

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
'Militant' wins round against Florida prison censorship
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 82/NO. 45 DECEMBER 3, 2018

'Speak out against attacks by bosses, their government'

BY MAGGIE TROWE

"Socialist Workers Party members across the country join with, and speak out in defense of, all those who are hit by attacks from the bosses and their government — like the striking

SWP SPEAKS IN INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

Marriott hotel workers; workers who lost everything in Paradise, California, the victims of a social catastrophe caused by a dog-eat-dog system that puts profits before the lives of working people; and former prisoners who reconquered their right to vote by a big majority in this fall's referendum victory in Florida," Harry D'Agostino, who was the party's candidate for New York lieutenant governor, told the *Militant* Nov. 20.

"We take word of these fights —

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Fall Campaign to sell Militant subscriptions and books

Oct. 6 - Dec. 4 (Week 6)

Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold
UNITED STATES				
Albany	115	64	115	39
Atlanta	85	57	85	30
Chicago	115	86	115	62
Dallas	50	42	50	28
Lincoln	15	12	15	9
Los Angeles	125	70	125	32
Louisville	30	23	30	17
Miami	40	14	40	26
New Jersey	35	21	35	19
New York	110	75	110	44
Oakland	85	68	85	48
Philadelphia	55	34	55	27
Pittsburgh	15	17	15	3
Seattle	90	48	90	30
Twin Cities	65	34	65	23
Washington	80	46	80	55
Total U.S.	1,110	711	1,110	492
Prisoners	25	21		
UNITED KINGDOM				
London	60	46	60	31
Manchester	50	39	50	21
Total U.K.	110	85	110	52
CANADA				
Montreal	50	33	50	32
Vancouver	45	35	45	25
Total Canada	95	68	95	57
New Zealand	40	28	30	22
Australia	30	22	15	2
Total	1,410	935	1,360	625
SHOULD BE	1,400	1,050	1,400	1,050

Florida voting rights victory is gain for the working class!



Florida Rights Restoration Coalition

Oct. 27 actions took place across Florida for Amendment 4. Measure won by 64 percent, restoring voting rights to over a million former prisoners, inspiring fights in other states.

Voting rights amendment for ex-prisoners wins big majority

BY SETH GALINSKY

The passage of Amendment 4 in Florida restoring voting rights to most people convicted of felonies there is an important victory for working people and gives an impetus to similar fights across the country.

The owners of the *New York Times* and other liberals and middle-class radicals claim that workers who elected Republican Ron DeSantis governor in Florida put a "fascist" like

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Use victory to expand rights of prisoners, former inmates

The following statement was issued Nov. 21 by John Studer, organizer of the Socialist Workers Party national campaign.

SWP STATEMENT

The elections in Florida were the most important for working people in the U.S. this year for one reason — the amendment to the Florida

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Marriott hotel workers strikes going strong, winning contracts



Militant/Eric Simpson

Oct. 31 Halloween day picket by striking workers at San Francisco Marriott Marquis.

BY JOEL BRITTON

SAN FRANCISCO — "All day, all night! Local 2 is on strike!" and "Sign a contract like you should!" chants filled the smoky air here Nov. 18 as UNITE HERE members continued their seven-week strike against sev-

en downtown Marriott hotels. Their central slogan — "One job should be enough!" — captures their demand for pay high enough to live on.

A plume of smoke from the massive fire that destroyed most of Para-

Continued on page 5

Calif. wildfire carnage is product of capitalist rule

BY JEFF POWERS

CHICO, Calif. — Working people in Paradise, Magalia and other towns near here were hit by one of the worst wildfires — named the Camp Fire — in state history, burning over 150,000 acres in Butte County beginning Nov. 8. There are 77 confirmed fatalities and 12,000 structures, mostly houses, have been destroyed.

At the same time, the Woolsey Fire in Los Angeles and Ventura counties in Southern California burned 96,949 acres. There are three confirmed fatalities and 1,472 structures were destroyed.

The result of these fires is a social catastrophe. But this disaster isn't the result of the fire; it was caused by the workings of the capitalist system that puts the profits of capitalist builders, investors, utility company executives, insurance magnates and other bosses before the lives of working people. The murderous toll could have been largely prevented if that was the priority of the capitalist rulers and their government.

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Gaza fighting shows need to recognize Israel, Palestinian state

BY TERRY EVANS

The latest round of fighting between Hamas, the reactionary Islamist ruling party in Gaza, and the Israeli government showed that neither side wants a full-scale war. Despite an intense barrage of rocket and mortar attacks from the Gaza Strip on Israel and Israeli airstrikes, the two sides rapidly agreed to a new cease-fire Nov. 13.

The combat took place just days after

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Inside

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France: 'Yellow Vests' protests hit gas tax, Macron gov't 4

Protests in Norway defend women's right to abortion 7

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Uber drivers strike in India, demand fares they can live on

New Zealand Sistema workers fight for better pay, conditions

Brazil vote reflects toilers' anger at corruption, crime and crisis

BY RÓGER CALERO

In the midst of a deepening economic, social and moral crisis, accentuated by widespread government corruption, Jair Bolsonaro of the Social Liberal Party was elected Oct. 28 in a runoff against Workers' Party candidate Fernando Haddad. The liberal media, from Brazil to the U.S., claimed Bolsonaro was the "Trump of the tropics," and his election meant a fascist was in office. They blamed the workers and peasants who voted for him.

Bolsonaro, a former army captain, tapped into widespread working-class disenchantment with bourgeois politicians. He presented himself as an outsider — even though he has been in Congress for 27 years. He swore to crack down on crime and corruption, pledging he would wash the "scum" away. He coupled anti-crime demagoguery with saying he would bring order to a corrupt political system.

Bolsonaro "was the only one that wasn't corrupt," Edimar Passos de Souza, a 51-year-old security guard who lives in a working-class neighborhood in Sao Paulo, told the press. De Souza said he had voted for the Workers' Party in the four previous presidential elections.

Many longtime politicians were swept out of office, including 75 percent of standing senators. Among them was former President Dilma Rousseff. She was in office from 2011 until being impeached in 2016 on accusations of breaking fiscal laws and responsibility for a massive bribery scandal that took place under her watch, involving politicians and bosses from major construc-

tion companies and the state-run oil company Petrobras.

Bolsonaro was a constant target of liberal media criticism during the campaign for crude offensive remarks against women, Afro-Brazilians and gays; for defending the use of torture; and praising the military dictatorship that had ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985.

Bolsonaro's racist and anti-women slurs — many of which dated back years — disgusted many workers, but at the same time his tough-on-crime and anti-corruption demagoguery appealed to them. There were 64,000 murders in Brazil last year. Some working people expressed concern, however, when Bolsonaro said he would give cops "more latitude" to kill criminals. Police brutality is rife in Brazil. In 2017 cops killed some 5,000 people, most in working-class neighborhoods.

"I am not just thinking about myself, nor worrying if he [Bolsonaro] will accept my [sexual] orientation," David Trabuco told *El Clarin*. "I am worried about crime and health." Trabuco is gay and an evangelical Christian who lives in Brasilia.

Bolsonaro won the runoff election with 55.2 percent of the vote. Haddad got 44.9 percent.

Haddad became the Workers' Party's presidential candidate after a court banned former President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva from running. Da Silva, who was leading the polls from a prison cell, is currently serving a 12-year sentence for bribery.

Lula had served as president from 2003 to 2010. He was well-known by



Reuters/Ueslei Marcelino

June 15, 2013, protest in Brasilia, against government of Workers' Party leader Dilma Rousseff's plan for massive funding of World Cup, at same time health care, transportation deteriorated.

workers as the former head of the Metalworkers' Union who had helped lead strikes and social battles and helped found the Workers' Party.

