

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Moscow bars candidate opposing Putin, Ukraine war
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 88/NO. 8 FEBRUARY 26, 2024

Rail unions push for steps needed to prevent more East Palestines

BY CANDACE WAGNER

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — For rail workers, “East Palestine was no surprise,” Jared Cassity, director of safety for the SMART-TD rail workers union, told a video conference of rail union officers two days before the Feb. 3 one-year anniversary of the toxic train derailment here. SMART-TD represents railroad conductors and engineers. “The next East Palestine, at least at this pace that we’re going, is imminent.”

In East Palestine and Columbiana, the county seat, residents and supporters gathered to mark their determination to continue to fight to make Norfolk Southern railroad bosses and government agencies take steps to ensure the health and well-being of those affected by the disaster.

On Feb. 3, 2023, Norfolk Southern train 32N, almost 2 miles long with
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Supreme Court questions moves to throw Trump off the ballot

BY TERRY EVANS

The U.S. Supreme Court held oral arguments Feb. 8 on former President Donald Trump’s appeal of a Colorado high court ruling throwing him off the Republican primary ballot there. A clear majority of the justices voiced strong doubts about the Colorado ruling. If upheld, it would embolden Democrats’ moves to bar Trump from the ballot across the country.

Not confident President Joseph Biden can win reelection in November, the Democrats are desperate to find any way possible to stop Trump from running.

A Supreme Court victory by the Democrats in the Colorado case would provide a precedent to be turned against workers when we organize independently of the bosses and their two parties. Daunting petitioning requirements
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Protest against Jew-hatred! No to Putin’s war in Ukraine!



Reuters /Evgenia Novozhenina

People sign for anti-war presidential candidate Boris Nadezhdin in Moscow Jan. 23. Putin, alarmed as 200,000 people were seen lining up to sign petitions, barred him from ballot.

Support Ukraine battle for its independence

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine continues to devastate the lives of working people there, to fuel anti-war opposition to the regime of President Vladimir Putin in Russia, and to roil world politics as it enters its third year. Workers in Ukraine are at the center of the fighting to defend the country’s sovereignty.

To defend his capitalist government’s expansionist course, Putin repeated his denial that Ukraine is a nation in a Feb. 6 interview with U.S. journalist Tucker Carlson. “Ukraine
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Blows to Hamas advance fight against Jew-hatred

BY SETH GALINSKY

Israeli officials are preparing an offensive to eliminate Hamas’ last remaining stronghold — Rafah, near the Egyptian/Gaza border — after dealing major blows to the Tehran-backed group’s command structure and underground bases in Gaza City and Khan Younis.

Demonstrating that U.S. imperialism is no friend of working people — Jewish or Palestinian — the White House keeps pressuring Israel to scale back its operations and agree to a cease-fire that would
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Thousands of flight attendants rally at airports for contract, pay, respect



Militant/Betsy Stone

Over 350 flight attendants rallying at San Francisco airport Feb. 13 cheered when they heard that 99.48% of fellow workers at Alaska Airlines voted to authorize strike action. Workers from International Association of Machinists and Teamsters at the airport joined picket in solidarity.

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Spirited picket lines by flight attendants and their supporters at some 30 airports worldwide Feb. 13 gave voice to their demands for new contracts, higher wages and respect for the nearly 100,000 workers who have toiled for years under expired contracts.

The Association of Professional Flight Attendants, Association of Flight Attendants-CWA and Transport Workers Union Local 556 joined forces in a bid to push back against the bosses and their use of the infamous anti-union Railway Labor Act that hogties their unions’ ef-

orts to win better contracts.

Over 500 flight attendants from American Airlines, United Airlines and Southwest Airlines and their supporters rallied outside Chicago O’Hare International Airport. “I absolutely know that this is the first time they have seen a showing like this,” Transport Workers Union Local 556 member Corliss King told the press.

Katrina Fraley, an American Airlines flight attendant, told *Militant* reporter Dan Fein, “We need a cost-of-living adjustment, more vacation time and a
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As US economy improves, workers’ confidence grows for unions to fight

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The current uptick in the U.S. economy, showing a 3.1% increase in gross domestic product last year, in job openings and a declining monthly rate of overall inflation, is good for the working class. It means workers have more confidence to act to improve their situation and opens up more opportunities for using our unions to fight for better wages, schedules and working conditions.

Recent actions include the Feb. 13 rallies across the country by flight attendants demanding higher pay and compensation for *all* the hours they work; the two-week “illegal” strike by 2,000 teachers in Newton, Massachusetts, that won wage raises and cost-of-living adjustments; and the six-week strike by the United Auto Workers last fall against
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Socialist Workers Party, ‘Militant’ win new hearing among workers

BY JANET POST

The *Militant* and the Socialist Workers Party are getting a hearing among workers and a welcome response in the labor movement.

The Central Labor Council of Memphis and West Tennessee showed the front page of the Feb. 5 *Militant* on their Facebook page Feb. 2, along with a re-
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Calif. rally demands, ‘Reinstate fired health care workers’

Montreal school bus drivers strike for a pay raise

Meeting marks life and political contributions of Bruce Kimball

BY JANICE LYNN

ATLANTA — A meeting to celebrate the political life and contributions of Bruce Kimball, a member and later a supporter of the Socialist Workers Party for more than 50 years, was held here Feb. 4. Kimball died of cancer Jan. 21 at 76.

Susan LaMont, organizer of the Atlanta SWP branch, welcomed the 54 participants. SWP members, supporters and friends from Atlanta, the region and around the country, as well as family, neighbors, friends and co-workers of Kimball and his companion and comrade Sarah Harris attended.

LaMont said the party is on the front lines in working-class struggles today — in the fight against Jew-hatred and defending Israel's right to exist as a refuge for Jews; in defense of the Ukrainian people fighting for their independence against Moscow's invasion; to defending constitutional freedoms under attack, as well as today's union struggles.

In the early 1970s, Kimball joined the SWP in Cleveland. He was in his early 20s, LaMont said. He was impacted by Cuba's socialist revolution, led by Fidel Castro; the mighty struggles for Black rights that brought down Jim Crow segregation; the rise of Malcolm X as a leader of the working class; and the growing fight against Washington's war in Vietnam.

Won to SWP's historical continuity

"He was won to the SWP — to its course of action, integrity and its historical continuity going back to the 1917 Russian Revolution, led by V.I. Lenin, and the fight led by Leon

Trotsky to defend that course against Stalinism," LaMont said

New members like Kimball worked with veterans of the political and labor battles of the 1930s and '40s who were active in the Cleveland SWP branch, and in the party nationally, she said.

LaMont explained how Kimball became a Marxist and party cadre, taking on whatever assignments — wherever he was needed — to work to expand the reach of the party. He joined in building party branches and in labor and political struggles as the working class moved to the center stage of U.S. politics in the late 1970s.

After Cleveland, Kimball moved to San Antonio, Texas, and became involved in the growing struggles by Chicanos for social justice, including for a political break with the Democrats and Republicans.

"SWP members, both male and female, began to get jobs in industry, including in the coal mines. Bruce was one of them," LaMont said. He moved to St. Louis and became part of the United Mine Workers' battles against the coal bosses in the southern Illinois coalfields.

In written greetings to the meeting, Jonathan Silberman, a leader of the Communist League in the United Kingdom, recalled Kimball's 1984 visit to bring solidarity to coal miners there. "He came just a couple of weeks after 150,000 coal miners here walked out in a fight over jobs — the start of what was to become a yearlong strike by the National Union of Mineworkers," he wrote. Kimball toured U.S. coalfields after his return, speaking at Militant Labor Forums about the British miners' fight.



