

THE MILITANT

EDITORIAL

Holiday greetings to fellow workers behind bars

— PAGE 11

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 88/NO. 49 DECEMBER 30, 2024

The defense of constitutional freedoms key in class struggle

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Defending freedom of speech, assembly, religion, the right to bear arms and other constitutional rights from attack by the rulers and the FBI remains at the center of working-class politics today. These freedoms provide working people with protection from government interference in union and political activity.

They were won in class battles over two and a half centuries, including in two popular revolutions. The first succeeded in gaining independence from British colonial rule and the second in overturning slavery.

These freedoms were put to use in the class struggles that forged industrial unions in the 1930s; by the movement that uprooted Jim Crow segregation in the 1950s and '60s; in fights against Washington's wars from Korea to Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan and others; and in efforts since 1919 to build a communist party in the U.S.

Spying, harassment and frame-up
Continued on page 11

Overthrow of Assad's tyranny, Israel's response, deepening showdown in the Middle East



AP Photos/Ghaith Alsayed

Damascus, Syria, Dec. 13. Millions celebrated across country over fall of Assad dictatorship. Mass graves holding tens of thousands of victims of regime's torture are being uncovered.

BY SETH GALINSKY

The reactionary capitalist regime in Tehran and its ally Hamas believed the pogrom they launched against Jews in Israel Oct. 7, 2023, was a major victory and would pave the way

for more attacks, the ultimate destruction of Israel and the expulsion or annihilation of the Jews in the Middle East — another Holocaust.

The Hamas thugs killed 1,200 people, took 250 hostages and raped and mutilated dozens of women, the largest anti-Jewish pogrom since World War II.

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Canada Post strikers fight gov't order to return to work

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

MONTREAL — After Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon Dec. 13 called on the Canadian Industrial Relations Board to order back to work the 55,000 Canadian Union of Postal Workers members on strike, the union denounced “this assault on our constitutionally protected right to collectively bargain and to strike.” It “continues a deeply troubling pattern in which the government uses its arbitrary powers to let employers off the hook, drag their feet, and refuse to bargain in good faith with workers and their unions.”

The workers have been on strike since Nov. 15.

Over the last few months, Ottawa has ordered striking port workers in Quebec and British Columbia, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and Teamsters union rail workers at Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Kansas City, back to work under compulsory arbitration.

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Celebrate 10-year anniversary of release of Cuban 5 from US prisons!



Estudios Revolución

Fidel Castro, leader of Cuba's socialist revolution, right, greets the Cuban Five at his home Feb. 28, 2015. Clockwise from front left, Antonio Guerrero, René González, Fernando González, Alejandro Castro Espín (Fidel's nephew), Ramón Labañino and Gerardo Hernández.

BY RÓGER CALERO

On Dec. 17 working people in Cuba marked the 10th anniversary of the victory in the battle to win the release of

The Cuban Revolution is an example for workers worldwide

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the Cuban Five. That's how five Cuban revolutionaries arrested and railroaded to jail in the United States in 1998 had

become known worldwide.

Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino and Antonio Guerrero, the three remaining behind bars in the U.S., returned to their homeland that day in 2014, reuniting with their two brothers-in-struggle, René González and Fernando González, who had returned to Cuba after serving their prison terms.

It was a great moment for all those around the world who had fought for the previous 16 years to win their freedom. Across the island Cubans poured into

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Milk-Bone strikers in Buffalo win broad support from fellow unionists

BY CANDACE WAGNER

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The 165 members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 36G continue to win broad support in

their strike against Milk-Bone in Buffalo, New York. The workers walked out Oct. 28 after the company, owned by giant conglomerate J.M. Smucker, demanded they accept health insur-

Jury acquits Daniel Penny unanimously, case reflects crisis of capitalism today

BY PETER THIERJUNG

NEW YORK — A 12-person jury here unanimously found Daniel Penny not guilty Dec. 9 in the death of Jordan Neely. New York City District Attorney Alvin Bragg charged Penny 19 months ago with killing Neely on a subway train.

Neely, 30, was a homeless man and Black. Penny, 24 at the time, is a college student, former U.S. Marine, and Caucasian.

Many eyewitnesses, police and emergency personnel, medical examiners, character witnesses and others, 40 in all, testified. Working people who were on the train May 1, 2023, told how Neely

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AS WE GO TO PRESS...
Milk-Bone workers voted Dec. 18 to ratify a new contract, end their strike. BCTGM President Anthony Shelton: “The SOLIDARITY of the Labor Movement was vital to this victory!”

ance plans that are vastly inferior to the one they currently have.

BCTGM Local 81 in Traverse City, Michigan, organized a raffle for the

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Malcolm X: ‘Learn to see, listen and think for yourself’ 7

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Frontier flight attendants picket in fight for new contract

Striking food workers face Bakkavor union busting

Workers and farmers in Indonesia protest gov't attacks

BY LINDA HARRIS
AND STEVE PENNER

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Thousands of workers joined demonstrations here in Indonesia's capital city Oct. 24 and across the country in the following days. The actions protested anti-labor measures in the Omnibus Law imposed in 2020 by former President Joko Widodo as part of the capitalist rulers' drive to expand economic development. Indonesia is a country of some 284 million people, with a workforce over 146 million.

Widodo claimed the law would create jobs by cutting red tape, easing restrictions on foreign investment and improving labor "competitiveness" — code words for deepening the exploitation of working people.

Hundreds of thousands of workers and students protested the introduction of the law in 2020, including a three-day national strike called by the country's main trade union federations.

The law superseded more than 70 laws on the books, including ones that provided some protection to wage workers. It made it easier for bosses to fire workers and reduced the benefits bosses had to provide to workers, including severance pay.

Before May Day demonstrations this year, Said Iqbal, chairman of the Indonesian Trade Union Confederation (KSPI), said that since the introduction of the Omnibus Law many companies have laid off permanent employees and replaced them with contract workers at lower wages. The KSPI, one of the main union federations, has over 2 million members.

In a series of actions in October, the unions called on the government of President Prabowo Subianto to grant



Militant/Baskaran Appu

Militant correspondent Steve Penner, left, meets with representatives of Confederation of Indonesia People's Movement in Jakarta Nov. 12. General Secretary Anwar Sastro Ma'ruf is second from right.

an 8% to 10% increase in the minimum wage to compensate for rising prices, as well as to restore legal protections for workers, abolish outsourcing and revoke the Omnibus Law. Subianto ran for office as a populist. He had previously served as a general under the brutal Suharto dictatorship, which ruled Indonesia from the mid-1960s until 1998, when it was brought down by massive countrywide protests.

Workers rallied again Oct. 31 in front of the Constitutional Court here. The action coincided with the court's review of the Omnibus Law. The court granted 21 out of 71 petition points filed by unions against the law and ordered the government to replace it with a new one within two years.

The ruling limits the terms on contract work and provides for two rest days a week. It also stipulates the minimum wage system requirements must fulfill the reasonable needs of workers and

their families, without specifying what that should be.

Subianto responded by announcing the government would increase the minimum wage by 6.5%, and the KSPI cancelled strikes it had been planning.

Union movement needs unity

These *Militant* correspondents met with representatives of the Confederation of Indonesia People's Movement (KPRI) in Jakarta. They work with a number of small unions and with workers in the informal sector, who make up about 70% of the Indonesian workforce. They are not unionized.

Workers in the informal sector either don't have written contracts with their employers or are self-employed. They range from street vendors and agricultural workers to manual laborers in manufacturing and construction. They're paid low wages, toil long hours and have limited access to social protections or health care.

"Less than 3% of the workforce are union members, about 4 million workers," KPRI General Secretary Anwar Sastro Ma'ruf said. "Unemployment stands at 7 million but this only includes those who are considered to be 'looking for work.'"

There are many different unions and union federations, most connected with different political parties. "In Indonesia, the unions are fragmented. The challenge is how to bring unification," Rizki Estrada said. "The bosses use union-

busting tactics against the independent trade unions."

"A lot of industry, especially in manufacturing and food, is leaving Jakarta," Ma'ruf said, going to parts of the country where labor costs are lower. "This poses the need to spread organizing to the regions."

Farmers' struggles

We also visited the offices of Bina Desa, a group that campaigns on behalf of small farmers and fishermen. They also promote the use of "natural" farming methods.

John Sinulingga, an editor at Bina Desa, explained how big estates take land from

small farmers. The land gets divided up among family members and the plots get smaller. These measures deepen poverty in the countryside. Many youth are leaving for the cities, a large proportion becoming informal workers.

Farmers also face the environmental and social impact of multibillion-dollar Chinese projects and other foreign investments. The large-scale mining operations funded by China, such as nickel extraction, have caused deforestation, water pollution and the displacement of local communities.

Hundreds of farmers took part in a "National Farmers Day" protest in Jakarta Sept. 24, demanding redistribution of land. Small farmers have fought for agrarian law reform going back to the struggle for independence from the Dutch, which wasn't won until after World War II.

Indonesian Farmers Union Chair Henry Saragih told the media there that rice fields have decreased drastically in the last decade, increasing the number of subsistence farmers. "There has been an increase of 2 million farmers who used to have enough land for farming but now do not," he said. Small farmers can barely harvest enough to survive.

Saragih also criticized large corporations' growing control of agricultural land that the government promotes as "National Strategic Projects." As these projects expand, Saragih said, "agrarian conflicts are increasing."

THE MILITANT

After Hurricane Helene: 'No more evictions!'

Two months after a hurricane devastated western North Carolina, profit-hungry landlords have begun a wave of evictions and demands for rent on damaged housing. The *Militant* backs local protesters calling for an end to the evictions and rent relief.



Blue Ridge Public Radio/Laura Hackett Buncombe County, N.C. residents demand end of evictions outside courthouse Oct. 13.

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The Militant

Vol. 88/No. 49

Closing news date: December 18, 2024

Editor: John Studer

Managing Editor: Terry Evans

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

Published weekly except for one week in January, one week in June, one week in July, and one week in September.

Business Manager: Bob Bruce

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

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Website: www.themilitant.com

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

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

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

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The Cuban Revolution is an example for workers worldwide

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Sixty-six years ago under the leadership of Fidel Castro, working people in Cuba overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, took political power and went on to uproot capitalist exploitation. There is no better example of what workers are capable of accomplishing than this first socialist revolution in the Americas.

