

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Exchange with 'N.Y. Times'  
on Che and Cuban revolution

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 59/NO. 48 DECEMBER 25, 1995

## Stop NATO war drive!

### Clinton gets bipartisan support for Bosnia plan

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Since early December, daily flights of C-130 military transport planes have been shuttling U.S. soldiers and weaponry into Bosnia. They are the first of 20,000 U.S. troops that will be part of a NATO occupation force of 60,000.

Washington has launched an aggressive propaganda campaign to justify this new drive toward war in Yugoslavia. President Bill Clinton set the tone in a December 2 address to thousands of U.S. troops stationed in Baumholder, Germany, who were headed for Bosnia. Stressing that the soldiers would be heavily armed, he said, "If you are threatened with attack, you may respond immediately and with decisive force." Clinton's speech was greeted by cheers and applause.

"There could be incidents with people who have still not given up their hatred," the president emphasized. "Everyone should know that when America comes to help make the peace, America will still



NATO troops arrive in Bosnia to enforce partition. Imperialist invading armies aim to overturn Yugoslav workers state and re-establish capitalism with brute military force.

The major capitalist powers, with Washington at the helm, are now leading a drive toward a bloody war in Yugoslavia. They are pouring tens of thousands of troops and heavy weaponry into Bosnia and other Yugoslav republics. Their underlying goal is to overthrow the workers state there and reestablish capitalism.

For the past four years the imperialist powers had relied on

### EDITORIAL

the warring factions of would-be capitalists — fragments of the previous Stalinist bureaucracy — to try to crush the Yugoslav workers and farmers. But these indirect means failed, resulting only in more chaos and instability in Europe. Now, the capitalist rulers, from Washington to Bonn, are resorting to direct and naked military intervention.

Democratic and Republican politicians and the big-business media are beating the war drums to justify their use of brute military force — all in the name of peace.

What is needed now is a campaign by working people to oppose and tell the truth about the imperialist war drive against Yugoslavia. All those resisting the

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## Paris offers concessions in face of strike wave

BY NAT LONDON

PARIS — "Withdraw the Juppé Plan!" and "All together, all together, yes!" have become the rallying cries of millions of workers and students in revolt throughout France. Increasingly, workers are also raising the demand that Prime Minister Alain Juppé resign.

On December 12, more than 2 million demonstrated in cities across the country. Some 200,000 marched in Paris, according to the organizers of the action.

According to the police estimates, demonstrations in both Marseilles and Toulouse exceeded 100,000 — making them the largest actions in these cities since 1944, when Hitler's occupying army withdrew.

The mobilizations were led by large, spirited contingents of striking rail workers. They reflected a highly combative mood, as workers sensed the government weakening and beginning to make its first concessions. At the end of the day, the unions called for another national day of action and demonstrations to be held December 16.

Millions of unionists struck, particularly in the public sector. Workers on the railroads, buses and subways, gas and electric utilities, telecommunications, postal service, air traffic control, many ports, the national education system, hospitals, garbage collection, and the daily newspapers and public radio stations are among those who stopped work for the day or are now on unlimited strike action. University students have also become an integral part of the strike movement.

The mass demonstrations on December 12 culminated a week of rapid extension of the strike movement, started by railroad workers 19 days earlier.

When Juppé addressed the nation on December 5, refusing to compromise with the striking rail workers, he hoped Élysée

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## Workers protest social cuts in Canada

BY GARY KETTNER

LONDON, Ontario — "We've given a new meaning to the phrase 'from Paris to London,'" said Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) national president Buzz Hargrove, referring to the strike movement in France. Hargrove spoke to thousands of people from across Ontario at a rally held here December 11 to protest cuts in social services and antilabor legislation adopted by the Conservative provincial government led by premier Mike Harris. The rally was the culmination of a one-day strike and day of protest in this city of 320,000 people midway between Toronto and Detroit.

Braving bitter cold and bone-chilling winds, pickets fanned out to dozens of sites across the city beginning Sunday

evening and continuing through the night and early Monday morning. Thousands of the 60,000 unionized workers in the London area participated in the strike.

About 10,000 people joined two marches, which met at the Western fairgrounds for an indoor rally. Busloads of workers and students came from Windsor, Toronto, Hamilton, and many smaller cen-

ters in southern Ontario.

Protesters had their own answers to the government's argument that the economic crisis makes the cuts necessary. "The deficit is a created crisis," said Anne Hartman, a student at the University of Western Ontario. "The Royal Bank should be paying the deficit....The banks are making

Continued on Page 14

## Boeing strikers approve new contract offer

BY SCOTT BREEN

SEATTLE, Washington — "This strike is over and the victory is ours!" Bill Johnson, president of International Association of Machinists (IAM) District 751, told a packed press conference. Machinists in Washington, Oregon, and Kansas ratified a new contract with Boeing by an 87 percent margin after a 69-day strike.

"You did it, you stood out on the picket lines," Bob Gregory, chief union negotiator, told the crowd of 200 clapping and shouting workers. "When you go into work tomorrow, go in with your head held

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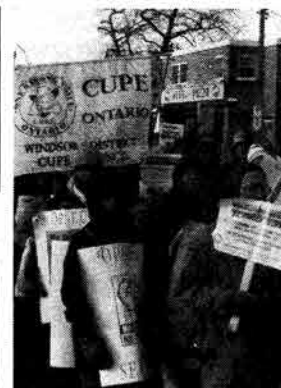
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**Malden Mills blast shows bosses' disregard for workers — page 12**



## Ex-apartheid minister indicted

Former South African defense minister Gen. Magnus Malan was indicted for murder December 1 in the killing of 13 people in 1987. Prosecutors charged that Malan along with 19 others, including some of his top generals in the old apartheid regime's security system, collaborated with Mangosuthu Buthelezi to create a paramilitary unit that carried out the massacre. Buthelezi, currently minister of home affairs, was not charged. The trial is set for March 4.

Deputy president F.W. De Klerk and right-wing leaders linked to the old regime urged President Nelson Mandela to grant amnesty to Malan and the others. Mandela has refused to interfere in the investigations and named Archbishop Desmond Tutu to head a commission that will investigate political crimes committed under apartheid.

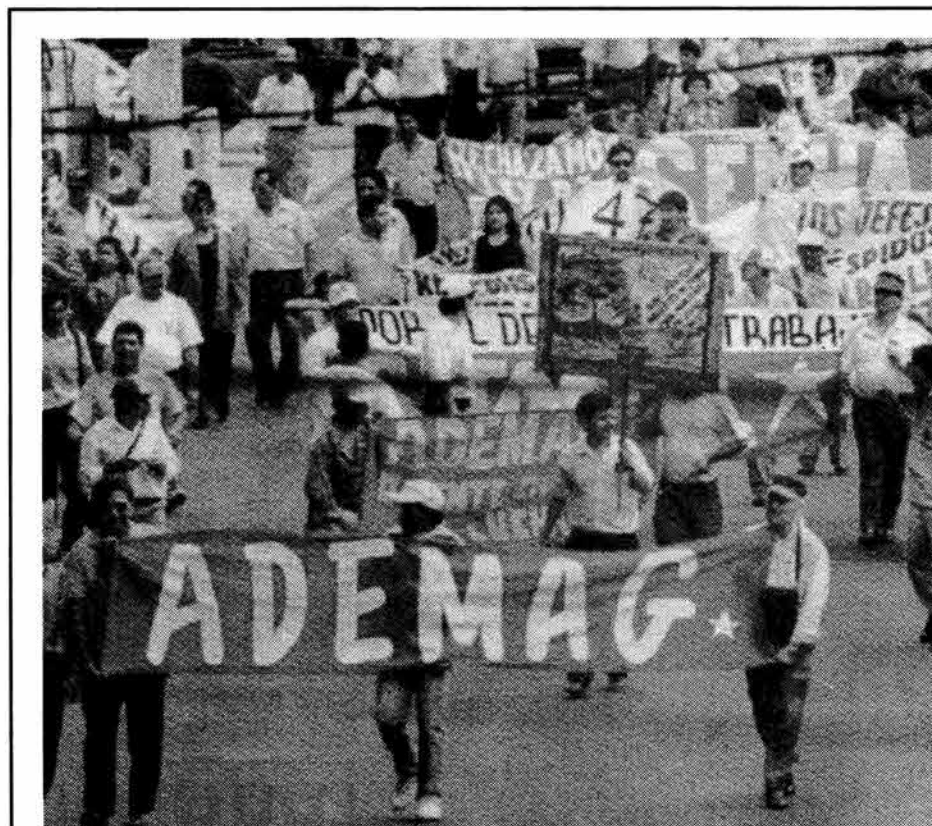
## Sanctions kill Iraqi children

Mary Smith Fawzi, a researcher at the Harvard University School of Public Health, and Sarah Zaidi, science director of the Center for Social and Economic Rights in New York, conducted a survey. They reported that as many as 576,000 Iraqi children have died since the end of the Persian Gulf War because of the U.S.-led economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council. The survey was conducted for the Food and Agriculture Organization and stated that mortality rates for children under five had increased fivefold in the aftermath of the war.

With water and sanitation systems deteriorating and hospitals operating at 40 percent capacity, deaths related to diarrheal diseases have tripled. "I had a sense that the situation had gotten worse, but I didn't think that there would be such a dramatic difference," Fawzi said.

## Chernobyl trust fund bankrupt

An international trust fund set up to aid the victims of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster has run out of money while illnesses in contaminated areas of Ukraine have shot up 30 percent. Thyroid cancers diagnosed in neighboring Belarus are 285 times the levels before the accident. Some



Some 1,500 government workers marched in the center of San Salvador November 30 to protest government plans to lay off 15,000 workers.

9 million people have been affected in some way by the catastrophe.

UN officials estimated that \$650 million was needed to aid the victims of the accident, but only \$1 million was pledged to the trust fund at the United Nations. An additional \$8 million was donated by other nations. A UN official asserted that much of the effort in the area went toward research, which prompted many of those suffering to say they "feel like laboratory rats to be studied" instead of people needing medical care.

## Dengue spreading in Caribbean

The Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) in Trinidad recently reported that St. Lucia, Grenada, Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines are experiencing new outbreaks of dengue fever, a tropical mosquito-carried disease sometimes fatal to children. An epidemic that hit Cuba in

1981, which grew to 270,000 and killed at least 113 people in a seven-week period, was brought under control.

Recently, 140,000 cases have been reported in the Caribbean and Latin America, with more than 40 deaths this year. Almer Dyer, St. Lucia's medical officer of health, stated that while the region experienced waves of the dengue virus in the 1970s, the disease has become more resistant. Or health care and living standards have deteriorated. "I can say emphatically that our population is nowhere prepared to cope with an outbreak," said James St. Catherine, director of medical services in St. Lucia.

## Abortion doctor shot in Canada

Dr. Hugh Short, a prominent gynecologist in Hamilton, Ontario, was shot November 11 while watching television at home. Short performs the majority of abortions at Henderson Hospital, which had been heavily picketed by anti-choice demonstrators. The cops initially tried to say the doctor was accidentally shot by a deer hunter shooting illegally in a conservation area.

"I would be hard pressed to believe the shooting was an accident when Dr. Short was inside his house on the second floor," said Marcia Gilbert of the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League. "Someone took aim at him and fired," she added.

## Fuhrman facing investigation

Gil Garcetti, the Los Angeles district attorney, announced November 27 that an investigation by the state attorney general has begun to determine if ex-cop Mark

Fuhrman committed perjury during the O.J. Simpson murder trial. Several groups organized protests in front of the criminal courts in the city demanding such action. Garcetti stated that the state investigation was required because public opinion would not "accept a decision by our office as one made completely free from bias."

Fuhrman, who in taped interviews repeatedly used the word "nigger" and bragged about brutalizing and framing up people, denied using racist slurs in the previous decade. According to the *Amsterdam News*, a lawsuit filed against Fuhrman for planting a knife on Joseph Britton, a Black man, was settled out of court for \$100,000 two weeks after the Simpson trial began, before the cop was called to the stand.

## Court rules for union activists

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled November 28 that employers cannot retaliate against paid union organizers in their workforce and cannot refuse to hire job seekers whom they suspect may be planning to organize a union from inside. The decision overturns an appeals court ruling implying that union organizers were not employees because they served the union's interests, not the company's.

The case stemmed from a complaint filed by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who contended that a nonunion electrical contractor in Wisconsin refused to interview 10 job applicants because of their union membership.

## Senate bans abortion method

The U.S. Senate voted December 7 to approve legislation that prohibits women from using intact dilation and evacuation, a late-term abortion procedure. A similar bill passed in the House of Representatives November 1.

According to the *New York Times*, White House officials say President Bill Clinton would probably veto the bill unless it included exceptions for the life and health of a woman seeking the procedure. The Senate okayed an amendment to allow the procedure to "save the life of a mother whose life is endangered by a physical disorder, illness, or injury, provided that no other medical procedure would suffice for that purpose."

## Clinton vetoes budget cuts

On December 6 Clinton vetoed the budget bill passed in Congress, proposing substantial cuts on welfare, Medicare, and Medicaid. Clinton put forward his budget proposal. The president's plan projects cuts in Medicare by \$124 billion over seven years compared to the measure passed in Congress that would cut \$270 billion from the program over the same period. Other proposed cuts by the White House include \$54 billion in Medicaid programs and \$20 billion in welfare.

— MAURICE WILLIAMS

Mary Ellen Marus from Toronto contributed to this column.

## THE MILITANT

### Support strikers in France

Workers and students in France are engaged in a ferocious battle against the capitalist class, which is attempting to gut social gains to get an edge on its competitors in London and Bonn. 'Militant' correspondents are on the scene telling the workers side of the story.

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# U.S. set for war in Bosnia

Continued from front page  
war" in North Africa and Europe during World War II, and the massive U.S. deployment on European soil in the following decades.

Hailing the contingent's involvement in the final bloodbath of the Gulf war in February 1991, Clinton proclaimed, "In just 89 hours of combat, you destroyed 440 enemy tanks, 485 armored personnel carriers, 190 pieces of artillery, and 137 air defense guns. You should be very proud of that remarkable record." Left out were the 150,000 fleeing Iraqi soldiers and civilians who were slaughtered in that assault, which the U.S. military brass called a "turkey shoot."

Clinton claimed that this time the U.S. military is being mobilized "not with a call to war, but a call to peace." Their purpose, he said, is to enforce a U.S.-brokered "peace" deal signed in Dayton, Ohio, which calls for the partition of Bosnia.

An initial contingent of 2,500 NATO troops, including 700 U.S. soldiers, arrived in Yugoslavia by mid-December and thousands more are on their way. In addition, U.S. defense secretary William Perry ordered 3,800 reservists to prepare for duty, including National Guard troops from Puerto Rico. The U.S. force is bringing dozens of M-1A1 tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, Apache and Kiowa combat helicopters, and planes.

Of the 60,000-strong NATO force, dubbed "Operation Joint Endeavor," 10,000 will be sent from France, 13,000 from the United Kingdom, and 4,000 from Germany — the biggest German military deployment since World War II. The troops from 15 NATO members will be joined by units from Russia, several other Eastern and Central European countries, Pakistan, and possibly Egypt, Bangladesh, and Malaysia.

## Bosnia divided into imperialist 'sectors'

Washington, Paris, and London have already drawn up plans to carve Bosnia into three military "sectors" under their respective forces' control (see accompanying map). Most of the U.S. troops are to be based in the northeastern city of Tuzla, headquarters of the U.S. sector. The British sector is in the northwest and the French will be around Sarajevo and in Gorazde in the south.

Clinton was in Paris December 14 for the formal signing of the Bosnia partition treaty, which was signed by presidents Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia, and Franjo Tudjman of Croatia. Clinton — who had to travel in Paris by helicopter due to the mass strikes and protests paralyzing that country — signed as a witness along with French president Jacques Chirac and prime ministers Helmut Kohl of Germany, Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia, and Felipe González of Spain, current president of the European Union.

The day before, the Republican-led Senate voted 69-30 in support of the deployment of U.S. troops in the Balkans. The measure was sponsored by Republican senators Robert Dole from Kansas and John McCain from Arizona.

"The decision's been made, the deployment started," Dole argued. He began his speech by declaring that the Senate resolution was not an endorsement of President Clinton, but rather "support for our men and women in uniform."

"This is no Gulf of Tonkin resolution," Democratic Party senator Edward Kennedy said, referring to the vote in Congress that set the stage for massive U.S. military intervention in Vietnam. "The military mission [in Yugoslavia] is limited and achievable."

"Stability in Europe and the continued viability of NATO are our vital interests," said Democratic Party senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska, in pushing for Washington's intervention. "And they are at issue today in the Balkans."

The House of Representatives previously voted to oppose the U.S. troop deployment. But on December 13 it passed a resolution similar to the one in the Senate. Several congresspeople who earlier expressed opposition to sending troops came out in support after traveling to Sarajevo. Republican congressman Sam Brownback, for example, said following his visit that he was now concerned about "the humanitarian issue" and that "U.S. leader-

ship could stop more of the suffering."

On the other hand, ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan, one of the Republican contenders in the U.S. presidential race, has criticized the Clinton administration for sending troops to Bosnia. In a December 3 syndicated column, Buchanan explained his position. "This is not isolationism; it is Americanism," he insisted. While arguing that "no vital U.S. interest is at risk" in the Balkans today, he said Washington should "strike hard any enemy that strikes us."