Haddad tried to tap into Lula's popularity. His "A Happy Brazil Again" campaign presented the Workers' Party as more capable of getting Brazil's capitalist economy out of the dumps. But he didn't campaign as a candidate for working people. He and his supporters on the left ran as champions of "identity politics," saying that Bolsonaro's election would lead to a backlash against homosexuals, women, blacks and other minorities. But the rampant crime, corruption and harsh reality of life for millions brought Bolsonaro to power.

A rise of fascism?

The radical and middle-class left in Brazil and beyond see Bolsonaro's election as part of what they claim is a rise of fascist and reactionary currents worldwide. They point to the support he received among more conservative middle-class layers, former military officers, and of millions of followers of the growing evangelical church as proof. They fail to mention the fact that evangelical church members and large sections of the middle class also voted for Lula and Rousseff when they were elected.

In the absence of a fighting working-class leadership, millions of workers in Brazil look to bourgeois elections

for a way out of the crisis of capitalism. They voted first and foremost in hopes something will be done against the breakdown of the social order — the crime epidemic, corruption and political privilege. So millions held their noses and voted for Bolsonaro. But they won't get any relief from him, or any other politician seeking to represent the capitalist class.

Until working people end the economic and social system that breeds the conditions for crime — capitalism — bourgeois politicians will take turns trying to convince workers they are the best ones to address the problems.

The victims of the rulers' "anti-crime" offensive are the workers themselves. Between 2000 and 2015 Brazil's prison population more than doubled to 725,000, with the main cause of imprisonment being minor drug offenses.

Workers' Party's 'economic miracle'

Brazilian bosses and politicians benefited from a commodity exports boom that marked the country's economy until 2013. The expansion was part of a surge in some of the biggest so-called emerging markets — what Goldman Sachs dubbed the BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — for much of the time the Workers' Party was in office.

Goldman Sachs promoted "investment" in the BRICS, whose growth,

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THE MILITANT

Is Jew-hatred on the rise in the US today?

The 'Militant' explains why working people and the labor movement need to oppose all anti-Semitic attacks, where they come from, and why there is less Jew-hatred among workers today and why it can only be totally eliminated by overturning capitalist relations.



AP Photo/Murray Becker
Mass anti-fascist protest, New York 1939.

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The Militant

Vol. 82/No. 45

Closing news date: November 21, 2018

Editor: John Studer

Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Terry Evans, Seth Galinsky, Emma Johnson, Martin Koppel, Jacob Perasso, Brian Williams.

Published weekly except for one week in January, one week in June, one week in July, one week in September.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Telephone: (212) 244-4899

Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

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

'Speak out against boss attacks'

Continued from front page and the need for independent working-class political action — to working people on their doorsteps in cities, small towns and rural areas.”

“We plan to step this up in the final weeks of our eight-week international campaign to win 1,400 *Militant* readers, sell 1,400 books by SWP leaders, and to raise \$100,000 for the SWP 2018 Party-Building Fund,” D’Agostino said.

“The restoration of the right to vote for workers who have served time on felony convictions, supported by a massive vote in a Florida ballot measure, is something the SWP has long championed,” Dennis Richter, who ran as the SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in California, told the *Militant* Nov. 19. “When my supporters and I were campaigning outside the Farmer John meatpacking plant in Los Angeles before the election, I talked with Kelly Evans, who told me, ‘I can’t vote because I served 16 years in prison for a felony conviction.’”

She said the cops had come to her house on reports there was someone with a gun. It was her, preparing to commit suicide. She shot herself but survived. She was charged with endangering the lives of the cops, convicted and imprisoned.

“I told her my party supported the Florida measure. The capitalist rulers and their parties try to deny workers behind bars civil rights while they’re in prison and afterward,” Richter said. “The SWP opposes all attacks on the right to vote and fights for the labor movement to take up this struggle.” Evans told Richter she was glad to meet him and very much wanted to get the right to vote. She asked for his campaign literature and got a copy of the *Militant*.

Example of Cuban Revolution

In discussing the road for workers to fight to take political power out of the hands of the bosses and their parties, SWP members often point to the example of the Cuban Revolution made by workers and farmers in 1959.

“We visited an apartment complex in Niskayuna, New York, near Albany, and met Yailene Welden, a call-center worker born in Puerto Rico,” D’Agostino said. “She was interested in our description of the response of the

government in Cuba, where workers and farmers made a revolution and took control of their own destiny, sharply counterposed to that of the administration in the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico, as both prepared for last year’s deadly hurricanes and then faced rebuilding.

Welden knew how thousands had died in Puerto Rico, left to their own devices by the rulers in both Washington and San Juan. “I explained how Cuba’s government, with a revolutionary history of mass mobilizations, had organized to evacuate people in the path of the storm, made sure they all had places to stay, and began rebuilding as soon as the storm ended,” D’Agostino said.

“She said she wanted to get together again to discuss this more,” the SWP campaigner said. “And to look more closely at the *Militant* and other literature I had.”

Is socialist revolution possible?

In the South Tottenham neighborhood in London, England, Nov. 15, Communist League members Hugh Robertson and Dag Tirsén knocked on David Powell’s door. Powell said he was an admirer of Maurice Bishop, who led the 1979 revolution in the Caribbean island of Grenada that overthrew the U.S.-backed government of dictator Eric Gairy and established a popular revolutionary government.

“But revolutions can’t be done today,” Powell said. “The rulers are too powerful. Look what they did in Grenada when they killed Bishop, and in the U.S. when they killed Malcolm X.”

“I have a different view of what happened,” Tirsén said. “The murder of Bishop, a revolutionary leader of integrity, was the product of the counterrevolutionary course of a secret Stalinist group in the government led by Ber-



Militant/Eric Simpson

Socialist Workers Party member Joel Britton, left, speaks with Marriott hotel striker and UNITE HERE member Carlos Zevallos at Westin St. Francis hotel in San Francisco Nov. 18. Zevallos got a *Militant* subscription. “Without the union,” he said, “I might be one of the homeless.”

nard Coard. It wasn’t engineered by the CIA. Malcolm X was assassinated by partisans of the Nation of Islam, a group he had broken with as he evolved as a working-class revolutionary.”

“But the lessons and inspiration of the Grenada Revolution and of Malcolm X live on. Today, world capitalism is in deep crisis. Both the Conservative and Labour parties are in turmoil in the U.K., and so are the Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. They are trying to solve the crisis of their system on our backs.”

“I don’t agree with everything you say,” Powell said. But after looking over *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* and *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* — books by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes — he bought the subscription and those two books, taking advantage of the special offer, while making a modest donation to the Communist League. He said he appreciated what the working-class organization was doing. All five books on special are featured in the ad on this page.

As we go to press, branches of the SWP and of the Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.K. have sent in 935 subscriptions and sold 625 books, a little behind schedule. Party members and supporters in the U.S. have sent in \$61,187 on the SWP’s \$100,000 Party-Building Fund. The drives continue

through Dec. 4.

Mounting a stepped-up effort to knock on doors and take part in labor and social struggles over the next weeks will help communist campaigners meet more workers eager to discuss how the working class can resist the bosses’ offensive and advance along the road to political power. This will lead to more new readers of the party press and financial backers of the party’s work.

To join in, contact the SWP or Communist League branch nearest you listed on page 8.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA Oakland

The California Camp Fire — A Natural Disaster that Became a Social Catastrophe. Speaker: Jeff Powers, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Nov. 30, 7:30 p.m. Donation \$5. 675 Hegenberger Road Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

PENNSYLVANIA Pittsburgh

What Do the 2018 Midterm Elections Mean for Working People? Speaker: Osborne Hart, ran as Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate. Fri., Nov. 30, 7 p.m. *Union Project*, 801 N. Negley Ave. Tel.: (412) 322-7470.

