

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Putin's invasion of Ukraine shakes up post-WW II 'world order'
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 87/NO. 10 MARCH 13, 2023

Support grows for 'Militant' against ban in Florida prison

BY SETH GALINSKY

When they hear that Florida prison authorities banned an issue of the *Militant* for printing articles on a strike by New York nurses and on recent protests in Iran, many workers, farmers, union activists and others are outraged.

Officials at the state's privately run Blackwater River Correctional Facility banned this year's issue no. 4 of the socialist newsweekly Feb. 1, charging the two front-page articles pose "a threat to the security, order, or rehabilitative objectives" of the prison. In addition, officials at two other Florida prisons, Charlotte Correctional and Wakulla Correctional, have been blocking subscribers from getting the paper without any written notification, a violation of their own rules.

Karl Butts, a farmer in Plant City, Florida, called the allegations "preposterous." In a letter to the Literature Review Committee, Butts said the ban is a "blatant violation of the constitutional protections of freedom of the press and the right of inmates to read the news

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Worldwide protests speak out: Defend Ukraine independence!

Demand Moscow's troops out of *all* of Ukraine now!



OC Media/Mariam Nikuradze

Tens of thousands rallied to defend Ukrainian independence in Tbilisi, Georgia, Feb. 24, marking one year since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Moscow invaded Georgia in 2008. Protests took place in over 100 cities, from Europe, Asia, in U.S. from Miami to Anchorage.

BY ROY LANDERSEN

During the first year of the Russian rulers' invasion of Ukraine the stark difference between the two countries' armies has grown.

The Ukrainian armed forces have fiercely resisted, strengthened by tens of thousands of volunteers, largely from

the working class, confident and determined to defend the country's independence. In contrast, Russian President Vladimir Putin is using a conscript army as cannon fodder, suffering a series of defeats as he attempts to subjugate Ukraine.

"Everything changed" the first day of the invasion, Oleksander Protsuk, 27, a former plumber, told Al Jazeera. He had never before served in the army, but "the war forced me to take up arms, to protect my country, because the former 'brotherly' nation attacked us."

The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine issued a statement on the war's anniversary, saying "the unprovoked military invasion" by Moscow

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'Special' grand jury probe in Georgia is attack on political rights

BY TERRY EVANS

Casting aside any pretense at impartiality, special grand jury foreman Emily Kohrs has been on a "media tour" divulging selective details of the Democratic Party-run search for indictments targeting Donald Trump's alleged interference in Georgia's 2020 elections. A gleeful liberal media is presenting her comments as confirmation of progress in the seven-year drive to bring down the former president and prevent him from ever running again.

The liberals' legal machinations, leaks and use of the FBI — as well as the "special" grand jury — are dealing blows to constitutional freedoms working people need to defend ourselves.

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Residents, rail workers fight toxic effects of Ohio disaster

BY TONY LANE

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Working people, farmers and small-business owners here and in neighboring towns in Ohio and Pennsylvania are increasingly angry about the response of both the rail bosses and the government to the continuing effects of the Feb. 3 derailment of Norfolk Southern train 32N here. This includes the subsequent fire, burning and spread of toxic chemicals, and the pollution of land and water that occurred. And they're fearful of the long-term impact on their health and living conditions.

Rail workers — who have more than enough familiarity with the disdain for the conditions they labor under and the effects that has on working people who live by the tracks — are discussing the need for union control over rail operations.

Militant worker-correspondents met
Continued on page 5

Workers, women and oppressed peoples push for freedom in Iran

BY SETH GALINSKY

Despite the announcement in early February by Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that he would give amnesty to "tens of thousands" of prisoners, the actual numbers released as of Feb. 27 are in the hundreds. Thousands were imprisoned during recent protests as they demanded a halt to political repression, an end to the regime's

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Socialist Workers Party speaks out against Jew-hatred in the Bay Area



The Jewish News of Northern California/Steven Buss

Graffiti on Manny's bookstore in San Francisco in 2021. Those spewing Jew-hatred use "Zionist" as synonym for Jews. Leftist groups targeted owner, an Afghan refugee who supports Israel's right to exist. Anti-Jewish attacks have increased in California and elsewhere in recent years.

BY BETSEY STONE

OAKLAND, Calif. — On Feb. 1 a man walked into the Schneerson Center, a small synagogue in San Francisco, pulled out what appeared to be a gun and shot six or eight blanks, terrifying those who had gathered there for study and prayer. Two weeks later in Los Angeles a man with a history of making antisemitic statements shot and wounded two worshippers as they

left their different synagogues.

These are not isolated incidents. Anti-Jewish attacks have increased in California and the U.S. in recent years.

Socialist Workers Party member Carole Lesnick delivered a letter of solidarity on behalf of the party to the Schneerson Center. She also sent letters urging unionists and others to speak out against antisemitism that were printed in the

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Uber, Lyft drivers strike, rally at New York airport

BY SARA LOBMAN

NEW YORK — “We’re fighting to receive the pay raise we’re entitled to,” Yohan Fulgencio, an Uber driver since 2015, told the *Militant* Feb. 26. “With inflation, all of our operating expenses have gone up — gas, insurance, repairs, maintenance fees and tickets. Everything falls on the driver. The city approved a raise for drivers last year that was supposed to start in December.”

Fulgencio was participating in

a one-day strike of Uber and Lyft workers at LaGuardia Airport here. The New York Taxi Workers Alliance organized the protest after a judge ruled in January on a lawsuit filed by Uber bosses blocking the planned pay raise approved by New York’s Taxi and Limousine Commission. Sunday’s strike came before a March 1 TLC hearing on new pay rules.

After a rally of several hundred at a parking lot near the airport, drivers fanned out to picket at airport locations. Striking drivers did not pick up passengers at the airport between 2 p.m. and midnight. “It’s not just normal wear and tear that we’re responsible for,” Money, who does not use a last name, explained. “A customer broke my back window. It cost me \$500 to repair. Uber paid \$80, I had to pay the rest.”

“The company takes too much of our money,” Ajay Singh said. “We get less than 50% of the fare the passenger pays.” He showed this reporter the record of a recent trip. The passenger paid Uber \$45. Singh received just \$18.

They’re also demanding an end to Uber’s ability to unilaterally deactivate drivers in response to customer complaints without an investigation. “A customer falsely said my car



Militant/Lea Sherman

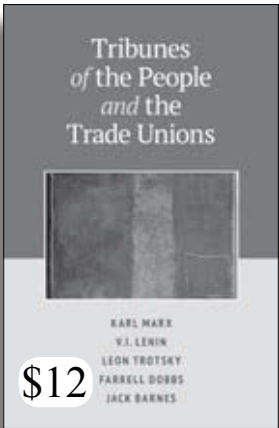
Uber and Lyft drivers staged one-day strike at LaGuardia airport Feb. 26 to demand “pay raise we’re entitled to,” Yohan Fulgencio, an Uber driver since 2015, told the *Militant*. Another Uber driver, Ajay Singh, said, “The company takes too much of our money,” more than 50% of fares.

smelled like marijuana,” Fulgencio said. “Uber cut my access to the app ‘until further notice’ without even talking to me. A few hours later they ruled it was a false charge, but I was off the app and out of work for more

than a day.”

Jamal Uddin, a driver for 20 years, first with Yellow Cab and now with Uber, said, “I was deactivated for two years on a customer’s false complaint.”

Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions



A tribune of the people uses every manifestation of capitalist oppression to explain why it is workers and our allies who will lay the foundations for a world based not on violence and competition but on solidarity among working people worldwide.

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Hundreds protest beating death of prisoner in Montreal

BY JOE YOUNG

MONTREAL — Hundreds marched here Feb. 10 to protest the death of Nicous D’André Spring, a 21-year-old black man on Dec. 25, a day after

he was assaulted by prison guards at Montreal’s Bordeaux prison.

He was arrested Dec. 20 and pled not guilty to charges of assaulting a police officer, uttering threats and possession of a weapon. Despite a judge ordering his release Dec. 23, Spring was left in jail and the next day guards put a spit hood on him and then pepper-sprayed him. He lost consciousness and was taken to a hospital where he died a day later.

“We need the names of the officers who did this to our brother. We need them to be held accountable for what they did,” Sarafina Dennie, Spring’s sister, told a rally following the march.

The demonstration was organized by the Justice for Nicous Spring Action

Committee. In addition to demanding charges against the guards who assaulted Spring, the committee is demanding the release of video footage of the attack, the release of the testimonies of other prisoners who were present at the time and an end to the use of spit masks.

Spring had been receiving mental health support, Dennie told the press in January. A guard and a supervisor have been suspended and two inquiries into the assault on Spring are underway. One is being organized by the cops themselves. The other, a public inquiry, was ordered by Quebec’s chief coroner Jan. 17.

While blacks make up 3.5% of Canada’s population they are 9.2% of prisoners in federal jails.

THE MILITANT

Earthquake catastrophe fueled by capitalism

Under capitalism, earthquakes and other natural disasters turn into social catastrophes. Tens of thousands died in Turkey and Syria when bosses boosted profits with shoddy construction. Both regimes are notorious for attacks against their own peoples.



Reuters/Umit Bektas

Thousands died, millions left homeless in Turkey and Syria after Feb. 6 earthquakes.

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The Militant

Vol. 87/No. 10

Closing news date: March 1, 2023

Editor: John Studer

Managing Editor: Terry Evans

Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Seth Galinsky, Martín Koppel, Roy Landersen, Jacob Perasso, Vivian Sahner, Brian Williams.

Published weekly except for one week in January, two weeks in June, one week in August, two weeks in December.

Business Manager: Bob Bruce

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

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Website: www.themilitant.com

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

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: For one year send \$35 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

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‘Workers and working farmers both face common class enemy’

BY TERRY EVANS

MOUNT OLIVE, N.J. — “My father inherited his family’s debts, then we inherited his,” Hunter Hildebrant, 25, told the *Militant* at her family’s farm Feb. 18. Together with brothers Roy and Forrest, and twin sister Aspen, she grows tomatoes, onions, peppers, strawberries, blueberries, pumpkins and flowers on 56 acres that have been in the family for four generations.

Their father died in 2012 when Hunter was 15. “Teachers gave us half days off school, calling it a ‘work-study program,’ so we could keep the farm going.”

They rapidly discovered the challenges that lay ahead.

The farm had a lien on it, a claim “by someone we never met who lived thousands of miles away,” who could seize their property if the Hildebrants failed to make debt payments. “We had to pay off \$25,000 a year for several years,” she said. “It might not sound like a lot, but it was to us.”

Very few working farmers can stay on the land without having to take out loans. Average farm debt reached a record high in 2020, after rising steadily for three decades. At the same time, farm incomes are expected to fall again this year, the Department of Agriculture projects, increasing the debt burden farmers face.

While workers are exploited directly by their bosses, working farmers are squeezed by the high interest rates banks and other lenders charge and the prices for inputs — seed, feed, fertilizer and farm implements — on the one end, and the low prices offered by monopoly processing companies and supermarket chains on the other.

Hunter Hildebrant took a job as a janitor at a community college, which also allowed her to study horticulture without paying tuition. “I didn’t finish the course, but I learned a lot.” Today she works on the farm, as well as at a large commercial greenhouse, and is looking for a third job.

Aspen also works two jobs. Like many working farmers, while putting in long hours on the land they also have to work other jobs to try and make ends meet.

Friends and fellow farmers helped out. Because of the high prices today and their impact on the finances of working people, “they aren’t buying flowers like they used to,” she said. And last year the Hildebrants’ wells ran low. “Without enough water we had to throw out produce that had withered.”

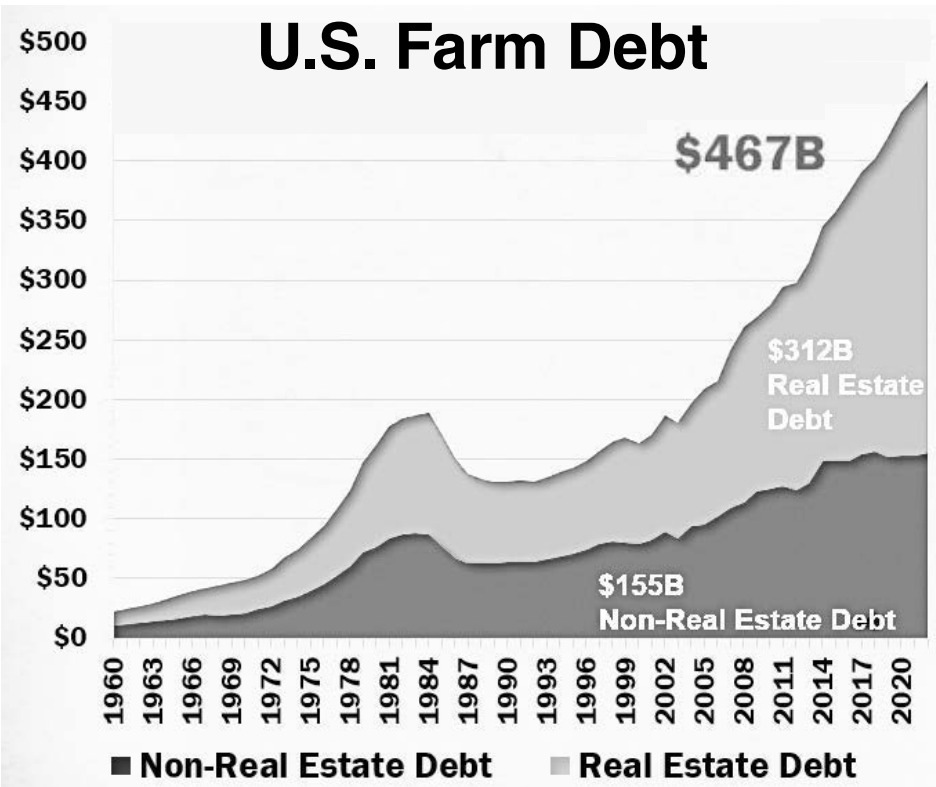
“Diesel prices have almost doubled since the pandemic,” she said, pointing out they depend on the fuel

to run tractors and to keep three greenhouses warm enough to cultivate seedlings.

“We have a ‘tractor graveyard’ on the farm. My brothers improvise. They take parts off the old tractors to keep the two we run going.” They often face unexpected expenses. The truck Hunter uses to take their produce to local markets now needs to be replaced.

As well as selling what they grow at a farm stand and farmers markets, they also supply a wholesaler. “But we have no say over the prices we get from the wholesaler.”

