

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
U.S. gov't uses child's case
to push campaign against Cuba
 — PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 63 NO. 44 DECEMBER 13, 1999

Puerto Rican protesters get ready to face U.S. Navy

BY HARVEY McARTHUR

CHICAGO—"We're reaching the most critical moment of this struggle, because we know the [U.S. government] decision is near," declared Flavio Cumpiano November 27. Cumpiano is a spokesperson for the newly organized Coordinating Committee for Justice and Peace in Vieques. He spoke in anticipation of Washington's announcement on whether it will resume bombing runs over the U.S. Navy target range on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. "Puerto Rican organizations continue to be very active and committed to the situation in Vieques," he added.

As of December 2, U.S. warships were on their way to Vieques, while the Clinton administration continued to strive for some "agreement" that would allow them to carry out exercises not only off the coast but over the island.

The U.S. military took over two-thirds of the island, located off the eastern coast of Puerto Rico, in the 1940s. One end is used for a large ammunition dump and the other for a live firing range and amphibious assault training area.

Vieques residents and others have resisted this Navy occupation of their land for decades. The issue exploded as a central focus of the struggle against U.S. colonial rule over Puerto Rico on April 19, when a civilian guard, David Sanes, was killed as a U.S. warplane dropped its bombs miles off target.

Protesters immediately set up civil disobedience camps on the firing range, forcing the Navy to suspend training exercises. Tens of thousands of people have since joined marches and rallies, demanding the U.S.

Continued on Page 4

Titan Tire explosion shows bosses' lack of safety

BY RAY PARSONS

DES MOINES, Iowa—A massive explosion and fire erupted at the Titan Tire factory here November 24. The plant is the scene of a hard-fought strike waged by 670 members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 164. Since May 1, 1998, these unionists have been taking a stand on the picket lines against forced overtime and two-tier wages, and for pension and health-care benefits for retirees. Another 500 members of USWA Local 303L are on strike against Titan at its plant in Natchez, Mississippi.

A massive cloud of thick black smoke could be seen for miles around. One worker, truck driver Douglas Oswald, 25, was killed instantly. Others were treated for smoke inhalation. Titan has been operating the plant with strike-breakers. The plant was evacuated following the outbreak of the fire.

A Bulkamtic Transport Co. tanker truck operated by Oswald was delivering a load of heptane when a leak occurred. Heptane is a highly flammable chemical used in building tires. A report by fire investigators on the exact cause of the fire is not expected for more than a month.

The Des Moines Register reported No-
 Continued on Page 4

Cops brutalize thousands during protests in Seattle

Socialists advance program to unite workers in struggle

BY PATRICK O'NEILL
 AND ELENA TATE

SEATTLE--Using military-style tactics, authorities closed downtown Seattle November 30. A "state of civil emergency" was imposed by Seattle mayor Paul Schell, including a curfew from 7:00 p.m. until 7:30 a.m. on a 50-block section of the downtown area. Washington State governor Gary Locke called in the National Guard and state police to enforce it. State and city officials tightened the clampdown the following day, extending the curfew through to the end of the week.

These police forces were mobilized against tens of thousands of people who came to Seattle to protest the meeting of the World Trade Organization. They attacked protesters with tear gas, pepper spray, batons, and rubber bullets. Armored personal carriers continue to patrol the streets and helicopters circle the skies. As of December 2, police have arrested several hundred people.

The police and the rulers in this city were caught off guard by the large-scale disruptive actions that began November 29 and grew significantly during the large union-organized protests the next day. Hundreds of demonstrators chained themselves near the venue of the planned WTO conference. These and similar actions tied up many police and effectively forced a one-day postponement of the opening of the ministerial summit. These protesters chanted nationalist slogans, while the repressive forces in state and city prepared to close down political space in the center of the city.

A smaller group of black-clad activists who identified themselves as anarchists smashed shop windows and doors in the central shopping area, providing police with the excuse to attack. A number of passersby were beaten up by the cops as well. Among those arrested were some who called out, "I love America," as they were driven away. Some of the protesters not involved in the violence yelled "Shame!" at those breaking windows. They themselves came under attack by the police.

Authorities organized buses to take those arrested to the former Sand Point naval station, which they are using as a temporary prison. Seattle police chief Norman Stamper declared it a crime to be in

Continued on Page 6



Militant/Lisa Ahlberg

Socialist workers and youth have sold dozens of copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* in Seattle in the course of campaigning for program that can advance working-class solidarity, not economic nationalism.

'It's all about being treated like human beings,' say Overnite strikers

BY SUSAN LAMONT
 AND DICK GEYER

MEMPHIS, Tennessee—As they enter their sixth week on strike against Overnite Transportation, Teamsters members here remain determined to continue their fight to win union recognition, a decent contract, and dignity on the job.

Jamie Joe Lawrence, 48, has worked as a driver at Overnite for 10 years. "It's all over being treated like human beings," he said. "They're trying to take our dignity and respect away from us. Conditions here have gotten a lot worse over the last eight years."

Overnite, the sixth-largest U.S. trucking company, was bought by rail giant Union Pacific in 1986. Unable to get Overnite to bargain seriously since they voted to join the union in 1996, workers at the Memphis terminal first struck for several days last July. "We did it to get their attention," Lawrence said.

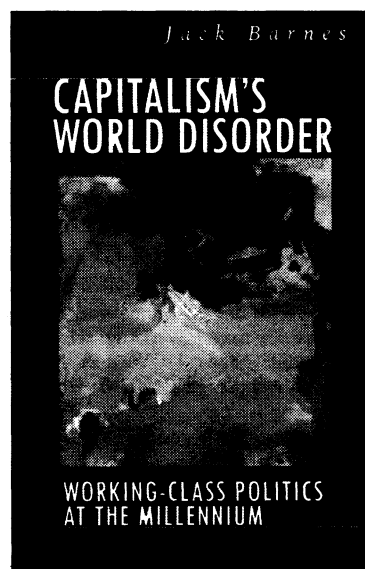
This is one of Overnite's four hubs, a huge facility the length of three football fields, with 200 loading doors. Despite Overnite's claims that the strike isn't having an effect, anyone driving by the terminal is struck by the sight of row upon row of idle trailers. Of the trucks that are on the road, some are virtually empty, strikers report. Workers from other Overnite terminals that have been shut down by the company have been brought in to work in Memphis. There are normally about 450 workers here, including over-the-road drivers, city drivers, dock workers, and maintenance work-

Continued on Page 8

\$20 SPECIAL OFFER!

From Pathfinder

Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium



Jack Barnes

"The capitalist rulers offer us social disaster. They offer us depression. They offer us death from curable disease. They offer us war. They offer us fascism. They offer us an unending list of horrors. But we offer ourselves the ability to prevent those horrors from becoming the final reality, the confidence that we can transform that future."

REGULAR PRICE: \$23.95

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8, or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Tel: (212) 741-0690. Fax: (212) 727-0150. When ordering by mail, please include \$3 to cover shipping and handling.



Afghans protest UN sanctions

Tens of thousands of people in Afghanistan have demonstrated against the imposition of economic sanctions by the United Nations. On November 14, at Washington's insistence, the UN Security Council voted to freeze overseas assets of the Afghan government and to bar the national airline, Ariana, from overseas routes. Washington is demanding that the Taliban government in Kabul turn over Osama bin Laden a Saudi-born businessman accused by the U.S. government of involvement in the bombings of its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last year. After the bombings U.S. forces fired cruise missiles into living quarters in Afghanistan and a chemical factory in Sudan, claiming that bin Laden was the target.

Washington pressures Baghdad

The United Nations Security Council is debating the terms it will impose on Iraq for extending the program under which Baghdad is permitted limited oil exports. The Russian, Chinese, French, British, and U.S. representatives are divided over their proposals for establishing a new weapons inspection commission in Iraq, and over the grounds on which the almost-decade-long sanctions might be lifted.

London and Washington advocate the harshest terms for the lifting the sanctions. They also collaborate in near-daily bombings of Iraqi territory. U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright declared November 24, "It would...be better to have monitors on the ground, but...I believe through our continued patrolling of the northern and southern no-fly zones, we are able to keep Saddam Hussein in his box." Baghdad opposes demands for a new weapons inspection commission.

London and Washington are also pressing for the dismissal of Hans Von Sponeck, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Baghdad and a German national, following his criticism of the sanctions.

Social ferment spreads in Nigeria

Protest and social ferment are spreading in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country. The oil-producing Niger Delta region has been particularly unstable. In early November the



Students in Malaysia demand democratic rights

Students demonstrate in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, November 23, against restrictions on democratic rights. The government's University and Colleges Act bans their participation in politics. General elections November 29 saw the victory of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's United Malays National Organization (UMNO), in power since independence in 1957, against opposition that included the wife of jailed former finance minister and deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim.

government of President Olusegun Obasanjo sent troops to the state of Bayelsa after clashes in which 12 policemen were killed. Bayelsa produces more than 20 percent of Nigeria's oil. "Impoverished Ijaw villagers [demand] a greater share of the region's oil wealth, which accounts for 95 percent of Nigeria's export earnings," according to a Reuters report. They also demand that oil companies clean up their pollution or leave. The Coalition for Justice in Niger Delta has demanded the withdrawal of all soldiers and tanks from the region. The government also used soldiers against protesting workers in September. Washington has cultivated Obasanjo as an ally since his election in February. The president previously enjoyed a spell as military ruler of the country in

the 1970s.

Haitian workers scapegoated

The Dominican Republic's government of president Leonel Fernández began stepped-up deportations of Haitian workers in November. Many Haitians cross the border to the Dominican side of the island to work in the sugar industry, living in rough shacks—with no running water, medical facilities, or power—that are part of work camps or *bateys*. Among those facing deportation are Haitians who have lived and worked in the Dominican Republic for years, and some Dominican citizens of Haitian descent. Bourgeois politicians have frequently scapegoated these migrant workers for unemployment and inflation.

Ukraine gov't restarts Chernobyl after Europe bank loan is stalled

On November 26 authorities in the Ukraine started up the last functional reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear plant. Although the reactor is slated to be closed permanently, the Ukrainian government is using the facility to meet winter power demands. Ukrainian officials say they need the payment of a promised \$1.2 billion to complete two nuclear power stations now under construction before decommissioning Chernobyl. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is holding off approving the loan, taking advice from "Western experts" who assert that the country's power needs have slumped along with the decline in economic activity, and that new

stations are not necessary.

In 1986 a meltdown at Chernobyl sent radioactive contamination over much of Europe in the worst nuclear power disaster ever. The official death toll was 8,000, according to Ukrainian authorities. The actual effects, including long-term radioactive contamination, are far worse. Workers are now repairing the concrete-and-steel sarcophagus that encases the destroyed reactor.

Farmers protests in Pakistan...

Farmers in Pakistan's cotton-growing areas organized days of protests in mid-November, drawing attention to the dropping prices of their major cash-earning product. In one action, farmers heaped cotton on a funeral bed as a symbol of the death of the crop. "There will be virtually no profits this year," said one cotton farmer. Raw cotton prices have fallen by one-fifth over the last year, affected by weak prices for the almost 20 percent of the harvest that is exported, and by the withdrawal of subsidies to the farmers by the newly-installed military government.

Farmers also say that they will find it difficult to plant wheat, their second crop, because payments for the cotton will be delayed.

...and the Ivory Coast

Farmers in the Ivory Coast threatened to burn their cocoa crops as part of a series of protests in late November. Faced with prices that have fallen to their lowest level in seven years, the farmers organized a week of strikes, paralyzing the country's marketing network. They have aimed their anger at measures taken in August to privatize the marketing of the crop in this West African country, the world's largest producer of cocoa. Most farmers have no access to effective storage facilities, and so depend on rapid transport and sale of the beans. The prices they receive have been halved between last season and this one, and now fall well short of their costs of production.

Okinawans oppose U.S. bases

Protests have greeted the attempt by the governor of Okinawa, an island seized by Japan a century ago, to broker a compromise between residents and the U.S. military forces stationed there. Governor Keiichi Inamine is trying to revive a plan to relocate Washington's Futenma air base to another part of Okinawa.

There are a dozen U.S. bases on the small island, occupying nearly one-fifth of its area. Two-thirds of the 50,000-plus U.S. troops in Japan are stationed there.

The Japanese government supports the maintenance of the bases, and has promised an aid package if the base is relocated. Fishermen and environmentalists are among those who call for the bases' removal. "The Okinawa people have asserted they wanted all the bases withdrawn from the island," said one participant in a protest of 150 people outside the local government building.

—PATRICK O'NEILL

THE MILITANT

Support the Irish freedom struggle!

Working people should support the Irish fighters demand of British troops out of Ireland, and release all political prisoners. They also demand the pro-British police force RUC be disbanded. The Militant follows these events as they develop. Don't miss a single issue!



SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

NEW READERS

\$10 for 12 issues

RENEWAL

\$15 for 12 weeks

\$27 for 6 months

\$45 for 1 year

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

UNION/SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION _____ PHONE _____

CLIP AND MAIL TO THE MILITANT, 410 WEST ST., NEWYORK, NY 10014.

12 weeks of the *Militant* outside the U.S.: Australia and the Pacific, \$A15 • Britain, £7 • Canada, Can\$15 • Caribbean and Latin America, \$15 • Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, £8 • Belgium, 500 BF • France, FF80 • Iceland, Kr1,700 New Zealand, NZ\$15 • Sweden, Kr75 (Send payment to addresses listed in business information box)

The Militant

Vol. 63/No. 44

Closing news date: December 2, 1999

Editor: NAOMI CRAINE

Young Socialists column editor: CECILIA ORTEGA

Business Manager: MAURICE WILLIAMS

Editorial Staff: Hilda Cuzco, Martin Koppel, Argiris Malapanis, Brian Taylor, and Maurice Williams.

Published weekly except for one week in December and biweekly from July to August by the Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Telephone: (212) 243-6392; Fax (212) 924-6040.

The Militant can be reached via CompuServe at: TheMilitant

Internet: TheMilitant@compuserve.com

The Militant website can be accessed on the internet at: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to The Militant Business Office, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Subscriptions: **United States:** for one-year subscription send \$45 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: for one-year sub-

scription send \$65, drawn on a U.S. bank, to above address. By first-class (airmail), send \$80. **Asia:** send \$80 drawn on a U.S. bank to 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Canada: Send Canadian \$75 for one-year subscription to Militant, 4581 St. Denis, Montreal, Quebec H2J 2L4.

Britain, Ireland: £36 for one year by check or international money order made out to Militant Distribution, 47 The Cut, London, SE1 8LL, England. **Continental Europe, Africa, Middle East:** £40 for one year by check or international money order made out to Militant Distribution at above address.

France: Send FF420 for one-year subscription to Militant, Centre MBE 175, 23 rue Lecourbe, 75015 Paris; chèque postale: 40 134 34 U. **Belgium:** BF 2,400 for one year on account no. 000-1543112-36 of 1Mei Fonds/Fonds du 1 mai, 2140 Antwerp.

Iceland: Send 5,800 Icelandic kronur for one-year subscription to Militant, P.O. Box 233, 121 Reykjavik. **Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark:** 500 Swedish kronor for one year. Pay to Militant Swedish giro no. 451-32-09-9.

New Zealand: Send New Zealand \$75 to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand. **Australia:** Send Australian \$75 to P.O. Box K879, Haymarket, NSW 1240, Australia. **Pacific Islands:** Send New Zealand \$75 to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand.

