

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Bosses drive for profits, rail workers lose lives and limbs
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 87/NO. 32 AUGUST 28, 2023

Maui wildfire disaster caused by capitalism, gov't disdain

BY JOHN STUDER

A rapidly moving wildfire raged across Lahaina, a historic town on Maui in Hawaii Aug. 8, laying waste to over 2,000 buildings, mainly residences, and causing the death of over 100 people to date, all but two unidentified, with more expected. It is the deadliest wildfire in modern U.S. history, surpassing the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise, California, which wiped out the town leaving 19,000 buildings destroyed, 85 dead and displacing hundreds more.

Working people in Hawaii and elsewhere have responded with solidarity and a mobilization of help. People on the island organized to gather and deliver food and other necessities, and across West Maui people have worked together to provide shelter, food, fuel

Continued on page 3

War games and new arms race show threat of war is growing

BY SETH GALINSKY

In a sign of increasing tensions and the dangers of new wars between major capitalist powers in today's world, 11 Russian and Chinese warships conducted joint maneuvers off the coast of Alaska near the Aleutian Islands at the end of July and beginning of August. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, it is the "largest such flotilla to approach American shores."

In September 2022, when three Chinese and four Russian naval vessels carried out similar actions near Kiska Island in the Aleutians, Washington sent just one U.S. ship to observe. This time the Pentagon rapidly sent four destroyers and a P-8 Poseidon aircraft to shadow the Russian-Chinese flotilla.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the joint Chinese-Russian exercises in

Continued on page 9

Memphis strike 'standing strong' against IFF bosses

Strike deserves support of all working people!



Militant/Amy Husk

Members of Bakery Workers Locals 57 and 19 from Ohio join BCTGM Local 390G strike picket at International Flavors and Fragrances plant in Memphis, Tennessee, Aug. 13.

BY AMY HUSK

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — When we went on strike "some of the supervisors told us we would only last a week. Here we are 10 weeks later, still strong, still together," Zandra Lee, a member of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 390G at the International Flavors and Fragrances plant here, said on the picket line Aug. 13.

Nearly 200 members of the union have been on strike since June 4 after working for almost a year under an expired contract. The workers make soy protein products that are used by Nestle, Nestle Purina, Kind Bars, Abbott Nutrition and other companies to manufacture baby formula, pet foods, soy-based

nutritional powders and other goods.

IFF has 158 plants worldwide and 51 laboratories. Its annual net sales were \$11.7 billion in 2021.

Lee was talking with union members from BCTGM Local 57 at Klosterman Bakery in Cincinnati and a BCTGM Local 19 member from Schwebel's Bak-

Continued on page 6

NY forum: 'Defense of constitutional freedoms is key issue in class struggle'



Above, AP/Terry Renna; inset, African People's Socialist Party Armed Secret Service agents guard former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, during FBI raid, Aug. 8, 2022. Inset, throwing flash bang grenades, FBI agents attacked Uhuru Center, African People's Socialist Party, in St. Louis 10 days earlier.

BY TERRY EVANS

The indictment of Donald Trump by the Biden administration's Department of Justice "is a head-on assault on free speech," Steve Clark told a Militant Labor Forum organized by the New York and Northern New Jersey branches of the Socialist Workers Party Aug. 12. Clark is a member of the party's National Committee.

"Working people fight to defend everything that provides us space to organize and act," he said. "The criminalization of political differences, led by the Democratic Party, is dangerous. The indictment is not just part of an intra-ruling-class faction fight. It's a frame-

up. Class-conscious workers should demand the charges be dropped."

"Lying has never been a disqualification to be a bourgeois politician," Clark told the 55 people at the meeting. "More important, it's not a disqualification for free speech. The indictment is based entirely on what Trump said about the 2020 elections." On those grounds, the SWP would be high on the list of parties subject to disqualification, Clark added. We know that all elections under capitalism are rigged in favor of the bosses' parties and against the working class and workers' parties such as the SWP.

Clark drew attention to the ruling

Continued on page 7

SWP campaigns for a program to unite workers and farmers in struggle

BY NORTON SANDLER

FRESNO, Calif. — Laura Garza, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from California, addressed a meeting of the African American Farmers of California at a local restaurant here Aug. 11. Thirteen people took part.

In brief remarks, Garza noted the increase in trade union strikes and the importance of workers and farmers supporting each other's struggles. Workers and farmers need to defend constitutional freedoms, including the right to free speech, she said, which is under attack from the Democratic Party administration in its multipronged attempts to muzzle and to jail Donald Trump.

Garza distributed her campaign flyer and explained the Socialist Workers Par-

Continued on page 3

Military coup in Niger heightens tensions in Africa

BY TERRY EVANS

Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani overthrew the government of President Mohamed Bazoum in Niger July 26, amid deteriorating conditions facing millions of workers and farmers as well as attacks by Islamist terrorist groups.

The takeover sharpened tensions between the French imperialist rulers, who had been allied with Bazoum, and Moscow, which has been increasing its military presence across the Sahel region.

Continued on page 9

Inside

Editorial: Thomas Sankara showed road forward 9

Oberlin sues insurance companies for refusal to pay college's legal bill 2

'New York Times' opens new witch hunt on political rights 4

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Hotel workers protest violence against pickets in California

Bus drivers strike at Autobus Venise in fight for higher wages

Oberlin sues insurance companies for refusal to pay college's legal bill

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

A small family-owned bakery with delicious pastries in Oberlin, Ohio, is in the news again, but not for anything they've done. After a six-year battle, the owners of Gibson's Bakery finally defeated efforts by Oberlin College administrators to destroy them through a slanderous race-baiting campaign. Now the college administration is suing four insurance companies to recover the multimillion-dollar award a trial jury ordered the college to pay the Gibsons.

In the suit the college claims the insurance companies refused "to honor promises they made in their respective policies to protect the interests of Oberlin College," and its former vice president and dean of students, Meredith Raimondo.

The fact is, in their unrelenting promotion of slanders against the Gibsons, Raimondo and other college officials prolonged the losing litigation with years in appeals that almost forced the family into insolvency. They hired more and more lawyers, driving up costs and legal fees the insurance companies now refuse to pay.

The suit, filed in Lorain County Common Pleas Court in April, targets Lexington Insurance Company of New York; United Educators Insurance of Bethesda, Maryland; Mount Hawley Insurance Company of Peoria, Illinois; and StarStone Specialty Insurance Company of Cincinnati.

Oberlin College's dispute with the Gibsons began Nov. 9, 2016, when a student tried to use a fake ID to buy wine. After that failed, he put the bottle under his coat and walked out. Allyn Gibson

Jr., the grandson and son of the two co-owners, followed him outside and stopped him. The shoplifter and two friends, all students at Oberlin, started beating Gibson. The police arrived and arrested the three, all of whom are Black. They eventually entered guilty pleas and were convicted, with the Gibsons agreeing not to insist on jail time.

The day after the shoplifting hundreds of students demonstrated outside the store, along with Raimondo and other college administrators who helped organize the protest. They produced a flyer claiming Gibson's Bakery was a "RACIST establishment with a LONG ACCOUNT OF RACIAL PROFILING and DISCRIMINATION," while never producing a shred of evidence to back up these slanders. Protests continued the next day.

Oberlin College administrators refused to retract their accusations, so store owners Allyn Gibson and his son, David, both now deceased, sued the college, charging they had been libeled by the school and their reputation and business had been harmed.

In June 2019, after a five-week trial, jurors unanimously found the college guilty and awarded the Gibsons \$44 million in compensatory and punitive damages. This was subsequently reduced to \$25 million plus legal fees, under an Ohio law that caps such awards.

In their appeals, the college administrators argued unsuccessfully they were just standing up for the free speech rights of their students. The insurance companies say they shouldn't now be penalized for the college's expenses in pursuing these appeals.



Bruce Bishop/Chronicle-Telegram via AP

Working people gather in solidarity with Gibson family at their bakery in Oberlin, Ohio, 2022. Gibsons won lawsuit against Oberlin College for ongoing campaign of race-baiting slanders.

Over the next three years, the administrators expanded their legal representation in driving forward with appeals, jacking up legal costs and placing undue hardship on the Gibsons and their bakery. But last year, Ohio's Ninth District Court of Appeals unanimously upheld the jury's verdict and the Ohio Supreme Court that August refused to hear yet another appeal by the college.

College officials assumed they could pummel the Gibsons forever, based on \$75 million in insurance coverage. Through dragging out the appeal, the

damages originally awarded earned interest, increasing it to \$36.59 million, which the college finally paid to the Gibson family and bakery, and their lawyers, last December.

In its current suit against the insurance companies, Oberlin admits that shortly before the 2019 trial the case could have been settled for less than \$10 million. The Gibsons were asking for an apology from college administrators for their race-baiting slanders. But college authorities were not willing to do this, then or to this day.

For first time ever, debt owed on credit cards in US tops \$1 trillion

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In a stark sign of the challenges facing working people as the crisis of capitalism deepens, credit card debt in the U.S. for the first time ever topped \$1 trillion in the second quarter this year. That's up 4.6% from the previous three months. "Compared to other debt categories this quarter," the New York Federal Reserve said, "credit card balances saw the most pronounced worsening in performance."