To preserve crops from pests “we can shoot rabbits, but to get rid of weeds we need herbicides,” Hunter said. While inflation now runs at 6.4% annually, the cost increase for crucial farm inputs like diesel, seeds and herbicides is much higher. Some herbicides have skyrocketed as much as 300% since the end of the pandemic. That’s all part of a setup in which all the risks are taken by working farmers, while the agricultural mo-



U. S. farm debt in billions of dollars. After rising for decades, average farm debt has reached a record high. A disproportionate amount of this debt falls on the backs of working farmers.

nopolies reap vast profits.

“Initially I was wary about talking to socialists,” Hunter said as we were leaving the farm. “I’m a Republican voter.”

“Workers and working farmers face a common enemy,” I said, pointing to the strikes and other union struggles

taking place today. “We need to organize independently of the bosses and their two political parties.”

She invited us to come back and talk some more.

Roy Landersen contributed to this article.

Co-workers, Moscow war protesters get ‘Militant,’ new book

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Socialist Workers Party members campaigned for party candidate Ilona Gersh running for Chicago mayor Feb. 25, outside the Alpha bakery where she works. The next day co-worker Kimarah Brown got a *Militant* subscription from Gersh and the new book *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by party leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark.

“It’s awesome. I don’t think I’ve ever met a worker who is running for office,” Brown told Gersh. “The Democratic and Republican parties just make promises. But we can trust people we work with.” Other co-workers got a copy of the new book in Spanish and a copy of *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity* by Frederick Engels, Karl Marx, George Novack and Waters the day after the SWP plant-gate team.

Through discussions like this, at workers’ doorsteps and protests against Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, members of the SWP and Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom are getting out the new book, which highlights the political opportunities ahead for class-conscious workers. They’re also encouraging *Militant* readers to extend their subscriptions.

SWP members and supporters in Chicago also took part in two rallies in defense of Ukraine’s independence Feb. 24 and 25. “One participant strongly insisted that our opposition to U.S. sanctions against Russia amounted to supporting Putin’s propaganda,” wrote SWP member Naomi Craine. “I explained that sanctions come down on working people the hardest and are an obstacle to mobilizing the broad support that’s possible among toilers in Russia to end the war. But I couldn’t convince her.”

Others had a different point of view. “The problem is not the Russians, it’s Putin,” Nataliia Kondratiuk, told Craine and Lisa Rottach. She moved here from Ukraine a year ago. “The way the government treats people

in Russia, they have no rights. We’re brave, we’re strong. We will stop this,” she added. Two people at the rallies subscribed to the *Militant* and about 35 single copies were sold.

In the Colony, Texas, Alyson Kennedy, SWP candidate for mayor, joined a march of some 60 people holding signs against Moscow’s invasion Feb. 25. Kennedy met Olena Partow, a cosmetologist living in the U.S. who visited Dnipro, Ukraine, a year ago. The airport there was bombed making her return difficult. “No one could believe it,” she said. “Russians are like our brothers.”

“One of the central issues in my campaign is why working people should support Ukrainian working people defending their country’s independence,” Kennedy said. She pointed to opposition to the war inside Russia. “Over 20,000 have been arrested in Russia for protesting Putin’s invasion, but still individuals find ways to protest.”

“I had been worried about a good friend who left the U.S. to join the Ukrainian army,” Partow said. “I just found out he lost both his legs.” She showed Kennedy pictures of him in a hospital.

“The SWP campaign is for workers and farmers taking political power,” Kennedy said. After she explained that the *Militant* has been covering the class struggle in Ukraine long before the invasion began, Partow got a copy of the paper.

In Los Angeles some 300 people attended a rally in pouring rain in front of City Hall Feb. 24 demanding Moscow end its invasion of Ukraine.

“We are stronger today even though we are far from home,” Oleksandra Korniienko told SWP members Barbara Bowman and Deborah Liatos at the action. Korniienko and her three children left Ukraine when the war began, going first to the U.K. and then here.

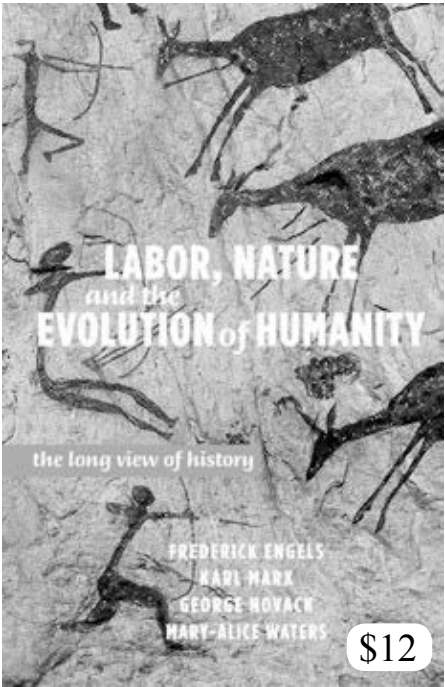
“Your fight against Moscow’s invasion is very important,” Bowman said. “And so is solidarity with it. Workers in Ukraine face not only the war but also the world economic crisis, like working people in the U.S.”

“When I was in England a family opened their home to us for six months,” Korniienko said. “Even though they didn’t have much they told us not to worry.” She noted the sharpening class divisions in Ukraine. “Some are getting rich, while others don’t have electricity. Even our soldiers say when the war ends we have to change things.”

“In Ukraine you don’t have social services like in the U.S.,” she added. Bowman pointed out that Social Security here “was won through union struggles over years.” Today, she said, U.S. bosses are attacking wages and conditions, including cutting back on safety “as you can see from the recent train derailment in Ohio.” Korniienko got a copy of the *Militant* and the SWP statement “Defend Ukraine’s Independence!”

To help expand the *Militant*’s reach and introduce books on revolutionary working-class politics as widely as possible, contact the SWP and CL branches listed on page 5.

George Chalmers in Fort Worth, Texas, Naomi Craine in Chicago and Deborah Liatos in Los Angeles contributed to this article.



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Jew-hating protest targets NY play about Leo Frank

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK — On Feb. 21 about a dozen ultrarightists showed up outside the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical “Parade” to hold a Jew-hating protest, targeting the play’s central figure — Leo Frank. Frank, a Jewish factory manager at an Atlanta pencil factory and president of the Atlanta chapter of B’nai B’rith, was framed up on charges of raping a 13-year-old worker and lynched by a Jew-hating mob over a century ago.

“Parade” producers and the actors and their union strongly condemned the antisemitic action.

This is a “reminder of why we’re telling this particular story,” said Ben Platt, who plays Frank. “And it made me feel extra, extra grateful to be the one that gets to tell this particular story and to carry on the legacy of Leo.”

Frank was convicted in August 1913 of the rape and murder of Mary Phagan in the factory. He appealed his conviction all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, saying his constitutional rights had been violated, but the justices ruled 7 to 2 against him.

His trial was held amid an orgy of Jew-hatred. Mobs gathered each day to hoot, holler and threaten violence if he wasn’t convicted. Although there was substantial evidence a Black worker at the factory committed the crime, officials badgered him into implicating Frank as the killer.

In response to Frank’s trial and conviction, the Anti-Defamation League was founded in Chicago in 1913 with a mission that worked to mobilize support for him. They declared they would work, “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.”

