

# Buffalo Forum



Local Publication of the  
U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

**Workers of all countries, unite!**

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February 9, 2018

Vol. 22 #2

## STATE OF THE UNION

### Trump Warns Warring Factions in U.S. to Unite and Obey or Be Treated as Enemy Combatants

The U.S. president, in executing his office and as Commander-in-Chief, has responsibility to preserve the Union. The Constitution requires him to regularly present the State of the Union to Congress, which has now become a significant yearly speech. On January 30, Donald Trump delivered his State of the Union

address in circumstances where the conflicts within and between the presidency, the intelligence agencies and the military are manifesting themselves openly as the fight over the political power becomes sharper and sharper.

The growing conflicts within the  
**Warring Factions • 3**

### President Continues to Threaten First Strike Use of Nuclear Weapons Against Korea

In his State of the Union address, President Trump generally threatened the peoples of the world, saying simply voting against the U.S. at the United Nations was grounds for being considered an adversary. He also emphasized "In confronting these dangers, we know that weakness is the surest path to conflict, and unmatched power is the surest means of

our defense." He especially targeted the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), as he has been doing his whole first year in office.

Many presidents have said, in dealing with various countries like Iran and the DPRK, that "all options are on the table." In addition, Trump has directly and repeat-

**First Strike Use of Nuclear Weapons • 6**

## BUFFALO LEAD POISONING

### Demand Full Testing and Full Treatment

Buffalo's lead poisoning crisis continues. About 1,000 children are diagnosed every year with dangerous levels of lead in their blood. More new cases are reported here than most other places statewide. It is estimated that the 1,000 cases are

**Buffalo Lead Poisoning • 2**

## BUFFALO JOINS IN

### Spirit of Resistance Reflected in Actions Across U.S.

Demonstrations on the one-year anniversary of President Trump's inauguration were spirited and large, with thousands marching in Buffalo, 200,000 in New York City and hundreds of thousands more in Chicago, Los Angeles and many other cities, like Charlotte and Asheville, North Carolina, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Oklahoma City. Many of the actions were organized on January 20 under the banner of Women's March 2018. The spirited Buffalo action saw demonstrators stretching 30

deep from Niagara Square to the Holding Center, where inequality and mass incarceration were firmly denounced. Women's rights, immigrant rights, right to education, the struggle for equality and a stand against U.S. wars and militarization of life were all part of the action. Everywhere, the need to resist and the need for different forms of resistance were the major concerns put forward by the participants, which included many youth, in particular young women (see photos p.7-8).



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### **I • BUFFALO LEAD POISONING**

not even half of the children suffering from lead poisoning. While fully knowing about the problem, state, county and city officials refuse to take the actions necessary, both for testing and for treatment to guarantee the rights of children to safe water and safe homes.

State, county and local officials are also not upholding the law requiring all children be tested at least twice by the age of three years old. School officials can verify that only about half the more than 4,000 children enrolled in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten have been tested at least once for lead poisoning. There are thousands more younger children in programs like Head Start that also are not being tested.

In addition, the state refuses to implement the current standard of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for dangerous levels of lead, which is 5 micrograms per deciliter of blood. That is the equivalent of one grain of sugar dropped in 3.3 gallons of water. Minute amounts of lead cause severe problems, especially for children. These include serious and permanent brain damage and health disorders of various kinds, directly impacting a child's thinking and learning abilities and emotional well-being. Yet the state continues to use a standard of 10 micrograms. This means even many of the children who are tested are not treated because they fall below this level.

The CDC actually says there is no safe level of lead in the blood, which is the standard that should be utilized. Instead, officials continue to refuse to do their duty to uphold rights and uphold the law by ensuring all children are tested, that water and homes are treated, and children provided with care, as needed.

It is actually a crime for the various officials to refuse to do the testing, but this law is not enforced. Unlike laws concerning minor drug offenses like marijuana possession, used to jail youth in large numbers, especially African Americans, laws concerning lead poisoning are not enforced. State and county officials are not being charged for these crimes, crimes of child endangerment and grave harm.

Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) are now proposing to provide free lead screenings for incoming students and younger siblings at community schools and two mobile health clinics. The program might begin in about six months, but currently is just under discussion.

According to BPS, school nurses were recently asked to find out how many of the 4,647 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students had proof



of being tested for this school year. Nurses could verify that only 53 percent of those students had one screening, let alone the two screenings mandated by state law. This means 2,166 children who either were not screened or whose test results were not reported by their pediatrician, also required by law. More generally school nurses brought out that they are prohibited from accessing the state immunization database that includes information on testing results for individual children.

Testing for pre-school and younger children is the minimum needed and a positive step. However, testing for all children regardless of age as requested by parents and teachers who can observe problems, is needed. More importantly, government officials must organize to provide the treatment needed, of water, or paint, or soil, main sources of lead poisoning. Currently, it is up to the homeowner to solve the problem, which may be beyond their means, or for renters, may be something they cannot enforce.

Lead poisoning is a public responsibility of government. It is a social problem, in Buffalo and many other cities and requires a social solution. School, county and state officials, joined by unions, should organize to provide filters, for example, when water is the issue. This was done in Flint, where unions and city officials joined together to provide and install filters. The same can be done for painting homes. The public universities can also participate in assisting with testing and treatment.

It is state and county officials who are currently standing in the way, so it is a matter that people should take into their own hands and organize to solve, including demanding full testing with the lower standard, full treatment as a public duty and that charges be brought for child endangerment and breaking state law concerning testing.

## I • WARRING FACTIONS

governing factions were in no way sorted out by the presidential election. Thus, the predominant fear today, expressed by all contending forces, is that the on-going state of civil war, which always exists behind the scenes in the United States, will break out in open violence. Trump thus used the State of the Union to demand “the unity we need” to prevent such a development.

He threatened Americans to stand together or face punishment. Reiterating several times the need for unity to “Make America Great Again,” he said this is necessary to avert civil war. He gave his definition of an American and threatened that those who do not adhere to this definition will be branded terrorists and enemy combatants and treated accordingly. This includes the Guantánamo torture camp, which he will increasingly use.

From the beginning of his speech, Trump addressed the warring factions within the ruling class. “Tonight, I call upon all of us to set aside our differences, to seek out common ground, and to summon the unity we need to deliver for the people we were elected to serve,” he said.

The reference to “the people we were elected to serve” sounds much broader but the State of the Union speech is delivered to the joint houses of Congress, which is filled with millionaires and is, in large part, comprised of people who represent private interests.

Speaking of his administration he said, “Together, we are building a safe, strong, and proud America.” Later he said, “Tonight, I want to talk about what kind of future we are going to have, and what kind of Nation we are going to be. All of us, together, as one team, one people, and one American family.”

Note the reference to “family,” not to a polity, which signifies a people with political rights, including the right to political power.

He goes on to define just what it means to be part of this “American family.”

“We all share the same home, the same heart, the same destiny, and the same great American flag. Together, we are rediscov-

ering the American way,” Trump says.

He explains this “American way:”

“In America, we know that faith and family, not government and bureaucracy, are the center of the American life. Our motto is “In God We Trust.” And we celebrate our police, our military, and our amazing veterans as heroes who deserve our total and unwavering support... Young patriots like Preston [a boy who put flags on the graves of veterans] teach all of us about our civic duty as Americans. Preston’s reverence for those who have served our Nation reminds us why we salute our flag, why we put our hands on our hearts for the pledge of allegiance, and why we proudly stand for the national anthem.”

Here Trump is not only calling for unity among the factions, but also targeting all those who may support a different flag, such as the flag of peace, which the U.S. flag certainly does not represent. Recent polls again confirm that the large majority of people in the U.S. are anti-war and stand against U.S. wars of aggression and occupation.

Trump also specifically targeted all those who have stood against police brutality and killings as well as the African American athletes and the many youth and people across the country who have joined them in refusing to stand for the anthem. These forces have all targeted the government and demanded that action be taken to end police impunity and inequality and to defend the right to speak out and resist.

