

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Israel's blows to Tehran, allies
boost fight against Jew-hatred
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 89/NO. 1 JANUARY 13, 2025

SWP, 'Militant' campaign to discuss shifts in world politics

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Recent political developments shaking world politics have stirred discussions among workers about a road forward, from the advances made by Israel in dealing blows to Hamas, Hezbollah and the rulers in Tehran; the fall of the Bashar al-Assad tyranny in Syria; the weakening of Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime as Ukrainians continue to defend their sovereignty; to a deepening economic and political crisis in Europe.

"Get the *Militant* today? Read about the fall of the dictatorship in Syria," Joel Britton said to workers driving out of the Ghirardelli Chocolate Co. in San Leandro, California, Dec. 18. Britton and another member of the Socialist Workers Party were discussing this question with members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 125, who were driving in and out at shift change.

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Milk-Bone strike, labor solidarity win new contract, strengthen union

BY CANDACE WAGNER

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The 165 members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 36G at J.M. Smucker's Milk-Bone factory here are scheduled to return to work Jan. 2 after seven weeks on strike. Workers voted in their majority to accept a three-year contract offer that includes a wage increase and pushes back some of the company's demands for union members to pay more for health care coverage.

Steve Palumbo, chief union steward in the plant, told the *Militant* he believes there hadn't been a strike at the plant since 1968. "They thought they could push us around," he said, calling the original company offer "a slap in the face." A second offer, which was even worse, was voted down overwhelmingly. The strike began Oct. 28.

Wages will increase by \$2.25 an hour in the first year and \$1.75 an hour in each of the following two years. According to strikers, the 20% wage increase is the

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Overthrow of Assad's tyranny opens space for working people



Reuters/Amr Abdallah Dalsh

Huge crowd at New Year's Eve celebration in Damascus, Syria, as millions across country marked fall of Assad family's oppressive 50-year rule. Working people have high expectations as thousands were freed from Assad's prisons and space has opened to fight for their interests.

BY SETH GALINSKY

The overthrow of the Bashar al-Assad dictatorship in Syria has left in tatters much of the "axis of resistance" organized by Iran's capitalist rulers to expand their power across the Middle East and to wipe out Israel.

This is a direct consequence of Israel's successes in dealing serious blows to Hezbollah in Lebanon and destruction of much of Tehran's air defenses, as well as its decimation of Hamas in

Gaza. Israel's fight to defend itself as a refuge for Jews and prevent another Holocaust has opened space for working people in Syria and beyond to advance their own interests.

With Assad's boot off their neck and thousands freed from his prisons, millions across Syria celebrated. Working people have high expectations. After 50 years of the Assad family tyranny and 13 years of war

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Hundreds of thousands mobilize in Cuba: 'End Washington's embargo!'



Estudios Revolución

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and Cuban revolutionary leader Raúl Castro, center, lead 500,000 people along Havana's Malecón Dec. 20 past U.S. Embassy to protest Washington's decadeslong economic and political war against Cuba's socialist revolution.

BY JANET POST

Hundreds of thousands of people marched down the Malecón by the U.S. Embassy in Havana Dec. 20, to protest the unrelenting economic war being waged against the working people of Cuba by Washington. The demonstration was led by former President and Army Gen. Raúl Castro and Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel.

"We are marching now to tell the U.S. government to let the Cuban people live in peace. Down with interference!" Díaz-Canel told the crowd. In addition to calling for an end to the decadeslong

embargo, they demanded the U.S. government remove Cuba from its list of "State Sponsors of Terrorism."

Inclusion on this list subjects Cuba to additional punitive measures.

Waving Cuban flags, marchers chanted, "We will never surrender!"

After the 1959 victory of the revolution in Cuba bringing workers and peasants to power, the embargo was enacted in 1960 by President John Kennedy, based on a memorandum drafted by the State Department. "Every possible means should be undertaken promptly

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Canada forum discusses capitalist trade conflicts vs. a working-class road forward

BY JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL — "Ottawa and Washington are trying to line up working people in each country against one another, and against

workers in other countries," Steve Penner, organizer of the Communist League in Canada, told a Militant Labour Forum here Dec. 21. In this conflict "working people will be the main casualties."

The forum was organized to discuss how workers should respond to the Canadian government's campaign against U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's threat to impose a 25% tariff on products from Canada and Mexico.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau warned that Ottawa would retaliate with its own set of tariffs on U.S. goods. He argued that the government of Mexico, not Canada, was

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Culture flourishes in Ukraine while artists, actors are jailed in Russia

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Working people in Ukraine have tenaciously defended their country's sovereignty against almost three years of an all-out invasion by the Vladimir Putin regime in Moscow. As part of conducting this war, Putin has carried out a systematic and brutal assault on the political, cultural and human rights of the Russian people, fearing growing opposition to his war and his rule.

In sharp contrast, and despite the horrors of Moscow's assault on their country, culture is flourishing in Ukraine, a reflection of the population's pride in their national independence.

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Montreal hotel workers fight union-busting drive

Flight attendants demonstrate against two-tier employment

The fight for rights of women, women workers in Indonesia

BY LINDA HARRIS
AND STEVE PENNER

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Supporters of women's rights joined a mass labor rally here Oct. 24 protesting new anti-labor measures in a law adopted by the government. Some of its measures hit women especially hard, including extending the maximum overtime hours to four hours a day and 18 hours a week and removing the right for workers to have two days off a week. These make it even more difficult for women to spend time with their families.

The law also makes it easier for employers to hire workers on temporary contracts. Contract workers can be paid by piece rate rather than an hourly wage, and don't receive the same benefits as permanent workers. And the law makes it more difficult to get severance pay if you're laid off.

Tens of thousands of workers, the large majority women, have lost jobs in the garment and textile industry over the last year. Indonesia was the eighth-largest exporter of clothing worldwide in 2021, but the industry has been in decline, with major textile factories shutting down.

Some 85% of all textile workers are employed in Java, Indonesia's most populous island, outside this city, where the minimum wage is much lower than here.

These *Militant* correspondents took part in a meeting here Nov. 11 with representatives from Perempuan Mahardhika, which organizes women workers, and Jala PRT from the National Advocacy Network for Domestic Workers. The meeting was held at the

offices of Yayasan Kalyanamitra, a women's rights organization.

Vivi Widyawati explained that Perempuan Mahardhika works with women garment workers, both in small shops and in factories, which are 80% to 90% female.

Low wages and discrimination and harassment are widespread in the garment factories, which subcontract out work. "Many workers are on short-term contracts, in some cases for only two weeks," Widyawati said. "That makes it harder for workers to join a union."

Millions more Indonesian women and girls work in private households as domestic workers and in the broader "informal economy" of workers who have no contract — the majority of all jobs in Indonesia. As a result, they don't even have the limited protections in Indonesian labor laws.

Jala PRT has been fighting for years for a domestic workers' protection bill, first submitted in 2004, to be passed by the Indonesian parliament.

Lita Anggraini, national coordinator of Jala PRT, called on Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia's new president, to get parliament to pass the bill. "Domestic workers are workers. They provide essential services," she said. "But domestic workers are denied access and claim to basic rights and protection. They face some of the harshest working conditions."

The fight for women's rights

Yayasan Kalyanamitra was founded in 1985 under the Suharto regime to "fight against injustice and the oppression of women." One of its campaigns today is to end child marriage.



Militant/Baskaran Appu

Organizations representing women workers met Nov. 11 at the offices of Kalyanamitra, a women's rights organization. Speaking at left is Ika Agustina, the group's executive director.

It has been working with groups in villages in rural western Java where contract marriages of underage girls continue to take place. Villagers are promised money for their family for allowing their daughters to marry foreigners.

Young girls "don't have the power to say no," Rena Herdiyani, a longtime leader of Kalyanamitra, explained. "They have to quit school and they lose access to education." Also, she said, they face a higher mortality rate, with a greater risk of dying from having a child too young. "It is another way in which women are exploited."

