 2017

Decenas de activistas de 350Seattle cerraron 13 bancos Chase en Seattle el 8 de mayo en alianza con los pueblos indígenas. La acción fue una confrontación con JPMorgan Chase y otros bancos para detener sus préstamos para el oleoducto Keystone XL, que se extendería desde Alberta, Canadá hasta los Estados Unidos, transportando petróleo extraído de arenas bituminosas canadienses.

Líderes indígenas han señalado que el petróleo de arenas bituminosas utiliza tres veces más energía para extraerlo que el petróleo regular, siendo así una causa

del calentamiento global. El Keystone de 1.700 millas cruzaría el inmenso acuífero Ogala hasta el sureste de Nebraska.

Las/os manifestantes se presentaron cerca del mediodía frente a los bancos Chase de la ciudad. En algunos bancos, hicieron sátiras frente al banco en trajes que se usan para trabajar con materiales peligrosos. Otros bancos fueron ocupados por indígenas cantando a son de sus tambores. Las/os manifestantes, sosteniendo carteles y pancartas, se tomaron de brazos e hicieron declaraciones en otras sucursales. Coreaban: ¡“Ni carbón, ni petróleo! ¡Queremos nuestro dinero de vuelta!”! Refiriéndose a los miles de millones de dólares en dinero de rescate que

los bancos recibieron del gobierno federal durante la última recesión.

Una vez que la policía pudo alcanzar todas las acciones, arrestaron y encarcelaron a 26 personas. La acción recibió cobertura de prensa local, nacional e internacional.

Más de 121 Naciones Originarias, junto con otras organizaciones indígenas, han firmado la Alianza del Tratado Contra la Expansión de Arenas Bituminosas. Se pide a los bancos que se desprendan de todas las empresas que construyen el Dakota Access Pipeline, el Keystone XL (que será construido por TransCanada) y los otros tres oleoductos que salen de las arenas bituminosas.

Vivimos en un planeta acosado por se-

quías, migración forzada, derretimiento de las capas de hielo y crecimiento de los mares. La reciente decisión del gobierno de Donald Trump de aprobar el Keystone XL ha aumentado la crisis. James Hansen, director del Instituto Goddard para Estudios Espaciales de la NASA dijo que “sería el fin para el clima”, si el Keystone XL se construye para transportar el petróleo de las arenas bituminosas. (New York Times, 9 de mayo)

Sin el apoyo de los grandes bancos, las compañías petroleras no podrían permitirse el lujo de construir proyectos de arenas bituminosas como el Keystone. Y Chase está conectado a la industria petrolera tanto como mucho de ellos. □