

## BNSF rail bosses lay off workers in search of profits, undercut safety

BY JOE SWANSON

LINCOLN, Neb. — The bosses at the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway announced Feb. 28 they were furloughing over 360 mechanical and rail-car inspectors, members of the International Association of Machinists and the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen. These workers inspect, maintain and repair locomotives and rail cars.

Days before, Warren Buffett, one of the world's richest men and owner of BNSF Railway, based in Omaha, told stockholders he was “disappointed in its profits.”

AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department official Greg Regan told the media that since 2015 over 41% of BNSF's mechanical department employees have been let go. “BNSF workers are being pushed beyond capacity, and with these additional cuts, there is grave concern that there will be additional lapses in safety,” he said.

BNSF bosses have offered other jobs to some furloughed workers, Regan said, but those positions require workers to move and take a \$6 to \$8 pay cut while surrendering seniority.

IAM pipefitter David McAndrew, who works out of the BNSF Hobson Yard here, told the *Militant*, “I was awakened by phone calls and texts all day, saying the same thing, ‘Sorry you’re out

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## Join the SWP campaign! Rachele Fruit, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, is working-class alternative to both Biden and Trump



Rachele Fruit, Socialist Workers Party 2024 candidate for president, center, introduces the party's program at International Longshoremen's Association Local 1416 hall in Miami Feb. 25.

BY RACHELE FRUIT

The future of humanity depends on building a leadership, a party, that can mobilize the working class in our millions to take state power away from the capitalist rulers and place it into our own hands, to start down the road to a socialist revolution. This will open the door to ending the exploitation and oppression inherent in capitalist rule worldwide.

The U.S. today is a capitalist dictatorship, a deeply class-divided society ruled over by the bosses, their political

parties and their government, backed by a bloated layer of upper-middle-class hangers-on. There can be no proposals that can unite us. The politicians of both the Democratic and Republican parties claim to speak for working families, but working people increasingly recognize this isn't true.

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## Forum: Growing protests advance the fight against Jew-hatred today

BY SARA LOBMAN

NEW YORK — Sixty people attended a Militant Labor Forum here March 10 to address “The fight against Jew-hatred today. Defend Israel's right to exist as a refuge for Jews.”

Speakers included Columbia University Professor Shai Davidai; Seth Galinsky, a member of the Socialist Workers Party and a writer for the *Militant*; Joanne Kuniansky, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from New Jersey; and Ariana Pinsker-Lehrer, a graduate student at the Columbia School of Social Work.

Earlier that day more than 2,000 people rallied and marched in Central Park here demanding Hamas release all the remaining hostages taken during its Oct. 7 murderous pogrom against Jews in Israel. The action was sponsored by more than 50 Jewish organizations to mark 150 days since the hostages were kidnapped.

“For the past five months I have been speaking against antisemitism on college campuses,” Davidai said, stating that anti-Jewish statements and acts are tolerated by the Columbia administration. “We need to get people who aren't involved right now to join this fight.”

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## Power bosses drive for profits fueled fire, disaster facing working people in Texas



Rancher collects cattle killed in Smokehouse Creek Fire in Skellytown, Texas, March 1.

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

FORT WORTH, Texas — Several deadly wildfires ripped through the Texas Panhandle leaving more than 10,000 cattle dead and more than 1 million acres of land destroyed,

threatening the livelihoods of thousands of working people.

There are 4.1 million beef cattle in Texas, 85% in the Panhandle. It is the most profitable agricultural commodity

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## Crisis unfolding in Haiti is result of decades of Washington's interference

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Working people in Haiti, where the history of colonial oppression has left it one of the poorest countries in the world, are bearing the brunt of unstable capitalist rule and imperialist

interference. A wave of attacks by powerful criminal gangs on key government targets hit the country's capital, Port-au-Prince, Feb. 29.

Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry announced March 12 from Puerto Rico that he was resigning immediately, and would be replaced by a transition council to set elections.

The gang violence had spiraled out of control as Henry traveled to Kenya to push for deployment of a U.N.-backed police force from that East African country, currently on hold by a court ruling there. Thugs have burned police stations, closed Haiti's main international airports and broken into the country's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 3,800 inmates,

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## UAW organizing drive in Alabama at Mercedes-Benz makes progress

BY SUSAN LAMONT

COTTONDALE, Ala. — “Our organizing drive got new impetus from the gains the United Auto Workers made during the strike at John Deere in 2021 and what the UAW accomplished last fall with strikes at the Big Three automakers,” Kirk Gardner, a worker at the Mercedes-Benz assembly plant in nearby Vance, told the *Militant* March 9. “After that, support for the union snowballed.”

Workers at the plant announced Feb. 27 that they had gathered UAW cards

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Power bosses fueled Texas fires

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ity in the state, raking in \$15.5 billion in 2022.

The Smokehouse Creek Fire — the largest of five extensive ones in the state — began Feb. 26, quickly ravaging ranches, farmland and small towns. Burning over 1,700 square miles, five times the size of New York City, the fire was 74% contained by March 7.

Working people have responded with solidarity. Residents of Fritch opened spare bedrooms and donated food and farm supplies to people affected by the Windy Deuce Fire, which burned 140,000 acres in and around the town.

“People in the Panhandle have always pulled together to help each other,” Leonardo Segura, a retired United Steelworkers union member who worked at the Asarco copper refinery in Amarillo, told the *Militant*. “There are lines and lines of trucks coming in loaded with hay, water, building materials and other donations from all over the state.

“Some people lost everything,” he said. “When the fire started heading to Oklahoma, people started to evacuate. With the wind blowing 60 to 70 miles per hour, when the fire is headed your way all you have time to do is pack and go.”

“Many of the homes that were destroyed by the fires were not insured,” said Tammy Flanagan, also from Amarillo. “Two people were killed in the fires.”

Xcel Energy, which sells power in Texas and seven other states, has admitted its equipment helped start the fire. “Its facilities appear to have been involved in an ignition of the Smokehouse Creek fire,” the company said, but denies it acted negligently.

Melanie McQuiddy, who lives in

Canadian, a town near the Oklahoma border, filed a lawsuit Feb. 26 charging the power monopoly was responsible for the destruction of her home. The Texas A&M Forest Service said March 7 that Xcel power lines helped cause both the Smokehouse Creek and Windy Deuce fires.

Shane Pennington, a cattle farmer near Canadian found 50 cattle dead and others blinded. “It just burned all the hair off them,” he told CNN. “Their feet are coming off. Their hooves, they’re bloody.” He’s had to euthanize animals.

“I’ve seen this country, how it is with grass and sagebrush and cattle roaming out there, and the next day we come down here, it’s a barren desert,” Brandon Meier, a rancher and high school teacher in Canadian, told the media. He said many cattle are also suffering from smoke inhalation. Udder burns have made it impossible for some cows to nurse their calves.

The Swenhaugen family in Canadian lost most of its pig farm. Shane Swen-



The Texas Tribune/Mark Rogers

Farmers and ranchers in Canadian, Texas, confront Department of Agriculture representatives March 5 calling for help covering widespread losses from deadly wildfires in Texas Panhandle.

haugen, his dad and brother survived the inferno by escaping into a greening wheat field where they stayed for hours watching everything around them burn.

The profit drive of the utility bosses and other capitalists is responsible for these devastating fires. The unions

need to lead a fight to nationalize the giant energy monopolies and run them under workers control.

Alyson Kennedy is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from Texas.

Thousands of farmers in India march on New Delhi

BY JANET POST

Thousands of farmers in India are marching toward New Delhi protesting government attacks on their livelihoods. They’re encamped at multiple points along the way, with armed forces deployed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government to block them from reaching the capital.

Farmers are demanding a minimum price support for all crops, a pension for farmers and farm laborers at the age of 60, cancellation of farmers’ debts, no hikes in electricity costs and the dropping of charges against farm-

ers involved in previous mass protests.

Facing government roadblocks, the farmers’ unions are urging sit-ins whenever marchers are stopped. Marches began Feb. 13, but paused Feb. 22 after Shubhkaran Singh, a 22-year-old farmer, was killed by police during a protest at the border between Punjab and Haryana states, on the way to New Delhi. The marches were relaunched at his funeral. He had been trying to get a waiver for his family’s farm debt repayments.

