

# THE MILITANT

**INSIDE**  
**Stalinist 'Popular Front Against Fascism' only leads to disaster**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 88/NO. 47 DECEMBER 16, 2024

## Deepening wars and int'l rivalries overshadow UN 'climate' talks

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Intensified national rivalries and conflicts spreading around the world overshadowed the 29th United Nations climate conference, COP29, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, Nov. 11-24. The annual summit — where prominent capitalist figures burnish their green credentials — was marked by the absence of government heads from Washington, Beijing and elsewhere.

Moscow's invasion of Ukraine has shaken Europe and beyond in the largest war on the continent since World War II. Conflicts are spreading in the Middle East in the wake of the Tehran-backed Hamas pogrom against Jews in Israel Oct. 7, 2023. Washington and rival capitalist powers are moving to rearm and shift alliances to defend their economic and political interests in future wars.

Alongside these conflicts, heightened competition for markets and resources are pulling apart the imperialist world order and shaking every multilateral pact and institution — whether for political, military, trade

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## Protest Canadian gov't plans to deport immigrant workers

180 unions, groups back permanent residency for immigrants



La Presse/Josie Desmarais

March in Montreal Nov. 2 demands Ottawa grant permanent residency to immigrant workers in Canada, drop plans to slash number of legal immigrant workers amid growing unemployment. The government threatens to conduct roundups, mass deportations.

BY JOE YOUNG

MONTREAL — Over 180 unions and other organizations across Canada have issued an open letter to the federal government calling for an end to its moves to target immigrant workers and to grant permanent residency to all those living in the country. Those signing include the Ontario, Quebec

and Manitoba Federations of Labour, the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN), the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Unifor and dozens of immigrant rights groups.

This comes in response to a major assault launched by the federal government in Ottawa targeting hundreds of thousands of immigrants. This includes slashing the number who can become permanent residents and eliminating at least 775,000 work and study permits.

New permanent residents will be

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## Israel's blows to Hezbollah open space for toilers in Middle East

BY SETH GALINSKY

Taking advantage of Israel's devastating blows to Hezbollah in Lebanon, Islamist militias led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham have taken over Aleppo, the second largest city in Syria, and are advancing toward Hama. They say their aim is to overthrow the Tehran and Moscow-backed dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. At the same time, the Syrian National Army — a creation of the Turkish government — has attacked towns in northern Syria controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

For years Hezbollah has based forces in Syria that have provided a crucial prop to Assad's widely hated regime.

The takeover of Aleppo is an unintended consequence of the blows the Israeli army has dealt Tehran and its "axis of resistance" — an alliance cemented by hatred of Israel and the Jews — over the last several months.

Together with the resistance to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, this is accelerating the coming apart of the old imperialist world order in the Middle East and beyond, as rival capitalist powers jockey for position. Moscow, Ankara, Washington, London, Paris, Riyadh, Tehran and more have backed competing forces in Syria.

The overthrow of Assad would be

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## Teachers strikes in Massachusetts make gains, set powerful example



Grey Collins

Some 500 Marblehead High students walked out of class Nov. 7 in support of their teachers, along with teachers in Beverly and Gloucester, who defied state government ban on strikes.

BY EMILY FITZSIMMONS

BOSTON — Striking teachers in three North Shore cities are back at work, ending two and half weeks of walkouts involving over 1,400 workers. Substantial gains were won in pay and parental leave by the three unions. To do so, they had to disregard an anti-labor state law that makes strikes by public employees illegal.

The Marblehead Education Asso-

ciation and Beverly Teachers Association signed new contracts Nov. 26 after over two weeks on strike. The Union of Gloucester Educators ended their 15-day strike Nov. 22. Collectively the unions were fined over \$1.5 million by the state.

"The costs of our victories should not be so high," the Newton Teachers Association said in a statement Nov.

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## French rulers face setbacks at home, in Africa as capitalist crisis deepens

BY TERRY EVANS

Underlying the turmoil that brought down the French government Dec. 4 was its inability to strengthen the position of the country's capitalist ruling families in the face of an economic

### 'Hello there. I'm an algorithm. I'm here to decide your rent'

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Throughout the U.S., working people are being hit by outrageous rents that eat up disproportionate amounts of families' household income. Residential rents have increased at least 20% nationwide since 2020, with more than half of working people paying over 30% of their income just to have a roof over their head. And, as bosses press against pay raises, the squeeze gets harder and harder each year.

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downturn across Europe that is fueling sharper competition with their imperialist rivals.

These problems are exacerbated by the rupturing of decades-old economic and political ties between Paris and regimes in its former colonies.

Pressures are mounting on the French rulers to offload even more of their crisis onto the backs of working people.

French Prime Minister Michel Bar-

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— On the picket line, p. 5 —

San Francisco hotel workers expand hard-fought strike

New South Wales hospital nurses rally in fight for new contract



# Canada gov't attacks immigrants

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reduced to 365,000 by 2027, from 471,700 last year. Permanent residency allows immigrants the right to live, work and study anywhere in Canada, receive health care coverage and contribute to the Canada pension plan.

The sharp shift in Ottawa's immigration targets reflects the reality that because unemployment is increasing — now at 6.6% — employers don't need as many immigrant workers. The goal of the Justin Trudeau government is not to stop immigration, but to adjust it to better meet the needs of the capitalist class it represents.

Many capitalist politicians and the media here are joining in scapegoating immigrants, blaming them for the shortage and high cost of housing working people face.

The open letter calls for immediate permanent residency for temporary foreign workers and for students already in Canada. It calls for a comprehensive and inclusive regularization program for all undocumented migrants and the abolition of the government's closed work permit regime. This ties temporary immigrants to one employer. If they lose their job, they're subject to deportation.

Ottawa is halving work permit lengths from two years to one. It's refusing to renew postgraduate work permits for immigrants who have been working in Canada, and ending work permits for family members in high-wage, nonmanagerial jobs and for most international students.

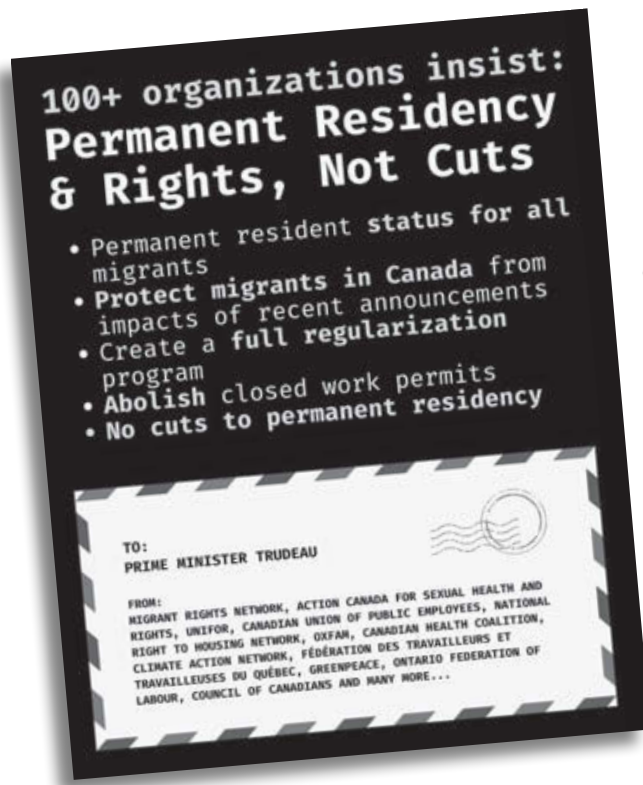
The open letter says, "These measures will force thousands of migrants who have already been in Canada for several years — often with their families — to either leave the country or become undocumented."