And it will keep rising as workers and farmers increasingly have to wrack up more and more debt for food, car repairs, rising rents and mortgages and all kinds of family emergencies. Inflation and sharply higher interest rates

imposed over the past year have made paying down credit cards even harder.

According to Bankrate, 60% of those who carry a balance on their credit card — 54 million people — have been in debt for at least a year. These debts are assets for the bankers and capitalist investors who make big profits off the high interest rates they charge. The average interest rate on credit cards today is 20.53%, according to TransUnion.

Making minimum payments on a credit card balance of \$5,733 will boost interest payments to \$8,366 and keep you in debt for some 17 years. Nearly half of credit cardholders are permanently in debt, without any prospect of ever paying off their balance.

THE MILITANT

China's youth face job crisis as economy slows

Some 45% of young workers in China today are either not working or in school. The Chinese government says they have too "high expectations" as the economy contracts. The 'Militant' explains the slowdown has serious ramifications for the capitalist economy worldwide.



Jobs fair in China, where one-fifth of young people can't find jobs, deepening alienation.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

NEW READERS

\$5 for 12 issues

RENEWAL

\$10 for 12 weeks

\$20 for 6 months

\$35 for 1 year

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

UNION/SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION _____

CLIP AND MAIL TO THE MILITANT,
306 W. 37TH ST., 13TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10018.
OR SUBSCRIBE ONLINE AT:
WWW.THEMILITANT.COM

12 weeks of the *Militant* outside the U.S.: Australia, A\$10 • United Kingdom, £4 • Canada, Can\$7 • Caribbean and Latin America, US\$10 • Continental Europe, £8 • France, 8 euros • New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, A\$10 • All other areas, US\$16 (Send payment to addresses listed in business information box)

The Militant

Vol. 87/No. 32
Closing news date: August 16, 2023
Editor: John Studer
Managing Editor: Terry Evans

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

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

Business Manager: Bob Bruce
The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.
Telephone: (212) 244-4899
Fax: (212) 244-4947
E-mail: themilitant@mac.com
Website: www.themilitant.com

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

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

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

Latin America, Caribbean: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.
Africa, Asia, and the Middle East: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.
Canada: For one year send Canadian \$45 to the Militant, 7107 St. Denis #204, Montreal, Quebec H2S 2S5.
United Kingdom: Send £30 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London, 5 Norman Road (first floor), Seven Sisters, London, N15 4ND, England.
Republic of Ireland and Continental Europe: Send £85 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London at above address.
France: Send 100 euros for one year to Diffusion du Militant, BP 10130, 75723 Paris Cedex 15.
Australia: Send A\$70 for one year to P.O. Box 73 Campsie, NSW 2194 Australia.
New Zealand and the Pacific Islands: Send A\$70 for one year to above address.

Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

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

SWP campaigns for program

Continued from front page

ty's call for nationalization of the land, which would end it being a commodity, bought and sold by banks and other mortgage holders. With the land nationalized, farmers and their heirs would be protected from eviction and could stay on the land as long as they want to farm it. She cited the example of the Cuban Revolution where nationalization of the land ended the exploitation of the peasantry on the island and was a decisive part of forging a worker-farmer alliance.

Because of a tight schedule at the venue there was only a brief discussion after Garza's presentation. One participant asked, "Do different communities in a city like Los Angeles get along?" Garza responded that the bosses foster divisions between workers who are Black, Latino, Caucasian or immigrant. "The Socialist Workers Party advances a program that unites the working class in struggle against our common oppressor, the capitalist ruling families and their government," she said.

Garza added that the party's program includes the necessity of organizing a labor party based on the unions that acts in the interests of workers and farmers, as opposed to the Democrats and Republicans who defend and protect the capitalist system.

Shirley Roman, an alfalfa farmer, told Garza the biggest issue she faces is access to water. Another concern emphasized was skyrocketing land prices.

Will Scott, president of the African American Farmers of California, said that equity for Black farmers is a pressing problem. Government funds for Black farmers are a "pittance. The government should be user-friendly. It isn't."

As SWP campaign supporters were eating dinner following Garza's presentation, one participant came to continue discussing nationalization of the land. That's an important idea you are raising, she said, "but wouldn't it take a constitutional amendment to get it enacted?"

"It's going to take a revolutionary struggle," Garza said, "but the demand for nationalization of the land is part of a fighting perspective for farmers and workers to advance today."

Seattle SWP candidates: 'Amnesty for immigrant workers'

SEATTLE — "I support you and the labor movement but it's going to be an uphill battle. They don't need labor any more, they're moving more and more

to robotics," Julian Dane told Socialist Workers Party candidates Henry Dennison and Vincent Auger, after they knocked on his door here Aug. 9. Dennison is running for King County Council District 2 and Auger is running for Seattle City Council District 1.

"The question is which class controls the technologies," responded Dennison. Like they always have, the capitalist rulers use advances in machinery and technology to increase the exploitation of labor to boost their profits rather than to benefit the working class. SWP member Jacob Perasso added that workers still have the power to shut down production.

During the discussion Dane, a construction project manager who is Black, said, "immigration hurts minority workers, making it harder to unionize."

"The labor movement needs to fight for an amnesty for all immigrant workers with or without official government papers so we can unite our class against bosses' attempts to divide us," said Dennison. To counter competition for jobs, workers need to combine in unions.

Dane said that it has been 100 years since the labor movement made any real progress. Union victories in the 1930s under effective leadership helped open the road to the rise of the CIO, which organized 30 million workers. One of the most important victories of the working class was the Black-led proletarian movement that overthrew Jim Crow segregation in the



Militant/Jacob Perasso

"I want nothing but the real facts. We have to understand the world today," construction worker Lorenzo Rainwater told SWP candidates Henry Dennison, left, and Vincent Auger, right, in Seattle Aug. 9, as he bought the *Militant* and asked them to come back for further discussion.

1950s and '60s, Dennison said. We're seeing more working people using their unions today, ending a decades-long retreat of the labor movement.

Dane said the Democratic Party has a long history of betraying Black people. When asked what he thought of the charges against Donald Trump, he said, "It's political," adding that Trump may win more of "the minority vote in the next election."

Perasso said the Democratic Party was aiming to refurbish the image of the FBI and that the SWP opposes the attacks on constitutional freedoms, whether against Trump or anyone else.

Dane purchased a subscription to

the *Militant* and two Pathfinder books, *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, and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Barnes.

Over the next several weeks, SWP members and others who distribute the *Militant* around the world will be talking to subscribers about why they should renew their subscription. To join in this effort and to campaign with the SWP candidates, see list of party campaign offices on page 8.

— Jacob Perasso

Maui wildfire disaster caused by capitalism, gov't disdain

Continued from front page

and other resources to those who are now homeless.

Area unions like the United Public Workers mobilized their members to deliver aid. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union in Hawaii and on the mainland did likewise. If you want to help, contact the ILWU at www.ilwuc.org Kokua Maui Fund.

Residents who face rebuilding their lives from the ground up contrasted this outpouring of working-class solidarity with the seeming indifference of government authorities at all levels. Asked if he was warned about the fire, area resident Mike Steff told the *New York Times*, "Oh, hell no."

Local authorities never turned the area's warning sirens on. The fires reached the town before any order to evacuate. Some tourists in hotels and residents in West Maui were instructed to shelter in place as the fire advanced.

Hawaiian Electric, which operates the electrical system in Maui, decided not to turn off the power despite gale-force winds that were knocking down power lines. There was a major power grid fault just after 11:38 p.m. Aug. 7, only 20 minutes before the first fire was reported. Downed lines are suspected to have been the immediate cause of the fires.

Firefighters who arrived to fight the rapidly spreading blazes discovered there was no water pressure in the town's hydrants. The fire moved too fast to be fought with buckets.

There is only one road out of Lahaina and it was quickly clogged. Some fled on foot and were able to escape. Others waded into the ocean, staying there for hours. Others perished.

While the Camp Fire in Paradise burned 17 days, this fire reached the ocean and stopped within hours.

Working people in Paradise have sent their solidarity to the people of Maui. "Sending love and support from Paradise, California," Melissa Crick sent to one woman there whose social media information she saw online. To her surprise, the woman wrote back, saying she knew about Paradise and the support meant a lot to her.

A disaster rooted in capitalism

The liberal press in the U.S. claims the problem in Maui was "how climate change turned lush Hawaii into a tinderbox," as the *New York Times* put it. They blame high winds from a nearby hurricane, high temperatures and a drought for what happened.

But the truth is the profit-driven capitalist system is the culprit, as a look at the history of Hawaii and the allocation of resources in Maui today shows.

The Hawaiian Islands, a kingdom ruled by inhabitants from an earlier Polynesian migration, became an object of interest to U.S. capitalists in the 1800s. As sugar plantations began to dot the islands, their owners increasingly sought to take control. Led by Samuel Dole, sugar planters deposed the queen and seized power in 1893. In the context of the birth of U.S. imperialism in the Spanish-American War, Washington annexed Hawaii in 1898. It became a U.S. territory two years later, with Dole as its first governor.