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

Cuban editor speaks on art and culture at New Jersey campus

BY ANDY BUCHANAN
AND BOBBI NEGRÓN

NEWARK, New Jersey—Seventy people, mostly students, packed the art gallery of the Robeson Student Center on the Newark campus of Rutgers University November 18 to hear Norberto Codina speak on "Art and Culture in Cuba Today." Codina is the editor of *La Gaceta de Cuba*, a magazine published by the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba. It is the foremost cultural journal in Cuba today.

In her opening remarks to the meeting, gallery director Kathy Schnapper welcomed Codina to the campus and noted that the program was sponsored by the Rutgers Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience; the English Graduate Student Governing Association; several individual professors; and student groups including the Organization of African Students and Latinos United Networking America. Judy Hall, a Rutgers instructor and the president of the English Graduate Student Government Association, chaired the program.

A lively question and answer session followed Codina's brief opening remarks. In response to a question on literacy in Cuba, Codina pointed to the organization of the literacy campaign in the early years of the Cuban revolution. He noted that this campaign in 1961, in

which students fanned out across the island to help teach workers and peasants to read and write, was critical to the advance of the revolution. Quoting 19th century Cuban revolutionary leader José Martí, who said that "to be cultured is to be free," Codina stressed that access to culture, in its broadest sense, is intertwined with social advance on every front.

A number of Cuban-American students took part in the event. In the days before the meeting, people handing out leaflets to build the event had discussions on the Cuban revolution with several young Cuban-Americans, including civil exchanges with some who were critical of the revolution. Alex, who gave only his first name, said that although he couldn't tell his grandparents where he was going, he planned to attend the meeting and hear the "other side of the story."

In the discussion period, one Cuban-American student told Codina he hadn't heard anything recently about singer Carlos Varela, implying he thought the balladeer might have been suppressed by the Cuban government. Codina replied that performances by the singer continue to fill major concert halls in Havana.

He noted that, although some "conservative" elements in Cuba consider Varela to border on being counterrevolutionary, he is a supporter of the revolution and is popular with



Militant/Brian Taylor

Norberto Codina (right) speaks November 16 at Hunter College in New York City.

many young Cubans because his songs address real social problems—from the generation gap to the social effects inside Cuba of the capitalist market. He noted that an interview with Varela will be featured in the next issue of *La Gaceta*.

Codina said that Cuba was the subject of "three blockades"—the economic embargo maintained by Washington since the triumph of the revolution 40 years ago, the impact of the collapse of favorable trade relations with the Soviet Union at the opening of the 1990s, and the problems caused by errors within the revolution.

"Dogmatism" and "schematicism" in cultural matters Codina said, are being combated. One example of the strength of the Cuban revolution today is the growing number of ini-

tiatives to embrace the cultural contributions of Cuban artists living in the United States and other countries, regardless of whether they are supporters of the revolution. *La Gaceta* has published writings by a number of Cuban-American poets and writers.

While in the region, Codina also addressed a meeting of about 20 people at Hunter College in New York City, sponsored by the Hostos Puerto Rican Club. Several students from the Palestinian Club also attended the event. He earlier spoke at campuses and public meetings in Chicago, Detroit, and Olivet, Michigan.

Andy Buchanan is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees. Bobbi Negrón is a student at Rutgers-Newark and a member of the Young Socialists.

A LETTER FROM EUROPE

German economic crisis drives down the euro

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—The euro touched a new low of less than \$1.01 in trading November 26. The drop in the 11-country European common currency has been spurred by capitalist investors' fears of economic stagnation in Germany.

Wim Duisenberg, president of the European Central Bank (ECB), commented that the fall of the euro against the dollar "does give me some concern that a further movement in this direction would contribute to undermining the confidence in the euro of the public at large. Unjustified, but still it is a public perception," the *Financial Times* of London reported November 26.

The German government's decision to bail out the bankrupt construction company Philipp Holzmann AG is one factor contributing to the drop of the euro relative to the U.S. dollar and Japanese yen. Tens of thousands of jobs were threatened if the company went belly up, at a time when unemployment averages 10.5 percent. As thousands of construction workers protested in the streets, Social Democratic chancellor Gerhard Schröder negotiated a government-backed rescue package for the company.

Although Schröder was able to get parliamentary approval the next day for cuts in pensions as part of a \$16 billion austerity package, the decision not to allow such a big company to fail had a negative impact on capitalist investors around the world.

The week before, Schröder denounced in nationalist terms the attempt by British Vodafone AirTouch to take over the German telecommunications and engineering group Mannesmann. The buyout "would threaten Mannesmann's particularly German corporate culture," he declared.

This resistance by the German government to the kind of merger that has been the pattern in the United States and United Kingdom in the last decades also put question marks on the performance of the German economy in the minds of capitalist investors internationally.

In Tokyo, Deutsche banks spokesperson Kenneth Landon talked about concerns among Japanese investors that "politicians will not allow restructuring to proceed unhampered" and as a result "Europe looks less attractive compared with the restructuring and M&A [merger and acquisition] activity in Japan." Japan has been hardest hit among the imperialist powers by the worldwide economic depression since the beginning of the 1990s.

The economic growth rate in Germany—

which has by far the biggest economy of any country in the European Union—is not expected to exceed 1.5 percent this year. In France the economy grew 3 percent in the third quarter of 1999 compared to a year earlier, and the growth rate for the Netherlands was 4 percent.

This spring, soon after the launch of the euro, the ECB lowered interest rates by 0.5 percent, but in early November restored them to 3 percent. This is much lower than the U.S. rate of 5.5 percent, which is one reason the U.S. dollar is more attractive than the euro. The ECB is now under pressure to raise interest rates further, which could derail the weak upturn in the capitalist business cycle in Germany and the rest of western Europe, deepening social crises there.

Meanwhile, French president Jaques Chirac

and British prime minister Anthony Blair met in London November 25 with their foreign and defense ministers and chief military commanders and called for the creation of a "European crisis-intervention force." They said the European Union should put up a force of between 50,000 and 60,000 troops and 300–500 aircraft that could be deployed quickly, separate from the U.S.-dominated NATO command structure, and be sustained in the field for at least a year.

The scheme also involves rounding out logistics, command, and intelligence capacities in which the imperialist powers in Europe lag behind Washington, as was shown in the recent war in Kosovo.

British and French officials said their aim is not to set up a European standing army, but they would make their respective general staffs

available to command any EU-led operation. London declared it was ready to provide British forces "for specific operations" to the existing five-nation Eurocorps, led by France and Germany.

Blair and Chirac expressed hope that the EU summit meeting in Helsinki on December 10–11 would endorse their plan.

The statement aroused concern in Washington, as it calls for the creation of an "autonomous" EU military capacity. In a recent speech Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott said autonomy could split NATO by leading European countries to consult among themselves first in a crisis, rather than with all of their partners in the alliance.

Carl-Erik Isacsson is a member of the metalworkers union in Södertälje, Sweden.

Michigan court convicts boy, 13, of murder

BY JOHN SARGE
AND BILL SCHMITT

DETROIT—Nathaniel Abraham, age 13, was convicted of second-degree murder in an Oakland County court, 25 miles north of here, on November 16. The boy, who was 11 when he was charged with the 1997 shooting death of Ronnie Greene, Jr., was tried as an adult. He may be the youngest person ever charged and convicted of murder as an adult in the United States. Abraham could get up to a life sentence in prison. Prosecutors say they will ask that he be sent to a juvenile prison until he is 19 or 21, with the possibility of being incarcerated in an adult penitentiary after that.

An estimated 4,000 youth are currently being held as adults in the U.S. prison system, including 70 on death row, convicted of crimes committed before they reached their 18th birthday. Since 1992, 44 states have adopted new laws that allow more children to be tried as adults, in some cases as young as 10 years old. Michigan's 1996 law is one of the harshest. It allows children of any age accused of serious crimes, such as murder, to be charged as adults. Before its enactment no one under 14 could be tried as an adult. Although children under 14 tried as adults can still be sentenced as juvenile offenders, at the discretion of the judge, youth between 14 and 16 charged under the law are automatically sentenced as adults. All charges against 17-year-olds are tried in adult criminal court.

Before the trial the press tried to paint Abraham as a cold-blooded, confessed mur-

derer who'd had many run-ins with the cops. But testimony during the widely covered trial brought out facts to the contrary. Abraham, a Black youth, was growing up in a working-class neighborhood in Pontiac with a learning disability. He was ignored by school officials and the social service system. His mother, a lab technician who worked an evening shift, requested that the juvenile court system declare her son incorrigible so he could get some help. They ignored her request.

Abraham was arrested during a school Halloween party. Before the cops even explained to his mother that Abraham faced murder charges, the cops pressed her and the boy to waive his right to an attorney during questioning, which they did. Abraham's statement was the basis of the charges against him and was used against him in court. The defense did not challenge the fact that Abraham fired a .22-caliber rifle, but argued there was no intent to kill. The rifle was old and did not have a stock. Abraham told cops that he was "just shooting at trees," and "I guess I just hit somebody."

His lawyer, Geoffrey Fieger, the Democratic Party candidate for governor of Michigan in the last election, said he believed racism had played a role in the charges and trial. Only 8 percent of the population of Oakland County is Black, in contrast to neighboring Wayne County, which encompasses Detroit and is heavily Black. Only one member of the jury was Black.

The trial opened a public debate on the question of charging youths as adults. Amnesty

International used Abraham's picture on the cover of a report it issued critical of the way children are treated in the court system in many U.S. states.

Like at many worksites, a lively debate unfolded at Ford's Michigan Truck plant. While many workers had questions about the circumstances of the incident by the end of the trial, some still argued, "Adult crime, adult time." Others insisted that there was no way an 11-year-old should be charged as an adult.

Small protests have been held around the trial. On November 12 the Black Law Student Alliance from the University of Michigan joined the NAACP and the Michigan American Civil Liberties Union in protesting the proceedings. The defendant's mother, Gloria Abraham, told those gathered, "I appreciate your support for my son and all my children." She urged, "As a community, we need to stick together for our children. The way they're handling my son's situation is not the answer."

Sixty people returned to the court house November 23. Leaders of the local NAACP, defense attorneys, and others were joined by Democratic politician Alfred Sharpton from New York and Martin Luther King III, the son of the slain civil rights leader, in protesting the verdict. They urged others to join them on December 14, the date set for sentencing.

John Sarge is a member of the United Auto workers. Bill Schmitt is a member of the Young Socialists.

Titan Tire explosion kills one worker

Continued from front page

November 25 that Titan has failed to file legally required reports with state officials detailing its chemical inventory since 1996. Other emergency response paperwork was filed with county officials, according to a press report published two days later. Firemen nevertheless faced an extremely dangerous situation as they fought the blaze. Just 10 feet from the burning truck was a rail tanker car containing petroleum oil. The heat from the fire warped the metal skin of the tanker; if the oil had become too hot it could have ignited in a much more deadly explosion.

Initial media reports claimed that the blaze was ignited from a passing car outside the plant, where the heptane leak had flowed into the street. These reports served to cast suspicion on the USWA strikers. One of the unionists' sturdy picket shacks is located less than 200 feet from the site of the blaze.

Later reports rejected this claim. Strikers who witnessed the explosion say the fire erupted inside the plant, and followed the

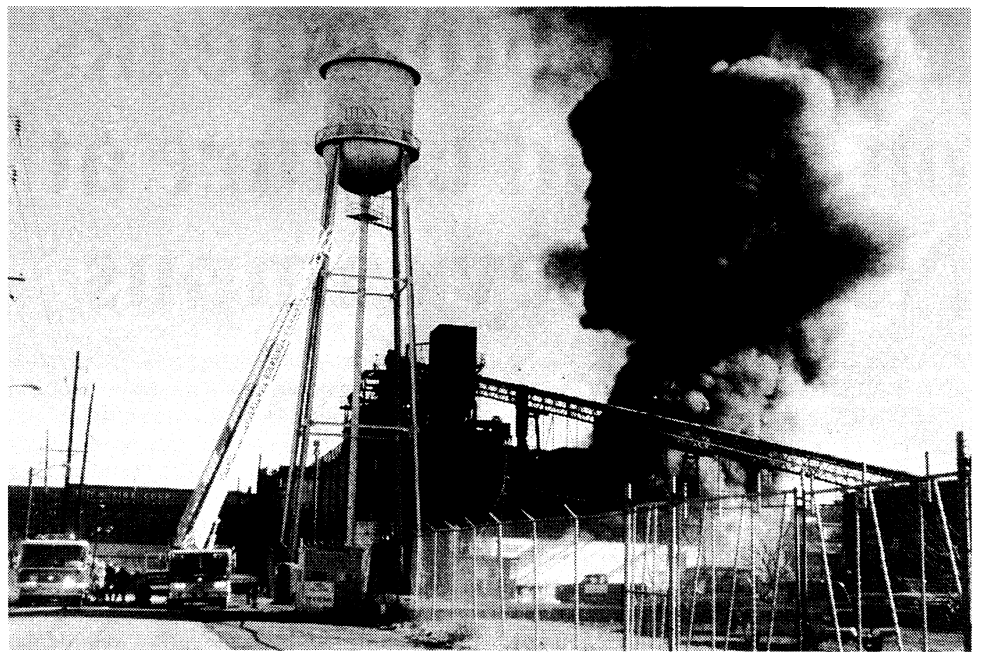
spilt chemical out to the street.

The determination of the strikers at Titan Tire has been sustained, in part, by their determination to fight against unsafe conditions in the plant. In April 1997, a year before the strike, union member Donny Baysinger was crushed in a tire-building machine that was known to have faulty safety devices. Before the walkout most workers were putting in 26 days in a row, often 12 hours a day.

Local 164 striker Denny Wicker, a 31-year veteran in the Des Moines plant, said, "Their safety record wasn't good when we were in there and now it's gone all to hell." Maurice Taylor, Jr., the owner of Titan, "has no regard for human life at all. He's exploiting anyone he can get at the union. That's what caused the fire," Wicker added.

Numerous times during the course of the strike emergency rescue squads have been called out to treat strike breakers injured on the job.

In April of this year, Titan management refused to let Iowa safety inspectors tour the struck plant. USWA officials are allowed



USWA Local 164

Fire could be seen for miles after explosion at Titan Tire plant on November 24

by law to participate in such inspections, but the company defied several court orders and rejected the union involvement. The company relented and allowed the tour after two weeks.

At the Titan plant in Natchez, where the members of USWA Local 303L are on strike, an October 4 explosion and fire re-

sulted in two replacement workers being burned. This was the most serious among an increasing number of injuries sustained by scabs working in the plant, strikers report.

Ray Parsons is a member of USWA Local 310 in Des Moines.

Protesters in Vieques are 'more united than ever'

Continued from front page

Navy leave Vieques completely. Under this pressure, a wide range of political figures, including pro-statehood governor Pedro Rosselló, called for Washington to stop using Vieques as a target range and return use of the entire island to the Puerto Rican people.

Washington has stepped up pressure in recent weeks, as Pentagon officials announced they intend to use Vieques to train pilots from the aircraft carrier *USS Eisenhower*, now scheduled to deploy to the Arab-Persian Gulf in February 2000. The Pentagon initially announced the *Eisenhower* would start practice bombing December 1.

Protesters responded with a series of demonstrations November 19-21 in front of the U.S. base on the island and by reinforcing the protest camps now occupying the firing range.

