

The Gaza genocide and the death of Aaron Bushnell: What are the political lessons?

David North
13 March 2024

The following lecture was given by World Socialist Web Site International Editorial Board Chairman David North at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on Tuesday, March 12.

On February 25, 2024, Aaron Bushnell, 25 years old, committed suicide in front of the Israeli Embassy in Washington D.C. Shortly before 1:00 p.m., as he approached the embassy, Aaron live-streamed a statement. He said:

I am an active duty member of the United States Air Force. And I will no longer be complicit to genocide. I am about to engage in an extreme act of protest. But compared to what people have been experiencing in Palestine at the hands of their colonizers—it's not extreme at all. This is what our ruling class has decided will be normal.

Upon arriving at the embassy, Aaron doused himself with a flammable liquid which he ignited. He shouted "Free Palestine!" as he was engulfed in flames. A Secret Service officer, who had been called to the scene, aimed a gun at the young man and ordered that he "get on the ground." Other officers arrived and used fire extinguishers to quell the flames. Aaron was transported to a local hospital, where he died of his burn injuries seven hours later, at 8:06 p.m.

As is to be expected, the Biden administration has issued no official statement on the suicide. President Biden, who concludes every speech with the refrain, "May God protect our troops," has not said a word let alone expressed regret over the death of Aaron Bushnell, a member of the US Air Force.

For the most part, the allies of the Israeli state and pro-Zionist media outlets have downplayed the event and denigrated Aaron as a sick individual whose suicide lacks any political or social significance.

But this is not the response of the overwhelming majority of the world's population. Countless millions have seen the event, either as a video or photograph, and it has evoked, as it should, shock, sorrow and sympathy. The death of a young man, and in such a horrifying way, cannot but profoundly affect healthy human emotions.

However, the sorrow evoked by the death of Aaron Bushnell and respect for his idealism and sincerity must not extend to justifying and praising his suicide, let alone recommending such a self-destructive act of "extreme protest" as an effective form of political opposition to the Gaza genocide and, more generally, the crimes of imperialism.

Those who are now endorsing Aaron's suicide, and thereby encouraging, directly or indirectly—and Cornel West is among them—its emulation, are not only irresponsible. They are contributing to the demoralization and political disorientation of the opposition to the Gaza genocide and the broader struggle against imperialist war. They are counterposing the futile protest of the individual martyr to the building of

a politically conscious mass movement of millions that is necessary to stop and put an end to imperialist barbarism and the capitalist system upon which it is based.

I will expand on this criticism in the course of these remarks. But I first want to place Aaron's death in its broader social context.

The precise circumstances of Aaron's death were, of course, exceptional. But suicide itself is not an unusual cause of death in the United States. This is an important fact that must not be overlooked.

In 2021, suicide was the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States. A total of 48,183 Americans died of suicide. There were 1.7 million suicide attempts. The age-adjusted suicide rate was about 14 per 100,000 individuals. There were, on average, 132 suicides per day, and I am sure that many of you here know of co-students, friends, who have passed through a serious personal crisis and perhaps even succeeded in taking their lives. White males accounted for over 69 percent of suicide deaths in 2021, while African American men accounted for 8.3 percent of suicides. Male suicides were just about four times more frequent than female suicides. The highest rates of suicide are among adults between the ages of 25 and 34, and 75 to 84.

Soldiers and veterans comprise a significant segment of the victims of suicide in the United States. The substantial rise of suicides among soldiers has been clearly related to this country's continuous involvement in wars.

A study released in 2014 showed that "the suicide rate rose from 12.1 to 18.1 to 24.5 per 100,000 person-years of active duty in the years 2004-05, 2006-07, and 2008-09, respectively." The Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Service Members also found that "suicide risk was associated with being white, male, having a junior enlisted rank, having been recently demoted, and being currently or previously deployed,"^[1] a description that largely applies to Aaron Bushnell.

Another study, published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* in 2013, reported a "dramatic increase in suicides" within the Air Force, which in 2010 reached their highest rate in 27 years.^[2] This trend has continued. In 2020, there were 109 suicides by Air Force personnel. Included in this figure were those on active duty, reservists and members of the Guard. There were 72 suicides in 2021 and 91 in 2022. During the first two quarters of 2023, the Air Force reported 46 suicides. It is the single largest cause of death among members of the Air Force.