As the 20th century dawned, pineapple plantations joined the sugar monopoly to dominate world production. Workers were drawn from China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines, and some from Latin America. Profits were amassed and mansions were built, many adorned with pampas grasses imported from South America.

Unions, led by the ILWU, battled to

organize the workers, fighting for higher wages and better conditions in the sugarcane and pineapple fields.

The ILWU organized more than 26,000 sugar workers in an islands-wide strike in 1946, uniting workers from all nationalities. The victorious strike changed the balance of forces between workers and plantation bosses. "The politics of Hawaii would never be the same after that," William Puette, director of the Center for Labor Education and Research at the University of Hawaii, wrote in 2017. "And certainly labor relations would not be the same."

Over the next 50 years, the sugar and pineapple bosses lost markets to foreign competitors, and in 2016 the last sugar grower in Hawaii shut down. The flight of bosses seeking greater profits elsewhere is a story many workers are familiar with. Tourism and related industries now drive profits in Hawaii.

This meant thousands of acres of former plantations were left untended. The government there did nothing to protect the now nonproductive land, seeing no way to profit from it. "Those fire-prone invasive species fill in any gaps anywhere else — roadsides, in between communities, in between people's homes, all over the place," Elizabeth Pickett, co-executive director of the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization told *Wired.com* Aug. 10. "At this point, 26% of our state is covered in these fire-prone grasses." They were the tinder that exploded in flame in Maui.

This is a solvable problem. But the capitalist bosses and government at all levels in Hawaii didn't take it on. And this, exacerbated by other electric company and government blunders during the fire, is what explains this was a social catastrophe rooted in the for-profit system, not "climate change."

Further reading

pathfinderpress.com

'New York Times' opens new witch hunt on political rights

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — With language virtually inviting government prosecutions and other punitive action, the *New York Times* published a front-page article Aug. 5 claiming that several organizations and individuals in the United States are part of “a financial network that stretches from Chicago to Shanghai and uses American nonprofits to push Chinese talking points worldwide.”

The *Times* — the paper of “record” of the U.S. ruling class — dedicated considerable resources to the lengthy screed, bylined by four “investigative” reporters on three continents with the aid of seven other reporters and researchers. None of the organizations fingered by the “reporting” team have “registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, as is required of groups that seek to influence public opinion on behalf of foreign powers,” says the article. “That usually applies to groups taking money or orders from foreign governments.”

The organizations cited include Codepink, whose website says it is a “feminist grassroots organization working to end U.S. warfare and imperialism”; New York-based People’s Forum; and several groups that present the regime in Beijing as a model of a “just” society and promoter of world “peace.” Among the individuals whose constitutional rights to freedom of speech and assembly are targeted by name are businessman Neville Roy Singham; Codepink leader Jodie Evans; and Vijay Prashad, executive director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio wrote to Attorney General Merrick Garland Aug. 8 urging an immediate investigation into Codepink, People’s Forum, Tricontinental, six other named organizations, and “all related organizations linked to Mr. Singham.”

The *Times* singles out Singham, who made his fortune in a software company he founded. “Mr. Singham has long admired Maoism, the Communist ideology that gave rise to modern China,” the paper said.

In 2017 Singham married Evans, a co-founder of Codepink. The *Times* editors’ intrusive sensationalism includes a screenshot of their wedding invitation. Evans served in Democratic California Gov. Jerry Brown’s administration and managed his 1991 bid for the Democratic Party presidential nomination.

The *Times* charges that Singham and others are at the center of a loose coalition called “No Cold War,” which is “part of a lavishly funded influence campaign” that allegedly works “closely with the Chinese government media machines and is financing its propaganda worldwide.”

The *Times* claims that Singham through various nonprofit groups in the U.S. also funds political activity of groups in South Africa and other parts of the world.

Foreign Agents Registration Act

In addition to raising the specter of Foreign Agents Registration Act violations, the *Times* also quotes anonymous “tax experts” who say that Singham “may have” claimed tax deductions for his donations to nonprofit groups. This



New York Times attacks free speech, spurs call for ‘foreign agent registration’ prosecutions.

is a not-so-subtle hint to the government to initiate intrusive audits and jerk the tax exempt status of such groups.

Codepink, People’s Forum, and other organizations are circulating and asking for signatures to a letter headlined “McCarthyism Is Back: Together We Can Stop It.” It correctly points out, “This attack isn’t only on the left but against everyone who exercises their free speech and democratic rights.” Receiving funds to promote the views of an organization or individual “is not illicit,” it notes.

But the statement undermines any ability to build a broad defense of the Constitution’s First Amendment rights by urging signers in its closing lines to “remain committed to building an international peace movement.” For Codepink, People’s Forum, Tricontinental Institute and some others targeted by the *Times*, what they mean by “peace” is making excuses for Moscow’s now year-and-a-half-long war

on Ukraine’s national sovereignty and independence and calling for “negotiations” that would leave substantial parts of that country occupied by the regime of Vladimir Putin. And keeping quiet, at best, or openly supporting Beijing’s repressive actions against the Uighur national minority and protests for political rights in Hong Kong.

The broadest defense possible of free speech and association is needed. Like some daily mouthpiece of imperialist Washington, the *Times* boasts that it “is the first to unravel the funding and document Mr. Singham’s ties to Chinese propaganda interests.”

Already, the *Times* article and its allegations have been picked up by other news media around the world. Defenders of the interests of the working class need to be prepared to respond to other attempts like this to undermine constitutional rights, both those already underway and more to come.

Moscow’s war, Ukrainian resistance and the place of the national question

BY ROY LANDERSEN

As working people in Ukraine exert courageous efforts to reconquer parts of their country seized by the Vladimir Putin regime in Moscow, they are strongly motivated to defend their independence. At the same time, workers and oppressed nationalities across Russia are becoming increasingly disaffected from Putin’s war.

At the heart of these developments is the national question. The Ukrainians were oppressed for centuries by Russia’s czars. They won autonomy for a few years after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution led by V.I. Lenin. Then they came under the iron grip of Moscow again as the counterrevolution headed by Joseph Stalin took hold. Ukraine regained its independence in 1991 after the Soviet Union disintegrated.

Putin blames Lenin for the creation of Ukraine as a nation. He insists it has no right to exist. But over the last decade Ukrainians have proved the opposite, fiercely fighting for their sovereignty.

Following revelations of a series of corruption scandals, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced Aug. 11 that the chiefs of all regional army recruitment centers would be fired. They will be replaced with “warriors” from the front, he said, who have “lost their health, lost their limbs,” but who have “retained their

dignity and have no cynicism.”

Meanwhile, the Kremlin is cynically using draftees, especially from the oppressed nationalities, as cannon fodder in its effort to crush Ukraine. An estimated quarter of a million Russian workers and farmers in uniform have been killed or wounded over the past 18 months.

For every death from Moscow, proportional to the population, there have been 87.5 from Dagestan, Russia’s southernmost republic; 275 from Buryatia; and 350 from Tuva. The latter two, in eastern Siberia, are among the poorest regions of Russia, whose people are mainly of Asian origin.

The most frequent protests against the war’s toll have been in these regions by relatives of those in the army. The national question raises its head again.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

NEW YORK

New York

Defend Constitutional Freedoms! Drop Charges Against the African People’s Socialist Party! Speakers: Oronde Shakur, African People’s Socialist Party; Manuel Meléndez Lavandero, Comités de la Resistencia Boricua; John Studer, Socialist Workers Party; Milagros Rivera, Cuba Solidarity Committee in Puerto Rico (by phone). Sat., Aug. 26, 6:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 307 W. 36th St., 13th Fl. Tel: (646) 434-8117.

SWP: Defend free speech, political rights!

Below is a statement issued Aug. 15 by Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City Council District 48.

Working people and all defenders of constitutional protections of free speech and assembly should oppose the campaign by the *New York Times*, now backed by Sen. Marco Rubio, for investigations and prosecution as “unregistered” foreign agents — in this case, for the government of China — of members or supporters of Codepink, People’s Forum and other organizations. We oppose any attempts to take away the tax exempt status of groups cited by the *Times*.

Since its enactment in 1938, as the U.S. rulers prepared to plunge working people into the second world imperialist slaughter, the Foreign Agents Registration Act has been used repeatedly to persecute opponents of U.S. government policy, violate their democratic rights, and dangle a sword over the heads of many others.

In recent decades we’ve seen this with the Cuban Five, Cuban revolutionaries arrested in Florida in 1998 and handed down sentences from 15 years to life. Among other frame-up charges, they were found guilty of acting and “conspiring” to act as “unregistered” agents of the Cuban government. In fact, they were gathering information on counterrevolutionary groups organizing and carrying out terrorist attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil.

This year the U.S. government issued frame-up indictments of four leaders, members and former members of the African People’s Socialist Party as “unregistered” agents of the Russian Federation. They face up to 15 years in prison if convicted. Several aides to former President Donald Trump have faced trials on similar charges.

