

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Women workers keep Ukraine mines running as war continues
 — PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 89/NO. 5 FEBRUARY 10, 2025

New US gov't takes shape amid growing conflicts, wars

BY TERRY EVANS

Since Donald Trump took office as president again Jan. 20, he has moved to advance his “Make America Great Again” nationalist agenda and, at the same time, to promote his pledge that his plans will mean a pro-worker White House. He’s issued a swath of executive orders, announced plans to grab Greenland and the Panama Canal, paused most foreign aid for review, and visited workers in North Carolina and Los Angeles devastated by storms, fires and government indifference.

It’s too early to say exactly what he will prioritize. As a businessman who brags about his ability to make a good deal, much of what he threatens is a negotiating tactic. But one thing is clear. He will do his best to defend the national interests of the capitalist ruling families, at home and worldwide.

In his Jan. 23 Zoom remarks to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Trump presented his course to strengthen the profit-driven interests of the U.S. rulers as being in the interests of all countries, and good for both bosses and workers alike at home. He said he will bring jobs and prosperity to the U.S. and peace to the entire world. At the same time, he stepped up his threats to make any government that gets in

Continued on page 3

For Israel’s defeat of Hamas, end to Tehran’s nuclear threat



Courtesy Miriam Restaurant

Rafael Hasid, Israeli owner of Miriam Restaurant in Brooklyn. He left up Jan. 25 antisemitic graffiti so that people can “see that things like that happen.” Tehran-backed Hamas war to destroy Israel has sparked rise in anti-Jewish violence worldwide, a deadly threat to all workers.

BY SETH GALINSKY

The unstable ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, and the release of more Israeli hostages, along with Israel’s free-

ISRAEL, THE HOLOCAUST, AND OCT. 7 POGROM

— See editorial page 9

ing of hundreds of Hamas thugs ready to return to duty, does not resolve the key challenge facing the people of Israel — ending the deadly threats from Tehran and its “axis of resistance.” Though

weakened by Israeli blows over the last year, Tehran, Hamas and Hezbollah are working to rebuild efforts to try to destroy Israel and eliminate the Jews.

Both the outgoing Joseph Biden administration and the incoming administration of Donald Trump pressured the Israeli government to agree to the three-stage ceasefire deal that began Jan. 19.

Hamas is using the ceasefire to sal-

Continued on page 7

Working class responds to LA fires disaster with solidarity

BY BERNIE SENTER

ALTADENA, Calif. — “Under capitalism, every time a disaster happens, the bosses and their politicians merely recreate the same conditions for it to happen again,” said Eric Simpson, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Oakland mayor and a union factory worker, in a discussion with Santos Aviles and his two sons in front of their home here.

They returned yesterday after being evacuated for two weeks because of the fires that swept through Los Angeles starting Jan. 7. Altadena, where many Black families live, saw 17 of the 29 deaths in the fires, after city officials failed to get out timely warnings.

Simpson came to Los Angeles Jan. 25 and 26 to join SWP members in meeting with working people who’ve been devastated by the fires and the disdain shown by government officials.

With the first significant rainfall in months, the fires have been mostly contained. People are returning to their homes, picking through the

Continued on page 4

US ‘population growth’ shrinking as the crisis of capitalism deepens

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

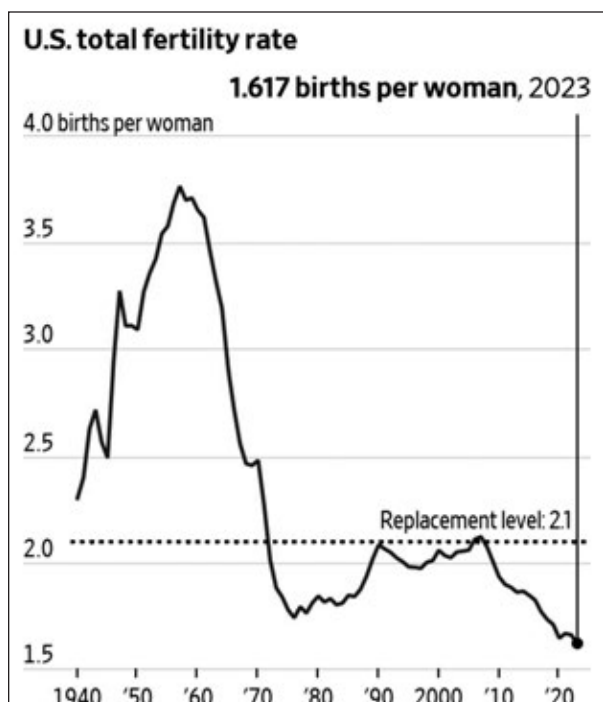
Declining birth rates and life expectancy in the U.S., both symptoms of a deepening capitalist economic, political and moral crisis, have led to a sharp drop

in population growth, one that will continue to deepen over coming decades. In fact without a steady flow of immigrants entering the country each year the population would already be shrinking.

Working-class youth are especially affected. A growing percentage live with their parents well into adulthood and remain substantially dependent on them financially.

Recently released government statistics show the U.S. had a population estimated at 341 million on New Year’s Day and is expected to grow to 350 million people by year’s end. Last year the population grew 1.09%, only because of the continuing arrival of immigrant workers. Many are a key part of the workforce, from agricultural workers to delivery workers to

Continued on page 9



Socialist Workers Party joins strike battles, calls for building a labor party

BY JANET POST

The Socialist Workers Party and Communist League in Canada are launching 2025 election campaigns with candidates presenting a working-class program to fight against the effects on us of the unfolding political and economic crisis of the capitalist system.

Join fight against Phoenix jail ban on the ‘Militant’!

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Join our fight to overturn the unconstitutional ban of *Militant* issue no. 42 by authorities at the Lower Buckeye Jail in Phoenix — the largest detention facility in Arizona. Letters have been arriving at the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office from around the country, and more are needed.

“Please reverse the decision to ban the Nov. 11, 2024, issue of the *Militant*,” wrote Timothy Frankland, a member of American Postal Workers Union Local 7019 in Eagan, Minnesota, in a note sent Jan. 24 to prison officials in Mari-

Continued on page 9

The candidates and their supporters will join with workers on picket lines and in social struggles, and help build solidarity to strengthen their battles.

During the months ahead working people can join in campaigning! And in reading and helping distribute the *Militant* and books by SWP leaders and other revolutionaries published by Pathfinder Press.

In Montreal, Katy LeRougetel, the Communist League candidate for Parliament in the Dorval-Lachine-Lasalle

Continued on page 3

Inside

US gov’t threatens attacks on the sovereignty of Venezuela 2

‘Jewish News’: SWP backs Israel’s fight against Jew-hatred 6

One-day strike by Kurds in Iran demands end to death penalty 7

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Las Vegas hotel workers win 69-day strike at Virgin Hotels

13,000 Quebec child care workers strike and rally

US gov't threatens attacks on the sovereignty of Venezuela

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's inauguration for a third six-year term Jan. 10 has heightened discussions in U.S. ruling-class circles about what Washington's next moves on the country should be. In July, Maduro was declared the winner of a highly polarized election, which Venezuela's opposition forces, Washington, the European Union, and some governments in Latin America have refused to recognize.

"Here's one goal that is overdue," op-ed columnist Bret Stephens wrote in the Jan. 14 *New York Times*, "deposing the regime ... through coercive diplomacy if possible or force if necessary."

The incentive, he says, should be an offer of amnesty or permanent exile for high officials in the Maduro government and Venezuela's armed forces. Washington accuses them of throttling democracy and turning the country into a global hub for drug trafficking and money laundering.

Stephens says this might mean "U.S. military intervention of the sort that in 1990 swiftly ended the regime of the Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega." Under Democratic and Republican administrations alike, the U.S. imperialist rulers have imposed political and economic sanctions on Venezuela for 20 years. Washington's goal is to overthrow Maduro and his government and impose a regime more subservient to Washington.

Over a year ago, the Joseph Biden administration decided to try a new

wrinkle. In exchange for a promise from Maduro that the upcoming presidential election would be fair and transparent, the administration lifted some of the crippling sanctions on oil and gas exports it had imposed on Venezuela in 2022. It also gave Chevron, the one U.S. oil company Washington currently allows to operate there, a green light to step up operations.