Buchanan's view, however, is not supported by most other conservative or right-wing politicians. On his radio program, Oliver North, notorious for helping to organize Washington's mercenary war against the Nicaraguan revolution under the Reagan administration in the 1980s, urged listeners to support the U.S. troop deployment while criticizing the way the White House has handled the matter.

## War propaganda

Meanwhile, capitalist politicians and commentators have been stepping up the pro-war propaganda, directed particularly against Muslim "zealots" and Serbs.

Government officials have suggested a scenario of U.S. troops being attacked by some of the several hundred volunteer combatants from Iran, Afghanistan, and other countries who have been fighting in Bosnia on the side of the government there. The Associated Press quoted an unnamed Pentagon official who warned about fighters in Bosnia who "are there to propagate their Islamic agenda" and who supposedly might attack U.S. troops with truck bombs.

The big-business press has also painted Serbs as a legitimate target of attack by NATO, seizing on accounts of atrocities committed by the chauvinist Serb forces led by Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. A December 8 article in the *Christian Science Monitor* raised the specter of Serbian "snipers" in Sarajevo. The same article made a point of noting that Serb protesters at a rally in Grbavica had "stomped on an American flag."

On December 13, many reports in the big-business press quoted Vojislav Maksimovic, the self-declared mayor of parts of Sarajevo held by pro-Belgrade Serbs. Maksimovic said that a referendum on the Dayton accord among Serbs "was designed to show the world that the Serbs do not want to live under Muslim rule." Early results of the vote among 60,000 Serbs in Sarajevo showed a huge majority opposed to the "peace agreement," according to the Yugoslav press agency.

Not leaving anyone out, recent media coverage has also targeted Croats, pointing to reported instances of Bosnian Croat soldiers looting towns soon to be handed over to the Serbs. The Dec. 10 *Washington Post* stated such incidents "underscore the need, U.N. and Western officers say, for a rapid change in the way business is conducted in Bosnia if NATO's deployment of 60,000 troops is going to have any hope of achieving peace."

To illustrate what kind of approach was needed, the paper quoted a U.S. military officer who said, "All of these factions could use a swift kick in the rear."

Under the guise of enforcing the accords and punishing violators of it, NATO commanders have granted themselves virtually unlimited authority in Bosnia. U.S. admiral Leighton Smith, chief of the NATO mission in Bosnia, threatened to strike hard at anyone deemed a "problem." He declared, "We will demand complete freedom of movement to go where we want to go and see what we want to see" in that country.

## Goal: to overturn workers state

Despite Washington's claims that the U.S. troops will be in Bosnia and Croatia for only a year and that the NATO troops will limit themselves to enforcing the accord, the White House and its imperialist counterparts have pointed to more far-reaching goals.

"We simply want to restore peace and democracy and a decent life to those people," Clinton told the press December 2 at the U.S. base in Baumholder.

Just what he meant by the rather sweeping term "democracy," was elucidated at a December 9-10 conference in London of 52 governments and international "aid"

agencies. The so-called Peace Implementation Conference, called by the British government, discussed the return of refugees, who number 1.7 million outside of Bosnia, and the provision of shelter, food, and medicine in Yugoslavia.

Officials at the conference, however, were eager to take up much broader questions that are dearer to their capitalist hearts and pocketbooks. "Aid agencies and World Bank officials also presented embryonic plans to reestablish a currency for Bosnia, create a central bank and lay groundwork for a market economy," the *Washington Post* reported.

Such a goal, however, means overturning the workers state in Yugoslavia, a country where workers and farmers made a deep-going socialist revolution and expropriated the capitalist class after World War II. The main barrier to achieving imperialist aims is the working class — of all nationalities.

According to the December 10 *New York Times*, J. Brian Atwood, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, "said one of the biggest challenges would be creating a functioning economy in a country that had not only been decimated by war, but that had not really even begun the shift from Communism to capitalism before fighting broke."

## Conflicts among invading powers

Despite all the talk about a "joint endeavor," tensions between the rival powers continue to grow. The massive intervention of NATO troops will heighten these conflicts further.

Some of the sharpest frictions are between the imperialist powers and Moscow. The Russian troops in the international occupation force in Bosnia are to serve under U.S. general George Joulwan, who is NATO supreme commander. Moscow, however, has divergent interests from Washington, and has backed Milosevic's regime in Serbia and its Bosnian Serb allies.

The turmoil inside Russia also has imperialism worried, especially with the cur-



Maps such as this one are run in many big-business dailies

rent resurgence of nationalist and Stalinist forces. The imperialist powers are concerned that instability there could affect the joint military effort in Yugoslavia.

More fundamental are the conflicts among the imperialist powers themselves, each of whom is pursuing its own national class interests in the Balkans.

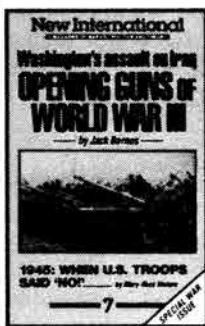
Washington has made it clear that it intends to call the shots in the NATO force. In his December 2 speech in Germany, Clinton told the U.S. soldiers, "You will take your orders from General Joulwan, who commands NATO. There will be no confusing chain of command."

The decision by Paris to rejoin NATO, while reflecting French weakness relative to U.S. imperialism, is also a cause of headaches for Washington. U.S. officials "expressed concerns that renewed French activism in the [NATO] alliance could exacerbate the rivalry that so often characterizes U.S.-French relations in Europe," the *Washington Post* noted.

Such differences are bound to flare up as the NATO intervention and drive toward war set off forces outside its control. Pointing to such a likelihood, a *Christian Science Monitor* reporter commented, "If 'peace enforcement' breaks down into great-power patrons bickering among themselves over the interests of their clients, the same forces that plunged Europe into World War I will be at work."

## BOOKS FOR WORKING-CLASS CAMPAIGN AGAINST WAR DRIVE

Pathfinder publishes a number of books and pamphlets that are valuable weapons for working people opposed to the imperialists' march toward war in Yugoslavia. Below is a selection of titles documenting earlier opposition to imperialist war, battles to defend unions and democratic rights at home, and the struggle for socialism.



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# Paris offers concessions in face of strikes

Continued from front page

Palace would rally public opinion against the strike. But the protest movement mushroomed into a social confrontation between millions of workers and students on one side and the bosses and their government on the other.

The day of Juppé's speech, 700,000 demonstrated throughout France, followed by more than a million on December 7. Two million workers were on strike that day.

## First concessions by Juppé

By the end of that week it became clear that Juppé had failed in his efforts to stonewall the spreading movement into submission. He was forced to address the country once again, offering concessions to the strikers for the first time.

The prime minister agreed to cancel his attempt to end early retirement for rail workers but stood by his plan to gut the social security system. Workers were only emboldened, as the December 12 actions showed.

Juppé claims that the rail workers are really interested in defending their personal "privileges," such as early retirement benefits.

Many rail workers at the sprawling Villeneuve-St. George rail shunt yards took this allegation head-on at their daily strike assembly. "We started the strike with three demands — against the restructuring of the national rail system, for our wages and retirement benefits, and for the withdrawal of Juppé's plan attacking the social security system. Are we going to settle just on our own demands?" asked Patrick.

For Serge Lachaise of the French Confederation of Democratic Labor (CFDT) and Franck Lacombe of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), who jointly chaired the assembly, there could be no question of abandoning the demand for the withdrawal of Juppé's entire plan. "The heart of our movement has to be Juppé's plan. This is what unites us to workers everywhere in France," Lachaise told the meeting.

The discussion then turned to how to build a delegation to go to the Renault auto plant at Choisy-le-roi just across the rail yards. Nearly 100 rail workers showed up at the Renault plant gates the next morning to explain their strike and talk to the auto workers.



Students in France demonstrate against the 'Juppé Plan' of austerity measures

Striking workers at the Austerlitz station in Paris agreed that Juppé's plan had to be withdrawn. For Dominique, the current strike differs from the last rail strike in 1986. "Last time we were 'corporatist' — that is we only raised demands of interest to rail workers. This time we are fighting for everyone." Dominique had just come back from a demonstration of rail workers from the Austerlitz station along with activists from the Right to Housing (DAL), an association that provides shelter for homeless people.

The Austerlitz workers voted unanimously to continue their strike until Juppé's plan is withdrawn, although they had already beaten back the attacks on their retirement benefits. Several workers said, "Juppé should withdraw along with his plan."

For one striking train driver at the Gare du Nord station, the reasons for escalating the struggle went deeper. "This society sucks. That's why there's the struggle," he said. Two days earlier a homeless person had been found dead from the cold in the rail yard, just a hundred yards from the picket line.

## Rail workers set tone

Combative rail contingents set the tone of the December 12 demonstrations. It took three-quarters of an hour for the thou-

sands of rail workers carrying flares and blowing horns, normally used to warn approaching trains, to enter Nation Square in Paris. They were followed by several thousand bus and metro workers.

There were contingents from housing rights associations. Members of the coalition that organized a November 25 march of tens of thousands defending abortion rights were also present.

Two *Militant* reporters who are rail workers in Los Angeles wore signs identifying themselves: "*Chemoinots des USA — Solidarité*" (Rail workers from the USA — Solidarity). They were stopped everywhere and photographed numerous times.

Juppé's plan is a direct assault on the social security system of medical care, retirement, unemployment, and family benefits. The government wants to slash social security benefits and raise taxes, allegedly to balance the budget "within two years." Juppé has also moved to break up and partially privatize railroads, gas and electric utilities, the post office, and telecommunications.

He announced that the retirement age for public workers would be raised to the level of those in the private sector, where, since 1993, workers retire at age 60 and must work 40 years to get full pensions instead of the 37.5 years previously neces-

sary. Most employees at the state-run SNCF railroad retire at age 55. Train drivers retire at age 50.

Paris is attempting to push through these measures to keep the franc strong and restore the competitive position of French capitalism against rivals in London and Bonn.

Even after the December 12 actions, Juppé stood by his "reforms," claiming there is "no better alternative." He has invoked an article of the French constitution that allows the prime minister to declare some laws without approval of parliament. This allows the government to rule by decree on all questions concerning the social security system.

But millions of workers and students are not willing to take "no" for an answer to their demands, making it likely that the class struggle will continue to heat up.

## Élysée can't cash in on hardships

The shutdown of all public transportation has brought about huge traffic tie-ups around Paris. On some days, traffic jams are as long as 580 kilometers around the city. It takes this reporter as long as four hours to drive the 20-kilometer (13-mile) stretch of highway from the Paris suburb of Marne-la-Vallée to the city.

The government has tried to play on the very real difficulties many people are facing. Many workers spend four or more hours a day going back and forth to work. Families are separated as some employers in Paris house their employees in city hotels for the week.

The governing Rally for the Republic (RPR) sent a secret circular to all its local branches to prepare for what it hoped would be a massive national demonstration December 7 to protest the transportation strike. Each RPR unit was to set up a "Committee of Users of Public Transportation." According to the circular, these committees were to use post office box numbers for their address and could have no public association with the RPR. The "secret" document, however, was published by several national newspapers.

A test demonstration was held in Paris December 3, but only about 1,000 people attended. As the strike movement expanded, the RPR was forced to cancel the December 7 action. That day turned into a national day of protest by the striking unions. Instead of a massive protest of outraged public service users, one million workers demonstrated against the government and millions struck.

A final effort to organize an antistrike demonstration fizzled on December 10. Only 1,500 people showed up.

Despite the transportation problems, polls showed 59 percent of the population supporting the strike on its 15th day. This has made it very difficult for the Juppé government to act against the strike. Proposals by the General Confederation of Small and Medium Businesses to use the army to solve the transportation problem had to be shelved.

Some small businessmen have been volunteering to staff clandestine mail sorting centers set up by the postal service in an effort to break the strike there. But striking postal workers have sent out roving pickets to find and shut down the strikebreaking centers.

Striking workers have replied by reinforcing their ties to various social movements. In Limoges, striking rail workers seized several passenger rail cars, turned on the heat, and began housing homeless people. They also took up a collection to contribute to a fund for victims of AIDS. Striking electrical workers have been switching the central distribution centers onto nighttime service, thus reducing everyone's electrical bills by 50 percent.

Common actions are being held by striking workers and the Right to Housing group. DAL, working with striking students at Jussieu University and rail workers from a nearby station, occupied a university building to house homeless. Later, they occupied the Pompidou Cultural Center.

Another example of human solidarity developed during the strike wave has been the "hitchhiking phenomenon." Drivers will ask pedestrians in the street if they need a ride.

On December 6 and 7 coal miners in Lorraine region fought pitched battles

Continued on Page 5

## France strike movement chronology

### October 10

Some 3.5 million public service workers walk off the job for one day to protest proposed cuts in the social security system.

### October 26

University students in Rouen begin protest movement demanding increased funding for education. Hundreds occupy regional offices of the Ministry of Education and are brutally attacked by riot police.

### October 27

Thousands of parents, students, and faculty members march in the streets of Rouen and occupy university. National demonstration is called for November 9.

### November 15

National Assembly approves Prime Minister Alain Juppé's plan to gut social security.

### November 21

More than 100,000 students demonstrate throughout France to press for more funding and hiring of additional staff. Thousands of high school students join protests for the first time.

### November 24

Several million public workers organize one-day strike. Train, subway, bus, and air traffic grind to a halt as hundreds of thousands demonstrate against Juppé's plan. Rail workers walk off the job.

### November 25

Rail workers vote to continue strike in-

definitely.

### November 28

General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and Workers Force (FO) labor federations organize national one-day strike and demonstrations.

### November 30

Some 160,000 high school and college students organize demonstrations throughout the country. Postal workers in mail sorting centers join strike wave. Walkout begins at France Télécom, the national public telecommunications company.

### December 1

Opinion poll shows 62 percent of population support strikes. Small businessmen's association calls on government to use military for transportation. Only Airport workers block runways for two hours.

### December 2

Government orchestrates demonstration of 1,000 "users of public transportation" to undermine strikes.

### December 3

Government announces plan to use 1,700 private buses to transport people to and from Paris. Education Minister François Bayou announces concessions to students — hiring 4,000 additional teachers and university personnel, and more than 2 billion francs in extra credits.

### December 4

City of Bordeaux, of which Juppé is also mayor, is paralyzed by strike of bus drivers, garbage collectors, and truck drivers blocking highways leading into the

city. Out of 139 mail sorting centers, 109 are on strike.

### December 5

Seven hundred thousand demonstrate throughout the country. Almost half of all telecommunications workers are on strike. Juppé gives national televised address refusing to back down.

### December 7

One million demonstrate against Juppé's plan. Several thousand striking coal miners in Lorraine demonstrate and battle with riot cops. Government announces more than 2 million public workers are on strike and names mediator to meet with rail union representatives.

### December 9

Rail unions meet with mediator, declare he has no new proposals. They call for reinforcing the strike. Workers shut down Eurostar trains connecting Paris with London and Brussels.

### December 10

Juppé speaks on national television announcing for first time that negotiations will be held with the unions and that he will personally participate in them. He offers concessions on rail workers' retirement age. Antigovernment demonstrations take place in many French cities — 30,000 in Bordeaux, 25,000 in Caen.

### December 12

More than 2 million demonstrate against Juppé's plan throughout France. Strike movement expands.



# France: rail workers lead wave of strikes

BY CRAIG HONTS

PARIS — Usually at 9:00 a.m. the Austerlitz train station here is bustling. But 16 days into the national rail strike nothing is moving. Hundreds of thousands of phone and power workers, subway and bus workers, municipal workers, teachers, hospital and other government workers, as well as students, have joined the rail workers in a nationwide social protest movement against government plans to drastically reduce social security benefits.

The rail workers have taken over the Austerlitz station and are using it as their strike headquarters. Sunday morning, December 10, pickets greeted a team of worker-correspondents from France, Sweden, and the United States, and welcomed us into the general assembly, which was about to begin.

"Every day we meet at 10 a.m., discuss the strike, and vote on whether or not to continue," said Patrick Meynier, a young ticket agent. The meeting began with a report on the most recent government overture to end the strike.

"The Juppé plan and the contract plan are two equal evils we are fighting against," a ticket counter worker told us during our first visit to Austerlitz. The Juppé plan, as it is known here, aims to dismantle social security.

"The strike was prompted by two things," said Jean-Paul Danard, an engineer at the Montparnasse station. "The plan to cut social security payments and raise the minimum retirement age from 50 to 55, and the plan to privatize the railroads with the possible layoff of as many as 30,000 workers."

Train drivers can now retire at age 50 in France, a gain they won in 1910. Christine Bernard, a ticket collector at the Austerlitz station, explained, "What we have was fought for by our parents and grandpar-

ents. Workers of those generations died so that we can have what we now have. We don't have the right to give away any of these things."

Another worker said the government's claim of needing to cut social security to balance the budget has fallen on deaf ears. Only a few weeks earlier the government announced a 100 billion franc (US\$1-5 francs) plan to salvage Crédit Lyonnais, the biggest bank in France.

## Taking over facilities

The tactic used by rail workers and others in their strikes is to take over the rail facilities and make sure that no trains operate. The workers then use the yards and stations as centers to reach out and mobilize more support.

Claudio Serenelli, a rail worker at the Gare du Nord station, described how they shut down rail traffic December 7. "Two trains were waiting — the Eurostar to London and the Number 80 train to Brussels," he said. "One hundred fifty pickets were on the platform as the CRS [French riot police] advanced toward us with the trains moving up behind them." Then the CRS charged, allowing the Eurostar train to get out of the station.

The strikers dropped onto the snow-covered track and ran for the city limit. "The CRS," explained Serenelli, "are only authorized to operate inside the city boundaries of Paris." Once beyond Paris boundaries, the strikers blocked the line with their bodies before the oncoming train.