In an advance, Indonesia's revised marital law raises the minimum age for marriage to 19. "But there is a loophole," Herdiyani said, that allows

"dispensation from religious courts for child marriage.

Kalyanamitra has a number of students working with it. "We are dealing with a new generation," Lilis Listyowati said. "Young women are targeted by capitalism" over social media and in other ways.

Those participants in the meeting were interested in the new edition of the Pathfinder book *Cosmetics, Fashion, and the Exploitation of Women*, including in translating it into Indonesian. As the book's new preface explains, it is about how the universal second-class status of women in class-divided society emerged in humankind's past and how it continues to flourish today under capitalism. And in how it can be ended.

Kurds in UK rally in defense of their rights after assaults by police, arrests

BY DAG TIRSEN

LONDON — Hundreds of police, many heavily armed, raided the Kurdish Community Centre in Haringey, north London, and seven houses across the city Nov. 27, an attack on the rights of all working people. Kurds and their supporters protested outside the community center and in the local area that day, the next day and again in central London Dec. 1.

During the raids, cops deployed heli-

copters and drones, according to KCC leaders, broke down doors and caused injuries. The assault at the community center coincided with preparations there for an anniversary celebration of the founding of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey. The center was closed down by cops for nine days after the raid, breaching the right of assembly.

Six of the seven Kurds arrested in the raids were charged Dec. 10 with being

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THE MILITANT

Protest Dominican gov't deportations of Haitians

More than 71,000 Haitian immigrants have been deported to Haiti by the government of the Dominican Republic since October. The Sugarcane Workers Union fights against this anti-immigrant campaign, explaining it's in the interests of sugar barons and other capitalists.



AP Photo/Ricardo Hernandez

Dominican gov't trucks fitted with cages are used to deport Haitians across the border.

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SWP discusses shifts in world

Continued from front page

“In the few seconds I had with each worker,” Britton said, “I pointed to the front-page photo in the Dec. 23 issue and said, ‘Look at the massive numbers of working people celebrating the downfall of Assad.’”

One worker “gave us \$5 for a single copy and another gave \$4,” Britton said, noting that sales at the shift change have taken place for several years. “Several others had their dollar bills or a handful of coins ready. A dozen production workers and a truck driver got the paper, which also had news on solidarity the BCTGM strike at Milk-Bone in Buffalo, New York, was winning.”

SWP members going door to door in Euless, Texas, Dec. 29 met truck driver Victor Torres. When Alyson Kennedy pointed to the photo on the front page of the *Militant* of the massive outpouring of working people in Syria, Torres said, “I saw this on the news.” Kennedy explained that when Israel defeated Hezbollah and Hamas, whose goal was to kill or to drive all the Jews out of the Middle East, this opened the door

to the overthrow of the brutal dictatorship of the Assad regime.

“There are a lot of changes taking place here too, we see more strikes in the U.S.,” she said, pointing to the recent strike victories at Milk-Bone’s plant in Buffalo and by UNITE HERE Local 2 hotel workers in San Francisco.

Immigrants blamed

“I don’t like either the Democrats or the Republicans,” Torres said. “Everything is going up except our salaries. They don’t do anything about this and they are always trying to blame the immigrants for these problems.” Torres was born in Laredo, Texas, and his parents were from Mexico.

“The SWP supports fighting for amnesty for any worker who lives and works in the United States,” Gerardo Sánchez told him. “The problems we face are caused by capitalism, not immigrants.”

“They keep immigrants illegal so they won’t fight for their rights,” Torres said. He described how area truck drivers “have a website — Truckers of Dallas — where we post videos and information that can help truckers with Department of Transportation citations and other problems we face.”

He bought a *Militant* subscription



“I don’t like Democrats or Republicans,” truck driver Victor Torres, right, told SWP members Gerardo Sánchez and Alyson Kennedy in Euless, Texas, Dec. 29. “They blame immigrants for problems.” He got a *Militant* subscription and *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*.

and a copy of *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*.

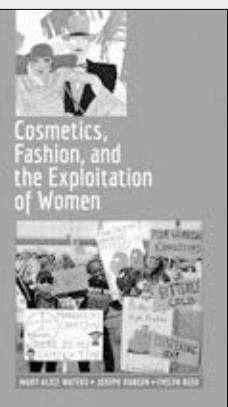
Many workers come to see the *Militant* as essential for presenting a working-class road forward. Susan LaMont and Markie Wilson, SWP members in Atlanta, visited Jesse Cable, a retired pressman and longtime reader of the *Militant* Dec. 28. They brought him a copy he had preordered of the new edition of *Cosmetics, Fashion, and the*

Exploitation of Women.

“It’s not easy to understand what’s happening in the Mideast now,” Cable said. “If you look online, there’s constant stories posted, but there’s not a single word about the working class in the Middle East or anywhere else,” he said. “That’s why the *Militant*’s coverage is so different.”

To join in efforts to expand the reach of the *Militant*, contact the SWP branch nearest you listed on page 8.

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SF hotel workers approve new contract, end 3-month strike

BY ERIC SIMPSON

SAN FRANCISCO — After 93 days on the picket line, UNITE HERE Local 2 union members at the Hilton San Francisco Union Square voted Dec. 24 to ratify a new contract by 99.4%, ending the longest hotel strike in the local’s history.

After 2,500 workers struck six hotels at three chains here, 12 now have new contracts — seven at Marriott, three at Hyatt and two at Hilton hotels. The union says it will demand that San Francisco’s other full-service hotels accept the standard set by the new contracts.

Workers successfully defended the unique health plan they had previously won, financed by the hotels but jointly administered with the union. They also won a \$3 an hour wage increase for non-tipped employees, with \$3.50 more through 2028; kept retiree health care; increased monthly pension benefits; and strengthened their

ability to fight workload violations.

Marriott was the first of the three hotel chains to reach an agreement, breaking ranks Dec. 14 to return to the bargaining table. Workers there voted to approve the new contract Dec. 19, after 89 days on strike.

In front of the Grand Hyatt on Union Square that same night, Marriott workers joined the picket line. “Going through this together, we’ve gotten really close here on night shift,” Juvy Castro, a worker in the hotel’s cafe, told the *Militant*.

Two days later, Hyatt caved. Workers approved the new contract unanimously.

Hilton was the last to fall. On Dec. 20, the *Militant* counted 18 unionists playing drums in front of the hotel, as dozens of strikers danced and chanted, “One day longer!” Two days before Christmas, the California Nurses Association brought a hot dinner for all the pickets. Later that day Hilton threw in the towel. Workers then approved the new contract.

Pickets had gone up here Sept. 22 for 24 hours a day. The number of hotels struck gradually increased as workers voted to strike. The union organized several downtown marches of over 1,000 workers to show their unity.

The last mass march was on Dec. 11, three days before Marriott returned to the negotiating table. “Don’t gut our health care!” was its theme. From the beginning the chains wanted to get rid of the union’s health plan of zero payments per month, or \$10 to cover a family. When the hotels were forced to back off, they instead pushed for a two-tier plan, with an inferior plan for new hires. But union members held firm.

For Fe Cruz, a lobby housekeeper at Marriott’s Westin St. Francis, keeping the health care plan was essential. “After 25 years as a housekeeper, I’ve had five surgeries for carpal tunnel, and without my health care I wouldn’t have been able

to afford them,” she told the press.

“Now the managers are learning a lesson about how strong we are,” Carol Bungay, a phone operator who has worked at the Hyatt for decades, told the *Militant*. “When we go back we’ll be in a better position to stand up to them, to oppose assignments outside of our job.”

The negotiating committee included dozens of union members in addition to the lead negotiators. In the end, John Elrod, a bartender at the Hilton who was on the negotiating committee, said, “It’s a really good contract.”

“Hilton, Hyatt, and Marriott workers refused to give up their health care or go backwards — and we proved on the picket line that we’re not afraid of a tough fight,” Lizzy Tapia, president of UNITE HERE Local 2, said in a statement.