The national anthem represents the Republic, its wars and constitution, which are thoroughly racist and founded on genocide of the Indigenous peoples and the enslavement of Africans. All those who refuse to pledge and stand are not part of the “American family,”



Trump implied. He backed this emphasis by promoting guests from the military, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and police, applauding them as the country’s heroes.

### **Demands for Powers to Fire Federal Workers “At Will”**

In his State of the Union, Trump also called for the destruction of federal workers’ unions through “at-will” contract arrangements. “[...] I call on Congress to empower every Cabinet Secretary with the authority to reward good workers and to remove federal employees who undermine the public trust or fail the American people,” Trump said.

Trump bragged of having fired 1,500 Veterans Affairs (VA) health care workers for allegedly not providing proper care for veterans. He also alluded to the fact that the “right” of health care workers not to provide medical service on grounds of religious or moral belief has been imposed in the name of defending religious freedom. This is said to permit and protect those who do not believe in abortion to refuse to provide the service.

The paradox lies in saying that workers have the right to affirm their conscience on religious/moral grounds but when it comes to working conditions it is another story. The firing of VA workers was the segue to declaring that to honor veterans means eliminating workers’ rights to not be fired arbitrarily and without cause. This aspect

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### 3 • WARRING FACTIONS

of Trump's anti-worker, anti-union actions was generally ignored in the monopoly media's coverage of Trump's State of the Union speech as well as in the official response of the Democratic Party.

The notion of loyalty to veterans and soldiers Trump gave in his State of the Union is used to justify the government's ability to fire federal workers "at will." This would establish what is called "at will workers." He said that in order to have accountability, workers must be deprived of all rights and that this will ensure veterans and others get what they need.

"At-will" employment is a term used in U.S. labor law for contractual relationships in which an employee can be dismissed by an employer for any reason (that is, without having to establish "just cause" for termination), and without warning.[1] This notion is typically traced to a treatise published by H.G. Wood in 1877, called Master and Servant.[2] As if 140 years of the struggle for rights never took place, it is an argument advanced today within U.S. ruling circles to make the reintroduction of slave-labor official legal policy with penalties for non-compliance.

**Trump's Attempt to Use Immigration to Unite Factions and Divide Workers**  
Trump used immigration to further set the stage to criminalize not only immigrants but those who support them, including at the level of state and local governments. He made a point of branding undocumented immigrants as criminals and gang members. By way of example he used the tragic killing of two young women from families with African American heritage:

The savage gang MS-13 have [*sic*] been charged with Kayla and Nisa's murders. Many of these gang members took advantage of glaring loopholes in our laws to enter the country as unaccompanied alien minors — and wound up in Kayla and Nisa's high school.

Here we see several aspects of how Trump operates. He is striving to win backing among the ruling factions for immigration laws that greatly increase enforcement and criminalization. He is

also striving to divide workers, attempting to pit African American families against Hispanic families, particularly those targeted by current laws, especially Salvadorans who have been a significant portion of the immigrants coming into the country recently, many of them youth. He leaves out that the U.S. is responsible for conditions in El Salvador forcing many to emigrate, and that the MS-13 gang, now in El Salvador, has its origins in Los Angeles. Trump has removed Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Salvadorans, meaning that many who have lived here for decades are now to be deported.

Workers originally from El Salvador, like many from Mexico, are an integral part of the U.S. working class. Both are a significant part of the resistance among U.S. workers and united efforts to defend the rights of all, such as at May Day demonstrations. Trump is hoping to block the further development of a political movement of the workers with these various attacks.

The many demonstrations involving hundreds and thousands of Americans from all walks of life, including the women's marches and actions opposing Trump's immigration bans, border wall and promotion of Nazis and KKKers, show the persistence of the people to build their united resistance for their rights.

