

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
East, Gulf Coast dockworkers
voting on new contract
 — PAGE 5

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 89/NO. 3 JANUARY 27, 2025

Israeli blows to Tehran, Hamas, Hezbollah open space for toilers

BY SETH GALINSKY

The overthrow of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, hastened by Israel's blows to Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, has dealt blows to the reactionary bourgeois regime in Iran and its allies throughout the region.

Israel and Hamas are reported to have reached a ceasefire and hostage release agreement Jan. 15, the formal announcement of which has yet to be made as the *Militant* goes to press.

Israel's victories have helped widen the space for working people in the region to organize in defense of their own interests.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei claimed in mid-December that the idea that Tehran's "resistance" has been defeated is mistaken and "the one who will be uprooted is Israel."

Making it crystal clear that Jew-hatred and the eradication of Israel are central to his regime, its Tasnim news agency featured a cartoon (see picture on page 7) with Khamenei's

Continued on page 7

Los Angeles wildfire disaster is a product of capitalist rule

With little gov't help, working-class solidarity is key



Militant/Laura Garza

Near Los Angeles Eaton fire, hundreds brought donations Jan. 13 to Santa Anita racetrack lot in Arcadia. Fire victims could get things they needed from army of volunteers there.

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

LOS ANGELES — Over the last week, catastrophic fires have engulfed large areas of Los Angeles County. As of Jan. 14, at least 25 people have been killed and nearly 180,000 forced from their homes. Intense Santa Ana

winds continue to fuel the flames. Since the early stages of the Palisades fire Jan. 7, more than 10,000 homes have burned down, as well as schools, businesses and other structures.

Continued on page 4

Join Socialist Workers Party campaign for Oakland mayor

BY BETSEY STONE

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Socialist Workers Party announced Jan. 11 it is running chocolate-factory worker and long-time unionist Eric Simpson in the special election here to decide who will replace former Mayor Sheng Thao, who was recalled in November. The election will take place April 15.

At shopping centers and door to door in working-class neighborhoods, campaigners for Simpson are getting out the party's program, signing up new subscribers to the *Militant* and gathering signatures to put him on the ballot.

"Only by organizing the working class can we solve the problems in Oakland and elsewhere," Simpson told Tsai Saephan and his son Jeff Phan after knocking on their door Jan. 12. "We can start by building up the unions and organizing solidarity with union struggles."

"My goal is to get a union job,"

Continued on page 3

Biden administration pauses attack on Cuba as 'state sponsor of terror'



Office of Cuban president

Half a million Cubans march past U.S. Embassy in Havana Dec. 20 protesting Washington's over 60-year-long economic war against Cuba, listing country as "state sponsor of terrorism."

BY JOHN STUDER

On Jan. 14, President Joseph Biden filed a "Certificate of Rescission of Cuba's Designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism." It stated, "The Government of Cuba has not provided any support for international terrorism during the preceding 6-month period" and it "has provided assurances that it will not support acts of international terrorism in the future."

"Despite its limited nature," the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs

responded, this reversal of U.S. policy imposed in the last week of the first Donald Trump presidency and maintained through the four years Biden has been in office "is a decision in the right direction."

It is "in line with the sustained and firm demand of the government and the people of Cuba, and with the broad, emphatic and reiterated call of numerous governments, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, of

Continued on page 4

Help 'Militant' in fight to overturn impoundment in jail in Phoenix!

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Prison authorities at the Lower Buckeye Jail in Phoenix — the largest detention facility in Arizona — banned the Nov. 11, 2024, issue of the *Militant*. The *Militant* is appealing the ruling, asking supporters of civil lib-

Chinese rulers face economic slowdown, sharpening rivalry with Washington

BY ROY LANDERSEN

China's state capitalist rulers are suffering through a yearslong slowdown in economic growth, at the same time that they confront mounting competition with rival capitalist powers, above all, Washington. As economic conditions worsen, millions of working people in China are looking for ways to resist, despite Beijing's repression.

The Chinese government is using state funds to boost manufacturing to try to export its way out of the crisis. China's trade surplus set a new record of almost \$1 trillion in 2024, more than a third of that with the U.S. But corporate profits in China have declined for a third straight year.

Chinese capitalists dominate global

Continued on page 6

erties and prisoners' political rights to join in getting this unconstitutional ban reversed.

In response to an inquiry by *Militant* attorney David Goldstein, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office representative Juan Garza wrote Dec. 26, "There is a photo on the cover of the newspaper that was found to violate MCSO policy. The photo in question has several armed men surrounding a prone woman in the bed of a pickup truck. MCSO does not allow photos of weaponry."

An inmate subscriber in the jail informed the *Militant* about the ban in a letter sent to the paper Nov. 13. He enclosed a copy of the Central Mail Rejection Notification form he was given that day saying the newspaper

Continued on page 9

Inside

Editorial: Join the Socialist Workers Party campaign! 9

Why Trump wants to take over Greenland, the Panama Canal 2

Ankara pushes to expand sway after fall of Assad regime 7

— On the picket line, p. 5 —

Workers on weeklong strike at IKEA warehouse in Maryland

Why Trump wants to take over Greenland, the Panama Canal

BY TERRY EVANS

President-elect Donald Trump has announced he intends to pursue gaining control over Greenland, as well as the Panama Canal, to advance the interests of the U.S. ruling class against its competitors abroad, especially Beijing and Moscow.

Since Russian President Vladimir Putin's bloody invasion of Ukraine, and the Tehran-Hamas pogrom against Jews in Israel, all capitalist powers are scrambling to strengthen their militaries in anticipation of bigger wars to come.

Greenland and the Panama Canal are key in the sharpening competition over trade and military sway, from the North Atlantic to the Pacific. Both Moscow and Beijing are expanding their presence in Latin American and the Arctic.

What became the Canal Zone in Panama was seized by Washington in 1903 as the U.S. rulers sought to impose their domination across Latin America. The construction of the canal gave them control over a key world shipping route. After a decadeslong fight against U.S. domination, hundreds of thousands took to the streets in 1979 to celebrate the treaty that returned the canal to Panamanian sovereignty.

Greenland is a nation of 57,000 people, the majority of whom are indigenous Inuit. It's an "autonomous territory" of Denmark, and one of the European Union's Overseas Countries and Territories, but Washington is the foremost military power on the island.

Aspirations for independence have

grown in recent years, after decades of subjugation at the hands of the Danish rulers. In the 1950s, Danish authorities took Inuit children from their families to "re-educate" them as "model" Danes. Last year 143 women from Greenland sued the Danish government, saying that Danish doctors had fitted contraceptive coils in some 4,500 women and girls on the island without their consent or knowledge in the 1960s.

"We need Greenland for national-security purposes," Trump told the press Jan. 7. Washington's Pituffik Space Base in Greenland includes part of the U.S. ballistic missile early warning system. Control over Greenland "is valuable for projecting power, monitoring activities of rivals and securing shipping routes," the *Wall Street Journal* reported, quoting unnamed officials.

Trump claims he'll use Washington's vast economic clout, and hints at the use of force, to get control of Greenland.

Growing capitalist rivalry in Arctic

Since its invasion of Ukraine, Moscow has reopened dozens of Soviet military bases in the Arctic and increased submarine patrols and exercises there.

Beijing has acquired mining operations in Greenland. Chinese capitalists seek control over shipping lanes in the Arctic, which offer shorter export routes than some they now use. Under Trump's first presidency, the Pentagon successfully pressed the Danish government to block Beijing from fi-



A U.S. ballistic missile early warning and satellite surveillance system at U.S. Pituffik Space Base in Greenland. Washington seeks greater control over Greenland as competition with Beijing and Moscow grows for strategic bases and trade routes in the Arctic region.

nancing three airports in Greenland.

U.S. and rival capitalists also covet Greenland's profitable deposits of oil, natural gas, graphite and other rare-earth elements that are used in manufacturing many high-tech goods.