The union printed a flyer to spread the news of the victory to workers at all the hotels in the area. “The bosses thought this was their time,” it says. “All their goals, especially to get out of our Local 2 Trust Fund and roll-back medical benefits, lie in ruins. Our unwavering, immovable Strikers, Union Committee/Picket Captains and City-Wide Negotiators deserve all the credit. Let’s Roll On! to sign the rest of the hotels! Contract Now!”

Betsy Stone contributed to this article.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

GEORGIA

Atlanta
Immigration, Tariffs and the Class Struggle: Workers Face Capitalist Policies and Trade Wars. Speaker: Susan LaMont, Socialist Workers Party. Sun., Jan. 19, 4 p.m. Donation: \$5. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel.: (678) 528-7828.

Kurds rally in defense of their rights

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members of the PKK, which has been banned in the U.K. since 2001.

The Kurdish people, numbering 30 million across Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, are the largest nationality in the world without a homeland. Since the post-World War I carving up of the Middle East by the British and French imperialist rulers, the Kurds have been denied national rights. This is enforced today by the capitalist rulers in each country. Tens of thousands have sought refuge in the U.K. and elsewhere.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s Labour government is committed to maintaining the British rulers’ trade, political and military relations with the Turkish government, a bitter foe of the Kurdish people’s struggle for self-determination. During a Nov. 14 visit to Turkey, Defense Secretary John Healey vowed to

deepen defense cooperation with Ankara. Thousands of Kurds have been killed since the PKK launched an armed struggle against Turkish government oppression in the early 1980s.

The six Kurds charged in London will not be tried until January 2026, a judge ruled Dec. 20. They face onerous bail conditions, including wearing an electronic monitor, observing a curfew, reporting to the cops each day and not visiting the community center or having contact with each other.

The cops’ evidence “mainly consists of documents and references to the defendants’ legal campaigning and advocacy work on the Kurdish issue,” their lawyer, Ali Has, told ANF News. “This raises serious concerns about the abuse of legal mechanisms to charge individuals for exercising their fundamental rights.”

Trade conflicts, workers interests

Continued from front page

Washington's real problem and could be kicked out of the North American trade pact.

Trudeau also says Washington and Ottawa should unite against Beijing. In October both governments imposed a 100% tariff on Chinese-made electric vehicles. Ottawa also imposed a 25% surtax on steel and aluminum imports from China.

Premiers Douglas Ford of Ontario and David Eby of British Columbia upped the stakes, threatening to shut down energy supplies to the U.S. if Trump carries out his threat.

"Heightened competition for markets and resources is pulling the imperialist 'world order' apart," Penner said.

"There are big stakes for how working people and our unions respond. History shows that trade wars point toward future shooting wars in which the working class will be the cannon fodder. Sharpening conflicts among the imperialist powers over control of world markets and colonies preceded both the First and Second World Wars."

He said a call by officials of the Canadian Labour Congress Nov. 26 for working people in Canada to join with the country's capitalist rulers in fighting Trump's threats is a far bigger problem for workers than the U.S. president-elect's threats.

"This attack on our industries," said a statement signed by CLC President Bea Bruske, "jeopardizes good, unionized jobs across vital sectors like manufacturing, mining, energy, and agriculture — jobs that are the backbone of our economy."

"But Canada is a class-divided society," Penner said. "There is no 'we' that includes Canada's working people together with the capitalist bosses who exploit and oppress us. The government that is attacking our right to strike and other fundamental freedoms is acting on *their* behalf to defend *their* industries and profit system."

In the week before the forum, Trudeau's government ordered 55,000 striking postal workers back to work, the third time Ottawa has banned workers from striking in the past four months.

"The idea that the unions should be fighting to defend 'Canadian' jobs here, or 'American' jobs in the U.S., is a deadly trap.

"The working class is an international class," Penner continued. "We need to unite to defend our interests against the ruling billionaire families, including by fighting for jobs for all."

Working-class political action

"The drive by the CLC officials to convince workers to join Ottawa's 'Team Canada' against Trump is a deadly obstacle to the unions defending workers' interests," the CL leader said.

"Anti-Americanism is a central pillar of Canadian nationalism. But U.S. workers are not the enemy of the working class in this country. They are our most important and powerful ally, and the Canadian and U.S. bosses are our common enemy.

"The rulers' goal is to block any form of independent working-class political action that could lead to labor challenging the political rule of the capitalist class," he said.

"In 2022 unions in Ontario took a step forward when they threatened a general strike in defense of the 55,000 school support workers who defied a law banning their right to strike. Their determined and solid effort forced the provincial government to repeal the law.

"In the past few years hundreds of thousands of workers in the U.S. and Canada have waged fights for better wages and working conditions," Penner said.

"Out of these experiences, workers are learning the power of united working-class action. But this doesn't automatically lead workers to recognize that calls to support the Canadian rulers' against their rivals, in the inevitable trade conflicts that arise, are a deadly trap."

That's why CL members seek ways to point to workers' common interests, against the chauvinism fostered by the rulers and their political parties, he said. To advance an independent working-class road forward, Penner urged meeting participants to campaign for Philippe Tessier, the CL's candidate in the Quebec National Assembly by-election for Terrebonne.

"My campaign explains the need to build solidarity with working people in Mexico, the U.S. and internationally," Tessier said during the discussion. "The unions need to forge their

Political crisis deepens in South Korea



Yonhap News

In the deadliest air disaster on South Korean soil, a Jeju Air passenger jet crashed at Muan International Airport Dec. 29, killing all but two of the 181 people on board. This has added to the escalating political crisis facing the country's capitalist rulers. Working people have taken to the streets in weeks of mass protests following an attempt by the unpopular People Power Party President Yoon Suk Yeol to impose martial law Dec. 3. Both he and the acting president who followed him have been impeached.

Yoon was elected in 2022 by the thinnest of margins, 0.8%. He claimed martial law was required because the opposition-dominated parliament was refusing to act on proposed legislation. The massive demonstrations, including union walkouts, reflect working people's memory of earlier decades of military dictatorship. Their hard-won political rights are under attack.

Yoon was suspended from office and banned from leaving the country as South Korea's divided rulers weigh a course forward. If he is convicted of leading a "rebellion," he can face the death penalty or life imprisonment.

Washington relies on South Korea as a key ally to counter North Korea as well as the rise of Beijing. New acting President Choi Sang-mok hastened to assure the U.S. rulers that their alliance remained "ironclad."

Still, when Yoon declared martial law, the U.S. and South Korean militaries cancelled scheduled military exercises and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin deep-sixed a planned trip there. Washington has 28,500 troops stationed in South Korea.

In the airliner disaster, the Boeing 737-800 plane made an emergency landing after an apparent bird strike, but without flaps or landing gear deployed. It slid down the runway into a barrier at the end and burst into flames.

The government's slowness to respond and disrespectful treatment of angry relatives have deepened the political crisis.

— ROY LANDERSEN

own independent foreign policy that starts from the class interests workers share in common worldwide.

"That's the road toward building a mass party of labor based on the

unions, with the perspective of replacing the political power of the ruling capitalist families with a workers government," he said. "And to joining in the fight for a socialist world."

Over 1,000 UK food workers on strike over boss attacks on wages, conditions

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

SPALDING, England — Members of Unite the Union at Bakkavor here marked 12 weeks of their strike with a 150-strong picket Dec. 20. Workers walked out Sept. 26 over a pay claim. The strike is now a battle over the union itself.

Bosses have bused in strike-breakers from other plants, refused negotiations in favor of pressuring individual workers to accept a deal, and declared they aim to end paid breaks and erode premiums for shift- and public holiday work.

At the picket workers held a Christmas raffle and received a solidarity message and strike fund contribution from Rail Maritime and Transport union members from St. Pancras station in London.