Militant photos: above, Holly Harkness
Above, Bruce Kimball. Inset, Peter Heathfield, left, general secretary of National Union of Mineworkers, with Kimball, Militant correspondent and coal miner, in March 1984.

"What became known as the 'international coal project' was decisive to the forging of the Communist League as a proletarian party," Silberman said.

Kimball also built party branches in Austin, Minnesota, where he worked as a meatpacker, and in Greensboro, North Carolina, where he was a member of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union at a large mill.

Kimball becomes a party supporter

In the early 2000s Kimball quit his party membership, and he and Harris moved to Atlanta. A few years later he decided to become an organized party supporter. Over the next 20 years he took on responsibilities at the Pathfinder distribution center here in Atlanta, which is organized by a team of supporters under party leadership.

Holly Harkness, organizer of the distribution center, told the meeting the supporters' auxiliary is a leveraged political conquest of the party with nearly 250 supporters worldwide. They take manuscripts prepared by the party leadership and organize to get the books prepared, printed and shipped. They keep in print more than 400 titles in 11 languages, books spanning more than 150 years of communist class struggle, history and program.

"This body of work is the program and continuity essential to building communist parties worldwide," Harkness said.

She pointed out the impetus for the project hadn't been a technical one, but political. It was the SWP's response to a sea change in the working class in the early 2000s, a new mood and growing confidence among workers after decades of retreat. Many party supporters, who were unorganized at the time, said, "We want to help. Organize us!"

Jim Rogers, another leader at the distribution center, described the high standards and competence Kimball and other volunteers maintain, and his satisfaction in working collectively to accomplish something so important for the party.

Written messages came from members and supporters around the country, as well as from Canada, the U.K. and Australia. Many described Kimball's serious, but easy-going manner, his ready sense of humor, his patient, helpful way of working with people, a reflection of his confidence in the working class.

Tom Embry, a former co-worker and long-time friend of Kimball and Harris, asked to give greetings to the meeting. "Even after we both quit the job where we met," he said, "we stayed friends. I learned to appreciate Bruce's honesty, his values, as well as his broad cultural interests, which ranged from jazz to the arts, to computers. He was also a fan of cricket and sumo wrestling."

"We are celebrating the decisive place of building a proletarian party amidst

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THE MILITANT

Cuban Revolution shows the road forward

Washington's fear of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro said in 1962, is "fear that the plundered people of the continent will seize the arms from their oppressors and, like Cuba, declare themselves free people of the Americas." The 'Militant' says this is still the case.



Fighters in 1952 Bolivian national revolution. Upsurge toppled military dictatorship, legalized unions, began land reform.

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

SWP, 'Militant' win new hearing

Continued from front page

print of the paper's article on the life of Elmore Nickleberry, a participant in the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike against inhuman and discriminatory treatment.

"Great read! This is OUR Labor Black History," the labor council wrote. The strike marked an important advance in the working-class movement that overturned Jim Crow segregation. The record of that struggle is invaluable for workers using unions today to combat the employers' offensive.

R.B. from Cleveland wrote, "Thank you to the *Militant* for supporting American Airlines customer service agents and Communications Workers of America Local 4201 during our informational picket outside of Chicago O'Hare in 2023." Workers fought for higher pay, job security, health benefits.

"We recently voted YES on a tentative agreement with American Airlines," R.B. writes. "Thank you to the *Militant* for supporting the rights of working people! I will share the *Militant* with all my fellow workers at the airport."

The 15,000 customer service agents won a new contract with immediate pay gains averaging 20%.

This kind of response bodes well for the reception the Socialist Workers Party 2024 campaign will get as its candidates campaign to present an independent working-class road forward.

Anti-worker Emergencies Act

A court ruling striking down the Canadian government's use of the Emergencies Act to try to repress a protest by truckers in 2022 was the center of discussion when Katy LeRougetel, Communist League candidate for Parliament in the Montreal district of LaSalle-Emard-Verdun, visited *Militant* subscriber Deborah Green at her home in Oshawa, Ontario.

Hundreds of truckers had protested COVID mandates that threatened their jobs and livelihoods. The federal government mobilized 3,000 police and invoked the Emergencies Act to break up the action and arrest participants.

On Jan. 23 a federal judge ruled that the use of the act had violated fundamental political rights. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claimed the truckers threatened violence. Green had visited the truckers with her children to show her support. She said Trudeau's claims were a lie. "There was no violence," she told LeRougetel. "They took us into their trucks for soup." "Workers are turning to our unions more and more to fight for wages and decent working conditions," LeRougetel told Green. "We need the

right to organize and speak freely more than ever."

She described recent strikes by 600,000 Quebec public sector workers, fighting for wage increases to catch up with inflation and an end to intolerable working conditions. Green said she had worked as a personal support worker, looking after seven residents at a care home. "You just work like an assembly line," she said. She signed up to renew her *Militant* subscription.

In London, Pamela Holmes, the Communist League's candidate for the parliamentary constituency of Tottenham South, joined several hundred people in front of the BBC headquarters Feb. 4 to protest the media's silence about the brutal treatment of women who were killed, raped or tortured in Hamas' Oct. 7 massacre in Israel, as well as its treatment of women hostages.

"Communist League members and supporters were welcomed by many in the crowd," Holmes told the *Militant*. "Participants took copies of our state-

Canada: Attacks on churches set back fight of Native peoples

BY PHILIPPE TESSIER

MONTREAL — There have been 96 recorded cases of arson and graffiti attacks on churches across Canada, more than half of them Catholic churches, with several burned to the ground, since the discovery of what is likely the remains of up to 215 Indigenous children in unmarked graves at a former residential school for Natives near Kamloops, British Columbia, in May 2021. Most of these attacks have happened on or near Native reserves.

The Penticton Indian Band released a statement in June 2021, after the burning down of two churches in the region's First Nations' reserves. "We, along with the Osoyoos Indian Band, who also lost their church," it said, "are in disbelief and anger over these occurrences as these places of worship provided service to Members who sought comfort and solace in the church.

"It is not our place to say who to worship and what historical relevance it has to our people," the statement said. "We are all free to choose and it is our place as a community to support that freedom."

After First Nations' leaders had condemned the arson attacks, Harsha Walia, former executive director of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, retweeted a news story about two more Catholic churches being burned down. "Burn it all down," she said, reflecting the reactionary perspective of



Central Labor Council of Memphis and West Tennessee featured on its Facebook page Feb. 2 the *Militant* article on the life of Elmore Nickleberry, a participant in the historic 1968 Memphis sanitation strike. "Great read," the union says. "This is OUR Labor Black History."

ment, 'Fight Jew-hatred! Defend Israel's right to exist! Support Ukrainian people's fight for independence!'"

Eighteen copies of the *Militant* were picked up as well as the books *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* by Abram Leon, and *Labor, Nature, and*

the Evolution of Humanity by Frederick Engels, Karl Marx, George Novack and SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters.

To join in campaigning for Socialist Workers Party or Communist League candidates, contact the SWP or CL branch nearest you, listed on page 8.

many middle-class radicals.

After unmarked graves were discovered by radar technology, tens of thousands marched nationwide to protest the ongoing oppression of the 1.6 million Native people by the Canadian capitalist rulers. Natives make up only 5% of the Canadian population, but over 30% of its prisoners, and fully half of all youth in prison. The official unemployment rate for Indigenous people is 11.6%, compared to 7.6% overall. The Native infant mortality rate is twice as high.

From 1883 to 1996, the Canadian government set up 139 Indian residential schools with the avowed goal of "killing the Indian in the child."

