Ohio
Profit motive behind fiery, toxic train wreck

By Otis Grotewohl

Corporate greed and capitalist irresponsibility led to a fiery, jackknifed derailment of a Norfolk Southern Railway train in East Palestine, Ohio, on the evening of Feb. 3. This northeast Ohio community is located 22 miles south of Youngstown, Ohio, and 35 miles north-west of Pittsburgh.

East Palestine sits on the borders of Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania, along the Ohio River. Fortunately, there have not been any reported casualties, but this “accident” has triggered suffering, anxiety and serious concern for people living in the area.

Railroad Workers United (RWU), a rank-and-file caucus made up of militant railroad union members, issued a statement Feb. 7 stating that the derailed train was known as the Norfolk Southern train NS 32N. It included 150 cars and “consisted of (only) 3 locomotives, 141 loads and 9 empties.” The train was 9,300-feet long and weighed 18,000 tons.

The collision resulted in a pileup of 50 loaded freight cars. Flames rose to a height of 100 feet. What was most alarming is that 20 of those cars carried toxic, hazardous material. Ten of those cars were involved in the accident; five of them carried vinyl chloride, a colorless gas, which is associated with an increased risk of liver and other cancers, says the National Cancer Institute.

On Feb. 5, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine ordered residents of East Palestine to evacuate immediately: “You need to leave; you just need to leave. This is a matter of life and death.” (AP News, Feb. 6) He did not consider that most working and oppressed people don’t have anywhere to go outside of their homes. Houseless people faced even more challenges. Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro urged inhabitants of that state within a mile radius to “stay inside” and “lock the doors.”

As a result, a few thousand residents and people living in the surrounding area were evacuated and displaced. They had no choice but to pack essential belongings, such as clothing, food and medicine, and take their pets on very short notice.

On Feb. 6, crews carried out a controlled release of the toxic materials, including vinyl chloride and phosgene, a toxic gas, in order to prevent an abrupt explosion of the train cars, which would have sent hazardous debris into the neighborhood. The toxics were fumigated into a trench and burned off before they hit the air. Smoldering black smoke immediately filled the disaster site, and a fireball erupted.

Authorities claim this was done during the day, so that the gas would disperse faster and prevent an explosion. But officials do not admit that the entire situation could have been prevented, nor that there will likely be long-term deleterious effects on residents and the environment.

Health and environment at risk

Even though residents were relieved to return home on Feb. 8, most are worried about the long-term harmful effects on their health and the environment. This is especially concerning since the impact of most cancer-causing toxins do not appear immediately.

On the same day East Palestine residents were told it was safe for them to return home, West Virginia Governor Jim Justice announced toxic residue from the derailment was found in the Ohio River. (wkn 27, Feb. 8)

This Workers World reporter spoke to Melissa Trahan, a vegan-jerky distributor and punk musician from Cleveland, who has relatives in East Palestine. She said, “I am most concerned about the long-term impact on the health of individuals and the environment. I saw the news about dead fish in Leslie Run, several miles from the site of the derailment. I have concerns for those residents with well water, such as my grandmother.”

Trahan expressed concern about her “parents and aunt, who were being reassured by the media that ‘everything was under control,’” but I encouraged them to find shelter elsewhere, just to be safe, moments before my aunt was forced to evacuate. Now that they have been allowed to return, following the release of the dangerous chemicals into the air, they are once again being told ‘everything is okay,’ but I am still unsure things are okay.”

Despite officials’ claim that conditions are safe, local farmers have reported that animals became sick shortly after the wreck, and many have died. Ohio state officials have tried to silence those disclosures.

In one outrageous incident, Evan Lambert, a Black reporter from NewsNation, was brutally arrested Feb. 9 while covering the story near the accident site. He was charged with “resisting arrest” and “criminal trespassing.” (wkbn 27, Feb. 9)

Profit-driven capitalism to blame

RWU released informative statements regarding the accident. Their press release, mentioned earlier, entitled, “Fiery Ohio Train Wreck the Result of PSR,” argues that the disaster could have been prevented, calling the derailment a “19th century-style mechanical failure” of an axle. The statement blames a Wall Street-backed deregulation model known as “Precision Scheduled Railroading” (PSR). This practice led to reduced routine service, critically needed maintenance and even staff. (tinyurl.com/5ggywtxm)

At the same time, PSR permits more train weight and length than previously authorized, says RWU. The policy has generated more crashes and increased stress and fatigue for workers. While the NS 32N train had a crew of three — an engineer, a conductor and a conductor trainee — PSR proponents state that only one crew member should perform all three jobs. Yet, the fact is that safe staffing levels, rigorous oversight and routine inspections result in fewer accidents.

