

## U.S. troops press assault on Baathists

Full British regiment  
joins battles  
south of Baghdad

BY SAM MANUEL

After consolidating its takeover of Fallujah in mid-November—and an earlier victory in Samarra—in the Sunni Triangle of central Iraq, the U.S. military is pressing its offensive against Baathist forces in several villages south of Baghdad.

The operation is part of the war U.S. forces launched days after the U.S. elections to destroy the remaining loyalist units of the former army of Saddam Hussein's regime, which dispersed but maintained much of their weaponry and fighting cohesion after the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion. These former units of Hussein's Republican Guard have exacted a high price from the imperialist occupation forces and among many Iraqis over the past 18 months.

More evidence has also emerged that wealthy Sunnis, many of them former officials in the Hussein regime, are bankrolling the Baathist-led attacks. These Sunnis are using bank accounts in Syria, Jordan, and other neighboring countries to finance bombings on civilian and military targets, kidnappings, and beheadings of hostages. The loss of Fallujah, the center of such operations, has pushed the Baathists and their collaborators to flee abroad or to other locations in Iraq, such as the area south of Baghdad many Iraqis refer to as the "Triangle of Death," where they are being pursued by the U.S.-led forces.

An estimated 5,000 troops are involved in that offensive, dubbed Operation Plymouth Rock. The entire Black Watch regiment, made up of 850 elite British troops, is now taking part in the raids there.

The involvement in battle of the British  
Continued on Page 4

## Behind conflict in Ukraine

Dispute over influence  
in ex-Soviet republic  
between Moscow,  
imperialist powers

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Thousands of protesters took to the streets in Ukraine to support competing presidential candidates following the November 21 election, which was marked by widespread allegations of fraud. Mass demonstrations by backers of Viktor Yushchenko, a former prime minister, have predominated in Kiev, the capital. Rallies backing the current prime minister, Viktor Yanukovich, have been centered in Donetsk and other eastern sections of the former Soviet republic.

Behind the developing crisis is a dispute among the ruling layers over the extent of ties with Moscow or Washington.

Moscow, which is backing the current regime, is trying to slow down the establishment of governments in former Soviet republics on Russia's borders that are more subservient to Washington and other imperialist powers. Ukraine, which has a large Russian-speaking population, has maintained substantial economic and military ties with Russia since declaring independence in 1991. Both historic and recent ties with Russia make Ukraine more important to Moscow than other former

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# Utah: Co-Op miners expose unsafe working conditions

Fight bosses' threats to fire UMWA supporters



Militant photos by Terri Moss  
November 29 press conference  
outside MSHA office in Price,  
Utah (above). From left: Dee  
Rowland, of Catholic diocese  
in Salt Lake City, and John  
Rowland; Co-Op miner Timoteo  
González; Renée López, spouse  
of UMWA retiree; Co-Op miner  
Bill Estrada; and UMWA re-  
tiree Raymond Cisneros. With  
back to camera is Ann Fivecoat,  
wife of retired miner. Accident  
at nearby Dugout Canyon mine,  
owned by Arch Coal, nearly  
killed coal miner Pat Dirks, to  
whom Co-Op miners sent get-  
well card. Skyline Mine (right)  
is also owned by Arch Coal.



BY LUIS ASTORGA

PRICE, Utah—"We the miners at Co-Op and other miners heard about your serious accident at the Dugout Mine and want to extend our solidarity. We know that the coal companies are always pushing so hard for production, and that is what causes accidents. Coal miners have to depend on ourselves for safer mines. Get well soon."

So reads the get-well card to Pat Dirks signed by more than 30 miners. Dirks, a roof bolter at the Dugout Canyon mine owned by Arch Coal, suffered near-fatal injuries November 22 when he was struck by a massive slab of rock that fell from the roof.

The solidarity gesture was a centerpiece of the statement by Bill Estrada, a leader of the Co-Op miners' union-organizing struggle, to a news conference held in front of the offices of the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) here November 29.

Estrada was backed by a delegation of Co-Op miners, United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) retirees, and Dee Rowland, a representative of the Salt Lake City

**166 coal miners  
killed in China  
mine explosion**  
(see p. 7)

diocese of the Catholic Church. The Co-Op miners, fighting to win representation by the UMWA and standing up to threats of wholesale firings by their bosses, assembled to place before MSHA a list of safety violations at Co-Op.

The list included illegal cuts of 55 feet into the coal seam, when the maximum allowed in that mine is 40 feet. Estrada informed those

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## Toronto meat packers approve contract, end strike

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—Packinghouse workers on strike against Quality Meat Packers and Toronto Abattoirs (QMP) voted November 28 to accept the company's third offer and end their walkout.

The vote by members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 175 was 271-112 in favor of the proposed contract. The union bargaining committee had made a unanimous recommendation for approval of the offer. Approximately

190 workers did not participate in the vote, which was held from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in a hotel in Mississauga, a suburb of Toronto.

The approved contract was almost identical to the company's "final offer," which strikers had rejected November 13 in a vote of 200-180. It includes small wage increases over three years.

The strike began November 1, follow-  
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UFCW Local 175 members on picket line November 5 outside Quality Meat Packers slaughterhouse in Toronto. They fought for higher wages, won small pay raise.

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to start uranium enrichment 4

Meat packers at Colorado plant  
approve contract giving union  
some control of line speed 9



# Pathfinder sales up at Montreal book fair

BY SYLVIE CHARBIN

MONTREAL—The annual Salon du livre de Montréal, one of the largest book fairs in the French-speaking world, was held here November 18–22. The event drew over 124,000 visitors, 4,000 more than last year. Book fair activities were covered live on radio and got extensive coverage in newspapers and TV.

International delegations at the fair came from Belgium, France, Egypt, and Haiti. Publishers and authors from several other French-speaking countries were also represented.

Pathfinder Books had a stand at the fair, among the more than 800 booths. Eleven volunteers from Montreal and Toronto, as well as Chicago, staffed the Pathfinder stand throughout the 53-hour event, some taking time off work to do so.

One day of the fair is dedicated to book trade professionals. Volunteers at the Pathfinder booth were able to make important contacts—particularly with Montreal-area librarians.

Two librarians who staff small rural libraries on a volunteer basis also visited the booth twice to make sure that Pathfinder stand volunteers got all the information necessary to place Pathfinder books in the five regional “Central book exchanges” (book lending centers) throughout Quebec. They explained that readers using local libraries in outlying regions, often too small to stock many books, borrow books from these lending centers, using their catalogues to request particular titles.

Reflecting the importance of Pathfinder’s French-language publishing project, 60 percent of the titles sold from the Pathfinder stand were in French, 33 percent in English, and 6 percent in Spanish.

Several visitors took full advantage of Pathfinder’s Super Saver Sale, which started in August and ended November 30. Of a total of 63 books and pamphlets sold—a 70 percent increase over last year’s sales—45 were among those offered on the special discount. Best sellers included *The Second Declaration of Havana*, 10 copies; and *Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* by Jack Barnes, 9 copies. Two pamphlets by Thomas Sankara—the central leader of the revolution in Burkina Faso, West Africa—were among the most popular titles; a total of 14 copies were sold of *We Are Heirs of the*

*World’s Revolutions and Women’s Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*.

The total value of book sales at the fair was Can\$572, helping to push Pathfinder sales in Montreal for the first three weeks of November to Can\$950 (Can\$1=U.S.\$0.83).

Discussions on working-class politics also led six people to subscribe to the *Militant* and two to its sister publication in Spanish *Perspectiva Mundial*. In addition, 26 people, including several youth, signed up to receive regular notices of Militant Labor Forums in Montreal or be called about subscribing to the *Militant*.

Volunteers at the booth also distributed hundreds of copies of promotional material, including business cards with the *Militant* and Pathfinder Press web sites, as well as leaflets advertising upcoming Militant Labor Forums. Many fairgoers said they were pleased to see books on revolutionary socialism in different languages at the fair. Several said they would check out the new Pathfinder book center and Militant Labor Forum hall in Montreal.



Militant  
Pathfinder Books stand, November 20, at Montreal book fair, in Montreal, Quebec.

On November 20, halfway through the fair, thousands demonstrated three blocks away outside the Quebec Liberal Party convention. The protest was directed against ongoing cutbacks in education and health care and other anti-working-class poli-

cies of the federal Liberal government. Ten books and pamphlets, as well as a subscription to the *Militant*, were sold to protesters from a literature table set up during the action by the Communist League and Young Socialists.

## Delaware River closed after oil tanker spill

BY JOHN STUDER

PHILADELPHIA—The *Athos I*, a 750-foot-long oil tanker attempting to dock at the Citgo refinery in Paulsboro, New Jersey, spilled 30,000 gallons of crude oil into the Delaware River here November 26. While being maneuvered into the refinery across from Philadelphia’s international airport, the tanker suddenly lost power, leaned 8 degrees on its left side, and began leaking.

The tanker, sailing under the Cypriot flag, was carrying 325,000 barrels of oil from Venezuela. Divers reportedly found a 6 1/2-foot by 1 1/2-foot gash in the hull of the *Athos*. The U.S. Coast Guard said it is not clear yet what caused the hole.

“It may have a devastating impact on the marshes just below Philadelphia,” Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey Sierra Club, told the Reuters news agency.

The Philadelphia area along the Delaware is a center for oil refineries. About 42 million gallons of oil are unloaded here every day.

On November 27, a plume of sludge extended 20 miles from the refinery area—near

the Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, a nature preserve next to the Philadelphia airport—up the river to the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge north of downtown Philadelphia. Dead birds and snapping turtles have already washed up on shore along the route of the spill.

A stench hangs over the riverbank in Paulsboro. The Philadelphia *Inquirer* reported that the sludge on the river appeared to be as thick as asphalt.

In fact, the Citgo refinery specializes in the production of asphalt, and much of the oil shipped there has already been processed into a thicker grade of crude.

“This stuff accumulates,” Mary van Rossum, a representative of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, told the *Inquirer*. “You are introducing toxins with every spill, and that stuff starts to build up and impact water quality.”

## New features on pathfinderpress.com

BY DEAN PARSONS

Readers of the *Militant* will be interested to learn that pathfinderpress.com has now begun to offer an exciting glimpse inside Pathfinder titles.

New photos that bring to life the dramatic events of the historic 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes included in the new edition of *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs can now be viewed online by clicking the “Inside this Book” link.

Pathfinderpress.com plans to expand the number of titles that readers can explore using this feature. It will also connect readers to introductions, prefaces, tables of contents, and text selections. Available now is the introduction by Jack Barnes to *Teamster Rebellion* (in English and Spanish). Two prefaces to Armando Hart’s *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Under-*

*ground, 1952–58*—the publisher’s preface by Mary-Alice Waters and the preface to the U.S. edition by Eliades Acosta Matos—are also available through this new feature.

Pathfinderpress.com recently completed the bilingual web pages for all books in French and Spanish, passing an important milestone in its development. A single click now extends the reach of pathfinderpress.com to readers around the world whose first languages are French or Spanish.

Finally, you can now download free Pathfinder promotional flyers in .pdf format through a new “Promotional Materials” link. The 2004 Pathfinder Press brochures in English, Spanish, and French are also available for a nominal cost. These attractive materials will help get the word out about Pathfinder’s latest titles.



### Find out about Utah miners’ fight for union

*After a 10-month strike, Co-Op miners in Huntington, Utah, returned to work in July and have continued battle for union from inside. From day one of the strike the ‘Militant’ has covered this important labor struggle weekly. New subscribers can get two back issues of their choice to find out more. Don’t miss a single issue!*



Co-Op miners and PACE unionists picket Sept. 18 at Salt Lake office of Carl Kingston, a member of mine-owning family.

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# Conflict over Ukraine vote

**Continued from front page**  
Soviet republics—from the Baltics to the Caucasus.

Discontent among working people with deteriorating economic conditions is also a factor in the current conflict. Decades of Stalinist misrule followed by efforts to reestablish capitalism over the last decade have brought an economic catastrophe that has devastated living standards. The republic's economy contracted sharply in the 1990s and inflation has remained in double digits in recent years.

The national electoral council announced Yanukovich the winner November 24 by a 49.5 percent to 46.6 percent margin. This sparked the first round of antigovernment protests. The supreme court then blocked the final publication of the election results. On November 27, the parliament declared the vote invalid in a nonbinding resolution.

Two days later, outgoing Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma called for new elections to settle the dispute, and Yanukovich said he supported the proposal. Yushchenko, however, indicated new elections would not be enough. "The election was falsified," he said. "As long as this problem is not solved, all other problems are secondary."

Yanukovich, who had the backing of Kuchma, promised closer ties with Moscow. Russian president Vladimir Putin officially congratulated Yanukovich the day of the electoral council's announcement. At the same time, the Kuchma-Yanukovich government was active in the U.S.-led NATO's Partnership for Peace and sent 1,500 troops to Iraq as part of Washington's "coalition of the willing."

Yushchenko differs with the current regime in calling for more rapid moves toward membership in NATO and the European Union (EU). He has also called for the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from Iraq.

Washington and other imperialist powers have sided with the opposition in its claims of electoral fraud. The U.S. government is trying to position itself to gain greater influence in this republic of 48 million bordering Russia, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus region.

"We cannot accept this result as legitimate because it does not meet international standards," said U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell, the day of the electoral council announcement.

"The validity of the elections [are] in doubt," said U.S. president George Bush.

U.S. officials raised the possibility of sanctions against Kiev, including cuts in Washington's \$140 million in annual aid.

### Economic ruin

On the eve of the election, an Associated Press dispatch described the economy of Ukraine as a "mix of audacious consumption and entrenched poverty." The candidates competed with each other over who could promise more jobs, and higher wages and pensions.

