

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Farmers in Cuba confront  
impact of US economic war  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## China-US rulers conflict deepens amid spreading world disorder

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Following years of expanding their state capitalist economy and building up their military, the Chinese rulers are now asserting greater political clout, especially in Asia, leading to sharper tensions with the imperialist rulers in Washington. Conflicts that have been building for years have been accelerated by the worldwide fallout from Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

In a not-so-veiled swipe at the U.S. rulers, Chinese President Xi Jinping told Russian President Vladimir Putin that it is Beijing and Moscow that are driving historic changes in the world, at the end of a three day visit to Moscow March 22.

Xi proclaimed "common interests are multiplying" between the two countries. Both signed a statement on

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## Back Ukraine fight against Putin regime's invasion, war

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Russian President Vladimir Putin is preparing to conscript another levy of over 100,000 working people into Moscow's army, after sending tens of thousands to their deaths, attempting to conquer Ukraine. Working people there are determined to defend their homeland as Moscow bombs densely populated urban areas daily and attempts to advance along the eastern front.

Putin says "Ukraine as a nation should not exist and that Ukrainians are a people who should not be allowed to live," Volodymyr Hapun, a Ukrainian soldier defending the line near Kremynna in the east, told the *Kyiv Post*. Moscow sends its forces into battle "even though they may lose a significant number," he said. Ukrainians "can't afford that kind of

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## Back East Palestine fight for control over health, cleanup

New derailments hit Minnesota, Holland, more



The Intelligencer/Wheeling News-Register/Stephanie Elverd

Help is pouring in from around the country for working people of East Palestine, Ohio, weeks after toxic derailment disaster caused by rail bosses' drive for profits. Above, volunteers distribute supplies in neighboring Negley March 26, delivered by Soup Mama's convoy of trucks.

BY TONY LANE

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Working people here continue to fight to gain control over the cleanup, rebuilding and long-term health care needed in the wake of the Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern train derailment and subsequent fire and environmental disaster. And they're winning widespread solidarity and help.

Evidence shows that residents, firemen, cleanup crews and others were stricken by the toxic chemicals released into the air, water and soil by the disaster. After over a month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention just admitted that seven of the 15 inspectors who conducted house-to-house interviews

in East Palestine fell ill with symptoms of nausea and headaches. Those same symptoms have been reported by many local residents.

Forcing out the financial records and extent of the attacks on workers by the Norfolk Southern bosses remains a ne-

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## Help broaden reach of 'Militant,' books, the Militant Fighting Fund



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Alyson Kennedy, SWP candidate for mayor of Fort Worth, Texas, and campaign supporter Geraldo Sánchez discuss working-class road with warehouse worker Michael Perkins April 1.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

When Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor in Fort Worth, Texas, and party member Geraldo Sánchez were going door to door there April 1, warehouse worker Michael Perkins was in his truck, getting ready to go to his second job as a lawn care worker. As the capitalist economic crisis unfolds, more workers are finding one job is not enough to get by.

Sánchez showed Perkins *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes. "This book

is about the struggles of workers and farmers who are Black and shows how it's possible to change the conditions we face," Sánchez said. It points

**DEMOCRATS ATTACK  
ON TRUMP HITS  
RIGHTS WORKERS NEED  
— SWP campaign statement p. 11**

a road forward for all working people. "I always thought Malcolm X was more for the people," Perkins said.

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## Historic fall in life expectancy reflects deepening crisis of capitalism today

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Life expectancy continues to plunge in the U.S. Today it has fallen to 76 years old, its lowest level in over a quarter century. This is not from a new COVID-19 epidemic, but the deepening social and moral crisis of capitalism. It reflects the living and working conditions working people faced before the pandemic and since, as the bosses drive to maximize their profits off our backs.

While life expectancy in other imperialist countries rebounded to an average of 82.4 years in 2021, in the U.S. it continued to fall. In fact, U.S. life expectancy is today lower than that of Cuba (79.2 in 2023), Lebanon

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## Teamsters at Sysco strike over wages, barbaric schedules

BY AMY HUSK

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Nearly 300 workers, members of Teamsters Local 89 and Local 135, went on strike March 27 at Sysco here and in Indianapolis. Couple day solidarity strikes spread to California and Washington.

Continued on page 6

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# PBS documentary distorts story of fight against Vietnam War

**BY TERRY EVANS**

“The Movement and the ‘Madman,’” a new PBS documentary, offers a version of the movement against the Vietnam War in 1969 that blames President Richard Nixon for the war and plays up the role of the Democratic Party that year in the Vietnam Moratorium. The demonstrations drew hundreds of thousands into their first protests and attracted working people.

Some 8 million U.S. military personnel were deployed in the course of the Southeast Asian War against the struggle of the Vietnamese people for self-determination and to reunify their country.

Washington went down to a historic defeat in 1975. Vietnam was reunified and capitalist property relations were overturned a few years later.

In the midst of a shooting war, more and more working people in the U.S. began to question it and an anti-war movement — unprecedented in wartime in U.S. history — grew. The largest ever anti-war demonstrations were organized, having a powerful impact on the ranks of the armed forces. The movement was deeply intertwined with the ongoing struggle against Jim Crow segregation.

Produced and directed by Stephen Talbot, “The Movement and the ‘Madman’” focuses on 1969. It shows interviews with some leaders of the Moratorium, footage of the massive demonstrations in October and November, and interviews with government officials. Nixon planned to “threaten the North Vietnamese with nuclear weapons,” Morton Halperin, then an aide to Nixon’s Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, says. “To make that threat credible,” Nixon wanted “the Vietnamese

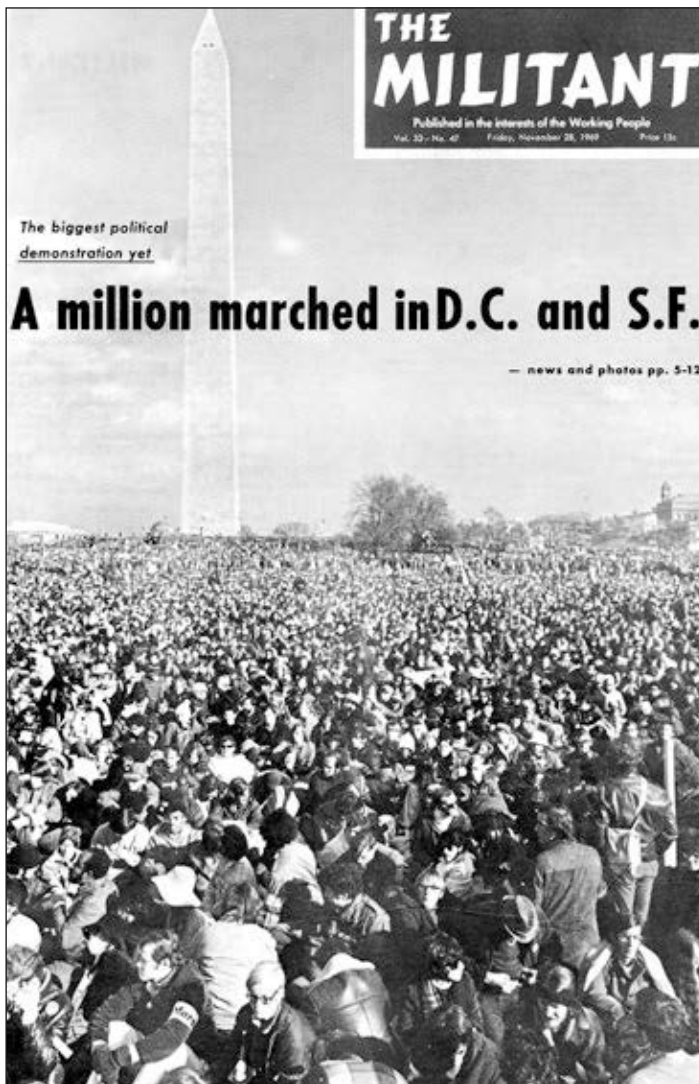
to fear he was crazy and might actually do this.”

Nixon would later admit the spread of anti-war protests helped to destroy “the credibility of my ultimatum to Hanoi.”

Early in the film David Hawk, one of the organizers of the Oct. 15, 1969, Moratorium, heaps praise on the “courage” of congressional representatives who joined anti-war actions. Their speeches on the steps of the Capitol are shown prominently. David Mixner, another organizer of the October Moratorium proudly tells filmmakers that Bill Clinton, then working as an intern for a senator, visited him at the Moratorium’s office.

Anyone looking for an account of the class forces that ended the war, and the working-class perspective of many who led the fight, would do well to pick up a copy of Fred Halstead's *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the Movement in the U.S. Against the Vietnam War*. Halstead was one of the organizers of the 1969 anti-war demonstrations and had been Socialist Workers Party candidate for president in 1968. He describes how the war was escalated by the previous Democratic Party administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. "Dove politicians didn't lead," Halstead writes, "they followed, far behind."

“Even after the dramatic switch in



Nov. 28, 1969, *Militant* reporting massive protest against Vietnam War.

public attitude” toward the war “made dovishness permissible on Capitol Hill,” Halstead said, “the vast majority in both parties — doves included — consistently voted for the Vietnam military budget up to 1973.”

## U.S. rulers forced out of Vietnam

“For all their tactical disputes,” Halstead writes, the rulers “never did change their minds about their right to brutalize Vietnam to keep a piece of it under U.S. domination.”

"They were *forced* — first of all by the resistance of the Indochinese peoples but also by the American anti-war movement and international opposition to the U.S. role," he said. "They backed off, bit by bit, brutalizing as much as they could get away with, all the way to the end."

Little mention is made in the film of the huge impact of the Black-led working-class movement for civil rights un-

derway as the war took place. That successful struggle transformed the attitudes and the self-confidence of millions, giving momentum to those protesting the war here and in the army.

"The Movement and the 'Madman'" barely mentions the shifts already taking place among U.S. soldiers. By 1971, "the morale, discipline and battle-worthiness of U.S. Armed Forces," wrote the *Armed Forces Journal*, was "worse than at any time this century."

By focusing heavily on Nixon's plans to threaten a nuclear attack, the film minimizes the actual horror inflicted by Washington on the Vietnamese people, including carpet bombings and widespread use of napalm.

Some 60,000 U.S. soldiers were killed in the war. Millions of inhabitants of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia lost their lives as the U.S. rulers dropped more bombs than in all previous wars combined. From 1962 to 1971, their forces sprayed 21 million gallons of defoliants across southern Vietnam. Agent Orange, known to produce cancer, was widely used,

turning vast tracts into wastelands. Thousands of U.S. veterans suffer from the effects of Agent Orange today.