"Our future and fight for independence is our own business," Greenland's prime minister, Mute Egede, said in response to Trump's remarks, before adding he looks forward to talks with Trump.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen says she wants to keep hold of Greenland, but would welcome an increase in the U.S. military presence there. The rival governments of France and Germany both condemned Trump's comments.

US intervention in Panama

Some 5% of world maritime trade goes through the Panama Canal annually, including 40% of all U.S. container traffic.

Trump's threats to retake the canal are aimed at reasserting control and pushing back Beijing's growing influence. Both seaports at either end of the canal are operated by CK Hutchison Holdings, a Hong Kong-based company under Beijing's thumb. Chinese capitalists are expanding investments and political sway across Latin America, long considered by the U.S. rulers as their backyard.

After installing a compliant govern-

ment in Panama in 1903, Washington gained the rights to build the canal. Repeated struggles against U.S. domination of Panama's economy and for an end to Washington's occupation followed. Through their unions, canal workers joined struggles against racist Jim Crow segregation imposed there by U.S. authorities.

In 1964 U.S. soldiers attacked students flying the Panamanian flag, desecrated it and set off a rebellion in the zone, and in Panama City and the city of Colón. More than 20 Panamanians were shot dead.

Ten years after having been forced to relinquish control, U.S. forces invaded in 1989 to oust the government of Gen. Manuel Noriega and installed a more submissive regime. Whole neighborhoods were bombed flat and hundreds were killed.

Trump "thinks he can take whatever he wants," Isabel Corro, president of the Association of Family Victims of the 1989 U.S. Invasion of Panama, told the *Guardian* newspaper. But Washington retaking the canal "should not happen and we will not let it happen." Panama's government says sovereignty over the canal is "non-negotiable."

The U.S. ruling families are determined to shore up their faltering place at the head of the imperialist world order, and see Greenland and the canal as key to that effort.

THE MILITANT

Boston desegregation fight advanced class struggle

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the "Battle of Boston," when thousands fought for school desegregation. The fight's roots were the massive battles that brought down Jim Crow segregation, strengthening working-class unity and the class struggle ever since.



AP Photo/Frank C. Curtin
March of over 12,000 people in Boston Dec. 14, 1974, in fight to desegregate schools.

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Join SWP Oakland campaign

Continued from front page

Phan said. “I support unions. The politicians don’t understand what workers are going through.”

“Union officials here supported Sheng Thao, who is a Democrat, and that got us nowhere,” Simpson said. “The politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties rule in the interests of the rich. We need for the unions to break from supporting these parties and build a party of labor, to take political power away from those running the country now.”

Saephan told Simpson he was laid off from his job and concerned about the closing of factories and other businesses in Oakland, including the sports teams that have left. He was in agreement with the Socialist Workers Party’s call for a federally funded public works program to provide union-scale jobs building housing, child care facilities, hospitals and infrastructure.

“Bosses are forcing workers to do overtime, with schedules that make it impossible to have time for family, while other workers are left without any work,” Simpson said. “All workers should have the right to a job. We need our unions to fight to shorten the workweek with no cut in pay to spread the available work around.”

Simpson also speaks out on the big national and international issues facing the working class — from Israel’s fight to defend its right to be a refuge from Jew-hatred and pogroms, to the battle of the Ukrainian people against Moscow’s invasion, to the example for workers everywhere of Cuba’s socialist revolution.

Simpson, a member of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union, is building solidarity with the strike at Virgin Hotels in Las Vegas. He points to the recent successful strike of hotel workers, members of UNITE HERE in San Francisco, the same union of the workers in Nevada, as an example of the growing willingness of workers to fight.

“Workers at the six hotels in San Francisco organized picket lines 24/7 for 90 days,” he told Marco Lopez, a union carpenter, while campaigning Jan. 11. “The strikers stayed out until they were

able to win a wage increase and push back the company’s demand for concessions on health care. This is an example for other union fights.”

“I’m union. I understand,” Lopez said. “Strikes can have a domino effect.”

Simpson said his campaign calls for unions to fight for cost-of-living adjustments so wages automatically keep up with rising prices. Lopez said that even a wage of \$30 an hour wasn’t high enough to keep up with mortgages and other bills in the Bay Area.

The campaign for mayor was announced at a Militant Labor Forum here Jan. 11, where Socialist Workers Party leader Jacob Perasso, a participant in the recent Guadalajara book fair, was a featured speaker. He described the recent roundup of farm workers and other undocumented workers in California’s Central Valley.

Simpson said the Socialist Workers Party opposes these roundups and supports the fight against deportations. “My campaign finds widespread agree-



Militant/Maggie Trowe

Eric Simpson, a chocolate-factory worker and long-time unionist, is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Oakland, California, in special election called for April 15.

ment with the party’s call for amnesty for undocumented workers in the U.S., a necessity to unite workers and cut across divisions used by the bosses to drive down all our wages,” he said.

On Jan. 15 Simpson and his supporters will submit the signatures of 100 registered voters supporting his right to be on the ballot, double the requirement. Join the campaign!

SWP uses ‘Militant’ to discuss world politics, class struggle

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Socialist Workers Party members, and members of the Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, are using the *Militant* to discuss with working people the big political questions facing our class worldwide.

They are taking the paper to workers on their doorsteps, at strike picket lines and at political protest actions, and telling them about the program and activities of the parties.

Communist League members Beverly Bernardo and Katy LeRougetel spoke with some 40 participants in a weekly Bring Them Home march and rally in Montreal Jan. 5. The protests demand Hamas return the hostages it has held since its murderous Oct. 7, 2023, pogrom against Jews in Israel. Two Syrians took part, carrying the three-starred Syrian flag popular in the mass celebrations that have taken place since the fall of the Bashir al-Assad dictatorship.

“Some people say they’re worried

about what will replace Assad,” one of the Syrians told LeRougetel. “But I tell them, it’s two different things. First, Assad has gone. Now it’s up to us what comes next.” He gave a \$5 donation to get a copy of the *Militant*.

LeRougetel and Joe Young attended a rally in downtown Montreal Jan. 11 calling for the repressive government in Iran to free all political prisoners. The 50 participants also commemorated the 176 people killed when the Iranian military shot down Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 on Jan. 8, 2020.

“We used to think it wasn’t possible to do anything against the government,” Leyla Fakhari, as she helped organize the “Woman, Life, Freedom” banner in French, Farsi and English, told LeRougetel. “Now that Assad is gone, we have hope. But we’re watching what happens next.”

“Workers in Syria have won space to breathe and to organize in their own name. We have to do the same here,” said LeRougetel.

“Yes, in Iran, the retired workers, the nurses, the oil workers, they’re rallying for their wages, but also for freedom for political prisoners,” Fakhari said. Taking note of the *Militant*’s coverage of these struggles, she bought a copy.

“Hamas and the Iran government, they’re both terrorist,” Eli Givari, a day care worker, told LeRougetel. Givari pointed to the picture on a Militant Labor Forum flyer of 19-year-old Naama Levy being kidnapped by a Hamas thug during the Oct. 7 pogrom. “They do the same to women in Iran. Tehran and Hamas are good friends and they teach each other about what they can do,” she said.

Rally participants chanted the name of Zhina Amini, a young Kurdish woman who died Sept. 16, 2022, after being brutalized by Iranian police for not wearing proper head covering.

“It’s the blows delivered by Israel against Hamas and Hezbollah that helped topple Assad,” said LeRougetel. “Yes, Hamas started the war and the Israelis are just defending their country,” Givari replied.

As rally participants started chanting in Farsi, LeRougetel asked Bitu Jalali, a kindergarten teacher, what they were saying. “Kurds, Baluchi, Turks, frater-

nity, equality,” she said. “Amini was Kurdish. And now people say the Kurdish revolution is happening in Balochistan. We are united.”