Profit-driven capitalism to blame

Solidarity with railroad workers

RWU members and others in the labor movement argue that the railroads should be nationalized, as they are in most countries. In solidarity, the militant rank and file-led United Electrical Workers Union (UE) recently called for public ownership of the railroad industry.

UE’s declaration states: “We demand that Congress immediately begin a process of bringing our nation’s railroads under public ownership. Public ownership of part or all of their rail systems has allowed many other countries to create rail systems that can move people and goods quickly, affordably and in an environmentally sound way. With public ownership, governments can take the long view and make crucial infrastructure investments — and prevent price-gouging.”

More unions should make transitional demands like UE has done in support of railroad workers. The ruling class could provide such reforms but refuses to do so, asserts this writer. Every social gain and reform that improves the material conditions of workers and oppressed people should be welcome.
President Joe Biden’s Feb. 7 State of the Union address offered no real surprises. Like many of his predecessors, he praised the success of his first term in office, but failed to provide a clear vision for the future. According to the Wall Street Journal, Biden’s speech was “a reaffirmation of the status quo, with little in the way of new proposals or plans.”

In fact, the speech was largely a recap of the past two years, with no major new initiatives or programs. Biden did announce a few specific initiatives, such as a plan to build more affordable housing, but these were small compared to the $1.9 trillion stimulus package that he signed into law earlier this year.

Biden also spoke about his plans for the environment, including a goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. However, many environmentalists were critical of the plan, calling it insufficient to address the urgent need for action on climate change.

Another area where the audience was disappointed was Biden’s failure to address the ongoing crises of the pandemic, the economy, and social inequality. While he acknowledged the challenges, he did not propose any concrete solutions or policies to address them.

Overall, the speech was seen as a missed opportunity to set a clear agenda for the rest of his presidency. Some felt that it was too focused on the past and failed to engage with the issues that matter most to American workers and families.
Hunger strike vs. torturous conditions

By Jim McManah
Tacoma, Washington

Over 80 detainees went on a hunger strike Feb. 1 at the ICE Processing Center, formerly the Northwest Detention Center, in Tacoma. In an effort to crush the strike, they were quickly tear-gassed at the beginning of their heroic stance. The immigrant detainees struck against torturous conditions at the private prison, which is run by the multibillion-dollar Geo Group corporation. Their immediate demands included nutritious meals, clean facilities and proper medical care.

Abolish the death penalty and national oppression

By Gloria Rubac

Based on a talk given at the Feb. 5 webinar “Global Class War: Lessons from Sam Marcy for workers struggles today.” Go to youtube.com/Arbryqk88S/No to view the webinar.

The national question, as analyzed by Comrade Sam Marcy and Workers World Party, has been so important to us in Texas, as we fight not only against imperialist wars, killer cops, racist border walls, but also as we fight against the death penalty.

While there are many people opposed to the death penalty, the organization [Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement] that comrades in WWP helped found and are leaders in today, has raised the question of national oppression.

In fact, we are criticized by other very well-funded organizations for always talking about the fact that no government in this country has any authority to imprison or sentence to death people of oppressed nationalities.

Like Comrade Sam wrote about, there is racism, yes, for sure, but there is also national oppression. Because Black and Latinx and Indigenous people are from oppressed nations within the boundaries of the United States, they have the right to determine their destiny, their lives, their political decisions.

One of the first death row cases that we worked on was that of a Black man, Clarence Brandley, who was a custodian at a high school in Conroe, north of Houston, along with four other men who were white.

A young girl was murdered in the gym before school started in 1981, and there was an outcry to get the killer. The cops arrested Clarence, who was an, as he put it, a disabled man who was white. The cop looked at them and said, “one of you two is going to hang for this.” He then pointed his finger at Clarence and said, “Since you’re the N-word, you’re elected.”