Pointing to the violations of due process at the trial, and the lynch-mob threats, a nationwide campaign urged his death sentence be thrown out and a new trial scheduled.

The state legislatures of both Texas and Tennessee asked for his life to be spared.

A Jew-hating campaign was mobilized to call for Frank to be put to death. Its central leader was Tom Watson, a well-known former populist turned white supremacist.



Joan Marcus

Cast of “Parade” Feb. 21. Actors’ Equity Association, representing 51,000 actors and stage managers, condemned the antisemitic demonstration outside play’s first night on Broadway.

“Jew money has debased us, bought us, and sold us — and laughs at us,” Watson wrote in his magazine, attacking the campaign for Frank’s life. “Let the rich Jews beware! The next Jew who does what Frank did is going to get exactly the same thing that we give to Negro rapists.”

To add teeth to his threats of mob action, Watson wrote, “Another Ku Klux Klan may be organized to restore HOME RULE.”

Despite the antisemitic outcry, Georgia Gov. John Slaton commuted Frank’s sentence to life imprisonment in June 1915. Two months later a mob of 25 armed men, including a state legislator, judge and former governor, kidnapped Frank from his state prison cell with no opposition from the jailers, drove him over 100 miles to Marietta, Georgia, and lynched him. Thousands turned out.

In the September 1915 edition of Watson’s *Jeffersonian* magazine, he called for a revival of the Klan, which had disbanded in 1869. Two months later a group met atop Stone Mountain outside of Atlanta to relaunch the new Klan.

In 2002 a special exhibition was mounted in Pittsburgh, entitled “Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America.” A *Militant* article about it by Omari Musa detailed the thousands of Blacks and others who were lynched. It included a picture of Leo Frank, noting his lynching “marked the KKK as being not only anti-Black, but anti-Semitic as well.” He could have added, anti-Catholic too.

The Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles posthumously pardoned Frank in 1986, though it did not make a judgment on his innocence.

There is renewed interest in this case today, and in recent antisemitic attacks. The Georgia Historical Center erected a marker commemorating Frank in 2008. In 2018, the first national anti-lynching memorial was placed at the site. The next year the district attorney in Fulton County created a panel to reinvestigate the case.

Jew-hating mobilization

“You want the truth about who you’re going to see tonight,” yelled one of the rightists to those entering the Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre, “You’re paying \$300 to go f-king worship a pedophile.” Others chanted, “[Leo Frank is] a Jewish pedophile.”

The Jew-haters also handed out flyers slandering the Anti-Defamation League, saying it was established “to protect a Jewish child murdering pedophile Leo Frank.”

“If there is any remaining doubt out there about the urgency of telling this story in this moment in history,” the show’s producers said in a statement, “the vileness on display tonight should put it to rest.”

“We condemn the demonstration in the strongest possible terms,” the Actors’ Equity Association, the union of stage actors and managers, said. “‘Parade’ tells an important story of what happens when anti-Semitism and other kinds of hatred are allowed to grow unchecked.”

SWP speaks out against Jew-hatred in the Bay Area

Continued from front page

East Bay Times, Mercury News/San Jose, Jewish News of Northern California and San Leandro Times.

“Working people in this country face a grinding economic crisis,” Lesnick wrote. “History teaches us that as this crisis deepens, and as workers fight back, the capitalist rulers will turn to Jew-hatred, seeking to blame Jewish people for the economic and social problems workers face.”

Party members have also reached out to Jewish students at the University of California at Berkeley who are being targeted, not by ultrarightists, but by liberals and students who consider themselves part of the left.

As many as 14 clubs at its law school, including Women of Berkeley Law, the Queer Caucus and Law Students of African Descent, have put into their by-laws a ban on speakers holding views “in support of Zionism, the apartheid state of Israel, and the occupation of Palestine.” Since over 80% of Jews believe Israel has a right to exist, it’s a ban on Jews. A ban not on speaking about Israel, but on *any* topic.

Last August the five-member board of the Jewish Students Association at Berkeley Law issued a response, saying that “students should not be forced to choose between identifying as either ‘pro-Palestine’ and thereby ‘anti-Israel’ or ‘pro-Israel’ and thereby ‘anti-Palestine.’ Students can advocate for Palestinians and criticize Israeli policies without denying Israel the right to exist.”

Association board member Charlotte Aaron told a meeting sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council in October that clubs imposing the ban require members to attend a training session. Its message? “If you are a Zionist, in any way, shape or form, then you are also a settler colonialist, and you support police brutality, and all sorts of really terrible things.”

Socialist Workers Party members spoke with U.C. Berkeley student Ariel Mizrahi, who was tabling on the

campus plaza with “Bears for Israel,” named after the school’s mascot. Her family fled to Israel from Egypt when Jews were being expelled from Arab countries as Israel was formed after the Holocaust of World War II. “The life of my family was at stake,” she said. “The years of oppression of Jews is why Israel is needed.”

The organization JewBelong put up billboards in the neighborhoods around the Berkeley campus stating, “You don’t have to go to law school to know that anti-Zionism is Anti-Semitism.” Opposing groups vandalized the billboards, writing “Anti-Zionism = Anti-Racism.”

Speakout against antisemitism

At a Feb. 18 Militant Labor Forum speakout against antisemitism, Lesnick said the meaning of the word Zionism has evolved over time. Before the Holocaust, a majority of Jews rejected the Zionist movement’s dream of a homeland for Jews in Palestine as a solution to Jew-hatred and violence. “This changed when the U.S., Canada and other imperialist powers slammed their doors on refugees fleeing fascism, when Jewish survivors of Nazi extermination had no choice but to go to Palestine for survival.

“Israel has existed for over 70 years. There is nothing like the old Zionist movement today,” Lesnick said. Many who identify as Zionists just mean they support the existence of Israel. “For anti-semites, the term ‘Zionists’ has become a synonym for ‘Jew.’”

The SWP supports the fight of Palestinians for their rights and against national oppression, including support for a sovereign contiguous Palestinian state, Lesnick said.

The view that Israel exists as nothing more than a colonial-settler occupation, the same as apartheid South Africa, alongside calls for all of Israel, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, to become Palestine — a call for the destruction of Israel — are harmful to both Palestinians and Jews, she said. It denies the need for Israel as a refuge for Jews

Toxic effects of Ohio disaster

Continued from front page

Tish McDevitt, who lives in Negley, just south of East Palestine, Feb. 25. She was told to evacuate when the railroad was going to drain and burn toxic vinyl chloride from derailed tank cars that threatened to explode. “But now we’re told we’re not eligible for any aid for the evacuation or the aftermath of the fire,” she said. Leslie Run Creek, which carried spilled chemicals down to the Ohio River, runs through Negley. “And we are worried sick about the safety of our well water. Maybe it tests ‘safe’ today. What about after the chemicals have time to seep into the ground?”

Diana Elzer, a co-owner of Sutherin greenhouse where McDevitt works, said, “No one blames the crew of that train. It was the greed of the company that caused it. Why couldn’t the company say what the train was carrying? It was days before the Environmental Protection Agency released the information on the other chemicals that were spilled.”

In fact, the first responders on the scene after the derailment and fire broke out — who weren’t issued hazmat suits or respirators to protect themselves — knew nothing about what was burning or being released into the air. Days later it became clear that hazardous chemical placards on dangerous tank cars melted in the fire.

