

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Openings for fighting workers
and farmers to forge links

— Young Socialists Convention, PAGES 8-10

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Stop the bombing of Iraq!

Protest Clinton's murderous assault

We urge all working people to join in campaigning against the murderous, imperial assault Washington has unleashed against the people of Iraq. Workers and farmers, first and foremost those in the United States, have an interest in demanding, "Stop the bombing now! Hands off Iraq! All U.S. troops and 'inspectors' out of the Mideast!"

The massive, sustained bombing launched by the White House December 16 will be the deadliest the U.S. rulers have carried out since the Gulf war in early 1991. Like his Republican predecessor George Bush, President William Clinton has no qualms about sacrificing the lives of workers and

EDITORIAL

farmers in Iraq for the interests of the billionaire families who rule the United States.

As in the 1991 war, and the other U.S. bombardments of Iraq since Clinton took office, the aim of the U.S. rulers is to strengthen Washington's dominance over the toilers in the Mideast, advance their military encirclement of the workers state in Russia, and deal a blow to the unquenchable struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination. At the same time, the American propertied families are seeking to strengthen their hand against their imperialist rivals in Europe and Japan.

The Clinton administration's professed concern over Baghdad's supposed "weapons of mass destruction" is pure hypocrisy. Not only is Washington the only power ever to use nuclear weapons against human beings, killing hundreds of thousands of civilians in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The U.S. rulers have repeatedly used chemical and biological weapons — against the peoples of Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, and other countries. And countless working people in Puerto Rico, the United States, and elsewhere have suffered from the testing of weapons of mass destruction.

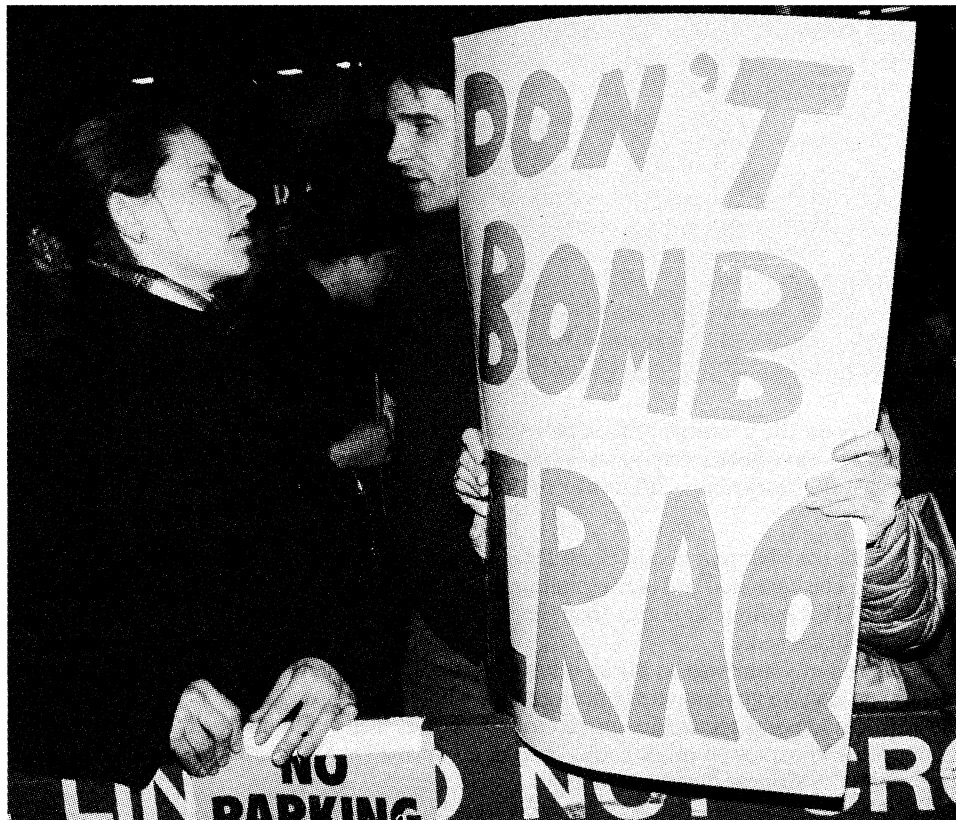
On top of the blood of at least 150,000 Iraqis slaughtered in the Gulf war, Washington is responsible for the deaths of more

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Striking coal miners to vote on proposed contract with Freeman

As we go to press, officials of the United Mine Workers of America and the Freeman United Coal Co. have presented a proposed contract to settle the three-month-long coal strike by 350 miners in central Illinois against Freeman. On December 15 UMW president Cecil Roberts presented the proposed agreement to a joint meeting of all three striking locals. After a 48-hour period to read and discuss the proposals, the membership will vote December 17.

The next issue of the *Militant* will carry further coverage.



Some 100 people gathered immediately at Times Square in New York City to protest bombing assault by Washington and London against Iraq December 16.

Militant/Doug Nelson

Washington and London launch biggest assault since '91 slaughter

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

After more than a year of constant provocations against Baghdad and repeated preparations for a military assault, U.S. president William Clinton ordered "Operation Desert Fox" against Iraq December 16. The massive aerial attack began at 1:00 a.m. Baghdad time. U.S. warships in the Arab-Persian Gulf launched a volley that totaled more than 200 cruise missiles without warning, as U.S. planes began bombing raids. British war planes are also deployed as part of the attack force.

This is the largest military action against Iraq since the end of the 1991 U.S.-organized Gulf war. U.S. military officials said the second night of attacks called for using 15 B-52 bombers armed with long range cruise missiles, firing from outside Iraq's borders.

"I have ordered a strong, sustained series of attacks against Iraq," Clinton declared.

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4,000 garment workers set up pickets in response to lockout in Montreal

BY CARLOS CORNEJO

MONTREAL — Nearly 4,000 men's clothing workers, members of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), began picketing 25 factories in Montreal and the surrounding region December 14.

"We aren't machines, we are human beings," "Dignity, justice," and "Together we will win," their placards read. At SFI Apparel factory, located on a busy street, many truckers honk their horns to show support. The mood is combative, and the workers have stopped delivery trucks.

The picket lines went up Monday morning after garment bosses declared a lockout at the end of the working day Friday, December 11. It was an effort to take the initiative away from the UNITE members, who had shown increasing determination in their contract fight over the preceding days. Two thousand workers met at the Convention Palace in Montreal December 10, on the eve of the lockout, and rejected the union negotiating committee's proposal to accept the employers' final offer with 70 percent opposed.

The struggle of these unionists will have a big impact on the 100,000 garment workers in Quebec, 88 percent of whom are not unionized. Approximately 80 percent of all workers in the industry are women, and three-quarters are immigrants.

Workers are defending themselves against the clothing bosses' attempt to lower wages throughout the industry. The employers have asked the Quebec government to abolish a decree regulating garment workers' wages in both union and nonunion shops. The decree is scheduled to end June 1, 1999.

Employers negotiating with UNITE are refusing to incorporate into the master union contract the base wages set by this decree, wages the union has won over the years. The master contract expired November 30. For nonunion workers, abolition of the decree would mean that the minimum wage

would become the basic wage.

The bosses want the new contract to institute lower wages for workers hired after the decree is abolished. In some cases, the

difference in wages for the same job under such a two-tier system would be up to CAN\$2 per hour (CAN\$1 = US\$0.65). The

Continued on Page 14

N.Y. actions demand release of Puerto Rican political prisoners

BY ROSE BAKER

NEW YORK — Hundreds of people took part in a day of actions here December 10 to demand the release of 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners held in U.S. jails, and to support independence for Puerto Rico. The action was the culmination of a year of political activities marking 100 years of resistance to U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico and step-

ping up the worldwide campaign for the release of the imprisoned independence fighters. Many of them have been locked up for 18 years, making them among the longest-held political prisoners in the world. The date marked the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 100 years since the sign-

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New International

U.S. IMPERIALISM HAS LOST THE COLD WAR

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New International ■ no. 7

Opening Guns of World War III:

Washington's Assault on Iraq

JACK BARNES

The U.S. government's murderous assault on Iraq heralded increasingly sharp conflicts among imperialist powers, the rise of rightist and fascist forces, growing instability of international capitalism, and more wars. In *New International* no. 7. Also includes "Communist Policy in Wartime as well as in Peacetime" by Mary-Alice Waters. **\$12.00**

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

Moscow: 23,000 teachers strike

Teachers in eastern Siberia and north-western Russia staged an indefinite walk-out December 15 with a demand that has become common among toilers there: back pay now. In Vologda 12,000 teachers at 443 schools and day-care centers went on strike. About 100 of them held a picket on the railroad tracks, which local authorities responded to by sending riot cops to the area. They have reportedly not assaulted the strikers, however. In Buryatia, Siberia, 11,500 teachers walked out and classes were suspended at 245 schools. The Russian government has accumulated millions of dollars in wage arrears to state employees over the past decade.

S. Korea workers protest layoffs

"Scrap the swap deal," chanted more than 10,000 protesting workers December 14 at the Daewoo Electronics Co. headquarters in Seoul, south Korea. They were referring to that company's plan to swap, or merge, debt-ridden subsidiaries with Samsung Motors Inc. under a government-mediated restructuring plan. The same day in the southern city of Pusan, another 10,000 workers from Samsung rallied against the plan, which is projected to include up to 40,000 firings. The Samsung-Daewoo deal is a centerpiece in Seoul's plan to consolidate pieces of the country's top five conglomerates. Workers have been holding daily protests since the scheme was announced in early December.

Tokyo takes over another bank

The Japanese government announced



Militant/Nelson Blackstock
Two miners on the grounds of Russia's White House (parliament) in Moscow July 18, 1998. Miners have been camped out since June, demanding back pay. The banners read: "All bosses are bastards — All power to the strike committees."

plans to take over Nippon Credit Bank December 13. The bank had bad loans totaling more than \$31.4 billion, far higher than was previously disclosed.

While Tokyo's aim was to boost investors' hopes that the government is acting to stabilize the banking sector, the move cast doubt on the accuracy of other banks' bad loans claims. "Japanese business conditions

continued to deteriorate virtually across the board through December," read the lead sentence in a December 14 *Wall Street Journal* article. The Bank of Japan's *tankan* — a closely watched survey that asks 9,129 companies if the economy is doing better or worse, then subtracts one from the other — worsened to minus 56 from minus 51 in October.

N.Y.: secret cameras on the rise

According to a New York Civil Liberties Union study, some 380 hidden surveillance cameras belonging to government agencies are filming parks, public streets, and sidewalks of Manhattan with the full blessings of New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Another 2,000 cameras operated by private entities are also in place, the study reports. Such cameras have proven to be "incredibly effective," in cutting crime, asserted New York City police commissioner Howard Safir, who added, "You have no right to privacy in a public place."

Doctors protest abortion ban

A dozen doctors in Hartford, Connecticut, say they will boycott the Hartford Surgery Center until it overturns a ban on elective abortions. Several other doctors sent a letter they signed December 10 to protest the ban, imposed by the center's main owner, HealthSouth Corporation of Birmingham, Alabama.

In related news, New Jersey joined the list of states where courts have struck down antichoice laws. Federal Judge Anne E. Thompson ruled that a state law, ostensibly aimed at banning a particular type of late-term abortion, was unconstitutional because it would threaten the health of women by denying them access to the safest medical procedures. Thompson also noted that the law was so vaguely written it could be used to prevent abortions altogether. Similar laws have been overturned by Federal courts in at least 10 states.

— BRIAN TAYLOR

Separate IAM district for airline mechanics passes

BY LARRY LANE

SAN FRANCISCO — Officials of International Association of Machinists (IAM) District 141, headquartered here in San Francisco, announced December 11 that a referendum within the district approved the establishment of a separate district lodge for the mechanics and related members of District 141.

IAM District Lodge 141 membership also currently consists of ramp service, stores, kitchens, and customer service workers at United Airlines; mechanics, cleaners, and ramp workers at USAirways; and union members at a few smaller carriers. There are some 55,000 members in the district.

IAM top officials had begun pressing for a referendum following the announcement

that a company-minded outfit — the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) — has secured enough signatures throughout the country to force a bargaining representative election among mechanics at Northwest Airlines. IAM tops then rapidly moved to establish a separate district at Northwest, adapting to AMFA's craft-mentality arguments but a majority of those who voted at Northwest voted for AMFA.

At the District 141 convention in Pittsburgh in October, delegates approved holding the referendum at United and USAirways.

District Lodge 141 issued a tellers report stating that 23,606 ballots had been mailed out. Of those returned, 5,935 or 63 percent voted yes, 3,100 or 33 percent voted no, and 390 were void. The total number of votes was 9,425 — 40 percent of the 23,606 ballots mailed out. The statement goes on to say that ballots were "sent to all District 141 members covered by Mechanic and Related Classifications at United, USAirways, Piedmont, Aloha and Hawaiian Airlines as well as Johnson Controls (IND)."

The tellers report concludes, "Based on

the results of the vote, The Committee to implement the creation of the new Mechanics and Related District will begin to meet the first week of January."

A statement issued by Kenneth Thiede, president and general chairman of IAM District 141, points out that a recent conference of District Lodge 141 voted to create a committee of officers and rank-and-file members to "develop an implementation plan consistent with the referendum." The implementation committee will then make recommendations to the IAM international president R. Thomas Buffenbarger.

Larry Lane is a maintenance machinist at United and member of IAM Local 1781.

THE MILITANT

Independence for Puerto Rico!

Washington's colonial domination of the Puerto Rican nation reinforces racism and other divisions that sap the fighting capacity of working people. The 'Militant' tells the truth about this struggle for self-determination — a necessity for workers and farmers in the United States. Don't miss a single issue!



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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant's views. These are expressed in editorials.

Conflicts sharpen within NATO alliance

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

The government of Canada has taken new steps toward confrontation with Washington over military policy in NATO. These follow the accord between the British and French governments to give the European Union (EU) a role in military affairs in Europe and beyond, which was announced on December 1. That agreement heightened tensions between the imperialist regimes on the two sides of the Atlantic that belong to the reactionary military alliance.

The dispute among imperialist powers over military policy has now expanded within North America itself.

"The Canadian Parliament has taken another step toward confrontation with the United States over inclusion of nuclear weapons in NATO arsenals," said an article in the December 11 *Washington Post*. "After a two-year study and a divisive internal debate, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons has released a report accusing the United States and other nuclear powers of clinging to a Cold War mentality in their defense doctrines."

The report called on NATO to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons and to detach nuclear warheads from the missiles and bombs on which they are deployed. The document, released December 10, augmented calls on Washington and other major capitalist powers by Canadian foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy to reduce their nuclear arsenals.

Similar proposals were earlier floated by the government of Germany, whose representatives repeated them at the meeting of foreign ministers of NATO member countries in Brussels December 11. But the three powers in NATO with massive nuclear arsenals — Washington, London, and Paris — have categorically rejected such demands. Unlike these governments, Bonn and Ottawa are not nuclear powers.

"The committee report criticizes the United States for talking out of both sides of its mouth on the question of nuclear non-proliferation," the *Post* article said, referring to the Canadian parliament document, "urging countries such as India and Pakistan to renounce nuclear weapons, while keeping them at the ready for its own use."

This course by the Canadian government has provoked sour retorts by the White House. The *Post* article concluded with the following paragraph: "Minister Axworthy is pursuing a course that could lead to a growing and dangerous rift within the alliance," a U.S. official said."

Shift of alliances sharpens rift

Tensions within NATO have also grown between Washington and its imperialist allies in Europe.

This was reflected in the accord between London and Paris pledging the support of both governments — the main powers in western Europe capable of quickly deploying sizable combat forces abroad — to giving the European Union a military role for the first time. This signifies a weakening of the "special relationship" of military and economic cooperation between Washington

and London that has been in place for half a century. It also registers a step forward for the French rulers, who have had the sharpest conflicts on military tactics and other policies with their U.S. counterparts.

Washington tried to put a positive spin on the development. But U.S. government officials could not hide their concern that the deal may weaken the domination of NATO in Europe, undercutting the hegemony of the U.S. government as the number one military and economic power in Europe.

"As Europeans look at the best way to organize their foreign and security policy co-operation, the key is to make sure that any institutional change is consistent with basic principles that have served the alliance well over 50 years," wrote U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright in an article in the December 7 *Financial Times* of London.

The first of these principles, Albright stated, is "to avoid decoupling: NATO is the expression of the indispensable trans-Atlantic link. It should remain an organization of sovereign allies, where European decision making is not unhooked from broader alliance decision-making."

A number of bourgeois politicians and pundits pointed to the growing conflict these statements registered.

"Albright's article in the Dec. 7 *Financial Times* was clearly propelled by the historic British-French decision that the European Union must have its own defense role," wrote ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan in a syndicated column published December 12. "Prime Minister Tony Blair is taking Britain deeper into Europe and away from the United States."

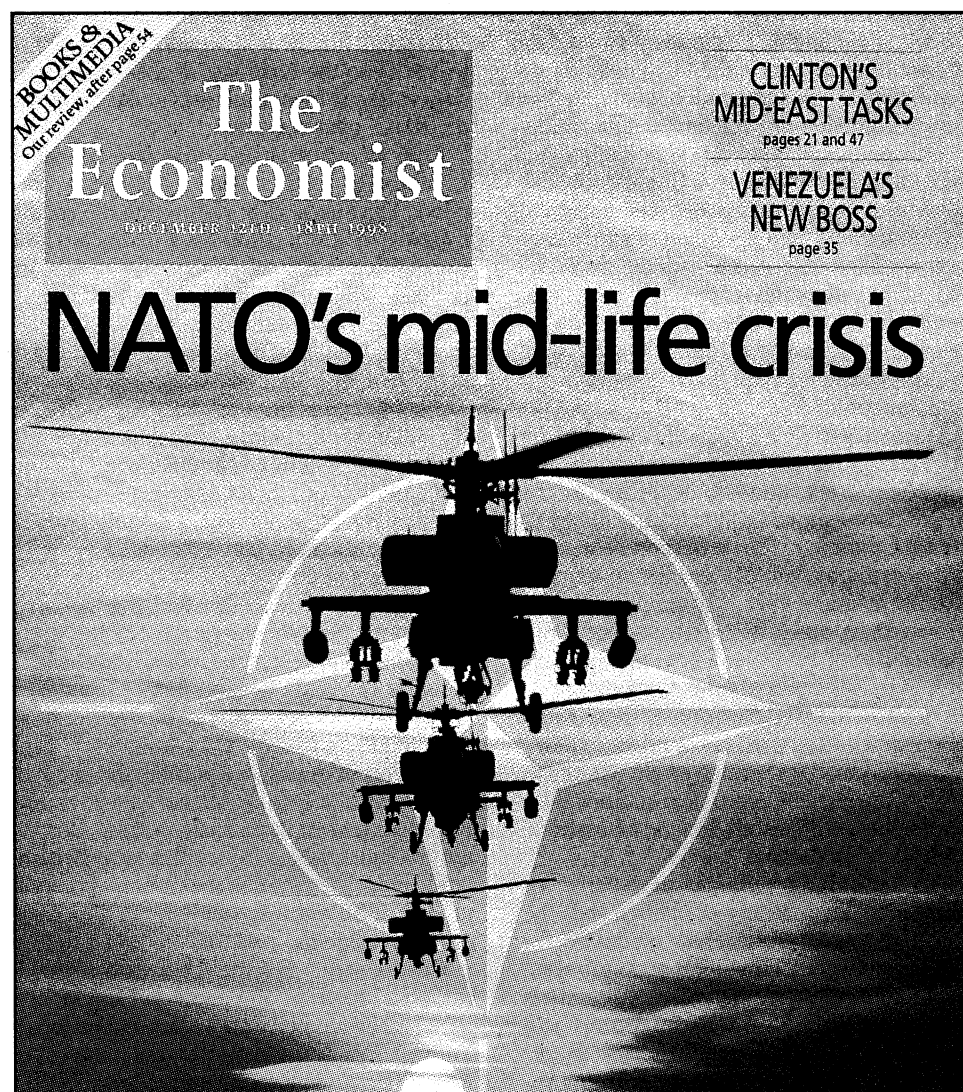
With the disintegration of the Soviet Union nothing can hold the Atlantic military alliance together, Buchanan said. "The EU is creating a single-currency zone larger than the United States as a rival. It is consolidating defense industries to cut dependence on U.S. weapons. It disagrees with U.S. Mideast policy, rejects our policy in the Gulf and ignores our sanctions on Cuba, Iran and Iraq."

At the Brussels meeting, Albright pushed the latest White House proposals to maintain NATO's dominance. These include making formal the jurisdiction of the U.S.-run alliance to intervene beyond the borders of its member states and deployment of military forces without seeking authorization of the United Nations Security Council — as has been the case in Yugoslavia.

"We must be prepared because we know that events beyond NATO's immediate borders can affect vital alliance interests," Albright said.

