

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Cuba trip to Angola, South Africa celebrates overthrow of apartheid
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Beijing-led BRICS, US rulers stoke new conflicts

BY ROY LANDERSEN

The governments of the BRICS countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — set up as a coalition to challenge Washington’s economic and political supremacy, met in Johannesburg, South Africa, Aug. 22-24 to decide their next steps.

Their main decision was to invite the governments of Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to join the bloc.

Many of the new or aspiring BRICS members, like the government of Ethiopia, are deeply in debt to Beijing. Governments in Argentina and Egypt, weighed by debts to imperialist banks, see membership as a way of securing new loans.

BRICS was founded after the 2008 global financial crisis as a way for Beijing and Moscow to counter the G7, the U.S.-led club of the world’s richest capitalist countries. It includes the governments of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the U.K. The expanded
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UAW workers at ‘Big Three’ prepare for Sept. 14 walkout

Autoworkers vote 97% to authorize strike action



AP Photo/Mike Householder

United Auto Workers members ‘practice picketing’ near a Stellantis factory in Detroit, Aug. 23. Union demands big wage raise, end to divisive two-tiers, restoring cost-of-living protection.

BY ILONA GERSH

CHICAGO — Members of the United Auto Workers union voted by 97% to strike if their demands are not met by the bosses of the Big Three — Ford, General Motors and Stellantis. The union represents 150,000 work-

ers at these plants and their contract expires Sept. 14.

The UAW is demanding an end to two-tier wages, a 40% hourly wage increase and restoration of cost-of-living-allowance clauses to compensate for inflation. COLA was eliminated in 2009 when the bosses demanded concessions as part of being bailed out of bankruptcy by the government.

Other demands include the reestablishment of medical benefits for retirees and a pension for all workers, that was cut in 2009, as well as higher pay for retirees. The Big Three have closed 65 plants over the last 20 years,
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SWP campaign takes working-class program to March on Washington



Militant/Arlene Rubinstein

Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City Council, Joanne Kuniansky, center, running for New Jersey State Senate, discuss party’s program with participants at march.

BY JAMES HARRIS AND ARRIN HAWKINS

WASHINGTON — Over 5,000 marchers turned out here Aug. 26 to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington. The action was organized by Al Sharpton’s National Action Network and the Drum Major Institute led by the family of Martin Luther King Jr. Other sponsors of the event included the Conference of National Black Churches, the Anti-Defa-

mation League, the NAACP, AFL-CIO, National Organization for Women and the Democratic Party National Committee, among others.

The focus of the event was to try and whip up enthusiasm for campaigning to defeat former President Donald Trump in the 2024 elections and vote Democrat all the way down the ticket. Organizers said “hate crimes, hate speech” are “at their highest levels” and people need to
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What’s the road forward for the working people in the Mideast?

BY SETH GALINSKY

Talks toward a diplomatic deal between the rulers of Israel and Saudi Arabia are taking place at the same time that tensions in the Middle East are rising and preparations made for more wars. These conflicts occur amid the unraveling of the old imperialist world order and shifting alliances, accelerated by Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, as rival regimes compete for markets, raw materials and political influence.

President Joseph Biden’s National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in late July to advance negotiations to establish diplomatic relations between the Saudi and Israeli governments.
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Defend right to free speech! Protest attacks by Democrats

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK — In several cities around the country the Socialist Workers Party has helped initiate panels hosted by the Militant Labor Forum to bring groups together to speak out in defense of constitutional rights. Regardless of differing points of view on other issues, they joined together to speak out in defense of free speech and other political rights and against government attacks and frame-ups.

“Drop the charges against the African People’s Socialist Party!” was one of the demands raised at all these meetings. The speakers at a New York forum Aug. 26 were Oronde Shakur, from the APSP; Manuel Meléndez Lavandero, Comités de la Resistencia Boricua; John Studer, *Militant* editor and a leader of the SWP; and Milagros Rivera, president of the Cuba Solidarity Committee in Puerto Rico, who participated by Zoom. Simi-
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As 2024 election looms, Socialist Workers Party is the alternative

BY TERRY EVANS

The centerpiece of President Joseph Biden’s reelection campaign is denouncing former President Donald Trump and his supporters as “MAGA Republicans” and hailing the four indictments against his Republican opponent. Democrats, Never-Trump Republicans and the middle-class left are determined to drive Biden’s main opponent out of the race. Otherwise, they fear Trump will win in 2024.

To accomplish their goal, the White House and its allies have targeted freedom of speech and other key constitutional protections. Working people
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Atlanta rally backs actors, Writers Guild strikers

Marchers in Washington debate

Continued from front page mobilize to counter the “right.”

“The dreamers are in Washington, D.C.,” Sharpton told the rally, “the schemers are being booked in Atlanta, Georgia, in the Fulton County Jail.” He was referring to the indictment of Trump and 18 others on Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act conspiracy charges.

The March for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 drew a quarter of a million people to Washington, reflecting the African American-led working-class movement fighting to overthrow Jim Crow segregation. While the central leaders of that march shared the same pro-Democratic Party political perspective as those here, that protest was marked by the unfolding movement for Black rights and the way it strengthened the union movement.

It came on the heels of bloody conflicts. In June 1963 alone, Medgar Evers, a leader of the NAACP in Mississippi, was assassinated by the Ku Klux Klan; Alabama Gov. George Wallace tried to physically block the integration of the University of Alabama; and thousands of young marchers demanding an end to segregation in Birmingham faced fire hoses and police dogs and won. These developments fueled discussion at the 1963 march on the need to break with the Democratic Party. At that rally, pro-Democratic Party organizers censored the militant speech prepared by John Lewis, president of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Still, he was able to tell the crowd, “We can’t vote for the party of [Democrat] Eastland or the party of [Republican] Goldwater. When will we have a party of our own?”

“The march dramatized the readi-

ness of the Negro masses to struggle, to go all the way in the fight,” the *Militant* wrote at the time. “It also pointed up what the Negro people could do if they had leaders of the same mettle.”

Socialist Workers Party members sold 7,500 copies of the *Militant* at the march.

Marchers discuss road forward

Among those participating in the rally this year were workers and youth interested in political discussions about what is needed to advance the fights by working people. Some stopped by campaign tables set up by the Socialist Workers Party, picking up the *Militant* and books written by SWP leaders. Many were drawn by signs that read, “Defend constitutional rights. Drop the charges against Trump.” While many disagreed, many others wanted to discuss and debate these questions.

“I do think Trump is a real problem.” Levon Boxer, a 26-year-old warehouse worker from Nashville, Tennessee, told Róger Calero, SWP candidate for City Council in New York. “But you guys are making a good point here on dropping the charges against him. They will do the same thing to us. And we don’t have a billion dollars.”

“RICO laws are anti-union,” Adam Teller, a member of the International Longshoremen’s Association in Norfolk, Virginia, told SWP campaigners. “The ILA has been the target of numerous investigations by the federal government, and it never did a thing to make the union stronger.”

“Trump just got charged with violating these laws, but I think about how they could be used against me and my union.”



Above, AP; inset, Afro Archives
March on Washington of 250,000, Aug. 28, 1963, marked by growing fight to end Jim Crow. Organizers censored SNCC President John Lewis, inset, as too militant, too critical of John F. Kennedy’s White House.



“More workers are using their unions to fight. The decadeslong retreat by the working class has come to an end,” Joanne Kuniandy, SWP candidate for New Jersey State Senate, said. “The bosses and their government target the unions. That’s why it’s absolutely necessary to oppose the Democrats’ assault on constitutional freedoms, whoever is the target today. They’re crucial for the space we need to organize and fight.”

Teller signed up for a *Militant* subscription and got the book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes. He also bought a copy of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by Barnes and SWP leaders Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark.

Rally participants included workers involved in union fights from around the country. “Last week, shipyard workers in Maine won a new contract,” Jason Ryder told Kuniandy. He was part of a group of members of Machinists Local S6 from Bath Iron Works, one of the largest military contractors in the country. In 2020, the union waged a hard-fought 63-day strike against boss efforts to bust their union. The company failed in their drive to increase the number of nonunion contract workers in the shipyard and to pit veteran unionists against new hires.