These moves by Canada's capitalist rulers have increased the pool of workers with either no or only limited rights, who can be pressured into accepting low wages and difficult, dangerous working conditions. A recent U.N. report says these workers are subject to all kinds of abuses, like wage theft, sexual harassment, excessive work hours, no protective equipment, lack of health care and more.

As of the second quarter of 2024, there were 2.8 million temporary residents in Canada, out of a total population of 41 million. This includes thousands of seasonal agricultural workers, factory workers, asylum-seekers and university students. In 2023 about 1.2 million immigrants came to Canada, marking the highest percentage increase of Canada's population since 1957.

Ottawa's measures aim to cut the number of temporary residents in Canada by 900,000 over two years. Migrant rights groups estimate that there are some 500,000 workers without officially recognized status in Canada.

Deportations are increasing. According to the Migrant Rights Network, there were 7,032 deportations in the



Over 180 unions and other organizations across Canada have issued an open letter, left, calling for the federal government to end its moves to target immigrant workers. "These measures will force thousands of migrants who have already been in Canada for several years — often with their families — to either leave the country or become undocumented."

first half of 2023, about 39 a day, much higher than in the previous two years. With the threat of deportation hanging over their heads, the open letter points out, undocumented workers "are denied access to essential health care, exploited at work, and live in fear."

## Quebec government joins attack

Quebec Premier Francois Legault has threatened to ship half of all those in the province demanding asylum out to other provinces. He calls for creating detention centers to hold asylum-seekers while their claims are investigated. Legault has asked the provincial police to patrol Quebec's border with the U.S. in anticipation of an influx of asylum-seekers when Donald Trump becomes president.

Some 600,000 temporary workers live and work in Quebec today, twice as many as in 2021. Legault says this number will be substantially cut.

French-language courses for immigrants are being slashed. At the same time, the Quebec government has frozen the number of temporary workers who can move to Montreal, claiming they threaten use of the French language.

Philippe Tessier, Communist League candidate in the Quebec provincial by-election in Terrebonne, told the *Militant* that the open letter is an important weapon in the fight for rights of immigrants and the whole working class. "It needs to be circulated widely and fought for."

The fight for unconditional permanent residency for all immigrants in Canada and to stop all deportations is a life-and-death question for our unions. Working-class unity and solidarity is crucial for the success of class battles today and those to come," he said.

"Workers need a union-based party of labor that can unite working people, whether Canadian or foreign-born, in a struggle to defend our common interests as a class against the owners of capital."

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## The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind US

The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward

A decadeslong retreat by the working class and unions has come to an end. More and more workers — of all ages, skin colors, and both sexes — are saying, "Enough is enough!" They've begun to wield the collective power of the exploited producers in response.

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# THE MILITANT

## UK farmers protest as costs soar, income falls

Over 10,000 farmers protested Nov. 19 against U.K. government plans for new farm taxes. The protest follows years of higher costs for feed, fuel and fertilizer, while incomes declined. "I don't think farmers will back down," Briony Greenland, a farmer, told the *Militant*.



Militant/Dag Tirsén  
Thousands of farmers from across U.K. protest new farm taxes in London, Nov. 19.

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# Stalinist 'Popular Front Against Fascism' only leads to disaster

BY RÓGER CALERO

Claiming working people face the imminent danger of fascism taking power — in France, Hungary, Italy, Argentina and the U.S. — Stalinist parties of all stripes, Social Democrats and middle-class radicals are resurrounding proposals for a 1930s-style Popular Front Against Fascism.

This scheme ties the working class to an alliance with the so-called progressive wing of the capitalist class, the very class whose rule gives rise, at times of deepening crisis and sharpening class struggle, to fascist forces. It led to a wave of bloody defeats in the 1930s, including the victory of Generalissimo Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War.

"New Popular Front rallies French to save democracy from Macron-Le Pen coup," was the headline of an article last September in the *People's World*, the online paper of the U.S. Communist Party. It hailed the left coalition led by the French CP, together with France Unbowed, the Socialist Party and Les Ecologistes, for collaborating with the government of French President Emmanuel Macron to block the National Rally party of Marine Le Pen from winning the election.

Similar arguments were used in the U.S. to justify a multiclass alliance against Donald Trump, who Stalinist forces and many others claim is a fascist.

"Georgi Dimitrov would be smiling this morning in Marxist heaven," read a *People's World* article about the French election results. Dimitrov, a leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party and Stalin's Communist International in the 1930s, is credited with being the author of the Popular Front.

Communist Parties worldwide were instructed to form coalitions with imperialist parties deemed "antifascist," or seen as friendly to Moscow's diplomatic needs.

It was a new name for class collaboration — working-class parties and organizations subordinating the interests of the exploited producers to the bosses and their government, under the banner of forming a "grand alliance" to stop fascist forces from taking power.

Far from being a strategy to rout Nazi thugs, Popular Front blocs blocked revolutionary prospects and working-class upsurges in many countries in Europe, Asia and the Americas, with disastrous consequences for working people. The goal wasn't for the working class to take political power into its own hands, but to win "peaceful coexistence" for the Stalinist regime in Moscow with "democratic" imperialist regimes in the U.S., France and elsewhere.

This treachery opened the way to the fascist victory in Spain, propped up Hitler's rule in Germany, and made the onset of the second imperialist war — World War II — inevitable.

In the U.S., the new line applied by the CP was to provide unqualified support for Democratic President Franklin

D. Roosevelt and against rising sentiment for a labor party.

The Communist Party championed Roosevelt's New Deal, paving the way for U.S. entry into the imperialist slaughter in World War II. This brought with it attacks on constitutional rights and on space for political action by the labor movement, the Socialist Workers Party, Blacks and other oppressed nationalities.

The CP "has followed some variation of the People's Front strategy ever since, making adjustments as circumstances demanded, right up to the present day," *People's World* managing editor C.J. Atkins proudly states on the paper's website.

In contrast, the revolutionary working-class course advocated by the Socialist Workers Party was and is the mobilization of the working class to lead millions oppressed and exploited by capital to take political power into their own hands to prevent fascist brutality as the crisis of capitalism deepens.

This program is detailed in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* by Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky, adopted by the SWP in 1938. It is the heart of the SWP's program today. Updated for today's conditions, it's available in *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*.

## A popular front to stop Trump?

As the so-called anti-MAGA coalition of Democrats, Stalinists and virtually all of the left moves "into the next stage of the fight" after the 2024 elections, they blame "deplorable" working people for voting in Trump. And they



Workers occupy Renault auto plant in France, May 1936, part of wave of sit-down strikes that opened door to socialist revolution. Communist and Socialist parties joined Popular Front government, called for "social harmony" with bosses, demobilized the revolutionary upsurge.

complain that the Democratic Party leadership failed to put forward an economic program to address the effects of the crisis workers face, as if it's possible for a capitalist party to do such a thing.

These forces debate how to "remedy" the working-class "dealignment" from the Democratic Party and "pry back working-class voters from the clutches of Trumpism," as the Social Democratic website Jacobin put it.

What does the ANSWER coalition, led by the Party for Socialism and Liberation, prescribe? "Defeat Trump's extreme-right billionaire agenda."

But "Defeat the Trump agenda" means nothing but support to "better" Democratic Party candidates in upcoming elections. It is a cover-up for class collaboration.

Trump won't solve the crisis workers are living through. Neither would have Kamala Harris, or any other Democrat or Republican. Bosses don't stop being bosses and the capitalist government in

Washington does not stop serving the interests of the bosses.