That conquest on Jan. 1, 1959, transformed the lives, conditions, and political consciousness of workers and farmers in Cuba. And like the Bolshevik Revolution before it, the Cuban Revolution opened a renewal of communist leadership in the Americas, the United States and beyond.

Under Batista's rule, hundreds of thousands were out of work, half of the island's population had no electricity and more than half lived in huts, in slums, with no sanitary facilities. The Cuban people became convinced that the only road forward was to fight.

One of the first steps of the revolutionary government was to cut rents by 50%, then the price of electricity and phone service. Millions turned out to back the government's land

reform, which returned land to those who tilled it, and its nationalization of basic industry. Schools and medical centers were established. Mass organizations, from a new working-class army to nationwide formations of women, youth and neighborhood committees were put together to deepen the revolution.

That's what's possible when working people, with the leadership we deserve, succeed in putting state power into their own hands.

The Cuban Revolution has shown that internationalism is key to defending the revolution. "Those not willing to fight for the freedom of others will never be able to fight for their own," Fidel Castro said in 1976. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans then began to volunteer to join the fight to repel the invasion of Angola by the apartheid regime of South Africa and to win Namibian independence, helping pave the way for the fall of the apartheid regime itself.

The U.S. government, under every administration since 1959 has used all means possible, including a brutal embargo, to bring hunger and misery to the Cuban people, and above all to



Granma

Literacy brigadistas set out for Cuba's rural areas in 1961. Over 100,000 volunteers joined effort to teach workers and farmers to read so they could fully participate in the revolution.

overturn their socialist revolution.

From the beginning, the Socialist Workers Party has joined in building the broadest possible opposition to the U.S. rulers' economic war against the Cuban people. It's made the speeches of Castro and other revolutionary leaders widely available. The SWP seeks to build a party in the U.S. to lead the fight for workers power here, extending what was accomplished by the Cuban toilers.

The Cuban people continue to fight against Washington's aggression. On Dec. 20, they will march along Havana's Malecon to express, in front of the U.S. Embassy, their demand for an end to U.S. hostility.

"We will march with the profound conviction, instilled by Fidel, that there is no force in the world capable of crushing the force of truth and ideas," the Cuban daily *Granma* wrote Dec. 17.

Celebrate 10-year anniversary of release of Cuban 5 from US prisons!

Continued from front page

the streets from factories, schools and offices to express their joy. Supporters around the world joined in celebration.

Our return was "like a chess game that only a revolution like ours can play, one that has the pride of having faced the biggest empire in the world and has not kneeled down before it," said Hernández at a Dec. 17 gathering this year in Havana attended by the Five, Cuban leader Raúl Castro, and President Miguel Díaz-Canel to mark the victory.

The Five were arrested in predawn FBI raids in Florida, under the direction of the Bill Clinton administration, on frame-up charges of espionage. But they had no evidence to convict them on this, so Clinton's Justice Department resort-

ed to trumped-up conspiracy charges, and, in the case of Hernández, conspiracy to commit murder. In fact, the Five had come to the U.S. to gather information on paramilitary forces in southern Florida with a long history of violent attacks on Cuba and against supporters of the Cuban Revolution in Puerto Rico and the U.S.

Five reinforced U.S. workers' fights

The Five's revolutionary record and their conduct in the trial and in prison won them respect and admiration among workers inside and outside prison walls. They rejected both threats and enticements made by government agents and prosecutors trying to convince them to cop a plea to crimes they never committed.

Their fight helped shine a spotlight on the class character of capitalist "justice" experienced firsthand by millions of working people in the U.S. — from the brutality of cops and prison guards to denial of trial by a jury of your peers and any semblance of presumption of innocence. Labañino appropriately described it as "an enormous machine for grinding people up."

Over their years in prison, the Five learned about the class struggle in the United States. "We lived in a microcosm of the outside world," said Hernández in an interview published in the book *It's the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US 'Justice' System*, one of a number of publications put out by Pathfinder Press as part for the fight for their freedom.

Their jail mates learned about Cuba's socialist revolution and its internationalist example. Three of the Cuban Five were among the 425,000 Cuban volunteers who went to Angola to defend that country against an invasion by South Africa. The blows dealt to the hated apartheid regime helped free Nelson Mandela and end its rule.

From the beginning of the fight for the Five's release, the *Militant* helped week

in and week out to get out the truth about the defense campaign and about Cuba's socialist revolution. Members of the Socialist Workers Party helped organize events and art exhibitions in community centers, libraries, union halls and elsewhere, explaining who they were and what they stood for.

"Your unwavering strength, dignity, honesty, creativity — and humor — have shown the world what it means to be a revolutionary. What it means to be a communist," Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes wrote to the Cuban Five and to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba upon their release.

'Ours was a fight in defense of Cuba'

"It was always clear to us that the fight for justice in our case was a fight in defense of Cuba," wrote René González in September 2012. It was simply "an extension of the confrontation between those who claim the prerogative to attack Cuba and those of us who believe in Cuba's right to defend itself."

In 2014, recognizing the failure of 11 previous U.S. administrations to make the Cuban people submit to Washington's dictates through economic strangulation, the Barack Obama administration said it would turn to "different methods" to topple Cuba's socialist revolution. As part of this shift, Obama agreed to the release of the Five, in exchange for Cuba's release of U.S. agents.

Obama decided he could press Washington's moves against Cuba best by reestablishing diplomatic relations between the two countries and to ease some of its economic pressure.

"This in no way means that the heart of the matter has been solved," Cuban President Raúl Castro said Dec. 17, 2014, as the three Cuban revolutionaries returned to Cuba. "The economic, commercial, and financial blockade, which causes enormous human and economic

damages to our country, must cease."

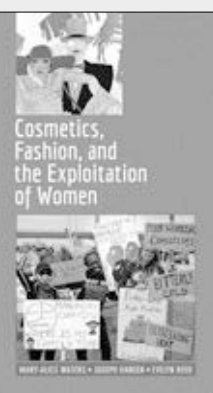
When Obama's "different methods" failed to make a dent in the support of the Cuban people for their socialist revolution, Washington moved to resume and deepen its economic war on them. Over the next decade, Donald Trump's White House imposed some of the most draconian economic and political measures yet taken against the Cuban people — and Joseph Biden's administration has maintained them.

Upon their return, the Cuban Five spoke to audiences across the island sharing their experiences. "Everything that happened is not about us as individuals," Guerrero said at a 2015 presentation to young university students in Havana on *Absolved by Solidarity*, another book published by Pathfinder. "It's the Cuban people, who we represent. The standing we gained represents the resistance of our people."

"In carrying out their work, none of the Five Heroes sought applause, rewards or fame," Cuban leader Fidel Castro told the press March 1, 2015, after meeting with them. "They received their distinctions because they didn't seek them." A week earlier the Five had been awarded the distinction of being "Heroes of the Republic of Cuba."

Today, all five have taken on leadership roles in working to advance Cuba's socialist revolution.

Hot off the press! 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

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

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.

Frontier flight attendants picket in fight for new contract

ATLANTA — “We’re out here today to raise awareness that the company’s new policy on scheduling is costing flight attendants to lose 30% to 40% of their pay compared to what they used to make,” J.D. Minter, local council vice president for the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, told the *Militant* Dec. 11 as we participated in a spirited mid-day protest outside Frontier Airline’s facilities at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. “We’re not on strike now, but 99.6% of union members have voted in favor of a strike,” he said.

The union is demanding Frontier Airlines resume negotiations on a new contract, he said. They are still working under their old contract, which became amendable in May. Under the anti-union Railway Labor Act, flight attendants can face years of federally controlled negotiations and other government interference in their right to strike.

“Frontier flight attendants used to fly several times during a shift, staying overnight at different locations for two to four days before returning home,” said AFA member Andre Kirkland. “It meant we got more hours. Now you go to one place, then turn right around and come back. So we have fewer hours and we have to drive to the airport for each flight, which costs us more.”

“Some flight attendants are homeless,” Minter said. “Some are living in their cars, many are working other jobs to make ends meet. But those with less seniority are on call. So it’s harder to have a second job, because they don’t know their schedule.”

Other airport workers greeted and waved to the pickets. Similar protests took place the same day at Frontier locations in Chicago, Denver, Las Vegas and Orlando, Florida.

Show your support! The Association

of Flight Attendants-CWA organized actions in contract fights at PSA Airlines and Air Wisconsin Dec. 17 and are planning actions at United Airlines Dec. 19. For more information, visit afacwa.org.

— Marklyn Wilson
and Susan LaMont

Striking food workers face Bakkavor union busting

SPALDING, England — Hundreds of Unite members at the Bakkavor food factory here have voted overwhelmingly to continue their strike until the company improves its pay offer, the union announced Dec. 12. As the strike enters its 12th week, bosses are stepping up efforts to try to break the union.

Strikers told the *Militant* the company, which has 21 factories in the U.K., is stepping up efforts to bus in strikebreakers, offering them 18 pounds per hour (\$22.80), while striking workers have been earning the national minimum wage of 11.44 pounds or just above.

Donna-Maria Lee, chief people officer at Bakkavor, told the press that the majority of employees continue working. She claims that over 700 of them have accepted the company’s pay offer, including some strikers. This figure includes salaried staff, who are not part of the collective agreement, and temporary agency workers. Striking workers say that although a good number are working, the vast majority have not signed individual agreements, hoping the union wins a better deal.

The company is seeking to eliminate paid breaks and shift premiums that the union has held onto at Spalding, even as they’ve been eroded at the company’s other plants.

Along with a daily presence on the picket line, workers have organized mass meetings, expanded pickets and a lively march through the town center. They’ve received support and dona-



Militant/David Rosenfeld

Association of Flight Attendants members picket Frontier Airlines at O’Hare airport Dec. 11. “This is the first day of action we’ve had in Chicago,” said AFA Local 86 President Brianna Whelan. Actions took place at Frontier locations in Atlanta, Denver, Las Vegas and Orlando.

tions from other Unite branches, as well as a solidarity message from the Rail, Maritime and Transport union branch at King’s Cross station in London. It was delivered when two of its members visited the picket line.