In assessing the cause of suicides in the Air Force, the 2013 study in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* noted that "only one quarter of active Air Force personnel who die by suicide have ever deployed to a combat zone, and less than 7% have directly experienced combat." However, the report did find a "sense of regret or remorse or 'feeling bad about what I did'" was related to suicidal impulses among Air Force personnel. While such feelings were especially notable among those who had direct combat experience, the extent to which such feelings are present among a broader group of military personnel remains unclear.

This factor should be taken into account in assessing the suicide of

Aaron Bushnell. This does not deny the very strong political impulse and intentions underlying his actions but contributes to an understanding of the wider social context of the experiences that led to his death.

The *Intercept* has established that Aaron Bushnell posted on Reddit using the handle “acebush1,” and it reported:

The acebush1 Reddit user joined the military soon after posting about their financial struggles at the beginning of the pandemic. On March 19, 2020, acebush1 inquired about becoming a Uber Eats driver. The following month they posted asking for financial help: “HELP—Can’t get stimulus or unemployment benefits, about to run out of money.”

In May 2020, Aaron enrolled in the Air Force’s “Basic and Technical Training” program. He was eventually stationed at the Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio. He was trained as a cyber-defense operations specialist with the 531st Intelligence Support Squadron.

In August 2020, according to *Intercept*, he reposted a video of a military aircraft, adding a heading which indicated amazement at what the Air Force was able to do. However, his postings make clear that his attitude toward the Air Force and his own political conceptions were undergoing a significant shift to the left. He expressed sympathy with an Alabama prison strike and posted a meme image of the anarchist philosopher from the 19th century Max Stirner. The *Intercept* reports: “In 2023, acebush1 made a post with the title ‘Free Palestine!’ and linked to a video of an activist takeover of UAV Tactical Systems, a drone company operated in part by the Israeli defense contractor Elbit Systems.”

In June 2023, acebush1 wrote:

I’m sticking it out to the end of my contract as I didn’t realize what a huge mistake it was until I was more than halfway through, and I only have a year left at this point. However it is a regret I will carry the rest of my life.

Keep in mind the factor of regret among Air Force personnel who have taken their lives or have attempted to take their lives. In another statement, responding to a question posted on the r/Airforce subreddit, in which a user asked whether veterans, if they had to do it over again, would still have enlisted, *Intercept* reports acebush1’s answer:

Absolutely not. I have been complicit in the violent domination of the world, and I will never get the blood off my hands.

Although Aaron was not, based on the information currently available, directly involved in the combat operations of the Air Force, he clearly perceived himself as bearing moral responsibility for the crimes committed by the United States and shared a sense of guilt, which the study referenced in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* identified as a significant factor in suicides among Air Force personnel.

To the extent that this sense of guilt contributed to Aaron’s suicide, it testifies to his moral integrity. Moreover, it deeply implicates the existing social order—the vast societal structure of economic, political and ideological oppression and criminality, rooted in capitalism—in the death of Aaron Bushnell. All explanations of Aaron’s death that concentrate only on his personal psychological state, as if the personal develops in isolation from the social, are false. External factors, those arising from

social and political conditions, were the principal and decisive cause of Aaron’s death. This is the most important fact of all about Aaron’s suicide.

Why did Aaron decide that suicide was the necessary and only response to crimes committed by the Israeli state and its sponsors in the Biden administration? Why did he decide to respond in such an individual way to what is clearly a political situation?

It is in the examination of this question that the tragedy of Aaron’s death and the most difficult problems of contemporary society are revealed. Even the most complex social problems, arising from the interconnected global economic and political relations, mediated through class interests and affecting every human being on the planet, are generally experienced and commonly interpreted in individual terms.

This tendency is not merely an expression of an error in personal judgment. The nature of capitalism—so-called “private enterprise”—reinforces the conception of society as simply an aggregate of isolated individuals.

It was first Marx who, in the process of elaborating the materialist conception of history, challenged and refuted this conception, writing in 1845 that “the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of social relations.”^[3]

The individualistic character of daily life and the associated sense of personal isolation and alienation that it fosters acquire an especially malignant character in a period of political reaction, such as our period, in which the bonds of social and class solidarity are eroded. In a series of articles written in 1912, Evgeni Preobrazhensky—the Marxist revolutionary, Bolshevik, and later a major figure in the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky, and ultimately a victim of Stalin’s purges—defined suicide as a form of “social murder” carried out by society, which is especially prevalent when the class struggle is suppressed.