On November 21 Vieques activists announced the formation of a new coordinating body, the Coordinating Committee for Peace and Justice in Vieques. It brings together the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, associations of

fishermen and activists in the civil disobedience camps, United Youth, Alliance of Vieques Women, the local Catholic and Baptist churches, Puerto Rican Independence Party, and the Popular Democratic Party, which supports continuing Puerto Rico's colonial status.

The Coordinating Committee announced they would not accept any agreement that allowed even a temporary resumption of bombing on the island.

"We want to send a message to those politicians who seek to create divisions that we are more united than ever," declared Héctor Oliviera, a founding participant in one of the protest camps on the firing range.

The Puerto Rican Workers Federation (CPT) is one of the groups maintaining a civil disobedience camp on the restricted part of the island. "We are not going to leave until we are arrested, if that's what is going to happen," said CPT president Federico Torres Montalvo November 19.

Torres has joined several other prominent labor and church officials to call for "human chain" protests in support of Vieques in the Puerto Rican capital, San Juan, and other cities on December 1.

Some 1,350 students at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) in Río Piedras met November 10 and voted by a large majority to call a general strike and organize demonstrations if the U.S. resumes bombing. Rafael Ortiz, vice-president of the General Student Council, said they would set up a strike coordinating committee to organize civil disobedience brigades to carry out demonstrations on the main island as well as Vieques to fight against the Navy and the militarization of the island.

UPR students also say they are reaching out to student groups in the United States and around the world for support in their struggle.

The San Juan daily *El Nuevo Día* reported November 20 on a poll reflecting continued broad opposition to the Navy presence in Vieques. Some 56 percent throughout the country wanted the military to leave and opposed any resumption of maneuvers, *El Nuevo Día* said. This reached 80 percent among those living on Vieques itself.

The *Miami Herald* reported November 20 that President Clinton phoned Puerto Rican governor Pedro Rosselló three times

recently, trying to get him to back a resumption of the firing exercises. Clinton offered to use only nonexplosive projectiles. Rosselló initially agreed, but backed out in face of broad opposition within Puerto Rico as news of the plan leaked out. The governor refuses to say what else Clinton told him, and is issuing repeated calls for people to remain "calm."

Former governor Carlos Romero Barceló, now Puerto Rico's nonvoting representative to the U.S. Congress, has said he thinks a compromise with the Navy is necessary.

Washington is also increasing pressure by floating repeated rumors of when the administration may announce its decision on Vieques, raising tensions on the island in anticipation of the government's move. Most recently, Secretary of Defense William Cohen declared November 23 that he would make a final recommendation to Clinton in the first week of December. U.S. Navy spokespeople have said they cannot postpone the *Eisenhower* exercises past mid-December.

El Nuevo Día reported that special units of the Puerto Rican police are training to confront protesters at U.S. government offices and military facilities elsewhere throughout the country.

On November 21 Vieques activists denounced government wiretapping of their phones. A local official told *El Nuevo Día* that this was done by "U.S. security agencies."

Harvey McArthur is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 100A.

— YOUNG SOCIALISTS AROUND THE WORLD — Young Socialists forum in Seattle helps make fund drive goal, attracts young people

This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists (YS), an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS write to: Young Socialists, 3284 23rd St., San Francisco, California, 94110. Tel: (415) 824-1429.

Email: 105162.605@compuserve.com

BY AUTUMN KNOWLTON

SEATTLE—The Young Socialists made its local goal of \$400 towards the national fund drive November 12 at a special YS-organized forum that featured YS leader Manuel González. The event contributed to the overall success of the \$8,000 fundraising campaign to meet the national operating expenses of the Young Socialists.

The forum, which was entitled "Prospects for Building an International Revolutionary Youth Movement Today," included a report on González's participation in the International Seminar of Youth and Students on Neoliberalism in Havana, Cuba, August 15-19, as well as discussion on what the Young Socialists are doing today.

Several young people who are interested in finding out more about the Young Socialists took part in the discussion, including students from the Evergreen State College, the University of Puget Sound, and

North Seattle Community College.

González explained that the example of the Cuban revolution points the way forward out of the worldwide crisis of capitalism. Leaders of the Cuban revolution who addressed the conference emphasized that young people need to get involved in the struggles of the working class.

Representatives from the Young Socialists went to the conference from Canada, the United States, and Sweden and intervened in the discussions, promoting the idea that the system of capitalism needs to be replaced all over the world, not just in Cuba, in order for humanity to move forward.

Much of the discussion during the forum revolved around Hugo Chávez, the president of Venezuela. Chávez combines strongman tactics with modest social reforms to limit democracy for working people by calling on them to "trust and follow me and I'll solve your problems," while giving the illusion that he stands above class struggles.

Participants also discussed other topics such as neoliberalism, the protests revolving around the World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Seattle November 30-December 3, and the ultrarightist politics put forward by Patrick Buchanan, whose aim is to put together the cadres of what can be a fascist movement in the United States.

After the forum participants stuck around

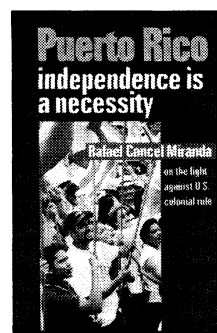
for more discussion with González and other forum participants. The YS did the drawing for a raffle they had been selling tickets for throughout the last month of the fund drive. In total the YS raised \$230 that evening from contributions at the door, raffle ticket sales, and a collection at the meeting.

The next evening González spoke at a similar forum in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The Young Socialists in Seattle organized events throughout the drive to send in money to the YS National Office on a regular basis, including a video showing and used book sale October 23. The video featured excerpts of speeches by Malcolm X that show his political evolution as a Black nationalist fighter into a revolutionary leader.

The video inspired a lot of discussion among the participants about the importance Malcolm X placed on working people organizing themselves independently of the Democratic and Republican parties, and the need to make a revolution to achieve liberation for Blacks. People also discussed Malcolm X's insistence on viewing the struggle of equal rights of Blacks in the United States as an important struggle taking place in the context of international political development, and in particular the national liberation struggles developing in the semicolonial world.

From Pathfinder



Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity

Rafael Cancel Miranda

In two interviews, Cancel Miranda — one of five Puerto Rican Nationalists imprisoned by

Washington for more than 25 years until 1979 — speaks out on the brutal reality of U.S. colonial domination, the campaign needed to free the Puerto Rican political prisoners, the example of Cuba's socialist revolution, and the resurgence of the independence movement today. In English and Spanish. Booklet \$3

See page 8 for list of distributors

Socialists mount campaign blitz at WTO events

BY PATRICK O'NEILL
AND ELENA TATE

SEATTLE—Twenty-nine copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*; 290 copies of the *Militant*; four copies of *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*; various other Pathfinder titles; and two introductory subscriptions to the *Militant*.

These were the results from a day's sales of a team of 30 people, including members and supporters of the Young Socialists, Socialist Workers Party, and Communist League in Canada. The socialists organized themselves from six literature tables in Seattle as tens of thousands of people marched to protest against the meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) slated to open that day, November 30.

Many participants in the team, who came from as far as Montreal and Miami, had traveled to Seattle two or three days before to start an intensive week of campaigning. Using Pathfinder books, a Young Socialists pamphlet produced especially for the event, and the socialist periodicals *Perspectiva Mundial* and the *Militant*, they organized to intervene in the political discussions that have mushroomed in the city around the WTO meeting.

The socialist campaigners are not taking part in the protests, which have a nationalist character. Typically, the organizers are calling on Washington to take action against the Chinese workers state and semi-colonial governments they accuse of violating labor rights and the environment (see article on front page).

"Our team has worked to keep our focus on the international campaign to sell *Capitalism's World Disorder* and to place it in libraries and bookstores," said Ernie Mailhot, who is heading up the steering committee organizing the team's work. "So far we've placed seven copies of the books in a couple of stores, along with four copies of *New International* no. 11, featuring 'U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War,' as well as four copies of *Making History*, Pathfinder's newest book.

The speeches in *Capitalism's World Disorder* come out of the experience of workers and farmers around the world in the last decade. They deal with the questions of imperialist exploitation, the dead end of economic nationalism, the emergence of rightist forces, the growth of struggles by working people, and many other political questions.

Sales had been going well before the day of the big demonstration, but certainly sped up on November 30. That day showed that "it's wide open to discuss politics with the young people, workers, and farmers who are coming to Seattle to join in the events," said Ernie Mailhot.

"Many people stopped to talk, and bought a copy of the *Militant* or a book," he said. "Most did not agree with our view on the WTO protests, but were very open to discussing and learning more by reading the literature.

"As of December 2 we've sold 61 copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* off of the socialist literature tables, more than 550 copies of the *Militant*, and 12 introductory subscriptions. No one tried to stop us from promoting our books. We did meet a few individuals who support Patrick Buchanan, though."

Samantha Kern, a member of the Young Socialists National Executive Committee, told the *Militant* that YS members in the team would be following up with more than 80 young people who have asked for more information about the Young Socialists and Pathfinder books.

"In addition to organizing classes on *Capitalism's World Disorder* and a panel of Young Socialists from all over the world, our team will be stepping up the pace of bookstore visits, too," said Kern, who is also a member of the steering committee for the socialist sales team here.

"We'll be taking the books and the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* to factory gates, and to picket lines of Overnite strikers and locked-out Kaiser workers in the region. We're also planning to celebrate a successful effort with a *Militant* Labor Forum on the political discussions of the previous week and a wrap-up party December 4."

Off to a good start at bookfair in Guadalajara, Mexico

BY MANUEL GONZÁLEZ
AND BETSEY STONE

GUADALAJARA, Mexico—The 13th annual Guadalajara International Bookfair opened here November 27 with more than 300,000 people expected to attend. This yearly bookfair is the most important gathering place for publishers throughout Latin America.

Supporters of Pathfinder Press from eight cities in the United States are here, staffing a booth and participating in teams to distribute Pathfinder books in bookstores, libraries, and on campuses in the Guadalajara area. During the first few days of the fair, 160 books were sold and hundreds of brochures distributed announcing Pathfinder's new titles.

Two of the highest-selling books have been issue no. 5 of *Nueva Internacional*, featuring the Spanish translation of "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War," with eight copies sold, and *Capitalism's World Disorder*, with four copies. Both focus on how workers can organize to respond to the economic crisis. Many people asked about the Spanish translation of *Capitalism's World Disorder*, which will be published in January 2000.

There have been many long discussions at the booth and at the tables at the University of Guadalajara. After meeting us on the campus, several students have come to the bookfair to visit our booth to continue discussions.

Many who stop to talk are looking for answers to the economic crisis and attacks on the standard of living of workers and farmers that has hit hard in Mexico since the devaluation of the peso in 1994. Patricia Cerda is a nurse in a large hospital in Guadalajara who tries to survive on wage of \$5 a day. She said cuts in social services have led to fewer nurses being asked to care for more patients, undermining the health of nurses and patients alike.

Alejandro Aguilar and Edgar Barragán, high school students, were among the many youths who purchased pamphlets by Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara. They, like many others, were eager to learn more about the strikes and working-class struggles in the United States.

They had never heard of Malcolm X but when they learned that Fidel Castro was welcomed by him in New York in 1960 they wanted to read more about him as well.

The media here is featuring news of the Mexican presidential election that will take place in June 2000. The presidential candi-

date of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, was a featured speaker at an event launching his new book, *Palabras con Cárdenas* (speaking with Cárdenas).

Cárdenas was part of a group which split off from the Institutional Revolutionary

as an alternative to what is being put forward by Cárdenas and other politicians in the current Mexican election.

Five copies of the newest Pathfinder book, *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces* have been sold. Many people bought copies of

Perspectiva Mundial, the monthly Spanish-language sister magazine to the *Militant*, which includes the introduction to *Making History* by Mary-Alice Waters.

Team sells book to stores in coal region

BY STEFANIE SWENKO

Supporters of the *Militant* recently participated in a three-day team in the coal areas outside Pittsburgh. (Last week's column reported on the first day of this effort.) As part of the ongoing effort to get *Capitalism's World Disorder* into the hands of fighters, we made several appointments to meet with owners and managers of bookstores and libraries in coal mining areas.

One visit was with the library archives at a university. The archives section has many books on labor history, including of the mine workers. On this visit, team members placed several books, including *Capitalism's World Disorder*, *Mother Jones Speaks*, *The Eastern Airlines Strike*, and *Coal Miners on Strike*.

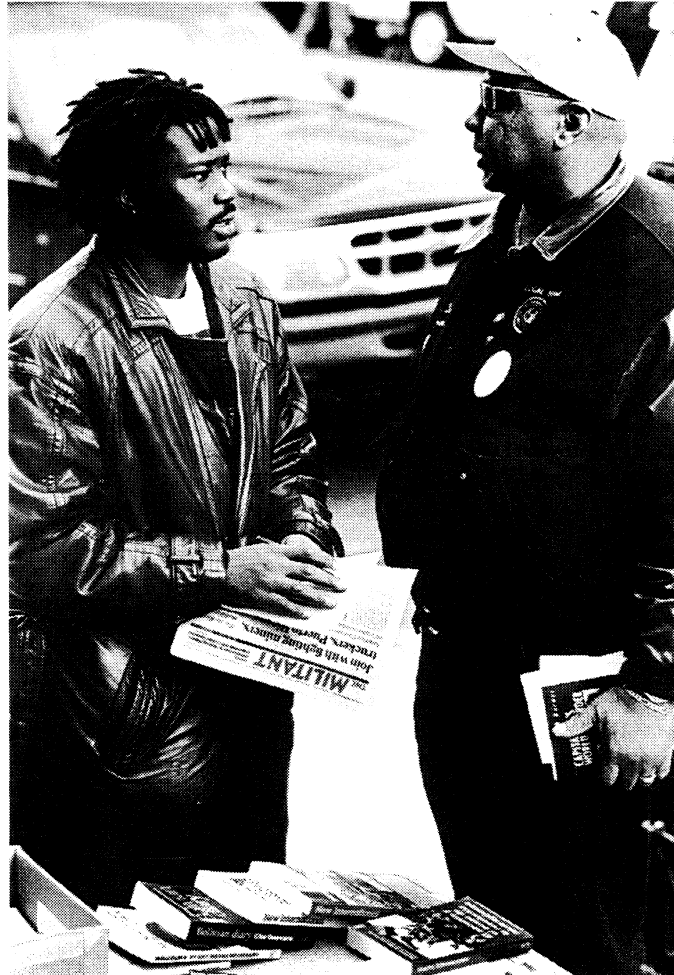
Also at the university we met with two professors who are interested in using Pathfinder books as class texts. One of the professors was interested in using *Genocide against the Indians* in a class he is teaching next semester. In

speaking with these professors, we found out that issues, such as the recent mine closings, are discussed in some of the classes. Although we need to meet with them again, we sold three titles, and were referred to others at the university that would be interested in using Pathfinder.

Team members also visited a small bookstore in West Virginia. The owner quickly became interested in *Capitalism's World Disorder*, and decided she wanted it for her store. After looking through the catalog, she ordered five other titles, including *Sexism and Science*, and *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*.

We also spoke with the buyers at two other bookstores that have sections of "local inter-

Continued on Page 8



Militant/Lisa Ahlberg

Discussing *Capitalism's World Disorder* at anti-WTO protests

Party (PRI), the party that has ruled Mexico for more than 70 years, in the late 1980s as the PRI began to lose support under the impact of the economic crisis.