Nixon's nuclear threats were not those of a "madman," any more than the sharp escalations of the war by Johnson.

The anti-war mobilizations “changed the political face of the United States and motivated a healthy distrust of the rulers in Washington,” Halstead concludes.

"It broke the fever of the anti-communist hysteria and weakened the efficacy of the red scares," he said. It challenged "the image of GIs as obedient pawns of the brass immunized against dissenting currents within the civilian population."

Today, sharpening conflicts among the world's capitalist powers accelerated by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, and the ensuing worldwide arms race, point toward inevitable wars to come. Halstead's account of the class forces that came together against the Vietnam War is essential reading.

# THE MILITANT

*For a fighting alliance of workers and farmers*

*Working farmers in California are losing crops to flooding as the U.S. government sends aid to richer agribusinesses. The 'Militant' explains need for an alliance between workers and farmers, and a labor party based on our unions that will fight for our class interests.*



KSBW Channel 8  
Residents protest government indifference  
to flooding in Pajaro, California, March 17.

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Help broaden reach of ‘Militant’

Continued from front page  
“Martin Luther King wanted everyone to follow him to keep them from making trouble. Sometimes you have to fight to open doors.”

Pointing to the land behind his house, Perkins added, “My dad had cows, goats and he raised and trained horses. The city tried to get us to move out, but they couldn’t do it because we’ve been here for so long.”

“Workers and working farmers face deteriorating conditions and we’re seeing more examples of those who are saying, ‘Enough is enough,’” Kennedy said. “The Socialist Workers Party explains the problems we face are not because of the divisions between the Democrats and Republicans, but from class divisions between the wealthy capitalists and their upper-middle-class backers and working people.”

Perkins got a copy of the *Militant* and urged the socialist campaigners to come back next Saturday so he can get some of the books.

Continuing these discussions on the challenges working people face today and a road forward is important. It is at the heart of the international spring campaign to get at least 1,350 subscriptions to the *Militant*, sell 1,350 books by SWP and other revolutionary leaders, and raise \$165,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund. The eight-week effort runs through May 16.

Members of the SWP in the U.S. and Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the U.K. are talking to workers on their doorsteps, at union picket lines and other protests. A key book they are introducing is *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by Barnes and SWP leaders Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark.

In Chicago, Ilona Gersh, SWP candidate for mayor, and campaign sup-

porters presented the party’s program to those in the crowd at a March 30 rally where U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders and a leader of the American Federation of Teachers encouraged people to vote for Democrat Brandon Johnson, who faces fellow Democrat Paul Vallas in the April 4 mayoral election.

“Both the Democrats and Republican parties represent the ruling rich,” Gersh told Tucker Millett.

“Yes, I agree, they are two wings of the same thing,” Millett responded. “So who should we support?”

Workers need a labor party

“We need a labor party that can champion union strikes and organizing drives, build protests for women’s emancipation, against racism, for immigrant rights,” Gersh replied. “We need to unite the working class to cut across the divisions that the bosses and the government impose on us.

“All of the capitalist candidates for mayor,” Gersh said, “offer schemes that they say will provide jobs and develop the economy, like opening more casinos and stores to sell cannabis.” The government’s push to get more people addicted to gambling and marijuana is pernicious, the SWP points out. It undermines the fighting spirit and morale of the working class.

“What we need is a federally funded jobs program, led by the unions, to build things working people need,” Gersh said. “A guarantee that when inflation goes up, our wages go up too. Jobs that pay enough to support families of working people without the massive overtime we work now.”

Millett subscribed to the *Militant*. At a SWP literature table set up at the event, five others subscribed and three people purchased copies of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us* and several other titles.

SWP members Ned Measel and



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

SWP campaign supporter Valerie Libby, right, shows *Militant* to Vicky Hamilton in Springfield, Ohio, March 28. Hamilton and her husband run a small produce farm near where a Norfolk Southern train derailed March 4. “How do we know we are getting the facts?” Hamilton asked.

Jacquie Henderson and campaign supporter Valerie Libby went to Springfield, Ohio, March 28. A Norfolk Southern train derailed there March 4, just a month after the toxic derailment in East Palestine where workers have been fighting to control the cleanup and rebuilding of their town.

Derailment in Springfield, Ohio

“Of course we are concerned,” said Vicky Hamilton who has a small produce farm not far from where the train derailed. “My husband is out plowing the field now for planting and we hope to open with baked goods next month. But we haven’t received any answers from anyone. They announced that there is no problem with the rail cars on the ground. But how do we know we are getting the facts?”

Measel said, “Working people need to demand full access to the company’s records. And we should support rail workers’ demands for limits on length of the trains and for train

crews of four, two on the front and two on the back.”

Hamilton subscribed to the *Militant* and invited socialist campaigners to come back to talk more and sample her baked goods and vegetables.

Getting fund off to a good start

The SWP in Chicago has been reaching out to win new contributors for the Militant Fighting Fund.

“Volunteers get together at our campaign headquarters to call people,” Gersh told the *Militant*. “The phone calls are a way to get to know our subscribers, discuss that week’s issue with them, and encourage them to renew and to participate in activities with us, and get contributions to the fund.”

“As of April 3, contributors have pledged \$10,927 toward our local goal of \$14,000,” she said, “and we’ve sent in to the *Militant* over half.”

To join in the campaign to expand the reach of the *Militant* and books contact distributors listed on page 10.

Campaign to expand reach of ‘Militant,’ books, fund  
March 18-May 16 (week two)

Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold	Fund quota	Fund received
UNITED STATES						
Atlanta	50	13	50	19	\$9,500	\$2,350
Chicago	100	30	100	57	\$14,000	\$7,447
Cincinnati	50	17	50	24	\$6,000	\$0
Dallas-FortWorth	60	19	60	34	\$5,000	\$878
Lincoln	15	6	15	5	\$500	\$0
Los Angeles	90	44	90	58	\$16,000	\$600
Miami	45	12	45	42	\$5,500	\$858
Minneapolis	70	27	70	38	\$5,500	\$435
N. New Jersey	85	25	85	49	\$7,000	\$940
New York	100	26	115	62	\$20,500	\$6,935
Oakland	90	29	90	33	\$15,000	\$3,572
Philadelphia	50	21	50	28	\$6,000	\$0
Pittsburgh	45	11	45	10	\$6,000	\$754
Seattle	75	21	75	18	\$14,000	\$50
Washington	50	21	50	24	\$4,500	\$907
Other						
Total U.S.	975	322	990	501	\$135,000	\$25,726
Prisoners	50	43				
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	40	17	40	28	\$2,450	
Manchester	35	15	40	15	\$1,200	
Total U.K.	75	32	80	43	\$3,650	
Canada	90	34	90	61	\$12,000	\$2,315
Australia	35	10	35	15	\$6,000	\$530
Total	1,225	441	1,195	620	\$156,650	\$28,571
SHOULD BE	1,350	338	1,350	338	\$165,000	\$41,250

Communist League hits Jew-hating attack in Canada

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

MONTREAL — During the March 25-26 weekend an antisemitic attack on the Bagg Street Shul took place here. Perpetrators spray-painted multiple black swastikas on the front of the 102-year-old synagogue, including on the glass on the front door. The swastikas were discovered the morning of March 27 by synagogue President Michael Kaplan.

Sam Sheraton, whose Hungarian-born mother survived the Auschwitz concentration camp, told the *Montreal Gazette*, “The Nazis went around breaking all the glass and painting all the synagogues with swastikas, so it’s very, very symbolic.”

The vandalism was condemned by Jewish organizations, with B’nai Brith calling it “a clear act of antisemitism.” They and other groups said they are working with police to ensure the security of the community and that the

perpetrators are prosecuted.

Marvin Rotrand, national director of B’nai Brith’s League for Human Rights, noted that the number of antisemitic incidents recorded in Quebec in 2021 increased by 20% over the previous year, with the majority occurring in Montreal.

On March 29, Rotrand sent a letter to Montreal Mayor Valerie Plante and the City Council urging the administration to be “more proactive in combating antisemitism.” B’nai Brith urged Plante to mark Yom Hashoah, also known as Holocaust Remembrance Day, April 17-18. The commemoration honors the 6 million Jews killed by the Nazis. Plante has condemned the Montreal attack.

On April 1 Felix Vincent Ardea, Communist League candidate in the federal riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grace-Westmount, visited the synagogue to extend solidarity and deliver a statement the CL campaign issued March 30 entitled, “Jew-hatred is a deadly threat to working people. Protest antisemitic attack on the Bagg Street Shul in Montreal.”

Shul President Kaplan warmly received the CL candidate. Kaplan said in his opinion the attack “was an isolated incident; our relations with the community here in Montreal are very good.”

“In today’s world of deepening capitalist crisis, we see the contradictory

reality that while antisemitism among working people is at a low ebb, individual assaults on Jews are on the rise,” Vincent Ardea said. “Every act of Jew-hatred must be answered and combated, no matter where it comes from.”

He said his campaign sees the attack as a working-class issue. “The unions need to speak out, organize and act to defend Jews from every antisemitic assault,” the League’s statement says.

Kaplan gave the CL candidate a tour and briefly explained the history of the synagogue, recognized as a heritage site both by the city of Montreal and Quebec government.

The Jewish Question  
A MARXIST INTERPRETATION

\$17

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# Celebrate the life of Celia Pugh, Communist League leader in UK

BY PETE CLIFFORD

LONDON — More than 60 people gathered here March 26 to celebrate the life and political contributions of Communist League leader Celia Pugh. A 52-year veteran of the communist movement, she died March 4 after a long illness at 70.

Participants included her long-time partner Pete Rosner, her two brothers and sister, their partners, as well as others who had journeyed from France, Belgium, Norway, Northern Ireland and the U.S. Twenty-five messages to the meeting were displayed from people who had worked with Pugh from North America, the South Pacific and elsewhere in Europe. A four-panel display highlighted her part in working-class battles and party building.

Communist League leaders Jonathan Silberman and Ólöf Andra Proppé, and Mary Martin, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S., spoke at the meeting. Proppé is a rail worker and has been part of a series of recent national strikes held by the Rail Maritime and Transport union to fight for better wages and to oppose job cuts. The meeting was chaired by CL leader Catharina Tirsén, just returned from Iraqi Kurdistan where she was part of an international team presenting books by communists and other revolutionary leaders at the Pathfinder stand at the Erbil book fair.