The most noteworthy feature of the 2024 U.S. presidential election was the number of strikes that took place over the past year. It showed the growing conviction among workers that class struggle is the road forward.

The Socialist Workers Party says this is our starting point: Build, extend, and strengthen the trade unions, and use that union power to advance the interests of working people. More workers today are seeing that this course goes hand in hand with building a party of labor that can lead a fight to overthrow the rule of the bosses and their parties, for the working class to take political power.

This latest attempt to recycle the dangerous illusion of the popular front as something progressive means it is time to revisit these lessons for working people and youth today repelled by the brutal realities of capitalism.

# Putin threatens to turn Kyiv, Ukrainian people 'into dust'

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

At a meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan, Nov. 28, Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened to use hypersonic ballistic missiles against Ukraine's urban areas, including Kyiv, a weapon he boasted could turn targets "into dust." The Oreshnik missile, he said, could destroy even highly protected underground sites, creating blast sites that "reach 4,000 degrees."

Working people in Kyiv, Kharkiv and other large cities often take refuge from Moscow's attacks in the subway. Schools, concerts and other activities take place there as well.

These new missiles could be used against all kinds of targets, including "industrial enterprises, or decision-making centers, including in Kyiv," Putin threatened.

In the first use of a missile capable of carrying nuclear weapons in its almost three-year war against Ukraine, Moscow dropped an Oreshnik missile on Dnipro Nov. 21. That missile was a test, carrying little to no explosives, causing limited damage to the city's infrastructure and no deaths.

The strike came two days after Ukraine used U.S.-made long-range missiles to strike an ammunition depot in the Bryansk region of southwestern Russia.

Continuing its attacks on the people of Ukraine, Moscow's forces fired more than 90 missiles and 100 drones Nov. 28 in a barrage that left nearly a

million people without power as temperatures dropped to freezing. For the third time in three months, the attacks included strikes on critical electricity transmission facilities linked to nuclear power plants, which provide two-thirds of Ukraine's power, increasing the risk of a nuclear disaster.

The strikes left more than half a million in Ukraine's western Lviv region cut off from electricity. Another 280,000 in the western Rivne region and 215,000 in the northwestern Volyn region also lost power. Ukraine's emergency services said Moscow's overnight attack inflicted damage in 14 regions across the country.

Unlike Ukraine's drone and missile attacks in Russia, which overwhelmingly target military facilities and suppliers, Putin's attacks are aimed at crucial infrastructure and housing and are designed to inflict death, damage and misery on civilians.

"In several regions, strikes with cluster munitions were recorded and they targeted civilian infrastructure," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told the press, calling the attacks a "despicable escalation" of the war. These weapons are packed with smaller munitions that explode midair, causing indiscriminate damage. Some land unexploded, making it dangerous for repair crews to go into action.

Ukraine's air defenses shot down 90% of the missiles, with falling debris damaging a health care clinic in Kyiv.

One drone attack killed a woman in the southern city of Kherson.

The escalation by Moscow comes as the political and financial costs of the war bear down on Russia. Thousands of Russian soldiers continue to die in "meat wave" attacks in Ukraine. Ukraine's military estimates that 2,030 Russian troops were killed or seriously wounded Nov. 29, the highest toll in any one day so far. It surpassed the 1,950 estimated casualties Nov. 12.

In November the value of the Russian ruble dropped to a 32-month low. Military spending hit the highest amount in over 30 years. And it is expected to reach more than \$120 billion next year, over 30% of the country's total annual budget.

With inflation already running at 8.5%, a video of a break-in at a local grocery store in Yekaterinburg hit the news. While one person ran to the cash register, the other went straight for the refrigerator, taking over 44 pounds of butter. Butter is now like "gold," the storeowner said on Telegram, with one stick costing almost \$2, some 30% higher than a year ago.

"It is getting worse day by day," Stanislav, a Moscow resident, told CNBC. While declining to give his last name given the risks associated with criticism of Putin's war, Stanislav said he knows the price rises are linked to the invasion of Ukraine. But, he said, he avoids many discussions about it. "It is dangerous to say something true in Russia," he said.

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# Rivalries overshadow climate talks

Continued from front page or “climate” arrangements.

President Joseph Biden attended the annual summit in 2021 and 2022 and Vice President Kamala Harris did so in 2023. Neither were present this year.

Commentators in the liberal media complained the potential of the gathering was spoiled by the election of Donald Trump days beforehand. Trump has pledged to pull Washington out of the Paris climate accords, as he did in his first term. After Biden took office in 2021, his administration rejoined the pact. It involves nearly 200 governments who set nonbinding goals to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Releases of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases add to the gradual warming of the Earth’s atmosphere along with natural variations in the planet’s climate.

In 2021 Washington and rival capitalist powers set a target of halving these emissions by the end of the decade. But emissions have continued to grow by 1% to 2% per year, confirming that this “goal” was always a fantasy.

Every capitalist power, whatever the character of its government, puts protection of the profit-driven interests of its own ruling families ahead of all other considerations. These capitalist classes have no concern for the social consequences of their rapacious exploitation of land and labor, nor their depletion of resources or deadly contamination of the earth, sea and air. This is exacerbated by today’s wars and sharp trade conflicts.

## ‘A chaotic, bitter summit’

COP29 was “a chaotic, bitter summit,” liberal outlet CNN complained. “Many wealthy country leaders failed to show up, Argentina pulled out its negotiators, and some developing country groups grew so frustrated in the final throes of talks, they walked out.”

The extravagant gathering drew thousands of officials from some 200 countries. As with previous summits, it was accompanied by predictions of imminent catastrophe from bourgeois political figures and the middle-class left, much amplified by Trump’s election.

“Time is not on our side,” forewarned

U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres Nov. 12, before complaining that 2024 had been a “climate disaster.” Humanity faces “ecocide” and a “climate collapse,” cautioned prominent “climate activist” Greta Thunberg.

After extended talks, the meeting adopted a target of raising \$300 billion a year by 2035 from more developed capitalist powers, supposedly to help undeveloped nations acquire renewable energy sources. The goal was only a fraction of the \$1.3 trillion demanded by representatives from underdeveloped countries when the conference initially opened. The chief delegate from India condemned the final goal as “an optical illusion.”

The gathering was held in Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic on the Caspian Sea, that relies on oil and gas for 90% of its exports. Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan’s president, told the gathering that oil and gas were a “gift of God,” and countries “should not be blamed” for having them. His remarks ran head on against the stated aims of the summit organizers, which are to end the use of fossil fuels.

Moscow had used its “United Nations veto to prevent any European Union country from hosting” the summit, CNN reported.

## Beijing-Washington rivalry

Over recent years, Beijing, a growing rival to Washington, has fought to lead in cornering the highly profitable market for renewable energy sources.

# Massachusetts teachers strikes make gains, set example

Continued from front page

24. “We must gain the legal right to go on strike when negotiations fail.” The NTA had won a new contract with a solid strike at the beginning of the year and was fined \$625,000 for its 15-day walkout. The union encouraged its members to join the pickets and contribute financially to the North Shore unions that, they explained, faced disproportionate financial penalties on their smaller memberships.

“This was a monster contract for us,” Lydia Ames, a Beverly Middle School teacher and union leader, told this *Militant* worker-correspondent. “Not only in terms of pay for both teachers and paraprofessionals, and parental leave,” but in other gains, including less onerous requirements for scheduling time off.

“This has been an awakening for me,” she said. “I didn’t realize how much agency I had, and our union had, in determining our future. I considered myself a ‘sleepy teacher,’ but no longer. I’ll never feel that way again.”