Jalali explained that the song being played at the rally was by Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi, who was released from prison in December after being sentenced to death “for his music. He was held in isolation. Activists in Iran and around the world campaigned to free him. First his sentence was reduced, and now he’s out. It shows even little steps count!”

Communist League members Michel Prairie and LeRougetel spent an hour outside the huge Canada Post sorting center in Montreal’s St. Lawrence district Jan. 10 introducing workers to the *Militant*. Some 55,000 postal workers went on strike across Canada in November, until the government used a notorious anti-labor law to order them back to work. “Postal workers and others liked the sign we brought, saying ‘Union solidarity, for a party of labor, workers must take power. Read the *Militant*,’” Prairie told the paper.

“Some workers stopped to talk, asking if we would be back again since they didn’t have money on them. One postal worker bought a *Militant* and described company-spread rumors about work schedule changes,” he said. “Many are looking to the May deadline for a possible new strike. We will continue to get out the paper here and build solidarity with their ongoing fight.”

To join in getting out the *Militant* and program of the communist movement, contact the party branch nearest you listed on page 8.

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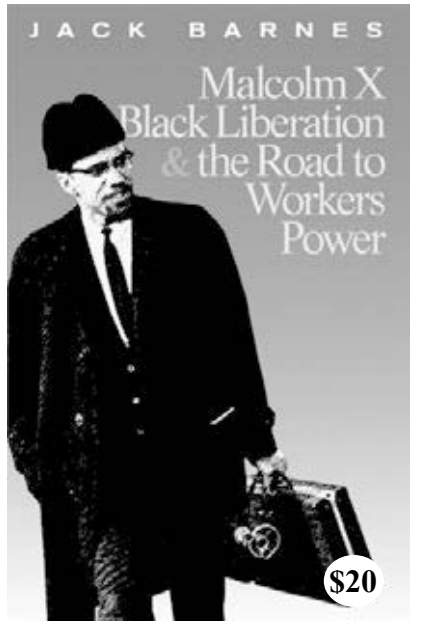
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Los Angeles wildfire disaster

Continued from front page

At least five major fires have burned, with others popping up over a 45-square-mile area — from the Palisades fire, which includes more well-to-do areas along the coast, to the Eaton fire in more working-class areas of Altadena and Pasadena. Over 350,000 power company customers were without electricity, including 200,000 in Los Angeles County, the most populous county in the country.

Authorities knew well ahead of time that dry and nearly hurricane force winds would hit the county, which has had minuscule amounts of rain since last May. The lack of advance organization for evacuations and other preparatory steps forced people to leave their homes in a mad rush as the fires rapidly spread.

This led to gridlock. Drivers were told by the police to abandon their cars and head for the beach on foot. Emergency crews then bulldozed the vehicles aside so fire trucks could get through.

The destruction wrought by the Los Angeles fires is not mostly a result of little or no rain, low humidity levels and high winds. The culprit is the disregard by local government in building infrastructure to deal with such natural disasters, as well as to organize people to be prepared to evacuate if necessary. Or even more importantly, to work together to deal with emergencies that are becoming more frequent.

The water systems here are not designed to fight fires. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power said that in advance of the fire and high winds, it had filled all available water tanks in the city, including three 1-million-gallon tanks in the Palisades area. These were rapidly exhausted.

And the Santa Ynez Reservoir, part of the Los Angeles water supply system, had been taken offline and was empty when the firestorm exploded.

“There must be some things we can do to try to mitigate this. Please,” Sanah Chung, a Pacific Palisades resident, told Reuters while hosing down hedges and trees in his front yard, “Fire hydrants are empty. Firefighters are doing everything they can, but we need to do things more proactively before.”

“Under capitalism natural disasters turn into social disasters. While everyone is affected, working people, who already face high prices and wages that don’t keep up, face catastrophic consequences for the ability of their families to survive,” Laura Garza, organizer of the Los Angeles

branch of the Socialist Workers Party and the party’s candidate for U.S. Senate in 2024, told the *Militant*.

“We need to fight for a federally funded crash program to put people to work at union-scale wages clearing the debris, rebuilding homes, schools, hospitals and crucial infrastructure needed to battle future disasters like this,” she said. “This fight will require organizing and acting independently of the capitalist parties — the Democrats and Republicans. We need to build a party of labor to take political power.”

Working-class solidarity

Despite the disdain for preparation by local and county government, working people have come forward to offer solidarity.

On Jan. 13, worker-correspondents for the *Militant* joined hundreds of others in a parking lot at the Santa Anita racetrack in Arcadia, a short distance from the Eaton fire. This is a staging area for people to bring donations of all kinds and for those affected by the fire to pick them up. Many sorted through material for what they needed. A veritable army of volunteers was helping to organize and distribute the donated goods. A local Sikh group made food and was distributing it to all comers.

Winnie Chong rented an apartment in Altadena that was destroyed in the fire. “When the fire came, I left. I also had to help my husband, who is disabled,” she told a *Militant* volunteer. “I’m glad you have a newspaper to tell people about this. We need everyone to hold Gavin Newsom and the mayor responsible. We need to demand answers about how this happened.”

The capitalist government at all levels set things up for disaster. Gov. Newsom had cut state funds for fire prevention and forest management by \$100 million months earlier. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass had proposed a budget plan for 2024-25 that included a reduction in spending for the Los Angeles Fire Department. In May the City Council



Militant/Laura Garza

Local Sikh group made and brought food to distribute to all comers. They joined hundreds of volunteers in Arcadia who set up to help those battered by fires get back on their feet.

reduced the proposed spending cuts to \$17 million, down from the original proposal of \$23 million.

At the donation center, Jessica Lopez, 23, told the *Militant* that five members of her family had to evacuate their apartment in Pasadena. “We’re staying with family in L.A.,” she said. The response at the racetrack “shows how much people care and are actually there for each other.” Her aunt, Nancy Lopez, added, “We might be moving to Vegas or Mexico, because the cost of living is cheaper, especially in Mexico.”

Christopher Castillions, a firefighter paramedic currently on medical leave with a knee injury, told the *Militant*, “I can’t be out there now with my brothers fighting the fires so I felt this was the best way to help the community.” He was distributing cloth bags that people could use to pack up what they collected.

“I came because there’s a lot of chaos in lives now,” Raven Bowens, a member of the Screen Actors Guild on the show “Days of Our Lives,” said. “I love L.A. and wanted to help people.”

Help has come from all over. California has deployed more than 900 spe-

cially trained prison inmates to combat the deadly fires. Other firefighters have come from nearby states, and from Mexico, Canada and other countries.

‘No one left on their own’ in Cuba

Unlike in the U.S., where the capitalist rulers and their government leave working people to fend for themselves, in Cuba the government leads civil defense committees, mass organizations and the army to make sure no one is left on their own when natural disasters strike, and to rebuild afterward. This is a conquest of Cuba’s socialist revolution.

Hurricanes, as well as other natural disasters, are frequent occurrences in the Caribbean. The Cuban government sends buses to evacuate people from the most exposed areas and sets up well-stocked shelters in schools and other public buildings. Local civil defense committee members go door to door to make sure residents are prepared.

Despite serious shortages, largely a product of Washington’s punishing 60-year-long economic war on the Cuban people, the Cuban government and mass organizations work to assure the shelters have food, medical care and even staff to organize activities for children.

Biden pauses attack on Cuba as ‘state sponsor of terror’

Continued from front page

Cubans living abroad, of political, religious and social organizations, and of numerous political figures in the United States and other countries.”

In December half a million Cubans marched by the U.S. Embassy in Ha-

vana protesting Washington’s unrelenting economic war against their socialist revolution. “We are marching to tell the U.S. government to let the Cuban people live in peace,” Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel told the crowd. They also demanded the U.S. government remove Cuba from its list of “State Sponsors of Terrorism.”

Defenders of the Cuba Revolution in the U.S. and elsewhere have joined in the campaign.