Over 150,000 Native children were seized from their families and sent to these institutions, suffering years of psychological, physical and sometimes sexual abuse. There were over 4,000 official deaths there, but many more never reported. Official records were only kept beginning in 1935.

Some 60% of these schools were run on behalf of the Canadian government by the Catholic Church, with the other 40% run by Anglican, United and other churches.

Meeting marks Kimball's political life

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great revolutionary struggles to end capitalist rule that will come out of its uncontrollable social crises, convulsions, and wars of the imperialist epoch," SWP National Committee member Dave Prince told the meeting.

"We are living through great turning points in history, big shifts in U.S. and world politics," he said. "Bruce followed these closely until the end of his life."

Prince said Kimball became a supporter, based on his political support for the party's program, loyalty to its course and determination to help. That commitment to work by the supporters allows the party to be significantly stronger in what it does today.

"In 1991," Prince said, "the party noted the first Gulf War in Iraq announced the opening guns of World War III, that U.S. imperialism had lost the Cold War. This meant that the 'world order' born out of Washington's victory in World

War II was beginning to come apart. U.S. imperialism will go down as the world's last empire.

"The reality we are living through today is one that is beyond the control of the capitalist powers," he said. But it is not outside the control of millions in the working class, whose struggles, with a communist leadership, are capable of taking power. The unanswered question is the pace at which this will unfold," he said.

"We look forward to revolutionary victories toward a new chapter in the history of humanity, building a society without classes and exploitation, a society of cooperation and human solidarity. That's what the party places itself in, and where Bruce placed himself."

Participants at the meeting contributed \$2,527 for the work of the SWP, stayed around to enjoy an attractive spread of delicious food and discuss politics.

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Fight in the interests of the working class
Solidarity with union battles today

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Candace Wagner, U.S. Congress

Texas

Alyson Kennedy, U.S. Senate

Thousands of flight attendants rally



Militant photos: left, Hilda Cuzzo; above, Scott Breen
Hundreds picket at Dallas-Fort Worth airport, left, at Seattle-Tacoma airport, above, Feb. 13.

Continued from front page
 wage increase. I haven't had a raise in five years."

"Corporate greed doesn't fly" read signs carried by 40 pickets at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport in Florida. "We don't get paid when passengers board," Satin Fye, a member of TWU Local 556, told *Militant* reporter Steve Warshell. "All that time is free for the company. We want that pay! We also want higher wages in general because our rates don't come close to matching inflation."

Some 250 flight attendants rallied at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in

Washington. Jeffrey Peterson, Association of Flight Attendants Alaska president, told the *Militant* that flight attendants from Alaska, United, Southwest, American, Frontier, Air Wisconsin and Horizon airlines turned out. "We're out here supporting each other. Tens of thousands of flight attendants have been in negotiations for one to three years."

A broad range of unions turned out at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The airport limited how many people could participate, but people lined up to join the picket line and the boisterous pickets drew a crowd. Members from UNITE HERE, United Auto

Workers, SMART-TD rail workers, Service Employees International Union, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Teamsters union all came to show their support.

Tony Totty, president of United Auto Workers Local 14, came from Toledo, Ohio, to represent his union at the action. "I think the prevailing message that workers took from the UAW strike is," he told the *Militant*, "you can win."

"This fight is about more than just money," Chip Lowe, a union official from the Association of Flight Attendants, told the *Militant*. Another issue is staffing. "They used to have at least

one more flight attendant per flight, but airlines now run with the Federal Aviation Administration minimum," he said. "It has nothing to do with meeting the needs of the customers on the flight."

Some 350 picketed at San Francisco International Airport. Members from all three unions were fired up, buoyed by protesting together. A cheer went up when it was announced flight attendants at Alaska Airlines just voted to authorize a strike by 99.48%. It was the first strike mandate in three decades, reflecting labor's increased willingness to fight.

Thousands more joined actions elsewhere, from Guam to London.

Rail unions push for steps needed to prevent more East Palestine disasters

Continued from front page

150 cars, suffered a wheel axle failure and derailed, dumping 50 cars on the ground, including 11 carrying dangerous chemicals. A massive fire ensued, leading to evacuation of the downtown area. Three days later, Norfolk Southern officials pressured government authorities to allow them to drain five vinyl chloride tanker cars and burn off 115,000 gallons of the chemical.

This so-called controlled burn sent up a noxious cloud that rained toxic dust over miles, including into neighboring Pennsylvania. Chemical runoff in area streams killed thousands of fish and aquatic animals downhill from the crash. Dangerous chemicals were detected in the Ohio River, 16 miles away.

One day after the burn, the rail bosses had crews relay tracks on top of contaminated soil and ballast, and the company began running trains again. "These workers were provided with no protective equipment, they were exposed to these chemicals," Tony Cardwell, president of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way, said in the video conference. "Some are still suffering from headaches from this. We are invested in the outcome for the people of East Palestine and for our members."

Two days after the burn, authorities told residents it was safe to return to their homes. Many who did, or just came

to check on them, reported health problems. Environmental Protection Agency employees who were doing house-to-house interviews fell ill as well.

Only after a public meeting where area residents excoriated Norfolk Southern bosses and government officials was the railroad forced to agree to rip up the newly laid tracks and remove the contaminated soil beneath. That took months.

"I don't feel like hardly anything has changed in a year," Zsuzsa Gyenes told the *Militant*. "My son and I are still living in a hotel. Homes aren't being tested."

Gyenes said she participated in several actions Feb. 3 this year. "There was a protest near the crash site with a big banner, 'We don't want to die.' It was controversial. Not everyone wants to call more attention to the ongoing consequences of the disaster," she said.

"I feel like we've been stonewalled, but the protest was kind of empowering," she added. "Hopefully the events organized that day will help invigorate our fight."

The White House announced that President Joseph Biden will visit East Palestine Feb. 16 — the first time he's bowed to pressure to put in an appearance.

"I hope it's not just a photo op," Gyenes said. "I hope he's finally coming to bring us more help." Residents have long demanded Biden declare the East Palestine derailment a national disaster, which would open up federal funding. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine requested the disaster declaration last July.

Workers control of rail operations

The Feb. 1 rail union video conference focused on the Rail Safety Act now stalled in Congress. Railroad bosses oppose the bill, especially its requirement for a two-person crew on all trains. Eddie Hall, president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, explained the dangers

of engineer-only long-distance hauls.

Andrew Sandberg, speaking for the International Association of Machinists, said that since profit-boosting Precision Scheduled Railroading was introduced on Class 1 railroads in 2017, there are now 3,000 less Machinists working on those railroads. To reduce operating costs, rail bosses have systematically slashed the number of conductors, engineers, track and maintenance workers, as well as locomotives. "And when they cut workers, the same day they force the workers who are left to work overtime," Sandberg said. "This is dangerous."

"The safety culture hasn't changed," said Brian DeLucia from the Transportation Workers Union Rail Division. "We represent car inspectors. We still have locations where the inspections they are doing on 3-mile-long trains is one person sitting in their truck watching it roll by. I hope that another East Palestine doesn't happen, but unfortunately, I fear it will."

Further reading



pathfinderpress.com

The National Transportation Safety Board has announced new public hearings will be held in East Palestine in June, tasking with preparing a final report on the causes of the derailment. At NTSB hearings here last summer, rail union representatives spoke, exposing the dangers the profit-driven rail bosses' moves have posed for both rail workers and people who live near the tracks.

Ved Dookhun, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from Pennsylvania, joined the protests here Feb. 3. Dookhun is a freight railroad conductor and member of SMART.