Headlines this week announced the consolidation of a "left-center" coalition to support the Cárdenas campaign. Cárdenas presents himself as representing a "Third Road" between capitalism and socialism to solving the problems of Mexico, like that advocated by Anthony Blair of the Labour Party in Britain. Several people who passed by the booth wanted to discuss whether such a "Third Road," which is actually a capitalist road, could solve the problems of working people.

The sale of nearly 60 books on Cuba reflects interest in looking at the Cuban example

Pathfinder Reprint volunteers close in on goals for 2000

BY TOM TOMASKO
AND WARREN SIMONS

By the end of the year Pathfinder Press will turn a corner in its attempt to keep in print all of its titles. Pathfinder Press publishes or distributes more than 350 titles that form a large part of the political arsenal of the communist movement.

In order to keep each book in print with as little labor as possible, and to be able to respond to political opportunities in a timely fashion, Pathfinder has adopted state-of-the-art technology that allows a publisher to create inexpensive printing plates quickly. However, the books need first be in electronic form.

The Pathfinder Reprint Project is a concerted effort by 100 individuals in eight countries contributing their voluntary labor to convert all of Pathfinder's titles to electronic form.

This complicated and time-consuming task is being sustained through the political understanding and consciousness of the volunteers—an awareness buoyed by the knowledge that the brewing capitalist crisis will generate working-class resistance. The fighters for that resistance will be able to find ideas and solutions for their struggles in Pathfinder's books.

Our goal is to have all of the books and pamphlets scanned into computers and ready for proofreading by January 2000.

From February 1998 to November 1999, 203 books and pamphlets were scanned. Some books were already in digital form. Pathfinder also prints a series of Education for Socialists bulletins which will be scanned during the year 2000.

There are only 18 books and one pamphlet to go to meet the January 1 target. A team of 12 volunteers is completing the job.

While the end is in sight, it is still a challenge to work on so many books in one month. The biggest difficulty is that four titles in French, the *Nouvelle Internationale* series—translations of the Marxist magazine *New International*—need to be scanned. Only two of the scanning volunteers are French speakers.

In November the Reprint Project developed a series of posters to be used in bookstores and bookfairs. Greg Sack, who works on creating digital covers and graphics for books, designed three posters in English and three in Spanish that illustrate Pathfinder's reason for existence: to publish the speeches and writings—in their own words—of revolutionary and working-class leaders and to get these into the hands of fighting workers, farmers, and youth. The Spanish poster series is being used at the international book fair in Guadalajara, Mexico (see article above).

The project faces two other challenges in its campaign to convert books to electronic form. One is that it needs more people who

can proofread in Spanish.

There are three out-of-print books—*Revolución traicionada* (The Revolution Betrayed) by Leon Trotsky, *Socialismo y el hombre en Cuba* (Socialism and Man in Cuba) by Ernesto Che Guevara, and *El ascenso y el ocaso de la revolución nicaragüense* (The rise and fall of the Nicaraguan revolution), in *Nueva Internacional*—that Pathfinder wants to have available by the Havana bookfair in February 2000. If more people who can proofread in Spanish volunteer in December, these books can be reprinted.

Another challenge is the creation of indexes for newly formatted books. In many cases the page numbering differs from the old edition, making this a time-consuming task. Although we have found ways to streamline this work—and 16 people are working on it—more people volunteering will speed up the process.

Anyone wishing to join in the effort to keep the lessons of the modern working class movement in print, please contact Ruth Cheney at ruthchen@flash.net.

Tom Tomasko is a member of the steering committee of the Reprint Project. Warren Simons is the organizer of the scanning team.

Police brutalize thousands during protests

Continued from front page possession of a gas mask in the restricted zone. Even some areas outside the officially cordoned zone were affected.

The police actions have sparked outrage among the many who have come to Seattle to take part in the protests. United Steelworkers of America (USWA) president George Becker raised a cheer when he denounced the crackdown on December 1. Becker was speaking at a reactionary rally in which steel produced outside the United States was dumped into the harbor. The previous evening, at a fund-raiser for locked-out USWA members at Kaiser Aluminum, he had received a less enthusiastic response when he said that he had "mixed feelings" about the police violence.

At a Militant Labor Forum held November 30, Young Socialists leader Jason Alessio stated that the YS "is completely against the police attack on the protesters." Using an opportunity handed to them by some of the protesters, "The cops and city officials have imposed a curfew that is an attack on youth and workers' rights and will be used even more in the future to push back the fights of workers and farmers."

Talks highlight capitalist rivalry

The protests outside the meeting of the World Trade Organization, originally slated for November 30 to December 3, have been matched by the conflicts among the participating governments.

More than 130 governments are represented at the talks. The imperialist powers—the governments of the United States, Canada, Japan, and the European Union (EU)—wield decisive weight in the negotiations. Divisions among these powers are a feature of the summit. The governments of EU member states and Japan are particularly resisting Washington's demand that they slash subsidies on agriculture. At a meeting in Tokyo a month ago, French and Japanese government ministers demanded "special treatment of the sector."

U.S. trade representative Charlene Barshefsky stated, "We want to open up agricultural markets globally.... The United States views agriculture as the most central element of the new Seattle round." Agricultural productivity in the United States, which is the largest exporter of agricultural products in the world, is much higher than in France, which is the number two exporter.

These powerful imperialist governments use such trade negotiations not only to register their positions in relation to each other, but to increase their opportunities to make superprofits off the labor of farmers and workers in the Third World. The semicolonial nations' much lower level of economic develop-



Police used tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets to attack protesters November 30.

ment, fostered by imperialist domination, puts them at a profound disadvantage in international trade relations. Patten Oti, the minister of foreign affairs of the Solomon Islands, pointed to the phony "equality" that supposedly prevails in such talks. "It's like boxing," he said. "You can level the ring. But if you put Mike Tyson in as an opponent, you know what the outcome will be."

Protests push economic nationalism

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets on November 30 for the main anti-WTO protest, organized by the AFL-CIO and various liberal and radical groups. The action included feeder marches of various union locals and student and environmental groups. The *Seattle Times* estimated a crowd of 35,000 at the height of the action. Over the week many smaller actions took place, including some involving farmers from a number of countries and religious groups.

Whether they called for its reform or abolition, these protests laid the blame for many evils on the WTO that are in fact the results of

the lawful workings of capitalism and imperialist exploitation. Most of the protest organizers claim the WTO violates "national sovereignty," including of the mightiest and most brutal imperialist power, Washington.

Officials from various industrial unions have played a major part in organizing and leading the anti-WTO protests. They have helped to give the actions their sharply nationalist character. The officials call for protection of "American jobs." They center their campaign for jobs on opposing investment by U.S. companies overseas. They call for trade policies that penalize the products produced in capitalist factories by the toilers of the Third World.

At times they have cloaked these policies with rhetoric expressing horror at the low wages and bad working conditions endured by workers in Latin America or Asia.

USWA president Becker addressed a rally of USWA members at a benefit for the Kaiser workers, who have been resisting a lockout for over a year. At that event he said, "Who will stand up for workers around the world? You

do! It sure as hell isn't their governments, it sure as hell isn't the WTO, it sure as hell isn't the corporate structure. You do! You're the only hope they've got!"

But in many of their speeches in Seattle, Becker and other union bureaucrats dropped this "white man's burden" phrase-mongering, and spoke in more straightforward nationalist terms. At the USWA-organized "Seattle Steel Party" protest—which claimed the mantle of the 1776 Boston Tea Party, a key event in the American revolution against the British crown—participants marched to the waterfront and heaved a series of steel I-beams into the Puget Sound to symbolize supposed "dumping" of "foreign steel" on the U.S. market. One of the beams was tagged with the slogan "American Steel = American Strength." Participants from environmental groups also threw hormone-treated beef from the pier as part of this action.

A banner carried by a Teamsters contingent in the AFL-CIO-organized march read, "Keep the borders closed to unsafe NAFTA trucks." Teamsters union publicity blames unsafe roads on vehicles "driven by low-wage, unlicensed Mexican drivers." But according to the U.S. Congress's reports, the 5,000 truck accident deaths that occur each year are due mostly to the fact that governmental regulatory agencies have too cozy a relationship with U.S. trucking companies.

Many taking part in the protests also expressed concerns about environmental damage. The demands raised by these activists have, like those focusing on child labor, sweatshops, and other abuses, pointed the finger of blame at governments of Third World countries.

Protesters who demand that Washington impose trade restrictions on countries in the Third World that allegedly violate labor and environmental standards play into the imperialists' hands. "How Clinton will use protests in talks," ran a headline in the November 29 *Seattle Times*. According to the article U.S. president Clinton says he wants "a common ground on which business and workers and

U.S. gov't uses boy to push anti-Cuba campaign

BY ERIC SIMPSON AND ROLLANDE GIRARD

MIAMI—A political debate is taking place here around the future of a five-year-old Cuban boy, Elián González, who survived a boat smuggling tragedy. U.S. officials have given him residency in the United States over the objections of his father in Cuba.

González is one of three survivors of the 13 people who left Cuba by boat on November 21, trying to reach the United States. His mother, Elizabeth Broton Rodríguez, died at sea. The captain of the 17-foot-long boat lived in Miami. He went to get his girlfriend, her son Elián, and other family members, charging the others \$1,000 for the trip to Miami.

Since he was discovered off the Florida coastline, the press and the Cuban rightist organizations in Miami have used the little boy to try to slur Cuba and its socialist revolution.

The Cuban American National Foundation made a poster of the rescued boy that read "Another child victim of Fidel Castro. After 40 years, this is the result of Fidel Castro's failed revolution." They were planning to distribute the poster at the World Trade Organization conference in Seattle, Washington.

González also has been shown on TV surrounded by toys and wealth—he has been on the front page of *El Nuevo Herald* almost daily since the rescue.

The boy's father, Juan Miguel González, has demanded that his child be returned to him in Cuba. He told the press he "has been kidnapped. Here, he has his health care and education free. He does not lack anything." González works at a hotel in Varadero. His son lived with him five days out of the week. All four of the child's grandparents in Cuba have called for his return.

The Cuban foreign minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, stated in

Seattle that the child is "detained by force." "It's repulsive and offensive that they use this case to make propaganda and to try to mix this painful story with political issues," Roque said in an interview he gave during the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle.

The Cuban government accused Washington of promoting illegal immigration by Cubans, saying this tragedy could have been prevented. The Cuban coast guard spotted the overloaded boat and urged them to return. When the boat left Cuban waters, the Cuban authorities notified the U.S. Coast Guard, who failed to locate it.

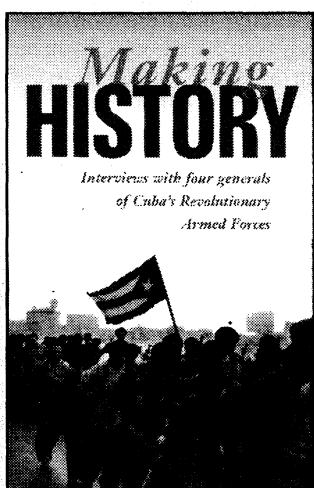
The Immigration and Naturalization Service made Elián González a U.S. resident. His father will have to sue in the Florida state courts to regain custody and have his son returned to him in Cuba.

Eric Simpson is a member of Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees Local 415. Rollande Girard is a member of the International Association of Machinists Local 1126.

NEW FROM PATHFINDER

Making History

Interviews with four generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces



On January 1, 1959, men and women of Cuba in their millions ceased being simply the objects of history. They became its makers as well. By their actions they opened the door to the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

The human beings who fought to accomplish that feat were ordinary working people. Most were still in their teens or early twenties when they began. Who they were, where they came from, and the experiences that transformed them are the subject of this book.

Four outstanding generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, each with close to half a century of revolutionary activity, talk about their lives. Through their stories we can see the class dynamics that have shaped our entire epoch. We can understand how the people of Cuba, as they struggle to build a new society, have for more than forty years held Washington at bay. Regular price \$15.95

Special offer: \$11.95 for members of the Pathfinder Readers Club

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8, or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Fax: (212) 727-0150. When ordering by mail, please include \$3 to cover shipping and handling.

U.S. Cuba 2000 Conference

December 4 - 5

Venue:
Seattle Center, Pavilion "A"
305 Harrison Street
Seattle, Washington

National Network On Cuba
P.O. Box 39188
Redford, MI 48239
Tel/Fax: (313) 561-8330
E-mail:
patsybehren@hotmail.com

Issues of the Conference

- Bilateral US/Cuba relations
- To build participation for the Second Meeting of World Solidarity with Cuba, to be held in Havana, Cuba, November 10 - 14, 2000
- Economic development of Cuban society
- Future possibilities of new exchanges between U.S. and Cuba

in Seattle

environmentalists and farmers and government can stand together."

"Instead of ignoring the protesters outside," commented the reporter, "Clinton will try to use them as leverage in the talks going on inside the meeting halls."

Many of those who came to Seattle to protest in the last days of November did not share the strong nationalism of the protest leaders. Among the hundreds of steelworkers who were bused to the demonstrations were many who were looking for new supporters for the Kaiser Aluminum workers' struggle. A number of these labor militants stopped at tables organized by the Young Socialists and the Socialist Workers Party, and bought a *Militant* or a copy of *Capitalism's World Disorder*. Like these unionists, many students saw the actions as a way to protest against the injustices they see around them.

Buchanan campaigns in Seattle

Other participants saw the nationalism of the protests much more clearly, and celebrated it. Patrick Buchanan, the rightist figure and contender for the Reform Party presidential nomination, arrived in Seattle November 29. He planned to appear on an anti-WTO platform with members of Congress and the European Parliament. Buchanan was the featured guest on a talk show hosted by Geraldo Rivera. They were joined by telephone by Teamsters union president James Hoffa.

"Pat Buchanan is the only candidate that is speaking out about the issues of world trade, of China and the fact that China is ... almost a rogue state that is threatening Taiwan, that is persecuting people in Tibet, that is persecuting Christians," said Hoffa.

The AFL-CIO officials are campaigning against Congressional approval of the U.S. China trade pact concluded on November 15. In the agreement, Beijing granted a number of concessions to the desire of U.S. capitalists to penetrate the Chinese economy more deeply. In exchange, the U.S. government has agreed to support Beijing's application for membership in the WTO. Through trade and investment, the rulers hope to undermine the gains of the Chinese revolution, now 50 years old. With that reactionary objective in mind, they



Militant photos by Lisa Ahlberg
Actions called by labor officials, liberals, and petty-bourgeois radicals reinforced the U.S. rulers' political campaign against the workers state in China, as well as for economic nationalism. Socialist workers and youth campaigned with books like *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*.

mount campaigns targeting the abuses of human and labor rights by the Stalinist regime that rules China.

Buchanan paid tribute to the Teamsters leader on the Rivera show, saying, "Jim Hoffa's done a magnificent job as head of the Teamsters. He's waged the good fight against ... these Mexican trucks, which are overweight and unsafe with bad tires and brakes—to prevent them from coming into this country. They're rolling time bombs. He's protected the jobs of his ... union guys."

"Buchanan on same side as liberals," read a headline in the *Seattle Times* of Monday 29.

"[His] arrival... today showcases the uneasy alliance of the political left and right in opposing the World Trade Organization," reported the article. "Members of the Reform, Libertarian and ultra-conservative American Heritage parties will join environmentalists, labor unions, animal protectionists and anarchists in a march through Seattle tomorrow."