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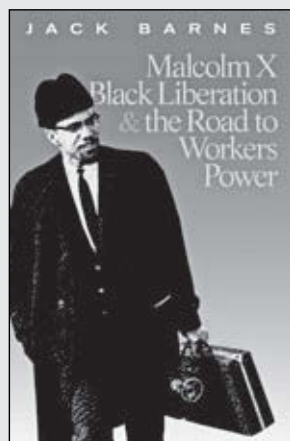
Oct. 6 - Dec. 4 (Week 6)

Area	Quota	Collected	%
Albany	\$6,000	\$3,847	64%
Atlanta	\$9,500	\$7,266	76%
Chicago	\$11,000	\$5,463	50%
Dallas	\$2,500	\$1,315	53%
Lincoln	\$225	\$160	71%
Los Angeles	\$10,000	\$4,934	49%
Louisville	\$800	\$912	114%
Miami	\$3,500	\$1,755	50%
New York	\$14,000	\$11,357	81%
New Jersey	\$2,500	\$1,798	72%
Oakland	\$12,500	\$9,512	76%
Philadelphia	\$3,000	\$1,500	50%
Pittsburgh*	\$900	\$150	17%
Seattle	\$10,000	\$5,648	56%
Twin Cities*	\$4,800	\$1,680	35%
Washington, DC	\$5,500	\$3,390	62%
Other	\$1,350	\$500	37%
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To subscribe or purchase books at these prices, contact Socialist Workers Party or Communist League branches listed on page 8.

France: ‘Yellow Vests’ protests hit gas tax, Macron government

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Some 280,000 demonstrators took to the streets, especially in smaller towns and more rural areas, in France Nov. 17 to protest rising gasoline taxes that impact workers, self-employed and small farmers the most. Protesters blocked roads with their cars and their bodies at 2,000 locations nationwide, with tens of thousands rallying in support. Actions continued over the next couple of days over the effects of the capitalist economic crisis and expressing declining support for French President Emmanuel Macron’s climate change scheme.

“I earn 500 euros (\$570) a month. How do you expect me to live on that?” Jean Luc, 57, who was attending the protest in Calais, told France 24. “With what I earn I can only allow myself one meal a day.”

Macron raised so-called “green taxes” on fuel prices, particularly on diesel, the most commonly used fuel in France. The goal of the tax isn’t to raise money for the government, but to force people to back off driving. Diesel prices over the past year have risen 20 percent and gasoline in Paris costs \$7.06 a gallon.

Those living outside of cities, especially in rural areas, depend on their cars to get around, to do chores, and to get to work, often having to drive greater distances. In many of these areas official unemployment remains high — at nearly 10 percent — and rural hospitals have closed, making it necessary to drive longer distances to meet medical needs.

The protests were very popular, backed by 75 percent of those asked in a Nov. 16 poll by *Le Figaro*.

Increasingly known as the “president for the rich,” Macron has attacked rail workers and fought with the unions over anti-working-class labor “reforms.” His popularity has plummeted, from 39 percent in July to 21 percent in October.

At the action in Paris Nov. 17, po-

lice fired tear gas, injuring 227 people — seven seriously. Over the weekend 409 people were injured nationwide and a 63-year-old woman protester killed when hit by a car.

The protesters, broadly known as the “Yellow Vests” after the safety vests they wore, aren’t affiliated with any national organizations. “We are not political people; we do not belong to a union, we are citizens,” Didier Lacombe, a retiree who lives on a fixed income near Éragny, a small town an hour west of Paris, told the *New York Times*.

The blockade protests grew out of a petition against the tax increases that circulated online and got millions of signatures. “You have persecuted drivers since the day you took office,” white-haired grandmother Jacline Mourand told Macron and his government in a celebrated YouTube video that has been viewed 6 million times. “What do you want with the dough, apart from changing the plates at the Elysée or building yourselves swimming pools?”

The protesters have won support from forces on the right and left of bourgeois politics in France, from the National Rally, the new name of



Over 250,000 demonstrators rallied throughout France Nov. 17 in an explosion of anger against rising gas prices. Sign says new taxes are “the drop of diesel that overflows the gas tank.”

the party of Marine Le Pen, and from France Unbowed’s former presidential candidate Jean-Luc Melanchon.

However, two of the main French trade unions — the General Confederation of Labor and the French Democratic Confederation of Labor — have both come out against the protests on the grounds they included some “fascists.”

Blockades remained in place at about 150 locations Nov. 18 — from

Rennes, in western France; to Avignon, in the south. Some 20,000 protesters took part in 350 actions the following day, including on a highway leading to the tunnel used by Eurostar trains to Britain.

Despite the mass actions, French officials insist the gas taxes will remain in place, and increase again in January.

Yellow Vest protesters say they plan to organize further actions.

‘Militant’ wins round against Florida prison censorship

BY SETH GALINSKY

In another — but unexpected — victory in the fight against prison censorship of the *Militant*, the Florida prison system’s Literature Review Committee says it made “an error” in upholding the ban on the Sept. 17 issue of the paper. Committee Chair Dean Peterson says the issue “is, and will continue to be, allowed into FDC [Florida Department of Corrections] Institutions.”

“We’re pleased that the Literature Review Committee has overturned the ban,” said *Militant* editor John Studer. “But this is at least the 18th time in two years Florida prison officials have impounded issues of the paper, forcing us to spend time, effort and money to challenge the bans.

“Even if most are overturned, the *Militant* shouldn’t have been impounded in the first place,” Studer said. “Our readers behind prison walls have the right to read literature and newspapers of their choosing, to think for themselves, to be part of the world.”

In a Nov. 19 email to David Goldstein, the *Militant*’s attorney, Peterson sent a “timeline” to try to explain the “error.”

Sept. 13, Florida State Prison impounded the issue. A week later the Tomoka Correctional Institution, cit-

ing “slightly different rule criteria and exemplar pages,” also impounded it, Peterson says. He neglects to mention the *Militant* was never notified about Tomoka, much less the “different” criteria, as their own regulations require.

Sept. 22, Goldstein asked for and received an extension of time to submit an appeal.

Sept. 26 the Review Committee discussed the impoundment and overturned it, but never informed the *Militant* or Goldstein.

Oct. 15, Goldstein filed the *Militant*’s appeal. Oct. 17, the committee reviewed the appeal and upheld the ban. Oct. 24, Peterson informed Goldstein the appeal had been denied.

Although not part of Peterson’s “timeline,” between Oct. 24 and his report of the “error” and reversal of the ban, it’s worth noting that Amnesty International USA and PEN America sent letters calling for overturning the ban on the issue.

“We cannot penalize you for making an appeal” after the impoundment was overturned, Peterson wrote, and therefore the second ban was revoked.

He doesn’t even begin to try and explain how the committee could approve the issue one day and ban it on another. What does this say about their criteria?

To impound an issue of the *Militant*, or any other publication, Florida state prison officials check off a generic reason on a multiple choice form. Among their favorite choices are utterly false claims that one or another *Militant* article could encourage “physical violence,”

“riot, insurrection” or “disruption of the institution.”

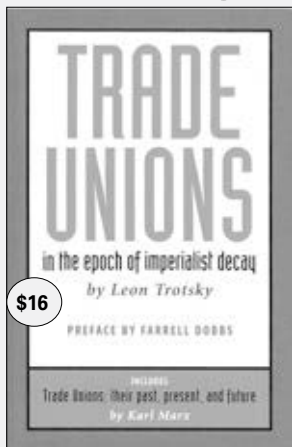
In the Sept. 17 issue, officials at Florida State Prison cited two articles, one on the successful and widely publicized fight against solitary confinement in California and the other on the hunger strike by Crimean film director Oleg Sentsov, who was framed up, tortured and imprisoned in the Siberian gulag of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

As the letter from Karin Deutsch Karlekar, director of Free Expression at Risk Programs at PEN America, points out, “Prisoners have a right to read the *Militant*’s reports of current prison conditions and protests around the globe.”