"I salute the continuing resistance by working people in this area and their demand that Norfolk Southern and government agencies tell the truth and address the real health and welfare impact of the railroad's complete disregard for the safety of rail workers and residents alike," he said. "My party explains the low point of labor resistance is behind us, that working people are standing up and using their unions to fight attacks by the bosses and their government. The response by working people here is further proof of that."

"Working people in East Palestine have shown that neither the railroad bosses nor the government and its various agencies act for our interests," Dookhun said. "The rail unions have spoken out — including during the recent video conference — to make clear this disaster was inevitable."

"More laws and government regulations are no solution. It is rail workers and our unions that need to act now. We can fight for workers control of all rail operations — from crew size to schedules — to ensure safety on the job and in the community."

"We say railroad unions need to use union power, force the bosses to hire more workers, to maintain and inspect equipment and trackage. There should be a crew of four on every train, two on the locomotive and two in the rear, and trains no longer than 50 cars."

Militant Labor Forum

Moscow's War Against Ukraine

Why Working People Should Defend Ukraine's Right to Independence

Speaker: John Studer, Socialist Workers Party, editor of the *Militant* newspaper

Sat. Feb. 24, 6:30 p.m.
 followed by reception.

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Calif. rally demands, ‘Reinstate fired health care workers’

LYNWOOD, Calif. — Holding placards and wearing shirts demanding the reinstatement of nine fired workers, a spirited rally of 200 people was held across the street from St. Francis Medical Center here Feb. 10.

Scott Byington, who has worked as a nurse at St. Francis for 28 years, was one of those fired. He told the *Militant* that after negotiations with hospital management on a new contract were stalled, he was part of a Nov. 30 delegation that went to the headquarters of the hospital’s owner, Prime Healthcare in Ontario, California. “We went to deliver a folder with letters of support we have received from politicians and others requesting a meeting with the officers of Prime, and information on the big staffing shortages at the hospital,” he said.

The delegation included members of the United Nurses Association of California/Union of Health Care Professionals and of Service Employees International Union-United Healthcare Workers West. A few days later, he said, they were called into Human Resources at St. Francis and told they faced disciplinary action, accused of “trespassing, and using profanity.” They were fired Dec. 20.

“We went to Ontario to advocate for adequate staffing levels,” said Sonia Rodriguez, an ultrasound technician who also was fired. “Our protest fell on deaf ears. The nurses settled their contract, but members of SEIU are still bargaining on staffing levels.”

Prime — which says it is the fifth largest private health care corporation in the country — owns 44 hospitals. The company took over St. Francis in 2020. Prime claims it has a history of turning around for-profit hospitals that are “financially distressed.”

Workers told the *Militant* the company boosts profits by short staffing and holding down wages. “I came to support the fired workers,” said Aileen Marshall, a nurse at a Prime-owned hospital in Garden Grove. “They let so many workers at St. Francis go. They don’t want to pay the top rates.”

Yvonne Wheeler, head of the Los An-

geles County Federation of Labor, a few local politicians and several fired workers spoke. Wheeler said the fight will continue until all nine are reinstated.

Byington told the rally that he is still president of the nurses local at St. Francis. “Their day is coming,” he said.

— Norton Sandler

Montreal school bus drivers strike for a pay raise

“The company wants us to go back to work and submit everything to arbitration. But arbitration won’t give us what we deserve. You have to fight to get what you need, which for us is a 37% wage increase over six years,” Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) bus driver and strike picket line captain Lise Chapleau told two *Militant* worker-correspondents Feb. 7. Some 350 drivers have been on strike since Oct. 31.

We met Chapleau on the picket line at the Autobus Transco school bus depot in Pointe Claire on the west end of the island of Montreal.

Transco bosses claim the union demands are “unreasonable and unrealistic.” The workers drive buses for a number of public and private schools in the Montreal region. The strike has affected over 15,000 students and their families.

According to Chapleau, the workers voted by 99.5% to strike with the goal of winning a wage raise to erase the fall in their real income due to inflation.

Sixteen strikers were on the picket line when we visited. Picketing runs on three shifts from 6 a.m. to around 4:30



Militant/Bill Arth

Rally at St. Francis Medical Center in Lynwood, California, Feb. 10 demands nine fired health care workers be reinstated. Hospital officials fired them for fighting for better staffing levels.

p.m. on school days.

“Without the union strike pay of \$315 a week we would be finished,” said Chapleau. “But we’re in this for the long haul. We have support from many parents who learned about our issues from the leaflet we’ve been distributing.”

“We drivers are well aware that the current strikes in school transport are causing hardship for parents. This definitely isn’t something we wanted to do,” the drivers’ leaflet explains in French and English.

“Many of the workers who do this tough job make less than \$25,000 a year. A school bus driver is responsible for the safety of about 50 children, some of them very young.”

Drivers work split shifts, in the morn-

ing and evening, and aren’t paid for the down time. They currently make around 18 Canadian dollars (\$13.40) an hour driving six hours a day. Strikers told us there is a shortage of school bus drivers as many quit because of the low pay.

In 2022 the Quebec government increased the subsidy given to bus company bosses, supposedly so they could increase wages. Transco received a 25% increase in their subsidy.

But instead of raising wages, the bus companies “took advantage of the situation to maximize their profits,” says the union leaflet.

Strikers told us that Transco bosses used their increased subsidy to buy out another company.

— John Steele and Steve Penner

Head Start in NY county shuts down, workers left hanging

BY JIM WATSON

BETHEL, N.Y. — Children enrolled in the Head Start program and their families in Sullivan County, 90 miles north of New York City, took a big hit Feb. 2. I work as a bus driver transporting some of these children.

As the drivers and teachers who ride the school buses for this federally funded child care and educational program settled the 2- to 5-year-old children into their seats for the bus ride home,

our cellphones lit up with a message from the countywide program administrators. “Due to unforeseen circumstances, we are closed until further notice,” it said. The shutdown left 349 children, 83 full-time staff and 11 part-time workers hanging.

Not surprisingly, the shutdown has given rise to all kinds of rumors about fiscal impropriety. It took days before some information was forthcoming from Washington. A spokesperson

for the federal Administration for Children and Families told the media, “As a result of fiscal mismanagement, the organization does not have sufficient federal funding remaining to continue operating their Head Start and Early Head Start program.”

The families whose children participate in Head Start in this seasonal resort center are entirely working class.

Many of the children are in single parent homes, including single grandparents with more than one child in the household. The child care aspect of Head Start has been essential for the working parents who have jobs. Many families using this program can’t afford their own car in a largely rural county, which is now known primarily for its dairy farms and the Woodstock Music & Arts Festival held here 55 years ago. Public transportation is minimal.

The ruling rich are trying to transform the area into profit-generating casinos, racetracks and havens for middle-class refugees from the city. This has led landlords here to jack up rents and to the development of a residential construction boom.

The Head Start office in Washington says it will organize to “transition” to another service provider. In the meantime, working families and former employees are left in the lurch.

—25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO—



March 1, 1999

DERRY, Northern Ireland — “The British government has got away with murder for too long — let’s see if they can handle the truth as well as they can handle the lies,” said Kay Duddy. Her brother, Jack Duddy, was among the 14 civil rights protesters killed by the British Army here in 1972, on what became known as Bloody Sunday. She was speaking at a “State Violence: State the Truth” conference held here the day before the annual Bloody Sunday demonstration.

London has been forced to open a new inquiry, said John Kelly from the Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign, but to get “prosecutions of those who planned and carried out Bloody Sunday, we have a long way to go.”

The presence of relatives and survivors of British state violence from the south, showed the potential for an all-Ireland campaign.