Along with this decision, the Biden administration waived Title III of the notorious Helms-Burton Act, which had allowed U.S. nationals to sue the Cuban government for damages on claims they lost property nationalized after the Cuban Revolution.

It also waived for the next six months a memorandum that bars people in the U.S. from having financial transactions with “restricted Cuban entities.” This lifts restrictions on staying at hotels with connections to the government.

The Biden administration’s decision should have happened years ago, a Jan. 15 article in Cuba’s daily *Granma* points out. All that was needed was a recognition of the truth — the total lack

of justification for such a designation.

At the same time, Cuba’s foreign ministry noted, “The U.S. government could reverse the measures adopted today in the future.”

Despite the steps taken, “the economic war remains and persists in posing the fundamental obstacle to the development and recovery of the Cuban economy at a high human cost to the population, and continues to be a stimulus to emigration.”

In addition to the more than 60-year-long economic embargo, other measures that remain in place are restrictions on sale of oil to Cuba, a ban on ships docking in the U.S. within 180 days of having docked in Cuba, and dozens of other restrictions added in 2017.

At the same time, the Cuban government announced a decision to free over time some 553 people convicted of crimes in Cuba. Díaz-Canel wrote Pope Francis at the beginning of the year announcing their release, in keeping with the Catholic Church declaring 2025 as a special year of mercy and forgiveness.

This is in common with the humanitarian record of the revolution, explained the Cuban government.

Los Angeles forum celebrates Cuba’s socialist revolution

LOS ANGELES — Despite the catastrophic fires burning across the area, the Militant Labor Forum here held a special meeting Jan. 10, celebrating the 66th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.

“The wildfires raging through the Los Angeles area are a reminder that one important conquest of the Cuban Revolution is how it confronts natural disasters like hurricanes,” Socialist Workers Party member Bernie Senter told meeting participants. “The entire population is mobilized and empowered. Their scarce resources are effectively used to mitigate its impact. Here, working people are left on their own and everything is in the hands of insurance companies and other capitalists.

“Every step of the way, the leadership of the revolution under Fidel Castro responded to the aspirations of the toiling majority,” he pointed out. “This leadership was forged over years. There was nothing spontaneous about it. As radicalizing young people from the cities and peasants in the countryside were recruited to the Rebel Army, they were battle-tested and trained in the moral values and principles that were the foundation of the revolution. Their mobilization and involvement in the achievements of the revolution transformed the Cuban people. And it changed us in the Socialist Workers Party, and provided a powerful example for a world socialist revolution.”

— NORTON SANDLER

Workers on weekslong strike at IKEA warehouse in Maryland

BY SAMIR HAZBOUN

PERRYVILLE, Md. — Members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local Lodge I-460 have been on strike at the IKEA distribution center here since Nov. 15. Nearly 320 IAM members work at the warehouse, which distributes furniture to 39 IKEA stores across the region.

“The biggest issues we’re fighting for are to protect seniority, to protect tenure, and to defend against favoritism,” Anthony Venzon, strike captain and secretary-treasurer of IAM Local I-460, told the *Militant*.

“I’ve been at this plant 10 years. We just want to be able to come in each day and know that we’re going to be doing the job we are trained in and know how to do well and safely,” he said. “The company wants to be able to do away with seniority, to assign us to jobs we’ve never been trained on and demand 100% productivity speed from day one.”

Striker Ron Jarusek, a loader who has worked at the plant for 16 years, said, “I had never been in a union before here, but over the years I learned that being in a union means you have to think about others. I thought about voting yes on the contract because maybe I would personally be OK, but when you think about your co-workers being negatively affected you have to stand together with them and vote no.”

Donna Matthews, who works in stock control, explained that the company already can move workers with less than three years seniority wherever they want. “We’re just asking for what’s fair. Respect our years of experience and don’t mess with our seniority, give us a real raise and pay us what’s comparable to the other warehouses in the area. And we need cost-of-living adjustments.”

“We’ve gotten so much solidarity from places that aren’t even IAM, which means a lot,” Venzon said as he handed out strike paychecks. “AF-SCME visited our picket lines the other day and some people from the IAM and AFL-CIO came down here all the way from Maine!”

Members of IAM Local S6, who won a hard-fought strike at the Bath Iron Works shipyard in Maine in 2020, brought support from their local. “IKEA needs to wake up and realize that negotiating a fair contract is the only way forward,” their statement said. “The 320 members of Local I460 deserve a good deal and Machinist Union Leadership will continue to fight until they get that deal. There is power in a union!”

The IAM unionists invite the public to join their picket lines Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. along Ikea Road in Perryville.

Contributions to the strike fund, payable to IAMAW Workers Local I-460, can be sent to IAM Local Union I-460, P.O. Box 536, Perryville, MD 21903. Messages of solidarity can be sent to info@iamlocal460.com.



Militant/Samir Hazboun

IAM members picket IKEA distribution center in Perryville, Maryland, Jan. 13. Nearly 320 have been on strike since Nov. 15 fighting to protect seniority, against boss favoritism.

East, Gulf Coast dockworkers voting on new contract

BY LAURA ANDERSON

MIAMI — Members of the International Longshoremen’s Association are discussing a tentative contract agreement reached Jan. 8 between the union and East and Gulf Coast port bosses, following negotiations. Dockworkers are voting on the con-

tract as the *Militant* goes to press.

Some 45,000 striking dockworkers had shut down East and Gulf Coast ports Oct. 1-3, winning widespread support from fellow workers and showing the power of organized labor. They were fighting for a new contract that included wages that

cover soaring prices and to defend working conditions.

The bosses were pressing the union to allow the use of driverless trucks, automated cranes and computerized gate checkpoints to speed up work and boost their profits. For workers the question isn’t the use of technology, but the protection of jobs and safety.

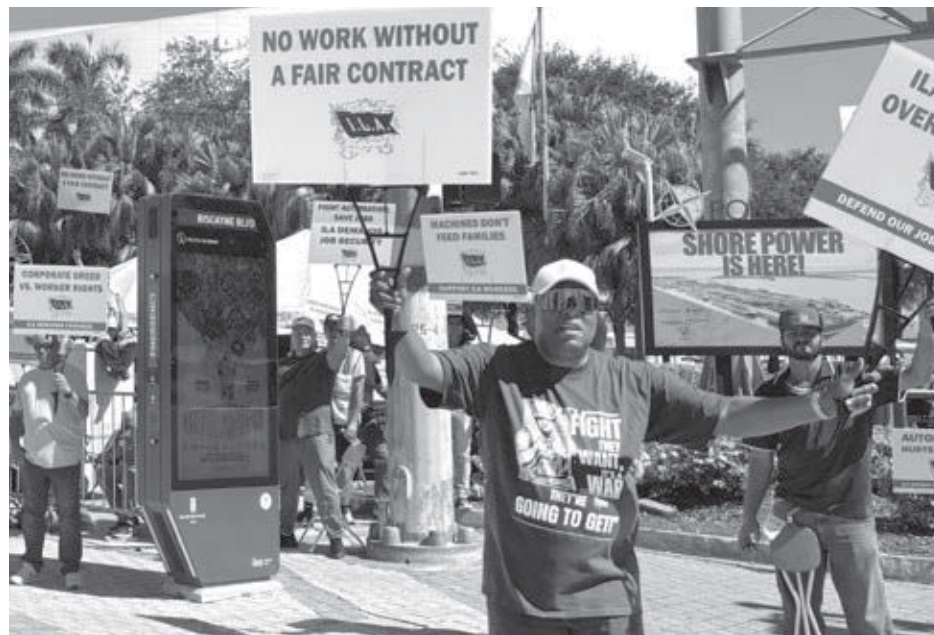
Dockworkers face haphazard schedules, shifts that stretch for 15- or 20-plus hours when ships are in port, loading and unloading thousands of containers, and no work or pay when there are no ships.