Readers of the *Militant* can help advance the fight for an end to the impoundments. Get your union local, church group, local prison rights and civil liberties organizations, student groups and co-workers to send letters.

Send them to Dean Peterson, Library Services Administrator, Florida Department of Corrections, Attn: Literature Review Committee, 501 South Calhoun Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-2500, or email Allen.Peterson@fdc.myflorida.com. Please email a copy to themilitant@mac.com.

Recommended reading



Food for thought—and action—from leaders of three generations of the revolutionary workers movement — Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky and Farrell Dobbs. Invaluable for workers relearning today what a strike is, how it can be fought and won, and are interested in ideas about how the entire system of capitalist exploitation can be ended.

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

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

Uber drivers strike in India, demand fares they can live on

Thousands of drivers for Uber and Ola resumed their strike against the bosses at these app-based companies in India Nov. 17, snarling traffic. They are demanding higher fares, a guaranteed minimum base pay and more sustainable work hours.

After a promise by the Maharashtra chief minister to hold a meeting to hear the drivers' demands, the strike was suspended Nov. 19. The drivers did organize a rally in Mumbai that day, but prior to the action police arrested protest leaders, reported the *Hindustan Times*.

The action had relaunched what the union of Ola-Uber drivers — Maharashtra Rajya Rashtriva Kamgar Sangh — said was the second round of an ongoing strike. On Oct. 22, some 20,000 drivers in Mumbai, as well as more in New Delhi and other cities, had begun their strike, the *Indian Express* reported.

It lasted 13 days until company officials and Maharashtra Transport Minister Diwakar Raote promised to discuss and resolve these issues with union officials. Two weeks later, after nothing was settled, drivers walked out again.

The companies "have reduced fares when they should be paying a higher rate," Sunil Borkar, secretary at Mumbai taxi drivers' union told Reuters. Fuel prices in India have risen more than 20 percent since the beginning of this year, as drivers' incomes plummeted. Some say they have to work up to 16 hours a day to try and make ends meet.

Union drivers of auto-rickshaw and tourist permit cabs conducted a one-day strike in New Delhi Oct. 22. The taxi unions also organized a protest in front of Parliament that day with Ola and Uber drivers joining in.

Uber and other e-hail car services attract drivers by offering high incentives, encouraging them to take out loans to buy cars in hopes they can make good money. But in their drive for profits, the bosses then cut fares and cut back on payments to drivers more, squeezing them as they face rising debts.

— Brian Williams

New Zealand: Sistema workers fight for better pay, conditions

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Thirty workers at Sistema Plastics, members of the E Tu union, held a protest at the factory entrance Oct. 26 against the bosses' stalling on a better contract. The union's membership at the factory has grown to 200 of the plant's 500 workers as their fight over pay and working conditions heats up.

The protesters waved union flags and placards and called out to co-workers driving in and out at shift change.

Sistema, which was bought up by U.S.-based Newell Brands in 2016, makes household plastic containers exported to over 80 countries worldwide.

Workers are scheduled on 12-hour shifts five days a week at minimum wage — \$16.50 New Zealand dollars per hour (\$10.70) — with no premium pay for overtime. "We have to work these hours to make enough, otherwise we wouldn't survive," one worker who didn't want to give her name told the *Militant*. She said she often



Bhushan Koyande/Hindustan Times

Uber and Ola drivers strike and rally Nov. 19 in Mumbai, India, demanding higher fares, guaranteed minimum income. Two-day strike was suspended when government promised talks.

works a 72-hour week. "The only night I get to put my children to bed is Saturday."

A delegation of workers and union representatives delivered 7,000 letters to the company Oct. 19 demanding workers get higher pay. Workers at the protest told the *Militant* how Sistema takes advantage of migrant workers, especially from India and the Philippines, who are

on temporary work visas.

Sistema is well-known among workers in Auckland for its poor working conditions. "New staff are leaving as soon as they can," Sistema worker and union shop steward Sesilia Williams said in an Oct. 25 E Tu press release. "Sometimes they just drive off at the first break, not even telling anyone they're going."

— Felicity Coggan

Marriott hotel strikes strong, winning contracts

Continued from front page

dise in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains has covered the San Francisco Bay Area. "Unhealthy" air warnings have resulted in school closings and cancellation of outdoor sports events. But the 2,500 Marriott strikers, some wearing protective masks, are keeping up their militant and disciplined picketing 24/7 and winning support from passersby.

At the St. Regis Hotel on Third Street a large water bottle is filling up with contributions. Bus, truck and automobile drivers honk in support. Several strikers keep up a loud and lively beat on big pails and other "drums" as strikers with bullhorns lead chant after chant.

Lila Neupane, 39, a sous-chef with eight years at the St. Regis, told the *Militant* that "the union at the struck Marriott hotels in Boston have settled!" Neupane said he was encouraged by what strikers here have heard about the new

contract that workers voted up there.

Over 8,000 hotel workers went on strike against Marriott in Oakland, San Jose, San Diego, Detroit, Boston and Hawaii last month. While the Boston workers voted to settle Nov. 17, over 5,000 are still on strike at hotels here and in Hawaii.

"We have pushed them back," Neupane said. The bosses say they've backed off demands for some workers "to work shifts as short as three hours, which would mean workers couldn't work enough hours to qualify for benefits." Another reason union members opposed such a short shift, Neupane said, is "the long distances many workers have to travel from cities where they have found housing they can afford."

UNITE HERE Local 2, the strikers local here, said Marriott bosses have also agreed to drop plans to outsource food and beverage production and to end outside delivery services. But keep-

ing health care and winning higher pay are still on the table.

After negotiations with Marriott and Kyo-ya Hotels & Resorts in Hawaii, UNITE HERE Local 5 said the bosses' offer didn't meet workers' needs there either. "A true settlement offer is one that looks at the true cost of living and working in Hawaii," the union said, "and brings us toward the goal of all workers: 'One Job Should Be Enough.'"

The company refused to set further negotiations until Nov. 26, meaning workers face the Thanksgiving holiday on the picket line.

Marriott-run hotels in Hawaii have cancelled Thanksgiving dinner for guests. But union cooks and servers are preparing dinner for strikers and their families in three shifts Nov. 22. You can eat and then "Enjoy Thanksgiving with your home family & your union family on the picket lines!" the union strike bulletin said.

San Francisco strikers stand firm

"Today is Day 46," read one placard in the strikers' lean-to outside the San Francisco Marriott Marquis on Fourth Street, where hot soup and coffee awaited picketers taking breaks Nov. 18 during their six-hour stints on the line.

Priscilla Paras-Huerta is ladling out homemade soup, in between checking in workers for picket duty and answering questions from people passing by. A UNITE HERE member who works at the airport, Paras-Huerta got a union leave to help with the strike. Strikers, she said, can apply for financial aid beyond their \$400 weekly strike pay from the union if they need to.

"We will stay out, however long, to keep a decent life," Steve Krespel, 49, a bartender with seven years at the Marriott Union Square Hotel told the *Militant*. "One of my neighbors asked me if the union hired people to picket all these hotels." He explained how the UNITE HERE members from each hotel are the backbone of the picketing. "For me," he said, "it's an honor to be out here."

— 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO —



December 6, 1993

Some 480 soda ash miners fought off a union-busting probe by General Chemical Co. at its southwest Wyoming mine. During the course of their four-month strike, members of United Steelworkers of America Local 15320 stood up to cop harassment and arrests; company firings of 34 strikers for so-called strike misconduct; threats, including the use of firearms by company scabs; and provocations by federal authorities.