These proposals were not welcomed by many of Washington's imperialist allies in the EU. French foreign minister Hubert Védrine said December 8 that by implementing this course "we would run the risk of diluting the alliance and dividing the allies, which, of course, should not happen."

"Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer of Germany said it would be a mistake to make a rule out of the exception that the allies made



Front page of December 12-18, 1998, issue of the British magazine *The Economist*.

this fall in Kosovo," said an article in the December 9 *New York Times*. "NATO threatened bombing to halt government attacks against ethnic Albanian civilians in the Kosovo province of Serbia, even though the United Nations Security Council had not explicitly authorized military action."

The conflict over how to carry out imperialist intervention in Yugoslavia has been at the center of tensions within NATO. It was on the blood of the people of Yugoslavia that the U.S. government established itself as the major "European" power. As the rival capitalist classes in Europe wore themselves out in futile attempts to displace one another as the winner in the new Balkan wars, Washington unfurled its NATO banner in 1994 and decisively moved in. The U.S. rulers' aim has been to establish U.S. supremacy in Europe and create the conditions that one day will facilitate the restoration of capitalist social relations throughout the Yugoslav workers state.

Parallel to this "success" in displacing its imperialist competitors in Yugoslavia, was Washington's push to expand NATO into eastern and central Europe bringing U.S. troops closer to Russia's borders. During a NATO summit meeting scheduled for April in Washington, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the military alliance, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic are supposed to be taken into NATO membership.

At the same time, U.S. army officers are being used in 13 countries in Central and Eastern Europe to "train" military officers of those regimes. This is part of building a military ring around the former Soviet Union, in anticipation of future confrontations with working people in Russia in order to reestablish the domination of capitalism there.

The policies Albright announced in Brussels are supposed to be ratified at the April NATO meeting. The prospects for that gathering are not so rosy for Washington's goals, however.

"NATO's mid-life crisis," is the front-cover story of the December 12 *Economist*. "Just as it was preparing to hang out the bunting for its 50th birthday next April, the world's strongest military alliance has teetered on the brink of real trouble," said the magazine's lead editorial. "In backroom discussions, NATO diplomats found they could not agree on what the alliance is for, what weapons it would threaten of us and in what circumstances. In the absence of the Soviet threat that once glued NATO and its 16 members together, such disagreements have an ominous feel about them; however effective it has been in the past, nothing guarantees that this partnership will last for ever."

Disagreements are also mounting over Washington's policy of attempting to overthrow the regime of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein. On December 14, UN secretary general Kofi Annan said the Clinton administration's calls for toppling the gov-

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NATO expands occupation in Balkans

BY BOBBIS MISAILIDES

ATHENS, Greece — Under the guise of protecting the rights of the Albanian majority in Kosova and implementing the accord reached last October between U.S. government special envoy to the Balkans Richard Holbrooke and Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic, the U.S.-led NATO alliance is deepening its intervention in Yugoslavia. The agreement was signed under the threat of NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia. The stepped-up imperialist intervention aims to lay more firmly the ground for eventually restoring capitalism throughout the region of the Yugoslav workers state. Washington has used its control of the intervention through NATO to bolster its dominance in Europe at the expense of its rivals, particularly Paris.

NATO has begun to send an "extraction" force into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. On December 7, six aircraft carrying military and telecommunications materiel along with 40 French soldiers flew from France to the NATO post in the region of Macedonia bordering Kosova. Seven hundred more French troops are to be sent

in the next two weeks. The NATO force is expected to reach 1,800 troops, but, if it is considered necessary, it will be increased by several thousand more, stated the Athens daily *Eleftherotypia*. The newly elected Macedonian prime minister Ljubco Georgievski upon taking office explained that his support to the NATO troops is part of his government's drive to put Macedonia "on the road leading to integration with the European Union and NATO."

The stated purpose of the NATO force in Macedonia is to be prepared to go into Kosova to save 2,000 "observers" sent there under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The stationing of the OSCE "observers" was agreed to by Milosevic in the accord with Holbrooke. Under the Milosevic-Holbrooke accord, the OSCE force is supposed to monitor withdrawal of troops and police from Kosova that Belgrade deployed there in an effort to crush the struggle of the oppressed Albanians for national self-determination.

Belgrade's deputy prime minister Tomislav

Nikolic denounced the development of NATO troops in Macedonia, saying that "any entry by NATO forces into the Yugoslav or Serbian territory would be a violation of international law and occupation of a state by a military organization."

Despite the threat of air strikes by NATO, a new so-called "peace-plan" pushed by U.S. government envoy Christopher Hill has been rejected by the Milosevic regime as well as by Kosovar leader Fehmi Angani in the continuing negotiations. Angani said that Hill's proposal is "unacceptable because it comes closer to the positions and demands of Serbia that it retain its domination of Kosova."

The Kosova Liberation Army (UCK), which has been carrying out a guerrilla war for independence of Kosova, declared in a statement last week that it "will not accept any political settlement that would endanger the aspirations of our people for independence or require us to live in an anti-Albanian, undemocratic state without a future, such as Yugoslavia."

Since the Milosevic-Holbrooke accord a cease-fire has been observed by the Milosevic regime and the UCK.

Help send 'Militant' reporters to Yugoslavia!

A team of *Militant* correspondents are on their way to Kosova and Belgrade. They will report first-hand on the fight of Albanians in Kosova for independence, the impact of the imperialist intervention, and other political developments in the region. Contributions to help finance this trip can be sent to: the *Militant*, 410 West St., New York, NY. 10014, earmarked "Balkans Reporting Team."

Irish nationalists press fight for equality

BY PAUL DAVIES

MANCHESTER, England — In the face of continued determination by Irish nationalists, the British government is attempting to stall implementing the terms of the agreement signed last April by political parties in Northern Ireland and the British and Irish governments. Of the institutions mandated in that accord, the only one established so far is the shadow assembly for the six counties of Northern Ireland. This body was sought by representatives of Unionism — those who want to preserve the “union” with Britain — and opposed by Irish republicans in the negotiations.

The October 31 deadline for establishing an executive of the shadow assembly has come and gone, and the deadline for the proper establishment of the all-Ireland Ministerial Council, made up of representatives of the Irish government and the six-county assembly, approaches. “If that deadline is missed then there is no agreement,” explained Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams. Sinn Fein is the party that is fighting to end the British-imposed partition of Ireland and establish a united and independent nation.

Unionist leader David Trimble withdrew, without agreement, from negotiations over the executive and the all-Ireland Ministerial Council on December 3.

Writing in the republican newspaper *An Phoblacht*, Sean Brady explained that the Unionists “have no interest or desire for equality between nationalists and unionists. In practice, equality between nationalists and unionists would mean equal job opportunities...equal right to access to services and resources...equality with unionists in the civil service, the policing service.” Brady argues that British prime minister Anthony Blair “bears special responsibility as the representative of the British state to which the unionists claim allegiance and which still claims jurisdiction over the Six-county area.”

Britain imposed the division of Ireland earlier this century, against the wishes of the majority of the Irish people. It has maintained systematic discrimination against Catholics living under British rule in the northern six counties. Where most people live, work, and study is still largely determined by their religious background. In Portadown, for example, this reporter was told by Breandan Mac Cionnaith, a leader of the nationalist community, that many Catholics cannot freely walk into the city center without harassment, intimidation, or even death threats. This setup is fostered by the British to ensure relative privileges for the Protestants, with the intention of maintaining a bulwark of Protestant support for British rule against the Catholic majority that make up the island’s population.

Campaign against RUC, British troops

Sinn Fein launched a week of street protests December 4 outside barracks of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) across Belfast, demanding the disbandment of the pro-British police force.

Some 1,000 nationalists poured into the Whiterock community center November 4 to testify to the beatings, abuses, and murders suffered by nationalists at the hands of the RUC, over the years.

Opponents of British rule also continue to campaign for the release of political prisoners. Despite British stalling on the establishment of new institutions, London has had to continue to release of republican prisoners. On November 26 Alex Murphy and Henry Maguire walked out of Long Kesh prison in Belfast. They had been convicted in 1988 in the killing of two British soldiers. The soldiers had driven an army car into the funeral of Kevin Brady, who was murdered by loyalist assassin Michael Stone. Stone had killed Brady after opening fire indiscriminately on mourners at the funeral of three republican fighters shot dead by British soldiers in Gibraltar.

Also released recently were Joe Doherty and Jimmy Smyth. Supporters of the Irish freedom struggle in the United States campaigned for years to stop their extradition to the United Kingdom, before Washington returned them to their British jailers.

Irish republicans also point to the need to remove all the British troops — who number in the tens of thousands — from Northern Ireland. On November 22 a joint British army and RUC patrol in the County Armagh village of Silverbridge shot in the direction of local residents.

On the same day the RUC also opened fire on a crowd of 60 people in Lurgan, after it had evacuated an area around the local Youth Club and Gaelic Association. The RUC claimed that there was a “suspect device” in the area. Sinn Fein assembly member for Upper Bann Dara O’Hagan declared, “The RUC’s immediate resort to the indiscriminate use of plastic bullets in this incident of their own making is in stark con-

trast to the kid glove treatment of the nightly threatening activities of several hundred loyalists in Portadown. I am not suggesting that plastic bullets be used against loyalists, but pointing to just the latest displays of the partisan and sectarian nature of the RUC.”

As a part of their delaying tactics the British are attempting to put pressure on Sinn Fein through various ways, including unproven allegations of thuggery to prevent the Donegal Celtic football team from playing a match against a team of cops from the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Donegal Celtic initially agreed to play a cup semifinal against the RUC on November 15, but withdrew following campaigning by Relatives for Justice, a group whose family members have been killed by the RUC.

RUC harassment extends not only to individuals but also to republican groups and institutions. The RUC carried out two raids on the Felons Club in west Belfast the last two weeks of November. The club, an association of former political prisoners, has also come under pressure to force the resignation of all its committee members, in order to comply with a new law that forbids anyone with a prison record from membership of a club committee.

The Irish government has also got in on the act of trying to pressure republicans to make concessions. Elizabeth O’Donnell, the minister of state at the department of foreign affairs, said differences between Sinn Fein and the Ulster Unionist Party “poison and threaten the viability” of the agreement signed last April. She denounced the refusal of the Irish Republican Army to “decommission” its weapons ahead of the RUC, loyalist gangs, and British troops. Speaking at a conference of the ruling Fianna Fail party, Irish prime minister Bartholomew Ahern said there was an “irresistible dynamic” toward a united Ireland, and that this

would happen within the next “15 to 20 years.” Ahern stressed that this could only be accomplished, however, with the agreement of the Unionists.

In an attempt to salvage something for the British rulers from Ireland, British prime minister Anthony Blair became the first leader of the British state to address the Irish parliament since Britain imposed partition in 1922.

Meanwhile, Sinn Fein assembly member O’Hagan joined with nationalists workers at the Wilson double-deck trailers factory in Lurgan, Northern Ireland, to protest murder threats that have appeared on the factory walls. In recent days the slogan “Fenians Remember Hyster” has appeared on the workplace wall. This is in reference to the Hyster factory in Craigavon, where three nationalists were shot dead by loyalists in November 1991. Fenians were Irish revolutionaries in the last century, who fought to rid their country of British rule.

In Britain, supporters of the struggle for Irish freedom are organizing a national demonstration “Bloody Sunday Massacre — March for Justice, Time for Truth,” for Jan. 30, 1999. Last year a major victory was won with the announcement of a new inquiry into the events surrounding Bloody Sunday, when British soldiers shot and killed 14 peaceful civil rights demonstrators in Derry in 1972. As the new inquiry has unfolded, the ministry of defense has claimed that it cannot find any of the 1,800 British soldiers involved, apart from the 10 who have come forward voluntarily. It will be the first time in many years that a national demonstration about Ireland will march through the center of London and pass Westminster, the location of the British government.

Paul Davies is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union.

Cuban youth leader speaks in Sweden

BY ANITA ÖSTLING AND DANIEL AHL

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — Olga Díaz Ramos, a leader of the Union of Young Communists in Cuba, wound up her tour of Stockholm November 22. In all, she spoke to more than 350 people in high schools, seminars, colleges, and public meetings in the Stockholm area.

Díaz spoke at two high schools in different classes, in all 100 students heard her speak. Several students in Telge High School in Södertälje wanted to know how Cuba can have so many top athletes. “Are they doped?” students asked. Díaz explained that Cuba has a national system of physical training, free of charge, and accessible to every Cuban. This forms part of the preventive health-care system in the country. “This gives an opportunity for children to develop into first-class athletes if they have the talent and decide it is what they want to do.”

On her final day in Stockholm, Díaz met

with 27 young union activists from the construction, food, municipal, transport, and state employees unions. Their questions about Cuba included, “Who owns the means of production? How high is unemployment? How does the health-care system work? What kind of tax system exists in Cuba?”

Díaz spoke at a number of public events. Two meetings, at the University of Stockholm and in a public hall in the downtown area, became very polarized. The Social Democratic Student Association and the Student Left sponsored the meeting at the university. Some 40 people participated, among them a handful of Cubans living in Sweden who oppose the revolution. Díaz calmly countered all their statements and slanders.

The Committee for Youth Exchange with Cuba, the Sweden Cuba Friendship Association and the Workers Education Association (ABF) in Stockholm organized the public meeting in Stockholm. It was attended by 50 people out of which a dozen were Cubans hostile to the revolution.

About halfway into the meeting one participant stated that he loved Cuba, despite the revolution and the government. He mentioned health care and education being very good. But he said Cubans can’t invite foreigners to their homes and asked why Cubans can’t drive their guests in their cars.

Díaz answered by describing the conditions in Cuba before the revolution, saying that it wasn’t *despite* the revolution and the government that things are better now, but *because* of them. Cubans can drive foreigners in their cars, she added, but need a permit for being in business. Díaz then wrote her address down on a piece of paper and invited the participant to visit her in her home in Havana. This prompted one of the Cubans in the audience to leave his chair and try to rush up to the podium. He was stopped, but this incident led to disturbances in the hall and difficulty in keeping the meeting in order. The program ended after two hours. At the door on their way out two young men and a young woman separately explained that they had come out of curiosity and because they wanted to know more about Cuba. But given the polarized atmosphere in the hall they had refrained from raising their hands to ask their questions.

A couple days earlier, on November 18, Díaz visited Västerås, a town some 75 miles west of Stockholm. At noon she spoke to

more than 100 high school students at the Rudbeckian High School, invited by members of the Young Left, the youth organization of the Left Party.

Students asked about the future of Cuba and its socialist revolution. “Since 1990,” Díaz said, “it has been said that the Cuban revolution will fall. It has also been said that Cuba was a satellite to the Soviet Union. But Cuba has developed through a historical struggle for independence, which lasted for 130 years. We have made many mistakes along the way. But we have corrected and improved ourselves, and continue to do so.”

Later that day, Díaz was invited to speak at the town library. A majority of the 30 or so people attending the meeting were from Chile and other Latin American countries. As part of her presentation, she described the preparations of the Union of Young Communists for its seventh congress, which opened December 7.

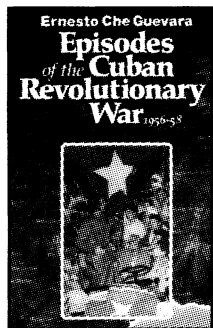
A debate was opened when Díaz was asked how the UJC views the arrest by British cops of former dictator of Chile, Augusto Pinochet. “We’re skeptical about it,” she declared. “We think it’s strange that those who supported the military dictators in Latin America back then are the ones who are now trying to prosecute them. From the human viewpoint, he clearly deserves the harshest possible punishment. Legally, one has to consider whether a government has the right to prosecute a person who has immunity in another country. One has to consider whether this brings about the prosecution of other individuals who the capitalists want to get their hands on, and to what extent this process has been created to give the right wing its own martyr. Up to now the left has had martyrs because we have been forced to fight. We see the danger in the Spanish judicial system prosecuting a person responsible for the Chilean trauma, and how this will unite the forces on the right. Prosecuting Pinochet is a decision the Chileans themselves have to make.”

Another question concerned the role of Cuban president Fidel Castro. “The leadership of the revolution,” said Díaz, “has worked very hard to renew itself, and has prepared a large group of youth to lead our country. Nobody can replace Fidel, but we will try to be like him.”

Daniel Ahl is a member of the Young Socialists in Stockholm.

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U.S. assault on Iraq

Continued from front page

less than 20 hours before the House of Representatives was scheduled to begin debate on impeaching him. "They are designed to degrade Saddam [Hussein's] capacity to develop and deliver weapons of mass destruction."

Pentagon officials said the imperialist onslaught could last up to four days, suggesting some White House officials wanted to end it before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Clinton said in his televised address to the nation, "For us to initiate military action during Ramadan would be profoundly offensive to the Muslim world and, therefore, would damage our relations with Arab countries and the progress we made in the Middle East."

But U.S. war secretary William Cohen declared there was no set time frame. "We intend to carry out our mission, how long it must take."

"It seems that Clinton... wants to kill some people in a hurry out of respect for Ramadan," Amin Jadir, an Iraqi government worker, sarcastically told a reporter in Baghdad.

"Maybe the Arabs and Muslims will stand with us after seeing how much injustice we are facing," remarked Abu Ali, a grocer in Baghdad.

Meanwhile, more than 3,000 Palestinians took to the streets of Nablus in the West Bank December 17, chanting "Death to Clinton," "Death to America." The demonstrators burned a dozen U.S. flags, including those that had been distributed by the Palestinian Authority several days earlier to cheer the arrival of Clinton in the Gaza Strip and Bethlehem.

"Two days ago, Clinton was here and we thought he carried a message of peace," said Majeda Masri, a teenage protester. "But now it is clear that he is a murderer."

In Baghdad, doctors at a hospital said the first wave of attacks killed at least five people and injured 30 others. One of the missiles hit Karada, a commercial and residential neighborhood, bursting a water main that flooded a one-and-a-half-mile stretch that included streets in downtown Baghdad. Workers were shown on television trying to patch the bubbling pipe.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry Shelton said December 17 that the first night's missiles had leveled headquarters buildings of Iraqi special forces and intelligence operations in Baghdad. Four of the five barracks housing special guards were also destroyed, he asserted.

Tehran radio reported a missile hit the city of Khorramshahr, inside the Iranian border.

More troops for imperialist slaughter

Washington currently has some 24,100 military personnel, 22 warships, the *USS Enterprise* aircraft carrier, and 201 warplanes in the region. London has 22 combat planes, including more than a dozen Tornado fighter bombers, deployed in the area. The U.S. rulers plan to beef up their massive armada with the aircraft carrier *USS Carl Vinson* and its 60 combat aircraft, at least 10 F-117 Stealth fighter jets, and a brigade of ground troops due to arrive in the Gulf on December 18.

At a December 16 new conference, General Shelton stated the additional soldiers are "elements of a division-ready brigade to reinforce our troops already on the ground in Kuwait as part of Exercise Intrinsic Action." He said, "We're also in the process of deploying additional military forces to southwest Asia to U.S. central command's area of operation to bolster our already substantial military presence in the Gulf region." He noted that the Clinton administration was preparing a "crisis response force" that included an "air expeditionary wing" of 36 combat aircraft.

Washington launched the military attack after chief UN weapons inspector Richard Butler ordered UN "monitors" to leave Baghdad. Butler claimed the Iraqi government had reneged on its promise to allow the UN snoopers access to any area of Iraqi territory. On December 9 some 12 UN spies were blocked from entering a Baghdad branch office of the ruling Baath Party. An Iraqi official said the "inspectors" tried to enter the building "in a provocative way and with no notice."

Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariq Azziz said the provocation and Butler's report were "intended to trigger an American and British military strike on Iraq." Hell-bent on launching bombing raids against the Iraqi



Action outside U.S. embassy in Amman, Jordan, November 22 protests Washington's threats.

people, "the Clinton administration did not inform other nations, even NATO partners, in fear that word of the attack would reach Iraq before the attack was set," wrote Bill Gannon in the December 17 *Star Ledger*, published in Newark, New Jersey. Plans for the assault were limited to London and "other strategic partners" in the Arab-Persian Gulf, such as Tel Aviv.

One month ago, Clinton called off the first stage of a massive bombing mission on November 14 at 8:45 a.m., just 15 minutes before Washington's war machine prepared to rain 300 cruise missiles on Iraq. At the time British prime minister Anthony Blair declared if Baghdad didn't go along with every demand of the UN snoopers the next time there will be "no warnings, no wrangling, no negotiations, no last-minute letters.... The next withdrawal of cooperation and [Iraqi president Saddam Hussein] will be hit."

The U.S. government provoked that crisis as well as the previous ones by trying block any steps by Baghdad toward easing the draconian embargo imposed on the Iraqi people. On October 31 Hussein announced his government would prohibit inspections or monitoring, after Washington excluded a section from UN resolution 687 in its draft review of Baghdad's compliance with the UN inspection program.