“Celia’s determination not to stand on the sidelines but to get involved in the class struggle was decisive to her becoming a communist,” Silberman told participants. He, Pugh and Rosner had joined the International Marxist Group at Essex University in the course of big working-class battles. In January 1972 Pugh helped lead an occupation of the university that enabled some 250 striking miners to be billeted there and use the campus as a base to picket nearby power stations. The nationwide strike, marked by mass picketing, led to miners winning a significant pay raise.

“It’s the first time I had heard of the miners strikes,” Gabriella Adeyemo, a factory cleaner in London who attended the meeting, said. “It was great how Celia took solidarity.”

Weeks later Pugh and fellow students joined a London demonstration protesting the killing of 14 civil rights

protesters in Derry, Northern Ireland, by British soldiers, known as Bloody Sunday. In March of the same year, Pugh organized solidarity for women shoe workers at Fakenham, Norfolk, inspired by the rising women’s liberation movement. They’d occupied the factory to fight for jobs.

## Turn to industrial unions

Working-class battles like this, alongside revolutions in Grenada, Nicaragua and Iran convinced the world communist movement to organize to get a majority of its members into the industrial unions in 1979. Pugh was at the forefront of the effort to build parties that were proletarian in program, composition and conduct.

In 1980 she moved to Cardiff, South Wales, leading efforts to organize solidarity with the 14-week national steel strike. She built relations with strikers, writing part of a pamphlet about the strike, called “Steel women’s power.” At the same time, as miners were preparing battles that were to culminate in the 1984-85 strike, Pugh led party branches in building political relations with coal miners throughout the area. In later years she lived in Manchester, Nottingham, and London.

“Celia never hesitated to move where the party needed,” Safia Ouabaio, from Amiens, France, told the *Militant* after the meeting. She did so, wrote Communist League leader Tony Hunt in a message to the meeting, because she wanted to do whatever was necessary “to build the only kind of party that can lead the exploited and oppressed to making a revolution.”

“The fight to carry out the turn to industry led to the formation of the Communist League in 1988,” Silberman said.

The turn required “strengthening our understanding of the foundations of the modern communist movement,” Martin explained in her presentation. “So we’re better able to explain the history of our class and the road to taking power.” In 1985 Pugh was the first communist from the U.K. to participate in the Socialist Workers Party’s leadership school in the U.S., taking six months away from day-to-day responsibilities to study works by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

“Such international collaboration is



Militant/Dag Tirsén

Participants heard talks on Celia Pugh’s contributions to building the communist movement. Many stayed afterwards for political discussion, to buy books and enjoy refreshments.

central to all our work,” Martin said.

SWP leader Norton Sandler was at the same session of the school as Pugh. “Celia threw herself into the study of Marxism,” he wrote in a message to the meeting. And she “contributed over many years to the rich political continuity our international movement builds on today,” providing “solid foundations to take advantage of new opportunities that are coming with the low point of labor resistance behind us.”

One example, Martin pointed to, is what is unfolding in East Palestine, Ohio, after the derailment of a train carrying toxic chemicals. “Working people are fighting to gain control over the cleanup, a fight that goes hand-in-hand with the struggle of rail workers for control over job conditions that are crucial to their lives and the lives of those living near the tracks.”

“Many messages to the meeting speak of Celia’s capacities as a ‘tribune of the people,’” Silberman said, “reacting to all cases of tyranny and oppression wherever it occurs.” Displays at the meeting featured photos of Pugh as a CL parliamentary candidate, campaigning in working-class areas and writing on countless occasions and on many issues for the *Militant*.

An important highlight, Silberman said, was her response to “revolutions in Grenada and Nicaragua that established workers and farmers governments, joining Cuba in standing up to imperialism.” A counterrevolutionary coup was carried out in Grenada in 1983 by a Stalinist faction in the government. “Maurice Bishop and other central leaders were murdered, giving Washington an opening to invade.

## Defending Maurice Bishop’s legacy

“Celia took central responsibility for leading the movement in the U.K. to defend Bishop’s legacy in the face of a slander campaign orchestrated by Stalinist parties around the world,” Silberman said. She worked with George Louison, former agriculture minister in the revolutionary government, who was then living in London. “Celia and George went house to house spending hours explaining the truth to Grenadians and others from the Caribbean who were living in London.”

In 1988 Pugh joined a voluntary work brigade to Cuba, Proppé said. The trip took place during the rectification process, a movement led by Fidel Castro to reverse the consequences of copying political methods long dominant in the Soviet Union, to lead working people to take greater control over their

state and address unmet social needs. In the *Militant* that July, Pugh wrote she would join Cuban workers “constructing foundations for family doctor clinics, houses and other building projects.” After returning, Proppé said, “Celia helped organize several tours of Cuban revolutionaries to the U.K.”

In 2010 Pugh started to suffer from dementia. The League worked with her to continue a fruitful political life, for as long as possible. She worked in the McVitie’s biscuit factory until late 2014, Silberman said. “She could do the job but was unsure how to find which line she should work on. Her workmates ensured she was able to get there.”

Martin described a visit she’d made with Pugh to London’s world-renown Kew Gardens in 2016 while she was visiting the U.K. with SWP presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy. “This experience taught me something about utilizing the capacities of comrades at whatever stage of their life,” Martin said. “To carry forward the work of the party and to get enjoyment. Celia knew all the best places to visit.”

Participants contributed 2,000 pounds (\$2,470) to the work of the League at the meeting. Many stayed around afterward poring over the displays, chatting and enjoying delicious refreshments.

“I got a real sense of history from the meeting,” Thom Hutchinson, a media project coordinator, told this reporter, “one that’s carried over to today.” He picked up a copy of *The Turn to Industry: Forging a Proletarian Party* by SWP leader Jack Barnes to learn more.

Roman Laniel, a student from Amiens, France, was one of those at the meeting. He’s joined union-led actions protesting the French government’s moves to raise the retirement age. Like several people at the meeting he never met Pugh, but “through the speeches I got to know her, the political experiences of working people that were related and we are part of today.”



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Hugh Robertson and Celia Pugh, center, take *Militant* and Pathfinder books door to door, building support for striking truck drivers in Dagenham, East London, May 10, 2015.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### TEXAS

#### Fort Worth

**Defend Constitutional Freedoms from Government Assault.** Speaker: Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., April 15, 5:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 6815 Manhattan Blvd., Gramercy Building, Suite 108. Tel: (817) 899-6720.



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

## Northwestern hospital workers demand more pay and staffing

CHICAGO — “Respect us, pay us, staff us!” chanted hospital workers, members of Service Employees International Union, and their supporters outside Northwestern hospital here March 31. They were there to build support during their ongoing contract negotiations with the hospital. They are emergency room technicians, cooks, pharmacy technicians, groundskeepers, housekeeping workers and many others essential to the hospital’s functioning.

The current contract ended Jan. 28 and the union is fighting for an agreement raising the minimum pay from \$15.80 per hour to \$25, for safer staffing levels and an increase in overtime premiums. The hospital countered, offering just \$1.20 per hour for the lowest paid workers and 44 cents for the technicians. They refused to discuss minimum staffing levels or overtime pay.

Carson Schmittle, an emergency room technician and one of the speakers at the rally, told the crowd about the dangerous conditions patients face because of the staffing levels. “The ratio of techs to patients should ideally be one tech to 10 patients or less,” he said. But there have been days where he has been the only worker, serving up to 100 patients. “We continue to be expected to do more with less. This results in unstable patients often waiting for hours to even have their vitals checked. It weighs heavily on us.”

Twenty-six of 49 emergency room technicians left Northwestern in the last year. This meant Schmittle was tasked with training new hires before he felt comfortable safely doing the job.

“If we don’t come to work, our patients don’t eat, they don’t get transferred to where they need to go, there is no Northwestern without us,” said Kimberly Smith, chief steward of the union and a patient care worker.

— Kaitlin Estill

## Minneapolis postal workers rally for contract, no forced overtime

MINNEAPOLIS — “We deserve to have our lives back!” chanted some 150 members of National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 9, family members and supporters outside the main post office here April 2. They’re demanding an end to forced overtime and an increase in the workforce. The union has been negotiating for a new contract since Feb. 22.

“Staffing, safety, and service — Letter carriers need a raise,” read the banner workers spoke in front of, describing the shortage of workers that has resulted in large amounts of forced overtime. Days can last 12 or 14 hours, and workweeks can range from 60 to 80 hours and beyond. Normal days off are regularly canceled, with carriers scheduled six and sometimes seven days a week — enforced with threats of discipline.

“The hours are really rough on families when you don’t get time off work,” letter carrier Latham Luepke told the *Militant*. “I worry about him all the time,” said his wife, Ty, who joined the picket, “being outside in this winter weather 12 hours a day.”

Carrier Ben Noble said the long hours make the work even more dangerous than it already is. On-the-job injuries have increased.

Holding an “End mandatory overtime” sign, Andy Olufson said, “Just

to get a paycheck, you shouldn’t have to put yourself in a meat grinder.” He said he just got engaged. “If I hadn’t been able to get on eight hours, I wouldn’t have been dateable.”

This staffing shortage impacts the service to the public. Carrier Pete Schilling said there are routes in his West Edina station that are only delivered once a week. Customers regularly complain of delayed and missing mail.

Management’s answer was to impose a so-called golden hour rule, where carriers aren’t allowed to speak to each other for the first hour of work, a move to speed up production. Carriers that break the rule are harassed.

— Chris Pennock and Kevin Dwire

## Steelworkers rally protests firings at Calif. Chevron refinery

RICHMOND, Calif. — Over 60 people attended a protest organized by United Steelworkers Local 5 at the Chevron oil refinery here March 23 titled “We are still here.” The leaflet building the action said, “Bring your family, friends and pets for a rally marking nearly one year since we went on strike.”

“Since coming back to work last May over 10 union members have been unjustly terminated,” B.K. White, a member of the union’s Workers Committee at the refinery and former USW Local 5 president, told the *Militant*. “Toward the end of the strike, I was told off the record that Chevron management would be gunning for me. They intended to find any excuse to fire me. And that’s just what happened. I got fired fighting for my people. We are waiting for arbitration to get my job back.”

Elvira Figueroa, a worker with more than seven years at the refinery, said, “Beyond the 10 fired, there are many more who have been placed in the discipline system. In some cases, they’re just one step away from firing. The company is particularly going after union health and safety representatives.”

“Chevron’s purpose is to threaten and intimidate us to keep us from continuing to carry out union activity,” she said. “In many ways the unity we had on the picket line made us stronger.”