Two days earlier, fellow Unite members at Oscar Mayer, 150 miles away, mounted a 100-strong rally outside the Wrexham Borough offices, where the

local council was discussing and adopted a motion in support of the strikers.

Workers at Oscar Mayer also walked out in September to fight bosses' demands to end paid breaks and extra pay for working public holidays — effectively a wage cut — and for union recognition.

"Without a union we have nothing," strike leader Joanna Kowalska told the *Militant*.

Prominent on placards at the rally were demands for the reinstatement of workers fired by bosses who claim they didn't sign a contract in time. The contract was issued in English, yet the majority of workers are from Eastern Europe and read little English.

Bosses "thought they could get away with this because were immigrant workers," striker Zlati Zlatev said.

Andrés Mendoza in Manchester contributed to this article.

More on program of the Socialist Workers Party

'Our Politics Start With the World' in New International no. 13

"We start with the interests of the working class, which is an international class. We're unconditionally opposed to the rulers of the United States imposing protectionist barriers of any kind under any pretext on imported goods."

— Jack Barnes

The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us

The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward

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

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

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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.

Montreal hotel workers fight union-busting drive

MONTREAL — The picket line maintained by 600 locked-out workers at Quebec's largest hotel, Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth, remains spirited in face of the decision by the bosses to close this hotel here over the Christmas to New Year's holiday period. They haven't set a date to reopen, claiming management cannot maintain a five-star level of service.

The hotel locked out the workers, members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN), Nov. 20, a day after they voted by over 90% to reject the bosses' latest contract offer. The 17 other CSN-organized hotels in Quebec have reached new contracts with the union, covering 4,000 workers.

"They want to break the union," CSN spokesperson Pierre-Andre Champoux told *Militant* worker-correspondents on the picket line Dec. 17. "The negotiations are blocked on two issues — the workload for housekeepers and the use of outside, nonunion agency workers. The morale of the workers is high. Once a week we have a general assembly of the members to evaluate the situation."

"They want to replace union workers with nonunion workers," said Francois Houle, vice president of the union local and negotiating committee member. "Thirty percent of the workforce are already agency workers." Houle brought containers of hot soup for the pickets prepared by locked-out hotel chefs.

Signs held by the workers and plastered on the hotel's plate-glass windows complained about the use of scabs by the bosses, a violation of Quebec law.

A delegation of Canadian National rail workers, members of the Teamsters union, responded to the hotel workers' need for solidarity by joining their picket line Dec. 19. "I think it's a good opportunity to unite workers against the

tyranny of the bosses," said CN rail conductor Giulio Archambault.

Join the picket line — 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. all week. Send donations to CSN, 1601 Avenue De Lorimier, Montreal H2K 4M5.

— John Steele

Flight attendants demonstrate against two-tiered employment

FORT WORTH, Texas — Members of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA gathered outside Terminal E at Dallas-Fort Worth airport Dec. 17 to advance their fight for a new contract. They work at PSA Airlines, which, as union flight attendant Jeanne Krejci explained, is a "wholly owned subsidiary of American Airlines." But flight attendants there make 45% less than their counterparts at American.

Workers at PSA are fighting to match what was recently won at American, she explained, including retroactive pay, boarding pay and better schedules. "Delay, delay, is not OK," pickets chanted.

Chris Corona, a flight attendant at Envoy Airlines, told the *Militant* that workers there are fighting for a union. The protesters were joined by a member of the Association of Professional Flight Attendants.

The rally here was part of a series of actions that day at PSA and Air Wisconsin, another subsidiary of American Airlines. Similar protests occurred at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Philadelphia International Airport, Dayton International Airport and Chicago O'Hare International Airport.

— George Chalmers

Amazon drivers organize strike action in four states

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — "Working here made me want to get involved in fighting for a union," Aaron Nipper,



Militant/John Steele

Locked-out hotel workers picket Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal Dec. 30 in their fight for new contract. Rail workers, other unionists have joined picket line in solidarity.

an Amazon delivery driver, told the *Militant* here Dec. 19, as some 20 drivers and supporters from the Teamsters union picketed outside the huge Amazon distribution center in this north Atlanta suburb. They were part of a five-day protest by drivers at eight Amazon locations in California, Illinois, New York and Georgia.

"We're fighting for union recognition and better pay and working conditions," Nipper said. He said he worked at Amazon for two years before being illegally fired for union activity in November.

Like many other companies, Amazon uses a subcontracting scam, aiming to keep its workforce divided, to fight against union-organizing efforts and keep wages and benefits low. Amazon claims the drivers aren't Amazon employees, even though they drive Amazon trucks, wear Amazon uniforms and have to follow Amazon procedures and work rules.

"You clock in to work, pick up your van and get your route, load the van up yourself, then head out to make your deliveries," Nipper said. "Our shift is supposed to be 10 hours, four days a week. But you have to keep going until all the packages are delivered, so we often have to work 12-hour days." Drivers are only paid overtime after 40 hours a week, he said, and company-provided health insurance is so costly

many drivers can't afford to sign up.

Two dozen members of Teamsters Local 705 picketed at the Amazon warehouse in Skokie, Illinois, just north of Chicago, reported Dean Hazlewood. As the delivery trucks crept up to the gates to go out on their delivery rounds, pickets would delay them just long enough for one picket to hand the driver a flier about the organizing drive and urge them to join in.

Carla Latuff said she had been a driver for Amazon there for six months. Arriving from Venezuela two years ago, she said she "never imagined I would be on a picket line. But this is a fight for all workers at Amazon. The unity of all workers is the way we are going to win."

The Teamsters filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board over the company's refusal to negotiate. Amazon claims the complaint is invalid because the drivers are contract workers.

— Susan LaMont and Marklyn Wilson

Quebec Amazon workers rally for first contract

LAVAL, Quebec — Dozens of workers, members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions, rallied at Canada's only unionized Amazon warehouse Dec. 23 to demand their first contract. Supporters from other unions joined them in solidarity here, just northwest of Montreal, where some 230 union members work.

"They tried to stop it before it started. But we showed them we really wanted this," union member Musa Gaku told CBC News. "In the last six months we've reported almost 126 injuries," Hillary Kibos added.

"Our work conditions are clearly inferior to those in other warehouses," Felix Trudeau, president of the local union, told the media. "Amazon has ample means to pay us properly."

The union was certified in May. After six months of negotiations, the company is supposed to make an offer Jan. 16. The workers are demanding starting pay of 26 Canadian dollars an hour (\$18). Right now they start at CA\$20. In Quebec a first contract goes to arbitration if there is no negotiated agreement.

Elsewhere, more than 800 workers at Walmart's Mississauga, Ontario, warehouse voted in September to join Unifor, one of Canada's largest industrial unions. It is the first Walmart warehouse to be unionized in Canada. Some 95 drivers at Walmart in Surrey, British Columbia, voted to join Unifor in November.

— Joe Young

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

January 10, 2000

NEW YORK CITY — The Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court ruled Dec. 16 that the cops charged with brutally gunning down Amadou Diallo, a 22-year-old worker from Guinea, are to be tried in Albany, New York. This ruling reversed an earlier decision that the trial would be held in the Bronx where the killing occurred.

The indictment of the cops was a major victory for working people in the city of New York. It came about as a result of demonstrations, speak-outs, and civil disobedience protests over the course of weeks, including daily picket lines outside the police headquarters that involved thousands of workers and others.

Moving the trial is an attempt to prevent the cops from being convicted, and also to try to stop this case from further weakening the Democratic and Republican parties during the upcoming election year.

THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

January 17, 1975

The New Year has begun with 6.5 million Americans out of work. What is the government doing about this? On Dec. 31, President Ford signed a bill providing money for 100,000 public service jobs. Five times that number were laid off in December alone.

We propose an alternative program:

- The government should institute a massive public works program to build quality housing, hospitals, schools, mass transportation systems, sewage plants, and similar projects.