“I’m very disappointed in Gov. [Maura] Healy. She said we should return to work even without a contract. That’s union busting!” Ames said. “We need a labor party.”

All three unions put a priority on winning significant raises for paraprofessionals, who are essential in the classroom as teachers’ aides and instructional assistants, but are severely underpaid. Because they are public employees, these workers are exempted from the state minimum wage law. In Marblehead, for example, their wages started at only \$11.93 an hour under the old contract. Now that goes up to \$17.07 by the 2027-28 school year. Similar increases were won in



Chinese President Xi Jinping, front left, and U.S. President Joseph Biden, rear right, at Asia-Pacific economic forum in Peru Nov. 16. The two rivals chose to attend this and G20 talks in Brazil, looking for allies and openings, instead of COP29 climate conference in Azerbaijan.

the other school districts. Teachers at the top of the scale won raises of 15% to 17% over their three- and four-year contracts. Raises for all teachers puts them closer to teachers’ salaries in other area districts. And winning decent parental leave was a big goal for each of the unions.

“Our contracts are more humane, they reduce the divisions between the teachers and paraprofessional units, but we still have quite a way to go,” Starsha Berchoff, a paraprofessional at North Beverly Elementary School, told the *Militant*. “The fight was worth it, our union is so much stronger. This experience brought us all together, and will benefit us in future contracts.”

Teachers pointed to solidarity from fellow area teachers, parents and students, and the Teamsters union, whose members drove by the picket lines many times in a large truck with a pro-union banner.

Ames described the reception teachers got at the Dec. 1 holiday parade in Beverly, where thousands of spectators

and marchers turned out.

“Our union decided to have a float this year to show our gratitude to the community,” she said. “Our signs said, ‘Thank you Beverly.’ We received nothing but cheers and shouts of ‘We’re proud of you!’ Only Santa got more cheers than we did.”

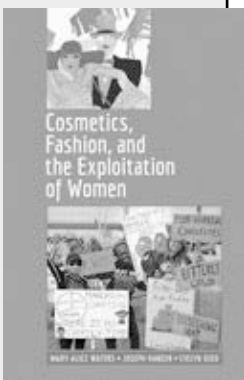
“Meanwhile, the elected officials, who marched together, were booed the entire route of the parade.”

## Prepublication special offer!

How the cosmetics and fashion bosses rake in profits from the social insecurities of women and youth. This lively debate from the mid-20th century — now in a 2024

edition with a new preface and an opening article by Mary-Alice Waters — offers a Marxist understanding of the origins of women’s oppression and fight for their liberation as part of the working-class struggle for power.

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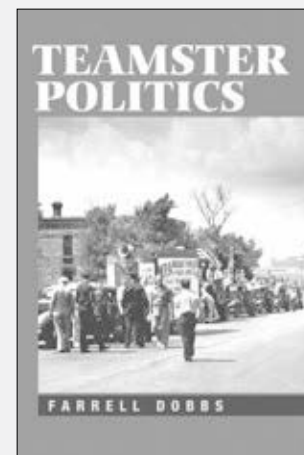


## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### CALIFORNIA

**Los Angeles**  
**Immigration, Tariffs and the Class Struggle in North America. From Mexico to the U.S. and Beyond, Workers Face Capitalist Policies and Trade Wars.** Speaker: Laura Garza, Socialist Workers Party. Sun., Dec. 15. 5 p.m. Donation: \$5. 2826 S. Vermont Ave., Suite 1. Tel.: (323) 643-4968.

## Recommended reading



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— Farrell Dobbs

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## Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles around the world!

This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about workers' struggles for a union movement in every workplace today. It gives a voice to those engaged in battle and helps build solidarity. We need your help to make it a success. If you are involved in a skirmish or strike or know other workers who are, please contact us at (212) 244-4899 or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story gets told.

### San Francisco hotel workers expand hard-fought strike

SAN FRANCISCO — While new, improved contracts have been won this fall by striking hotel workers across the country, here they are still on strike. Marriott, Hilton and Hyatt bosses are playing hardball, demanding an inferior medical plan for new hires and other concessions.

In response, UNITE HERE Local 2 has increased the number of hotels on strike from three to six, with 2,500 workers now picketing. Workers at eight other hotels have voted to authorize the union to call them out.

Pickets on Thanksgiving Day at the Palace Hotel told this *Militant* worker-correspondent that they're ready to stay out as long as needed. "For me the big issue is medical benefits," restaurant worker Yanai Lopez said. "I need the health care where I only pay \$10 a month for myself and my daughter." She has worked there for 10 years, and now pays \$17 a day to take Bay Area

Rapid Transit to work. "Everything is going up," she said. "We need a raise."

Other big issues are job combinations and heavier workloads. At the same time, some workers don't get enough hours. During the COVID-19 shutdowns large numbers of hotel workers were laid off. Now, even as occupancy rates have gone up, the hotel owners are boosting their profits by refusing to restore regular staffing. Many workers have short hours, with some not getting enough hours to qualify for medical coverage.

As the strike enters the 10th week, negotiations are at a standstill, with hotel representatives rejecting union demands that more workers be hired and that bellmen, concierge, restaurant and other jobs that were cut be brought back.

Hotel bosses argue that the workers must pay for the fact that hotel occupancy, while gaining, has not yet returned to the pre-COVID level. "San Francisco Is Sinking in Bad Ho-



Militant/Joel Britton

Pickets on strike at Palace Hotel in San Francisco celebrate Thanksgiving Day there Nov. 28.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

### THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

#### December 20, 1999

The struggle to get the U.S. Navy out of the island of Vieques has given a powerful boost to the fight to end Puerto Rico's colonial subjugation to Washington — the root of the problem. The massive desire among workers, farmers, fishermen, and young people for the Navy to leave Vieques is a part of the growing anti-colonial sentiment.

The struggle for Puerto Rico's sovereignty strengthens resistance to U.S. imperialism. The common enemy of the Puerto Rican people and workers and farmers in the U.S. is Washington. Those fighting to get the Navy out of Vieques should oppose U.S. military and other imperialist interventions around the world.

The independence movement has taken the moral high ground, playing a leading role in this struggle and gaining in attractiveness. Not one more bomb! U.S. Navy out of Vieques! Independence for Puerto Rico!

### THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

#### December 20, 1974

LONDON — Lord Widgery, "Lord Chief Justice," turned down appeals brought by two building workers, Des Warren and Eric Tomlinson, against jail sentences meted out by a court in Shrewsbury last year. Widgery's judgment put the Shrewsbury Two back in jail for the "crime" of picketing during the 1972 building workers' strike.

The strike had provoked the ruling class's ire because of the militant methods of struggle employed by the strikers. Flying pickets travelled from one building site to another, spreading the strike all over the country. The determination of the rank and file won a 20 percent wage rise. The victories prompted the government to try to clamp down on strike picketing.

Thousands of Liverpool building workers shut down building sites after Widgery's ruling. In London thirty sites stopped work. One-day strikes were held in Scotland.



Militant/Bob Aiken

Nurses rally in Sydney, Australia, Nov. 26, part of 24-hour strike at hospitals throughout New South Wales. Workers are fighting for 20% pay raise over three years and hiring more workers.

tel Debt," read a headline in the *Wall Street Journal* timed to coincide with the contract expiration.

While crying poverty, the hotel giant Marriott reported a gross profit for the 12 months ending in September of \$5.5 billion. Hyatt raked in over \$1 billion. Meanwhile, the cost of renting a hotel room in San Francisco is skyrocketing. "The owners would rather overprice their rooms and leave them empty, which leaves the room cleaners sitting at home," Local 2 staffer Lorraine Powell said. "It's all about the money for them."