He wrote:

The high percentage of suicides in an epoch of counter-revolution and social disorder is also easy to explain in terms of the point of view we have been discussing. During a buoyant epoch people rally more closely to achieve common goals, the isolation of the individual is reduced to a minimum, and the powerful forces of collective support the individual in his life and struggle. A complete opposite picture prevails during an epoch of disintegration, when old associations fall apart and the new have yet to emerge, when the centrifugal forces of society prevail over the centripetal. The powerless individual, when facing society, loses his equilibrium and perishes with the first encounter with adverse circumstances, which at a different time would have had no essential consequences for him.^[4]

Preobrazhensky’s analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the interaction of the personal, social and political factors that led to Aaron’s suicide. Aaron, according to information published by the *Washington Post*, was raised in a religious compound in Orleans, Massachusetts, known as the Community of Jesus. This group has been accused of abuse dating back to the mid-1970s by former members. Aaron broke from the group in 2019. He subsequently, under the pressure of financial problems exacerbated by the pandemic, entered the military.

It did not take long before he was repelled by its culture of indifference and brutality. He moved in the direction of left-wing politics, and, as is often the case, he initially established associations with various middle class political tendencies.

The Israeli assault on Gaza occurred at a point when Aaron was only beginning to work through, in political terms, the consequences of his

break from religion and reactionary American nationalism. To borrow and rephrase the appropriate words of Preobrazhensky, Aaron's "old associations" had fallen apart, but "the new" had only begun to emerge.

Thus Aaron sought through an act of individual self-sacrifice to bring the horror of Gaza to an end. He did not see another means of achieving his noble purpose. He was appealing, through his personal martyrdom, to other individuals. He saw no other way to translate his personal grief and outrage into effective action. The decision to register his personal protest by ending his own life expressed the incompleteness of Aaron's intellectual break with a religion-influenced world outlook, as well as the absence of an understanding of the objective contradictions of capitalist society that not only underlie capitalist-imperialist barbarism, but also provoke the eruption of class conflict and create the potential for the world socialist revolution.

Again, these limitations in Aaron's development were not of a purely personal character, but, rather, a manifestation of prevailing social, political and intellectual conditions. Aaron was born on the eve of the 21st century, almost a decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a political and social catastrophe that was the outcome of the betrayals of working class struggles by Stalinism, Social Democracy and the class collaborationist trade unions within the United States and internationally. Significant and sustained manifestations of organized working class struggle had virtually disappeared in the United States. Aaron would not have witnessed a significant strike during the first 20 years of his life.

Moreover, the suppression of class struggle by the trade union bureaucracies, allied with the Democratic Party, was accompanied by the virtually unanimous repudiation of Marxism by the university-based intelligentsia. The historic association of socialism with the working class was dismissed, as was the perspective of socialist revolution. "Left" politics was reinterpreted in a manner that focused not on the decisive question of social class but on various forms of personal identity. This had the effect, and still has the effect, of strengthening the influence of the reactionary and demoralizing outlook of individualism.

It is important to pay tribute to Aaron's idealism. His personal sacrifice must not be forgotten. But honoring his memory requires that the appropriate political lessons be drawn from his death. Toward this end, it is an inescapable political obligation to subject to the harshest criticism efforts to glorify Aaron's suicide, even to the point of asserting that personal martyrdom is an effective strategy and tactic in the struggle against the genocide being carried out by the Israeli state.

The most disturbing of the attempts to justify Aaron's suicide is the essay by journalist Chris Hedges titled "Aaron Bushnell's Divine Violence." It has been published by *Scheerpost*, *Consortium News* and various other online sites. The essay consists of a mixture of religious mysticism, middle class utopianism, political disorientation, historical falsification and the glorification of irrationalism.

Defining the suicide in religious terms, Hedges begins his essay by proclaiming that Bushnell's death "pitted violence against radical evil." Rather than identifying the social classes, economic interests and geo-political strategies that are driving the war, Hedges dissolves a real socio-economic phenomenon into a spiritual abstraction, "radical evil," which is also commonly known as the Devil. On this basis, Hedges shifts responsibility for the war away from governments and politicians, and the social class in whose interests they are acting, to humanity in general. Aaron Bushnell, Hedges states, "died for our sins." Thus, by implication, all mankind is responsible for the crimes of American imperialism, NATO and its Israeli allies.

Having mystified the conflict, Hedges imagines the possibility of the transformation of the American military into a force for good.