March 1, 1974

The FBI has refused to release its documents on the “Socialist Workers Party-Disruption Program” because to do so, the agency says, would “expose confidential informants, disclose intra-governmental documents and disclose investigative files and techniques.”

William Sullivan, a former assistant to the director of the FBI, initiated the program in 1961 to “alert the public to the nature and activities of the SWP and thus to neutralize the SWP.”

Maceo Dixon, co-chairman of the SWP 1974 National Campaign Committee, said, “We are determined to fight these attempts to intimidate us. In this year’s elections we are running more than 100 candidates in 15 states and the District of Columbia. Our candidates are ‘alerting the public’ to the program of the SWP — the building of a socialist alternative to the politics of the Democrats and Republicans.”



February 28, 1949

Unemployment has become a serious problem. Conservative business circles estimate the present jobless figure at more than 4 million — and rising. The time has come for nationwide labor action to put into effect a realistic program to protect the working class. We propose the following:

1. For a 30-hour week, six-hour day with no reduction in take-home pay.

2. For a clause in every union contract providing a sliding scale of hours with no reduction in weekly pay.

3. For an all-out wage campaign to raise mass purchasing power by boosting real wages. 4. For unemployment insurance equal to full weekly union wages for all unemployed and for the duration of unemployment.

5. For public works of a socially beneficial character to provide jobs for the unemployed at union wages.

6. Call a United Congress of Labor to mobilize a fight for this program.

New International
A magazine of Marxist politics and theory, 1934-present
Intercontinental Press
International news magazine 1963-86
Online at
pathfinderpress.com

Support Ukraine independence

Continued from front page is an artificial state,” Putin said. He claimed, “Ukrainians are part of the one Russian people,” when in fact they have existed as a nationality for centuries fighting foreign invaders and occupation, including that imposed by the despotic Russian czars.

Czarist rule was overthrown in 1917. Led by V.I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the working class took power, making the world’s first socialist revolution. After the 1917 revolution, the Bolsheviks created Ukraine, Putin claimed. He condemned Bolshevik policies “promoting national languages and national cultures.”

“For some inexplicable reason, Lenin, the founder of the Soviet state, insisted they [Ukrainians] be entitled to withdraw from the USSR,” Putin told Carlson.

In fact, Lenin led the new workers state to unconditionally grant the right to self-determination to all nations oppressed under the czars, including Ukraine, leading them to join a voluntary federation of independent Soviet republics and advance the unity of working people.

After a few years, these conquests were overturned in a counterrevolution headed by Joseph Stalin that drove workers from power and ended the proletarian internationalist course fought for by Lenin. The reinstatement of Moscow’s oppressive domination over the Soviet republics ensured the inevitable disintegration of the USSR along national lines as the Stalinist regimes crumbled in the late 1980s. Ukraine declared its independence again in 1991.

In his interview Putin glossed over Moscow’s early defeats in its war, claiming, “We withdrew our troops from Kyiv” in April 2022. The truth is that his invading army was forced to retreat, largely by working-class volunteers who took it on. Moscow’s military planners

had failed to take into account the determination of Ukraine’s working people to defend the country and fight to repel the Russian rulers’ attempt to seize the capital.

After earlier Ukrainian gains in the east and south, the front lines have become static for months despite heavy losses on both sides. Moscow continues its bombardment of cities and towns across the country, maximizing civilian casualties to try to demoralize the Ukrainian people. But their resolve has only hardened.

Putin is using waves of untrained and ill-equipped conscripts to try to wear down and push back Ukrainian front lines. But the deadly consequences of these assaults are provoking a sharp conflict at home.

Kremlin faces rifts, opposition

One Russian unit near the Donbas town of Novomykhailivka suffered heavy losses in early February. At least 12 armored vehicles, including three tanks, were destroyed, reported the *Kyiv Post*. The advancing column was repeatedly hit by Ukrainian light drones.

“What is the point of these attacks? So that [senior commanders] can report they are taking decisive action, and so that they can earn medals by throwing away the lives of their own people?” wrote Maksim Kalashnikov, a Russian commentator and supporter of Putin’s war.

Vladimir Solovyev, the anchorman of a nightly national news program, criticized Kalashnikov and others for reporting the facts. “Those people need to be arrested and put in jail,” he said. “Who are they doing this for?”

Divisions are surfacing among Russian frontline forces. A soldier in the 5th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade complained about “bastards with messed-up fantasies” throwing troops



Thousands protest in subzero temperatures in Baymak, Bashkortostan region of central Russia Jan. 17 against four-year prison term on local leader Fail Alsynov. He is a well-known opponent of Putin’s war on Ukraine and fighter for national rights of Bashkir people. Protest was one of largest since Moscow invaded Ukraine in 2022.

into battle “as meat, as cannon fodder.”

Ukrainian soldiers in the Kherson region are firing shells with surrender leaflets that provide instructions to Russian troops about how to quit and approach Ukrainian positions safely. More than 100 Russian soldiers near Avdiivka, scene of heavy fighting for months, surrendered to Ukrainian forces in December and January. Their low morale had been exacerbated by food and water shortages, as well as frostbite.

Anti-war actions in Russia

The Way Home, an organization of wives and mothers of Russian soldiers, is demanding their loved ones be relieved from frontline duties. It has been gaining support since its founding last September, when the Kremlin reneged on a promise that soldiers mobilized 12 months earlier would be rotated out of the battle zone after a year.

Members of The Way Home go to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier near Red Square in Moscow to lay flowers regularly on a Saturday. Scores of the women, wearing white headscarves, protested “500 days of hell” at the Kremlin Feb. 3. The group refuses to call for a second troop mobilization as a means to rotate troops and get their relatives back.

“We don’t want this fate for anyone,” The Way Home website says, “God forbid anyone has to go through what we go through every day.”

Unlike earlier public anti-war protests, the Kremlin has held off from heavily repressing their actions so far. Police arrested male journalists and protesters Feb. 3, but not the women. When some women tried to block a police van, cops pushed them aside but didn’t detain them. At a similar protest in Yekaterinburg, five were arrested.

In mid-January mass protests erupted in Bashkortostan in Russia’s southern Ural Mountains against the sentencing of Fail Alsynov to four years in a penal colony. He is an opponent of the war and a leader of the Bashkirs’ fight for ethnic rights. The demonstrations were among the largest in Russia since the war began.

Bashkirs and other oppressed nationalities shoulder a disproportionate burden of the fighting and dying.

“If you don’t stop acting against our people, against our fathers and mothers, we will abandon our positions and come for you,” a group of Bashkir soldiers said in a video addressed to Russian authorities. “If you want a war, you will get it.”

Blows to Hamas today advance the fight against Jew-hatred

Continued from front page leave the reactionary Islamist group intact. President Joseph Biden claimed Israel’s planned offensive in Rafah — essential for dismantling the group — was “over the top.”

White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said the offensive is “not something that we would support,” feigning concern for 1.5 million Palestinians in the area. Israeli officials say they intend to evacuate Gazans from Rafah.

Washington’s real concern is to impose the stability it needs to maintain the U.S. rulers’ place as the world’s dominant power and to advance their own economic and political interests against rivals in the region.

The developments unfolding in Israel and more broadly in the Middle East since Tehran-backed Hamas organized the murderous pogrom against Jews Oct. 7 have deeply affected world politics. Actions are needed by working people and unions to fight against Jew-hatred and for Israel’s right to defend itself.

“Those who say that under no circumstances should we enter Rafah are basically saying lose the war,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told ABC News Feb. 11.

Liberal media in the U.S. are full of articles describing suffering by the people in Gaza. But they offer no explanation for the causes of the dire conditions there — Hamas’ actions, not Israel’s.