“The union fought for one pay scale

for all 4,000 workers,” he said, “and we won!”

“That’s an example to point to, how to win unity and strengthen the union,” Kuniandy said.

“When you fight you can win — maybe not everything you want, but we got more experience,” Ryder said.

SWP’s revolutionary perspective

“The organizers of the rally today argue that white supremacy is on the rise, but that isn’t true,” Kuniandy told those who came to a Socialist Workers campaign meeting held after the march. “The Black-led working-class movement against Jim Crow segregation transformed the country and the working class.”

She pointed to how she and other campaign supporters joined actions with other unionists supporting the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists National Day of Solidarity four days earlier.

The candidate also participated in a spirited picket line by striking nurses in New Brunswick, New Jersey, who

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THE MILITANT

Support struggles of working people in Iran!

The Iranian government hopes to head off protests on one-year anniversary of death of young Kurdish woman Zhina Amini at hands of the cops on Sept. 16, 2022. Confidence has grown among workers standing up for their rights. The *Militant* supports their fight.



Group of Union Retirees
 Retired teachers in Iran Aug. 22 demand freedom for imprisoned teachers, political rights.

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Ex-prisoners make gains on right to vote in Mississippi

BY JANET POST

In a victory for working people, the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals decided Aug. 4, by a 2-1 vote, to end Mississippi's lifetime ban on the right of ex-felons to vote. The lawsuit under consideration was filed by six ex-felons in 2018. The court's majority decided the ban is cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the U.S. Constitution's Eighth Amendment, and that it "is at odds with society's evolving standards of decency."

"It is an especially cruel penalty as applied to those whom the justice system has already deemed to have completed all terms of their sentences," the judges wrote.

"Should it stand," the *New York Times* wrote Aug. 4, the decision "could have implications in 14 other states that confer lifetime bans on voting for at least some crimes." Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch is filing an appeal of the ruling to the full appeals court.

Up to now, workers imprisoned on felony charges who became released on probation or parole were barred from voting. The only way an ex-felon could get the right to vote was if it was restored by the Mississippi governor or through a bill passed for that particular individual by a two-thirds vote in both houses of the state legislature. Only 335 of the 166,494 persons who completed their sentences in Mississippi between 2000 and 2015 had their voting rights restored.

Over 218,000 felons were disenfranchised as of 2016, including some 127,000 African Americans, or nearly 16% of the Black electorate. The American Civil Liberties Union, Mississippi NAACP, Mississippi Center for Justice and others joined the call for restoring the right to vote to released felons.

Fight continues in Florida

On July 19 a federal lawsuit was filed against Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and other elected officials by the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition and four individual ex-felons. They say that Florida has failed to carry out Amend-

ment 4 to the state Constitution, passed in 2018, that restored the right to vote for 1.4 million people with prior felony convictions upon completion of their sentences, including prison, parole and probation. It excluded those convicted of murder or sex offenses.

The amendment passed with a 64.5% majority after supporters 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."

After the amendment passed, the Florida legislature intervened, adding a provision specifying that voting rights will only be restored after a felon pays any financial obligations, including fines, court costs and restitution.

But "many people who have been in prison aren't aware of what they owe," the *Miami Herald* editorial board wrote July 25.

DeSantis also created an "elections police" squad last year. It arrested 20 former prisoners who had received approved voter-registration cards and voted. These former felons, who had

Amy Belvin: 'Lifelong commitment to the SWP'

BY BETSY FARLEY

LEXINGTON, Ky. — "Amy Belvin was passionate about the fight for a better world," explained Socialist Workers Party member Amy Husk, one of a number of speakers at the Aug. 26 celebration of her life. Organized by Rev. Brian Chenoweth and Fran Belvin, Amy's sister, the event was held at the Unitarian Universalist Church here. Amy Belvin died July 9.

"In 1979 Amy joined the Socialist Workers Party and threw herself into the working-class struggle with determination. As a party member and a unionist she built solidarity with striking packinghouse workers at Hormel in Minnesota, cannery workers in Watsonville, California, and many others," Husk told the 50 people there.

they are not inevitable, if the working class has a leadership that organizes us to act in our own class interests."

There have been two times in history in which the working class has taken power away from the capitalist warmakers. The first was in October 1917, when millions of workers, peasants and oppressed peoples in Russia made the first socialist revolution in the midst of the First World War. The Bolsheviks led workers and soldiers sick of being used as cannon fodder for the capitalist rulers to overthrow the government and established the first workers state.

In the second, Calero said, Fidel Castro led workers and farmers in the millions to conquer power in Cuba, shattering the old state power, and to carry out a revolutionary program to address the needs of working people in city and countryside.

"The SWP is the continuity today of these revolutions," Calero said. "Our goal is to lead a revolution here."

Arlene Rubinstein contributed to this article.



AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis

Federal judges in Mississippi ruled 2-1 Aug. 4 to restore voting rights for former felons. Above, from left, former prisoners Wayne Kuhn, Dennis Hopkins, Byron Coleman and Jon O'Neal at press conference in Jackson, Mississippi, in 2018, demanding their right to vote.

served time for either murder or a sex offense, now face five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine just for voting.

Florida Rights Restoration Coalition Deputy Director Neil Volz told the *Militant* July 31 that the organization assisted many of the 20, and their cases are now at the heart of a legal challenge just filed against Florida officials.

The coalition is also demanding the state set up a central database where former prisoners can see the amount of money the justice system claims they owe. "We have already helped some 40,000 'returning citizens' discover their financial obligations and also helped in paying some of their fines and fees," Volz said.

March in Washington spurs debate

Continued from page 2

are demanding more staffing. Kuniansky described meeting one Caucasian worker there who carried a Mexican flag he said was given to him at a local restaurant to show support for the strike. "Wide-ranging solidarity can be won for strikes today," she said.

"The bosses use their government and courts against the working class," Kuniansky said. "This is why the defense of hard-won constitutional freedoms is so important, and why we demand 'Drop the charges against Donald Trump.'"

Róger Calero spoke on the accelerating war drive among competing capitalist powers since Putin's invasion of Ukraine, the first major war in Europe since the inter-imperialist slaughter of World War II.

He pointed to the danger of escalation of the war in Europe, to expanding conflicts with China in the Pacific and growing instability in the Middle East and West Africa. "Frictions around trade and currency wars ultimately lead to shooting wars," he said, "but

Fran Belvin said her sister was an activist even as a teenager. "Amy and a friend organized a protest against the Vietnam War holding up signs in our front yard that read, 'Make the world safe for 14-year-old boys.'" She stressed Amy's role as part of the layer of women who fought their way into 'nontraditional' industrial jobs that had previously been for men only. This influx of women strengthened the unions and helped inspire the rise of the women's rights movement.

One of the messages to the meeting came from SWP leader Joel Britton. "During her years in the party, Amy helped organize opposition to Washington's military interventions around the world and stood up to attacks on constitutional rights." She was a partisan of the Cuban Revolution and "helped organize solidarity in the early 1980s with the then-workers and farmers governments of Grenada and Nicaragua."

"When her health no longer permitted working an industrial job," Britton continued, "Amy taught school in Oakland and participated in a long strike by the teachers union in the late 1990s. With great enthusiasm, she rolled onto the strike picket lines in a wheelchair decorated with strike placards."

Fran Belvin and her husband Richard King put together a lively slide show

that included the two sisters growing up in the 1950s as well as Amy joining with other U.S. workers to visit and bring solidarity to Cuba and Nicaragua. One slide showed Amy and other workers on the picket line with striking copper miners in Arizona as they stood up to National Guard troops brought in to break the strike.

The celebration included a reception with food and displays of artwork and poetry Amy had made. Many participants looked through a display of articles from the *Militant* that included articles she wrote and reflected working-class struggles she had been involved in.

Longtime friend Jim Altenberg sent a message describing their work together as members of the SWP. He said they also spent time traveling and enjoying cultural activities in the Bay Area.