The company agreed to reinstate the 34 strikers after a one-month suspension in exchange for the union dropping outstanding grievances. Reinstated workers will not face probation or future discipline. "Either we all go back or none of us go back," was the way Dave Welch, one of the strikers, summarized the miners' view.



December 6, 1968

Ruling circles in Washington and Tokyo suffered a stunning setback when the people of Okinawa and the rest of the Ryukyu island chain voted in favor of ending U.S. control and again becoming part of Japan and in favor of getting the U.S. military base off their islands. The election was a concession won by the mass mobilization of the Okinawan people. It was the first election for chief executive since the U.S. administration began.

Although the political will of the Okinawan people has been made clear in the election, their new chief executive will be severely limited in the effective action he can carry out. His proposals must be approved by the real ruler of the one million people on the island, the United States high commissioner.



December 4, 1943

Shocking reports have come from India of millions suffering death from sheer starvation. In the streets of Calcutta, in the industrial province of Bengal, lie hundreds of thousands of homeless men, women, and children; bodies weakened and shrunken by starvation.

The estimated death toll in the single province of Bengal is 2,000 a week, according to the official British government figures. But the estimate of Indians travelling in the country is 50,000.

The responsibility for the terrible plight of this mass of Indian people rests with British imperialism. For 150 years the British rulers have been siphoning off the profits from the natural resources and labor of India. Their unquenchable thirst for greater wealth is one of the direct causes of the Indian famine.

California wildfire carnage

Continued from front page

Every day the number of confirmed deaths in Butte County increases as more and more bodies are discovered. Hundreds are still missing and unaccounted for. Most people in Paradise received no alert that the fire was roaring into the town. The alert system was voluntary, and less than half the residents were on the list. Those who tried to flee found roads blocked by fire, debris and the sheer number of people attempting to escape. Some burned to death in their cars.

By contrast, everyone with a cell-phone in the wealthy town of Malibu got an Amber alert message warning of the fire danger there.

Smoke from the Camp Fire has polluted the air all the way to San Francisco some 150 miles away. Air quality advisories throughout the Bay Area urged residents to stay home.

The air gets worse the closer you get to the Camp Fire. Sales clerks at Ace Hardware in Colusa — a farm town 60 miles from Paradise — told the *Militant* Nov. 16 that they had sold out their entire stock of 200 surgical masks in two hours.

Over 50,000 people have been forced to flee the Butte County fire. Many have gone to Chico where they rented motel rooms, filled the few emergency shelters, or found lodging in churches and in homes where residents opened their doors to complete strangers.

Human solidarity

Socialist Workers Party members who came to lend solidarity visited with several hundred who had set up camp in the Chico Walmart parking lot. Workers from the area pooled resources and bought tents and bedding to provide shelter for the refugees. Most arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs. Volunteers organized free food and clothing distribution booths. There was even a table with food for pets.

An ad hoc group of students from Chico State University got together and brought sandwiches to the tent city. Under pressure to help, Walmart provided portable toilets and water bottles.

Despite rumors that Walmart wanted to shut down the camp, many working people remain there. Fresh rounds of volunteers have come in, working to raise tents off the ground before heavy rains arrive.

“We intend to support the needs of the people,” Rain Scher, one of the volunteers, told the *Washington Post*. Those in crisis should have “agency and self-determination,” she said.

The six overcrowded government-run shelters in the area have become centers of an epidemic. Many have come down with highly contagious Norovirus, shaken by vomiting and diarrhea. Dozens have been taken to the hospital.

Denise Chester — a housewife with three children who is married to a construction worker — told us she got no alert. “At first I grabbed a water hose and tried to save my house and the two houses close to it,” she said.

The fire was too much. She got her three children and their dog, and joined other residents to fight their way out of town. “We organized a caravan of 10 people,” Chester said. “I knew a back way out and we took it. We went on dirt roads but we survived. My house was completely burned to the ground.”

Dakota Reiley, 18, from Oroville, told us he and his brother made it to the Walmart parking lot without any money. “People I do not know bought the tent where we sleep,” he said. “They bought all the other tents that you see too.”

Fred and Sally Hugg’s farm in Concow survived when they were able to beat back the fire. They organized to gather and take in some 200 animals from people who had to flee, including 100 chickens, 60 ducks, 20 goats, three pigs and four donkeys. They’ve gotten help from other volunteers and members

Brazil vote reflects toilers’ anger

Continued from page 2

they said, would make them leaders in world capitalist expansion and boost profits for bosses and bankers.

Much of the hype was centered on Brazil, the fifth most populous country in the world, with 209 million people compared to Russia’s 157 million. And Brazil’s gross domestic product is \$2.14 trillion, while Russia’s is \$1.72 trillion.

But demand dried up in 2013, especially from capitalist enterprises in China, the Brazilian capitalists’ main market, and commodity prices plummeted there. Goldman Sachs closed its BRICS fund in 2015.

The collapse hit workers hardest.

Lula’s 2003 election was one of several electoral victories by bourgeois politicians in Latin America who campaigned as representatives of the poor.

His election was met with great expectations, especially from workers and peasants who had fought against government cuts in social spending and attacks on wages and living conditions in the 1990s. Lula, however, had pledged to work with business owners and enact austerity measures to meet IMF fiscal targets. Imperialist and national capitalist investors were the main beneficiaries

of the Brazilian “economic miracle.”

The Workers’ Party government’s program for “inclusion of the poor” — known as “Bolsa Familia” — involved a monthly cash handout that’s credited with lifting 36 million people “from extreme poverty.” It also included programs granting more access to education and health services.

But when Brazil’s economy plunged into a recession in 2014, it wiped out earlier gains. Unemployment has risen and tens of thousands of working people have been devastated. More than 1.5 million families were removed from Bolsa Familia benefits under Rousseff and accelerated after her impeachment.

The Workers’ Party’s subservience to the capitalist rulers was shown in its refusal to meet the demands of tens of thousands of peasant families for land. The party gave priority to assuring profits for agribusiness giants, both Brazilian companies and international monopolies. Ten percent of the biggest landlords in Brazil control 85 percent of agricultural production.

Discontent among working people and middle-class layers built up as conditions deteriorated. This was the backdrop to Bolsonaro’s election.



Militant/Eric Simpson

Volunteers wearing masks to keep out smoky air serve food to fire survivors at Walmart encampment Nov. 15. Hundreds of workers are volunteering in face of government inaction.

of the Future Farmers of America.

Almost all of those involved in the largest search effort in California history — trying to find survivors or human remains in Butte County — are volunteers.

And more than 1,000 of those fighting the fires have been California prisoners who volunteered. Two prisoners are among the five firefighters severely burned in Paradise the first day of the fire. They are paid just \$2 a day, with an extra \$1 for each hour when they battle an active fire.

The solidarity and collective aid from working people here is a powerful reflection of what our class is capable of.

Bosses, government indifference

David Insular and Theresa Lynn Squires are retired on disability. “The only place we could afford to buy a home was in the Paradise area,” Insular said. “Now we have nothing left.”

“They claim that the Federal Emergency Management Agency has set up shop in Chico to help us,” he said. “I called their office and they told me that it would take 10 days just to get an application. We have friends in Redding where we could stay but we have no gas and no money to get there. I contacted the Red Cross and asked them for \$40. They said they couldn’t help.”

The Pacific Gas and Electric Company in Northern California has come under heavy criticism. Fire investigators have found PG&E bosses and their refusal to spend money to upgrade their infrastructure have been responsible for some of California’s worst fires in the last three years.