“It is our fundamental right to agitate for our demands, and we are being browbeaten, not being allowed to reach Delhi,” Singh Ghumana, national president of the Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor farmers union, told the *Financial Times*.

“Until our demands are met we are sitting,” said Juzhar Singh. He is traveling in a cart from Amritsar in Punjab decorated with a sign declaring, “We are farmers, not terrorists.” To smear protesters, the government accuses Sikh farmers, who are the majority of small and medium farmers in Punjab, of links to a terrorist Sikh separatist group.

The farmers’ unions organized

to block rail tracks for four hours March 10, leading to train delays or cancellations in Punjab.

The current protests follow actions in 2020-21 when hundreds of thousands camped around New Delhi for over a year, forcing Modi to withdraw laws that would have halted state-guaranteed minimum prices for staple grains.

In recent negotiations the government offered a five-year subsidy on five crops. But farmers turned that down, demanding an ongoing subsidy for all crops, which would allow them to cover their costs of production against rising expenses for diesel, fertilizers and other farm inputs.

While inadequate, government-guaranteed prices help protect many small farmers from harvest failures after droughts or heavy monsoon rains, or from price collapses when bumper harvests flood the market. And they keep down food prices for millions of working people. Eight hundred million Indians rely on a government food welfare program for wheat and rice.

THE MILITANT

Workers fight against ‘congestion pricing’ ripoff

From New York to London, taxi drivers and other workers are being taxed with special “congestion fees” and “surge pricing.” The *Militant* explains that these regressive taxes hit working people the hardest, while wealthy bondholders rake in profits at our expense.

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Stephen Nessen

New York taxi drivers protest “congestion pricing” toll imposed on trips downtown.

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# UAW organizing in Alabama

**Continued from front page**  
from more than half the workers. There are 4,500 production workers.

Union supporters are organizing to win a yes vote to bring in the union. “We’re able to pass out leaflets as long as it’s not on company time,” said Jim Spitzley, who has worked at the plant for 27 years. “We have hats, stickers and buttons that we’re allowed to wear, but so far we can’t wear union T-shirts at work.” The company is holding mandatory meetings to try to convince workers to vote no.

**Bosses impose ‘permatemps’**

“When the 2008 recession hit,” Spitzley said, “they laid off 1,500 workers. Despite company promises, they never came back. Instead, more and more workers were hired as temps, and it took up to eight years for them to be hired as regular employees. We used to call them ‘permatemps.’ They’re 15% to 20% of the workforce now. The company also instituted a two-tier set-up in 2010 where new hires got lower pay and fewer benefits.”

The company ended the two tiers, raised wages \$2 an hour and increased bonuses after the UAW strikes last fall, hoping to undermine support for the union drive. Before that, workers had received only 42 cents in hourly raises over the previous six years.

One of the leaflets union members are using on the job contrasts the current and future wages at Mercedes to those of workers at the Big Three after last fall’s strikes. Over six weeks the UAW organized selective strikes of up to 50,000 workers to overcome deep concessions that the bosses and government had forced on the union in 2007.

Today new hires get \$23.50 an hour at Mercedes compared to \$25.53 at General Motors, Ford and Stellantis. By 2028 new hires at Mercedes will get only \$27.50 an hour, compared to \$42.94 at the Big Three.

“When we talked to our co-workers the biggest issues were higher pay, better benefits and fairness on the job,” Gardner said.

“Lots of workers get injured,” added Spitzley. “They’re often let go or else put right back on the job that injured them.” The company is always looking for ways to cut the time allowed for each operation and to add more jobs onto each worker, they said.

Almost all the union cards have been signed online, Gardner said. “But it’s still going to take union supporters talking to other workers, educating them about what the union is and answering their questions.”

The Vance plant was the first major Mercedes-Benz factory built outside of Germany. Since 1997 some 4 million vehicles have come off the line there, making the company billions of dollars in profits.

“We’ve learned that we can’t trust Mercedes with our best interests,” said

Jeremy Kimbrell, in a YouTube video making public the support for the union at the plant. “There comes a time when enough is enough.”

Bosses say, “now is not the right time,” he added. “But here’s the thing. This is our decision. It’s our life. It’s our community. These are our families. It’s up to us.”

The announcement follows a similar effort at a Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where more than half the 4,000 workers have signed union cards.

According to the UAW, over 10,000 autoworkers at 14 nonunion auto companies, mainly in the Southeast, have recently signed union cards. Following last fall’s strikes, UAW President Shawn Fain announced a campaign to organize these plants.

Union supporters at Mercedes have built solidarity with labor struggles in Alabama in the last few years, including the hard-fought strike by the United Mine Workers of America at Warrior Met Coal in nearby Brookwood from April 2021 to February 2023.

They also backed a strike that won an



Inset, Militant/Susan LaMont

After gains by the United Auto Workers in strike last fall against the “Big Three” automakers, support for a union at the Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance, Alabama, above, “snowballed,” autoworker Kirk Gardner, left in inset, told the *Militant*. Jim Spitzley, right, is president of UAW Local 112 leading organizing drive at the plant.



end to wage tiers by 190 UAW members at ZF Chassis Systems in Tuscaloosa last fall. The company supplies axles for Mercedes and is the only one of many auto-parts suppliers in the state that is organized.

Union supporters at Mercedes are

in touch with workers at some of the other plants where organizing drives are underway, including the Hyundai assembly plant in Montgomery.

Janice Lynn and John Benson contributed to this article.

## BNSF rail bosses lay off workers, undercut safety

**Continued from front page**  
of a job, and you get five days’ pay.”

Last October, Union Pacific bosses furloughed 1,350 track-maintenance workers. Tony Cardwell, president of their union, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, sent a letter of protest to the federal government’s Surface Transportation Board saying Union Pacific will defer “much-needed maintenance on its right of ways, tracks, buildings, and bridges for the sole purpose of showing a larger profit to its shareholders in the fourth quarter” and that “will only lead to catastrophic outcomes.”

“With each employee the railroads furloughs and/or dismisses, it removes another worker to catch the next derailment disaster before it happens,” Jakob Forsgren, a track welder and chairperson of Local 1320 of BMW here, told the *Militant*. “The result of a smaller workforce results in a more dangerous workplace and increasing the hazards of moving trains safely through communities.

“Rail workers today are being used like canaries were historically used in coal mines, to detect the presence of carbon monoxide,” he said. “The railroad bosses want to stop bringing in the canaries.”

**Rail accidents, injuries up**

The five Class 1 freight railroads operating in the U.S. — Union Pacific, BNSF, CSX, Norfolk Southern and Canadian National — reported 256 accidents on their main lines last year, an 11% increase over 2022. Derailments, the most common rail accident, were up 13.5%. “Obstruction accidents,” a train striking another object, and the second-most-common category, rose 21%.

Norfolk Southern had the most destructive derailment last year, when a freight train moving through East Palestine, Ohio, suffered an overheated wheel axle and derailed, dumping 50 cars on the ground, including 11 loaded with dangerous chemicals. The massive toxic fire that ensued poisoned the soil and water throughout the area.

Working people in East Palestine

have waged a courageous fight there that has shown that neither the rail bosses nor the government and its regulators act in the interests of working people. Their resistance, alongside the protests by railroad unions, have forced out facts showing the disaster was inevitable. Similar disasters are to be expected as the layoffs and dangerous working conditions increase.

As this former rail worker and *Militant* correspondent was drafting this article, word came that a rail worker had to be taken to the hospital after being injured when a BNSF train struck a truck at an unprotected crossing 40 miles southwest of Lincoln, derailing 20 cars.

As these fights unfold, rail bosses are also taking aim at the unions’ ability to represent their members.

A SMART-TD union posting on Jan. 25 describes how the Union Pacific railroad is attempting to drive a wedge between the union and its members. It says

UP tells workers that if they involve a local chairperson in a disciplinary matter that can double your probation period from 12 months to 24 and tacks on an instant 30 days out of work.

Fights over safety and work conditions are also unfolding in Canada, where 9,300 workers at Canada’s two biggest railroads — Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Kansas City — are currently in contentious contract negotiations.