Elzer has issues with the cleanup the railroad is doing. “Norfolk Southern’s CEO, Alan Shaw, admitted the company had no intention of removing the soil containing the chemicals that are under the tracks,” she said. “After their burn of those deadly chemicals, they had those tracks in and the trains were running in no time.”

When people complained enough, and the press reported it, “19 days after the disaster, Shaw said, ‘I listened to community members’ and will remove the contaminated soil,” Elzer said. When Norfolk Southern and government officials announced they planned to drain and set fire to the toxic vinyl chloride, Linda Murphy, who lives on the south end of East Palestine, told us, “I sped home, put the horse in the trailer, gathered our dogs and fled.

“When we came back my horse’s face, neck and chest swelled up. He was lethargic. The vet explained that it was caused by an allergic reaction to an ‘environmental issue.’ Guess what that was?”

“The Leslie Run Creek right below our house is full of dead fish and frogs.”

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has upped its estimate for the number of fish and other animals killed near East Palestine from 3,500 to 44,000.

Murphy said the clinic the Ohio Department of Health opened in East Palestine is a joke. “Since the burn, I’ve had headaches, my eyes hurt, my throat is killing me. Outside, I have a hard time breathing. So, on the first day it opened, I took a day off work and went. There was no doctor there. The nurse took my information and referred me to my own doctor with a ‘sinus infection.’”

Rail crew gets alert too late

The National Transportation Safety Board issued a preliminary report on the derailment Feb. 23. It said the train crew only got warning of an overheated wheel from a wayside detector seconds

before it derailed.

Norfolk Southern, like other rail bosses, says one of the reasons it has slashed workers — helping boost profits — is they’ve been replaced by better technology. This includes the wayside detectors. As train 32N neared East Palestine, three detectors began registering soaring wheel temperatures on car 23, hitting 103 degrees higher than the air temperature at milepost 69.01, where security camera footage at a trackside factory showed sparks flying from the wheel. This wasn’t enough to trip an alert to the crew.

As the train got to East Palestine, the temperature on the wheel had reached a whopping 253 degrees higher than the air, and the crew finally got an alert, way too late to prevent the derailment.

National Transportation Safety Board Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy admitted to the press that while the detector alert “system” worked just as it should have, still the derailment and ensuing crisis “was 100% preventable.”

Reminder of Lac-Megantic disaster

What has unfolded in East Palestine reminds many rail workers of the 2013 calamity that befell the people of Lac-Megantic in Quebec. The brakes on a parked train carrying oil tankers on a hill outside the town bled out and it rolled into the town’s center and derailed, exploding and bursting into flame. Forty-seven people were killed.

When government officials and the rail bosses tried to pin the blame on rail workers, they were exonerated. It was the bosses, with their one-man crews and 12-hour shifts, who were responsible.

The Coalition of Citizens and Organization Committed to Rail Safety has fought to have the new railroad’s tracks moved outside the city center. When members of the Communist League visited Feb. 25 and discussed what was unfolding in East Palestine, committee leader Robert Bellefleur said they knew of it and had sent a statement of solidarity.

“Our Coalition of Lac-Megantic supports the local population of East Palestine through this ordeal, so that they receive all the necessary support from the authorities, as well as the compensation to which they are entitled from the railway company responsible for this en-



Paul Chiasson/The Canadian Press

Bosses drive to boost profits led to train derailment in Lac-Megantic, Quebec, in July 2013, killing 47 people. Rail coalition there sent solidarity message to people of East Palestine, Ohio.

vironmental disaster!”

In an effort to avoid taking the blame for the disaster, Biden administration members and other officials, as well as Norfolk Southern bosses, have been working overtime to look like they’re doing something useful while trying to pin blame on someone else. After saying nothing for days, Secretary of Transportation Peter Buttigieg finally announced that “he would soon outline specific safety improvements railroads should take immediately. He harshly criticized them for lobbying against steps ‘intended to improve rail safety and to help keep Americans safe,’” Reuters reported.

Eddie Hall, president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, commented on Buttigieg’s proposals. Under the hugely profitable Precision Scheduled Railroading scheme rail bosses use today, “they have reduced the number of thorough inspections of rail cars, along with other service cuts,” Hall said, and “have lengthened trains to as long as three miles from end to end.”

“We were very fortunate this time that there were three crew members on this train,” he said, including a conductor trainee. Rail bosses have cut train operating crews from four or five down to two, and are campaigning to chop them down to one. Jeremy Ferguson, president of the SMART-TD rail union, told Buttigieg, “Now is not the time to introduce more technology but rather to focus on the fundamental changes needed to reverse railroading’s dangerous trajectory.”

“Yes, this is a case where the accident could have been prevented,” Jakob Forsgren, a welder and track repair worker who works in and out of Lincoln, Nebraska, told the *Militant*. He is chair of Local 1320 of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees. “It could have been prevented by keeping enough manpower to properly inspect this train prior to it derailling. It could have been prevented by keeping enough manpower to not need 1.5-mile-long trains, or having a brakeman on the rear of the train who may have seen the hot bearing.”

What can be done?

The only way to stop deadly disasters on the railroad is by steps taken by workers through their unions to take increasing control over how they are run. This is also the way to make communities where the railroads pass through safer for all.

A 2007 statement by the Socialist Workers Party, “The Stewardship of Nature Also Falls to the Working Class: In Defense of Land and Labor,” explains, “Despite efforts to persuade us otherwise by the employing class and the government and political parties of the bourgeoisie, job safety, consumer protection, and environmental protection are inextricably tied together. The fight in the mines, factories, fields, and other workplaces to protect life and limb of the working classes and broader public is the germ of struggles for workers control of industry and for independent working-class political action.”

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Defend Ukraine independence!

Continued from front page

has caused enormous damage across the country. “Thousands of schools, hospitals, and industrial enterprises” have been destroyed, throwing workers out of a job.

“I lost many childhood friends,” Kyrylo Borysenko, 23, another soldier said. Despite the hardships working people face, from unemployment and inflation, “people are united, they stand for each other.

“We’re from Ukraine, you can’t break us, because our spirit is strong.”

While Moscow’s forces have been forced back from over half the area they occupied early in the war, they still control 17% of Ukraine. Putin is trying to regain the offensive by replenishing his army with hundreds of thousands of reservists and Wagner battalion former prisoners called up late last year. Sent to attack in human waves, they are suffering heavy losses on the eastern front.

Nonetheless, his forces are inching closer to encircling the fiercely contested town of Bakhmut. Forcing the Ukrainian garrison to withdraw would give Putin his first battlefield advance after months of setbacks.

Most Russians don’t support the war

Putin’s war was never popular among working people in Russia. Now with tens of thousands of coffins coming home, pressure on him is growing. The regime held stage-managed rallies on the war’s one-year anniversary compelling people to attend.

“We have to go and there’s nothing we can do about it,” a state employee, who requested anonymity, told the Moscow Times, at a rally in the capital where Putin spoke Feb. 24. Authorities are using the event “as a propaganda tool.” A group of teachers told the BBC they were pressured to go by their bosses.

“I’ll be here for a while and then I’ll leave,” said a worker from the city’s metro transit system. “I think most people here don’t support the war. I don’t.”