Efforts by the government of the newly independent country in 1991 to privatize the economy and reestablish capitalism spelt ruin for working people in a republic that had been considered the "breadbasket" of the former Soviet Union. Although privatization has now reached as high as three-quarters of the industrial sector, it is centered in light industry, food processing, pulp and paper, and woodworking, and accounts for 60 percent of industrial output.

The "Mass Privatization Program" began in 1995 through the distribution of "privatization certificates." It quickly became a bonanza for those in the ruling caste in high

managerial positions who bought up the vouchers at a fraction of their stated value from working people desperate for cash.

Between 1991 and 1999 the gross domestic product in Ukraine fell by 60 percent, and has only begun to recover in recent years. Hyperinflation that reached 10,000 percent in the early 1990s wiped out whatever savings working people or the middle classes had been able to put away, and real wages declined by 63 percent during the same period.

An indication of the deteriorating social conditions in Ukraine is the lowering of the life expectancy rate, which fell from 70.5 years in 1990 to 67.9 years in 2000. The relative change among men and women is even more dramatic, with men on average living 11.2 years less.

While the GDP has increased over the last few years, inflation continues to hit working people hard, with the rate expected to reach double digits this year and next.

The economic decline of the last 14 years was preceded by decades of misrule by a privileged bureaucracy under the domination of the Stalinist rulers in Moscow.

The Russian Revolution of October 1917, under the leadership of V.I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks, gave an impulse to revolutionary uprisings throughout the old tsarist empire. The communist leadership began to forge a voluntary federation of the various republics organized on the basis of soviet power—both where working people had overthrown capitalism (as in Russia and Ukraine), as well as

where that could not yet be accomplished but revolutionary workers and peasants governments had come to power (as in most of the Central Asian and Transcaucasian republics).

A bureaucracy in Kiev and Moscow came to power in the 1920s through the brutal suppression of workers and farmers and the destruction of the Bolshevik character of the Communist Parties of Ukraine and Russia.

In 1929 the Stalinist bureaucracy began a half-decade of forced collectivization of agriculture. Under the banner of financing rapid industrialization, Moscow devastated Soviet agriculture and destroyed the basis for the worker-peasant alliance that had made the revolution.

The results of forced collectivization in Ukraine were doubly brutal because the Stalinist rulers were also aiming to crush any nationalist aspirations among the Ukrainian people. The bureaucracy's policy in the countryside produced a famine that killed several million Ukrainians in 1932–33.

More recently, Ukrainian workers and farmers learned to hate the misrule of the



Map of Ukraine showing bases of Russia's Black Sea fleet

Stalinist bureaucracy in the Chernobyl nuclear plant meltdown in 1986. Years of disregard for safety measures resulted in the worst nuclear disaster in history, which released 200 times the radioactivity of Washington's 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.

More than 125,000 people in Ukraine and neighboring Belarus died in the disaster, and the United Nations estimates 9 million people in the area suffer from the effects of the radiation.

Both Yanukovich and Yushchenko come from the privileged bureaucratic caste that

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## WTO authorizes sanctions against U.S. products

### Dispute over U.S. steel tariffs shines light on interimperialist trade rivalries

BY PAUL PEDERSON

The World Trade Organization (WTO) voted November 26 to authorize the European Union, along with the governments of Japan, Canada, Mexico, India, south Korea, Chile, and Brazil to levy trade sanctions against U.S. products. The sanctions, amounting to \$150 million annually, were authorized in retaliation for a protectionist measure Washington enacted in 2000 to defend the U.S. steel industry against foreign competitors.

The U.S. measure is known as the Byrd Amendment after its main sponsor, West Virginia senator Robert Byrd. It places punitive tariffs on imported products that Washington claims are "dumped" on the U.S. market—that is, sold below prices U.S. manufacturers say they can compete with. The funds collected from these penalties are then handed over to U.S. companies that Washington deems to be harmed by competition from abroad. The measure was primarily aimed at defending the profits of the U.S. steel barons in response to a worldwide crisis of overproduction in the steel industry.

At a November 26 news conference in Crawford, Texas, U.S. president George Bush said Washington would comply with the ruling from the 148-nation trade body. He added, however, that the U.S. government plans to use the WTO to go after Airbus, the Europe-based aircraft-producer that is Boeing's main rival.

"I think it's important that all nations comply with WTO rulings. I worked with Congress to get in compliance," Bush said. "We expect the WTO as well to treat our trading partners as they treat us. And that's why, for example, I filed a complaint on the Airbus situation. We believe the subsidies for Airbus are unfair for a U.S. company such as Boeing."

In October Washington filed a complaint with the trade body charging that Airbus had received \$15 billion in subsidies from several European governments. The European Commission countered that the U.S. government has subsidized Boeing to the tune of \$23 billion.

Since the Byrd Amendment went into effect in 2001, Washington has paid out more than \$700 million in subsidies, primarily to companies in the steel industry. While most of the funds came from levies on Japanese and European goods, semicolonial countries like Brazil are disproportionately impacted by such protectionist measures, being in a far weaker position to retaliate against the imperialist power with the largest economy in the world.

The United States accounts for 12 percent of the world's exports and 19 percent

of the world's imports. These figures dwarf its closest rival, Germany, at 9 percent and 8 percent, respectively. That gives U.S. imperialism far greater weight than any single country to enforce its will through the club of tariffs.

While Tokyo is claiming \$80 million in damages and the EU is claiming \$50 million, none of the nations that filed the claim with the WTO have yet decided to impose the sanctions.

"If the U.S. does not bring its legislation into conformity with international obligations the EU would impose retaliatory measures in early 2005," read a statement issued from Brussels. These measures "will take the form of additional import duties on a wide variety of U.S. products from an indicative list approved by the WTO that includes machinery, foodstuffs, textiles and paper products."

According to the *International Herald Tribune*, Japan's government is planning to aim its fire at imported U.S. steel products. Tokyo has not yet announced a timetable for when tariffs would be applied, or the scope of penalties it would impose.

### War sharpens trade conflicts

"Retaliation is not Canada's preferred option," said Canadian minister for international trade Jim Peterson November 23. "But the U.S. has failed to live up to its international trade obligations and repeal the Byrd Amendment." Canadian officials threatened to slap 100 percent tariffs on a range of U.S. goods. They are authorized by the WTO ruling to collect \$10 million in retaliatory tariffs.

Washington has used trade measures to kick the Canadian ruling class in the teeth for refusing to join the "coalition of the willing" in the war against Iraq. Ottawa fears it might face even sharper measures from Washington if it decides to use the WTO measure to retaliate against its neighbor. Washington has collected \$2.5 billion from Canadian capitalists by slapping 27 percent tariffs on Canadian lumber. Under the Byrd Amendment, those funds could be turned over to U.S. lumber bosses to give them a further edge over their Canadian competitors.

This trade conflict, sharpened by Ottawa's stance on the imperialist war in Iraq, provoked a crisis in the Canadian ruling class. The government was forced to call early elections last June as the division deepened. The incumbent prime minister, Paul Martin, hung on to his post, but his government emerged weaker from the elections.

The Byrd Amendment was Washington's answer to a deepening crisis of overproduction in the worldwide steel industry.

Throughout the last decade, as more steel producers emerged and joined the competition, the market reached a point where more steel was being produced than could be sold profitably. In the United States, two of the largest steel companies, Bethlehem Steel and LTV, went belly-up and were bought out by competitors. Scores of smaller firms followed suit and a trend towards greater consolidation of steel production in fewer and fewer hands developed worldwide.

In November, for example, the firm that bought up Bethlehem and LTV, the International Steel Group, was bought out by the large UK-based concern Ispat, forming a \$32 billion monopoly.

### Blows to the unions

At the same time, the ruling classes in the competing imperialist states have been propelled to drive for deeper concessions from working people to shore up the employers' declining profit rates.

The steel mergers in the United States, and particularly the emergence of Wilbur Ross's International Steel Group, were marked by a wholesale gutting of union contracts, ending of company pension obligations, and deep blows to the Steelworkers union. The union officialdom helped the employers by championing the bosses' nationalist "Save American Steel" campaign, which supports increased tariffs on steel imports and changes to the steel industry to make "our companies" more competitive.

A similar picture emerges from Canada. Capitalists there have also used nationalism to go after lumber workers without much resistance.

"When the tariffs were first levied, I was the first guy to say, 'This is the end,'" John Allan, president of the British Columbia Lumber Trade Council, told the *New York Times*. "But the American lumber litigation drove a new cost paradigm in Canada."

"An industry consolidation helped reduce costs by allowing Canadian producers to build larger mills," the *Times* said. "Investments in new machinery, including computerized cutting equipment, have...increased the amount of lumber extracted from each log by 16 percent since about 1991. And to raise efficiency further, most mills in British Columbia now operate around the clock."

The lumber bosses in Canada have used these moves to increase labor productivity and reduce costs. Through layoffs of thousands and changes in work rules, the capitalists made sure that increased costs came out of the workers' earnings, not their profits.

As a result of these measures, Allan told the *Times*, "the duties didn't make much difference" in the profit rates of the Canadian lumber bosses.

### U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

By Jack Barnes

"Once Stalinism had transformed the Soviet Union into the opposite of a voluntary federation of workers and peasants republics, its break-up, its disintegration from within, was inevitable. This became a precondition to a new advance of the worldwide struggle for national liberation and socialism."

From *New International* no. 11—\$14



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# UK troops join combat

**Continued from front page**

unit has deepened London's commitment to Washington's course in Iraq and is part of a broader shift among governments in Europe toward acceptance of the accomplishments of U.S. imperialism in Iraq.

In the run up to the assault on Fallujah the regiment was redeployed from the relatively quiet areas around Basra in southern Iraq—where the British forces have largely been based since the 2003 invasion—to a base in Baghdad to free up U.S. troops for the assault on Fallujah. Black Watch troops then guarded two bridges over the Euphrates river into Fallujah during the U.S. attack. Now they are in the thick of the fighting.

Capt. David Nevers, spokesman for the Marine unit heading the Plymouth Rock offensive, said the addition of the British regiment would enable U.S. troops to “squeeze the insurgents into a tighter box.”

The participation of the regiment also registers a shift among the imperialist powers in Europe recognizing the consequences of Washington's occupation of Iraq. During an official visit to London November 18, after the takeover of Fallujah, French president Jacques Chirac played down differences between the two governments due to London's close alliance with Washington in Iraq. Despite those differences, said Chirac, Paris is ready to work with London and Washington to rebuild Iraq, according to the *International Herald Tribune*. Chirac called London's special relationship with Washington a “family link” created by history, which he viewed as an “advantage to Europe.”

## Baathists finance, organize attacks

In the wake of the victory by the U.S. military in Fallujah, more evidence continues to emerge showing that the “insurgency” in Iraq is organized and funded primarily by the country's former Sunni rulers and their Baathist party. Several former top military officers of Hussein's army and of militia groups like Tawhid and Jihad led by the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi have been captured. Many were forced to flee to other cities in the Sunni Triangle or neighboring Syria.

The defeated Baathists and their supporters also abandoned enormous arms caches, the size and quality of which could only be amassed by a government. The U.S. military announced November 24 that it had discovered the largest arms cache so far in a mosque near the home of Abdullah Janabi, who was a leader of the pro-Baathist mujahadeen council in Fallujah. Janabi reportedly escaped the city during the U.S. assault. In addition to the weapons and munitions, the U.S. military said they found 500 letters in Janabi's house from relatives of members of anti-government militias who had been killed asking for compensation. One letter from clerics in Fallujah, dated October 20, asked Janabi to negotiate the surrender of the city. According to the *New York Times*, Janabi's passport shows he had recently traveled to only one country—Syria.

An article in the November 26 *New York Times* stated: “American and Iraqi officials say much of the insurgency is being financed by wealthy loyalists to Saddam Hussein who fled to bordering countries before the American-led invasion in March 2003.”

Many other media sources have published similar reports. “One senior defense official said more than a dozen ‘financial people’ from Hussein's government have been iden-

tified funneling money from Syria to insurgents in Iraq,” said an article in the October 31 *Washington Post*. “Izzat Ibrahim Douri, a former senior Baath Party official, is among those said to have traveled to Syria to help set up a support network. He is now believed to be back in Iraq and playing a significant role in coordinating attacks.”

According to London's *Observer*, another senior Baath party organizer and former aide to Saddam Hussein is among the Sunni leaders directing and financing bombings in Iraq. The man, Mohammed Younis al-Ahmed, “is one of between 20 and 50 senior Baath party figures based in Syria who... are involved in organizing the guerrilla war against the U.S.-led multi-national forces in Iraq and against the new Iraqi security forces.”

To the degree that “Islamist” forces led by non-Iraqis are involved in attacks on U.S. troops and the Iraqi National Guard and police, these reports indicate that they couldn't carry out attacks without financial and other support from Baathists. Jordanian al-Zarqawi, for example, said the *Observer*, could not survive “if he was not tolerated and exploited by the old Baathists.”

Meanwhile, Hoshiyar Zebari, foreign minister in the U.S.-installed interim regime in Baghdad, said the Iraqi government would meet in Jordan with representatives of a “number of political opposition movements.” He added that some of them are “high-ranking Baath leaders who were accused or were on lists of most wanted people.” At an international conference on Iraq held in Egypt, leaders of several Arab governments pressed Baghdad to meet with its opponents, including Baathist leaders.