The strikers waited 45 minutes to make sure no more trains were being run, and then returned to Paris to participate in the big demonstration being held that day.

While the government portrays rail workers as a privileged elite, their wages are actually quite modest. An Austerlitz



Militant/Pamela Holmes

March in Paris against Juppé plan December 5. Sign reads, "Railworkers on strike."

worker with 15 years' seniority pulled out his monthly pay stub for October. It was 7,100 francs net, about \$1,400. The *Christian Science Monitor* reported that the average life of a rail worker in France is 57, compared to the national average of 73.

Several strikers spoke with pride about the solidarity they are getting. A striker's husband brought pork chops by at Austerlitz. A butcher gives strikers 50 percent off for meat. During the demonstrations, rail workers invite people on the sidewalk to make financial contributions to their struggle, raising hundreds of francs. While some *Militant* reporters were at the Austerlitz station, a couple of older people dropped off a 1,000-franc contribution from a group of academics.

## Support for other struggles

At the Austerlitz station, Dominique Larchet explained how many of the pickets had left to attend a demonstration in

support of housing for the homeless and for jobs.

"In the outlying stations," said Jean-Paul Danard, from Montparnasse, "we now see people who are homeless and begging. We never used to see this before. Where are things going, what kind of society is being created? We have 3 million unemployed now, more than 10 percent of the workers. But what happens when we have to work an extra five years before retiring? It's just that many more jobs the unemployed will not get a chance to fill."

Striking bus drivers at the St. Martin subway station have transported homeless people to their station, covering their buses with big placards explaining what they were doing.

Ten thousand homeless people in Paris usually get shelter from the cold in the subway stations, which have been closed by the strike.

"What the drivers have done for the homeless is a real representation of the working class," said Jacques Villiard. Workers at various stations have opened up areas for the homeless.

"What we are fighting for is a different kind of society," Larchet said. "A job is not a privilege, a wage is not a privilege."

Another rail worker, Jean-Marc, added, "The rulers are afraid that the ideas of the French workers can reach workers abroad. In ordinary times we tend to just think about what is happening in France, but now we have to see ourselves as part of what is shaping the whole world."

"We are not rolling trains anymore," said Larchet. "What we are rolling are ideas."

*Craig Honts is a member of United Transportation Union Local 1674 in Los Angeles. Also contributing to this article were Laura Anderson from Los Angeles, Pamela Holmes from London, Michel Prairie from Montreal, and Mary Martin from Washington, D.C.*

# Students in Paris shut down schools

BY LAURA ANDERSON AND MARY MARTIN

ST. DENIS, France — "There are no classes and no heat because we are on strike in solidarity with the striking workers and for our own demands," said Didier Gallé, a student at the University of Paris VIII at St. Denis.

"We took it over," another student said. "Masses of us stood outside those doors and demanded access to the school. Now

we occupy it. Since the metro is on strike, many of us walk or hitchhike long distances every day to meet and decide what to do next."

Didier continued, "I want us to organize more joint actions with the workers."

St. Denis, a university of 27,000 northeast of Paris, is one of 70 out of a total of 90 universities in France that have declared full or partial shutdowns since October. Students demand increased funding for facilities, faculty, and staff, as well as equal treatment for immigrant students. They remain on strike in solidarity with public sector workers despite important concessions wrested from the government December 3.

The international team of *Militant* reporters who visited St. Denis on December 8 were welcomed at the student strike organizing committee office. "This is the clearinghouse, the center for the exchange of information between campuses," Jessica Lambert explained. Another student said solidarity messages are exchanged via fax with campuses in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Britain.

"Our strike is a revolutionary movement because we want a new society, not just more chairs and professors," Lambert continued, "although we do want more chairs and professors!"

We joined Nathalie Camier, a student at St. Denis, staffing a Pathfinder literature table near the strike office for several hours. Throughout the day students sat down to discuss world politics and how the strikes in France fit in.

Nora Hammiche, who is from Algeria, talked about the need for solidarity with immigrant workers. "Some immigrants are scared of political activity because the cops use the excuse of terrorist attacks to harass them," she said. Hammiche, who had participated in a march of 40,000 for abortion rights two weeks earlier, said championing the rights of immigrants is necessary to defend democratic rights for all workers and youth.

Sedjan Tisanic from Belgrade wanted to read the *Militant* coverage on Bosnia and said he didn't like the U.S. troops being sent there. "Their only purpose would be

to bring capitalism," he stated. Noting he wanted no part in the war for U.S. markets, Tisanic added, "I prefer to fight for the rights of all people, not just myself."

Asked what she thought had been accomplished by the struggle up to this point, Laurence, a member of the strike committee and an anthropology student, answered, "It doesn't bother me if we lose this battle. What is important are the relations we have established among ourselves through the struggle. Look around — we are Algerians, Africans, Blacks, whites — all together. This is the most important thing," she stressed.

*Anderson is a member of the United Transportation Union in Los Angeles. Martin is a member of International Association of Machinists in Washington, D.C.*

## Paris concedes

Continued from Page 4

with the CRS riot police. The conflict started with a strike for wages at four mines. Coal miners marched to the regional prefecture where they were met by CRS forces. The local president of the CFDT miners union took the microphone to urge the strikers to remain calm in the face of police provocations. As he spoke he was seriously injured by a tear gas grenade fired straight into his face. Thousands of miners returned to their mines for additional equipment.

The workers cleared out the CRS cops with a bulldozer, which they then sent crashing into the wall of the police commissariat. Fifty miners shut down one of the generators in the nearby power plant.

Some 100 miners went to the town hall and forced mayor Pierre Lang, who is also a conservative deputy in the National Assembly, to go with them to the bottom of the mine shaft at the Vouthers mine. The mayor was held there for two hours and was released when he agreed to accompany the miners to a meeting with the prefect and the director of the state-run coal operation.

On the second day of the conflict, 4,000 miners fought against 700 riot police for most of the day. More than 50 people were injured in the pitched battles, two of them seriously. At the urging of union officials, the miners returned to work December 11 with a modest wage gain.

*Nat London is a member of the CGT at the Renault plant at Choisy-le-roi.*

# 40,000 defend abortion rights

BY NATHALIE CAMIER

PARIS — "Let's move forward together. And all together let's defend women's rights." Despite a strike by public transportation workers in this city, close to 40,000 people answered this call. They marched November 25 to defend a woman's right to choose abortion, contraception, and work, and for equality for women and against the rise of the "new moral order." The demonstration was called by the Coordinated Association for the Right to Abortion and Contraception (CADAC), and by more than 140 political, union, and community organizations.

This was the first such strong mobilization since abortion was legalized in France 20 years ago. It reflected growing concerns by working people and youth in face of increased attacks against women's rights.

Groups with links to the "pro-life" movement in the United States, the Vatican, and the far right in France have organized more than 100 actions some violent against abortion clinics or medical personnel performing voluntary interruption of pregnancy (IVG).

In January of this year, 8,000 people

demonstrated against IVG with the support of bourgeois politicians.

On November 25, some 100 rightists participated in a counterdemonstration at the Bastille under the protection of the riot police (CRS), singing canticles in Latin and chanting, "Abortion is murder."

Among the demands put forward by the November 25 pro-abortion rights action was increased government funding for contraception and IVG centers. The lack of sufficient resources forces 5,000 women every year to travel to other countries to get an abortion because they have exceeded the legal limit of 10 weeks into pregnancy.

Demonstrators also demanded equal rights for women, most of which, even if formally recognized, are not applied in practice. Women are discriminated against on the job market. They are proportionally hit harder by high unemployment, part-time, and seasonal jobs. Women's average wage still represents only 80 percent of that of men doing the same job.

*Nathalie Camier is a student at Paris VIII University at St. Denis and is currently on strike.*



# Building a Party of Communist Workers

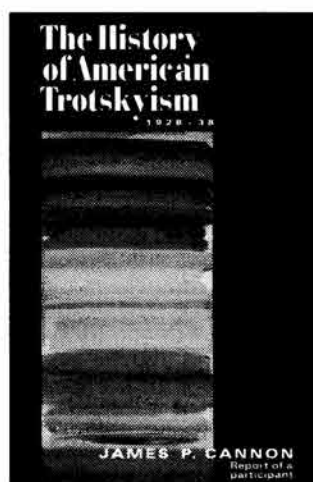
## Struggles that Forged the Socialist Workers Party

BY JAMES P. CANNON

A traveling organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World before and during World War I and a leader of the working-class left wing of the Socialist Party, Cannon became a central leader of the Communist Party of the United States following the Russian revolution in 1917. He was expelled from the Communist Party in 1928. Cannon collaborated with Leon Trotsky, a central leader of the Bolshevik Party in the early years of the Russian revolution, in fighting to maintain the communist course of V.I. Lenin in face of the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union led by Joseph Stalin. A founding leader of the Socialist Workers Party, Cannon served as SWP national secretary until 1954 and was national chairman emeritus at his death in 1974.

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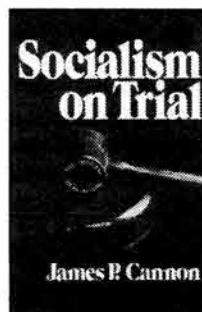
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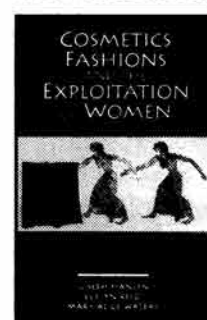
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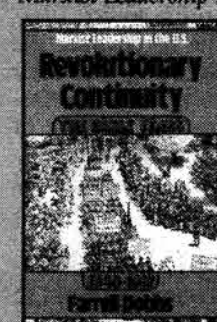


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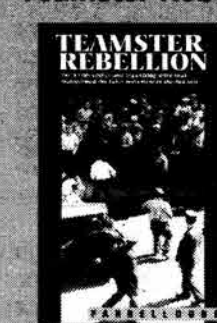
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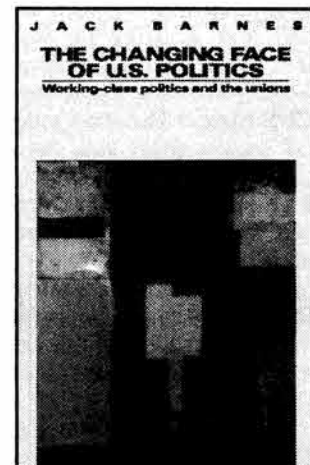
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# The 'New York Times,' Che Guevara, and the Cuban revolution: a further exchange

BY STEVE CLARK

"A popular method always used by the bourgeois press in every country with unerring effect," wrote Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin in 1917, "is to lie, scream, raise a hullabaloo, and keep on reiterating lies on the off-chance that 'something may stick.'"

Last week's issue of the *Militant* printed in full a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* by Mary-Alice Waters rebutting an article aimed at perpetuating one such lie: that a deep political division existed between Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara. Waters was replying to "Mysteries of Bolivia: The Revised Che Guevara" by Thomas H. Lipscomb, which the editors of the *New York Times* had featured prominently in the November 26 issue of the Sunday "Week in Review." The *Militant* also reproduced the abridged version of Waters's letter that had been run in the December 2 issue of the *Times*.

Among other unsubstantiated claims published by the *Times* and challenged by Waters, she answered Lipscomb's assertion that "the Bolivian Army officer who captured Guevara, Capt. Gary Prado Salmon, has stated that Guevara said Castro failed him at a crucial time." As run in the *Times*, Waters's reply stated: "Mr. Lipscomb cites no source. Prado did write an account of his supposed conversation with Guevara in his 1987 book, 'How I Captured Che.'<sup>1</sup> But nowhere does Prado say anything even vaguely similar to what Mr. Lipscomb claims."

## Hearsay as a source

Several days later, the *Times* unearthed a "source" — Daniel M. Collier, who describes himself as "the co-author of a book on revolution." Collier's corroboration of Lipscomb's account was run by the *Times*, under the heading "Guevara's last words," in the letters column of its December 8 issue. It is useful to quote the letter in full:

In her Dec. 2 letter, Mary Alice Waters disputes Thomas H. Lipscomb's account (Week in Review, Nov. 26) of Che Guevara's statement to Capt. Gary Prado Salmon, the Bolivian Army officer who captured Guevara. Ms. Waters is wrong.

In 1981, Prado was shot in the back

while putting down a right-wing Falangist takeover attempt at an Occidental Petroleum site in Bolivia. He was sent to the Rusk Institute in New York for evaluation and therapy for an injury that left him paralyzed below the waist.

Knowing my interest in military history, a friend asked me to drop in on Prado at the Rusk Institute. I did so on several occasions in September and October 1981.

While we spoke about many subjects during these visits, Prado's account of Guevara's surrender and his conversation with him before Guevara's execution were of considerable interest to me because I'm the co-author of a book on revolution.

Prado told me Guevara had said that Fidel Castro not only failed him on the Bolivian campaign but also probably betrayed him.

Although Gary Prado Salmon may always be best known as the man who captured Che Guevara, I never had the impression that Prado considered this event the centerpiece of his life.

Prado's statement regarding Guevara's final thoughts about his relationship with Castro is an important historical account and should be a useful antidote to romanticized views of the Cuban Bolivia fiasco of 1966-67.

Far from presenting "an important historical account," Colliers adds nothing more than hearsay. Like Lipscomb before him, this expert on revolution and volunteer bedside counselor fails to explain two things.

First, why would Guevara have discussed such matters at length with Prado, an officer of the Bolivian dictatorship carrying out an operation directly organized by the CIA? Such conduct is out of character for any revolutionary cadre, much less a leader with the combat and political experience of Ernesto Che Guevara.

## Nothing in writing

Second, why would Gary Prado — who wrote an entire book on these events in order to line his pockets — have left out the most sensational selling point?

In a portion of her letter not run in the *Times*, Waters pointed out that "in his preface to the book, Prado says: 'There are no sensational revelations here, rather a series of small details.'" The revelation that Guevara told his Bolivian captors that Fidel Castro "had not only failed him... but probably betrayed him" hardly counts as a small detail.

As Waters explained, Prado presents an eight-page account of his alleged final conversation with Guevara that contains nothing whatever along these lines. "That same night and over the next few days," Prado explains in the 1987 book, "I reconstructed the dialogue in my campaign diary so as not to forget it. I transcribe it now with practically the same words that were used. This is neither a fictionalized version of reality nor a pure invention."

Prado's book, as Waters stated in her letter to the editor, "is hardly a reliable account, of course, since the other party in the alleged exchange was murdered by Prado's cohorts the next day."

Prado himself, nonetheless, contends his account is not only the truth but the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Why, then, would he have told a visitor in a New York hospital room a spectacular tale he never tried to sell to a book agent or publisher?

## Bay of Pigs, 'October Crisis'

An even better question is: Why can the *Times* find no stronger defense for Lipscomb's unsubstantiated article than third-hand gossip?

One possible explanation was given in last week's *Militant* in an article commenting on the political character of the abridgment of Waters's letter by the *Times*. "Any reader of the *Militant* who doubts that the editors of the *New York Times* might falsify events about the Cuban revolution," I wrote in that article,



In a July 3, 1968, televised broadcast, Fidel Castro answered charges that the Cuban edition of Guevara's Bolivian diary was a fabrication. Above Castro displays photograph of Bolivian generals celebrating Che Guevara's murder. Recent articles in *New York Times* attempt to perpetrate myth of political division between Castro and Guevara.

"can refer to the documented record of at least two instances: the 1961 U.S.-backed invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, and the October 1962 'missile crisis.'"

Coincidentally, on the very day that issue of the *Militant* was printed, a front-page obituary appeared in the *Times* of James Reston, the paper's former Washington bureau chief and executive editor. Reston was a central figure in both these events.

In the obituary, the *Times* reviewed what it called the "two Cuba episodes," which had become publicly known later in the 1960s. Here is how the *Times* told the stories:

In the spring of 1961, The *Times* was preparing to publish an article by Tad Szulc reporting that 5,000 or 6,000 Cuban exiles who had been training in the United States and in Central America for nine months were about to launch an invasion of Cuba to overthrow the regime of Fidel Castro.

The article was planned for page 1 on April 7, under a four-column headline. But Orvil Dryfoos, then the publisher, was troubled by the security implications of the report. On April 6, he and Mr. [Turner] Catledge, then managing editor, telephoned Mr. Reston, who advised them not to publish the article and cautioned against giving away the proposed timing of the landing as "imminent."

The article was published on April 7 under a one-column headline and with no mention of the invasion's date. The Bay of Pigs invasion took place 10 days later and ended in debacle. President John F. Kennedy, who took full responsibility, said that if The *Times* had pub-

lished more about the operation, it might have saved the Administration from making such a colossal mistake.

"If I had it to do over, I would do exactly what we did at the time," Mr. Reston said later. "It is ridiculous to think that publishing the fact that the invasion was imminent would have avoided this disaster."

In 1962, Mr. Reston was apparently the only reporter who had found out that the Soviet Union, then under the leadership of Nikita S. Khrushchev, had secreted nuclear missiles in Cuba only 90 miles from Florida. When Kennedy realized that Mr. Reston had the information, he telephoned him directly.

Four years later, Mr. Reston recounted the incident to E. Clifton Daniel, then managing editor of The *Times*.

"The President told me that he was going on television on Monday evening to report to the American people," Mr. Reston recalled. "He said that if we published the news about the missiles, Khrushchev could actually give him an ultimatum before he went on the air."

"I told the President I would report to my office in New York," Mr. Reston continued. "And if my advice was asked, I would recommend that we not publish. It was not my duty to decide."