Strikers have been boosted by news that Unite members at five Princes food factories have voted to walk out. Workers at the company’s Cardiff factory are striking for two days in the lead-up to Christmas, with further action to be announced at other sites, including Long Sutton and Wisbech near Spalding.

— Jonathan Silberman

Electrical workers in Louisville reject bosses’ contract offer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Members of the International Union of Electrical Workers-Communication Workers of America Local 83761 at GE Appliances here rejected the bosses’ new contract offer by 73% Dec. 11. The current contract expires at the end of the year.

The company said they were deeply disappointed with the results of the vote, according to WDRB News.

GE, which manufactures dishwashers, refrigerators and other large appliances, employs over 5,000 workers here. The company was sold to Haier, a Chinese company, in 2016. Haier reported over \$2 billion in profit in the first three quarters of 2024.

“We’re not asking to be rich. We’re just asking to live,” Jason Gaines, a 13-year employee, told the *Louisville Courier-Journal* at a union rally Sept. 14. “I don’t want to worry about working 30 hours of overtime a week just to pay my bills.”

The starting wage is \$17.52 an hour for first-shift “Flex” workers, the lowest of the five tiers for production workers. “The company says if you want to make more money you can work more overtime,” Mike Portwood told the *Militant*. “I’ve worked at GE for 10 years and I make \$23 an hour. I worked 18 days in a row one time. That takes away time from my family.”

Portwood said many workers can’t afford cars. “When the shift change comes you see Ubers picking people up.”

Susan Bailey, with 29 years in the plant, told the *Courier-Journal* that she had to take a second job at Walmart to get by, even though she makes “top-tier” wages.

Health care is also an issue. At the rally Local President Dino Driskell said 30% of the union’s members have to “turn down their health care because it’s too expensive.”

GE has hired a lot of workers from Cuba, Nepal, Africa, Afghanistan and other countries over the last several years. Many of these workers “are real fighters,” said Aaron Little, a former GE worker fighting to get his job back after he was fired for union activity. “Some of them quit because they refuse to accept the conditions in the plant. The company uses the fact we speak different languages to try and divide us.” Little worked at GE for 11 years and was an assistant chief steward.

There’s a lot of turnover because of the low wages and poor working conditions. Driskell told the *Courier-Journal* that more than 2,000 workers have less than two years in the plant.

In a Dec. 12 letter to the membership after the vote rejecting the contract offer, the local union leadership said it would “try and get the company back to the negotiating table as soon as possible,” but to “be prepared to strike” if the company refuses.

“We don’t want a strike,” said Portwood, “But we will if we feel it’s necessary.”

— Amy Husk

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

THE MILITANT

December 27, 1999

Forces defending the Chechen capital of Grozny dealt a blow to Russian troops who entered the city Dec. 15, attacking a tank column and leaving an estimated 100 Russian soldiers dead. The pitched battle was the first major ground clash in the city since Moscow began its offensive in September.

Moscow’s campaign, which aims at subduing independence forces and bringing the rebellious republic forcibly under its rule, has occupied 60 towns and villages. Much of Grozny lies in complete ruins after Russian bombardment, more than 200,000 people have fled. Tens of thousands remain in a city that was home to a quarter of a million.

The capitalist rulers of the U.S. have substantial interests at stake, both short and long-term.

Washington has demonstrated its determination to grasp the lion’s share of the oil wealth lying beneath the Caspian Sea.

THE MILITANT

December 27, 1974

CHICAGO — More than 1,500 steelworkers packed USWA Local 65 hall Dec. 8 for the swearing-in ceremony of the union’s new director in District 31, Ed Sadlowski.

It was the first time that a director of this largest district has taken the oath of office here, not at the headquarters in Pittsburgh. The oath was administered by the leaders of all seven sub-districts, not by International President I.W. Abel.

Abel had handpicked Sam Evett as the man to run the district, and had promoted and financed Evett’s campaign against Sadlowski in the past two union elections. Abel has now appointed Evett to be his personal representative in the Midwest.

Sadlowski has announced that he will rely upon the membership to carry through a self-defense program against contract violations, layoffs, speedup, and unsafe working conditions imposed by the steel companies.

THE MILITANT

December 26, 1949

In recent years [President Harry] Truman and his labor and liberal cohorts have been the chief obstacle to the development of socialist consciousness and independent political action by the mass of the American people.

The depression and war, the social ferment produced by each, the fear of a new depression and a new war, have all had their impact on the thinking of the workers. They are willing to listen to candidates today, even candidates accused of being socialist.

And that’s all to the good. Any public discussion of socialism offers the genuine socialists an opportunity to present the truth. The 1950 elections will provide us with such an opportunity and it’s our duty to seize hold of it with both hands and use it to show the American workers the socialist path to the security, liberty and peace that are denied them by the capitalist system.

‘Militant’ publishing schedule

This is a two-week issue.
The next issue will be mailed out January 3.

Works by SWP leaders find keen interest at Guadalajara book fair

BY LAURA GARZA

GUADALAJARA, Mexico — Pointing to books on Cuba's socialist revolution, the fight for women's emancipation and titles by Karl Marx, Libertad Segura Meza said she was surprised to see so many books on working-class politics. The high school teacher was one of hundreds of visitors to the Pathfinder booth at the Guadalajara International Book Fair, Latin America's largest book festival, held here Nov. 30-Dec. 8.

"I am interested to know about other movements and their struggles," she said. "We are many and we don't have to be at a distance from each other."

Segura Meza bought the Spanish language editions of *Cosmetics, Fashion, and the Exploitation of Women* by Mary-Alice Waters, Joseph Hansen and Evelyn Reed and *The First and Second Declarations of Havana*. The latter is for her father, a supporter of the Cuban Revolution.

These were among the 160 titles that fairgoers bought at the Pathfinder booth, with books on politics and the class struggle in the U.S. especially drawing people's attention. Pathfinder publishes books by Socialist Workers Party and other revolutionary working-class leaders.

The book fair is the second largest in the world, with over 900,000 attending. It hosted large displays from Spain, the country of honor this year, and from many other countries.

"I haven't studied much about what happened on Oct. 7 and afterward in Israel and the Mideast. I've just heard what the media has showed," Diego Gara Godoy told Jacob Perasso, a volunteer at the Pathfinder stand.

"Oct. 7 was a pogrom. Hamas and Tehran aim to destroy the state of Israel and murder Jews," Perasso said. "Their program has its roots in the course of Amin al-Husseini, who was the grand mufti of Jerusalem and collaborated with Hitler in hopes of implementing the Nazis' 'Final Solution' in the Middle East during World War II."

Perasso pointed to *The Fight Against Jew-Hatred and Pogroms in the Imperialist Epoch: Stakes for the International Working Class*. "It explains the need to build working-class parties capable of overthrow-

ing capitalism to end the threats Jews face," he said.

After looking through the book, Gara Godoy said, "You have really opened my mind, I want to read more."

Interest in labor resistance in U.S.

Many visitors to the Pathfinder booth were interested in discussing what working people in the U.S. face and what's behind the election of Donald Trump.

"The working class is showing the will to fight back against the bosses and their speedup and unsafe conditions," this reporter told Víctor Hernández Saldaña Jubilado. "And that didn't change during the election campaign."

"It interests me a lot, the fact that these kinds of books are being sold in the U.S.," said Saldaña Jubilado, pointing to *New International* no. 11 with the title "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War." "It's something to know that there are people in the U.S. conscious of the situation that the U.S. government has generated." He bought this title and *America's Revolutionary Heritage* by George Novack.

Many who stopped by the booth had lived and worked in the U.S. or had friends and relatives there. Two Mexican call center workers told Perasso they made well above minimum wage, but still struggled to meet the



Militant/Linda Joyce

Jacob Perasso, SWP member and volunteer at Pathfinder booth, discusses Pathfinder books with two call center workers at Guadalajara International Book Fair in Mexico Dec. 4.

high cost of many essentials.

"The rent has gone up, it's going wild," Sara Juarez said. "I can't afford to live in Guadalajara. I take the bus two hours each way to and from work."

"I have a car, gasoline has gone up as well, it's horrible!" Sara Myers, her co-worker said.

Perasso described similar challenges facing young workers in the U.S. to make ends meet and sustain families. Increased labor resistance in recent years is aimed at changing these conditions, he said.

Along with a dozen copies of *The Fight Against Jew-Hatred and Po-*

groms in the Imperialist Epoch, other top sellers from the Pathfinder booth included 10 copies of *Are They Rich Because They're Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism* by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes and eight copies of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*.

The Cámara Cubana del Libro booth, featuring literature and political books from Cuba, drew steady interest, hosting a series of presentations by prominent Cuban authors, poets and other writers.

Canada Post strikers fight gov't order to return to work

Continued from front page

The Industrial Relations Board issued the return-to-work order Dec. 15, extending the current collective agreements between Canada Post and Canadian Union of Postal Workers until May 2025, allegedly to provide more time for negotiations to continue. Meanwhile, Canada Post announced it has agreed to implement a 5% wage increase, retroactive to the day after the contracts expired at the end of last December.

Fight is in interest of all workers

Postal workers are fighting for higher wages and safe working conditions. On Dec. 9 the union lowered its wage demands from 24% to 19% over four years. Canada Post didn't respond, leaving its "offer" of 11.5%

over four years on the table.

"My hourly wages have only increased by \$9 [US\$6.30] in 30 years at Canada Post. It leads to impoverishment," Helene Perron, a letter carrier in Laval near here, told the *Militant* on the picket line Dec. 12.

"In my 30 years with the post office, management never negotiates in good faith. There is always the threat of being ordered back to work," letter carrier Marie-Christine said.

"They want Canada Post to copy the Amazon model — precarious work with no benefits, no good work, no decent wages," Mississauga, Ontario, union shop steward Sarbjeet Deol said.

Another key issue is Canada Post's plan to hire part-timers to deliver parcels on weekends, creating a two-tier wage system, with new workers earning less and having fewer benefits. The bosses also want a separate retirement scheme for these new employees that doesn't guarantee a pension. The union continues to defend the defined-benefit pension plan its members have now.