Militant/Kaitlin Estill

Hospital workers, members of Service Employees International Union, rally outside Northwestern hospital in Chicago March 31 in fight for contract, pay increase, more staffing.

“Two of the firings were for ‘misconduct’ on the picket line. The other eight were manufactured. All are unjustified,” Jose Chavez, head of the Workers Committee, said. “The company is going full out to punish union activists.”

“The picket today is a good step to defend our members and our union,” he added. “The union is fighting to get everyone’s job back. It’s in the grievance process and it will be many months more before any of these firings are resolved.”

— Carole Lesnick

## Pennsylvania chocolate factory explodes, killing seven workers

WEST READING, Pa. — One of the buildings at the R.M. Palmer chocolate factory here exploded and burned to the ground March 24. The blast killed seven people inside the plant. At least 10 others were taken to the hospital.

Machine operator Patricia Borges, one of the survivors, told the media her arm caught fire. She fell through the floor into a vat of liquid chocolate. She and some of her co-workers had complained about smelling gas before the explosion. Since then, the local natural gas company, UGI, has stationed an emergency trailer outside the remaining company structures.

Luis Martinez, a postal worker who lives next to the plant, told the *Militant* his house shook with the explosion. “I

rushed out to look down the block” and saw flames, smoke and rubble.

The next day UGI workers went door to door checking the meter and gas connection in everyone’s basement. Martinez showed me a UGI flyer saying they were checking for possible leaks. A number of area residents said they’ve long complained about smelling gas. “Now we are buying little gas detectors online or at Home Depot,” he said.

In addition to the explosive potential of the gas people smelled, many components used in making chocolate, like cocoa powder and highly flammable powdered starch, as well as other fine dusts, are all explosive hazards at food plants like Palmer’s. Government officials say they are investigating.

“Why did this happen?” Martinez asked. “Palmer isn’t saying nothing. Palmer and UGI are at fault.”

Tim Burns, a retired printer who has lived his entire life two blocks from the plant, agreed, saying, “This didn’t have to happen. People didn’t have to die.

“How is it that nobody in the plant was evacuated when they told people about the smell?” he asked. “It’s all about greed.”

The Palmer company, established in 1948, is one of the largest U.S. chocolate producers. Its seasonal candies and other products are sold through Walmart, CVS and other chains.

— Osborne Hart

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 20, 1998

SYDNEY — Thousands of unionists around Australia demonstrated April 8 to oppose the overnight sacking of 1,400 dockworkers — the entire workforce of Patrick, one of two main stevedoring companies in Australia.

At 11:00 p.m., in a coordinated military-style operation, hundreds of security guards with dogs evicted workers from the docks. The next morning, Minister for Workplace Relations Peter Reith was in Parliament proposing legislation to provide \$250 million in loans to companies to fund the dismissals. This latest union-busting plan of the government follows months of attempts to break the Maritime Union’s closed shop on Australia’s wharves.

By 10:00 a.m. 5,000 unionists walked off their jobs to march to Patrick’s Darling Harbour terminal to support the sacked “wharfies.” Round-the-clock picket lines are being staffed.



April 20, 1973

Ivan Dzyuba, prominent Ukrainian Marxist, was sentenced to five years imprisonment at a trial held during mid-March in Kiev. Dzyuba is best known for his book *Internationalism or Russification?* a Leninist critique of the Russification policy currently being carried out by the Kremlin in Ukraine.

Dzyuba describes the Ukrainization process the Bolsheviks instituted in the early 1920s to encourage the development of Ukrainian language, literature, and culture and to foster the control by Ukrainians of their social, political, and economic life.

The current Soviet policy is a return to the Great Russian chauvinism that Lenin and the Bolsheviks fought so hard against. Dzyuba states that the restoration of the Leninist policy on nationalities is imperative “for the cause of building communism and for the fate of the world communist movement.”



April 19, 1948

The House Un-American Committee has unanimously agreed on an omnibus witch-hunting bill to be introduced shortly in Congress. The aim of this vicious legislation is “to jail Communists.” The present Smith “Gag” Act will be amended to make it criminal to seek the “overthrow of the government by any means.”

In “illegal conspiracy” the committee includes disruption of “trade, commerce or government with intent to further the objectives of the world Communist movement.” When asked if this “disrupting trade” clause included strikes, the Un-American Committee replied that it could in strikes that were “primarily” political.

Considering how the coal stoppage was recently attacked as injuring U.S. foreign policy and how readily strikes are attacked as “political,” this clause can be used against militant unionists.



# Teamsters at Sysco on strike

Continued from front page

Sysco is the largest food distributor worldwide, reporting \$60.1 billion in sales in 2022.

A hundred truck drivers in Louisville joined the Teamsters union local last August and have been negotiating with Sysco for a contract. They rejected the company's self-proclaimed "last, best and final offer" by a nearly 9-1 margin.

Sysco here delivers to dozens of restaurants and businesses, including the Jefferson County Public Schools.

"Quality of life is the main issue in this strike," Trey McCutcheon, a business agent for Local 89, told this *Militant* worker-correspondent. "They push these guys to the point of exhaustion. They start early in the morning and work 16-hour days," sometimes six days a week.

"Sysco claims they are offering good raises. But they don't say that these drivers haven't had a raise in four years," he said. "Drivers at Sysco, who are required to get a commercial driver's license, start at around \$24 an hour. Most other companies in the area pay \$28 or \$29."

Driver Mike McCullum was on the picket line energetically helping to lead the chants. He's worked for Sysco for almost a year. "The main issues are better pay and working conditions," he said. "They work us 68 to 70 hours a week regularly. Safety standards are very low. I helped get workers to sign up for the union. It didn't take much convincing because the conditions were so bad."

The Teamsters union represents more than 10,000 Sysco workers nationwide. This is the second national strike action the union has organized against Sysco recently. In October 2022 workers went on strike for nearly three weeks to win contracts for over 800 members in Arizona; Syracuse, New York; and Plympton, Massachusetts.

Every location has its own contract, McCutcheon said. "The strike in California is a solidarity action. We sent out workers to get a picket line going in California."

## Fremont picket line

"The only people working inside the plant right now are managers and probationary employees who could lose their jobs if they walked out," Hannah Bernardson, a Teamsters union staffer

from Indianapolis, told the *Militant* in Fremont, California.

"Three people came here from Indianapolis — myself and two others," she said. "At least 150 workers walked off the job here. We are asking workers to show their solidarity by honoring our picket."

"Our team and another team of Teamsters union members from Louisville are traveling across the country," Bernardson said. "Yesterday the team from Louisville picketed the Oxnard plant in Southern California and shut it down. Typically these actions last a couple of days. We plan to go to other cities but we are not saying which ones."

Jim Dunham, a Sysco truck driver from Indianapolis, said, "There are 80 Sysco plants. Thirty-one are organized. Nine of the organized plants have had to go on strike to get a contract. It wasn't like this before. I've worked for Sysco for 27 years and this is the first time I've been on strike."

## Strikers win widespread solidarity

This *Militant* correspondent met up with Teamsters Local 89 members from FireKing in New Albany, Indiana, at the Sysco picket line in Louisville. They won a strike in July 2022 after 12 weeks on the picket line. Dale Beanblossom, Heather Hurley and



Teamsters Local 117

Over 250 members of Teamsters Local 117 in Seattle went out April 2 in solidarity with Sysco workers on strike in Louisville and Indianapolis for higher wages, livable work schedules.

Reese Funkhouser, all of whom I met on the picket line at FireKing, greeted me and gave me an update on what had happened after the strike was won.

"They fired me and two other workers as soon as the strike was over," said Beanblossom. "But we fought and won all three jobs back. And then I was elected head shop steward."

"Lots of people came out to support us when we were on strike," said Hurley,

"so now we're out supporting others."

Many unionists and other supporters have been by the picket line to bring solidarity. The day I was there, the Painters Union had dropped off pizzas.

To send support to strikers, contact Local 89 at (502) 368-5885 and Local 135 at (317) 639-3541.

Jeff Powers contributed to this article from Fremont, California.

# China-US rulers conflict deepens amid world disorder

Continued from front page

the war in Ukraine making no mention of Moscow's violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, instead blaming the U.S.-led NATO alliance.

Chinese officials have begun discussing their "peace" plan to end the war with governments in Europe that are allied with Washington. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez traveled to Beijing and urged Xi to talk to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. French President Emmanuel Macron and Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, plan to visit Beijing this week.

## Ties with Moscow

For Xi, Beijing's ties with Moscow are foremost about countering what he calls the "all-round containment, encirclement and suppression of China" by Washington. Russia's capitalist class finds itself in a weaker position a year into the war and Putin has no choice but to play second fiddle.

Over decades the massive expansion of Chinese exports led Beijing to launch its Belt and Road Initiative, seeking greater profits and control over trade routes as it drew capitalist rivals and semicolonial regimes more closely into its orbit. As a result, it also seeks to advance its political influence. In March the Chinese government brokered a deal between the governments of Iran and Saudi Arabia, ending a seven-year rift in their relations. Both agreed to seek an end to the war in Yemen, where they back opposite sides.

Last month the Honduran government established diplomatic relations with Beijing and cut its ties with the government of Taiwan. Honduran Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique told the *Japan Times* the decision was made in part because the Honduran government was "up to its neck" in debt and needed loans from China.

Xi also hopes to rally support at home as the worldwide capitalist crisis continues to batter workers' living standards. City authorities are buried in debt after exhausting funds to comply with pandemic testing and lockdown rules. Some 31 provincial governments owed around \$5.1 trillion at the end of 2022.

Over five years, authorities in Shangqiu, a city of 7 million, ordered the building of 114 miles of rail, two airports and three new highways. But in February, the city's bus operator announced it would have to suspend service. The company hadn't paid its employees for months. Other city administrations are drawing up plans to cut spending on education, health care and public services.

## Protests mount in China

Since January thousands of people, including many retirees, have taken to the streets in Wuhan and other cities to demand authorities reverse cuts to medical benefits.

The Chinese rulers' expansionist course is bumping into problems elsewhere. Many of its huge Belt and Road projects have left governments with debts they can't pay. Under the program the Chinese rulers eclipsed the World Bank as the largest lender to developing countries. Now around a quarter of the roughly \$1 trillion of Belt and Road financing is being used to extend further loans, putting these governments in even deeper debt, as Beijing tries to rescue its own banking system.