- Jobless workers should be paid unemployment benefits at union wage scales, for as long as they are out of work.

- Unemployment could be reduced immediately by reducing the work-week without any cut in pay in order to spread the available work to all those who want a job.

Demonstrations to demand "Jobs for All!" can be a step toward organizing people to defend their interests.

THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

January 9, 1950

The hated dictatorship of the butcher Chiang Kai-shek today rots on the garbage dump. The success of the Chinese people in ridding themselves of Chiang and opening up a new stage of development that can lead to the overthrow of capitalism has upset the world balance of power.

The cost to the American people of [President] Truman's reactionary policy in China and the Far East has been high. America has lost incalculable resources of friendship. To win back that friendship will not be easy. A start can be made by demanding recognition of the new government without further delay. Economic and financial aid to speed the long-range development of China should be offered on a generous scale with no strings attached.

That's in the spirit of the America of the working people who feel the warmest friendship and sympathy for the long-suffering Chinese people.

Culture flourishes in Ukraine

Continued from front page

The Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theater in central Kyiv has been packed almost every day since it reopened six months after Russian tanks rolled across the border toward the capital on Feb. 24, 2022. It was founded in 1920 amid a flowering of Ukrainian culture that was encouraged by the revolutionary workers government led by V.I. Lenin after the Russian Revolution.

Ivan Franko (1856-1916) was an outstanding Ukrainian cultural figure who penned poems, novels and plays. He wrote about peasant and working-class revolutionary struggles, and the condition of women and Jews, in his native Galicia, now western Ukraine. He translated Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Emile Zola, Aleksandr Pushkin, Henrik Ibsen and many others.

Theater director Yevhen Nyshchuk, along with many of his colleagues, volunteered for the Ukrainian army as Putin's forces crossed the border. Tickets are free for members of Ukraine's armed forces and substantial funds are raised for the military.

More than 1,500 performances of over 50 international and Ukrainian classics, as well as contemporary drama, have been attended by over half a million people.

One play is adapted from the classic anti-war novel by German writer Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which depicts the horrors of trench warfare in World War I. In the novel, the main German character sees Russian prisoners of war and French soldiers, realizing they are just like him and his comrades.

The three actors in the main roles of the adapted play, "Three Comrades," are performing after having enlisted and fought at the front for a year. They say this gives realism to their performances. To take part in the play today, their commander grants them leaves.

"Remarque sounded completely different. The reality of the war, which has already affected everyone, has changed us," Nyshchuk, also an actor, told CNN. He often addresses audiences to thank them for their commitment. "I felt the audience had changed its perception of the theater, had more appetite for it, for this exchange of energy."

People are not so much escaping the realities of war, but seeking thought-provoking entertainment. Air raid sirens regularly interrupt performances, forcing people to shelter in nearby underground metro stations.

On Dec. 25, "everyone survived a missile attack" of more than 70 missiles and over 100 drones, "and in the evening they came to the performance, which was not canceled," Nyshchuk said. Long audience applause celebrates the performances, but also each other for their spirit of survival.

Explosion of bookstores, books

The number of bookstores across the country has jumped from 200 prewar to almost 500 now. The largest, Sens, opened on Kyiv's main street in the midst of the war. The shop rapidly became a popular volunteer hub. Last year it offered over 57,000 titles to over half a million customers. Crowds attend the store's busy schedule of book launches and other programs.

"A book is the most convenient way to spend time during the war when it is impossible to predict anything," Sens' founder, Oleksiy Erinchak, told CNN. "Many people have switched to the Ukrainian language [from Russian]. They are trying to understand what it means to be Ukrainian. And books make it much easier to do that."

The number of adults reading books *every day* has doubled during the war to 16%, the Ukrainian Book Institute reports.

A popular Ukrainian band, Okean Elzy, plays "at big concerts and in shelters, in stadiums and in dugouts," band members say. "But it's not the place that matters, it's our togetherness." Since Putin's invasion, they have performed over 300 concerts for the military, including near the front lines.

Yegor Firsov, a chief sergeant who enlisted in 2022, told CNN he supports an active cultural life, even if the front lines for soldiers are a "real hell." Whenever he gets a leave, he goes to concerts



Yulia Weber/Ivan Franko Drama Theatre

Kyiv theater director and actor Yevhen Nyshchuk addresses audience before performance to thank them for their commitment. Like many of his colleagues, he volunteered for the army to defend Ukraine from Moscow's 2022 invasion and gets leave from the front to perform.

and other cultural events, noting, "bookshops and theaters are about the real thing, about life."

Putin strangles Russian culture

In stark contrast, the Putin regime has accelerated its attack on culture in Russia in order to suppress any opposition to the war. After his repressive forces quashed sizable political protests following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin intensified a far-reaching crackdown on poets, playwrights, artists, musicians and other cultural workers. Many have been arrested, prosecuted and silenced, or have fled the country.

For the past year, the Russian Culture Ministry has been demanding all state-funded theaters reflect "traditional values" as defined by Putin. His "values" include strict adherence to "service to the Motherland" and "unity of the nations of Russia," which includes Ukraine.

The Kremlin is seeking to "identify and destroy everything that is alive on

the Russian stage," theater critic Marina Davydova told the Moscow Times.

One theater worker noted that Russian classics like plays by Nikolai Gogol aren't immune from censorship. "If someone complains that some version of 'The Wedding' doesn't reflect 'family values,'" then there won't be state funding for it.

Nadya Raplya, a dissident artist now in exile in Berlin, told the Moscow Times her exhibition in 2019, called "Autumn of the Pakhan," Russian slang for a crime boss, was raided and shut down by police.

This was before the war when many Russian artists claimed to be staying out of politics. She rejected this, saying, "There is no such thing — art cannot be apolitical."

Like thousands of other cultural workers, Raplya says she looks forward to the war being over, the Putin regime gone and all political prisoners released. "Then I will probably be in Moscow tomorrow."

Daily mass protests in Georgia oppose pro-Moscow course

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Weeks of mass street demonstrations continue across the country of Georgia protesting the authoritarian pro-Moscow government led by the Georgian Dream party. Protesters are demanding a rerun of the October parliamentary elections, which they insist were rigged. Daily actions have been mounted since Nov. 28 when Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze announced his decision to postpone talks on Georgia joining the European Union until at least 2028.

On New Year's Eve, tens of thou-

sands demonstrated through the streets of Tbilisi, Georgia's capital. "We won't give up," protester Ruso told the *Militant* Jan. 1. "Our demand remains for new elections, that's what we deserve. It doesn't matter if some of us are beat up by the cops or arrested, we don't leave anyone behind. We are fighting for each other."

On Dec. 28 thousands participated in a human chain outside the parliament building and along several bridges in Tbilisi. Protesters carried banners saying, "We demand fresh elections," and "Freedom for political prisoners."

"Everyone must understand that the protests will not stop until all the demands are met," demonstrator Teimuraz Tsiklauri, a 23-year-old student, told Agence France-Presse.

Similar rallies were held in Batumi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Poti, Samtredia, Rustavi, Gori, Khashuri, Telavi, Gurjaani and other cities.

Over the past month riot police have used tear gas and water cannons to disperse demonstrators. The interior ministry admits more than 400 people have been arrested. Dozens have been hospitalized. The protests have led to growing rifts within the government, with the country's top human rights official, ombudsman Levan Ioseliani, joining Amnesty International in accusing police forces of "torturing"

some of those detained.

More protests occurred Dec. 29 after the ruling party's Mikheil Kavelashvili was sworn in as Georgia's new president. The previous president, Salome Zourabichvili, refused to recognize Kavelashvili's election. She joined protesters in demanding new elections. She addressed demonstrators outside the presidential palace and then left it, despite earlier promises to refuse to give up her seat.

The Georgian Dream government, which has been in office for 12 years, was formed and bankrolled by Bidzina Ivanishvili, a multibillionaire capitalist with banking and steel interests in Russia. Its policy of acquiescence to President Vladimir Putin's regime in Moscow is opposed by most of the 3.7 million people in Georgia, a former Soviet republic on the southeast corner of the Black Sea.