“CN and CPKC aim to eliminate all safety-critical rest provisions from our collective agreements. These provisions are necessary to combat crew fatigue and ensure public safety,” Teamsters Canada President Francois Laporte said last month.

On Feb. 16 two crew members were injured when four CPKC locomotives slammed into a stopped train and derailed east of Revelstoke, British Columbia, sparking a fire.

### Join campaign to expand the *Militant’s* readership

The international spring campaign to increase the readership of the *Militant*, get out books by leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and other revolutionaries, and to raise funds for the paper is underway! Join in!

Get the paper to your co-workers, friends, family and fellow unionists and spread the word about its unique and indispensable coverage, and working-class point of view on all questions. Kick in what you can to the fund. Take advantage of special offers on books listed on page 7 that provide crucial lessons from previous working-class struggles to help working people chart a road forward in the face of today’s capitalist crises, rising Jew-hatred and wars.

From March 9 to May 7, members of the SWP and the Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the U.K. are organizing to sell 1,350 *Militant* subscriptions, 1,350 books and raise \$165,000 for the paper.

The *Militant* is the voice of the campaign of Rachele Fruit, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president — the working-class alternative to the Biden-Trump campaigns of the bosses’ two major parties. Fruit explains in her front-page statement that workers are capable of organizing in our millions to end capitalist rule and what we can do today to advance that perspective.

From the paper’s coverage of the United Auto Workers campaign to unionize auto plants in the South, to rail workers’ resistance to dangerous conditions, the *Militant* is a vital tool for building union solidarity.

Follow the progress of the spring campaign in the paper each week. Be sure to write up discussions you have introducing the *Militant* to fellow workers and mail them — along with photographs — to the paper.

Contact the party branch nearest you listed on page 8. Payments to the fund can be made out to the *Militant*, and sent to 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

— TERRY EVANS

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# Forum: fight against Jew-hatred

Continued from front page

In retaliation for his activity, Davidai is being targeted by Columbia’s Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. “It’s an internal investigation, so the university acts as judge, jury and executioner,” he said. But harassment by Hamas supporters and the school haven’t shut him up. “I’m willing to pay the price for speaking out. The price for not speaking out is higher.”

Davidai said he saw a similarity between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel and Donald Trump in the U.S., both of whom he disdains.

Kuniansky described how she and campaign supporters joined in a two-month fight in the Wayne, New Jersey, City Council against a resolution — which ultimately passed — demanding the Joseph Biden administration “facilitate a cease-fire and urgently end the conflict.” Ending the war in Gaza without defeating Hamas will only embolden the reactionary Islamist forces and lead to more pogroms, she explained.

Kuniansky said she explains to fellow workers and others why the fight against Jew-hatred is a life-and-death question for the unions and working people everywhere. “When capitalism is in crisis, the rulers scapegoat Jews to blind workers and divert our attention from our real enemy — capitalism,” she said. “When rising working-class struggles threaten their rule, the rulers turn to fascist thugs who will fight under the banner of Jew-hatred to beat down the working class and crush the unions.

“After the Oct. 7 pogrom, I spoke to nurses on their picket line down in New Brunswick,” Kuniansky said. She joined their picketing several times. Many were interested in why the fight against Jew-hatred was an important question for all workers, she said. “These are the alliances we need to build.”

Pro-Hamas supporters at Columbia, Pinsker-Lehrer said, “are a very vocal minority.” She had disagreed with the school administration’s refusal to give permission to Hamas apologists at the School of Social Work to hold a meeting in December to support the “Palestinian counteroffensive.”

When the group then held their meeting in the school lobby, Pinsker-Lehrer went and took the floor to challenge the group’s support for the Oct. 7 massacre. Referring to the Jews, Muslims, Christians and others who live in Israel and Palestine, she told them, “There are 14 million people ‘between the river and the sea,’ and none of them are going anywhere.”

“There are so many ways to support Palestinians without dehumanizing Jews,” she said.

“Three years ago no one would have expected to see the first large-scale ground war in Europe in 75 years, which started with the Russian invasion of Ukraine,” Galinsky said. “Or that the largest pogrom against Jews since the Holocaust would happen in Israel. But there’s no going back to the world before these events.”

Defenders of Israel’s right to exist as a refuge for Jews need to answer the lies and distortions of Hamas supporters, whose call for a cease-fire is intended to gain time for the Tehran-backed outfit to rebuild and launch new pogroms, he said. “Ariana’s goal wasn’t to win the Hamas supporters over, but to win the majority who are still undecided.”

“For us, defense of an unfettered right

to free speech is crucial. Calls to shut your opponents down, no matter how distasteful their remarks are, will only be taken by the authorities and be used against opponents of Jew-hatred, the unions and other working-class organizations,” he said.

Galinsky pointed to a comment Davidai made, saying he saw a similarity between Netanyahu in Israel and Donald Trump in the U.S., both of whom he dislikes. The SWP says it was a victory for working people when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Colorado decision barring Trump from the ballot. “We have to defend constitutional rights,” Galinsky said.

“As long as capitalism exists, Jew-hatred will exist,” Galinsky added. “That’s why we have to build revolutionary working-class parties that bring together workers, whatever their religion or nationality, in the United States, in Israel, in Palestine, and elsewhere. Taking power out of the hands of the dog-eat-dog capitalist system will open the door to ending Jew-hatred and all other forms of oppression, forever.”

At the end of the program Galinsky urged participants to join in defending Davidai in the face of Columbia’s witch hunt.

Many participants stayed long after the program and lively discussion period to keep talking about the questions they raised. Students, staff members and professors from Columbia University, Hunter College and University of Southern Connecticut discussed concrete challenges they faced from Hamas supporters in bringing this debate to campus. They also discussed ways to broaden the discussion to include workers and unionists in the area.

## Gaza cease-fire debated at Allegheny County Council

PITTSBURGH — At a March 5 Allegheny County Council meeting fighters against Jew-hatred helped defeat a resolution calling on Washington to step up pressure on Israel to carry out a permanent cease-fire in Gaza.

The debate was “not about helping victims of war, but about whether Israel has a right to exist,” Julie Paris, Mid-At-



Militant/Mike Shur

From left, Columbia professor Shai Davidai, SWP N.J. senatorial candidate Joanne Kuniansky, chair Willie Cotton, Columbia social work student Ariana Pinsker-Lehrer, and Militant staff writer Seth Galinsky at March 10 Militant Labor Forum, “The fight against Jew-hatred today.”

lantic regional director of StandWithUs, said. Over five hours, 140 area residents spoke for the resolution and 72 against, before it was voted down.

Supporters of the resolution accused Israel of being an “apartheid” state, slandering it for perpetrating “genocide.” They were answered by opponents of Jew-hatred.

Since Hamas’ Oct. 7 pogrom, “there has been an ongoing and deliberate campaign of misinformation, attempting to portray the attackers as victims and the victims as perpetrators,” Moshe Nadoff told the meeting. Council member Bethany Hallam, who introduced the resolution, had posted — and later withdrew — comments celebrating Hamas’ Oct. 7 massacre.

“Hamas does not believe in a permanent cease-fire,” said Charles Saul. “They believe in pauses where they can regroup, rearm and refire, each time with more lethal weapons.”

“Many of my relatives are still in Israel,” Margaret Fischer said. “Every family member knows someone who was raped, burned alive, tortured or taken captive by Hamas. By asking for a cease-fire, you are asking for Hamas to succeed.”

“Some of those calling for a cease-fire in Gaza deny the facts of what happened on Oct. 7,” said Candace Wagner, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress. “The silence is deafening about the rape and mutilation of women and girls. Hamas attackers’ own body

cams livestreamed this violence.

“Hamas’ backers, the Iranian regime, are leading an ‘axis of resistance’ against Israel,” she said. “They all share the Iranian rulers’ hatred of Jews.”

— Kathie Fitzgerald

## Communist League denounces anti-Jewish threats in Montreal

MONTREAL — Over 100 Hamas supporters waving Palestinian flags mobilized here to shut down a panel of three reservists from the Israel Defense Forces. The meeting had been scheduled to take place at Concordia University, but was moved to a nearby building housing the Montreal Holocaust Museum and offices of the Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal, because university officials cancelled the campus event on the excuse that “security” could not be guaranteed.

Pro-Hamas campus forces gathered at the new site March 4, threatening all those who wanted to participate.