The strike ended when the bosses’ United States Maritime Alliance increased its wage offer to 62% over a six-year contract. Negotiations continued over other issues, including the central question of automation.

Full details of the new tentative contract will not be released to the public until after the Jan. 15 vote.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the contract includes a provision that bosses “that add autonomous equipment must hire one dockworker for each new crane added.” But bosses will be able to continue getting a single dockworker to operate multiple machines at the same time at ports where they have already pushed this through, the *Journal* says.

“Solidarity from our global maritime unions,” ILA President Harold Daggett said in a Jan. 9 statement, “bolstered the ILA’s strength” in the contract fight. Alongside that support, a delegation from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union from West Coast ports joined the ILA strike picket line in the fall.



Militant/Laura Anderson

International Longshoremen’s Association members on 3-day strike picket in Miami Oct. 3.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

THE MILITANT

January 24, 2000

BIRMINGHAM — “Farmers want to go to Atlanta because they haven’t received any debt relief or money, or have been outright turned down. They want justice,” said David Howard, a cotton and soy bean farmer from Mississippi, and president of the Mileston Cooperative.

Farmers and their supporters stepped up activities this week to build the Jan. 17 march in Atlanta. Black farmers in the rural area northeast of Memphis are fighting to get out the truth about a growing scandal. It involves the federal government’s actions around the March 1999 settlement of the lawsuit against discrimination by the United States Department of Agriculture.

The settlement — far from providing relief to Black farmers — has become part of perpetuating the long-standing discriminatory practices that over the years have driven tens of thousands of small Black farmers off the land.

THE MILITANT

January 24, 1975

The FBI maintains 160 agents in Puerto Rico whose sole function is to persecute the pro-independence movement on that island of 2.8 million people. This was among the facts revealed by a former FBI employee at a news conference in San Juan.

One of the methods employed by the FBI is to send agents into pro-independence organizations. Other FBI techniques included illegal mail tampering. Sometimes the FBI would return the letters to the postal system for delivery, but in other cases the intercepted communications would be put in FBI files. The FBI also obtained copies of bank records of pro-independence groups.

The latest information about the FBI’s activities comes in the wake of a stepped-up campaign of harassment of pro-independence militants related to the recently concluded strike at the Aqueducts and Sewers Authority.

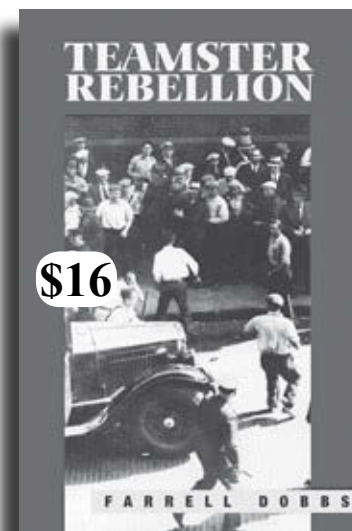
THE MILITANT

January 23, 1950

[President] Truman has given the green light to invoke a Taft-Hartley injunction against the embattled coal miners, some 90,000 of whom last week decided not to discontinue their “rolling” strike begun Jan. 9.

This move brings out into the open the conspiracy of the coal operators and the government to put legal shackles on the miners and deal them a crushing defeat. Then the way will be cleared, Big Business thinks, to “deal with” the other unions, particularly the CIO.

The whole capitalist class and government, including Truman, have launched a concerted assault upon a vital sector of the labor movement. The entire organized working class must be mobilized to back the miners, to send them finances and relief, to hold mass meetings and pass resolutions telling Truman, Congress and the courts: “Hands off the miners!”



pathfinderpress.com

Daily protests continue against pro-Moscow gov't in Georgia

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Protesters demanding a new presidential election continue to take to the streets in Georgia. The actions began Nov. 28 after the pro-Moscow Georgian Dream party government announced plans to shelve talks on joining the European Union until at least 2028. Since then demonstrators have held daily marches in the capital, Tbilisi, and cities across the country.

While the government has pulled back from the large-scale police assaults carried out in the first weeks of the protests, cops continue to pick up demonstrators. In Batumi, Georgia's second largest city, 10 protesters were arrested Jan. 11, including Mzia Amaglobeli, editor-in-chief of Batumelebi, an area news network, and of its nationwide online magazine, Netgazeti.

She was first arrested for putting up posters calling for a nationwide strike, then charged with assaulting a police officer, an act punishable by four to seven years in prison.

"There is no violence from the protesters," Ruso, a 27-year-old demonstrator in Tbilisi, told the *Militant* by phone Jan. 13. "People are getting arrested for things like making too much noise."

On Jan. 10, Tbilisi City Court Judge Ketevan Jachvadze denied bail for 11 people, including actor Andro Chichinadze and comedian Onise Tskhadadze. Both deny frame-up charges of participating in "group violence." Protests against their detention continued outside the court during the trial.

Ruso said she was a student in 2023 when the government tried to introduce a law that would penalize people charged with being "foreign agents," curtailing political rights and limiting freedom of the press. She joined the tens of thousands who protested. The government initially backed off, but then passed the bill in May 2024.

"There are many problems here that need to be addressed," she said, pointing to monthslong protests last year by residents of the village of Shukruti in western Georgia, including workers at the manganese mine there. They're fighting against bosses' expansion of mining operations, leaving houses, vineyards and some farmland in ruins.

Moscow invaded Georgia in 2008,

seizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia. "In December Moscow announced it won't import tangerines from Abkhazia," Ruso said. The measure, alongside the Russian government suspension of some funding for the region, was aimed at pressuring local authorities after they shelved a bill, favorable to Moscow, that would advance its efforts to Russify the population.

Many workers participate in the current actions in Tbilisi, but so far few unions are involved, Ruso said. "Right now demonstrators call for a new election. It's the one thing we can all agree on."



Jerome Gilles/NurPhoto via AP

Tens of thousands of protesters celebrate New Year's Eve in Tbilisi, Georgia. They are demanding new national elections, defending Ukraine's sovereignty against Moscow's invasion.

Chinese rulers face economic slowdown, growing rivalry

Continued from front page

manufacturing, surpassing Japan as the world's leading car exporter in 2023. Their solar panel plants, which produce double the global demand, will increase output by 50% more this year.

Capitalist powers in the European Union and Washington have ramped up anti-dumping tariffs on these imports. Governments in Brazil, Turkey, Indonesia and India are raising tariff barriers against Chinese goods as well.

The incoming Donald Trump administration plans to use the preponderant size of the U.S. rulers' domestic market as a weapon in its conflicts with Beijing, imposing more tariffs.

China's rulers are more dependent than ever on exports to developed capitalist markets — and more vulnerable to trade disputes as a result.

After the 2008 global financial crisis, the Chinese rulers' industrial production was boosted by a huge government stimulus. But massive spending on urban infrastructure and housing fueled glut. There are now about 80 million unoccupied housing units across the country. The collapse of this property bubble is the biggest drag on China's economic growth. Millions of construction workers have lost their jobs.

One reflection of the crisis is the fall in China's population. Birth rates have plummeted by 50% since 2016, while death rates have risen. Youth unemployment hit a record high of 21.3% in June 2023. Many young people stay with parents because they can't find a full-time job, while others face bosses' relentless demands for longer working hours.

"There's a big difference between China doing well and Chinese people doing well," Moxi, a former psychiatrist, told the BBC. He quit his job because of overwork.

For decades the bureaucratic regime in Beijing hoped to secure the acquiescence of working people by assuring them better living standards. But during the rulers' iron-fisted pandemic lockdowns anti-government protests spread.

China Labour Bulletin, published in Hong Kong, reports that last year there were hundreds of strikes and protests by workers across the country. Many were in the construction and manufacturing industries, mainly over wage arrears and lost jobs. Workers from the garment industry, hospitals and warehouses also took action.