Washington hoped this reengagement would lead to somewhat greater stability and a more favorable situation for the interests of U.S. imperialism both in Venezuela and the region. And to tone down Caracas' collaboration with Moscow, Beijing and Tehran.

These overtures came to an end after the July election. Chevron continues to lobby for a negotiated settlement, fearful any other solution might disrupt its business there.

But whether it's open support by Washington to provocations by bourgeois opposition figures in Venezuela, new economic sanctions or menacing declarations about possible military intervention, they are all flagrant violations of Venezuela's sovereignty.

The U.S. imperialist rulers' posturing as the world's foremost defender of "democracy" crumbles in the face of its record of bloody interventions and wars in Korea, Guatemala, Vietnam, the Balkans, Iraq and more.

Their goal is to defend their position as top dog in the world imperialist pecking order and access to markets and raw materials. The U.S.



Reuters/Ueslei Marcelino

U.S. politicians, media step up threats against Venezuela, calls for "regime change," by force if necessary. Toilers line up for food, other necessities, in short supply from U.S. sanctions.

rulers and their Venezuelan capitalist allies could care less for the rights and interests of working people there.

U.S. sanctions batter working people

U.S. sanctions on Venezuela, especially those on the country's oil and gas industry, have battered the country's economy. Driven by growing economic hardship, more than 7.7 million Venezuelans have left the country since 2014, more than a quarter of the population.

Meanwhile, the Maduro government has privatized some factories, mines and agricultural operations. This has led to thousands of workers being laid off, with some jailed for opposing the measures. Some 370 peasants and rural workers have been killed by hit men hired by capitalist landowners in the process of evicting them and taking back the land.

The oil sanctions have also achieved another one of Washington's goals, to make it difficult for Venezuela to continue oil exports to Cuba at the same level it did earlier. In 2024, they were halved. The U.S. rulers will never forgive Venezuela for any aid it has provided to Cuba.

Washington increased its promised blood money for Maduro's arrest the day of his inauguration to \$25 million, and laid bounties on other figures in his administration.

On Jan. 22, incoming Secretary of State Marco Rubio held a phone call with Edmundo González Urrutia, the opposition candidate in the July election. Describing González as Venezuela's rightful president, Rubio reaffirmed the new administration's determination to continue Biden's policy.

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

by Jack Barnes

This is a book about the example set by the people of Cuba that revolution is not only necessary — it can be made.

It's about the class struggle in the U.S., where the capacities and revolutionary potential of

workers and farmers are today as utterly discounted by the ruling powers as were those of the Cuban toilers. And just as wrongly. \$10

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THE MILITANT

Support UK food workers strike for higher wages!

Some 300 Unite union members walked out Jan. 7 at Princes food in Long Sutton, England, part of actions by 800 workers at five company sites. "This strike isn't just about pay," union steward Paul Russell told the *Militant*. "It's about the future and a strong union."



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Unite union members outside Princes food company in Long Sutton, England, Jan. 14.

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Calls for building a labor party

Continued from front page

riding, and campaign supporter Sabrina, who didn't want to use her last name, brought solidarity to a one-day provincewide strike by child care workers.

Some 13,000 workers from 400 government child care facilities went on strike Jan. 23. Many rallied and marched in cities and towns across Quebec, demanding a union contract with higher wages and better working conditions. The strikers, whose contract expired in March 2023, are members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions. (See article on page 5.)

Sabrina is a college student and a child care worker herself. "This is great to have so many people here," she told LeRougetel as she described her own working conditions to the strikers.

On Jan. 25, supporters of the CL campaign began gathering signatures to put LeRougetel and Philippe Tessier, the League's candidate in Montreal's Bourassa riding, on the ballot.

While campaigning door to door in Lachine, LeRougetel met Olietha Atett, a warehouse packaging worker who signed to put her on the ballot.

They discussed Amazon bosses' recent announcement they were closing seven of its distribution centers in Quebec. Thousands will be laid off. This comes after workers at the Amazon warehouse in Laval, north of Montreal, won union certification, a first in Canada. (See article on page 6.) Amazon bosses are notoriously anti-labor.

"I joined a rally in December to support the unionizing drive by workers at the Laval warehouse," LeRougetel told Atett.

"Amazon knows more and more workers are going to fight for union rights," she said. "The Communist League campaign builds solidarity with these battles."

"In my job," Atett said, the workers "want to be recognized, to be respected." LeRougetel said, "And we need to go further. All labor struggles are political struggles. We need a party of labor that can unite union and nonunion, farmers and students. Workers should run the country, not the capitalists."

In Lachine, campaigners found many workers knew about the Amazon closings. LeRougetel told the *Militant* that they had an "equally widespread conviction that the union-organizing drive is the reason for the closures despite denials by the company."

Support for Miami campaign

In Miami, Laura Anderson, SWP candidate for mayor, and campaign supporter Steve Warshell met a number of workers in a local Walmart parking lot, introducing them to the

campaign and the *Militant*.

Jim Brown, a salesman for a TV station, bought a copy of the *Militant* after seeing the articles on Israel's war to defend its existence as a refuge against Jew-hatred and pogroms like the one carried out by Hamas in October 2023 and on the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad's dictatorial regime in Syria.

"I agree that getting rid of Assad gives more space to working people in Syria," said Brown. "I also agree with what you say on Lebanon and Gaza. And I support independence for Ukraine."

Anderson also spoke with Javier Mendez, from Honduras and Marta Gomez from Venezuela. "The people I know in Caracas think that life is easier here in the U.S.," said Gomez. "But I can see how hard it is for the average person. Apartment rents are unbelievable and medical care through insurance is very, very high."

"Right now it's extremely difficult for working people to begin families," Anderson told Mendez and Gomez. "The cost of childbirth is in the thousands of dollars even without complications, and you have to pay up front."

"Through organizing unions and standing in solidarity with those that



Militant
Katy LeRougetel, second from left, Communist League candidate for Parliament in Montreal, talks with child care workers on strike for a new contract provincewide in Quebec Jan. 23.

already exist, we can fight for jobs, health care, livable schedules and affordable housing," Anderson said. "We need to break from the political parties that represent the capitalists — the Democrats and Republicans — and build a labor party based on the unions that can lead the fight for the interests of the whole working class."

Mendez and Gomez bought a copy

New US gov't takes shape amid conflicts and wars

Continued from front page

Washington's way, whether an ally or foe, pay with damaging tariffs or worse.

Trump moved back into the White House as turmoil grips the imperialist world "order." Washington's status as top-dog, the prize of the U.S. rulers' victory in the Second World War, is fraying. Conflicts between rival powers are intensifying, as shown by watershed events, like Moscow's three-year-long war to conquer Ukraine and Tehran's and Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, pogrom in Israel and their threats to massacre Jews again and again until either Israel is destroyed or all Jews are dead. Ruling classes worldwide are cranking out more weaponry and seeking new alliances in preparation for the bloody wars to come.

This follows years of sharpening competition between Washington, its EU allies and its rivals, especially Beijing and Moscow and their allies in the expanding BRICS bloc, which also includes the governments of Brazil, India and South Africa. At issue are resources, markets and political and military domination. None among them is capable of halting the growing conflicts and vulnerability of the world capitalist system to economic breakdowns, social upheavals and potential nuclear conflict.

Trump told the political leaders and corporate titans at Davos that he was lifting former President Joseph Biden's restrictions on energy production to "make the United States a manufacturing superpower." He announced tax cuts on corporate income that would make the U.S. more profitable for foreign capitalist investors. "But if you don't make your product in America," he threatened, "you will have to pay a tariff."

"We are watching the end of the second age of globalization," complained Daniel Yergin, vice chairman of S&P Global.

Many attendees were enthralled, hoping to profit from grabbing hold of Washington's coattails. Others were appalled. Trump behaved "like a 21st-century emperor announcing edicts

to his newly conquered princes and satraps," wrote David Ignatius in the *Washington Post*.

Workers need their own party

For well over a century, the Democratic and Republican parties have alternated in the White House, each presenting themselves as a "lesser evil," while consistently and loyally serving the capitalist class against working people. Trump's second term is one more step on that road. What is most striking is not anything the new administration is doing, but the sharpening of the challenges the U.S. rulers face worldwide since Biden took office in 2020.