More than 100 pickets defiantly rallied at the city's mail-processing plant in Calgary, Alberta, Dec. 14. Postal workers Local 710 President Wycliffe Oduor vowed workers won't accept anything short of their demands. Alberta Federation of Labour President Gil McGowan spoke, noting Labour Minister MacKinnon has claimed he supports the right to strike. "So which is it? Do workers have the right to strike or not?" he asked. Ottawa "is sending a message to all employers that all they have to do is stall negotiations" in order to have the government impose a contract on workers.

Postal workers and their supporters rallied at the offices of federal Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland in Toronto Dec. 16.

The action was backed by the Toronto and York Regional Labour Council, which said the fight is in defense of the rights of all workers.

Canadian Union of Postal Workers Local 126 President Craig Dyer told CBC in St. John's, Newfoundland, Dec. 16 that union members were angry at the government for taking away their right to negotiate a contract and won't commit to obey the back-to-work order.

In Toronto CUPW member Helen Karrandjas told Canadian Press, "We work hard. We deserve a living wage, and it looks like Canada Post's upper management is not willing to negotiate."

A long history of struggle

In 1965 the CUPW won the right to collective bargaining. It defied government policies and staged a victorious "illegal" strike across the country for two weeks that extended bargaining rights to most federal public-sector workers.

Canada Post workers have been issued back-to-work orders five times in the last 46 years, under both Liberal and Conservative governments. In March 1979 postal workers defied Ottawa's attempt to impose a contract on them. CUPW President Jean-Claude Parrot was jailed for three months for refusing to order them back to work.

"As a member of Teamsters Canada Rail Conference and conductor at Canadian National Railway, I have participated with fellow rail workers on the picket lines of the longshore workers and Canada Post strikers. This kind of solidarity is needed on a broad scale to unite workers in a struggle to defeat Ottawa's attacks on the right to strike," Philippe Tessier, Communist League candidate in the upcoming Quebec by-election in Terrebonne, told the *Militant* Dec. 16.

5,000 protest against Jew-hatred in the UK

LONDON — Members of the Communist League found interest in the party's program and activity among marchers protesting the rise in attacks on Jews since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, pogrom in Israel. Over 5,000 people joined the Dec. 8 action organized here by the Campaign Against Antisemitism.

"Many people came up to our table at the start and finish of the march," CL member Pamela Holmes said. "Several had already gotten the book *The Fight Against Jew-Hatred and Pogroms in the Imperialist Epoch: Stakes for the International Working Class* from CL members at previous actions. They came by to say hello."

The book's title explains why pogroms — like Hamas' Oct. 7 massacre — are not new, and what can be done to uproot capitalist exploitation and end Jew-hatred and national oppression for all time.

One participant said she moved to the U.K. in 2013, having grown up in Israel. "People live and work there side by side," she told Holmes. "Some Arabs serve in the army. When they're included, like in the unions, it's just how we live."

Holmes pointed to the *Militant's* coverage of union struggles by Jewish and Arab workers in Israel, fighting together against the bosses' attacks on wages and conditions.

Four subscriptions to the *Militant* were sold, alongside eight copies of *The Fight Against Jew-Hatred and Pogroms in the Imperialist Epoch*.

— ÓLÖF ANDRA PROPPÉ

Martial law overturned in South Korea, president is impeached

BY ROY LANDERSEN

South Korea's political crisis — triggered by a short-lived move by then President Yoon Suk Yeol to impose martial law — entered a new stage Dec. 14 as he was impeached by the National Assembly. Over 200,000 people protesting outside the parliament in Seoul cheered at the news.

Demonstrators, old and young, had rallied daily in the nation's capital with signs like “Impeach Yoon, ringleader of insurrection!” He had sprung his emergency decree on the polarized country Dec. 3, citing threats from “anti-state forces.” He was reacting to moves by liberal bourgeois parties that had deadlocked the parliament, paralyzing his scandal-plagued and increasingly unpopular conservative government.

His martial law decree banned all political activity, strikes and “gatherings that incite social unrest” and would have put the country under military rule for the first time in 45 years. Mighty political protests, including by members of his own party, led him to back off.

Martial law is ‘war on the people’

“This is the happiest moment in my life,” Kim Myoung-sook, 60, told the *New York Times* at the huge rally demanding impeachment. “Martial law is a declaration of war on the people.”

Protests had continued daily demanding Yoon step down. The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, which has 1.2 million members, called for an indefinite general strike “until Yoon's government steps down.” This defiant opposition by working people strengthened the parliamentary vote to rescind his decree. Members of the Korean Metal Workers Union held two-hour strikes at GM Korea, Hyundai Motor and other factories Dec. 5. The Korean Railway Workers' Union also walked out that day.

On Dec. 11 tens of thousands of metal workers union members struck for four hours at Kia Motors and other plants to join a rally to demand that Yoon resign. The next day 10,000 Confederation of Trade Union members

rallied in the capital, marching to the presidential residence calling for Yoon to quit. Millions of unionists know how martial law targets their organizations and hard-won rights.

With Yoon's impeachment, the prime minister, Han Duck-soo, assumed interim presidential powers.

Some of Yoon's closest advisers have resigned or been arrested. Prosecutors are also weighing criminal charges of insurrection against him.

Yoon won't actually be removed from office until the country's Constitutional Court certifies the impeachment vote. If it is upheld, presidential elections will occur within 60 days.

Decades of conflict over military rule

At the end of World War II the Korean people rose up after four decades of Japanese colonial occupation. Under a deal between President Franklin Roosevelt and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin, the country was divided in half, with the Red Army entering the north.

In the south a powerful revolutionary upsurge was crushed under U.S. occupation forces, which installed a brutal landlord-capitalist regime. Washington brought back from U.S. exile Syngman Rhee, who assumed dictatorial power.

The 1950-53 U.S.-led Korean War, carried out under the blue helmets of the United Nations, laid waste to the peninsula and killed millions of Korean people. Backed by the People's Republic of China, North Koreans fought the U.S. to a stand off, leading to an end of the war. To this day Washington has refused to sign a peace treaty formally ending the war.

Over the following decades, rebellions by workers and peasants were murderously suppressed by military dictatorships in South Korea, backed by Washington. The last of these authoritarian regimes was toppled at the end of the 1980s.

The U.S. rulers are concerned about the political instability of one of their key allies in the Pacific, which is Asia's fourth-largest economy. It reflects intensifying crises,

Dominican gov't deports thousands of Haitian workers



AP Photo/Ricardo Hernandez

More than 71,000 Haitian immigrants and others have been deported to Haiti by the government of the Dominican Republic since October. Trucks fitted with metal cages normally used for livestock line up every morning at the Elías Piña border between the two countries to be loaded with workers and children, including some people who've never lived in Haiti and some snatched up just because they're black.

Dominican President Luis Abinader announced on Oct. 2 a campaign to deport 10,000 immigrants per week. The date marks the anniversary of the 1937 massacre of 20,000 Haitians and Haitians-by-descent ordered by then-dictator Rafael Trujillo.

Today, as many as 1 million Haitians live and work in the Dominican Republic. One of the poorest countries in the world, Haiti has no semblance of a bourgeois-democratic government. Rival capitalist gangs and political parties are vying for power as thugs control the capital, Port-au-Prince. Thousands have been killed, hundreds of thousands have been displaced from their homes, and much of the infrastructure destroyed. Earthquakes in 2010 and 2021, a hurricane in 2016, and the re-emergence of cholera in 2022 only added to the disastrous conditions.

The capitalist rulers in the Dominican Republic are exploiting the deep economic, political and social crisis in Haiti to fan reactionary nationalist sentiments. They hope to use divisions among workers to mask their profit-driven attacks on wages, working conditions and government social programs.

Haitian workers make up a significant portion of the working class in the Dominican Republic, in construction, agriculture and the sugar cane industry. The Sugarcane Workers Union fights against the government's anti-immigrant and deportation campaign, which, they explain, defends the interests of the sugar barons and other capitalists.

— JANET POST

conflicts and rivalries among capitalist powers across the world. These are especially sharp in East Asia over the flashpoints of Taiwan and the divided Korean Peninsula.

Washington, with more than 28,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, had to postpone planned joint military exercises as the governmental crisis unfolded.

The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us

The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward

The global order imposed by victors of the inter-imperialist slaughter of World War II is shattering with explosive ramifications for workers and farmers worldwide. 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.”

pathfinderpress.com



Strike at Milk-Bone in Buffalo wins broad support

Continued from front page

strikers. Local President Coty Ryder designed the posters and union members sold tickets on the job, raising \$945. In late November, two Local 81 union officers drove to Buffalo with a carload of supplies for the picket line.

“It's a completely different thing reading about a strike and then being there,” Local 81 Chair Melissa Straubel told the *Militant*. “You realize that these people are just like us. They are trying to scratch out a living in a factory against the big corporation that owns it.”

The Southern Region of the BCTGM organized union members to pass out informational flyers on the strike outside the nonunion Smucker's plant in Memphis, Tennessee.

Teamsters Local 449 in Buffalo has been a stalwart in solidarity with the strikers. The unionists organized cookouts and bring truckloads of firewood for pickets' burn barrels, which are critical in the Buffalo winter.

Strikers picked up baskets of groceries that the Teamsters organized. The Teachers Federation visits weekly with coffee and donuts. The Communications Workers of America, United Auto Workers locals and other area union members join the picket line and bring supplies.

“CSX union rail workers brought in two railcars of flour early in the strike but refused to hook them up to the plant,” picket captain Tony Serra told the *Militant*. “First railroad management and then Milk-Bone management tried, and none of them could make the connections work. Two weeks later the railcars were hauled away because the flour was ruined.”

Serra said one railcar holds four to five truckloads. Not being able to use railcars is contributing to the slowdown in production, as management tries to keep it going using scab labor.

Steve Palumbo, chief union steward at the plant, said photos of empty store shelves where Milk-Bone products

are normally stocked have come in from as far away as Florida. Strikers say the company warehouse is 85% to 90% empty.