Hamas violated the existing ceasefire with Israel on Oct. 7 by massacring 1,200 people, wounding more than 5,000 and taking more than 240 hostages, the largest massacre of Jews since the Nazi Holocaust.

Nearly three-quarters of those killed in Israel were civilians. The Tehran-trained and financed death squads raped and maimed women, tortured many of their victims and killed entire families. They also killed at least 24 Arabs, 39 Thai and 10 Nepalese farmworkers, and four Filipino home care workers as well as Africans and Cambodians, for the “crime” of friendly relations with Jews.

Hamas continues to hold over 100 hostages. Their allies, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen and forces in Iraq and Syria, lob missiles at Israel and carry out attacks elsewhere daily.

Hamas creates civilian ‘martyrs’

The Israeli offensive has uncovered Hamas’ massive spiderweb of tunnels throughout Gaza and provided indisputable proof of how the Jew-hating group



Above, Haaretz; right, Majdi Fathi. Hamas built tunnels, command posts under hospitals, schools, mosques, homes to maximize civilian casualties. Above, diagram of tunnel underneath Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. Right, Palestinians leaving Rafah after Israel let them know plans for military offensive.



deliberately puts civilians in harm’s way to create “martyrs” and to try to win sympathy abroad.

Unlike Hamas, which deliberately targets civilians, Israeli leaders are reluctant to launch operations that could cause significant civilian casualties. That’s why Hamas puts its command centers and weapons warehouses underneath homes, schools, mosques and hospitals — to use Palestinian civilians as human shields.

Hamas could immediately end the war in Gaza by releasing all the remaining hostages, evacuate all the tunnels and hand over the organizers of the Oct. 7 pogrom.

But Hamas has no interest in peace with Israel. It repeatedly says its goal is to carry out Oct. 7-like assaults “again and again.”

U.N. complicity with Hamas

Israeli army officers took reporters on a tour of a high-tech Hamas operation directly underneath the United Nations Relief and Works Agency headquarters in the upscale Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City. The entrance to the tunnel leading to the underground center was located under a UNRWA school.

Inside were six rows of server cabinets with racks of computers. Even though lines to the entrance’s electrical panels came directly from the U.N. headquarters, U.N. officials pretend they didn’t know the tunnels were there.

The U.N. has long been complicit with Hamas. The schools the agency runs in Gaza indoctrinate children that they should fight to expel Jews and conquer Israel. Many of the agency’s employees are Hamas operatives.

“The victims of 7/10 were not killed because of their Judaism, but in response to Israel’s oppression,” claimed Francesca Albanese, the U.N.’s Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian Territories, Feb. 10. But this is a straight-up lie. Hamas’ founding convention calls for “killing the Jews.”

Fighting Jew-hatred is not a “Middle East” question.

Whenever capitalism is in crisis, the wealthy rulers scapegoat Jews for economic and social problems, including in the U.S. When their rule is threatened by rising struggles, the

rulers turn to fascist thugs that fight under the banner of Jew-hatred, to beat down the working class and crush unions.

Most Arabs in Israel oppose Hamas

Apologists for Hamas rarely mention that some 20% of Israeli citizens are Arabs. And that the overwhelming majority — whatever their view of the government of Israel — oppose Hamas.

“I would say that 85% of Arabs in Israel condemn the Oct. 7 massacre and don’t justify it in anyway,” Loui Haj told the *Militant* by phone Feb. 10 from Acre, where he manages a tech company. Haj is a Palestinian citizen of Israel.

In an Nov. 26 column in *Haaretz* he wrote that those who chant “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” are “calling for the annihilation of Israel.”

Life for Arab Israeli citizens, Haj added, “is complicated and hard, but

it is still incomparably preferable to life in any one of the surrounding countries.” Anyone who tries to destroy Israel “will find me arm in arm with my Jewish brethren.”

The column was controversial. “Many Jews liked what I said, but some rightists insulted me for defending equal rights for Palestinians. Some Palestinians told me I had ‘sold out.’”

“But many Palestinians thanked me for the column,” he said. “They said I put into words what they are feeling.”

Haj says the sentiment among Palestinian citizens after the Israel Defense Forces began its counterattack in Gaza became more complicated. Many Arab citizens of Israel have relatives in Gaza. “The collateral damage is their families.”

“I see that Israel is my country and it is right to defend itself,” he said. “Hamas is responsible, but that does not make you feel better when you see the demolished buildings and the catastrophe for civilians in Gaza.”

Moscow bars candidate opposing Putin, Ukraine war

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

In the largest anti-war manifestation since Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine almost two years ago, some 200,000 people waited in lines stretching for city blocks all across the country in January to sign petitions to put Boris Nadezhdin on the ballot for the March presidential election. Nadezhdin, a 30-year politician and currently a City Council member in Dolgoprudny, north of Moscow, is an outspoken opponent of Putin’s war, calling it a “fatal mistake.”

“Boris Nadezhdin is our collective ‘No,’” Lyosha Popov, who collected signatures in Yakutsk, south of the Arctic Circle, told the *New York Times*. “I am here collecting signatures against Putin, against military action.”

Alexander Rakityansky signed a petition in St. Petersburg. Originally from Belgorod, a border city with Ukraine that’s been caught up in the war, he said he backed Nadezhdin so his hometown “doesn’t get bombed and people don’t die on the streets.”

Karen Danielyan, a 20-year-old from Tver, north of Moscow, was determined to give her name and passport details as required to sign the petition. “The fear that this will

continue further is much stronger and heavier than the fear that they will do something to me for working as a signature collector,” she said.

On Feb. 8 Putin’s election commission disqualified Nadezhdin’s petitions, claiming that “invalid signatures” left him just short of the 100,000 required. He is one of two anti-war candidates thrown off the ballot. Former TV journalist Yekaterina Duntsova had been disqualified Dec. 23.

Nadezhdin called the ruling against him political. The “official understanding is that all the society is for Putin,” he told Al Jazeera. “But it’s not so. The majority of people in Russia want the conflict in Ukraine to stop.” Nadezhdin says he will appeal to the Russian Supreme Court.

“The fact that we saw lines of support on the streets of Russian cities was an unpleasant surprise for the Kremlin,” one regime figure who declined to give his name told the *Moscow Times*.

Three other candidates, all supporters of the war, are running in the election, none of them serious challengers. One is Nikolai Kharitonov, the candidate for the Communist Party, who praises Joseph Stalin’s forced

collectivization of Soviet agriculture in the 1930s that led to millions being starved to death, a policy carried out with special brutality in Ukraine.

Independent polling had shown close to 10% saying they would vote for Nadezhdin, higher than the other three combined.

Putin will assure he is reelected with a large majority. But that won’t end the growing opposition against his war on Ukraine.

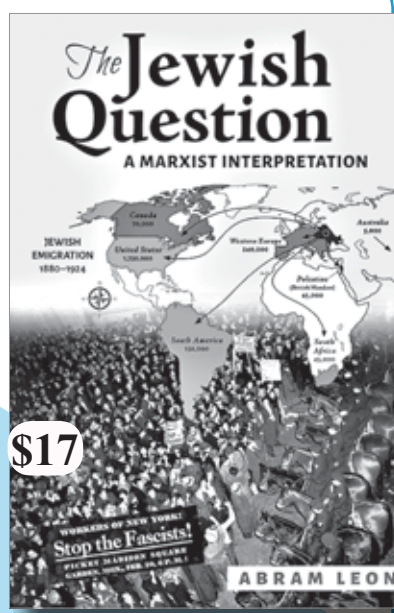
“There is no solution to the Jewish question under capitalism, just as there is no solution to other problems before humanity . . .”
— Abram Leon

From antiquity to feudalism, to capitalism’s rise and death throes of imperialism — Jews have been targets of persecution.