Trump aims to respond by using the massive size of the U.S. domestic market as a club against Washington's rivals. U.S. consumption is a massive 31.5% of total world personal consumption, *Barron's* reports.

His threats are aimed at extracting concessions for Washington and its capitalist masters in future trade negotiations and other conflicts.

Trump has also made immigration a key issue for his administration, claiming its current level is an obstacle to workers getting good jobs. Raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement have risen in recent days, with some 2,200 immigrants arrested Jan. 25-26. Trump brandished the threat of a 25% tariff on goods coming from Colombia to get its government to accept Washington's use of military aircraft to transport undocumented workers there.

The U.S. rulers have long turned

of the *Militant* and *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark.

If you are interested in finding out more about the SWP and Communist League campaigns or want to get involved, contact the party branch nearest you, listed on page 8.

the spigot of immigration off and on to meet the needs of the bosses for cheap labor in industry and agriculture. And they use raids and deportations to try to reinforce the pariah status of the many millions of workers without papers and to divide the working class in order to attack the wages and working conditions of all workers.

In response to these attacks, advancing working-class solidarity is key. "Fighting for an amnesty for all undocumented workers in the U.S. is the road to strengthening the labor movement," Joanne Kuniatsky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey governor, told the *Militant*.

Trump told Davos attendees that he wanted to start talks with Moscow to end the war in Ukraine, and sit down with Beijing and Moscow to begin talks to reduce the number of nuclear weapons each holds.

At the same time, Trump called on governments in the NATO alliance to increase their military spending to 5% of their gross domestic product, a move aimed at bolstering the striking-power of the Washington-led bloc.

As the conflicts shaking the world deepen, the cut-throat competition inherent to capitalism can set into motion forces beyond the rulers' control and pave the way for World War III.

These clashes underline why the labor movement needs its own political party and an independent working-class foreign policy, based on workers' common interests worldwide, against the bosses, all their parties and governments.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

NEW YORK CITY

Commemoration of the Holocaust and the October 7 Pogrom. Their Significance 80 Years After World War II. Speaker: Dave Prince, Socialist Workers Party National Committee. Sun., Feb. 2, 2:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 307 W. 36th St., 13th floor. Tel.: (646) 434-8117. Sponsored by New York and Northern New Jersey Militant Labor Forums.

Socialist Workers Party Campaign Join in building the working-class alternative

California

Eric Simpson, mayor of Oakland

Florida

Laura Anderson, mayor of Miami

New Jersey

Joanne Kuniatsky, governor

Craig Honts, lieutenant governor

Ohio

John Hawkins, mayor of Cincinnati

Ned Measel, Cincinnati City Council

Texas

Alyson Kennedy, mayor of Fort Worth

Hilda Cuzco, Fort Worth City Council

Solidarity marks response in LA

Continued from front page
 damage. More than 16,000 homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed in fires that consumed over 85 square miles, making it the costliest blaze in U.S. history. Close to 200,000 people were under evacuation orders.

The thousands of working people throughout the area who volunteer staffed an untold number of makeshift distribution sites and donation centers in parking lots, churches and elsewhere. They are getting smaller as the fire burned out. Armed National Guard troops in desert camouflage sit in their Humvees parked at intersections restricting access to burned-out areas. Hundreds of utility workers are replacing destroyed power lines.

Santos Aviles is a landscaper, but said he doesn't think he'll get much extra work cleaning up. "The insurance companies will be in charge of cleanup, and they won't give work to me," he said.

Simpson said the Socialist Workers Party campaigns for a massive government-funded public works program to put thousands to work at union-scale wages to clean up and rebuild. "The union movement should lead this campaign. While only a small minority of workers are in unions today, they can campaign for things that will

benefit the entire working class, including people like you who are self-employed. Millions will be attracted to this struggle. And the fight for amnesty for immigrant workers needs to be right at the heart of it."

Nikki High is the owner of Octavia's Bookshelf in nearby Pasadena. "I came down to the store the day after the fires hit to get power and an internet connection," she told the *Militant*. "I invited others to come down." People, businesses and restaurants brought donations. "Volunteers helped hand out supplies. I took all the books off the shelves, stored them in the attic, so people could come in and 'free shop' straight from the shelves with dignity."

Roger Dagoberto Cruz was volunteering for the day at the Pasadena Community Job Center because his work as a gutter installer was slow. Right after the fires, 800 or 900 people would show up in the morning to get supplies and distribute donations, he said. "But now it's a lot less."

Shea Sage was standing next to a lot filled with burned-out cars. On the day of the fires, she didn't get any warning to evacuate. "I saw 14 fire trucks and police cars driving down the street. Then the power went off and I had no cellphone service because the towers were without



Militant/Fredy Huinil

Roger Dagoberto Cruz, left, a gutter installer, told Eric Simpson, SWP candidate for mayor of Oakland, that when work is slow he volunteers at the local job center to help others get work.

power. I never felt so abandoned."

Francisco Garcia pulled Simpson aside at a church-run food distribution tent after hearing him talk about unions. Garcia is a truck driver at BNSF Railway. He lost everything when the fire destroyed his home, including a collection of love poems he wrote as a youth. He's staying in a shelter now.

Garcia used to be a union organizer with the United Food and Commercial Workers at Zacky Farms. "These

companies are getting greedier and greedier," he said.

The *New York Times* food section ran a special story Jan. 18 on how small restaurant owners and hundreds of working-class volunteers had organized to make and distribute thousands of pizzas to firefighters and evacuees.

When LaSorted's Pizza started this up, workers from other shops showed up. "The line out the door looked like diners waiting for tables," the *Times* said, "but this was a crew of volunteer drivers who'd signed up on Instagram. They were waiting for instructions from other volunteers who sorted hundreds of requests."

It was like a small army had been deployed. "When things like this happen," Tommy Brockert, LaSorted's chef, told the *Times*, "people are able to do extraordinary things." It was a snapshot of the potential of the working class.

Simpson and other SWP members were distributing "A working-class program to rebuild Los Angeles in wake of deadly fires," a statement by the Socialist Workers Party. It says, "The government on every level, with its two capitalist parties, is responsible for the devastation. Now all they do is try to pass the blame by pointing fingers at each other. No preparation, dilapidated infrastructure, no evacuation plan. The labor movement must break from the capitalist parties and organize our own party, a party of labor, to organize the whole working class. This is a necessary step on the road to taking power out of the hands of the capitalists and building a socialist future."

To contact the SWP in Los Angeles or Simpson's campaign in Oakland, turn to the list of party offices on page 8.

18,000 Teamsters authorize strike in Costco contract fight

BY JANET POST

"Who are we? Teamsters. What do we want? A contract. When do we want it? Now. If we don't get it? Shut them down," shouted dozens of Costco workers, members of the Warehouse Division of the Teamsters union, at a Jan. 23 rally at the company's corporate headquarters in Issaquah, Washington. Costco's annual shareholders meeting was taking place inside. The unionists are gearing up for a possible strike when their National Master Agreement expires Jan. 31. Their first agreement was signed in 2022.

"We get a free membership, and half of us can't even afford to shop there," fleet driver Paul Lowrie, a member of Teamsters Local 174 in Sumner, Washington, said at the rally. "It's ridiculous."

More than 18,000 union members at 56 stores nationwide voted by 85% to authorize the strike. This is 8% of Costco's 219,000 workers at 624

stores. The strike would impact stores in six states — California, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Virginia and Washington. Forty of those stores are in California. The vast majority of Costco workers are nonunion.

The company rejected the union's proposals for increased seniority pay, paid family leave, sick time, increases to retirement benefits, bereavement policies and "safeguards" against management surveillance. Costco is also refusing to accept a card-check agreement that would make it easier for workers to join the union.

Costco "expelled union representatives from stores, harassed and intimidated workers for wearing Teamsters buttons, sent employees home and blocked the Teamsters from providing updates on in-store union bulletin boards during negotiations," the union told *Forbes* magazine.

Practice strikes were held in mid-January in Sumner; Massapequa, New

York; and in San Diego, Long Beach and Hayward, California. "We're out here today to send a clear message to Costco that we are ready to do whatever it takes to secure the contract we deserve," said Jesse Sexton, a Teamsters Local 150 member, at the practice strike Jan. 15 in Hayward.