Kennedy then called Mr. Dryfoos, the publisher, and asked him not to print Mr. Reston's article. Mr. Dryfoos left the matter up to Mr. Reston and his staff, and the article was withheld.

We can leave aside Kennedy's apocryphal regrets about the falsification of the Bay of Pigs article. And it takes immense gullibility to believe that the Kennedy administration and publisher of the *Times* "left the matter up to" the Washington bureau chief to decide whether or not to run the missile crisis story.

But the most illuminating aspect of the story in the *Times* is its matter-of-fact presentation. The editors expect their readership to understand that this is simply responsible journalism. Their obligation is to defend the class interests of the U.S. rulers on matters of deep-going bipartisan agreement.

And to this day, there are few questions on which there is as broad a consensus on Wall Street and in Washington as the need to overturn the first and, so far, only socialist revolution in the Americas.

<sup>1</sup> Prado's 1987 book, *Como capturé al Che*, was released to take advantage of publicity around the 20th anniversary of Guevara's death. The book was published in English translation in 1990 by Praeger under the title, *The Defeat of Che Guevara: Military Response to Guerrilla Challenge in Bolivia*.

## —CALENDAR—

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### MARCH AND RALLY IN BOSTON TO DEFEND ABORTION RIGHTS

Saturday, December 30

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**Assemble at 12:30 p.m.**  
Boylston and Tremont Street.

**March: 1:00 p.m.**

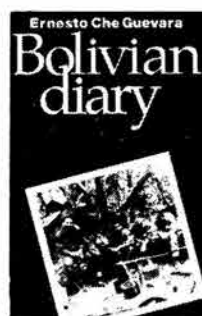
**Rally: 2:00 p.m.**

**at Arlington Street Church,  
351 Boylston Street.**

**Speakers:** David Gunn Jr., whose father, Dr. David Gunn, was killed outside a clinic in Florida; author Marge Piercy; poet Rosario Morales and others.

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# Che Guevara describes 'baptism of fire'

Excerpt from new edition of 'Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War'

The following are excerpts from *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War — 1956-58* by Ernesto Che Guevara. The book was written as a series of articles that appeared in *Verde Olivo* (Olive Drab), the weekly publication of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba. The first article, on the battle of Alegria del Pio, was published in February 1961. It is published below along with the author's introduction. The last article in the *Verde Olivo* series appeared in 1964.

Early next year Pathfinder Press will release a new edition of the *Episodes*, including material previously not available in English. These excerpts are copyright © Pathfinder Press and are reprinted by permission.

BY ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

For a long time we have considered how to write a history of our revolution that would encompass all its many facets and aspects. The leaders of the revolution have often privately or publicly expressed their desire to write such a history, but the tasks are many, the years pass, and the memory of the insurrectional struggle is dissolving into the past. We have not yet clearly set down these events, which already belong to the history of the Americas.

For this reason I am beginning a series of personal reminiscences of the attacks, skirmishes, and battles in which I participated. It is not my intention that this fragmentary history, based on remembrances and a few notes, should be taken as a full account. On the contrary, I hope that all those who lived through these events will develop them further.

The fact that I personally was limited to the fighting at a given point on the map of Cuba during the entire struggle prevented me from participating in battles and events in other places. I believe that to make our revolutionary actions understandable and to do so in an orderly manner, I can best begin with the first battle, the only one Fidel participated in that went against our forces: the surprise attack at Alegria del Pio.

There are many survivors of this battle and each of them is encouraged to contribute his recollections so that the story may be filled out. I ask only that the narrator be strictly truthful. He should not present any inaccuracy in order to clarify his own role, exaggerate it, or claim to have been where he was not. I ask that after writing a few pages to the best of one's ability, in line with one's education and disposition, the author then criticize them as thoroughly as possible in order to remove every word that does not stick to the absolute facts, or in which the author is not fully certain. With this aim I begin my recollections.

[Published in *Verde Olivo*, February 26, 1961]



Student demonstration against Batista dictatorship at University of Havana Nov. 27, 1956, as *Granma* carrying Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and other revolutionaries was en route to Cuba.

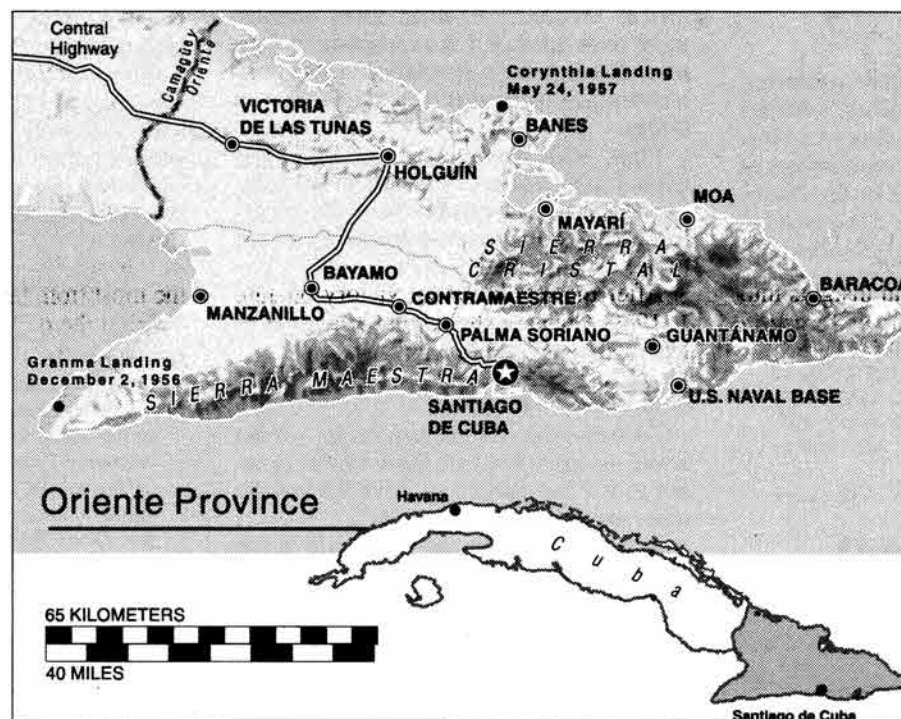
## Alegria del Pio

Alegria del Pio is a place in Oriente province, Niquero municipality, near Cabo Cruz. There, on December 5, 1956, the dictatorship's forces took us by surprise.

We were exhausted from a trek not long so much as painful. We had landed on December 2, at a place known as Las Colomadas beach. We had lost almost all our equipment, and with new boots we had trudged for endless hours through saltwater marshes. As a result, almost the entire troop was suffering from open blisters on their feet. But boots and fungus infections were not our only enemies. We had reached Cuba following a seven-day voyage across the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, without food, in a boat in poor condition, with almost everyone plagued by seasickness, unaccustomed to sea travel as we were. We had left the port of Tuxpan November 25, a day when a stiff northern gale was blowing and any navigation was impossible. All this had left its mark upon our troop made up of novices who had never seen combat.

All that was left of our war equipment was our rifles, cartridge belts, and a few wet rounds of ammunition. Our medical supplies had disappeared, and most of our knapsacks had been left behind in the swamps. The previous night we had

passed through one of the canefields of the Niquero sugar company, owned by Julio Lobo at the time. We had managed to satisfy our hunger and thirst by eating sugarcane, but due to our lack of experience we had left a trail of cane peelings and bagasse all over the place. Not that the soldiers looking for us needed any trail to follow our steps, for it had been our



Courtesy Pathfinder Press

guide—as we found out years later—who had betrayed us and brought them there. We had let him go the night before—an error we were to repeat several times during our long struggle until we learned that civilians whose backgrounds were unknown to us had to be closely watched in dangerous areas. We should never have permitted our false guide to leave.

By daybreak on December 5 hardly anyone could go a step further. On the verge of collapse, the men would walk a short distance and then beg for a long rest. Because of this, orders were given to halt at the edge of a canefield, in a thicket close to the dense woods. Most of us slept through the morning hours.

At noon we began to notice unusual signs of activity. Piper planes as well as other types of small army planes together with private aircraft began to circle overhead. Some of our group went on peacefully cutting and eating sugarcane without realizing they were perfectly visible from the enemy planes, which were circling slowly at low altitudes. I was troop physician at the time, and it was my duty to treat the blistered feet. I recall my last patient that morning: his name was Humberto Lamothe and it was to be his last day on earth. I still remember how tired and worn-out he looked as he walked from my improvised first-aid station to his post, still carrying in his hand the shoes he could not wear.

Comrade Montané and I were leaning against a tree talking about our respective children, eating our meager rations—half a sausage and two crackers—when we heard a shot. Within seconds, a hail of bullets—at least that's the way it seemed to our sagging spirits during that baptism of fire—descended upon our eighty-two-man troop. My rifle was not one of the best; I had deliberately asked for it because I was in very poor physical condition due to an attack of asthma that had bothered me throughout our ocean voyage and I did not want to be responsible for wasting a good weapon.

I can hardly remember the sequence of events. I recall that Almeida, then a captain, came beside me to get orders, but there was nobody there to issue them. Later I learned that Fidel had tried vainly to get everybody together into the adjoining canefield, which could be reached by simply crossing a path.

The surprise had been too great and the gunfire had been too heavy. Almeida went back to take charge of his group. At that moment a comrade dropped a box of ammunition almost at my feet. I pointed to it, and he answered me with an anguished expression, which I remember perfectly, that seemed to say "It's too late for ammunition boxes," and immediately went toward the canefield. (He was murdered by Batista's henchmen some time later.)

Perhaps this was the first time I was faced in real life with the dilemma of choosing between my devotion to medicine and my duty as a revolutionary soldier. There, at my feet, were a knapsack full of medicine and a box of ammunition. I couldn't possibly carry them both; they were too heavy. I picked up the box of ammunition, leaving the medicine, and started to cross the clearing, heading for the canefield. I clearly remember Faustino Pérez, kneeling and firing his submachine gun. Near me, a comrade named Albentosa was walking toward

the canefield. A burst of gunfire hit us both. I felt a sharp blow to my chest and a wound in my neck, and I thought for certain I was dead. Albentosa, spewing blood from his nose and mouth and from a deep wound made by a .45-caliber bullet, shouted something like, "They've killed me!" and began to wildly fire his rifle at no one in particular. Flat on the ground I turned to Faustino, saying, "I'm hit!"—only I used a stronger word—and Faustino, still firing away, looked at me and said it was nothing, but I could read in his eyes that he considered me as good as dead.

Still on the ground, I fired a shot in the direction of the woods, following an impulse similar to that of the other wounded man. Immediately, I began to think about the best way to die, since all seemed lost. I recalled an old Jack London story where the hero, aware that he is bound to freeze to death in the wastes of Alaska, leans calmly against a tree and prepares to die in a dignified manner. That was the only thing that came to my mind at that moment.

Someone on his knees shouted that we had better surrender, and I heard a voice—later I found out it was Camilo Cienfuegos—shouting: "Nobody surrenders here!" followed by a four-letter word. Ponce approached me, agitated and breathing hard, and showed me a bullet wound, apparently through his lungs. He

for further reading

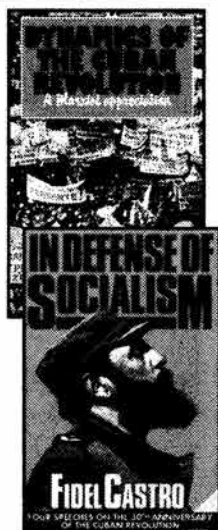
## Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution

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January 1957 march in Santiago de Cuba protesting repression that followed *Granma* landing. Sign reads, "Stop the murder of our children. Cuban mothers."

said, "I'm wounded," and I replied indifferently, "Me too." Then Ponce, and other comrades who were still unhurt, crawled toward the canefield. For a moment I was left alone, just lying there waiting to die.

Almeida approached, urging me on, and despite the intense pain I dragged myself into the canefield. There next to a tree I saw Comrade Raúl Suárez, whose thumb had been blown away by a bullet, being



*Granma*  
Batista's troops pursue the revolutionaries in Niquero municipality, December 1956.

attended by Faustino Pérez, who was bandaging his hand. Then everything became a blur, as low-flying planes strafed the field.

This only added to the confusion, with scenes ranging from the Dantesque to the grotesque—such as a comrade of considerable corpulence desperately trying to hide behind a single stalk of sugarcane, while in the midst of the din of gunfire another man kept on yelling "Silence!" for no apparent reason.

A group was organized, headed by Almeida, including Lt. Ramiro Valdés, today a commander, and comrades Chao and Benítez. With Almeida leading the way, we crossed the last path among the rows of cane and reached the safety of the

woods. The first shouts of "Fire!" were then heard in the canefield and columns of flame and smoke began to rise. I cannot say this for certain, however, since I was thinking more of the bitterness of defeat and the imminence of my death than of the events that were occurring. We walked until the darkness of night made it difficult to go on, and we decided to sleep, all huddled together in a heap. We were starving and thirsty, and the mosquitoes added to our misery.

This was our baptism of fire on December 5, 1956, on the outskirts of Niquero. Such was the beginning of forging what would become the Rebel Army.

[Published in *Verde Olivo*, February 26, 1961]

## Guevara's 'Episodes' to be available early 1996

BY GREG McCARTAN

Pathfinder Press announced on December 7 that its new English-language edition of *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War, 1956-58*, by Ernesto Che Guevara, will be available in early 1996.

This book provides crucial insights into how a communist vanguard was forged in Cuba, one that has continued to lead working people in the fight for socialism over the past 35 years. It helps show why Cuba remains at the center of world politics, and why the Cuban people continue to fight to maintain their independence and socialist revolution. *Episodes* was first written by Guevara as a series of articles for the Cuban Armed Forces magazine *Verde Olivo*, beginning in February 1961.

Guevara takes the story from the organization in Mexico of an initial cadre of fighters led by Fidel Castro who took the boat *Granma* to Cuba to initiate the armed struggle to overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship, to the military battles and political campaigns through which Guevara and other combatants in the Rebel Army were transformed by their experiences and forged into a tested leadership of working people. He describes the growth in the countryside and cities of the revolutionary movement that toppled the dictatorship by a mass armed insurrection.

*Episodes* is a careful account of "personal reminiscences of the attacks, skirmishes, and battles in which I participated," as Guevara puts it in his prologue to the series, reprinted above. Engagingly written, it draws the reader into the deep popular roots of the Cuban revolution.

Guevara was born in Argentina and traveled extensively through the Americas, ending up in Guatemala in late 1953. He was drawn there by the popular upsurge that accompanied the limited land reform program being advanced by the government of Jacobo Arbenz. This threatened major corporations such as the United Fruit Company—one of the large U.S.-owned corporations with extensive landholdings—and Washington organized a mercenary army to topple the Arbenz regime. Guevara involved himself in the political struggle to oppose the CIA's eventually successful attempts to overthrow the Arbenz government.

Forced to leave Guatemala, Guevara escaped to Mexico in September 1954. The following August he met Fidel Castro, who selected Guevara as one of the first members of the force organized by the

Cuban July 26 Movement to overthrow the Batista dictatorship. "I remember that our first discussion was about international politics," Guevara writes. "Within a few hours—by dawn—I was one of the future expeditionaries."

After the revolutionary victory on Jan. 1, 1959, Guevara shouldered a number of responsibilities in the new government. He frequently represented Cuba internationally, including at the United Nations and other world forums. Guevara served as head of the national bank and minister of industry, in which his practical work, writings, and speeches serve as enduring contributions to the connection between economics and politics in the construction of socialism.

Chapter titles of *Episodes* give a good sampling of the scope of the narrative: "A Revolution Begins"; "Surprise Attack at Altos de Espinosa"; "Bitter Days"; "Reinforcements"; "Caring for the Wounded"; "The Struggle Against Banditry"; "War and the Peasant Population";

and "From Batista's Final Offensive to the Battle of Santa Clara."

This edition of the book, the first in English to carry the complete *Verde Olivo* series written by Guevara, contains a wealth of information to aid the reader in getting the most from the account.

From the original series and from careful reconstruction by the Cuban Armed Forces, the Pathfinder edition presents a wealth of maps and battle sketches to enable the reader to trace the progress of the most important military events. A full 32 pages of photos will be included in the book, bringing to life scenes from the revolutionary war, protests and strikes in the cities, the brutality of the Batista regime, and the mass character of the struggle.

A chronology presents the major political turning points in the revolutionary struggle, from protests in the 1940s through the triumph of the revolution on New Year's Day, 1959. It gives a broad sweep of the protests and mobilizations out of which the revolutionary movement

organized by Castro emerges, and of the battles, uprisings, strikes, and other events from the landing of the *Granma* to the entry of the rebel forces into Havana.

A number of items appear in the Pathfinder edition for the first time in English. A detailed and well-researched glossary of names, places, and organizations provides an invaluable resource for readers delving into the text.

Additional sections contain letters, reports, and other documents written by Guevara, including "Portraits of Revolutionaries" and Military Order No. 1 on the agrarian reform in Las Villas province. Design of the book cover, photo insert, and maps make the book attractive and the wealth of information accessible.

The book is edited by Mary-Alice Waters, editor of the Marxist magazine *New International*, who provides a political introduction to the *Episodes*. Waters is also editor of the new Pathfinder edition of *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara*, published in 1994.

Coming soon  
from  
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### Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War, 1956-58

Ernesto Che Guevara

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*Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War* is a firsthand account of the military battles and political campaigns that culminated in the January 1959 mass armed insurrection that overthrew the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship.