That section explicitly states that once Iraqi is declared free of "weapons of mass destruction" the oil embargo will be lifted. Iraqi officials state that due to shortages caused by the embargo some 5,000 children die each month from the effects of malnutrition and other ailments.

"We saw that the U.S. is not going to let the UN ease sanctions, regardless of what we do," said Iraqi ambassador to the UN, Nizar Hamdoun.

Paris has pushed for the sanctions to be lifted, dreaming of the day when French oil companies can regain prominent trade positions in the gulf region. Highlighting the accelerating interimperialist tensions, Paris condemned the U.S. air strikes. "France deplores the escalation which led to the American military strikes against Iraq and the grave human consequences which they could have for the Iraqi people," the French government declared in a statement. The Chinese and Russian governments, also opposed the attack. "We are very displeased and were urge the United States to stop its military action towards Iraq," said China's foreign ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi in Beijing.

"Russia demands an immediate end to military action," said a statement issued by President Boris Yeltsin December 17, "to show common sense and restraint and not to allow further escalation of the conflict,"

Continued on Page 14

House postpones impeachment debate

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

The U.S. House of Representatives postponed debate and vote on impeachment proceedings against William Clinton after the president ordered sustained bombing raids against Iraq December 16. "We're not going to put off this impeachment matter indefinitely," declared Rep. Steve Chabot, Republican from Ohio.

Congress voted to authorize the impeachment inquiry October 8. Two months later on December 12-13, the House Judiciary Committee approved four articles of impeachment against Clinton. They include charges that he committed perjury in his appearance before a grand jury on August 17, when he provided "false and misleading testimony" on his sexual encounters with former White House employee Monica Lewinsky. The president is also being accused of "misuse and abuse" of the Oval Office.

A majority of 218 votes in the 435-member House of Representatives is needed to approve any article of impeachment, which would move the case to the Senate for a trial. A two-thirds majority in the Senate is required to remove Clinton from office.

During the week leading up to the bombing of Iraq, debate spread among capitalist politicians over whether to impeach or censure Clinton. Announcements by an increasing number of Republican politicians, who hold a majority in the House, indicated that Clinton would have likely been impeached if the vote had been held as scheduled on December 17. The scandal mongering and repeated disclosures of his sexual transgressions, however, has led to a situation where any option to resolve the crisis weakens the U.S. presidency.

That will be the case whether Clinton resigns, is removed from office, impeached by the House but not found guilty by two-thirds of the Senate, or admits he is a liar as a number of Democrats and Republican politicians who are calling for the option of censure

demand.

Many in U.S. ruling circles are increasingly nervous that the impeachment process will heighten political instability. Removing Clinton "under the present circumstances of a polarized party-line vote," wrote the editors of the *New York Times* December 16, "could become a bigger threat to civic stability." Impeachment would undermine "public confidence" in the government's chief executive office they opined.

The *Times* editors and other bourgeois pundits and politicians have advised Clinton to admit lying as the only hope to save his hide and stay in office. The president needs to declare that "in fact he lied and say he's willing to face the court like any other American citizen and be held accountable for his actions," said Rep. Christopher Shays, a Republican from Connecticut who had earlier declared he would vote against impeachment.

If the House votes for impeachment, the *Times* editors called for considering a "joint Senate-House resolution of condemnation" offered by former Senator Robert Dole that would bar criminal prosecution of Clinton while censuring the president and forcing him to acknowledge "what everyone knows about his repeated and purposeful lies." Clinton would have to sign such a document to stay in office.

The scandal has fueled cries by right-wing forces about lack of morals and spreading of corruption among the "elite" in Washington. Bonapartist politician Ross Perot called for "cleaning up the government" and demanded Clinton's resignation.

"Censure is a coward's option, another one of those insider deals that explain why so many Americans hate politics," declared ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan. "It is an extra-constitutional act, a corrupt bargain."

The majority of working people in the United States continue to reject what can best be described as the pornographication

of politics — that is, "exposing" the disloyalty and corruption of bourgeois politicians to exacerbate and profit from middle-class panic and to drag workers along with the declining capitalist class down into the pit of resentment and carnal envy. This is the stock-in-trade of a range of bourgeois politicians, especially ultrarightists.

The November 3 U.S. elections indicated that the majority of working people could care less about Clinton's libido and sexual exploits. That sentiment appears to continue to be prevalent as the Republican party leadership has pushed the impeachment process forward. "I'm really getting bored with it," said Steve Hancock, a school bus driver in Pasadena, California. "It's gotten to the point where I don't even want to pay attention."

What's behind the unfolding presidential crisis is the greater vulnerability to scandals today of virtually all top politicians of the most rapacious ruling class in the world. This is a reflection of the instability of the world imperialist order and the growing lack of confidence in this system and its leading personnel expressed both by its beneficiaries and millions of others.

Washington's military superiority in Europe, for example, is being challenged by a growing number of its imperialist allies on the other side of the Atlantic and beyond as the debate over NATO military policy shows (see article on page 3).

The strains between the main capitalist powers are exacerbated by fiercer economic competition among them as a war of words continues to erupt between the U.S. government and officials of the European Union over agricultural trade and market share of their competing aircraft and war industries. The crisis is becoming more apparent to millions as world deflationary pressures have resulted in commodity prices dropping to their lowest level in two decades, bringing the specter of the "Asian flu" much closer to the United States and other imperialist centers.

Protesters demand: 'Stop the bombing!'

BY VALERIE JOHNSON

NEW YORK — Chanting, "Stop the bombing!" more than 100 people gathered at Times Square December 16 as thousands of passersby saw live footage of Washington's air strikes against the people of Iraq airing on the screen overlooking the square.

While some individuals passing the protest shouted pro-imperialist remarks like, "Make Iraq a parking lot," many people took literature demonstrators were passing out.

Shortly after the protest began, the police hauled away one of the speakers for allegedly not having a sound permit for the action. This was met with chants of "Free speech! Free speech!"

Anthony Wilkins, a garment worker and member of Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees Local 168, came directly from the factory he works at with a co-worker after hearing about the action on the radio. Wilkins stated, "To me he's trying to cover up," referring to Clinton. "He says Saddam can't threaten his neighbors, but he's bombing Iraq!" the worker added.

Six students from Philadelphia walking by joining the protest. One chanted, "We're with you — no to war," and "Free Mumia," referring to Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is on death row in Pennsylvania.

Another action is call for December 17 at 5:00 p.m.

At press time the *Militant* had received reports of similar actions from Des Moines, Iowa; Houston; Newark, New Jersey; Seattle; Washington, D.C.; Chicago; and New Zealand.

Detroit meeting celebrates the life of veteran socialist Helene Millington

BY CHARLES HANLON

DETROIT — Some 40 people gathered at the International Institute in Detroit November 29 to celebrate the life of Helene Millington, a member of the Socialist Workers Party since 1975. Millington died here October 21 at the age of 86 while hospitalized for heart surgery. People who had worked alongside of Millington over the last decades came from around Michigan, as well as from Chicago; Seattle; Toledo, Ohio; Connecticut; Toronto; and Blenheim, Ontario. Two of Helene's daughters were present. Around a dozen people sent messages to the meeting, several of which were read to the meeting. An article on Millington's life and political contributions appeared in the November 16 issue of the *Militant*.

John Sarge, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party branch in Detroit and an auto worker, chaired the meeting and welcomed participants. "Millington's political activity spanned seven decades," Sarge said. "She came to Detroit in 1932 to escape the isolation of a small town in Indiana." She participated in labor struggles, the civil rights movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement, prior to joining the party in 1975.

Robin Maisel, in a message to the meeting, said "When I lived in Detroit and Helene first came into contact with our movement and up to the time I left for Los Angeles in 1978, Helene was called 'Sue.' ... Around the time Sue came around the forums as a regular I mentioned to her that I was working at the old Square D plant. Sue had a friend who worked at Square D at the time of the 1954 strike. She knew the building well because she had gone with her friend to picket the plant. The cops took down the license plate numbers of everyone parked near the plant. She found her license plate number and name in her State police file. It was on a document with everything else blacked out with magic marker from September 1954."

At the age of 62 in 1975, Helene joined the Socialist Workers Party.

Jack Willey, a member of the SWP National Committee, who joined the party in Detroit, also spoke. Willey said he first met Helene in July of 1993 at a march to commemorate the 1963 giant march in Detroit led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which solidarized with the deepening struggle against Jim Crow segregation in Birmingham, Alabama, at the time. "I was fresh out of high school, a political activist, looking for a revolutionary organization to join. One that could actually lead a revolution in this country, knowing that this was the most powerful nation in the world. And as we began marching a friend and I came across a party election campaign table with signs and a number of people at it and one of them was Helene. The thing that struck me right from the beginning when I met Helene and the Socialist Workers Party was their serious attitude toward discussions with people like me and the way they carried themselves. This was my first contact with the party." Helene was 81 years old at the time.

James Harris and Arlene Rubinstein in a message to the meeting said, "Helene was one of those fortunate people that would



Memorial meeting for Helene Millington November 29 in Detroit. Left to right are Nan Bailey, John Sarge, Jack Willey, Shelton McCrainey, and Naomi Craine.

always maintain her youthful outrage at the injustices of capitalism. She would never accommodate herself to them or seek out a separate peace for herself even in advanced age. Helene was outraged by capitalist injustice, but she wasn't embittered or demoralized by it. ... Young people were especially attracted to her serenity and absolute confidence in the revolutionary capacities of working people. Those a little older were also attracted because after being around her some of her youthful enthusiasm would usually rub off."

Shelton McCrainey — from the Chicago branch of the Socialist Workers Party, a member of the United Steelworkers of America, and a Vietnam war veteran — told the meeting, "I joined the SWP when I worked at the General Dynamics tank plant near Detroit coming out of a strike. ... The question in my mind at the time was if I was too old to join. This was answered when I met Helene, who was in her 60s. She was a true revolutionary, hardworking, full of energy, love, talking politics to young people. She helped me overcome my fears of rejection in selling the *Militant*." McCrainey talked about the UMW strike at Freeman Coal Company in central Illinois and urged solidarity with the striking coal miners.

McCrainey recounted selling the *Militant* with Helene. He described her as a tireless salesperson of the socialist newsweekly at bus stops, at political events, at plant gates and in her neighborhood.

The chairperson recognized several participants in the meeting including two activists from Irish Northern Aid, a locked-out Detroit newspaper worker, and two activists from the Justice for Cuba Committee. One of Helene's neighbors from the retirement community where she lived came to the meeting and also sent a message. She had brought him to Militant Labor Forums in Detroit over the previous months.

Nan Bailey, a member of the SWP national trade union committee and a member of the International Association of Machinists in

Seattle, also spoke.

Bailey spent several years in the Detroit SWP working with Helene, beginning in 1976. Bailey described Millington's participation in the fight to defend school desegregation in Boston in the mid-1970s. "Helene was one of thousands from around the country who traveled to Boston to participate in the May 17, 1975, march supporting school desegregation and protesting the violent attacks that racists were carrying out against Black students as they were being bussed to school."

"From that movement, to the United Farmworkers grape and lettuce boycotts, to demonstrations in defense of a woman's right to choose abortion, you would always find Helene on the front lines of the action," Bailey said. "She thrived on these opportunities to do mass work. And she was a leader among us in consistently and effectively introducing communist ideas to fighters we met in these struggles. She was the leading *Militant* subscription seller during every sub drive while I was in Detroit, and I'm sure she was one of the leading salespeople in the

country," Bailey said.

"When the party made the turn to industry in the late 1970s, Helene enthusiastically supported that decision and worked in every way she could to help advance our work in the turn. Although she was already at retirement age and could not get a job in industry, she regularly participated in plant gate sales at plants we targeted to get jobs at in the Detroit area. The River Rouge UAW plant was her plant gate sale for some time."

"A few of the messages and comments here today have referred to Helene as unique. And she truly was an outstanding individual. But I want to submit that she was not unique. The conditions she faced in her lifetime, her decision to become a fighter on a number of important social questions, her conclusion in 1975 that joining the communist movement was the logical conclusion of what her political experiences as a fighter had taught her and the most effective way to advance those struggles. These are the same conclusions that so many women like Helene — and other fighters from all walks of life — are also reaching. And as the crisis of world imperialism deepens, many more will draw those conclusions. We can be confident that we can look forward to many Helenes joining the fight that Helene Millington put at the center of her life."

The meeting closed with a presentation by Naomi Craine, editor of the *Militant*. She reported on the success of the recent Red Weekend in the Pathfinder Building in New York City, which was organized for the installation of cutting edge computer-to-plate (CTP) equipment to cut costs and reduce labor time in the production of Pathfinder books. The installation of CTP is not just a good idea, but a necessity at this time to meet the needs of the communist movement and make the book production financially possible. She urged people to contribute to the Capital Fund whose goal is \$550,000 — the amount needed to pay for the equipment and pay off loans on the printing presses. The money collected goes toward these capital expenses, not operating expenses. The aim is to collect \$350,000 by the end of the year. Contributions of \$2,800 were raised in a special collection to honor Helene's life.

Conflicts sharpen in NATO

Continued from Page 3

ernment in Baghdad fall outside approved UN resolutions. Annan indicated that other powers in the UN Security Council are not backing U.S. government policy either.

Behind the brewing conflict within NATO is intensifying interimperialist competition over markets, trade, and who will superexploit the oppressed nations of the world.

Conflicts between themselves notwithstanding, the capitalist powers in the European Union are about to launch a common currency, the "euro," in order to better compete as a block against their chief rival in Washington. The December 16 *Financial Times* reported that many leading financial companies are predicting the euro will be a

stronger currency than either the dollar or the Japanese yen; that Nippon Life of Japan, the world's largest life insurance company, is considering shifting much of its overseas assets from dollars to euros; and the British government is publicly considering moves to join in the euro in as little as eight months.

The increased competition has also been registered in recent conflicts over agricultural trade, like banana exports, and sales of commercial aircraft, where the French-based Airbus appears to be gaining an edge in its competition with the U.S. giant Boeing.

Recently, a number of companies in Europe building weapons and combat aircraft are pushing the creation of an EU-wide conglomerate in the war materials industry. U.S. government officials are not too happy with this prospect, which is far from being materialized. "I do not like a world in which you have three large United States integrated contractors — Boeing, Raytheon and Lockheed — and one in Europe," said John Deutch, a former U.S. undersecretary of defense. This situation would "essentially not be competitive."

These trade conflicts could develop into shooting wars. And all the imperialist powers, with Washington at the helm, are getting ready for that eventuality, which includes not only military assaults against semicolonial countries like Iraq but the possibility of fighting between the imperialist powers themselves down the road.

This year the Pentagon has asked for the largest increase in military spending since 1984, during Ronald Reagan's first administration. Secretary of Defense William Cohen is seeking a 4 percent increase in the Pentagon's \$258 billion budget for next year, or at least \$10 billion, and a \$112 billion increase in the next six years.

Chicago: UPS workers hold one-day strike

BY CAPPY KIDD

CHICAGO — A surprise walkout by 3,000 United Parcel Service (UPS) package handlers and drivers paralyzed the operations of the sunrise shift at 12 Chicago-area facilities December 9. The walkout was called by Teamsters Local 705 to protest supervisors doing union work, numerous unsettled grievances, and the company's refusal to implement the contract that ended the 1997 national UPS strike.

"We told UPS, 'Hey, we are not playing. You have to respect our contract.' It was just a one-day strike but it got their attention and they're negotiating now," said Sonny Gavilan, 24, who has worked at UPS for five years.

Gavilan and Fiore Auriene spoke with *Militant* correspondents a few days after the walkout. Auriene is also 24 with four years on the job, and both are package handlers at

"the Catch," the largest UPS center in the world.

Failure to live up to the contract is a key issue for the thousands of package handlers who work part-time at UPS. After the 1997 strike, UPS agreed to convert 10,000 part-time jobs to full-time positions over a five-year period.

"There are over 1,000 people on each of the four shifts at the Catch and I don't know of anyone who has been given a full-time job," said Auriene.

Teamsters Local 705 represents more than 11,000 UPS workers in Chicago. Local 705 spokesman Paul Waterhouse was quoted in the December 10 *Chicago Tribune* saying, "We have grievances on a daily basis. When you add up what we have caught them doing, it's the equivalent of 50 full-time jobs." Other union officials said the company's estimated 1,000 supervisors work an extra

20 to 25 minutes a day handling packages.

Gavilan and Auriene told the *Militant* that UPS has been claiming they weren't doing the volume of business necessary to create the full-time jobs. "But they made over a billion dollars in profits in 1997 and they are projecting \$2 billion this year. How can they possibly claim the volume isn't there?" said Gavilan.

"The corporations don't care about the workers. To them, we are just the machinery," said Auriene.

When asked if they would be willing to resume the strike if the company continues to stonewall, Auriene said he would be more than happy to go back out and Gavilan responded he would be the first on the picket line.

Cappy Kidd is a member of the United Auto Workers.

Actions in New York City demand U.S. gov't free Puerto Rican political prisoners

Continued from front page

ing of the Treaty of Paris, when the rising imperialist power in Washington forced Madrid to codify the U.S. colonial conquest of the Spanish colonies in Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam.

The protests took place three days before residents of Puerto Rico voted in a nonbinding plebiscite conducted by the colonial government on that nation's status. Voters were supposed to indicate their preference on five choices: for Puerto Rico to remain a "commonwealth," to be a "free association," a variant of the commonwealth, with limited autonomy under U.S. colonial rule; to become the 51st U.S. state; to become independent; or none of the above. In a rebuff to the pro-statehood administration, slightly more than 50 percent of those voting chose "none of the above," a protest vote advocated by pro-commonwealth forces.

The day's events here began with a meeting at Baruch College. About 60 people, mostly students, came to hear Rafael Cancel Miranda, the well-known Puerto Rican anti-imperialist leader. The meeting was sponsored by the Black and Hispanic Studies Department and the Hispanic Society.

Cancel Miranda said the U.S. government had no right to go around the world posing as a champion of human rights, when Washington has a blood-soaked history of invasions of other nations — from Panama to Iraq and Bosnia — and repression against Puerto Rican independence advocates, holding 15 of them in U.S. jails today. Yet anyone who fights back against their brutality "is a terrorist, according to them."

"They talk about human rights!" said Cancel Miranda, who spent 28 years in U.S. jails for his pro-independence actions. "When I was in prison in Marion federal penitentiary, they kept me 18 months in a 'behavior modification' program. They used drugs on us. When that didn't work, it was the big stick. But with all that power, they couldn't break us. They broke my jaw, but they couldn't break my spirit."

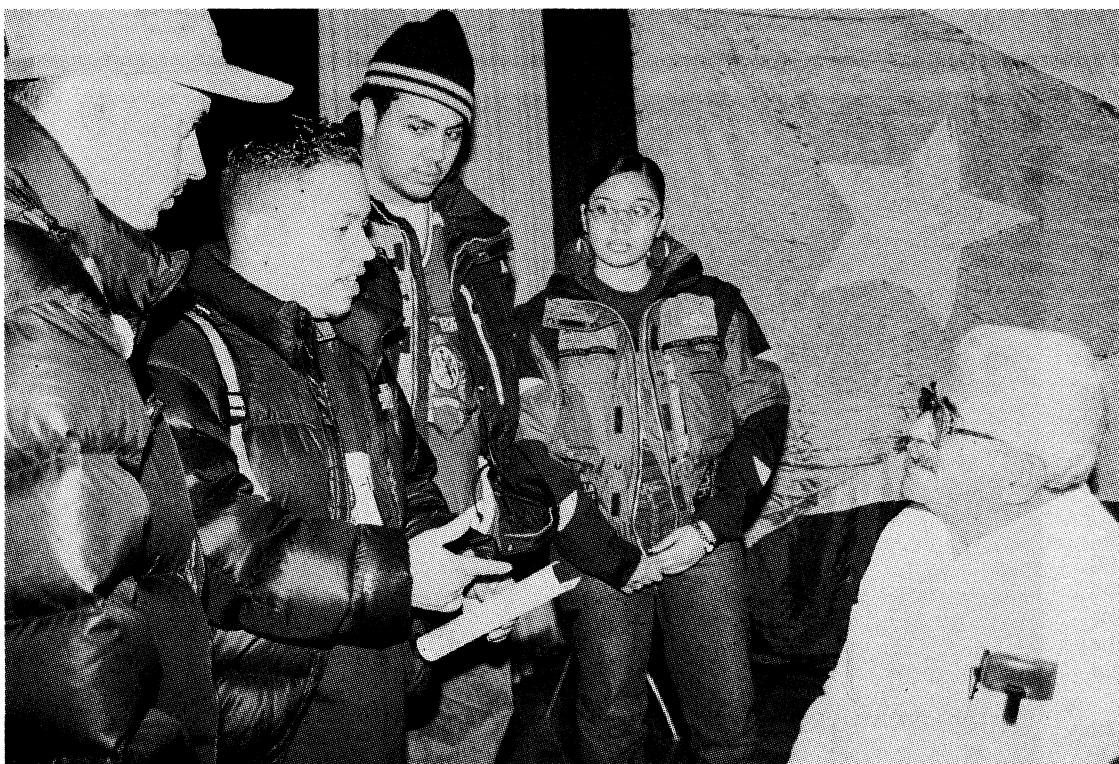
Cancel Miranda noted that in 1979, under growing worldwide pressure, the U.S. government freed him and three other imprisoned Nationalists. "They had to release us unconditionally. We didn't ask them for a pardon because we had nothing to be pardoned for — they are the ones who invaded our country," he underlined.