"From day one, we've told Costco that our members won't work a day past Jan. 31 without a historic, industry-leading agreement," Teamsters General President Sean O'Brien told the press Jan. 20.

"If picket lines go up Feb. 1, people can check Teamster.org for more information," Jamie Fleming, Local 174 communications director, told the *Militant*. "People can join the picket line, bring food if you can. The best support is when people show up."

Costco is the 11th largest U.S. corporation on the Fortune 500 and recently reported \$254 billion in annual revenue, a 135% increase since 2018.

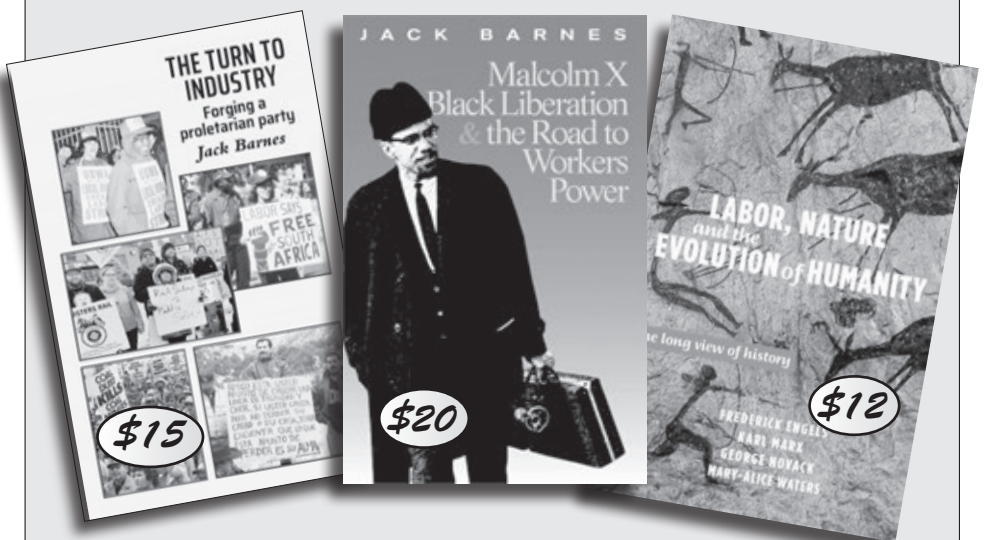
Rebecca Williamson in Seattle contributed to this article.



Teamsters

Costco workers, members of the Warehouse Division of the Teamsters union, protested outside company headquarters Jan. 23 in Issaquah, Washington, to demand a new contract.

Recommended reading



from pathfinderpress.com

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Las Vegas hotel workers win 69-day strike at Virgin Hotels

The 700 members of Culinary Workers Local 226 and of Bartenders Local 165, both UNITE HERE affiliates, voted unanimously to end a 69-day strike Jan. 22 after bosses at Virgin Hotels Las Vegas met most of their demands.

The bosses, who had offered a paltry 30 cents an hour wage increase and then refused to negotiate, instead demanding binding arbitration, caved in and agreed to a contract similar to that won last year by the rest of the 50,000-member union, which represents Nevada casino, hotel and restaurant workers.

The five-year pact includes a \$4.32 an hour wage increase for nontipped workers and \$2.16 for tipped workers.

Strikers had maintained picket lines around the large hotel 24/7 since Nov. 15. They carried out a spirited march to the Las Vegas Strip, where many casino hotels are located; organized picket line meals on Thanksgiving and Christmas; and social activities, such as a Noche Cubana and a taco and pupusa night. Virgin owners hired strikebreakers and sent security guards out to try to snatch up picket signs and banners.

Unions in the area and beyond extended solidarity. “The city came together for us,” striker Adriana Kimber told Channel 8 News. “The fact that they honked for us and supported us really helped.”

UNITE HERE National President Gwen Mills and a delegation of Local 2 union members, who recently won a 12-week hotel strike in San Francisco, visited the picket line in solidarity Jan. 6.

— Maggie Trowe

CN rail signal workers planned strike over wages, schedules

MONTREAL — On Jan. 28 rail bosses at Canadian National Railway and union officials of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which represents the signal and communications workers, announced that a tentative four-year agreement had been reached, the same day workers were preparing to set up picket lines. No details of the pact have been released, as

the union’s members still have to vote on it. The unionists had served notice they could go on strike that day.

The 750 signalers are demanding higher wages, improved “work-life balance” and improved benefits. They work long hours, on call and often away from home.

The signalers went on strike for two weeks in 2022, getting support from Canadian National rail conductors in Montreal, who are members of the Teamsters union, and members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions locked out at Rolls Royce.

— Beverly Bernardo

1,200 Unifor rail workers at CPKC voted 99% to strike

Members of Unifor Local 101R at Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway have voted by 99% to authorize strike action. On Jan. 27, two days before the workers were set to walk out, CPKC announced a tentative four-year contract had been reached with union negotiators. Workers will be voting on it.

Unifor is the largest private-sector union in Canada. It represents some 1,200 mechanics, laborers, diesel service attendants, heritage train mechanics and mechanical support workers, who carry out the inspection, repair and maintenance of the company’s fleet of locomotives and railcars.

The union began new contract talks with CPKC bosses last October, speaking for its members at 17 work sites in Canada. Workers’ top concerns are high levels of contracting out, forced overtime and strict scheduling policies that negatively impact work-life balance.

In late November Unifor announced negotiations had reached an impasse, and the union would organize a strike vote. “CPKC’s unwillingness to address the key concerns of our members is unacceptable,” said Unifor National President Lana Payne. The rail bosses also informed Unifor they wouldn’t be available for further negotiations until Jan. 24, just days before the present contract expires.

After 10,000 freight rail workers, members of the Teamsters, at Canadian



Culinary Workers Local 226

Workers at Virgin Hotels Las Vegas ended 69-day strike Jan. 22, winning key demands, including wage increase. Above, picket in November. Strike won much-needed union solidarity.

Pacific Kansas City and at Canadian National went on strike last August, the federal government used anti-labor legislation to order them back to work.

“There is growing frustration among workers due to rising cost of living, economic inequities and lack of safety on the job,” Payne said.

— Beverly Bernardo

13,000 Quebec child care workers strike and rally

MONTREAL — In the first of a possible five days of strikes, almost 13,000 workers from 400 government child care facilities rallied and marched in cities and towns across Quebec Jan. 23. They are demanding the government negotiate a union contract with higher wages and better working conditions.

Hundreds of workers in Montreal, wearing yellow union T-shirts over their winter coats in the sub-freezing temperatures, poured out of the Papineau subway station for an 8 a.m. rally and march. They went first to the offices of the Quebec Ministry of Families and then to the office of Premier Francois Legault.

The workers, the vast majority women, are members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions, which organizes 80% of unionized child care workers in Quebec. The workers voted by 94% to mandate union leaders to call the strikes

to press for a speedup in negotiations. Talks have been underway for eight months with little progress. Their union contract expired in March 2023.

Most of the workers live at a poverty level with annual incomes from 39,000 Canadian dollars (\$27,180) to CA\$54,000. They are demanding increases to match income levels that public school workers receive, reduction in their impossible daily workload with the hiring of more staff, as well as variable wage rates that reflect differences in the cost-of-living across the province.

The government is demanding more “flexibility in work organization,” a code phrase for more work from fewer workers in exchange for higher wages.

“Many workers quit to take jobs in the elementary school sector because the salary is 9% higher on average,” union activist Stephanie Vachon told CityNews four days before the strike. “There is no reason for us to be treated differently. We want more than 17%, we should have 26% to be treated equally.”

“Year after year, the government asks us to do more work, more perfection in our work, and it’s difficult to give the service, the quality of service that we want to give,” she said. “We run all day long and we interact with kids, it’s really physical, emotional and psychological. It’s an exhausting job.”

“I really support the strikes because we know that the work conditions in day cares are not necessarily up to par,” said single parent Alex-Ann Adams, reflecting the views of the majority of parents.

“If we want our kids and the next generation to be well raised and well taken care of, we have to take care of the day care workers as well.”

Send solidarity messages to CSN, 1601, avenue De Lorimier, Montreal, Quebec H2K 4M5.