Many Georgian working people see strong links between what they face today and the long fight by toilers in Ukraine to defend their sovereignty against Moscow's attacks. When Putin launched his February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, 30,000 people turned out in Tbilisi to protest.

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

"I declare war to the death on Great Russian chauvinism."

"It must be absolutely insisted that the union Central Executive Committee should be presided over in turn by a Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian, etc. Absolutely!"

— V.I. Lenin, 1922

In 1922 and 1923 Lenin waged his last political battle. At stake was whether the revolution would remain on the proletarian course that had brought workers and peasants to power.

pathfinderpress.com

Lenin's
Final
Fight



\$17

SPEECHES & WRITINGS
1922-23

Israel's blows to Tehran, allies boost fight against Jew-hatred

BY SETH GALINSKY

Israeli forces have dealt severe blows to Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza and to Tehran's anti-aircraft defense system. These victories were possible because Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refused to give in to pressure by President Joseph Biden's administration to exercise "restraint"; and to the wide support in Israel for his course and the morale of Israeli soldiers who understand what is at stake.

This has advanced the war to defend Israel as a refuge for Jews and to prevent more pogroms and another Holocaust, but the war is far from over. The reactionary bourgeois regime in Iran is driving ahead toward making a nuclear bomb, a move Netanyahu has said Israel will not allow. The Houthis in Yemen continue to fire ballistic missiles at Israel.

At the end of November Iran's Atomic Energy Organization chief reported that Tehran has started up a few thousand new centrifuges. This would allow the production of uranium close to weapons-grade levels. If even one Iranian nuclear warhead made it through Israel's anti-missile defenses, it would be devastating. Ten million people live in Israel — including nearly half the Jews in the world — in an area smaller than Vermont.

Israel's Channel 12 news reported Dec. 29 that computers captured in Gaza show Hamas and Tehran had been preparing the Oct. 7, 2023, pogrom that killed 1,200 people for at least seven years. Hamas hacked security cameras on the border. It had the addresses of people it planned to target as well as schools and health clinics.

The pogrom was meant to be the opening of the battle to destroy Israel and evict or kill all the Jews there.

Israel: a refuge for Jews

In an interview with Netanyahu in the Dec. 21 *Wall Street Journal*, the Israeli prime minister gets at some of the central questions. In describing a crucial stage of the war against Hamas, Netanyahu notes U.S. officials "said to me, 'If you go into Rafah, you're on your own, and we're not going to send you the critical arms.'"

"But if we don't go into Rafah, we can't exist as a sovereign state. We'd become a vassal state and we won't survive," Netanyahu said. "The question of arms will fix itself, but the question of our independence will not. That's the end of Israel."

Washington's goal is not to defend Jews, but stability for its own imperialist economic and political interests, including the Biden administration's goal of better relations with Tehran. Netanyahu, a capitalist politician, seeks U.S. imperialist aid, but he understands that if Israel is to survive, it must be willing to fight on its own.

The Israel Defense Forces occupied Rafah with minimal civilian Palestinian casualties, despite Washington's predictions of 20,000 deaths. Israel followed this up with surprise attacks on Hezbollah in Lebanon — again over U.S. objections.

A layer of Israeli officials in the army

high command, police agencies and in rival political parties look to U.S. imperialism, hoping it will "correct" Netanyahu. They pressure the Israeli government to fall in more closely behind the U.S. rulers' foreign policy.

The *Journal* interview helps make clear what's behind today's witch hunt against Netanyahu, who is on trial for alleged corruption. One of his aides, Eli Feldstein, soldier Ari Rosenfeld and three other soldiers have been arrested on allegations of stealing classified documents that senior officials had kept hidden from Netanyahu.

The main "highly classified" document, given to German tabloid *Bild*, was a report by Hamas officials found on the computer of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar! It shows Hamas was not interested in a deal to free the hostages it seized, but in using them and their families to increase international pressure on Israel to end the war, leaving Hamas intact for more pogroms.

For years Israel's capitalist government has been responsible for the fact that Arab citizens of Israel have faced, and fought against, unequal treatment by the Israeli rulers. But a recent poll shows that 57.8% of Arab citizens in Israel, including Muslims, Druze and Christians, believe the war

Iran: Shopkeepers, truckers protest soaring prices



Hundreds of shopkeepers at several bazaars in Tehran, above, shut down their stalls Dec. 29 and protested over soaring prices, skyrocketing rents, raw material shortages and government disdain. The protest began with fabric merchants and shoemakers and spread. The plummeting Iranian currency — now at 820,000 rials to the dollar — has put many products out of the reach of workers and cut into sales that small business owners rely on.

The overthrow of the Tehran-backed Bashar al-Assad dictatorship in Syria, combined with the costs of Tehran's expansionist war moves abroad, as well as the effects of U.S.-led sanctions, has accelerated the economic crisis.

The independent Union of Truckers and Drivers declared "full solidarity" with the shopkeepers, noting that "the unstable currency fluctuations and endless high prices" have made conditions for truckers "unbearable."

Widespread electrical blackouts have shut down factories and schools. Anger increased after President Masoud Pezeshkian called on Iranians to turn down the thermostat two degrees to save gas. The crisis has deepened opposition to the Iranian rulers' war moves aimed at the destruction of Israel.

— S.G.

against Tehran's "axis of resistance" has created a shared sense of destiny between Jews and Arabs.

The decisive defeat of Hamas and Hezbollah and Tehran's plans to de-

stroy Israel can further open the doors to common action by working people of all nationalities and religious beliefs across the region, a needed road forward.

Ouster of Assad tyranny opens space for working people

Continued from front page

some 75% of the 20 million people in Syria are living on \$3.65 a day or less.

Working people there also face intervention from rival capitalist governments, from Washington to Turkey and beyond. Each is jockeying for position and pushing their own economic and political interests. It remains to be seen if the heterogeneous rebel coalition can put together a functioning government and which outside forces have the most influence.

Assad's hold over the two-thirds of the country that he controlled disintegrated when he could no longer count on thousands of Hezbollah thugs, Iranian troops and Russian air support to come to his rescue. With Turkish support, a rebel coalition — led by the Sunni Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham — forced Assad to flee.

Tahrir al-Sham says it broke from al-Qaeda and Islamic State in 2016. It portrays the rebel coalition as moderate in a bid to win economic aid and an end to sanctions imposed by Washington and other imperialist powers. It promises a "free market" and respect for religious and ethnic minorities — Alawites, Christians, Druze, Kurds and others — under Islamist rule.

Turkish diplomats were the first to meet with Tahrir al-Sham leader Ahmad al-Sharaa in Damascus. Ankara had been providing electricity to the rebel stronghold in Idlib in northern Syria and is extending the power lines to Aleppo. This will help make up for the cutoff of oil supplies from Iran.

A high-level U.S. delegation met with Sharaa in Damascus Dec. 20. "It was a good meeting," Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf said. Washington

dropped a "reward" it had been offering for the capture of Sharaa, although Tahrir al-Sham remains on the State Department's terrorist list.

Leading up to Assad's overthrow, Washington increased the number of U.S. troops in northern Syria from 900 to 2,000, largely stationed alongside Kurdish forces in the Northeast. This is aimed at defending U.S. imperialist interests in the region, not defending the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which has come under attack from pro-Turkish government forces.

Delegations from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Ukraine, Qatar, Jordan, Iraq and Bahrain have also met with leaders of the transitional government. Syria's new foreign minister has been invited for talks in Saudi Arabia.

Moscow still has a key naval base and an air base on Syria's Mediterranean coast. "We don't want Russia to exit Syria in the way that some wish," Sharaa told Al-Arabiya television. Moscow had previously served as a key military prop for the Assad dictatorship. Sharaa noted that "all of Syria's arms are of Russian origin, and many power plants are managed by Russian experts."