Conditions Nov. 8 warranted a preemptive power shutdown, but PG&E bosses decided not to order one. Then they reported they had a problem on one of their high-voltage power lines



Militant/Eric Simpson

Socialist Workers Party member Jeff Powers talks with fire survivor Denise Chester Nov. 15 at Chico Walmart parking lot camp.

near Paradise. Fifteen minutes later the Camp Fire broke out in that area. Authorities say this is most likely the cause of the fire.

Places like Paradise are in what is called wildland-urban interface. Housing is built near forests and associated brush and grasslands. Fully one-third of all housing in the U.S. is built in this kind of area.

The steps to minimize fire danger is no mystery: keeping ground clear of debris and dead plants; removing fallen trees; periodic controlled burns; not stringing electric wires near dense forests, and instead putting them underground; and using fire-retardant materials in construction. But under capitalism, builders, utilities and governments deem these steps too expensive.

PG&E bosses find it more profitable to pay the fines than to take preventive measures to stop or retard fires.

In Magalia, volunteers kept the area around the Pine Ridge School thinned and clear. The school survived the fire intact.

Cuba’s revolution shows alternative

The simple fact is capitalism turns fires into social disasters. It leaves workers on their own to try and survive.

It doesn’t have to be that way. Cuba’s revolutionary government sets an example of what can be done when working people are in charge. “We have one unmovable principle,” Raúl Castro said when Hurricane Irma hit Cuba last fall. “The revolution will not leave anyone defenseless and is already taking measures so that no Cuban family is left on its own.”

All of the resources of Cuba’s people were mobilized. Everyone knew in advance what shelter they were assigned to move to. The government organized the evacuations. Special measures were taken

to aid the elderly, disabled, ill and pregnant women. Livestock were moved to safer areas. Electrical workers were stationed to be in place to restore power.

Most importantly, humans were put before things. “No material resource is worth more than the life of any individual,” said Federico Hernández, president of the Granma Provincial Defense Council.

Protests in Norway defend women's right to abortion

BY GREG MCCARTAN

OSLO, Norway — Over 15,000 supporters of a woman's right to choose abortion mobilized in 34 cities nationwide Nov. 17, marching against a proposed law that would restrict this right.

"I feel it should be up to the woman," Ine Lund, a 22-year-old student, told the press.

The turnout in front of the national parliament, called Stortinget, grew to 8,000 people. Leaders of women's organizations, including an abortion rights leader from Poland, addressed the crowd. Signs reading, "My body, my choice!" were carried by many young protesters.

The Feminist Group Ottar and the Women's Front called the protests, which were backed by over 60 groups, including central labor organizations. Opposition political parties and their youth organizations endorsed and joined the actions.

"A woman's body is not negotiable," read the large banner leading the protest in the northern city of Mo i Rana. It referred to negotiations between Prime Minister Erna Solberg, leader of the Conservative Party, and the Christian Democrats, a small conservative, Lutheran-based party with eight representatives in parliament.

Solberg's minority government depends on support from the Christian Democrats, who recently debated switching to bloc with the opposition Labor Party to form a new government. To prevent the fall of her coalition, Solberg decided to woo the Christian Democrats into government by offering to negotiate restrictions on the right to abortion.

The current law allows women to choose abortion in the first 12 weeks of a pregnancy. After then, abortions are only allowed if the life of the mother is endangered and require the approval of two doctors. The Christian Democrats want to restrict provisions that allow women after 12 weeks to abort a fetus that is sick, injured or has genetic conditions, or selective abortions in multi-fetal pregnancies.

Christian Democrat leader Martine Tonnessen claimed that abortion after 12 weeks "opens up for a society where

we get rid of people we don't want."

Solberg told the press that she has marched for women's right to abortion in the past, a right she still "has respect for." She claimed her negotiations with the Christian Democrats "assume that women's rights will not be weakened."

This isn't the first time Solberg has tried to restrict women's rights, Elisabeth Sjurso from The Women's Front told the *Militant*. "Four years ago, we protested because the government wanted to give doctors permission to not refer abortions if they had moral problems with the procedure," Sjurso said. "They had to retreat and now they are trying again. Most people in Norway are behind us."

Polls show that 68 percent of Norwegians are against changing the law, with only 16 percent in favor.



Militant/Johanna Engen

Thousands marched in Oslo and around Norway Nov. 17 against threatened law to restrict women's right to choose abortion. Middle sign says, "Abortion is not a bargaining chip."

The Feminist Group Ottar insisted on preventing any men from speaking at any of the rallies. Randi Mobaek, a leader of the group, justified the exclusion by saying men were welcome to partici-

pate, but on "this day it is women's bodies and lives on the line."

This undercuts the united struggle of working people to defend women's rights.

Gaza fight shows need to recognize Israel, Palestine

Continued from front page

Hamas and the Israeli government had begun implementing a 10-point agreement by the Egyptian regime. Hamas had agreed to scale down provocative attacks dubbed the March of Return and to stop flying incendiary kites into Israel that have damaged thousands of acres of crops.

In return, the Israeli government, which controls the borders with Gaza, allowed Hamas to receive \$15 million in cash from Qatar for the wages of thousands of Gazan government employees who have not been paid in months, as well as fuel.

But on Nov. 11 an Israeli special forces unit was discovered attempting to place listening devices in Khan Yunis, Gaza. In the firefight that ensued, six Hamas fighters and one Israel Defense Forces officer were killed.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad then fired more than 450 rockets into Israel in less than 24 hours, and the Israeli military attacked 160 targets in Gaza. Israel's Iron Dome missile defense intercepted just 100 of the rockets. Some 60 people in Israel were wounded and at least three Palestinians in Gaza were killed.

Hamas rocket kills Palestinian

The only death in Israel was of Mahmoud Abu Asabeh, a Palestinian construction contractor from the West Bank city of Halhoul, who was living in Ashkelon. Asabeh had worked in Israel for 15 years, returning to Halhoul on weekends.

"We are against the rocket attacks and the strikes on Gaza," his son Bashir told *Yedioth Aronoth*, adding that his father had many Jewish friends. "We want all of it to stop because we do not want to see more victims."

Both Hamas and the Israel Defense Forces were careful to limit the extent of their operations.

In one widely talked about example, Hamas had the opportunity to destroy an unprotected bus with dozens of soldiers. The Hamas commandos waited until all the soldiers got off, then demolished the bus with an anti-tank missile.

The Israeli government exercised similar restraint. Even as fighting continued, it allowed 35 fuel tankers and

hundreds of other trucks with supplies into Gaza, part of the earlier agreement.

Hamas worries about discontent

Some 200 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military during the March of Return. Since March, demonstrators have repeatedly attempted to breach the Israeli-Gaza border, part of the destructive course Hamas has foisted on working people since it seized control of Gaza in 2007. Its goal is to expel Jews from Israel and Palestine.

The health system in Gaza is on the verge of collapse. There is power for only three to four hours a day, due to the refusal of the Palestinian Authority to pay for diesel for the Strip's power plant. The only electricity had been supplied by Israel. With little electricity, raw sewage contaminates the water supply. Tons of garbage lie uncollected on the streets, after service cutbacks aimed at preventing a total collapse.

But while the small capitalist class and high-ranking regime officials are doing OK, Hamas leaders are worried about growing discontent among working people there with their course and growing international isolation.

That's what led Hamas to negotiate and even to ask that the Israeli government once again allow thousands of Gazans to work inside Israel.

The Palestinian Authority, which governs in the West Bank, cynically attacked the original deal, accusing Hamas of selling out to the "Zionist-American conspiracy aimed at separating the West Bank from the Gaza Strip."

There are also divisions in the Israeli government. Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman resigned after the latest round of fighting and withdrew his Yisrael Beiteinu party from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition. Lieberman accused Netanyahu of "surrendering to terror." But Netanyahu held onto the government when leaders of the Jewish Home party backed off threats to also pull out of the coalition.