In addition, many of the projects are plagued with construction flaws. Thousands of cracks have emerged in the Chinese-built \$2.7 billion Coca Codo Sinclair hydroelectric plant in Ecuador, the country's biggest source of power.

Beijing has increased its military

budget to \$300 billion, up sharply from just \$22 billion in 2000. In recent years the Chinese air force has flown hundreds of sorties near Taiwan. The Taiwanese government says the flights are designed to probe and exhaust the island's defenses.

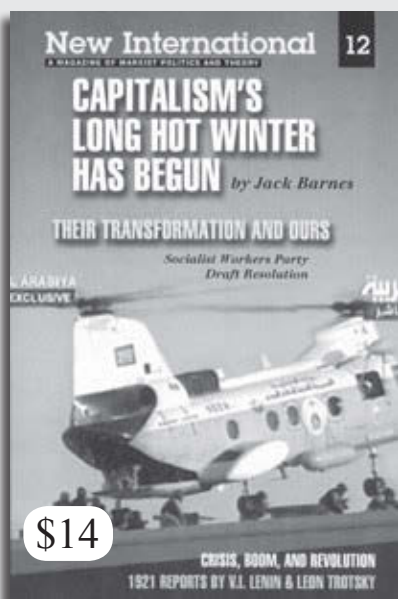
Last August, Beijing responded to the visit of then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan by launching missiles, deploying warships in the Taiwan Straits and simulating a blockade of the island. On April 3, Beijing warned House Speaker Kevin McCarthy not to go ahead with a planned meeting with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen when she visits the U.S.

Beijing's war machine still pales in comparison to Washington's, with its \$800 billion military budget, its stockpiles and its control of 750 bases in at least 80 countries worldwide. U.S. officials are taking steps to amass a giant weapons stockpile in Taiwan aimed at heading off an invasion by Beijing.

Washington's allies in the Asia-Pacific region are also rearming and solidifying their collaboration. The Japanese government recently initiated its biggest armaments program since World War II, raising military spending by 60% over the next five years. On March 13, the Australian rulers unveiled a \$200 billion plan to build nuclear-propelled submarines with the governments of the U.S. and U.K.

In February, U.S. airmen refueled Japanese fighter jets during a joint military exercise on Tinian island, in the Northern Marianas Islands, just north of Guam. Tinian was the launch point when the U.S. rulers dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. "We're not concerned with the past, we are concerned with the future," said Col. Inadome Satoru, commander of Japan's Ninth Air Wing Flight Group.

## New International no. 12



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Ukraine fights Moscow’s invasion

Continued from front page  
attrition, because we cherish every soldier.”

Putin tries to justify his attempt to crush Ukraine by maligning its government and people as “fascists.”

Like many Ukrainians, Anastasia Zahorna “did not understand the scale of what was happening, even when I saw smoke through the window” of her home in Kyiv when the invasion began, she wrote in the *Pittsburgh Observer-Reporter* last year.

But today more than 10,000 Ukrainian civilians have died, mainly from aerial attacks. Zahorna and her family were forced to flee to the U.S., joining more than 8 million Ukrainians who have moved abroad since the war began. Nearly 6 million more are internally displaced inside the country. Tens of thousands have volunteered to join the fight to defend their homeland.

Zahorna’s father stayed behind in Gruzskoye to join an armed self-defense unit that fights alongside the Ukrainian army. “These groups defend residential buildings, districts of the city, or in the case of my dad, entire villages of people,” she explained. Such volunteer forces have been key in repulsing Moscow’s invasion.

Russian conscripts slaughtered

Protests by the families of Russian soldiers against their treatment grew soon after Putin called up 300,000 more troops last September. Demonstrations took place in November in St. Petersburg; the cities of Voronezh, Penza and Vladimir around Moscow; in Vologda in the north; and elsewhere. Family members demanded the army brass withdraw their sons, fathers, husbands or brothers from the front.

“Draftees were not supposed to be on the frontline, but they were sent there like cannon fodder,” Kristina, the wife of one soldier, told the *Moscow Times*. Putin admitted a month after the call-up that about 50,000 new recruits were at the front. Now he intends to draft 147,000 more.

“I am a law-abiding citizen, born in

the USSR. I am conditioned to trust people in power,” Irina Chistyakova, the mother of a Russian soldier, told ABC News last month. “So in April [2022] I believed them. But in June I stopped believing them,” after her son Kirill went missing in March 2022. He remains in captivity in Ukraine.

Chistyakova joined the Council of Soldiers’ Mothers and Wives, which protests the government’s treatment of soldiers. Its leader, Olga Tsukanova, called Putin a coward for refusing to meet with her. Since then, she says, she has been followed by state security and detained.

“Basically they are closing the mouths of mothers,” she said. These methods “they’ve used them for years, but without taking account that there’s a limit to everything.”

Families have to fight to discover what has happened to their relatives who have gone missing, as news of the war and its casualties is suppressed. When they discover their men are alive, it then takes another fight to have their names added to the



Above, SOTA telegram channel Mothers and wives of Russian soldiers hold sign March 11 that reads “580 Separate Howitzer Artillery Division” in video charging “our mobilized men are being sent like lambs to the slaughter.” Inset, Olga Tsukanova, a leader of Council of Soldiers’ Mothers and Wives, who has protested Moscow’s war policies and treatment of soldiers.



Kremlin’s list of POWs, who are eligible for a prisoner exchange.

Alina Maksimovskaya told the *Moscow Times* that she discovered her boyfriend, Andrei Zavyalov, was a prisoner of war when she saw interviews the Russian soldier gave on Ukrainian TV. Since then Zavyalov

has been released. Almost 10,000 Russian soldiers have attempted to surrender via a special hotline set up by the Ukrainian government. To try to deter this, Moscow adopted a law making “voluntary” surrender punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

Fall in US life expectancy reflects capitalist crisis today

Continued from front page  
(79.3) and the Czech Republic (79.8), as well as the U.K., Austria and the Netherlands, all of which are over 80 years.

“Americans are dying and suffering at rates that are demonstrably unnecessary,” said a report titled “Shorter Lives, Poorer Health,” first issued by the National Academy of Sciences a decade ago. What’s involved is a “longer systemic issue,” the paper’s lead author, Steven Woolf, told the media, and the situation has gotten worse since.

Maternal mortality in the U.S. is at its highest level since 1965. The number of women who died during pregnancy or shortly after rose to 1,205 in 2021, 40% higher than the previous year. For Black women the mortality rate was 2.6 times higher than the rate for Caucasian women. And things are increasingly dire as profit-driven hospital bosses are closing maternity

wards in rural areas, and then shutting down more and more rural hospitals altogether.

At the same time, the birth rate in the U.S. has declined for over 70 years, reaching its lowest level ever. And a growing number of young people live with their parents well into adulthood, unable to afford forming a family and pay for housing on their own.

Mortality rates are rising, particularly among the young. Teen drug overdose deaths have doubled in the last three years. This is exacerbated by the widespread availability of the opioid fentanyl, which drug dealers package in counterfeit pills, marijuana and other products.

And new strata of profiteers have arisen from the growing legal marijuana marketing binge.

Nationwide, drug overdose deaths doubled in six years, from 52,404 in 2015 to 106,699 in 2021. Between 2010 and 2021, the number of adolescent deaths from fentanyl and related synthetics rose more than 20-fold, from 38 to 884, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported.

Child mortality is rising at a rate not seen in at least half a century. The “Shorter Lives, Poorer Health” report noted, “American children are less likely to live to age 5 than children in other high-income countries.” One in 25 U.S. 5-year-olds today will not make it to their 40th birthday.

Of the 10 most populated cities in the U.S., Philadelphia has the highest rate of infant mortality — 1.5 times higher than the national average. Babies of African Americans there are over four times more likely to die before their first birthday than Caucasians.

As a “stopgap” measure, the city is now offering 250

expectant mothers living in several Black areas of the city \$1,000 a month through the baby’s first birthday.

“In this country health care is run as a business to maximize profits for the hospitals, medical networks, and pharmaceutical- and insurance-company bosses, instead of being available to all free of charge,” said Lea Sherman, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey General Assembly. “What’s needed is government-funded universal medical care from cradle to grave. This would go a long way to expanding the quality of life and life expectancy.”

Even though life expectancy has declined in the U.S., a bipartisan group of senators is discussing a plan to raise the retirement age to 70 before workers could get full Social Security benefits.

Won as a by-product of the rise of working-class struggles and the industrial union movement in the 1930s, Social Security today is relied on by millions for retirement. As workers can live many years beyond when their labor is exploited by the capitalists for profits, the propertied rulers have continued to seek ways to cut into this social wage.

When the capitalist parties first passed Social Security in 1935, they set the age of eligibility to get benefits at 65, never intending to pay much out. Life expectancy then was below 62, and just below 60 for men.

In 1983 the eligibility age was raised to 67 for those born after 1960. Now talk is in the air among capitalist politicians to raise it even higher.

Millions who got medical coverage when the federal government under President Donald Trump expanded Medicaid during the COVID-19 pandemic can now expect to see that evaporate on May 11. That’s when President Joseph Biden says he will proclaim the pandemic over and these programs will be shut down.

That means all kinds of care previously covered will be shifted to “the commercial market,” as CNN put it. COVID vaccines that have been free will then — Moderna says — cost \$130.

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# Back fight in East Palestine

**Continued from front page**  
cessity to expose the real causes of the disaster.

This worker-correspondent and fellow Socialist Workers Party member David Ferguson met up with Jacob Tate in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, April 1. Ferguson had met Tate at the “Jeep invasion” in East Palestine two weeks earlier, when Jeep club members from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia caravanned to East Palestine to show solidarity, discuss with workers and farmers their struggle and support local shopkeepers. Tate said he knows what the derailment means, as the Norfolk Southern tracks run right by where he lives.

The “invasion” is one of dozens of significant efforts by workers and farmers across the country to organize aid for those in this area.

Tate works as a truck driver and contractor in this region, including in nearby East Palestine. He lauded the efforts to hold Norfolk Southern accountable and said working people need more information on what the railroad and the government are doing.

Ferguson explained the victory that rail workers had won, getting two major railroads to back off moves to impose a one-person crew, and that working people of East Palestine should take some credit for this.

Tate talked about his experience as a truck driver. “One thing I learned — you always listen. That tells you what’s going on. You can tell if the rear end is going out, if a tire is going bad, if the radiator is running hot. You can smell or hear the problem before any sensor tells you.”