“I am writing to convey the unequivocal support of the nearly 13 million members united in the AFL-CIO for the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) International Union Local 36G members who are on strike at the Smucker's-owned Milk-Bone plant in Buffalo, New York,” wrote AFL-CIO President Elizabeth Shuler in an open letter to Mark Smucker, chair of the board and president and CEO of J.M. Smucker Co. “I strongly urge you to get back to the bargaining table.”

After stalling for weeks, Milk-Bone management now says it will sit down with the strikers, BCTGM International Representative Jared Cummings told the *Militant*.

Sergio Zambrana contributed to this article.

Malcolm X: 'Learn to see, listen and think for yourself'

Malcolm X Talks to Young People is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. As his evolution accelerated in the last year of his life, Malcolm emerged as the authentic voice of the forces of the coming American revolution. The excerpt is from his speech "See for yourself, listen for yourself, think for yourself," given Jan. 1, 1965, in Harlem to a group of high school youth from McComb, Mississippi. They had been engaged in civil rights battles there, including registering Blacks to vote. His advice has wide applicability for young fighters in today's world. Copyright © 2002. Reprinted by permission of Pathfinder Press.



P.H. Polk/Courtesy of Tuskegee University
Malcolm X with Black youth at Tuskegee Institute, in Alabama, Feb. 3, 1965. He addressed several thousand students amid ongoing mass protests to overthrow Jim Crow segregation.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MALCOLM X

[O]ne of the first things I think young people, especially nowadays, should learn how to do is see for yourself and listen for yourself and think for yourself. Then you can come to an intelligent decision for yourself. But if you form the habit of going by what you hear others say about someone, or going by what others think about someone, instead of going and searching that thing out for yourself and seeing for yourself, you'll be walking west when you think you're going east, and you'll be walking east when you think you're going west. So this generation, especially of our people, have a burden upon themselves, more so than at any other time in history. The most important thing we can learn how

to do today is think for ourselves.

It's good to keep wide-open ears and listen to what everybody else has to say, but when you come to make a decision, you have to weigh all of what you've heard on its own, and place it where it belongs, and then come to a decision for yourself. You'll never regret it. But if you form the habit of taking what someone else says about a thing without checking it out for yourself, you'll find that other people will have you hating your own friends and loving your enemies. This is one of the things that our people are beginning to learn today — that it is very important to think out a situation for yourself. If you don't do it, then you'll always be maneuvered into actually — You'll never fight your enemies, but you will find yourself fighting your own self. ...

Never at any time in the history of our people in this country have we made advances or advancement, or made progress in any way just based upon the internal good will of this country, or based upon the internal activity of this country. We have only made advancement in this country when this country was under pressure from forces above and beyond its control. Because the internal moral consciousness of this country is bankrupt. It hasn't existed since they first brought us over here and made slaves out of us. They trick up on a conversation and make it appear that they have our good interests at heart. But

when you study it, every time, no matter how many steps they take us forward, it's like we're standing on a — what do you call that thing? — a treadmill. The treadmill is moving backwards faster than we're able to go forward in this direction. We're not even standing still — we're walking forward, at the same time we're going backward. ...

[T]here has been a move on — and I will conclude in a moment — there has been a move on to keep the Negro thinking in this country that he was making strides in the civil rights field, only for the purpose of distracting him and not letting him know that were he to acquaint himself with the structure of the United Nations and the politics of the United Nations, the aim and the purpose of the United Nations, he could lift his problem into that world body. And he'd have the strongest stick in the world that he could use against the racists in Mississippi.

But one of the arguments against getting you and me to do this has always been that our problem is a domestic problem of the United States. And as such, we should not think to put it at a level where somebody else can come and mess with United States domestic affairs. But you're giving Uncle Sam a break. Uncle Sam's got his hands in the Congo, in Cuba, in South America, in Saigon. Uncle Sam has got his bloody hands in every continent and in everybody else's business on this earth. But at

the same time, when it comes to taking forceful action in this country where our rights are concerned, he's always going to tell you and me, "Well, these are states' rights." Or he'll make some kind of off-the-wall alibi that's not a bona fide alibi — not because it's an alibi, but to justify his inactivity where your and my rights are concerned. ...

Now, you've lived in Mississippi long enough to know what the language of the Ku Klux Klan is. They only know one language. If you come up with another language, you don't communicate. You've got to be able to speak the same language they speak, whether you're in Mississippi, New York City, or Alabama, or California, or anywhere else. When you develop or mature to the point where you can speak another man's language on his level, that man gets the point. That's the only time he gets the point. You can't talk peace to a person who doesn't know what peace means. You can't talk love to a person who doesn't know what love means. And you can't talk any form of nonviolence to a person who doesn't believe in nonviolence. Why, you're wasting your time.

So I think in 1965 — whether you like it, or I like it, or we like it, or they like it, or not — you will see that there is a generation of Black people born in this country who become mature to the point where they feel that they have no more business being asked to take a peaceful approach than anybody else takes, unless everybody's going to take a peaceful approach.

So we here in the Organization of Afro-American Unity, we're with the struggle in Mississippi 1,000 percent. We're with the efforts to register our people in Mississippi to vote 1,000 percent. But we do not go along with anybody telling us to help non-violently. We think if the government says that Negroes have a right to vote, and then when Negroes go out to vote some kind of Ku Klux Klan is going to put them in the river, and the government doesn't do anything about it, it's time for us to organize and band together and equip ourselves and qualify ourselves to protect ourselves. [Applause] And once you can protect yourself, you don't have to worry about being hurt.

That's it. [Applause]

December
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Pathfinder Readers Club Specials

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Australia rally protests attack on synagogues, Jewish homes

BY MIKE TUCKER

SYDNEY — Members of the Jewish community here made it clear they will not be intimidated as more than 2,000 turned out for a rally Dec. 15 to condemn recent attacks on Jews and synagogues.

Four days earlier, homes in the Sydney suburb of Woollahra had been painted with anti-Israel graffiti and a car set on fire, just three weeks after a similar attack there. And in Melbourne, the Adass Israel Synagogue was set on fire and gutted Dec. 6. Over 1,000 members of the Jewish community protested there two days later.

Rabbi Benjamin Elton told the Sydney rally how the Great Synagogue in the city center had been besieged by some 70 demonstrators Dec. 4, screaming for the destruction of Israel. Police responded by imposing a lockdown to prevent those in the synagogue from leaving. Ofir Birenbaum, of Together With Israel, told the rally that when he arrived he was arrested for “antagonizing the protesters” because he carried an Israeli flag. They are allowed to demand “Drive out the Jews,” he said, but if we express ourselves, we are breaching the peace.

Elton said that the Great Synagogue, which opened in 1878, had never faced antisemitic attacks until this year, following Hamas’ murderous Oct. 7, 2023, pogrom in Israel.

Hamas supporters demonstrate in the city every week, he said, while Jews are placed in lockdown. This violence in the streets is what led to the torching of the synagogue in Melbourne, he said. “This is no longer a threat. This is our reality.”

A protest by pro-Hamas thugs at the Caulfield Shule in Melbourne Nov. 25 was routed by 200 Jews who turned up to defend it.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry recorded 2,062 Jew-hating attacks from October 2023 to last

September, a more than fourfold increase over the previous year. These include physical assaults, vandalism, arson, graffiti and verbal abuse.

A Dec. 10 message from the Communist League to the Adass Israel Synagogue congregation said that the arson attack that gutted the synagogue “was an act of antisemitic violence that must be condemned by working people, our unions, and all supporters of democratic rights.”

“Acting to answer every instance of antisemitism today is vital not only for Jewish people,” the message said, “but for working people of every nationality and our unions, and for the future of all of us.”

Build solidarity with striking San Francisco hotel workers!

BY ERIC SIMPSON

SAN FRANCISCO — Some 2,500 striking hotel workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 2, are fighting to defend health coverage won in past contract battles. As the strike enters its 13th week it’s the longest-ever hotel strike here, and the workers are winning solidarity. Over 1,000 unionists rallied downtown Dec. 11.

Kristie Rivera, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA Council 11, told the *Militant* that members of the union refuse to stay at the struck hotels. Flight attendants at United Airlines are in the middle of a contract fight themselves. “Our labor is connected. We work together with UNITE HERE at the airports and in the flight kitchens,” Rivera said. “Solidarity is very valuable.”

Strikers have begun to picket the loading docks of the six struck hotels and report Teamsters truck drivers are turning away.

UNITE HERE Local 5 in Waikiki and Oahu, Hawaii, organized a rally in solidarity with Local 2. They just



Militant/Mike Tucker

Rally in Sydney Dec. 15 condemns arson attack gutting Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne and harassment of congregation at city’s Great Synagogue by Hamas supporters.

ended a strike over the same issues. Workers in Local 8 at the Westin Hotel in Seattle and workers from the Hotel and Gaming Trades Council who work at the New York Hilton have both sent messages of support.

The Northern California Carpenters Regional Council moved its annual Moose Feed luncheon from the struck San Francisco Hilton Union Square in solidarity.

The AFL-CIO nationally is calling on unions to support the strikers and is circulating a petition for workers to sign.

“Hilton, Hyatt, and Marriott are trying to phase out the union healthcare that generations of San Francisco hotel workers have fought for and won. That’s unacceptable,” a petition on UNITE HERE’s website says.

Hotels currently pay into a health care fund for union workers, who don’t pay anything until they use it. It’s \$10 a month for family cover-

age, with a cap on prescription costs. Bosses want to take new hires out of that plan.

Local 2 is building a demonstration for Jan. 13 outside the Westin St. Francis Hotel. When the union asked JP Morgan to move its 2025 Healthcare Conference from the struck hotel, the bankers refused. “Health care profiteers impoverish working people and hurt patients,” the union says in a flyer calling for the march and rally.

Messages and contributions can be sent to UNITE HERE Local 2, 209 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, CA 94102. The local’s phone number is (415) 864-8770 x778, fax (415) 864-4158. Contribute online at <https://actionnetwork.org/fundraising/support-local-2-hotel-workers>.

Workers in the Bay Area are urged to visit the picket lines and contribute to the strike fund at the collection boxes in the picket tents.