The Israel Defense Forces and Hamas have fought three wars in the past decade. Israel's rulers are not keen on yet another costly war without any progress beyond the knife-edge situation.

The Israeli rulers have improved re-

lations with several Arab governments, based on their common goal of countering the Iranian capitalist regime's influence in the region. In October the foreign ministers of Bahrain and Oman called for a rapprochement with Tel Aviv. The Saudi regime has done the same. This bolsters White House efforts to push the Palestinian Authority and Hamas into talks with the Israeli government.

The latest events in Gaza highlight the correctness of the statement released in December by the Socialist Workers Party, underlining "the political necessity for the Israeli and Arab governments and leadership of Palestinian organizations to begin immediate talks to recognize both Israel and an independent Palestinian state.

"Negotiations to reach such an agreement must recognize the rights of Jews everywhere to take refuge in Israel," the party said, "as well as the unconditional right of the dispossessed Palestinian people to a contiguous, sovereign homeland on territory — including East Jerusalem — conquered and occupied by the Israeli government during the 1967 war."

"It is along this road that working people of all national backgrounds, religious beliefs and political allegiances in Israel and Palestine can use and defend their space to speak, organize and begin redressing the blood-drenched legacy of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation."

"In opposition to Washington, to bourgeois governments and political organizations across the Middle East and to the middle-class left here in the United States, the Socialist Workers Party has a different starting point," the statement says. That is "the class interests and solidarity of workers and toiling farmers across the Middle East — be they Palestinian, Jewish, Arab, Kurdish, Turkish, Persian or otherwise and whatever their religious or other beliefs — as well as working people in the United States and around the world."

"We are *for* whatever helps working people organize and act together to advance our demands and struggles against the capitalist governments and ruling classes that exploit and oppress us," the statement explains.

For recognition of a Palestinian state and of Israel

- For repeal of U.S. Jerusalem Embassy Act

- For workers' solidarity in Israel, Palestine, the world over

Socialist Workers Party statement



Read or download ready to print flyer at www.themilitant.com

'Angola experience had a big impact on consciousness in Cuba'

Below is an excerpt from *Soldier of the Cuban Revolution: From the Cane Fields of Oriente to General of the Revolutionary Armed Forces* by Luis Alfonso Zayas. As a teenager Zayas joined the July 26 Revolutionary Movement led by Fidel Castro, which overthrew the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship in 1959 and opened Cuba's socialist revolution. Zayas served three tours of duty in Angola between 1975 and 1987 as hundreds of thousands of Cuban volunteers fought alongside Angolan troops to beat back the invasion of Angola by the apartheid South African regime. Zayas discusses here the big impact of this and other Cuban internationalist missions on the political consciousness of working people in Cuba. Mary-Alice Waters, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and president of Pathfinder Press, conducted this interview. Copyright © 2011 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Militant/Jon Hillson

Members of Cuban women's anti-aircraft artillery unit, May 1989, after return from Angola following defeat of South African invasion. "Cuban volunteers on internationalist missions," said Zayas, "are learning about capitalism, about the exploitation of man by man."

greatest sacrifices, and that's how our forces were able to be sent to Angola. All of Washington's great strategists couldn't even conceive of that.

How was it possible to send thousands of men aboard aged turbo-prop passenger planes and merchant ships? On board the freighters, they had to travel in the cargo hold. The men couldn't go on deck or they'd be spotted. But then how do they relieve themselves? How do they bathe and wash up? How do they eat, since the ship wasn't set up to provide meals for thousands of men? To spend three weeks like that, who can bear it? You need to have the kind of consciousness the Cubans who went had.

Their spirits were high, because they had confidence in Fidel. Fidel tried to meet with every group of soldiers that left. He'd go and talk to them. He'd explain what the situation was. And if he couldn't go himself, he'd send someone else.

Only with a leadership like Fidel's could something like that be achieved.

Our forces arrived in Angola in November 1975, right when they were needed. It was the same in 1987, with those needed during the siege of Cuito Cuanavale. Because in both cases, there was no force in Angola capable of taking on the advancing South African troops. Fidel made the decision to send what was needed to win, and they arrived in time to achieve that.

Fidel led everything that had to

be done to defeat the South African forces. He'd spend entire nights analyzing and figuring out what had to be done and how. His direct participation was decisive. ...

WATERS: The experience of Angola — to have stayed with this internationalist commitment for almost sixteen years — had a broad impact on the political consciousness of the Cuban people. Fidel once said the revolutionary spirit of voluntary labor — something both he and Che had championed during the opening years of the revolution, but had sharply declined in the 1970s and early 1980s — sought refuge during that period in defense, in the mobilization of the Territorial Troop Militia, in the work of the internationalist missions. The rectification process of the late 1980s, which included the revival of voluntary work brigades to build homes, schools, child care centers, and clinics, and then the class solidarity that enabled Cuban working people to confront and surmount the political and economic challenges to the revolution in the wake of the implosion of the Soviet Union — all that would have been impossible without the internationalism, without the experience of Angola.

ZAYAS: We often talk about how we've provided help to other peoples on these missions. We go to help, to teach, to collaborate.

But Cubans have also learned a great deal. Like the way doctors in Cuba are now being trained — at the side of

the patient. A doctor who trains at the patient's side is really trained. It's different from the training one gets in a classroom with a video. It used to be said here that doctors really start to understand what medicine is only when they finish their studies and begin to have patients. Today we take the student to the patient beginning in their first or second year. That's a completely different kind of training. And it's a product, in part, of what we learned from our internationalist missions.

Those serving on internationalist missions have received something else. Today's generation didn't live in the Cuba of old. They see photographs of what Cuba was like then, but they don't know how life was under capitalism. It's not that there are no problems in Cuba today. But when young Cubans go on internationalist missions, they see the reality in these places firsthand, and that gives them a clearer understanding of what the revolution changed in Cuba.

Look at what's happening in Venezuela now. Don't think that the Cubans serving in Venezuela today are just helping the Venezuelans. They're also learning what life is like in a country that hasn't had five decades of socialist revolution, with a leadership like Cuba has had, which has educated the Cuban people.

Then there's the help we've given to countries facing big catastrophes — hurricanes, floods, earthquakes. Cuban doctors have gone places where people have never seen a doctor, where they may have just enough food to survive but die from lack of basic medical attention. For everyone who has gone on these missions, that kind of experience is extremely important. It creates a consciousness different from what they had before.

They go places where even news doesn't arrive, because there are no means of communication, neither radio nor television. Simple survival is the aim. Living that reality helps mould our consciousness.

Cuban volunteers on internationalist missions in other countries are learning what Cuba used to be like. They're living in the world where such conditions still exist. They're learning about capitalism, about the exploitation of man by man.

So it's not only about helping. We also receive.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

ZAYAS: The big decisions to send forces to Angola were made by Fidel. The US government never imagined Cuba could send fifty thousand armed men to fight in Africa. How could Cuba do so, since we had no transatlantic merchant ships set up for troop transport, nor did Angola? But we Cubans, of course, are prepared for the

November BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Use victory to expand ex-prisoners' rights

Continued from front page

Constitution that restores voting rights to more than a million people convicted on felony charges passed with 64 percent in favor. This is an advance for the working class, and cause for celebration.

Supporters of democratic rights are already taking advantage of this victory in New Jersey, Iowa and Kentucky to push back against restrictions on the voting rights of millions there as well.

The purpose of the capitalist rulers' criminal "justice" system — their cops, courts, plea-bargain frame-up operation and prisons, and associated restrictions on political rights — is not to "fight crime," much less "rehabilitate" workers who get caught up in it. It has everything to do with keeping working people in our place.