Whatever your opinion of the political views of those targeted by the *Times*, the entire modern class struggle shows that the capitalist rulers use such charges to go after working-class militants and those in the revolutionary vanguard of workers’ struggles. It’s a law of history. Defending the right to free speech and association for all, no matter their views, is absolutely necessary to be able to defend and advance the interests of workers and farmers.

The Socialist Workers Party uncompromisingly defends and fights for the right of free speech and assembly.

U.S. government hands off Codepink, People’s Forum and all the individuals and organizations targeted by the owners and editors of the *New York Times*!

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Hotel workers protest violence against pickets in California

LONG BEACH, Calif. — Hundreds of hotel workers and their supporters protested outside the Hotel Maya in Long Beach Aug. 11, and at the Fairmont Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica and the Laguna Cliffs Marriott in Dana Point the next day. Violent assaults by hotel security against striking workers picketing there had taken place the previous weekend. UNITE HERE Local 11 has filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board. The union also announced a boycott against the hotels.

Contingents from a broad range of unions and community groups joined the protests. Josh Campbell, a striking Writers Guild of America picket captain, was part of a union delegation joining the hotel workers in Santa Monica. “We’re here in solidarity,” he said. “When we heard about what happened at this hotel last week, we knew we had to be here today.”

Ada Briceño, co-president of Local 11, told protesters in Long Beach, “They will not break us down. We will fight and win.”

— Bill Arth

Bus drivers strike at Autobus Venise in fight for higher wages

SALABERRY-DE VALLEY-FIELD, Quebec — Unifor Local 700 bus drivers working for Autobus Venise commemorated four months on strike here Aug. 3. They are fighting against inadequate and patronizing boss proposals. “We want to negotiate, but we won’t negotiate for nothing,” said Sylvain Brisson, president of the 50-member Autobus Venise union local.

The strikers want a raise to 690 Canadian dollars (\$513) for 30 hours of work starting now, and a three-year contract. This amount would be a CA\$23 an hour wage, as opposed to the CA\$19.50 they get now. The drivers work split shifts, one driving students to school and the other taking them home.

The bosses have offered a four-year contract, at CA\$650 a week the first

year, CA\$678 the second, and the last two years left open pending terms of a new deal with local school bosses.

Other area bus drivers have recently won substantial raises. Autobus Mata-nais, in the Gaspésie-Iles-de-la-Mad-eleine, agreed to raise wages 30% to 65% higher over a six-year contract. Autobus de l’Energie in Shawinigan agreed to raise wages from CA\$24.91 to CA\$28.32 starting July 1. Drivers at both companies had been on strike since March. Both groups of drivers are members of the CSN union.

Their examples show significant gains can be won through determined strike actions backed by labor solidarity.

“Getting insight on the struggle here was eye opening, to say the least,” said Jourdain Dumont, one of four Canadian National conductors who joined the Unifor picket line Aug. 3. “The fight to make a livable wage is a scenario we’re all too familiar with. We have the strength in numbers and can accomplish more when we stand together.”

“On June 26, the company hired scabs to run the buses,” Brisson said.

UK rail unions picket against cuts in ticket offices, jobs

BY ANNE HOWIE

MANCHESTER, England — Striking members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers union were joined on picket lines by disability rights campaigners and other trade unionists in many parts of the country during one-day strikes by 20,000 rail workers on July 20, 22 and 29.

Weeks before, rail bosses had announced the closure of almost all station ticket offices, cutting more than 2,000 jobs. Both the RMT and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen held a series of strikes over the past year. The government and rail bosses demand unions accept job cuts and attacks on working conditions to get higher pay.

A July 18 meeting of over 100 people organized by Manchester RMT branches was addressed by Mick



Militant/Norton Sandler

Striking hotel workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 11, rally in Long Beach, California, Aug. 11 in fight for contract and against violent attacks by hotel security on picket lines.

But the Labor’s Administrative Tribunal ruled against this move Aug. 3, putting a stop to the scabs.

Autobus Venise is owned by Soges-co, which runs 32 bus and transporta-

tion companies throughout Quebec. The bosses hope its size will intimidate the workers. The pickets are up from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday to Friday.

— Alexandre Jacob

Lynch, the union’s general secretary; members of disability rights groups; and Andrew Burnham, mayor of Greater Manchester.

The fight against the ticket office closures is “about humanity, accessibility and we are determined to win,” RMT regional organizer Craig Johnson said. Train company Avanti West Coast has already announced 192 redundancies, Johnson said, despite claims by rail bosses that workers would be relocated.

“No one will be there to help us with ticket machines,” Kevin Greenham from the National Federation for the Blind told the meeting. Only 3% of visually impaired people say they can use a ticket machine.

Workers need a labor movement that is not just about the world of work, Lynch told the meeting, but one “that goes into our communities,

we’ve got to stand together.”

The Rail Delivery Group, an organization of rail company bosses, “says it is modernizing,” said Rick Burgess, a member of the Greater Manchester Disabled Peoples Panel. “There’s nothing modern about excluding disabled people from public transport.” He urged participants to join RMT picket lines.

“I see this first of all as a fight for jobs,” said Janine Cantwell, a Rail, Maritime and Transport member and dispatcher at Manchester Victoria station. Rail workers had received no pay raise for years, she added, and closing ticket offices or reducing their hours would make it harder for older people to get reduced fares. The RMT is demanding a pay raise to match inflation.

Mark Porter, union convener at Rolls Royce in Barnoldswick, Lancashire, gave greetings to the meeting from Unite, noting that members of the RMT joined the picket line of Rolls Royce workers in 2021. “This is an attack on the most vulnerable,” he said. “We stand together.”

Through fights like this, unions can challenge decisions taken “by those driven by profit, instead of those of us who work on the railway and the working people who use it,” said Pete Clifford during the discussion. Clifford is an RMT member and train dispatcher at Manchester Piccadilly station and the Communist League candidate for Manchester Central in next year’s general election.

During the discussion I pointed to the fight waged by residents of East Palestine, Ohio, and rail unions in the U.S., to make the Norfolk Southern rail company take responsibility for the damage caused by the derailment and spillage of toxic chemicals there in February. Rail bosses had cut jobs, endangering the lives of workers and those living near the tracks, highlighting the need for unions to fight for control over safety, I said.

The RMT has called further strikes for Aug. 26 and Sept. 2.

Anne Howie is a member of the RMT at Manchester Piccadilly station.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



August 24, 1998

“Fidel, Fidel!” roared an enthusiastic crowd when Cuban president Fidel Castro arrived in Grenada Aug. 2 on the last stop of a week-long tour through the English-speaking Caribbean. Just 15 years ago, U.S. forces invaded Grenada, occupied the island for 18 months, and installed a government subservient to Washington.

Hundreds of people came out to welcome the Cuban president, and show solidarity and appreciation for Cuba’s role in helping to develop and defend that island. Castro was present for the unveiling of a plaque to honor the Cuban internationalist construction workers killed in the 1983 U.S. invasion. They had been in Grenada building a new airport and defended themselves when attacked by the invading forces.

More than 5,000 Grenadians out of a population of 97,000 turned out to send off the Cuban leader at the end of his visit.



August 31, 1973

DELANO, Calif. — Thousands of farm workers marched in the funeral procession here for a striking member of the United Farm Workers Union who died at the hands of a deputy sheriff Aug. 15. Because of the union-busting activity of local authorities, the UFW has demanded federal intervention. Vineyard owners, foremen, and scabs have been carrying guns and have used them on several occasions.

Meanwhile, in Fresno County, strikers defied an injunction limiting the size of picket lines and the use of bullhorns to appeal to non-strikers. In Tulare County, officials dropped criminal charges against 249 pickets arrested for defying injunctions.

These victories were the fruits of the courage and tenacity of the strikers, who continue their fight in the face of violence and victimization by the race-baiting, union-busting forces arrayed against them.



August 30, 1948

An enraged public opinion is gathering in support of James Kutcher, legless Newark veteran threatened with dismissal from his position with the Veteran’s Administration because of membership in the Socialist Workers Party.

The pending dismissal is based on President Truman’s Executive Order which denies federal employment to those who belong to organizations listed as “subversive.” Kutcher boldly and “proudly affirms membership in the SWP.” Kutcher declared, “I do not advocate force and violence to achieve socialism; the only time I ever practiced force and violence was under orders given me in the Army by the U.S. Government.”

Kutcher brands the entire procedure involved in these hearings as “illegal and unconstitutional.” He insists they be open to the press and the public as the issues “concern the American people as a whole.”

Bosses drive for profits, rail workers lose lives and limbs

BY JOE SWANSON

Since the Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern derailment and fires contaminated East Palestine, Ohio, working people everywhere have been paying attention to the job conditions and life disruptions the bosses' drive for profits inflicts on rail workers and their families. During picketing by rail workers' unions last fall — part of their fight for a contract with livable wages, schedules, crew sizes and safety protections — many carried signs saying, "Railroaders lives matter."

But the rail bosses organize their operations in ways that all too often lead to the death and maiming of workers. Four rail workers have been killed over the last seven weeks.