“That’s why we say the trains need to be shorter and you need workers at the rear of the train,” Ferguson said. “They would have smelled or seen the axle that had gone bad on that train.” Tate agreed, saying he too had seen the video of the train smoking when it went through Salem, 20 miles before East Palestine.

Tate was interested in discussing why the unions “aren’t as big they should be.” I showed him *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*. “Opposition to life-sucking schedules, massive overtime, unsafe conditions and the two-tier and three-tier wages forced on us has been behind a lot of the strikes in recent years. That’s what this book is about,” I said.

Tate also told us about an effort by residents in West Mayfield township to

organize and put pressure on the railroad. “Norfolk Southern used to park their trains next to homes there and residents complained about the noise and smell,” he said. “When they contacted Norfolk Southern, they were told to ‘deal with it.’ It took us nine months, but we got NS to stop doing that.”

## Rail workers fight back

Rail workers and their unions point out how rail bosses in their drive for profits have been pushing to cut crews, run longer and heavier trains and wreak havoc with the schedules and lives of their employees. These are the conditions that lay behind the East Palestine train derailment. “There’s a ‘hurry up and get it done,’ or if it’s not done, ‘hurry up and get it out of the door’ mentality,” James Orwan, general chairman of International Association of Machinists Lodge 19 told the *Wall Street Journal*. That union represents workers who inspect, repair and maintain locomotives.

Scott Wilcox, a retired Norfolk Southern engineer, told Fox News the derailment “was very likely due to not having enough time given to the car inspector at the originating point to be able to fully assess that car or any of the other cars and train, for that matter.”

“They used to have between five and eight minutes to inspect a car,” he said. “But now, from what I’ve heard from car inspectors, they’re down to like between 30 seconds to a minute. So, they may not have time to check everything. The length of some of these cars, it’ll take you 30 seconds just to walk the length of it.”

“It’s profit over everything, not just safety,” Mark Wallace, a top official with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, told the *New York Times*. “It’s profit over customer service. It’s profit over employee satisfaction.”

“When the equipment’s defective, the equipment’s defective,” Lance Johnston, a former Norfolk Southern engineer, told the *Times*. “You stop what you’re doing, and you fix it.” Johnston was fired in 2021 after telling his manager about problems with the brakes on the engine he was assigned. He was told to use the locomotive, even though the problems made it hard to control the train and could lead to a derailment.

He’s suing to get his job back.

“We need to do what they’re doing in Greece today, stand up and stop the erosion of regular working people’s rights and the public’s safety,” Andrés Trujillo,

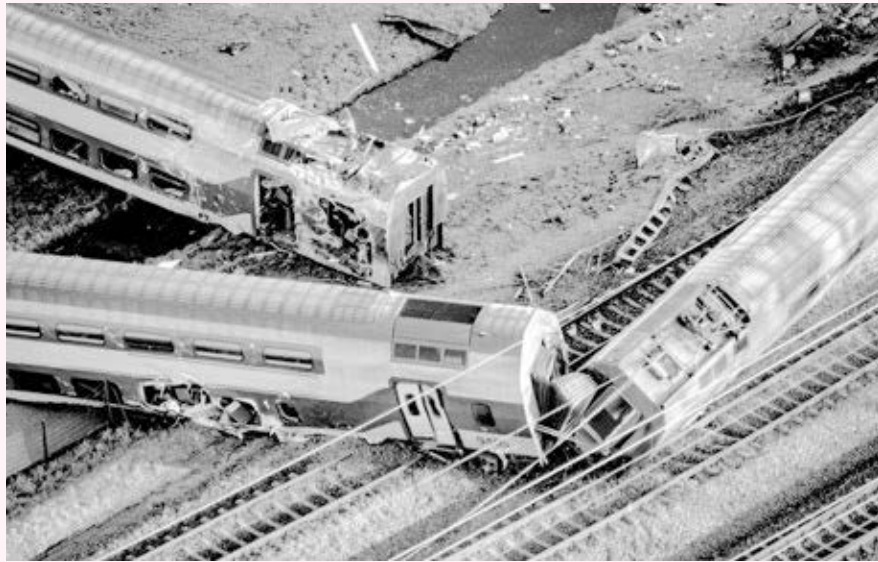
tine, Ohio, in February.

Taking the *Militant* door to door in Raymond April 3, worker-correspondents Michael Najim and I met with Ashley Yang. She is a stay-at-home mom with four boys whose husband works in construction. “They knocked on our door after the derailment and we had to go to my in-laws to spend the night,” she said.

We showed her the *Militant* coverage of the fight being waged by working people in East Palestine to take control over the cleanup from the toxic spill and fires there and the need for larger crews on trains to guarantee

**Continued on page 11**

## Passenger train crash in Holland kills one, injures 30



RUT/SplashNews.com

At least one person — a construction worker laboring on the tracks — was killed in a nasty derailment, above, in the village of Voorschoten in the Netherlands at 3:25 a.m. April 4. The double-decker intercity train carrying over 50 passengers ran into a construction crane involved in track work. At least 30 others were injured.

Eleven were cared for by local residents while the rest were taken to hospitals. That train’s engineer was hospitalized with broken bones.

“We have no idea how the crane got on the track that was still open for traffic,” John Voppen, chief executive of the government’s ProRail management, told a press conference. A freight train running on an adjacent track also hit the crane.

“We heard a bang first and then later, a much more intense one,” one local resident told the press. “Then we heard people screaming. It was not good.”

The damage means the tracks — used for train travel from Amsterdam to Brussels and Paris — are out of service. The government said it has opened an investigation.

Four days earlier, two passenger trains derailed in Switzerland, leading to a number of injuries in both cases, one in Luscherz and the other near Bern.

— JOHN STUDER

a locomotive engineer, member and legislative representative of SMART-TD Local 1138 in Florida, told the *Militant*. After a head-on collision and derailment that killed 58 passengers and crew members in Greece Feb. 28, rail workers went on strike for days and mass protests spread across the country.

Another result of the outpouring of anger by working people at both the rail bosses and the government for the conditions that led to the disaster in East Palestine was a bill signed into law in Ohio March 31. It mandates a two-person crew on freight trains and requires that wayside detectors alongside tracks that monitor overheating in wheel axles be installed closer together.

In fact, Norfolk Southern and other railroads set these detectors not to react until ultra-high temperatures are registered. The train that crashed in East Palestine didn’t send an alert to the crew until after a detector read a temperature of 253 degrees F above normal, too late for the crew to prevent the derailment.

But new regulations rely on the government agencies to act on behalf of rail workers. The government showed its real stripes last fall when President Joseph Biden led a bipartisan Congress to bar rail workers from striking and forced down their throats a contract they had voted down.

Workers need to rely on ourselves, to use our unions to defend our class interests and stand up for all those who are threatened by the bosses’ greed.

## Workers control, not technology

In the derailment of a Norfolk Southern train in Sandusky, Ohio, last October, the Federal Railroad Administration reported that after inspecting a suspect wheel bearing “the crew requested permission to set out the subject car multiple times and requested support from mechanical inspectors.” But “the crew was then directed to move the

train,” the FRA said. “After the train travelled another 7 miles, it derailed due to a burnt journal bearing.”

“Initial reports state one tank car was punctured and leaked molten paraffin wax into the surroundings.” As of mid-February that paraffin, which had melted and blocked up the sewers, still has the main road there blocked.

“The crew should be empowered to do the right thing,” Clyde Whitaker, state legislative director for SMART-TD, told an Ohio legislative committee. “And not be told otherwise to commit an unsafe act.”

Interviewed by WKYC in Cleveland, John Hiatt, a former engineer and now an investigator in rail accidents, said, “A long train, the only way you can inspect your journal [the wheel hub over the axle] to make sure they’re not hot and smoking is visually. You just can’t do that with one or two persons on a locomotive.”

He explained that the detectors were invented to justify eliminating cabooses and cutting rail crews.

Rail bosses consistently downplay the importance of the eyes and ears of rail workers for safety, both to themselves and to those who live by the tracks. Norfolk Southern CEO Alan Shaw told a U.S. Senate hearing, “We’re not aware of any data that links crew size with safety.”

Their answer to opposition to their moves to slash crew size is to say they’ll be replaced by new technology. The fact this doesn’t work was captured by the initial National Transportation Safety Board report on the East Palestine disaster. It said, “This was 100% preventable.”

What is needed is a crew of four on every train, two on the locomotive and two on the back end, with trains limited to no more than 50 cars, with control over rail safety in the hands of their unions.

# Derailment, evacuation in Minnesota

**BY EDWIN FRUIT**

RAYMOND, Minn. — In the early morning hours of March 30 a BNSF train derailed a mile south of here, putting 22 cars, including a number loaded with highly flammable ethanol, on the ground. Over 800 people live in the town, about 100 miles west of Minneapolis. Volunteer firefighters from 28 areas responded to put out the resulting fires.

People were told to evacuate the town until the fires were extinguished. That afternoon they were told they could return. Most people immediately thought about the disaster that had taken place in East Pales-



# Farmers in Cuba confront impact of US economic war

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN  
AND RÓGER CALERO

GÜINES, Cuba — Farmers at a co-operative here are part of efforts by Cuba’s working people and their revolutionary government to boost agricultural production and reduce dependence on costly food imports.

“Last year was very hard,” said Yunai Cruz, president of the Cuban-Bulgarian Friendship Agricultural Co-operative, which produces a variety of vegetables, including potatoes, which are in short supply across the island, as well as raising some livestock.

He pointed to the brutal impact of Washington’s six-decade-long economic embargo against the Cuban people, the consequences of which intensify the impact on Cuba of the worldwide crisis of capitalist production and trade. This is exacerbated by the cost of the COVID-19 pandemic, and now Moscow’s war against Ukraine.

Cruz was addressing a group of socialist workers from the U.S. and the United Kingdom who visited the farm Feb. 24 at the invitation of the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP). Accompanying them were Idia Ruiz, editor of ANAP’s magazine; ANAP journalist Jorge Sariol and photographer Carlos Parodi and local leaders of the farmers association. The cooperative is 30 miles southeast of Havana.

Top among the challenges, Cruz noted, are shortages of fuel, fertilizer, insecticide and spare parts for farm equipment. “We used to buy chemical inputs from Mexico, Brazil, Spain and Italy,” he said. “But Cuba’s imports from those countries collapsed during the pandemic. U.S.-based agro-industrial companies dominate the market for these products, which are subject to U.S. sanctions, and that severely limits us.”

Prices for fertilizer imported by countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America tripled in 2020. That puts vital supplies out of reach for many small farmers and threatens the livelihoods of millions around the world.