"She introduced me to Shakespeare and Brecht. We even got to see the very last performance of Bertolt Brecht's own theater company, the Berliner Ensemble, in Berkeley," he wrote.

Amy Husk stressed Belvin's lifelong commitment to the SWP and the fight for a world based on human needs, not profits. "In the 20 or so years she was actively part of this fight she lived more than many people live in a lifetime. We know her life will be an inspiration to others."



Militant/Betsy Farley

Display at Aug. 26 meeting in Lexington, Kentucky, showed political work done by Amy Belvin.

Election in Argentina deepens crisis facing working people

BY CLAUDIA KAISER-LENOIR

Whichever candidate wins the presidential election in Argentina in October will only mean more hardships for working people. In the midst of the deep capitalist crisis shaking the country, the solutions offered by all the capitalist politicians foreshadow belt-tightening measures, continued inflation and more attacks on wages and pensions, as the Argentine rulers seek to satisfy the demands of foreign investors and creditors as well as of domestic capitalists.

Widespread frustration with worsening conditions and the absence of any working-class political leadership opened the door to a narrow win in the Aug. 13 primary election for Javier Milei. His appeal is his claim to stand outside the two traditional political coalitions. Milei took 30% of the vote, with Patricia Bullrich of the conservative Together for Change coming in second and the candidate of the ruling coalition of Peronist parties, Sergio Massa, third. They will now face off in October.

Alongside cuts in social spending, Milei says he will meet the crisis by closing the central bank and abandoning the currency, the peso, in favor of the dollar.

The current president, Alberto Fernández, has a 75% disapproval rating. In an attempt to boost support for his Peronist coalition, Fernández announced a 23% increase in payments to retirees before the primary. The day after the vote, however, his government devalued the peso by 20%, wiping out almost all of the raise.

Inflation ran at a staggering 113% in July. While I was recently there, I was able to witness the impact on the daily life of working people. Fruit and vegetable vendors at sidewalk stalls regularly stop selling selected items at mid-morning, and resume sales mid-afternoon, with prices adjusted to the daily, and sometimes hourly, fluctuation in the dollar-peso exchange rate. Many other products have the same kind of price gyrations.

Items ordered and prepaid in full at major stores often require payment of the inflation-driven price increase at time of pickup.

As a result of the worst economic crisis since 2001, some 40% of Argentines now live below the poverty level. The official unemployment figures are at a relatively low 6.9%, but this hides the fact that of the total number of workers currently employed, only half are registered as full time with access to benefits.

Economy Minister Massa traveled to Washington in mid-August to ask for

loans from the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, which would further shackle the country in debt. Argentina is the largest debtor to the International Monetary Fund. The country's foreign debt currently stands at an unpayable \$25 billion.

Bubbling resistance

In the face of the sky-high prices, pressure on the government has grown from workers demanding wage hikes. In July, steelworkers, members of Unión Obrera Metalúrgica, carried out a 48-hour strike, part of their fight for a contract. Teachers and health care workers held large protests in the northwest province of Salta in May and June.

Large protests were held in Jujuy, another province in northwest Argentina, in June, demanding better wages, repeal of anti-strike and anti-protest clauses added to the province's constitution, and an end to expansion of mining on Indigenous land. The police met protesters with violence.

These protests, however, have been



AP photo/Natacha Pisarenko

Market in Buenos Aires, Aug. 10, where customers can pay vendors in rapidly deflating cash or exchange goods through barter. Inflation has gone over 100% annually, one of world's highest.

largely suspended by the officialdom of unions that are allied with the governing party, as they push for the reelection of Peronist politicians. Over decades, unions have been hog-tied by their long-standing political subordination to one or another wing of the Peronist party. Since the end of World War II these coalitions have been the main props of capitalist rule, at the same time they pose as the

champions of working people.

Following the primary vote, working people also have faced an increase in violent crime. In Buenos Aires and other cities looting raids on supermarkets were reported, along with widespread mugging of pedestrians and passengers on public buses.

Róger Calero contributed to this article.

What is road forward for working people in Mideast?

Continued from front page

As part of the deal the Sunni-based capitalist monarchy in Saudi Arabia wants Washington's help in developing nuclear power — which could also lead to developing nuclear weapons — as well as acquiring advanced weapons and a stronger commitment of U.S. military backing to counter threats from Tehran, reports the *Wall Street Journal*.

While U.S. imperialism remains the most powerful military force intervening in the Middle East, U.S. purchases of its oil have declined while purchases by Japan, France and China have increased. The Saudi monarchy is seeking more long-term relations with Beijing, now its largest trading partner at some \$100 billion a year.

The latest moves are taking place just five months after the Iranian and Saudi governments reestablished diplomatic relations — with the aid of Beijing — allowing a fragile lull in their decadeslong antagonisms.

Netanyahu wants deal with Saudis

Liberals both in Israel and the U.S. claim Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government is "the most right-wing in Israel's history," and say its goal is to annex the Palestinian West Bank. But Netanyahu is not about to let the minority of more extreme parties in his coalition sabotage a potential deal with the Saudi rulers, nor let them take actions that would end up boosting the prospects of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and their backers in Tehran. The Israeli police forcibly evacuated Israeli settlers from the "illegal" Aira Shajar outpost in the Palestinian West Bank Aug. 14.

Netanyahu has stated that "there is no political obstacle" to making concessions to the Palestinian Authority, which rules over large sections of the West Bank, if that would help seal a deal with Riyadh.

While a rapid agreement between the two governments is unlikely, the talks stand on the 2020 Abraham Accords, brokered by the Donald Trump administration, which established diplomatic and trade relations be-

tween the Israeli government and the governments of Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Sudan.

With or without an official agreement the Saudi and Israeli governments are expanding their relations. In early August Israeli SolarEdge and Saudi conglomerate Ajlan & Bros Holding announced a joint venture for developing solar energy in Saudi Arabia.

Since taking office, the Biden administration has done nothing to win more Arab or Muslim governments to the accords.

Regardless of the goals of the participating capitalist rulers and their politicians, the Abraham Accords and the trade relations that go with them open space for working people of all religions and ethnic groups to meet and work together. This provides better conditions for common action in defense of the interests of the working classes.

And ending the boycott of Israel by Arab regimes strengthens Israel as a refuge for Jews in the face of the worldwide rise in antisemitism.

None of this is to the liking of the Shiite-based bourgeois clerical regime in Iran. To maintain itself in power, it's driven to extend its counterrevolutionary influence across the region, especially in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Tehran makes no secret of its goal to wipe Israel off the map.

At the beginning of August the Pentagon sent 3,000 additional Marines and Navy personnel, backed by the USS Bataan warship and F-35 fighter jets, to the Gulf of Oman in response to what it says was increased harassment of oil tankers and other ships by Iranian forces.

In early August the *New York Times* reported the Biden administration had agreed to release \$6 billion in Iranian government funds in exchange for the regime freeing five imprisoned U.S. citizens. U.S. sanctions against Iran still extract a high price from the Iranian people, even if the regime has succeeded in bypassing some of them.

The *New York Sun* reported Aug. 21 that the Iranian regime has man-

aged to increase its oil exports from 300,000 barrels a day at the height of Washington's sanctions during the Trump administration to about 2.2 million today, mostly sold to Beijing.

Tehran: Make Jenin a little Gaza

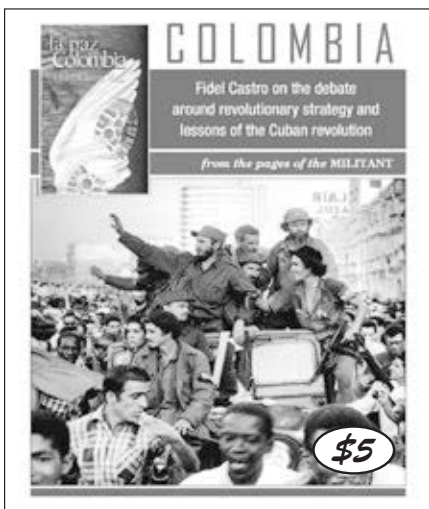
Tehran aids reactionary Islamist forces throughout the region. This includes Hamas, which rules Gaza with an iron fist, and Hezbollah in Lebanon. It also created militias in Iraq and Syria that have increasingly carried out operations targeting Israel.