“This was an outrageous act of Jew-hatred,” Katy LeRougetel, the Communist League candidate in the upcoming Montreal federal by-election in LaSalle-Emard-Verdun, said in a statement.

The IDF reservists are on a Canada-wide tour speaking on “The Israeli Perspective Coming to Life,” as part of “the fight against the delegitimization of Israel.” The event was or-

Continued on page 6

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



### March 29, 1999

The massive train crash in Illinois that killed 13 people was a disaster that could have been prevented. The main cause of the accident is known: throughout the United States, highway and rail traffic are forced to intersect at thousands of railroad crossings, causing a major safety hazard.

Railroads historically refused to run tracks through tunnels and over bridges in populated areas, nor did government regulatory agencies require it. Last year 422 people were killed in train-vehicle collisions.

The thousands of road crossings are not a necessity. The U.S. rail system is designed to make profits for the rail bosses, not to ensure safety. The labor movement, led by the rail unions, should demand a massive public works program to build the overpasses, bridges, and tunnels needed to provide safe transit in this country.



### March 29, 1974

A Conference in Defense of Soviet Ukrainian Political Prisoners was held in New York the weekend of March 2. A panel of former Russian dissidents and Ukrainian political activists led a four-hour discussion of the national question as it affects the Ukraine. The internationalism was symbolized by the fact that the Russians spoke Russian and the Ukrainians spoke Ukrainian.

Dave Frankel, representing the Socialist Workers Party, explained that one of the most powerful components of an anti-bureaucratic revolution is the resentment of the oppressed nationalities against their Great Russian chauvinist overlords.

He noted that Leon Trotsky supported the right of self-determination for the Ukraine and considered the fight for Ukrainian independence to be of key importance to the world revolution. The SWP continues to advance this position.



### March 21, 1949

DETROIT — George Novack, National Secretary of the Kutcher Civil Rights Committee, made a stirring appeal on “The Case of the Legless Veteran” to more than a hundred unionists and civil liberties defenders at a meeting here sponsored by the Greater Detroit and Wayne County Kutcher Civil Rights Committee.

Joining for the defense of Kutcher, who lost both his legs in action and was fired from his Veterans Administration job for membership in the Socialist Workers Party, were prominent speakers from labor, liberal and church groups.

Novack gave a statement of the facts in the case: “The cold war against government workers represented by the loyalty purges is a threat to all workers.” Tom Clappitt of the United Auto Workers said, “We must fight those responsible for the many victims of the loyalty purges through political action.”



# Join the SWP campaign!

Continued from front page

The Socialist Workers Party puts forward a program to organize and build a powerful union movement for working people to join together to fight for the things we need — wages and hours that enable us to raise our families with a decent place to live, safe working conditions so we can make it home in one piece, government-funded all-embracing health care, child care and elder care, and more. Hundreds of thousands of workers and their unions, from auto, rail, truckers, flight attendants, nurses and others are fighting for demands that point in this direction.

Well over a half million workers will see their union contracts expire this year, from postal workers to dockworkers, teachers and grocery clerks. And they are willing to fight after years of losing ground.

Inspired by last year’s auto strikes, workers at the Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance, Alabama, have signed up to join the United Auto Workers union. Their fight deserves the solidarity of all working people. The company says this is not the right time, and this is not the right way, says autoworker Jeremy Kimbrell, but the thing is “*this is our decision.*”

That statement expresses a widespread willingness to fight among working people today. We are human beings who can take action to shape our future. We can organize society without exploitation and oppression. Workers’ solidarity can overcome the ways the capitalists divide us for profit by fighting to end two-tier contracts, life-sucking “suicide” schedules and women’s second-class status. Amnesty for immigrant workers in the U.S. would allow them the right to work without fear of deportation and open the door to unifying the working class. Organize *all* workers!

The labor movement is made up of unions representing millions of workers today. The unions need to break from the political parties of the bosses — Democrats and Republicans alike — to build a labor party capable of fighting for our class interests in the political as well as economic arena. To speak as a tribune for all those exploited and oppressed by capital.

Workers and farmers helped lead two great American revolutions, for independence and the overthrow of slavery. Hundreds of thousands of workers joined forces in the 1930s to organize powerful industrial unions. These gains, and the mighty post-World War II battles for independence from colonial rule in Africa, Asia and Latin

America, helped kindle the Black-led mass working-class movement that brought down the scourge of Jim Crow segregation once and for all.

Our class has never been in a stronger position to join hands to fight all attempts by the bosses and their parties to divide us, and to take on the war, exploitation and oppression that marks our epoch — the capitalist system itself. We can rise to the task imposed on us by history.



The working-class party that seeks to lead our class to political power must, first and foremost, defend the Jewish people from a new wave of pogroms. Jew-hatred is a life-and-death question for the working class. The Oct. 7 massacre in Israel carried out by Hamas with help and direction from the reactionary capitalist government of Iran — truly a pogrom — was the worst slaughter of the Jewish people since the Holocaust. It unleashed a torrent of Jew-hatred around the world.

The Holocaust did not have to happen. Stalinist and Social Democratic governments and parties betrayed working-class struggles in Germany, Italy, Spain and elsewhere whose victories would have prevented Hitler from ever taking power. The so-called democratic imperialist countries, including the Franklin Roosevelt-led United States, slammed their doors shut to Jewish refugees, condemning Jews in Europe to the Holocaust, the systematic extermination of 6 million Jews. These historic disasters made Israel a necessity as a refuge for the Jewish people.

Immediately after the Oct. 7 pogrom, I, and other candidates of the SWP, took to the streets in protest, spoke to the press, joined debates at city councils and other activities against Jew-hatred.

As we campaign in our unions and in working-class communities, we explain that Jew-hatred, a reflection of the crisis of capitalism, is the tip of the spear. Ultimately, when they feel their rule is threatened, the capitalists will back fascist thugs who, with their banner of “Kill the Jews,” will move to smash the unions, crush the working class and annihilate the Jewish people.

Abram Leon, leader of the communist movement in Belgium, wrote *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*. He said, “There is no way to resolve the Jewish question independent of the world proletarian revolution.” Leon was killed in 1944 in the Nazi gas chambers at Auschwitz.

Two years ago, the Vladimir Putin regime in Russia unleashed its murderous war against Ukraine with the aim of erasing it from the map — its history, its language and culture, its right to exist.

Ukrainian workers and farmers have been conducting a courageous 10-year fight to defend their national sovereignty and independence. In 2014 hundreds of thousands of working people across the country took to the streets in pitched battles known as the Revolution of Dignity. Since 2022 they have fought heroically to push back Moscow’s invasion, winning the solidarity of workers worldwide, including in Russia.

For working people in the U.S., the toilers in Ukraine are our class allies, and their fight for national independence is our fight. For the U.S. rulers, the plight of Ukraine is an opportunity



Reuters/Marvellous Durowaiye

Protest against soaring prices, Lagos, Nigeria, Feb. 27. “Workers see the effects of the capitalist crisis every day of our lives,” says Rachele Fruit, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president. “The SWP presents a working-class program to fight for the interests of all the exploited.”

to find new ways to strengthen their hand for future wars to expand their control over markets and profits.

We are at a turning point in world politics. These two historic watershed events — in Ukraine and Israel — reflect the weaknesses and breakdowns of the imperialist “world order,” and the danger of spreading wars and potential for nuclear catastrophe.

The SWP’s 2022 political resolution, printed in *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*, states, “Only socialist revolutions in the imperialist countries can bring the danger of a world nuclear conflagration to an end once and for all.”

We don’t call for nonproliferation or arms treaties or disarmament. We say, “The only disarmament which can avert or end war is the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the workers.”