The Iraqi government has also reestablished a commission charged with vetting former Baathists from government ministries, according to Agence France Presse. Sami al-Askari, head of the surveillance commission of the de-Baathification commission, said the government “had evidence that Baathist elements have infiltrated the National Guard, police, and interior ministry, and that some are leaking information to terrorists.” Askari cited as an example the arrest of the head of security for the interim government in the Green Zone, a militarized section of Baghdad which houses key ministries of the Allawi regime, and the U.S. and British embassies. He also mentioned the arrest of a high-ranking National Guard officer in relation to the ambush and killing of 43



Getty Images/Michael Dunlea

**Members of London's Black Watch regiment conduct house-to-house searches November 25 in wealthy neighborhood along Euphrates River, south of Baghdad, where former members of Baath Party apparatus under Saddam Hussein lived.**

members of the Iraqi security forces whose attackers it appears had been tipped off.

The interior ministry, said AFP, had earlier brought back 940 former employees of the Hussein regime—some to high-ranking positions in Fallujah. It has recently removed more than 500 of them, the report said.

## UN Oil for Food program scandal

At the same time a U.S. Senate committee is currently investigating charges that the Hussein regime siphoned billions of dollars from the United Nations-run Oil for Food program during a decade of trade sanctions against Iraq. The Associated Press reported that CIA officials will testify that some of that money is being used to finance armed attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq.

After the 1991 U.S.-led war on Iraq, Washington got the UN Security Council to impose a draconian trade embargo on Iraq. Later in the 1990s, the Iraqi government was allowed to sell oil and use the funds to buy food under the UN-supervised program.

Washington is now taking advantage of a scandal surrounding this program to punish UN secretary general Kofi Annan for his criticisms of Washington around the current war in Iraq. Annan sided with Paris and Berlin and didn't follow the U.S. government's lead on Iraq. More recently, he has questioned the credibility of holding elections in Iraq given the fighting in the Sunni Triangle. The UN chief, who

was installed on Washington's initiative, is now being pushed by his former sponsors to resign. Many U.S. politicians and columnists are now pointing out that Annan's son continued to receive \$2,500 a month for four years after he had supposedly severed ties to Cortecna, the Swiss company contracted by the UN to manage the Oil for Food program. Annan had earlier denied this was true.

William Safire wrote in a column in the November 29 *New York Times* that Annan should resign, “even if personally innocent...having brought dishonor on the Secretariat of the United Nations.” The following day, the editors of *Investor's Business Daily* called on Annan to “do the decent thing and resign. If not, the U.S. should remind him which nation pays the biggest share of the United Nations' costs.”

In an Op-Ed column in the December 1 *Wall Street Journal*, Senator Norman Coleman also called for Annan's resignation. Coleman heads the Senate committee investigating the UN Oil for Food program.

## Other fruits of U.S. offensive

The U.S. military suffered its highest casualties in a single month in November—135, with 51 killed while taking over Fallujah. The previous high in a single month was in April, during the first attempt to dislodge Baathists from Fallujah. The U.S. military estimates that more than

**Continued on Page 5**

# Under U.S. pressure, Tehran halts uranium conversion

**BY SAM MANUEL**

Under pressure from Washington, Tehran acquiesced November 28 to demands by the French, German, and British governments that it halt all activities related to the enrichment of uranium. The following day the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board of governors adopted a resolution welcoming Iran's decision but also instructing the agency's director to continue “investigations into remaining outstanding issues” surrounding Iran's nuclear program.

On November 15, Tehran reached an agreement in principle with the European Union (EU) Three—Berlin, London, and Paris—to halt its efforts to develop the capacity to enrich uranium, a process that is necessary to produce fuel for nuclear power plants. In exchange, the three governments

electrification.

The Workers Party government had denied the IAEA entry to the plant earlier this year. The accord grants the UN “inspectors” limited access to the centrifuges in the enrichment process. Brasilia had demanded this provision in order to “protect technological and trade secrets.”

Brazilian science and technology minister Eduardo Campos announced the Resende plant would begin operations before the end of the year. Plant operators will carry out a six- to eight-month trial period before going on line to produce large enough quantities of uranium to power the Angra I and Angra II nuclear power stations. Campos projected this will be fully accomplished by 2010. Currently Brasilia sends its uranium to Canada and Europe for processing, receiving it as a gas in return, before finally converting it into fuel for energy generation.

promised to oppose Washington's efforts to refer Iran's nuclear program to the United Nations Security Council. They also agreed to hold talks on technological and trade cooperation with Iran.

On November 25, the opening day of the IAEA meeting, Tehran requested that 20 centrifuges be exempted from its agreement with the European governments. Tehran said it needed to operate the small number of machines for research purposes. Centrifuges are used to enrich uranium by spinning it at supersonic speeds. Nuclear specialists say it would take thousands of centrifuges operating over several months to produce enough enriched uranium for a nuclear warhead.

The IAEA meeting had been convened to discuss Tehran's compliance with a September resolution demanding Iran halt programs to enrich uranium. The Bush administration charges that Iran is seeking to develop nuclear weapons under the cover of its nuclear energy program. It has campaigned for more than a year to bring such charges before the UN Security Council to pave the way for imposition of additional economic sanctions and possible military probes against Iran.

The EU Three threatened to support Washington's demand if the government of Iran did not back down by the end of the meeting's weekend recess, according to CNN.

In a face-saving gesture to Iran, the IAEA agreed that the 20 centrifuges would not be sealed and locked in position but will be monitored by surveillance cameras. The resolution also states that Tehran's suspension of uranium enrichment is a “voluntary confidence building measure not a legal obligation.” Iran insists that under the UN's Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) it has the right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful

use, including nuclear energy.

The resolution also omits language sought by Washington that would have required the IAEA to inform the UN Security Council of the agreement, effectively putting it on the council's agenda. It also does not contain a U.S. proposal that any future breach of the agreement by Iran be referred to the Security Council, stating instead that the board be informed of any breaches.

According to Reuters, Iran's president Mohammad Khatami said on state radio that the IAEA resolution “was a definite defeat for our enemies who wanted to pressure Iran by sending its case to the U.N. Security Council.”

Paris, Berlin, and London differ with Washington regarding how best to advance their imperialist interests vis-à-vis Iran. They have pressured Tehran to make concessions regarding its right to nuclear technology in hopes of keeping Washington at bay. Paris, in particular, stands to gain the most through its current investments in Iran and future deals it hopes to strike, including in Iran's nuclear industry.

Jackie Sanders, the U.S. representative to the IAEA board, indicated that Washington would consider bringing Iran's nuclear program before the Security Council on its own, according to Reuters. “Any member of the United Nations,” Sanders said, “may bring to the attention of the Security Council any situation that might endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.” She also warned any countries that exported weapons-related equipment to Iran that Washington would “impose economic burdens on them and brand them as proliferators.” Legislation that would impose sanctions on foreign companies that invest in Iran is currently before the U.S. Congress.



2,800 new readers: Welcome!

BY PAUL PEDERSON

“We welcome the 2,300 *Militant* and 530 *Perspectiva Mundial* readers who subscribed over the past three months,” said *Militant* editor Argiris Malapanis. “And we also thank all those who made the circulation campaign a success, significantly increasing the readership of the two publications.”

Campaigners took the *Militant* subscription total over the top in the two days before this issue went to press. They took advantage of the Thanksgiving holiday weekend in the United States to get the *Militant* and its monthly sister publication in Spanish *Perspectiva Mundial* into the hands of working people and youth at shopping malls, workers’ districts, on the job, and elsewhere.

The subscription drive, which began August 28, was kicked off by sales of the socialist press to thousands of people who came to New York to join protests leading up to and during the Republican national convention. During those initial 14 days of campaigning, the Socialist Workers 2004 ticket was introduced to thousands of people, and 210 individuals subscribed to the *Militant* and *PM*.

The subscription effort complemented campaigning for Socialist Workers candidates in the elections around the United States. Partisans of the *Militant* in Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom all exceeded most of their goals.

Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Fall 2004 Subscription Drive Final Scoreboard					
Country	Militant			PM	
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold
SWEDEN	30	37	123%	5	5
UNITED KINGDOM					
Edinburgh	25	31	124%	2	0
London	50	59	118%	12	9
UK total	75	90	120%	14	9
ICELAND	30	33	110%	2	0
AUSTRALIA	55	58	105%	8	4
NEW ZEALAND					
Auckland	45	51	113%	1	1
Christchurch	35	30	86%	1	1
N.Z. total	80	81	101%	2	2
CANADA					
Montreal	32	39	122%	12	8
Toronto	75	63	84%	18	5
CANADA total	107	102	95%	30	13
UNITED STATES					
Newark	90	106	118%	25	21
Atlanta	80	90	113%	20	21
Detroit	40	45	113%	10	11
Houston	80	90	113%	20	16
Des Moines	65	70	108%	25	33
Pittsburgh	65	69	106%	4	2
Seattle	55	58	105%	12	15
Birmingham	40	42	105%	8	9
New York	180	189	105%	60	50
Chicago	100	104	104%	40	41
Price, UT	50	52	104%	20	14
Tampa	40	41	103%	10	11
Boston	100	102	102%	40	31
Craig, CO	65	66	102%	20	12
Cleveland	40	40	100%	10	6
Twin Cities	105	88	84%	40	34
Washington	115	90	78%	21	20
Omaha	55	43	78%	45	19
Los Angeles	150	117	78%	50	52
Philadelphia	95	70	74%	10	3
Miami	100	72	72%	50	12
NE Pennsylvania	55	36	65%	15	16
San Francisco	125	66	53%	35	20
U.S. total	1890	1746	92%	590	469
14-day campaign*	-	179	-	-	31
Int'l totals	2267	2326	101%	651	533
Goal/Should be	2300	2300	100%	550	550
*14 days of campaigning in New York Aug. 21–Sept. 3 at protests and events leading up to and during the Republican convention					
IN THE UNIONS					
	Militant			PM	
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold
AUSTRALIA					
AMIEU	8	11	138%		
UNITED STATES					
UMWA	30	34	113%	12	7
UNITE	50	52	104%	40	33
UFCW	135	106	79%	150	116
Total	215	192	89%	202	156
CANADA					
UFCW	6	5	83%	3	2
UNITE	2	1	50%	1	1
Total	8	6	75%	4	3
NEW ZEALAND					
NDU	2	2	100%		
MWU	2	1	50%		
Total	4	3	75%		
SWEDEN					
Livs	2	1	50%	1	0
ICELAND					
Hlíf	2	1	50%		
Efling	2	1	50%		
Total	4	2	50%		

AMIEU—Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union; Livs—Food Workers Union; MWU—Meat Workers Union; NDU—National Distribution Union; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA—United Mine Workers of America; Hlíf—Union of Unskilled Workers in Hafnarfjörður; Efling—Union of Unskilled Workers in Reykjavík.

Alongside the sub drive, a Pathfinder Supersaver sale that featured two dozen steeply discounted books and pamphlets on revolutionary working-class politics gave a boost to the outreach efforts of socialist campaigners.

One of the highlights of the effort was the increase in readership among coal miners. Socialist miners across the United States sold 41 subscriptions to co-workers and fellow unionists in the mines where they work and at union gatherings or picket lines. Many more miners signed up during special sales teams to the coalfields in Colorado, Kentucky, New Mexico, and West Virginia.

In the final weeks, several areas came from behind to make their goals.

“We got teams out every single day except for Thanksgiving to make our goal,” reported Maggie Trowe from Boston. Trowe said that socialists there sold five subscriptions to *Perspectiva Mundial* and one to the *Militant* on the job in the final days of the drive. “We met one co-worker at a table yesterday and sold a sub to the *PM*,” Trowe reported. “We also sold a subscription at a meeting where a Colombian trade unionist spoke about the government repression and murder of unionists there, a topic that has been covered in the *Militant*.”

U.S. troops press assault against Baathists in Iraq

Continued from page 4

1,200 Baathists and their supporters were killed in Fallujah. Other estimates put the Iraqi toll as high as 2,000.

By all accounts, however, the civilian toll was minimal because most of Fallujah’s population of 250,000 had fled prior to the week-long U.S.-led assault, which started November 8. According to an Iraqi Red Crescent official, as few as 150 Iraqi families stayed behind during the attack.

The U.S. forces used relatively light and modern weaponry and elite units in the assault on Fallujah. This was part of advancing the “transformation” of the U.S. military into smaller, lighter, and more lethal brigades that can be deployed more rapidly anywhere around the globe that the U.S. rulers’ interests are threatened.

Many of Fallujah’s buildings—many more than the 200 initially estimated by the interim regime—and most of the city’s power lines were destroyed. Parts of the city’s water and sewer systems were also damaged.

Despite the devastation, there was little outcry against the assault among Iraqis because of the widespread hatred among a majority of Shiites and Kurds toward the party-police state run by the Baathist regime for decades.

This has caused a degree of demoralization among Baathists and their backers. One indication of this is an audiotape, the text of which has been posted on the Internet, which reportedly condemns Islamic scholars for their failure to support the militias in Fallujah. “You have let us down in the darkest circumstances and handed us over to the enemy,” the taped message says. “Hundreds of thousands of the nation’s sons are being slaughtered at the hands of the infidels because of your silence.” It also accuses Sunni and Shiite clerics of “preventing youth from heading to the battlefields.” The voice on the tape is allegedly al-Zarqawi’s but its authenticity could not be confirmed, reported the *New York Times*.

Critical 15 days for Militant Fighting Fund

BY SAM MANUEL

Supporters of the *Militant* newspaper in New York are planning a public meeting to help bring home the effort to raise \$30,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund by December 15. Distributors of the socialist weekly in New York aim to raise \$9,000 towards the overall goal.

The New York meeting, scheduled for December 10, will feature leaders of the Socialist Workers Party who are involved in the party’s work in support of the fight by Co-Op miners in Utah for representation by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). *Militant* editor Argiris Malapanis, who is also a defendant in the suit, will take part in the program.

Distributors of the *Militant* in Chicago have adopted a goal of raising \$2,000 and are also planning a December 10 meeting.