Guevara's *Episodes* shows how he and other Rebel Army combatants were transformed by their experiences into battle-tested leaders of working people in Cuba.

Writing with clarity and humor, he shows how the revolution's social program emerged out of deepening class-struggle experience by workers and peasants themselves. He explains how the Rebel Army and July 26 Movement grew into a movement capable of leading millions to carry through a socialist revolution in the years after the 1959 victory.

Guevara's *Episodes* appears here complete for the first time in English. This new edition contains letters and other documents written by Guevara during the war. With an introduction by Mary-Alice Waters.

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# Reprints of socialist books hit the press

Pathfinder, located in New York with distributors in Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, publishes books and pamphlets by revolutionary and working-class leaders. Pathfinder bookstores are listed in the directory on page 12.

draw together the experiences and lessons of the Chicano movement in the United States over the previous decade. Members of the SWP and Young Socialist Alliance were centrally involved in the battles for Chicano liberation and working-class struggles such as those to build the United



## PATHFINDER AROUND THE WORLD

By Greg McCartan

Three Pathfinder titles are being reprinted in December with substantial improvements. *The Revolution Betrayed* and the *Communist Manifesto* will feature new covers, and the *Manifesto* and *The Politics of Chicano Liberation* have new type and internal design.

These reprints come just prior to the release of *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War, 1956-58*, by Ernesto Che Guevara. Special promotional material for this new book will be featured throughout December in the *Militant*, in mailings to Pathfinder supporters, and in press releases and information sent to book industry magazines.

Supporters of Pathfinder can make plans to utilize these attractive reprints to increase sales from Pathfinder bookstores, to retail outlets and libraries, on literature tables, and elsewhere. They provide a good opportunity to increase membership in the Pathfinder Readers Club as well, since special offers on these books amount to a substantial savings for workers and young fighters seeking to build up their libraries of revolutionary literature.

Newly back in print is *The Politics of Chicano Liberation*, the preface to which is reprinted in this issue of the *Militant*.

Edited by Olga Rodriguez, the book features reports and resolutions of the Socialist Workers Party in the 1970s that

Farm Workers union.

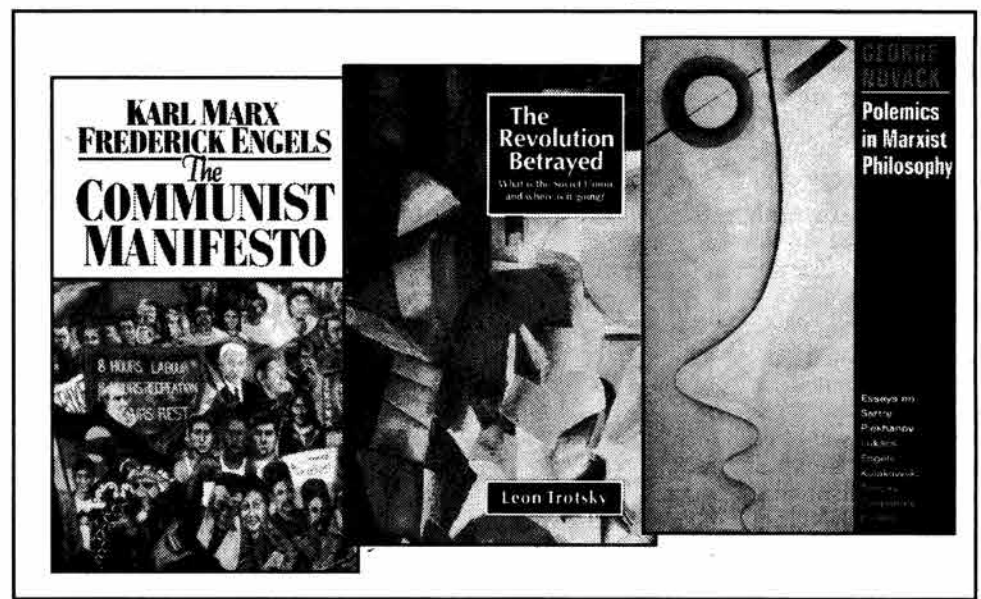
Many fighting to defend affirmative action, to oppose the anti-immigrant measure Proposition 187, and to build the labor movement will find the history and the lessons in the book invaluable for advancing today's struggles.

The book will be available December 21. A 25 percent discount off the \$15.95 retail price is available to members of the Readers Club.

One of Pathfinder's best-selling titles, the *Communist Manifesto*, is now available in an attractive new format. The cover features a detail of the Pathfinder Mural in New York and was designed by Toni Gorton.

Written by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in 1847 as the program of the first modern communist workers organization, the *Manifesto* presents in bold, scientific, and straightforward language why communism, to the degree it is a theory, is the generalization of the historical line of march of the working class, and of the political conditions for its liberation.

Thousands of Pathfinder's edition of the *Manifesto* are sold each year off literature tables at protest meetings and strikes, to people visiting Pathfinder bookstores, and to university bookstores for use in college classrooms. Supporters of Pathfinder can visit colleges in their area to show appro-



New covers for the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels; *The Revolution Betrayed* by Leon Trotsky; and *Polemics in Marxist Philosophy* by George Novack will enhance Pathfinder's revolutionary arsenal.

priate professors the new pamphlet and encourage them to order it for their class use.

Now 68 pages and with a more durable cover, the *Manifesto* sells for \$3.95.

Coming off the press in early December will be *The Revolution Betrayed*, a classic work of Marxism by Leon Trotsky. Trotsky was a central leader of the 1917 revolution in Russia, one of the most deep-going revolutions in history, and of the Bolshevik Party and Communist International during the early years of the Soviet Republic. Following Lenin's death in 1924, Trotsky was the principal leader of the international struggle to continue Lenin's communist course.

In this book Trotsky examines the social, political, and economic impact of the counterrevolution organized during the mid- to late 1920s by the privileged bureaucratic caste headed by Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union, and why and how that

layer was able to take and hold political power. It is essential reading in gaining an insight into the crisis shaking the countries of the former Soviet Union today.

This printing features a new color cover designed by Eric Simpson.

Pathfinder also has a 25 percent-off special offer available until January 1 to members of the Readers Club on the newly reprinted *Polemics in Marxist Philosophy*, by George Novack. Regularly \$19.95, the special offer price is \$14.95.

In this book Novack defends scientific socialism as an essential tool working people have to advance the fight for a world based on cooperative labor and human solidarity. Novack takes on those in the 20th century who, parading as the true interpreters of Marx, have provided a "philosophical" veneer for the anti-working-class political course of Stalinist and social democratic misleaderships around the world.

## A working-class program for Chicano liberation

Printed below is the new preface to *The Politics of Chicano Liberation*. The book is being re-issued by Pathfinder Press this month. The preface is copyright © Pathfinder Press and is reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY OLGA RODRIGUEZ

*The Politics of Chicano Liberation*, first published nearly twenty years ago, presents a working-class program in the fight for Chicano liberation. The book is based on reports and resolutions that draw on decades of experience in the fight to defend the rights of immigrant workers, including the concrete experiences of members of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance who participated in the battles for equality and self-determination the Chicano people fought in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The perspectives put forward were a contribution to discussions among Chicanos on how to confront the new challenges opened by the employers' offensive during the 1974-75 recession.

The lessons of those battles are also valuable today as working people and youth mount resistance to new assaults,

such as the spirited and determined marches against the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in California. The struggles covered in this volume that a new generation of fighters will find invaluable include the battles to unionize the mainly Chicano and Mexican farmworkers from California to Ohio, to defend undocumented immigrant workers from deportation, and to extend civil and trade union rights to this section of the working class in the United States.

### Chicano Moratorium

Also richly documented are the Chicano Moratorium against the U.S. imperialist slaughter in Vietnam and the disproportionate numbers of Chicano youth dying in that war, the fight for bilingual-bicultural education and affirmative action in hiring and in education, and the initial thrust toward independent political action of the working class and the oppressed, signified by the emergence of the independent Chicano political formations, the Raza Unida parties, that began to challenge the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties' stranglehold over politics.

At the time the first edition was printed in 1977, the offensive by the wealthy owners of big business against labor began to intensify. As the 1976 resolution "The Crisis of Capitalism and the Struggle for Chicano Liberation" notes, with the onset of a long-term and irreversible period of economic stagnation, the capitalist rulers would more and more seek to shift a disproportionate burden of their crisis onto workers, especially those from oppressed nationalities. This, the resolution said, will be "felt with particular acuteness in three areas, each of which has already generated important struggles: the fight for jobs and against discriminatory hiring and layoff practices; the fight against deportations and racist immigration policies; and the fight for an equal education, and bilingual-bicultural education."

These and other trends noted in the book have become permanent features of social, political, and economic life in the 1990s. The fight for Chicano liberation to-

day is a fight to defend the basic rights and other conquests that Chicanos and the working class as a whole won in the struggles of late 1960s and early 1970s, in order to prepare for bigger struggles as the worldwide imperialist crisis takes on harsher and more devastating proportions.

### Fight for immigrant rights

The documents in this volume can be of particular value to those who joined protests last year against Proposition 187, a chauvinist measure that would deny undocumented workers and their children access to public education, health care, and other social services. For many among the seventy thousand students, other youth, and workers who took to the streets of Los Angeles in October 1994—and among the tens of thousands of students who walked out of their classes across California a month later—the actions were their first jolt into politics.

Chicano workers and youth played a leading role in that fight because of the dual character of the oppression Chicanos suffer: discriminated against as a people because of race, culture, and language, and exploited as wage workers, because the Chicano nationality is substantially working class in its composition. The identity between Chicanos and their Mexican brothers and sisters is deep on both sides of the border. It is this that helps to impel Chicanos into the vanguard of the actions in solidarity with workers who emigrate to the imperialist centers.

The nationalist "America first" campaign has become a central theme of Democratic and Republican party politicians alike. They hope to shift the blame for the deep-going crisis of capitalism away from the wealthy minority and onto the most vulnerable sections of the working class in the United States, including undocumented immigrant workers. For the U.S. labor movement, rejecting this chauvinist, divide-and-conquer approach must become a central issue if it is to take on the ongoing employer assault on the rights, wages, and living standards of working people in the United States.

Indeed, the scapegoating of immigrant

workers is a worldwide phenomenon from Bonn to Tokyo, Melbourne to Paris, Ottawa to Athens. This sharply poses the need for independent, working-class solidarity and political action on a world scale—not the narrow nationalist, xenophobic, and chauvinist measures that the politicians of the imperialist ruling classes are pressing.

### Borders begin to break down

The growing parasitism and volatility of capitalism in crisis means that the near collapse of the Mexican economy in December 1994 and its devastating impact on working people will be repeated, in varying forms, in country after country dominated by imperialism. And that means that more and more workers and farmers from Latin America, Asia, and Africa will be driven to cross the borders into the imperialist centers in search of jobs and a life for their families.

The fighting spirit of the workers and youth who took part in the protests against Proposition 187 helps to break down the borders erected by imperial capitalism that separate us from our class brothers and sisters around the world. Just as the growing numbers of Chicano, Mexicano, and other immigrant workers in the industrial working class and trade unions strengthen the U.S. labor movement, so too, the influx of immigration into the imperialist centers around the world adds to the potential power, unity, and revolutionary capacities of the working class worldwide.

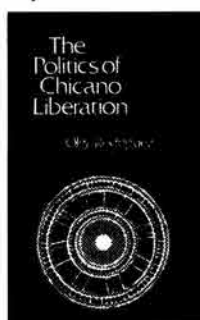
The lessons of the battles fought by the Chicano and Mexican peoples contained in this book, together with Pathfinder's *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*, can help contribute to a deeper understanding among the generations of working-class fighters coming forward today. They can learn how the oppressed and exploited, rejecting the role of powerless "victim" that capitalism tries to consign them to, can move to center stage to mount a revolutionary struggle in which workers and youth will take their destiny into their own hands.

August 17, 1995

## The Politics of Chicano Liberation

Edited by  
Olga Rodriguez

The rise of the Chicano movement in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s: from the United Farm Workers organizing drive and the Chicano Moratorium against the Vietnam War to the emergence of La Raza Unida Party and the fight against deportations. \$13.95



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# Kmart workers fight for union contract

BY JOAN PALTRINERI  
AND PETER THIEJUNG

GREENSBORO, North Carolina — Members of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) from several southeastern states joined workers from the Kmart Distribution Center here and local supporters in a December 2 protest to press the fight for a union contract.

More than 1,000 people filled the Dudley High School gym in a rally to kick off the day. The media reported that as many as 1,700 participated. From the school, participants were bused to a protest at the local Super Kmart and then to a closing rally at the distribution center's gates.

Buses of UNITE members came from textile mills and plants in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and from across North Carolina. Several contingents of workers involved in struggles for union recognition participated.

Workers, union officials, and union staff came from Tultex in Martinsville, Virginia, where a 17-year fight involving five organizing drives culminated last spring with a contract. Workers from Healthtex in Georgia and Virginia who conducted a successful one-week strike last year turned out. A group from the newly organized Levi-Strauss plant in Valdosta, Georgia, attended. So did some 30 workers from the Chipman Union plant, also in Georgia, where workers have been in a long fight for a contract and have participated in community protests against racism. A few workers from a Virginia garment plant came to learn about the Kmart fight as part of deciding whether to launch a union organizing drive of their own.

Representatives and members of the postal workers unions; Bakery, Confectionery, and Tobacco Workers union; and Communication Workers of America joined the protest. Bruce Raynor and Edgar Romney, executive vice presidents of UNITE; William Lucy from the national Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Richard Womack, director of Civil Rights for the AFL-CIO; and Richard Koritz, secretary of the Triad Central Labor Council, addressed the opening rally.

## The slave mentality must end

"Kmart workers are tired of being harassed, intimidated, and terminated," Deborah Holt told the rally to a standing ovation. "There's something wrong with a society when people work 40 to 60 hours per week and still can't put food on the table." Workers in the South are paid "slave wages" and "it's time to let the Fortune 500 companies know the slave mentality must end," she said.

Kmart, like many other companies, has located in North Carolina due to low labor costs. The state now has the highest percentage of manufacturing jobs in the country, and is second only to South Carolina in having the least unionized workforce. Only 5.2 percent of workers are organized, one-third the national average.

Many workers in Greensboro have firsthand experience with Kmart's low wages and difficult working conditions. Holt, who is one of more than 550 employees at the distribution center, explained that more than 2,000 workers have left Kmart or have been fired since 1992, when the facility opened.

Workers start at \$6.75 an hour and top wage is \$8.50, regardless of the number of years in the plant. Kmart pays much higher wages at its other distribution centers across the country. Kmart employees in Newman, Georgia, for example, make \$14 an hour, according to union officials. The union is demanding wage parity for the Greensboro workforce and an increase in paid holidays and sick days.

## Local boycott launched

Kmart claims that the low wages are based on the lower cost of living in North Carolina, an assertion workers dispute. Statistics from the American Chamber of Commerce Research Association confirm workers' contentions that the cost of living is similar to areas where several other distribution centers are located. Kmart wages in those areas on average are 52 percent higher than the pay received by Greensboro workers.

Rev. William Wright, Rev. Gregory



Militant/Floyd Fowler

Members of UNITE, other unionists, and supporters rally Dec. 2 in Greensboro.

Headen, and Rev. Nelson Johnson, longtime supporters of the fight by Kmart workers, addressed the rally. They are prominent members of the Pulpit Forum, a group of ministers primarily from the Black community who joined with the workers on November 24 to begin a holiday season boycott of the three Kmart stores. Kmart has 2,167 stores in the United States and 147 in other countries.

Union officials filed charges October 25 against the company with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The charges assert that Kmart discriminates against its predominantly African-American workforce. Union spokespeople allege the company's low wages are racially motivated.

On November 14, ministers from the Pulpit Forum held a press conference at the Woolworth store where 35 years ago

Black students launched a historic sit-in at the lunch counter to protest Jim Crow racial segregation. The ministers gave Kmart a seven-day deadline to negotiate an agreement with UNITE or face a boycott, but the company did not meet their demands. Ministers have told congregations about the contract fight during sermons, often to the enthusiastic response of those present.

## Union ranks reach out

Workers at the distribution center have pressed for the boycott as a way to win support. For the last several months, the union ranks have turned to the community and found a reservoir of support.

A contingent of 100 Kmart unionists was prominent at the September 23 "1,000 Black Man March" here. More than a dozen workers carried a banner about their

struggle at the October 16 Million Man March in Washington, D.C.

In three weeks, workers collected more than 10,000 signatures on petitions demanding Kmart bargain with the union. Signers came from 37 church congregations where Kmart workers spoke, 11 local unions, and students at several area university and high school campuses. Union members addressed the state AFL-CIO convention in September and received a standing ovation.

Boycott picket lines have brought Kmart workers into daily contact with working people in the Greensboro area. Many shoppers have responded to boycott appeals and have often stopped to learn more about the struggle. Church members report having heard about the boycott at church services and some have joined picket lines.

Discussions on the boycott picket lines have helped Kmart unionists better explain their fight. One tobacco worker challenged some pickets, saying that the struggle was not primarily a race issue but one of union busting "no matter if the workers are Black, white, or green."

"This is not about Black workers or about white workers," Sullivan Hamlet, a second-shift worker, told a cheering crowd of hundreds gathered at the distribution center to conclude the December 2 actions. "It's about economics," he continued. "We have refused to allow the company to divide us." Hamlet called on workers to stand together for the benefit of all.

Press coverage of the December 2 protests here centered on the arrest of one worker and the citation of three others for attempting to pass through police lines in front of the Super Kmart store. The arrested worker was charged with misdemeanor riot and crossing police lines.