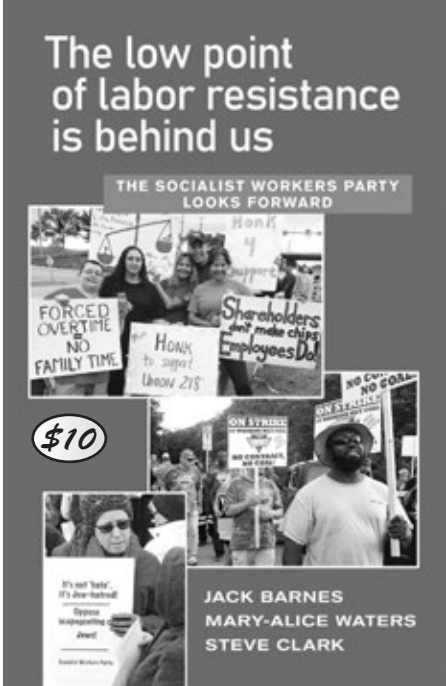
The reality we are living through today is beyond the control of the capitalist powers. But it is not outside the control of the tens of millions in the working class who, with a communist leadership, are capable of changing the world.



The Socialist Workers Party presents a working-class program to fight for the interests of all the oppressed and exploited. Workers see the effects of the capitalist crisis every day of our lives.

- Defend constitutional protec-

## For further reading



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tions — freedom of speech, assembly, and of worship — won over 250 years in mighty class battles. This is at the center of the class struggle today. We oppose the Democratic Party-organized witch hunt of Donald Trump and hail the victory in the U.S. Supreme Court’s unanimous decision overturning the attempt by Colorado authorities to throw him off the ballot, affirming the right of millions to vote for the candidate of their choice.

- Every worker has a right to a job. The SWP calls for a government-funded program of public works to create millions of union-scale jobs to build housing, schools, hospitals, child care and elder care centers, and rebuild the collapsing infrastructure the employers are letting rot throughout the country.

- For a sliding scale of hours and wages. Reduce the workweek with no cut in pay to help ensure no worker is laid off. For automatic cost-of-living clauses in all union contracts and social programs like Social Security to assure wage increases keep up 100% with inflation.

- For workers control of production, organized by the unions. No worker has to die on the job! Workers have a right to know the bosses’ business secrets — of the company, whole industries and the national economy, and to take control over what is produced and to meet the needs of the vast majority.

- The fight for women’s emancipation, the ability to participate fully in all aspects of building a new society, is tied to ending the capitalist-caused crises of joblessness, lack of quality housing, child care, medical care as well as suicide and drug-addiction — all of which bear down on working-class families and women especially. We fight for women’s right to reproductive and maternal health care, sex education, safe and reliable contraceptives and the decriminalization of abortion.

We look to the example of the two great working-class revolutions of the past century — the 1917 socialist revolution in Russia, led by V.I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and Cuba’s socialist revolution, led by Fidel Castro. These are part of the Socialist Workers Party continuity that show working people are capable of taking political power and transforming society, as well as ourselves. A new world can be built. Join the Socialist Workers Party.

—**MILITANT  
LABOR  
FORUMS**—

**PENNSYLVANIA**  
**Philadelphia**  
**Malcolm X and a Working-Class Road to Confront the Capitalist Crisis.**  
Speaker: Ved Dookhun, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate; member SMART-TD Local 1373. Fri., March 22, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5. 2824 Cottman Ave., Suite 16. Tel.: (215) 708-1270.

**Pittsburgh**  
**Women’s Liberation Is Vital to the Working-Class Struggle for Emancipation.**  
Speaker: Candace Wagner, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress 12th District. Sun., March 24, 6:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 5907 Penn Ave. Suite 313. Tel.: (412) 610-2402.



# Biden tells Israel to sign ‘cease fire,’ end fight to crush Hamas

BY SETH GALINSKY

The battle to prevent another pogrom by Tehran-backed Hamas continues. During the Oct. 7 pogrom in Israel 1,200 were killed, more than 5,000 wounded and over 250 hostages forced into Gaza. It was the worst massacre of Jews since the Nazi Holocaust. Five months later, a U.N. report finally admitted that rape and abuse were widespread during the Hamas assault and that the 100 or so hostages still alive and held in Gaza are likely being sexually abused and tortured.

In a March 6 interview on Lebanon’s Mayadeen TV, Hamas Political Bureau member Osama Hamdan trampled on the truth, saying this “is the opposite of the facts.” He cynically said one of the freed hostages had cosmetic surgery after her release “because she thought that she was not assaulted because she was not pretty enough.”

Despite Hamas’ refusal to even say which of the hostages are still alive, the White House continues to press Israel to agree to a cease-fire.

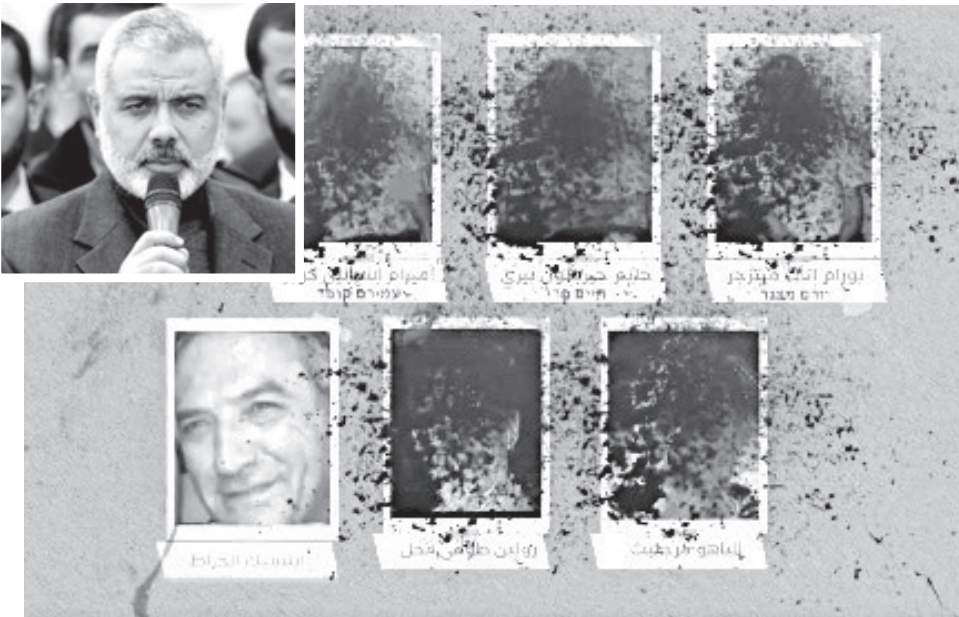
President Joseph Biden told MSNBC

March 9 that an Israeli attack on Rafah — Hamas’ last stronghold — would cross a “red line.” He said Washington could withhold some military assistance if Israel launched an offensive against Hamas there, a step crucial to eliminating Hamas’ potential to launch new pogroms, as it’s promised to do.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says that the Israel Defense Forces have defeated 18 of Hamas’ 24 battalions. He told Fox News, “We can’t leave a quarter of the Hamas terror army in place.” Israeli officials say they will facilitate the evacuation of more than a million civilians from Rafah before launching an offensive.

Negotiations over a temporary cease-fire in Gaza have come up against Hamas’ refusal to release any more hostages until Israel agrees to make a pause permanent and to pull its troop out of the territory. Netanyahu has called that demand “delusional.”

Highlighting Hamas’ stance, the group posted on its website March 9 the pictures of seven of the hostages, digitally splattering each image with blood,



Inset, Arab News; above, Gaza Now

Inset, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh says Oct. 7 pogrom that slaughtered 1,200 Jews was a “victory” the group must not let “slip away.” Above, screenshot from website where Hamas digitally splattered blood over photos one by one of Jewish hostages it claimed had been killed during Israeli assaults in Gaza. Hamas’ founding covenant says its goal is “killing Jews.”

and gloating over its claim that they had died as a result of Israeli attacks.

The Biden administration continues to insist that the Israeli government commit to a “two-state” solution once war with Hamas in Gaza ends.

But Hamas is not interested in two states. Its goal remains to kill Jews and destroy Israel. “We should hold on to the victory that took place on Oct. 7,” Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh told the International Union of Muslim Scholars

Conference in Qatar Jan. 9. “We must not let this moment slip away.”

Washington is promoting a scheme where the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority would take over Gaza’s administration. Israeli officials have good reason to believe that would be disastrous.

Yasser Abu Sido, a leader of Fatah — the political party that heads the Palestinian Authority — told Egyptian TV Feb. 23 that while he is not a “fan of Hitler,” there were “obvious reasons” for the Nazi Holocaust — the murder of 6 million Jews. Jews “planned to take control of Germany,” he said. “They started to bring down Germany in terms of the economy and moral values.”