Judge upholds free speech in Uhuru 3 case

BY RACHELE FRUIT

MIAMI — The sentencing hearing for the Uhuru 3, leaders and supporters of the African People’s Socialist Party framed up on charges of conspiring to act as agents of Moscow, was held Dec. 16 at the federal courthouse in Tampa. Over 100 supporters of freedom of speech packed the courtroom, overflowing into the hallway.

“No one’s going to prison; no one’s going to be fined,” U.S. District Court Judge William Jung ruled. He acknowledged the court had gotten over 1,600 “character letters” in support of the Uhuru 3 and noted how the courtrooms had been full of their supporters throughout the trial. The judge admitted, “If not for the requirement to register as a foreign agent, everything in the indictment would be legal and protected speech.”

He sentenced each of the three to three years probation and 300 hours of community service. They had faced a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine each.

The Uhuru 3 are APSP Chairman Omali Yeshitela, African People’s Solidarity Committee Chairwoman Penny Hess and Uhuru Solidarity Movement Chair Jesse Nevel. In September they were found not guilty

of acting as unregistered Russian agents, but, in a contradictory ruling, found guilty of *conspiring* to act as Russian agents. They are appealing that conviction.

The charges are based on the notorious Foreign Agents Registration Act, which the capitalist rulers have used before to target constitutionally protected free speech and political activity. If you hold views that are similar to those of a foreign government, the U.S. government can unleash its FBI political police to spy on you, disrupt your political activity and then prosecute you. As part of the frameup, armed FBI agents broke into and raided APSP offices in St. Petersburg, Florida, and St. Louis, on July 29, 2022.

The pretext of serving a foreign power has been used by the government since the first imperialist world war to go after opponents of Washington’s wars, the Socialist Workers Party and others.

The judge’s ruling against jail time or fines is a victory in the two-and-a-half-year free speech battle.

“The only reason we didn’t get prison time is because we fought back against this government attack,” Yeshitela told the crowd.

Iran workers strike, protest, amid deepening crisis

The blows Israeli forces have dealt to the capitalist rulers in Tehran and its “axis of resistance” have provoked unprecedented open debate and discussion in Iran, accelerated by the fall of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. Working people increasingly oppose the regime’s military adventures and its fomenting of armed attacks on Israel.

This takes place amid a deepening economic crisis, an increase in the regime’s use of the death penalty, and more frequent power outages. Wages don’t keep up with rising prices and bosses’ disdain for safety and workers’ lives is reflected in dangerous smog in Tehran. There are weekly protests by retirees and oil workers and strikes by nurses, truck drivers, municipal workers and others.

Bartharina, a Tehran-based news site, posted part of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s most recent address to the people of Iran where he says, “Women, Life, Freedom. That is the future of Iran. That is the future of peace.” In the past, censors would have shut down the site. But not this time.

“A group of people gathered in a corner of this polluted and frozen city to demand an order to attack Israel,” Khabar Online noted Dec. 16, making fun of a small demonstration in Tehran. “We don’t know what fate awaits the people of this land ... but we do know that in the 21st century, our homes should not have electricity cut off every two hours.”

There is also widespread discussion and opposition to a new law aimed at increasing enforcement of the reactionary dress code for women. *Etemad* printed a letter from Mohammad Dadkan, the well-known former president of Iran’s Football Federation, after Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian blamed budget shortfalls for many of the economic problems facing working people.

Dadkan noted that large amounts of money have been budgeted for centers for convincing women to wear hijab. Meanwhile, he said, a widely publicized photo shows “a 5-year-old girl wearing a headscarf but with bare feet. Consider the meaning of this photo.”

— SETH GALINSKY

Deepening Mideast showdown

Continued from front page

But Tehran underestimated the people of Israel — Jews, Arabs, Christians, Muslims and Druze. They fought off the Hamas death squads and then took the offensive, despite nonstop pressure from the Joseph Biden White House to stop the war. They eliminated most of Hamas' fighting capacity, killed half of its trained thugs, dismantled Hezbollah's leadership and destroyed most of its missiles in Lebanon, and took out Tehran's main air defenses.

These blows also opened the door for the uprising that overthrew the tyrannical regime of Moscow- and Tehran-backed Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

But the regime in Tehran is driving ahead to produce nuclear weapons, a deadly threat to Israel and to working people throughout the region. And it is still infiltrating advanced weapons to Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the West Bank, and encouraging the Houthis in Yemen to keep up their ballistic-missile attacks on Israel.

Bartarhina, a popular news site in Iran, noted that the overthrow of the Bashar al-Assad dictatorship "began on Oct. 7," and that "by weakening Hezbollah" Israel ensured "Assad's defensive wall collapsed with one kick."

Hezbollah was forced to accept a ceasefire with Israel in Lebanon Nov. 27 and pull back its operatives from Syria. Then Syrian rebel forces led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a bourgeois group with origins in Islamic State and al-Qaeda, and given the green light by the Turkish government, swept from Idlib province in northwest Syria to Damascus. The soldiers of the Assad dictatorship dropped their weapons and abandoned their posts as the rebels advanced.

The overthrow of the regime was a big blow to Moscow. Syria is home to the only Russian naval base on the Mediterranean Sea and to a major air base. Convoys of Russian troops, escorted by Tahrir al-Sham, have been abandoning Moscow's bases inside Syria and heading to the coast, likely on their way out of the country.

Millions celebrate Assad's fall

With the boot of the Assad tyranny off their necks, hundreds of thousands of people in cities across Syria turned out for joyful celebrations. Some among the millions who fled Syria to escape the regime are returning to rebuild their lives. Many have high expectations, while still wary of what the new government will do.

Recommended reading



www.pathfinderpress.com

The Assad regime brutally crushed a popular uprising that began in 2011. In the absence of a working-class leadership, contending armed rebel forces won backing by rival capitalist regimes from Qatar to Turkey, threatening Assad's rule.

He remained in power only through the deployment of thousands of Hezbollah thugs, advisers and military aid from Tehran, and airpower from Moscow.

But Hezbollah, battered by Israel, and Moscow, suffering huge casualties in its war against Ukraine, could no longer come to Assad's rescue.

For the first time in years, many are confident they can stand up for themselves. "If I'd spoken out before, Bashar al-Assad's forces would have cut off my tongue," Tawfiq Diam told BBC from the Eastern Ghouta suburb of Damascus Dec. 11.

The rebel forces broke open the cell doors in prisons in each city they took, releasing thousands, some who had been imprisoned for decades. But tens of thousands of people captured by the regime are still missing.

Mass burial sites are being uncovered. The U.S.-based Syrian Emergency Task Force told ABC News that it believes there are well over 100,000 bodies buried in just one of the dozens of sites.

'Moderate' Islamic rule?

Ahmed al-Sharaa, the head of Tahrir al-Sham, broke with Islamic State and al-Qaeda in 2016, saying they were too extreme. The group has governed Idlib province in northwest Syria since 2017.

While Tahrir al-Sham says its goal is to rule Syria under Sharia law, Sharaa says the rebels will respect the rights of Kurds, Alawites, Christians, Druze and other minority groups.

The rebels met with representatives of Christian communities. "Continue to live normally, you're coming up to your Christmas holiday, nothing will change for you," the rebels told Brother Georges Sabe, who took part in the meetings and reported on them, according to France 24.

Syrians of all religious beliefs and nationalities are watching to see if the rebels' actions meet their words.

It's not clear what relations the forces led by Tahrir al-Sham will have with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which holds about one-third of Syrian territory, carved out in the fight to defend the Kurds, an oppressed nationality. The SDF collaborated with Washington in defeating Islamic State forces. There are still some 900 U.S. troops based there.

The Ankara-created Syrian National Army with Turkish air support has pushed the SDF out of Manbij. For Ankara any advance for Kurdish autonomy in Syria is a threat to capitalist rule in Turkey, where millions of Kurds are also fighting for national rights.

Israel defends its borders

Given the history of Tahrir al-Sham and other Islamist rebel factions — including applauding the Oct. 7 pogrom — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not taking any chances.

Since Assad fled Dec. 8 the Israel Defense Forces carried out more than 450 airstrikes in Syria, destroying Syria's navy, ammunition depots, radar systems, missiles, chemical weapons



AP/Yousef Masoud

Captured Israeli tank Oct. 7, 2023. Tehran-backed Hamas death squads killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, raped and mutilated women, took 250 hostages. They viewed pogrom as opening road to destroying Israel, killing or expelling Jews from Palestine and the Middle East.

stores, dozens of its air bases and more, with very few human casualties.

As the Syrian army collapsed, its troops abandoned the 50-mile-long buffer zone along the Golan Heights that was part of a 1974 agreement between the Syrian and Israeli governments. Israeli troops moved in to take their place, including occupying the Syrian side of Mount Hermon. As the highest mountain in Syria this gives Israeli troops an overview that would aid in preventing any attack on Israel's border.

Sharaa called on Israel to halt the attacks and to withdraw from the buf-

fer zone. "We do not want any conflict, whether with Israel or anyone else," he told the press Dec. 16.

In the wake of significant blows to Tehran and its proxies, the Israeli government is considering steps to put an end to Tehran's capacity to develop nuclear weapons.

Doing so would strengthen Israel's defense of the safety of a refuge for Jews. It would open more space for workers, working farmers and oppressed nationalities throughout the Middle East to come together to defend themselves against their capitalist rulers.

Israeli army command refused to wake Netanyahu as Hamas pogrom loomed

BY SETH GALINSKY

A year and a half before Hamas and Tehran launched their murderous Oct. 7, 2023, pogrom, the Israel Defense Forces Military Intelligence Directorate obtained a 40-page Hamas document. It "laid out almost exactly how Hamas eventually wound up carrying out the attack," the *Times of Israel* reported, a rocket barrage, drones to knock out security cameras and thugs pouring into Israel on paragliders, motorcycles and on foot.

IDF intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Aharon Haliva, Gaza Division commander Brig. Gen. Avi Rosenfeld and then IDF Southern Command chief Maj. Gen. Eliezer Toledano all read the report. They buried it, keeping IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi, the Israeli Air Force and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the dark.

Over the next year, Halevi and other IDF officials along with the leaders of Mossad and Shin Bet, Israel's security agencies, kept assuring Netanyahu that Hamas was not a serious threat.