The crowd at the front waved Russian flags and sang patriotic songs. One lyric, “Made in the U.S.S.R.,” opened with the words, “Ukraine and Crimea, Belarus and Moldova, it’s all my country.” Putin aims to recreate the Russian empire that existed under the czars by forcibly incorporating these nations, which he claims are Russian lands inhabited by Russian people.

Also marking the anniversary, people across Russia held anti-war protests. Some participants displayed Ukrainian blue-and-yellow ribbons.

Dozens of people were detained in 14 Russian cities.

A woman in Irkutsk, Siberia, held a placard that read, “I demand the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine!”

In St. Petersburg, Ivan Popov was arrested after holding a “No to war” sign next to the Bronze Horseman, a statue of Czar Peter I, known in Russia as Peter the Great. Elena Osipova, the well-known 77-year-old artist, held posters reading “No to war” and “Putin is war” in front of that city’s Kazan Cathedral.

In the Leningrad region, Dmitry Skurikhin painted anti-war slogans on the walls of his store in the village of Russko-Vysotskoe.

The administration at the Sovremennick Theatre in Moscow canceled its performance of “The Gin Game,” starring Liya Akhedzhakova. The actress has repeatedly called for Putin to end the war. After performances members of the audience have thanked her for her stance.

Actions also took place from Vladivostok and Khabarovsk in the Far East to Yekaterinburg in the Urals and from the Arctic port of Murmansk to Tomsk and Kazan across central Russia.

Washington advances own interests

President Joseph Biden marked the invasion’s anniversary by extending the U.S. rulers’ sanctions against Russia, which fall hardest on working people and undermine the building of solidarity between workers in Russia and Ukraine. Like rival capitalist powers, Washington responds to the war by seeking to advance its own strategic interests.

With the U.S. rulers’ tacit approval, the U.K. government backed by the governments of France and Germany offered a post-war security pact to Kyiv. This is to try to induce Kyiv to settle for less than fully restoring Ukraine’s territorial integrity. French President Emmanuel Macron says his government will help Ukraine win, but he has continued to meet with Putin and echoes the Russian ruler’s pretexts for the invasion, saying the Moscow fears the expansion of NATO threatens Russia. Now he plans to fly to China to push for a peace deal.

The Kremlin says it will never give up the parts of Ukraine it has seized. In contrast, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said only his government, of the country that has been invaded, can decide the terms on which the war will end.

The determination of Ukrainian working people to repel Moscow’s forces from every inch of Ukrainian territory has strengthened since the start of the war.

Worldwide protests denounce Moscow war on Ukraine



Militant/Janet Post

Tens of thousands demonstrated in more than 100 cities around the world Feb. 24 opposing Moscow’s brutal war against Ukraine and marking one year since Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion.

More than 10,000 people marched past the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. In Paris, several hundred sang Ukraine’s national anthem at Place de la Republique before Ukrainian children in traditional clothing led a procession. In London, 2,000 rallied at the Russian Embassy where a nearby street has been renamed Kyiv Road. Events were organized in Helsinki; Sydney; Bangkok; Tokyo; Bali, Indonesia; and the Netherlands. Thousands rallied in New York and in Washington, D.C.

Participants included Russians, Georgians, Belarusians and people from other former subject nations under Russian rule.

“Withdraw Russian troops from Ukraine! If Russia stops fighting, there is no war!” chanted hundreds Feb. 25 and 26 outside the Russian Embassy in Seoul, South Korea. A Ukrainian teacher at the protest, Andrei Litvinov, whose brother is a Ukrainian soldier, told the *Korea Herald* he traveled to Poland “with a Korean team to help the war refugees there.” Metelitsa Oleg, from Belarus, who protests at least once a month, said she and “many of her fellow Belarusians” opposed Minsk’s support for Russia.

There were protests in Russia, mostly by people laying flowers or stuffed animals at monuments dedicated to Ukrainian historical figures. Some chanted, “Victory for Ukraine! Freedom for Russia!” Thousands have been arrested for speaking out against Putin’s war.

In one of the largest rallies, tens of thousands gathered in Tbilisi, Georgia, including Ukrainian refugees and students marching from Tbilisi State University. The mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, thanked participants for their solidarity and paid tribute to the 36 Georgian volunteers who have died so far fighting for Ukraine. “You know all too well what Russian aggression means,” he said. Moscow invaded Georgia in 2008.

In the U.S., rallies were organized from Los Angeles to Chicago, Miami to Anchorage, Alaska. In Philadelphia, many Russians joined Ukrainians and others in a march carrying a 197-foot Ukrainian flag, above. “When Putin invaded Ukraine I demonstrated in my hometown of Petrozavodsk against the war. We got arrested,” Russian construction worker Alexandr Pisarev told the *Militant*, proudly showing photos of the protests.

— JANET POST

Workers, women, oppressed nationalities push for rights in Iran

Continued from front page

abusive treatment of women, and equal rights for oppressed nationalities, and as workers stepped up union struggles.

But judiciary spokesperson Massoud Satayshi claimed that “most of the accused and convicts will be released” soon. A coalition of 20 independent unions, cultural organizations and student groups is demanding that all the political and union prisoners be released.

Despite brutal prison conditions, many of those who have been released come out unbroken, confident and ready to press forward the fight for political rights.

Seven women political prisoners were greeted with flowers and cheers by supporters when they were released from Tehran’s notorious Evin prison Feb. 9. After walking out of the prison, without covering their hair, the women stopped to have their picture taken as they chanted “Women, life, freedom!”

Mohammad Habibi, a spokesperson for the Coordinating Council of the Iranian Teachers Trade Union, was released from prison Feb. 8 after nearly a year in jail, at least the third time he has been imprisoned. Habibi was soon back joining other recently freed union activists at meetings to advance the fight for their demands.

At the same time, the bourgeois-clerical regime continues to arrest union and political activists, especially in areas populated by oppressed nationalities such as Kurdistan and Baluchistan.

More space for strikes, protests

Workers across Iran are taking advantage of the space opened up by the resistance to the regime’s assaults to fight for union recognition, go on strike and hold protests to advance their own demands.

Labor actions in the last couple of weeks have included lead and zinc miners in Yazd province demanding unpaid wages, steelworkers in Kerman demanding compensation after the factory closed, and by iron smelt-



Aliieh Motalebzadeh

Seven Iranian women political prisoners, supporters celebrate their release from Tehran’s notorious Evin Prison, Feb. 9. Independent unions, student groups and others are demanding release of all political, union prisoners.

er workers in Isfahan. Other actions have been organized by petrochemical workers in Chabahar, in Sistan-Baluchistan province; bakers in Nishapur, Khorasan province; and chromite and copper miners in Kerman province.

Weekly protests by retired workers continue across the country demand that benefits keep up with soaring prices, with a day of action set for Feb. 28.

The government Feb. 20 shut down *Sazandegi* (Construction), a daily allied with the reformist wing of the capitalist rulers, for publishing a front-page article headlined “Meat rebellion.” It reported the price of meat has skyrocketed 90% over the last year. The government claimed the paper was “disturbing public opinion,” one sign the rulers fear the deep social and economic crisis will spur more resistance by working people.

“Discussion should not be shut down,” said *Etemad* (Trust), another reformist paper. Journalists, it said, should be “the eyes and ears of the people.”