Why is Jew-hatred again raising its ugly head? What are its class roots? Why is there “no solution to the Jewish question under capitalism” without revolutionary struggles that transform working people as we fight to transform the world?

Abram Leon, 26, was killed in October 1944 in the Nazi gas chambers at Auschwitz.

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see distributors on page 8



U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

New International no. 11

“Once Stalinism had transformed the Soviet Union into the opposite of a voluntary federation of workers and peasants republics, its breakup, its disintegration from within, was inevitable.”
—Jack Barnes

Lenin’s Final Fight

Speeches and Writings 1922-23

“I declare war to the death on Great Russian chauvinism.”
V.I. Lenin, 1922

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New York Museum of Modern Art protest shows ‘anti-Zionism’ is really Jew-hatred



NEWYORK — Hamas supporters organizing actions to disrupt the lives of working people worldwide use the suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza — a result of Hamas’ strategy of using them as human shields and refusing to build shelters for them — to try to convince students, youth and others to back their call to impose a cease-fire on Israel, which would leave Hamas intact to murder Jews again. They claim they’re not antisemitic, just “against oppression” and “anti-Zionist.”

Their actions show otherwise. At a Feb. 10 occupation by the Palestine Youth Movement in New York City, some 800 people calling for a “cease-fire now” sat in at the Museum of Modern Art, above, forcing it to close down. They chanted, “Free Palestine, from the river to the sea,” a Hamas slogan calling for driving all Jews out of the region. They demanded five of the museum’s board members be fired for “cultural complicity to Zionism.” All five are Jewish or married to someone who is Jewish.

—S.G.

Communist International defended rights of oppressed peoples

One of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for February is Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite! Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress of the Communist International, 1920, Vol. 1. The 1917 revolution led by V.I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks established a workers state in Russia that inspired millions of exploited and oppressed people worldwide and led to the foundation of the Communist International. The excerpts are from discussion on the national and colonial questions by Lenin and by Mariya [Ester] Frumkina, a former leader of the Jewish Bund who joined the Bolsheviks. In 1920 she became editor of the party's Jewish press. She was purged in 1938 during the Moscow frame-up trials under Joseph Stalin and died in prison in 1943. Copyright © 1991 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



V.I. Lenin speaks at opening of Second Congress of Communist International in Petrograd, July 1920. Delegates adopted resolution drafted by Lenin on the fight against national oppression.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY V.I. LENIN

In this age of imperialism, it is particularly important for the proletariat and the Communist International to establish the concrete economic facts and to proceed from concrete realities, not from abstract postulates, in all colonial and national problems.

The characteristic feature of imperialism consists in the whole world, as we now see, being divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressor na-

tions, the latter possessing colossal wealth and powerful armed forces. ... This idea of a division, of dividing the nations into oppressor and oppressed, runs through the theses. ...

I should like especially to emphasize the question of the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. This is a question that has given rise to certain differences. ... We have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national-revolutionary movement rather than of the "bourgeois-democratic" movement. It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consists of peasants, who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships. ...

However, the objection has been raised that if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement we shall be obliterating all distinctions between the reformist and the revolutionary movements. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries, since the imperialist bourgeoisie is doing everything in its power to implant a reformist movement among the oppressed nations too. There has been a certain rapprochement between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often — perhaps even in most cases — the bourgeoisie

of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie, that is, joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. ...

The significance of this change is that we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organizing in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited.



I think that we should also take into account the national minorities, that is, minorities that do not possess a defined territory. I am astonished to see that the Second International's mistake is being repeated here. We talk of territorial autonomy but do not take the national minorities into account. I would like the national minorities in the various countries to be taken into consideration, and I therefore propose an amendment to point 9.

First, however, I would like to remind those present of the experiences of the Communist Party and the Soviet government in Russia. The organizations of the Communist Party of Russia and the Soviet institutions have special departments and commissariats for national minorities that attend to the affairs of the national minori-

ties and everything that concerns, for example, the Jewish question.

I propose the following. ... "At the same time all Communist parties must, in their general policies and propaganda, lead a determined struggle against the bourgeois concept that this or that national majority has the exclusive right to control the territory it inhabits. Communist parties must oppose the conception of nationalist Socialist groups who regard the national majority as the absolute ruler and treat as foreigners the workers of national minorities without territory living in their country (Poland, Ukraine).

"If revolutionary groups give unconditional support to the independence struggles of oppressed countries inhabited by many peoples, without categorically demanding that the rights of national minorities living in these countries be realized in life (and these rights can be absolutely guaranteed only through the dictatorship of the proletariat), the danger arises that the previously oppressed petty-bourgeois masses may turn into oppressors.

"The Soviet regime and the Communist Party of Russia provide the working masses of all nations with the real possibility of cultural development, thanks to the detailed specialization of state administration (departments for education of national minorities, commissariat for the affairs of the nationalities, and so on). They set as their goal a truly fraternal coexistence of all nations. These experiences must be taken as a necessary basis for the national programs of all Communist parties."

There is a tendency to regard all minorities without territory as alien, foreign elements. So it is in Poland and the Ukraine. It is important for all countries to note the experience of the Soviet government and the Communist Party of Russia, which give the toiling minorities of all nationalities the opportunity for full cultural development by placing at their disposal the necessary organizations, such as those to educate national minorities, and commissariats that champion the interests of the national minorities.

This example must serve all Communist parties as the foundation for resolving the national question.

February
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Get Moscow out of *all* of Ukraine now!

Two years ago Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a war against Ukraine to crush its independence and subjugate its people.

Eight years earlier workers across Ukraine rose up in massive protests for political rights that ousted the pro-Moscow regime of Viktor Yanukovich. Workers' class consciousness and confidence grew.

Moscow's invasion is the first major ground war in Europe since World War II. It is a watershed in world politics, sharpening conflicts between Washington and rival powers and shaking the alliances that shape the imperialist "world order." A second turning point came Oct. 7 with Hamas' massacre in Israel, the largest slaughter of Jews since the Nazis' Holocaust. Like Ukraine's war to defend its sovereignty, Israel's war to defeat Hamas is in the interests of workers worldwide.

Days after Moscow's invasion in 2022, the Socialist Workers Party National Committee issued a statement by Jack Barnes, the party's national secretary, which remains available on the *Militant's* website.

It answered Putin's lie that an independent Ukraine posed a threat to the people of Russia and refuted his outrageous claim, repeated to Tucker Carlson this month, that Ukraine isn't a nation at all. Since then, members of the Socialist Workers Party and Communist Leagues have spread the word about the courageous fight of working people in Ukraine to defeat the invasion and return *all* of their country to Ukrainian sovereignty, and hailed efforts by workers in Russia to protest Putin's war. Advancing these intertwined

working-class struggles is the road forward.

Throughout the 2024 campaign, the Democratic and Republican parties will debate how to defend what they call "our" interests in Ukraine, the Middle East and worldwide. There is no such thing. Whenever they say "our" they mean the profits and political interests of the U.S. capitalist rulers. They deny workers have our own, sharply counterposed, class interests.

SWP candidates and members present "an independent working-class foreign policy," the party's statement said, one "that starts from the interests of the toilers at home and internationally — not from hypocritical chants about 'democracy' and 'freedom' behind which the capitalist rulers seek to mask their exploitation and oppression of billions the world over.