## Hard work and creativity

Co-op members gave us a tour of the farm to see firsthand how, through hard work and creativity, they are confronting these challenges.

Above all, they are striving to increase their yields. Vegetable production dropped drastically last year. “But we’ve resisted and now we’re beginning to recover,” Cruz said.

“Ten years ago we had 50 tractors, but today just 29 are in operation due to the fuel shortage and lack of spare parts,” he said. “We’re working to increase the use of draft animals, but for now the additional labor falls on co-operative members and seasonal labor the co-op hires.”

The farm is the largest of 26 co-operatives in the Güines municipality. Established in 1978 with eight members, today it has 133, including 36 women. The cooperative members pool their land and equipment and farm together.

Land in Cuba is not a commodity to be bought and sold. It is state-owned and Cuban law guarantees the right of all farmers to remain on the land as long as

they work it. They never face the threat of debt slavery, foreclosure or eviction that hangs over so many working farmers in capitalist countries.

Beginning with the May 1959 agrarian reform law, the new workers and farmers government nationalized the plantations owned by foreign and Cuban capitalists. This was carried out by mobilizing millions of farmers, workers and youth in the countryside and the cities, as they overturned capitalist rule and deepened their socialist revolution.

## Boosting food production

“Today Cubans are paying a lot for food,” Cruz noted. “This is not because of farmers, but because of middlemen raising prices as well as the increased prices of imports.”

To encourage greater food production, the Cuban government has implemented measures allowing for produce to be sold directly to private outlets and in farmers markets. One consequence, however, has been the growth of speculators who buy up produce cheap and resell it at much higher prices.

“We’re working to increase our production of food to help bring down prices,” Cruz said.

To reinforce these efforts, the Cuban government provides farmers with cheap credit, subsidizes their purchase of inputs and guarantees prices for their crops.

This contrasts with what happens in capitalist countries, where processors and other agricultural monopolies pay small farmers as little as possible — sometimes even below the farmers’ break-even costs — while hiking prices working people pay in stores.

“It’s the human being that’s at the heart of the revolution,” Cruz said, as he explained cooperative members’ commitment to guarantee food, housing and other necessities for all members of the farm community, as well as to help boost production for the benefit of the



Revista ANAP/Jorge Sariol

Cuban farmers with delegation of communists from U.S. and U.K. during visit to Cuban-Bulgarian Friendship Cooperative in Güines, Cuba, Feb. 24. They are looking at tank with tobacco leaf residue used to create tabaquina, a natural pesticide, to substitute for imported products that are difficult to obtain because of Washington’s 60-year-plus embargo.

Cuban people as a whole.

Three-quarters of production from the cooperative, we were told, is sold to the state to make basic food items available at highly subsidized prices. Most of the rest is used to meet the needs of co-op members and their families.

Farmers here proudly told us they also fulfill a “social commitment,” that is, like many cooperatives in Cuba, they provide food supplies to local health care institutions free of charge. In their case, they supply vegetables and meat to a nearby maternity home and a children’s cancer treatment center.

They also noted that the cooperative served as a COVID vaccination center for the surrounding community.

One challenge for Cuban agriculture has been obtaining pesticides, due to Washington’s embargo and the high prices of imports. And, in 2019 Cuban farmers were hit with an infestation of bean flower thrips that was resistant to pesticides they had. The insect blight devastated the production of black beans, leading to the disappearance of this basic staple from many Cuban kitchens.

“Our country didn’t have in its budget the millions to buy the pesticides we needed from a foreign company,” said Cruz. “So we farmers

found an alternative.”

Co-op members showed us a tank full of tabaquina, a pesticide they produce themselves from tobacco leaf residue. It’s effective in combating this strain of thrips.

## Housing and child care

To help meet the needs of the community, the cooperative, with the help of state funding, is converting a former school into housing for 90 farmers and their families. “Each unit has one or two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and bathroom,” said Raúl Zamora, president of ANAP in the municipality.

The purpose is both to create better conditions for existing co-op members and to attract new ones. A longstanding challenge in Cuba has been an aging rural workforce, as many youth have migrated from the countryside to the cities or — especially over the past year — to the U.S. and elsewhere.

Another priority of the cooperative is building a child care center for their members and other families in the area. This is part of a nationwide effort — led by the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), ANAP, and the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) — to build children’s centers in workplaces, both urban and rural.

Families in the co-op need child care services for 24 children, and another 20 are on the way, we were told. Currently, 12 go to the child care center in nearby Güines. The other children are cared for by their families, which limits participation, especially by the mothers, in the cooperative’s work.

“If the bus doesn’t come due to a shortage of fuel, parents have to take the kids to school,” said co-op Vice President Armando Musdeliel. Having a child care center here would allow “more women to become involved in production and be more independent,” said another member.

Idanis López Tasé, the co-op’s agronomist, remarked that the Cuban Revolution has led to big advances for women’s rights and participation in all aspects of society, going back to the revolutionary war, when women fought in the Sierra Maestra mountains alongside Fidel Castro.

“Most of the tasks I do in the cooperative are ‘men things,’ working a tractor, and so on,” she said. “But I’ve been doing this for 20 years and I love it. Women have proved that we can do this work.”

*Claudia Kaiser-Lenoir contributed to this article.*

## Socialist workers came to Cuba to see challenges and ‘truth with their own eyes’



Revista ANAP/Jorge Sariol

Jorge Sariol, a journalist for *Revista ANAP*, magazine of the National Association of Small Farmers in Cuba, reported on a Feb. 24 visit by socialist workers from the U.S. and the U.K. to the Cuban-Bulgarian Friendship Agricultural Cooperative in Güines, Mayabeque province. They brought books published by Pathfinder Press from “very beautiful editions of the Communist Manifesto to texts with profound analysis of the contemporary dilemmas of the working class in the so-called developed world,” he wrote. “They come to Cuba to see the truth with their own eyes and prepare ways to help.”



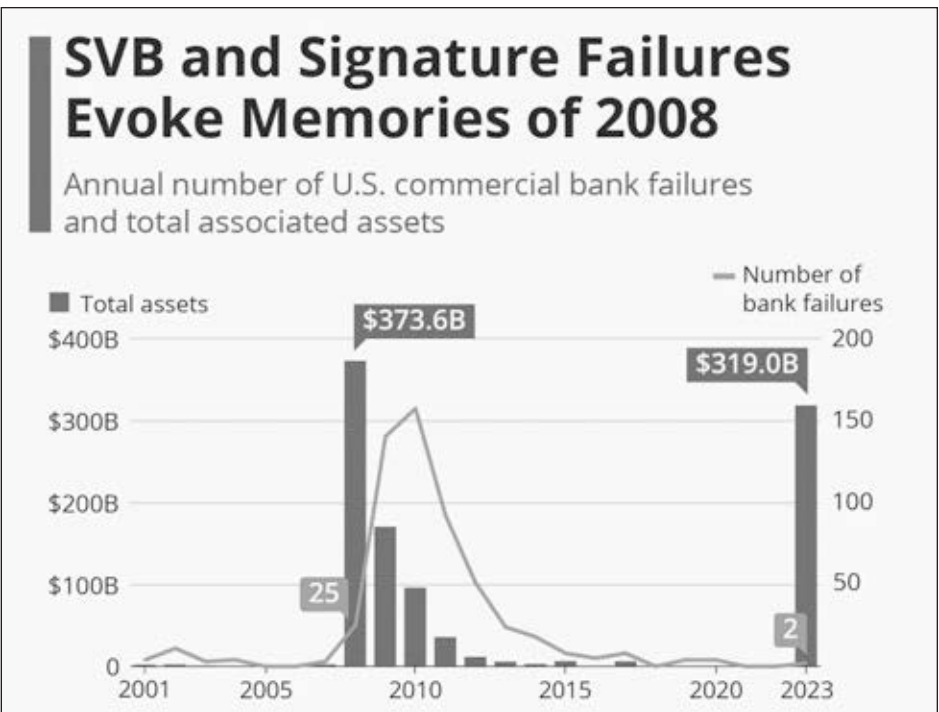
# More fiscal disorder coming as crisis of capitalism deepens

Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, is one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for April. Written on the eve of the 21st century, it covers the fast-breaking events that shook world politics from the 1987 near-meltdown of the world’s stock markets to the Mexican “peso crisis” of December 1994. These events lay the groundwork for today’s deepening shifts and crises in the global world order. The excerpt is from “The Vote for Ross Perot and Patrick Buchanan’s ‘Culture War’: What the 1992 Elections Revealed.” Copyright © 1999 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JACK BARNES

International capitalism’s stock, bond, and currency markets today are indeed, as widely proclaimed, becoming more and more interconnected and, partly as a result, they are also becoming more unstable. Just a little over five years ago, the world’s stock markets crashed. In just one day in October 1987, the stock market in the United States plunged nearly 25 percent. The crash sent shock waves through the international bourgeoisie, and working people sensed it was the harbinger of



Recent bank failures revived fears of another global financial crisis. White House claims promise of billions to corporate depositors won’t harm working people, but we will have to pay.

a deepening social crisis worldwide. It was the first sharp public signal of an accelerated decline in the post-World War II curve of capitalist development — the first signal that a worldwide depression had become inevitable. ...

Bankers put their money where they anticipate it will be safer. But these enormous currency transfers increasingly turn the day-to-day business of banking into speculation, further destabilizing the world capitalist system.

Unimaginable sums of money are traded back and forth every day. With the development of computers and telecommunications, the speed and quantity of international transactions in a single twenty-four hours is mind-boggling. ...

As recently as the early 1970s, annual currency trading across borders was still only a fraction of world trade. Today, however, no government or big-business statistical agency really knows the exact scope and size of this currency trading, although most public estimates put it at more than \$1 trillion each day.

As profit rates decline, capitalists look for more and more ways of using money to make money. Investing in plants and equipment does not bring them sufficiently competitive returns, so they keep inventing new kinds of paper instruments to trade and speculate with, including accelerated currency speculation. Capitalists have faced a long-run decline in profit rates at least three times

before in the history of world capitalism, and each time it has led to a deep crisis before it could be turned around. But the speed of international communication today, the enormity of the monetary amounts involved, and the percentage of the world’s working people brought under capitalist exploitation since the post-World War II decolonization make the potential scope and explosiveness of the coming crisis truly staggering. ...