The Netanyahu government is looking for leaders of clans that have a history of opposition to Hamas in Gaza to play a role in governing there. Hamas has threatened to kill anyone they accuse of collaborating with Israel.

## Forum: Protests advance the fight against Jew-hatred

Continued from page 4

ganized by student groups Startup Nation, Hillel and Diploact, a Jewish outreach organization.

The Jew-hating attack was called by the Concordia chapter of Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights, which said the Oct. 7 Hamas pogrom in Israel was “an unfaltering desire for liberation.” Last November supporters of this group attacked Jewish students on campus who had set up an information table about the hostages Hamas is holding.

SPHR Concordia boasted they had won an important “victory” in forcing university authorities to “shut down the genocidal Zionist event.”

In the aftermath of the attack, several Montreal Jewish organizations won a 10-day court injunction barring a series of pro-Hamas organizations from demonstrating within 165 feet

of the Holocaust Museum and other Jewish community buildings.

“Relying on the capitalist cops and courts weakens the fight against Jew-hatred,” LeRougetel told the *Militant* March 8. “Court injunctions like these are used by employers to undermine workers’ right to picket effectively during strikes, like the one waged by

350 Transco school bus drivers.

“We need to rely on the mobilized strength of our own organizations to defend our right to free speech and assembly,” she said. “Winning the unions to the fight against Jew-hatred is a life-and-death question for the working class.

— John Steele

## Hamas’ goal is ‘Final Solution,’ carried out to the end

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The mounting pressure by the Joseph Biden administration and other imperialist powers to impose a long-term cease-fire on Israel, putting on ice its battle to destroy the military capacity of Hamas, ignores the avowed intentions of this reactionary group — to continue to kill Jews and destroy the state of Israel.

“Longing for Auschwitz” was the headline of an article in the March 3 *Tablet* online Jewish magazine. It points to the unwavering line of march of the proxy forces of the reactionary regime in Tehran — Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Houthis in Yemen.

On Oct. 7 Hamas unleashed its thugs to carry out a murderous attack on a dance party and farm communities in Israel, a pogrom that killed 1,200 people, wounded more than 5,000 and kidnapped over 250 hostages who were taken to Gaza and tortured, killed or offered for ransom. It was the worst massacre of Jews since the Nazis’ Holocaust.

Hamas’ assault on Israel was not, as its boosters worldwide claim, some national liberation protest or an excusable act of rebellion, “but something far worse,” says the *Tablet*. Those attacked, the vast majority of them Jews, “were not only to die, but to die in torment.” This included torture, burnings, beheadings, gang rapes and other forms of sexual assault.

Hamas’ actions involved “the purposeful humiliation of Jews by people

who detest them and were sworn to degrade and dehumanize them before murdering them,” wrote author Alvin Rosenfeld. He is the director of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and chair in Jewish Studies at Indiana University at Bloomington. Contrary to the claims of President Biden and capitalist rulers in the Middle East, Hamas and its allies are not looking for a “two-state solution.” They’re working for a repeat of Adolf Hitler’s Final Solution, one that this time is 100% successful. Understanding and acting on this undeniable fact is a key political question facing working people today.

Hamas’ 1988 founding covenant explicitly spells out its goal — “killing the Jews.” It declared, “Israel exists and will continue to exist until Islam obliterates it, just as it obliterated others before it.” The “Palestinian problem,” it says, is not amenable to a negotiated political settlement.

Leaders of Hamas have made clear they intend to expand attacks like the Oct. 7 pogrom. Hamas leader Ghazi Hamad, speaking on Lebanese TV Oct. 24, stated that this attack “is just the first time and there will be a second, a third, a fourth ... until Israel is annihilated.”

The stakes involved are high. Some 46% of world Jewry lives in Israel today. That’s almost one out of every two Jews alive. “Were Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and their allies ever to succeed in liquidating Israel, the loss would be immeasurable,” Rosenfeld explains.

The state of Israel came into existence 75 years ago as a result of three historical developments: A series of betrayals by counterrevolutionary Stalinist parties that prevented powerful workers movements from taking political power in Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece and elsewhere in Europe before and after World War II; the refusal of the imperialist rulers in Washington, London, Ottawa and more to open their borders to Jews seeking to flee Nazi persecution; and the resulting slaughter of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust — 40% of Jews alive worldwide.

In the U.S., the Democratic Party administration of Franklin Roosevelt granted an average of just 17,000 visas per year to Jews from 1933 to 1945.

After the imperialist allies and Moscow defeated Germany, ending the war, a quarter million Jews were held in “displaced persons camps” set up in Germany, Austria and Italy. Barred from the U.S. and elsewhere, many Jews overcame obstacles put in place by the British, then the colonial power in Palestine, and made it there and joined the fight to find a refuge free from Jew-hatred.

This history explains the founding of the state of Israel, and the importance of recognizing Israel’s right to exist as a refuge for Jews.

Rosenfeld quotes Hungarian Jewish writer and Holocaust survivor Imre Kertesz, who wrote in 1998, “The antisemite of our age no longer loathes Jews: He wants Auschwitz.”

“There is no solution to the Jewish question under capitalism, just as there is no solution to other problems before humanity...”  
— Abram Leon



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or see distributors on page 8



# Cuba's Association of the Blind prepares for national assembly

BY RÓGER CALERO

HAVANA — The Havana International Book Fair is not just an event to display and promote literature and the arts. It's also a place where you meet ordinary Cuban working people defending the conquests of their socialist revolution.

A good example was the bookstand of Cuba's National Association of the Blind. There, socialist workers from the United States and Canada learned about how ANCI members, like other Cuban working people, use their mass organizations to respond to economic and social challenges today, which especially affect those with disabilities. How they draw on the working-class solidarity won through the revolution.

ANCI has been holding meetings across Cuba to elect delegates and vote on proposals for the association's general assembly in November. They'll discuss what they can do to alleviate the impact of the worldwide capitalist crisis, compounded by Washington's unrelenting 65-year-long economic war to punish the Cuban people for making a socialist revolution. Local leaders of the Cuban Communist party, mass organizations and the government are invited to take part.

"After the 1959 triumph of the revolution, many argued that it was not necessary to form associations for people with disabilities, since the revolution's inclusive approach would resolve everyone's problems," Karina González, ANCI's vice president in Havana province, told the *Militant*. "But life demonstrated these associations are necessary."

ANCI was founded in 1975. But even before that, people with disabilities, backed by Cuba's revolutionary leadership, were involved in the social transformations carried out in the revolution's early years. They broke down prejudices and other barriers, including the effort to create dignified jobs for all. In 1978 and 1980, the Cuban national associations of People with Physical and Motor Disabilities (Aclifim) and the Deaf (ANSOC) were created for the same purpose.



La Demajagua/Rafael Martínez Arias  
María Victoria Viltres, physical therapist who has retinitis pigmentosa, working in rehab center in Buey Arriba municipality on the edge of the Sierra Maestra mountains, October 2016.

"This is an unfinished task," said González, referring to their efforts to integrate persons with disabilities into the general workforce. In the late 1980s, she said — at the initiative of revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, as well as proposals by Aclifim members at their congress — workshops were created to help people with disabilities learn skills to help them make the transition into regular jobs.

"But that goal wasn't accomplished," said González. "Instead, people remained in these workshops until they retired," doing work with no real connection to production.

"We need to find meaningful sources of employment," González said. "Today there is not a single blind person working in the telephone company, a job where nonsighted people have worked historically," she added. "I have a pharmacy degree, and I can assure you that a blind person can stuff blister packets into a box on a production line. What's needed are reasonable adjustments to adapt worksta-

tions and production requirements."

Reactivating these workshops, which are in dire need of materials and equipment due to lack of funding, was brought up by a delegate at the ANCI municipal assembly in Centro Habana Feb. 21. Two dozen people took part.

The delegates also discussed dangers from improvised garbage dumps that are multiplying on many Havana street corners, due to the lack of funds for fuel and spare parts for trucks. "Many problems we're facing aren't due just to the economic crisis, but to social indiscipline," a delegate said, describing the efforts workers in one neighborhood went through to have a dumpster removed from the corner, only to find the area now occupied by electric bicycles blocking the walkway.