Clarence spent 10 years on death row and faced several execution dates before a mass struggle finally freed him.

Comrades, here in Texas fully 75% of those on death row are people of color. Black people are only 12% of the general population. From the cops to the courts to the prisons, people of oppressed nationalities are victims of the state.

We say that executions are legal lynchings. We say executions are racist and anti-poor. And it used to surprise us how critical others, who were opposed to the death penalty, were, telling us: “You don’t have to always talk about race.”

Well, we do this because we want ALL people to be involved in the struggle to abolish the death penalty, including those who look like those sitting on death row. And we are the only anti-death penalty organization anywhere that is truly multinational.

From Texas death row: A salute to Sam Marcy

There are comrades, living and deceased, who make the heart beat “love” at the mere thought of them. And one such comrade is Sam Marcy.

Before leaving us behind to carry on the unfinished work of the party, Comrade Marcy taught me two very important truths that are closely related:

1) Everything has a history, whether it’s labor, imperialism or prison. Thus, all things must be understood from a historical perspective;

2) This aids us with the second, and most important part: correct analysis. A correct analysis is the first step to resolution.

One of the urgent issues in the United States today, as it pertains to the prison industrial complex, is perpetual administrative segregation housing or solitary confinement. It has irrevocably changed our mental and physical lives. We are tortured every minute of every day. Our mental health deteriorates, we mutilate ourselves and committing suicide. We salute the Party and the Prisoners Solidarity Committee for writing and acting to end this torture.

Long Live Comrade Sam Marcy!

— Muenda, Texas death row, 2023

Workers pondering how to defeat pension cutbacks

By G. Dunkel

Public opinion polls show a massive rejection of the government’s plan to “reform” France’s pension system. President Emmanuel Macron means to increase the age workers can retire from 62 to 64 and increase the qualification for a full pension from 42 years to 43 years worked. His plan would make it harder for workers who hold a hardh, difficult job to qualify for needed special treatment. It is not much harder for women to qualify for a full pension.

Macron’s government claims the French pension system is in financial distress and that expenses must be cut. The public has examined the projections the government made and concluded that the French system could go until 2070 before its financing would have to be changed.

The polls indicate that 7 out of 10 people living in France oppose this reform, and 9 out of 10 workers oppose it. An online petition has gathered over a million signatures as of now.

French workers have expressed this opposition not just by words; they have put their bodies on the streets by the hundreds of thousands nationwide four times since Jan. 19. The eight major French labor confederations, acting as an inter-union political coalition, issued the call, and the people — even those who are not members of any unions — responded by joining the actions.

Fewer than 6% of the French are union members, which is even less than the percentage of union workers in the U.S. But French unions have major political clout and often lead big political struggles.

Another day of nationwide protests and one-day strikes is planned for Feb. 16.

If Macron’s government refuses to consider the people’s demands regarding pensions, the inter-union coalition is calling for hardening the unions’ struggles and a total work stoppage in all sectors of the economy for March 7. They plan a big effort on March 8 — International Working Women’s Day — to explain the pernicious effects these pension changes will have on women’s retirement.

The union leaders say they will have won if the gov’t withdraws its proposal.

Portugal, Spain

While workers in France have been in the sharpest struggles, there have been actions throughout Western Europe. Hundreds of thousands of Spain’s health workers protested in Madrid and in Santiago de Compostela Feb. 12 against the destruction of the public health system.

In Portugal, rail workers are striking, and 12,000 teachers demonstrated in Lisbon on Feb. 11 to demand higher pay, better working conditions and respect. ☐
El imperialismo contra el globo descarado

Declaración del Partido Mundo Obrero

El líder de la mayoría del Senado, Chuck Schumer, lo calificó como "incursión descarada". La portavoz de la Casa Blanca, Karine Jean-Pierre, lo calificó como "una clara violación de nuestra soberanía". Para no quedarse atrás, el presidente entregó el plan a la coalición de seguridad nacional. Representantes, Kevin McCarthy, tuvo el "descarado desprecio a la soberanía de Estados Unidos en una acción desestabilizadora que debe ser abordada, y el presidente Biden no puede permanecer en silencio.