Recently Tehran has been sending dynamite and other weapons to its allies in the West Bank — at times via drones — hoping to take advantage of widespread disillusionment with the Palestinian Authority and turn at least the city of Jenin, where Hamas and Islamic Jihad are strongest, into a little Gaza as a base for attacking Israel.

At the same time Hamas has for now kept to its de facto truce in Gaza with the Israeli authorities — even while it boasts about its role in increased terror attacks launched from Jenin on unarmed Jewish civilians in the West Bank and Israel itself. The Israeli regime has granted permits to 20,000 Gazans to work inside Israel.

But this could change on a moment's notice and the people of Israel could find themselves in a Tehran-instigated multifront war from forces in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria.

In the fight to prevent that possibility becoming a reality, working people in the Palestinian territories, in Israel and throughout the Middle East need to forge mass revolutionary parties, as do workers all around the world. Such parties would unite working people of different national backgrounds and religions to advance our common class interests. They would lead the battle to create an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, end violence and oppression throughout the region, and rid the world of antisemitic persecution and attacks, on the road to taking power out of the hands of the capitalist class and carrying out a socialist revolution.



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UAW prepares for walkout

Continued from front page

slashing the number of workers. The union demands the right to strike over plant closures, as well as protection programs to guarantee bosses continue to pay workers laid off when a plant shutdown does occur.

The UAW also demands more paid time off for workers to be with their families. “Our members are working 60, 70, even 80 hours a week just to make ends meet,” a union flyer says. “That’s not living. It’s barely surviving, and it needs to stop.”

The union has begun organizing “practice pickets” to show UAW members’ determination to fight. The tactic follows ones initiated by the Teamsters at UPS, who held pickets and rallies across the country before winning a contract adopted overwhelmingly by its members.

Hundreds joined union actions in Louisville, Kentucky, and Detroit Aug. 23-25. Workers chanted, “Equal work for equal pay. All the tiers must go away!” and, “Record profits. Record contracts!”

Andrea Harris, 42, a repair tech at the Stellantis Mack Assembly Plant, told the *Detroit Free Press* she was picketing “for better wages for my family.” She described a grueling pace on the assembly line that left her legs injured, requiring hospitalization at one point. “We’re ready to strike. We’re tired,” she said.

Socialist Workers Party campaigners went to the Ford assembly plant here in Chicago to find out what workers thought about these issues. “They treat us like garbage,” said Darnel Dixon, who just started there two months ago. “Like today, we got sent home early,” cutting their pay. He said they aren’t guaranteed eight hours of work when they clock in. And he said the starting wage is \$16.67 an hour, barely more than Chicago’s minimum wage.

Another worker who’s been there two years said he makes a bit over \$19. A worker with 13 years said he’s up to \$32. “So the demand to end the two-tier wages is major,” said Naomi Craine, a rail worker and Socialist Workers

Party candidate for U.S. Congress in Illinois’ District 4.

“A divided union is not going to survive. We can’t have all these classes of workers within the same damn workplace doing the same damn work,” UAW President Shawn Fain said when he addressed pickets at Ford’s Truck Plant in Louisville.

Terrence Parham, who has worked at Ford for about 10 years, told the press his job at the plant involves tough working conditions that can lead to repetitive-motion injuries. He said that wear and tear means the demand for a pension for all autoworkers is crucial.

Unionists look to make gains

“This is our time to take back what we are owed. Working together with the companies doesn’t work for us. The only way the working class advances is if we stand together,” Fain told union members in a live-stream update Aug. 25. “The only way we’re ever going to have a better quality of life for ourselves and our families is if we fight for it.”

Fain was elected this year in the UAW’s first-ever direct-ballot election, beating the incumbent, Ray Curry, by a few hundred votes out of some 140,000 cast. Curry took office in 2021 after the federal government intervened in the union, launching a “corruption” probe leading to the conviction of a dozen union leaders for embezzlement and other charges.

Fain’s election is one reflection of workers looking for ways to strengthen their unions and make gains. Workers face continuing attacks as the bosses seek to defend their profits against sharpening competition, by taking it out on the backs of the working class.

Other examples are the gains won by 340,000 Teamsters at UPS, the ongoing strike by 180,000 members of the Screen Actors Guild and Writers Guild, thousands of striking hotel workers in Los Angeles, workers on strike at International Flavors and Fragrances in Memphis, Tennessee, and other union struggles.

The Big Three bosses say they can’t

Atlanta rally backs actors, Writers Guild strikers



Kruz Valero-Cox

ATLANTA — More than 800 unionists rallied here Aug. 22 as part of the National Day of Solidarity with striking members of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and the Writers Guild of America. SAG-AFTRA members have been on strike since July 13, and WGA members since May 2. Similar actions took place in Los Angeles, New York and other cities.

“As long as it takes!” was one of the cheers at the spirited rally held at the Teamsters Local 728 union hall. Speakers included AFL-CIO President Liz Schuler and a number of film and TV actors and writers. Workers involved in union organizing efforts at Delta Air Lines, as well as Teamsters union members who drive the large movie vans, participated in the protest. Georgia has become an increasingly attractive center for TV and film production.

“We’re not on strike, but we’re honoring the actors’ and writers’ picket lines,” Teamsters member Paul Yates told the *Militant*. “Their fight for a fair contract is our fight too,” noting that some 2,400 Teamsters work in the Georgia film industry.

“I definitely think there’s a concerted effort by the employers to go against the unions, to break us down. What the Biden administration and Congress last fall did to the rail workers is like being enslaved to the rail companies,” he said. Teamsters in the movie and TV production face some of the same conditions as rail workers, including inhuman schedules and no family time. “When we work, it’s 16-18 hours a day,” he pointed out.

Yates got a year’s subscription to the *Militant* and *Teamster Rebellion* by Socialist Workers Party leader Farrell Dobbs, who led the union’s over-the-road organizing drive in the 1930s. Yates was interested in learning more about the history of his union, and what’s happening in the labor movement today.

— JANICE LYNN AND SUSAN LAMONT

meet the union’s demands because they face too much competition as the industry shifts to electric vehicles. These can be built with fewer workers than internal-combustion engine ones. They are spending billions on developing technology and building plants to manufacture lithium batteries for EVs.

Bosses shuttered the big auto plant in Lordstown, Ohio, in 2019. They built a new plant nearby called Ultium, a joint venture of GM and Korea’s LG. Industrywide there are now six U.S. plants making EV batteries and 22 more under construction.

The bosses insist these plants don’t come under the UAW master contract and that the union has to fight to unionize them one at a time. The 1,100 workers at the new Warren, Ohio, Ultium plant, built next to Lordstown, voted in the UAW in December 2022. Their starting wage was \$16.50 an hour. The union has won a wage increase to \$20 and back pay since the union election was won. Further negotiations continue.

The first union contract, which has been tentatively accepted by the union negotiating committee, raises starting pay to \$20, then \$21 after six months or 1,000 hours worked. This is far less than UAW workers get in the auto plants. Ultium is the first unionized lithium battery plant in the country.

The stakes for the working class as a whole in the Big Three fight is high! Solidarity with the UAW!

Naomi Craine contributed to this article.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



September 14, 1998

DURBAN, South Africa — The 12th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, which includes 113 governments, mostly from semicolonial nations oppressed by imperialism, convened here Aug. 29.

Cuban president Fidel Castro arrived Sept. 1 to take part in the summit, which is expected to denounce the U.S. embargo against the Caribbean island. Following the meeting, the revolutionary leader will begin a state visit hosted by the South African government.

To millions of black South Africans and others who fought in the revolutionary democratic struggle against apartheid, the decisive role of Cuban troops in defeating South African invaders in Angola — and the contribution this made to apartheid’s demise — is well known. Also appreciated is the presence of about 300 Cuban volunteer doctors who are working in rural areas throughout this country.