Kurds dialogue with Islamist leaders

The Turkish-created Syrian National Army — a part of the rebel coalition — occupies a swath of Syrian territory along the northern border, aimed at corraling in the Syrian Democratic Forces. Ankara accuses the SDF of backing the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an armed Kurdish group in Turkey.

There are some 30 million Kurds — an oppressed nationality — in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. The Turkish government fears that any

advances for Kurds in Syria will strengthen the struggle for national rights by Kurds in Turkey.

According to the Kurdish news agency Rudaw, the SDF has directed all institutions in the autonomous area it controls to fly the new "flag of the revolution" and has banned display of PKK flags and symbols.

Sharaa says he wants to dissolve all the armed groups into a new national army, including the Kurds. The SDF and the new government held a "preliminary meeting" Dec. 30.

Sharaa also told the press, "We do not want any conflict whether with Israel or anyone else."

The Israeli government is skeptical about the recent transformation of Tahrir al-Sham. Aisha al-Dibs, named as the head of the new regime's Office for Women's Affairs, has repeatedly praised Hamas' Oct. 7 pogrom and called for the destruction of Israel.

Israeli leaders are also concerned about the growing influence of Ankara in Syria. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has denounced Israel's war on Hamas, praised the Jew-hating group and has ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, as does Hamas. At the same time, Ankara still maintains some diplomatic relations with Israel.

Working people in Syria are putting their stamp on developments. Hundreds of Christians marched through Damascus on Christmas Eve after eight Islamist fighters vandalized a Christmas tree in the city of Suqaylabiyah. They called for an end to "injustice and sectarianism against Christians."

Rebel leaders and Islamic clerics rapidly met with parish priest Father Maher Haddad. The tree was restored and the vandals arrested.

SWP put FBI on trial, won victory for constitutional protections

FBI on Trial: The Victory in the Socialist Workers Party Suit Against Government Spying is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January. In 1987 the SWP won its 15-year legal and political battle against decades of illegal FBI spying, harassment and disruption. It was a victory for the whole working class, expanding the right to practice politics free from government interference. The excerpts below are from the introduction by Margaret Jayko. Copyright © 1988 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARGARET JAYKO

This book is about a historic victory for democratic rights. It contains the federal court decision that codifies the accomplishments of the successful fifteen-year legal battle waged by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) against decades of spying, harassment, and disruption by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The ruling in this case places a valuable new weapon in the hands of all working people fighting to defend their rights and living standards and all those struggling for progressive social change. It can and should be used widely to win broader freedoms for everyone.

The SWP and YSA filed the law-



Bottom left: Minneapolis Star Journal

FBI raided the Socialist Workers Party headquarters in Minneapolis in June 1941, as Roosevelt administration moved to silence opposition in the unions to the U.S. rulers' preparations to drag workers into the second imperialist world war over markets, profits, political power.

suit July 18, 1973, in federal court in Manhattan. They charged government agencies with "illegal acts of blacklisting, harassment, electronic surveillance, burglary, mail tampering, and terrorism" against the socialist organizations. They demanded a court injunction to halt these illegal activities and that the government be ordered to pay damages.

The trial opened in New York April 2, 1981, and continued for three months. In eight years of pretrial proceedings the plaintiffs had managed to pry hundreds of thousands of pages out of the secret files of the FBI and other government police agencies. ...

Five years after the trial, on August 25, 1986, U.S. District Judge Thomas Griesa ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The judge found the FBI guilty of violations of the constitutional rights of the SWP and YSA and of their members and supporters.

On August 17, 1987, Judge Griesa issued an injunction barring any further government use of the FBI files on the SWP, YSA, and their members and supporters that had been compiled illegally. ...

Judge Griesa found that "the FBI's disruption activities, surreptitious entries and use of informants" were "violations of the constitutional rights of the SWP and lacked legislative or regulatory authority."

The court ruling provides a compelling summary of the government's illegal operations against the SWP and

YSA as revealed in the case. Judge Griesa dealt extensively with the FBI's use of informers to spy on and seek to disrupt the SWP and YSA. ...

The decision in this case codifies significant advances for political rights. Important new ground has been conquered in extending the right to privacy of political organizations and individual activists. This, more than any other single issue, was at the heart of the case.

For the first time a federal court has ruled that the very presence of government informers in a political organization is a violation of the constitutional rights of free speech and association and the right to privacy. "The FBI's use of informants clearly constituted invasion of privacy," wrote Griesa.

After reviewing the record of more than four decades of FBI spying and disruption, Judge Griesa concluded that "there is no evidence that any FBI informant ever reported an instance of planned or actual espionage, violence, [or] terrorism." Instead, the informers helped the FBI amass "thousands of reports recording peaceful, lawful activity by the SWP and YSA." They also carried out FBI orders to "suppress recruiting activities," to "frustrate the growth of the organizations," and "to attempt to disrupt them."

Without the right to conduct their affairs in private, the decision states, the freedom of association of those whose views are opposed by the government is violated. This decision reinforces and

extends important previous victories by the civil rights movement and women's rights struggles in establishing a constitutional right to privacy.

The court decision also recognizes that the government cannot ignore Fourth Amendment protections against arbitrary searches and seizure by justifying measures such as burglaries, "bugs," and wiretaps on grounds of "national security" interests.

The FBI burglaries were "obvious violations of the Fourth Amendment," wrote Judge Griesa. "The FBI knew this full well. There was no statutory or regulatory authorization for such operations." ...

Government lawyers argued throughout the course of the suit that the FBI operations were legally justified because of the SWP's Marxist views and communist activities. This was rejected by the court.

The ruling makes clear that protection of the right to be free from unconstitutional government activities applies to communist organizations such as the SWP and YSA, as well as to noncommunist groups.

The program and activities of the SWP since its founding in 1938 were very much at the heart of this fight. The SWP called many witnesses to the stand during the trial to testify about the party's views, organization, and actions. In addition, dozens of government witnesses, ranging from a former U.S. attorney general and other top Department of Justice officials to FBI street agents, explained the FBI's goals and methods in combating "subversion."

The first two witnesses were Farrell Dobbs, SWP national secretary from 1953 to 1972; and Jack Barnes, who became national secretary after Dobbs.

On the witness stand, Dobbs traced the history of the SWP, described some of the party's fundamental political concepts, and discussed the 1941 conviction of eighteen leaders of the party and the Teamsters union in Minneapolis — including himself. They were imprisoned under provisions of the thought-control Smith Act, which makes advocacy of communist ideas illegal. Dobbs testified that the views the SWP advocates today are the same as the ones he and others were imprisoned for during World War II. Dobbs's testimony is cited extensively by Griesa in his decision.

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Is 'fascism' coming on January 20?

As 2024 came to a close, *Financial Times* chief foreign affairs columnist Gideon Rachman insisted President-elect Donald Trump is "reviving aspects of the fascist tradition."

He also claims that Democrats lost the 2024 election because they "overestimated the depth of the average voter's historical knowledge" when they called Trump a fascist. These views are common among liberal media and the middle-class left. They see working people as ignorant and the source of all prejudice and reaction, and to blame for the election outcome.

But the simple fact is, Trump is far from being a modern-day Hitler. The U.S. capitalist rulers have no need to unleash fascist gangs to crush revolutionary struggles today. Nothing in Trump's first term suggests he's anything other than a defender of "democratic" U.S. imperialism.

Falsely claiming Trump is a "fascist" today will make it harder to recognize *real* fascist forces when the rulers organize them, as they will, when the crisis of their capitalist system deepens. Such claims obscure the fact that the source of the problems workers confront is the ruling capitalist families and the political parties that serve them.

The bosses' unquenchable thirst for profit drives them to slash jobs, impose speedup and cut wages, and Democrats and Republicans alike will back them, whatever tactical differences they have. Workers need to use our unions and union solidarity to build on the

gains won in recent labor struggles.