Such events can help partisans of the fund go a long way toward meeting the goal. With two weeks to go, over half the amount targeted is still outstanding. Just over \$14,300 has been received by the *Militant*. Pledges to the fund now stand at \$27,587, leaving \$2,413 in additional pledges needed to reach the goal.

The fund was launched October 31 to



Militant/Nick Castle

Wendy Lyons, SWP candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, campaigning November 30 outside her workplace, the Farmer John meatpacking plant.

“Most of those who subscribed during the 13 weeks the campaign lasted are first-time readers,” said *Militant* business manager Mike Italie. “This means we can expect to launch a subscription renewal effort sometime in January as those subscriptions expire, to increase our long-term readership.” At the start of the effort, Italie said, the *Militant*’s subscription base was at 1,470. It has now reached 2,545.

“Congratulations to all the partisans of the *Militant* on a job well done,” said Malapanis.

Fighting in Mosul, elsewhere

U.S. troops have also continued to fight supporters of the Hussein regime in the northern city Mosul. Baathists there launched widespread attacks last month in an attempt to aid their brothers in Fallujah. In response, thousands of Kurdish peshmerga soldiers joined U.S. troops in retaking police stations that had been overrun by the Baathists.

The peshmerga—the name means literally “those ready to die”—are military units founded in 1946 by Iraqi Kurd leader Mustafa Barzani to help defend the independent Kurdish Mahabad Republic founded in neighboring Iran at the time. Today, they reportedly number as many as 55,000 members.

The peshmerga are now collaborating with the U.S. military to defeat Baathist forces in Mosul. Kurds there had been historically discriminated against or driven out of their homes under the Hussein regime.

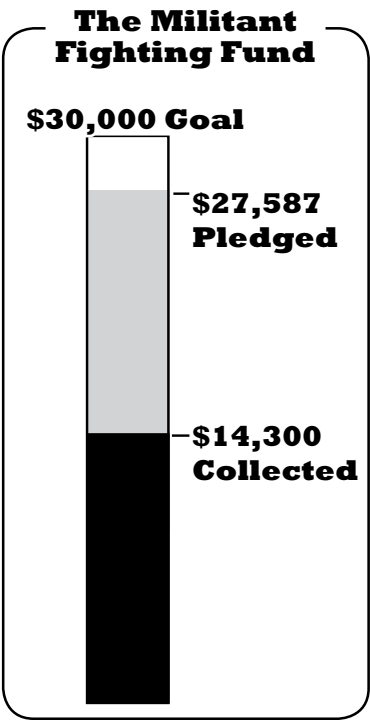
“I cannot say that Mosul has been cleansed,” said Iraqi Maj. Gen. Rashid Flaih, who heads a 500-strong commando force sent to help U.S. troops crush Baathist militias in the city. At least 50 people have been killed in 10 days reported the November 28 *Scotsman*. Most of those have been member of the Iraqi police and National Guard.

Many of those killed, reportedly by single gunshots in the head or by beheadings, are Kurds. This has made the Kurdish soldiers there more determined to fight and perhaps carve out a section of the oil-rich city as part of a semi-autonomous Kurdish area in a federated Iraq.

“We are here to defend our people. We will fight and we will fight to win,” Sadi Ahmed Pire, commander of a Kurdish peshmerga battalion, recently told his troops gathered on the bank of the Tigris River just across from the Sunni Arab-dominated section of Mosul. “The Kurds of Mosul will not be second-class citizens,” he said, according to the *Boston Globe*.

On November 25 security officials of the Iraqi interim government announced the capture of Abu Saeed, reportedly a top aide to al-Zarqawi, according to the London *Guardian*. Saeed was captured during fighting in Mosul, where the U.S. military said it also discovered large caches of

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# Miners fight for safety

Continued from front page

present that the Co-Op management has failed to make readily available to the miners for their review the roof control plan for Co-Op's #4 mine. He also said workers are exposed to diesel exhaust fumes from the mechanics shop on the surface due to inadequate ventilation.

Estrada described other recent attacks by the company. "C.W. Mining managers have been threatening mass firings of Co-Op miners," he said. "They are using new and arbitrary production standards as well as claims that foreign-born miners don't have proper documentation."

Retired miner Bob Fivecoat later told the *Militant* that he sees these attacks as the company's attempt to intimidate and threaten supporters of the UMWA. "They are trying to get rid of the leaders of this fight," he said. "They figure that if they fire them the rest will get in line."

These escalating attacks on the miners come in the wake of rulings against C.W. Mining by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in November of this year. The NLRB ruled that 47 miners were entitled to back pay for the nearly 10 months they were on strike between September 2003, when they were illegally fired, and July of this year. The labor board also ruled that members of the Kingston family, which owns the mine, will be excluded from voting in the union representation election.

In response to the recent attacks, two dozen Co-Op miners signed the following petition to the NLRB: "We the undersigned demand that the National Labor Relations Board, Region 27, immediately sanction C.W. Mining for ongoing harassment on the job, threats of mass firings, and physical abuse against employees involved in a union organizing effort at the Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah in violation of the settlement agreement between C.W. Mining and the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) signed by both parties July 2004,

case number: 27-CA-18764-1."

This petition is being circulated more widely. Speaking on behalf of the Catholic Church diocese in Salt Lake City, Rowland stated that she would start gathering signatures on the miners' petition and would call and fax the NLRB. She added that this fight would be reported in the *Intermountain Catholic News*.

In the settlement agreement cited in the petition the Co-Op owners said, "We will not discharge, give oral or written warnings to, suspend, or otherwise discriminate against you because you engage in concerted activity protected by Section 7 of the Act or other activity on behalf of the United Mine Workers of America." The law referred to here is the National Labor Relations Act.

Alyson Kennedy, one of the Co-Op miners, filed a police report November 22 after a supervisor shoved her. The attack took place in the foremen's office as Kennedy and two other miners—Jesús Leyva and Bill Estrada—were speaking with another supervisor who was threatening to fire Kennedy and other workers for alleged failure to meet arbitrary production standards.

Letters by Co-Op mine manager Charles Reynolds threatening to fire those who cannot prove proper documentation to work have been given to most foreign-born workers at the mine. A sample was made available at the news conference. These letters state: "You must provide to C.W. Mining Co., on or before December 9, 2004, valid documentation showing your eligibility to work. Failure to provide such documentation will result in your termination."

The company deadline is only seven days before the tentative date set for the union election—December 16.

UMWA representatives and Co-Op miners are organizing to visit every worker in the mine eligible to vote in the upcoming election.

"We are going out to visit miners in the coming days," UMWA organizer Roy

## Pathfinder draws interest at Mexico book fair

BY JORGE ORTÍZ  
AND NAOMI CRAINE

GUADALAJARA, Mexico—The 18th International Book Fair of Guadalajara opened here November 27. The nine-day event features about 400 booths of publishers and book distributors from 31 countries. Each year the fair honors the literature and culture of a different region. This year, books and art from Catalonia are featured. Tens of thousands, including many students and other youth, poured into the Exposition Center, the site of the fair, during the first weekend.

Volunteers from the United States are staffing a booth from Pathfinder Press. In the first two days of the fair, they sold 138 books and pamphlets from the stand. Some who came by the booth and had purchased Pathfinder books at previous fairs here and were eager to get more.

Among the visitors to the Pathfinder booth were a high school professor accompanied by some of his students. They were surprised and glad to meet the volunteers, and to learn that they were workers from the United States who are involved in working-class struggles there. They bought five copies of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism* in Spanish to use in their study circles, and said they would come back. Overall 12 copies of that pamphlet were sold the first weekend of the fair.

Discussions on the reasons behind the U.S. assault on Iraq, other imperialist wars, and the world economic crisis prompted four people to buy copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* in Spanish. Interest in the U.S. elections and the war in Iraq also spurred sales of the monthly magazine *Perspectiva Mundial*, the *Militant's* sister publication in Spanish, with 13 people buying single copies and 1 subscribing.

Books on the Cuban Revolution are among the best sellers at the Pathfinder booth. These include *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* with 23 copies sold in either Spanish or English. Many people have mentioned that they've seen the recent movie *The Motorcycle Diaries*,

about Ernesto Che Guevara's travels in Latin America as a youth, before the Argentine doctor joined the Cuban revolutionary movement. Most who bought the book of Che's speeches were interested in learning about Guevara through his own words.

## Toronto meat packers sign pact, end strike

Continued from front page

ing an October 28 meeting attended by about 400 of the 570 QMP workers. At that meeting, the company's first offer, also recommended for approval by the bargaining committee, was rejected by 75 percent of the workers.

The first offer contained a signing bonus of \$500 per worker. The company withdrew the bonus in its second and "final offer." The proposal that was finally accepted contained a signing bonus of \$300 paid in two installments—the first within two weeks of the ratification vote, and the second in "the first week of January 2006 for employees actively employed on both the date of ratification and January 1st, 2006."

The new three-year contract includes wage increases of Can\$1.15 to Can\$1.75 (US\$1 = Can\$1.19) over the length of the deal, depending on classification, and minor improvements in the dental plan and pensions. The return to work agreement states that "the Company shall not discriminate against, threaten, harass, insult or treat in any adverse way any person for lawfully exercising his/her right to picket or to strike and in particular the Company shall not discipline or treat in any adverse way, any employee for any related activity during the labor dispute."

"The strike was worth it, even though we didn't get what we need, because the company now knows we want to be treated like human beings," said a cutting room worker who asked not to be identified.

The QMP bosses made some headway during the walkout in wearing down the strikers through a campaign of intimidation. The owners claimed they had no more

## The Salt Lake Tribune

### Miners allege union busting

They claim Kingston mistreatment in weeks before vote

By Glen Warchol

Coal miners trying to organize a new union at the Co-Op Mine owned by the polygamous Kingston family on Monday complained of dangerous conditions and worker intimidation at the mine near Huntington.

Co-Op miner Bill Estrada alleges workers supporting the United Mine Workers of America have been threatened and, in one case, assaulted....



Coverage of miners' November 29 press conference appeared in the November 30 *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Price Sun Advocate*.

Fernandez told the *Militant*. "The UMWA is organizing volunteers, including a list of retired miners who have volunteered to speak with Co-Op miners about voting for the union."

Fernandez also expressed the opposition of the UMWA to the recent letter by Co-Op mine manager Charles Reynolds threatening miners with dismissals. "This is another scare tactic by the company to harass employees," said Fernandez. "This could be an unfair labor practice charge. The company can not intimidate or coerce employees before an election."

Following the news conference, miners and their supporters met with MSHA officials to present their safety complaints. Miners reported that more examples of safety violations by C.W. Mining were discussed in the two-hour session. One noted that a piece of mining equipment makes unbearably loud noises and that miners have to pay for additional ear protection. Another said that the company informs department foremen ahead of time when MSHA inspectors enter the property and organizes to stop miners from carrying out their normal work until the inspectors leave.

There is also a lot of interest in the fight for women's rights. Initial sales of those titles include six copies of *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* by Thomas Sankara and four of *Abortion Is a Woman's Right* in either Spanish or English.

"They tell us to stop welding and clean the area or cover it up and to clear any smoke that's in the shop," said Timoteo González, a welder in the shop located on the surface of the mine. "It would be good to have a safety committee. We could name an organizer and the committee could take responsibility in reporting to MSHA."

Miners said that MSHA officials urged them to call as soon as possible after an unsafe practice is observed.

"We have the right to choose the United Mine Workers of America as our union," Estrada told the press. "We call on all working people, trade unionists, religious and social justice groups, as well as immigrant rights advocates to support us against the desperate attacks by C.W. Mining that have failed to block our fight for union representation, safer working conditions, and dignity on the job."

Estrada urged supporters to write or call the MSHA; write, call, or fax NLRB Region 27 Director B. Allan Benson; and send copies of such letters and messages of support to the Co-Op miners.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret Morning News*, Utah's two main dailies, and the *Price Sun Advocate* covered the news conference outside the MSHA office.

The MSHA can be contacted at 215. E. Main Street, Price, UT 84501; Tel: (435) 637-3051.

Letters to the National Labor Relations Board should be sent to NLRB Region 27 Director B. Allan Benson at 600 17th Street, 7th floor—North Tower, Denver, CO 80202-5433; Tel: (303) 844-3551; Fax: (303) 844-6249.

in 1998–99 failed to stop the concessions drive of the QMP bosses. This drive followed a pattern of concessions imposed on workers in the meatpacking industry across Canada and in the United states that began in the mid-1980s. Along with the monetary concessions came six years of speed-up on the line accompanied by a rising injury rate, longer hours, and verbal abuse of workers by foremen and management as the bosses increased productivity. Because of the conditions in the plant, the initial vote to reject the company offer and strike was in part a demand for dignity.

There are no new concessions in the contract that was approved. Early on in the negotiations between the company and the union bargaining committee, the bosses demanded contract language limiting the use of washroom time outside paid breaks to 30 minutes a week per worker. This was withdrawn after the majority of workers boycotted a company-sponsored "employee appreciation" lunch-time barbeque in protest.

The four-week strike affected the hog industry throughout Ontario. According to the Ontario Pork Marketing Board, a large portion of the approximately 28,000 hogs slaughtered by QMP each week had to be sent out of province, including to the United States, at considerable expense to the both the large industrial hog producers and working hog farmers. QMP, the number two hog slaughterhouse in Ontario, processes nearly one-quarter of the 115,000 hogs slaughtered per week in the province.

John Steele is a member of UFCW Local 175 at QMP and was one of the strikers.



# Mine explosion kills 166 in central China

BY DOUG NELSON

A gas explosion erupted early Sunday morning November 28 at the state-owned Chenjiashan Coal Mine in central China, trapping 166 miners deep inside tunnels and shafts full of suffocating smoke and carbon monoxide gas.