Cualquier persona que sabe que Estados Unidos ha sido invadido por aire, tierra y mar. O al menos por uno de los tres.

Pero ¿qué consistió este acto supuestamente "descarado"? Un globo. Por supuesto, era un globo muy grande, del tamaño de tres autobuses. Pero era un solo globo desarmado, sin piloto ni armas. Eso es todo.

Pekin insiste en que se trataba de un globo civil de investigación meteorológica extraviado por los fuertes vientos y ha acusado con razón a Estados Unidos de exagerar. ¿Un globo? Por supuesto, era un globo muy grande, del tamaño de tres autobuses. Pero era un solo globo desarmado, sin piloto ni armas. Eso es todo.

El lider de un país que ha sido invadido por aire, tierra y mar. O al menos por uno de los tres.

¿Cómo se informará del avistamiento del globo sobre Montana.

El 4 de febrero, justo después de que el globo sobre- volara tierra pero se encontraba a menos de las 12 millas del Océano Atlántico que reclama Estados Unidos, un misil disparado desde un avión de la Fuerza Aérea estadounidense lo detuvo. Demostrando que es firme con China, el Presidente Joe Biden se jactó de haber ordenado derribarlo. Pero los republicanos de la Cámara de Representantes tienen pre visto votar a favor de una resolución no vinculante que condena al plan de la Casa Blanca por no haber actuado con suficiente rapidez contra el globo.

Todo este discurso firme, seguido de un discurso más firme, podría ser visible si no fuera tan peligroso. Coincide con las predicciones del 27 de enero -que otros altos mandos del Pentágono trataron de retirar del general de cuatro estrellas de las Fuerzas Aéreas Mike Minihan, según las cuales Estados Unidos estará en gue rra con China en 2023. Minihan dio instrucciones a todo el personal del Mando de Movilidad Aérea, que el super- visor, para "disparar un cargador a un blanco de 7 metros con la plena comprensión de que la letalidad imponente es lo más importante. Apunten a la cabeza". (ABC News, 27 de enero).

El biligerante mensaje sobre el incidente del globo sigue a la recientemente anunciada expansión de la presencia militar estadounidense en Filipinas. Según NPR el 2 de febrero, "los analistas dicen que esta mayor huella podría ayudar a disuadir a China tanto de tomar medidas en Taiwán autogobernado, como de contener la presencia de Pekín en el Mar de China Meridional". Y ello a pesar de que incluso Estados Unidos reconoce a la República Popular China como el legítimo gobierno chino y admite que Taiwán forma parte de China.

Acaba de celebrar el imperialismo estadounidense el que amenaza la soberanía de China, y no al revés.

Este último incidente expone por enésima vez la flagrante hipocresía del Estado más poderoso e imperialista de la historia de la humanidad. Estados Unidos ha invadido más países que ningún otro gobierno del mundo, sin ningún respeto por la soberanía de esos países.

El peligro de estos últimos movimientos bélicos es palpable. Minihan prácticamente ha ordenado a los militares estadounidenses bajo su mando que estén pre parados para arriesgar sus vidas. Pero el peligro real es para el pueblo chino y los pueblos del mundo, que se verían atrapados en una nueva guerra imperialista, llevada a cabo en tándem con la guerra en Ucrania.

Los activistas contra la guerra en Estados Unidos tie nen el deber de oponerse a todas las maniobras bélicas de Washington y comprometerse a defender a China Popolar contra la agresión imperialista.

Legendario periodista dice que buzos de EE.UU. volaron los Nord Stream

Por RT español

En un artículo publicado aquí el último octubre en inglés, Sara Flounders demostró que los EE.UU. ganaba el más de la destrucción de Nordstream 1 y 2, y sea probablemente el culpable (workers.org/2022/10/66955/).

El artículo abajo es de RT español del 8 de febrero, 2023.

El Presidente Joe Biden decidió sabotear el gasoducto Nord Stream después de más de nueve meses de discusión con el equipo de seguridad nacional, según el artículo de Seymour Hersh, ganador del premio Pulitzer en 1970, afirmó que fueron buzos de la Marina estadounidense quienes colocaron los explosivos bajo los gasoductos Nord Stream en junio de 2022.