One of the meeting's hosts, Ana López, coordinator of the New York chapter of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners and a professor at Baruch, recalled the broad international campaign that won the release of Cancel Miranda and the other Nationalists, and the impact that these fighters had on her as a youth. She urged the audience to attend an afternoon picket line in front of the United Nations to call for the release of the political prisoners and show support for independence for Puerto Rico. Several students from the audience went to the event.

Some 200 people, overwhelmingly high school and college students, marched in the UN protest, many with large photos of the 15 prisoners and signs that said "Free them now!" or "Independence for Puerto Rico!" About 100 of them drove the 17 hours from Chicago to take part in the day's activities, said Marcos Vilar, national coordinator of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners.

Judy Madrid, a 17-year-old student who came to the events with classmates from Antonia Pantoja High School in Chicago, said she was protesting "the inhuman treatment that the political prisoners suffer in prison. They shouldn't be in prison for exercising their right to freedom of speech, press, and assembly."

Among those who addressed the rally were Vilar; New York City Councilman José Rivera; Sen. Angel Santos of Guam, who is active in the fight by the Chomoru people for the independence of that U.S. colony in the Pacific; several students from Chicago; Kazi Toure, a Black former political prisoner; and John Fogarty, a leader of the Irish-American Unity Conference in California who



Youth speak with Puerto Rican independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda December 10 at an evening meeting to sign declaration demanding U.S. president Clinton release the political prisoners immediately.

Militant/Rose Baker

helps organize efforts to win the release of Irish Republican political prisoners known as the H-Block Four. Fogarty read greetings to the rally from the H-Block Four.

Many at the rally, including activists from Pro-Libertad and the coalition Comité 98, had helped organize activities throughout the year to mark 100 years of resistance to U.S. colonialism and to call for the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners.

Young people at the rally used the opportunity to meet other fighters and organize future activities. Michelle Reteguiz and other students from Manhattanville College said they wanted to bring Puerto Rican and Irish freedom fighters together to their college.

A student at City College of New York, Carlos Torres, said he and other members of the Puerto Rico Collective are part of organizing a March speaking tour in New York of Cancel Miranda and fellow Nationalist hero Lolita Lebrón, along with Puerto Rican author Ronald Fernandez. The Puerto Rico Collective is a pro-independence youth group in the New York area.

That evening, a meeting of about 150 people was held at the UN Church Center, where a number of prominent figures and dozens of others signed a declaration calling on President William Clinton to release the Puerto Rican political prisoners immediately by granting them a pardon and general amnesty.

At the meeting, José López, director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and the brother of political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, introduced several speakers, including New York City Council member José Rivera as a longtime supporter of the campaign to free the Puerto Rican political prisoners.

One of the featured speakers and signers of the declaration was Angel Santos, the independence fighter from Guam.

"What right did the U.S. have to claim ownership of our lands and of our people?" Santos asked. Washington stole two-thirds of the richest agricultural lands, and military fences surround a lake used as a source of drinking water, he said. He cited the high levels of unemployment and alcoholism, similar to the oppressive conditions that Native Americans are subjected to in the United States. His graphic account had a visible impact on many in the youthful audience who expressed amazement at the similarities with the colonial conditions

facing Puerto Rico.

"They have tried to destroy our language and culture," Santos said. "We have a moral and legal obligation to do what we need to survive." He described several mass protests in which he had taken part over the last eight years against the U.S. military presence on Guam, including an ongoing "illegal" occupation of federal lands by the people of Guam and a successful fight to win universal access to beaches that were used by U.S. base personnel but that had excluded native residents.

To cheers from the audience, Santos said, "In the end, the spirit of our people will conquer the sword of the colonizer."

López pointed to U.S. government attempts to use grand jury investigations to frame up pro-independence activists. Marcos Vilar and others have been targeted in a grand jury investigation in which U.S. officials are seeking to frame University of Puerto Rico professor José Solís in relation to a 1992 bombing at a military recruitment center in Chicago. López is the director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, which is the object of an "investigation" by several

state agencies that claim misappropriation of government funds.

"There is a history of colonialism and a history of anticolonial resistance," López said. "But there is no way to stop the struggle, no matter how many grand juries or threats."

Cancel Miranda, the main speaker, said the U.S. rulers underestimate the capacity of the Puerto Rican national struggle. "They don't understand our strength. Just like they don't understand the strength of the Vietnamese people, who beat the hell out of them."

The Puerto Rican leader explained that the plebiscite in Puerto Rico was a farce designed to give legal cover to colonial rule. "How can you hold a free plebiscite in a country that is militarily occupied?" he asked. "They control our social, political, and economic life." Only through struggle against the U.S. colonial rulers will Puerto Rico win its freedom. Cancel Miranda expressed disagreement with a comment by councilman Rivera, who had said the Puerto Rican political prisoners "sit rotting in jail."

"They are *not* rotting in jail," Cancel Miranda said. "They will never rot because they are fighting, because they are free men and women."

"We have to fight back and win," Cancel Miranda said, "by whatever means necessary, because they use whatever means to smash us. If we fight, we will win."

Among those who signed the declaration calling for the release of the 15 political prisoners, in addition to Cancel Miranda, were representatives of the GABRIELA Network, a Filipina women's group; the War Resisters League; Comité 98; ASPIRA; Pro-Libertad; the Coalition to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal; Confederación Taíno; the Committee to Defend José Solís; the Socialist Workers Party; several religious figures; and students from Columbia College in Illinois; and University of California at Berkeley.

Vilar reported that the petition would be taken to the White House the following week by Rivera and a delegation of other elected officials.

Esperanza Martell, a leader of Pro-Libertad, reported that as a result of a phone calling and post-card campaign, the White House had received hundreds of thousands of requests for the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners.

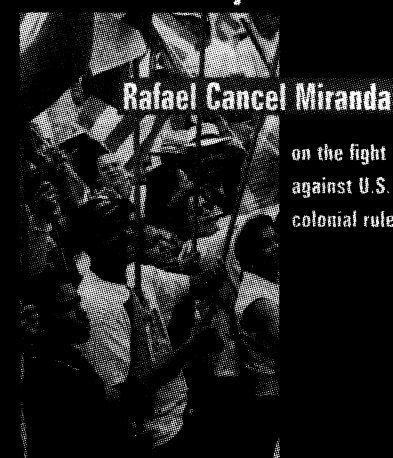
Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity

Rafael Cancel Miranda on the Fight against U.S. Colonial Rule

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Puerto Rico independence is a necessity



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YS convention shows openings for workers, farmers to forge links in

BY NAOMICRAINE
AND JOEL BRITTON

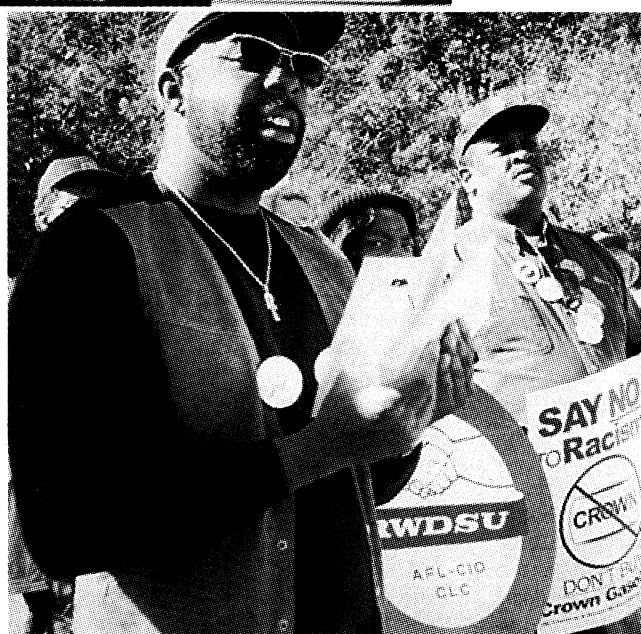
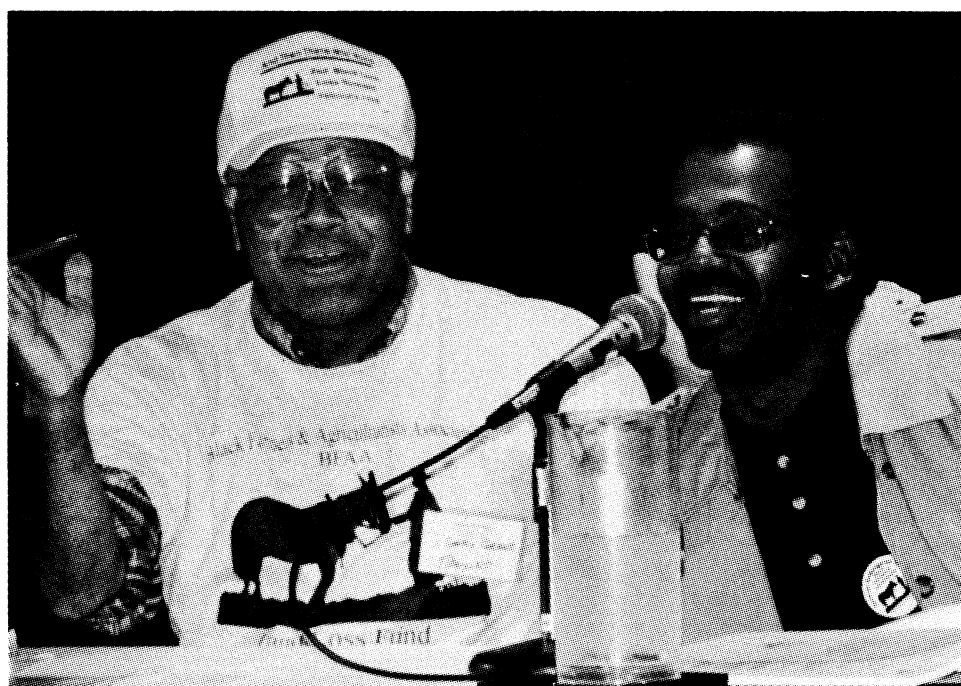
LOS ANGELES — The Third National Convention of the Young Socialists and Socialist Conference, held here December 4-6, registered the growing possibility for workers and farmers to forge links with each others' struggles and with the activity of a revolutionary proletarian youth organization. Of the 345 people who attended the conference, 91 were under the age of 27. Many participants were members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party and sister communist leagues. Guests at the conference also included several trade unionists and farmers leading current struggles.

The final conference session reported on the accomplishments of the YS convention and socialist conference, and preparations for the 40th constitutional convention of the Socialist Workers Party to be held next spring in San Francisco.

In his summary remarks SWP national secretary Jack Barnes stressed that the interlinking of struggles and fighters discussed throughout the gathering reflected the sea-change in working-class politics that has taken place over the last two years: a shift in the mass psychology of the working class away from the specter of retreat that marked the labor movement for nearly two decades.

Barnes noted that growing numbers of workers are becoming convinced that it is possible to win battles against the employers. Instead of each struggle appearing isolated and incidental, as it did for many years, there's a hunger in the working class for solidarity, for struggle, and for learning from each other.

Barnes underlined the importance of the Young Socialists' connection to the working class through the SWP. It's being linked to the working class that offers an effective strategic road forward to the social protests youth engage in. Protests without this working-class component — against the death penalty, for a woman's right to choose an abortion, denouncing police brutality — no matter how worthy, can become simply moral



There's a hunger in the working class today for solidarity, for struggle, for learning from each other. Top: Gary Grant (left) and Eddie Slaughter, leaders of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association, give a class during the conference on fight for land and against discrimination. Lower left: An October 11 march in Virden, Illinois, in solidarity with striking Freeman coal miners. Lower right: Locked-out oil workers and supporters picket in Birmingham, Alabama, November 12 to publicize fight against Crown Central Petroleum.

witress.

In this period, the SWP has the perspective not only of recruiting more individual workers, he said, but of getting to know, collaborating with, and fusing with groups of vanguard working-class fighters who are beginning to broaden their political scope.

Young Socialists convention

Eighteen delegates elected by YS chapters and YS members in cities where no chapter exists yet had voice and decisive vote in

the proceedings of the convention, which is the highest decision-making body of the Young Socialists. Members of the National Committee elected at the previous YS convention participated as fraternal delegates with voice and consultative vote, as did delegates from Young Socialists groups in Canada, France, Iceland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

These delegates discussed and adopted reports on building a proletarian youth organization and on the tasks and perspectives of the Young Socialists. They also elected a new National Committee.

Discussion on the main YS convention reports was open for all YS members and invited youth to observe. The convention reports were open to all participants in the broader socialist conference held in conjunction with the YS convention.

The conference sessions included presentations by Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *New International*, a magazine of Marxist politics and theory, and by Jack Barnes. Several YS members participated in a panel discussion about their experiences and activity held on the evening of December 5. Participants were also able to discuss and exchange experiences in classes, workshops, and at a lively display center.

Young Socialists Manifesto

Samantha Kern, a YS leader and meatpacker in San Francisco, gave the opening YS convention report, titled, "Building a Proletarian Youth Organization." She began by quoting from the Young Socialists Manifesto. This document had been drafted last April by the Los Angeles chapter in the course of several discussions where YS members sought to clarify for themselves the character and activity of their organization and the necessity of its relationship to

the SWP, the communist vanguard party of the working class in the United States.

This document, which is published in issue no. 11 of *New International* along with the "Aims of the Young Socialists" adopted at the organization's second national convention in Atlanta in 1997, was discussed in all of the YS chapters prior to electing delegates to the convention. It was adopted by the delegates as a guide for the organization.

The Manifesto starts with some of the key points raised in the article "Imperialism's March toward Fascism and War" by Jack Barnes, published in *New International* no. 10. That article explains that in the recent past, it was harder for young fighters "to see how they could link up with a social force, with the working class and labor movement, that had the power to bring about change... harder yet for them to connect up with a broader tradition of struggle" in the working class. The Manifesto continues, "But today there exists an open field where the YS can function as a revolutionary youth organization."

Many young people "hate the brutal attack on gay student Matthew Shepard and the assassination of abortion provider Barnett Slepian, which are part of the polarization of politics today," Kern said. "We hate the attacks on gains of struggles like affirmative action and bilingual education, the moves to execute Mumia Abu-Jamal, the FBI harassment of striking coal miners, the government discrimination against Black farmers, and Washington's war moves against the people of Iraq."

The convention was called at a YS conference held in San Francisco in mid-September. Since then, Kern said, YS members have participated in protest

actions around these and other questions. Young Socialists have joined in and brought others to actions across the United States demanding independence for Puerto Rico and the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners, and have been on the picket lines of striking workers at Kaiser Aluminum, Titan Tire, Freeman Coal, and many others.

YS members in several cities helped build speaking engagements for Norberto Codina, poet and editor of *La Gaceta de Cuba*, the magazine of the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC). This was important "not only to get out the truth about art and culture in Cuba but to lay the groundwork" for further work with others in defense of the Cuban revolution, Kern said.

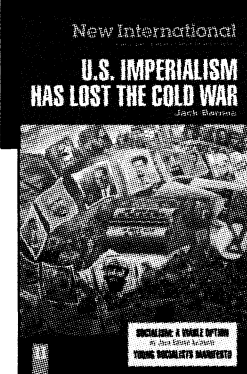
A youth organization alone cannot lead workers and farmers to overthrow capitalism, she said. The Young Socialists gets its proletarian character and strength from its connection to a revolutionary working-class party—the SWP. Youth are attracted to the YS because of this, and because the YS "offers the seriousness and discipline necessary to overthrow the most vicious ruling class in the world," Kern added. This report was followed by several hours of discussion by convention delegates.

Cuba as part of the world

The next morning Mary-Alice Waters, who had recently returned from a *Militant* reporting trip to Cuba, gave the first major conference presentation, titled "Cuba as part of the world: Confronting global capitalism's assault on the toilers and winning a new generation to communism."

She pointed to the example and the course of the communist leadership in Cuba. She noted that Cuba cannot escape the world capitalist market, the deflationary collapse affecting growing millions of toilers, espe-

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New International ■ no. 11

U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

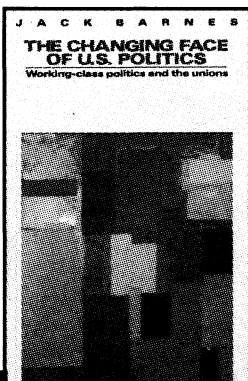
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fighting struggle

cially in the semicolonial countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

In Indonesia, for example, millions of workers have lost their jobs since last year — in a country where there is no form of entitlements that protect working people from the ravages of capitalism. Most Cubans are also adversely affected, but because of the revolution — the fact that workers and farmers hold state power — not one person is without access to unemployment compensation, a pension, medical care, education, and other basic social necessities.

For months, Cuban president Fidel Castro has been giving speeches pointing to the spreading social catastrophe and arguing that socialist globalization is the only way forward in face of the global crisis of capitalism.

The political response of tens of thousands of Cubans to the devastating results of hurricanes in Central America and the Caribbean this year has been in the best internationalist tradition of the revolution, Waters said. The Cuban trade union paper *Trabajadores* reported November 30 that in response to an appeal from the union leadership some 250,000 health-care workers have volunteered to go to Central America in face of a medical crisis that has been worsened by Hurricane Mitch.

Havana has also pledged to provide the medical personnel needed to reduce the infant mortality rate in Haiti from 135 per 1,000 live births to 35 — and a similar contribution in Central America — if wealthier countries provide the financial resources needed. Young communists in Cuba point to this as their opportunity to take part in the kind of internationalist mission that “changes your life forever,” Waters said.

This expression of international solidarity is part of the political fight in Cuba to confront the challenges that stem from the worldwide economic crisis and, above all, the lack of advancing revolutionary struggles in the world. In face of this, revolutionaries in Cuba are taking steps to strengthen the proletarian character of their revolution and the alliance of workers and farmers. Waters pointed to three other examples of this fight.

The Union of Young Communists (UJC) of Cuba convened its national congress in Havana the morning after the YS convention closed. Leaders of the UJC explain that the central focus of their congress will be facing the need to win a new generation of youth to Marxism. They are striving to politicize the work of the organization. UJC leaders point to the need to turn to young workers and farmers, to proletarianize the UJC, which today has a smaller presence in the factories and farming cooperatives than on university campuses.

A second example of the political strengthening of the revolution is the discussion that has opened in Cuba on the legacy of racial prejudice and how to combat it. This particular discussion is being carried out on a level not seen since the early 1960s. This was taken up, among other places, at the national congress of UNEAC, which Waters reported on for the *Militant*. The November 23 issue of the *Militant* published a document on “Society and Culture” adopted there, which points to the widening social differentiation that results from the capitalist market pressures bearing down on Cuba today, and the need for a conscious political effort to combat those effects.

The third example Waters pointed to was the development of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution. The first congress of this organization, started five years ago, took place at the same time as the YS convention. The organization brings together several generations of fighters, including combatants from the Cuban revolutionary war, the battles to defend the socialist revolution, internationalist missions, and others with at least 15 years in the Revolutionary Armed Forces.

They work in the neighborhoods and schools to win a new generation to the struggle for socialism by conveying the history of the revolution and their own experi-

ences and example. Waters and *Perspectiva Mundial* editor Martín Koppel interviewed two leaders of the Association of Combatants, Brig. Gen. Gustavo Chui Beltrán and Brig. Gen. Sergio Pérez Lezcano. (The interview will appear in a future issue of the *Militant*.)

When they learned of the Young Socialists convention, Waters said, these revolutionaries insisted, “Those young fighters of the party have the support and solidarity of the Combatants of the Cuban Revolution. We send greetings, greetings, greetings!”

Waters concluded with another message to the Young Socialists, from revolutionaries who fought with Che Guevara in Bolivia. It was a dedication inscribed in a copy of *Seguidores de un sueño* (Followers of a dream), a collection of biographical sketches of the fighters who took part in the struggle led by Ernesto Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1966–67 written by Elsa Blaquier. Her husband, René Martínez, fought in Bolivia under the *nom de guerre* Arturo and died in combat there.

The dedication in the book was signed by Blaquier, herself a revolutionary combatant; Rodolfo Saldaña, who was part of the underground support network for the guerrilla force in Bolivia; and Brig. Gen. Harry Villegas (Pombo), who fought with Guevara in Cuba, the Congo, and Bolivia. It read, “For the young socialists of the United States, with our greatest wishes that you find in the lives of these eternally young men and women the example of altruism and selflessness that must be followed by those who uphold the ideas of socialism.”