The Trump administration is also threatening to bring charges against city officials, such as those in California, Illinois and New York, who provide sanctuary cities for undocumented immigrants. These officials do not fully cooperate with ICE in holding or turning over immigrants who have been arrested on minor charges. Trump has already said sanctuary cities are a threat to national security. His State of the Union address raised the specter that if



he does not secure the unity he demands, he may consider these government officials enemy combatants. He is already implying that those who defend immigrant rights and stand against police impunity should be considered "un-American" and treated accordingly.

### **Resurrecting Enemy Combatants and Guantánamo**

Trump specifically resurrected the use of the term "unlawful enemy combatant" and reintroduced the policy to use torture camps such as Guantánamo:

"Terrorists who do things like place bombs in civilian hospitals are evil. When possible, we annihilate them. When necessary, we must be able to detain and question them. But we must be clear: Terrorists are not merely criminals. They are unlawful enemy combatants. And when captured overseas, they should be treated like the terrorists they are... I am asking Congress to ensure that, in the fight against ISIS and al Qaeda, we continue to have all necessary power to detain terrorists, wherever we chase them down, wherever we find them. And in many cases, for them, it will now be Guantánamo Bay."

This reiterates that the president alone determines who is and is not a terrorist,

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to be annihilated, and who is and is not an unlawful enemy combatant. The history of Guantánamo, its torture and illegal and indefinite detention, has shown this. The “wherever we chase them down” includes the U.S., as already occurred under Bush and Obama.

Trump is telling people at home and abroad that he is prepared to criminalize all who do not submit to his definition of being American and supporting America. He stated this directly in relation to those abroad: “Around the world, we face rogue regimes, terrorist groups, and rivals like China and Russia that challenge our interests, our economy, and our values. In confronting these dangers, we know that weakness is the surest path to conflict, and unmatched power is the surest means of our defense.”

The “unmatched power” includes modernizing the U.S. nuclear arsenal and increasing the Pentagon budget still further, and further threats against Korea and Iran. Trump repeated the U.S. nuclear policy of “peace through strength,” saying: “We must modernize and rebuild our nuclear arsenal, hopefully never having to use it, but making it so strong and so powerful that it will deter any acts of aggression by any other nation or anyone else.”

“Perhaps someday in the future, there will be a magical moment when the countries of the world will get together to

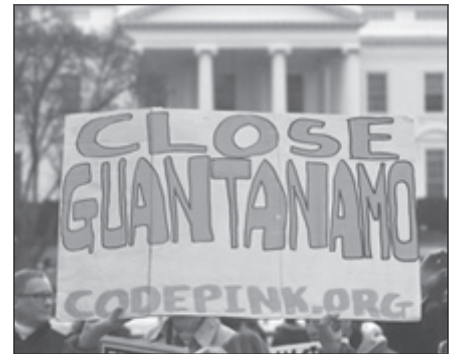
eliminate their nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, we are not there yet, sadly,” he added.

Trump also said that those who vote against the U.S. in the UN will be subject to this “unmatched power,” and deprived of U.S. aid. Referencing the UN vote where the large majority voted against U.S. plans to move its embassy to Jerusalem, he said, “I am asking the Congress to pass legislation to help ensure American foreign-assistance dollars always serve American interests, and only go to America’s friends. As we strengthen friendships around the world, we are also restoring clarity about our adversaries.”

Trump once again presented the use of force as the solution to deal with all those who his administration cannot control, whether at home or abroad.

At a time the old arrangements of the Constitution are no longer adequate to resolve conflicts within and between the warring factions, which are striving to control the political power for themselves, the conditions lead to open civil war and U.S.-led imperialist war. At the same time the striving of the American people and the peoples of the world is increasing to find solutions that serve their interests.

Trump is attempting to contend with the problem faced by U.S. rulers of open, violent civil war among the factions, coalitions and cartels and its spill-over into broader



imperialist war where the U.S. cannot predict the outcome. He is calling for unity based on a pledge of allegiance to the U.S. state, its military and police powers, while using “unmatched power” against those at home and abroad who refuse to submit.