Joan Paltrineri and Peter Thierjung are members of UNITE Local 2603 at the Kmart Distribution Center in Greensboro.

# Rubber workers press fight for jobs

BY NORTON SANDLER

DES MOINES, Iowa — The National Labor Relations Board announced in a press release November 20 that some 1,100 rubber workers are entitled to get their jobs back at Bridgestone/Firestone tire plants in five cities.

"We are finally seeing an end in sight because of the solidarity of the union, working people, and religious organizations. We've received a lot of support because we are morally right," union member Don Barrell said in response to the NLRB announcement. "The word inside the plant is that the replacement workers are sensing they may be out of there soon. They are starting to see that the company's word isn't worth much."

Rubber workers went on strike at Bridgestone/Firestone facilities in Akron, Ohio; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Noblesville, Indiana; Decatur, Illinois; and in Des Moines in July 1994.

Management began bringing in "permanent replacements" in January 1995. The hard-fought ten-month strike ended in May with union members making an unconditional offer to return to work. Since then some 300 union members have been recalled by the company in Des Moines and just over 1,000 nationally. In Des Moines alone some 500 of the original strikers remain on the street, with about 1,100 out of work nationally at the plants that were struck.

The United Rubber Workers union merged with the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) last summer. Steelworkers union officials have been pressing a boycott of Bridgestone/Firestone tires as a major priority for former strikers and for the USWA membership.

In Des Moines this effort has resulted in leafleting of Sears stores and other outlets that carry Bridgestone products. Former strikers who have yet to be recalled receive checks of \$130 to \$140 weekly from the USWA if they participate in this boycott activity.

An NLRB press release states the actions of Bridgestone/Firestone converted the dispute from an economic strike to an

unfair labor practice action when the company sent letters notifying strikers they had been permanently replaced when vacancies still existed in strikers' job classifications.

The NLRB release also states that the company violated labor law by refusing to reinstate strikers following earlier NLRB rulings favoring the union.

An NLRB official said the agency will press the company and the union to resolve their differences through negotiations. On November 6, union and company officials began talks on a contract after several months without discussions.

Bridgestone/Firestone spokesperson Trevor Hoskins told the *Des Moines Register* that the company will appeal the NLRB ruling. Union lawyers say they will press for back pay for union members but that it could take from two to four years to be resolved through the courts.

## Boycott rally

On November 17, some 700 union members rallied outside the USWA Local 310 union hall here across the street from the sprawling Bridgestone/Firestone plant.

Many were former strikers here, including some union members who are working again inside the plant. The Steelworkers officialdom based in hundreds of workers from some 10 Midwestern states to the rally and provided a catered lunch following the event.

Many participants held placards distributed by the union that read: "Boycott Bridgestone/Firestone tires," "The un-American Company, Bridgestone/Firestone," and "Permanently replaced by Bridgestone/Firestone." The company is owned by a large Japanese conglomerate.

"We are going to get our membership back to work with the pride and dignity they deserve," Jeff Doornenbal, newly elected president of Local 310 here, told the rally. District 11 director David Foster told the crowd that the boycott is having an effect on the company. Several local Democratic Party candidates also spoke or sent messages to the event.

One of the louder rounds of applause of

the day was for Charlie Gibson, president of the Noblesville, Indiana, local, when he referred to the Japanese owners of Bridgestone/Firestone as "little slant-eyed SOB's." This comment was highlighted in the *Des Moines Register's* coverage of the rally. Several union members from the Oklahoma City local came to the event dressed in camouflage. One official of that local justified this "because we are at war with Japan."

A different view was put forward from the stage by Glenn Richard from Local 998 in Oklahoma City, who toured Japan with other union members in early September. He explained to the crowd that the "Japanese people stand real strong behind us, we received real solidarity. They are backing our boycott; these are strong union people there."

Several unionists present responded angrily to the anti-Japanese outburst from Gibson and urged the union officials to respond to it. A few days later, in a letter published in the December 6 *Des Moines Register* and distributed to many union members who participated in the rally, USWA District 11 director Foster wrote, "I want to make it clear to your readership that our union in no way condones those [anti-Japanese] statements."

"Earlier this year," Foster added, "two Des Moines families traveled to Japan to join with several Japanese unions in seeking to bring the Bridgestone/Firestone dispute to conclusion. In spite of enormous differences in language, culture, and history, our common problems as working people in a global economy are binding us ever tighter. I know I speak for the overwhelming majority of our members who see corporate greed, not race, as the root of our problem at Bridgestone/Firestone." The letter concludes, "Please let your readers know that the United Steelworkers of America does not and will not subscribe to intolerance."

Steelworkers activists from Des Moines and other cities are currently touring Spain, Italy, and Belgium to organize support for the boycott of Bridgestone/Firestone products.



# Workers, youth write of support for Curtis

BY REBECCA GETTLEMAN

DES MOINES, Iowa — Supporters of Mark Curtis around the world are organizing events to prepare for the next stage of the union militant's defense fight, which will open up as soon as the socialist activist is released from prison.

Curtis was granted parole by the Iowa authorities November 21. He was framed up on rape and burglary charges in 1988 while working as a meatpacker in Des Moines. Supporters here are hosting a reception and program December 17 that will include speakers from area meatpacking plants, farm activists, and others. The program will combine new and longtime backers of Curtis's fight.

Des Moines activists recently distributed material on Curtis's parole victory at the plant gate of the Monfort packinghouse where Mark was working at the time of his frame-up. They got a positive response from a number of workers there. One woman who worked with Curtis prior to his arrest said, "We need him back in the plant." Supporters at Fawn Engineering in Des Moines, organized by United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 270, wore "Justice for Mark Curtis" stickers to celebrate the parole. Ernie Casen, a longtime Curtis supporter, said, "It's about time.

Mark should have never been in prison for something he didn't do."

In Chicago a December 16 reception will include defense committee coordinator John Studer. In Houston, artist and political activist Gertrude Barnstone will speak along with prisoners' rights activist Ray Hill, Prof. Tom Kleven from the Thurgood Marshall School of Law, and well-known political figure Frances Farenthold. Other events prior to the holidays are also set for London, England; St. Paul, Minnesota; San Francisco; and elsewhere.

The Mark Curtis Defense Committee has set a goal of raising \$25,000 by the end of the year. The funds are needed for Curtis's ongoing legal defense and in order to continue to get out the word on both the parole victory and the challenges ahead. A top priority is retaining an attorney for Curtis in Illinois, where he will be paroled to.

So far \$6,800 has been raised in pledges

and payments. Kitty Loepker, a steelworker in Granite City, Illinois, who attended Curtis's November 21 parole hearing, made some calls when she returned home and raised \$300 for the defense effort. Committee backers in Des Moines report that the checks sent in are often accompanied by letters of congratulations.

Among the messages received is one from Robin Cash, a Cuba solidarity activist in Portland, Oregon. "I am so glad you will be getting out soon," Cash wrote. "You have been an inspiration to me these many years to 'do the right thing.' I admire the courage, confidence and persistence you have shown."

Members of the Young Socialists National Committee sent another letter of solidarity right after their November 25-26 leadership meeting. "One of the most important parts of the over seven-year fight has been *you* comrade," the YS message stated. "Facing the physical hardships and

privations of prison, the frame-ups, the slanders, you refused to trade your convictions and your soul for an 'easier' life or maybe an earlier release...you not only maintained your innocence, you refused to be cowed and continued to carry out political work."

On December 7 Curtis's lead attorney, William Kutmus, received a copy of the parole order released by the Iowa authorities that has been forwarded to officials in Illinois. The order stipulates 13 standard conditions for release that apply to all who receive parole. This order set no additional "special terms" for Curtis.

At this time it is not known how long Curtis will have to remain in prison prior to being released or exactly what additional restrictions may apply in Illinois. That state has laws on the books requiring anyone convicted of a "sex offense" to register with the local authorities for 10 years after the end of their imprisonment.

## Textile blast shows bosses' disregard for safety

BY JENNIFER BANATHY

METHUEN, Massachusetts — On Monday, December 11, just after 8:00 p.m., an explosion ripped through Malden

Mills, a textile plant here. One of the largest mills in New England, Malden employs 2,400 people, 700 of whom were on site at the time of the blast.

The explosion blew away a large part of the flocking division building, where fiber particles are glued to a cloth backing. The force of the blast knocked out the entire sprinkler system at once.

Aided by fierce winds and feeding off huge wooden planks soaked with years of oils, solvents, and soaps, as well as propane used for fork lift operation, the wild blaze sped to several other buildings, which were completely razed.

More than 30 workers were injured. Eight are in critical condition, two of whom have burns that cover more than 75 percent of their bodies.

One worker, Pablito Coplin-Hilton, commented, "They were working on the flock line. The flock, it was all over their skin. When the flock is burning, it becomes part of your skin, you can't get it off."

"We got outside and found people so burned that the rubber gloves they were wearing were melted on their hands," another worker explained. "We had to use scissors to cut people's shirts off because they were so burned. Everybody was in shock."

Workers in the woven division, in an adjoining building to the flocking division, described how smoke started pouring into their building. Their pleas for

evacuation were denied by their supervisors, who told them to remain inside because the fire was not in their building. Employees said the first explosion appeared to take place in the area of an oil-fired boiler that superheats the ovens used in the manufacturing process.

In March 1993 a similar explosion and fire in the flocking division left six workers injured. Frank Gravett, an area manager of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), stated in a telephone interview that the inspection following the explosion and fire in 1993 cited the owner of Malden Mills for inadequate emergency action plans and for lack of automatic fire detection and suppression systems on the production lines. He said that OSHA is now investigating the December 11 incident.

The disaster immediately idled 1,400 workers. The federal government is promising to file emergency legislation to ensure that those left jobless by the fire will receive unemployment checks before Christmas. Discussions are also being held to determine how much emergency assistance can be delivered to the area.

Malden Mills president Aaron Feuerstein claimed December 12 he does not understand "how the fire moved so quickly, because we have installed the most modern sprinkler system." He acknowledged there had been fines by OSHA, but insisted that the safety issues cited were "minor, minor, minor."

## Boeing contract approved

Continued from front page

up high. Don't let anybody take it away from you."

Jerry Little, Renton stores clerk, told the *Militant*, "The strike was a big step forward. The union was getting too weak and this proves unionism works."

Other workers echoed this sentiment. "You've got to stand your ground," said Ernest Hopson, who has worked for Boeing for eight and a half years. "If we had laid down and took what they originally offered, they'd have taken more."

Provisions of the new four-year contract include lump sum wage bonuses of 5 percent of annual earnings for 1995 and 4.5 percent for 1996. Boeing will also pay out an additional 5 percent "signing bonus" on acceptance of the contract. General wages will increase 3 percent in both the third and fourth year.

Union members will not have to make payments for the company medical plan, but only until July 1998. At that time, if the increase in costs of the plan exceeds the rise in the national average of health-care plans, Boeing can start charging workers a monthly premium of no more than \$10 for single coverage and \$30 for family coverage.

Boeing will continue to offer optional health plans and health maintenance organizations for no charge. In addition, it will offer workers cash incentives to switch out of Boeing's plan or stay in the optional ones: \$600 during the first year, \$400 in the second, and \$200 the third year. The contract provides for a \$5 increase in the pension plan, to \$40 per year of service.

Included in the contract is a "letter of understanding" that says, "Bargaining unit employees should not be laid off as a result of subcontracting." It states that "any bargaining unit employee whose work is subcontracted will be reassigned, or retrained, for available work." An article on subcontracting guarantees the company the right to outsource work. A new article entitled "layoff benefits" grants laid-off workers a week's pay for each year of service, up to 26 weeks.

Most workers interviewed explained why they voted for the contract. "Everything is significantly better," said Steve Lassiter, a 17-year Boeing veteran. "There are significant gains to show that we were out for something."

"For the first time in 18 years, I voted 'yes' on a contract," said William Brown.

Some voted against the contract because they wanted to maintain free medical benefits. Many who voted for the contract, despite the health takeback, felt like Lassiter, who said, "Eventually, we are going to have to give something on medical. At least we delayed it over two years."

Others, like Hector Palacios, voted against it "to protest the company's slap in the face." Even though there are lots of gains in this contract, Palacios said,

"Boeing should have presented it to us at the beginning, in October."

Hopson, who voted for the pact this time, said, "The contract is not 100 percent what we wanted, but it's the best we can do right now."

Strikers were overwhelmingly proud of their fight with Boeing. "I think the membership thinks of this as a victory. We're proud of ourselves," Jackie Boschok told the *Militant* in Everett.

Daisy Charles had been laid off and then recalled just five weeks before the strike. "This is the most unique strike I've seen," she said. "All of the people just came together. Times are really hard. We had no choice but to stand together."

"The bottom line," Hopson said after the contract vote was announced, "is that Boeing needed to put out airplanes, and they weren't, so they made us an offer we could take."

*Scott Breen is a member of IAM Local 289. Bob Bruneau, a member of IAM Local 751-A at Boeing, and Marc Kinzel, a member of IAM Local 79, contributed to this article.*

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**Vancouver:** 3967 Main St. Postal code: V5V 3P3. Tel: (604) 872-8343.

### FRANCE

**Paris:** MBE 201, 208 rue de la Convention. Postal code: 75015. Tel: (1) 47-26-58-21.

### ICELAND

**Reykjavik:** Klapparstíg 26. Mailing address: P. Box 233, 121 Reykjavik. Tel: 552 5502.

### NEW ZEALAND

**Auckland:** La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Road. Postal address: P.O. Box 3025. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

**Christchurch:** 199 High St. Postal address: P.O. Box 22-530. Tel: (3) 365-6055.

### SWEDEN

**Stockholm:** Vikingagatan 10 (T-bana St Eriksplan). Postal code: S-113 42. Tel: (08) 31 69 33.



**Joe Scrooge** — "My feeling is that policies we've had in place... reflect a commitment to sensitivity. But it's fair to say that restructurings are business decisions — they're not driven by such things as the Christmas season." —



**Harry Ring**

Chevron spokesman Jim Hendon on current company layoffs.

**It's called Intelligence** — Currently the single Pentagon spy plane flying over Bosnia is its old-

est, least capable, and most crash-prone. Three state-of-the-art drones had been assigned there, but two were shot down and the third yanked out. Sent to Bosnia in a huge rush, the planes were not equipped with radar, forcing them to fly below the clouds as easy targets.

**Just as good** — U.S. military and intelligence agencies have made extensive use of psychics in intelligence gathering — like trying to locate underground tunnels they suspected the North Koreans had dug in the demilitarized zone. One psychic staffer at the Pentagon channeled information through his fingers. A laid-back co-worker favored a technique combining relaxation and meditation. The *Washington Post* said

the secret program was code-named "Stargate."

**Who would think otherwise?** — A New Jersey Department of Motor Vehicles spokesman said it was easy for Jersey City cops to grab stolen or towed cars by ensuring that the owners were not notified. He said the DMV doesn't watch for such scams because the police are expected to always tell the truth.

**Meanwhile...** — "Three Newark police officers have been indicted on charges of illegally using their position on the auto squad to acquire stolen vehicles for virtually nothing." — Associated Press.

**Good on gas** — A neat Xmas

item from Hammacher Schlemmer, the Spa-ster. As near as we can figure it out, it's a hot tub shaped like a sports car. Seats four comfortably. \$35,000.

**Also, at some point, he'd die** — That Florida doc who cut the wrong leg off a diabetic patient and removed another patient's toe without her consent was suspended from practice for six months and fined \$10,000. The Board of Medicine said it imposed a light sentence because he had a good record and, besides, the diabetic patient's other leg would probably have been removed anyway.

**Something for everyone** — Canada's Ontario government is selling a food calendar to promote

local produce. It includes some tasty recipes and such ingredients as asparagus, fresh peaches, pecans, and white wine. Earlier provincial officials chopped welfare 21.6 percent and suggested recipients could eat well on \$90 a month by sticking with bologna, canned beans, etc.

**No comment** — "In Kenya, supersonic jets bring tourists to \$500-a-night gin-and-tonic safaris. But almost half the resident population cannot find safe water to drink, no matter how far they walk. Slum residents near the capital, Nairobi, once were allowed to fill their water buckets from water taps at a local golf course. But this has been found to disrupt golfers and has been disallowed." — *Los Angeles Times* dispatch.

## Major parts of anti-immigrant law knocked out

BY HARRY RING

LOS ANGELES — Fighters for immigrant rights gained ground with a federal judge's ruling knocking out key provisions of California's immigrant-bashing Proposition 187.

California voters approved the ballot measure in November 1994, with 59 percent in favor.

Federal judge Mariana Pfaelzer ruled November 20, that California state agencies cannot deny undocumented immigrants access to federally funded health-care and social welfare programs, as Proposition 187 stipulates. The power to regulate immigration, she declared, belongs "exclusively" to the federal government.

She also struck down a clause that directed police agencies to report suspected "illegal" immigrants to state and federal authorities and for teachers and health

workers to inform on the undocumented.

The decision also said the state cannot prevent children of undocumented immigrants from attending public schools. It said doing so contradicts a 1982 U.S. Supreme Court decision voiding a Texas law that denied public education to children of the undocumented.

But that decision, and Pfaelzer's ruling as well, does not protect those seeking a college level public education.

The federal judge upheld the 187 clause providing stiffer penalties for the sale or use of false residency or citizenship papers.

And she declared it legal to deny access to medical or social welfare programs that are exclusively state-funded.