Solidarity with this important fight is needed. Join the picket lines that are up 24/7. Donations can be made on the UNITE HERE Local 2 website.

— Betsey Stone

### New South Wales hospital nurses rally in fight for new contract

SYDNEY — Some 400 nurses, members of the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association, marched on the Ramsay Health Care company's annual meeting here Nov. 26 to press their demands for a 20% pay raise over three years and increased staffing levels. More than 1,000 nurses joined a 24-hour strike at 17 hospitals across the state that day.

"This is the first strike at Ramsay,"

Susanne Muir, marching with a contingent from the Baringa Private Hospital in Coffs Harbour, some 330 miles north of Sydney, told the *Militant*. "Nurses are doing double shifts all the time," she said, and "the bullying is relentless." Muir said she is now working on casual contracts in the public hospitals, where she earns 10 Australian dollars (\$6.45) an hour more than at Ramsay, even though this involves traveling farther away from home.

Ramsay, the biggest private hospital chain in Australia, made AUS\$900 million profit last year. The nurses association has been negotiating for a new agreement with the company in New South Wales for 20 months, with workers voting down two pay offers. Nurses at several Ramsay hospitals have been organizing protest walkouts since July.

"People think they are getting better care at a private hospital — they're not," said another nurse at the rally. "We're paid less than nurses at a public hospital and the staffing ratios are worse. They're a business."

— Bob Aiken

### Airport kitchen workers fight for more pay, end sexual harassment

LOS ANGELES — "It's been two years without a contract. We've met with the company twice but they won't give us what we deserve," Gary Duplesses, a cook at Flying Food Group, organized by UNITE HERE Local 11 here, told the *Militant*. Duplesses was part of a lively picket line of 50 outside the company's facility near Los Angeles International Airport Nov. 27.

The company supplies meals to international flights and Hawaiian Airlines, UNITE HERE lead organizer Ramon Lacayo III said. "Workers are fighting for higher wages and a pension so they can retire with dignity. Safety on the trucks when they deliver to the planes is also an issue." The union organized an unfair labor practice strike in 2023.

Salud Garcia, 81, has worked for the company for 32 years. She said better health care coverage is a big issue, but sexual harassment by management is also something workers are protesting.

The workers carried signs saying, "No contract, no peace" in English and Spanish, and a big banner that read, "FFG workers stand against sexual harassment."

— Norton Sandler

### THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

#### December 19, 1949

The "loyalty" purge and "subversive" blacklist have become a major threat to the job security of workers in private industry. This menace has reached the point where employers have begun to demand clauses in union contracts permitting them to fire unionists on political grounds.

An ominous example of this development came to light last week when 2,800 unionists at a meeting of CIO United Auto Workers Local 669, which represents some 5,000 workers at the Wright Aeronautical Corporation plant near Paterson, N.J., indignantly and unanimously rejected a contract in which the company had inserted a clause giving management the right to fire any workers it accused of belonging to a "subversive" organization whose alleged aim is violent overthrow of the government.

Stop the witch hunt inside the unions!



# French rulers face setbacks

Continued from front page

nier used constitutionally mandated special powers to unilaterally impose a government budget Dec. 2 without parliamentary approval. Opposition parties then moved a no-confidence vote that led to the fall of his minority government, installed only three months ago by President Emmanuel Macron.

Days before Barnier's diktat, Marine Le Pen — leader of the National Rally, the largest of the capitalist parties in France's National Assembly — demanded Barnier scrap proposals to freeze cost-of-living raises on pensions, increase taxes on electricity and raise prescription costs. These measures will fall hardest on working people, already impacted by soaring prices.

The cost of French government borrowing rose above that of Greece's government for the first time Nov. 28. Attempting to scare up support for the budget, Barnier's spokesperson, Maud Bregeon, warned France faced a "Greek scenario."

Beginning in 2009 Athens faced an unprecedented debt crisis. The rulers in France and Germany utilized their long-standing domination of the European Union to press Greece's rulers to cut their spiraling debt by slashing jobs, wages and pensions in return for more loans. As successive Greek governments surrendered to these demands, the rulers in Paris and Berlin enriched themselves off the backs of workers in Greece.

During this crisis politicians in the stronger imperialist nations frequently used the derogatory term PIIGS to describe Europe's weakest capitalist powers, Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain.

But today it's Europe's dominant powers, in Berlin, but also Paris, that face economic stagnation, as they confront rising competition for markets from Beijing and Washington. They also face the unprecedented effects of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, the largest ground war in

Europe since World War II, and the continuing fallout from Hamas' pogrom against Jews in Israel. This has highlighted the long-term weaknesses of the imperialist rulers in both Paris and Berlin.

## French forces pushed out of Africa

Unlike Berlin, the French rulers have nuclear weapons and never became dependent on Moscow for their supplies of energy.

Moreover, they had a colonial empire. This included French West Africa, which Paris ruled directly from 1895 until 1958, when the oppressed peoples there won their independence. Since then the French rulers have sought to take advantage of historic economic, political and military ties with their former colonies to offset Paris' decline, and to defend their reach in the imperialist world.

But today these links are being torn apart in the conflicts and social convulsions unfolding worldwide. The government of Chad announced it was severing its defense pact with France Nov. 28 and pressed Paris to take home the 1,000 troops it deploys there. The rulers of the United Arab Emirates and Moscow's mercenary Wagner forces have provided military aid to the Chadian junta.

Ties to the government in Chad had been key to the French imperialists' interventions in Africa. Troops from Chad were indispensable in aiding French military forces when they crushed Islamist groups battling to overthrow the government in Mali in 2013. French forces unleashed airstrikes against anti-government groups in Chad as recently as 2019.

The same day that the rulers in Chad announced they were cutting military ties with Paris, the government in Senegal pressed Paris to get its 350 troops out of its country. Senegal's president, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, noted Nov. 28 that Beijing now provides Senegal with more loans and trade than Paris.

These steps by the regimes in Chad and Senegal follow moves by the rul-



Serge D'Ignazio

President Emmanuel Macron is driving to solve capitalist crisis in France on the backs of working people. Above, massive "yellow vests" 2019 protest against Macron's policies held in Paris.

ing military juntas in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger to cut ties with Paris and oust French troops. Each has turned to Moscow's Wagner forces to help suppress Islamist groups battling to overthrow them.

## French rulers' crisis hits the EU

As the challenges facing France's rulers mount, the impact of this political and economic turmoil reverberates across Europe. The euro fell close to a 14-month low against the U.S. dollar Dec. 2 on the announcement of Barnier's budget decree.

Macron came to office promising to slash French government debt and transform the country's faltering capitalist economy. This, he claimed, would enable him to convince Berlin to set up a common EU treasury with borrowing powers.

Not "as long as I live," former German Chancellor Angela Merkel had responded to similar demands in 2012. Berlin, the dominant force in the EU, was never going to take responsibility for the debts of its weaker European "allies."

From the beginning, the EU was set up as a protectionist trading bloc designed to advance the interests of Berlin and, to a lesser degree, Paris, against Washington and against their rivals in Europe. It was also aimed at aiding their unrelenting efforts to put the costs of their dog-eat-dog capitalist competition onto working people.

Macron's policies at home have been met with working-class resistance. Tens of thousands took to the streets for months in 2018, in "yellow vest" protests against his government's moves to impose a fuel tax and other assaults on their living standards.

# Mass protests against Moscow's interference break out in Georgia

BY ROY LANDERSEN

A political upheaval is shaking Georgia. The largest demonstrations in the modern history of the country followed the Nov. 28 decision of the increasingly pro-Moscow and authoritarian Georgian Dream government led by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze to shelve preparatory talks on joining the European Union until 2028. Protesters are demanding a rerun of October elections, which they insist were rigged.