Protests by middle-class layers have also spread in response to the loss of bank savings, rising debts and the fall in the value of their houses.

Beijing vs. Washington rivalry

Beijing has extended its reach into Asia, Africa and Latin America with its global Belt and Road infrastructure projects. They're funded by China's state-owned banks, and lead to increased debts for the countries involved.

In Chancay, a remote town in Peru, the Chinese shipping giant Cosco is building a deep-water megaport to facilitate the supply of agricultural goods and metals from Latin America to China. Washington is alarmed that the facility can double as a military base for Beijing.

China is investing billions of dollars

in Latin America to transform trade across the Pacific, cutting shipping times to China by a third and expanding Beijing's influence in a continent that Washington considers its backyard.

Beijing is increasing its military clout in the Pacific region, which the U.S. rulers consider one of the spoils of their bloody victory in World War II.

The Chinese navy launched its largest exercise in the Taiwan Strait in almost 30 years in December. Over 100 warships entered maritime approaches to Taiwan in a dress rehearsal for an invasion. Beijing says it wants to reclaim the territory. Washington has vowed to take military action if it tries.

Beijing has also expanded its military presence in the South China Sea, harassing and ramming vessels inside what the Philippine rulers consider their exclusive economic zone.

This heightens instability in a region that carries one-third of world shipping, including 65% of China's total trade and 40% of global oil supplies.

Beijing is modernizing its warships and missiles, fighters and bombers, as well as its cyber warfare capacities. However, the U.S. rulers still have by far the largest and most lethal military forces in the world.

Washington's capitalist rulers and the incoming Trump administration are determined to defend their place at the head of the imperialist world order. NATO commander Adm. Rob Bauer told the Jan. 7 *Financial Times*, "If tectonic plates shift, you have earthquakes. If the plates of geopolitical power shift, you have wars."



Deep-water port at Chancay, Peru, is majority-owned by China shipping company COSCO. Linked by rail to Brazil, it will cut shipping times for Latin America's agricultural and mineral exports to China by a third. U.S. rulers are alarmed at Beijing's challenge in their "backyard."

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 victors of inter-imperialist slaughter of World War II is shattering, with explosive ramifications for workers and farmers worldwide.

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Israeli blows open space for region's toilers

Continued from front page
quote, showing a giant hand pulling out weeds and snakes from a map of Israel and replacing them with a Palestinian flag. The snake heads sport Stars of David.

Despite Khamenei's pronouncement, two generals in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have been widely quoted in the official press describing the depth of the blows inflicted on Tehran.

"We lost Syria, we suffered," Brig. Gen. Behrouz Esbati, who led the Iranian forces in Syria for years, said at the end of December, calling Assad's overthrow a "very bad defeat."

Assad's rule was challenged in a bloody civil war after he brutally crushed mass protests in 2011. He hung on to power with military support from Tehran and Hezbollah and Moscow's airstrikes against his opponents.

Esbati admitted that Assad's government was "a handful of corrupt, depraved individuals," "alienated" from the people, though he says not a word about the tens of thousands tortured and murdered by the dictatorship.

As the Sunni-Islamist rebel forces advanced toward Damascus, the remaining Iranian and Hezbollah forces hastily withdrew. "The road from Damascus to Beirut was littered with destroyed military vehicles including tanks and mobile rocket launchers," reports the *Wall Street Journal*. A large amount of military equipment was later blown up by Israel with some captured by the rebels.

General, 'We can't strike Israel'

The Iranian regime has repeatedly threatened to "raze Tel Aviv and Haifa to the ground" and launched two missile barrages at Israel last year in retaliation for Israeli strikes killing leaders of Tehran's "axis of resistance." But today, Esbati said, the Iranian regime no longer has the ability to strike Israel. An Israeli raid destroyed the centerpieces of Iran's air defense systems in October.

The regime's defeats are having an impact on the morale of the Basij, a paramilitary force that has been a key part of the regime's attempts to repress anti-government protests.

Brig. Gen. Hassan Hassanzadeh, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Tehran, said a Jan. 10 drill by the Basij fell far short of the expected attendance, despite the usual

distribution of free food to all participants and "wedding gift packages" for those about to get married. Many "declined to participate," Hassanzadeh said, adding that "this is a trend that we have seen increase since the events in Syria."

The blows to Tehran's allies in Lebanon, Gaza and Syria occur as the capitalist economic crisis hitting workers in Iran gets worse. Workers say that the minimum wage only covers 25% of monthly expenses. "We can't afford meat or chicken," a worker at a vegetable oil factory in Kerman province told the Iranian Labour News Agency. There are frequent protests by oil workers, nurses, retirees and others, as well as weekly protests in prisons against the death penalty.

At the weekly retiree actions in Ahvaz Jan. 12, protesters chanted "Enough warmongering, our table is empty," "the enemy is here, not in America," and "forget about the hijab, do something about inflation," a reference to the regime's attempts to enforce its reactionary dress code on women.

Shake up in Lebanon

The defeats dealt Tehran and Hezbollah are also shaking up the Lebanese government. For more than two years the parliament there has been unable to agree on electing a new president. Under a decadeslong deal, the prime minister must be a Sunni Muslim, the president a Christian and the parliament speaker a Shiite. Hezbollah, better armed than the Lebanese

Army, dominated the country and was often able to impose its will.

But in the wake of its losses to Israel, Hezbollah withdrew its favored candidate, reluctantly agreeing to the election of Gen. Joseph Aoun. He is the first president to take office since 1990 without the prior approval of Tehran or the ousted Assad regime. The U.S., Saudi and Israeli governments welcomed Aoun's selection.

Ceasefire, hostage deal

The blows to Tehran, Hamas and Hezbollah forced Hamas back to the negotiating table with Israel. According to U.S., Qatari and Israeli officials, Hamas agreed Jan. 15 to a deal that includes the start of a six-week initial ceasefire from Jan. 19.

According to news reports, in the first phase Hamas is to free 33 hostages, in batches, starting with women and children, in exchange for some 1,000 Palestinians convicted or accused of terrorist acts by Israel and a withdrawal of some Israeli soldiers from parts of Gaza. The second phase would include more talks over further IDF withdrawals while Hamas would release the remaining living captives in exchange for more prisoners.



Jew-hating cartoon published by Iran's Tasnim news agency quotes Iran Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who said America and Zionist regime's idea that the "resistance" is over is completely wrong. "The one who will be uprooted is Israel."

The plan for a ceasefire highlights the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead in the fight to defend Israel's right to exist as a refuge for Jews and to prevent Hamas and Tehran from carrying out more pogroms.

Working people — Jewish, Arab, Muslim, Kurdish, Azerbaijani, Persian and more — from Israel to Syria and beyond can take advantage of the blows to Hamas, Hezbollah and Tehran, as well as the fall of Assad, to find ways to come together to advance their national aspirations and their own class interests.

Ankara pushes to expand sway after fall of Assad regime

BY SETH GALINSKY

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is pushing for his regime to benefit the most from the overthrow of the Bashar al-Assad dictatorship in Syria, calling it "a historic window of opportunity." Erdogan is also urging the more than 3 million Syrian refugees in Turkey to return home.

Turkey shares a 565-mile-long border with Syria. Erdogan's government was the first to meet with Ahmad al-Sharaa, the central leader of the new Syrian government, who the Turkish rulers worked with when he was the head of rebel forces in Idlib before Assad's fall.

As the fight against the Syrian dictatorship unfolded in the wake of Assad's murderous assault on mass protests in 2011, the capitalist government in Turkey created the Syrian National Army, one of dozens of armed groups operating there.

Turkish troops occupy a narrow swath of northern Syria, aimed at pushing back the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

As the Assad regime got weaker, the SDF took control of the largely Kurdish region in the northern part of the country. Collaborating with hundreds of U.S. troops stationed in the area, it helped defeat Islamic State fighters, who had moved in amid the chaos.