Weekly protests of thousands continue in Baluchistan and Golestan against government repression and unequal treatment of the oppressed Baluch nationality. Among their demands is the prosecution of those responsible for the massacre of more than 60 people when

police and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps attacked protesters outside the mosque in Zahedan Sept. 30.

The government-funded Iranian Labor News Agency printed an interview with Moinuddin Saeedi, a member of the Iranian parliament from the Baluchistan city of Chabahar, defending prominent Baluch Sunni cleric Maulana Abdul-Hamid. He continues to use weekly sermons to denounce repression, despite slanders against him in the pro-regime press. Saeedi said that claims that Abdul-Hamid is provoking violence and “separatism” are false.

Both Saeedi and Abdul-Hamid back protesters’ calls on the government to put perpetrators of the Sept. 30 massacre on trial.

Government agents provocatively entered the mosque in Zahedan during Abdul-Hamid’s service Feb. 24,

Revolution, Counterrevolution and War in Iran

by Steve Clark

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Putin’s war against Ukrainian people shakes up the post-World War II international ‘world order’

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Moscow’s yearlong assault on Ukraine, the first major shooting war on European soil in more than 75 years, has caused deepening shocks to the “world order” put together by the U.S. ruling class after it emerged as top dog at the end of the imperialist slaughter in World War II. It comes on top of the sharpening competition and rivalry from today’s economic crisis.

From Washington to Moscow, Beijing to Berlin, the rulers are scrambling to beef up their military forces and looking to rework their alliances. One of the most important shifts has been between the U.S. rulers — who see Europe and the Pacific as their spheres of influence — and Beijing and Moscow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed China’s top diplomat, Wang Yi, to the Kremlin Feb. 22. Just prior to Moscow’s invasion, the Russian and Chinese governments announced a “no-limits” partnership. Beijing refuses to back Washington’s

demands to isolate Moscow. Chinese-Russian trade has soared over the last year with Beijing becoming the largest buyer of Russian oil.

At the same time, Beijing has taken advantage of Moscow’s weakness by extending its own reach at the Russian capitalist rulers’ expense. The Chinese rulers are expanding their investments in Central Asia, where Moscow has long dominated.

Beijing also issued new regulations this year requiring the addition of Chinese names to eight places along the Russian-Chinese border. Under the directive, the Russian city Vladivostok would once again be called Haishenwai. Along with some 23,000 square miles of other Chinese territory, Vladivostok was taken by the czarist rulers of Russia in 1860. From the early 2000s Chinese capitalists began buying up land and investing in areas of Russia along its vast border. Immigration from China to these areas rose.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping is preparing to visit Moscow for a summit with Putin in the coming months.

“These two countries share a vision,” complained State Department spokesperson Ned Price “of an era in which big countries could bully small countries.” Price neglected to mention that U.S. rulers have waged murderous wars for decades from Korea and Vietnam, to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Today Washington is expanding its military presence and strengthening its alliances in the Pacific to counter Beijing’s rise. The Australian government announced Jan. 6 that it will expand its active defense personnel by a third. Under its AUKUS pact with the rulers of the U.S. and the U.K. it will acquire nuclear-powered submarines.

Meanwhile, Japan’s government, another U.S. ally, announced plans to acquire long-range missiles capable of hitting North Korea and parts of China as part of its biggest military buildup since losing World War II.

Elsewhere in Europe Moscow’s invasion has accelerated the push by

the rulers of Finland and Sweden to join the U.S.-imperialist-led NATO.

Months before the invasion of Ukraine, Moscow demanded NATO refuse to allow any more governments to join. After the invasion began, Finland’s border with Russia was closed and many Finnish companies that traded in Russia shut down. Finnish President Sauli Niinistö said, “The mask has come off and all one can see is the face of war.”

In May, the Finnish government applied to join NATO. So far all but two of the governments in NATO — those in Hungary and Turkey — have approved the bid.

As NATO expands, fissures within it have opened up. On Feb. 18 Hungary’s prime minister, Viktor Orbán, defended his opposition to Washington’s sanctions, saying cutting the Hungarian rulers’ economic ties with Russia “would be against our national interest.” His government also refuses to supply weapons to Kyiv.

Since the war began capitalist rul-

ing classes have begun rearming, with the U.S. rulers in the forefront. In December President Joseph Biden signed a defense budget of \$858 billion, 10% higher than the year before. Military spending across Europe’s rival powers is expected to rise by up to 65% by 2026.

Berlin has announced a boost to its military of more than \$100 billion and sent weapons to Ukraine. French President Emmanuel Macron’s government will raise military spending by more than a third in coming years, it announced Feb. 17, adding it would boost its military presence in the Indo-Pacific region where they have 8,000 soldiers stationed. “We need to be one war ahead,” Macron stated, indicating the carnage the imperialist rulers are preparing worldwide in the years to come.

Tensions rise over Moldova
Putin’s invasion of Ukraine is also aimed at recreating the Russian empire that existed under the czars. He

has other nations in his sites. On Feb. 21 the Kremlin revoked a decree that had committed Moscow to respecting Moldova’s territorial integrity. Moldova lies southwest of Ukraine and has a pro-EU government.

Some 1,700 Russian troops are stationed in Transnistria, a republic in eastern Moldova controlled by pro-Moscow separatists. On Feb. 23 the Kremlin alleged its troops in Transnistria faced a “direct threat” from Ukrainian forces, a claim denied by Kyiv.

Last year Moscow cut off its natural gas supplies to Moldova, leading to power cuts across the country.

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Fight for workers control of the railroads

This statement was released March 1 by Henry Dennison, a rail worker, member of SMART-TD union, and member of the Socialist Workers Party in Seattle.

The disastrous train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, and the ongoing damage it is doing to the lives, health, and livelihoods of workers, farmers and small-business owners throughout the area is a clear demonstration of why workers must use our unions to fight for control over safety and all aspects of the operation of the railroads.

For many years I worked in the coal mines. On the job I learned from my brothers and sisters in the United Mine Workers of America how miners organized and fought for a measure of control over how we mined coal. Why we had to stand together every day to enforce safety questions, and how we could stand with other workers in other unions to strengthen each other. For a short time the union won the right to shut down production whenever it determined we faced unsafe conditions.

Politicians of both the Democratic and Republican parties are using the disaster for their own advantage. The Biden administration claims that they will introduce new regulations they say will give the government the power to prevent more catastrophes like has been visited on East Palestine. But this is a trap. History shows regulations only strengthen the hand of the government, as opposed to the workers themselves. The capitalist rulers' political parties and government protect the profits and power of the boss class. This was demonstrated yet again when the Biden administration led a bipartisan Congress to ban rail workers right to strike and imposed a contract we had voted down last fall.

Instead of turning regulation of the railroad over to the bosses' government, we need to use our unions to take control over the conditions we work under. This is the only way we can protect ourselves and all those who live along the tracks.

We need shorter trains. Fifty-car trains with a crew

of two on the head end and two in a caboose or engine on the rear would allow workers to keep eyes on the entire train. In East Palestine, this would have enabled us to see the hot axle on train 32N and bring it to a halt, preventing the disaster that took place.

We need to demand the rail bosses stop cutting jobs to boost profits and immediately hire more car inspectors and repairmen, engine mechanics, operating crew members and track workers, and restore engine and car repair facilities that have been shuttered or reduced in size.