— John Steele

— 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO —

THE MILITANT

SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

February 7, 2000

CHARLESTON, South Carolina — Cops in full riot gear attacked an early morning march to the waterfront by hundreds of members of the International Longshoremen’s Association Jan. 20. Eight of the unionists are now facing frame-up charges of inciting to riot.

The action was called to protest the use of nonunion labor on the docks. The police “blocked off the streets. There were blue lights everywhere. They were on the roofs, horseback, there was a helicopter and they had the National Guard on alert,” stated Kenneth Riley, president of ILA Local 1422. The cops ensured the unloading of a ship by non-union dock workers.

The eight facing charges are scheduled to appear in Municipal court Jan. 25 for preliminary hearings. “The show of local support from other unions has been good,” Riley said. “Everyone has been waiting for us to tell them how they can help.”

THE MILITANT

SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

February 7, 1975

Maria Joffe, the widow of the Left Oppositionist Adolf Joffe, won exile in Israel Jan. 12. “I have little time left but I have a commitment to humanity to write so people will know what happens in the Soviet Union,” the 75-year-old Bolshevik veteran said on her arrival at Tel Aviv airport.

There was no indication of why Joffe’s widow chose Israel as a place of exile. Every Jew has a right to Israeli citizenship.

Maria Joffe was held in a concentration camp from 1929 to 1956, from the Stalinist bureaucracy’s consolidation of its dictatorial regime until the post-Stalin “thaw.” She was in the Trotsky home on Jan. 17, 1928, when the revolutionary leader was seized and sent off to exile in Soviet Central Asia. It is not clear whether Maria Joffe was arrested then, or decided to remain working in Russia and was arrested later.

THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

February 6, 1950

In 1900, world politics was European politics. The great European powers had divided the globe among themselves and as supreme rulers determined the fate of four continents. In 1950, European politics has become world politics. Europe is divided between American imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy who as supreme rulers determine its fate.

In 1900, the fervent knights of European civilization put their brand on the African brush and the Pacific islands, the Arab oases and the towns of China. Everywhere famine, opium, syphilis and forced labor followed in the wake of the generals, the traders and the missionaries.

In 1950, barefoot children are to be seen on the highways of Europe. Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, Balts have been transplanted, deported, driven to forced labor. And hunger’s emaciated face is to be seen in every European city.

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Women workers keep Ukraine mines running as war continues

BY ROY LANDERSEN

As the third anniversary of Moscow's Feb. 24, 2022, murderous war against Ukraine approaches, more and more of the country's men have been called on to defend their country's sovereignty, arms in hand. This has meant substantially greater numbers of women are drawn into nontraditional jobs in coal mines, steel mills and other basic industry.

"I used to work as an accountant," coal miner Iryna Ostanko, 36, told NPR for a story run Jan. 7, "and then this job, which pays way better, opened up." She works day shift at the coal mine in Ternivka, a small city in eastern Ukraine's coal country. Her miner friend, Tetiana Medvedenko, 44, was a housewife until recently.

Medvedenko's husband, who also works at the mine, "wasn't thrilled that I took this job," she said, but now he "puts up with it." Ostanko's father, a retired miner, was glad to hear she had got such a good job. The mine is owned by DTEK, one of a number of industrial companies run by one of Ukraine's richest people, Rinat Akhmetov.

The two women, both machine operators working 870 feet underground, symbolize how much the war has changed Ukraine's workforce, especially in heavy industry. For years, a decades-old law prohibited women from working in "harmful and dangerous conditions," including underground jobs in the mines. Within a few months after Putin's invasion, Kyiv lifted the ban as the shortage of workers grew.

Many male miners volunteered for the army at the onset of war, with more joining or being conscripted since. Steel plants and coal mines faced growing shortages of workers and production fell sharply.

Today hundreds of women work underground, as coal bosses try to keep up wartime production.

Moscow's intensified drive to seize the entire Donbas, the heart of Ukraine's historical industrial region, is putting significant pressure on Ukraine's coal supply, essential for the country's steel works and export trade.

Russian forces keep pressing daily attacks on the coal mining center of Pokrovsk, 100 miles east of Ternivka. This mine is run by Metinvest, another arm of Akhmetov's empire. In September, several airstrikes hit another mine, killing four women working above ground.

After many miners joined the fighting or left for safer jobs, 1,000 of the most

resilient and dedicated workers kept the mine operating, Ukraine's last internal source of coking coal. One entrance to the mine was recently closed as Russian forces got closer. Workers had to use another one, then travel 6 miles through underground tunnels for two hours to get to the coal face. They rode the coal conveyors out again at shift's end.

On Dec. 20, the shaft, with Ukraine's last supply of coking coal, was blown up to prevent advancing Russian troops from using it.

The mine in Ternivka is still operating. When Medvedenko walks to work, she passes a giant DTEK billboard celebrating "the new face of Ukraine's coal miners." One of the faces is hers.



Tetiana Medvedenko, left, and Iryna Ostanko, both union members at coal mine near Ternivka, Ukraine. When men there volunteered for the army, for the first time women were hired.

Michael Robinson Chávez/NPR

'Jewish News': SWP backs Israel's fight against Jew-hatred

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

"Why the Socialist Workers Party is defying the far left on Israel," is the headline of a Jan. 21 article by contributing editor Dan Pine in the *Jewish News of Northern California*. The paper, first published in 1895, reaches tens of thousands of readers through its website and twice a month print edition.

Pine wrote that after an antisemitic message was scrawled near a Chabad menorah in Oakland during Hanukkah, "Rabbi Dovid Labkowski got a sympathy call from an unusual corner. Two members of the Socialist Workers Party reached out to express solidarity with Chabad and the Jewish people.

"It wasn't the first time."

Last summer, when vandals hurled chunks of concrete at the windows of the Chabad Oakland headquarters, Pine noted, "SWP member Eric Simpson of Oakland wrote a letter to the rabbi," saying, "The Socialist Workers Party views the fight against Jew-hatred as a central question of world politics."

SWP members "took to the streets of San Francisco, standing alongside thousands protesting antisemitism in the wake of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas massacre in Israel. Among them was Rachele Fruit," Pine wrote, "at the time, the SWP candidate for U.S. president."

"Israel is doing a very good job at trying to prevent another Holocaust," Fruit told the *Jewish News*. "And we defend this. We think Israel has a right to exist as a refuge for Jews around the world."

"Many on the far left, including other socialist groups, uniformly vilify Israel," Pine wrote. "The Socialist Workers Party rejects that view. Instead, SWP members place the fight against anti-Semitism ... at the top of their agenda."

Those middle-class left groups "are anti-Jewish and antisemitic to the core," Fruit said. "They are not pro-Palestinian; they are pro-Hamas, which is basically pro-Nazi. ... They call themselves pro-socialist but what they are is a wing of capitalist politics. They don't challenge capitalism as a system."

Pine quotes an April 2024 statement by Fruit

that says, "Since Hamas launched its war Oct. 7, Israel has been acting to defeat Hamas, to prevent it from carrying out its stated goal," which it "shares with the reactionary rulers in Iran: to drive out the Jews, exterminate them and destroy the state of Israel."

Fruit "used her candidacy to support workers rights and often campaigned by walking picket lines with striking workers," Pine wrote.

"Our focus is what's happening in the working class," Fruit told him. "We went to picket lines explaining the need to fight Jew-hatred, we got a great response."

"The *Militant* newspaper has run dozens of articles," Pine said, "condemning antisemitism over the past 15 months."

Socialist Workers Party member Maggie Trowe told the *Jewish News* the party rejects the notion that Israel is a colonial-settler state.

"Once Hitler came to power, the

U.S. imperialists led by FDR [Roosevelt] and governments in the U.K. and Canada would not allow Jewish immigration," she said. "Our party called to open the borders to Jewish refugees. After the war, Jewish people were living in displaced persons camps and not allowed to go anywhere. So after that, the formation of Israel was inevitable. It is the only sure refuge for the Jews."

"The SWP doesn't support the Israeli capitalist government," Trowe said, "but we defend Israel's right to exist as a refuge for Jews and to defeat the Jew-hating and pogromist currents who try to annihilate Israel."