Militant reporters did not



see any organized members of the Buchanan brigades. But Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists members did bump into three individuals who said they support him. One brandished his own book, *How to Buy American*. Another said that "socialism is fine—with national borders."

Campaigning for communism

A large team of Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists members and supporters have had a busy week selling socialist literature to workers and young people in Seattle, including protesters. They have explained that

the Buy American, America First, defend-our-sovereignty politics of the protest leaders form a bridge to the politics of the ultraright, who are beginning to assemble forces that will ultimately be used in violent combat against workers organizations.

The socialists explain that the labor movement needs to focus its fire on the policies of Washington, including when it assumes a "democratic" and "pro-labor" posture to score points against trade rivals and victims. They proposed demands like the cancellation of the Third World debt; jobs for all—for a shorter work week with no loss in pay; and defend affirmative action as a program for the labor movement to organize around. And they campaigned in solidarity with important struggles going on today, such as the union battles being waged by the Kaiser workers and Overnite truckers, and by the people of Puerto Rico against the use of the Vieques island as a live firing range.

The socialists have found that the atmosphere around the protests allows for many political discussions.

The sales team members are finding that *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* and *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*, the newest titles off the presses of Pathfinder, are essential to helping to address the key questions that the protests pose. These are not just the dead-end politics of nationalism, but the dead-end political methods of individual "radical action"—the type of anti-working-class methods that characterize anarchist groups.

In the process of disciplined, mass, revolutionary action, individuals step forward who take on leadership responsibility—often surprising themselves. The four Cuban generals whose personal and political histories are the subject of the interviews in *Making History* give a powerful example of the power of workers and peasants to transform society and to transform themselves in the process. *Making History* has been on sale for less than two weeks. Team members are finding it of immense value in learning about and discussing the role of workers and farmers in revolutionary change.

'Sweatshop campaign' is deadly trap for workers

BY LISA POTASH

CHICAGO—One important piece of the economic nationalist politics of the protests taking place against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle is the "anti-sweatshop campaign" led by officials of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) in the United States.

This campaign is a deadly trap for working people. Rather than placing our union and its membership in on a fighting, class-struggle course, this campaign portrays workers in other countries as our competitors in the world market and hapless victims of cruel corporations.

UNION TALK

Rather than bringing the power of our union to bear to join together with the real struggles of garment and textile workers around the world against a common enemy—U.S. imperialism and the capitalist system as a whole—it ties our union together with the corporations and their government in Washington in a protectionist, "buy American" campaign. And rather than recognizing the fighting capacities and revolutionary potential of working people both here in the United States and internationally, the anti-sweatshop campaign does nothing to back or develop a struggle against the garment and textile bosses anywhere.

The UNITE officials' campaign enshrouds U.S. nationalism with a pro-worker and human rights veneer, all the while feeding the fear of loss of jobs in this country. It ultimately bolsters the America First political line of ultrarightists such as Patrick Buchanan, who is posturing as a champion of "American" workers who are "forced to compete with sweatshop labor abroad," which he—together with the UNITE officialdom—blames on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the WTO.

For some years, UNITE officials have distributed literature and held occasional street

rallies decrying the working conditions and wages of textile and garment workers in semi-colonial countries, as well as China. Several rallies have been held against sweatshops in the United States as well. But even in those cases, the rallies have not been tied to struggles.

The summer/fall 1999 issue of *Unite for Justice*, a newsletter published by the Chicago and Central States Joint Board of UNITE, is typical. It appeals to union members to urge cities to adopt "No Sweat Procurement Ordinances" against buying "sweatshop-made" uniforms. Members are also urged to write congressmen asking support for the Wool Tariff Bill, to protect "our industry" from "a loophole in the NAFTA treaty and the Canadian-U.S. agreement [that] allows Canadian makers of men's suits to pay no duty on finished wool suits they export to the U.S. At the same time, U.S. producers must pay a 30 percent tariff on the wool they import."

The UNITE officialdom appeals to university students and radicalizing youth to join in this anti-sweatshop campaign. A meeting of 100 was recently held at a college campus in DeKalb, Illinois, for example.

The *Unite for Justice* newsletter reports that a leader of Students Against Sweatshops told the UNITE convention of "student-led campaigns to stop schools from buying university-licensed clothing from companies that use child labor, underpay their workers, illegally prohibit unions, and subject their employees to unhealthy and dangerous working conditions."

In other words, buy from UNITE-organized companies in the U.S.A.

The campaign promotes protectionism, in a situation where Washington already uses its dominance in the world to impose 3,000 tariffs on clothing and textile imports brought into the United States.

I viewed a video used in the campaign, produced in 1995 by the National Labor Commit-

tee, called *Zoned for Slavery: the Child Behind the Label*. The video back cover encasing the video calls on U.S. companies "to prohibit forced overtime by offshore contractors, to guarantee the right of young workers to attend night school... and to commit themselves to working with independent local human rights organizations to monitor their contractors' compliance."

This video asserts that the low wages of garment workers in Central America are a threat to U.S. workers' job security, and interviews a few textile workers in this country expressing that view, against a backdrop of scenes of abusive working conditions in Honduras and interviews with garment workers in Honduras, El Salvador, and elsewhere in Central America. The bosses at the particular factory in Honduras spotlighted in the video are pointedly noted as being South Korean, adding to the U.S. nationalist tone of the video as well.

Garment and textile workers in the United States have every reason to extend solidarity to all struggles in other countries against the indignities and brutality of capitalism. The working class in the United States has special obligations in this regard, given Washington's dominance in the international capitalist system. Not to "save" our fellow workers in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa as an act of charity, but to fight alongside them as equals as they organize to win unions and other gains in the face of conditions of economic depression in their countries. One of many examples of struggles is the strike earlier this year of 600 workers who are members of the newly formed Glove

Workers Union in Indonesia. They are fighters, not victims, helping to establish union and democratic rights in Indonesia.

One way to join with our fellow workers is to champion the demand to cancel the Third World debt, which is used by the imperialist rulers to extract billions of dollars of wealth from the semicolonial world.

Working people in this country also need to oppose the U.S. government's membership in the WTO, which is one of the avenues through which it organizes to extend and deepen the exploitation and oppression of working people in other countries, including the workers state in China. But the UNITE officialdom has joined hand-in-hand with the U.S. textile bosses in being among the most virulent opponents of Beijing's ability to seek normal trade relations, including by joining the WTO. Working people here should support China's right to join the WTO.

Most important, by standing shoulder to
Continued on Page 10

Militant Labor Forum — Seattle, Washington

Why the "America Firstism" of WTO protests is a deadly threat — International solidarity is the answer to employers' attacks!
Socialists assess WTO conference, protests, government repression

Speakers: Representatives of Socialist Workers Party, Young Socialists

Sat., Dec. 4, 7:30 p.m.
Pathfinder Bookstore,
2533 16th Ave.,
So. of Beacon Hill.
Donation: \$4. For more information, call (206) 323-1755.

Overnite strikers fight for union and dignity

Continued from front page

ers. Strikers report that among drivers and workers in the maintenance shops, about half are out. The strike is strongest among the dock workers—70 percent are on the picket line. Virtually everyone who walked out when the strike started October 24 is still out.

In the 1996 union representation election at this terminal, 219 workers voted for the union, 201 against.

Strikers are picketing two gates, and have set up a big yellow tent nearby where they can take a break, talk, and cook while staffing the picket lines 24 hours a day. Members of Teamsters Local 667 from other freight carriers in Memphis often join the picket line. They also help with the ambulatory pickets, where strikers follow scab trucks to their destinations in the city and set up pickets there. They've succeeded in getting several companies to tell the Overnite trucks not to return.

Ronnie Caldwell, 51, has been a driver for Yellow Freight for 15 years. He is spending his whole five-week vacation on the Overnite picket lines. "I'll be out here 24 hours a day, seven days a week if I can," he said. "What's happening at Overnite is what's going to happen to us in 2003 if they don't win. We'll take a beating without them. UPS, Yellow Freight, Roadway, CF would all love to see Overnite beat the Teamsters here. Then they would take that strategy and beat us to death." Caldwell has been involved in some of the ambulatory pickets.

Dennis Harris, 39, has worked for two and a half years as a city driver. He's a former meatpacker from Illinois and longtime union member. "I support the Teamsters," Harris said. "This is mostly about how Overnite treats people, their harassment, how they bully us. We need to have a con-

tract, to have a voice, to be treated as human beings.

"We don't know when we'll be off, from day to day. We don't get overtime [pay] after eight hours, but only after 45 hours," he added.

Pensions are another issue in the strike, Harris said. "Right now if you retire after 20 years, you would only get \$700 a month."

Kenneth Hill, 32, has worked on the docks for 10 years. "We're on strike to be heard," he said. "We're trying to get them to cut the overtime down. Right now, we can be scheduled to work 60 hours a week."

Many strikers are getting jobs with other freight companies, and are drawing \$100 a week strike benefits.

Terrance Fondren, 21, has been at Overnite seven months; he's a forklift driver on the docks. "They wouldn't treat me right," he said. There are lots of younger workers on strike, he added.

Jesse Neeley, 35, has worked on the docks for 10 years. "I think the strike is going well," he said. "We can tell we're having an effect, because we've heard that they're not buying any new equipment, which they always do around this time." For Neeley, the main issue in the strike is also "to be treated right."

Strikers are also fighting for five workers who were fired for union activity before the current walkout started - one driver and four dock workers. "They were fired on hearsay," Neeley said, after the July strike.

Darl McCool, with 15 years on the docks, has done all the jobs at Overnite. "This strike is not about money," McCool stressed. "The workers with the least leverage are toting the biggest load in the strike," he said. "The dock hands can't go out and get another job driving a truck for somebody else for \$16 an hour. They're looking at getting a job for \$8 or \$10. But they're stronger than anyone in the strike."

Overnite workers say they have to pay \$240 a month for family medical coverage. The company only recently began to include dental and vision coverage, in an attempt to ward off the union threat.

Roger Darnell went to work for Overnite right out of high school; he's been on the

docks 10 years now. "I decided to go on strike because several men who had 18 and more years seniority were fired and I knew they hadn't done what they were accused of."

"We started signing union cards in 1994," he said. "At first people were scared. The company would stage meetings with us for hours and hours, talking against the union. They showed us union-busting films. That let everyone know how desperate they are. The union is stronger on the docks because of the mistreatment and firings. And the other Teamsters are our extended family; without them, we wouldn't be out here."

The Richmond *Times-Dispatch* reports that Overnite has already spent more than \$20 million—half of its total profits in 1998—fighting the Teamster organizing drive. This includes the cost of an outside contractor that provides up to 400 strikebreaker drives and dock workers wherever the company

needs them.

Overnite workers picketing at the Chicago-area Bedford Park terminal November 26 reported their walkout is also holding strong, with about 50 of 64 local drivers on strike.

Chicago is one area where Overnite has brought in outside strikebreakers, paying them a reported \$1,000 per week, and housing them in a local hotel. At least two of the workers had had enough and decided to return home on November 17. They spoke with pickets, who helped them get their belongings and drove them to the airport.

Susan LaMont and Dick Geyer are members of United Steelworkers of America in Birmingham, Alabama. Harvey McArthur, a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers in Chicago, contributed to this article.

Sales team meets interested youth

Continued from Page 5

est," and were told that books for this section were most likely to be ordered. In both cases, the buyers took catalogs, and we plan to meet with them again soon.

The team also participated in community, plant gate, and portal sales. We visited six mines in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. *Militant* sales were especially good, and we also sold two copies of *Coal Miners on Strike*. We got names and numbers of three miners who want to meet again to talk about what's happening in the mines, and to have a better look at *Capitalism's World Disorder*.

A campus Pathfinder table drew a lot of attention. A couple of students really wanted to get *Capitalism's World Disorder*, but just did not have the money. However, on a previous visit to the area, we placed the book in a local bookstore, so we suggested they buy it there when they can.

One student gave us his number so we can follow up with him on getting the book. Several students we talked with were interested in a range of books and issues. We also learned from a student that a few days earlier, local miners were on campus petitioning around the attacks on health care benefits. In all, five students gave us their numbers so we can keep in touch, and students from two campus groups wanted to work together on activities with the Young Socialists.

We also talked with garment and steel workers at several plant gate sales. We got the name and number of one worker who saw the *Militant* in the break room, and wants to meet again for more discussion. We met with another worker who was recently fired after being part of a walk out. This worker liked what *Capitalism's World Disorder* says, and he bought a copy. We will be visiting with him again, and will continue to sell at this plant gate.

In all, it was a busy and productive team. We placed 13 Pathfinder titles and sold 7. That includes two copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* placed, and the two individual copies sold. This goes along with sales of 66 copies of the *Militant*. Yet, there is more we need to do in these areas, as this response is no fluke. These miners, steelworkers, and students are real fighters, exactly the kind of people we want to get *Capitalism's World Disorder* to.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Socialist Workers' Answer to Seattle WTO Protest. Fri., Dec. 10, 7 p.m. 1223 N. Milwaukee Ave. Donation: \$4. Tel: (773) 342-1780.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

World Trade Organization: Enforcing Domination of U.S. Finance Capital; Protectionist Protests a Trap for Labor. Fri., Dec. 10, 7:30 p.m. Pathfinder Codman Square Bookstore, 683 Washington St., Dorchester. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 282-2254.

TEXAS

Houston

Report Back from WTO Protests in Seattle: Why Protectionist Protests Are a Trap for Working People. Speaker: Laura Garza, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Dec. 10, 7:30 p.m. 6969 Gulf Freeway Suite 380. Donation: \$4. Tel: (713) 847-0704.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

U.S. Navy Out of Vieques! Independence for Puerto Rico! Speakers: Flavio Cumpiano, Washington representative, Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques; Sam Manuel, Socialist Workers Party, member of United Transportation Union. Fri., Dec. 10, 7:30 p.m. 3541 14th Street, NW, at Perry Place, 6 blocks north of Columbia Heights metro stop on green line. Donation: \$4. Tel: (202) 722-6221.

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Why Protectionist Protests against WTO are a Deadly Trap for Workers. Fri., Dec. 10, 7 p.m. 1st floor, 176 Redfern St., Redfern. Donation: \$4. Tel: 9690 1533.

BRITAIN

London

Ireland: More Space for Struggle against British Rule. Speaker: Caroline Bellamy, Communist League. Fri., Dec. 10, 7 p.m. 47, The Cut. Donation: £2. Tel: 0171-928-7993.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

World Trade Organization: Why Protectionist Protests Are a Trap for the Labour Movement. Speaker: Felicity Coggan, Communist League. Fri., Dec. 10, 7 p.m. 203 Karangahape Road. Donation: \$3. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

CALENDAR

WASHINGTON, D.C.

A Call for Justice. Black farmers to rally in protest of White House violation of settlement. Mon., Dec. 13. Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association. For more information, call 252-826-2800.

IF YOU LIKE THIS PAPER, LOOK US UP

Where to find Pathfinder books and distributors of the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, *New International*, *Nouvelle Internationale*, *Nueva Internacional* and *Ny International*.