The IDF intelligence directorate did send four warning letters to Netanyahu. But not about Hamas. They told Netanyahu he should stop pushing his controversial judicial reform plan because it created divisions that would embolden Israel's enemies to attack.

Then on the night of Oct. 6, IDF and Shin Bet officials considered growing signs that Hamas was about to attack. At 1:30 a.m. on Oct. 7 they updated Halevi's office and the IDF Southern Command. At 3 a.m. the head of the IDF Intelligence Directorate, on vacation, was informed. At 3:30 a.m. Halevi set up a 5 a.m. phone conference and decided to meet again at 8.

But no one woke up Netanyahu to in-

form him. Hamas attacked at 6:30 a.m.

Why wasn't Netanyahu informed? Probably just a drill, they thought. That right-winger Netanyahu might order an immediate military counterattack, a "provocation" that could lead to conflict, upsetting the Joseph Biden administration's drive for an accommodation with Iran. They put their partisan political considerations above their responsibility to the prime minister. That would normally be considered treason.

These officials were also acting as transmission belts for the chief executive of U.S. imperialism. The U.S. rulers' starting point is not the defense of Jews, Israel or anyone else. It's defending their own economic, political and military interests.

Netanyahu wants and needs U.S. imperialism's aid. But he knows that Israel must be prepared to fight on its own, or the result could be a world without Israel. If Netanyahu had caved to White House demands to ease up on Israel's war on Hamas, to not escalate attacks on Hezbollah, to not strike any Iranian nuclear sites, their enemies would have been emboldened. Hamas would be carrying out new Oct. 7s, Hezbollah would still be firing missiles into Israel and Bashar al-Assad would still be in power.

Israel is a class-divided country. For a layer of the faction-ridden capitalist class, their representatives in the government and the "woke" middle class, Israel's savior is "democratic" U.S. imperialism — a dangerous illusion — and Netanyahu's refusal to back down is an obstacle to peace. They want him out. The current corruption trial against Netanyahu, taking place in the middle of a war for survival, should be viewed in this context. It's a political witch hunt.

Jury acquits Penny unanimously

Continued from front page

burst into the subway car as the doors were closing. He was aggressive, throwing his jacket to the ground as nearby passengers moved away. He threatened and screamed, “Someone is going to die today” and “I will kill.”

Witness Caedryn Schrank described his ranting as “satanic” and said she “thought I was going to die.” Lori Sitro testified she used her stroller as a barrier to protect her 5-year-old child. Alethea Gittings said, “I was scared shitless.”

Penny watched Neely’s behavior, then grabbed him from behind and held on to restrain him. Both fell to the ground. Two other riders helped hold a fiercely struggling Neely down until police arrived. In videos played at the trial, Penny told detectives he was trying to “de-escalate” the situation and prevent Neely from harming anyone.

Others in the subway car, a multiracial cross section of this city’s working class, stepped up to help. Some appealed to the conductor to hold the train. Others called 911. Several passengers later thanked Penny.

Police testified that Neely had a pulse when they arrived. They administered CPR and a dose of Narcan, an opioid antidote. They declined to perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, saying they feared catching a disease. Neely was taken to a hospital and an hour later he was declared dead.

“Those passengers were afraid,” Mayor Eric Adams, who is Black, said Dec. 3, suggesting Penny should not have faced criminal charges. “You have someone [Penny] on that subway who was responding, doing what we should have done as a city.”

Frame-up campaign

From the moment Neely died, other Democratic Party officials, including Bragg, began recasting what happened as a homicide driven by racial hate.

Tossing aside constitutional rights, especially an accused person’s right to be considered innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, Congresswoman Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez labeled Neely’s death a “murder.” Her colleague, Jamal Bowman, called it an “execution.” Rev. Alfred Sharpton smeared Penny as a vigilante. Black Lives Matter supporters called Neely’s death a “lynching.”

The liberal capitalist press pictured Penny, the Marine, as a trained killer, versus Neely, “a beloved street performer,” who when he was younger impersonated Michael Jackson. A May 4, 2023, *New York Times* opinion column was headlined, “Making people uncomfortable can now get you killed.”

Reporters repeatedly referred to Penny’s restraint of Neely as a “chokehold,” recalling for readers the 2020 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Small protests took place. People jumped on subway tracks to block trains. They demanded Penny be railroaded to jail.

For Bragg, the Penny case became an opportunity to bolster an election campaign narrative peddled by Joseph Biden and later Kamala Harris, that Democrats “protect” voters against the alleged “fascism” and “white supremacy” of Donald Trump and “MAGA Republicans.” Last spring Bragg gained notoriety by framing Trump on 34 felony counts of business fraud, a verdict Trump is appealing.

Bragg first charged Penny with second-degree manslaughter carrying a possible 15 years in jail. Then weeks later, he added a criminally negligent homicide charge with a maximum four-year prison term. This “overcharging” was meant to pressure Penny to agree to a plea bargain for the lesser charge, handing Bragg a conviction.

Prosecution case unravels

For Bragg and his lead trial prosecutor, Dafna Yoran, witness testimony, video evidence and the facts produced at trial made the case against Penny paper thin.

Yoran conceded at the trial’s start Penny’s intentions may have been good, but it was Penny’s “chokehold” that killed Neely. “He went way too far,” she said. Then the prosecution hammered away at the jury for seven weeks on Penny’s “guilt.” They even divided a five minute video into 1,465 still frames for a slide by slide presentation to argue manslaughter had occurred. Passengers’ phone videos and police bodycam footage were played and replayed on six jumbo TV screens.

Dr. Cynthia Harris, the city’s medical examiner, testified videos proved a chokehold killed Neely. She said she didn’t need to see the autopsy or toxicology reports to reach her conclusion. Even if Neely had enough fentanyl in his system to knock down an elephant, she said, it would not have changed her mind.

Penny’s attorneys called a forensic psychiatrist who testified Neely’s 5,000-page medical record convinced him Neely was “severely psychotic.”

Dr. Satish Chundru, a forensic pathologist, also testified for the defense. A chokehold did not cause Neely’s death, he said. The homeless man died from a sickle-cell crisis causing a lack of oxygen, provoked by the “combined



Drug use, threats are common at New York subway stops. Daniel Penny became scapegoat for authorities unable and unwilling to solve crises of homelessness, drugs and mental health.

effects” of a potent synthetic marijuana, known as K2, in Neely’s system; acute schizophrenic psychosis; and physical exertion against Penny’s restraint.

In the end, over the seven-week trial, prosecutors provided zero evidence that Penny was a racist or a vigilante looking to kill a Black person.

Jurors began deliberations Dec. 3. Three days later they told Judge Maxwell Wiley they could not reach a unanimous verdict on the second-degree manslaughter charge.

Yoran then proposed the judge dismiss the manslaughter charge and instruct the jury to consider the lesser criminally negligent homicide count, Bragg’s aim from the beginning. The judge complied and overruled objections by Penny’s defense attorney, who called for a mistrial.

After a weekend break, the jury reconvened and quickly reached a unanimous decision finding Penny “not guilty,” a stunning blow to District Attorney Bragg and his weaponizing of his office for partisan political ends.

Penny’s trial and Neely’s death, however, reveal greater injustices fac-

ing working people.

Penny became a scapegoat for city authorities and capitalist politicians, who find themselves unable and unwilling to solve the crises of homelessness, the proliferation of deadly illegal drugs, and the longstanding mental health crisis plaguing this city and the country.

Neely suffered from major depression, schizophrenia, PTSD, and drug abuse. He was locked up in Rikers Island jail from November 2021 until February 2023 for punching a 67-year-old woman, breaking her nose and fracturing her eye socket bone. He was released from jail on a plea deal and ordered to stay in an intense inpatient treatment center, but walked out after 13 days. No one did anything to get him back. Three months later he was dead.

The danger he became to others and himself is a consequence of a profit-driven capitalist system governed by Democrats and Republicans on behalf of its rulers, who could care less for anyone or anything they cannot use to make profit. They are responsible for his death.

Liberals, left hail Mangione’s killing of health care CEO

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

NEW YORK — After staking out the site, an armed attacker waited in the early morning here Dec. 4 until Brian Thompson, the CEO of UnitedHealthcare, walked by on his way to a work conference. The gunman approached him from behind, firing several shots point-blank and, after clearing a jam,

continued to shoot, killing Thompson.

On Dec. 9 Luigi Mangione, 26, was arrested at a McDonald’s in Altoona, Pennsylvania, while carrying a loaded 3-D printed gun and silencer, fake ID and supposedly a handwritten document, which the press has taken to calling a “manifesto.” He’s been charged with 11 counts, including first-degree murder and murder as a crime of terrorism. If found guilty on all counts he faces a mandatory sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Between these two events and continuing since, a media circus has reduced Thompson, a 50-year-old father of two and husband, into a symbol of greed, amid a growing fascination and even glorification of Mangione by middle-class liberals and the radical left.

T-shirts saying “Deny, Defend, Depose,” which Mangione allegedly etched onto his bullets, and “Free Luigi” are

being hustled online. “Wanted” posters of several other prominent health insurance executives have been pasted up around the city here. One of Thompson had a big “X” across his face, indicating he had already been eliminated.

After Elsa Merritt wrote a folk ballad posted on TikTok with lyrics about Mangione, she told the *Wall Street Journal* she wasn’t really in love with him, but “any musician has to have a finger on the pulse of pop culture.” Her boyfriend, she said, told her, “I don’t blame you. I have a crush on him too. I think everyone does.”

“This is not to say that an act of violence is justified, but I think for anyone who is confused,” Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez told CBS Dec. 12, “they need to understand that people interpret and feel and experience denied claims as an act of violence against them.”

James Harr, the founder of a “socialist apparel” brand, has announced plans to sell a deck of cards of “most wanted CEOs,” complete with names, faces and images of gun range targets.

Pick up almost any paper or social media outlet and you can find more and more examples to add to the list.

A road forward

Mangione is from a wealthy Maryland family. His grandparents built a real estate empire, including a for-

profit nursing home chain of nine facilities, some of which have been cited for mistreating patients.