Rabbi Labkowski told the paper that he found sympathy from Socialist Workers Party members to be heartwarming. "I'm not shocked at all," he said of the SWP outreach, "because I think all people of conscience should be on the right side of things."

Amazon shuts 7 warehouses in Quebec after workers win a union

BY JOE YOUNG

On Jan. 22 Amazon announced it is closing all seven of its distribution centers in Quebec in the next two months. This will cost the jobs of over 3,000 workers — 1,950 who work directly for Amazon and 1,459 at other companies that do deliveries, the Quebec Ministry of Work and Social Solidarity said.

Recently workers at a warehouse in Laval, north of Montreal, won union certification, a first in Canada. They are negotiating for their first contract.

Amazon claims that the closures have nothing to do with the union drive. "This is about offering the best service we can to customers in a way that's efficient and cost-effective," spokesperson Barbara Agrait told the Canadian Press. The company will hire outside delivery services.

"It's because of the unionization. They say it's not that. But this is not a company going bankrupt," Mustapha Brahim, a worker at the Laval warehouse, told the *Militant*. "Perhaps they don't want other Amazon sites to unionize."

"These companies want people to

work at the rhythm imposed by their rules. You couldn't complain if you were sick, if you were injured," he said. "The company knew that with the union there would be a slowdown of work."

"There is no doubt that the closures announced today are part of an anti-union campaign against the CSN and against the employees of Amazon," Carole Senneville, president of the Confederation of National Trade Unions, said in a statement. "The CSN will never abandon its mission to unionize and defend the rights of the workers."

The Canadian Labour Congress and Unifor, a major union in the private sector, have denounced Amazon's move. Unifor expressed its support for the CSN.

At the same time, Unifor is seeking to unionize an Amazon warehouse in Delta, British Columbia.

"My thoughts go out to the families of the workers," Francois Legault, the premier of Quebec, said. "But it remains that Amazon, is a private company, it's a business decision of a private company."

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St. Volodymyr Statue

• 1 p.m. Rally Russian Embassy

For Israel's defeat of Hamas

Continued from front page
vage its brutal dictatorial rule in Gaza, reconstruct its battered forces and leadership, and begin preparing its next pogrom. Hamas remains true to its roots among forces that collaborated with the Nazis during World War II to extend the Holocaust to the Middle East. It remains true to the goals in its 1988 founding covenant: kill the Jews and impose an Islamist caliphate in Palestine.

Israeli troops will remain in southern Lebanon at least until Feb. 18, three weeks past the original 60-day timeline set for their withdrawal in another wobbly ceasefire deal. The Israeli government explains that Hezbollah and the Lebanese army have not complied with the agreement to withdraw all Hezbollah forces from the south and destroy its weapons there.

And the reactionary bourgeois regime in Tehran retains the capacity to drive ahead on its nuclear program so it can produce nuclear weapons.

Hamas used the Jan. 25 release of Daniella Gilboa, Liri Albag, Naama Levy and Karina Ariev to further its goals. When Hamas attacked Oct. 7, 2023, the four female Israeli unarmed military spotters had been stationed along the Gaza border.

The video of Levy, bloodied, being pulled by the hair and forced into a Hamas vehicle in Gaza was seen around the world. It's one of the photos on the front cover of *The Fight Against Jew-Hatred and Pogroms in the Imperialist Epoch: Stakes for the International Working Class* published by Pathfinder Press.

On their release, Hamas made the four women wear military uniforms and stood them before a banner that celebrated the "Al Aqsa Flood" — the name Hamas gave to the Oct. 7 pogrom — surrounded by masked armed members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad before they were handed over to the Red Cross.

Their point was to reaffirm their intention to carry out more pogroms, as well as promote the myth that the 250 people Hamas kidnapped Oct. 7 were well-treated prisoners of war. In reality the vast majority of the 1,200 people Hamas murdered, the hostages they took, and the women they raped and mutilated that day were civilians.

Doctors in Israel said that some of the recently released hostages were suffering from malnutrition. More information on the brutality the four suffered has still not been made pub-

lic. Hostages previously released or freed have reported widespread sexual abuse by the Hamas thugs.

Hamas: Obstacle to Palestinian rights

As soon as the ceasefire began, Hamas thugs left their hiding places, grabbed their weapons, paraded around Gaza and began openly escorting aid convoys. Despite its heavy losses, there is still no organized alternative to Hamas' rule. It presents itself as a defender of Palestinian national rights. In fact it is the biggest obstacle that Palestinian workers and farmers face in being able to win those rights.

On Jan. 23 Hamas death squads executed 11 Gazans and shot 17 in their feet, claiming they were "traitors." Its real purpose was to warn any Palestinian who dares to challenge Hamas' reactionary course.

That's not new. Hamas took over the government of Gaza in 2006, after winning a narrow plurality in elections, and then smashed all opposition in bloody fighting. Hamas busted strikes, restricted women's rights, tortured its opponents and diverted aid meant for the people of Gaza to its war against Jews.

During the Oct. 7 anti-Jewish pogrom, the Hamas death squads also killed dozens of Arab citizens of Israel and immigrant workers from Thailand, the Philippines and other countries. Among those killed were Osama Abu Madiam and his cousin, Ghaliya Abu Madiam, who were working on a farm near Gaza. Ghaliya was wearing her Muslim head scarf and Osama yelled out to the attackers that they are Arabs.

"You're more Jewish than a Jew," one of the thugs shouted before gunning them down and wounding Osama's 5-year-old son, who survived.

A showdown looms

By the end of the ceasefire's second stage, whose terms are still being negotiated, all the remaining living hostages are supposed to be released in exchange for Israel releasing hundreds of imprisoned Gaza residents and Palestinians accused of terrorism. Many are seasoned terrorists who will rejoin the war against Jews.

The third stage is even vaguer. From the outset, Hamas has been committed to destroying Israel. Israel's existence had become inevitable in the aftermath of World War II. Before, during and after the Nazi's genocidal slaughter of 6 million Jews, London and Washington slammed their borders shut to Jewish refugees who had survived the Holocaust.

At the same time, openings to extend the socialist revolution in Europe were betrayed by the Stalinist regime in Moscow and parties it controlled. Real opportunities for workers to take power into their own hands and to chart a road to end Jew-hatred were lost.

Jews had nowhere to go. That history is central to understanding why Israel exists as a refuge for Jews today.

IDF chief of staff to resign

Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi announced Jan. 21 he was resigning as of March 6. "On the morning of October 7, under my command, the IDF failed in its mission to protect Israel's citizens," Halevi wrote, admitting "my respon-



Above, NurPhoto via AP/Majdi Fathi

Above, Hamas thugs display four Israeli hostages before their Jan. 25 release under unstable ceasefire. Hamas death squads killed 1,200 people in Israel Oct. 7, 2023, took 250 hostages, including Naama Levy (right), one of the four, and raped dozens of women.

sibility for this terrible failure."

In reality his letter is a cover-up. He says not one word about the conscious decision by leaders of the IDF, the Shin Bet and the Mossad to keep Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the dark for well over a year on growing signs Hamas was planning a major attack. They hid a 40-page Hamas document discovered in 2022, outlining detailed plans for the attack. In the months before Oct. 7 IDF spotters like Gilboa, Albag, Levy and Ariev had sounded the alarm about unusual activity by Hamas forces. Higher ups brushed it aside.

On Oct. 7, with evidence mounting an attack was imminent, Halevi took no measures to reinforce the border. The military and police officials decided to not wake and inform Netanyahu.

They feared correctly that he would order a major attack on Hamas. These officials are part of the middle-class meritocracy inside Israel who look toward the capitalist rulers of the United States. But for the U.S. ruling class, Jews are expendable. Washington's interest is to advance U.S. economic, military and political interests in the region.

One-day strike by Kurds in Iran demands end to death penalty

BY SETH GALINSKY

A one-day strike shut down businesses and schools all across the Kurdish region of Iran Jan. 22, demanding the revocation of death sentences for Pakhshan Azizi and Warisheh Moradi. These two Kurdish women are accused by Tehran of belonging to the Free Life Party of Kurdistan, one of several groups fighting for the rights of the oppressed Kurdish nationality. The reactionary capitalist regime claims this makes them guilty of "rebellion against the state."

