

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Interview with Cuban
Brig. Gen. Harry Villegas

— *International Socialist Review*, PAGES 7-16

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Meatpackers strike IBP over wages, speedup

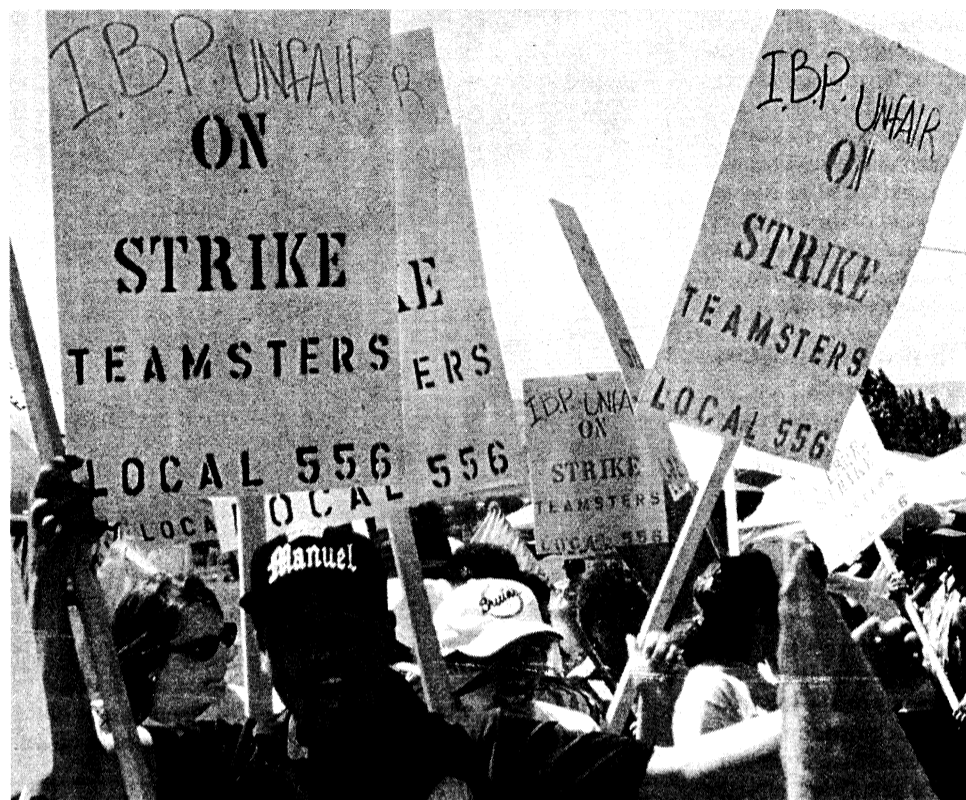
BY LEA KNOWLES

PASCO, Washington — Members of the Teamsters union, other unionists, and strike supporters rallied and marched here June 19 in solidarity with the 1,200 meatpackers from Teamsters Local 556 on strike against Iowa Beef Processing (IBP) in nearby Wallula, Washington. The action was co-sponsored by Teamsters Local 556 and MEChA, a Chicano student organization. The 700 marchers chanted, "Si se puede" (Yes, we can do it) and "What do we want? A contract! When do we want it? Now!" Signs in the crowd included, "Long live the union" and "Strike for justice."

A popular chant at the rally was "Vote no!" referring to the upcoming vote on the company's latest contract offer — a \$1.57 wage increase over the life of a five-year contract. This wage offer is only a slight improvement from the \$1.05 wage increase IBP offered last week. The union is demanding a \$1-a-year wage increase over the life of a three-year contract.

Workers described health, safety, and speedup as other central issues. Kill floor veteran Edelmiro Vera said that years ago the plant killed 1,500 head of cattle in eight hours. Today the number has risen to 2,050; between two shifts the average daily output is 3,600.

The march ended in Memorial Park where
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IBP strikers and supporters hold mass picket at plant in Wallula, Washington, June 12.
Militant/Scott Breen

Imperialist troops expand control of Kosova

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

Two weeks into their occupation of Kosova, as the *Militant* went to press June 24, U.S.-NATO troops were expanding control of the province with a force projected to exceed 50,000 soldiers. In the process, they are dealing blows to the right of Kosovars to national self-determination and deepening divisions between Albanians and Serbs there.

As Duci Petrovic, a leader of the Students Union of Yugoslavia, put it in a June 23 phone interview from Nis, "NATO is setting up a protectorate in Kosova. They intend to stay there a long time to control the situation. In
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Build August active workers conference

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Seven politically active youth attended a recent discussion on "Youth and the communist movement" in Chicago, YS member Jay Paradiso told the *Militant*, reporting on the summer school program sponsored by the Young Socialists and the Socialists Workers Party in that city. The next day, six of them marched together with several hundred other
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Join July 7 actions to free José Solís, other Puerto Rican political prisoners

BY JOSHUA CARROLL

CHICAGO — Thousands turned out for the annual Puerto Rican People's parade here June 19. The event was officially dedicated to the people of Vieques, an island of Puerto Rico that is occupied by a U.S. Navy base, and to José Solís Jordán, a Puerto Rican independence activist who was convicted March 12 on frame-up charges of terrorism.

Supporters of the campaign to free Solís will hold a picket line at the Chicago federal building July 7, the day he is to be sentenced here. There will also be picket lines that day at federal buildings in other areas, from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to several U.S. cities — Oakland, California; Minneapolis; New York; Boston; Miami and Orlando, Florida; Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia; Camden, New Jersey; Cleveland; and Des Moines, Iowa.

The Des Moines action has been initiated by the Socialist Workers Party in collaboration with the Ad Hoc Committee on Human Rights, an immigrant rights group made up predominantly of workers at the giant Swift meatpacking plant in Marshalltown, Iowa.

At a gathering at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center following the Chicago parade, José López, director of the center, spoke about the fights to win justice for Solís and to oppose the harassment of the Cultural Center. The center has now been targeted with five subpoenas by a federal grand jury investigation. López urged participation in the July 7 picket lines as well as the July 22-25 actions in Washington, D.C., to demand the release of all Puerto Rican political prisoners in U.S. jails.

The day following the parade, 50 people showed up for a Fathers' Day vigil outside the downtown prison where Solís is being held.

In New York, the July 7 picket at Federal Plaza and the July 22-25 actions are being built by several organizations including Pro-Libertad, National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners, Committee in Solidarity with Dr. José Solís Jordán, and Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project. In New York's huge Puerto Rican Day Parade June 13, a prominent contingent, including family members of the prisoners, marched with a float. The parade was dedi-

cated in part to the Puerto Rican prisoners.

On July 6-9, the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization will hold its annual hearings on Puerto Rico's colonial status. Supporters of Puerto Rico's independence are planning a delegation to testify at the hearings, as well as public events in New York City.

The focus of the testimony at the hearings will be on the fight to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques and the campaign to free the political prisoners, reports Ismael Guadalupe Ortiz, a leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, who will be one of those testifying along with Carlos Ventura, president of the Vieques fishermen's association.

Repeated demonstrations have been held in Puerto Rico against the U.S. Navy's use of Vieques for bombing practice. A major action will take place July 4 in Ceiba, at the entrance to the Roosevelt Roads U.S. naval base.

Rose Ana Berbeo in New York and Martín Koppel contributed to this article.

Textile workers vote for union in N. Carolina

BY MIKE ITALIE

ATLANTA — Workers at the six Fieldcrest Cannon textile plants in Kannapolis, North Carolina, voted 2,270-2,102 in favor of joining the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees. The June 23-24 election was the fifth organizing attempt since 1974. Pillowtex, which bought the Fieldcrest mills in 1997, is protesting the union's victory, and an 285 additional ballots are being challenged.

Seoul sinks N. Korean boat, U.S. gov't backs provocation

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

After several days of escalating naval provocations, south Korean warships fired 150 artillery shells and more than 7,000 machine gun bullets at vessels from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) June 15. The barrage set fire to a north Korean patrol boat and sank it, killing all 17 crew members.

Washington, which maintains some 40,000 troops and a naval armada in and around south Korea, immediately announced it was deploying more force, including two cruisers, the

Vincennes and the *Mobile Bay*, as well as electronic warfare aircraft and antisubmarine aircraft. The DPRK's ambassador to the United Nations, Li Hyong Chol, urged the UN Security Council June 18 to "take a measure to cease at once the military provocations on the part of the U.S. and the south side." Li said Washington was deploying AC-130 ground attack planes, as well as F-15 and F-18 fighter bombers in south Korea, had moved its warships into the area, and put U.S. Marines on

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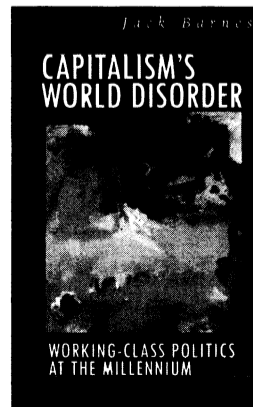
\$20 Special offer good through June 27

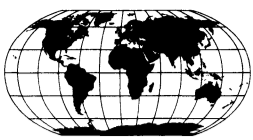
Capitalism's World Disorder Working-Class Politics at the Millennium

JACK BARNES

"We have watched the first large-scale war take place in Europe in almost half a century. There has been massive, sustained artillery shelling. Air power has been used to bomb civilian populations in Europe for the first time since the bombing of Dresden, London, and other cities during World War II... All this has been taking place in Yugoslavia. It is a war that has brought to the surface the deepest conflicts among the imperialist powers in Europe and North America since the collapse of the Stalinist apparatuses at the opening of the 1990s." — Dec. 31, 1994

Available from Pathfinder, see stores on page 16





Iraq rejects 'new' sanctions plan

Baghdad rejected June 18 a proposal sponsored by British and Dutch government officials to accept a "new inspection agency" with a new group of UN "arms inspectors" in exchange for a partial lifting of the U.S.-led embargo imposed on Iraq in 1990.

Abdulghani Abdughafur, an Iraqi government official, said the deal would only "prolong the unfair embargo on Iraq." The pact would require UN Security Council approval every four months and could be scuttled any time the Clinton administration decides to crank up its punishment of the Iraqi people. In January of this year, White House officials were forced to admit U.S. spies worked under cover on teams of UN "arms inspectors."

Meanwhile, U.S. warplanes bombed an Iraqi radar installation near the city of Mosul June 18. The jets were enforcing Washington's "no-fly zone" imposed on northern Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War slaughter, supposedly to protect Kurds in northern Iraq and Shiite Muslims in the south. The "no-fly zones" cover more than 60 percent of Iraq.

Asian crisis expected to worsen

Officials of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said the economic crisis hammering workers and peasants in the region "is likely to worsen," London's *Financial Times* reported June 21. The ADB study said the crisis, which erupted in mid-1997, has provoked rising unemployment, plunging incomes, more hunger, and deteriorating health care. In Indonesia, the world's fourth-largest country, the poverty level jumped from 11.3 percent of the population in 1997 to up to 20 percent in 1998.

Imperialist banks foisted short-term loans on governments and corporations in Asia at an accelerating rate in the 1990s, precipitating the crisis. By the end of 1997, the foreign debts had ballooned to \$140 billion in Indonesia, \$150 billion in south Korea, and \$95 billion in Thailand.

Russia, Chechnya border clashes

Chechen fighters opened fire at Russian outposts and barracks June 18, killing seven policemen and Interior Ministry troops. The day before, the Chechens fired mortars at the Russians and killed three Interior Ministry guards. Chechen residents in a village near

the border said 17 homes were hit by Russian helicopter rockets and mortar.

Attempting to crush the Chechen independence movement, the regime of Boris Yeltsin launched an invasion in December 1994 by 30,000 Russian soldiers. This was a deeply unpopular war among working people in Russia.

During the first year and a half of relentless Russian army bombing and shelling, an estimated 35,000 people were killed and the capital city of Grozny and dozens of Chechen villages were devastated. The Chechen fighters defeated Moscow in 1996 and forced the Russian army out of their territory. The Kremlin, however, does not recognize Chechnya as an independent state.

Oil workers protest in Venezuela

Laid-off oil field workers in Venezuela have been protesting the construction of an oil refinery using contract workers. The workers have also demanded safe working conditions and compensation for the families of employees who have been killed or maimed by accidents on the job. Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez sent in 250 military police June 16 to protect the construction site, a joint venture between the state-owned *Petróleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA) and the U.S.-based oil company Conoco.

Meanwhile, Venezuela's 40,000 oil workers won pay hikes of 3-6 percent after threatening to strike against a decision by PDVSA to freeze their wages in 1999.

Mexican workers strike for raises

Workers protest in south Korea



Workers on strike lay down in front of government building in Seoul, south Korea, June 17 to protest government attacks on union rights.

Workers at the HanYoung truck parts plant in Tijuana, Mexico, have been on strike since May 3. They are demanding a 35 percent wage increase, government-mandated profit-sharing, and a wage scale linked to seniority. The city government's Special Forces police detachment and state cops tore down strike flags posted at the facility and escorted 70 scabs into the plant. The strikebreakers, however, did not know how to operate the plant's welding equipment and were forced to leave.

The HanYoung workers, who organized the independent October 6 Union for Industry and Commerce in 1997 to replace the government-affiliated union, earlier struck the company in May 1998.

Mexican bank goes belly-up

Mexico's Bank Savings Protection Institute announced June 17 it would take over Grupo Financiero Serfin S.A., the country's third-largest bank, which had declared bankruptcy. Serfin's shares had dropped 41 percent since the beginning of June and are now worth about five cents each. The agency said it would inject at least \$1.3 billion to make the bank available for sale.

Mexico's banks held thousands of bad loans when the peso was devalued in 1994. Under new legislation, several Mexican banks were for the first time taken over by imperialist banks, including Wall Street's Citibank. The new law ratified a government "bail-out" of the Mexican banking system of some \$60 billion — 16 percent of the country's gross domestic product. Serfin unloaded \$6 billion in bad debt on the Mexican government in that "rescue" deal.

GM bosses campaign for job cuts

As contract negotiations approach between the Big Three auto barons and the United Auto Workers (UAW), the bosses are preparing their campaign to squeeze more out of GM auto workers.

"GM's labor costs per vehicle were nearly double Toyota's and 31% higher than archrival Ford Motor Co.'s," asserted a June 18 article in the *Wall Street Journal*. The article said GM bosses need to dump 40,041 workers to match the productivity of Toyota's North American plants and almost 30,000 to equal Ford's. Last year UAW members at two GM plants in Flint, Michigan, walked off the job for several weeks, shutting down much of the auto giant's assembly and parts operations in North America. The

strike began when workers walked out over health and safety issues, outsourcing, subcontracting, and demands for production "efficiency" through speedup.

— MAURICE WILLIAMS

REVISED SUMMER PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

The *Militant's* summer publication schedule has been revised. The next issue, no. 26, will be printed in two weeks, on Thursday, July 8. The next issue will be printed a week later, on July 15. The paper will then be printed biweekly, on July 29, August 12, and August 26. We resume weekly publication in September.

THE MILITANT

Release Puerto Rican political prisoners

There are 17 Puerto Rican prisoners in U.S. jails, held for their political beliefs that their island nation should be independent. All those who support democratic rights and freedom of speech should support the fight for their release. The 'Militant' tells the truth about this struggle. Don't miss a single issue!



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Occupation of Kosova

Continued from front page

the future people will not tolerate that. They will protest." Washington and its imperialist allies have secured the acquiescence of the Russian regime in carrying out their course.

As part of Moscow's unending — and fruitless — search for stable relations with imperialism, Russian president Boris Yeltsin agreed to send about 3,000 troops to Kosova that will in fact answer to NATO's command there. Moscow agreed to this blueprint by Washington at a June 18 meeting in Helsinki, making it clear that the dash of 200 Russian soldiers from Bosnia to Pristina, Kosova's capital, before imperialist troops arrived on the scene was nothing but a bureaucratic stunt by the Kremlin. Yeltsin's regime was instrumental in coaxing Belgrade to hand over control of Kosova to the Atlantic military alliance.

Through 78 days of brutal daily bombings that devastated much of Yugoslavia's industry and infrastructure, Washington dealt a blow to the Yugoslav federation. The U.S. rulers' aim is to weaken and eventually overthrow the Yugoslav workers state and gain more of an edge on their European rivals in the bargain. The Clinton administration made gains along its pragmatic course in the Balkans, but paid a price. The White House set back Washington's ability to use ground troops for a military assault abroad, by giving the false impression that U.S. imperialism can advance its interests through a high-tech air war.

NATO troops abet looting

NATO troops, led by British units, began entering Kosova June 11, the day after Belgrade started withdrawing its forces. By June 20, all Serb military forces, some 47,000 troops, had left Kosova. As the *Militant* went to press, NATO had deployed 20,000 soldiers throughout the province into five "sectors" — areas occupied by British, U.S., French, German, and Italian troops. Throughout this time, NATO forces have been fostering divisions between Serbs and Albanians, their claims that they are there to provide security for all residents notwithstanding. The big-business press in the United States and other countries has been aiding the effort to portray the conflict as one between all Serbs on one side and all Albanians on the other.

On June 23, U.S. Marines shot and killed one Serb and wounded two others in a gun battle at Zegra, a village south of Gnjilane where the U.S. forces — now numbering 4,500 and expected to grow to 7,000 — have set up their headquarters. The Pentagon claimed its troops came under fire before shooting.

In Mitrovica, a city about 60 miles north of Pristina that used to be inhabited by 120,000 people before the war, "the French are allowing the effective division of the town into ethnic districts," according to a report in the June 24 *New York Times*. For two days, French troops there reportedly did nothing to stop looting and burning of homes of Gypsies.

In the first two weeks of the NATO occupation of Kosova, about 20 percent of the 860,000 deported Albanians returned to the province, according to unofficial estimates, often finding their houses or other property destroyed — either from the NATO bombing or attacks by chauvinist Serb forces. A still unknown number of Albanians, probably thousands, were killed during the mass expulsions.

In the village of Grace, between Mitrovica and Pristina, returning Albanians reportedly looted and burned homes of Serbs, after driving them out, on June 20, while British and French troops on the scene directed traffic. Lieut. Col. Robin Clifford, a NATO spokesman, described the event as "an unfortunate incident." Accounts in the big-business media paint a picture that virtually all Albanians in Kosova want all Serbs to leave, regardless of whether they participated in the "ethnic cleansing" and other atrocities committed largely by Serb chauvinist paramilitary groups and special police forces.

In telephone interviews and other accounts the *Militant* obtained, however, many Yugoslavs paint a different picture.

Vladimir is a university student in Novi Sad who asked that his last name not be used. He knew a number of Serbs in Urosevac (Ferizaj in Albanian), a town in southern Kosova near the border with Macedonia. "They were determined to stay after NATO troops entered Kosova," he said, "but they have left and are now in Novi Sad. They were not afraid of their Albanian neighbors returning from Macedonia; these Serbs had tried to stop the 'ethnic cleansing.' But they were afraid of criminal elements and units of the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) that are trying to drive all Serbs out. NATO is helping that, they are letting it happen."

In a small village near Pec — a city in western Kosova that has suffered some of the worst destruction — KLA soldiers reportedly killed three Serb civilians June 19. Units of the Kosova Liberation Army — the guerrilla group that waged an armed struggle for independence for several years — have surfaced throughout the province and in many cases declared a "provisional government." The KLA became an appendage to NATO's forces during the 11-week war against Yugoslavia. On June 21, its leadership signed an agreement with NATO commanders in Kosova to disband its military structures and turn in its heavy weaponry within 30 days. At the same time, the group got a NATO promise to be allowed to reorganize as a police force of some sort. In the refugee camps in Albania, Montenegro, and Macedonia in April and May, *Militant* reporters witnessed KLA members being used to police those Kosovar Albanians who don't follow Washington's line.

A number of Albanians expelled from Urosevac and other towns had told *Militant* reporters stories similar to Vladimir's about Serbian neighbors trying to protect them from Serb paramilitary units and about Serb soldiers refusing to carry out orders to drive Albanians out and instead deserting their units.

Self-determination

Many Serbs in Kosova and elsewhere in Yugoslavia are influenced by the nationalist demagoguery of the regime of Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic toward Albanians. After the developments in the last three months, however, vanguard layers among Serb workers and youth have been advocating more forcefully the need to support the Kosovar Albanians' demands for self-determination as the only way to counter both the reactionary line and course of the Milosevic regime and the imperialist attempts to dismember Yugoslavia.

"The people of Kosova have a right to decide their future," said student leader Duci Petrovic. "It's almost like a natural right. Self-determination is what they need. It's the only basis on which we can build real cooperation with Albanians in Kosova. In the future we'll have a chance to rebuild ties with Albanian students there."

Petrovic and his group, the Students Union of Yugoslavia, had organized canvassing throughout Serbia last year against the suppression of national rights of Albanians in Kosova who comprised 90 percent of the pre-war 2.1 million people there. The Students Union had sent a delegation from Belgrade to join large student-led demonstrations in Pristina in 1998 demanding reopening of the Albanian-language university and other rights.

Branislav Canak, president of Nezavisnost, the trade union federation in Serbia independent of government control, and other trade unionists have taken a similar public stance on self-determination and are attempting to reknit ties with fellow Albanians in Kosova.

"NATO will try to deny that," said Petrovic. "They are against self-determination. Just like Milosevic. He brags that in the agreement he signed with NATO there is no clause for a referendum on the status of Kosova."

He was referring to the deal that allowed the U.S.-NATO troops to occupy Kosova, according to which the province remains under the formal sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia "with substantial autonomy."

Russian troops, Moscow's role

Petrovic, Canak, and other interviewed by this reporter did not think very highly of the role of Moscow in the conflict. "No one mentions the Russian troops anymore," Petrovic said. "There was a flurry of hysteria about it two weeks ago. Now the whole episode is forgotten." He was referring to the speedy dispatch of about 200 Russian troops from Bosnia to Kosova through Belgrade. Moscow used the action as a bargaining chip to push its demand that it be granted control of a section of Kosova. Washington adamantly rejected that and Yeltsin gave in at the Helsinki meeting, where he agreed that Russian troops will be dispersed in the five sectors controlled by imperialist powers and their top officers will have to answer to the unified NATO command.

"We were all surprised at the beginning, when we saw the Russian troops passing through Belgrade," said Martina Vukasovic, a mathematics student at the University of Belgrade, in a June 23 phone interview. "But soon the dust settled and the pomp was over. The Russian troops will be dispersed, and they will basically be under the command of NATO. Just like in Bosnia. Our government uses it to give a false impression that the United Nations —



Serb residents of Kosova flee to Serbia after U.S.-NATO forces began their occupation of Kosova June 11. About 50,000 Serbs have left Kosova in the first two weeks of the NATO takeover of the province, in addition to the 50,000 who had left during the 11-week war — half the prewar Serbian population of the province of 200,000. The imperialist troops there are fomenting national divisions between Albanians and Serbs.

not NATO — calls the shots in Kosova."

Vukasovic and others said the Yeltsin regime does have conflicting interests with Washington but was simply using the war in Yugoslavia to bargain for some economic concessions by imperialism. Ever since May 6, when Moscow signed the U.S.-crafted statement in Cologne, Germany, agreeing to the deployment of an international "peacekeeping" force in Kosova, it was clear it was just a matter of time before Milosevic would give in. "Yeltsin cooperated with Washington," said Dusan from Novi Sad. "He probably did it to get some more loans from the IMF." At the so-called Group of Eight summit in Cologne June 20, Yeltsin did get some promises of new IMF loans but only if his regime succeeds in pushing through austerity measures.

Only after Moscow signed off on NATO's terms did Milosevic capitulate. Even the big-business press now admits that NATO's claims of major damage its air strikes inflicted on Belgrade's military were greatly exaggerated. NATO officials acknowledged June 22 "that the alliance knocked out a good deal less military equipment in Kosovo than had been thought," said a front-page article in the June 23 *International Herald Tribune*. "As they were counted through NATO checkpoints," the article stated, "the Serbian force of nearly 47,000 men seemed less demoralized than allied accounts had led people to expect. They took back into Serbia what seemed to be hundreds of tanks, artillery pieces and armored personnel carriers."

No jobs, worries for winter

The NATO air raids, however, did inflict a great deal of damage on working people. Almost all of Serbia's oil refineries, a majority of heating plants that provide heat and hot water to city residents, much of heavy industry, and dozens of roads, railways, hospitals, and schools were destroyed.

According to Dusan Rakovic in Nis, a student whose father used to work in a machine tool plant and is now out of a job, and representatives of Nezavisnost, unemployment in Serbia is about 70 percent.

"We've been without jobs since April 9," said Christina Ranic, a member of the metal workers union in Kragujevac, an industrial city 60 miles south of Belgrade. She worked at the Zastava car manufacturing plant, which at one time employed more than 30,000 workers. "We now occasionally go to the factory to clean up the debris. We survive mainly from humanitarian aid that comes from some trade unions but mainly from Greek churches."

While electrical power has been restored in most of Yugoslavia since the end of the bombing, the day-to-day hardships for working people are enormous and most expect them to worsen. "Without fuel and enough electricity we'll have a rough winter," said Dusan from Novi Sad.

Imperialist powers pledged reconstruction aid for Kosova at the recent G-8 summit but made it explicit no funds will go for rebuilding any parts of Serbia as long as Milosevic remains in power.

The Milosevic regime has been issuing calls on state radio and TV for people to join reconstruction efforts. "It's a Potemkin village," said Duci Petrovic, a facade, referring to these announcements.

"There are no funds or materials," Dusan pointed out. "Plus most people are not going to cooperate with this regime, which they hold responsible for the disaster we face."

Milosevic's troubles begin to grow

"Discontent is growing against the regime," said auto worker Ranic. "Everyone here expects anxiously his fall," referring to Milosevic. More than 100 army reservists blocked a main road in Kragujevac, leading to Belgrade, June 19 demanding their back pay, Ranic said. They had been promised about \$10 a day for serving in the army during the NATO air strikes. The protest was defused after the army promised to pay them within a week.

Ranic said her husband, an officer in Nezavisnost, has been called to Belgrade for a broad union meeting to discuss how working people can be mobilized to begin rebuilding the country and organize more effective opposition that can lead to replacement of the government. Ranic and others said the recent call by the Serbian orthodox church for Milosevic's resignation was another indication the regime may not be able to hold on to power for too long.

The most consistent protests against Milosevic have taken place in and around Belgrade by Serbs who fled Kosova since the NATO occupation. "Up to 1,000 people from Kosova who tried to enter Belgrade but were turned back in the suburbs yesterday protested," said Martina Vukasovic June 23. Hundreds have been waging protests inside Belgrade for the last three or four days. The government is trying to force most of the 50,000 Serbs who left Kosova to return. State radio and TV are calling these protesters "traitors" and are hiding the extent of the exodus.

"Milosevic handed part of Yugoslavia to NATO. Now he has the gall to call Serbs who leave Kosova, who are afraid for their lives,

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Upcoming Labor and Farm Actions

Sun., June 27, 2:00 p.m.

Steelworkers for Justice Rally — Support locked-out workers at Kaiser Aluminum

St. James Boat Club on U.S. 61 Gramercy, Louisiana
Sponsor: USWA Local 5702-01

Wed., July 7

Protest the frame-up of Dr. José Solís Jordán

Federal Buildings across U.S.

Sponsor: Committee in Solidarity with Dr. José Solís Jordán. For more information, call: (312) 409-0801.

Thurs.—Sun., July 22–25

All Out to Washington, D.C. It's time to bring Puerto Rican Prisoners home!

Washington, D.C.; Nat'l march Sat., July 24
For more information, call: (773) 278-0885 or (212) 927-9065.

Party-Building Fund goes way over the top

BY BRIANTAYLOR

Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party-Building Fund scored a big victory, zooming well beyond the initial \$75,000 goal by the June 15 deadline. In the following days checks earmarked to the fund kept pouring in — more than \$93,000 has been deposited. The final fund chart will appear in the next *Militant* issue.

Now let's take the momentum from the final weeks of this campaign and roll it right into efforts to win new readers and subscribers to the *Militant* newspaper and its Spanish-language sister publication, *Perspectiva Mundial*, as well as selling Pathfinder's *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*. It gives a boost to the socialist summer schools that Young Socialists chapters and Socialist Workers Party branches in many cities have launched together. Call your nearest city listed on page 16 for more information.

All of these efforts to build the communist movement will come together in the August 5-7 Active Workers Conference in Ohio (see ad on page 6). Many of you who have contributed to this campaign will want to make plans to join the car caravans from all over the country headed to the conference.

Supporters in a number of cities made final pushes to blow the top off the goal. Below is one page from that story.



BY HOWARD ELKHART

SAN FRANCISCO — "The celebration of the 40th anniversary of the agrarian reform [in Cuba] is not about the past. It is about advancing the socialist revolution in Cuba and the world today," said Mary-Alice Waters.

Waters is editor of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist* and a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party. Francisco Picado, a leader of the SWP

and Young Socialists leader, Cecilia Ortega, spoke here with Waters June 12 at a banquet and meeting to raise money for the Party-Building Fund.

Waters was recently in Cuba as part of a *Militant* reporting team that joined celebrations and meetings marking the 40th anniversary of Cuba's first agrarian reform. The first Agrarian Reform Law adopted by the revolutionary government of Cuba was signed on May 17, 1959, signaling the end of the wealthy landowner class' rule in that country.

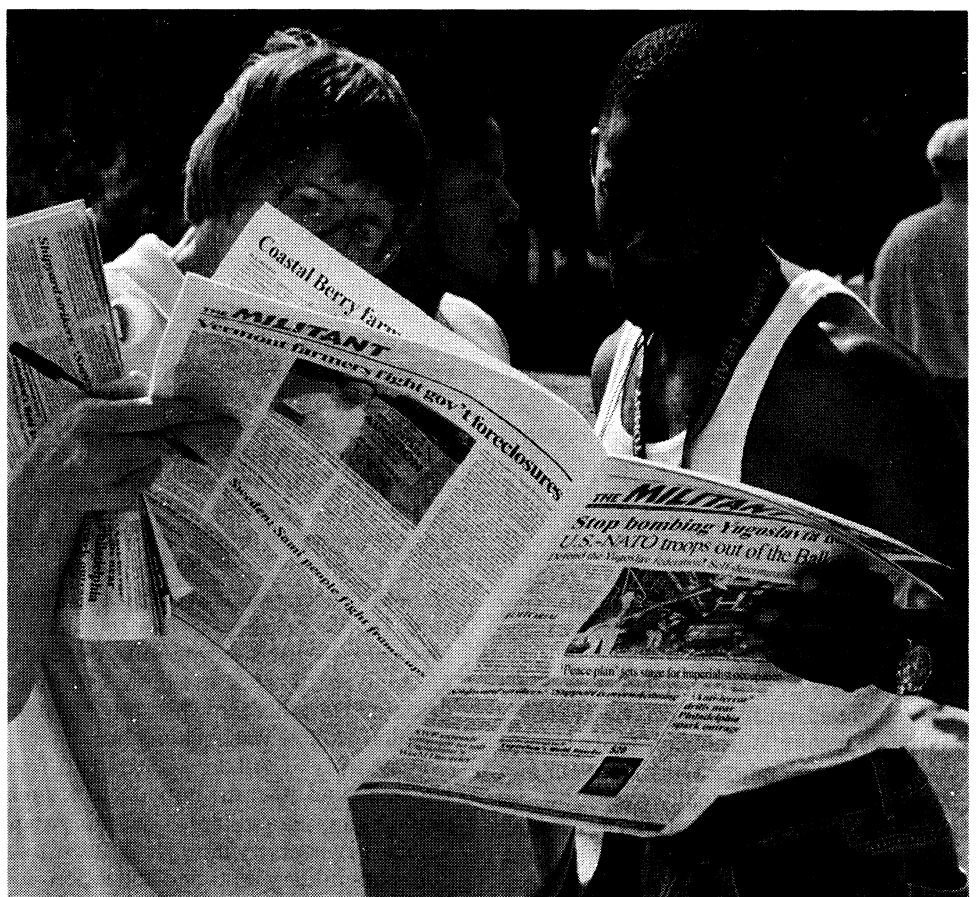
"The lesson of the Cuban revolution is that you have to have an organization dedicated to changing the world," Waters said.

Waters also talked about the failure of U.S. imperialism to reimpose capitalist social relations on working people in Yugoslavia. "The workers in the workers states cannot be starved into submission, but will have to be crushed, beaten in combat, to accept capitalism."

Working people today, especially those involved in struggles, have wider ears for a communist perspective on the world, noted Francisco Picado. He described some of the fights by workers and farmers today that reflect a change in the thinking and confidence of millions of working people, who increasingly are seeking ways to resist the bosses and their government and connect with other fighters.

These developments pose an exciting challenge for communist workers to join with those fighting today, wherever struggles may break out. This requires that the party organize on a regional basis and extend its reach by getting jobs in meatpacking, garment plants, and coal mines.

Ortega outlined the Young Socialists' plans for an ambitious summer program of study and political activity. Many young socialists are now moving to Chicago, Atlanta, San Francisco, Los Angeles and other cities to join SWP members in classes on *Capitalism's World Disorder*



Militant/Amy Roberts

Supporters of Socialist Workers Party-Building Fund can use momentum to win new readers to socialist press. Above, selling *Militant* at TWA contract vote in St. Louis June 8.

and other Marxist literature; participate in political actions from campaigning against the U.S. war in Yugoslavia to strike pickets and upcoming demonstrations demanding the release of José Solís and other Puerto Rican political prisoners; and to do political work in industrial plants along with other party members and Young Socialists. The summer program will culminate at an Active Workers Conference, set for August 5-7 in Oberlin, Ohio.

The 55 participants at the meeting raised \$3,600 in contri-

butions and pledges to the Party-Building Fund there.

The next evening, Waters spoke at a similar event in Los Angeles that put supporters there more than \$3,000 over their \$6,000 goal.

Chicago: hundreds protest cop brutality

BY PATTIE THOMPSON

CHICAGO — More than 500 people marched to the police headquarters here June 17 protesting two recent killings of Black people by Chicago cops.

Chanting "No justice, no peace," and carrying signs referring to these and other victims of police brutality, the protesters demanded a full investigation of the killings and an end to the cops' cover-ups. A caravan of 10-15 UPS drivers drove their delivery vans to the march, honking their horns and displaying signs that said, "Stop Police Brutality."

The cops gunned down LaTanya Haggerty June 5 after they approached the driver of the car she was in for double parking. Eyewit-

nesses stated that she was fatally shot getting out of the car with her hands up. The cop who fired claimed she thought a cell phone in the car was a gun.

The same day Haggerty was killed, the police shot Robert Russ at point blank range after breaking the rear driver's side window to get at him. The cops had started their pursuit of Russ supposedly because of "erratic driving."

Within hours of the Russ killing, the police department stated the shooting was accidental. Later that day, police spokespeople announced that their investigation concluded it was justified.

Dozens joined protests at the city hall immediately. The daily lunchtime protests con-

tinued all week leading up to the June 17 march.

Antonia Randolph, a student from Northwestern University, where Robert Russ was to have graduated June 11, joined the demonstration "because we've got to put pressure on the cops like in New York City," referring to the wave of protests against the cop killing of Amadou Diallo.

Pattie Thompson is a member of *International Association of Machinists Local 1474*.

Young Socialists \$9,000 Fund Drive April 3-June 30			
City	Goal	Received	%
Chicago	500	596	119%
Philadelphia	50	57	114%
Seattle	250	268	107%
San Francisco	1000	1000	100%
Atlanta	300	182	61%
Santa Cruz	300	134	45%
Twin Cities	400	175	44%
Boston	200	60	30%
Los Angeles	1000	240	24%
New York	1000	200	20%
Salt Lake City	100	10	10%
Austin, MN	150	0	0%
Detroit	200	0	0%
Houston	100	0	0%
Newark	200	0	0%
Springfield, IL	75	0	0%
Washington, D.C.	200	0	0%
Other		500	
Total	6025	3422	57%

The YS has launched a \$9,000 fund drive to be completed by June 30. The funds are needed for the expenses in building a proletarian youth organization that is financially independent and can respond rapidly to political developments and maintain its national office.

Military provocations against north Korea

Continued from front page

alert in Okinawa. U.S. Navy and Air Force warplanes have also stepped up patrol flights over the region.

Seoul has amassed frigates, destroyers, and landed ships in the area, while putting its entire armed forces, including 650,000 troops, on combat alert.

The conflict began June 7 when six north Korean patrol boats escorted fishing vessels into a crab-fishing area just off its west coast. DPRK officials said the naval escorts were necessary in response to actions by Seoul's warships, which chased off north Korean fishing boats in the crab-rich region.

South Korean officials claimed the ships from the DPRK crossed the "northern limit line," which was unilaterally imposed by the U.S.-led UN Command after the Korean people fought Washington to a stalemate in the 1950-53 war. The DPRK does not recognize the line.

After a tense encounter over the disputed waters, south Korean patrol boats rammed four north Korean vessels June 11. "Our ships are ready to butt the north Korean intruders again," declared Col. Hwang Dong Kyu the next day.

Seeking to ratchet up military pressure on the DPRK, south Korean Defense Minister Cho Seong Tae met with U.S. Gen. John Tilelli, the chief U.S. military commander in south Korea, and asked him to put some U.S. troops on high alert "The U.S. Command would help us," asserted Capt. Shin Han Woo, a south Korean defense ministry spokesman.

On June 13 the DPRK government agreed to a meeting called by U.S. military officials in south Korea. Two days later, however, Seoul's warships sunk the north Korean vessel, and Pyongyang suspended contact with Seoul.

MILITANT PERSPECTIVA MUNDIAL Subscription drive MAY 1 - JUNE 27							
	Militant		%	PM		NI	
	Goal	Sold	Goal	Sold	Goal	Sold	
Sweden*	16	10	63%	8	7	8	10
Australia	14	8	57%	3	0	12	1
Canada							
Vancouver*	30	23	77%	3	1	15	12
Montreal	20	10	50%	10	4	30	12
Toronto*	35	12	34%	5	3	25	14
Canada total	85	45	53%	18	8	70	38
New Zealand							
Christchurch	16	10	63%	1	0	6	0
Auckland	30	12	40%	1	0	5	0
N.Z. total	46	22	48%	2	0	11	0
United Kingdom							
London	35	22	63%	8	4	30	10
Manchester	24	6	25%	2	0	14	7
UK total	59	28	47%	10	4	44	17
United States							
Atlanta	28	25	89%	7	7	16	8
Houston	35	27	77%	15	6	20	5
Miami	35	26	74%	15	10	20	17
Los Angeles	65	46	71%	30	27	40	30
Birmingham, AL	35	21	60%	5	2	10	1
San Francisco	90	49	54%	40	10	40	10
Seattle	45	23	51%	15	5	15	4
Washington, D.C.	50	25	50%	15	4	30	10
Detroit	35	15	43%	8	8	15	10
New York	120	49	41%	50	30	75	21
Philadelphia	32	13	41%	6	1	15	0
Chicago	50	20	40%	15	6	30	8
Des Moines	40	15	38%	20	32	20	8
Pittsburgh	30	11	37%	5	3	20	0
Newark, NJ	125	43	34%	50	23	60	29
Cleveland	40	12	30%	8	2	10	3
Boston	35	8	23%	15	8	25	15
Twin Cities, MN	50	11	22%	12	12	15	1
Central Illinois	20	1	5%	4	0	7	2
So. Minnesota	8	0	0%	5	3	3	1
U.S. total	968	440	45%	340	199	486	183
Iceland	8	3	38%			2	0
France	5	0	0%	3	0	25	3
Int'l totals	1201	556	51%	384	218	658	252
Goal/Should be	1100	1023	93%	350	326	600	558

* = raised goal

Miners and fighting workers buy 'Militant'

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

"We want our *Militant* bundle overnight," said Cappy Kidd, a member of the United Auto Workers in Chicago. "We need more papers to send sales teams to knock on doors in working-class communities where the cops recently killed two Black men and one Black woman, LaTanya Haggerty."

Socialist workers and members of the Young Socialists are using the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and the book *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* to reach out to workers involved in struggles, at plant gates, and on the job. Taking the social press and Marxist literature to fighting workers, farmers defending their land, and rebel-minded youth are essential to the campaigns.

As we go to press with four days remaining in the drive, we need to sell 475 copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder*, 544 subscriptions to the *Militant*, 132 subs to the Spanish-language magazine *Perspectiva Mundial*, and 347 copies of *New Internationalist* to reach the international goals. The key to meeting this challenge lies in taking advantage of political opportunities over the next few days to talk to strikers at Newport News shipyard in Virginia, meatpackers on strike in Washington State, working people resisting police brutality, and others fighting assaults by the bosses.

Coal team in central Illinois

Five workers subscribed to the *Militant* after meeting socialist workers at a mine portal and plant gate in central Illinois. One also got a copy of the recently reprinted Pathfinder pamphlet *Coal Miners on Strike*.

"We first sold at the entrance to the Freeman Crown no. 3 coal mine in Farmersville," said Harvey McArthur, a meatpacker and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers. "We had a sign that said, 'Subscribe to the *Militant*. 12 weeks for \$10,' tucked under the windshield wipers of our car. Two passersby saw the sign, made a U-turn and came back to talk to us. One, a truck driver, bought a *Militant*; another, a staffer for the Laborers International Union, bought a *Militant* subscription and the coal miners pamphlet."

McArthur said three of the miners bought subscriptions to the *Militant* among the 40 who were going in to work. And seven others got copies of the paper. Many miners were familiar with the *Militant* from their strike last fall,

and several commented about different times they had met other workers distributing the *Militant* during the strike.

"We told them there were a lot of other strikes going on that needed their help," said McArthur. "One of the miners said he was willing to do something, but that they never got any information about what was happening in other parts of the country. He bought a copy, and is considering getting a subscription to the *Militant* to help fill this void."

"After we left the Crown no. 3 mine portal, we went to the Bridgestone/Firestone plant in Bloomington, Illinois, where workers, members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), are headed for a contract dispute later this year. We sold five copies of the *Militant* and a subscription there."

Talking to Continental Tire strikers

Supporters from Birmingham and Atlanta spent five hours on the picket line talking to several USWA members on strike against Continental General Tire in North Carolina. "Spending the time to get to know the strikers and listen to their concerns as well as discussing *Capitalism's World Disorder* with them is very important," said Ardy Blandford from Birmingham. She said their discussions with the unionists ranged from why the strikers felt the company was trying to break the union, to what the capitalist system as a whole has in store for working people.

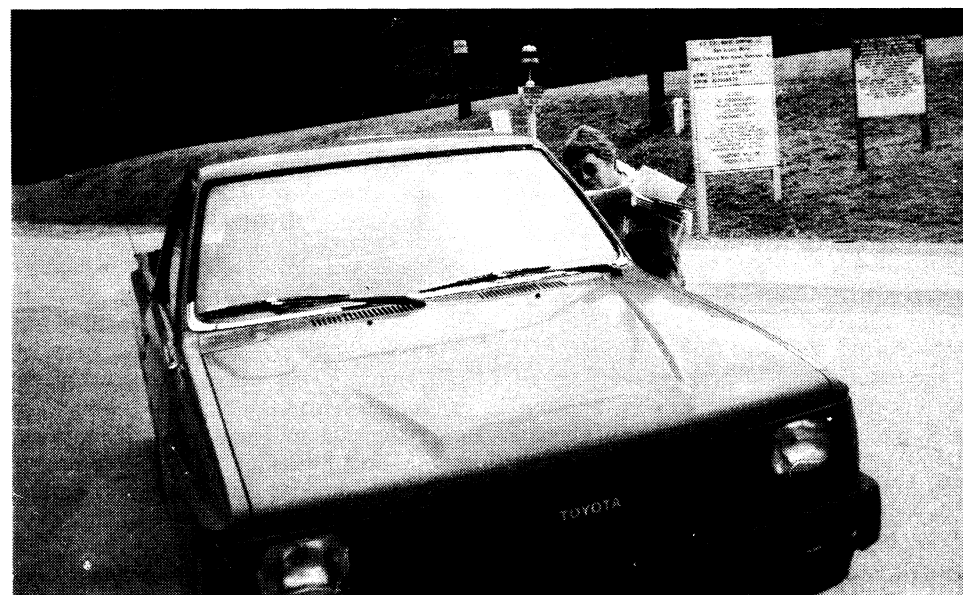
"One of the strikers who bought the book didn't have the money, but another striker realized how much his fellow union member wanted to read it and offered to loan him \$20."

"We set up a meeting at the home of a striker who had bought a subscription to the *Militant* from an earlier visit. He purchased a copy of *Capitalism's World Disorder* from us this time," said Blandford. "He offered to put us up the next time we come to North Carolina and have a barbecue, hang out, and talk politics."

The team also sold one *Militant* subscription, and three copies of the socialist newsweekly to the strikers. Several strikers expressed interest in building and participating in the June 27 "Steelworkers for Justice Rally" in Gramercy, Louisiana.

Packinghouse workers in Minnesota

Three socialist workers from Minnesota and Iowa went on a two-day regional team to Worthington, Minnesota, where



Militant/Bill Kalman

Selling the *Militant* at U.S. Steel Oak Grove mine portal in Alabama.

there is a large Swift-Monfort pork packing plant. One of the main objectives of the team was to find out more about the attitudes and experiences of the workers inside the plant.

"We went door to door in two trailer parks in Worthington, where we sold five subscriptions to *Perspectiva Mundial*, including four to meatpackers," said Amanda Ulman, who works in packinghouse in Marshalltown, Iowa.

"We also sold five copies of the *Militant*, eight copies of *PM*, and one copy of the pamphlet *An Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis* in Spanish. We sold two *PM* subscriptions to two Swift workers who were part of a group five or six Swift workers hanging out near one of the trailer parks on Sunday afternoon.

"We had a discussion with them that lasted an hour, which covered a broad number of topics. We talked about the campaign for justice for framed-up immigrant workers José and Gonzalo Ledezma, the U.S.-NATO war against Yugoslavia, and how to confront dangerous working conditions," said Ulman. "One of the

workers insisted on getting our phone numbers so they could call us if a struggle developed inside the plant."

◆

Pathfinder Press editor Mike Baumann reports that *Coal Miners on Strike*, which reprints *Militant* articles on the 1977-78 and 1981 miners strikes, is one of Pathfinder's top sellers this year. In the two months its been out, some 600 copies have been shipped to Pathfinder stores and supporters.

CAMPAIGN TO SELL 'Capitalism's World Disorder' April 1 – June 27

Country	Goal	Sold	%
New Zealand			
Auckland	20	22	110%
Christchurch	14	13	93%
N.Z. Total	34	35	103%
Iceland	4	4	100%
Canada			
Montreal	7	11	157%
Vancouver	21	30	143%
Toronto	50	32	64%
Canada Total	78	73	94%
Sweden	6	5	83%
United Kingdom			
London	41	35	85%
Manchester	17	11	65%
UK Total	58	46	79%
United States			
Atlanta	40	45	113%
San Francisco	136	129	95%
Washington, D.C.	60	55	92%
Los Angeles	82	63	77%
Detroit	78	54	69%
Pittsburgh	40	27	68%
Birmingham	60	40	67%
Seattle	50	33	66%
Miami	45	29	64%
Philadelphia	50	32	64%
Houston	70	43	61%
Boston	50	29	58%
New York	120	67	56%
Des Moines	55	29	53%
Twin Cities, MN	50	26	52%
C. Illinois	17	8	47%
Chicago	75	35	47%
Cleveland	60	26	43%
Newark	150	65	43%
S. Minnesota	14	1	7%
U.S. Total	1302	836	64%
Australia	20	9	45%
International total	1546	1035	69%
Total goal/should be	1500	1425	95%

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

New England Family Farmers Hit by Price, Debt Squeeze. Speaker: Andrea Morell, Socialist Work-

ers candidate for Boston City Council. Fri., July 9, 7:30 p.m. 838 Washington St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 282-3354.

NEW JERSEY NEWARK

The Rise in Working-Class Resistance: A Report Back from the Newport News strike. Panel discussion. Fri., July 2, 7:30 p.m. 87A Halsey St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (973) 643-3341.

AUSTRALIA SYDNEY

The Struggle Inside Indonesia Today: Eyewitness Report. Speaker: Bob Aiken, participant in an international *Militant* reporting team. Fri., July 2, 7 p.m. 1st floor, 176 St. Redfern. Donation: \$4. Tel: 9690 1533.

NEW ZEALAND AUCKLAND

Is 'Zero Tolerance' the Answer to Crime? Speaker: Terry Coggan, Communist League candidate for Auckland Central. Fri., July 2, 7 p.m. 203 Karangahape Road. Donation: \$3. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

CHRISTCHURCH
Equal Rights for Immigrants! Oppose Antidemocratic Laws. Speaker Lars Ericson, Communist League. Fri., July 2, 7 p.m. 199 High St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (3) 365-6055.

MILITANT SUBSCRIPTION DRIVE In the unions							
	Militant			PM		NI	
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold	Goal	Sold
Australia							
MUA	2	1	50%			1	0
AMWU	3	1	33%			2	0
Australia total	5	2	40%			3	0
Canada							
IAM*	6	5	83%			4	1
USWA	7	1	14%	1	1	6	0
UNITE	4	0	0%	1	1	6	0
Canada total	17	6	35%	2	2	16	1
United States							
USWA	35	18	51%	4	1	20	1
IAM	50	21	42%	11	2	21	7
UNITE	15	6	40%	20	10	12	9
UTU	50	16	32%	5	1	20	9
UAW	40	11	28%	4	1	15	1
UFCW	35	7	20%	25	39	20	6
PACE (Houston)	7	1	14%	1	0	3	0
U.S. total	232	80	34%	70	54	111	33
New Zealand							
EU	3	1	33%				
MWU	2	0	0%				
SFWU	2	0	0%				
N.Z. total	7	1	14%				

CAMPAIGN TO SELL 'Capitalism's World Disorder' IN THE UNIONS

	Goals	Sold	%
New Zealand			
EU	2	2	100%
Total	2	2	100%
United States			
PACE (Houston)	15	19	127%
UTU	80	63	79%
UAW	75	52	69%
IAM	110	64	58%
USWA	80	49	61%
UFCW	80	28	35%
UNITE	70	16	23%
Total	510	291	57%
Should be	500	480	96%
United Kingdom			
TGWU	7	3	43%
RMT	4	1	25%
AEEU	2	1	50%
Total	6	5	83%
Canada			
IAM	7	8	114%
USWA	7	3	43%
UFCW	3	0	0%
UNITE	3	0	0%
Canada total	20	11	55%
Australia			
AMWU	5	2	40%
MUA	4	0	0%
Total	9	2	22%

AEEU—Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Workers Union; AMWU—Amalgamated Manufacturers Union; CAW—Canadian Auto Workers Union; EU—Engineers Union; MUA—Maritime Union of Australia; MWU—Meat Workers Union; IAM—International Association of Machinists; PACE—Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers; RMT—National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers; SFWU—Service & Food Workers Union; TGWU—Transport and General Workers Union; UAW—United Auto Workers; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UNITE—Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees; USWA—United Steelworkers of America; UTU—United Transportation Union

Colorado mine boss threatens to hire scabs

BY JEFF POWERS

RANGELY, Colorado — “The company has run adds for replacement workers in the *Denver Post*, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the *Grand Junction newspaper*, and every newspaper in every small town between here and Salt Lake,” Vince Conkle president of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1984, told the *Militant*.

The members of Local 1984 struck the Deserado mine on April 27 over health care for retirees, control over job bids and job assignments, vacation scheduling, and pay. Deserado is owned by Blue Mountain Energy and it produces coal exclusively for a company-owned power plant near Vernal, Utah. The miners went on strike after rejecting the company’s final offer by a vote of 105-2.

Three people have been killed in the mine since it opened in 1984 and last year the Federal government cited Blue Mountain Energy for more than 60 safety violations.

“We are not children,” Local 1984 recording secretary Carol Amy said as she described some of the conditions behind the strike. She has worked at the mine 10 and a half years. “They were so disruptive. I caught a foreman doing our work one day and I stopped him. This was something they tried to do all the time. Then the company promoted someone out of seniority before me and I stopped that too.”

“The last negotiations we had a couple of weeks ago broke off after the company said we would have to change our position,” Conkle said. “New negotiations are scheduled for June 23.”

Picket lines are staffed 24 hours a day. The company has not yet tried to bring in scabs. “Nobody has crossed the picket line so far,” Conkle reported.

The strikers remain disciplined despite Blue Mountain’s repeated attempts to provoke the miners through the use of a private security force hired for the strike. While



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Striking miners in Colorado on June parade float thanking community for support

Militant reporters were on the picket line, a security guard positioned himself on a distant knoll to get good pictures of the reporting team.

“This is something that happens all the

time,” the picketers explained. “The other day a guard drove his four wheeler off the road all over the place right near where we have our pickets, just trying to get us angry. We

Continued on Page 18

Newport News strikers: ‘what we do makes a difference’

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEWPORT NEWS, Virginia — “We must let them know that they can’t walk all over us any old way. What we do here will make a difference to the other companies.” This is how Glenda Saunders, a pipefitter at the Newport News shipyard for 19 years and a member of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 8888, summed up her view of the strike battle here.

After two and a half months on the picket lines, the big majority of the 9,200 hourly workers represented by USWA Local 8888 are holding the line in their fight with the company for respect and dignity on the job and for a decent contract with increased wages and pension benefits.

As we go to press, union members are building an expanded picket line at the plant

between the 35th and 50th street entrances on June 24. The following day some 30 busloads of strikers will board buses to attend the Newport News Shipbuilding annual shareholders meeting in Richmond, Virginia.

In addition to picketing the many gates of entry to the shipyard, union members held a floating picket line June 9 with more than a dozen boats full of striking steelworkers.

Meanwhile, the company is doing all it can to keep the pressure on. In mid-June, shipyard bosses announced they were considering instituting a separate higher pay scale for skilled workers. In the previous union contract the yard paid all production workers on the same wage scale with a top pre-strike wage of \$14.53 per hour.

Local 8888 members are not receiving strike pay. Instead, USWA officials set up

an office where workers submit their bills to be paid. Strikers can also receive cash stipends of \$50, if they specifically request it.

Steelworker officials announced in early June that for the rest of the month there will be substantially less assistance. According to the new rules, the union will pay only emergency bills for members, such as mortgages on the verge of foreclosure, utilities on the verge of being cut off, and rent if the member is about to be evicted.

An article in the June 17 *Newport News Daily Press* cited USWA spokesman Tony Montana as saying that when the strike began, “the Steelworkers claimed 8,000 mem-

bers, or more than 85 percent of eligible workers. Since then 786 members have resigned from the union.” Virginia is a so-called right-to-work state, so workers are not obligated to join the Steelworkers even though the union has won the right to represent all of them.

Despite increased financial pressures, many of those on the picket lines are determined to stick with this fight. “I made my sacrifices,” said Barry Creedle, a striking pipefitter. “I’m staying out here for the union.”

Brian Williams is a USWA member Local 2609 at Sparrows Point, Maryland.

Meatpackers strike IBP

Continued from Page 1

there was a rally featuring strikers and other speakers, including a worker fighting her suspension by Alaska Airlines. Francisco Picado, a meatpacker and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 120 at Galileo Foods in the San Francisco Bay Area, brought a message of solidarity from his co-workers. Meat market owner Polo Aguilera also expressed support, saying, “As long as IBP treats my people like it’s doing to you, I will not buy any IBP products.”

The picket line at the IBP plant in Wallula after the rally was lively, where 200 people had gathered in front of the plant.

The strike began unofficially June 4 after 30 workers were fired. Maria Martinez, the chief shop steward at the plant, said the bosses “tried to discipline an operator for stacking [letting the meat pile up on the line]. I shut off my machine and tried to find out what was happening. They told me to go back to my station and not concern myself with this. As a shop steward, I refused to back off.”

Workers said when Martinez and 29 other workers walked out of the plant a company “attendant” demanded they turn over their badges and work equipment and said they were fired. When some workers tried to get back into the plant, they were pushed back by the attendant. “We told the boss either everyone comes back in or everybody stays out,” said Rodolfo Blanco. Then the supervisors chained the

doors of the plant so no other workers could get outside to join the walkout. A shop steward called the police from a cell phone to say that the workers were being held against their will, and when the company found out the police were coming they unchained the doors. Many more workers left the plant. Later workers from the afternoon shift joined the picket in front of the plant. At its peak the picket line numbered about 500 people.

Most of the workers did not work after that, but instead demanded the union hold a strike vote immediately. On June 8 the Teamsters officially went on strike with a vote of 847 to 291 in favor of the strike. According to Martinez, about 80 percent of the workers are Latino, and the others are from Bosnia, Laos, and other countries.

On June 12 the workers organized a mass picket, which was attended by more than 400 strikers and others. That day workers distributed a flyer in Spanish with their main demands: “We will fight for a just contract, for a safe job, for respect and for sanitary work conditions.” José Avila, a worker with almost seven years at IBP, said the strike “is not just about money; we want to be treated better. We want to change things for those who will come later.” Avila makes \$8.58 an hour as a meat cutter. He said that when new workers arrive in his department, he urges them to work slowly and safely.

The strikers rejected the company’s new contract proposal June 21, by a vote of 688 to 51. Union officials said another 342 ballots were excluded because there were questions of eligibility. IBP responded that they were withdrawing the offer and would begin hiring replacement workers. Martinez said about 150 workers have quit the union and returned to work; the company claims the number is 500.

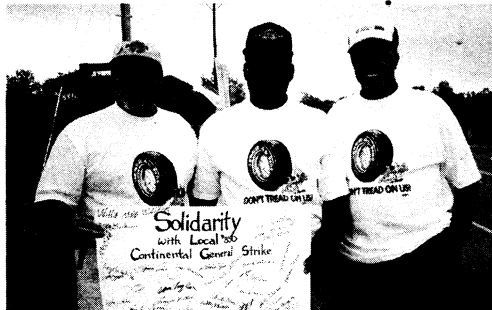
The strikers are beginning to reach out to others to get support for their fight. On June 16 they spoke at a meeting of the King County Labor Council in Seattle to explain their fight, and on June 23 strikers addressed a rally protesting raids by the immigration cops.

Francisco Picado and Ned Dmytryshyn contributed to this article.

Come to and build an

Active Workers Conference

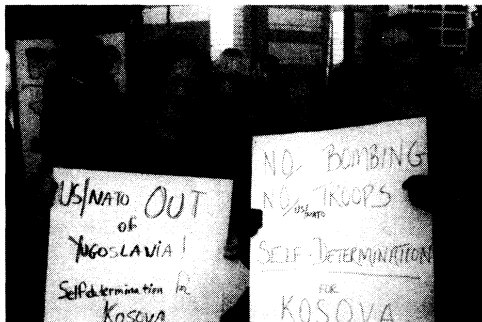
August 5-7, 1999



Rally in support of the Continental General Tire workers in Charlotte, N.C., April 1999.

In face of the employers’ offensive, growing numbers of working people are reaching out to others in struggle. This conference will be an opportunity for workers, farmers, and young people involved in such social struggles to exchange experiences and learn from each other, and from the past lessons of the workers movement. It will be a place to gain information needed to broaden solidarity with others whose struggles are charting a way forward for working people in the United States and internationally.

- Workshops ♦ Classes
- ♦ Feature Reports
- ♦ Books & Pamphlets
- ♦ Information Tables ♦ Recreation
- ♦ Socials & Fun



Demonstration against U.S. NATO war in Yugoslavia and for self-determination of Kosovo, in Los Angeles, March 1999.

DISCUSSIONS WILL INCLUDE:
 Labor Battles ♦ Farmers’ Struggles
 ♦ Actions Against Police Brutality ♦
 Women in Industry ♦ The Fight for
 National Self-Determination and
 Against Imperialism and War ♦ The
 Continuity of the Communist Move-
 ment and the Fight for Socialism ♦
 The Cuban Revolution ♦ Building an
 Alliance of Workers and Farmers

Sponsored by:
**Socialist Workers Party
 Young Socialists**



Rally of 600 hog farmers in Toronto, Ontario, Dec. 1998 for government aid as pork prices dropped.

The conference will be held on the Oberlin College campus, Oberlin, Ohio.
 For more information, see page 16

'We are a political army, fully aware of what we are defending'

Interview with Brigadier General Harry Villegas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba

Brigadier General Harry Villegas was born in 1940 in Yara, a small village in the foothills of the Sierra Maestra mountains of eastern Cuba. As a teenager he joined the struggle against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, and in 1957 joined the Rebel Army, fighting under the command of Ernesto Che Guevara.

After the victory of the revolution in January 1959, Villegas served as head of Guevara's personal escort. In 1961, following Cuba's nationalization of imperialist- and domestically-owned industry, he worked with Guevara as a factory administrator, in the broadening effort to organize Cuban working people to take more direct control of the organization of the economy. He returned to active military duty the following year.

In 1965 Villegas volunteered to take part in an internationalist mission in the Congo, where he served as chief adjutant to Guevara, who led the front. It was during this campaign that he received the nom de guerre he has since come to be known by — Pombo.

Villegas is best known around the world as one of the Cuban revolutionaries who fought alongside Guevara in Bolivia, in what Pombo describes as "an epic chapter in the history of the Americas." In July 1966 he was sent by Guevara to Bolivia to help coordinate advance preparations for the effort to establish a revolutionary front in Latin America's Southern Cone. In November of that year he became part of the guerrilla unit there led by Guevara, serving on its general staff throughout the course of the eleven-month campaign. After Guevara was killed in October 1967, Villegas commanded the group of surviving combatants that was able to elude the encirclement jointly organized by the Bolivian army and U.S. military and intelligence forces. After numerous battles, the three Cuban combatants crossed the border into Chile in February 1968, and arrived in Cuba the following month.

Villegas is author of *Pombo: A Man of Che's 'guerrilla,'* his diary and account of the 1966-68 revolutionary campaign in Bolivia. Additional recollections of the Bolivian campaign by Villegas are included in the appendix to *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara* and in the pamphlet *At the Side of Che Guevara*. All three titles are published by Pathfinder.

From 1975 until 1990, Villegas served most of the time in Angola, as part of the leadership of the Cuban volunteer military contingent that was there at the request



Top photo by Antonio Núñez Villegas, above right, December 1958, with (clockwise) Lupe Velis, Che Guevara, and Miguel Manal, during Cuba's revolutionary war. Villegas, right, early 1970s, while serving as commanding officer at border with U.S. naval base at Guantánamo.

of the Angolan government, helping to defeat an invasion by the apartheid regime in South Africa. The responsibilities he carried out included serving as front commander and a member of the general staff; member of the general staff of Operation Olive (the struggle against right-wing bands in Angola); liaison between the military mission and the armed forces command in Havana;

and head of operations. Villegas was awarded the medal of Hero of the Republic of Cuba, the country's highest honor, by the Council of State.

In recent years Villegas served as head of the Political Section of Cuba's Western Army, and was a member of the Political Directorate of the General Staff of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). Currently he heads the Secretariat and is ideological director of the Patriotic-Military and International Front of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution. He is also a deputy in the National Assembly of People's Power, and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba.

The following interview with Harry Villegas was conducted in Havana, Cuba, on November 10, 1998, by Mary-Alice Waters and Martin Koppel. Waters is editor of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*. Koppel is editor of *Perspectiva Mundial*.

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Mary-Alice Waters: The region of eastern Cuba where you were born and raised has historically been the cradle of revolutionary struggle in Cuba, the stronghold of the independence forces for more than a century and a half. How did these traditions affect you as a youth? What experiences led you to join the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the Batista dictatorship?

Harry Villegas: Oriente has been the birthplace of all of Cuba's independence struggles. In fact, this was even where the first rebel in Cuba, and the first Cuban internationalist, you might say — the Indian Hatuey — started fighting. Hatuey was a native of the island of Quisqueya — or Española, which was the name given it by the colonizers; today it is the Dominican Republic.¹

Oriente's revolutionary traditions

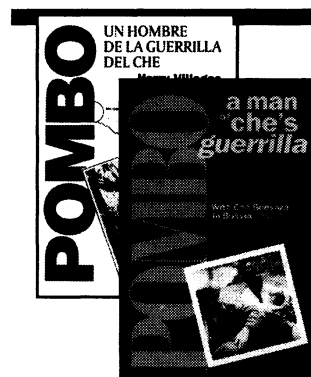
I think there are two major reasons why the people from Oriente have played a decisive role from the beginning in our struggles for independence, both of which are closely interrelated. One is economic. Oriente was one of the poorest areas, with the highest illiteracy rate, cut off from social development. Here in Cuba we say that struggles come from the east — that independence came from the east — but culture comes from the west. The revolution has evened this out somewhat, making things more equitable. But Oriente was really much more backward than the western provinces. The other factor was that exploitation by the powers that be, and the repression, were more intense there. This generated dissatisfaction and protests. It generated acts of violence.

If you go back to 1868, to the first independence war, the people from Oriente were the ones who adopted the most radical positions. Their starting point was always the need for independence. There were other tendencies, such as the annexationists and the reformists, but the people from Oriente always fought hardest for independence.²

¹ Hatuey, a Taino Indian chief who had fled the Spanish colonial forces from what is today the Dominican Republic, led an uprising in Cuba against the colonizers; he was captured and executed in 1511. Tradition has it that when he was offered last rites by a Spanish priest so his soul could go to heaven, Hatuey asked if that's where the souls of the Spanish conquerors went. When he was assured it was, he declined the rites, saying he preferred his soul go elsewhere.

² There were two important Cuban wars of independence from Spain: the war of 1868-78, and the war of 1895-98 that ended in Spain's defeat. Cuba became an independent republic, but its government was in fact dominated by U.S. occupation forces.

Opposing the perspective of independence in the years before 1868 were two currents led primarily by wealthy Cuban-born landowners. These were generally referred to as the reformists and the annexationists. The reformists sought to win a certain degree of autonomy from Spain, while reforming the system of chattel slavery in order to maintain it. The other current favored annexation of Cuba to the United States. Most looked to the slaveholding states of the U.S. South, seeing annexation as a way to strengthen the slave system in Cuba. A smaller group looked to the U.S. North. After the U.S. Civil War, some opponents of slavery in Cuba were also attracted to annexationism, seeing it as a means to eliminate slavery. Slavery in Cuba was not abolished until 1886.



Pombo: A Man of Che's guerrilla With Che Guevara in Bolivia, 1966-68

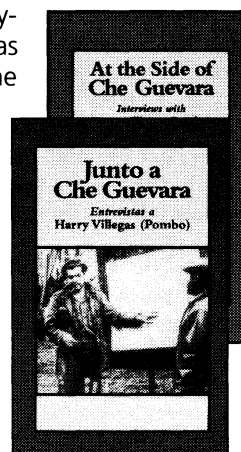
A never-before-published story of the 1966-68 revolutionary campaign in Bolivia led by Ernesto Che Guevara; the diary and account of Pombo — a member of Guevara's general staff, a young fighter still in his 20s. Harry Villegas is today a brigadier general in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces. His day-to-day account of this epic chapter in the history of the Americas illuminates the times we are living through and foreshadows the titanic class battles that will mark the Americas of the 21st century. \$21.95. Also available in Spanish.

At the Side of Che Guevara

INTERVIEWS WITH HARRY VILLEGAS (POMBO)

Harry Villegas, currently a brigadier general in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba, worked and fought alongside Ernesto Che Guevara for a decade—in Cuba, the Congo, and Bolivia. In these interviews he talks about the struggles he has taken part in over four decades — including the war in Angola and the defeat of the South African apartheid army at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988. Above all, he explains the importance of Guevara's political legacy for a new generation of fighters around the world. In English and Spanish \$4.00.

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Available from Pathfinder

Over time traditions developed. The war of 1868, led by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes,³ began in Oriente. The war of 1895 spread a little more to other parts of the country — there were uprisings in Havana, Matanzas, Las Villas, and elsewhere. But the deepest and most determined uprisings were in Oriente — not only in Baire,⁴ but also in Guantánamo and several other places in the province.

The traditions of struggle in this region continued, passed along through families and schools.⁵ Jesús Menéndez, the “General of the Cane-fields,” was murdered in cold blood in Oriente in 1948. He was from Santa Clara, not Oriente, although he had support there. And they killed him while he was visiting the sugar mills there.⁶

In 1952, when Batista’s coup d’état took place, resistance in Oriente was boiling. People hoped somebody would step forward to lead the fight. Then came the attack on Moncada in 1953, the *Granma* landing in 1956. The struggle exploded everywhere. Oriente was on a war footing.⁷

By then, Celia Sánchez’s influence had been greatly felt in the area where I lived.⁸ And the July 26 Movement — Celia, that is — had won over a number of peasants to support the *Granma* landing. In Manzanillo and surrounding urban areas, there was some organization in the underground struggle, fostered by Celia. The incorporation of the first peasants in the Sierra Maestra didn’t come about spontaneously. Celia had made contact with Guillermo García, with Crescencio Pérez, with Ciro Frías.⁹ In other words, she had organized a whole group of peasants who quickly stepped in to support the *Granma* expeditionaries.

I had a brother who belonged to a cell of the July 26 Movement. So when the tyranny reacted to the revolutionary struggle by intensified repression, we really felt it firsthand.

The upsurge in revolutionary struggle in response to these epic events, these legendary battles, had a profound impact on the young people of the region. That’s why there were very few young men in the vicinity of the Sierra Maestra who did not go up to the mountains to join the Rebel Army. That explains why there were so many combatants from Yara and Bayamo and Manzanillo. This di-

³ Carlos Manuel de Céspedes was the initiator of the Cuban independence war of 1868-78. He was killed in battle in 1874.

⁴ Cuba’s second independence war was launched in Baire in 1895, in what became known as *El Grito de Baire* (the Cry of Baire).

⁵ Fidel Castro and Raúl Castro were both born in Oriente and spent much of their youth in this province.

⁶ Jesús Menéndez, general secretary of the National Federation of Sugar Workers and a member of the Popular Socialist Party, was murdered at the Manzanillo train station in January 1948 by police captain Joaquín Casillas. At the time the government of Cuba was under the bourgeois-democratic regime of President Ramón Grau San Martín.

⁷ On March 10, 1952, Fulgencio Batista organized a military coup against the government of Carlos Prío and canceled scheduled elections. Batista was a retired Cuban army general who had been strongman in successive governments in Cuba from 1934 — in the wake of a revolutionary upsurge that toppled dictator Gerardo Machado — until 1944. As the Cuban bourgeoisie and their Yankee patrons reconsolidated power following the initial battles of late 1933, Batista bought off most of the insurgent political leaders, using repression against those who resisted.

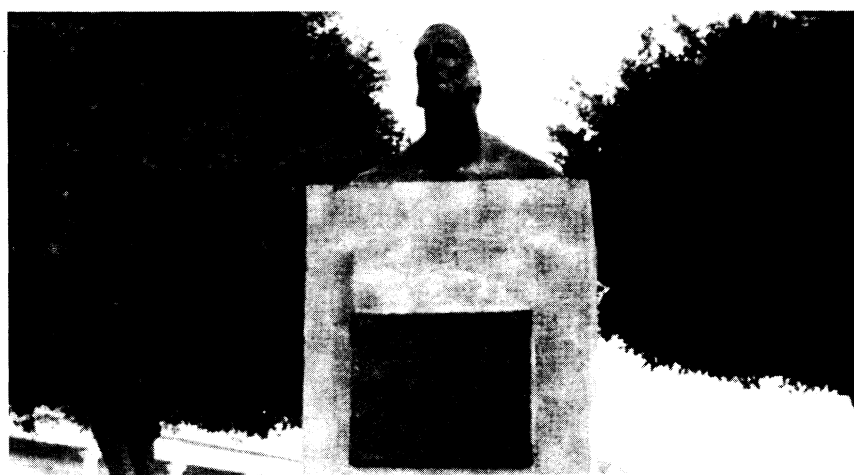
Following the 1952 coup, with support from Washington, Batista imposed a brutal military dictatorship that lasted until January 1, 1959. On that date Batista fled the country as his military and police forces surrendered to the victorious Rebel Army advancing under the command of Fidel Castro, with the growing popular support for the July 26 Revolutionary Movement, culminating in a general strike.

On July 26, 1953, some 160 revolutionaries under the command of Fidel Castro launched an insurrectionary attack on the Moncada army garrison in Santiago de Cuba, and a simultaneous attack on the garrison in Bayamo, marking the beginning of the revolutionary armed struggle against the Batista dictatorship. After the attack’s failure, Batista’s forces massacred more than fifty of the captured revolutionaries. Fidel Castro and twenty-seven others were tried and sentenced to up to fifteen years in prison. They were released on May 15, 1955, after a public defense campaign forced Batista’s regime to issue an amnesty.

On November 25, 1956, eighty-two revolutionary fighters, including Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, Juan Almeida, and Ernesto Che Guevara, set sail from Tuxpan, Mexico, toward Cuba aboard the yacht *Granma*, to initiate the revolutionary war against the Batista regime. The expeditionaries landed in southeast Cuba on December 2, 1956.

⁸ Celia Sánchez, a leader of the July 26 Movement in Manzanillo in Oriente Province, organized the urban supply and recruitment network for the Rebel Army. She became the first woman to become a combatant in the Rebel Army.

⁹ Biographical information on these and other Rebel Army fighters can be found in the glossary to Ernesto Che Guevara, *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War 1956-58* (Pathfinder, 1996).



FIRMA FIDEL EL PRIMER TITULO
 “COMENZAMOS A DAR LA TIERRA
 A LOS CAMPESINOS POR DONDE
 MISMO EMPEZARON A QUITARSELA LOS
 CONQUISTADORES A LOS INDIOS, POR
 BARACOA” INRA ZONA 097

Monument to Taino Indian chief Hatuey, “the first Cuban rebel and the first Cuban internationalist.” He was killed in 1511 by Spanish colonizers. Sign from 1959 quotes Fidel Castro’s declaration on signing the first land reform deed: “We’re beginning to distribute land to the peasants in the same spot where the conquistadores started to take it away from the Indians — in Baracoa.”

rect influence led people to join the revolutionary struggle.

My participation began in an underground cell, carrying out small actions like throwing chains over electrical wires in order to cut power, planting small bombs, distributing propaganda, selling bonds to raise money. In a small town, the normal things one does become known very quickly, and the authorities singled us out, trying to stop these actions. They arrested me two or three times and slapped me around. A cousin of mine and my mother stepped in. They would automatically go down to the garrison to see what was happening. Because you know how these small towns are. Yara was a tinderbox. Word spread rapidly. “So-and-so is in jail,” they would say. Right away the entire family headed over to the garrison.

It was getting harder and harder to live there. It was a very small town, very tiny. And the army maintained a permanent presence in the vicinity. It became an important center for the army, with battalions of troops stationed there. There were more soldiers in Yara than residents. You couldn’t go anywhere without running into a soldier.

At one point, early in the struggle, the general staff of the tyranny’s army was in the Estrada Palma sugar mill, now called Bartolomé Masó. It’s right next to Yara, in the same foothills. To get to Estrada Palma, you had to

“Che explained to us why agrarian reform was a necessity...”

pass through Yara.

So we asked for authorization from the movement to go up to the Sierra. They didn’t give it to us, but since we were a little undisciplined, we went and joined up anyway.

Waters: Earlier today you mentioned informally a fact I found very striking — that six generals currently in the Revolutionary Armed Forces come from Yara.

Villegas: Among the many fighters that Yara produced — and it produced a lot of them — six have attained the rank of general.

Waters: Did you all know each other back then?

Villegas: It’s a very small town, so it would be pretty hard not to have known each other. Division General Leopoldo Cintra Frías, a Hero of the Republic of Cuba, came from that town. You also have the first and only woman to have earned the rank of general in Cuba, Teté Puebla — Delsa Puebla, but we call her Teté. Then there’s Manuel Lastre, brigadier general; Miguel Lorente, also a brigadier general. And there’s Orestes Guerra. Plus myself. There are six of us. The town of Yara really did produce a lot of fighters for the Rebel Army.¹⁰

Fight against racist discrimination

Waters: What differences were there between blacks and whites? Was the struggle against racial oppression part of your rebellion against the existing social, eco-

¹⁰ In the late 1950s Yara had a civilian population of seven- to ten thousand.

nomie, and political conditions?

Villegas: Discrimination in this region was not very severe. Its effects were not greatly felt. I don’t know the reasons why. It might be because we had a little money. I come from a poor family, but my mother had a store and we were slightly better off.

But Oriente wasn’t like Las Villas, for example. If you went to a park in Las Villas — just to point out the kind of discrimination there — blacks walked through one part of the park and whites through another. This was not the case in Yara. There blacks and whites walked together, and blacks and whites mixed at the fiestas.

There were separate social circles, of course. White clubs and black clubs were separate. Places where whites went for parties and dances, blacks could not go. But they played sports together. They went to the same schools. In other words, discrimination there wasn’t as severe as in other parts of the country.

Perhaps it was because my region was more isolated. Perhaps because Yara was very close to where slaves were first freed in Cuba, right there in La Demajagua. Or perhaps because the first slaves who fought for Cuba’s independence were those from Yara, on October 11, 1868.¹¹ These things too may have had an influence.

My grandfather was a sergeant in the *mambí* army. He fought in Maceo’s invasion column.¹² He was one of those who fought for independence in the region around Yara. So he was very respected in town. He was regarded with a great deal of affection. Perhaps these were all reasons why we didn’t suffer much discrimination, why we didn’t experience its full effects.

After the triumph of the revolution, however,

I had a chance to see what discrimination really was. I remember returning to Havana en route from Yara. It was the first time after the victory of the revolution I’d gone home. They had given me a pass, and I had gone to see my family. I was nineteen years old at the time. We stopped at one town in Las Villas, the last one you come to on the Central Highway going west before getting to Matanzas — I think it’s called Los Arabos. A dance was going on and we went in. I was with Alberto Castellanos, who is white. Both of us were in Che’s personal escort, and we went around together.

When we walked into the hall, we saw everybody going “shhhhh,” making comments to each other. I really didn’t notice at first. They sent for a police officer who was black to come tell us we couldn’t be there because that club was for whites only. “Who says this is for whites only?” we replied. “And why did you, a black man, agree to be sent here?” Castellanos added. We were wearing our officers’ uniforms, and we started asking young women to dance with us, and they did. But then we thought, perhaps it wasn’t such a good idea, nor was it the right thing, to go to this place from which they wanted to kick me out.

Castellanos stepped in and said no, they couldn’t kick me out. He couldn’t accept that; that if I had to leave, he would do so as well. We caused a stir. But in the end we had a huddle and decided to leave. Blacks were not expected to show up at their club.

The same thing happened to us here in Havana, in Tarará. After Che left La Cabaña, we moved to Tarará.¹³ There was a club in Tarará that blacks were not permitted to enter. One day we went for a walk, and we went into the club. They sent for General Bayo to get us out. We respected Bayo; he was the general who served as

¹¹ On October 10, 1868, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, the owner of a sugar plantation at La Demajagua near the town of Manzanillo in southeastern Cuba, rang the sugar mill’s bell and assembled the plantation slaves. Céspedes announced he was freeing the slaves, that they were free to join him or not in a fight to win Cuba’s independence from Spain. He then formed up a contingent of fighters and attacked the nearby town of Yara. This act, known in Cuban history as the *El Grito de Yara* (the Cry of Yara), was the beginning of Cuba’s first war for independence, which lasted until 1878.

¹² *Mambí* refers to fighters in Cuba’s wars of independence against Spain, many of whom were freed slaves or agricultural workers. The term “mambí” originated in the 1840s during the fight for independence from Spain in the nearby island of Santo Domingo. After a black Spanish officer named Juan Ethninius Mamby joined the Dominican independence fighters, Spanish forces began referring to the guerrillas by the derogatory term “mambies.” Later the related term “mambises” was applied to the freedom fighters in Cuba, who adopted it as a badge of honor.

Antonio Maceo y Grajales (1845-1896), a black Cuban known as the Bronze Titan, was a brilliant military strategist and political leader. He was a leader of the 1868-78 and 1895-98 wars of independence. He was killed in battle on December 7, 1896, after having led the invasion of Pinar del Río from Oriente.

¹³ Tarará in prerevolutionary times was an area of luxury beachfront homes outside Havana. Diagnosed with exhaustion and pneumonia, Guevara was moved there for rest and recuperation at the beginning of March 1959 on doctor’s orders, together with his family and escort. He remained there until May 1959.

instructor for the *Granma* expeditionaries in Mexico.¹⁴ And he told us we had to leave, because blacks could not be there. We asked how it was that he, who was so well respected and so well liked in the army, could fail to understand that we had not fought so blacks would continue being oppressed. But we left.

When I got home and told the story to the other members of the escort, however, they grabbed their rifles and went out and took over the club. They made everyone leave saying, "This is now the Rebel Army's club." Later Bayo went and told Che about it. Che then spoke to us, telling us we shouldn't do things like that, because they could be utilized by the enemy. He said the revolution had not yet progressed far enough for people to understand that there were neither blacks nor whites, but rather that we are fighting for all Cubans, for equality, against discrimination.¹⁵

Martín Koppel: What soldiers took over the club?

Villegas: The soldiers under my command. I was head of Che's escort and I had a platoon there, at the beachfront in Tarará.

Waters: On your orders?

Villegas: No, they did it spontaneously. I didn't get involved. But these were more or less my experiences with discrimination. This was as close as I came to being directly affected by it.

Discrimination is always a rather complex phenomenon. It might not affect you directly, but you feel it. You could say it's a problem that lies in people's subconscious, and they have to be educated. There are people, friends even, who have told me, "I'll give my life for you, but I wouldn't let you marry my daughter because you're black."

Can you believe that?

Waters: It seems that at that time in Oriente, blacks also owned land. That must have affected social relations as well.

Villegas: There were regions of the country, like Las Villas, where discrimination was very severe. Blacks had their place as blacks. In Havana, too.

In Yara you didn't see really rich people. When I go to

where they made furniture and did construction work. He was in the army for a while when he was young. I never knew him when he was in the military, but my older brothers did. His family came from the Canary Islands and he was a very educated man for our small town, uncommonly so. Very good at chess. He sat us down and taught us how to play. He used to play chess with all the kids in the neighborhood. My mother Engracia was of African descent. She had a shopkeeper's heart, and liked business, commerce. She started out making candy. Then she set up a little store in Yara Arriba, and later expanded it. After that she bought a little store in Las Tunas. Later on, with her sister in Palma, they started a bakery.

They were two completely different types of people. My father was extremely kind. He had nothing. Everyone loved him. He was the best-loved person in town. Whenever he saw something that needed to be done, he did it. My mother put her family first, took care of her family, saw that the kids went to school. She was more self-centered, you might say. My father was a little more socialist, more open, kinder.

Koppel: How did your aspirations, your expectations, change with the revolutionary struggle?

Villegas: When we went to the Sierra, pushed by the expanding struggle against the dictatorship, we didn't have a well-defined Marxist or Leninist political outlook. Simply a sense of justice. Our aim was to fight the system that existed, that was imposed on us, and to fight things that were wrong. Generally that's what motivated us and many others. Often people didn't even know why they went exactly. They simply got caught up in the spirit of the struggle and joined the people who were in the Sierra.

My brother had been a member of the Cuban People's (Orthodox) Party, the same party Fidel had belonged to. It embodied the most progressive section of Cuban youth at that time. Theoretically speaking, you might say, the most progressive elements should have been in the Socialist Party.¹⁶ But from the point of view of the masses, the most progressive elements among Cuban youth at the time were in the Orthodox Party. And those young people in the Orthodox Party later joined the July 26



Granma

Whites-only country club, 1955, attended by members of Cuba's ruling class. In the first months of the revolution in 1959, all whites-only facilities were opened to everyone, or closed down.

plotted. When you spoke with them, they told you stories about how they had ended up in the Sierra Maestra, since they had no way to make a living, no way to support themselves, searching for a piece of land to provide for themselves by the sweat of their brow.

All these things had a radicalizing effect. When I met him, Che was concerned about the people's health. He would explain to us his ideas of justice and equality. How one had to work with the peasants to win them over, from an ideological point of view. How we had to engage in armed propaganda. How we weren't allowed to mistreat the peasants. These concepts would form part of the basis of our socialist ideas.

Later on, when the distribution of land began, Che explained to us why it was so urgent, why land distribution was a necessity. He was the first one to argue for agrarian reform. Che was the one who participated in drafting the first agrarian reform law in the Sierra, and later he drafted one with Humberto Sori Marin.¹⁸ Fidel was seeking a balance. Not just the communist tendency, not just the capitalist tendency. Sori Marin was a lawyer, and Fidel paired him with Che, and this is how the first agrarian reform law was drafted. It was pretty much balanced between the two tendencies.

All these things had an influence on us. Later, the revolution itself, as it dramatically unfolded, continually pushed us to become more and more conscious of the importance of building a different society.

In my case, I was forced to read and study. I was very

¹⁸ On October 19, 1958, the general command of the Rebel Army issued Law no. 3, on the peasants' right to the land. The law abolished tenant farming and sharecropping in liberated territories, and recognized all those who worked the land, including squatters, as the legitimate owners.

Humberto Sori Marin was a lawyer who joined the Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra in 1957. Shortly after the 1959 victory he went into opposition and joined an armed counter-revolutionary band seeking to topple the revolutionary government. He was captured and executed in 1961.

"The revolution has created the conditions to end discrimination and is fighting to do so..."

visit people now, for example, I realize I used to think so-and-so was rich, but now I realize he wasn't; he didn't have anything. He was a storekeeper just like us. With the same things, the same status, the same conditions of life. But he was white, and whites always had a little higher status. That's still the case in Cuba today. The revolution has created the conditions to end discrimination and is fighting to do so, but there are still those who will insult you to your face.

This also happens with women. We're fighting to end discrimination against women. But there are still people in the armed forces itself who think that women only cause us problems. When they have children, they take a maternity leave. The woman's job remains unoccupied for up to a year, and that causes conflicts. Of course, that doesn't mean we shouldn't have women in the armed forces; we've got many.

But they are not treated the same. We don't take disciplinary action against women. If a woman is absent, it's not the same as a man being absent. Women are not put on trial, but men are. It's a question of courtesy, and courtesy toward women is part of the revolutionary ethic.

The forging of a revolutionary

Waters: As a young person you certainly didn't imagine that one day you would be a general in the Revolutionary Armed Forces. When you were growing up, what did you think you would do?

Villegas: We Cubans don't like to be military men.

I never wanted to be in the military. I wanted to be a pilot. That was what I longed for, what most interested me. At home they wanted me to be a storekeeper like my mother, but that's not what I wanted.

My father was a worker, a carpenter. He had a shop

¹⁴ Alberto Bayo had been an officer in the Republican army during the Spanish civil war. In 1956 he provided military training in Mexico to the future *Granma* expeditionaries. He moved to Cuba after January 1, 1959, and worked for the Revolutionary Armed Forces. He had authored a number of books on military matters, including *150 Questions for a Guerrilla*, which had been printed and circulated in several South American and Central American countries in the 1940s and 1950s. It was published in Havana in 1959 following the revolutionary triumph.

¹⁵ On March 22, 1959, around the time of the events Villegas is describing, Cuban prime minister Fidel Castro gave a speech that came to be known as the revolutionary government's "Proclamation against Discrimination," calling for a campaign against unequal treatment of blacks in employment and public facilities. In the weeks following the speech, all whites-only facilities in Cuba were rapidly opened to everyone. Those refusing were closed down. A translation of this speech was published in the April 19, 1999, issue of the *Militant*, and will appear in a forthcoming Pathfinder book containing key speeches and policy declarations by Castro from the early years of the revolution.

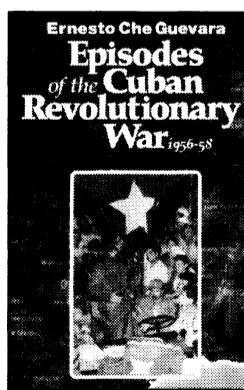
Movement under Fidel's leadership, my brother among them. As one might expect, he dragged me along with him toward those ideas — I was the youngest child, while he was the oldest.¹⁷ And when my brother left town to join the Rebel Army, I stepped forward and threw myself into the work of the cell.

That was when my revolutionary activity began, without any theoretical foundation. Later, over time, reality itself took hold of my consciousness. When you arrived in the Sierra Maestra, you saw how the peasants lived, how they lacked everything, how they were truly ex-

¹⁶ The Cuban People's (Orthodox) Party was formed in 1947 on a platform of opposition to imperialist domination of Cuba and government corruption. Its youth wing provided initial cadres for the Moncada assault and for what became the July 26 Movement. In the 1950s the official party leadership moved rightward and fragmented. The Popular Socialist Party (PSP) was the name taken in 1944 by the Communist Party of Cuba. It opposed Batista's coup, but from the time of the Moncada assault until the final months of the revolutionary war, the PSP rejected as adventurist the political course of the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army.

¹⁷ At the time Villegas was 14 years old; his brother was 35.

By Che Guevara



Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War, 1956-58

ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

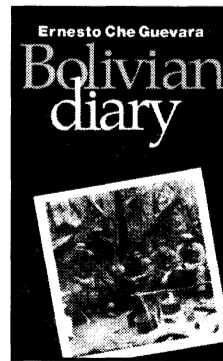
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Militant
Picket line at United Nations, New York, early October 1962, several weeks prior to Cuban Missile Crisis, demanding "Hands off Cuba!"

young and wanted to hang out and have a good time. But Che said, "Your first duty is to raise your educational level." He explained that we had to raise our educational level in order to be more useful to the revolution and to our people.

Then one day, he said to me, "You're a factory intervener."¹⁹ I said, "Me?" "Yes, you. You're a factory intervener." Che sent me, with no training and little more than a sixth-grade education, to Sanitarios Nacionales, a factory just outside Havana (today it is in the municipality of San José) that produced bathroom fixtures and other ceramics. It was the first company we acquired that had been jointly held by foreign and domestic owners. It belonged to a Mexican and a Cuban. The revolution seized the assets that belonged to the Cuban, and left the part

an officer of the FAR. How did the working class respond to the invasion?

This is important because Washington's hand was not stayed primarily by Cuba's military strength, but by politics — they feared the determination of Cuba's working people to defend their revolution. They feared the price the U.S. armed forces would have to pay. They didn't want to run the risk of invading Cuba, because the casualties would have been so high.

From your perspective at that time, working as intervener at the ceramics factory, how did working people respond to news of the invasion at Playa Girón?

Villegas: At the time of the merce-



Granma
Cuban militia in action at Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs), April 1961. U.S.-organized Cuban mercenaries invaded the country; they were defeated in 72 hours. It was the workers who responded to the call to defend the Cuban revolution. "Every Cuban, every worker, wanted to go to Girón."



Cuban militia members during October 1962 missile crisis. The battle at Playa Girón and the Cuban people's response to the October Crisis were "two historical moments decisive in consolidating the revolution."

belonging to the Mexican alone. Those were the conditions under which I went there.

Playa Girón, October Crisis

Waters: Several months ago we had the opportunity to interview three other generals of the Revolutionary Armed Forces about their experiences during Playa Girón²⁰ and the October Crisis. We talked with division generals Néstor López Cuba and Enrique Carreras and Brigadier General José Ramón Fernández. Each one had a unique perspective on those historic events, of course. And your experience during the days of Playa Girón adds another element. You were working at the ceramics factory you just mentioned and were not on active duty as

¹⁹ After the Cuban revolution came to power in 1959, the new government took over the running of a number of economic enterprises held by Batista's cronies, as well as some public utilities. These actions, known as "interventions," were in turn directed by "interveners." Following Cuba's nationalization of foreign- and domestically owned capital between August and October 1960, the term came to be used to describe the revolutionary cadres assigned to head the workplaces in the newly nationalized industries.

²⁰ On April 17, 1961, some 1,500 Cuban mercenaries invaded Cuba at the Bay of Pigs on the southern coast. The counterrevolutionaries, organized and financed by Washington, aimed to declare a provisional government to appeal for direct U.S. intervention. The invaders, however, were defeated within seventy-two hours by Cuba's militia and its Revolutionary Armed Forces. On April 19 the last invaders surrendered at Playa Girón (Girón Beach), which is the name Cubans use to designate the battle.

nary landing at Girón, I had recently left Che's personal escort. In essence, I felt more like a guard than a worker. So when they landed, I automatically reported to Che, ready to go there with him and participate in battle. Che had done the same thing.²¹ He intended to go fight. But everyone was ordered to stay at their assigned post. Fidel told Che that he had to be at his assigned post in Pinar del Río. The whole thing was totally organized. And Che told me the same thing Fidel told him. "Stay in the factory," Che said. "You must remain at the helm, organizing the defense, the security of the factory, and maintaining production."

Who responded when Cuba needed to be defended? Who was called to service? The workers. Those mobilized in their volunteer militia battalions were sent off. One of those who was killed at Playa Girón came from our factory, and it was subsequently named after him.

It's difficult to describe. You'd have to have lived through it to see how every Cuban, every worker, wanted to go to Girón. The workers wanted to leave the factory, and I had to stand there telling them that everyone had to carry out the task they were assigned to. Their task was to remain there and produce, because it was also important to maintain production. It was the same thing I had been told by Che. I had been convinced of it, and now in turn I had to convince others.

Nevertheless, many workers were pulled out. All those who were members of militia battalions and sub-battalions were sent to Girón. Everyone was anxious to know exactly what was happening. It was a challenge to maintain discipline, because every time the tanks went by, or the transport vehicles filled with men went by, everyone wanted to come out and watch, to cheer for them and wave, to see the militiamen off. My task was a very pedagogical one.

Koppel: And where were you in 1962 at the time of the October Crisis?

²¹ At the time, Guevara was minister of industry. During the Playa Girón invasion, as well as the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, the revolution's central leaders were assigned command of troops in different regions of the country. On both occasions, Guevara was sent to head the defense of Pinar del Río, Cuba's westernmost province.

Villegas: The October Crisis came when I was at the school for administrators.²² I was one of those who had become an administrator without ever even having been told what a factory was, so they told me that I had to study. Che took me out of the factory and sent me to a school, a school for administrators, where there were about 400 compañeros. While I was there at that school, the crisis hit.

Officers from the FAR general staff came there and explained to us that we were being formed into a unit of the reserves. They organized us and kept us on alert, waiting to see how things went. An officer came by frequently to brief us. But at first we didn't know exactly what was happening.

Soon we were given more complete information, about the blockade of the island ordered by the U.S. government. About our decision, the government's decision — which by that time had been made public — to not allow them to inspect us.²³

That would have been a humiliation, an affront to our dignity and our sovereignty. All those questions were explained to us.

One thing the revolution has always done is explain things to those who don't fully understand. In that sense, Fidel has been a patient teacher, concerning himself with reaching even the least informed citizen. That's why people say that Fidel is an educator, and it's true. He's a master at helping people understand. And people have seen that his ideas correspond to reality. That is why they trust him. When he explained why we couldn't let ourselves be inspected, why we could neither give in nor give up, the people understood.

Che was right when he said an entire people was prepared to sacrifice themselves. It didn't matter that the enemy had nuclear weapons, or that it had the military might it did. That has never really mattered to us. Today, when I think back on those days, and with the degree of military training I now have, I realize that we truly had great courage, great determination, great bravery. This is what has always forced the enemy to stop and think. When a people is determined to defend itself, there is no weapon that can defeat them. Fidel has said moral weapons can be more powerful than nuclear weapons. Martí said the same thing:²⁴ "trenches of ideas are stronger than trenches of stone." The Cuban revolution has eloquently proven the truth of Martí's assertion.

Waters: That was the decisive factor in the resolution of the October Crisis. It was not Kennedy and Khrushchev who decided the outcome. It was the Cuban people. Kennedy and his advisors understood what was happening here in Cuba. The Pentagon told them they could expect 18,000 losses in the first ten days of an invasion. That's more than they were later to suffer in the first five years in Vietnam. When Kennedy learned that, he changed course and began searching for a way out of the crisis.

Villegas: I think those two historical moments were decisive in consolidating the revolution. And the attitude and character of Fidel during both events was decisive. We can't imagine a struggle without someone in charge, and Fidel has always led. Che talked about this, about why Fidel is so important.

Fidel led the troops at Girón. He got there, although

²² In the face of escalating preparations by Washington for an invasion of Cuba in the spring and summer of 1962, the Cuban government signed a mutual defense agreement with the Soviet Union. In October 1962 President Kennedy demanded removal of Soviet nuclear missiles installed in Cuba following the signing of that pact. Washington ordered a naval blockade of Cuba, stepped up its preparations to invade, and placed U.S. armed forces on nuclear alert. Cuban workers and farmers mobilized in the millions to defend the revolution. Following an exchange of communications between Washington and Moscow, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, without consulting the Cuban government, announced his decision to remove the missiles on October 28.

²³ Following the October 1962 missile crisis, the U.S. government, with Soviet acquiescence, demanded that the United Nations conduct an "inspection" of Cuba to verify that the Soviet nuclear missiles were being withdrawn. Cuba unambiguously refused this demand. Cuba's position was expressed by Fidel Castro on October 23, 1962: "Anyone who tries to come and inspect Cuba should know that he will have to come equipped for war."

²⁴ José Martí (1853–1895), noted poet, writer, speaker, and journalist, founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party to fight Spanish rule and oppose U.S. designs on Cuba. He organized and planned the 1895 independence war and was killed in battle in Dos Ríos on May 19 of that year. His revolutionary anti-imperialist program is part of the internationalist traditions and political heritage of the Cuban revolution.

our people didn't want him to be there. But he knew it was important not only to command those who were going to fight, but to go himself to fight along with them. And the people knew he was there. This gave each combatant extraordinary moral courage, to know their commander was there with them. That he hadn't just given them orders, but was sharing their fate. That was decisive.

The decision during the October Crisis that under no conditions would we accept being inspected was also important. There was no fear during either of these two events. We were fully convinced we were right and would triumph. Just like we're convinced now that we are right and that, sooner rather than later, we'll win, we'll overcome the situation we're in.

Waters: How did the working people respond when the October Crisis ended? How did they view the settlement between Washington and Moscow?

Villegas: The response was one of great unity. It wasn't a matter of not knowing the risks. The Cuban people were fully aware of the risks. We also knew that to give in entailed even greater risks. We maintained the same stance as our leaders.

The strong identification between Fidel and the people — which continues today — meant that everyone understood and supported the position of our government. For that reason, some of us didn't understand the Soviets. The vast majority of Cubans never understood why the Soviets caved in.

I've read some of the analyses that have been made of the crisis. In truth, the Soviets did not have their feet on the ground, because at the time their intercontinental nuclear weapons capability was extremely low. The relationship of forces was totally against them. The North Americans had much greater capacity in intercontinental weapons. That's why the Soviets brought their weapons here.

But we didn't expect the Soviets to back down. For the Cuban people, who are well-informed, it was a great disillusionment that they backed down. We had the image of the Soviets from World War II, men of sacrifice,

"Who responded when Cuba needed to be defended? The workers..."

effort, courage. The general image was one of warmth and respect.

Our decision to stand firm, to not back down, was understood perfectly by the people. Later they didn't understand why the Soviets hadn't maintained the same position we had. That's the truth.

Social aims of the Rebel Army

Waters: I'd like to go back to the early days of the revolution and your experiences as a young soldier under Che's command at La Cabaña.²⁵ There is a very specific thing related to culture and education, to the social aims of the Rebel Army, that we'd like to ask you about.

One of the recent "biographies" of Che quotes from some dispatches sent by U.S. embassy personnel to Washington during the first months of 1959. The communiqués express concern over what was happening in the garrison at La Cabaña. Che, they reported, was doing something with very disturbing implications. He was organizing a department of culture within the Rebel Army and teaching soldiers to read! The Department of Culture was also doing things like organizing concerts, poetry readings, and ballet performances right there in La Cabaña, not for the officers but for all the soldiers. The dispatch said this was very worrisome, because it showed Che's communist tendencies.²⁶

I think this captures something very important, on both sides. The U.S. government had good reason to be afraid, of course. When education and the cultural conquests of all previous civilization become the property of the working class, when working people take this as their right, their prerogative, the rulers should tremble. A new ruling class is in the process of asserting itself. The incident also captures the importance that not only Che but the entire leadership of the Rebel Army gave to educa-

²⁵ Located in Havana, La Cabaña had been a garrison of Batista's army before the revolution. On the evening of January 2-3, 1959, Guevara's column took over La Cabaña, and he became commander of the Rebel Army base stationed in the fort. Batista's main garrisons were soon closed by the revolution and converted into schools.

²⁶ The dispatch, dated March 20, 1959, is quoted on page 152 of Jorge Castañeda's biography of Guevara, *Compañero: The Life and Death of Che Guevara* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).



Members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces visiting art museum. "We're fighting hard to have culture become ingrained in the military environment.... As guarantor of the revolution, the Rebel Army had to raise the educational and cultural level of the people."

tion, to broadening the cultural horizons of working people. It captures the class character ...

Villegas: ...of the revolution.

Waters: Yes, and the aspirations of working people to transform themselves, to educate themselves, to be the bearers of culture into the future that they alone can build.

Villegas: Che felt that the task of creating and developing the Rebel Army's Department of Instruction and Culture at the time was not only to encourage the creation of cultural works. Che was the first one to start a campaign for literacy. Because there is no culture without literacy.

The Rebel Army was an army of people with humble origins. If you read the book *Secretos de generales*,²⁷ you'll see that almost all the generals interviewed come from families of workers or peasants. That was the composition of the Rebel Army. That's why the first thing we did was set up schools to eradicate illiteracy. The Department of Instruction was created, and everyone who couldn't read and write was enrolled in these schools. Che looked for teachers and the work began.

As part of all this, a movement was created to bring cultural works to those who had never seen them before, to the members of the Rebel Army. We had a large theater in La Cabaña, a huge theater that could hold the entire garrison. Plays were put on there, ballet performances, and other cultural presentations. Movies were brought in, and other compañeros would join us for discussion after a movie was shown. The purpose of all this was to raise the cultural level of the army, which at that time was very low. Almost all of us were peasants.

I think the North Americans must have been worried, thinking that culture for workers and peasants was a sign of communism. But our purpose was to create a movement that later grew very powerful in the army, with the aim of becoming participants in culture, making it our own. So a group of amateurs developed, which put on plays, performed songs, held festivals. All these things were promoted as part of the process of creating a higher cultural level.

We are still fighting for this today. In the armed forces we're still fighting for soldiers not to become isolated. Because the life of a military man ends up isolating him from cultural events unless that is consciously combated. For example, I can tell you that one of the hardest things we face in the army is to get soldiers into the habit of going to museums from time to time. You've got to take people there. Soldiers don't spontaneously go to museums very often. The soldier has very little free time, and when he does he looks for other forms of entertainment. We're fighting hard for this, to get people used to going to museums, to have culture become ingrained in the military environment, to maintain a cultural level, to get people to like cultural events, to like poetry, to like theater. But also for them to be able to know when the poetry is not good, to be able to appreciate the quality of cultural works.

Che was a man with a very high cultural level. He was not just someone with a broad political knowledge. He also had broad cultural knowledge. He liked poetry, the theater, all these things, and he tried to get all of us to take part in it.

Today the entire population has a different cultural level. The Special Period,

²⁷ *Secretos de generales*, (Secrets of generals) a book written by veteran Cuban journalist Luis Báez, comprises 41 interviews with top officers of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces and was released in 1997 by Si-Mar Publishers of Havana.

of course, has meant fewer performances being opened, but now we're beginning to see a resurgence.²⁸ We have real theater, like the Escambray Theater Company,²⁹ which brings plays directly to the countryside, and it's had a tremendous response.

There's an element of truth in what the North Americans were saying about this. Nobody writes or produces a play for the sole purpose of educating people about theater. In other countries, people usually do it for money. But in the case of the revolution, it wasn't for economic reasons. The important thing was getting the message across. Culture enables man to be fuller, more complete, more human, and therefore more revolutionary.

I can tell you, for example, that I worked on *Mother* when I was in the school for administrators, and we presented that play.³⁰ Shortly thereafter we organized a theater competition at school, and we put on a number of plays.

So that's the assignment Che was given at that time, and I think he carried it out extraordinarily well. He developed a series of initiatives that

were very good.

Later he founded a magazine, *Verde Olivo*, which many people followed because of its clear message from a political and cultural standpoint.³¹ It was a weekly of the armed forces directed very much to the entire population.

At the time, when the party had not yet acquired a mass size, the armed forces was the most authentic representative of the people's interests, of the interests of the workers. That was where you found the best of the country's working people. The people trusted the armed forces, and they still do, Fidel once said, and Raúl repeats it every day, that the Rebel Army is the soul of the revolution. Raúl says that the armed forces continues to be the soul of the revolution. And it is true. The people see the armed forces as the representative of the revolution.

²⁸ The Special Period is the term used in Cuba for the extremely difficult economic conditions the Cuban people have faced since the early 1990s, and the policies the leadership has implemented to defend the revolution. With the disintegration of the regimes of the Soviet bloc that previously accounted for 85 percent of Cuba's foreign trade, much of it on terms favorable to Cuba, the island was brutally thrust deeper into the world capitalist market. The sudden break in trading patterns — which took place as the world capitalist crisis intensified, and has been exacerbated by the ongoing economic warfare organized by Washington — led to the most severe economic crisis in Cuba since 1959. By 1996, through the efforts of Cuban working people, the decline in industrial and agricultural production bottomed out. Shortages of food and other essentials, though still severe, have eased.

²⁹ The Escambray theater group, based in a rural area of Cuba's Escambray mountains, is one of Cuba's best-known theater troupes. For thirty years it has staged plays in towns and villages across Cuba, including the most isolated areas.

³⁰ *Mother*, by the Russian writer Maxim Gorky, recounts the atmosphere of utter poverty in which the Russian people lived under tsarism.

³¹ *Verde Olivo* was the weekly magazine of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, published in Havana beginning in 1959. It is currently published as a monthly.

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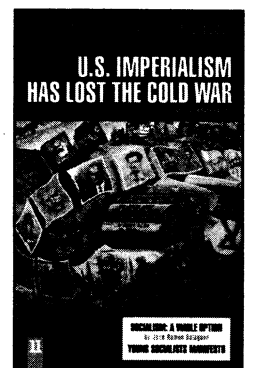
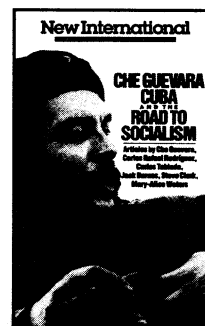
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Courtesy of Richard Dindo

Che Guevara and Pombo in Bolivia, late 1966 or early 1967. René Martínez Tamayo (Arturo) is at right.

Of course, there are still a lot of people who were among the original founders of the armed forces, people of very humble origins. Raúl has been at the helm of the armed forces, and this has guaranteed that they do not go off track. Raúl is a very strict person; very fair, but he demands that those serving under him be held accountable for their errors. The people have tremendous trust in the armed forces.

Waters: The policy on education and culture that Che put in practice at La Cabaña was not his policy but the policy of the revolution. It was first implemented by the Rebel Army in the Sierra, wasn't it?

Villegas: Yes, Fidel and Che began it in the Sierra. As the guarantor of the revolution, the Rebel Army had to raise the educational and cultural level of the people. That's where the literacy campaign began. Then it was extended to the entire population. But it started with the Rebel Army.

Revolutionary Armed Forces

Waters: Your remarks concerning the trust the Cuban people have in the armed forces makes me think about what is occurring now in Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala, the terrible social disaster unfolding there following Hurricane Mitch.³² It is useful to contrast this with the way the Cuban government responded when Hurricane Georges swept across Cuba a few weeks earlier. The armed forces took emergency measures, mobilized resources to help evacuate people and livestock and protect property. The kind of social disaster occurring in

³² The fall of 1998 saw two major hurricanes devastate the Caribbean and Central America.

Hurricane Georges slammed into the Caribbean in September 1998, killing over 300 people in Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. In Cuba, although the storm damaged 40,000 homes, because of the civil defense evacuations, the death toll was held to six.

Hurricane Mitch hit Central America in November, killing over 9,000 people, mostly in Honduras and Nicaragua.

Central America would be inconceivable in Cuba because the government and armed forces represent the same class interests as the big majority of the people.

Villegas: In Guatemala, they are criticizing the president, among other things, for not going to the areas affected by the catastrophe. Compare this with what happened here during Hurricane Flora in 1963, which was one of the most powerful hurricanes ever to hit Cuba. Fidel was right there in the middle of the storm over the objections of the rest of the national leadership, putting himself at risk and nearly drowning. He was riding an armored transport vehicle and traveling aboard a heli-

copter, evacuating children. You can understand why the people of this country love Fidel so much.

This time he didn't go there himself, but you saw him on television, not sleeping day or night, following the status of the hurricane, keeping people informed about what was happening. He sent Raúl to the eastern provinces, as well as Machadito and Balaguer.³³ And knowing Fidel, I imagine that he was calling them on the phone every hour asking how things were going and getting information. He couldn't sit still at all, knowing that he wasn't there on the front lines. But he made absolutely sure that someone was there on the spot at all times, to say what had to be done to prevent damage. His direct instructions were that the party had to remain there on the scene. And the president, Fidel personally, was the one who was seeing to what had to be done, down to the last detail — how to prevent electric power lines from falling, how to guarantee that the people maintained discipline.

Koppel: What role did the FAR play in these mobilizations?

Villegas: The FAR helped out with helicopters, with armored transport vehicles, with the presidents of the Civil Defense units, who in Cuba report to the FAR and its minister. The head of Civil Defense is a deputy minister of the armed forces. So there's a direct link. When the general staff is activated in a municipality, you're actually activating the entire defense apparatus that we have in each of these regions, but for specific purposes, such as combating hurricanes, disasters, things like that. It's not like it was in the past when we would have to go and evacuate people. Now the population is more organized under the leadership of the Civil Defense, which is part of the armed forces. Our participation, the participation of the FAR itself, is less public, but it's more a leadership role. You also have the party and all the other institutions. When necessary, all the troops participate too. It must be remembered that the Revolutionary Armed Forces are the people in uniform.

Waters: This broad leadership role of

³³ José Ramón Machado Ventura (Machadito) and José Ramón Balaguer are members of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Cuba. Both are veterans of the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army.

the FAR has always been very important in Cuba. After the events with Ochoa, Abrantes, and the others,³⁴ Fidel called on the top leadership of the armed forces to take on more responsibilities in the leadership. That's when Furry became minister of the interior, I believe.

Villegas: Yes, after the Abrantes affair.

Waters: A year ago Division General Ulises Rosales del Toro, who was Raúl's second at the time, took over as head of the ministry of the sugar industry. Turning around sugar production is undoubtedly one of the most difficult challenges the country faces. Fidel often makes these kinds of demands on the leadership of the FAR. It's one of the differences with the top officer corps of imperialist armies. When they retire from active duty, with very lucrative business connections, they often become millionaires. The generals of the FAR exemplify the place of the army in Cuban society. They take on the toughest jobs, winning people's respect.

What has been the role of the armed forces in the Special Period, and how is the army responding to the more difficult material conditions Cuba has faced in recent years?

Villegas: Through its example the FAR is helping to solve a whole series of tasks. Because of the confidence people have in the army, as you were saying, whenever there's a need for a cadre who is a real sharpshooter, eyes turn to members of the FAR. That explains the example of Ulises, due to the situation we face at the present time with sugar.

Members of the armed forces are trained to provide an example of austerity, of honesty, of honor. Moreover, they are people who know how to lead. And that's extremely important. In a factory, an enterprise, an institution, you are leading human beings. That's why you need organizational ability — to be able to lead people. And this plays a big role in decisions to take cadres out of the armed forces and put them in such positions.

Fidel said something recently that's a source of pride for us: we don't have anyone from the armed forces who is rich. No member of the armed forces has utilized that position to get rich. Rather, every member of the armed forces who leaves does so under such extraordinarily humble circumstances that they have to look for another

"Culture enables man to be fuller, more complete, more human, and therefore more revolutionary..."

job in order to continue paying their bills. Because there are no privileges in our armed forces, no one who retires has privileges other Cubans don't.

What we receive is honor and recognition from the people for the work, the effort, and the sacrifice we've made in defense of the country. When I retire, in my neighborhood, the CDRs will throw a party for me.³⁵ In recognition of my work they will read a summary of my biography, and that's it. What the members of the armed forces need are incentives of a moral character. That doesn't mean our material needs are completely neglected. We still get a wage that you can pretty much get by on, although I wouldn't say it's easy now in the Special Period. Many who retire have to look for work in other places, and they keep working. They're still in good health, they have a lot of experience, and this enables them to continue feeling useful. We're also not accustomed to being idle. That's something we don't like. We like to always be doing something.

But among all the retirees from the armed forces, you won't find anyone who's gotten rich, anyone who's misused the position they've had in the armed forces. And if they're given leadership tasks, it's because of their ability from a leadership and administrative standpoint, because they have experience in leading others.

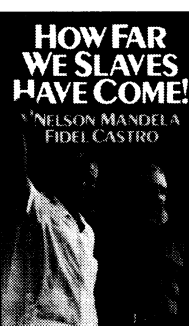
³⁴ In June-July 1989 Amaldo Ochoa, a division general in the Cuban army, and three other high-ranking officers of the Revolution Armed Forces and Ministry of the Interior were tried, convicted, and executed for hostile acts against a foreign state, drug trafficking, and abuse of office. Ochoa had organized the smuggling of ivory and other goods while heading Cuba's military mission in Angola and had established contacts with Pablo Escobar and other major international drug dealers. At the same trial, thirteen other Cuban army and Ministry of the Interior officers were convicted.

That same month, José Abrantes was removed as head of the Ministry of the Interior in connection with these events. In August he was convicted and sentenced to twenty years in prison on charges of abuse of authority, negligence in carrying out his duties, and improper use of government funds and resources. Abrantes was replaced as minister by Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé (popularly known by his nickname Furry) who at the time was deputy minister of defense and first substitute for the minister Raúl Castro.

A documentary record of the case of Ochoa and others convicted with him can be found in *Case 1/1989: End of the Cuban Connection* (José Martí Publishing House: Havana, 1989).

³⁵ The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) were organized in 1960 on a block-by-block basis as a tool with which the Cuban people could exercise vigilance against counterrevolutionary activity. In subsequent years it has also served as a vehicle to organize participation at mass demonstrations, take part in vaccination campaigns and civil defense, the fight against petty crime, and other tasks.

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Above: Militant/Martin Koppel Student rally of 70,000 people in support of the Cuban revolution at University of Havana, September 7, 1994. Banner of Union of Young Communists (UJC), quoting Cuban national hero José Martí, reads, "Revolution: Everything I have done until now and everything I will do, is for that." The UJC, Villegas says, "must win over other young people to their ideas."

What a military person needs most, I think, is recognition by society. For example, currently, whenever people see things going badly, someone will ask, "Why don't they bring a military person here?" It's completely different from other countries. Camilo once said the Rebel Army is the people in uniform. And it's no different today in the slightest. That statement by Camilo still holds up. It's a great truth.³⁶

Waters: Many readers of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* read with great pleasure the interviews with generals López Cuba, Carreras, and Fernández that were published a few months ago.³⁷ A comrade who works in a steel mill in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, read them together with some of his coworkers who he said were very impressed. When I asked, "What is it that impressed you and your fellow workers about the interviews?" the answer was very interesting. After thinking a few seconds, he replied, "Two things. First of all, the political level of those generals." He said that we're used to the fact that Fidel's speeches are very political, but these interviews show there's a much broader political leadership cadre. He noted that generals in the United States are not thought of as being men of profound ideas. The second thing that impressed him and his coworkers, he said, was "the humanity of the generals."

Don't those two observations capture important leadership qualities, political qualities, that distinguish a revolutionary army?

Political education

Villegas: The political level of a general, of a soldier in our armed forces cannot be compared with that in a capitalist army. Because the capitalist army claims to be nonpolitical, while we are a political army. We are fully aware that we are a political army. And we're fully aware of what we are defending.

To give this awareness a theoretical foundation, we study. There is a thorough program of political education. We don't just educate ourselves militarily, at the military academy. A certain percentage of our officers have also graduated from the Nico López School,³⁸ and have gotten their degree there, at the party school. They have a degree in political science or social science. This always gives you a different way of looking at questions, to always see them from a political standpoint, as a Marxist and a Leninist.

In the military academy, we have our political specializations. But within the armed forces, there is a political education system, in which the generals and the combatants participate.

In the army a series of lectures are given, for example, that take place every semester, lasting three days. In the Western Army government ministers and university pro-

³⁶ Camilo Cienfuegos (1932-1959), a commander of the Rebel Army, was named chief of staff following the victory over Batista in January 1959. His plane was lost at sea in October 1959 while he was returning to Havana from a mission to combat a counter-revolutionary mutiny in Camagüey led by Hubert Matos.

³⁷ These appeared in the June 22, July 6, and July 27, 1998, issues of the *Militant*.

³⁸ Antonio "Nico" López (1934-1956) was a veteran of the Moncada attack and a founding leader of the July 26 Movement. He participated in the *Granma* expedition in December 1956 and was captured and murdered by the army shortly after the landing. López had become a friend of Che Guevara's while the two were living in Guatemala in 1954, and he helped to bring Guevara around the July 26 Movement, which Guevara joined in Mexico. The advanced-level school of the Communist Party of Cuba is named after him.



Three Cuban veterans of the Bolivian campaign, from left: Pombo, Benigno, and Urbano, with guides Estanislao Vilca and Efraín Quicañas, as they cross the border from Bolivia into Chile, February 1968, after escaping encirclement of Bolivian army.

fects international communications, the influence of the Internet, the information superhighway, all those things.

That is one example, but we also have classes in Martí, in Marx, in Lenin. Twice a month there are classes with eight hours of instruction. There are also classes for rank-and-file soldiers, an entire system. But we don't leave it there. We also give classes to workers, to civilians.

The subject matter in the courses given in the army is recorded and taken to all the units. Lectures given by ministers, by leaders of the revolution, are recorded on video and later shown to all the units. The course material on a number of subjects from the perspective of the ideas of Marx, Lenin, and Martí, are collected together in a notebook. Last year the topics dealt primarily with Che. We analyzed all aspects of Che's ideas.

We also have a system for studying anniversary dates. We have what are called "encounters with history." These require real preparation. In the Western Army, for example, on August 13³⁹ we study "an analysis of Fidel's political-military thought." On that date we have a discussion on the different aspects of Fidel's ideas. Each party nucleus⁴⁰ has to assign a team to research a particular aspect of Fidel's ideas and then give a presentation to the soldiers. The nucleus has to approve the presentation before it's presented — that is, the group of communists studies it collectively. They add to it, delete from it, and enrich it. This is also a part of political education.

Koppel: In the last year or so, we've noted the activities that veteran leaders of the FAR like yourself and other compañeros have been promoting, above all in meetings with young people in workplaces, in schools, in universities, in the community.

Villegas: This is very interesting work. We call it patriotic-military-internationalist work. In recent years, as a result of the Special Period, it has fallen to the armed forces to make sure this work doesn't drop off, but is kept up. The goal is to cultivate the historic, combative traditions of our people. Five years ago, the Association of Combatants of the Revolution was created. It is the only veterans' organization composed of three generations of Cubans encompassing various struggles for the defense of the revolution: the Rebel Army, the struggle against bandits and Playa Girón, and internationalists. It also includes active-duty members of both the armed forces and the Ministry of the Interior. Anyone with fifteen years active duty should belong — or can belong.

I said "should" because automatically, when the association learns that someone has fifteen years, we invite them to join the Association of Combatants of the Revolution. Members are given a schedule of activities in schools, with children, teaching about our combative tra-

³⁹ Fidel Castro's birthday. Castro was born in 1926.

⁴⁰ The nucleus is the basic unit of the Communist Party of Cuba, composed of party members in a given workplace or military unit.

fessors are brought to speak on specific topics.

When we take the case of globalization, for example, we look at it from different angles. How the development of the productive forces led to globalization, as Marx explained. How, as Fidel has said, it is an inevitable process that will either be socialist or capitalist. How neoliberal globalization is capitalist globalization. We look at how it af-

ditions. This is important, because it's not just someone talking about a battle that took place many years ago. In most cases it's the combatants themselves telling children about what happened on a historic date. It's living history. For example, I am assigned to the school right here at the corner. I have been asked to go and meet with the students, to make a presentation about the meaning of the revolution's triumph, the Rebel Army, and then open it up for questions. It's another one of the methods we have of patriotic and internationalist education.

In a general sense, the party leads this work. It's the most concrete form of conducting ideological work among the people. Military law — I think it's Article 75 — says that patriotic-military and internationalist education is political work carried out among the population with the aim of defending the revolution. Why do we say "with the aim of defending the revolution"? Because we're creating a sense of patriotism, we're creating a spirit of defense of the homeland based in all our traditions and values.

Koppel: During the Special Period, the economic measures Cuba has been obliged to adopt have brought greater penetration of the world capitalist market and its values and social relations, which are the antithesis of the social relations and values the revolution has fought for. Revolutionaries in Cuba are waging a political battle against all these influences. What impact does this situation have on the type of living history you convey and the political lessons you try to bring to a generation of young people who have never been through the experience of making a socialist revolution and beginning to build a new society?

Union of Young Communists

Villegas: I believe what we're doing is vitally important. By itself, it doesn't solve the problem of the ideological struggle. There are a whole series of institutions that must also be a part of this fight, the whole ideological fight. But having people who are respected, who are highly regarded in their own neighborhoods, who are examples of sacrifice, work, and dedication, has a deep influence on young people.

I think the Union of Young Communists (UJC) should have more of a presence in the neighborhoods. Not only in the factories, not only in the schools, but in the neighborhoods too. Sometimes a young person is not in school and not working, yet he or she is in the neighborhood.

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Former prime minister of the Congo Patrice Lumumba, who was captured while under protection of UN "peacekeeping" troops and murdered following 1960 pro-imperialist coup. "Che admired and felt a certain degree of commitment toward Lumumba and his legacy."

We can't leave them on their own like that, unattached. That's my opinion.

The party has neighborhood nuclei or cells, but the UJC doesn't. It has cells in the factories, the schools, the armed forces. Yet youth are the most numerous group of "unattached" people in the neighborhoods. In the Western Army, the UJC pays attention to nonmembers.

The UJC has formed the Panchito Gómez Toro Youth Brigades. It's a voluntary organization. In fact, to emphasize that it's voluntary they have to pay twenty cents to join. Members can participate in recreational activities and other events. Among them are UJC members who carry out recruitment work talking about what the UJC is, talking about our revolutionary history. UJC members get paired up with nonmembers. We say to a UJC member: "You look after so-and-so, pay attention to him, work with her." We have to do something similar with our youth who are neither in school nor working. We can't just ignore them, just leave them for the enemy to influence. If they like North American music, if they like dancing and things like that, we have to see to it that they have a life too. When I was young, I was a Boy Scout. I played volleyball, baseball. I had a series of activities that led me to have a healthy life.

Healthy activity has to be available to the youth. And it has to be organized without telling them what to do. Note that the Panchito Gómez Toro Youth Brigades are a separate group; it's not the UJC. A UJC member creates the group, organizes it, and UJC members join, but it doesn't belong to the UJC. They have to win their influence individually, as members of this organization, this brigade that encompasses almost everyone. Whatever influence they have, that's the influence of the UJC. There's no help from the local UJC committee, saying "you must do this." No. The local UJC committee carries out this work through its members who belong to the brigade. It has to guide its members in how to win over other young people to their ideas. Because unless you do so, you kill the spirit of participation by the youth. You have to win them over.

Waters: Where does the name "Panchito Gómez Toro" come from? Who was he?

Villegas: Panchito Gómez Toro was a son of Máximo Gómez. He died fighting with Maceo.⁴¹ He's a symbol of Cuban youth, his story is a very beautiful one. He traveled with Martí through Latin America and was greatly influenced by Martí and Maceo. When Maceo fell, he went to defend his body and was killed.

Che and the Congo revolutionary war

Waters: In the last year some parts of Che's *Episodes of the Revolutionary War in the Congo* have been published here in Cuba in a book by William Gálvez, *El sueño africano del Che* [Che's African dream]. There have also been a number of articles in the Cuban press, including one that you wrote, about what had previously been a little-known chapter in the history of Africa and

⁴¹ Máximo Gómez (1836–1905), born in Bani, the Dominican Republic, was a military leader of the Cuban independence forces in the Ten Years War and the 1895–98 war. Following the defeat of Spain in 1898, he was dismissed as commander in chief of the Cuban army by the pro-imperialist regime imposed by the U.S. occupation army. He died in 1905.

Antonio Maceo was one of the chief military leaders of both independence wars who was killed in battle in 1896.

of the Cuban revolution.⁴²

Villegas: Yes, I'm also preparing the diary I wrote in the Congo during this time.

Waters: There's a lot of commentary, especially by enemies of the Cuban revolution, who say Cuba's effort to aid the liberation forces in the Congo was a total disaster, an adventure. This type of criticism appears in several of the recent biographies of Che and in other articles. What is your evaluation?

Villegas: I think we have to view the events in the Congo



Cuban internationalists in Congo, 1965. Among them are José Ramón Machado Ventura (with cap), Emilio Aragonés and Che Guevara (against wall, with Guevara smoking), Harry Villegas (standing), and Ulises Estrada (at center, facing sideways).

from two sides: the political and the human.

First the human side. During Che's last trip through Africa and Asia between December 1964 and March 1965, he was able to evaluate the revolutionary potential in Africa, and consider how the Cuban revolution could help

⁴² From April to November 1965, Guevara headed a contingent of more than one hundred Cuban volunteer fighters in the Congo. Harry Villegas was one of these combatants. The contingent went there to support liberation forces in the Congo who belonged to the movement founded by Patrice Lumumba, in their fight against the country's pro-imperialist regime.

Patrice Lumumba, founding leader of the independence movement in the former Belgian colony of the Congo, and its first prime minister, was the most intransigent of the leaders resisting the efforts to keep the new nation under the thumb of imperialism. He had been ousted in September 1960 in a U.S.-backed coup led by army chief of staff Joseph Mobutu, who later changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko. Lumumba, who had been under the "protection" of United Nations troops, was captured and then murdered in January 1961 by imperialist-backed forces loyal to rightist figure Moïse Tshombe.

In mid-1964 a new revolt broke out in the Congo led by pro-Lumumba forces. The rebels were able to gain control of Stanleyville (today Kisangani), the country's second-largest city. They were defeated in November 1964, however, with the help of Belgian and South African mercenary armies — politically and militarily backed by Washington — whose assignment was to prevent the vast mineral wealth of the Congo from escaping imperialist control. Thousands were massacred as the imperialist forces retook Stanleyville.

Nevertheless, large numbers of rebel fighters remained in several areas of the country. These were the forces whom the Cubans assisted. Owing to deep divisions and other weaknesses among the forces in the Congo and the decision of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to withdraw support from the fight against the proimperialist regime, the Cuban contingent was compelled to withdraw in November 1965. Most of the fighters returned to Cuba, but Guevara, Villegas, Carlos Coello, and José María Martínez Tamayo went to Tanzania, where they remained for several months while preparations were made to open a guerrilla front in Bolivia.

While in Tanzania, Guevara wrote *Episodes of the Revolutionary War in the Congo*, using as a reference the campaign diary he had kept. The complete manuscript was published in Spanish in April 1999.

Villegas's article on the Congo, "Con el arma de la autoridad moral" (Armed with moral authority), was published in Spanish (July 1997) and English (December 1997) in issue 137 of *Tricontinental*. It is available, along with other articles and interviews by revolutionists who knew and worked with Guevara, in the booklet, *Celebrating the Homecoming of Ernesto Che Guevara's Reinforcement Brigade to Cuba: Articles from the Militant on the 30th Anniversary of the Combat Waged in Bolivia by Che and His Comrades*. That booklet, available in both English and Spanish, can be ordered from Pathfinder.

realize that potential. He proposed to Fidel that Cuba assist some of those African countries, such as Guinea, Angola, and the Congo. And Fidel believed this was correct.

At the same time, Che himself had already made his decision to leave Cuba. He had not decided to go to Africa. Anyone who thinks that is completely mistaken. Che wanted to go to Argentina, to his homeland, to fight for Latin America. But the conditions for this did not yet exist. So he was asked to postpone these plans for a little while. It was to be a brief postponement, and he felt he could use that time to help the Africans. Not as a combatant, but as an adviser.

Everything — including the information from compañeros who had been sent there earlier — indicated that suitable conditions existed. Che studied the situation in Mozambique, Guinea, and Angola, but it turned out that the Congo was really the place with the most battle-tested fighters, with more of a tradition of struggle, with the whole Lumumba experience behind them. We should also add that Che admired and felt a certain degree of commitment toward Lumumba and his legacy. Che was really inclined to try to help Lumumba's people above all.⁴³

That wasn't the whole thing. The decision wasn't just for Che and his unit to go to Africa. The Cuban government also followed through with all the other commitments made during Che's trip. A group of Cubans, a battalion of troops, was sent to the French Congo to help. A group was also sent to Guinea. In other words, the commitments made were not left hanging.⁴⁴

With the decision that Che would go, Víctor Dreke, who had earlier been chosen to lead the Congo group, was named second in command. Everyone in the unit was black, the only whites were Che — who was going for a short period of time, to assist — and his liaison with Latin America, José María Martínez Tamayo, Papi.⁴⁵

It was thought that white combatants would not be accepted by the revolutionary organizations in Africa. That's why, Che and Papi aside, all the rest of the Cubans were black.

Once we got to the Congo, we found that things weren't at all like we had been told by the leaders there. For one thing, we thought that [Laurent] Kabila and [Gaston] Soumialot, the leaders of the struggle in that region, would leave their centers in exile and come join us at the

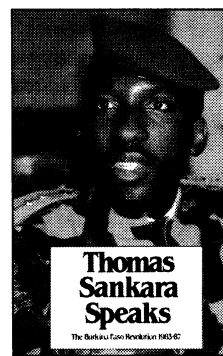
⁴³ For more on the esteem that Guevara and the central leadership of the Cuban revolution had for Lumumba and his leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle in the Congo, see the speeches by Guevara and Fidel Castro in *To Speak the Truth: Why Washington's 'Cold War' against Cuba Doesn't End*, published by Pathfinder.

⁴⁴ Following Guevara's trip, Cuban volunteers were sent to assist liberation fighters in a number of African countries, including Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, the Congo-Brazzaville (the former French Congo), and Angola. A number of participants' accounts of these missions are contained in *Secretos de generales*.

⁴⁵ Víctor Dreke, during Cuba's revolutionary war, had been a leader of the Revolutionary Directorate column in Las Villas that collaborated with Guevara's Rebel Army column in the fall of 1958.

José María Martínez Tamayo, known alternately by the nom de guerre of Mbili, Papi, and Ricardo, was a Cuban revolutionary who worked as Guevara's liaison with revolutionary forces in Latin America beginning in 1962. He served with Guevara in the Congo and then Bolivia, where he was in charge of the advance preparations for the guerrilla front. He was killed in battle in June 1967.

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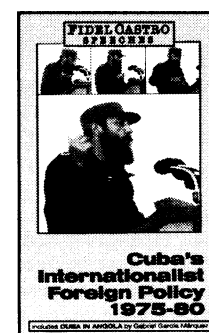
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front.⁴⁶ That didn't happen. The leaders didn't show up; not one of them came to the front. This was the situation when Che got there, and it didn't change.

We had made commitments, and we followed through with them, including sending doctors and others to help. Che had Fidel's complete backing. Fidel said, "We're going to support Che in whatever way we can." He sent a number of leading people who might help the organization of the struggle, including [Oscar] Fernández Mell, [Oscar Fernández] Padilla for the Cuban embassy in Tanzania, [Emilio] Aragonés.⁴⁷

If a criticism can be made, I think it's that we didn't fully understand the characteristics and traditions of the Africans we worked with at that time. The ranks accepted us, but their leaders didn't. That's the reality. It wasn't the fault of any individual; it was a question of leadership traditions.

At a certain point, Che decided that any Cuban who wanted to leave should go, while he and those who wanted would stay, because he saw the possibilities of cadres developing among the fighters themselves.

Che's conviction was always that the struggle sifts out its own leaders. The struggle itself reveals who is willing and able to be a leader, and who is not. Che saw that among that group of thousands of men, their own leaders would emerge. He worked hard to find someone who would share that responsibility together with him. But in the end, he wasn't successful. He was unsuccessful, in my opinion, because there was not yet a deep enough sense of nationhood among them.

Those who had such a consciousness were not there at the front. Instead, there was a tribal consciousness, a regional consciousness. A sense of nationhood had not yet established roots. This, in my opinion, is the reason for the failure.

From the personal standpoint, during the period he was in Africa, Che was torn. He wanted to leave Cuba to collaborate with other fighters. He was unable to go to Argentina. So he decided to go where he felt he could be a help. His admiration, his esteem, the regard he felt for Lumumba, for those people in struggle, who really had considerable forces, weighed heavily. But the fundamental problem there, which he couldn't surmount, was tribal divisions. It was the lack of identification between the different groups. At its roots, it was a problem of social development.

What actually happened was that we managed to get around the divisions to some degree by putting a group of Cubans to work with each tribe. Then they had something in common — the Cubans who were advising them.

"Che's conviction was that the struggle itself reveals who is willing and able to be a leader..."

This allowed Che to exercise leadership. Although people didn't speak the same language, although they couldn't understand each other, they more or less always had a link, because there were Cubans among them. This was the link that connected all of them to a leadership, and at certain moments it allowed everyone to work together.

But there was something we could not do, as a matter of principle: go around the leadership that invited us there. It's a complex thing. We could not pull everyone around us without dealing with Soumialot, Kabila, and the others, who never arrived at the front.

Therefore, up to the last moment we remained loyal to them. If one could say there was an error in going to the aid of the Congo struggle, one has to look at it from the standpoint of what we were attempting to achieve.

We were trying to organize them in a way that would help them develop the struggle much more broadly. This was Che's conception. And help them in whatever way possible. Our idea was not to make them communists, not to make them socialists. The idea was to help establish Lumumba's ideas and what he had been fighting for. As could be expected, our influence moved them a little to the left, made them more anti-imperialist, helped tie them to the most progressive ideas. And we were making progress in this.

Waters: You could not know what was possible, what could be accomplished, without trying. It would be decided in struggle.

⁴⁶ Laurent Kabila and Gaston Soumialot were two leaders of the movement identified with Lumumba.

⁴⁷ Oscar Fernández Mell was a commander in the Revolutionary Armed Forces. A medical doctor, he later served in various posts, including as head of the general staff of Cuba's Western Army, second in command of the army general staff, and Cuba's ambassador to Britain.

Oscar Fernández Padilla was a vice-minister of the Ministry of Industry at the time.

Emilio Aragonés had been July 26 Movement national coordinator in 1960, and subsequently played a central role in the national leadership of the political organizations that preceded the Communist Party of Cuba. He served on the CP's Central Committee from 1965 to 1991.

Villegas: The fact is, we came smack up against reality: we had no one on whom we could lean for support.

A decision was made by the forces in the Congo to initiate combat at Front de Force.⁴⁸ It was done precipitously, before things were ready. More preparation and training were needed. In irregular warfare, if you do the basics, things can go well. But we had to start from zero.

We were up against ideological and religious concepts, a very complicated task. "Let's dig a trench," you might say. And the response would be, "No, we're not getting in. Holes in the ground are for the dead." You might say,



Mary-Alice Waters and Brigadier General Harry Villegas (Pombo) during interview in Havana, November 1998.

"You can't shoot that way, you have to aim the rifle." But it's not just aiming. We had to show them how to close one eye and use a directing eye. We had to teach them how to close one eye, because there were some who didn't know how. All this required that we train them first, and for this great patience was needed.

You don't see these things in Che's book; what you see in it is a dialogue taking place based around the day's events. And when someone is as critical as Che, the things written down are always harsh, especially when things are going unfavorably.

Our group of Cubans still had many compañeros with a sixth-grade education. It was a challenge to understand the Africans' customs, behavior, and life. This situation led some people — not very many, two or three — to

ask to leave and return to Cuba.

Che could not grasp this. You have to understand what being a Cuban revolutionary meant to Che. He always had a very high standard — like everyone holds today. Che believed that a Cuban revolutionary, above all, had to be consistent in word and deed.

First, there was his understanding of what it meant to be a revolutionary. A revolutionary, he once said, is "the highest level the human species achieves." But then he added the adjective "Cuban" to it. As he says in his letter to Fidel,⁴⁹ he would never renounce being a Cuban revolutionary. Following Che's lead, other Cubans there felt the same way. Che's dedication, his selflessness — these qualities are not easy for each and every individual to achieve. When someone representing the Cuban revolution lacked these qualities, Che was extremely critical of them.

You'd have to have lived through this to understand it. I often think I'm not really getting across when I try to explain it. And when I explain the conditions there, I don't do so just to defend Che. I'm speaking about reality. And our time there was very short, transitory.

Waters: At the beginning you said there were two sides, the political and the human. What about the political?

Villegas: Seen from the angle of world politics, the situation was very complex. We were on the continent of Africa, in a world that was much less globalized than it is today. There were organized regional groupings that pursued their own continental interests.

After combat began at the battle of Front de Force, in

⁴⁸ On June 29, 1965, a guerrilla unit composed of fighters from Cuba and Rwanda led an unsuccessful attack on a mercenary garrison at Front de Force (also known as Force Benera) in the Congo. Fourteen Rwandans and four Cubans were killed in the battle.

⁴⁹ Che Guevara's farewell letter addressed to Fidel Castro, written before he left Cuba for the Congo, was made public in October 1965, at the presentation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba. It is available in many places, including in *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War*, published by Pathfinder.

which we lost some combatants, Che decided to move to guerrilla warfare. We began to conduct ambushes and to utilize methods of irregular warfare, carrying out guerrilla attacks.

The government of the Congo, against which the Lumumba movement was fighting, appealed to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), requesting that the OAU intervene in this war because of the presence of Cubans. There were discussions within the OAU and among the African presidents at a meeting in Accra,⁵⁰ and they adopted a general line of not giving assistance to opposition forces in any domestic conflict. They decided they would only support forces fighting against a colonial power. This meant that in the future they would give support only to revolutionary movements in the Portuguese colonies — the only colonies that remained. This was a change from the previous position of the OAU, which had given open support to the pro-Lumumba forces.

Of course there was Namibia too, but it was not seen as a colony. It was supposedly held in trusteeship by the UN.⁵¹

The Congo groups weren't fighting directly against a colonial power. Formally the Congo was independent; the old colonial power, Belgium was gone. They were fighting their own brothers, even if the government forces were representatives of colonial and imperialist powers, the exploiters. It was a different situation, a struggle against Mobutu. And it was portrayed as if the two sides were massacring each other.

The OAU also exerted pressure on the revolutionary movement in the Congo, forcing them to say that outside forces had to leave. Pressure was put on Mobutu — actually Mobutu was gone at this point, Joseph Kasavubu was in⁵² — to get all the forces there to leave, and to get the mercenaries out. In this context, they also pressured Tanzania to confiscate the ships, weapons, and other matériel destined for the pro-Lumumba movement forces.

Waters: The whole history of Africa would have been different if the conditions in the Congo had more closely resembled what you had originally thought.

Villegas: It would have been completely different if — apart from the conditions I explained earlier concerning the individual leaders — the basis had been laid to keep fighting. The presence of small groups of Cubans in each unit made this possible. So when this new political situation developed, Fidel left open the final decision. Fidel gave Che a free hand; Che himself would decide what to do. And he would always have Cuba's support. A senior delegation from the [Communist Party] Central Committee was sent from Cuba for discussions with the Tanzanians.

But the problem was with the OAU agreement. It wasn't a problem with the Tanzanians.

Che tried, he fought, he worked to see who would stay. He told the Cubans, "Whoever wants to leave can leave. Whoever wants to stay can stay." That was the decision

⁵⁰ Meeting in Accra, Ghana, October 21–26, 1965, the Organization of African Unity decided to limit military aid by foreign powers.

⁵¹ In 1920, under the authority of a League of Nations mandate, Namibia (South-West Africa) came under South African control. In 1946 the United Nations called for South Africa to submit a new trusteeship agreement. This request was rejected by the government of South Africa, which maintained that the UN had no right to challenge its occupation of Namibia. In 1966 the UN General Assembly voted to strip South Africa of its mandate.

Namibia won its independence in 1990. A decisive factor contributing to this victory was the defeat of the forces of the South African apartheid regime in Angola at the hands of the Angolan army, Cuban volunteers, and Namibian independence fighters.

⁵² Joseph Kasavubu had been president of the Congo under Lumumba, and supported the coup that ousted Lumumba in late 1960. In July 1964 Kasavubu appointed Moïse Thombe as prime minister, but dismissed him in October 1965. Kasavubu remained as president until November 1965, when he himself was ousted in a coup by Joseph Mobutu, who, as Mobutu Sese Seko remained president of the Congo (Zaire) until 1997.

Available from Pathfinder

El sueño africano del Che: ¿Qué sucedió en la guerrilla congoleña?

[Che's African dream: what happened in the Congolese guerrilla?]

By WILLIAM GÁLVEZ

Contains major excerpts from *Guevara's Episodes of the Revolutionary War in the Congo*.



Published by Casa de las Américas, Havana \$26.95

In Spanish.

Available in bookstores on page 16.

he took. Still, not a single leader of the groups that were fighting in the Congo came to the front lines. Not one. At this point the idea arose of going in search of Pierre Mulele at the other end of the country.⁵³ We ourselves started to exert pressure by saying that the logical thing would be to go in search of Mulele.

Che told us to go look for Mulele. But Mulele was at the other end of the country. We would have had to cross all of the Congo, a country of something like three million square kilometers. Crossing it would have involved a journey like Mao Zedong's Long March.⁵⁴ That was his idea. Che wanted to go with four others. But we argued: How could Che know for sure that Mulele would be there at the front, that he was at the head of his fighters, given that Soumialot and Kabila hadn't come to the front. That made Che think. He really had no basis to be sure that Mulele would be found there, after this gigantic march. That was when he decided to leave the Congo.

I truly believe that Che's position, if we look at it from an individual point of view, was an example of selflessness. He subordinated himself completely, without any conditions. Most never realized who he was.⁵⁵ And when the leaders realized Che was there, it was very disconcerting for them. What should they do? They themselves had never been there at the front. They hadn't shown any interest in being there. And now someone had come to help them inside the country, while they were outside. This was a really difficult situation for them. By the time they were faced with this decision, the OAU pressure had already begun, demanding that we get out.

So you have to take into account the time and the place in which all this occurred. In the few brief months he was there, Che gradually realized there were no prospects for the thing to go anywhere.

Revolutions's reinforcement detachment

Waters: Last year, the remains of Che and several of the other compañeros who died in Bolivia were returned to Cuba.⁵⁶ You commanded the military honor guard for the solemn and impressive ceremony in Santa Clara. What seemed to us most important about those events was that they became a vehicle for the Cuban people to express their revolutionary commitment, to reaffirm their support for the proletarian internationalist course that Che and the other compañeros in Bolivia fought for.

The immense dignity of the ceremony, the spontaneous outpouring of emotion and respect, paid homage to all those who have fought and died for humanity's future. What impact did these events have inside Cuba?

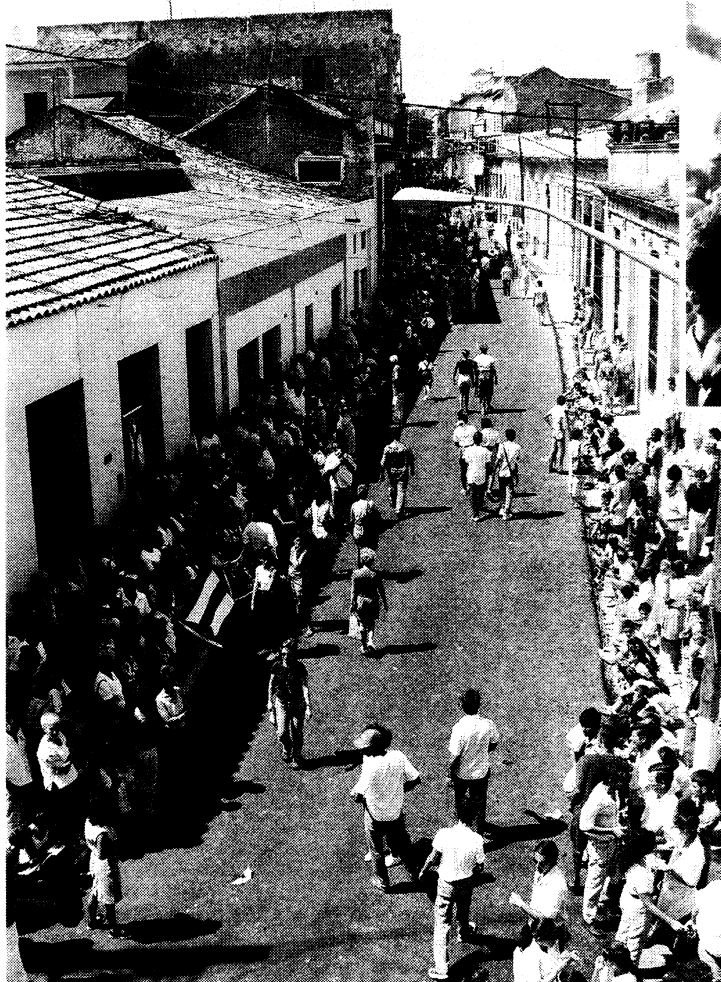
Villegas: We're not a people who make a big deal when someone falls. We don't worship the dead. I think the reception for Che has a deeper political and ideological

⁵³ Pierre Mulele had been minister of education in Patrice Lumumba's government. In January 1964 he had launched a rebellion against the pro-imperialist regime in the province of Kwilu, east of Leopoldville (today Kinshasa).

⁵⁴ In 1934-35, during the civil war in China, troops of the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Zedong were surrounded in south-central China by forces led by Chiang Kai-shek. To break out of the encirclement, some 90,000 troops undertook what came to be known as the Long March, traveling 6,600 miles on foot to north-west China. During the yearlong trek, their numbers were reduced to fewer than 6,000.

⁵⁵ During his seven months in the Congo, Guevara took the nom de guerre Tatu, and was not publicly identified as leader of the Cuban contingent. Only a few leaders of the Congo liberation forces learned his true identity.

⁵⁶ Ernesto Che Guevara's remains were found in Bolivia in July 1997, together with those of six other revolutionary combatants from Bolivia, Cuba, and Peru. All were killed in the course of the guerrilla campaign led by Che Guevara to topple the military dictatorship in Bolivia and link up with rising revolutionary struggles elsewhere in Latin America, especially in the Southern Cone. The remains of the seven combatants were brought back to Cuba, where hundreds of thousands of Cubans mobilized to pay tribute to their example and to express determination to remain true to that revolutionary course. At the October 17 ceremony in Santa Clara, where the remains were buried, Cuban president Fidel Castro told participants that he viewed the event as a homecoming. He saw "Che and his men as reinforcements, as a detachment of invincible combatants that this time includes not just Cubans. It includes Latin Americans who have come to fight at our side and to write new pages of history and glory." Castro's speech is available in the booklet *Celebrating the Homecoming of Ernesto Che Guevara's Reinforcement Brigade to Cuba: Articles from the Militant newspaper on the 30th anniversary of the combat waged in Bolivia by Che and his comrades*, distributed by Pathfinder. It is also available in the October 26, 1997, issue of *Granma International*.



Militant photos by Martin Koppel

Massive tribute by the Cuban people in October 1997 to the "reinforcement detachment," as remains of Guevara and a number of his comrades who fell in Bolivia were returned to Cuba. The response was an expression of the Cuban people's longtime "identification with Che's ideas and his principles."

character. It's not simply respect for someone who died. It's really a show of love, of esteem, of identification with what Che represented. That's really what's behind the tribute paid to Che by our entire people.

Che helped bring this about by what he taught and through his personal example. That personal example had a deep impact on the people. There are some Cubans who know little more about Che than that he died. Many others wish that Che were at our side today, fighting during this difficult and complex time for our people. All this, I believe, is what led so many to turn out, not only in Santa Clara, but all along the way, in massive numbers. It was identification with his ideas and his principles.

It had a tremendous impact on me. I traveled in the jeeps that carried the remains of each of the combatants. I could see the extraordinary discipline of the people, the extraordinary organization. I can tell you that from the Plaza of the Revolution in Havana, all the way to

Santa Clara, there were hardly any open spaces. The people came from towns a long way from the highway to pay tribute to him.

There were some very moving things. I remember when we were entering the province of Villa Clara, for example. I don't know how they were able to get everyone there. As we passed through, they sang Carlos Puebla's song.⁵⁷ They kept singing, it was played over loudspeakers, and the people were humming along. And it was endless, endless, endless. It was deeply moving.

Fidel's brief speech at the Santa Clara ceremony was a masterpiece. It shows why he has such an impact on our people. The thoughts on people's minds were summed up by Fidel when he said that this wasn't a farewell to Che. We were welcoming a reinforcement detachment.

A reinforcement detachment! To fight alongside us! And now it is Tania who will join that detachment, meaning that women will become part of it.⁵⁸ This is important because of the decisive contribution women make to society. That is what Tania symbolizes. And along with Tania, nine other combatants will arrive to swell the ranks of the detachment, which as Fidel said is a Latin American detachment. And it is important for the entire continent to have a detachment of Latin American combatants here.

I am convinced these internationalists will give us much greater strength as we confront the struggles that lie ahead, the struggles we are waging.

Che's ideas are alive, and we're still fighting for these ideas, which he gave his life for. We're fighting today, during the Special Period, to achieve greater productivity, and to be more true to our principles. That's what these ideas mean today. They are the dreams and ideas that unite us.

⁵⁷ Carlos Puebla was a well-known Cuban musician who wrote "Hasta siempre, Comandante," a tribute to Che Guevara that remains popular in Cuba.

⁵⁸ In the closing months of 1998, the remains of ten other combatants who fought with Che Guevara were recovered in Bolivia. Among them was Haydée Tamara Bunke, known by her nom de guerre Tania, the only woman in Che's *guerrilla*, who fell in combat in August 1967. The remains were returned to Cuba and interred along with those of Ernesto Guevara and others at a December 30 military ceremony in Santa Clara. Raúl Castro presided over the event, and the honor guard was commanded by Brig. Gen. Delsa "Teté" Puebla. Harry Villegas was among the participants in the Santa Clara ceremony.

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Leave home without it — Last year, 1.4 million U.S. people filed for personal bankruptcy, triple the number of 12 years ago. A large number were credit-card users, the fastest growing category of debtors.



Harry Ring

To visit Yugoslavia? — By a two-thirds majority, the U.S. Senate voted down a proposal to bar

the Pentagon from leasing — at \$50 million a year — six luxury business jets to haul around military commanders. The military inventory already includes 100 executive jets, but a solon dismissed them as “old dumbos.”

Not to hurry — Nine people, including the pilot, died in the recent Little Rock, Arkansas, plane crash. The pilot had been working more than 13 hours. The Federal Aviation Administration, responsible for air safety, declared its intention to enforce the regulation requiring that pilots get at least eight hours uninterrupted rest in each 24

hour period. The regulation was issued in 1985.

To sum it up — A *New York Times* headline advised: “For good health, it helps to be rich and important.” The article added: “More than genes, more than diet, social class predicts longevity.”

Take that — England’s South West Water company admitted that for a month in 1997, it provided 100,000 customers drinking water unfit for human consumption. A stern magistrate’s court fined the company about \$15,000.

Gotta make a buck — A group

of California prosecutors are suing the Rite Aid drug chain for selling contraceptives and baby formula well beyond their expiration date. Like a pack of condoms purchased last month with a “sell by” date of March 1995.

‘Be your own boss’ — A survey found that England’s 46,000 mom n’ pop groceries are open, on average 117 hours a week. That’s nearly 17 hours a day, seven days a week.

Who could believe that? — “Zealous police in Turkey tapped the phones of top military and government officials, including the prime minister. Among the revela-

tions: some of the most wanted criminals have regular, easy access to top military and government officials” — European news item.

The Great Society will not appear in the next *Militant*, as Harry Ring is currently recuperating from injuries from an auto accident. He’s determined to get back in action as soon as possible, knowing readers look forward to this column each week. We wish him the best.

‘Culture war’ aims to mobilize rightist movement

The following selection on the “culture war” is from a talk presented in April 1993 to participants in a regional socialist educational conference in Greensboro, North Carolina. The talk, entitled “Capitalism’s Deadly World Disorder,” and discussion on it are included in *Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*. The book is copyright © 1999 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

The polarization in the “culture war” declared by [Patrick] Buchanan and other ultrarightists takes many forms: chauvinist anti-foreigner agitation, racist assaults on affirmative

from the pages of Capitalism’s World Disorder

action, vulgar attacks on women’s social equality, half-hidden but virulent outbursts of Jew-hatred, fearful prejudice against homosexuals. These incipient fascist forces are vocal advocates of the cops, like those currently on trial in Los Angeles for brutally beating Rodney King; fascist movements always draw many of their cadres from the cops.¹ There will be no limit to the pomographic overtones of their demagoguery, as they claim to offer a road to bring a “decadent” society out of its crisis.

¹ Los Angeles policemen Theodore Briseno, Stacey Koon, Laurence Powell, and Timothy Wind were on trial in federal court for violating the civil rights of Rodney King, a Black worker whom they had been videotaped brutally beating in March 1991. Following an earlier acquittal of the cops by an all-white jury in state criminal court in April 1992, anticop riots broke out across much of Los Angeles for more than four days.

On orders from the Bush administration, some 1,100 U.S. marines, 600 army infantry troops, and 1,000 Border Patrol and other federal cops joined 6,500 California National Guardsmen and thousands of Los Angeles police in occupying large areas of the city’s Black and Latino communities.

Fifty-eight people were killed over the four days, more than 80 percent of them Black or Latino; some 17,000 people were arrested; and immigration cops used the dragnet as an excuse to deport several hundred detainees.

House of Representatives ‘crime’ bill attacks democratic rights

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

The U.S. House of Representatives approved a “juvenile crime” bill June 17 that would extend mandatory sentences to minors and permit state governments to post the Ten Commandments in public facilities, including schools. Congress also voted down firearms legislation that would have weakened some gun control regulations of a similar bill approved by the Senate last month.

Liberal politicians, including Vice President Albert Gore, seized on the April 20 shootings by two students at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, where 15 people were killed, and the May 20 shooting by a student at a high school in Conyers, Georgia, to press for more “gun control” laws. These measures give cops and the state more powers to impose background checks and other restrictions on democratic rights.

Intertwined with the gun control arguments on Capitol Hill was a debate on “mod-

ern culture,” “violent entertainment,” and what some capitalist politicians argued was the need to bring religion into the schools. “Culture Wars Erupt In Debate on Hill” read a headline in the *Washington Post* the day the House vote.

Rep. Thomas DeLay got prominent media coverage for his assertion that the recent violent incidents in Colorado and Georgia high schools were linked to the “culture of abortion and the teaching of evolution,” not guns, as many liberal Democrats claim. DeLay, a Republican from Texas who is the House majority whip, also launched a tirade against birth control and day care. “This was a culture problem and we had to make that clear,” said DeLay after the vote.

The House vote came one month after the Senate passed legislation that would authorize the trying of 14-year-old children as adults for felonies and drug offenses. The Senate bill also provides \$1 billion over five years in federal funds for jailing more young people.

he came to the windup of the talk. “We must take . . . back our culture and take back our country,” Buchanan said, “*block by block*” — just as the called-up National Guardsmen had done in Los Angeles a few months earlier. (Buchanan’s description of the L.A. events was a gross exaggeration, but that is not the point.)

Block by block — that was the banner Buchanan raised to bring to their feet his partisans watching him live on TV around the country. That was Buchanan’s summation. That fight was his promise. And that day will come.

You’ll sometimes see Buchanan referred to in the bourgeois press as an “isolationist,” or “antiwar.” He opposed U.S. government



Militant/Denise McInerney
Supporters of a woman’s right to choose abortion defend clinic from rightists in Little Rock Arkansas, July 1994. Reactionary positions “are invested with emotional energy and declared to be the banner of a movement.”

policy during the Gulf War and speaks out against committing U.S. troops to the United Nations military operation in Bosnia. But class-conscious workers could make no more deadly mistake than failing to recognize — and to act on — the political fact that Buchananism is part of the imperialist war drive today.

Buchanan will mobilize the rightist movement he is building to demand that Washington use *all* its military might to back “our boys.” But he’s determined to first win the war *at home* against the working class, to hamstring *us*, and he urges his followers to act in the image of his heroes, Franco, MacArthur, and McCarthy. That’s a precondition to *really do the job*, Buchanan holds, but then America has to do it!

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



July 12, 1974

BOSTON — “What we have before us is a fight common to all women. Tonight we are issuing a call to action,” stated Carol Henderson Evans, a coordinator of the Ad Hoc Committee to Defend Abortion Rights.

She was speaking to an enthusiastic meeting of 250 people at Faneuil Hall June 26. The teach-in and protest rally, sponsored by the committee, was called in response to Massachusetts legislation that would restrict the availability of abortions and severely limit research and experimentation on fetal tissue.

A bill introduced by state Representative William Dellahunt would allow abortions after the twentieth week of pregnancy only for therapeutic reasons. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year that states could not impose such restrictions on a woman’s right to choose until after the twenty-fourth week.

Another bill, which was signed into law the very evening of the rally, restricts research of fetal tissue.

Dr. Leonard Berman, one of four doctors recently indicted under an 1814 “grave-robbing” law for using fetal tissue in a research project, spoke at the Faneuil Hall rally. He stated his opposition to the fetal research law, explaining that such research has led to the discovery of vaccines

against German measles as well as means of diagnosing birth defects. Improved health care for both women and children, he stated, will be adversely affected by the law.



July 11, 1949

Shown above are five of the Trenton Six, whose death sentences were reversed in a unanimous decision of the New Jersey Supreme Court on June 30. [Above photo was of five Black men.]

The court’s decision condemned the “confessions” extorted from the defendants while they were being held illegally and without warrants on “suspicion” of murdering a Trenton junkdealer.

It also criticized the prosecution for withholding fingerprint evidence requested by the defense and the trial judge for improperly charging the jury and for taking it on himself to pronounce the death sentence on them although the jury verdict was “guilty” and not “guilty in the first degree.”

But while the court threw out the convictions, it did not free the six defendants, who are still in jail and many have to undergo another trial in the fall.

Mass protest has won a significant partial victory; but more and stronger protest is needed now to win cancellation of plans for another trial and immediate freedom for the defendants.

U.S.-NATO troops out of Balkans

U.S.-NATO troops out of the Balkans! That should be the demand of workers and farmers around the world, and particularly in the United States.

More than 11 weeks of bombardment by Washington and other imperialist powers have devastated the industry and infrastructure of Yugoslavia. In addition to thousands of people killed and injured in the assault, the destruction of factories has left millions without work. There are shortages of food, clean water, and fuel as a result of the systematic bombing of oil refineries and electric power plants.

Now an occupation force of U.S., British, French, German, and Italian troops is carving up Kosova, with the acquiescence and participation of Moscow. These forces preside over the further fanning of chauvinist divisions among working people unleashed by the Belgrade regime, in face of which many Serbian residents who have stayed in Kosova feel compelled to leave their homes. Washington is moving to reorganize elements of the Kosova Liberation Army as a police force to do its bidding in the region. The imperialist troops, while pretending to be neutral, will only act to abet the various middle-class forces that promote chauvinism at the expense of working people.

Workers internationally should stand with those within Yugoslavia who are fighting to defend the Yugoslav federation that was won through the 1942-45 revolution. We need to answer Washington's lie that the Balkans conflict is the result of unalterable historic ethnic hatred — a conflict the imperialist rulers claim only their military intervention can keep in check. This is a cover for the U.S. billionaires' true aims: to establish their supremacy in Europe, deepen their military confrontation with the workers states in Eastern Europe, including Russia, and create conditions that will eventually allow them to reimpose capitalism.

The events of the last few weeks should put to rest any illusions that the regime headed by Slobodan Milosevic would organize a fight to defend the Yugoslav workers state from the imperialist assault, or that government of Boris Yeltsin in Moscow would act to protect the toilers of the Balkans. These regimes, made up of remnants of the former ruling Stalinist bureaucracies and other wannabe capitalist forces, follow a pragmatic course aimed at protecting their own privileges. While they may sometimes come in conflict with Washington, they will always place their own narrow interests ahead of those of workers and farmers around the world. The sending of 200 Russian troops to occupy the Pristina airport, for example, was not a progressive act in defense of Yugoslavia but a crude stunt by the Moscow bureaucracy to maneuver with the imperialist powers as it agrees to the cutting up of Kosova.

There are no stand-ins or saviors for the working class. As "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War," the 1990

convention resolution of the Socialist Workers Party, points out, referring to the Soviet Union, "The working class is the only reliable defender of the workers state, the conquests of [the] October [1917 revolution], and the only source of their regeneration. It will take mighty battles with the working class to reimpose the dominance of stable capitalist property relations, dismantle the state monopoly of foreign trade, and end centralized planning. Such battles will be prepared as workers move to resist growing unemployment, accelerated inflation, cuts in the social wage, and deepening social inequality.... The restoration of capitalism is impossible short of defeating the working class in bloody, counterrevolutionary battles." (This resolution is published in issue no. 11 of *New Internationalist*.)

The historic struggle of the working-class vanguard throughout the Balkans has been for unity based on a voluntary alliance of workers and farmers, against a long history of fragmentation and bloody wars by local exploiting classes, usually with imperialist sponsors stirring the pot.

Despite the murderous wars and chauvinist propaganda of Milosevic in Serbia, Franjo Tudjman in Croatia, and the other ruling layers in the Yugoslav republics today, substantial numbers of working people refuse to give up the fight for the Yugoslavia that was forged in struggle.

Such a federation can be truly voluntary only if it is based on the right of all oppressed nations to self-determination — up to and including independence. This remains the conclusion of a small but important vanguard of working people and youth in Yugoslavia. Communists would not *advocate* independence for Kosova, however, unless the fight for a federal republic became historically exhausted and another way forward was posed. That is not a settled question today.

The Clinton administration claims the NATO occupation is the only way to allow the return of Kosovar Albanians to their homes. But initiatives, such as those by leaders of the Nezavisnost union in Yugoslavia, to appeal to their brothers and sisters in Kosova for unity on the basis of mutual respect and equality of all nationalities shows how it could be possible for vanguard workers and youth to lead brigades of working people in areas of conflict to guarantee the safe return of all refugees, the security of all residents, and the right of Kosovars to decide their future.

National self-determination is impossible under the boot of imperialism. Workers around the world have the obligation to demand all foreign troops — whether under the NATO or UN flag — get out of the Balkans now. We should also demand the draconian sanctions against Yugoslavia, spearheaded by Washington, be lifted, and the "investigators" sent there under the auspices of the so-called war crimes tribunal in The Hague be withdrawn.

Imperialist occupation of Yugoslavia

Continued from Page 3

"traitors" because of what his regime did," said Dusan from Novi Sad. "The government is not telling the truth about Serbs fleeing Kosova because that would show their claim 'Yugoslavia won the war' is nothing but a lie."

On June 23, Milosevic promised to lift the war emergency measures that banned public protests without a permit, imposed strict censorship, and gave special powers to the police. Anti-government protests have been announced in the central Serbia cities of Cacak and Kraljevo. "But it's too early to tell what will shape up," Dusan said. "The regime may still keep restrictions on democratic rights and many people are still absorbed with daily survival at the moment."

For the imperialist powers that marched into Kosova, their seeming triumph did not enhance the fortunes of the respective ruling parties, especially in Europe. Three days after the British NATO units first entered Kosova, Anthony Blair's Labour Party suffered a major setback in the June 13 elections for the European parliament. German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's social democrats suffered a

similar defeat to the opposition Christian Democrats. Bonn subsequently announced major new austerity measures in an attempt to stem the deterioration of the German mark and the euro against the U.S. dollar.

These are all indications that Washington has gained more of an edge over its imperialist rivals in Europe. On the home front, the Clinton administration whipped those in the U.S. ruling class who pronounced the White House course in Yugoslavia a fiasco and argued for a ground invasion or for an end to the bombing. But Clinton's seeming victory can easily turn into his disaster.

With nearly 100,000 NATO troops deployed in the Balkans now — from Bosnia and Croatia to Macedonia and Albania — Washington is not in sight of its goal of reestablishing capitalist social relations in Yugoslavia and the region. Recent protests by Romanian miners, opposition by Polish farmers to the effects of the capitalist market, and deep-seated attitudes against privatizations and layoffs among working people in Albania and a number of former Yugoslav republics have shown that the former landlords and capitalists can return to power only astride a cannon.

Colorado miners strike wins support

Continued from Page 6

just ignored him," a worker described.

On the picket line *Militant* reports spoke with three workers — ages 19, 23, and 24 — who had been hired within the last year and were traditionally called green hats. "They thought that since this is such a good-paying job we would cross the picket line when we went on strike. They were so wrong. We are in this because we believe in the needs of retirees," one of them explained.

Although the strike is in an isolated area, Local 1984 has received support from a number of other unionists, mainly other mine workers. "So far we have been sent checks for over \$2,000 from four UMWA locals in the west," Local 1984 vice president Charles Cudo said.

A number of local stores in Rangely have placed signs in their windows saying they support the UMWA. The local governments in Rangely and Dinosaur, Colorado, have passed resolutions on the strike and sent them to Blue Mountain management. "We would like you to rethink

your objective to hire other workers outside our area to replace those locally involved in the strike," reads part of the statement from Dinosaur city officials.

Local 1984 has produced a brochure explaining their side of the fight and the miners have begun to distribute it widely throughout the area. On June 19 UMWA local members organized a float for Bedrock Days, a local celebration in Dinosaur. This is something the miners have done before but this year the float featured signs thanking the community for its support in their fight. Some of the miners' wives are beginning to organize a women's auxiliary.

"Our biggest ally is the pile of coal. It is going down," Ed Hinkle, a 14-year Deserado miner, commented. "The company stockpiles coal to run its power plant and we know we are hurting them because we know the pile is getting low."

"Our strike is important and other miners — union and nonunion — throughout this area are watching it closely," Carol Amy said. "They know what we get will have a direct effect on how their companies treat them."

Build the active workers conference

Continued from front page

people to protest police brutalization of working people.

This combination of studying basic works of Marxism and joining in political struggles with other youth, working-class fighters, and others, is part of a plan of action by socialists in Chicago and around the country that will culminate in an August 5-7 Active Workers Conference in Oberlin, Ohio. Through this activity they are seeking to convince many of these workers, farmers, and youth to join the Young Socialists or the Socialist Workers Party.

The Chicago summer school participants include three Young Socialists members and four college students interested in the socialist movement who helped organize a protest at DePaul University against the U.S.-NATO assault on Yugoslavia. They and others in Chicago are now beginning to work out the nitty-gritty details of how to get to the Active Workers Conference, such as travel and fund-raising. Car caravans will depart from several locations around the country, drawing workers and young fighters from around each of these regions, and head to the Ohio conference.

In Seattle, socialists have hosted summer school classes on *Capitalism's World Disorder* and other books in which several newly interested people are taking part. Some summer school students also participated in a rally by Teamster-organized packinghouse workers on strike against Iowa Beef Processing in Wallula, Washington.

On August 1, after a final fund-raising party, people from across the Northwest will depart from Seattle on a cross-country caravan to the Active Workers Conference.

Talk on need for revolutionary party

The keynote presentation at the Active Workers Conference will be on the revolutionary party — on why such a party is necessary to lead a mass vanguard of toilers to overthrow the capitalist rulers and establish a workers and farmers government. It will explain why this working-class party must be of the kind built by the Bolsheviks, under the leadership of V.I. Lenin, which led millions of working people to power in Russia in October 1917.

Two pillars of the Ohio conference will be the Young Socialists and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party. The gathering will give YS members an opportunity to describe the work they have been involved in. The Young Socialists have been strengthened as an organization through their recent political activities, such as their involvement in the successful tour of two Cuban youth leaders. For the summer, the Young Socialists has transferred several of its members to designated summer school centers — in Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, and other cities — to help strengthen and build chapters.

Many of the more than 120 SWP supporters currently involved in the project to convert all Pathfinder Press titles to digital format will be attending the conference, where workshops on this project will be held.

The party supporters also play a critical role in financing the revolutionary party. At its May 30-June 1 meeting, the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party decided to launch a campaign to raise the monthly contributions by supporters from an annual average of \$139,000 to \$175,000 by the closing rally at the Active Workers Conference on August 7. This campaign, which will require systematic work by party branch leaderships in every city over the coming weeks, will be organized out of Seattle.

The National Committee also decided on other steps to reconquer a proletarian approach to financing the communist movement. One decision is to return to the party's tradition of branch units being debt-free in their monthly obligations to the party's national office. A related step is to set three-month budgets serving as effective tools for branches to meet their basic operating expenses and make it possible to respond to the labor and farm resistance that is now a permanent feature of U.S. politics.

This profound change in working-class politics means that, to be a competent party that is able to judge politics accurately, socialists must systematically reach out and link up with working-class struggles beyond the cities where party branches exist. This makes it necessary to make aggressive use of the party's state, regional, and district structures along those lines. For example, socialists from the two local units making up the party's Minnesota State organization and from Des Moines, Iowa, got some positive results from a two-day team they organized to meet up with packinghouse workers Worthington, Minnesota.

Socialists in Southern branches are carrying out a number of joint activities in the region. Unionists from Houston and Birmingham, including socialists, are traveling to Gramercy, Louisiana, to join a June 27 rally by locked-out Kaiser Aluminum workers. Some Kaiser workers have participated in the socialist summer school in Houston.

Socialists in Birmingham have sent a couple of teams to Auburn University in eastern Alabama to meet with several students who have bought *Capitalism's World Disorder* and try to involve them in the regional summer school program. A special joint Atlanta-Birmingham July 4 summer school weekend is planned in Birmingham.

And socialist workers from a number of cities are taking part in a Virginia team to reach out to the nearly 9,000 striking Steelworkers in Newport News, Virginia, with solidarity and a communist perspective. They are also participating in a march and rally by the strikers in Richmond and selling at several industrial plant gates, a campus, and working-class communities in the area. Socialists from Washington, D.C., are seeking to work more closely with a couple of youth in Virginia Beach, Virginia, who are interested in the Young Socialists.

Workers walk out over seniority rights, hours at Steel of West Virginia

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

profits have gone up 43 percent.

"We bent over backward to get them up and running and profitable," said Perry, a millwright with 22 years in the plant. "We had to

totaling 11 percent are spread over the five-year life of the contract. The deal includes retroactive pay of 3.5 percent for the last two years and nine months of working under an extension of the old contract.

The old contract is one of the worst in the industry. Northwest flight attendants have sunk to 17th in salary among the airlines. They have not received a raise since 1988, and in 1993 agreed to a 15 percent wage give-back and other concessions when the company said it was losing money. The company has reaped record profits in two of the last three years.

Karen Schultz, a veteran flight attendant at Northwest, said the retirement proposal is not what they were fighting for. "Folks are most disappointed with the 3.5 percent retro-pay," she added. "We were told we would get quite a bit more than the other union groups or a signing bonus plus 3.5 percent since our pay was so far behind. What does this pitiful retro-pay say to the company about future contracts?"

Another issue is the five-year length of the contract. "There is discussion on the proposed length of the contract," said Schultz. "It was a surprise to us all."

Each member of Teamsters Local 2000 will receive copies of the agreement in the mail and Teamster officials will present the agreement for discussion in union meetings starting June 26 in Memphis, Tennessee. Voting on the contract will take place sometime in July.

Bell Canada workers end strike, 1,400 will lose jobs

MONTREAL — The 9,500 telephone operators and technicians at Bell Canada, members of the Communication, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP), have been back at work since May 16. Workers at Bell in Ontario and Quebec had struck April 9 in response to Bell's announcement to essentially transfer its telephone operator service to a newly established company partially owned by Bell. The transferred workers would find themselves

make concessions and we feel that we've sacrificed enough. People are tired of getting mistreated."

The strikers are paying close attention to contract developments at other union plants such as Century Aluminum in Ravenswood, West Virginia.

Several unions have already offered support to the striking Steelworkers, including the Teamsters and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) members at Cabell Huntington Memorial Hospital, who were recently on strike themselves. Members of the United Transportation Union from CSX Railroad, whose tracks pass just yards away from the picket tents, are backing the strikers. As are members of USWA Local 40 at INCO, also in Huntington, who carried out a successful strike earlier this year.

Northwest Airlines flight attendants discuss contract

MINNEAPOLIS — Flight attendants, members of Teamsters Local 2000 at Northwest Airlines, are discussing the terms of a tentative contract June 10 offer from the company. The offer came two days after union officials announced that flight attendants voted, by more than 99 percent, to authorize a strike against the company.

On June 9 union members staged informational picketing and leafleting at a number of airports, including in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Detroit, Atlanta, Memphis, and Seattle. Thousands have worn green ribbons and attached "I will strike" tags to their luggage.

Full details of the contract are not yet available. Teamster officials released a summary that includes an immediate 57 percent raise in retirement benefits, with increases of up to 80 percent overall after 54 months. Pay would go up an average of 13 percent to start, including a 25-percent increase for junior flight attendants with less than six years of service. Further raises



Militant Eleanor Brown

Members of USWA Local 37 picket Steel of West Virginia plant in Huntington June 12

ON THE PICKET LINE

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

HUNTINGTON, West Virginia — Some 480 members of Local 37 of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) went out on strike here June 6 against Steel of West Virginia Inc. (SWV). The Steelworkers had rejected the contract by 80 percent. Workers on the picket line described seniority rights as the key issue in the strike. SWV produces tractor-trailer sections, housing frames, highway guide rails, and mine beams.

As we went to press, the Militant learned the strikers ratified a new contract June 20 and returned to work the next day.

For some time the company has not been filling job bids by seniority. Instead, they have been putting who they claim is the "most qualified" person into new job openings.

The bosses have taken away several personal days that workers were previously entitled to and enforced a 56-hour workweek for the first time. This was something the company could do according to the contract, but had never implemented before. One longtime worker was fired as a result of this in 1998, because he continued to go to church on Sunday. The union had even arranged for someone else to cover his work. Another worker with 34 years seniority was fired for failing to attend a company meeting. The union considers this pattern of firings as a mechanism to drive out workers close to retirement.

According to USWA Local 37 president Sam Perry, since Roanoke Electric Steel Corporation of Roanoke, Virginia, bought Steel of West Virginia last December, SWV's

without a union and their wages cut in half. Bell had promised monetary compensation and retirement packages for those losing their jobs, but the operators demanded more.

To settle the strike Bell agreed to keep 100 more telephone operators, for a total of 900 out of the current 2,300, and increased the monetary compensation and retirement packages for those losing their jobs. One operator with 18 years' seniority said her compensation offer had increased by Can\$15,000 (Can\$1=US\$0.66) after the strike, almost double the original offer.

The technicians got a 13.2 percent wage increase over the life of the five-year contract and their workweek has been reduced from 38 to 37.5 hours. The technicians

and the remaining operators have been promised job security until December 2000.

Fernand DeSilva, a technician in Montreal, said the majority of people were glad to go back to work. The women who were forced to leave were leaving with a lot more than they had before the strike. Nonetheless, he added, "It was not a total loss but a lot of jobs were lost."

Tony Prince, a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees in Cleveland; Bill Scheer, a member of AMFA Local 33 in Minneapolis; and Annette Kouri, a member of the USWA in Montreal, contributed to this column.

Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

Leon Trotsky

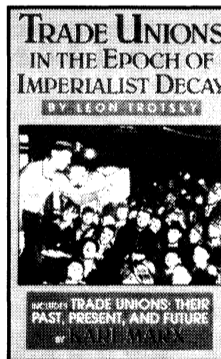
Featuring "Trade Unions: Their Past, Present, and Future"

Karl Marx

"Apart from their original purposes, the trades unions must now learn to act deliberately as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation. . . . They must convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions."

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PATHFINDER

LETTERS

Build July 7 actions

I just read the article "Free Puerto Rican political prisoners," written by me, and the accompanying editorial titled, "Build July actions to free Puerto Rican political prisoners," in the June 28 Militant. I am writing to point out what I think is a big problem in the editorial: neither José Solís, the most recent political prisoner convicted by the U.S. government, nor the actions being organized on July 7 in cities across the country in his defense, are even mentioned.

A large portion of the article focuses on the importance of participating in and building the July 7 actions, as well as the centrality of Solís's case to the fight for the release of all Puerto Rican political prisoners. The article quotes Marcos Vilar, a national leader of the movement to free the Puerto Rican political prisoners, as saying, "We want defenders of Solís to go to the July 7 protests that are being organized in their areas. Where there are not already protests called, people

should get together to organize them." I think this should have been the line of the Militant's editorial. All workers, farmers, opponents of imperialist war, and battlers for social justice — those to whom the Militant speaks — should join these July 7 protests, and where none are planned, should work with others to initiate and organize them.

The National Network on Cuba, at its last meeting, voted to endorse these actions. Many of its member organizations will want to help organize and build these actions. I think the planned action in Miami is an excellent example of what can be put together. The Socialist Workers Party, the Antonio Maceo Brigade, the Alliance of Workers of the Cuban Community, and the Miami Coalition to End the Embargo of Cuba joined together to call a picket line on July 7 at the Federal building in Miami. I am sure that readers of the Militant in many other cities will be able to do the same sort of work, along with others, to call and organize demonstrations at

federal buildings in their areas.

Joshua Carroll
Chicago, Illinois

Editors' reply: Carroll is right. The July 7 protests are important for all working people and supporters of democratic rights. We urge readers to join in these actions, and work with others to initiate them where none are called yet.

Native American struggle

The Militant quoted Kadira Belyne who was a protester against the U.S. bombing of Yugoslavia. Belyne argued that if Washington really "cared about human rights, they would not be persecuting the Diné people on Big Mountain. Our government is in collusion with Peabody Coal to drive them off the mountain. That hypocrisy just bums me up."

The Diné, which is the proper name of the people commonly known as the Navajo, have lived on Big Mountain with the Hopi people

for generations. Washington adopted law P.L. 93-531, which was the result of a 24-year campaign by special interest groups such as the Kerr McGee Corp. and Peabody Coal Co. This law established an artificial boundary effectively forcing Navajo and Hopi people to move to areas Washington felt was appropriate. A national campaign was launched to defend the rights of these Native Americans.

This is only one of the latest chapters of U.S. hostility to the first people to live in this part of the world. However, the resistance to the theft of Native American lands is more than 500 years old. One of the most dramatic attempts at Native American unity was led by the Shawnee leader named Tecumseh shortly after the American Revolution. Tecumseh traveled from Canada to Louisiana, and from Florida to New York speaking to as many Native Americans as he could. These various nations spoke different languages and had gone to war against one another in the

past. Yet, Tecumseh argued that if all Native Americans did not unify to stop the theft of their lands, Washington would do everything in its power to take everything they had.

In the days of Tecumseh it was unthinkable to attempt to unify workers and farmers with Native Americans. Today it is possible to attempt to unify workers and farmers from all over the world, including Native Americans. That is why it is crucial to point towards the need for a real unity in Yugoslavia, which takes into account the demands of all the nations in that area.

Steve Halpern
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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.

Irish nationalists call for mobilization to defend Garvagh Road community

BY CAROLINE BELLAMY

LONDON — Irish nationalists have stepped up their campaign to defend the Garvagh Road community in Portadown, Northern Ireland, from rightist attack. The June 10 issue of *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, the newspaper of Sinn Fein, published a call for nationalists across Ireland to stand ready to support the Garvagh Road residents leading up to the planned July 4 parade through their neighborhood by the pro-British Orange Order. Friends of the Garvagh Road committees have been formed across Ireland, Britain, and the United States.

"My community is not going to sit back and take this," said Breandán Mac Cionnaith, speaking to some 120 trade unionists and Irish activists in London May 8, the day after the formation of the Friends of the Garvagh Road committee here. "Others must join us. It is time to stand up and confront sectarianism. We need support and action this year." Mac Cionnaith is a leader of the Garvagh Road Residents' Coalition in Portadown. The coalition is fighting for the re-routing of marches by the rightist Orange Order away from the Garvagh Road area, where 95 percent of the residents are Catholic.

The July Orange Order march to the Drumcree church in Portadown — one of hundreds of annual triumphalist parades by right-wing Protestant groups in the occupied counties — has been a focus of confrontation since 1995. Last year, for the first time, residents prevented the march from going through their neighborhood. "We're not against marches," explained Joanne Tennyson, a Garvagh resident speaking in London in January. "We only disagree with the one to Drumcree church because it comes back down the Garvagh Road and disrupts our lives. It's about the Orange Order walking all over us. You've got 7,000 Orangemen going to a church that can't hold more than 200. They're not going there to hear the word of God."

Rightist parades back British rule

These triumphalist marches are aimed at reinforcing anti-Catholic repression and upholding the Protestant privileges that have been key to London's rule in the north of Ireland. In the last year, the Orange Order has held more than 170 marches and rallies in Portadown. Countless nationalists have been assaulted and their homes attacked, a Catholic church at Harryville has been picketed to stop churchgoers attending, and Rosemary Nelson, the civil rights lawyer who represented the Garvagh residents, was murdered in March.

Nationalist residents are subject to daily attacks. Catholic-owned businesses and houses have been burned and bombed, and families intimidated from their homes. Recently a 16-year-old girl had a bottle of Coke smashed in her face and a nationalist resident was beaten nearly to death by rightist thugs. Elizabeth O'Neill, 59, a Protestant woman married to a Catholic, was killed by a pipe bomb thrown into her home June 5. She was the 10th person to die as a direct result of Orange Order protests in Portadown since July 1996. The police and government response has been negligible.

"The Orange Order say they stand for civil and religious liberty," commented Mac Cionnaith at the launch of the Friends of the Garvagh Road in London May 7. But when it was founded in 1795 "there was an organization that stood for civil rights and equality — the United Irishmen."

"The Orange Order was founded as a counter-revolutionary force to oppose and oppress the United Irishmen, to create sectarian division where others were trying to heal. Militia units controlled by Orange lodges opposed all Catholic emancipation and home rule. It had its own political party, the Unionist party." After the partition of Ireland in 1920, the Orange Order controlled the state in the six Irish



Some 200 people rallied on Garvagh Road last December to protest Orange Order parade. Rightists have besieged the nationalist area in Portadown, Northern Ireland, since July 1998.

counties that were held by London as part of the United Kingdom, he added.

"People talk about the marches issue as one of competing rights. If we were talking about a fascist march or the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama, no one would be talking about competing rights but about a denial of the rights of the minority," Mac Cionnaith said.

The Good Friday Agreement, signed last year by the British and Irish governments and major nationalist and Unionist parties, guaranteed the right to live free from sectarian harassment. Events in Portadown, however, show the agreement is not being upheld, Mac Cionnaith said.

"The agreement says we have the right to live free from discrimination and to have freedom of economic activity. This has been denied to us for the last ten generations. Catholics make up 32 percent of the population of Portadown, about 6,500 people. But we have only 2 out of 7 electoral wards," he said. "Forty-three percent of the unemployed are Catholic, and 50 percent of the long-term unemployed. The biggest employer in Portadown makes carpets, actually on the Garvagh Road. The workforce is 610 people and less than 90 are Catholics."

The Orange Order is determined that this year's march will go ahead. Portadown Orange Order spokesman David Jones threatened in

May that if the group cannot march down the Garvagh Road by July 4, "we are on a slippery slope towards something possibly as serious as civil war...[and] the problem won't be at Drumcree, it will be throughout the country."

The Parades Commission, which was set up by the British government in 1997, has given loyalists permission to go ahead with a "Long March" through Northern Ireland. It will start in Derry June 24 and arrive in Portadown to take part in the Drumcree parade. *An Phoblacht* reports that various loyalist groupings are joining forces, intent on an all out offensive in the build up to Drumcree. In response the British government has deployed 2,000 soldiers. This is addition to the 15,000 troops that already occupy Northern Ireland today.

Residents appeal for support

In turn, the Resident's Coalition has been reaching out broadly to mobilize support. In the last few weeks members have traveled to venues across Ireland to recount their experiences. The Friends of Garvagh Road groups are organizing delegations of supporters and observers to go there over the weekend of the Drumcree march. More than 20 will be going from London. A "food column" is planned to go from West Belfast, and a demonstration of 1,000 was held in Dublin June 19.

Worker dies as Boeing cuts jobs, ups output

BY SCOTT BREEN

RENTON, Washington — A crane operator died at the Boeing factory here June 10. Dean Morris, 55, was operating an overhead crane 60 feet above the factory floor when it came off its rails and fell to the ground upside down, crushing him. The plant manufactures wings for the company's 737 and 757 jets.

Morris, a Boeing employee for 17 years, was a member of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) District 751. His wife and two sons also work at Boeing.

Employees in the Wing Responsibility Center (WRC) building where the accident occurred were sent home at 11:30 a.m., three hours after the tragedy, when Boeing managers finally decided to suspend production for the rest of the day. Many had already stopped working when they heard of Morris's death.

In a statement to the press, Boeing said that it had "ordered a broad inspection of overhead cranes in all facilities in Puget Sound" as well as in Long Beach, California; Wichita, Kansas; Philadelphia; and St. Louis.

Workers at the IAM Local C union meeting

that night held a minute of silence in commemoration of Morris. IAM 751 President William Johnson said that the Machinists union would be part of any investigation.

In a somber mood, many workers put black tape over their Boeing badges the day after the tragedy. Several hundred Boeing workers attended Morris's funeral June 15, including crane operators from as far away as Everett, 45 miles to the north.

A week later, crane operators blasted their warning horns simultaneously throughout the WRC building at 8:12 a.m., the time Morris' crane crashed, in memory of that tragedy.

The cause of the crash remains unknown. According to operators on the site, the crane cage ran off its rails despite three safety devices that somehow failed simultaneously.

In addition to the Boeing Company's investigation, the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries is conducting a separate investigation. The IAM is participating in these investigations as well.

Many operators have declined to run cranes in the WRC until there is a clear explanation of what happened and what Boeing will do to prevent its reoccurrence. Renton site man-

There will be a delegation of 50 people, organized by the Irish Emergency Parades Committee, traveling to Portadown from the United States as international observers. Irish Northern Aid has also called for a week of actions throughout the United States to show solidarity with the fighters of the Garvagh Road.

The demand of the Orangemen to march down the Garvagh Road is "at the core" of the loyalist campaign of violence, said Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, the party leading the fight to end British rule in Ireland.

"The vacuum generated by the failure to implement the Good Friday Agreement is being increasingly filled by loyalist bomb and gun attacks on nationalists, and the wholesale intimidation of the Garvagh Road community," Adams added.

The British and Irish governments have backed Unionist attempts to block the convening of a new Northern Ireland Executive. They demand that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) decommission its weapons before this and other bodies are set up.

Meanwhile, Sinn Fein celebrated record gains in the June 10 elections to the European Parliament, and in local elections held in the Irish Republic the same day. In the six-county European election, Sinn Fein increased its vote from 9.9 percent in 1994 to 17.3 percent. In the Republic of Ireland its vote doubled from 3 percent of first preferences in 1994 to 6.3 percent.

In response to the public inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday—January 30, 1972, when members of the British army's Parachute regiment shot 14 unarmed civil rights protesters dead in Derry—the right-wing *Daily Mail* has been running a "Don't betray the Paras" campaign. Referring to the Parachute regiment as "heroes," the paper cites their role spearheading the NATO "peacekeeping" force in Kosovo.

On June 17 the high court in London ruled that soldiers who testify in the inquiry should be allowed anonymity. One of those who may be called to give evidence at the inquiry is Gen. Michael Jackson, the commander of K-FOR in Kosovo. He was an adjutant in the Parachute regiment on Bloody Sunday. Among those under his command in Kosovo will be Mark Wright and James Fisher, two British soldiers convicted of the 1992 murder of Belfast teenager Peter McBride.

Caroline Bellamy is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union in London.

ager John Hayhurst said that "Renton crane operations will not resume until the safety of our employees is ensured." The following week, however, the company got a few volunteers to begin operating a few of the cranes in the WRC.

There has been a recent history of safety complaints involving the cranes, which move overhead continuously throughout the three shifts at Boeing's facilities in Everett and Renton.

The death occurs after Boeing has reached its highest production rate ever, cranking out more planes per month than ever in its history. At the same time, it is engaged in massive layoffs, and trying to increase the productivity of labor through speedup and "lean manufacturing."

According to Boeing's Hayhurst, "This is the first industrial accident that has resulted in a fatality at the Renton facility."

Some workers can't help wondering if "lean manufacturing" and cuts in maintenance crews due to these layoffs have contributed to this new Boeing "first."

Scott Breen is an assembly mechanic in the WRC at Renton and a member of IAM 751A.