He asks:

Shouldn't, in a just world, the U.S. fleet break the Israeli blockade of Gaza to provide food, shelter and medicine? Shouldn't U.S. warplanes impose a no-fly zone over Gaza to halt the saturation bombing? Shouldn't Israel be issued an ultimatum to withdraw its forces from Gaza? Shouldn't the weapons shipments, billions in military aid and intelligence provided to Israel be halted? Shouldn't those who commit genocide, as well as those who support genocide, be held accountable?

These simple questions are the ones Bushnell's death forces us to confront.

One is entitled to ask Hedges, by way of a response to his questions, "In what church, synagogue or mosque are we to pray for the realization of this 'just world'?" His questions are not "simple." They are simply absurd. Why would they be asked by any intelligent person who had any sense of political reality? Hedges' questions posit a world as imagined by liberals, in which all would be well if only "evil" was replaced by "good." It is essentially the philosophy of all protest politics.

But the questions make no sense. Why, in the "just world" imagined by Hedges, would there be a need for war planes, no-fly zones, and ultimatums? The only way Hedges' "simple questions" make any sense is if one imagines U.S. imperialism as a changeable and potential force for good. Israel, on the other hand, is conceived of as the manifestation of pure and unchangeable evil. The Christian and bigoted overtones of this hypothesis are clearly apparent.

In support of his moral appeal for a benevolent US imperialism, Hedges claims that "The coalition forces intervened in northern Iraq in 1991 to protect the Kurds following the first Gulf war." Hedges seems to have forgotten that the Gulf War of 1991 marked the beginning of the violent eruption of American imperialism that accompanied the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were killed in the course of that war. The declaration of a no-fly zone had nothing to do with protecting the Kurds. The policies pursued by the first President Bush were dictated entirely by his evaluation of the tactical interests of the US Army in the midst of the invasion of Iraq.

The most reprehensible sections of Hedges' essay are those in which he fervently argues in support of Bushnell's "self-immolation" as "a potent political message."

He declares, "It jolts the viewer out of somnolence. It forces the viewer to question assumptions. It begs the viewer to act. It is political theater, or perhaps religious ritual in its most potent form."

Hedges' unqualified endorsement of Bushnell's suicide—making himself, in effect, not only an accomplice after the fact in the young man's death, but also an instigator of future protest suicides—proceeds from a completely false depiction of political reality. Based on what Hedges writes, one would assume that Aaron committed suicide under conditions of mass indifference to the slaughter of Gazans, in which there was no indication of popular opposition to the mass killings of Palestinians. Therefore, under such conditions of universal apathy, what was left to Aaron but to sacrifice his life, to subject himself to dreadful violence in a desperate attempt to arouse some visible level of concern for the people of Gaza?

But, contrary to the situation as imagined and fabricated by Hedges, the Israeli onslaught has been met with mass protests all over the world. There have been innumerable demonstrations, which, in some cases, have involved hundreds of thousands of people. It should be added that in many cases large numbers of Jews have participated in and even organized substantial protests.

The problem that has limited the effectiveness of the protests has not been public indifference but the absence of a political perspective and strategy upon which the struggle against the genocide in Gaza, and, more

broadly, against the preparation of the imperialist powers for a third world war and the use of nuclear weapons can be based.

The protests have remained within the confines of the existing structures of bourgeois politics, directed not toward the independent political mobilization of the working class against capitalist rule but, rather, to the application of pressure on bourgeois governments to change their policies.

This, in fact, is the political orientation favored by Hedges. He references earlier incidents of self-immolation—with special emphasis on those that occurred historically in Tunisia, South Vietnam and Tibet—as examples of the effectiveness of ritual suicides. “These individual self-sacrifices,” he writes, “often become rallying points for mass opposition.”

Now, it is true that there have been cases in which such a dramatic event has triggered or intensified protests. But there is no case in which the ritual suicides contributed to an effective strategy for the revolutionary transformation of society. In fact, in two of the three cases he cites, in South Vietnam and Tibet, self-immolations have been carried out by reactionary political forces and exploited for its own purposes by American imperialism.

For example, in 1963, the immolation of the Buddhist monk Thích Qu?ng ??c set into motion a train of events utilized by the Kennedy administration to overthrow the existing Diem regime—which was viewed as incapable of waging an effective struggle against North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front—and to bring a military junta to power.

As for the immolations in Tibet, they are guided by the interests of Washington, which encourages the separatist movement as a weapon against China. There is nothing remotely progressive about this movement. And in the case of Tunisia, where the suicide of a young worker triggered mass protests, a decade later the very personnel that were overthrown, the same political forces that were overthrown in the first wave of protests, are now back in power.