Azizi had spent several years in displaced persons camps in the Kurdish region of Syria, aiding victims of Islamic State. Both women say they were physically tortured by Iranian jailers and placed in solitary confinement to force them to confess.

"Let us prove once again that Kurdistan will not remain silent in the face of such an inhuman government and will resist," said the strike call by six Kurdish political parties. They said the strike was "a voice of solidarity with the political prisoners" and "a message of struggle

The Biden administration opposed Israeli troops entering Rafah to strike Hamas, opposed Israeli attacks on Hezbollah in Lebanon, and demanded Israel not attack nuclear sites in Iran. The top leadership of the Israel Defense Forces echoed the Biden administration's rationalizations for why Israel should end the war without having dismantled Hamas.

In an article that reflects those views, Israel-based Ynetnews said Jan. 17 that "the time has come to renew dialogue with the Palestinian Authority ... and to initiate talks on a peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians."

But this is not a war between Israelis and Palestinians. It's a war to defeat the efforts of Hamas, Hezbollah and Tehran, which are organizing to carry out another Holocaust. The Palestinian Authority, widely hated by most Palestinians, has been complicit in fostering Jew-hatred.

Netanyahu understands that if Israel is not prepared to act alone, there could be a world without Israel.

The battles to decisively defeat Hamas, Hezbollah and Tehran still lie ahead.

and resistance for all the people of Iran."

At the same time, "No to Execution Tuesdays" — a weekly hunger strike begun a year ago by political prisoners at Ghezelhesar Prison in Karaj — has spread to 34 prisons across the country. Its 53rd consecutive weekly protest took place Jan. 28.

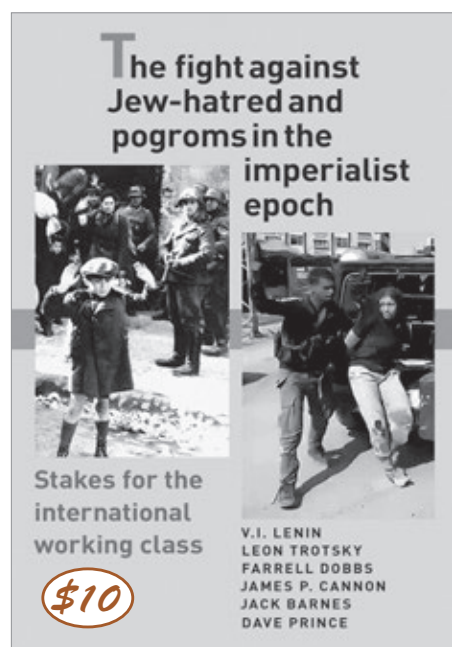
In the wake of protests that roiled the country after the death of Zhina Amini, a young Kurdish woman, at the hands of the hated "morality" police in 2022, "the government has resorted to expanding executions and intends to create more fear and panic in society to prevent protests," said a Jan. 14 statement by "No to Execution Tuesdays." But they haven't been able to stop workers and farmers from taking to the streets in the face of the deepening capitalist crisis.

Tehran carries out more executions every year than any other government in the world, with the exception of the regime in China. Over 100 prisoners were executed in January.

While most of those executed are ac-

Continued on page 9

Recommended reading



pathfinderpress.com

Sankara: 'Semicolonial people's foreign debt is unpayable'

The French edition of Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution 1983-87 is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for February. In 1983 Sankara led an uprising in the former French colony of Upper Volta, bringing to power a popular revolutionary government, which mobilized peasants, artisans, women, workers and youth to carry out far-reaching social measures. They took control of their own destiny in one of the poorest countries in the world. Sankara was an outstanding communist, looking to the example of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, the Marxist leaders of Cuba's socialist revolution. He was assassinated in a counterrevolutionary coup in 1987. The excerpt is from "Dare to invent the future," a 1985 interview with Jean-Philippe Rapp. Copyright © 2007 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Cuban President Fidel Castro, right, welcomes Thomas Sankara to Havana, Sept. 25, 1984. Sankara sought to emulate Cuba's revolutionary example in less-developed Burkina Faso.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

THOMAS SANKARA: [T]hey give us less than a year, for example, before our coffers are empty — before we're no longer able to pay government employees and have to run to the International Monetary Fund or some other organization for help. But struggling along, for better or for worse, we'll get through this storm and emerge on the other side with our heads high. Then

they'll set another deadline by which time, it seems obvious to them, we'll fail. But we'll hold our own through thick and thin. We're proving over the long run and in real life that there are other game plans that can make it possible to bypass the classical methods of filling the coffers.

JEAN-PHILIPPE RAPP: But what more can the Burkinabè people do? Won't it backfire on you if you demand too many sacrifices?

SANKARA: Not if you know how to set an example. We've set up a Revolutionary Solidarity Fund to which thousands of Burkinabè contribute. Their contributions, though small individually, represent a considerable effort aimed at relieving our people of the need to beg for food aid. The fund has allowed us to ward off the most urgent problems, in particular the problem of survival faced by the population of the Sahel region.

RAPP: A related question is that of the foreign debt. At the conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, the participants were quite divided on how to deal with the question of paying back this debt.

SANKARA: As far as we're concerned, we say very clearly: the foreign debt should not be repaid. It's unjust. It's like paying war reparations twice over. Where does this debt come from, anyhow? It comes from needs imposed on us by other countries. Did we need to

build mansions or to tell doctors they would receive a fabulous salary at the end of the month? Or foster the mentality of overpaid men among our officers? We were coerced into running up very heavy debts, and the economic enterprises made possible by these loans have not always run smoothly. We entered into weighty financial commitments on their account — often suggested, proposed, organized, and set in place by the same people who lent us the money.

They have quite a system. First come the members of the assault squad, who know exactly what they are going to propose. Then they bring out the heavy artillery, and the price keeps going up. These are wonderful investments for the investors. They don't put their money in their own banks because at home the returns aren't good. They have to create the need for capital elsewhere and make others pay. ...

RAPP: But does refusing to pay the debt make any sense if only one or two countries do it?

SANKARA: The pressure to pay the debt does not come from the isolated usury of a single banker. It comes from an entire organized system, so that in the event of non-payment, they can detain your planes at an airport or refuse to send you an absolutely indispensable spare part. So deciding not to pay the debt requires we form a

united front. All the countries should act together — on the condition, of course, that each one of us is open to looking critically at the way we ourselves manage these funds.

People who have contracted huge debts because of their own lavish personal expenses don't deserve our support. We said this clearly in the message we delivered to the OAU: "Either we resist collectively and refuse categorically to repay the debt or, if we don't, we'll have to go off to die alone, one by one."

RAPP: But this point of view was not unanimous?

SANKARA: Though everyone understands the logic behind such a legitimate refusal to pay, each of us thinks he's smarter, more cunning than the other. A particular government will skirt the need for collective action to go and see the moneylenders. This country is then immediately portrayed as the best organized, the most modern, the most respectful of written agreements. They're given more loans, so further conditions can be imposed. When the discontent spills out into the streets, they suggest sending in the "heavies" to break those who won't fall into line — and to put someone of their choice on the throne.

RAPP: Aren't you afraid of a violent public reaction against your internal economic measures?

SANKARA: The general support we're finding as we impose measures that are not in themselves very popular shows the nature of our revolution. It's a revolution directed not against any people or any country, but rather one that's aimed at restoring the dignity of the Burkinabè people, at allowing them to achieve happiness as they define it. ...

We have different values. We're not the least bit embarrassed to say we are a poor country. ...

When we receive a foreign ambassador who has come to present his credentials, we no longer do so in this presidential office. We take him out into the bush, with the peasants. He travels on our chaotic roads and endures dust and thirst. After that we can receive him, explaining, "Mr. Ambassador, your Excellency, you have just seen Burkina Faso as it really is. This is the country you must deal with, not those of us who work in comfortable offices."

February
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Israel, the Holocaust and Oct. 7 pogrom

The stakes for workers in the U.S., the Middle East and worldwide are enormous in backing Israel's unfinished battle to defeat Hamas and Hezbollah once and for all, and to destroy the ability of the reactionary capitalist regime in Iran to acquire nuclear weapons and use them to obliterate Israel and open the door to another Holocaust.