There were 293 miners working underground when the blast occurred. Only 127 of those who were working closer to the mine's entrance at the time were able to escape to safety, 43 of whom were hospitalized for burns, cuts, and carbon monoxide poisoning.

About 1,000 distraught workers and miners' relatives have been protesting since then outside the mine in freezing temperatures and waiting for news about those still trapped underground. This protest is part of growing unrest by workers and peasants in parts of China—including large strikes and demonstrations—as working people resist the attempts by foreign capitalists, local business owners, and government bureaucrats to profiteer at the expense of the lives and livelihoods of workers.

Chinese television news reported that many of the workers trapped in the Chenjiashan mine were working in underground tunnels up to five miles long that were accessible only by foot. Two days after the blast, rescue workers had recovered only 50 bodies of the remaining 166 miners. News reports indicate that there is little chance that any of those who remain underground are still alive.

High concentrations of poison gas and broken ventilation systems still prevent the more than 1,000 rescue workers from reaching the remaining miners. Rescuers who returned from the tunnels said they

saw blue smoke, indicating that the coal bed could be on fire.

China's state news agency, Xinhua, reported that the explosion resulted from high concentrations of gas in the mine, which becomes volatile when it reaches a density of 12 percent. A second explosion occurred alongside the gas blast when the fire ignited concentrated coal dust.

The mine is known to have a high gas density. A previous explosion there ensuing from concentrated gas killed 38 miners just three years ago. After the latest disaster, the Shaanxi provincial government ordered mines with high-density gas temporarily closed for safety inspection.

Chinese media sources reported that a mine fire broke out at a work site underground six days before this most recent blast, but production continued as workers unsuccessfully attempted to extinguish the blaze. "The firefighting team at our mine made efforts to put out the fire and they worked for nearly a week to control the fire," a miner told the *China Daily*.

According to the South African newspaper *Cape Argus*, workers were ordered to continue working or face fines. "They often let miners go down to the shaft even when the gas density is unsafe," said Tang Longqing, a 46-year-old miner.

The mine explosion at Chenjiashan is but the latest example in a pattern of deadly mining disasters in the country.

On October 20, a gas explosion took place at the Daping coal mine in Xinmi City, Henan province, also in central China. The blast killed 148 of the 446 miners working underground at the time.

Like the Chenjiashan mine, a mixture of concentrated gas and coal dust was ignited



Getty Images

**A retired miner shouts in rage as relatives of miners gather outside the Chenjiashan Coal Mine, where up to 166 miners lost their lives in a massive gas and coal dust explosion November 28. A crowd of 1,000 has gathered outside the mine, waiting for information.**

deep in the Daping mine. The disaster happened as workers were pressed by management to venture deep in the mine. According to Zhao Tiechui, the deputy head of the State Administration of Production Safety, the extension of the mine there increased the amount of gas in the tunnel. Investigation reports indicate poor ventilation allowed high-density gas to enter the tunnel and mix with fresh air where the mix was ignited by engine sparks.

Another mine in Henan province was hit by an explosion November 11, killing 33 miners.

Six days before the Chenjiashan disaster, a fire erupted in five privately run iron mines in Shahe City. So far, 68 workers have been confirmed dead from those blasts and 119 are still missing. The fire is believed to have been started by an electrical cable in one of

the mines, which rapidly spread to four other connected mines.

Coal is China's main source of power generation, accounting for 70 percent of its total energy usage. China is also the world's leading coal producer. The country produced 35 percent of the world's coal last year. In the first 10 months of this year, China's output was 1.3 billion tons, up 16 percent from last year. In 2003, production increased 19 percent over the previous year. The rapid and steady rise in coal production has nevertheless failed to keep pace with the explosion in demand and meet the growing power needs of the country. In recent years, the country's gross domestic product has been growing by 9 percent annually, as migration from the countryside to the cities continues apace along with accelerating industrialization. The increased demand has also created a rise in coal prices, driving mine operators and owners to maximize production at the expense of safety.

"The foundations of coal mine safety remain weak and there are still many holes in safety administration," said the deputy director of China's Work Inspection and Administration Authority, Sun Hua, at a news conference last month. "In particular, with the current high demand for coal, many businesses are producing more than they're able to."

From January to the end of September of this year, 4,153 people have been reported killed in mine disasters in China.

The deadly conditions have generated increasing resistance. According to press accounts, miners at the Huainan coal mine in Anhui Province reportedly walked out September 3-10, demanding accident compensation, and protesting against arbitrary layoffs and forced overtime. The weeklong walkout reportedly forced mine authorities and the city government to agree to some of the miners' demands before they returned to work.

Struggles by miners in China appear to be part of an increase in broader resistance by workers and peasants in parts of the country as the bureaucratic regime in Beijing continues to open up China's economy—which remains to a large degree nationalized—to capitalist investment from abroad and to allow wider operation of the capitalist law of value. According to press accounts there has been an uptick in protests across China. Several million people reportedly took part in some 500 demonstrations in September. Thousands of peasants have reportedly been involved in protests in Henan and Jiangxi provinces against over-taxation and land seizures.

A November 27 article in the *Washington Post* reported that an unprecedented series of recent walkouts by workers have occurred in the booming Pearl River Delta, where foreign companies have invested more than \$50 billion over the last five years. This includes a November 7 one-day strike at the Shanlin Technology appliance factory, where 1,000 workers walked out to demand overtime pay and more days off. The workers returned to work the next day, after the company agreed to raise overtime pay by 50 percent and guarantee two days off a month.

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions announced November 25 that Wal-Mart facilities in China will be unionized.

## New York ports boom with increase in China trade

BY PAUL PEDERSON

NEWYORK—With a 65 percent increase in container traffic in the past six years, the Port of New York/New Jersey is undergoing a transformation, as larger, faster ships make the overseas route to New York an increasingly favored one for the flow of consumer goods from China. The boom is fueling new hiring for longshore workers at the port, a massive expansion project that includes dredging deeper waterways and expanding rail and road links, and new pressure on the government of Panama to enlarge the Panama Canal to make way for even larger vessels.

Once the main entry point for goods flowing into the Northeast, Midwest, and Canadian markets, in recent years the Port of New York/New Jersey has been eclipsed by the growth of West Coast ports like Long Beach and Los Angeles as the main gateways for goods from Asia. Until 1985 the New York port was the busiest in the world, the *New York Times* reported. Today it is ranked 15th.

"It is unclear whether it will make good on plans to recapture its historic role as the dominant hub for the Midwest and Canada, or slide back to what it was becoming two decades ago: a narrower gateway serving mostly the Northeast," wrote Eric Lipton in a November 22 *Times* article on the port's expansion.

The flow of consumer goods from China has increased dramatically, at a 17 percent annual growth rate since 1994. Today, Wal-Mart stores, the largest retail chain in the United States, has 70 percent of its inventory manufactured there, a total of \$18 billion in goods last year, and that rate has increased annually.

The Western harbors have taken the lion's share of the Asian import boom because it has been faster to ship goods from those ports overland to the East Coast than to take the "all water" route through the Panama Canal. Once offloaded at the Western ports, the double-stacked containers make their way by train to U.S. cities in the East and Midwest in about 19 days from start to finish, as opposed to the 35-day trip that the overseas route meant just five years ago.

With the development of faster cargo ships, made to barely squeeze their way—

with inches to spare—through the locks of the Panama Canal, the time it takes to go direct from China to New York has been cut in the last five years to as little as 22 days. This is \$300 to \$600 less expensive per container than the overland route. So while 65 percent of the goods shipped from China still arrive at Western ports, that figure marks a considerable drop from the 86 percent share in 1999. The share coming through New York and other eastern cities, on the other hand, has increased from about 10 percent to 35 percent in the same period.

"You want to go where the people are," Richard Markovich told the *New York Times*. Markovich is the director of international logistics at Michaels, a chain of 850 arts and crafts stores. The Northeastern region is the largest commercial marketplace in the world, "where some 80 million people live within a 24-hour truck trip," the *Times* noted. Two years ago, Michaels opened a massive warehouse in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, to bring its products in through the New York harbor to the Northeast region. A number of other retail chains have followed suit.

The boom has fueled an increase in hiring at the ports. The *Times* reports that 3,500 dock workers have been hired in the last five years in New York, along with thousands of truck drivers, railroad workers, warehouse stockers, and other workers involved in the port's operations.

Since 1990 the longshore workers have labored under a two-tier contract. With the flood of new hires, now more than half work at the lower, second-tier rate. The bosses have also increased their profit margins through mechanization. The number of workers on the docks has shrunk from 39,000 in 1955 to about 5,500 today, as containerization and other innovations, along with speed-up, have



Shipping containers stacked eight high at Port Newark.

dramatically increased productivity.

The center of the Port of New York/New Jersey's activity is in New Jersey, at Port Newark and the Elizabeth-Port Authority Marine Terminal. Unlike New York's Brooklyn waterfront and Hudson piers, the New Jersey wharves are serviced by direct, nationwide rail links and highways. A multi-billion dollar reconstruction is underway at the ports and in the waterways that ships must navigate to reach them. The projects will more than triple the number of containers that can be moved by train and the number of trucks that move in and out daily. A round-the-clock dredging project is underway to make the channels that service the port deeper to accommodate modern cargo ships, and new cranes and other equipment are being installed.

The expansion of East Coast trade is having a similar impact in other ports along the coast, like those in Norfolk, Virginia, and Savannah, Georgia.

The Panamanian government—which has had formal control over the Panama Canal since 1999—is considering a plan to expand the waterway to accommodate even more ship traffic. More goods flowed through the canal during the 2004 fiscal year than ever before in its history. The Panama Canal Authority, reported the *Times*, "will most likely ask Panama this year to schedule a referendum on the plan." Such an expansion would cost billions and take more than a decade to complete.



# Black nationalism and the socialist revolution

Below is an excerpt from *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. It contains the summary transcripts of four discussions the Russian revolutionary held in 1933 with leaders of the Communist League of America on what was then called the Negro Question. Drawing on the rich experience of V.I. Lenin's Bolshevik party, Trotsky explained why support for the right of U.S. Blacks to self-determination is central to the building of a communist party. Copyright © 1967 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LEON TROTSKY

TROTSKY: The point of view of the American comrades appears to me not fully convincing. The right of self-determination is a democratic demand. Our American comrades counterpose the liberal demand to this democratic demand. This liberal demand is, moreover, complicated. I understand what political equality means. But what is the meaning of economic and social equality within capitalist society? Does that mean



AP/Wide World photos

**Malcolm X speaking in Selma, Alabama, Feb. 4, 1965. Trotsky rejected argument that the struggle of Blacks for their liberation as a people is divisive. Malcolm X's political course confirmed Trotsky's view on the revolutionary potential of Black nationalism.**

a demand to public opinion that all should enjoy the equal protection of the laws? But that is political equality. The slogan "political, economic, and social equality" sounds ambiguous and is thus false.

The Negroes are a race and not a nation. Nations grow out of racial material under definite conditions. The Negroes in Africa are not yet a nation but they are in the process of forming a nation. The American Negroes are on a higher cultural level. But since they are under the pressure of the Americans they become interested in the development of the Negroes in Africa. The American Negro will develop leaders for Africa, that one can say with certainty, and that in turn will influence the development of political consciousness in America.

We of course do not obligate the Negroes to become a nation; whether they are is a question of their consciousness, that is, what they desire and what they strive for. We say: If the Negroes want that then we must fight against imperialism to the last drop of blood, so that they gain the right, wherever and however they please, to separate a piece of land for themselves. The fact that they are today not a majority in any state does not matter. It is not a question of the authority of the states but of the Negroes. That there are and will be whites in areas that are overwhelmingly Negro is not the question, and we do not need to

break our heads over the possibility that sometime the whites will be suppressed by the Negroes. In any case the suppression of the Negroes pushes them toward a political and national unity.

That the slogan "self-determination" will win over the petty bourgeois more than the workers—that argument holds good also for the slogan of equality. It is clear that those Negro elements who play more of a public role (businessmen, intellectuals, lawyers, etc.) are more active and react more actively against inequality. It is possible to say that the liberal demand as well as the democratic one in the first instance will attract the petty bourgeois and only later the workers.

If the situation was such that in America common actions took place involving white and black workers, that class fraternization already was a fact, then perhaps our comrades' arguments would have a basis (I do not say that it would be correct); then perhaps we would divide the black workers from the white if we began to raise the slogan "self-determination."

But today the white workers in relation to the Negroes are the oppressors, scoundrels, who persecute the black and the yellow, hold them in contempt, and lynch them. If the Negro workers unite with their own petty bourgeois, that is because they are not yet sufficiently developed to defend

their elementary rights. To the workers in the Southern states the liberal demand for equal rights would undoubtedly mean progress, but the demand for self-determination, even greater progress. However, with the slogan "equal rights" they can be misled more easily ("according to the law you have this equality").

When we are so far that the Negroes say "we want autonomy," they then take a position hostile toward American imperialism. At that stage the workers will already be much more determined than the petty bourgeoisie. The workers will then see that the petty bourgeoisie is incapable of struggle and gets nowhere, but they will also recognize simultaneously that the white Communist workers fight for their demands and that will push them, the Negro proletarians, toward communism.

The petty bourgeoisie will take up the demand for equal rights and for self-determination but will prove absolutely incapable in the struggle; the Negro proletariat will march over the petty bourgeoisie in the direction toward the proletarian revolution. That is perhaps for them the most important road. I can therefore see no reason why we should not advance the demand for self-determination.

I am not sure if the Negroes in the South do not speak their own Negro language. Now, at a time when they are being lynched just because of being Negroes they naturally fear to speak their Negro language; but when they are set free their Negro language will come alive again. I would advise the American comrades to study this question very seriously, including the language in the Southern states. For all these reasons I would in this question rather lean toward the standpoint of the [Communist] party; of course, with the observation that I have never studied this question and that I proceed here from general considerations. I base myself only upon the arguments brought forward by the American comrades. I find them insufficient and consider them a certain concession to the point of view of American chauvinism, which seems to me to be dangerous.