Kobakhidze claimed Georgian Dream won a narrow victory, but the four opposition parties refuse to participate in the parliament. The country's largely ceremonial president, Salome Zourabichvili, has joined protesters face-to-face against riot police, saying Georgians are "rising against the Russian puppetry regime."

Some 200,000 people, about a sixth of the population of Tbilisi, the capital city, filled the streets near the parliament Dec. 1. Similar sizable protests took place in cities throughout the country. Many chanted, "Georgia! Georgia!" and waved red and white Georgian colors or the blue and gold EU flag.

"We want freedom and we do not want to find ourselves in Russia," Nika Maghradze, a 21-year-old protester, told Agence France-Presse.

The night before, demonstrations were attacked by riot police with pepper spray, rubber bullets and chemically laced water cannons. Protesters were

beaten in the street or in detention.

Protesters have established a camp in the city center, reminiscent of the Maidan protests in Ukraine a decade ago. That popular uprising forced the dictatorial pro-Moscow Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to flee to Russia.

Most of the 3.7 million people in Georgia, a former Soviet republic on the southeast corner of the Black Sea, oppose the growing influence of the Putin regime in Georgian politics. The mostly young demonstrators fear finding themselves under Moscow's thumb again, as Georgia was under the Stalinist Soviet Union.

Georgian Dream was formed and bankrolled by Bidzina Ivanishvili, who became a multimillionaire capitalist in banking and steel in Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. By far the richest man in Georgia, his party has been in office for 12 years.

The ruling party denounces what Kobakhidze calls a western "global war party." Some of Georgian Dream's election posters pictured devastation in Ukraine, playing on fears that Georgia could be next.

When Putin launched his 2022 invasion of Ukraine, 30,000 people turned out in Tbilisi in protest. Opposition to Putin's war remains widespread.

Russian troops invaded Georgia in 2008 and still remain in two statelets Moscow created, called Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

## Protests, strikes force end to martial law in South Korea



KCTU

In an escalating fight over the political direction of South Korea, President Yoon Suk Yeol triggered the country's biggest political crisis in decades by abruptly declaring martial law Dec. 3. His goal was to ban all opposition political activity. This was the first time the country faced imposition of rule by the armed forces since the military dictatorship, which U.S. forces had put in place, ended in the late 1980s.

Yoon backtracked six hours later after mass protests erupted demanding his resignation. Yoon's own party joined opposition parliamentarians in voting unanimously against martial law. South Korea's trade unions, above, joined the protests in central Seoul and called for an open-ended general strike. Washington has postponed joint military exercises with South Korea scheduled for later this week.

— ROY LANDERSEN



# Blows to Hezbollah open space

Continued from front page

a major setback for Tehran's attempt to extend its reactionary influence throughout the region.

The regime in Tehran thought that the Oct. 7, 2023, massacre of 1,200 people in Israel, mostly civilians, the taking of 250 hostages and the rape and mutilation of dozens of women — the largest anti-Jewish pogrom since the Holocaust — would pave the way for Israel's destruction and the expulsion or murder of the Jews.

But they underestimated the people of Israel, who fought back. Israeli working people in uniform — Jews and Arabs alike — understood that what was at stake was the existence of Israel, home to half the world's Jews, and the possibilities for Jewish and Arab workers to live together and to defend their common interests.

Since Oct. 7 the Israeli army has decimated Hamas and its leadership in Gaza, eliminated the central leadership of Hezbollah in Lebanon and most of its missiles, and destroyed much of the Iranian regime's air defenses as well as a key nuclear development site.

## No working-class leadership in Syria

In 2011 mass protests by working people of all religions and nationalities calling for an end to Assad's rule broke out across Syria. The regime met the protests with furious repression. In the absence of a working-class leadership, former Assad military commanders and reactionary Islamist forces took leadership of forces challenging the regime in a 10-year civil war. Islamic State also intervened, trying to carve out areas it could control.

Moscow's airpower, Tehran's military aid and assaults by thousands of Hezbollah fighters from Lebanon were key to Assad's survival.

By 2020 his regime pushed back the rebels. The various Islamist factions retreated to the northwest province of Idlib, protected by the Turkish government. And Islamic State had largely been defeated by Kurdish fighters in alliance with Washington, which still has some 900 troops and bases in the Kurdish region in northern Syria where most of the country's oil is produced.

Working people in Syria paid a high cost with over 306,000 civilians killed and 12 million "internally displaced," or fleeing as refugees into Turkey and other countries.

But today, Assad can no longer count in the same way on Moscow, Tehran and Hezbollah to save his regime.

Faced with resistance by the Ukrainian people to Putin's February 2022 invasion, Moscow began redeploying equipment and personnel to Ukraine, while leaving a presence in Syria. Russian and Syrian planes are now bombing the advancing rebel fighters.

At the same time, Hezbollah withdrew most of its operatives from Syria — including hundreds of combat-tested members of its elite Radwan battalion — back into Lebanon after Israel Defense Forces stepped up attacks on Hezbollah forces to stop their missile strikes on Israel. Tehran-backed militias from Iraq have now begun sending operatives to Syria to try to aid Assad.

## Hezbollah severely weakened

A severely weakened Hezbollah — the largest, best-armed member of Tehran's so-called axis of resistance — agreed to a ceasefire in Lebanon, which began Nov. 27.

Almost immediately, groups in Syria, headed by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Sunni-Islamist militia, moved to take the offensive. This action was given tacit approval by the Recep Tayyip Erdogan regime in Turkey. HTS forces rapidly took over Aleppo, as demoralized Syrian soldiers fled without a fight.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham originated as an affiliate of al-Qaeda at the start of the Syrian civil war, but says it broke with it in 2016 and paints itself as willing to respect other religious and ethnic groups. After seizing Aleppo, its forces visited Christians in the city pledging to protect them.

The Turkish government-led Syrian National Army has attacked towns in northern Syria controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. Ankara intervenes to advance its own interests, primarily to push back the SDF, which it accuses of promoting the fight for Kurdish national rights in Turkey. Some 30 million

## Thousands of oil workers step up protests in Iran



Organizing Council for Oil Contract Worker Protests

Hundreds of oil workers marched to the offices of the Gachasaran Oil and Gas Exploitation Company in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province Nov. 24. They demanded the right to unionize, protest and "organize freely without retaliation." They also called for the end of the contract system "that exploits labor."

Their slogans included "unity against poverty and corruption," "contract oil workers' rights are our rights," and "stop the war-mongering; our tables are empty." The action took place amid growing opposition to aggression against Israel by Tehran and its so-called axis of resistance.

Two days later, thousands of contract oil workers from 12 refineries and their families rallied in front of the South Pars Gas Complex in Bushehr Province, above, chanting, "Fair pay is our inalienable right." According to the Organizing Council for Oil Contract Workers Protests, "after 16 weeks of protests and the government's indifference to the workers' demands, the workers decided to intensify the protests and hold a unified and coordinated rally."

Both actions demanded the reinstatement of workers fired for earlier protests and "the correct implementation" of job classifications, which would mean pay hikes. They want contract workers to be made permanent company employees. They also demand a fixed work schedule of 14 days of work, followed by 14 days off. Many oil production sites are hours from the nearest town and workers spend weeks away from their families.

The actions take place as Iran's oil sales are well below capacity because of U.S.-led sanctions, and from a drop in demand for Iranian oil from China, and inadequate investment and maintenance. "This imbalance trend," Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a televised interview, "has arrived at a crisis."