With its tentacles spread worldwide, U.S. imperialism will drive to dominate its competitors, shore up its declining "world order" and strike blows at new revolutionary struggles, as shown by Washington's decadeslong drive to overturn Cuba's socialist revolution.

Washington, like all its rivals, is rushing to expand its military arsenal. Today's sharpening trade and other inter-imperialist conflicts will inevitably lead to new shooting wars, including the threat of nuclear annihilation.

Our class has an opposite starting point to theirs — solidarity with all fights against exploitation and national oppression, including defense of Israel as a refuge for Jews and support for Ukrainian sovereignty in the face of Moscow's invasion.

As long as the U.S. capitalists hold power, there will be no solution to imperialism's march toward fascism and a third world war.

That reality underscores the decisive place of the fight to build a party of labor, based on the unions, to lead millions to replace the world's final empire in the U.S. with the workers in power. Organizing independently of the bosses and their parties on all questions is key to advancing along that road. A victory here will unleash the immense potential power of working people, as an inseparable part of the fight for a socialist world.

Milk-Bone strike, labor solidarity strengthen union

Continued from front page

largest they have ever received.

The union pushed back some company demands around health care costs. Palumbo said increases in medical premiums are now capped at 10% per year. "The original offer had them uncapped, so the company could have raised them as much as it wanted."

The strikers also defeated the company's demand for a \$200 a month "surcharge" if a spouse chooses the Milk-Bone health coverage, even if they could get insurance from their own employer. "We knocked that right off," Palumbo said. "Local 36G members are the only ones in the entire company, over 9,000 employees, that doesn't have to pay this. Even the managers pay it." Very few Smucker's workers nationally are unionized.

The contract was voted up 82 to 57. "We were 25 votes apart," Palumbo said. "Some were willing to stay out, others saw the reality of what we would lose, and it was hard before the holidays."

"I was prepared to be out there until next year," said Cathy Kennedy, a worker in the plant for 21 years. She said that maybe they couldn't get the company to budge on insurance, but the workers could get a larger raise.

"The conditions we work under are also important, they can't keep people, so we're always working short-handed. The junior people are only getting two days off a month. A lot of them are young people with small kids," Kennedy said. "They can force us to work 16 hours with no limit and then you have to come back in eight hours for your regular shift."

"If you say no to the overtime, you get attendance points. In the summer, it's generally 100 degrees or hotter in there, people have passed out," she added.

"We have to respect the vote, it was a democratic vote of the union," Tony Serra, one of the picket captains, told the *Militant*. "We don't have to agree with it. The picket line was strong."

Solidarity crucial

"The SOLIDARITY of the Labor Movement was vital to this victory," BCTGM International President Anthony Shelton said in a statement. Talking to strikers here brought that home.

"When we went out," Serra said, "the solidarity was phenomenal. The autoworkers here were great, the Teamsters and all they did. The school bus drivers were great. They don't make that much money but they were always bringing doughnuts."

Solidarity included union rail workers who brought

in two railcars of flour early in the strike but refused to hook them up to the plant, Serra said. Two weeks later the railcars were taken away still loaded.

Other area unions, including the Communications Workers of America, the Teachers Federation, nurses and postal workers, regularly joined the picket line. Kennedy said, "We had more food donations than we could eat. We fed the neighbors." She added, "I was floored by the out-of-state support."

Melissa Straubel, executive board chairman of BCTGM Local 81 at a Sara Lee industrial bakery in Traverse City, Michigan, and Shantel Myers, the local's recording secretary, drove nine hours to bring a carload of supplies to the picket line in late November. After they returned home, union members sold raffle tickets on the job, raising more than \$900 for the strike.

"Organizing solidarity with the Milk-Bone strike really got us together in Local 81. Talking to our co-workers about the strike was a real door opener," Straubel told the *Militant*. "They didn't realize what a big union the BCTGM is and how we can have each other's backs. We recruited more people to the union through this." Local 81's contract is up next December.

In response to an appeal by the BCTGM International, locals across the country raised contributions. The Southern Region of the BCTGM organized union members to pass out informational flyers on the strike outside a nonunion Smucker plant in Memphis, Tennessee. Officers of BCTGM Local 22 in Minneapolis passed out flyers at a Walmart in Fridley.

"I've been in the BCTGM for 38 years," Serra said. "This solidarity opened my eyes, I've never seen this before. The next strike in Buffalo I am going to it and bringing something. If the workers at Sara Lee in Michigan go on strike, we're going to Traverse City. We'll get four or five of us in a truck."

Kennedy and Serra agreed that the strike had strengthened Local 36G. "Inside we weren't all friends, but everyone pulled together on the picket line," Kennedy said.

"We saw the strong character of some union members that we hadn't seen before," Serra added. "They were leaders, stepped forward, spoke to the media. I was so impressed. We saw a lot of future leaders."

"One of our members told me that she believes that since we all went out together united and stayed united and then voted, now we must go back to work united," he said. "I agree with that."

Steve Palumbo told the *Militant*, "This strike puts us in a stronger situation in three years at the end of this contract."

'End US embargo!'

Continued from front page

to weaken the economic life of Cuba," it said, "denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government."

Every U.S. president since, Democrat or Republican, has kept the embargo in place. Tightened by both Donald Trump and Joseph Biden, Cubans today face harsh shortages, including of foodstuffs, medicines, fuels, means of transportation, as well as the deterioration of many basic services.

On Oct. 30 Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodríguez, told the United Nations General Assembly, "More than 80% of our population has only known Cuba under a blockade." The body adopted a resolution calling for an end to the embargo 187 to 2, with one abstention. The U.S. and Israel were the two voting against.

The march showcased the determination of Cubans to defend their revolution.

Sixty-sixth anniversary

The march comes as the 66th anniversary of the victory of the first socialist revolution in the Americas, Jan. 1, 1959, is celebrated. The two great socialist revolutions in our epoch, the other being the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia led by V.I. Lenin, point the way forward for the working class worldwide.

The Cuban Revolution triumphed because of the central political role of Fidel Castro, leader of the July 26 Movement and the Rebel Army. He led workers and farmers to defeat the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and take state power out of the hands of the capitalist class. This opened the door for the toiling majority to win land for the peasants, make ever-deeper inroads against capitalist property relations and transform itself in the process.

In a Jan. 1, 1979, speech celebrating the 20th anniversary of the revolution, Fidel Castro said, "Up until Jan. 1, imperialism was our indirect adversary; our direct adversary was Batista. After January, imperialism was our adversary directly. Before January, we fought to become the masters of our destiny; after January, we fought to defend this right and to carry out the socialist revolution."

"Before January, we were part of a national revolution; since that January, we have been part of the world revolution. Before January, a vanguard was the main protagonist in events; since that January, the main protagonist has been the people."

Fidel Castro and the Cuban leadership understood, as Lenin and the Bolsheviks before them, that for the working class to take power into our own hands you need a Marxist leadership. And it means leading millions into revolutionary action.

In a speech known as the "Second Declaration of Havana," Fidel Castro addressed a million workers and peasants in Havana's Plaza of the Revolution Feb. 4, 1962.

"What is it that is hidden behind the Yankee's hatred of the Cuban Revolution?" he asked. "What is it that rationally explains the conspiracy which unites, for the same aggressive purpose, the most powerful and richest imperialist power in the modern world and the oligarchies of an entire continent. ... What unites them and stirs them up in fear?"

"In their sleepless merchants' and usurers' minds there is the idea that revolutions can be bought, sold, rented, loaned, exported, and imported like some piece of merchandise," he said. "They imagine that revolutions are born or die in the brains of individuals or are caused by divine laws, and, moreover, that the gods are on their side."

But, he asked, "What does the Cuban Revolution teach? That revolution is possible, and the people can make it, and in the contemporary world there are no forces capable of halting the liberation movement of the peoples?"

The Cuban Revolution stands as an example for working people everywhere, including in the U.S.

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