Twenty-eight-year-old Derek Scott Little, a CSX conductor trainee, was killed on the job June 26 at the Seagirt Marine Terminal in Baltimore. Jacory Ceaser, 24, was killed July 15 when he was crushed between two intermodal cars in Chicago. Forty-year-old Travis Bradley, a CSX conductor from Ridgeley, West Virginia, was killed Aug. 6 when he was riding on the side of a train through a close clearance in Cumberland, Maryland.

And a contract worker, whose name has not yet been released, was killed after being struck by railroad track equipment Aug. 4 at a remote location between Great Barrington and Sheffield, Massachusetts.

The Class 1 rail bosses' operating system is based on longer and heavier trains — up to 3 miles long — with smaller and smaller crews, on schedules that dictate constant fatigue, with insufficient training and immeasurable other ways of cutting corners on safety. Some 30% of the total workforce on these railroads have been eliminated in less than a decade. They've boosted profits by over 50%, and are hungry for more.

Don Grissom, an assistant to the president of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen — which inspects, maintains and repairs rail cars — told a 2022 congressional hearing how this works. A Union Pacific railroad yard that had 74 carmen in 2018 now has 24 on duty to inspect trains, he said.

Each rail car has up to 180 inspection points counting both sides of the car, he testified. "One defective car can derail an entire train." Carmen "were permitted around 3 minutes per car on predeparture inspections." At the same UP yard, "on a 150 car train, we're only allowed 2.5 hours maximum to perform inspections," a minute or less per car.

"However, when the FRA [Federal Railroad Administration] is on the property, that rule changes to 4 hours and they give us four Carmen to do it. But as soon as the FRA leaves, it's back to business as usual."

"Why do this?" he asked. "Simple: profits."

To mark the six-month anniversary



Trains/David Lassen

Rail workers picket North American Rail Shippers' Kansas City conference, May 2022, during contract negotiations. Four rail workers have been killed on the job in the last seven weeks.

since the East Palestine derailment, the AFL-CIO's 37-union Transportation Trades Department issued a public statement. "There have been more than 60 high-profile derailments since East Palestine," it said. "Through it all, freight rail companies have maintained their fundamental disregard for public safety. Safety is just a buzzword to the railroads."

East Palestine: 'We stand with you'

"To the people of East Palestine: we have not forgotten you. We see you. We stand with you. We fight with you. Solidarity forever," says the statement.

On Aug. 11 the Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced it had levied four citations against Norfolk Southern for viola-

tions of workers' safety following the derailment. Most had to do with the bosses' drive to get the tracks relaid on top of the contaminated soil and ballast one day after the derailment.

OSHA cited the company for failing to make sure workers wore chemical resistant footwear when working on contaminated ground, for letting workers with no respiratory protection pour cement on contaminated soil and not training them about hazardous chemicals.

The bosses agreed to pay a fine of \$49,111, part of a settlement with the agency and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees rail union.

Following the derailment and the public outcry raised by rail workers and area residents alike, the nation's largest freight railroads reluctantly agreed to participate in a federal safety program that allows workers to report safety issues anonymously. But no rail lines have actually signed up.

Vincent G. Verna, a vice president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, said the rail companies "do not want to relinquish their ability to discipline their employees who report something."

"Working conditions on the railroads today make for an unforgiving life," Lance Anton, a conductor and SMART-TD union member with some 12 years experience, told the *Militant*. "Rail workers have to deal with working 12 hours shifts or longer, at times in difficult weather, and dealing with continuous harassment and speedup."

He said rail bosses need to be forced to provide more training before new hires are set up. "It takes two to three years experience for conductors and engineers to work safely and with confidence, to learn the company rules, the yard and road terrains, to spot cars at industry sidings, where other crews are working and many derailments happen."

No rail worker needs to die on the job! We need to use union power to fight for workers control over operating conditions and safety as the only way to reverse the treacherous conditions rail workers and those that live and work near railroad property face.

Our unions need to fight for trains no longer than 50 cars, and a minimum of four-person crews, with two on the head engine and two on a caboose or rear engine. And they need to take control over new-hire training.

Joe Swanson is a retired conductor and member of SMART-TD.

Memphis strike 'standing strong' against IFF bosses

Continued from front page

ery Outlet in Dayton, Ohio, who drove together to Memphis to deliver solidarity cards and contributions from their local union members.

The Local 57 delegation included bakery workers Gary Ringo and Kaitlin Estill and business agent Earl Farris. They had helped get signatures on the card and raise money to bring to the strikers. Forty-one workers signed and donated \$240. The local kicked in \$250 more.

"Lots of workers in the plant contributed to making the card that we brought. One came up with the headline, another did the graphics, some of us circulated it to other workers to sign," Estill said. "It helps strengthen us to do something like this."

"Workers in Cincinnati were mad when we heard that IFF didn't want to give workers Martin Luther King Jr. Day off and that IFF wants to be able to

change their health care plan with only a month's notice," Ringo added. "And we work a lot of forced overtime too, so they relate to the fight to be paid time-and-a-half for that."

"This experience is going to help the union members at Klosterman in their contract fight when their contract is up in a year and a half. They'll get a lot out of meeting the strikers here in Memphis," said Farris.

The Ohio delegation also included Jacquie Henderson, who brought a card and donations from workers at the Dayton outlet store and solidarity from BCTGM Local 19.

The strikers picket 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The visiting unionists met up with several International Flavors and Fragrances workers, including Local 390G President Cedric Wilson, at dawn as they came off night shift picket duty. They gave Wilson their cards of support and contributions.

Michael Hibler, who has worked in the plant since 1974, was one of the overnight pickets who greeted them. "We get a lot of support from workers in the Memphis area," he said, as many drivers honked in support. "They know why we are here. They are facing some of the same things we are."

"And we appreciate all their support," he said. "We live by those words on your cards about standing together in solidarity."

"The company hasn't come back to the bargaining table yet, but we can sense their desperation," Wilson said. "They're trying to get some of us to cross the line and come back to work."

We're not going back until we get the contract we deserve."

Wilson explained that until about a year ago, half of the lab workers didn't belong to the union. "The company had lied to them, telling them they would have to pay back union dues for all the years they worked here if they signed up," he said. "When we explained the truth we convinced them to join and be part of the fight."

Glenda Sumner, one of several lab workers walking the picket line that morning, said, "This is not about money, it's about workers' rights. I'm proud of my team. We're all out here and we're representing!"

Estill said that Klosterman often forces younger and newer workers onto dangerous jobs without enough training or safety equipment. "Many workers have scars on their arms from burns," she said.

"You shouldn't have to put up with that," said striker Zandra Lee. "At IFF we fought for better personal protection equipment after there was an accident and a worker got hurt." She showed them what type of gloves they wear to protect themselves.

"When we go back, we're going to fight for this type of protection," said Estill. The strikers deserve all the support they can get, which strengthens their fight — and the whole labor movement. Contributions are needed. Go to <https://www.gofundme.com/f/bctgm-local-390g-iff-memphis-workers-on-strike>

Join the picket line, night or day, at 4272 S. Mendenhall Road in Memphis.

Read about the battles that forged the labor movement

pathfinderpress.com

Defense of constitutional freedoms is key issue in class struggle

Continued from front page

by Judge Thomas Griesa in the SWP's landmark federal lawsuit against decades of FBI spying and harassment. In a victory for all working people, Griesa ruled in 1986 that government spying on the SWP was unconstitutional.

Acknowledging that the SWP is a revolutionary organization, Griesa said that government informers had never produced a shred of evidence the party engages in espionage, violence or terrorism.

"The evidence does show in considerable detail the nature of the SWP's actual, lawful activities," which, the judge added, it "has a clear constitutional right to carry out." Clark urged participants to read Griesa's ruling, along with trial testimony by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes and former National Secretary Farrell Dobbs in *FBI on Trial: The Victory in the Socialist Workers Party Suit Against Government Spying*, published by Pathfinder Press.

Days after the forum, Democrats took the assault on constitutional freedoms another step. A grand jury in Georgia indicted Trump and 18 others Aug. 14 for racketeering, conspiracy, making false statements and other charges. The Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, purportedly enacted to combat the mafia, has been widely used to target unions.

The SWP's defense of free speech is nothing new, Clark said. Leon Trotsky, a leader of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, explained in 1939 that all suppression of rights, no matter who the target, comes down on the working class. That is a "law of history," Trotsky said.

Clark also cited SWP leader James P. Cannon's response when New York City authorities banned a Nazi rally in 1960. "Our line is free speech. We have to fight for it and convince other people we mean it," Cannon wrote. "As the class struggle develops, we will have to fight the fascists, and not only with words." But this won't be a fight to deprive them of the right to speak. It will be "a defensive fight to prevent them from interfering with the rights of workers."

New York Times columnist Thomas Edsall recently pointed to liberals' increasingly open hostility toward the First Amendment. But Edsall's claim that liberals have historically been the staunchest defenders of free speech is false, Clark said. Among the prominent examples he cited was Judge Griesa, a conservative Republican and Nixon appointee, who ruled for the SWP against the FBI.

John Studer, the *Militant's* editor, recalled from the audience that it was Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt who remade the FBI into a political police force targeting militant workers, Black rights fighters, opponents of Washington's wars and SWP members.