The number of prisoners in the U.S. skyrocketed during the presidency of Bill Clinton as he pushed through legislation that imposed a raft of "minimum" and draconian mandatory "three strikes" sentences and increased the number of charges prosecuted as felonies.

As a result of the plea bargain system well over 90 percent of prosecutions never go to trial today. There are more people locked up in local, state, and federal jails and prisons in the U.S. than any other country in the world, 40 percent of them Black.

Ramón Labañino, who spent 15 years in U.S. prisons as one of the Cuban Five political prisoners, says the capitalist justice system is "an enormous machine for grinding people up."

The Socialist Workers Party is for the vote for everyone — including workers behind bars. For ending

the "cruel and unusual punishment" of enhanced sentences, solitary confinement and the death penalty.

We see those behind bars as fellow workers, not criminals. Communists and other class-conscious workers campaign politically, encouraging those they meet to study, to learn the history of the working-class movement, to think socially and act politically, to join in offering solidarity to all those who stand up for the interests of the working class worldwide.

The fight for the right of workers behind bars to get the *Militant*, and any other publications and books they desire, is a never-ending campaign for the party and the paper. And why every attempt to censor the *Militant* in prisons must be fought.

Capitalist politicians and prison officials in Pennsylvania and a number of other states are moving to restrict prisoners' access to letters, publications and books. We join the fights against these attacks and indignities.

Over the last two years, prison officials in Florida — with the third largest number of prisoners in the U.S. — have stepped up impoundments of the *Militant*. Even when eventually overturned, these bans are an obstacle to workers behind bars being able to get timely access to read about politics and workers' struggles, to think for themselves, to express solidarity if they choose.

The fights for voting rights, to end mandatory minimum sentencing and "three strikes" sentence enhancements, to stop prison censorship of the *Militant* and other literature reinforce each other. They help unite the working class in struggle.

Join in!

Prisoners' rights the civil rights of our era!

There's an article in the Nov. 12 issue about the 'SWP: Push back limits on franchise! Restore voting rights to ex-prisoners!' that I really enjoyed reading about and hope to see more that deal with ex-prisoners' rights, as well as issues with prisoners. Especially dealing with the Justice/Prison system and over-capacity and underfunded prison system in Illinois. It's the civil rights issue of our era.

A prisoner
Illinois

Cancel Honduran debt!

Thanks to the *Militant* for the article, 'Amnesty for all immigrants in US, cancel Honduran debt to US banks.' The Central American caravan is not an easy question for revolutionary communist workers to deal with who have an obligation to think about the interests of the working class as a whole. Such flows of our fellow toilers are unprecedented in the history of the workers' movement owing precisely to the unprecedented crisis of global capitalism.

Think not only the Americans and Europe but Asia, specifically, the million-person Rohingya caravan into Bangladesh. To conflate, as some do, the communist aspiration for a world without borders with the call for open borders under the domination of capital is irresponsible.

August Nimitz Jr.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

The letters column is a forum for all viewpoints of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Florida voting rights victory is gain for the whole working class!

Continued from front page

President Donald Trump in office. But the 64 percent vote, overwhelming working-class, in favor of the voting rights amendment shows that hysteria about a wave of reaction in the U.S. working class is false to the core. Working people oppose attacks on democratic rights.

Two states, Iowa and Kentucky, still have laws like the one just overturned in Florida that permanently bar all felons from voting. Eight others permanently bar some felons. Fourteen states restore voting rights upon release from prison. Most of the rest restore those rights after completion of parole or probation. Only two states, Maine and Vermont, allow everyone to vote, including workers behind bars.

Supporters of the amendment to the Florida Constitution collected more than a million signatures to get it on the ballot. They organized demonstrations, concerts, action days and toured a bus around the state painted in big letters: "Let My People Vote."

Blacks — imprisoned disproportionately in the U.S. — are thus disproportionately denied voting rights. Though just 17 percent of state residents, Blacks comprise some 46 percent of those in Florida prisons. Before passage of the law, one in five Blacks there couldn't vote because of past felony convictions, com-

pared to one in 13 in the rest of the country.

"Any crime over \$300 is a felony," Karen Leicht, 61, who served over two years in federal prison for conspiracy to commit insurance fraud, told the *Times*. "Three times with a suspended license and you're a felon."

Under the new law, workers convicted of felonies will be able to vote once they finish their parole or probation. Those found guilty of murder or sex crimes are excluded. Even with these restrictions more than 1 million people will have their voting rights restored starting in January.

Kentucky, Iowa, New Jersey next?

The Florida victory has already sparked a discussion in Kentucky, where more than 312,000 people — including more than 68,000 Blacks — are disenfranchised because of felony convictions.

Unlike Florida, amendments to the Kentucky Constitution have to be proposed by the state legislature, and then, like in Florida, win at least 60 percent of the vote in a referendum. An attempt to get the measure on the ballot failed in 2016. There is growing coverage in the press of efforts to push for a new vote.

A legislative advisory board in Iowa recommended Nov. 14 restoring voting rights there as well. Some 52,000 Iowa residents are denied voting rights because of past convictions. The 22-member board approved the proposal without a single vote against.

A Nov. 12 editorial in the *Newark Star-Ledger* was headlined "NJ Must Boost Voting Rights for Felons. Florida Just Did."

"There are 73,000 felons in our state on probation and parole. Why would we deny voting rights to 15,000 parolees who have already paid their debt with a prison sentence?" the editors asked. "And why would anyone deny the vote to 58,000 people on probation when they have never even been in jail?"

The *Star-Ledger* adds that disenfranchisement "has racist origins: The Black Codes employed by the South after the Civil War deprived the freedman from voting, so 'crimes' such as loitering were enforced to subjugate former slaves. These methods persist, as drug laws have banished millions of men of color from the mainstream and created the prison industrial complex."

Disenfranchisement goes back to the founding of

the United States and was directed at the growing working class. Under the Constitution, voting rights were decided state by state. In the early years only landowners could vote. It wasn't until 1856 that the last state, North Carolina, removed property ownership as a requirement.

The bloody battles to defend and use the franchise by Blacks coming out of the victory of the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction led to the 15th Amendment. This says that the right to vote shall not be denied "on account of race, color, or previous conditions of servitude." Women didn't win the right to vote until 1920. Eighteen-year-olds only gained the franchise in 1971 during the Vietnam War, saying if they were old enough to fight, they were old enough to vote.

In Louisiana, in another victory for working people, Amendment 2 passed by over 60 percent of the vote. It requires that juries must vote unanimously to convict and imprison anyone. A 10-2 vote was previously enough.

A similar anti-working-class law remains on the books in Oregon.

Discriminatory sentencing changes pushed

President Donald Trump announced Nov. 14 that he was backing the bipartisan "First Step Act." This would lower some federal prison sentences, including "three-strike" provisions that require a mandatory minimum life sentence for third-time drug offenders. The mandatory minimum would be set at 25 years.

The bill also makes sentences for crack cocaine shorter retroactively. The disparity in mandatory sentences for crack cocaine, used mostly in Black and other working-class communities, and those for use of powder cocaine, was reduced in 2010, but wasn't made retroactive.

Millions of people across the U.S. are still denied the right to vote. Pushing these restrictions back "are an important part of advancing the unity and fighting capacity of the working class," Steve Warshell, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from Florida, said in an Oct. 29 statement calling for passage of Amendment 4.

Class conscious workers everywhere should take advantage of the victory and keep fighting until all restrictions on voting rights — and the imposition of mandatory sentences — are brought down.

"It's the poor who face the savagery of the US 'justice' system"



The Cuban Five talk about their lives within the US working class

In their own words, five Cuban revolutionaries who spent up to 15 years in US prisons on frame-up charges address the realities of class relations in the US without exaggeration or distortion.

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