September 14, 1973

The Justice Department is considering abolishing the infamous list of “subversive” organizations. The list dates back to a 1947 executive order by President Harry Truman, directing the Justice Department to draw up a list of organizations that were “totalitarian, fascist, communist or subversive.”

The Socialist Workers Party appeared on the original list and remains listed today. A challenge to the constitutionality of the list is a major objective of the suit filed against [President] Nixon and other government officials this past July by the SWP and the Young Socialist Alliance.

This suit attacks violations of the rights of SWP members and supporters, including illegal wiretapping, burglary, surveillance, and job harassment by government agents. Elimination of the list would be an important victory in defense of political rights.



September 13, 1948

“The high point of my visit to the Twin Cities was the large turnout of packinghouse militants at the St. Paul meeting. I welcomed the opportunity to pay tribute to them for their heroic strike struggle against the profiteering meat trust,” Farrell Dobbs wrote.

“The packinghouse workers came to hear me speak both as the presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers Party and as a leader in the 1934 Minneapolis truck drivers strike. We quickly found a meeting of the minds on the need for militant union policy backed up by independent labor political action.

“I also talked with a group of railroad workers. They informed me that sentiment for independent labor political action is gaining momentum in the ranks of the rail unions.

“You may be sure there is going to be a first-class SWP campaign in these parts.”

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Cuba trip to Angola, SAfrica marks overthrow of apartheid

BY SETH GALINSKY

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel's recent trip to Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa highlighted the Cuban Revolution's decades of solidarity with — and participation in — the fight against colonial rule and imperialist exploitation in Africa.

Carolina Cerqueira, president of Angola's National Assembly, introduced the Cuban president at a special session to welcome him Aug. 21 in Luanda, the capital. The Cuban people's unconditional support was decisive in winning Angolan independence from Portugal and consolidating it, she said.

"Our Cuban brothers and sisters crossed the ocean to support the African people in their struggle," Cerqueira said. "The Cuban troops were a fundamental pillar for independence for Angola, Namibia and the end of the racist apartheid regime in South Africa."

She was referring to the 375,000 Cuban internationalist combatants — along with 50,000 health care, education, construction and other workers — who played a key role from 1975 to 1991 in defeating repeated invasions of Angola by the apartheid South African regime.

Díaz-Canel told the National Assembly that Fidel Castro said in 1988, "To be internationalists is to pay our debt to humanity and that whoever is not able to fight for others will never be able to fight adequately for themselves."

Today there are 2,056 Cuban internationalists in the country, including nearly 1,200 health care workers. Six hundred of the Cuban medical personnel are helping to train 3,000 Angolans as doctors. "Angola is the African country where we have the most diverse and most numerous collaboration," the Cuban president said.

During an Aug. 20 meeting between Díaz-Canel and Cuban volunteers in Luanda, construction engineer Wilfredo Ferrer took the floor. "The Cuban collaboration in Angola," he said, "isn't restricted to economic contracts. It shouldn't be seen like that. Our cooperation is a synonym for solidarity, brotherhood. That's how it was during the war and now during peace."

Dr. Alejandro Naranjo told the meeting the Cuban volunteers help train the Angolans, but it is also a learning experience for the Cubans. "It allows us to see rare diseases or ones that have been eliminated in Cuba that the Angolan doctors, because they confront them every day, dominate the treatments and apply them successfully," he said.

In South Africa some 800 people

greeted the Cuban delegation at Freedom Park in Pretoria on Aug. 23 for a solidarity meeting attended by high-ranking officials of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, African National Congress, South African Communist Party and of the government, along with the Friends of Cuba Society and Cuban residents of the country.

The park, dedicated to telling the story of the fight against apartheid, features a wall with the names of 143,000 people who died during the struggle, including those of the more than 2,000 Cuban internationalists who fell in combat in Angola.

"From very early, Cuba denounced the incarceration of Nelson Mandela and his comrades at a time when alleged champions of freedom and human rights regarded them as terrorists," Díaz-Canel told the crowd. "It's a huge satisfaction to have made a contribution to the end of apartheid."

After the overthrow of apartheid, one of Mandela's first trips abroad was to Cuba, where he embraced Fidel Cas-



South African Communist Party

Some 800 people listened to talk by Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel at Freedom Park in Pretoria, South Africa, Aug. 23. Event celebrated Cuban Revolution's role in overthrow of apartheid rule.

tro and joined him speaking to tens of thousands of Cubans at a July 26, 1991, rally in Matanzas. The rally celebrated the July 26, 1953, assault on the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship's Moncada military base, the opening shot of the Cuban Revolution.

"The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa," Mandela said. "The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom, and

justice, unparalleled for its principled and selfless character."

Many of the South African speakers at Freedom Park called for an end to the U.S. economic war on Cuba, its removal from the U.S. State Department's list of "state sponsors of terrorism," and for the return to Cuba of U.S. military-occupied Guantánamo.

While in South Africa, Díaz-Canel also attended and spoke at the BRICS summit in Pretoria.

Beijing-led BRICS, US rulers stoke new conflicts

Continued from front page

BRICS bloc will now cover close to half the world's population and over a third of its economic output.

The main movers of the BRICS alliance are the capitalist rulers in Beijing, who are seeking ways to chip away at U.S. imperialism's dominance.

Chinese President Xi Jinping cited "common interests of emerging markets and developing countries" in pushing for the group's expansion. But the alliance is riven by competing national interests of its various ruling classes. The governments of Brazil, India and South Africa oppose lining up behind Beijing against Washington.

The Indian government, moreover, faces clashes with the Chinese rulers over control of a disputed border region, as well as rivalry with Beijing for markets, resources and influence across Asia. This has spurred Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to seek closer ties with the imperialist powers in the U.S., Japan and Australia.

No replacement for U.S. supremacy

The governments of India and South Africa opposed a proposal by Brasilia before the summit to move toward a BRICS-backed currency. Outside the eurozone, 79% of world trade is conducted in dollars. The dollar is backed by the

military and economic clout of Washington. No agreement was reached.

The BRICS leaders settled for member states carrying out more trade in local currencies. Dollar-strapped governments, like in Argentina, are already using the Chinese yuan in certain transactions.

To try to counter the U.S.-led International Monetary Fund and World Bank, BRICS governments set up their own New Development Bank in 2015.

But the reality of Washington's domination of world financial transactions has become even clearer since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Washington's sanctions on Russia have forced the New Development Bank to suspend all operations in Russia. Wall Street lenders have stopped advancing loans to the NDB. Two-thirds of borrowing by the bank — set up to counter the greenback — is actually dollar-denominated!

The Chinese rulers' relative weakness has become even more obvious recently. They face a property market meltdown, falling exports and mounting local government debt. Youth unemployment stands at 20%. These conditions are likely to accelerate not only Beijing's, but the global, economic crisis.

Since Moscow's invasion, the New Development Bank has had to double the premium it charges to borrowers. It's issuing far fewer loans than before the war in Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin faced arrest if he traveled to the summit. That's because the International Criminal Court — of which host South Africa is a member — issued an arrest warrant for him related to his invasion of Ukraine. He joined the gathering by video link. He made demagogic appeals to attendees to help create "a new multipolar world order."

Xi and Putin claim to present an alternative to neo-colonialism. They tap into a real aversion by semicolonial governments to Washington and other

imperialist powers over their long history of bloody colonial oppression and exploitation. Moscow and Beijing make these claims despite the fact the Russian rulers are at war to subjugate the Ukrainian people.

Beijing has spent \$1 trillion on giant Belt and Road infrastructure projects aimed at expanding its control over trade routes and grabbing markets. Many governments in Asia, Africa and Latin America have sunk deeper into debt to China's banks to pay for these projects. If governments default, Beijing can seize facilities as it did with the Sri Lankan port of Hambantota.

For Beijing these projects are a door to military expansion, deepening the conflict with Washington beyond Asia. The Chinese rulers opened their first military base abroad in Djibouti in 2017.