Need to be armed with Marxist theory

A small vanguard organization of communists like the SWP is a fraction of the fighting vanguard of the working class, and that vanguard is a fraction of the working class as a whole, Jack Barnes said in his conference presentation. That is one of the conclusions of “U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War,” the 1990 resolution of the SWP, featured in issue no. 11 of *New Internationalist*. Barnes’s talk was titled, “Bonapartism and polarization: contradictions and instability of the leftward shift in bourgeois politics.”

In the working-class struggles that have been unfolding in the United States since at least the start of 1997 nuclei of parties are being forged. These formations are broader than any individual fighter. There are groupings of workers who have gone through fights together against the employers, gained confidence to protect each other, learned to reach out to others for support, and have begun to draw broader conclusions about capitalism. This development is in its initial, embryonic stages, Barnes said, but it’s essential that the SWP have the perspective not only of recruiting individual workers to the party but fusing the party with such groups of vanguard workers who seek to generalize their experiences.

Barnes pointed to the spiraling world economic crisis that is fueling increasing competition and conflicts among the imperialist rulers and driving the employers’ attacks on labor. The question is not when the economy will improve in Japan and Korea, he noted, but when the deflationary crisis will come home to the United States.

Long assumed economic and military relations between the major capitalist powers coming out of World War II are being challenged. The dollar will have new competition next year, with the currency of the European Monetary Union, the euro. Even a small shift of dollar-denominated funds to euros can have an impact on the U.S. economy.

On the military front, the decision of the British and French governments to take a step toward making some military decisions through the European Union, outside the U.S.-controlled NATO alliance, is a challenge to Washington’s hegemony in Europe.



Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes speaks at December 5 conference session

Militant/Dave Wulp

When the class struggle heats up, a proletarian party must be able to anticipate developments, instead of always reacting to them. Otherwise it cannot be trusted to be responsible to those who look to it in combat. To be effective as part of the working-class vanguard, communists must take ideas seriously. That means working at a better grasp of Marxist theory, strategy, and politics every day, Barnes noted, studying and using tools like the magazine *New Internationalist*.

The working-class vanguard should not be surprised by events like the recent election of a Bonapartist figure, Jesse Ventura, as governor of Minnesota. Demagogues like Ventura will gain more of a hearing, building on the resentments of middle-class layers, and many workers and farmers who fear the instability and dislocation they expect is coming.

Millions in this country, including workers who have been ground down over the previous years under the accumulated blows from the employers, look at the devastation

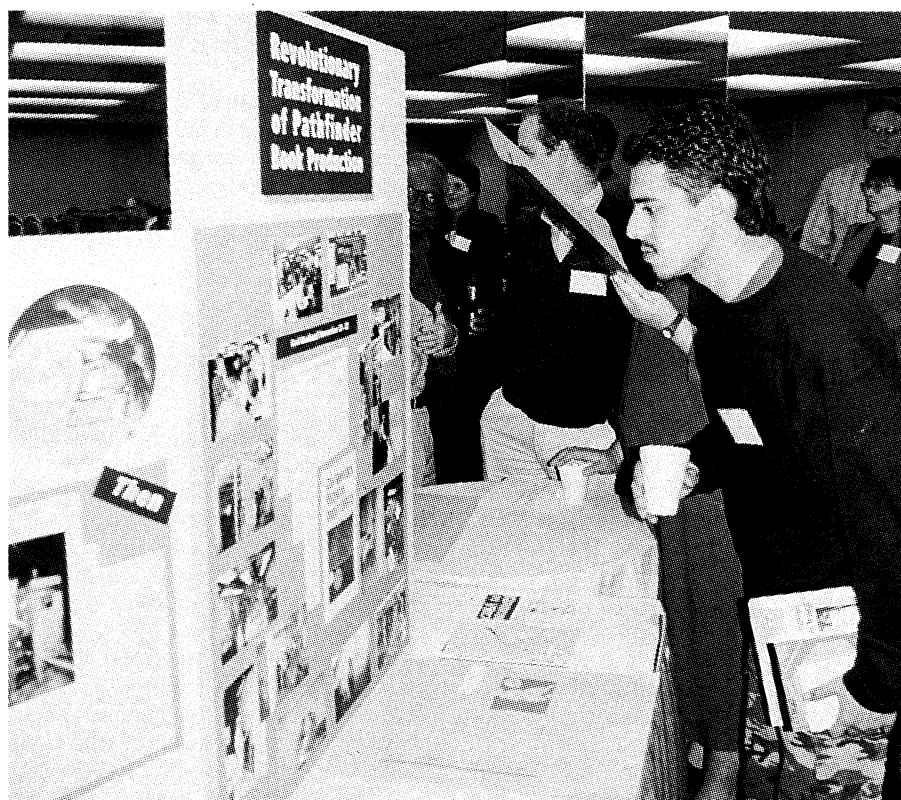
sweeping Indonesia, Korea, and Russia with dread. They become susceptible to the arguments of figures like Ventura, who paint themselves as “strong leaders” able to stand above the corruption of traditional politicians and institutions, cut through bureaucratic wrangling, and offer stability and “order.”

The working-class vanguard explaining and campaigning against such forces is a battle for the soul of the working class — for social solidarity among working people internationally against the appeals of Bonapartism and the rightist currents it feeds.

As class conflicts intensify, the brittle bureaucracies that sit on top of the trade unions and other organizations of the working class and oppressed will tend to shatter. That was reflected in last month’s victory of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) over the International Association of Machinists (IAM) in a representation vote among mechanics and cleaners

Continued on Page 10

\$69,000 more needed by Jan. 1 for fund to buy Pathfinder’s computer-to-plate machine



Militant/Megan Arney

A display (above) and special presentation at the YS convention and socialist conference highlighted the \$550,000 capital fund that is being raised to help in the transformation of the production of Pathfinder books and pamphlets. Of the total fund, \$350,000 is needed to cover the cost of the computer-to-plate (CTP) system newly installed in Pathfinder’s printshop. This sum is needed by the end of the year. The rest will pay off the \$200,000 still owed on the shop’s web and two sheetfed presses. At the conference, capital fund director Dave Prince announced that four workers at United Airlines who will be taking other jobs to strengthen socialists’ work in eight industrial unions have pledged their “Employee Stock Ownership Plan” money — blood money resulting from a concession contract. A pledge from a fifth United worker brings the total contribution from this source to \$46,000. So far \$281,000 has been raised, a \$15,000 increase since last week’s report. An additional \$69,000 is needed by January 1 to pay the balance owed on the CTP machine. To find out how you can make a capital contribution, write to the Capital Fund Committee, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Socialist conference

Continued from Page 9

at Northwest Airlines. As in the vote for Ventura, a layer of workers were convinced to vote for a "change" against the "status quo" of a union officialdom that does not organize a fight to defend the interests of union members, Barnes said.

Socialist workers campaigned against AMFA, explaining that its leadership has a pro-company outlook that plays into the bosses' hands by attempting to split airline workers along craft lines. But communists keep their eyes on the ranks of workers, regardless of what structure they're organized in. When the working class is advancing in struggle, workers begin to identify the union as themselves, not an outside force, and they refer to the union as "us" rather than "them," as has generally been the case for many years.

In the discussion following Barnes' report, Arlene Rubinstein, a cleaner at Northwest Airlines in Atlanta who will soon be a member of AMFA as a result of the recent election, stressed the importance of not walking away from her co-workers. Before the vote, she said, the situation was very tense between supporters of AMFA and workers who opposed it. Since then, there has been a lot of interest in what the communist workers think, including among those who voted for AMFA. More than 20 co-workers picked up copies of the issue of the *Militant* that covered the vote. "We've been more than two years without a contract, and are no closer now," she said, "and the company continues to fire workers. It's around these questions that the fight will take place, and we'll be part of it."

YS links up with fighting labor, youth

A panel presentation titled "Bringing Alive the Changing Face of U.S. Politics" gave a picture of YS activism. The six panelists were members of the Young Socialists who talked about their political activity over the last few months and conclusions they have drawn from those experiences.

Manuel González, a student at the University of California at Santa Cruz, explained how members of the YS chapter there participate in campus coalitions around struggles like the fight for affirmative action. YS members also worked with other students to help organize an 80-person meeting for Cuban poet and editor Norberto Codina, took part in protests against the U.S. attacks on Iraq, and joined a *Militant* sales team to coal miners in the Navajo Nation in Arizona.

Elena Tate, a high school student in Boston, spoke about her experience in the fight for women's rights. "This starts with the central right of a woman to control her body," Tate said she called people who had expressed interest in the Young Socialists to join with her in building the October 28 protest against the murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian, who provided abortions in Buffalo, New

York.

One of the students she called came and brought five others. "More youth meant there was more chanting and less crying" at the protest, she noted. Tate also helped bring Puerto Rican independence leader Rafael Cancel Miranda to speak in her school's bilingual education department last year.

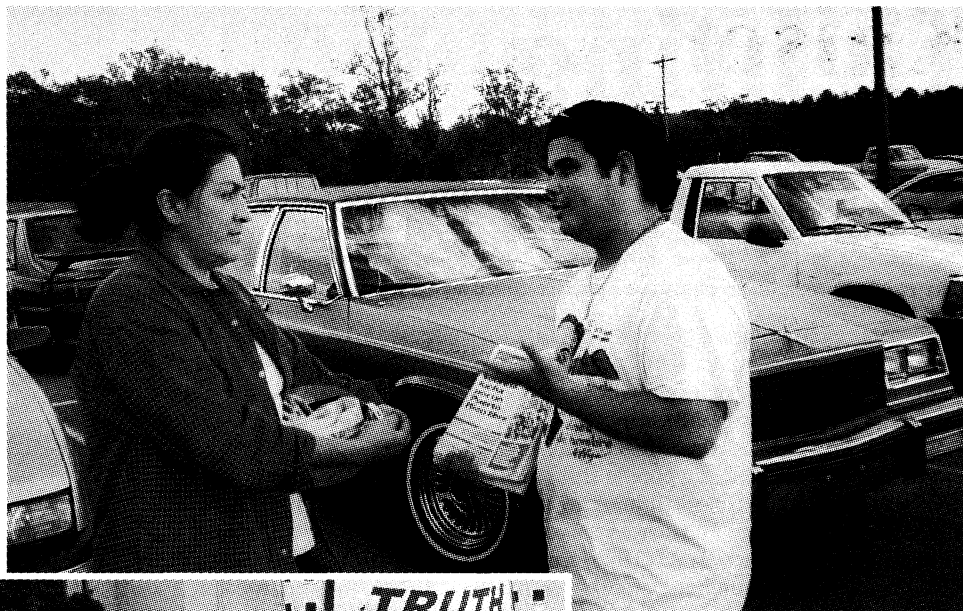
Rafik Benali, a YS member in Paris, discussed the importance of YS members in France participating in the work to translate "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War," which will soon be published in issue no. 6 of *Nouvelle Internationale*, the French-language sister publication of *New Internationalist*. In addition to training a new generation of volunteer translators, "we are reading and learning from it," he noted. Benali also described the sharpening political polarization in France, pointing both to the stepped-up fight by immigrant workers for papers and to an antigay, anti-women's rights demonstration of 10,000 organized by the far right.

Amanda Ulman, a member of the United Auto Workers in Des Moines, Iowa, said YS members there recently met a student who was building a protest against the planned execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal in Pennsylvania.

About 30 people took part in the march and rally. "The YS had a chance to speak," Ulman said. In addition to taking up the question of the death penalty, "We also spoke against the imminent bombing of Iraq, and invited people to a picket in Leavenworth, Kansas, demanding the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners and Native American activist Leonard Peltier. And we pointed to the strike at Titan Tire." The entire group of young protesters decided to go to the Des Moines Titan plant, which was nearby, to support the strikers and learn about their fight.

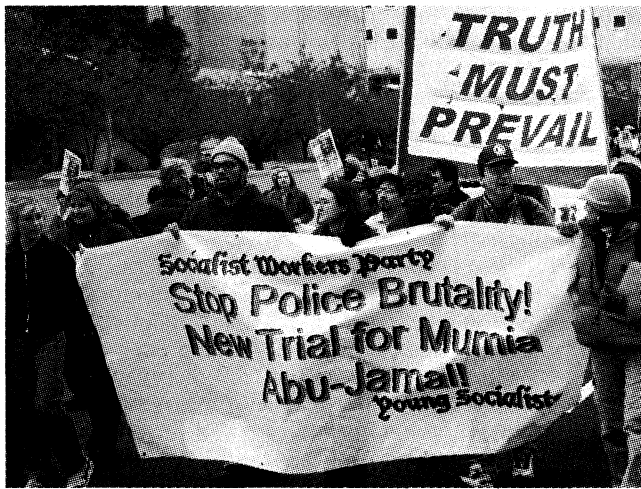
Paul Carter is a young worker from Atlanta who took part in a successful campaign at his workplace to organize the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union three years ago. He later met communist workers in that plant and joined the Young Socialists. Carter spoke about the crucial importance of workers forging an alliance with farmers, and of the significance of the Black farmers' fight to keep their land and push back government discrimination. He recently participated in a farmers camp-out in Washington, D.C. This struggle is not only one for farmers, he noted, but is part of "a new resurgence of the Black human rights struggle."

Ryan Lewis, one of six Young Socialists members working in the printshop that produces Pathfinder books and the *Militant*, described the shop as a "training ground for communists. We learn collective responsibility and work habits." The shop is staffed



Militant photos/above: Brian Williams; left: John Staggs

The task of the SWP in the coming months is to help take Young Socialists to working-class struggles and industrial plant gates for discussion with workers and to sell the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. Top: YS member José Sánchez talks with poultry worker at North Carolina factory gate. Left: November 7 march in Philadelphia protesting government moves toward execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Young Socialists' link to working class through SWP offers an effective strategic road forward to the social protests youth engage in.



by socialist workers who volunteer for an average stint of about three years. "We define ourselves in struggle, and that's true of the YS members in the shop. After our tours of duty, we'll be stronger to build the movement," Lewis said.

Forging ties of solidarity

Three people involved in some of the important battles discussed throughout the YS convention and conference — David Yard, Gary Grant, and Dean Cook — gave greetings following the panel presentations.

David Yard is a member of United Mine Workers of America Local 1969 on strike against the Freeman United Coal Co. in Virden, Illinois. The 350 workers at Freeman's three mines in central Illinois have been on the picket lines since September 11. "Black farmers and coal miners have a common enemy, and I want to discuss linking our struggles more," he said, turning to Grant, who is the president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA).

"I've been a member of the UMWA 22 years," Yard said, "and I've never seen a strike escalate so fast" as at Freeman. Not only has the company hired Vance "security" thugs, but it has filed a lawsuit challenging the union's right to strike, and announced it is training replacement workers. "We're fighting the federal, state, and local cops as well," said Yard, whose grandmother was harassed by the FBI.

Yard encouraged participants in the conference to invite miners to speak in their area and build solidarity with the strike. "If you do that there won't be more A.T. Massey's" he said, referring to the 1984-85 UMWA strike at that company, which ended in defeat. Three unionists remain in jail today on federal frame-up charges stemming from that strike. Yard referred to defeats suffered some years ago by unionists in Central Illinois and their lingering effect.

Grant spoke next about the class action suit filed by Black farmers against the U.S. Department of Agriculture for discrimination. "Jack [Barnes] talked about organizations that crumble in times of crisis. We've seen that with the organizations that should respond to this crying need" of farmers being driven off the land. "The NAACP and the Black churches have not been able to rise to this. So real leaders of the fight will rise from the ranks in struggle." He described how the battle has unfolded since the first demonstration by 40 Black farmers in Washington, D.C., in December 1996. At a recent hearing October 5 "they had to move to the ceremonial court room because 300 Black farmers showed up."

Dean Cook, a member of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 4-227 locked out by Crown Petroleum in Pasadena, Texas, gave the final greetings. He briefly explained the fight at Crown, where 252 workers have been locked out for nearly three years. "Crown wanted to take our seniority and give 105 jobs to contractors. They wanted takebacks

on sick pay, holiday pay, overtime pay, callout pay, health benefits, everything. We refused. They charged us with sabotage and locked us out. We've been reaching out, looking for support."

"I admire the Young Socialists," Cook said. "I was 28 when I got my first union job, and 34 when I woke up to the realities of capitalism. Books like *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* help me understand" the world and struggles of the working class.

Earlier in the day, John Fogarty, the regional vice president for human rights of the Irish American Unity Conference in San Francisco, addressed the conference bringing greetings from Kevin Barry Artt and Terry Kirby, two of the "H-Block Three." They are Irish republicans who escaped from Long Kesh prison in Belfast in 1983 and have been fighting extradition from the United States to Northern Ireland for the last six years.

Also attending the conference was Eddie Slaughter, vice president of the BFAA, who arrived after taking part in a December 5 meeting of 120 Black farmers in Georgia. He spoke from the floor in the discussion following the panel. "How would you like it in Illinois if some Black farmers showed up with you on the picket line?" he said, addressing David Yard. "And we would love it if you showed up in court with us in your fatigues!"

Ron Martin, a member of the Boilermakers union from Birmingham, Alabama, also spoke in the discussion about the coal miners' strike. "The attack on the Illinois miners is a big discussion in my local," he said. "Miners are heroes in the labor movement in my hometown. I remember them marching though the streets on strike when I was in elementary school in the 1970s." Martin emphasized the importance of union members everywhere supporting the striking Illinois miners to ensure a victory.

Luis Rivera, an apprentice electrician and member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers who recently joined the Young Socialists in Chicago, commented, "Before I met socialists, I saw a lot of problems in society. You keep fighting them, and a few years later it's the same fight. I felt the same as Dean going into the Pathfinder bookstore the first time" and seeing books that had answers to these questions.

A broad range of classes helped round out the discussion at the conference. Topics included, Teamster rebellion: the fight for a class-struggle left wing; the fight for Black freedom: from "40 acres and a mule" to the fight for a workers and farmers government; 150 years of the Communist Manifesto: its relevance for today's struggles; the Russian revolution: how the Bolsheviks led workers and peasants to power; new rise in the fight for Chicano liberation; and the origin of women's oppression and the fight for socialism.

A special session included classes by Dean Cook, Black farmers' leaders Gary Grant

Continued on Page 12

Irish fighters send greetings to YS

Below we reprint excerpts from the greetings sent to the Young Socialists convention from two of the "H-Block Three," Irish republicans who have been fighting extradition from the United States to Northern Ireland.

Our greetings to the youth whose aim is to change the world. Experience shows that without young and uncluttered minds taking the lead, meaningful change rarely happens. So, we salute you and urge you forward....

You are Young Socialists. And just like our rapidly growing Sinn Féin Youth organization, you know ours is a serious cause with lives often in the balance. Our fight for a democratic society free of bigotry requires a serious and committed organization. It is a source of inspiration to us that you and others like you have taken up the challenge, whether it be on the streets of Belfast or Garvaghy Road, the fields of Watsonville, California, or an American courtroom.

We hope you will all remember our imprisoned comrades whether Irish or the Puerto Rican nationalist freedom fighters, who occupied cells in the same prison we did, whether Native American, like Leonard Peltier, a mighty voice for indig-

enous people, or a Black American like Mumia Abu-Jamal, whose fight for freedom enjoys international support against a fast approaching death sentence. We remind everyone, that we are no more important than others seeking justice. All victims of oppression deserve support.

The obstacles we face often seem insurmountable. May we suggest, they are not. Our freedom on bail is proof of that. And while we are grateful for the wisdom of the appellate court judges who ruled in our favor, the battle for our complete exoneration is still far from over. We are optimistic because the reasoning, arguments and powerful forces that gained our release are growing.

Change is occurring. And faster than most can imagine. It is not an accident of history that one of the world's greatest empires, Great Britain, will enter the 21st century neither great nor an empire. That's good for the world and even better for the working people of England....

Our deepest thanks for your invitation and support. We congratulate you in advance on the success of your convention.

Kevin Barry Artt
Terrence Kirby

Kaiser Aluminum strikers reach out to win solidarity

BY JIMALTENBERG

OAKLAND, California — Shouting "When they say go away, we say no way!" and "One day longer!" striking members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), other trade unionists, and environmental activists fighting to prevent old-growth redwoods from being cut in northern California held a spirited march in downtown Oakland December 2.

At City Hall 250 people came to rally in support of steelworkers on strike against Kaiser Aluminum. Some 3,000 workers have been on strike against Kaiser since September 30 over company demands to cut 20-30 percent of jobs at five plants in Louisiana, Ohio, and Washington State.

Strikers from Kaiser plants in Tacoma and Spokane, Washington, filled three buses to come to Oakland for a two-day campaign to win support for the strike. On December 1, strikers packed a meeting of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to win their backing, and they announced plans to picket Kaiser president Ray Milchovich's house and company headquarters.