How he thinks this will happen or how it would solve any problem facing the United States at this time has become a matter of much diversionary speculation. What the working class and people need is an anti-war government and a new direction for the economy that such a government would require.

**Notes**

1. “At Will Employment,” Wikipedia.
2. A Treatise on the Law of Master and Servant: Covering the Relation, Duties and Liabilities of Employers and Employees. H. G. Wood, Albany, N.Y., J.D. Parsons, Jr., 1877.





**I • FIRST STRIKE USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

edly threatened to use nuclear weapons in a first-strike against the DPRK. In an effort to justify such action, as well as possible military aggression using conventional weapons, Trump, referring to the DPRK said, “No regime has oppressed its own citizens more totally or brutally than the cruel dictatorship in North Korea. North Korea’s reckless pursuit of nuclear missiles could very soon threaten our homeland. We are waging a campaign of maximum pressure to prevent that from happening.” Then he basically repeats that “weakness is the surest path to conflict,” saying “Past experience has taught us that complacency and concessions only invite aggression and provocation.”

Trump does not say the U.S. is waging a campaign to actually prevent use of nuclear weapons, something desired and fought for by the peoples of the world. Rather he paints the DPRK as the aggressor and promises “unmatched power” against her as the “surest means of defense.”

The aim of making the DPRK the aggressor is to completely hide both her actions and those of the U.S. when it comes to aggression. Consider this information:

1) The DPRK has never engaged in aggression

2) The DPRK has repeatedly said that she will not use nuclear weapons unless attacked. In his New Year’s speech, for example, DPRK leader Marshal Kim Jung Un stated, “As a responsible, peace-loving nuclear power, our country will neither have recourse to nuclear weapons unless hostile forces of aggression violate its sovereignty and interests nor threaten any other country or region by means of nuclear weapons. However, it will resolutely respond to acts of wrecking peace and security on the Korean peninsula. Our Party and the government of our Republic will develop good-neighborly and friendly relations with all the countries that respect our national sovereignty and are friendly to us, and make positive efforts to build a just and peaceful new world.” Not only has she pledged not to use nuclear weapons, her entire history demonstrates that while she defends herself and her right to chart her path forward, she does not engage in aggression.

3) The DPRK has no troops or bases



abroad, no warships prowling the seas, no drones bombing other countries.

In terms of U.S. actions:

1) The U.S. waged war against Korea, in Korea, not the other way around.

2) The U.S. dropped more bombs on Korea, mainly in the north, than all the bombs dropped in the Pacific theater during WWII. Many massacres of citizens occurred.

3) The U.S. has 28,000 U.S. troops occupying south Korea, plus control of the south Korean Army in times of war.

4) The U.S. repeatedly conducts major war games against the DPRK in the area, practicing bombing raids for using nuclear weapons.

5) The U.S. keeps warships and bombers, some likely loaded with nuclear weapons in the area.

6) The U.S. has a long history and current practice of aggression against Korea and the peoples of the world.

Yet we are to believe the DPRK is the threat.

Trump makes no mention at all of the positive developments in Korea, such as on-going talks between north and south and steps toward reunification. The developments include a single Korean delegation marching together at the Olympics, under the reunification flag. Talks by delegations from the south and north included efforts to work together under the banner By Our Nation Itself. This shows the desire of all Koreans to peacefully reunify their country using their own efforts. These are very significant developments that contribute to peace, yet Trump is silent about them.

It is an indication that the U.S. is against reunification, as it would serve as the basis for peace and the basis for ending U.S. interference.

Instead, Trump says, “We need only look at the depraved character of the North Korean regime to understand the nature of the nuclear threat it could pose to America and our allies.” Here we are supposed to accept the possibility of U.S.-launched nuclear war against Korea, not on the basis of responding to an actual attack, but because Trump, yes Trump, claims the regime is “depraved.”

Aggression is not determined on the basis of the personality or depravity of any given head of state. It is based on actual actions, actual bombings, like U.S. drone warfare, U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and now a permanent presence in Syria. Crimes against the peace include preparations for war, like the war games, and propaganda for war, as Trump has repeatedly done against the DPRK, calling to rain down “fire and fury” like the world has never seen and “totally destroy” her.