Her decision voiced sympathy for voters' "justifiable frustration with the federal government's inability to enforce the immigration laws effectively."

The state attorney general's office indicated it will appeal the ruling, which is expected to be decided eventually by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ira Mehlman, state spokesperson for the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which supported 187, fumed that the court decision was "outrageous."

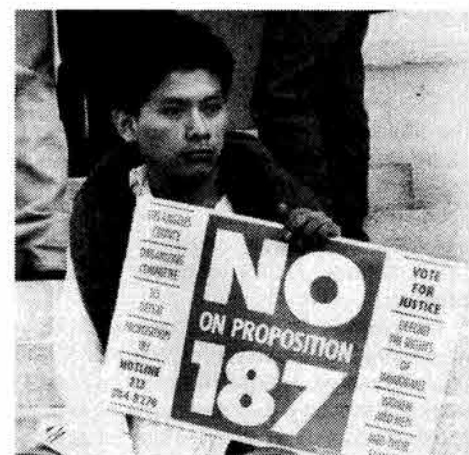
Gov. Pete Wilson, another 187 promoter, pointed to anti-immigrant measures pending in Congress, saying he was hopeful that if they pass, "much of Proposition 187 will become law."

That is by no means assured. While both major parties share a determination to crack down on immigrants, there are divisions between them — and within each of them — on the best way to accomplish this. These divisions were apparent during the debate prior to the vote on Proposition 187 and immediately afterward.

For instance, last December, Rep. Newt Gingrich declared he did not favor a national version of 187. A better solution, he said, would be to double the size of the Border Patrol and "seal off" the border.

This is basically the same as the approach being taken by the Clinton administration.

In good measure these tactical differ-



Militant/Harry Ring

Student protesting anti-immigrant law

ences stem from a recognition that the immigrant bashing will inevitably spark a major social confrontation.

Prior to the passage of 187, more than 70,000 Latinos and other opponents of the reactionary measure poured into the streets of Los Angeles in one of the biggest demonstrations in the city's history. Soon after, more than 10,000 teenagers marched out of their schools in an equally dynamic "vote no" demonstration.

## OSPAAAL International Meeting

Below is the call for a conference issued by the Havana-based Organization of the People's of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL). The organization was established following the Tricontinental Conference held in Havana, January 3-15, 1966.

The Organization of the People's of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), set up out of the First Tricontinental Conference, will be soon celebrating its 30th anniversary. Three decades of solidarity with the Third World people's struggles, claims and most precious desires are worthy of a retrospective assessment, an analysis of present circumstances and, above all, call for perspective reflection.

Such a significant content is the reason for inviting you to participate in the International Meeting "Solidarity with the Third World, a Challenge on the Eve of the Third Millennium," to be held on January 12-15, 1996, in Havana, Cuba, under the auspices of OSPAAAL.

The serious social drama, the worldwide economic chaos and the political instability of the southern part of the world

are now darkening the coming century. The so-called new world order the North is trying to impose has inevitably deepened the huge gap of inequalities that makes us come apart and has also led to a new postponement of our peoples' most legitimate aspirations, held back many times and trampled on many others.

Even a brief outlook at the risks that endanger the survival of mankind in the threshold of the Third Millennium highlights the importance and force of solidarity, the imperative seed of unity implying the respect for extensive diversity, and the essence of humanism that we the less fortunate groups should recover and set against injustice, the brutal empire of market laws, the cult of egoism and individualism and any hegemonic attempt to dominate this world, which is as much our own as the wealthiest believe it to be theirs.

This is a convocation to bring efforts and experience together in an international tribute to honor thirty years of solidarity with the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America which we shall turn into a crusade for the defense of their dearest and most unrenounceable dreams.

Executive Secretariat OSPAAAL

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

### THE MILITANT

Published in the Interest of the Working People

December 25, 1970

Price 10¢

CHICAGO — Following the recent 18-hour national rail strike, which was outlawed by a special act of Congress, an emergency meeting on the right to strike was called by leaders of eight locals of the United Transportation Union in the Chicago area. The meeting, attended by 200 officers and members of the UTU and other rail labor unions, set up a "truth committee" to publicize the plight of railway workers and win the support of unions and other sectors of the American public for the right of railroad workers to strike. The congressional strike ban expires March 1.

Robert Groah, UTU general chairman on the Belt Railway of Chicago, and one of the initiators of the meeting, declared: "We were on a legal strike and suddenly found Nixon and Congress coming after us and saying 'You illegal people. You lawbreakers. Back to work.' While they were saying this, they were still trying to blot the ink dry on the law we were violating. I am sick and tired of complying with all of the laws in order to effect a change and then having the railroads say, 'We are not going to bargain. Congress will take care of this.' And Congress does. We are going to have to get political."

A guest speaker was Wayne Kennedy, cochairman of the Chicago Joint Council of the American Federation of Government Employees. Said Kennedy, "My only suggestion is that not only must the railroad unions take militant strike action to secure justice for their membership, but

that the American public should take the railroads away from the few corrupt multimillionaires who now own and run them for their own private interest; and they must turn management of this vital industry over to the real experts — the railroad workers themselves."

### THE MILITANT

NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

December 22, 1945

DETROIT, Dec. 10 — Detroit auto workers today staged the largest picket line in the city's history in a display of solidarity with the GM strikers. More than 10,000 men and women representing CIO auto locals from all parts of the city, joined with pickets from the closed-down GM plants. For over an hour they circled the huge General Motors Office Building, which occupies an entire city block.

The demonstration had been called by the December 4 regional conference of all CIO United Automobile Workers locals in the Detroit area.

It was an inspiring sight to see these men and women workers of all ages and all races marching shoulder to shoulder, five abreast, in closed ranks. Some were in working clothes, some in uniform. Still others bore the insignia of their local union flying squadrons.

Over the entrance to the International headquarters was a huge banner reading "We Fight Today For a Better Tomorrow." This fighting spirit was repeated in the picket signs, numbering more than a thousand, which were carried in the line of march... "GM PROPOSES LOW WAGES, LONG HOURS, HIGH PRICES, MASS UNEMPLOYMENT" read one sign. Other signs included "HITLER BURNED BOOKS — GM HIDES BOOKS."

### OSPAAAL International Meeting

## SOLIDARITY WITH THE THIRD WORLD A CHALLENGE ON THE EVE OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM



January 12-15, 1996  
Havana, Cuba

The Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL) will soon be celebrating its 30th anniversary and invites you to participate in an international tribute to honor 30 years of solidarity with struggles of the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

For further information, please contact OSPAAAL Secretary-General, Calle C No. 670 esq. a 29, Vedado, La Habana, Cuba. Tel: (537) 3-5136, 30-0583, 31-3101, Fax: (537) 33-3905



# Stop NATO's war drive!

Continued from front page

assaults by the bosses and their governments have a vital stake in joining this effort. This includes unionists who have been fighting Caterpillar and Boeing and those on strike against the Detroit news bosses, youth demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, fighters against police brutality, defenders of abortion rights, and family farmers defending their right to a livelihood. It includes GIs and reservists — the workers, farmers, and other youth who will be cannon fodder for big business.

For the first time since the Korean War, the imperialist powers are intervening with a massive force inside a workers state — a country where workers and farmers overthrew and expropriated the ruling landlords and capitalists in the 1940s. Washington, Paris, and London have already divided Bosnia into three sectors to be controlled by their respective armies. Some 30 governments will have troops involved in the occupation force.

In what may have seemed unthinkable only a few years ago, imperialism is marching down the road toward a major ground war being fought in Europe with troops from the United States, France, Britain, Germany, and other powers — capitalist governments with antagonistic and competing interests.

The war in Yugoslavia has been prodded along from the beginning by various imperialist regimes, as when Bonn welcomed the declarations of independence by the regimes in Croatia and Slovenia in 1991 and eagerly granted recognition and support. Washington, London, and Paris alike have sought to promote their competing interests through their relations with one or another gang of thugs.

But things have not gone smoothly for wannabe exploiters like those represented by Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade or Franjo Tudjman in Zagreb. Their bloody wars for territory and resources have met with stubborn resistance, such as the defense of Sarajevo by workers and youth of diverse nationalities.

While unleashing a slaughter against working people, killing thousands and displacing 2 million, the gangsters ruling different regions of Yugoslavia haven't succeeded in making it stable and safe for capitalism again.

So the imperialists are now moving decisively to take direct control in order to overthrow the workers state and to wrest the biggest possible portion of Yugoslavia for themselves. As they do so there is a contest for which imperialist power will occupy the top rung on the ladder and get the greatest booty, and where others on the imperialist feeding chain will end up.

Washington is coming out on top of the heap. Since the end of World War II it has been the major power in Europe — economically and militarily — and the Clinton administration intends to keep it that way. Washington has used its military might, as with the recent U.S.-led NATO bombing campaign, to push Bonn more to the sidelines in Croatia and assert its control of the region. This is a fact France's rulers were forced to recognize when they recently decided to rejoin the NATO military alliance.

The employers, their governments, and their media are resorting to a multifront campaign of lies to justify the war drive in Bosnia. On one hand they hypocritically claim it's a humanitarian mission for peace. On the other, they are trying to whip up pro-war chauvinism by portraying "Islamic fanatics" or Serb and Croatian "looters and rapists" as the enemy.

Now, Democratic and Republican politicians are rallying behind the battle cry of "Support our troops" to convince working people to accept becoming cannon fodder for this war against our fellow workers and farmers in the Balkans.

As they have repeatedly done to win public support for their war aims — from Pearl Harbor during World War II to the fabricated Gulf of Tonkin attack in Vietnam — the imperialist rulers will cold-bloodedly look for any opportunity to provoke an incident in order

to unleash a patriotic war orgy. In his December 2 speech to U.S. troops in Germany, Clinton conjured this exact scenario. "If you are threatened with attack, you may respond immediately and with decisive force," he proclaimed.

As columnist William Safire put it, "If any side hits our peace-enforcers we will not cut and run, as in Lebanon and Somalia. The full division of Americans based in Tuzla will respond with ferocity, even as our allies plead with us to be 'proportionate.'"

With these words, Clinton — one of the most warmongering U.S. presidents — and his cohorts clearly explain how they will make their case for war. They will do so once the first U.S. GIs fall in combat, sweeping away the denial and even outright opposition to a U.S.-led war in Bosnia that exists at the moment among millions of working people.

This war drive is bipartisan, as were the U.S. assaults on Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Somalia, and Haiti. Today, the representatives of the rich in Congress aren't confident the war in Yugoslavia will be easy, smooth, or that they can prevent it from becoming a quagmire and provoking organized opposition. But, as always, the capitalist handwringers are falling in line behind Commander-in-Chief Clinton as the troops pour in. The voice of working people is not represented in Congress, and we will have no vote on war.

While crying crocodile tears for the people of Bosnia the U.S. rulers and their politicians are also forging ahead with their deepening assault on our unions, on democratic rights, with attempts to gut Social Security, cut back on medical care, and attack the gains of Blacks and women. The war drive in Yugoslavia and the bosses' assault on our democratic rights and living standards at home go hand in hand.

That's why opponents of imperialism and the march toward war will find the space to openly debate and discuss the rulers' assaults in the working class. Now is the time to orient even deeper to workers and youth. Now is the time to go to the plant gates and picket lines at mines, mills, and factories. Now is the time to seek out citizen-soldiers on U.S. bases, working farmers in the countryside, students demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, activists mobilizing to defend abortion rights. Now is the time to ask anyone resisting attacks by the bosses and their governments to oppose NATO's war drive as well.

Resistance to the plans of the rulers takes on double importance now — from strikes to fights against police brutality, the death penalty, for Black rights, in defense of immigrant workers, for affirmative action, and for women's rights. These struggles, and the people who go through them, will intertwine with building opposition to the war drive.

Every opportunity should be taken to have meetings, discussions, debates, and get out literature that explains the truth about what Washington is preparing. Some of the best tools available are the book *The Truth About Yugoslavia — Why Working People Should Oppose Intervention and New International* no. 7 with the article "Opening Guns of World War III." Selling the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and the *New International* at plant gates, in the community, on campuses, and at political events is one of the most important activities there is to get into the discussion with a range of working people.

We also urge all our readers to participate and help build the socialist educational conferences advertised on the front page. These events will help arm politically all those who want to fight imperialist tyranny, fascism, and war.

This range of activities is the only way to effectively carry out the broadest possible campaign against the war moves — a working-class campaign against the imperialist war drive in Yugoslavia.

Let's urge all working people and youth to join in demanding:

All NATO troops out of Yugoslavia now!

## Canada protests

Continued from front page  
millions of dollars in profits."

Instead of reducing budgets, "the government should worry about employing people," said David Mallott, a lab worker at the London Victoria Hospital.

Among the participants in the marches were several Detroit newspaper strikers. "We are here to show our support for this fight," said striking Newspaper Guild member Kate DeSmet. "You are not alone in this fight. Corporate greed is becoming worldwide. That's why we need worldwide unions."

Marvin Conner, from the Amerindian Center in London, received especially warm applause when he said, "Governments have taken away my people's health care and rights. Now they want to do that to you. We have to stand together to stop the cuts."

Many among the younger demonstrators pointed to the wave of strikes in France as the example to follow. Michel Roy, a student and teaching assistant at York University, said it would take a general strike for at least 16 days to push back the latest cutbacks. Why 16 days? "Because that's how long it's taken for the French workers to force the prime minister to meet with them," he said. "There is no option but to shut down workplaces."

Speakers at the rally included Robert White, president of the Canadian Labor Congress, and Alexa McDonough, leader of the federal New Democratic Party.

The protest was called by the Ontario Federation of Labor at its November 13-17 convention.

### "Cross-picketing"

Striking workers shut down most of the large industrial plants in London and the surrounding area. The picket lines were organized through a system of "cross-picketing," with workers from one workplace picketing another location. The strike was particularly solid at the major plants organized by the CAW.

About 120 workers, mainly from the CAMI plant, set up picket lines at the Ford Talbotville assembly plant early Monday morning. Ford obtained a court injunction at 3:30 a.m. But the pickets ignored the injunction and police made no attempt to enforce it. None of the 1,200 day shift workers crossed the line. Picket lines were set up again for the start of the afternoon shift. This time, a large police presence forced the pickets to allow supervisors into the plant, but only a handful of workers showed up and the shift was canceled.

The CAMI plant in Ingersoll is jointly owned by General Motors and Suzuki and employs 2,200 workers. Some 300-400 auto workers from CAW locals 200 and 444 at Chrysler and Ford in Windsor set up picket lines at 6 a.m. The CAMI bosses had offered workers a \$300 bonus to come into work. But only two workers went in.

3M Manufacturing, where about 1,000 CAW members work, was picketed by Windsor Chrysler workers. Fifty cars lined up to cross the line, but the unionists refused to let them cross, despite the cops' insistence that they be let through. After an hour-and-a-half-long stand-off, local CAW officials arrived and urged the pickets to let the cars enter. But workers responded that they hadn't "come all the way from Windsor to let people cross the line. This is a *strike!*" They held out for another hour before, reluctantly, letting the cars cross.

Members of the Amalgamated Transit Union were off the job and the city bus system was shut down for the day. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers picketed the mail sorting plant, disrupting some postal service.

At the McCormick-Culinar food processing plant, the bosses agreed in advance to union demands to close for the day. Workers at the Kellogg Canada breakfast cereal plant and the Labatt's brewery won similar agreements.

City and provincial government employees organized by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and OPSEU, and some teachers and hospital workers, joined the strike; most government services were at least partially affected. Three high schools were closed and exams were canceled at the University of Western Ontario and Fenshawe College.

The mobilization was broad despite threats of reprisals from some employers and an intensive media campaign warning of violence and intimidation by "imported" protesters.

Union leaders repeatedly promised that the London protest will be rapidly followed by other days of protest. Unions in a half-dozen cities have already offered to be the next target.

### Meetings to celebrate life and political contributions of Ed Shaw

Nearly 250 people packed the Earl Hall auditorium at Columbia University in New York December 10 to celebrate the life and political contributions of Ed Shaw — a longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party who died in Hialeah, Florida, on November 9. Participants socialized during a reception before the program began, milling around tables with a delicious food spread and refreshments. A fund appeal in honor of Shaw's life raised \$3,987 toward Pathfinder's program to publish the definitive record of the Cuban revolution and its leadership.

A similar meeting took place in Miami December 3. Another celebration will be held in San Francisco December 17. In a future issue we will report on all these events.



# Detroit newspaper strikers stay the course

BY JOHN SARGE

DETROIT — "If you're not together, if you're not part of the union, you're nothing. We are together! We will win," declared Paul Kulka.

Kulka, a striking Detroit newspaper circulation worker, and a member of Teamsters Local 372, was reporting on his travels as a member of the Detroit newspaper strike speakers bureau. He was addressing a rally and concert that drew over 500 strikers and their supporters at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 58 hall here December 3.