The rally was opened by Judy Galt, president of the Alameda County AFL-CIO, who announced that unionists in the Bay Area had just won an important victory. Members of the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) and their supporters had been the target of a vicious lawsuit from the shipowners' Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) for their protests and refusal to unload cargo in September 1997, from the *Neptune Jade*, a ship loaded at Liverpool, England, by scabs brought in to break the dock workers' union there.

The ship was also turned away by unionists at other ports on the West Coast and Japan. The shipowners sued the union, charging that the ILWU-led protest was illegal and had cost them thousands of dollars. They demanded that the union turn over the names of everyone who had participated in the protest actions, including union members and students from Laney College in Oakland who had joined union picket lines at the port. Galt told the crowd that the PMA's lawsuit had been dropped.

Rally speakers included Stan White, president of USWA Local 338 at one of the Spokane plants; Dave Foster, president of USWA District 11, which includes Washington State; and Oakland mayor Elihu Harris. Members of the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians, locked out from ABC television, joined the rally. The TV technicians chased a cameraman carrying ABC-TV Channel 7 equipment

from the rally three times. When the cameraman tried to film the rally from on top of a building, they unfurled a large banner reading "Live from Channel 7: UNION BUSTING." Others included members of the Machinists, roofers, Hotel and Restaurant Employees, ILWU, and Service Employees unions.

Also participating were activists fighting the Maxxam Corporation's Pacific Lumber Company, and Maxxam's owner, Charles Hurwitz, for their devastation of the redwood forests in northern California. Maxxam is the major stockholder in Kaiser Aluminum. Workers told this reporter that Maxxam slashed the lumber workers' pensions, and they heard that Kaiser was seeking to recruit millwrights from Pacific Lumber's mills to scab on the strike. Karen Pickett, of the Bay Area Coalition for Headwaters was among the speakers. The Headwaters groves are the only remaining old-growth redwoods left on privately-held lands.

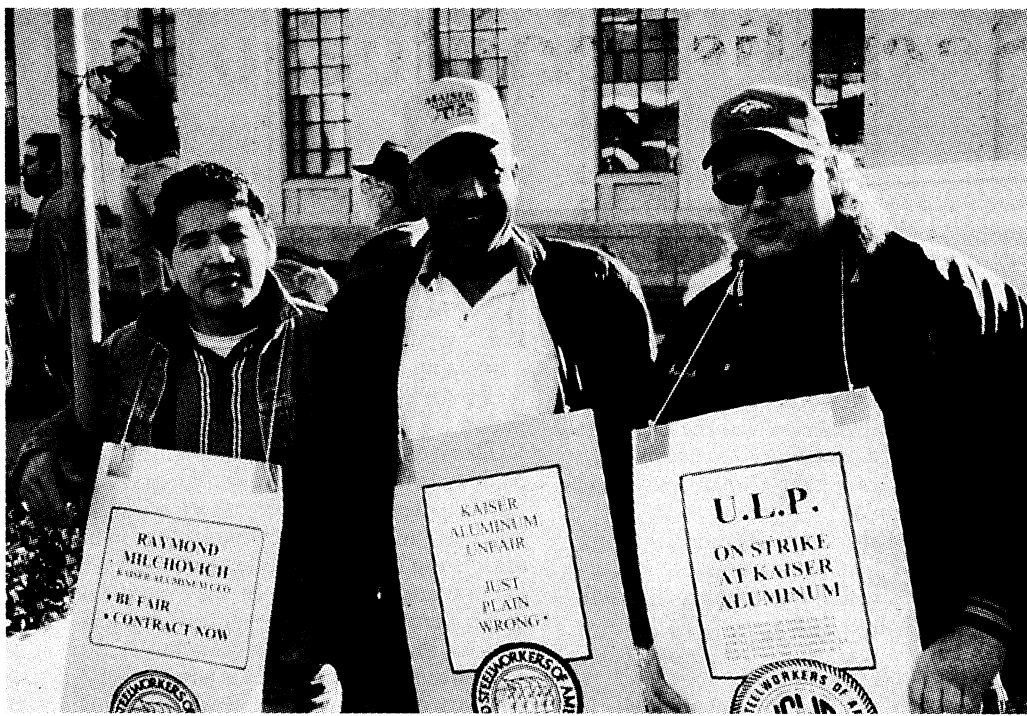


BY ESTELLE DEBATES
AND LIEFF GUTTHIUDASCHMITT

TACOMA, Washington—The bargaining team for the five striking locals of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) met with Kaiser Aluminum officials in Minneapolis December 1. The December 8 *USWA Kaiser Solidarity* newsletter explains the Steelworkers came fully prepared with proposals for discussion with Kaiser, including early retirement incentives as an answer to Kaiser's stated need to reduce the workforce; protection against the sale of Kaiser plants; protections against the contracting out of work; jobs security; and parity with Alcoa and Reynolds.

Workers at Kaiser receive wages and benefits far below those of the industry standards set by contracts with Reynolds and Alcoa. "After receiving our bargaining team's proposal last Tuesday, they [company officials] asked questions for about an hour and a half, left the room to caucus among themselves, and then came back to reject our offer."

The strike against Kaiser by the 3,100 members of the USWA began nearly three months ago when workers rejected the company's "final offer," which included slashing 400 jobs; the "right" of the company to contract out hundreds more jobs; a wage increase that amounted to 2.3 percent per year — less than the 3 percent annual inflation rate; and the gutting of seniority agreements.



Militant/Bill Fabyunkey

Three members of USWA Local 7945 from Tacoma, Washington, on strike against Kaiser Aluminum at rally in California in December.

Kaiser's latest action reaffirms that the company is not interested in negotiating, but rather is out to bust the union. This has been clear since the beginning when in the days before the contract deadline the company moved several mobile homes onto company property. These facilities have been used to house scabs throughout the strike.

The union recently challenged the inadequate housing for the scabs as being a violation of health standards in the State of Washington. The most recent newsletter from Local 329 in Spokane reports that "the Washington State Department of Health supported Kaiser in breaking state law, and gave them the extension they needed to continue housing scabs on plant site in illegal mobile homes." Although the company shows no sign of bargaining in good faith, striking workers remain firm in their determination to outlast the company.

Monday barbecues sponsored by the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union Local 23 in Tacoma are part of the weekly activities of USWA Local 7945. In addition, every Wednesday night, wives and other relatives of strikers organize family gatherings at a club nearby the plant where dinner is served and strike pay is distributed. There is a food bank organized through the local and its supporters. Organizers of the family gatherings have also established a special Christmas Fund to ensure that the numerous children of striking workers get some presents during the holidays. A representative of the United Food and Commercial Workers union brought a \$500 contribution for the special fund from union butchers in the Tacoma area. The Longshoremen are sponsoring a dance for strikers and supporters this coming week.

Strikers have been speaking at a number of meetings of other unions and organizations. Richard Dolph, a striker from Local 7945, told

the *Militant* that he recently spoke at meetings of International Association of Machinists Local 751A at Boeing and at a Jobs with Justice meeting in Tacoma. In addition he is slated to speak at a local meeting of the United Transportation Union at the Burlington Northern/Sante Fe railroad. "The Boeing local donated \$1,000 to the strike," said Dolph, "and promised that if we give them a week or two notice, they will bring a bus of workers to a rally."

All five locals involved in the strike — from Gramercy, Louisiana; Newark, Ohio; and Spokane and Tacoma, Washington are touring together in teams. Two members of each local travel for a two week period to Pleasanton, California, the location of Kaiser's corporate headquarters, and to Houston, Texas, headquarters of holding company Maxxam, Inc. In addition 150 strikers toured the Northern California region from November 29 through December 4.

As an outcome of the trip to Northern California, strikers linked up with Earth First!, an organization that has been protesting the cutting down of redwood forests in Northern California by Maxxam. Earth First! members carried out a protest action at the Port of Tacoma on December 7 in an attempt to block a ship with ore for Kaiser. In a December 8 press release on the union's Aluminum Industry Conference that was to begin in Pittsburgh the following day, the USWA officials said that building support for the strike at Kaiser would be a "main topic" at the gathering.

Strikers welcome fellow fighters to join them on the picket lines. As many are now working regular jobs, it is especially appreciated when other unions take regular picket duty. Locals are accepting contributions to food banks and Christmas funds. Strikers are willing to come speak about the stakes of the fight and how to get involved.

Caterpillar unionists support Illinois UAW strikers

BY TOM SMITH
AND JOSHUA CARROLL

EAST PEORIA, Illinois—"No matter how long it takes, we'll be there," declared Jim Clingan in welcoming more than 250 people to a Christmas party for strikers against Tazewell Machine Works and their families on December 12. Clingan is the president of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 974, which organizes workers at Caterpillar Inc. here. Eighty-two members of UAW Local 2283 have been on strike against Tazewell in Pekin, Illinois, since October 5. Their contract expired on September 11. The company makes parts for Caterpillar.

At the event, hundreds of gifts were given to the children of the striking workers, along with groceries and financial contributions. Most of the presents were donated by UAW members at Caterpillar plants in the region and the Mitsubishi plant in Bloomington.

Local 974 retirees staffed the Tazewell picket lines that evening so that all the strikers could attend. Retirees also staffed the picket lines several weeks earlier so that strikers could attend the funeral of a co-worker who died in a hunting accident.

Chad Hartley, president of the striking local, spoke following Clingan. He vowed that with the solidarity and help of unionists in the region, "We will stay out one day longer" than Henry Cakora, the would-be

union-buster who owns Tazewell Machine.

Kenny Minton, a member of Local 974 who helped organize the event, explained, "We learned how to help other people through our struggle." Minton was referring to the recent seven-year contract fight UAW members waged against Caterpillar. "These fighters are not alone," he continued. "We all need to stick together."

Blaine Arendt, a worker at Caterpillar in Aurora, Illinois, who had driven more than two hours to be present, echoed these sentiments. "After the support we got, I hate to let a strike go by without helping out," he said.

One of the main demands of the strike is that Tazewell Machine continue to provide a "dues check-off." This allows the union to collect all dues money in a single payment deducted from individual members' paychecks. Cakora's demand to eliminate this is a direct attack on the union, said Terry Beebe, a machinist and a negotiator for the union.

Cakora's intent to break the union is made clear by many of his comments. For example, he described the union as "communist, un-American, and run by mobsters," and told workers that they "would never work for me again so long as you have the union," according to Nathan White, a foundry worker at Tazewell. The union has filed numerous

unfair labor practice charges against Cakora.

One hundred percent of the membership of the local is out on strike. Two workers who refused to join the union have crossed the picket lines. As of December 14, Tazewell Machine has brought in 61 scabs.

Workers at Tazewell are also demanding better working conditions and benefits. Currently, workers have no retirement plan and must contribute an average of \$70 per week for family medical insurance, which does not even include dental and optical coverage. In addition, Tazewell wants workers with 10 years or more seniority to pay a \$3,000 annual deductible for health care.

Cakora and the city of Pekin have gone after the right of UAW members to picket, filing for an injunction against strikers that would prevent them from using burn barrels, portable toilets, and a picket shack near the plant. This would make it difficult to maintain picket lines during the winter months, when temperatures drop well below freezing. Tazewell is also trying to limit the number of strikers who may picket at one time by filing a lawsuit accusing strikers of harassing and intimidating scabs. The lawsuit alleges that strikers are responsible for slashing tires, throwing rocks, causing property damage, and other violent behavior. Yet, "with all their security cameras and guards," White said, "Tazewell can't pro-

duce a shred of evidence." Meanwhile, company security guards have begun carrying billy clubs to intimidate strikers.

At the picket lines, strikers could not emphasize enough the support and solidarity they have received from unionists and other members of the community. Many commented that without such backing, they could not have stayed out so long. They described contributions of food, clothing, and firewood that come in on a daily basis. A number of strikers noted one particular elderly woman who every other week drops off four logs, one pot of soup, and a check for \$100. "Her four logs probably burn for about eight minutes, but that's not the point," commented Fred Bennett, who has worked at Tazewell for 10 years.

Dan LeMasters, another striker, described the way strikers are received in the community. "When you wear your union jacket out in public all sorts of people come up to you and thank you for sticking together and keeping the union strong. They're proud of us."

"Henry Cakora doesn't expect to see us back in the plant," LeMasters continued, "but we'll be back in there."

Tom Smith is a member of UAW Local 974 at Caterpillar. Sarah Katz contributed to this article.

Young Socialists hold convention, conference

Continued from Page 10

and Eddie Slaughter, and David Yard about their fights and the impact of these struggles on their own political consciousness. Display center tables from all three fights, with photos, T-shirts, and information, were the scene of lively discussion during breaks.

The Pathfinder book tables were also crowded. Conference participants bought more than \$1,400 worth of books and pamphlets. *New International* was the top seller. *The Communist Manifesto*, *Teamster Rebellion*, and books on the Cuban revolution were also popular.

There were also two workshops, on work in defense of the Cuban revolution and using the *Militant*, that were open to all youth at the conference.

On to the party convention

Ryan Kelly, a YS leader and volunteer in Pathfinder's printshop in New York, reported on the Young Socialists' tasks and perspectives for the coming period.

"There is no one particular struggle or project that will be at the centerpiece of our work," he stated. "We must use the social weight of YS activism by relaunching our turn into mass work. Being quick, responsive, and a part of the resistance and skirmishes in our area is how we'll build a proletarian youth organization leading up to the Socialist Workers Party convention."

The discussion focused on the activities that will be carried out to strengthen the YS during the four months between now and the SWP convention, which will take place in April in San Francisco. Delegates discussed the openings for advancing their work in defense of the Cuban revolution, and also decided to organize for a larger percentage of its membership to learn Spanish to better fight alongside the section of the U.S. working class whose first language is Spanish.

The convention also reaffirmed its course in making it a priority to keep the works of revolutionary leaders published by Pathfinder in print, by deciding to assign another member of its organization to work in the printshop.

Samantha Kern gave a report to the final conference session on the YS convention's decisions on its tasks, and introduced the new National Committee elected by the convention delegates. She announced that for the next period the YS National Office will move to San Francisco. The new National Committee had just met and elected a National Executive Committee of Kern, Ryan Kelly, and Cecilia Ortega.

Jack Barnes then introduced the members of the party's Trade Union Committee (TUC), who were seated on the platform along with the new YS National Committee. The TUC is the party leadership body that will work most closely with the YS leadership between now and the party convention, he said.

Barnes noted that workers are radicalizing faster than student youth today, which has not been the case for decades. He came back to a theme from the "In this issue" article in *New International* no. 11. "The evidence continues to accumulate that the working class in the United States and most other imperialist countries has emerged from the period of political retreat that followed the short, brutal — and demoralizing, because largely uncontested — imperial assault on the people of Iraq in 1990–91.

"Signs of renewed defensive action are all around us — more numerous strike actions reflecting the tenacity and resistance of the embattled ranks; a noticeable growth in the confidence and determination of women in industry; the increased weight of Black leadership in labor battles and struggles of working farmers; an upswing in the Puerto Rican independence movement; more actions in defense of immigrants'

rights. Such developments prepare the strengthening of working-class leadership in these struggles."

Citing the article written by Karl Marx in 1866 titled "Trade Unions: Their Past, Present, and Future," Barnes said events today increase the potential of the unions to act as Marx described in that article, "as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interests of its complete emancipation."

This means the union ranks are in a better position in relation to the officials, in reality and in potential. It means there are more opportunities for work among women in industry, and new possibilities for leadership in the Black community. In one example of this, a member of the International Association of Machinists from Vancouver described during the conference how the small minority of women in her workplace have recently formed a women's committee of the union and discuss activity together, including supporting a strike by nurses in the area.

Palestinian youth assert their dignity

Continued from Page 16

Wye accord, Netanyahu vowed to cancel further troop pullbacks until the Palestinian Authority halts what he claims are acts of incitement and violence and abandons plans to declare an independent state in May 1999.

In return for the promised withdrawals, Arafat agreed to take further steps to clamp down on activists protesting Israeli rule. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) will be in charge of "supervising" the arrests and punishment of Islamic militants and confiscation of weapons. In addition, an expanded meeting of the Palestinian National Council and other organizations on December 14 reaffirmed a previous decision to revoke the clauses in the Palestinian National Charter of 1964 calling for the destruction of Israel.

In response, Netanyahu said the Israeli government still wouldn't carry out the land withdrawal scheduled for December 18 until more of their demands are met.

Following the agreement, Palestinian Authority police began rounding up several hundred leaders and rank-and-file members of Hamas. Hamas is a bourgeois nationalist opponent grouping that has won support among workers and youth in the struggle for Palestinian national rights.

A week after the Wye agreement was signed, U.S. officials announced that Clinton and Netanyahu had also signed a pact to increase Washington's military assistance to Israel. The agreement calls for a joint strategic planning committee to recommend ways to upgrade the U.S.-Israeli military relationship. Currently, Washington provides Israel with \$2.9 billion in military and economic aid every year.

Socialist workers need to actively search out these developments, participate in them, and publicize them, Barnes said.

He emphasized that the continuity of each struggle that breaks out today, from the Illinois coal fields to Titan Tire strikes in Iowa and Mississippi, to other battles, has less connection to past defeats and more to do with other struggles taking place today. This continuity is not within a given industry, union, or region, but rather in the working class as a whole and in those sections of it who want to fight. The working-class vanguard is every fighter who offers himself or herself to do this and reaches out to others.

Capitalism offers the perspective of more executions, more storm troopers, more brutality, more government intervention in the unions. This puts a premium on competent strategy and tactics in trade union work, Barnes said.

The rulers want fighters to do foolish things, to let anger, not strategy, be their guide. Vanguard workers can't just rely on

the most conscious and committed activists in a fight, but need to find ways to organize the largest numbers possible of those affected by the fight into activity, at the same time reaching out broadly to others for solidarity. And do so in a way that does not unnecessarily open up fellow fighters for victimization by the cops and company.

The task of the SWP in the coming months is to help take Young Socialists to working class struggles and industrial plant gates for discussions with workers and sales of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, and to study with them, Barnes said, beginning now with the feature article in *New International* no. 11, "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War." The goal between now and the party convention is to recruit every YS member to the SWP, to increase the number of fighters who come to that convention five- or tenfold, and to recruit every fighting worker we meet and work with to the SWP on the road to the San Francisco convention.

tegic planning committee to recommend ways to upgrade the U.S.-Israeli military relationship. Currently, Washington provides Israel with \$2.9 billion in military and economic aid every year.

In mid-November, shortly after Netanyahu's cabinet narrowly approved the accord, the Israeli prime minister announced that he would proceed with a plan to build more than 1,000 homes as part of a Zionist settlement in the midst of Arab East Jerusalem. This plan evoked massive Palestinian protests when announced in early 1997.

Tel Aviv has also begun expropriating Palestinian lands in order to build a dozen new bypass roads — more than 50 miles worth in all — for Zionist settlers living in the West Bank. "What kind of peace is this?" declared Imad Salim, 25, a Palestinian farmer living just south of Jerusalem. "If peace means losing our land, what good is it?"

Israeli regime in crisis

After 31 months in office, Israeli prime minister Netanyahu faces the biggest political crisis of his regime. "Netanyahu is under attack from the right for signing a peace accord with the Palestinians and by the left for not moving swiftly enough to implement it," states a December 8 article in the *Washington Post*. A motion of no-confidence is expected to be voted on by the Knesset, Israel's parliament, on December 21. If Netanyahu loses this vote new elections

would have to be held within 60 days.

In an effort to salvage the Wye Plantation accord, U.S. president Clinton visited both Israel and the Gaza Strip, headquarters of Arafat's Palestinian Authority, December 12–14. In a speech upon landing in Jerusalem, Clinton stated that he had come "to reconfirm America's unbreakable ties, unshakable commitment to Israel's security." Clinton announced that he is submitting a request to Congress for an additional \$1.2 billion to meet Israel's "security" needs related to the Wye accord. Clinton also addressed the Palestinian National Council meeting in Gaza.

In an effort to defuse protests while Clinton was in town, the Palestinian Authority canceled a December 14 general strike called to show solidarity with the prisoners' hunger strike. In response to a request from Arafat, the Palestinian prisoners agreed to suspend their week-long hunger strike December 13.

Meanwhile, pressure continues to build for the Israeli army to withdraw from the nine-mile-wide strip of land it has occupied in southern Lebanon since 1985. Despite massive bombing attacks by the Israeli forces, the group Hezbollah has continued to lead resistance to this occupation and has inflicted increased casualties on the Israeli troops stationed there.

Brian Williams is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 2609.

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God rest ye merry — England's *Evening Standard* estimates that the merger of Germany's Deutsche Bank and the U.S. Bankers Trust will mean a loss of as many as 3,000



Harry Ring

employees at the City, London's Wall Street.

Many of these, it said, are likely to get the ax before Xmas.

Xmas tip — Randy Seigel of the *Cleveland Times* suggests that if you don't have time for Tom Wolfe's *A Man in Full*, a story of U.S. greed and decadence, pick up a copy of the FOA Schwarz holiday toy catalog. For instance: An all-night sleepover at an FOA Schwarz store for a party of 15 youngsters. Each gets a \$100 gift certificate and keeps the sleeping bag. \$17,500.