The rail bosses' drive to use longer and longer trains, fewer workers, just-in-time scheduling, and cut back even further on maintenance to boost profits reflects their class priorities — profits over all other concerns. This will lead to more East Palestines, more Lac-Mégantics. Our interest is the protection of the entire working class.

“As long as it is more profitable to clean up a disaster than to prevent one,” Jeremy Ferguson, president of the SMART-TD union, said after the derailment, “these Wall Street-driven rail corporations will continue to hold communities like East Palestine hostage.”

We need to demand that those in East Palestine whose livelihoods and living conditions have been so callously upended by Norfolk Southern bosses and government officials at all levels be compensated. We should demand they receive lifetime medical coverage paid by the railroad because the chemicals that leaked and others produced in the “controlled” fire may take years before they cause disease.

Laws like the Railway Labor Act — passed to strengthen the hands of the rail bosses — and regulations that always favor the bosses don't exist because the working class is weak. They exist because the capitalist rulers fear our numbers and our potential strength.

We need to step up our use of our unions to fight for our interests and the interests of our class. To do so, we need to build our own party, a labor party, based on our unions, to fight to take political power into our own hands.

‘Militant’ fights ban

Continued from front page
they choose.”

The fight against the ban is winning broad support. Timothy Frankland, a third-generation union worker in St. Paul, Minnesota, urged the committee “to reverse the ban.”

Justin Mazzola, deputy director of research for Amnesty International USA, wrote to the review committee that the two articles “merely provide information on current events related to these important national and global events.” Prisoners have the right to “maintain their connection to the outside world during their incarceration.” PEN America, Reporters Committee on Freedom of the Press and the National Coalition Against Censorship have also called on Florida prison officials to reverse the ban.

The number of prisoner subscribers to the *Militant* has been increasing over the last several years. There are now more than 190 inmates in 94 state and federal prisons in 28 states who subscribe, including more than 80 in 23 state facilities in Florida. While prison systems outside Florida have occasionally attempted to bar the *Militant*, all those attempts have been overturned.

Florida prison officials have tried to suppress the *Militant* nearly 50 times from 2013 to 2021. The *Militant* challenged every one, overturning most of them.

“There is nothing in the *Militant* that justifies it being banned,” said *Militant* editor John Studer. “Prisoners have the constitutional right to read a wide a variety of literature, to think for themselves, to form their own opinions, and we have the right to promote our point of view and reach our readers.”

Saritza Legault, Florida Department of Corrections Library Services administrator, informed David Goldstein, the *Militant*'s attorney, that the review committee will meet March 9 to “review” the impoundment.

Militant readers can help win support from co-workers, union officials, fellow union members and others.

Send letters to Saritza.Legault@fdc.myflorida.com or via post office mail to Florida DC Literature Review Committee, 501 South Calhoun Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-2500. Please send a copy to the *Militant*.

‘Special’ grand jury probe in Georgia is an attack on political rights

Continued from front page

Convened by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, the special grand jury is part of a two-year-long “investigation” into Trump in Georgia. Willis is a Democrat, called a “pit bull in the courtroom” by cops who worked with her. The jury sat for eight months, called 75 witnesses, including subpoenaing former Trump administration officials. The reason this grand jury is “special” is that it had no power to indict anyone. It was set up as a giant fishing expedition to dig up dirt on Trump. Willis can now “recommend” charges to a regular grand jury, which she would also run.

Portions of the special grand jury report were released to the press Feb. 13, including its conclusion that “no widespread fraud took place in the Georgia 2020 presidential election.” Trump's attorneys had alleged officials counted votes of 10,000 dead people, convicted felons and unregistered voters. The only specific reference to indictments in the excerpts says a majority of the panel's members “believe that perjury may have been committed by one or more witnesses.”

Fulton County Judge Robert McBurney gave Kohrs the green light to discuss the jury's deliberations. She proceeded to give out all kinds of “wink-wink” hints Trump was headed for indictment. Kohrs told NBC the list of recommended indictments “is not short” and includes names “you would recognize.” Regarding “the big name everyone keeps asking me about” — a thinly veiled reference to Trump — she told the Trump-hating CNN, “I don't think you'll be shocked.”

When reporters told her that Trump said the Feb. 13 grand jury report had exonerated him, they reported Kohrs rolled her eyes and burst out laughing. The grand jury never called Trump to testify and the released excerpts of its report don't mention him.

She told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that the jury heard tapes of Trump's phone calls, saying it's “amazing how many hours of footage you can find of

that man on the phone.” She told them, “some of these that were privately recorded or recorded by a staffer.” She offered her opinions on which witnesses seemed happy to testify and which didn't.

As the jury foreman, Kohrs swore in witnesses, she told the *New York Times*, claiming, “you can tell a lot about people in that 60 seconds.” She also revealed prosecutors invited her and other jurors to parties.

A number of liberal media commentators and prosecutors have said that Kohrs' extensive comments may damage any actual attempt to charge Trump or others arising from Willis' probe.

What is a grand jury?

After the American Revolution, working people fought to have protections against government attack written into the new Constitution. One was the establishment of the grand jury system, to place prosecutions into hands of fellow citizens, not the government.

This is part of the Bill of Rights Fifth Amendment, which establishes no one can be prosecuted for the same crime twice, nor compelled to give evidence against themselves, “nor be denied of life, liberty or property without due process of the law.” Each of these are vital protections that workers, farmers and other exploited producers need.

But as capitalist rule in the U.S. has grown to require more tools against working people, grand juries have been transformed into the opposite of what they were intended for. They're a tool for prosecutors to organize fishing expeditions. District attorneys use grand juries to compel witnesses to testify, without a lawyer and with no cross-examination of your accuser allowed.

The government has a decadeslong record using the extraordinary powers granted to grand juries to target opponents, including working-class fighters. In 1936 federal prosecutors used a grand jury to frame up Pedro Albizu Campos and other Puerto Rican Na-

tionalist Party leaders on thought-control “seditious conspiracy” charges. A federal grand jury was used to indict playwright Arthur Miller in 1957 after he refused to tell a congressional committee the names of Communist Party members he had met.

And a federal grand jury was used in 2010 to go after anti-war activists in Chicago and Minneapolis, leading to a raid on their homes by the FBI.

Crisis of bosses twin parties

Underlying the hostile and factional relations between Democrats and Republicans today are sharp challenges facing the capitalist rulers. They're grappling with how to defend their declining domination of the imperialist world order amid accelerating conflicts with rivals like Beijing, which has intensified after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. They also face union and other working-class struggles that have broken out following years of the capitalist rulers dumping the economic crisis of their system on our backs.

Neither party has been able to win decisive majorities in Congress and chart a self-confident course for the ruling capitalist families. Both are wracked with internal divisions while engrossed in partisan assaults against the other in preparation for the 2024 election. Neither party has a clearly agreed-on candidate.

Both parties fear working people — the tens of millions Biden castigated as “MAGA Republicans” and “semi-fascists” last year, the same people Hillary Clinton labeled “deplorables.” This was clear last fall when a bipartisan Congress came together to ban rail workers from striking over safety and livable work conditions and imposing a contract they had voted down.

Kohrs' media tour was one more front in the Democrats' relentless drive to make Trump's “crimes” the decisive issue in 2024. But whoever's rights are targeted by the rulers today, it's the exploited and oppressed who will be in the crosshairs tomorrow.