— SETH GALINSKY

Kurds in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey make up the world's largest nation without their own country.

After Hayat Tahrir al-Sham took over Aleppo, the Syrian National Army attacked Tal Rifaat, a Kurdish town in Syria that had been under control of the Syrian Democratic Forces.

The Kurdish fighters have been negotiating with HTS over the evacuation of Kurds from neighborhoods the SDF controls in Aleppo to the Kurdish region in northeast Syria.

## Israel and Syria

The Israeli government has been watching the events in Syria closely. It warned Hezbollah and Tehran not to take advantage of the conflict to re-arm Hezbollah.

On Dec. 3, an Israeli airstrike in Damascus killed Salman Nemer Jomaa, Hezbollah's liaison with the Syrian army.

The stance of HTS toward Israel is contradictory. A few days after Hamas death squads attacked Israel on Oct. 7, Abu Mohammad al-Julani, the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, said it "brought joy to the hearts of the oppressed."

But referring to Tehran's accusation that the rebels are agents of Washington and Israel, an HTS supporter told Israeli TV station KAN, "They accuse us of cooperating with you because we were quite happy when you attacked Hezbollah, really happy, and we're glad that you won."

## Recommended reading for working-class fighters

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Reuters/Mahmoud Hasano

Aleppo residents getting bread after Islamist rebels captured city as demoralized Syrian soldiers fled. Israeli blows to Hamas, Tehran and Hezbollah, which pulled out hundreds of operatives deployed there to back up Assad's regime, are fueling political shifts in the Middle East.



# Fidel led Cuban combatants to defend Angolan sovereignty

One of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December is the Spanish edition of *Soldado de la Revolución Cubana* by Luis Alfonso Zayas. A teenager from a peasant background, Zayas joined Fidel Castro's Rebel Army, which overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959. Millions of Cuban workers and peasants were transformed as they made a socialist revolution. Between 1975 and 1988, more than 375,000 Cuban volunteer soldiers aided newly independent Angola in repelling invasions by the South African apartheid regime. Zayas served in three internationalist missions in Angola. The excerpt below is from the chapter "Defending Angola's Sovereignty." Copyright © 2011 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Fidel Castro, leader of Cuban Revolution, explains military situation in Angola to officers of Cuba's internationalist volunteer military mission in 1976. "Using a map, Fidel led the war as if it was here in Cuba," Zayas said.

Approaching Luanda from the north, with another powerful force, was the FNLA, led by Holden Roberto, backed by the Zairian and US governments. They had been stopped just twenty kilometers away, in Qui-fangondo. They were practically at the gates of the capital.

And then there were the forces of UNITA, led by Jonas Savimbi. UNITA had the political and military support of the South Africans and Washington, which gave them weaponry and supplies of all types.

In response to this dire situation, Agostinho Neto, the president of Angola and leader of the MPLA, asked for Cuba's help. Cuba had supported the MPLA since 1965, when the guerrilla struggle against the Portuguese was in its early stages. If Neto had not requested Cuba's help, or if the Cuban forces hadn't arrived in time, the South African military would have captured Luanda. UNITA and Savimbi, or the FNLA and Holden Roberto, would have been installed as the government, thwarting the independence struggle of the Angolan people.

The people of Luanda supported the MPLA, which had led the struggle against Portuguese colonialism. ...

With the support of the Cuban volunteers, the Angolan army — FAPLA, the Popular Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola — turned them back. ...

The Soviets had some advisers in Angola, although not many. They had a different strategic military conception from ours. The Soviets favored big armies. What was needed in Angola,

however, wasn't big armies or grand military strategies. The help they needed was much more practical.

The Soviets did give a lot of support in weaponry and equipment. It was for Angola, but it was handled by the Cubans. Why? Because few Angolans knew how to use most of it. They had to be trained. ...

Many Angolan technicians and armed forces personnel were trained here in Cuba. The Soviets also provided training to the Angolans — to pilots, combat engineers, communica-

## "Fidel Castro's direct participation was decisive in the victory"

tions personnel, and so on — teaching them to use the equipment. They trained a lot of Angolan military personnel in Russia. But the Angolans generally accepted the Cuban advisers more readily than the Soviet ones. They understood our advice better, since it was more practical, more in tune with the needs and character of the struggle in Africa. ...

Using a map of Angola, Fidel led the war as if it were here in Cuba. He knew what was happening in every little corner of the country. He received information every day from those of us who were over there and from his liaisons, who would come and go.

Sometimes Fidel knew things you wouldn't even imagine, and he'd give instructions for what had to be done.

"Do this, do that, because the South Africans are going to do such-and-such." And he'd be right. Fidel directed the battle of Cuito Cuanavale against the South Africans, as if he were in the forward command post in Angola.

The big decisions to send forces to Angola were made by Fidel. The US government never imagined Cuba could send fifty thousand armed men to fight in Africa. How could Cuba do so, since we had no transatlantic merchant ships set up for troop transport, nor did Angola? But we Cubans, of course, are prepared for the greatest sacrifices, and that's how our forces were able to be sent to

Angola. All of Washington's great strategists couldn't even conceive of that.

How was it possible to send thousands of men aboard aged turbo-prop passenger planes and merchant ships? Onboard the freighters, they had to travel in the cargo hold. The men couldn't go on deck or they'd be spotted. But then how do they relieve themselves? How do they bathe and wash up? How do they eat, since the ship wasn't set up to provide meals for thousands of men? To spend three weeks like that, who can bear it? You need to have the kind of consciousness the Cubans who went had.

Their spirits were high, because they had confidence in Fidel. Fidel tried to meet with every group of soldiers that left. He'd go and talk to them. He'd explain what the situation was.

And if he couldn't go himself, he'd send someone else.

Only with a leadership like Fidel's could something like that be achieved.

Our forces arrived in Angola in November 1975, right when they were needed. It was the same in 1987, with those needed during the siege of Cuito Cuanavale. Because in both cases, there was no force in Angola capable of taking on the advancing South African troops. Fidel made the decision to send what was needed to win, and they arrived in time to achieve that.

Fidel led everything that had to be done to defeat the South African forces. He'd spend entire nights analyzing and figuring out what had to be done and how. His direct participation was decisive.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LUIS ALFONSO ZAYAS

I first arrived in Angola in early December 1975. At that point, South African forces, backed by Washington, were just three hundred kilometers from the capital city of Luanda, coming from the south. They were advancing along a line extending from Porto Amboim to Quibala. They had a powerful force, with armored vehicles, artillery, planes, and infantry.

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# The potential power of the working class

Hamas' murderous Oct. 7, 2023, pogrom in Israel and Moscow's invasion of Ukraine were watershed events in world politics, with large stakes for the working class. Millions were appalled by these assaults and recognize the need to defend Israel as a refuge for Jews, to fight Jew-hatred wherever it arises, and to defend Ukraine's sovereignty against Moscow's assault.

Conflicts like these are part of the explosive contradictions built into the declining capitalist world order.

Just as the U.S. rulers defend their profits with assaults on workers' jobs, wages and conditions here at home, so they defend their interests in conflicts, including wars, with their rivals abroad. These battles are fought over which capitalist power holds sway over the exploitation of the world's working people. This takes place as the crisis of imperialism deepens, fueling more frequent and sharper clashes.

Far from offering a future of peace and prosperity, more workers see that under capitalism we bear the brunt of the rulers' crises and the bloody consequences of their wars. In today's strikes and political

struggles, we see the increasing confidence and class consciousness of working people.

