



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 55 miles northwest 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 2-mile radius of East Palestine 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 toxins were funneled into a trench and burned off before they hit the



Plume of black smoke after ‘controlled release’ of toxic chemicals following train wreck, in East Palestine, Ohio, Feb. 6, 2023.

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. (wkbn 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/34wyztsm)

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.

PSR is another profit-driven “cost-cutting” scheme, stresses RWU. Railroad barons and train operators have been lobbying Congress to deregulate the railroad industry for decades. They regularly petitioned the Federal Railway Administration for relief from historically required inspections. PSR now gives the bosses excessive discretion in all operations.

RWU revealed in a report on Feb. 8 that Norfolk Southern shareholders “helped kill a federal safety rule aimed at upgrading the rail industry’s Civil War-era braking systems, according to documents reviewed by The Lever.”

The report states: “Documents show that when current transportation safety rules were first created, a federal agency sided with industry lobbyists and limited regulations governing the transport of hazardous compounds. The decision effectively exempted many trains hauling dangerous materials — including the one in Ohio — from the ‘high-hazard’ classification and its more stringent safety requirements.” (tinyurl.com/4dcvp6nc)

## 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.” (ueunion.org, Jan. 30)

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. □

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# Bellicosity, bravado & blather

President Joe Biden's Feb. 7 State of the Union address offered no real surprises.

Like any loyal imperialist politician, Biden included the obligatory pro-war rhetoric. He blamed Russian President Vladimir Putin for the Ukraine war, calling it "a murderous assault, evoking images of the death and destruction Europe suffered in World War II." And, he added, "Putin's invasion has been a test for the ages." (whitehouse.gov)

The ages! That's a long time.

Biden then went on the offensive against China, saying "if China threatens our sovereignty, we will act to protect our country. And we did." Again, he promotes the lie that an unarmed, unpowered balloon from China — and now a few "unidentified flying objects," from who knows where — had to be shot down, because they somehow threatened the most powerful empire in human history.

The bulk of Biden's message was a lot of bravado and blather — bravado about the low official unemployment rate, economic recovery bills, cutting into Big Pharma's billions in profits (slightly) and trying to force a 15% minimum tax on corporate earnings. This tax rate is still pathetically low; as Biden admitted, a nurse or a teacher pays a much larger percentage of their income in taxes.

### 'I'm a capitalist'

The president reassured any nervous billionaires that "I'm a capitalist." That puts him in the same class camp as Disney, Yahoo, Microsoft, Dell, Amazon, Twitter, Google, Intel, Meta and other monster corporations that have announced huge layoffs this year, even as Biden tries to take credit for "creating" millions of new jobs all by himself.

He wanted to make it clear that he was for a "kinder, gentler" capitalism, and that "Capitalism without competition is not capitalism. It is exploitation."

What Marxists know, and what millions of workers are coming to realize, is this: You're either on one side or the other. You can't be a capitalist and be "the most pro-union president you've ever seen." Capitalism, competitive or otherwise, is by definition

a system rooted in exploitation.

There were bits and pieces of Democratic Party liberalism, such as the calls for Congress to pass a law enshrining reproductive rights, to pass the pro-labor PRO Act and to pass the Equality Act, to protect the LGBTQ+ community from discrimination. But there was no mention of the spate of anti-trans bills in state legislatures.

The parents of Tyre Nichols were in the audience, and Biden decried the police killing of their son. But he made the point that "most cops are good, decent people." The record shows that these "good, decent" cops and their associations (which are not real unions) usually line up behind the "few bad apples" and try to block any charges or disciplinary action against them.

### Phony liberalism

The speech had more hot air than a weather balloon.

There was a promise to "end cancer as we know it." What makes that possible? "With democracy, everything is possible."

Garbage! In fact the capitalist mode of production, with its pretense of democracy, has spawned private, for-profit health care — the biggest obstacle to ending cancer, COVID-19 and other life-threatening conditions.

Biden's speech had two contradictory aims: to prove, on the one hand, that he is a loyal servant of the capitalist ruling class, while on the other hand to convince the working class that he is doing all kinds of things that benefit them.

The capitalists can decide if Biden is the best person to carry out their dirty work for another four years. Some seem to prefer someone like Florida's ultraright, ultrabigoted Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Workers need to break with both the Republicans and the Democrats and fight for a system that puts human needs before profits. Socialism, not capitalism, can unleash human potential to a point where, if not "all," many more "things are possible." □

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## Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it's the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people's movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and

worldwide. If you're interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

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# Hunger strike vs. torturous conditions

By Jim McMahan  
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.



About two dozen Geo guards in riot gear tear-gassed strikers, without provocation in several pods, as they were putting forth their demands. The tear gas spread to other pods. Guards also used pepper spray. They sprayed so much that the mirrors in the pods were coated with yellow chemicals. One prisoner passed out and had to be taken to the hospital to be revived.