Kurds, an oppressed nationality

There are some 30 million Kurds — the largest nationality without its own country in the world — in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. The Turkish govern-

ment charges that the SDF has ties to the Turkey-based Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Ankara calls a terrorist group. Its real fear is that any advance for Kurds in Syria will strengthen the struggle for national rights and self-determination by Kurds in Turkey.

Ankara faces competition from its capitalist rivals in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and elsewhere, for influence and lucrative contracts to rebuild Syria's devastated towns and factories.

Turkey's capitalist class has other interests in Syria. Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) have sought to take advantage of Turkey's historic ties in Syria going back to the days of the Ottoman Empire, which stretched across Syria to parts of Africa, into Europe, Ukraine, Caucasus, parts of Iran and Iraq. The bourgeois Islamist AKP has been in a long-term rivalry with the Saudi monarchy over who will be the voice of Sunni Muslims in the region.

But the Turkish rulers' rivalry with the Shiite Muslim-based bourgeois clerical regime in Iran is even sharper. The regime in Tehran has tried to extend its reactionary power throughout the region, ever since it cemented its rule by consolidating a counterrevolution against the 1979 popular revolution in Iran that overthrew the U.S.-backed shah.

Tehran put together proxy forces aiming to destroy Israel and expel or kill the Jews. It relied on these armed groups in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen to get its way.

The ruling class in Turkey — which rules over a modern capitalist nation — furthers its economic and political goals by presenting itself as the "neutral" arbiter between competing powers, while building up its own military might.

Turkey is a member of U.S.-led NATO and hosts U.S. military forces at its Incirlik Air Base. At the same time, the Turkish military buys significant weaponry from Russia, even though it was on opposite sides to Moscow in the war in Syria.

In 2024 Ankara began a rapprochement with the Egyptian government, which had overthrown the previous government of Mohamed Morsi in 2013, despite Erdogan's historic ties with Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood.

While Tehran was arming and sending troops and Hezbollah fighters to Syria to shore up the Assad regime, Ankara was aiding the armed opposition. Yet Iran remains the second largest supplier of natural gas to Turkey

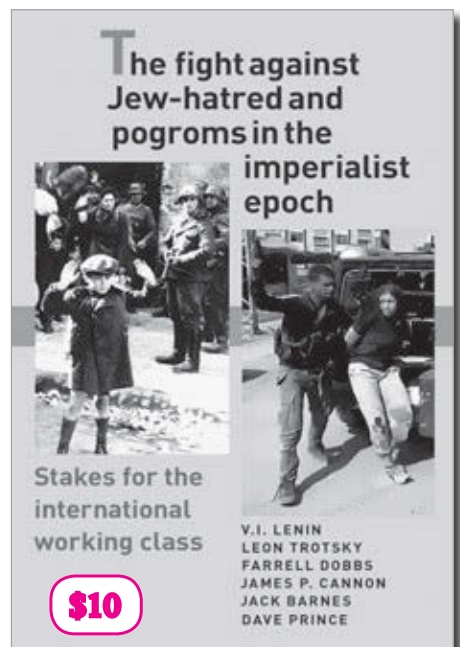
Turkey's army 2nd largest in NATO

The Turkish army is the second largest in NATO. It has 700 modern battle tanks, more than Germany and France combined. To advance its interests in the eastern Mediterranean's vast gas fields, Ankara is building up its naval force, adding a destroyer equipped with anti-aircraft missiles and its first aircraft carrier.

Ankara is producing its own stealth fighter planes and advanced submarines.

Continued on page 9

Recommended reading



pathfinderpress.com

'US capital rules through its twin parties. It supports both.'

Letters from Prison by James P. Cannon, a founding leader of the Socialist Workers Party, is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January. In 1944 during World War II, Cannon and 17 other leaders of the SWP and the Minneapolis Teamsters union were imprisoned for opposing Washington's imperialist aims and entry into the slaughter. They were the first to be framed up by Franklin Roosevelt's Democratic Party administration under its thought-control Smith Act. Cannon's letters take up questions of program and perspectives as SWP leaders prepared the communist movement for the explosive labor battles that would erupt after the war. This excerpt is from Letter 82, written on Aug. 9, 1944, from the federal prison in Sandstone, Minnesota. Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JAMES P. CANNON

Who is the "J.M." who writes from Chicago about the two-party system? Just judging by his lack of manners alone I would take him to be an over-educated college boy who "majored" in "iconoclasm."

There are differences in the Repub-



Laura Gray cartoon in the *Militant*, July 29, 1944, depicts bosses cracking whip over their two parties, the Republicans and Democrats, as they rush to do the capitalist rulers' bidding.

lican and Democratic parties, in my opinion, though not in the sense that J.M. takes as his point of departure — that the Republicans are more "reactionary" than the Democrats. This is an illusion entertained by many workers and fostered by the bulk of the labor bureaucracy, the Social-Democrats, and the Stalinists. *The Militant* does well to center its fire on this illusion; this is the main point, and should be the burden of our agitation. Big capital rules through the mechanism of the two parties as far as fundamental issues are concerned, but not always directly in response to their unanimous commands.

There are deep conflicts of interest as well as differences of opinion in the ranks of the capitalists. The two parties, which are in reality two big factions of a unique two-party system united on fundamentals, and the numerous factions and cross-currents within them, reflect these conflicts and differences. The big capitalists on the whole are more class conscious than the workers, but they are by no means omniscient

in judging their own political interests. They don't always know what is best for them; and as *The Militant* correctly observes, they are not notably grateful to politicians who have served them best in a given situation.

"Big capital rules through the mechanism of the two-party system but not always directly."
— James P. Cannon

These Oliver Twists always cry for more with an animal instinct. And they are not a bit squeamish about their methods of getting it. Their ruthless criticism, obstruction and sabotage of the Roosevelt administration — undeterred by the plaintive bleats of the "liberals" and labor fakers that they were hurting the "war effort" — have to be understood as methods of pressure to compel Roosevelt & Co. to do things their way.

It is not an unreasoning "opposition,"

as the labor fakers represent it. Results have shown that their brutal "opposition," which put Roosevelt in his place as their servant, has been far more effective than the lackey-like support of the labor leaders offered to Roosevelt as the master. Why should he pay for support that he can get for nothing?

The classes are not homogeneous, and neither are the two big class parties. There are differences of origin — this ought to be the starting point in the analysis of every organism — differences of tradition, composition, sectional interests, political machines with their own special interests to serve, different techniques and methods of demagoguery to hold various strata of the population in line. These are important factors worthy of notice by the political analyst. But one can lose his bearing entirely if he does not recognize their secondary character.

They complicate the political situation in which the big capitalists have to manipulate the masses in order to assure their firm rule. But in the absence of an independent class opposition on the political field they will continue, as in the past, to solve the problem without too much difficulty.

What is their fundamental method? It is the *two-party system*. Which party do they support? They support *both*.

And what is even more important, both parties support them in all *fundamental* questions. It could not be otherwise under the present political scheme.

January BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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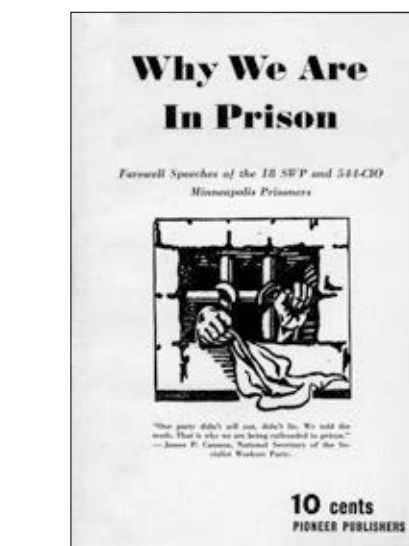
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March 1944 pamphlet on fight to win freedom of 18 imprisoned SWP, Teamster leaders. "Our party didn't sell out, didn't lie. We told the truth," James P. Cannon said. "That's why we're being railroaded to prison."