The course pushed by Beijing in its escalating rivalry with Washington, is the opposite of that advanced by Cuban communist leader Fidel Castro when he led the Non-Aligned Movement. This organization was established as a product of the giant struggles that uprooted colonial domination in the 1950s. In 1979 Castro chaired the movement, speaking out against imperialist plunder and led calls for cancellation of the debt owed by oppressed nations.

Days before the BRICS summit, President Joseph Biden hosted a meeting with government heads of Japan and South Korea at Camp David Aug. 18. Biden used the meeting to bolster Washington's alliances as a counterweight to Beijing's military expansion in the Pacific.

Japan occupied Korea from 1910 to 1945, looting the country. During World War II Japanese rule over the Korean people included forced labor and using Korean women as sex slaves.

Despite this history, Biden secured the agreement of Washington's two closest allies in East Asia to deepen military and economic cooperation.

from pathfinderpress.com

SWP is the alternative in 2024

Continued from front page

ple need these freedoms to speak out about and organize against the attacks of the bosses and their two political parties. And to fight against the rising threat of more wars as capitalist competition and rivalries sharpen.

Despite their best efforts, the pro-Democratic Party media are finding it hard to make it look as if what they call “Bidenomics” has created an economic recovery. Some 5.2 million workers who want a job aren’t able to get into the labor force today, and a further 4 million work part time because they can’t get full-time work. Biden claims to have created more jobs than any other president, but the percentage of working age people actually holding a job is a mere 60.4%, below pre-pandemic levels.

Real wages have declined for 26 of the past 29 months, under the impact of rising prices and bosses’ push to hold down wages and attack unions. Workers looking to start a family, or who are trying to sustain one, face mounting difficulties. Rents have soared by 30.5% since 2019, and eviction orders are 50% higher than three years ago in several major cities.

These conditions are aggravated by a drop in world manufacturing output, which slumped to its lowest level in three years in July. The slowdown is especially severe in China, the world’s leading manufacturer, but it’s also marked in France, Germany and Italy, the three largest manufacturing powers in Europe. Sharpening competition for markets and investments among rival capitalist ruling classes drive them to step up attacks on wages, jobs and working conditions.

As U.S. bosses take aim at workers, more of us have begun using our unions. Workers are going on strike for wages that match price hikes and against boss demands for multitier contracts, life-threatening speedup, forced overtime and unlivable work schedules. In the face of deteriorating living standards, millions of working people say they would like to join a union.

Biden and Trump, and all the other Democratic and Republican politicians tell us to rely on them, that they’ll fix up the economy. But in a system founded on the exploitation of the vast majority by a handful of capitalist ruling families, what they really mean is protecting the bosses’ profits at all costs.

This reality is cast aside by the middle-class left in their drive to

keep Democrats in the White House. The Communist Party hailed the AFL-CIO’s early 2024 endorsement of Biden, calling for a “people’s front against the MAGA right,” and a vote against Trump “all the way down party tickets.”

Independent working-class action

A course to defend workers’ interests starts with relying on ourselves and our unions in the mines, mills, factories and other workplaces.

“The destructive effects of unemployment and price rises can be fought by the unions,” Laura Garza, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from California, told the *Militant* Aug. 29. “The SWP campaigns for the labor movement to demand cost-of-living adjustments in every contract and all benefits, so when prices rise our wages go up automatically. A union-led fight for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay is needed to share the work available around and prevent layoffs.”

Garza has built support for striking hotel workers and others in Los Angeles and across the country. “As working people fight together we begin to see more clearly the interests we share with fellow workers here and around the world,” she said.

That’s the opposite starting point of the Democratic and Republican parties. Both uphold the interests of the U.S. capitalist rulers. Like their rivals, the U.S. rulers are expanding and upgrading their military. Washington is determined to strengthen and to extend its military might and alliances in the Pacific, throughout the semicolonial world and elsewhere to counter the influence of Beijing.

Some commentators in the capitalist press and among the military brass fear Washington is ill-prepared for the inevitable wars that lie ahead.

‘What’s missing in Maui is a working-class voice’

BY SETH GALINSKY

“There’s going to be a lot of finger pointing between the city government and the state and the electric company about who’s to blame for the fire,” Sergio Alcubilla, executive director of the Honolulu-based Hawaii Workers Center, told the *Militant* by phone from Maui Aug. 30. “They all claim there was no forewarning.”

The government’s negligence included no organized evacuation, a decision not to set off the siren alarms, and the collapse of the water pressure needed to fight the fires.

Alcubilla was on his way back from a fact-finding tour in Lahaina. “You still see miles of dry brown grasses” that hasn’t burned yet, he said. He was referring to the invasive plants that have taken over thousands of acres after the island’s sugar plantations shut down. This was the fuel for the fast-moving wildfire that destroyed the town Aug. 8, leaving at least 115 people dead.

“This is the third major fire here in recent years,” he said. “A firefighter friend called it a tinderbox.” Neither the government, Hawaii Electric bosses nor big-business landowners took any serious preventive measures.

Some 6,000 of the town’s 13,000 residents — many forced to flee with just



South Korean Defense Ministry

U.S. Air Force bombers and South Korean warplanes in drills, South Korea, March 19. As tensions rise, both Democrats and Republicans back U.S. rulers’ preparations for wars to come.

In the *Wall Street Journal*, commentator Walter Russell Mead complains that after the Cold War “too many American policy makers forgot that our adversaries are impressed by our will and power rather than our virtue.” He contrasts this to how the U.S. rulers acted after they emerged victorious at the end of World War II. Then they recognized “it didn’t matter how many inspiring ideas went into the Atlantic Charter ... if the U.S. and its allies couldn’t defeat Germany and Japan on the ground.” Power, not diplomacy, was and remains crucial.

Failure to wield military power ruthlessly led to Washington’s defeat in Vietnam, says Mackubin T. Owens, a retired Marine officer and professor at the Naval War College. Writing in the Spring edition of *Claremont Review*, Owens argues the U.S. defeat in Vietnam was “the result of hesitancy and squeamishness about wartime tactics.”

In fact, the U.S. rulers *did* inflict death and devastation on a vast scale in their attempt to defeat the Vietnamese people’s victorious battle for independence. Owens says that even more

lethal force should have been used. Capitalist morality is defense of profits at all costs, regardless of the brutality and bloodletting involved.

Owens’ comments, and Meads’, reflect renewed debate about what the rulers must be willing and able to do to defend their predatory interests in conflicts unfolding today and in the more bloody battles that lie ahead.

“Workers need our own foreign policy,” Garza said, “one that places the interests of workers here and fellow workers around the world above the plunder and wars of the U.S. rulers and their rivals.”

“The only road to prevent future wars, and the threat of nuclear catastrophe, is for working people to take the power to make war out of the hands of the capitalist class,” she said, “as working people did in Cuba.”

“We need to build a vanguard party of the working class to lead millions to carry through a socialist revolution in the U.S., to end exploitation and join hands with fellow workers worldwide to build a world free of hunger, oppression and war.”

the clothes on their backs — are being housed in hotels and Airbnbs with some aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other government organizations, and help by volunteers and union donations. But there is no plan for where they’ll go when that money runs out.

“Those most directly impacted are the working class and immigrant communities,” Alcubilla said. The majority of Lahaina residents are immigrant workers, including 40% Filipinos; 13% Latinos, mostly Mexicanos; and 10% Pacific Islanders. Native Hawaiians make up a smaller percentage. The tourist industry and remaining pineapple plantations depend on low-paid immigrant labor.

While there is some government aid for U.S. citizens and others with government-recognized papers, among immigrants “there is a lot of distrust of the government,” Alcubilla said.

Many immigrants worry if they apply for aid or housing they could end up being deported or hurt their chances for permanent residency in the future. “They’re suspicious about FEMA,” Kevin Block, an immigration attorney on Maui told the press. At the shelters, FEMA people wear uniforms. “They look like cops.”

In some cases this means “20, 30

people in a two-bedroom house trying to huddle up and wait it out,” Cassi Yamashita, from Maui Economic Opportunity, said. The Koinonia Pentecostal Church is putting up 20 members of the Filipino congregation in its parish hall.