At the forum were two people who had joined a solidarity brigade that had traveled from Puerto Rico to Cuba last year. On their return 60 brigadistas were interrogated by the FBI. "None of them talked to the FBI," one of the trip participants reported.

Throughout modern history, Clark said, attacks on political rights have accompanied steps toward war by the rulers, such as we're seeing again today. Moscow's 18-month war against Ukraine's sovereignty and independence

is accelerating tensions between capitalist powers. In response to large-scale joint naval exercises off Alaska's Aleutian Islands by Moscow and Beijing, Washington deployed warships and aircraft to track the vessels. Especially in such volatile times, the imperialist rulers tighten the screws on free speech and political activity.

A dangerous threat to rights was advanced in a recent *New York Times* article, "Rich U.S. Leftist Linked to Web of Global Chinese Propaganda," Clark said. It fingers individuals linked with the People's Forum, Codepink, and other groups for alleged violations of the Foreign Agents Registration Act. A statement condemning the attack by Róger Calero, SWP candidate for New York City Council, appears on page 4.

A road to unify the working class

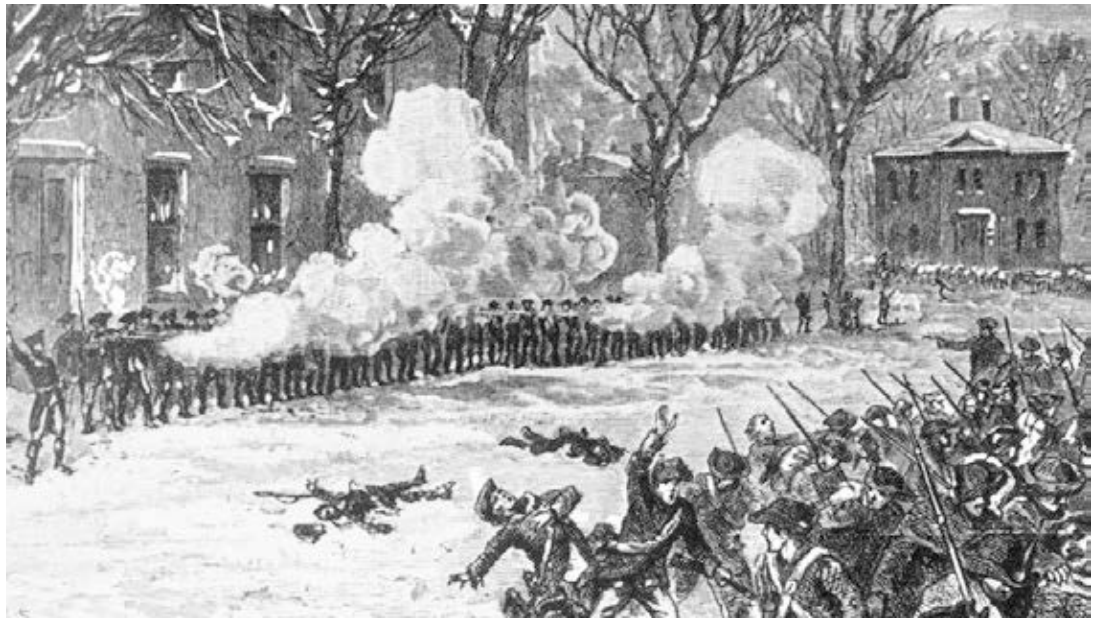
Constitutional rights are also at the center of the June 29 Supreme Court ruling overturning two university admissions programs, Clark said.

"The mass struggle for Black rights, the anti-Vietnam War movement and resistance among workers in coal, rail, steel and packinghouses opened the door to winning affirmative action," Clark said. In 1974 a consent decree pressed by the United Steelworkers union set hiring goals in basic steel for Blacks, women, and Latinos, helping overcome divisions and strengthen that union and others.

As the labor movement retreated over the next few decades, however, affirmative action was "substantially corrupted into a tool of capitalist division benefiting the most privileged layers," Clark noted, citing SWP leader Jack Barnes from the book *Are They Rich Because They're Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning under Capitalism*.

"Rights that mark true progress for the working class are color blind," Clark said. It took the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction to uproot slavery and win the 14th Amendment. No state, that amendment says, shall "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

"Our society is not, and has never been colorblind," writes Justice Clarence Thomas in a concurring opinion on the Supreme Court ruling. "But under the Fourteenth Amendment, the law must disregard all racial distinctions." Thomas recounts how the court abandoned that constitutional protection in



Depiction of battle during Shay's Rebellion in 1877. Struggles by farmers and mechanics in First American Revolution and by working people of all skin colors in the Second American Revolution won constitutional protections Socialist Workers Party defends today, Steve Clark told participants in New York forum.

its 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson ruling, providing legal cover to racist segregation. As a result, Thomas said, "even the promise" of the 14th Amendment "took time to materialize."

"But it wasn't 'time' that tore down Jim Crow," Clark said. "It was class struggle. You won't find a description of that in any of the justices' opinions." He described the SWP's participation in those battles, from building the industrial unions in the 1930s and '40s that started breaking down segregation, to the Montgomery bus boycott and other fights that marked the proletarian movement for civil rights in the 1950s and '60s.

In a dissenting opinion, Justice Ketanji Jackson Brown says the ruling values racial diversity "in the [military] bunker, not the boardroom." Her comments highlight the upper-middle-class and professional aspirations of the layers she speaks for, Clark said. In contrast, Thomas says the Harvard and similar admissions programs are "a call to empower privileged elites" in "a world in which everyone is defined by their skin color."

Working people have an opposing starting point. Bourgeois revolutions cleared the path for the working-class movement. Democratic republics and universal suffrage enabled labor "to achieve its present unity and solidarity," said Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin in 1919, for "waging a systematic struggle against capital." Without this, "this development of the working class would have been impossible." Constitutional protections won by farmers and mechanics during the First American Revolution, and then by toiling producers of all skin colors during the Second, are what the SWP defends today.

But a bourgeois republic remains "a machine for the suppression of some

people by others," Lenin added. "As long as there is exploitation there cannot be equality." Real protection, Clark said, comes from using political space to fight for a revolution that can bring the working class and its allies to power.

Caliber of Cuban leadership

The historic accomplishments of the leadership forged by Fidel Castro are recounted in Joseph Hansen's *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution* and the SWP's 2022 political resolution, reprinted in *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*, Clark said. The proletarian and internationalist course that Castro led "did not simply transform the lives, conditions, and political consciousness of workers and farmers in Cuba," the resolution explains. "It opened a renewal of communist leadership in the Americas, in the United States and beyond."

Hansen described the caliber of the revolutionists of action — that's what he called them, *revolutionists of action* — who led workers and farmers in Cuba to conquer power in the face of the most powerful ruling class in history. "I was taught that important as books are and for all the time that must be put into mastering them," Hansen wrote, "what is decisive is the revolution itself?"

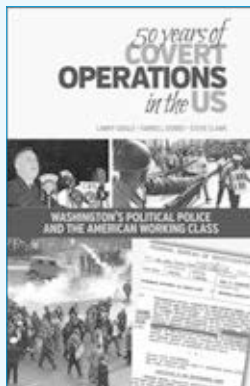
"Workers learn through fighting, gaining unity and class consciousness," Clark said. "So we can take the next necessary steps — breaking with the bosses' Democratic and Republican parties and building a labor party based on the unions."

The program and continuity of the Socialist Workers Party point the necessary way forward for the working class in the U.S., as part of the world struggle for socialism. "You can't wait for a revolutionary situation to build a proletarian party.

"That's the lesson of the assault Castro led on the Moncada garrison in Santiago de Cuba in 1953," Clark added. Despite failing to take the garrison, that battle opened Cuba's revolutionary war leading to the conquest of power by workers and farmers just six years later.

Clark urged participants to join SWP members defending constitutional protections, building support for union struggles and organizing opposition to the U.S. rulers' economic war on Cuba. "And above all, forging a working-class party that can and will lead tens of millions to make the American socialist revolution."

Two books to help understand, organize and act to prevent government assaults on freedoms protected in Constitution



FBI on Trial: The Victory in the Socialist Workers Party Suit Against Government Spying
By Jack Barnes, Farrell Dobbs and others — \$17

50 Years of Covert Operations in the US: Washington's Political Police and the American Working Class
By Larry Seigle, Farrell Dobbs and Steve Clark — \$10

www.pathfinderpress.com

Cuba's working people defended their revolution arms in hand

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for August. The excerpt is from the chapter "There will be a victorious revolution in the United States before a victorious counterrevolution in Cuba," based on talks by Barnes in March 2001. Cuba's workers and farmers crushed the U.S.-backed mercenary assault at Playa Girón in less than 72 hours. It was U.S. imperialism's first military defeat in the Americas. On the eve of the battle, Fidel Castro told the world they had made a socialist revolution. Copyright © 2007 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Bohemia
Cuban militia members celebrate successfully defending their socialist revolution against an April 1961 invasion at Playa Girón fomented by the capitalist rulers in Washington.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JACK BARNES

The U.S. rulers were wrong about the workers and farmers of Cuba. Officials in the CIA and White House expected the invasion force, after a few days, to spark some uprisings against the revolutionary government. They anticipated some divisions among the officers of Cuba's revolutionary armed forces, too. By analogy, the imperialists saw the government in Cuba as some tropical variety of a Stalinist regime, with the same inherent brittleness. And they saw the cadres of the Revolutionary Armed Forces as some

radical variant of a bourgeois Latin American officer corps, comparable to those they had long dealt with. ...