Governments and national banks no longer have much control over their currencies. ... World currency markets are awash with dollars. Dollars are held in massive quantities by corporations all over the globe, including by many owned in full or in part by U.S. capital. In fact, some 50 percent of all private financial wealth in the world is held in dollars, as well as more than half of all exchange reserves in the vaults of foreign central banks. In Russia, and even Eastern Europe to some degree, the dollar is the only real store of value today.

The conflicting national capitalist classes ultimately cannot control the results of their intensifying competition — and not because their actions are “irrational.” Deep social crises result from acts that are completely rational for the profit maximization of *particular* capitalists competing with other capitalists and with other particular *national* capitals. The consequences of all these sepa-

rate rational, short-term, and pragmatic decisions, however, further destabilize the *world* imperialist system.

Capitalist governments try to buffer some of these unanticipated consequences. In a manner of speaking, they resort to a kind of socialism — the socialism of the bourgeoisie, the socialization of their losses.

The financial press wags its finger at General Motors management today, saying it would be filing for bankruptcy protection if it were a small business and that it got that way by making short-run, revenue-maximizing decisions instead of long-run investment decisions. But that is what all owners of capital do, all the more so when their profit rate is declining and their mass of profits is stagnating. When profit rates get low enough, the owners of capital consider it better to cut costs — to “downsize” — than to invest in the expansion of capacity with no foreseeable competitive returns. And it is not enough for capitalist governments to try to keep interest rates low either. Capitalists are not going to borrow to invest unless anticipated profits make that a more lucrative use of their money than some alternative — like currency speculation, for example. ...

Instability and sharpening conflicts will continue to mark the imperialist world. There will be more banking and credit crises in the years ahead. And along with them, confidence in the bourgeois leaderships of the imperialist countries will continue declining, too. We should note the tendency today for prime ministers, presidents, and other bourgeois office-holders to be elected with a decreasing percentage of the populace having any confidence that these political figures will be able to turn things around.

This is an important economic fact, not just a political fact. Because workers should not ever fall for the ultimate fetish of money — the notion that there is something objective that determines the worth of a currency. There is nothing objective about it. The paper currency of a national state under capitalism is only as strong as the confidence of the population, of the dominant propertied families themselves, and of international bankers in the stability and future of that ruling class and the competence of its leading figures.

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# Democrats attack on Trump hits rights workers need

Statement by Joanne Kuniansky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey state Senate, released April 4.

The indictment of former President Donald Trump on ginned-up felony charges by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat, is an assault on constitutional freedoms working people have a vital stake in defending and extending.

Trump is accused of falsifying financial records to hide hush money payments by his then lawyer Michael Cohen to Stephanie Clifford and others. This is a “crime,” the far-fetched indictment says, because it was all aimed at influencing the 2016 presidential election, *seven years* ago.

It is one of several investigations into Trump and his supporters, all aimed at keeping the Democrats in the White House in 2024. The use of the FBI — Washington’s central political police outfit — and the courts by the Democrats against their opponents sets a dangerous precedent that has been and will be turned even more ferociously against workers, our unions and any union efforts to run independently of the political parties of the capitalist rulers.

Turning back this assault led by the Democrats against constitutional protections and freedoms is at the heart of the class struggle today.

Working people are the vanguard in protecting

freedom of speech, worship, the right to a trial by a jury of your peers and much more. All attempts to chip away at these protections should be fought by our unions and all organizations of the oppressed and exploited.

Bragg’s prosecution is driven by a blatant upending of the presumption of innocence. Nancy Pelosi says Trump like “everyone has the right to a trial to prove innocence.” But the accused *is* innocent until they are proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a trial by a jury of their peers. The burden of proof lies with the accuser, not the defendant.

The indictment of Trump is built on Cohen’s conviction in 2018. But he never went to trial.

As part of targeting Trump, special counsel and former FBI czar Robert Mueller ordered a raid of Cohen’s premises and hit him with a raft of charges, mostly unrelated to his payments to Clifford. They threatened prison terms of up to 65 years. The entire operation was designed to force Cohen to cop a plea and finger Trump. That’s what he did, cutting a deal and getting three years in jail. Plea bargaining is a tool prosecutors wield to force “confessions” and avoid having to prove their accusations before a jury. Its systematic use under the capitalist “justice” system is a blow to constitutional rights.

The statute of limitations for the felony Trump is accused of has run out. Bragg is seeking a way around

that, undermining another key protection workers have.

Fabricating business records is a misdemeanor, a minor crime, under New York law. To ramp it up to a felony, Bragg says, this was done to cover up a federal “crime.” But Bragg is the Manhattan DA, responsible for applying New York laws. Long ago federal prosecutors decided not to charge Trump with these allegations. By interfering in federal law, Bragg violates the constitutionally set separation of powers between federal and state governments.

Bragg’s goal is to take down his target, regardless of the weakness of his case. His overtly partisan operation is really aimed at the millions of workers who voted for Trump — or didn’t vote for either party in 2016 and 2020 — the ones Hillary Clinton called “deplorables.”

Its most important effect will be felt by the working class as we fight boss attempts to put the capitalist crisis on our backs and use our unions to advance our class interests independently of the two capitalist parties. Under capitalism, “all suppression of political rights and freedom, no matter whom they are directed against in the beginning, in the end inevitably bear down upon the working class, particularly its most advanced elements,” explained Leon Trotsky, a leader of the Bolshevik-led 1917 Russian Revolution. “That is a law of history.”

The charges against Trump should be thrown out.

## Working-class road forward debated at conference

BY NAOMI CRAINE

CHICAGO — “A decadeslong retreat by the working class and unions has ended, while the owners of capital and their parties, Democrats and Republicans alike, are intensifying efforts to shift the burden of their crisis onto working people,” Roy Landersen, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party, said in a talk here March 30. And, following Moscow’s brutal invasion of Ukraine, “the imperialist ‘world order’ is unraveling, with global conflicts among rival powers mounting,” he said.

Landersen was presenting the new book, *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 at a session of the Platypus Affiliated Society’s 15th International Convention. It was held that weekend at the University of Chicago.

Platypus is a campus-based network “for the self-criticism, self-education, and, ultimately, the practical reconstitution of a Marxian Left.” The gathering drew over 150 participants from across North America, as well as from Europe and the Pacific.

Landersen said those seeking to end the evils of capitalist society need “to join the working-class movement as it is today, not in an ideal future,” to build a party that is proletarian in its program, composition and activity. “The conflict is not ‘left vs. right’ but class vs. class.” Today, he said, that party is the SWP.

Marxists don’t preach for socialism, Landersen said, but join the class struggle at every stage. As Fredrick Engels, who along with Karl Marx was a founder of the modern workers movement, said in 1847, “Communism is not a doctrine but a *movement*; it proceeds not from principles but from *facts*.”

### Debate on Cuban Revolution

Landersen pointed to the example of Cuba’s socialist revolution, where, with Marxist leadership from Fidel Castro and others, “workers and farmers in Cuba not only transformed their lives, conditions and political consciousness, but opened a renewal of communist leadership in the Americas and beyond.”

During a lively discussion period, one person said talk of the Cuban Revolution “brings up the image of guerrilla struggle in the mountains,” which he didn’t see as relevant to the situation in the United States.

Gabby Prosser, an industrial bakery worker and member of the SWP and the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union in Minneapolis, explained how she had just returned from a visit to Cuba, where she met representatives of the

food workers union there.

She described the fights she and her co-workers have waged at her workplace for safer conditions, using the union. She also described the much stronger position Cuban unionists are in. “Workers are in power there, it’s their state. That’s what’s important about the example of the Cuban Revolution.”

One participant said union membership in the U.S. is much lower today than in the 1970s, and militant strikes even then didn’t lead to socialist revolution. “What’s different about today?” he asked.

Landersen pointed to the depth of the economic crisis of capitalism today, and experiences workers have had with the U.S. rulers’ imperialist wars and assaults on constitutional freedoms. This has caused working people to shed illusions in the bosses and their parties.

This debate continued at an April 1 panel titled, “Back to the 1970s? Socialism, Labor and the Left,” in which rail worker and Chicago SWP leader Naomi Craine participated.

Several people questioned the SWP’s call for a labor party asking how would that be different from existing reformist parties that use that name in Europe and elsewhere. One referred to the Democratic Party as historically the party of workers in the United States.

“The Democratic Party is the largest party of U.S. imperialism,” Craine said. “The program of a party is set by the class the party represents, not by the class that votes for it.”

Parties like the Labour Party in the U.K. have long shed any control by the unions, she said, ruling openly for the capitalist rulers there. The SWP calls for working people to push for building a labor party based on our unions, organized independently of the capitalist parties and fighting for all those oppressed by capital. “Within that, communists would fight for the labor party to adopt a revolutionary program,” she said.

Cam Hardy, the panel moderator, who works as a butcher in a small shop in Toronto, told the *Militant* that while Platypus is focused on the left, “the Socialist Workers Party is different.” The SWP’s “involvement in the unions, especially in the Minneapolis Teamsters in the ’30s,” shows how such struggles can “go beyond victories on the job.” He said this showed how the “development of class consciousness can turn into revolutionary class consciousness.”

An SWP literature table was crowded during breaks as participants sought more discussion. Fifty-five books by SWP leaders and other revolutionary leaders were sold, including five copies of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*. A dozen participants signed up for *Militant* subscriptions.

## Minnesota derailment

Continued from page 8

safety. Yang said, “We didn’t face the same health hazards as they did in Ohio, but I agree that there needs to be more crew on these long trains.”

We also spoke with Mayor Ardell Tensen, who is also assistant fire chief. He said his town is in the hub of farm country and that trains, many carrying ethanol, run through every 90 minutes, around the clock.

Tensen explained the situation would have been much worse if the derailment had occurred in the center of Raymond. There are sizable grain bins in the downtown area that could have burned and been destroyed.

“I’m actually a farmer,” Fire Chief Brian Neal told the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. He grows corn, soybeans and sugar beets. “Half of the town in some way, shape or form has ag ties.”

“We didn’t face the same situation as in Ohio,” Tensen told us. “The content of the tankers here was less toxic to the environment and to people’s health, and the rapid response from many different communities helped to put out the fires and stem any spread of the burning chemicals.”



MPR News/Kerem Yücel

Pile of burnt cars on BNSF Railway train hauling highly flammable ethanol that derailed in Raymond, Minnesota, March 30. Over 800 people live there, many are tied to farming.

### Correction

In issue no. 14, the caption for the photo about the National Farmers Convention incorrectly said Ellie García, the SWP 2022 candidate for U.S. Senate from California, participated in the conference. A statement by her was distributed at the gathering.