UNITED STATES

ALABAMA: Birmingham: 2232 Magnolia Ave. Zip 35205. Tel: (205) 323-3079. E-mail: 73712.3561@compuserve.com

CALIFORNIA: Los Angeles: 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Zip: 90006. Tel: (213) 380-9460. E-mail: 74642.326@compuserve.com **San Francisco:** 3284 23rd St. Zip: 94110. Tel: (415) 282-6255, 285-5323. E-mail: 75604.556@compuserve.com

FLORIDA: Miami: 4582 N.E. 2nd Ave. Zip: 33137. Tel: (305) 573-3355. E-mail: 103171.1674@compuserve.com

GEORGIA: Atlanta: 230 Auburn Ave. N.E. Zip: 30303. Tel: (404) 577-7976. E-mail: 104226.1245@compuserve.com

ILLINOIS: Chicago: 1223 N. Milwaukee Ave. Zip: 60622. Tel: (773) 342-1780. E-mail: 104077.511@compuserve.com

IOWA: Des Moines: 3720 6th Ave. Zip: 50313. Tel: (515) 288-2970. E-mail: 104107.1412@compuserve.com

MASSACHUSETTS: Boston: 683 Washington St. Mailing address: P.O. Box 702. Zip: 02124. Tel: (617) 282-2254. E-mail: 103426.3430@compuserve.com

MICHIGAN: Detroit: 7414 Woodward Ave. Zip: 48202. Tel: (313) 875-0100. E-mail: 104127.3505@compuserve.com

MINNESOTA: St. Paul: 1569 Sherburne Ave. W., St. Paul. Zip: 55104. Tel: (651) 644-6325. E-mail: 103014.3261@compuserve.com

MISSOURI: St. Louis: Box 19166, 2910

Meramec Street. Zip 63118. Tel: (314) 924-2500. Compuserve: MilPath167@cs.com

NEW JERSEY: Newark: 87A Halsey. Mailing address: Riverfront Plaza, P.O. Box 200117. Zip: 07102-0302. Tel: (973) 643-3341. E-mail: 104216.2703@compuserve.com

NEW YORK: New York City: 59 4th Avenue (corner of Bergen) Brooklyn, NY Zip: 11217. Tel: (718) 399-7257. E-mail: 102064.2642@compuserve.com;

67 Charles St., Manhattan, NY. Zip: 10014. Tel: (212) 366-1973.

OHIO: Cleveland: 7535 Broadway. Zip: 44105. Tel: (216) 641-9405. E-mail: 103253.1111@compuserve.com

PENNSYLVANIA: Philadelphia: 711 E. Passyunk Ave. (1 block south of 5th & South Sts.). Zip: 19147. Tel: (215) 627-1237 & (215) 627-1251. E-mail: 104502.1757@compuserve.com **Pittsburgh:** 1003 E. Carson St. Zip 15203. Tel: (412) 381-9785.

E-mail: 103122.720@compuserve.com

TEXAS: Houston: 6969 Gulf Freeway, Suite 380. Zip: 77087. Tel: (713) 847-0704. E-mail: 102527.2271@compuserve.com

WASHINGTON, D.C.: 3541 14th St. NW Zip: 20010. Tel: (202) 722-6221. E-mail: 75407.3345@compuserve.com

WASHINGTON: Seattle: 2533 16th Ave. South. Zip: 98144. Tel: (206) 323-1755. E-mail: 74461.2544@compuserve.com

AUSTRALIA

Sydney: 1st Flr, 176 Redfern St., Redfern NSW 2016. Mailing address: P.O. Box K879, Haymarket Post Office, NSW 1240. Tel: 02-9690-1533. E-mail: 106450.2216@compuserve.com

BRITAIN

London: 47 The Cut. Postal code: SE1

8LL. Tel: 0171-928-7993. E-mail: 101515.2702@compuserve.com

Manchester: Unit 4, 60 Shudehill. Postal code: M4 4AA. Tel: 0161-839-1766. E-mail: 106462.327@compuserve.com

CANADA

Montreal: 4581 Saint-Denis. Postal code: H2J 2L4. Tel: (514) 284-7369. E-mail: 104614.2606@compuserve.com

Toronto: 851 Bloor St. West. Postal code: M6G 1M3. Tel: (416) 533-4324. E-mail: 103474.13@compuserve.com

Vancouver: 4321 Fraser. Postal code: V5V 4G4. Tel: (604) 872-8343. E-mail: 103430.1552@compuserve.com

FRANCE

Paris: Centre MBE 175, 23 rue Lecourbe. Postal code: 75015. Tel: (01) 47-26-58-21. E-mail: 73504.442@compuserve.com

ICELAND

Reykjavik: Klapparstig 26. Mailing address: P. Box 0233, IS 121 Reykjavik. Tel: 552 5502. E-mail: milph@mmedia.is

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland: La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Road. Postal address: P.O. Box 3025. Tel: (9) 379-3075. E-mail: 100035.3205@compuserve.com

Christchurch: Gloucester Arcade, 129 Gloucester St. Postal address: P.O. Box 22-530. Tel: (3) 365-6055. E-mail: 100250.1511@compuserve.com

SWEDEN

Stockholm: Vikingagatan 10 (T-bana St Eriksplan). Postal code: S-113 42. Tel: (08) 31 69 33. E-mail: 100416.2362@compuserve.com

Aerospace workers in British Columbia defeat 7-day week

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN
AND VUK KRČMAR-GRKAVAC

DELTA, British Columbia — More than 470 members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 11 at Avcorp Industries voted 65 percent in favor of a new collective agreement November 1 after several months of negotiations and job actions. Avcorp Industries is an aerospace components manufacturer with operations in British Columbia and Quebec. It does subcontracting work for Bombardier, Boeing, Airbus, and BC Ferries.

At the beginning of October the membership voted 99.5 percent for strike action. At that point the company was attempting to impose a seven-day operation and other concessions, while offering 2.5 percent, 1.5 percent, and 1.5 percent wage raises over three years. An important concern of union members was the wide pay gap between starting- and top-level mechanics and the fact that there are more than 70 categories of workers with multitiered wage structures that divide the membership. The members had unanimously adopted the demand for across-the-board increases of Can\$1.50 and Can\$1.00 (Can\$1=US\$0.68) over two years rather than percentage increases, which widen the gap.

A starting mechanic's rate was Can\$11.43 per hour, compared to the top rate of Can\$21.69. The company's final wage offer amounted to an 11 percent increase at the top pay scale and an 8 percent increase at the bottom.

Union members at Avcorp circulated articles on the contract fights at Boeing in Seattle (in August and September) and at

Rolls-Royce in Montreal. Inspired by job actions that Machinists' union members organized at these workplaces in face of similar concessions proposals, workers at Avcorp organized synchronized riveting and hammering on the hour, distributed "No to 7 Day" and "No to O.T." (overtime) buttons, boycotted overtime, and organized a march through the corporate offices and a rally outside the windows of the company's CEO. For several days union members refused to wear company coats and coveralls. Through actions like these and determination by the membership, the company's seven-day concession proposal was beaten back.

Workers expressed a wide range of views on the contract, in which the final wage offer was unchanged.

"We should have done what the Quebec nurses did and went on strike. We could have fought for more," commented Ajay Gallacher, who has been at Avcorp for seven months.

"The lower paid workers are left further behind. The starting wages are too low for manufacturing," said Eric Pariseau, a Learner Mechanic from Quebec with eight months in the plant.

"The offer was not bad for me but I voted against because it wasn't enough for the low paid majority," added mechanic Damien Surr.

"I voted yes," said mechanic Oscar Chung. "I didn't think it was worth going on strike for a few more pennies. But I agree the gap is too high between the top and low mechanics. I think the Learner Mechanic category should be eliminated."

"I think that this is the best contract we've

Hotel workers in Toronto demand better contract



Militant/R. Ray

Sheraton Centre and Toronto Hilton hotel workers, members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union in Toronto, marched November 23 for better wages. Workers at both hotels have been without a contract since last February. Workers at the protest explained their contract demands include higher pay and staffing levels.

ever had," said 13-year mechanic David Grove-Bolmeer. "It's right that more money was given to people who had sacrificed the 6 percent wage rollback in 1993." Workers at Avcorp accepted a 6 percent wage cut that year. Many workers who were with the company at that time and voted for the contract still feel that they have fallen behind the cost of living, even though the 6 percent cut was restored.

"I don't agree how the Negotiating Committee went back on their word on fighting to bring up the low paid workers," said four-year mechanic Cindy Reynolds. "We could have fought for more." Financial statements reveal that the company has more than \$340 million in back orders and the day after the agreement was ratified an announcement was made by management that they were getting a \$4 million loan from the provincial

government.

The union negotiators "accepted the company's story that there was no more money without studying the books. I feel we were coerced into voting for the agreement by creating the impression that the company would not survive a strike," stated Learner mechanic Yvonne MacDonald.

Although the increase in wage gap has opened the door to further attacks by the company, the job actions organized by union members to fight for a better contract strengthened the union. Mechanic Rod Hinz-Vanderbeek said, "I've never seen such solidarity in the plant" as in the weeks leading up to the contract vote.

Ned Dmytryshyn and Vuk Krčmar-Grkvac are members of IAM Local 11 at Avcorp.

Canada auto contracts signed; issues remain unsettled

BY AL CAPPE

The latest round of contract talks between the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), representing 50,000 workers, and the Big Three auto companies Ford, DaimlerChrysler, and General Motors, ended without a strike October 24 when GM workers accepted a settlement "patterned" on deals previously ratified by CAW members at Ford and DaimlerChrysler.

The big-business press described the new auto contract as "rich," noting the 3 percent wage increase in each year of the three-year contract, the Can\$1,000 signing bonus, and a 25 percent increase in pensions over six years.

CAW officials described it as a "historic" deal. But shortly after a tentative agreement was announced at GM, several hundred workers from its Oshawa, Ontario, plant walked off the job, shutting down the assembly line for seven hours. The action reflected the seething anger against worsening conditions in the plant and the belief expressed repeatedly to the media and at the ratification meeting that "nothing is going to change" with the new contract.

CAW negotiators accepted tentative deals before local issues were settled. Since there are no separate rounds of local negotiations, workers no longer have the legal right to strike against future company demands and proposals.

The Oshawa location voted 70 percent in favor of the contract, bringing the GM-wide vote down to 80 percent as compared to 94 percent at Ford and DaimlerChrysler.

Despite opposition from CAW national leaders present, a group of CAW members from the Lear Seating plant in Oakville, Ontario, set up an informational picket outside the September 21 ratification meeting for workers from Ford assembly plant there.

Ford is turning to the nonunion parts giant Magna International Inc. as a supplier of mini-van seats, canceling as of 2002 its contract with Lear, which employs 500 CAW members at Oakville. CAW president Basil Hargrove had stated publicly that the Lear issue was a key one at the bargaining table. But three hours before the strike deadline, union negotiators dropped the demand.

"They want us to take the money and run," said Ford assembly-line worker Mario DeSantis after the Ford ratification meeting.

"We need to support the brothers and sisters at Lear Seating."

In the DaimlerChrysler talks the CAW negotiators threatened to strike over their demand that the auto company force Magna to recognize the union at its plant near Windsor that produces seats for DaimlerChrysler mini-vans. The union is contesting the results of a certification vote at the plant.

As with Ford and Lear, CAW officials dropped this demand in the final hours of the negotiations. The contract does nothing to counter the drive by the Big Three to increase their rate of profit by producing more cars faster and with fewer workers. More job cuts, speedup and injuries are to be expected.

To wrest concessions from the workers in the Big Three assembly and parts plants, the bosses are turning these shops into ever smaller islands in a growing sea of lower-paid nonunion and unionized parts plants. They rely increasingly on outside suppliers for parts and looking to "modularization," with whole sections of a vehicle would be produced by companies like Magna for final assembly by the auto makers. They are "spinning off" their parts divisions as separate entities.

Only half of the parts sector is unionized. By the end of the current CAW agreements in 2002, 80 percent of the jobs in the auto industry will be in the parts sector, according to the October 23 *Toronto Globe and Mail*. As well, "the number of CAW members at the Big Three will decline," despite recent investment announcements.

The absence of a fight against the contracting-out to nonunion suppliers deepened the divisions in the union, as reflected by a placard at the Lear informational picket line: "You get a signing bonus. We get unemployment insurance."

The deepest division in the labor movement in Canada is between English Canada and Québec. General Motors has plans to close the Ste-Thérèse plant, which currently employs 1,200 workers. It is the only assembly plant in the province of Québec. GM agreed only to wait until the end of the contract. CAW officials did not make this a strike issue, but rather offered a major concession. In the October 17 Montreal *La Presse*, Hargrove praised a Québec govern-

ment offer to help finance the startup of modular production at Ste-Thérèse and questioned GM's lack of interest given "the union's openness to modular operation."

In the GM agreement, there is no proposal for the rehiring of the 1,500 workers currently on layoff from GM plants in St. Catharines and Oshawa in Ontario, as well as in Ste-Thérèse. In fact, the contract summary states that there may be a further "excess of employees."

Despite the hundreds of workers on layoff, CAW officials accepted the hiring of part-time workers. This concession creates a layer of lower paid, more vulnerable workers used to drive down the conditions of all work-

ers.

At Ford the question of part-time workers is one of the unresolved "local" issues to be brought before an upcoming union meeting.

The contract summaries point to "improved language" to deal with on-the-job issues. But what counts in the fight against speedup, heavy work loads, job cuts or harassment is union power. Union strength can only be built through the kind of militant rank-and-file action taken by the GM Oshawa workers whose walkout shut down production.

Al Cappe is a member of the CAW at Ford's Ontario Truck Plant in Oakville, Ontario.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



December 13, 1974

Having failed to break the strike of 3,000 waterworks personnel by jailing their leaders, the Puerto Rican government called out the National Guard Nov. 28, using acts of sabotage against the government-run water system as a pretext.

The strike against the Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA—Aqueducts and Sewers Authority) began Oct. 30 in defiance of a court injunction. On Nov. 4 a jail sentence of 30 days was handed down against 11 strike leaders for violating the court order.

However, the workers refused to participate in any negotiations while their leaders were in jail, and a general strike was threatened by the Puerto Rican labor movement.

On Nov. 8 the sentencing judge backed down and released the 11 union leaders, giving them five days to negotiate an end to the strike or face imprisonment once more. When the deadline ran out without a settlement, Gov. Rafael Hernández Colón chose to pardon the 11 rather than face the prospect of a general strike.

The new attack on the AAA strikers parallels the action of Hernández Colón in July 1973, when the guard was called out against striking firemen and electrical workers.



December 12, 1949

For once the Associated Press hit the nail on the head when its dispatch on the presidential elections in Colombia said that the "Conservatives named Laureano Gómez President."

The "election" of Gómez was truly a one-party affair run from beginning to end by the ruling Conservative Party. After the Liberal Party once again got a majority in both Congress and Senate in last June's congressional election, the Conservatives realized they had no chance to win the presidency in a free election.

They therefore prepared for last month's election by launching a campaign of terror, murder, burning and destruction of whole villages and small communities where the Liberals had a strong following.

Then, without consulting Congress, the Conservatives, through the President, declared martial law a few weeks before election day under the pretext that there was a state of "undeclared civil war." This move abolished all constitutional guarantees, imposed a drastic censorship on the opposition press and prohibited political gatherings.

Build solidarity with Overnite truckers strike

Reports from Memphis, Atlanta, Chicago, Miami, Twin Cities, and several other cities indicate that Teamsters union members on strike at Overnite Transportation, the largest nonunion trucking company in the United States, are holding their own in the battle. Their strike, now in its fifth week, has been successful in highlighting the struggle to unionize Overnite on a national level, and has won broader support in the labor movement than at any time before in their two-decade-long fight.