Not being intimidated by this retaliation, 35 more prisoners joined the hunger strike a day or two later, bringing the strikers' numbers to well over 100. While external communications from the

prison were cut off, the prisoners' solidarity organization, La Resistencia, was able to get information from some contacts inside. Rallies in support of the prisoners were held on most days of the strike. The strike ended after about a week, when the prisoners started receiving better food, and other conditions improved.

Promises for better conditions have been made by the prison administration, and a state house bill HB 1470 has even been submitted to the state legislature adhering to the prisoners' demands. The strike received national radio coverage on "Democracy Now." In retaliation, nine strikers were placed in segregation (isolation cell), along with another striker given 45 days there. □



## 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 [youtu.be/5Arb33Q8SNO](https://youtu.be/5Arb33Q8SNO) 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 notably 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 like no other.

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, 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 and an older mentally 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 prison, 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.



Gloria Rubac(she/her)  
TX Death Penalty Abolition Movement / WWP Houston

It is because of Comrade Sam's writings that we have learned how to incorporate the national question into our active work against executions. We are based in a 50-plus-year-old Black community center.

In fact, the only split we've had in our group is because some felt like we shouldn't be based in a Black center but in the ACLU office. They said the Black neighborhood was "too dangerous" and would "scare" people.

We thank Sam for explaining the relationship of the class struggle and the national question. He taught us well. We carry on in his memory, as we fight for the liberation of our class here in the U.S., whether on the streets, in the study groups or in the prisons.

¡Que viva Compañero Sam Marcy! Abolition Now! □

## 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 lessons 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; and

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. Incarcerated people are losing their minds, mutilating themselves 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

France

## 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 harsh, difficult job to qualify for needed special treatment and make it 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. A team of French economists 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 saying no to the changes.

French workers have expressed this opposition not just by words; they have put their bodies on the streets



Strasbourg, France, Feb. 11, 2023. 'Work less, live better.'

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 9% 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 government 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 150,000 teachers demonstrated in Lisbon on Feb. 11 to demand higher pay, better working conditions and respect. □





El globo descarado

## 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 de la Cámara de Representantes, Kevin McCarthy, tuiteó que “el descarado desprecio de China por la soberanía de Estados Unidos es una acción desestabilizadora que debe ser abordada, y el presidente Biden no puede permanecer en silencio.”

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

Pero ¿en 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.

Pekín 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. Sin embargo, Washington y los medios de comunicación, sin pruebas, se han referido repetidamente al “globo espía chino”. El Secretario de Estado estadounidense, Antony Blinken, canceló un viaje diplomático previsto para reunirse con funcionarios chinos después

de que se informara del avistamiento del globo sobre Montana.

El 4 de febrero, justo después de que el globo sobrevolara tierra pero se encontrara 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 derribó. 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 previsto votar a favor de una resolución

no vinculante que condene a 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 risible 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 guerra con China en 2025. Minihan dio instrucciones a todo el personal del Mando de Movilidad Aérea, que él supervisa, para “disparar un cargador a un blanco de 7 metros con la plena comprensión de que la letalidad impenitente es lo más importante. Apunten a la cabeza”. (ABC News, 27 de enero)

El beligerante 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.

En realidad, es 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 preparados 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 tienen el deber de oponerse a todas las maniobras bélicas de Washington y comprometerse a defender a China Popular contra la agresión imperialista. □

### MUNDO OBRERO editorial

## 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 lo más de la destrucción de Nordstream 1 y 2, y sea probablemente el culpable ([workers.org/2022/10/66955/](https://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 discusiones secretas con el equipo de seguridad nacional, según el artículo de Seymour Hersh, ganador del premio Pulitzer en 1970.

El legendario reportero Hersh hizo este miércoles, 8 de febrero, una chocante revelación en su artículo “Cómo Estados Unidos eliminó el oleoducto Nord Stream”, publicado en su blog personal. 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 relacionar a EE.UU. con las explosiones, a pesar de que Joe Biden viera los gasoductos como un medio que 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 Thorp, portavoz de la Agencia Central de Inteligencia, comentó los hechos de manera similar, asegurando que “esta afirmación es total 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



Victoria Nuland de EE.UU.: ‘Nos agrada mucho saber que el Nord Stream 2 se ha convertido en un montón de chatarra en el fondo del mar.’

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 siguiera dependiendo de los gasoductos para obtener gas natural barato, Washington temía que países como Alemania fueran reacios 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 reunir a 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 cumpliendo con los deseos de los presidente”, reza el artículo.

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, la CIA insistió en que cualquier método tendría que ser encubierto. “Esto no es 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 dedicó a elaborar un plan para una operación encubierta que utilizaría buzos de aguas profundas para provocar una explosión, pese a que al principio esa idea fue recibida con escepticismo por los miembros del grupo interinstitucional. Uno de los factores que les inquietaba 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 buceo.

### 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 marinos y buzos que tenían generaciones de experiencia en la exploración altamente 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 mejor para colocar los explosivos”, explicó el periodista. Los noruegos no decepcionaron y no tardaron en encontrar el lugar adecuado. □