The battle wasn't bungled by the operations section of the CIA; it was won by the workers and farmers of revolutionary Cuba. What led to the outcome wasn't the military inadequacy of the imperialist rulers, something they could conceivably — and rapidly — improve; it was their class political blindness, something they cannot change. And this blindness extended all the way from the White House, to the CIA, to the liberal opinion molders, to the leadership of the mercenary brigade itself. ...

[A] March 13, 1961, speech by Fidel Castro, [was] given as Washington was accelerating its campaign of terror aimed at overturning the Cuban Revolution. ...

There is one thing the Cuban people "can tell Mr. Kennedy," Castro said to the cheering crowd. "A victorious revolution will be seen in the United States before a victorious counterrevolution in Cuba."

We're convinced that sentence remains as accurate today as it was in 1961. It's not a prediction; it's not an encouraging clap on the back. It's the recognition of how capitalism works, of the line of march of working people, and of the communist caliber of the revolutionary movement in Cuba. For revolutionists in the United

States, in Cuba, and around the world, it sharply poses Lenin's famous question: What is to be done?

Fidel's assertion makes quite a statement about the Cuban Revolution — even more so forty years later, if you think about it, than it did at the time. And it was quite a statement in 1961! ...

We should recall that only a matter of days after their defeat at Playa Girón, the Kennedy administration began making plans for an invasion force of tens of thousands of soldiers to assault Cuba. The invasion was to be the culmination of a stepped-up program of covert air and sea attacks, terrorist activity, economic sabotage — and assassinations. By the end of 1961 these plans had been formalized as Operation Mongoose, with Brigadier General Edward Lansdale formally in charge. But this time around the operation was organized directly out of the White House under the supervision of the president's brother Robert F. Kennedy, who was attorney general. ...

One of the recently declassified Mongoose "memorandums for the record" recounts a March 1962 meeting in the Oval Office to discuss a proposed plan to assassinate Fidel Castro during a visit to Ernest Hemingway's former home near Havana. The memo, drafted by Lansdale, reported "agreement that the matter was so delicate and sensitive that it shouldn't be surfaced to the Spe-

cial Group" — the joint CIA-Pentagon-White House body chaired by Robert Kennedy that oversaw Mongoose — "until we were ready to go, and then not in detail. I pointed out that this all pertained to *fractioning the regime*" — a code word for assassination.

"If it happened," the memo concluded, "it could develop like a brushfire, much as in Hungary, and we must be prepared to help it win our goal of Cuba freed of a Communist government."

It's the memo's reference to Hungary that I want to call to your attention. Lansdale was drawing an analogy to the Hungarian Revolution of October 1956. Armed workers had risen up against the brutal Stalinist regime and established revolutionary councils in Hungary that year, before being crushed by Soviet tanks a few weeks later.

But this Operation Mongoose memorandum is another example of the U.S. rulers being taken in by their own ideology. Because the socialist revolution in Cuba is not some variant of a Stalinist regime — one with broader popular support to begin with, perhaps, but nonetheless fundamentally alien to the toilers. To the contrary, the revolutionary government in Cuba — a workers and peasants regime, the dictatorship of the proletariat — is the *opposite* of the regimes of a privileged, petty-bourgeois caste in Hungary, the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, or anywhere else. Just as Stalinism itself is not a degenerate form of Bolshevism but its negation — a counterrevolutionary current that emerged and crystallized in deadly opposition to the continuity of Lenin's course and its proletarian internationalist foundations.

As proven at Playa Girón, and then once again a year and a half later in October 1962, the workers and peasants of Cuba weren't biding their time, waiting for some external shock in order to rise up and overthrow a hated pseudo-socialist government. Instead, on both occasions they mobilized in the millions to defend their national sovereignty, their socialist revolution, and its revolutionary leadership.

Fidel Castro has referred to the collapse of the puffed-up regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as "the fall of the meringue." There was no meringue in Cuba, at the opening of the 1960s. Nor is there one today.

August
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Pathfinder Readers Club Specials



Cuba and the Coming American Revolution
JACK BARNES
This is about the struggles of workers in the imperialist heartland, the youth who are attracted to them and the example of the people of Cuba that revolution is not only necessary, it can be made.
\$10. Special price \$7

Eugene V. Debs Speaks
\$17. Special price \$12

Teamster Politics
FARRELL DOBBS
\$16 Special price \$11

Thomas Sankara Speaks
The Burkina Faso Revolution 1983-87
\$20. Special price \$14

Their Morals and Ours
LEON TROTSKY
\$10. Special price \$7

Los Cosméticos, las modas y la explotación de la mujer
(Cosmetics, Fashions and the Exploitation of Women)
EVELYN REED, JOSEPH HANSEN, MARY-ALICE WATERS
\$12. Special price \$8.50

Join the Pathfinder Readers Club for \$10 and receive discounts all year long

30%
DISCOUNT

ORDER ONLINE AT
PATHFINDERPRESS.COM
OFFER GOOD UNTIL August 31

IF YOU LIKE THIS PAPER, LOOK US UP

Where to find distributors of the *Militant*, *New International*, and a full display of Pathfinder books.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: Oakland: 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Zip: 94621. Tel: (510) 686-1351. Email: oaklandswp@gmail.com. **Los Angeles:** 2826 S. Vermont. Suite 1. Zip: 90007. Tel: (323) 643-4968. Email: swpla@att.net

FLORIDA: Miami: 5711 NW 7th Ave. Unit B. Zip: 33127. Tel: (305) 929-8966. Email: swpmiami@icloud.com

GEORGIA: Atlanta: 777 Cleveland Ave. SW Suite 103. Zip: 30315. Tel: (678) 528-7828. Email: swpatlanta@fastmail.com

ILLINOIS: Chicago: 1858 W. Cermak Road, 2nd floor. Zip: 60608. Tel: (312) 792-6160. Email: SWPChicago@fastmail.fm

MINNESOTA: Minneapolis: 2401 1/2 Central Ave. NE, Unit B. Zip: 55418. Tel: (612) 271-1930. Email: swpminneapolis@gmail.com

NEBRASKA: Lincoln: P.O. Box 6811.

Zip: 68506. Tel: (402) 217-4906. Email: swplincoln@gmail.com

NEW JERSEY: 3600 Bergenline, Suite 205B, Union City. Zip: 07087. Tel: (551) 240-1512. swpnewjersey@gmail.com

NEW YORK: New York: 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor. Zip: 10018. Tel: (646) 434-8117. Email: newyorkswp@gmail.com

OHIO: Cincinnati: 2300 Montana Ave., Suite 230. Tel: Zip: 45211. (513) 837-1038. Email: swpcincinnati@gmail.com

PENNSYLVANIA: Philadelphia: 2824 Cottman Ave., Suite 16. Zip: 19149. Tel: (215) 708-1270. Email: philaswp@verizon.net **Pittsburgh:** 5907 Penn Ave., Suite 313. Zip: 15206. Tel: (412) 610-2402. Email: swppittsburgh@gmail.com

TEXAS: Dallas-Fort Worth: 6815 Manhattan Blvd., Suite 108 Fort Worth. Zip: 76120. Tel: (817) 899-6720. Email: dfswp@gmail.com

WASHINGTON, D.C.: 7603 Georgia Ave. NW, Suite 300. Zip: 20012. Tel: (202) 536-5080. Email: swp.washingtondc@verizon.net

WASHINGTON: Seattle: 650 S. Orcas St., #120 Zip: 98108. Tel: (206) 323-1755. Email: swpseattle@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA

Sydney: Suite 2, First floor, 275 George St., Liverpool. Postal Address: P.O. Box 73 Campsie, NSW 2194. Tel: (61) 435-995-604. Email: cl_australia@optusnet.com.au

CANADA

QUEBEC: Montreal: 7107 St. Denis #204 H2S 2S5. Tel: (514) 272-5840. Email: cllcmontreal@fastmail.com

FRANCE

Paris: BP 10130, 75723 Paris Cedex 15. Email: militant.paris@gmail.com

UNITED KINGDOM

ENGLAND: London: 5 Norman Road (first floor). Seven Sisters. Post code: N15 4ND. Tel: 020-3538 8900. Email: cllondon@fastmail.fm **Manchester:** 329, Royal Exchange Buildings, 3 Old Bank St. Post code: M2 7PE. Tel: (0161) 312-8119. Email: clmanchr@gmail.com

Thomas Sankara showed road forward

The course led by Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso is a powerful example to working people across Africa, in the U.S. and worldwide. Tens of millions confront social and economic crises, the deadly consequences of Moscow's war in Ukraine and the threat of new wars.

Sankara led a revolution, toppling a pro-imperialist regime and replacing it with a popular revolutionary government. As president between 1983 and 1987, he used political power to organize the toiling classes to confront the results of imperialist exploitation and to transform their conditions and lives.