Well-managed care — Judged relative to size and stock performance, HMO top dogs were among the highest paid CEOs in the country.

Imagine the loss without him — Nonprofit Kaiser Permanente, the biggest of the HMOs, lost a whopping \$266 million in '97, and the figures look worse for '98.

Meanwhile, CEO David Lawrence drew \$1.4 million in a wages, a 16 percent hike.

Progress report — Britain's top court ruled that people who were unlawfully jailed by magistrates for failure to pay fines can seek compensation. At its peak, 22,500 people a year were imprisoned for defaulting on fines.

The case in which the High Court ruled included four single mothers and a person who owed less than £10. Those jailed for a week may be able to claim up to £400.

Big Bro — Using a variety of electronic equipment, 35 percent of U.S. employers spy on their work force, according to the American Management Association.

'No way?' — Driving on an Ontario Province highway, Laurie Lee was terrified when a car began tailgating her and finally forced her to stop. Unable to unlock the driver's

door, the guy pounded on her window. Then, she said, "He's showing me a badge. But I'm thinking, 'No way this man is a police officer.'"

She called for help on her cell phone. Turns out he was an off-duty cop and is now facing dangerous driving charges.

Thought for the week — "The poor are never counted, and even less in a crisis. I don't think we'll ever know exactly how many died here." — Paulo Oberti, head of Santo Domingo UN office during recent hurricane.

Washington's murderous 1991 assault on Iraq

Below are the first paragraphs of "The Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq" by Jack Barnes, which describe the devastation of Iraq in the 1991 U.S.-led Gulf War. The article is based on a talk given by Barnes, the national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, on March 30, 1991, and was published five weeks later as the lead article in issue no. 7 of the Marxist magazine *New International*. It explains why Washington's slaughter did not lead to the dawn of a "new world order," but rather held a mirror to the declining capitalist world order and accelerated its contradictions. The magazine is copyright © 1991 by 408 Printing and Publishing Corp., reprinted by permission.

BOOK OF THE WEEK

BY JACK BARNES

The U.S.-organized carnage against the Iraqi people is among the most monstrous in the history of modern warfare. "Is" not "was." Death and dislocation continue today, as does the imperialists' culpability for them.

We may never know the actual numbers of toilers killed in Iraq and Kuwait during the six weeks of incessant allied air and sea bombardment and the murderous one-hundred-hour invasion launched by Washington February 24, 1991. But the one common media estimate that as many as 150,000 human beings were slaughtered is conservative, if anything. Just think about the impact of a massacre of that magnitude on the less than 19 million people of Iraq. Compare the blow of this number of deaths, and many additional maimings, and the relatively short period over which they mounted, with the impact many of you can remember in the United States, a country of 250 million,

of the 47,000 U.S. combat deaths during Washington's nearly ten-year — not ten-week — war to prevent Vietnam's reunification.

The most concentrated single bloodletting was organized by the U.S. command in the final forty-eight hours of the invasion, as Iraqi soldiers fled Kuwait along the roads to Basra. While publicly denying that Iraqi forces were withdrawing from Kuwait, Washington ordered that tens of thousands of fleeing Iraqi soldiers be targeted for wave after wave of bombing, strafing, and shelling. These were people who were putting up no resistance, many with no weapons, others with rifles packed in bedrolls, leaving in cars, trucks, carts, and on foot. Many civilians from Iraq, Kuwait, and immigrant workers from other countries were killed at the same time as they tried to flee.

The U.S. armed forces bombed one end of the main highway from Kuwait city to Basra, sealing it off. They bombed the other end of the highway and sealed it off. They positioned mechanized artillery units on the hills overlooking it. And then, from the air and from the land they simply massacred every living thing on the road. Fighter bombers, helicopter gunships, and armored battalions poured merciless firepower on traffic jams backed up for as much as twenty miles. When the traffic became gridlocked, the B-52s were sent in for carpet bombing.

That was the killing zone. You couldn't move down the road. You couldn't move up the road. You couldn't move off the road. You couldn't surrender, wave a white flag, or give yourself up. The allied forces simply kept bombing and firing — at every person, jeep, truck, car, and bicycle. One allied air force officer called it a "turkey shoot." Others called it the biggest of the "cockroach hunts." That's the American way — carpet bombed, and shot in the back.

This slaughter, along with similar unreported operations during Bush's heroic hundred hours, ranks among the great atrocities of modern warfare. It was the Guernica, the Hiroshima, the Dresden, the My Lai of the U.S. war against Iraq.¹



Baghdad, January 1991 after U.S.-led bombing raid struck. On the main road from Kuwait city to Basra as Iraqi civilians, immigrant workers, and soldiers fled the area "allied forces simply kept bombing and firing — at every person, jeep, truck, car, and bicycle.... That's the American way — carpet bombed, and shot in the back."

The imperialist coalition and the Baghdad regime both have their own reasons for covering up the truth about the bloodbath. As a result, we'll never know how many people died in the massacre. In late March Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was asked by a reporter to provide an estimate of the number of Iraqis killed as a result of combined allied bombing and ground operations. Showing a little of the true face of imperial arrogance and racism, Powell replied: "It's really not a number I'm terribly interested in."

Neither has Baghdad made any attempt to give an accounting to the families of the workers and peasants in uniform slaughtered in the trenches, in the foxholes, in the open desert, and on the highways in Kuwait and southern Iraq. As during the Saddam Hussein regime's 1980-88 war against Iran, tens of thousands of families in Iraq had their sons, brothers, nephews, and husbands sent off to war and then never saw them again or heard of their fate.

The U.S. government slaughter was not an operation with any military purpose per se. The victims were not part of military units or of an organized retreat. They had become individual human beings simply trying to get away from the war. It was a mass rout. By established "rules" of modern warfare they were not soldiers fighting; they were refugees fleeing. Even during the massive slaughter of World War II, both the Allied and German officer corps sometimes allowed soldiers fleeing down roads from battle to get away without this kind of murderous bombardment. But not the bipartisan killing machine organized by U.S. secretary of defense Richard Cheney (Republican), Gen. Colin Powell (Independent), and Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf (Democrat), commander of the U.S. forces in the Gulf.

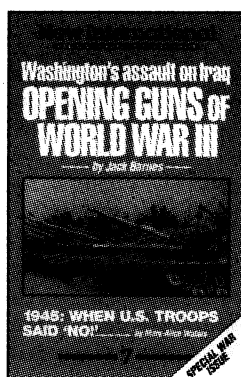
We can be sure that this massacre had a devastating impact on many of the U.S. soldiers who were on the scene those days or saw its horrible results afterwards. Some GIs have already begun to talk publicly about these horrors they witnessed and raise questions about the seemingly pointless inhumanity of what was done. They will play an important role in bringing these war

crimes by Washington to light and into U.S. politics in the months ahead.

What's more, the deaths and destruction during the U.S. invasion account for only a portion of those who were killed as a result of the military blockade of Iraq that began in the first days of August 1990 and the six-week-long air war launched January 16, 1991. Some of the horrendous damage is detailed in the March 20 report drafted by United Nations under-secretary-general Martti Ahtisaari of Finland, following a trip by a UN fact-finding commission to Iraq. To the credit of the *Militant* newsweekly — showing what it means to publish a paper in the interests of working people worldwide — the UN report was printed immediately and widely distributed for all to read. I know of no other newspaper that did so.

"It should... be said at once that nothing that we had seen or read had quite prepared us for the particular form of devastation which has now befallen the country," Ahtisaari wrote. The people of Iraq face an "imminent catastrophe" due to the war's destruction of an "economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society. Now, most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous."

1. During the Spanish civil war the German air force aided Spanish fascist forces. They bombed and strafed the fishing village of **Guernica** in April 1937, killing more than 1,600 men, women, and children and wounding nearly 1,000. The people of the Japanese city of **Hiroshima** were the first target of an atomic bomb, dropped by U.S. forces Aug. 6, 1945; Washington was responsible for the death and maiming of more than 100,000 people and the destruction of 90 percent of the city. Five firebombing raids against the German city of **Dresden** — a city with little military significance — during the spring of 1945, killed some 100,000 or more civilians and consumed most of the city in flames just weeks before the German government's unconditional surrender. Some five hundred unarmed men, women, and children in the South Vietnamese village of **My Lai** were lined up and shot by U.S. forces on March 16, 1968, after their houses had been dynamited and burned — all on orders of the U.S. officer corps.



New International

A MAGAZINE OF MARXIST POLITICS AND THEORY

■ no. 7

Opening Guns of World War III:

Washington's Assault on Iraq by Jack Barnes

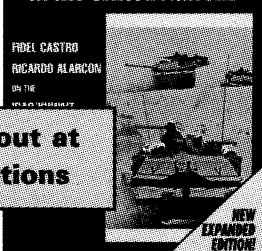
The U.S. government's murderous assault on Iraq heralded increasingly sharp conflicts among imperialist powers, the rise of rightist and fascist forces, growing instability of international capitalism, and more wars. In *New International* no. 7. Also includes "Communist Policy in Wartime as well as in Peacetime" by Mary-Alice Waters. \$12.00

Fidel Castro, Ricardo Alarcón

The case against Washington's 1990-91 embargo and war against Iraq, as presented by the Cuban government at the United Nations. \$10.95

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Stop the bombing of Iraq now!

Continued from front page

than 1 million more, as a result of the unrelenting sanctions the U.S. government has spearheaded in the years since.

The U.S. rulers' latest assault on Iraq comes in the context of the spreading deflationary crisis of world capitalism and accelerating conflicts between Washington and its imperialist rivals in Paris, Bonn, Tokyo, Ottawa, and even London. The impending challenge of the euro to the U.S. dollar; moves by Paris and London to make certain military decisions through the European Union, instead of exclusively through the U.S.-dominated NATO alliance; and plans by Tokyo to initiate an Asian monetary fund counter to the IMF — all are signs that U.S. imperialism's relative strengthening *vis-à-vis* its competitors since the early 1980s has peaked.

The bombs raining down on Iraq today follow a year-long effort by Washington to carry out such an attack.

In November 1997, Clinton had to pull back from a military buildup in the Arab-Persian Gulf and accept a deal brokered by its ally and rival in Paris and by the Russian government. "The fact that the immediate threat of a military strike has been averted for the moment should not fool class-conscious workers and rebel-minded youth into letting their guard down," the *Militant* said at the time. The fuse for a U.S. assault on Iraq had gotten shorter, not longer.

Washington's next attempt, at the start of this year, continued to have a hard time winning backing from U.S. allies, except the British government. Clinton again had to accept a deal, this time brokered by United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan. "Peace deal sets hair trigger for war," read the front-page *Militant* headline. We explained that the attacks on Iraq were part of preparing for war against the workers state in Russia, as Washington pushed forward at the same time to expand NATO membership in Europe right up to the border of the former Soviet Union.

Just weeks ago, after the U.S. rulers said they came within hours of launching air strikes against Iraq, the *Militant* explained the provocative role of the so-called inspectors, and warned that nothing had been resolved, pointing to the inevitability of renewed U.S. aggression.

William Jefferson Clinton became president in the wake of the Bush administration's failure during the Gulf war to accomplish Washington's aim of establishing a stable client regime in Baghdad. The article "Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq" by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes explained that the 1990-91 war was the first "since the close of World War II that grew primarily out of the intensified competition and accelerating instability of the crises-ridden old imperialist world order. It is the increasing internal strains within the declining order that drove Washington to launch its murderous military adventure. The irremediable social and political conflicts, and consequent instability, that existed before the Gulf war and that underlay it have all been exacerbated." (See issue no. 7 of the Marxist maga-

zine *New International*.)

Later, speaking days after the November 1992 elections, Barnes noted that the U.S. rulers expect Clinton "never again to make the error of beginning something he is politically unable to finish, as the Bush administration did in Iraq." But the world capitalist crisis has made it impossible for Clinton to do differently. The accelerated weakening of U.S. imperialism, not offensive behavior common to the class whose interests Clinton represents, is at the root of the scandalmongering that has already weakened the U.S. presidency.

Clinton took office as U.S. bombs were falling on Iraq in January 1993, air strikes begun by Bush with the incoming president's wholehearted agreement. Clinton ordered the bombing of Iraq once more in the midst of the 1996 election campaign. And now he is raining death and destruction on the Iraqi people once again.

The Socialist Workers Party National Committee has issued a call for action, urging workers, farmers, youth involved in social protests, and others to organize and build picket lines, speak out, and other actions against Washington's deadly attack. Now is the time to take political tools like "The Opening Guns of World War III" and other issues of *New International*, as well as the *Militant* newspaper and revolutionary books and pamphlets, to workers at the plant gates, on picket lines, and side-by-side on the job — explaining the reasons for Washington's aggression and why all working people should oppose imperialism and its wars.

The SWP will hold a national leadership meeting January 1-3 to discuss the accelerating capitalist crisis and political polarization that underlies Washington's war moves, and the increased working-class resistance that points the way forward.

In his closing summary at the socialist conference held in conjunction with the December 4-6 Young Socialists National Convention, Jack Barnes pointed to the importance of bringing together those working people who are fighting the attacks of the employers and their government. This decaying capitalist world order, he said, will offer more executions, more brutality, more storm troopers used against strikes, more wars.

The U.S. rulers' bombardment of Iraq is an extension of their barbarity and assault on the rights of workers and farmers at home. Workers who are fighting the bosses, from the Illinois coal fields to the Kaiser Aluminum picket lines, are up against the same government, who deploys its cops and courts against labor. Farmers facing a mounting crisis that will force many off the land, especially a disproportionate number who are Black, are up against the same enemy. Young people protesting stepped-up executions, police brutality, deportations, attacks on women's rights, and attempts to gut affirmative action can recognize the same contempt for human beings and rights in the assault on the Iraqi people.

These fighters need to put at the center of their political activity today campaigning against the U.S. slaughter of the people of Iraq.

Garment workers picket in Montreal

Continued from front page

basic wage of a presser would be reduced from CAN\$8.40 to CAN\$7.30 per hour. The minimum wage in Quebec is CAN\$6.90.

"First they will hire workers with lower wages, then they will try to get rid of those with more seniority," said Enel Saint-Louis, who has worked as a presser at Golden Brand for 11 years.

"There are no more secure jobs," commented Pierrette Allard, a machine operator at SFI Apparel.

"The bosses are trying to lower their production costs in order to be more competitive against their rivals, mainly in the United States," explained Giordani Jean-Richard, a 23-year-old Haitian worker employed as a clerk at SFI Apparel. "They want to reduce our wages to raise their profits. They take it out on us because we are their main obstacle in achieving this."

To sweeten the pill, the bosses offered to raise wages by CAN\$0.65 per hour over three years. They also claim that wages of present employees will not be lowered during the next three years. However, many workers never saw the last contract raises because the bosses gave them only to hourly paid workers or to piece workers who could meet production quotas.

Union militancy before lockout

Two weeks before the lockout, 600 workers at Jack Victor Company and 900 at Golden Brand stopped work December 1 after supervisors distributed a leaflet inviting them to accept the bosses' offer and vote against a strike. Later that day, a first general assembly, attended by 3,000 workers, rejected the bosses' first offer by a 90 percent margin.

A few days later, union officials accepted the bosses' "final offer." They attempted to get the contract approved by taking the vote factory by factory, during working hours. But delegates and workers from several shops succeeded in having a general assembly called, which rejected the bosses' offer after a broad discussion. The assembly was an opportunity for collective discussion of the real impact the offer would have on the wages of union and nonunion workers.

The contract would no doubt have been approved "if separate votes had been organized in each factory," complained Louise Béchamp, spokesperson for the Men's Clothing Manufacturers' Association.

Many workers thought they should have gone on strike after the December 10 meeting. "Slowdowns and even work stoppages took place on Friday in some factories," Béchamp acknowledged.

"The bosses knew that some of us were not going to come to work on Monday. We had already decided to stay outside the plant gate and encourage others to do the same," explained Rima, a sewing-machine operator at SFI Apparel for five years.

The locked-out workers will receive CAN\$75.00 per week in union benefits after the second week of the lockout. Recently, some have been working only three or four days a week because of cutbacks in production and temporary layoffs.

"We would rather have a hard time for a while than look forward to a minimum wage for the rest of our lives," said Tony Sanchez, a presser at Jack Victor.

Carlos Cornejo is a member of UNITE locked out at SFI Apparel. Michel Dugré and Sebastien Desautels, also members of UNITE at SFI, contributed to this article.

Support Quebec garment workers

The labor movement should throw its weight behind the 4,000 locked-out garment workers in the Montreal area who are defending their wages and their union. This fight by some of the lowest-paid workers has enormous stakes for all working people. The outcome will especially affect not only the union members, but the big majority of the 100,000 garment workers in Quebec who are nonunion.

This is a fight for working-class unity and against an attempt by the bosses to introduce a two-tier system, which would allow them to bank more profits through the superexploitation of a layer of garment workers. The bosses aim to sow more divisions among workers that would weaken our ability to defend our living and working conditions.

A disproportionate number of the garment workers earning minimum wage or just above are young, Blacks, immigrants from oppressed countries, Quebecois, and female. The employing class uses the oppression of and prejudices against these workers to keep the price of their labor power lower than for the rest of the working class.

Under capitalism, wages are determined from the bottom up, not the other way around. The bosses use the miserable wages that they impose on the most downtrodden as a floor for the wages paid to all workers. There will be no way for the labor movement as a whole to defend the

wages, rights, and social gains won in past struggles without defending the living conditions and the rights of those most oppressed by the capitalist system.

The Montreal garment workers' fight illustrates the growing militancy among workers who are women. It places immigrant workers at the center of the labor resistance in Canada, thus making these workers and those born in Canada more united.

By defending their right to vote on union contracts after a collective discussion, giving all workers a better chance of hearing different points of view and better understanding the stakes in their fight, the Montreal garment workers have strengthened their union. They gave an example of the steps all workers need to make toward transforming our unions into a social movement capable of defending the living and working conditions for all.

Montreal garment workers are joining the growing layer of working people around the world who defend themselves against the impact of the crisis of the capitalist system: from the Illinois miners, to the Quebec poultry workers, from the Canadian farmers, to the maritime workers in France.

Youth and working-class fighters need to follow closely this fight, explaining its importance to co-workers and others and building solidarity.

U.S. forces bomb Iraq

Continued from Page 5

which could result in the most dramatic consequences not only for the Iraqi settlement but for the stability of the entire region."

As Clinton ordered the assault on Iraq, debate ensued in Congress on the timing of attack. The bipartisan support for Washington's war moves remain.

"While I have been assured by administration officials that there is no connection with the impeachment process in the House of Representatives, I cannot support this military action in the Persian Gulf at this time," Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. Both the timing and policy are subject to question."

"This operation has been carefully planned over a period of time," Republican Sen. John Warner, incoming chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The House of Representatives adopted a resolution December 17 supporting the assault on Iraq, with an overwhelming bipartisan majority of 417-5.

Iowa farmers face deepening crisis

BY TIM MAILHOT

DES MOINES, Iowa — "Free Butcher Hogs. To pick up at my farm. I would rather give them away free than take \$14.82 per hundredweight," read an ad placed in an eastern Iowa newspaper by hog farmer Ron Mohr November 25. Within a few days, 38 hogs were trucked off.

In central Iowa, a small businessman bought 50 hogs from a neighbor at an above-market price and on November 28 gave them away in a raffle at his store. Tickets cost nothing and the hogs were butchered at no cost.

These offers aren't being made for fun, or because hog farmers in Iowa have money to burn. This is how two farmers have tried to draw attention to the dire situation caused by a complete collapse in the price for hogs for slaughter. The price Mohr was offered is the lowest in 27 years. When adjusted for inflation, this is the lowest price ever. Hog prices hit a peak in July 1997 at \$60.31 per hundred weight. The current price means farmers lose between \$50 and \$75 for each hog. A farmer in St. Ansgar, Iowa, recently shot a sow rather than pay for a routine \$50 medical procedure. "I hated to do that but she just wasn't worth it at these prices," said Mike Borcharding.

This crisis isn't limited to working farmers who raise smaller numbers of hogs. Contract farmers — those who sign agreements to raise hogs for a larger contractor — face some potentially big problems. These farmers supply the labor and buildings that produce thousands of hogs a year with livestock and feed supplied by the contractor. Currently, at least 40 percent of the pork industry is based on contract arrangements. As prices have fallen, the possibility has increased that a contractor may declare bankruptcy, leaving the farmer holding thousands of dollars of debt for the buildings and operating expenses.

U.S. agriculture secretary Daniel Glickman announced that the government will respond by purchasing up to \$50 million worth of pork from processors, which he says will shrink the supply and hopefully boost prices. This meat would be made available to people receiving food assistance from the government.