Others pointed to unsafe conditions created by the proliferation of small private businesses that set up tables and other physical obstacles on sidewalks. "No one is controlling this, and those responsible to do so often make things worse," another delegate said. "ANCI's national assembly must speak out about this."

### Strengthening solidarity

A good portion of the discussion at the meeting was dedicated to finding ways to strengthen working-class solidarity and social consciousness toward people with disabilities.

"It's no secret we have shortages of everything in Cuba," said 32-year-old Annelice Medero, who was born blind, graduated as a journalist, and is a leading member of ANCI in Havana. "We have to find ways for people who can't be in the line at the crack of dawn at the pharmacy to also get medications when they become available. Without that, their health conditions get worse because they aren't taking their medicine."

Medero and others addressed the erosion in the time-honored practice fostered by the revolution that people with disabilities can move to the front of the line at grocery stores, banks and so on. Managers are often the source of this erosion, telling people with disabilities they have to stand in line like everyone else.

"But then I have to make sure no

one is jumping the line in front of me, since I can't see!" said an ANCI member. "Sometimes you're told, 'Your turn came a long time ago, but others went first.'"

"There is more pressure," but these problems can be addressed. "Solidarity is deeply ingrained in Cuban people," she said.

Centro Habana delegates unanimously rejected a proposal for an upper age limit of 60 for new ANCI members. That would limit the fight for inclusion of all in social and political activity, some argued. Many over 60 are perfectly able to be in ANCI and take on leadership, one delegate said. Living longer is "part of the achievements of our society, and we can continue to contribute."

Delegates also spoke about efforts to recruit university students to work with ANCI. In Cuba students take on three years of social service after graduation. The proposal was aimed at raising social consciousness among young people. In other assemblies, ANCI members discussed challenges in housing and access to sport and recreational activities.

The U.S. rulers' tightening economic, trade, and financial embargo "has made participation more difficult, and there are less activities due to the lack of resources," said Eliannis Figueredo, an ANCI spokesperson from Granma province. "We are trying to find other ways of doing things."

### Support from revolutionary gov't

During the book fair in Havana, the Pathfinder stand was visited by Luis Estruch Rancano, author of *Juan Almeida Bosque: Testimonios de un santiaguero 1970-2009*. During those years, Estruch worked closely with Almeida, a central member of the leadership forged by Fidel Castro going back to the 1953 assault on the Moncada barracks that opened the revolutionary struggle.

After the revolution, when Almeida was assigned as party leader in Santiago de Cuba province, he came directly in touch with challenges faced by the associations of people with disabilities, said Estruch. He "became a champion of their demands."

"Almeida was a bricklayer before the revolution," said Estruch, when asked about the special training workshops. "He was a man with a trade, not a university professional." So when he "saw that people with disabilities were being denied these trades, Almeida began to help with that movement."

Estruch was governor of Santiago in 1996 when ANCI hosted an international conference there of organizations for the blind and the visually impaired. During the proceedings an earthquake hit Santiago, causing a blackout.

"Good heavens! What should I do?" Estruch asked himself in the middle of the dark auditorium. "This isn't in my manuals as governor!"

"Then out of nowhere someone shouted, 'Let's form a little train! Luis, you be the engine!' We marched out with each person holding the shoulder of the person in front, and I was the engine," he said.

"A sighted person didn't come up with the idea of the little train," said Estruch. "A blind person did. The associations are aware of the scale of the problems their members face, and together we can find solutions."

## Book specials for Militant subscribers



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# Thomas Sankara: ‘Revolution, women’s liberation go together’

To mark International Women’s Day, the Militant is running this excerpt from a speech by Thomas Sankara, leader of the popular democratic revolution in Burkina Faso, to a rally of several thousand women on March 8, 1987. It is from the French edition of Women’s Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle by Sankara, one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for March. Sankara had been won to Marxism before leading an uprising in Burkina Faso in West Africa in August 1983. Inspired by the Cuban Revolution, he mobilized workers and peasants, women and youth to carry out deep-going social measures in one of the poorest countries in the world, as well as to extend international solidarity. He was assassinated in a counter-revolutionary coup in October 1987. Copyright © 2008 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

### BY THOMAS SANKARA

Though the August revolution has undoubtedly done much for the emancipation of women, this is still far from adequate. Much remains for us to do. To better appreciate what remains to be done, we must be more aware of the difficulties still to be overcome. There are many obstacles and difficulties. At the top of the list are the problems of illiteracy and low politi-



Militant/ Ernest Harsch

Thomas Sankara, leader of 1983-87 popular revolutionary government in Burkina Faso, delivers speech to several thousand women on International Women’s Day, March 8, 1987. He explained that “the authenticity and the future of our revolution depends on women.”

cal consciousness — both of which are intensified by the inordinate influence that reactionary forces exert in backward societies like ours. We must work with perseverance to overcome these two main obstacles. Because as long as women don’t have a clear appreciation of the just nature of the political battle to be fought and don’t see clearly how to take it forward, we can easily stop making headway and eventually slip backward.

This is why the Women’s Union of Burkina should fully live up to its role. The women of the UFB should strive to overcome their own weaknesses and break with the kind of practices and behavior traditionally thought of as female. ...

Together we must collectively take care that women retain access to work. It is work that emancipates and liberates women by assuring them economic independence and a greater social role, as well as a more complete and accurate understanding of the world. ...

[T]he transformation our society has been going through since August 4, 1983, [is] so that equality between men and women is a tangible reality. The new labor code, now being drawn up and debated, should express how profoundly our people aspire to social justice. It should mark an important stage in the work of destroying the neocolonial state apparatus — a class apparatus fashioned and shaped

by reactionary regimes to perpetuate the system that oppressed the popular masses, especially women.

How can we continue to accept that a woman doing the same job as a man should earn less? Can we accept the levirate and dowries, which reduce our sisters and mothers to common commodities to be bartered for? There are so many things that medieval laws continue to impose on our people, on women. It is only just that, finally, justice be done. ...

And what about the all-consuming and mind-deadening housework that tends to turn you into a robot and to leave no time or energy to think! This is why resolute action must be undertaken aimed at men and at setting up a large-scale network of social facilities such as nurseries, day-care centers, and cafeterias. This would allow women to more easily take part in revolutionary debate and action. Each child, whether rejected as the mother’s failure or doted on as the father’s pride, should be of concern to society as a whole, every one the object of society’s attention and affection. Men and women will, from now on, share all the tasks in the home.

The plan of action in favor of women should be a revolutionary tool for the general mobilization of all the political and administrative structures in the effort to liberate women. I repeat, comrade militants: before it can correspond to the

real needs of women, this plan must be subjected to a democratic discussion at every level of the UFB’s structures.

The UFB is a revolutionary organization. As such, it is a school for popular democracy, governed by the organizational principles of criticism and self-criticism and democratic centralism. It intends to differentiate itself from those organizations where mystification has won out over concrete goals. But such a differentiation can be effective and permanent only if the comrades of the UFB carry out a resolute struggle against the weaknesses that unfortunately still persist in some female milieus. Because we are not talking at all here about bringing women together for the sake of appearances or for any other electoralist, demagogic, or otherwise reprehensible ulterior motive.

We are talking about bringing together women fighters to win victories. We are talking about fighting in an organized way and on the basis of a series of activities decided democratically within their committees, taking fully into account each revolutionary structure’s own organizational autonomy. Every UFB official must have fully absorbed her role in her structure in order to be effective in action. This requires that the Women’s Union of Burkina carry out vast campaigns of political and ideological education of its officials, so as to strengthen the UFB structures on all levels.

Comrade militants of the UFB, your union — our union — should participate fully in the class struggle on the side of the popular masses. Those millions whose consciousness was dormant and who have now been awakened by the coming of the revolution represent a formidable force. On August 4, 1983, we Burkinabè made a decision to rely on our own resources, which means in large part on the resources that you women represent. To be useful, your energies have to be focused on the struggle to eliminate every breed of exploiter and imperialism’s economic domination. As a structure for mobilization, the UFB will have to forge a highly developed political awareness among its militants, so they can make a completely revolutionary commitment as they carry out the different actions initiated by the government to improve the position of women.