But Hedges cannot contain his enthusiasm. Self-immolations, he writes, “are sacrificial births. They presage something new. They are the complete rejection, in its most dramatic form, of conventions and reigning systems of power.”

Not true. Such acts are nothing of the sort. Depending on the circumstances, they may be aimed at achieving a change in the personnel of the existing regime. Or, and this is more commonly the case, they hope to exert pressure for a change in existing policy by those who currently hold power.

They are not consciously directed toward the overthrow of existing property relations, the smashing of the capitalist state and its institutions, and the transfer of power to the working class.

On the contrary, in the most fundamental sense, the acts of ritual suicide are fundamentally incompatible with the perspective of socialism and socialist revolution. The program of socialist revolution is formulated on the basis of a scientific analysis of the socio-economic structure of society. The fundamental driving force of social revolution is not inchoate and desperate rage but an understanding of the objective contradictions of the world capitalist system and the mass social action that is guided by the comprehension of these contradictions.

Hedges, however, rejects a rational understanding of political reality as ineffective. He invokes the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr’s celebration of a “sublime madness in the soul” and his claim that “nothing but such madness will do battle with malignant power and spiritual wickedness in high places.” This is nothing but a glorification of political irrationalism, which actually expresses an orientation to the right, not to the left. Right-wing politics is closely aligned with irrational sentiments. Genuinely progressive, left-wing, socialist thought is aligned with science.

Hedges concludes his essay with the following declaration:

Divine violence terrifies a corrupt and discredited ruling class. It

exposes their depravity. It illustrates that not everyone is paralyzed by fear. It is a siren call to battle radical evil. That is what Bushnell intended. His sacrifice speaks to our better selves.

To put the matter bluntly, Hedges’ essay speaks to the pessimism, intellectual bankruptcy and essentially reactionary character of middle class pseudo-leftism, i.e., the ideological conceptions that generally predominate on university campuses.

In 1940, in the course of an internal party political struggle against an anti-Marxist tendency that had emerged in the American section of the Fourth International, Leon Trotsky noted that the greatest social revolution in history—the conquest of power by the Russian working class in October 1917, an earthshaking event—was led by the party whose activity began not with the throwing of bombs but with the defense and elaboration of dialectical materialist theory.

Trotsky was referencing the long struggle that had been waged by Russian Marxists, dating back to the 1880s, against the terrorist methods advocated by the Russian populists. At that time, the Marxists polemicized against the carrying out of terrorist attacks on government officials. This was a practice different in many ways from the act of suicide, which was not being advocated at that time by any serious political tendency. But there are certain critical elements of the arguments advanced against terrorist acts that are entirely relevant to the rejection of suicidal “political theater” as promoted by Hedges.

The essential issue is that the politics of terrorism substituted the heroic act of an individual for mass action by the working class. Terrorist assassinations, even when the victim was the head of state, could not bring about a radical transformation of society. One tyrant would be replaced by another tyrant. Moreover, rather than raising the political consciousness of the masses, terrorist acts relegated them to the position of passive spectators observing the conflict between assassins and police authorities.

I will conclude by recalling a tragic incident that occurred on the eve of World War II, in November 1938.

A Polish-born Jewish immigrant youth living in Paris, by the name of Herschel Grynszpan, 17 years old, assassinated a Nazi diplomat at the German embassy by the name of Ernst vom Rath. The act was not carefully prepared. The subsequent investigation indicated that Grynszpan, outraged by the Nazi persecution of Jews and the suffering of his own family, went to the German embassy to take revenge. He had not chosen a specific individual as his target. He had no experience in politics. Grynszpan shot the first official that he encountered, and, unluckily for vom Rath, he was that individual.

The assassination had far-reaching and infamous consequences. Hitler’s regime decided to exploit the assassination to violently escalate attacks on German Jews. Within hours of vom Rath’s death on November 9, 1938, the Nazis launched the anti-Jewish pogrom that became known as Kristallnacht.

Grynszpan, who had been immediately arrested, was subjected to furious denunciations—not only from the fascists but also from the “left” Popular Front government, supported by the Stalinist Communist Party, which denounced the youth for undermining relations between France and Germany and weakening the left government.