Despite brutal cop attacks, over 200,000 people joined massive protests this week against the hated pro-Moscow government in Georgia. In South Korea, thousands took to the streets and unions went on strike to protest President Yoon Suk Yeol's attempt to impose martial law. In Syria, working people face the need to defend themselves in renewed conflicts against the Bashar al-Assad regime as Moscow, Tehran, Ankara and Washington all look to advance their interests there.

The working class makes up a far higher percentage of the world's population than ever before, with the productive capacity to meet the needs of the billions on the planet. What is lacking is political power.

Out of today's battles, opportunities will grow to build proletarian parties capable of leading tens of millions of workers to overturn capitalist rule. By taking political power into our own hands, our class can open the door to abolishing capitalist exploitation — the source of the misery, Jew-hatred and wars we face. Join in this historic effort!

## Court convicts Canada 'Freedom Convoy' leader

BY JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL — Pat King, who was one of the spokespeople for the 2022 "Freedom Convoy," was convicted Nov. 22 by Superior Court Justice Charles Hackland of five frame-up criminal charges, including mischief and disobeying a court order. The convoy was a movement of hundreds of Canadian truckers and thousands of their supporters demanding an end to job-threatening government-imposed COVID-19 mandates.

This conviction, based primarily on videotapes King made describing his participation in the convoy and broadcast on social media, amounts to an attack on the right to freedom of speech and expression. It strengthens Ottawa's drive to reduce the political space working people need to organize and protest government policies carried out in the interests of Canada's ruling capitalist families.

His sentencing is set for Jan. 16. King could face up to 10 years in prison. Government prosecutors are calling for "significant" prison time. King says he is considering an appeal.

On more serious charges of intimidation and obstructing the police, the court found King not guilty.

King's arrest came the day after that of two other prominent convoy spokespersons, Tamara Lich and Chris Barber. They are awaiting a verdict in their joint trial, which ended in September after lasting over a year. The judge gave herself six months to render a verdict.

King, Lich and Barber were arrested after Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked, for the first time ever, the draconian new Emergencies Act. He used the trumped-up pretext that the three-week camp-in of convoy members with their rigs in downtown Ottawa, backed by solidarity blockades at several Canada-U.S. border crossings, had created a "national public order emergency."

A federal court judge ruled in January that Trudeau's use of the Emergencies Act was unjustified and illegal, saying the action violated rights listed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Ottawa used the Emergencies Act to mobilize 3,000 heavily armed police to crush the protest, arrested some 200 participants, banned demonstrations and gatherings, and froze the bank accounts of hundreds of protesters, including the ones of King, Lich and Barber.

The "evidence" presented by the prosecution in their trials centers on what they *said* — not on anything they *did*.

On his release from custody last July, King was hit with extremely strict bail conditions, a further violation of his right to free speech. He is forbidden from using social media in any form, except to appeal for donations, in which he cannot mention the convoy or any "other commentary." No one else is allowed to post on his behalf. He is prohibited from participating in demonstrations or public protests, or from communicating with Lich, Barber or any other Freedom Convoy leaders.

## Celebrate political contributions of Karen Ray

BY JOEL BRITTON

OAKLAND, Calif. — Karen Ray, a member of the Socialist Workers Party for more than two decades, died at her home in Westminster, Colorado, Nov. 11 following a long fight against cancer. She was 63.

Ray joined the Young Socialist Alliance in the late 1970s as a student at New York University and joined the SWP soon after. She got a job on an auto assembly line as part of the party's work to strengthen and transform the industrial unions into class-struggle organizations.

Later, she became an aircraft worker at Boeing in the Seattle area and was a leader of the party's work in that region. In 1989, Boeing workers went on strike for 48 days. Ray, who worked at Boeing's Everett plant, was a member of District 751 of the Machinists union and walked the picket lines and

helped organize to win solidarity.

Ray took responsibilities as an organizer of SWP branches, was a party candidate for public office, worked in the movement's print shop and served on the party's National Committee as an alternate member.

She resigned from the party some 20 years ago. In recent years, she joined the party's supporters auxiliary to participate in the production of Pathfinder books written by leaders of the party and other revolutionaries. These efforts help keep the party's communist continuity in print.

Fellow SWP supporter Karl Butts, who collaborated with Ray in preparing Pathfinder books for publication, says she "conducted herself with integrity, taking a serious attitude toward any assignment she took on."

When this writer talked to Ray in October, she said she had been fired for missing work as her cancer advanced, and the boss had just sent her a \$500 severance check. She said she could think of nothing better to do with it than contribute it to the SWP's party-building fund. We received it a few days later.

## 'Hi. I'm an algorithm.'

Continued from front page

To maximize their profits, big corporate landlords are now determining their rent charges through computer-generated algorithms. They increasingly rely on RealPage, a Texas-based firm whose software dominates 80% of the U.S. market for rent gougers. It sets prices for about 3 million rental units nationwide.

The algorithm works by amassing rent and apartment data from across the country — using computing power to swipe its information from sources both private and public — to come up with recommended rents for vacancies and yearly increases for workers with expiring leases. It *never* concludes that rents should be reduced, only increased. Landlords pay for their "labor" to get exactly these kinds of results.

In some metropolitan areas, the use of rent-fixing software algorithms has resulted in double-digit rent raises. When ProPublica reporters looked into RealPage in 2022, Andrew Bowen, then a company executive, boasted, "As a property manager, very few of us would be willing to actually raise rents double digits within a single month by doing it manually."

Landlords who contract with RealPage are so pleased with its self-serving recommendations, they follow them about 90% of the time, the American Economic Liberties Project reports.

Rent-setting algorithms have also led to higher rates of evictions, and more working people having to move out of their apartments as rents are set higher and higher.

As news about this operation has become more well-known, the federal government, joined by eight state attorneys general — from North Carolina, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Minnesota, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington state — filed a lawsuit in August against RealPage. The complaint claims that RealPage accesses data on over 16 million of the 23 million apartment units in the U.S. The case, however, is only against RealPage, not the landlords who follow this company's "advice" and live off your rent.

"Ill-informed legislation seeking to ban the responsible use of nonpublic price data will not lower rent prices," RealPage spokeswoman Jennifer Bowcock insisted to the *Wall Street Journal*.

### Jacking up rents through 'junk fees'

Another way landlords have been jacking up rents is through use of hidden "junk fees," which tenants aren't told about until they move in. John Hall, a high school teacher, and Monica Bahena, who works in a medical office, rented a one-bedroom apartment in College Park, Maryland. They found the place on Zillow, advertised at \$1,729 a month, a place they liked but could barely afford. They decided to give it a go.

When they began moving in, they were told that there were a few additional mandatory monthly "fees," including \$150 for a "technology package" and "front door trash pickup," and a one-time \$450 "community fee."

Eight months later, the couple joined a class-action lawsuit against the building's owner, Houston-based Camden Development, one of the country's largest apartment developers and landlords. "You get in, you apply, and then all of a sudden there are all of these fees," Hall told the *Washington Post*.

After months of struggling to cover the rent, Hall and Bahena finally broke the lease, moved out of the building and also out of the state.



### Support the Milk-Bone Strike!

Members of BCTGM Local 36G are on strike against J.M. Smucker in Buffalo, New York. The workers are fighting against an increased cost to their health care and low wages. Here's three ways you can help:

- Join the picket lines. Up 24/7 at 243 Urban Street.
- Donate to Strike Fund. BCTGM International Union, 10401 Connecticut Ave, 4th Fl., Kensington, MD 20895
- Help spread the word. Tell your friends, neighbors, co-workers about the strike and ask them to pitch in.

Contribute to the  
'Militant' online at  
[www.themilitant.com](http://www.themilitant.com)