March

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# Working-class road to women’s emancipation

*International Women’s Day is celebrated around the world March 8. On this occasion the Militant is printing excerpts from The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark. Copyright © 2023 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

Frederick Engels, the founder of modern communism together with Karl Marx, pointed the way forward in 1885, when he wrote: “True equality between men and women can become a reality only when the exploitation of both by capital has been abolished, and private work in the home has been transformed into a public industry.”

The revolutionary Soviet republic under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and some decades later the Cuban socialist revolution under the leadership of Fidel Castro, created the first opportunities in history for a government of the working class to organize and lead a fight for women’s emancipation.

The domestic slavery confronting women, Lenin said, will change “only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding the state power) against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its *wholesale transformation* into a large-scale socialist economy begins.”

Only the proletarian dictatorship could begin — begin! — eliminating the economic compulsion on which the oppression of women in all class-divided societies has been founded.

In both the USSR and in Cuba that revolutionary course began with electrification, including in the most

isolated regions of the country, to advance all aspects of social, economic, and cultural transformation. It required eradicating illiteracy. It required providing apartments and rural dwellings with running water and sanitation, as well as schools, jobs, medical care, education in health and hygiene, laundries, and childcare centers. It required combating drunkenness, drug abuse, domestic violence, and gambling.

Lessons from these proletarian-led revolutions are central to our communist continuity and internationalism. These include lessons from the blows the Stalin-led counterrevolution in the USSR and Communist International dealt to women and their families from the latter 1920s to the collapse of that Stalinist regime in the closing years of the twentieth century.

A course to address the capitalist-caused crises bearing down on families in the working class and among other toilers is at the center of the fight for women’s emancipation today.

It begins with the fight by the working class to create the material and social conditions that will enable women and men to realize the basic conditions of our humanity. That means full participation in social labor and the ability to make conscious decisions, benefiting from advances in science and technology, including medical science, related to both production and human reproduction.

The road to the emancipation of the working class is the road to eradicating the historical roots not only of women’s second-class status, but all forms of exploitation, oppression, and extreme coarseness under capitalism, the final stage of class society and its brutalities.

# Conditions facing women unionists in Ukraine today

BY ROY LANDERSEN

“The expansionist war of the Russian regime has ruined the lives of millions of Ukrainians, deprived them of their homes and forced them to seek safety and shelter in other regions of Ukraine and beyond its borders,” the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine noted in a March 8 statement marking International Women’s Day. The union featured remarks on the KVPU website from three Ukrainian women union members about what Moscow’s invasion has meant, especially for women workers across the country.

“For me, a resident of the Luhansk region, the war began back in 2014,” said Lidiya Galkina, chair of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine at the Toshkivska mine. Although the sounds of enemy shelling became “commonplace,” all the mines there operated almost uninterruptedly.

But in June 2022, Moscow’s invading forces “destroyed my home, the settlement, and the production facilities [and] all the mines.” Almost 5,000 people were made homeless. Many miners who “lost all their property still have unpaid wages.”

Galkina said many mining families found refuge in the nearby Dnipropetrovsk region, while “some miners heroically defend our land on the front lines.” She organizes fellow volunteers to make camouflage nets for the Ukrainian army.

“One-third of the men” from the Kametstal iron and steel works in Kamianske, near the major city of Dnipro, “are currently on the front lines, risking their lives for the freedom and independence of Ukraine,” said Svitlana Kuzminykh, deputy head of the trade union Metalistiv there. They are defending the country and “the dream of a better future,” as they fight an enemy with more manpower and weaponry.

“During these dreadful years,” she added, “we have lost 31 defenders, and seven boys are considered missing in action.”

What the Ukrainians have, all three women made clear, is a cause they are determined will win out — the independence of their country.

The men who have joined the armed forces are now being replaced by women, who have “started to work in ‘traditionally’ male positions” at many stages of the production process, Kuzminykh said. Women work overtime, including weekends and holidays, while “at home, they have children who also need attention and protection.”

For the first time, hundreds of women have started working underground in Ukraine’s mines. This is on top of tens of thousands of women who have joined the country’s armed forces.

The women said they don’t complain about the difficulties and challenges, Kuzminykh said, “because we all live in hope for victory.”

Vira Bulankina, a member of the Free Trade Union of Railway Workers of Ukraine at the Kharkiv Passenger Wagon Depot, described how “in the first days of the war, Russian invaders started to shell and bomb Kharkiv.” Amid the destruction “most of the city’s transportation was damaged and disabled.”

During this period, many Kharkiv residents sought to leave the city. It is Ukraine’s second largest city and is less than 20 miles from the Russian border. “The railway station turned into a turbulent stream of people,” Bulankina said. “There were not enough trains, cars, or seats not only in the wagons but also at the station. People traveled sitting on the floor.” Many rail workers stayed on the job for days without rest “to help the army and the city residents.”

Despite the shelling and dangers, many Kharkiv residents are returning to their native city. In two years of war the railway settled into a steady operation, but with “the flow of passengers decreased by tens of times.”

“We will not be broken!” Galkina, the miners’ union official, said, speaking for all three.

# Navalny funeral turnout shows opposition to Putin

BY ROY LANDERSEN

In the largest political protest against the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin and his war in Ukraine since it began over two years ago, thousands gathered for the Moscow funeral of Alexei Navalny March 1. For days after, they kept coming, piling up flowers making a mound that entirely covered the nearly six-foot-high Orthodox wooden cross at his gravesite. Similar mountains of flowers were placed at memorials for political prisoners under Joseph Stalin across the country.

Putin could not suppress this popular outpouring for his hated political rival, whose death at 47 in the Kremlin’s Siberian gulag had been announced Feb. 16.

These acts were the visible tip of the iceberg of opposition among Russian working people to Moscow’s two-year-long murderous war on Ukraine.

In 2014, Navalny supported the popular Maid-

an protests and opposed Putin’s armed takeover of Crimea. But as a Russian nationalist, he spoke out for the Crimean Peninsula’s “historic links” with Russia, which earned him enmity among Ukrainians, especially Crimean Tatars.

From his prison cell Navalny condemned Putin’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine as an attack on the peoples of both countries, saying the “heroism and high motivation of the defending forces can only result in defeat.”

A year later, he had shifted his position on Crimea. He said the only resolution to the war was to return to the borders of Ukraine and Russia “internationally recognized and defined in 1991,” when the Soviet Union disintegrated. This meant Crimea once again being part of Ukraine.

Navalny’s death at the hands of the regime has stoked, not extinguished, opposition. His widow, Yulia Navalnaya, has urged his supporters to carry out his “political will” in a protest against Putin by turning up at polling stations at noon March 17 in the midst of the country’s presidential election.

“There are many people around you who are anti-Putin and anti-war,” Navalnaya said March 6. “If we come at the same time, our anti-Putin voice will be much louder.”

# Haiti crisis is result of decades of US interference

Continued from front page

many fellow gang members.

Last year some 5,000 people were killed. After fleeing neighborhoods besieged by gangs, around 200,000 people have been dispersed.

Rival gangs currently control about 80% of Port-au-Prince with roadblocks on all the main roads to and from the capital. On the docks, where electricity has been cut off, dozens of containers holding critical supplies are held up.

Once seen as thugs connected to the police and directed by rival capitalist families, the gang chiefs are now taking over themselves. Jimmy “Barbecue” Cherizier, a former cop and the leading spokesman of the alliance of scores of gangs, claimed, “We are making a bloody revolution.” Their forces have surrounded the National Palace.

Haiti’s economy has contracted for five consecutive years while food inflation is soaring. The cost of a bag of rice, a Haitian staple, has risen from \$40 to \$120.

Working people in Haiti have long faced intervention by Washington, and, more recently, U.N. troops. They were devastated by earthquakes in 2010 and 2021 and a hurricane in 2016.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with government leaders from the Caribbean, North America and Europe in Jamaica on March 11, trying to put a lid on Haiti’s escalating crisis.

Washington’s proposal is for a multinational force — but not U.S. troops — to be deployed to “assist” Haiti’s national police.

With Washington’s backing, Henry had become prime minister in July 2021 after the assassination of President Jovenel Moise. Both ruled by decree.

Socialist Workers Party statement

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