Según una fuente familiarizada con el asunto, la operación se llevó a cabo bajo la cobertura de los ejercicios BALTOPS 22 de la OTAN. Tres meses más tarde los dispositivos fueron activados de forma remota para destruir los gasoductos.

Como era de esperar, la Casa Blanca rechazó cualquier acusación que pudiera relacionarse a EE.UU. con las explosiones, a pesar de que Joe Biden viera los gasoductos como un medio que le permitiría a Vladimir Putin usar "el gas natural como arma para sus ambiciones políticas y territoriales". Adrienne Watson, una portavoz de la Casa Blanca, calificó tales suposiciones como "una ficción completamente falsa", mientras que Tammy Thor, portavoz de la Agencia Central de Inteligencia, comentó los hechos de manera similar, asegurando que "esta afirmación es innegable y absolutamente falsa", recuerda el periodista.

Según su artículo, Biden decidió sabotear el Nord Stream después de más de nueve meses de discusiones secretas con el equipo de seguridad nacional de Washington, abordando diferentes maneras de hacerlo con el fin de encontrar la mejor.

"Durante gran parte de ese tiempo, el problema no era si llevar a cabo la misión", sino cómo llevarla a cabo sin dejar pruebas evidentes "de quién era el responsable", aseguró Hersh. Teniendo en cuenta que las explosiones ocurrieron en medio de las hostilidades entre Moscú y Kiev, cualquier "acción que pudiera atribuirse a la Administración violaría las promesas de EE.UU. de minimizar el conflicto directo con Rusia. El secreto era esencial".

La elaboración del plan

A medida que las tensiones entre Ucrania y Moscú iban en aumento, la Administración Biden también se iba centrando en el Nord Stream. "Mientras Europa siguió dependiendo de los gasoductos para obtener gas natural barato, Washington temía que países como Alemania fueran reacias a suministrar a Ucrania el dinero y las armas que necesitaba para derrotar a Rusia", escribió el reportero, señalando que "fue en ese momento inestable que Biden autorizó a Jake Sullivan [asesor de Seguridad Nacional] a reunirse con un grupo interinstitucional para idear un plan".

"Lo que quedó claro para los participantes, según la fuente con conocimiento directo del caso, es que Sullivan tenía la intención de que el grupo presentara un plan para destruir los dos gasoductos Nord Stream, y que estaba informando con los deseen de los presidentes".

Al principio, la Marina propuso utilizar un submarino para asaltar el gasoducto directamente, mientras que la Fuerza Aérea pensó en lanzar bombas con fusibles retardados que podían activarse de forma remota. No obstante, el Cía insistió en que cualquier método tendría que ser "taciturno. ‘Esto no es una cosa de niños’, dijo la fuente, agregando que, si el ataque era rastreable hasta Estados Unidos, sería interpretado como ‘un acto de guerra’.

En ese contexto, el equipo de trabajo de la CIA se decidió a elaborar un plan para una operación encubierta que utilizaría buzos de aguas profundas para provo car una explosión, pese a que al principio esa idea fue recibida con escépticismo por los miembros del grupo interinstitucional. Uno de los factores que lo hizo era que las aguas del mar Báltico estaban fuertemente patrulladas por la Armada rusa y no había plataformas petrolíferas que pudieran usarse como cobertura para una operación de buzo.

El operativo

Para poder continuar con el plan, los estadounidenses decidieron solicitar ayuda a Noruega. "Odiaban a los rusos, y la Armada noruega estaba llena de magníficos marineros y buzos que tenían generaciones de experiencia en la explotación rentable de petróleo y gas en aguas profundas", dijo la fuente, agregando que los noruegos sabrían mantener el secreto, ya que la destrucción del Nord Stream les permitiría vender mucho más de su propio gas natural a Europa.

En marzo, algunos miembros del equipo volaron a Noruega desde EE.UU. para reunirse con el Servicio secreto y la Armada del país nórdico. “Una de las preguntas clave era qué lugar exacto del mar Báltico era el más adecuado” para realizar la operación, explicó el periodista. Los noruegos no se decrieron y no tardaron en encontrar el lugar adecuado.

Victoria Nuland de EE.UU.: ‘No os agreda mucho saber que el Nord Stream 2 se ha convertido en un montón de chatarra en el fondo del mar’.