Pork price is high, farmers get nothing

Over the last year and a half, while hog prices have gone down regularly, the number of hogs being slaughtered has continued to swell. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that a record 2.2 million hogs are being shipped to slaughterhouses weekly. The total hog slaughter for the year in early November was 84.6 million, an 11 percent increase over 1997.

This drop in prices paid to farmers hasn't been reflected in pork prices at local grocery stores or restaurants. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that in October, the price of a composite of pork cuts was \$2.302, just pennies under the record high.

At that rate only 18 percent of the consumer dollar spent on pork goes to the farmer. Some elected officials have begun calling for federal or state investigations of pork prices. Patty Judge, newly elected secretary of agriculture in Iowa, has also spoken of investigating the processing capacity of the packinghouses, and U.S. senator Charles Grassley of Iowa has asked U.S. meatpackers to do all they can to increase slaughter capacity at their plants. Hog slaughter capacity in the United States has dropped by 35,000 per day in the last two years, according to Steve Meyer, an economist for the National Pork Producers. He placed some of the responsibility for this on big packers like Smithfield Foods, who have bought slaughterhouses only to close them.

The big pork processors have been quick to cash in, buying up as many hogs as they can. At the Swift and Co. plant in Marshalltown, Iowa, six-day work weeks are common and line speeds have been ratcheted up. IBP, Inc., the Dakota City, Nebraska-based meatpacker, reported its profits doubled in the third quarter this year over last. Processor Smithfield Foods and restaurant chain Evans Farms, Inc. also reported significantly increased profits for the most recent quarter.

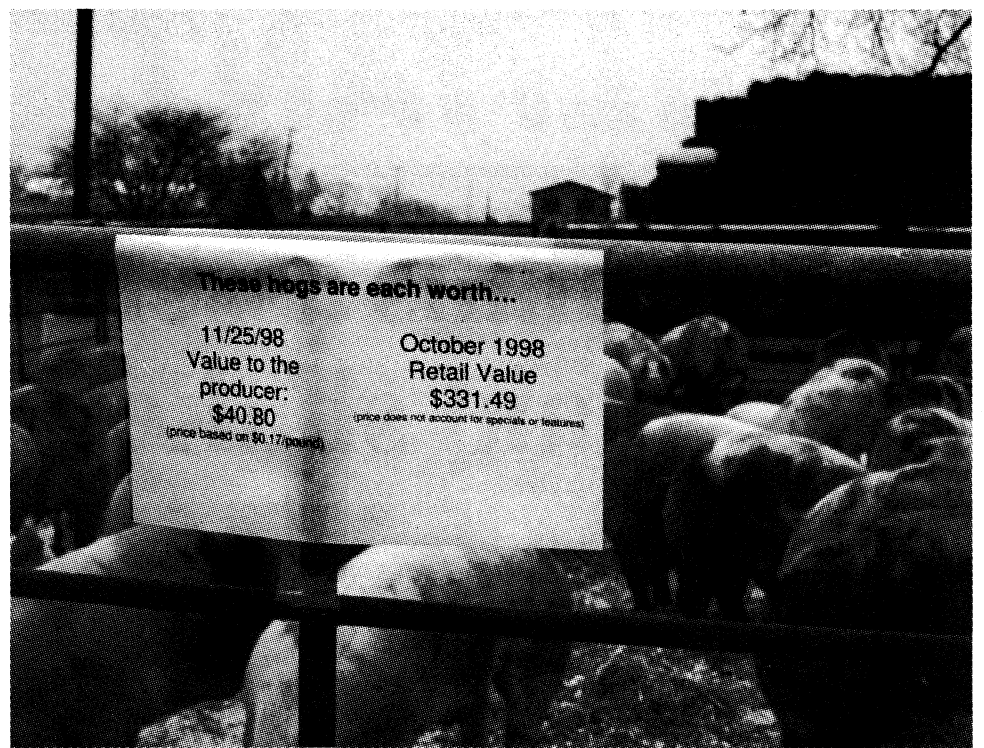
Another major processor, Hormel Foods Corp., hasn't seen the large increase in its margins because it has long-term contracts with its suppliers that set prices at a level about twice what others farmers are currently getting.

These so-called ledger contracts contain a built-in debt trap for farmers if the market price remains below what they are paid for an extended period of time. The difference between the market price and what they are paid is recorded as a loan by Hormel, which is offset only when market prices rise above the price set by the ledger contract. Some farmers could end up owing hundreds of thousands in debt to Hormel if prices remain low into next year. It isn't clear how many farmers are tied to these contracts.

Discussion over how to respond

Raymond Parsons, Socialist Workers candidate for Iowa secretary of agriculture in the recent election, said in an interview, "What working farmers need today is a fight for a living income and an end to farm foreclosures. The collapse of prices for farm products is part of the normal workings of the capitalist market system as it slides deeper into depression conditions around the world."

He pointed to the importance of building solidarity between farmers facing this squeeze and workers on strike at Titan Tire and Freeman United Coal. "Workers can be won to support our fellow toilers on the land. Our bosses use the same justification for pushing for lower wages, longer hours, and worse working conditions. We need price committees made up of farmers and workers to open the books of the meatpackers



Militant/Tim Mailhot

Pigs given away by farmer in Iowa in November 1998 to draw attention to devastation faced by working farmers as result of collapse in hog prices for slaughter.

and agribusiness enterprises and expose their 'business secrets,' which result in rigged prices paid to farmers, high supermarket prices, low wages for workers, and the willful destruction of the environment."

The traditional organizations of farmers have been slow to organize any protests of the crisis. The Iowa Farm Bureau Federation was present at the hog raffle, which was organized by a store owner in Indianola, Iowa. About 1,000 people showed up during the four hours the raffle tickets were given out. A number of farmers who had already been forced out of raising hogs were present.

The hogs were purchased from Craig Hill, a district director of the Iowa Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau also arranged for the processing of the pork. Hill, who operates a 250-sow farrow-to-finish farm, noted that fewer and fewer farmers in Iowa are able to afford to farm full-time. "Out of 98,000 farmers in Iowa, only 15,000 survive doing it full-time," he said. As a short term solution to the pork glut, Hill said, "Let's ship it to Honduras. The government could buy it for schools and foreign aid. But we need to organize farmers, industry, and the government to find a solution." He opposed any sort of deficiency payment system, which would be similar to what grain growers receive. "We have too much product and that's driving the price down," Hill argued. "What we need is better growth management to control prices."

As the pressure on family farmers increases, discussion on what action needs to be taken is spreading. A debate on government assistance versus its traditional free-market policy broke out at the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation's (IFBF) 80th policy meeting held in Des Moines on December 1. On December 4 a projected three-hour public hearing hosted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Agriculture stretched to five hours

as speakers debated the social and environmental impact of large livestock confinements and the latest drop in hog prices.

In Illinois, the Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Pork Producers Association are establishing a retail pork price reporting network to the Chicago area. It will monitor and publicize the gap between the price farmers get and the average retail price.

At the IFBF meeting, a number of pork producers pointed out the difficulty in competing against large scale confinement operations. In the last two or three years, about 9,000 hog farmers in Iowa went out of business. Others pinned the blame for the drop in prices on the increasing power the processors have. Over the last 10 years, there has been a shake out in the meatpacking industry, with a larger share of the industry dominated by a few packers. Five processors control about 60 percent of pork processing in the United States.

Delegates to the IFBF meeting rejected a proposal for a one-time \$40-per-head payment to small and medium hog farmers for hogs marketed between Sept. 1, 1998 and March 31, 1999. The final resolution adopted by the IFBF called on boosting the capacity of packinghouses "by any and all means available to the government," building foreign trade and reducing trade barriers, establishing mandatory price reporting of all sales to the major packers, providing more training to farmers in risk management, and government assistance in the creation of producer-owned packing plants.

Doug Sorenson, who supported the payment proposal, said that without it, "We're going to lose so many producers its not even going to be funny.... People are losing their butts, and this won't help people in the short-term. All we're going to have left are the big guys."

Tim Mailhot is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 310.

— LETTERS —

Facts on West Papua

There is an error in the "In Brief" item of the December 14 issue, "Indonesian troops massacred W. Papua independence fighters."

The item says that "Biak residents held a festival commemorating the July 1, 1961, proclamation of West Papuan independence from New Guinea."

West Papua was still a Dutch colony at that time, with UN-sponsored "decolonization" in the process of handing the territory over to Indonesia against the wishes of the people. The Indonesian administration was established in 1963 and, in 1969, with a UN-endorsed "act of free choice," which West Papuans bitterly describe as the "act of no choice," was incorporated into Indonesia. The Free West Papua (OPM) movement declared independence from Indonesia in 1971.

In any case, "New Guinea" has never been a country to declare independence from! *Bob Aiken*
Sydney, Australia

Reaction to Buchanan

Enclosed are two pieces taken from the Philadelphia *Inquirer*. The first is a column by Patrick J. Buchanan, where he demands

that Harvard University accept white Christians to its student body at a rate of 75 percent, and no less. The next piece is a series of letters to the *Inquirer* which are for the most part critical of Buchanan's column.

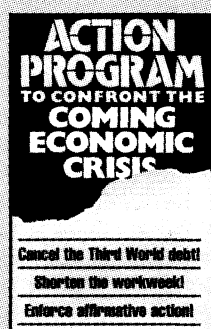
For anyone familiar with Buchanan's politics, this column should be no surprise. However, I found this piece a bit more reprehensible than most of his columns and so did many of the readers of the *Inquirer*.

In Daniel Guerin's book *Fascism and Big Business*, he pointed out how the Nazis wanted to push social relations back to a time before the revolutions against feudalism. This was their theoretical basis for a complete autocracy. Buchanan not only wants to push us back to before the Civil Rights movement, he wants to go back to before the American Revolution. After all, the First Amendment of the Constitution is freedom of religion.

Steve Halpern
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

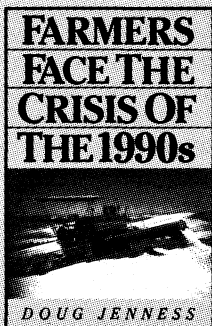
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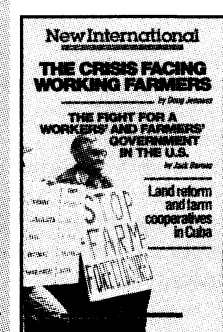
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Palestinians assert their dignity, Clinton tries to aid shakey Netanyahu regime

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Undaunted by the Israeli regime's military might, thousands of Palestinian youth have taken to the streets over the past several weeks in renewed protests aimed at reasserting their dignity and right to an independent Palestinian homeland. The demonstrators are demanding the release of the more than 2,100 political prisoners held in Israeli jails. Meanwhile, the regime of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu teeters on the brink of collapse, as an impending no-confidence vote in parliament threatens to topple his coalition government.

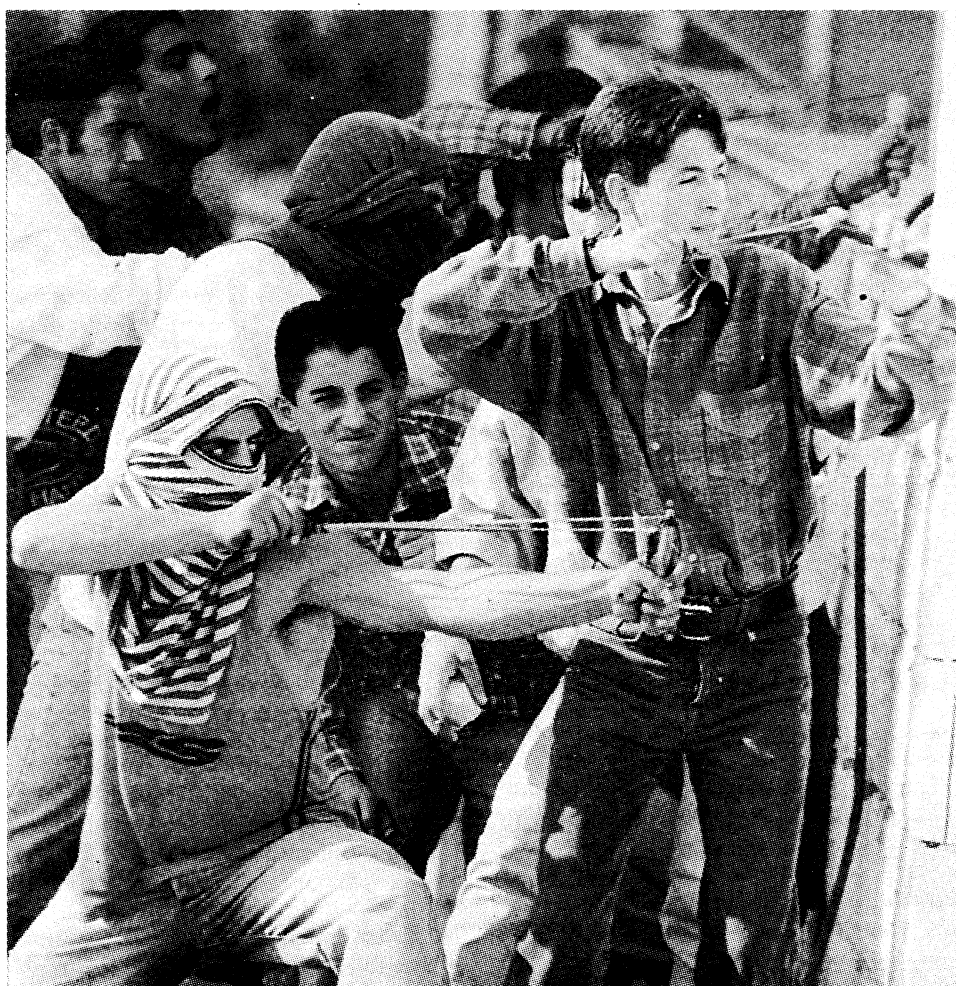
Protests erupted in virtually every city of the occupied West Bank on December 9 to commemorate the 11th anniversary of the 1987-93 uprising by Palestinian youth known as the *intifada*. Thousands of Palestinians fired slingshots at helmeted Israeli soldiers, who responded with tear gas, live rounds, and rubber-coated steel pellets. A 17-year-old Palestinian, Jihad Iyad, was killed near Ramallah and at least 87 others injured in clashes there and in Bethlehem, Nablus, and Jericho.

Several days earlier, hundreds of Palestinian prisoners demanding to be freed from Israeli jails launched a hunger strike that has been joined on the outside by family members. In every Palestinian town and in East Jerusalem, the prisoners' relatives have set up tent camps for fasting and organizing demonstrations against the Israeli military presence. Nearly every family has had members jailed by the Israeli regime during the 30 years of occupation of the West Bank. Thousands of Palestinians have participated in protests demanding the prisoners' releases.

Asis Barghouti, 21, who was shot in the arm by Israeli troops during clashes near Ramallah, said he took to the streets because his father, like so many other Palestinian prisoners, has been held for three years without charges. His uncle has already served 21 years of a life term for an attack in which Israelis were killed. "If Netanyahu does not release the prisoners, this will be the situation every day," Barghouti said from his hospital bed. Barghouti's grandfather, Salah, 74, said he backed the protesters. "I was out there with them, collecting rocks and giving them to the young men," he said.

Accords don't bring land or peace

The Israeli regime had promised to release 750 political prisoners as part of a deal signed in October by Palestinian Authority president Yasser Arafat and Netanyahu at a meeting organized by U.S. president William Clinton at the Wye River Plantation in



Palestinian youth slingshot Israeli soldiers during protests in Bethlehem December 7

Maryland. The first batch of 250 inmates set free in November included hardly any political prisoners, fueling the latest round of Palestinian protests.

The Wye agreement is a continuation of the process begun with the accord reached between the Israeli government and the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organiza-

tion (PLO) in Oslo, Norway, in 1993.

That accord registered the failure of the Israeli government to suppress the struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination. But it was as much a product of the increasingly bourgeois character of the PLO leadership, headed by Arafat, which over the previous 15 years had turned its eyes further away from the ranks of the Palestinian masses inside and outside Israel. While the *intifada* drew a new layer of youth into the struggle, it did not forge a new leadership strong enough to replace the PLO apparatus.

Under the Oslo accord, Tel Aviv has turned over control of the Gaza Strip, which had become nothing but a headache for the Israeli rulers to try to control, to the Palestinian Authority, along with a patchwork of towns in the West Bank. Both regions have been under Israeli occupation since 1967.

The Wye agreement calls for Israel to withdraw its troops from an additional 13 percent of the West Bank, to be carried out in three stages over the following three months. The Palestinian Authority was also allowed to open an airport in Gaza. Israeli forces, however, will remain a presence in this area for "security" purposes.

About 14 percent of West Bank territory that had been under joint Israeli-Palestinian control will pass to the full control of the Palestinian Authority. Prior to this agreement, the Palestinian Authority controlled 3 percent of the West Bank. Another 24 percent has been administratively run by the Palestinian Authority with full control belonging to Tel Aviv.

After withdrawing from another 2 percent of the West Bank as agreed to under the

Continued on Page 12

Greece: students protest education cuts

BY CAN COBAN
AND GEORGES MEHRABIAN

ATHENS — Tens of thousands of high school and university students took to the streets in 44 towns and cities across Greece December 9 to protest a government education "reform" law known as the Arsenis Law.

In Athens, contingents of students assembled on side streets and converged, carrying their local high school banners, toward the central Athens march site. Close to 20,000 youth participated. They were joined by a contingent of hundreds of school teachers who marched behind their union federation banner. The union had declared a one-day strike to coincide with the student-led march. These marches are part of a broader response against the capitalist government's austerity measures that includes tractorades by working farmers and strikes by workers.

The march took place in the context of a wave of high school, technical high school, and university occupations. In an interview with *Militant* reporters given three days earlier, Giorgos Bouloubidis, a high school student in the Athens neighborhood of Zografos, said, "Close to 1,000 school and university buildings are now under occupation, out of a total of about 3,500." Bouloubidis and five other students spoke to *Militant* reporters after the weekly neighborhood coordinating meeting of occupied high schools. According to the teachers federation, two-thirds of all high schools, 800, are occupied, along with 200 other educational institutions.

The coordinating meeting involved representatives from five nearby occupied schools and was held in the yard of one of the schools. A lively exchange took place over the demands for the march and where their contingent would assemble. The students settled on the three basic demands of "overturn the Arsenis Law, increase education funding by 15 percent, and for a unified high school system." Similar meetings have

been taking place throughout the city's high schools as students have sought to coordinate their activities.

During the meeting two parents showed up at the locked main gate to say that the parents' association was putting out a statement in support of the students. They were let in and heard. "There have been many parents who have come to show their support or to help out," Georgia Kafedzi, one of the students, explained. A student from another school reported members of the Construction Workers Union and the Retirees Association had come by to show support.

The Arsenis law "makes university entrance much more restrictive and graduation from high school much more difficult, by instituting about 30 statewide exams that we have to take over the last three years of school in addition to another 300 or so school exams," said Bouloubidis. Last year 125,000 high school students graduated; it is estimated that now the figure will drop to 85,000.

"What we will have are not high schools where people learn but rather simply examination centers whereby students are cleared for university," added Andreas Kilchikis.

"There is no increased funding for the educational system projected. For schools to get more funding they say go to the church or to the municipalities," continued Bouloubidis.

"The right to free public education is undercut, with the almost doubling of registration in after-school private tutoring centers, with the passage of this law," said Andreas Simopoulos.

Across town in the suburb of Halandri about 10 technical high school students sat around a camp fire and chatted with *Militant* reporters on the grounds of their occupied school.

"Conditions in the technical schools are horrible," said a student who did not want

to be identified, while another demonstrated how the nearby wall was loose. "The government just provides no money for us. We have no work shop here, so we must travel to another far away school for practical training. And even there the equipment is from the 1960s."

He is studying to be an electrician and has a side job as a supermarket clerk. "Often, I have to bring equipment and tools in order to do the practical training."

University students have also been actively involved in the occupation wave as well as the street protests. *Militant* reporters visited the department of philosophy at the University of Athens, which is under occupation. Some 50 students were guarding the occupied department building. Many were getting off of their midnight shift while others were coming in to relieve them. Several professors tried to get in then but they were stopped. Discussions ensued and the professors are politely but firmly turned away. One of the occupiers, who identified himself as Thanassis, said the government's cuts in education were aimed "to get into the European Monetary Union. The education plan is part of that overall policy. It's like the attempt earlier to get a private company into the university to take on the teaching of English. We defeated that earlier attempt."

"But you see badly needed money from the EU budget for education can only be used if 30 percent goes to private companies. That is how the private companies get in," explained another student.

Student coordinating committees have announced that they will join a general strike and demonstration called by the General Confederation of Labor for December 15 to protest government austerity measures.

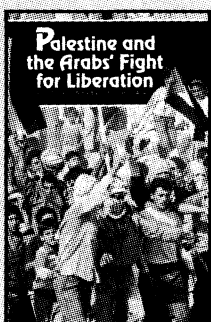
Natasha Terlexis also contributed to this article.

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