"The stakes are enormous. Working people must see the necessity of taking political power into our own hands — as toilers did in Cuba at the opening of the 1960s, following a popular, workers-and-farmers-based revolution — or we will face a future of social devastation, reaction, world war, and even nuclear catastrophe."

We are living in an epoch of revolutionary struggles. Workers in the U.S. will have our chance to emulate what the leadership of Cuba's socialist revolution showed is possible. That requires building a proletarian party tempered in class battles and capable of leading millions to take political power into our own hands. The Socialist Workers Party's 2024 campaign presents this perspective. Join us!

Court questions moves to throw Trump off ballot

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are already imposed to try to prevent the Socialist Workers Party from getting on the ballot.

The Colorado court relied on Section 3 of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which bars former office holders who have "engaged in insurrection" from holding office. It was ratified in 1868 to bar ex-Confederate officers from taking office and using their position to overturn the conquests of the Second American Revolution that uprooted slavery.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh said the Colorado ruling undermined the franchise. The court should "think about the right of the people to elect candidates of their choice, of letting the people decide," he said.

Liberal justices were equally skeptical about the ruling. Justice Elena Kagan questioned how a single state can rule against a presidential candidate's eligibility.

"The whole point of the 14th Amendment was to restrict state power" to interfere with the right to vote, Chief Justice John Roberts said. It says that "states shall not abridge privilege of immunity, they won't deprive people of property without due process, they won't deny equal protection." The Colorado ruling is "at war with the whole thrust of the 14th Amendment."

Democrats attack free speech

In barring Trump from the ballot, the Colorado judges claimed his speech at a public rally Jan. 6, 2021, was not protected by the First Amendment because he "incited" the riot at the Capitol later that day.

Trump actually told supporters to keep their action peaceful and prepare to "fight like hell," or "you're not going to have a country anymore." By making these words a "crime," the judges set a precedent. Whenever a worker vows to "fight" attacks by the employers they could be accused of "incitement."

Underlying Democrats' assault on basic freedoms — and their growing hysteria about the coming elections — is their deep fear of the working class.

Trump must be disqualified from running, liberal professor Sean Wilentz says in an article in the Feb. 22 *New York Review of Books*, because a Trump victory would be "an ongoing coup d'état by a charismatic despot."

To help rig the 2024 election for Biden, Department of Justice special counsel Jack Smith has filed a number of criminal charges against Trump, including one invoking the Espionage Act. This law was adopted in 1917, just before the Bolsheviks led workers to conquer power, making the world's first socialist revolution in

Russia and providing a powerful beacon to working people worldwide. Ever since, the Espionage Act has been used to target militant workers, opponents of Washington's wars abroad and communists.

Democrats' efforts to paint Trump as a threat to "national security" go back to 2016, when Hillary Clinton's campaign cooked up the Trump-Russia-collusion hoax and President Barack Obama's administration unleashed the FBI to spy on and disrupt Trump's campaign.

Anti-working-class Espionage Act

Smith is attempting to frame up Trump for "espionage" over claims the former president improperly held onto classified documents after leaving office. On Feb. 6 Judge Aileen Cannon granted part of Trump's request that Smith identify the names of his list of potential government witnesses. Smith had demanded they be kept secret, claiming they otherwise could face retaliation. Cannon's ruling protects Trump's constitutional right to confront the witnesses against him.

The fact that Smith's charges are a part of the Democrats' drive to hobble Trump's campaign was underlined Feb. 8. In a widely expected decision, the Justice Department announced it was recommending no charges against Biden for the same "offense" — retaining confidential documents after he was no longer vice president — that Smith accuses Trump of. Biden had taken dozens of such documents to his Delaware home and other locations.

In 2016, no charges were filed against Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who kept thousands of secret documents on her personal server and then destroyed them to try to cover up what she had done.

As Biden's poll numbers continue to fall, calls are growing in the liberal media for Democratic Party kingmakers to replace him. Whether they do so or don't, their assaults on constitutional freedoms will continue unabated.

Leaders for the Democratic National Committee are pursuing their drive to bar candidates from the ballot who they fear will take votes from Biden. They filed a complaint against former Democrat Robert Kennedy Jr. with the Federal Election Commission Feb. 9, accusing his presidential campaign of violating campaign finance laws by spending \$15 million to collect signatures to get on the ballot.

Fighting these attacks on basic freedoms is of vital interest to workers, regardless of who the rulers target.

Workers' confidence rises

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the Big 3 — General Motors, Ford and Stellantis. Gains made there have inspired organizing efforts at Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz, Toyota and 10 other nonunion auto companies.

It's impossible to predict the course of the economy, but in the face of an upswing today many workers are still dissatisfied. "Why Americans Are So Down on a Strong Economy" headlined a Feb. 7 *Wall Street Journal* article. Many feel "vulnerable to wide-ranging social and political threats," the paper said.

Growing numbers of working people sense that the spreading wars and social crises today, from Moscow's invasion of Ukraine to Hamas' Oct. 7 slaughter of Jews in Israel, are reverberating throughout the Washington-led imperialist "world order" and will impact their lives and that of workers worldwide.

"Even though I'm OK right now, there's a sense it could all go away in a second," Kristine Funck, a nurse in Milford, Ohio, told the *Journal*.

She expressed concern about rising health care costs, putting coverage out of reach for increasing numbers of working people. Average family health care premiums rose 7% last year and are expected to go up another 6% this year.

Clayton Wiles, 44, a truck driver in Wilmington, North Carolina, said he makes \$10,000 more than he did three years ago, bringing the family's annual income to \$58,000. "But the Wiles can't afford to fix their broken-down truck and plan to draw from modest retirement savings to pay for health insurance for their two children when they lose Medicaid eligibility this year," the *Journal* said.

According to a recent Journal-NORC survey, some 78% of people in the U.S. aren't confident their children's lives will be better than their own, a record percentage since this survey began in 1990.

Among those hardest hit are workers stuck in low-wage jobs. Their families pay as much as 30% of their income on food and another 30% on transportation. In January the Labor Department announced 353,000 jobs had been added to the U.S. economy. But the number of those having to work part time and more than one job, with lower wages and often no benefits, is increasing.

Real wages declined from mid-2021 until mid-2023, when an uptick in union battles meant wage raises began to edge slightly higher than the inflation rate.

Prices stay stubbornly high

What continues to make more and more workers and farmers angry are high prices at the grocery store. The slowing monthly rate of inflation has had little impact there. Over the last four years groceries have gone up 25%, gasoline 22% and rents 19%. In addition, electric bills have risen 26% and child care 16%.

This leads many workers to substitute cheaper items in their diet, like ground beef for steak, which is up 33%. And prices go up through what bosses call "shrinkflation" where you pay the same price to buy ever-smaller amounts of food, like breakfast cereal. Since January 2019 household paper products were up 34.9%, with nearly a third of the increase from smaller sizes of rolls and packages. This isn't reflected in the government's calculation of inflation.

Many workers are turning to increased use of credit cards to pay for necessities, from groceries to fuel to electric bills. And it's taking longer to pay these debts off. This is a boon for the big bankers, who charge well over 20% interest rates on outstanding monthly balances, a rate that goes even higher if you miss a payment. Delinquencies are on the rise.

Mortgage rates, now at about 7%, discourage young workers from getting a place of their own to raise a family. Home mortgage rates were under 3% before the pandemic.

All of this leads to openings for the working class. Workers feel the economy is improving, and there's room for us to fight for our class interests, at the same time the attacks of the bosses mean we *need* to fight.

'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

The fund enables prisoners to get reduced rate subscriptions. To donate send a check or money order payable to the 'Militant' and earmarked "Prisoners' Fund" to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018. Or donate online at www.themilitant.com