I also believe that the demand for equal rights should remain, and I do not speak against this demand. It is progressive to the extent that it has not yet been realized. Comrade Swabek's explanation in regard to the question of economic equality is very important.

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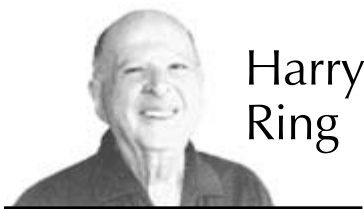
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**A union challenge**—“Sick days dwindle, disappear for many—Half of full-time workforce receive no



Harry Ring

paid sick days”—Headline, *USA Today*

**Wages of Imperialism**—In the years of British imperialism in India, the British split from India

the small Gurkha- populated state of Nepal. Since the 19th century, the Nepalese monarchy has offered thousands of Gurkha troops as cannon-fodder for British imperialism.

Last month Lal Buddha, a retired member of a Nepalese unit of the British Army, where he had served 24 years, appealed to the British army tribunal.

He had been discharged two years ago for medical reasons. His army wages were over \$71,000 less than his counterparts in regular British units, and his pension was 95 British pounds compared to the standard British Army pension of 515 pounds monthly. He told the tribunal he has considered becom-

ing a beggar. He angrily said that his wife works in a motel seven days a week to support their family.

**With friends like British imperialism, who needs enemies?**—According to the British Army’s website, the Gurkha soldier “has proved himself to be of the closest of friends and bravest of allies that Britain has known.” The website mentions that Nepalese troops suffered 43,000 casualties in the two world wars, although of the 26 Victoria Crosses—London’s highest military honor—awarded to Nepalese units, 13 were given to British officers.

**“Civilized” weapons**—When

Taser stun guns emerged there was much hokum about cops using them in place of guns. They are somewhat less lethal than regular guns but they deliver a high-voltage shock and cops use them quite freely. A Phoenix daily found that cops use them to avoid chases and confrontations, or simply to enforce their orders. Recently in Miami, a cop used a Taser to stun a 12-year-old girl. A few weeks earlier, a cop immobilized a first-grader with a 50,000-volt shot.

**Mr. Capitalism**—One of Donald Trump’s Atlantic City casinos is now formally belly-up. The bankruptcy will beat debtors out of \$1.8 billion. And the shares that that

fetched at \$35 each are now worth 50 cents. Meanwhile Trump, said to be “worth” \$2.6 billion, continues to take home \$1.4 million a year. On the bankruptcy he comments “I don’t think it’s a failure. I think it’s a success.”

**America the beautiful**—Two ex-cops in Richmond, Virginia, will finally face federal charges for the savage beating of Lamont Koonce, a Black man who was pulled out of his car at a traffic stop and beaten and stomped. He was in a coma two months and suffered a fractured skull and other major injuries. He is no longer able to work. Initially, the cops said he had stumbled and fell trying to run away.

## City of Atlanta cuts off water to collect overdue bills

BY NED MEASEL

ATLANTA—The city of Atlanta’s Department of Watershed Management has begun turning off the water to customers that are more than 30 days delinquent on their bills. The department says \$35 million is overdue and it will begin shutting off 400 to 500 customers a day, effecting up to a quarter of the city’s 134,000 accounts.

In January city authorities sharply increased the rate for water. They have also instituted an increase of an additional 1 percent to the sales tax, purportedly to pay for \$3 billion in sewer improvements. A federal judge ruled that Atlanta’s antiquated sewers violate the Federal Clean Water Act. The price of water will steadily increase until 2008 when the rates for the largest water users will have tripled.

The city’s sewer system is notorious for broken pipes and frequent backups in

working-class neighborhoods.

Workers, particularly those worst paid and unemployed, and those living on disability and Social Security retirement payments, will feel the largest impact.

An article in the November 2 *New York Times* reported that the Midtown Assistance Center, used to receiving calls from those looking for help with gas and electric bills, was now getting calls from people looking for help in paying water bills.

Speaking from the center, Dorothy Chandler said, “It’s a huge concern. The calls that I’ve had today, the people are \$600 behind, \$800 behind. They’re huge amounts, much more than we could possibly help with.”

The *Times* article said that Irene Gorman, a pharmacy worker who is a single mother of four, has paid \$80 a week on a past due bill and has trimmed it to \$282.



Eight-mile-long sewer tunnel in Atlanta, part of \$3 billion water project. City authorities have used the project as a pretext to impose a new tax and jack up water rates.

## Meat packers approve contract in Colorado with a say over line speed

BY DANIELLE LONDON

CRAIG, Colorado—Workers at the second-largest meatpacking plant in the United States, Swift and Co. in Greeley, Colorado, voted overwhelmingly to accept a five-year contract November 20. The vote came after the union threatened to call for a strike, citing demands by Swift for increased payments for medical care and more “flexibility” for the bosses in overtime and weekly scheduling.

The 2,300 workers at the plant process

more than 5,000 head of cattle a day. Swift, the second-largest beef and pork processor in the world, owns 13 other plants across the United States and Australia, processing more than 7 million head of cattle annually.

The contract—which was approved by a 90 percent margin—includes a \$1.50 an hour wage increase over five years, as well as measures that increase the union’s control over line speed. The *Greeley Tribune* reported that this contract provision drew applause from workers during the meeting

on the contract vote. The union at the plant, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7, says the company routinely increases the line speed to unsafe levels whenever a breakdown slows production. Now a union representative will have to open the lock that allows the company to increase the speed.

The company also decided not to press

for a reduction in the minimum workweek from 32 hours to 28 hours per week, one of the key demands in its first contract proposal. At the same time, workers accepted increased payments for health coverage as their insurance premiums, doctors visits, and prescription costs will go up under the new pact.

## U.S. jet strafes New Jersey school in training accident; residents outraged

BY ABBY TILSNER,

NEWARK, New Jersey—On November 3, a little after 10:00 p.m., a U.S. fighter jet from the District of Columbia Air National Guard at Andrews Air Force Base fired eight high-powered cannon rounds through the roof of an elementary school at Little Egg Harbor Township, which is 20 miles north of Atlantic City, New Jersey. The strafing took place after school hours, during a training exercise that’s supposed to take place in a nearby firing range.

Nobody was hurt, although four custodial workers were on duty at the time. Damage from the eight shells included holes in the roof shattering ceiling tiles, splintering the edge of a desk, and causing other damage in a few classrooms, a hallway, and an office. Five slugs were found in the school’s parking lot.

A number of area residents are now demanding that the live ammunition exercises be stopped altogether. Judy Kupseta, whose twin sons attend fifth grade at the school, for example, said she wants all training stopped at the range.

The 970 children who attend third to sixth grades returned to school on Monday, November 8, after four days off so the damage could be repaired.

The F-16 fired 25 rounds in rapid succession from the aircraft’s 20 mm M61-A1 Vulcan cannon, while preparing for target practice at the nearby Warren Grove Gunnery Range about three miles away.

Authorities are still investigating whether this was caused by pilot error or a mechanical malfunction. The F-16 carries just one person, the pilot. All training flights in the area have been suspended until after the inquiry is completed.

Other accidents at the training range include a New Jersey Air National Guard F-16 crash near the Garden State Parkway after the pilot lost control while doing maneuvers in 2002. Errant practice bombs sparked a forest fire burning 11,000 acres of pinelands in 2002 and another fire burned 1,600 acres in 1999. In 1992 a Pennsylvania Air Guard A-10 crash-landed near the range.

The Warren Grove Gunnery Range began in 1942 as a World War II weapons research location and has been part of the New Jersey Air National Guard since the early 1960s. During the past year pilots have flown 3,700 sorties over the range.

The population of Little Egg Harbor in 1940 was 547. It had grown to 16,000 by the year 2000, according to U.S. Census figures. Besides Little Egg Harbor, the range also extends into Bass River Township, Burlington County.

Michael Dupuis, president of the township school board, said that he will formally request at an upcoming school board meeting scheduled for November 15 approval to demand that military officials restrict training at the gunnery range to night hours, and never allow strafing or bombing while school is in session.

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



December 14, 1979

Escalating the drive toward war against Iran, President Carter granted the shah sanctuary at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

This followed the Mexican government’s refusal November 29 to readmit the deposed tyrant, whose proven record of murder, torture, and theft have made him hated by working people around the world.

The granting of sanctuary is a step toward granting this criminal permanent asylum in the United States.

While pretending to seek the release of the hostages, Carter keeps the crisis boiling by refusing to return the ex-shah to Iran for trial. That simple act would produce instant freedom for the fifty Americans in the embassy.

Instead, administration officials are fabricating war propaganda about the treatment of the hostages. On December 4 the administration charged—without presenting a shred of evidence—that hostages “have been threatened with execution if they fail to cooperate.”

Students occupying the embassy angrily denied the slander.

Twenty-one U.S. warships, including two aircraft carriers, have been sent to the Arabian Sea in preparation for an attack on Iran,

But Carter’s push toward war is making little headway among American working people. Government-inspired rightist demonstrations that monopolized the headlines at the start of the crisis have been increasingly overshadowed by antiwar rallies,

teach-ins, and polls showing overwhelming opposition to U.S. military action.



December 13, 1954

The Sixteenth Convention of the Socialist Workers Party, held in Chicago Dec. 3–5, concentrated its main attention on an analysis of the immediate political situation in the United States and the effects of world developments on this situation.

Three days of intensive discussion revolved around important recent changes in the world and domestic political scene. The determination of the tasks and tactical line of the party in light of the political situation was the second primary question considered.

The main reports to the convention were given by Farrell Dobbs, National Secretary of the SWP, James P. Cannon, National Chairman, Murry Weiss and Joseph Hansen, members of the National Committee.

The convention adopted, after extensive discussion, two main resolutions: The Political Situation in the U.S. and the Resolution on the American Labor Movement. The convention also decided to launch a \$15,000 fund to promote propaganda for the class struggle socialist program.

The reporter on the Political Resolution cited as the three main factors of the new political situation in the U.S. “the slow-down of Wall Street’s drive towards World War III, the important set-back suffered by the McCarthyites, and the renewal of a trend toward a labor-Democratic Party coalition government as the dominant political perspective for 1956.”



# Fight for safety on the job

The capitalists worldwide are sacrificing the life and limb of working people on the altar of lower costs and higher productivity. They are carrying out unrelenting warfare—sometimes open, sometimes disguised—against the health and safety, the unionization, and the very humanity of the working class. The bosses have a one-point program: to boost their sagging profit rates at our expense. This is translated in real-life terms into broken bones, torn ligaments, black lung disease, and death on the job—as well as lower wages and cuts in health-care and other benefits.

When a coal miner at the Dugout Mine owned by Arch Coal in Utah was recently struck by a massive slab of rock falling from the roof, it was just one more example of an accident waiting to happen at workplaces across the country.

The Co-Op miners in Huntington, Utah, are setting an example of how to battle to protect safety on the job. The conditions at Co-Op were responsible for three deaths in the mine in the last half of the 1990s—half of the total coal mine fatalities during that period in Utah. The miners are organizing to establish representation by their union—the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)—in order to have greater control over the conditions and pace of work, as well as livable wages and benefits.

From day one of their fight a year ago safety has been at the heart of the Co-Op miners’ struggle. Their November 29 press conference outside the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) office in Price, Utah, where they presented a list of safety violations by management, is a continuation of the course that has won them broad backing in the labor movement and from churches, students, and immigrant rights and other organizations.

We wholeheartedly support the call by the Co-Op miners for wide circulation of their petition to the National Labor Relations Board demanding sanctions against C.W. Mining for harassment and threats of wholesale firings of UMWA supporters. We also join the miners in urging that messages be sent to the MSHA backing the miners’ struggle for safer working conditions and dignity on the job.

As the bosses step up their drive for greater profits, struggles will grow among working people to resist the devastating consequences of the employer attacks on our lives and working conditions. Workers will fight for protection against speedup and layoffs, for improved safety and health conditions, regulation of and veto power over work rules, and

health codes to protect workers against industrial hazards, from asbestos fibers and coal dust, to chemical and radiation poisoning.

Workers must fight for veto power on questions of safety on the job. They should insist that production be shut down at once on the demand of the workers and at no loss of pay whenever their safety is at stake. All safety controls and the speed of the production line must be set by the workers themselves.

Through union power working people can fight for more acceptable levels of chemical pollution and control over purification of waste products. Through our collective strength workers can establish safe standards after gaining full access to information on the materials and equipment we work with, and through consultation with technicians of our own choosing.

To wage an effective fight workers must organize as a class, in unions, and not rely on the bosses, their government, or fake “friend of labor” politicians. Out of the estimated 100,000 deaths on the job in the United States in the two decades between 1982 and 2002, for example, U.S. government agencies have only referred 196 cases to prosecutors to charge bosses with willful violation of safety standards.

Through reliance on our collective strength, and solidarity with each others’ struggles, working people can make gains in this fight. Meat packers at Swift and Co. in Greeley, Colorado, for example, won a provision in their new contract that gives a union representative a key to the lock that allows the bosses to increase the production line. It’s not surprising that this drew applause from workers when it was announced at the meeting to vote on the contract.

Like all such agreements with the bosses, the one at Swift will be put to the test on the shop floor. As workers fight and score some victories, they shift the relationship of forces in their favor and transform their unions into more effective instruments of struggle. In doing so, more and more workers will begin rejecting the bosses’ argument that they cannot afford to stay in business unless pollution controls are lifted or safety standards lowered. More and more people will argue that it is the workers and the community who cannot afford pollution, diluted safety rules, or bosses who put profits above all other considerations. And more and more workers will realize that only labor can put science to work as the liberator of humanity, not its destroyer.