Mangione, who is fighting extradition to New York, undoubtedly wishes those calling him a “hero” would keep in mind that he is innocent until, and if, he is convicted in court.

And for many workers — thousands of whom have waged hard-fought union battles to get affordable medical insurance for their families — this deluge of sexual fantasy and idolatry toward Mangione is repugnant, a broadside attack on serious efforts to take on the issue.

The horrible health care in the U.S. isn’t caused by a handful of greedy bosses. It’s part and parcel of the workings of capitalism, a social system that operates by turning everything into commodities that can be sold for a profit. Food, electricity, housing and medical care, things that should be a human right and which we have the know-how to provide to every person on the planet today, become objects of exploitation and oppression.

Murdering individual capitalists can’t bring this system down, let alone build a society worth having.

Only through using the unions to fight to defend our wages, safety and health care today, and, over time, gaining the self-confidence and class consciousness to conquer power by workers and farmers mobilized in our tens of millions, will solutions to these issues be found.

Greetings to fellow workers behind bars

Holiday greetings to fellow workers behind bars! The *Militant* will continue telling the truth about what workers face on either side of prison walls and spreading the word about our common struggles.

The dog-eat-dog capitalist rulers in the U.S. claim their criminal “justice” system is a beacon for human rights worldwide. But their plea-bargain system, “own-your-own-crime” requirements for release, and overall degrading conditions they impose on workers caught up in their prisons expose that claim as a lie.

Over 1.8 million people are confined in U.S. prisons, the highest incarceration rate anywhere in the world. The overwhelming majority never get a jury trial, a constitutional right won in struggle. Under the plea-bargain setup, they’re bullied to “confess” to a lesser crime to avoid threats of even longer jail time.

The entire system, from the cops and courts to jails, prisons, and parole boards, is aimed at protecting the wealth and power of the country’s rulers, and at punishing and imparting fear in the working class. It’s reinforced by the capitalist rulers’ barbaric use of solitary confinement and the death penalty.

What all working people face in prison comes down especially hard on African Americans. Blacks are 14% of the U.S. population, but 39% of all federal prisoners.

Many of those behind prison walls are framed up. The *Militant* salutes the fight by Carlos Harris, his family and supporters who won his release in October after nearly two decades in California state prisons. Harris never gave up fighting his wrongful conviction.

The horrors inflicted on prisoners under Bashar al-Assad in Syria are becoming more widely known

since his overthrow. Thousands of prisoners are incarcerated in Russian President Vladimir Putin’s gulag for opposing his war against Ukraine. Journalists are thrown into prison in Hong Kong for reporting on protests against Beijing’s stifling control. Novelist Boualem Sansal was seized last month in Algeria for the anti-autocratic political themes in his books.

The *Militant* joins in fighting for freedom for all those imprisoned for speaking out against tyranny, exploitation and oppression.

In addition to the torturous conditions imposed on all workers in U.S. prisons, political prisoners like Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu-Jamal face special indignities.

This issue celebrates 10 years since the last of the Cuban Five — revolutionaries who were framed up and imprisoned for actions in defense of Cuba’s socialist revolution — were released and returned home.

The *Militant* will continue to challenge every attempt by authorities to ban prisoners from receiving our paper. We have a long and proud record standing up for the rights of prisoners to read material of their own choosing. We make available a paper that keeps them in touch with working-class struggles in and outside prison walls. It is a tool for building working-class solidarity that provides a revolutionary road forward for workers and all the oppressed.

The *Militant* offers reduced-rate or free subscriptions to our readers behind bars, made possible by contributions from the paper’s working-class readers. The number of prisoners subscribing continues to climb, going over 300 this year. Contribute whatever you can to the Militant Prisoners’ Fund!

Defense of constitutional rights key in class struggle

Continued from front page

operations by the FBI, the rulers’ political police, are key to their offensive against working people. Under both Democrats and Republicans, the government continually seeks ways to refurbish the reputation and expand the use of its foremost political police agency.

A historic victory against government spying was won by the Socialist Workers Party’s lawsuit and political campaign against the FBI, begun in 1973. A court ruling in 1986 found the FBI’s use of informers, its burglaries and wiretappings of SWP headquarters, and its covert disruption of party activity and the lives of SWP members were unconstitutional.

Over the past nine years the FBI has been used by liberal forces, supported by the middle-class left, to target President-elect Donald Trump in a failed campaign to drive him and his “deplorable” working-class supporters out of politics.

A review by the Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General Dec. 12 admitted that the FBI had at least 26 informants at the Jan. 6, 2021, melee at the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Four entered the Capitol and 13 went into a restricted area. Three of the snitches were tasked with reporting on people attending the event and an undisclosed number provided FBI bosses with on-the-scene updates.

Last July FBI Director Christopher Wray refused to tell Congress whether FBI agents had been involved.

The Justice Department’s review was launched days after the fracas, but the report claims it was necessary to withhold the findings until now. Acknowledging the presence of informers might “interfere” with the prosecution of the many hundreds of people who have been locked up, government officials said.

Liberals unleash FBI on opponents

After Trump said he is nominating Kash Patel to be FBI director, Wray announced Dec. 11 he will resign. In another recent Justice Department report, the FBI admitted it spied on Patel starting in late 2017 when he played a prominent part in a House Intelligence Committee investigation into the FBI’s role in slandering and framing Trump for “Russian collusion.” This charge was concocted by Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign.

Patel says the FBI couldn’t openly snoop on his

work exposing the sham charges, but instead pried into his Google account and then got a court order gagging Google from informing him.

Democrats are seeking to remake the image of the FBI, to turn it into a progressive, woke agency to target forces like Trump that they smear as “fascist.”

In a sweeping attack on the Fourth Amendment’s protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, some 30 heavily armed FBI agents raided Trump’s Mar-a-Lago home in August 2022, claiming they were looking for evidence that Trump had illegally stashed classified documents there.

Political police target the working class

While targeting Trump, these attacks are more broadly aimed at the working class. The FBI has targeted a number of people who they view as “foreign agents” — including leaders of the African People’s Socialist Party and Scott Ritter, a former United Nations weapons inspector in Iraq, both of whom Joseph Biden’s Justice Department claims have untoward relations with Russia.

Under Wray’s watch, the FBI has also targeted Catholics. A memo last year from its Richmond, Virginia, office described Catholic groups that worship with the traditional Latin Mass as potential “racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists.”

And many parents have been outraged over Attorney General Merrick Garland ordering the FBI to snoop on parents speaking out at school board meetings about not being informed about gender-related instruction in schools that affect their children.

The use of government spies has gone hand in hand with increasingly open attacks on free speech. Upper-middle-class layers consider views that differ from theirs as “unacceptable,” whether it’s opponents of abortion clinics, foes of so-called critical race theory, advocates for the freedom to worship or others.

‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

Makes it possible to send prisoners 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.

Back Ukraine’s fight to repel Moscow’s invasion

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Russian President Vladimir Putin is driving to conquer more territory in Ukraine’s southeast despite the staggering loss of the lives and limbs of Russian workers in uniform. Moscow’s bombardment of Ukraine’s cities and power grid continues to strike blows at working people there, but they remain determined to defend their country’s sovereignty.

Moscow is pushing to expand its grip in Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia, which Putin in 2022 declared were “four new regions” of “a greater historical Russia.” Moscow’s forces have only been able to occupy a part of each of these provinces.

Putin hopes to use Russia’s numerically superior forces to try to take more of the Donbas industrial region. They are trying to encircle the well defended transport hub in Pokrovsk, which is becoming the biggest battleground of the war. The Russian army has now lost more armor there than the German army during the siege of Stalingrad in World War II. Hundreds of Russian infantry were mowed down near Pokrovsk Dec. 11 with their bodies “piled up high against a wall,” according to a report in Euromaidan Press. Two days later, Ukrainian units mounted successful counterattacks. They may be stretched, but they have higher morale than Moscow’s forces, as they fight Putin’s attempt to subjugate them.

Deaths in one month exceed those in Afghan war

Russian casualties have been mounting for the past five months, to over 45,000 in November, the highest so far. That month’s deaths exceed the 15,000 Soviet soldiers killed during Moscow’s entire 10-year war in Afghanistan. The Kremlin contemptuously throws away the lives of demoralized Russian workers in uniform. Those from the non-Russian ethnic regions suffer disproportionately high losses.

The North Korean government has sent troops to reinforce depleted Russian forces. Putin is desperate not to launch a new wave of conscription that would likely lead to wider protests against his regime inside Russia. But North Korean forces themselves face heavy losses trying to dislodge the Ukrainian incursion into Russia’s Kursk region. Of the more than 200 casualties inflicted on Moscow’s forces there Dec. 16, over 30 from North Korea were killed or wounded.

A column of Russian military vehicles headed north through Crimea Dec. 12, reported Atesh, a Crimean Tatar-led underground movement there. The Crimean Peninsula has been occupied by Moscow since 2014. The Atesh partisans said, “We know where and how to stop this equipment from reaching mainland Ukraine!”

The next day two Ukrainian rail workers in Simferopol, Crimea, were detained and beaten by political police from Russia’s FSB. Atesh declared that such actions would only strengthen their will to fight.

Putin targets nuclear plants

Putin’s threats of escalation include a Nov. 21 strike on Dnipro with a new ballistic missile, and targeting Ukraine’s power grid linked to its nuclear plants. He aims to increase the pressure on the “democratic” imperialist governments in Washington and Europe to get Kyiv to end the war on terms favorable to Moscow.

The Joseph Biden administration has provided Ukraine with just enough weapons to avoid defeat, but not enough to repel Putin’s forces. Washington’s foreign policy seeks stability for the U.S. rulers’ own economic and political interests, not those of working people in Ukraine or anywhere else.

In one of the largest missile attacks on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure, the Russian military Dec. 13 launched almost 200 drones, as well as 94 cruise and ballistic missiles, 81 of which were shot down. Several Ukrainian power plants were damaged, knocking out electricity for thousands of people.

Dozens of injured soldiers rioted in Russia in November over poor medical treatment, reported Ukraine’s Defense Ministry. They smashed windows, destroyed barracks and 10 of them fled the medical compound before they were forced back to the front lines. Most had not even recovered from their injuries.