The Workers Center has called on the government to start paying unemployment benefits to those who lost their jobs, and let them produce documentation later, which many lost in the fire.

“The real question will be, what’s the rebuilding going to look like?” Alcubilla said. “What kind of work are people going to do? So much of the economy depends on tourism, but right now tourism has gone down.”

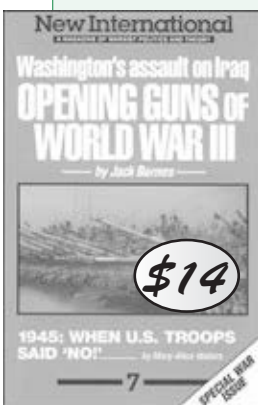
Trying to prevent ruthless real estate speculators from rapidly buying up Lahaina property, the state is considering a moratorium on sales of destroyed homes. “But that’s also a challenge for people who decide they can’t rebuild and want to move,” he said.

“The concern is that once the spotlight recedes, things will go back to the status quo,” Alcubilla said. That would mean the land speculators and bosses who own the hotels, restaurants and other tourist facilities would end up being the big winners.

“The voice missing here is the working class.”

Opening Guns of World War III: Washington’s Assault on Iraq

by Jack Barnes



In New International no. 7

The devastation of Iraq did not lead to the dawn of a new world order. The Gulf war held a mirror to the declining capitalist world order and accelerated its contradictions.

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Capitalist crises pose necessity of socialist revolution in the US

The French edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* by Mary-Alice Waters is one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month* for September. It features talks the Socialist Workers Party leader gave as part of an extended political debate addressing this topic at the 2007 and 2008 Venezuela International Book Fairs. The excerpt is entitled, "The class battles ahead are inevitable, their outcome is not. That depends on us." Copyright © 2017 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

I also want to thank the National Book Center, CENAL, the organizer of the Venezuela International Book Fair, for the important initiative its national leadership took last year in organizing the fair's rolling five-day debate on the theme, "The United States: A Possible Revolution." ...

It is not by accident that the *New York Times*, the US daily newspaper most influential in molding bourgeois and petty-bourgeois opinion, just this week disparagingly singled out that event by name as an example of how divorced from reality all of us here in Venezuela are. How divorced from reality all revolutionary-minded workers are, everywhere. ... That we should think events

Could the crash of '87 happen again?



AP Photo/Peter Morgan

New York Stock Exchange, Oct. 19, 1987, onset of U.S. financial crash. Similar crash struck world markets in 2007. Crises are built into the workings of capitalism, driving bosses and their governments to push to salvage their profit system on the backs of working people.

like the Venezuela International Book Fair, which promote reading and culture and civil debate among working people, point a way forward for humanity.

As we said last year, however, the question of whether socialist revolution is possible in the United States is no small matter. Its "answer, in practice, will ultimately determine the future of humanity — or more accurately, perhaps, whether there is a future for humanity."

What most struck me in rereading last year's presentation was the list of assumptions one would have to make to reach the conclusion that socialist revolution in the US is *not* possible. And then thinking about what has begun to transpire in the world in just the last twelve months!

"To reach that conclusion," we said, "you would have to believe that there won't again be economic, financial, and social crises, or devastating world wars, on the order of those that marked the first half of the twentieth century. That the ruling families of the imperialist world and their economic wizards have found a way to 'manage' capitalism so as to preclude shattering financial crises and breakdowns of production and trade that could lead to something akin to the Great Depression. ...

"You would have to be convinced that competition among imperialist rivals, as well as between them and the more economically advanced semicolonial pow-

ers, is diminishing not sharpening. ...

"Most important, you would have to believe that capitalism's profit rates, which have been on a long downward curve since the mid-1970s, are now going to begin to rise for several decades at an accelerated pace."

In other words, you would have to think that the imperialist epoch with its inevitable conflicts, described by Lenin nearly a century ago, has been superseded by something new.

A year ago when we were discussing these questions here in Caracas, the main US stock market index, just a few weeks earlier, had closed at its all-time high of a little over 14,000. Yesterday it swung wildly by almost a thousand points, from under 8,000 — more than 40 percent below that peak — to close at almost 9,000. These manic fluctuations have become so much a daily occurrence as to become commonplace. And everyone knows they simply announce another plunge. ...

Trillions of dollars of what Marx called "fictitious capital" have been "lost" in the last year — and so have the very non-fictitious homes and savings of millions of working people. Yet the bottom is not in sight.

The financial panic of banking capital is the symptom, however, not the disease.

What seemingly started as a capitalist crisis centered in credit and banking has

now shown itself to be something of a different dimension. Its roots lie in the extended decline of the rate of accumulation of capital, the devastating contraction of new investment in plant, equipment, and hiring. As the de facto bankruptcy of General Motors bears witness, the deepest contraction of industrial production and employment since the opening decades of the last century has accelerated dramatically. Some two million workers have been thrown out of work in the US since the beginning of this year — already the greatest annual loss since the end of World War II.

The inevitability of such a contraction has underlain this worldwide crisis from the beginning.

It is worth reminding ourselves that the Great Depression of the 1930s was not the consequence of the stock market crash of 1929 and subsequent banking crises alone. Its deeper origins are found in the violently intensifying competition among capitalist powers in the years leading up to World War I — competition for colonial possessions, access to markets and raw materials, and inexpensive sources of labor to exploit — and the economic and social breakdowns and financial catastrophe that accompanied that first inter-imperialist slaughter and its aftermath.

It took the global carnage of the Second World War, which included massive physical destruction across Europe and Asia from 1939 to 1945 — and, above all, the postwar military, economic, and financial dominance of US imperialism — to lay the basis for the exploiting classes to pull out of that crisis. They did so first in the US and Canada, and then slowly across devastated Europe.

That is important. As Lenin stressed, there is no hopeless situation for capitalism. The two decades from 1930 to 1950 showed once again that the dons of finance capital, if they are not replaced beforehand by the workers and rural toilers, can dig themselves out of any crisis — by inflicting enough bloody defeats on the working classes and taking over enough of the world's destroyed industrial capacity.

The only question is the price the toilers will be made to pay.

And the only solution remains taking the power to inflict these horrors — state power — out of their hands, once and for all.

September
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Help get out the ‘Militant,’ books on revolutionary struggle

Join us getting the *Militant* out as widely as possible, an irreplaceable source of news on unfolding working-class struggles. Every week the paper gets out the truth about union battles like the strike by the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers in Memphis, Tennessee, and the contract showdown by United Auto Workers against the Big Three auto bosses. The *Militant* gets out the facts — and explains the stakes — in these confrontations, to help build the solidarity needed so workers can win.

The paper is needed to answer the innumerable attempts of the capitalist rulers and their middle-class media mouthpieces to cover up the true relations of class exploitation that underlie the intolerable conditions we face. The bosses’ press hides the responsibility of their class and its government for social disasters, like the one unfolding in Maui today, or for the toxic train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.

The rulers try to hide the fact that the sharpening competition between Washington and profit-hungry rival capitalist powers is fueling the growing threat of war today.

Above all, the 2024 candidates of the Democrats and Republicans try to convince us there is nothing workers can do to change these conditions except to hold their noses and vote for one of them.

The *Militant* says No!

The paper points to examples that show workers’ capacities to stand up to assaults by the bosses. It advances demands workers and the unions can use to advance our class interests, sharpen our fighting spirit, trust in ourselves and inculcate implacable distrust of the bosses and their political parties.

Alongside the *Militant*, books from Pathfinder Press help working people see the root cause of the problems we face under capitalist rule. They place our struggles in the sweep of history, helping us see that the rulers’ claim that “it’s always been

this way” is a lie. That history under capitalism is the unfolding of our class’s struggle to take back from the exploiters the wealth only we produce, to use for all humanity. The books generalize powerful lessons from previous labor and revolutionary struggles that point a road forward today.

Each week the *Militant* reports on the campaigns of Socialist Workers Party candidates as they join union fights and address political questions from a class-struggle viewpoint. SWP campaigns explain why Cuba’s socialist revolution provides a powerful example of what working people are capable of. We have the capacity to assemble and lead millions of the exploited and oppressed to conquer political power and transform the world.