The only voices raised in defense of Grynszpan were those of Leon Trotsky and his supporters in France. But Trotsky, in a magnificent essay, defended Grynszpan against his persecutors, while making clear his rejection of the terrorist method chosen by the young man. He was responding to a political assassination carried out against a fascist official, not a suicide. But Trotsky’s criticism of Grynszpan’s act, which cost Grynszpan his own life, retains immense relevance. Trotsky understood the teenager’s hatred of the representative of fascism and the desperation he felt.

However, Trotsky recognized his own responsibility, as a revolutionary leader, to strongly counsel the youth against emulating Grynspan's act. He wrote, and this essay was unique in its time:

In the moral sense, although not for his mode of action, Grynspan may serve as an example for every young revolutionist. Our open moral solidarity with Grynspan gives us an added right to say to all the other would-be Grynspans, to all those capable of self-sacrifice in the struggle against despotism and bestiality: *Seek another road!* Not the lone avenger but only a great revolutionary mass movement can free the oppressed, a movement that will leave no remnant of the entire structure of class exploitation, national oppression, and racial persecution. The unprecedented crimes of fascism create a yearning for vengeance that is wholly justifiable. But so monstrous is the scope of their crimes, that this yearning cannot be satisfied by the assassination of isolated fascist bureaucrats. For that it is necessary to set in motion millions, tens and hundreds of millions of the oppressed throughout the whole world and lead them in the assault upon the strongholds of the old society. Only the overthrow of all forms of slavery, only the complete destruction of fascism, only the people sitting in merciless judgment over the contemporary bandits and gangsters can provide real satisfaction to the indignation of the people. This is precisely the task that the Fourth International has set itself. It will cleanse the labor movement of the plague of Stalinism. It will rally in its ranks the heroic generation of the youth. It will cut a path to a worthier and a more humane future.

These words resonate in our own time and—changing what needs to be changed in accordance with the circumstances—powerfully sum up the political lessons that should be drawn from the tragic death of Aaron Bushnell.

For those of you who really want to fight; who are outraged and horrified by what we are witnessing every day; who realize that even as we speak there are children and even infants dying in Gaza who are not allowed drinking water, have no food, are living in utterly inhumane conditions; and who feel outrage and indignation to watch the president of the United States justify these actions and even say, “Well, we mustn’t have another 30,000 Gazans dead—perhaps 5,000, perhaps 10,000 more, 15,000 more, but not 30,000.” That’s too much even for Biden.

Those of you who are sickened by what you see, what are the political conclusions you are going to draw? What is required to put an end to this? Not individual acts of vengeance, not personal acts of self-sacrifice, but a turn to the only social force which actually has in its power, in its objective role in the whole process of capitalist production, in its position in the forces of production, its potential economic strength, its global character, the ability to bring capitalism to its knees, to destroy the very foundations of militarism.

This is the task our party has set itself, what we seek to do through the publication of the *World Socialist Web Site*, through the activity of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, and through the present candidacy of Joseph Kishore for president of the United States and Jerry White for vice president, as the candidates of the Socialist Equality Party. We are using this campaign to educate and politically prepare workers, young people and students for the struggles which will and must unfold, to enable them to participate in and lead the struggles of the working class and impart to that powerful coming movement a genuine revolutionary perspective.

So transform your anger and outrage into effective political action, into the determination to master Marxist theory, to learn the lessons of history,

to acquaint yourself with the great revolutionary struggles of the last century.

And I say this with some urgency, because not that much time is left. If you have been following the news, there are active discussions for the intervention of NATO in Ukraine. Biden and his colleagues and co-conspirators in NATO are playing Russian Roulette with the danger of nuclear war. They have demonstrated their indifference to the possibility of mass death, in their attitude toward COVID, in the way in which they have sacrificed in pursuit of America’s global strategic interests hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian lives, in their willingness to consider the use of nuclear weapons as an acceptable form of military conflict.

We are confronted with great political questions and challenges. They can be solved. But to solve them, we must build a revolutionary party. This party must win the allegiance of the great masses of the working class. That’s the basic, fundamental lesson we must draw from the death of Aaron Bushnell and from a comprehension of the crisis of our times.

[1] “Suicide rates double among US soldiers between 2004 and 2009, research shows,” *BMJ*, published 6 March 2014

[2] *Journal of Affective Disorders*, Volume 148 (2013), 37-41.

[3] “Theses on Feuerbach”, *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Volume 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), p. 7

[4] E. A. Preobrazhensky, *The Preobrazhensky Papers, Archival Documents and Materials*, Volume 1: 1886-1920, edited by Richard Day and Mikhail M. Gorinov, translated by Richard Day [Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015], pp. 243-44



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact