Pakistan govt faces tough war on border

By Doug Nelson

After a yearlong effort, the U.S.-backed Pakistani military has made little progress in retaking control of Taliban strongholds in parts of the country’s northwest. From these bases, Islamist forces launch guerrilla assaults against U.S., NATO, and Afghan troops in Afghanistan.

In the northwest of the country, the Pakistani government has taken steps to crack down on more Islamist groups following last month’s terrorist attack on civilians in Mumbai, India. The primary target is Lashkar-e-Taiba, the main organization implicated in the attack in which some 170 people were killed, and one of many such groups that the Pakistani government has nurtured for years.

The United Nations Security Council passed a U.S.-backed resolution December 10 placing Lashkar-e-Taiba and four of its alleged leaders on a list of organizations that support al Qaeda. Those on the list are subject to asset freezes, travel bans, and arms embargoes.

The resolution listed a charity group with substantial assets in Pakistan, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, as an alias for Lashkar-e-Taiba. Jamaat-ud-Dawa is headed by the Pakistani government banned the organization in 2002, was one of those placed on the list.

The resolution was passed after the Pakistani ambassador to the United Nations, Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, a founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba, publicly disassociated himself from Lashkar-e-Taiba after the Pakistani government banned the organization in 2002.

Troy Davis supporters oppose execution

By John Benson

ATLANTA - A three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments December 9 on the appeal of Troy Davis, who was framed up and convicted in 1991 for the murder of off-duty police officer Mark MacPhail in Savannah, Georgia.

The appeal is based on the fact that since the conviction enough evidence has been presented that a “reasonable juror” could find Davis not guilty. Seven of nine prosecution witnesses in the case have recanted their testimony.

The night before, supporters of Davis gathered outside the federal appeals courthouse in Atlanta. Speakers vowed to continue the fight to save Davis’s life and overturn his conviction. The vigil was organized by Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and Amnesty International in Atlanta.

More than 200 people attended the hearing, filling the courtroom and another set aside for the overflow. The families of Mark MacPhail and of Troy Davis both attended.

Addressing the media after the hearing, Martina Correia, Davis’s sister, pledged to keep fighting, not just for Troy, but for others like him who do not have people fighting for them. She pointed to a recent episode of the television show Boston Legal, which referenced Davis’s case, as an example of the progress of the campaign to defend Davis. “Troy deserves his day in court,” Correia said. She went on, “I hope the case illuminates what is wrong with the system, the things that keep people fighting for them. She went on, “I hope the case illuminates what is wrong with the system, and reminds people that while we fight for the rights of Davis, we fight for the rights of all men.”

Davis both attended.

The announcement of the three-judge panel’s decision is expected by next month.

Auto bailout: huge cutbacks for workers

By Brian Williams

The White House announced December 19 it was bailing out General Motors and Chrysler with $17.4 billion in loans. The deal is premised on yet more steep concessions by auto workers to make these companies “more competitive.” If this is not accomplished by March 31, government officials say, the funds must be returned and the companies will have to file for bankruptcy.

The deal extends $13.4 billion in loans to General Motors and Chrysler in December and January, with another $4 billion in February. Ford is not seeking an immediate government loan.

“The automakers and unions must understand what is at stake,” stated President George Bush in announcing this Continued on page 3

U.S. troops to patrol in Iraqi cities beyond June deadline

By Ben Joyce

Washington will maintain troops in dozens of Iraqi cities beyond the June 30, their earlier deadline for ending patrols of city streets, Gen. Ray Odierno, the top U.S. commander there, said December 13.

The announcement comes just weeks after Washington and Baghdad adopted an agreement that extends deployment of U.S. troops in Iraq until Dec. 31, 2011.

Though the “status-of-forces” agreement calls for troops to pull out of cities and towns by the end of June, Odierno said that some troops would remain at numerous outposts in Iraqi cities to help support and train Iraqi soldiers and cops. Counterinsurgency forces that fight alongside Iraqi troops are defined by the U.S. military as “training personnel.” The general argued that no adjustments to the pact are necessary to do this.

Even the 2011 deadline for the full Continued on page 8

Australia construction unions protest anti-strike law

By Joanne Galinsky

SYDNEY, Australia — In a national day of action called by construction unions, thousands of workers marched here and in seven other cities December 2 demanding that the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) be abolished.

The ABCC was put in place by the Labor government of John Howard in 2005 to enforce the Building and Construction Industry Im Continued on page 8

Workers leave Chrysler truck assembly plant in Warren, Michigan, December 12. Continued on page 8

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Students protest in Greece over cop killing of youth

BY BOBBIE MISAILIDES AND NATASHA TERLEXIS
ATHENS, Greece—Some 10,000 people, mostly high school and university students, marched on Parliament here December 18 as part of a nationwide protest against the police killing of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos. He was shot December 6.

Banners held by the students had slogans such as “Down with the government of blood, poverty, and privatization!” In display of force, radio police met the march with massive amounts of tear gas and stun grenades.

The protest was given further impetus by the shooting of a high school student in the hand the previous day by an unknown assailant. Another demonstration of 3,000 was held December 18 in the working-class suburb of Piraeus, where the latest incident occurred.

As of December 19, the number of high school occupations across the country has reached 800, while 200 universities have also been occupied. Thousands of high school and university students, teachers, and others marched to Parliament on December 12.

Among the most prominent demands of the protesters are that the cop who killed Grigoropoulos be prosecuted to the full extent of the law and that the police patrolling the streets be disarmed and the government resign.

Fueling the protests is discontent over the country’s educational system and the specter of unemployment that many feel awaits them at the end of their school years. “Money to the banks, bullets to young people, our time has come” was one of the main slogans chanted by youth in the December 12 march, referring to the 28 billion euros to be given by the government to banks facing crisis.

The daily protests have included a general national strike called by the two union federations and a march of tens of thousands of workers and youth on December 10. The following day thousands of high school students participated in marches on 25 police stations.

Anger over police brutality was fueled further when the cop responsible for shooting Grigoropoulos claimed the youth was “a troublemaker.” The officer also claimed that he was attacked by a group of young people. Fearing for his life, he said, he shot his gun in the air and the bullet ricocheted before hitting Grigoropoulos. At least 12 eyewitnesses have stated that they saw the cop shoot the youth cold-bloodedly in the chest and that there was no group of students protesting in Greece

Students protest December 15 in Athens, Greece, against killing of youth by police.

‘Teamster Rebellion’ in Swedish launched

Debbie Delange, a volunteer in the Printing Project in Manchester, England, told about the efforts of dozens of volunteers to produce the book in time for the European Social Forum, held in Malmö, Sweden, in September. Communist workers and Young Socialists from Sweden, Britain, Belgium, and the United States who participated in that event drew upon lessons from the book in discussions at the forum and explained a communist perspective.

A week later the book became a center of political discussions at the Pathfinder stand at the international book fair in Gothenburg, Sweden. A few speaking on the December 6 panel was Paul Mailhot, from the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. He gave the audience a picture of the atmosphere and severity of the economic downturn in the United States.

Mailhot stressed that having Teamster Rebellion in four languages now—English, Farsi, Spanish, and Swedish—means workers speaking different languages who find themselves in struggles of their own can study and absorb the single lessons of the Teamster battles and gain an understanding of the type of revolutionary leadership that was decisive in that fight.

The Militant is the first of a four-volume series on the Teamster battles by Farrell Dobbs. The titles are available from Pathfinder Press.

Protest attacks on workers’ rights

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Pakistan govtʼs war on border

Continued from front page

tions made clear that Islamabad would take action against Jamat-ud-Dawaa once it was added to the UN list. Pakistani officials then placed Saeed under a three-month house arrest. They also sealed dozens of Jamat-ud-Dawaa offices, arrested scores of its members, and froze the groupʼs assets. However, many facilities linked to Jamat-ud-Dawaa—which runs some 150 health-care centers, 8 hospitals, 160 schools, and 50 madrassas, or Islamic schools—remain open.

The Pakistani government officially banned Lashkar-e-Taiba in 2002 following a 2001 attack on the Indian parliament, which brought the two countries to the brink of war. However, the group continued to operate openly in areas of the country.

Following the Mumbai event, Islandab also took steps against Jaish-e-Mohammad, another officially banned group accused of involvement in the 2001 attack on the Indian parliament. Pakistan defense minister Mukhtar Ahmed announced that Maulana Masood Azhar, founder and leader of Jaish-e-Mohammad, had also been placed under house arrest. However Pakistani ambassador to India Shashik Malik later said Azhar is not in Pakistani custody and no where to be found.

The Pakistani government has refused to hand over suspects arrested in the attack to the Indian government. Lashkar-e-Taiba was founded at the end of the 1980s and had served Islamabadi by providing fighters to the Hima- layan territory of Kashmir, a majority Muslim area fought over between the governments of Pakistan and India. Lashkar-e-Taibaʼs stated goals are to spread boundaries of an Islamic state under Sharia law, and force non-Muslims to pay tribute. The Islamistʼs aim in the mass killing of Indians in Mumbai was likely to fuel sectarian violence between Muslims and Hindus and reignite conflict in Kashmir.

The Pakistani government has a long history of using reactionary Islamist movements to further the interests of the countryʼs ruling class. The Islamizing of the Pakistani state was carried out by the countryʼs military rulers, in part, as a counterweight to Balachi and Pashtun nationalist movements on its soil. Later the Pakistani government established, funded, and armed Islamist fighters to extend its political influence in the region from Afghanistan to Kashmir. Islamabadʼs policy of support for Islamist fighters had previously also served the interests of U.S. imperialism—which backed mujahideen forces against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s—until the U.S. rulers began to consider the establishment of the Taliban government resulting from that course as a problem.

Under heavy pressure following Washingtonʼs invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Pakistani government turned against al-Qaeda, elements of the Taliban, and other groups in the country. It launched a war against them in parts of Pakistanʼs northwest, predominantly Pashtun mountainous regions were declared to be in the crossfire, and hundreds of thou-

U.S. auto bailout: big cuts for workers

Continued from front page

decision. “The time to make the hard
decisions to become viable is now—or
the only option will be bankruptcy.” The
founder of GM, who is chairman of the
company Seat is also cutting produc-

tion. This will keep the doors of Amer-
icasʼ factories open. “All stakehold-
ers—management, directors, bondholders,
suppliers, dealers, workers—will
have to participate in shared sacrifices
to help the industry move forward,”
Gettelfinger said.

Meanwhile, both GM and Chrysler have assembled teams of bankruptcy lawyers to prepare for the option of an “ordered bankruptcy.” “One of the key

ingly discussed option on Capitol Hill,”
reported the Financial Times, “would be
to provide federal aid in conjunction
to the bankruptcy protection section, since
commercial banks could be unlikely to lend
to companies in Chapter 11.”

Auto giants slash production

A few days prior to the bailout, GM and Chrysler announced major cuts in production during the first quarter of 2009. GM said it was idling 30 percent of its North American manufacturing capacity during the first quarter, building 250,000 fewer cars and trucks. Some 20 GM plants will also be shut for about a month “in one of the broadest shutdowns in the automakerʼs history,” noted the Times. GM officials said as
assemblies at three of its Mexican fac-
tories were also being temporarily closed (see front-page article on Mexico).

Chrysler shut 30 of its U.S. fac-
tories for at least one month beginning December 19, laying off 46,000 work-
ers. Two factories in Toledo, one in De-

troit, and one in Canada are projected to be
down longer. Auto sales at Chrysler fell 47 percent in November, compared to the same month a year earlier. Over-
all auto sales in the United States were
down 37 percent that month.

Ford is halting production at all but two plants for an extra week in January. Toyota and Honda have also announced production cuts. In Europe, where auto sales are down 26 percent, Volvo is halting work for 20 to 25 days in the first quarter of 2009. Spanish auto company Seat is also cutting produc-

state governments are slashing funds for social services vital to working people. Part of their scheme is reducing funds to cities, which in turn is leading to a new round of cuts by local authorities. New York governor David Patersonʼs latest budget includes cutting $240 mil-
lion that has been going to New Y ork City. He is proposing 137 new or in-
creased taxes and fees, most of which would fall hardest on working people. This includes an 18 percent levy on non-
diet soft drinks, doubling taxes on beer and wine, and increased taxes on gas, cable TV, cigars, and license and regis-
tration fees for owning and operating a car.

Patersonʼs plan would also eliminate a 3 percent wage raise for state workers, increase retiree contributions for health-
care coverage, raise the minimum retire-
ment age for newly hired state workers
to 65, and cut 380 million in education funds.
The state Metropolitan Transportation Authority voted December 17 to raise fares on its buses, trains, and tunnels by an average of 23 percent. The cost of a single sub-
way ride will increase to at least $2.50. TMI

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Volvo is halting work for 20 to 25 days in the first quarter of 2009. Spanish auto company Seat is also cutting produc-
tion. In Europe, where auto sales are down 26 percent, Volvo is halting work for 20 to 25 days in the first quarter of 2009. Spanish auto company Seat is also cutting produc-
tion.
Capitalism's long-term deflationary crisis

Printed below are excerpts from two presentations that explain how the worldwide economic crisis—which today is sharply accelerating—is rooted in the workings of the capitalist system itself. The first piece is from the book Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium, by Jack Barnes. The second excerpt is from an IWW conference in Los Angeles at the beginning of the year titled “End This World War Now.” It is a report given by Barnes to delegates at the IWW national conference in July 2002. Copyright © 1999 by New International. Reprinted by permission.

The second excerpt is from issue 12 of New International no. 12: The Militant’s Long Hot Winter Has Begun, “It discusses the collapse of the Mexican peso in late 1994 and the bond default and subsequent bankruptcy filing of Orange County at the same time by the government of wealth Orange County in Southern California. Copyright © 1999 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

Unemployed workers at Miami employment office November 20. Mounting joblessness today is rooted in capitalists’ inability to expand productive capacity “anywhere near enough to fuel another gigantic boom,” says Barnes.

So, the world’s propertyed families have been fighting among themselves more and more to use credit to corner a bigger cut of the surplus value they collect from legal squalor in the working class. They have been blowing up great balloons of debt. But ever since the 1987 stock market panic, and at an accelerated pace since the onset of world depression, conditions at the opening of the 1990s, the capitalists have been plagued by the problem that first one balloon, then another and yet another begins to deflate. And they have no way of knowing which balloon will go next until they start hearing the “whoosh,” and by then it is too late.

All of us were children once and have blown up balloons. They can expand very slowly, very gradually. But then try to let the air out. That is harder to control. Remember? The balloons can get too big.

With returns on investments in capacity-expanding plant and equipment under pressure since the mid-1970s, owners of capital have not only been cost cutting; the holders of paper have been borrowing larger and larger amounts to buy and sell various forms of paper securities at a profit. They blew up a giant balloon of debt in Orange County over a period of years; the bondholders thought they had died and gone to heaven. Then the balloon began to deflate, as they learned the hard way that interest rates go up as well as down. When the balloon international bankers had inflated in Mexico in the 1980s began to collapse, the bondholders, keeping more and more money in the balloon to keep it from deflating kept their vulnerability became. Earlier this year, when rates started rising and low-interest bond issues were suddenly no longer attractive, the balloon burst without a sound.

Now the capitalists and their public representatives—and not just in Mexico or Orange County—have been given another warning of the long-run possibilities of an uncontrollable deflation.

Over the past couple of decades, upturns in the business cycle have relied on floating large amounts of fictitious capital—ballooning debt and other paper values. The capitalists are now paying the piper for the lack of sufficient economic growth during that period to keep rolling over their debts.

Only a couple of participants in this economy, those close to eighty years old, have lived, as political people, through a world depression. Some of us have experienced two or three deep-goings into crisis since the mid-1970s. In the midst of another of these downturns stock prices dropped sharply over a number of years, unemployment shot into double digits in several imperialist countries, and there were sudden bursts of inflation. That’s different, however, from a deflation of such magnitude that the financial backbone of world capitalism—its debt structure and dominant financial institutions—buckles, production plummets, long-term joblessness spreads worldwide, and the great mass of humanity is hit by economic contraction or bouts of ruinous price explosions—sometimes both together. Masses of people lose faith in capitalism, but at first they just lose hope. Conditions of that kind, which have stalked the most vulnerable parts of the colonial world over the past decades, will be the widespread devastation. We’re not predicting such a thing, Continued on page 8

For further reading

Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium by Jack Barnes

The social devastation, financial crises, political turmoil, political assassinations, police brutality, and military assaults accelerating all around us are not chaos. They are the inevitable product of lawful and under-standable capitalism unleashed by capitalism. —$24

New International no. 12 by Jack Barnes

Today’s sharpening international conflicts are fueled both by the opening stages of what will be decades of economic, financial, social convulsions and class battles, and by the most recent shift in Washington’s military policy and organization since the U.S. buildup toward World War II —$16

Available from www.pathfinderpress.com or contact distributors on page 5

Jan 5, 1959 DETROIT—An agreement reached Dec. 19 ended the strike of 7,100 Dodge Main plant workers, members of Dodge Local 3, United Auto Workers. The strike lasted 18 days.

It was precipitated over conditions in Department 76—the body shop. Past practice over some 20 years called for the lines to shut down ten minutes every hour because of fumes, heat, heavy labor and generally hazardous and difficult jobs such as welding and soldering. In early 1957, in one of the company’s speed-up drives the relief time was cut in half to five minutes each hour. Last January another speed-up was instituted, and the relief time was cut to 12 minutes in the morning, and 12 minutes in the afternoon.

Because workers resisted new work quotas, they were sent home after one or two hours of work per day.

Jan 6, 1934

The unemployed seamen of New Year have been subjected to severe ill treatment and abuse down in the Seamen’s Institute. If a seaman comes ashore and applies for a cheap bed at the Institute dormitory, the first question asked of the clerk is “Have you got money?” Then he is grilled about his credentials as a bona fide seaman, when and where born, what his maiden name, religion, what companies sailed on and, finally, the clerk takes a deep sniff of the applicant’s breath.

The seamen today are in a very desperate mood and are looking with anxiety toward a militant organization. Whether such an organization will arise out of the coming struggles of the seamen, depends upon the active seamen, who are themselves unorganized as yet.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

January 20, 1984

Since early December, the racist white minority regime of South Africa has been conducting a new—and massive—lawful strike in Angola.

Striking hundreds of miles into that independent, Black-ruled country, South African air and ground forces have inflicted heavy damage and taken hundreds of lives. But they have also met with stiff Angolan resistance.

Angola, which has heroically stood up to repeated South African aggressions over the years, is again confronting the full power of the apartheid regime’s military might. While Washington claims to favor “peace” in southern Africa, it has consistently sought to shore up the apartheid regime’s position, provide it with the means to carry out its attacks against neighboring countries, and politically justify invasions like the one in Angola.

January 12, 2009

The Militant
Below is an excerpt from FBI on Trial: The Victory in the Socialist Workers Party Suit against Government Spying, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. In July 1973 the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance filed a lawsuit against the FBI, CIA, and other government agencies, charging them with decades of illegal spying and harassment. The trial opened in April 1981. Five years later U.S. District Judge Thomas Griesa ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The excerpt quoted here is from testimony presented at trial by Jack Barnes, SWP national secretary. Margaret Winter was chief counsel for the SWP. Copyright © 1988 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

Testimony in socialists’ lawsuits against FBI spying

Margaret Winter: With the philosophy underlying the belief that their ideas are consistent with those of the Socialists, the FBI has no interest in the literature and ideas that the SWP distributes. The SWP was founded in 1936 as a revolutionary socialist political party. It stands for the international socialist movement and the United States as a part of it. It has been a small but consistent grouping that has tried to advance the struggle for the abolition of capitalism. It was part of the movement against the fascist war aims in World War II. How Washington—backed by big business and government officials—acted to gag class-conscious workers, and the freedom of the press, is a central question in this period.

The SWP has been, and continues to be, a revolutionary socialist political party, a revolutionary political party that is dedicated to the struggle against the capitalist system and the capitalist state. It has a clear philosophy of those who held that in a republic, our concept of democracy, as being combined in a constitution which was in contradiction to chattel slavery, property requirements for the electorate; for the lack of franchise for more than half the population of the United States, for the lack of representation of the adult citizens of the United States, for the lack of a free press in the rise of the republican form of government, that was written and printed well before the consti-

The Militant January 12, 2009 5

a republican form of government—

in the sense of a rule of law, which has elites officials that govern—is the only possible basis for socialist democracy, for the extension of democracy, as counternumbered to any au-

thoritarian and totalitarian mode of functioning.

That philosophy is similar to the philosophy of those who held that in the writing of the Constitution. . . .

I am especially saying yes in the sense of standing the Constitution as amended with the Bill of Rights, with the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fif-

ten amendments, the amendments on the franchise, on the poll tax and so forth, all of which substantially in our opinion democratize the Constitu-

tion. Some took mighty struggles.

Three took a civil war of the most horrid kind to accomplish. Without an extension of those conquests all talk about socialism is a mockery.

But the answer has to also be no in this sense. The Constitution was written with the philosophy which did not see a contradiction between the certain states systems and the checks and balances of the Constitution and chattel slavery for millions of human beings; for property requirements for the electorate; for the lack of franchise for more than half the population, female half, until the twentieth century; for no rights for the original native residents of the domain; the original absence of the Bill of Rights itself; the absence of even direct elections of senators; and a number of things like that.

But to that degree the philosophy is in contradiction completely with the philosophy of Marxism, which is the theory of workers and farmers’ republic, our concept of democracy, as being combined in a constitution which would be in contradiction to chattel slavery, property requirements, restrictions of franchise for any reason of sex or age or anything like that. It would also include the fact that the prerequisites of the larg-

gest property owners, the largest pro-

ductive property owners, the owners of the big mines, mills, and factories would be subordinate to the development and extension of the democrat-

cial rights of the great majority of the citizenry.

In some ways maybe the Civil War was the best example of this—

the blood that was necessary to eliminate chattel slavery and get the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amend-

ments. But the fact it took until 1964 to get the poll tax to be unconstitutional and 1965 to, by law, guarantee that the vote was not taken or restricted in any way of doing to color to the adult citizens of the American South—

Jack Barnes: Look, I respect those views, you know. I mean we are re-

ally not here debating about slavery or anything like that and let’s bring the clarity: Barnes: All right.

The yes and no can be indicated maybe in one other thing. That’s the evolution toward greater and greater concentration of executive power, which has been a tremendous change since the drafting of the Constitu-

tion and the original first ten amend-

ments. We feel there is a growing contradiction from even the constitu-

tional viewpoint—talking politically, not as a lawyer—between executive power. That was written and printed well before the declaration of war and the total protections guaranteed by the amendments to the Constitution.

Margaret Winter: In 1987 the Socialists were fighting for the legal battle by the Socialist Workers Party against the FBI, CIA, and others to try to get the FBI to be able to divulge what any restrictions there might be about doing color to the adult citizens of the American South—

Jorge: Griesa: Look, I respect those views, you know. I mean we are re-

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ments. We feel there is a growing contradiction from even the constitu-

tional viewpoint—talking politically, not as a lawyer—between executive power. That was written and printed well before the declaration of war and the total protections guaranteed by the amendments to the Constitution.

Margaret Winter: Mr. Barnes, I hand you a copy of a book called Democracy and Revolution by George Novack put out by Pathfinder Press. This book sets forth the Socialist Workers Party’s views on the relationship of democracy, the Constitution, and socialism.

This is the single book that collects the views of the SWP on these questions, buttressed by our views on the rise of democracy going back to the first known examples I think in the rise of the republican form of government in the United States. Winter: We could offer [this book as evidence], your Honor. Griesa: Received.
Students at London event discuss Cuban Revolution, China, world politics

BY JULIE CRAWFORD
LONDON—“Is the Cuban Revolution an example for others?” asked a student. There was one of 15 Chinese youths among the 30 students at the London School of Economics who attended a December 10 seminar here. The event, one of a series hosted by university student groups, was organized by Jonathan Silberman of Pathfinder Books in London.

Silberman noted the interest the subject of Our History Is Still Being Written—The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals, published by Pathfinder Press. He introduced Winston and Silberman as co-authors of the book, from whom Wang Lusha, a London School of Economics student, read an excerpt.

Wang recounted the anti-Chinese racism he encountered when living abroad. “One man made me change my opinion,” Wang wrote. It was Moisés Sío Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong, one of the three generals interviewed in Beijing. Sío Chui and his wife, from the Chinese-Cuban community, were almost felt ashamed to be Chinese. “I almost felt ashamed to be Chinese. The students groaned in recognition on hearing natural catastrophes. A fourth asked if “market socialism” would help to develop Cuba’s economy.

Silberman said there is a revolution- ary leadership in Cuba, which turns to working people to resolve the country’s economic and social problems. The leadership is seeking to organize working people to boost food production, in order to reduce the continued dependence on food imports and to raise living standards.

The turning point of the Soviet Union and the resulting end of the favorable economic agreements Cuba had with that government precipitated a deep economic crisis in Cuba in the early 1990s, Silberman explained. In response, the Cuban government had to expand trade with the capitalist world. But it did so “while maintaining free education and health care, and raising pensions and the minimum wage.”

“Wang recounts the anti-Chinese racism he encountered when living abroad. Such racism is rife in the United Kingdom,” Silberman said. He pointed to Havana’s opposition to international recognition of Taiwan as an example for others.”

Our History Is Still Being Written
The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution
By Jonathan Silberman, Winston Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong
—$20
Also available in Spanish and Chinese
www.pathfinderpress.com

London School of Economics student Li Ang (right) chairs December 10 seminar presented by Jonathan Silberman (left) on Pathfinder book Our History Is Still Being Written.

Under these conditions, “there has been a growth in unequal living standards, largely based on differential access to foreign currency, which the government is seeking to address,” Silberman said. “But in Cuba there are no private owners of factories, no private employers allowed to employ wage labor, and no billionaire property owners in town or country.”

Silberman remarked that one of the early acts of the Cuban Revolution was to recognize the People’s Republic of China. The Batista dictatorship had refused to recognize the Chinese revolution and considered Taiwan the “government of China.”

For a quarter of a century, with the beginning of the Sino-Soviet rift in the mid-1960s, Silberman said, China’s relations with Cuba were almost nonexistent. He pointed to Havana’s opposition to the Chinese army’s invasion of Vietnam in 1979 and Beijing’s support for the U.S.-backed Pincheret dictatorship in Chile. The two governments also took opposite positions in Angola following the invasion of that country by the apartheid regime of South Africa.

“The Chinese government supported Jonas Savimbi and Holden Roberto,” added an international relations student, referring to the leaders of two U.S.-backed Angolan groups that backed the apartheid regime’s invasion of Angola. The related between Cuba and China have improved since then, Silberman said. “Cuban medical personnel were welcomed in China to engage in voluntary work and to teach in medical schools.”

A Australian group hosted a December 10 seminar on the topic of human rights, with the participation of the Chinese-Australians’ League, a group of New Zealanders who have been involved in human rights campaigns. The group, which was founded in 1983 by Chinese-Australians, is now run by Chinese-Canadians.

New Zealand: workers protest harassment of Communist League leader by customs agents

BY MIKE TUCKER
AUCKLAND, New Zealand—More than 260 workers, union officials, and supporters of workers’ rights have signed an open letter by Annalucia Vermunt, a leader of the Communist League in New Zealand. The letter protests the actions of customs officials at Auckland International Airport who detained, interrogated, and strip-searched Vermunt November 17.

Vermunt has been a Communist League candidate in a number of election campaigns, most recently running for Parliament in November national elections. A meat worker and active unionist, she has been involved for two decades in political campaigns for Maori rights, women’s rights, and other working-class struggles.

Vermunt said. “That’s why it is significant that so many have joined me in submitting this open protest letter.”

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More than 90 fellow meat workers working in Otahuhu, Auckland, have signed Vermunt’s letter. Other signers include trade union officials, academics, Maori rights campaigners, and representatives of political organizations.

Vermunt was detained at customs for more than four hours when returning to Auckland from Australia. After twice interrogating her, searching her bags and taking swabs, officials found no evidence of narcotics or contraband. Despite this, she was forced to undergo a strip search. Then officers continued to detain Vermunt and subjected her to a third interrogation, demanding that she answer questions about political activity as a leader of the Communist League.

Vermunt’s letter, addressed to the ministers of immigration and customs, demands that such harassment cease. Vermunt was detained and similarly questioned by customs officials at the Christchurch airport in 2005 and 2006. National Radio interviewed Vermunt November 18, along with several of those who had endorsed her letter. These included Matt Cartman, national secretary of the Unite union; Robert Reid, national president of the National Distribution Union; and Catherine Delahunty, a Green Party member of Parliament. “It is not acceptable” for customs to question people about their political activity, said Delahunty.

In a press statement released the previous day, Vermunt noted, “What happened to me is an illustration of how the increased powers being granted to police, immigration, and customs will be and are being used to target working-class activists and political dissent.”

Using the banner of fighting “terrorism,” the New Zealand Parliament has adopted a raft of legislation over the past decade to widen police powers of surveillance and detention and to curtail democratic rights. This includes beefing up the powers of the border police.

Vermunt pointed out that the first use of “antiterrorism” laws in New Zealand had been police raids on Oct. 15, 2007, targeting Maori rights supporters. Although forced to back down from terrorism charges in the face of protests, police are prosecuting firearms charges against 17 of those arrested. Five have been hit with additional charges of “participating in a criminal gang.”

Vermunt also noted the revolution in the media December 14 of a nearly 10-year operation by a police informer infiltrating political groups and spying on union activities. The fink was paid by the Special Investigation Group, an “antiterrorist” police outfit. Vermunt and the Communist League were among those spied on by the informant.

“Is it on account of our violation of our rights, such as happened to me at the airport, is met with a response,” Vermunt said. “That’s why it is significant that so many have joined me in submitting this open protest letter.”

Vermunt’s lawyer has written to the ministers of immigration, customs, and the Security Intelligence Service demanding that they release all information they hold on file on Vermunt.
Layoffs in Mexico

Continued from front page and 30 distribution centers and laying off 2,200 workers. Aluminum producer Aleros is laying off 500.

Mexico, the world’s sixth largest oil producer, is also being affected by the drop in the price of crude. State-owned Pemex account for just 10 percent of Mexico’s export revenue, but one-third of government income.

Applications for jobless benefits in Mexico have increased every month since June, according to government figures. Although unemployment is official at 4.5 percent, these figures are understated, just as in the United States. The true figure is at least 10 percent, according to a report by the Coalition of Workers of the National Institute for Statistics, Geography, and Data.

By government criteria, anyone who works even one or two hours a week is considered employed, as well as vendors selling CDs on the Mexico City subway or teenagers washing car windshields at stoplights. Millions in the “informal economy”—including those who are hired off the books or scrape by through selling merchandise or services on their own—are not registered with the Mexican Social Security Institute and not included in official unemployment figures.

Peso takes a ‘bungee jump’

In what the Economist magazine called a “bungee jump,” the value of the Mexican peso relative to the U.S. dollar lost a quarter of its value to a record low of 14 pesos to the dollar in September, a 28 percent increase from 2007. More than $1.8 billion went to importing corn and soybeans, with aViewModel.

The peso's fall has pushed up inflation and reduced the real value of early December—the highest in seven years. But the cost of the “basic food basket”—25 products including meat, eggs, rice, beans, and tortillas—rose 12 percent higher. In Mexico City basic staples rose by 60 percent in the first 10 months of the year.

Starting on Jan. 1, 2009, the legal minimum wage, which does not apply to “informal” workers, will rise a mere 4.6 percent to no more than 54.8 pesos—US $4.15—a day. The Mexican government reports it spent more than $15 billion in hard currency to import food from January to September, a 28 percent increase from 2007.

Mexicans who work in the United States have decided to return to Mexico for now. “You think, ‘I used to earn $600 a week and now I’m getting half of that week’,” Daniel Ramírez, a construction worker laid off in Denver in August, told the Associated Press. He decided to move back to San Luis Potosí in central Mexico.

Immigrant workers’ remittances to their families have dropped. In August $1.9 billion was sent to Mexico, a 12 percent drop from August 2007.

Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?

“The swell on the U.S. left will rise a couple of percent by early December—the highest in seven years. But the cost of the ‘basic food basket’—25 products including meat, eggs, rice, beans, and tortillas—will rise 12 percent higher. In Mexico City basic staples rose by 60 percent in the first 10 months of the year.”

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The event was chaired by longtime Cuba solidarity activist Shirley Pate, who began the program by reviewing the history of the case. Yanet Stable Cárdenas of the Cuban Interests Section and singer Luci Murphy read several of Guerrero’s poems, in Spanish and English respectively, with accompaniment from musicians Earl Richardson, Lorenz Wheale, and Joe Kennedy.

Guerrero, who is locked up at the maximum-security federal penitentiary in Florence, Colorado, sent greetings to the event.

The exhibit includes a display case with books and pamphlets on Cuba and the Cuban Five distributed by Pathfinder Press.

How to see ABC webcast on case of Cuban 5

A ABC News Webcast on the Cuban Five can be viewed on YouTube. The five-minute video, posted to the Web site Dec. 11, 2008, reviews some of the facts about the 10-year incarceration of these five Cuban revolutionaries in U.S. prisons and their fight for freedom. The men were accused of “conspiracy to commit espionage” and other frame-up charges. Their defense attorneys are currently preparing an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. The video can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlRMURUw4.

New Zealand garment workers demand pay raise

WELLINGTON, New Zealand—Workers from the Rembrandt Suits factory in the Naenae neighborhood here held a picket December 6 outside the Kirkcaldie and Stains store to demand higher wages. The store sells Rembrandt-manufactured suits.

Twenty-five sewers and other members of the National Distribution Union, mostly women, and supporters gathered to draw attention to the company’s miserly offer of an hourly increase of 24 cents. Workers said they are presently paid NZ$12 ($US6.90), the legal minimum wage, regardless of how many years they have worked there.

The picketers handed out leaflets to passersby and held signs stating, “Rembrandt Suits pay sweatshop wages” and “$12-an-hour.” Ese, a worker who has been at the factory for 13 years, told the Militant she is concerned about layoffs. Many workers were laid off in June, she said, and there have been more layoffs in December.

D.C. public library features Cuban Five art exhibit

BY SUSAN LAMONT

WASHINGTON—About 90 people filled the second-floor lobby at the main Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library here December 17 for an evening of art, poetry, and music in support of effort to free five Cuban revolutionaries unjustly held in U.S. prisons.

The exhibit, lasting through the end of December, is called “From My Altitude,” the title of a collection of poetry by Guerrero that has been published in both Spanish and English. Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando Gonzalez and Rene Gonzalez, also known as the Cuban Five, have been locked up in U.S. prisons since their arrest by FBI agents in 1998. The five Florida residents had been monitoring right-wing Cuban American counter-revolutionary groups who have a record of organizing bombings and other murderous attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil with Washington’s complicity.

In a 2001 trial marked by violations of constitutional rights, the five men were convicted and given long sentences on frame-up charges that included conspiracy to commit espionage, failure to register as foreign agents, and—in the case of Hernández—conspiracy to commit murder. Guerrero, Hernández, and Labañino are serving life sentences. Fernando González was sentenced to 19 years in prison and René González to 15 years.

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Cuban Guantanamo Bay defendants

Greetings to workers behind bars!

Continued from front page

gress.

We extend our solidarity to Moisés Moró, former president of United Steelworkers Local 13742 in New Jersey, who remains in jail facing deportation, one of the thousands of workers in this country unjustly jailed by immigration cops.

We also send greetings to framed-up inmates Troy Davis, who is fighting from death row for a new trial; Black rights activist Gina Ahlu Jawal, also on death row; Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement; Lex Wotton, sentenced to six years by an Australian court for his part in protests against the police killing of an Aboriginal while in custody; and Fahad Hashmi, a Pakistan-born man framed-up and in a U.S. jail on "terrorism" charges. Hashmi is one of many people in prison today as a result of the U.S. "war on terror," including the 255 incarcerated at the Guantánamo prison camp.

The capitalist rulers like to think that when they slam the prison doors shut they lock away the ability of prisoners to resist the abuse aimed at dehumanizing and depoliticizing them. Decisive to reinforcing pris-

ers’ capacity to continue asserting their self-worth is the solidarity they receive from working people on the outside.

We urge all our readers to join the fight to win re-

lease for these prisoners. And we invite you to contrib-

ute to our Prisoners’ Fund, which makes it possible to send steeply discounted subscriptions to working peo-

ple behind bars. Send a donation today to the Militant, 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

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The Militant ‘publishing schedule

Continued from front page withdrawal could be renegotiated, said Odierno. "Three years is a very long time." He said that the current U.S. troop fatalities are down this year to 25 per month from an average of about 70 from 2004 to 2007.

Odierno’s statement made at a base north of Bagh-

dash, followed another day by Defense Secretary Robert Gates that same day. Gates, chosen by President-elect Barack Obama to remain in his post, had just arrived from a conference in Bahrain where he spoke of "imperialism's course go-

ing into the next presidential administration.

"Anyone who thought that the upcoming months might present opportunities to test the new presi-

dent would be in for a big mistake," Gates said at the conference. "President Obama and his national security team, myself included, will be ready to defend the interests of the United States and our friends and allies from the moment he takes office on January 20." Gates also expressed concern over the size of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. The Obama admin-

istration plans to send 20,000 additional troops there in 2009.

"I am more mindful than most that with 120,000 troops the Soviets still lost, because they never had the support of the Afghan people," he said. "I think that after we remove these troop increases that we are talking about, we ought to think long and hard about how many more go in."

Gates was referring to the invasion of Afghan-

istan by the Soviet Union in 1979 as a back-garden-

ment that had taken power there the previous year. Counterrevolutionary landlord forces backed by Washington succeeded in mobilizing popular op-

position to the invasion and by 1989 Moscow had withdrawn all its troops.

U.S. troops in Iraq

Continued from front page

Continued from front page

Australian construction workers

Continued from front page

An Australian court is about to decide whether or not there are grounds to deport a 25-year-old construction worker Trevor Marshall, who was convicted in 1995 of pairwise stealing a motorcycle and a seaman’s kit.

The legislation allows the government to deny legal representation to workers and union representatives, and to fine or jail them, as well as authority to secretly search the homes of workers and their employers.

With the aim of driving the unions out of the con-

struction industry, the act made it illegal for workers to strike or take other industrial action without the agree-

ment of their employer.

Even if a worker is shot and killed on site, his workmates must be able to prove they had a reasonable concern about an imminent risk to themselves to legally stop work and assess the safety situation.

The legislation further stripped the government of legal representation to workers and union representatives, and to fine or jail them, as well as authority to secretly record union meetings.

On the eve of the nationwide rallies the common-

wealth director of public prosecutions dropped charges against Noel Washington, an official of the Construc-

tion, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU).

He had faced six months in jail for refusing to give evidence to the ABCC about what he saw and heard at a meeting of workers in 2007.

In Brisbane the December 2 action against the ABCC took place the day after 25-year-old con-

struction worker Tom Taktaura died. A 20-ton beam fell from an overpass and crashed him while he was working on the Eastern Busway site. The beam was not bolted into place.

The Militant

Continued from front page

Justice system. Are we protecting innocent people or are we protecting the system? This is why we need to abolish this death penalty," she told the media at an impromptu press conference in the street outside the federal court building. She said the Antiterrorism and Defence Penalty Act should be repealed.

Laurie Moyer from Georgians for an Alternative to the Death Penalty said that getting this hearing and the turnover of Davis’s supporters is a result of the cumula-

tive effect of what supporters of the case have done.

The judges said the hearing would determine what

Correction

The photo credit for the photo box titled “Path-

finder books well received at Montreal event” in the December 12 issue was incorrect. It should be Pac Quin.