The fight against Jew-hatred is inseparable from the working class's struggle for its own emancipation. Jew-hatred and pogroms are an integral part of the permanent social convulsions and wars of the imperialist epoch. Whenever the capitalist class feels their rule is threatened, they turn to Nazi-like forces and their Jew-hating ideology to try to crush the workers movement. This is the lesson of the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust.

It poses sharply the need for workers and our unions to join today's struggles against every act of scapegoating, persecuting, or assaulting Jews, whenever and wherever they arise.

Today that fight is centered in Israel, the only country in the world that unconditionally offers a refuge from Jew-hatred and pogroms, arms in hand. This deserves the wholehearted support of the working class and the unions.

Israel's defense is weakened by the fact that it is a capitalist country and it relies on backing from U.S. imperialism. Like all "democratic" imperialist powers, the U.S. capitalist rulers consider the Jews expendable in their overriding drive to advance their economic, political and military interests.

A deepening showdown is inevitable in the Middle East. The current ceasefire between Hamas and Israel is inherently unstable as long as the conflict between Israel and Tehran's "axis of resistance" remains unsettled. Hamas originated from forces that collaborated before and throughout World War II with Hitler's Nazis, trying to extend the Holocaust in Europe across the Middle East and North Africa.

True to Hamas' founding charter, which calls for

slaughtering the Jews, it carried out the worst pogrom since the Holocaust on Oct. 7, 2023.

Last week, before releasing four Israeli hostages as part of the ceasefire, Hamas paraded them in front of a banner proudly celebrating its pogrom. It is intent on using the ceasefire to rebuild its military capacities and recruit more thugs pledged to "martyrdom" in the fight to annihilate the Jewish people.

Hamas and Tehran get political backing from the middle-class left worldwide, including a variety of Stalinist parties. Hamas relies on support from imperialist institutions, like the United Nations, and from capitalist governments in the region. They cover up its Nazi origins and real aims, and demonize and sanction Israel.

Only the working class can lead the fight to end Jew-hatred. Israel's battle is at the forefront of this fight today.

In the course of making and defending the 1917 Russian Revolution, V.I. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party led working people to take on and defeat the czarist regime and reactionary forces that carried out pogroms against Jews. The Bolsheviks organized workers and peasants in their millions to take political power into their own hands, remove Russia from the carnage of World War I and end capitalist exploitation.

"Pogroms against the Jews are fatal to the interests of the workers and peasants revolution," stated a resolution written by Lenin and passed by the new workers government. It "instructs all Soviet deputies to take uncompromising measures to tear the anti-Semitic movement out by its roots." And that's what the Bolsheviks led working people to do. This is the continuity the Socialist Workers Party is schooled in.

Building parties to lead the fight to overturn capitalist rule and establish workers power — in the U.S., the Middle East and worldwide — is the only road to end Jew-hatred for all time.

Fight 'Militant' ban

Continued from front page

copa County. "The impoundment of this issue of the *Militant* 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."

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office says issue no. 42 was impounded because of "a photo on the cover of the newspaper that was found to violate MCSO policy," which "does not allow photos of weaponry."

The photo illustrates armed Hamas thugs seizing a woman and taking her hostage during the murderous Oct. 7, 2023, pogrom the reactionary outfit carried out in Israel. The photo accompanied an article explaining why the fight against Jew-hatred and the potential for a new Holocaust is central to the working class everywhere, including in the U.S.

"Amnesty International USA is calling on the Ancillary Services Division Commander to overturn the impoundment," wrote Justin Mazzola in a Jan. 29 letter, "so that subscribers may maintain their connection to the outside world during their incarceration."

"An image to inform subscribers about current events of the outside world in and of itself and without more should not be a means to violate prisoners' freedom of expression," Mazzola wrote. "A blanket ban of all images with weapons without further context of the reasoning for inclusion is far too broad and violates individuals' right to freedom of expression."

Earl Christy, a retired member of the Laborers' International Union of North America, writes from Red House, West Virginia: "I urge you to reverse your decision to ban the issue of the *Militant* newspaper depicting the same photo of the Hamas terror attack against Jews and others on Oct. 7, 2023, that was published in many other publications, including newspapers. Your decision is a disservice to the U.S. Constitution."

"If this decision stands, every inmate in Maricopa County will find it extremely difficult to get access to newspapers or TV news, since they all, almost every day, carry news and photographs of Moscow's war on Ukraine, Israel's fight to exist as a refuge from Jew-hatred and pogroms and myriad other conflicts that depict weapons," *Militant* editor John Studer said.

Militant attorney David Goldstein filed an appeal of the ban Jan. 13. The "confiscation of an inmate's political literature violates the First Amendment," he wrote. "It is discriminatory and arbitrary, in violation of the *Militant's* rights to Due Process and Equal Protection under the Constitution's 14th Amendment."

Join the fight to get this impoundment overturned. Spread the word. Mail letters urging the reversal of the ban to Ancillary Services Division Commander, MCSO, 3250 W. Lower Buckeye Road, Phoenix, AZ 85009. Email a copy to mcsocentralmailroom@mcsocounty.gov, and also to themilitant@mac.com.

Kurds in Iran strike, demand end to death penalty

Continued from page 7

cused of criminal offenses, such as drug dealing or murder, the regime has increased executing political prisoners. Some 54 political prisoners are on death row today.

The death penalty and prison sentences are handed down disproportionately to oppressed nationalities. Members of the oppressed Baluch nation comprise just 6% of Iran's population, but account for 20% of those executed. Kurds are just 10% of the population, but some 50% of political prisoners.

Opponents of the death penalty are calling for the revocation of the death penalty for Mehdi Hasani and Behrouz Ehsani, accused of being members of the People's Mojahedin Organization.

"The death penalty is a tool in the hands of governments to create terror and an inhuman punishment to bring society into submission and deprive people of the means of life," said the Free Union of Iranian Workers Jan. 15.

This union, along with the Coordinating Com-

mittee of Teachers Unions, the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Drivers Union and the Oil Contract Workers union, are part of the campaign to abolish the death penalty.

"The workers and toilers," the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Drivers Union said, "must loudly declare our opposition to the death penalty under any pretext."

US 'population growth' shrinks as crisis deepens

Continued from front page

jobs in meatpacking and other industries.

The birth rate in the U.S. declined to an average of 1.62 births per woman in 2023, the lowest rate recorded since the government began tracking it in the 1930s. For the population to at least hold steady requires a birth rate of 2.1 children per woman. Fertility rates have been falling below that figure for the past 17 years. In fact, if fertility rates had stayed at the 2007 level, there would be about 10 million more youth alive in the U.S. today.

This reflects the growing difficulties young women face in deciding when or whether to have a child, given the hundreds of thousands of dollars it costs for working-class families to raise a child today. They face increased pressure in making ends meet given the high prices of rents, mortgages, child care, groceries, gasoline, growing credit card debts and more.

This is in sharp contrast to the "baby boom" years following World War II, when the fertility rate was more than three births per woman.

Worldwide the fertility rate has tumbled more than in half over the past 70 years. This includes a sharp decline throughout the imperialist countries in Europe. The lowest fertility rates were recorded in southern Europe and Japan at about 1.2 children per woman, with South Korea's birth rate dropping to 0.7 births in 2022. In contrast, sub-Saharan Af-

rica has one of the highest birth rates.

According to a Congressional Budget Office report, U.S. deaths are expected to outpace births by 2033, seven years earlier than this government agency said just a year ago.

Life expectancy declining

Life expectancy in the U.S. has also been declining. In 2010 it stalled at close to 79 years, followed by a sharp drop by 2022 to 76.1 — the lowest in 25 years. This reflects the devastating impact that the capitalist economic and social crisis is having on the working class, given the high number of deaths from opioid drug overdoses — near or over 100,000 a year since 2020 — and the daunting cost of health care.

This plunge is a sharp change. A baby born in the U.S. in 1980, for example, looked forward to a life 34 years longer than a baby born in 1880. Today, since advances in treating diseases and injuries continue, the drop in life expectancy reflects the ravages of capitalist exploitation and wars. And this reality won't be easily reversed as long as the capitalist rulers' drive for profits rules the roost.

The road forward is for the working class to use our unions to fight the attacks of the bosses and their government today, and to organize our own political party, a party of labor, to take political power out of their hands.

Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq

by Jack Barnes
In *New International* no. 7

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