It is a testimony to the breadth and depth of the resistance of working people today that these strikers—a minority among the workers at Overnite and even at some of the struck terminals—have stood solid for more than a month. The determination of the strikers is evident from reports at every picket line. The Teamsters have continued to organize support rallies, push back against the company-inspired court injunctions limiting picketing, and win a hearing among Overnite workers not yet on the picket line.

These fighters have experience in taking on the Overnite bosses and know they face a hard and uphill battle. They have made an impact on the trucking company's operations, as is evident in Memphis and elsewhere, and look to winning more workers there to support the union and join the strike.

"Hope lies in the united strength of our unions," one striker said at a Militant Labor Forum in Atlanta. "UNITE, Teamsters, UAW, and others. We need to act as one body," he said. This assessment of the future of the fight is central in the coming weeks. Rail unions too, have a special stake in this fight, since rail giant Union Pacific owns non-union Overnite. The more the bosses see members of the Teamsters union who work at other trucking firms walking the picket line, the more other unions make a visible presence in front of Overnite terminals along with strikers, and the more the labor movement acts as one body to back the strike action, the greater the potential to deepen the fight and press for union recognition.

Puerto Rican activists seeking to expel the U.S. Navy from Vieques, students involved in battles against education cuts, and those involved with other social struggles have a direct interest in coming out to the picket lines to support Teamsters strikers. A blow against Overnite bosses weakens oppressor class, the common enemy.

For the struggle of today and the sharper battles of tomorrow, fighters from one struggle meeting those who have been through another is the only way the union of all workers is advanced and a leadership tested in such class conflicts is forged.

Sweatshops campaign

Continued from Page 7

shoulder with workers and farmers around the world, U.S. garment and textile workers strengthen our fighting capacity as part of the broader working-class resistance that has begun to grow here in the United States in response to the employers' attacks on our unions, living standards, and democratic rights. The recent union-organizing victory of textile workers at Pillowtex in North Carolina, after a decades-long struggle, points to what's possible.

The campaign against "offshore contractors," however, is part of the decades-long retreat of our union, a retreat that has resulted in declining real wages and deteriorating working conditions of garment and textile workers in the United States, along with a decline in the unionized component of both industries. One byproduct of this retreat is the growing number of garment sweatshops in the United States.

Gaining political clarity and a working-class perspective on this question is crucial to workers of all industries in figuring out how to chart a course forward, along an internationalist, working-class axis.

A good starting point is joining the picket lines of Overnite truckers fighting to build a union, supporting coal miners' fight to keep lifetime health benefits, and standing with Puerto Rican workers and students demanding the U.S. military stop using the island of Vieques as a bombing practice zone.

Lisa Potash is a sewing machine operator and member of UNITE in Chicago.

Anti-WTO protests give social cover to U.S. imperialism

In a letter on the facing page, reader Brian Miller argues that the *Militant* has taken too critical a stance against the protests surrounding the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) "Although the 'America First' crowd is certainly one of the significant tendencies... they are by no means the only ones" involved, Miller states.

But the actions, and the participation of the demonstrators—whether unionists or others—had no redeeming value whatever from the point of view of the interests of working people. The protests, regardless of the views of par-

world.

Earlier this year, Clinton issued an executive order that highlights the actual content of such "child labor standards." The measure banned the purchase by the U.S. government of any goods allegedly produced with child labor—targeting particularly imports from countries such as India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Guatemala. This puts a progressive mask over the "buy American" campaigns spearheaded by the U.S. labor officialdom and U.S. businesses, such as textile companies, competing with industries in those nations.

Child labor and low wages are not a result of "bad policies" by governments in the semicolonial world, with U.S. corporations "taking advantage" of them. Rather, these conditions are a result of the normal workings of the imperialist system, with the U.S. government as its top enforcer. The wealthy families that rule the small number of imperialist countries dominate and exploit labor and resources throughout the world. They systematically plunder the semicolonial countries, not only by superexploiting labor in their factories there but through the loan shark squeeze of the Third World debt and through imperialist-dictated unequal terms of trade that are reinforced every day—with or without the WTO.

Class-conscious workers have an obligation to fight first and foremost against the capitalist rulers in their own countries—most of all in the United States. Accepting the arguments of the anti-WTO protests leads you in the opposite direction. You find yourself marching side by side with the "incipient fascists and jingoists of many stripes" who as Miller notes, were part of the Seattle actions. How many protest organizers tried to distance themselves from the pro-war aims of Washington's anti-China campaign? In the name of "human and labor rights" they abetted it.

Working people in the United States should oppose Washington's participation not only in the WTO but all other international forums set up by the imperialist powers to mediate and defend their class interests—from NATO to the United Nations. We're for abolishing all of them. But this is not a slogan to campaign around, and the *Militant* doesn't.

What this paper has consistently advocated is a campaign around demands that can unite working people internationally in struggle by clearly posing the issues in class terms:

- Cancellation of the Third World debt, a demand that can unite workers in the United States with our fellow workers and farmers around the world against our common enemy: the U.S. ruling class;
- A shorter workweek with no cut in pay and massive public works to create jobs for all;
- Affirmative action programs with quotas, including a substantial raise in the minimum wage, to cut across the racist and sexist divisions the bosses try to impose on working people.
- Stop the deportations—equal rights for all immigrants.

These demands point to the only force that can change society—not U.S. government sanctions against other governments and individual companies, but workers and farmers fighting together across national borders against our employers and their governments. They highlight the need to build a mass working-class political party capable of leading millions to take power out of the hands of the exploiters and to join the worldwide struggle for socialism, as working people in Cuba have done through their revolution.

This is what socialist workers and youth presented as they intervened in the swirling discussions that took place in Seattle. They set up literature tables on the streets and spoke up in forums and workshops, looking for those who are attracted to an internationalist working-class perspective. Their results—including the sale of dozens of copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, a book that presents a clear, working-class alternative to the American nationalism dished up at the WTO protests—are evidence that only a sharp, objective class analysis can have a shot at explaining the working class's divergent interests with the anti-WTO protests and its organizers.

—NAOMI CRAINE

DISCUSSION WITH OUR READERS

ticipants, gave social cover to and reinforced the American nationalist framework promoted by Washington and the billionaire families it serves. Often in the guise of criticizing U.S. corporations and even the U.S. government, their real targets were governments of other countries—mainly nations oppressed by the U.S. capitalist families—and they appealed to Washington to pressure these governments, mostly through the weapon of trade tariffs and sanctions. They ended up prettifying U.S. imperialism as a supposed agent of progress and social enlightenment, rather than targeting it as the number one exploiter and warmonger in the world.

This "solidarity" that portrays working people in the Third World as pitiful victims in need of a benevolent U.S. cop is one they don't need. In today's context of sharpening trade conflicts between the U.S. rulers and their capitalist competitors abroad, all these protests were in the America First camp, giving a social varnish to Washington's big stick. A couple of examples of seemingly progressive demands help illustrate the point.

Many protesters focus on concern over the environment. People for Fair Trade, one of the groups organizing the actions, states on its web page that "corporations [are] favored over environment" by the WTO.

But what were the concrete demands of the environmental protests in Seattle? One of the most prominent was for the restoration of a portion of the U.S. Endangered Species Act that supposedly protects sea turtles—which are in danger of extinction—from being killed in shrimp nets. The central point of this law is to ban the import to the United States of shrimp caught by fishermen in countries where "turtle-safe" nets are not universally used—particularly in the semicolonial world, such as Malaysia and India. Who benefits from this? U.S. capitalists who profit from the protectionist import ban. It is the toll of the capitalist market dominated by U.S. and other imperialists and the drive to reduce costs to compete that makes environmentally friendly equipment of little interest to the bosses.

The campaign over the sea turtles points people toward identifying with the U.S. government. "Don't trade away our sea turtles," declares one piece of literature produced by the Sierra Club, calling on Clinton to fight the WTO for more vigorous enforcement of the shrimp ban. "Our turtles"? That's a dead giveaway of the American nationalist content of this demand and how it pits working people in this country against those in the Philippines, Malaysia, and elsewhere.

Another prominent demand is for "standards against child labor." This is presented as a fight to protect children around the world from being forced to work long hours under hazardous conditions. But the organizers of this campaign again appeal to U.S. imperialism to impose penalties on governments in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

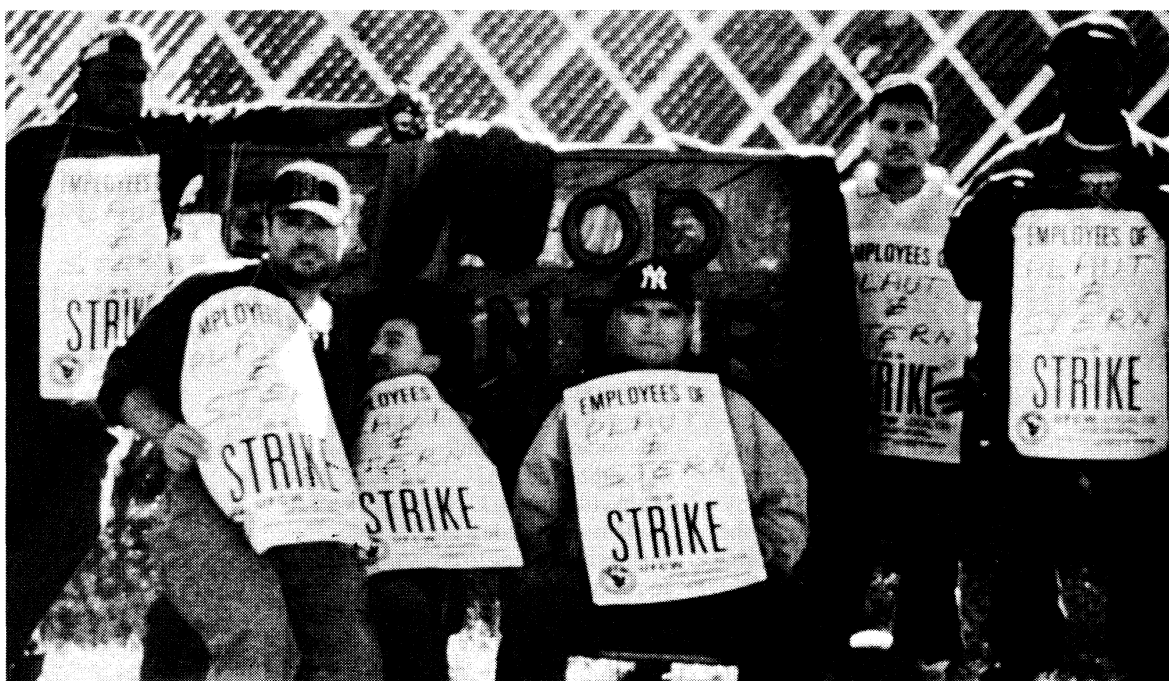
U.S. president William Clinton, in fact, poses as one of the big defenders of children. At the WTO summit, he demonstratively campaigned for a declaration by the International Labor Organization, a U.S.-dominated body of the United Nations, "banning the worst forms of child labor," falsely presenting the U.S. government as the champion of better standards of working people around the

New York State nurses strike for a contract

This column is devoted to reporting the resistance by working people to the employers' assault on their living standards, working conditions, and unions.

We invite you to contribute short items to this column as a way

As horns from passing cars blared in a show of support for the striking nurses, Courleas explained how the nurses had been reaching out for support in the community. "Before the strike began, we leafleted area supermarkets explaining what



Militant/Mitchel Rosenberg

Meatpackers at Plaut & Stern with supporters on the picket line during their November strike for contract

ON THE PICKET LINE

for other fighting workers around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

PLAINVIEW, New York—Almost 400 nurses here are walking the picket lines, on strike against the North Shore University Hospital in this town on Long Island.

On Sunday afternoon, November 13, 300 strikers, their supporters, and their children turned out at the picket line in a spirited and confident show of strength.

The members of the New York State Nurses Association have been without a contract since Oct. 31, 1998. Gayle Courleas, a registered nurse for 26 years who works in the emergency room, told the *Militant*, "The issue here isn't money, it's patient safety. We want guaranteed staffing levels written into the contract. Right now, we can have as many as 14 to 16 patients for every nurse; we can't possibly provide the type of care for them that they need."

Laura Ditzel, a nurse in the oncology department that deals with tumor-related illnesses, talked about what the understaffing at the hospital means for the nurses. "There are many days when we miss our breaks, work through our lunch, and end up staying an extra hour—that we don't get paid for," she said. "We just want staffing levels that can meet the patients' needs."

the issues were, and since we've been out we received support from doctors who donated food to the picket line and volunteer fire departments who have refused to take patients to this hospital."

At the last negotiating session, hospital officials disputed the nurses' contention that the hospital was understaffed. "They basically said that we were liars," said Ditzel, as other nurses on the line nodded in agreement. The hospital management has brought in 80 scab nurses from around the country to keep the hospital running, but strikers remain confident as they enter the second week of the strike that they will prevail.

'No concessions,' say Minnesota Teamsters

MINNEAPOLIS—Eighty workers are entering the ninth week of a strike against Thiele Corp. here. The workers, members of Teamsters Local 970, are standing firm for a guaranteed wage increase. The strikers report that they have given concessions in previous years, including a medical co-pay that averages about \$85 per month. The pension plan has been eliminated, replaced by a 401K plan. In addition, the workers have been working under a company wage incentive plan called GPM or gross profit margin, under which any increase over the base pay depends on the reported profits of the company. Workers report that many quarters they have received only their base pay.

The central demand of the strike is for a significant guaranteed wage increase. Base wages for an experienced worker at the company are \$14 per hour. Workers at the company make bag-making machines and palletizing equipment. The company used to be called Bemis, but was recently bought up by Thiele.

During a November 20 visit, there were four strikers in front of the plant. They said strikers are maintaining a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week vigil in front of the plant. So far the company has not hired any scabs. The plant is located at 2709 University Avenue, just south of the Burlington Northern railyards. The plant is also lo-

cated on an in-town truck route. Strikers report that many truck drivers and railroad workers have visited their picket lines and offered them food in support of their fight.

New York meatpackers win union contract

BRONX, New York—Twenty-three meatpacking workers, members of United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Local 174, returned to work victorious here November 24, after ratifying a new contract at Plaut & Stern, a shop in the Hunts Point Meat Co-op Market.

The workers struck Plaut & Stern October 29, after working without a contract since the previous one expired May 8 this year and the company refused to sign the same contract approved at other UFCW shops in the market. Over the last three years of the previous contract, new hires at Plaut & Stern were kept by the bosses from joining the union. At the time they walked out, nearly half the shop were not yet union members. One general helper and all three drivers crossed the picket line set up by 23 butchers and helpers. During the strike, Plaut & Stern contracted out its work.

Workers from many shops in the market expressed support for the action, stopping by the line on the way by, and workers at two shops, B. Rosen & Sons and Hanau Meat Co., organized contingents to join the pickets.

Unionists at Rosen collected \$117 in solidarity with the strike during its first week.

Ten Rosen workers joined the picket line November 17 during their lunch, following a couple of days discussing the need to mobilize to strengthen the picket line.