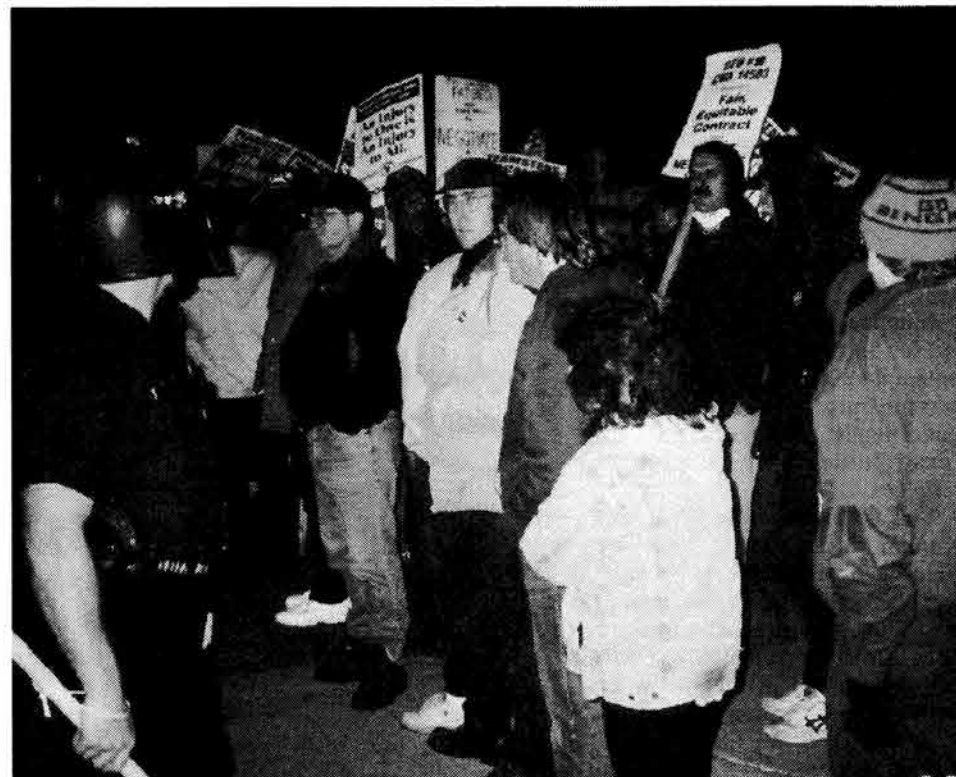
Along with members of all six striking unions and their local supporters, unionists traveled from Chicago and Decatur, Illinois, the Twin Cities, and Washington D.C. to attend the event.

Kate DeSmet, a striking member of the Newspaper Guild said that across the country "support for this strike is awesome." Kulka and DeSmet have traveled to New England, New York, northern California, and Washington state in the last two months. They have been explaining the stakes for working people in the battle by more than 2,000 newspaper workers against the Detroit *News* and *Free Press*.

DeSmet told the gathered unionists that she went to Everett, Washington, on November 12 to take part in a rally in support of members of the International Association of Machinists on strike against Boeing. There someone approached her and said he had just read in the local paper that the Detroit newspaper strike was over.

"I told him that the striking unions' rank and file had news for anyone who wanted to say that the strike is over," DeSmet said. "The strike ain't over till we say it's over." Management, she added, "Wished it was over."

Linda Chávez-Thompson, Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO also spoke. "Today the AFL-CIO is launching a nationwide adopt a family campaign," for Detroit strikers, she said. A regional adopt a striker campaign has asked union



Militant/John Sarge

Police break picket line to escort scab drivers into depot in September. City officials considered using firefighters armed with hoses against the striking union members.

locals to make regular contributions to individual strikers' families.

Other speakers included local labor leaders and Dan Lane, a member of United Paperworkers International Union Local 7837, who has been locked out by A.E. Staley in Decatur, Illinois for over 30 months.

## Effect of the strike

Members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 26, which represents Detroit bus drivers, presented \$1,060 to the strikers they had raised to support the struggle.

The effects of the strike on the functioning of the *News* and *Free Press* are driven

home every week. The two newspapers suffered a 42 percent decline in advertising during the crucial Thanksgiving weekend. There was 772 pages of advertising in 1994 and only 448 pages this year.

"The holiday season is absolutely critical to the newspaper business," said Al Young, president of Teamsters Local 2040, which represents mailroom workers. "If the *News* and *Free Press* can't convince advertisers to stay in the paper during this time of the year," he continued, "they have a very serious problem on their hands, much more serious than they're willing to admit."

Strikers and their supporters kept the

pressure on advertisers still in the paper by mobilizing over 1,000 people to go out and leaflet at retail locations the Friday after Thanksgiving.

Knight-Ridder Inc., owner of the *Free Press* continues to suffer severe financial losses due to the strike, according to a monthly financial report released by the company.

"October numbers continue to reflect losses associated with the strike against Detroit Newspapers," Knight-Ridder reported. Company chairman Tony Ridder had earlier estimated the strike will cost his company \$56 million in 1995, after a profitable 1994.

## Firefighters ordered against pickets?

An article in the December 2 *Alliance*, a strike bulletin produced by the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions reported that firefighters in six suburban communities may be ordered against the mass pickets on Saturday nights. Firefighters, it said, in "Dearborn, Sterling Heights, Warren, Lincoln Park, Southgate and Taylor have been told that officials are considering using fire fighters armed with hoses against striking union members."

Lawrence McColl, Michigan State Fire Fighters Union president, has sent a letter to union fire fighters in those cities calling on them to resist any effort to hose strikers, exposing pickets to injury and hypothermia with Michigan's sub-freezing winter temperatures.

The Detroit Newspaper Agency, the joint business operation of the struck papers, tried to get a court injunction limiting picketing at the Harper Woods newspaper distribution center after large picket lines surrounded the site in the early morning hours of November 25. To management's chagrin, a local judge refused to issue the injunction.

John Sarge is a member of United Auto Workers Local 900 in Detroit.

## LETTERS

Below we are running some of the letters we have received from prisoners. The *Militant* has a Prisoner Fund in order to meet the requests from readers behind bars to receive the paper at a reduced rate. Prisoners are asked to contribute a small amount for their subscriptions and the remaining cost is offset by the donations we receive to the Prisoner Fund.

The number of requests for subscriptions we are able to respond to depends on the amount we receive in contributions from other readers around the world. If you would like to contribute please send a check to the *Militant*, earmarked for the Prisoner Fund. Prisoners who are interested can write for a sample copy and subscription information.

In regard to your *Militant* papers, I had been in a location with a person that received your papers. Now I no longer have access to your papers, but would like to continue reading your material. Would you forward me some copies of your material please.  
Plainfield, Indiana

These words that I write today are written from within a colonized setting, Belly of the Whale, warehouse, or just prison, whichever name you like. But anyway, I am one brother who is hungry for the knowledge and information that you offer. If you can please send a newspaper in English and a magazine in Spanish they will be most helpful in our fight for liberation.  
Chino, California

I'm very much interested in your newspaper or magazine which are free to prisoners. That's great, because I'm housed in

prison in Kinder and am without funds. My interest is not love, romance, or money. My interests are political views of public forums, anti-racism, forced military service, U.S. communist party, the Marxism of political prisoners in prison worldwide.  
Kinder, Louisiana

Hi! I am a Death Row prisoner in Indiana. I was given your address and told that you publish a socialist newspaper that is free to prisoners. I would be forever grateful if you would put me on your mailing list.  
Michigan City, Indiana

I extend my best wishes and sincere regards out to all the *Militant* staff members. My primary reason for writing this letter is because I would like to obtain a limited degree of your assistance if possible.

I'm currently incarcerated in the Texas prison system. I am a progressive-minded politically aware type person, and in essence I'm writing you this letter because I would very much like to obtain a subscription to your *Militant* newspaper if possible. Due to the fact that I am completely without funds and I don't have any outside support I would appreciate it if you would send me a free subscription if possible.  
Gatesville, Texas

I am a previous subscriber to your paper and salute the *Militant* staff with the clenched fist and a fervent cry of power to the people. I am still here dwelling in the cesspool of prison incarceration and though I feel my revolutionary morality being shaken I have been prompted to send you this letter because anyone who is going through any of the oppressive organs of the state needs a tool to



struggle with to keep one on track and to keep one ever growing in knowledge, theory, and revolutionary principle and there is no other paper that has scientifically educated me like the *Militant*.

There are many papers out there that speak from an emotional voice whose objective is to produce action, but just action without science is saying really nothing. There is no other paper that addresses the issue of giving a world perspective view of the rev-

olutionary process and for this reason it is a must that I get back on your mailing list, especially since there is no one here that I know who is receiving your paper and I need it to address certain issues in educating the masses.

I definitely wanted your views on the Million Man March because I remember long ago you addressed this issue of the Nation of Islam leadership. Please let me know if you still have a prisoner subscription, the price, and if pos-

sible please send me a back issue so I can have something to read.

The ongoing struggle for a liberated world. Ever forward...  
Jefferson City, Missouri

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.



## Sri Lanka army takes rebel capital

BY MARNIE KENNEDY

SYDNEY, Australia — After a fierce 50-day offensive, the Sri Lankan army captured Jaffna, the capital of the Tamil rebels, December 5.

Located in the northern peninsula, Jaffna is Sri Lanka's second-largest city and has been at the center of a 12-year struggle for an independent state, known as Eelam, in the country's northern and eastern provinces. The city and surrounding areas have been administered by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for the last five years. The group has been fighting for independence from Sri Lanka.

The army assault began October 17. Some 2,000 people were killed by Sri Lankan troops fighting to take control of Jaffna.

The government was forced to pull thousands of troops out of eastern provinces to mount "Operation Rivirasa" (Sunshine) and recently announced a one-month recruitment campaign for 10,000 new troops. The *Independent* reported November 27 that 20 government soldiers, one day out of training, had been ambushed and killed near Batticaloa, in the east.

Four hundred thousand refugees fled the offensive, which involved a reported 40,000 troops, backed by recently purchased tanks and armored personnel carriers. F-7 fighter jets and mobile artillery provided support. The military campaign began in July when 10,000 troops secured the route between the Palaly Air Base in the north of the peninsula with the Karainagar Naval Base in the west. The battle for Jaffna is described in the press as the government's largest ever military action. More than 500 Sri Lankan soldiers were killed.

Following the fall of Jaffna, Tamil rebel leaders stated they will mount new attacks on the occupying forces. Lawrence Thilaker, a Paris-based spokesperson for the Tigers, said many of the refugees won't return to Jaffna. "They have past experience of military control," he told Reuters. "No Tamil with dignity will like to live under a Sinhalese military army. For the people to get back, the army must withdraw."

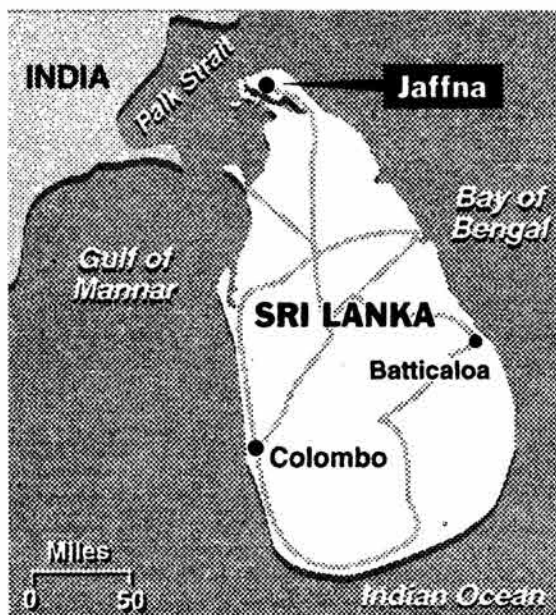
The refugees are crowded alongside roads and in villages and towns that have no resources to cope with them. In Chavakachcheri, one day's walk from Jaffna, the population has swelled from 40,000 to 150,000. Food and medicine are scarce. Many are living outside and seasonal rains have made appalling conditions worse.

Malaria and viruses are spreading and outbreaks of cholera and other epidemics are feared. There are reports that the Sri Lankan army is blocking relief supplies to stop them being taken by the LTTE. The government has prevented international aid agencies from functioning indepen-

dently of its control. The Belgian agency Doctors Without Borders has appealed internationally for aid for 500,000 refugees. K. Pon-nampalam, the peninsula's civil administrator, was fired by the government November 7 for "exaggerating" the number of refugees.

Sri Lankan president Chandrika Kumaratunga stated, "We are fighting a war we don't want," and claimed she aims for a negotiated solution rather than a military one. But she rejected the LTTE's call for foreign mediation in the days before the assault on Jaffna.

In Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital, harassment of Tamils has increased. More than 1,000 have been jailed since April. In Tamil areas roadblocks have been erected and security personnel have cordoned off sections of the city. Government forces are conducting house searches and imposing penalties for accommodating unregistered visitors. All schools were closed in early November. Two Catholic priests were arrested for smuggling banned goods and money to the Jaffna peninsula. There are also reports of Tamil priests being dragged from



Hindu temples and jailed, and of arrests of dozens of Tamils at cinemas.

Tamils make up 12 percent of Sri Lanka's population of 21 million. They have faced institutionalized discrimination and periods of government-sanctioned pogroms and have been at the receiving end of broader attacks on democratic

rights.

While Tamils have lived in Sri Lanka for centuries, the British colonial rulers in the last century ensured their division from the majority Sinhalese population. English-speaking Tamils were brought into the British administration in large numbers. Other Tamils were brought in from southern India in the 19th century to work as virtual slaves on British tea plantations, which antagonized the previous landholders — Sinhalese peasants. The British crown fostered these divisions to maintain control of the country.

As part of periodic anti-working-class onslaughts since Sri Lanka's independence in 1948, a succession of governments have perpetuated and exacerbated the oppression of Tamils. Colombo has removed citizenship and voting rights for some Tamils, and made Sinhalese the only official language and Buddhism virtually the state religion. Tamils are mainly Hindu or Muslim.

A previous military campaign to recover Jaffna in 1987 resulted in the Indian army being brought in by the rightist government of President Junius Jayewardene. In the upheavals that followed, government-sponsored death squads slaughtered tens of thousands of Tamils. Some 50,000 people have died in the 12-year conflict.

## 'We are an independent East Timor'

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia — "We are not Indonesians, we are not Portuguese, the only way we can be accepted as a people, as a nation, is in an independent East Timor." With these words, Harold Moucho, a representative of the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (FRETILIN), underlined the reality of the decades-long struggle of the East Timorese people against foreign oppression. He was addressing a 600-strong rally here November 12. Similar actions were held in other main cities around Australia marking the fourth anniversary of the Dili massacre.

The November 13 *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that "Indonesian police [were] systematically arresting and beating up young Timorese men in the run-up to the anniversary" in an attempt to forestall protests.

In Dili, the East Timorese capital, a wave of house-to-house beatings by police riot squads resulted in the "arrests of an estimated 150 to 400 young Timorese." In Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, about 20 students held a candlelight ceremony to commemorate the massacre. Security forces reportedly arrested four people after confiscating a banner and a FRETILIN flag.

Chanting "No blood for oil!" and "Indonesia out of East Timor!" the march wound through the main streets of Sydney. It marked the massacre of over 200 people in Dili when Indonesian troops opened fire on a funeral procession for Sebastiao Rangel at the Santa Cruz cemetery Nov. 11, 1991. Many of the survivors were then "disappeared" and murdered in cold blood. Rangel had been killed by Indonesian soldiers as he sought refuge in a church in Dili.

The November 12 march in Sydney was preceded by a mass in St. Mary's Catholic Cathedral where Bishop Cremin announced that he was adding his name to the list of Catholic organizations offering sanctuary to East Timorese refugees should they be threatened with deportation by the Australian government. It culminated in a rally at the steps of the Sydney Town Hall where traditional Timorese dancers performed.

"The Indonesian regime has admitted to 50 victims of the Dili massacre," said Milena Pires of the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT). "But as the Mothers of



Santa Cruz [the organization of relatives of the disappeared] are demanding, where are those bodies?" She pledged that the East Timorese people would not rest until the last Indonesian troops have left East Timor and all the political prisoners, including Xanana Gusmao, the imprisoned leader of FRETILIN, are freed.

### Twenty-year occupation

Moucho, of FRETILIN, pointed out that the Indonesian invasion of East Timor and its military occupation in the 20 years since has resulted in "the extermination of one-third of the Timorese population." This occupation has been carried out with the "complicity of Australian governments."

The current Labor government, he said, is "continuing to train and supply Indonesia's elite troops" engaged in repression in East Timor. "Australia is the only country to give de jure recognition of the Indonesian annexation of East Timor" in order to share with the Indonesian regime in exploiting "the massive oil and gas reserves in the Timor sea," he said.

At the same time, as Moucho said, newly arrived refugees from East Timor face "the trauma of possible deportation to either Indonesia or Portugal [the former colonial power in East Timor]" as Canberra tries to deny them asylum.

Jenny Munro, chairperson of the Aboriginal Metropolitan Land Council of Sydney, declared that the 1,300 East Timorese refugees are welcome in Australia.

"Aboriginal people understand the oppression and genocide that your people face, because that is what has been perpetrated against us for over 200 years!" she said. "We too have lost our children defending our land."

One of the Timorese refugees, Nelson Lemos, answered Canberra's attempts to deny them asylum on the basis of supposed Portuguese nationality. "We are not Indonesians or Portuguese. We are proud to call ourselves East Timorese!"

Max Lane of Aksi-Indonesian Solidarity Action and Gil Scrine of the Australia-East Timor Association also spoke.

The action was somewhat larger than previous years, with a large number of Timorese immigrants and young people. One young woman, Christine Barton, who marched with a placard reading "Free East Timor and West Papua!" said that this was her first protest. Having found out about Indonesian repression after visiting West Papua as a tourist, she said, "I want to get more involved in helping make others aware." There have been recent revelations of Indonesian brutality to West Papuans around the U.S.-owned Freepoint mine in what Jakarta calls Irian Jaya.

Hundreds of people also took part in actions across Australia December 7 to mark the 20th anniversary of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor on that date in 1975.

Ron Poulsen is a member of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and works at Streets Ice Cream in Sydney.

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