The U.S. acts of aggression, and the whole history of non-aggression by the DPRK, are known—but we are not to look at them. We are not to look at the whole, but only the part proclaimed by Trump of a “depraved” leader.

Trump is basically trying to use the same sort of disinformation spread about Iraq and Libya and their “depraved” leaders and “weapons of mass destruction.” As with those countries, this is to generate support for U.S. aggression against the DPRK. It is also an effort to undermine the broad anti-war sentiment among the people, stemming in part from lessons learned about U.S. claims about Iraq, Libya, Iran and Viet Nam before that. Let no one be fooled! As the peoples here and worldwide have said in their millions, *No! End U.S. Wars! Bring All U.S. Troops Home Now! Hands Off Korea!*

**U.S. Sanctions Serving to Starve Koreans**

To further gain support, as Trump did throughout his speech, he attempts to use an emotionally charged story. In this case he tells the story of a starving boy in the DPRK who loses his legs and then walks thousands



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#### 6 • FIRST STRIKE USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

of miles on crutches to find asylum outside the DPRK. He was Trump's guest at the speech and now lives in Seoul where he reportedly rescues defectors.

As with aggression, the U.S. is silent about its role in trying to starve the people of the DPRK. The U.S. has long imposed sanctions, long before nuclear weapons were an issue. The sanctions are designed to starve the people as the U.S. thinks this will bring about regime change.

Sanctions against the DPRK were increased still further this past year and the U.S. has in place use of a naval blockade, so as to "turn out the lights"—that is depriving the entire country of fuel and electricity. Yet the Koreans persist and continue to advance on the path of their own choosing. This is what the U.S. refuses to accept.

The U.S. has the view that bullying combined with "peace through strength" will force peoples to succumb. But this method has repeatedly failed in the face of a peoples mobilized and fighting for their national and social liberation, as is the case for the Koreans, for the Vietnamese, for the Cubans, to name a few, who all faced direct U.S. threats to use nuclear weapons.

It is also the case that we are expected to sympathize with an individual who has no problem supporting Trump and his plans to go to war against his fellow Koreans. Trump is also making clear that the U.S. will support and try to organize defectors,

welcoming them into the "American family." The story is supposed to show the "depravity," while rallying support for collective punishment against a whole people because of what has happened to this individual.

Trump made a similar effort using the tragic killing of two teenage girls, which he said was done by members of the MS-13 gang who entered the country as unaccompanied minors. That tragedy is supposed to generate support for collectively punishing all unaccompanied minors entering the country, branding them as criminals and treating them as such, rather than as human beings with rights. The Koreans too are not to be seen as human beings and a people striving to reunite through their own efforts, *By Our Nation Itself*, but as "depraved" and cruel.

With immigration and Korea, we are not to look at the whole, and certainly not at the social relations between humans and humans that give rise to the current situation of imperialist war and U.S. aggression, which are not in the interests of the people of the U.S. or the peoples worldwide. We are not to look at relations within the U.S. of great and growing inequality and impoverishment and the blocking of the drive of the people for empowerment and all human rights. These relations are indicating that the people must have political power to resolve the dangers brought out in Trump's State of the Union



—including the danger of open and violent civil war as well as broader imperialist war. It makes clear the urgency to organize for an anti-war government. This includes the need for a new electoral process that empowers the people to govern and decide.

The existing set-up is rigged against the people and by design keeps the people from power. Electing different people will not eliminate that character. Organizing to develop collectives that take up empowerment, including being decision makers themselves and refusing to turn this over to anyone else, is a step to take. Demanding that candidates submit to the program of the people and their demand for an anti-war government, is another. For the DPRK, let all stand with the Koreans in demanding reunification *By Our Nation Itself*, without U.S. interference, the removal of all troops, ships and closing of all U.S. bases and signing a peace treaty now!



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