That day, after seeking unsuccessfully to hire scab butchers through an ad in the *New York Daily*

News the previous week, Plaut & Stern bosses met with the unionists to negotiate.

On November 18 the workers rejected the company's proposal unanimously, citing the gulf between it and the Hunts Point agreement. Three days later the company presented a revised proposal that strikers approved unanimously.

While the contract mirrors the Hunts Point agreement in most respects, it is missing the progression for new hires toward the standard rate in the third tier of the Hunts Point workforce, according to UFCW Local 174 business agent Frank Kissel. New helpers will start at \$7.40 per hour and get a yearly raise of 30 or 35 cents during the second through fourth years of the four-year deal. Workers covered by the market contract start at \$7.00 hourly with 35 cent raises those same years, but get 40 cents more each six months until they top out at about \$12.00 per hour. In addition, current workers will get only \$500 of the \$1000 signing bonus received by the other workers.

However, both agreements will expire together in May 2003, allowing the victory won at Plaut & Stern to pose the need for more united action in the future.

Chicago strikers back Overnite truckers

CHICAGO—Three members of the Steelworkers union who are on strike at Tool and Engineering Co. took a couple of hours off their picket duty to drive to South Holland, Illinois to join the Overnite Teamsters picket line there.

At the line the Steelworkers explained their struggle and learned about the truckers' fight. They met Teamsters from around the city, including a driver from UPS who was part of one of the squads following trucks leaving the plant. For an

hour they walked the line and discussed the situation facing their respective struggles.

The Tool and Engineering workers noted that the Teamsters didn't have a picket shanty yet, and offered some suggestions on how to build one based on their experiences. November 28 marks the one-year anniversary of their strike.

The main issues in their fight are the company's demands for a \$4-\$9 wage cut and the beginning of co-payments for medical insurance. A few weeks ago at a union meeting attended by about half of the 96 strikers, a narrow vote of 23-22 approved a settlement of the dispute if the company would agree to five demands. The most important demand is that the three wages categories, proposed by the company with sliding wage scales in each, would not have the sliding scale, so that each worker would get the top suggested amount in each category. Strikers also demanded a mechanism to challenge the category each worker was placed in. The company has not accepted these conditions. This has provoked a strong response on the picket line by workers declaring to keep up the fight.

The week before the meeting to discuss these proposals, about 25 strikers showed up at the Chicago city council chambers to join in a protest called by community groups against a proposed ordinance that would allow Chicago police to arrest people sleeping in their cars.

Mike Galati, a member of the UFCW in New York; Tom Fiske, a member of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association in Minneapolis; Mitchel Rosenberg, a member of UFCW Local 174 in New York; and John George and Lee Singer in Chicago contributed to this column.

FROM PATHFINDER

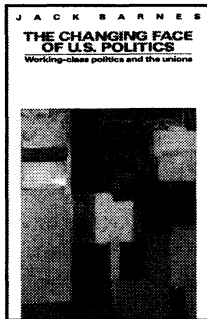
THE CHANGING FACE OF U.S. POLITICS

Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions

JACK BARNES

Shows how millions of workers, as political resistance grows, will revolutionize themselves, their unions, and all of society. \$19.95 Also available in French and Spanish.

See page 8 for listing of Pathfinder distributors



LETTERS

Don't Alienate Anti-WTO Allies

I'm an avid subscriber to the *Militant* for years, but I feel uncomfortable with this wide swing the paper is taking against the active political opponents of the WTO (World Trade Organization). Although the "America First" crowd is certainly one of the significant tendencies participating in the mobilization of tens of thousands of anti-WTO protesters expected in Seattle over the weekend, they are by no means the only ones.

The *Militant* seems to be portraying all the opposition as war hawks against China or crass U.S. patriots or dupes of the politicians championing those reactionary positions like ultrarightist Patrick Buchanan and bureaucratic leading members of the

labor officialdom like James Hoffa, Jr., of the Teamsters. Surely this element of the opposition is necessary to be aware of and counteract as effectively as possible, but other elements are in full or near full agreement with the *Militant's* editorial position itself.

Many are outspokenly hostile to the role of U.S. corporations or the U.S. government in the Third World and are going there to protest the U.S. capitalist class seeking to advance its imperialist and neocolonial interests through the vehicle of the WTO.

Environmental concerns are being championed against the world's national ruling classes in these protests—i.e., placing demands on rather than appealing to "their own bourgeoisie" for the solution, in effect shouting, "You can't hide your waste dumping

in a WTO smokescreen."

Similarly, many human rights protesters are not simply China bashing or taking up a "white man's burden" approach to Third World peoples, but are demanding that the WTO not be used to mask in "diplomacy" agreements between the US imperialists and Third World governments that compromise living conditions for millions of the world's toilers.

Not all labor protesters are simply for "protecting American jobs" or harassing Mexican truckers; many would prefer parity in job conditions across the planet and are instead opposing WTO complicity in establishing exploitative "sweatshop" conditions or suppressing union movements.

Plenty see the WTO primarily as a symbol of capitalist aggression and

would agree with the *Militant* that the WTO is just an "arena" short of war for the big imperial powers to resolve trade and other conflicts. No doubt there are those, too, who would join with the *Militant's* slogan of "abolish the WTO."

These positions and tendencies do not seem a mere "progressive veneer" on capitalism or national ruling class interests. They are also not necessarily revolutionary stances, since many forces would advocate a reformed "progressive" WTO, overlooking its inherent nature as a tool of the capitalist class like any other similar pseudo-international quasi-organization, including NATO.

Yet if teams from the *Militant* are out in Seattle to discuss the nature of the WTO and the international political priorities for the working class

today, they should not be alienating themselves from the protesters or portraying them to workers and students as definitive class enemies.

Allies may not be particularly correct or adept in their analysis, and they are by no means above criticism, but they are allies nevertheless and do not warrant being lumped in categorically with incipient fascists and jingoists of many stripes.

*Brian Miller
Union City, New Jersey*

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

Moscow intensifies war in Chechnya

Washington uses assault to ratchet up propaganda against Russian workers state

BY NAOMI CRAINE

The Russian government is intensifying its war against Chechnya. A force of 100,000 Russian troops is now concentrated in and around the small Caucasus territory, and are tightening their circle around the capital, Grozny. The Russian military has been pounding the city with rockets, but is meeting stiff resistance from Chechen independence fighters.

Washington and its imperialist allies have seized on Moscow's offensive as a pretext to put greater pressure on the Russian government. "The violent military campaign in Chechnya is creating very negative reactions against Russia in the world," declared Michael Camdessus, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which represents the interests of the world's major imperialist powers. In his November 28 statement, Camdessus threatened that the IMF might hold up a promised loan to the Russian government.

Asked whether the White House would link backing for the IMF loan to the situation in Chechnya, State Department spokesman James Rubin stated, "Before one addresses the question whether one supports this loan in principle, there are a number of things the Russians have to do to satisfy the IMF, and we will not address ourselves to our decision as to whether to support the loan until they have met those steps." He said U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright would meet with the Russian foreign minister to raise "concerns about the way in which Russia is prosecuting this war... and the effect on civilians."

At the November 17-18 meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, held in Istanbul, Turkey, Clinton pointed at Russian president Boris Yeltsin and lectured, "If the attacks on [Chechen] civilians continue, the extremism Russia is trying to combat will only intensify." He called for a "political settlement."

Other bourgeois political figures have urged a more aggressive stance against Moscow. Conservative *New York Times* columnist William Safire criticized the White House for making "handwringing statements," and praised a declaration by Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush that "If the Russian government attacks innocent women and children in Chechnya it cannot expect international aid. Period."

In 1996, during Moscow's previous attempt to crush the independence struggle in Chechnya, Clinton gave tacit support for Russian president Boris Yeltsin's assault, fearing the destabilizing effects of a Chechen victory on his weak bureaucratic regime.

Since then, however, tensions between Washington and Moscow have increased. The U.S. rulers have found it harder than they had hoped to move toward the restoration of capitalism in Russia and other parts of the former

Soviet Union. As result, the Clinton administration has pushed ahead with moves to tighten the imperialist military encirclement of Russia, including expanding the NATO military alliance eastward, placing U.S. troops closer to the Russian border. The U.S. government is also trying to pressure Moscow to revise the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, to allow the installation of a U.S. missile system in the Pacific that would effectively give Washington a first strike nuclear capacity. Both Beijing and Moscow oppose such a scheme.

The U.S. rulers are simultaneously trying to establish themselves as the dominant power in the former Soviet republics along Russia's southern flank, including carrying out military exercises in Kazakhstan. On the economic front, Washington has been pressing for an oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea to Turkey that would bypass Russia. A deal to build such a pipeline was reached November 18 by the governments of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey.

Despite Clinton's pious statements of concern for civilian lives in Chechnya, the U.S. president made clear he's no supporter of self-determination for the people of that region. "We want Russia to overcome the scourge of terrorism and lawlessness," he told the OSCE summit. "We believe Russia has not only the right, but the obligation to defend its territorial integrity."

Kremlin aims to retake Chechnya

Moscow has painted Chechen fighters as "terrorists" who are responsible for a series of explosions in apartment buildings that killed more than 300 people in several Russian cities in September. No one has claimed responsibility for the blasts. The Yeltsin regime has used the explosions and the attacks in Dagestan to justify its war against Chechnya. Since late September the Russian military has relentlessly directed bombs and artillery fire against the Chechen people with the stated aim of wiping out "Islamic terrorists" who the Kremlin claims launched raids into the neighboring republic of Dagestan.

Now the Russian government has begun to openly state that it aims to retake Chechnya, which won a degree of independence after Chechen rebels humiliated the Russian military in the 1994-96 war. At that time an invasion force of more than 30,000 Russian troops was dispatched to crush the independence movement. Some 80,000 people were killed and dozens of cities and villages were devastated, but the Chechen resistance remained



Russian soldier practices taking cover behind resident in the Chechnya village of Novoschedrinskoye in October.

unquelled.

On November 25 hundreds of Russian rockets launched from several directions pounded Grozny, killing scores of civilians and setting sections of the city ablaze. Rounds of mortar fire also hit the town of Urs-Martan, reportedly a base for 3,500 Chechen fighters. A Russian major said his troops had orders to continue shelling Grozny for the next several days, the Associated Press reported.

So far Moscow's bombing campaign against the 1.5 million Chechens has killed more than 4,000 people and forced at least 220,000 from their homes into the neighboring republic of Ingushetia and elsewhere. While claiming support from Chechen civilians in its war against "bandits and terrorists," the Kremlin's assault has angered the Chechen population.

"If you could talk to everyone in the villages you would see that 70 percent are against [Russian troops] being here," said Alisof Kolymanovich, a former tractor operator.

"Is this a war?" asked Grozny resident Ali Taisimov. "In a war soldiers fight in close combat... The Russians are only bombing civilians."

The Russian military has balked at storming into Grozny or advancing into the mountainous southern part of Chechnya. It has relied on air strikes and artillery fire, trying to avoid ground battles which inflicted heavy losses on Russian soldiers in the previous war.

"The logic of the military operation in Chechnya consists of minimizing losses," asserted Vladimir Baranovsky, an official of Moscow's Academy of Sciences. The "NATO operation in Yugoslavia was founded on the same principle," he added, referring to Washington's 78-day bombing campaign against Yugoslavia earlier this year.

Appeal to Russian troops

Some Russian soldiers now deployed in Chechnya are uncomfortable with their role as military occupiers. "Sometimes I don't know what we are doing," said Sergei Kuznetsov, a

19-year-old private. "During the day, the people in Gudermes smile at us and bring us goodies. But at night, they are out there shooting at us. I don't know whom we are protecting from whom."

Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov issued an appeal November 25 to the Russian troops to desert their units and support the Chechens' struggle against Moscow. "You are gun-fodder and human slaves in a high-profit business called war," he wrote in an open letter to the soldiers. "You're suffering the hardships of military service not for the sake of the Russian people, but in the interests of a small group of Russian politicians."

In the Kremlin's previous war against the largely Islamic people in the northern Caucasus mountains, Chechen women stood on the road leading to Grozny and appealed to Russian troops to refuse Moscow's orders and halt their advance. Many times the Russian soldiers and their officers refused to move their tanks any further.

Numerous articles have appeared in the big-business press cite the "popularity" of the war against the Chechen people compared to several years before, pointing to the rising star of Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin, whose conduct of the military campaign has made him Russia's "most popular political figure," according to the *Washington Post*.

That is not the universal view, however. Some Russian women, members of the Association of Soldier's Mothers, have been traveling to the Caucasus region to prevent their sons from being forced into battle against the Chechen people. The group also organized actions against Yeltsin's last war against Chechnya. Some help their sons to desert the military.

"These women stop at nothing to keep their sons alive," explained Valentina Melnikova, head of the association's Moscow branch.

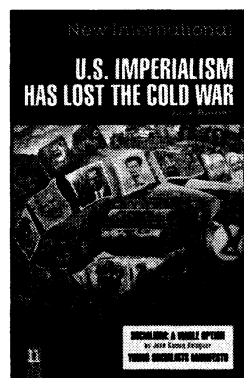
Conflict rooted in Stalinist betrayal

The Yeltsin regime's anti-Islamic crusade and war in the Caucasus has its roots in the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union more than 70 years ago. Following the victory of the Russian revolution of October 1917, the Bolshevik party headed by V.I. Lenin championed the right to national self-determination of peoples who had been oppressed under the tsarist empire, forging a genuinely voluntary federation. The bureaucratic caste that began to emerge in the early 1920s, with Joseph Stalin as its foremost figure, pushed to reverse this course. The Stalinist apparatus intensified and institutionalized Great Russian chauvinism in the 1930s, transforming the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics into a prison house of nations.

The bureaucratic regimes in the Soviet Union and those imposed on other countries of Eastern Europe where capitalist social relations had been overturned served as reliable instruments for the transmission of capitalist values. They disintegrated in 1989-91 under the accumulated weight of the social and economic crisis generated by decades of bureaucratic misrule and the pressure of the deepening downturn of the capitalist system worldwide. As this unfolded, the oppression of national groupings through the use of police repression and military force began to weaken.

The Yeltsin government today is attempting to quell the rising resistance to Russian chauvinism among the oppressed nations in the Caucasus. The Communist Party of Russia, another of the competing factions of the bureaucratic caste of opportunists and assassins that shattered a decade ago, has voiced its support for Yeltsin's war against Chechnya.

Maurice Williams contributed to this article.



In New Internationalno. 11

• Two programmatic documents of the Socialist Workers Party: **U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War** by Jack Barnes and **The Communist Strategy of Party Building Today** by Mary-Alice Waters

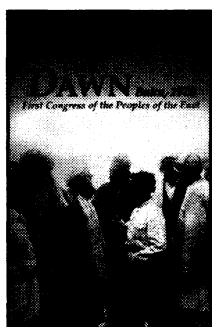
• **Socialism: A viable Option** by José Ramón Balaguer

• **Young Socialist Manifesto**
\$14.00

In English, French, and Spanish

To See the Dawn

Baku, 1920 — First congress of the Peoples of the East
How can peasants and workers in the colonial world achieve freedom from imperialist exploitation? By what means can working people overcome divisions incited by their national ruling classes and act together for their common class interests? These questions were addressed by 2,000 delegates to the 1920 Congress of the Peoples of the East. \$19.95



Available from Pathfinder

From bookstores, including those listed on page 8, or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Telex: (212) 727-0150. Please include \$3 for shipping and handling.