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Join Socialist Workers Party campaign!

The Socialist Workers Party is running Eric Simpson for mayor of Oakland, and the party will be announcing candidates across the country in coming weeks. Join in campaigning for the only party that is rooted in the working class and dedicated to its class interests. Its goal is to organize our class to take political power from the ruling capitalist families, uproot all forms of exploitation and oppression, and extend a hand to revolutionary struggles worldwide.

The SWP's 2024 ticket, Rachele Fruit for president and Dennis Richter for vice president, got a serious hearing for this program.

This year the party's candidates and their supporters will walk union picket lines and build solidarity with striking workers. Maximizing support is crucial to winning victories and to strengthening workers' confidence and readiness for further struggle.

In the sharpening trade and military conflicts shaking the capitalist world, the U.S. rulers are driving against all their rivals. They intend to use working people as cannon fodder in these clashes. The SWP candidates say there are no "American" interests that workers share with the bosses. Our interests lie in the opposite direction, with fellow workers worldwide, against the employers and the political parties that serve them.

Central to a working-class foreign policy today is defending Israel as a refuge against Jew-hatred and

pogroms. The capitalist rulers in Iran and their proxies are determined to carry out another Holocaust to annihilate the Jewish people. Jew-hatred is endemic in the imperialist epoch. It's used by the capitalist rulers whenever they fear workers fighting for power.

SWP candidates advance demands to combat bosses' efforts to set native-born against foreign-born workers, to divide and weaken the working class. The party calls on unions to fight for an amnesty for all undocumented workers in the U.S. Such a fight would help unite working people, strengthen all union fights and prepare our class for the sharper struggles to come.

The working class is the only class with the power, experience in common struggle, and capacity to fight capitalist rule and win.

Workers need a party of labor, to organize all workers — those working or out of a job, retirees, union members and the unorganized — to fight for the things our class needs. It would join struggles against racist violence, women's subjugation and national oppression and reach out to defend the small farmers and other exploited producers.

SWP candidates point to the need to expand and deepen the political organization of working people everywhere. They explain all our struggles are political struggles. Which class rules is the decisive question facing workers here and worldwide.

Join the SWP campaigns. Become part of the fight for a socialist world.

Death-row prisoners reject pardons by Biden

BY JANET POST

Two inmates on death row at the federal penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana, Len Davis and Shannon Agofsky, have refused to agree to commutations issued Dec. 23 by President Joseph Biden. The outgoing president had reclassified the sentences for 37 of the 40 prisoners on federal death row to life in prison without parole.

In court filings Dec. 30, both prisoners say they never requested a commutation, did not want one and will not sign the paperwork they were offered. They both are fighting to overturn their conviction and win release from prison.

Agofsky, 53, was sentenced to death in 2004 for killing another prisoner while serving a life sentence for an earlier murder. He says he was innocent. "To commute his sentence now, while the defendant has active litigation in court, is to strip him of the protection of heightened scrutiny" that comes from a death sentence, his court filing says.

Davis, 60, a former New Orleans cop, was convicted in 1996 of ordering the murder of a woman who had filed a brutality complaint against him. He has always maintained his innocence, and, in his court filing, says that the death sentence draws "attention to the overwhelming misconduct" in his case.

Biden made it clear in ordering the commutations that he gave no consideration to these fights. "Make

no mistake: I condemn these murderers, grieve for the victims of their despicable acts, and ache for all the families who have suffered unimaginable and irreparable loss," Biden told the press when he issued his 37 commutations.

But there is a serious question about whether the two inmates actually can refuse the commutations. A precedent-setting 1927 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Biddle v. Perovich*, upheld President William H. Taft's reclassification of the death sentence of a gold miner, Vuco Perovich. Perovich, an immigrant worker from Montenegro, was convicted of killing Jacob Jaconi, a fisherman from Greece.

The Supreme Court ruled that the president has the power to commute a sentence of death to life in prison without the consent of the prisoner. Perovich fought the commutation, seeking a way to get out of prison.

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. wrote the decision saying, "Just as the original punishment would be imposed without regard to the prisoner's consent and in the teeth of his will, whether he liked it or not, the public welfare, not his consent, determines what shall be done."

Even though during Biden's presidency the Justice Department halted federal executions, it continued to seek new convictions imposing the death sentence and to defend existing ones against challenges in court.

Ankara pushes to expand sway after fall of Assad

Continued from page 7

The government of Turkey first established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1949. It maintains those relations despite heated clashes over Israeli actions against Hamas.

It was Israel's devastating attacks on Hezbollah, which had propped up the Assad dictatorship, that was key for paving the way to Assad's overthrow. The Israeli government is closely watching the actions taken by the victorious Syrian rebels.

Sharaa, the main leader of the rebel coalition, has his origins in Islamic State and al-Qaeda. He says he wants a single Syrian state and for all armed groups to dissolve themselves into a new Syrian army.

Concerns about the threat of a Turkish-influenced Syria are being debated in Israel. According to the Jewish News Service, the Israeli government favors the division of Syria "into cantons with varying levels of autonomy." That would leave Kurdish forces in control of the north and Druze organizations in the south.

Whatever the outcome, working people in Syria, Turkey and beyond have more space today to press for their interests, following the overthrow of Assad. "We didn't stand in the squares so that we could get rid of one dictator and replace him with another," Hisham al-Jawhari, a Druze leader in Suweida, told Syria Direct, referring to years of protests there. If that were to happen, he said, "We might return to the squares."

Help 'Militant' fight ban

Continued from front page

was unacceptable because of its "inappropriate content" and "inappropriate photos."

"During seven years of receiving the *Militant* I have never been through an inappropriate process to stop me receiving the *Militant*," he wrote. "For my part, I will begin a process to be able to continue receiving the *Militant* since I am a fan of the *Militant* and I love reading its content." On Dec. 13 he filed a grievance urging jail officials to reverse their position and give the issue to him.

He recently informed the *Militant* he has received every issue since the ban.

The photo the institution objects to shows armed Hamas thugs with a woman in a pickup truck they had just seized in Israel and taken to Khan Younis, Gaza, as a hostage during the murderous Oct. 7, 2023, anti-Jewish pogrom.

Just about every major newspaper in the country carried similar pictures in their reporting on the pogrom. And they often show guns or other weaponry in coverage of the battles in defense of Ukraine's sovereignty against

Moscow's attacks, conflicts worldwide from Sudan to Syria, the recent deadly assault on revelers in New Orleans and much more. Maricopa County's ban would lead to shutting out of the prison virtually every publication, denying news and discussion of politics to workers behind bars.

A review of stories and photos that have appeared in recent issues of the *Arizona Republic*, the largest newspaper in the state, include: a photo of the type of gun used in the attempt to assassinate Donald Trump last September; an Israeli army howitzer deployed along the country's border with Gaza as part of fighting against Hamas' terrorist attacks; armed cops searching suspects; and much more.

Goldstein filed the *Militant's* appeal of the ban to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Jan. 13, along with copies of the *Arizona Republic* photos. The appeal was also sent to the Ancillary Services Division Commander.

"This impoundment violates the constitutional rights of prisoners to read political literature of their choice and to form their own opinions about important political developments in the U.S. and worldwide," said *Militant* editor John Studer. "It also deals a blow to freedom of the press, as well as the right of the *Militant* to reach the growing number of readers it has among workers behind bars."

The *Militant* is currently mailed to over 300 inmate subscribers in 156 state, federal and municipal prisons in 29 states. No other prison has informed the *Militant* that they rejected issue no. 42, the one Arizona's Lower Buckeye Jail impounded.

Join the fight! Get out the word and send letters urging prison authorities in Maricopa County to reverse their decision. Email them to JuanGarza@MCSO.Maricopa.gov, to the attention of Ancillary Services Division Commander, with copies to the *Militant*.

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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.