## U.S. troops press attacks on Baathists

Continued from Page 5

weapons including anti-aircraft guns, artillery rockets, and thousands of grenades, mortars and small arms.

Meanwhile, during raids in the “Triangle of Death” south of Baghdad, U.S., British, and Iraqi troops have reportedly captured more than 200 Baathists in the first week of the offensive there.

Despite the intensified fighting in the Sunni Triangle, the northern areas around Mosul and Kirkuk, and the areas near the Iraqi-Syrian border, much of Iraq remains calm. One indication of this is ongoing progress in oil production.

The November 29 *Wall Street Journal* reported that despite frequent sabotage attacks Iraq’s oil industry “pumps away.” The International Energy Agency in Paris, the *Journal* said, estimates that Iraq pumped an average of about 2 million barrels of oil a day in the second and third quarters of this year. That output is about 20 percent short of the country’s oil production before the 2003 invasion.

### Taking positions on Iraqi elections

Under the unfolding U.S.-led onslaught against the Baathists, most political forces in Iraq have lined up behind the call for national elections as soon as possible.

The Dawa party and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the main Shiite parties dominating the interim government, have rejected a demand by Sunni-led parties to

postpone elections for six months due to fighting in the Sunni Triangle. In a joint statement with 40 other Shiite-led parties, Dawa and SCIRI said the elections will proceed as scheduled on January 30. U.S. president George Bush and U.S. ambassador to Iraq John Negroponte have also said they hoped the elections will proceed as scheduled.

Adnan Pachachi, who served as Iraq’s foreign minister before the interim government was installed, said that more than a dozen political parties, including representatives of the two main Kurdish parties, met at his home and issued a statement supporting a postponement of the elections. “If you rush the elections, there will be some boycott,” Pachachi warned.

The main Kurdish political groups, however, soon shifted position and aligned themselves with the Shiite groups on the elections.

A senior Kurdish official who is part of the interim government said that participation in the meeting with Pachachi should not be construed as approval of a delay of the elections.

On November 28, Barham Saleh, Iraq’s deputy prime minister and a leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, said the elections should go ahead as scheduled. “Sticking to that timetable will be difficult,” Saleh told the BBC. “But delaying elections will be much more difficult because it will have serious ramifications to the political process, to the issue of legitimacy, and surely all of us do not want to give the terrorists the slightest of technical wins in that situation.”

# Conflict in Ukraine

Continued from Page 3

ruled Ukraine when it was part of the former Soviet Union. Yanukovich was a bureaucrat in the coal industry in the eastern region and Yushchenko in the banking system. They each served terms as prime minister during the presidency of Kuchma, who directed the regime in Kiev toward closer collaboration with Washington and other imperialist powers, while maintaining ties with Moscow.

Kiev joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994 and has participated in more than 200 of its training exercises. The Ukrainian government hosts the annual PfP training at a military base in western Ukraine. In May 2002 it formally announced its intention of seeking NATO membership. Six months later, Yanukovich, who criticized Yushchenko as “pro-West,” took office as prime minister.

The 1,500 Ukrainian troops stationed in Iraq represent the largest contingent from a non-NATO country. They are based in the sector under Polish command. Their deployment builds on years of cooperation in the Ukrainian-Polish Peacekeeping Battalion (Urkpolbat) promoted by Washington and NATO. Urkpolbat has been based in Kosova since July 2000, aiding the imperialist occupation forces in the Balkans.

Kiev has also deployed troops to Afghanistan to join the U.S.-led “war on terrorism” there.

### No support for EU membership

While Kiev seeks to increase collaboration with imperialism, which in turn wishes to draw Ukraine further away from Moscow, the European Union shows no interest in bringing Ukraine into EU membership.

The Polish government, which joined the EU in May of this year, is leading the campaign for Ukrainian membership. But Paris, Berlin, and others that dominate the alliance have kept Kiev at arm’s length. In 2002 the president of the European Commission said Ukraine had about as much of a chance of being admitted into the EU as New Zealand. The EU’s official European Neighborhood Policy, whose goal is to create “a ring of friends” around its borders, places Ukraine on the same level as Tunisia, Jordan, and Morocco.

The leading imperialist powers in the EU oppose entry for Ukraine for the same reason they have pushed off Turkey’s possible admission into the distant future: it has an underdeveloped economy and a population larger than many current EU members. The rulers of France and Germany do not wish to provide any subsidies for Ukrainian agriculture.

Mass protests in Kiev began November 22 once the official results appeared to give the election to Yanukovich. Yushchenko supporters were outraged over what they charged was widespread fraud, especially after he had been declared in the lead, according to exit polls the day of the vote.

The following day Yushchenko took a symbolic oath of office in parliament, even as the electoral commission was about to declare his opponent the winner. The outgoing president called for negotiations between the two contenders for office. According to AP, however, a Yushchenko ally told a crowd November 23, “We are ready to negotiate only about the peaceful handing over of power to Yushchenko by Kuchma.” Protesters have surrounded government buildings and set up a tent camp.

### Ties with Moscow threatened

In response to the daily protests of Yushchenko supporters, backers of Yanukovich took to the streets as well. The *New York Times* correspondent in Kiev reported that hundreds of thousands turned out in eastern Ukraine to back Yanukovich. His support is based in those areas, the more industrial regions of the country. The 17 percent of Ukrainians of Russian descent are concentrated there. Yanukovich himself did not learn the Ukrainian language until taking office as prime minister two years ago.

Officials from eastern Ukraine voted November 28 to hold a referendum on secession should Yanukovich’s election be overturned. In the eastern city of Severodonetsk, about 3,500 local officials from 17 of Ukraine’s 25 regions met with Yanukovich, the BBC reports. While on the one hand saying he would not support such a move, Yanukovich told the meeting, “There is one step to the edge. When the first drop of blood is spilled, we will not be able to stop it.”

Tens of thousands rallied in Donetsk the day before for a referendum on autonomy, and 3,000 gathered in the Black Sea port of Odessa threatening to declare independence if Yushchenko becomes president.

Washington seeks to exploit the political crisis to increase its influence in a region once under the domination of Moscow. Under pressure from Washington, Berlin, and other imperialist powers, Russian officials have backed off from their announcement that Yanukovich was the winner of the presidential election, and stated they would consider a new election as a means out of the crisis.

Moscow refers to Ukraine as part of its “near abroad,” those former Soviet republics that remain under its influence. Ukraine is of special importance because of the role it played as “breadbasket” to the former Soviet Union, providing a large portion of its agricultural needs. It is also rich in iron ore and coal, and supplied much of the USSR’s heavy industry.

An article in the November 25 *Economist* said that “Ukraine is the key battleground for influence between the EU and Russia.”

Many of the former Soviet republics have joined the U.S.-led NATO alliance, and earlier this year three joined the EU. “Others, such as Romania and Bulgaria, will follow them before long,” the *Economist* said. “The Union’s new members have toughened visa requirements for Russian visitors and closed their borders to some Russian goods.”

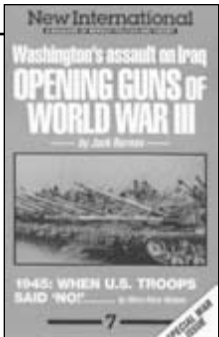
Ukraine is dependent on Russia for about 85 percent of its energy supplies. At the same time, Ukraine is a major transit route for Russian oil and natural gas for export. “A government on bad terms with the Kremlin could choose to increase transit fees, putting a squeeze on Russia’s major source of outside revenue,” noted a November 27 AP dispatch. “It could also choose to use one of its pipelines to carry oil from Caspian countries such as Azerbaijan, rather than Russian oil.” Earlier this year, Kiev announced it would not carry Russian oil through one pipeline, but reversed itself under pressure from Moscow, according to AP.

The Black Sea port of Sevastopol is home to Russia’s southern naval fleet. The division of the Black Sea fleet after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a point of contention between Moscow and Kiev. Following years of negotiations, in 1997 an agreement was reached dividing the fleet between the two countries and providing for a 20-year lease to Russia of Sevastopol and other bases on the Black Sea. Under the accord, Moscow can station up to 25,000 troops at these bases, as well as armor, artillery, and military aircraft.

Moscow wants to avoid a situation like the one it faces in Georgia, where it is under pressure to withdraw military units that have been stationed there for decades.



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# Joining the resistance in the packinghouses

## Socialist meat packers respond to new openings to build, strengthen union

BY CHRIS HOEPPNER

SOUTH ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Socialist workers active in the meatpacking union—the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)—across the United States gathered here over the November 20–21 weekend. They charted a course on how best to become an integral part of the growing opportunities to build and strengthen their union.

“There is serious resistance in the Midwest by meat packers to the bosses’ attempt to increase line speeds, and cut wages and health-care benefits in order to bolster their profits,” said John Pines, a meat packer here. “This includes dozens of efforts to organize packinghouse workers into the meatpacking union, strikes, and contract disputes. These struggles spread from Colorado to Illinois and from Ontario, Canada, to Texas and involve thousands of workers.”

Pines cited the strike of 570 workers at Quality Meat Packers in Toronto, Ontario, who are pressing to win back some of the 40 percent wage and benefits cut they were forced to accept six years ago (see front-page article).

A strike at the Hunts Point meat market in the Bronx, New York, last spring resulted in the workers winning representation by the UFCW. Efforts to win union recognition have also taken place recently in Chicago, and Buffalo Lake, Minnesota.

There have been numerous efforts by packinghouse workers to organize and strengthen the union in the Midwest over the last half-decade.

One hot spot has been in Nebraska. Thousands of workers have participated in organizing drives there over the last four years. This has included efforts to organize several large plants into UFCW Local 271—including Nebraska Beef, Swift Cudahy, and Swift Northern States (then ConAgra) in Omaha. These plants have workforces of 1,000, 160, and over 400 respectively.

Edwin Fruit, a member of UCFW Local 1149 in Perry, Iowa, recounted the experiences of a recent Socialist Workers Party 2004 election campaign team that traveled through the central meatpacking region of the Upper Midwest. Socialist campaigners got a positive response, he said, including selling dozens of subscriptions to the *Militant* and its sister publication in Spanish *Perspectiva Mundial*.

The gathering took place at the same time as workers voted on a proposed contract at the Swift cattle slaughterhouse in Greeley, Colorado (see article on page 9).

“It was reported that workers at Swift yesterday voted by a margin of more than 90 percent for a new union contract that includes a provision that the union will have their own padlock, with separate keys, placed on the switch that controls the production line’s speed,” said Pines. “The relationship of forces in that plant between the bosses and workers will determine how effectively the workers can monitor and prevent the company from jacking up the line speed,” he emphasized. “The speed of the line is the question of questions in packing plants across the country today.”

Pines pointed to the importance of recent reports in the bourgeois press that the productivity rate of U.S. workers is bottoming out. “More and more the bosses are forced to hire new employees to keep up with their production demands, at the same time as they are driving to squeeze more productivity out of the hides of workers,” he said.

Earlier this year, after some workers called UFCW Local 1546 to help bring in the union, a six-month organizing effort took place at Stempede Meats in Bridgeview, Illinois, which has a workforce of 300. The workers lost the election, but the discussion is not over.

“Even though we lost this round in organizing a union at the plant, workers who voted against the UFCW in the election are already talking about how they made a mistake because of the speedup since the union defeat,” said Barbara Winslow, a meat packer who recently participated in the union organizing drive at Stampede. “People want to try again.”

“The central way in which we will be able to strengthen our participation in this resistance,” said Pines, “will be to carry out a radical and rapid shift in our efforts to acquire the skills necessary to work in the meatpacking industry and change jobs as needed. This will enable socialists across generational lines to participate jointly

for the coming years in strengthening the unions.”

Pines said that the steering committee that organizes the work of socialist meat packers nationally will lead an effort in the next few months to train every socialist worker in the industry to be a butcher. “We need to be able to handle a knife, know how to do several cuts of meat, and have the flexibility to move from job to job when needed,” said Pines.

Paul Montoya described how he has begun to pick up boning and other cutting skills on the job in New York. “We have to pick up skills to be equipped to respond to the unfolding struggles,” he noted.

“This will mean that any preconceived notions about ‘target factories’ that we have prioritized getting into in the past—because of their size or other factors—must be secondary to getting hired in places where we can rapidly get training to become skilled butchers,” said Dean Richards, a meat packer from San Francisco.

James Harding, a meat packer in Washington, D.C., pointed out “that the most skilled butchers have respect and are looked to for leadership by other workers.”



Cut floor of slaughterhouse in Omaha, Nebraska. Responding to the resistance by workers to bosses’ attacks on wages and working conditions in meatpacking plants—largely concentrated in the U.S. Midwest—was the focus of November 21 meeting of socialist meat packers.

## Ohio opens new slaughterhouse in prison

BY HELEN MEYERS

CLEVELAND—The state of Ohio is opening a \$10.6 million state-of-the-art slaughterhouse and meatpacking plant on the grounds of the Pickaway Correctional Institution in Orient, Ohio, in December. This marks a big expansion of the prison system’s meat production business.

The Ohio prison system has been processing meat from its slaughterhouse at the London Correctional Institution where prisoners tend a herd of 175 dairy cows and grow hay, wheat, oats, and corn. That facility has been providing meat for only a few of the prisons in Ohio. The new 37,000-square-foot plant at Pickaway will provide 3.4 million pounds of beef and pork to feed 44,000 inmates in 32 prisons in the state. It is slated to be fully operational by 2007 and will provide meat for other state agencies, including the departments of mental health and youth services.