Help win new readers to the paper! Read it and discuss it with co-workers and others. Dig into books on revolutionary working-class struggle!

A good place to start is to join SWP candidates introducing the *Militant* at coming Labor Day actions.

Defend the right to free speech! Protest attacks by the Democrats

Continued from front page

lar *Militant* Labor Forum panels have taken place in Cincinnati; Los Angeles; Miami; Oakland, California; and elsewhere.

APSP Chairman Omali Yeshitela and Uhuru Movement leaders Penny Hess and Jesse Nevel were indicted May 2 on federal charges of conspiring to act as unregistered agents of a foreign government — Russia. If convicted they each face up to 15 years in prison.

The New York meeting opened with a video of the armed FBI raid on offices and homes of APSP and Uhuru Movement leaders in St. Petersburg, Florida, and St. Louis last July. The FBI used flash-bang grenades, drones, armored vehicles and automatic weapons, restraining party leaders and seizing computers, files and financial records.

The African People’s Socialist Party fights for the liberation of Africa from imperialist rule, Shakur said. “These outrageous charges come from the Biden administration and the Democratic Party.” What’s involved is “our freedom and the right to speak, whether you agree with what we say or not.”

Meléndez expressed solidarity with the APSP’s fight against these frame-up charges. “Puerto Rico is a colony of the U.S.,” he said, and those fighting for self-determination and independence have faced a long history of battling FBI harassment and frame-ups.

Drop the charges against Trump!

“It’s useful to step back and look at what has transpired over the past seven-plus years in the relentless campaign by the Democrats and FBI against former President Donald Trump,” said Studer. First they tried to prevent him from being elected in 2016, and pointed the finger at their real concern: those who Hillary Clinton described as the “deplorables,” working people who voted for Trump, hoping for some change from the blows of the deepening crisis of capitalism.

We saw two impeachment trials — both of which failed to get convictions — followed by the orchestrated show trial called “hearings” in the House of Representatives about the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol melee and then the prosecution of well over 1,000 on seditious conspiracy and other frame-up charges, based on testimony from FBI informers, Studer said.

And now the far-reaching indictments against Trump in Florida; Washington, D.C.; Atlanta; and New York.

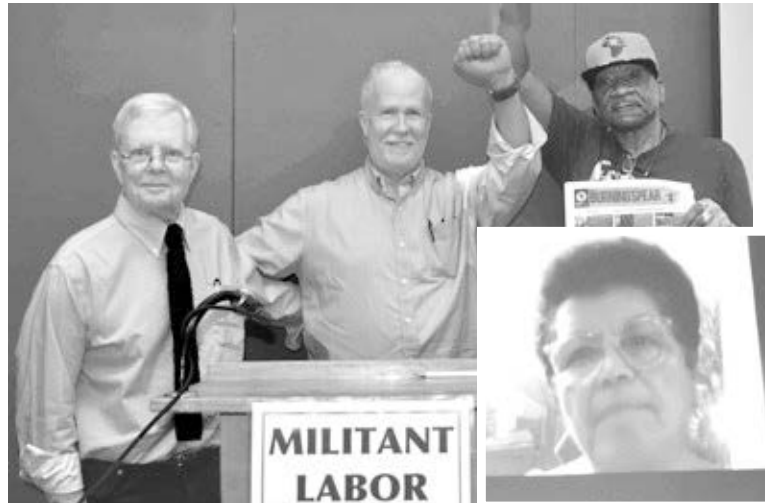
“They’re seeking to drive him out of politics by any means necessary,” he said, “targeting his friends, employees, political allies and his lawyers. These charges are all frontal assaults on free speech and constitutional freedoms — rights won in past class-struggle battles that are crucial for the struggles of working people today and tomorrow.”

That’s why the SWP says, “Drop the charges

against Trump!”

The issue here isn’t Trump’s politics, or whether he knew he had lost the 2020 election or not, Studer said. Trump’s a lying capitalist politician like all the rest. That’s what they do. But lying is not a disqualification for the right to free speech.

“The SWP in its landmark 1973-87 lawsuit and political campaign against the FBI and other federal agencies exposed their use of informers, bur-



Panelists at New York forum, Aug. 26. From left, John Studer, Socialist Workers Party; Manuel Meléndez Lavandero, Comités de la Resistencia Boricua; Oronde Shakur, African People’s Socialist Party. Inset, Milagros Rivera, Cuba Solidarity Committee in Puerto Rico, participating via video link.

glaries, wiretaps, provocateurs and dirty tricks,” Studer said. “We said, ‘Yes, we’re a revolutionary organization and have every right to be one,’” and we won, exposing and pushing back the FBI. Now the Biden administration and other liberals are trying to “refurbish” its image.

In an Aug. 2 *New York Times* opinion piece, Thomas Edsall shows how the liberals embrace their abandonment of the First Amendment today, Studer said. Edsall quotes from an article by University of Michigan law professor Catherine MacKinnon, “Weaponizing the First Amendment: An Equality Reading”:

Once a defense of the powerless, the First Amendment over the last hundred years has mainly become a weapon of the powerful. Starting toward the beginning of the 20th century, a protection that was once persuasively conceived by dissenters as a shield for radicals, artists and activists, socialists and pacifists, the excluded and the dispossessed, has become a sword for authoritarians, racists and misogynists, Nazis and Klansmen, pornographers and corporations buying elections in the dark.

We’re also seeing attempts by the New York Red Squad to refurbish its image, Studer said. Rebecca Weiner, the new head of the 1,500-cop “intelligence and counterterrorism squad,” says today it targets only the right-wing, white-supremacist movements and Islamic State.

Milagros Rivera described the fight waged by participants in the Juan Rius Rivera Solidarity Bri-

gade against FBI harassment after they returned from Cuba last year in July.

“FBI agents contacted 72 of the 102 brigade members,” Rivera said. “They tried to put forward a friendly face, saying we want to talk to you because there’s good and bad in your organization.

“We informed our people not to talk with the FBI.”

The U.S. government “wanted to intimidate and impede travel to Cuba,” she said, so we raised, “We’re Puerto Rican and we’re going to Cuba.” And that is what the brigade did again this past July. “Solidarity from everybody is the most effective thing to do.”



BY BETSY FARLEY

CINCINNATI — A panel organized by the *Militant* Labor Forum here Aug. 20 featured Kerry Porter of the Uhuru Solidarity Movement, John Hawkins of the Socialist Workers Party, and civil rights fighter Ruby Shuttlesworth Bester. All spoke on the importance of protesting any attack on free speech — from the African People’s Socialist Party to Donald Trump.

“I was eight years old when our family moved to ‘Bombingham,’ as the city of Birmingham, Alabama, became known because of the racist violence and bombings carried out against Black people fighting for our rights there,” Ruby Shuttlesworth Bester explained.

Her father, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, then the pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, was the central leader in Birmingham of the mass working-class movement for Black rights that smashed Jim Crow segregation and permanently strengthened the fighting capacity and unity of the working class in the U.S.

In those days just like today, “the FBI was always trying to stop you, stop the forward movement of Black people,” Bester said.

“My father and others joined the NAACP to organize against racist discrimination,” she said. In 1956 the Alabama attorney general ordered them to turn over their membership list to the state, and they refused and were forced to shut down. “My daddy reorganized it as the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, and they set about desegregating the buses and schools.”

Bester and the rest of her family were home on Christmas night in 1956 when a bomb exploded there. Shuttlesworth and other fighters put out a call for Blacks to desegregate the city buses the next day. “My father refused to be intimidated, and the next morning he got on the bus.” Shuttlesworth and 21 other people were arrested.

“When I was 12 years old,” she recalled, “my father and mother took three of us kids to enroll us at the all-white Phillips High School. Brown v. Board of Education was the law, but Birmingham schools were still segregated.” She described how her father was brutally beaten and her mother stabbed in the hip by a crowd of racist thugs.

A lively discussion followed the presentations.