Burkina Faso, formerly Upper Volta, was one of the poorest countries in Africa — as Niger is today. The revolutionary government mobilized the toiling majority to fight for what they needed, to build their own mass organizations and to join with struggles worldwide against imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation. It curtailed the power of the landowners and exploiting classes. It nationalized the land to guarantee peasants the fruits of their labor.

Millions were mobilized to carry out literacy and immunization drives, and build wells, dams, schools, housing and a national railroad. They planted trees to push back the Sahara desert, whose encroachment is a challenge to peoples across the Sahel.

“As Karl Marx said, those who live in a palace do not think about the same things, nor in the same way, as those who live in a hut,” Sankara said in 1986. “The struggle to defend the trees and forest is above all a struggle against imperialism.”

From the outset his government mobilized women to fight for their emancipation. Ending women's subjugation “is a basic necessity for the revolution to triumph,” he said.

While some political figures in Africa try to bask in the legacy of Sankara to get a hearing, there is no government in Africa today following the revolutionary course he blazed.

Like Fidel Castro, the central leader of Cuba's socialist revolution, Sankara acted on the capacities of ordinary men and women to transform the world and themselves. He spoke on behalf of the exploited worldwide, against governments that serve the exploiters.

Sankara was assassinated in a counterrevolutionary coup to protect the interests of those whose class domination was threatened by a deep going revolution. Since then he has become a symbol for millions of workers, farmers and young people.

Pathfinder publishes *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, in English, Spanish and French. Read what Sankara said and help get the book into the hands of fellow workers.

Military coup in Niger heightens tensions in Africa

Continued from front page

Neighboring capitalist powers, backed by Washington, threaten to intervene to overturn the coup.

Tchiani dissolved Niger's Constitution and suspended the former government. His military regime says it will prosecute Bazoum for treason, based on his relations with foreign governments.

Paris, the former colonial ruler, has 1,500 troops in Niger, the largest contingent of the 5,650 troops it deploys in Africa. Niger's substantial uranium deposits are key for France's nuclear power plants, which produce most of the country's electricity. Paris also exports power to Germany, which cut off its imports of gas from Russia after Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Washington has two military bases and 1,100 troops in Niger. Prior to the coup, they had been training and advising Bazoum's special forces. The Pentagon has unleashed drone strikes on Libya from Niger and mounted surveillance operations in the region.

The rulers in both Paris and Washington have spent years intervening in the Sahel, a region of western and north-central Africa below the Sahara, pursuing their own separate imperialist interests. Both justify their presence as attempts to stop Islamist forces, which have taken over vast swathes of land in Mali and elsewhere, forcing millions to flee their homes. Neither has had much success. Last year the U.S. State Department described Niger as a “lynchpin of stability in the Sahel” after coups in Mali and Burkina Faso led to the ouster of French troops and openings for Moscow.

Coup leaders in Niger announced an end to military agreements with the French government. The failure of French forces to stem Islamist terror groups' incursions from Mali deepened hostility toward Paris among working people in both countries. Tchiani also halted joint military exercises with the U.S.

Thousands demonstrated Aug. 11 near a French military base in Niamey, Niger's capital, chanting “Down with France! Down with ECOWAS!” The Economic Community of West African States is a bloc of 15 nations threatening military intervention to overturn the coup. It is headed by the rulers of Nigeria, who are allied with Washington.

The new rulers in Niger, along with coup leaders in Burkina Faso and Mali, posture as anti-imperialist fighters to garner support.

Since the coup, Paris and Washington have suspended financial assistance to Niger. Nearly half the country's budget comes from foreign aid. For decades the rulers in Niger have used the CFA franc, a currency set up and controlled by the French government, to aid its domination and plunder of the region. Fourteen African governments rely on the CFA franc.

For working people in Niger, the political turmoil

comes on top of economic destitution and increasing threats from the Islamist forces. Most are subsistence farmers with small landholdings, coping with frequent droughts. Some 21 million out of a population of 25 million have no access to electricity. Basic sanitary facilities are available to only 13% of the population in rural areas. High prices and food shortages are exacerbated by today's crisis of capitalism worldwide.

For both Niger's capitalist rulers and their longtime allies in Paris and more recently Washington, the coup has sharpened competition over control of the country's mineral resources and potentially vast profits. Niger has large deposits of coal, oil and gold. Chinese capitalists are also exploiting Niger's oil and uranium, and Beijing is building an oil pipeline in the southeast.

Moscow intervenes across region

Russian President Vladimir Putin is pushing to expand Moscow's influence, trade and military presence in the region, taking advantage of the growing difficulties faced by Paris and Washington. Tensions between Washington and Moscow have increased since Putin's invasion of Ukraine and the punishing sanctions imposed by Washington and its allies on Russia. Pressures toward new wars are growing.

Putin has deployed Wagner mercenaries in conflicts across Africa since 2017. Today they operate in Mali and Libya, which border Niger, and in the Central African Republic and Sudan.

Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin hailed the coup as a victory in the battle “of the people of Niger with their colonizers.” He hopes the coup will lead to openings to expand Wagner's reach in the Sahel.

Shortly after announcing his military forces would no longer permit Ukrainian grain shipments to Africa and one day after the coup, Putin hosted a meeting with African heads of state in St. Petersburg. He promised some Russian grain and military aid in exchange for political support for his regime's murderous war against Ukraine. Prigozhin also attended, meeting with participants on the sidelines.

The Russian foreign ministry condemned threats by ECOWAS leaders to invade Niger.

After the coup, governments in ECOWAS imposed sanctions on Niger, making life harder for working people there. People living near Niger's border with Nigeria depend on cross-border trade for most basic necessities. The Nigerian government has cut its power supply to Niger, the source of 70% of its electricity.

While ECOWAS nations have yet to invade, their forces remain on standby. The military-led governments in Mali and Burkina Faso condemned ECOWAS leaders' threats to invade, pledging to assist Niger's new rulers.

Threat of war growing

Continued from front page

cluded destruction of a mock enemy submarine as well as helicopter landing-and-takeoff practice on each other's ships.

While a direct conflict between U.S. imperialism and its allies on one side and the regimes in Moscow and Beijing on the other is not yet imminent, disputes over their clashing economic, political and military interests are on the rise across the world.

Moscow's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine — the largest land and air war on European soil in decades — accelerated shifts in alliances among imperialist powers and capitalist governments worldwide and set off a new arms race. As capitalist ruling classes compete for markets and profits, they are also preparing for wars to come.

Although weakened in many ways, U.S. imperialism remains the dominant economic and military power in the world, capitalism's last empire. Meanwhile, the Chinese rulers have been challenging the U.S.'s reach, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

This has been sharpest over the South China Sea. Beijing has been building militarized artificial islets and using its armed power to claim islands disputed with regional regimes, some U.S. allies, from Vietnam and the Philippines to Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei.

U.S. and Chinese planes and ships are increasingly “shadowing” each other recently as each capitalist power asserts its “rights” in the South China Sea.

Beijing's “Belt and Road Initiative” program of loans and construction projects to advance its reach and influence around the world is also to lay the groundwork for military alliances and bases.

Competition between Washington and Beijing is rising in Africa as well. In 2021 China's two-way trade with Africa reached \$254 billion, four times more than U.S. trade there. Beijing opened its first, and so far only, foreign military base, in Djibouti, East Africa in 2017. It's just miles from a U.S. base, operating there since 2003.

While Beijing is expanding its naval and other military capacity, by most measures it is far behind U.S. armed might.

One example: Washington has 11 nuclear-powered aircraft carriers that can each accommodate 60 or more aircraft. Beijing has three, none of them nuclear powered. Moscow has one — and if it can pull together a crew, it might sail in 2024.

In 2020 U.S. military spending was estimated at \$778 billion, nearly 39% of total global military spending. Beijing was a distant second, at \$252 billion. But in the wake of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, capitalist powers around the world are taking steps to boost their military forces.

Big jump in ammunition production

The Pentagon is organizing to increase production of artillery shells by 500% within two years. The *New York Times* reported Jan. 24 that this is part of “pushing conventional ammunition production to levels not seen since the Korean War.”

In its 2022 National Defense Strategy review, the U.S. Department of Defense stated that strategic competition with the People's Republic of China is “the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security.” It complains about Beijing's “increasingly aggressive endeavor to refashion the Indo-Pacific region and the international system to suit its interests and authoritarian preferences.”

The Chinese Defense Ministry issued a statement while the Russian and Chinese ships were in international waters off the Alaska coast. It said the joint operations were not “directed against third parties and have nothing to do with the current international and regional situation.”

But a few days later the English-language *Global Times*, which reflects of the views of the Chinese Communist Party, put a wider perspective more bluntly. “It is ironic that all US forces involved in shadowing the China-Russia joint flotilla” off the coast of Alaska, the paper said, have been involved previously in military operations in the Taiwan Straits or “trespassing into Chinese territorial waters in the South China Sea.”

“It exposes the US's double standard that only allows its military presence near other countries, but doesn't accept other countries' military presence near it,” the paper said. “The Americans should get used to it.”