In response to criticisms here that the new plant will compete with private business, Ohio agriculture secretary Fred Dailey said, “This is going to be good for prisons and inmates, and it’s going to be good for Ohio’s beef-cattle industry. Now we have one more bidder on what we produce on Ohio farms.” The state is claiming the facility will save \$2 million annually from its budget. This is largely due to the low wages prisoners are paid for such jobs.

According to Reginald Wilkinson, chief of the state prisons, 120 minimum and medium security inmates will work under strict supervision and constant video surveillance. The workers will go through a three-year apprenticeship program to become butchers. Students from the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine at nearby Ohio State University will train at the plant and on the prison farm. Meat inspectors will be trained on-site, according to Dailey.

### — MILITANT LABOR FORUMS —

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## LETTERS

### Electrification

In concert with the demand for access to modern forms of electricity for the semi-colonial world, I recommend checking out the latest issue of *National Geographic* magazine (November 2004).

There is a map of the world at night, taken over several months, showing the electric lights from the surface of the planet. This map shows at a glance which countries have access to electric power and which do not. One of the captions tells that Italy, an imperialist power with a population of 60 million, glows brighter than India with a population 17 times greater (over 1 billion).

Jim Wright  
Cleveland, Ohio

### Iraq war

I read last week’s *Militant* and I found it as interesting as ever. I have only two questions regarding the imperialists’ war against Iraq. The first question is what did you mean when you said (editorial

al “Bring the troops home now!” in November 30 issue) “The 2003 assault was Rumsfeld’s war, but was followed by Powell’s occupation”? What exactly was Powell’s tactic? What was his course? In what did it differ from Rumsfeld? Isn’t Powell another advocate of the war party? What makes Rice more reliable?

The second question is: Why does the *Militant* say that the fighters in Iraq are Baathist? Are they the only fighters? What about the suicide attacks? Are they Baathist as well? Is Abu Musab al-Zarqawi associated to the Baathists?

Thank you very much for your time and keep up the good work providing the only serious working-class explanation to world politics today.

Carlos Pizarro  
by e-mail

### Has ‘Islamism’ peaked?

I would like to understand better a political point featured in the November 16 issue of the

*Militant*. The article reporting on the October 31 talk by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes states that Islamism “has peaked,” and refers to the “exhaustion of ‘Islamist’ groups like Hamas or al-Qaeda.” You report Barnes explained that a 1979 action by such forces, which was crushed by the Saudi regime, “was the high point of ‘Islamism’ while September 11 was its flare-out.”

I hope you will write more on this subject. To the best of my knowledge Hamas, for instance, did not even exist (at least in its present form) in 1979 but appears to have won broad support since then, arguably perhaps for reasons other than “Islamist” ideology. In any event, a follow-up article of some kind would be welcome.

Geoff Mirelowitz  
Seattle, Washington

### After U.S. elections

It is difficult to determine what the next step is for a citizen

concerned with the well-being of American workers, especially after such a strenuous election.

The answer is simple: We must continue to fight for the rights of workers to organize, and against the capitalist system that is pursuing economic imperialism as its fundamental foreign policy.

For the past four years, the Democrats have complained that the previous election was “stolen” from them. Now what will they say? The labor unions mobilized and put a majority of their resources behind the effort to elect a representative who promised a better country. What will the unions fight for now?

If those same resources would have gone toward building a movement that was in the best interests of the working people in America, then we would be fighting—instead of appearing to be “defeated” when John Kerry lost.

Instead of focusing on what may or may not happen four years from now, we should focus

on what we can do for ourselves as workers during the next four years. We must fight for what we want instead of fighting for something that is a little bit better than what we currently have. There are still millions of Americans who just participated in activism for the first time. We must mobilize these people and concentrate on the interests of the working people and think of the next step.

The issues that working Americans face right now are too critical to be ignored and must be acted on immediately.

Scott Holliday Wilson  
Washington, D.C.

**The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.**

**Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.**



# Polynesians protest effort to oust president

## Dispute highlights opposition to French colonial rule in South Pacific islands

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—In one of the largest protests ever held in French Polynesia, 20,000 people marched October 16 in Papeete, the capital of this Pacific island country, according to local press reports. They were protesting the attempted ouster of the newly elected government led by Oscar Temaru, and demanding new elections be held.

Temaru is a long-time leader of the movement for independence of the island nation from French rule and against France's nuclear testing in the territory.

French Polynesia is comprised of 118 South Pacific islands that cover an area the size of Europe. The largest is Tahiti, home to two-thirds of the territory's population of 266,000. About 78 percent of the population is of Polynesian descent. Along with New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna, French Polynesia is one of three colonies ruled by Paris in the Pacific.

In May, the party led by Temaru, Tavini Huiraatira, won general elections for the local Territorial Assembly. Temaru was elected president, replacing Gaston Flosse, a close ally of French president Jacques Chirac. Flosse had held the position for most of the past 20 years.

Flosse immediately challenged the vote. On October 9 he won a no-confidence vote against the new government in the assembly. Then, on October 23, with only 29 of the 57 elected members participating, the assembly re-elected Flosse president.

Since then, a stand-off has occurred, with both leaders claiming the presidency. Both have sent delegations to Paris to call on the French government to intervene. On November 15, France's highest court, the Council of State, backed a demand by Flosse and struck out the election results in the largest constituency, the Windward Islands (Iles du Vent), citing "voting irregularities." With 37 assembly members now unseated, France's minister for overseas has called both parties to a meeting in Paris, seeking to broker a solution in the interests of French imperialism.

Temaru says that new elections should be held throughout French Polynesia. Working people have continued to protest to back this call. On November 10, the Tahitian trade union O Oe To Oe Rima called a strike. About 2,000 workers stayed home, and several hundred marched in the center of Papeete. They were demanding a raise in the minimum wage, which had been pledged by Temaru's party in the election campaign.

Supporters of the new government have also blockaded entry to key government buildings, including the ministry of finance, the central post office, land affairs ministry, government printers, and information technology services. On November 20, the Speaker of the Assembly announced that 42,890 people from throughout the islands of the territory—about 28 percent of the population—have signed a petition calling for dissolution of the assembly to allow fresh elections.

Meanwhile, Temaru and his cabinet, backed by supporters, have refused to leave the presidential palace. Flosse and his cabinet have been forced to work from nearby buildings, but have cut phone and power lines to the palace.

The call for new elections has received the backing of the head of the Tahitian Protestant Maohi church, Father Taaronui Maraia, and the Tahitian royal Pomare family. In France, the Socialist, Green, and Communist parties have backed the Temaru government.

The victory of Temaru's party in the May poll came as a surprise to many political commentators. The election had been triggered by Flosse, who asked Chirac to dissolve the assembly and call a snap poll shortly after France granted a new autonomy status for the territory, making French Polynesia an "overseas country within the French republic." Flosse has promoted limited autonomy as an alternative to independence.



AFP/Valerie Macon

20,000 march October 16 in Polynesian capital against attempted ouster of president.

Prior to the election, Flosse presided over the adoption of new election rules. According to these regulations, any party winning the most votes in each of the six constituencies receives a bonus of 30 percent more seats. With his party the largest in the assembly, Flosse expected to get the lion's share of seats. Temaru's party, however, Tavini Huiraatira, contesting the election as part of the Union for Democracy coalition, won 27 seats in the 57-seat assembly. Two other seat holders—one a former minister in Flosse's government, and the other from a pro-autonomy party—decided to support Temaru, giving him 29 seats, a razor-thin majority over Flosse's 28.

The surprise result mirrored election results in New Caledonia on May 9. There, the anti-independence party Rally for New Caledonia within the French Republic (RPCR) lost its long-time control of the key southern province and of the country's Congress. RPCR's leader of 25 years, Jacques Lafleur, resigned from all leadership posts.

Leading up to the poll in French Polynesia, Paris threatened to cut off funding to the territory if Temaru was elected, and sent an additional 120 police to the islands.

A week before the elections, a march called by opposition parties to protest against the Flosse government drew several thousand people.

Temaru said independence is not on the agenda in the near future. "The result of the elections for a new assembly was not a referendum for or against independence, but instead was a protest against a style of government that favored some voters over others," he said shortly after being elected. "The question of political independence will only be posed in full agreement with France and when French Polynesia's political, economic, social, and financial situation allows it to happen. In any case, only Polynesians will decide on their country's future when the time comes. This question could be posed in 10, 15, or 20 years."

Despite the measure of autonomy now granted to French Polynesia, Paris retains control of key matters such as foreign relations, defense, immigration, and TV and radio broadcasting. Its economy, though relatively developed in comparison to other Pacific Island countries, is dependent on millions of dollars of subsidies from France, a fact used by figures like Flosse to argue against severing ties with the colonial

power. The payments include \$180 million annually as compensation for the massive drop in income when France's nuclear testing program was ended in 1996.

Temaru had pledged to raise the living standards of working people, including increasing the minimum wage from 110,000 French Pacific francs (US\$1,209) per month to 150,000 francs (US\$1,648), and to encourage the use of the indigenous Maohi language. In its five months in office, his government had initiated an audit into the suspected misuse of government income by former president Flosse, as well as an investigation into the health effects of the 38 years of nuclear testing on workers and their families near the test sites.

Despite the ending of nuclear testing, French Polynesia remains of military importance to France. Its two naval bases at Tahiti and Hao Atoll in the territory are part of Paris's ability to project its military strength in a world of growing inter-imperialist competition.

The French rulers have recently been taking steps to expand their influence in the Pacific directly and through their colonies. Last year the French government doubled the amount it earmarks annually for its "South Pacific Economic, Social and Cultural Cooperation Fund," supposed to be for the development of Pacific Island countries. Chirac has looked toward closer integration of the three Pacific colonies, including French Polynesia joining New Caledonia as an observer in the regional group of states, the Pacific Islands Forum. French Polynesia was eventually admitted last August.

Last year, Chirac paid a celebratory visit to France's South Pacific colonies, wrapping up the tour by hosting a meeting of regional governments in Papeete. It was intended to demonstrate French imperialist weight in the region. Chirac's luster, however, was tarnished somewhat by a strike and demonstration by opponents of French rule in New Caledonia, and protests on his arrival in French Polynesia.

Temaru, then mayor of Faa'a, French Polynesia's biggest town, refused to join the official welcoming ceremonies. He joined other supporters of independence, including unionists and former workers in the nuclear industry, in a protest against Chirac's visit.

## Virginia day laborers protest arrests for 'loitering'

BY LEA SHERMAN

WOODBIDGE, Virginia—More than 75 day laborers and their supporters marched and rallied here November 20 protesting the arrest of their co-workers by Prince William County police. Three workers were taken into custody November 15, following a mass arrest on October 19 of two dozen laborers. The Latino workers were charged with "loitering" because they were waiting in front of a 7-Eleven store for contractors to pick them up for work.

Using a Virginia law that passed this summer, House Bill (HB) 570, the local police then turned in some of the workers to federal immigration authorities. Eleven workers now face deportation.

The spirited crowd marched along Route 1 near the 7-Eleven where the arrests were made. Protesters chanted in Spanish and waved signs condemning the arrests and calling for the repeal of HB 570. The concluding rally was held in front of Ricos Tacos Moya Mexican Restaurant on Route 1, where a meal was served after the action.

Speakers at the rally included a representative of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, who denounced HB 570 as racial profiling by the police; Mahonrry Hidalgo, who is part of a similar struggle of day laborers in Freehold, New Jersey; Norberto Martinez of Mexicanos sin Fronteras (Mexicans without Borders) in Washington, D.C.; and Ricardo Juárez, a local organizer of the march and of the Workers Committee of Woodbridge.

Other organizations that took part in the march included the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, ANSWER, and the Socialist Workers Party.

Earlier in the day, about 100 people attended a two-hour town hall meeting at the Prince William County auditorium where a heated debate ensued.

Members and supporters of the Virginia Coalition Against Terrorism—an ultrarightist, anti-immigrant group—took part in the meeting with signs, shouts, and catcalls. "If they are illegal, take them away. Enforce the law. That's why I pay taxes," said Michael Crowe, one of its members. The percentage of Latinos in the county has increased from 9 percent to 16 percent in the past four years, an increase Crowe calls an "immigration invasion."

Others supported the workers, denying the allegations of Prince William police captain Tim Rudy that the day laborers used alcohol and drugs, littered, urinated on the property, and sexually harassed women.

"I've found them to be entirely, in my experience, polite, hard-working people," said Bruce Smith who lives in the vicinity of the 7-Eleven. "They have been as good as neighbors as anybody in the neighborhood."

Ricardo Juárez, organizer of the Workers Committee of Woodbridge, a project of Mexicanos sin Fronteras, said in an interview, "These arrests are a targeting issue against an organized group of workers. There are a lot of workers looking for jobs,

but it is these organized workers who have been arrested."

Among its activities, the Workers Committee organizes English classes, carries out informational campaigns, works for legalization of undocumented workers, distributes food, and helps to secure wages when the employers do not pay. The HB 570 law gave state and local police the authority to arrest "illegal" immigrants without a warrant. The law, which targets alleged "terrorists," is supposed to apply only if the immigrant had been convicted of a felony, had been ordered out of the country, or was suspected of committing another crime.

Juárez said that this law should not have been applied at all in the case of the arrested workers. "We are workers, not criminals," he said. Several placards carried in the November 20 march made the same point.

The group continues to organize the day laborers. They are working with an immigration attorney who is challenging the law on loitering, which has been ruled unconstitutional by the state supreme court.

A court hearing was set November 29 for more than a dozen of the workers facing the loitering charge. In the meantime, day laborers are still waiting for employment outside the 7-Eleven, taking the risk because they need work to survive. Juárez said that because of the publicity fewer contractors come by and the job situation for these workers has become more difficult.

"Yesterday only five workers got jobs, while 100 needed jobs," said Juárez.